Spell It Out

by prettysailorsoldier

Prompt: Potterlock AU where Sherlock anonymously sends John a gift with Amortentia because it was their lesson, but he's confused on why it's not working on John even though he's brewed it perfectly or stolen it from Slughorn or whatever - wsshomesandwatson

Remaining at Hogwarts over break has become something of a tradition for Sherlock and John, staying behind together ever since their very first year, but, when Irene throws a gift of doctored coconut ice into the mix, plans quickly change, even if John doesn't.

Notes

While I cannot guarantee I will be able to write your prompt, there is always a lot of overlap and/or combining, so feel free to keep submitting them to me up until the end of the series! You can leave your prompts in comments here on ao3, or on my Tumblr.

“You sure you don’t wanna come back to my place for break?” Irene asked, tugging her purse up higher on her shoulder as they lingered in the entrance hall.

Sherlock smiled, nodding down at the ground, but it was John who spoke.
“We’ll be fine,” he assured, swatting a fingerless-gloved hand. He’d come straight from the last Gryffindor Quidditch practice before Christmas holiday, the robes never bothered with for just training, but they still wore the uniform jumper and trousers, brown boots and pads stretched up over the cream fabric to his knees, and the light snow falling outside clung to his jumper in the form of water droplets on the red and gold stripes. “We always stay over break.”

“Yes, but that was before you were lucky enough to make my acquaintance,” Irene replied, touching a hand to her sternum, and John chuckled as Sherlock rolled his eyes. “Seriously, you could still come,” she added, waving a hand in the air as she craned her neck around them, and Sherlock turned to see Mary and Molly thumping down the stairs toward them. “We’ve got plenty of room. And there’s always the tent we took to the World Cup if you guys wanna rough it in the back garden.”

“Rough it?” John mocked, grin bright in the light of the torch holstered to the wall beside him. “That ‘tent’ had a hot tub. And a fully-stocked bar.”

“But the beds are only queens,” Irene countered, and John shook his head at the ground, smiling in bemusement.

“Of course,” he muttered, lifting his face once again. “How could I forget? Well then the tent is definitely out; I refuse to be unconscious on anything less than a king.”

Sherlock laughed, and Irene rolled her eyes, rattling her head exasperatedly.

“I’m just saying,” she sighed, and Sherlock nodded.

“We know,” he assured, curling a corner of his mouth in a smile, “and it’s kind of you to offer, really, but we always stay here.” He flicked a hand to John in gesture, who shrugged, nodding in confirmation. “It’s an orphan tradition.”

Irene blinked, mouth dropping open in secondhand insult, but John only laughed, the joke so long-running between them, it no longer stung, and it wasn’t as if they’d ever known one another before their parents died—John having moved in with his aunt at six, and Sherlock under the care of his guardian Mrs. Hudson since he was nine.

John’s aunt was a vicious drunk, however, his sister already married and living in Scotland, and Mrs. Hudson liked to visit her sister in Florida over the holidays, so the only person even at the family manor over Christmas would’ve been Mycroft, and they both preferred solitude to that. Plus, Hogwarts was beautiful at Christmas, and the dormitories were always deserted, so they simply swapped sleeping arrangements between Ravenclaw and Gryffindor tower for the holiday, never out of one another’s company for longer than it took to shower. However lovely it might have been to spend Christmas with the Adlers, Sherlock wasn’t ready to give that up, having John entirely to himself for the holidays something he’d grown accustomed to in the time since first year, and, now in their sixth year, he didn’t think he’d be making any radical changes.

“Hey!” Mary chirped as she joined the group, Molly beaming just behind her. “Did you guys change your mind?”

“No,” Irene muttered bitterly for them, and John chuckled as Sherlock shook his head at the stone floor.

“Naw, we’re gonna stay here,” John said, looking between the three girls, “but you guys have fun. Not too much fun, though,” he warned, lifting a finger and his brows. “I don’t wanna read about any vandalism in the Prophet again this year.”
“Vandalism,” Mary scoffed. “As if. So we enchanted some park benches to bite people on the ass, it’s not like anyone got hurt.”

“Hurt? That one guy needed stitches!” John spluttered, and everyone else laughed as Mary flicked a dismissive hand.

“I promise we won’t hit the Firewhiskey this year,” Irene swore, lifting two fingers aside her face. “Not as hard, at least,” she added in a mutter, and John narrowed his eyes. “Anyway,” Irene continued with an airy wave, “I left your presents on your beds. Glowing cards of gratitude are not required, but are always appreciated.”

“You got us presents?” Sherlock muttered, frowning across at the woman. “Why?”

Irene blinked, tipping her head with suspicious innocence. “Because I value your friendship, of course,” she crooned, and Sherlock’s eyes contracted to slits. “I’m sure you two will just love them,” she added with a Slytherin smirk, but turned her gaze away before Sherlock could parse any meaning from the glint in her eye. “We should go,” she said, beckoning the two girls with a nod as she moved toward the door, “before we have to share a compartment. Ta-ta!” she sang back at them over her shoulder, waggling her fingers in a wave, and Sherlock’s brow creased perplexedly while John just laughed.

“You have your presents, right?” he asked, calling Mary back as her and Molly made to follow. “I sent them up with Hannah last night. Should’ve been five—one from each of us for you two, and then the joint one for Irene.”

