The Case of the Man Who Was Wanted
by MyDearLadyDisdain

Summary

After an inexplicable case in Surrey, Sherlock is after the strangest criminal he's ever encountered: a mass murderer, that has eluded the authorities for almost 14 years. Unfortunately, Sherlock Holmes is the only one that can see right away that this Harry Potter character is completely innocent. And hang on, is that tea set floating?

Notes

I own nothing. This is a BBC's Sherlock/Harry Potter crossover. There will be slash in later chapters. Also, sensitive and graphic topics, in later chapters. Since it doesn't have a name, I christen Harry/Sherlock slash "Sherry." This story is AU from halfway through the 7th HP book. It takes place after His Last Vow, in the Sherlock universe.

This work is also posted on fanfiction.net. I'm polishing it up, and re-posting it here, but I will post at ff.net first. Either way, if you liked the story please leave me a comment on what you liked, what I could improve on, or anything- even just to say hello. I love talking to my readers, and it helps getting a second opinion on things.
Prologue

"The world is full of obvious things which nobody by any chance ever observes."

-Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

Sherlock Holmes was not an easy man to fool.

Moriarty, being an exceptionally clever bastard, had gotten the closest. Nonetheless, Sherlock was always a step ahead. Magnussen, in a way, did fool him; but it was quickly negated by an unimpeded bullet straight to the skull. Sherlock had gotten the last laugh with that wormy, rude man. The most dangerous and devious criminals had been outsmarted time and time again by Sherlock Holmes.

Sherlock Holmes is not comfortable being outsmarted.

However, when two innocent and perfectly normal residential buildings were not only outsmarting Sherlock, but in fact *fooling* him, Sherlock Holmes lost his temper.

"It HAS to be here, Watson!" He was pacing back and forth on the sidewalk in front of the two brick town houses. His frustration seemed to be growing every minute, which was saying something, considering Sherlock had been at it for almost 2 hours. Evening was drawing on, and it was getting progressively darker.

John, who was usually more than confident in his best friend's mental competency, was beginning to have some doubts. It was not at all helped by the looks strangers gave them as they passed the odd pacing man on the street, and John, who had been trying to look as casual as possible.

"Sherlock, I really don't understand." John said to his friend, now worry showing in his face. Perhaps Moriarty, seemingly returning from the grave, had affected the genius detective's perception of reality. John was worried, as a friend, a colleague, and mostly, as a doctor.

"Listen," Watson went on speaking, hoping he might calm his friend,

"Listen Sherlock, there's nothing here. There's number 120, yes. Over here is number 124. There is nothing in between them. 122 Archer Street simply does not exist. It's a fluke, and error in numbering. I really, really, do not understand what we're doing here."

"Well, that's hardly new is it! You, not understanding something. I believe you've been told to put that on a shirt, and now it seems quite appropriate that you do. Now, stay there, and just let me *think!*" Sherlock was in full temper tantrum mode, that much was obvious.
'Nothing for it but to let him ride it out.' John thought. John had thought this whole case rather weird. Not in the usual way, and not in a clever way, like most of their famous cases. This one was...unsettling. It had felt like that from the beginning, from the little house in Surrey. John Watson had an anxious feeling, like they were digging too deep, meddling with things they ought not meddle in. The feeling intensified ten fold when they came across this street, and the two houses with a missed number in between them. John believed Sherlock felt it as well, an instinct, coming from the pit of his stomach, to leave this place, and the riddle of the missing number.

Sherlock was now staring at the gap between the two houses. His gaze was intense, the anger clearly showing on his face. John thought perhaps this was an improvement from the pacing. Although, now he was murmuring to himself, which considering Sherlock, was not altogether strange.

"It must be here, can't be underground, soil is all wrong, shade from trees indicates house was build in the 40's, neighbors are new, old ones had seen it, gap too small, bigger on the map, more than one map, eliminate the impossible..."

A cat was lazily ambling up the street towards them. Probably a stray, John thought, no collar. It did have a mangy look about it, the fur was white, but there were gray splotches of dirt on its coat. It passed right by Watson, and pausing at Sherlock's ankles, gave a resounding meow.

John saw Sherlock jump, and quickly look down to locate the source of the disturbance.

"GO AWAY!" Yelled Sherlock, unjustly taking out his ire on the cat.

Two things happened in such a quick succession that even Sherlock almost missed it. The cat, frightened, bolted through the gap between numbers 120 and 124. For a second, Sherlock thought he saw the cat flicker, as though the white animal was a mirage. His sharp eyes, ever observant, made sure to follow the little beast. The cat stopped not far away, but now it was sitting on the porch of a house, which had inexplicably (and finally) appeared. It had peeling white paint and an unkempt lawn. The number above the door was 122.

John gaped. There was no way that house was there a split second ago. He looked to the two houses on either side, to confirm that there was no way there was room between them for another. But, as though it was all a matter of course, the two houses had become thinner, and further apart. 'This,' John thought, 'was the most abnormal thing in the world.'

Sherlock on the other hand seemed ecstatic.

"Yes! What did I tell you John? Oh this is brilliant, some sort of mirage, or illusion, (possible mirrors) and I'm not sure on the exact method, but we will find out I'm sure... Get your gun out, remember this Potter character is supposed to be dangerous. Come along!" Sherlock was already striding up to the door, on the walkway, that was literally not there a second ago. John was still gaping. His brain was firmly telling him that what he was seeing was completely impossible, no matter how many mirrors one uses. However, quick soldiers reflexes had him following orders, with his gun at the ready, he ran behind Sherlock, stopping at the door of the impossible house.

"Alright, I'm going to pick the lock. There's a chance we've been spotted already, but if we haven't, I want to try to take him by surprise." Sherlock said under his breath, and rummaged his pockets, looking for something to pick the lock. John's heart was racing. The anxiety he had felt was increasing the more he stared at the house. The house looked to be in need of upkeep. Some of the siding had peeled off, and the windows had a layer of dirt. Looking up, John noticed one window lit by interior light. There were curtains, and a flower on the windowsill. He noticed the flower was a purple Orchid, which were Mary's favorite.
Mary.

Something so important, he had forgotten, he had to go as soon as possible.

"Oh god, Sherlock, I have to leave now. It's our anniversary. Oh my god, I can't believe I've forgotten, Sherlock she's going to kill me!" John stammered out, and started running back down the walkway toward Archer Street. This whole stupid case had him on his feet, running behind Sherlock for the last two days. He can't believe it. His mobile was still sitting at Baker Street. Mary's probably called dozens of times now.

"Wait, John!" Sherlock was right behind him, grabbing his arm.

"The gun, give me the gun. He's supposed to be dangerous. I'm going to need protection." John practically shoved his gun into Sherlock's hands. Being a good soldier, he knew you should always treat a loaded weapon with respect, but at the moment John has lost the ability to think clearly. His mind was a jumbled mess. John kept having the same thought over and over, stuck in a loop: 'She's going to kill me, literally, she's capable, and she'll do it. I have to get out of here. I have to get home.'

Minutes later, the doctor was hailing a cab on Main Archer, panting from sprinting from the doorway of the impossible house between 120 and 124. He would be halfway home, sitting in the backseat of his cab, before his mind finally cleared, and he was able to think rationally. He was already home, running up the stairs before his mind had a chance to doubt. Seeing Mary upstairs, sitting at the table reading a journal, it finally hit him. Their anniversary was a week from now.
Follow the White Cat

“In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again.”

-Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

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Follow the White Cat  

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Sherlock watched John's retreating form with a frown. Normally, he would be opposed to his partner running off right in the middle of a case. Not just in the middle, but right at the pinnacle. The work of two days, of searching around London and Surrey, chasing the most bizarre trail of clues that the consulting detective has ever encountered. Most of them, Sherlock had to admit he still had no answer to, though he would never admit this out loud. Sherlock was hoping that whatever or whoever was in this impossible house would have answers for him.

But John was gone now, shouting for a cab a few blocks away.

*Why had I let him go?*

Sherlock looked down in confusion at the gun in his hand. His mind was buzzing, strangely going around in loops, never coming to conclusive thoughts. Sherlock was definitely not comfortable with that. Something was messing with his head. Not just his senses, but his acute logical analysis of the situation. Try as he might, he couldn't formulate a plan or make a decent deduction. It almost resembled being drunk, if not for the clear vision and balance.

He could see John in the distance, getting in the cab now.

*Go after him.*

It was incredible, this single spark of an idea seemed so important. Suddenly, all that mattered was that Sherlock leave the doorstep of 122 Archer Street, and chase after John. Everything else in his mind became fuzzy, and Sherlock found himself ambling towards the gate of 122, towards John, away from the house.

The voice in his head kept repeating it: *Go after him, it's incredibly important, you've just forgotten.*

‘*Hang on, if it's so important, why have I forgotten?’* A moment of clarity. John, remembering his anniversary (but it wasn't today) and running off. Him, Sherlock, almost running off too, for no reason whatsoever. What was this?

Sherlock looked back at the house, his eyes narrowed in suspicion. First, the illusion that defied geometrical reality. Now, odd impressions that overtook him and John, similar in nature, which caused them to flee. Something very intricate was going on; if Sherlock could only see the bigger picture. There was an answer, there had to be. Whatever it was, it almost certainly could be found in this house.

Sherlock began to amble up the path, back towards the door of the house. The compelling desire to
run away was mounting on him every step, but now it was matched by his insatiable curiosity.

Go away, go to John.

Again, the voice was telling Sherlock, very plainly, that he needed to be elsewhere, and fast. However, another voice was also present, quieter, but more steadfast: 'How is he doing this to my head?'

At the door, Sherlock pocketed John's pistol, and considered his plan of entry. Picking the lock seemed instinctive, but now he reconsidered. The door, doorknob, and lock seemed simple enough. However, this man apparently rigged his house with mind-altering technology the nature of which Sherlock was completely unfamiliar with. Balance of probability suggested that the lock would not be simple at all, and picking it would waste precious time. Sherlock was still being bombarded by the overwhelming desire to run away, run anywhere, and he knew he would eventually succumb. Unless he got in quickly.

'Alternate entry: windows, obvious. Two windows are on the first floor, likely never opened, could be locked. Three windows on second floor, have probably been open before, light's on upstairs though, unwise to breach there, could be caught at disadvantage. First floor then, attempt window on the left, enter sitting room, stairs adjacent, entry possible, however perhaps it is wisest to SIMPLY GO HOME!'

Shaking his head of that last thought, Sherlock darted to the window on the left. Grooves and scratches on the frame suggest indeed it has been opened, but probably by former residents. The new resident however had not, and if Sherlock had to guess, the new resident might not even be aware that this window was here. This was a good choice then, unlikely there will be added locks. Sherlock quickly congratulated himself, and started prying open the panes.

After a few sharp jabs up and down, it gave. Sherlock heard one last booming suggestion that he must go immediately to John. Ignoring it, he climbed through into the dark landing.

... Everything was upside down, there was a bottomless abyss underneath him, and he was falling, falling falling, forever and ever, but suddenly he was in Appledoor. Magnussen was laughing that sick laugh of his, flicking a kneeling Mycroft in the face. Magnussen turned, and began talking with an ugly accent.

"You should have known Sherlock, you should have figured it out. I thought you were a genius? Look how stupid you turned out to be! How simply delicious."

"I'm not stupid!" Sherlock yelled, anger and fear were paralyzing him, and he had no idea how old he was. He couldn't move, he couldn't do anything, except drown in his panic.

"Of course you are, even your brother thinks so. You are stupid, and childish, and now look what you've done? Everyone you love is in my pocket. I'm glad Sherlock, glad you've made this mistake. Glad you are such an idiot." Magnussen kept flicking the kneeling Mycroft. Suddenly, John Watson was there, walking up, and he knelt there too, at Magnussen's other side. Magnussen was now flicking John Watson and Mycroft Holmes in the eyes, in an off-beat rhythm. Mrs. Hudson, carrying a tray, hurried by in the background. She shot Sherlock a disapproving look, and was gone.

"Sherlock, look how very disappointed they are. They thought you were clever, they counted on you. You aren't clever though, are you? Now, I can do this to both of them, and it's all your fault. I
can do this all day, forever and ever. "Magnussen started flicking especially hard to accent his words. Oh god, he would be stuck here forever, and he would have to watch his failure play out over and over again. Sherlock was terrified. It felt like he had never been this scared in his life. Why was he so scared? He could barely think, all of his brain devoted to the panic now eating him up. He could barely think anything at all, except that somehow this was all very odd. Since when did Mrs. Hudson serve tea at Appledoor?

"They must be very angry with you. Are you angry with him, Mycroft? Disappointed?"

Mycroft turned to face Sherlock, flinching with every flick of that monster's finger. His face began to twist into a grimace. Mycroft now looked at Sherlock with such an expression of sadness and heart-wrenching sorrow, as had never been worn by the actual Mycroft ....all very odd...something...

"Hang on, Mycroft would never look like that, he doesn't show that much emotion, ever! No, not in a million years. This, this is all not real!" Everything came rushing back now, the case in Surrey, the dark-haired criminal named Potter, and the impossible house at 122 Archer Street. Magnussen was scowling, but everything was fading now, fading to mist. The last thing Sherlock saw was Mycroft wearing a triumphant smile.

"You figured it out, little brother."

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Sherlock opened his eyes. Presumably, he had climbed through the window, as he was now standing in a dark sitting room, and his heart rate was way above normal. The panic was slowly dying now, but he could still feel it writhing inside him like something ugly and embarrassing that he wanted to squash.

Sherlock let a stream of choice words out, as he caught his breath.

Whatever that dream, or illusion, or drug-induced hallucination was, it was horrible. H.O.U.N.D. had nothing on that. It was so personal, so real, he could recall it easily, all the details sharp like a real memory. But what was it?! Taking a few shaky breaths, Sherlock decided to go on with his plan. The questions were piling up, and he needed answers. Sherlock really did hate not knowing.

He decided to take a quick survey of the situation. The overwhelming compulsion to run away seemed to have vanished, and he was returning to his senses. His brain was whirring into activity again.

'Sitting room, furnished carefully, very dusty. Creaks coming from second floor, casual, meandering, one man, he is unaware that I am here. A soft whistling as well, reminiscent of water vapor. Odd that he is unaware, I must have made noise opening the window. He's sure of himself, thinks no one could get through the strange and horrible security system, overconfident (don't blame him). Or, does not expect entry at street level. Hall is to the right, take stairs up, house has loud plumbing lots of white noise, manage to sneak up on him, can surprise him with weapon.'

A few more seconds to steady his breath, and Sherlock was creeping into the hallway, where a soft light was coming from the rooms upstairs. He sincerely hoped the stairs would be more or less normal.

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2 Days Prior
"Why did it have to be Surrey suburbs? The most interesting case I've had all month, and it's in the most boring part of the country. These houses, do people actually live like this? How can anyone stand being identical to their neighbors?"

Sherlock could tell his friend and partner was getting annoyed at all his rantings (John is transparent). They've been driving for hardly an half an hour, and Sherlock managed to fill that whole time up complaining about suburban life.

"I think I would literally kill myself if I had to live here. In fact, let's put that down as theory number one for how these two kicked it. Elaborate suicide, spurred by the minutiae of the most dull life imaginable." Obviously, suicide was highly unlikely, but Sherlock thought he was being rather funny. John's face contorted a bit, and he looked away. Oh right, suicide seems to still be a sore subject with him.

They were nearly there now though, driving through the calm streets of Little Whinging (utterly ridiculous name), they turned on Magnolia Road, took another right and they were there on Privet Drive. It was eight in the morning, and they both had work to do. The police had all of number 4 sectioned off with tape, and all around Sherlock noticed curious neighbors peeking through their blinds, looking at the unusual activity on their street. Sherlock didn't blame them for looking. Everyone must be so bored here.

The chief, Nelson or Nilridge or something, met them at the tape to let them through.

"Glad you could make it Mr. Holmes, this one's a real mystery, impossible murders, both of them. Got all of us just floundering for an explanation. Right this way, through here..."

It was a real mystery, and the murders were impossible, Sherlock thought after examining the scene, so the chief’s initial assessment was correct. Man and woman, both nearing their 60's, found dead in their home. The man, in the living room, keeled over on the couch. No wound or obvious cause of death. First thing Sherlock would assume is heart attack, especially looking at the man's size. There was just one tiny detail that proved it couldn't be natural, and that was an expression of absolute horror frozen on his face.

The front door and back door are both locked, no signs of forced entry. These people liked their privacy, they had more than one lock. Nothing on the doors or windows was out of place, and Sherlock could spot out of place. Perhaps the killer was very careful.

The woman though, the woman was completely impossible. Same expression, lack of wounds consistent. But she was locked in her bathroom. There is no window there. The door had to be kicked in, as it was locked from the inside. So a woman died of fear, by herself in locked room? Sherlock began to examine the body on the bathroom tile. Her hands, he thought were very telling.

"Interesting..."he murmured.

She must have seen or heard something coming for her husband. She knew what it was, that there was danger, but the husband didn't realize it in time. She must have ran straight into the bathroom, locked herself in. Her palms had nail marks, from where she clenched her hand.

"The killer was in here with her. He stood right here," Sherlock placed himself at near the sink, "killed her, then seemingly vanished into thin air."

The chief tried to interrupt him.
"The door was locked, no one could have been here with her..."

"Which is why, you were right. This is a good mystery." Sherlock started glancing about, ruffling the things on the sink, soap, toothbrushes, a man's razor. A towel rack was hung on the wall, and he began to examine with his magnifying glass.

"The killer was close to 7 feet tall, she recognised him, or at least knew why he was here, didn't fight back, and he killed her. She was terrified, must have know it was coming. Look at the nail marks."

Sherlock rambled off all the other relevant information to the cop, who took it all down in his little notepad. Sherlock knew that what he was giving them wouldn't help them catch the culprit. There was something more to these murders, something that went much deeper. This older couple, the Dursleys, seemed to be the picture of normal, British family life. Their house was spotless, neat and very, very ordinary. Almost obsessively ordinary. So how is it that these two, who no doubt were very boring alive, could turn out to be such interesting corpses? What were Mr. and Mrs. Dursley hiding?

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"You..." Sherlock hissed, careful to keep his voice low. "I should have known there was something off about you." Standing in front of the stairs, Sherlock was looking directly into a pair of yellow eyes. Sitting on a step half way up, looking for all the world like it belonged there, was the mangy, white cat from outside. It gave Sherlock an appraising look, and began to lick it's paw.

'Bit rude, luring me into a house booby trapped with deliriants, and then pretending like I don't exist.' Sherlock backtracked; cats weren't rude. Okay, back to logical deduction mode. This cat has somehow become important. Why?

The cat has been a stray most of it's life, evident by the coat, several small patches of hair missing. Probably lived in this neighborhood most of it's life, but, recently it has been taken in by an owner. Fur around neck is a little bent, someone tried to put a collar on it. Changed their mind, or maybe the cat didn't like it? The grey spots on the fur are dirt, but they're faint, so someone tried to give kitty a bath. The cat is also a bit fat for a stray, so someone's feeding it, although it doesn't live in their house, and apparently wanders about wherever it wants, and tricks unsuspecting detectives into psychedelic nightmare houses.

The cat came right up to Sherlock outside, before darting into the house, so it's not afraid of people. So all together, what does this give us?

'Somebody loves you, kitty.' The cat had stopped licking it's paw, and was staring at Sherlock. He got the strangest feeling that the cat was aware of what he was thinking. What business did a cat have, shooting him knowing looks like that?

The cat gave a loud meow, turned tail, and ran up the stairs out of sight. Sherlock began creeping up the stairs, slowly and noiselessly, once again following the white cat.
"I went out to the hazel wood,
Because a fire was in my head,
and cut and peeled a hazel wand,
and hooked a berry to a thread;"

-W. B. Yeats, *The Song of Wandering Aengus*

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The cat gave a loud meow, turned tail, and ran up the stairs out of sight. Sherlock began creeping up the stairs, slowly and noiselessly, once again following the white cat.

Sherlock remembered the gun in his pocket. Now was the time to take it out. Reaching the landing, Sherlock saw a poorly lit dining room. There was a little table with two chairs, and a few half-melted candles. *Another oddity.*

Someone's shadow was on the wall. He could hear the footfalls of the man he was here to find. The last two days had been utter insanity. Sherlock was hoping this man, with a very strange house, would be able to give him all the answers he needed.

He could hear the footsteps retreat into a room further away, probably the kitchen. Sherlock took the opportunity to sneak into the little dining room. His gun was out, and he was pointing towards the other room, the other man. Sherlock felt the wonderful jolt of adrenaline, making way through his veins. This was really the best high for him. Playing cat and mouse with the most dangerous people in London is a risky game, but the most fun game that Sherlock has ever played. Even better than beating Mycroft at Operation.

"Meow!" Sherlock had almost forgotten about the cat. It had now joined the man in the kitchen.

"Oh, look who decided to show up again. You hungry?" A raspy voice answered. Male, but not the voice Sherlock had expected to hear. There was a note of something in it.

Something that reminded Sherlock of Mrs. Hudson, and his parents, and John. Something Sherlock didn't really want think about too much.
"Where have you been? It's been days you know. I get that being a cat you're independent, but I do worry." Was this man actually talking to the cat?

"Meow!" Oh, and apparently the cat was answering. Has the world gone mad in the last few hours?

"Yes alright, I think I have something for you, just let me look." Sherlock heard the sound of rummaging and couldn't help but thinking this didn't sound like the type of conversation a mad murderer would be having. Especially with a cat. Somewhere in the back of Sherlock's mind things were falling into place, and it would be only a matter of time before his brain produced some of its own answers. Until then, he needed this man to come out. His patience was running out.

As if in cue, his prey returned into the dining room. Sherlock's well trained reflexes snapped him up.

"Put your hands up Mr. Potter, or I will shoot!" Sherlock saw the dark haired man's momentary look of panic. Then, confusion?

"Is that a gun? Are you seriously hoping to get me with a gun? Well, I suppose it is a novel idea..." While speaking, the stranger slowly raised his hands. His eyes were darting from the gun to Sherlock's face. Sherlock was looking for all the signs he knew of impending aggression. The stranger's green eyes were excited, but he was remarkably calm.

The man had a pleasant face, older than what Sherlock had seen from the wanted poster. There were some stress lines, but in this moment, the man seemed almost ease. A small part of Sherlock was frustrated. Considering he was pointing a loaded weapon straight at the man's chest, at ease was hardly appropriate.

Sherlock met the man's eyes, trying for his best attempt at confrontational superiority. Sherlock Holmes had stared down maniacs, criminals and notorious psychos in his life. He was not going to let this thin, cat-loving, bespectacled man get the best of him. Looking straight into the man's eyes, Sherlock felt something strange.

The man's eyes glittered, and Sherlock felt the curious sensation of being scanned, his mind probed and prodded. Odd words, that decidedly weren't his, floated in the back of his head, almost out of reach of consciousness. Hogwarts, and then, Where's your wand? Sherlock had no idea what to make of either. Since when did pigs have warts? And was 'wand' innuendo?

Sherlock broke eye contact, deciding that being careful was of higher priority than winning a staring contest. This man had access to mind-altering technology, and perhaps hypnosis played a part in his adventures earlier this night. He knew little of hypnosis, although he was sure that it was only possible with direct contact, and time.

"That was interesting," the stranger spoke again. He looked away, and had a look of consternation, as though trying to solve a difficult puzzle.

"You have a rather difficult mind, Mr Holmes. Admittedly, I'm a bit confused about some things." Well, that makes two of us. Sherlock supposed that while the stranger was inclined to talk, he might as well let him. He decide to ignore the edge of panic that sprung up when this man had said his name.

Suddenly the stranger grimaced.

"Sorry, I know it's terribly rude to just break in like that. Being a fugitive it pays to be cautious, but it's a rather unfortunate habit at this point."
"What I don't understand is why they would send a muggle after me. They must know very well it wouldn't be challenging for me to escape." Sherlock had no idea what this man just said, but he was still feeling very insulted. Perhaps noticing the look of annoyance on Sherlock's face, the stranger hurriedly added.

"Not that it's not impressive that you found me in the first place. In fact it'll be quite a joke on the lot of them. Almost fourteen years of highly trained aurors out for my blood, and a muggle with a gun corners me. They always underestimate you, you know. They have this condescending attitude, like 'oh look how quaint they are, compensating with their gadgets and gizmos.' But this will definitely show them!"

The man's eyes glittered with excitement, looking at Sherlock with a look of camaraderie, as though they were about to pull a prank together. Well, Sherlock was not in on it. He still had no bloody idea what was going on, and this man was not making any sense. Although it was good of him to admit that Sherlock was impressive, he was quite sure he wasn't a muggle, whatever that was. By the sound of the word, it was definitely an insult. Before he could begin his questions, the stranger spoke again.

"It almost seems a shame that I do have to escape. If it weren't for the threat of the kiss, I'd almost consider letting you bring me in. It would be hilarious watching the ministry officials as they realize a muggle policeman bested their own people." Right, that was the last straw for Sherlock. What kissing had to do with anything, he had no idea, but he certainly wasn't going to let this man escape.

"Mr. Potter, I have no idea who they are, and why they have such little faith in my abilities, but let me remind you that I am currently pointing a gun at you, and therefore your chances for escape seem rather slim." Sherlock put on his most acerbic tone, but the stranger merely tilted his head in, a universal sign of confusion. Sherlock decided to plow on.

"I have some question that you will answer for me, first of which is what the hell happened when I came in through the window?" Sherlock could feel his facade crumbling at the edges. All of this night's 'adventures' were piling up, and after all there's only so much a man can take. It was therefore highly infuriating that the man opposite Sherlock kept looking at him with a nothing more than tame curiosity. Suddenly, Potter's face cleared of confusion. He stared at Sherlock.

"You don't know do you? They...didn't send you?" The stranger spoke, with a look of awe in his eyes. Loathe as he was to admit it, it seemed Sherlock really didn't know. In fact, it seemed he didn't know what he didn't know, which was even worse. Well, at least it's a first, Sherlock huffed internally.

"Then this is most extraordinary!" Potter was back to looking excited.

"The fact that you were able to track me and find me, not even knowing what you were looking for, well it's simply amazing! I didn't even realize that the muggle, the police were attempting to find me. I'm not sure how you did it Mr. Holmes, but you have certainly earned my respect." Potter almost stepped forward in his excitement. Realizing what he was doing, he quickly withdrew, his hands still somewhat raised in mock surrender.

Sherlock considered all this. Potter was starting to sound surprisingly like John, what with all the flattery.

So, this man knew the police weren't looking for him. That was illuminating. Until his encounter
with the Surrey chief the morning after the Dursley murder, he would have thought the police would be actively searching him out. This whole thing stank of conspiracy.

Reviewing once again the facts from the Dursley murder, Sherlock made the resounding conclusion that this man in front of him did not murder his relatives. It had been a long trail of evidence that lead to this deduction. Sherlock had suspected it, but it was always nice to be sure that you're right. The man responsible for their deaths was almost 7 ft tall. Harry Potter was slightly shorter than Sherlock, and decidedly not that giant. In fact, Harry Potter didn't seem dangerous at all. Slightly unbalanced, judging by the way he was talking, but not aggressive.

More facts and clues fell into their place in the back of Sherlock's mind, and theories formed. He decided to test one out. He suspected that Harry had not yet even known of his relatives' fate.

"I'm not with the police Mr. Potter. However, I am sometimes called to examine cases that are particularly difficult. When the police are baffled, I help them sort it out in their undersized brains. The reason I am tracking you is because two days ago I was called to Surrey..." Sherlock paused dramatically, seeing that his hypothesis was correct. Harry visibly blanched. He had not know about the murder, and he certainly had not committed it.

"What happened in Surrey?" The man asked, his voice strangled.

"A double homicide. A Mr. and Mrs. Dursley were found dead..." Sherlock paused, examining Potter's reaction. He expected cool surprise, maybe a slight twinge of sympathy, but not this. The man's face contorted in a grimace, like he was in pain. He tried to control it, and replace it with something. Potter was very upset at the news of his relative's deaths, and Sherlock had not expected that. Certainly not after what he'd seen at Privet drive.

"...were found dead under very mysterious circumstances." Sherlock finished, now more carefully gauging the man in front of him.

... 2 Days Prior

Sherlock and Watson stayed on the scene at Privet Drive after examining the bodies of the two elder Dursleys. Sherlock was convinced there were more clues waiting in the house, but he couldn't very well get to them with all these ruffians, -er police people, in his way. One or two of them attempted to politely tell Sherlock and John to clear off, but a few insults and deductions about their mothers and love affairs shut them up.

After making sure that most of the police were hurrying away, tail behind their legs, Sherlock began to examine the rest of the house. He was informed by the chief that the two Dursleys had a son, now mid thirties. He had moved out a few years back, and now resides in London. His old bedroom, just like his parents’, was incredibly boring, and yielded no new information. The chief thought him a suspect but Sherlock announced immediately that the son's IQ was probably in the double digits, and perpetrating an impossible murder was far out of his capabilities.

Out in the hall of the second landing, Sherlock's attention was immediately drawn to the other bedroom. It was apparently a guest room, but there were some details about the door that led to some disturbing conclusions.

"Why didn't you tell me there was a fourth person that lived here?" Sherlock turned his sharp eyes to the chief that was waddling after them, taking in all the information on his little notepad.
"There wasn't Mr. Holmes, just Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, and their son..." He stammered out, but was promptly cut off by Sherlock. Sherlock so loved cutting people off.

"There was another. Same age as their son, male. Family relation." The chief began to hurriedly shuffle his notes.

"No, Mr Holmes, no mention of them having another son, and none of the pictures show anyone besides the three Dursleys we know about..." Sherlock snorted. The chief was moderately clever to use the family pictures, which Sherlock had noticed. Somewhat clever, but wrong, Sherlock thought. He strode over to the door of the second bedroom.

"He lived here, in this bedroom. The Dursleys did their best to hide him away. Although I’m not an expert on matters of affection or lack thereof, I would guess the family held great dislike for the fourth resident of number 4 privet drive. So there's no surprise he's in none of the pictures." Sherlock knelt down. Well, this was getting interesting.

"There was a cat-flap in that door. They would lock him in here, feed him through that." Sherlock walked into the bedroom and began to examine random objects. However, the more excited Sherlock became, John became more and more upset. He hated injustice in the world, and this was an extreme case. How could parents do that, the doctor thought to himself.

"Hang on, are you saying they did that to their own son? The locked him in here and starved him, while the other one got fat as a whale?"

Still rummaging about with the closet, Sherlock answered.

"No, not a son. Must have been a cousin or nephew. Yes, I think nephew fits. And yes, John, to everything else. That's not all..." He was standing next to a wall, and moved a tacky landscape painting out of the way.

"He was thrown against the wall here," Sherlock gently mimicked the action of being thrown, pointing out a slight indent in the otherwise smooth surface. Then he stepped over to the other wall, "And here. It was likely about twenty years ago since he's been here, so most of the evidence is gone. We can assume this was not the only instance of physical abuse."

John was gaping and shooting dirty looks at the wall. War and chasing mad criminals, with a madder detective, might have desensitized him, but he still thought child abusers were sick. Sherlock, seemingly unaffected kept rattling off facts about this other resident of number 4 Privet Drive.

"They were careful to keep him out of society, secluded. They didn't want people to know about him. He had a secret they didn't want anyone else to know. Hmm, this window..." He walked over to the only window in the room.

"They put bars on this window, several times. Somebody forcibly broke them, from the outside. He must have had an accomplice that helped bust him out." And here, John thought these Dursley people were a picture of ordinary, family life. Who knew they were the type that would imprison a kid? He felt a lot of his sympathy for their death flee him.

Sherlock was tapping on a floor board with his foot. Suddenly, he was moving the bed, and started prying open the floor.

"He kept his things here, the important ones. There's nothing left now, damn!" Sherlock supposed it wasn't so surprising, these people tried to wipe away every trace that their nephew had lived with
them. They must have discovered his hiding spot and got rid of anything that was left. Or maybe the boy took everything when he cleared off.

Sherlock was beginning to feel excited. This was a very intricate mystery indeed. So that's what the Dursleys were hiding? A nephew with a secret. Sherlock momentarily considered that the nephew was very ill, and that was the reason for his forced seclusion.

No, an illness was unlikely. Perhaps it was a matter of the boy's parentage? He did not understand it, but Sherlock knew that sometimes people took great offense to children born outside of marriages. However, these were all guesses in the dark, and Sherlock needed facts.

Next course of action would be to question the neighbors. Hopefully, someone will remember the fourth and most interesting member of the Dursley family. They would need to visit the district's schools as well. He might have gone to school locally, so they would have records there.

"Right. John we're leaving." With a swish of his coat, Sherlock turned around and loped down the stairs, heading for the door. John, who was used to this abruptness, picked himself up immediately and ran after Sherlock. He was almost down the stairs when Sherlock halted in his tracks. John had a momentary struggle while grabbing the banister, to avoid running head first into Sherlock and falling on his face.

"Sherlock! What..." With a considerable degree of ire in his voice, John began speaking.

"The cupboard!" Sherlock exclaimed, then turned around and gave John the look.

"The cupboard under the stairs," Sherlock strode towards the small door.

"There's a lock on it. Oh, I was absolutely blind not to notice it before!"

Something cold writhed in John's belly.

"You're not suggesting what I think you're suggesting are you?" John asked.

"Probably."

"They kept him in a cupboard?"

"Definitely. Until something happened to change their minds, and relocate him to the smallest bedroom. I have no idea what it could have been. Their attitude had certainly not changed. Perhaps someone else persuaded them?" Sherlock opened the little bolt lock and opened the door.

Looking inside, John realized right away that Sherlock was right, about everything regarding this nephew. Whereas the second bedroom was swept clean of any evidence that someone else lived there, the cupboard was completely intact, with kid drawings, toy soldiers, and a little bed-like nest in the corner. It was like the Dursley had never set foot in here, after it was vacated by its one miserable tenant. Probably didn't want to face their shame, thought John bitterly.

For the doctor, it was cases like this that were the hardest to handle. The contrast of the sleek, shining comfort of the Dursley house and a cramped, dusty cupboard where a child was forced to live were infuriating. Sherlock was already inside, ducking and putting his magnifying glass to everything within reach. Right now, John didn't really feel like investigating.

He reached inside and yanked a drawing of the closest wall. The kid had some talent, John thought, almost fondly. You could clearly see two figures, one with a bushy beard, riding a motorbike. Apparently, this motorbike could fly, as they were zooming past little clouds and stars. Quite an
imagination too, then.

"This is fantastic! Everything is preserved, almost perfectly. They must have never come in here." Sherlock was still engrossed in every detail of the tiny ‘room.’ John knew that his friend had a clear disregard for the emotional side of humanity. So, perhaps it was not surprising that he was yelling 'fantastic' while he uncovered this family's dark secret. However, the bars on the window, the cat flap, and now this ruddy cupboard were striking at something very painful and upsetting.

"Fantastic? Sherlock, this is a kid we're talking about. A kid that's been through..." John began to express, but of course, was cut off by Sherlock.

"He's not a kid, John. Remember, this all happened almost twenty years ago. He'd be our age now." John was about to retort, but found that what Sherlock said made him feel slightly less upset about the whole thing. He closed his mouth and walked away from the cupboard. Right. They were still on a case, trying to find the person that murdered the two Dursleys. Right. A sudden thought struck him.

"Sherlock you don't think it was the nephew..."

"That murdered them? No, highly improbable. Although, not for a lack of motive. The murders are too impersonal." Sherlock said.

They stayed at the house for a few more minutes while Sherlock upturned everything in the small cupboard. The chief had located them again, and gaped in surprise when he found the little space. Sherlock was looking smug that all of his deductions were proven correct. He informed the chief that they would be in touch when they uncovered more information. To John, he said that they were now leaving the scene, and would be doing some field work around Little Whinging.

John followed after his friend. He still had the little drawing in his hand when they left the house, and he absentmindedly folded it. The man that would be in his mid-thirties didn't concern him, not really. It was the little boy, that was lonely and unloved, and had lived here two decades ago, that John now felt a regard for. 'Parents should put up their kids' drawings.' He thought, as he tucked the yellowing paper in his pocket. John wished, really wished, that he would have come here those two decades ago, to save a little boy that dreamed about flying away on a bike, while he was locked up under the stairs.

"...were found dead under very mysterious circumstances." Sherlock finished, now more carefully gauging the man in front of him.

Sherlock thought it very surprising that the man had reacted so strongly. If it were him, he would be happy that a family who had cared so little, and done so much hurt were dead. Well, maybe not happy, but certainly not as unhappy as Harry seemed to be now. One thing was for certain though, Potter was even worse at hiding his feeling than John.

Everything seemed to be coming together in some corner of Sherlock's head. Everyone might think that human nature was a mystery to Sherlock, and in some instances it was, but he knew criminals inside and out. Looking at Potter, it was highly unlikely that he was the sort man who could commit murder. Then, there were the other facts to consider: the cat, reacting to his relative's deaths, the easy manner, and of course, the unmistakable signs of conspiracy overarching this whole case. It was Sherlock's personal opinion that whoever got saddled with all the blame in highly secretive cases was usually not the perpetrator. It was his opinion only, but it was proven right on too many occasions.
Now all Sherlock wanted to know is more about who was pulling the string on this whole affair. Undoubtedly, Potter had some idea. Sherlock had about a hundred questions, all lined up. It was no use though, if the man in front of him decided to ‘escape.’ Sherlock needed to gain his trust. Then, maybe he could unearth some answers that weren’t incomprehensible gibberish. Well, in order to gain trust, he needed to give trust. Or, at least, appear to.

"Mr. Potter, you might think I am suggesting that you are a suspect in the Dursley case. Let me rephrase. I believe you innocent of their murders. I also have reasons to believe that you are innocent of the other crimes that are attributed to you." Sherlock lifted an eyebrow, marking the last bit with an invisible question mark.

The change on Potter's face was astounding. His eyes were suddenly filled with gratitude, and a trace of hope.

"You're not lying..." The man almost whispered. "I can't tell much else, it's all way too fast, but you're not lying. You really believe that."

Sherlock realized how absurd it was that he was still holding John's gun. Potter wasn't dangerous. Or, maybe he was, but not just right now, and not to Sherlock. Lowering the gun, Sherlock sighed, and sat down. Harry Potter's eyebrows shot up in surprise, and he lowered his hands.

"Are you gonna offer me a cup? Since you're making some anyway?" Sherlock asked, remembering the faint whistling noises of vapor escaping a kettle he heard earlier. Potter smiled slightly, retreated into the kitchen, and came back with two steaming mugs that were mismatched. One, Sherlock noted, had curious little balls in yellow and red for a pattern. The yellow one had wings. Well, what could he possibly deduce from that? What sort of ball has wings?

"I'm not sure if I'll be able to properly help you Mr. Potter, considering I find myself completely unaware of the secret society you belong to." A stab in the dark, but a good one.

Apparently Sherlock hit the mark because Potter was now staring at him.

"Nonetheless, you seem to be aware of a lot, Mr. Holmes." Harry was looking at him with awe. Mixed with something. Sadness? He sighed.

"I don't think you'll be able to help me at all, Mr. Holmes." Well that was just rubbish, thought Sherlock. 'I'll be the judge of that.'

"You don't know me very well, Mr. Potter, or what I do. Whether I can help or not depends on me, doesn't it. Unless you really are guilty?" Leaning on the pause, Sherlock was gleeful to see Potter rise perfectly to the bait.

"No! No, I'm not." Harry stammered out. Sherlock almost felt bad for him. It was painfully obvious how lonely the man must be, being on the run for more than a decade. He had probably not had a conversation with another human being in ages. It was a bit immoral to use that to manipulate him. But when Sherlock wanted answers, he was going to get them.

"Right then, first thing I want to know is what happened when I entered your window." This was probably not the most important question. However, the experience seemed to stick out in Sherlock’s head, and he needed it to have a rational explanation.

Potter sighed.

"I don't think that is the first question you will want answering." Potter said dejectedly. His whole attitude seemed to have undergone a change. He was hunched, and not looking at Sherlock.
"Oh, and what question should I be asking then, Potter?" Sherlock was getting annoyed with this evasiveness. He was trying to help, after all. Harry looked, and held his gaze for a long time.

"I think even you asked them, Mr. Holmes, I would not be able to answer." Harry said, now looking at the floor again. "There are laws about telling an outsider about our society, you see."

"Although-" Potter was hesitating now, on the brink of some decision. He looked back at Sherlock, his eyes glittering defiantly.

"I don't think I could be any more wanted than I am, so what's a few international secrecy laws?" Harry seemed to consider what to say next. Sherlock knew well enough to keep his mouth shut, for now.

"Fine, culpam caecirius was what was cast over the windows and doors. It's a ward that's actually meant to immobilize someone. I'm still rather surprised you got through." Harry said this all in a very matter-of-fact tone, as though it wasn't just gibberish again.

Sherlock was about to formulate something acerbic in reply, when he remembered that he needed to ask the right question. He pondered for a second on what that might be.

"What is it that connects the people in your secret society?" Seeing Harry's small smile assured Sherlock that this was indeed the right question.

"Magic, Mr. Holmes. It's magic." Right, that was not the answer Sherlock was looking for.

"Who do you take me for, Potter? What, is that supposed to be a joke? I don't know if you're mad or simply think I'm a complete..." Sherlock's voice went dead as he saw the two mugs of tea and the tea pot began to rise in mid air. The tea set was floating, right there in front of his nose, like magic. He barely registered that Potter now had a stick in his hand, similar to an orchestra conductor's baton.

Floating, the china was floating. No, no, not possible.

"It's no joke, Mr. Holmes. Although, whether I'm mad or not, I'm not so certain." Harry spoke, and lowered the wooden baton. The tea set gently clicked down.

"The thing that unifies my 'secret society' is the ability to wield and do magic." He finished, unceremoniously tucking away the stick.

Sherlock had got up, by reflex, and started pacing. He suddenly remembered that he was in the hide-out of someone who had access to mind-altering technology, or some narcotic, that had given him his bad trip earlier. Perhaps he was still being affected. In fact, he was almost certainly being affected. Was it the tea? No, Potter had drunk it too, and it was from the same pot.

Maybe Sherlock was still under the influence of whatever was installed in the window? Yes, that must be it. Unless...

*Unless it was what, really magic? Don't be stupid.* He mentally berated himself. But, another voice in his head insisted that it all matched up.

*Every case could be explained by magic. It's hardly an explanation.* As Sherlock paced up and down the small dining room, Harry sat there merely looking at him.

"I could do something more extreme. I just didn't want to upset you." He said, with worry in his voice.
Fine, if he was so worried and wanted to prove this magic thing, Sherlock would go about it the scientific way. Change up the variables. He could perform some parlor tricks here, on his home turf, but what about a change of location? One that wasn't doused in hallucinogens, as Sherlock suspect this place was.

"Can you do that anywhere?" Sherlock asked brusquely.

"Yes, of course. Well, anywhere without an audience." Harry replied, concern still evident in his eyes as he looked at Sherlock.

"Fine. Great. We'll do your magic thing, but at a different location. We're going to Baker Street." Sherlock made to leave for the door.

"Wait," Harry called out. "Baker Street, that’s in central London, right? If we’re going that far, we can take my way." Sherlock turned around, his eyes narrowed in suspicion.

"Look, if you think of the location very hard, I can take us there in seconds." Harry stammered out, nervous under Sherlock's penetrating gaze. "That is if you want." He finished lamely.

"You can take us to central London in seconds?" Sherlock asked with derision.

"Yes. I suppose it requires some suspension of disbelief on your part. Or we could do it the way you came, but I do have to be careful." Harry answered.

Alright, Sherlock thought, I'll bite.

"Fine. Take me to my flat in seconds, Mr. Potter." Sherlock tried for sarcasm, but it came out as curious neutrality.

Harry stood up from the table, and strode over to him.

"Think of the location." Sherlock did, and Harry looked into his eyes and nodded accordingly. Preposterous. As though he can read minds.

"Brace yourself, it's somewhat uncomfortable." Harry grabbed Sherlock's hand. Sherlock wasn't prepared for that, but more so he was not prepared for the unpleasant and claustrophobic feeling of coming out of a thin straw. He closed his eyes against it. When the sensation went away, he opened his eyes and found himself standing in the living room of 221b, and Sherlock's disbelief was certainly being suspended.

After the proper excuses were made to Mrs. Hudson about the noise, they were free to experiment.

Sometime later that night, Sherlock sat cross-legged on his carpet as Harry was making almost every object in the living room spin, float, dance and wheel about. Sherlock was laughing, and it was getting undeniably hard to assert that magic was not real. Sometimes Harry would transform one thing into another, and sometimes he would change the color of an object, but Sherlock's favorite was when he summoned a flock of bluebirds from the tip of his stick (wand, he corrected himself). They spun a few circles across the room, and landed on Sherlock, singing a song much prettier than any real bird.

Looking around a living room that was literally dancing, Sherlock felt something very old awakening in the pit of his stomach. Some sense of wonder that he hadn't felt for a very long time. Something he felt when he was a child, with Redbeard running beside him, and all the houses were whizzing by too fast to notice, as he was riding so fast it had felt like he was flying away on his bike.
“...almost nothing important that ever happens to you happens because you engineer it. Destiny has no beeper; destiny always leans trenchcoated out of an alley with some sort of Psst that you usually can't even hear because you're in such a rush to or from something important you've tried to engineer.”

-David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest*

John had really screwed up this time. Just *what* was he thinking running off like that, and leaving his best friend in such a dangerous place? The anniversary thing: how could he have been so stupid?

It had felt just like that day that Sherlock jumped, with John running off to see Mrs. Hudson in the hospital, when she was perfectly fine, having tea in the drawing room. John knew he wasn't a stupid man (compared to other people; not Sherlock Holmes, who didn't count). But John had felt exceptionally stupid that horrible day, being so easily tricked by Moriarty. If he hadn't, maybe things would have been different and Sherlock wouldn't have even needed to go into hiding for two years.

But his friend wasn't dead from his mistake, he had to remind himself. The fact that Sherlock possibly killed himself because John wasn't there with him on the rooftop had added another layer of awful on the whole 'losing your best friend' situation. It was that thought that had been the worst to stomach. It was that thought that had kept him from calling Mrs. Hudson. How could he tell her that it was probably his fault that Sherlock was no longer with them...?

Now he had run off again, just when Sherlock needed him, for an anniversary that wasn't today. Even if it was, he should have stayed. They were dealing with a mad criminal that could apparently make whole houses disappear. Anniversary be damned, he should have been there. Mary would have understood. So why had he left?

It was such an odd evening. John distinctly remembered the panic and the need, the compulsion, to run home as soon as possible. What had made him think that? Perhaps, he was just trying to make excuses for himself. *'Right,'* John thought, *'I fucked up, and I need to fix it.'*

He decided right away that he needed to phone Sherlock. Usually it was almost impossible to reach his aloof friend, but he was hoping today he might actually deign to pick up his phone. *'Unless he's in trouble.'* A nagging in the back of his mind that John squashed down. Right now he needed his wits about him. Taking a deep breath to calm down he took out his phone and called Sherlock.

To his surprise, Sherlock answered on almost the first ring.

"Sherlock! I'm sorry, I can't believe what I've done, running away like that! Are you okay? Are you..."

"I'm fine, John, everything's fine." Sherlock said, a tone of calm.
"Are you sure? Where are you, I'll come.." John was desperate to rectify his mistakes.

"No." Sherlock sighed. "No, John, everything's okay really. You need not worry. It's all...it's fine." His friend's voice sounded a bit tired. But overall, he didn't sound stressed, and he didn't sound like he was in any sort of trouble.

"I'll come now. Are you at Baker Street? Did you get in the house? Find that Potter character?"

"Yes John, I'm at Baker Street. There's...well, there's a lot to explain, and believe it or not, I think I may need some sleep. You too, you should rest and come in the morning. I'll explain everything then." Sherlock needed sleep? Since when?

"Alright, if you sure you're okay...?" Tentatively, John agreed with Sherlock. He'd been on his feet for two days in a row, and sorely need to kip for a few hours. And who was John to impede Sherlock when he finally decided to join the other mortals and have a good rest?

"Yes, yes, I've said many times now, everyone's okay, and I'll see you tomorrow morning, John. Good night." Click.

John sighed in relief. Mary was still sitting at the table, staring at him.

"What'd you do?" She asked, immediately picking up on the situation. John sat down and tried to explain the evening's events to her. As he spoke, she looked at him with a bemused expression.

"...and then, I was yelling about our anniversary, and how I had to get home right away." John hazily remembered the moment. Everything about the night, waiting outside that damned house, following the cat, had been a blur.

"Sherlock ran after me, asked for the gun, and I gave it to him. Then, ran off, hailed a cab, and now I'm here." John finished his story.

Giving Sherlock his gun was another screw up, in a night filled with them. Sherlock might be his best friend, and John trusted him implicitly, but handing him a loaded weapon was probably not a good idea. In fact John had several rules regarding Sherlock Holmes, and one was 'never give that madman a deadly projectile weapon.' John thought it was a fair rule, considering that the last time Sherlock Holmes had a gun, there was a dead body between them. Of course, it was all for the best, in the end. Magnussen deserved to die, and John hadn't felt any pity for him. But still. Sherlock needed boundaries. John was usually the person that set them. Because if not John, then who else would?

"You know, if you did miss our anniversary, I would take 'attempting to capture a notorious criminal' as a decent excuse. I might not even be mad...for that long." Mary gave him one of her catlike smiles, and scooted closer. She placed her hand over his, and it had an instant calming effect on John. He was right in saying that she was the best thing that could have happened to him.

... The next morning John was hurrying on his way to 221B. His friend had said that there was a lot to explain. Hopefully, the genius that Sherlock was, he would have figured out how Potter could make a whole house disappear.

After knocking on the door, John let himself in. He met Mrs. Hudson on the lower landing. Apparently she wasn't allowed up for awhile, and this fact was gravely irritating the aging landlady.
"And he keeps making such noises up there, oh, the state the living room must be in by now..." John made his apologies on behalf of Sherlock, and went up the stairs. He heard Sherlock call out from his bedroom:

"I'll be right there, just sit down." Fine with that, John went into the living room.

"Sherlock, do you think I could get my gun-" John stopped. He hadn't realized that Sherlock had a visitor. Sitting on the couch was a man that was happily chowing down on John's takeaway from a few night before. He was so engrossed in the carton of food, John could barely see his face. John took in his appearance and tried to place in his mind who the man could be.

His first thought was client. But the man had been wearing dark trousers that had been sadly worn and inexpertly patched in a few places. He also had ratty sweater in the most ridiculous color of maroon. There was a large capital H stitched into the front. By its wear, the sweater could be ancient. So not a client, but possible one of Sherlock's homeless network? A junkie from the den? With Sherlock, there was just no way of knowing who he would bring home.

"Sorry, I didn't realize we had company..." The man looked up in surprise, a bit of lo mein hanging out of his mouth, and John recognized his face at once.

"You!" John was scared now. What was a dangerous and notorious criminal doing at 221B? Luckily, the adrenaline had made everything slow down, and John could think clearly. He spotted the gun, his gun, lying innocently on an end table across the room. John barreled towards the gun, hoping that he reached it before Potter could pull out whatever weapon he had.

He had the gun in his hands now, and was pointing it at the man on the couch, who was apparently so bemused he had not moved an inch.

"Don't move Mr. Potter, or I will shoot!" It was really not John's fault that he had not recognized him. Potter's hair was long and windswept, falling past his shoulder, and he had a growth of beard. He also had a large pair of circular glasses accosting half his face. He was clean shaven and younger looking by far in his wanted poster.

"This is getting a bit old..." Potter muttered, and John wondered what the hell that meant. Harry put the carton of Chinese takeaway down on the coffee table and lazily raised his hands. He also leaned back into the couch, for all the world looking like he was bored. This did nothing for John's temper. He was about to start yelling at the man to get on the floor, when right next to him he heard the deep and calm voice of his best friend.

"Put the gun down John."

"But..."

"No, no, all of that's not true. I had my suspicions for awhile now, but I had the chance to confirm it. You can put the gun down. I assure you, he's nor more dangerous than Mrs. Hudson."

John had already lowered the gun, and looked once again at the man on the couch. Harry already picked up the carton, and was once again munching down on noodles, looking like he had not care in the world. The way he was going at it, one would think he hadn't eaten in days. 'Perhaps he hadn't.' John thought, as he took in Harry's gangly frame and rather thin face.

Sherlock had seated himself in his armchair, which left John his own chair. He plopped down unceremoniously, and looked at Sherlock. Right, he did say there was a lot to explain. Hopefully the presence of a wanted criminal was one of those things.
Sherlock however didn't seem to be in any rush. He was staring absentmindedly at a spot somewhere above John's head. His long fingers formed a steeple, the universal sign that he was thinking very hard about something. Finally he gave a sigh and began talking.

"Perhaps it would be easiest for you to show John before we tell him." Sherlock said, it seemed like to no one in particular. Harry had paused his ravage of the Chinese food to look up, a cross look on his face.

"Mr. Holmes, I don't intend to tell anyone..."

"Yes, the international statute of secrecy. But, as you eloquently put it last night, 'you could not be any more wanted.' So what's the harm in telling John?"

"There no harm, but you can't just tell random people about an age old secret. There's a reason we went into hiding you know..." Harry was becoming agitated. This was not an unusual reaction to Sherlock Holmes. Most of the times John could spot why, but right now, John had no idea what was going on.

"Tell me what? This is ridiculous, what age old secret. Does it have anything to do with the disappearing house?" John was rather indignant at being the only one out of the loop.

"Yes, it has everything to with the house. And Mr. Potter, you'll find that us muggles have changed since the Dark Ages. I'm sure no one would think to burn you at a stake nowadays. Especially not John."

Harry opened his mouth to say something, but Sherlock went on.

"And John isn't random people. He's my best friend and colleague. He will be assisting me on this case, and he will need to know in order for us to progress anywhere." John thought that was rather sweet, especially coming from Sherlock Holmes. He always thought of him as his best friend, but it was quite reassuring to have Sherlock also say this.

"I already said you couldn't help." Harry said with a dejected air. John thought that was rich. He was sitting in the client's seat, and telling them that they couldn't take on his case. Sherlock also looked on the brink of arguing. Instead, he changed his tactics.

"Fine, I won't help. But Dr. Watson suffered a terrible injustice last night. He witnessed a house that could disappear and reappear, and was a victim to the muggle repelling charm. I'm sure you would agree that you owe him an explanation?" 'Was that a guilt trip?' thought John. It seemed to be working, because Harry now was looking rather guiltily at Watson.

"I am sorry about that. You must be confused." Well, yes. John was rather confused. He decided that perhaps he ought to add his own two bits.

"I trust my friend, Mr. Potter. He seems to think you're not guilty, and then so do I. If this is the case, I think we will both endeavor to help you, whether you think we can or not. And I won't tell a soul about your 'age old secret.' I swear." John tried to sound kindly, putting on his best bedside manner. He was really curious to this secret now.

Harry looked nervously from Sherlock to John, and back again.

"Are you sure?" He asked, looking at Sherlock.

"Yes, of course."
"Well, what should I show him?" Harry asked, looking pointedly at Sherlock. Sherlock's eyes widened in excitement.

"You could do the birds, those were brilliant! Or maybe you could change the color of his jumper to something ridiculous, I'm thinking a poisonous shade of pink. Or wait, no, let's go with what you showed me first, levitation." John had the distinct feeling that he was missing something huge.

"Or no, wait! Do you think you could levitate this armchair, with me still in it?" Sherlock was looking at Harry with excitement. As if to prepare for the act of levitation, Sherlock jumped up on the chair and securely grabbed one of the arms.

