Trip the Light Fantastic

by EventHorizon

Summary

Mycroft's need for an escort to the school dance wins him a very surprising candidate when he finds an old book of spells in an abandoned occult shop...

Notes

This piece is for kez, who placed the winning bid for it in the Mark Gatiss birthday auction. I am absolutely honored to write this as (a) a truly incredible person won this piece (b) it's for a great cause. My deepest, most sincere thanks for your generosity and support of the LLGS!
“Ridiculous. Don’t embarrass yourself, Holmes. Well, don’t embarrass yourself further, is more accurate.”

“I have no idea to what you are referring. Nor, do I think do you, contenting yourself, rather, with the notably inbred and disharmonic sound of your voice floating into your pachydermesque ears.”

“Pfft. If you believe for one moment that we take your assertion as fact, then you are profoundly stupid.”

“Think what you will, however, you will feel the fool when I arrive and you are forced to eat your poorly-chosen words without the benefit of condiment or utensil.”

“Holmes… it is pitiful enough you must suffer life as a poof, but as a blowhard, as well? I sincerely doubt your family will be able to tolerate that degree of disgrace. I hope your bags are packed, for I expect a long voyage out of range of polite society is in your near future.”

“And still the bleating continues. However, we shall see what we shall see. Now, if you will excuse me, I believe it is time for my Latin lesson.”

Mycroft strolled off, leaving the gaggle of his peers behind him, making very certain he did not acknowledge their audible whispers with a backwards glance. Once he turned the corner, however, he allowed himself to scurry into an empty classroom and have his mental breakdown in peace.

WHAT WAS HE THINKING! Was he deranged? It… he did not even want to attend the dance! It was an insipid event and he abhorred every possible thing associated with it! Yet… that preposterous insect, Bascomb and his squadron of sycophants… hearing the trumpeting of their plans to attend with the obviously mentally-diseased females who had agreed to serve as their companions… the sneered question as to his own attendance was simply too… what was wrong with him! Never had he fallen prey to their goading and infantile insults. Now, he had declared that not only would he attend the dance, but with his boyfriend… his boyfriend! He who could not, to date, even claim a single romantic assignation for his record! This was disastrous!

Mycroft kicked at the wall and, after he stopped cursing because of the pain, crept out of the room and dashed towards his class. Enough of this nonsense. He was a Holmes and a Holmes did not panic. A Holmes planned and persevered. Considered and conquered. He would emerge victorious and show the feeble-minded knuckle-draggers who roamed these halls that a person of his quality could have on their arm the most scintillating, breathtaking, virile, cunning and clever person in existence. Now… he just had to meet a person beside the knuckle-draggers to make a start on his campaign…

“Oh look, The Emperor of Edibles. Make way, John, for Mycroft needs a good league of floor space to comfortably fit his gargantuan bulk.”

And, as an additional thorn in his side, Sherlock simply had to be home with the one person he knew besides his own school’s knuckle-draggers. Flaunting his social triumph in such an unseemly manner was certainly not proper.

“Thank you, Sherlock. Your greeting warms my heart, as always. And John, good day to you.”
“Hi, Mycroft. Sherlock’s helping me with my science homework.”

“I see. And why do you not have any paper or pencil… or book… in front of you, but Sherlock is well-provided with all?”

“Well…”

“Helping is not synonymous with doing, John Watson. Sherlock, return John’s work to him.”

“It shall take him a fortnight! If I leave John to his own devices, he cannot manage the addition of two single-digit numbers, let alone coalesce the relevant anatomical features of Class Mammalia into a coherent essay!”

“Hey!”

“Be silent, marmoset. We have much to do today and Mycroft must not be allowed to interfere with our agenda.”

This did not sound good.

“May I inquire as to the items on said agenda?”

“No. It is information not for your ears.”

“Yeah, sorry Mycroft, but not for your ears.”

“Then scribe your itinerary on a piece of paper and my ears shall not factor in the communication of information.”

The double snorts were difficult to ignore, but Mycroft held back his laughter in order to maintain a reasonably stern countenance. After all, any set agenda involving Sherlock and John was especially needful of close inspection.

“I’m afraid I must insist. And, in any case, it might be that my assistance would prove useful to your endeavors.”

“That could be true, Sherlock. After all, Mycroft can drive a car and we need to be driven into the village. Your driver doesn’t take us to get sweets or chips afterwards, either, but Mycroft might if we ask him very nicely.”

Hmmm… Driver was aware of the boys’ plans, which, apparently, were not unique for them, but steadfastly ignored their incessant clamoring for non-nutritious food items. So… the scales remained fairly balanced. And, now he had a mechanism for prying open his brother and John for more detail.

“It is not impossible that I might be swayed into some form of post-activity indulgence.”

Two boys glaring was nearly as adorable a two boys snorting in contempt and Mycroft held his aloof demeanor until Sherlock waved his hand dismissively and commanded him to prepare a car for their use. At the very least, this would be some meagre diversion from the havoc he had wrought on himself. At most, it might actually be entertaining.

Breaking and entering was certainly not entertaining.
“This is both illegal and immoral and if you and John have previously perpetrated this crime, I am terribly ashamed of your behavior.”

The fact that there was a small ladder hidden behind the rubbish bins for the boys to use and what appeared to be a compromised lock for the window of the empty shop stood in bleak testimony to the fact that shame was most suitably warranted, but, as expected, not felt by its intended targets.

“Your entanglement in the tendrils of ethical minutiae is completely boring.”

“Yeah, boring.”

“You are attempting to burglarize a place of business!”

“Not burglarize, Mycroft… use. And it’s only an empty shop, so what’s the problem?”

“The problem, John, is a somewhat inadequate description of the situation. First, there is the illegality of the situation, which could land you before the magistrates. Second, there is the unseemliness of desecrating property that is not yours to possess. Thirdly, this is not what one would consider, in any manner, a safe situation. The shop could have been abandoned for structural issues or a pest infestation. And, as it seems you have perpetrated this offense in the past, you may have been observed by an individual or individuals who might have unsavory intentions towards you and enact them at any time. Fourthly…”

“Cease your list preparation, dirigible. I am taking each of your perfunctory agenda bullets squarely in the bladder and it is creating a situation that I feel you will not be content to witness me remediing.”

“Don’t worry, Mycroft. The toilet still works, so it won’t be so bad.”

Before he could mount a response, the two boys darted up the ladder and through the shop window, forcing Mycroft to climb after them, though, he was loathe to admit, not as agilely as the younger pair. Once inside, he found, to some degree of relief, that the shop did not seem to specialize in anything that was immediately harmful to the small burglars. In fact, he was hard-pressed to decide, at all, what was the shop’s purpose before it was abandoned.

“May I ask why you have taken to subjecting this establishment to criminal actions?”

“It’s fun! There’s lots to explore and it’s like we have our own secret place to play in.”

“And there is every indication that this shop housed a practitioner of the Dark Arts and that is an area I am not averse to investigating. The concept, of course, is ludicrous, however, science demands evidence and I intend to gather every piece of evidence I can for this particular matter.”

Oh joy… the boys believed they had found a witch’s shop. Though, it was far more likely that it was one of the rather seedy businesses that purported to purvey magical trinkets while they distributed illicit substances behind the counter.

“Be that as it may, I must still object to this activity and I feel it is best that we leave the premises without further insult. We can, if you like, turn the unused gamekeeper’s cottage on our estate into…”

“And assault our senses with the scent of servitude and animal pelts? Nay! Now, go and wait in the car as Driver does. We shall inform you when we are ready to depart.”

“No… I think not, brother dear. If I cannot convince you to leave of your own accord, then I
“That’s not fair, Mycroft! This is Sherlock’s and my secret place. You can’t just stay here and make it un-secret!”

“Since our driver and, now, I have knowledge of your skullduggery, I would say your secret died long ago.”

“Enough! John and I are now, officially, ignoring you and will continue to do so until you again become useful. Come, John. We have work to do.”

Mycroft’s farewell was two noses in the air as the boysstormed off to begin pulling various items out of a cabinet affixed to the far wall. A cursory glance satisfied the older Holmes that nothing lethal or intoxicating was in the pile that was forming, so he turned his attention towards gaining a better idea of the environment and whether he should ban the children entirely from their play or investigate the ownership of the property and see it become part of his family’s holdings.

Looking more closely at the remaining shop contents, Mycroft had to admit that it all appeared benign. A sparse selection of books, various cheaply-constructed items which, he assumed, were sold as rare and powerful magical artifacts, bits of cloth with arcane and, undoubtedly, nonsensical sigils and runes… nothing, however, to worry him unduly. And, despite its empty state, the building seemed to be in good repair, so there was little chance that the boys would fall through rotted floorboards. Seeing said boys intent on whatever experiment Sherlock was concocting, Mycroft browsed again through the books scattered among shelves, drawers and cabinets, finally drawing a heavy leather-bound tome from a high shelf and took a moment to settle in to wait for his brother’s inevitable boredom to arrive and the demand for a new activity to be screeched into the air.

Ah… how amusing. A book of incantations and rituals. It was a fortunate thing that he was fairly fluent in various languages, living and dead, so the author’s use of several of the latter posed no roadblock to his comprehension. Actually, he was somewhat impressed by the attention to detail used in the book’s construction. The pages seemed legitimately aged, the illustrations were notably well-done, the book’s boards and bindings were appropriate for something purporting to be an aged volume of magical lore. Either it was a very clever fake or the shop’s owner had stumbled across something legitimately antique. And heartily amusing. If he was of a frivolous mind, he might actually enunciate the incantation for producing sleep to see if that would earn him a little additional protection from Sherlock’s strident and theatrical proclamations.

After two hours of child minding and enduring the stuffiness in the air, Mycroft announced an end to their outing, but wisely proposed a short stop for a late-afternoon nibble that took the venom out of Sherlock and John’s protestations. As the two boys replaced their treasures, Mycroft took one final look around the space and decided that purchasing the building was not unreasonable for the amount of joy the children took from their games. And, of course, it could be rented once the luster of the experience waned and the family could earn a good penny from a well-managed business occupying the space.

Setting down his book, Mycroft stopped, thought, and again picked it up, carrying it with him to the car, using the door to exit the building this time, instead of the window. It was not stealing, he told himself, since the item had been effectively discarded by its previous owner and they would be buying the shop and contents, anyway. It was, perhaps, a silly urge, but the book was something different from his standard fare and offered a small measure of entertainment, which later would be enjoyed with a glass of good brandy and a roaring fire once they finally returned home.
Chapter 2

John and Sherlock merrily engaged in a film, the staff tending their own duties, the library free for his personal use and using it he was. His brandy, fire and book evening was officially underway and there was a calm settling into his bones that he had not experienced since before his mountainous lie at school. Perhaps there was a spell in here that prevented one from ever again telling an untruth. No, that would not do. Sometimes lies were very useful things, the exception being when one fabricated a paramour to escort one to a dance to celebrate the season of procreation. How utterly ghastly. The season of mud was a better descriptor. And, in any case, it was not as if he had enjoyed even a single opportunity to celebrate the mechanics of procreative or non-procreative physical acts. Not that it bothered him… much… it was just… he wouldn’t necessarily turn away the right situation for such a celebration. A handsome, intelligent, witty, strong, virile situation would find eager welcome in his lonely arms…

Ah… just the ticket for it. A summoning spell for an incubus. They were supposed to be comely, were they not? And virile. Enthusiastically, so, at that. For a single night, the intelligent and witty specifications could be ignored, since the primary actions of the evening would not involve significant amounts of conversation. And this one was not even very difficult compared to others he had read in his new book. A few words delivered in a masterful tone and…

“Oh… hello.”

… and he had obviously indulged in too much brandy and fallen asleep since there was no other explanation for the very green and nearly naked figure standing by the fire waving cheerfully at him.

“Dear me, I had not realized my tolerance for alcohol was quite so low.”

“Having a bit of a drink, are you? Want to share? Looks like you’ve got a cozy place here…”

Mycroft watched his dream stroll around the room, the small cloth around his midsection doing a very poor job of hiding the delectable assets it was attempting to cover.

“I… well, this is the first time I’ve experienced a lucid dream, however…”

“You think you’re dreaming? Well, that explains a few things. Not even a summoning circle on the floor to pen me in. I thought you might be a little new to all of this, but it’s ok. You got lucky and your spell found me instead of someone truly awful. What were you trying to call, anyway?”

Now, the imaginary… person… was sitting next to him, plucking the book out of his fingers and giggling wickedly, with a noticeable gleam in his… amethyst… eyes.

“An incubus, huh? Can’t say I’m surprised, since this room is all set for a touch of romance, but, let me tell you, you’re doubly lucky you didn’t get one of that lot. They’re fun, sure… spent many a fabulous night with one of them or their sisters, but they don’t like humans very much. Make you pay dearly for their favors and it’s not a cost you want to see in this lifetime. You said part this with an ‘a’ like in cat, didn’t you, and not bay. Basic spell is just a general demon summoning, but what you put right there says what to call up. Say it wrong, even a little, and it’s a wheel of fortune as to who you get. Could have been one of those miserable grunts that smashes up everything the second they get a chance, so count your blessings. Anyway, my name’s…”

Mycroft’s ears nearly bled from the stream of consonants that flowed out of the creature’s mouth and wondered if his unfortunately-not-sleeping self could benefit from another brandy or five.
“… but I know that’s a tongue-tangler for your kind, so you can call me Greg. Once, I was called by someone like you, though not exactly like you because he was sort of old and had small eyes that squinted a lot, but he had a terrible time with my name and settled on that, instead. I’d say it fits me well, don’t you? Unless they don’t use that name anymore. It’s been awhile since I’ve been here.”

He was quite certain that he did not reach out a finger to touch the tail that was twitching its way towards the brandy bottle on the table by the sofa, but Mycroft felt the demon’s merry laugh deep in places he didn’t care to mention, especially to this example of polite society.

“I am real, if that’s what you’re wondering. You’re not sleeping or drunk or had a knock to the head. You summoned me up and now… well, now I’m a little lost because you didn’t cage me so we could negotiate for what you want or hit me with a binding spell to make me obey your commands. But, you seem nice enough, and are definitely easy on the eyes, so I’m sure we can think of some good way to pass the time. You know, an incubus isn’t the only one who can put stars in your eyes…”

Now that pesky tail was twitching towards something else and Mycroft had a surprising surge of modesty rise up and took the brash appendage between two fingers to set it back down next to its owner.

“I have no doubt that you could. Forgive me, but this is all very new and… I cannot easily accept that you are, as you have said, something other than a figment of my imagination.”

“You weren’t actually trying to summon me, were you?”

“No, I was not. In a sense, I suppose I was, in that I knowingly uttered the words on the page, however, I did not for a moment believe they had any real power. In truth, I still do not.”

“You don’t seem very upset about it, though. I would have thought that if you really didn’t believe in magic, you’d be a little more… off in the head.”

Yes, that was strange, but if there was a defining feature of the Holmes blood it was the ability to remain calm and in control for all situations. Even those that defied all principles of acknowledged reality.

“I agree and have no satisfying answer to give you. Are you… disappointed in my lack of reaction?”

Not that this infernal creature’s opinion was in the slightest bit important to him. At all. Ever. Though if the beast shifted position on the sofa again so the light of the fire danced across his lightly-muscled frame the situation might change.

“No, I was just curious. Actually, it’s sort of nice not to be brought over for something that’s going to hurt me or someone else. There are some right bastards running about, let me assure you of that, and more than a few get their hands on that spell or one like it. Are you sure there’s nothing you want me to do? I mean, I’m already here, so why not take advantage of it.”

Don’t wink at me, evil thing. I shall not slake my lusts with your breathtaking body because… because of a reason concerting propriety that I will at some point be able to articulate. However…

“For how long are you here?”

“How long do you want me to be here? You’re the summoner and you’re the one who’ll send me back when you’re done with me.”
“Can you… could I return you home and then bring you back?”

“You could… just put my name, my real name, right where you mucked up the pronunciation and it’ll direct the spell at me personally, but why would you want to do that?”

“For the reason… there is only one thing for which I can imagine I might desire your assistance and it does not occur for several more weeks. I am certain you would prefer to spend that time in your own home with your…”

“And you’d be wrong. I like it here, actually. Not as hot and it’s a lot more fun. It’s been a pity that I haven’t had more time here to really enjoy myself, so I’m happy to get the chance. Point me to a corner to sleep in and you’ll never know I’m here… unless you want to, of course.”

Leering is hereby banned, in addition to winking, foul fiend.

“I believe the house staff will not be as placid as I when confronted with your appearance.”

“That’s easily fixed.”

Sitting next to Mycroft was now a young man with rich brown hair and equally luscious eyes, sporting the same strong form as he wore before, minus the green skin, tail and points on his ears.

“Oh… that is to say… oh.”

“Like what you see? Nah, don’t bother answering, your eyes are doing it for you. So, can I have my corner now?”

“I… you truly wish to remain here? It will be some time before the dance and…”

“A dance! I LOVE to dance! Come here…”

Mycroft was lifted off the sofa and into the arms of his new acquaintance to be waltzed around the library, feeling only a small amount of shame from melting into the demon’s embrace and breathing in his spicy, yet welcoming, scent.

“You’re a brilliant dancer… you know, I don’t even know your name.”

“Mycroft. Mycroft Holmes.”

“Oh, I like that. It’s a very sexy name, which is appropriate, since you’re a very sexy man. And you are a brilliant dancer. I’m glad you still waltz, though I’m sure I’ll have to learn other dances so I don’t look a fool when I spin you around the dance floor.”

Other dances… yes, there was that. Time to investigate what was going on in the world of dance that he might be required to demonstrate beyond what his dance instructor had been diligently teaching him. Many of those particular dances likely went out of fashion during Victoria’s reign.

“I am certain you will not look a fool, regardless of your proficiency with dancing.”

“Well, that’s very nice of you to say. Very nice, indeed. I like nice. Nice is good.”

A slight peek of amethyst lit the demon’s eyes and Mycroft found himself allowing the slight roaming of hands across his back and leaned forward when his dance partner tilted his head upwards to entice him into...

“AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! There’s a green
man trying to eat Mycroft!”

John’s hysteria more than made up for Mycroft’s lack of it and the demon found himself on the ground, being pummeled by tiny fits, while John yelled for Mycroft and Sherlock to run away. Instead, Sherlock stood frozen in shock at his friend’s loss of control and it fell to Mycroft to pull John off of the demon who was starting to laugh at the boy’s attempt at thrashing.

“Good heavens, John. Have you lost your senses?”

“He’s green! And has a tail!”

“Mycroft, call for our personal physician immediately. John has contracted some form of debilitating illness that has devastated his brain!”

“Nah, this little one’s fine. Mycroft, lean him this way. Is that… wormwood I smell on you?”

Mycroft’s shocked gasp made Greg laugh again and grab John for a hug, which made the small boy scream in terror.

“Get some of that stuff in you and my bit of illusion doesn’t work so well anymore. Shame on you drinking absinthe, little one. It’ll stunt your growth and you really can’t afford that, now can you?”

“John Watson! Did you get into Father’s drinks cupboard?”

“Sher… Sherlock made me! He wanted to investigate if absinthe really made you crazy.”

“And you permitted it? I think we need to engage in a discussion about your sense of self-preservation, young man.”

“WAIT!!!!!!!!!!!”

All eyes turned towards Sherlock who was vibrating like a reed in a strong gale and pointing an imperious finger at the man still on the floor.

“Why does John Watson say you are green?”

One quick shrug of the shoulders and Sherlock had the evidence to weigh for himself.

“YOU ARE GREEN!”

“AND HE HAS A TAIL AND PURPLE EYES AND ALIEN EARS! AND HE’S ALMOST NAKED!”

“PRESENT YOUR TEETH FOR INSPECTION IMMEDIATELY!”

Sherlock launched forward and tried to pry open the mouth of the demon who decided it was easier to comply than resist.

“Boring. They should, at least, be sharp but these are no more ferocious than those of a pensioner’s.”

John pulled Sherlock back and stood between him and Greg, glaring his most intimidating glare at the demon to protect his friend.

“Now, there’s a fierce warrior if I’ve ever seen one. Sorry about the teeth, lad. But, I do have a
few surprises left that I’ll show you one day. I’ll be here awhile, so we’ll have lots of chances to get

to know one another.”

“No! He’s evil and was trying to eat Mycroft! We need to call the police!”

John started towards the phone, but realized quickly he was going nowhere fast.

“I’M CAPTURED!”

“Gregory, are you affecting some form of magic on young John?”

“Just a bit. And, for your information, John, I wasn’t trying to eat Mycroft. At least… not in a

way you’d understand…”

Mycroft hoped the hot rush he felt on his cheeks wasn’t coloring him as brightly as their guest.

“… we were just having a nice dance and maybe, if you hadn’t broken the mood, a bit of a

pleasurable attention. Now, if I get off the floor, are you going to have another go at me?”

“Are you… if you try to hurt my friends, I’ll do more than give you a punch.”

“Fair enough.”

In a moment, Mycroft again had a warm body standing near him and pointedly ignored that, in his

natural form, Gregory was just as intoxicating and when he wore a human face.

“See? Not eating anyone. And, just so you know, people really don’t taste very good unless

you cook them just right and add a little seasoning. I mean if you’re really hungry, anything will do

of course, but…”

“Gregory, do behave yourself. You are working Sherlock into a state of investigative

anticipation and I will not approve for him any experiments involving cannibalism.”

The younger Holmes disappointment was loudly expressed and John patted his friend on the back in

commiseration.

“Alright, just trying to be helpful. I can tell the little ones have a lot of questions, though, which

is good and I’m happy to answer any of them. See, Mycroft? It’ll be good to have me here! I can

play with these two during the day and you and I can dance at night. Maybe do some other things at

night, too, if you take my meaning.”

Well, it was certainly not the time nor place to argue those particular points… not that an argument

was, in any manner, leaping to his

lips…

“Oh… the creature is now assaulting my ears as well as my eyes with his carnality. Find the

beast some clothing and a gag before I am insentient from his inability to conduct himself with even a

modicum of decorum.”

“Hey, the name’s Greg, if you’d be so kind. And the more proper term is demon, in your

language. Anyway, what’s wrong with carnality? That’s how you got made, don’t forget.”

“Appalling. But, demon? I see… Mycroft, you are a bounder.”

“Oh? And why, pray tell, brother dear?”

“You found a summoning rite in John and my secret base of operations, didn’t you? And,
knowing full well my research interests in the material therein, you chose to hide this from me. Hence, you are a completely unscrupulous bounder.”

“That’s true! You should have gotten Sherlock and me to be there when you did it so Sherlock could collect data! Bounder!”

“I think they’ve got you there.”

“Thank you, Gregory, your input is not required.”

“You won’t be saying that later on when my input is what you’re sweaty and begging for.”

John slammed his hands over Sherlock’s ears as the dark-haired boy pronounced the demon a despicable lecher and Mycroft took the opportunity the distraction offered to calm his rapidly heating blood. Definitely time for more brandy.

“Ooh, can I have one? I do enjoy a drink in the evening and I’d wager that whatever you have is something I’m going to like.”

“John, make note that he lecherous demon consumes alcohol.”

“Right!”

John pulled a small notepad out of his pocket and began scribbling furiously.

“And is still indecently clothed.”

“Note made!”

Mycroft sighed and poured two snifters of brandy, handing one to the demon standing close and smiling hopefully.

“Thanks! And… I was right. This is fantastic! Perfect for a night like this. So, what are we going to do now?”

“You will submit yourself to all of avenues of my scientific inquiry!”

Mycroft took a long sip of his drink and wondered about the likelihood of him going mad before the dance arrived and rendering all of his worries meaningless.

“Sherlock, Gregory is not a test subject for one of your experiments. However… I suppose it would not be amiss, given the circumstances, and Gregory’s willingness to open himself to questions, for you to collect information while he and I indulge in our brandy.”

Sherlock and John quickly settled on the rug in front of the fire, with John holding his notebook ready to record Greg’s responses.

“We will begin now. And I expect full disclosure on any topic I might choose to pursue.”

Mycroft nodded for their guest to take a seat on the sofa and chivalrously provided him with a blanket for his lap to help stave off the chill. And the children’s line-of-sight view of the demon’s unmentionables. Which were certainly worth mentioning, at least, in his mind. In the dark. In bed. With a bit of high-quality lubricant for company.
“So, where am I sleeping? I don’t mind sharing if you’ve got a bed big enough.”

The wickedness of the demon’s grin was absolutely despicable. And made his knees water very upsettingly.

“I believe we can find a bedroom you would deem appropriate.”

“I think yours would be very appropriate, actually.”

“It is eminently suitable for one, however, a double occupancy might strain its comfort. Here, this room is across from mine and next to Sherlock’s.”

Mycroft pushed open the door and experienced no surprise when the demon launched forward to fling himself on the bed to see how high he would bounce. And no, it was not honorable that he failed to avert his eyes from the rather prominent exposure of some exceedingly… stimulating… anatomical parts, but it was late and he could be forgiven the completely fatigued-based lapse of manners.

“This is brilliant!”

Yes, roll about and… dear lord, do not raise your legs and wave them about in the air. Oh, very well… if you simply must…

“I take it you find the bed comfortable?”

“You have no idea what I usually have to sleep on. This is the most fantastic bed in all the universes!”

“Pardon me… but did you say all the universes?”

“Sure! There’s lots. Not all of them are very interesting, but it’s a lark now and then to go exploring to see what I can find. Usually, it’s just something that leaves a rash, but you never know!”

Yes, this day was officially overloaded with both information and sensation and now it was time to turn off his body and mind and try to clear the slate for tomorrow’s onslaught of surrealism.

“Now, why don’t you come over here and we can pick up where we left off when the little ones interrupted us?”

Lying on your stomach with your spectacular buttocks exposed for my viewing is not going to sway me to your debauchery, hellspawn. Even with that insidiously saucy flicking of your tail.

“It is as firm as it looks. Want to come and check?”

Hell. Spawn.

“I presume you will be joining us for breakfast?”

“Food! I never turn down an offer of food, especially when I know it’s going to be good. Good food, good drink… good man who likes the sight of my bum. This is the best summoning I’ve ever had!”
It is utterly crass to make mention of my accidentally wandering eyes, you villainous blackguard.

“Very well. Then, I shall see you in the morning.”

“What? No! You don’t mean to go to sleep now? There’s still plenty of night left, right? Actually, I don’t know what time it is, but it doesn’t feel like dawn is coming, so there’s still plenty of time to have a little chat. And maybe a cuddle.”

“Unlike you, I must steward Sherlock and, since he is spending the night with us, young John through their morning routine so that they, as well as I, may arrive at school on time.”

“I can help with that! Whatever that is, I can absolutely help. And I’ll come with you to school, too, so you have someone to talk to if things get boring.”

“No, that will not be possible. You will remain here and find a non-destructive way to amuse yourself until I return.”

“But that’s no fun! I mean I can have fun on my own, but it’s not nearly as much fun as what I can have if you’re here.”

“Your sacrifice will be duly noted.”

“Please…”

How could such a decadent creature evince the most pleading and needful eyes and why would such a ridiculous thing shoot straight to his heart?

“I shall make you this bargain. Tomorrow, I must attend school for I have matters that require my timely attention…”

And, a lack of attendance would surely be interpreted by the knuckle-draggers as proof of shame and lack of escort for the dance.

“… however, since Mummy and Father are abroad, it is not a difficult matter for me to remain home with you the following day. Will that be acceptable?”

“Can’t the little ones stay home tomorrow?”

“You would deny them their opportunity for education?”

Such a precious… no, wait… petulant pout.

“No… learning is important.”

“Then we are agreed. You will entertain yourself for the scant few hours that we are at school and I will provide companionship for you the subsequent day.”

“And we’ll have a good time tomorrow night, right? Maybe more brandy… oh! Are there taverns nearby? I love a good evening at a tavern.”

“I believe public houses do exist in the nearby village, however…”

“Super! Then we’ll pay them a visit and have a spot of brandy or beer or whisky or whatever they have on offer. Pretty serving girls? Or boys?”

There should be no internal sourness brewing over the question because he was not, in any manner,
feeling a stab of jealousy at the question. That was utterly ludicrous.

“I have no idea. I am certain you will duly inform me if you find them comely should we debase ourselves by setting foot in one of the bedraggled establishments.”

No, do not smile at me in that knowing fashion.

“Bit testy, are we? You know that no one in there is going to be as gorgeous as you, don’t you? Not possible. Can’t happen.”

Hmmm… compliments were obviously a natural antacid. A useful bit of information to store away…

“It truly does not concern me.”

“It truly does, and those pretty pink cheeks of yours tell me you know it as well as I do. Come here and let me feel how hot they’re getting.”

Horrid man.

“Goodnight, Gregory. I do hope you sleep well.”

“I’d sleep better if you stayed here with me.”

“Then, at least, sleep marginally well.”

Mycroft would not, at all, call his escape from the room a retreat, but one does what one must against the enemy. Though Gregory could not precisely be called the enemy. From the world of film, however, the antagonist was generally the more striking and his Gregory was certainly an incredibly striking individual. Not that ‘his’ was, in any manner, appropriately applied in this case. Tired… very, very tired… and the morning would come very, very early…

Why couldn’t all dreams be this delightful? Generally, his dreams were of the most banal variety, however, this one… curled around a deliciously warm body, strong hands gently stroking his skin, the soft glint of the morning sun off of green… green!

“Gregory!”

“Good morning!”

“What are you… why are you in my bed?”

“Because it’s warm and you’re in it.”

“Gregory… we discussed this.”

“Actually, I’m not sure we did, but feel free to start now and I’ll keep you company while you do.”

“You are an unapologetic degenerate.”

“That’s not true! I make sure to apologize right away if I do something daft, like kneel on someone’s hair or sneeze when I’m giving them a bl…”
“Thank you! I stand corrected. And… keep your tail on your side of the mattress, if you would be so kind.”

“Well, since we’re both sort of on the same side of the mattress, I’ll say you’re talking rubbish and let him go about his business.”

“If we are to quibble semantics, then let me ask that you keep said tail on your side of the demarcation line between my person and yours.”

“You know… if I lay on top of you, that line gets a bit blurred and…”

“I am now rising for the morning. Do me the courtesy of not attempting to intrude upon my morning ablutions as you have my repose.”

“What did any of that mean?”

“Do not spy on me in the shower.”

“See! Now, that’s something I can understand. But, I really think you should change your mind because if all bits of you are… extended… they’re a lot easier to wash, don’t you think?”

“Goodbye, Gregory. Why don’t you rouse the children and help them begin their day?”

“Ok… if I can’t have an eyeful of lusciousness in the morning, then that’ll have to do.”

Well, he didn’t have to vault out of bed quite so eagerly, did he? Fickle demon. And, for his information, all relevant bits were already… extended. Luckily, that extension was pressed uselessly against the decidedly non-muscular mattress and impossible to discern by even the most cheeky of demons.

__________

Oh, dear lord…

“Hi, Mycroft! Look! I’m on the ceiling!”

And he was. John was walking around the ceiling of Sherlock’s bedroom much like a housefly and Sherlock, himself, was promenading along the walls.

“Yes, so I observe. And is there a reason we are not preparing ourselves for school?”

“We’re already ready. We’re in our uniforms, we’ve used the toilet and…”

“The specifics are decidedly unnecessary, thank you. I suppose, then, you are ready for breakfast?”

“Hurray! Greg, it’s time for breakfast!”

Mycroft tried using his most somber countenance to cow the grinning green demon, but wasn’t terribly astounded when it failed utterly.

“Food! That sounds good to me. Sherlock, you want food?”

“No.”

“Want me to open that window so you can do some walking on the outside of the house?”
“Yes.”

“Ok. Hold on a moment…”

“Absolutely not! Gregory, you will not contribute further to the children’s already legendary level of delinquency. Now, please deposit Sherlock and John safely on the floor and… we must find for you something more suitable to wear to the dining room.”

John and Sherlock serenaded Mycroft with a raucous duet of rude noises as they were magically lowered to the floor and Mycroft rolled his eyes at the green terror’s pitiful attempts to smooth John’s disarrayed hair.

“Don’t they look handsome?”

Sherlock snorted, but John looked very eager to hear Mycroft’s verdict.

“Their presentation is quite pleasing to the eye. Sherlock, please escort John… no, how silly of me… John, please escort Sherlock to the dining room and begin serving yourselves. Gregory and I will follow shortly.”

John grabbed Sherlock’s hand and dragged him along out of the room, leaving Mycroft to sigh heavily and furrow his brow at his guest.

“On the ceiling, Gregory?”

“Why not? They’d done all they had to, so why not have a little fun? And it’s not like I changed them into monkeys or something and let them scamper about in those trees out there. Come on, what’s wrong with a little playtime in the morning?”

“That sounds painful. Definitely need a little fun if you’ve got to suffer that day in and day out.”

Deciding that retreat was the better part of valor, Mycroft crooked a finger and motioned the demon to follow, breathing in sturdily for strength as they entered his bedroom.

“Now, do not attempt to entice me into any dalliances while we find your garments.”

“Yes.

“No, that is simply preposterous.”

“Your lips do lovely things when you make ‘p’ sounds. Do it again.”

“Behave, you pestilent person.”

“Really, just lovely.”

“Stop staring at my lips. And NO! Do not stare at my manhood, instead.”

“Can’t help it. I’m a great admirer of fine art.”

And the scoundrel believed he was not an incubus.
“Be that as it may, we must dress you and that shall not happen with continuous distraction. Wait here and I shall… my bed is not a trampoline!”

Mycroft took heart that his bed was made of very sturdy stuff and handily shifted the demon’s focus so that he might rummage through his wardrobe for items that had at least some small chance of fitting his guest’s more… solid… form.

“Here. I do believe these will suit you. NO! Do not undress in here. Have you no modesty?”

“Not really, but I can maintain the mystery until you’re ready to get better acquainted. Which is going to be soon, just you watch.”

Mycroft ignored the flirty swish of the fiend’s bottom as it followed its owner into the dressing room and he waited patiently for the demon to again emerge. Which was taking a very long time…

“Gregory, are you alright?”

“Yep.”

“Do you… require assistance?”

“If I said yes, you’d think I’d meant something filthy, wouldn’t you.”

“I… I admit I might.”

“And you’d be right! But, I’ve got this, just give me a minute.”

Another long moment and Mycroft decided that a quick peek to assess the situation was not amiss.

“Oh…”

“Someone couldn’t wait, could he? Well, that’s ok… I don’t mind finishing with an audience.”

Apparently the clothing he had chosen had not passed muster and the rogue had replaced them with items of his own choosing, specifically a crisp, white dress shirt that had been left unbuttoned down to the chest and kept untucked from the dark grey trousers that clung lovingly to the creature’s thighs. His very human appearing thighs…

“These were a tad tight, but I coaxed a little cooperation from the fibers so I got a bit of extra room. I was looking through your shoes, but I don’t know if I really want any since I’ll be padding around the house all day. Might as well let my feet breathe, right?”

“I… I leave it to you to make that decision.”

“Then, no shoes it is! I’ll probably want some other clothes at some point, too, if I’m going to be here awhile. These don’t really allow a lot of room for motion, do they? Hard to dance or run or climb with any of this.”

“Which is to be expected, since I do not normally engage in those particular activities.”

“That’s part of your no-fun agenda, isn’t it? That’s ok, I’m making it my mission to show you how much fun fun can actually be!”

Right now, the fun portion of his day was being well-satisfied by watching his acquaintance dance to music only playing in his imagination. What a spectacular… no, correction… *infantile* man.
“Well, that can be a conversation for another day. Shall we? As it is, there is some likelihood that we shall be left with crumbs and crusts for our meal, for John does delight in a bountiful and well-prepared breakfast.”

“Good for him! Little one knows what’s important in this life. Food, fun, drink and other things he’ll learn about later. Come on, I’m so hungry I could eat a bear and I am NOT anxious to do that again.”

Mycroft shrieked as he was grabbed by the hand and made the second Holmes son to be dragged through the corridors of the house. He could only hope that the staff did not intercept their trajectory, as they would likely be run down like blades of grass…

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“This is amazing!”

“Yeah!”

Mycroft and Sherlock shook their heads at the exuberance of the other two at the table and shared a very empathetic glance.

“I am happy you are both pleased with your breakfast. But do hurry, John, for we must soon depart and you would not want to leave behind any especially palatable nibble.”

The small boy began shoveling the remaining contents of his plate into his mouth, which was something of a perpetual motion action because the demon continued to add food to replace what had already met it’s digestive fate.

“Gregory, John is not of goose descent, so kindly do not attempt him fatten him for our Christmas table.”

Both John and the demon looked devastated at the pronouncement and John made a very dramatic show of slowly and mournfully finishing what food still sat on his plate.

“Very good. Now, Gregory… I will inform the staff that you are the son of a business associate of Father’s so they will not question your presence. Do make all effort to give them no specific reason to call your identity into question.”

“I won’t. Don’t want to feel a boot to my bum just when I’m settling in. Can I borrow some of those books I saw? I know you’d have your head explode if I ran and climbed and danced, so how about some reading to pass the time?”

Now, that was a blessed relief.

“You are most welcome to enjoy whatever the library provides. And I shall demonstrate the use of both the television and the radio for your entertainment. Sherlock, John, please retrieve your schoolbags and meet me in the car. I shall only be a moment.”

The two boys groaned loudly, but followed Mycroft’s orders and, when the older pair was alone, Mycroft fixed the demon with a final simmering glare and motioned for him to follow, leading him for a quick tour of the house so that food and entertainment could be had at leisure.

“The staff is, of course, prepared to service your wishes, but be warned… our staff is used to very equitable and respectful treatment, Sherlock notwithstanding, and I will be most upset if I find you have abused their employment.”
“I wouldn’t do that! Good, honest work deserves respect. So… you’re going to be back this afternoon, right?”

“I shall and… I will be most happy to spend a collegial evening with you once scholastic matters have been tended to.”

“Ok, that sounds good. Have fun learning things, Mycroft!”

“I will endeavor to do so.”

Mycroft felt very nervous leaving the demon unsupervised, but trial by fire was a time-honored strategy. One could only hope his were not the fingers to be burned…
Chapter 4

House – standing. Grounds – not ablaze. Staff – not racing in terror from the still-standing house. Apparently, Gregory had not disrupted the universe too severely in their absence.

“Mycroft, I can stay with you tonight again, can’t I? Sherlock and I want to get started on our experiments with Greg.”

“My prohibition against human test-subjects remains in effect, I’m afraid.”

“The hell creature is not human, therefore, your ridiculous moratorium is moot.”

“Very well, Sherlock. Gregory shall, heretofore, be categorized as human for the purposes of scientific experimentation.”

“Intolerable! You cannot impose post-hoc conditions upon research! And entirely inaccurate ones, at that! The Nobel Prize Committee would thrash you within an inch of your worthless life for such a travesty. It would have little effect, since, of course, you have several elephants-worth of blubber protecting your vital organs, but my sense of justice would be satisfied, nonetheless.”

“Do you know when they shall arrive? I will have tea prepared.”

“Scurrilous swellhead.”

“I try my best. And, to return to your original question, John. If your parents give permission, you may stay the night again with us.”

“They will. They get to watch what they want on the telly and not have to spend time making sure I’ve done my studies or brushed my teeth.”

“Do not forget the intercourse. I am certain every surface of your hovel is now slathered in unmentionable fluids.”

Mycroft was lucky he’d exited the car and opened the rear door, so he was able to catch John as he died a quiet and mortified death, handily preventing the collision between window glass and child skull.

“Well done, Sherlock. You have paralyzed John.”

“His tender sensibilities will not compel me to self-censor!”

The older Holmes sibling picked up the small boy, along with his schoolbag and carried the lifeless form into the house, sighing loudly at the sight of the small parade of rabbits hopping into the library. Which, he found as he pushed the library door fully open, were actually late to the party.

“Mycroft!”

Thankful for the years of training his patience with Sherlock, Mycroft set John down, then pried one of the boy’s eyes open so he could see the spectacle and, more importantly, stand on his feet without falling over.

“RABBITS!”

Yes, rabbits. Verily two score scattered through the library, feasting on the banquet laid out for them
in… yes, Mummy’s antique Limoges dinnerware.

“Aren’t they brilliant? I found a few when I took a walk and collected a few more from here and there to visit with yours. We’ve had a great day!”

John immediately dropped onto the ground and began playing with his new friends and Sherlock wasn’t slow to follow, examining the rabbits with far more delicacy and care than Mycroft would have initially predicted.

“Gregory… you have filled the library with live animals.”

“Well, yes. Are your eyes bothering you or something?”

“Is this another salvo in your ‘fun’ campaign?”

“Well, not officially, but I guess you could say that. I mean… look! Sherlock and John are already have a great time!”

And, Mycroft refused to admit, they were. Sherlock had pulled his magnifying glass out of his schoolbag to closely investigate the detail of the rabbits’ features and John had placed several on his stomach and was giggling from the wriggling sensation as they settled on their new, warm cushion.

“Be that as it may, consider the unhygienic detritus that is now soiling the rug. And the floor. And… yes, they are quite happily enjoying the mahogany Georgian side chairs, aren’t they?”

“Oh yeah, that lot are a bit shy. Or tired. Or small. But they have their own cozy conversation group going, so it’s alright. Don’t worry about any mess either. I can take care of that easily enough so you won’t even know they were here. And… see! I made certain your space on the sofa was kept nice and clean so you can sit next to me and tell me all about your day.”

Patting the sofa in a very hopeful fashion was not going to turn the tide of Mycroft’s ire. At least not quickly. It would definitely hold fast for a solid five minutes of taciturn demeanor. Or three. Three should be a sufficient chastisement. And he would not favor the evil gremlin with any display of enjoyment of the comfortable sofa and distracted children after a long day at school.

“There you go. So, did you have a good day? Tell me all about it.”

Demonstrating interest in his day was not going to shorten the mandatory three minutes of diffidence. At least, not by any appreciable margin.

“It was a standard school day, nothing more.”

“Yeah, but what’s that like? You’re the smartest person there, aren’t you? Hope it’s not too boring, what with being the smartest and having to wait for all the dimmer people to catch up with what you’ve already learned.”

Demonstrating a highly insightful assessment of his school situation was also not going to shorten the mandatory three minutes of diffidence. Which was now two. Or perhaps one and a half.

“If pressed, I would admit that you have described the scenario quite succinctly, however, now and again, I am presented with some challenge in which I take an interest. An analysis of a current political situation or a particularly complicated mathematics problem.”

Which the teachers had learned to tuck away for those times when even his rigidly controlled behavior was showing signs of fraying due to boredom or frustration with the idiocy of his
“Yeah, I knew it. I could tell right away that you had a fantastic brain. Well, once some of the lust died down so I could see it more clearly.”

No, there was positively no fluttering of the heart and soothing of the nerves from the smallest glimpse of the rapscallion’s smile. Not a smidgen.

“Your single-mindedness is decidedly off-putting.”

“Try that again and make it sound sincere this time.”

“My breath is far too precious to waste. Now, will you do me the immense favor of returning your zoo to the various locations from which they were abducted so that the boys may focus upon their schoolwork? I do prefer to see it done before dinner, if possible.”

“What! No! Please, Mycroft, don’t make Greg send the rabbits away! They’re so cute!”

Of course, John’s speech was slightly muffled due to the rabbit who had found a comfortable resting place on the boy’s face.

“And I demand the opportunity to investigate their critical thinking skills with a classic maze experiment, as well as evaluate their speed, though I must first research what enticement would likely produce the most spirited reaction if held in front of them like steak before a hound.”

“You can’t dash those little ones’ hopes, Mycroft. Really, that would just be black-hearted.”

Very effective use of manipulation. Not unexpected, he supposed, for a villainous demon.

“Very well. Two rabbits may be maintained for the evening, but will be returned home in the same manner as their brethren before we retire for bed.”

The various plaintive wails and stentorian orations concerning the pitifully-small warren they were being allowed to maintain nearly broke Mycroft’s resolve, but the keen gaze of a particularly large and hungry rabbit towards the 14th-century tapestry than fell tantalizingly within reach of his incisors helped the only rational individual in the room to stand firm.

“Only two? But the little ones…”

“Shall each have one rabbit to claim as their own or to mingle for a cooperative venture. And, under no circumstances, will the presence of wild game in the house obviate the need for all schoolwork to be completed accurately, thoroughly and in a timely fashion.”

“Ooh, all that made my head hurt.”

“Be that as it may, that is the furthest I am willing to negotiate on the subject. Now, return the remainder from whence they came.”

“Now?”

“Have you not been listening to a single word I have uttered?”

“No… I mean yes, even though there were a lot of them.”

“Then, commence.”
“Ok, but this is going to take awhile.”

“No, I do not believe it will. I’m certain you shall affect some form of prestidigitation to do the deed, so kindly speak your incantation or perform the necessary hand gestures, but I expect to see two, and only two, rabbits in my library before I ring for the staff to bring our afternoon refreshment.”

“Really?”

“Do I appear as if I am joshing?”

“No… no you don’t. Alright… here we go…”

The demon closed his eyes and Mycroft caught a flash of both tension and green crossing his face before a… thickness… infiltrated the room and, without a sound… all the rabbits in the room vanished except the one in Sherlock’s hands and the specimen still sitting on John’s face.

“Thank you, Gregory. Now, if you would… GREGORY!”

Mycroft made his second grab of a collapsing form for the afternoon and gently laid the demon on the sofa, making rather sickening notice of the shallowness of his breathing and the complete lack of response to any stimulus.

“Mycroft! What’s wrong?”

John’s voice sounded as panicked as the older boy felt as two rabbits were abandoned and the boys crowded near the sofa and stared at the unconscious body.

“I… I have no idea.”

“You bullied him and now he’s hurt!”

The boy might be small, Mycroft thought, but his punch was quite a formidable weapon.

“I did no such thing.”

“That is a flagrant lie!”

“Yeah, a lie!”

“You were utterly horrid and now he lies near death from your abuse! Why are you incapable of behaving in anything other than a supercilious and coldhearted fashion?”

The former statement was one which Mycroft was beginning to worry about quite seriously as the demon did not seem to be reviving with any rapidity. As to the latter… there was no time to ponder its validity at this point.

“I did not mean for this to happen, Sherlock, nor am I glad for it. You must believe that?”

From the two murderous glares he was receiving, Mycroft expected that the answer to his question was a resounding no. And, perhaps, it was merited. Looking back, he had been rather dictatorial and it was not the first time during his and the demon’s brief acquaintance…

“Very well. I will apologize to Gregory at my very first opportunity. Now, let us see if we can get him to his bedroom so that he can be comfortable. I have no doubt that, if he was conscious, he would be distressed since I believe his tail is quite caught in his trousers.”
Needless to say, the moment their guest lost consciousness, his natural appearance resurfaced and Mycroft could not imagine how that long and muscular tail was weathering being compressed in dress trousers.

“John, see if of the staff are in the vicinity. Sherlock, help me see him righted.”

John sped into the corridor to check if the coast was clear, leaving Mycroft and Sherlock to try and maneuver the surprisingly-heavy body upright and then into some position that might facilitate his transport.

“This is as unhelpful as stalk of celery to a hungry tiger!”

“I admit we are not bred for manual tasks, Sherlock, however, a Holmes does not shirk from a challenge.”

“A Holmes, also, does not port cargo like a Sherpa!”

Needs must, brother dear. Now, let us try this…”

With John on the lookout, Sherlock and Mycroft dragged the unconscious body through the corridor, Sherlock’s job mostly being to keep a pillow under the demon’s head to protect it from the hard marble floors. Cursing there was no lift in the gargantuan house, they then enlisted John’s help to enact a marginally-coordinated motion of arm-and-thigh lift to tackle one step at a time, all three using language for which they would be instantly and ferociously punished if it was heard by parental ears. It was a blessed relief when they reached the landing and the dragging could again begin. Of course, the quantity of wrestling to hoist the body into the bed was another herculean struggle.

“There… now, if you will excuse me, I shall divest Gregory of his clothing so that he might rest in greater comfort.”

“No! Sherlock and I are staying here to watch after Greg. You might toss him out the window if he wakes up and smiles or something.”

Sherlock nodded sagely and Mycroft scowled at the two diminutive doubters.

“Considering the amount of effort it required to get him into this bed, do you really believe it possible for me to toss him out of the window like a piece of notepaper?”

“So… the only reason you are not sealing his doom is your limitless laziness and pathetic physical condition. You are, again, a bounder, Mycroft.”

“Yeah, a bounder!”

Yes, sarcasm had been a poor choice of communication tactics.

“I have no intention of causing Gregory any… further… distress. Now, I am certain he would appreciate some privacy while I make him comfortable and I know the two of you will be happy to comply. A cool compress, perhaps, for his head? And a pitcher of water to keep by the bedside for when he awakes? Oh, and ask the staff to mind the rabbits until we can determine from whence they came and see them safely returned.”

“Alright, but Greg had better be here and in good shape when Sherlock and I get back or it’s another punch for you.”
Showing his fist to cement his point, John nodded to Sherlock and the two finally left the room, allowing Mycroft the opportunity to free the demon’s body from his shirt and trousers, hissing at the sight of just how badly the poor tail had been compressed by the waistband. It was almost enough to distract him from the beauty of the body that was laid out on the bed, modesty protected only by the pair of blue silk underpants he had, apparently, pilfered from Mycroft’s dressing room. The shade should clash with the demon’s skin, but it was, actually, a stunning blending of jewel tones that perfectly complemented the demon’s vibrant personality, as well as his tantalizing physique.

And he would apologize to Gregory. Profusely and sincerely. It was not the demon’s fault that he was a… demon. That he saw the world very differently and had a different order of priorities or… or that he was a breathtaking, scintillating creature who did rather frightening things to the libido of someone who was very lonely and finding they might not actually be as confident about sensual matters as they had anticipated. Especially… if they actually liked the subject of his desires.

Pulling the blankets over the demon, Mycroft tentatively took the creature’s vitals, realizing he had no idea what ‘normal’ should be for this species, then pulled a chair close to the bed to wait for Sherlock and John to return, so they could wait together.

Which didn’t take long, as the two boys barged into the room not a few moments later, laden with their burdens. John quickly, with some help, crawled onto the bed to put the cool cloth on Greg’s head and Sherlock set down the drinking water and began, as Mycroft had done, taking the pulse and monitoring the respiration of his patient.

“His condition has not improved. John, do you concur?”

John made his own grim-faced examination, adding in a bounty of hmmm’s and tut-tut’s for emphasis.

“I concur.”

“Mycroft…”

“Yes, I know. I am a bounder.”

“Precisely!”

“I concur, again!”

Mycroft sighed and settled in for what could be a very painful and noisy wait.

“And why not?”

“Sherlock… that book is entirely too dangerous to place in anyone’s hands, let alone yours.”

“Slander! There could be, this very instant, a spell which would free the demon from the grip of his malady and mine is the only intellect capable of finding and properly implementing it!”

“You shall not have access to the book of incantation, brother dear. Not for love or money. As we have witnessed, it is a powerful thing and not meant for casual, untrained use.”

“He’s right, little one. That thing is…ow… dangerous unless you know what you’re doing.”

Three loud gasps simply added to the demon’s headache as he slowly sat up in the bed and leaned
back against the headboard.

“Greg! You’re awake!”

“That I am, John. And, if you could shout just a little more quietly, I’d really appreciate it. My head’s feeling a bit poorly, I’m sad to say.”

“It is unsurprising, as Mycroft’s cruelty would spawn a myriad of health complaints in even the heartiest creature, of which you are surely not counted as a member. Here, consume water as you are likely dehydrated from the vitality-sapping effects of my brother’s toxic personality.”

Sherlock poured a glass of water and handed it to the demon, who drank it greedily.

“Oh, that’s good. Thanks. How… ummm… how long was I out?”

“Several hours I’m afraid. Gregory? Are you… are you experiencing any lingering effects from your episode beyond your headache?”

Mycroft hoped he didn’t sound as worried and ashamed as he feared, but, if he did… well, at least the feelings were honest.

“I’ll be fine. Just takes a lot out of me doing something big like that.”

“Given your previous demonstrations, I would not have predicted that returning the small creatures to their burrows would have drained you so.”

“If they’d not had to go so far, it wouldn’t have been as large a problem. But, I made sure everyone was put back right where I found them, too, so no worries anyone’s lost and can’t find their friends and families.”

He probably shouldn’t inquire, as his own head did not need the additional pain, but that was a statement that simply could not be left unaddressed.

“Far? Gregory… from where did the rabbits hail?”

“Ummm… I don’t know exactly. I found a book with a big map in it and just started… shopping. Some came from across that big stretch of water to the west, some from a really huge island down near the bottom of the map, others came from…”

“Forgive my interruption… are you saying you brought rabbits from America, Australia and… you scavenged the world for your playmates?”

“Why not? It was fun! And they were thrilled to get to meet cousins from this way and that. You saw them… nearly as excited as Sherlock and John!”

Mycroft had a rather pointed response to make, then noticed the pain and fatigue still present in the demon’s eyes and felt another wash of shame at his own behavior. The silly creature had kept his word… the library was spotless after he sent the rabbits to their homes.

“I was merely surprised at the scope of your reach, there was no chastisement meant, I assure you.”

No, it did not alleviate his heavy heart in the slightest to see Gregory’s luminous smile light up the room.

“Does that mean you can send Sherlock and me to America and Australia and places like that?”
Oh, dear god…

“Not today, John, because I’m completely knackered, but tomorrow…”

“I demand to visit every creditable natural history museum in the world!”

“And I want to see more rabbits! And monkeys and elephants and giraffes!”

“If you show me where all that is, we can have a brilliant trip and…”

“Again… pardon my interruption, however, the children shall not be gallivanting across the globe as if they were some form of socialite on safari.”

The cacophony of rage and indignation set Mycroft’s ears ablaze and he wondered if this was what he had heard referred to as being the ‘mean parent.’

“However… once Gregory is feeling better, we may discuss the possibility of brief and supervised visits to locations of academic relevance.”

“Giraffes are highly academically relevant!”

“Thank you, John. I shall take that into consideration. Now, I am certain Gregory would benefit from a warm and nourishing meal. Would you two be so kind as to have one prepared for him?”

Both boys suspected this was a tactic to distract them from their newly-acquired mission to become world travelers, but couldn’t ignore that their mission wouldn’t succeed if their method of transportation didn’t have any fuel. Besides… Greg actually looked a little thinner than he had before…

“Very well. John and I shall, this once, acquiesce to your demands, however, do not, for an instant, believe this shall become a pattern.”

Sherlock hopped off the foot of the bed and helped down John, who followed after him, looking back in what he thought was a very covert fashion to fix Mycroft with a ‘if you hurt him while we’re gone, you’re going to drown in punches’ glare.

“Thanks for that, Mycroft. Food sounds brilliant right now. Top up the energy level so I’ll be right back to normal.”

“Gregory, the children are gone and you may now be honest. How severely were you impacted? And I would appreciate an entirely truthful answer.”

Oh, that badly. The demon didn’t need to verbalize his answer, because Mycroft saw the change when his companion relaxed and allowed the true depth of his infirmity show clearly on his face.

“It wasn’t good, that’s for certain. I’ve had to do big things before and things that were far-reaching, but never both at once. It… like I said, it wasn’t good. But I had to, you know? You were upset and I didn’t like that. I don’t want you to be upset because of me.”

And the demon looked so distraught that Mycroft couldn’t help himself reaching out and stroking his muscular arm in what he hoped was a comforting gesture.

“And I have made you believe that I am eternally upset with you, haven’t I? I have not been a good host, nor, in truth a good person, with respect to you and for that, I offer you my most sincere apology. I have taken pains to find fault with your behavior and that is utterly inexcusable, for there
is nothing you have done which has been an affront to anything but my pomposity. I have behaved appallingly and it is to my discredit that you suffered dreadfully because of it.”

“Mycroft, don’t be so hard on yourself…”

“I shall, for it is well-deserved. I admit that… you have a joie de vivre that is most foreign to me and, if I am to be perfectly honest, somewhat unsettling. I have no idea how to respond and find myself off-footed during our interactions, which is, for me, a highly unusual situation. The fault for this is not yours, it is entirely mine, and I have no right to vent my frustrations upon you.”

This time it was Mycroft who received a bit of tactile comfort, trying not to shudder at the feel of a hand running across his shoulder. Which reminded him…

“And, in the interests of full disclosure… I am… unused to such a… sensual individual as yourself. You embrace that aspect of your nature wholeheartedly and I am… to put a word to it… no, I’d rather not, actually, but to say that despite what you might think from my bit of japery with the book I discovered, I am not… versed in the more… intimate forms of behavior and… again, the term off-footed is properly applied to the situation… and…”

Mycroft’s eyes had dropped from the demon’s to stare at the floor, so he missed the soft and understanding smile that moved across Greg’s lips. However, he was very aware of the small kiss that was applied to the back of his hand in a very old-fashioned and pleasantly chivalrous manner.

“I wondered about that actually, so things make sense now. A man who calls up an incubus, even as a jest, has something on his mind, especially someone as sexy and gorgeous as you, so I thought… but I understand now.”

Understand? The man was mad. Sexy… gorgeous… those were certainly not words to describe him. Though the demon had used those and many others with appreciable frequency since he arrived. And the creature did not seem prone to lying.

“Do you… do you really believe that?”

“What? That you’re stunning? Of course! I’m not blind, you know. All that delicious beauty sitting on the sofa when you called me up… had a hard time not doing something very filthy to myself just to take the edge off so we could have a chat!”

That was astoundingly tawdry… and overwhelmingly delightful.

“And you like that don’t you… those cheeks of yours getting all rosy and warm. Here, let’s see…”

No, he was not leaning into the demon’s touch as his cheek was being slowly and seductively stroked. It was ridiculous to think so. But, was there a feeling as glorious as Gregory’s hands on his skin? No, that was an even more ridiculous thought…

“Warm and perfect, just like I knew it would be. And I am going to try and not be so… me, Mycroft. I don’t want you upset because of my foolishness.”

“Balderdash. I find myself growing fond of your you and am anticipating an enjoyable experience becoming more familiar with the person you are.”

Oh, please do not smile in that particular fashion. It leads to thoughts of a most lascivious fashion. Which are not entirely unpleasant, but are better examined at another time. When they can be acted upon in a fashion previously described as astoundingly tawdry. Multiple times, if necessary.
“I like the sound of that. Getting familiar with you is something I’ve wanted since I saw the firelight dancing on that fine skin of yours.”

“Am I to interpret that as a salacious statement?”

“Feel free. If not that one, I’ll have another one for you in a minute.”

“You are a very persistent man, Gregory.”

“Emphasis on man, if you please. If you need proof, I’ll happily provide it as soon as the little ones go to bed.”

Mycroft found he couldn’t muster any irritation at the demon’s nonsense and it was not only because the hand on his cheek was taking a bit more liberty and roaming along his neck and across his chin. Perhaps it was a good thing that the boys would be back soon with Gregory’s meal, so this détente didn’t flare into something for which he wasn’t quite prepared. Though… truth be told, he was nothing if not quick to adapt…
This time when Mycroft woke to someone holding him tenderly, he swallowed the surge of confusion and sense that he was doing something wrong and simply relaxed into the embrace. They was no impropriety here. It was natural and understandable for Gregory to desire comfort after his experience. And, perhaps, in his world, the sharing of a bed was a normal thing, even between those of casual acquaintance. If that was what they were. It was still an area his mind had yet to fathom, however, he had read in the demon’s eyes that he would have the chance to learn his own mind on the subject and that was a very welcome reassurance.

And… in truth… lying here in the demon’s arms was positively bliss and there was no reason he could not indulge in a bit more rest to experience it further…

“Gregory, I know you are awake, so kindly cease your attempts at shamming.”

Mycroft had, for the third time, caught the amethyst flash of the demon’s eye peeking at him, as if the tiny, gleeful smile hadn’t been enough of a giveaway.

“You’re dreaming. Though, I have to admit it’s a very nice dream and one you should have often, so why don’t you just lie here and enjoy it.”

“Is it a trait of all your people that the telling of falsehoods is a skill at which you have absolutely no competence?”

“If that means what I think it means, then no. Lots of us are fantastic liars! And I include myself in that, thank you very much. Can lie my way out of anything, if I have a mind to. Of course, it’s not really me saying this since you’re dreaming, so it’s you who realizes I’m a bloody wonderful liar and isn’t that just another shiny feather in my cap.”

So smugly self-satisfied. For more than one reason, as well, apparently…

“And am I also dreaming the rather… firm… protuberance pressing against my leg?”

“Told you it was a very nice dream! And since you are dreaming, you can make it as pleasant as you like, so go on then… take advantage of the situation, why don’t you. I’m sure dream me won’t complain.”

The wickedness of that smile was absolutely… arousing. Damn the foul fiend and his blistering beauty.

“Perish the thought. I was simply remarking on the similarities between our species biological processes.”

“Oh. Well, that’s not what good dreams are made of. But… maybe it’s me that’s dreaming! Let’s see if those biological processes are as fun as I anticipate they’ll be when you’re burying yourself inside me at one end or the other…”

Something long and muscular began to wind across Mycroft’s flank, moving across and downwards to tease his belly and navel, stopping, he didn’t fail to notice, at the very instant he tensed almost undetectably in worry. Though he truly should probably be uncomfortable right now, the feel of being desired so openly and treated carefully and affectionately did wonders to soothe his fears.
“Perfect skin. Did you know you have perfect skin, Dream Mycroft? Well, you do. I think I’ve said that before, but my Dream Mycroft should hear things like that every day.”

Saying that in a rough and deep voice softly in my ear is not going to win you further southward inches of tail probing, you horrid thing. Though do continue caressing my stomach in the lovely manner you have adopted, if you would be so kind.

“That is most flattering. Now, I must get Sherlock and John ready for school…”

“Can’t they stay home and play, instead?”

“Gregory, we have had this discussion and you agreed that education is important.”

“Sure, but… do they have to go every day? Are there that many new things to learn that they have to leave every morning?”

“I am happy to say there are, so let me attend to their preparations.”

“You’re still staying home with me, right?”

“I am a man of my word, so, yes. And we may do whatever you would like for entertainment. Within reason.”

“And go to a tavern tonight?”

“The house is well-provided with alcohol. We do not need to travel afield to obtain any.”

“But taverns aren’t just about alcohol! They’re about talking and laughing and throwing a few punches if it’s that kind of night… you go out and have a good time! The alcohol just makes you more a chattier, gigglier, fightier sort of person.”

“Then I shall keep my imbibing to a minimum.”

“Hurray! We’re going!”

No, that was not what he meant, however, now it seemed rather caddish to retract his misinterpreted offer.

“Let us see how our day fares and then we may make plans for the evening. Now, if you will excuse me…”

“Now?”

“Yes, now. Sherlock and John are, likely, already awake and, left to their own devices, will create chaos and havoc such as not been seen since the birth of the universe.”

“Which is why I adore them. Can I help them get ready?”

“Will you see their feet remain on the floor?”

“Do I really have to?”

“I will offer the compromise that when they return from school, they may promenade wherever they like, so long as they remain indoors so they are not observed by those uninformed of our current situation.”
“That’s sounds good. Not as good as staying here with you, though.”

Undulating your ravishing form in that particularly decadent way will not win you the opportunity to luxuriate in bed like a wastrel, hellion. Though it would be a lovely thing if it could be so… especially… no. No, not especially… oh dear heaven…

“Gregory… are you naked?”

“Yes.”

Oh dear, dear heaven…

“Why on Earth are you unclothed?”

“Because that’s how you’re supposed to sleep! It lets the body breathe.”

“You are, again, telling an untruth. I left you in your bed in naught but a pair of pants, therefore, fully 97% of your body was breathing perfectly well. You cannot begin to tell me that the remaining fraction was gasping for fresh oxygen! Even that bit was most appropriately ventilated!”

“I think your math is wrong.”

“No, it is perfectly sound. And you are stark bare in my bed!”

“Doesn’t that have the loveliest sound?”

“Gregory…”

“Don’t worry, Mycroft. You’re all cocooned in those pyjamas of yours, so you didn’t get rubbed down by my warm, naked body. Even my tail had to navigate around all those miles of silky cloth to find a bit of flesh to fondle.”

“One does not sleep naked, Gregory. It is simply not done.”

“Why not?”

“Because… it isn’t.”

“That’s what I thought. Only a bit of silliness, probably because you’re just awake and not thinking clearly. That’s alright, I’m a tad fuzzy-headed first thing in the morning, too. But, I’ll tell you what. I’ll get the little ones started on their day and you take a moment to shake the cobwebs out of that beautiful brain of yours.”

Mycroft felt more than saw the slight lean forward, then came the demon’s hesitation which Mycroft manfully resolved by leaning back slightly in response to receive the whisper-soft kiss on his cheek that inflamed a feeling inside him that was both cozy and licentious, a paradox he despised as much as the fact that the accursed hellspawn rose from the bed dragging the top blanket with him so that his breathtaking body didn’t so much as flash a flicker of green into the room. While it was shamefully hypocritical to castigate the creature for his nudity one moment and castigate him for his decency the next, Mycroft had no issue with the disgrace since it stayed tidily in his mind where it belonged. Besides, the raging case of lust with which he had been left was more than just punishment and, with Gregory gone, he would begin immediately showing himself the error of his ways. Luckily, lubricant was just a nightstand away…
Well, at least they were still on the floor…

“Look, Mycroft! I’m blue!”

A very fetching shade of blue, at that. With emerald green eyes and a short tail that wagged like a puppy’s through John’s hastily assembled tail-friendly underpants.

“Yes, and it is a hue that flatters you nicely. And Sherlock… how handsomely you wear plum.”

With eyes of the deepest gold and a longer tail than John’s, though John’s was decorated with fine markings that wound towards the tip, so the ‘mine is better than yours’ conversation had, likely, already raged and lapsed into a sad state of stalemate.

“I wear any color in an attractive fashion due to my natural, exceedingly-pleasing appearance.”

“Of course. Gregory… do tell me this is reversible.”

“This is reversible.”

“Would you care to elaborate?”

“Sure! The little ones wanted to know why I looked the way I do when I made myself look human and I said I didn’t know, I just do. When a human wants to look like a demon, they have a specific appearance, too, and it’s the same every time you work the spell unless you take steps to change it. Anyway, they wanted to know what they’d look like, so now they do! Aren’t they handsome? Show Mycroft the rest!”

John proudly parted his hair so Mycroft could see the small horns growing from his head and Sherlock proudly pulled back his hair to reveal the very elegantly-pointed ears that appeared to have faintly gold-dusted tips, which matched well with his eyes and the fine gold shimmer on his familiar high and notable cheekbones.

“Now, that’s a pair who are going to turn heads. Have to beat the admirers off with a club, most likely.”

“Can Mycroft have a turn?”

Dear John, aren’t you lucky that sewing shut your mouth won’t significantly impact the colorfulness of your appearance.

“He surely can! That’s a brilliant idea! Mycroft, want to give it a go? Give us a chance to see how spectacular you are no matter what face you wear?”

Sherlock’s and John’s gagging made the demon giggle and Mycroft opened his mouth to refuse the offer then thought… why not? It was an innocuous thing and it would amuse the children, which would take away some of the sting when he pronounced it time for breakfast and they had to return to their less elaborate forms. And, he would not be so foolish as to declare he was not somewhat curious about the outcome…

“Very well. But just for a moment.”

“Greg, make Mycroft some pants!”

Oh yes, there was that.

“I think these will do.”
Did the demon have to lick his lips in such an anticipatory fashion? And where did he find yet another pair of silk underpants? Which had been sliced in the back up to the waistband… well, that was many pounds sterling desecrated in an entirely unwholesome fashion.

“Hope you don’t mind, but I modified a few of these so I could wear them. I have to admit your love of silky things is something I’m coming to understand. And appreciate.”

Mycroft snatched the injured underpants and stepped behind the old-fashioned dressing screen to don his costume, then gave his consent for whatever was to occur. After a small tingling that seemed to run through every nerve in a not-wholly unpleasant fashion, the first thing he noticed was a pressure against his lower back, which was somewhat remedied by a quick shuffle to properly arrange his… oh dear lord, he truly did have a tail! And… well, Sherlock was going to be quite aggrieved when he saw this.

Stepping from behind the screen, Mycroft couldn’t help but smile at the astonished gasps, followed by Sherlock’s enraged pout and Gregory’s… well, if lust could be bottled, they would need an oil tanker to contain what was flowing out of the demon.

“Mycroft! You’re… you’re beautiful!”

“Thank you, John.”

“You are as flamboyant as a Brazilian Carnival dancer!”

“Really, brother dear? Well, this I must see…”

Stepping towards the floor-length mirror, Mycroft was not surprised the household’s real demon darted to his side and seemed to be attempting to mentally rut against his new body. Though, once he could see himself in the mirror… well, that was unexpected. The same, however, could not be said for the sultry whispering in his ear. Though, both were just as tantalizing.

“Y… you’re gorgeous, Mycroft. Beautiful isn’t a good enough word. You’re a chest of jewels, a field of stars, an armful of flowers. No, those don’t even come close. You’re spectacular, sexier than anyone ever born…”

No, it was neither gentlemanly nor fair to casually brush his hair away from the perfectly-sculpted points of his ears and lean slightly towards the demon, whose control broke and couldn’t stop himself wrapping an arm around Mycroft’s waist, placing tiny, reverent kisses along the ridge of this new ear and lightly brushing the tip with his tongue.

And Mycroft savored all of it. Looking into the mirror, seeing both his new form and the demon holding him as if he was a rare and precious thing… it was intoxicating. Deeper blue than John and with a longer tail than even Gregory’s, all of him pattered with fine, opalescent lines that glowed with blues or greens or golds or reds depending on how he moved and the light hit his skin. And his eyes… the Aurora Borealis would gladly call them cousin.

“I take it you find this form attractive, Gregory.”

The small, desperate whine shot straight to Mycroft’s groin and he was very happy the boys had returned to studying each other’s appearance more closely and paid no attention to the heavy perfume of arousal that was blanketing this side of the room.

“You don’t want to know what I think. What I want to do… can I… I promise, nothing bad…”

Mycroft had never felt so powerful hearing the pleading tone in Greg’s voice and the tentative, trace
of a finger along his naked arm. Which rose and slowly turned this way and that under the softly stroking hand.

“The most gorgeous human I’ve ever seen… the most gorgeous demon I’ve ever seen… I can’t believe you’re so perfect…”

No force on Earth could have prevented the little contented sigh that slipped from Mycroft’s lips.

“… I’m going to remind you of that, too. Not going to let you forget how amazing you are…”

This was beyond the bounds of propriety, however, Mycroft could not resist the urge to lift his hand to receive the kiss he knew it would be given. And the second. The third was especially pleasant and lingered… yes, he was adapting to this new paradigm quite nicely and wasn’t Gregory the patient one to allow him the time to sail these unfamiliar waters at a pace he could successfully manage.

“You flatter me, Gregory.”

“Just being honest.”

“Perhaps I might return to this particular form once the boys have left for the day. I find the uniqueness of it quite refreshing.”

“I won’t complain. This skin, your human skin… I’ve known a LOT of skin, but this is, by far, the best.”

“Fatcroft has enough skin to make sails for a galleon, whether it be an ostentatious hue or not.”

And now, the dismal obligations of reality reappear to taint his burgeoning seductive confidence.

“Thank you, Sherlock. And now, it is time to return us all to our more typical presentation and make you ready for school.”

Two sets of suspicious eyes fixed Mycroft with a fierce glare and he had to concede that the children were far more ferocious as demonspawn.

“The use of ‘you,’ as opposed to the more correct ‘us’ is an insult to language that not even you, Mycroft, are prone to make.”

“I do apologize, Sherlock, however, I shall be remaining home today to assist Gregory with acclimating to our way of life.”

“No! You can’t say home from school if Sherlock and I have to go. It’s not fair!”

“John is correct. The lack of equity in this situation is absolutely unacceptable.”

“And, if this was a democracy, that opinion would have merit, however, as this is a monarchy and I wear the crown, we remain status quo. You shall spend the day at school and I will keep company with Gregory.”

It would probably infuriate the duo to notify them that when their tails shook in that particular manner it completely undermined their intended ferocity and made them appear somewhat like characters from a child’s cartoon, so Mycroft kept that particular observation to himself. Practice in front of a mirror to coordinate glare and tail behavior would certainly be to their benefit.

“Then, we demand to be allowed to remain home tomorrow.”
“And you shall have my agreement.”

Sherlock and John shared a surprised look and a grin of triumphant glee.

“Of course, tomorrow is Saturday…”

The small demons’ roar of rage shook the walls and Mycroft delighted both in their fury and the warm chuckle in his ear from his personal demon, who appeared to be having a difficult time loosening the arm around his waist. Not that he was complaining, mind you…

“And that we have settled the matter… Gregory, would you mind?”

Sherlock and John pleaded at full force to remain as they were and complained just as strongly when they returned to their standard look, with Mycroft sharing their sorrow at losing what was quite the artistic adventure he had been enjoying.

“Cease your bleating, if you please, and make yourselves ready for breakfast. As we have determined, Gregory can gift you with your alternate appearance at will, so I presume he will not object if you choose to wear you second skin when you return this afternoon. Gregory? That will not overtire you, will it?”

“Nah. It’s a simple thing and doesn’t draw power from me to maintain itself.”

“And John and I shall look again as we did now?”

Sherlock’s newly-human scowl spoke volumes as to what he expected the answer to be and Greg was happy he could give him the answer he wanted. And… yes, there was more than a little pride he was taking from the fact that the boys liked to look the way he did… as did his Mycroft…

“Exactly the same. I don’t choose what you look like, unless you want it to be something different, which is a bit of a bother, but I can do it, if you’d like.”

“No. We desire to keep this appearance until such time as I have studied it thoroughly.”

“Alright then. So, how about you do as Mycroft asks and get dressed. Don’t want to miss the food, do you?”

John looked as if the suggestion terrified him and ran towards the closet to pull out his uniform and begin dressing. Sherlock, instead, pointed at the closet and, after a large sigh, Greg floated the uniform over the boy’s waiting hands.

“Sherlock! Gregory is not a servant.”

“To you, he is a gigolo. To me, he is a servant. At least he may say he serves some purpose in the household.”

No, that was not permission to rub your nubile body against me in such a lascivious manner, evil demon. But if you simply must, that last wriggle was particularly enjoyable…

“I’m ready!”

Mycroft groaned slightly, since John’s version of ‘ready’ involved a wildly disheveled tie and his shoes accidentally tied together.

“Gregory, might I beg your assistance in remedying John’s appearance, while I tend to Sherlock?”
“What’s wrong with John?”

Oh dear…

“Gregory, might I beg your assistance in supervising Sherlock while I remedy John’s appearance.”

“Sure! Anything to help.”

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“When are they coming home?”

“’At precisely the same time as yesterday.’”

“’Ok… that’s a long time, though.’”

Mycroft smiled and patted Greg’s hand in what he hoped was a very sympathetic fashion. There was something terribly endearing about the demon’s attachment to the children, especially to Sherlock. Few took to his brother so quickly, let alone at all, but Gregory simply took Sherlock’s unique nature in stride.

“’Yet, they shall return, filled with complaints about their day and desperate for a measure of frivolity, which I am certain you will be amenable to providing.’”

“LOTs! Are they too young for the tavern?”

“Quite.”

“’Oh… well, that’s ok. I like the idea of it just being you and me, anyway. A few mugs of good ale, a little conversation and… whatever might happen while I walk you home.’”

“’We will take the car, for the village is some distance away.’”

“’I get to pilot one of those! That’s brilliant!’”

Perhaps walking would be the better idea…
“And this one goes this way…”

Propriety had been left by the wayside and was visible as a barely-recognizable speck in the far and forgotten distance. It hadn’t taken much convincing for Mycroft to ban the staff from the library, shed his clothing except for his tail-accommodating underpants and return to his more colorful form to lie on the floor in front of the fire with a good book, and share a morning of reading with his new companion. For the demon, reading currently meant following each of the jewel-like lines decorating Mycroft’s body with a strong, thick finger.

“…flowing down along this bit here…”

“Gregory, do you believe you are reading some form of map inscribed on my skin?”

“Map to some very wonderful places if you ask me. And if you take off those silky underthings.”

“I am most content as I am, thank you.”

“You know it’s not my finger I want to use to trace these lovely lines, don’t you? I’m being good though, and not letting my tongue do what it wants, even though it wants to very badly.”

“Gregory, do behave.”

Though kindly continue to straddle the exceedingly fine line between acceptable and unacceptable as you have been doing, quite marvelously, actually, and ignore that I am an incredibly inconstant person with limits that seem to shift with the winds in a truly reprehensible fashion.

“I am! Want to know what I’d be doing right now if I wasn’t?”

Yes, desperately.

“No.”