“Aren’t they all joint ones?” she asked, quirking an eyebrow at Sherlock, who grew suddenly very fascinated by a suit of armor. Mary giggled, shaking her head fondly at him. “It’s alright, Sherlock. I don’t care if John buys your presents for you, so long as I still get two,” she assured with a wink, and Sherlock ducked his chin as he failed to press his smile flat. “Yeah, I got them,” Mary said, patting the Gryffindor-striped duffel bag hanging down at her hip. “I assume Molly’s are the ones wrapped in the bird paper?” she asked, and Sherlock nodded, quite proud of himself for contributing that much at least, the swallows not quite ravens, but at least they moved, sweeping across the expanse of blue paper like the open sky. “Alright then,” Mary chirped, smiling at them as she set her bag more firmly in her shoulder, moving toward the door. “We’ll see you guys after break. Don’t have too much fun without us!”

“Wouldn’t dream of it,” Sherlock replied, John chuckling at his side, and Mary narrowed her eyes between them before clicking down the steps toward the courtyard, Molly just behind.

“Happy Christmas!” the girl called, waving excitedly over her shoulder, and Sherlock and John lifted their hands in return, voices entangling as they returned the sentiment.

They stood there until the girls were out of sight, John crossing his arms over his chest, and then Sherlock saw him turn his face up in his peripheral vision.

“So,” the blond drawled, lifting his brows with a smirk, “Exploding Snap?”

Sherlock grinned down at him. “You sure you’re up for it?” he taunted. “You’re still paying me back from last Christmas.”

John snorted, and Sherlock laughed, following as John bobbed his head back toward the staircase. “It’s only chocolate frogs,” he shrugged, their usual gambling currency, “and I’m feeling lucky tonight.”
“Oh, are you?” Sherlock chuckled and John beamed, snapping a nod.

“Yep!” he said, and Sherlock laughed, shaking his head down at the steps as they climbed.

Suddenly, he was flung to the side, catching himself on the railing as hurried footsteps flapped up past him. “What the-” he yelped, looking up to find the Gryffindor Chaser grinning down at him from the landing.

“Race ya to the tower!” John exclaimed, and then took off up the next set of stairs, dodging students towing their luggage and owls.

“Wait!” Sherlock shouted, clamoring after him. “Which tower? John!” he called, but the boy only laughed, Sherlock trying to keep his striped jumper in sight as they sped up the shifting staircase.

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“Move your feet.”

“You move your feet.”

“My feet were there first.”

“Yes, but then you moved, so now…” John quirked his brows, waggling his toes where they were stretched out to rest on the table in front of the fire in Gryffindor Tower, and then laughed as Sherlock flopped his calves over John’s shins, pinning his legs to the table. “Mmm, comfy,” he grinned, and Sherlock rolled his eyes, settling further into his armchair, although he didn’t remove his legs.

Snow drifted soundlessly passed the window as the glass reflected the fire, their game abandoned on the rug in front of the flames, and smoke still lingered in the air from a spectacular win on John’s part, although a corner of the boy’s Potions notes were charred in the process.

John flicked at the burnt parchment, nose wrinkling as the black ash fell to his jumper, where he quickly brushed it away. “Don’t suppose you remember the first three ingredients in Amortentia?” he asked, and Sherlock chuckled, shaking his head.

“Just ask Slughorn after break,” Sherlock suggested as John rolled the parchment back up. “You left halfway through that class, so you’ll need to get the notes from him anyway.”

“I could copy them from you,” John supposed, smiling as he batted his lashes, but Sherlock shook his head.

“I don’t take notes,” Sherlock reminded, and John huffed, tossing the parchment roughly in the direction of his bag across the rug. “You could probably get them from Molly, though.”

“No, I’ll just talk to Slughorn,” John shrugged, plucking a few last flakes of ash from his jumper. “He tends to grade a bit easier if you stop by his office anyway. Hey, what happened after I left?” he asked, leaning forward, his legs shifting under Sherlock’s, but not moving away. “Did Elaine and them ever get the chance to swipe some potion?”

“No,” Sherlock said, smiling as he remembered the twittering group of Gryffindors creeping their way closer and closer to Slughorn’s example cauldron. “Irene did though.”

“What!?” John spluttered, mouth dropping open. “How? She’s not even in that class!”
“She stopped in,” Sherlock supplied, flicking his wand to summon another cauldron cake. “Said she wanted to borrow a book from him. She snuck a vial while he was rummaging through his desk.”

John chuckled breathily, shaking his head in disbelief. “Bloody hell,” he muttered, flopping his head against the back of the chair. “Who do you think she has in mind?” he asked, and Sherlock snorted.

“Well if I know,” he muttered, and John laughed, “but god help that poor girl.”

“Amen,” John agreed with a solemn nod, and then they caught one another’s eyes and dissolved into giggles. “Hey,” the blond prompted after a moment, nudging at Sherlock’s legs, “you were there for the whole class, right?”

Sherlock nodded, frowning in confusion, and John leaned against the armrest, elbow resting on the upholstery as he supported his head on a palm.

“I heard Mary talking about it after. I guess Slughorn had you guys go up and smell it at the end?”

Sherlock’s stomach swirled, and he crossed his arms, fingers digging tight into his biceps, but he kept his face impassive.

“Does it really smell different to everyone?” John asked, eyes pinched with inquisitive ignorance, and Sherlock swallowed through a drying throat.

“I- That’s what Slughorn said,” he offered, dropping his eyes to the fire as he shrugged. “He asked a few people, and they all had different answers.”

“What did you smell?” John asked, and Sherlock’s eye twitched.

“I-I didn’t get very close,” he muttered, and John bobbed his legs, the movement rattling up through Sherlock’s body.