'Right, so he's finally gone round the bend. Can't say I wasn't expecting it.' thought John. He looked at Harry to see how he was handling being requested to levitate someone. He saw Harry, with an indulgent look, taking out a wooden stick, and flicking it casually in Sherlock's direction.

Before John realized what was going on, Sherlock began rising, armchair included. John was gaping as his friend was somehow being lifted halfway up to the ceiling.

"Can you move me around the room?" Sherlock asked. John couldn't comprehend what was going on.

Harry screwed his features in concentration and Sherlock's armchair began to float towards the fireplace, then the kitchen, tracing a circle around John.

"Faster!" Sherlock shouted. Harry blew out a breath and gave another flick of his stick.

The armchair did begin to go faster, round and round the room. Sherlock was whizzing by, and John could only sit there, completely floored.

Suddenly, there was a loud crash, and Sherlock and the flying armchair were in a heap next to one of the walls.

"Shit!" Harry sprang up from the couch and was running towards Sherlock.

"I'm sorry, I lost control of it, it's a rather heavy armchair. I'm really sorry! Are you okay?" Harry was pulling up Sherlock, who was laughing, and brushing away his apologies.

"Ah! So weight matters, how interesting... I wonder, it has nothing to do with your physiological qualities, it's not a matter of your muscle strength. But this is the first limitation that I have seen. What determines the amount you are able to lift?"

Sherlock was firing off, while Harry was flicking his wand towards the crash site. A shelf full of knick-knacks was reassembling itself, an oriental vase gluing itself together before John's eyes.

"Inanimate objects don't have a limitation, if you cast the feather light charm." Harry began, apparently satisfied with his clean up.

"You could technically levitate whole buildings, if you make them light first. The tricky part is getting it so that it spreads through the whole object. The bigger it is, the harder that becomes...

"Oi! What was that?" John was trying as hard as he could to not sound angry. Both Harry and Sherlock jumped in surprise, being so engaged in their conversation, they might have momentarily forgotten John. Harry opened his mouth to speak, but Sherlock beat him to it.

"Before the middle ages, there was a group of people that had special abilities, and they lived
alongside our society. That is why before then, there were so many reports of 'magic' and 'witchcraft.' Most of the time these people were harmless, using their abilities to aide their non-magical neighbors. However, in the 12th century the inquisition came to Europe. I'm assuming they began to fear for their safety, so they went underground, and began to hide their society...

"Hang on, I haven't told you any of that. How did you know...?" Harry was looking at him, astounded.

"Ah, I was right! I deduced that part, I knew it had to be medieval! See John, no such thing as coincidences. Anyway, so when the witch-hunts began, all of the people from this society gathered and decided to keep their culture a secret from the rest of the world. This is why, to this day, very few people that are not magical are even aware of their existence." Sherlock finished his monologue and was looking at John with the 'figure the rest out, you can do it' look. John endeavored.

"So...then...Harry's a witch?" John asked lamely.

"A wizard, actually." Harry looked a bit offended. John tried to piece the rest together.

"So the house last night, that was magic?" Sherlock beamed at him.

"Correct! And so was your desire to run after Mary, thinking you had forgotten something important. Magical compulsion." John was trying to digest all of this. It certainly made sense. It was the only thing to make sense, in fact. How else could you hide a whole house?

He looked at Harry, in his ratty sweater and glasses. He certainly didn't look how John would imagine a wizard. No long white beard, pointed hat, or billowing robes. But, that stick that he brought out...that must have been his wand. Wizards and wands. And flying armchairs. It was a lot to take in, and John's head was spinning.

"Sherlock, those people we saw, coming out of the chief's office..." Some strings were making connections in John's head. Suddenly a lot more things were making sense from the previous three days.

"Precisely, John. That was how I knew that their society disconnected in the medieval ages. Two groups of costume enthusiasts converging on the two places where we were investigating is too much of a coincidence. Of course, I wasn't sure what it meant then..."

Harry was looking at them both with apprehension. He didn't look comfortable at the mention of other wizards.

"Costume enthusiasts?" He asked.

"Yes, believe it or not, you're likely not the first wizard that John and I have encountered. And the robes were a dead giveaway that something was suspicious..."

...

3 Days Prior

After investigating the Dursley house, Sherlock dragged John to a primary school: the only one in Little Whining. By Sherlock's reasoning, they would almost certainly have the nephew's records. Sherlock sent John to try to suss out information from teachers, lending him Lestrade's borrowed badge. John attempted to protest and tell Sherlock off for stealing another badge, but before he
knew it, Sherlock had already gone somewhere.

The interviews didn't go well. The teachers all seemed to be too busy for him. Without a name to look for, they had nothing to go on. John tried and tried until a rather cross-looking matron told him to leave the property, badge or not, screeching:

"Education is in progress!"

Disappointed, John left. To his surprise, Sherlock was already waiting outside, a file hidden in his coat.

Walking away from the building, Sherlock began to quickly flip through it. He paused on one of the pages.

"John, why is this name familiar to me?" He reached over and let John look at the file. There, in black and white, under the name heading John read Potter, Harry.

"Sherlock! He's been on the bloody news for almost a decade! Er...I think terrorist involvement or something? Caused the death of a dozen innocent people in the late nineties. I would expect you to know more, since it's your job to these kind of crazies." Sherlock took the file back, looking at it with a grim expression. John continued.

"So I was right, it was probably him that did in his dear aunt and uncle, isn't it?" Sherlock looked up at this.

"It doesn't make any sense..." He grumbled.

"What doesn't?"

"Think, if he wanted his foster family murdered, you think he would have sent someone else? No, it would have been personal. It would have been revenge. The man that killed the Dursleys had not opened the door to either the guest bedroom or the cupboard. If that man was Harry Potter, he would have likely visited the locations where most of his childhood was lived.

“And the murders would probably have been more... graphic if this was anger fueled revenge. And the biggest flaw with that is why now? I'm assuming he's been on the run for a decade, why would it matter to him now that his family died? No John, Harry Potter might be involved, but he did not carry out this murder." Sherlock looked at the file again.

"I suppose the chief ought to know we found the nephew, though. Maybe he'll have a bit more insight into this Harry Potter. Otherwise, I might have to resort to unsavory measures to get the information I need."

An hour later they were standing in the Chief's office, and Sherlock was quickly becoming furious.

"What do you MEAN you don't remember?! It was only this morning, we talked, found two impossibly murdered bodies, there was a cupboard,..." Sherlock was leaning over the chief's desk and yelling at him. John didn't think this was a good idea, not at all. Especially now that he saw the chief calling over two burly police officers, who promptly escorted John and Sherlock off the premises.

Out on the curb, John noticed another group of people standing around near the police headquarters. The people themselves all looked ordinary enough, but they were wearing some odd robe-like suits, decidedly old fashioned. John dismissed them as people who did the whole 'dress up as historical figures and brandish plastic swords at each other' nut-jobs. After all, if he stopped
for every weirdly dressed person in England, he would never get anywhere.

Sherlock regarded them with a fleeting look of suspicion. Fixing his coat, he huffed (after being so disgracefully deposited on the pavement) and turned tail.

John followed after him.

"Do you think the chief was payed off to act like that, then?"

Sherlock considered this.

"Yes, that's possible. I wouldn't have thought him so fine an actor, though."

"Where are we going now?"

"It seems like I have to resort to unsavory measures after all. We're going back to London."

A few hours later, they were outside of lavish palace, where aged government dignitaries all took their tea together. This was also the primary workplace of Mycroft Holmes.

Before the duo would make it inside, both Sherlock and John noticed a group of oddly dressed people hurrying away on some business. Suspicious, indeed.

…

The three men were sitting around the little kitchen table, as Sherlock recounted seeing the strangely robed men. In his precise memory, he told Harry about the details of the robes, their color, stitching, etc.

"Those were aurors. They're like our special police force. Not surprising they would have linked the Dursleys to me, I suppose. The Dursleys have no other connections to our world, really." Harry explained.

"Right, so what possible motivation could someone have to murder them, since it was obviously a wizard who did it? Therein lies our first clue. If we find the Dursleys’ killer, we find the people who wanted you framed in the first place. I'm positive that is the real reason behind the murder: making sure you stay wanted."

Sherlock looked rather smug. Harry, however, looked uncomfortable talking about the Dursleys. In fact, he looked rather grim.

"When did it happen, then? Their...er, murder?"

"Three days ago now." John answered. Harry's eyes widened. He looked at Sherlock with a mix of awe and amusement.

"You found me in three days?" He quietly asked.

"Two. I really don't know what your 'aurors' are doing on their job, but once I found the pattern of how you move it was quite obvious."

"Mr. Holmes, as astounding as that is, even if we find the people who did this to me, I don't think you will be able to help. Our ministry, well they don't take the opinions of er...non-magicals very seriously. Even if we find evidence of something that happened in 1999, I very much doubt anyone will listen."
Sherlock was about to argue. Deciding not to push the issue just now though, he opted change the subject.

"Speaking of your hidey-hole, I believe you must have some personal items still there...?"

"Yes, in fact I was planning on going back there soon." Harry pulled up the sleeve of his maroon sweater to look at an ancient golden watch.

"I won't be able to stay there, not anymore. Mr. Holmes, I might be out of touch with you after I leave. Before I find another house, I'll probably have to rough it, so I won't be in London."

Harry stood up, as though to make the point that he had to leave. However, his face now had a look of sad reluctance. Sherlock noticed, and knew that he could use the man's loneliness to his advantage. There was just no way that Sherlock Holmes would let a wizard walk out of his house. There was still so much to know...

And of course, Harry would probably have missed the company of fellow human beings. Sherlock had deduced that once Harry was probably a rather social person, who was fond of strong friendships. Sherlock knew that his own company was perhaps not the most sought after in the world, but it'll have to do. He'll do his best to be more...charismatic. And John could help of course. He was always being described as a 'friendly' person, whatever that meant.

A plan was formulating in his head. Despite Harry's reluctance to have them on his case, it was nonetheless a case, and Sherlock wanted it solved. It would be hopeless of him to continue, if he did not have 24/7 access to a wizard. Yes, he certainly needed Harry here. He'll capitalize on Potter's starvation for human contact, and hopefully that will be enough to hold him. Just in case, he made a mental note to invite John over as often as possible, to diffuse his own, sometimes unfriendly, attitude.

"Nonsense, 'roughing it' is out of the question. You'll stay here." Sherlock put it very simply.

John was just as surprised by Sherlock's insistence as Harry seemed to be.

"Sherlock are you sure? You're not exactly..." Sherlock narrowed his eyes at John. The message he was sending was rather clear. 'Shut up, John.'

"No, I couldn't possibly..." Harry began to back out, but Sherlock was faster.

"Is it not my fault that you are now without a hideout? I insist, you will stay here. I'm in desperate need of a flat mate anyway. And your aurors would never think to look for you in a muggle's home, why would they?" Sherlock now also stood up, to be more level with Potter. He could see Harry was already faltering. No doubt his paranoia at being found, and his desire for companionship were at war in his head. Sherlock could practically see it behind those green eyes.

"And you can call me Sherlock. After everything, I believe we're there, don't you?" Check and mate. He could see Harry's eyes give a strange glimmer at the thought of having friends again.

'Too easy.' Thought Sherlock, sitting back down with a satisfied smirk.

A bit later the two dark haired men were ironing out the 'flat-share deal', as John sat and watched them. He had never known Sherlock to be so affable. Even to the point of letting Harry bring about his cat (well not his cat, apparently it was just a stray that took a liking to him).
Harry left 221B, promising to return within the hour, after he dismantled whatever wizardry had been over that house on Archer Street. This gave John some time to privately ask his friend about what exactly was going on.

"Do you make a habit of asking people you just met to be flatmates?"

"John, he's a wizard! Do you know what this implies, about the scientific method, about the universe in general? There's so much interesting research I could be doing. There's no way I would just let him leave, not when there's so much to know." Sherlock still wore the same look of happy excitement. He seemed to be in one of the best moods that John had ever seen him.

John had his own suspicions about why Sherlock had been so adamant about Harry staying here. 'Well, that figures. It took someone who was literally magical.' John smirked a bit.

The two old friends chatted for a bit longer, before John had stood up, and told him he had to be home. He had a little girl to take care of, not that this hadn't been fun of course.

John left with a slight smile playing on his face. He could see the way that Sherlock had looked at their new wizard-acquaintance. He would bet a considerable amount of pounds that research' is not all this was about. Now, whether Sherlock realized that or not, was another question.
King's New Clothes

“That made a deep impression upon the emperor, for it seemed to him that they were right; but he thought to himself, ‘Now I must bear up to the end.’”

-Hans Christian Andersen, translated by H. P. Paull, *The Emperor's New Clothes*

Harry Potter sometimes made rash decisions. He always trusted his instincts. He believed that his continued survival was mostly due to his ability to follow what his gut whispered to him. Moving in with the strange genius-detective was a very rash decision. To his credit though, the little voice that had been his guide through life, had insisted it was a good idea.

So, after assuring Sherlock that he would be back shortly, Harry apparated back to Archer Street. He gathered his belongings (a single rucksack that had an uncountable amount of charms on it), and began to dismantle the wards he had placed on the house.

He found it truly baffling that anyone, much less a muggle, would have been able to penetrate the spells. The house being invisible aside, the curse he had placed to immobilize any intruders should have stopped anyone who came in. How Sherlock was able to do it, he didn't know.

Harry thought that Sherlock was beyond extraordinary, and for many reasons. His breaking into the house was the least of them. Harry had performed legilimency on the man, and found that his mind was unlike any other he has encountered. What Sherlock was able to reason out, given the most ambiguous clues, had been...almost magical. Harry decided that he quite liked the man. And despite the fact that he met him only yesterday evening, the little voice in his head was saying that he could trust Sherlock. After all, he was probably the only man in Britain that believed in Harry's innocence.

When he finished dismantling the wards, Harry began to vanish all the evidence of his stay in Archer Street. Dishes, candles, bits of rubbish lying around. A resounding 'meow' made him stop and spin around. The white cat that he had taken a liking to had materialized behind him. He didn't really have a name, so Harry had named him after the cat's favorite neighborhood to haunt.

"Archie! There you are. Listen, I have to move out of here..." The cat pranced up to him and rubbed his leg. Harry wasn't sure if Archie was a magical cat, but he could swear the animal understood him. Archie sat down in front of him, and looked up expectantly.

"You can come with me, it's a nice place with the nice man you met the other day. I asked if you could come, and he said you could. Would you like that?" The cat looked at Harry and gave another meow, decidedly sadder than the last one. The cat looked over to the window, and then back at Harry as if to say 'My home is here.'

"It would be a lovely place for you though. Central London, fancy alleyways and lots of other cats. And I would feed you very often. Come with me." Harry always felt a sense of embarrassment when he talked to the cat. He just knew the animal understood his every word, but that didn't mean it wasn't weird.
The cat looked over to the window again, and gave another meow, sounding something like human longing. Harry understood perfectly as well. Archie would not want to leave the place that was his home.

"Fine, if you're going to be like that, at least give me a hug. I'll miss you, you know..."
The white cat jumped right on Harry's jumper, and sunk it's claws into the knitting, giving him one of his 'hugs.' Harry reacted and grabbed the cat, wincing at his sharp claws. The cat bumped his head against Harry's chest a few times, and deciding that that was enough, jumped back onto the floor.

Returning from the Archer street hideout, and cementing his plan to take up residence at 221B, Harry started really looking about the flat. He rather liked the place. It was cluttered and very lived in. On first look, he thought it looked like a mess, but now that he could examine it, he found loads of books, a few sets of preserved insects, glassware, and even some weapons.

It reminded him a bit of Grimmauld place, after it had been cleaned up. Not that he expected there to be dangerous magical artifacts; but there was a skull, and that had certainly surprised Harry when he noticed. Keeping a skull was old hat for wizards (mostly dark ones, admittedly). He had no idea what sort of use a muggle would get out of keeping a skull.

He would very much like to ask Sherlock about the skull, but he seemed nowhere in sight. Despite the haphazard living room, Harry's first impression of the muggle's flat was decidedly positive. It seemed a bit odd, but then Harry had not much experience with how muggles lived. There were the Dursleys and the unhappy years Harry had spent there, but this place on Baker Street was about as a different from Privet Drive as one could get. Possibly this is precisely why Harry had such a good feeling about it.

Remembering the Dursleys, Harry felt a guilty pang. There was no reason for them to die, none at all. No, there was one reason actually: him. It was impossible that a wizard had randomly selected Harry's relatives as their victim. Sherlock had been right. It was almost certainly the same person that perpetrated the original bloodbath that had been blamed on Harry.

Harry didn't care much for his relatives, glad to see their backs in 1997. That didn't mean he wanted them dead though. The murder would be blamed on Harry, wasn't that appropriate? In a way, it was his fault.

He looked around the living room, at all the strange and beautiful items. Well, he didn't really want to mess with Sherlock's things much. Especially since the man seemed nowhere in sight. Instead, he decided to visit the kitchen and see if there's any more well prepared food that he could steal. He opened the fridge and looked in.

This is when Harry had come to the unsavory conclusion that he might have accidentally become flat-mates with a serial killer. This was not an unfounded suspicion in the least. Harry really didn't know what else to assume, after he found a severed head in the fridge, and a plastic bag full of...intestines?

The little voice in his head whispered that there was probably an explanation. But Harry was a little pissed at that voice, considering how wrong it had been in letting him come here in the first place. 'Look where you've got us now. We're sharing a living room with a mad muggle who collects body parts. Smashing, well done.'

Harry quietly closed the fridge and sat down. He didn't feel hungry anymore, and he supposed that
was a small plus. On the other hand, he had no bloody idea about what to do with this whole 'potential maniac who butchers people' situation. His best course of action would probably be to call the police, but considering his own status, that was out of the question.

Harry heard a door slam downstairs, and footsteps on the stair case. Checking that he still had his wand, Harry drew a few big breaths and tried to steady himself. Figures, the first person to believe him about his innocence kept people's heads in the fridge. And his friend (John, was it?) had seemed alright, normal really.

Holmes was a bit strange, but he never guessed it was this strange. Suddenly, he heard the door downstairs open, and a in a few moments Sherlock flounced in, hardly paying any heed to Harry, who was quietly sitting at the kitchen table. Sherlock plopped down, acting as though he was perfectly innocent and carefree, and there were no mutilated corpse parts in his fridge.

Sherlock had a few paper bags in his arms and he dumped them on the table. He took out a newspaper from one of the bags, and sat down, opened it and disappeared behind it.

Harry watched him steadily. He decided that he would need to find out all he can about the owner of the head. The man might have had a family, there could be people looking for him. The traitorous voice in Harry's head softly said that it's also possible that Sherlock hadn't been the one to decapitate the man.

Harry considered how to approach this. He was afraid of asking straight up if Holmes was a murderer. He could find the answers in his mind obviously, as confusing and fast-paced as it was. And although Harry had a distaste for legilimency, sometimes it was necessary.

Legilimency with Sherlock was difficult, as Harry had come to find out yesterday. Half of the things that were in his head had made no sense to Harry, though he could guess they were connected to muggle science. And of course, the thoughts were all very fast, and Harry really had to try very hard to even catch their meaning in the first place.

Sherlock was reading the journal, and his eyes whizzing by on each line. Harry looked in his eyes, and tried to prod at what was going on inside. Sherlock was steadfastly thinking about what he was reading. Random flashes of corpses kept coming up to the forefront, and being discarded again. Harry's throat tightened.

This didn't bode well.

He couldn't see anything in Sherlock’s head past what he was concentrating on: the newspaper. He would have to bring the dead man's head to the forefront of Sherlock's thoughts, somehow. Otherwise, it was useless. Harry gathered his courage and dove in.

"So, uh, there's a bloke's head in the ice box." Honesty was the best policy sometimes. Sherlock looked up at him with a blank expression. Not with a surprised 'what are you talking about, severed heads?' or a scared 'severed head, good god, really?' No, just a blank expression. As though Harry had just asked him if he had any milk.

Suddenly, Sherlock's expression cleared in comprehension and he gave a soft 'oh.'

"Yes, an experiment, nothing to worry about." His eyes went back to the newspaper. Harry was sure he was telling the truth. It was still not consoling, but very surprising.

"Experiment?" He choked out.
"Yes, I need to find out how blood coagulates in the mouth, given the temperature is close to zero centigrade." Once again, truth.

"I mean, where did you get it?" A bit more straightforward. Sherlock looked up at this, and studied Harry.

"Hmm, maybe some explanation is in order then... I certainly didn't kill him, if that's what you're thinking. Judging by your pallor, and the fact that you're currently attempting to read my mind, yes, you were thinking exactly that. Perfectly honest mistake, what else would you assume?" Not only was Sherlock telling the truth, Harry could make out the purpose of the experiment. Sherlock was trying to catch a criminal at the expense of some poor sod's head.

"I should have warned you. You might find other experiments. You should know that I did not bring about the harm of any of those people." Again, all true as far as Harry could tell.

Harry had decided that was enough interrogation for one evening. He promptly pulled out of Sherlock's mind. An apology for the accusation and legilimency seemed a bit awkward. Luckily, Sherlock had seemed absorbed with the newspaper again, until he put down it down with a huff.

"All boring, all transparent. I'm glad I have you here; the criminals of London are being an extreme disappointment." Harry wasn't sure what to make of this, so defaulted to an area he was comfortable with.

"I'll make tea, then, yeah?" Harry pulled out his wand and got the kettle brewing with a few flicks. Sherlock lit up at this, as he had whenever Harry did magic. He couldn't blame him, since Harry had felt exactly the same way when he found out about magic. Plus, doing something nice was probably due after he (indirectly) accused his new flatmate of murder.

Making the pot and cups zoom over had apparently been enough for Sherlock.

"So you do a lot of...experiments?" Harry tasked timidly.

"Yes. Most of them I keep at Bart's, but sometimes I need to keep a closer watch on the data. Speaking of which, did you notice if there was a faint blue hue around the corners of the mouth?"

Harry only looked at him with wide eyes.

"Er...no, I didn't notice..."

Sherlock took a sip of his tea.

"It shouldn't be forming yet, I'll check on it later. I hope my experiments in forensic science didn't put you of your appetite? I got take out again."

Harry looked over to the brown bags with realization. He was feeling hungry, and now a little guilty as well. He opened his mouth to properly apologize, but Sherlock (who seemed to have an uncanny ability close to legilimency) held up his hands, beat him to it.

"Don't apologize. Most people would assume the same. In fact, most people I interact with never really stop assuming that."

Sherlock looked over to the bags.

"I don't usually eat very much, but John had suggested that I get some food for the both of us. Since I have you here for awhile, and we're not under any time constraints, I might as well. My
brain does slow down with too much food. You're not leaving anywhere, are you?"

"Mmm, no, as long as you're offering your place as a hide out?"

"Brilliant! Now, can you heat up the food with magic?"

They were eating take-out (Indian this time) in companionable silence, and Harry was relieved. He was actually way beyond relieved. He was very, very glad that the first person who had extended anything besides an arrest warrant was also not in the habit of decapitating people.

... 

Mycroft Holmes had a lot of little problems. Insignificant little bumps in the road, little setbacks, and worries. Most of them, he could solve rather easily, and with a minimum of effort. Korean elections, Middle Eastern radicals, and his ever annoying colleagues all fell into the category of 'little problems.' What Mycroft liked best about little problems is that after he had solved them, they didn't rise up again for quite some time. There were very many of these little worries, but that was fine, because he really didn't need to exert himself much to find a solution.

Mycroft Holmes also had one big problem. One giant problem that wore ridiculous coats (in the middle of summer), sometimes got stuck in opium dens, and was frequently in way over his head.

Mycroft's one big problem was also the one that mattered the most, which was irritating. He wished very often that he could simply not care about his brother, and thereby not get involved with all the harebrained adventures he seemed to attract.

It had been a rather quiet few months since Magnussen and that little fiasco in home front security. Since then, Sherlock had seemed unusually docile. He was hoping Sherlock would be happy for some time, just solving the little homicides and thefts that sprouted in London.

His hopes were all dashed when a few days ago his brother came into his office demanding to know anything Mycroft had on one Harry Potter. It took all of Mycroft's quick thinking and self-restraint to not be very obvious. His brother was not on his level of intelligence, but he could spot when people lied to him. And Mycroft had to lie to him, a lot.

He tried as hard as he could to make Potter's case into something simple, boring even. Mycroft threw in some mentions of irregularities in financial accounts, terrorist affiliations, in short things his brother couldn't give a hoot about. However, it seemed Sherlock wasn't letting on all that he knew about Potter. No matter what Mycroft had said, his brother remained resolute in chasing after him.

At the end of the interview, Mycroft had to simply state that he knew almost nothing about the fugitive, and couldn't give Sherlock any more information. This was almost true. Despite knowing what society Potter belonged to, Mycroft knew nothing about why or how this man was accused and on the run. They usually would, although not always as fast as Mycroft would have liked.

It was an interesting revelation, when Mycroft first found out about the wizards. The prime minister had chosen him as one of the dozen or so government officials 'in on the secret.' One of them had come and performed some impossible feats with twitches of a little wooden stick. It was baffling, amazing and in Mycroft's calculated mind, very dangerous. And now his brother was chasing one of them; perhaps the most dangerous one there is England. Fantastic.

Mycroft sighed and poured himself a bit more of the finely aged whiskey. Yes, sometime he really wish he didn't hold any regard for his brother.
Mycroft had tried as hard as he could to keep Sherlock from chasing a deranged wizard, so if anything happens it would be Sherlock's fault. Perhaps it would have been wiser to let Sherlock in on the secret as well? No, Mycroft though, if there's anything that would make Sherlock give chase faster it would have been the promise of magic, real and powerful.

He had even tried to warn him, before Sherlock left his office a few days ago. He had said not meddle with this case, to give it up. Sherlock rightfully looked suspicious, and John looked confused.

Suddenly his phone rang, and he heard Anthea's voice.

"It's your brother sir, he says it's urgent." Good, so he wasn't dead.

"Tell him to come up."

He only had a moment's notice that his brother was coming up. Then, his door banged open, and his brother flounced in with a great huff and swish of his coat.

He really did have a flair for the dramatic.

He strode right up to Mycroft's desk, pointed a long finger at him and proclaimed:
"You liar!" Then, Sherlock fell into one of the armchairs, and resolutely looked away. Oh, dear. This would be a long work day.

"Would you care to clarify?" Mycroft asked, Sherlock sneered in return.

"Why? Do you make a habit of lying to family, Mycroft?"

Sherlock was trying to go the guilt approach. Not that it ever worked. Mycroft carefully examined his brother. He had been eating again. This meant almost certainly that the case was off. Which indicated that...

"So you found Potter, then?" Sherlock looked up, and smiled.

"Yes, no help from you, thanks."

"In that case, Sherlock, I'm rather impressed. Where is he now? Did he give you the slip?" Mycroft didn't know everything about wizards, but he did know they can pop in and out of existence at will.

"No, no he didn't." Sherlock was still smiling at him, daring him to ask what happened. It was obvious this was a game to him.

Mycroft recounted the facts. Sherlock would have certainly figured out that there was something unusual about the man as soon as he had found him. He was sure Sherlock would now be (unintentionally) in the know about magic. He also probably realized that Mycroft had been as well.

"I'm rather surprised that you made it back in one piece Sherlock. I understand Potter would have had eclectic ways of defending himself?" This was perhaps the biggest worry on Mycroft's mind. He could just see his brother resurfacing in bits, hacked apart by a curse.

"He didn't try to defend himself." Ugh, Mycroft really hated when his brother knew more than he did. It didn't happen often, so Sherlock always lorded it over him as much as possible. Still in the armchair, Sherlock was looking at him with that annoying smile.
"That is surprising. If he didn't give you the slip, where is he now? Certainly you could not trust a jail to hold him...?" Mycroft was hoping his brother would finish with-holding information soon, and clarify some things about this situation. This question game was becoming tedious.

Sherlock jumped up and began pacing Mycroft's office.

"I would tell you Mycroft, but..."

"But what?"

"I'm just not sure I can trust you."

Mycroft sighed. His brother really was ridiculous.

"Why, because I couldn't tell you he was a wizard? Or that magic exists? Really, Sherlock, would you have ever believed me?"

Sherlock turned around, with a thoughtful look on his face.

"No, I probably would have thought you mad." Sherlock continued pacing.

Mycroft's patience was really wearing thin.

"So..." He began, but Sherlock interrupted him in a flurry.

"I'll tell you everything, but first I have to know if you trust me."

"Trust you with what? To stay away from destructive narcotics, or know when to back out of a case?" Sherlock frowned at him.

"If I were to say that the wizards are wrong in accusing Potter of murder, would you trust me?"

Mycroft considered this.

"Yes, I trust your deductive abilities as only second to mine. Not to mention, the only other word I have on this is the few wizards I've met. And to be honest, Sherlock, the one's I've met are all idiots."

"That's disappointing." His brother frowned, but seemed to relax and flopped back into the armchair.

"Now that we have that established, where is he Sherlock?"

"Oh, Baker Street. Told him he could have John's old room."

Mycroft blinked. That was unexpected. He decided it was high time for a refill on his whiskey.

"What is he doing there, Sherlock?"

Sherlock gave him a long look.

"I'm rather surprised at you Mycroft. I would have thought you too would be curious when you discovered them. But I suppose you've never been the curious sort, have you?" Sherlock said.

_Ah, so that's what was going on._ Sherlock found himself a new toy. Mycroft smiled at his brother.

"So then, you found yourself a new goldfish? I was wondering how long it would take since the
good doctor is no longer available 24 hours a day."

"Mycroft, only you think of people as pets." Sherlock scoffed.

"Of course, and you're the shining beacon of humane kindness and affection? I'm not chastising you, brother. This one is a magical goldfish after all. How exciting!"

He could see Sherlock was getting annoyed. Well, he deserved it after making Mycroft worry. This whole time, he and his new wizard buddy had been holed up in Baker Street, while Mycroft had people out looking for any sign of Sherlock.

Discretely of course.

"Hmph, the only reason I'm telling you any of this is because before long you will again poke your obnoxious nose into my business. It would be uncomfortable if you decided to phone the wizard cops before figuring it out."

"Wise move, little brother." Sherlock huffed at him, and stood up.

"Fine. I'm leaving." He turned around to make his point.

"Wait, Sherlock, won't you invite me with you? I would also like to meet your new...friend."

"No Mycroft, you know how dreadfully embarrassing you are." Sherlock retorted, chuckling. Mycroft swallowed the joke.

"Now, brother, don't you think you can benefit from a second opinion?"

"Mmmmm, no, I don't think so."

"Sherlock, I do trust you. But I need to see what you see. Otherwise, I would be doing a grave injustice to the English people, who I am sworn to serve."

Sherlock narrowed his eyes.

"And if you decide that he's guilty?"

"Then perhaps he isn't your best bet for a flat mate? I've hardly ever been wrong, you know."

Sherlock huffed and gave a roll of his eyes that seemed to indicate 'if you must.' Mycroft smiled and ordered them a car.

Sitting in the car, Mycroft considered the new circumstances arising around his baby brother. A wizard at Sherlock's command could be formidable. There was the tiny problem of the wizard not being able to leave the flat, but nonetheless, Sherlock could be much more useful with magic at his aide.

Mycroft had already decided that the wizard was, as Sherlock had said, not dangerous. Sherlock's ability to read people had usually been on the mark. If Mycroft was honest, there were some discrepancies in the case that even he noticed. Mycroft had been giving the barest minimum of details pertaining to the Potter case. He briefly considered, then, to offer his help, but decided against it. He hated legwork, and chasing after a wizard would have included lots of it.

What he did want was to establish what kind of character Potter was, whether he could be trusted with his brother. Then, innocent or not, if he was a danger, Mycroft might have to break a few promises.
The drive to the flat had been wordless, each brother too preoccupied with his own thoughts. Stepping into the flat, they found an irate Mrs. Hudson, who had still not been allowed access to the top flat. Doing their best to sidestep the aging landlady, they made their way up to the upper landing.

Apparently, Sherlock had told Potter about Mycroft’s visit. He was sitting there expectantly, and got up as soon as they entered. Mycroft thought he had a bit of a vagrant look to him, but he supposed being on the run would do that.

As soon as they made their introductions, Sherlock did his best to focus the wizard’s attention on himself, and resolutely ignore Mycroft. Well, that was typical. Mycroft preferred to observe anyway.

It seemed Potter had been quite taken with Sherlock. He certainly indulged every time Sherlock asked him for magic. Sherlock, likewise had been very taken. With magic or Potter, it was unclear. Perhaps both. Potter also seemed about as dangerous as boiled turnips.

Of course, wielding magic in the first place made him more powerful than an average man, but Potter’s personality didn't seem to have an ounce of aggression. Mycroft sighed internally. He hated when people were idiots, and the wizards were no exception.

Mycroft’s attention came reeling back to the present when he realized Sherlock was doing his best to convince the wizard to hex him.

"You could give him some aspect of the Suinae anatomy, you said you could that?"

"Yes, of course I can, but I’ve only just met your brother, and have no reason to curse him, Sherlock..."

"Oh there's plenty reason. How about a longer nose, that's fairly harmless?"

"Sherlock, no..."

Mycroft decided it was high time that he got out of here. Potter seemed to be holding up, but he knew how convincing his brother could be.

"Well, I've had a lovely chat. Sherlock, I'll be keeping in touch." Mycroft gave him a meaningful look, and Sherlock scoffed.

"Mr Potter, good to make your acquaintance." Mycroft held out his hand, with what he hoped was an affable smile. Potter stood up and returned the formalities. Mycroft noticed that he looked particularly guilty.

Leaving the flat, Mycroft entered the car again, where Anthea was still waiting. He took off his coat, and loosened his tie. Then, he noticed that Anthea was positively staring at him.

"What, what is it?" He asked.

"Sir, your vest." Mycroft raised an eyebrow at her. Anthea scrambled in her purse for a small black case, a compact as it turned out. She held it out to him, with the mirror up. Mycroft looked at himself and was surprised to notice that his vest changed to a particularly hideous combination of bright pink with lime green polka dots. Well, his brother was very convincing.

Fighting the urge not chuckle in front if Anthea, Mycroft returned her the mirror.
"You don't like it?" He asked, putting on his best mock serious tone.

"On the contrary, Sir, very dashing." She giggled, as they drove away from Baker Street.
"Don't you see? Voldemort himself created his worst enemy, just as tyrants everywhere do! Have you any idea how much tyrants fear the people they oppress? All of them realize that, one day, amongst their many victims, there is sure to be one that rises against them and strikes back!"

-J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Halfblood Prince*

...
"All the introductions are almost out of the way now. Just one more. Mrs. Hudson has been growing unbearable. I guess she doesn't like being locked out of my flat. All that talk of her not being my housekeeper, and she can't help but stay out."

"That's the old lady downstairs?"

"Yes, the one. I'll invite her up now." Sherlock made to leave the room.

"Sherlock, wait! It's pretty amazing everyone so far seems to take you at your word. I suppose I understand your brother and your best mate, but isn't she your landlady? Will she believe you?"

Sherlock crossed the room back to where Harry was sitting and bent over him, looking straight into his eyes, their faces inches apart. Sherlock decided it was important to make this point very clear. The wizard was very skittish, and Sherlock noticed more than once the tell-tale sign of shifting and twitching which usually meant that someone was thinking of making a quick escape. He couldn't have the wizard escaping. The physical proximity and eye contact would impress the point that indeed, Sherlock was looking out for the wizard's best interests.

"Have I given you any reason not to trust me?" Sherlock could see the brief flash of panic that crossed Harry's eyes at being so close to someone.

"No, no you haven't..." Harry seemed to hesitate. "Yes, of course I trust you. Bring her up I guess. But if you get kicked out of your flat for letting a known terrorist room with you, don't go blaming me, yeah?"

Sherlock decided that was good enough, and straightened up. As he did he noticed Harry release a nervous breath.

"You're not the only known terrorist that has been here. In fact another one took his tea in that very chair. And she let him waltz right on upstairs. Of course, he wasn't innocent, by far..."

Leaving Harry with a perplexed expression, Sherlock loped off downstairs.

Mrs. Hudson was, as always, in the lower landing. She was watching some incredibly tedious program on the telly.

"Mrs. Hudson! Would you come up with me please?"

The aging matron jumped a little, and looked at him with an annoyed expression. Apparently, not being in the loop of Sherlock's business had irritated her.

"Sherlock, all this business with me not being allowed upstairs is over with. I don't know who's been taking care of you, god knows you can't take care of yourself, and all the bangs I keep hearing from up there... You haven't gone and blown another hole in the living room wall have you?"

Sherlock tuned her out as always. Obviously, everything would be clear once everything was explained to her. He led her up the stairs, and into his own flat. Harry was sitting there, still looking rather bemused.

Before Sherlock had a chance to begin his explanation however, Mrs. Hudson exclaimed.

"Oh good heavens! Sherlock, what's Harry Potter doing in our living room?" Sherlock noted with pride that Mrs. Hudson didn't have an edge of fear in her voice, just curious surprise.

"Yes, you might recognize him. Apparently, he's been the highlighting feature on more than one
news reel, in the last decade. You should know, that he is innocent of the crimes attributed to him and..." As he was speaking, Sherlock was looking at, and analyzing Mrs. Hudson, and something was decidedly off. His brain kicked into high gear.

She knew who Harry Potter was, but, judging by her confused expression, seemed to be unaware of his presence on the telly. Sherlock knew she didn't like watching the news, and preferred pop culture drivel. This would explain why she had never seen news reports on apparent sightings of Harry Potter, the deranged murderer. This didn't explain how she knew of him, otherwise.

Mrs. Hudson saw her mistake, and attempted to recover.

"Oh, yes, on the telly. Of course, that's where I know him from."

Sherlock literally winced at how bad a liar Mrs. Hudson was. He looked back at Harry, who was looking at the both of them with confusion. So he didn't know what was going on either.

"Mrs. Hudson, how do you know who Harry Potter is?"

Sherlock could see her hesitate.

"Oh, I've just remembered I've left something on the stove. And I've got to dash and get some more biscuits, we're nearly out. The shop on the corner is closing soon, I've really got to hurry..."

She made to bustle her way to the door, but Sherlock was faster, and blocked the way with his frame.

"Mrs. Hudson, how do you know about Harry Potter?" Sherlock repeated himself, (which he really did hate doing).

The landlady wrung her hands and looked from one man to the other. She gave a little sigh, and sat down in the empty armchair.

"Oh Sherlock dear, I'm really not supposed to tell anyone..."

Sherlock groaned.

"Mrs. Hudson, believe me, whatever it is you think I don't know, I probably do. That includes magic."

Mrs. Hudson's eyes widened.

"I hadn't realized...Obviously I don't go talking about it to anyone, my sister made it very clear no one's to know..."

"Your sister?"

"Yes, the one from Bath, I've told you about her." Sherlock made a gesture with his hand to keep talking. He vaguely remembered a sister. He would have payed more attention if he knew that the sister Mrs. Hudson always mentions was involved in this.

"Yes, well, my sister." Mrs. Hudson took a big breath, "She's a witch. None of the rest of my family knew anything about magic till Margaret got her first letter. It was all very exciting. That's how I know who Mr. Potter is."

Sherlock frowned. Mrs. Hudson seemed to think that this explained everything. And it did make a lot of things clear, but the whole picture was still missing. He would need more information.
"And...you've kept in touch with your sister?"

"Well of course I have! We're not like you and Mycroft, always harassing each other. We're very close. She stayed with me when the Troubles began in the seventies. That is, the magical world's troubles. Poor dear, her husband went missing around then. I rather liked Mr. Fenwick too, such a shame. He was a wizard too, you know. I've only met him a few times, but he was very kind. Maggie was never the same after that..."

Sherlock contained himself as Mrs. Hudson prattled. This is all useful information, he reminded himself.

"...And then in the nineties when the Troubles began again, that's when she told me about Mr. Potter. She had a job in the ministry by then, and she would always talk about you."

Mrs. Hudson smiled warmly at Harry. Harry shifted a bit, embarrassed by the attention.

"Oh she'd go on and on, about how this young man had more spine than the lot of barmpots she worked with. She would always show me articles from their newspaper (and Sherlock, the pictures move!), and tell me about this amazing young man, and all the adventures he had..."

Sherlock had jumped up and began pacing. Mrs. Hudson's story faded to background level. So, Harry was famous before his crime. This changed everything. Sherlock felt irritation at Potter, for not revealing this. Of course, a famous person would be much easier to frame. Sherlock knew, very intimately, how easily the crowd can be swayed.

"You didn't tell me you were a celebrity before you were set up." He shot Harry a glare. Harry, who had been silent, remained so. Sherlock tried for a deduction. He had to admit he was a bit out of his depth, though.

"You would have been in your teens in the nineties. Child prodigy?"

Harry chuckled.

"No, not exactly a prodigy." Damn. It was a good guess, though, Sherlock consoled himself.

"Oh heavens, Sherlock he's the Chosen One!" Mrs. Hudson exclaimed.

"It's been a long time since anyone's called me that." Harry added, darkly.

Mrs. Hudson, untroubled, went on.

"My sister told me all about it when she came to stay with me during the second Troubles. Well, she said she was only visiting, but I reckon she was hiding. It was a nasty time, as I understand it. People turning up dead left and right, and poor Maggie in the middle of it all...

“She ended up staying with me for a whole year, while the war went on. She would always point to your picture and say, 'There, Martha. If we've got a chance, it's this young man there.' Even though by then the articles about Harry weren't very nice.

“Well, she was right wasn't she? Mr. Potter ended up winning the war. It all had to do with some evil wizard, but I never learned his name. No one would say it, which I thought was very strange..."

As Mrs. Hudson spoke, Sherlock digested everything to do with Harry. It seemed that the wizard he had found was far more interesting than he assumed. That was saying a lot, as Sherlock thought that magic was literally the most interesting thing he's ever encountered.
In his mind, Sherlock was making a specific and detailed list of questions for Harry. As impatient as he was, Sherlock realized that he would have to be more delicate with Potter. It was obvious that Harry was immensely uncomfortable at the mention of this magical war. He was fidgeting in his armchair, and his eyes darted about the room.

Usually Sherlock wouldn't care in the slightest if he hurt his feelings or some such rubbish. But with Harry it was different. Sherlock fully understood that the wizard could easily leave, and finding him again would be very annoying, not to mention time consuming.

Mrs. Hudson, who was oblivious to both Sherlock's calculations and Harry's discomfort, plowed on with her story.

"Well, whatever that man's name was, Mr. Potter was able to defeat him. The articles about Harry all became nice very quickly. Shows you how easily they can turn. Apparently he defeated that man-with-no-name right at the school where Maggie went for seven years.

"Hogwarts, wasn’t it? Oh she loved it there! She said it was the best place in the world. She told me such amazing stories. You know she met her husband there. He was in the same house: Fluffy-puff, I think. They got married a few years after graduating..."

Sherlock snapped around, a scandalized look on his face.

"Please tell me there's not actually a school house called fluffy-puff..."

"No, no it's called Hufflepuff. It's named after the witch that founded it." Harry clarified, chuckling.

"I find that nearly just as ridiculous. So..." Sherlock squared off and stared at Harry. He was done with Mrs. Hudson for now. "So, you were involved, nay headlined, a magical war when you were a teenager."

Harry nodded to confirm this. Sherlock examined the man before him and noticed a new facet of his character coming through. He seemed...tired, much older than a few minutes ago. He had a slight frown on his face, disapproving the conversation and allowing it at the same time.

"And the man that Mrs. Hudson doesn't know by name?" Sherlock questioned further, too intrigued with the story now to stop himself.

"Tom Riddle, but most call him Voldemort. Megalomaniac who wanted to control the whole world, and refused to stay dead." Harry answered.

"Ugh, those are obnoxious. There's one named Moriarty, currently running around London. Or, so I suspect. He could be anywhere really."

"Yes, I remember hearing something about him quite recently."

Harry was staring into Sherlock's eyes as he said this, no longer smiling. He had a determined and calculating expression on his face. At first, Sherlock thought he might be trying to read his mind again. But, the odd glitter in Harry's eyes was missing, and Sherlock didn't feel the little push in his mind that signified legilimency.

Sherlock realized that Harry was measuring him, wondering if perhaps they weren't so different. In the back of Sherlock head, Mycroft's voice floated to the top of his mind.

He could hear his brother saying: 'You've found yourself a dragon-slayer.'
Except, that wasn't what Mycroft said earlier this afternoon, so why had Sherlock's brain produced that?

Sherlock returned Harry's stare, and considered the man. He supposed they were both dragon-slayers, in their own right. With everything Mrs. Hudson just told him, Harry's life seemed to be similar to Sherlock's. Except, Sherlock didn't take on a fully-grown Moriarty in his teens. And it had been Sherlock's choice to side with the angels, he wasn't 'chosen' to do so.

Mrs. Hudson cleared her throat. Sherlock realized he and Harry had been staring into each other’s eyes for half a minute. Harry came to the same conclusion, and blushing a bit, turned back to Mrs. Hudson.

Breaking eye contact, Sherlock felt an odd lurch somewhere in his naval. It was an odd sensation, and one Sherlock definitely did not recognize. He decided it was probably something magical, and ignored it.

"As I was saying about Margaret, I asked her sometime after the war was over about that young man. She said that he'd gone dark, did some very evil things. And weren't you saying, Sherlock, that Harry was innocent? That's just lovely, I should phone up Maggie, she'll be happy to hear that he hadn't gone dark all along..."

Sherlock and Harry both cried: "No!"

Harry looked at Sherlock with evident fear. His expression read something like 'you better fix this now.'

"Mrs. Hudson, until I clear Mr. Potter's name, and he assures me it won't be easy, absolutely no-one is to know that he is staying here." Sherlock felt sure that the landlady would keep their secret. She smiled at him, her indulgent motherly smile.

"Oh Sherlock! I didn't know he'd be staying here! Well, isn't this lovely. And I thought it must be a terrible blow to you, with John getting married. I'm glad you've decided to move on, dear. And a wizard too! Very exotic."

Sherlock wondered why she always insisted that his roommates were his bed-mates. Mrs. Hudson knew him very well, and should know by now that this was definitely not Sherlock's area.

Mrs. Hudson was taken care of now. If he had any hope of doing work she will have to vacate the living room.

"Mrs. Hudson, what was it that you left on the stove? Don't you think you need to attend to that?" Sherlock tried his best to imply it gently.

"Oh, no, come to think of it, I haven't got anything on the stove. Are you two boys hungry? Sherlock never eats if he can help it. Horribly unhealthy if you ask me. My mother always said one really shouldn't skimp out on meals, if one can help it.

“And Harry, you look awful thin. Poor dear, you probably haven't had a good home cooked meal in ages. I'll whip something up for dinner just this once. Maybe as as a house warming celebration, and we could all sit down..." Sherlock inwardly groaned.

He tried getting up and walking toward the door, to indicate through body language his desire for Mrs. Hudson to leave. She remained sitting, and even worse, talking. Harry, however, was taking it all in stride. In fact, Sherlock observed that the wizard seemed to be quickly growing comfortable around the landlady.
"And Harry dear, do you usually keep your hair that long? I'm not sure it suits you. But you probably haven't been able to go to a barber's or anything..."

"No, no I haven't. And I don't have the courage to attempt to cut it myself. It doesn't really matter to me much."

"Oh that's no way to go about things. I'm a rather adept with a pair of scissors, maybe I could give it a go?"

"If you could, I'd appreciate it." Sherlock sighed. There was no hope of getting Mrs. Hudson back in her rooms now. Not when someone was engaging her. Nothing would work short of bodily forcing her out, and although Sherlock had no problem doing this to his brother (and on occasion John), he could never do that to dear Mrs. Hudson.

Just then he felt his cell buzz. Taking it out, he saw that he had 5 missed text from Lestrade, all of increasing urgency.

Case hopeless. I haven't got a clue why the head was found in the cellar. Any thoughts from you would be great.

I swear, if you're just at home playing Cluedo, while the city of London is terrified of decapitations, I will punch you.

That last text was a joke, I'm not going to punch you. No promises for Sally.

Just come. North of Camden Market. Do you want me to send you the address?

Sherlock, I need you on this case. Very important.

I would rather not beg. Is that what you want? Fine I'm begging. Come, please.

Sherlock had been hoping that Lestrade might figure this one out on his own, since it irked him that he would have to leave the wizard alone for a bit. But his Work was calling, and he always answered.

"Right, I'm heading out; will be back in a few hours." No point beating around the bush. Mrs. Hudson reacted to the news with an offhand wave. Harry on the other hand glanced up with a slightly worried expression. Sherlock had no idea what that meant, and decided not to pay attention to it. Occupied with Mrs. Hudson, he was sure that the wizard would be fine for a couple of hours.

...The only logical solution, then, is that the head was brought down by the brother's wife. Mr. Emberly's murder eliminates him from the will, and framing his daughter, would obviously eliminate her. Thereby, all the money goes to the brother, and in effect, his wife." Sherlock pronounced proudly to Lestrade, who was looking at him with a skeptical expression.

"Well, alright, but why couldn't the brother have done it? Why did it have to be his wife?" He asked.

"Because, if you use your keen sense of insight, that you must have surely developed in the ten years you've served Scotland Yard, you would have seen that the brother deeply cares about his niece. He would have left everything to her given the chance. Also there's the fact that he's a complete pillock and couldn't possibly think up a murder this intricate."
Lestrade nodded his head, looking off in the distance. He was trying to digest all this information. It made sense, and he trusted Sherlock's abilities.

Sherlock seemingly finished, turned himself around, and looked over the crime scene once again. Greg always had the distinct impression that he might be expecting a round of applause when he finishes solving cases, and announces his conclusion to all the coppers gathered round.

If Greg was being honest sometimes he felt like giving him a standing ovation, but that might undermine his authority with his co-workers (specifically Sally). Anyway, he was sure that Sherlock probably heard clapping in his head all the time when he made his brilliant deductions.

"Well, if that's all, I'll be heading back..." Sherlock begin to wander off. Greg decided this was the best opportunity to approach him. He had a few questions for the consulting detective.

"Sherlock? Can I speak to you for a moment?" Sherlock turned around and narrowed his eyes. Lestrade really hated when he did that. He knew all of his secrets were a moment's notice from being disclosed to the general public or whoever happened to be standing near. He was hoping he'd be able to keep the subject matter not focused on himself this time.

"Listen I know it's none of my business, but you'd been rather...absent lately. I was just wondering if there's something going on? Any trouble? Anything I should know about?" Sherlock looked at him impassively. Greg decided to elaborate.

"It's just that, if you're busy, I'm wondering what's keeping your attention. Especially with Moriarty being back and all. Just, give me a heads up if there is any trouble, yeah?" Sherlock considered him for a second.

"You're still feeling guilty about my 'suicide'? Touching." Sherlock smirked at him. That wasn't what he was talking about, thought Lestrade indignantly.

"No, it's just...if there's any trouble, you can come to me. You should know that, that's all."

Sherlock seemed to hesitate, thinking something over.

"You've broken the law, for my sake, a few times." Sherlock stated ponderously.

Now Greg was lost. What did this have to do with anything? Before he had a chance to ask, Sherlock snapped out of his reverie.

"Right, I might stay busy for awhile, but if a truly interesting case pops up, you should know that I'll be bringing a new assistant next time. Just a heads up." With that Sherlock swished his coat, and walked away from the taped-off crime scene.

Lestrade blew out a breath. Although a part of him wanted to clarify exactly what laws he would be breaking in the near future, a bigger part decided that he really didn't want to know.

…

On his way back to Baker Street, Sherlock decided to take a stroll. He had to work out a few things about his wizard friend, now that his mind was no longer occupied with the Emberly murder. He'd made a few too many deductions that were wrong. And although he tried to assuage his ego by telling himself that the subject of magic was completely foreign, his pride was still wounded.

That and he had a burning desire to impress Harry. The wizard had been able to floor him, after all. Sherlock thought he should return the favor.
Barely noticing where he wandered, as his feet found the familiar paths of London's street, Sherlock set his brain to figuring out what Potter wasn't telling him. Or rather, what he has yet to tell him.

By the time Sherlock turned onto his familiar corner of Baker St, he felt he had a few deductions that would be spot on. Letting himself in, he found both Harry and Mrs. Hudson working in the kitchen.

In his absence, Mrs. Hudson somehow convinced the rogue sorcerer to not only have a shave, but chop off his long hair as well. His new friend looked decidedly better, and much less like one of his contacts in the homeless network.

He considered Harry, now that he was at least halfway presentable. Sherlock supposed, in a very objective way, that the wizard was a handsome man. He was thin, but Sherlock thought it rather suited him. His face was angular, sharp, but altogether pleasant.

Harry's worn and patched clothes, though a gold mine of information, would also have to go. Sherlock made a point to remember them all in intricate detail. He was confident in his memory, and thought they were no longer necessary. He mentally made the decision to let Harry borrow his own clothes. They were nearly the same size.

Sherlock quietly sat down at the table. Mrs. Hudson seemed good on her promise for dinner, and soon they were all eating. Sherlock mainly kept his silence, and observed Harry as he interacted with Mrs. Hudson.

She prattled on about things Sherlock couldn't care less about, and the wizard, in a show of good nature, followed her along. He nodded and asked the appropriate questions. All in all, they seemed to be getting along splendidly.

Sherlock thought this was definitely to his advantage. He knew that his caustic personality was liable to upset the wizard at some point. It would be beneficial if Harry also became attached to the landlady. More chance of him staying at Baker Street. More time to study this incredible phenomena of magic.

After dinner, Mrs. Hudson told them that her favorite shows were coming on the telly, and that Harry-dear needed anything he ought to call her up. They both assured her that everything would be fine, and thanked her for dinner.

After she was gone, Harry served them tea, and they sat together for a few moments, in companionable silence.

"So then, how was it that you escaped prison?" Sherlock thought he would be sly and slip this clever deduction in, with no preamble. He thought it would certainly be more dramatic that way.

Across the table, Harry's color drained from his face. This was not the reaction Sherlock had expected. He saw Harry's eyes narrow, his shoulders hunch a millimeter, and his hand dart into his pocket. All of the reactions were obvious: he was deciding on fight or flight. However, what was not obvious was why this bit of information caused such a response in Harry.

Sherlock's first thought was that perhaps his deduction was slightly off, and he decided to attempt to correct it.

"Or whatever the wizarding equivalent is. They wouldn't put you in a normal prison, I would think." Across from him, Harry was sitting very still, a slight frown frozen on his face.
"How could you possibly know that?" The wizard asked hoarsely. Sherlock stared at him. Something wasn't computing. Harry was perfectly impressed with Sherlock's deductions before this. They've all been rather simple ones, to date. Why was this longer leap in logic putting him on edge? He decided to clear it up.

"I deduced..."

"You couldn't have deduced that."

"Well I did..."

"I doubt that very much." Harry narrowed his eyes. Sherlock noticed his right hand twitch, as though gripping a gun. It would be his wand, Sherlock reminded himself. He had to admit, this was quickly spiraling out into dangerous territory.

Sherlock still had no idea what was making the wizard this distressed. Frankly, it looked like Harry was a few seconds away from showing the darker and more aggressive side of magic to Sherlock. Sherlock considered letting him, out of curiosity, but decided that he was not the appropriate target for curses.

He was on the verge of apologizing when Harry whipped out his wand, and pointed it straight at Sherlock's head.

"You couldn't possible know that...unless you talked to other wizards..." Harry’s voice was low and oddly hollow.

Sherlock could have laughed, as relief washed over him, now that he understood. In fact he did let out a chuckle, which didn't help the situation.

Quick as a shadow the wizard leaped out of his chair, and brandished his wand to the living room ceiling. Sherlock thought he heard him mumble 'Magus Revelio.' Sherlock could have punched himself. Well not really, but it was now very clear what had upset the wizard.