“Yes, you do, but I’m afraid it might give you a bit of a heart attack, so I’ll save that for later when you can at least have it in your big, comfortable bed. Have I told you you’re gorgeous this morning? I think it all the time, so I can’t be sure if it’s actually dribbled out of my mouth lately or not.”

Silly creature… but it did beg a question…

“I believe you have. Gregory, a question if I may. You stated you have indulged frequently in… carnal activities. Is that the norm for your people?”

“Having a bit of fun? I suppose it is, for some. Well, most. See someone who catches your fancy and, if you catch theirs, you have a few hours of merrymaking with them before you go your separate ways.”

“Ah, I see.”

But the demon didn’t. There was tone in that ‘I see.’ Something was bothering his Mycroft and he didn’t like that one tiny bit.
“What do you see?”

“Oh, nothing. It simply explains the… it is nothing, really.”

“No, it is. What you think matters and I like to hear you talk about what you’re thinking. Or anything at all, really. You’ve got a lovely voice and with that big brain of yours… it’s amazing!”

“Yes, but I am certain you’ve heard any number of appealing voices in your time. And seen truly attractive forms that you complimented so effusively.”

Now the light clicked on and the demon smiled widely, flopping down on his back so he could look up into Mycroft’s eyes.

“You think when I tell you you’re gorgeous it’s because that’s what I say to everyone I give a cuddle to, don’t you?”

“I would assume you would speak kindly of your bedmates, as you seem, to me, a decent sort for that type of thing.”

“Yes, well… you do have a point. But you’re wrong, too. You want to pull someone for a night’s enjoyment, you treat them well, that’s a must, but if you think… Mycroft, I tell you what I think of you, honest about it all, not because I want you in bed, which I do, but that’s beside the point… it’s because, well, you’re special. I’ve not seen nor met anyone like you before and, maybe, I’ve gotten a bit of stardust in my eyes, but that’s fine with me. And I don’t believe in hiding things like when you believe someone’s special and different and wonderful and they’re in your fantasies when you have a bit of a wank once everyone’s gone to bed. So don’t worry about the past, Mycroft. Don’t be jealous, not for a second.”

“Jealous… how ridiculous.”

But unquestionably true.

“You’re so jealous I want to take you right here and show you that you have nothing to be jealous over. And, yes, if you’re wondering, you can blush when you’re blue. You wear it brilliantly, too.”

Mycroft cut his gaze down to the grinning demon and read the question in the fantastically-purple eyes. Leaning over slightly, and gulping grandly, he placed a small kiss on Greg’s nose, then found he had little motivation to return to his reading because the heat of the demon’s skin, the soft smile on his lips and the deep fire in his eyes held him fast.

“It’s… it’s ok if you want a little more, Mycroft.”

The tiny, reassuring touch to his hand emboldened Mycroft to lean in again and, this time, place his kiss on the demon’s lips and it was with a small amount of embarrassment that he moaned slightly from the sensation.

“Perfect. Is there anything about you that isn’t perfect? Would you… you can have another if you’d like.”

Oh, he would very much like and Mycroft slowly took a third kiss, savoring the delicious feel of being kissed in return. Wondering if everything he’d heard about kissing was true, Mycroft parted his lips and this moan wasn’t slight… it was deep and needy as the demon’s tongue entered his mouth, just a tad, to take a taste of something he’d been imagining since he’d seen the human sitting in wait when he first appeared in the library.
Greg kept the heat of the kiss low and simmering, adoring that Mycroft didn’t pull away, but, instead, continued to kiss him with less and less tentativeness, yet with the same degree of careful exploration that was setting his body and soul on fire with a deep, yet gentle flame that was doing very nice things to many, many parts of his anatomy. When his blue beauty finally broke the kiss and pulled back with barely-noticeable look of uncertainty in his eye, the demon smiled reassuringly and reached up to caress Mycroft’s cheek.

“That was wonderful.”

“It was? I mean, yes. Yes, it was.”

Now his Mycroft’s expression had none of that pesky insecurity and was that a little smugness dancing at the corners of his eyes? Perfect… just perfect. And very well-deserved. Kisses like that were what made life worthwhile…

“And you can have a little taste whenever you’d like. Or a little something else…”

Mycroft narrowed his eyes, but followed the demon’s pointed finger, only to be mortified… and titillated… to find his new tail had a mind of its own and had, apparently, taken to running itself lazily up and down Greg’s muscular thigh.

“Oh, I do apologize.”

“Don’t. At least not on my account. I like it. Feels good.”

So very, very improper, but the worry about that was fading at a fascinatingly rapid rate.

“I… I am pleased to hear that.”

“And I like pleasing you, so aren’t we both lucky, then?”

Well, if the creature was going to be logical about it…

“That we are. Now, shall we return to our books?”

“Will you still rub my leg?”

Ever the purveyor of temptation…

“I would not dare disturb your enjoyment.”

Mycroft watched in candid amazement both at the honestly happy smile on the demon’s face and the fact that the book Greg had been reading was sent back to the shelf, and another drawn down without the demon moving a muscle.

“You’ve got a lot of good books here. We can do this a lot, you and I. Read, have a lovely fire… that’s ok, right?”

“I believe that sounds delightful, actually.”

“Great! A nice relaxing day and then a night at the tavern. This is an amazing day!”

Oh yes, the tavern. Well, if he could manage his first kiss with grace and aplomb, then a tavern night would in no manner undermine his composure. First kiss… what was Gregory’s favorite word? Perfect. And it was perfect. The epitome of perfection, actually. Whatever was the precise formula of all the relevant variables, the kisses they shared met it exactly. And these were, from his
understanding, simple and sweet kisses. What would happen when he pushed a little further into scorching and salacious? That was something he was becoming, by the second, more and more ready to find out…

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“It works!”

John hung from the branch by his tail and waved his arms wildly in excitement. Sherlock adopted a more reserved demonstration and set himself gently swinging like a windchime in a gentle breeze.

“Told you. A little exercise and practice and your tail can do some pretty amazing things.”

Mycroft looked up at the boys, hanging from the tree, and shook his head in wonder. Upon returning from school, Sherlock and John immediately demanded to return to demon form and Greg had begged to take them outside so they could romp and frolic without having to worry about being seen or breaking anything valuable. And the romping had commenced the moment they cleared the line of sight of the house’s windows.

“I’m going to practice every day and have the strongest and most useful tail ever!”

“That’s the spirit! Sherlock, you going to practice, too?”

“Practice is for those who lack mastery.”

“Mycroft, toss me that rock.”

Mycroft cocked an eye at the demon, but complied, admiring again how his limbs glittered even in the weak afternoon sunshine. Then, he was admiring that Greg didn’t catch the rock, but snatched it with his tail and whipped it upwards yelling for John to catch, whooping with the small boy when John grabbed the rock in his hands.

“You want to come down here and try that, Sherlock?”

“If there was any value in rock hurling, then yes. Since there is not, then no.”

“John you want to come down here and try that?”

“Yes!”

John scrambled down the tree, yelling for Mycroft to find him some rocks to catch. This, of course, prompted Sherlock to follow quickly, announcing loudly that he refused to be shunned, and stand next to John, glowering ferociously as he waited to be thrown a rock.

“You throw, Mycroft, and I’ll catch?”

“I would be honored.”

And, the next hour or so was spent playing catch, with all three new demons getting practice throwing and catching with their unfamiliar appendages. It was only near the end that Mycroft realized that a very large portion of Greg’s bright and ever-present grin was coming from the fact that as he maneuvered his tail for the rock practice, the slit at the back of his pants opened to flash glimpses of his bottom to a person who was very eager to horde every glimpse he was given. Cad.

“That’s brilliant! Did you see that, Mycroft? That was a good fifteen-throw volley the little ones did!”
“It would have been far longer if John were not a homunculus.”

“It would have been far longer if you hadn’t thrown it over my head, Sherlock.”

“You both did very well and we shall lay the blame on fatigue after your long afternoon of play. Now, we do need to return to the house…”

Three strident voices protested Mycroft’s proclamation and Mycroft noticed, quite proudly, that Sherlock and John now instinctively used their tails to punctuate their arguments and not allow them to waggle randomly like a flag in a typhoon.

“No now… you know you prefer to do your schoolwork at this time of day, so it is off your mind for the weekend, and, also, so you might do it together. Let us not forget that we must return John home in a scant few hours.”

This round of protestation was as loud and vehement as the first, but had the added twist of John falling to his knees and begging to stay overnight, with the demon falling next to him to embrace the distraught boy and shed a deluge of wholly fake tears.

“My, I could fund the entirety of my future with the theatrical performances I am witnessing were they to be put on the stage.”

“Can’t the little one stay with us tonight? Sherlock’s going to need someone to play with when we go to the tavern or he’ll be alone and lonely and we can’t have that! It’s barbaric!”

“Yeah, barbaric!”

“I shall not be the victim of barbarism! I am far too valuable a person for my person to suffer such an ignoble fate!”

Mycroft wondered if the next time Mummy and Father decided on an extended holiday, they would consider taking him along. Surely there was a kennel in the vicinity that could be persuaded to take Sherlock for the duration.

“John, you know quite well that you will inveigle your parents to let you return here in the morning. Sherlock, you have a large amount of research notes you want to review and annotate, which will keep you busy for the evening. Gregory, the children are not unused to being separated and shall fare exceptionally well for the few hours of their relative solitude. So, please, let us return to human form and we shall make a start on the next segment of our day.”

The tears, begging, wailing, glaring, pontificating and non-specific chaos gradually tapered off, with John and Greg sharing a commiserative hug before the demon returned the other three to their normal appearance and took a human guise for himself.

“There. Much quieter. Don your clothing, children. It would not do to stalk towards the house in naught but your underpants.”

“Does that mean I can?”

Mycroft frowned at the demon, but there was little displeasure in it. Anything that prolonged the time he was allotted to gaze upon his companion’s exquisite form was something to be desired. Unfortunately, giving the staff as little to gossip about as possible, was always a good thing.

“No, it does not. Good heavens… your rude noise, Gregory, will not compel me to change my mind.”
“It was worth a try. Ok, who wants to race?”

Sherlock beginning to throw on his clothes before the ‘go’ signal was given surprised no one, but John made a quicker show of it and started running for the house a hair before the taller boy joined him. The demon gave the two their head start, then immediately appeared fully dressed and shot off after them, waving at Mycroft over his shoulder. For his part, Mycroft leisurely donned his attire and strolled just as leisurely in the direction of the house. If he timed this correctly, Gregory would have already refereed the argument about who really won the race and who was a dastardly cheat, which was a pleasant thing to ponder. One thing he had to admit… he could get very used to having a helpful demon around the house…

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“This is fantastic!”

“It is an automobile and not even one of significant note, because Fatcroft cannot be trusted to properly pilot any of the household’s respectable vehicles.

Mycroft turned over the engine of the elegant Jaguar set aside for short trips to the village and cracked a small smile at the demon’s gasp of delight when they started moving.

“I would not think this would impress you, Gregory, given the magic you so easily wield.”

“That’s why this impresses me! It works without magic! We’re going fast and…”

Mycroft turned on the radio and chuckled at the anticipated joyful outburst.

“There’s music coming out of it! Just like that radio you showed me. Is this one of those? They put radios in here? That’s a brilliant idea! Why don’t they have televisions, though? That would be an incredible thing…”

“And without property visual attention to what lies ahead of you, it would also, likely, be a fatal thing.”

“Oh. Yeah, I suppose you’re right. The radio is enough then.”

And did the demon make car noises during gear shifts? Of course he did, along with John, so they sounded like some form of automotive chorus. When the vehicle finally stopped in front of John’s house, Mycroft actually mourned the loss of the theme music for his driving.

“This is your house, John? It’s a really nice house.”

“Thanks, Greg! It’s not as big as Sherlock’s and Mycroft’s, but it’s a good house and close to school so I can walk if I’m not riding with Sherlock.”

“We shall see you in the morning, John.”

“Bye, Mycroft! And bye, Sherlock!”

John opened the door and Mycroft sighed loudly as the demon jumped out of the car with him.

“Gregory, kindly return to the vehicle.”

“Can’t. Have to see John gets to the door safely.”

“Mycroft, your pet is deranged.”
“Be silent, Sherlock. Gregory, John is walking the short distance to his home, which resides in a safe and respectable neighborhood, in full view of all of us in the car. I believe he will make the journey unscathed.”

“We crossed a bridge, didn’t we?”

“We did.”

“Bridge troll. Nasty buggers and they’d eat someone as small as John in one bite without chewing. Which is sort of a blessing if you think about it.”

John’s loud squeak prompted Mycroft’s very put-upon eye roll and the sight of the child clinging to the demon’s leg drew out a long and pained groan, which Sherlock mimicked nearly to a tee. Though, Mycroft noticed from a glance in the mirror, there was a touch of worry coloring his brother’s eyes.

“Gregory, there are no such things as bridge trolls.”

“Sure there are! Lots of things out there are real if you know how to look for them.”

Sherlock’s worry immediately fled to parts unknown as his eyes lit up with a troll-hunting anticipatory gleam.

“Let the little one go unprotected and they’ll be a hellhound picking pieces of him out of its teeth before you know it.”

“I don’t want to be eaten!”

“Gregory, you are frightening the children.”

“Do not malign me with your limp-wristed slander, bloat-belly!”

“Sorry, Mycroft, but you have to be careful about these things. You can wait here and I’ll see him home safely.”

Realizing the havoc the demon could wreak on unsuspecting and very pleasant people, Mycroft shot out of the car the moment Greg began to drag the still-clinging John towards the door, with Sherlock not a second behind him. The plan as it stood – knock, deliver John, run away before the demon could say anything. Simple, yet effective.

“Oh, hello! Our son has finally remembered he has a home. He hasn’t been a bother, has he, Mycroft?”

“Hello, Mrs. Watson, and under no circumstance has John been a bother. We delight in every minute he spends with us and his behavior is unassailable.”

“That’s good, because I’m sure he’ll want to run straight back to your house in the morning. And who is this?”

John finally let go of the demon’s leg and smiled up at his mother.

“This is Greg, Mycroft’s boyfriend.”

Mycroft knew, just knew, if he looked at the demon, the fiend would be wearing a luminous smile to accompany the arm that wound around Mycroft’s waist.
“Oh, isn’t that nice. And what a lovely couple you make.”

No. No no no no do not… oh fine. Kiss me on the cheek and lay your seal upon me, villain.

“Thank you, ma’am. Though it’s really Mycroft who’s the lovely one.”

“And so polite. I’m sure you mother is very proud, Mycroft.”

Mummy would likely be aghast since (a) he had not exactly been forthcoming with his parents about his sexual preferences and (b) Gregory was not precisely what she would term ‘cultured.’ However, since the Watsons did not move in his parents’ social circle, the chance of discovery was nil.

“Yes, quite proud. Now, we must bid you good evening. Do enjoy your night.”

“Oh, and you, too. Sherlock, are you still going to stop by to help make biscuits on Sunday?”

“Yes and I have very specific demands on what should be prepared.”

Mycroft surreptitiously pinched his brother and smiled in apology at the boy’s characteristically poor manners.

“I’m sure you do, and we’ll see what we can do about that. But remember, whatever you bake you have to eat, so none of your little experiments in my kitchen. Understand?”

Sherlock’s surly ‘Yes, Mrs. Watson’ was music to Mycroft’s ears and he used the opportunity to turn his brother in the direction of the car. After a final farewell, he pushed the boy along with the demon walking alongside, humming happily as they walked. Once everyone was in the car and moving back towards their own house, Mycroft counted the seconds and wasn’t surprised he scarcely hit ten before the demon spoke.

“I’m your boyfriend.”

“John was simply having a small jest at his mother’s expense.”

“Nope. I’m your boyfriend. What do you think, Sherlock?”

“If I am forced to court insanity by contemplating the topic, then I must stand in agreement with John’s assessment of the situation. Your lustful gazes and treacly declarations leave no other conclusion to present itself.”

“See?”

“Gregory, you shall surely be the death of me.”

“Not a chance of that. Warm and supple is how I want you when we’re doing boyfriend things in that bed of yours.”

“I am deafened!”

“Kindly do not deafen Sherlock.”

“Ok. I’ll just act out what we’re going to do and he can shut his eyes and keep his sight, at least.”

“I am deafened anew!”
Mycroft kept his eyes fully focused on the road and tried not to picture the sorts of things that could occur between him and the demon in his sizeable bed. The bed satisfactorily proportioned to accommodate a variety of positions and physical activities. The bed in which he had already lain with his demon and enjoyed the most delicious of experiences, though they had, to date, been entirely chaste. However… there was always the possibility for change. That was the joy of the future – you could shape it as you wanted…

Mycroft took a very deep breath and parked the car, this time, in front of what appeared to be a pleasantly-sedate pub and prayed that this would not be one the demon’s more exuberant periods of entertainment. He would take as a good omen that dislodging Sherlock had not been as difficult as he had imagined, though having the demon promise to let him take certain, and non-invasive, body material samples likely played a very large role in securing Sherlock’s cooperative attitude.

“This looks wonderful! And I smell beer!”

The demon launched out of the car and ran forward to nearly press his nose against the glass in the window while he waited for Mycroft to catch up to him.

“I would assume they offer beer aplenty here. I simply hope they offer palatable beer, as well.”

“Drink enough and that won’t matter anymore.”

“Joyful. Shall we?”

“Oh yes, we shall…”

Beer was good. It was very good. And cheap. You could buy lots and it cost but a pittance. Gregory was funny. Which was a bit of a non-sequitur, but anything was legal if you didn’t say it out loud. Sexually desirable, too. And intelligent, which was somewhat of a surprise, but maybe it shouldn’t be. Was that snobbish? Probably. He was somewhat of a snob. Not Gregory, though. He talked to everyone! And listened, too. Gregory was a very good listener. And fantastically handsome. And could drink lots of beer! Which didn’t seem to impact his aim. They’d won money! Gregory was very good at darts. He was, too, but only at the beginning because beer definitely impacted his aim. But that was alright, because Gregory laughed and kissed him when he missed the dart board and called him wonderful names, some he had to whisper because they were a bit naughty. Those were especially nice. Oh… how did they get outside?

“You alright, Mycroft?”

Gregory had a lovely voice.

“I am utterly content, my dear.”

“And drunk.”

“Quite. Isn’t that marvelous?”

Gregory gave the best kisses. And hugs. And laughed with the sound of angels ringing Christmas bells. But lower. And rougher. And more seductive.

“Absolutely. But, I bet you can’t make that machine of yours take us home in this condition, can
“I… no. That would be very unwise. We might strike an animal or historical structure and that would be a terrible tragedy.”

“I’m sure it would. Ok, then… here, just walk a little more until we get clear… ok. Now, don’t worry about anything, alright. I won’t let anything happen to you.”

“I know that! You adore me.”

Yes, kisses were now, unquestionably, one of his favorite things.

“That I do. Ready?”

“For?”

Now Mycroft knew he was wildly drunk because, after he was handed his Gregory’s shirt and trousers, it appeared as if large wings unfolded from the demon’s back and, in another moment, he was flying through the night sky, carefully cradled in a pair of powerful arms. My, everything looked so small from up here…

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“I’m in pyjamas!”

The demon smiled brightly and knew that nothing in any universe was as cute as a very drunk Mycroft Holmes.

“You are! Sherlock’s already in bed with a book and now you’re going to bed, too.”

“I must say… I find the sound of that terrifically appealing…”

Mycroft strode rather wobbly a few steps forward to stand in front of the demon and stare into his breathtaking, amethyst eyes. Leaning his head slightly, he took the lips at which he’d spent the night staring in a kiss that pushed quickly to the limits of the morning’s affections and started to take a few large strides into new territory, as he felt a surge of arousal take hold and saw no reason not to follow where it led. And how nice were pyjamas for facilitating the feel of rubbing one’s wakening erection against another that was hastening to keep pace with its eagerness.

“Time for bed, Mycroft.”

“I agree.”

The demon led Mycroft to his bed, helped the pyjama-clad human between the sheets, kissed him on the forehead and checked that there was water in the pitcher on the nightstand.

“Gregory… don’t make me wait, you silly thing.”

“I’m not going to. You can go to sleep right now and not have to wait a bit.”

“I don’t want to sleep. I want you…”

Mycroft sat up and reached out to sneak a hand up under the demon’s re-donned shirt and caress the warm and tantalizingly-soft skin beneath.

“And I want you, too. But you’re not thinking clearly right now and I am not going to take
advantage of that. I do adore you, Mycroft, and that’s why I’m going to wait until you do this without beer making it seem like a good idea.”

“But it is a good idea! If you knew what I think about when I awake and you are wrapped around me…”

“Probably the same thing I think and, I promise, when you’re sober, if that’s what you want, I’ll do everything I can to make you a very happy man.”

No, he was wrong. A pouty, drunk Mycroft Holmes was the cutest thing in creation.

“Oh, very well. Do you promise?”

“My most solemn oath.”

“Then, I accept. On one condition.”

“Which is?”

“Sleep with me.”

“Didn’t we just settle that?”

“Sleep! Sleep with me.”

“And you’ll be a good boy and not try to seduce me?”

“I’d do a very good job of it, though, wouldn’t I?”

“Yes, you would and that’s why you have to mean it when you say you won’t.”

“Can I have a kiss, at least?”

“You can have a kiss.”

“Only one?”

“You can have… four.”

“I win!”

“Was there any doubt?”

“No, because I am an incomparable negotiator.”

“I know, that’s why I didn’t even try hard. Just a waste of time against someone like you.”

“Very true.”

Mycroft tugged on Greg’s shirt and pulled him into one of his bargained kisses and the demon took the opportunity to begin unfastening his trousers. This was going to be hard. Correction, this already was hard. And throbbing. Because Mycroft was the most sinful being in existence. The most special, too. And nobody, not a single, solitary person, was ever going to take advantage of his sinful, special Mycroft. Including him.

“And I get four more!”
“Three more, love.”

“No, four. I didn’t count that one.”

“Why not?”

“I did not wish to.”

“That’s fair.”

Very, very hard…
Chapter 7

Oh. Oh. Oh dear…

“Shhhh…. take it easy, Mycroft. Head hurting a little? That’s ok, it’s normal. Just lay here quietly and keep your eyes closed.”

So this was the much-touted hangover, laughingly presented in films and novels. What a beastly thing… who would make light of such dreadful circumstances… everything was in agony! Even his agony was in agony…

“That’s my Mycroft, just take it slow and easy for awhile.”

Such an easy directive to follow. Even the idea of movement hurt. Though the gentle threading of fingers through his hair was quite comforting. As was the soothing sensation of the demon’s warmth against his body. Though it was be far more glorious if…

“Gregory… are you fully garmented in pyjamas?”

Now is not the time to acquire a sense of propriety when the deliciousness of your bare, warm skin would be welcomed by my quickly-expiring form much as the grace of an angel’s touch. Though, what a decent chap you are for chuckling so very softly with my aching head lying upon your broad and welcoming chest.

“It seemed smart. I didn’t think you’d do a very good job keeping your promise and I was right. All grabby hands and kissy lips. Not that I minded, of course, but a little extra armor never hurts when fighting such a mighty foe.”

Promise? What promise? That was… ah. Yes. That promise. And a promise that was necessitated by… oh dear. No no no no no. How utterly disgraceful… how could he… humiliating was not even near the proper term. A harlot was not so forward! Or flagrant! A burlesque house would turn him away for indecency…

“Oh, Gregory… I am so sorry. I behaved abominably and I cannot apologize with sufficient vigor. I am truly, truly sorry, you must believe me…”

“Hush, Mycroft. It’s alright. Beer does interesting things to people and you were very interesting last night. Trust my Mycroft to be the most amazing drunk in the world! He’s the most amazing at everything, so I didn’t expect anything less. Happy, fun, sexy, brilliant… just as perfect drunk as not-drunk!”

I am not worthy of your tender kisses upon my painful head, but I will accept each one as greedily as if they were gold. Though that gold does not glitter nearly as lustrously as your forgiveness.

“That… that is kind of you, however, I must insist that an apology is in order. My behavior was inexcusable and I must also extend my most sincere gratitude for your honorable response. Not everyone would have been so noble given my embarrassing conduct, especially… well, I am certain you understand.”

Yes, please, carefully raise my hand and bestow a kiss upon my palm to impart upon me your blessing.

“Especially since you know I very much want what you were offering? Anyone who takes
advantage like that is a bastard who deserves a good kick in the arse. They’re not good people, that’s the end of that. And no not-good people are going to get near you, especially when you’re adorably drunk and sexy beyond belief.”

So protective. And flattering. And comfortable to wrap around during one’s rest. He rubbed your back, too, with the most flawless, gentle strokes, which was most gentlemanly of him. And, to think, demons were believed to be vile and vicious creatures…

“Well, I will again extend my gratitude, for it is well-deserved. In all honesty, I did not predict the effects of overindulgence on my person.”

“First good drunk? I’m the luckiest demon ever! Getting to be there for that important first. Makes me feel quite special. I’m more than happy, volunteering even, to be there whenever you have a first of anything.”

Oh, that wicked leer in your voice, kept quiet and low-pitched so as not to insult my grieving head. And you are undoubtedly making the appropriate facial expression to match your saucy tone. However, if the villain were a lesser creature, that particular leered-about first would have happened; there really was no doubt. He had been shameless last night! Positively shameless. And wanton. A desperate and needy creature with blood that boiled like lava and an unquenchable thirst for the touch of the person now tenderly taking care of him in his hour of need. And it would have been… well, at the time it would likely have been a glorious thing, but that would not be the way he would have felt this morning, pounding head and rising nausea, notwithstanding. His demon was incalculably licentious, however, he was just as incalculably honorable. That was a very potent combination, indeed…

“I am certain that is the case. Now… is there, perhaps, some water in the vicinity? I find my mouth is harboring a flavor one might associate with the bilge of a fishing vessel.”

“Absolutely! One cup of water coming up. I’ll have to shift to pour it, so brace yourself.”

The demon flashed a small, understanding smile at Mycroft’s pathetic, pained groan as he leaned over to pour the water and, also, at the second from Mycroft having to sit up a little to actually drink it.

“Alright, love?”

“Yes. Actually, the water is helping. A little more?”

“Anything you want. And I’ll get you something plain and simple to eat in a bit to make that stomach of yours feel better, too. I’m sure it’s beginning to do you a mischief.”

That was actually somewhat of an understatement. It was as if he’d swallowed a live eel

“I would greatly appreciate that. However… perhaps, a tad later?”

Greg grinned and motioned Mycroft to finish his water, then carefully nudged him back down so he could spoon the hangover victim, enjoying greatly that Mycroft nestled himself firmly against his body and released a long and contented sigh when he was done.

“Thank you for this, Gregory. It is a most welcome balm.”

“Happy to do it. My Mycroft deserves the best I can give him.”

Mycroft… how easily the demon used the phrase…
“And thank you, also, for our evening. Though the price being paid is a steep one, it was greatly entertaining and I find myself most happy with the experience.”

“Yes! I’m glad you had fun, because I did. A lot! That was a great tavern! Lots of fun people and the beer was fantastic. Oh, I gave the money we won to Sherlock. Made him more willing to stay in his bed last night.”

“Ah, very good. The direct bribe is often a successful way of managing my brother, though it can become most expensive if employed too often.”

“We’ll just have to win more money next time. When can we go back?”

When his body replaced each and every cell with one that did not writhe in torment.

“We shall see.”

“Today? We have to go and get your machine, anyway.”

Machine? Oh, the car. That he was too inebriated to drive. Prompting Gregory to…

“YOU HAVE WINGS!”

Hurting lots, hurting very, very lots… no shouting when preparing to die…

“Liked that, did you? One of my best features, if I do say so myself. Those and my bum are right at the top of the list.”

“You… you flew me home.”

“It was that or walk and it wouldn’t have been a short walk what with having to stop and give you kisses every few steps. Not that I wouldn’t have liked it, but this was more… what’s it called… efficient! Yeah, more efficient.”

Wings. Large, breathtaking wings that let them soar above the countryside. And…

“Gregory, did you, perhaps, take a slightly longer path than required to return us home?”

“Ummmm… maybe. As the demon flies, it wasn’t that far back here, so I thought why not! Have a little flight to show my happy, drunk Mycroft a nice time. You liked it, too. Singing most of the way…”

Yes, the singing. Something else that was breaking through the fog of his memory… his humiliation had now reached horrifying heights.

“I don’t suppose I can convince you to forget that particular fact?”

“No! Why would I want to forget that? That was a lovely time we had circling around and seeing the sights with our own bit of song to make things lively. You’re unbelievably gorgeous in the moonlight, too, did you know that? That lovely pale skin of yours glows and your eyes shine… I can’t wait to take you up again for a longer flight!”

Apparently his agitated-swine singing voice had not unduly distressed his companion. Or the poor demon was rather hard of hearing… or slightly delusional… witness now his unprompted amusement.

“Gregory, at what are you giggling?”
“Hmmm… oh! Sherlock. He’s been pounding on the door for awhile and now he’s threatening to build a battering ram and punch his way through. He’s the cutest thing in the world.”

“What! I… are you hallucinating?”

“No. Oh! Yeah, I forgot, I sort of worked a little magic on your hearing so you wouldn’t be disturbed. This isn’t the first time he’s been yelling, either. Don’t worry, I’ll just send him back to his room again and he’ll find something to do to keep himself occupied. By the way, what’s a tailor and why is one on the way?”

“GOOD LORD!”

Hurt, bad hurt, stupid evil bad hurt, ridiculous useless head…

“Mycroft?”

“I completely forgot that the tailor is arriving to measure Sherlock for some new clothes and to discuss a new suit for me. I need to rise…”

Or not. Not was actually very good.

“That didn’t work.”

“I am most aware of that fact.”

“Do you really have to get up?”

Thank you for the sincerely mournful tone in your voice, dear demon. And the slight tightening of your limbs around my battered and crippled form. Only you understand the true depth of my misery…

“Yes. And we might capitalize on the opportunity and make a start on a suit for you for the function we are to attend.”

“The dance! I can’t wait! I’m a great dancer and we’ll be the best there, just you watch.”

“Yes, well… that is something on which to focus another time. For now, let me dress and find some pain reliever and a spot of breakfast before the man arrives. Fortunately, that activity only requires standing still while being moved about like a doll.”

“You’d make a fabulous doll. One of the really special, beautiful ones, too.”

How much more bearable was an alcohol-induced death with such kind words in one’s ear.

“You are a comfort to me, Gregory.”

“Can you call me ‘my dear’ again? Just once would be ok. I really liked that.”

Had he done such a thing? Yes, he had… and there should be no surprise given his utterly immodest behavior. Though there was nothing terribly immodest in two simple words. Which seemed to mean something to his nursemaid. Oh well, there really was no harm in it, was there?

“Of course, my dear.”

No harm at all. In fact, there was copious a quantity of benefit if one appreciated an excited, yet gentle, wriggle against one’s body. And he was certainly one who did.
“I like the way it sounds when you say it. And since you did something nice for me…”

Loosening your hold on me is certainly not nice, foul fiend. For your information… ah. I stand corrected. Yes, this is quite another matter.

“See? I’ll just float you over to your clothes and we can find something for you to wear. I can help you dress, too, if you’d like, and I won’t even peek. Much.”

Floating was a most relaxing experience. Was flying? Perhaps he would have to try it again to come to a firm decision. One should not judge when one’s memories are hazy forms beyond the gossamer veil of a million brain cells who gave their lives so that he might discover the wonder and peril of beer. And more floating should be explored, as well. One had no need to move one’s head when one floated…

Floating was still extremely pleasant. One could, for example, float to the toilet and floating was not dependent on line of sight and the one performing one’s floating could remain on the other side of the door while one accomplished one’s business. Once could float to one’s dressing room and spend an endurable century dressing one’s self with only a modicum of help from a closed-eyed assistant. One could also float down the rather rigorous stairs while no staff was looking and even be surreptitiously floated to the dining room, levitated so low to the ground that one appeared to be making contact when reaching a more populated section of the house, where more obvious floating might be detected. Floating into one’s chair and the chair gently floated back under the table to preclude any agonizing effects of floor-chair friction also very lovely.

And what could one say about the determined efforts of the demon to secure him a nourishing, yet bland and easily-digestible meal? One could write a sonnet to the toast and tea with which he was presented…

“Start with that and maybe I can find you a little egg or porridge if you can hold this bit down.”

“This shall be fine, I am certain. Thank you Gr… my dear. You are making my infirmity a survivable experience.”

And your human-skin flush when I use a particular term is a delightful thing to view across the breakfast table.

“That’s good of you to…”

“THERE YOU ARE!”

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO! SKULL EXPLOSION IMMINENT!!!

“YOUR LAZINESS IS UNACCEPTABLE! I AM
..............................................................................................................................................................................”

“Gregory, is Sherlock’s highly-welcome laryngitis your doing?”

“Wrong way around. He’s still going on and on, you just can’t hear it. It’s a handy trick.”

“I would agree. Again, my thanks.”

“You’re welcome. Just enjoy your breakfast and I’ll keep the little one company until he calms down.”
Mycroft smiled, and began nibbling on his toast, most happy to leave the tending of Sherlock to other hands for the moment.

“Your actions are not appreciated, demon.”

“Your brother’s got a bad head, Sherlock. He needs a little quiet right now.”

“Mycroft has a fat head, you mean, and that requires no special treatment. And is this enforced censorship the reason I was left standing in the cold and drafty corridor outside Flabcroft’s bedroom for an eternity? On multiple occasions?”

“Yep. And don’t tell me you didn’t like your little trips back to your own room. Because you did. I even gave you some flips and swoops to have fun with.”

“They… I might admit that the experience of levitation is a scientifically interesting one.”

“We can do it again, if you want.”

“We can! I mean… well, I suppose another opportunity to collect data would not be amiss.”

“There we have it. You had breakfast yet?”

“I have broken fast, yes. At an hour when it is expected that respectable people eat, unlike now, which is when the livestock are brought their pails and to their feeding troughs for their morning meal.”

“You’ve got quite the mouth this morning… upset John’s not here yet?”

“What! That is ridiculous.”

“Your brother’s nodding, so I think I’m right.”

“My brother is nodding because his neck is too weak to hold his inflated head.”

“That’s not nice, little one, and you know it. Try and be a little kinder, at least today, alright? Maybe I’ll show you a new spell or something if you give your brother some peace. Now, is there some way you can talk to John and ask him to come and play?”

“Of course. However, I have been forbidden use of the telephone without Mycroft’s supervision because of Prince PlumpRump’s completely draconian prohibition that the servants refuse to ignore.”

“What’s a telephone?”

“A device for speaking at distance.”

“Hold on… Mycroft, can Sherlock use your telethrone to talk to John and ask him to come and play?”

“Telephone, you buffoon!”

Mycroft took a sip of his tea and decided that, yes, a morning of peace and quiet was truly a blessed thing.

“On this one occasion, yes. However, Sherlock, I will inspect the telephone charges very closely for any evidence of another spree similar to that which lost you telephone privileges in the first place.”
“It is not my fault that the experts on macromolecular breakdown by stomach acids are found in four separate countries!”

“He said something about stomachs in four countries, love.”

Mycroft nodded carefully and ignored what he didn’t need to hear to know was Sherlock’s scandalized gasp.

“Do not address Mycroft with familiarly-affectionate terms.”

“Why not?”

“It will further inflate his head and I, for one, am not going to search for rope to keep him tethered to his chair as it finally grows to a size to make the buoyant force upon it exceed even his gargantuan weight.”

“I have no idea what you just said.”

“That surprises me not. I will now summon John. Prepare to amuse us.”

Sherlock hopped off his chair and marched away, with the demon lifting his spell once the boy was out of sight.

“There we go. There will be two little ones in the house soon, but I’ll make sure they don’t bother you.”

“You are a superlative caregiver, Gregory. I could ask for none better.”

“It’s my pleasure. More tea?”

And he understood the fundamental necessity of tea. Apparently, one did not have to be English to be positively delectable. Or even human…
“He really can’t hear me?”

John yelled again at the top of his lungs and Mycroft contentedly continued to sip his tea, which had now turned to a gingery-herbal blend because his stomach was apparently displeased even with the mild and meek toast with which it had been presented.

“That’s pretty amazing.”

“The degenerate threw himself into the arms of abandon and is now refusing to endure the agony he should rightfully suffer.”

“Greg, is your name Abandon, now?”

John’s cheeky grin made the demon laugh and Sherlock snarl in annoyance.

“No do not speak to him politely. It is because of him that Mycroft is not receiving his just rewards.”

“My dad had a hangover once and, I have to say, if he’d been Greg’s boyfriend, he would have been a happier person than he was. I actually thought he might die. Mum said she hoped he would.”

“Which is why your mother and I understand each other. We both believe that as ye sow, so shall ye reap.”

“Mum can’t sew, Sherlock. Remember the outfit she tried to make for me for the school play? I was supposed to be a tree, but I sort of looked like a green worm with some floppy worms hanging off of me.”

“It is fortunate you have use to me beyond conversation.”

“Thanks!”

“My point, exactly.”

Greg took the opportunity to check on Mycroft and see that he had everything he needed. If they went to the tavern again, he’d make sure that his human didn’t have quite so much beer. The poor thing was keeping a brave face on, but you didn’t need to be a genius to know his stomach wasn’t a happy thing at the moment. But that was ok, he knew where the ginger biscuits were and the cook had been happy to brew a special tea that helped when the belly was having a rough go of things. He’d make sure Mycroft felt as good as he could and keep close watch next time they were out for a little drink. Which, hopefully, would be soon. Like tonight. Or this afternoon, even. Anytime out with Mycroft, when they could laugh and play games and enjoy themselves was a brilliant time.

“So, what are we going to do today, Sherlock?”

“I must, because the universe has seen fit to torture me, submit to being pinned and prodded by the tailor. Subsequent to that, I have several experiments to conduct and the scabrous villain from the hellpits has pledged to demonstrate more of his magic, so that shall merit a notable portion of our day’s time budget. Are you staying overnight?”
“Yes! Mum and Dad are going out for an evening with their friends and I get to sleep here so they can be out late.”

“Very well. That extends our opportunities to study the foul creature.”

The demon turned attention back to the boys and wasn’t surprised they were being silly, as little ones were apt to be. Showed spirit and that was a fantastic thing for a little one to have lots of.

“Are you talking about me?”

“Yes, green and ghoulish thing that you are.”

“I’m not green. At least, I’m not right now.”

“I see you do not protest the ‘ghoulish’ adjective.”

“I don’t actually know what that means.”

“I am adrift in a sea of ignorance!”

“Want to take a walk underwater?”

Mycroft assumed the demon said something agreeable to the boys because the vigor with which they were trying to pull him out the library door was quite something to behold. Perhaps it was time to issue an edict.

“Gregory is not to be entangled in any scheme or plan until such time as the tailor has completed his task. After we have concluded that portion of the day, some form of play may be discussed.”

And how lovely was it that the howls, shrieks and hisses of disapproval failed to reach his tender ears. Truly, Gregory’s gift was a blessing he forever would appreciate.

“You heard him, little ones. We can play after Sherlock and Mycroft get their new clothes.”

“And you, my dear. Do not forget your suit.”

John gasped and pointed, substantially comforted by Sherlock’s kindly pat on his shoulder.

“Sherlock! Did you hear that!”

“They have been positively nauseating all morning and one would think Mycroft’s distended belly would be able to suffer no more of that particular insult.”

“If Mycroft’s in love with a demon, what would their kids be?”

“Happily, we shall never know, for men are not able to procreate with each other. Your knowledge of basic biology, John, is on par with your knowledge of quantum physics.”

“Well, with the right ritual…”

Now it was Sherlock’s turn to gasp and point, which was followed by a loud and vehement demand to be presented with any hybrid newborns for appropriate scientific testing. Fortunately, the announcement of the tailor’s arrival forestalled the demon having to continue down that particular path of discussion.

“Ah, excellent. I assure you, Gregory, this shall not take overly long, for I know you are hoping
for a more active turn to the day.”

“Active or not, so long as me and you and the little ones have fun, I’m perfectly happy. They can read, can’t they? We could read books if you’re still feeling poorly and I can rub your belly so it feels better.”

Mycroft was glad that John dragged Sherlock out of the library to find the tailor since even watching their laughter was making his head ache. And, of course, now he was simply dying for a belly rub.

“We shall see how the day progresses.”

Greg smiled brightly and reached out to take Mycroft’s hand, which he promptly kissed before helping Mycroft off the sofa. Which reminded the human of something that had bothered him all morning. Well, perhaps bothered was not the appropriate term, but it was bothering him so it would stand for now.

“Gregory…”

How to broach this without seeming pathetic?

“You know, when you think and purse your lips like that, all sorts of sexy things go through my head.”

Perhaps through the very large door that had just been opened.

“Is kissing, by chance, one of them?”

Or I might simply stand here and admire the lascivious smile with which you are gracing me.

“My Mycroft is missing his kisses? That’s good to know… I wasn’t sure, what with everything, if you’d… I didn’t want to make you uncomfortable.”

If there was a more lustful person with which to trust one’s virtue, Mycroft doubted he would ever meet them.

“I appreciate your consideration. However… I shall not be uncomfortable.”

“You sure?”

“I am most certain.”

Dearest Gregory, do not grace me with that perfect mix of anticipation and desire in your smile or I shall surely remain here, transfixed for the remainder of my days.

“Then, it would be terrible of me to deny you.”

The demon stepped forward and took Mycroft’s lips, carefully and tenderly, letting the kiss bloom slowly to a heat that warmed Mycroft very nicely. So nicely, in fact, that he took a deeper taste of Greg than he had before and trembled, both from the sensation of his own exploration and the demon’s small moan in response. Breaking away was near murder, but if he continued to kiss this luscious creature, they would never leave the library.

“Feel better now, love.”

“That I do. Your skill for affectionate gestures is most delightful.”
“Thanks! And yours are the best kisses I’ve ever had, and I’m not just being nice by saying that. It’s amazing how fast I start to get hard when you kiss me.”

Could there be any higher form of flattery? No, no there could not.

“Think we should follow the little ones now?”

“Ah, yes. I had quite forgotten about them, I’m afraid.”

“Look at you stroking my ego. You’re as good a stroker as you are a kisser, aren’t you?”

Dastardly demon. Now is not the time for an impromptu erection. The inseam measurement would be irretrievably compromised.

“Gregory, do behave.”

“What’s the fun in that?”

“I shall reward you with another kiss if you do.”

“Only one?”

“We may negotiate the quantity at a later time.”

“When we go to bed?”

Mycroft spun the demon and began pushing him out of the library. Was this what everyone with a… person… in their lives experienced? Somehow, he didn’t think it was and felt very lucky that he was one of the privileged few…

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“Why not?”

“Must I even say?”

“Yes.”

“I don’t understand either, Mycroft. Greg would look great in a purple suit! It would match his… something.”

John smiled widely at the tailor, who was paid a king’s ransom not only to produce exquisite clothes for the Holmes men, but to endure the process of producing those clothes, which was eternally a challenge.

“I believe the word appalling comes to mind.”

“Purple isn’t appalling! It’s lovely! I mean…”

Mycroft sighed at the demon who was using both fingers to point to his eyes and wondered how to phrase his objection in a more comprehensible manner.

“Gregory, consider our bit of entertainment last night. Can you remember an individual who was festooned head to toe in purple, whether it be lilac or violet in nature?”

“No, but nobody was wearing a suit, so I don’t see how that fits.”
“Your fashion sense is as pitiful as your vocabulary! And I see no reason why we are spending any portion of our wealth on dressing you, since you are satisfied to prance about like a nudist.”

“Hey! I know lots of words! There’s nothing wrong with being naked, either. Helps the body breathe, just like I told your brother. And, for your information, Mycroft says I need a suit for the dance we’re going to and I want it to be the nicest suit possible so I don’t embarrass him when we meet his friends.”

Mycroft blamed his slowed responses on his ethanol-promoted impairment and cursed that he was too late to prevent the death of the two boys, who had turned to stone, their faces frozen in a rictus of shock that was truly not their most appealing look.

“What? What did I say?”

“The elephant does not attend dances! He has never attended a dance in his humorless life!”

No, do not begin to leer at me, Gregory. Yes, I know you are slotting this nicely in your list of firsts, however, it would not do to frighten the kind tailor with the obvious appearance of your barely contained excitement. And lust.

“This is your first dance, Mycroft?”

“I would have to refer to my social calendar to provide a definitive answer.”

“That is a lie! You have no social calendar because you have no social life for which to budget time! And he has no friends, so I have no idea what that part of your blather referenced, buffoon. I shall blame your barely-measurable brain and its inability to decipher complex thoughts. Mycroft was likely discussing chairs and you became confused.”

“I’m Mycroft’s first dance partner. I definitely like the sound of that. Don’t worry, love… we’re going to have a great time. I’ll make it good for you, I promise. No need to be nervous about a thing.”

It was not possible to melt from embarrassment, but that wasn’t stopping Mycroft from giving it his best try.

“And in my lovely purple suit, we’ll be the ones everyone is staring at because we’re the handsomest ones there!”

The melted Mycroft solidified a bit at that, if only to continue the fight for taste and subtlety.

“You shall not wear a purple suit to the dance, Gregory, and that, simply, is that.”

“But why?”

Mycroft’s silent tears moved the tailor’s heart to such a degree that he conferenced with the most rational person in the room, John, and sent him to get a case out of his car. The battle was still raging when the small boy dragged the bag back into the house.

“If I may be so bold, Mr. Holmes?”

Mycroft broke off his discourse on grapes and aubergines to give the tailor a rather apologetic nod and gratefully accepted the man’s understanding smile.

“I believe we might find a compromise, in this situation. Your companion’s complexion would
be flattered by a variety of tones, including a range of suitable grey. Charcoal, even, for gravitas.”

Leaning over to the fabric samples he had brought, the tailor took several and handed them to Mycroft for inspection.

“Any of those would fashion a very appropriate suit for your event and would be well-accompanied by accessories of a colorful nature. I believe…”

Now, the man opened and sorted through the bag John had delivered and extracted several other samples of fabric and a booklet of color possibilities.

“A tie, for example, in a dark and masculine purple would be quite a striking choice. Normally, I might advocate a white pocket square, but there is no reason not to include one in a matching purple to add that additional dash of color to the more somber tone of the suit. And, of course, one cannot forget socks if one enjoys a touch of confident whimsy.”

Confident whimsy… that did summarize the demon most succinctly. And his demon’s eyes were already looking over the color choices and smiling. This was certainly not the worst of ideas…

“Yes, I believe you may be correct. And…”

Mycroft took the color charts from Greg and glanced over the offerings.

“… I admit that several of these would pair nicely with, I believe, a mature charcoal, adding the necessary livening to complement Gregory’s naturally-colorful personality. My dear, will that suffice for you?”

“What’s a tie?”

“Yes, Gregory is quite content with the decision. I shall leave it to you to coordinate matters and I believe…”

One of the fabric swatches was handed over to the tailor who smiled approvingly at Mycroft’s choice.

“… this shall form the basis of the beast.”

“Very good, Mr. Holmes. This is what I would have chosen. It wears very well and… is less prone to visible… mussing when worn by a vigorous owner.”

There was a reason this man, and his father and grandfather had been the Holmes family tailors of choice for what seemed a millennia.

“Then we are agreed. And the new garments for Sherlock? I do believe the sooner they are delivered the better.”

“Of course, Mr. Holmes. Has he any left from my last visit?”

“A few, but we are perilously close to witnessing his days pass while clad only in pants we were forced to purchase in the village and, perhaps, a grain sack worn as some form of crude tunic.”

“You believe yourself amusing, Mycroft, however the fragility of the clothing you insist I wear is in no manner my fault and I shall not stand for being besmirched when it falls to rags from an afternoon’s gentle activity.”

The three older men in the room politely stayed silent and allowed Sherlock his crazed delusion.
“And what of John? Why is the deviant allowed new clothing and John is left without? It is discrimination of the most egregious form and I shall not stand for it!”

Mycroft sighed heavily as John, again, took to his knees, with Greg next to him, consoling the begging and completely not-distressed child.

“Very well. John, prepare to be measured. Will a pair of trousers and shirt do, Sherlock?”

“John also requires socks.”

“I see.”

“Purple ones! Like Greg’s!”

The demon smiled proudly, giving John a big hug and Mycroft wondered if it was entirely lunacy to already want to pour for himself a large, soothing brandy.

“Very well. We shall see that added to the invoice.”

John and Greg’s shouts of happiness finally pulled a smile from Mycroft’s face, as did the slight caress to his cheek received before Greg dropped softly onto the settee next to him so John could take center stage with the tailor.

“Thank you, love. Look how happy the little one is!”

Anything that kept Sherlock’s shrieking to a minimum had Mycroft’s staunch approval. Hopefully, once the tailor departed, the demon would reinstitute his little assistance and return the world to a much quieter place.

“It is a joy to see him so jubilant.”

“And I’m happy, too. Gonna make you proud when we go to the dance. Actually, it will be the other way around, because everyone is going to be jealous of the gorgeous man I have on my arm. I’m probably going to have to give a few handsy bastards a good knock to keep them from trying to steal you away!”

Not that he would condone Gregory fighting for his hand… however, it would be a glorious thing to watch. His demon, of course, being victorious and savagely so.

“I doubt it shall be much of a concern, so your feral nature may remain safely concealed.”

“You like my feral nature and you know it. All that raw, animal desire focused right on you.”

Well, not that I would admit it among witnesses…

“Poppycock.”

“That’s a new word! See, Sherlock! Added a new word today, so now I know even more!”

Sherlock dismissed the demon with an irritated wave of the hand and focused, again, on directing the tailor’s actions so John was provided with properly-fitting clothing, unlike his own, which were always too loose. Why would anyone leave room between skin and silk when clothing’s only purpose was to keep said skin from becoming soiled?

“He’s so cute. You’re sure they can’t come to the tavern with us? I think the little ones would have a lot of fun in the tavern and they can drive your machine home when you’ve had too much
“I believe they are a tad young to pilot a vehicle, however, I am certain we can find some activity to suit everyone’s taste today, even if the tavern is not involved.”

“Ok.”

Mycroft was very gratified the tailor was a discrete man and made no comment that the human-faced demon leaned over to give him a kiss and drew his head down so it rested on Greg’s broad shoulder.

“You rest awhile, love, so you feel even better when it’s time to play.”

Yes, his ‘friends’ would be highly jealous, but it would be of him, with this exquisite man at his side. And he would consume their envy with a very large spoon…

Cold, wet… cold… if the experience had not been so utterly wondrous, he would be decidedly miserable.

“That was brilliant! Can we do this again tomorrow?”

John shook the lake water out of his hair and giggled happily at the few pieces of underwater plant that shook loose.

“Liked that? That’s a great lake for exploring, too. Plants and fish and other things… we can take a little stroll around whenever you’d like.”

Sherlock nodded as if that was something he had already decided and Mycroft had to smile at the difficulty his brother was having hiding his glee. Spending a few hours walking about on the lake bottom, examining the life and man-made objects that they found was certainly not the way he had envisioned spending the day, but he found he had absolutely no objection to it.

“Can we… we could take a train to the seashore and walk around under the ocean! That would be… Sherlock! Think of all the things we could see!”

Something, Mycroft noticed, his brother was already imagining. Now, it would be an effort to keep the two from commandeering a car and driving to the nearest beach for an adventure. And, Gregory would undoubtedly be more than happy to facilitate and accompany their escape.

“We shall consider that as an educational activity for another day. Now, I believe that everyone could do with a hot shower and a fresh set of clothes. Earlier, Gregory suggested an afternoon of reading and I feel that is a very appropriate way to spend the remainder of the day. Or, perhaps, we might find a game of some form to pass the time.”

“Ugh, sentenced like a criminal to forced interaction with you. Will my suffering never end?”

“I think it sounds fun, Sherlock.”

“I fail to experience any surprise, however, my experiments are far more important and your time, therefore, is best used in my service.”

“Oh. Yeah, I forgot about those. Can we do your experiments first and then read or play a game with Mycroft and Greg later?”

“I suppose if we finish with my vital research and can find no other activity to fill our time, we
might consider that an option, if only to have them on hand to acquire for us whatever our needs mandate.”

“Does that mean snacks?”

“Yes.”

“Hurray!”

John began running towards the house and Sherlock set off after him, leaving Mycroft and Greg to take a more leisurely pace back to warmth.

“How are you, Mycroft? Still feeling poorly?”

Surprisingly, being under the water had a soothing effect on his troubled body, but, now, he was not underwater and the discomfort was beginning to return, though with nothing near the viciousness he had suffered before. As was a tiredness that penetrated to the bone and made him long for a ride back home on very swift wings.

“There are vestiges that continue to plague me, but it is a minor thing.”

“Well, after a good bath, you’ll feel much better.”

“I have quite recently spent a goodly number of hours submersed in water, if you remember.”

“Yeah, but that was fun! Though, I have to admit baths can be a lot of fun, but they’re also relaxing and make you feel nice, so you’re going to have one when we get home.”

“I believe a shower shall do the…”

“No, a bath.”

“Very well, a bath.”

“And I’ll help.”

Oh, dear lord…

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“Gregory, I really must protest…”

Mycroft looked down at his bathtub, which was filled with water and… bubbles.

“Why? What could be better than a warm bath with lots of bubbles?”

A warm bath without lots of bubbles, for one.

“Now, here’s what we’ll do. I’m going to close my eyes and promise not to peek and you’re going to get that sexy body of yours in the water where I can’t see your bits, so you don’t have to be shy about having me in here.”

“Or, you could tend to your own ablutions and the issue of shyness would fail to arise.”

“I love it when you use big words. Ok, here I go. See? Eyes closed and I’m not even facing a mirror, so I could cheat and see something lovely in the reflection.”
Mycroft knew, absolutely knew, that if he asked the demon to leave, and meant it, Greg would do it. All he had to do was say he was uncomfortable with the situation and the demon would apologize and leave the room immediately. All he had to do was not get undressed, as he was doing now, and he could bathe in solitude. But, really, what fun would that be?

“There. My nudity is shrouded by a mountain of bubbles.”

“Perfect! Now, you can play with them while I wash your hair.”

What?

“What?”

“Wash your hair. That’s a great feeling, isn’t it? Someone washing your hair when you feel tired and sick? Don’t worry, I won’t get soap in your eyes…”

And, before Mycroft could protest, Greg picked up the pitcher he’d filled, carefully poured water over Mycroft’s head, and squeezed into his hands some of what he’d learned was shampoo. Then, he drank in Mycroft’s soft sigh as he began to massage his human’s scalp and thread his thick fingers through the sudsy strands of hair.

“What did I tell you? Feels wonderful, doesn’t it? My Mycroft looks like he’s enjoying this a lot.”

That was somewhat of an understatement.

“So, you just relax and let me take care of this, ok? Then I’ll leave you to wash the rest of you while I take a shower in my room. I’ll check on the little ones, too, so you can soak and rest as much as you’d like.”

“ Hmmmm? Oh, yes. Thank you, that would be delightful.”

Greg grinned brightly, hearing the contented tone in Mycroft’s voice and made sure he kept his massaging gentle, except when his hands wandered downwards to Mycroft’s neck and shoulders, which earned him the most beautiful sounds as he massaged the tight and tired muscles. When he finally told Mycroft he was done, the small grunt as an answer was exactly what he’d hoped for and he quietly snuck out of the room, so as not to break the mood.

Hearing the soft click of the door, Mycroft allowed his mind to acknowledge that he was alone and, further, that he had never been so relaxed, nor felt so pampered. Yes, baths definitely had their advantages over showers, when one had a demon in the house…

When his skin was well and truly pruned, Mycroft finally stepped out of the bathtub and after a quick rinse with the remainder of the water in Greg’s pitcher, dried his refreshed body and admired the bubble castle he’d built, which had only lost two parapets from his exit. A quick flick of the toggle to drain the tub and Mycroft was off to find his clothes and remember, as he buttoned his shirt, that if the demon hadn’t stolen clothes from his wardrobe, then he would have nothing into which to change. The knowledge that Greg would gladly walk naked through the halls seeking garments, propelled Mycroft to gather an armful of clothing and make a preemptive delivery.

A polite knock on the demon’s bedroom door produced no answer, so Mycroft opened it a tiny bit to peek in and, seeing no one inside, but hearing the shower running, entered to set the clothes on the bed. As he turned to leave, Mycroft stopped and stilled even his breathing to focus on the sounds he
was hearing, some of which were his name. Said in a rough, breathy and… pleading… voice that hit a chord at his core with did very pleasant things to areas of the most private nature.

He should leave. Now. Actually before now, but now would do. What he should not do is open the bathroom door a crack to see… see if there was something wrong. Yes! A safety precaution. Nothing at all unseemly about that. And wasn’t it fortunate that the shower stall was very visible from his vantage point because… oh.

The demon’s body was breathtaking. He’d seen nearly all of it before, but now, totally bare and wet, he felt his breath catch in his throat at the beauty he was seeing. And that was before… the demon’s hands on his ample erection, doing such delectable things...

“Yes… just like that… please, Mycroft… your mouth… suck me just like that… you’re so gorgeous… on your knees with my cock in your mouth… harder, love… please, just a little harder and faster…

Yes, Gregory… let me pleasure you, even if it is only in your mind.

“So good… just a little deeper… just a little… oh, right there… lick me like that again… now, suck me… hard, love… suck me fast and hard… feels so good… I need you, Mycroft… need you to make me come… faster for me, love… just a little more… please, Mycroft, I need… yes… oh yes… a little more… oh… yes…

Mycroft gasped when the demon’s body shuddered and splashes of semen painted the walls of the shower stall. His Gregory was exquisite… and, soon, he knew to the depths of his soul, that exquisite creature would find his fantasies fulfilled. His body would not forgive him if he did not allow it to do exactly what the demon described…

Closing the bathroom door as silently as possible, Mycroft crept out to take care of a little personal problem that had suddenly developed and compose himself before he again saw, and touched, his Gregory. Who happened to be listening for the bedroom door to close so he could laugh and thank every of his lucky stars for his precious human. Answered his body’s call, didn’t he? Maybe Mycroft didn’t know it, but his instincts knew what was needed, so he got to enjoy the best wank he’d had in… ever. One day he’d tell Mycroft just how much he liked being watched, but that secret would stay safe with him for the time being. That was part of the fun, wasn’t it? Learning about the person in your life a little bit at a time…
Chapter 9

“Good heavens, Sherlock. Are you gargling?”

After a shamefully long time, Mycroft felt he could finally interact with other people and not shame himself with visible traces of lust and residual sexual self-service. It had been a brutal task to calm his body after his… visual entertainment… and he was still a little off-footed seeing the luscious green skin and brilliant smile of the demon who was sitting on the library floor with the jewel-toned children.

“Your racist comment will not go unchallenged, human!”

“Have you suffered some form of brain injury, brother dear?”

And do still your sinuously re-shifting body as you make room for me in front of the fire you dire and wicked demon. Such wanton repositioning should be illegal. Something I shall contemplate as I take my place near your warm and enticing form.

“Well, you see, Mycroft, we’re demons and you said Sherlock was gargling when he was actually speaking demon, so that’s why he got a little hysterical. Not that Sherlock needs a reason to get hysterical, but there you have it.”

“Ah, thank you, John. I do offer my most sincere apologies. The language has such a… complex sound.”

“Sherlock’s great at it, though! I’m not because you need a really limber tongue and I don’t talk as much as Sherlock does, so his tongue is a lot more limber than mine. Greg’s teaching us about his home and if we ever get to visit we need to be able to talk to people.”

“I see…”

Mycroft cut a glance over to the demon who was beaming with pride as Sherlock let loose another string of mismatched, virtually vowel-free syllables.

“Gregory?”

“Isn’t he amazing? I say something and he gets it almost immediately!”

And isn’t your joy in your protégé all the better when you celebrate it by wrapping your arm around me and sliding slightly to press our bodies together in an undisguised affectionate gesture? I believe it is…

“I find it likely that John’s assessment as to the root of Sherlock’s linguistic talent is not far from the mark, though, my brother has shown a facility for languages since he was young.”

“And you, love?”

“Mycroft can speak every tongue native to the inhabitants of a typical farmyard, provided they are slow-moving and well-fattened.”

“Thank you, Sherlock. And, yes, my dear, I have some small ability with languages, though I am not at all certain if I can manage such a robust tongue as yours.”

Yes, I realize my catastrophically poor choice of words and in no possible fashion require your
“I bet you can. I bet you can manage it brilliantly, actually. We can find out once the little ones go to bed. Little ones… go to bed.”

“Pfft… as if you can command me expatriate of the netherworld. Besides, you have already indentured yourself for the evening and neither John nor I are amenable to releasing you from your binding.”

“Gregory… please do not tell me the children have cast upon you some form of hex.”

“No, nothing like that. I just promised to teach the boys a few words and help them browse through the spell book you found.”

Mycroft wasn’t certain if laying his head on the demon’s shoulder was the proper behavior to demonstrate his opinion of this plan of action, but it did seem to prevent the headache he had predicted would rise like a volcano in his cautiously-recuperating head.

“My dear… I do not, in any manner, believe that to be a good idea.”

“Be silent, human!”

“Sherlock, though you wear the trappings of Gregory’s people, your species remains intact, much to the delight of the demon community, I am quite certain.”

“It’s alright, love, really. They’re already trying to steal the book for their own look, so, this way, I can make sure they don’t do anything daft that I’ll have a miserable time trying to fix.”

Sherlock and John both adopted completely insincere scandalized expressions and Mycroft had to admit that the demon likely had a valid point.

“May I ask, at least, that the browsing be unaccompanied by experiments with the spells contained therein?”

The fury that erupted from the two small boys prompted Greg to re-established Mycroft’s cone of silence, which earned him a very grateful smile from the man in his arms.

“Don’t worry, Mycroft. I’m going to make sure that nothing bad happens. I haven’t actually looked through that book very well, but most grimoires have a lot of spells that are simple and don’t do much more than light a candle or make the hair fall off a cat.”

“I do not wish to be bald, Gregory.”

“You are pretty feline, aren’t you? Sleek and sassy and I bet if you curl up in my lap I could make you purr nice and loud.”

That was something on which they could experiment at a later point tonight.

“We are sickened by your besotted prattle!”

“Yeah! I’m very sick and… need ice cream!”

“Oh… that sounds good. Me, too.”

“You, too, what, Gregory, if I am sufficiently courageous to ask?”
“Ice cream.”

Well, that was certainly not the destructive answer he had anticipated and wasn’t the night a better one for it. And he felt safe enough to signal Greg to lift his enchantment to better interact with the hungry children.

“Then let us retire to the kitchen and enjoy a brief refreshment, shall we?”

“No. That would require John and I forsake our appearance and we refuse to do so. You will retrieve our refreshment and bring it to us to enjoy since you are already camouflaged in the guise of the lowly humans by whom we are surrounded and exist only to serve us.”

At least his demon held him tenderly while villainously laughing at his plight.

“I don’t think they’ll change their minds either, love. I’ll help, though.”

Mycroft bemoaned the loss of his green god, but rejoiced in the gain of his handsome human. His demon was a balm to the eyes whatever skin he wore.

“That is most kind of you, Gregory. The children would be wise to emulate your considerate behavior.”

The twin rude noises from the little demons made the larger demon laugh and rise to his feet, extending down his hands for Mycroft to use for a boost upright.

“We’ll be back in a minute, little ones, and you just have to hope that Mycroft and I don’t eat all the ice cream ourselves and bring you back some… ground up bugs or something to eat.”

“The scoundrel has a point. Placing Mycroft in proximity to a palatable edible will ensure said edible meets a swift and masticated death. We must safeguard our victuals.”

“But, we can be demons again when we come back, right?”

“I shall insist upon it. In this form I am free from the stifling prison of the textile industry and I shall use the opportunity to test the agility of tails as they pertain to manipulation of fine tools.”

“What does that mean?”

“Can I use my tail to eat ice cream.”

“Oh! Good idea! We’d better get lots, then.”

“I plan to.”

Mycroft had to admit that his demon, though a willing participant in and facilitator of the boys’ chaos, was also a patient teacher and it was quite a relaxing bit of time watching Sherlock practice manipulating the spoon to scoop ice cream from his dish and maneuver it successfully to his mouth. John’s tail was too short to accomplish the task, but he had his own mission, which was using his spoon as a catapult, slapping his tail down to launch ice cream masses towards the small flying bowl the demon had conjured to keep the boluses from insulting the floor and furniture and which, happily, returned the ice cream to John’s dish to be reused or eaten and the boy desired.

“Do we have any more chocolate?”
No, John, they did not. The small container behind his back, helpfully kept cold by their resident demon, was simply an optical illusion.

“Fatcroft is hiding it because he is a gluttonous blackguard and deserves a thrashing.”

Drat.

“Yes, John, we do. Would you care for some?”

“Please. This is really an amazing day. Lots of fun and now, ice cream!”

Mycroft won a very impressed smile from Greg as he used his long, blue tail to hand the container of ice cream to John, who immediately began refilling his bowl with ammunition.

“And what time are you expected home tomorrow?”

“Oh, not early. Mum isn’t baking until the afternoon, so I can stay all morning and then you and Greg can have the whole house to yourself while Sherlock and I make biscuits.”

Was there a civilization in existence that would not recognize the sing-song of romance with which John inflected his words? No, that was an impossibility.

“Are we going to get some?”

How the demon could think of more food after four bowls of ice cream was something Mycroft couldn’t fathom. However… a bit of shortbread would have made a nice accompaniment to their treat…

“I’ll make sure you get lots. Mum likes you, so she’ll be happy to give you all the biscuits you want. She said she’s happy Mycroft found himself a real lad and not a toffee-nosed twat. I’m not exactly sure what that means, but she was smiling when she said it, so that means she likes you.”

Mycroft counted the seconds and scarcely hit five before the demon had sidled up next to him and clasped their hands.

“I’m a real lad and your boyfriend.”

Then it was the entwining of their tails in a most salacious, yet rather sweet fashion.

“I am happy you approve of Mrs. Watson’s assessment.”

The kiss Mycroft received was its own answer to that question, despite the boys’ shocked and nauseated shouts and cries.

“Inappropriate!”

“And sort of gross!”

“You, John, have been an ardent advocate for a romantic connection between Gregory and I, yet you find physical expression of such a thing objectionable? I am quite caught out by your hypocrisy.”

And quite caught out, also, by his own inadvertent admission of a romantic connection, which obviously delighted the demon, if the quivering tail wrapped around his own was any indication.

“Being boyfriends is one thing, Mycroft, having to watch you be boyfriends is another. Right,
“Succinctly and correctly stated, John. I am utterly horrified.”

Though not so horrified that Sherlock failed to use the distraction to grab the remainder of the chocolate ice cream and spoon it into his dish before John depleted their supply.

“Given that Gregory and I have undertaken no formal commitment, I find the foundation of your assertion somewhat faulty.”

“What?”

“The cowardly queen of custard is attempting to deny his amorous intentions. I am ashamed that even a speck of my genetic material shares common ground with his.”

“That’s a rotten thing to say about your brother, little one. Mycroft’s just playing with you a bit, anyway. Teasing a little to get a rise out of you, but you don’t have to say evil things because of it. Now, why don’t you and John finish your snack so we can start looking through that book?”

Sherlock glared, but huddled with John to lay waste to the remainder of the house’s ice cream supply, leaving Greg to turn his attention back to Mycroft. Which he did with a large smile and a quick peck on Mycroft’s azure-toned cheek.

“Silly little buggers… I wager they’re still going to want a big dinner on top of their treat and, then, more treat after they’ve had their food! They’ll sleep well tonight with those full bellies, which is good, because that gives us lots of time for all sorts of fun that little ones don’t even have any business knowing exists.”

This kiss was more than a peck and somewhat more centrally-placed than on his cheek, and Mycroft decided that his lips appreciated the demon’s flavor equally whether they were this color or his normal tone.

“You are positively lascivious, Gregory.”

“That’s good, right?”

That actually was subject to some debate.

“I believe you would think it so, yes.”

“Then, hurray for me.”

“And you will adhere to your promise not to allow Sherlock and John to use the spellbook as a new experimental platform, correct?”

“I’ll check everything with you first, how does that sound? My Mycroft has a good head on his shoulders and takes safety seriously.”

“That I do. And I agree to your terms.”

“And we can kiss until the wee ones finish their treat?”

“Well, I suppose it would pass the time.”

And allow him to sink into the bliss of the demon’s embrace, while not dwelling on pesky things like romantic connections and associations which bore labels and titles. It was quite the wrong time for
that, when there were far more enjoyable activities in which to engage. Certainly it was not because he was somewhat terrified to do so…

“Gregory, we did have a discussion about my hair, did we not?”

“It… it didn’t fall out.”

“No, rather the opposite, I think.”

Mycroft contemplated the flow of indigo hair that draped down his back nearly to his bottom and heaved a put-upon sigh.

“I think it’s brilliant!”

“Thank you, John. Your phrasing of the necessary incantation was impeccable.”

“Thanks! I thought I did a good job and when your hair started growing and growing I knew I did!”

“Is no one going to assist me!”

Sherlock had somehow flipped his reality so that his feet faced the ceiling and his head hovered just a centimeter or so above the floor.

“Hold on…”

Mycroft watched the demon support the boy, then say a few ear drilling words that brought Sherlock somersaulting back to his normal orientation.

“There we go. I think you said the last bit a little too fast and muddled a word.”

“Ridiculous! The spell is obviously incorrectly scribed and it was the author’s incompetence that is responsible for my peril.”

“Well, try it once more to make sure they made a mess of it and your bum doesn’t hover off the ground to spare your… what were they called, again, love?”

“Hemorrhoids.”

“Yeah, those.”

John started laughing, as young boys are apt to do when discussing bottom problems, and began braiding Mycroft’s hair just like he’d seen the girls do at school.

“This really is lovely hair, Mycroft. You’re very lucky. And so is Greg…”

Who had taken up a section and was studying John’s motions to copy on the other side of Mycroft’s head.

“I certainly am, John. Getting to run my hands through this soft, beautiful hair… I bet it would be amazing in the shower, all wet and dripping…”

Mycroft gasped sharply and was very happy no one knew the source of the surge of lust that raced directly to his nethers from that particular turn of phrase. Though… Gregory was smiling at him
most devilishly. That was nothing unexpected, however, from the foul fiend…

“I think you’re right. Mycroft should take a camera with him into the shower so we can see how pretty his hair is.”

“Why is nobody noticing my accomplishment?”

Sherlock was now floating upright with his arms crossed triumphantly across his chest.

“That’s a great job, Sherlock! Mycroft, didn’t he do a great job? Natural talents, the little ones are. I’m so proud of them!”

And Mycroft couldn’t quite decide whose smile was brighter, Greg’s or the boys’, so wisely decided to call it a draw.

“If anyone is surprised that I excel at everything I attempt, they are mentally defective.”

Greg whispered something to John, who giggled and leapt up to give Sherlock a push, sending the boy sliding across the room like a hockey puck.

“That was dastardly, John Watson!”

“Can I do it again?”

“Yes, but you must time my travel so I may calculate the velocity of my motion.”

With the boys now embarking upon another of their countless experiments, the demon languidly continued on braiding Mycroft’s hair and laying soft kisses along his blue beauty’s long and slender neck.

“You’re so gorgeous, I can scarcely believe it, Mycroft. No matter what, you are fantastically gorgeous and make my blood boil like I have fire raging inside me.”

“You are too kind, Gregory.”

“Not kind… honest. You have no idea how… honored… I felt when all those blokes at the tavern saw you on my arm. Knew I had myself the most special, gorgeous man any of them had ever seen.”

Which was more delicious, the demon’s sincere flattery or his tender physical attentions? Oh what did it matter… Sherlock called him a glutton and, right now, he felt perfectly willing to accept the title. And… perhaps… with a little more time… other titles that were on offer, though those be of a more affectionate nature…

“Maybe tomorrow, when Sherlock and John are away, you can take me around so I can see more of where you live? And I can let more people see how lucky I am to have found someone like you.”

Hmm… more exposure to the gentle and simple people of the village might temper some of the demon’s more outlandish behaviors. Or, it would frighten away the populace leaving a proverbial ghost town in their wake. The puzzle was a complex one to ponder…

“It is certainly a plan we may discuss tomorrow.”

“Yes! Are there any more taverns we can visit?”
“I am somewhat concerned about your fascination with alcohol, my dear.”

“It's not just the beer! It's the talk and the laughs and the darts and hearing the news and gossip. You want to know what's going, you pop into the tavern and have a nice mug or three of ale and you'll know everything!”

That was, if he was gracious enough to admit it, a valuable piece of information for the future.

“As I said, I shall give it all due consideration once we have deposited the children at the Watson’s.”

“We don’t have your machine.”

“Actually, we do, for the staff retrieved it for me. Regardless, there are others on the property available for use.”

“More machines!”

“Automobiles, Gregory.’

“More automobiles!”

“Would you care to see them?”

“Yes! After I finish decorating your hair.”

“Which will vanish when you return me to my standard appearance.”

“Uhhhhhh….”

“Oh, dear lord.”

“Don’t worry, you’ll still be the most gorgeous man in existence. And you know how much I love your pretty reddy-orangey locks.”

“Gregory…”

“Please? Just for a little while…”

Just when did he become so pathetically feeble-willed…

“Oh, very well. But I shall not sport my new coiffure outside the boundary of the property.”

“Thanks! I can’t wait to curl up with you tonight in bed, all of that luscious hair to play with. Along with the many, many other luscious things about you that I love to play with.”

Unrepentant seducer.

“We shall see, Gregory.”

“And you know how much I like to see, Mycroft.”

Sherlock’s crash into the sideboard brought the older pair out of their cocoon long enough to verify the lack of death, either of Sherlock or the furnishings, and prompted Mycroft to suggest a trip to the garage to allow Greg to view the family’s collection of cars.

“That sounds fun. I'll pull Sherlock along and when we're outside, we can really push him a
long way. In fact… Sherlock do you have any big rubber bands that we could use to make a launcher?”

“Ah, yes. That idea has substantial merit. The older vehicles have tires that require inner tubes and we may tie together a series of them to construct the device. Mycroft! We are now proceeding to the garage!”

John grabbed Sherlock’s hand and pulled the floating boy towards the door and Mycroft was thankful for the demon’s speed at restoring their appearance, although, Sherlock’s bottom hovering above the floor would likely prompt its own questions from the staff. Although… it was Sherlock…

“Now us, love.”

“Mycroft would not deny the thrill that ran through him seeing the fresh round of desire wash across the demon’s face when he was returned to his normal features.

“Beautiful…”

One very long kiss with Greg’s hands entangled in his familiar ginger hair nicely warmed Mycroft’s core and it was only the impatient shrieking wafting into the library that broke their embrace.

“Shall we, my dear?”

“Shall we, what? Can I make requests?”

“Gregory, do behave.”

“Maybe one day. But only when misbehaving isn’t fun anymore.”

And, now, it was Mycroft being pulled out of the room and quickly towards the waiting children for their trip outside. Where, Mycroft was very certain, Sherlock was going to be England’s most successful human projectile…

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“Hmmmmm….”

“Gregory…”

“Um hmm?”

“What did we agree when I gave permission for you to sleep in my bed tonight?”

“That I’d tell you how sexy you were and how hard you make me and how I love the way you smell and how your skin feels…”

Well, there went his attempted rebuke straight to the devil.

“You do realize we are not likely to find any rest if you continue to stroke my hair and trace the patterns on my body, do you not?”

“The problem being?”

Well, none, in truth, since a bracing cup of morning tea was the cure for many sleep-deprived ills. And he hadn’t actually asked to be returned to his regular appearance after they retired for the night had he?
“That you require rest, as do we all.”

“Sherlock and John aren’t going to be resting, now, are they?”

“No, since you gladly enchanted them to be able to converse with non-human creatures. They shall be prowling the house seeking rodents, insects and any other form of creature they might find for an extended conversation.”

“It’ll wear off by morning, don’t worry. And, it’s educational!”

As are the variations in your touch as you roam your fingers across this opalescent body. Fortunately, education was a highly valued thing in the Holmes household.

“They are young, Gregory, and require sleep to properly develop.”

“Oh, fine. I’ll make sure that any other fun they want to have happens well before bedtime.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. And… do we have to go to sleep now?”

If I can resist the truly distraught tone of your voice and pleading eyes, yes.

“We have a full day ahead of us tomorrow, I have no doubt, and I would rather meet it with the energy necessary to enjoy it to the fullest.”

“That’s true, I guess.”

“Oh, my dear, do not pout.”

“I look sexy when I pout, though, don’t I?”

Which is why I am begging you to forego the action before my natural bodily responses do their best to attract your lustful attention.

“We shall term it your sultry expression, if you wish.”

“I like that. Kiss to celebrate?”

Absolutely.

“Very well. If it will help you sleep.”

“I can’t promise that, but I’m willing to try.”