“No, come on,” he coaxed, smile bright below blue eyes. “I know you; you’d be too curious not to check it out. So, what did it smell like?”

“I-” Sherlock stammered, peering through his lashes, and then blew out a subtle breath, steadying himself as he affected nonchalance. “Lots of things, really,” he muttered with a shrug, trying to look at John without seeing, without noticing the way the fire caught in his eyes, flecking the blue with molten gold. “Rain,” he started, and did not say it was the smell caught in John’s hair after a match, when he found Sherlock in the stands and shook the droplets loose from the straw strands. “Night air,” he added, but he meant the scent of ozone that whistled past him when John charmed him into going for a ride after practice, laughing whenever Sherlock’s grip tightened at the slightest buffet of the wind. “Fresh-cut grass,” he continued, and thought about the warm days they laid under a tree near the lake, John tugging up strands and seeing how high he could pile them on Sherlock’s chest until he noticed. “And I think ginger,” he concluded, less sure of that one, but he hadn’t had the change to read the ingredients list on John’s cologne yet.

“Well,” John muttered, shrugging a shoulder as he picked at the stitching on the arm of the chair with his fingernails, “that’s not too specific. Could be anyone!” he chuckled, and Sherlock forced a breathy laugh.

“Yeah,” he croaked, clearing his throat, heart thundering in his chest as he forced himself to meet John’s eyes, “anyone.”

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Sherlock didn’t sleep well that night, opting to stay in his own dormitory instead of in Gryffindor Tower with John. He’d said it was because of an experiment he needed to keep an eye on, but really he’d just needed the space, needed to breathe and get a grip on himself before Christmas Eve, when he’d no longer have any excuse, he and John having a number of traditions he wouldn’t be able to back out on without the blond growing concerned, and concerned John would be even worse, watching Sherlock much closer than he could afford right now.

He stepped out of the bathroom into the deserted dormitory, gripping his wet hair with a towel as he reached for his thin grey jumper, and then felt his foot collide with something hard, the object skittering across the floor in front of him. Looking down, he saw a small parcel wrapped in silver and green paper, the present from Irene he must have knocked off his bed when he crawled into it last night, and he reached down, hanging the towel up on a hook as he moved to sit on the edge of his mattress. Temporarily setting the present aside, he pulled his jumper on, plucking a pair of socks from his trunk and tugging them onto his feet before returning to the gift, rattling it up by his ear. Something shifted inside the package, but he couldn’t quite identify what it was, and ripped the wrapping paper free, Christmas Eve probably close enough.

It was a plain box, a small white one Sherlock had often seen used with jewelry, and he wriggled the lid free, morbidly considering the possibility that Irene was going to propose. There was no ring, however, and, at first, all Sherlock saw was a note, a small torn sheet of parchment curling inside the square. Sherlock plucked it free, frowning down at Irene’s handwriting, a cryptic swirl that read only: ‘You’re welcome’. Trepidation prickling at the back of his neck, he looked once again to the box, and there was a moment, a blissful second of ignorance he would look back on very fondly over the next several hours, that he didn’t understand. Sitting on a bed of crumpled silver tissue paper were two small items: an empty glass vial and a single square of coconut ice. Sherlock left the sweet alone—never caring for coconut, in spite of the fact that it was John’s Honeydukes favorite—and plucked free the vial, twisting it up in front of his face against the light of the window. The sun caught a single droplet of liquid lingering in the bottom, reflecting off the mother-of-pearl sheen, and Sherlock gasped, the vial slipping from his grasp to shatter on the floor.

‘You’re welcome.’

Irene hadn’t had a girl in mind for that potion after all.

“John,” Sherlock breathed, grabbing only his wand and his shoes as he raced down the stairs, nearly tumbling to his death at least four times as he tried to slip them on between steps.

He managed it eventually, however, wishing for the first and only time in his life that he’d invested in a broomstick, but he made it to Gryffindor Tower in record time regardless, the Fat Lady swinging to admit me with only a widening of her eyes, apparently knowing better than to heckle him today.

“John!” he shouted, throwing open the dormitory door, and was greeted by a shout.

“Jesus!” John exclaimed, whirling around as he clutched a hand to his chest, catching himself on a post of his bed as his knees hit the edge of his mattress. “Sherlock?” he panted, closing his eyes down at the rug as he breathed. “Christ, you nearly gave me a heart attack! What are you-”

“Irene’s present,” he interjected, pushing John aside as he began tearing through the boy’s trunk.

“Where is it? Have you opened it?”

“What?” John murmured, frowning as he shook his head dazedly. “Irene’s present?”

“Yes, Irene’s present!” Sherlock snapped, slamming the lid of the trunk shut, and John jumped, stumbling back as Sherlock moved on to tearing apart his bedclothes.
“Sherlock!”

“Where is it!?” he snarled, flinging John’s pillow behind him, and John dodged it with a yelp. “It was in green and silver paper!”

“Yeah, I know!” John urged, snapping his arms out to latch onto Sherlock’s wrists, stopping him short of going through his nightstand. “I opened it last night.”

Sherlock’s heart stopped dead, his body entirely nonresponsive a moment as his vision blurred, and then he slowly turned his face up to John, meeting the earnest concern in the boy’s face. “You—You opened it?” he questioned, and, hesitantly, John released his grip.


Sherlock’s throat squeaked as his mouth dropped open, and he cautiouslystraightened up, shuffling his feet back from John as he scanned between his eyes, but they looked normal. Worried and confused and maybe a little bit hurt, but not smitten. Not that Sherlock would have any idea what that looked like. “Did you eat any?” he asked, swallowing hard as John nodded.