Harry had assumed that the only way Sherlock could have come to that information was if he had sold him to the magical authorities, whoever they were. No doubt, the fugitive now thought that the wizard cops must be closing in on him, and he was going to be dragged back to prison. The quick leap in Harry's logic, though faulty, had impressed Sherlock.

"There's no one coming, if that's what you're searching for. You can read my mind if you like..." Sherlock tried for his best calming voice. Harry seemed to agree with his suggestion. Wand still out, the wizard locked his green eyes with Sherlock's.

Sherlock expected the gentle push that accompanied his friend's ability to read minds. However, this time there was nothing gentle, as image after image seemed to be ripped from Sherlock's mind. It was highly unpleasant, and he felt a thrumming pain forming behind his eyeballs.

After the barrage stopped, the wizard still seemed unsatisfied.

"Memories can be faked, altered..."

"Although that's very interesting, and I would love to question you about the implications of that later, let's focus on the matter on hand, shall we?" Sherlock noticed, with chagrin, that his voice sounded rather shaky.

"I can explain to you, how I came to that conclusion. If you can follow, that is?"
Harry made no move to sit down, and Sherlock decided that he might as well start explaining.

"It was Mrs. Hudson's story. If you read between the lines, most of the information is there." The wizard made no move of encouragement, but also none of protest. Sherlock took a big breath and began explaining.

"Her sister was an adoring fan of yours. I'm assuming since you were the young hero that defeated the evil wizard, you had more than one of those. Nonetheless, her sister, who had sided with you during the war (probably to some personal danger), had been convinced that you had 'turned dark.'

"Now what would convince and adoring fan of something like that? If it was, as I assumed before, a crime in which you were assumed the culprit but never captured, Mrs. Hudson's sister would probably maintain that you were innocent. However, she did not. I.e. you were taken in, and put on trial, after the crime was committed. This is not altogether surprising, since you probably had no idea it happened, and would have been taken unawares.

"They must have done a very good job of framing you. I'm assuming there were witnesses that saw you there at the scene. You'll have to flesh out the other details for me later on, if you want me properly on the case, but let's move on.

"Obviously, at the trial, they found you guilty, despite your status as, what was it? Oh, the chosen one. It must have been a combination of a mountain of evidence, as well as poorly mounted defense on your part.

"Not that I blame you, you would have been hardly twenty at the time. So you would have had to stand a fair trial and found guilty, since Mrs. Hudson's sister no longer stands by your innocence. If you were guilty, they would have put you in prison. You're here now, so you must have escaped. Altogether, not a very difficult deduction."

Harry was staring. Sherlock couldn't quite identify the expression on his face. It wasn't floored, precisely. He did notice, thankfully, that he had lowered his wand at last.

"If it helps, I also deduced that your jumper was given to you by a mother of seven children, whose family unofficially adopted you. Oh, and that your favorite dessert is treacle tart." Sherlock finished in what he had hoped was an offhand manner.

Harry ambled back towards the table, and plopped down.

"You got all that from Mrs. Hudson's story?" Harry asked. Sherlock noted that now, at last, he looked properly surprised. He nodded.

"Blimey, I thought you were smart, but that...that's proper genius."

"It wasn't a hard leap, considering all the facts..."

"No. No, that was brilliant. It was incredible. Do you think like that all the time?" Harry was still staring at him with a bemused expression.

"Yes, it's what I do. So was I right? About everything? I usually miss one or two points."

"No, that was...that was everything. I mean, it's astounding, better than legilimency really. Loads better." Sherlock practically glowed with pride. This was the initial reaction he had hoped for. He was glad they were finally here, considering the very long way they had taken.

Harry took a deep breath.
"Right then, I owe you a huge apology..."

"Absolutely unnecessary."

"No, I acted like a git. You're probably the only person in Britain that doesn't think I'm a dangerous nutter, and here I go acting like one."

"Well, I'm hardly an advocate for sanity. You've seen my icebox..." Harry let out an uneasy chuckle.

"Sherlock, still, I'm sorry. Very, very sorry. I guess all that running has made me a tad paranoid." Sherlock considered the man across from him. Guilt was very easy to take advantage of.

"Well, there is something you could do, if you wanted to make up for it..."

Harry looked up.

"How do you feel about crime scenes? I need a new assistant."

Chapter End Notes

As always, check out this story in ff.net. It's up to >120k words over there.

It's posted under the same titles there, and my pen name is also the same.

Please leave a comment if you can:)
"Human life occurs only once, and the reason we cannot determine which of our decisions are good and which bad is that in a given situation we can make only one decision; we are not granted a second, third, or fourth life in which to compare various decisions."

—Milan Kundera, The Unbearable Lightness of Being

A warm May evening was drawing to a close, and the two residents of 221B Baker Street were lounging in the sitting room, and having what appeared to be a pleasant and easy conversation.

Well, it appeared this way, but Sherlock privately thought that it wasn't very easy, even for a man as capable as himself. He was rather straining his 'people skills,' trying to be as amicable as possible in the face of a magic wielding convict, who had proven himself more resilient to manipulation than Sherlock expected. And although he would call their conversation interesting, it wasn't easy by any means.

His initial suggestion that Harry atone by accompanying Sherlock on cases had been met with point blank refusal. If Sherlock Holmes was very honest with himself, he just wasn't very used to people refusing him anything. The wizard had apologized profusely of course, but stated that it was simply too risky to go out in public.

Sherlock wasn't even quite sure at this point why getting the wizard to agree was all that important. Since Harry couldn't exactly parade around the fact that he can alter the laws of physic with absurd ease, (at least not in public, and definitely not in front of Lestrade), his usefulness on a crime scene might be minimal. Perhaps at this point it was more battle of egos.

Sherlock wanted something, and he was going to get it, as he had always done.

After trying a few times to verbally coerce the wizard into becoming his new assistant (and getting the same apologetic answer), Sherlock decided to switch up his tactic. There was a multitude of things he needed to know about the magical world, and he might as well ask about those. And in the course of this interrogation, er, conversation, he could slip in his dire need for assistance in fighting crime in London, and bringing justice to the world.

Sherlock ran his mind through topic which were considered 'light' conversation. Usually he had a distaste for that sort of non-sense, and preferred to get to the point. But he needed context into Potter. That was one of the fine points of controlling people, Sherlock thought. He needed to know about their background, their 'story,' as John would indelicately put it. Then he would know where all the buttons are, and which ones to push, in what order.

Usually, he could simply deduce the context, with normal people anyways. He could see some details of Harry's life still present in the stitching of his sweater, and the white cat that he had
chosen to lavish with care back at Archer street. But it was simply not enough to go on. Most of the details were obscure and he had no idea what they meant. Probably because he was not yet all that familiar with the wizarding world. Well, there was never a better time than now to get acquainted.

"I'm assuming most British wizards attend the same school?" Sherlock asked.

"Yes, Hogwarts. It's brilliant. A castle up in Scotland. You go from ages eleven to seventeen."

"And there are houses? I wouldn't normally be interested, but if the whole of wizarding Britain attended the same school, those kinds of things have relevance."

"I suppose they do, but I think people put more stock in them than they should. So there's Slytherin, Ravenclaw, Gryffindor and Hufflepuff, named after the four founders."

"Do wizards still have preposterous names like that, or did that die out in the middle ages?"

"Oh no, they still come up with weird names. Things like Mundungus and Lucius. I don't really know what that's about. It's not like you have a common name either, though. I've never heard of a 'Sherlock' before."

Sherlock huffed a bit.

"It happens to be a very traditional family name, if you must know. So how are students assigned a house?"

"Well, at the beginning of every year, the headmaster brings out this talking hat. It welcomes everyone with a little song, which it composes over the course of the school year. Then each first year puts it on, and the hat looks in their head and sees what qualities they have, and which house they are most well-suited for."

Sherlock stared at the wizard across from him. Some answers that Harry gave him made Sherlock think that he was pulling a long running joke. Magic might be interesting, but some things were too weird. A talking hat that decides the future of a student seems like a practical joke. In that moment, Harry seemed to come to the same conclusion.

"It sounds silly when I put it like that, I suppose."

"Right. And what are these qualities that the...hat looks for?"

"It goes after what the founders valued. Hufflepuff valued loyalty and hard work..."

"Ugh, boring."

"Ravenclaw valued intelligence..."

"As they all should!"

"Gryffindor valued bravery..."

"Oh, and I'm sure those students caused no problems for the teachers."

"And Slytherin valued cunning and ambition."

Sherlock considered this.

"That one sounds adequate."
"Also, most dark wizards come from Slytherin."

"The ambitious are often misunderstood... Which house was yours?"

"The hat did consider putting me in Slytherin first, but eventually decided on Gryffindor."

"Hmm, well you missed out, then." Sherlock chuckled. The house of bravery, huh? That could be used to his advantage.

"So the hat must have decided that you very courageous?"

"I don't know about that."

"Don't be modest. You headlined a magical war when you were just a teenager. You must have been considerably brave to do that."

Harry had a puzzled look on his face.

"So for a person who is courageous, and not to mention, hardened by combat, I find it difficult to see how you don't have the mental fortitude to withstand going out in public. In a disguise, of course. There aren't any interesting cases now anyway, so you don't have to worry yet. All I'm suggesting is that next time the Scotland Yard is duped by a particularly clever criminal, I'd appreciate your help in bringing him to justice."

At this Harry crossed his arms, and stared at Sherlock. Sherlock was about to speak up again, but stopped himself. He had made his point, the ball was in Harry's court.

Harry took his time answering. He was still staring at Sherlock as he begun to slowly nod.

"Hmmm, yeah..."

"Yeah,' you'll assist me on crime scenes?" Sherlock asked, a bit of excitement leaking through his voice.

"No, I was thinking that you would have definitely been in Slytherin."

Sherlock had to stop his face from going into a full-on pout. That was not the answer he expected. Before he had a chance to retaliate, Harry spoke up again.

"Where did you go to school, then?" The wizard asked.

Sherlock did not want to have this conversation about himself. His life, pre-consulting, was rather boring. At least in comparison to that of a wizard. Not to mention, they would waste valuable time if Sherlock had to talk about himself as well. After all, he knew the details of his life, and he was in no hurry to rehash them.

"Posh boarding school, nothing exciting." Little white lie, but it would go a long way, decided Sherlock. He was really hoping to bring the conversation back to Harry. The wizard, however, seemed determined to turn this into a two man endeavor.

"What about your job? I gather you work for the police, but you seem to have rather flexible hours. Or are you on vacation?"

"I don't work for the police, I work with the police. It's a small, but ever important distinction." Sherlock considered with annoyance actually being on the payroll of Scotland Yard. They would probably fire him within a week, if he didn't off himself sooner.
Harry didn't seem to understand, as he was looking at Sherlock with a perplexed brow. Sherlock sighed. He might as well explain the nature of his work. Especially if he was going to involve Harry in it.

"I'm a consulting detective, only one in the world. When the police are baffled, they consult me. When our esteemed government has misplaced highly secret weapons plans, unfortunately, they come to me. When someone believes their significant other has been cheating, they come to me, but I usually show them to the door in that case."

Harry considered all this with a thoughtful expression.

"Do you like it?" he asked.

"Yes. It's all I live for. My work is my life, is my work. Everything else is...secondary."

"So, you don't have a family, or..."

"No, heavens no. That's really not my area. It would complicate things"

It was clear by his still wrinkled brow, that Potter had not understood Sherlock's profession, and it's hold on his life, fully. But that was all right. Once Sherlock got his way, (and he eventually would), the wizard will be there along side him, playing the great game. Thankfully, for now, Harry chose to remain silent and not ask anymore questions. Sherlock used this opportunity.

"Tell me more about this 'Chosen One' thing. It doesn't sound like a very commonplace title. How is it that you were chosen?"

"I'm not exactly sure. It's rather complicated."

"Well since you remain obstinate on us not going out to help London's finest, we have all the time in the world to sit here and talk."

"Erhm, well, it was a prophecy..."

Sherlock stood up immediately.

"Prophecy?! As in a verbal message or warning of an event that would take place in the future?"

Harry nodded, surprised at the sudden reaction.

"Perceiving the future! Do you know what that implies? About life, about the very fabric of our universe! If everything can be foretold, nothing is decided by us, so we are simply pawns, and all our lives are predestined, with no free will, and..."

"I told you it was complicated!" Harry cut in.

Sherlock looked around. He had started pacing madly about the living room, and now found himself halfway to the kitchen.

"Sometimes they come true, but loads of times they don't. If I weren't a literal part of one, I would consider the whole fortune-telling business complete hogwash. And even so, they're self-fulfilling in a way. If anything, they rely completely on free will."

Sherlock sat back down, and searched Harry's face. There was something off, there.

"Sore subject?" He drawled.
"A bit yeah, but it's-

"Well, that's fine, let's talk about something else." Sherlock put on a calmer expression, but had the distinct impression that it was perceivable forced. He wasn't apt to admit that the subject of prophecies had bothered him slightly. He would save that line of questioning for another day.

"Besides Hogwarts there must be some other magical landmarks, or locations where wizards congregate? I would think there must be some in London."

"Yes, there's Diagon Alley. Not far from here, just off Charring Cross. It's well hidden, obviously. It's sort of a shopping district."

Sherlock could barely resist beaming. He had been hoping for something like this.

"That is near here. How do you get there?" He asked, hoping he wasn't giving much away.

"The entrance is through a pub. There's a charm on it so muggles can't see it. Like that house on Archer. Anyway, I haven't been there in ages. I don't even know what it looks like now."

"You don't fancy a daytrip, do you?" Sherlock tried to keep the tone joking. Despite the fact that it would be much easier if the wizard took Sherlock there, the detective had an inkling that Potter wouldn't be up for it.

Judging by the stern look Harry gave him, and the curt 'No,' Sherlock's inkling was correct.

For now, Sherlock filed the information away. There would have to be a stake out later, in order to learn the exact location of this magical shopping district. With or without the wizard, Sherlock was going to visit this Diagon Alley. He needed objective information, one that could be gleaned from a personal investigation of a magical area.

Sherlock felt that perhaps he had extracted enough context from Harry for the night. With an abrupt 'Goodnight,' muttered somewhere in the direction of Harry, Sherlock stood up and left the room. He had only a brief glance of Harry's confused face before he departed. Well, the wizard wasn't used to him yet. That would change.

…

The next morning Sherlock woke up with a clear purpose. He was privately very grateful that Lestrade seemed to be holding his own against the criminals of London for once, because Sherlock Holmes had way bigger fish to fry.

His conversation last night with wizard didn't go as well as he had hoped. He still had not convinced Harry that his best use of time would really be as Sherlock's assistant. What Harry did reveal, about the wizarding district that had been under Sherlock's nose this whole time, was much better. Sherlock decided then, that with or without Harry's help, he was going to Diagon Alley.

He considered his plan. First thing he would need is a disguise. Sherlock had seen only a few people he conjectured to be wizards, but he had a faint idea of what they might dress like. Ostentatious, and a bit old fashioned, and the weirder the better. His wardrobe could certainly provide for all of those.

The first thing Sherlock immediately searched out was a fleecy, Victorian shirt, with ruffles in the most unlikely places. A souvenir, as he remembered, from a case where a man was killed during a play in the theater. He had kept the shirt then as evidence, and very nearly forgotten about its
existence. It was fortunate he hadn't chucked it out, as the shirt very much deserved.

Next, in his closet, he dug out the longest coat he had, one that he hadn't worn in years. Sherlock decided that it very nearly resembled a robe. Its hem nearly swept the floor, and had once or twice tripped him up when he was trying to give chase to some criminal or other. It wasn't very practical, and Sherlock hoped that he wouldn't need to do much running around today.

Finally, he found a very silly colorful scarf that Mary had given. He examined it again, with his face scrunched in distaste. It had large purple flowers emblazoned on it, and was made of a flimsy silk-like material. He was very nearly sure that it was some sort of gag gift, as he could imagine no circumstance, other than this one, where he would ever wear it.

After the assemblage was complete, Sherlock looked himself over in the mirror. He decided not to look too long, as his appearance offended him greatly. Exiting his room, Sherlock took great care not to run into Mrs. Hudson on his way down. There were some things he had rather not live with.

After leaving his flat, Sherlock quickly hailed a cab to the area that Harry mentioned last night. Making his way down Charring Cross, now on foot, Sherlock began scouting the location. It was not exciting work, but worth it if the place he was looking for was anything like he imagined. And the first step to reaching it would be to simply follow a wizard or witch through the entrance, whatever that may be. It would only be a matter of time before he saw another strangely dressed person that he could track.

Trying to be as discreet as possible (a difficult task, considering he was dressed as oddly as he could manage), Sherlock wondered up and down the streets and alleyways around the square. Some people passing by gave Sherlock strange looks, but most seemed too busy to even notice.

The May morning was turning into noon, and Sherlock sincerely hoped he would spot a wizard soon. His heavy overcoat became heavier by the minute, and he was growing rather bored of just walking. It had seemed like hours of pacing up and down the various streets, until he finally spotted his prey.

An older man was ambling up the street wearing normal pants, a normal-enough jacket, but what was unmistakably a woman's nightdress, tucked underneath. Sherlock wondered briefly if perhaps the man was not simply touched in the head, and no wizard at all. If so, following a mad person around London might not be the most proper use of his time.

As the man came closer, Sherlock was able to properly identify other details about the aged man's appearance. His hands had a few splotches of ink (although he was definitely not working in the press); his jacket sleeves had flakes of dried wax, and his jacket pocket had the silhouette of what might be a wooden stick, around 11 inches long.

It took Sherlock some self restraint not to jump up, but rather to remain out of sight in the shadows. The observations he made about the man might as well have been a neon sign that flashed: "Wizard!" The hardest part is done, Sherlock thought. Now, all he had to do was follow him, and watch carefully as he goes into this pub. Sherlock hoped that his keen senses would be able to follow the subject past the "anti-muggle" charms.

Sherlock began trailing the man as closely as he could. Thankfully the old man was preoccupied with his own thoughts and hardly noticed the tall shadow following him. He seemed to mutter something under his breath every now and again, and Sherlock could just barely make out the phrases "toad spleen," "eight sickles," and "they've gone daft." Sherlock made a mental note to ask...
Potter what these sickles were, and whether they had any relation to communist symbolism.

The man ambled down the street at what Sherlock thought was an agonizingly slow pace. Even worse, the old man stopped a few times to peer into shop windows that Sherlock knew could have nothing to do with magic. The old man stood a particularly long time in front of a store selling cellphones, looking at the items on display with a curious, though suspicious expression.

The man paused again in front of a big book shop, and a Thai place that Sherlock remembered to be a record shop, years back. Sherlock had visited both places and had no recollection of anything odd that might point to them being a gateway to the wizard world. However, it was at this point that Sherlock noticed the man in front of him looking up and down the street.

The detective's body tensed. He estimated that they have arrived at the pub, and Sherlock has yet to see past the enchantments on it. He fixed his eyes squarely on the man's retreating back, hoping this would work again. The man ambled to the place between the book shop and Thai cafe, which Sherlock assumed must be the entrance. He assumed this, because all he could see was just a stretch of plain brick wall.

Suddenly, a loud honking noise down the street immediately drew Sherlock's attention. A double-decker very nearly collide with another car, but both managed to swerve away just in time. It was a split second that the detective lost sight of the subject, but apparently it was enough for the old man to disappear into whatever place Sherlock couldn't see. The man was nowhere to be seen, and Sherlock was left on the street.

Sherlock swore in frustration. He'd been at doddering after the old man for nearly an hour, just so he could lose him because a bus driver was mildly incompetent, and decided to honk right that second. It seemed very unfair. His hopes deflated, Sherlock almost considered putting off this plan altogether and just grabbing lunch at the Thai place, that he WAS able to see, thank you very much.

He was in the middle of ripping off his stupid scarf, (and maybe binning the shirt while he was at it), when Sherlock saw him. Another man was approaching from the other end of the street. The man had absolutely normal clothes, and nothing about his appearance was "magical." He had a normal hair cut, there were no wax drips on his clothes, and he wasn't blubbering about eccentric ingredients.

But Sherlock stopped in his tracks, and casually tucked his scarf back into place, with a small smile. The one thing the man did have, was a homemade sweater of exactly the same stitching pattern as that hideous thing he saw Potter wearing. Indeed, Sherlock could just make out, over the man's buttoned jacket, the top of a letter 'C' or 'G,' stitched in the front.

The man, who Sherlock noticed had blazing red hair, seemed much more aware of his surroundings, than the old man with the nightdress. Sherlock crept back a bit, out of the view of his new subject, but his predatory eye was absolutely fixed. He didn't care if the trumpets of the Apocalypse were to sound, there was literally nothing that would distract him now.

The man-with-the-jumper paused in front of the same stretch of wall and looked both ways. Sherlock's eyes might have been popping out of his skull, with how concentrated his glare was.

Finally, Mr. Jumper but his hand on the wall, and Sherlock saw a little door knob, attached to a scratched up wooden door, that was part of a tiny facade that had the words "Leaky Cauldron," in curly golden script above the entrance. The detective's face split into a grin. He had done it!

As it happened on Archer Street, it seemed that the two shops scooted over to accommodate the
new pub front that was there. Sherlock thought that he might be able to see it now, even if he turned away, but he didn't risk it. Keeping his eyes on the door, through which the red-haired man had already disappeared, Sherlock casually strolled toward the door.

He put his hand on the faded gold door knob, and felt a spike of adrenaline. He was half afraid that he might be subject to the same delirious hallucination that happened when he sneaked into the house on Archer Street. He pushed at the door, and it yielded. His heart hammering, Sherlock stepped through into the dark pub.

The pub was cramped, and a bit dirty, but Sherlock liked it immediately. It reminded him, in a strange way, of his flat; especially if he'd been in a morose mood, and didn't clean up after himself. It was small, but looked sort of comfortable, and there were odd assortments of objects everywhere. Sherlock especially took a liking to the floating candles, which sadly, his flat lacked.

He would ask Harry if perhaps he could permanently levitate a few light bulbs.

Sherlock could barely control the tide of sensory information that his trained senses were sending him. There were so many details, intricacies, it was impossible to take in all at once.

There were about a dozen magical folk scattered through the pub. Sherlock noted that his clothes had fit in somewhat with the others. Hopefully that meant he wouldn't draw much attention.

Sherlock headed for the bar, trying his best at a casual stroll. He passed by a table of three witches, loudly arguing about the merits of using horned slugs in skin cleansing potions. They had tall, slender glasses of a what looked like condensed, swirling smoke. Whatever it was must have been potent, because the witch that had almost finished hers had been talking the loudest.

The bar keep was a handsome black man, about Sherlock's age. He was leaned over and speaking softly to a woman with glossy brown curls, and a purple cigarette. The woman, Sherlock observed, had been married for six years, and the barman had recently divorced, with two kids. The woman was twirling her hair, and pitching her chest forward, in a glaring sign of attraction. Affair, two years, still undiscovered. Briefly Sherlock was reminded that wizards were people too, and therefore still odious.

Sherlock quietly took a seat at the bar, near the corner. He noticed a few patrons had coins out on the table, that did not resemble British pounds. With a jolt, Sherlock realized that the wizards must have their own currency, and he probably couldn't buy anything here with his bank card.

Sherlock had a moment of panic. He needed time to figure out how this place functioned as a gateway to an entire district. He needed time to figure out what to do next. It might be suspicious if he simply sat at the bar for ages, without ordering anything, and speaking to no one. Thankfully, the barman was still preoccupied by his 'secret' lover, who was now blowing out smoke rings shaped vaguely like daisies. Sherlock inwardly scoffed, as he thought of a million better uses for magic.

Sherlock surveyed the shelf behind the bar, and took great pleasure in reading the labels of the bottles on display. Among Muggle classics were bottles of wizarding liquor with names like Burma Banshee's Howling Gin (a pitch black bottle that trembled on its own), and The Russian Werewolf (the label picturing a slightly swaying wolf in an ushanka).

Sherlock thought he could stay here for hours, admiring all the foreign objects that he had never
imagined existed. On the bare brick wall, there was a painting of three ladies, who not only were moving, but winking and calling softly to some of the customers. It was difficult to focus, even for Sherlock Holmes.

The detective needed to concentrate. He turned his body in the stool, so that he could have a view of nearly the entire pub. It consisted of only one room, and a little dark hallway that led off to what he assumed were the water closets. He knew, from his detailed mental map of London, that this building butted up against the back of another building, and there was nothing in between. He had to observe the guests, and quickly figure out which way the actual entrance was.

The only problem was that none of the guests seem to want to go just yet. They all remained stationary with their glasses, and their companions. He noticed the old man with the night dress, who was now sporting dark blue robes, chatting amicably with an old woman.

Sherlock was very glad when one of the matrons with the smoking glasses stood up.

"Enough chatter with you old bats. I came here to go the apothecary, and I intend to do so." This was Sherlock's cue. As casually as possible, he allowed his keen eyes to follow the woman's movements, as she headed towards the little hallway. Momentarily, Sherlock was puzzled. Could the entrance to this wizarding district be found in a toilet stall? He would be forced to credit the wizards with a sense of humor, if it were.

Exactly fifteen seconds after the woman disappeared, Sherlock stood up to follow her. The hallway took him to two doors, with aging signs reading 'hags' and 'warlocks.' But he had heard the woman go around the corner, and there he noticed another door. His excitement rushing him on, he strode towards it, and went through.

Suddenly he was standing in a small courtyard, with a few rubbish bins, and a brick wall. His logical sense was telling him that it was impossible for this little pocket of air to be here, but he reminded himself, it was also impossible for him to have traversed his living room in a flying armchair.

The witch must have been faster than she looked, because she was nowhere to be seen. Sherlock tried to understand where she could have gone. It's not like she could have flown away. He had to remind himself again, that yes that was a possibility, but a rather illogical one.

Why have a secret back alley, if one is meant simply to fly over it?

Sherlock looked around in consternation. Why did these wizards have to be so damned secretive? Why couldn't there just be a giant archway, with the word Diagon Alley spelled over it?

Sherlock spent the next few minutes pacing up and down the small paved courtyard, putting his brain to figuring out any possible solution. He counted the bricks in the walls, and calculated if there were any mathematical patterns to their placement. He examined, with a coroner's eye, the rubbish bin, and it's contents, only to find that it was a perfectly ordinary rubbish bin. He even examined the little dandelion that grew between the cracks of the paving, to see if it was the solution that would get him across. He tugged on it, and then simply plucked it, wondering if maybe it functioned as a lever of some sort.

The only thing that was even slightly out of norm, was a little indent in a brick above the trash cans. Sherlock, excited when he first noticed it, pressed it any which way he could think of. When nothing happened, he was forced to the conclusion that it was simply an slightly indented brick, and had no meaning.
Sherlock kicked the wall in frustration. He knew the answer was in front of his nose, but he couldn't see it. But now, he had no idea what to do, and he was facing a literal brick wall, unyielding and obstinate.

The door behind him creaked, and Sherlock spun around, his heart thumping. Great, just what he needed. A meddlesome wizard to come and bust him as he was trying to breach their secret world. Sherlock's muscles tensed instinctively, as he prepared for confrontation. His mind conjured a picture of a tall, hulking man, wielding a wand, which would be an impossible weapon for him to counter.

However, through the door came a slender woman, dressed in a smart business suit, with her brown hair done up in a modern twist. Looking up her eyes widened, as surprised to see Sherlock he was to see her. Sherlock took in her appearance: the few strands out of place, the tiny scuff marks on her shoes, and the miniscule pieces of lint on her clothing. She was approximately in her mid thirties, had a somewhat powerful position in the government (magical ministry, Sherlock reminded himself), and had just come from a stressful meeting. He observed that she had one child, but has been divorced for some time.

Her eyes were brown, and Sherlock noticed right away, had the glint of someone too clever to manipulate easily. Well then, Sherlock thought, he had better put on his best game. A plan formed in his head, quick as lightning. His brain really did work faster when under pressure, he mused.

The woman chose to lead with a warm smile, but Sherlock noticed her slightly veiled eyes, which signified suspicion. He quickly recited standard Slavic pronunciation in his head. Russian, his accent would be Russian. Well, Eastern European to most British ears.

"Hello...?" The woman chose to lead again, the slight tilt on the word signifying her question as to what he was doing here.

"Hello, miss... I was wandering, if you could assist me into Diagon Alley. I was pointed to this Pub as the entrance, but I do not see..." Sherlock let his sentence hang. Sherlock considered his accents very good, and saw some comprehension dawn on the woman in front of him. He also noticed her gently touch her ring finger. If he assumed correctly (and he nearly always did) her ex-husband was also from Eastern Europe. That was either very lucky or unlucky, depending on how the two parted.

"Oh, I see. New in London?" Sherlock could still see the suspicion clouding her eyes, but her face was still a pleasant mask and revealed nothing. She took out her wand from the inside of her jacket, and led over to the wall by the bins.

"It's just three up and two over." She said, pointing her wand at the bricks. Sherlock felt a swoop of excitement as her wand pointed over the indented brick he had noticed earlier. He had solved the puzzle after all, he just didn't have the proper tools to unlock it.

She rapped the brick with the tip of her wand, and Sherlock watched in amazement at the long awaited reveal of this secret entrance. The bricks, as though hooked up to an intricate mechanism began to move and swivel out of the way. In less than five seconds, a huge archway formed that revealed Diagon Alley in all its splendor.

If Sherlock thought he was overloaded in the small pub, he had no idea what was in store for him. It was shocking to see a place that was so alive and vibrant, but yet like nothing he had ever encountered before. The sensory input of so much new and interesting information had made Sherlock speechless, and even worse, unable to make any deductions. There was simply too much to take in! Despite this handicap, Sherlock felt the wonderful thrill of new knowledge, new
adventures before him. There was a new world that awaited him, one that was eccentric and unpredictable, and one Sherlock realized he desperately wanted to be a part of.

As he stepped through the archway, his brain grounded him in reality immediately. For a few small seconds he had forgotten about the woman that had accompanied him there. He looked around and realized that she had been looking at him this whole time. Her eyes held even more calculating suspicion, although the warm smile was still plastered on her face. Sherlock also realized that he grinned like a fool upon seeing the Alley reveal itself. He tried to quickly correct his mistake.

"It iz, er, very impressive." he said, nodding towards the street.

"Yes, I thought so too when I first saw it." She said, through that damned smile. "If you would like, I can show you around? It must all be very foreign to you." Her tone was perfect neutrality, but Sherlock felt slightly chilled. There was a predatory glint in her eye that reminded him too much of the woman.

Turning around he realized with a dropping feeling that the archway had become a brick wall again. Without a wand, he was basically trapped in here. A cutting panic cut across his previous excitement.

Sherlock studied the woman that was still expecting an answer. He could ask her, perhaps, to open the archway again, which would be a very plausible request. She would probably oblige, and he could go home to Baker Street, and play his violin, and be bored again. Or he could jump in headfirst, as reckless as ever, and follow the woman. Well, let it be at least said that Sherlock Holmes was no coward.

Smiling a predatory grin of his own, he squared off against Ms. Business-suit.

"Yes, do show me around. I would like that very much."
The woman stared at Sherlock and her smile widened. To Sherlock, she momentarily looked like a cat, ready to pounce on an unsuspecting songbird, and devour it in one gulp. Her eyes were quickly calculating him, glittering with the intelligence that Sherlock there perceived before.

She motioned her head, and started walking down the cobbled street, with Sherlock trailing behind. Sherlock briefly thought that perhaps he should have asked Harry more about wizarding culture, and wizarding norms, before rushing into this adventure. As of now, the woman he was following had the upper hand, and the detective was not comfortable with that. Well, he thought, the more dangerous the game, the more fun to be had.

As he followed her, she briskly pointed to the various shops, and establishments, reciting their titles.

"There's Eeylops, if you're looking for a new owl. They have some on loan too, if you need to write a quick letter. There, behind that corner is Madame Malkin's. It's mostly robes in the old fashion; nothing that could be worn in muggle London..."

Sherlock listened to her, memorizing all the locations. He felt grateful to the woman for getting him into this alley; but right now, he dearly wished she would walk a bit slower. He wanted to crane his neck into every shop he passed by.

The shops all had moving displays, and lively colors. Sherlock approved of this, as he secretly thought that London really needed a splash of color. Or a few buckets of it, thrown about not too carefully. Besides all the shops, there were street vendors selling candy, roasted nuts, and jewelry. One vendor had a large stall of tropical flowers, that had been magicked to serenade those that walked by them.

"A clever witch, a lion's heart..." sang a troupe of red hibiscus flowers, as the woman walked in front of him. A bouquet of tiger lilies joined with "with handsome eyes, and quick of wit...," as
Sherlock crossed the same stall.

They were reaching the end of the main street, where a tall, white building dominated the skyline. Sherlock saw, by the woman's trajectory, that this is where she was headed. It struck Sherlock that she had not yet introduce herself, nor asked for his name before taking him on this whirlwind tour. Sherlock would not call himself an expert in common courtesy, and had no problem with not knowing the woman's name. Still, it was strange.

Upon reaching the building, she suddenly stopped.

"This is Gringotts. Main wizarding bank in England. If you need to make any transfers, withdrawals, this is the place." Sherlock looked at the white building which looked like it was bending from a great blow to it's side. Architecturally, it was impossible that it was even standing, at this angle of declination.

"You have been very helpful, Miss. What may I call you?" Sherlock asked. She smiled the same Cheshire smile, and offered her hand.

"Granger. Hermione Granger." Sherlock smiled, and shook her hand.

"And you are...?" She asked with a tone of light skepticism that Sherlock didn't like one bit.

"Roman Turgenev, it haz been a pleasure, Hermi-ohneh." Sherlock deliberately butchered her name, as a foreigner would with a name like 'Hermione.' She smirked a bit, amusement shining in her eyes, as though she was sharing a private joke with Sherlock. The detective frowned slightly, wondering what had was going through the woman's head. He changed the subject.

"If I wanted to exchange currency, could I do this at Gringotts?" He motioned towards the dilapidated building, that still managed an imposing quality.

"Yes. In fact, I have some quick business there as well. If you would like, we can continue our tour afterward. I know a great, little teashop just down that side street." She said, pointing to a narrow alley.

Sherlock was taken aback by this offer. He examined the woman's face. She was still suspicious of him, that's for sure. But her eyes held something more. Something that made her pupils dilate suddenly. Was that...attraction? Sherlock blinked rapidly. Strange, strange woman. Sherlock had a distinct urge to simply run away from her. But it was obvious that she knew something he didn't. And the weight of that unsolved something hung over Sherlock's head.

"I vill gladly accompany you, Miss." He agreed. The witch smiled in triumph, and they strode into Gringotts together.

As they walked out of Gringotts, Sherlock happily pocketed the old fashioned wizard money. It clinked along merrily in his pocket.

The goblins had made a strange impression on him. The one who had exchanged his currency had a round, flabby face, and an unpleasant smile, that reminded Sherlock a little too much of Mycroft. He chuckled and made a mental note to ask his dear brother if he knew what goblins were.

Hermione was now leading Sherlock towards what might be the South side of the district. However, it was hard to tell the coordinates, as the whole alley's existence was baffling. They passed by cafes with colorful umbrellas, under which wizards and witches sat, enjoying the warm
Hermione strode past them, and turned down a tiny dead-end alley, just big enough for two shops. One had all manner of interesting silver machinery, and delicate instruments, that Sherlock could spend hours examining. But Hermione ducked into the other shop, that had a hanging sign saying "Gemini" above its door.

Sherlock followed her into a the small room with little round tables for two, crammed every which way. There were multicolored oriental lanterns hanging from the low ceiling, and garlands of lights on the walls. It gave Sherlock the impression of being inside a Christmas tree. Hermione confidently sat them down at a booth, next to the window. The table had a little bowl of water, with a floating flower bloom inside.

An Indian woman appeared next to their table, with a smile and familiar greeting for Hermione. The woman's eyes rested on Sherlock, and they traveled up and down his physique. Sherlock was used to this response from some women, and he was privately glad that he elicited the same looks from witches. It would make his integration into their culture much easier, he decided.

The woman looked like she was about to ask Hermione something, but Granger cut her off.

"Two butter beers please, Parvati."

"Sure thing, Hermione." The woman, Parvati, flicked her wand over to their bowl and flower bud ensemble, and swished away. Sherlock noticed her giving Hermione an approving wink, as she left their table. The flower bud bloomed, and emitted a soft light. Oh, Sherlock, thought, like a candle. So they had flowers instead of candles, and candles instead of lamps.

"I always thought they were rather silly, when we went to school together. But the charms they've put over this shop are ingenious." Sherlock wondered who Hermione was talking to. Presumably him, but it was a piece of information that was completely out of context. He settled for politely nodding.

She raised an eyebrow, challenging his understanding.

"There are silencing charms placed between the tables, so none of the patrons can hear the others’ discussions. You'd think a lot of dodgy types would show up, but it's mostly couples who want have their whispers in secret." It was Sherlock's turn to raise his eyebrows. What exactly was she getting at? Sherlock decided it was time to switch tactics.

"Iz this why you have brought me here, Miss? For the...privacy?" He leaned forward, putting his elbow on the table, and arranged his eyes in a way he's seen John do countless times on his 'dates.' He's heard it described as a 'smoldering stare,' but had no idea what a facial expression had to do with slow, low-temperature, flameless form of combustion.

"Yes. I thought we'd both rather have this discussion in private, Mr. Holmes." Hermione had a triumphant smirk on, as Sherlock snapped back. Uttering a few quiet curses he ripped the stupid scarf of his throat. And he had really worked it up for that accent...

Life had not been boring since Sherlock came into John's life. It had been exhilaration, adrenaline packed, sometimes dangerous, and sometimes very, very surprising. John never thought his life would be more exciting than it was already, considering he was married to an ex-CIA assassin, and occasionally solved crimes with his genius best friend.
Well, John thought, it was certainly a sound analysis. After all, how was he to know that a wizard, (and he still had trouble using that word seriously in his head) would be joining their little rag-tag family. John would never have predicted it, but his life had decidedly become a lot more not-boring.

But waking up on this particular Saturday, John Watson found that he had literally nothing to do. So after whiling away a lazy morning, John decided it might be high time to pop over to 221B. He hadn't had much contact from Sherlock except for a single text in the early hours. It was mildly worrying, but so were most texts Sherlock.

_Breaching wizard territory today. Under no circumstances tell Potter. Unless I do not return within 12 hours. In that case, inform Potter immediately._ -SH

John had placated himself that Sherlock could handle this situation. But as the afternoon wore on, and John was still at home doing squat, he thought he might see how the 'breaching' went. Or, in worst case scenario, wait for Sherlock and try to see if the new tenant of 221B would show him more of his magic.

Arriving at Baker Street, John met Mrs Hudson on the lower landing. She greeted him in her warm, motherly manner as always. She seemed in much higher spirits since he last visited, which he always liked to see. Mrs. Hudson hardly got all the credit that she deserved.

Making his way to his old flat upstairs, John discovered that Sherlock had still not returned from his 'adventures.' But Harry was there, sitting in an armchair, and puzzling over one of Sherlock's thick, dusty tomes on chemistry. Harry was wearing the same disgruntled expression that John remembered constantly having while taking orgo-chem at Bart's. The 'I don't have a single bloody clue about what's on this page' expression. The point is, John sympathized.

Upon seeing him, Harry abandoned the book (with what John thought was a look of relief), and got up to greet him. The wizard offered him tea, which John accepted. The tea, he noticed, began making itself in the kitchen. John was struck at how polite this fugitive was, compared to the lunatic that also lived here.

"Were you looking for Sherlock?" Harry asked, once they settled down.

"Yes, but he's still out I suppose."

"Yeah. Do you know where he went? It is his job or...?"

Yes. He's off "breaching" some secret territory, the location of which you probably let slip while talking to him. It happens. Oh right, under no circumstances tell him.

"Haven't the foggiest. Probably on a case." John answered. "Bit of light reading?" John asked, pointing over to the heavy chemistry volume.

"I don't know. I thought I'd try to read one of these books, but that one could be written in ancient runes for all the sense I can make out of it." Harry said, with an exasperated air.

John and Harry made small talk. John agreed with him on chemistry, it being one of his least favorite subjects in med school; and Harry told him about the magical equivalent (potions), and how that was his least favorite as well. They talked about John's job, Mary, and Mrs. Hudson (whose sister apparently was also magical).

"What about Sherlock? Doesn't he have...a family?" Harry asked tentatively.
"Well, he's got his mum and dad, who are much lovelier than he is. And then there's his brother..."

"Right, I've met him. I mean, he hasn't any kids or anything?"

John couldn't hold down a chortle. The image of Sherlock running after a toddler, while trying to blowtorch eyeballs popped in his head.

"No, kids are definitely not his area. I'm sure you've noticed, but Sherlock's not exactly standard-issue." John tried to put it lightly, he really did.

"He's a bit eccentric, I suppose." Harry answered lightly, as though they were talking about an elderly aunt who dressed in an old-fashioned manner. A bit?! Yeah alright Potter, John thought. Understatement of the century.

"So, has he ever had any sort of relationship?" Harry pressed on.

"Mm, no not really. Well...there was one, but he was just using her to break into her boss's office. You know, for a case." Harry creased his brows at this.

"Why, are you interested?" John added as an afterthought.

"No! I mean I'm...not that there's anything wrong with... I'm just not..."

"Right." John nodded quickly. He observed Potter looking away quickly, and just the hint of a blush creeping into his cheeks. Yeah, I just bet you're not. Of course, John's deductions weren't always correct. In fact, as Sherlock just loved pointing out, they were hardly ever correct. He had a good feeling about this one though, but for now, decided to keep his mouth shut.

The two men sat in a somewhat awkward silence for a few minutes, while John finished his tea. Deciding to be the one to break it, John cleared his throat.

"You don't have some sort of magical disguise, or something do you?" John asked. "Or non-magical. I don't know maybe a wig, or a stick-on mustache." He added.

"Uh, well, yes. I've had to forage for supplies more than a few times. I think I'm rather decent at the "disguise" type of magic." Harry answered.

"Brilliant. Fancy a pint?" John asked lightly. Sherlock had asked him, when Harry first moved into the flat, to attempt to befriend the wizard. Sherlock was well aware that some of his personality traits weren't exactly winning. At least he was making an effort, John thought.

Harry looked like he was about to refuse, but then looked about the living room. Particularly, he looked with distaste at the chemistry tome he'd been trying to muddle through. Probably deciding that there wasn't much else going on, he agreed.

"Sure." Harry finally conceded, standing up. "I'll go put on my er...disguise then."

A few minutes later, a paunchy older man with silver hair, a well trimmed beard, and piercing blue eyes exited the bathroom. John was stunned, and almost went into panic mode, until he realized he was wearing Potter's clothes. Oh right, the disguise. Now that he looked, very carefully, he could see Harry's features, just warped and distorted.

"It's not much good against wizards, or really anyone that knows what they're looking for. But if we're just going out to muggle London it should do." Harry, the old man, said in an offhand manner. John wholeheartedly agreed. He didn't think anyone would recognize Potter the 'terrorist' like this.
Just before they left 221B, Harry stopped.

"I almost forgot." He waved his wand over his clothes. The coat-like robe he'd been wearing had swiftly turned into a normal-ish looking jumper and jacket combo. Granted it was the same color, and the same strange material, but it would do, John thought. Harry appeared to have thought the same, and they left 221B together.

…

"Yes. I thought we'd both rather have this discussion in private, Mr. Holmes." Hermione had a triumphant smirk on, as Sherlock snapped back. Uttering a few quiet curses, he ripped the stupid scarf of his throat. And he had really worked it up for that accent…

"Please don't be upset." Hermione said in a genuinely concerned tone. "I knew you looked familiar from the moment I saw you. I was trying to put your face with a name. It took me a some time, but when I finally did, I couldn't pass up the chance to have lunch with the famous Sherlock Holmes!" Hermione said. Obviously she was excited to be in his company. Well, that was something at least, thought Sherlock.

"How could you know who I am? I thought wizards were woefully oblivious of goings-on in the muggle world?" Sherlock asked.

"They are, typically." Hermione agreed. "But my parents are muggles, and they've put me on to your friend's blog. Where he writes about all of your cases? It's Dr. John Watson, isn't it?" Oh, the blog, of course. The root and cause of all the woe in Sherlock's life. Hermione kept talking.

"Anyway, they thought it was the sort of thing that would be right up my alley, and they were right. I'm a big fan, Mr. Holmes." Hermione finished. The butter beers arrived, and she opened hers and began taking little sips. Sherlock gave the waitress a dirty glare as she retreated. The seemed to amuse the woman across from him, and she giggled a bit.

"So. Aren't you going to turn me in to your Ministry? I thought they had some laws about us muggles not being in the know." Sherlock asked. He tried to keep the nastiness out of his tone as much as possible, but he was very disappointed. Mostly in himself, of course.

"No, I'm not." Replied Hermione in a very serious manner. "I probably should, considering I work for 'them.' Oh well, they'll get over it." She added, in a much lighter tone.

"And why not?" Sherlock asked, in a much nicer manner. If she truly didn't intend to turn him in, this might work out to his benefit.

"Well, a few reasons. One, I assume, from what I know of you through the blog, that you would be able to deduce the existence of magic again..." Quite right, Sherlock agreed. In fact, he'd figure it all out again as soon as he got home. But Ms. Granger needn't know that.

"And two, because you're probably on one of your cases. And who am I to obstruct the path of justice. That is, if you really are who the blog says you are..." Hermione let that sentence run into a question. Oh, I see, thought Sherlock. She wants a demonstration. Well, Sherlock was just delighted to oblige.

"You're quite right on all counts. Hmm, so was your ex-husband Polish or Bulgarian?" Sherlock still couldn't decide between the two. Hermione smiled.

"Bulgarian. I must say the accent was spot on. You even mispronounced my name the way he used to." Sherlock nodded in agreement. His accent was spot on, thank you for noticing. But he had a
few more deductions for Ms. Granger.

"You've just came back from a stressful work meeting, when you met me. You work a government job, which you dislike. Your previous occupation was much more satisfying, and was a more research oriented career. I quite agree, even in the magical government, I'm sure nothing is duller than politicians. You miss your one daughter immensely, and she is coming home soon from her boarding school. You have a ginger cat that you've bought in the last five years, probably as a replacement for another cat. You've had a string of lovers since your divorce that were all very unsatisfying. The last one must have ended badly, and the waitress, Parvati I think, keeps wanting to bring it up. She assumes, by the way, that you're cheating on him with me, and will probably tell him if she has the opportunity. Speaking of which, you are attracted to me, and despite my status as a muggle, hope to interest me romantically. Flattering by the way, but no thank you. Oh, and you're a vegetarian." Sherlock finished.

Hermione's eyes were wide as dinner plates. Yes, definitely floored, Sherlock thought. He smirked proudly.

"Was that everything? I sometimes get one or two things off." He drawled. Hermione shook her head.

"No, that was all... that was all true. I mean that was brilliant, really..."

"It's quite alright, I'm well aware." Sherlock cut her off. He knew how amazing he was. Right now, what he needed from this woman wasn't compliments but information. Sherlock decided to be try and be civil.

"You ought to order, since you're hungry." Sherlock added. Hermione was still looking at him with wide-eyed astonishment.

"Yeah, I suppose I will. Do you want...?" Sherlock refused with a curt shake of his head. The waitress came over again and Hermione placed her order.

"So, what bring you to Diagon Alley? Are you working on a case, Mr Holmes?"

Sherlock quickly constructed the story he would tell Hermione. Obviously, he couldn't let her in on the fact that a highly wanted wizard was currently living with him. But he could certainly illuminate some of the details for her. She would be much more helpful that way.

"Yes, as a matter of fact I am, Ms. Granger. I was to Surrey to assist on the most curious crime scene..." Hermione's face visibly darkened. Good. So she was familiar.

"If you're talking about the Dursley murder, you should know there's already a suspect..."

Hermione started.

"Potter? No, I don't think so. Though, the thought did cross my mind." And was just as quickly discarded. Really, for anyone who saw the scene, it should be obvious that Harry had zero involvement in it, Sherlock thought.

Hermione looked like she was trying to hide the fact that she was very upset. Why would she care, Sherlock wondered.

"Did you know him, Ms. Granger?" Sherlock asked. Hermione looked at him, and took her time answering.

"It's no great secret that me and Harry Potter were very friendly. We went to school together."
Sherlock examined her clenched right hand, and heightened breathing.

He very much doubted that 'friendly' described their relationship appropriately. If he was seeing things correctly, than they used to share a very intimate relationship. His first guess would be lovers. For some reason, Sherlock felt decidedly not good about that. This woman, with her cat-like, predatory smile wasn't what Harry needed. So he settled on 'they must have been very good friends,' and hoped he was right.

Hermione seemed to be suddenly struck by a thought.

"You're not going to go chasing after him, are you?" She asked him, with a frightened tremor. *Already caught him, thank you very much*, Sherlock thought with satisfaction. Before he had a chance to answer, Hermione continued.

"Mr. Holmes, I must caution you against this. Harry Potter is probably the most dangerous wizard in Britain. He's very powerful magically, you see. And well..." She seemed to hesitate saying this. "And I'm not sure he's in his right mind." I distinctly guilty look crossed her face.

"He's lived a very difficult life. It'd make anyone unstable, I think. The point is, he has a considerable amount of magic at his disposal, and more than enough combat experience. He'd be the last wizard I would want to face in duel..." Hermione didn't seem finished, but she fell quiet and looked away, in what Sherlock could swear was shame.

Sherlock, on the other hand, was just trying as hard as he could not to laugh. Yes, Harry Potter, the murderous nutter who makes him tea, and has a fondness for Indian take-out. The most dangerous wizard in Britain taking care of stray cats, and helping Mrs. Hudson with the cleaning. Spot on.

"May I share something with you, Ms. Granger?" Sherlock asked, still holding back the chuckles. She looked up at him.

"I don't believe that Harry Potter was responsible for the Dursley murder." Hermione looked taken aback. She opened her mouth, then closed it, unsure in what to say.

"Are you very sure?" She finally asked.

"Yes. I've never been more positive. There was plenty of motive however, which is why I'm assuming he is the prime suspect." Sherlock answered. Hermione fell silent, thinking about this. Her food came, brought by the same Indian girl. She looked at the plate in front of her, with an obvious lack of appetite. She slowly picked up her fork and began to prod it this, way and that.

"It's just that, I don't know who else could have killed those people. They had no ties to our world besides Potter. It doesn't make sense..." She said, more to herself, as she was still looking down in her plate. Sherlock decided to take the questions in a different direction.

"This Potter, he's been on the run for awhile now?"

"Yes. Nearly fifteen years now." Hermione answered. Her voice adopted a hollow, dead quality.

"And the initial crime he was charged with...?" Sherlock really did need more details on this case he was supposed to be solving. Hermione sighed heavily, before answering.

"It was about two years after the war ended. Do you know much about the wizarding war?" Hermione asked.

Sherlock inclined his head to the side. "Not very much, but enough. Continue, please."
"Well, Harry had a rough time. That doesn't really describe it, actually. I think the war changed him, and he was so young..." Sherlock got the distinct impression that Hermione was trying to defend her old friend. She wasn't refuting his guilt, however.

"After he defeated Voldemort, he wasn't really the same. Sort of shut himself in this old house, his godfather's house, and never came out. We were all very worried, but I think we all decided he deserved some privacy after everything that happened." Hermione's eyes looked out the window as she spoke. Her food remained untouched, as she was focused wholly on her story.

"The minister at the time, Kingsley, was friendly with him before. We were all friendly since we were all part of the resistance, you see. He invited Harry to this ministry function. It was celebrating the anniversary of Voldemort's defeat. Honestly, none of us really thought he'd show up. Up to that point he'd avoided all publicity events like the plague. But he came..."

Sherlock noticed that the woman's eyes began to water slightly. He supposed she must still have some residual emotional ties to Harry. The thought that they might have been lovers crossed his mind again, and his stomach roiled. 'Odd,' he thought. 'Why would I care?' Nonetheless, he had to mentally reassure himself that there relationship was probably just platonic, as Hermione continued her story.

"But he came, and it was a surprise. I...I noticed there was something off right away. He had this intense look in his eyes, like he was on a mission of some sort. Up until then, his eyes looked sort of...empty. Like he didn't really care much about anything. I remember the first thing he did was go talk to Ron. He was a good friend of ours, you see. I lost track of him then, but I guess he talked to a few more people. They testified later. I was a little annoyed then, because it seemed like he was deliberately avoiding me..." Hermione let out a bitter chuckle.

"So I kept on my way, enjoying the party. Suddenly I heard screams coming from the far end of the hall. Everyone heard them, and the whole ballroom started running. I remember Ron and I ran towards it though, our wands out." She paused and took a deep breath here. Sherlock wished she'd get on with it. He was utterly enthralled by her story.

"We ran to this small hallway, where the screams were coming from. Harry was there, and he was standing over six dead bodies. One of them was Kingsely Shaklebolt. The only other one I knew was Hestia Jones. They were both...they were very good people. They didn't deserve to die then. I didn't know the other four personally, I don't even remember their names, anymore..." Hermione had stopped talking, and was looking away.

"Did they capture him right then?" Sherlock asked.

"No. He had a broom with him. It's odd, I remember he wobbled a bit when he first got on. Harry was usually so graceful on his broom. The ministry is underground of course, but he flew out to the upper stories and escaped before anyone could catch up. We were unprepared. It was so peaceful after the war, no one thought anything like that would happen. Especially for Harry to do something like that..."

"But he was captured?" Sherlock pressed on.

"Yes. That same day actually. He didn't even try to run or hide. We found him in his house, Grimmauld place. I think he was playing chess with his house elf when we got there..." Hermione was leaning her head on her elbow, and slowly dragging her fork across a full plate of food.

Sherlock needed to think long and hard about everything she'd said to him. He could already see some of the holes, but he needed to know more about magic, what it can and can't allow. He
needed to find out more about what happened that day. More details, more context. However, it was clear that Hermione was done talking. And if Sherlock kept pushing her, she might stop talking altogether.

Hermione suddenly looked up.

"Mr. Holmes. Er, Sherlock... I really don't think you should try to chase after Harry, especially alone. I don't imagine I could best Harry Potter in duel, but you'll need someone on your side, even if it's just to get you out of danger." She took out her large purse, and fumbled inside it.

"I have a mobile. Believe it or not, wizards still use owls to carry all their messages and I really think muggles are ahead in this area..."

Sherlock thought this was a brilliant idea. He knew he would need Hermione again. And he knew he would have more questions. He happily exchanged phone numbers with her. They then paid for the butter beers and food (which was mostly intact) and left the cozy safety of the cafe. It was evening now, and shadows fell across Diagon Alley. It still seemed like a merry little street, with all the shop-lights and lanterns.

They walked back towards The Leaky Cauldron, as Hermione said she would help Sherlock get out. All in all, she was extraordinarily helpful.

"Hermione, I might need to speak with you again." Sherlock said. She nodded.

"Go ahead and call me. I'm free most evenings." Good, Sherlock thought. He would definitely need her again. She walked him to the brick wall, and opened it again with a tap of her wand. The archway opened and they both stepped through.

"I'll be fine from here." Sherlock said. Hermione seemed on the verge of saying something.

"I hope you find the person who murdered the Dursleys." She said, resigned, as they waved each other goodbye.

…

Sherlock considered the witch, as they parted ways. It would be above useful to have another acquaintance in the wizarding world. On top of that, she can actually go outside without fear of being captured. Yes, he thought, Hermione Granger would be indispensable.

It was brilliant, dumb luck that she also turned out to be so well acquainted with the details of Harry's case. If he intended to make any headway in Harry's case, she would certainly come in handy.