The demon leaned over, very careful to avoid Mycroft’s hair and pressed their lips together, letting Mycroft set the pace and taking care not to let his hands roam since Mycroft had actually consented to take to bed without his pyjama top so the demon could better study his markings and he didn’t want to make his human regret the indulgence. Though it was clear that someone’s hands wanted to roam and were being forcibly held back by the will of the owner. Maybe a little reassurance was in order.

“It’s… it’s ok if you want touch me, Mycroft. I’ve run my hands over you and it’s been ok, right? I won’t mind.”

Greg smiled comfortingly and swallowed the moan of pleasure as Mycroft thought a moment, then
tentatively ran a hand across the demon’s chest, followed by a trace up his arm and shoulder.

“That feels nice. Here… how about I do this.”

Now, Greg moved Mycroft’s hair and lay down, gently encouraging his human to position himself comfortably next him.

“Now, you can do as much or as little as you like and I’ll love every minute of it, so don’t worry about doing anything wrong.”

Mycroft stared into the demon’s richly-colored eyes and saw only acceptance and a pure adoration that had nothing to do with sex. Slowly and cautiously, he reached out his hand and ran it over the demon’s chest, drinking in the quiet, contented sigh he received as his reward. A response that emboldened him to continue moving his hand across the demon’s skin and, after a nearly-audible swallow on his part, move his fingers downward to Greg’s flat and inviting stomach.

“Is everything about you perfect, love? I love those hands of yours; they know exactly how to make me feel good.”

And, with no pressure or expectations on his shoulders, Mycroft felt comfortable enough to lean over to reinitiate their kiss, with his hand continuing to follow the demon’s muscles, savoring the sensation of the warm flesh under his fingers, flesh that practically cried out for his touch… so firm, yet yielding… except for…

“Oh, my dear…I do apologize.”

“For what?”

“I did not mean to…”

“Give my nipple a little rub? Nothing wrong with that. Carry on.”

Something he surely should not do, but, apparently, his thumb was not seeing fit to listen to reason.

“Yes…”

“Gregory?”

“Hmmm? Oh… I’m sensitive there and my Mycroft has an instinct for making me feel wonderful.”

“I… I do?”

“Yeah… so you enjoy yourself playing with your new toy and seeing what you can do to me because of it.”

Well, if a challenge was going to be issued…

“If… if you are certain…”

“I am, love, but only if you are. Don’t ever forget that.”

He would not. It was the most profound gift the demon could bestow and he treasured it like nothing else. But… his fingers were itching to continue their exploration and observe their results, which they did before his brain could intercede, slowly tracing circles around the deep green areola and rolling the nipple gently between his fingers, whimpering slightly as the demon moaned and his body
arched off the bed.

“So good…”

The sight of Greg’s tongue moving across his lips inspired Mycroft to suck his thumb a moment and rub it gently across the nub of sensitized skin, marveling at how the tight flesh pebbled even more firmly with the extra stimulation. And his demon was provided with two nipples, was he not…

“How can you… so perfect…”

This was power… this was truly the feeling of power. With a simple touch he had this glorious creature in the palm of his hand… under his control… writhing at his demand…

“More… could you…please…”

When he was ready, to, yes. A few more moments of feather-light contact was a pleasant thing and didn’t it make the demon beg so delightfully…

“Mycroft… please…”

So polite, so deserving of a reward… and, thank you, my dear, for undulating like a serpent from the small pinches I deigned to give you…

“You are magnificent, Gregory… truly, you are stunning…”

Especially when you look at me with your beautiful eyes, which are darker and more captivating than ever I have seen them.

“A…again?”

“If I desire it.”

“Please…”

How could he deny his demon when he was trembling so beautifully with need? And a tiny twist with his pinch produced such lovely music from his Gregory’s perfect lips. Music which soared from only the lightest flick of his tongue.

“Mycroft… I… more? Please, I beg you…”

This was… phenomenal. His own body was burning with a heat that was both powerful and frightening and it only skyrocketed seeing the demon’s hands repeatedly reach for something that was not at all happy to be ignored and was threatening to burst from the loose pyjama bottoms.

“Do not restrain yourself, Gregory. Sh…show me the heights your passion can reach.”

The demon’s eyes snapped open and he groaned loudly as he drew out his swollen cock and began to stroke it fast and hard, moaning softly and, finally, crying out as his orgasm crashed through him coating his hand with semen that Mycroft felt a tremendous and primal urge to lean in and taste, though he held himself back to focus on his demon’s return to reality.

“I… that was… so perfect. So bloody perfect and… I… it felt so… indescribable…”

Something Mycroft was experiencing as he took in the full sight of the sated demon, with the contented smile, his softening, glistening cock and play-darkened nipples.
“You alright, love?”

Mycroft looked into the demon’s heavy-lidded eyes, so brimming with satisfaction and affection that any post-activity unease burned away from his soul like a snowflake in an open flame.

“I am. That was… you are breathtaking.”

“My Mycroft knows what I need and gives it to me… I still can’t describe how good that felt. Thank you, love. Do you… want me to…”

Greg’s clean hand reached over and lightly ran along his human’s inner thigh, removing it without hesitation when Mycroft shook his head no.

“I am content with what we have already shared.”

“And that’s all I ever want, Mycroft… for you to be happy. So, I’ll get tidied up and we can…”

“I shall tend to your cleansing.”

“It’s alright, love. You just rest and…”

“Nonsense. Continue to bask in your sexual glow and I will remove the less comfortable aspects so we may rest.’

Greg almost opened his mouth to argue again, but noticed the slightly strained and needy look in Mycroft’s eyes and, instead, smiled and made a ‘be my guest’ gesture, pointedly not laughing when his human dashed towards the bathroom. It wouldn’t be too long before his Mycroft made it back to bed, if he had to wager, but he could only hope his dear one remembered the wet flannel he supposedly went in there to get. Cold semen wasn’t nearly as tasty as warm and one day… when his Mycroft was ready… he’d get nice warm snack from the best possible source. Life was good…
Chapter 10

“There’s John’s house!”

Mycroft sighed heavily and endured the loud ‘YAY!’ from John and the demon, who both jumped out of the car after it stopped and began running for the door, leaving Mycroft and Sherlock to follow at a proper pace after a shared nod to acknowledge their correct view on issues such as pointless running and excited exclamations.

“And look who it is… come to see our John home safely?”

Mycroft was a step too slow to prevent any conversation between the demon and John’s mother and only yelped slightly when Greg snaked an arm around his waist when he drew alongside.

“Yes, ma’am. Can’t be too careful with the little ones. Besides things with claws and teeth that might snatch them up, they could see something interesting, scamper along after it and get lost forever in some labyrinth someone’s got lying around!”

It was a fortunate thing his demon was a fantastically handsome individual whose smile washed away any questions you might want to ask him, instead prompting you to stare besottedly at his luminous visage. Well, at least in his case. For the woman at the door, the look, fortunately, was far more one of amused indulgence…

“Oh, aren’t you a funny one. And you’re right about that, too. Lots of nasty individuals around these days who’d love to snatch those two and send them overseas to work for a living.”

“Whereas John might suffer that menial fate, our abductors would quickly recognize my physical attractiveness and strength of mind and sell me as a child concubine to a heinous, yet wealthy, paedophile. I would, at least, live in comfort until Mycroft determined my location and had the armed forces descend on the fortress to secure my liberation, as well as John’s who, if I was feeling munificent upon my abduction, would have negotiated for him a job in the kitchens.”

“That would be brilliant! I could help them cook and eat all I wanted all day long! That’s a lot better than being a columbine. Thanks!”

“A columbine is a flower, John Watson.”

“That doesn’t make any sense. Why would you want to be a flower? You hate pretty things, Sherlock, let alone something pretty and dainty like a flower.”

Before Sherlock could launch into a strident and painstakingly-detailed lecture, Mycroft gave both boys a small shove to start them moving into the Watsons’ house and received a grateful smile from John’s mother for his efforts.

“You two are welcome to stay and help if you’d like. Plenty of room in the kitchen for a few more busy hands.

Now it was Greg that Mycroft took pains to preempt and quickly jumped in with a polite refusal, all the while, gently pulling the demon back towards the car.

“Well, you know you’re welcome anytime the boys want a chance to play in the kitchen.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Watson. I am certain we shall take advantage of your kind offer at some point
in the very near future. Come along, Gregory, it is time we make a start on our own day’s activities.”

With another cordial smile at the woman who was giving him a very presumptuously-knowing grin, Mycroft tugged Greg along back to the car before the demon could go ahead with the plan he seemed to be concocting, which undoubtedly involved one kitchen, two rambunctious children, a surplus of baking ingredients and a long cleaning-up session afterwards, and got them moving towards the village as soon as the car doors closed.

“Mycroft… you know…”

“We may visit with Mrs. Watson another time, my dear, and I am certain that if you wish to make biscuits or some other form of baked good, she will be happy to host you in her kitchen.”

“Yes! I love to learn new skills and nobody has ever let me cook before. I can put some meat or cheese on some bread, but I can’t make anything like what I’ve been able to eat at your house.”

“I suppose if you desire an introductory lesson, we could spend time in our own kitchen so that you might learn the function of the various tools and develop certain basic techniques.”

“Really? That would be brilliant! I’d love to be able to cook something nice for you. Give you a little surprise with a good meal. That’s a problem with magic, sometimes you actually have to know what to do to get the magic to do it for you. Oh! Can you teach me how to make wine? Or that brandy we have in the evening?”

“Ummm… it is not inconceivable, I suppose, for you to handcraft your own wine. I know it can be done, though it is not a simple task to undertake and the results are certainly not guaranteed. The same can be said, I believe, for brewing one’s own beer.”

“I could make beer?”

“Is that the entirety of what you gleaned from my information?”

“No… but it was the most interesting bit. That really could be a lot of fun.”

And, from what Mycroft’s mind reminded him from the one text he had perused on the making of handcrafted libations, a terribly untidy undertaking. Which, with his demon involved, along with the inevitable assistance of the two boys, would likely raze the house to the foundation.

“Well, that is an idea we might certainly entertain once we have further investigated the correct procedure and need for specialized equipment.”

“That sounds smart, but I don’t expect anything different from you. I can still cook, right? You have all the things I need already, I think.”

“Yes, we are currently provided with all of the materials for a cooking experiment and I am confident the kitchen staff will gladly allot us a space in which to work.”

“Perfect! I get to learn to cook and drive a machine… automobile. What else can I learn to do?”

“I suggest that we consider ideas on an individual basis as we encounter new situations that you would like to investigate. Perhaps you might make a list to which to add as you discover a new skill to hone.”

“Ooohhh… a list. I can do that. I’ll need things to make it, though. Are we going somewhere I can buy things to make a list?”
Mycroft weighed the options of asking the demon what he thought was required for the ritual of list-making then decided he would rather be surprised.

“I believe we shall find all you need in the village.”

“We can start on my list at the tavern.”

“Your single-mindedness is rather impressive, my dear.”

“You’re the one who started me thinking about beer.”

“I see… I am the villainous defiler of this story.”

“Well, not now, but last night…”

Oh yes, he had been waiting for mention of the previous night’s activities. Falling into a sound sleep in his demon’s arms, a soft humming in his ears after he’d released his own tensions and cleaned away the remnants of his bedmate’s passions… delicious. Waking to an adoring smile and a series of gentle kisses that ignited a comfortable warmth in his center… bliss. Having Gregory avoid the mammoth-sized elephant in the room as a topic of conversation for the entirety of the day so far… blessed relief. All morning he had enjoyed his demon’s considerate attentions and tender affections, but he knew, at some point, the subject must be raised. At least, Gregory was content to broach the subject in the fashion of jest…

“Are you offering complaint?”

“No! For the best time anyone’s ever shown me? I’m thanking you every minute in my mind. Couldn’t say anything out loud with the little ones underfoot to hear, but no, not a single complaint. If I could sing, I’d sing a song about how you made me come harder and faster than I could possibly believe only from a little nipple play, but maybe singing is something I could learn so you get to hear my song someday. I’ll put that on my list… learn to sing so Mycroft knows he gives me unbelievable orgasms. How does that sound?”

And, Mycroft had no doubt, the fiend would do exactly that and give his concert with an exceptionally full-throated delivery.

“I believe your kind words have provided me a complete picture and I am… happy that you were satisfied with the experience.”

“More than satisfied. You’re… what’s a good word… masterful! Yes! That’s a good one. You’re masterful in bed. Play me just right so I feel like I’ve got lava in my veins and my cock gets so hard it could cut stone. And, you know, whenever you want, you’re welcome to let your hands do a bit of exploring again. I like it, so if you want your fingers to wander, feel free. I won’t mind. Sitting here not minding right now, as a matter of fact.”

Yes, smile seductively and give a come-hither look that a femme fatale would admire. Cad.

“There shall be no lascivious misconduct while I am operating a motor vehicle.”

“When we stop, then?”

“There shall be no lascivious misconduct while we are in the village.”

“When we’re home?”
“………………………………..”

“I’m having a little misconduct later, aren’t I?”

“I have no comment to make on the subject.”

“I’m having a lot of misconduct later, aren’t I?”

“No. Comment.”

Though Mycroft couldn’t keep the smile off his face when the demon started a happy wiggling in his chair and giggled as merrily as if he’d found his Christmas presents. Was this what being… a boyfriend… was like? He had thought it a slightly different affair. A touch more… formalized and proper. But, perhaps, it was because he was formalized and proper. He had certainly not imagined time spent on the library floor having his hair braided or ribald evenings at a pub. And he’d harbored no expectation of this level of consideration and affection. Of camaraderie and companionship. Further, he had formed countless mental images about the nature of the potential misconduct in which they would engage, however, those images, though far more salacious, paled in comparison to the arousal he experienced from his demon’s simple attentions.

He had anticipated, realistically, to one day meet someone who was amiable, with tastes and an education similar to his, who, hopefully, would have an appreciation of some manner of carnal activities and with whom he could share time in a companionable manner. He had not, though, expected fun. He had expected to enjoy their time together, but not treasure it. And he certainly had not expected to be treated as if he was a precious and cherished. As if he was important and his… boyfriend… genuinely valued him and the time they shared. Was it his presumptions that were incorrect or had he simply found someone who gave him so terribly much more than anyone in his situation could expect to receive?

Ultimately, it mattered not, for he was the recipient of those great gifts, along with understanding, compassion and patience. And, none of that was influenced by Gregory’s non-human state. While that did hold appeal, for many reasons, it was not central to the attraction, to the happiness he experienced in the demon’s presence. It was a simpler thing. He liked Gregory. Very much, if he was to be honest. The demon was silly and bawdy and unbridled and, without doubt, the most delightful man he had ever known. And that delightful man felt the same about him…

“Positively perfect, just like my perfect Mycroft. One fine evening of misconduct… little or lots, it’s all fine by me, though if you have enough little, you end up with lots anyway, which is a pleasant surprise, don’t you think?”

Simply delightful…

Mycroft parked the car and thought a moment about where he should direct their meandering, deciding that a practical approach would, as always, be best. With that in mind, he dredged the recesses of his mind for the landscape of the village and where there were suitable clothes to be had. Gregory’s ‘coaxing’ of natural fibers to better fit his frame did not mean that said fibers returned to normal size once he had shed his borrowed garments and their usefulness to a less… fit… form had come to a sudden and mournful end. His wardrobe would never forgive him if too many more victims were sent to their untimely demise from being stretched as if on the torturer’s rack and that was a shame he simply could not bear.

“I feel it best we start with procuring for you a basic wardrobe. I believe I remember a few shops
that have men’s garments on offer.”

“New clothes! Do I get shoes, too?”

“Given the number of pairs of shoes owned by you totals naught, I consider that a prudent decision.”

“Yes! Clothes and shoes! I don’t have to wear them all the time, though, do I? Skin needs…”

“To breathe, yes, I remember. I would ask you wear a full set of clothes in the presence of the house staff or visitors and when we are out in public. Is that too onerous a request?”

“What’s that mean?”

“Is that too great a burden for you?”

“I get a tingly feeling in my fun parts when you use sexy-sounding words.”

“Gregory, kindly keep your… fun parts… mindful and obedient while we are in the village.”

“That’s harder than it sounds.”

“I know that you shall do your best.”

“My best won’t be very good if you’re here, though. I have one look at you and… there it goes! And with sexy words coming out of those beautiful lips… are there places to go off to have a quick rub if a body needs one?”

“No, that particular amenity is not provided in polite society.”

And all mentions of public relief facilities would be avoided unless a need of perilous urgency presented itself.

“Oh… well, that’s no fun. I’ll do my best, but no promises.”

“Thank you, in advance, for your attempts at cooperation.”

“You’re welcome. Do I get a kiss?”

Out here? In the open? Where anyone might see them? Well, it was not as if that bridge had not been well and truly burned at the pub. The quantity of physical affection he had exchanged with Gregory that night could only be described as plentiful… and the few disapproving looks they received had withered from either his or Gregory’s commanding glares. Well, his had been commanding. Gregory’s had been more… gleefully challenging… and he had little doubt, as did their detractors, that the demon happily would have settled the issue in a somewhat physical fashion and was fully confident that he would exit the altercation as unbloodied as he entered it, though his opponent would not be able to make the same claim.

“Oh, I suppose so, if it will encourage you to demonstrate self-control while we are amongst the citizenry.”

So, of course, his Gregory had to pull him into a kiss that set every nerve on fire and made his own fun parts veer sharply towards misconduct, especially with the knowledge sitting in his mind that he had yet to sample the demon’s truly smoldering embraces…

“Ok, now I’m ready for my clothes. And my list supplies. And beer. Oh! And food. You
must be starving, sleek as you are, and it’s been a long time since we ate! We’ll do that first.”

Mycroft was grabbed by the hand and dragged towards the rows of shops, with the demon using his nose to find an aroma that made him smile and pull his human towards its source.

“Food!”

If there were more ingredients than grease, potatoes and unnamable, once-breathing protein in this establishment, Mycroft would be greatly surprised.

“Gregory, if I promise to find a reputable restaurant for our repast, can we please postpone this particular stop until I can make good on that promise.”

“What’s wrong with this food?”

Botulism, trichinosis, giardiasis, salmonella...

“I… I have a taste for something… lighter.”

“Oh… but this smells good.”

Such was the diabolical nature of greasy, salty morsels of heart failure.

“You would not want my stomach to experience upset from a weighty and hard-to-digest meal, would you?”

“No… I’d never want that. Not ever, no matter how good the food smells.”

“And I shall not fail to deliver to you something pleasant-smelling and stomach-friendly.”

“Ok, and since you promised, I know it’ll be good. Actually, I know that anyway since my Mycroft knows all there is to know about good things. Good food, good beer, good kisses, good nipple licks…”

“YES… yes, thank you, Gregory. You are too kind. But let us keep our more private business to ourselves, shall we?”

“No bragging about things I do in bed with my Mycroft, got it. It’d make the other poor blokes feel bad about who they have on their arm, since it isn’t you, and that’s not a nice thing to do, is it?”

One crisis averted, though there would surely be scads more to battle as the day wore on. It was somewhat of a certainty with Gregory. Or Sherlock. John was his own bit of a handful, as well. Apparently, Fate decided his life should be rife with opportunities to meet and best the direst of crises… how lucky was he to be singled out for that particular honor…

It is best to be humble when one can. Now, shall we? I have spied, I believe, a shop that might have clothing for you.”

“It looks like a fun store, too, so this should be brilliant. Let’s go!”

And, again, Mycroft was dragged along, this time to the shop he’d pointed out and through its door, making a rapid double-check of his assumptions before deciding to remain. If the shop would not offer what they needed, then there was no need to subject the other customers or the shopkeeper to the demon’s rather boisterous nature.

“You were right! Look at all the clothes! Wearing them will almost be as fun as being naked!”
Yes, madam, I understand completely your scandalized glare, but do forgive my companion for having an adoration of life and joy that vaults beyond your wildest imagination. It is beyond mine, as well, to be truthful, but I am learning…

“Yes, however, try and remember our agreement.”

“What?”

“Let us see if we can sidestep any mention of nudity while we browse, shall we?”

“What’s wrong with being naked?”

Mycroft wondered if there was a lifetime limit to long-suffering sighs and, if so, how close was he to reaching it.

“Nothing, per se, however there are topics of conversation appropriate for public locations and those which are not. Nudity falls squarely within the not-appropriate category.”

“But, since you wear clothes so you aren’t naked, aren’t you actually talking about naked things when you talk about clothes?”

And closer he crept towards his sigh limit… time for a distraction…

“Oh look, what a handsome shade of green that shirt boasts. Let us examine it more closely, perhaps?”

“Green! I love green! Do they have purple shirts, too?”

“A bounty, I am certain. Do feel free to seek them with my wholehearted support.”

Which prompted the expected ‘Yay’ and the launch of a human-faced rocket deeper into the shop. Fortunately, a busily-engaged Gregory was far less prone to… scandal. There was more than sufficient time for scandalous things later this evening…

“Purple! See!”

Blindingly so, at that. However, his Gregory deserved nothing less than the most… vibrant… colors the shop had to offer. Perhaps, though, he would take charge of the shoe purchases…

It was a mountain of cloth that finally found its way to the till and Mycroft smiled at the demon who was practically dancing with excitement.

“Look! And it’s all amazing!”

Shirts, trousers, socks and undergarments, the latter mostly pattered with some form of ridiculous motif from various television programs… it would serve his companion nicely and was most inexpensive, so replacing destroyed specimens would not deliver him a bill on par with Sherlock’s monthly clothes budget. As mandrake-like were Sherlock’s complaints about visits from the tailor, louder still was his indignity at the suggestion he wear clothes that could be purchased readymade.

“I agree. You shall be both handsome and comfortable in your new garments, I have no doubt.”

And, yes, I may have been casting out a line for a small demonstration of affection so thank you for noticing and giving me the kiss for which I had been hoping.
“Thanks, love.”

The small clearing of the throat signaled that the necessary addition had been performed and it was time to settle the accounts.

“Ah. Thank you. Just one moment…”

Mycroft reached for his wallet and stifled his yelp of surprise as the demon beat him to it, drawing out two handfuls of neatly folded bills from his pockets and presenting them to the shop owner.

“Is this enough?”

If one wanted to buy the shop, then most certainly.

“Gregory… where did you…”

Mycroft’s line of inquiry died a swift death as two hands reached out to grab the money, however, he was relieved to see, the amount removed from the treasure horde matched what was scribed at the bottom of the bill.

“I’ve got clothes!”

“Yes, that you do.”

“Now, shoes?”

“Yes… shoes.”

Mycroft’s narrowed eyes didn’t faze the demon who waved at the shop owner and patrons as he pulled Mycroft out of the exit, in search of footwear. This time, though, Mycroft dug in his heels and brought the pulling to a halt and did his own bit of pulling to direct Greg to a small bench for a quiet chat.

“Oh, did you want to look at my clothes again? That’s a good idea, actually. I’m not sure I remember everything I picked because there was so much and it was all so lovely.”

“No, that was not my intent. Rather, I had hoped you could answer for me a question.”

“I don’t know.”

Well, that wasn’t helpful.

“And why not?”

“Don’t know the question yet.”

Yes, there was that.

“Very astute. My question is this. From where did you obtain the funds to purchase your lovely new clothes?”

“Oh! The money! Well, Sherlock showed me where you kept money, so I took some…”

Thank heavens… for one unhappy moment he’d believed the demon had developed a taste for pickpocketing.
“And I looked at it very hard and made some of my own! Don’t worry, I put all of yours back where I found it. I’ve got plenty of my own now, so I can pay for nights at the tavern and clothes and food and you don’t have to pay for it all yourself.”

Never again would he thank the heavens, for it was obviously populated in the middle-management ranks by hordes of blithering incompetents who would be immediately sacked when he made his foray to the Great Beyond.

“Gregory… are you saying your money is not real?”

“Of course it’s real! Here, see!”

Mycroft took the notes handed to him and groaned slightly at the sight.

“I did a good job, didn’t I?”

So very proud of himself… well, to be honest, he had never seen counterfeit money before, but if it was made to this standard, it was a miracle the nation’s economy had not crumbled to dust.

“Your eye for detail is most remarkable.”

“Thanks! I made lots, too, so we can have fun all day today and not have to worry about not being able to pay for something. Like beer.”

“Gregory… though it pains me dreadfully to say this… one cannot simply conjure money like a library’s worth of rabbits.”

“Why not?”

“Because… of sound economic reasons.”

“Which are?”

“Legion.”

“What?”

“It is frowned upon.”

“By who?”

Was there any direct road out of this maze of verbal streets and alleys?

“By those with authority such that their frown is taken quite seriously by the local and national agencies of law enforcement.”

“The lady in the shop took it and why would she take it if it wasn’t useful?”

“She did not know it was fabricated, now did she?”

“I would think she deals with a lot of money in a day and would know real money from fake money right away. So, my money is as real as anyone else’s.”

Did they offer conjugal visits in the regional prison? That would, at least, be some balm when his demon was taken away in handcuffs to begin serving his debt to the Crown.
“Gregory… if I ask you, nicely, not to spend any more of your money, will you, if nothing else, humor me in my request?”

“Then I won’t have any money.”

“I shall give you all you desire.”

“But that leaves you with less money! That’s not good, not when I can make as much as I like.”

Arguing with Sherlock suddenly seemed ridiculously easy.

“My dear… consider your own home. You do not simply conjure funds to pay for what you desire, do you?”

“Of course not!”

“There we have it.”

“We don’t use money.”

AAAAARRRRRGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!

“Very well… you simply cast a spell for whatever you desire, I presume.”

“Of course not!”

Severing one’s tongue was supposed to be a rather quick and relatively certain manner of affecting one’s death, was it not?

“Might I ask how, then, you engage in commerce?”

“What?”

“How do you obtain the goods and services you require?”

“Oh! Well, it depends. Sometimes you can just use a spell or a ritual or potion or somesuch. But, magic doesn’t work the same way here as it does at home. It’s… harder at home. For some things, at least. Most of the time, it’s not worth the bother. You gather what you want to eat, trade for something to wear or a bit of jewelry. Find somewhere to live and trade for things to make it comfortable. Use a bit of magic for a fire at night, sure, and to protect what you own… we use a lot of magic, but… like I said it’s harder. The stronger you are, the easier it is, though.”

“I see. Are you considered strong?”

“Me? No, not particularly. Not to be mean, but you were able to summon me. You cast out a spell like that, and you can only pull in someone who’s not strong enough to counter you. That’s why the spells to summon the really nasty buggers are miseries to work and you need to have a lot of power yourself to even try them. I’m average, I suppose, at least in the magic area. In terms of sexiness… well, that’s another story.”

Do not flash a wicked and tantalizing smile in my direction when we are arguing Gregory. It is decidedly unsportsmanlike.

“You previously stated that you enjoy being here. Is it because… your magic is, here, a more formidable talent?”
“You know, I never really thought about that. I just like it here because it’s nice. The land is different and it’s not so hot. I… I admit, though, I haven’t always liked what I had to do when I was summoned. Some things I really wish I couldn’t remember, actually… Oh well, nothing for it, is there? But you’re right, my magic does get a bit of a boost when I’m here. Or, maybe, my magic doesn’t change, but here is easier for it to work with. I’m sure you can figure it out since you’re the smartest man I know.”

Mycroft opened his arms and took his demon in a long hug because Greg’s smile had lost a tragic amount of its shine and it broke his heart to see his demon struggle with painful memories. It broke his heart, to be honest, and infuriated him, as well. How could anyone, seeing this happy and kind person, force them to commit a reprehensible act? It was barbaric. Unconscionable. Unfortunately, there were many barbaric people in this world and there always would be, but now was not the time to touch upon that particular subject. Now was the time for him to do his best to buoy his demon’s spirits…

“And, now, I have learned new things about your culture, something for which I am greatly pleased. I would very much like to learn even more, if you are amenable such a thing.”

“Talk about home? Sure! The little ones want to learn, too, so I can tell you all lots of stories. Maybe, one day, you can even visit. Of course, I’ll have to keep watch for thieving bastards who’ll want you for themselves, sexy thing that you are.”

That was almost the familiar, scold-worthy leer, yet there remained a faint touch of shadow in his demon’s smile, so Mycroft decided to declare partial victory and committed himself to achieving total grin luminosity before they left the village. Anything less would be decidedly non-Holmesian. And a terrible showing of being a… perceived boyfriend.

“I am certain that if the opportunity arises, an exploration of your home would be a most enjoyable thing. Now, I believe the next item on our agenda was shoes?”

“Yes! And I have lots of money, so I can buy lots of pairs in lots of colors to match my clothes.”

And back to the starting point of the conversation. Perhaps a stop at the pub wasn’t the worst possible way to end their day. The likelihood of needing a soothing beverage at that point was undoubtedly going to be high…
The twelve bags of goods and two humans arrived back home and they were just nearing the completion of unloading the car when two smaller humans arrived, laden with baked goods and a few jars of homemade jam.

“Ugh… the redolence of inebriation is thick upon you.”

“Mycroft and I went to the tavern! They have great beer and I had a few while we had a little to eat and played some darts. Not Mycroft, though, because he turned a bit green when he smelled the beer and he’s had enough bad stomachs for awhile. And that was after we had a brilliant time shopping! I got lots of clothes and shoes and books and toys…”

Ah, the shopping… there could not exist anywhere anyone so enthusiastic about… everything… as his demon. The shoe experience was one that probably made the somewhat aged and taciturn shopkeeper smile for the first time in a decade. And watching his Gregory gathering armfuls of books with the rapture of the most committed bibliophile, was an unequivocal delight. Then it was the toy shop… perhaps he had tried to distract Gregory from that particular establishment, but it was as if it possessed its own magic and lured the demon through its doors for what became one of the most enjoyable hours of time imaginable. The brightly colored toys and games had absolutely captivated his companion and Gregory filled three large bags with items he felt the boys would enjoy and that could be shared to include them all.

“Toys!”

“Lots! I’ll tell you, John, Mycroft is the best toy shopper, too, because he finds all sorts of wonderful things and when he asked, the shopkeeper let me play with them to see how much fun they were. And I bought everything I played with because it was all amazing!”

What was truly amazing was how the promise to purchase any opened packages opened wide the shop for his Gregory’s entertainment. Or perhaps not… it was rather easy to predict just how many boxes would be opened and dolls re-dressed seeing the shining eyes of the extremely stunning, and stunned, man. And, from John’s gleeful expression, he was visualizing the whole escapade and couldn’t wait to make himself a part of it.

“And we’ve got biscuits, so we can eat biscuits and play with toys and…”

John’s excitement had him vibrating so strongly he apparently lost the ability to talk, so decided to simply snatch the remaining shopping bag and race towards the house, teetering between staying vertical and toppling over from being overburdened with toys and snacks. Luckily an equally-excited demon was running at his side, keeping the boy from an unfortunate encounter with a mouthful of dirt.

“They are both childish and insane.”

“Perhaps, brother dear, yet we value them, still.”

Sherlock looked up at Mycroft and scowled, but it held little heat. John was, in so many ways, his antithesis, but… if he did not have John in his life, said life would be a miserable thing, indeed.

“As one values microbial decomposers.”

“ Decomposers who are in possession of the majority of your day’s toil and will likely make
quick work of it if they are not properly supervised.”

“Yes, that is true. And Mrs. Watson allowed us to test only the smallest quantity of product while we experimented, regardless of the strength of my argument that we be allowed to consume a larger sample size for a proper scientific investigation into cooking techniques and the optimum ratio of butter to sugar and flour.”

“The scientific method is not necessarily adhered to by the general population, I’m afraid.”

“Hence my dissatisfaction with the human race.”

“Will an additional few biscuits and a perusal of our day’s purchases salve your discontent?”

“I shall not know until I try.”

“Very well. Let us join John and Gregory and we may begin your inquiry.”

Sherlock nodded and marched towards the house, leaving Mycroft to stroll slowly after him. What a dizzying day it had been. And, with the sun only recently faded from the sky, there was likely a dizzying evening ahead of him to be savored, as well…

It was, apparently, the new normal for their little group to adopt their more colorful personas when relaxing together and it was four highly exotic males who enjoyed the warm fire and the assortment of playthings the day had garnered, as well as a rather shameful amount of biscuits, though Sherlock and John consumed the praise for their efforts as greedily as they did the evidence of their success.

“These are great! You little ones really did a good job. Are you going to make more tomorrow?”

“The children shall be in school all day, Gregory, so I am afraid we shall have to wait for their next culinary endeavor.”

“More school?”

“We are condemned to that particular torture for fully the most vital and productive years of our lives, seeing them utterly wasted and leaving us only to weep for the lost opportunities to truly reach our full potential.”

“That’s not good. Mycroft, why do the little ones have to go to school if it’s doing bad things to them? I thought they were supposed to be learning.”

“Sherlock is being hyperbolic, as is typical for him. What he fails to mention is that the knowledge he acquires through proper instruction and guided practice have enabled him to reach the heights he has achieved in his own scientific pursuits.”

“Oh. Sherlock, quit being hyperbolic. You put a scare into me.”

Sherlock’s rather moist pff made John giggle and take a second to poke Sherlock’s carefully-constructed tower to completely undermine its architectural integrity.

“Down she goes!”

“That was villainous, John Watson.”
“Now you can make another one! This building set is great and look at all the little people and not-people we can make houses and castles and forts for.”

John grabbed up handfuls of the various figures of people, animals, aliens and, oddly, vegetables and waved them like he was showing off his horde of gold, earning a smile and hair-ruffle from the demon.

“Sherlock can probably build an amazing castle! Or a lot of little shops like we visited today. Or both! I got two building sets, so you could make a castle and a little village around it. We can draw a crown on one of the people or animals and make them the king. And I got lots of little automobiles, so we’ll need space for them to drive around…”

Mycroft leaned back and sipped the tea he’d collected during their biscuit binge, heaving a silent sigh that his tail had, once again, taken matters in its own proverbial hands and begun stroking his demon’s back as the next round of construction began, both boys commencing with their loudly proclaimed intentions and demands for this or that item to start their masterpieces. Watching his demon and the children was a joy in and of itself. Such absolute commitment to a task that had no purpose but to entertain and make the time they spent together a blessed occasion.

“We shall begin the construction and what remains unfinished shall be considered sacrosanct by the servants else they suffer the lashing of my tongue.”

“I shall pass along your directive verbatim, brother. I am certain we shall be fanned very effectively this night from the quaking of the staff.”

“*Something* should make them quake in fear. Your lax hand certainly does not do the deed. They are likely stealing us blind and fornicating in the butler’s pantry when they should be doing their contracted work.”

“Mycroft, you want to show me this butler’s pantry?”

Such a debauched smile… did his demon have no sense of decency? And could he hope that Gregory never attained any during their time together?

“I regret to inform you that Sherlock paints a very distorted picture of the dynamic of our household.”

“Oh, well, that’s no fun. I suppose we’ll just have to have our nice time in your bed like we usually do. Not that I’m complaining, mind you.”

Sherlock and John shrieked in horror, but Mycroft enjoyed a warm flow of electricity to parts unmentionable from the slow, soft and lingering kiss laid upon his cheek.

“Now, now, Gregory… there is no need to scandalize the children.”

“They’re strong, they can handle a little scandal. That rhymed!”

Something for which Mycroft found himself rewarded with another kiss and a gentle squeeze, not that he would ever mention his utter lack of merit for the prize.

“Cease your romantic natterings and libidinous gropings! We have more important things to do! I require some semblance of grass and we need to craft channels for the moat for the castle. Make haste and obtain for me that which I need.”

“We need juice, too! And find out what time we can have dinner because I’m hungry.”
“You consumed fully half your body weight in baked goods, John. Surely you cannot have enough room in your stomach for a further assault.”

“Sure I can, Mycroft! I don’t know if you know this, but there a big tube connected to your stomach and, right now, all my biscuits are packed in there waiting for me to poop them out later. So, there’s plenty of room in my stomach for more food.”

“John’s a smart one! Both the little ones are so smart…”

John got his own hug from the demon and gave it back happily. Then, because he was also a smart one, Greg hopped up and scooped up Sherlock for a squeeze, letting him back down before Sherlock recovered his senses and began to screech.

“And I bet Mycroft and I can find something for your water and grass, as well as all the juice you can drink. Come on, love, let’s get what the little ones need and then we can play one of the games I bought.”

Mycroft took the extended hand and accepted the help to his feet, along with quick peck of a kiss by the now pink lips of his demon.

“And I promise you, love, I won’t pick any game that the little ones can’t watch and join in if they want to.”

Of course, the villain couldn’t even begin to say that and maintain a serious expression. Dear Gregory fancied himself quite the comedian. Fortunately, he had sufficient somber maturity for them both. Someone in this household had to maintain decorum. Sometimes…

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Given that John was being permitted to stay the night, it was a late evening of playing and laughter before the boys were bathed and tucked into beds. Now, there was the matter of the house’s other child to tend to…

“Noooooooooooo…..”

“Yes.”

“Whyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy?”

“For the very reasons I previously elucidated for Sherlock and John.”

“But you’re already the smartest person in the world!”

Mustn’t preen… at least not noticeably.

“Be that as it may, I absented myself from the educational process on Friday and cannot do so again tomorrow.”

“But whyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy?”

Greg flopped down on the bed, spread-eagled and ravaged by a ferocious flow of flagrantly false tears.

“Because I am enrolled in the institution and that is what is expected of me. Now, I see no reason that I would return home later than usual, so you shall only have a relatively short while to keep yourself occupied and with your purchases today, along with existing household amenities, I
“am certain you will make very good use of the time.”

“Nooooooooo…..”

“Good heavens, I had not realized that after the rising of the moon, members of the demon race transformed into toddlers.”

“That would be pretty funny, actually.”

“Your grief is slipping, Gregory.”

“Oh yeah… staaaaaaaaaayyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy.”

“Much better. One should always strive for consistency.”

“I need kisses. Lots of kisses.”

“I shall provide all that you require to temper your sorrow.”

And, of course, the evil thing had to reach up and make grabbing gestures and flash his most come-hither grin. It would be utterly dishonorable to deny the creature since he had not a second ago issued his promise.

“Oh very well. If you cannot wait even a moment…”

After a second’s hesitation, Mycroft cautiously clambered onto the bed and, after another second’s hesitation and Greg’s encouraging smile, clambered further and onto the demon who quickly wrapped his arms around Mycroft’s back.

“I’m starting to feel better.”

“I am gladdened to hear it. Let us see if we might continue to bolster your well-being.”

A mental deep breath preceded Mycroft leaning in to initiate a kiss that quickly made his heart skip a beat and his body warm to a most comfortable level.

“That’s my Mycroft, everything as perfect as it can be. You could have your own school where you taught people how to kiss and make lots and lots of money.”

“I leaned my craft from a true master.”

Who is currently wriggling with glee in a most delightful fashion.

“Oh, I suspect you can teach me a thing or two…”

Was that a challenge? Interpreting it as one could lead to very lascivious things, which was not exactly a hardship…

“Well, let us see…”

Mycroft leaned in again and took his demon’s lips in a soft kiss that he let slowly build, tentatively experimenting with pressure and depth, as well as caresses and touches, until the gentle warmth at his core was burning hot as a glowing coal and there was no hiding how much either he or his demon was enjoying the contact. Moving his hips even slightly sent a shock of pleasure up through his spine and back down to settle heavily between his thighs. And weren’t the hands roaming across his back the most astounding thing?
“So gorgeous… my Mycroft is so gorgeous…”

How delicious was the hot skin of the demon’s throat… exactly as delicious as the soft noises his demon made when he kissed and, perhaps, licked that tasty expanse. Delicious, stimulating, exciting… and utterly frightening if he let himself think about it for very long because his body definitely desired a certain outcome and he was absolutely uncertain how to… bring that about.

“What’s wrong, love?”

Oh yes… must remember that one’s ruminations should not be accompanied by a cessation of sensual explorations.

“What’s wrong, love?”

“Oh, what a thing. I was simply… thinking.”

“About good things?”

Shining a spotlight upon certain trepidations was certainly not sporting…

“Perhaps.”

Yes, please do smile knowingly and caress my back with unimaginable tenderness, if you would be so kind, you scurrilous malefactor.

“Anything I can do to tip that to a yes?”

Honesty? It wasn’t always the correct strategy, but with his Gregory, it seemed nearly an imperative. At least for this issue.

“I do not know… I am not, however, entirely against your trying.”

Was that not the case? Without data, how would he be able to make a firm conclusion? Oh dear lord, Sherlock was becoming infectious.

“Ok, that makes sense. How about this… let’s get out of these clothes, just like we were last night.”

That was not an excessive request. Ground, in that area, had already been laid.

“A welcome suggestion.”

And one that would be acted upon with haste, not only because the faster he rid himself of his garments, the more time he had to watch the demon leisurely strip the clothes from his delectable form.

“Now, come here…”

Mycroft followed the demon onto the bed, heads cradled by their plump, cool pillows and let himself be drawn into another kiss that was all the more glorious from the press of body against body, with only a scant amount of fabric preserving the final vestiges of modesty.

“I love the feel of your body, Mycroft. It’s sexy and amazing and if it’s ok, I’d like to touch it a little. Just a little, though, but tell me if you want me to stop.”

His demon had run hands over his form many times, but not in this situation, when they were nearly nude, aroused and engaged in savoring that arousal in quite an intimate manner. However, the hand trailing down his naked back, while he was slowly and deeply kissed was positively thrilling…
“Beautiful. Just beautiful. Perfect skin, a perfect body…”

Not a bit of what he saw when he looked in the mirror, but his Gregory had never wavered from that viewpoint. Or failed to remind him of it. Often.

“Now, let’s see if my Mycroft likes this…”

One sharp gasp preceded a long, needy sigh as the demon’s hands ran across Mycroft’s bottom and the human wished his body wouldn’t tremble so much and undermine his controlled demeanor.

“I think he does…”

Who would not enjoy the feel of large, strong hands caressing… squeezing with utmost tenderness… while being kissed with a simmering passion that was making every nerve ache for more. Would it be… well, his demon would not have instigated an action that he, himself, would not appreciate, so… oh yes, that was a highly appreciative moan… though he was not entirely sure from which one of them it emanated. His Gregory’s body… it was majestic. Firm and yielding in the most sublime combination and so desperately desirous of his touch. Every stroke of his hand was rewarded with such an uninhibited response. Would… could he give more?

“Yes…”

Sliding his hand up beneath the silky cloth to touch skin… fiery, bare skin… glorious fiery, bare skin…

“Want me to take them off?”

Eek! No! Mustn’t behave like a startled church mouse! And this would mean more of that spectacularly glorious, fiery, bare skin to touch…

“I am not opposed.”

And, despite that lackluster endorsement, in the blink of an eye, the radiant smile appears and the undergarments disappear. His demon was… dazzling… and so… ample.

“Someone likes what he sees.”

“I would blind if I did not.”

“Now, come back here and kiss me. Let your hands roam how they like, too. I’ll never get enough of you touching me.”

And there was so much to roam across! The titillating base of his tail… and his bottom… his Gregory had the most succulent bottom in history and it called to his hands like a siren song. There was nothing in creation as eye-filling or as finger-enticing… except, perhaps, what was in front of said bottom. Something which was now free and visible and awe-inspiring and absolutely diamond hard… and, now, pressing against him firmly with the start of this new kiss. This new and different kiss. This kiss that held less… restraint. That was bolder and a sliver more aggressive, though still fantastically careful and alert for any possible displeasure or upset. In his arms was a naked, virile, eager… could he say lover?… yes, that would do… naked, virile eager lover and he could not, for an instant, believe his luck. This did not happen to the stuffy and staid Mycroft Holmes… but, apparently, beyond all belief, it did.

“You make me feel so good, Mycroft. Know just what to do to set me on fire. Can… is there anything you want from me?”
So wonderfully caring and doting. And gazing with the most adoring eyes, brilliantly tinged with unabashed lust.

“Would you… kiss me in the manner you have been wanting?”

Mycroft found his request honored quickly and furiously, his mouth taken in a kiss that pushed all thought out of his mind and replaced it with a pure and unsullied passion that quickly escalated as his back and bottom were tended to by his demon’s strong hands. Though, there was something coming between him and his full pleasure… and, just maybe, he felt comfortable enough to do something about it.

“What… what’s wrong, love? Did I do something you don’t…”

“Shhh… Gregory. I simply… have a need to join you.”

“Join? What… oh. Oh… oh Mycroft. You’re… well, I already knew you were the most beautiful man in the world but… wow.”

Mycroft twirled his underpants on his finger and gave them a toss off the bed before motioning Greg to continue on with what they were doing, an offer the demon instantly accepted. Skin… so much soft, creamy skin on his Mycroft. Blue or cream, it didn’t matter. His human was spectacular. Every single bit of him, including one that he was only now privileged enough to see. And it was all his to worship. All his to make feel good and special and happy… because his Mycroft deserved all of that. What he’d done to deserve someone like this, who the fuck knew, but he wasn’t going to question luck as good as that!

“You’re magnificent, Mycroft. Can’t describe how wonderful it feels to be with you like this.”

No, it was not at all possible to describe what he was feeling at the moment and he wouldn’t have been able to form the words if he could even give rise to the thoughts. His Gregory… so ardent in his passion. With hands of the most talented concubine and a heart so caring it could make one weep. Of course, right now, his hands were the most relevant feature and it was already a trial not to find release from the attention being given his bottom, simple as it was. Well, that, and the electric shocks from the friction from his… body parts… being rubbed by a wicked and decidedly intentional paramour. If he lasted another few minutes it would be a miracle… and somewhat of an embarrassment.

“I… I’m not going to last much longer, love. I’ve wanted this too long and I can’t…”

Not an embarrassment!

“I find myself in a s…similar predicament. However…”

“Yes?”

Truth. His Gregory deserved truth.

“I… do not know what to do about it.”

Yes, kiss me with a wellspring of understanding that an angel would envy.

“Do what you’d normally do if you were alone… if you want. Or… I can help.”

Mycroft could only nod, so strong was the surge of desire in his mind, which was vocalized in the most primal tones as the demon wrapped a hand around his human’s cock and began to stroke.
“So gorgeous…”

Not that he could prove that at the moment with his Mycroft’s face buried in his neck.

“So perfect…”

But he could prove that his human made the most amazing noises when he was having a nice time.

“So sexy…”

And when his human was having a very nice time, didn’t he just lose all that properness and let himself feel…

“So mine…”

Mycroft’s brain closed up shop to sit and watch the fireworks explosion in his head, which was continually fueled by the pyrotechnic blasts racing through his body as he clutched the demon tightly and made the lewdest noises imaginable in his lover’s ear.

“I do adore you, Mycroft. Whatever you need to be happy, I want to give you. Whatever you need to feel safe, I want to do. My amazing, special Mycroft…”

Greg nudged his human’s head off his shoulder and gazed into his blue eyes, which were swirling with abating arousal and chaotic emotions, and leaned in to give that very adored human a kiss.

“How are you, love?”

The same as anyone who had felt their body blown apart and the pieces scattered to the four winds.

“I… fine. More than fine, actually. That… I can find no words to fully express what I experienced.”

“Then don’t try. As long you’re happy, that’s all I care about.”

Happy was an exceptionally poor word for what he felt, but it would do until his brain could concoct a suitable synonym. He’d never understood, in truth, the extreme social focus on sexual matters, though the pleasure he derived from self-tending to his urges was surely enjoyable. It was, however, nothing like this. Not in any way…

“I am, dear Gregory. I most assuredly am. But… you?”

“I can take care of that, don’t you worry.”

Oh, but he did, because equity was the hallmark of a… relationship… was it not? It was not at all because he had a sudden driving need to prove he could provide his demon with the same level of ecstasy.

“Would you, though… would you be averse to my stepping in, instead?”

“My Mycroft wants to show me a good time? I’ll never say no to that.”

And thank you, my dear, for smiling so anticipatorily and washing away any lingering insecurities about just how to show you your desired good time. Fortunately, your anatomy has not flagged in its eagerness, so I am not starting somewhat behind the mark already. And… how phenomenal does that anatomy feel gripped in my hand…
“Yes… just like that. Love those long fingers of yours… oh yes, faster… just like that… ha! Yes! Rub that leaky business all over and… too good… little faster… grip just a little harder… not going to last very long with… your hands are… just a bit more… just a bit…”

There was a blinding intensity about his demon’s face when he released and Mycroft knew it was a sight that he would never fail to take his breath away. And this time, he could fully claim to be the cause, which was a profoundly powerful feeling…

“That was… those hands of yours… bloody wonderful they are and you certainly know how to use them. Come here, Mycroft…”

Something Mycroft gladly did since there was a kiss on offer and it was, as he had hoped, a kiss of the most supreme tenderness and affection. The physical delights his demon offered were incalculable but… the emotional delights vaulted even that great height.

“You are satisfied, my dear?”

“Want me to sing a song about it?”

“We have already ascertained that you lack knowledge as to proper singing technique.”

“True, but I’ll try anyway. My Mycroft is the best lover and there’s not a song anywhere written that’s about something as important and brilliant as that.”

Still mustn’t preen, though his crippling worries that he was in no manner sufficient to please this glorious creature were quickly becoming a thing of the past. Though, a few stray tendrils of insecurity were remaining stubbornly wrapped around his brainstem.

“That is kind of you to say, but a musical score is quite unnecessary. I am… gratified to hear your words, though. You are so undeniably sensual and I am only…”

“Stop right there. There’s nothing ‘only’ about you. You don’t show that part of yourself out in the open, but that doesn’t mean it’s not there. It is and it’s deep. Deep and beautiful and perfect for swimming around in naked. There’s nothing ‘only’ about my Mycroft. Nothing at all. You’re the very best, but, don’t worry, I’ll remind you if you forget. I’ll remind you very, very nicely, too.”

Another long kiss was what his human needed, so Greg made certain to give the longest and gentlest he could. How anyone hadn’t already swept Mycroft up for a little fun was something he couldn’t fathom, but he honestly couldn’t bring himself to mind that fact in the least.

“I believe that is a notable talent of yours.”

“I have one or two and I’m glad you get to enjoy them all. Now, I’m going to get something to clean us up and then I’m going to wrap my arms around you so you can have a warm, safe sleep. How does that sound?”

Heavenly.

“Most agreeable.”

“Just one minute…”

It was perfectly proper, now, to ogle the demon’s naked bottom as he darted off to find a cloth, so ogle he did. It was a majestic bottom, too, exotically provided with the decadent green tail just to the north. An incomparable creature and one who, due to his unchecked insanity, saw something similar
in him. A warm, safe sleep indeed. He had never slept so deeply and restfully as when he lay in his
demon’s embrace. And now, with the satiation of his first mutual sexual experience threading
through his veins, that sleep would be a blessed one, indeed. Gregory said he adored him… the
sensation in his heart said he might feel the same. Now, he just had to decide what to do about
that…

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“But whyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy?”

Oh dear lord…

“Yeah, why Mycroft?”

“John, even you must understand why Gregory cannot accompany me to school.”

“Well, I don’t. We have to go to school to learn. Why can’t Greg go to school and learn, too?”

“And I like to learn! You know that, love. Pleeeaaasssee…”

In light of his act of pro-nonsense treachery, John was hereby banned from spending nights in their
home which culminated in a group departure for school.

“Certainly not. Firstly, you are not enrolled as a student. Secondly, you have not the proper
uniform…”

“Done!”

Of course. One human male appears in a school uniform identical to his own. Grossly unfair
tactics…

“Let the foul beast accompany you. If it is possible, your school experience is even more dreary
than John’s and mine and heavily-provided with mental defectives and wastes of mammalian DNA.
I shall also accompany you and scribe notes as to the havoc the demon wreaks and that shall form the
basis of my treatise on the ill-preparedness of the human species to survive a demon assault on our
civilization.”

“The matter, I’m afraid, is settled. Gregory shall remain here and occupy himself in whatever
manner he pleases and we shall be off to school. Upon our return, we may find some amusements to
entertain ourselves.”

“But, Greg will be lonely!”

“I’ll be very lonely.”

“And the heathen may act upon his heavy-heartedness by enacting terrifying punishments on the
house staff, which they heartily deserve, but if there is no one present to prepare my afternoon
restorative, I shall be quite cross and take my revenge on your pale and flabby flesh.”

John’s miming of a man stabbing an enemy to death was admirably accurate and spirited.

“Our absence is but for a scant few hours and our staff is a made of stern stuff.”

Mycroft sighed at the two furious glares and the one pleading stare and mentally straightened his
clothes, standing straighter and taller.
“Now, let us…”

“What if… what if the milkman comes and Greg sees him and falls in love with him and they go off to start kissing and then get married?”

The demon had to rush forward to grab Mycroft before he collapsed in horror and applied a few hard pats to the back to get his human breathing again.

“How… how dare you utter such a thing, John Watson? Consider yourself deprived of any afternoon refreshment for a fortnight!”

“My snack!”

“You cannot starve John! He is already a homunculus and would disappear entirely!”

“Calm down, love. The little one was just having a joke. You know I’d never kiss the milkman. Won’t kiss anyone but you, at least not in a sexy way. It’s ok… stop your heart beating so fast…”

An impossible request! His romantic entanglement was being disentangled!

“Shhh… it’s alright, Mycroft. John, tell him you were joking.”

“John was laying out a perfectly plausible scenario and if Mycroft had a thimbleful of sense he would chain you to his wrist and keep a firearm on his person at all times.”

“Aww… you think I’m that much of a prize, Sherlock? That’s a very nice thing to say. Thank you!”

Sherlock’s rude noise was actually an effective anchor for Mycroft’s mental meltdown and slowly he began to climb the chain towards the surface of his personal ocean of despair. His Gregory was such a guileless soul…

“I shall contemplate the reinstitution of your afternoon nibble while we are at school. My dear, thank you for your stalwart support and I shall see you soon.”

Before Greg could protest, Mycroft gave him a kiss that, as expected, scandalized the boys, then hustled said boys out of the door towards the waiting car. For his part, the demon waved until the car was out of sight, then ran upstairs to lose his clothes. His human was going somewhere where there were lots of men, even if they weren’t milkmen, who would see how brightly he was glowing this morning and would know he had a lovely, sexy time last night. That might make them think they could have a lovely time with Mycroft and his human couldn’t hold off the grabby hands of all those lust-crazed dogs! Luckily, tracking that big automobile would be easy by air…
The demon sat high in the tree, watching Sherlock and John being unloaded at school and marveled at what he was seeing. So many little ones! All in their uniforms, running about like tiny mice, with his own mice walking straight through them towards the doors of the school because they were anxious to learn new things and were going to have a brilliant day. John was waving at everyone, too, and they were waving back! He could now say he felt better about their day at school, because all the little ones seemed happy and healthy and he was one to know that you didn’t look or feel happy and healthy if you were in a bad situation, so that was one lingering worry crossed off his list. Now, it was time to take care of the other.

Greg waited until the car drove off then worked a little magic to camouflage himself as he flew after it, though he had to admit that he didn’t like the look of Mycroft’s school as much as he did Sherlock and John’s. Nobody seemed to be having much fun or waving, which went a long way towards explaining why Mycroft had such a difficult time enjoying himself. How could you learn to do that if the people around you weren’t making the most of the day! Oh well, it wasn’t as if he didn’t have that well in hand. All his Mycroft needed was a little encouragement to loosen his corset strings and he had a great time doing fun things. Wasn’t it lucky, then, that encouragement was something he didn’t have any problem providing lots and lots of any time his human needed it? Yes, it was, and there were so many rewards to reap because of it. Seeing Mycroft happy was the best of them all, too.

Watching the human disembark the vehicle, Greg hesitated a moment, then gave a silent cheer when all the students started moving inside to begin their classes. This would give him a good chance to see what was going on inside the building and make certain nobody was getting any foolish ideas about his Mycroft, who had looked like a king walking into the school, with his shoulders straight and his head held high. A gorgeous, confident, powerful king who’d just had a night of great sex and a sound sleep and who could resist that? Nobody living and there wasn’t a single member of the undead hovering about that he could see, so that meant everyone would feel drawn to his human and that was certainly not a safe situation. Not one bit.

A quick scurry down from his perch and a packing away of his wings preceded Greg starting to peer in the ground floor windows, looking for a familiar face among the rows of people taking out books and pencils to start their day. After a few minutes, he hadn’t found his target and that was a few minutes where anything could be happening, so a quick change of outfit… and skin… took place before he did his own walking through the front door of the school to have a better look around.

It was big, that much was certain. And nice, he supposed. Not as nice as Mycroft’s house, but still nice enough to spend the day in. It wasn’t cold or drafty, either, which was important. And he could smell food somewhere, as if cooking was just getting started for lunch, which was also important. The little ones brought lunches in sacks, but Mycroft didn’t have a sack of lunch when he left, so he’d make sure before he left that whatever they were serving was hot and filling and tasted good and was nutritious. If not, he could make a sack of lunch for Mycroft the next time he came to school. It couldn’t be that hard, could it? There was lots of food in the kitchen and certainly no shortage of sacks…

“Young man, shouldn’t you be in class?”

If he could find the right one, yes.
“I don’t actually go to school, sir. I mean, I don’t actually go to this school. I’m looking for Mycroft. Do you know where he is?”

Winds of fire, man! You don’t have to glare at me like I said I was here to steal your wife, your money and the hair on your head.

“I see. You are acquainted with young Mr. Holmes.”

Very well acquainted, thank you very much, and in all the best ways.

“I’m staying with him, so if you’d just point me…”

“Come with me.”

Mycroft would probably be angry if he turned the rude man who just grabbed his collar into a bug or something, so he’d let himself be dragged along until he had some idea of just why this glare-y, rude man was being so glare-y and rude. Then he’d turn him into a bug because he’d have a reason and Mycroft was definitely the type of person who thought reasons were important things.

“Now, sit here and do not move. Let us see what Mr. Holmes has to say about this disturbance.”

Well, if the rude man was going to go and find Mycroft… oh, that was a nasty look. Fine, sitting back down but only because part of that nasty look says you’re going to be grabbing Mycroft’s collar in a minute and dragging him along your shiny floors right back here…

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Oh no…

“Mycroft!”

“Gregory… what are you doing here?”

Why had no one informed him the Apocalypse was scheduled for today?

“That was precisely my question, Mr. Holmes. Random individuals wandering the halls is not something I am prone to tolerate.”

“No, sir. I quite understand.”

“Then kindly explain to me why this person was doing precisely that.”

“I wasn’t wandering! I was looking for Mycroft.”

“Gregory… please. I… I believe my communication this morning was misunderstood, Headmaster. I told Gregory that it was not possible for him to… shadow… me for the day and I must not have been as clear in my language as I had believed. He is a dear friend of the family who is visiting for awhile and… Gregory only hoped to witness the workings of this school to compare to his own. I am very sorry for the confusion and any inconvenience it has caused.”

His Mycroft shouldn’t have to apologize for anything, because nobody had done anything wrong. He’d even looked into one of the windows to see his reflection to make certain his hair was combed nicely!

“I do not expect this to happen again, Mr. Holmes. Do I make myself clear?”
“Yes, Headmaster. I would not dream of causing any further disruption. If you allow me a moment, I shall see Gregory to the door and ensure he has transportation home. Come along, Gregory. Let us see if Driver is still on the grounds to return you to the house.”

Mycroft took the demon by the hand and Greg had to suffer another dragging, this time in the opposite direction from whence he came. And that wasn’t a happy look on Mycroft’s face. Still very kissable, but not at all happy…

“Gregory… I am very cross with you at the moment.”

“Why? I didn’t do anything wrong. Just wanted to have a little look around and see what you did at school all day. And protect you from grabby hands, though I already ruled out the undead, which is a good thing because they can be miserable bastards when they put their mind to it.”

“Wha… what?”

Mycroft pulled the demon into a quiet nook and tried to make sense of things, which, with Gregory, as for Sherlock, was not an easy thing.

“Gregory, despite the rather juvenile behavior of some of my peers, my health and safety are not at risk here, if that is your concern.”

“Maybe not health, but your safety’s quite the concern. No, I’ll put health on the list, too, because don’t think that all the eyes on you today, what with your glowy loveliness, aren’t wanting a piece of it for themselves.”

Glowy loveliness? His demon was mad! Flatteringly mad, but mad nonetheless.

“Gregory, I have no idea to what you are referring, however…”

“It’s… what’s that called… biology! Yes, that’s it. It’s biology. You’re gorgeous and happy and still smell of the fun we had last night…”

Mycroft certainly didn’t begin to lift an arm to smell his armpit because that was inexcusably gauche and he had enjoyed a rousingly hot shower this morning to take care of that very thing. Of course, his demon had joined him and, though further… sullying… had not occurred, the thought of it had been quite potent and… evident… from certain anatomical perspectives.

“… and, beyond that, you’re just radiant. You’re as radiant as a candle flame and if you don’t think that’s a beacon to those who don’t have a phenomenally beautiful flame of their own, then you need to study that biology business a bit harder.”

Mycroft blinked a few times and then a few times more while his mind desperately tried to process the very unfamiliar data. Radiant? Him? Utterly preposterous… though he might admit to a small feeling of… luminescence… today that was altogether new to him. And his dear demon looked so heartbreakingly sincere…

“Gregory… radiance aside, I can assure you that I am not a target for any sexual nefariousness by my classmates.”

“How do you know?”

Because he was considered as far down on the latter of desirability as an earthworm.

“I simply know. Now…”
“No you don’t. I can tell that’s not what you wanted to say, so that convinces me you need someone here to make certain today goes well for you. I don’t want you having to spend your time protecting yourself when you’re supposed to be learning. And I don’t think that rude man will be any help, either. I got the feeling he didn’t like you very much.”

That was something of an understatement. Questioning the school’s spending vs. income ratio, which was decidedly not a heartening one, unless one had an interest in enhancing one’s retirement fund in a rather disreputable manner, had not earned him favor with the headmaster or his secretary, though her point of contention might have been his verbalized observations on the pattern of closed-door meetings and mutual absences from the premises, especially given the headmaster’s very-married status. However, his revelations did exempt him from certain school activities and courses that were a profound waste of his time, which had, ultimately, been his endgame…

“There is, perhaps, some frigidity to the headmaster and my relationship, however, the man is not sufficiently stupid to allow one of his charges to be physically accosted in the hallways.”

Especially if that charge’s father was on the governing board of the school in which the hallways were located.

“Look how big this place is, love. There’s a lot more here than hallways.”

“That is suspiciously literal of you, Gregory, so I am assuming you have no further foundation on which to build an argument.”

“Oh, I can still build an argument… I’ve got a lot of talent for arguing and I’ll use every bit of it if it keeps you safe.”

Such a forceful tone… could it be? It could. Their first fight! It was terribly wrong to feel a thread of glee running through his veins for the occasion, but logic and reason were short-circuited, apparently, when one sported a radiant glow.

“I am safe, Gregory. I promise you that my welfare is in no manner imperiled by today’s attendance. Now… you did not walk here, did you?”

“Nope. Flew. And I’m not ready to fly back, so how about we go to class and you can go on learning. What class are you taking? Is it something fun? Are there extra books so I can follow along?”

Breathe in… breathe out. Repeat. No… that had no effect at all.

“Gregory… firstly, it is not school policy to allow individuals free access to its resources. Secondly, the presence of a visitor would inspire a bounty of questions, which would be its own source of perturbation for the school day.”

Especially about this visitor, who would surely provide answers of the most puzzling and intriguing nature and… oh, it would be a fiasco! Mental note made and filed – work with Gregory on conversation topics and acceptable behaviors for the dance, else his best laid plans were going to lead straight to hades.

“But I’ll be quiet and won’t cause any fuss at all. Besides, I have to check what they’re going to feed you and I might as well do that when they’re putting the food on your plate. Do you think they’d give me a lunch, too? I didn’t bring any of my money with me, but I’d work to pay the cost, if that’s ok.”

“You shall take lunch at home, which is where you shall spend the day. I and the children will
return by afternoon and we shall enjoy the remainder of the day together."

"Not if you’re ravished by thirty lads who can’t keep their hands off of you, you won’t."

While such *might* have factored into one or two of his pre-Gregory fantasies, the likelihood of the occurrence was of a magnitude that could not be discerned by an electron microscope. But wasn’t his demon simply a wonder to believe such a thing was actually feasible…

"I shall not be ravished; on that score you may take my word."

"I’d like to, love, but I can’t since I don’t really know the situation myself. That’s why I’m here! Have a nice little visit with you and keep an eye out for ravishers."

In all his life, Mycroft could not claim to feel so protected and adored, however, that was not a recipe for a successful day at school.

"And I do very much appreciate the thought, Gregory, I truly do…"

Why was the demon giving such a quizzical look?

"Why won’t you call me ‘my dear?’"

Oh. Because if anyone heard him there would quickly follow the dreaded *questions* and those were of the sort he was not entirely ready to broach. The ‘boyfriend’ cover story had in no manner been given flesh and, though *his* ability to improvise was incomparable, Gregory’s talent for espionage was an unknown variable.

"Because affectionate terms are not appropriate for a place of work which, with some latitude given, this situation meets."

"Oh. Then, I’m sorry I called you ‘love.’ I don’t want to get you in trouble."

The sharpest dagger cut so deeply as the feeling from seeing the saddened look in his demon’s eyes.

"Do not be sorry in the least. It was not for you to know and you are highly aware how greatly I treasure my term of endearment. Please, do not be distressed. I am in no manner displeased and would be most grateful if you would gift me with even a glimpse of your majestic smile."

First the cut of the eyes, then their lightening, then the slow growth of the wide and brilliant smile that had become a blessed fixture of his days. Mission accomplished.

"Perfect. Now, if you wish, I shall call my driver and have him…"

"Why? Are we going home already?"

"Not we… you. *You* are going home and…"

"I’m not going home until I’m satisfied you’re not going to be molested."

And around the garden we go…

"Gregory… go home. I am fine and shall continue to be fine, but I shall not have a successful day if I am forever having to introduce you to instructors and students, tell our story… or what I might concoct for it… answer the innumerable questions… you would not want me to lose a day of education, would you?"
His demon wore this frown as heavily as the last, but this one signaled that the next few words might be the ones he wanted to hear.

“I don’t want to make you lose a day at school.”

“Yes!

“And I appreciate that immensely. Now, allow me a moment to use the telephone…”

“No, it’s ok. I can fly.”

“Flying is not precisely unobtrusive.”

“It is if I want it to be.”

“Oh… well, that is good to know. And I shall not be long, Gregory. Why don’t you formulate a plan as to how our afternoon might be used? John shall not be an overnight guest, but he will share our afternoon and I know you have the imagination to craft something truly wonderful for the children to enjoy.”

“There’s lots of things we can do this afternoon! We’ll have all sorts of fun, and I can even give them a little fight above your house for a special treat.”

“Simply marvelous. Now, I must return to class, but… know that I shall be thinking about you.”

Mycroft contemplated giving Greg a kiss, but decided against it, again, on the off chance that they might be observed and strolled away in the most ‘I am far too collected and composed to be molested’ manner he could affect. Greg watched his human walk away, or, at least, watched his human’s bum walk away, then looked around to see if anyone was watching and changed his skin to begin walking after Mycroft. If all his Mycroft was worried about was other people being distracted, then there was an easy way to deal with that. Mycroft was going to be so surprised…

Smiling apologetically, Mycroft returned to his seat and opened his textbook after a quick look at a neighbor’s page, and that quick look was enough for him to miss the slight cracking of the classroom door and the scurrying in of the very green demon. Who decided that he didn’t mind putting his hands over Mycroft’s eyes and giving him a kiss on the top of his head as a greeting.

“Mr. Holmes! What has gotten into you?”

Shrieking and bolting from his seat was not the collected and composed persona he had been hoping to evince!

“I… I do beg your… and the class’s pardon. An insect! I received somewhat of a sting and I’m afraid it took me somewhat by surprise.”

Insect. A large and green insect who… Large. Green. Nearly naked. And here. Oh no… oh no no no no…

“Very well. But do try to contain yourself in the future. Do you require a visit to the nurse?”

“No… thank you? I shall be… I am fine.”

But you are obviously not if you have yet to start running in terror. Though… the same could be said for the cloddish dolts still sitting at their desks.
“Then why are you continuing to stand?”

“Oh. Yes.”

Mycroft dropped back into his seat and hoped his eyes weren’t as wide as he believed when a loincloth-clad emerald-hued demon rested its incomparable bottom on the desktop.

“Hi!”

No turned heads. No curious stares in his direction. Oh good… Gregory was playing tricks again.

“Are you…”

“Shhhhh… they can’t hear me, but they can hear you and that would cause the disruption you didn’t want, now wouldn’t it?”

Ah, so his Gregory had discovered and capitalized upon a loophole. Really, if this was not so ridiculously aggravating, he might feel proud of such a strategic move. Oh, it was worth the honesty… he was proud, but this would remain secret from his lover, no matter how brightly his Gregory’s gemstone-like eyes were glittering.

“And they can’t see me, either, if you were wondering. Isn’t this brilliant! I can visit with you all day and nobody will know. And if you want to say anything, just write a note. You can write a sexy note, too, if you want and I promise not to do anything about it until we get home.”

Another mental note made and filed – speak to Gregory about turning back time so this particular day could be restarted and sent along a different trajectory. There was no world in which this day was not going to be the most insidious form of torment. And his torturer was already grinning in anticipation…

“Ooohhh… I like that Shakespeare bloke. He’s a randy fellow, isn’t he? Are there any pictures in your book? Do any of your books have randy pictures? Oh. That’s no fun. We’ll have to buy some then… I would definitely like looking at sexy drawings with you. And then doing the things we see in the drawings. Hah! Your teacher wants to know if you’re sick because you’ve gone all red. That’s funny! No, really, it is. You need to laugh more…

“Is that a spell? I don’t remember seeing numbers in spells before, but all those letters and symbols have to be some form of magic. Why didn’t you tell me you learned magic in school?”

“That one there with the dark hair. There’s something up with that one and I’m keeping an eye on him. Both eyes, actually, so don’t get up and leave without me.”

“Don’t think I don’t know you won’t drop food into my hand because you’re being testy. Please! I haven’t eaten anything since breakfast and I’m hungry. The food smells good, too, and you have a whole plate of it, but I don’t even have a crumb. Give me a crumb, Mycroft. I don’t want to have to tickle you, but I will. Lovely. Not even a shred of meat with my breadcrumb. You are an evil, evil man…”
“It’s been hours since you wrote me a note! Ok, maybe not hours, but... minutes. How am I supposed to last minutes without a note from my Mycroft? Oh! Draw me something happy... is that circle on the sticks that sort of looks like a person me? Why... you put an arrow through my head. Well, that’s not very happy. And your grinning doesn’t make it any happier.”

“It’s a map! And a big one. You should have a map as big as that one the old man in the ugly jacket’s pointing to so we could lay on the floor and look at it and decide the places we want to visit. We can lay on it naked, too, and point out things without even using our hands. No! Don’t show me the arrow-in-the-head picture again! Fine. No talking about penis pointing in school. You have too many rules...”

Five. Four. Three. Two. One. Oh, thank heavens...

“Where’s everyone going? Oh! Is school over? Hurray! Now we can talk and kiss and do all sorts of... hey! Wait for me!”

Mycroft sped towards the exit, confident his shadow was sewn securely to his heels and nearly wept with joy seeing his car waiting for him in its usual location.

“That’s your car! It’s good that it’s big because it was easy to follow from the air. Can I ride with you? Are we going to collect the little ones, too? John’s going to get his snack, right? You’re not still mad at him, are you?”

Mycroft stopped, turned and raised a finger to his lips, smiling when the excited demon closed his mouth with an audible snap. Looking around to make certain they were not under observation...

“Yes, we will collect Sherlock and John though there is a short wait until they are released from school. Yes, John will have his afternoon refreshment reinstated. No, I am no longer angry about his jest. And... I believe it might be wise if you flew home and arrived before the rest of us, so you might dress and coordinate our afternoon activities. Is that amenable to you?”

“That’s not a bad idea! I’ll eat something, too, since you were evil and didn’t let me have any lunch.”

“One makes one’s bed and one must then lie in it, I’m afraid. But, Gregory... I am happy you worried about me. Very happy, actually. It meant a great deal that you not only had concern for my well-being, but that you acted upon that concern, as well. I shall see you shortly.”

Looking around again and making sure the driver was busy with his newspaper, Mycroft finally gave his demon a quick kiss, then stepped back and motioned towards the sky. With a bright grin, Greg unfurled his wings and took flight, leaving Mycroft to gaze in wonder at the sight, one for which he had only the foggiest memory and that was through the thick and sluggish haze of alcohol. Exquisite. His Gregory was simply exquisite and there was not enough gold in the world to outshine his beauty. Beauty more fully revealed now that his loincloth had shifted slightly... Beautiful... sunlight simply bounced off his bottom like a coin on a tight-sheeted mattress...
Chapter 13

The bliss of being welcomed home with a kiss was indescribable, though he and his demon had parted company only a short while ago.

“Must John and I be subjected to your amateurish romantic theater? Is it not enough that we have suffered the drudgery of institutionalized education, thus rendering this day another in my overfilled ledger of disgracefully wasted time?”

“I know that’s not true, little one, because your school looked brilliant. Everyone smiling and happy and waving at John. You had a wonderful day and you know it. You can tell me everything you learned while you have something to eat, too.”

The demon gave his human another kiss and was still puckered up when Sherlock and John pushed him back from Mycroft.

“Explain yourself, minion of the netherworld! How do you know, yet completely misinterpreted, the nature of our school environment?”

“I followed you this morning. Thought I’d take a little time to make sure your day was like your brother described it and then I spent the rest of it with Mycroft. His school isn’t as energetic as yours, but they definitely did a lot of work.”

Sherlock dropped his schoolbag on the ground and John’s quickly followed.

“What! You accompanied Mycroft to school? I did not hear a race of emergency vehicles towards ground zero. We were not instructed to hide under our desks to weather the impending fallout. Mycroft still has hair!”

“You’re working very hard at being silly, Sherlock. Why don’t you go and eat something to build up your strength so you won’t need a nap before we get to do something fun.”

Sherlock threw his hands in the air in the most frustrated manner he could muster and began kicking his schoolbag in the direction of the kitchen.

“You… you really went to school with Mycroft?”

“That I did, John. And I had a good time, too, except for getting starved near to death, but that was just Mycroft being a bit tetchy. Don’t worry, though… I’ll get his spirits up before we go to bed. And I’ll keep them up after we get to bed, too.”

Now it was John’s turn to throw his hands in the air, but he, at least, picked up his schoolbag to carry with him as he stalked after Sherlock.

“Gregory, do not discombobulate the children.”

“You and those beautiful words of yours. And do you have any idea how beautiful you were today at school? So serious and focused, well, when I wasn’t trying to get you to smile a little. Just gorgeous…and I was right, too. You’re the smartest one there! You knew everything and could talk it about it like an expert. I was so proud…and now I don’t have to check again that you’ll be safe because I’ve done that and, although there were a lot of interested eyes pointed in your direction, nobody tried anything that I’d have had to give them a smack for.”
Mycroft *had* thought to have a small word with the demon about his insubordination, however, any future threat had been neutralized and… how could he chastise someone for wanting him to be secure and protected. *And* believed his appearance necessitated that protection…

“I am certain that any eyes in my direction were entirely without lascivious intent, but I am happy that your concerns are now assuaged. May I assume that you will remain home tomorrow without my having to bind one or more of your appendages to the bedpost?”

Oh dear, that was unwise… no, please do not smile at me so lecherously, Gregory, lest I make myself naked and leap into your muscular arms to enact whatever fantasies are playing in your head like the most erotic of adult films.

“Well, if you like that sort of thing, be my guest. I’m always up for a little spice in my fun and whatever makes my Mycroft happy is fine with me. But, yes, I’ll stay here tomorrow if you want me to. It’ll be lonely, but I can find things to do, I suppose. And, I can go into the village and explore a little more, because I saw a lot of shops we didn’t visit that looked interesting. I’ve got money, too, so I can buy something if it catches my eye.”

Oh, that was not the soundest of plans, from any standpoint of reasoning.

“What say we wait to have you again visit the shops until I may accompany you?”

“Why? The village isn’t big and I know the way home so I can’t really get lost.”

Mycroft took the demon’s arm and began to walk him towards the cacophony of two energetic boys obtaining their post-school nourishment.

“Let us discuss the matter further while we check on Sherlock and John, shall we? I am certain they are anxious to hear further the stories of your experiences today and are as eager to share theirs.”

And the conversation would likely lead in a myriad of directions, all of which might serve to distract his Gregory from the topic at hand.

“That a good idea. And I know you have work to do for school, so we can do that after they eat so the rest of the day is ours to enjoy. Is John going to stay with us tonight?”

“School nights are generally best spent at home.”

“I suppose.”

