Much Ado About a Whole Bloody Lot

by blueink3

Summary

"What do you mean John has to kiss her?"

"Sherlock, that's generally what happens when one is starring in a romantic comedy."

Or, Sherlock goes to see John in his first role post-Macbeth and he's really not all that happy about it.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

― Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably.‖
- Much Ado About Nothing, Act V, Scene ii

Sherlock stands stock still in front of the Natural History Museum, watching as children and parents alike stream out of the looming stone building before it closes its doors for the evening.

He could have found another, quieter place to stand, but unfortunately, Harry Watson told him to pick a recognizable spot to meet, which is why he's leaning against the bronze statue of Theodore Roosevelt, looking like he'd rather be anywhere else in the world.

The sun is still relatively high in the sky for nearly 7pm, but it is June, and the shadow of the substantial building is providing some necessary relief from the heat.
“Oh good, you found it!” a voice announces and he turns to find Harry walking up the steps, lifting her sunglasses on top of her head.

“Hard to miss,” he drawls, gesturing disdainfully at the massive equestrian depiction behind him. Still, he kisses her cheek because he hasn’t seen her in a couple of weeks and that’s what people do. He is fond of her, though. Despite what he says. And she knows it, too, as evidenced by the sly grin she gives him as she pulls away.

“Shall we?”

“Mm.”

They make their way down the steps and across the street, entering Central Park amid the overwhelming smell of horse manure and hot dogs. Sherlock nearly retches. Luckily, they pass the food carts and horse-drawn carriages quickly, entering the green maze that Sherlock will never admit he gets continually lost in. At least the Delacorte Theater, which hosts Shakespeare in the Park every summer, is relatively close to the perimeter. Any deeper and he’d need a compass to emerge once more.

“How’ve you been? It feels like it’s been ages,” Harry begins once the insanity of the museum and Central Park West is behind them.

“Fine,” Sherlock replies. Even though he hates small talk, Harry has a way of bringing it out of him. “John’s been busy. I’ve been away.”

“So, basically, you’re miserable,” Harry says and Sherlock glares, but remains silent because it’s true. He and John have barely spent any time together since the show closed a couple of months ago, what with John heading off into rehearsals for *Much Ado About Nothing* and Sherlock splitting his time between New York and London for Greg’s upcoming production of *Coriolanus* at The National. He actually missed John’s opening because of it and, though John assured him it was completely fine and he understood, Sherlock could see the disappointment in his eyes.

It’s been haunting him for weeks.

“This is when you ask me how the wedding planning is going,” Harry, always with the impeccable timing, interrupts his dour musings.

“I’m sure it is, but I honestly couldn’t care less.”

Harry bursts out laughing and Sherlock can’t help but quirk a smile. It’s tough getting a rise out of her. Unless it concerns John. Then she’s fiercer than a Mama Bear protecting its cub.

“Oh, of course you do,” she teases, elbowing him. “There’ll be dancing.” She’s got him there and he huffs.

“Fine,” he says before affecting an overly excited tone. “How’s the wedding planning going?”

But she waves a hand dismissively. “Oh Clara’s got most of it done already – stage manager and all. That was just my roundabout way of wondering if you were actually okay with the arrangement.”

Sherlock frowns and his pace slows. “Arrangement?”

Harry stops in the middle of the path, causing Sherlock to halt beside her, but not before nearly taking out a child on a scooter.
"I know John’s told you.” She squints in the sun peeking through the trees, but her sunglasses remain on her head. She stares at him with earnest and open eyes. “About the baby.”

“Ah,” he replies, heartbeat kicking up a notch. It’s bad enough that he has to watch John act with people who aren’t him this evening. He has no desire to get into a heart to heart with his sister in the middle of Central bloody Park. “And what of it?”

“Are you okay with it? I mean, John said you were, but – ”

“Why wouldn’t I be okay with it?”

“Well,” Harry shrugs. “It could be a bit weird I guess.”

Sherlock sighs. He already went through this with John, but clearly the Watsons need more assurances than that. “Harriet, are you and Clara going to love that child?”

Harry’s mouth snaps shut and she leans back as if the very question is utterly preposterous. “Of course.”

“Is that child is going to make you both happy?”

“Yes,” she whispers, swallowing tightly.

