

## I Put a Spell on You

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# I Put a Spell on You

by [firefright](#)

## Summary

Eight months after he and Jason first met, a new supernatural threat to one of Gotham's other resident vigilantes brings Constantine back to the city once more. Considering the rather 'familial' nature of the trouble this time around, it feels only natural for him to ask the kid for his assistance a second time. And maybe, in the process, they can also get to know each other a little bit better than they did before.

## Notes

Hello! This a gift fic for my dearest Skalidra, who requested 'More Constantine fic. Possibly with Jason, or maybe going off that one Grayson issue with Dick and the vampires?' and so an idea was born. I hope the rest of you guys enjoy the unexpected continuation of this AU as well ;D

Happy (slightly early) birthday, darling!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

The next time John sees Jason, it's under similar, if slightly less city-ending circumstances.

"I can't believe we're doing this," the kid says, as from the boot of the car they drove over here, John digs out a ring of garlic bulbs and hangs it around his neck. "Are we seriously doing this?"

"What do you think, luv?" John replies, dumping a handful of roughly cut wooden stakes into his waiting arms next. The words are muffled by the cigarette in his mouth, the fierce howl of the wind in the air. Cold nights in Gotham seem to run at Antarctic temperatures, never mind New Jersey. Just a few minutes of being outside has been enough for John to conclude that he'd actually have last chance of freezing his bollocks off hanging around the arse-end of Hell in the middle of winter than here.

"I think you're nuts," Jason stares at the small pile in his arms. "I mean, I've seen some weird shit in my time, but this is... fucking *vampires*, really?"

John huffs a laugh at his disbelief, "What? I thought you liked the classics. Dracula's right up your street, innit?"

"Dracula's a *book*," Jason emphasises, as if John could possibly not know that, "And forgive me if I like the thought of being the only dead thing around." He immediately scowls as John also reaches across to tuck a small bottle of holy water into a pocket of his jacket, "This all feels so damn cliché."

"Fiction always come from the truth, isn't that what they say?" Unconcerned, John slips himself a little holy water, too. That should just about do it in terms of preparation, he thinks. After all, the kid's here to be the muscle of the operation, not him.

"So I've heard." Jason shuffles the stakes in his arms, managing to stuff a couple into his belt without dropping any while holding the last in his hand. "Haven't you got any, I don't know, silver bullets or something? I'd be a damn sight more comfortable shooting the fuckers than this."

"What do I look like, a miracle worker?" John drops the now stubby end of his cigarette to the ground, grimacing as a smudge of ash makes it onto his shirt. "Did the best I could on short notice, I did. Chair legs for stakes, down the grocer's for the garlic. Even nicked the holy water out the font of the local church, and now you're moping at me over silver bullets. Bleeding ungrateful, is what you are."

Jason rolls his eyes at his theatrics, "Fuck off, I didn't ask you to recruit me for this."

"No," he grins, "But you didn't say no either."

The scowl that remark earns him is apoplectic, but Jason doesn't deny it.

"Cheer up, luvvie," John goes on, slapping his hand against the lad's shoulder, "So long as Christopher Lee don't show up, we'll be fine."

“The Saruman guy?”

Never has a remark forced John to bite his lip more — at least that he can remember in this moment. Bloody youth of today, not knowing the classics. Or maybe it's more about bloody Americans. He'll figure that specific part out later.

“Remind me to introduce you to the joys of Hammer horror when we're done with this,” John says, “Now, you want to complain some more or go get on with saving the day?”

Jason sighs, twirling the stake in his hand before rolling his eyes, “Yeah, sure. Let's go save Dickface from vampires, then you and me can agree never to talk about any of this again.”

“Just like the other thing?” John can't resist saying it, or raising his eyebrows in a way that's blatantly suggestive.

Predictably, Jason blushes, no doubt at the flash memory of hot skin against skin that John catches echoing off his thoughts. Once recovered, he quickly responds by giving him the bird. “Shut up, Constantine.”