Such a disappointed face. Gregory’s affection for the children was a joy to behold. John was an affable child and returned affection gladly, but Sherlock… Sherlock was a solitary boy for a reason, but the demon did not seem in any manner put off by the acerbity. Such a contradiction of traits – lecherous, yet caring. Powerful, yet tender. Ridiculous, yet insightful. And the whole of the grab bag was his to enjoy.

“Biscuits! Throw a few at me and I’ll catch them in my mouth!”

Really, who could boast that much entertainment in their lives…

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“I am dying!”

Sherlock threw his pencil in one direction and his paper in the other, letting his spread arms flop
uselessly and his head dangle over the back of his chair in a very good impersonation of crippling despair.

“Retrieve your materials and continue with your essay, brother dear.”

“It has sapped my vitality and has left me a naught but an empty husk.”

“That’s pretty good, Sherlock. Almost makes one want to believe it except when you’ve been sapped to an empty husk, you get all wrinkly and don’t look smooth and pink like you do now. Now, let’s see how you’ve been doing.”

Nobody dared to ask how Greg knew personally how that condition appeared and watched as he retrieved Sherlock’s essay from the floor.

“See! You’ve made a start… ok, it’s good that you began with what your essay is about, but it’s probably not good you followed with why it’s a stupid and pointless topic. I’ll scratch out that part so you don’t leave it in by accident. Now… this isn’t bad! You have some good ideas, but you’re not putting in any reasons to support them.”

“That if I have said it is sufficient! My knowledge base is vast and encompassing and I would not bother to make a statement if it were not a verifiable truth! In fact, the sluggards and dimwits who instruct me should be thankful that I make the effort to put my thoughts to paper as it is a shameful waste of my time to scribe what is already housed in my brain.”

“But, what if the person reading it didn’t know you? They wouldn’t know you were so smart, now would they? Think of it like one of your science things. You’ve got to have evidence for something if you want people to believe you, right? You do your experiments so you have evidence to prove what say when you tell me what happened. Just do that with your essay. Here, try again, pretend it’s one of your science projects and I bet you do a grand job with it.”

Sherlock coughed pitifully and dragged his head upwards, mostly to glare at the demon before snatching away his paper.

“Do not criticize my academic performance.”

“Just trying to help. Besides you don’t want to get too far behind John, now do you? He’s already got most of his done!”

John’s smug grin was the fire Sherlock needed to dive for his pencil and dig back into his work, leaving Mycroft to chuckle at how readily his demon had mastered the art of handling Sherlock. And correctly cut to the recurring weak points in his brother’s non-science compositions.

“And now you, love. Let’s see… now that I know this isn’t a spell, I can see what it’s supposed to do. These look fine but… no. Look at that one again. The answer’s got to be larger than that, so you went wrong somewhere.”

Mycroft stared at his maths assignment and began to scoff until he noticed the error staring up at him from the page.

“Gregory… how did you know this was incorrect? You did not even have an inkling on the subject until today!”

“Well… it makes sense, doesn’t it? I mean, I listened to what your teacher said and that answer didn’t match what it should have been. Not so hard, really. I admit I don’t know exactly what it should be, but I did know it should be larger than what you wrote. Was that helpful?”
Must remember that Gregory, despite his buffoonery, was not actually a buffoon.

“It was, indeed. If memory serves, it was during my working of this particular problem that the children decided to see whose notebook paper burned more quickly and I was distracted from my task by the need to keep our home from falling to ashes. Thank you, my dear. Your natural grasp of mathematics is quite impressive.”

“Greg may be green, but that doesn’t mean he’s dumb as a frog. Though, I guess I can’t really say that because frogs might actually be smart, I’ve just never talked to one. The next time we find a frog, Greg can put that spell on me again so I can talk to it and find out if it’s smart or not. Actually, I’ll have to talk to several because if there are smart frogs, there might be not-smart frogs, just like people. For instance, I’m smart because my essay is nearly done and Sherlock’s not because all he has is his name on the paper. His second piece of paper.”

Sherlock’s roar earned him a sympathetic pat from his brother who smiled across at John in admiration of his effective jab.

“Now, now, little one. Everyone has things they’re smart about and not smart about. That’s what makes people interesting and why it’s good to know lots of different people so they can step in for things that aren’t your strength and you can do the same for them. Here… why don’t you let Sherlock read your essay so he can see what you’ve done? Sherlock, don’t rip up John’s essay just to be evil. I’ll get us all something to drink, shall I? Some of that tea you like, love?”

“A cup of tea would be a blessed thing, my dear. Thank you.”

Greg smiled and darted off towards the kitchen with Mycroft wishing the demon could parade about in as few clothes as he had during his school experience. Though, the number of erections he would suffer daily would surely impact his ability to think at some point… his brain needed some measure of blood to function and Gregory was positively masterful at making every drop decide a southerly vacation was called for every time he smiled…

“Mycroft, I have to say I think it’s great you brought Greg here. He’s nice and fun and… magic! Are you… is he going to stay here? Forever, I mean?”

Mycroft blinked in surprise at John and, then, at Sherlock who was now giving his brother an ‘answer the question immediately and pray your answer satisfies me’ glare that Mycroft recognized all too well.

“I… well, I had not really given the matter any thought.”

“Why not? Greg’s your boyfriend now and I would think him being here for a long time would be very much on your mind.”

Damn John Watson and his infernal logic!

“Perhaps I misspoke. What I meant to say was that I have not thought ahead, as I have been, instead, enjoying the situation as it stands. I presume, at some point, Gregory and I will discuss the issue. In truth… in truth, I have no firm idea what obligations or responsibilities might be waiting in his own reality. He may not be able to remain for an indefinite period.”

“But you don’t want him to go back, right? You want him to stay here with us, don’t you?”

There was no manner in which this conversation could be less comfortable. Not even if they were having it in the nude in the middle of the village church, with the vicar’s wife making a sketch of them to sell for a charity fundraiser.
“My wants are not the deciding factor, John. There are likely many factors that will contribute to the path the future holds, so let us table this discussion until we have a more clear idea of what are those particulars, shall we?”

“Your cowardice is grossly off-putting. Simply confess your desires and be done with it!”

“What desires? Love… have you been talking about things with the boys that you tell me I can’t talk about when the boys are here?”

ACK! Must remember not to engage in highly personal and revealing discussions when certain ears were soon to return to the vicinity. And do not wriggle your eyebrows at me, foul fiend. I have truly reached the limit of my composure, which I am certain you are observing for my face is quite hot enough to be glowing like a coal in a furnace.

“Perish the thought. And is that my tea I see on your tray? Excellent. I am absolutely parched.”

Greg smiled widely and set down the tray, giving Mycroft a kiss as he handed him the tea and Mycroft congratulated himself on the successful distraction.

“And a little something for these two so they can finish their schoolwork and still have energy to play this afternoon. I’m sorry, John, but Mycroft says you have to go home tonight. There’s still time today, though, to have a lot of fun and I’m sure we’ll find something to do to make the most of it.”

“That’s what I like about you, Greg. You like fun and understand how important it is.”

With a gleam in his eye that Mycroft properly interpreted as hinting at future extortion, John collected his beverage from the tray and entered into a whispered conversation with Sherlock, who was a very eager participant.

“Look at them… off in their own little world. Thought maybe a walk this afternoon would be the perfect thing for a nice day like today. The boys can climb trees, all the way to the top with a spot of help, and we can relax. Bring a blanket to sit on while they play.”

Simple, peaceful and heavenly… the sort of afternoon to soothe one’s soul, as well as one’s body.

“That sounds most enjoyable. Sherlock’s disdain for nature does seem to wane when he is given a magical method of exploration and it is good for him to take fresh air now and then.”

“With his long tail, I can show him how to swing about like a monkey and go tree to tree. It takes some practice, but it’s not that hard to set up a bit of a net so he can’t fall very far. John will have a rougher time of it, with that stubby tail of his, but he’s also more athletic, so he can probably jump where he needs to go.”

The trees filled with rampant demon younglings… his Gregory was practically beaming at the thought and Mycroft felt a warm curl of pleasure in his chest at the sight. His normal mode of relaxation was hiding with a book, hoping that Sherlock was unable or unwilling to find him. This new manner of spending recreational time was, by far, a more agreeable thing and it was obvious he was not alone in that holding that belief.

“A stellar idea. And I admit to some anticipation of wearing my more colorful skin again.”

“I am, too. My Mycroft… there’s not a jewel anywhere that is as beautiful as him. But, being beautiful doesn’t get your schoolwork done by itself, so, are you going to finish your studies or am I going to have to scold you?”
“Does your scolding involve physical interaction of any form?”

See, devil born? I can wriggle my eyebrows, too. Though my leer feels a bit more like the manifestation of dyspepsia, but that is a minor matter, since you have correctly interpreted it and are returning to me one of the highest caliber.

“Listen to you… making me all hot and bothered when I can’t do anything about it.”

“The day is, as they say, young.”

“That it is.”

“Kiss or let Fatcroft finish his work, demon! My manifesto is nearly complete and I shall not sit here and wither while he completes his arithmetic!”

“Alright, alright… you’re a harsh taskmaster, little one. And, believe me, I’ve known some right bastards in my day.”

Sherlock snorted and earned a ruffling of his curls, but Greg settled back in his chair and motioned Mycroft back to his work at the same time as he picked up John’s essay for a final reading. For his part, Mycroft twiddled his pencil and drew in a deep breath of sheer delight. Now and again, he’d wondered about what it would be like to have someone take care of and have a concern for him, as he did for Sherlock and John. Further, to have someone take some of the weight associated with the shepherding of Sherlock and John.

His Gregory did both so easily… so naturally… what would it be like to know that such support would always be available? That an afternoon like this one would become the norm and not the exception in his and Sherlock’s lives. And, with that support came an affection that was uninhibited and freely-offered, which he found he was treasuring far more deeply than he might ever have imagined. John’s earlier questions were becoming uncomfortably and exceedingly relevant. Evil little toddler…

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“AAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!”

A small blue demon hurled himself from the top of one tree towards its neighbor, grabbing a limb and swinging like a pendulum before shuffling towards the trunk and finding a convenient place to sit.

“This is great!”

It had taken Mycroft a few tense moments to overcome his nerves watching the two boys climb, jump and swing among the treetops, especially when they fell, but seeing them land a few feet below their drop point into an invisible pair of cradling hands dispelled the nervousness and allowed him to turn attention to more important matters, such as kissing his green-skinned lover and gazing into his violet-hued eyes.

“I believe the children are enjoying themselves.”

“Hah! They’re a treat to watch, aren’t they? And Sherlock’s found lots of sciency things to study, so he’ll be busy for days with what he’s collected and measured.”

Sherlock’s arsenal of tools required a hastily-constructed belt and pouch device that the small plum-colored boy was wearing around his waist. The discoveries from his investigations that were too
large to fit into his pouch were shuttled to the ground by Greg’s goodwill and sat in a small pile next to the blanket. Fortunately, they had brought a sack with them specifically for this purpose, though, two might have been a wiser choice.

“I do admire your ability to mix recreation with education.”

“Told you I thought school was important. It’s just that you can learn a lot when you’re having fun, too. For instance, I learned that you like being romantic outdoors.”

Mycroft grinned shyly, but didn’t rebut the demon’s statement. There was something decadent and, dare he say it, wild about indulging himself with the sky overhead and the smell of spring in the air, especially with the paucity of clothing he tended to wear in his demon form.

“It is a uniquely exhilarating experience.”

“Well, it’s fine with me if you want to sneak out at night for a little recreation of our own. Or just go for long walks. Sitting and watching the clouds is nice, too. It’s all wonderful when I get to share it with you.”

Mycroft adored the honest happiness written on the demon’s face and leaned in to give him another kiss.

“I quite agree. And…”

Should he? Well, there was no time like the present…

“… I have been meaning to ask… you said earlier that I was the one who would need to return you home. Is there… I know you generously agreed to stay here until you were able to act as my escort for the dance, but is there… have you responsibilities that set an immutable timeframe for your visit?”

“Come again?”

If there was a salary in the afterlife to be paid him based on the number of words he used in this lifetime, Mycroft was certain his wealth would far surpass that of what he earned during his living years. It was little wonder his peers considered him overly loquacious. It was one of the many items in the bulging portfolio of reasons his company was not highly solicited unless someone needed emergency academic assistance, something for which they were more than happy to grovel and promise eternal camaraderie.

“Do you have a specific date by which you must return or… may I assume a more open-ended arrangement?”

Mycroft couldn’t interpret the look on the demon’s face, which was some combination of confusion, hesitation and thoughtfulness and found, once again, his tail taking charge by beginning to stroke his Gregory’s arm to comfort any unpleasant feelings.

“I hadn’t thought about that. I suppose… well, I guess it will depend on how long I’m wanted here. I’ve not got much at home, but I can’t say I never want to go back. Maybe just for a visit, now and then, if… if you want me to stay here for awhile. I don’t want to stay where I’m not wanted, though, so… I guess… do I have to keep talking or do you know what I mean?”

That look was easy to interpret as it was pure and intense embarrassment, prompting Mycroft to wrap his arm around Greg’s waist and pull him close.
“I do and I believe I share you sentiments.”

“What do you mean?”

“That I do not want you to remain here if you do not wish to stay. That I would never demand of you what you did not want.”

The sheer gratitude that lit the demon’s eyes saddened Mycroft terribly, for he knew what lay at its foundation, but there was also in that spark a relief that spoke of more current things and he very much liked the direction those current things might take.

“Oh. That’s good. That’s good to know, I must admit. But, it’d also be good to know… do you want me to stay here for awhile? Beyond the dance, I mean? I know you had a plan in mind but…”

And the current things arrive precisely at the appointed hour, for Gregory was nothing if not accommodating to his unspoken schedule and slow simmer of trepidation. His demon was not the only one to have ghosts that lingered in the mind from the slings and arrows hurled by unkind hands.

“I did, but… I did not anticipate enjoying my time with you as much as I have. It is to be expected to change one’s plans to fit new circumstances, is it not?”

“I suppose it is. So, I might expect to be here for a bit?”

Such hopeful anticipation… what worry Mycroft may have harbored about the demon’s intentions was fully squashed and he gave Greg a slight squeeze on his thigh.

“I believe that to be a prudent supposition. To forestall any confusion, I shall make with you this bargain. If I desire that you leave, I shall tell you and if you would rather return home than remain here, you will promise to tell me.”

“Really?”

The stars in the heavens were pieces of coal compared to the demon’s lustrous smile…

“Is that equitable?”

“That means fair, right?”

“It does.”

“Then that is very equitable. Very equitable, indeed. Kiss to celebrate?”

“A time-honored way to cement a pact.”

And if that kiss lasted for some time, along with the wandering of eager hands across colorful skin, so much the better. A good and, hopefully, long-lasting deal should be sealed with the most meaningful of gestures…

“__________

“You can come and visit us at school tomorrow, Greg. Sherlock always says how bored he is, but I bet he won’t be bored if you’re there.”

Mycroft and Sherlock shared a look in the front seat of the car about their opinion of the conversation in the rear seat of the car and were satisfied to see their alliance on the issue was a strong one.
“Gregory’s attendance would likely distract you and Sherlock from your studies, John, and I know well that is the last thing he would desire, given his staunch stand on the subject of education. Perhaps, though, we might give him a tour at some point once the school day has concluded.”

“Alright, but it won’t be as fun as him being invisible and making fun of the people I don’t like.”

That almost prompted a change in Sherlock’s opinion, but the warning glare from Mycroft quelled his urge to make that change permanent.

“Your understanding is greatly appreciated. And, I do believe we are here.”

This time, Mycroft remained in the car while Greg walked John to his door and waited the expected eternity for the demon to finish his chat with John’s mother before returning.

“John’s lucky to have a mum like that. You can tell she loves him a lot, which is a brilliant thing. And he’s going to be with us after school tomorrow, too! I made sure he told her he’d gotten all of his schoolwork done, so she wouldn’t worry that we were letting him be lazy about his studies.”

“Very forward-thinking of you, my dear. Now…”

“I require vinegar!”

Mycroft looked over at his brother after the sudden and ear-shattering outburst while Greg leaned forward to rest his chin on the front seat to better hear the conversation.

“Why on Earth do you require vinegar? And so stridently, at that.”

“An experiment.”

“On what subject?”

“One that far exceeds your ability to comprehend, so I shall not use breath better put towards verbalizing my successful results on attempting to elucidate my methods or intentions.”

Which was Sherlock-speak for ‘my experiment would not meet with your immediate approval and I am hoping to forestall a protracted negotiation that will leave me unsatisfied, though with all of my limbs and in possession of my senses, all of which have been threatened by previous research proposals.’

“Is this experiment likely to explode?”

“Not with anything approaching nitroglycerine force.”

“Release lethal pathogens into the air?”

“Since you do that each time you pass gas, I believe that question is moot.”

“Lovely. Will it In any manner permanently disfigure either the house or any person within it?”

“You are the reason we continue to exist in the Dark Ages, albeit with better plumbing!”

“Answer the question.”

“No! There should be no destruction, though I cannot make the same promise for staining.”
“Will you confine your work to your laboratory bench?”

“Where else would I conduct my experiment? Your bed?”

“Which you have done in the past.”

“True, but that was for amusement, not serious research.”

“Then, I have your word?”

“If you feel it necessary.”

“I do.”

“Fine. You have my word my experiment will not extend beyond the limits of my laboratory, though I am not responsible for any remnants being spread through insect vectors.”

“Very well. Given your need is a simple one, I am certain the kitchen is well-provided with a container of vinegar for you to use.”

“No. It is not. There was a container. Now… it is no more.”

If there was ever an open position for an instructor for long-suffering sighs, Mycroft would immediately submit his resume.

“I see.”

“I don’t.”

“Thank you, Gregory. It appears that Sherlock has acted as the grim reaper of kitchen acids and sent it to its untimely death.”

“It was my right as a scientist to use the tools at my disposal!”

“Without permission of Cook, I think not.”

“Sherlock! Did you steal the vinegar?”

At least his Gregory was shocked by Sherlock’s actions. That kept the overall level of surprise at Sherlock’s behavior above its standard level of naught.

“One cannot steal what one owns, demon. Holmes money purchased the vinegar and I, as a Holmes, have a full right to use it as I see fit without wasting time seeking permission from someone who I also own!”

“What! Mycroft… tell me the people who work for you aren’t slaves…”

“Good heavens, Gregory, no! Sherlock is being, as always, fractious and hysterical. Our staff earns a very tidy wage and a package of benefits that is quite the envy of their peers, so I am told.”

“It is Mycroft who is lying! Take me now for my vinegar and I will purchase for you something with which to thrash him mightily, as he does the staff when they dare derelict their duty!”

Mycroft started the engine of the car and began driving in the direction of town, knowing that Sherlock’s teeth in the leg of an idea meant a long night of debate and argument, however, a quick stop for vinegar would purchase for him and his demon a night of relaxation, instead, while his
brother conducted his experiment. Sometimes victory is won by surrender and his demon’s luscious form was quite the pleasant spoils of war…

“No.”
“Please?”
“Absolutely not.”
“But, why!”
“Gregory, you have no need for what appears to be 15 containers of yoghurt.”
“I do!”
“Reason?”
“It’s good.”
“And how would you know that?”
“Ummm….”
“How many did you already consume?”
“Four. Or five. I wasn’t counting.”

Mycroft sighed and looked around for the empty containers, which he found hiding beneath the bag of rice that Sherlock insisted he needed for its properties as a desiccant.

“One does not consume one’s groceries until one has paid for them, Gregory.”

“Why not? Pay first or pay after, the shop still gets paid.”

“If I promise to purchase for you your yoghurt, will you agree to allow them to remain unmolested until we, at least, return to the car?”

“Fine. I promise.”

“Thank you.”

“Gregory!”

“What!”

“Do not… do not tip that bag of crisps into your mouth, Gregory. No! No, I am not joshing. Do not… you did. I am undone.”

“ther gud. ‘nd not yogrt!”

“Swallow.”

“k’nt.”
“Because you have half a bag of crisps in your mouth!”

“ther vry gud.”

“Do not leave my side again. NO! That was not an invitation for intimacy, you villainous creature!”

“h’ve sm krsp. y’ll fll bettr.”

“Brandy would make me feel better.”

“Lets buy that next.”

“Finally, you say something intelligible.”

“I swallowed.”

“And without choking, either. Drat.”

“But, now I’m thirsty.”

“Gregory… do not… from where did you get that… don’t you dare open that juice. Do not… have you become deaf?”

“Not that I know of, but I’ll test once I finish my juice. Hey! Sherlock’s found something that looks interesting. It burns, too, just like his notebook paper.”

“Oh god…”

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“Under no circumstances.”

“I demand it!”

“This product is not even for men!”

“I refuse to submit to gender discrimination!”

“You do not have the anatomical parts to make this product useful.”

“Anatomy is not required, only scientific necessity.”

“Sherlock Holmes, you have no need for tampons!”

“If a body is beginning to decompose, could the murderer use tampons to absorb the fluids and forestall discovery? My experiment is critical to determine this!”

“A dead body would also emit a very pungent odor, rendering discovery likely in any case.”

“That is why I also require spray deodorant. Twenty or twenty-five should suffice. I will return. Oh, and your demon has found the sweets section. Prepare to open wide your wallet.”

Oh no. Brandy was no longer remotely sufficient for his pain…

“Perhaps I should simply fashion a noose and see the end of this infernal venture.”
“The butcher will have twine. I shall obtain it when I choose my leg of lamb.”

“Do I want to know why?”

“No.”

“Carry on.”

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“Trolleys are not for racing!”

“Science!”

“Yeah, science!”

“Gregory, do not encourage Sherlock in his shenanigans.”

“But, it’s science, love! Science and learning! Besides, we’ll need the extra trolleys, anyway, so this will test to see if they’re good ones.”

“Why on Earth would we need three shopping trolleys?”

“Cabbages.”

“What?”

“Well, and pet food. Sherlock’s experiment is rather complicated.”

“Give me strength…”

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“No oil! I am absolutely putting my foot down on the subject of oil.”

“Well, don’t put it right there if you value your shoe.”

“How much did you spill, Gregory?”

“Just one bottle. It was green! I had to taste it!”

“Of course you did.”

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“Sherlock! Put the eggs down and back away slowly…”

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“Love? Love? Sherlock, poke your brother and see if he’s ok. He hasn’t said anything in awhile and I don’t like the way he keeps blinking like that.”

“Firstly, there is not enough money in the world to compensate me for having contact with Mycroft and secondly, it matters not, for I stole his wallet and can pay for our items myself.”

“Oh. Well, stealing is wrong and we’ll have a talk about that later, but maybe it’s good in this case since I don’t think Mycroft is going to be useful for the moment.”
“Then I shall drive home.”

“Look! That made him twitch! Maybe he’s waking up.”

“Curses. Foiled again.”

With the cracked-open boot secured with some of the butcher’s twine Sherlock stole to help his brother hang himself, the mostly-recovered Mycroft checked for any potential produce escapees and motioned the two passengers into the car.

“That was great! How often do you shop for science supplies, Sherlock?”

“It is a rare occasion, for Mycroft’s hand around my neck makes it difficult for him to pilot the car.”

Mycroft quickly lowered his rising hand and discretely cleared his throat.

“Sherlock exaggerates, as is typical. Normally, he appends his easily-obtainable supplies to the weekly grocery order, however, we occasionally are required to make a specific trip for an immediate need. The remainder of his inventory we must order from scientific supply companies.”

“Well, if Mycroft can’t take you to the shop, I’ll take you, little one. Once Mycroft teaches me how to drive his car, I’ll be able to bring you where you like if he’s too busy with other things or asleep.”

The mostly-recovered Mycroft began a relapse and only hoped the local terrain was sufficiently soft to make for a gentle crash.

“I mean, since I’m going to be here for… well, for however long Mycroft and I want, I should start helping with things like that.”

Sherlock’s gasp, then knowing glare sparked anew recovered energy and Mycroft fed on Sherlock’s villainous energy to replenish his greatly-depleted stocks.

“I see. You and Mycroft have come to an… agreement.”

“Gregory and my business is precisely that, Sherlock. Gregory’s and mine. Now, kindly find something else to occupy your attention such as severing your femoral artery with your teeth.”

“Hah! Your threat is as impotent as your phallus since I know that the ensuing blood splatter would require a reupholstering and Father said that if that happened again he would purchase for us mules to ride!”

Brandy… one or five snifters of brandy and he would be right as rain…

“Then simply sit quietly. Perhaps find an appropriate station to which to listen on the radio.”

"Not until you answer my question.”

“That you call me meddlesome is becoming all the more hypocritical.”

“Confess!”

“When I was five years old, I wore Mummy’s new hat into the garden where it was defiled by an
overflying bird. A pigeon, I believe, however, my ornithological knowledge was poorly developed at that age.”

“Fool! Bare your soul so that I might ridicule your insipid romanticism.”

“I decline.”

“Demon! Would you state, for the record, that you and Mycroft are now officially… something.”

“What’s that mean?”

“Another fool! Are you entangled?”

“Does that have something to do with the string in your pocket?”

“Have you vaulted beyond the quasi-comical use of the term… boyfriend… and into the more formal and binding application of said term?”

“Still not helping.”

“Are you and Mycroft a couple!”

“Oh! Yes! We agreed I’m going to be here until either of us doesn’t want that and, since I hope that doesn’t ever happen, I’d say we were definitely a couple.”

“I see…”

Mycroft cut eyes towards his now-quiet brother and watched the rapid shifting of Sherlock’s face through a plethora of configurations until it finally flashed a bright and unmistakable delight before settling back into it’s normal scornful scowl.

“…I think I may be ill.”

“Mycroft! Get us home, quickly!”

Sherlock’s approval… that might actually earn the little viper forgiveness for the shopping trip. And Gregory stating so plainly and indisputably his intentions… he might also earn forgiveness. After the aforementioned many snifters of brandy and some focused and prolonged attention behind closed bedroom doors…
“This is intolerable!”

Sherlock sat up in his bed and glared at Greg and Mycroft, who were desperately trying not to laugh.

“It is you, brother, who are insisting upon sleeping in your alternate form. That your tail is part of said form is in no manner our fault.”

“It refuses to… compress!”

“Sorry, little one. Most of us don’t sleep flat on our backs for that reason. Just turn your bum a little and that should fix it. Or sleep on your side. That’s a good thing, anyway, in case you get sick in the night, so the sick has a way to come out of your mouth and you don’t choke to death.”

“Your particular method of assistance is precisely the opposite of its intended purpose.”

“Then I’ll just turn you back to…”

“No. My experiment cannot be conducted if I have not the actual parameters for the experiment to be conducted.”

“What experiment?”

“How this less-evolved form impacts both my slumber and the accompanying dreams.”

“You want to know if you dream differently in demon form?”

“Yes. It is a valid question and I shall be the first to document the answer.”

“Might Gregory simply describe to you his dreams and you might compare them to the more standard human variants?”

“It is fortunate you have neither the interest in nor the talent for science, Mycroft, because you would set back the march of human progress by millennia.”

“I take it your response is ‘no.’ “

“In the most strenuous terms.”

“Then we shall leave you to your research. Please remember that if you find a need to visit the kitchen or other parts of the house, you must take steps to ensure you are not discovered by a member of the house staff.”

“If I but meow with sufficient conviction, their tiny minds completely will be fooled into believing my feline identity.”

The pillow that Greg grabbed and used to smack Sherlock produced the hoped-for flattening and Mycroft gave a very grand show of suffocating his brother, who made the older pair quite proud by the efficient use of his tail, as well as his other extremities, in his defense.

“Now that you are, hopefully, unconscious due to lack of oxygen to the brain, kindly do continue to rest well, brother dear. We shall see you in the morning.”
“Villainous fornicators! This abuse shall not go unaddressed! I shall exact the most punishing revenge at the very first, though utterly unexpected, opportunity!”

“Already you are dreaming! How delightful for your research timetable. Come along, Gregory, let us leave so as not to disturb his work any further.”

Mycroft escorted the grinning demon out of Sherlock’s room and into what he was quickly coming to consider theirs and enjoyed a pleasurable wash of serenity from his Gregory immediately wrapping him in warm arms for a kiss.

“Poor little thing, he’s so smart and interested in so many things… it must be silly in that brain of his with all of that whipping round and round.”

“A very astute analysis. Sherlock suffers horribly from both an insatiable curiosity and a marked intelligence, which makes the world not a restful place, but one of constant demands on his attention and mental faculties, all of which leave him chasing one bit of knowledge after the next. It was worse before he met John; now, at least, he is learning that not every spark of curiosity need be followed that very instant, or at all, in many cases. It has given him some ease, I believe, and I do what I can, on my part, to provide whatever tools and training I can to grow that ease to whatever height it might possibly reach.”

“He’s going to be a great man. Just like his brother. If that’s what’s going on in the little one’s head, it has to be even worse for you and look at you! Calm, in control… starting to learn how to have fun…”

How can you readily affect the perfect grin that underscores both the chaste and unchaste aspects of fun? How is that even possible?

“… you’ve got all that rolling about in your brain and you’re just perfect. It’s good you’re teaching Sherlock, because it must be so for him too hard to wade through it all alone. I don’t know how you did it on your own, but I’m so proud that you did.”

He had accomplished the task through extreme force of will through his entire childhood, while he, piece by piece, erected the necessary mental structure of manage the maelstrom. Though, to be fair, he had been born with a far stronger mental grip on his abilities than had Sherlock, who seemed to have been born with none at all. It was good of his demon to recognize that, though… something nobody else had ever given a second thought.

“Thank you, my dear. Your support, as ever, is both welcome and appreciated.”

This kiss lasted longer and, since he had started it, Mycroft reasoned that it was his duty to make the first move towards something more heated, which was gladly matched by his demon’s response.

“Perhaps we should move our activities to a more… horizontal location.”

“Hmmm… my Mycroft is hoping for some attention, is he? Well, I’m happy to give all he wants.”

As well as a quick swoop up and carry to the bed, where he was gently laid down to stare up into a pair of profoundly exotic and excited eyes.

“And what exactly does my Mycroft want tonight?”

Suggestions. Suggestions would be very helpful at this point.
“I shall rely upon your unmatched ability to predict my wants.”

“Putting yourself in my hands, are you? Smart, because these hands love nothing more than making you happy.”

And that happiness began, apparently, with a slow unbuttoning of the demon’s shirt and as-slow removal of his trousers in the most arousing of stripteases.

“As you really are, Gregory. Can you… in your own skin?”

That grin had nothing of the unchaste about it and Mycroft felt the lustful brilliance in places that greedily and gleefully soaked up the heat.

“My Mycroft likes the way I look. I’ll never get tired of hearing that.”

With a quick motion, the demon’s underpants were also on the floor and, in the next second, the sight of his emerald skin filled Mycroft’s eyes.

“Exquisite. You are positively exquisite, Gregory, both in form and feature.”

“Nothing compared to you, love.”

Mycroft couldn’t find it in himself to complain that his demon was completely daft on the issue and had better things to do with his lips than speak anyway. Kissing, for instance. Kissing his furnace hot and naked Gregory who had climbed onto the bed, then onto him for a moment of affection. And it was only expected that he run his hands across the expanse of skin of his demon’s back and backside to demonstrate most fully how much that moment of affection was appreciated. Stroking the base of the agile and muscular tail produced such a luscious moan from its owner that it not only set Mycroft’s body aflame with a hotly-simmering lust, but it set his mind thinking, as well…

“Gregory?”

“Hmmm…”

“Do you… do you ever fantasize about…”

“I fantasize about a lot, love, so you’ll have to be more specific.”

“Yes, I do apologize. I was simply curious if you think about us, doing this… but when I am presenting my other, more colorful, skin.”

“Oh! Oh… I see what you mean. Ummm… sometimes. When you’ve got your real look, I daydream about all sorts of sordid things about you looking like that. I do the same when you’re looking like me. I just daydream about you, really, and whatever you’re wearing at the time makes its way into the pictures.”

“So, you have no preference?”

“No, not at all. I… I thought you were the most breathtaking person I’d ever seen that first night you summoned me and neither way you look makes you more or less amazing. They’re different, but neither is better than the other.”

“Then you would not mind if I asked to inhabit my second skin for tonight?”

“You… you want your blue skin?”
“I do. Rather like Sherlock, I am eager to know the limits and possibilities of that form and now is a good time, I think, to conduct my own experiment.”

“Ok. I… I don’t have a problem with that at all.”

Mycroft felt the characteristic tingle associated with his transformation and had anticipated the shift by turning slightly so his tail wasn’t wedged between him and the mattress, though it was a bit unhappy trapped in his increasingly ill-fitting trousers.

“Gorgeous. Always so gorgeous. Unique and beautiful as a human and as a demon…”

And do seal that unequivocal statement of satisfaction with another of your stirring kisses, if you don’t mind. Oh, you already are. Carry on, then. And aren’t you the most considerate man loosening those frustrating trouser buttons, so tail confinement is a dimly-remembered thing of the past.

“Just amazing… here, let’s get you out of these clothes, so all that loveliness can show.”

Very efficient of you making quick work of this useless and inconvenient clothing, my dear. And long shall be savored the sound of your sucked in, shuddering breath as your eyes gazed upon the stretched out sapphire-shaded nakedness that ridiculous mass of garments concealed.

“I take it you like what you see?”

Not that you need say a word, for it is enough to experience the soaring sensation of pure power from the primal and unabashed look of desire in your deep violet eyes. Such a profoundly heady sensation…

“If that was the last sight I had in this life, I’d die a happy man.”

Was it vulgar to slightly reposition so one’s… assets… were more prominently on display? The large hand running along his outstretched leg said it certainly was not.

“Beautiful…”

Not even a twinge of unease. It may have taken time to get to this point, he could now say without hesitation that he was deliriously happy to have arrived.

“… and so sexy…”

Yes, do caress that leg both with your hands and your lips. The combination is truly… invigorating.

“… you can’t imagine what I feel when I touch you… when I kiss you…”

Hands, lips and now tongue… utter decadence.

“… when I lick and suck and make you writhe…”

Oh.

Ohhhhhh….

“That’s what I like to hear… and what I like to taste…”

If this pleasure was not lethal, nothing in the world could ever kill him because this was… transcendent.
“So good in my mouth… knew you’d be. Knew you’d be perfect to suck.”

Mycroft lost himself fully in the sensations of lips and tongue doing things to him that were more magical than anything his demon had ever before crafted and felt no shame in the desperate and needy sounds that were falling from his mouth. As it was, he was fantastically proud that he was not giving in to the nearly overpowering urge to grasp the demon’s head and thrust without any semblance of abandon. The villain was… prolonging! Sucking him deeply into his mouth, running his tongue… everywhere! Always, though, changing the pace or pressure or pattern to keep him from his release so the pleasure built from one indescribable level to the next. It was unbearable!

“Gregory… please…”

No! Do not take that as inspiration to further draw out… oh, yes… do drag your tongue lower and tantalize all of the appropriately-termed nether regions. Is there no limit to the talent of your mouth? Is it completely unmeasurable?

“Perfect. Your body’s perfect, love, and it wants to be touched so badly. Don’t worry, though, because I’ll make sure you get all the touch you ever want.”

Of course, use your tail to punctuate that argument and… oh, it is a nimble thing…

“Someone likes a bit of a tailjob when my hands are otherwise occupied, it seems. Tails can do lots of things if you put your mind to it and my mind is certainly happy to oblige.”

Vixen! No, incorrect gender. Reynard!

“Gregory… I beg you…”

“Ooooh, I like that.”

And do express your satisfaction with a particularly wet and tongue-rich slurp that conjures electrical shocks in every nerve the human body has ever been known to possess. And continue on… oh, heavens… just like that… deeper…

“Deeper… yes… yes… Gregory, please do not stop… faster… dear lord, harder… please, Gregory… Gregory…”

Mycroft’s toes absolutely curled tight at the sensation of his orgasm coursing through him and the added sensation of the swell of pleasure through his long tail turned his mind completely off for moment while he bathed in the luxury of pure and utter paradise.

“Delicious. Warm and delicious, just like I knew it’d be.”

No… not at all. Delicious was the feeling of boneless bliss while your lover rested his head on your thigh, stroking his hands over your skin.

“You are… incomparable, my dearest Gregory. Truly, there is nothing and no one to whom you can be compared. I have never felt such things… never dreamt they were possible.”

“Flatterer. But, I’m fine with that, actually. I’m just happy you’re happy, love.”

Kisses along one’s inner thigh were really their own breed of pleasant. And his tail apparently agreed, as it felt it proper to reward his Gregory with a soft stroking of his finely-formed face.

“Happy comes not close to what I feel, but it is certainly amongst the elements of the formula.”
“Then I’m happy. You deserve to feel good and I love putting that smile on your face.”

Smiling… it was not something he had ever done with appreciable frequency until he met his demon. Now, when they were together, it slid easily across his lips.

“And I believe I could lose myself in that smile when I see you return it to me with the peculiar luster that you alone are able to muster.”

“That rhymed! Sexy, brilliant and now a poet. I’m blessed. Truly, I am a blessed individual.”

Not as blessed as Mycroft wanted him to be, however. Must remember that having one’s mind turn to liquid and leak out of one’s ears was not an excuse for leaving one’s lover untended to.

“And I would enhance that feeling, if you would but switch positions with me.”

“You won’t get any argument from me.”

Though the swapping of places took a moment as the demon preferred to kiss his way up Mycroft’s body, covering every bit with soft kisses and teasing licks that were causing faint stirrings in something that had no business stirring for at least another hour or so.

“Look at those eyes… all those swirls of blues and greens. You’ve got the most wonderful eyes, love, whether human or demon.”

Greg kissed Mycroft warmly and hoped his human knew that he thought everything about his Mycroft was wonderful. It was an honor to be able to love this body and make it sing.

“No it is you who are the flatterer, Gregory.”

Not that Mycroft would complain. Basking in the weight and warmth of the demon’s body lying on top of his, hearing adulating words in his ears… the sexual satiation was simply icing on the cake. Speaking of…

This time it was Mycroft who initiated the kiss and used the opportunity to roll the demon off of him so they could exchange roles and he could begin a slow slide down Greg’s body, providing as many kisses, licks and nips as he, himself, had received, lingering in the belly area, which was the most agreeable combination of soft and firm and, like the rest of his demon, smelled of all things masculine.

Then, he slid further down and was greeted by something that was very eager to make his acquaintance. Something that looked far more… substantial… now that he was within licking distance. He had so rarely seen a naked male form and never one at such proximity. Should he be trembling? What was this witchcraft! Mycroft Holmes feared nothing! Except, apparently, the responsibility of sexually pleasuring the most erotic creature ever to walk the Earth.

“Just start with your tongue, love. Lick anywhere that looks interesting and think about what you like me to do with my tongue. You’ll get the idea fast enough.”

The most helpful erotic creature to ever walk the face of the Earth. And with some direction, it was easy to make a start with a long lick along the vibrant green shaft, which was rewarded with a heavy, contented sigh from the recipient.

“That feels amazing.”

Yes, do heap on the praise as it appears the indomitable Mycroft Holmes responds very well to
positive reinforcement. For instance, he might be emboldened to swirl his tongue around something even more vibrantly green and leaking a clear fluid which, only now, he noticed possessed a tiny amount of the most intriguing iridescence.

“Do that again…”

Of course. And, this time, lips shall factor into the equation.

“Yes…”

Well, apparently he had some talent for this. It was to be expected of course, but… oh, cease the ridiculous posturing and concentrate! Your bedmate is moaning appreciatively!

“Perfect… you’ve got a perfect mouth for this.”

Thank you, my dear. And, lo! That mouth can…

“Ackk….”

“Not so deep, love. No need for that when you’ve got hands to help out. This should be comfortable and enjoyable for you, too. Just take what you can and, believe me, it’ll be fine.”

And thank you for speaking in a breathless and aroused tone to emphasize that I am not failing you with my rudimentary and somewhat haphazard technique. Thank you also for my favorite thing… suggestions, for this rudimentary and haphazard individual does possess the standard number of hands and a newer appendage that would be happy to prove its mettle in the arena of lovemaking. It very much enjoyed petting and stroking, for instance and… yes, that was another highly appreciative moan from the dear, dear demon.

Mycroft returned to a shallow sucking and positioned himself so one hand could help mimic the depth his demon so easily managed, the other could gently massage the heavy, tightening mass between his lover’s thighs and his tail could reach around and titillate the lovely nipples that had first introduced him to the wonders of exciting such a magnificent creature. From the demon’s impassioned moaning and barely-checked writhing, his hand/tail/mouth coordination was a rollicking success.

“Stars in the sky, love… just a little faster? Just a little and that tongue of yours… give it another little swirl… oh, that’s good… just a bit more… so close so just a bit… just a bit… THKKFLMNOEZZBAL!”

Slowing his motions, Mycroft caught his demon’s release in his mouth and found one of his concerns handily laid to rest. Gently licking and lapping at the sensitized skin, the very blue Holmes let several more shudders crest through his lover’s body before beginning the slow kiss-laden climb up Greg’s body to lay a long, slow version on the demon’s slightly-flushed lips.

“Your taste is sweet, my dear.”

“I could say the same for you.”

“No… I speak quite literally. Your passions are delicately sweet upon my tongue, unlike what… well, I had heard something quite to the contrary, truth be told.”

“Really? You know about demon come?”

“No… human. It is supposedly not altogether palatable.”
“I can’t say what it would taste like to you, but to me, it’s… what’s a good word… I know - scrumptious. That’s a good big word just for you and it’s absolutely the right one, too.”

“It is? Truly?”

“Yeah, like… well, yours is like that tea you made for me with the milk, but also with some spices and a little honey. I knew you’d be the most delicious thing in my mouth, ever, in my entire life, and I wasn’t wrong. Not wrong, at all.”

Was it inappropriate to be ridiculously proud of one’s rich and robust flavor? Hell and be damned if it was, because he didn’t care a whit.

“Then I am happy to offer you something you enjoy.”

Greg wrapped his arms around his human and held him close.

“You do, love. I enjoy you. Talking, being quiet, having fun, having sex, laughing, reading, taking a walk, having a drink… I enjoy being with you and whatever that means at that particular time on that particular day.”

Mycroft relaxed to the sound of a softly spoken array of cacophonous consonants that flowed from the demon’s mouth, while Greg stroked his arm and nuzzled his forehead and experienced a peace and contentment that was so unique in his life. Further, there was the undeniable flare of pride that he had this in his life. He had heard his buffoonish schoolmates boast about their dalliances and they were (1) undoubtedly fabricated or wildly exaggerated and (2) possessed of none of the affection and attention that his demon so easily and naturally bestowed. A unique and rare treasure from a unique and rare individual… and he prized that treasure very, very fiercely.

“Now, why don’t you get comfortable and let that gorgeous head of yours get some rest. See? Got the blankets back up here to keep you warm and, anyway, I can see your eyes getting heavy.”

“Balderdash. I…”

The yawn that Mycroft tried to suppress made an upsetting gesture at him and rudely kicked its way into the open, though Greg laughed loudly at the defeat and laid another kiss on Mycroft’s useless-as-yawn-barricade lips.

“Rest, love. A good round of sex deserves a good sleep and this was amazing sex, so you deserve an amazing sleep. Want me to sing you a song?”

“A lullaby, Gregory? I was of the belief that you could not sing. And, I am not a child, you know.”

“For my Mycroft, I'll do my very best. You don’t have to be a child to enjoy a song to help you sleep, either. Here…”

Mycroft found himself tucked tenderly against his demon as Greg used a little magical help to extinguish the room’s lights. Then, an unexpectedly melodic voice sounded quietly in the still room, filling the air with strange, yet soothing words that caressed Mycroft’s ears until he fell gently to sleep in his demon’s arms. For his part, Greg smiled at his partner as he lay there and made a vow that his Mycroft would never have to worry about poor sleep or evil dreams, because he was happy to stand guard and make certain that his lover was always protected from the nasty things that flitted about in the night. Mycroft deserved that and so very much more. As much as he could provide and everything he held in his heart, as well. Which was a lot. A very lot. And that was more than a little alright with him…
A lover. He could say, with no equivocation, that he now had a lover. A man to share his physical passions, as well as his bed once those passions were spent. His analysis sheet currently boasted two, no, two and a half data points for intimacy and that was certainly enough to form a discernable pattern, which was, indisputably, a highly pleasing one. How had he been so fortunate? His demon was \textit{unparalleled}. Lustful, tender, caring... if one were to script a list of attributes of the perfect lover, his Gregory would meet each one. No, he would \textit{exceed} each one. And to that list of exemplars, he must put one at the top – patience. So easily a creature of Gregory’s appetites could have grown frustrated or contemptuous of his hesitancy and insecurity, yet he was treated with the most profound respect and patience and that was a thing he would never take for granted.

“My eyes aren’t even open and I know you’re awake because I can feel you being smart and thinking about things.”

With Gregory one could not be certain he wasn’t being literal about such statements.

“My mind is a veritable blank page of paper, so I must inform you that you are sadly mistaken.”

“You’re beautiful when you lie, do you know that?”

“And how might you know that when you claim your eyes are shut?”

“Ummmm….”

“You are breathtaking when you lie, do you know that?”

The demon laughed and made a show of feeling around for Mycroft before pulling him close and laying a kiss on the tip of Mycroft’s nose.

“I’ll never turn down a compliment. Good morning, love. How did you sleep?”

Like he never had before. Nights with his demon were unutterably restful and fulfilling.

“Very well, thank you. Blissfully is, perhaps, the proper term to describe it.”

“That’s what I want to hear. My Mycroft getting a good night’s sleep so he can have a wonderful, rested day.”

Though the wonderful, rested day would not see its start if he did not disentangle from the demon’s warm arms and see to getting himself and Sherlock ready for school. It was, however, highly unlikely that Gregory would make that an easy thing to accomplish.

“I shall do my best to be productive and successful in my day’s endeavors to repay you for you vigilance in guarding my dreams. And, on that note, it is time to make a start on those endeavors.”

Of course, counter my motions precisely so I remain in your snare not matter in which direction I take myself.

“Gregory…”

“Yeah?”

“I do have to leave the bed, you know.”
“Right now?”

“I must shower and dress myself, then see Sherlock does the same so that we have time for breakfast before we must leave.”

“Ummmm… how about I tend to Sherlock and we have a little cuddle with the time we’ve saved?”

Because a ‘little’ cuddle would not be the outcome of the torrid coupling we would inevitably enjoy, you demonic lecher.

“I would enjoy nothing more, however, I believe our time together would not be as brief as you assume.”

“Really? Watch this.”

Mycroft blinked and found, the blankets tossed back and his demon doing indescribable things with his mouth before the next blink arrived. And, from the motion of the villain’s tail, Gregory had no issue with self-service when there was a need for expediency. What a nerve-shatteringlly erotic scene. His demon doing things that the most lurid novel would find flagrant and lavishing him with the most explicit soundtrack to accompany his performance. Given the urgency of the moment and the greater urgency in his blood, there was no shame, none at all, in releasing in what seemed like a moment’s time. How could he possibly last beyond a heartbeat with that degree of skill and intent applied purely to his pleasure? Besides, it gave him the luxury of watching his demon sit back on his heels and seek his own pleasure with hands, as well as tail properly tending to his heavy, hard anatomy.

“Love your eyes on me, Mycroft. Love you watching when I do this.”

“You… you do?”

“Yeah… I do. Makes me hotter than an open flame. Knowing you’re watching, that you like what you see…”

Well, in that case…

“Then I shall gaze upon you every instant, my dear. Take in the sheen of arousal on your skin, the exquisiteness of your masculinity, listen to your breath as it draws in and flows back carrying the most seductive noises. You fill my eyes, my ears… all my senses with your rapturous beauty and utterly unbridled sexuality and as I watch you I play in my head the image of my hands and my lips touching you in the most sensual fashion, helping your passions rise, stoking your inner fire until…”

Until a long string of consonants flow out of your mouth and a look comes upon your face that I would gladly have in my dreams every night of my sleep. And your positively delicious smile as you look at me, tinged with both devotion and wickedness shall heavily factor, also, in my dreams.

“Perfect. Have I told you yet today you’re perfect, love?”

No, but please do not let that stop you from proclaiming your adoration in the most ardent of tones.

“No, not yet.”

“You’re perfect. You are fabulous, wonderful, brilliant, sexy, perfectly-perfect and nobody could ever be more perfect than you.”
Most acceptably ardent, thank you very much.

“I am very happy you award me a passing mark.”

“And humble. I’ll put humble on the list, though it’s not really true and you’re playing with me. My Mycroft is confident and a bit prideful, but it’s ok, because he’s so amazing, he has a right to be proud.”

Never had false humility won him such welcomed praise.

“Now, before I have to put lazy and late on the list, too, it’s time for you to have your shower.”

Something that suddenly sounded quite appealing as his demon had taken great pains to anoint his body with fluids in the most amatory and primal of marking rituals.

“Yes, that is a very sound suggestion. And shall you still hold to your word to manage Sherlock?”

“Absolutely! The little one’s fun to talk to with all of his silliness. I don’t mind getting him dressed.”

“Then we have an accord. If you will excuse me for a moment, I shall join you at breakfast.”

“One thing before you go, love.”

Mycroft was about to ask why but the non-sexual tingling through his body answered his question. In truth, despite the evidence of his eyes, he had forgotten about his rather inhuman state at the moment.

“Ah, yes. It is astonishing how quickly one can grow accustomed to a new norm when one inhabits it completely.”

“Want me to teach you my language? Sherlock’s catching on to it quickly and I just know, with your bigger brain, that you could do even better.”

“Perhaps, at some point. However, I do not believe I shall be so nimble of tongue as my brother or you with the requisite sounds.”

“Love, I know very well how nimble your tongue is and it’s just right for what it needs to do, speaking or not.”

No… mustn’t have another erection on a school morning. Tardiness was not something the headmaster found very tolerable, even for the most important of reasons.

“Very kind of you to say. Now, if you will excuse me?”

Greg waved magnanimously and grinned as Mycroft sauntered into the bathroom, watching his pert and firm bottom every moment he possibly could. His Mycroft was the sexiest thing alive and maybe he didn’t believe it now, but it was his intention to make his Mycroft believe that and never, ever, have any doubts. But, there were other things to deal at the moment and that other thing should probably be trying to take scissors to its school uniform trousers right about now to make space for its tail…

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“Can you not simply enchant the simpletons to see me in my other form so that I may continue
my experiment?”

The small, plum demon stared up at the larger green one and gave that stare every bit of force his golden eyes could muster.

“I’d have to go to your school to do that, little one, and I told Mycroft I wouldn’t do that today.”

“Then enchant me!”

“Enchant you to look human, so you can still look like a demon underneath even though you really look human all the way down at the bottom?”

“Yes!”

“Uh… no?”

“Explain and pray your explanation is of the most convincing nature or I shall express my derision in the harshest of tones.”

“Ok, right now you’re already under a spell and laying a second one over the first, especially since it’s sort of the same spell is just going to make it all go wonky.”

“Quantify ‘wonky.’ “

“Ummm… sixty.”

“That is meaningless.”

“So was your question.”

“That is untrue.”

“To you, maybe, but let’s just leave it at ‘no’ and get you dressed for school.”

“I do not wish to attend school today.”

“I’m not sure that matters. Mycroft would rather stay home, too, but he’s going and I don’t think Mycroft really has to do anything he doesn’t want to do, what with being so smart and clever and sophisticated and sexy.”

“I think I may be sick.”

“Oh! Come on and let’s get you into the shower, then, so if you vomit it’ll go right down the drain and it’ll be easy to clean you up afterwards.”

Greg scooped up the small demon and carried him into the bathroom to get the morning started. It wouldn’t matter, though, if he let Sherlock practice with his tail catching slippery soap or wielding a washcloth while he got clean. Little ones should have fun and showers were great places to have fun, even if wasn’t the type of fun you needed two people to have…

Mycroft felt a bit guilty experiencing surprise that Sherlock was ready for breakfast at no appreciably later a time than usual, but his Gregory was so terribly apt to become distracted while doing… well, anything, really.
“Your pet is behaving in a most contentious fashion this morning. You should provide a suitable beating to encourage a more agreeable demeanor.”

Though here was Sherlock’s normal morning mood showing its most unappealing face, however, after his demon and his brother exchanged words in that truly ear-splitting tongue, Sherlock turned his attention to his breakfast and didn’t continue to rub salt into the gash.

“And what shall you do with your day, my dear? We will be no longer than our standard return time, so that is not too many hours you shall find yourself unaccompanied.”

“I’ll think of something. With all the books you have I won’t lack for something to read and you’ve got that television that is filled with interesting things. I’m sure I’ll find something to do.”

A more definitive answer would have made Mycroft happier, but at least none of the suggested activities sounded particularly disastrous.

“Excellent. And do ask the staff for anything you might require. Cook especially seems fond of you and your appreciation of her cuisine, so you shall not, at least, want for a good meal.”

“Your cook is amazing! Look at all of this! Every bit of it tastes good, too. It can be awful having to eat what’s available to keep the body together, especially when it tastes like someone ate it before, but this is wonderful. The food at the tavern is good, too. When are we going back?”

When his stomach stopped clenching at the thought of beer.

“Soon, my dear. I promise we shall visit again, soon.”

“You are becoming a wastrel, brother, and when you are living in a rubbish bin and hunting rats for sustenance, do not believe for a moment I shall reach out a hand to save you, for I care not for the feel of alcohol-sodden flesh.”

“There you go being silly again, little one. My Mycroft is never going to have to eat rats because I don’t even think your cook can do much to make them taste good, stringy and gamey things that they are. I’ll take care of him, don’t you worry.”

For someone who assumed that he would ever be the one to do the taking care of for the people in his life, finding himself on the other end of the stick was an experience Mycroft found very much to his liking. At least for this particular circumstance.

“Oh good, the pauper steps in to stand as head of household.”

“Humans think a lot about money, don’t they? It’s strange.”

“When money is the key to prosperity, I would say there is nothing strange about it.”

“Silly, silly, Sherlock. A bit of food, a place to be out of the weather and the people you love… that’s all you really need.”

Mycroft and Sherlock shared a look that said they recognized that the demon was substantially off the mark with that particular assessment, at least for their world, but it would be cruel to enlighten him on the subject.

“A heartwarming sentiment, Gregory and I applaud you for it. Now, brother dear… it is time.”

“Oh good, another dreary day at school. Another dreary chair in which to seat myself and
another dreary desk to scrawl my notes begging for rescue to toss out of the window.”

“See! You already have a bracing itinerary to frame your day. Come along.”

Mycroft rose from the table and bore, rather giddily, the fussing over his clothes and hair by the demon, which served only to muss his clothes and hair further, but that was entirely irrelevant in his opinion. His lover was seeing him off for the day. His lover was showing attention and devotion. His lover was being solicitous and cared that he meet the day properly presented and with a kiss, the ghost of which lingered long after he was in the car moving away from the house.

“Are you in a trance? If the demon enchanted you after denying me, I shall be very angry!”

“What? Oh… no. I was simply thinking.”

“That, at least, makes sense, for your stunted brain requires the entirety of your body’s energy to function even at its staggeringly subpar level.”

“Then I am happy I consumed a hearty and filling breakfast, for I anticipate my brain shall be called to action at least once or twice during the day.”

“I was surprised your de…”

Sherlock remembered that the driver was not deaf and quickly amended his vocabulary.

“…your fornication partner did not sit upon your lap and feed you your breakfast given the lustful gazes you were sharing across the table.”

*Mycroft* remembered that the driver was not deaf and, though inured to Sherlock’s antics, found this one above the usual standard if the braking and swerving of their vehicle was any indication. Fortunately the man was discrete…

“Thank you, Sherlock.”

At least his brother had the decency to look chagrined at his disclosure.

“Sh…shall John be coming home with us today?”

“I see no reason why he should not, unless his parents have plans for his time.”

“Good. I have an experiment to conduct and I require his assistance.”

“Then it should be a pleasant afternoon for you.”

“I shall also require your… Gregory.”

One of *those* experiments.

“I am certain that if he is free and your experiment is non-lethal, he will be most willing to participate.”

Gregory seemed incapable of denying Sherlock and John anything, as long as the non-lethal line was not in jeopardy of being crossed, so his participation was veritably a guaranteed thing.

“As he should be. My research is of the most critical and important nature and impeding it is a crime against humanity.”
“Which shall concern him mightily, I have no doubt.”

Fortunately, Sherlock saw fit to continue the rest of the drive in silence as he solidified his upcoming experimental protocol, which left Mycroft free to daydream about the direction his life had taken and the bounty of benefits associated with the detour. Benefits that would make it difficult today to think about his demon in even the most chaste of terms without risking a very compromised dignity and exceedingly ill-fitting trousers…

Greg watched the car pull away and waved until nobody could see him anymore and heaved a deep sigh that… well, that they couldn’t see him anymore! Mycroft and Sherlock had to go to school, he understood that, but… noooooooooooo….

Now, he had to decide what to do for the hours and hours and hours and hours that they’d be gone. Reading was nice and they did have a LOT of books. It wasn’t a bad day so a walk or bit of a fly-around might be fun. That book that talked about birds said a place called Costa Rica had lots and pretty fish, too. He was always up for a swim. But, he hadn’t made a safety amulet for Mycroft, Sherlock or John, so he wouldn’t know if they got hurt or were in danger, so he needed to stay close until that was done. Actually… he could work on those today! Perfect!

With a plan in mind, the demon began scouring the house for the things he needed and left a legion of confused house staff in his wake as he inquired about the availability of ingredients they weren’t certain they’d heard of in anything outside of a book of fairy tales. At least the cook could provide him with the herbs he asked for, but had to disappoint with the request for sunflower petals taken only from west-facing plants. He was going to have to get a little creative.

Once all household leads were exhausted, the demon decided that a wider market was needed and since there were plenty of markets in the village, that was the best place to start. And he had money! Lots of money, actually, even if Mycroft said it wasn’t real. His human could be as silly as Sherlock sometimes, though, and that was good because it wouldn’t do to be serious all the time. There wasn’t a lot of fun in that and if there was something Mycroft needed, it was a little more fun in his day.

With a check that nobody was watching, Greg darted out to the garage and looked among the vehicles for the one that looked easiest to drive, because why go to the village the easy way and fly or teleport when he could have an adventure instead! He’d watched Mycroft very closely and asked questions about cars, so the one without the knobby thing in the middle looked like the best choice. That part looked complicated what with all the foot stomping and shoving the knob around over and over and he didn’t have time for anything complicated. This one did all that itself, according to Mycroft, which meant it was true, so now he just had to try all the keys on the peg board to find the one that fit. Which was the fourth set along. This was going to be fun!

This wasn’t fun! It was scary and hard and if he barely laid his foot on the brakes, the whole car slammed to a stop and he was going to hit his head at some point and that wouldn’t be a lot of help making his amulets! And you couldn’t take your hands off the wheel for even a minute to play with the radio or you started going towards a tree or a fence or goose and they honked a LOT when they were startled! People honked, too. Well, their cars did if you went too slow or stopped suddenly or started towards a goose. There was a lot of honking today and his head was starting to hurt, but the village was past those trees, so as long as none of the trees jumped out in front of him, and he hadn’t noticed any sentient trees in the area yet, or bastardy tree sprites, he should make it with all the car parts attached the car…
The car really didn’t need that extra mirror because it had three, which was a lot, if you asked him, and minus one was still two, which was more than a body needed for mirrors. But, Mycroft would notice and that might lead to one of his grimacy faces and those weren’t very nice to look at so a check that nobody was watching anymore and a little wave of the fingers and three mirrors were again on the car so it looked absolutely new and lovely.

Ok, now the paint looked absolutely new and lovely and so did the paint of the car he sort of scraped trying to get into the open space that looked big enough to fit Mycroft’s car until he realized it wasn’t big enough to fit Mycroft’s car. He fixed the dents, too, because it wasn’t the other cars’ fault he hadn’t really done this before. But there were more and bigger spaces a little bit away from all the shops, so that the putting away of the car went better and the car was in its space just like the other cars and it had only taken eight or nine tries to get it that way, which wasn’t bad, actually. Now it was time to do some shopping. And have beer. Or some of that fizzy drink that the cook let him have, when he was thirsty and water wasn’t impressing him with its blandness and lack of fizz. It was cold and sweet and that might be good right now since he had gotten a little hot and sweaty trying to make the car do what he wanted it to do without using magic, which would spoil things and, really, be cheating. That sounded like a good plan. A cold drink and then some shopping.

And food. There was good food here and he didn’t have to worry about Mycroft’s delicate stomach since Mycroft wasn’t actually here, so that shop that smelled so wonderful last time he was in town could give him lunch. Or pre-lunch. He probably should have brought a nibble because he was getting hungry what with fighting the car and getting honked at so often. No! He had to think about what he was here for and not his stomach! Though he could think and eat at the same time fairly easily, so long as he wasn’t trying to pilot the car, too, so maybe just a little something from that shop that smelled really, really good to kick off the shopping with a solid… kick.

The really, really good-smelling shop wasn’t open! It was ok, though, because he’d found a bakery and they had lots and lots of things to buy. So he’d bought lots and lots that he could eat while walking, but shops didn’t let you bring in pastries and buns, so he’d had to walk around for awhile eating his food until the shopping could officially begin. That was alright, though, because there were plenty of people to talk to and they liked to talk! Admittedly they were sort of old, but old people did like to talk if you were willing to listen, which he was, so shopping actually didn’t get started until later than he’d hoped, but he’d gotten some great stories and shared his food because storytellers deserved something for their troubles, and he’d had to get a little more to tide him over until lunch, but that fit into his pockets fairly well, so he could sneak a bite in a shop if he got hungry waiting for lunch. Which wasn’t actually as far away now as it was when he started his shopping trip, which was nothing if not convenient…

This was great! Everybody was happy to help him find what he needed, though he did have to make a lot of substitutions, but that was ok, because it was pretty clear if a spell was going to work or not and if it didn’t, he’d just have to try again tomorrow with a new set of substitutions. And there was so much to see! Maybe some of the things in his bags weren’t for his spell, but it was hard to see things that Mycroft or Sherlock or John would like and just leave them behind. People understood that, too. When he talked about Mycroft and Sherlock and John they smiled and laughed and said he was lucky, which was true, but it was still nice to hear other people say it. That wasn’t something he’d had in his life before, so if he boasted a little about his Mycroft and the little ones, it wasn’t really a bad thing, just an excited thing and there wasn’t anything wrong with that.
Lunch was brilliant! There was fish and potatoes and it was all fried up hot and crisp. And the sun was out so he could sit on a bench in a pretty little spot and eat his lunch and wave at the people he’d met already and feed bits of the buns he still had in his pockets to the birds. This was the best. It was the very best thing in his life. He was in the human world where he really did like to be, but… he could do what he wanted! And he had his Mycroft and little ones, who were lights in his eyes… Home was good, it was, and that was the truth, but it wasn’t this. Mycroft wanted him to stay, too… that part was especially nice. His Mycroft wanted him here, not for a bit of fun for one, single night, but for a long time. His Mycroft who was… hard to describe he was so perfect. And his human didn’t know how easy it was to see he was going to be someone special in this world. Someone important and powerful. It was in him and he could see it like an electrical storm raging through his aura. The little ones had a future ahead of them, too. The sparkled with creativity and curiosity and energy and they were headed for a life filled with adventures. And he would get to see it! Mycroft wanted him to stay, so he’d get to see all of that and do what he could to keep them safe and happy, too.

Deciding to eat only half of his second round of lunch and save the rest for a snack, Greg strolled about the village, visiting every possible visitation spot he could find and filling more bags with things he might need for his spell if what he already had didn’t work the way he wanted, as well as bibs and bobs that simply caught his eye. Then it was dropping it all into the car and having a few pints and laughs at the tavern until someone mentioned the time and that almost put him off his new pint. If Mycroft and the little ones had a normal day they should be home… well, a bit ago, and… Mycroft could be a little wiggly about things sometimes. His human worried, which was a good thing, but his human also worried, which wasn’t such a good thing. He might be in trouble…

The demon waved at the people who happily watched him try and maneuver the large car out of its parking space and, this time, he quickly started cheating and used a little magic to keep his car from hitting the ones in front and behind who’d been rather rude and parked very close to him. After a few centuries, he actually had the nose pointed vaguely towards the street and crept out of the space, watching closely for any honking cars, geese or little ones who were out of school now and were barely taller than the height of the bonnet, like John.

Then it was the slow putter home, which went better than the slower putter to the village now that he learned that pulling over and waving cars around him reduced the honking to a very acceptable degree. And… oh. Mycroft must be having visitors, because there were cars in the drive. Rather a lot of them. They all looked alike, too. It must not be a fun visit, though, because there was Mycroft looking cross and seemed to be scolding the man wearing the hat, who didn’t look like he appreciated being scolded, but was afraid to say anything, probably because Mycroft’s aura was practically exploding off of him and even if the man couldn’t see it, he likely felt it and was worried Mycroft would do something rather rash in a minute. Maybe if he drove very, very quietly, Mycroft wouldn’t notice him…

“GREGORY! DISEMBARK THAT VEHICLE IMMEDIATELY AND PRESENT YOURSELF FOR AN EXPLANATION!!!!”

Mycroft noticed him. Maybe he should wave.

“How dare you wave at me? Bring yourself here this instant and pray you… were kidnapped and escape my wrath!”

Waving didn’t work. The man with the hat thought it was funny, though, which was nice. Uh oh…
Mycroft noticed the man. Who wasn’t laughing anymore. At least he got to get into his car, with the other men who were already in their cars and they got to go home. Unlike him. Mycroft’s aura was bordering on ultraviolet and was making time sizzle… not the moment to hit one of the other cars as they sped away so paying attention and giving them a wide berth…

“GREGORY! CEASE YOUR ATTEMPTED… GETAWAY AND BRING YOURSELF TO ME IMMEDIATELY!”

Oh look, Sherlock and John were watching out of the window. They waved back, at least.

“GREGORY!!!!!”

Maybe Mycroft had banshee blood. That was loud. Probably shouldn’t keep him waiting any longer.

“NOW!!!!”

Stopping now, love. No car going to the garage or even pointed in the right direction for the garage. Just stopping and getting out and see? Smiling the smile you really like and…

“I SHALL NOT BE PLACATED BY YOUR ATTEMPTS AT SEDUCTION!”

Not smiling the smile you really like, so…

“IS THAT FISH?”

Don’t offer any food, even if it is still reasonably crispy and the paper soaked up a lot of the grease.

“Hi, love. Have a nice day at school?”

Mycroft shouldn’t glare like that. It had to be hard on his eyes.

“I am very, very cross with you, Gregory. Where have you been?”

“Umm… the village.”

“The village! The place we agreed you would wait to visit until I could escort you?”

“Oh! I see! You’re upset I didn’t wait for you! I’m sorry, love, I really am. I didn’t know it was that important to you or I wouldn’t have…”

“That is in no manner the root of my upset, Gregory.”

“It isn’t?”

“By no accounting.”

“Are you sure you don’t want any fish?”

Well, you didn’t have to throw it into the bushes, did you? Maybe a cat would find it though. That would be alright.

“Gregory… I return home to be informed by the staff that you were asking strange questions and then driver finds one of the cars absent from the garage, with you, also, absent from the house. Have you no semblance of understanding how that would… what in the world were you thinking?”
“Well, I needed some things and I thought the village would be the most likely place to find them
and I didn’t see why I couldn’t try driving one of your cars because it’s not that far away, though I
did learn that there are a lot of things between here and there and you really have to pay attention to
what you’re doing or you’ll get honked at a lot, which isn’t good for the head, but…”

“You took a car and with NO experience at driving, decided to have a jaunt to the village for a
day at the shops? Is that what you are telling me?”

“Uh… yes.”

“HAVE YOU ANY IDEA HOW DANGEROUS WAS THAT IDEA?”

“Uh… no.”

“Gregory! Gregory… an automobile is a very dangerous thing if you are not practiced with its
handling and you could easily, very easily, have come to harm or brought harm to others. Did this
not occur to you?”

“Sure it did! But, I drove very slowly and very carefully… mostly… and see! The car isn’t
hurt! Not one bit! And I didn’t hit a car or a fence or a little one who was as small as John.”

“Gregory… the fact that nothing occurred does not negate the danger that it might have
occurred.”

“I think it does, actually.”

“No… no it doesn’t. You were extremely fortunate that you did not meet with a lorry, which
occasionally make their way on our narrow roads or… sheep or…”

“I didn’t see either of those. I did see geese, though. They honk and spread out their wings
when they’re startled.”

Mycroft held his head in his hands and wondered how far the demon would let him take the
strangling he desperately wanted to bestow. His Gregory was most indulgent at times…

“Head giving you some trouble, love? I understand. Mine did, too, mostly after the geese and
car horns and parking, so how about a nice fizzy, sweet drink? That made me feel better.”

If the image of a very hurt, very dead demon wasn’t still fixed firmly in his mind, Mycroft might
have laughed at the lunacy of it all.

“Gregory… please, please, promise me you will not take a vehicle again until you have been
properly instructed in its use.”

Greg began to protest that he learned a lot today and now that he knew what to do to get to the
village, it really wasn’t a problem, but as Mycroft was losing his rage, he could see clearly the worry
in his human’s eyes and decided that it wasn’t a good idea to carry on any further. His Mycroft had
been upset that something bad might happen and that made a person a little emotional, which
explained a lot. It was a good thing, actually, because it meant Mycroft cared but he shouldn’t have
to worry like that again. Not at all.

“Alright, love. I promise that I won’t take any of the cars until you teach me how to drive them
properly.”

“Truly?”
“I promise that I promise that I won’t take any of the cars until you teach me how to drive them properly.”

Mycroft released a very long sigh and nodded. His Gregory could have been in jail right now, hurt, dead, in hospital, which could have led to exposure… he felt very like a tyrant with his behavior, but the alternative… the alternative did not bear considering.

“Very well. Now, the children are waiting and are, also, very upset, so do be prepared to soothe their distress.”

They didn’t look very distressed with their faces pressed to the window seeming for all the world as if they were waiting for Mycroft to erupt like a bomb and had a wager on exactly when it would happen, but that could stay Greg’s secret for now.

“I’ll be very prepared because I have lots of presents for them, and for you, too. And they can help me make my protection amulets, which I know they’ll like. You can have a nice brandy and watch us because it’s a bit messy and I know you’re very much against mess.”

Presents… which meant money. Oh yes, the headache was surging nicely. The brandy suggestion was a very helpful one, at this point. And the part about the protection amulets could politely wait for that first snifter to be drained to raise its had to gain further of his attention.

“Oh good. I take it you had an enjoyable day?”

Greg smiled widely and began to regale Mycroft with his stories and smiled even more widely as his human began to relax while they carried his bags towards the house. New rule – don’t let Mycroft get upset because when Mycroft got upset he got very upset. Second new rule – when Mycroft gets upset start planning for a nice night where he gets lots of attention because when Mycroft gets upset it’s for caring reasons and that deserves celebration and attention. Good massagey, sexy attention.

“Gregory, ‘massagey’ is not a word.”

“Did I say that part out loud?”

“That you did.”

“Oh. Did you like it?”

“Most certainly.”

“Then we’ve got our evening planned. And I am sorry, love. I won’t make you upset again.”

“I appreciate that. I have quite enough on my hands with Sherlock and John, as it is.”

“I bought them these little guns that fire darts with rubber tips so they stick on things. Isn’t that brilliant?”

A snifter would not be necessary for the brandy. In truth, there wouldn’t be any reason to restopper the bottle…
“How are you doing, love? Nice and relaxed?”

Brandy was very much the proper libation for the afternoon because, besides the demon’s shopping rampage through the village, there was now… this.

“Oh, quite. And, tell me… is the cauldron absolutely necessary?”

Burbling away merrily over the fire that he had, blessedly, convinced Gregory to establish outdoors and not in the fireplace in the library.

“Well, no, I suppose, but I didn’t want to take a pot from the kitchen in case your cook needed it to make dinner. Besides, it’s traditional, which is very much something you should like. It looks impressive, too, don’t you think?”

A large, black cauldron simmering over a blazing fire, stirred with what was nearly a boat oar by two small, yet brilliantly-hued demons standing on invisible platforms so they could stir the large black cauldron? Impressive was certainly one word to describe it.

“How impressive. And remind me again of the purpose of this exercise?”

“Amulets! I thought about going somewhere else today, one of the places on your map, but realized that if something happened to you or Sherlock or John, I wouldn’t be nearby to help. This way, I’ll know right off if something happens and be there quickly to set it right.”

“I see. And was it necessary to purchase as the foundation of your charm something quite so… elaborate?”

Mycroft looked at the three pendants lying on the ground next to him and wondered if the demon had searched every shop in the village for the three that were most likely to remain unsold so as to protect the eyesight and sanity of the general populace.

“Are they amazing? I knew you wouldn’t want anything big, since you have to wear your school uniforms, but that doesn’t mean they couldn’t be colorful! Not that you’ll be able to see the color once we’re done, but you’ll know it was there and that should give you a smile well enough.”

Thank heavens for small favors.

“Very thoroughly planned. And I do want to commend you for your protective instincts. I admit that I have always had a worry about Sherlock and John being out of my sight, for they can, in an instant, find themselves in the most devilish of circumstances. It is comforting that if they are in danger, they shall not have to bear it alone for very long.”

“Nope, I’ll be there as soon as I feel there’s a problem. There’s a… what’s it called… homing! Yeah, a homing piece to the spell, so I won’t have to waste time with a location spell, too.”

“Highly efficient. However, I believe your assistance is required…”

Mycroft pointed at the boys, who were staring in shock at the large, gelatinous mass that was beginning to crawl its way out of the cauldron and hoped his demon’s laughter meant things were not as dire as they appeared.
“Yeah, it does that. Time for a little more hair of wolf, or at least that big dog that the butcher owns. That’ll calm things right down and get us ready for the next bit. Here’s where it really gets messy!”

As if the various splotches of potion already anointing the children and Gregory much like paint smudges worn by an artist could be classed otherwise. However, there was brandy aplenty and his demon was more than content to allow him to drink it undisturbed by participation in their ritual, the children were engaged and, so far, non-destructive, the afternoon was mild and there was nary a pressing call on his time to pull him from this spot. All in all, he couldn’t think of a more pleasant manner in which to spend the day.

“I think it’s alive!”

“Oops. You might be right, John. Did I put in the nail from a forgotten fencepost before or after the water that’s passed twice through a fiend from hell?”

“After.”

“Damn. I knew I wasn’t paying close enough attention. Never mind, I’ll send this little bugger back where he came from and… Sherlock! Hand me that jug again.”

“I am not touching your urine.”

“I didn’t say touch it, I said touch the jug.”

“The proximity is sufficiently off-putting.”

“Well, we have to backtrack a little and this time I won’t make a mistake. So, hand me my pee, now.”

“I would rather chew glass.”

“Then I’ll grab the jug and you can watch that our little friend doesn’t climb out further and take a bite off of you. You won’t miss an arm or leg, too much, will you?”

“You had best hope the container is completely water resistant.”

“If any gets on you, I promise to let you have some of my hair for that shrinking spell.”

“Greg, you do realize he’ll spill it all over himself now, don’t you?”

“Sherlock, you won’t douse yourself in my pee just to become small like John says, will you? Oh, you already did. Well, wipe your hands and hand me the jug. We’ve got things to do first and then we can work on making you tiny.”

Another large sip of brandy and, really, nothing could upset his calm. Gregory handled the children marvelously and their endeavors were clearly educational in nature, so everything was right in the world. So long as the brandy held out…

“I admit it is not quite as… vibrant… as I had anticipated.”

Mycroft looked at his new possession, which had somehow become solid silver through an impregnation/transformation process that he was happy to leave a mystery, so long as it saved his eyes the insult he had feared.
“Nice, isn’t it? It’s a messy business, but the little ones helped a lot, so it didn’t take a full night like it can if a body does it alone.”

The urge to inquire about how many of these the demon had created surged with some strength, but the greater urge not to know won the internal debate handily.

“My thanks, Gregory. It is a tremendous gift and I shall wear it proudly. Now… are you certain the children will be alright?”

Mycroft looked at the new, smaller cauldron that had taken its larger brother’s place over the fire and the two boys who were trying their hands at their own spell.

“They’ll be fine. If that spell goes wrong, nothing really happens, so it’s a safe one for them to practice on. If it works, they’ll be tiny enough for us to put in our pockets for a little calm down when they start to get over-excited.”

That, without question, was a strong selling point.

“Besides, while they’re occupied, we can have a little time to ourselves. How was your day, love? Before… well, before you got upset at me, that is.”

The latter said so meekly that it broke Mycroft’s heart.

“I am no longer angry, Gregory, so do not worry that I continue to harbor any ill feelings. In truth, I was highly worried for you and, perhaps, behaved poorly when I saw you had not succumbed to an imagined threat. I really have little idea of how versed you are with our ways and customs, the hazards of this world, and I had in my mind countless scenarios where you met a tragic fate or were taken into custody where your special nature might be revealed. I do apologize for shouting at you, however, as that was uncalled for, but I will not apologize for the reasons for my concern.”