“Yeah, a little last night. Sherlock, what’s going on?” he asked, stepping forward, and then stopped, looking curiously over Sherlock as the brunette matched his step with a retreat. “Why are you asking me about coconut ice?”

“No reason,” Sherlock muttered, frantically rattling his head as he stepped backward across the dormitory. “Just…curious. I-I just remembered, I have to—” He turned his thumb back toward the door, looking over his shoulder a moment, and the lack of focus cost him, a heel of his shoe catching on the edge of the rug, and he fell, hitting hard on the stone floor.

“Sherlock!” John cried, rushing to kneel at his side, and Sherlock couldn’t even panic properly at the proximity, his spine hurt so bad. “Are you alright? Did you hit your head? Sherlock!?”

“Wh—What?” Sherlock murmured, blinking as he turned his spinning head to John’s face, the blue slowly coming into focus far too close. He startled up, throwing himself away against the wall, and John snapped his hand back, eyes widening in alarm.

“Sherlock, what—”

“I have to go,” Sherlock muttered, scrabbling to his feet and out the door before John could so much as stand.

“Sherlock!” the man called at his back, but Sherlock was faster, his longer legs taking the stairs two at a time before he leapt the last few, landing hard on the common room carpet. “Sherlock, wait! Sherlock!”

Sherlock ran for the portrait hole, but the painting didn’t open at his approach, and he hit hard against the wooden backing, hissing in pain as he grabbed his shoulder. “Open!” he snarled, pounding on the painting, but only a muffled humming greeted him, the Fat Lady apparently ignoring his pleas. “I will set you on fire, I swear I will!” he spat, pulling his wand from his pocket. “If you don’t open right now, I’ll—”

“Sherlock!”

He whirled around, John’s figure silhouetted against the opening of the portrait hole, and then he stepped into the shadows, frantic face coming clear as he approached.
“Where are you going?” he asked, shaking his head as he looked over Sherlock’s face, and Sherlock pressed himself as flat as he could against the frame. “It’s Christmas Eve! We-”

“I can’t,” Sherlock interjected, and John blinked, forehead creasing.

“What?” he breathed, shuffling closer, and Sherlock twisted his face away, trying to shut out the blue of his eyes and the sweet smell of his skin—definitely ginger, he decided. “You can’t? But we always-”

“I-I know, I just-” He trailed off, shaking his head at the stone wall to his left. “I can’t this year, I-I have- I just can’t, alright?”

“No!” John challenged, eyes sparking as he moved even closer, and Sherlock had to hold his breath. “It’s not alright! What is wrong with you?” John urged, the wrinkle deepening between his brows as he looked down to Sherlock’s chest and back. “You were fine last night, and now you look like you’re about to pass out!”

“I’m not-”

“Don’t lie to me!” John interjected, and Sherlock’s eyes dropped to the floor between them, a shock of pain rippling over his chest at John’s tone.

He hadn’t meant to hurt him, that the last thing he would ever want, but, though John was fine now, who knew how long it would last, and, if anything happened, if John did something- Well, Sherlock wasn’t sure he’d be able to stop him, was fairly certain he wouldn’t want to stop him, and, though he lied awake at night and dreamt about John talking about him the way he had Sarah Sawyer in year 3, he didn’t want it like this, John forever wanting him only in daydreams better than a handful of spellbound hours he would only ever remember through a fog.

“Sherlock, tell me what’s going on,” John said, softer now, his fingertips grazing Sherlock’s sleeve. “I mean, I know you’re never exactly excited to go into Hogsmeade, but- Well, we don’t have to, if you don’t want.” He shrugged a shoulder, and Sherlock swallowed, John always far too considerate, far too good. “The Three Broomsticks is always really crowded anyway, and there’s usually butterbeer in the Great Hall. We could-”

“It’s not that,” Sherlock murmured, and John stalled, just watching him. Sherlock opened his mouth, sucking in a breath, and then faltered, sighing as he ran a hand back through his hair. “Okay,” he breathed, swallowing as nodded down at the floor. “Okay, I, um- Can you just…back up a bit?” he requested, pushing his hand toward John’s chest, and, after a moment’s hesitation, John stepped away. “Further,” Sherlock prompted, and he retreated another two footfalls. “That’s-That’s good,” he muttered, swallowing as nodded down at the floor, twisting his fingers in front of him as a wave of nausea rolled up from his stomach, but he was going to have to do this eventually, and, if John was under the influence of a love potion, he’d probably barely remember it anyway. “I- You remember how I told you that Irene took a vial of Amortentia from Slughorn?” he said, speaking quickly before he lost his nerve, eyes focused past John’s left elbow.

“Yes,” the blond answered, evidently still confused, and Sherlock huffed out an anxious breath, turning to pace the very short distance he could between the portrait hole edges.

“Well, she- I-I think- See, when I opened my present- I-I think, maybe-”

“Sherlock.”
“I think she put it in your coconut ice,” he blurted, and John’s shoulders wilted with shock, his mouth dropping open, and Sherlock held his breath, waiting for the inevitable.

“She- She put-” John stammered, lifting his fingers to his lips in horror. “But-But why?” he blustered, rattling his head. “She- She’s a lesbian!” he exclaimed, hands flying out to his sides. “Why would she give me a love potion?”

Sherlock grimaced, wishing for all the world he could transfer his powers of deduction to John just long enough to avoid having to explain this himself. “I don’t think she’s supposed to be the object of your affections,” he murmured, but John only continued to frown.