“Then why on earth would I not be okay with that?” Sherlock asks exasperatedly, before his voice softens. “And furthermore, if there is one more piece of John Watson on the earth, then the world will be better for it. And he or she will be loved terribly by the both of us, so I’m not sure what all the fuss is about.”

He finally glances up to find Harry wiping a stray tear. “Silly me, then,” she laughs and sniffs, reaching up and tugging him into a hug.

He stands with his arms at his sides awkwardly for a moment before slowly bringing them up to wrap around Harry’s back. She clears her throat against his chest and steps away, flicking her sunglasses back into place to hide her red-rimmed eyes.

“You’re a good man, Sherlock Holmes.”

“It’ll be our secret,” he replies before hooking his arm so she can hold onto his elbow.

They follow the path around as it twists and turns, before the brown wooden rotunda of the Delacorte crests over the hill. It’s not much to look at from the outside, but the best interpreters of Shakespeare have walked across that stage.

And the best part of all? It’s free. Well, it would be free for Sherlock anyway, as John’s partner, but still, it’s an honorable program. He glances at the sign displayed proudly on the side of the wall: “The belief that every citizen needs and is entitled to a theatre.” Many assume that New York theatre pales in comparison to London, but even Sherlock must admit this is one thing they got right.

“Damn, I forgot the mints,” Harry says, pausing slightly as they head towards the box office.

“Mints?”

“John asked that I bring him more mints. You know, for his Beatrice kisses. He ran out.”

Sherlock blinks, his hard drive stuttering over new data. "What do you mean his Beatrice kisses?"
Harry sighs the sigh of the long suffering as she steps up to the counter to pick up their tickets. “Sherlock, that's generally what happens when one is starring in a romantic comedy. Watson?” she offers to the young woman behind the counter and the woman must recognize the family resemblance because she blushes fiercely as she grabs the tickets. Then she spots Sherlock and goes positively crimson. Harry turns and finds that Sherlock hasn’t moved. She huffs and grabs his elbow, steering him away from the counter. “You own every Shakespeare edition in print. Please tell me you’re being deliberately obtuse.”

And he is, though ‘denial’ might be a better word for it. “I just… didn’t think that far ahead.”

And he didn’t. At all. His hard drive is still overheating and he begins to breathe deeply, as Harry attempts to be the annoying voice of reason at his side.

“Sherlock, you watched him kiss someone in A Little Night Music. Hell, he kissed Sean while you buggered off.”

Sherlock flinches and digs the toe of his shoe into the ground. “I’d prefer not to be reminded of that time, thank you very much.”

“Tough,” Harry replies, though it comes out softer than she probably intended. And Sherlock can’t fault her for it. Not when he left her to pick up the pieces of John he had shattered across the pavement.

He swallows thickly and makes a beeline for the concessions, leaving Harry to catch up.

“Do you mind?” he asks, gesturing to the wine list and she rolls her eyes.

“You know I don’t. Go for it.” She tucks their tickets into the pocket of her sundress. “I was teasing, you know. About you buggering off. I didn’t mean anything by it.”

“I know.” He takes a large gulp of wine and briefly wonders if he’ll need them to refill it before he actually pays. Then he thinks about John kissing someone else and he takes another swig, thoroughly ignoring the arched eyebrow Harry is sending his way. “I’m fine,” he says and even he knows there’s no way that sounded convincing.

“Yes,” she grins, grabbing a pack of chocolates and tossing them next to Sherlock’s wine glass. “Completely fine.”

And before he can retort, he hears the stage manager’s voice over the intercom filtering through the warm summer breeze from the open-air theatre:

“Ladies and gentlemen, fight call, fight call. Fight call on stage.”

xxxxxx

“Ladies and gentlemen, fight call, fight call. Fight call on stage.”

John stands and slides his braces over his shoulders, giving himself another glance in the mirror before heading for the stage. His 1930s military uniform has been appropriately aged and distressed with dirt, blood, and sweat, making him look like a man returning from war. It's missing the haunted expression that never quite leaves a soldier's eyes, though. The ghosts that hover on the periphery, waiting for a quiet moment to strike.