“Right you are, squire. This way, then.”

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Thing is, Jason's big ‘brother’ has got himself into a bit of a pickle. Gotham's a magnet for bad things, just the same as London is, and a coven of roving vampires is no exception. Add in a tasty looking, do-gooder target like Nightwing unknowingly trying to interfere with their feeding habits, and well, you'd have to be a sodding idiot not to see what would happen there.

John's reasonably sure Grayson's still alive, and even if he's been bitten with the intent to be changed, not so far gone that he won't be able to pull him back from it. He wouldn't have asked Jason along if he wasn't, since as cold as the kid likes to play it towards the rest of his family, he really does seem to care about them still (at least so far as John can tell).

Daylight's just beginning to creep its way over the horizon as they make their way underground into an old abandoned subway station, of which Gotham seems to have an unhealthy amount. You'd really think the authorities would've learned to close up and fill in all these empty spaces by now. But then again, common sense never does seem to be a speciality of bureaucrats. Penny-pinching and downright thievery on the other hand...

“I feel like a fucking idiot with this garlic around my neck.” Jason mutters, “Why aren't you wearing any?”

“Stuck a few bulbs in my pockets back at the store, luv, don't worry.” John replies, deliberately keeping his gaze focused ahead because he knows if he looks back now he'll probably crack up laughing. That part of his ‘preparations’ really is just a wind up on the lad, one he may or may not clue him into later.

“Right,” Jason says, with all sceptic sense of someone who spent their formative years on the street, “So what's the plan for when we get in there?”

John shrugs, tempted to light up a new cigarette, but vampires have acute senses, even with all the other stink about. “Scope out the area, see where your brother is, then get him out.”

“And?”

“And what?”

Jason makes a disgusted sound. “That’s really your whole plan?”

“Yup.”

There’s a groan. “Great, just great.” Jason sighs, “This is why you’ve got such a bad reputation, you know.”

“No, I’ve got a bad reputation because I’m a bad man,” John corrects him, “Everything else is just circumstantial.” Fuck it, he pulls out the fag, before stopping and turning back round to face Jason. “Fine, look, ‘ere’s what we’re gonna do. I’ll wander in, rile the bastards up and get ‘em good and pissed off at me first. Then, while they’re distracted, you can go grab that brother of yours and hightail it out of there.”

Jason eyebrows raise. “First of all, he’s not my brother. And second of all, you’re going to piss them off?” he repeats.

“Mmhm.”

“Is that normally how you deal with vampires?”

“It’s normally how I deal with anyone.” Feeling generous, John taps out a cigarette for the kid, too, and reaches up to tuck it in behind his ear for later. “Come on, luv, you trust me don’t you?”

“Not even a little.” Jason replies, wrinkling his nose.

“That’s the spirit.”

They make it the rest of the way down the tunnel in silence, the kid treading so quietly John can’t hear him at all. Wouldn’t know Jason was even still there if it weren’t for the sharp pulses of his aura, tinged green and a little blackened around the edges with silent worry and anxiety both. God knows how he, and the big Bat himself, manage that feat, both of them six foot and taller with muscles like concrete while John clomps around like a drunken heifer, but he’s not going to question it. Not now at least, with them drawing up so close on the nest.

A few old subway cars lurk in the shadows, abandoned alongside the rest of the place. John can feel cold spots of death emanating from it, as well as one warm torch of life, which is how he knows they’ve reached the right place.

“All right, sunshine,” he says, stepping back to loop an arm around Jason’s shoulders and drag him in close for a wee heart to heart before the main event, “Here’s where you do your thing. Become one with the shadows, all that lark. Just keep it quiet till you got that brother

of yours tucked over your shoulder, mind you. I'll not be much of a distraction if you're making more noise than I am."

"You know, for once in my life I don't think that'll be hard," the kid mutters, before squinting at him through the dark. "Don't anything stupid, Constantine. Last thing I need today is to be saving your ass, too."