She was somewhat attracted to him, he could tell, although she was trying to disguise it. He wondered if it may be beneficial to play on that attraction, and commence a relationship with her. Sherlock, as always, wasn't interested in the slightest. However, he couldn't deny the usefulness of having a witch in love with him. With a pang, he remembered Janine, and her 'revenge.'

Of course, Janine's newspaper revenge didn't cost him anything. He couldn't care less what the ladies of London thought of his sleeping patterns, or lack thereof. But Sherlock had a feeling that an angry witch might be a formidable adversary.

Especially a witch as clever as Hermione seemed to be. No, he thought, it would be better if they remained platonic. She seemed interested enough in his cases, and would still offer assistance. Although he wanted to know as much about magic as possible, he really didn't want to find out how unpleasant it could be, coming from a woman scorned.
Sherlock was really glad that Harry was staying at 221B. Really, the circumstances couldn't have been planned better. He needed access to a wizard, and here was one that was on the run from the law, and needed a safe place to take cover. It practically bound him to the flat, in Sherlock's opinion.

Having this exact thought, Sherlock entered 221B, and found that it was empty, and his wizard was gone.

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Chapter End Notes

Once again, remember to check out this story on fanfiction dot net. It's there under the same title, and I have the same pen name there as well. I'm updating it here at a glacial pace, still haven't gotten the hang of AO3 formatting, to be honest.

Let me know what you thought. I don't work for money, just love! Or even mild interest.
It was so cold outside. Ron ducked his head deeper into his coat, as he shivered and kept walking. The snow was driving against him, kicked up by the biting wind. The cold was coming from deep inside too, and even though it was a very short walk from where he apparated, it felt like a long, miserable journey.

Finally, he pushed past the gate, and walked down the path that led to the little cottage. Warm light was spilling out of the windows onto the snow, and Ron couldn't wait to get in there, and put the day behind him. Through the window, he could see the fireplace roaring, and his bones ached with the cold. He pushed his palm against the door, and it clicked open, the enchantments recognizing his touch.

The fireplace was indeed lit, and Hermione sat in front of it on the couch, wearing one of his baggy, but warm sweaters. Crookshanks dozed quietly on her lap, and she was stroking him, absentmindedly staring into the fire.

Ron shrugged off his heavy coat, and went to sit next to her. She smiled in greeting. Digging her wand out from underneath her, Hermione flicked it into the direction of the kitchen. A steaming mug gently glided over to Ron.

She always made him hot chocolate when he came back from visiting Azkaban. He was grateful. It eased the the hollow feeling in his stomach considerably. Taking sips from the mug, Ron sat back into the couch, and stared into the merrily crackling fire. They sat like that in silence for long minutes, while the wind howled outside, and knocked against their little cottage.

Ron never knew how to start these conversations. It was always bad news these days, and he was rubbish at delivering them gently. If it were up to him, he would just sit here in silence like this for hours, letting the fire and chocolate gradually warm him back up. It was three more days till New Year's, and that was a cheerful thought he'd been clinging too all day.

Crookshanks woke up, and stretched himself on Hermione's lap. He lazily made his way over to Ron, and bumped his rather large, squashed head against Ron's hand. Ron obligingly scratched him behind the ears. He'd really grown a fondness for the cat. It always seemed to know when he was down. Crookshanks settled himself on Ron's lap, and went back to sleep. Lazy bugger, Ron thought affectionately.

Hermione looked over, and decided to break the silence.

"So, what happened?" She asked, quietly.
Ron sighed, and leaned further back into the couch. He took his time answering, since he didn't really know what to say.

"Nothing." He answered, simply.

Hermione was looking at him with narrowed eyes.

"Nothing, Ron? What do you mean 'nothing'? What did he do, did he say..." She started, but Ron cut her off.

"Nothing, Hermione! Literally nothing! I sat there for hours and tried to talk to the git, and he didn't say a word the entire time. He just sat there and looked at me, as though wondering what bloody business I had to be there in the first place!" It wasn't Hermione's fault, he knew. He really shouldn't yell at her, since she was just as upset and angry as he was. But he was always so frustrated, he could barely keep that aggressive edge of himself in check.

Looking over at Hermione, he saw her eyes begin to water, and he immediately felt bad.

"Sorry." He said quietly. She waved away the apology with her hand. Pulling her knees up, she wrapped her arms around them, curling into herself. She buried her face into her knees, and started trembling slightly. Ron put his hand on her back, and gently rubbed between her shoulder blades.

They sat like that, with Ron bitterly looking into the fire, and Hermione pretending that she wasn't sobbing into her knees. After long minutes, she lifted her head again.

"What are we supposed to do, Ron?" She whispered through her watery tone. And Ron had no idea. He sat next to her, offering nothing except his silent sympathy. In truth, he didn't know if there was anything else they could do. And at this point, Ron and Hermione were the only ones trying.

"I was so sure, I was so sure that he couldn't..." Hermione spoke up again.

They were both sure, when it happened in May. They were both so confident that the boy they had known as their best friend for so long, was innocent. It was another adventure, another mystery for them to solve. It seemed quite fitting, since Harry had saved their skins so many times, that now they got a chance to save his.

He still remembered that evening very clearly. It was May 2nd, and there was great ball in the ministry. Ron was set to graduate from auror's training in a few weeks, and his future boss had made a not-so-subtle suggestion that he should come. He had went there with Hermione, but eventually they broke apart, and she went to chat with her co-workers on the other side of the ball room.

That's when Harry showed up. Ron was very surprised to see him, considering that Harry Potter had spent the last two years not leaving the sanctuary of Grimmauld Place. He crept around the edge of the giant room, probably trying not to draw attention to himself, Ron thought. He came over, as soon as he'd seen Ron, and they exchanged a short greeting.

Harry had seemed clear-headed, more coherent than Ron had seen him since the war. Not that they'd seen much of each other. Whenever him and Hermione went to visit, Kreacher was there saying that his master wasn't taking visitors. Ron had gotten angry once, and tried to rush past the aged elf, but was thrown back by the powerful elf magic that Kreacher had unfortunately possessed. They did see him several times, when the elf didn't stop them. But it was useless. Harry hardly noticed they were there. His eyes stared off, and he kept playing with a little black stone,
spinning it in his hand. Mostly, it seemed like he could barely hear them.

Which is why Ron was stunned when Harry approached him, and seemed so normal that evening. Harry asked Ron about his auror training, and if they'd made any headway into capturing the remaining death eaters. Ron replied that there wasn't anything new. There was only four remaining, on the loose, which wasn't much considering Voldemort's inner circle consisted of almost thirty people. The names of the last elusive four had been pinned to most of the auror's desks on a severe, official parchment:

*Greyback, Fenrir*

*Lestrange, Rodolphus*

*Rookwood, Augustus*

*Snape, Severus*

Ron privately thought that those four were probably going to remain free for a very long time. If they were clever at all, they'd clear out of the country and never be seen again. The only intelligence the auror's had on them was that at least three of them they were moving in a group. Sticking together for protection, probably.

He recited their names to Harry, and he scowled.

"Snape! That snake bastard deserves to die." Harry growled. Ron was a little taken aback by Harry's aggressive tone. Suddenly, he put his arm on Ron's shoulder, and looked in his eyes.

"I don't care about the others, but make sure you catch Snape. For me, Ron." He had fierce, determined expression, as he said this. Then, without so much as a goodbye, Harry walked away. Ron didn't follow him, and simply stood there, completely taken by surprise. He remembered a twinge of hope, that maybe his best friend had finally come back to his former self.

Those hopes dashed to pieces that very evening, when the ballroom filled with screams, and people running towards the exits. Ron wasn't one of the aurors that went after Harry. He was still a trainee, and his commander had simply sent him home.

Hermione came home that night with him, and they'd spent all night trying to figure out what had just happened. They had been so quick to assume that Harry couldn't have possibly done it.

Hermione pointed out so many details that seemed to suggest it wasn't their Harry that was responsible. Their Harry couldn't do something like this, not in a million years.

They spent so many sleepless nights together, trying to figure it out. Hermione thought it was obvious that it must have been someone using Polyjuice potion. They'd drawn up diagrams of how the perpetrator wearing Harry's face fled the ministry. They'd collected everyone's testimony of that evening. Together, they'd worked so hard on building a solid case for Harry.

The wizarding world had mostly already turned on their savior. Ron was sick with the lot of them. Hermione turned a furious shade of pink whenever she read the Prophet. Only a few witches and wizards (besides Ron and Hermione) believed that Potter could be innocent. But they'd worked tirelessly. It's what Harry would have done for them.

A month later, at Harry's trial, Ron had begun to lose hope. Hermione was beside herself afterward. She stormed and raged about how poorly they were treating him, after he saved all their arses. Ron never said anything, but it was then that he'd begun to suspect that maybe Harry really was
responsible. Well, responsible in the loosest sense of the word. It should have been clear to anyone that he wasn't in control of himself.

Ron shoved all those thoughts away, and worked with Hermione tracing and retracing Harry's steps that night. After the trial, it was just the two of them, digging for answers, trying to get Harry out of Azkaban. But month after month, it was easy to lose hope in someone who didn't even bother to defend himself. Harry practically admitted that he did what he was being accused of, at his trial. Not coherently, or very clearly, but it was enough for the judges.

Of course Hermione said that it was obvious he didn't know what he was talking about. He'd been out of touch, locking himself up at Grimmauld Place for so long that he had lost track of what was real. And the dementors must have been affecting him, she said. But now, almost eight months later, it was harder and harder to deny what was right in front of them.

If the stupid git bothered to once, only once, defend himself, Ron would know it wasn't him. He and Hermione would keep going for years if they had to, trying to prove his innocence. Hell, Ron would bust him right out of Azkaban, if he had to. Every time Ron visited him, he hoped it would be the day that Harry finally came back and said 'It wasn't me Ron.' But he never did, and Ron had had just about enough. So he and Hermione sat side by side on the couch, and both thought the same thing.

She had stopped crying now, and had a blank look on her face, still staring into the fire.

Crookshanks still dozed happily on Ron's lap, unaware of what was going on around him.

"Do you think maybe we were so convinced..." Hermione started talking, but paused, collecting herself.

"We were so convinced because we still feel guilty?" She finished, sadly. Ron scowled. She had no right to feel guilty. It was his decision, that she merely followed. It was his fuck-up, his big mistake, and he dragged her into it. But he knew she did feel guilty, and he felt it too. No matter how hard they tried to fix their mistake, they couldn't. Then, after the war was over, it was too late.

She was probably right. Wasn't she always? That's why they both tried so hard to prove a man was innocent, even though he never bothered to say he was. They both owed him big time, for breaking their promise.

Ron thought of the world, and what great fucking mess it was. No one ever got what they deserved, good or bad. Harry was rotting in Azkaban, while Rodolphus Lestrange was free, doing god knows what. People who defended the light were left dead, maimed, or their families broken. His own family was shattered by the loss of two siblings. He thought of the Malfoys, snug and happy in their giant manor, because they 'switched sides' in the last minute.

He thought of Teddy robbed of a mother and father, and now his godfather. And in a sick way, that felt horribly familiar. He suddenly got an image of Harry in the shrieking shack, dressed in Azkaban robes, trying to explain to Teddy how he was innocent. Ron thought of Sirius and how unfair it was that he died before being exonerated.

Except Sirius was innocent, and he had never been given a trial before they carted him off to prison. No one bothered to listen to him. Ron felt sure that if Sirius had been on trial, he would explain everything: about Peter, about the secret-keeper being changed, and about their animagus forms.

Harry had been given a trial, and well... Hermione was right. The only reason they kept going was
because they both felt guilty at leaving Harry when he needed them most. If Ron was very honest, he hadn't truly believed in Harry's innocence since the trial. They kept trying to look for answers where there were none, because partly it was their fault. Now, maybe it was finally time that he and Hermione admitted this.

They'd moved to the kitchen, where Hermione warmed up some food she'd made hours ago. It wasn't his mother's cooking, but it was good food, so Ron had no right to complain. He was feeling warmer now, the effects of the dementors waning from his bones, and Ron happily dug in.

Hermione sat across from him and watched him with a blank look. Neither of them had said it, but there seemed to be an agreement between them that the adventure was over, the mystery solved. Harry was guilty, and they had both better come to terms with it.

Suddenly, Hermione drew in a big breath. She was getting ready to say something, but couldn't quite figure out how to start. Then, she dove right in.

"We need to talk, Ron." She said, with hollow sound to her voice. Ron motioned his hand for her to start. He had a weird feeling in his stomach, like everything was on an edge, like the universe was holding its breath. Hermione wasn't looking at him now, and her eyes started watering again. Ron hated when she cried. She almost never did, thankfully. He always felt like it was somehow his fault, and it made him feel terrible. He slowed his chewing and looked at her in concern.

"Ron, I...I don't feel the same anymore." She finished sadly, still avoiding eye contact. Oh, Ron thought. Surprisingly, he knew exactly what she was talking about. She didn't feel the same way about him anymore.

"I think I'm going to spend the night at my mum's place tonight." She said with finality, though her voice was cracking. Ron slowly put his fork down.

Ron wanted to be angry, he wanted to yell at her, to shout 'You belong with me! We belong together, we always have!'

But he felt no anger rising within him, only resignation. If he was very honest, he wasn't as upset as he should be, because he hadn't felt the same either. Not in ages. The tender feelings he cradled in his chest all through their years of Hogwarts were getting harder and harder to find.

He remembered watching her, a schoolgirl then, growing more and more brilliant by the year. Hogwarts seemed like so long ago now, a forgotten century. Soon it would be, as a new millennium drew on. It felt like there was less, and less between them, as they made their way further from Hogwarts. He was an auror, and she was an Unspeakable. They could barely keep up a conversation, unless it was about how to help their old best friend not be convicted for murder. It felt like the last thing they had in common was Harry's case. Now, there was nothing. Just memories of things they did together. Ron searched, almost desperately, for the feelings he had for her, but he found nothing.

He didn't know how to answer her, or even if she was expecting an answer. He wasn't a touchy-feely bloke. He settled for nodding at her, and also averting his eyes.

"Is that- do you have any thoughts about this?" Hermione asked. It sound like there was a little hope in her voice. Maybe she thought that Ron would rage and tell her that he loved her, and that his life was nothing without her; and Ron would have, two years ago. That's exactly what he would have done. He would have strode over to her, embraced her, and told her how much she meant to
him. She didn't mean anything to him anymore, though. Just a girl he went to school with. A good friend maybe, a good ally to have in the ministry...

"I don't feel the same anymore either. So, I understand." Ron said quietly.

With a flick of her wand, some of her things flew neatly into a trunk, and it slammed shut. Hermione said she'd come back later for the rest. It floated behind her, gently knocking into walls. She hugged Ron, telling him that she wanted to stay in touch with him. He hugged her back and promised they would.

Ron moved slowly, dazed by how quickly everything was happening. Crookshanks jumped into Hermione's arms, and meowed sadly in Ron's direction. He felt like a part of his past was dying, leaving him forever, first Harry, now her. There would be nothing left soon of old Ron, the one that was a nervous wreck before a quidditch game, and the one that got jealous when Hermione took Krum to the Yule ball. The war was over, and a millennium was coming. New Year's Eve was just three days away. Everything changed, Ron reasoned.

"Ron," Hermione turned around. She was at the door, already wearing her coat.

"I'm not telling anyone about the books we found at Grimmauld." She said, pointedly looking at him.

"I won't either." Ron replied. Acknowledging his words with a curt nod, Hermione tightened her scarf, and strode out of the door into the winter's evening gloom.

Present Day

After his enlightening adventure in Diagon Alley, Sherlock was returning to Baker Street in unusually high spirits. That is, until he found his flat surprisingly empty. He had so many questions that Potter needed to answer, but the wizard was gone.

His first thought was that the wizard cops, aurors, had collected him. This would be an awful turn of event, as he needed Harry, or else it would be difficult for him to continue making contact with the magical world. He had also promised Harry a safe place to stay.

Sherlock did not know exactly what would happen to him if he were captured. He could pick up a few clues from his discussions with Harry, and it didn't sound good. Sherlock wasn't sure whether wizards had capital punishment, but it wouldn't be surprising considering many of their customs had not changed since the middle ages.

His heart started pounding, and his mouth went completely dry. Thick, suffocating panic was settling into Sherlock's brain, making it hard to think, hard to reason. His mind decided to produce images of Harry chained up in a government cell, being beaten within an inch of his life.

That couldn't happen, cried Sherlock inwardly. He wouldn't let that happen.

Sherlock's brain reflected on his relative powerlessness in the situation. The wizard authorities wouldn't listen to him, since he wasn't even supposed to know about their world. They might listen to Mycroft, but even that was a slim chance, really. It didn't matter, he resolutely told himself. He would do anything, anything at all in his power to save his… wizard. He would rant and rave about the magical world's existence, break their secrecy, and bring the world crashing around their stupid,
magical ears. His brain decided to send him another preposterous picture: Sherlock swooping in to rescue a pale wizard, with dark hair, and huge pleading eyes...

Sherlock physically flinched at the thought. He wasn't some bloody Byronic hero, coming to rescue a damsel in distress. He was a detective, so now he needed to do detective work.

Sherlock tried look at his abandoned living room with a clinical detachment, but it was hard seeing past his panic. Why was there a Chemistry textbook laying on the floor? Why were the chairs around their little table moved out? Why was there a tea set out. There was dregs of tea left in one, and a spoon peculiarly placed in the saucer…John.

John was definitely here, Sherlock concluded. This was good, his friend wouldn't let anything happen to Harry. His brain spun back to a few days prior when he requested that the doctor befriend the Harry, in order to make him a permanent addition to 221B. Yes, Sherlock thought, John must have taken him somewhere. Harry wasn't taken into custody in some deep vault of the magical people's prison system, and he wasn't in any danger.

Still trembling slightly, Sherlock sat in his armchair. He steepled his long fingers together and looked out into the kitchen, though not really seeing anything. His mind was reflecting on what had just occurred, solely within itself it seems. His panic had only lasted less than a minute, but it had felt like Sherlock went on a long journey, deep to some part of his brain that was not normally examined. Why had he reacted? The panic was receding now, and Sherlock took steady rhythmic breaths to return his heartbeat to normal. Relief settled in its place, along with shame at being so easily ruffled, and stupidly coming to false conclusions, and an odd lingering sweetness, which Sherlock couldn't identify.

Breaking his meditative pose, he quickly took out his cell, and composed a text to John, his fingers gliding quickly over the keys. He slipped it back into his pocket, and continued to stare out into space, while his mind was turning over and over. He thought about Hermione, and her story, about John and Mary, about Janine, and most of all, about the wizard that was living across the hall from him.

He sat like that for long hours, only moving once to check John's reply on his phone. His mind trekked deeper and deeper within itself. His memory palace, incidentally, really did resemble a house. It had rooms, shelves, and stairs, where things that were useful were stored meticulously, in an ordered scientific fashion.

His memory palace, he had told John, was simply a mnemonic device. Method of loci, as the Greeks called it. It could be anything: an apartment or a street, or a map. John once commented that it was very telling that Sherlock decided to call it a palace.

The thing that no one really knew, was that the palace was not there solely for the ease of remembering important data. His palace was orderly, logical, and perfect; but it had been built over something that was its exact opposite. Underneath Sherlock's mind house, was a labyrinth.

It was the great dualism of architectural theory: the labyrinth and the pyramid. Order above, chaos below. Both complementary and reflective of each other. Two constructs, rising and falling from the horizon, that are reflections and antonyms of each other.

Sherlock had not strayed into his labyrinth casually. Indeed, he mostly avoided it. Nothing in his labyrinth was pertinent to his work, so nothing there was really useful. If anything, the labyrinth was sort of a garbage dump. Things he couldn't delete, yet didn't want laying around in his house. Things that weren't degradable, things he couldn't forget, all went into the maze.
Sherlock was never a literature buff, but he did not oversee the significance of having a labyrinth hide his secrets. There was no bull-headed monster inside, but there was a part of him locked away from the sunshine above.

The detective sat there and ruminate on old Greek myths and his own psyche. His eyes fluttered shut every now and again, and would flicker open again. He wasn't really using them. He was lost entirely in the constructs that were in his head. The noises from the street, from the city, the neighbor's telly, were all a far-off tide that Sherlock could place no meaning behind. All of sensations were far away, and unnoticeable, except one. Some noise that kept growing louder and louder, demanding attention.

"...Sherlock!" Oh, that was John's voice. Sherlock snapped back into the present, his eyes blinking away the darkness of the labyrinth. He found John standing above him, with his jacket still on. He wasn't sticking around, then. Behind him was Harry, who was looking at Sherlock with curiosity, and a slight lopsided smile. There was a light aroma of beer coming from John, and Sherlock's mind quickly constructed the events of the evening. Sherlock thought he might as well let them know that he was here with them now.

"Evening." He said dispassionately. The deep corners of his mind, which he had excavated, were spilling over. He needed time to put himself right again. He closed his eyes, and began to stuff the thoughts and memories back where they belonged: into his underground chamber. Thankfully, John took this time to say good evening to Harry then Mrs. Hudson, and Sherlock, who was aware enough to reply with a quick good-bye.

He didn't particularly want to, but he supposed he ought to thank John for his efforts. Sherlock did ask him to do this, never mind that the detective almost had a heart attack because John decided to bring Harry along for a pint.

Sherlock was nearly done with his mental clean-up when he realized that Harry had taken a seat opposite him, and was observing him with the same lopsided curiosity. Sherlock looked right back at him, not really sure of what he should say, if anything.

"I've thought about what you asked me..." started Harry, suddenly.

"Oh?"

"About assisting you, in your work." Sherlock's eyebrows elevated themselves, seemingly of their own volition.

"I'm not sure how much help I'd be. I know next to nothing about muggle laws, or crime scenes or anything. The only things I know about forensics are from crap telly. But..." The wizard seemed to hesitate, "if you really want me to come with you, I will. I mean, I'm not doing much sitting about the flat, and you are letting me hide here and everything, so..." Sherlock was pleasantly surprised at this. Perhaps John deserved many more thanks. He wondered what conversations they had that spurred this decision.

However, it did sound like Harry was only taking up his offer because he felt like he owed Sherlock something for his little room in 221B. He didn't think John would have framed the argument that way to him. Normally, Sherlock would have no problem getting what's his if the wizard thought it was because he was obligated. For some reason though, this particular situation didn't lay quite right with Sherlock. Harry certainly didn't owe him. The room he allowed him to have was perfectly repaid by his stunning performance of magic, usually on Sherlock's demand. Sherlock decide to voice these thoughts out loud.
"You don't owe me anything."

"You are letting me stay here..." Harry started saying.

"Yes, and you perform any spells I ask you too, without any hesitation. Consider your rent paid in magic, and my insatiable curiosity." Sherlock cut across him. Harry had a slight frown on his face. Fine, if he was going to be difficult about this...

"I do need an assistant, and I think you're quite right. You're not doing much sitting around, trying to bore yourself with stoichiometry." Sherlock motioned to the book, laying next to the armchair. Harry chuckled and flicked his wand at the book. It sprang up, and flew into the shelves, sliding snugly between two other volumes.

... 

It had been several long days since Harry finally agreed to become Sherlock's partner in fighting crime. The detective had been hoping for a case to show up the very next day, maybe even that night, but no such luck. All the cases that Lestrade bothered him with were transparent, boring and obvious. He might have a wizard in tow, but he still did not leave his flat for anything less than a 7.

Sherlock's boredom however, was being kept in check by his ever gracious flatmate. Sherlock asked over and over again for Harry to perform the same spells, charms, and transfigurations.

Harry barely even complained, except once, when Sherlock had him perform the hover charm on every single object within reach. Sherlock recorded all the pertinent data. He was quite happy with his progress in this particular experiment. That is, until Harry revealed that there was actually an incantation for the charm. Apparently, the wizard was able to cast it without saying it aloud. This of course, skewed the data. But Sherlock could be patient, so he quickly grabbed more paper for his clipboard and asked Harry to perform the charm while saying 'wingardium leviosa,' on the same hundred or so objects. In the end, Harry had begun to complain that he might suffer from magical exhaustion if they kept at it.

Harry had also provided a dozen or so magical texts, for Sherlock's perusal. It was a distinctly odd vision, seeing Harry pull out book after book from the same worn knapsack. He supposed he ought to be used to it, by now. Magic, Sherlock thought, might always have a small element of surprise to it.

Sherlock skimmed quickly through Harry's meager library, before starting to study, in earnest, all that was on the pages of each textbook. His favorite magical subject, Sherlock decided, was potions. He was amazed, when reading 1001 Magical Herbs and Fungi, that common plants could be combined in such intricate ways, to produce such amazing effects. Also, potion making required very little magical power. Most of these elixirs could be effortlessly brewed by muggles.

While Sherlock obsessed over potion recipes and ingredient properties, Harry had also begun to read. The wizard quickly abandoned most of the more ponderous tomes that were in Sherlock's possession. Although, once or twice Sherlock did catch him, with a pained expression, trying to make his way through a neurophysiology book.

Not all of the wizard's literary choices were worthy of commendation. One afternoon Sherlock strode into his own living room finding Harry with a novel.

Sherlock glanced at the title.

"Jane Eyre? Ugh!" Really, of all the things he could have picked...
"Well, it was in your bookcase." Harry answered, defensively.

"Hmph, I'm sure Mrs. Hudson left it there. I wouldn't be caught dead reading that—that romantic drivel." In truth it was Sherlock's, but he would be hard pressed to admit this. The last time he read that novel he was only sixteen. And even though it made an impression on him then, it was totally excusable, as everyone was a special kind of idiot at sixteen.

"I rather like it." Harry answered lightly.

"Do you? What part are you on..." Sherlock craned himself over Harry's armchair to quickly spot the page which was now open. Jane, the silly girl who couldn't make out what was right in front of her nose, was being propositioned by her own cousin, the insane priest.

"I thought she would end up with that Rochester bloke..." Harry muttered to himself. Unfortunately Sherlock caught it.

"Oh, she does. She marries him." He replied.

"Sherlock, I'm not done reading it!" Harry was now looking up, twisting his neck around to give Sherlock a disapproving glare.

"Well, I've just saved you a few hours. You're welcome." Harry frowned at him, and resolutely went back to reading. Sherlock was not discouraged. He perched himself on the armchair, still looking over Harry, following along the narrative on the page below.

"So, you like this book?" Sherlock asked casually.

"Yes, although I would have liked it much better if I didn't know what was going to happen at the end." Harry pointedly replied.

"Don't you think it's awful, that she marries him? Rochester has been described as a monstrous character. The poor girl deserves better, no?" Sherlock tried to keep his tone as casual and light as possible.

"Better than this St. John psycho." Harry mumbled. His eyes stopped moving across the pages, and he thought about it more.

"Rochester's not that bad. He might be surly, a bit on the rude side, but overall...well she loves him doesn't she?" It occurred to Sherlock that the wizard was now asking him his opinion on the book. Since he definitely didn't have one, Sherlock chose to remain silent.

He was still perched above Harry, looking down at the wizard and the book. It was a peculiar angle, one that revealed a pale sweep of neck, and collarbone. His hair, now cut to a decent length, rested in a disordered way over the back of his neck. Sherlock wondered, in a distracted way, what it would feel like to the touch. Probably soft, because it certainly looked it. Maybe wizard hair was different than muggle hair? He should investigate. Sherlock reached out a hand, imagining vividly what it would feel like to run it through the black mess, tangle in it, grasp it. All for science, of course.

His index finger was millimeters away, when Sherlock suddenly snapped back. Thankfully, the wizard seemed completely oblivious to what was going on behind him. Sherlock quickly jumped off his perch, and strode to his own room, shutting the door behind him. He sat on his bed, and stared suspiciously at the door, as though someone was want to come bursting through it at any minute.
Where had this madness come from? Sherlock felt like he was completely out of the loop in his own brain. Why would he have any business touching the wizard's hair? He was sure it was perfectly normal, and that it was different was a preposterous assumption. Wizard hair was probably exactly like non-wizard hair. They were still the same species, for god's sake.

His mind decided to aggravate him further by playing through the same vivid scenario. Almost involuntarily, Sherlock's limbs arranged themselves, and he lay down on his bed. His hand were locked behind his head, and Sherlock's eyes stared at the ceiling. Slowly, he closed his eyes, and decided to ride out whatever it was his subconscious was trying to communicate.

He saw his hand, in front of him, reaching into black hair, twisting it, then lower, gliding over a neck, then a jaw line. The mess of black hair turned then, and resolved into a face. Harry smiled softly up at him, and leaned into the palm of Sherlock's hand.

There was a slight hum in his head now, and he felt a swooping sensation somewhere around his mid-drift. The dream-Harry was still looking at him, with a question hanging in his eyes.

With his eyes still closed, Sherlock saw the wizard getting up, and he was standing on eye level with Sherlock. His lips moved, saying something inaudible. He seemed to be coming closer, and Sherlock hand was still pressed against the side of the wizard's face. Harry put one hand on Sherlock's shoulder, and their faces were inches apart...Sherlock suddenly felt an enormous rush of adrenaline. It felt like he was hanging off a cliff, only one finger still grasping the edge, and he was going to fall, fall down so far, into the abyss below...

Sherlock's eyes snapped open. Right away he noticed that there was an elevated temperature in his cheeks, and his breathing had hitched slightly. Well, what in the hell was he supposed to make out of that? Apparently his brain decided that it wanted to pet Potter. Ridiculous. If he wanted to pet something he would have gotten himself a house cat. A wizard, another man, was hardly an appropriate subject to caress.

He sat up, and decided to put the matter from his mind. Or rather, deeper into his mind, down a long tunnel that twisted and turned, where it would silently stay and not bother him. He had his work, and he had cases, and now he had his experiments with magic. Whatever he had just experienced had no room in his life.

Sherlock stayed quietly on his bed, for several minutes. Once he was sure that his mind was once again functioning normally, he returned to the living room. He still had questions about the Incendio charm, and he was hoping Harry could provide answers. This time, Sherlock told himself there would also be limited damage to physical property. He did promise Mrs. Hudson, after all.

…
“As opposed to the previously described pyramid of reason, the dark corners of experience are not unlike a labyrinth where all sensations, all feelings are enhanced, but where no overview is present to provide a clue about how to get out.”

― Bernard Tschumi, *the Architectural Paradox*

Greg Lestrade would never tell anyone, especially his co-workers, that sometimes he really worried about Sherlock Holmes. In an older-brother sort of way. Not that Sherlock Holmes needed another person to worry about him, but still.

Even when Sherlock got on his nerves, or forgot his first name, or stole his badge, he was sort of fond of the younger man. He was more fond of him when he helped with cases, instead of being annoying prick, but it was all rolled together in one package.

May had started to turn into June, and Greg had started to worry about Sherlock. It's not that he thought the detective was in danger, because he knew well that the younger Holmes could certainly protect himself. It's just that it's been almost a month, and he hadn't seen Sherlock. Usually, the detective would be so stir-crazy that he would be bothering Greg every day if there was yet an interesting case.

As it was, Sherlock must have had something to keep him preoccupied during the last few weeks. This is what most worried Greg. He didn't think Sherlock would turn back to narcotics, but you just never know. He considered, once or twice, texting Mycroft Holmes, but decided that this would be a great betrayal in his and Sherlock's...professional relationship.

He did run into John Watson, and had no reservations about asking him. John however, wasn't in the least bit helpful. He smiled at Greg, and said verbatim:

"Maybe he found someone magical to occupy his time."

The implication was ludicrous. Sherlock didn't do that. He didn't know the detective's private life in intimate detail, but he knew for sure that he didn't do that. Even if he did, Lestrade thought there wasn't anyone magical enough in all of Great Britain to keep Sherlock occupied 24/7.

What Greg needed was a good case for Sherlock. A clever case, or a gory case, or something interesting. But that didn't seem forthcoming.

It was a very calm month. Even the weather seemed to agree, as the heat made everything hazy, and the people sluggish. Greg had been enjoying the warmth, but the nagging worry about the detective was still there.

He was almost ready to drop in on Sherlock, and visit his flat (and see if he was still in one piece, and more or less sober), when him and the boys were called to an empty warehouse. The body of
young girl, was laying out on the dusty floor, and her eyes looked out, cold and empty. A jagged cut ran from her pelvis all the way to her throat.

Quickly, Greg took out his phone and sent Sherlock a short text.

"HM is back. Come directly."

...  

...  

Sherlock was all alone. How long had he been here? It seemed like it's been centuries since he's been trapped here, all alone, in this darkness. He was standing in a dark catacomb-like hallway, lit by torches. The ceiling was low and oppressive, and seemed to swallow the meager firelight. There were other passages twisting this way and that, and he had no idea which way he was supposed to go. There was no meaning to his existence here, but to to slowly wander around, trying to memorize the chaotic web of stone hallways. He slowly paced through the labyrinth, bemoaning his solitude with a deep, tenor 'Moooo.'

Suddenly, he heard footsteps just around the corner. How was this possible? No one ever came to his labyrinth. It had been his prison, no one else was supposed to be able to enter. That had been his curse, eternal loneliness in this stone cage. But, yes, around the corner, there was someone coming. He couldn't believe it. Someone was here, finally. His heart sped up. A torchlight was moving closer, and that someone was turning the corner. Sherlock tried to hide in the shadows. He was a monster, no one would want to meet him in this horrible maze. He didn't want to scare this stranger.

But the stranger ran right up to him, carrying a torch in one hand, with a long string coming out of his pocket, trailing behind him. Sherlock stood up. The stranger had black hair, and shining green eyes. He knew him, he thought. The stranger reached out his hand and his mouth blurred, as he spoke:

"We can make it out of here, come on. Let's go together."

The man motioned with his hand, and started running the opposite direction, down the long hallway. Sherlock didn't need telling twice, as he started to run after the man.

The man was fast, but Sherlock was even faster. His strong hooves made cacophonous sounds against the stone floor, as he ran after the man and his torchlight. He was gaining on the man, running so fast, his horns long and sharp, in front of him. They were reaching a wall, and Sherlock kept gaining on the man, unable to slow his pace. He knew what would happen, but he tried so hard to stop, slow down by any means.

The man suddenly stopped and turned, looking right at Sherlock. Sherlock couldn't stop though, and his horns were aimed right for the man, and he kept running. Stop, stop please, he pleaded with himself. It was to no avail. He kept moving forward, the momentum carrying him, and he felt the man's body make contact with the wall that was right behind them now. His sharp horn pierced the man's flesh, penetrating his ribcage. He felt warm organs make way, as his horn firmly lodged into the man's yielding body. The man cried out in pain, pinned to the stone behind him.

Sherlock reeled back, horrified by what he'd done. A dark stain began to spread on the man's chest, as he sagged against the wall. No, oh god no. What had he done? He tried to apologize, tried to tell the dark haired man how very, very sorry he was. But all that could come out of his mouth was a melancholy "Mooooo."
The man looked up at him. He was grimacing in pain, but he tried to smile. It was a crooked, jagged line of a smile.

"It's okay, I know." The man said before his eyes closed...

Sherlock woke up with a groan. It took him a few moments to try to dispel this strange dream from his waking mind. He really hated sleeping. Especially when his brain decided it was going to be stubborn and ridiculous, and not let him forget the dream as soon as he woke up. His heart was still thumping in his chest, and Sherlock tried to close his eyes, and stuff the dream somewhere far away, and forget it.

A part of his mind, the one that was trained in Jungian psychology and symbolism, sprang to work trying to dissect what the dream meant. Before it could sputter out the conclusion, the other parts of his brain simultaneously yelled at it to shut up. Great, now his own brain was having internal conflicts.

He looked over to his clock and the display read 6:17 am. The sun would just be coming up, and Sherlock noted the light glow behind the curtains of his windows. He'd only gone to sleep four hours ago.

Sherlock generally didn't sleep much, but in the recent week, he found that he could sleep even less. Every night, he would have these dreams that would leave him panting, drenched in sweat, and his heart hammering away against his ribcage. They were all slightly different, but certainly all centered around Potter. None of them were nightmares precisely. But they were growing more and more...Sherlock really didn't have a word for it. Persistent? Mystical? Obnoxious?

It seemed that he had dug a little too far into his subconscious that day after Diagon Alley, and it was now pouring out, hemorrhaging while he slept. Sherlock clearly remembered his momentary madness, when he almost reached out and petted the wizard's hair. That was the start of it. He wished he could say that was the only instance, but Sherlock was now convinced that he was slowly going mad.

Just last evening, as he watched Harry drinking cup of tea, Sherlock noticed his Adam's apple, bob up and down. Again, the amazing need to reach out and put his hand against it almost overwhelmed Sherlock. Examining it later, Sherlock thought that perhaps he had a subconscious urge to choke the wizard? That explanation, however, didn't fit with the rest of the detective's insanity. Petting and strangling hardly went together.

Running his hands through his damp hair, Sherlock thought he might as well get on with the day. He staggered out of his bedroom, and into the shower, the dream still playing vividly through his mind.

When Sherlock entered the kitchen, he found that Harry was already up and happily munching on toast and marmalade. He was also reading a newspaper, that was floating in front of him, the pages lazily turning, and folding themselves. His wizard flatmate looked perfectly content, and this irritated Sherlock to the extreme. He hated mornings.

The detective flopped himself down with a groan, and shoveled some breakfast into his own plate, trying to ignore Harry's annoyingly chipper expression. As though whatever was in that paper was any reason to look happy, thought Sherlock. There wasn't even a single interesting homicide. Two
bank robberies, and one jealous wife that poisoned her husband. That's all the City of London could provide for a nearly a month. Finally, the wizard that shared 221B with Sherlock had agreed to come with him, to assist on crime scenes, and it seemed that every bloodthirsty maniac in the United Kingdom simultaneously wanted a vacation.

He moodily stirred cream into his coffee, giving the wizard a dark look.

"How do you not get bored?" Sherlock's tone was bitter, as he felt. It really wasn't fair that he was simmering in frustration from not having any cases, and slowly going mad on top of that. “With reading the paper? It changes every day, you know.” The wizard answered lightly. He always answered things so lightly, Sherlock thought. One would think being a child soldier, and then a fugitive on the run, would have given Harry a bit more edge.

But Sherlock had found that Harry was always very amicable, and very mild mannered. Which might be a good thing, considering that Sherlock had a habit of getting on peoples nerves.

There was something wrong with the wizard.

Sherlock wanted to pin his personality as resembling Molly's, who was always letting people step all over her, and never got angry because of her passivity. But it wasn’t exactly like that. It was like there were pieces of the wizard missing, Sherlock thought. Despite the fact that Harry seemed to get along fine, it was like he was hollow, his reactions to things completely subdued.

Harry looked up to find that Sherlock was intently staring at him. The wizard looked back in confusion.

"Something on my face?" He asked.

Sherlock snatched the morning's paper from mid air, where it was hovering, and growled ‘No,' letting some of his frustration come out.

Harry however, kept going on with his breakfast, as though that was a perfectly normal thing. Sherlock recalled doing the exact same thing to John, and the doctor snapped at him, and gave him a 'you don't just grab things' lecture. Maybe John was just an angrier person, compared to Potter?

That might be it, Sherlock concluded. He was used to John, and maybe Harry's lack of outbursts seemed strange in comparison. He'd only ever had those two flatmates after all.

Breakfast was over, and Harry flicked his wand at the dishes. They flew into the sink, and commenced washing themselves. Indeed, the flat had looked marginally cleaner since the wizard moved in. There were a lot of perks to living with a wizard.

Sherlock might complain that his lack of cases was boring him, but he wasn't nearly as bad off as he would be Harry-less. True, he wanted a bit more action, a bit more running around London trying to catch someone with a loaded pistol. He didn't really mind research either, though. Specifically, research into magic. It was a good thing, that almost a month into their living arrangements, Potter was still willing to perform any spell, or explain any theory to Sherlock.

Sherlock's fingers found his phone in the pocket of his dressing gown. He took it out, seeing if perhaps there was any news from Lestrade. He looked through his inbox.

He saw again the text from Hermione Granger requesting his presence, that Sherlock had still not replied to. It was nearly a week since she'd sent it. Sherlock meant to reply, hovering over it numerous times. He knew that she must have found something out, and it would beneficial in helping him investigate Harry's case.
Every time he thought of replying however, he could see the conclusion of the case: Harry walking out of 221B in high spirits, able to walk the streets free, able to live in the wizarding world again, and leaving Sherlock. The detective just wasn't ready to relinquish his hold on the wizard yet. He could always get to his case later, he reasoned. It's been 15 years since he was charged with the crime, a couple more months wouldn't hurt him.

He was sure that if he made the appropriate excuse to Hermione, he could get back into her good graces. If she knew who he was, she knew he was a busy man. It was easy to put the case from his mind. Especially since Harry seemed to be perfectly content hiding out in Baker Street with him. In fact the wizard seemed just as content as Sherlock with not pursuing his innocence.

So Sherlock focused on studying magic, and casually glancing at his website, to see if any interesting cases would crop up. He had thought that it would be another slow day, where he would try to rationalize the chemistry behind Potions, and made notes about charming light bulbs, when his cell buzzed.

He quickly read the text from Lestrade, the meaning registering in less than a second, and his body automatically sprang him from the table.

Finally! He'd been waiting almost a year for this. He grinned at Potter, who was looking at him with mild alarm.

"There's a case, a really good one. We have to go as soon as possible." Not hearing Potter's reply, Sherlock dashed to his room and took out a paper bag. He ran back into the kitchen, and dumped the contents on the table.

There were a few wigs, glasses, and cosmetics. If he was going to go with a wanted criminal, he'd have to invest some time in disguising him. Sherlock surveyed the things in front of him, and looked back at Potter, assessing what would be the best fit. Potter was looking down at the table, his lips twitching upwards.

Sherlock grabbed a shaggy light-brown wig, and a mustache to start, with a little tube of costume glue. Armed with these things he made his way towards Potter. Well, jumped his way towards Potter, really. The wizard must have figured what was coming however, and expertly ducked out of the way, and dodged behind the table.

"What are you doing? What is that?" Harry pointed to the shaggy wig, with equal disgust and hilarity.

"Seeing as you're wanted, you can't exactly stroll around London sans disguise. Although, you're welcome to try. I haven't broken anyone out of jail in too long. Might be fun to try again." Sherlock explained, holding the contents of his hands out for Potter to examine. Harry approached cautiously and picked at the wig, holding it by one strand of hair.

"You expect me to wear this? It looks like something furry that expired ages ago. Is it muggle fashion now to put dead mammals on your head?"

"Strange, I didn't seem to hear your brilliant idea? Besides, your hair was even longer and messier than this when I first found you." Sherlock was becoming exasperated. It was a perfectly fine wig, one that he'd used a few times. Deciding he wasn't having more of Potter's nonsense, he deftly grabbed the mess of brown curls, and planted it on the wizard’s head. Harry gave a squawk of indignation, and tried to bend away, but Sherlock's slight advantage in height was working for him.

Harry must have been curious now, as he took out his wand and gave a complicated swirl. A mirror
appeared in front of them, and he examined himself. Just when Sherlock was about to get the mustache on, Harry began to laugh.

"This is ridiculous, nobody would be fooled by this." He said, plucking the brown curls off his head.

"That's because you have to adjust it first. We'll do that later. Come here, I have to glue this mustache on..."

The wizard immediately back away, his eyes widened with horror.

"No thank you! I'd rather not have another person's hair stuck to my face. Besides, I can do this myself." Harry said, then pointed his wand at his own chin. He squeezed his eyes in concentration, and after a few second, a magnificent handlebar mustache appeared on his face, along with a pointed beard that looked very stately.

Sherlock thought it looked very natural, sprouting from Harry's face as though it belonged there. It would be a very good disguise, if it weren't for the fact that the facial hair ensemble was a bright fire-engine red.

Harry noticed this too, looking in the mirror, and uttered a quiet curse. He began twirling his wand over his face, muttering spells. The mustache turned into an auburn, off-red color, that was more or less natural. The beard was more resilient though, and turned a deep shade of plum.

Sherlock remembered now that Harry had gone on a little excursion with John. All the details of their trip to the pub didn't seem significant that evening, as he had spent it panicking that Harry had been caught, and was being held in wizard prison. Then, analyzing why he did panic, because he almost certainly didn't care about Potter that much. Now, he realized that he must have had a way to alter his appearance, in order to accompany John.

"Hmph, you could have told me you could do it with magic." Sherlock dropped the costume pieces back onto the table, now closely examining Harry's progress.

"I would have. If you'd given me a chance, instead of chasing me around with bits of dead hair..." Harry was trying to get his now ginger beard to turn a natural auburn. He succeeded, but unfortunately the mustache also changed into a canary yellow.

"They're synthetic fibers, not 'dead hair'..." Sherlock was watching transfixed as Harry's beard wiggled rebelliously, and went back to it's original bright red.

"Oh sod this!" Harry muttered, and wiped the facial hair off, with a sharp jab of his wand.

He closed his eyes, and twirled his wand with what Sherlock noticed was more ease, as though he knew these movements by heart. Potter shrank a bit in height, and his hair became much shorter, and a bit balding, and gray. A beard appeared, but it was a very well-trimmed, professor type beard, that was silver. A few more flicks, and Potter now had more wrinkles around his eyes, and his face was rounder and flabbier. The only thing redeeming about his new appearance were the piercing blue eyes, Sherlock thought. His features were still there, and Sherlock thought he would be able to pick him out, but he knew for certain no one else could. No one ever really payed attention.

Potter now looked like a completely different person, true, but he also looked ancient, and well, 

boring. The red goatee might be a bit extreme, but it was much more exciting than this aging-dentist-look.
Harry looked in the mirror, and seemed satisfied with his work.

"I think I'm ready, then." He said, and Sherlock scoffed. He took out his phone and sent a text to Lestrade.

*Will arrive in an hour or two. Try to keep forensics from completely destroying all the evidence, in the meantime. -SH*

"Right," he turned back to old-dentist-Harry, who had an expectant look, as though he seriously thought he was going out like that.

"Can you change back to how you were before?" Harry did, appearing again as the skinny and handsome wizard that was now familiar to Sherlock. Wait no, not handsome. Rather worn looking, and bespectacled, Sherlock quickly reminded himself. Maybe pleasant looking, at most. Sherlock's perceptive eyes did pick something up, near Harry's forehead, as he changed back. Like a small jagged line that was there for the briefest moment.

"Why was it easier for you to turn into that old man, and not the previous alteration?" Sherlock asked, vaguely pointing at his own chin to remind Harry of the goatee he saw him attempt.

"The more you practice, the easier it becomes. It's hard to improvise a new appearance on the spot. I've been using that 'old man' pretty much anytime I had to leave my hideout." Harry explained.

"Well, that will not be happening again. I certainly won't be seen with someone who could pass as my father. Let's figure out a new look, shall we?" Sherlock said. This would be a fun start to the case. It wasn't everyday that you got to chose what your assistant looked like.

"I don't see why it matters. That disguise was good enough for John."

"Yes, and John wears hideous sweaters the color of oatmeal, so let's not defer to him on matters of style."

"I thought we were in a rush? Something about a really good case, and we had to go directly?"

"Not to worry," Sherlock pulled out his phone, and grinned at Harry, "they won't expect us for a few hours, at least."

Sherlock began to issue command after command, on what he wanted Potter to look like, starting with his height and eye color. Harry groaned, but did attempt to follow. It took him a few times to get the details right, and Sherlock could see that Harry wasn't finding this easy.

"...and do bring back that goatee, that was very fetching. Though perhaps not exactly in that palette of colors." Sherlock drawled, as Harry was transfiguring his hair to be wavy and reddish, under Sherlock's orders.

"Hold on! Human transfiguration is a difficult branch of magic..."

"You said the same thing about potions, and it couldn't be simpler." Sherlock replied.

"Just because not all of us are geniuses." Harry muttered under his breath. He did bring back the mustache and beard, though it was less flamboyant than the previous handlebar. The wizard then proceeded to add wrinkles to his eyes and around his mouth, though this was certainly not ordered by Sherlock.

"What are you doing? I thought I made my opinion on geriatrics quite clear." Sherlock said.
"Age is the best way to disguise yourself." Harry replied, as though it was an obvious fact.

Sherlock agreed, but they had magic!

"Fine, but can't you make yourself look younger instead?"

Harry deliberated.

"Not with any ease. Subtracting is much harder than adding. I would need a potion most likely. To be honest, I've never attempted it." he said.

Sherlock narrowed his eyes, and critically appraised Harry's new appearance. He was certainly older than the actual Potter, but he supposed that was fine. If there was a risk of Harry turning into a teenager, he'd rather avoid it. The wizard was taller now, and was still very skinny. He had wavy auburn hair, and a beard. He had a thinner face now, and his nose was longer. He had blue eyes, and had transfigured his circular glasses into something more square and modern.

The wizard was looking at his reflection with amusement, and something that looked like melancholy. Sherlock quickly guessed at what he was thinking.

"Look like someone you know?" he asked.

"Yes. A bit. Not enough for anyone to make the connection, though." Harry flicked his wand at the mirror, and it popped out of existence.

"Are we all sorted then?" He asked.

"Nearly. The robes might draw some attention." Sherlock had a plan for this, and there was no way Harry was backing out. The wizard did attempt it, waving his wand over his clothes. They changed into a sad, gray jacket and jumper.

Sherlock scoffed, and shook his head. He pulled Harry along to his own room. Now that the wizard was slightly taller, he and Sherlock would be the exact same size. Which means he could fit into Sherlock's clothes and not have to wear those ridiculous tatters. Really, this was overdue.

Sherlock had been so preoccupied with magic, he forgot his earlier resolution to have Harry throw out, or possibly disintegrate, all his old wizard clothes.

He began searching through his drawers for something that would be appropriate. Harry stood behind him, staring around the room.

"You know, I imagined your bedroom would have way more...experiments." He said in an offhand way.

"I tend to keep those in kitchen, if you haven't noticed."

"Yes, I have." Harry chuckled.

Sherlock located the clothes he thought would be the best fit, and thrust them at Harry, telling him to go change. It was the detective's fault, but they were running late now. Not that tardiness bothered Sherlock in the slightest. Lestrade could wait. If Sherlock was lucky, they might have come up with some brilliantly wrong conclusions about the crime. Oh, how Sherlock loved those. Well, loved correcting them, really.

The wizard hardly argued with having to change his wardrobe. He was probably growing used to
the detective's demanding nature, by this point.

Sherlock had the wizard apparate both of them onto the roof of a residential block. Roofs were nearly always empty, he reasoned. They were in Harlesden, about a half a mile from their destination. Just the simple ability to instantly transport themselves anywhere made the wizard an incredibly valuable assistant. It wasn't altogether pleasant, but so incredibly efficient. In current traffic, it would have taken them ages to get here.

They'd taken a staircase down to street level, and Sherlock began to quickly cover the distance to the crime scene. Harry was keeping up behind him, though not without some complaint.

"How do you breathe in this thing? It's ridiculously tight." He muttered, and tried to unfasten the topmost buttons of his gray tailored shirt. Sherlock promptly slapped his hand away. So what if his shirts were tight? It's not like he, as well as Harry, didn't have the figure for it.

"They're not tight, stop squirming."

"They are. Are you sure they're even men's?" Sherlock glowered at him, and decided to ignore that question.

They were nearing an old brick building, three stories tall, with yellow tape around its perimeter. The shops on the lower levels had been closed for several years, by Sherlock's estimation, and the building itself would soon be demolished. In short, abandoned. Perfect place for his killer to dump the body.

Sally was standing at the edge of the tape. As they approached her, her eyes narrowed spotting Sherlock. Then, just as suddenly, they widened when she saw Harry.

"Morning, Sally." Sherlock tried to keep as much bitterness out of his tone as possible. No use antagonizing her so early in the day.

"You're here, are you?" She said back to Sherlock, not trying to keep things civil on her end.

"It would appear so." Sometimes Sherlock liked to switch things around on her, and confuse her. Start out nice and polite, then mention that the man she was seeing actually had a wife and three children. Nothing got her going faster.

"And who's this?" She said, pointing at Harry. The wizard, who probably sensed the tension between them, attempted to be cordial as well.

"Allen Dore, pleased to make your acquaintance, Miss...?" He offered his hand and even gave her a little bow. Sherlock rolled his eyes. He could have come up with a more interesting name than that. Although he was pleased to note that Sally now looked flustered, not wanting to be outright rude to Sherlock, in front of his handsome new assistant.

He could certainly admit that disguised Harry was handsome, nothing wrong with that.

"Sgt Donovan." She blurted out, and shook his hand. "What's he, your new lab rat?" She turned to Sherlock again, with an accusing glare.

"Friend of mine, actually." Sherlock said, as Donovan scoffed. "Sally, you know very well you have orders to let me, and anyone with me, through. I don't appreciate you wasting my time."

She glared at him one more time, and wordlessly pulled up the tape. He hurried through, Harry behind him. Sherlock noted her bracelet, as it was revealed under her long sleeves, when she raised
her arm. He quickly deduced it's origin. He hung back for a few seconds, standing near Sally. This was too good to pass up.

"You should know, he gave another woman that bracelet first. She rejected it, and you got landed with her gift." Sherlock said this quietly. Part of it was that he did like making her angry, and this was the sure fire way. There was another part, but he certainly would never admit it.

"Enjoy ogling the corpses, freak!" She spat after him. Yes, especially since this was usually her reaction.

Harry was looking between the two of them, with his eyebrows scrunched up. Sherlock ignored him, and made his way towards the building.

When they were out of the earshot of Sally Donovan, Harry stopped, and turned to him. Oh great, more distractions. Didn't anyone realize there was a case to be solved? A small part of Sherlock whispered that he'd just spent an hour making the wizard transfigure himself exactly to his liking, when it was just as practical for Harry to use the old man disguise. He promptly told that voice to stuff it.

"Why do you let that woman talk to you like that?" Harry asked. He still had a concerned expression, and his glare was something that Sherlock hadn't seen on Potter's face before.

"I don't let her do anything, she goes on without my permission" Perfectly true, thought Sherlock. Harry seemed to gather himself. He had a peculiar look to his face, one that didn't quite belong. Perhaps it was the magical disguise?

"Well, you're not a freak. You're a genius, and the only person in Great Britain that believes me." His tone was slightly raised, which once again, didn't seem like it belonged to Harry. It almost seemed like he was angry, but not exactly...

"I'm not sure how that disqualifies me." Answered Sherlock. He narrowed his eyes, and surveyed Potter. Yes, angry is what he seemed, considering the tone and the glare, and the furrowed eyebrows. But Sherlock was a good actor, and he knew acting when he saw it. And Potter was definitely acting. So why was Harry pretending to be outraged on his behalf?

If he were genuinely outraged, that would be understandable. John had been, on a few occasions. It was always nice when his doctor stood up for him. Not that he needed it, but still.

But the wizard wasn't truly angry, Sherlock could see that. His eyes were sad, maybe worried, but not angry. For some odd reason, Potter had the urge to act out his anger, when he didn't actually feel any. How odd.

Sherlock tilted his head and studied the wizard, with his penetrating gaze. He wasn't sure what to think of this. Should he be glad, that Harry wanted to 'defend his honor,' or whatever he was trying to do? Or irritated, since it was obvious the wizard was attempting to lie with his body language.

He wasn't lying about what he said though, which was comforting. Sherlock decided to dissect this matter later, when they were at Baker Street, and not in Harlesden on a case.

... 

Lestrade was standing in the lower landing, giving orders to two of his 'forensics specialists.'

"Finally, I thought you weren't coming! Who's this?" He pointed at Harry, but then answered his own question.
"Oh, I remember, new assistant. You in medicine?" Before Harry could answer, Sherlock decided he would be the one making things up.

"Allen Dore," Sherlock introduced him with a drawl, wishing Harry had picked a better pseudonym, "Professor of Occult History at Cambridge." He distinctly saw Harry's lips twitch.