But this is Much Ado About Nothing. Not Henry V. That haunted look will stay under lock and key, only coming to visit when John glances in his own mirror, long after Benedick has faded away.
Eventually, he'll shed the military garb and slip into an Italian countryside costume, which will be starched and pressed within an inch of its life and he knows that no matter how still he stays, he'll be wrinkled by the time he makes his entrance. Nate understands this and only gives him a look of fond exasperation when he passes him backstage.

"Mr. Watson," he hears and he turns to find the Beatrice to his Benedick, Janine, jogging to catch up.

"Ms. Hawkins." He gives a slight bow and waits for her. "And how are we today?"

"Fucking melting," she mutters as she fans herself.

"Don't let Renee hear you say that."

"Fuck that," Janine replies, nudging John's shoulder with a laugh.

Their stage manager, Renee, has a swear jar and it's $1 for every curse word said, which is then donated to Broadway Cares/Equity Fights Aids. John has contributed a pretty penny so far.

"So today's the big day, huh?"

John feigns ignorance, but his gut clenches. "What big day?"

"Don't do that," Janine murmurs as they step out onstage, feeling the slight breeze off the water behind them. "I'm pretty sure the entire cast knows Sherlock's coming."

"Shit," he mutters and somehow, somehow, Renee manages to hear him with her superhuman powers from across the stage.

"That's a dollar to the swear jar, John Watson."

He groans. "How come I always get in trouble and she always gets away scot-free?" he asks, gesturing to Janine who holds her hands up innocently.

"You're foolish enough to get caught, my dear," Renee replies as the cast laughs. "Let's get to it."

They round up, and John comes to stand behind Jack, who's playing Claudio. Claudio is about to publicly shame Hero and throw her to the ground at their own wedding (as you do). Janine stands behind Christina, who's playing Hero, and sticks her tongue out at John. He lifts his arms as if to say 'bring it' and Renee rolls her eyes as she gives them the cue. Jack throws Christina to the ground without injury, and John makes a half-hearted show of holding him back before they move onto the next bit of choreography: John falling out of a tree while trying to overhear a conversation between Hero and Margaret. It's murder on his shoulder, but no amount of stunt choreography will help that. Luckily they have a PT on retainer.

"Is he excited?" Janine asks as they make their way backstage once more.

"Sherlock? I think so. I assume so." He fidgets. "We haven't really had a chance to talk about it."

"Are you excited?"

"I think 'nervous' is more apt," he replies.

"Aw," she says, squeezing his good shoulder. Janine's been a fine ally in this - in this odd transition from a Shakespearean one hit wonder to a taken-seriously classical actor.

It was odd, getting the phone call from Mike telling him that Daniel Sullivan, the director who's
helmed Shakespeare in the Park for as long as John's been aware of it, wanted to meet with him about a role. And not just any role: Benedick, one of the greatest leading men in Shakespearean comedy.

"That's half-hour," Renee calls as she wanders the halls. "House is open."

John hands over his dollar as she passes and she pockets it with a wink. Nate pauses in the doorway as Renee exits, glancing at John with a look that says, 'Really? Again?' John shrugs and allows Nate to help him apply dirt to his face, before he sprays him lightly with a bottle of water.

"War-weary enough?" Nate asks as he spins John towards the mirror and John sighs.

"Doesn't take much."

He can hear the murmur of the crowd over the intercom and he breathes deeply, attempting to tamp down his nausea.

Sherlock is somewhere out there, program in hand, waiting.

It's enough to make any man's fortitude crack.

Janine appears in the doorway, hands on her hips, head cocked to the side as she studies him.

"You better buck up, boy-o. We've got some verbal sparring to do."

"Well, then en garde," he replies with a flirtatious smile. Janine has been hitting on him shamelessly since day one, knowing how happily unavailable he is. It's a game for both of them, but it took him a good couple of weeks before he actually had the gall to return the teasing.

"Come on, Mr. Watson," Janine says with a salacious smile, coming up behind him and placing her chin on his shoulder. "Let's give him a show."

xxxxxx

Sherlock is on his third chardonnay by the time the ushers are urging everyone to turn their mobiles off. Harry digs around in her bag until she finds hers and smiles at a text from Clara before she powers it down.

His gaze wanders over the set – the Tuscan villa built against the very real backdrop of a darkening sky with the Belvedere Castle on a hill in the distance. It's not a bad view, Sherlock concedes. You'd never know you were in the middle of Manhattan.