John chuckles at the concern, "Darling, I did something the stupid the moment I stepped in the door. Nevermind now. Don't go worrying your pretty head about me."

"Not worried," Jason grunts, "Just..." he scowls, "Nevermind."

"Mmhm." John gives Jason a minute's head start to get to it, then steps out bold as brass to the front of the train. He's faced down the bloody King of the Vampires and given the fucker an existential crisis in his time, no way he's afraid of these little scroungers.

"Oi, oi!" he shouts, loud and clear enough to send his voice echoing down the rest of the tunnel and around the train cars, "Rise and shine, me beauties! Come on now, I've not got all day to wait 'ere!"

Silence is his first answer, and during the few seconds it lasts he can practically feel Jason's incredulity radiating out at him from wherever it is he's hiding. John stands firm, though, as the fading echoes of his voice eventually give way to furious hissing, and between the looming cars four figures soon step out. One female, three male.

"There you are," John says, grinning and taking another drag off his cigarette like he's stood in the middle of his favourite local rather than a dank tunnel underneath the crime capital of the USA, "Now then, I don't suppose you lot can tell me if Bela Lugosi's hanging about? Only I'm supposed to tell him he missed dinner with Peter Cushing last Wednesday, and the cranky bastard'll have my guts for garters if I go back without a response again."

The woman, who's moved to stand slightly in front of the rest of them, curls her lips (disturbingly red against the stark white skin of the rest of her face) in distaste. Evidently, she doesn't much like his joke.

"You have made a very grave mistake in coming here, mortal." comes the predictably snarled reply. "How dare you intrude on our sanctuary."

John raises an eyebrow, "That's funny, I was going to say the same thing to you. Just the first part mind, wouldn't call this place much of a sanctuary meself. More like a breeding ground for rats. But then again, I suppose for pasty wankers like yourselves a place that has a big bat sign hanging in the sky every night must have felt like one big invitation, right?"

The three blokes behind her start to advance, along with another round of hissing, "Let me tear him apart, Mistress." one begs.

"Well, that's certainly an option," John replies, "If you want to be turned to ashes, that is."

The woman scoffs at his boast, looking him up and down, “Am I supposed to take you for some kind of hunter?”

“Who else would be daft enough to waltz into the middle of a group of vampires?” John answers, tossing the stub of his now diminished cig down and crushing it beneath his heel. “But lucky for you bastards, I’m in a giving mood and offering you a choice instead of just exterminating you first.”

“Which is?” she inquires, boredly.

“Get out of town or be put down,” he shrugs, “Simple as.”

This garners a laugh from all of them, even though it’s the first time in the conversation that John’s been completely serious.

He lights another cigarette, waiting for them to get over it. As he does, he does a quick check on Jason’s aura, now located inside the train cars. There’s the other one, too, living and bright, with a taste of cool night air and adrenaline attached (though it’s currently a little dimmed at the moment).

Good lad, he thinks, he’s moving fast, just the way John needs him to.

“Yeah, yeah, laugh it up, pisspots.” Lighting up the second cigarette, John encourages the smoke to wreath around him like a cloud when he takes a drag, and the extra flare of fire when he breathes in is enough to paint an eerie glow on his eyes in this black pit to boot, “We’ll see if you’re still laughing in a minute or so.”

“You really expect us to be afraid of you?” the woman scoffs, backed up by her trio of idiots. “You’re one, we’re four. You don’t even have a weapon on you.”

“Don’t I?”

*Fire*, he thinks. Projects. *Fire*.

Reaching into his pocket, John pulls out a small gem, cheap plastic bought from one of those new age stores down the way (nothing more than glitz and glamour), and holds it up so they can get a good look at it in the dim light. “Tell me, do you know what this is, luv?”

Her eyes glow red, too, though in a different kind of fashion. “No, should I?”

“It’s a sun stone. Concentrated sunlight trapped inside a diamond house. All I have to do is speak one word and, well, poof! You lot are history.”