"Oh, right then." Lestrade looked confused, which was an expression he wore a lot, especially around Sherlock. His confusion cleared in a moment though, and he changed the subject.

"Alright Sherlock, I don't get the chance to say this often, so I'm really gonna enjoy this." Lestrade took a big breath, readying himself. "You were wrong." He said, with a note of something close to triumph.

"Hmm did you enjoy that?" Sherlock asked, humoring the DI.

"Yes." He replied, shamelessly.

"Good, because I'm not."

"You said he emigrated! This is the work of the Harlesden Maniac, for sure, and according to you, he left for greener pastures eight months ago."

"And he did." Sherlock wasn't 100% positive that this was the work of the infamous Harlesden Maniac, until Lestrade took him to the upper landing.

A girl, in her teens, was laying on the floor, with the familiar jagged cut reaching from her pelvis to her throat. She had dirty blonde hair, dyed from it's original brown, and wide blue eyes. Sherlock would guess that she was about fifteen, and lived somewhere in a 10 mile radius of here.

Yes, this was almost certainly the Harlesden maniac's work. Sherlock brain quickly recalled all the relevant data he gathered over the years.

Caucasian, about 5'4", in the habit of murdering young women, and dumping them in abandoned warehouses. His murders had been strung along several years now, and Sherlock truly admired him. He was cold, intelligent, and very hard to catch. But Sherlock had known, as well as he knew that June followed May, that another one was coming. He had a good feeling, almost intuitive, that it would be the last murder the man would commit. Sherlock had gotten so close to him, then. He didn't have a name or a face, but those were just details. As soon as he found out the man's identification, the rest of the evidence was there, waiting to put the lunatic behind bars.

Then, suddenly, his crime spree stopped. He was either dead, or had left the country, and Sherlock had good reason to believe it was the latter.

Upon entering the room, he noticed the wizard going completely pale, and scooting towards the edge of the room. Sherlock supposed it was natural reaction to the scene. He saw Harry's gaze flickering over the northeast corner of the room. Sherlock looked there himself, but saw that it was completely empty.

"So, if he emigrated, how come there's another victim?" Lestrade voice sounded behind him.

"Is it not possible that he could return to England?" Sherlock bent over the body, taking out his rectangular magnifying glass. He lifted her hand gingerly, and examined her fingers.

"But he did sell his home." Sherlock concluded. "He burnt off their fingerprints with chemicals, post mortem, when he was active before. This was done with...a hot plate, I think. No chance to
store dangerous corrosives in a hotel, I suppose."

"You think he did this in a hotel room?" Lestrade asked, with disbelief.

Sherlock stood up, in irritation.

"Of course not, don't be daft!" He looked over at Potter, who was still staring at the same empty corner. Something clicked in Sherlock's head. If he was staring there, maybe he was seeing something that Sherlock wasn't.

"Right, I'm going to need some time alone here, if you please." He said to Lestrade, motioning towards the door.

"Now, hold on, I can't leave you in here alone..." The DI stammered.

"No, no of course the rules. I won't tell if you don't." Sherlock tried bodily forcing him from the room, but only got as far as the door.

"Sherlock, I can't..."

"Yes you can, Greg. I just need a few minutes. Thank you."

Probably surprised at the correct use of his first name, Lestrade relented, said 'five minutes,' and closed the door behind him.

Potter was looking between him and the corner. After a few long seconds, he took out his wand, and flicked it an arch across the room. All the noises from the police downstairs went mute. Silencing charm, Sherlock thought.

"What is it, what do you see there?" Sherlock asked, excitement leaking through his voice. They needed to make this quick, whatever it was. Lestrade would be come busting back through, whether they were ready or not, once the five minutes were over.

Harry opened his mouth a few times, then closed it. He was looking at the corner with pity etched on his face. His voice sounded hoarse, and very subdued, when he finally spoke, addressing the empty corner.

"I'm so sorry."
"Yes, man is mortal, but that would be only half the trouble. The worst of it is that he's sometimes unexpectedly mortal—there's the trick!"

— Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*

The building Sherlock led him to was grim, and had a shabby look to it. It was brick, but Harry thought it might have been painted white at some point, long ago. Heavy clouds hung low over the roofs of Harlesden, and promised bad weather in the coming hours.

Harry wasn't sure what he was doing here. Besides being able to apparate the detective, he didn't know what other contributions he could make to solving a crime. He knew nothing about laws and procedures in the muggle world. He didn't even know much about wizarding laws, if he were honest. He ought to, considering he had spent so much time running from them.

He watched in a daze as muggle policemen swarmed the building, barely giving him a second glance. His paranoia spiked, but he reminded himself that none of them would recognize him. Nonetheless, he stuck close to Sherlock's side, feeling oddly safe with the detective beside him.

Unlike the rude woman outside, Harry decided he liked Lestrade. At least he was treating Sherlock like an actual person. The DI seemed harried, as though he was rather tired of his job. Harry thought he could understand this. Dealing with murderers wasn't easy business. Unless you were Sherlock, who apparently lived for it.

After Sherlock introduced him as a professor of 'Occult History,' Harry tried hard not to chuckle. It was, perhaps, the closest they could get to telling the DI about who he really was. The two of them carried on a conversation about the Harlesden Maniac, of whom Harry truthfully never heard.

Sherlock and Lestrade made their way to the upper landing, and Harry trailed close behind. He could see the open door, and he caught a glimpse of a body on the floor. His blood ran cold. Sherlock however didn't seem bothered in the least as he entered the room, and began to prod the body this way and that.

Harry knew that muggle investigation relied on physical evidence still present on the body, but it was still unnerving watching Sherlock. He edged towards the corner of the room, trying to take up as little space as possible. Meanwhile the detective examined the girl's fingernails with a little piece of glass that Harry was mildly confused about. He tried to avert his eyes from the corpse.

That's when he saw her. She was standing in a corner, looking dispassionately at her body laying on the floor. Her blonde hair was pulled behind her in a ponytail, and she had on worn jeans, and a crumpled shirt. Her outline was smudged, as though he was seeing her through a sheet of rain, or fog, and her form kept flickering at the corners.

She took a drag of her cigarette, and her eyes slid over Sherlock and Lestrade, as they kept working
and talking, oblivious of the girl's presence. She caught his glance, and tilted her head in question. No doubt, he was the only person to pass through here that could see her.

Harry had no idea what he could do. He couldn't very well just start talking to her. He didn't know how he could explain this to his detective, much less the DI who wasn't even in the know about magic. He wasn't even sure if he should talk to her. He had no idea what he could possibly say. How does one comfort a teenager, who'd been violently murdered?

He noticed then that Sherlock was giving Harry a curious look, and glancing in the corner, where the girl still stood, occasionally blowing out smoke puffs. Sherlock, the genius that he was, had somehow caught on to the situation. Though, Harry reasoned, probably not the entire scope of it.

Sherlock jumped up, and started herding Lestrade out of the room. He practically shoved him through the door, as the DI yelled something about 5 minutes. Sherlock looked hungrily at Harry, anticipation etched on his face. Harry decided that if they were going to do this, he might as well take a step to make the conversation private. He swept an arc over the room, to cast a silencing charm.

"What is it, what do you see there?" Sherlock asked, a rather hungry edge to his voice.

Harry opened and closed his mouth. The dead girl, whose naked body is laying split open in front of them? A spirit that hasn't yet passed, likely due to the violent and gruesome way she met her end? Which one was the right answer?

He turned back to the girl instead, who was looking at him as well, her eyebrows raised, no doubt expecting him to acknowledge her.

"I'm so sorry." He said. The girl nodded, and looked at her lifeless body.

"Yeah, me too." She said. "It's Liz, by the way." She scrunched up her nose, and took another drag of a cigarette. No matter how much she smoked it, it didn't seem to burn up. It was still exactly the same length, the fiery cherry caught in the middle.

"I'm so sorry Liz..." Harry said quietly.

"It's not your fault though is it? Are you two trying to catch whoever did this?" She asked, pointing towards her corpse. She seemed very detached, as though she was asking him if today was a Monday or a Tuesday. They usually were Harry thought. The dead hardly cared anymore about what happened here, where things were bloody and messy, and sometimes so awful. It was so unfair, Harry thought, that something like this happened to a 15 year old girl.

"Yes." Harry replied. He decided to let her lead the conversation. It was frightfully rude to pry, he reasoned, even if the person you were talking to was dead.

"It's a shame, you know. I didn't particularly want to die. I just started seeing this boy, his name is Mark. Goes to school with me..." She stopped, and took another drag. Harry had the stupid urge to tell her off for smoking, but then quickly realized that it wouldn't make much of a difference now.

"I suppose I won't see him again?" She asked, though not really looking at Harry.

"You will. Maybe in some time though." Harry answered.

"It's sort of strange, isn't it? Looking at my body like this? I feel like I ought to be self conscious... I'm not; It hardly seems to matter. Though I could have done without that one poking at my chest..." Liz gestured towards Sherlock. Harry stayed silent, and felt a small blush creep up his
"I thought it would be different than this," Liz spoke again, waving her hand around the room to imply her situation. "Like a tunnel with light at the end, or some nice place in the clouds?" She looked at Harry this time.

"It is very nice. You just have to let go first."

At this Sherlock perked up.

"Not before she tells us what happened! First: what's her name and address." Sherlock said, in his rather demanding manner.

Liz looked at Sherlock with amusement. Harry was just dumbfounded that the detective had figured out what was happening. Especially considering that Harry had not said anything to him. The detective seemed to be taking it rather well, too. It's not everyday you stand over the body of a murdered girl with her ghost hovering next to you.

"Well, if it helps to catch him, I suppose... My name is Eliza Monahan. I live with my mum on Greenhill Road." Liz said, looking between Sherlock and Harry. Harry recited the information back to the detective. Sherlock looked as though Christmas came early. Harry grimaced a bit. It wasn't on to be so happy in this kind of situation.

"What happened last night? What time did she get taken, what street was it on?" He asked, vaguely in the direction of where Liz was standing.

"It was around 11 at night. I was walking on Craven Park, on my way back home, and then someone grabbed me. Then I woke up...dead." She said. Harry found it odd to be playing translator between the detective and the victim. Nonetheless, he recited her words back to Sherlock.

"Where on Craven Park? Did you see where your body was taken? It was placed here later, she must have seen where the murder took place." Sherlock sounded annoyed.

"I don't know where exactly. Somewhere between St. Thomas and St Mary's street. And I woke up here standing over my body. I didn't see who grabbed me either." She said. As Harry finished saying all this to Sherlock, the detective put his hands over his mouth in a steeple, and with furrowed brows looked at the corpse.

Liz took this silence to look back at Harry.

"Is he your boyfriend, or something?" Harry could feel himself flush. Where would she get that notion from? He stammered something about 'Of course, not' but the girl didn't look convinced. Well, teenagers would be teenagers, Harry thought.

Sherlock suddenly gave a yelp, and jumped up. Apparently he had figured something out, because he looked ecstatic.

"Yes, thank you Elizabeth, you've been very helpful." He waved again towards the direction of the girl.

"It's Eliza," Liz scowled. "How are you hoping to solve my murder, if he can't even remember my name."

Harry shrugged. Leave it to Sherlock to irritate the dead.
"Don't mind him. I'll remember. Eliza Monahan. Boyfriend: Mark. Lives on Greenhill Road with her mum." Harry said. She looked slightly mollified at that.

"Is this when I should go on?" She asked.

"If you want. I'm sure there's people waiting for you on that side."

Liz nodded, and fell silent. Harry could see the smudged edges of her form become more and more transparent.

"Good-bye, Liz." She smiled a bit, and then was gone, her outline disappearing with the smoke from her cigarette.

...  
Sherlock could feel three successive, noiseless vibrations against the door. That would be Lestrade, and they were out of time. He gave a motion to Harry that seemed to suggest he should sweep the place clean of his charms. Potter seemed to understand, and swiped his wand across the room. Noises from downstairs poured in again, and Sherlock opened the door.

Lestrade was standing behind it, with a fresh coffee.

"Learn anything?" He asked.

"Loads." Sherlock replied. Obviously he couldn't tell the DI that about what just happened, unless he wanted to end up in a home. Even Sherlock was still trying to process it. He had guesses though, and his guesses were generally on the dot. He did need to give the police some information. Sherlock considered how to go about this.

He could tell Lestrade that he deduced all of the relevant data, but that somehow felt like cheating. Not that he opposed cheating. Cheating was a perfectly reasonable action, as far he was concerned; especially when it concerned school subjects like Literature and History, which were dull, tedious, and largely useless.

But this felt like taking credit for something that wasn't his work. Granted, it wasn't exactly Harry's work, but it was close enough. Sherlock strode over to Potter, and wrapped his arms around the wizard's shoulders. Potter scrunched in on himself, but Sherlock ignored it, as he gave Lestrade a wide grin.

"Mr. Dore here has been quite an asset in..." Sherlock paused, trying to find a way to put exactly what Harry had done, "in illuminating the evidence."

There, that was enough credit given to the wizard.

"Is that right? Well, good, good, what have you learned then?" asked Lestrade.

Sherlock let go of Harry, who slunk away from him, looking uncomfortable at the mentions of his contribution. Sherlock let him go, as he informed Lestrade of the girl's identity, and all the relevant data he had gathered. While he spoke to Lestrade, Harry exited the room. Sherlock assumed he didn't really want to stare at the body any longer than he had to.

"-and be prepared to respond, when I call or text. I expect to bump into him sometime today. It would be beneficial to both of us, if you were nearby to make the arrest." Sherlock finished.

"The Harlesden killer? You expect to bump into him?" Lestrade had that irritating quality of
repetition. Sherlock scowled.

"Yes. Remain in the area, if you will."

Without hearing the DI's response, Sherlock made his way downstairs to join Harry, who he assumed was waiting for him outside. The wizard looked slightly troubled when he left, which he supposed was natural.

Exiting the building Sherlock saw something that made his stomach jump up, and attempt an escape through his mouth.

A junior police officer, one whose name Sherlock had no record of, was cornering Harry. She was the blonde one, ambitious and pretty, the one that irritated Donovan almost as much as Sherlock himself. She had her hand splayed on Potter's chest, and standing very close to him.

Sherlock thought at first that she might be threatening him, but it turned out to be just overly aggressive flirting. She smiled, and giggled, but Potter simply looked very uncomfortable.

Something about that struck Sherlock, but he didn't know, or even care what it was. He strode over to them, grabbed Potter by the upper arm, and made off toward Craven Park.

... 

It wasn't a very long walk to the stretch of street where Eliza was taken. Sherlock started his search, spanning the length of the block, carefully observing everything around him. It would be only a matter of time before he found something just a little out of place.

He decided that meanwhile, he would question Potter about what had just transpired at the crime scene.

"So, you can speak with the dead?" Sherlock looked over at Harry. Even under the magical disguise, Sherlock could see the wizard's face tighten, and his mouth turned downwards, as he gave a tight nod.

"And is that common?" Sherlock asked, pausing at a records shop, examining the door handle, and then abandoning it, as it was not at all what he was looking for. They kept walking.

"All wizards can see and interact with ghosts." Harry answered. Sherlock turned to look at him. It wasn't a lie, and he wasn't telling the truth. A half truth, more like.

"So Eliza was a ghost?"

"Not exactly. She was a spirit, just lingering before moving on. A ghost sticks around longer. Possibly forever, I've never really asked one." Harry answered, slowly and deliberately.

"Ah, and can all wizards speak with spirits? Ones that are on the verge of moving on?" Sherlock asked, and saw that Harry's face tightened further, his features set into a grim frown.

Harry shook his hand, and gave a short 'no.'

Well, of course not. If every wizard could see and talk to a murder victim, there would never be any murders. Or at least, unsolved ones.

"Are there any other wizards that can?" Sherlock asked, a small smile playing on his lips. Harry wasn't particularly talented at hiding things from him.
The wizard gave a deep sigh.

"No, Sherlock, to my knowledge there are none." He said, his tone very sad. Sherlock couldn't understand why the wizard was bothered by this. Having talents others didn't wasn't a thing to frown about. He was about to tell Harry this, when he realized he might have found what he was looking for.

The detective had a rough idea of how the killer operated before, but with the help Eliza was able to provide, he now had a much clearer picture. He stood at the entrance of a small alley, next to a rundown office building. He could see that the second floor had been recently vacated, and was even more recently put up for sale, which was what he was looking for. This must be it.

There was a back door, from the alley. Sherlock dashed towards it, vaguely aware of the wizard ghosting his steps. The door was locked, but had been recently scratched, probably from a key inserted in a distracted, or hurried manner. He knelt down, examining the steps, and the trodden weeds that grew near the door step. There were a couple of drops of something reddish-brown on the concrete steps. A predatory smile played on his features. He hardly needed his magnifying glass to identify it.

He reached for his lock pick, when he had the sudden realization that magic could be used for more than speaking to the dead, and instant transport, which was tremendously useful in its own capacity.

"Can you unlock the door?" He asked, not looking at the wizard. Harry must have complied, because there was a click, and the door swung open. Magic was great. That's five minutes that the detective didn't have to waste trying to pick a lock, that would no doubt be rusty and difficult.

Sherlock slipped through the doorway. It led to a set of narrow stairs, that went straight to the second floor.

"Sherlock, what are we doing?" The wizard had also entered, and was looking about with apprehension. He didn't seem too comfortable with breaking into a private property.

"I'll explain later. Come." Sherlock quickly locked the door again, and dashed up the stairs, with Harry following. The second floor only held an office space, which was for sale, and currently vacated.

By the meager light coming through the dusty, plastic blinds Sherlock could see that the office was once an old tour agency. There was a large poster that advertised guided tours of Barcelona, Madrid, and Majorca, on the opposite wall. Sherlock took a quick survey. Filing cabinets in place, but computers and other electronics cleared out. A few desks had been recently moved to make a clear space on the floor. The clearing had been recently swept and mopped, while the rest of the office had a fine layer of dust. Yes, he thought, this was certainly the place. It was almost too easy now.

He could do a simple search on Google, to find the killer. Whoever was selling the office, had killed Eliza Monohan, in this very room. Or, he thought, it might be even easier if he found his identification here, maybe on one of the desks, or in a cabinet. You never know what evidence is hiding, until you examine everything.

He began dashing about, lifting papers, and going through drawers. Harry, who Sherlock was barely aware of, stood close to the door, like a sentry.

He was ruffling through old receipts and travel deals, when he heard it. Sherlock froze. His sharp
ears had heard the unmistakable sound of a click, then the door being opened. Silently, he congratulated himself on locking the door again, as the person now coming would have no idea they were here. And he knew exactly who was coming.

He grabbed Harry, and breathed into his ear, as quietly as he could manage.

"We need to hide. Now." Harry's eyes widened, and, standing so close to him, he could feel the wizard's heart rate spike. Sherlock had no time for panic just now. Still having a hold of his upper arm, he took them to the corner of the room that had seemed the most concealing. There was one filing cabinet there, and he thought maybe they could not be seen behind it. He tried to pull Harry along, but was met with resistance.

Harry was fumbling with something in his coat, and seemed uninterested in what Sherlock was doing, crouched behind the filing cabinet. He produced an odd, silver cloth, certainly one that Sherlock had never seen (and he was an expert on cloth, fibers, and their origin).

Quickly, Harry stepped over to Sherlock and put his arms above both of their heads, draping the strange cloth around them. With his arms around Sherlock's shoulders, the wizard crouched a bit, effectively taking Sherlock with him. Sherlock was against a wall, and Harry was practically on top of him, his hot breath falling on Sherlock's cheek.

The detective knew he ought to be listening for the footfalls falling on the stairs, but time suddenly slowed down. Sherlock knew he had a plan, surely he had a plan, but his thoughts were drifting away from him like wisps of smoke, and dissolving. It seemed like a lifetime between each thump of his heart, and the now perceptible rhythm coming from the wizard's chest. He was suddenly aware of every inch that was pressed against Harry, and felt the warmth of the man's body temperature against his own limbs. His nervous system buzzed with an odd anticipation.

There was more hot breath falling on his skin, and now a low noise, right next to his ear. It registered, a split second later, that Harry was saying something to him.

"Invisibility cloak." Oh, Sherlock thought with detachment, that would explain a lot. They were crouched down, so that the cloak would cover both the tall men effectively. The wizard was hiding them, like Sherlock told him to do. That was marvelous. He was certainly a competent assistant, thought Sherlock. His lips twitched into a crooked grin, as he thought how lucky he was that his new friend could do magic.

The wizard's face was slightly turned away, but Sherlock's eyes found the stretch of skin that spanned from Harry's jaw to his shirt collar. Harry was under his magical disguise, and it was odd knowing it was his wizard there, but having a mass of auburn hair in his line of sight. Sherlock, with his sharp eye, could still see the physiognomy of the wizard. He could pick out the angles of the facial features underneath the magic. He also spotted a small, dark birth mark, right under Harry's jaw, that was all Harry's, and not part of the magical illusion.

He felt the now familiar tug of his strange madness. He had wanted to reach out for the wizard's thyroid cartilage last time. This time, the small joint of neck and jawline was calling for Sherlock, and he felt a pull on his hands. He wanted to place them, just there in that crook, and then maybe run them back into the hair, that was the wrong color. Or perhaps he ought to investigate the coiled muscles in Harry's arm, that one that was still resting on Sherlock shoulder.

A part of Sherlock's mind screamed that this was neither the time, nor the place, to indulge in his new-found insanity. Sherlock happily ignored that voice, as the rest of his mind was happily clouded in a childish curiosity of what would happen if he gave in.
Harry shifted, a millimeter, but Sherlock felt the wizard's knee bump into his own leg, and a strange tingling rushed up his thigh, and settled in his stomach. It hummed there, and seemed to take control of Sherlock's muscles. His body twisted, and shifted a bit, to mirror Harry's, closer to the feeling of warmth he felt coming from the wizard. More of his nervous system became aware of the body leaning against him, and Sherlock felt a strange swoop somewhere in his mid drift. Their chests were touching, and a length of Sherlock left leg was against Harry's.

Looking down, he found that his own hand was resting only inches from where Harry's thigh met his hips, and Sherlock's insanity instantly focused on that, as its object of fascination. His hand twitched, eager to place itself on the junction of bone and muscle. It was a very short distance from his hand to Harry's hip, after all.

The voice in the back of Sherlock head was now screaming obscenities, as his hand raised itself. It hovered a millimeter above Harry's hip, feeling the slight change in temperature, as he got closer to his body. Sherlock gingerly placed it, right on the hip bone, feeling the bone through the fabric. He traced the bone upwards, until it disappeared under muscle of the stomach, which were softer, yet still tense. How fascinating. Sherlock certainly knew the anatomy of human body well enough, but it was worth specifically documenting the wizard's form separately. Indeed, he really did need to gather data on the rest of Harry's anatomy, and preferably without the magical disguise.

The door to the office swung open, and Sherlock was thrown back into the present. His insanity fled as suddenly as it had come. He immediately withdrew the offending hand, as his mind cleared.

Oh, right.

Harlesden.

Maniac.

Murdered girl.

Her ghost and Harry talking to it.

Sherlock's hand on Harry's hip.

What?

There was no time to question it, as a man in his late forties entered the office. He was very plain looking, with light brown hair, and a smart suit. Standing only a foot away, he stared directly at where Sherlock and Harry were hidden, and then kept looking around. Sherlock felt a rush of gratitude for the wizard's quick thinking, and the invisibility cloak. He had some time to reformulate his plan.

He examined the man, from his vantage point. Briefcase, likely holding the murder weapon. A square outline in his pocket, that held his passport and travel tickets. A suit he had no time to have dry cleaned. Then... a black hair, long, near the buttons of his jacket. Sherlock sucked in a breath. That meant there was another victim. Possibly still alive.

Sherlock had two choices: either he could attempt to follow the Harlesden killer, and he would undoubtedly lead him straight there, or he could attempt to extract the information of the victim's whereabouts through force. Following would be easier, and much less messy.

The killer made a round around the room, as Sherlock watched from under the cloak. He looked very concerned, as he placed a hand on a desk drawer, that Sherlock had opened and rifled through. Sherlock could see the realisation dawn on the man's face, as he understood that someone had been
here. He was caught and he knew it. Panic settled into the killer's eyes.

That's plan A out the window. No chance to follow him if he decides to run. Extraction through force it was then, Sherlock decided.

Quieter than a shadow, Sherlock ducked under Harry, and sneaked from under the cloak. A few long, noiseless strides, and he was right behind the killer. Sherlock jumped on the shorter man, grabbing his arms from behind, attempting to put him in a choke hold. The man yelled out, and with the desperation of a cornered animal, tried to fight off the detective. His briefcase clattered to the floor, and Sherlock kicked it away, and under a desk. Sherlock nearly succeeded in subduing him, until one of the man's arms got loose, and dove straight into his jacket. Sherlock saw the glint of a revolver.

Before the killer had a chance to raise the weapon, it flew from his hands with unnatural force. The man cried out in surprise, as heavy ropes wound around his torso, pinning his arms more effectively than Sherlock's hold. Sherlock turned around, to find Harry standing there with his wand out, and pointed.

"You could warn me next time." Harry said, still pointing his wand at the bound man.

"I had faith in your ability to follow my lead." Privately Sherlock thought that binding him with ropes right away would have taken some of the fun out of it.

The killer was looking between Harry and Sherlock with malice etched on his face. He had an oddly distorted face, which clashed with his casual and neat appearance.

"You can't do this. I have rights! You can't just attack me like this!" Sherlock ignored him.

"He has another victim. She might still be alive. We need to find out where she is." Sherlock's first thought was to extract the necessarily information through force, but then he remembered that his wizard could read minds. That would involve less of a legal hassle.

"Since I doubt that he'd simply tell us, perhaps his mind could show us?" Sherlock tried to imply what he wanted from the wizard. Harry gave him a nod, then stepped in front of the killer, making eye contact.

"Legilimens." The killer's face slackened, and his eyes became blank. Harry's on the other hand, looked intense, as he concentrated. Sherlock took advantage of the momentary pause to fish out documents from the man's pocket. The magical ropes were tight, but after digging around a bit he came up with a passport and a plane ticket to Berlin. Flicking through the passport, he found the man's name was Walden Baskey.

Sherlock looked up when he heard Harry stumble and give a yelp. He was panting, and looking away. His auburn hair was growing darker, and the beard had disappeared from his face. His magical disguise must have malfunctioned. Sherlock wandered what brought that on.

Baskey was looking between Harry and Sherlock with panic.

"What was that? He's all different now, he looked different just a moment ago! Who are you people?" Sherlock ignored Walden Baskey, as all of his focus was on his wizard. His breath was ragged, and when he looked up, Harry's face was filled with so much revulsion that Sherlock was rather taken aback.

"How could you? Your own family, how could you do that?" Harry's voice was strained with pain, as though it was his own family that Baskey had threatened. Sherlock fought very hard not to
scoff. His wizard could be so overly empathic sometimes.

"Care to enlighten me?" He asked, raising an eyebrow at Harry.

"It's his daughter. The things he's planning... he wants do it to her, his own daughter!" Harry was clearly upset, but just now, Sherlock had no time for it.

"And is this daughter still alive?" He asked, now looking at Baskey. Walden's angry twitch told him, that indeed, she was. They'd interrupted him here before he finished his business.

"We need to locate her. Any chance you saw her whereabouts?" This time Sherlock addressed Harry, who shook his head rather violently.

"You'll need to investigate again, in that case." Sherlock commanded, pointing his finger at Walden's head, clearly ordering Harry to get back to it. The wizard looked up with a pleading look, obviously not wanting to look into the mind of the killer again. Sherlock wondered what that was like, to rifle through the memories of someone who made sport of young girls.

The wizard gathered a long, shaky breath, as though he were about to plunge in cold water. He repeated the spell, but this time, Sherlock only had to wait a few seconds before Potter delivered the information.

"A room, very plain, hotel by the look of it. Number 17, somewhere in London, street named...Bridgewater..." Harry struggled out.

"That's all I need." Sherlock snapped up. Harry, with a look of relief, ended the spell. Walden Baskey slumped a bit, an empty look in his eyes.

"Can you cast a memory charm on him? And also put on your disguise again?" Sherlock asked. Harry looked surprised as he patted his face, and noticed the absence of beard. Nonetheless, he did as Sherlock requested. Walden Baskey slumped a bit, an empty look in his eyes.

Sherlock took out his phone, and sent two texts, both to Lestrade. One informed him of the hotel, which he recognized from his detailed map of London. The other demanded that the DI make his way here immediately, to make the arrest. He informed Harry that the police would be arriving soon, and the wizard answered with only a small nod.

Walden Baskey had passed out, perhaps as a result of the spells. This left Harry and Sherlock practically alone in the room. He heard a few rumbles of far off thunder, and he noted absently that it would be raining soon. Sherlock strolled to an empty desk, and hopped up on it, trying to look as casual as possible.

Sherlock's earlier experience under the wizard's invisibility cloak came rushing, and clamoring to the forefront of his mind, and the inside of his head was whirling around. Of course, none of this was visible on the surface.

He could still feel heat on his hand, the one that had been placed over the wizard's hip bone. How strange. Mostly, how dreadfully embarrassing. He knew that at some point the wizard would demand an explanation for his behavior. Well, Sherlock thought, Harry was out of luck. Sherlock had no idea why he had done it. He recalled thinking something about the dire need to study human anatomy, as he followed Harry's hip bone with his fingers. This was a preposterous notion, however. Sherlock knew human anatomy as well as he knew tobacco ash, and as intimately as he knew the map of London. Harry didn't sport any obvious mutations either, so the need to study his...
anatomy specifically was completely unjustified. There was nothing special about the wizard's body, Sherlock told himself.

He chanced a glance at the wizard. He was leaning against the wall, his long legs crossed, and resolutely not looking at Sherlock. This caused a mysterious flare of anger. Wasn't Harry even curious as to what Sherlock had done, then? Sherlock felt his temper roil. He expected the wizard to at least ask what Sherlock had meant by groping him, but it looked like the wizard was much more interested in the old advertisement posters hung about, than the killer or Sherlock.

"You need to be more careful, if your disguise can falter this easily." Sherlock did not mean to say it with such venom. Harry looked surprised, his eyes widening when they found Sherlock's. Then, he looked down, blushed a bit and stammered out an apology. God damn him. Now Sherlock felt guilty, which was just as unreasonable as being angry. Where had all these sudden frustration come from?

Sherlock crossed his arms, and looked away. He was most certainly not going to apologise. He would just sit here, in silence, until Lestrade finally came. He wished the DI would hurry. He could hear rain begin to splatter outside. At least the wizard could take them back to Baker Street quickly, and neither of them would have to get wet.

Sherlock felt himself almost say something, either an apology or further criticism of the wizard. He caught himself every time though, and not a sound escaped his lips. There was tension in the room, but Sherlock was well adept at dealing with tension. Practically everyone felt awkward around him, 24/7.

Harry also seemed happy enough to stand quietly, though Sherlock did spot him open his mouth a few times, and then hurriedly close it. On the one hand, Sherlock had never wanted more to know what was going through another mind. On the other hand, he really didn't want to acknowledge the wizard's questions, which of course, had no answers.

It felt like blessed relief, when he heard the sirens. Lestrade busted through the door, soaking wet from what was now a downpour, and followed by about fifteen other armed policemen. Sherlock merely gestured to the knocked out Walden Baskey. Lestrade quickly informed him that Laura Baskey, the intended victim, was found drugged to her eye balls in a hotel room, but was now on her way to a hospital.

When they'd taken Walden away in handcuffs, Sherlock jumped into his prepared explanation for Lestrade, making sure Harry was in earshot. The wizard, he noticed, hadn't moved from his place by the wall.

"Unlike other killers, who take great pains to smuggle their victim as far away as possible from the place of abduction, Baskey operated in an entirely unique manner. He rather relied on speed. His victims, as we've noticed before, were completely random, and had no connection to him. This was, in part, why he was particularly difficult to catch him.

"Baskey was in the business of purchasing real estate, cleaning it up, then reselling it at a slightly higher value. This office had recently been purchased by him, and tomorrow would be remodeled, then, put again on the market. It was this business that enabled him to commit his crimes with such efficiency. Whenever he had a space he was reselling, he would utilize it for murder. It was simple enough, he would hang about in the vicinity and grab anyone that happened upon him. The murder would be committed in less than an hour, as all he had to do was drag each victim to the adjacent building of which he was a temporary owner.

"Once I figured out where the relative area of the crime took place, I simply had to find a flat, or an
office, or any real estate for sale. It was rather clever, too, that all the evidence left at the scene of
the crime was always destroyed when the building was remodeled..." As Sherlock spoke, he
occasionally glanced Harry's way. The wizard, who looked awkward and rather sad before, now
looked mesmerized. Sherlock smiled inwardly, until Lestrade interrupted him.

"But how did you know it was in this area, where he killed the girl?" Lestrade asked, with
furrowed brows. Sherlock couldn't exactly tell him.

"Deductions I made when examining the victim. Details such fine and capable detectives as
yourselves should have seen." He drawled. Lestrade looked like he was going to question further,
and Sherlock needed to draw attention somewhere else.

"You'll find the murder weapon, or at least one of them, in the briefcase here." He pointed under
the desk, where Baskey's tan, leather case had been cast during their struggle. This sufficiently
distracted Lestrade.

Sherlock decided he was done here now, and he motioned for the wizard to follow him, as they
exited the little office, and onto the street. Harry did follow, and soon as they were far enough
away, Sherlock asked to be apparated back to Baker Street.

"Won't Lestrade have more questions?" Harry asked, perplexed. They were outside, and both were
going wet from the rain. Sherlock was almost going to complain, but found he rather liked the
way the rain was making Potter look. The auburn hair looked darker, and more like his natural
tone. Sherlock could see much clearer the face of the wizard underneath the disguise.

"Oh, no doubt. However, I don't make it a habit to explain him everything. He does occasionally
need to do actual police work; it's good for him."

Harry chuckled, grabbed Sherlock's arm, and took them back to their flat.

...
Gift Horse

...“And you're weak and you're harmless
and you're sleeping in your harness
and the wind going wild
in the trees,
and it ain't exactly prison
but you'll never be forgiven
for whatever you've done
with the keys.”
-Leonard Cohen

...Gift Horse

...The ice clinked together, as Mycroft took another drink. Looking at the glass of whiskey, he decided that he might soon develop a problem with his, let's call it, de-stressor. Shrugging, he downed the rest of the drink, and let out a long sigh.

He was tired. It was another long day, as they all seemed to be, recently. All the bureaucrats were insufferable, the politicians were more corrupt than before, and his brother was in trouble again. Or rather, still. His brother was still in trouble.

Maybe not immediate trouble, Mycroft consoled himself.

A faint bluish-white glow danced around his office walls. There was a stone dish on his desk, which was casting the glow. He had to go through bureaucratic hell to get his hands on this little dish. Then the memory, which had cost him a few too many bribes and manipulations than he was comfortable with. Of course the wizards didn't want to lend him this particular piece of government property. What would he, a muggle, want with it after all? And, securing this specific memory was maybe just a little suspicious. Thankfully, Mycroft thought, wizarding England was nearing it's new election term. He hoped, with all the excitement of new candidates and their campaigns, his little foray into their world would go completely unnoticed, in the long run. He hoped.

Now, what was he going to do about Sherlock?

...Harry chuckled, grabbed Sherlock's arm, and took them back to their flat.
The second that Sherlock's feet touched the ground, and his lungs finished decompressing themselves after apparation, he let out a triumphant shout that almost surprised him. He found that his sour mood had all but dissipated. He felt a familiar rush in his veins, muscles, and most importantly, his brain. Another case solved, another riddle neatly fitted with an answer.

The elation would only last so long, before boredom returned. But at least now he had a vanguard: even with the case over, there were still mysteries waiting to unfold in the magical world.

Sherlock twirled around to face the wizard, who had shifted back into his own looks, the auburn hair replaced with black, and the goatee disappearing completely. Harry had proved to be incredibly useful. Sherlock liked having an assistant primarily for the ability to bounce ideas and theories off another human being. Thereby, through reflection, his deduction would only become more focused and accurate. Of course, John, being a doctor, would sometimes save the day. Sherlock had to admit, that as much as he felt regard for John, he was nowhere as useful as a wizard. Especially one that was exceedingly qualified for Sherlock's specific line of work.

"It's highly advantageous that you have spent the last decade on the run from authorities." Sherlock announced. Harry lifted an amused eyebrow.

"The skills you would have gained from this, versus say a career in magical accounting, will be quite useful to me." Sherlock clarified.

"Well, I'm glad to know my long and lonely years of exile had a purpose." Harry chuckled.

Sherlock wondered if that was a social cue that he had gone too far, but decided to ignore it, since the wizard didn't look exceptionally bothered.

"You will assist me on future cases." It wasn't worded like a question, but Sherlock thought it left the vague notion of choice hanging in the air.

"As long as I'm advantageous." Harry echoed back, which was as good as a yes. "Want dinner? I'll cook."

Sherlock jerked his head with non-commitment, and went about his way through the flat. He was bouncing between his laptop, and paper files, which held the details of Baskey's other victims. He would have to remember to keep tabs on Laura Baskey. She might have a few more details on her father, and his 'hobby.'

A merry sizzle started in the kitchen. Sherlock barely registered the sounds of cupboards opening, and pans being shuffled about.

They were eating together, as had become the norm over the past month. Sherlock didn't particularly care for the habit, but he supposed he did just solve a major case. He could afford to slow down for an intake of nutrition.

The wizard across from him was being quiet, and looking down at his plate. Sherlock thought it looked like he was contemplating something. With Harry not meeting his eyes, Sherlock found that he was freely staring at the wizard. He watched the wizard's eyes take on a far away look, as the muscles in his jaw worked. Sherlock felt again the now familiar, yet still unsettling hike in his abdomen.

He dropped his eyes, too. Whatever strange madness was afflicting him, it was obviously not done yet. Worse still, the episodes seemed to be increasing in frequency.
Sherlock's mind jumped to what had happened under that cloak, today. The cloak, which he made a note to interrogate Potter about later. Really, the wizard kept the fact that he owned a cloak of invisibility pretty quiet.

Sherlock was, to put it mildly, confused, about what had happened. In as much detail as possible, Sherlock replayed the event. Perhaps there was a clue as to what was behind Sherlock's ridiculous impulses. He remembered commanding Harry to hide, and then the wizard took out his cloak, and draped it over the both of them. That is, in essence, all that happened. So why had Sherlock's brain violently and spectacularly gone off the rails, from such a simple event?

He tried to recall his precise thoughts in that half-minute (27 seconds, give or take), when he was trapped under Harry's body. Although his mind seemed clouded, and distracted at the time, now everything came back in clear detail. His nervous system had an exact replica of where the wizard's body had leaned against his. The nerves where they touched lit up like beacons, like city lights that drew a map of the street and intersections, as you flew by above.

He remembered first fixating in the wizard's neck, then on his arm, and finally on his hipbone. Where those three areas somehow connected? What was the purpose behind his touch? What was Sherlock trying to do, acting on that insane impulse? Being unable to resist impulses wasn't exactly new for Sherlock. But most of the time, he could at least guess where the impulses came from. No answers were forthcoming, as his brain kept spinning in circles.

Sherlock took a deep breath. Even as he played the scene through his mind, he felt his blood shift, and his heart pounded in an elevated rhythm. This made chewing more difficult than necessary.

Sherlock growled deep in his throat, though he hoped it sounded like he was merely clearing it. He took a drink of water, and then another bite of his dinner. Whatever this madness was, it was affecting him physically, and that was bad news. Frustrated with the lack of insight into his own psyche, Sherlock decided to discard the matter for now. The only course of action he could see is to repress the impulses, until hopefully, the problem disappeared.

He counted each time he inhaled and exhaled, with measured intakes of air. After a few long minutes, he felt his pulse settle back to normal. He looked up at the wizard, who had thankfully, not noticed anything.

"So why haven't started a family?" Harry suddenly broke the silence.

Sherlock jumped a bit at the unexpected question. His eyes snapped up to meet Potter's.

"I've told you, my work prevents it." He might have been unnecessarily short, but really what a nonsensical query. Harry had met Sherlock, he ought to know why.

"Besides the fact that I barely tolerate human interaction, my profession constantly puts me, and those around me in harm's way. Why John, who was only my flatmate, got targeted. Imagine what would happen if I decided to...reproduce."

Sherlock put as much condescending stink as he could on the last word, letting Potter know just what his opinion was on children, and having them.

Harry nodded thoughtfully, but didn't say anything. Sherlock felt his mouth go dry, and an uncomfortable heat settle on his face.

"You must think me inhuman." Sherlock added. Everyone did, for the most part. Harry was looking at a spot above Sherlock's shoulder.
"No, I think you're very selfless." He said slowly. Sherlock barely restrained himself from snorting, and made a little noise that sounded like he was choking.

"It's difficult, not to get attached. Even when you know you shouldn't." Harry elaborated, as though that clarified the matter.

"I don't find it difficult." Sherlock stated flatly.

"Right." Potter wasn't denying it, but surely there was something a little off about his answer.

Later lying in bed, Sherlock found himself unable to sleep. Not an unusual state of events, but still an undesirable one.

With the Harelsden maniac caught, he should be thinking about the next case, but he still swiveled back to Potter. It was annoying. He had already made the decision to stop thinking about what he had done under that cloak, but a part of his mind refused to cooperate. It went back, again and again, replaying the scene in high definition detail. Though the precision and clarity remained, sometimes his brain would extrapolate, and create scenes which didn't actually happen. Like, Sherlock putting his hand on the wizard's shoulder instead, or on his chest.

Sherlock was forced to open his eyes in order to dispel the image, and stared at his ceiling.

There were other events from the day, beside that damned cloak, that Sherlock needed to dig through, vivisect and understand.

Refocusing his mind to the best of his ability, (which was slightly more difficult than usual, with his nervous system still half lit up from the physical memories he had vowed to suppress), Sherlock shifted his awareness to the other mental notes he had left himself throughout the day.

What else had been important?

Sally Donovan. Well, she wasn't important, obviously. What she had said had been, though. It was some variation of him being unusual for his fascination with crime, death, and murder. Really, all of her insults melded together, as they were usually the same phrases, recombined in slightly different ways. So really, what she said wasn't important, but...

Harry's reaction was. He had grabbed Sherlock, and stopped him.

'Why do you let that woman talk to you like that?' He had said. There was an odd lilt to his voice. His tone was a note higher, and abrasive. It was, what one could consider, angry. But Sherlock knew that it was put on, like a play for an audience, the pitch imperfect, and contrived. His wizard, for some reason unknown to Sherlock, acted out an emotion he didn't feel.

Sherlock considered what intention the wizard had in doing this. Was he simply displaying his opinion on the way the Scotland Yard lot treated their consulting detective, and the play acting meant to reinforce the point? John had been outraged on his behalf a number of times.

Sherlock decided to think of another instance where Potter displayed anger or aggression. Maybe the contrast of real anger would provide an answer. Not everyone gets frustrated over the same things, after all. If he could analyze Harry's pattern of aggression, he could figure out this little mystery.

Sherlock mind began playing through every encounter he's had with the wizard since they met in
May, looking for any instance of anger. It was only a month of memories, so he reasoned that it shouldn't take very long. Especially if he were looking for something specific.

Sherlock's brows furrowed. He saw Harry's face, changing rapidly in his mind's eye, going through all the memories he had shared with the man, fastwording through a month of his life. It only took a few minutes to sift through them all. His could almost hear the mechanical click, as his mind paused at a moment a fan hour ago, when he last saw Potter, concluding his mental perusal. Well, that can't be right.

Sherlock fingers came up to massage his temples. He went back to the beginning, this time examining in more detail, each moment he had observed Harry, all in chronological order. The search criteria was still there, but after scanning all the relevant data, his brain still drew a blank.

His body snapped up, and began to pace across his little room, with the lights still out.

He forced his mind to dig into every moment that it had recorded of the wizard, analyze every second. Sherlock's eyes were scrunched together, as his legs automatically took him across the length of his room, and back again. His head jerked slightly to the left and right as he walked. But again, his mind ground to a halt, when it reached the last memory it had of Potter. Nothing.

Not a single instance of genuine anger. Not even a flash of violence and frustration.

The closest instance had been panic, wild fear that he had been caught, when Sherlock deduced that he had already been to prison. Harry had then thought that there were aurors coming, perhaps already hiding in wait. But no, even then, he was at most short, panicked, but certainly not aggressive, which would be reasonable in the situation. He had read Sherlock's mind then, instead of hexing him to bits (which, after multiple perusals through *Confronting the Faceless*, a beat up old textbook from Potter's knapsack, Sherlock decided was a very good thing to avoid).

Even when Sherlock first met Potter, jumping out with a gun and yelling, Potter was...oddly calm. Unnaturally peaceful.

Sherlock stood still now, as the conclusion dawned on him. He stared at the door, imagining the wizard somewhere beyond it. There were, in total, only two possible explanations.

The first was that in almost a month of living at Baker Street, Sherlock had not managed to seriously irritate the wizard, even once (Sherlock wasn't sure if that felt like a slight, or an accomplishment on his end). The second was that Harry Potter was incapable of anger.

Truthfully, they were both equally unlikely. Almost as unlikely as the fact that Sherlock had not noticed this hole in the wizard's psyche. Although, he could be given some leeway, since he had seen some discrepancies. He had noticed that the wizard seemed hollow, subdued, but to be missing so much?

Sherlock almost immediately discarded explanation number one. Some people thought Sherlock so narcissistic that he simply didn't see how his behavior affected (read: infuriated) bystanders. But Sherlock did know, and simply chose not to care. It was much easier that way; it had always been. The only drawback was that sometimes, even those that had stuck by him (John, Mrs. Hudson, Molly Hooper, Lestrade) entertained vague notions of murdering the only consulting detective in the world. Presumably, they stopped themselves on some moral ground of all those criminals Sherlock wouldn't catch, and the havoc they would wreak.

It seemed like a glaring impossibility that he wouldn't have made the wizard angry, irritated, frustrated, annoyed even once, during his stay at Baker Street. A snide voice in the back of
Sherlock's head suggested that it was preposterous he was even concerned with Potter's emotion, or lack thereof, but that was quickly hushed. Sherlock needed to know who he was dealing with.

Explanation number two didn't seem any more likely. Sherlock quickly flipped through the abridged DSM-V stacked in an easily accessible part of his mind palace. There was no neat explanation for this, but he already knew that. With the exception of catatonia (obviously not the case here), violence and anger tended to express themselves in every human being. If anything it's what that tied everyone together.

Aggression was a very mammal thing, really.

Sherlock's mind lightly grazed over anti-social personality disorder as a possible explanation, but that was not possible either. If anything, the wizard was overly empathetic, making his guilt almost too easy to manipulate.

He paced back and forth across his small room, the two theories rolling in his head. Sherlock ought to know about people with missing emotions, considering that he was missing whole sets.

But anger? That was an odd thing to miss. Sherlock could certainly get angry: at boredom, at his brother, at the newscaster for being wrong...There were so many things in life to be irritated at. Now, he found himself irritated again.

Here he was, a master of his own emotions, more so than any other human he has ever met, and HE was the one that was slowly going insane for a still unknown reason. Really, Potter was the one that should be madly pacing about like a caged, unfixed cat. Yet, because of some strange quirk in the wizard's psyche, Harry remained unperturbed, calm, and friendly, even when Sherlock dropped a thumb (severed, of course; not his own thumb) in the wizard's oatmeal a few days ago (by accident, to be sure).

Yes, Sherlock thought, this matter definitely requires investigation. One way or another, he would get to the bottom of what was wrong with Potter. Sherlock quickly and conclusively decided to focus on this, instead of what was possibly wrong with him. A voice that sounded incredibly like John gave a soft, disapproving hum, but Sherlock though if he were to listen to the voices in his head, they could at least be polite enough to use words. Slowing down his pace, Sherlock thought of the next step.

An idea began to form in his head.

He had two theories. If he could disprove one, the remaining one would have to be the truth. He hadn't made the wizard angry yet, but well, he hadn't really been trying.

Sherlock didn't want to assume, but he had a feeling that if he were to really apply himself to the matter, the wizard's saintly patience would run thin rather quickly.

Now, there were a number of ways he could approach this experiment, many of which he was intimately familiar with. Sherlock was in the business of pissing people off since the tender ages of early childhood, when Mycroft had been his favorite subject. Hopefully, his expertise would pan out well in this new setting.

Sherlock recalled his experiments with flies, and musical stimuli. The experiment was ruined ("I'm drawing the line at bugs, Sherlock" John had said), but not before he had gathered enough data about certain rhythms, pitches, and their effect on aggression.

Resolving to begin his research the next day, Sherlock lay back down, and fell asleep.
He was in the labyrinth again. There was stone, all around, nothing but twisting passages made of cold blocks. Except, he didn't feel lonely this time. Sherlock was sitting on the floor, and Harry was sitting across from him. Harry was propped up against a wall, and there was a large dark stain spreading on his abdomen. Sherlock remembered that he had impaled him, last time he had visited the labyrinth. He was very glad, then, that Harry seemed to be doing okay, for some miraculous reason.

They had a ball of string, between them. Sherlock rolled it to Harry, and the wizard rolled it back.

'So how long are you going to take to figure this out?' Asked the wizard. He sounded a bit bored, which annoyed Sherlock. He didn't have to stay in this labyrinth if he didn't want to.

'Mooooo?' He said, though it might have meant something more like 'Figure out what, Potter?' as he rolled the unwinding ball back towards Harry.

'Whatever it is that's bothering you.' Harry said, and rolled the ball of string back to Sherlock.

Sherlock rolled it back with his hoof, and snorted out another 'Moooooo,' which of course meant: 'I've decided to simply ignore it.'

Harry caught the ball, and looked at Sherlock. Suddenly, he looked very scared.

'You've tried that before.' There was a deep rumble throughout the labyrinth. Sherlock knew, with a sense of dread, that it was coming from the center, where the monster lived.

Harry was looking around with panic.

'You've tried that before, and now that thing lives here.' Harry said, and Sherlock knew he was referring to the monstrously dark center, around which the labyrinth was built.

Harry woke up the next morning to what could only be the sound of a musical saw played by a ghost. Horrible, jagged sounds, sharp and high pitched were coming from the living room. Throwing on his clothes, he went downstairs to locate the source of the noise. It was Sherlock, who was standing by the window in a dressing gown, and absolutely torturing a violin.

His eyes lit up when Harry entered, as though he had been waiting for him to wake up.

"Er...what's up?" Harry asked, pointing to the instrument. Sherlock barely looked around.

"Practicing! You don't mind do you?" Sherlock said, not asked.

"Practicing for what, a death day party?" Harry asked, grimacing. The sound really was terrible. Each note had a whining pitch, that somehow penetrated through his head, and ground on his brain like sand.

Sherlock looked around curiously at the mention of death day parties. Harry could see that the detective wanted to know more about this, and Harry would happily tell him anything, if it meant that noise would stop.

Apparently, whatever Sherlock was practicing for must have been important, because the detective didn't press further, and continued "playing." There wasn't really a melody. The notes (and calling
them that was a stretch) ran wildly up and down scales in chaotic patterns.

Still wearing a painful expression, Harry made his way over to the kitchen. As soon as he cleared the living room, he cast a quick silencing charm, and almost sagged with relief when the noise stopped.

He put on the kettle, and went about making something to eat.

Before the toast was even done, he heard the noise again, Sherlock twirled into the small kitchen, violin still firmly held on his shoulder, and still making those ungodly screeches. Harry couldn't resist putting his hands over his ears, which barely dampened the sound.

"It helps when I practice around other people." Sherlock said cheerfully, a gleeful look on his face.

"It sounds horrible." Harry told him blankly, but Sherlock didn't seem to care one bit. He strode around the kitchen still making that noise, not letting up for a moment.

Harry tried to make himself something to eat as quickly as possible. He practically jammed two pieces of toast down his throat, and gulped down his tea, which was a few degrees below scalding.

All the while, Sherlock watched him with a hungry, expectant expression, as though expecting Harry to do a trick in tune with the music.

Some of the notes made his muscles coil, almost like an adrenaline rush. It was a strange feeling: he felt himself tense up, and then release, and then tense up again, almost like a muggle car he'd seen, that would rev up when the key was turned, and but was unable to start. It dawned on Harry that maybe the noises were intended to elicit some sort of reaction, though he had no idea what it could be.

He shrugged his shoulders, trying to get rid of the feeling. Rinsing off the crockery, he hurried off to the room in the upstairs landing. Unfortunately, he would only have a few minutes of quiet and peace, because Sherlock really was intent on having an audience.

... The sun was setting and Sherlock was slouched in his arm chair. John had called it his 'brooding chair,' but Sherlock thought that was a ridiculous moniker. He didn't brood. It is possible that statistically, he used this particular armchair more often when he was wading through a difficult case. But brooding was something that teenagers engaged in, and he was now decades away from that. So, Sherlock arranged his face into a blank expression, and his limbs into a comfortable and open position, that at no level of scrutiny could be called 'brooding.'

Only this time, he could admit that he was indeed, brooding, because his experiments failed. Or rather, his findings were inconclusive, which of course, meant that they failed. He kicked out his legs angrily, crossed and uncrossed them, as he thought of his unsuccessful research.

He had taken painstaking care to not only modify, but enhance his finding from the fruit fly/violin experiment. The musical pitches he had created were supposed to create aggression in subjects.

Indeed, they had, but in the wrong subject. Sherlock was, himself, feeling frustrated and volatile. Whether it was the effect of the violin pitches, or the fact that he was no closer to answering any questions about Potter, he didn't know.

He supposed it was possible that theory no. 2 was correct, and Potter was incapable of being affected, though the absence of evidence was not the evidence of absence.
The more he thought about it, the more annoyed Sherlock became. The imbalance of Harry's perfect calm, and the inner turmoil of Sherlock's head wounded his ego. He was the one, after all, who had a cool grip on his emotions. *Apparently, not any longer*, a snide voice in his head commented.

He looked over towards the wizard. He was sitting at the table, a few spare light bulbs in front of him. He was, as Sherlock recalled, trying to charm them to float and produce light. It was tricky. It seemed magic and electricity didn't go hand in hand.

Sherlock let out a resigned sigh. It seemed that humans (well, live ones anyway) weren't his area of expertise. He was at a loss when he made them angry, and he was even more confused now, when he couldn't reproduce the same results. Usually, when he did make someone angry, John would have to explain the reason to him.

He simply didn't understand.

He recalled a particular instance, years ago, when he had pissed off Lestrade to the point where the DI had thrown him out of his office, and yelled something like 'he ought never come back,' though using slightly more colorful language. This had struck Sherlock, since usually, the DI was one of the more level headed people in his life.

He remembered, that this was when Ms. Lestrade had started her affair with the gym teacher.

Sherlock could tell right away, and had told Lestrade of his wife's infidelities. Why would this upset the man, he wondered. Or rather, why would this make Lestrade angry at him? Surely, he would rather know about his wife, wouldn't he? He and John rode in a cab that night, and Sherlock brought this up to the doctor.

John had explained that sometimes, when people are presented with information that's hurtful, they take their pain out on the source. The old 'shoot the messenger' thing. Then, John had suggested that maybe Sherlock should be more, what was the word, *delicate*, in revealing a thing like that. It all sounded like a load of garbage to Sherlock. Why did the method of delivery matter? Though later, he took John's advice, and apologised. Everything worked out in the end.

Sherlock jumped out of the chair. Maybe, he could use John's opinion again. If John could explain the source of anger, maybe he could explain the lack? He quickly texted John, informing him that he's paying him a visit. Immediately.