Mycroft lost the air in his lungs from the hug he received and took a moment to try to refill them when the demon finally let go.

“I wouldn’t want you to, love. Apologize for worrying, I mean. And, I guess I did forget that you don’t know how well or if I can take care of myself. I can tell you though – I’m brilliant at it.”

“Oh, and that, of course, is a completely unbiased assessment.”

“It is. I can keep an eye on myself and stay out of trouble. Mostly. If I do get into trouble, I’m good at getting out of it, too. Just today, one of the ladies working in a shop caught me eating and was going to give me a good scolding, but I charmed her out of it.”

Something that surprised Mycroft not a whit.

“The root of my concern did not lie in scoldings, my dear.”

“Oh, I know. I just didn’t want to dwell on more awful things. I can take care of myself, love. I really can. I can do terrible things to a person who tries to hurt me and I’m hardier than you might think. It takes a lot, a very, very lot to lay me low, so an accident here or there isn’t really a worry. And I’ve been caught by the law before, too! Got pinched for housebreaking, which wasn’t true, because I was sneaking and not breaking, but they didn’t see it that way. It wasn’t my fault the house was warded against magic and I had to muscle my way inside, now was it? Oh, I guess that does rather set it in the breaking category, doesn’t it. Guess they weren’t so wrong, after all.”
The demon was a happy, loving, rather loony creature, but he was, apparently, made of stern stuff. Mycroft felt his uneasiness ebb just a bit more, but knew it would ever linger at the edges of his mind until he convinced himself that it was needless.

“I am happy to hear that you are suitably self-sufficient, but you will not be put-out, will you, if I continue to have a care for your well-being?”

“NO! Not at all. I’m glad for it, actually. My Mycroft worries about me and that’s a fabulous thing, in my opinion. And look! The little ones are really little now!”

Mycroft looked over at the cauldron, which was now a skyscraper compared to Sherlock’s and John’s height and filed away his and his demon’s conversation for further contemplation at a later time. No harm had been done, so there was no reason to beat the proverbial dead horse. Besides, the sprout-sized boys dancing wildly was far too precious a sight to sully with pesky safety concerns…

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“No.”

“Heavens, brother dear, can we not return you to your normal size even to sleep?”

“No.”

“This is fun, Mycroft, so why would we want to stop?”

“Because…”

Mycroft just knew if he looked at his delicious green demon for support he would be met with the most scintillating smile to tease him about his devotion to things un-fun.

“Because a mouse happening upon you might be a formidable foe to vanquish at your current size.”

John eeped! loudly and scurried under the blanket, though Sherlock was not so easily convinced.

“There are few mice in the house and those that are in residence are far more likely to be denizens of the kitchen and pantry than my bedchamber where not even a crumb of food can be found. Your lies are disgraceful, Mycroft, as is your waistline.”

Sherlock’s squeaky, cartoon voice made it very difficult to put much stock in his argument, but Mycroft forced himself to concede his brother had a point.

“If you’re really worried, love, they can sleep with us.”

The demon was nearly bowled over by his lover’s and the tiny boys’ objection and decided that they weren’t keen on the idea.

“Forget I mentioned it.”

“I shall! Mycroft, who emits a quantity of flatulence that is nearly lethal for my standard size and unquestionably lethal at this size, would surely kill me a second time as he dreamt of a piece of roast beef and ate my gas-felled carcass in one bite.”

“And he’d think I was a mouse and squash me!”
John’s trembling under the blanket ceased long enough to show support for their side of the argument, then immediately recommenced.

“First, Mycroft doesn’t make that much gas and second, I don’t think he dreams of roast beef because I haven’t seen him chewing in his sleep and I’ve watched him a lot while he was sleeping. Third, for your ears, John, Mycroft wouldn’t squash a mouse. First, he’s too nice and second, he wouldn’t want to get his hands or shoes all bloody.”

His demon making numbered lists was a rather arousing thing, though Mycroft wasn’t certain what that said about him. Not that it mattered, of course, because their bedroom was but steps away and beckoning quite loudly.

“I still shall not be moved.”

“Alright, Sherlock. Love, are you alright letting the little ones sleep in here by themselves? It was nice for John’s mum to let him stay with us, but I doubt if she’d want us to hand back a little boy who’d been nibbled on by a mouse.”

Greg reached over and gently used his fingernails to pinch the hidden homunculus who squealed very much like a mouse in response.

“Gregory, do stop teasing John. And, I suppose they shall fare well enough for a single night’s rest. However, please do not attempt to climb down from the bed as I am concerned what a fall from that height might mean for your small forms.”

“I am not yours to command!”

“No, brother dear, but I am the one who will have to bring you to hospital should you suffer a broken bone or inform Mummy and Father if you break your neck and they need to shop for mourning outfits. Goodnight, Sherlock, and goodnight to you, too, John. Sleep well and we shall retrieve you at your normal rising time in the morning.”

John peeked out from the edge of the blanket and waved at the larger demons, who beat a quiet retreat, checking the corridor for any staff before darting towards their own bedroom to end the night. Though, the demon wasn’t quite ready to see it end, which was very much to Mycroft’s delight.

“Oh, that does feel exquisite.”

“Told you. Good massagey attention for my Mycroft. You deserve a nice back rub after the day you’ve had.”

And ‘good’ was a paltry term for the ecstasy he was experiencing from his demon’s hands. If his body became any more relaxed, it would melt into a pool of bliss.

“You are quite talented, my dear. Truly, you have the hands of an artist.”

“When I’m inspired, maybe. And nobody inspires me like you do, love.”

“You flatter me. But I cannot bring myself to mind.”

“Hah! Good for you. Now, you just relax and let me loosen up all of those lovely muscles.”

For someone who claimed he had no talent for singing, Mycroft smiled at his demon’s soft humming as he worked each muscle in his body, kneading away the day’s tension and placing a soft, chaste
kiss here and there as if to lay a seal of approval on his work. Soon, it was Greg who was smiling, this time at his human’s quiet snores and he gently repositioned Mycroft’s body so it was cozy and snug under the blankets and he was cozy and snug next to him. His poor human, such a hard day. It felt nice to be able to get him to relax and think about good things, have fun with Sherlock and John… and he’d do the same tomorrow. Now, just had to remember to wake up in time to get them off to school. Luckily, Mycroft hadn’t noticed his clock was missing. Something learned today - clocks didn’t respond very well to being dropped out of a window, even when it was completely an accident. They must sell clocks in the village, though, so he’d have a reason to go back soon. This time, though, on foot…

Hmmm… something smelled most delicious…

“I told you that Mycroft would rouse for food.”

The Mycroft in question cracked his eyes and wasn’t surprised to see Sherlock scowling at him, but was surprised that Sherlock was full-size and dressed for school.

“Hush, little one, or no breakfast for you.”

Which Mycroft now noticed was being carried on a large tray by a very human-looking demon.

“Sherlock, if you lose us breakfast, I’ll punch you hard. You wouldn’t think being tiny would make a person so hungry, but I’m starving!”

John showed Sherlock his fist and hopped up onto the bed patting his lap for a plate of food to be dropped on it.

“Here you go, John. And, look, love… a hot pot of tea and all the things you like for breakfast. I thought you could eat first and then get dressed, today, instead of the other way around.”

Mycroft rubbed the sleep out of his eyes and budged up to lean back against the headboard and accept the breakfast tray that was placed on his outstretched legs.

“I find that to be a very agreeable suggestion. And I see our imps have been restored to their normal condition, both in color and size.”

“The dastardly devil refused to allow John and I to remain as we were and be delivered to school to better observe the behavior of the goats and chickens with whom we are forced to associate during the day as a social experiment.”

“I didn’t much follow the goats and chickens part, but you shouldn’t experiment on people without their permission, Sherlock.”

“You know nothing of objective experimental criteria demon, so do not criticize my methods.”

“Anyway, brother dear, I am certain the glow of your miniaturization success will easily last you through the day, rendering it a pleasant experience, regardless. And thank you, Gregory. This impressive feast is a very pleasant way to start the day.”

Which, Mycroft realized, was following a night of perfect slumber that must have begun while his demon was attentively tending to his accumulated stresses. That was a tad impolite, but Gregory did not seem to have taken offense and he was so fantastically rested this morning… but, he should be decent and show his gratitude by offering these three, no… two… pieces of bacon to his Gregory as
“You’re welcome! And, thanks! This is very good. And you cook says she can make fish and potatoes just like I ate yesterday, so I might have that for lunch again.”

“Fish and chips! I love fish and chips!”

John’s bright smile was offset by both Sherlock and Mycroft’s look of incipient botulism, but Greg’s staunch support brought the bright side to victory.

“Maybe I can ask the cook if she can make that for dinner and we can all have some!”

Mycroft felt somewhat villainous making use of his secret weapon, however, the cause was certainly just.

“Gregory, I believe you forget that John will be at his own home this evening and we should see him there early to compensate for his extended visit yesterday and this morning. Perhaps some other time we might enjoy your frightfully-fried repast.”

If a painter could produce a realistic portrait of the twin pouts of the demon and the small boy, it would be the most adorable work of art in the universe and Mycroft would gladly hang it in the entrance so all guests could gaze upon its glory.

“Well, that’s no fun.”

“My apologies to the gods of fun.”

Absolutely adorable pouts. Fortunately, his tea was excellent for both invigoration and fortitude and he was not swayed by the formidable cuteness.

“I’ll miss you John. And our fish.”

“You have it anyway, Greg. Don’t suffer because of me.”

“No… I’ll wait. We’ll have our fish and potatoes together and I’ll make sure Mycroft doesn’t throw it in the bushes for the cats to eat.”

Two pouty figures clasped hands solemnly and returned to their breakfasts, leaving two exasperated figures to shake their heads and commiserate silently, while savoring the knowledge that their mealtimes would be uncompromised by liquid lipids, tubers and socially-inferior sea creatures. Sometimes harsh measures were required to protect one’s digestive canal, but the end result was undoubtedly worth the effort.

One good book read. Another good book started. A very silly programme on Mycroft’s television that made him laugh so loudly that someone had popped their head into the television room to see if he was alright. So far, being home alone wasn’t so bad, but now it was time to get started on his secret mission…

Greg concentrated hard and gave a whoop of glee that he had timed things correctly and the little extra remote sensing he snuck into the amulets was working like a… well, like a charm. Snatching up his brown paper sack, which was quickly acquiring grease stains, the demon took flight out of a window towards the back of the house where he wouldn’t be seen and camouflaged himself so Mycroft’s worries about law enforces wouldn’t come true. Flying fast and straight, he landed on the
lawn outside Sherlock and John’s school and, following his nose, hunted down John, who was just sitting down for lunch. Luckily, John’s shocked face went unnoticed among the throng of boisterous boys who seemed to view lunchtime as an opportunity to explode into balls of energy.

“Greg!”

“Shhh… here, I brought you some lunch.”

The demon unwrapped his arms from the bag so it could be seen and handed it to John, who grabbed it quickly and looked inside.

“Yeah! They… nobody can see you, right?”

“No, but they can hear you, so you might want to talk quietly.”

“Oh. That’s probably true, not that anyone pays attention to much during lunchtime.”

Which the demon had to admit seemed true. Some didn’t even seem to be paying attention to their lunch, which was a shame because it smelled good and he’d only had a one plate of fish and potatoes before he left and that wasn’t lasting as well as he’d hoped.

“And thanks for this. It’s amazing! I don’t know what’s wrong with Sherlock and Mycroft, but they don’t like good things sometimes. Good telly, good music, good food… they’re strange.”

“They’re just who they are and that’s brilliant enough on its own.”

“You’re right, but…”

John waved a chip in the air to make his point and the demon did have to concede it was a good one.

“Ok, they’re strange, too, but life would be boring if everyone was the same. Besides, we can have all the fish and potatoes we want, whether they like it or not.”

“Yes! This is perfect for today, too. Sherlock and I had science class this morning and… well, it went the way it does sometimes when Sherlock decides he wants to try something on his own. That’s why he’s not at lunch. It’s going to take a long time to clean up that mess.”

“Oh, that’s a shame. I can’t say I’m surprised, though. He’s got an incredible brain, but sometimes forgets where it might lead him. Can I have your lunch? The one you’re not eating?”

John shoved over his own lunch bag and the two ate quietly for a moment, contemplating Sherlock’s sad fate and where his lunch bag might be since he wasn’t going to need it. On the subject of food, John and Greg could easily have hatched from the same egg.

“What are you going to do with the rest of the day? Practice kissing for when Mycroft comes home?”

Sniggering like a seven-year old, the demon popped a biscuit into his mouth and smiled broadly.

“Don’t need to practice. Already got my technique mastered.”

“That must be why Mycroft’s been smiling. He usually doesn’t smile much, but he’s been doing it a lot since you got here.”

That didn’t sit well with Greg. Didn’t sit well, at all. Not that he suspected anything different, because the Mycroft he first met wasn’t one to smile much, but it still hurt to hear it said aloud.
“Well, I’m going to do my best to keep him smiling.”

“Good. He’s more fun when he smiles.”

‘Right! That’s what I keep telling him! Smile, have fun, enjoy life.,’”

“Eat fish and chips.”

“That’s another good one. I bet you have to do something similar for Sherlock.”

“Sometimes. Sometimes a lot of the time, too.”

“But you don’t mind it.”

“Not at all. Sherlock’s my friend. My best friend. Sort of like you and Mycroft, except without the kissing.”

“Mycroft… he doesn’t have a lot of friends, does he.”

“Not that I’ve met. I think he’s spent all his time studying or watching Sherlock and me and hasn’t had any time left over for doing things with people.”

“That’s not good.”

“True, but that also means he hasn’t had time to find a boyfriend.”

“Which is very good.”

“So maybe it’s all even if you do the sums. Oh, lunch is about over.”

John made quick work of the rest of his food and sniffed the inside of the bag for good measure before he burped and let out a large sigh of contentment.

“This was the best lunch I’ve ever had at school.”

“We can do it again, if you’d like. The cook didn’t ask questions when I asked for another portion of lunch in a sack so I could take it with me on a walk.”

“That sounds good to me. Sherlock and I bring our lunches because he doesn’t trust what they make here and I have to admit it sometimes hard to figure out exactly what it is they put on the plate. Something hot would be nice now and then, though. Ok, I have to go back to class now. Bye, Greg! And thanks.”

John darted off with the stream of small boys leaving the lunchroom and Greg waited until he was alone to make his way outside, spread his wings and start the flight home. That was a brilliant way to spend a little time! Nice lunch with John, bit of flying around lovely countryside… he had a book waiting for him and Mycroft and the little ones would be home soon so they all could enjoy something fun together. This summoning just kept getting better and better…

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“You shall not have my forgiveness!”

Sherlock’s returned-home opening salvo confused everybody but John, who had suffered his friend’s wrath since Sherlock was released from lab-cleaning duty.
“Ok, since I don’t know what I’m supposed to be forgiven for, little one, I can’t say I’m very upset about it.”

“Need I remind you about the subject of lunch?”

Lunch? Mycroft heaved a long-suffering sigh, even though he knew his suffering was just about to begin.

“Gregory, what did you do?”

“I didn’t tell either, Greg! Sherlock smelled fish on me and figured it out on his own.”

The fish-and-chips war, apparently, had gone covert and Mycroft grudgingly admired his demon’s strategic strike.

“John was provided with a hot lunch and I was denied even a morsel!”

“That’s because you had to clean the lab!”

And another headache tablet was added to Mycroft’s daily allotment.

“Sherlock, what did you do?”

“The demon did not respond, so neither shall I!”

“Hey! I didn’t have time to answer, so don’t try and use me to keep from Mycroft that you dirtied up your science room and had to miss lunch to tidy it.”

“On an empty stomach! I nearly perished!”

Mycroft was actually relieved when a member of the house staff stepped into the library and motioned for his attention. Perhaps the house was on fire or something equally calming.

“Yes?”

“Telephone for you, Mr. Holmes. Your parents.”

Ah. Certainly not as calming as a house fire.

“Thank you. I shall take it… I suppose I shall take it in here.”

Because he would be trailed by his personal circus wherever he went and the staff had better things to do with their time than clean the floor of straw and cart-wheel tracks.

“Hello? Ah, Father. It is good to hear your voice…”

Mycroft braced for his father’s long discussion of the various business and political issues of the day and then his mother’s observations on society and fashion, with the marked shift in gender lines when his father’s discussion would turn to the arts and his mother’s towards sports and, a century later, when they wound down their status report, he felt confident he could speak as an authority on any number of topics relevant to the various countries his parents had visited since last they had phoned.

“Yes, how delightful. It is good you are enjoying your respite. I know, one must continue to experience and broaden one’s mind if one wishes to make and retain a mark on the global community. Shall I pass the phone to Sherlock?”
Not that he gave his parents the chance to object and now it was Sherlock with the receiver glued to his ear, making strangling motions until he had, also, served his sentence.

“Can I say hello?”

Sherlock gladly thrust the phone into John’s eager hands and both Holmes brothers took the ensuing fortnight to recover their stamina while John talked about school, asked questions about the trip and, generally, made the Holmes parents very pleased with his interest and manners. Further, as always, they were incredibly thankful that he had not been scared away by Sherlock’s nonsense or Mycroft’s lack of nonsense and continued to be an important person in their children’s lives.

“Ok, then. I’ll say goodbye now.”

“Can I say hello, too?”

“NO!”

Mycroft snatched away the phone that John was handing to the demon and pointedly ignored the hurt on Greg’s face as he tied up the loose ends of the call and bid his parents goodbye.

“Well, that went surprisingly well. Thankfully, neither Father nor Mummy has found much about which to complain and our ears were spared their scathing critiques of their offenders.”

Still pointedly ignoring…

“Mycroft… that was very rude!”

“I am sorry, John, however, you have not suffered the agony of their social or cultural commentary and know not its soul-sapping effects.”

Pointedly ignoring like a champion…

“That is not what John meant!”

Stop interfering with my ignoring, brother dear…

“Oh? Then I apologize again. Now, shall we find a refreshment to begin our afternoon or…”

Two children with glowering faces and crossed arms and one demon looking close to tears… the pointedly ignoring was beginning to breathe its last.

“Very well. Gregory, I could not allow you to speak to Mummy and Father due to the sheer number and diversity of issues it would raise and questions it would prompt. I am not at all certain they would not take the next flight home to assess the situation for themselves.”

“What’s wrong with that? They’re going to have to meet Greg sometime, since he’s your boyfriend now.”

Dear John, Gregory does not require a solicitor for his defense, so kindly do shut up.

“And when that time comes, I am certain I shall have had sufficient opportunity to prepare myself for the event, however, that time is not now. So, do run along and inform the kitchen that we would enjoy a refreshment. I am certain Gregory would be happy to help with our schoolwork and, then, we might find something less academic to which to devote our attention.”

Sherlock and John scowled thunderously, but knew that the look on Mycroft’s face meant he
considered the matter closed and would not be moved on the subject. Storming out of the library, the two boys left Mycroft and his demon alone which was something Mycroft was quickly regretting.

“Oh, my dear… please do not be distressed.”

“All I would have done was say hello. I wouldn’t have embarrassed you.”

So this is what it felt like to be stabbed. Not a joyful experience, whatsoever.

“That was not my concern, Gregory. To date, I have never discussed my preferences with my parents, nor the fact that I might be ready to explore those preferences in a physical manner. And, I admit, I have given them little reason to believe those explorations would be anything but a long time in coming. The revelation of a romantic interest would be highly surprising and highly intriguing to them and... we have no story for you. No background, no identity… no tellable tale of our first meeting. It is something on which we need to work, but yet have not taken steps towards and I shall assume full culpability for the procrastination. However, we can make a start on it today, if you wish, so that our story is scripted, reviewed and rehearsed with ample time to spare for Mummy and Father’s next phone call and, of course, the dance.”

Mycroft kissed his demon lightly on the cheek and took him in a gentle hug, waiting a worrying amount of time for Greg to hug him back.

“I guess I understand. And we should definitely get started on that soon, because your dance isn’t very far away and I don’t want you to regret taking me, not one little bit.”

So, his demon was not cured of his malaise, but somewhat mollified and that was, likely, the best Mycroft could hope for at the moment. Must remember for the future, though, that his Gregory had a tender heart and did not have the same set of concerns as did he about their relationship. And he would begin today, without question, putting his full attention towards the topic of their association. One day, the crafting of an identity for himself or another might be necessary and any practice on the subject was a wise use of time. Moreover, of course, if he could not adequately explain his lover to his family and peer group, said association would be a precarious thing and that was not something he could allow. His Gregory was far too important to him to lose…
“Gregory… I am quite able to shower on my own.”

“Sure you can, but what’s the fun in that?”

Greg continued to undress his human and wondered if the sight of Mycroft’s skin would ever fail to set his blood boiling. He doubted it, but he’d have a long time to experiment and find out.

“I was rather thinking of expediency. It has been quite a long day.”

And such was the honest truth. The returning of John to his home had been followed by another demanded trip to the shops, this time for various cleaning supplies to assist Sherlock in an experiment centering on the destruction of animal tissue by various household cleaners. This, apparently, was in response to one of the maid’s threat that if they boys continued to track vestiges of other experiments through the house, she would bury them up to their necks in floor cleaner and leave them there until they dissolved. Now, he was somewhat ready for bed, but his demon had other ideas. Ideas that he could not actually say were objectionable. Not in any manner, whatsoever.

“I know and that’s why I’m helping. I’ll get you clean, so you can sleep soundly. It’s school tomorrow again, isn’t it?”

“That it is.”

“Then I’ll do my best to make this quick, so you get a full night’s rest. It’s just so hard…”

The demon ran his hand across Mycroft’s bare skin and smiled at the slight tremor that ran through the milky pale body.

“… because you’re so gorgeous. But, I will try my best. Now, let me get the water hot.”

Naked and preparing to have his nakedness washed by another living being. A handsome, strong living being, with very healthy sexual desires. He was definitely not the timid, sexually-inhibited person who had first encountered the beautiful green man at his side.

“Oh, very well… if you simply must.”

The beautiful green man with the brilliant smile.

“That’s the spirit. Now, I’ll make certain you don’t slip…”

Was there another in the world so attentive and caring? How could there be? The universe scarcely seemed sufficiently large to hold such a supply of devotion.

“There, see? Doesn’t that feel good?”

“Good is hardly the world for it, my dear. You are truly gifted in the area of comfort.”

“Thanks! I’ve got a lot of gifts, actually, and I’m happy to share all of them with you. For example, I will now share my washing gift, so you’ll be as clean you can be. Just stand there and let me do all the work.”

That was a command most easily followed. Well, perhaps not so easily because his demon was very thorough with his efforts and left no nook and cranny unaddressed with his attentions.
“Someone likes being washed.”

“You are… kissing my bottom. How else should I respond?”

“Exactly like that. But, let’s see if we can make that excitement grow a bit more.”

That was highly unlikely, but…

“Gregory!”

“Hmmm?”

“You… you licked.”

“Ummm hmmmm…”

“You licked… there.”

“Ummm hmmmm…”

“And… ohhhhhhh…. are c… continuing to lick.”

“And you like it.”

I should be highly improper to enjoy being licked… there… but… who cared about propriety at a time like this!

“And I suspect I can find something you like even more…”

This was already staggeringly arousing, what more could… oh god…

“Shhh… don’t tense, love. Just relax, it’s only my finger. And that’s all it’ll be. This time. Just feel for me, love. Don’t think, just feel…”

Feel? How could he not? His entire body was ablaze with pleasure. A set of warm lips on his skin, one large hand caressing his thigh, a long, nimble tail wrapping itself around his hardness and one finger penetrating him with increasing depth, moving in and out gently, stopping only to…”

“Gregory!”

“There it is… special little place inside that loves to be rubbed. And you’re leaking fantastically, so I know this feels good. Let yourself enjoy it, love. Just relax and let yourself enjoy…”

It was… it was debauched and filthy and glorious and magnificent and this was the hardest his erection had ever been…

“Beautiful… my Mycroft glowing with pleasure… so incredibly beautiful.”

Ardent, passionate words in his ear…

“One day, I’ll do this with my cock. I’ll fuck you gently when you want it…”

“Yes…”

“…and hard when you want that instead.”

“Yes… Gregory, please…”
“I’ll come inside you and let you carry me in your body for a little while…”

“More… please, Gregory… more…”

“My Mycroft is mine and I’ll mark him properly so everybody knows that. Especially him.”

A sharp bite on his thigh tipped Mycroft into an orgasm that had him crying out and shuddering in his demon’s grasp, while he coated Greg’s tail with thick spurts of his release.

“Beautiful… gorgeous, beautiful, marvelous… my Mycroft is unbelievable.”

The demon stood and wrapped his arms around his human, drinking in every bit of the scent of his satisfaction and smiling at how boneless Mycroft was in his embrace.

“That was…”

“Hmmmm?”

“I am without words.”

Because there were none to describe how he felt. Still his body tingled and felt as if it had transcended the mortal plane.

“You don’t need them anyway. My gorgeous Mycroft is happy and that’s all that’s important. Now, I’ll actually give you a good wash and get you into that big, soft bed of yours.”

“But… you. Gregory you must be… please, let me help you.”

“I’d love that. I’ll always love that.”

“How… how would you like it?”

“On your knees. In your mouth.”

Another strong rush of arousal surged through Mycroft as he dropped to his knees and began licking the firm, green erection that twitched sharply from the contact.

“So good… my Mycroft has the most perfect mouth.”

No, Gregory was the perfect one. Perfectly hard, perfectly thick…

“Suck a little? Just a… oh yes… that’s good. And use your hands… so perfect…”

Teach me everything you like, Gregory. Your ecstasy simply spurs a greater reserve of my own.

“I’m gonna… don’t worry, I’m just going to hold your head a little. Move my hips a bit. Pinch me if it gets uncomfortable.”

His erection was desperate to grow again, but was too spent to rise, leaving the desire to curl in his abdomen like a delicious ache that purred as would a contented cat. His Gregory was so careful, gently holding his head and thrusting shallowly that he would happily kneel there until the water grew cold, giving his lover every bit of sensation he could manage. When the demon quietly moaned his name and pulled his erection out of his human’s mouth, Mycroft gladly caught his semen on lips, tongue and chin, licking away the traces while Greg watched.

“Come here.”
Greg helped Mycroft to his feet and held him close, resting his head on Mycroft’s shoulder and nuzzling his neck.

“So amazing. My human is the most amazing human in the world. That felt very, very good…”

It was entirely unseemly to puff visibly with pride but seemliness had no place in a sex-graced shower.

“I am happy to hear that. I want to give you at least some of the delight you give to me.”

“Oh, you do. You very much do. Don’t ever worry about that. My Mycroft has the hands, and mouth, of one of those incubi he tried to summon when we first met.”

Mycroft felt Greg’s smile against his skin and couldn’t help but laugh. No incubus ever created could compare to what he now held in his arms.

“That was truly the silliest act of my life.”

“I agree, but it brought me here, so I can’t agree too loudly. Now, I will definitely get you clean and into bed. This is the best way to shower before sleep – can we do it a lot?”

Every time he set foot on this tile, if Mycroft had his way.

“I believe that can be arranged. And… can there be more of…”

Mycroft took Greg’s hand and ran it up the crease of his bottom, trying not to blush at his request.

“As much as you like, love. Whenever and however you’d like. Whatever makes you happy, we’ll do. Ok?”

Mycroft squeezed his demon tighter and nodded against his resting head.

“Time to get clean?”

Another nod and Mycroft drew back to smile at Greg, after pointing to the soap which was waiting patiently on the shower floor.

“It is. Wash me at your leisure.”

“Yes! Good sexy fun, then good clean fun and then good sleepy fun. See… you’re learning how to have fun. Told you that you’d like it.”

Perhaps he might be enjoying it a teeny tiny bit…

“It is acceptable, I suppose.”

The demon’s snort was very Sherlock-like and Mycroft giggled as soap began to later his body. His demon was a strange and oddly complex creature, but he was his demon and that was all that truly counted. Must make a note to place two soap bars in the shower from this point forward so simultaneous cleansing could occur. Or, perhaps, four bars, instead. They did have tails, now, didn’t they?

Snuggled between clean, fresh sheets, Mycroft curled with Greg and shared slow, languid kisses. Of course, he did have to remind his demon that some buccal cleansing was in order prior to kissing
when certain activities had taken place, but they now knew that Greg liked the taste of shampoo and didn’t mind washing his tongue after it had been used for specific pleasurable pursuits.

“You know, Mycroft… this isn’t getting you to sleep.”

“On the contrary, it is building a cocoon of contented bliss that shall cradle me in my rest.”

“You’re good with words. We don’t have so many in my language so we don’t really make pretty word pictures like you do. That’s another reason I like it here… all the books! And the way people talk, though nobody talks as nicely as you do.”

“More the reason to allot a greater quantity of time to this world than your own.”

“Your parents… do they live here?”

Ah yes… a hurdle awaiting clearance.

“They do.”

“And are they going to be happy that I’m living here now?”

Most certainly no.

“I am certain there will be some discussion on the issue.”

“I don’t want to be a problem. I can live outside if that’s easier. I’ve lived outside a lot. Do you have a cave nearby? I’ve lived in caves a number of times. Or a tree. I’ll start looking for a tree to live in. I’ll have to borrow some blankets when it gets cold, but it’s not so bad if you remember to tie a rope around your waist so you don’t fall off your limb when you’re sleeping. If you’ve got some stones, I can build a shelter. Those are nice, because it’s easy to keep warm and you don’t have to worry about any flying nasty getting angry if you’re sleeping too close to their perch.”

Every day was a new bit of information learned about demon kind and Gregory’s place in it.

“Let us see if we can avoid having you fabricate a shelter or roost in a tree, shall we? I would ask, though… have you no family home at which to live?”

“Uh… no.”

“Do you have… family with which to live?”

“Uh… no. Well, maybe. I don’t know, really.”

“Can you explain that?”

“Well, once I hatched…”

“HATCHED!”

“Yeah… oh! Oh, I forgot that humans don’t hatch. Not all demons do either. And some do both, depending if they’re living in a safe place or not. Don’t want to leave an egg sitting about if there are things around who’d like a nice egg for breakfast.”

“You… you were… “

“Are you alright?”
“How… how big was the egg?”

“How start! And sort of soft. They grow and harden for awhile and then, at some point, you hatch out of it.”

“But, your parents…”

“Oh. Well, they’re around somewhere, I suppose, but once I hatched and got the idea of don’t eat rocks and avoid getting eaten by things that look like rocks, they… well, they sort of went their own way. Happens sometimes. Usually the little ones stay near their parents for awhile and get looked after, but not always. It was ok, though, because I figured things out pretty quickly, so I didn’t need much looking after. Got right onto finding villages with good food and good things to trade and I’d settle for awhile until I decided to move on. Or didn’t have much choice. That’s a problem with getting summoned. Off you go for who knows how long and who’s going to guard your stuff? Most demons are polite and wait a respectable time before looting your belongings, so you’ve got a chance to come back and find them, but… that’s another reason, I suppose, you don’t see a lot of big, nice homes like this one. It would take a lot of power to protect them while you were in a different reality and not many demons are that strong.”

Learning more and more about the demon world all the time, but… well, none of this was to Mycroft’s liking. Not a single bit.

“So, when you return home for a visit, you shall have lost all you own?”

“Sure! But, like I said, we don’t really have many things to begin with, so it’s not much of a loss. The worst part is when you’ve found a really nice place to sleep, maybe a little shelter that nobody’s using and you’re just getting settled, meeting other demons in the area, finding where they’re selling food and drink and whoosh! Off you go. That is miserably frustrating…”

The reasons his Gregory was so enamored of the idea of the children, the pub and the shops began to make a great deal of sense. The life Gregory had led did not suit his demon, frankly, and the ability to give him a new one, a better one, was something Mycroft found extremely gratifying.

“It must be. I can assure you, my dear, that the possessions you have acquired while here shall remain yours and no one shall abscond with even a single sweet.”

“Sherlock and John will.”

“Well… yes. But you know where they live and can retrieve your stolen item with little appreciable effort.”

“That’s true. Or, I’ll just go and buy more. I’ve got lots of money, you know.”

Handily forgetting about all the counterfeit currency lying about the bedroom like bits of note paper.

“That you do. And…”

Gregory had survived his first foray into the village without damage to himself or the general populace and their property…

“… perhaps you shall find something entertaining to purchase tomorrow if you find yourself again in the shops.”

“Really! I can go back into the village?”
“Will you promise me that you shall be careful and not do anything to endanger yourself?”

“I will! There’s lots to do that’s not dangerous, too. Sit and feed the birds, talk to the old people, eat, buy nice things, eat some more, have beer and maybe have something to eat while I drink my beer and talk to the people at the pub… lots to do without being endangered.”

Talking to people… that was an issue that needed to be addressed.

“That all sounds most appropriate and highly enjoyable. And… you do remember to conceal your true nature from your conversation companions, correct?”

Having Gregory deemed mental and taken away for evaluation was another potential headache he did not have the time nor energy to consider.

“Of course I do! I have been in the human world before you know.”

“Yes, of course, you are right. I simply worry. You often become quite excited when you find a thread of conversation to your liking and loose lips do sink ships.”

“That doesn’t make any sense.”

“No, I suppose it doesn’t. It is immaterial, in any case, for I have full faith that you shall conduct yourself most acceptably. Now, I do believe it is time to rest.”

Especially since the subject of Mummy and Father is but a speck in the rearview mirror of Gregory’s mind…

“Sounds wonderful. Here we go…”

Mycroft found himself positioned so he was happily nestled against his demon’s side with his arm draped across his waist.

“Sleep well, Mycroft.”

“You also, Gregory. I shall see you in the morning.”

No, that was incorrect. What he would see in the morning was Sherlock and John hovering above him like malevolent spirits, though John’s bright smile rather undercut the maleficence.

“Hi, Mycroft!”

The dark specter was now waving. What a gladdening morning.

“And good morning to you, John. May I ask why you are here so early?”

“My mum had to go into work early, so she phoned and asked if she could bring me by to wait until school started.”

“Oh? I heard no telephone.”

“Greg put one of his quiet zones around you so you could sleep well. He heard and said yes!”

Another reason his sleep had been so sound. Would his demon ever run out of boons to grant him for peace and contentment?
“Then I bid you welcome and now ask why you are hovering above me like as if you are hoping I shall expire and you might dine on my still-warm flesh?”

“That’s disgusting.”

“Which is Mycroft’s natural state.”

“And good morning to you, brother dear.”

“For the moment, I somewhat agree.”

“We’re air swimming!”

“Flying, you garden gnome!”

“No, it’s air swimming. Greg said we could swim around in the air just like we’re in water and we can. Watch, Mycroft!”

John began to paddle and moved through the air exactly as he would in a swimming pool, even ‘diving’ lower and swimming upwards as if to reach the surface.

“Very impressive. I take it that Gregory gifted you a treat to start your morning with a spot of fun.”

“Your demon is not entirely useless, though his refusal to let John and I perform our aerial acrobatics out of doors without your permission is absolutely stultifying.”

It might be slow-going, by Gregory was learning…

“I suggest we postpone your outdoor exercise until after school so you might have more time to enjoy it. Now, where might Gregory be at this point?”

“Getting breakfast. We get to eat in here again, so Sherlock and I can keep swimming.”

Which John was happily doing, with the additional enticement of barging into Sherlock and listening to him sputter indignantly.

“Gregory is most considerate of our time and the efficiency of its use. Now if you will excuse…”

Oh, apparently his demon had tended to the issue of nudity before the children arrived. Well done, my dear.

“… excuse my pyjama clad state, I shall return in a moment.”

Breakfast with an empty bladder was a far more agreeable thing than if the situation was otherwise. While Mycroft tended to business, the boys swam in their large, airy pool and it was only by chance that Mycroft heard the nature of their conversation before he left the bath and, rather dishonorably, chose to listen in.

“Since Greg and Mycroft are boyfriends and Greg lives here now… do you think they’ll get married someday?”

Oh my… John was thinking ahead, wasn’t he? With with a very romantic turn of mind…

“Mycroft’s chances of finding a human mate can be considered nil, therefore, I would not be all surprised if he pledged his troth to a non-human victim instead.”
“Does that mean yes?”

“It does.”

“Good. Greg’s fun and he makes Mycroft fun, too.”

“I will admit that Fatcroft is not as dour and tedious now that the green goblin is scampering about the halls.”

That was fantastically-high praise from Sherlock. This morning was certainly rife with surprises…

“And that also means we get to do things like this whenever we want.”

“A collateral effect I cannot deny is greatly to my benefit. The research possibilities are legion.”

“And none of the other kids at school get to do this so…”

John’s rude noise gave Mycroft a smile, but it was a wistful one. Sherlock was certainly not a popular boy, but John had his own set of troubles due to his small size and… well, his association with Sherlock. Having something special that set them apart was surely a good thing. Something private they could lord over the other children at school and know they had a special secret in this world to call their own. Well, if there was a person who could give them great reason to believe themselves blessed, it was certainly Gregory.

“No, this is proof of their boundless worthlessness. Now, we must convince the demon to demonstrate to them exactly how boundless is the worthlessness they inflict upon the planet.”

“Yeah, he would be great at pranks.”

And, now, it was time to make his appearance, for the scale of the jests Gregory could perpetrate were not within the parameters of modern mathematics and the innocents must be spared. Even if the innocents were, often, younger siblings of the so-named simians who sullied his own school days with their fleas and discarded banana skins.

“It appears we are still enjoying our morning swim! I am certain that Gregory will provide for you the appropriate pool whenever you feel the need for a dip. And here he is to deliver our breakfast! Truly we are grateful for such a kind and generous person in our lives.”

Mycroft smiled widely at Greg, who returned the grin happily, very pleased with the unexpected compliment.

“Thanks! They’re having a great time, aren’t they? That’s a great spell when you want a little fun but there’s not a drop of water to be found. And I do have breakfast! Tasty, yummy breakfast to get the day started right. Let’s go, little ones. Swim over to the bed so I can release the spell and you can eat.”

“Enchant the breakfast tray so it floats and we might dine in greater comfort.”

“Sorry, Sherlock. That’s actually fun to do, but it’s also easy to have a little accident and I don’t want Mycroft’s nice floor wearing the breakfast you’re supposed to be eating.”

Sherlock huffed loudly, but he and John swam over to hover above the bed, where the dropped when the demon removed the incantation.

“Perfect fall! Now, let’s get some food into you and then find your uniforms. Busy day, I’m
sure, with all the things you have to learn, so let’s get it started the best way possible. Fed, clean and happy – that’s the way all days should start, actually.”

“What are you going to do today, Greg?”

Though, from the look in John’s eyes, something involving school-delivered hot lunches was very high on the hoped-for list.

“I don’t know, little one. Mycroft said I can to go the shops, though, so I might go there and see if there is anything new to buy. Or people I haven’t met. Or places I haven’t seen. I’ve flown around most of the area so I’ve seen lots of the sights, but…”

The in-stereo FLOWN! nearly bowled over the demon who had to be steadied by Mycroft so the breakfast tray was spared a tragic fate.

“Oh! Right, I forgot you didn’t know I could fly. Got wings and everything. Love, tell them how nice my wings are.”

Of course, suffering the affronted glares of two small boys was not exactly burdensome, but the tea his demon was just putting within his reach was certainly a welcome thing.

“Yes, Mycroft… you fiend. Tell John and I all about them.”

“Well, they are quite large and most striking. Their ability to port not only Gregory but a passenger is most impressive.”

The eruption of indignation and demands for rides made the demon laugh and happily ruffle each boy’s hair.

“Don’t worry, I can give both of you a ride whenever you’d like.”

“NOW!”

“IMMEDIATELY!”

“No, you have school, so get about eating your breakfast so you’ll have a full stomach when you get there. But, after school, we can think about it. Depends on how much work you have to finish first.”

Spoons were waved in protest, but Greg simply ruffled their hair again and sat next to Mycroft to smile brightly and beg a sausage.

“Gregory, you did bring enough plates to have one of your own.”

“This is better.”

“Not for my sausages, it is not.”

The demon’s rude noise was cheered by John, who very much approved of a wet and indecent-sounding rejoinder.

“Fine. I’ll put my sausage on my own plate and don’t you think for a moment you’ll get a chance at it, Mycroft. Your fingers aren’t going to get one single chance to grab my sausage, no matter how hard you might want to.”

His demon had taken petty revenge. The erection threat was not an insubstantial one, either.
Spectacularly well done, Gregory…

“I trust I shall survive.”

Though not easily or well. His demon’s vulgarly-termed sausage was now somewhat of a necessity for survival. As were these times… simple times where they could enjoy each other’s company. Now, the question was how to keep his demon in his life once Mummy and Father returned. That issue merited extreme concern and attention. Neither would be inclined to permit his lover to take up residence in the house, let alone his bedchamber. Fortunately, they were away for still some time and there was opportunity to think. To think and to plan…

“Gregory, why are you stealing my scone?”

“Because it’s warm and tasty like something else I know.”

Thinking and planning with all possible intensity…

Perhaps he should pay more heed to Gregory’s opinions on the subject of fun. For example, if he slithered out of the door this very instant, he could put behind him the dreary maths lecture he’d suffered through and the even more dreary literature lesson he was facing. The dreariness could be replaced by a day of merry delight with his demon and he would certainly learn more from that experience than he would here.

“Ah, Holmes. Looking as sour and superciliousness as ever.”

Bascomb! Fatuous tit.

“What a joy that must be for you.”

“You know, Holmes… I have yet to hear a single word further about your invented, I mean, devoted boyfriend. How fares he?”

“He is well. Very well, actually. We enjoyed breakfast together this morning, in point of fact.”

“Oh… well, that would be rather scandalous, if it was in any way true.”

“Believe what you will. Gregory and I share company on a highly regular basis.”

“Of course you do. Every night when your head hits your pillow and you fall asleep. And your dream is named Gregory? Rather common, don’t you think? Couldn’t you have given him something slightly more…upscale?”

“As if I was responsible for his naming. Truly you are an individual of the most supreme idiocy.”

“At least I am not so idiotic to invent a paramour when my lie would certainly be caught out. Tell me, is your hallucination from a good family? From what part of the country does he supposedly hail?”

EEP! The lie was not yet erected! Must dissemble!

“Gregory’s roots are… European in nature.”

“Oh, good lord, Holmes. Your fantasized a foreigner!”
“I did not say that. He is… he is as English as you or I. It is only in his sultry coloring that his more Continental heritage is in evidence.”

“How ghastly. I am quite certain his lack of proper manners and hygiene are the bane of his classmates, were they to exist. Tell me, what school shall you have us believe he attends?”

Uh…..

“I did not say he attended school. For your information, Gregory has already completed his academic work.”

“His university, then.”

AAARRRGGGGHHH…

“Gregory is enjoying a break from his studies.”

“So, a scruffy foreigner with no plans for Uni. Let us hear more about this truly scintillating and promising candidate. His surname, perhaps?”

The lie! Why were its bones not sheathed in flesh?

“Why do care, Bascomb? I believe you doubt his existence in the first place.”

“Oh, I care about many things, especially when they shine light on your pitiable fabrication.”

“We shall see, then, how pitiable I am when Gregory is on my arm and you are blinded by the brilliance of his smile and strength of his form.”

“Your scullery maid’s mop is going to need quite the bit of professional help before it will aptly be described in those terms. You’ll need to add feet, at the very least, so you can pretend to dance.”

“Oh, how harshly my sides ache from laughter.”

“Your pride will be aching, painfully, when your foolishness is revealed.”

“And yours will shrivel to a husk when your mocking is dismantled.”

The mutual snorting, huffing and glaring continued for a second before both boys continued on their way and Mycroft hoped the whirling in his brain would stop before he had to speak coherently on the subject of Yeats. The lie. The lie was paramount. And Gregory must flawlessly present the lie, else all was lost. Oh dear… this was not going to be easy…
Chapter 18

“Come again?”

“We don’t have one.”

“You have no family name?”

“No.”

“So, you have but one mode of address?”

“Yes, it’s…”

Mycroft winced at the sound of rocks turning around in a tumbler while the demon reverted to his native tongue.

“… remember?”

“Yes, and, well no. I would not have recognized that as your name, I must admit, were I not warned of the fact. Well then… we must concoct something suitable.”

“Holmes!”

“Thank you, John, but no.”

“Why not? He’s your boyfriend and someday you’re going to get married and he’ll be a Holmes then, won’t he? You’re just speeding things up a bit.”

John Watson’s romantic mania was running full force today, it seemed. And wasn’t his demon eating it all with a very large spoon.

“Yes! That’s the idea! I’ll just use yours and poof! the problem’s gone. Now, we can go outside and play?”

Mycroft grabbed the sleeve of Greg’s shirt as the demon began to beat a hasty retreat for the great outdoors and sighed loudly.

“No, the problem is not gone. It is highly improper for you to assume my name without benefit of marriage and it would be more than slightly suspicious to claim the name coincidentally.”

“Oh. That all sounded bad, so I think you’re saying we can’t do it.”

“Very good. Now, let us think of something suitable, shall we.”

“How about Watson!”

“Thank you, John, but, again, no.”

“Why not? It’s a good name!”

The small boy glared at Mycroft and Sherlock, now returned from the loo, glared, also, though he had no idea why he was glaring except it was at Mycroft who certainly deserved it, regardless.

“It is a very good name, John. A fine and noble name, however, it will not do for this particular
“You still haven’t told me why not?”

My, but John could evince a pugnacious manner when he was so inclined. Foot forward, chin upraised and shoulder back as if to hurl a punch. Which, given John’s lack of height would probably connect squarely with his groin and completely undo any licentious plans he might have for the remainder of the day. Best tread cautiously.

“For the reason that the small amount of information I have divulged about Gregory would preclude that particular name.”

“Why?”

“Oh good heavens… because I have assigned to Gregory a… Continental heritage.”

“What’s that mean?”

Why was the argument of ‘because I have declared it so’ no longer sufficient with children? There was naught for benefit to being head of household, only detriment of the small and glaring kind.

“It means that I have implied Gregory’s forebears hailed slightly more recently from across the Channel than did ours.”

“You said he was French?”

“No… per se. But, of the swarthier peoples, most certainly.”

“Sorry, Greg. You’re French.”

John patted Greg’s arm and Sherlock almost appeared mournful at the news.

“Oh. Is that bad?”

“No, my dear. It is not.”

At least for the purposes of this current conversation and your continued goodwill.

“You said just yesterday, Porkcroft, that if a single Frenchman discovered a bar of soap, he would be immediately put to death for heresy.”

“Thank you, Sherlock, for serving as the discourse police.”

“Someone must or we shall be mired and drowned in your suffocating words as would an explorer in quicksand.”

“I’m confused.”

“There, there, Gregory… the children are simply being fractious. Perhaps they are again hungry. It has been a full half-hour since a plate of food slid down their throats.”

“Gregory Croissant… what an appropriate choice by someone of your girth, Mycroft.”

“Thank you, again, Sherlock, for your bountiful and penetrating wit.”

“I sort of like that, actually.”
“No! No, my dear, that is not an avenue on which we shall be traveling. Let us… have you any ideas?”

“Not really. I thought Holmes and Watson were fine, but they weren’t so… is this really important? It’s a very nice day today and we’ve got lots of time to play before John has to go home. I thought I might take the little ones for a flight around the area and…”

The sonic wave that hit Mycroft’s ears from the sudden eruption of enthusiasm from Sherlock and John nearly blew his eardrums into the wall, but his hearing and any concept of fun was a distant second in importance to crafting his demon some form of name and story.

“That can wait until later. The importance of this objective cannot be overstated.”

“Gregory Baguette, Gregory Escargot, Gregory Beret… just choose something with and be done with it, dullard! There is… flying… to be had and I, for one, shall not lose even the smallest fraction of my share due to your dithering.”

“There is no dithering, brother dear. The fact that I would prefer Gregory not carry a name more appropriately assigned a character in an animated children’s program is, I believe, to my credit. Alright, I suppose… hand me, oh… that book to the far left on the second-to-the-bottom shelf by the fireplace.”

“Is it a cookbook?”

“NO! Good heavens, but you are single-minded, Sherlock. My dear, perhaps… would you…”

Greg frowned in confusion, but Mycroft’s pantomime of a book flying towards them turned on the light in his brain.

“Sure! Here you go.”

The book floated across the room to land in front of Mycroft on the library table.

“Thank you. There is, I believe, a section here on French genealogy…”

“So you do condemn the demon to damnation.”

“What? I don’t want to be damned! It’s supposed to hurt, isn’t it?”

“Greg’s going to be French, Greg’s going to be French…”

John continued his happy little song, which had the demon clapping and Mycroft holding his head in his hands until Sherlock snatched the book and began flipping through the pages in the desperate hope that concentration would make everyone else in the room vanish. Finally, as John’s song was wandering off into the area of animals and cheese, Sherlock threw up his hands in exasperation and slammed a finger down onto the text of the open page of his tome.

“Here! It is decided. The Fates have guided my hand and the die is, therefore, cast. We will now prepare for departure. Demon, complete all pre-flight checks so our journey is a safe and scientifically-interesting one.”

Mycroft lifted his head and peered over at Sherlock’s nonsense to see his brother imperiously pointing to something in their book.

“Whatever are you talking about, Sherlock.”
“Here, this shall be the demon’s name.”

Leaning over, Mycroft looked where Sherlock was pointing and, very grudgingly, had to admit it was not the worst of all possible choices.

“Lestrade.”

“Oh good, you can read.”

“It is… not entirely ghastly. And, in no manner, is it connected with food, to break your rather ridiculous streak.”

“Is that going to be my name?”

Mycroft looked at his demon, sighed yet another time and thought a moment, but was unable to offer up any substantial objection.

“Do you have any opposition to it?”

“I like Croissant better, actually.”

“A croissant is a small roll, my dear.”

“Oh. And that’s not good?”

“No.”

“Then, Lestrade it is! It sounds a bit like…”

Mycroft cringed at the flow of mismatched letters and dared not ask for translation after Sherlock’s rather shocked gasp and widened eyes.

“… so it’s funny, too.”

How something that had at least four Q’s and several X’s sounded like Lestrade, Mycroft wasn’t certain, but if his Gregory was happy, and not an edible product, then he was happy, as well.

“It is decided. You are now, for the purposes of introduction, Gregory Lestrade.”

“And who is his family?”

Mycroft glared at Sherlock, who smiled smugly back and crossed his arms over his chest.

“They are to be determined. One thing at a time, brother dear.”

“And his occupation?”

“Have you lost understanding of the concept of numbers so that ‘one’ is now befuddling you?”

“I’d like to know the answer to that, too, Mycroft.”

Now, John was sitting in judgment of his lack of planning! This was the foulest of treachery…

“As I said, one thing at a time. Besides, is it not the appointed hour where you drop to the floor and beg Gregory to spread his wings and take you for a flight?”

John hit the ground with a thud and clutched at the demon’s leg, contorting his face in the most
tragic, pleading visage possible of any human.

“I see that it is. Gregory, will you consent to grant the children a small ride to experience the marvels of flight?”

“Sure! I’m always happy for a little spin in the sky.”

“Excellent. I shall remain here and continue to script your resume while you and the children enjoy a bit of fresh air.”

“What! No, you have to come with us, love. You don’t want to be here where there’s no sunshine or clouds, do you?”

“Unfortunately, sunshine and clouds will not gain for me the product I require. If you are not returned when I have completed my task, I promise to join you for the remainder of the day. Is that an acceptable compromise?”

“I suppose so.”

Said with the loveliest protruded bottom lip forming an adorable, and highly seductive, pout.

“Then it is settled. I shall see you later, regardless. Do enjoy your… fun.”

Greg continued to pout, but stood and dragged John along as he trudged towards the library door, Sherlock following with several scornful looks at Mycroft over his shoulder as he marched, all of which left Mycroft quite happily alone so he could focus. If the school day had any value, it was in impressing upon him the immediate necessity for detail concerning his guest. People would begin to ask, and there could be no hint of suspicion associated with his demon. This would require a great deal of thought and care to be both believable and an appropriate match for Gregory’s… temperament. Fortunately, he had the time, now, to make that happen.

Well, this was a disaster. Did Gregory have to perform his aerial maneuvers in direct view of the library windows? Sherlock must have set some particularly energetic tests, for the loops, dives, twists and turns were positively acrobatic. How was one supposed to concentrate when there was a nearly-naked demon performing above one’s lawn? Since the staff had not broken down the door to declare the arrival of Armageddon, his demon must have implemented one of his invisibility spells but, out of sheer teasing spite, left him able to see everything. Cad.

Oh good, it was apparently time to start providing rides. Perhaps there might now be some peace.

Really, Gregory? Emulating a hummingbird and hovering at the window so John could wave? So very helpful. Yes, do soar away so John might whoop with childlike abandon. Is there no chance work might be done today?

Thank you. Yes, thank you, darling fiend. Being scowled at by Sherlock as he dangles upside down while you hold his feet is truly a high point of my day. Flutter away and return to allowing him the opportunity to gather… whatever he is gathering from the treetops, if you would be so kind. Tea… tea is immediately required…
Three wind-destroyed individuals stood in front of Mycroft, two with smiles so large they nearly swallowed the faces to which they were attached.

“THAT WAS BRILLIANT!”

“Did you see, love? They little ones were fantastic fliers!”

“It was not an entirely appalling experience.”

Mycroft groaned slightly at Sherlock’s pockets, which were moving without the benefit of Sherlock’s hands, and simply hoped nothing in them had a taste for human flesh.

“Yes, I observed quite closely their aviation skills. I had little choice but to observe them closely, actually.”

“Like that? I made sure you got to watch the fun, even if you couldn’t be out there with us having it. Get all your work done?”

Greg looked over the library table and scrunched his face as he tried to find something that hadn’t been there before they went outside several hours ago.

“Not as much as I would have liked, however, now that you are returned from your adventures in the skies, perhaps you might see the children cleaned and dressed before dinner, so I might have a bit more time with my task?”

“Dinner! Yes! I get hungry when I fly, so I’m certainly ready to eat. John’s eating with us, right?”

“Yes, John shall be eating with us. In fact, he shall stay the night, so as to keep Sherlock occupied while you and I begin our rehearsal of your script.”

“What?”

“While you and I share a brandy and enjoy the dancing light of the fire.”

“Ooh, I like that. Come on, little ones. Let’s see you clean and fresh so we can have dinner and then I get to be a bit romantic with Mycroft.”

“Ugh… I shall consider the library besmirched and avoid it at all costs.”

That was the best news Mycroft had heard all day. And it was commencing now, since his demon was escorting the disheveled boys out of the library to set in motion the steps towards dinner and romance. Barring a naked and wet escape by Sherlock and John, this should buy him a solid hour and he was not Mycroft Holmes if he could not do in an hour what most men did in three.

“What… why are you naked? And dripping wet! Sherlock Holmes! John Watson! Return now to your bath and do not come down here again! Tell Gregory to banish the mermaids and not to summon another one until you are both done with your baths. This is not the time for his tomfoolery!”
Oh, dear heavens… perhaps the mermaids should have remained to provide a chorus of moral support.

“Now, let us try this again, my dear. What is your name?”

“Greg.”

“More, please.”

“Greg-ory.”

“Good, remember now that you possess a second name and utilize it, as well.”

“Right! Gregory Croissant. No! That’s the one I can’t have. Lestrade! That’s it. Gregory Lestrade.”

Mycroft frowned at the demon who was, unquestionably, fabricating his dull-mindedness with an unabashed glee.

“Can you please take this seriously, Gregory?”

“I’ll try, love. I promise. What’s next?”

“Where do you live?”

“Oh, nowhere special. Move around a lot because my dad’s work takes him lots of places.”

Not the strongest of tales, however, pinning his demon down to a single location would potentially prompt requests for details and descriptions, which would mean further coaching, or, heaven forbid, the inquiry about a friend or relative who lived in the area in question. Must not allow any opportunity for improvisation or his Gregory would take the opportunity and run with it like a runaway racehorse.

“Very good. And, you earn your living in what manner?”

“I help my dad with his business.”

“Which is?”

“Enterpriseship.”

“Entrepreneurship.”

“What you said.”

“Try and pronounce it properly, my dear.”

“En…tra… pun…oor…ship.”

“Acceptable.”

“What’s it mean?”

“You… cultivate innovation and bring new business ventures into the economic arena.”

“What?”
“I doubt you will be called to provide a definition, my dear, but, if so, I will gladly step in and deliver one.”

“Ok, that sounds good. More brandy?”

Mycroft pursed his lips and narrowed his eyes, but took the snifter from his demon’s hands to refill. Gregory was not giving this his utmost attention and gravitas, not that he had any appreciable gravitas to speak of, but that did not excuse its lack.

“Gregory, you do realize that, if you are to remain here for an extended period, we must have a story for you that is convincing, so that it does not prompt deeper inquiries that might lead to your exposure, do you not?”

“Sure! I don’t want to be exposed to anyone but my Mycroft.”

Do not waggle your eyebrows at me, hellspawn. I will have none of your shenanigans while we are conducting business. And… do not make kissy faces, either. Oh, very well…

“That’s what I needed! A perfect kiss from my Mycroft and a nice brandy to follow it up. And I’m not trying to get in trouble, love. It’s just… can’t I just say I’m Greg and your boyfriend and a solid lad and that’s that?”

“No, that is entirely insufficient. You must seem a man of… consequence.”

“You mean I’m not?”

The loss of kissy face was a truly distressing matter and must be rectified swiftly and at any cost!

“No, that was not quite my meaning. It is…”

How to explain to Gregory, who had little use for the trappings and customs of society, that a veritable portfolio of evidence must be in one’s possession to be given even the slightest nod of acceptance, or, at least, tolerance, by his peer group? This was not something his demon would easily understand.

“… it is simply that the individuals we are likely to meet, say, at the dance, will expect a profile that has a bit more flesh on the bone.”

“Oh. I suppose that makes sense. It seems to me, though, that what matters is who a person is, not what they is. Are.”

No, now is not the time for a philosophical discussion on a man’s worth. Given that his fellow students had a worth value that amounted to that of one of the blocks in the building sets his demon had purchased during his last shopping spree, the conversation was pointless, in any case.

“And I would agree, however… consider those you meet during your forays into the village. Are you not curious about them? Do you not ask about their lives? What is their trade, are they provided with family or… pets?”

“OH! Oh! I understand, now. And you’re right, I like hearing about things like that so it stands to reason people would want to hear all of that about me. I already tell them about you and Sherlock and John, though, so that part’s under control.”

Once in a great while, Fortune decided to bestow at least some favor…
“Good. I am glad both the intent and the import are now clear. So, let us continue…”

“Now?”

“Yes?”

“Can’t we just enjoy the fire and sip our brandy? You can sit on my lap, too, so we can be cozy and kiss.”

Temptation by a demon. How cliché. But, how utterly… tempting… clichés were clichés for good reason…

“I shall strike a bargain with you, my dear. I will cozily nestle on your lap if, in exchange, you will put the full force of your attention to the matter at hand and learn your particulars.”

“Will there be kissing?”

“I shall award you kisses based on the extent of your ongoing progress.”

“Ok, then. I’m ready to learn.”

“Excellent. I am certain you shall be an apt pupil once you demonstrate proper dedication.”

“I’m dedicated to you, does that count?”

More than his Gregory would ever know…

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“I see. Yes, today would work very well in my schedule. We shall expect you at 6:00 pm.”

Mycroft set down the phone and turned to address the small audience that seemed always to gather when he did anything besides sit.

“Ugh… visitors. John and I shall not be plagued by the tedium of whomever has decided to bore themselves to death by visiting you in this dreary house.”

“For your information, brother dear, that was the tailor. Our garments are ready and, since, he shall be in the area for another matter, he asked to deliver them to us tonight.”

“Our clothes! Hurray! I get my purple socks!”

John did a little gig, with Greg falling quickly into step with him as his dance partner. For Mycroft’s part, it was another of the pieces of the enormous subterfuge puzzle that he had been putting together. Getting Gregory to internalize his, admittedly, vague identity, negotiate acceptable conversation topics and modes of behavior, schooling the demon in social niceties… it had been a somewhat aggravating and frustrating period, however, his persistence was paying dividends. Not that Gregory demonstrated any of his education when they were at home, but the short, mutual trips to the village found his demon on his best behavior, though there was some suspicion that when it was not a mutual trip, said behavior was far more typical of Gregory’s colorful ways.

“Yes, and I am certain they will adorn your feet you most splendidly.”

“Does that mean my suit is ready?”

“That it does, my dear.”
“Yes! And it’s going to be the nicest suit in the world because you picked the color and the fabric and you don’t pick anything but the best. And... my purple socks, too?”

Which was, most likely, truly the demon’s most pressing concern.

“They will be delivered, also, and you are welcome to model them while the tailor checks for any final adjustments to your other garments.”

This time, Greg began the joyful jig and it was John who joined in, much to Sherlock loudly-snorted disgust.

“When the gyrations cease, might we actually complete my experiment so that, should I be felled by a poison pin or strangled with measuring tape, my work will, at least, live on after me?”

“Of course, darling brother. Never let it be said that your commitment to science has not been fully and properly indulged. My dear, would you?”

Retiring one hand from his dance routine, the demon used it to dig inside his nose and rubbed the residue on the slide Sherlock held in his hand.

“There you are, Sherlock. What you want that for, I can’t imagine, but I’ll give you as much as you’d like.”

“This should be sufficient. Come, John. We will study this under my microscope.”

“Are you going to dye it? I like when we dye things.”

“Stain! And... perhaps.”

“Can I paint on my skin with your stains again?”

“Will I get a human nasal sample from you to compare to the demon’s?”

“Yuck. But, yes.”

“Then, we shall see.”

Mycroft hoped his prohibition against any indelible staining above the neckline held fast and turned to look at his Gregory, who was still shimmying in the most unbridled and sinuous fashion imaginable. Not that he minded the unbridled sinuosity, of course, but there was a proper time and place for everything.

“Gregory?”

“Yes?”

“Are you going to stop dancing at any point in the near future?”

“Do I have to?”

“It would be fantastically-difficult for you to find your way into your new suit with such spirited motions.”

“Well, the tailor isn’t here yet, is he? Why don’t you dance with me until he gets here?”

Because what the demon was doing was only, in the most loosely applied definition, dancing.
However…

“I shall counter with the proposal that I instruct you in what to expect when we are asked to take to the floor and demonstrate our skills at my school event.”

“That’s a great idea! I don’t know what dances they do now and I want to do everything right so you have the best possible time. Ok, what do I do?”

“You might stop thrashing, as a start.”

“Oh. Right. Ok, now… what?”

Something that was rather a good question as Mycroft had little idea as to exactly what one would expect, since asking a helpful classmate was out of the question for the reason of a dearth of helpful classmates in his school building. However, knowing well the sorts of lessons he had endured as a child and the likelihood those lessons had been forced upon most of the youth of his social class… well, it was a place to start, at the very minimum. Wrapping one arm around his demon’s waist and using the other to hold his hand in the classic slow-dance pose, Mycroft began to hum and move Greg in a well-remembered pattern.

“Hey! This is nice. I get to hold you and dance.”

“I thought you might enjoy it.”

“I do. And if I get hard from rubbing against you like this, I’ll have a jacket with my suit that will hide it.”

“Yes, such is a benefit of more structured manner of dress.”

“Can we dance like this for awhile?”

Hold his demon and gently dance him around the library? Was there really any question?

“As long as you would like.”

“Brilliant! Will there be other dances for us to do?”

Given the need for refreshments and idle small talk, the possibility of avoiding such a thing was somewhat robust, so… no.

“We shall see. However, I cannot envision any as delightful as this.”

“You might be right. It reminds me of sex, so what could be more delightful than that?”

Nothing really. It was certainly the most exalted of comparisons…

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Do not become erect. Do NOT become erect…

“Well, love… how do I look?”

Like the most spectacular man ever birthed… or hatched.

“Exquisite, Gregory. Simply exquisite.”
Mycroft watched the demon turn this way and that in the mirror and smile brightly from what he saw in his reflection.

“It’s a very nice suit.”

“I would agree.”

It was a spectacularly striking suit. It fit his demon perfectly, emphasizing the breathtaking nature of his form and the lushness of his coloring. His demon was a vision, simply a vision…

“Well, little ones?”

“You look amazing! That’s the nicest suit I’ve ever seen!”

Said with John’s feet in the air so the boy could continue to admire his socks.

“It is not entirely vomit-inducing, though it is a near thing.”

“Yes! Everyone likes my new suit!”

Especially, Mycroft noticed, his tailor, who seemed quite pleased with a job well done. If pressed, he might admit that his and Sherlock’s reactions to their new garments was never quite this enthusiastic, so the man likely appreciated the additional… appreciation.

“And see! Doesn’t the purple look nice?”

Another reason for his tailor to be satisfied with his work. The chosen shade of purple excellently complemented the suit, yet would not cause the vision of any who viewed it to flee in self-protective horror.

“Most certainly. A very handsome hue.”

“Can I have more suits? I have money, so I can pay for them.”

Having picked up several hundred pounds worth of counterfeit notes only this morning, Mycroft had had quite enough of the demon’s overflowing coffers for one day.

“Let us rest your purse, Gregory, and allow mine to uptake the responsibility, shall we? You may have any number of suits, if that is your desire. Of course, you must promise that you will wear them and, I do believe, that might cut across your philosophy of allowing a body to breathe.”

And it might save a number of very high-quality suits the fate that surely lay in store for this one. If his demon made it through the dance without some form of garment malfunction due to his exuberance, he would see it officially declared a miracle.

“True, but I can spend extra time naked before and after I wear my suit to make up for it.”

John giggled loudly, which almost covered Sherlock’s huff of annoyance and Mycroft simply smiled and hoped the man with the needle and thread never decided to script his memoirs for posterity.

“Lovely. Well, I believe it is time to return to your standard garb and for our guest to be on his way.”

“Already?”

“You would not wish to risk anything untoward occurring, such as one of Sherlock’s experiments
accidentally causing your new clothes to burst into flames or dissolve like sugar in hot tea, would you?"

“No! I like my suit.”

“How dare you besmirch my experimental protocols! If the prison of cloth combusts or dissolves by my hand, it shall be an intentional act and not an accident, which would speak of slipshod work and an inattention to my controls and methods.”

John helpfully hopped off the sofa and assisted the tailor in putting away his things, giving himself a few of his own looks in the mirror. He had a new shirt and trousers, as well as socks, and he looked handsome, too. Maybe next time, he’d ask for a suit, so he could look as nice as Greg. Sherlock would go crazy and that would be fun to watch, as a little bonus.

“I do apologize, brother. Now, Gregory, why do you not take the children and see them returned to their recreation wear and I shall settle our account? Then, perhaps, we might find a film to watch? I believe it would not be amiss if we saw our beds at a later hour than usual, given the lack of school tomorrow and John’s remaining in our care for the night.”

“Good idea! I love to watch films. Come on, you two. Let ‘s find something to wear that we can get dirty if need be.”

“We will be watching a film, hell… helllacious miscreant. Dirt shall not factor into our activities.”

“Not during the film, Sherlock, but afterwards, maybe. There’s lots of fun things to do outside in the dark and Mycroft said we can be up late, so why not take advantage of it?”

As the demon led away the boys, with plans already fomenting about their post-film activities, Mycroft tried to remember the status of his headache-reliever supply and retrieved his chequebook from the small desk by the library window.

“Thank you, Mr. Jervis, for being so prompt with this order. It is very much appreciated, as is the quality of the product. Truly, I am most pleased.”

“You are very welcome, Mr. Holmes. And… if I may be so bold…”

Mycroft cut his eyes over to the man who was smiling at him in a not altogether professional capacity.

“Yes?”

“He will make you proud. Your young man, I mean.”

Well, that was unexpected. But, surprisingly reassuring.

“Gregory is a most attractive individual.”

“That was not entirely my meaning, sir. He has a good heart and that is… something to cherish. Now, do let me know when you would like for me to begin on Mr. Gregory’s additional suits. I assume you will have copious opportunities to introduce him to your various acquaintances and escort him to functions.”

“I… that… yes, I shall inform you the moment the need looms. It is very kind of you to consider such things.”
Which was far beyond the horizon of Mycroft’s own state of planning and expectations.

“Of course, sir. And, thank you. I will, I am certain, see you again quite soon.”

The tailor took the cheque from Mycroft’s fingers and bid him farewell with a small nod as he gathered his things and exited the library. Acquaintances and functions… Mycroft had not entirely convinced himself that this one would be successful, let alone plan for another. Dearest Gregory was blindingly handsome, affable, possessed, as mentioned, of a soft and decent heart and took an honest interest in everything and everyone. In the village, this was an astounding boon to his socialization, but in ‘polite’ society… oh dear. Perhaps he really should have thought this through a bit more thoroughly…
Chapter 19

“Pleeeeeeprovidedeeeeease.”

“Absolutely not. What an utterly ridiculous idea. And you, Gregory, are entirely aware of that fact.”

Mycroft stared down the three glaring faces and wondered where had been the fork in the road that his life took to land him in the surreal landscape of Wonderland.

“But… it’s science!”

“Yes, my dear, it is, however it is not science that can be revealed to the general populace, is it?”

Glares and bodies vibrating fiercely with agitation. What everyone needed to make their day complete.

“If verification of my assertions is demanded by the Nobel committee, the hell beast can wear a mask, in addition to his loincloth when I bring him forth. You already, most likely, perpetrate similar and disgusting gameplay in your bedroom, so there should be no perturbation of your sensibilities.”

Mycroft had no desire to investigate further where Sherlock had gained any knowledge of the games individuals might play in intimate situations, nor the spark of interest such a suggestion had ignited in his loins. That could all wait for another time when his attention did not have to remain squarely focused on the matter at hand.

“You are not going to exhibit Gregory for your science presentation and that is the end of that.”

“I only have intention to present my findings from the biological and chemical analyses of his tissues and exudates. I have no plan to bring him into the spotlight, when that place is mine alone to take.”

“Nobody has to know they’re demon samples, Mycroft. Sherlock can say they’re from… a tuna or something.”

“Thank you, John, but that is not an option. On occasion, there is, in the judging panel and visitor pool, individuals with some degree of scientific acumen and might realize that what Sherlock is presenting does not match anything to be found on this planet. I admit that I am not so versed in histology and biochemistry that I can state what points would be the most troublesome, so let us err on the side of caution and keep Sherlock’s research to ourselves for now. Besides, it is not as if my brother lacks countless other options for his science project.”

A documentary filmmaker would, at this point, add in a narration track about the colorful and spirited dance of the agitated creatures being captured by the camera’s lens and Mycroft allowed his mind to wander along those lines, with his mental voice doing its very best impersonation of David Attenborough until the foot stamping, arm waving, and circle turning slowed to a halt.

“Now, shall we take this bit of time to, perhaps, consider another entry for the science competition? Gregory and I were to work further on our preparations for the dance, but we can spare the time towards your needs, Sherlock, if that would be helpful.”

“I can choose my own subject matter! You have proven, already, to be an anchor around my neck and I do not need to sink further into the inky depths of your anti-science leanings.”
Sherlock put his nose in the air and stormed off, with John quickly following, leaving behind a demon who felt a need to show solidarity, but also wanted follow his usual routine of helping Mycroft relax from his day and getting his much-desired post-school-treat. The treat finally won out.

“Oh… isn’t there some way to… he was really looking forward to his presentation.”

“It is alright, Gregory. Every year, Sherlock’s ideas for his science project must be whittled down to one that is feasible, non-lethal and legal. This is no different than any of our other journeys through this particular quagmire. But, do tell me about your own day. Did you find interesting ways to pass the time?”

Greg frowned, but didn’t see any signs his human was telling a lie. Mycroft’s aura was a complicated one, but when he told a big enough lie, there was usually some orange swirling around his feet to show for it, and there wasn’t a bit of orange down there now, so…

“I helped your driver wash the cars! He told me a lot about them, too. For instance, did you know that the one he drove to bring you home from school has a leaky tire? Well, it does and he has to keep an eye on it so it doesn’t go flat, but it’s ok, because he is keeping an eye on it until the new tire arrives that he ordered. And, another one takes a bit of nudging to get started but he’s going to fix that, too.”

So, a constructive day learning about the automobiles his demon loved so much and, very likely, getting quite wet and having an enjoyable time doing something physical and helpful. It had certainly been a most successful day, by all accounts.

“I am agog at your level of productivity, my dear. Truly, I did nothing today which could begin to compare. And I am certain that Driver appreciated the assistance.”

“It was fun, too! Tomorrow, I’m going to help your Cook make pies.”

“Simply delightful.”

Though… how long would his Gregory be satisfied with making periodic visits to the village and participating in the household duties? The demon was nothing if not a lover of life and experience. What would Gregory do as the time he spent here grew longer and longer… this was certainly something that required thought, in addition to all of the other items concerning his demon that required thought. Behaving like an ostrich and sticking his head in the sand was pleasant, to be sure, however, it was not bringing him the solutions he must seek.

“I get to eat pie all day, too, which is the best part. I’ll have to save some for John, though, because I suspect he likes pie as much as I do.”

“Yes, I believe that is quite the case. And are you ready for today’s lessons?”

“And fruit?”

“You have a taste for fruit this fine afternoon?”

“I got to try some melon when I accidentally dropped one on the floor and it broke open, well, after I cleaned the mess from breaking the melon, and it was amazing! The rest of it’s waiting for me and I am missing its sweet goodness. Almost as much as I miss your sweet goodness when you leave the bed in the morning for school.”

Fortunately, his Gregory had taken to waking them both early each morning so that any instances of hot-bloodedness could be attended to before attention was needed elsewhere or Sherlock stormed
into their bedroom with another of his eternally-long list of demands. There was such a marked contrast between the jolly and playful Gregory and the sultry and sexually-confident Gregory, but both situations never failed to please. No questions had been asked, however, about the fate of the rather expensive alarm clock that had set on his nightstand and that was likely for everyone’s good.

“That then we shall immediately make a start on that portion of the day.”

“Yes! And what do I get to learn today after I’ve eaten my melon?”

A tremendously painful lesson. For him, at least.

“We shall work further on topics of conversation. I have noticed that there is no small amount of discussion both in school and in the village concerning… sports. I have amassed study material on the subject and had delivered a number of video recordings of popular sporting events so that you might familiarize yourself with them.”

And this would handily leave any discussion on that particular subject to his demon so that he, himself, did not have to partake.

“Oh! I’ve seen quite a bit of that on your television and John talks about it, too, so I’m already somewhat of an expert.”

“Ah… well, that is highly fortunate for us. Today, then, shall simply serve as a review and a clarification of some on the finer points and details.”

“Does that mean we’ll stop early so we can go for a walk or go to the tavern or let the little ones try some new spells?”

“I fail to see why not. Provided the lessons go well, both for you and the rest of us, for I know the boys returned with some measure of things to accomplish, then the evening is certainly free for recreation.”

The demon took Mycroft in his arms and danced him around the room, very deftly showcasing the skills he had mastered during previous lessons.

“You’re wonderful to dance with, Mycroft.”

“As are you, my dear.”

“We can do this even after the dance at your school, right?”

“We may dance whenever it pleases you.”

Mycroft basked in the bright glow of his demon’s smile and happily accepted his expected kiss before being waltzed towards the kitchen. Only a little over two weeks more until the time of do or die and so much to do beforehand. At least, he could rest assured that the dancing portion would proceed flawlessly. His Gregory danced divinely…

“Pleeeeeeeeeeease.”

Not this again.

“Gregory… I simply do not believe this to be a good idea.”
“You are hoping to diminish my audience and that stands as a black, though typical, mark against you, Mycroft!”

“It’ll be fun!”

“Lots of fun, love! Pleeeeeeeeeeeeeeeease…”

Mycroft listened to the strident voices and tried to remember if there were any sleeping tablets in the house to swallow. A bottle or five should do the trick.

“Sherlock, the audience for your science presentation shall be admirably robust and the absence of one individual shall make a most insignificant difference.”

“But, Mycroft, Greg likes science and he helped a lot with Sherlock’s project. He should get the chance to come to our science night and see how good Sherlock’s work is compared to everybody else’s.”

One curious, enthusiastic demon in a room filled with parents, school personnel and small, innocent children… was there a more obvious recipe for disaster?

“And anyway, Greg needs practice talking to people besides those at the pub and the shops and this would be a chance for him to… see new faces!”

John beamed with pride at his argument and got a hug from Greg as a reward, much to Mycroft’s annoyance.

“I am sorry, John, but there is too great a chance that…”

“That what, Mycroft? That your demon will embarrass you?”

Mycroft glared at Sherlock who smirked challengingly and soaked up John and Greg’s shocked gasps.