“I don’t believe you.” she says, expression imperious even though the quick dart of her eyes to the gem speak volumes more. “There’s no such thing.”

“Oh yeah? Sure about that, are you?” he grins, a full on smirk now. Lets it pull sharp and nasty on his cheeks. “Considering you lot probably couldn’t even touch a century between you, I don’t think so. You’re babes in the wood on the grand scale of things, playing at being hard fuckers for the audience. Else you’d all be a lot more scared of me now.”

*Sun. Burning. Embers.*

“What if he’s—” one of the men starts to say, before she holds up a quick hand to shush him.

“It’s not real,” the woman says again, though now her voice isn’t quite so steady, “And you’re a dead man.”

Jason and Grayson’s auras are moving together now, back towards the entrance they came in through, and John knows that’s his cue to stop delaying and really let the curtains hang loose on the act.

“Nah, see,” he says, “That’s where you’re wrong, luv,” *Heat. Charring. Searing. Sparks. Tinder. Melting.* “I’m not dead, I’m John bloody Constantine.”

*FIRE.*

The mental shockwave he unleashes after pretending to crush the gem in his hand sends them all reeling, hissing and spitting and clawing at their own skin and clothing. Nothing really happens, of course, it’s all a pantomime, but for a moment the vampires’ perception of their torment is strong enough that John can actually smell flesh and hair roasting up his nose. Their screams, on the other hand, are real enough to burst his eardrums. Begging, pleading. He can feel Jason’s confusion as he sees what’s happening, too, and John can only spare a brief nudge to encourage him to stop staring and get the hell out of here, because maintaining this kind of illusion over four separate minds takes a hell of a lot of concentration on his part.

Finally, he feels the lad start to run, taking his precious burden out along with him, and then — step by tiny step — John starts to follow suit, backing away slowly as you would from any dangerous predator.

He’s almost made it all the way to the stairway out by the time the woman, stronger than the rest, manages to snap free.

“You filthy little—!”

“Woops,” John laughs, a touch nervously now for true, “Sorry, pet, hope you’ll forgive me trick there, just needed to get back something that wasn’t yours. Now if you’ll excuse me...”

“Kill him!” She shrieks.

Seems as good a time to turn tail and run as any.

John pelts back up the stairs, the spell breaking completely as the three blokes she calls a coven wake up and come after him, too. He can feel his lungs start to seize after just a few seconds, his thigh muscles burn. One day he’ll take up cardio, lay off on the cigs, so on and forth, but for right now he may just be buggered.

“Constantine, get the fuck down!”

Then again, it’s always good to have mates in these situations.



The bullets Jason's shooting won't do much more than slow the bastards down and piss them off more. But it's enough, John thinks as he wheezes along, for him to put together one last little spell.

*Darkness. Shadow. Night.*

He runs like the dickens, grabbing Jason's jacket to haul him back out again as soon as they're level with each other — though the kid does his level best to keep shooting at the same time.

*Moonlight. Safety. Easy prey. Blood.*

*Blood.*

*EAT.*

They stumble out into the cold morning light, and — stupid angry, greedy bastards that they are — the vampires follow, deluded into seeing darkness still instead of the now weakly shining sunlight. It's worth it for the moment of confusion on all four of their nasty little faces before, one by one, they each beging to pop and burn like firecrackers going off in the dawn.

Definitely not a sound John will be forgetting anytime soon. Neither will the kid by the look on his face.

"Christ," Jason says breathlessly, dropping the gun down to hang at his side. "They just... *fuck.*"

"Yep." John wheezes, bent low over his knees as he gets his breath back.

"How... how the... how did you get them to—"

"Trade secret, luv," this answer he accompanies with a cough, then wipes his mouth, "'an't you got family to check on?"

Jason stares a moment more at the now dissipating ash piles, then jerks out out of whatever stupor it is he's fallen into at the mention of his brother. "Shit! Right, Dick, that fucking..." he's gone from John's side in a second, stalking back to the waiting car.