…

After Sherlock had shown up at John's place, he dragged his friend to a small cafe that was in the area. He didn't know whether Mary was clued in about magic, nor did he really care, since a former CIA agent would hopefully have the ability to keep secrets. But this puzzle, the wizard of Baker street, was too personal for anyone else. Except John. He was okay. John would probably understand.

They sat down, and Sherlock summarized the situation to his friend, starting from Donovan, and working all the way up to the violin experiment. John sat and listened, with that politely puzzled expression he usually wore when Sherlock explained cases.

"That's the only explanation. That he is incapable of anger. You had some training in psychiatry. What could possible cause that?" Sherlock finished. John's expression had shifted to amusement, which was doing no favors for Sherlock's mood.
"I don't know, Sherlock. Maybe he's a Buddhist?" John was joking. This wasn't the time, Sherlock thought.

"I'm being very serious, I need to know if this is a symptom of a medical condition of which I'm unaware." Sherlock replied coolly.

"I can't think of one..." John trailed off. He didn't look very worried. "Look Sherlock, maybe consider this from a different perspective."

"Which is?"

"Maybe it's not a medical condition, but rather he's just a...nice person, or something?" John finished lamely.

Sherlock produced a scoff that would put Mycroft to shame.

"Or even if it is, something like...a condition..." he paused. "Well, maybe it's not a bad thing?" John said.

Sherlock arched an eyebrow, silently asking John to continue.

"Look, I've lived with you. You're no bouquet of flowers. Practically everyone who meets you will at some point want to choke the life out of you. You're very good at making people angry, is what I'm saying. Even the ones that love you."

Sherlock nodded, well aware of this fact.

"But see, here you have someone who doesn't get angry with you, or doesn't have the capacity. Does it make a difference which it is?" John asked. It took a few seconds for Sherlock to figure out that this isn't a rhetorical question.

"Of course it makes a difference." He replied.

John thought about it longer. After the silence stretched on, he finally added.

"The saying goes 'Don't look a gift horse in the mouth,' but for you I suppose it would be more like, 'Don't deduce your blessings to pieces.'"

Walking back to Baker Street, Sherlock decided that he had not spent the day in a productive manner. The violin experiment, did not yield any relevant results, and John had been just as useless. But, he might as well take his advice. 'Don't worry about it, anymore,' had been the gist of it.

And John was right. Why would he try to explain his flat mate's strange emotional nuances? He decided that it was of no matter to him.

It was a pleasant evening. He turned onto Baker Street feeling more at ease. Or at least, until he spotted the door of 221b. Sherlock's face twisted into a scowl. Mycroft.

Sherlock made as much noise as possible going up the staircase, stomping on each step, and letting his displeasure be known. It had been too recent since his brother's last visit, and he had no desire to see him for quite some time.

When he reached the landing he found his brother and the wizard sitting across from each other in arm chairs. Mycroft looked morose, and studied Potter with a detached, icy expression. He was
wearing that blue tie, with the stripes, which he always wore when he delivered bad news. It was like Pavlov's training; whatever came out of his mouth would be tampered now with Sherlock's expectations of something truly horrible.

Harry didn't look particularly happy, staring out the window with a tired expression. Sherlock suspected this was probably somehow Mycroft's fault.

Mycroft stood, giving a little tap tap with his umbrella, and fixed him with an unpleasant smile. Harry remained seated, and just barely looked up.

"Good evening, Sherlock." His brother started.

"Isn't it considered good manners to forewarn people when you come by for a visit? Request their permission, perhaps?" Sherlock fixed Mycroft with a glare.

"I was hoping to have a private chat. If you would accompany me..." Mycroft took a few steps to the door. Sherlock heard a car pull around the block and stop at the door of 221b.

"I'm sure whatever this private matter entails, we can just as easily discuss it here." Sherlock said, keeping his tone light. Harry looked up with a small smile, but then promptly went back to looking out the window. Something was wrong, he thought. Sherlock gracefully sidestepped his brother, and dropped into the chair that Mycroft had vacated.

Mycroft pursed his lips, and slowly blinked. This was his go-to expression whenever Sherlock was behaving 'like a petulant toddler, that has no regard for anything other than himself.'

Sherlock bit back a giggle. He loved that expression. Mycroft was not discouraged however. He made a little noise in the back of his throat, swung his umbrella in a circle, and decided to just get on with it.

"Uncle Rudy's health has taken a turn for the worse." He said, to no one in particular. "He's in a private hospital, in Yorkshire. Mummy insists that we visit." He finished. Sherlock was confused.

This was bad news, but not what he had prepared for. Uncle Rudy's been having health problems for the last decade, this was hardly surprising.

"That's unfortunate. I'll be sure to visit." Sherlock said.

"There are some other matters, family related, I wish to discuss. Sherlock, let's go for a drive." Mycroft said, and ostensibly reached for his phone, holding it in his hand. It was a clear enough warning; non verbal, so Harry wouldn't understand. 'Don't make me call up help.'

Sherlock growled, and followed his brother. Might as well get this over with.
"At the bottom of every frozen heart there is a drop or two of love—just enough to feed the birds."

-Henry Miller, *Tropic of Cancer*

A black Mercedes was waiting just outside of 221b. Parked illegally, too. He opened the door and got in. Mycroft climbed in after him. The driver pulled away, and started making a lazy, circular path through London, not going anywhere in particular. There was a screen between them, presumably so that the driver doesn't overhear their 'private conversation.'

"So, what is this crucial family matter, of which I need to be so immediately informed?" Sherlock started. Mycroft frowned and rearranged his suit, pulling on the sleeves, and straightening his tie. Anyone else might have said it looked like he was nervous, but Sherlock knew better.

"You're in danger." Mycroft started, in a cautious tone.

"Practically all the time, yes. Probably something to do with my occupation." Sherlock answered, impatient to get on with it.

"I've been doing some research, Sherlock, about your flatmate." Mycroft continued. He sounded unsure of himself, which Sherlock also guessed was ingenuine.

"Hmmm, find anything interesting?" Sherlock asked lightly.

"Interesting...no, not particularly. But something which will require a certain amount of cautious intervention." Mycroft wasn't looking at his brother, but rather at his own sleeves, as he kept fiddling with them. Sherlock frowned. He didn't like the sound of this. If he was reading the subtext correctly, Mycroft was talking about getting Potter out of 221b. Not good. Also, not going to happen.

"And what is that you learned, then?" Sherlock asked.

Mycroft drew in a long breath.

"That I was wrong in my earlier assessment." Mycroft was talking about his earlier assessment of Potter, and whether or not the wizard posed any danger to Sherlock. Not that it mattered much, what Mycroft thought. Just that it made everything easier with his brother out of the way, so to speak.

Sherlock saw this situation spiraling out of hand. He didn't need any intervention from his brother. Even if Potter was dangerous (the very idea was absurd), he was certainly going to keep him around at Baker Street anyway. He lived with danger, he didn't mind it. If anything, he courted it. The wizard was staying, and that was that, thought Sherlock. But he also knew that Mycroft was going to be hard to convince. Before he could think of his next strategic answer, Mycroft cut in.
"I'll be taking the situation out of our hands, shortly." Mycroft answered, gravely and with finality. The subtext of this was obvious, he's calling the wizard authorities, who will be equipped to handle capturing Potter. Sherlock froze in his seat. He couldn't let his brother do that. Under any circumstances. He tried to come up with a reasonable answer, but he felt panic rise up instantly at Mycroft's words.

"Have you called them already?" He asked instead, his tone hoarse with fear.

Mycroft looked at him with a surprised arch to his brow.

"No, I was letting you know first. Also getting you out of there so that you are not complicit." Mycroft said.

Sherlock blew out a breath. He needed to think clearly, but this seemed to to be next to impossible in his current state. Indeed, he was not even questioning why the panic had risen so suddenly, just that he needed to Mycroft to understand.

"You're not calling them." He said, trying to make his voice low and dangerous. It wasn't working properly.

"Don't be difficult about this." Mycroft replied, then continued in what he probably thought was a soothing tone. "There are other wizards, you know. I'm sure I could put you in contact with someone who would be more than happy to …" Mycroft started, but was promptly interrupted by Sherlock.

"Mycroft," he growled.

"If you do this, know that I will never forgive you." Sherlock knew that Mycroft could read between the lines, too, and that 'I'll never forgive you' also meant 'Your next glass of whiskey will likely contain a deadly organic toxin.'

Mycroft was visibly taken aback. It took him a few seconds, but eventually his expression shifted. He smiled slightly, with a dangerous edge which Sherlock didn't like one bit.

"Ah, so this isn't a simple matter of curiosity, then, is it?" he said with a drawl. Sherlock chose to remain silent. Mostly because he did not know how to answer that. Was it not just curiosity on his end?

"It seems you really are unable to learn from your mistakes. Or have you forgotten your introduction to narcotics? I believe we can draw some parallels between the two situations, no?" Mycroft commented, snidely. Sherlock stiffened. What Mycroft was referring to what had happened ten years ago. Usually, his brother was tactful enough not bring it up. Mycroft was really going after blood, then.

"What was that young man's name again?" Mycroft asked, though Sherlock knew he remembered it perfectly.

"Pierce." Sherlock replied, with a hollow tone. Pierce, the talented, blonde chemist who had introduced Sherlock to the beautiful and horrible world of mainlining cocaine. The same chemist who had suffered an overdose, which left Sherlock’s world in shambles. He hadn't thought about his old friend in years.

"Yes, that's right. How did that work out for you?" Mycroft asked, the snide quality in his tone grating on Sherlock's nerves. You know bloody well how that worked out.
"This isn't the same at all." Answered Sherlock, with a measured quality. "Potter doesn't have a drug problem. I'm not even sure if there's an equivalent in the wizarding world so..." Sherlock waved his hand around as though to signify 'so your question is pointless.'

"Yes, but you've chosen to attach yourself to someone whom you know very little about. Someone who could be dangerous, and once you do become...attached, you tend to ignore the warning signs."

"I'm not attached." Sherlock said, putting the same disdain on the word with which Mycroft treated it.

"Then why not acquaint yourself with another wizard." His brother countered.

"I've promised to solve his case." Sherlock answered simply.

"How much progress have you made in this case, then, Sherlock? You've been letting him live with you for over a month now." Mycroft continued.

"I've been busy." Sherlock chose to answer succinctly.

"You've only had the Harlesden Ripper case, which you solved in a day. You can't have been that busy."

"I don't need to tell you how I spend my time, thanks."

"Try to look at this clearly, brother. What happens if, during the course of your investigation, you find that he was guilty after all? Would you continue protecting him, with all of your non-attachment?"

"Of course not." Sherlock answered. As soon as the words left his mouth, Sherlock realized he was lying. Strange. Thankfully, Mycroft seemed to have believed him.

"If I were to be honest, I dearly regret Dr. Watson's marriage." Mycroft said, almost to himself.

"Please don't. Be honest that is. It doesn't suit you." Sherlock commented. Mycroft frowned, and looked to be deep in thought.

"You know I cannot simply ignore this." he finally stated.

"Well, try your best, then." Sherlock said.

"Perhaps it would make me feel more comfortable if you were actively working out the case." Mycroft said, with a shrug. Sherlock scowled. He didn't like giving in to his brother. But he supposed it was better than having the wizard cops showing up and rampaging through his flat.

"Perhaps it would make me feel more comfortable if my brother did not actively interfere in business which does not concern him." Sherlock replied childishly. But he knew the conversation was over. The ultimatum was simple. He needed to get on with solving Potter's case, and in exchange, Mycroft would not call the magical world's authorities. Mycroft understood this too. Presumably, he also had no plans for getting poisoned this summer. With a resigned air, he knocked on the barrier separating them from the driver, and told him to return to Baker Street.

The car pulled up to the door of 221b, and Sherlock practically jumped out. His brother might have
been trying to say something, but he quickly slammed the car door. Entering, he took the stairs one at a time, ignoring Mrs. Hudson, and ran into the living room.

Harry was still there, sitting in the same armchair. His expression was miserable as he looked out of the window. Sherlock slowed his pace, and walked to the other arm chair. Harry barely acknowledged him, when he plopped into it. Sherlock wondered what was on the wizard's mind. Surely, the presence of his brother, though odious, couldn't have affected the wizard this much.

The silence stretched on between them, with Sherlock thinking about Mycroft's request to re-commence working on Potter's case. He supposed his first step would be to contact Granger again. He was just about to take out his phone, when suddenly Harry spoke up.

"So, when are they coming?" He asked so nonchalantly that at first Sherlock thought he might be talking about some dinner guests he'd forgotten about. Were John and Mary on their way?

"Who?" Sherlock asked. Harry turned to him with a crooked smile, that seemed somehow bitter.

"The aurors." Harry answered simply. Sherlock found himself unable to immediately respond. So Harry knew. He knew that his brother had planned on ambushing him here, in this flat.

"How…" Started.


"Why are you still here, then? Why aren't you running?" He asked. Surely, if Harry knew the wizard cops were on their way, he would be smart enough to grab his ancient and battered knapsack, and make a quick escape.

"I don't know. I suppose… I'm tired of running." Harry answered, looking out the window as though he expected the authorities to show up just through the panes. Sherlock felt himself getting angry again. Or perhaps, he was still angry from his conversation with Mycroft. Either way, Potter was being stupid. How could he, Sherlock, protect the wizard if he was so ready to be caught.

"That's completely idiotic." Sherlock hissed. Harry looked over to him with a puzzled expression.

"There's no one coming by the way." Sherlock waved at the window, as though to prove his point.

"But if there were, I would expect you to run, do you understand?" Sherlock found himself leaning out of his chair, glaring at Potter. Potter looked at him with a softly puzzled expression.

"No one coming?" He repeated, in a dull tone.

"No. I was able to convince my dear older brother that we don't need his assistance." Sherlock clarified. But he was not satisfied. Once again, though he was blind to his own motivations, he needed Potter to understand that if he had to run, he had to run.

"If you think they're coming, run and don't look back." Sherlock commanded. All he got in terms of response is a small nod, and a crooked smile from Harry. Sherlock leaned back into his armchair. He hoped this settled the matter. He didn't need the wizard acting exceedingly foolish, for no discernible reason. Tired of running? Indeed, he'd been sitting squarely in that armchair for the last hour, so physical exhaustion seemed like a preposterous excuse.

Sherlock huffed under his breath. Between Mycroft being unbearable and Potter being unreasonable, he was beyond agitated. He decided that he would settle in for the evening, and retrieve his violin.
When he got the case out, he noticed Potter had a horrified expression, but Sherlock just smirked and decided to play in earnest this time. Might as well let the wizard know that he was capable of producing real music. He saw Potter shift uncomfortably, as though ready to make his escape.

He started with a short waltz, meandering through the notes, improvising when he felt the need. When he began playing, he heard Harry suck in a breath, and sit back down in the armchair. That's right, thought Sherlock, smiling internally.

After he had finished the waltz, he paused, thinking of the next piece.

"That was lovely." The wizard across from him commented.

"Thanks." Sherlock said, and continued playing. It was easy to let his thoughts drift while he was occupied with the music. He didn't choose any particular strand to pull apart, rather let them all flow through. John had called it meditation, much to the ire of Sherlock. Meditation was for New Agers who believed in crystals and chakras, which was absolute rubbish. John had then told him that his 'mind palace' and his journeys therein, could also be considered meditative. He thought of all the things he needed to do: tell Lestrade to keep an eye on Laura Baskey, visit Uncle Rudy (who was by far his favorite uncle), re-open his investigation into Potter's case, make sure his brother did not attempt to interfere again.

Sherlock thought of his conversation with Mycroft. The music took an agitated turn, the notes coming out sharper. His brother was hardly ever wrong. What would happen if it turned out that Potter really was guilty? Sherlock imagined the scenario and thought that the best outcome would be to actually call the aurors. As soon as he let his mind play through this decision, seeing in his mind the aurors taking Harry away to prison, he knew that he would never do that. Sherlock's eyebrows scrunched together. Was his brother right? Did he, unwittingly, form an attachment to the wizard?

He glanced sideways at Harry. He was sitting peacefully, and seemed to be enjoying the music. Sherlock thought then that it was irrelevant, whether he was attached or not. He would do what he had to do.

However, the thought of his attachment, or lack thereof, kept plaguing him. He could not turn his mind away from fiddling with the idea. He used to consider himself unable to make attachments, but he knew now that this was false. The case with Magnusen had proved only that he would do anything to keep John (and by extension, Mary), out of harm's way. Then there was Pierce, but that had been ages ago. Despite what Mycroft thought, Sherlock had learned his lesson.

Sherlock abruptly ended the music. There was some connection of which he saw the briefest glance. Potter, and him, John and attachment… Well it was gone now.

His mind was spinning around and around, not coming to any conclusive answer. He opened his eyes, intent on putting away the instrument. Potter said something in the way of a compliment, but Sherlock wasn't paying attention. There was some connection that he needed to make, but couldn't find it. He allowed his mind to wander of its own volition, but it still danced around the same subjects, with no new insights.

Potter had moved to the kitchen table, and was back to fiddling with charts and lightbulbs. Sherlock found himself observing the wizard. Harry had an incandescent bulb pinched between his fingers. He was referring to some notes, and looking back at the bulb. The filament produced, for a second, a dim, orange glow, then flickered out.

He had told the wizard (after his excursion to Diagon Alley, of which Potter was still unaware) that
it might be nice to have floating lights. The task had been tricky, according to Harry. Things that ran off electricity did not respond well to magic. Sherlock thought it might be a great area of study, combining technology with magic. What he would give to have a magically enhanced laptop!

Suddenly, the bulb in Harry's hands began to glow again. It got brighter and brighter, until it was producing more light than a halogen lamp. Then, abruptly and without any forewarning, the bulb shattered.

The wizard uttered a quiet 'Damn,' and banished the shards with his wand. Sherlock chuckled, and thought that perhaps experimenting on his laptop would have to wait.

The wizard reached into a cardboard box he kept near, to produce another light bulb. Sherlock stood from his armchair, walked closer, and leaned against the fireplace mantel to watch Harry's second attempt. There was a mirror hung just above the mantel. His thoughts drifted away from him, and he found his mind pleasantly fill with a sort of buzzing, which he could not identify.

Harry was holding another bulb, and this time he started with an unbreakable charm. Sherlock recognized it by the faint wavelike pattern, which appeared on the glass for a moment. After he learned of this charm's existence, he had Potter place it over all of his glassware (which, Potter had commented, was a hefty collection). Concentrating, the wizard repeated the procedure, and again, the bulb began to emit a dim, flickering glow. The light's intensity gathered, but this time Potter was quick with a stasis charm. The bulb continued to emit a soft glow, and gave no apparent show of wanting to shatter.

Given his expression, the wizard seemed to be surprised by his own success. Gingerly, he let go of the bulb. It hung in midair, and continued to give off light. He turned to Sherlock, and gave him a brilliant smile, which Sherlock returned, lazily. The wizard scratched something on the charts, and dug out another bulb. Presumably, he wanted to see if he could reproduce the same result. Sherlock watched the already hovering bulb illuminating the wizard's pale face, which was again, a mask of concentration. He felt the same, now more familiar, tug at his navel, and thought he would like nothing more than to stand closer to the wizard; perhaps place his hand on Harry's shoulder, as he worked. A part of his mind whispered that he made a resolution to repress these ridiculous fancies, but it was difficult to care when his thoughts were drifting away from him like smoke. He was about to follow through, when he quickly glance at himself in the mirror.

There was something wrong with his reflection, Sherlock was able to note, but it was difficult to think further, with his mind still chugging along at a sluggish pace. He observed his face, which showed a slight smile slowly disappearing, but otherwise was normal. His hair, still the same curls. He almost turned away, when he noticed his eyes. His pupils, which should be constricted considering he'd been looking at a lampshade-less bulb, were not in fact, constricted. They were much larger than they should be, given the bright lighting in his apartment.

How odd.

He had half a mind to ignore it, but decided he should investigate. If there was something wrong with his eyes, he ought to know. His sharp sight was an exceeding useful tool for his work. Sherlock walked out of the living room, and into his bedroom. Changing the environment, seeing if variables respond. Neatly, he sat on the edge of his bed, and looked into the small mirror above his dresser. Even from a distance, Sherlock could see that his pupils had returned to normal.

So there was nothing wrong with his eyes, if they were able to constrict and dilate when necessary. He was about walk back out to the living room, but something scratched at the back of his mind,
Pupils dilate...with fear. Panic causes dilation, heightened breath, heightened pulse. No, that can't be it. He was not at all scared, in fact the opposite. He was rather comfortable and content. What else?

Certain drugs dilate pupils; LSD, MDMA, and of course cocaine. But he had not consumed any drugs. Surely he would feel the effects. Unless Potter was slipping him something? No that's ridiculous, Sherlock would have noticed. That, and he hadn't had anything to eat or drink since breakfast, so why would the effects be felt now? However, he thought it must somehow be related to Potter. Sherlock was observing him, when his eyes decided to go against the basic rules of chemistry and physiology.

If it was related to Potter, perhaps it was related to magic? Maybe, it was his body's way of responding to the electromagnetic changes that magic wrought? That seemed like a more reasonable explanation.

Happy with his conclusion, Sherlock stood up, and started making his way towards the door. He should have Potter place the floating lightbulbs above his desk, which he always thought could use more lighting...

'Because I took your pulse-

Sherlock paused with his hand on the handle of his bedroom door. The memory of his own words had wafted through his mind so vividly, it was as though he had heard them. Irene Adler. Winning her game. He remember her, kneeling on his rug, wearing his dressing gown; he had taken her pulse. He had told her later, in Mycroft's office, and guessed the password on her phone.

'-elevated. Your pupils, dilated.'

She was on her knees in front of him, while he sat in his armchair. Maybe she was asking him for dinner again. He reached out, and took her offered hand. Yes, her pulse was elevated. Her pupils, though there was plenty light from the fireplace, were dilated. Like his were, just now, when he was looking at Harry, because-

'the chemistry is incredibly simple, and very destructive.'

Sherlock stumbled back towards his bed, and sat down. Something in back of his mind was clicking into place. The chemistry, which produces large pupils and fast heartbeats, which he exhibits, is a result of-

Sherlock chuckled out loud. Surely not! How silly his own conclusion sounded. He wasn't attracted to Potter. That was preposterous. Almost without his bidding, his mind jumped back several minutes, when Sherlock wanted to stand closer to Harry, wanted to put his hand on his shoulder as he worked…

Yes, but that was a friendly gesture, he reminded himself. Nothing in that spelled attraction. His mind countered by replaying the incident under Harry's invisibility cloak, where Sherlock had placed his hand on the wizard's hip. That… that was harder to explain.

He placed his hands gingerly on his knees. In an offhand way, he noticed that they were slight tremors in his hands. Not good. He couldn't be attracted to Potter. Not that he was unable, he supposed he was. Just that he could not allow it. He closed his eyes. He imagined that Harry was sitting, just a few walls away, at the table, with his wand out. He let his subconscious play out the
scene. If he was infatuated, he needed to know.

Sherlock could see himself approach. Harry, looking up, stood facing Sherlock. He was smiling the same brilliant smile. Sherlock saw himself place his hand on the wizard's shoulder. Nothing wrong with that, he thought. A perfectly normal gesture. Suddenly, Harry moved in closer, and placed his hands on Sherlock's chest.

'Oh.' Sherlock thought, but let the scene continue. Sherlock could feel his pectoral muscles respond to the touch, imaginary though it was. His abdomen, as well, tightened, and he could feel his pulse steadily climbing higher. He saw himself lift his other hand, and place onto the wizard's hip, as he had once, in reality. Harry moved closer, until their chests were almost touching. Sherlock was a few inches taller than the wizard, and he was looking down at Harry's face, which was slightly tilted. Tilting his own head, Sherlock lowered it until… Sherlock's eyes flew open, his heart hammering away in his chest.

'Oh, no.'

The halls of St. Mungo's were considerably quieter in the evening hours. There were only a few healers, walking by with clipboards and perpetual frowns, and some straggling visitors hurrying out. There was also one witch, who strode purposefully forward. Hermione carried a bouquet of daisies and a scowl, as she traversed the labyrinthine halls of the wizarding hospital.

When she finally reached the room number that had been given to her by the Welcome Witch (who was, traditionally, not very welcoming), not even bothering to knock, Hermione pushed on the handle and entered the little room.

The room was illuminated by dim, blue orbs, which clung to the ceiling. There was only one bed, and it was occupied by her oldest friend. Looking down at him, Hermione sucked in a breath. She had hardly believed it, when George called and told her. But the evidence was right in front of her eyes. Ron was lying in the bed, looking for all the world like he was just asleep. Poisoned, was what George told her. Lethal poison, in fact. One that should have killed him. The healers had told George, who told Hermione, that the only reason it didn't, was because Ron had mysteriously developed a slight resistance to this particular poison.

Hermione remembered that Ron had been already lethally poisoned once, in their sixth year. Thankfully, Harry had his wits about him, and shoved a bezoar down his throat before Ron died. Hermione wondered if it was the same poison that laid Ron out this time. It would make sense, she reasoned. Even a single exposure to a lethal potion heightened a subject's resistance. So really, Ron was lucky that it was this specific poison, out of so many, which his would-be-killer chose. Last time it was Malfoy, but somehow she doubted he was involved.

She wondered who it was that tried to do Ron in. Truthfully, there was quite a large field of suspects. Ron had made it to Senior Auror, and was rumored that in a few years, if he played his cards right, he might even make Head. There were, in short, a lot of people who wanted Ronald Weasley to die. It came with the territory.

But he didn't die, and he wouldn't, George had said. Though, whether he would wake up or not, was still undetermined.

"What are you doing here?" came a sharp voice, from her right. Lost in her thoughts, Hermione didn't notice the woman sitting in the corner of the room, reading a novel. Charlotte. Hermione
thought of something nasty to reply with, but decided instead to play nice. She didn't really have a right to be here, unlike Charlotte Weasley.

She held up the daisies like a talisman of protection.

"Brought these." She said, with a slight smile. Charlotte did not reciprocate. Narrowing her eyes, she glared at Hermione, waiting for her to say something else. Hermione was struck again, with the familiarity of the situation. She remembered herself and Lavender Brown, having a spittle over Ron in the Hogwarts infirmary. She thought to herself 'Poor Ron, having all these girls fighting over him, but only while he's unconscious.' She had to school her expression, in order not to giggle.

She must have given something away, because Charlotte's eyes narrowed further.

"Fine. Leave them." Charlotte said tersely, pointing to the flowers. The command was in her tone was obvious. *You need to leave, too.* Hermione frowned. This woman was being very antagonistic. She had wanted to sit down for awhile, next to Ron; maybe talk to him, though of course he wouldn't say much back…

She placed the flowers on the table, turned on her heels and left. She was in no mood to trade blows with Ron's wife. She briskly walked back the way she came. In a few minutes, she arrived in the apparition chamber, where she apparated to her flat.

Once home she immediately put the kettle on. She almost considered something stronger, but decided against it, as it was getting late, and her work was waiting for her the next morning.

She sat at her table in a strange stupor. She could barely believe the fact that Ron was on death's threshold. And had been there for almost a week, as she found out. At first it was classified, since he was an auror who was injured on the job, but then… Well, she couldn't blame Charlotte for not wanting to call her, right away. The woman always suspected that there was something going on between the two old friends, no matter how many times Ron told her that it had been over for ages.

Then, there was the whole fiasco in Surrey. Hermione's head hurt just thinking about. They sent aurors out to investigate, which in her opinion, they didn't. They simply confirmed that yes, these are Harry Potter's relatives, and as such, their deaths must have been Harry’s work.

Amid all of this, was Sherlock Holmes, who she had met briefly, and had perhaps given too much sensitive information. Perhaps. And, of course, he hasn't returned any of her texts for weeks now. She had read the blogs detailing his adventures, and from what she could tell, forgetfulness was not out of character for the strange detective. But she was so hopeful that he would take on Harry's case! Or at least the case in Surrey, where he believed Harry to be innocent.

She had been thinking about the detective a lot. It must have been difficult for him, being a muggle, trying to solve a magical case. Well, Hermione thought, if he is as brilliant as he thinks, he should at least try. She had been thinking about the detective, and had come to a decision: she would hire him, formally. She had the funds to pay him. She would hire him to solve... was it Harry's case, or the attack on Ron? Though, she had no rational reason for this, Hermione had a feeling, deep in her gut, that the two could not be completely unrelated.

She took out her phone, and decided that there was no time like the present. It was late evening, but hopefully, Holmes would pick up her call. She found his contact, and clicked dial.

"Hello." A voice on the other end greeted her. It was hollow, and seemed almost surprised to be speaking. It barely sounded like the detective she remembered.
"Er, hello, Mr. Holmes? This is Hermione Granger, we met at… Diagon Alley?" she started, suddenly nervous.

"Oh, yes, I remember." The voice answered.

"Well, I was hoping I could arrange a meeting with you Mr. Holmes. I would like to formally hire you to investigate Harry Potter's case." She said.

"Harry?" The voice, which she was sure was Sherlock's, answered.

"Mr. Holmes are you alright?"

"Yes, fine. I need to speak with you anyway. When can you meet?" He asked her, some of the curtness she remembered entered his tone.

"Tomorrow, I work until five…" She started, but Sherlock cut her off again.

"I'll be at your home around seven. Text me the address." The detective, said, and then the line went dead.

Sherlock tapped the 'End Call’ button. He had lost of track of how long he had been sitting in his bedroom, looking at the door. Well, that was one thing taken care of. He had to meet Granger anyway.

His mind kept trying to trick him into thinking about the wizard. But Sherlock was smart, and knew how to distract himself when needed. Instead he busied himself with playing repetitive flash games on his phone.

Unfortunately being repetitive meant that they also became dull rather quickly. So, once again, he had nothing to do but think about the wizard. Once or twice, he almost worked up the courage to exit his room, and confront Potter. Though what would he say?

How dare you be attractive? Did you cast a love spell on me? Have you been slipping me narcotics? All of it was stupid, and Sherlock was tired of thinking on this subject. Frustrated, he crawled into his bed and fell asleep.

He was not in the labyrinth, and this was a relief. Instead, Sherlock was seated in his own living room, next to a roaring fire. Ah, how nice he thought, as he stretched himself out.

He felt very comfortable, until he saw the occupant of the other armchair. Irene Adler sat there, hugging her knees to her chest. She was completely starkers, though this in itself, was no great cause for alarm.

Sherlock noticed that there was a tear, perpetually flowing from her right eye.

Suddenly she turned to him.

' Now you have fun with it.' She said, her tone bitter. Sherlock noticed that her pupils were rather large, and he thought he must know what that meant.

' You trying playing the game while...compromised.' She wiped at her eyes. Sherlock noticed that her pupils were growing and growing, obscuring the rest of her iris. They did not stop at the edge,
and continued, until there were no whites to her eyes, just two black holes, which he knew to be a matter of simple chemistry...
"Science is always discovering odd scraps of magical wisdom and making a tremendous fuss about its cleverness."

— Aleister Crowley, The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autohagiography

The stone basin sat on Mycroft's desk, the eerie glow still throwing shadows on the grey walls of his office. The man who had come to collect it shook hands with Mycroft.

The man, Mycroft knew, had a senior position in the Department of Mysteries, which to his understanding was a research oriented branch of the magical government. He did not know the man's name, and did not care to to learn it. He could see in one long glance everything he needed to know.

The man had a vaguely rounded shape, and fair hair which was steadily growing grey. He was a widower. He lived alone, and devoted most of his time to his career. There were smudges of red ink on the sleeves of the man's, er, robe.

"Did you find the memories you were looking for?" The man asked, as he deposited the pensieve into a simple wooden box. Mycroft wondered why the man could presume to ask for such information. Nonetheless, in the name of courtesy, he replied.

"Yes." He said softly and fixed an unpleasant smile on his face, one which would hopefully hurry the man out. The man took his time, shrinking the box, and depositing it into his pocket.

"Curious why someone from your world would go looking for one of these." The man commented, almost to himself. Mycroft chose not to reply. There was a lilt of condescension in the man's voice as he said the words, and Mycroft knew this particular wizard did not think highly of non-wizards.

He could not fault the stranger for this, since Mycroft did not think highly of wizards. Indeed, his brother's entanglement with their world was a constant gnawing edge of anxiety.

Well, all Mycroft could hope for was that the situation resolved itself quickly and neatly. However, he knew nothing was ever quick or neat, when Sherlock got involved.

A lazy, orange light was pouring into the flat through half drawn curtains. It was eight o'clock as Sherlock slouched over to the coffee machine. He could hear muffled creaking coming from upstairs, which meant that the wizard was just getting up as well.
Sherlock was surprised that he had actually felt much better in the morning. Usually, mornings were difficult for him. Unless there was a case in which he was absorbed (and then, he would be sleeping very little), he always felt like the day would have to be traversed rather than lived; like walking through a swamp, or a strong current.

So, after realizing some rather uncomfortable things about his odd behaviour regarding Potter, he thought this morning in particular would be more difficult than others. But when he woke up, he did not feel daunted, as he had last night. Indeed, he felt quite the opposite. A rather cheerful mood had overtaken him, and he had the urge to either play the violin or take a stroll through London's more scenic districts. Perhaps he could take Potter along.

He had spent last night worrying over nothing, he told himself. The way forward was clear. It did not matter, one bit, if his errant 'lower-half' had woken up, unexpectedly. He could ignore it, just as well as he ignored the need to sleep or eat, when it suited him. It was, he knew, in the same spectrum of 'needs' which human beings deluded themselves into obsessing over. Sherlock knew better, though. It was merely function, as mechanical as the rotating chambers of a revolver.

He could understand now where his strange impulses were stemming from. Armed with knowledge, Sherlock was ready to suppress any sudden onset of temporary insanity. With this cheerful thought, Sherlock clicked the coffee brewer on.

There were steps behind him, and Sherlock watched, out of the corner of his eye, as Harry made his way downstairs.

The wizard greeted him with something ordinary, like 'good morning,' that somehow didn't seem to capture the scope of the moment. Harry said something else, something about breakfast, to which Sherlock nodded, since he was feeling hungry, and why not indulge a little?

He thought again of strolling through a summer-soaked London. The scant places where green things were able to thrive in the urban patchwork might be worth a visit. The flowers would be blooming. Or was that only in spring? He did not usually pay attention to the patterns of efflorescence.

The wizard passed by him to get to the stove, and Sherlock suddenly thought his kitchen was a bit cramped. They were practically on top of each other, as he poured out his coffee. His inexplicable good mood was still holding him high, but he still found his situation disconcerting.

He was feeling oddly out of place, in his own flat. Sherlock was the one who was a self-proclaimed sociopath, high functioning of course. Yet, he had to remind himself not reach out his hand as he passed Harry in the tight confines of the kitchen, and edged away towards the table.

Meanwhile, Harry seemed to be innocently oblivious.

Sherlock narrowed his eyes, as he watched Harry doing something domestic next to the stove. A sudden thought sprung up in his head. Did he know that the wizard was unaffected? It certainly seemed like it. But surely being a male and having matured past puberty, the wizard had some sort of interest, in someone?

Sherlock frowned. It would be just his luck to meet another asexual, right when his own asexuality was being questioned. But luck was just the stack of probability, one way or the the other. Since asexuality was relatively rare, the probability was low. Sherlock felt the familiar creep of curiosity.

He ought to know about the wizard's 'tastes,' so to speak. It could be an important piece of data. Rationally, Sherlock knew that this was not going to help him with suppressing anything, but as
always his curiosity won out.

Sherlock was waiting, like a predator crouched in grass, his eyes sharply tracing the outlines of the wizard, while Harry settled himself with breakfast and coffee. Sherlock thought he ought to start the conversation in an innocent manner. A diversionary tactic. He could ask Harry about whether the morning was pleasant, or if the toast was burnt, or some other such rubbish. However, the detective was not known to be a patient man, and instead he decided to just jump in.

"So while you were on the run-"

He almost couldn't help himself, as the words slipped out. He felt an odd lurch in his stomach, that usually meant he was hungry or needed a cigarette.

"Did you have many romantic involvements?" he finished, trying for as casual tone as he could possibly manage.

"I don't think many people are actively searching for a date with a known mass murderer, do you?" Potter commented. Sherlock shrugged.

"You'd be surprised." he quipped, and Harry chuckled. "You obviously have disguises. I would think you would be smart enough to use them to your advantage." Sherlock prodded further.

The amused looked slid off Harry's face. He looked thoughtful.

"No, I never pursued anything, or- er, anyone." Harry stated with finality. Sherlock thought this might have been the wizard's way of giving him a clue that the conversation is over. He happily disregarded it.

"I find that surprising. Most men put an unnecessary amount of time and energy in pursuing women. Are you saying you've never pursued women?" Sherlock was very interested now.

"Well, yes, I suppose there was a time…" A barely noticeable blush was creeping through the wizard's face, as he stumbled for the words. Sherlock, on the other had, also noticed that the wizard did not dispute the women part. He knew he should be happy about this, as it put Potter comfortably out of his reach.

"But that was ages ago. Where's all this coming from, anyway?".

"I simply want to be aware if I am to expect overnight guests at the flat." Sherlock lied, with ease.

"No I don't think so. Besides, I'm not sure if this place would work out as a den of seduction; there's still traces of intestines in the kitchen sink, which by the way…"

"Those weren't even human intestines." Sherlock cut in.

Harry looked like he was on the verge of arguing. But with a little jerk of his head, he must have decided to concede the point. Sherlock looked down at his coffee. He thought that maybe that was enough answers, too many really. But the wizard took initiative into his own hands.

"How about you?" Harry asked.

Sherlock just arched an eyebrow in a silent question. Surely they've been over this.

"I mean, you've said your work prevents anything too serious, but when you were younger...you've probably had...before your work…" It puzzled Sherlock that sometimes Harry could express a
thought in a clear and concise manner, and other times sound like he was just learning the English language.

"Did you ever, er, pursue anyone?" Potter finished.

"No." Sherlock answered.

"What, never?" The wizard looked rather shocked. Unexpectedly, it stung Sherlock's pride.

"No, never. I don't tolerate wasting time, especially in such a foolish manner." Sherlock felt, for a brief and fleeting moment, that he was an actor reading a script, one that he had written for himself a long time ago.

Harry looked like he was about to ask something else, but Sherlock avoided eye contact, and shifted his body away from the wizard. The conversation left a taste of something unpleasant. He should not have asked. What difference does it make which sort of genitals the wizard prefers to be in vicinity to his own?

Just then, he heard an electronic ring across the room. Sherlock loped over to the living room couch, where his phone was lodged between the two cushions. He really should keep the thing on his person, he reminded himself. With an annoyed expression he excavated it, and clicked it on. The number was Lestrade's.

"Yes?" he answered, with his usual curtness.

"Sherlock, you know I really don't like it when you withhold information which could be crucial to an ongoing investigation..." The DI began immediately, but Sherlock cut him off.

"I couldn't possibly not withhold information. The amount of time it would take to fill you in on everything you don't know might well exceed both of our lifetimes." Sherlock replied. He would not admit, but he didn't know exactly what information he was withholding, this time.

"Yeah, right, so why is that you brought a professor of the occult with you to Harlesden?" Lestrade asked. He sounded genuinely annoyed. Sherlock furrowed his brows. There was no practical reason for it. Only as a reference that only he and Potter would understand. *Occult History* didn't actually figure into the case. It wasn't even a real subject. Or so he thought, anyway.

"What's happened?" Sherlock asked.

"Laura Baskey disappeared from the hospital. We think she did a runner. Possibly because she was involved in her father's crimes, but that's why we need you here. We had a search warrant for her flat, and found some things that your professor should have a look at. Though maybe he already has, since apparently you've been doing your own investigating." The DI finished. Sherlock's eyebrows were raised in surprise. This *was* interesting. Here, he thought he was done with that case, and it suddenly bloomed into a much more complex puzzle.

"Send me the address, I'm coming." He said, and before the DI had a chance to reply, hung up the phone. He noticed Potter looking at him with curiosity.

"We need to go. Get ready. Quite quickly."

…

The address was in Central London, off Holborn road, and Sherlock decided to take a cab instead of relying on the wizard's apparition. There were few places that could be relied upon to be
completely empty in the denser parts of the city.

The wizard was much quicker about disguising himself as 'Allen Dore,' and complained little when Sherlock requested that he change into respectable clothing, which he scoured from his own wardrobe. They were sitting in a taxicab in no time at all.

"So what did you occupy your time with for more than a decade?" Sherlock asked. He had been wondering since their conversation at breakfast. Judging by John's behavior, chasing the opposite sex took up a hefty percentage of leisure time. Since Potter had nothing but leisure time, it followed that he must have found ways to fill it. Sherlock was curious as to what those could be.

Harry snorted.

"It wasn't a very exciting decade." He answered.

"Makes up for the other one?" Sherlock asked. He had some idea of Harry's life, before the whole 'framed for murder' business. He was almost jealous. What an exciting life, to be part of an anti-terrorist movement at such a young age.

"Yeah something like that… I suppose I didn't really do much. Kind of like early retirement, really. Watched more muggle telly than anyone should in a few lifetimes. Practiced some magic, when I could…" Harry waved his hand in a gesture that suggested 'and that's about it.'

"What sort of magic?" Sherlock pressed further. He was sure that if he were forced to watch television for 14 years straight he would have gone insane, many times over.

"Oh you know, nothing too exciting. The stuff in the books I have. I don't know, not much else…" Harry said. Sherlock fixed an expectant expression on his face. There had to be more than that… Potter looked rather uncomfortable, as he searched for something else to say.

"I wrote a … I'm not sure what to call it. An article, or a paper, I guess." Harry finished, looking like he didn't know what else to say.

"I didn't figure you for an academic." Sherlock replied.

"No, well I'm not." Harry answered.

"Did you...submit it?" Sherlock, who had no idea how the wizarding equivalent of scientific journals functioned, was intrigued.

"In a way. I mailed it to St. Mungo's. That's the hospital, in London." Harry answered.

"What was the subject?" Sherlock wanted the wizard to be more explicit. He suddenly wished he could perform legilimency. It would certainly make things quicker, if nothing else. He was sure if he had access to that power, Sherlock would almost never actually talk with anyone, which sounded blissful.

"It was about…" Harry hesitated, looking uncomfortable. "Souls."

The wizard obviously didn't want to talk about it. This made Sherlock all the more curious. Sherlock glanced outside of the cab window, and calculated that they would be arriving in just under ten minutes. Plenty of time, if only Harry would step up the pace.

"What about souls?" Sherlock asked, maybe a little on the brusque side. Harry looked at him with slight worry. Sherlock tried to peel apart his lips into a smile, to reassure him. It probably didn't
come out very kind, or even human, because Harry suddenly looked more worried. Thankfully, that didn't stop him from talking.

"About splitting souls, and damaging souls, healing souls, phoenix tears...nothing really interesting. To be honest, I really doubt anyone's read it. As you said, I'm no academic." he finished. There was connection here, Sherlock knew, to something important. The wizard wasn't lying to him, but he was omitting. Or rather, not going into the subject in depth, because of...what?

It was something the wizard did frequently. He could prattle on for ages about certain subjects. In the case of one afternoon, soon after Harry had started living at 221b, Sherlock had spent an hour listening to a lecture on the dynamic architecture of Hogwarts, which granted, he did find interesting. However, some subjects, the wizard was frustratingly tight-lipped about. He recalled the wizard having the same disposition when questioned about his ability to see the murder victim, Eliza.

The subject of souls was certainly foreign to Sherlock. Indeed, if it had not been for the lingering soul of one of the Harlesden Ripper's victims, he might say he did not believe in their existence. It was now difficult to say what he 'believed.' Though, perhaps not very difficult. He believed, as always, in things he could quantify. So really, he believed the things he knew, and no more.

"Anyway," Harry piped up, "where are we going?" he added, in a clear attempt to steer the conversation. Sherlock allowed it, since he had no follow up questions ready.

"Do you recall the charming gentleman we helped apprehend in Harlesden?" Sherlock asked. Harry gave a slight, un-amused nod.

"His daughter appears to have run away from the hospital. Which, I'm sure you understand, seems suspicious. We're on our way to her apartment."

"The police don't suspect her to be involved, do they?" Harry asked.

"Of course they do." Sherlock answered. The wizard looked troubled at this news. It also seemed he had no more to say for now.

By the time they arrived, Laura Baskey's apartment had minimal police presence. It suited Sherlock, in that there was less annoying buzzing in his ear. He looked around, assessing what he could see of the young woman that lived here:

-not married, no pets, no children
-string of boyfriends, none serious
-works in finance
-boring, normal, tedious...

Except, of course, her father, who came to be known as the Harlesden Ripper. Lestrade suspected Laura was complicit in her father's crimes. Sherlock knew that was improbable. Even now, he could picture the murders in stark detail, and there was no evidence of more than one perpetrator.

But, he had to grudgingly admit to himself, it was possible that Laura Baskey at least knew about what her father did with his spare time. There is more than one way to be involved in murder. Her disappearance was very suspicious.
Lestrade met them at the door, and led them through the living room. The wallpaper in the flat was cheap, but rather new. If he had to guess, the flat was remodeled less than a month ago. Sherlock filed these details away for later.

As soon as Lestrade gathered them in the run-away woman's flat, he tightly crossed his arms, and fixed Sherlock with a glare.

Sherlock had categorized Lestrade's (rather limited) range of gestures, and he knew this look was used in two situations. Lestrade was either perplexed about a crime, and couldn't make heads or tails of it (more common, and very frequent occurrence), or he was beyond irritated with Sherlock. This time, it turned out to be a bit of both.

"I looked up professor Dore, here; called Cambridge, and asked after him." Sherlock froze, as Lestrade started speaking. He was immediately aware of Potter's presence, hovering behind him. This wasn't the time to think of Potter, he told himself. Not while Lestrade was figuring out that Sherlock had lied to him. Again.

"No one there by that name, they said." Lestrade continued.

"Then, I thought I'd ask about their department of Occult History; which does not exist. In Cambridge, or, according to the folks that I spoke to, at any self-respecting University." Lestrade took a pause to draw his breath.

"Sherlock, they actually laughed when I asked about it. You know, I hate to be made a fool." Lestrade pressed his lips together, which meant he was finished and now it was Sherlock's turn.

"Don't. Not the time. Who is he?" Lestrade pointed at Harry, who hadn't said a word.

"A professor of Occult History who is unaccredited, and therefore, not teaching at a self-respecting university." Sherlock retorted, and stole a glance at Harry, who he willed to keep his mouth shut. At least for now. He knew if he simply avoided the question, the DI would eventually give up, and let Sherlock keep the secret.

"Why did you bring him?" Lestrade asked.

"I thought I could use his expertise."

"And how did you know you would need it?"

"A hunch." Sherlock answered, nonchalantly.

He was eager for this little interrogation to end. Sherlock was still unsure how Harry's 'profession' tied into this.

Lestrade sighed and gave Sherlock a hard, long stare. It seemed to imply that the matter could be resolved later, but it will be resolved at some point.

"I'm going to assume you're not telling me because I'd rather not know. I'll trust you this time, but Sherlock, this better not come back to bite me." Sherlock remained silent. He just hoped they could all move onto the mystery, and quickly. Thankfully, Lestrade obliged his unspoken request.

"Laura Baskey, aged 28, disappeared from the hospital last night around 3 am. Reviewing the
"And what are we doing in her apartment? You would not have called me here if there was nothing unusual about it." Sherlock could barely keep the edge of irritation out of his voice.

Lestrade frowned, and motioned with his arm to the doorway of, what Sherlock assumed, was the only bedroom.

It was not an unusual room. White wall paper, a twin bed, and a few arrangements of furniture, and then Sherlock glanced down at the floor…

The floor was wooden, and old. Sherlock noted, perhaps the only 'old' surface in the entire flat. No doubt Laura was able to benefit from her father's remodeling business. He noticed the carpet lying in a heap, in the corner of the room, which was likely thrown aside by unscrupulous, and underpaid police grunts. The length and width of the carpet, Sherlock guessed, were perfect for covering the middle of the floor which-

He wasn't sure what to call it. A chart, or a picture, or a diagram of some sort was scratched and painted into the wood. Sherlock's hands immediately sought his magnifying glass, tucked as always inside his jacket.

The illustration had a roughly round shape. It was about three and a half feet in diameter, though it was hard to gauge because the circumference was not regular. It featured many concentric circles and arcs spinning out from said center. There were words, here and there, (not in English, or any language he was aware of) and strange symbols in the spaces between the geometric figures. He had no idea what it meant, or what the writing was trying to signify.

He could ascertain other facts about the image however. The paint was regular acrylic, if he had to guess. It was painted into grooves in the floor, made with a screwdriver, judging by the harshness of the scratches.

The grooves were older than the paint on top, much older. The paint was not well worn and had to be fairly recent. He would guess that the artist was Laura, though it was possible the scratchings were not her handiwork.

"So what is it?" he heard Lestrade's voice above him, as he crouched over the floor examining the image. The truthful answer was that Sherlock had no idea. He had never seen anything like it. He did not want to admit this to the DI.

"What do you think it is?" Sherlock countered.

"It looks like some sort of witchcraft, doesn't it? Like something you'd see in a horror film." Lestrade answered, and Sherlock had to fight down a snort.

"It sounds like you have a theory." Sherlock said, as he was always in need of some good entertainment. And Lestrade's theories were always suitable in this regard.

"I do, yeah." Lestrade said, with what Sherlock knew was false confidence. Sherlock stood up to face the DI, and bid him to continue.

"I think they were both part of some cult." Lestrade started, hesitating at first, but gathering more steam as he spoke. "Maybe they were both brainwashed, both the father and the daughter were part of some sort of occult club. Baskey killing all those girls, maybe it was some sort of ritual, a sacrifice. If I'm right then we'll have to find this group as soon as possible because the other member might be dangerous as well…"
"If you're right, then yes." Sherlock replied, and went back to studying the diagram on the floor. Lestrade's theory was too much of a leap, he thought, if all he was going off of was the enigmatic diagram on the floor.

"You don't think so?" Lestrade asked.

"No, I don't think so. We never once found anything like this at one of the crime scenes. We have no evidence to correlate Baskey senior and this...occult club theory." Sherlock said.

"So you think this is completely unrelated." Lestrade countered, gesturing to the floor.

"No, nothing's unrelated." Sherlock answered. He thought suddenly of the fresh wallpaper adorning the walls of the bedroom and the rest of the flat, when a sudden idea struck him.

"You've already assumed too much, and deducing facts from assumptions is like building houses on quicksand." Sherlock mused, as he loped towards one of the walls. He noticed Harry, who had briefly left his mind. The wizard was studying the diagram with a curious expression.

"We can only deduce from what we see, and from what we know." he said, and then gingerly pried loose a section of the white wallpaper from the bottom, where it met the baseboard. He worked slowly so as not to damage the walls underneath. The wallpaper was a thick ply, which masked perfectly the texture of the wall.

He heard a puzzled 'What are you doing?' coming from Lestrade's direction, but continued peeling. It took a few minutes for one strips of the white paper to be halfway removed, and the wall underneath to become visible.

There were scratchings, almost identical to the ones on the floor. Except where the image on the floor was depicting geometric patterns, the walls only had what could only be described as words and letters. Sherlock considered himself talented in linguistics, but he was sure he had never seen anything like it. He was very glad that Lestrade had decided to call him in. This, he thought, would be a fantastically exciting case. There was so much to learn! He was even grateful to Laura, for doing a runner and leading him, in a roundabout way, to her mysterious flat.

The DI was standing behind him now, also examining the wall.

"You think it's on every wall?" He asked.

"Likely only the ones in the bedroom, but it wouldn't hurt to check. answered Sherlock.

"Right…" Lestrade answered.

Satisfied with the peeled off section, and after laying the discarded paper to the side, Sherlock picked his phone from his pocket. He aimed it at the diagram on the floor, and snapped a picture; then moved around, and took another, making sure that all angles of the image on the floor were covered.

"I'll need photographs of everything on the walls, if you could." Said Sherlock to no-one in particular, though Lestrade understood it was meant for him.

"What is on there?" The DI asked.

Sherlock just shrugged.

"Well, what about your 'professor'? Isn't this his area of specialty? Maybe he knows what it is."
Lestrade said, pointedly looking at Harry. Sherlock huffed. Neither Laura nor Walden Baskey were wizards, so it was highly unlikely that Harry would be any more knowledgeable on the subject than Sherlock.

Sherlock's thoughts were proven wrong when he turned around and saw Harry staring intently at the scratchings, his eyes moving side to side, as though he were trying to read. Interesting...

"Yes, what do you think about this, professor?" Sherlock asked.

Harry looked around, surprised at being addressed. He looked back at the wall, then at Sherlock, his face a look of concentration.

"It's…" he started, and gave Lestrade an uneasy glance.

"Well, it's Goetic." said Harry, as though that explained everything.

"You'll have to be more explicit." said Sherlock.

"It's a language…” Harry looked uncomfortably at the DI. Unfortunately, this time Lestrade noticed.

"Oh, no, no, no, you are absolutely not pushing me out again. Go on, you were talking about this gothic language? I can be privy to the details of my own investigation."

"Goetic. It's a language used to er, communicate with otherworldly beings." As Harry spoke, he kept throwing Sherlock pointed stares, which probably meant he wanted to speak with Sherlock alone. Well, there wasn't much Sherlock could do. Lestrade was pretty clear on the 'not being pushed out' front.

"Can you translate it?" Sherlock demanded.

"Of course not. I never learned Goetic." Harry answered, and unless Sherlock was imagining it (which he did very little of, since it got in the way of seeing the evidence of reality) the wizard was slightly off put by suggestion. He had the same subdued, hollow tone, as though the he had forgotten how to portray irritation.

Sherlock gave the room another searching look. The engravings would have to be deciphered later. Even though Harry could not translate it, he would probably be able to point Sherlock in the right direction. Sherlock thought it was wise not mention more in front of Lestrade, who was still unaware of what Harry was.

Lestrade was calling one of his underlings. Sherlock was glad to hear that the DI was following up on his request to have the walls stripped and photographed.

"Do you think this has a connection to your world?" Sherlock asked Harry in a low tone, while the DI talked on the phone.

"I don't think so. But it's hard to say." Harry said. Sherlock was really hoping that Potter had a better explanation which he simply didn't want to deliver here.

There was not much else he could do in the flat. Stripping the wall was a tedious task, that Sherlock felt could be better appropriated to someone else. He looked carefully through the room, noting the other items. Picture frames, books on micro-finance, a desk.

Sherlock checked the closet, then the drawers of the dresser. Nothing was standing out. He
swooped down next to the bed, and lifted the blanket to look underneath.

There was a little suitcase, which Sherlock fished out and opened. It was neatly packed with essential clothing items, and a plastic bag full of hygiene products.

He took down all of his observations in a neat corner of his mind. He had no doubt they would come to be useful as the case continues to unfold.

Harry was still staring at the peeled back wall, Lestrade was on his phone, and Sherlock was ready to leave.

"Get in touch when you have those photos." He said to Lestrade, who nodded his accord mutely.

Just then a young police woman entered the room. She held out a coffee for Lestrade who took it, and continued talking on his mobile, which was now pressed between his ear and shoulder blade. She was blonde and Sherlock thought she looked somewhat familiar.

"Hi again." She said with a wide smile, and Sherlock was rather disconcerted (since they had never met and there was no reason to attach 'again' onto her greeting). That is, until he realised it was directed at Harry, who nodded, and greeted her back.

He remember then seeing this girl leaning into his wizard, and displaying her attraction in a rather blatant way. It was right after they found Liz, and before they cornered Baskey. Harry had looked uncomfortable then, and he looked even more so now.

"Right, we're off." Sherlock said quickly. He avoided the impulse to grab Harry by the arm, and lead him out of the room. It was unnecessary anyway, since the wizard eagerly followed him out of the flat, and out to the street.