“Certainly not.”

“Then offer a reason for your refusal.”

“I…”

“Yeah, Mycroft! What’s your reason for why Greg can’t come with us to our science festival?”

“It’s…”

“How quickly your hypocrisy freezes in your cold and heartless mouth.”

They were being foolish and infantile, but how… how to express his worries in a manner that cast no aspersions on Gregory? His demon would make no purposeful mischief, but his exuberant nature was its own primal force … oh no. Not Gregory’s sad face. The sad, disappointed, hurt face. No, that he could not endure. It was simply not possible! Not even the most black-hearted of villains could stand firm in the presence of that!

“My dear, do you promise to stay at my side and listen closely if I issue a caution for… anything?”

“Are you asking if I’m going to be good?”
“In a roundabout way.”

“I'm going to be good.”

If it were possible to harness the energy from the anticipatory vibrations, Mycroft knew he would suddenly be the richest man alive.

“Very well. We shall all attend the science extravaganza and demonstrate our support and pride in Sherlock’s research. By the by, which topic did you finally settle upon, brother dear?”

“My research project is entitled ‘Ingestion Rate of Decaying Animal Tissue by Maggots Compared with Selected Fungal Species.’ I have already packed specimens of my research material to present along with my backdrop.”

Why was Gregory clapping? Oh yes, he unashamedly and unconditionally supported Sherlock, no matter the appropriateness of his scholastic doings.

“Joyful. Shall we make a start, then?”

Three figures dashed towards the waiting car, though one doubled back to collect the box of Sherlock’s research examples. Smiling widely at his portage duty, Greg hustled after the boys, leaving Mycroft to take a slower pace as he moved towards what could be certain doom. His demon was certainly not prepped for… mothers. And, worse… instructors. Trial by fire, however, was a time-honored method of testing one’s mettle, so into the fire they would go…

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Oh no…

“They’re selling snacks!”

John and Greg raced forward at top speed to the small fundraising table where baked goods were on offer, along with tea. Mycroft could only hope the tea was criminally strong… especially since NO!

“Gregory! Do put away your funds and allow me the honor of purchasing for you and John a refreshment.”

“Thanks, love! That’s nice of you.”

And, yes, the woman at the table provided the expected ‘look.’ Oh well, it was not as if they were not used to them, in their many varieties, from a percentage of the village population, but this was the first from his and Sherlock’s segment of the citizenry. There was some comfort in the familiar, he supposed.

“I’ll get something for Sherlock, too, then go and help him get his display set up.”

John began grabbing half of the table’s wares and Mycroft gently pried the least tightly gripped morsels out of the boy’s fingers.

“A small refreshment will suffice for now. More may be had as the evening progress.”

He would certainly need more tea, for instance, and it would not do to be discriminatory about such things with his Gregory present.

“Ok. Can I take these now?”
John presented the fistfuls of slightly squashed biscuits and cake slices and ran off as soon as the nod was given.

“I’ll take mine, too, but only one handful since I have to carry Sherlock’s big board.”

And another family member darts off with a fistful of sugar. This was going splendidly and the event had yet to start! At least the woman had, now, a look of sympathy in her eyes as he passed over his funds and received his much-needed cup of tea. Then it was the stroll to Sherlock’s area where, he was pleased to see, the erection of the exhibit was already underway without his need to participate and, glory to the heavens, Sherlock had enclosed his more objectionable materials in clear plastic cases… closed… so they could be seen, but not smelled.

“Oh look, a cow has lumbered its way into the hall.”

Mycroft patted Greg’s shoulder as the demon looked around for stray livestock, then gave his brother a watery smile.

“It appears that, this year, Sherlock, you face stiff competition. I see several projects that appear of the highest quality.”

There. That would attack his brother like an army of ants.

“What! You are utterly insane if you believe that anything present approaches my level of mastery of scientific research.”

“I believe I see an experiment involving the use of a computer. My, that one must certainly demonstrate robust data analysis.”

Sherlock had been demanding a computer for ages. The ants were quickly getting to very tender spots.

“What! A computer! How did… how did that idiot Penley lay hands on such an exalted device?”

“I’m sure I have no idea, but… what an interesting position for you that he has.”

Sherlock’s teeth gritted together so tightly that Mycroft was certain he heard cracking. Well, if such dental insult occurred, Gregory could likely set it right.

“Want me to buy one for you, Sherlock? I’ve got lots of money.”

Mycroft gently pressed the demon’s hands back into his pocket so as not to flash his, likely, Midas-worthy bankroll to the assembled masses.

“Yes! I shall script my specifications and we shall find a vendor at the earliest of opportunities!”

“Ok. You want one, too, John?”

“YES!”

“Ok, two of those machines. I’ll make a lot of money before we go shopping because, from the way you’re talking about them, I suspect they’re very expensive.”

Mycroft gulped his remaining tea and was positively ecstatic that no one in the area sold computers. However… his demon had no trouble with very long-distance travel or transport. Bugger.
“Hurray!”

“I THINK that such a purchase might not sit well with your parents, John. And, Sherlock… it shall take you some time to research the model that will appropriately suit your needs, so let us shelve this line of thought for the moment and concentrate on matters at hand.”

Mycroft busied himself fussing with the placement of Sherlock’s presentation board so his tea-fortified stomach did not suffer upset from the thunderous glare of the curly-haired junior scientist.

“It’s ok, Sherlock. We’ll go shopping as soon as you decide what you want and we can find John something else if he can’t have a pompooter.”

“Computer! Doltish demon… but there is nothing I can do at this moment on the subject, so this issue is tabled. For now.”

Sherlock’s nearly inaudible hiss sounded clearly in Mycroft’s ears and knew the topic would not die a quiet death. However, perhaps he might sidestep the worst of scenario by simply ordering something for his brother so that the potential catastrophe of the demon in a room filled with shiny, expensive electronics was not on the agenda for this lifetime.

“Excellent. And… oh, look. There is your mother, John.”

Mycroft blinked a few times, but the sight of the Watsons walking in carrying a large box and display board did not vanish like the expected mirage.

“And… did you enter a project in the science competition?”

“I did! Surprise! I won’t win, but Greg gave me an idea and I decided to do it.”

Sherlock gaped like a startled cod as John ran forward to get his box and board from his parents.

“See! And I’ll set up right next to you, Sherlock, so we can talk while everyone looks at our projects.”

Sherlock’s gape became a glare, this time aimed at Greg.

“You gave John an idea for a science project?”

“Well, you were working on yours and I didn’t see why he couldn’t work on one, too. You get lost in what you’re doing, sometimes, and talk to him even if he’s not there, so I didn’t think you’d miss us for an hour here and there. You didn’t either.”

Sherlock’s glare got a thousand degrees hotter when he saw that John’s presentation was on the subject of flight.

“It was fun, too! I read a lot and talked to my teacher and Greg… well, Greg may have helped with the models for the different sort of wings, but I cut out all the pictures from the magazines and my mum helped with making the poster, but Mycroft offered to help you with yours and, even though you told him to get stuffed, he could have, so that bit evens out.”

Sherlock watched the small, highly realistic, models of various animal, insect and mechanical wings drawn out of John’s box and Mycroft did his level best not to laugh at his brother’s indignation.

“Didn’t John do a wonderful job? Oh, and thank you, Greg, for helping him after school. Our John has never been this excited about science.”
Greg smiled brightly at John’s parents and Mycroft knew there would be a large basket of his
demon’s favorite treats delivered to said demon before week’s end.

“You’re welcome! I had as much fun as John. He’s a smart little one and knew just what types
of wings he wanted to study. This all looks great! I’m sure everyone who sees it is going to be very
impressed.”

John puffed up proudly and Sherlock’s rage intensified to the point that the demon thought he might
be having stomach problems and dug in his pockets for uneaten biscuits, which were passed to a
highly-irritated Sherlock.

“Spare me your linty offerings.”

“John, want some lint?”

“If it’s attached to those biscuits, then yes.”

“Here.”

John’s parents beamed at their son’s easy and positive interactions, which was not always the case
with others. John had a slightly pugnacious side that served him well against potential bullies, but
could rub others the wrong way if you didn’t know his good heart and strong spirit.

“Well, your father and I are going to say hello to everyone. Well, the ones that deign to talk to
common folk like us, anyway. We’ll be back a little later.”

Greg watched the couple disappear into the growing crowd and frowned such that Mycroft both
noticed and started to worry.

“Gregory? What is wrong?”

“Why won’t people talk to John’s mum and dad? They’re very nice and laugh a lot and do a
great job with John.”

Mycroft eased the demon away from the two boys who were lost in putting the final touches on their
exhibits and gave Greg a surreptitious squeeze of his hand.

“John is a scholarship student.”

“What’s that mean?”

“John’s parents are not wealthy.”

“So? I’m not either, really, except when I make some money.”

“There is a portion of the local denizens who are to a greater or lesser degree affluent and they are
not, necessarily, the most welcoming of those not in their social class.”

“You lost me again.”

“There are those who believe that one’s worth is determined by the heft of one’s purse.”

“That’s terrible! But… I can’t say I’ve never heard of anything like that before. I just… well, it’s
such a nice place to live that I supposed all the people were nice, too.”

“Rarely is that the case, and, if it is a comfort, the Watson’s are well-regarded by those not of the
hefty purse set and enjoy a robust social life with their cadre of friends.”

“That’s good. That’s really good. I like them a lot and I’m glad other people do, too.”

“Excellent. And John’s project… what was the impetus for that?”

“You mean why we decided to do it?”

“Precisely.”

“Well, Sherlock does get lost in what he’s doing quite a lot and that doesn’t leave much for John to do. John’s smart, too, so I thought that if Sherlock could do a project, why couldn’t he? And the little one did a brilliant job, didn’t he? Both of them… I’m so proud.”

This squeeze of his demon’s hand wasn’t surreptitious and Mycroft went so far as to wrap his arm around Greg’s waist as he walked him back to where Sherlock and John were readying themselves to talk about their projects to visitors and judges. This was a magical thing, without a whit of real magic on offer. His Gregory would be an exemplary guardian to any child, but to Sherlock and John, he was nigh on a miracle. And how delightful was it that his own hands did not have to be sullied by Sherlock’s entry for the year. Maggots… yes, that was far more a demon’s bailiwick than his…

Perhaps taking the demon to look at the other projects was not the most stellar of ideas…

“What’s wrong with those plants?”

“I believe the experiment was to test the effects of various levels of fertilizer on plant health.”

“I’d say this fertilizer stuff kills plants.”

“In this case… yes.”

“That’s sad. I don’t think they probably did anything to get fertilized to death, either, what with not being able to run or talk or steal.”

“Life is hard, sometimes, my dear. Especially for plants.”

“I don’t understand.”

“It is a model of our solar system demonstrating the motion of the various planets around the sun.”

“Where’s the pixies?”

“Pixies?”

“Pixies! There’s loads of them out there. Little things, too and they glow like candles.”

“I see… oh, we do apologize, madam. My companion is simply indulging in a bit of whimsy. He was in no manner implying your daughter’s project was anything but of the highest caliber.”

“Except for the pixies. And you get one of those big dragon-like things moving through now and then. They poop our this really heavy, really tiny poop that goes BOOM! and explodes and it makes
all sorts of new things. But, maybe I’m thinking of another universe.”

“See, madam? Just a bit of whimsy. Come along Gregory, away from the nice, yet angry woman…”

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“Hah! Look at that!”

“Yes, goldfish are very handsome fish.”

“But he’s pushing a little ball on a stick.”

“Because, as we can see from the narrative, it has been trained to do so to request food.”

“He.”

“Pardon?”

“He. Not it. That’s a bit rude.”

“Oh… well, I do apologize, though… how can you tell it is a male?”

“He told me. And he says the little one there is rather nice and buys good food, even though he has to do his little pushing thing to get any, which is a bit of annoyance.”

“It… he… you spoke to him?”

“Fish are smart. Well, at least this one is. His name’s Aubrey, too, not Goldy like on that sign. You should have the little one change it before he gets scolded by teacher for being wrong.”

“AND moving along to the next project…”

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“Ok, this one has me confused.”

“For what reason this time?”

“Well, why would you try to run a clock off a potato when potatoes are for eating?”

“To demonstrate that the potato can be used as a form of battery.”

“Can you eat batteries?”

“It is not recommended, no.”

“Then why use a potato as one?”

“Because… one can.”

“I’d make chips, instead.”

“Yes, that much I could easily predict.”

“Can you use a fish for a battery?”
“I… I suspect not.”

“Yes! Something finally makes sense!”

“Let me guess… you are baffled by what you are seeing.”

“No… I’ve seen volcanoes before.”

“Oh. Well, then…”

“This one’s not hot, though.”

“True.”

“And there’s none of the liquidy stuff to swim in.”

“Do you mean lava?”

“Is that the flowy, liquidy stuff?”

“It is.”

“Then yes.”

“I see.”

“You want to go swimming in it? We don’t have anything planned for tomorrow and it’s actually a lot of fun, what with the liqui... lava... being so thick and warm.”

Looking back at the line of bemused and irritated competitors and their parents, Mycroft thought a small absence from the area might not be entirely amiss. A few years and all of this would be but a distant speck in everyone’s memory…

Many cups of bracing tea later…

John stared at the certificate in his hands and barely noticed his parents and Greg’s firm hugs of congratulations.

“Fifth place! I got fifth place!”

“That’s fantastic son! Your mother and I couldn’t be happier.”

And to show how happy he was, John’s father lifted up the boy and set him on his shoulders for John to wave around his certificate like it was a captured enemy flag.

“For your show-and-tell performance, it is a rather astounding accomplishment.”

Said with Sherlock’s usual dismissive tone, but Mycroft didn’t miss the flash of glee in his brother’s eyes. Once the shock had worn off, Sherlock had been John’s most ardent advocate and had given his friend pointers on how to make his work sound its most Nobel-worthy. Of course, Sherlock’s first-place victory likely took some the sting out of John’s unexpected entry and ranking among the other competitors.
“My sincere congratulations, John. You did a highly laudable job with your project.”

“Thanks, Mycroft! And Sherlock got first!”

Sherlock shrugged off the new hug from Greg and made a show of shining his medal which still rested around his neck.

“As was to be expected.”

Sherlock’s satisfied smile made Mycroft smile in return. His brother took his scientific work very seriously and it wasn’t often he was rewarded for his efforts. The yearly science competition was one of the few times Sherlock could shine and, though he would hide it unto death, this meant a great deal to him.

“The competition was particularly lackluster this year, however, my work would have risen above the rank and file no matter the rigor of the competition.”

“With the size of the Holmes’ purse, the outcome this year really wasn’t in doubt, was it? And the Watson boy… again, no surprises there. Money spreads like spilled water.”

The clearly-made-to-be-audible, yet supposed-to-be-private comment by the mother that strolled past with her sneering child in tow set Mycroft’s blood pressure through the roof and it was only his quick action that stopped Greg walking after them. Of course, he forgot his lover didn’t need to lay hands on anyone to deliver their downfall and one pair of stockings and knickers dropped down from beneath a dress, followed quickly by small pair of trousers, which pooled around a set of thin ankles to send the child plummeting to the ground so everyone could have a better look at his duckling-printed underpants.

As John roared with laughter and everyone else tried not to roar with laughter, failing to greater or lesser degrees, the infuriated mother and son pair grabbed their malfunctioning garments and beat a hasty retreat out of the hall.

“Gregory…”

“She had no right to say that about John and Sherlock! The little ones worked hard on their science projects and deserved all the good things people said about them, as well as John’s paper and Sherlock’s necklace.”

“Medal!”

“Medal. Sorry, Sherlock.”

Mycroft couldn’t hold his scolding glare for very long since, first, he secretly applauded his demon’s actions and second nobody had overheard their conversation to raise any questions.

“I understand. And, this one time, there shall be no conversation on propriety concerning use of magic in public.”

“Oh… that’s a shame, because I really do like when we talk about things, love.”

There was really no reason to clarify the tone of the aforementioned conversation for such might put a greater frown on his demon’s face and that was simply unacceptable.

“Then we shall speak of other things. Countless and of varied topics.”
“Yes! After we celebrate Sherlock and John's projects, right?”

“Pardon?”

“Well, you celebrate good things happening and I this is a very good thing so… how are we going to celebrate. Can we go to the tavern?”

That was said loud enough to gain John’s father’s attention, as well as the man’s vote of agreement, but Mycroft and Mrs. Watson had very different views on the subject, which their partners quickly understood by the chastising looks on their faces.

“No tavern, love?”

“I believe we might find another option to demonstrate our gladness at Sherlock and John’s triumphant performance.”

Greg shared a mournful gaze with John’s father and Mycroft had a strong suspicion the man was another member of the local fish and chips club, founded by his son and the younger man he was commiserating with over the loss of their beloved pints.

“How does this sound? I made a cake to bring to work with me tomorrow, but science prizes are far more important than a silly baby announcement. A little cake and something warm to drink. Much better than a sour pint in a musty old tavern.”

Two members of their party had different opinions on the subject, but had to admit that cake wasn’t anything to be scoffed at. One member of the party even know how large was said cake and… well, the one thing that was better than cake was more cake.

“I find that a delightful suggestion, Mrs. Watson. Gregory?”

“Why would I say no to cake?”

“Gregory approves as well. Let us, then, gather the award-winning projects and rendezvous at the Watson’s residence for our victors’ well-deserved celebration.”

With cake on the line, the two small boys dove into their projects, packing them away quickly and smiling, in John’s case, glaring, in Sherlock’s case, at Greg to help them carry their wares out to the cars.

“Alright then, let’s go!”

The demon grabbed the two boxes filled with science projects, leaving the display boards for the boys to carry and off the trio went towards the cars.

“Your Greg is a marvel, Mycroft. So good with those boys. I… I hope he’s going to stay in the area for awhile. His dad knows your father? Having a little visit? That’s what John said at least.”

Ah yes… the cover story. Which did not adequately leave reason for his Gregory to linger here…

“It is my hope that he will. Gregory is… looking to, perhaps, explore business interests in the vicinity and I am assisting him with that particular venture.”

If there were two pairs of more disbelieving eyes in this world, Mycroft was certain he never wanted to see them. Yes… if one knew Gregory, the idea of him as serious entrepreneur was rather ludicrous. Fortunately, his own thick-skulled peers would not get the chance to know his demon to
any degree and were not nearly as perceptive as the Watsons. Even more fortunately, John's parents were too polite to call him out on his duplicity and simply smiled as they motioned him to follow after the more energetic members of their party. Long-term... work was needed to explain Gregory staying long-term, but it was work well worth doing. His demon was a marvel and he had no intention of seeing that marvel slip through his fingers. And the dance was only a week away…
Chapter 20

Mycroft was becoming somewhat used to the ebb and flow of energy in their house and this was certainly a time of flow…

“…very long string of consonants…”

“…even longer string of consonants, punctuated by a finger pointed in the most accusatory manner…”

“Good heavens! Can I not even take myself away for a phone call without bedlam laying claim to our home?”

“Your demon refuses to allow me access to the book of spells!”

“That’s because you want to try some things that aren’t safe, Sherlock.”

“The fiend dissembles!”

Before Greg could ask if that had something to do with falling apart, Mycroft decided an intervention was necessary.

“I generally find that Gregory is not prone to the telling of untruths on matters of consequence, brother.”

“You say that only to preserve his good graces and your access to coitus.”

“Sherlock Holmes! That is highly inappropriate for one of your age.”

“Then I shall table the comment and repeat it when I have reached my majority. It shall be as true then as it is now.”

Mycroft sighed deeply and hoped his demon might be the more rational of the pair.

“Gregory… would you care to elaborate on the situation?”

“It’s not anything to worry about, love. The little one just wanted to get hold of the book to turn one of his school chums into a frog.”

“I… I think that is most worrisome, actually.”

“It’s really not, because the spell’s a bit complicated for someone without experience in that sort of thing and you need a fair amount of power to do it. But, if you muck it up, it can have some nasty consequences for the person trying to cast it, so I think its best we leave that one alone for now.”

“And I demand he provide appropriate instruction so that the calamity is avoided!”

“You’re still not strong enough, Sherlock. Sorry.”

“Then… enhance my magical potency!”

“Umm… no.”

Another cacophony of consonants assaulted Mycroft’s ears and he wondered if it was too early in the
afternoon to begin with the brandy.

“Sherlock… I believe Gregory has your best interests at heart and he would not deny you this opportunity if he thought it a productive and educational venture. He has been most indulgent of your desires to learn more about magic and I feel we should defer to his judgment for this particular issue.”

“I see who wears the trousers in this family! The creature who scarcely knows what is a pair of trousers to begin with!”

Sherlock stormed off and Mycroft patted the shoulder of the demon, who was demonstrably saddened by the tirade.

“Fret not, my dear. Sherlock’s demands are incessant and only a fraction of them are what one would consider reasonable.”

“I’m starting to learn that, but… it’s hard to say no to him because he really does want to learn new things and that’s good, to my mind.”

“It is a very positive thing, however, Sherlock forgets that he has years to learn and not all things must be learned and experienced at this very instant.”

“I suppose that’s true. I think he’s also upset because John couldn’t come this afternoon. He has teeth.”

“Pardon?”

“Teeth. John’s got teeth.”

“I am… well, I thought I was aware of that fact, though, your bringing it up now as a significant point makes me question my previous observations.”

“John told Sherlock he’s got teeth to handle this afternoon and couldn’t come and visit.”

“Ah… was, by chance, the term ‘dentist’ bandied about in their discussion.”

“Not that I know of, but you can ask Sherlock for the details. Actually, now that you mention it, he was practicing my language when he told me, and teeth might have been the best he could do.”

“A very astute analysis and, likely, the correct one.”

“He’s doing great, too! Fumbles about a bit, and muddles some things, but for as short a time as he’s been practicing… he’s doing a brilliant job.”

“I am delighted to hear it. And your own practice? How did you fare with that today?”

The routine of giving the demon lessons on which to work while he and Sherlock were away at school for the day had proved a smartly strategic plan for keeping the exuberant creature close to home and… mostly… out of trouble.

“Good! I looked through all those magazines and papers you gave me to read and I feel very informed.”

Basic information about… the world… had been the focus for the past day or so and Mycroft was again highly impressed by the demon’s ability to absorb information, regardless of its source. Of course, getting said demon to demonstrate that knowledge in a practical manner had proved a tiny bit
problematic, as his Gregory seemed to delight in playing the somewhat empty-headed clown, despite his notable intelligence.

“Excellent. And you believe you can converse acceptably on the news of the day and goings on in the world?”

“I can acceptably converse.”

“And entertainment topics?”

“Also acceptably. Your staff helped with that, too, because they listen to the radio or keep the televisions on so they can watch programs while they work and they talk about all of that and let me listen, watch and talk, too.”

Well, that was something discovered, however, as long as the staff maintained their exceptional level of performance, there was no need to look further into the matter. And, anything that kept his Gregory occupied and entertained was certainly to be encouraged…

“Again, excellent. Your initiative for this assignment is most gladdening.”

“Do I get a reward?”

“Hmmm… what reward might you seek?”

“Laying you down naked and licking my way from your toes to your beautiful cock and then sucking you until you come.”

His Gregory’s utter lack of inhibitions was its own erotic thrill and his nethers were currently reminding him of that most forcefully.

“I believe that can be arranged once we have seen Sherlock safely to bed.”

“Yes! I don’t suppose we can put him to bed now, can we?”

“What do you, in truth, predict to be our likelihood of success?”

“Uh… none.”

“And there we have it.”

“It was worth a try, though.”

“Always. Now, shall we join my brother and see exactly what havoc he has decided to wreak given the foiling of his previous plans?”

“That’s probably a good idea. He’s already upset John won’t be here this afternoon, so… yeah, Sherlock can get into a lot of mischief when he’s upset about something. Maybe I can teach him a different spell to work that will make him happy.”

“That is a splendid idea. Do you have any ideas?”

“I do, actually. I can show him how to use a mirror to talk to John when they’re not together. John will need a mirror, too, but Sherlock can practice with us until he gets the spell right.”

That sounded harmless enough… and it might bolster both boys spirits when they were separated and feeling a touch lonely.
“A laudable suggestion. I am certain my brother will be most happy to learn that particular technique.”

“If he gets really good at it, I can show him how to spy on other people, too, which I know he’ll like.”

And away flies the harmless… oh well, one bridge at a time… and a cautious eye out for bridge trolls, as well…

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“WHEEEEEE!!!!!”

John bounded across the field much like Mycroft had seen of astronauts on the moon, though they had not quite reached the heights or distance the small, blue demon was accomplishing now.

“Really, Gregory?”

“What? It’s a fun thing to do and it’s handy if you don’t have wings or can’t send yourself to the places you want to go. This way, you go places very quickly and have more time to do whatever it is you wanted to do when you got there.”

“Are you properly timing my actions? This is a critical experiment!”

Mycroft waved the stopwatch for his brother to see that his precious data was duly being collected. Greg waved Sherlock’s notebook to show it was duly being recorded, also.

“What are the little ones going to do while we’re gone tomorrow night, love?”

Something that was, very uniquely, not Mycroft’s prime concern. How the boys occupied themselves while he and Gregory were at the dance was not nearly as worrying as the events of the dance itself. One could not say he had not done everything in his power to prepare his lover for the event, for he had. He had covered every angle, planned for every eventuality… it was now in the hands of the gods and he could only hope they were feeling especially kind at the moment…

“They shall be spending the evening with the Watsons, actually. Attending a cinema presentation and enjoying one of Mrs. Watson’s highly-palatable dinners.”

“That sounds great! Almost as much fun as going to a dance, but not quite, because you get to dance at a dance, which you can’t do, from what I understand, at the cinema. You can get snacks at both, but the dancing is certainly unique to the dance.”

“Yes, hence the eponymy of the term.”

“You know what those big words do to me?”

“Now, now, Gregory… no visible arousal while the children are present.”

“They’re not, actually.”

Mycroft looked around and found, to no surprise, that Sherlock and John had ignored his directions to say in visible range and gone off to the great unknown. Or the next property over.

“Will you do me the favor of returning them to where their behavior might be monitored?”

“It does little ones good to be off on their own now and again, you know.”
“Perhaps for children less apt to cause calamity than my brother and John, however, supervision is certainly the watchword for their particular temperaments.”

“But, they’re both wearing their amulets, so I’ll know if anything dangerous happens.”

“Leaping through a kind person’s roof might not be classed as dangerous in their current condition; however, I would still prefer to see such a thing not come to pass.”

“Oh. Yeah, that’s a possibility, I have to admit. And they do sometimes not pay close attention to things when they’re really having fun. They could land on a goose, for instance, and that would be worse than when I nearly hit one with a car so the honking would be horrible.”

“Most certainly, so…”

“Now?”

“If you please.”

“Ok…”

Greg closed his eyes a moment and, before they opened, two small demons were standing in front of Mycroft, both wearing thunderous scowls for their interrupted traipsing.

“This is kidnapping!”

“Since I have no intention of asking for a ransom, the term is very loosely applied, in this case, brother dear.”

“We weren’t going very far, either!”

“And now, John, you shall go even less far. Let us save the greater venturing for another day, shall we, and focus today on mastering the various aspects of today’s activity. For instance, Sherlock, how can you conduct your projectile motion studies if Gregory and I cannot properly observe you and scribe the necessary data?”

“That’s true, Sherlock. And you said you could use formulas to find out how high we jumped, which is good because then we could be sure who jumped the highest even if Mycroft and Greg couldn’t see because they were looking up at the bottoms of our feet.”

“Yes, there is merit to the argument. Very well. John and I shall remain in proximity for the duration of our tests.”

“Thank you for your cooperation. Shall you prepare for your experiment?”

“Yes, so do not wander off to exchange saliva with your hell beast.”

Mycroft chose not to comment on the hypocritical ‘wandering off’ prohibition and instead leaned over to give his demon a kiss, much to the frustrated irritation of the small scientist.

“Avert your eyes, John. They are becoming amorous.”

“You’d think, by now, I’d be used to it, but nope. It’s still… ugh.”

Mycroft was also thinking that by now, he might have become used to his demon’s kisses, but that, also, was not the case. Perhaps, if the act was a purely physical one, such might be the situation, but… well, it was not the time to dwell upon what lay under the physicality because it was most
vexing and required he examine areas of himself into which he eternally had been loath to peer. The fact that something did underlie the physicality, something significant, was… his mind simply did not know what to do with the knowledge.

“Ah… you and Sherlock remain transfixed by our enjoyment of each other’s company. I am not surprised, for it is a wondrous thing to behold, I am sure.”

“Yeah, this is definitely ugh. We’d better start your experiment, Sherlock, or this is just going to get worse.”

Not with the children watching, but John’s definition of worse, Mycroft thought, might not be as salacious as his.

“Agreed. We will begin with the height challenge first. Mycroft, prepare to time with utmost precision! Demon! Write legibly!”

The older pair shared a grin and made a grand show of readying themselves for their earth-shaking tasks. In truth, it took little to make the small boys happy. A bit of attention, some positive words… the access to untold magic was simply icing on the cake…

“Now?”

“Is there a difficulty, my dear?”

“No, it just seems early to get dressed when all I have to do is put on my suit.”

“And shower, complete other grooming measures such as teeth cleansing and hair combing, ensure your shoes are shined, have what I am certain is a small repast to restore your energies after such an ordeal and, finally, we must deliver Sherlock to the Watson’s residence so that he might begin his own eventful evening.”

One mustn’t forget, either, his inspection of the demon’s appearance with time allowed for corrections of the various bits of damage that would occur on the way to the dance and… Mrs. Watson. There would be some degree of fuss made there and the awkward potential of photographs. Such had already been threatened and John’s mother was not the sort to forget a threat.

“Oh… well, when you put it that way, I see your point. Can we shower first? One nice, warm shower so I can get my hands on that gorgeous body of yours before it gets covered up with your suit and I have to wait to get you out of your suit before I can get my hands on you again?”

That would put them punishingly off-schedule and, quite possibly, convince him out of going to the dance at all. His Gregory’s conduct in the shower was nothing short of scandalous. Gloriously, magnificently scandalous…

“I believe we shall shower in sequence so that one of us has eyes on Sherlock at all times. I would not believe it against his nature to attempt some sabotage to promote our humiliation at the dance.”

“He wouldn’t do that.”

“He would and would crow about his success for a fortnight. Now, in the spirit of getting the proverbial ball rolling, I shall shower first. Do keep close watch on your charge, Gregory. Sherlock is most sneaky when he has a mind for it.”
Before the demon could begin a negotiation on the shower issue, Mycroft darted into the bath and crossed his fingers that his Gregory would take seriously his warning and keep eyes firmly on Sherlock until such time as the guard was changed. There was a gleam today in his brother’s eyes that simply could not be ignored…

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“Do you want to tell him, little one, or will I?”

“I have nothing to confess!”

Even if his brother wasn’t frozen in place with a pair of nail scissors in one hand and his suit jacket in the other, there would be no believing his impassioned protest.

“Gregory, do provide the story, if you will. Sherlock’s honesty is not something, at the moment, in which to put faith, I suspect.”

“You might be right. I… I wouldn’t have believed it, but this one decided, and it was actually a clever idea if you were looking for a good joke to play on someone, but only when it’s not important like your dance… anyway, he was clipping stitches in the seams of your jacket, so it would wear for awhile, but fall apart while we were dancing and having a nice time. I fixed it, though, so you don’t have to worry about a thing on that score.”

“Sherlock Holmes! What a horrid child you can be. I have no idea what alignment of stars was in evidence when you were conceived, but it must have been the darkest of portents for it has haunted me ever since your birth.”

“You have no proof of my guilt!”

“I have every proof and your rather cherry-like cheeks are their own evidence that you certainly realize that fact. My dear, if you would release Sherlock from his rather amusing confinement, I shall take your place as his monitor and you may begin your preparations for the evening.”

Sherlock unfroze with no warning and it was only through quick action that Mycroft was able to grab his suit jacket and prevent it from joining his brother in an unplanned encounter with the floor.

“I shall pursue all legal action!”

“That should be rather interesting since you would need family funds to pay the solicitor and those rest squarely in my hands while Mummy and Father are not in residence.”

“Foiled by the cruel discrimination of birth order!”

“Do enjoy your shower, my dear. Rest assured that I shall deal with our criminal in a just and firm manner.”

Greg gave Mycroft a kiss and started towards the bedroom and his own bath, content in the knowledge that Sherlock would get a stern word for his conduct, but nothing more. It was a funny prank, after all… the little one just needed to learn a bit better when to play his pranks and when not to. The dance meant a lot to Mycroft and you don’t fiddle with something like that. You wait until a less important time, then give it a go…

“Sherlock… you know this is spectacularly unacceptable.”

“Pfftt… the disintegration of your jacket would only have occurred if you had actually
participated in the dancing portion of the event and with the likelihood of that standing at naught due to your inability to move at a pace faster than a waddle, as well as the availability of food, which is what you will waddle to as soon as you arrive, never again to move, I saw no real issue with the jest.”

“Your ability to lie has been compromised by your desire to promote my social humiliation and this stands as another black mark against you. If you choose to dissemble, kindly do so in a manner that demonstrates some degree of proficiency.”

Sherlock made a rude noise then slowly made his way off of the floor, wincing and grimacing as if he had been caught in a landslide.

“Are you rehearsing for an acting role as a train-wreck victim?”

“You are not amusing, Mycroft, and you insult humanity when you try to be.”

“How ambitious of me. Now, shall we make a start towards having me wear my suit? We do not want to be late delivering you to the Watson’s, do we?”

“No. If we are late leaving for the cinema, we shall have to sit squarely among the rabble, as opposed to at the head of the assembly where I am upwind of the nauseating aroma of their body odor and poor dental hygiene.”

“A very stout reason, then, for assisting and not impeding Gregory and my preparations. Come, let us reunite my jacket with the rest of my suit and make actual progress towards departing.”

“Fine, but know well that you are crushing my creative spirit.”

“I am most certain it will rebound at the very earliest opportunity.”

Which would be when Sherlock next drew breath, but let the poor boy have his moment of drama…

“Oh my… look at you! That’s a handsome pair if I’ve ever seen one! John, go get my camera off the table. I have to have a photo of this.”

Mycroft sighed at the unlikelihood of ‘a’ photo being taken, but could not deny how puffed up with pride was his demon at the praise. Which was wholly and completely deserved, at least for Gregory. His lover was a vision… simply a vision. He was masculinity personified, the epitome of manly perfection. It had taken some work to get his lover’s excitement managed to a level where dressing and grooming could occur, but occur it did and the results were impeccable.

“Thank you, Mrs. Watson. Gregory and I did hope we presented a pleasing sight.”

“Oh, I think you’re going to have to chase away admirers all night. Now, get closer and give me a big smile…”

Of course, this meant Greg wrapped his arm around Mycroft’s waist and pulled him near, smiling brightly and Mycroft couldn’t hold back a grin of his own.

“Perfect! Now, just a few more…”

Which seemed to be the incentive the demon needed to give Mycroft a peck on his cheek and strike countless other couple poses, all to the delight of their photographer.
“Oh, these are treasures, true treasures. Now, you two have a nice time and don’t worry about Sherlock. We’ll take good care of him.”

“Of that I have no doubt, Mrs. Watson. Come along, Gregory. Our dance awaits…”

Greg’s whoop of glee echoed into the night as the demon ran towards the car and stood at the door hopping foot to foot in excitement.

“He’s a good one, Mycroft. You keep hold of him, do you hear me?”

“Very loud and most clear. Do enjoy your evening.”

Mycroft hustled off before any further motherly advice could fly his way and felt no surprise that his demon waited until he opened the driver’s side door to hop into the car.

“We’re ready, right?”

“That we are. And my dear… you do look wonderful this evening.”

“Thanks, love. So do you.”

Greg smiled and leaned over to give Mycroft a kiss. His human was the one who really looked amazing tonight. So elegant and fine. He looked like he owned the world and was, without any doubt, the sexiest man alive. Mrs. Watson was right; he was going to have to keep close eye on his Mycroft because there were certainly going to be a lot of eyes on him and grabby hands, too, if he wasn’t careful. He wouldn’t blame anyone for wanting a little grab of something that luscious, but they could go and find their own lover to get a feel of something nice. This bit of nice was his and that was the most special thing to ever happen in this life… there would be no sharing…

Mycroft would not admit to gulping slightly at the sight of the school lit up and the abundance of vehicles parked outside, but he may have had his tiny, secret hope that the event had been cancelled cruelly by the sight.

“This is great! Look at all the automobiles! That means lots of people and lots of people mean lots of fun! Well, not always, because I was chased a few times by lots of people and they had torches and farm tools in their hands so that was rather the opposite of fun, but it was good exercise, I suppose.”

Another area to explore at another time, which certainly was not now.

“I am happy you are enthused by the sight. Shall we?”

Not that the question was necessary as the demon was out of the car and waiting for Mycroft in the blink of an eye.

“Can I hold your hand?”

“I… perhaps a more sedate entrance would be appropriate.”

“What’s that mean?”

Yes, what did that mean? His preferences were common knowledge, so any demonstration of affection should come as no surprise to anyone, at least no more than him showing any form of affection, which would be shocking enough on its own. Maybe…”
“Look! We can do that!”

Mycroft scarcely had time to turn his head before his arm was linked with the demon in exactly the same way that another couple was modeling as they entered the school and before Mycroft could object, Greg was steering him towards the front steps.

“Yes, I like this. Makes it harder for anyone to steal you away from me.”

Well, there was that. Not that anyone would try to steal him, but there was more than one person in school with a taste for men, and his Gregory’s splendor could be the final push towards prompting them to act on their desires. One could only be satisfied by longing looks and softly-frustrated sighs for so long… a condition with which he had an unhappy degree of familiarity…

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Mycroft didn’t know what he’d expected to happen when they entered the space set aside for the dance, but the quiet hush that fell over the crowd when they stepped into the room certainly wasn’t it. Apparently, his attendance had been thought a boast…

“This is amazing, love! It’s so beautiful…”

If there was anything in the room more beautiful than his Gregory’s enraptured smile, however, Mycroft certainly couldn’t see it. His demon was positively luminous

“I take it the ambience meets with your approval.”

“It’s fantastic! And everyone looks wonderful, though, not as wonderful as you. We’re going to have a great time, I just know it. And look… people are already staring at us because you’re so handsome.”

No… that was certainly not the reason, but, as he categorized the various facial expressions, he could see none that were aghast at the sight of him and his lover. Curious, perplexed, peevish, envious… lustful, for the females and previously identified males staring at his Gregory, but… none signifying there was anything about which to immediately worry. And didn’t Bascomb and his cronies appear as if their heads might explode with the anger of defeat. Perhaps this night might not be as burdensome as he had feared…

“I think that particular gaze is reserved for you, Gregory, for you are easily the most striking individual in the room. Now, shall we gain for ourselves a glass of punch? Already I find it slightly warm and a cooling beverage would be greatly appreciated.”

“Good idea. Cool down my Mycroft so I can get him hot again with some dancing.”

Oh yes… dancing. The part of the evening he was still hoping to circumvent by some rather dazzling use of conversation and distraction. Erotic, in both cases, if need be…

“A stellar plan. Shall we?”

Mycroft breathed deeply and walked his lover further into the room, highly aware of the eyes following their every step. And he made every step count, of course. Head held high, a glint of steel-hard confidence in his eye, a slightly smug smile on his lips… yes, he had an exquisite man on his arm. Or, rather, he was on the arm of an exquisite man. The dolts who had doubted his romantic prowess could enjoy eating their crow and he would happily provide the utensils.

“And they’ve got a lot of punch! And food. Do they have dances often because I think I’d like
to do this sort of thing with you a lot.”

“I… it is not a frequent thing, no.”

Thank heavens.

“Oh, that’s a shame. Are there dances in the village?”

“Perhaps there might be the odd gathering here or there associated with… the church or some summer fete and the like. I truly have no idea.”

“I’ll find out. I’m making a lot of friends in the village and that’ll be another thing we can talk about, like sheep, sports, beer and who’s fucking who, even if they shouldn’t be.”

“YES… yes, the village is a veritable wellspring of information. And, here you are. Have a sip of your nice punch.”

Mycroft used the small respite to again survey the room and reaffirm that his predictions for his peers’ dates was most correct. The least odious had females who appeared affable and sweet-tempered and the more odious… well, as they sow so shall they reap. In any case… oh lord, they were being approached…

“Mycroft… hello.”

“Ah, William. Yes, it is nice to see you.”

Not a total lie, in point of fact. William was squarely in the less-odious group, having as his main flaw a rather substantial interest in birds. There was only so much one could discuss about birds, yet William could vault beyond that limit with unimaginable ease.

“And you, as well. May I introduce Miss Charlotte Bainbridge?”

Comely, yet pleasant-looking and something about the smile told Mycroft that his schoolmate’s passions for binoculars and rambling might be shared.

“Good evening, Miss Bainbridge. And may I present Gregory Lestrade.”

“I know you!”

The collective blink was nearly audible.

“Pardon me?”

“I know you! Or, I know your mum. She owns the flower shop, right? I’ve seen your picture behind the till. She’s so proud of you… tells all her customers all about how you are and how well you’re doing in school. And this is the young man she’s so fond of! I’ve heard about you, too. She likes you, so if you’re worried about that, which is something people seem to worry about with mums in your wor… in life… then don’t. She loves hearing all about the birds you and Lottie have seen and packing you lunches to take with you when you go walking.”

Mycroft felt the hole opening below his feet to drop him squarely into his cell in hell when their companions smiled widely and clasped hands, with his classmate looking as if he was going to float away like a balloon.

“Really? I… I was a tad worried, I admit, because…well, I do go on a bit, especially if something rare has been spotted in the area and I’ve gotten a good view of it, or a photo, which is
really what you want to get, if you can, to document the sighting for your records but… well, yes. That’s good to hear. Thank you… Gregory, was it?”

“Yep, Gregory Lestrade. I’m Mycroft’s boyfriend.”

As if the arm snaking around Mycroft’s waist wasn’t its own evidence. Evidence that made their female conversation partner’s eyes begin to glow brightly.

“Oh yes! I remember Mum mentioning she’d met you! You bought a whole armful of daisies because you thought they’d give your Mycroft a smile! And it was a lovely mixed arrangement another day, wasn’t it?”

The flowers… his Gregory did have a tendency to return home from his visits to the village with gifts and flowers did figure prominently. The dear demon had a distinct fondness for natural beauty… and, apparently, making himself known amongst the village shop owners…

“I love flowers! They’re gorgeous, even the small ones you see growing wild along the side of the road. And since Mycroft’s gorgeous, too, it’s a natural fit.”

This was not really the tangent of conversation for which Mycroft had hoped. Had his demon no memory of his lessons!

“You’d probably like birds, too, if you like flowers, because they rather go together, don’t they? Will and I would love to have you come along on one of our walks. We do look mostly at the birds, but there’s loads of time for other things like flowers and wildlife and we run across the loveliest…”

“Yes… that sounds absolutely marvelous and I am certain Gregory will be more than happy to accompany you when he has time free, though that is in rather short supply. Now, if you will excuse us, I do believe I see someone with whom I require a quick word. Do enjoy your evening and I hope, most sincerely, that our paths cross again before the night ends.”

Mycroft began briskly walking away and, since Greg’s arm was tight around his waist, the demon was pulled along for good measure.

“Love, wait! Why can’t we stay and talk to Will and Lottie? They seem very nice and interested in interesting things.”

Because it appeared that his Gregory could quickly become fast friends with the pair and he was certainly not prepared and groomed for that level of interaction with anyone. Casual conversation and the passing of pleasantries was the very limit at this point and toddling off on a hiking excursion did not fit that particular bill.

“Because we have many people to whom to pay our respects tonight and we cannot tarry long with any particular one or two.”

No… do not give me the sad, yet suspicious, puppy eyes. I am only trying to ensure that your tenure in my life is a long and enjoyable one. Oh good, another song is beginning and there is a helpful gentlemen circulating to take punch cups. Thank you, my dear, I know you have a few sips remaining, but it is time for a small distraction and I would rather not wear your punch down my back.

“Shall we dance, Gregory? I believe this song to be one we are well suited to celebrate.”

Greg’s frown began to turn upside down and Mycroft took the advantage, sweeping his lover into a series of well-practiced steps and moving them deeper into the crowd of dancers at the room’s center.
“This is nice. You dance wonderfully, love. And people are watching us dance, too, which means we must be especially good.”

Or especially exotic to their rather narrow lives. No, that was uncharitable. It was not, per se, that a male couple was dancing together, it was that he was dancing with someone and that someone could have anyone in the room in their arms. Anyone in England, actually. Gregory’s movements were so unbelievably smooth and unthought about. He danced as if he was born to it and their bodies moved in perfect, nearly-sexual rhythm. If anything could sell the story that Gregory was his paramour, it was surely the sight of their performance on the dance floor.

“It is solely because you are the consummate dance partner. It is as if there are none in the room but us, so lost am I in the pleasure of your embrace.”

“Listen to you… more talk like that and I’ll make sure you get even greater pleasure from my embrace. It’s nice moving like this, isn’t it? Me getting to rub your body with mine, smell your skin and know you’re starting to get hard…”

That was the truth, too. The villain.

“Gregory, I cannot sport an erection while in public.”

“Why not? It’s not as if people don’t know what it is.”

“Which is precisely the point. It is not proper to become aroused during a social event.”

“Later?”

“That will be fine.”

“Yes! A night of dancing and food and drink and new people to meet… then a long, sweaty cuddle with my Mycroft that’ll have him seeing stars in his eyes. This is right up there at the top of best days ever!”

It was probably a good thing that so few in this world had a love of life as its wonders as unbridled as his Gregory because civilization would come to a crashing standstill. However, one person living so freely and joyfully posed no threat and wasn’t he a lucky man for it…

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“But, why not?”

“Because… it is not done to have another as a dance partner when one arrives escorted to an event.”

“That’s not true, because I’ve seen people dancing with more than one person. Are you worried someone will try to have a little feel while I dance with them?”

Only partially. The inability to monitor the conversation was another significant factor. But… well, the groping issue might be equally troubling.

“Perish the thought.”

“You’re cute when you’re jealous.”

“I do try.”
“AND I do believe I see someone with whom I require a word. Do excuse us.”

“You said that before. And we didn’t talk to… urk!”

Yes, I realize you have now caught onto a standard social convention for disentangling one’s self from a conversation, however, I will explain when we are out of earshot why your treatise on the importance of fish and chips in one’s diet should be delivered only to select audiences, such as John, his father and the feral cat that has adopted Cook as its mother and seemed to have an unlimited capacity for food. The fact it was christened Mr. Gregglesworth had pointedly been ignored.

“Yes! That’s alcohol!”

“Put the punch cup down, my dear.”

“Oh no, you’re not getting this away from me. It’s fruity and sweet and… you drank my punch.”

And now my head is spinning from the rather unsubtle spiking. The sacrifices I make for you, Gregory… they are legion and severe… oh dear, it’s getting rather hot in here, isn’t it…

“Come on, Mycroft…”

“The music is rather… fast, don’t you think?”

“No! It’s great and we can really move and shake and show off how fabulously we dance. Here, just follow what I do and everything will be fine.”

Or, he would look like a convict in the midst of an electrocution, however, that rather described most of those who had joined in the gyrations, so… mucking in like a good sport, it would be.

“Yes! Oh, you’re fantastic at this, love. That body of yours loves to move and does it so well. And I know how limber you are, so if I give you a quick spin and dip like this…”

Oh dear, this was most indecent. And most invigorating…

“… you’ll manage like we planned it beforehand. So perfect. My Mycroft is just a perfect hum… person.”

Alright… if forced, the admission might be made that tonight was rife with enjoyable moments. His demon could make even the most onerous occasion a delight. How marvelous it would be, looking ahead in time, when he was beset by stresses and demands, to know that there was always someone in his life who could bring to his lips an honest and much-needed smile?

“Are you sure we can’t have any more punch? I’m getting very thirsty.”

Of course, their spirits budget would be substantial, but what was a little libation compared to blissful and eternal devotion?

As the score stood, they had danced, enjoyed several collegial, though abbreviated, conversations,
mostly avoided the tainted punch, and \textit{decidedly} avoided the individuals who would gladly make his life miserable if given the slightest chance. This evening might actually end with a passing grade…

“I have to pee.”

A marginally-passing grade, but with Pass-Fail as the only option on offer, \textit{marginal} did not change the relevant facts.

“Very well. I shall escort you…”

“Just point way and I can find it, Mycroft. I promise not to visit the punch table or anything like that.”

Well, there was that worry nicely nullified.

“As you wish. Through the door behind us and down the corridor. It is the third door on the left and is clearly marked.”

“Thanks! Be back in a moment.”

Mycroft could only cross his fingers that his demon met with nothing that piqued his interest and settled in to use the small respite to catch his breath. Of course, it was only a handful of minutes before his nemesis chose to pounce…

“Well, Holmes… I have to say, I’m surprised to see you here.”

“Well, Bascomb, I have to say, you are easy to surprise.”

“I admit, I thought you were indulging in your typical behavior of blowing around vast quantities of hot air when you announced your heretofore unheard-of boyfriend, but… well, you found someone accompany you, so I will credit you that. How much did he cost?”

“Oh dear, my sides are threatening to split with laughter. As you are well aware, Gregory has been my companion for some time.”

“Weekly or monthly wage?”

“Verily you are a comedian.”

“Perhaps. I have heard quite a number speak about him, you know. He is… well, he has turned more than a few heads.”

“Gregory \textit{is} a tremendously handsome man.”

“And you prize him for it.”

“Who would not? Fine of form and face… that is a heady combination.”

“True, very true. What man wouldn’t want such a trophy on his arm?”

“Fewer still deserve it.”

Certainly not you, uncouth swine.

“Of course, he’s not really our sort, is he?”
And thank heavens for it.

"Perish the thought."

"Yes, most assuredly. His value is in quite another area, I suppose."

Companionship? Affection? Bringing new and exciting experiences to a dreary and dull life? Do you mean those, you ridiculous boor?

"Well, I certainly do not associate with him for the reasons I associate with you."

"I thought as much. His worth is far more… stimulating in nature, I suppose."

As in igniting his mind and body in ways he’d never before imagined? The answer was a resounding yes.

"Naturally. Such a man as Gregory offers much to one like me and it is certainly not what I will gain from anyone here."

"No, and I do understand perfectly. One must tend to all of life’s little needs as best as one can and I suspect he tends to yours most enthusiastically."

"Gregory’s enthusiasm is none of your business. But… I will admit that he is very attentive to my needs and is most talented in satisfying them."

Breakfast in bed, sharing quiet time in the library, managing Sherlock and John so his studies could be focused upon, bolstering his ego when he looked into the mirror and was not… was not terribly happy with what he saw…

"I am not surprised. That type of person usually is."

Type of person? Are you referring to a good person? A caring and affectionate person? One would hope so, for that is the person for whom all should aspire to have in their lives.

"Without doubt."

"And I understand clearly now why you do not bring him to other of our social evenings. He really would not fit in at all, would he?"

Their so-called social evenings consisted of drinking even more than Gregory and becoming exponentially more dreary because of it. The billiards table in the activity room was still not repaired after their last ‘tournament,’ which left the poor thing near in splinters.

"Heavens, no. The mere suggestion of such a thing is appalling. My relationship with Gregory is, in no manner, connected with my associations here and I have full intention of keeping it that way."

Mycroft had no idea why Bascomb’s face twisted into such a knowing and wicked grin, but it made his conversation partner even more ugly than normal, which was not a feat Mycroft thought could be achieved without surgical assistance.

"Pity. Your boyfriend seems rather put out by that fact."

Mycroft followed Bascomb’s gaze and whirled around to see Greg standing behind them with a thick shine of unshed tears in his eyes, which caused Mycroft both profound confusion and even more profound distress until his brain helpfully donned lecturer’s robes and began a presentation on
how the previous conversation might be interpreted by someone who had not the ability to read his mind for the mental monologue that provided a very clarifying perspective.

“No… Gregory, please, you must listen.”

The demon turned on his heel and dashed towards the exit with Mycroft fast on his heels, but the elder Holmes was only able to stay close enough to catch the sight of wings bursting through the demon’s suit as he took flight. Damn Bascomb! He knew Gregory was listening and… well, the revenge that would be enacted for this would he devastating, but now… now he had far more important matters to deal with and he could only hope that his demon was willing to listen to his words. With Gregory’s tender heart… this was not good…

Mycroft ran towards his waiting car and ordered his driver to get him home as quickly as possible, legal or not. With that direction, and with only a few close calls along the way, the house loomed quickly and the car barely made it to a stop before Mycroft was jumping out to run inside, hoping with all his might that his demon had come here and not gone off somewhere to work off his distress. Fortunately, after finding the library and kitchen lacking a demon, he found luck in their bedroom. Green, loincloth-clad luck…

“Gregory… oh, thank the stars. I am… you have no idea how…”

“Here.”

Mycroft took the piece of paper that Greg thrust at him and blinked at the unfamiliar words scribbled in his lover’s familiar hand.

“What is this?”

“Send me home.”

No. No, this could not be happening…

“Gregory, you must first listen to me…”

“You said that when I wanted to go home, I could. Were you lying?”

“I was not lying, however, we must talk, you and I…”

“About what? The fact that I’m a toy to you? That I’m good for sex and that’s about all?”

“Preposterous! That is not at all how I feel and you are well aware of it!”

“Really? I think you described that very thing pretty well, actually! And practically yelled me deaf keeping me off the phone with your mum and dad. Wouldn’t let me talk to people very long at the dance and, when we’re in the village, you do the same thing. I barely get ten words out and you’re shushing me or pulling me away. I thought… I know I can get a little excited sometimes and it’s probably a bother to listen to me go on and on about things, but that’s not it, is it? You said it tonight – I’m not your sort of person. I don’t fit in with people you know and that’s ok to you because you don’t ever plan to have me in your life for anything but sex. Oh, I forgot, and for the magic and keeping an eye on the little ones when you don’t want to.”

“No, none of that is true.”
Alright, maybe ‘none’ was not the correct word because… Gregory was so problematic! He had yet to work out the proper method for suitably integrating the demon into his life and that was not his fault! It took time and they’d had so little and Gregory was so… Gregory…

“Look at you… thinking of a way to swallow that lie you just told. It is true and I… I’d hoped you were different. That you saw me as something more than a creature you could use. I was wrong and stupid me for thinking that… someone like you could have feelings for someone like me. Now, you send me back like you promised.”

“You are misinterpreting things, Gregory. You are angry and hurt and not thinking correctly. You know I care…”

“I thought I did. But telling me you care is very different than showing me you care. It’s respect, too. Do you know how often you treat me like a kid? I thought it was because you can be a little fussy about things and I… I know I’m loud and I laugh too much and get excited over silly things and do silly things on top of it, but I thought… I thought than underneath it all, you had some respect for me. You don’t keep people from making new friends unless you don’t think they’re good enough for the friends they’re trying to make. Unless you think they’re going to embarrass you. Home, Mycroft. Send. Me. Home.”

“Gregory, you are escalating your upset to a frightening degree and… I cannot lose you, my dear.”

“Oh, I’m ‘my dear’ again, am I? Didn’t call me that once at the dance, just so you know.”

What? Of course he had? Hadn’t he? Oh no… no no no no no…

“You promised I didn’t have to stay here against my will, Mycroft. Don’t make me think you lied to me about that, too.”

This was disastrous! It was a ridiculously-small fault. Two tiny words! But… he knew what those words meant to his demon and… why had he not used them? This could not be happening…

“Mycroft…”

“I… please do not do this, Gregory. Let us talk about this when we have had time to cool our tempers.”

“You mean when you’ve had time to think of a way to change my mind.”

“Yes! If you want the truth, then yes! I cannot bear the thought of losing you…”

“Should have thought about that before you let people know I’m there for show and nothing else. Now, say that first part with a long ‘I’ and those two vowels there are said separate, not smooshed into one sound.”

“Gregory… I beg you…”

“I’m waiting.”

Mycroft’s hands were trembling so hard he could barely hold still the paper to read the words and his last hope that the demon would change his mind burned away when Greg pried the paper out of his fingers and held it up steady for Mycroft to read. Words… just a few lines of words and the paper was fluttering down to the floor and Mycroft was left alone. More alone than he had ever been in his life…
“Mycroft!”

John ran forward to what appeared to be Mycroft’s dead body on the library floor, but snorted loudly when he smelled the strong whiff of alcohol on the false corpse.

“He’s drunk.”

“Fatcroft? Was he too stupid to learn his lesson the first time about the perils of intoxication? Why am I even asking that? Of course, he is.”

Sherlock took a poker from the fireplace and used it to prod his brother into consciousness.

“Wha… oh, good heavens. Stop… stop jabbing me!”

“You deserve a beating for this disgraceful behavior, so be grateful that is not the fate you are currently suffering.”

Suffering was the word for it, too. He had a flavor in his mouth similar to sewerage and the now-familiar, crippling pounding in his head, to accompany the devastating pain that lived in his heart. He had thought that drinking himself insensible would dull that particular ache somewhat, but he was sadly, sadly mistaken.

“Leave me alone, Sherlock. Go and… frankly, I do not care what you do so long as you do not do it here.”

Sherlock looked over at John who was making a very notable show of mulling over the situation and the two boys shared a nod.

“No.”

“Leave!”

“No.”

“I will pay you.”

“No. But… what figure might you have been contemplating?”

Mycroft slowly dragged himself into a sitting position and waited for the room to stop spinning before speaking.

“Just go… I have endured enough torment that more heaped upon it is simply an act of cruelty.”

This shared look between the young boys wasn’t a pleasant one because Mycroft was truly upset and… where was Greg?

“Why are you here alone bleating and moaning when your faithful dog is not at your side adding its pitiful howl to your lamentations?”

“Please… just go.”

“Mycroft… where’s Greg?”
The cautious tone of John’s voice set Mycroft laughing a broken, brittle laugh and Sherlock began looking around the room for clues, finally finding the piece of paper on the floor that had sent his brother into this tailspin.

“This is a spell.”

“Very perceptive of you.”

“It is in Latin. A rather bastardized version, with some Greek, I believe and… gibberish… however…”

Sherlock worked through the translation and gasped loudly before glaring at his brother.

“You have banished him!”

“NO!”

John paled and moved to stand by Sherlock and join in staring at Mycroft who was hoping they would simply get tired of his face and wander off to look at something more interesting.

“Mycroft… you couldn’t have done that. Tell me you didn’t send Greg back.”

“Fine, I won’t tell you that. Now, if you would just run along and…”

“You did! You sent Greg back! What… what happened? Did you have a fight?”

John’s honest concern actually warmed Mycroft’s heart and he decided the truth would come out at some point and there was no reason that point could not be now.

“Yes, we did. Gregory… Gregory overheard a conversation of mine that he misinterpreted as being insulting to him. We returned here and an argument ensued… no, that is not entirely correct, for an argument allows two opinions to be bandied about and that certainly did not occur. Rather, simmering slights were exposed and Gregory asked… demanded, rather… to be sent home. As I had promised that he would not have to remain here if it was against his wishes… I had no choice but to comply with his request. I did not wish this, you must believe me in that. I begged him to stay, but he would not listen. He absolutely refused to listen…”

Mycroft decided sitting up was a tragic mistake and lay back down on the floor, scooting the brandy bottle over to peer inside for any remaining contents to return to the path of insensibility. And help with his headache.

“The demon is truly gone?”

Sherlock’s concern was as thick in his voice as had been John’s and Mycroft allowed himself a small smile of pride at his brother’s willingness to show his feelings.

“He is. I could not persuade him otherwise. I could not even persuade him to listen to my persuasion…”

Mycroft rolled so he was on his back and stared up at the ceiling that, unfortunately, did not crash down and put an end to his misery.

“That doesn’t sound like Greg. Well, maybe a little. He can be stubborn, sometimes.”

Mycroft smirked at John’s words. Oh, like following him to school despite being told to say very much at home? Or going into the village when he was, again, told to stay very much at home?
“But you can be a little mean, so it evens out.”

“What!”

The fact that Sherlock was nodding was in no manner comforting.

“I… I have endeavored to be nothing but kind to Gregory after my missteps during his earliest day with us."

“Pshaw.”

“I beg your pardon, Sherlock?”

“You heard me. You issue proclamations and expect the fiend to obey them as if he was your sad and unfortunate child and chastise him when he exhibits free will and does as he chooses. I am most certain spanking has been involved at some point, though, with your disgustingly carnal lusts, I cannot say it has not been a consensual thing.”

Mycroft kicked at the sofa in frustration then vowed never again to move as the collision of his foot with the furniture produced a riot of pain in his head such as the universe had never before known.

“Sorry, Mycroft, but you do treat him sometimes like you think he’s a kid and sort of a stupid one, too.”

“That has truly been your observation?”

John nodded and, as softly as possible, sat down next to Mycroft’s head.

“Yeah. I don’t think he likes it, either.”

“No… he does not. That figured quite prominently in his manifesto.”

“I’m not surprised.”

“Why did he not speak to me of this previously?”

John shrugged his shoulders and Mycroft sighed at the lack of answer.

“He probably feared reprisals after your rather typhoonic outburst with his trip to the village and the squall of fury with the rabbit incident.”

Sherlock dropped onto the floor on the other side of Mycroft’s head, but took no precautions to be gentle about it and Mycroft shrieked at the earthquake that shook his skull.

“That… oh, dear heavens I am in agony… that is ludicrous. Gregory knows what I feel for him. He would not…”

“Does he?”

“Pardon, John?”

“Does he know you feel? That you loooooooooove him?”

John took a full three seconds to sound out that one word, but it was more than Mycroft could ever bring himself to do, though he had been lying here struggling with the idea for hours.
“Gregory permitted me no chance to tell him anything. Not the truth of what he heard, nor the truth about what I feel.”

“Well, then he’s an idiot.”

That was helpful.

“I agree. The demon is idiotic, but that is his standard state of being, so I shall clarify and say he has been more idiotic than usual.”

That was even more helpful.

“It doesn’t mean you didn’t make a mess of things, Mycroft, but Greg did, too. When are you going to get him back so you can talk to him again?”

Mycroft struggled to move his head towards John and immediately regretted the action. Why did they not simply infuse spirits with pain killer to streamline the process of overindulgence?

“And just how am I supposed to accomplish the task?”

“You summoned him, you fool! Simply do it again!”

Sherlock’s voice was grating at the best of times. Now, with him leaning over so his mouth was closer than would ever be comfortable, it was debilitating.

“I summoned Gregory by accident. It was only by chance that the spell latched onto him and not another.”

Though… now that Mycroft thought back to that night, his demon had said it could be made to attach directly to him.

“Look! You can actually see Mycroft having an idea.”

“That is gas. Or a prelude to vomiting.

“It is neither, brother dear. Bring the book.”

“I cannot. The hellspawn placed it upon the high shelf out of John and my reach.”

“Then do what it is you have done previously to get your hands on it and bring it to me.”

Sherlock rolled his eyes and motioned to John to join him in shoving the small table by the window under the appropriate book case and stacking large books on top of it to make the pedestal sufficiently tall for Sherlock to reach the book of spells. It was an arduous task and not at all made less burdensome by Mycroft’s shouts of pain at the noise and commotion.

“Here.”

Mycroft braced for the thump of two small bottoms on the floor then realized that reading a heavy book while holding it above his head was not the wisest of plans. With the shakiness of his arms there was every likelihood he would drop the miserable thing onto his face and die from the ensuing concussion. Very slowly, and with help from John, the older boy righted himself and set the book in the far safer location of his lap.

“Let us see… no… no again… no… ah. Yes, here it is. This is the spell I was reciting when I summoned Gregory. He said that if his name was put here, instead of… whatever that says… it
would summon him directly.”

“What are you waiting for? Do it!”

John threw his hands up in the air and continued to wave them around as Mycroft sat staring at the page, notably not summoning Greg.

“Well? Are you going to allow John to wave like a reed in the wind all day?”

That was a distinct possibility.

“I…”

“Yes?”

“It is… you see…”

“I am ashamed to have trod the same birth canal as you.”

“There is an issue.”

“Your cowardice?”

“No! It is… I do not know Gregory’s name.”

Mycroft braced himself for the twin glares and felt his skin burning from the in-stereo rebuke.

“What! You don’t know Greg’s name? How can you not know? He’s said it often enough.”

“I know, John, I simply…”

“You simply did not care and, therefore, paid no attention.”

“That, Sherlock, is completely untrue. It is… his name is a hundred letters long and if there is a vowel in there anywhere, it is a profoundly lonely creature!”

“Weak, Mycroft. I can even say it.”

John made a sound that Mycroft associated with rocks sliding out of the back of a lorry and smiled widely when he was finished.

“Your pronunciation is pathetic, John Watson, however, it is passable for proving the point. John has even mastered the rudiments of the language though you have deliberately chosen not to do so yourself. And do not say you have not had opportunity, for I have heard the demon offer to teach you and suffer your callous refusals in return.”

“There was no need! Gregory speaks perfect English, so there was no reason for me to learn his tongue.”

“Except to demonstrate respect.”

John’s applause at Sherlock’s successful missile strike was its own source of punishment and Mycroft suffered it gladly, because… the boys were right. It would have been a small gesture to learn a few words of the demon’s language, but it would have shown interest and respect for his Gregory’s culture. He did not even know his demon’s name, for pity’s sake! That was a disgraceful thing and there was no other description for it.
“I concede the point. However, that does not bring me any closer to our goal.”

“Buffoon. Give me the book. I shall cast the spell.”

Not that Mycroft had any choice as Sherlock ripped the book from his hands and cleared his throat loudly.

“I shall now begin.”

Sherlock read the summoning spell, inserting Greg’s name, and Mycroft watched his brother sway a little once the final word had been uttered.

“Sherlock?”

“I… I cannot describe it adequately, but… the spell was properly cast. I shall try again.”

Once again the words were said and, once again, Sherlock staggered a little at the end, causing John to hop up and steady his friend.

“He is fighting me! I can… I can… I am certain the spell finds him, but it is akin to dragging a rope onto which has been tied a mountainous stone!”

Sherlock tried a third time, nearly yelling the words, and fell onto the floor when it was done.

“Sherlock!”

“It is alright, John. I… I cannot do it. He is resisting and I have not the force to overcome it.”

Mycroft sighed and found he felt no surprise at the failure. Of course the demon would resist. He had probably prepared himself for this very thing so he would be safe from being called back to this house ever again.

“Your effort was a valiant one, Sherlock, and I thank you for it. It is to be expected, I suppose, that Gregory would protect himself from this eventuality.”

“Well, that’s not fair.”

I doubt, John, that Gregory would agree.”

The small boy pouted, then shot to his feet and ran towards the small tray of spirits kept in the library.

“Watch! I’ll drink this… whatever it is… and it’ll probably start to kill me, or at least get me very sick, and my amulet will tell Greg and he’ll come back to make sure I’m ok!”

John lifted the large decanter of scotch and Mycroft hurled himself off the floor to whisk it out of the boy’s hands.

“Absolutely not! I… I shall credit you with an idea of merit, however, we cannot be certain that the powers of the amulets transcend the border between our reality and his. So, please do not attempt to leap from the roof or step in front of a moving car to test the possibility.”

This pout was even more thunderous than the last, but John stormed away from the alcohol to sit next to Sherlock, who was recovering from his ordeal.

“This is Greg’s fault. If he hadn’t run away, we could at least talk to him and try to fix things.”
Even the tiniest bit of support was a lifeline to Mycroft at this juncture and he clung to it tightly.

“I agree, John, however… perhaps fault is not the correct term. He was terribly upset and justifiably so… Gregory is an emotional being and, in this case, they held sway against reason. I am confident that he would, given the time to cool his humors, gladly discuss the issue with me and we would move past our difficulties. Unfortunately, there was no time…

“What, then, do we do now?”

Mycroft looked down at his brother and wished he had an answer to that question.

“Nothing, I suppose. I… I do not know if Gregory could return here even if he wanted without being called, so…”

Watching the light dim in both boys’ eyes broke Mycroft’s heart, which already lay in pieces in his chest.

“How about this? You are with us for the day, I suppose, John? If I am certain of one thing, it is that Gregory would want this day to be a pleasurable one for you and Sherlock, so let us find something to entertain you. And, a hearty snack is in order, I suspect… another thing that would have Gregory’s enthusiastic approval. Perhaps, if we refresh ourselves and allow our minds to move away from the immediate problem, it shall be easier to see a solution should one present itself. Come… let us spend today in a manner that would make Gregory happy.”

Mycroft hoped the false cheeriness was not blatantly evident in his voice, but from the incredulous looks on the boys’ faces, he knew it was. But, there was nothing for it… Gregory was no longer with them and all they could do was go on without him. Strange how such a simple, sensible idea was, in actuality, laughably difficulty to put into practice. He would not be able to go on as before. He had lost the person who brought joy to his life and filled his heart with… oh, he might as well say it, at least to himself… filled his heart with love. How does one go on after that?

Reaching down, Mycroft gave a hand up to Sherlock and John, neither of whom seemed motivated to do much more than sit and sulk, and began shepherding them towards the kitchen. John would feel better after something to eat and Sherlock would feel better after raiding the cupboards for materials for his experiments. For his part, Cook kept a large bottle of headache tablets in easy reach and that was a very grand thing…

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John and Sherlock finally sent Mycroft away to lie down after tiring of listening to him groan with every puff of wind that hit his face and, once alone, sat down for some serious conversation.

“Alright, Sherlock. What are we going to do?”

“I have been devoting my immeasurable intellect to that very question and…”

“Yes?”

“I have come to no firm answer.”

“Shite.”

“I agree.”

“We have to do something. I actually think Mycroft might die if we don’t.”
“That is unlikely, for his fat stores will keep him supplied with energy for a century or so, however… he will suffer for that century or so and in a truly grievous manner.”

“And… I already miss Greg. He liked spending time with us and always had good ideas for fun things to do. He didn’t get mad, either, when those fun things went a little... off.”

Sherlock huffed and scowled because John was right. There weren’t a lot of people who were willing to include him and John in their lives and the demon did it gladly. He was patient and listened, was never cutting or contemptuous. He was helpful, too, and understood the importance of science. And talking about science or experiments. He... understood. That was important.

“Isn’t there anything in the book that can help?”

Something Sherlock had already been considering and, now that the demon wasn’t there to be alerted when the book was being used...

“Let us see. I doubt Mycroft will have any awareness of our actions for some time and… we shall confine ourselves to an academic study at this point.”

“Does that mean we’re only going to read and not do?”

“It does.”

“Ok, then. Let’s go.”

Both boys stalked towards the library, carefully checking that no naysaying Mycrofts might be lying in wait to pounce, and closed the library door tight behind them.

“Alright, here’s the book. It’s a good thing the spells are labeled.”

“Yes, though the handwriting is atrocious. It shall take us some time to look through this.”

“I think we have time. Mycroft’s not going to be moving from his bed anytime soon.”

“True. Very well, let us begin. Here we have a spell to make flower buds bloom. Boring.”

“No, that’s interesting if you had a flower shop.”

“Which we don’t, so boring.”

“This one… yes, this is the one that promotes hair growth.”

“We already did that. Move on.”

Sherlock flipped through each page in turn until he got to one that gave him pause because… it was precisely what they needed.

“Here.”

John slowly read the text, with help from Sherlock and nodded.

“That’s it. Can you do it?”

Sherlock’s immediate instinct to defend his competence withered a bit when he looked back and recognized the complexity of the spell and the variety of languages, some possibly not human, in which it was written.
“I… I am not certain.”

“Ok… what do we need to do for you to be certain?”

Sherlock took a deep breath and slowly realized that he could approach this much in the same manner as a highly-complex experiment.

“First, we must ascertain the availability of the various supplies and then… I suspect this is the sort of spell that, if performed incorrectly, will have significant negative consequences. I… I am not sure of the pronunciation of many of these words, but I recognize them from other spells of lesser consequence. We could practice with those spells until they work correctly and use that knowledge to build a base for this one.”

“That could take a long time.”

“I know. But it is all I can think to do.”

John frowned, but had to admit Sherlock had a point. They’d had some little spells go wrong and it wasn’t a terrible problem, mostly just messy, but a big spell… Greg had warned them about that and Greg didn’t warn without a reason.

“Then that’s what we do. Should we… should we tell Mycroft?”

“No. Firstly, he will not approve and do what he can to impede our efforts and secondly… if we do not succeed, it would be a further cruelty to have his hopes dashed.”

“You’re right. Do you think we can use the abandoned shop again and try our spells there so he doesn’t find out?”

“That is not a horrible idea, at least for those that are more noticeable in their perpetration. And there is certainly room in this house to conduct our work unseen. Besides… if we are discovered, we might simply claim general curiosity. Regardless, I suspect Mycroft will not be overly demonstrative of attention for some time as he heals from this breach. We shall use that to our advantage.”

“Should we start now?”

“That is prudent. The longer we wait, the longer the demon might cement his resolve to remain parted from the elephant and that is not to our advantage.”

“Ok, then. Pick a spell and let’s find a place to work it.”

Sherlock thumbed through the pages and found a simple spell for mending torn cloth that contained one of the words about which he was uncertain.

“This. Come, let us find the petals from a white flower and three flat pebbles required to work the incantation.”

The boys marched off to start their first step on what could be a long road, but they were determined that they would make this work. Greg was too important to them to meet with failure…

__________

One and a half months later…

It had taken arduous work and a great deal of sneaking around, but Sherlock and John finally felt
confident they were prepared for what they had come to call The Great Undertaking. As expected, unfortunately, Mycroft was more a specter haunting the halls of the house than an actual occupant, especially after the week or so of additional pain he had to endure from the mean-spirited at school who took full advantage of the stories spread in the wake of Greg’s departure at the dance.

It had been more work than either boy had expected and both were tremendously thankful for Sherlock’s talent with science, because each piece of their target spell had to be researched. For ingredients or objects that could not be found, small spells using them had to be tested with substitutes and fine-tuned until the right one could be determined. For words, the same had to occur until the pronunciation was perfect. They suffered a wealth of destroyed clothes, singed hair, stained skin and other consequences of their many failures, but now… now it had all come together and they were ready.

“Is it time, Sherlock?”

“Almost. I have prepared the potion and it must sit for a second to… stop smoking. Then, we drink it, I make the necessary ritual gestures and say the appropriate words and… that should be that.”

“And we do the same to come back?”

“Yes, though with the second potion in this flask and a small alteration of the incantation.”

“Ok… well, Mycroft is working on his school work, not that he seems to notice if we’re around or not and my mum and dad said it’s ok to stay overnight, so we should have plenty of time before anyone wonders where we are.”

“Then… let us do it.”

The boys reached out to take their glass of the Sherlock’s potion and drained it dry, gagging at the hideous taste. Once he could speak, Sherlock pocketed the flask containing the second potion, performed the rest of the ritual and upon uttering the final word his bedroom was suddenly empty of inhabitants.

Inhabitants who saw a familiar scene one moment and one far different the next.

“Are we here?”

“We are somewhere, but… we did nothing incorrectly so this should be the demon plane.”

“And we’re near Greg?”

“The spell is specifically to find a particular demon, so I assume it would place us in his proximity.”

“So… what do we do now? Yell?”

“No, we begin a search and, if necessary, ask others of his kind if they know of his whereabouts.”

“It’s lucky you practiced so much with Greg’s language.”

“It shall surely be of use. Come, let us get started. I suspect the fiend will not be easy to convince and we do not want to be missed at home.”

“No, that’s trouble I don’t need. It’s bad enough Mum’s upset at how many shirts she’s had to
“It is a meager sacrifice for our objective but… Mycroft was somewhat volcanic about my new shoes.”

“They dissolved fast. I wasn’t expecting that.”

“Neither was I. However, I made note of it for future research.”

“Good. And… and Greg’s going to be there to help us with it.”

John nodded determinedly and Sherlock followed suit before stalking off in search of the demon. And ignoring the howling they heard in the distance. Maybe running was a better plan than walking…
Chapter 22

John could see why Greg preferred to be where they lived. It wasn’t that it was horrible here, it was just... not as good. It was hot and the air was thick, like those awful summer days when not a bit of wind blew and you felt like you would kiss a duck if someone would just turn on a fan. And the sky was the wrong color. It was too dark, too. He’d thought it was sunset when they arrived but nothing had changed, even though he and Sherlock had been here... well, his watch wasn’t working anymore, but it had to have been an hour. There were lots of noises, too. Howls and hisses and what sounded like thunderclaps... it seemed that just as you started to relax something else made a noise and you got scar... startled again.

The dirt didn’t look right, the rocks were the wrong color... the plants were lovely, actually, but nothing he recognized... and neither he nor Sherlock could tell if the creatures they ran across were safe or not. They’d almost tried to pet a small, furry, bright red thing that was fat and waddly, but then it showed its teeth, which could have turned their hands into bloody strips, so they left it alone. And then there were the demons. Sherlock’s plan of asking someone if they couldn’t find Greg on their own was turning into a problem since they were scar... hesitant about approaching any of the demons they saw from where they were hidin... surveying the situation.