The booze is making him warm and fuzzy, and just a bit sentimental. He misses John immensely, even though he just saw the man that morning for a cup of coffee and a brief kiss before he had to go to a meeting. He huffs as he pulls the phone out of his pocket, definitely blaming the alcohol for the text he sends next:

Break a leg. - SH

The mobile remains in his palm until the last possible moment, just to see if John texts back. He's not rewarded for his efforts, though, and he knows it's likely because John is getting ready to do nearly three hours of Shakespeare and checking his phone for a text from Sherlock is probably not high on his list of priorities at the moment.

He tells himself it's fine.
He's lying.

And Harry knows it too, when she merely reaches over, gently takes his phone, and turns it off. He's staring at his lap and she squeezes his knee, bringing his mournful gaze to hers.

"None of that," she murmurs as the lights begin to go down. "You're about to watch the man you love perform one of the greatest plays by your favorite playwright."

He smiles and it's genuine this time, but nothing – not Harry’s words or Sherlock’s studies or even his firsthand knowledge of John’s considerable talent – quite prepares him for the comedic and yet compelling tour de force John delivers next.

From the moment his regiment arrives at Leonato’s villa in exhausted victory, John commands the stage, drawing every eye to him, and that's not just Sherlock's bias talking. He's funny and biting in his banter with Beatrice, as she spits:

"I wonder that you will still be talking, Signior Benedick: nobody marks you."

John mocks her with an air of delighted surprise. "What, my dear Lady Disdain! Are you yet living?"

And before he knows it, Sherlock is laughing. Laughing so hard, he's nearly crying. He knew John was funny – even his retorts in private had perfect timing – but this is something else. It's hilarious, yet insecure. Heartwarming, yet angry. It's everything a scorned lover is when they're hurtling along the bumpy road towards their happy ending. And though Sherlock knows that happy ending is coming, John still makes him feel like its hanging in the balance. And that's the mark of a true professional.

He holds his breath constantly over the course of the first act, so much so that his vision begins to blur. Harry occasionally nudges him and he inhales sharply, lips parted as he watches his boyfriend, partner, lover, other half navigate the text like a veteran of the RSC.

He's so flustered that by the time intermission rolls around, Harry has to practically manhandle him from his green plastic seat back outside the rotunda. She gets him another chardonnay as he stands by a tree, staring at the line of women waiting for the loo.

"He's good," he murmurs as Harry sidles up to him.

"He is," she agrees. "Did you doubt that?"

"I never doubt John," he replies with more force than is probably necessary. Harry merely raises an eyebrow. "Still nice to be caught off-guard every now and then, though."

Luckily for him, there's been no snogging yet. Just witty repartee and, surprisingly, it reminds him of the start of their relationship. When they each were unsure of the other, yet they couldn't help but be pulled into the same orbit. The woman playing Beatrice is certainly talented. And formidable, to boot. A lesser actor in the role of Benedick would have been eaten for lunch and spit out by afternoon tea. Janine Hawkins. Sherlock can't help but admire her. He might feel differently when the snogging commences, though.

"You ready?" Harry asks and Sherlock jumps.

"What?"

She eyes him warily. "Are you ready to go in? They're dimming the lights."
Oh.” He nods and takes a sip of wine, fortifying himself. “Yes.”

Harry gives him a look that says she doesn’t believe him in the slightest, but blessedly, she remains silent.

Sherlock is only approached by two fans as he takes his seat once more, who gush over Macbeth and praise John’s performance that evening. As much as Sherlock hates interacting with squealing teenagers, his pride can’t help but shine through.

Eventually, though, the lights go out and Sherlock holds his breath again, thankful for the comedic relief that the character of Dogberry and his Night Watch provide. Still, the wedding scene is coming up and it’s never a pleasant thing to sit through. Claudio, believing Hero to have cheated on him, publicly shames her at the altar and throws her to the ground. The juxtaposition of tragedy amidst the comedy has always been jarring and a bit uncomfortable for Sherlock. But perhaps only because it makes him feel.

A plan is hatched for Hero to pretend to die (how very Juliet of her), and eventually, Benedick and Beatrice are, finally, left alone onstage. It’s Sherlock’s favorite scene in the whole play.