...
It was as pleasant as any summer day in London could be. The heat had not yet become oppressive, and the afternoon felt warm and lovely. Even Sherlock, who usually viewed seasons as nothing but obnoxious temperature changes which sometimes rendered his favorite coat useless, decided it was the right time to take a stroll outside.

So, exiting the apartment block on Holborn road, with Potter in tow, he started making a lazily and circuitous path through central London.

Like everything Sherlock did, the walk had a secondary, and more practical purpose. Sherlock had fully expected Harry to immediately divulge everything he knew about what they had seen in the flat. From the diagram carved into the wooden floor of the woman's bedroom, to the walls which were covered with a dialect Potter had called Goetic. But the wizard remained tight-lipped, and did not say a word as they strolled block after block.

It was an odd trait that the wizard had. Secrets and silence were not something Sherlock was accustomed to in an assistant. And Potter seemed a natural at keeping information to himself. The worst of it was that Sherlock could not easily deduce the wizard's secrets, unlike John, whose only real secret was his middle name, and too easy to discover once Sherlock got a hold of his birth certificate.

"Now that we are out of Lestrade's presence, care to fully explain what we saw in there?" Sherlock began, as politely as he could manage.

"I don't know too much about it, really." Potter answered.

"Let's start with the beginning. What is Goetic? Which group of people speak it?"

"People don't. I already said, it's a language used to communicate with beings which are not human. Sherlock, they would never let us study something like that at our school, and I certainly never picked it up afterwards."

"How do you know about it then?" Sherlock snapped. The wizard was being less than helpful.

"I only know what it looks like, since it is very distinctive..." Harry answered, and Sherlock agreed. He had never seen anything like it, and he considered himself an accomplished linguist.
The letters and words he remembered scrawled on the walls, while flowing together in some form of cursive, seemed like they were written backwards.

"And anyway, I don't think we should be having this conversation now." Harry finished, and as though to prove his point, glanced around suspiciously at people passing them by. Sherlock rolled his eyes. The wizard's paranoia was somewhat irritating. He could not fault him, however, since one does not evade the law for a decade by being less than cautious.

Sherlock huffed, and continued walking.

As they walked on Sherlock noticed the smell of cooking food wafting through the street from a small diner, with the doors open, no doubt to attract customers. Sherlock was apathetic to it, since he had already consumed enough nutrients at breakfast to last him until the next day. However he did notice the longing glance Potter gave to the open doors.

Sherlock decided then that he might be able to loosen Potter's silent resolve with food. It had worked with John multiple times. He would notice that sometimes, while working a case, the doctor would get irritable and illogical, for no apparent reason. At first, Sherlock could not make heads or tails of why John could be perfectly happy and energetic one day, and then moody and jumpy a couple days later; but it seemed that a large helping of food generally solved the problem. He had asked Mrs. Hudson about the strange phenomenon, but she had laughed and said something incomprehensible like 'The way to a man's heart is through his stomach,' which Sherlock thought was rather morbid, as he had no intention of vivisecting John to reach any of his organs.

He stopped and turned, grabbing Potter's arm, and walked them into the open doors.

It was only after he had sat them down at a corner booth, some distance away from the other scant patrons, that Sherlock noticed the wizard looking confused.

"Aren't you hungry?" he asked. Potter's expression cleared up, and the wizard smiled at him. Harry nodded, and uttered a quiet 'thanks.'

Sherlock waited until he had ordered food, and was well on the way to consuming most of it, before he recommenced his questioning.

"When I asked you if our case has a connection to your world, you said you didn't thinks so, but it was hard to say. Care to explain what you meant?" Sherlock started.

Potter eyebrows furrowed. He pointed to the plates which Sherlock had ordered and not touched, and asked: "Aren't you going to eat that?"

Sherlock did not think that was a logical follow up to his own question.

"No, all yours." He said and pushed the plates over to Potter.

Sherlock pursed his lips, and began drumming his finger on the table. He had learned from Mycroft that this was an effective way of getting someone to talk, of their own free will.

It worked splendidly. It only took less than a minute for Potter to look uncomfortable, and start talking.

"It's not only people from...uh, our world that have had access to that language." Harry said in hushed tones, as though everyone in the diner was busy eavesdropping. Sherlock scowled in annoyance. There was music pouring from overhead, and a group of three men with beers speaking
rather loudly in the middle of the small room.

No one would overhear them, he was sure. To convince Potter he stood up, and slid into the opposite side of the booth, where Harry had to quickly slide over and make room. The two men were sitting closely side by side. This way they could speak quietly, if the wizard absolutely required it. And, a convincing voice whispered to Sherlock, the closeness was also a fortuitous turn of events.

"I'd prefer if you didn't try to censor yourself." Sherlock said with his voice lowered. "You realize that whether or not you tell me anything, I will continue searching for this woman. I'd rather know what I am facing, but I have jumped into situations knowing very little as well." Sherlock said, thinking of his trip to Diagon Alley. He noticed, with glee, that Harry had a guilty expression.

"Right. I'm sorry. I'm supposed to help, aren't I?" Harry said. Sherlock nodded his complete agreement.

"From what I remember, it is uncertain where the language came from, or who discovered it, but it rose to vogue sometime in the 11th century. The beings it was used to communicate with were, more often than not, malevolent. Even though it was considered a magical art, both wizards and muggles had some success talking with them." Harry started speaking quickly, still keeping his voice on the quiet side.

"Anyway, halfway through the 14th century, someone supposedly made a deal with one of those beings. The deal was that the Asker would gain ultimate power, whatever that means. In exchange, the being could be granted access to our world." Harry continued.

"This all seems very vague." Sherlock commented.

"Yes, well, that's because whoever it was that unleashed the being was erased from history by the wizards of the time. Goetic, and all the manuscripts containing it, were made illegal. The majority were destroyed, though obviously, some survived.

"After that, most wizard stayed away from Ars Goetia. It's considered a dark art, and to my knowledge, very few have involved themselves with it since then." Potter finished and resumed eating.

"So these beings are able to grant power to whoever talks to them?" Sherlock asked, with skepticism. The whole story sounded like a spooky tale to frighten wizarding children.

"I think that's the point, yes." Harry answered.

"And very few wizards have attempted to make contact?" Sherlock prodded.

"I don't know of any." Harry shrugged.

"Am I to assume that all wizards are devoid of the desire for power?"

"No, unfortunately not." Harry answered. "But, the beings are difficult, or rather, impossible to control. I think wizards, even the dark ones, have instinctively stayed away from it. That, and no one knows how to properly summon them anymore. Not since Goetic was outlawed."

"And what about non-magicals?" Sherlock asked. After all, Laura Baskey was certainly no witch.

"That's where it gets complicated." Potter started. "I think it was around the turn of the century that a group of muggles found some of the writings. They translated them, and pieced together what
they could. One of them, Crowley I think his name was, published the translation. It caused a scandal in the wizarding world, but in the end, no harm came out of it. Once the wizards realized other muggles thought Crowley was just a nutter, they left him alone." Harry finished.

"The translations are published? Where could I find them?" Sherlock asked.

"Probably most well-stocked libraries." Harry shrugged.

"And the wizarding authorities are not concerned about this?"

"No. I guess something essential was lost in what Crowley was able to put together. Like I said, no one's been able to so much as talk to one of the beings since Goetic was originally banned. So, the ministry did not deem it a threat." Harry answered.

Sherlock sat back in silence for a few moments processing everything Harry told him. To his horror, he realized Lestrade's theory sounded more and more convincing. Baskey's daughter could have potentially been involved in a cult that was attempting to revive the dead language, and do… whatever it is it was supposed to do.

"Tell me more about these beings."

"That I really don't know anything else about. Our history is deliberately vague on the subject. I think muggles used to call them demons, though I highly doubt any of them have horns or hooves. Other than that…" Harry shrugged, indicating that he had no more answers for Sherlock.

Sherlock scoffed. *Demons*, indeed.

"It sounds like the only time this *Goetic* actually proved useful was right before it was banned." Sherlock said.

"Not sure if useful is the right word." Harry muttered darkly. "The being that was unleashed in the 14th century took the form of rats, millions of them. Rats that carried death."

"Are you talking about the bubonic plague?"

"Well, according to wizarding legends, that's how the black death started."

Sherlock thought at least the wizard was smart enough to admit that the whole thing was historical hearsay. He knew perfectly well that the incident known as the Black Plague was nothing more than a form of the Yersinia pestis bacterium, which had been around much longer than the 14th century.

"You believe that half of Europe died because one of these goetic beings was unleashed, but you're not worried about finding so much of it written on the walls of a flat?" Sherlock asked, with genuine curiosity.

Harry sighed.

"I suppose I have faith that whoever tried to erase it back then kept the secrets well hidden." Harry answered slowly, seemingly unsure of himself.

Sherlock narrowed his eyes. Something clicked in his head. He thought he understood something about Potter's nature. Before further analysis, Sherlock blurted it out.

"And you, have you kept your secrets well?" Sherlock asked. Harry turned to stare at him with
wide eyes.

"That's it, isn't it? You're trying to conceal something from collective knowledge. Something you think is too dangerous for anyone to dabble in…" Sherlock continued. Potter's frightened expression told him he was correct.

"It's scary how you can do that." Potter muttered, looking away.

"Please, legilimency is far superior. That was merely a guess. Though a good one, I assume." Harry merely shrugged, which indicated neither agreement nor disagreement. He was looking out the window blankly, not really seeing the busy street behind the glass.

"If it makes you feel better, I'm sure whatever it is you know will stay hidden, considering that you've led an incredibly reclusive life, and have had no contact from any other wizards." Sherlock added. Not that he cared if Potter felt better or not, of course. But it did cause an odd lurch in his stomach when the wizard turned to him, and smiled.

"I hope so." He said.

Sherlock arrived at Baker Street somewhat later than he expected. He had taken a trip to a library, where, like Potter said, he was able to find a wealth of information on the *Ars Goetia*. He was excited at first, but that excitement quickly soured into disappointment as he glanced through the books. It all looked like New Age mumbo-jumbo to Sherlock, more fantasy than history; and certainly none of it fact. Demons, dead kings, and *invocations*, which sounded like a non-magical buffoon attempting to recreate the linguistic power latent in spells. Sherlock thought it was closer to bad poetry.

Potter glanced through the books as well, though he found it more entertaining than Sherlock. But then again, the wizard was not above enjoying fiction, unlike Sherlock, who thought it was a waste of time.

Evening was drawing on when Sherlock got two texts at the same time. One was from Mycroft, reminding Sherlock snidely that their uncle Rudy will expect to see his nephews soon, and that Sherlock better be investigating away on Potter's behalf. Sherlock committed the first part to memory, as Rudy had been his favorite relative growing up.

The other was from Hermione Granger, and the tone was as snide as Mycroft's, and for a second Sherlock had the fleeting impression that the two were working together. 'Are you going to stand me up again, Mr. Holmes?' Her text had read. Sherlock quickly checked the time. 19:36. It appears he had, though quite by accident.

He scrolled through his phone until he found her address, which she had sent to him in a timely manner, after their last conversation. It was on the outskirts of London, which would be a long journey by cab. He almost requested that Potter apparate him there, but of course, though it would be very convenient time and travel-wise, if the two magicals were to meet before Sherlock could explain the situation, the outcome could be disastrous.

Groaning to himself, Sherlock made his excuses to Potter, and was out the door and hailing a cab.

Granger owned a tidy townhouse, among a sea of townhouses.
He did not feel any sudden and inexplicable urge to run elsewhere, like he had with Harry's hide-out. He supposed that he might not be the only non-magical guest which Hermione Granger would have.

He knocked on the door, and Hermione was there in less than five seconds, greeting him warmly and ushering him through to a small sitting room. He made special note of her shoes, which had a smart, short heel, and were rather scuffed. She also had scratches on her right hand. Cat scratches, if Sherlock had to guess.

"I'm very glad you came, Mr. Holmes. I was almost convinced that I would not see you again; but I was, and am, certainly willing to pay you for investigating the Surrey case, if that is what you wish..." She began speaking, but Sherlock interrupted.

"No need." He took a second to look around, and found himself annoyed at the lack of magicalness in Granger home. If he did not know better, he would have never guessed this woman was a witch.

"I had thought that wizards and witches would live in more eccentric accommodations." He commented.

"I have many muggle acquaintances. I had thought you are more used to taking clients in your own flat?" She countered. Indeed, he was. Though, just right now there happened to be a wizarding fugitive there, probably making tea and watching telly with Mrs. Hudson.

"I was curious as to what a witch's home might look like." Sherlock answered easily. It was not even really a lie.

"I hate to disappoint you with the lack of bubbling cauldrons and missing children." She shrugged. Sherlock chuckled.

"Potions aren't your forte?" He countered.

"They're certainly not my weakness." Granger answered, "I just don't enjoy working at home. You never get the stench of potion fumes out of the upholstery." She sat in one of the armchairs, and delicately motioned for Sherlock to also sit himself, across from herself.

"Could I trouble you for tea, or coffee, perhaps?" Sherlock asked, not really interested in any beverage. He merely wanted to see what the rest of Granger's house might look like.

"Certainly, how rude of me not to offer. Which is it?" Granger asked.

"Er..."

"Coffee, or tea?" She asked.

"Tea." Sherlock answered with confusion, since Granger remained sitting squarely in her chair. She took out her wand, which Sherlock noticed was slimmer and longer than Harry's, and gave it a complicated swirl pointing it over her shoulder. A tray came floating out of what Sherlock could only assume was the kitchen, and began serving two cups of tea. Granger gingerly took her cup from mid-air, where the plate remained floating. His own had floated towards the other armchair. Sherlock sat himself down as well, accepting that he might have to postpone exploring the witch's house.

"So, what happened in Surrey-" Hermione began. Sherlock had to admit she was difficult to get off track. "Have you been able to find anything else? When we spoke last, you said you did not believe Potter to be responsible, and I was hoping that you have made some headway in finding who the
true perpetrator was." She said, wringing her hands. Sherlock, however, was not ready to jump into the subject.

"Very little headway, unfortunately. Other cases got in the way. Don't you have an offspring that's supposed to be home?" Sherlock said, remembering his initial deductions at Diagon Alley.

"Yes. A daughter. She's with her father." Granger answered quickly.

"Very interesting. You did not wish to have her here?" Sherlock was intrigued by this little detail. Something was off.

"What does my daughter have to do with anything?" Granger asked, her voice icy.

There were bookshelves lining the walls of the entire study. Among thick and ponderous tomes concerning law, Sherlock spotted young adult books, neatly placed among the others. In fact, he also noticed children's books, which have not been touched in years, though carefully kept with the rest. He pursed his lips. He wondered what it was that had made Granger send her girl away.

"Possibly nothing. What were you asking?" Sherlock said, as he noticed Hermione giving him a suspicious glare.

"The Surrey case, you have gotten no closer to finding the culprit…?" She began.

"The Surrey case is irrelevant." Sherlock said with a bored tone.

"Mr. Holmes, two people were murdered in cold blood, in their own home. Two people who happen to be the only living relations of Harry Potter."

"Yes, you see that's just it. The frame job is so obvious, you'd have to be an idiot to not see it." Sherlock said.

"I am not one of the aurors that have investigated the case, but they are professionals, and they seem to think it's quite clear Harry Potter is responsible, so I don't see…" Hermione's icy tone was giving way to confusion, which suited Sherlock just fine.

"But you don't think he did it. May I ask why?" Sherlock said.

"You didn't think so either! Or have you changed your mind?"

"It doesn't matter what I think. I'd rather hear why you think Potter did or did not murder his dear aunt and uncle." Sherlock was unable to remain sitting. He jumped up and paced in front of the bookshelves, casting a cursory glance at the titles. He had hoped Granger would work it out faster.

He heard her suck in her breath, and for a few seconds she said nothing. Sherlock thought it looked like she was trying to control her temper.

"It doesn't matter what I think, either." Hermione said.

"I'd rather hear it anyway."

"I-" Granger hesitated, "I was not there. I don't know who murdered the Dursleys, I have very little information about the crime, and I don't wish to form an opinion with no information." Hermione said mechanically.

"Ugh, don't be so boring." Sherlock muttered. Hermione looked scandalized, but he pressed on.
"The Dursleys have no connection to the magical world, yet they were clearly murdered by a wizard. I was there, and can tell you that the two were victims of the killing curse. The perpetrator apparated in, killed the man first. Then, the woman, who was hiding in the bathroom, with the door locked. He did not touch anything else in their house. He did not visit any other rooms. It was cold, and impersonal. When the killer was done, he simply apparated out." Sherlock rambled off. He could picture number 4 Privet Drive as clearly as though he was still there.

"Now that you have some information, do you think Potter was the one to murder his relatives?" Sherlock turned to Hermione, who was attempting to keep her face blank.

"I don't know." She said simply.

"Yes you do. You've always known, but you're doubting yourself. Or, you simply don't want to reveal it to me. I must remind you, we are on the same team." Sherlock spoke, hardly noticing that he was pacing.

"The truth of the matter is that considering the method of murder, we have very little evidence from how the crime was perpetrated. The killer left nothing in the house but corpses, and they can't very well tell us who it was. This leaves us only the question of why. Once we figure out why someone would have wanted the Dursleys dead, we can figure out the culprit." Sherlock continued. He was hoping that Granger, being moderately clever, might pick up on what he was trying to communicate.

"So, then, why were the Dursleys murdered?" Sherlock asked, half rhetorical, half expecting Hermione's answer. She rose to the occasion.

"The official report states that Harry Potter had troubles with his relatives beginning at an early age. There are documented instances of him using magic to harm one of them, though it was accidental magic, and the hex was easily reversed. There are also documented complaints of maltreatment which were filed against the Dursleys by parties which were concerned for Harry Potter's safety. This is, of course, ancient history…" Hermione recited all this as though she were reading it from a brief in front of her.

"Indeed? 'Concerned parties?' Might you know these parties Ms. Granger?" Sherlock asked. This information did not surprise him. He remembered the smallest bedroom in the little house, which had, at one point, metal bars installed on the window. He also saw the clear signs in the molding around the window, that someone had forcibly removed the bars, by sheer force. Someone was in the know about how the Dursleys treated their wizarding charge, so a child abuse complaint was not unexpected.

"I'm afraid I don't." Hermione answered, with a slight twitch of her hands.

"Liar." Sherlock stated, "Though it's irrelevant. So, considering everything you've said, it leaves the why quite obvious, no? It had to have been Potter who murdered his relatives. A simple matter of revenge, yes?" Sherlock asked again, hoping that Granger would pick up the bait.

"It appears so." She said, turning pale and clutching her hands. Sherlock scoffed.

"You know very well that's not what happened. Why do you insist on being so obtuse? Or rather, acting obtuse." Sherlock said, with growing irritation.

"Let's go with that theory. Let's imagine Potter, coming back years later to murder his adopted family. Do you think he would have said a little spell, and left, on the spot, without disturbing anything? Does that sound like revenge?" Sherlock was no longer asking rhetorically.
"I don't think he would have murdered anyone at all!" Hermione bit out. She looked like she immediately regretted that outburst.

"Of course you don't. You're more observant and clever than the average idiot, and you were gracious enough to point out the inconsistencies in that original crime, the one in 1999 wasn't it? Different gait, difficulty mounting a broom, etc. You don't think Potter was responsible for any of it, which is probably why you have tried so hard to contact me." Sherlock finished.

"I didn't realize I was being so obvious." Hermione said, her tone still icy.

"No need to worry yourself. Practically everyone is." He answered. "So, the question really is why someone, more specifically a wizard, would murder Potter's relatives?" Sherlock asked aloud.

"Because everyone would assume it was Harry." Hermione said.

"Right. But Potter is already wanted. Surely he wouldn't be any more wanted? If, hypothetically, Potter were caught in the time between his escape from prison and the Dursleys' murder, he would have gone straight to prison. Would they have even given him another trial?" Sherlock rounded back on Hermione.

"No. If he were caught, I believe that the official procedure would be to immediately call for dementors and have them administer the kiss." Hermione answered sadly. Sherlock's eyebrows climbed up of their own accord. He did not know this. He understood that dementors were non-human guards of the wizard prison Azkaban. Judging by the few times he's mentioned it to Potter, and the nervous way the wizard spoke of them, dementors were highly unpleasant creatures. He also understood that the kiss was some form of execution used by wizards for their worst criminals.

"Would you mind very much to explaining exactly what this kiss is? The more information I have about your world the better." Sherlock said. Hermione looked very uncomfortable.

"It's… rather barbaric. The dementor... Well, the exact process has not been studied extensively, which is ridiculous considering we still use the kiss, and no one should have to undergo that when the authorities don't even exactly know what happens...." Hermione started to ramble. She stopped abruptly, and continued in a much more concise manner, for which Sherlock was grateful.

"The dementor lowers its hood, and it is thought that the creature is able to suck the soul out of a human victim. What happens to the soul after this act is still in question, though some think that the soul resides with the dementor while the body remains alive. Once the body dies, the soul would, theoretically move on. But again, this is all theory. After this, the victim, if he or she remains living, is catatonic. It's similar to a muggle lobotomy. Of course, the muggles have mostly done away with that repugnant practice." Hermione finished. Sherlock sensed that the use of dementors has been something that the witch has involved herself in politically. Though, judging by her frustration, she has had little success.

Sherlock was rather disturbed by this. If Harry were to ever be caught, he would be ... kissed immediately? What sort of system worked like that? What if new evidence were to surface which would, rightfully, exonerate Potter? Sherlock froze, and a horrible image floated to the forefront of his mind. He saw himself entering his house on Baker street, and finding Harry sitting slumped over on the floor, drooling and staring aimlessly at the ground. Sherlock had to shake himself in order to dispel the image. Irrationally he almost dashed to Hermione's door and ran back to Baker street, to make sure it was only his imagination. He controlled himself, of course, but the thought still frightened him.

"It's horrible, isn't it?" Sherlock was almost surprised to hear Hermione's small whisper.
"Yes. Does this happen to all criminals?" He asked.

"Only those that have escaped Azkaban." Hermione answered. Sherlock made a note to ask Harry how exactly he did escape the wizarding prison.

"I believe we were on the subject of motive, in regards to the Dursley murder." Sherlock said.

"Yes, so if you don't think it was Harry, who do you think it was?" Hermione asked, demurely.

"Unfortunately, Ms, Granger, you're the only magical person I know. Since the murder weapon was almost certainly magic, my list of suspects is very short." Sherlock replied, sardonically.

Granger grew pale suddenly.

"No, not you." Sherlock snapped. "But if you would like me on the case, I will need a large amount of help from you. I am, you must understand, rather limited in my capabilities. I can hardly access the magical world without some assistance." Sherlock said. He had Harry too, but the wizard was just as limited as Sherlock.

"Of course. Anything you need. Only…" Hermione hesitated.

"Yes?"

"I'm not exactly sure which case we are talking about." She said timidly.

"They are one and the same. I believe if we find the culprit of the Dursley murder, he will lead us to the culprit of the murders that took place in '99. Or, vice versa."

"So you don't think Potter was responsible?" She asked, her timidity disappearing suddenly. Before Sherlock could answer, she spoke again.

"But you have no evidence, and very little information about what happened in '99. All you have is my testimony, which is subjective, considering I was friends with Harry. I even told you this. Are you saying you're basing your whole conclusion of the fact that the Dursley murder was likely not committed by Potter?" Granger had a point. Of course, she didn't know that Harry was currently living with Sherlock. But even then, what evidence did he really have that Potter had not murdered anyone. Besides knowing that the wizard was definitely not cold-blooded psychopath material, very little, thought Sherlock.

"I don't always feel the need to explain my deductions." Sherlock answered simply. Hermione still eyed him suspiciously. She was not the type to trust quickly, Sherlock supposed.

"You were there, at the scene of the crime, and then at the trial? You're also moderately intelligent, and observant. You don't think he did it, and don't bother denying it. For now, this is all I have. I am working off guesswork, it's true. And, if you promise not to tell anyone, I have been wrong before. But we will not know either way until we thoroughly examine the case." Sherlock said, in as friendly a manner as he could manage. Hermione seemed mollified.

"I will help in anyway I can. I want to find the truth." She said, solemnly, as though she were making a legal commitment to Sherlock.

"Excellent! The first thing I will need is access to the building in which the murders took place. I will also need, if you are able to obtain it, a list of every ministry employee in the year 1999; as comprehensive a list as possible, though I admit this might be difficult for you to acquire. It's advantageous that you work there." As Sherlock spoke, he carefully watched Hermione. He was
expecting her to argue, or say that this was too much work for her, or that these records were impossible to find. She did not do any of that. Instead, to his surprise, she twirled her wand, and a little, bound journal zoomed to her. She began to scratch in it.

"It will be necessary to keep what we are doing secret. I believe that the person we are looking for works in the ministry, and alerting him or her to our efforts will be a major hindrance." Sherlock said, looking at the journal.

Hermione seemed to understand what he was saying.

"I won't leave it laying around." She said, pointing to the little book.

"Fine." Sherlock said. "I will also need a current list of every employee in the ministry. Judging by the total wizarding population in Britain, I would estimate that the ministry employs less than three hundred people. Is this correct?" Sherlock asked.

"Yes, I know it's roughly two hundred eighty, though the number constantly changes." Hermione answered briskly, as she continued to jot things down in her journal.

"It has barely been a month since the Surrey incident. I admit, I was slow to take the case up, but I am confident we will still find what I need. From the last two months, I will need a separate list of all ministry personnel that have either taken a leave of absence, were fired, quit, injured in the line of duty, or that have just stopped showing up. Pay specific attention to the auror department. If there have been any aurors recently that have been in any way indisposed, I will need full details..." Sherlock stopped talking when he noticed that Hermione had stopped writing and was looking up at him.

"You know of one?" He asked. Hermione nodded.

"A senior auror was poisoned, only a week ago. Do you think it could be related?" She asked.

"It's possible. Is he still alive?" Sherlock asked.

"Yes, but...he's not conscious. The healers are not sure when he'll recover."

"You knew him personally?" Sherlock asked, noticing the way Hermione's voice changed when she talked about the injured auror.

"Yes. I know him very well." She answered.

"Will you able to find out what he was working on before his mishap?"

"I will try." She scratched something in her book, then stopped. Biting her lip, she looked up at Sherlock, a question in her eyes.

"What you are asking for is all classified information. I would be breaking many laws, not the least of which is the International Statute of Secrecy. How do I know I can trust you?" She asked, though it seemed the question was for herself, rather than Sherlock.

"I'm not sure I care whether you trust me or not. The fact of the matter is that I cannot get anywhere without your help. I take cases because solving them is what I like to do. It is my passion. I also like to see justice being done. I assume you want me to solve this case because you want to see your old friend proven innocent. I don't see a conflict of interests." Sherlock said. He was pacing up and down, the length of the little sitting room. His eyes were focused on the bookshelves, and he was reading the titles. The conversation with Granger was only taking a small
portion of his thinking capacity, and he was at risk of growing completely indifferent to her moral dilemmas. He noticed one title that was familiar to him: *London's Noble Districts*. Its subject was curiously out of place among the others.

"If Harry is guilty...I don't- I wouldn't want to see him kissed." She admitted.

"I don't believe either of us have the intention of trying to chase after Potter..." Sherlock noticed Hermione's hand twitch. So she did want to chase Potter, he thought. He wondered what she would do with him if she found Harry. Nothing bad surely.

"I did say I have been wrong before-" Sherlock said, thinking unpleasantly of Magnussen, and what that error had almost cost him, "but I can assure that it is an incredibly infrequent occurrence. So far, everything I know about this case points to Potter being innocent." Sherlock stated.

"However, I usually require full cooperation from clients." Sherlock pointedly added.

"Yes, of course." Hermione said briskly, though Sherlock thought she might not be completely settled on the trusting him issue. This irritated Sherlock. He needed Granger. He hated when he needed other people in order to do his work.

"You sent your daughter to live with her father for the summer-" Sherlock began. He heard Hermione groan.

"Why are we back to this?" She asked, more exasperated than angry this time.

"Because it's relevant, isn't it?" Sherlock asked, in an offhand manner. He could imagine that the child was dear to Granger, and sending her away was no small decision. She was a mother, and she sensed danger.

"I assure you, it's not." She snapped. Sherlock chuckled.

"If I had to make a guess, I would say you've been trying to find Potter yourself." He said.

"I haven't-" She began, but Sherlock could tell he had guessed right.

"Since the Dursley murder. You've been putting all your extra hours into it, in fact. Has it payed off? Do you have any leads?" Sherlock asked, with feigned curiosity.

"You have no proof-" She began, but again, Sherlock cut her off.

"I don't need proof. This is hardly a court case." All he needed was to see her shoes and the worn book in the corner of the bookshelf, to know that Hermione had come very close to having Harry to herself. *London's Noble Districts* conveniently had a very detailed map of a certain historic neighborhood. He had searched through the book himself when he was looking at the map of old Archer Street, where Harry had been hiding.

Granger had a bemused expression on her face.

"It's going to be hard to keep anything from you, Mr. Holmes." She said.

"Then why bother?" Sherlock asked, going through the rest of the titles more carefully. Since the witch would not admit him to the rest of her house, this was the only source of deductions available to him. He would make good use of it, he decided.

"I suppose I shouldn't." She said. "I think I found where Harry had been hiding. But he wasn't there
anymore. Not for a couple of weeks, as far as I can tell." She admitted. Sherlock was fairly impressed by the witch's detective work. She was a month behind him, but still. He almost asked her if the white cat that lived there had scratched her, but restrained himself. As far as she knew, he had never been at the Archer house.

"What would you have done, if you had found him?" He asked.

"I don't know. I don't think I could have turned him in, to be honest." She said.

Sherlock nodded. He noticed a tiny book, barely visible between two larger tomes. The title was *Essences and Vessels*. It did not seem like the kind of reading Granger would be interested in. He decided to look closer.

"I think that's generally a good idea. If you were to, hypothetically, find Potter, I think the information we could get from him would be more valuable if- WHAT!?" Sherlock couldn't contain his outburst as he picked up the slim book, and read the author's name.

"I mean, er, what is this about?" he tried to recover. He held up *Essences and Vessels* to Hermione.

"Mr. Holmes, you really are quite strange..." She said, as she stood and came over to look at the what he had found. "And observant. I think that's the only magical book in this entire bookshelf. It doesn't howl or move like some of them, but still. It's a treatise on souls. Mostly it deals with the subject of damaging and healing souls. Incidentally, you can find answers to your earlier question about dementors and the kiss inside there. Or at least, the author's opinion on it." She said.

"And do you know much about this author?" Sherlock asked her. He did not know whether he found all this very funny or very irritating.

"No, I'm afraid I don't." she said simply.

"Would you mind if I borrowed it?" Sherlock asked, but he was already putting the slim volume into his coat.

"Not at all." She answered with amusement.

"Thank you." Sherlock said. He felt that at this point it was best to leave Hermione to finish the tasks he had given her.

"I will be in contact. My full attention is on this case, as of now. When you acquire any of the information I have asked for-" Sherlock started.

"I'll let you know immediately." Hermione finished for him.

... She walked him to the door. There was already a cab waiting for Sherlock outside, which was lucky, as it had started to rain.

Once seated in the cab, Sherlock took out the slim book he had taken from Hermione. It had a plain paper cover, white and glossy. The title, *Essences and Vessels*, was written in gray letters across the middle, and the bottom held the author's name: Allen Dore. Sherlock rolled his eyes. For how paranoid Harry seemed to be, he really ought to have thought of a different pseudonym for when he assisted Sherlock on cases.

Sherlock paged through the book, until he came to page usually reserved for the author's
biography. There was a letter from the publishers there. It stated what Sherlock already guessed, that Allen Dore was a Nom De Plum, and the author chose to remain anonymous. 'All proceeds from the sale of Essences and Vessels go to the Victims of War Charity, as requested by the author.'

Sherlock tucked the book securely into his coat. It would raise too many questions with Potter if he were to find Sherlock in possession of it.

It will be very complicated working this case with Harry and Hermione, he thought. He would have to walk a thin line between the wizard and witch, without letting either know about each other. Sherlock was confident that he could manage, but it might be easier if they could all combine their efforts.

Now, with Granger in the picture, and Mycroft's threat hanging over his head, Sherlock knew that it was only a matter of time before Harry's case was solved. The thought did not make him happy, however.

All he could see is Harry walking away from him, once he was free to do as he pleased. Perhaps he would get married, like John. Him and Hermione appeared to have a history. Hermione's help with exonerating him could certainly kindle a romance. The silliest and most illogical things could sometimes make people fall in love.

Sherlock wondered if he would ever have a reliable partner. One that did not need another person in their life to feel complete. He wondered if there was anyone else like him, or if his solitary status would eventually become permanent.

Being alone had never really bothered Sherlock. Not until John, anyway. It was, well, nice, to have someone to share his work with. Harry had seemed like a competent assistant. And more, a voice whispered in his head.

Perhaps, there is a way to make Harry stay at Baker street, the voice continued. Sherlock considered this. John had left, because he found Mary. He could not fault either of them. He could see how much they needed each other. But what if, what if he could make Potter need him in the same way? His mind automatically shied away from thinking too much about this.

When he got back to his flat, he found Harry was still up, and engrossed in a very serious conversation with Mrs. Hudson.

"Yes dear, but the wind is really frightful sometimes. It's really not very good for the flowers. Especially the petunias. They need shelter, but also sunlight, so you see I'm in a bit of a pickle…” Mrs. Hudson was saying.

Harry caught sight of him, smiled, and said good evening. Sherlock felt the now familiar tug in his chest, and he thought it was getting harder and harder to ignore it. Again, a voice whispered that it might be important to keep the wizard with him. Sherlock was one of the smartest people alive. Surely he could figure out how.

Trying to pay little heed to the traitorous whispers, Sherlock said goodnight to his flat mate, and went to bed.

They were sitting side by side in a restaurant booth, but their surroundings were definitely not at
the London diner. There was stone all around them, and dark hallways, twisting off into every direction.

"Well, at least you figured it out. Why you were acting so strange around me" Potter said.

"It did take me an embarrassingly long time." Sherlock could admit this. It was his dream after all.

"You're just not used to considering that angle." Potter reassured him. "What are you going to do about it?"

"What can I do? It's not like you return the sentiment." Sherlock answered.

"Don't I?" Potter said, with some surprise.

"Do you?" Sherlock felt a little flutter of hope.

"I don't know, I'm not the real Potter." Potter said with a shrug.

"Well, what good are you then?" Sherlock answered moodily.

"You're not going to just ignore it, are you?" Harry asked, with worry.

"That was the plan, yes."

"You can't." Harry whispered. "Remember. Remember what's at the center of the labyrinth." The lights suddenly dimmed and the stone walls seemed to close in around them.

"You can't just ignore it, Sherlock. Or else we'll never get out of here."

... 

**AN:** Please remember to leave me a few words if you are enjoying my work. I don't get payed in anything but kindness, so donate now! It’s very easy, and makes my day that much brighter:)
The June sun was slowly sinking behind the trees, and the ripples on Lake Menteith were glittering gently. Two skinny teenagers were sitting on a rickety pier, which was in danger of being overgrown with reeds. Teddy Lupin splashed the water with his bare feet, while Victoire Weasley was sitting with her legs crossed, like a yogi.

"I really saw it. I don't know why no one believes me." She said with a petulant pout. She would be going into her fifth year of Hogwarts, but Teddy thought she still acted like a complete child.

"Because Vic, if there were really mermaids at the bottom of this lake, your uncles would know about it, don't you think?" They had been having this discussion for hours it seems, and it had not gone anywhere in that time. Both were obstinate, and there was nothing better to do, anyway. The summer holidays seemed to stretch forever in front of them.

Teddy didn't mind the summer's slow and lazy progression. He liked visiting the lake house. He liked the Weasleys. He was always happy to be included in their summer plans.

"There's merpeople at the bottom of the lake in Hogwarts, you know." Victoire stated matter of factly. Teddy fought hard not to roll his eyes.

"Yeah, I know." He said.

"What do you think Hogwarts looks like now, in the summer? There's probably no one there." Vicky said. "I bet it's creepy, with just the ghosts wandering through the halls, and all the rooms are abandoned..." She continued, but Teddy cut her off.

"The teachers stay there over the summer. Some students do, too." He said.

Vicky glared at him.

"And how do you know that?" She demanded. Teddy just shrugged. In truth, he could not, and would not, tell her how he knew.

"Whatever, I bet you're full of it." She said playfully, and jabbed him lightly in the side. Teddy twitched.

"You can believe whatever you want to believe." He said, trying to sound mysterious and wise.
Victoire just scoffed.

"Professor McGonagall stays there, and professor Trelawny. Sprout does too, on occasion." Teddy continued. There were also a few students who stayed every summer, but Teddy didn't share their names with Victoire.

"Like you've been there over the summer…" Victoire huffed.

"One does not have to be at a place, to know what is there." Teddy said again in his mock-mysterious tone, that made Victoire giggle. He knew that the young Weasley disliked Trelawny, and thought it hilarious when Teddy made fun of the divinations professor.

"When the veil, that billows like an old warlock's pantaloons, is lifted from your eyes, you shall seeeee into the great beyond…" Victoire began intoning, in what Teddy thought was a fairly accurate imitation.

"But seriously, how do you know?" Victoire suddenly asked. Teddy didn't say anything and just stared out, over the lake.

"You've never had to stay at Hogwarts over summer have you? Because I'm sure you could come stay with mum and dad. They'd let you if I asked-" Victoire said hurriedly. Teddy looked at her. A blush was spreading through her fair face, and she looked down as she talked.

"No, I never stayed there over the summer." Teddy assured her.

"I knew you were full of it." She replied and aimed another poke at his ribs.

She got up then, and stretched out.

"C'mon. Let's see if they have dinner ready yet. I'm starving." She said.

Teddy got up, too.

'I'll race you back!' Victoire said, and suddenly she was off, running towards the magical house that sat between old beech trees, overlooking the lake. Teddy didn't try particularly hard to outrun her.

... When the two teens got back to the lake house, they found Victoire's grandmother laying out dinner for the hungry horde gathered at the lake house. With food taking most of her focus, Victoire seemed to have forgotten all about the conversation she had been having with Teddy.

Teddy and Victoire had been close at Hogwarts, but despite this, he could never share his secret with her. Like for example, how he always seemed to know about every passageway that was hidden in Hogwarts. Or, how he knew about who was there in the summer.

The biggest secret he had was a ragged piece of parchment that Teddy always carried with him, even in the summertime, when it was largely useless.

It was delivered to him on a stormy April morning, that had been his thirteenth birthday. He had woken up to the sound of a sharp rapping on his window pane. At first Teddy thought it was an owl. But when he opened the little window above his bed, a hooded crow, black and grey, rather wet and mangy looking, flew in and settled on his nightstand. It carried a heavy envelope attached to its black leg.
Teddy remember fumbling nervously with the tie, and finally getting the parchment loose. The whole time the crow just sat there and looked at him with unnaturally intelligent eyes.

It was only when his dorm mates started waking up, that the bird hopped on the window sill, and was gone into the rainy, morning gloom.

Teddy wondered who would have sent him mail by crow. He had never heard of crows being used instead of owls, and it had frightened him, initially. The envelope merely had his name, written in black ink. Teddy opened it, and found a blank piece of worn parchment, and a short note:

Teddy,

*Perhaps it is a bit late for birthday gifts, but I hope you accept this one. Enclosed is a rather special piece of enchanted parchment. I hope this letter finds you alone, as it would be wise to keep it a secret. It is simple to use. Press your wand to the parchment, and say *I solemnly swear that I am up to no good.*"

*Your father was a rather brilliant student. Together with some friends, they created this map. I've kept it for a very long time, but I believe it is time it was passed to you."

*Moony, Padfoot, Wormtail, and Prongs have aided magical troublemakers for two generations now, and it would be a shame to let their achievements be forgotten."

*Oh, and Happy Birthday!"

Neither the note, nor the envelope carried a signature.

Teddy did just what the note said, and suddenly, the marauder's map was revealed to him. He was amazed by the intricacy of the detail, and the scope of the map.

At first he didn't trust the map's magic. How could this parchment possibly know where everyone was, at all times? That didn't stop him from testing it out though. And sure enough, whenever he spotted footprints on the map, the corresponding witch or wizard would be there. His amazement with the map grew each time he used it.

What was most impressive about the map, or at least for Teddy, was that Moony, Padfoot, Wormtail and Prongs were able, in some sense, to talk. Or rather, write. It had taken him a couple of months to discover this amazing quality.

He had been looking for a shortcut between Divinations and History of Magic, when he spoke his wish aloud to the map. He was talking to himself really, but the map must have heard him. Four distinct handwritings appeared in the middle.

*Monsieur Padfoot would like to suggest the path that starts from the tapestry of Alexei the Wicked, and leads to the 2nd floor girl's bathroom.*

*Monsieur Prongs would like to suggest that Padfoot is a dunderhead who is girl-crazy, and really the best way to approach this is to go through the winding staircase in the Northeast corner, where the two singing suits of armor are.*

*Monsieur Moony humbly declares that both Prongs and Padfoot are spectacular idiots, and that the shortest way is actually through the main stairwells. Monsieur Moony would suggest simply running.*

*Monsieur Wormtail is staying out of this one, as he has no idea.*
After this discovery, the map became Teddy's most prized possession. It did not take a genius to figure out which one of the marauders was his own father, with a nickname like Moony. There were no enchanted portraits of his parents, and his parents did not stay with him as ghosts, but this small piece of his father was just as good, Teddy reasoned.

On some days Teddy would spend hours talking to the map behind the drawn curtains of his four poster bed. He had learned that in his days at Hogwarts his father was responsible for more mischief than Teddy thought he could brew up in a lifetime. And, in comparison to Padfoot and Prongs, he was the most responsible one.

The marauders would regale him with endless tales of sneaking out, pranks, and other scenes from their young lives. In exchange, Teddy would tell them about his life. It didn't take very long for the four boys, trapped forever in a magical parchment, to catch on that Teddy was actually Remus Lupin's son, and as such, heir to the title of marauder.

_Monsieur Padfoot would like to extend his condolences to Monsieur Teddy, as he is sure that Moony would be stricter than McGonagall on a bad day._

_Monsieur Moony would entreat Padfoot to shut his canine gap, and ask Teddy to entertain the others with stories of how cool a parent he really is._

_Monsieur Prongs will only add that if Teddy's mother is one Lily Evans, that he would wallop Moony so hard, his children (ie Monsieur Teddy) would certainly feel it._

Teddy felt desperately sad then. He couldn't break the news to Moony about what happened to him, and how much he really missed him. So he made up stories, of what he thought his dad might be like, if he had survived fighting against Voldemort.

Grateful for this piece of his father, Teddy wanted to thank the sender properly. However, Teddy didn't have the foggiest of who could have sent him the map.

He racked his brain constantly on the identity of his mysterious benefactor. He even went so far as to ask Professor Trelawny about crows.

"A crow, or a raven, is a traveller between worlds. It traverses this world and the next, and carries messages between the two planes. Seeing a crow in your dreams, this is an omen. A message from the other world. Perhaps, a message of fatal significance...." She had told him.

"She means you're gonna snuff it." His classmate whispered to him.

"Doesn't she always?" Teddy whispered back.

Teddy was invited to the lake house every summer since before he can remember. The house on Lake Menteith was owned by George Weasley and his wife Angelina, and it was large and spacious. Mr. Weasley had done very well for himself with his joke shop on Diagon Alley.

The Weasleys, who were a large family, always gathered there in the summer, but there were others too. Besides Teddy and his grandmother, professors McGonagall and Hagrid had always made appearances; a woman named Hermione Granger, who worked in the ministry and always brought her dark haired and quiet daughter; Mr. Longbottom, who was rumored to be taking over the post of Herbology professor soon. There were many other visitors, and though Teddy did not know all of them, they all seemed to know Teddy, and always asked after him.
His grandmother told him that most of the people who visited fought Voldemort alongside his mother and father. That's how everyone knew him.

The visitors would sometimes share things about his parents. Although it made Teddy feel slightly awkward, like he was being measured against them, he also craved any information the visitors could give him.

It seemed like everyone in Teddy's life would gather there in the summer. All his friends and distant relations, and more. The only exception was his own great-uncle, Henry Tonks, who never made an appearance, which puzzled Teddy. Though, in a way he was glad, since Teddy never grew to be fond of his great uncle, anyway.

It was at the lakehouse that Teddy finally learned the identity of the mysterious sender of the marauder's map.

Two summers ago, on a warm summer night, Teddy had been staying up with Ron and George Weasley. Ron Weasley was there without his wife, drinking heavily from a mug which constantly emitted steam.

The two red haired men were telling him about their time in Hogwarts, when George mentioned it.

"My brother and I served uncountable detentions with old Filch. One day, we found a blank piece of parchment in one of Filch's filing cabinets. We took it, not really thinking why, but it must have called to us in some way. It took us ages to figure it out, but long story short, it was this enchanted map."

Teddy had gone white, thinking that George Weasley must somehow know about his possession of said map. But it was evident, as George kept telling Teddy about the properties of the marauder's map, that he did not suspect anything.

"We only found out later, from talking to Sirius Black, who the Marauders were. They were our childhood heroes, and suddenly two of them were real; people we knew. One was your dad."

George finished.

Teddy couldn't stop himself from asking.

"Who do you think has it now." He said, tentatively.

George frowned. He thought about it for some time.

"We gave it to Harry Potter. With the trouble he got up to every year, we figured he had more use for it than us. Plus, me and my brother had already memorized the thing. I wouldn't have any idea where it is now." George finished sadly.

"My godfather." Teddy said with bitterness in his voice. His godfather was, as he knew, deranged, and wanted for murder.

"And he would have made a fine godfather if he hadn't gone barmy towards the end." Ron Weasley added with a hiccup.

"Barmy, Ron? Don't you think that's putting it lightly?" George asked, with a cold edge to his voice.

His brother just shrugged, and drank once more from his mug. It was common knowledge that Ron Weasley and Harry Potter had been very close once. Teddy did not think that Ron would ever
defend the man, considering Ron was an auror.

Suddenly, Ron put down his mug with a slam, and motioned vaguely towards Teddy.

"Your father was the best damn professor we ever had. If it weren't for Snape, that slimy git…” Ron had said, with a slur. But Teddy never did find out what Snape had done. George had ordered him to bed.

They were onto dessert, apple pie, which Victoire seemed to enjoy the most. Teddy watched out of the corner of her eye as she ate it hungrily, even though they had all just finished a rather spectacular and filling dinner.

The dining room in the lake house was grand and expansive, but with all the Weasleys present, it was almost full to capacity. There was a strange subdued quality to the Weasleys, almost morose, which Teddy wondered about. The only Weasley who was conspicuously absent was Ron.

Teddy rather liked Ron, and looked up to him. He admired the man's frankness and humor. Teddy had also been considering a career in magical law enforcement, and since Ron was one of the Senior Aurors, he had found the man endlessly interesting. Usually, Ron with his jovial and carefree manner was happy to indulge all of Teddy's questions about his job.

"Where's your uncle Ron?" Teddy whispered to Victoire. She gave him a dark look, and since her mouth was full, made a motion with her hand that seemed to imply, 'ask me later.'

Teddy did. When they were done washing up the dishes, Teddy repeated his question. Victoire looked worried.

"Mum and Dad won't give me the details, but I think he got injured or something. No one's supposed to know, with him being an auror and everything. So keep it hushed." She answered in a whisper, even though they were alone.

"He got injured? On the job?" Teddy asked, his curiosity getting the better of him.

"I don't know, I don't know, but mum and dad looked worried. It can't be good." She said.

That evening Teddy did not fall asleep easily. He thought about Ron Weasley and his godfather. He had never met Harry Potter, but he couldn't stop imagining what his godfather would have been like if he hadn't 'gone barmy,' as Ron had gently put it. It was probably wrong, on many levels, to think about what kind of parent figure his godfather would be, considering that he was also supposed to be psychotic.

Victoire had told him that Ron had been injured, but that was common for aurors, wasn't it? Teddy sensed that there was more to the story. Combined with the recent murders in the muggle world that were attributed to Potter, Teddy had wondered if the two old schoolmates had not bumped into each other, in the course of Weasley's investigation.

When Teddy did fall asleep, he had unpleasant dreams about Ron arguing and pleading with a dark haired, cruel man, who eventually got tired of the Weasley's words and blasted him into the ground. He dreamed about finding the marauder's map in the dead man's pocket, and a crow flying high overhead.
Unbeknownst to Teddy, his godfather was currently being bullied by a mad muggle, hell bent on summoning a malevolent being in the middle of his London flat.

The floor of the 221b's living room was littered with books and diagrams. It looked like a few pictures had actually escaped the pages that bound them, and made their way onto the wooden floors of the living room. The floor had chalk outlines of concentric circles, and many pointed stars, with strange and beautiful symbols drawn carefully on the borders.

Sherlock had spent all afternoon and evening working out Goetic. He thought if he had a pronunciation guide, he might be more or less fluent in it, with how much study he's put in.

Sherlock also knew that the dead 'language' was most likely rubbish, but the simple truth was that he currently had nothing better to occupy his time.

Lestrade had no new evidence regarding Laura Baskey's disappearance, and Hermione Granger had not yet provided any information in regards to Potter's case. So the detective's genius, which at all times needed an outlet, was channeled towards figuring out what had been written on the walls and on the floors of Laura's flat, then recreating it in his own.

He thought it was a splendid way to spend an otherwise very dull day, and indeed would have argued that his place needed some more decorations anyway, even if they are temporary.

Mrs. Hudson did not agree, and had told him that the cleaning cost would be part of his next month's rent. The wizard was also not enthusiastic about his idea.

As Sherlock bounced between this wall and that, muttering about the alignment of the moon and Mercury, and its effect on the angles of his diagrams, Harry had not said a word, and only watched nervously from the couch.

When he had finished, Sherlock cornered the wizard, and demand that he recite the necessary words, standing in the appropriate spot, in the middle of the chalk diagrams.

To his surprise, the wizard flat out refused him.

"What if it actually works?" Sherlock had said, with some annoyance. He hated uncooperative people.

"Sherlock- exactly!" Potter flung out his arms in exasperation. "If it actually works, that would be terrible, don't you see?" Harry had said.

"No, I don't see. You don't even know what it's supposed to do." The detective folded his arms across his chest, and sat heavily onto the couch next to Harry.

"Okay then, what is it supposed to do?" Potter asked him.

"It is supposed to summon something named…" Sherlock squinted at the notes, still clutched in his hand, "Baal-Berith."

"Why don't you do it?" Harry suggested sardonically.

"I will, if you won't." Sherlock answered in a huff. "But if there's anything at all to all this Goetic crap, I would make an educated guess that a wizard would have more success with it." He explained.
"I don't think you should either." Harry said, wringing his hands. "We don't really know what we're messing with."

Sherlock groaned. His wizard could really be obtuse, when the mood seemed to strike him.

It was fortunate for the wizard that at that moment Sherlock heard a buzzing from across the room that meant he had received a text. He glared at Potter as he stood up, as if to say that they were not finished with the conversation.

Loping quickly across the room, Sherlock dug his mobile out of his coat pocket, and read the new text. It was from Lestrade. *Interesting,* Sherlock thought.

... 

It had barely taken any time for Harry to don his 'Allen Dore' disguise, and be out the door with Sherlock. The detective suspected that Harry was eager to get away from his reasonable requests to say a few mumbo jumbo words in their living room.

They hailed a cab, since apparating anywhere in the vicinity of Scotland Yard was not practical. The city was simply too dense. And the cab ride would be short anyway.

... 

Sherlock was not wrong about the cab ride being short. But that does not mean that the ride was uneventful.

The wizard, who was wearing his magical disguise, was resolutely staring out the window. He had a look of concern on his face, which inexplicably bothered Sherlock.

The weather outside was stifling hot, even though the sun was on its way down, and night was drawing on London. The cabbie had the windows open, and driving through the heart of the city, Sherlock allowed himself to enjoy the sights and sounds of England's nightlife.

11 minutes left. New Scotland Yard was conveniently very close to Baker Street. Sherlock checked the traffic on his mobile, and estimate his ETA within a very limited margin of error.

The wizard shifted in his seat and sighed. Sherlock looked over. He had to tell his hand to freeze, because right then, he wanted nothing more than to pat Potter on the shoulder, in a consoling manner. He didn't know if the wizard was bothered by something specific or if he had simply fallen into a melancholy and quiet mood. The wizard did this quite often, and it hardly ever bothered Sherlock. *It shouldn't now, either,* he thought.

6 minutes left. Sherlock decided that it was best if he simply stared straight ahead. It didn't interest him, he decided, what Potter was doing, or how he was feeling. Sherlock stared past the cabbie, and out the front window of the car.

He heard it before he saw it. Two loud car horns, and then an awful metallic crunch, as two cars collided at the intersection in front of them. The cabbie swore loudly and creatively, as he he pumped his brakes and swerved to the left. They were able to avoid the collision, given that their speed was low, and the driver seemed to be skilled. The momentum of the sharp turn however, had sent both the occupants of the back seat sprawling.

It was perhaps no more than five seconds, but just as the incident under the invisibility cloak, Sherlock's inner clock seemed to have slowed down. Harry was thrown against Sherlock, and in an effort to steady himself, grasped Sherlock's knee, probably by accident. The wizard's torso was so
close to his own, Sherlock imagined he could feel the body heat radiating from under his shirt. Sherlock kept his hand resolutely by his sides, as he noticed his pulse hitch to an uncharacteristic bpm.

"Sorry, guess I should be wearing a seatbelt." Harry said, as he sat up and looked around behind him to fasten the safety belt. Sherlock became acutely aware of his stomach, which was trying to jump out through any orifice of Sherlock's body.

The space between them represented a paradox, in that there was too much distance and not enough at the same time. Sherlock didn't know if he would rather jump out of the moving car, or topple against the wizard in retaliation. They both seemed ridiculous decisions, so he settled with sitting in his own seat, and meticulously counting each breath.

As they passed (or rather, crawled) by, Sherlock noted that the collision was rather minor, both parties surviving, and indeed the vehicles mostly remaining intact. A bumper bender. A black passenger car had hit another taxicab, and the occupants of both had now exited their vehicles, which halted to traffic around them. The cabbie took it all in stride, and was already turning down a side street, and taking an alternate route.

Sherlock only gave the scene of the crash a cursory look, not taking in any details. Indeed, Sherlock was much too busy trying to figure out how it was possible to want to be as close as possible to someone, yet also want to be on another continent, an ocean away from the same someone.

He hoped that Potter was not aware of his uncharacteristic response. Sherlock felt a flush in his cheeks, and he was still having trouble returning his breathing to normal.

It was foolish to think that he would exhibit no symptoms of his condition, even now that he was aware of it. Even if he did not act, having his body disobey him was very annoying.

Sherlock pursed his lips, thinking that there had to be a solution to his problem. There must be a way, after all. People are often hurt (not physically, Sherlock reminded himself, just emotionally) by attachments to the wrong people. Perhaps they've invented drugs for this sort of thing? A pill that made you lose interest, or dulled affection; like an anti-viagra. Sherlock could not think of one though, and he had an extensive knowledge of pharmaceuticals.

It took the rest of the cab ride (delayed by 10 minutes because of detours) for Sherlock to regain complete control. Thankfully, glancing at Harry, Sherlock noted that the wizard was not particularly observant.

... 

Though it seemed much longer to Sherlock, they were in Lestrade's office in under twenty minutes. However, the DI was not there, which Sherlock thought was rather rude. Sally Donovan had informed them that Lestrade would be returning shortly from a very important meeting, and they were welcome to wait. Those were not her exact words, of course, but the message was there.