“What do you mean?” he questioned, and Sherlock looked away, biting hard at his lip. “And are you sure she even used it? I mean, I don’t feel anything. For her or anyone else.”

Sherlock tried to tell himself that was a good thing, tried to push away the hurt that cracked across his chest, but it crept up his throat regardless, leaving a bitter taste in his mouth. “I’m sure,” he said softly, slipping his hands into his pockets as he watched his toe push across the stone. “I think she thought- I think she thought she was doing me a favor.”

“A favor?” John parroted, and Sherlock was sure he was going to explode, his skin crawling with flame as he hoped John could at least do this last part himself. “Why would she think-” He stopped, and Sherlock was simultaneously relieved and horrified, his eyes fixed on the laces of his shoes.

“Sherlock,” John breathed, and there was a slight squeak of his trainer as he shifted closer, “are you- Do you mean-”

Sherlock swallowed, shaking his head as he backed toward the portrait hole, pushing on the frame, which, this time, mercifully opened. “I-I never meant- I didn’t want-”

“No, don’t!” he urged, stepping clear of the portrait. “Just-Just stay here,” he said, batting his hand back at the man. “It should wear off tonight; 24 hours or so after you ingested it.”

“But, I’m not-”

“John,” Sherlock barked, and the blond fell silent. “Please,” he pleaded emphatically, backing away toward the staircase. “Please don’t.”

John opened his mouth, and then closed it, blinking his eyes away to the ground, and, a second later, the portrait swung closed between them, the Fat Lady staring down at him as he panted.

She tutted, drawing Sherlock’s eyes up to her shrewd brown ones as she shook her head. “Men,” she muttered, and Sherlock glared at her.

“Thank you for your input,” he snapped, turning to start down the steps, but the woman called him back.

“You know, Sherlock,” she beckoned, and he stopped, “for a Ravenclaw, you can be a real idiot.”

“Excuse me?” he spluttered, twisting over his shoulder, and the woman crossed her arms.

“All those brains,” she clipped, bobbing her head at him, “and you still can’t see what’s right in front of your face.”
“What are you talking-”

“If John’s been given a love potion,” the lady interjected, “why is he still acting the same?”

Sherlock’s lips parted, and then closed, his jaw tightening as the Fat Lady smirked, quirking a brow, and then began to chuckle softly as he twisted on his heels, stomping away down the stairs.

“Happy Christmas, Sherlock!” she chimed, and his fists clenched, her question ringing in his head long after the laughter had faded.

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It wasn’t hiding, exactly. Sure, he was in a back corner of the library, and, okay, so he might have picked the wingback chair that faced the window, making him invisible to about 300 of the 360 degrees around him, but he wasn’t hiding. He just didn’t want any distractions, wanted to read a book on ancient poisons and their antidotes and watch the far-off flags of the Quidditch pitch flap in the wind in peace. Of course, he wasn’t really doing either of those things, mostly just staring unfocused out the window as he listened to the day tick by on the wall clock mounted some thirty feet away, the heavy hands shifting with crystal clarity in the silence.

Sherlock sighed, folding his neck forward as he lifted his hands, grinding his palms into his aching eyes, and then heard a soft rustle to his right, turning just in time to dodge a flying white projectile. Snapping his head to follow it, he watched the folded paper airplane loop back around, drifting lazily down to hover at his shoulder, and he gently extended a hand, overturning a palm for the plane to softly alight on. Closing his book and dropping it to the floor beside him, he cradled the plane between his two hands, turning it this way and that as he wavered.

While John was a half-blood and had always been aware of his magic heritage, he and his family lived in Muggle London. They did some magic around the house, but, for the most part, John had been stunned to arrive at Hogwarts, to see the possibilities magic provided, and had eagerly soaked up every lesson, enchanting anything and everything he could find. Sherlock might have had more natural intelligence, but John generally did better than him in classes, magic just taking to him for some reason, but maybe, like people, magic went where it was most wanted, and no one would ever be a better suitor for it than John. The paper airplane messaging system had officially been inducted in their second year, John unable to afford an owl and feeling guilty about sharing Sherlock’s, so, for in-Hogwarts—or in-class—notes, the enchanted Muggle amusement sufficed, finding its target with a tap of a wand and a whispered word.

Leaning forward, Sherlock checked around either side of his chair, but, finding the library still deserted, he unfolded the parchment, turning it to read the hastily scrawled words.

Lake, 10 minutes

Sherlock bit his lip, fingers tapping anxiously at the edge of the parchment.

It had been just under three hours since he’d left John in the tower, and, while he hadn’t really expected him to stay there, he wasn’t sure if seeing him was the best idea either. He’d seen people under the influence of love potions before and knew, logically, that John would be here if it had taken hold, or at least written a note with significantly more words and doodled hearts, but, still, he hesitated. What would he even say? He’d more-or-less, but mostly more, admitted to being in love with his best friend, or at least to Irene thinking as much, but, while Irene couldn’t be said to often be morally right, she was rarely ever wrong when it came to the actual facts of a situation, able to pick people apart almost as well as Sherlock could. John must assume the same was true here, and, if pressed, Sherlock knew he wouldn’t lie. He’d never get this close to admitting it again, and, in spite
of the gut-wrenching awkwardness and general shame and humiliation, he had to admit it was sort of nice to finally get it off his chest, his spine a little straighter without that burden on his shoulders.