Janine as Beatrice stares after her departed cousin, wiping away tears, as John stands on the other side of the stage, looking for all the world like he wants to wrap her in his arms and never let her go.

“Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?”

She nods. “Yea, and I will weep a while longer.”

“I will not desire that,” he says as he takes a step closer and she turns with a sad smile on her tear-stained face.

“You have no reason; I do it freely.”

“Surely I do believe your fair cousin is wronged,” is John’s reply and Sherlock can’t help but smile because that’s John all over. Believing the best in people even when all evidence points to the contrary.

“Ah, how much might the man deserve of me that would right her!”

“Is there any way to show such friendship?”

“A very even way, but no such friend.”

“May a man do it?” He so desperately wants to help her, but she doesn’t believe him. It breaks Sherlock’s heart every time.

“It is a man’s office, but not yours,” she replies.

John smiles, eyes watery, as he slides his hands in his pockets and stares out over the audience.

“I do love nothing in the world so well as you: is not that strange?”

He glances over at her as she inhales a sob.

“As strange as the thing I know not. It were as possible for me to say I loved nothing so well as you: but believe me not; and yet I lie not; I
confess nothing, nor I deny nothing. I am sorry for my cousin.”

John strides over and takes hold of her shoulders. “By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.”

“Do not swear, and eat it.”

“I will swear by it that you love me; and I will make him eat it that says I love not you,” he whispers fiercely.

“Will you not eat your word?”

“With no sauce that can be devised to it. I protest I love thee.”

“Why, then, God forgive me!” she laughs.

“What offence, sweet Beatrice?”

“You have stayed me in a happy hour: I was about to protest I loved you.”

“And do it with all thy heart,” he urges.

“I love you with so much of my heart that none is left to protest.”

He crashes their lips together and her knees buckle, but John keeps her upright, and Sherlock swallows thickly in the audience. He knows what those arms feel like and he misses them desperately. The kiss itself doesn’t upset him as much as he thought it would. Still, it’s odd to see John’s lips pressing against someone who is not him, and yet, he’s invested in the story. He wants Beatrice and Benedick to get together. Almost as badly as he wants John to himself. But he’s willing to share if it yields a performance like this:

“Come, bid me do any thing for thee,” John breathes when they part and Janine’s expression darkens.

“Kill Claudio.”

“Ha,” John says as he pulls away, though it contains little humor, “not for the wide world.”

“You kill me to deny it. Farewell,” Janine replies as she breaks away from him, but John grabs her wrist.

“Tarry, sweet Beatrice.”

“I am gone, though I am here: there is no love in you: nay, I pray you, let me go.”

“Beatrice – ”

“In faith, I will go.” She struggles against him, but he holds her tight to his chest.

“We’ll be friends first,” he barks.

“You dare easier be friends with me than fight with mine enemy.”
"Is Claudio thine enemy?" he finally asks she wriggles out of his grasp, turning on him with the fury of a thousand wronged women.

"Is he not approved in the height a villain, that
hath slandered, scorned, dishonoured my kinswoman? O
that I were a man! What, bear her in hand until they
come to take hands; and then, with public
accusation, uncovered slander, unmitigated rancour,
--O God, that I were a man! I would eat his heart
in the market-place!"

Sherlock smiles because he loves that line, though it sounds rather like it belongs in that Games of Thrones show John insists he watch.

Sherlock studies Beatrice as she goes on a tear with John trying to get a word in edgewise. This must be what he and John are like when Sherlock is focused on a single task and John is vying for a moment of his attention. He makes a note to not let that happen as often.

"I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving." Janine attempts to leave again and John grabs her once more.

"Tarry, good Beatrice," he says, halting her departure and raising his hand as if swearing in a court of law. "By this hand, I love thee."

She takes his and kisses his fingertips. "Use it for my love some other way than swearing by it."

John pauses for a moment, before his shoulder kick back and his chin ticks up, his stance all at once going from pleading to military. "Think you in your soul the Count Claudio hath wronged Hero?"

"Yea, as sure as I have a thought or a soul," she replies, voice breaking.

"Enough," he says quietly. "I am engaged; I will challenge him."

He smiles tightly, knowing that he has to challenge his dearest friend for the sake of his love. It’s a heady sacrifice to make.

John takes her hand and brings her knuckles to his lips.