There was every color and combination of colors imaginable! There were tails and horns and some even had an extra set of arms! The ones with wings flew around and it seemed that the sky had a few demons in it all the time, looking like little dragons. Or maybe it was little dragons. Who could tell? Not that anybody looked particularly mean, though. He supposed everyone they saw looked like people going about their business, but... Greg smiled a lot. Laughed, too. He’d supposed that other demons would be the same, but... that wasn’t the case. They had to do something soon, though, because they still hadn’t found Greg...

“Well, Sherlock?”

“I... I am analyzing.”

“So, you’re not sure what to do, either.”

“That was not my precise meaning, but... yes.”

They’d explored a lot of ground before they came across a village in a valley below the rocky expanse they’d been hidin... resting in for awhile and now, it seemed the only thing to do was go down there and start asking questions, but that idea didn’t hold as much appeal as it had when they’d first cast their spell.

“Greg is probably down there. We’ve looked everywhere else.”

“I concur.”

“Even if he’s not, there are a lot of demons to ask who might know if he’s in a cave or a tree or a stick house nearby.”

“True.”

“Should we... go and find out?”

“Probably.”
“Ok, then… let’s go.”

John took a step forward and, with that one done, the second, third and fourth came easier, especially since Sherlock was taking his own steps, right at his side. Of course, as they took these steps, they put themselves squarely in view of the demons they had absolutely not been spying on from behind the rather large rocks and it was only now the fact that they were not wearing their own colorful skin was becoming an issue. Apparently, humans weren’t exactly common here… they were getting a lot of notice…

“Sherlock…”

“I am well aware of the potential flaw in our plan, John. Give no evidence of unease.”

“Alright… just strolling along, having a bit of air. Thick, hot air…”

And the strolling along continued past various individuals who stared at the two small boys until Sherlock decided that the lack of attack was evidence that conversation would not incite his and John’s immediate demise and began asking questions.

“Are you learning anything?”

“The orange demon to whom I spoke first believed our demon to be, unsurprisingly, in what passes for a pub in yon ramshackle community. That was supported by the last fiend with whom I shared words.”

“The one with the big horns?”

“Yes.”

“I wonder if my horns will get that big when I’m older. They’re sort of puny now.”

“If we do not find Mycroft’s concubine, the question will be moot.”

“That’s true. I have to admit that I like being a demon. It’s fun to have a tail and horns and do magic.”

“It is an experience of extreme scientific interest.”

“Pfft. You have fun, too, science or not. So… are we going to the pub?”

“I suppose we must. Though it is rather in the center of the village.”

“Well… we’ve done well so far. And…”

John’s assessment was interrupted by a long string of consonants said in a rough voice that put the small boy on high alert.

“Sh… Sherlock. What’d he say?”

Sherlock swallowed and made a ‘back away’ motion with his hand so only John could see.

“He said he recognizes that we are humans.”

“Oh… well, that’s not bad.”

Another strong of consonants followed, this time accompanied by a smile that would have soothed
John’s worries if it hadn’t had a tinge of something menacing in the corners.

“What’d he say now?”

“That humans… that he finds the taste of humans quite pleasing.”

John eeped! loudly and jumped in front of Sherlock, holding up his fists.

“You tell him that if he tries to eat us, I’m going to punch him right in the face!”

The fact that the demon laughed loudly after Sherlock delivered the message convinced John to provide a little demonstration and he hurled a hearty kick right to the demon’s shin, which gave him and Sherlock time to start running and make it a good twenty yards before the demon caught up with them and grabbed each in one of its large, cobalt-blue hands.

“I have been abducted!”

“I’ll save you, Sherlock! I just… I just have to get unabducted first!”

The wriggling boys were tucked under the demon’s arms and Sherlock swore the fiend was whistling as he strode away like he’d found two prize pigs for the dinner table. Not that the whistling lasted long, as the pigs in question found themselves falling heavily onto the ground as their captor was slammed to the Earth by a streak of green that began lashing at the larger demon with what looked like a knife, in between laying harsh blows with tightly closed fists. As John shook off his shock, he dragged Sherlock away from the battle, which sounded as frightening as it looked, with the noise of punches, shouts of pain and strangled curses ringing loudly in the air.

Standing between Sherlock and the fight, John watched for any of the fracas to move their way and both boys stared wide-eyed as the colorful pile of demons battled fiercely until the blue one staggered back and held up his hands, earning a ferocious hiss from the victor who let him limp away to lick his wounds.

“GREG!”

John ran forward and gave the sweaty, dirty, bruised and slightly-bloody demon the firmest hug he could, hopping up and down while he squeezed the demon tightly.

“What… what are you two… how did you get here?”

Greg struggled to catch his breath, both from the fight and the sheer shock of finding the boys on his plane, but couldn’t hold back a bright smile of surprise, and joy, at seeing Sherlock and John.

“I demonstrated my mastery of magical technique by bringing us to you so that we might espouse lengthily on your stupidity.”

Greg shook his head, but, then, started laughing. Sherlock was Sherlock, no matter what universe he lived in, it seemed.

“Well, you did a great job of it! That’s a hard spell to work for someone who hasn’t done much magic.”

“And we found you! It wasn’t fun almost getting eaten, but… were we going to get eaten?”

Greg squatted down and gave John his own big hug and let out a small whoof of relief that the little one was still in one piece to hug.
“Oh, yes. Tiny things like you are nice and tender and would roast up over a fire into a very good meal for someone. It’s a good thing I felt your amulets calling me or you’d be turning on a spit soon enough.”

This hug of John’s was more for comfort, something the demon was happy to provide.

“That was a dangerous thing to do, little ones, just for a visit with me, but I’m happy you came.”

“We are not here to visit, fiend. We are here to bring you back so that Mycroft will stop moaning and sighing like a discontented spirit.”

This whoof wasn’t one of relief, it was of something entirely different.

“Yeah, I was worried that’s what you were here about.”

“Good. Then you are prepared for our discussion. Now, John requires food and I am desirous of a beverage. We may begin our discourse after our needs have been satisfied.”

Greg exchanged glares with Sherlock and knew this could go on all day since Sherlock was nothing if not stubborn, so, finally, nodded and disentangled John from his body.

“Alright. I was having a nice drink when you were nearly eaten so we can go back and see if any of it’s left. First off…”

John cheered as he felt himself transforming into his demon appearance, until the moment his tail began to hurt from being caught in his trousers.

“My tail!”

“Oh, no. Hold on…”

Greg picked up his knife to cut a gash in John’s trousers, then changed his mind and took a very deep breath before conjuring two small loincloths which he handed to the boys.

“There. You’ll look just like any of the other little ones running about.”

“I am not a savage! I will not wear this… serviette!”

“You will, Sherlock, or someone else is going to figure out that you’re human with those clothes of yours and with what it took out of me to fight off one person who wanted to eat you and get you those clothes… someone else decides you look tasty, I probably won’t be able to stop them. Might just hope you’ve got enough meat on you for them to want to share.”

Sherlock’s indignant snort made the demon smile and he made a grand show of motioning the boys towards some scraggly brush before turning around so Sherlock and John would have privacy to change.

“We’re going to be real demons! This is great!”

“Only you would think prancing mostly-naked through the demonic rabble would be entertaining.”

“Wrong. Greg would, too.”

“I would at that!”
“Be silent, foul fiend. And I am including you both in that declaration.”

Greg smiled and used the moment to stretch a few muscles that were starting to ache. He hadn’t had a fight like that in a long time, but he’d have twenty in a row to keep his little ones safe. Now that they’d mastered the spell to come here, maybe they could visit once in awhile. He’d adore that, actually… and it wasn’t something they needed Mycroft around to do. Which was good. Very good. Really, truly, especially good. Bastard.

“We’re ready!”

The demon’s smile widened as he saw the two little demons step out from their cover and reached out to take their human clothes to bundle together to take with them.

“You two look amazing!”

“We appear as if we are preparing to perform in some tawdry burlesque house.”

“Well, that sounds like fun! Come on and I’ll find you something to eat and drink. Maybe… yeah, we’ll make a few stops first.”

Greg nodded for the boys to follow and led them into the small village, smiling with pride at the various curious looks he received while he walked the boys towards an area that had a large selection of small benches and stalls where people had items for trade.

“Here, let’s get you something nice to wear.”

John clapped his hands and looked over the bits of jewelry and pieces of colorful cloth that were mixed with cooking tools, knives, toys and other household items.

“I want a necklace! Or a bracelet. And a knife.”

Greg laughed and ruffled John’s hair.

“Well, I don’t think I have enough to trade to get a knife, but a little jewelry should be alright. Sherlock, do you see something you like?”

“I do not require accessories to highlight my natural attractiveness.”

“Ok. John, you get to choose two things then…”

“WAIT! I said I do not require such things, however, that does not preclude the possibility that I might be taken by a flash of whimsy and find something colorful to be acceptably amusing.”

“That mean you want something?”

“Yes.”

“Then you can each pick what looks pretty.”

John dived in, running around to the various tables with Sherlock hot on his heels and Greg puffed with pride that his little ones were the handsomest ones in the village. Smartest, too. Add brave to that list, as well. Coming here on their own… that took courage! And Sherlock had really paid attention to his language lessons. John, too! Teeny thing asking ‘how much?’ and being polite about it… just warmed the heart right up…

“We have chosen.”
The demon laughed at Sherlock’s very serious pronouncement and followed the boys back to where they’d found their treasures, opening the small pouch he wore around his waist to see what he had inside to offer in trade. Coming back here to the expected nothing hadn’t been fun, but then it never was. Luckily, he was clever about things and… well, Mycroft never noticed the little sack he’d strapped to his leg which held a few things he’d bought with his own money. They’d been great for trading and he’d done a nice job building his life back up, so getting the little ones something shiny wasn’t a hardship.

“This shall be mine.”

Of course, the bracelet Sherlock wanted, the one that would take up half the boy’s arm and had to weigh as much as a plate of fish and chips might be somewhat of a hardship. Luckily, he was very good at bargaining… even with little demons who had the cutest possible scowls…

“This cannot be safe to consume.”

Sherlock, sporting a new, albeit more modest wrist adornment, glared incredulously at the crude mug of purple liquid, then at the demon who had ordered it for him.

“It’s safe. And, good, too. I eat the fruit that juice is made from a lot and I’m not dead yet.”

“That is not terribly comforting for you have proven your stomach can manage the most disgusting of comestibles.”

“This is great! Thanks, Greg. I was starving.”

“A trait, obviously, you share with John.”

Who was currently digging into the plate of food he’d been given, none of which he could identify, but what did that matter if it was tasty?

“Little one has a good appetite! I’d have cooked something for you, but I didn’t gather anything today, and, anyway, the person who does the cooking here is amazing!”

John chewed happily in agreement and fingered his new necklace which very fetchingly complemented his colorful skin, in his opinion. In fact, in his opinion, they were very handsome, which might explain why Greg kept getting looks from the other demons. Lots of looks, actually. Mycroft would not be happy with all the looks Greg was getting, even if Greg gave everyone doing the looking a little frown and shake of his head.

“I’ll get you a plate if you get hungry, Sherlock, don’t worry you’ll be left out.”

“I would rather emaciate.”

“Is that fun?”

“No.”

“Oh… that’s silly then. So… you came all this way to pay a little visit with me. I have to say that means a lot to me, it really does. I’ve missed you two. I’ve missed you a lot.”

“We missed you, too. But not as much as Mycroft, I think.”

John gave Greg a sad-puppy look to support his jab, then popped a big piece of… something… into
his mouth to continue chewing.

“I wondered when you two would come back to that.”

“John has chosen this as the opportune moment, and I see no reason to disagree. I am more than tired of the great ginger cow mooing late into the night so I cannot find even a mote of sleep. You must return and discuss this matter with him.”

“Uh, no. I’m not going back, not after what happened.”

“You do not even know what happened, hellbeast.”

“I was there, Sherlock, so yes, I think I do.”

“I counter with you know what you think happened, but, as I understand it, you did not allow Mycroft to provide any insight into the situation, instead, fleeing like an infant who has had their feelings bruised.”

Greg huffed loudly and leaned back in the rickety chair that creaked loudly to remind him not to lean back any further.

“That’s not the way it happened.”

“Oh? Then do elucidate.”

“What?”

“Sherlock means tell us your side of the story.”

“He could have just said that.”

John shrugged and stole a drink of Sherlock’s juice to wash down his food.

“I am waiting.”

“Sherlock… ok, fine. I thought Mycroft cared, alright? About me, I mean. That I… maybe I was someone special to him. Then I find out that I’m just someone he can use. That he doesn’t care, at all.”

“Did he say that?”

“No, but he didn’t have to.”

“I would argue that your ability to discern my brother’s intentions, based on the brief duration of your acquaintance, hovers near pitiful. Partially, and I will credit you this, it is because he has a poor grasp of anything of a personal or social nature, but that you believe you might have crystal clarity as to the meaning of his words or actions without suitable attempts at verification is mindboggling arrogant. And stupid.”

“Yeah!”

“Hey! You didn’t hear what he was saying about me. About us.”

“Pfft… Unless the conversation centered on something excruciatingly dreary, such as politics or economics, Mycroft has no ability to actually hold a conversation. He is profoundly socially awkward and could be led verbally astray by a pigeon. He says that you misinterpreted his words
and, although it pains me like a dagger to the colon, I suspect he is speaking the truth.”

“And you didn’t let Mycroft explain! That wasn’t very nice and sort of rude, actually.”

John wagged his finger at Greg, then licked off the sauce that was on it and wagged some more to cement his point.

“I… all he would have done was try and spin me around with those big words of his.”

“So, your argument is now that you were too stupid to converse with him and had to run away in shame.”

“NO! No, Sherlock, that’s not it, at all. I’m not stupid, even if Mycroft treats me like that sometimes.”

John licked his finger first this time before shaking it at the demon.

“He does, and that’s rude, too, but running away with your hands over your ears going ‘LALALALALALA I CAN’T HEAR YOU’ is pretty babylike, if you ask me.”

“AAAARRRRGGGGHHHH!!!!”

“Am I supposed to be able to translate that, denizen of the netherworld? It seems to be a demon dialect with which I am unfamiliar.”

“You… you just be quiet, Sherlock. And don’t wave your wet finger at me, John!”

A quick wipe with a piece of cloth returned John’s finger to dry so he could continue his strategic plan of wagging the demon into submission.

“Mycroft’s snooty sometimes, that’s true, but if you don’t talk to him and tell him that it bothers you, then he can’t try and change or at least say he’s sorry when he’s upset you.”

Greg pouted and stabbed a piece of food off of John’s plate to pop into his own mouth to pay John back for making a valid point and to buy himself a second to think.

“That’s easy for you to say, John, but I think it’s pretty obvious Mycroft knows he treats me like a little kid and…”

“And is it obvious to you that you do the same to him?”

Greg gaped at Sherlock and John did, as well, but quickly closed his mouth because he didn’t want it to look like he didn’t understand what Sherlock was saying, too.

“What are you on about, Sherlock? I don’t treat Mycroft like a child!”

“I beg to differ. Do you or do you not chide him mercilessly for what you perceive as his dour temperament?”

“What?”

“Have you not engaged in a campaign to make him ‘have fun,’ regardless of his feelings on the subject?”

John’s eyes lit up and he began nodding sagely at Sherlock’s salvo.
“That’s… I have not! Well… sort of, but… fun! Who doesn’t want to have fun?”

“Oh, so now it is you who decides what Mycroft must and mustn’t like?”

“No….”

“Or how he spends his time, even if means he foregoes activities he might prefer?”

“Do… did I do that?”

“That is something you would have to discuss with him, but I have observed your rather single-minded efforts towards making him the person you think he should be rather than who he is, in actuality. I will not say this has been necessarily to his detriment, as anything is better than the person he has grown to be, however, I would suspect he would like to have more of a say in the matter.”

Greg gnawed on his thumbnail a moment and looked through his memory, growing more and more unhappy with what he found.

“I sort of did do that, didn’t I?”

Two nodding heads was his answer and the demon let out a huge sigh of frustration and let his forehead bang against the tabletop.

“Fatcroft is in no manner blameless in this situation, however, it is not appropriate to assign to him the entirety of the fault. That you fled rather than discuss the situation stands as a substantial black mark upon your record and there is only one action that might erase it from your transcript of existence.”

“You mean go back.”

“Can you think of anything else?”

John nudged Sherlock under the table and the two boys shared a grin as the demon looked up and skyward to beg the heavens fall in on him and set the clock back to yesterday.

“He really misses you, Greg. He got very drunk when you left and he’s just been… miserable. They teased him at school, too, just so you know. That made it even worse.”

It wasn’t a fair hit, but John was satisfied with the look of pure shock and pain on the demon’s face. No matter how mad Greg might be, he still cared about Mycroft and that meant there was still a chance they’d get back together. Which needed to happen. Even he could see they were perfect for each other and he didn’t even like all that romantic stuff! Much. Well, some, but not the hearts and flowers. Maybe flowers. But not hearts. Hearts was where he absolutely drew the line.

“He was? That’s not good. I didn’t even think about that. Poor Mycroft… I really didn’t mean for that to happen.”

“If for nothing else, that is something for which you should offer apology and do not expect John and I to deliver it for you by proxy.”

“No… I wouldn’t do that. You have to say ‘I’m sorry’ in person or it doesn’t count.”

“Then you will return?”

The demon fidgeted with his fingers and then rocked back and forth in this chair a little before
sputtering a toneless tune that lasted until he let out a large puff of air and strapped on a determined face and nodded.

“I will. I have to. You’re right… both of you. I didn’t really listen to Mycroft and he did try, tried hard, to get me to and that wasn’t nice. And I especially didn’t think about him having to go back to school after I’d run out like that. That was dumb and it’s not fair he had to suffer because I did something dumb.”

“Will you…”

John crossed his fingers and smiled as widely as he could.

“… will you be boyfriends again?”

“I don’t know, little one. I… part of me…”

“You loooooooooooove him, don’t you?”

Yes, John realized he had no shame using his most formidable weapons for this argument, including this set of his saddest of the sad puppy eyes, but this was important!

“Not saying.”

“Ok, that’s a yes, wouldn’t you say, Sherlock?”

“There really is no doubt. Good, then this is settled and we may now move onto more vital matters, such as an exploration of this area and a collection of samples and specimens for my research.”

Greg looked between both boys and found a large and hearty laugh burbling up that he didn’t have the heart to push back down. They were tough little things! Fought with everything they had… and they were fighting for him and Mycroft. Which… well, it meant something. They didn’t need to know about the nights he tried to sleep and couldn’t because he missed Mycroft so much it was painful. Or when his body wouldn’t cool down, no matter how often he showed himself a good time because it wasn’t Mycroft doing the touching.

Maybe he had been hasty… not thinking right because he was so mad and hurt. Mycroft deserved a chance to explain, at the very least. And… maybe, too, they could talk about the things that bothered him. Or that bothered Mycroft. Talking didn’t mean anything beyond talking, did it? It didn’t mean they were boyfriends again, necessarily. Didn’t mean they weren’t either. Talking was just talking and that never did any harm. Not talking did, though. And he knew that, too. Yeah… he had done a stupid thing…

“How about this, little ones? I can show you around for a little while, then we can hide my things and… go back for a talk with Mycroft. How does that sound?”

“Partially acceptable.”

“Partially?”

“We will take with us your paltry possessions as the likelihood of your quick return, given the love-addled state of you and the bovine, is negligible. The likelihood of coitus, however, is nauseatingly-high and John and I will require earplugs while we conduct my experiments so our brains are not curdled by your primal moanings.”
Greg couldn’t actually argue since he had a feeling he’d feel very much like moaning when he saw Mycroft. There wasn’t anyone as handsome or sexy and… yeah, better safe than sorry.

“Ok, we’ll bring my stuff with us.”

“Hurray! This calls for more food!”

The demon laughed, ruffled John’s hair again, and waved at the cook to bring more food and drinks. They’d have a nice little party, then go exploring for Sherlock’s science stuff, then… then go back. It was a good thing, really. And he wasn’t nervous a bit. Not even a little, teensy-tiny bit. Ok, better order something to drink besides juice, at least for him…

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“This is where you live?”

Sherlock looked at the little cave, not too far from where they’d first spied on the demon village, and shook his head in disgust.

“Isn’t it great! Dry and cozy and close to water and lots of plants with food growing on them. One of the nicest caves I’ve had in a long time.”

“Ugh… I am appalled at the squalor. However, given that it is you in residence, I cannot say it is inappropriate. Do you have your belongings?”

Greg held up his sack, which also appalled Sherlock. How could a person own so little? It was mind-boggling, but, then, the demon had an entirely different view on life than did he. It was a bizarre, twisted view, but that was a lecture for another time.

“Then we shall depart.”

“Are you sure? John can still stand up.”

Sherlock snorted and waved his hand dismissively. Maybe he had collected a few samples, but it was not his fault that John was a homunculus and entirely unsuitable as a pack mule for his research materials.

“It is not as if I cannot return to gather more, if necessary.”

“True. No matter what happens between Mycroft and me, you and John are always welcome to visit. You got your potion ready?”

Now it was Sherlock’s turn to hold up his wares and he brandished his flask proudly.

“Good. Here…”

The demon hoisted John into his arms, along with Sherlock’s sacks of specimens and straightened his shoulders.

“…” I’ll hold on to John so I can catch a ride with you two and nobody has to summon me. Oh! I meant to ask, which one of you tried to summon me after I left?”

“That would be me.”

“You did a great job with that, Sherlock! I suspected someone would try that and I bartered for a charm to help me resist being pulled back. It was still really hard, though, so you should be proud of
yourself.”

Sherlock puffed up and soaked up the praise like a plant soaks up water.

“It was to be expected for I am a masterful magician.”

“Well, you’ve got a ways to go for that, but you surely have made a fine start. Now, let’s get going, shall we? You’ve been here for sort of a long time and someone could be worried.”

Sherlock’s potion was uncorked and each boy got a swallow before Sherlock recited the incantation. At the end of the final word the view changed completely to one that was very familiar and a great deal cooler.

“We’re home!”

John wriggled out of the demon’s arms, just in time to be standing on his own feet when Mycroft came racing into Sherlock’s bedroom, his face screaming his worry for the two boys.

“There you are! Do you know for how long I’ve… been… looking… Gregory?”

“Hi, Mycroft. I’m here to… do you… maybe we need to talk?”

Mycroft felt his knees go weak and quickly grabbed the doorframe for support.

“May we? I would like nothing more.”

“Yeah, we can. We should, really.”

The demon heaved Sherlock’s sacks off of his shoulder and set them down for the boys to start their work.

“There you go, little ones. Have fun while Mycroft and I talk. We’ll… we’ll check on you later and see what you’ve learned.”

Mycroft didn’t question the two colorful boys, the sacks or the new accessories the small demons were sporting, let alone what had occurred to bring his Gregory back because none of that was relevant now. What was relevant was standing in front of him, smiling hopefully and reaching out a hand to be taken, which he was more than happy to do.

“We shall be… I think the library would be a good place to converse, so you may find us there, boys. Shall we, Gregory?”

“I think we shall.”

Watchful that Mycroft’s legs were steady, the demon led away his human, hand in hand, to start a talk that was probably long overdue. Maybe… once it was done, there wouldn’t be a reason to go back. Right now, he wasn’t going to say that’s what he wanted, but… no. No jinxing things by wishing for what might not be. This was too important to screw up with jinxes. Far too important. The most important thing he could think of…
Mycroft felt no shame that he trembled the entire way to the library and clung tightly to the demon’s hand. He had lost all hope, felt a cold, empty hole grow in his core… endured the mockery of his peers and the sad, knowing looks from the Watsons when he voiced the pitiful lie that his Gregory had been called away on family matters. He had wished and hoped and bargained with the stars to bring his demon, his precious, precious demon, back to him, all to no avail. Until now…

“Please, my dear, have a seat. Be as comfortable as possible. Would you like a drink? A nice glass of the brandy you enjoy? Yes, the very thing. Let me pour one for you, while you make yourself comfortable on the sofa. And, see! There is a fire, which I know you very much appreciate.”

Greg smiled and took Mycroft in a gentle, comforting hug to help the human find a little calm.

“It’s ok, Mycroft. Just relax and we can talk. How about this? I’ll pour some brandy and you have a seat while I do it. Come on, let’s get you settled…”

Not that it was any easy thing to do, as his human seemed determined to continue their hug, even as he was bending down to urge Mycroft onto the sofa to have a seat.

“I’ll get us that drink, ok? Just going right over there… you really do have to let go of me, Mycroft, but I’ll come right back and sit here next to you so we can talk.”

Mycroft found it punishingly hard, but released his arms from around the demon’s shoulders and silently counted the seconds until Greg returned with a hefty measure of brandy for each of them.

“There… told you I’d only be a moment. Here… now, how… how are you, Mycroft?”

This time it was the demon who began trembling, because nothing… nothing in any world… should put tears in Mycroft’s eyes. Those eyes were too beautiful and his human was too special for anything or anyone to bring him pain…

“No… oh, Mycroft, don’t cry…”

Running fingers over his human’s cheeks to wipe away the slight traces of moisture wasn’t, maybe, the best idea for keeping this on a conversational track because… Mycroft’s skin made him drunker than brandy ever could. He could touch his Mycroft’s skin for days and never regret a second of it.

“There… much better. It’s alright, Mycroft… I’m here now.”

“But, for how long?”

That was the question of the day, wasn’t it?

“I… that depends, I guess. I’m not expecting anything either way. I’m just here to talk and talking doesn’t mean one thing or the other, it just means talking and that’s what I’m here to do. Did that… that didn’t make any sense, did it? This is… I wish I was as good with words as you are. Knew all those words to say so what I said made sense. Maybe…”

Should he? Might was well; it was what he came here for, after all.

“… maybe you wouldn’t think I was so dumb if I knew more words.”
Mycroft gasped softly, but his gasp turned into a sigh and he finally settled back on the sofa with a somewhat clearer head. *This* he could do. Discussion, conflict resolution… this was very much his area and never in his life had his skills been so necessary.

“I have never thought you unintelligent, Gregory. No… no, I shall not navigate this discussion through a tunnel of lies. In the beginning, I was not certain that your degree of intelligence was terribly robust, though I found that I cared not a whit about it, for I realized you were a person of worth, regardless. I learned quickly, however, that you have an admirable mind. You are observant and use those observations to both acquire knowledge and find opportunities to apply it. I recognize that you are not well-provided with facts about this world, however, you have not shied away from gathering the information that you need to interact in a useful and productive manner with this reality. I do not view you as unintelligent, Gregory. Far from it, actually.”

“Really?”

“I know… I know I have not treated you with the degree of respect you deserve. That I have made mistakes in my conduct that have not been to your benefit. I will assure you, though, that they have not been due to a poor perception of your intellectual capabilities.”

“Then what? What is it about me that… that you don’t respect?”

Mycroft cringed at the phrasing, but pressed on quickly because he could not let that misapprehension stand.

“That is not the crux of the situation, Gregory. What you have experienced… it is due to my own arrogance and pomposity. My rather stuffy sensibilities and views of decorum. I balk at the… exuberance… of your interactions at times. You veritably burst with energy and enthusiasm and… I do not always find it comfortable. That is not a fault with you, but, rather, with me and others who might not appreciate your incalculable zest for life.”

“Oh.”

“But do not consider it of consequence! It is a silly thing that I must strive to overcome and…”

“Why?”

“I… pardon?”

“Why should you have to overcome it? Why can’t I… try not to make you so uncomfortable?”

“Because… Gregory, I would not ask you to change who you are. I… care… for the person you are and do not want that to change.”

“No… I think you would. A little, at least. And that’s fair. I’ve tried to do that to you, so it’s fair you’d try to make me… fit a little better with what you’re used to.”
“What? Gregory… you have not tried to…”

But, as he began to say it, a small trickle of understanding began to flow in Mycroft’s mind, slowly expanding in volume as he watched the demon begin to smile.

“See… you’re thinking of stuff, aren’t you? And I’m sorry for it, Mycroft. I didn’t even see any of it until the little ones told me and then WHAM! it was right in my face and… I didn’t like it. Not at all. I got so mad at you that night and even asked myself why you could be so horrible when I’d tried to be so good to you… but I really hadn’t, had I?”

“Gregory, you were wonderful to me! Caring, devoted, passionate, companionable, supportive… I could not ask for better. It is to my shame, my abject humiliation, that I did not offer the same to you.”

“But, you did! Really… I just… this is so hard to talk about…”

“Try, my dear. Please try, for I desperately hope for reconciliation and that, I feel now, cannot happen if we are not honest with each other.”

The demon nodded and drew in a deep breath to continue speaking.

“You know I’ve done bad things. Not things I wanted to do, but things I had to do. Sometimes, not so bad, just… wrong. Like making someone rich or handsome or something like that. Every time I’ve been summoned it’s because someone’s wanted something from me and… they didn’t always treat me well, even when I gave them what they wanted. When I came here this time, it was different. All you wanted was me, thought I was important, not just what I could do. But that night at the dance…”

“You believed you had been deceived.”

“Yeah. It’s happened before, actually. Get summoned and the person seems nice until you find out they’re… not. It didn’t really hurt before, though. This time it did. It hurt a lot.”

“Then why did you not stay so I could explain?”

“Because I thought you’d lie. If you’d been lying to me, there wasn’t any reason you wouldn’t keep doing it. That wasn’t fair to you, though. I wasn’t thinking very well and I sort of knew that, too. I was so mad and hurt and I knew that and when you came home… it just got worse because I knew I couldn’t go back if you didn’t send me and I began to think about what would happen if you said no. It just all rolled around and got larger and nastier and… it was stupid and I’m sorry. I am sorry, Mycroft. Please don’t think I’m not. I should have given you a chance to talk, but I was just so afraid I’d get… that I’d get forced or tricked into staying here. Angry and afraid and hurt and…”

The demon’s voice trailed off and Mycroft’s mind hurled him back to that dreadful night to remind him that, yes, such was precisely how his demon had seemed.

“And… what do you now feel?”

“I don’t know. Sherlock and John said I misunderstood what I heard at the dance, so I hope I can lose some of the hurt I’ve been feeling. It’s been… bad. And, even though you didn’t want to, you did send me back, so I’m not as afraid anymore that you’ll try and make me stay here if I don’t want to. I’m not so angry, either, because it’s hard to be angry at someone for treating you like a child when you’ve sort of been doing the same thing to them. It’s… what’s the word?”

“Hypocritical?”
“Yes! That’s the one. So… I suppose I just want to talk about things and see if I can get the rest of the anger and the hurt out of me.”

“And I shall gladly do that, Gregory. Whatever you require from me, whatever you wish to know, consider it given for I will hold back nothing.”

“Ok. I guess then… what happened at the dance, Mycroft? I mean, it was a lot of fun and you really are a brilliant dancer, but… I didn’t get to talk to people very much and then… well, you know what the worst part probably was.”

“I do. As for the earlier slights, I have nothing to say to my credit save that I feared for you. And for myself, if I am to be truthful. Whereas I know you would not divulge your true nature, there was the question of… us. A cursory story was sufficient for the sparest of social pleasantries, which was what I expected for us at the dance, but for a deeper conversation… there would be questions that could not be answered or whose answer was suspiciously insufficient. We had discussed the issue before, you and I, however…”

“I didn’t take it as seriously as you did.”

“I think not. I think you did not believe it to be terribly serious, but, for me… it is not something of which I am proud, but there was a sense of victory I was chasing, a jeering laugh to be had at the idiots with whom I am forced to share a classroom. In that sense, I did fail you, for I was surely using you as has any of those who before have summoned you here. However… it would be the same if I had met a human companion in the village and had them as my escort. Much of the reason for my attendance was not to enjoy myself, but to make an impression and that was a dastardly thing on my part.”

“Oh… you were worried I’d spoil all of that for you.”

Mycroft shrugged and felt both relief and disgrace discussing what was not his best example of fine character.

“I suppose. Though, do not think, not for a moment that I was not proud to have you upon my arm. When we first met, the dance was discussed as a boon you could grant me, but, in the intervening weeks… that has not been the reason I have coveted your company. I quickly found in you someone with whom I could spend time that I enjoyed, not endured. Someone who made me feel so much more of a man than I believe myself to be. Someone… someone I cherished and felt my heart beat a little stronger when they were near.”

Greg reached over to rub his human’s arm while Mycroft took a moment to regain his composure.

“My pride and vanity did not serve you well that night, Gregory, and, for that, you have my most sincere apology. And for all the other times I acted in a manner that was condescending. But, my conversation with Bascomb, the one that you overheard… it did not mean what I suspect you interpreted it to mean. I was not affirming your fears, not painting our relationship in crass and unseemly colors… I know, though, that was the sound of it and Bascomb used the possible misinterpretation to tease from me more and more to distress you as profoundly as possible. I do not believe that about us, Gregory. If you had any idea, had an inkling of how I truly feel…”

The demon wrapped an arm around Mycroft’s shoulders and pulled him close, so Mycroft could lean against him and rest his body, which was as tensioned as a tightly-drawn bowstring and calm his aura which was nearly crackling with energy. His human was very upset, which hurt, and was telling the truth, which hurt more because he’d been an arse about things and was the one who had made him upset.
“I was condescending to you, too, Mycroft. I haven’t always thought about who you are or what you want when I’m after you to do things or not do things. And, if you tell me I didn’t have the right end of things with what I heard… then I believe you.”

“You… you do?”

“Yeah, I do.”

“And… will you accept my word that I will try, though I will surely fail with disappointing regularity, to treat you in a more respectful and thoughtful manner?”

“I will, if you’ll accept mine.”

“I will and I will never forget what grace you have shown me this night. Thank you, Gregory. Thank you…”

Greg turned to take Mycroft deeper into his arms and held him while Mycroft released the emotion that had been ravaging him since the demon had left.

“Shhhh… it’s alright, love… it’s alright.”

Mycroft burrowed deeper into his demon’s arms because he had despaired of hearing that affectionate term ever used again.

“It is now, my dear. Only now… it has been… I have been so…”

“I know, love. I know… I’ve been that way, too. Miserable, just miserable because my Mycroft wasn’t with me. We’re going to make sure that won’t happen again, right? Not let things get to a bad place before we talk about them? And if something happens quick, make sure we give the other person a chance to explain. That one’s mostly for me, but I guess you could get mad enough at something foolish that I do and go off in a huff.”

“Agreed. A thousand times agreed.”

“Ok, then. Come here… let’s see those beautiful eyes of yours…”

Which was, really, only an excuse to get his human’s head from his shoulder so he could place a soft kiss on Mycroft’s lips and remind himself of how perfect his Mycroft’s kisses actually were.

“I’ve missed those. Dreamed at night, sometimes, about your kisses… and other things. Had lots of offers for a little fun and couldn’t say yes to even one because nobody could ever be as good as my Mycroft. And… well…”

“Yes, my dear? Please…”

Not that Mycroft had any desire to hear about potential assignations, spurned or not, but something was in his Gregory’s voice that hinted of things he did very much want to hear.

“I… I couldn’t, didn’t even want to at all, because… because I still loved you too much.”

And, before he could say anything silly or stupid to spoil the moment, Greg leaned in and kissed Mycroft again, this time letting it linger and blossom into the warmest and most delicious thing he’d ever tasted.

“Gr…Gregory? You… did you say…”
"I did. Is that... that’s ok, isn’t it?"

This time it was Mycroft who leaned in for a kiss, but this one was neither soft nor tender. This was born of fiery emotions that he never predicted he could ever manage, but, with his Gregory, they were now a vital part of each breath he drew.

"It is more than ok, Gregory, my dear, sweet Gregory, for I love you, too. I love you with all my heart."

The demon grinned and kissed his human another time, this one saying very loudly that if they didn’t have little ones waiting for them, their next stop would be the bedroom where they would celebrate their love for hours on end.

"I’m so happy to hear that. So happy I can’t begin to tell you properly. I was worried, you know... especially after the dance. I thought I’d have to live with that, knowing that I loved you and you never felt the same way."

"You would have been unutterably wrong for I have known for some while, though I, perhaps, could not give it a name, that I felt something profound for you. Each morning I wake and know that it shall be a bearable one, no matter the trials or tribulations, for I have started it in your arms and shall end it in the same manner. That you have me in your thoughts, as you are in mine. At first, I was not certain if it was our intimacy that birthed this feeling inside me, but I soon realized that the physical passion we share is but a note in the grander song of what we have created."

Mycroft ran his hands over the demon’s shoulders, reminding himself that this was real and not one of the many, many dreams he’d experienced of this very thing. Dreams where his Gregory returned to him and they held each other close, professing their feelings and exchanging promises that they never again would be parted in anger.

"That feels good, love. It was a horrible thought that I’d never have you touch me again. Not holding hands or giving me a hug or having sex in our big, soft bed…"

"And I shared your misery in full. Truly I have been a despondent figure and the children have shown no hesitation reminding me of that fact."

"I believe it! One of the first things they told me, actually."

Only now did Sherlock and John’s colorful and nearly nude appearance register in Mycroft’s mind, as well as the fact that they had been missing for some hours, sending him into nearly a tailspin of panic.

"They told you… Gregory, have the children been in your universe?"

"Yes! Did a brilliant job of it and only got nearly eaten once. We should go and find them, actually. Sherlock’s got a lot of experiments he wants to run, but I know you probably want to hear all of their stories. And... they probably want to know what’s going on with us."

"Yes, I am certain they do. As greatly as I missed you, Sherlock and John suffered their own pain at your absence. They have come to look to you as another guardian, as well as confidant, and did not take well your departure."

"Poor little things. Well, they don’t have to worry anymore. Neither do you."

This kiss was simply a gentle peck on his cheek, yet Mycroft felt it as the most significant of his lover’s return because it felt like the seal of a promise. And his demon was not one to break his
promises.

“Then let us find them and deliver our good news. I have no doubt they will insist on some form of celebration and tomorrow is a school day.”

“Still? Don’t you ever not have to go to school?”

“Soon we shall have a holiday, my dear, but that time is not now.”

Though if his demon continued to pout so beautifully, tomorrow might be a holiday, at least for him.

“Oh, alright. At least I know how to get the little ones ready for school in the morning, so that’ll be easy. Give us more time to get to know each other again…”

That was certainly no pout. That was a lovely leer and a joyful tingle of familiarity rippled through Mycroft’s body. His demon was home. Not simply to accept his apology, but to be, again, a part of their family, which was a glorious thing. Glorious and comfortable and right. And he would do his damndest to ensure his demon never again hurt so badly as to choose solitude over their love. That was a vow he made with every fiber of his being. And if he failed in that vow, which was dishearteningly likely, then he would do his utmost to sit on his demon and make him listen and converse until the situation had been rectified. They would persevere, he loved and respected his demon too much to accept anything less.

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“Hurray!”

John launched himself at Mycroft first, to give a massive hug, and then at the demon to give another. He’d been so scared that they wouldn’t work out their problems, because both Mycroft and Greg were a bit stubborn, but Greg was staying and…

“Are you going to be boyfriends again?”

If John’s eyes were any larger and more hopeful, the small boy would probably fall over on head.

“I believe that is Gregory and my business, John.”

“Oh, no. Sorry, but Sherlock and I went on a very dangerous mission to make sure we got Greg back here so you could talk to each other and be boyfriends again and I, for one, am not satisfied with half a victory.”

John’s stern face and crossed arms most certainly did not make Mycroft want to laugh. The biting of his lip was purely to scratch an itch and not contain what John would interpret as an insulting giggle.

“Oh, very well. My dear?”

“Me? Sure! Mycroft and I are back together in all ways, including the sexy ones.”

John did fall over this time, followed by Sherlock, both boys clutching their chests to prevent their oncoming heart attacks.

“I think I killed them.”

“Do not spare it another thought, Gregory, for they have proven themselves to be most resilient. Almost eaten, did I hear you say? Quite a story behind that, I am certain… it would be a joyful thing to hear it from their mouths, though, the drool shall likely make that an impossible thing.”
Immediately two boys were back on their feet, tails vibrating with excitement at the thought of recounting the stories of their grand adventure and Mycroft settled himself and his demon on the sofa to make ready for the performance. Which was truly as lively and grandiose as he had expected…

“Good heavens… I am agog at the degree of determination and courage you have shown in this. Truly, I had no notion of your planning and am simply stupefied at the level of your success. Amazing, utterly amazing…”

Since no amount of praise was too great for the two boys, Mycroft didn’t feel at all silly lavishing it on thickly.

“Weren’t they brilliant! That spell is hard, too, but they never gave up. And how many little ones would make that trip and not get so scared that they didn’t end up just hiding behind a rock the whole time? Not a lot, I wager. They make me so proud.”

If Sherlock and John puffed up any larger, they’d probably start floating like balloons, but that didn’t stop the boys from trying. Mycroft agreed wholeheartedly with his demon… he was tremendously proud of the jewel-toned children who had put their minds to something and saw it through to the end, as a team, no matter the frustrations or hardships. Really, it was a marvel to contemplate…

“I agree. And how fortunate for John than he can award their endeavour the highest rank of success.”

“Yes! Sherlock and I don’t let anything beat us. Now, the important question… did you use the ‘L’ word?”

John’s smile was wider than his face, which confused Mycroft almost as much as the question.

“Pardon?”


“THANK YOU, brother dear. I believe we understand the track of your thought processes, unsettling though they be for one your age.”

“Do not attempt your censorial dictatorialism, beluga! Someone must illuminate John’s nonsensical prattle and that someone, apparently, must be me.”

“I’m confused.”

“Don’t feel bad, Greg, I am, too. And I’m the one who started the conversation!”

John and Greg watched the brothers wage verbal war and thought about visiting the kitchen for a snack to pass the time when Sherlock’s mind reminded him of a certain discussion at a certain hovel of a tavern in a certain universe that was not this one, where a certain word was used that happened to begin with the letter ‘L.’ Yes, this was information that must be gleaned.

“Since John and I have critical experiments to conduct and I can see, already, the lure of the kitchen pulling on your demon and my assistant, let us cut to the chase. Have you, in your, undoubtedly overwrought and treacly tones, declared your love for the hellspawn?”

Mycroft gaped like a fish and cut eyes towards the demon, who simply smiled happily and looked like he was readying himself to applaud Mycroft’s answer.

“I… well… how is this any of your concern?”
“John and I shall have to endure your ridiculous besotted gazes and we have a right to know if they are simply a by-product of infatuation or the result of proclaimed adoration.”

John nodded soberly and, with his demon continuing to smile encouragingly, Mycroft took a deep breath and decided there was no reason not to trumpet his and Gregory’s love to the four winds. Or at least to the two terrors watching him expectantly.

“Very well. Yes, Gregory and I have stated our love for each other in clear and indisputable terms, much to both our pride and joy.”

John cheered loudly and began a little dance that had Greg joining in while Mycroft looked on happily. His scarcely-clothed lover was simply gorgeous when he expressed his pleasure in dance. Or in any other manner, actually.

“Now that I have the baseline from which to work, I can assess this new state of relationship on your mental abilities. I predict you shall devolve to a babbling toddler by month’s end, but the paper I shall write on the subject will unquestionably cover me with much-deserved glory and I might find it within my heart to buy for you a lolly to acknowledge your contributions towards my research.”

Mycroft ignored Sherlock’s typical bluster and, instead, focused on the kiss his Gregory had chosen to give him, while continuing his shimmy in time with John. Their family was celebrating and this was the most blissful thing imaginable. The fracture had been devastating, but now… all was whole and well and they could, again, delight in what they had built.

“We need cake! And ice cream!”

“Yes! Perfect idea, John! Love… can we?”

Now, the tiny blue demon and the larger green one were on their knees clutching their hands to plead for their treats.

“I suppose a small celebratory repast would not be amiss. The children surely are hungry after their ordeal, though I would prefer we see something approaching actual food greet their stomachs before anything quite so sugary.”

“John and I consumed a revolting, though filling, meal on the demon plane. I shall not comment upon it further, save to say I am not entirely certain I cannot now properly be termed a cannibal.”

“Not a bit of human flesh on that plate, Sherlock. That’s far too expensive for a little place like that. Just some nice vegetables and fruits and…”

A long flow of consonants erupted that had Sherlock rolling his eyes and John clapping his hands.

“I know that word! It’s fish!”

“Our sort of fish, which isn’t as good as your fish, I don’t think, because we don’t fry it up in oil with potatoes, but it’s definitely not bad.”

“Greg… do you think the fish and chips shop is open?”

The demon gasped with excitement at John’s question and now the pleading was even fiercer, but Mycroft was made of very stern stuff.

“I surely believe it is closed at this time of the evening, however, I have full faith if you, Gregory, desire to escort John for a post-school visit at some point, the shop would welcome your business.”
That seemed to satisfy the bottomless stomachs and it was to a far more appropriate treat, in Mycroft and Sherlock’s opinion, that the little family sped, stopping only to return three of them to a human appearance and adding clothing to their bodies. Then it was a siege of the kitchen where the cook gave Greg a mighty and slightly blubbery hug before leaving the boys to their own devices, and cleaning duties, for their impromptu party. One that lasted a very long time and, at first, earned their group a very disapproving look from Mrs. Watson when they delivered John home. That look changed quickly, however, when she saw Greg standing behind John and Greg got his second big, blubbery hug of the night. Apparently, the demon had been missed by more than their immediate group and Mycroft felt, again, a surge of shame that he had been somewhat embarrassed by his demon’s open and enthusiastic nature. It had won his Gregory people who genuinely cared for him and there was nothing, nothing, wrong with that.

“Oh, Greg… it’s so good to see you! We were… well, we were worried, to be honest about it. And John was just miserable.”

“As I said, Mrs. Watson, Gregory was simply called away for matters of family business, though, neither he nor I anticipated how long he would be occupied. But he is now returned and I am most thankful for it.”

“Well, so am I. It’s good you lot have a practical lad on hand to keep an eye on your nonsense...”

Practical? Greg? Inasmuch as a rainbow-hued unicorn was practical, perhaps…

“… and to keep you warm on a cold night, right dear?”

Mycroft blushed hotly and fumbled for words, which were unnecessary as John happily stepped in with his own.

“They said they loooooooooved each other, too.”

Now Mycroft was blushing so brightly there was a danger a passing aircraft would mistake him for a landing light and make a quick stop in a local field. And, of course, the demon had to wrap arms around him and give him a kiss on his blazing-hot cheek.

“Absence makes the heart grow fonder they always say. Look at you two… could have asked me and I would have told you’d lost your hearts ages ago. Mothers can spot these things, you know.”

“Yes, thank you, Mrs. Watson. Now, I am afraid we must start for home as it is late, something for which you have my deepest apology, and I am certain you are ready to put John to bed.”

“How much sugar did he have already?”

“Oh…”

About the same quantity that might be found in a cargo ship filled with sugar cane. There was absolutely nothing left in the kitchen on which to nibble if one desired a bit of sweet with one’s tea and there would likely be hell to pay when the cook found the larders empty of everything but air. The sugar in the sugar bowl had not even been deemed sacrosanct, as it was found to be a welcome sprinkle on thickly-buttered toast and jam.

“…the barest minimum, I assure you.”

With a look that said the woman was very aware of the enormity of Mycroft’s lie but would let it slide for this single, special occasion, John’s mother nudged her son into the house and, after a quick
kiss on the cheek for the remaining three boys, closed the door behind her.

“John’s mum knew we were in love. She’s smart.”

Sherlock snorted at the demon and waved his hands in the air to make his exasperation clear to any neighbor who might be watching them from behind a slightly-opened curtain.

“Females see romance in a traffic collision, so it is not surprising she projected that sorry condition onto the two of you.”

“I would say, instead, brother that she read correctly the cues of tonal inflection, facial expression and body language and, from her objective perspective, formed them into a discernible picture.”

“Probably smelled us, too. I never thought about it, while I was here, but now, having been away awhile, you smell different than when I first met you.”

“Do not confuse his flatulence with pheromones, buffoonish demon.”

“I’m not. I know what Mycroft’s gas smells like and it’s nothing like this.”

Mycroft did his own bit of nudging, this to get his two charges to the car. His Gregory was home and, in a trice, life was back to normal. A very strange and chaotic normal, but normal nonetheless. Now, he could only hope the village was prepared for the return of its adopted son to its loving arms. With his fistfuls of fabricated cash to strew about like confetti…
“I refuse.”

Of course.

“Sherlock, tomorrow is a standard school day, and your attendance is expected. Therefore, a full night’s sleep is necessary to make that attendance as comfortable an experience for you as possible.”

“Pfft. Your lie is so pathetic it offends me morally.”

“Since your moral portmanteau boasts naught but dust in its interior, I believe your rebuttal is misapplied.”

“I have far too many experiments to conduct to be bothered by the fetters of sleep!”

Greg sighed and slung Sherlock over his shoulder, ignoring the screeching and wriggling until he tossed the small boy on his bed.

“Assault!”

“It is late, little one, and your brain needs to rest so it can learn more things tomorrow.”

“The mind is not a muscle, nincompoop.”

“Really? I know! Your eyes aren’t muscles, either, but they get tired and need a rest now and then, don’t they?”

“The eyes are attached via muscles to accommodate focusing and movement of the eye.”

“Oh. Well, it made sense to me.”

“As it does to me, my dear, and the analogy is most apt. Goodnight, Sherlock. We shall see you in the morning.”

Mycroft turned and walked out to avoid being dragged further into the bedtime debate, so failed to notice the demon lean over quickly to whisper in Sherlock’s ear, something which made the boy grin evilly.

“Gregory? Are you coming?”

“Yes! Yes, love, just… patting Sherlock on the head.”

And, giving Sherlock a pat so he hadn’t actually lied to Mycroft, the demon sped down the hall to catch up with his human.

“Hi.”

“Hello, Gregory. Now that the pleasantries have been exchanged, is it time for us to seek our rest?”

“Really?”

“I… I do apologize. Were you hoping to read or be otherwise engaged this evening?”
“No… well, yes. Not with reading, though.”

“Of course, you may… Gregory! Oh, Gregory… that smile is positively… sinful.”

“Good, that means I did it right.”

Mycroft cleared his throat to hide the small eep! of glee. He had not assumed out of hand that his demon would desire anything of a carnal nature tonight, but… well, he had hoped and, apparently, his hopes were to be realized. Gloriously realized, at that.

“Then, shall we take this discussion into the bedroom.”

“I think we shall. First one to the bed wins.”

“Win’s what, my dear.”

The demon leaned over to, again, do a bit of whispering and Mycroft’s subsequent grin was just as wide as Sherlock’s. Though the reason for it was far, far different…

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“Oh my.”

Greg laughed and gently pulled Mycroft over to rest against him.

“How’s my Mycroft doing?”

“Is that the sun?”

“Yes! I think we lost track of time.”

They’d made love for hours… Mycroft was not at all convinced his body would be able to produce any form of reproductive product for a fortnight. There was not a speck of his body that had not enjoyed the attentions of his demon’s hands and tongue and he felt very much like a wet rag that had been wrung dry, then carefully smoothed and tenderly laid out to dry in the warmth of the sun. Which was definitely peering through the windows in a rather rude alert that the day had officially begun and his night of decadence and sexual debauchery was formally at an end.

“Yes, that does appear to be the case. Not that I can muster even an iota of care for the fact.”

“Nothing like a long night of sex, is there? I’m sorry you didn’t get any rest, though. We’ll have to make sure, next time, that you don’t have school the next day when we want to have an all-night go at each other.”

Next time… were there any two words in the English language with a greater beauty?

“Truly that would be a very useful bit of foresight. Regardless, I must begin making ready.”

Which, naturally, first required Mycroft disentangle himself from his demon’s arms, something that was never an easy or straightforward task.

“Gregory…”

“Just a few more minutes?”

Raising his head and looking across at the new alarm clock that sat upon his bedside table, Mycroft
had an easy answer for that question.

“I am afraid that will not be possible. Tardiness is looked upon poorly and I would rather not see this week begin on an off foot.”

“No, that would be bad. You could fall right on your gorgeous face and that would be a terrible thing! Want me to get Sherlock ready while you have your shower and put on your uniform?”

“If you would not mind, that would be of immeasurable assistance. It has… well, it has been quite the ordeal to ready Sherlock these past weeks. He has become most obstinate and difficult to prod into motion in the mornings, very much, I feel, because he remembered well the benefit of your tender care and was gravely insulted that I could not provide something similar.”

“He missed me… that makes me so happy. Not that he was upset for awhile, but that… well, that he cared enough to miss me when I was gone.”

“Sherlock and John both missed you greatly and they do care, Gregory. On one hand, it boggles my mind, actually, how quickly and strongly the boys took to you, but, then, I also realize that you are one of the pitifully-rare individuals who show Sherlock and John the love and attention that young boys need to thrive, even when they test the bounds of that love with their infernal antics.”

“Their antics are brilliant! You have to have a lot of creativity to come up with their schemes. And they work hard, too! That spell to bring them to my universe… whew! I get tired just thinking about it.”

“Yes, about that… do I take it that they can visit your realm at any time of their choosing?”

“I suppose so. It takes some doing, and they’d have to modify it a little so they could travel there and not just travel there to find me, but if they wanted to go through the trouble again, they certainly could.”

“Ah… is there, perhaps, a way you could prevent that from happening?”

“You’re worried about them, aren’t you.”

“A worry I feel is entirely appropriate, given the situation.”

“I can’t argue, actually. I’ll have a talk with them. There are things I could do, but, I’d rather not because… well, I know how it feels to want to go somewhere and can’t because you’re trapped. I’d rather have them stay here because they understand that it can be dangerous to go to my home alone than take the choice out of their hands.”

Mycroft wasn’t quite of the same mind, as keeping the boys chained to their reality was perfectly fine with him, but he also understood with unhappy clarity the root of the demon’s argument. And it was appropriate to give the boys certain responsibilities and the opportunity to demonstrate that they were worthy of such trust.

“I do understand your concern, my dear, so perhaps… could you set something in place to, at least, notify us if they make a trip that has not been previously agreed upon and being undertaken unaccompanied by a chaperone?”

“Put a little bell around their necks like a cat? That I can do and it’s not a bad idea. They’re good boys, but do sometimes do things without thinking them out first and their amulets won’t work between universes. If it’s alright with you, though… I would like to take them back to my home now and then to let them explore and have new experiences. You can come, too, in fact, I’d really
like it if you did so you can see where I come from and what it’s like to live there.”

There was such hopefulness in Greg’s eyes that it nearly broke Mycroft’s heart. Yes, he did have a bit of fence mending to do and this would be a very good place to start.

“I would be delighted to pay a visit to your home, Gregory. Perhaps… you might begin teaching me some words of your language so that I might more fully appreciate the experience?”

The demon’s excited gasp made Mycroft laugh and it was with great relief he luxuriated in one of his lover’s always-pleasurable kisses.

“Really? That would be fantastic! I’ll be happy to teach you! Sherlock picked it up easily enough, so I know you will, too. Oh! Speaking of Sherlock, I’d best get on that.”

Mycroft mourned the loss of warm demon flesh pressed against him, but… well, he’d been the one to insist on attending school today and it would not do to go against his own edict.

“An excellent decision. I shall join you for breakfast, then, shall I?”

“Breakfast! I can’t wait! Your cook really is brilliant at, well, cooking. That’s something else I missed when I was at home – getting a brilliant breakfast every morning. Grabbing a few roots or pieces of fruit or wiggly things in the fruit was usually the way I started my day, not that they’re too bad, because we’ve got some great roots and plants and wiggly things that cook up tastily when you know what you’re doing, but it’s not the same. See you soon, love.”

Mycroft savored this last kiss and watched the demon take human shape and saunter out the bedroom door to find Sherlock. He had been so very, very close to losing this man. Had lost him, actually, if not for Sherlock and John’s intervention. Lessons would surely be learned and never, not ever, forgotten…

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His lessons certainly had not prepared him for this…

“Why am I the recipient of both your large and exceedingly-suspicious grins?”

“Just happy to see you, love.”

“I am not happy to see you, I am simply happy that breakfast may now commence.”

Lying in stereo… this was definitely not good.

“I find myself disbelieving your innocuous stories.”

“My stories are lots of fun, love! They’re not innocuous, at all.”

“He means… oh, it is not worth the air my lungs would expel to explain this to you. And, you, Mycroft… may we please, finally, break fast so that this dreary and tiresome day might see it’s start or do you continue standing there like the homeliest and heaviest statue ever carved?”

Unquestionably, something was going on and that was not at all a reassuring thing, however… however he must make the effort not to treat Gregory like a child and interrogating him about his and Sherlock’s little stage play would not be the most inspired of beginnings towards that objective.

“Of course. I am certain you are absolutely famished after your difficult and trying sleep.”
“It was! I was unjustly imprisoned and suffered mightily.”

“A sheet is hardly some form of force field, brother dear.”

“It was stifling and I chafed at the confinement.”

“Should have opened a window then, little one. Let in some fresh air to get rid of all that stifle.”

“Simpleton. I have little doubt the staff shall be so aggrieved to find their placid work environment shattered by your buffoonery that they shall chase you out of the house with broomsticks and bootblack.”

“Nope, because I’m helpful and nice, so they like having me about. What does happen is a little bit of dancing once you’ve gone off for the day, so make of that what you will.”

Mycroft pressed a piece of bacon into Sherlock’s mouth to forestall the oncoming verbal storm and smiled at his demon, who was obviously proud of his retort.

“And, have you made plans for your day, Gregory? I know it somewhat has been an abrupt homecoming celebration, however, I shall make myself available to you immediately after school for whatever entertainments you might enjoy. We may, in fact…”

Have strength. It is for a noble cause.

“… indulge in a trip to the pub, which I know you find agreeable.”

“Really? That would be great! I love the pub. They’ve got great beer, which is something else I really missed at home. We’ve sort of got beer, like we’ve sort of got fish, but I like your version a lot, too. Thanks, love. We’ll have an amazing time. And… I’m not completely sure what I’m going to do with the rest of my day. Bit of this, bit of that…”

Oh dear. That was not an encouraging piece of ambiguity.

“It is possible to adorn your response with a few accessorizing details, my dear?”

“Uh… no.”

“I see. Or, rather, I fail to see. Let me, then, ask this. Shall any of your lack of plans be likely to attract the attention of members of our village’s police service?”

“That’s the people in the identical cars, right? No, I can’t think of anything that would do that, but I didn’t think me having a little trip to the village would be something they’d be interested in, either, but here they were!”

And still his Gregory deftly sidesteps providing any concrete details. He had confessed at one point that he was a masterful liar, had he not? Apparently, his style of lying was more through omission of information that outright duplicity. Fiend.

“Then I shall assume all will be well and I shall greet you in a scant few hours here at home and not in the local police station where I must gaze upon you through the barricade of cold, iron bars.”

“See, Sherlock! That’s confinement, not a sheet you could have popped off to have a spot of air if you wanted.”

“I am no longer speaking to you, demon, as, already, my intelligence quotient has dropped five points during the duration of his highly-unpalatable breakfast. Mycroft! Fetch my books. I shall be
waiting in the car and I shall not wait for long.”

Sherlock stormed off and, since the door to the dining room was behind Mycroft, the older Holmes brother missed the look Sherlock shot back at Greg, who smiled and nodded in return.

“That one has spirit, there’s no denying it.”

“Yes, well… let us hope he perpetrates no atrocities today that render him to spirit and prompt him to shuffle off this mortal coil. However, he is correct in that we must depart. Do enjoy your day, my dear. I will be with you again, soon.”

Mycroft rose from the table and gave his demon a kiss before darting off to gather their things and meet Sherlock in the car and was highly surprised to find the demon following after him, mostly because there still remained food on Greg’s breakfast plate.

“Gregory? Is there a problem?”

“What? Oh! No, no problem. I’m just going to ride with you to school this morning.”

RED ALERT! MAKE READY THE TORPEDOS!

“I rather think not. You have a plethora of things to occupy your morning and, as we know…”

“As we know, those bastards think I took off and left you. Time to show them that’s not true. Or… that it’s not true anymore. Give me a little tour of your school before you have to start learning?”

Oh…. now that was an interesting idea. A very interesting idea, indeed…

“I suppose that can be arranged. You shall return home once it is completed?”

“I shall return home once it is completed.”

Gregory would not tell such an overt untruth, so… dash it all, embrace the moment and continue onwards.

“Very well, then a lovely tour you shall have.”

“Yes! Oh, I have to look nice for that, don’t I…”

Mycroft hoped his sudden erection would dwindle by the time they arrived at his school, because his Gregory looked stunning… tan trousers that caressed his muscular thighs, a loose-cut white button-up shirt and…

“Gr… Gregory? Are you sporting a suntan?”

“I am! See? Even made my hair a little lighter, too. If I’ve been off someplace, why couldn’t I have been off somewhere warm and sunny? Besides, from the way you’re starting to get hard, I’d say I look pretty good with some sun on my skin.”

Perhaps this was not as good an idea as he had believed.

“Come on, love. Let’s get your books and get to the car before Sherlock shrieks himself to death.”

“Oh… did… did you affect it so I, again, cannot hear him?”
“No, but it’s Sherlock. What else would he be doing if you didn’t obey his orders?”

His demon adored Sherlock, but understood him just as deeply…

Continuing the suspicious tone of the morning, Sherlock gave no complaint about being deposited at school and Mycroft could only hope that whatever was in the works would not leave the family either bankrupt or incarcerated. Now, the second part of the school run could commence and, he had to admit, he was very much looking forward to it.

“And here we are.”

“Lots of people milling about, too, so you’ll get a lot of attention, which is what my Mycroft deserves. Ready?”

What was the phrase? Ready as I’ll ever be?

“I believe I am.”

Mycroft opened the door and stepped out of the car, gaining the usual looks from people curious about who was the newest arrival and then the stunned, astonished, disbelieving and, occasional, lustful ones when his Gregory stepped out after him and, true to form, slid an arm around his waist.

“Look at all those people eating you up with their eyes. That’ll teach them to be mean to you, the evil bastards. Let’s walk real slowly so they can boil in their envy.”

His Gregory was somewhat vengeful when provoked, was he not? Another glorious trait to add to his tally sheet. And it was no real hardship to slowly stroll towards the entrance, pointing out architectural features of the building as his demon flashed his large and winning smile and ran his fingers seductively through his hair.

“See all that whispering? They’re all having to take back their nasty words. I just hope everyone says they’re sorry to you, because being mean isn’t right.”

Oh, that certainly would not be happening, but there was definitely crow being eaten, albeit in silence. And silence was the watchword when they entered the school where there were even more people and in a smaller space, all stopping what they were doing to stare as he and his demon ignored them all and casually walked through the masses, his dear Gregory taking every opportunity to award him a smile or, blessedly, a small kiss as they continued their tour, which lasted not nearly as long as he would have preferred.

“Classes are about to commence, my dear. I am afraid I must now leave you.”

“That’s alright, Mycroft. You’ll be home soon and… well, we had a nice time this morning, didn’t we?”

“We most certainly did. This shall be quite the topic of conversation for the day, I can assure you.”

“Well, then, let’s make sure to really give them something to converse about.”

And, what the demon meant was giving his human something other than a small kiss, loving the whispers and gasps that erupted when he took his Mycroft in his arms and did his very best to set those lovely pink toes on fire.
“I… yes, I would say that is quite the proper ending to our tale.”

“Good. Learn a lot today, ok?”

“I will endeavour to do just that.”

“Then I’ll go. I love you, Mycroft. Have a good day.”

Since bursting into tears would undermine his suave and sophisticated persona, Mycroft wrestled back the surge of emotion and permitted himself the smallest touch of his demon’s cheek.

“And I love you, my dear. Do enjoy yourself.”

As the flow of bodies started towards various classrooms, Mycroft dragged himself away from Greg’s arms and soaked up the continued confusion and shock of his peers as he made his way to class. Oh yes, his had been a fantastically-inspired idea. He could only hope whatever else his demon had planned for the day, it was nothing as staggering as this…

“…  “What?”

“Are you so tiny that the auditory canals of your ears cannot allow to pass even a sound wave?”

“That’s… ok, I’m not exactly sure what all of that was about, but did you really say…”

“I did. Be prepared.”

“I will. And, look… it’s almost time.”

“Yes, we must be vigilant.”

The bell rang to signal the onset of the lunch period and the boys dutifully made their way through the corridors with the other children towards the lunchroom, looking this way and that for whatever signal might be on offer and were profoundly disappointed to find Mycroft standing in wait at the lunchroom door, along with the school secretary.

“Here you are, Mr. Holmes.”

“Very good. Thank you for your assistance. It was most kind of you.”

The secretary smiled at Sherlock and John before leaving them alone, something which Sherlock did not think, in any way, was something to smile about.

“Why are you here, Fatcroft? Already the building’s infrastructure buckles and bows from the weight of the imbecility contained in its walls.”

“Hey! Don’t say mean things about your brother when people can hear you. It’s not right.”

Sherlock looked at John, then realized that his friend hadn’t been the one to speak.

“De… you?”

The figure waved at them and that cemented the identity as anyone other than Mycroft.

“Come on, little ones. We’ll go and have a nice lunch as a celebration for me being back.”
John punched the air in excitement and immediately started walking towards the exit.

“Well, brother dear?”

“You are not funny and you embarrass yourself when you try.”

“Good thing I don’t care about embarrassing myself, then, isn’t it?”

‘Mycroft’ nudged Sherlock forward and the two quickly caught up with John who was waiting outside, nearly jumping out of his skin with anticipation.

“Alright… where’s a good… there. Just the thing.”

The group hustled behind a small maintenance shed and the boys were officially joined by Greg.

“Ok, now, you two need to promise me not to wiggle because it’s going to hard enough to do this without all of that nonsense.”

“Wiggle? Why on Earth would John and I…”

The demon’s clothing vanished, except for his familiar loincloth and his large wings unfurled and stretched a little to limber up for the flight.

“We get to fly!”

“Quickest way, John. Alright… this won’t take long, but remember about the wiggling.”

The demon grabbed each boy around the waist and shot into the air, making sure they were well-hidden from all eyes, except for birds because they didn’t need any accidental collisions that might hurt those poor little things, and, in few minutes, the trio was landing behind some hedges separating a field from the road into the village, where the demon became Greg the human again, complete with clothing, much to Sherlock’s relief.

“If I never again am in close proximity to your nudity, I shall be awash with delight.”

“Oh, then you plan on walking back to school.”

“I see. You have ensnared me in a paedophilic trap.”

“John, little help?”

“Would it matter?”

“You’ve got a point. Alright, off we go. Fish and chips for John and me, something that’s not fish and chips for Sherlock. We can eat in that little park with the benches and ducks and old people.”

The demon checked that nobody was paying particular attention, then led the boys out from their hiding place and towards the center of the village where they’d find a nice lunch and have a bit of time to enjoy the fresh air. Fresh air was important for little ones and he wasn’t sure how much they’d gotten while he was away, so he’d make certain they got a good few lungsful of it today. A belly full of good lunch, too, that they’d share with the birds. It was the least he could do for the little ones after they’d been so brave. And they could have some nice cake or pastries after lunch because he had lots of money and the shopkeepers very much appreciated it when you bought things from them. It was quite nice of Mycroft not to throw away his money so he didn’t have to make anymore right away and he’d brought along a lot, just in case. This was going to be fun!
“This is fun! We should do it every day.”

John shoved another chip into his mouth and leaned back on their bench, breathing in a big quantity of fresh air, much to Greg’s satisfaction.

“I think someone would ask questions if that happened, little one, but maybe now and then. What about you, Sherlock? Having fun?”

Not that Sherlock could answer, because his face was stuffed with chips, which he had demanded after sampling John’s, though fish was still considered peasant food.

“…ts adkw.”

“What?”

“I think he said ‘it’s adequate.’ That’s good, actually, for Sherlock.”

Greg beamed, took a bite of his own lunch, then waved enthusiastically at someone he recognized, something he’d done quite a number of times since they’d gotten their lunches. The fish-and-chips woman even gave him a big smile and extra chips because she’d been worried about him! It made him a little misty-eyed, actually, though he didn’t think the little ones noticed. People had missed him. They were happy he’d come back and that said a lot. People had wanted to talk to him and even said it was good to see him. That was its own form of magic, really. You go out and do what you do and, somehow, people like you and are glad to know you. How did that happen? Magic. It had to be magic, but that was perfectly alright with him.

“After this, we can have some pastries. That shop over there has brilliant ones. Maybe… maybe we have time to stop in at the toy shop, too. I told your school we’d be back fairly soon, but a few minutes of looking at toys wouldn’t hurt. If you see something you like I can come back and buy it after I bring you back to class. Then…”

The demon made a hiss that Sherlock and John had heard only once before and went on alert for any cobalt-blue demons looking to eat their sweet, tender flesh.

“What’s wrong, Greg?”

“Over there.”

John looked over to see a group of older boys in school uniform, which didn’t really seem hiss-worthy in his opinion.

“I don’t understand.”

“That is because your social status rivals that of a garden snail. That particular throng of dysfunctional DNA is the core component of the group that derided Mycroft after his lack of masculinity sent the demon to huddle in another universe to preserve his own dignity. The one who has disgraced his tie with an attempt to appear nonchalant is the main villain – Bascomb.

“Oh! I remember you talking about him. He’s a nasty git and Mycroft doesn’t like him at all.”

“With good reason. His existence is an insult to evolution. His only possible redemption would occur if he had himself sterilized so his genetic code could not pollute the future gene pool.”
The demon let the boys have their conversation and kept his eyes focused on the group of boys who were not in school, when they should be in school, which was already wrong and… were just wrong altogether. Why were people mean? Mean and horrible and made other people feel bad when there was no possible reason to do so. And they certainly had no right to make his Mycroft suffer. That was not something he could let stand, but… Mycroft would be upset if he did what he really wanted to do, which involved a lot of blood and pieces of people and maybe getting Sherlock to banish him back home for an hour or so to sell his windfall and get the little ones some more jewelry and John that knife he wanted. Yeah, Mycroft wouldn’t like that at all because Mycroft was a nice person and, also, because he was very much against mess.

Having a sip of his favorite fizzy drink, the demon, instead, let his fingers make a few motions and, in unison, both trousers and pants of his targets dropped onto the pavement, leaving a group of boys quickly covering what Greg thought were very uninspiring bits. While the old ladies who were just coming out of the tea shop beat on the half-naked boys with their handbags, the demon added a little special something to the spell. Nothing that would be noticed now, but anytime any of those bastards got close to his Mycroft, their clothing would get just as slippery and if, they were very lucky, they might have a chance to grab their dropping pants so the teachers didn’t see their rather pitiful bits and his Mycroft would have plenty of time to get away from them before they said anything evil. Or, he could hang about and laugh, which Mycroft might very much like to do. It’d only be temporary, a few months or so at most, but maybe they’d think twice about being mean to others and making fun of them after they’d had a bit of it themselves.

“Wow! Old ladies really hit hard, don’t they?”

“I am more surprised, John, by their aim, which I would not predict given the effects of advanced age on eyesight. Oh… and they are quite limber, as well. I would not think they could lift their legs sufficiently high to score a kick in the buttocks of someone taller than are they, especially in a dress, but they are accomplishing the task with notable ease.”

Greg smiled and had full confidence that, given the old people chatting network, any of that miserable lot showing their faces, or other parts, in town was going to get a very unwelcome welcome for quite some time to come. It wasn’t much of a revenge for his Mycroft’s sadness, but it was something and that was better than nothing.

“Greg… did you do that?”

“Me, John? Didn’t move off this bench, did I?”

“You probably shouldn’t grin when you lie, because it makes the lie more obvious. Sherlock taught me that and it’s actually true.”

“Ok, that’s something new I learned today and I do like learning new things.”

“Are you going to tell Mycroft?”

“No, I don’t think so. He might not be happy about it and, besides, he might ask why I was in the village and I might let slip and tell him about our lunch, which I know he wouldn’t be happy about and why would I want to do anything that would make Mycroft unhappy.”

“That’s smart. Don’t you think so, Sherlock?”

“It is not entirely as inane and feeble-witted as the demon’s usual prattle.”

“Sherlock agrees. Can we have our pastries now?”
Greg wiped his mouth and let out a burp before nodding.

“Sounds good. The fun’s over anyway, what with that lot running off with their… tails… between their legs. Ready, Sherlock.”

“And then we may visit the toy shop? They have several items of a more scientific nature that I would like to examine.”

Plus, John had beheaded his king of their constructed kingdom and another must rise to take his place.

“Alright then, off we go. We’ll definitely do this again, though. Maybe we can all come for lunch sometime, including Mycroft.”

“Then there would be no food remaining in the village for the rest of us.”

“Silly, Sherlock. If silliness was money, you’d have more than me!”

The demon held up his fistfuls of cash and laughed at John’s excited gasp. Their visit to the toy shop was going to be a lot of fun. Then, he and Mycroft would come back later and visit the pub, which was, also, a lot of fun. Today was just a fun day all around.

“As your natural superior, I demand a tithe equal to half of your bankroll!”

Even with the silliness, today was absolutely brilliant. It was good to be home.
As the driver chauffeured him home from school, Mycroft smiled a contented smile in and stretched out lazily on the passenger seat. Whereas being the center of attention was never something for which he strived, there was a delicious sense of satisfaction from having one day where the eyes of the school were turned towards him, and not for a reason that was humiliating or hurtful.

Gregory had been most correct that a ‘tour’ of the school would be a useful strategy, as there now was not a single individual within those walls who was ignorant of the status of his relationship and the depth of passion that relationship offered. He was loved by the most stellar of men, a man who found his own feeble and rather withered charms of interest and value, a man who desired him physically and was unafraid to demonstrate that desire so that all might know it and mourn their lack of such in their lives.

And, highly unexpectedly, it had been a pleasant thing to be approached by those few with whom they had interacted at the dance to express their happiness that Gregory had returned from his ‘family obligations,’ and extend genuine offers to meet socially to have more time to get to know his Gregory and, though they did not say such aloud, get to know him, as well. It was one of the demon’s great gifts that his brilliant light shined upon those nearby and bathed them in subtler tones of his colorful nature to enhance their own appeal. Perhaps… perhaps the odd afternoon here or there to share a collegial beverage in the village with a classmate would not entirely be the death of him…

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… this, however, might.

“Gregory? Is there a reason there are now eight children in the house, as opposed to the expected two?”

Four demon Sherlocks and four demon Johns were milling about the library, having snacks and playing with some of the games that Greg had bought today at the toy store and Mycroft vowed that from this day forward, the children would not be allowed to return home before he did, regardless of the academic obligations that might keep him at school for a little longer in the afternoon. Apparently, without his vigilance, they multiplied like his Gregory’s beloved rabbits…

“Isn’t this great! Look at all of them having a brilliant time with their own little party. And see? I bought new books today, so we can read while they have fun. Come on, sit here by me and you can look at all the wonderful things we have to read.”

Mycroft wondered if his age precluded a stroke or if the rising pressure in his head was soon to send him to a blissful death.

“Eight children, my dear? Given the difficulty we have managing the infantile behavior of two…”

Mycroft’s words were quickly drowned out by eight indignant demon boys loudly expressing their opinion of the label ‘infantile’ and he wondered if it was too much to ask for his lover’s cone of silence to be laid upon his head. Oh, apparently his demon had decided to pour out a robust measure of brandy, instead. It was still a highly-considerate gesture. No… this situation was entirely Gregory’s fault, so he was a villainous blackguard, albeit one bearing spirits and sporting a salacious smile, and would be awarded no credit for thoughtfulness.
“Don’t worry, love, it won’t last long and, when it wears off, Sherlock and John, the real ones, that is, are going to want a long nap since the spell draws its energy from them and the more copies of themselves there are, the more energy they lose. And they’ll still be sleeping like little babies when it’s time to take John home, so they won’t give your staff any trouble while we’re at the pub.”

Mycroft felt his stern expression beginning to waver as he considered the paradise of the boys sleeping for hours on end, as well as the lovely brandy that was now in his hand.

“And look at them… all the tiny Sherlocks arguing with each other and the tiny Johns having a round of catch-the-sweet with their mouths. They’ve been good, too, at least for them. Playing with toys and games and I’ve been making sure they eat enough to keep up their strength, food, too and not just sweets, so don’t worry about a thing. Come on, Mycroft. Sit next to me and we can talk about your day.”

His Gregory was very difficult to refuse since, firstly, the children, though boisterous, were actually preoccupied with their own amusements and, secondly, the idea of relaxing and discussing his day was an exquisitely domestic thing he had greatly come to miss in the demon’s absence.

“As you wish.”

Mycroft settled on the sofa and adored that Greg sat with his back against the arm and patted his chest to encourage him to resettle in a cozier position, which Mycroft was more than happy to do.