"Sherlock, what happened?" Harry asked, once Donovan had left them alone.

Sherlock had a moment of panic, thinking that the wizard was referring to their cab ride.

"What happened? When?" He echoed.

"I mean, why are we here?" Harry asked politely.
"Oh. Baskey." Sherlock answered briefly.

"They found her?" Harry asked.

"No, not the daughter. The father. He's dead."
Walden Baskey had never intended many things in his life. Like many people, some things happened to him, and all he could do was let go and let the currents of life drag him around.

Some things, that he never intended, turned out to be good. Like his career in real estate, which turned out to be moderately successful and somewhat fulfilling. As a young lad he had always hoped that he would end up in academia, giving lectures from a podium. He never intended to marry, but he was glad to have been blessed with a wonderful daughter.

Walden thought that everything in his life has turned out more or less okay. He had a respectable career, and a family he loved.

That was until he purchased the flat, on a small side street, off Holborn Road. He knew immediately that something was wrong. But, Walden had no way of knowing just how wrong things could become.

The flat was covered wall to ceiling with cryptic writing. It spooked him just looking at it. But he was a modern man, and did not believe in the supernatural. The flat would fetch a good price on the market as soon as he fixed it up. So he began, with wallpaper and paint, to transform the flat into something comfortable, and not quite so ominous.

It was then that he began to lose some of his memories.

Walden was frightened at first, at what he thought was a very early onset of age related forgetfulness. His anxiety kept him from seeing a doctor, who truthfully, would not have been able to do much about Walden's memory lapses.

He did confide in his daughter. She was overly concerned. There was no need to make a fuss.

The trouble was, that the memory lapses seemed to be accelerating in frequency. He would wake up, and not know what day it was. Checking the date, he would realize he had no recollection of the past several days.

The last thing that Walden Baskey remembers clearly is waking up to the smell of blood. He was in the strange apartment, off Holborn Road, which he never did manage to sell. Baskey remembered...
running to the newly renovated bathroom and washing the blood from his hand, his forearms, and even his elbows, desperately hoping it was all his blood. Naturally, it was not.

"He's dead?" Harry gasped.

"Yes." Sherlock replied curtly.

"How?" Harry asked.

Sherlock was about to answer that they would know if Lestrade had actually shown up on time, when the DI walked through the door. He had a stack of manila folders in his hands, and the perpetually harried look that came with his job, along with the greying hair.

He invited them inside with barely a greeting, and began to spread the folders on his desk. Sherlock stood over the DI's shoulder and examined the photographs.

"Found dead this morning in his holding cell. Toxicology hasn't found anything. No wounds. There was no one in his cell. It's on video. The man just went to sleep and never woke up." Lestrade was saying pointing to the photographs which were spilling from the folders.

The photographs were indeed from the camera in Baskey's holding cell. The black and white pictures showed the man alone; first standing, then laying down in the cot. No one else was in the cell.

Sherlock picked them up and examined them.

"What do you think?" Lestrade asked.

"Could be a million things. Cardiac arrest, would be my first guess." Sherlock said, as he flicked through the photographs.

"You don't think it's suspicious?" Lestrade asked.

"People die in their sleep all the time. Is this all you've called me for?" Sherlock set the photographs down, and arched one eyebrow in Lestrade's direction. This was definitely less than a 7. He hated being called out for something so minor.

"I thought you wanted to be kept informed." Lestrade squared off, and crossed his arms. The detective inspector had perhaps sensed something suspicious in the Baskey's death, but Sherlock saw no evidence of that. He did not work from whimsies and hunches.

"A text would have been sufficient. No need to call me out for what appears to be natural causes. If that's all-" Sherlock drawled. He grabbed Potter by the upper arm and started heading towards the exit.

"Good day to you, too." He heard Lestrade grumble behind his back.

"That was a terrific waste of time." Sherlock growled at Potter once they were outside, as though it was the wizard's fault. Harry took it in stride.
"Well, since we're out, want to go somewhere for dinner?" Harry suggested.

Sherlock considered it. There was nothing to do at home except for fiddle with the non-functional diagrams that he had drawn up on the floors of his flat. He would be bored at a restaurant, but he would be bored anywhere else too. He might as well make deductions about the waitstaff, and complain about the quality of the food to the wizard, who was always willing to listen.

"Fine." He sighed, and began pulling Harry in the direction of an Italian place he had been to, once or twice.

…

"See the way he keeps wiping at his nose and sniffing? Trying to get clean from cocaine. About three years of heavy use. The dog tags he has under the shirt aren't his. Partner must be in the military." Sherlock rattled off, watching their waiter run around the floor, like a child watches a prancing grasshopper.

"What if he's just got a cold?" Harry suggested.

"Then I would like ask for a different waiter." Sherlock replied frostily. He had no time to get sick.

"No, no, that's compulsion. He's used to wiping his nose periodically to check for blood. You can tell by the frequency of the gesture…" Sherlock said, and indeed their waiter quickly swiped at his nose again.

They were seated in a booth, close to the windows, from where they could observe the streetlife outside, as well as the inhabitants of the restaurant.

There was a moderately handsome couple next to them, on their second bottle of wine. Happily married, four years, two children, one dog. Dull.

The waiter, Mark, came over with a black notepad.

He started rambling off the specials of the day, nervously twitching, and glancing towards his sides. Sherlock was growing irritated since he knew what he wanted, and had no need of this diatribe.

"Lovely selection of red wines, would you like the list, or…" The waiter went on. Sherlock was just about to snap at the young man to shut his gap, when an idea came to him. He had never observed the effects of alcohol on Potter. He knew, theoretically, (and in practice, too), that alcohol could potentially loosen and expose inner turmoils and emotions that an individual might want to keep hidden.

"We'll order. Carbonara for him," Sherlock pointed to the wizard, "and a puttanesca for me. And a bottle of your house red, please." Sherlock could imagine Mycroft's grimace if he were present at this very moment. Where his brother had developed a taste for refined and expensive liquors, Sherlock didn't care if he was drinking Patron Silver or petrol, since to him it all tasted quite similar. Wine he could tolerate, but the subtle taste everyone went on about was lost on him. The effect was more important than the means, he reasoned. And anyway, it wasn't for him.

"How did you know what I wanted to order?" Potter asked, with a little amusement. Sherlock rolled his eyes. The wizard was practically drooling while he looked at the table over, where the woman was tucking into the aforementioned dish with some delight. Or perhaps he was drooling over the woman? A part of Sherlock commented. This made Sherlock unreasonably irritated. No, it was the food, I'm confident of it he reassured himself.
They spent some time in pleasant conversation. The wizard, Sherlock had found some time ago, was unwilling to openly discuss the details of his world in public, especially when they were in proximity to other non-magicals. This presented Sherlock with the interesting game of disguising his language in such a way that they could keep up a conversation without anyone guessing at its contents. Not that anyone would guess, anyway. But he supposed the wizard's paranoia was a natural reaction to being wanted by everyone who knew who he was.

When the wine came, Sherlock poured both of them a full glass. He was immediately disappointed when Harry didn't start drinking it at a quick pace. In fact, the wizard would only drink his when Sherlock himself raised the glass to his lips, as though they were playing an adult version of Simon Says.

_Figures he would be difficult about this_, Sherlock thought, and took another sip from his glass.

He would have to be careful. From past experiences with John, Sherlock had learned that he was something called a 'lightweight.'

…

One bottle had turned into three, and by the time they were finished, Sherlock was feeling pleasantly warm as they stepped out of the restaurant, and into the London night. A light drizzle had started while they were eating, and it felt rather nice on his overheated cheeks.

He recognized that his steps were not exactly orthogonal, but rather following a slightly curved path. He could not bring himself to care.

He grabbed the wizard, almost stumbling in the process, and began pulling him towards the alley behind the restaurant. Harry followed, without complaint.

"Poof us home?" Sherlock asked, hoping he was enunciating clearly.

The wizard looked confused, as he mouthed the word 'poof,' but then he must have understood. Harry grimaced.

"I'm not sure apparating will be safe right now," he said, the apology clear in his voice.

"Hmph, not getting you drunk again, then." Sherlock whinged. Cab it was then, and made his way to the front of the restaurant.

Sherlock was happy to see a yellow cab stop, and park nearby, waiting for patrons.

He pointed it out to the wizard, and the other man also seemed happy with this fortuitous turn of events. Harry quickly clambered in. Sherlock heard him giving the directions to the cabbie, but Sherlock remained outside, just near the open car door.

He was reluctant to get into a cab again with Potter, but also excited, and the two contrary thoughts made his head spin. Their cab ride to Scotland Yard was still fresh in his mind, and Sherlock was not sure whether getting into a small, dark space with the wizard was wise for him.

_Don't be ridiculous, it's just a car._ Everything was perfectly fine and normal, Sherlock said to himself as he climbed in. Indeed, it was, as their cab ride home was not eventful at all.

…

As soon as they were through the doorway of 221b, Harry returned his face to its normal
appearance. They took the stairs together, Sherlock stumbling slightly, and the wizard holding him up. Sherlock was almost about to snap at Potter to let him go, as he was perfectly capable of making the stairs, when the wizard himself almost tumbled down, and Sherlock had to catch him by the sleeve, while keeping his own balance, clinging madly to the bannisters. Harry chuckled and it was infectious, because Sherlock started laughing as well, though he didn't know why.

"Sorry about that. I don't drink often." The wizard said, color flooding his cheeks. Sherlock thought at that moment that he could feel the iris in his eyes contract, as his pupils dilated, but he knew that it was impossible to feel such a thing. He saw the blush creep under the wizard's pale skin and wanted to follow it down, past the collar of the shirt, and see how far it spread over Harry's skin.

But even with the alcohol coursing through his bloodstream, Sherlock made no move to follow his compulsion. If anything, he felt more frightened by his desire, terrified of the outcome that his actions could precipitate.

Once they reached the landing both men needed to catch their breath. They stood framed in the doorway for a few moments, with Harry looking down, and Sherlock staring at the wizard. Sherlock had no idea what his facial expression represented. He could have been grinning madly or frowning studiously or sticking his tongue out, or all three. He dearly hoped his face was simply blank.

Harry looked up at him, and grinned crookedly.

"Well, goodnight!" the wizard said, and unceremoniously left to go to his bedroom. Sherlock didn't know whether to be angry or relieved, as he walked into the living room.

It was late, and the windows outside were pitch black. The only light in the room was a single, incandescent light bulb, levitating and meekly illuminating Sherlock's desk. By the dim light Sherlock could see his rendition of the Goetic diagrams which he copied from Laura Baskey's flat. He must have been more inebriated than he thought. He could have sworn that some of the writing had shifted, and was now on a different floorboard. That was impossible of course, so deciding he had simply over indulged in mediocre red wine, Sherlock headed to his bedroom.

Sherlock lay in his bed for some time, panting, and unable to stop the barrage of images that came for him during the nighttime hours. Sherlock thought that next time he ought to actually drink a little more, so that he could comfortably slip into unconsciousness. The images, fantasies more like, all centered around the same familiar subject. Half a dozen times, Sherlock almost leaped out of his bed, intent on dragging Potter out if his room, and… what?

What then?

He was able to stop himself, and eventually, Sherlock fell into a strange and troubling dream.

Harry woke up with a tolerable headache. He felt it was milder than he deserved. Drinking in public was a bad idea, and he couldn't understand why he had let himself do it.

The only excuse he came up with is that he felt safe with the detective by his side. Harry knew that alone he never would have dared. But as brilliant as Sherlock was, he wouldn't be able to do much about aurors, Harry reminded himself, so it was still a foolish thing to do.

It was still early morning. After the night's drizzle, there was clean, healthy sunlight pouring in through the windows, and Harry thought he might have heard birds above the sound of London's
traffic. A feeling of contentment stole over Harry.

Life was much better at Baker Street. He didn't need to pilfer food, or look for uninhabited shelters; talking to Sherlock was much more entertaining than talking to a cat, though sometimes just as confusing.

When he was alone, his mind would always wander to the pale and ghostly place between worlds, where he had been stuck, once upon a time. He felt like a shadow in that place; not dead, so unable to fully reach through the veil. But so close to the dead that he felt like a spectre in the world of the living.

But, around Sherlock he was always in the moment. Harry felt more in tune with life, with the world around him, than he had for a very long time. The pieces that Harry knew he was missing might not have been filled in, but at least he could see the faint glimmering outline of them, like missing jigsaw puzzles.

The hangover wasn't so bad, and the weather was fine, and it looked like it would be a good day. With that thought Harry cheerfully ignored his headache, got up, and headed to the main floor for breakfast.

Harry almost didn't notice him in the living room, standing by the fireplace, and studying the floor. Harry made it to the kitchen when he saw out of the corner of his eye a squat, transparent figure. He had to backtrack, and as he approached the figure, he was filled with dread.

"You..." Harry said, cautiously, "what are you doing here?"

The figure looked up. Its identity was undeniable now.

"You can see me?" Walden Baskey's image said with some surprise. "This is wonderful, I can tell you then..." Baskey began walking towards Harry, but the wizard retreated immediately.

"Get away from me!" Harry knew the spirit couldn't hurt him, but he still didn't think it was a good idea to approach a serial killer, dead or not.

"This," Baskey pointed to the floor, where Sherlock's diagrams were drawn into the wood with permanent markers and chalk, "it's just like in that flat. Oh, the flat, it was the flat, I know it was!" He said with dismay, wringing his ghostly hands.

"You must get rid of it! At once!" Baskey's eyes snapped to Harry's as he pleaded with him. "It will infect you, too. You must!"

Harry wasn't sure what to say. He looked at the writing under Walden's semi-transparent feet, which Sherlock had reproduced from the photographs of Laura Baskey's flat. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, it started to shift, and slither. Just as suddenly, it stopped, and became stationary again. The phantom did not wait for Harry to answer, but continued to speak.

"My Laura, I can't find her anywhere! Where has she gone?" He bemoaned.

Harry wanted to feel fury, at the killer's words, but he knew wanting was useless. Instead, all he felt was a mild disgust.

"Your daughter? Is that why you haven't gone on? You're still hunting her?" Harry said with a blank expression.

"No! I would never hurt my Laura! You must believe me!" Walden cried, and then approached
Harry again. This time, Harry didn't back away.

"You were the one that caught me, weren't you? There were two of you... I'm glad, very glad, you two found me, and stopped me before-before I could hurt my Laura! It was too late for the others, the poor girls..." Walden cried. "But you must believe me! It was the flat, the writing in the flat, and now it's here! It wasn't me, I would never have done those things!"

Harry was almost convinced he was having a very bad dream, but out of the corner of his eye he noticed the writing shifting again, and knew there was something to what Baskey was saying. After all, the dead seldom have ulterior motives. Looking down at the floor, he heard a low, hushed murmur, as the Goetic letters twisted slowly.

Harry thought he might be catching on. Quickly, he stepped out of the range of the writing, and into the kitchen. The spirit followed.

"You must promise me that you will destroy this." Walden's spirit waved at the floor. "Or else, it will do this again. I am sorry I couldn't stop it. But you have to destroy it now, before it takes over someone else!"

Harry looked at Baskey.

"I will." He said simply, at a loss for anything else.

The spirit relaxed, and then, starting from the edges, slowly disappeared into the air.

The warm firelight from a lonely torch was hung above Sherlock's head. It was the only source of illumination, and the stone corridor stretched out into infinite darkness on either side.

He was in his labyrinth again. He visited this place almost nightly now, despite never wanting to be here. The only consolation was that the wizard was also there, and was leaning against Sherlock, as they both sat on the stone floor.

"It's no use running from it, you know." The wizard spoke up. Sherlock shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not running anywhere." Sherlock answered.

"No, here you're not." The wizard answered with contentment. He pressed himself against Sherlock, rather like a cat. Sherlock let him, and raised his hand, tentatively. He ran his hand through the wizard's hair, but shyness stole over him, and he made himself stop.

"You know, this is your dream. You could do what you want with me." Harry stated. Sherlock was about to agree, but he knew he could not trust himself to speak at that moment. He continued carding his hands through the wizard's hair.

The wizard sighed next to him, and Sherlock felt it reverberate through his own body.

"You have to do something. Soon, this won't be enough for you. I know you have courage, when it counts. You just have to decide...." Harry was saying. "And the thing in the center, it will strangle us both if you let it," Harry whispered, as the firelight dimmed, and the corridor began to shake. "I can help you get rid of it, but you have to let me in there first."

Sherlock shook his head. No one was going into the center. Not him, and certainly not the wizard. He could not afford to lose the wizard to the monster in the stone heart of the labyrinth.
"Sherlock?" Harry was calling with urgency, but the firelight went out, and they were both plunged into darkness...

"Sherlock? Sherlock, wake up."

Sherlock opened his eyes to see the wizard standing above him, and for a second thought he was still dreaming.

"Sherlock I think you should come down and see this..." The wizard was saying.

As soon as Sherlock realized he was no longer dreaming he grew very irritated, which was not at all helped by the pounding behind his eyeballs.

"What? Why?" He managed to growl out.

Hurriedly, the wizard told him about seeing Baskey, or rather his ghost, and about Sherlock's writing moving on its own.

Sherlock jumped out of bed, and tugged on his dressing gown. He almost went down again on account of his unsteady feet, but Potter was able to steady him. Sherlock's mind was jumbled; a part of it was still in the stone labyrinth, where the wizard was tamely lying next to him. It was too much to have the real life version this close to him so early in the morning. Sherlock focused his mind, and counted his breaths, and after a few seconds, left his bedroom with Potter.

As soon as he saw the floor, where he had reproduced the carvings from Laura's flat, Sherlock knew Harry was telling the truth. The writing was really moving! Very slowly, and barely perceptible, but moving indeed! He immediately sprang towards it to isolate which string of symbols was affected.

Sherlock heard Harry give a warning, but disregarded it completely. How absolutely fascinating! Sherlock had the impression that he had done some sort of magic. Now, what would be the outcome of actually using the diagrams, that was the real question!

He quickly walked over to his cramped and messy writing desk, and found the paper with the written out invocation that would, in theory, activate the sigils on the floor.

"Harry come here. You will stand in the hexagram in the middle here, by the fireplace. You have to read this as precisely as possible. I wrote out a pronunciation guide, and it might be wise to practice a few times before actually doing it." Sherlock was trying to give the paper to Harry, but the wizard refused.

"Sherlock, no! Haven't you been listening? We have to get rid of it." Harry said, and repeated what the ghost of Walden Baskey supposedly told him. Sherlock quickly became very angry.

"You will listen to some mirage, perhaps an illusion of your own mind, but you won't listen to me? Fine, I'll do it." An amazing sense of confidence filled Sherlock. He felt like he could do anything. Anything at all. He was half convinced that if he were to have a go with Potter's wand, it would work for him as well.

"Sherlock we must destroy it. What if it takes hold of one us like it did with Baskey?" Harry was saying, with urgency and worry. Sherlock just waved a hand at him.

"Even if he was real, I'm sure he was lying." He said, with the same unwavering confidence.

"Why would he lie Sherlock? He's dead."
"There's a million reasons. Now if you're not going to help, kindly shut up so I can do this."
Sherlock stood in the hexagram, facing north, and prepared to recite the summoning. Before he could get the first syllable out, he felt Potter's hand on his arm.

"We have to destroy it. Now." The wizard said, his face blank.

Sherlock's confidence was replaced suddenly with violent anger.

"How dare you?" Sherlock snarled. "I will do what I like in my own home. You might as well clear out, if you don't like it. In fact do so now. Go back to whatever derelict hole you lived in before I brought you here!"

The wizard narrowed his eyes. Harry was examining him critically, like Sherlock was some sort of riddle he was trying to solve.

"I'm sorry about this." The wizard said plainly, and before Sherlock had time to react, the wizard reached for his wand, and with a flick Sherlock went completely still. He could not move at all, which was...distressing.

"You can kick me out later. But I think it's already started to affect you. I'm getting rid of it." Harry said, pointing to the floor. Sherlock wanted to shout and scream at him, but his own body would not obey him. Every muscle was frozen, and refusing any orders his brain sent.

Harry levitated him close to the kitchen. When he was being set down again Sherlock almost fell over. For a second, he was illogically frightened that upon hitting the ground he would shatter into pieces like a marble statue. But Harry caught him, and leaned him gingerly against the kitchen wall.

Sherlock was beyond furious. How could Potter do this to him, after all the help he has given the wizard? Sherlock found himself thinking of ways to kill the wizard, without being put on the business end of that wand. He knew more about murder than perhaps anyone in London. He felt confident that it was well within his capabilities, as soon as he was free of this damned curse!

Harry took out the wand, and began pointing it at the outer edges of his diagrams. *No, no, no!* All of that work, and Potter was going to destroy it. Sherlock wanted to stop him, at any cost, but it was absolutely helpless. He could not move a millimeter.

Damn him! Sherlock seethed as he watched the wizard clearing away everything. Once he had erased everything else, the wizard approached the hexagram. Sherlock was proud to note that it was twisting madly now, the lines distorting the wooden grain of the floor, and he could hear a low murmur, incomprehensible but strangely beautiful, coming from his work.

Don't let him destroy it, a voice told Sherlock. It was his work, his! And it was brilliant! Sherlock felt a strange tug on his navel, as Harry began erasing the outer edges of the hexagram. The tugging intensified into pain, and Sherlock wanted to cry out.

The hexagram was giving Harry some trouble, but when the wizard erased the final symbols at the heart of the hexagram, Sherlock heard a loud and pitiful cry, coming from it. The pain in his stomach disappeared, and also his anger. He was stunned for a moment. He was suddenly not sure what had just transpired in his own flat, and in his own head.

Why had he wanted to protect the diagrams? He would not have thrown the wizard out for them, surely? Yes, he certainly felt more regard for Harry than the scribbles on his floor. Why had he acted like that?
Harry came over to Sherlock cautiously.

The wizard had said that Sherlock was becoming affected by it in the same manner as Walden Baskey. He supposed that made sense. Where only a minute ago he wanted to poison the wizard for cleaning the floor, now he was sure that he would not want to cause Harry any harm at all.

"Are you okay?" The wizard said nervously, "I am very sorry. I think it might have gotten a hold of you, whatever it is. If you still want me to leave, then I will." Harry continued, but it was obvious by his tone that the wizard did not want to leave at all. This pleased Sherlock.

Sensing that perhaps Sherlock would like to have control of his body again the wizard twitched his wand in Sherlock's direction, and Sherlock sagged like a rag doll. He might have fallen over, but Harry anticipated it, and was there to help him. The contact made Sherlock flush, and lose his train of thought. Even worse (or perhaps better), Harry decided to hold onto Sherlock, presumably because he was worried the detective would fall over again.

"It's quite alright. I think you were correct." Sherlock said in a measured, and calm tone. He was still reeling from the implications of the whole situation. It was too easy to manipulate Sherlock, and he absolutely hated being manipulated. The contact that the wizard maintained with him did not help to focus Sherlock's thoughts.

"Thank you." Sherlock said, squeezing the wizard's arm, and stepped away. Harry positively beamed at Sherlock's reaction. Perhaps he was relieved that Sherlock was not going to kick him out. Sherlock felt a pang of guilt when he remembered what he had said to the wizard only minutes ago. He wanted to apologize, but didn't have a clue how to start. And anyway, it looked like the wizard understood he was not in control of himself.

Sherlock's legs felt like they would give out again. He quickly walked over to the kitchenette and plopped down in the wooden chair.

"Could you... ahem ...tea?" Sherlock said weakly, pointing vaguely to the cabinetry. What was wrong with him? His whole body was shaking, and exhibiting systems not unlike a withdrawal. His reasoning and focus were in shambles. He did not know if his mind was still compromised, and the idea of not being able to control himself, of being infected by something alien, was scaring him, forcing him into a barely restrained panic. The truth was, he did not know if he was still himself; or rather, himself again. He did not notice the creeping influence of the Goetic drawings until he was rid of them. For all he knew, he could still be under their influence, and simply ignorant of it.

He felt like he was coming apart at the edges. The only thing in the world he could trust was his own mind. If something were able to tamper with it, so easily it seemed, then he was completely alone, and helpless. What if the same thing decided to take hold again, and next time he actually did murder Potter? What if he murdered someone else?

Dread caught hold of him. Sherlock was shaking at thought of something ancient and powerful, which he knew nothing of, but his own folly had pushed him to tamper with it. He felt somehow sullied, and dirty, and he hated the idea of the alien thing possibly still crawling in his mind, waiting for its chance to take hold again. At least the wizard was able to put a stop to it this time.

The wizard. He had practically saved him. Sherlock felt a delayed wave of gratitude when he saw the wizard putting together tea. Harry came over and handed him a cup. Then, unexpectedly, the wizard put his hand on Sherlock's shoulder. Sherlock felt comfort at the contact.

"You're fine now. I can see that." The wizard said plainly, but with confidence.
"Have you ever been possessed?" Sherlock asked, even though he knew the answer from perusing *Essences and Vessels*.

"Yes, but not like that. It was another wizard." Harry said simply, and did not elaborate.

Sherlock knew when he picked up the slim volume from Granger's bookshelf that the author was his own wizard, which was why he was so quick to pocket the book. There are no such things as coincidences. The nom de plume that the wizard had written the short treatise under was Allen Dore, and Sherlock thought it was hilarious that Harry used the same pseudonym when he accompanied him on cases.

The book concerned magical theory, and as Harry once described it, it was "about splitting souls, and damaging souls, healing souls, phoenix tears...nothing really interesting." Sherlock disagreed with the last part, but the short summary the wizard had given him was mostly accurate.

There was a particular section, which Sherlock recalled, that dealt with none of the above mentioned subjects, but rather with possession.

"It is of course possible for the essence of one vessel to enter another. This is commonly known as possession. It is rare that the two essences in question are human souls, but possible. The imperius curse is such an example; the soul of the caster reaches into the body of the victim and inhabits both bodies at the same time. A more common example is the spell 'Permovo Fera,' which allows a wizard or witch to possess an animal, in a similar manner."

The paragraph following that described, with vivid detail, the experience of being possessed more directly by another wizard. Sherlock could tell, while reading it, that this is something his wizard had experienced, and probably not enjoyed very much.

Sherlock felt like he was regaining control. The wizard was probably quite capable of discerning whether or not he was in danger of being a puppet for whatever had called to him from those diagrams. He always trusted in his own mind, but perhaps he could trust the wizard as well. Or at least, in this regard. When it came to deductive thinking and reasoning, the wizard was of above average intelligence, but still an idiot compared to Sherlock.

Sherlock was a proficient observer: probably one of the best in the world. He could tell from Harry's character that the wizard was one of those fools who would rather die than let someone they care about come to harm. He could trust that Harry would be there to save him again, if he needed it. He would rather not need it but- the thought was comforting. And so was the tea and the company.

Suddenly, the company left, only to return a moment later with Sherlock's cell phone.

"It's been blowing up. I don't think you noticed." Harry said, as he handed the device to Sherlock. Unlocking his phone, Sherlock scrolled through his received texts.

It had not been a brilliant start to the day, but Sherlock had to carry on. He still had his uncle Rudy to visit, in Yorkshire. Mycroft and Hermione were both requesting his presence. Sherlock quickly staggered all of the things he needed to do, in order of importance. At least it would not be a boring day.

"How do you feel about going on a day trip to Yorkshire?" Sherlock asked. He could have sworn for a second he saw Harry's face darken, but then the wizard responded that he would be coming along.
"Very well. Hopefully you'll have a better reaction to my driving than John." Sherlock knew he was not yet perfectly okay after his encounter with possession, but decided that visiting his favorite uncle would clear his mind. And perhaps even though the morning started terribly, it could have been worse. Sherlock was glad that Harry had the maturity not to say 'I told you so.'

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Chapter End Notes

Please be kind to this long suffering author, and leave any comments or thoughts you had while reading. Reviews keep me motivated, and working away on a keyboard. Hope you guys liked this one!
Family Matters

"Mycroft: Well then, Sherlock. Back on the sauce?

Sherlock: What are you doing here?

Watson: I phoned him.

Mycroft: The siren call of old habits. How very like Uncle Rudy. Though in many ways cross dressing would have been a wiser path for you."

-BBC Sherlock

Family Matters

221b Baker Street had always felt like refuge for Sherlock. Even when the entirety of Scotland Yard had gathered there to search for narcotics, (all because of one measly, missing, pink piece of evidence), Sherlock was calm, because he had always felt rather safe between his wallpapered walls.

Perhaps there had been times before when he had to leave the place immediately, or risk going insane; but that was largely due to boredom, and had nothing to do with the walls of 221b. However, now Sherlock wished to be anywhere but his flat for an entirely different reason.

His near-possession, or perhaps full possession, had left a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach. The detective was still very unaccustomed to sick feelings, and indeed feelings in general, though the last few months had been full of strange new ones. In response, he tried very hard not to think on it, and instead concentrated on the what he intended to get done.

He decided to visit his uncle immediately, and if that happened to take him away far from his flat, it was a fortuitous turn of events.

He brought up a map of northern Yorkshire on his laptop, and had the wizard point out places he was familiar with. It was the only weakness of the wizard's appiration: he had to have been at a location to be able to teleport there. Eventually, the pair of men had figured out that the closest point they could apparate to was Leeds, which was an easy drive from their destination.

The location that Harry chose to apparate them was a disused custodian's room, in the middle of Leeds train station. Sherlock grumbled his disapproval as he exited the small, dusty closet, brushing cobwebs off his shoulders. It was a simple enough affair to rent a car, and shortly, the two men were off to a small parish called Norwood, where Mycroft had placed their uncle in a private clinic.

Sherlock, who was really too impatient for automobiles, had worried Harry immensely in their 40
minutes of driving. If John had been present, he could have perhaps prevented the detective from this dangerous escapade by driving himself; but alas, John was safe in London with Mary, and his toddler.

Harry had almost offered to drive the black Peugeot on a number of occasions, even though he had never so much as sat in the driver's seat of a vehicle. The wizard still had the impression that perhaps he might have gotten them to their destination a little safer.

Sherlock waved him off, as he took the car through twists and turns in the morose, rain-sodden countryside at breakneck speeds. The wizard now understood why Sherlock had him cast a notice-me-not charm on the car; any decent copper would have stopped them immediately.

Instead of paying attention to boring things like road signs and other cars, Sherlock kept up a lively conversation with the wizard.

"You'll like Uncle Rudy, I think. He's my favorite relation. He was always a bit too eccentric for my family, which is really saying a lot. Never boring though, old Rudy." Sherlock said with cheer.

"Sherlock, perhaps when passing the other cars, you could do it not quite so close to them." Was all Harry managed to squeak out in response, as Sherlock overhauled a silver Mercedes, missing the other car's side mirror by an inch.

"My reflexes are as sharp as ever. There's nothing to worry about." Sherlock said, with a dismissive wave of his hand, which really ought have been on the steering wheel.

"Why couldn't we take a taxi?" Harry asked weakly.

"This far out of the way? I'm not made of pound notes, you know." Sherlock replied.

"Merlin, I would rob Gringotts again to avoid this." Harry said under his breath. Sherlock was very close to asking Harry how he managed to rob the wizarding bank, but looking at Harry's distressed form decided that it could wait.

"We're almost there. Perfectly safe and sound, if I might add." Sherlock said, and turned off onto a narrow, dirt road.

At the end of the road was a handsome building that looked more like a large country estate, than a medical facility. Sherlock screeched into a parking space, and thankfully, their journey was over.

Washburn Clinic was a hospice, with none of the grim atmosphere usually associated with places where people were waiting to die. It was not an uncomfortable place, or subpar by any means, but because Mycroft had chosen it, Sherlock felt honor-bound to resent it.

The two men quickly made their way inside. A nurse escorted the pair to a well lit corridor, where all of the rooms had handsome oak doors.

The nurse stopped, and pointed to the room, and told them they could go inside. Visiting hours were until eight in the evening. They had plenty of time. With a smile, she was off, probably to tend to other patients.

"I'll just head to the tearoom." Harry said, but Sherlock grabbed him by the arm, and steered him towards the door.

"Come along. This shouldn't take long." Sherlock said.
He wanted to show Harry to uncle Rudy. His favorite relative was always worrying about Sherlock's habit of living alone, and he wanted reassure his uncle that he was getting along quite well. In the same way, he often showed John off to his relatives and acquaintances, as though to say 'see, someone can tolerate me just fine.'

Sherlock led them through the wooden door, and into a small, bright room. It only had one bed, which was surrounded with beeping medical equipment. Uncle Rudy was asleep on the bed, and thankfully, he looked alright. *Not about to die*, Sherlock decided. In an offhand manner Sherlock noted that Harry's footsteps behind him stopped.

Sherlock came up to his uncle's side. The man had thinned out considerably in the last few years. His dark hair was all but grey now, and the laugh lines around his eyes were a mess of wrinkles.

"Could you wake up now?" He said. This action had the desired result. Uncle Rudy opened his eyes, and smiled when he saw his nephew standing over his bedside. Then, looking behind Sherlock, his uncle looked puzzled.

"Ah yes, this is Allen Dore; he's my new..." Sherlock began to say, as he turned around to invite Harry to come closer. Instead, he caught a glimpse of Harry making a run out the door, which certainly sent the wrong message about the whole 'people capable of tolerating Sherlock' business.

Sherlock let out a stream of curses that he undoubtedly learned from John. How rude of the wizard.

"My apologies, I'll be one moment." He quickly said to his uncle, and followed Harry.

Sherlock ran out to the corridor, hoping Harry had not gone far. He spotted him immediately.

Harry was leaning against the wall, and he looked positively deranged. He was trembling, and looking around wildly, as though he had forgotten where he was. Worst of all, his disguise seemed to have malfunctioned again, and he was back to his natural appearance.

*Not good.*

Sherlock privately thanked Mycroft for putting Uncle Rudy in a small, private hospital. The corridors were, at the moment, blissfully empty. He approached Potter cautiously. The wizard didn't seem to know he was there, until they were barely a foot apart. Then, finally realizing that Sherlock was there, Harry grabbed hold of him by the shoulders. His eyes were wide with panic.

"Who are you?" he asked, in a hoarse whisper.

Sherlock was not amused.

"I am Sherlock Holmes, a consulting detective. You've been living with me for nearly two months." Sherlock said brusquely. Harry flinched at his words. The look of fear remained. This was mad, Sherlock thought.

"You've been in my mind. You know who I am. Now stop this!" He growled. Harry shook even more.

"Yes, yes I know. I believe you. I just... I don't understand..." He said, looking between Sherlock and the door to Uncle Rudy's room.

Well, it seemed Sherlock didn't understand either. *What if Mycroft was right*, a snide voice in his head drawled. *What if he's truly mad.* Sherlock dismissed the thought. Even if he was, Sherlock thought to himself, did it matter? Sherlock sighed, and realized that no, it didn't matter one bit.
"Come on." He said, grabbed Harry's hand, and led them to the men's lavatory, which was thankfully very close. He shoved Harry through into the small room. He needed a few seconds to think.

The strings of information intertwined in Sherlock's head, and he could see a conclusion, though one not as detailed and clear as he would have liked. Somehow, Harry knew his uncle, or at least, he knew someone who looked like his uncle, and whoever they were scared the hell out of the wizard. Only two options were available for explanation. Either his uncle was somehow involved in the magical world, or Harry's perspective on reality had become irreparably skewed. Sherlock hoped it was the first one.

He surveyed the wizard. He was still trembling, and absently looking into space.

"Go back to Baker Street." Sherlock commanded.

"No! I can't leave you here with him." Suddenly, Harry snapped out of his daze, and was looking at Sherlock with intensity in his green eyes. He had his wand out, presumably to defend Sherlock from the invalid who was confined to bed rest.

"He's obviously not who you think he is." Sherlock said, in a placating manner, motioning vaguely in the direction of Rudy's room.

Harry shook his head.

"I know that face, I know it…" Harry said. "Rudy-is that short for…Rodolphus?" He asked. Sherlock had to restrain his features in order not to show his surprise. The wizard should not have been able to guess his uncle's full name. It was not exactly common. Sherlock could see that the wizard would never leave if he told him the truth, so he decided to lie.

"No. It's short for Roderick." He said smoothly.

Harry visibly deflated. "Maybe I was wrong."

"Maybe." Sherlock agreed.

"Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to make a scene, it's just that he looks exactly like someone I know... And that name, and Yorkshire... I must have gotten confused." Harry said.

Sherlock held up a hand. "It's fine. I'll finish up here. You go back to Baker street."

"But how will you get back? I'm fine Sherlock, I'll go in with you." Harry said. Sherlock knew that was a bad idea. He was sure the wizard would have another panic attack once he saw his uncle again.

"No. He saw you with dark hair. I can hardly explain how your appearance changed so suddenly." Sherlock thought that was a pretty good reason, and so did Harry.

"Mycroft can give me a ride back. I need to talk to him anyway." Sherlock added.

Harry nodded but still looked reluctant. Sherlock was about to leave, but Harry stopped him. The wizard dug in his pockets and took out a 50p coin. Harry closed his eyes for a few moments. Then he pointed his wand at the coin.

"Portus mundialis." He said and the coin briefly glowed blue.
"Here, if you get in trouble, hold this in your left hand and say Baker Street." Harry offered the enchanted pence coin to Sherlock, who took it and examined it. It was essentially the same.

"Alright. Thank you." Sherlock said, holding back a torrent of questions. He had never witnessed this particular spell.

Looking more reassured, Harry disappeared with a pop. Sherlock immediately took out his cell, and typed out a quick message to John. Hopefully his friend would be willing to help.

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As soon as John got Sherlock's text he was on his way to Baker Street. The self-possessed detective usually did not sound so urgent when he asked John to do something, so John was expecting the worst when he got to 221b. When he walked up the stairs, rushing past Mrs. Hudson, he discovered that indeed there was no need to have rushed. The wizard was quietly sitting in an armchair, and looking out into space.

"Hullo! Just here visiting. Is Sherlock in?" John said, trying to be cheerful. Harry looked up with an expression that said he didn't seem up for cheer.

"No." The wizard answered simply.

"Oh well, if it's no bother, I'll hang around a bit. Maybe he'll show up soon." John said.

"You're here to mind me, aren't you?" Harry asked, with a hollow tone. John was taken aback. That was, in essence what Sherlock had asked of him. He wondered what had happened between the two men, but decided not to ask yet. Or to answer Harry's question.

"Ahem, I'll put on some tea?" He offered instead. The wizard did not react.

"Maybe something stronger?" John asked weakly. It was early afternoon, and day drinking wasn't really his forte. Thankfully, the wizard agreed to tea, and John bustled about preparing it. He was unsure of what else he could do.

After setting out a meticulously arranged tea tray between them, John was unsure about how to proceed. He settled with sipping his tea very slowly, and waiting for the wizard to initiate something. Fortunately he didn't have to wait long.

"John, you've known Sherlock a long time. Can I ask you a question?" The wizard asked tentatively. John was reminded of the first time he had talked with the wizard alone. The prevalent subject was also Sherlock. It was amazing, John thought, how Sherlock could so easily become the centerpiece in their lives. Well, it wasn't that amazing. It was actually quite natural.

"Of course, go ahead." John said,

"Is he a good man? I can usually tell, but with him..." Harry said.

John thought about this question. It was a question he had asked himself many times before. It was obvious to anyone that Sherlock was a great man. There had never been a man like him, John supposed, and never will be again. John thought of all the events that had transpired with his wife, and Magnussen, and Sherlock, and decided on his answer.

"Yes. The best I've ever known. Though sometimes, it is difficult to see it." John answered simply.

“Hmm ,” was all the wizard offered in response.
The two were back to sitting in silence. John had a fleeting impression that he was failing the mission that Sherlock had assigned to him. So, the doctor decided to do what he did best: regale the wizards with his tales of crime solving adventures. He was a good storyteller, after all.

He started with the first one, of course. At first, Harry didn't seem that interested. However, by the time that John began to explain how Sherlock encountered the cab killer with the two bottles of poison, the wizard was intently listening.

"So how did he figure out which bottle had the poison in it?" Harry asked.

"That, I don't know. Someone shot the rogue cabbie before Sherlock had a chance to down it." John explained. He didn't feel like it was necessary to add that he was the one who had shot the killer.

When John concluded retelling Harry the case which he dubbed 'A Study in Pink,' he continued with the other cases. It was, he decided, better than sitting in silence and staring at each other.

"That sounds brilliant." Harry exclaimed, when John was telling him about the Baskerville hound.

"Except for the bit where I cowered in a cage thinking there was a spectral beast after me, I suppose so." John allowed.

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When he saw Harry apparate away, Sherlock quickly made his way back to his uncle's room. He stepped through the door, and noticed that his uncle was still awake, with his hands neatly folded on his lap, and he appeared to be waiting for Sherlock.

"So," Sherlock began.

"So." His uncle echoed.

"I thought I was your favorite nephew. How is that you never told me about magic?" It was a gamble to start like this, but one Sherlock was willing to take. He half-expected his uncle to look bewildered and ask what he meant, but instead Rudy seemed mildly surprised.

"Well, you never asked." Rudy said, in a matter-of-fact tone. Sherlock pursed his lips, and narrowed his eyes at his elderly uncle. Rudy simply shrugged his shoulders.

"That's not a sufficient explanation." Sherlock said, and sat down at his uncle's side. His mind was working quickly to connect his eccentric, old uncle to magic. Considering everything he knew about Rudy, it really wasn't a far leap. He was irritated that it had not occurred to him before now.

"How is it you know about magic Sherlock?" Rudy asked.

"My flatmate is a wizard. I'm working on a case with him." Sherlock replied simply.

"Ah, was that the fellow who ran out of the door? I barely had a good look at him." his uncle said with an annoyed tone.

"Hmm? Yes. Something pressing came up." Sherlock answered.

His uncle looked vaguely concerned, but decided not to question Sherlock further. The detective sat silently for a few moments, trying to come up with his next question.
Perhaps uncle Rudy had sensed that he was about to be interrogated, so he spoke up.

"Sherlock, by any chance, did the young wizard depart so suddenly because of me?" Rudy asked.

"Yes." Sherlock admitted. He didn't see a point of hiding it. Perhaps his uncle knew why Harry had behaved so strangely. "Though he didn't tell me why."

His uncle sagged in his bed, and looked out the window with a forlorn expression.

"I think I might have a clue." Rudy said.

Sherlock perked up. He didn't think it would be this easy. All he had to do now was control his rampant curiosity and allow his uncle to tell him what he knew.

"I was born...a wizard," Rudy began, but Sherlock immediately interrupted.

"Meaning you aren't one now?" He asked.

"Well, I suppose I am, but I don't practice magic; I haven't in many years."

"So you are still a wizard. It's a matter of capability, not choice-" Sherlock added.

"Okay, yes, who's telling the story here, detective?" His uncle chastised.

Sherlock made a gesture with his hand that indicated his uncle should proceed.

"So, I was born a wizard, into a family that had been magical for a very long time. I guess I could tell you about my childhood, and growing up with my family, but judging by your expression it would be a waste of time? Well, to put it simply, I did not agree with the ideals that my family held. And, I found some of their practices...repugnant. My family were, even by the loose standards of the time, very dark wizards."

Uncle Rudy paused, and Sherlock had the impression that it was meant to be a dramatic revelation. Really, he didn't care at toss whether Rudy's biological family were dark wizards, light wizards, or wizards of any other color. But he did see a connection; since Harry had spent his younger years fighting dark wizards, perhaps Harry was acquainted with his uncle's original family.

"They were an awful bunch, really." Rudy continued. "I know it's not good to talk ill about your own blood, but that's the truth... They hated anyone that wasn't like them: other wizards who opposed them, wizards who had muggle parents, and especially they hated muggles."

It didn't take long for Sherlock to deduce the rest of the story in his head. He decided to speed up his uncle.

"So you rescued aunt Eleanor from them?"

"Alright, yes. You're making this a little difficult, nephew. My father, he was a terrible man. He kidnapped young muggles and, well, he made sport of them, shall we say. Your aunt was in my family's home for three days before I decided I could no longer tolerate her situation. That's when I fled, with her in tow." Uncle Rudy paused again. This time, Sherlock decide not to interrupt.

"The last magic I ever did was erasing Eleanor's memory. I didn't want her to live with what had happened to her. Ever since then, I've been living in this world." Uncle Rudy finished.

Sherlock thought about his late aunt. She had only died a few years back to a particular aggressive type of cancer. He remembered the way aunt Eleanor would constantly forget where she left the
keys or whether she had left the kettle on; he remembered the way his aunt's hands shook when she smoked a cigarette. Well, being kidnapped by wizards was probably the root of many of his aunt's nervous traits, even if she did not remember any of it. And perhaps the magical alteration to her memory had permanently made her a touch forgetful.

Where Sherlock was completely oblivious to magic only a couple of months ago, now it seemed to be everywhere, seeping out of every seam in his life. Mrs. Hudson's sister, his own uncle… he had an impulse to phone and ask Mycroft about any other wizards hiding in plain sight.

"Does Mycroft know about all this? Sherlock asked.

"I don't know. I never told him." Rudy replied.

"Thank you for your information, uncle." Sherlock said, "However I'm still at a loss to why you scared the wits out of my assistant. Might you have any insight?"

Rudy looked thoughtful for a moment.

"My brother resembled me when we were growing up. Perhaps he thought I was him?" Uncle Rudy suggested.

"No, I don't think so." Sherlock said. Harry had known his uncle's unusual first name, and Sherlock did not believe that it was a coincidence.

"Did you by chance re-enter the magical world around the time of the second war with Voldemort?" Sherlock asked. He needed to be as straightforward as possible, so he could gauge whether Rudy was hiding something.

"Blimey, there was a second war? No, I did not Sherlock."

Sherlock examined his uncle's face. He was telling the truth.

"What did you do with all of your magical belongings? Do you still have your wand?" Sherlock asked.

"I left everything behind when I fled, except my wand. I wanted to have some protection in case my family came knocking. I keep it in my house." Rudy answered simply. Sherlock nodded. He decided this conversation was a dead end for now.

"Now that's all out of the way, how are you?" Sherlock asked awkwardly. This was supposed to be a social visit after all. He could endure a few minutes of pointless niceties for his uncle's sake.

"Fine, getting better. Doctor said I can go home soon." His uncle answered with a light smile.

Sherlock sat silently for a minute. He was unsure of what else people said in a situation such as this. Enquire after health: check. Enquire after health of spouse: irrelevant, aunt Eleanore is dead. Enquire after health of relations: that would be paradoxical since Sherlock would be enquiring after his own health. In result Sherlock opened and closed his mouth a few times, and failed to make any relevant speech come out of it.

Uncle Rudy chuckled lightly. Perhaps sensing Sherlock's difficulty, the good man decided to take matters into his own hands.

"This wizard friend of yours, have you known him long?" His uncle asked.
"Ah, yes. We've been acquainted for a month and a half." Sherlock answered. He was relieved that he was answering questions now.

"Well, I would say that's not long, but you do move fast." Rudy commented. Sherlock did not think he was picking up the whole meaning of the comment, but decided to dismiss it.

"Mycroft still causing trouble?" His uncle asked with a conspiratorial air.

"I believe I'm the nephew who routinely causes the trouble." Sherlock quipped.

His uncle smiled warmly.

"Yes, that's right. Now with magic in the mix, that should brew up some very interesting trouble." Rudy said. Suddenly his expression altered, and he looked very seriously at Sherlock.

"Sherlock, be cautious with wizards. Some of them are good, but the bad ones...you don't want to run into those." His uncle said gravely.

"There are bad people who are not wizards as well, you know." Sherlock answered.

"Yes, I suppose. Still, just be careful won't you? I don't want anything bad to happen to my favorite nephew."


Sherlock decided to conclude the visit. He stood up and said his goodbyes to uncle Rudy. Overall, this visit had turned out great, perhaps minus his wizard going momentarily crazy.

"Uncle, before I leave I have one more question. What was the surname of the family you ran away from?" Sherlock asked. He would need a starting point if he intended to connect uncle Rudy with Harry's case.

His uncle frowned.

"Sherlock, do not go looking for them." His uncle said.

"I intend to avoid them, but I can't very well do that if I don't know who I'm trying to avoid." Sherlock said simply.

"Very well. It was Lestrange."

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Once Sherlock was outside of the clinic, he realized he had three ways to reach his destination, which was naturally Baker street. He did need to talk to Mycroft, but he did not actually want to see his brother. So asking him for a ride was out.

He had the magical 50p coin, which seemed like the obvious option.

Sherlock glanced at the black Peugeot he had rented. Last time he had abandoned a rented vehicle the company had been beyond irritating, sending him all sort of notices and fees… John had become upset by the whole ordeal, which was ridiculous since he should have understood it was imperative to the case they working at the time to leave the car behind.

With a groan, Sherlock decided now was not the time to bring the wrath of a rental car business upon his head, and settled into the sleek automobile. With a further, more aggrieved groan he
realized that the notice-me-not charm had worn off, and he would have to drive...normally.

"Hello, brother. How did the visit go?" Mycroft's voice sounded through the car, as Sherlock took it through a lonely country road. His phone was plugged into the computerized display on the dashboard, and the sound system magnified his brother's voice through small sedan.

"Well enough. Contrary to what you said last time, Rudy's health seems to be returning." Sherlock answered.

"How splendid to hear it." His brother replied. "Is he still up to his more... peculiar habits?"

"I have no idea. The dressing gowns in the clinic aren't gendered." Sherlock replied, with a roll of his eyes. He never understood why his brother was so strangely judgemental about their uncle's habits. They did not harm anyone, after all. Suddenly, he remembered how his uncle explained himself.

"It's not about wanting to dress like a woman, you nitwits, it's about getting some legroom!"

It seemed like an odd excuse, but if uncle Rudy had grown up a wizard, perhaps he was used to wearing robes instead of trousers. The fact that Mycroft thought it was an odd personality trait meant he did not know about Rudy being a reformed wizard. Mycroft had no idea. Fantastic.

Just then a loud honk sounded behind Sherlock. It could perhaps have been the beige Toyota he had cut off very brusquely and suddenly just a second ago. Though it wasn't Sherlock's fault if the driver of said vehicle did not have the wits to slow down properly.

"Are you driving?" His brother asked in disbelief.

"Don't remind me." Sherlock said. He didn't know how people endured it. Following the rules on the road took every ounce of joy from operating the black automobile. He thought about speeding up, seeing how fast he could make the little car go, but he also knew he did not need to get stopped but the local authorities. Lestrade couldn't do much all the way from London.

"I'll be sure to keep an eye on the Yorkshire traffic report." Mycroft said.

"Go ahead and do that. However, I do need to ask you some questions. Will you be capable of multitasking?" Sherlock said.

"I think I'll manage. Though let me say, it's quite refreshing that you're finally asking your older brother for help." Mycroft said, and Sherlock could hear the smirk through the phone connection. He resisted the impulse to hang up.

"You thought Potter was a fine flatmate for me in the beginning, and then you almost decided to call the wizard cops on him. What made you decide he was guilty?" Sherlock did not care for any more banter, and wanted to get to the point.

"I didn't say that he was guilty. You're the detective, isn't it your job to figure that one out?"

"I am figuring it out. I just want to know how much time I have before you decide to become an uninvited participant in the investigation." Sherlock answered.

"As long as you're moving forward, I will keep out of it. That is what I said, no? As to Potter, I had access to some memories which changed my opinion of his mental stability, thus I decided he
might pose a danger." Mycroft answered.

"You viewed memories? Of what?"

"His trial and incarceration."

"Do you still have access to these memories?" Sherlock asked impatiently.

"No. The wizards were barely cooperative when I asked for them the first time. I doubt they'd let me have another go. My power only extends so far, you know."

Sherlock swore under his breath.

"Could you give me the highlight reel?" Sherlock winced at how desperate he sounded.

"Hmm, the wizarding justice system is hilariously outdated?" Mycroft said. This information did not surprise Sherlock. The people still used owls to send messages to one another.

"Beyond that, Potter offered no resistance to his sentencing. When asked about the crime, he admitted that he was guilty...but I doubt whether the admission was genuine." Mycroft finished.

"You think he lied about having done it?" Sherlock asked.

"No, I don't think Potter knew what he was saying or what question he was answering. I'm not formally trained in psychiatric evaluation, but I don't believe Potter was aware of his surroundings." Mycroft finished.

"Psychosis?" Sherlock asked.

"Yes, probably. Do watch out for that, brother. It might sneak up on you. Or, him rather." Mycroft said. Sherlock considered the day and realized that it already sort of had. Of course, he knew that Harry never posed any danger to him, mentally stable or not.

"Right, thank you for your input." Sherlock was about to hang up.

"One more thing brother- they want to visit London again." Mycroft said gravely.

"Oh, god again?! When was the last time? It can't have been too long!"

"What do you expect? They're retired." Mycroft said.

"We need to find an occupation for them. This is getting ridiculous!" Sherlock exclaimed. His parents were much more manageable when they both held jobs. Maybe he and Mycroft could find them a time consuming hobby instead.

"Yes, I agree. Keep me posted if you have any ideas on that. Oh, and it's your turn to take them to a show. Thank your lucky stars that Le Miz isn't playing..." Mycroft said, and with that, he hung up.

Having returned the black Peugeot to a small parking lot in Leeds, Sherlock decided to dig out the magical 50p and give it a try. He did not have the patience to sit through a two and a half hour train ride to London.

Sherlock found a narrow alleyway, and crouched behind a dumpster. He was confident that no passerbyers would be able to spot him from the street. Though he supposed it didn't matter much if
they did, since he would be gone and would not have to deal with any repercussions.

He clutched the coin in his left hand and said Baker Street loudly. Immediately, he felt a strong pull at his navel that was exceedingly uncomfortable. He was spun round and round, and landed in a heap on a dusty floor, in the middle of an empty room. The journey was short, exceedingly unpleasant, but at least it had worked... *mostly.* He was standing in the middle of the living room of 221C, which looked gloomy and uninviting. 'Basement flats', he thought, and quickly made his way upstairs.

…

While Sherlock was gone, the whole merry crew had congregated in his living room and were happily watching re-runs of game shows. Mrs. Hudson, John, and Harry were calling out answers to the question on the telly. The three of them were all dead wrong.

"Tetrodotoxin." Sherlock said, as he walked in the room. The game show host echoed his answer a few seconds later.

"Of course you would know about poisons, Sherlock." Mrs. Hudson said warmly. "Let me put on some tea." She said, as the show cut to a commercial break.

Sherlock pulled up a chair to sit next to the others. He would probably not admit it, but seeing the three of them there had dispelled any of his earlier unease about the flat. He did not need to fear the thing he had tried to summon. Sherlock was sure that the wizard would look out for him; and so would John, and so would Mrs. Hudson. Though, the expertise of the latter two would probably not do much against the Goetic being which had possessed him.

He glanced over to Harry to see if he was in a better state than when he had left Yorkshire. The wizard caught his glance and looked embarrassed.

"Sorry about earlier." Harry said.

"It's fine." Sherlock answered simply.

Mrs. Hudson came back with a tray loaded with biscuits right as the show announced they were back, with another round of questions.

"Now Sherlock, remember the rules. You can't call out the answer until we've all had a try." John said.

"But if you're wrong..." Sherlock started.

"We might not be!" John argued.

"Very doubtful. Your success rate with guessing answers peaked at a measly 18%. Mrs. Hudson's has never been above 5%, and that's only because she always gets the dull ones about pop culture." Sherlock said.

"Aha, but now we have Harry. So combined, we might have a roughly 30% chance of getting it right." John continued.

"Harry's been on the run for a decade. I doubt he'll know anything about...the study of fossilized plants? They're giving these away!" Sherlock exclaimed when he read the question on the telly. Nonetheless he waited a couple of seconds for the other contestants in the room to have a go, before he confidently stated 'paleobotany.' It was correct.
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