"I will kiss your hand, and so I leave you. By this hand, Claudio shall render me a dear account. As you hear of me, so think of me. Go, comfort your cousin: I must say she is dead: and so, farewell."

He exits and Sherlock glances to his left to find Harry with tears in her eyes. She huffs out a quiet laugh, knowing she's being watched, and Sherlock reaches over and pats her hand. He supposes it's a special bond they have, being John Watson's biggest fans.

"You survived the kiss," she whispers as she nudges his shoulder and he grunts.

"Barely." But it's halfhearted at best because he's just so damn proud. John is up there on one of the most famous Shakespearean stages in the world and he's owning it. And suddenly, every missed phone call, every awkward silence, every hour spent apart over the last few weeks comes crashing down on Sherlock’s shoulders with the weight of a thousand guilty moments.

"I need to see him," he blurs out and Harry frowns, confused.
“He’ll be back onstage in a minute.”

“No,” Sherlock shakes his head, panic already rising. “I need to see him now.” He moves to stand and Harry grabs his elbow in a vise grip.

“Sherlock, if you leave, he’ll never forgive you,” she whispers harshly. “Also, he’s in the middle of a play, you know. You can’t exactly storm the stage. This is not Les Mis.”

His fingers wind their way into his hair and he tugs because, despite the fact that they’re sitting eighth row center, John is suddenly too far away. He needs to wrap his arms around him and cocoon him from the world. Away from bad reviews and lost awards. From ex-lovers and costars whose lips are not his own.

Mycroft has always told Sherlock he’s selfish and this is one time he’s more than happy to agree with him.

“He’s making out with someone who isn’t me and that is unacceptable,” he whines and Harry stares at him.

“You were fine with it ten minutes ago,” she hisses and Sherlock glares.

“I’m changeable,” he whispers back and Harry’s expression softens, as she pats his knee once more.

“It’s going to happen from time to time,” she muses with a smile. “Stay. Admire the talent. You’ll get your turn.”

Sherlock breathes deeply and tries to quell the anxiety in his chest. To silence the little voice in his head that tells him he’s had this man to himself all this time and he’s squandered it. Driven him away by disappearing to London to appear in a stupid play by stupid Shakespeare directed by stupid Greg Lestrade.

John’s still not onstage, which means Sherlock's attention drifts. He knows this play by heart and he ticks off every line that brings him closer and closer to John’s entrance once more. In the meantime, he contents himself by staring at John’s headshot in the program, wondering how on earth he turned into such a lovesick teenager.

John Bloody Watson, that’s how.

Finally, John reappears to challenge Claudio and Sherlock stops breathing, suddenly and completely bowled over by the fact that this man is his. To take home at night and wake up to in the morning. To kiss whenever he wants to, not because it’s dictated by a stage direction. To shag into the mattress whenever the moment overtakes him.

And as John growls, “You are a villain,” to Claudio, a thrill of arousal shoots up Sherlock’s spine.

He loves this man, wholly and completely. From the way he stirs his coffee to the way he delivers a particularly crushing line of dialogue.

Harry removes her appeasing hand from his knee, but he (somehow) manages to remain in his seat until the end. Until John gets the girl and Shakespeare’s play ends with a dance.

And when it comes time for the bows, he leads the standing ovation.

xxxxxx
John smiles as he finally sees Sherlock’s text and quickly wipes his face on the towel Nate tosses at him.

“Such a smitten kitten,” Nate sighs and John glances at him in the mirror.

“Did you just call me a kitten?”

Nate shrugs. “It’s the only thing that rhymed with ‘smitten.’”

John laughs and shakes his head, quickly changing out of his costume and yanking on his street clothes.

“Relax, I don’t think Sherlock’s going to leave without you,” Nate offers as he hangs up John’s wardrobe, but it does nothing to deter the speed with which John changes. He needs to get his hands on that man. Immediately.

Janine pokes her head in to give him a thumbs up and he grins cheekily in return.

“So do I get to meet Mr. Tall, Dark, and Handsome or are you going to take him home and have your way with him?”

Nate loudly clears his throat and promptly exits as John blushes crimson. “I’d like to say the former, if only to save my dignity, but I’m sure it’ll be the latter.”

“Lucky boy,” Janine grins.