No sense in stopping halfway through hell, he folded the note, tucking it into his pocket as he left the library, headed toward the lake. He stayed inside as long as he could, not dressed warmly enough for a lengthy outdoor excursion, but not wanting to take the time to go back up to Ravenclaw Tower, John’s message likely already having taken a few minutes out of his ten just in transit, and then ducked out a side door, snow crunching beneath his shoes as he pulled the sleeves of his jumper down to cover his hands.

The lake was huge, but there was no doubt where John had meant, a tree on the edge of the water the blond had jokingly named Frank in their first year when Sherlock had commented about how much time they spent there. John had suggested it was rude of them to spend so much time with someone without proper introductions, and, thus, Frank was born, a decision that Sherlock would never admit to being a smart one, though it was rather handy to be able to set up meetings and make excuses using the euphemism.

There were no footprints in the snow as he approached, and he turned, looking back to the castle, assuming he must have beat John here.

“September 27th.”

Sherlock gasped, whirling back to find John appearing around the trunk of the tree.

“Two years ago,” he added, lifting two gloved fingers as he ambled closer through the snow. “It was just before the first match of the season. Gryffindor and Ravenclaw that year, remember? I’d just found out I’d be starting.”

Sherlock frowned, tilting his head as he searched John’s face for understanding, but the boy was uncharacteristically blank. “I- Yes,” he replied, because he did remember the day, a cooler one than normal at the beginning of their fourth year, when they’d met right here after their classes to compare and commiserate. “But why-”

“You took my scarf,” John interjected, smiling softly as he bobbed his head back toward the trunk of the tree, stopping a slim two feet from Sherlock. “I don’t know why I even had it—it wasn’t near cold enough—but you took it, remember? Said you were cheering for Gryffindor that day?”

Sherlock quirked a brow, pulling his arms in tight to his torso, the cold beginning to make itself felt. “Yes,” he said hesitantly, “but how is that-”

“I was thinking about it after you left,” John interrupted again, rolling a hand back up toward the castle. “At first, I thought maybe Irene had just been screwing with you, ya know? Making you think she’d drugged me when she hadn’t? But, then I remembered it’s Irene,” he added, tipping his head, “and I heard what the Fat Lady said to you, about how I was still acting the same, and then I realized.” He paused, blinking away a snowflake that caught on his lashes, and Sherlock didn’t dare even breathe, holding John’s steady blue gaze. “Of course it wouldn’t work,” the blond said softly, shrugging a shoulder. “It wouldn’t need to. Because I’ve been in love with you ever since you sat here and put that scarf around your neck two years ago.”

Where Sherlock had been cold mere nanoseconds before, he was now on fire, his head spinning as his stomach whirled, the moment spiraling around him like a scene caught within a snow globe.

“You- What?” he breathed, and John smiled, dropping his eyes to Sherlock’s shoes a moment as he rocked back on his heels, hands slipping into the pockets of his black jacket.
“I love you,” he repeated impossibly, and Sherlock’s mouth dropped open, heart picking up from stalled to pounding, “and- I dunno, maybe the potion just makes it easier to say or realize or something, but…well, I don’t feel any different.” He lifted his eyes, breath fogging in front of him as it hissed past his lips in a gust of relief, but, where John seemed better for the admission, Sherlock was suddenly more troubled.

“The potion,” he murmured, drawing a step back as he tore his eyes away from John to the ground. “You’re not- You don’t mean it, you- You don’t know what you’re-”

“Oh, I do,” John assured, nodding as he smiled, apparently unconcerned, “but I figured you wouldn’t believe me. Not yet, anyway,” he added with a tip of his head, “so, I thought we’d compromise.”

Sherlock wavered, fists clenching and teeth pushing into his lip, and then, finally, he nodded, prompting John to grin.

“We can stay out in public places,” John started, rolling his hands in the air between them, “walk several meters apart, whatever you like, but…well, it seems rather silly we both spend Christmas Eve alone.” He tilted his head, quirking half of his mouth in a shy smile, and Sherlock chuckled faintly, dropping his eyes to his shoes.

“Yeah, I-I guess,” he muttered, looking at John through his lashes, “but what if-”

“I promise,” John swore, lifting his palms up to his shoulder, “I won’t try anything. Keep my hands in my pockets the entire time, if you want,” he added, and Sherlock laughed, head shaking at the absurdity of it all.

“I don’t think that’ll be necessary,” he replied, and John smiled as he shrugged.

“Well, no, neither do I, but, all the same.” He stepped forward, just a fraction closer, his soft voice barely carrying through the wind. “I don’t want you to think it isn’t real,” he said, and Sherlock smiled, a hesitant twist of his lips, but, before he could speak, he shuddered, his body finally reacting to the cold he had ignored, and John blinked, looking over him in sudden alarm. “Are you just wearing a jumper?” he blurted, incredulous, lips snapping shut in silent chastisement as Sherlock nodded.

“You said ten minutes,” he mumbled in frail defense, but John just clicked his tongue, shaking his head as he started walking back toward the castle.

“Idiot,” he snapped, nudging Sherlock on the arm as he passed, and Sherlock didn’t even argue, smiling softly to himself as he followed along in John’s wake, using the blond as a shield against the wind.

*****

Tap tap tap

Sherlock blinked his eyes open, the moonlight stretching blue through the navy curtains drawn around his bed.

Tap tap tap

He sat up, rubbing at his eyes as he reached beneath his pillow, pulling free his wand.

It had to be closer to dawn than dusk, he and John having parted for their separate towers hours ago,
even that being after midnight, and Sherlock cautiously shifted to his knees, peering through a crack in the curtains.