“That’s what I like to see. My Mycroft comfortable and relaxed… how was school, love? Anyone give you any trouble?”

“Quite the contrary… the day was a most placid one, in point of fact. However, there was a notable amount of attention in the aftermath our joint appearance, which I have to confess I enjoyed. It was a surprisingly agreeable experience, perhaps because of its uniqueness, and I bow to your wisdom in suggesting a public display of our restored relationship. Truly there are none now who would dare speak that our love was anything but true and real seeing our happiness together.”

“Yes! That’s great to hear… I don’t like to think of anyone being mean to you, especially when you’re at school and have to focus on what you’re trying to learn.”

“I believe I shall endure no further torment, at least for this particular issue. And you? How did you enjoy your day?”

“Oh, I had a grand time. Went to the village and saw lots of people I knew. Everyone wanted to talk and they all asked if I was alright and if I was going to be here for awhile… it was amazing and not only because I got extra chips and the plumpest pastry on the tray, either.”

Mycroft leaned back and motioned for Greg to take a kiss, which the demon gladly did. Yes, his lover’s nature had its problematic elements, but if the entire village could embrace it joyfully, he could do the same. He was in the arms of a man who inspired happiness and possessed a streak of honor and caring so wide it could not be measured with worldly tools and not a person in a thousand could boast such a thing. Without question, he was blessed. There was no other word for it.

“You are profoundly stupid!”

“I am you, half-wit! Consider yourself insulted by proxy!”

Blessed as no one else on Earth…

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As Greg predicted, once the spell wore off, Sherlock and John couldn’t manage another fifteen minutes before they were snoring softly on the floor and Mycroft, again, rejoiced in the demon’s magical abilities, as porting the small masses of dead weight up the stairs was not a feat he felt particularly inclined to perform. Floating the boys up to Sherlock’s bedroom, the two were tucked into bed and given kisses on their heads by the one who had performed the floating, before Greg stood straight and gazed on the small, colorful children.

“Aren’t they cute?”

“Most certainly. But, Gregory…”

“Don’t worry, I didn’t teach them that spell and it’s not in the book, so they can’t get it that way.”

“Oh thank heavens.”

Greg laughed and gave Mycroft his own kiss before taking his hand and leading him out of the bedroom, first making sure to leave a note in glowing letters on the bedroom wall so that Sherlock and John would know where they were if they woke up before the pub trip came to an end.

“I promise not to let them get in trouble with magic, love. Well, I’ll try my best because Sherlock and John are brilliant at getting into trouble, but I will try and, anyway, I can probably fix whatever problems they cause because of it.”

“Probably?”

“Well….”

“No, do not answer. I truly do not want you to elaborate and shall, instead, content myself with your ardent promise to do what you can to forestall any of their more egregious shenanigans.”

“Did I promise that?”

“Not in those words, but yes.”

“Alright, then! Pub?”

“I am certain the kitchen has now returned the beer stock to full as you have returned to our little fold. We could, of course…”

As expected, the demon burst into false and stage-worthy tears, earning him a there-there and commiserative pat on the hand from his lover.

“Calm yourself, dear Gregory. If you desire a night out, then a night out you shall have. In fact…”

It was past the hour when most reputable people have returned home for the day, was it not?

“… it might be a suitable occasion for you to practice driving.”

The tears dried up immediately and the demon’s excitement had him vibrating with a frequency that Mycroft was certain was going to start attracting bats to the window.

“Really, love? Really really?”

“I fail to see why not? The roads should be fairly empty at this hour and it is good that you begin to learn further of the basics of life in this world.”
Dancing… waltzing around the corridor as if an orchestra was playing and the entire royal court was looking on… his Gregory was simply astounding…

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His Gregory was a madman!

“My dear… the road is most straight for this section so it is to be expected that the car would be traveling straight, as well.”

“Practicing! Got to learn how this steery thing works, right? Thought it would be a good place to make some turns before we got to some real turns so I’d be ready for them. The last time I steered this car I drove very slowly, but I’m trying to go faster today like the other cars do and the turns are going to be a lot whoopier at this speed, I suspect.”

Whoopier… the agony…

“Gregory, my darling… it is perfectly acceptable to proceed at a slower speed when one is learning the rudiments of motoring. This is precisely why I chose this time of day for your lesson. Notice? Neither a car nor a goose have we encountered.”

“That’s true. And even if I couldn’t see the goose since it’s rather dark, I’d hear it because they’re loud when you give them a fright. Alright, if you say it’s for the best, I’ll go slower.”

“Thank you. I know you hope to master this skill and I fear you would be discouraged if we suffered an accident and, therefore, consider abandoning your valiant and worthy efforts.”

“You’re probably right. Actually, I know you are because my Mycroft is very smart about things like this.”

Mycroft breathed a large mental sigh as the car slowed and began to follow a trajectory that mostly followed the line of the road.

“Like how I didn’t use that other pedal to make us go slow? I really don’t like it much since it makes the car go SCREE! and jerk and that’s not any fun at all.”

Ah yes, that other pedal, more formally known as the brake.

“What say I provide focused instruction specifically upon that specific pedal? It is rather a touchy thing, but I believe you can be its master in but a trice.”

“This is great! I get to learn and have beer and take my Mycroft out for a lovely night… nobody is as lucky as me.”

Well, there was one person, but since he was sharing the car, there was somewhat an umbrella effect for the luck and that was certainly an agreeable thing, all around.

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And that luck held for the drive and through the hair-raising ordeal of parking, which only required one application of magic to fix a lamp post that had an unfortunate encounter with the automobile’s rear bumper. Much to his delight, Mycroft’s blood pressure was happily eased by the pleasant pint with which he had been presented and the welcoming atmosphere of their now-traditional pub. An atmosphere that opened its arms wide to his demon and, by association, himself and freely engaged them in conversation of the most informative and collegial type. Very informative, in fact…
“I really like this tavern, love. The beer is good and there’s not been one fight yet. Not that a good tavern fight can’t be a fun thing, but I don’t want one to start when you’re here when you could catch a hit.”

“Yes, that would rather put a damper on the evening. And I have come to agree that such a locale is an efficient site for the gathering of information. In fact, one does not even have to seek it out, for, verily, we have been regaled with a true bounty of village news and gossip without first asking a single question.”

And the eyes looking away to any direction but at him confirmed Mycroft’s bit of deduction about a particular piece of extremely interesting news and gossip that had come their way. From multiple sources.

“Gregory… did you unclothe my school colleagues while they avoided class to visit the village?”

“Ummm… I don’t know all your school chums, love, so I really can’t say yes.”

“That is a convoluted manner of admitting your guilt, my dear.”

“Is it? I’ll remember to tell that to Sherlock because that sounds like something he’d be interested to know.”

“You are most likely correct, but now, back to the matter at hand that you are studiously trying to avoid…”

“I’m not studying anything! I can’t even go to school, remember, you won’t let me.”

“Gregory Lestrade!”

“Hah! I almost forgot that was my name! It sounds good when you say it, though, with those beautiful lips of yours.”

“You are being most obstructive, and damning yourself mightily in the process.”

“Sherlock said I already was damned what with being a… you know.”

Mycroft glared at the demon who smiled brightly and waggled his empty pint glass at the server to signal another round.

“Very well, I shall approach this from a different direction. Let us say, purely hypothetically, of course…”

“What’s that mean?"

“It means that the situation does not exist or has not existed in reality, but we are going to imagine it is or has for the purposes of discussion.”

“Ok. I can do that.”

“Excellent. Again, let us say, purely hypothetically, that several of my school colleagues met with an extremely embarrassing fate while in the village which involved the loss of trousers and pants, as well as battery by several of our normally sweet-tempered elders. If such a thing had occurred, might you have knowledge of such a thing and how it came to pass?”

“How could I? It’s a hypothetical and hypotheticals aren’t real! You just told me that. Are you having memory problems, love?”
Apparently, arguing in the abstract was not his Gregory’s forte. Or he was as fabulously-devious as he was fabulously-attractive, which was not something to be discounted.

“I see. As you wish… I shall take, then, a third direction. Since we know that such a thing did occur, having been informed of such by individuals such your friend who provides gardening services to several of the heretofore non-hypothetical sweet-tempered elders, I will state that, if I knew the identity of the person who was capable of performing such a feat, I… I would offer them congratulations on a job well done.”

It was a very rare thing that Mycroft saw his demon speechless, so this was certainly an item to mark on his calendar.

“You… you would?”

“I would at that. Something entirely harmless, from an injury point of view, yet thoroughly embarrassing and surely to be remembered for a long time to come. For such doltish oafs, I cannot think of a more fitting, shall we say jest, to perpetrate.”

“Oh. Well… that’s good to know.”

The demon hid his pleased grins as poorly as did Sherlock and they warmed Mycroft’s heart just as cozily. Such a childish, yet effective, revenge against the most odious individuals one could imagine. Bascomb and his ilk should count their blessings his Gregory showed mercy, for what the demon could do if he felt so inclined did not bear contemplation.

“Then I am glad I was able to inform. I am certain it was naught but a prank, but a grand one should always be commended.”

Watching the demon puff with pride, Mycroft took a sip of his new pint and felt a tendril thread through his mind that touched several distinct points before dropping a question upon his tongue and, in truth, it was one he had pondered before this point. Fortunately, there was no one in earshot to hear the answer.

“Gregory, I have never asked, but… may I know your age?”

“You mean how old I am?”

“Yes.”

“In your time?”

“That would be helpful.”

Mycroft watched as the demon raised each of his fingers one by one, then made some marks in the water rings on the table and hummed a jaunty little tune.

“I don’t know.”

“For heaven’s sake, Gregory, you must know your age.”

“Why?”

“Because… it is simply a requirement of life.”

“Why?”
“For the reason… it simply is.”

Do not smile that smile at me Gregory, it is completely unsporting.

“You don’t even know.”

“That is untrue. There is the matter of… driving licenses…. for example.”

“What’s that?”

“The document you must possess before you may legally operate a motor vehicle.”

“That can’t be true because I don’t have one and I’ve driven three times! Twice here and once back. It’ll be twice back when we go home and I can’t believe nobody would have told me if I did something wrong four times.”

Arguing with his demon was like swimming through treacle on a cold January morning. No, actually, it was infinitely more difficult.

“I am a licensed driver and, therefore, legal issues are satisfied.”

“Nah… you’ve got that snooty tone that says you’re telling a fib because you don’t want me to know you’ve gotten flustered.”

“I do not fluster!”

“Of course you do! You’re very cute when you do, too.”

“Well, I never.”

“You should and you should do it a lot, too.”

“Do what?”

“Whatever it is you never do.”

Before his head began to spin, and not from the alcohol, Mycroft drew a deep breath and waded back to the beginning to take a stab at the whole business again.

“Answer me this. Have you been in our world sufficiently long to have a proper feel for the passage of time?”

“Ummmm… yes.”

“So you know the duration of a day.”

“I do.”

“And that roughly thirty of those is a month.”

“That part confuses me a little but I suppose it’s all about keeping things orderly, which is something humans seem to think is very important.”

“Something about which I would agree. Now, can you mentally imagine the duration of time that is a month?”

“I think so.”
“Very good. Can you extend that to the duration of twelve months in sequence?”

“That’s getting a bit much, actually.”

“Will you not try? For me?”

“I’ll do my best. Ok…”

And, of course, his demon had to count aloud. He would not be Gregory if he did not.

“I… I may have it.”

“Most impressive. Now, and I know this will be difficult but, how many of that increment, or a year, do you feel you have lived?”

“Oh… that’s asking a lot.”

“I know, my dear, but do your best.”

This time, it was a round of rocking side to side in his chair and a singing a little song which seemed to consist of only of the word ‘boopadoop,’ before the demon was ready to answer.

“Twenty.”

“Incorrect.”

“No… I think that’s it. Or close to it. It could be a couple more or less. I don’t remember that well from when I was very small, so I could have lost a few in my head.”

“No, my dear, you are mistaken. You have spoken of seeing our world from quite a distance in the past, far greater than twenty years. Hundreds is more a proper accounting.”

“No… I would know if that was true. I think you’re not understanding time very well.”

“I understand time perfectly well and I, for example, am but a few years shy of twenty myself. Now recall our conversation where you spoke quite the volume of praise for our manner of plumbing, as opposed to chamberpots and holes in the ground.”

“I love toilets! I mean, I can make my own poop vanish, but I know you can’t and toilets make it so that you can have magic or not and still don’t have to worry about it sitting about! Simply amazing…”

“Yes, they are a truly a marvel and have been in existence for far longer than the length of my life. Longer than many of my lifetimes, actually. And you remember a time before they were in use, so you must be older than many of my lifetimes. See?”

“No, not really. You seem to think time marches like ants in a line.”

Oh dear. His demon believed he was Doctor Who.

“My dear, and I will qualify this with a statement that I am only speaking from personal observation, but time does move in a line.”

“Exactly!”

“Pardon?”
“You’ve only got personal observation to rely on and you haven’t observed much when it comes to time, I suspect. Time can get a little muddled and twisty and loopy and flappy. Spells can get twisty, too. Or not. It sort of depends.”

“That makes… no, I shall complete the thought and say that makes no sense.”

“It’s… it’s just that time can flow like a river, but rivers don’t just flow, do they? They whoosh and burble and swirl and swish and sort of stop and mill around in one place awhile. And when they hit something, like… like a big log, they can sort of split to go above and below or flow in a different direction for awhile until then get to the end and start flowing normal again.”

“That… that is all highly informative, however, it fails to clarify the situation for me.”

“Well, think about being in the river. Whatever it does, you do, right? Unless you don’t, but that takes effort, which you absolutely can do, but if you’re too weak or just don’t want to, you don’t and flow along like a leaf. Most of the time everyone’s a leaf, but sometimes not. Maybe a fish! I never thought of that. Hah! No wonder I like fish and chips.”

Was there a single thread in that tangled skein he could tease out to unravel the meaning? Just one would do, he was not a greedy man…

“Gregory, can you, perhaps… provide an example?”

“Sure! Ok, say I’m a leaf…”

“Can you not be yourself, for simplicity’s sake?”

“It’ll work better with a leaf.”

“Carry on.”

“So, I’m a leaf and I’m flowing in the river and I’m whirling and swooshing and that’s fine and I’ll live my leafy life doing whatever the river’s doing, along with all the other leaves that are with me in that part of the river. Now, say, someone tosses in a new soggy leaf. It’s going to do what the others are doing in that part of the river, too, no matter what it was doing in the other part of the river you scooped it from.”

“If I might interject… you are saying that time does different things depending on circumstances and you can move between those things, but are constrained by the conditions imposed by the local temporal field?”

“Maybe. I didn’t quite understand what you said, but it sounded close. Want me to keep going?”

“Please.”

And, yes, do smile broadly at the new round for which I am signaling.

“Ok, so our leaf is doing its new thing, but if it was a fish, it could do something different. Or not, depending on how strong it was. A strong fish could go where it wanted, but a smaller fish or weaker one would be more like a leaf, though it could do a little of what it wanted, which a leaf can’t do. Spells can be like leaves, weak fish or strong fish and in any part of the river. That’s how I’m twenty! Or so.”

Mycroft gratefully accepted his new pint and used the distraction to buy himself time to think until some form of picture began to form in his mind.
“Let me see if I have some hold of this and do correct me if I am wrong. I am currently in a part of the river and I threw… well, I would assume from your description that it would be a leaf. It flowed in the river and that part of the river flowed in your direction. However, if I was in another part of the river, it still may have reached you because of the direction the river was flowing at the point I released my leaf. In fact, there are many ways my leaf might reach you, though it starts at a different point every time.”

“Yes!”

“But… I would assume that time progresses, the river flows, in the same direction here in my world because… well, I have seen nor read any evidence to the contrary.”

“You’re right.”

“Then your analogy fails.”

“No, because you forgot the logs.”

“There are no logs in our time river, my dear.”

“Well, I won’t say that’s completely true, because you live in only one tiny portion of this universe, but if we just think about your tiny part we can say there aren’t any logs. But you have to remember, you spell didn’t stay in your piece of the river, did it?”

“Ah… I believe I am beginning to see.”

“Think of the barrier between my universe and yours as a big log. And not only a big log, but a big knobbly, gnarly, one, too. When you send your spell out it can hit any piece of that log and change its direction so when it makes it around, it ends up in a different place on the new side of the log than where you tossed it on the first side of the log, even if it starts flowing straight ahead again.”

“Thus, someone could summon you from, say two-hundred years in my past and it reaches you at what you experience as your present.”

“You’re amazingly sexy when you’re smart.”

“Thank you. And, from your words, I would assume that if a spell was a fish, it could swim back to its insertion point and continue on from there or… oh. It could swim at will within its original portion of the river. Gregory… can you travel in time?”

“Ummm… not really. A few minutes, maybe, but I guess that can be helpful sometimes, so remember it if you ever need me to do that. But, weak fish, strong fish, remember? I’m a fairly weak fish, but, yeah, there are those of us who can… well, they can pretty much do as they like.”

Mycroft leaned back in his chair and let the previous conversation sink in. His Gregory had been summoned many times and from many points in time, but… oh dear. His Gregory had suffered much during those summonings and… well, he had believed that suffering to have been spread over centuries of time and such was not the case. Twenty or so years… his poor, poor demon…

“I am so sorry, Gregory.”

“For what? Being brilliant and sexy?”

“No… for realizing that when we discussed your more… difficult… summonings, they occurred during what is a heartbreakingly short amount of time.”
“Oh… yeah. I guess that’s true, isn’t it. That’s what happens when you’re a small fish, though. And it’s not that bad, really. You get a break in between and you do what you can to make the most of it. Have fun and meet people and live your life… but I don’t have to worry about any of that now. I can’t be summoned on this plane since summoning spells reach for my world and not this one. And, when we visit my home, I can have you say a spell that keeps me with you so I can’t get tapped by anyone else’s summoning and get whisked off for a bit of nonsense.”

“Good. That is very good to hear. As is… well, I shall not say I had been somewhat unsettled by the thought that you were tremendously older than me, but I may have had a small qualm about the fact. A larger one, however, existed… I was rather wrestling with the notion that I would age and you would remain young and beautiful. It seemed a terrible thing for you to endure and I was not entirely certain how to broach the subject until now.”

Greg reached over and took Mycroft’s hand to give it a gentle squeeze.

“That wouldn’t have bothered me, just so you know, but it won’t happen anyway, so you can stop worrying about it.”

“And I am thrilled for it, have no doubt. But, I shall also admit that… I have rather a hard time imagining elderly members of your species. You seem so profoundly vital that it is difficult to picture any diminishment of that vivacity.”

“Well, you’ll get to find out when we got to my home for a visit. There’s lots of old people! And getting old doesn’t mean you stop having fun or enjoying life and living it to its fullest. You still do all of that, though you might move a little slower while doing it and have some wrinkles and sags you didn’t have before. That can still be sexy though and I’ll be one of the sexier ones, you can count on that.”

Mycroft laughed in his beer and believed fully, in his heart, that his Gregory was absolutely correct. And that, in no manner, made his relief any greater. They would walk together in this bit of the river of time and he would not get left behind. Not fade away and be a frail and weak partner for the man he loved. Truly, this was a joyous night…

“Someone’s happy. Look at that lovely smile.”

“Always when you are near, my love.”

Lifting the demon’s hand, Mycroft gave it a kiss and basked in the glow of being deeply in love with an incomparable man. And they would have so many years together to see how bright that glow could get…

Mycroft was exceedingly proud that he kept his alcohol consumption to a manageable level and enjoyed simply a pleasant warmth in his body and mind, that still kept him from driving home, but allowed him to bear the ride with far more grace than the one that had brought them to the alcohol in the first place. And, lo… he was able to walk to the door from the garage with nary a wobble.

“Can’t hear any screams or shouts, love, so I think the little ones are still asleep.”

“I believe you are correct. Not a single member of the staff fleeing in terror and that is always a heartening sign. I believe this is an encouraging omen for future nights that we might enjoy together, especially… is it actually possible for you to become drunk?”

“On beer? It would take a LOT. But, if you’d like, we can experiment with something stronger
and see what it takes. There *are* drinks in my world that will do it quick enough, but I haven’t really had that much here besides beer and brandy or wine."

“Then I shall ever have my trusty chauffer at my beck and call!”

“Can I have a uniform like your driver?”

“I do like a man in a well-tailored uniform.”

As the lovers giggled at their silliness, Mycroft unlocked the door and escorted his demon into the house, stopping a moment to collect a phone message that had been left for him to read when they reached the library. Then, he suddenly wished he hadn’t.”

“What’s wrong, love? You’ve gone a bit green and you didn’t have nearly enough beer for that.”

“I… well, this is unexpected.”

“What? Is it… is something wrong?”

“Yes. Or no. I truly do not know.”

Mycroft handed over the note to Greg who read it with confused interest.

“Your mum and dad are coming home.”

“That they are.”

“In… that’s three days from now.”

“And weeks earlier than they had previously planned.”

“Aren’t you happy, love?”

“I am not certain if that is precisely the word I would use, no.”

“Want me to give you a massage?”

“As soon as we return from returning John home?”

“The moment we get to our bedroom.”

“Have I told you today that I love you, Gregory?”

“Yeah, but don’t let that stop you from saying it again.”

“I love you and anxiously await your hands upon me.”

“Only my hands?”

“Perish the thought. I know you are more creative than that.”

“Which *does* make you happy.”

“Eternally.”

Or, at least, as eternally as they could have once Mummy and Father came home…
Mycroft got his massage, the most sensual erotic attention a man could ever hope for and then a long night of peaceful sleep before Sherlock was tapping his head with a spoon and announcing that he was late for breakfast.

“Your demon has already imprisoned me in my uniform and you must now wake and join us for breakfast for I will not stand for any further of your lethargy.”

“I see. Gregory permitted me to sleep beyond my alarm.”

“That he is useless as a manservant is entirely unsurprising, given your laxness of hand in his training.”

“And what entertainment did Gregory permit you while affecting your imprisonment?”

“He may, and only because of my use of a forceful tone, turned my skin transparent.”

“I see. And you were able to see, then, your various muscles and their attachments?”

“Yes. I shall recommence the study when I return home and, subsequent to that, he shall turn my muscles and connective tissues transparent, so that I might see my vasculature, internal organs and bones.”

“Highly educational. I certainly approve.”

“Something that is entirely unnecessary in my day. My morning cup of chocolate, however, is most necessary and it is waiting while I waste time with you. Consider this your only warning. Rise or forfeit your sausages.”

Sherlock stormed out of the bedroom and Mycroft took the opportunity to stretch lazily and sneak a look at the clock. His lover had timed Sherlock’s disruption perfectly. There was exactly enough time to shower and dress, have a relaxed breakfast and make it to school precisely at the appointed hour. And, most interestingly, it did not appear that Sherlock had been apprised of last night’s surprising news. If he had, this morning’s greeting would have had a far different timbre.

Enjoying the luxury of readiness himself without having to simultaneously manage Sherlock’s nonsense, Mycroft finally made it to the breakfast table, where he was greeted with the sight of the sideboard possessing its usual serving fare, each piece now, however, encased by a cage that was sufficiently narrow of bar to keep Sherlock’s hands from reaching in.

“I see you have safeguarded my breakfast, my dear. For that, you have my gratitude.”

The demon gave Mycroft a large smile and freed the breakfast items from their confinement, hopping up to fix Mycroft a plate, while he motioned his human to have a seat.

“Your demon is infuriating. I was permitted only the smallest morsel of food. A mouse would not survive on what I was provided.”

“I suspect, brother, that Gregory’s rather draconian measures were enacted only after you consumed a full portion of breakfast and were attempting to confiscate the remainder of the morning’s serving, not from hunger, but from naked greed and hope to deny me anything to fuel my day.”
“Untrue! I am desperate for nourishment!”

Greg put a piece of toast and a few wedges of fruit on Sherlock’s plate and nodded at the expected sputtering.

“I am desperate for other nourishment!”

“You had a hard time finishing your own food, little one. Mycroft’s right about you trying to be sneaky and greedy and a belly ache would serve you right, but I don’t want you to feel poorly at school. Now, eat your toast and fruit if you’re still hungry or give it to me and I’ll finish it.”

The offending items were immediately deposited on the demon’s plate and Mycroft contented himself with eating while his lover held sway over the breakfast table. Gregory’s parenting instincts were surprisingly robust given his now-discovered youth and not sharing a species with the children he was so talented in parenting. However, there was truth in the existence of innate abilities and it was foolish to overlook such things or take them for granted.

“Excellent. And as a reward, Sherlock, why do you not visit Cook and place your request for your lunch. And she may verify with me that you might be allowed two biscuits in your lunch sack today, instead of your standard one.

Sherlock opened his mouth to protest, then realized protesting was exactly what he did not want to do, and sped off, closed mouthed, towards the kitchen.

“That was nice of you, love. Little one deserves a treat now and then.”

“I agree, but I also admit it is only through your example that I am learning to see such things for myself.”

“Sherlock is lucky you’re his brother. John, too, even though you’re not his real brother, it’s close enough.”

“Thank you, Gregory. And, might I assume that you did not broach with Sherlock the subject of Mummy and Father’s return?”

“No, I didn’t think it was a good idea before he had to go to school. It upset you and I was worried it would do the same to him, but I can’t help him relax the way I do you, so I decided to wait. Besides, you should be the one to tell him, since they’re your parents and you probably know how to talk to him about them.”

“Most wise. Sherlock will be confused and, likely, disconcerted at the news. He loves Mummy and Father dearly, as do I, however… they spend a great deal of time traveling and I suppose that Sherlock and I have grown into a pattern of life that is disturbed when they are at home. His time with John is lessened, for example, as is mine to read. We are happy to see them, of course, but… there is a loss of independence that chafes.”

“I think I understand. Did I… did I do any of that?”

“No, my dear. If anything, our independence has been enhanced. Sherlock and John are freer than ever to pursue their interests and entertainments and I have seen my own world broadened, as well. And my time for activities such as reading are still part of our itinerary, but now I can share them with you. However… we still must address the issue of you, as it pertains to Mummy and Father.”

“Will they like me?”
“That… that ultimately is not the salient question. Here is what I propose. Let us discuss this upon our return from school, where we have the afternoon and evening free for discourse and John might even be a participant, for he has interests and investments in this matter.”

“That sounds smart. I just don’t want you to be in trouble over me, love. Maybe I should take time today to look for a cave nearby I can live in if your parents don’t like me very much.”

“I am hopeful that will not be necessary and, in any case, I doubt you shall find a cave on the property. But do feel free to explore the grounds in more depth. The flowers are coming along nicely and as we move into summer, they shall make a fine showing.”

“I know you like flowers, too. You always smile when I bring you an armful.”

“I admit that I do. And I never once believed that I would ever be the recipient of flowers, yet you shower me with them and I could not be happier. Oh… look at the time. And Sherlock has not returned from the kitchen, so he has likely already eaten his two biscuits and is currently bartering for more. Today shall be a joyous day all around.”

Greg laughed, but didn’t miss the slight tension in his human’s face. He was still very bothered and that wasn’t good, but following him to school to be there if he got upset for some reason wasn’t a smart thing to do and Mycroft didn’t like un-smart things. Which made sense, really, so he had to start trying to be smarter about what he did and didn’t do. Today… no going to school. And he’d think very hard about what to do when Mycroft’s parents were here; his human was too important not to put all of his thinking in that direction. He loved Mycroft and living here with him and Sherlock and John, when he visited. He didn’t know what he’d do if that had to change. Didn’t know at all. Definitely time to think…

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“I am discontent!”

“Hush, Sherlock. Gregory will continue with your transparency experiments as soon as this meeting is concluded.”

“Can I be transparent, too?”

“I am certain Gregory will happily include you, John. Now, if there are no further distractions, I shall begin.”

Mycroft looked to his demon for support and took strength from Greg’s encouraging smile.

“What we are here to discuss is a rather troubling issue. Sherlock, John… I received communication from Mummy and Father. They shall be home in three… no, two… days’ time.”

“What! Intolerable! They are not permitted to change their schedule!”

“No! I don’t get to come and play nearly as often when they’re home!”

“Your objections are duly noted, however, they do not change the fact that we are soon to greet them upon their return. Given that fact, I assume you see the greater problem.”

“The interference with John and my routines is the greatest of problems.”

“No, Sherlock… Mycroft means Greg. I don’t think your parents are going to be happy finding someone living here they don’t know and… well, being Mycroft’s boyfriend. They sleep in the
same room! That might make your parents upset.”

Sherlock scowled but didn’t offer any rebuttal to John’s synopsis, so Mycroft pressed forward.

“I believe, John, your analysis is correct. Now, the task at hand is to craft a strategy to keep Gregory with us and in the comfort of the home we have come to share.”

“Coward! Simply state your intentions to Mummy and Father and leave it at that!”

“I would be ecstatic if it were that easy, brother, however, I do not own this house and Mummy and Father, if displeased, would be well within their rights to have Gregory removed by the constables.”

“But Greg’s a demon! He can just magic his way out of jail, so that’s not really a problem.”

“And you hit upon the second tier of our dilemma, John. No one can know Gregory’s heritage, now can they?”

“Oh. I forgot about that.”

“Worry not, for I, myself, forget, though I am presented with the evidence daily.”

“I still claim cowardice! If your backbone was sufficiently stiff, the shock would cow Mummy and Father, for they have seen naught but your worm-like nature since you were born. You could broker that shock into a very favorable agreement for the heathen’s continued residence.”

“Thank you, Sherlock, your suggestion has been appropriately filed.”

“I was doing a lot of thinking today, love, and I have a few suggestions, actually.”

“Oh? Please, Gregory, do go on.”

“Well, I could turn invisible. It’s not easy and I couldn’t do it for a whole day, but I could probably hide when I needed a rest. There are a lot of places to hide in a house this big.”

“Ah… well considered, my dear, however, I would assume you would become visible at some point we were together, say when we slept, and without a guarantee of privacy, our time could potentially be intruded upon and your ruse discovered.”

“Oh. Ok. Well, that wasn’t my best idea anyway.”

“Then do present us with your best effort.”

“Alright. I thought… well, I can do things and maybe… I could give your parents a lot of money or gold or jewels and pay to stay here. They couldn’t object if I was paying for my food and things, could they?”

Mycroft didn’t have to look at the small boys to know they considered this a fine idea and were already planning their own campaign to have the demon fill their own chests with treasure.

“Such a creative thought, but not one that shall persuade Mummy and Father, I’m afraid. They would likely be suspicious as to how one of your tender years could acquire such wealth and we would have no believable and substantive reason to offer.”

“Really? I thought it was a good idea.”
“It was very well thought-out, but you lacked the intimate knowledge of my parents’ mental workings to factor them into your calculations.”

“Oh. That makes sense.”

“Good. And, in truth, you have concocted more possible scenarios than have I. My best thought was a new student in school who, for a reason I have not yet decided upon, cannot stay in the dormitory and to whom I offered a room.”

“That’s not bad! I like that, love. It sounds like I’d have to pretend to have my own room, but that’s ok, because I could sneak into yours at night for a bit of fun and a little sleep.”

“Unfortunately, the plan is fatally flawed on several fronts. Firstly, you would have to appear to attend school…”

“I’d LOVE to go to school!”

“… but you cannot actually attend for you are not enrolled and would have to find some way to occupy your day away from the house, which is an unfair burden on you. Second, it would be expected that you return home at the end of the term and that is not to our favor. And, of course… there is the village conundrum.”

“Is that one of the shops? I don’t remember visiting that one.”

“No, conundrum means, say, problem or puzzle. You are not unknown in the village, my dear, and, though it is rare for either Mummy or Father to spend any appreciable amount of time there, they do visit and would certainly be asked, at some point, about you and, more worryingly, you and me.”

“I’m sorry, Mycroft. I didn’t think about that. Maybe I just should have stayed here and not gone exploring.”

Mycroft reached over to stroke his demon’s cheek and soothe away his sadness.

“Nonsense. If you had not, consider the number of individuals who would not have another friend to count in their ledger.”

Greg’s smile slowly moved across his lips and Sherlock and John quickly averted their eyes for the inevitable kiss.

“Thanks, love. It doesn’t solve our problem, though, does it?”

“No, I’m afraid it does not. I suppose I could claim to have been corresponding with you and we decided a meeting was in order, but there is a hint of romanticism to that, which is most certainly not of my temperament.”

“That’s not true! You’re very romantic! Just last night, for instance, when you…”

“INDECENCY! John and I shall not suffer stories of your rutting and grunting.”

“I wasn’t going to be indecent! I was just reminding Mycroft of how romantic it was when he did the clean up and…”

“THANK YOU, Gregory… the children do not need to know that particular bit of our history.”

“Why? It’s not indecent.”
“It is… not appropriate for young ears.”

“I don’t understand that at all. Why is you sweeping up all the crumbs and cleaning my fingers after we snuck the rest of the chocolate cake up to your bedroom and ate it in bed considered inappropriate? The little ones have eaten a lot of cake, so they know how messy it can be if you use your fingers.”

Mycroft and Sherlock both cleared their throats and avoided looking at each other, while Greg and John both shook their heads in confusion.

“Yes, quite. Regardless, we are no closer to finding a solution than we were when we began this discussion.”

“I still assert that you should simply set aside your spineless nature and confront Mummy and Father directly. You are of age for the unspeakably filthy acts you perpetrate on the demon and they will simply have to acknowledge that and allow the continued slaking of your lusts.”

Mycroft sighed at Greg’s nodding in agreement and John’s slightly-appalled nod, as well, wishing the situation was that simple.

“It would be a grand thing if that was all that was required, Sherlock, but do you really believe Mummy and Father would be so agreeable, regardless of the adamancy of my argument?”

“Their agreement is irrelevant. We shall… ah, yes. Extortion. If Mummy and Father do not accept the demon as the household pet, I, with the assistance of John, shall perpetrate acts of extreme disrepute and ruin their social reputation. This shall be your threat and John and I will support it fully, providing example, if required.”

Sherlock smiled proudly, John cheered, Greg tried to work out the thrust of Sherlock’s speech and Mycroft wished the brandy decanter wasn’t on the other side of the room.

“Sherlock, you shall not become a miscreant, well, at least more so than you can currently claim. But… as we approach the bottom of our proverbial barrel, the idea of disclosure, at least for the subject of Gregory and my relationship and our desire for his continued residence is standing as the most likely possibility. I suppose… I suppose that if the response is a negative one… I do have some independent means from grandfather and that would support a separate residence for myself and Gregory.”

“What! Unacceptable! You will not leave me alone in this mausoleum!”

“Love, we can’t leave the little one, alone. He’ll be lonely and bored, especially if John can’t come and visit whenever he wants.”

“It is not the solution that I would prefer, but… it might be the only option. And, given Mummy and Father’s rather, shall we say, itchy feet, it would not be long before they would again be traveling and we could simply return to residence and continue on as before, perhaps renting our own home and earning back some of the monies expended for its purchase.”

“Love…”

“I shall not lose you, Gregory. Whatever is required, I will do to keep us together. And, I will extend that to Sherlock and John. I have no intention of seeing what we have discovered and built together to fall to pieces. It will not happen. I simply will not allow it.”

Greg got out of his chair and stood behind Mycroft, wrapping arms around his shoulders and placing
a kiss on his forehead.

“I know you’ll do your best, Mycroft. The little ones do, too. And, since we really don’t have any other ideas right now, how about we rest our brains and do something fun. We can play for awhile and the little ones only have a tiny amount of work to do for school tomorrow, so we can play after they get that finished, too. John can stay and eat dinner with us, can’t he?”

“Yes, that is an excellent idea. And, of course, John may stay for dinner. Now, why don’t we change from our uniforms and find something to amuse ourselves. Thank you, my dear. You are ever prepared with ways to raise our spirits.”

Mycroft took Greg’s hand and gave it a kiss before rising from his chair and smiling at the two glowering boys. No, they were not ready to consider the matter closed and neither, in truth, was he, however, there was little for it at present and something to take their minds off their troubles certainly would not be amiss. And, besides… he desperately needed a moment simply to take his demon in his arms and hold him tightly. To breathe in his scent and look into his beautiful eyes, drawing what strength he could from his lover’s warmth. No, he would not allow them to be parted… no matter the price to be paid…

It was the hardest thing Mycroft had ever done to weather the days, then hours until his parents’ arrival and that sentiment was shared by the rest of the family, in Sherlock’s case, at the highest possible volume.

“Send a servant to disable their vehicle!”

“That would postpone the inevitable by only a few hours, brother dear.”

“Then… have them kidnapped!”

“No, that is not an option.”

“It could be if the kidnapper took them somewhere nice, where the food was good and there was a telly and soft beds.”

Mycroft reached down and stroked the hair of the small boy who had scarcely left Sherlock’s side since their family meeting.

“It is very kind of you to consider my parents comfort during their hostage state, John, however, I believe that would not make them more amenable to hearing our case when we finally had the chance to present it.”

“How… how much longer, love?”

Mycroft patted the demon on the hand, smiling again at how much care and attention he had taken in dressing and grooming. His poor Gregory had fretted terribly over making a good first impression and it made him all the more glorious to behold.

“At any time, now, I believe. It is difficult to pinpoint such things, especially if they decide to stop at some point for a meal or because they have seen something that strikes their fancy.”

“Ok… do I look alright?”

“You have asked me that countless times, my love, and my answer now is the same as for the
others... you are breathtaking.”

“The demon appears as if he was a toddler being taken to church and that is not likely to impress Mummy and Father.”

“What! I’ve got to go change.”

“That is not necessary, Gregory, for your appearance is perfectly appropriate. Sherlock is simply nervous and making others suffer for his distress.”

“Untrue! He is but one bowtie away from being asked to sell tickets for the church fete!”

“I didn’t even think of a tie! Let me go get mine.”

Mycroft grabbed the demon’s hand as he started towards the stairs and drew him close to stand at his side.

“You do not need a tie, for your ensemble is quite complete without it. Sherlock, do behave.”

“Oh dear, what has your brother done now?”

One demon and three humans turned towards this new voice and four gasps filled the entranceway as the lady of the house walked through the door, followed closely by Mycroft and Sherlock’s father. Then it was a single gasp that sounded loud in the room.

“I know you!”

Mycroft’s eyes followed the grinning demon’s pointing finger, which was aimed directly at his father’s face and felt his knees go weak at the sudden paleness on the target’s face.

“Grew up a bit, but I do know you! Mycroft, why didn’t you tell me I knew your dad? That would have made all of this a lot easier!”

Mycroft, Sherlock and John stood stock still in shock and startled when Greg darted forward and gave Mycroft’s father a large hug.

“This is great! And I didn’t need that tie, after all.”

“G... Greg? Greg?”

The demon had to duck quickly to miss being hit by the handbag that Mummy Holmes slung at her husband, who was still sputtering Greg’s name.

“You told me you got rid of that infernal book!”

“I... I need a drink.”

Mycroft and the boys dashed after the older man, who was still swatting off his wife’s handbag accuracy, while Greg stood a moment smiling, then broke into a dance. Sometimes life treated you brilliantly and this was the most brilliant that brilliant could be!
Chapter 27

Chapter Notes

And here we are at the end of our tale... I want to extend my most sincere gratitude to all of you who have supported this story and followed along with our boys' adventures. The kind words truly made this story a joy to write and I am very thankful for each and every one!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Mycroft snatched up the brandy decanter as soon as his father set it down and glared his most incendiary glare at the man when he frowned disapprovingly.

“Oh no... do not favor me with your disapproval, Father, when this is the least of the matters up for discussion. How could you... how could you not inform me of your knowledge of magic!”

“Brandy! Can I have one!

Mycroft sighed at the arrival of the remainder of the family and realized that a focused conversation between him and his parents was not the way this afternoon was going to be spent.

“Gregory... I believe this would go far more smoothly... oh, why not. Let us lubricate our synapses with ethanol so Father’s scurrilous omissions are easier to bear.”

“John and I, also, demand to be provided with brandy!”

“Sorry, Sherlock, you’re too young, though watching you and John toddle around drunk would be funny. Another year or two, though, I think.”

“STOP!”

Four boys froze in their tracks at the imperious command issued in highly annoyed female tones.

“Is this truly that... demon?”

“Yes! Hello, I’m Greg. Well, actually, I’m...”

Mycroft seethed that his father’s distressed moan at the cacophonous cascade of consonants assaulting his ears was nearly identical to his own.

“... but most people call me Greg. Greg Lestrade, now, actually. Sherlock gave me that second name. Isn’t it brilliant?”

“You... you are Greg. You are the villainous and insidious individual that plagued my husband for an entire summer in his youth?”

“Plagued? If you mean had a randy time with, then I suppose so.”

Mycroft’s brandy hit the floor milliseconds ahead of his father’s and it was a contest as to who went from bedsheet white to rose red the fastest.
“You… you had relations… with Gregory! How dare you! This is… I call you out, sir!”

If he had an epee in his hand, Mycroft would already be preparing for a duel, though his anger was quickly being overcome by a feeling of profound discomfort. His father and Gregory? This was… was the room spinning?

“Mycroft! Here, love… let me sit you down, because you’re not looking very well. There we go… have a nice sit. Shhhhh… you just rest there and try not to look so sick.”

“What! Two generations of demon defilers under this roof? John! I am being overtaken by disgust!”

John quickly grabbed Sherlock’s sagging form and dragged it over to a chair, taking a moment to heave Sherlock up to sit then squeezing in next to him. This was great! Daytime telly wasn’t this good and that was funny enough!

“I… no! No, that’s not what… what does Sherlock mean by two generations?”

Mycroft roused from his hysteria to hiss at his father, which earned applause from both John and Sherlock because it was a truly demon-worthy one and they had the experience to make that judgment.

“You will…cease ever speaking to me. And you will not impugn Gregory and my love! I… keep your hands off of him, paedophile!”

“Love? Mycroft, what in god’s name are you talking about? And how did Greg get here?”

“Speak not his name, defiler!”

“Love, you need to calm down, because you’re getting a bit like me after the dance and… oh, now I see just how stupid that really was.”

“And you! You… fornicated with my father!”

“What?”

“Did you have a bedroom with him, too, Greg, or can Mycroft at least say that’s something special for him?”

John wished he had some snacks to enjoy, because between his question and Mycroft’s accusation the room was exploding in snorts, chokes, shouts, hisses and other sounds he usually only heard when all his relatives came for a special dinner. That usually ended in a lot of drunk, angry people, which was fun to watch, too.

“Mycroft Holmes! Explain yourself!”

“And you, Mummy! You are in no manner exempt from my wrath! You knew about this and failed to disclose any of it! Father besmirched my Gregory and for this I shall not stand!”

Greg grabbed Mycroft shoulders and pressed Mycroft back down on the sofa, because standing and probably something worse seemed very much on his lover’s mind.

“You will keep a civil tongue with me, Mycroft. You are not too old to be put over a knee.”

“Certainly not, for John and I are most convinced it is a prominent feature of his and the demon’s sexual gameplay.”
This ignited another firestorm which Sherlock waved off with a practiced hand.

“You are far too young, Mycroft Holmes, for any form of… anything! Your father and I deserve an explanation, at the very least.”

“Father and you deserve nothing for you trade in naught but lies and omissions! And Gregory was the one sexually violated, so our side stands squarely on the moral high ground!”

“I did not violate the demon!”

“Silence! I… I cannot bear to hear the sound of your duplicitous, self-serving timbre.”

Greg had been trying, and mostly failing, to put together the pieces of the conversation, but one thing was clear. His human was very upset and that was something he had to try and fix.

“Love… can you, just for me, not yell a minute and tell me, just me, what’s going on. I’ve sort of lost track of things.”

Mycroft looked into Greg’s eyes and deflated a little, seeing the honest confusion they contained.

“Of course, my dear. I am simply distressed that Mummy and Father knew of the existence of your kind and never revealed that to me. Further… even you, Gregory, must understand why I would be aggrieved to find that… that mine was not the first Holmes bed you shared.”

Now, those were pieces Greg could put together, though he certainly didn’t like the picture they were forming.

“You think I had a bit of fun with your dad? Really?”

“Do not try and protect him, Gregory. I am most certain you were not at fault. He… he seduced you and most certainly violated your trust.”

Mycroft waved a fist at his father’s ‘Ridiculous!,’ causing Greg to wrap his hand around his human’s tightly-closed fingers and lower them back down to Mycroft’s lap.

“Ok, now I have something to work with that I understand. Well, the first part I can’t because I don’t why your dad wouldn’t tell you about me, but the second part I can do something about. I didn’t have sex with your dad, love. That’s not to say I didn’t try, because he was a handsome thing, though not as handsome as you, but he said he didn’t like men that way and, also, I think I scared him a little.”

Sherlock and John huffed frustratedly at the loss of a source of very entertaining drama and slumped in their chair to see if anything interesting could be salvaged from the conversation.

“I… but, I thought… Gregory, you said you had, and I quote, ‘a randy time’ with my father.”

“Oh! Well, when I said ‘with’ I didn’t mean with, if you know what I mean.”

“I’m afraid I don’t.”

“Well, it was more… you see, there was this village near the house we were staying in and we’d sneak out for beer and there were lots of young ladies who were very happy to have a little fun with two handsome lads. For a small village, there was a lot of sex going on, which is a good thing if you ask me.”

“WHAT! You… you told me that you did not see anyone that summer, Edward Albert Holmes!”
Why… I knew it. I knew you came back too happy. You never came back from your grandfather’s manor a happy person.”

Sherlock and John brightened at the new source of family turmoil and rubbed their hands in anticipation.

“My dear, I…”

“What was it again? He was horrid, my love! He was a foul fiend from the depths of hell! I could scarcely break from his black and stinging grasp!”

“Is your mum talking about me, Mycroft?”

“Oh, no demon. That was what I was sufficiently fortunate enough to hear from my husband when he dragged himself back home for the start of school and had to explain the near destruction of his wardrobe, his… suntan… and the loss of my locket!”

“The locket! I forgot about that. He lost that gambling. I think a butcher owns it now, unless he also lost it playing darts.”

“Gambling!”

“Calm, my wife, you must be calm.”

“Tell that to my locket, you… wastrel! And how many women did you dally with when you were supposedly promised to me?”

“Lots! Albie and I had a very good time when we went to the village.”

“Albie! You… you affected a pseudonym to hide your debauchery!”

Mycroft had to admit his mother could throw a dastardly punch when so inspired and his father would likely sport a bruise on his arm for days as evidence.

“No… I… it was simply for a lark. Besides we were not promised to each other at that point. Pre-promised, at best. And Greg exaggerates, as he is very wont to do. Demon, remember.”

“Do not denigrate Gregory’s integrity! I have yet to give you the thrashing you deserve, Father, but I will if you speak of him in anything but flattering terms!”

“Mycroft, do not threaten your father.”

“You assaulted him, so do not speak to me of pacifism, Mummy.”

“I will speak to you, then, of keeping intimate company under my roof as if this is some form of… den of iniquity!”

“But they love each other! You’re supposed to kiss and stuff when you love each other and Greg lives here now, so where else are they supposed to do their boyfriend…ing?”

Sherlock nodded in support of John’s incisive analysis, smiling widely that the words seemed to unnerve his mother to an even greater level.

“Mycroft is entirely too young for love.”

“And how old were you when you and Father first became, shall we say, acquainted Mummy?
Why, I do believe it was… my age.”

“That is entirely beside the point!”

“Hypocrisy is a harsh word, yet it suits you so well.”

“I want to hear more about the gambling!”

“I second John’s demands! Enough of this ridiculous romantic twaddle.”

Mycroft’s father, having tried and failed to vanish into the background, poured himself a second brandy and decided this would boil and sputter forever if he simply didn’t tell the tale and be done with it.

“I suggest… let us see everyone comfortable and I shall do what I am able to make sense of the situation. Please, my love… have a seat and I shall pour for you some wine.”

“Make it scotch.”

“I… of course, my beloved.”

While his father tended to his mother, Mycroft quickly did the same for his demon for, in no manner, could his father appear more solicitous than was he.

“And I shall refill your brandy, my dear.”

“Thanks! And, before you start, little ones, I won’t see you left out.”

Greg said a few words, closed his eyes, and opened them when John cheered, seeing the tray of snacks and drinks appear on the table near the chair they were occupying. Something which transfixed Mycroft’s mother.

“You truly can perform magic.”

“Sure! Lots, actually. I even taught Albie a couple of spells, but he had a terrible time with them. Not Sherlock, though. He’s amazing with magic! John, too. John, tell Sherlock’s mum how you made Mycroft’s hair grow down to his bum.”

John opened his mouth to answer, but got cut off by another groan from the family patriarch, which sounded far more interesting than what he was going to say.

“Sherlock has magical talent? We are doomed.”

“Sherlock’s great, Mr. Holmes! He’s done all sorts of spells, even if they were hard ones that took a long time. We visited Greg in demon world, for instance, and that was miserably hard. I’m good, too, though and helped. Mycroft doesn’t really try, so we don’t know how good he is, but he did summon Greg here with a spell from the spell book, so he can’t be too bad at magic.”

Which brought something back right to the front of Mycroft’s mind.

“Thank you, John. Now, Father… please tell me how you know my Gregory and had possession of the book that could summon him to this world. And please pepper your dissertation liberally with reasons why I was not informed of any of this.”

“And I! I could have been honing my abilities near from birth if I had this knowledge!”
Sherlock’s indignation was as real as Mycroft’s irritation, which, combined with his wife’s ‘you shall pay for this evermore’ glare, gave the sire of the Holmes family intimate awareness of what it meant to the fox to be surrounded by the hounds.

“Fine! Fine… the book was my grandfather’s, though I do not know from where he obtained it or exactly when. It was a summer that I was sent to spend at the manor, for my parents had plans to travel, that I became aware of it. I thought he was mad! He was old, then, very old and I thought his ramblings were the workings of a doddering mind… talking about magic and spells. Creatures from other worlds… it was not until he performed a small spell that I realized his words were true. Then… Greg arrived.”

“Hah! That was fun. Well, getting my flesh carved up wasn’t fun, but after that…”

“What! Gregory… are you… Father, if you tortured my Gregory, you shall not evade my most heinous retribution.”

“Shhhhh… it’s ok, love. It wasn’t your dad, and it wasn’t as bad as you think. Well, it was, actually, but my skin doesn’t hurt as bad as yours I think. And it was either that or a summoning circle. Or enchanted cage.”

“I… I don’t understand.”

“Well, you summon a demon and there’s a problem. First, we’re real, so we can hit, like your mum, or bite or grab a knife and stab you if we don’t like you. Then we can turn you into something nasty or make your skin turn inside out or something. A circle or special cage can keep us away from you physically and hold our magic inside unless you release it to do what you want. The problem is we’re stuck there and can’t go off to do something and there’s only things we can do if we can see what we’re doing them on. So… there’s symbols you can carve on us so it’s like having a cage around us, but we can go places. And if we try to run away, you can summon us back. So, if I’m given a choice, I usually choose that one, because I’m free to move around and it heals as soon as I go home again. I mean… you’ve seen all of my skin and it’s perfect, wouldn’t you say?”

The demon’s waggling eyebrows flustered Mycroft’s mother again and Sherlock began to calculate how he could use this power to his advantage. Anything to barter more freedom to spend time with John was certainly a tool he wanted in his arsenal.

“Very well. Father, your health is spared. For now. Continue.”

Mycroft’s mother had to admit that her son was showing sides of himself that she hadn’t seen before and, though she was not at all certain how she felt about them, he was becoming a rather interesting man…

“Your superciliousness is not appreciated, son.”

“Neither is anything you have perpetrated to this point, Father, so continue on or I shall not step in to moderate any of Sherlock’s new and rather startling magical mischief.”

Since that was an alarmingly effective threat…

“Grandfather summoned a demon, mostly, I believe, to prove to me that he could, and… there was Greg.”

“Right! Your mum hasn’t seen me, has she, love?”

In a flash, Greg appeared in his normal skin and both Sherlock and John giggled at Sherlock’s
mother’s shocked gasp.

“Much my reaction, as well, my dear. Well, there was no denying my grandfather was truthful in his assertions and... he did not see fit to see the creature returned to whatever hell he sprang from.”

“Greg’s home isn’t hell, really. It’s hot and sort of strange, but I don’t think you can get fish and juice in hell. Certainly not my new necklace. There are probably people who try and eat you, but that only happened once in Greg’s home and it likely happens a lot in real hell.”

“Thanks, John!”

Choosing not to uptake any part of that conversation, for sake of his sanity, Mycroft’s father continued on.

“Well... now, there was a demon in the household and... I made do as best I could.”

“You make it sound like we didn’t have fun? Why are you doing that? We had a lot of fun and there’s nothing wrong with having a good time with someone.”

“For the reason, demon, that Father has never evinced a modicum of behavior that is less than boring in the years I have known him and is likely embarrassed by what he perceives as a crime against propriety, in addition to his crass infidelity and general debauchery.”

Being chastised and outglared by a child did absolutely nothing to improve Sherlock’s father’s mood.

“That is most untrue, Sherlock. It was simply... youthful indiscretion on my part.”

“We had a great time indiscreting, too. I didn’t get to drive an automobile, though, or play with little ones, but it was still a grand time. I was sad when you left, Albie. I didn’t forget you, either.”

“Apparently, Father was happy to forget about you, though, my dear.”

“That is also untrue, Mycroft. It was simply... how does one explain such things? The one person I told, your mother, had the most difficult time believing my words and it was only the demonstration of one of the small spells Greg had taught to me that convinced her I was not lying or mad as a hatter. And, when next I encountered a demon Grandfather had summoned, it... well, it certainly was not an agreeable beast. I felt it best that the knowledge not be passed down, lest it... well, lest you and Sherlock do exactly what it appears you have already been doing.”

“And the book?”

Wishing his eldest son would let the matter die and forget the conversation in its entirety was not enough, apparently, to make it happen, onward the story went.

“When my grandfather died, the contents of his library passed to me. I... I will not say I did not experiment with it, however, Greg’s evaluation of my talents was not inaccurate. The smallest of spells I could perform with notable difficulty, but beyond that... it was simply a decorative volume for my shelves. That was until... you were born.”

That perked up many ears in the room and four young males sat up straight and tall waiting to hear where this new information would lead.

“You did know the book, Mycroft. And when you were just learning to read, you pulled that accursed tome from the shelf and sounded out your way through a spell to create fire. If your mother had not smelled smoke... it was then that I decided the book was not safe in the house.”
Some of Mycroft’s anger faded as he could, at least, understand keenly what must have gone through his parent’s minds. He had small memory of that event, but not the cause and, hearing it now, he knew how his parents must have felt. He worried terribly about Sherlock and John, even without magic, but after discovering their new talents, that worry had grown by leaps and bounds. Which made finding the book in a shop all the more frightening to contemplate.

“So, you gave it away? Knowing how dangerous was the book, you simply let it free into the world?”

“No, Mycroft. I am not quite that irresponsible. First I tried a dozen ways to destroy it.”

Greg’s shaking head told Mycroft the outcome of that particular venture.

“Oh, that won’t work. Grimoires are tough and don’t take to being burned or torn or anything like that. You can destroy them with the right ritual, but if you don’t know it, you don’t really have any hope. But… that does, maybe, explain why your spell found me, love. Spell books can… get used to things. You do a spell for a flower and it gives you the same flower over and over because it’s easier once it’s done that flower before. If it called me up before, especially by someone in your family, it might have been easier for it to find and grab me when you tried for the incubus and botched it.”

“INCUBUS!”

“Mummy, I am growing weary of your prudery. Let me announce it fully for you. I am acquainted with intimate activities and I prefer they occur with other males. If that appalls you…”

“Mycroft, we have known you were attracted to men since you were visited by puberty. I am more concerned… you are growing up and I am not certain if that is to my liking.”

More of Mycroft’s irritation faded, because, again he had some inkling of that particular trouble. Sherlock was growing so quickly and making his own life…

“Yes, well… back to the book. What finally became of it, Father?”

“I… I donated it to a collection for charity. I hoped that, given the complexity of the languages involved, which you were, unfortunately, unusually talented, there would be little harm if it fell into the hands of the average individual.”

“That’s not totally stupid, actually. Sherlock or Greg have had to teach me the words of the spells, otherwise, I probably wouldn’t have been able to do them at all.”

“And John is supremely average!”

John smiled widely at Sherlock’s compliment so no one in the room dared to correct his misapprehension. And, Mycroft had to concede he knew of no harm that had been done…

“Given that there has been no eruption of magical mayhem, I suppose it was not the poorest of plans.”

“Where did you find it, son?”

“In a shop in the village. An abandoned shop that Sherlock and John had claimed as their own personal territory.”

“Could have been the book again, just so you know. They’re stubborn things and if it wasn’t
happy you gave it away, it could have made it so it came back, somehow, even if it took a long time. And aren’t I lucky it fell into my Mycroft’s gorgeous hands.”

Greg leaned over and kissed Mycroft on the cheek, causing both parental figures to heave a sigh and resign themselves to the fact their hoped-for lack of young love in Mycroft’s life was well and truly shattered.

“And, you, Mycroft… Greg is living here? Is that what I understood?”

“Gregory has never, Father, been under my control and he has chosen freely to be at my side. We do love each other, a thing that has been tested and found to be strong, so I fully anticipate he shall ever be with me. And his gifts with the children are unimaginable. Truly… Gregory has helped to make this house a home.”

This shared look between his parents was something Mycroft could not define, though it intrigued him mightily.

“I see. Then… your mother and I have some rather serious thinking to undertake.”

“If you hope to see Gregory parted from me, understand now that you will not succeed. Even if I must purchase a residence for us, I shall do so.”

“You are not old enough to buy a home, Mycroft. However, that was not the point of my statement.”

“Oh? Then what. If it concerns Gregory and me, Father, we have a right to know.”

“Not everything is about you, Mycroft, however… this does concern you, as well as Sherlock.”

Getting the nod from his wife, and after a long sip of his brandy, Mycroft’s father pressed on with reason they had actually returned early from their travels.

“I have been offered a position of some interest in the government. It will still permit your mother and I opportunities for travel, however, we must be based in London. We decided that we must discuss the issue with you and Sherlock before we made a decision, since you would be uprooted and Sherlock… he would lose contact with his only friend. Now, though… I am seeing a clearing of the fog…”

Mycroft and Sherlock looked at each other and honestly had no idea what to say. Whereas both had spoken of wanting to live in London, to do so now… in new schools and without access to the privacy the grounds provided them for their new entertainments… it suddenly sounded like something they would rather wait to enjoy a bit later in life.

“I see. And why do say the fog is clearing?”

“Well, Mycroft, if there is an individual, besides you, who knows of what Greg is capable, it is me. I cannot say there is an individual on this planet who would be a more capable protector of you and your brother than he, no matter the seriousness of the crisis.”

“That’s true! No one can take better care of Mycroft and the little ones than me. I even made amulets so I know if they’re in trouble when I’m not there with them.”

“My very point. Have you made for them a teleportation object, yet?”

Sherlock and John gasped and vibrated with undisguised glee.
“Actually no, because… well, I haven’t really had need to, but I can. They take time, but they’re not that hard.”

“So, visits between here and London would not be difficult to affect so we could see them, at will.”

Mycroft looked between his father and his lover and decided there was little about his demon that was actually a source of surprise.

“Gregory, you can teleport?”

“I most certainly can, love. With one other person, too, and it’s not so hard. With more, though… that’s more than I can do easily. But what I can do is make each of you something like your amulet and set a point you can go back and forth from on your own. I have to tailor each one, so it’ll take time, but I can do it. Did one for your dad to go to the village and back, which came in handy when he was very drunk and being silly so I couldn’t fly him home or hold his hand so we could both teleport back together.”

“And you will make one for John!”

“Of course, Sherlock! I wouldn’t leave John out for that. We could all go and visit London together. I’ve been there before, but I think it was a long time ago, so I’d like to see what it’s like now with automobiles and not horses.”

Mycroft listened to the exchange and quickly put all the pieces together into a very appealing picture.

“I take it, Father, you propose to accept the position, but leave Sherlock and me here, knowing we shall not come to harm and we may have dinners and such with you on occasion through the use of Gregory’s gifts.”

“My thought exactly. I know… I know your mother and I are not at home often and that is, perhaps, unforgivably selfish of us. In truth, part of the reason I was considering accepting the position was that it would, shall we say, fix my feet to the floor more so than now, so we could be a greater part of your lives. Now, we can see that happen, though leave you in a situation to which I feel you have become accustomed and enjoy. It must be a happy thing to have the run of a house this size with your paramour in tow.”

Teasing… if there was anything more odious than parental disapproval of his relationship, it was parental teasing about his relationship…

“It’s great! Mycroft and I have a great time! And there’s so much room for the little ones to play, both inside the house and out. Lots of opportunity for fresh air and running about… and the village is close, too, which is brilliant. Have you been to the tavern in the village? It’s easily as good as the one we’d visit in the other village and the people are very nice. Now that I think about it, too, Mycroft is as bad at darts when he’s drunk as you, Albie! Hah! That must be that… Sherlock, what’s the word that you said wasn’t genie?”

“Genetics, buffoon.”

“Right! Must be genetics.”

And, of course, Gregory does not recognize parental teasing, nor that it would most certainly escalate now that his newer habits were becoming common knowledge.

“Mycroft Holmes… visiting a pub and displaying public drunkeness… where is the little boy we
left when we last packed our luggage?”

“Mummy… do not believe for a moment that any revelations about my maturation are to be considered fair play for jocularity.”

“I shall believe that for all moments, Mycroft, for that is my prerogative as a mother. I have to see some reward for the countless hours of painful labor I endured birthing you. Now… your father and I have some issues to discuss regarding his time with your… Greg and I believe now is a stellar point to get started. We shall see you later for dinner.”

With a grab of the ear, Mycroft watched his mother drag his father out of the library and, only when the door was securely closed behind him, did he let out a sigh of relief.

“Is that it? Is there to be no fisticuffs? I am profoundly disappointed.”

“I do apologize, brother dear, however, it appears… victory is ours without bloodshed.”

Something his mind was still trying to grasp, but it really could not be denied. His Gregory… this truly was now his home. This was truly now their home…

“This is great! Greg gets to stay here and so does Sherlock. We get to keep flying and being demons and doing magic…”

John jumped out of his chair and began an exuberant dance, which quickly gained him a taller, green partner.

“Mycroft, can you not control your concubine?”

“Sherlock, can you not control your counterpart?”

“At least John can dance.”

“Gregory is a masterful dancer or have your eyes begun to fail you.”

As the brothers bickered, neither could hide their growing smile that their worries were officially over. In fact, they had other things to look forward to, now, and that wildly beyond their greatest hopes. London would be theirs to explore and… and they could actually see their parents now and again. But these visits would end with them returning to their own home to continue on with the lives they have begun building. Really, what could be better?

“Know what we need, love? Ice cream.”

Apparently something could be better, and that was the official start of a life, with the addition of dairy.

“I quite agree. Sherlock, John, do you concur?”

The dash of two small boys out the library door was answer enough and it gave Mycroft and Greg a chance to celebrate the outcome of their day.

“I love you, Mycroft. And, now I can love you all the time and not have to live in a cave and visit after everyone else has gone to sleep.”

“And I love you, Gregory. Though there are still things we must wait to do when everyone else has gone to sleep.”
“Sexy things, right?”

“Most certainly.”

“You know… I can make it so everyone’s very sleepy very early.”

“I shall remember that, my dear, though too early and we might miss our evening meal, which is something I know would grieve you terribly.”

“Cook did say she was making something special tonight since your parents were coming home. She winked, too, so it’s got to be especially good.”

“Then we shall forestall your witchcraft until after dinner.”

“John’s going to stay, right?”

“I would dream of nothing else.”

“Ok, then. A good dinner, maybe some chatting because I really want to talk to your dad and mum and learn what Albie’s been doing since I knew him, but then… me and you and that great, big bed.”

“Perfection. Shall we go?”

“We won’t get ice cream if we don’t.”

“Then, let us make haste…”

Six months later…

“Just look at them, love. Like they were born here!”

Mycroft smiled at his lover’s tail running up and down his leg as they sat in the rather ramshackle tavern or restaurant or whatever it could be called and sipped what Gregory’s people called alcohol. He should be feeling very uncomfortable, sitting in public in nothing but a loincloth covering his exotically-hued unmentionables, but when in Rome…

“Sherlock and John do seem to fit in well with your world.”

“And so do you, Mycroft. Did you see everyone watching us when we were shopping? Our family was the center of attention and that’s because you and the little ones are just amazing.”

Actually, Greg was not happy with the amount of attention they’d been getting because there were far too many eyes on his Mycroft. Mycroft was the most beautiful demon he’d ever seen, and he wasn’t alone, so there were a lot of envious eyes and scheming he wasn’t happy about. Already, he’d had to shoo off more than a few people who wanted to ‘chat,’ and were using their tails to try and lift his lover’s loincloth to catch a better look at what his Mycroft had to offer. They were lucky they didn’t lose their tails to his teeth.

“And you, my dear. Do not think for a moment I have not spied the covetous eyes upon you. Though…”

“Yeah?”
“I may have noticed a pair or two glance my way.”

Greg smiled and leaned over to give Mycroft a kiss. It was taking time, but his human was gaining confidence in certain areas and nobody could be happier for it than he was.

“More than a pair or two. I told you that you were magnificent the first time I saw you in this form, didn’t I? Nearly came just from looking at how beautiful you were and that wouldn’t have been fun to explain to the little ones. And I was right! You’re the most gorgeous demon anywhere you can see. And you’re all mine…”

This kiss wasn’t nearly as chaste as the first, but Mycroft decided a little leeway was permitted. They were, in a sense, on holiday, were they not?

“I believe we might extend that to ourselves as a couple and celebrate our status properly.”

Mycroft took a breath and called over to the proprietor as he had seen the other demons do, for two more… alcohols… speaking slowly so his pronunciation was not overly abominable.

“I love it when you speak my language, love. I especially love watching your mouth and pretending what else it could be doing other than making all those lovely sounds.”

“Gregory, do behave. Oh, and we are to have dinner with Mummy and Father on Friday, where there shall be a number of individuals present from Father’s work, so be prepared for dinner conversation of the most stultifying and non-salacious fashion.”

“No talking about sexy things at dinner. Got it.”

“Excellent.”

“And… I have something to tell you, too, Mycroft. Want to hear it?”

“Is it of a sexy nature?”

“Uh… no. But I can talk about sexy things when I’m finished, though.”

“Then, proceed.”

“Ok, well… you know how we’ve been talking about what I can do since you and the little ones are at school again, which I don’t understand because surely you’ve learned enough by now, but it you say you have to, then you have to?”

“Yes, I know the conversations to which you are referring.”

“Good. Because I’ve got it all sorted and you don’t have to worry anymore.”

Which was not something Mycroft could say now, because his level of worry had just climbed to up to an unhappy position on the scale of concern.

“Oh, and what have you… sorted.”

“You know that old shop where Sherlock and John found the spell book?”

“I am not likely to forget.”

“Well… I bought it!”
Worry vaulting off the scale and beginning to climb Mt. Everest!

“You… you bought it?”

“Yes!”

“Gregory… you have no money to buy anything.”

“That’s not true, I have lots of money. You’ve seen it.”

“Are you telling me that you walked into an estate agent’s office and handed them stacks of banknotes? Fake banknotes?”

If the police were not waiting for them when they returned from their day of rest, Mycroft would be extremely disappointed at their incompetence.

“You need to stop saying they’re fake, because Albie said they were fine and he took them and put them in a bank for me.”

“F… Father took your money and established for you an account? How can he do that? You do not exist!”

“I do! I’m sitting right here!”

“I mean… you do not have papers of identity to verify your name. You have no history, no birth certificate, no school records…”

“I do now! Albie showed me examples of what I needed and I made them. He had someone put them wherever they’re supposed to be and so I have money in a bank, now!”

“Father conspired to create for you a false identity?”

“You have an issue with things like fake and false, don’t you.”

“And… he let you buy a shop? With your money?”

“He thought it was great! What did he say… something about cavies and emperors that I didn’t understand, but I looked that up in the book of words you gave me. I already knew emperor because I got summoned by a court magician for one, once, but did you know that cavies are the cutest little animals? I’ll bring some home one day so the little ones can play with them, but I still don’t understand what they have to do with me buying a shop.”

So… Father had decided Gregory’s wealth-enhancement abilities were perfectly acceptable, had he? Why could he muster no surprise for this. Father was showing sides of himself that were most unseemly, of late. And Mummy was no better… he truly had no desire to know where Gregory had gotten the set of diamond jewelry Mummy had worn to the opera, but, at least, he returned it home once the night came to an end…

“Caveat emptor, my dear, was that the phrase?”

“It was! See, you’re so good with words.”

“Yes… and Gregory… the more pressing issue… why have you purchased a shop?”

“Because I’m going to be a shopkeeper.”
Oh no.

“My dear, I cannot imagine that to be a good idea.”

“It’s a great idea! I get to be in the village all day and talk to people and run to the fish and chips shop for lunch and have the old people come in and visit me. I’ll put some comfortable chairs in my shop so they can have a sit while we chat. I’ll get one of those kettles, too, so I can make them tea. The old people very much like their tea.”

His current blood alcohol content was doing very little to dim his growing headache, so Mycroft decided to try the ‘more is better’ philosophy and ordered another round.

“Gregory… I am not certain if you are aware of this, but a shop actually has to have a function, wares to vend. It cannot simply serve as a comfortable place for tea and a chat.”

“Then what are tea shops for?”

“The sell their tea, my dear, something I am highly unconvinced that you will do.”

“Well, that part’s true, but my shop is going to sell things.”

“And what might that be?”

“Magical things!”

No, there was no amount of alcohol in this universe of the next that would be able to dim this headache.

“You cannot be serious. Gregory, you know well how strictly we must guard your secret.”

“I know, but I also know there was a magic shop there before I bought it. I found a mouse family to talk to and they said the owner really didn’t know much about magic and less about business, so it didn’t do very well, but the people in the village actually liked it and thought it was fun. People visiting the village did, too, especially if the owner talked about things like druids, which I had to look up, and other legends and magics that people in your part of your world know about. I can do all of that, and other things, too.”

“Gregory… to begin with, you do not have the first inkling of how to run a business…”

“Albie’s going to teach me. He said it’s not hard if you have someone you trust to watch your money and give you advice, which you or he can do, and if you have something good to sell. Then he started talking about things like foolish tourists and new age malarkey and goldmines and got very excited, which was something to see.”

Father actually believed this was going to be a profitable venture. There was nothing as tenacious as Father when his sights were set on profit. This was a disaster!

“And it’s not as if I’m going to sell people very magical things. I’ve seen this done, actually. You have some things are real and a lot that’s not, but people believe they are because, well, a lot of the time what people want magic for they can get without it if they believe it will happen. So, for example, if someone wants a love spell, you give them something that looks impressive and tell them they have to do the spell and then, when someone sees them and smiles, they think the spell is working and smile back, when they might have been too shy to do it before. See? Of course, I’ll also have some real magic for people who do need it, like they have a sick cat or something, but I’ll make sure that it doesn’t actually look like magic fixed the cat. Don’t worry, love… I have it all
figured out.”

Mycroft rubbed his temples and hoped he wasn’t visibly hyperventilating.

“And I looked at lots of things that I can sell in my shop and it’s amazing! Crystals and oils that smell nice. I’m going to put soap and things in there, too, because sometimes a nice hot bath with some good-smelling soap makes you feel so good you think it has to be magic, even if it’s just you finally getting to relax after a long day. It’s going to be a beautiful shop and if anyone can actually talk about magic and not-magic, it’s me, so your dad is sure my shop is going to be very popular.”

“You finally told Mycroft about the shop! Yeah! Greg, does this mean we can finally start fixing it up?”

Mycroft turned to look at the small, sweaty arrivals who were proudly adorned with their new jewelry, and took a moment to swat their hands away from the mugs on the table.

“I see. You and Sherlock also know about this enterprise, John?”

“Sure. Greg told us when he bought it, but said to keep it a secret because he wanted to tell you himself. I think he was worried you wouldn’t be happy about it, but that’s not true, right? You think the idea is brilliant, don’t you, Mycroft?”

Mycroft looked at John’s beaming face, Sherlock’s ‘pray you give the correct answer, beluga’ scowl and his demon’s hopeful smile and realized that there were far worse things in this world than his Gregory running a shop that couldn’t actually fail since he could simply create as much money as required for it to stay afloat and which gave him a way to feel productive, something the demon highly valued. And, it would offer countless avenues for the social interactions Gregory craved, though he would have to speak with him about charging for tea. His love had no idea how much tea he would have to provide if the elderly population learned where a cup could be had for free. Then, it would be biscuits. The line had to be drawn at biscuits.

“I was rather taken aback, at first, John, however… I am now of the opinion that this shall be a wonderful opportunity for Gregory and I will support him wholeheartedly.”

“Yes! Thank you, love! I was worried you’d be upset because… well, because you’d fret I’d do something daft, but I won’t. I promise I won’t and you’re going to love my shop. I just know you will.”

Greg gave Mycroft a long kiss, giving Sherlock and John time to steal a sip of alcohol and promptly wish they hadn’t.

“This is more noxious than xylene! John and I demand something potable immediately.”

Greg reached into his pouch and felt around for something to give the boys.

“Here… here’s some nails. That should get you juice and pay for something to eat. You can decide what you want and get enough for me and Mycroft, too.”

“Nails, Gregory?”

“They’re not easy to come by and if you actually have a little tavern like this, things get broken in fights and you need to be able to fix them.”

“I see.”
“And… you’re really happy about me getting my shop?”

Cautiously resigned was a better descriptor, but that could stay his secret for now.

“I believe you will have the finest establishment for magical wares in all the land.”

“I will! I’m going to start cleaning it and making it look the way I want tomorrow. Would you like to help me? You don’t have school until the day after, so we could talk about how to make it look and what color it should be and what flowers to plant in the little boxes under the windows.”

Mycroft smiled and gave his demon another kiss because he was absolutely enthralled by the enthusiasm and anticipation that radiated off his Gregory in rich waves of gold and…

“Gregory… why am I seeing colors being emitted by your body?”

“Really? That’s wonderful! You can see auras! I wonder if you’ll be able to do that when we go home or if you can only do it here. It’s fantastic, isn’t it? If you put it out of your mind, you won’t be distracted by it, but… you don’t have to. I like the idea of you seeing my aura and how it changes when I think about things. Or do things.”

How joyful… he acquired a magical power. Well, Gregory’s shop would certainly stock a book on the subject so research would not be difficult.

“Auras indicate emotions of the owner?”

“Sure. Whether you’re angry or afraid or happy or lusty. You can learn all of that when you study a person’s aura for awhile. For example…”

Mycroft watched Greg close his eyes and smile. Within moments the swirls of gold became suffused with the richest of reds and tiny tendrils of green that was so dark it almost appeared black if it was not for flashes of color sparked by contact with the gold.

“That’s me thinking about you naked and me on my knees sucking you all the way down my throat.”

“Oh. Well, I shall file that away for future reference.”

“Want to know what yours looks like when you think of me thinking of you that way?”

“You can see my aura?”

“Absolutely. And it’s as gorgeous as you are. Especially when you’re thinking about naked things.”

Lesson learned. Though, he looked forward greatly to learning even more lessons about aura interpretation, with his Gregory serving both as tutor and model.

“Then that shall be something we can discuss in more depth as soon as we are without the children.”

“That sounds wonderful. But… we’ll get a full day here, right? I’ve got a lot I still want to show you.”

“Of course, my dear. There is plenty of time for us to do that and more. All the time in the world for it, in fact.”
“Have I told you today that I love you, Mycroft?”

“Hmmm… my memory is failing me, so do say it again just in case.”

“I love you, Mycroft Holmes. You are the sexiest, smartest, funniest person in existence and I will love you as long as I breathe. In fact, maybe I’ll name the shop after you. Sexcroft! Sexcroft’s Magic Shop. I like the sound of that.”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Must I really explain?”

“Yeah… it sounded good to me.”

“Oh dear heavens. Firstly…”

Greg smothered his grin and let his human lecture him on the perils of Sexcroft, while keeping one eye on the little ones who were doing an amazing job of bartering their nails for food, drink and, apparently, the pin the cook had in her hair to keep it out of the food. He had a family now. A real family who loved him and who he loved with all his heart. He was the luckiest a demon could possibly be and he was going to do everything in his power to keep them safe and happy.

“Ok… so I won’t call it Sexcroft’s Magic Shop. How about… Mycroft’ Magical Mouth and Other Stuff?”

“What! Are you… have you lost control of your faculties? Firstly…”

Safe and happy didn’t mean he couldn’t have a little fun, though. What was life without a little fun…

Chapter End Notes

Once again, thank you for reading this story and being so supportive through the writing process. Comments and kudos are much appreciated and taken sincerely to heart!

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