Whatever preconceived notions Janine had about Sherlock and his formidable nature/sexual process, however, are probably blown out of the water as John’s dressing room door opens and Sherlock tumbles in his arms a moment later, wrapping around his body like a child clutching a well-loved teddy bear.

“Whoa hey,” John murmurs, raising his eyebrows over Sherlock’s shoulder at Harry in question, but she merely quirks up the corner of her lips in a sympathetic smile. John’s hands stroke up and down Sherlock’s back, counting the bumps of his vertebrae as Sherlock breathes hotly against his neck.

“I missed you,” Sherlock murmurs and John chuckles.

“Love, you saw me this morning.”

“Wasn’t the same. Hasn’t been the same.”

And something pangs deep in John’s chest, because he knows the feeling. It hasn’t been the same. They had been spoiled during *Macbeth*, spending practically every waking and sleeping hour together, but now, real life is making itself known. And it’s infuriating.

He should care that Janine is there witnessing it all, but he catches her reflection in the mirror and notices she’s fighting against her emotions as she watches them cling to one another.

“We make time for us from now on, yeah?” John murmurs, turning his head and placing a kiss just below Sherlock’s ear. Sherlock shudders in his arms and squeezes tighter.

“Yes.”

“Good.” He threads his fingers through the curls at the nape of Sherlock’s neck. “Now, will you come have a drink with my cast?”
Sherlock huffs against John’s skin and it sends a shiver down his spine. “Must I?”

“I think so. You’ve been quite the topic of conversation.”

“Your fault, no doubt,” he pulls away and presses a soft, chaste kiss to John’s lips.

He smiles. “Can’t help but brag about you, love.”

Sherlock blushes faintly and glances down at his shoes. “Fine. For you.”

“Good man,” John breathes, finally extracting himself long enough to give Harry a one-armed hug, seeing as the fingers of his other hand are still laced through Sherlock’s.

“Oh,” Sherlock says and John looks up to see that the man has finally noticed Janine, standing quietly in the corner of the room. “Ms. Hawkins,” he begins, awkwardly clearing his throat at being caught in such a vulnerable moment, “you were good tonight. Splendid, in fact.”

“High praise indeed from Mr. Sherlock Holmes,” she replies, smiling and holding her hand out. Sherlock takes it. “I promise I’ve been taking good care of him,” she continues, nodding in John’s direction. Sherlock smiles.

“I appreciate it.”

“Now come out for a drink,” she urges. “You’re all I’ve heard about for the past six weeks. I want to know how much John was exaggerating.”

Sherlock’s eyes narrow in his direction and John blushes under the scrutiny. “He does have a flare for the dramatic.”

“Do not,” John bristles.

“Do too,” Sherlock retorts.

“Well, just can’t seem to help myself,” he murmurs, tugging Sherlock back for another kiss and smoothing away whatever worry had taken residence on Sherlock’s features. Whatever anxiety had caused him to hurry backstage and all but barrel into John’s arms. John thinks he has a pretty good idea and they can have a chat about it later – about the future and how running two separate successful careers will work – but right now, Sherlock’s face alights with joy and it’s the kind of joy John doesn’t think he’s seen there since Tony night.

They allow Janine and Harry to drag them to the local haunt on the Upper West Side and ply them with beer. And they manage to spend 37 minutes at the bar before Sherlock bends down and whispers something absolutely filthy in John’s ear.

John doesn’t even bother making excuses as he spins on his heel and drags Sherlock into the night air, showing him the difference between a stage snog and a real one before the door even closes behind them, silencing the catcalls and wolf whistles that follow their departure.

He doesn’t care because Sherlock’s been away in London and now he’s here –

And John knows they’ve got a lifetime to figure it all out.

End Notes
- The Delacorte Theater is within Central Park near 81st St. across from the American Museum of Natural History.
- Broadway Cares/Equity Fights Aids (aka BC/EFA) is an amazing organization and the New York theatre community raises millions of dollars for them every year (and not just through swear jars, obviously).
- Fight call happens usually about fifteen minutes before the house opens, depending on how many stunts in the show there are. All of the choreography for every fight, tumble, etc. is run through so no one gets hurt.
- On a hill overlooking the theatre is the Belvedere Castle. If you've seen the movie Stepmom, you know it well.
- The RSC is the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!