John himself follows at a more leisurely pace, arriving just in time to get a good glance of Jason fussing over the back seat. Grayson's laid down there, mostly stripped out of the superhero suit, unconscious and with more than a few bloodied bite marks visible along his strong limbs and exposed shoulders. "He all right, then?"

"Does he look all right?!" Jason snaps back at him automatically, before looking down again with real concern ridged in under his eyebrows. He takes a deep breath in, seeming to steel himself before continuing, "He... he's lost blood and... he won't wake up. I've tried, but he won't." Blue eyes cast naked concern in John's direction as he asks, "Is that normal? They haven't done anything else to him to make him this way, have they?"

“Move out, luv,” John doesn’t sigh, though it’s a close thing, “Let me get a better look at ‘im.”

He places the palm of his left hand across Grayson’s forehead and finds it warm with life as the kid’s heart continues to beat, strong and sure inside his chest. There’s nothing really to worry about, but John lets the touch go on just long enough to make it look like he’s actually doing something before finally pulling back. “He’ll be fine,” he announces, “They just had a bit of a nibble on him, that’s all. Good rest and some food is all he needs.”

Jason’s shoulders sink back down a little in relief. “All right. Okay, cool. Just so long as he’s...”

He trails off long enough that John decides he better give him a little extra nudge to get the ball rolling. “Got a place we can go lay him down for a bit?”

“Yeah,” Jason starts again, “Yeah, of course. Can you drive?”

“You kidding me? I can’t even do it in England, and that’s on the right side of the road.” John shakes his head, “All on you, luv.”

Jason snorts, rolling his eyes briefly before stripping off his jacket and leaning into the car to drape it over Grayson’s bare chest. John has exactly enough discretion to pretend he doesn’t notice the carefully measured tenderness in the gesture, then circles round to the front of the car and climbs in on the passenger side.

A moment later, Jason slams into the driver’s seat (stopping only to rip the still present garlic ring off his neck and throw it down a nearby alley). “Keep an eye on him,” he orders, as he starts the engine, “Let me know if anything changes.”

John raises an eyebrow, nods, and doesn’t argue.

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Nothing does change during the drive, of course. At least not for the worse. In fact, by the time they reach Jason’s little hideout, Grayson’s actually woken up a little and is attempting to get a bleary-eyed look at his surroundings.

“Whoaaa...” he mumbles, cracking a smile as Jason opens the back door to haul him off the cracked leather seat, “Hey, little wing, when’d you get here?”

Once on his feet, Grayson stumbles a little, sending the jacket sliding down off his shoulders. Feeling generous, John helpfully darts forward to pick it back up.

“When did I...” Jason scowls as Grayson decides to fall forward onto him next and loop his arms around his neck, “Don’t tell me you don’t remember what happened, Dickface.”

“Mmm?” Grayson grins loopily as Jason hooks his own arm around his waist, using it to forcibly guide him into the building and leaving John to bring up the rear. “Dunno what you mean, Jay, everything’s kinda... *fuzzy*.”

“You got captured by vampires, moron. I had to come rescue you.”

“I helped, too.” John pipes up, so as not to be left out.

Grayson blinks a moment, swivelling his head around to look back at John, then — a little disturbingly — actually giggles, “Whaaat? Don’ be silly, Jay, vampires aren’t real.”

That one tiny statement is all it takes for Jason to round back on John again.

“What. The hell. Is wrong with him?” he spits.

“You mean ‘sides the obvious?” John scratches his chin. Jason growls, and he’s quick to hold up his hands in a peacemaking gesture. “Some vampires like to give their victims a feeling of euphoria when they feed from them. Makes the blood taste better, so I heard. He’s probably still under the influence, and combined with the aforementioned blood loss...”

“There’s no wonder he’s acting a little cuckoo.” Jason finishes for him dryly, “Great.”