*Tap tap tap*

His eyes snapped to the sound, finding a window on the opposite wall, a blurry figure staring at him through the rippled glass and blowing snow.

“Sherlock!” John snarled, and Sherlock whipped the curtains aside, stumbling as his blankets wrapped around his ankles.

“John!?” he spluttered, throwing the window open as he gaped at the boy. “What the hell are you-”

“Move,” John snapped, and Sherlock stepped away, the blond leaning tight to his broom as he shot into the room, and then pulled up and dropped to the floor in a single fluid motion, ever the graceful flier.

“What are you doing here?” Sherlock asked, pushing the window shut and latching out the cold. “There’s a fucking blizzard outside! You can’t fly in that!”

“Well, clearly,” John panted, leaning his broom against the wall as he peeled off his coat and gloves, “I can.”

“You shouldn’t,” Sherlock countered, and John rolled his eyes with a sigh, shaking water from his hair as he hung up his sopping jacket and toed off his trainers. “You could’ve been knocked off your broom. Fallen into the lake.”

“But I didn’t,” John chirped with a grin, but Sherlock only folded his arms and glared.

“But you could’ve.”

“But I didn’t,” the blond repeated with a flick of his finger, and Sherlock gave up.

“Fine,” he muttered, flicking a hand in the air as he moved to his trunk, snatching a towel from inside and tossing it to John, “Congratulations on your *near*-death experience. Now, what the *hell* could be so important that you couldn’t-”

“It’s 4:30,” John interjected, bending forward as he rattled the towel through his hair, pulling up thoroughly tousled before hanging the white linen behind him.

Sherlock blinked, tilting his head at him. “Okay,” he drawled, “and, in a few hours, it’ll be 7:30, when normal people wake up.”

“You hate being normal,” John quipped, smirking as Sherlock sneered. “It’s 4:30,” he repeated, grin broadening as he moved closer, clearly in on some joke Sherlock wasn’t privy to.

“So you said,” Sherlock muttered, searching John’s face. “What you *haven’t* told me is-”

“26 hours,” John interrupted, smiling as Sherlock continued to blink. “That’s how long it’s been since I opened Irene’s present,” he added, and Sherlock’s internal organs were sucked out.

“Oh,” he murmured, voice shaking as his limbs went numb, but John just chuckled, nodding at the floor.

“Yeah,” he affirmed, tipping his head with a smile, and Sherlock blinked away to his curtains, swallowing hard.
“So, you—You’re back to normal now,” he muttered, forcing a brittle smile as he shuffled back, leaning against a post of his bed, and John blinked, amusement dropping to a confused frown.

“I—Well, yeah, I guess, but—” he started, stepping forward, but Sherlock waved him off.

“No, you—you don’t have to say anything,” he assured, rattling his head. “It’s fine, I—You weren’t yourself,” he said, but John shook his head, expression earnest.

“No, Sherlock, I—”

“It’s okay, really,” Sherlock dismissed, nodding as he retreated. “I understand. And it’ll make a great story, at least,” he offered, chuckling mildly hysterically as he waved a hand toward John’s chest. “Irene’ll get a kick out of it.”

“No, Sherlock, listen!” John urged, hands stretching out in pleading.

“Mary too, probably,” he rambled on, hands beginning to quake. “She probably knew all about it.”

“Sherlock, stop!”

“I doubt Molly did, though. She would’ve told me.”

“Sherlock!”

“Or at least looked really uncomfortable.”

“Oh, for the love of—” John huffed, rolling his eyes, and then lunged forward, snatching Sherlock’s wrist.

“What are you—” he bleated, toppling across the carpet, but John caught him, arm wrapping around his waist as Sherlock collided with his chest.

“Shut up,” John hissed, and, before Sherlock had time to get indignant, John was kissing him, and he didn’t think he’d ever be mad about anything again.

It was a solid three seconds of mental screaming at himself before he responded, moving shyly against John’s lips as his eyes fluttered shut, but John didn’t appear to notice, merely tightening his grip around Sherlock’s waist as his other hand snaked up his neck. He gasped, the cold of John’s fingers unpleasantly jarring as they brushed the sensitive skin, and John pulled away, blinking frantically between his eyes.

“Sorry!” he panted. “I—I’m sorry, I didn’t—”

“No,” Sherlock snapped, rattling his head irritably. “It was just cold; it’s fine; come back,” he muttered in a single breath, and John laughed, a smile still on his mouth when Sherlock pulled him in by the red wool of his jumper.

He lifted his hand directly into Sherlock’s hair this time, shivers independent of the chill running down his spine as John’s fingers tangled in the curls, and he whined faintly, pulling at the fabric over John’s chest in an attempt to get closer. John overbalanced a bit with the tug, staggering forward, and Sherlock stumbled back, his knees bumping against the edge of his mattress. Pulling away just long enough to glance over his shoulder, he then bent his knee, bracing himself on the bed as he yanked hard at John’s collar, and the blond toppled down atop him with a yelp, pinning Sherlock to the bed a moment before he pushed up onto his palms.
“Are you o-”

“I’m fine, stop talking.” Sherlock hissed, wrapping his hand around the back of John’s neck as he leveraged himself up to the boy’s mouth, muffling a brief sound of surprise before John leant down, Sherlock’s neck resting back against the pillow.

Sherlock didn’t have much experience with this sort of thing, and what little he did have hadn’t exactly made him overly eager for a repeat performance, but, as with everything, John was the exception, and, as his tongue flicked at Sherlock’s bottom lip, the brunette saw stars. He gasped, sliding his fingers up to pull at John’s hair, and the kiss vibrated as the blond groaned, pressing his chest down to Sherlock’s as he slipped his tongue past his teeth. He tasted like tea, giving Sherlock the sneaking suspicion he hadn’t slept at all yet, but, thankfully, there was no trace of coconut ice, and Sherlock tentatively pushed back against his tongue, hoping this was something more instinctive than practiced.

Seemingly in response, John slid a hand down his side, running slowly over his ribs toward his waist, and then his fingertips grazed against the exposed skin between Sherlock’s rumpled t-shirt and plaid trousers, still startlingly cold.

Sherlock squeaked, his body lurching away from the contact, hips lifting to brush against John’s where the boy straddled one of his legs, and then they both gasped, Sherlock unaware he even had an erection until it slid against John’s.

John’s hand pushed down on his hip, pinning him to the mattress, and then they both just lay there, breaths panting warm over one another’s faces. “We- We should-” he stammered, blinking blearily down at Sherlock, expression twisting helplessly, but Sherlock smiled, understanding.

Lifting a hand, he pushed lightly at John’s hip, tipping the boy down onto the bed beside him, and he shifted up onto his side, shuffling back toward the edge of the mattress to give John more room. Bending his elbow up to cradle his head, he chuckled, staring across the pillow as John yawned, lifting a hand to his mouth. “You didn’t sleep,” he didn’t ask, but John shook his head all the same.

“No,” he answered, blinks already slowing as his head pressed into Sherlock’s pillow. “Couldn’t.”

“Why not?” Sherlock asked coyly, chuckling as John glared at him, but then the blond yawned again, dampening the effect of his rage. “Go to sleep,” he said softly, and John scoffed.

“You go to sleep,” he grumbled, swatting his hand blindly over the blankets until he found Sherlock’s shoulder, pushing into the muscle, and Sherlock laughed, grabbing onto his wrist to anchor himself as he teetered precariously toward the edge of the bed.

“I will,” he assured, blinking down in surprise as John twisted their fingers together, hands resting intertwined at the bottom curve of the pillow.

They lapsed into silence, John’s breathing steadily evening out as Sherlock tried to tell himself to stop staring at him, and he was just about to close his own eyes when John spoke, startling him.

“Sherlock?” he mumbled against the pillow, eyes fluttering opening a crack.

“Hmm?” Sherlock hummed back, and John shifted, bringing their faces even closer.

“For the record,” he said, tightening his fingers around Sherlock’s, “it’s still true. What I said earlier,” he murmured, a faint flush of pink visible on his cheeks even in the gloom, and Sherlock smiled, heart skipping in his chest as he looked down at their hands.
“I know,” he muttered, looking up at John through his lashes, “and, for the record, I- I mean- Me too.” He swallowed, face flaming, but John grinned, chuckling breathily as he bent his legs up, hooking a foot around Sherlock’s ankle.

“You too?” he asked, and Sherlock nodded, nibbling at his lip. John beamed, and then closed his mouth, tucking his face back into the pillow. “Well, alright then,” he sighed, and was asleep scant seconds later, Sherlock following shortly thereafter with a smile on his face.

*****

“So, what did you two get up to over break?”

Sherlock turned, meeting John’s eyes from the spot beside him on the bench, and then they both shrugged, looking back to Irene.

“Not much,” John replied, brushing a finger against his lip to wipe away a lingering drop of pumpkin juice, and Sherlock gripped his fingers hard to the edge of the wooden bench, trying not to give anything away. “Just the usual stuff, really.”

Irene blinked, eyes shifting between them as she leaned forward, folding her hands on the table. “Did you get my presents?” she asked, and Sherlock fielded that one with a nod.

“John did,” he said, flicking a finger at the man, “but I think I lost mine. Wasn’t anything expensive, was it?”

“What?” Irene muttered, eyes wide as he startled her out of her trance. “Oh, um, no, it-it wasn’t expensive.”

Sherlock smiled innocently, pushing lightly against John’s thigh under the table. “Well, good,” he replied, and John took the cue and stood.

“We should go,” he said, disentangling his legs from the bench, and Sherlock nodded, standing up after him. “Gotta go talk to Slughorn about that class I missed on Amortentia,” he added to Irene, who paled.

“Oh,” she croaked, and Sherlock turned his head to hide a smirk as she cleared her throat, “okay, well…I’ll see you guys at lunch?”

“Yeah, sure,” John chirped, and they both flicked a quick wave, heading abreast toward the door.

“They still watching?” John muttered as they neared the end of the Great Hall, and Sherlock turned, miming talking to John as he flicked a glance back out of the corner of his eye.

“Yes,” he clipped, and had only the warning of John’s devilish smirk before he was whirled to a stop, tan fingers tugging him down by the tie.

They’d done very little but make out over the past two weeks, but it still caught Sherlock by surprise every time, John’s lips chapped and still sweet with pumpkin juice as they pressed to his, and he hadn’t even managed to summon up the mental acuity to respond before John was pulling away with a pop, smirking up at him.

“You bastards!” came a screech from his left, and Sherlock turned, finding the furious face of Irene Adler glaring at them as she leapt up from the table. “I knew it, I knew it! I will hex you into the next millennium!”

“Run!” John exclaimed, pulling Sherlock by the tie for a few strides before his legs worked properly
again, and then they were tearing down the corridor, laughing as Irene spewed threats at their backs.

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