John is the one who gets the door. Has to, actually, with how clingy Grayson’s being over Jason. He barely pays attention to anything else, even as they get into the apartment, and John has to grin at how very pink the kid’s face is getting over all that touchy-feeliness from his ‘brother’.

“Put the kettle on, shall I?” he says cheerily, heading to the small kitchen as soon he spots it and dropping Jason’s jacket (still smelling of garlic) over the nearest chair.

Jason grunts an acknowledgement, “Knock yourself out. I’m gonna...” he stumbles as Dick nuzzles in against his throat, “Get this — high off his *ass* — bird cleaned up and into bed.”

And what an ass it is, John thinks, watching them walk away. “Good luck with that, mate!” he calls after Jason, before turning around to make himself familiar with the place.

It’s pretty decent. Nice even. Certainly a step above the motel room he and Jason last spent time together in. Neat, tidy. Everything in its place and a place for everything. John wanders around the main room and kitchen while he waits for the kettle to boil, poking at the weapons hanging on the walls, the delicate china tea set put out as decoration, and the warm brown leather sofa. He also has a look for some booze in the kitchen cupboards despite the early hour, but comes up empty. Looks like it’s just going to be straight tea for him, then.

Occasionally, from elsewhere in the apartment, there’s a light thud, the sound of more dopey laughter from Grayson and cursing from Jason. John whistles lightly in between those disturbances, setting out two mugs ready for when he emerges. Lad’s probably going to need it, after whatever it is that’s going off in the other room.

By the time Jason finally appears again, John’s already settled down on the sofa, steaming cuppa in one hand and lit cigarette in the other. He watches as Jason thumps over to him, scowl now seemingly etched in permanent lines across his face, before throwing himself onto the cushions beside him and snatching up the other mug John has left waiting on the coffee table.

“So,” he begins, with very little shame as to his nosiness, “How’d it go in there?”

Jason grunts for an answer, taking a resentful sip of his tea and sinking lower into the sofa. John watches as he stretches his long legs out under the coffee table, attempting — and largely failing — to toe his boots off.

“That good, eh?”

“I had to sedate him to stop him from trying to grope me.” Jason grumbles, to which John can’t help chortling, and the glower on Jason’s face afterwards just makes it worse. “It’s not funny.”

“It kind of is, luv,” he grins, tapping ash into the decorative bowl occupying the middle of the table that he’s taken to using for an ashtray. “Mostly because of that pretty blush on your face.”

“Fuck off,” Jason mutters, draping an arm across his face immediately. Whether to hide or deny him any further appreciation of that fact is up for interpretation, but John smirks all the same. “I just hope he won’t remember any of it when he wakes up for real later.”

“Hard to say, usually I don’t stick around that long.” John takes another pull, “Least he’s safe and sound, right?”

“Right.” The acknowledgement comes with an unsurprising amount of begrudgement, “God, I hate that asshole.”

John snorts, “Sure you do.”

It’s enough to get Jason to lift his arm a little, if only to be able to aim another glare in John’s direction. “I do.”

“Mm, that’s why you couldn’t come fast enough when I called you about ‘im.”

“Do you *want* me to kick you out on the street?” Jason asks, warningly.

“Nah,” John smiles wickedly, “I’m plenty comfortable where I am, little *wing*.”

“Oh my fuck. Can you please forget you ever heard that?” the kid groans.

“Nope.” John leans back, taking another pull of his cigarette, “But I can promise not to tell anyone else about it, providing you explain where it came from to me first.”

Jason fixes him with a narrow-eyed look of disgust, “You fucking disappear on me for eight months, after telling me I need to fuck you to save Gotham, and now you want me to just give up all the details of my life to you? Where the hell do you get off, Constantine?”

John doesn’t respond to that. Not verbally anyway. Instead he gives Jason a long look up and down, quirking his eyebrow in a way that’s unmistakably rude.

He really loves how easy the kid is to fluster.

“Urgh, fine,” Jason groans, plonking his tea back down on the table hard enough to cause a few drops to jump out of the cup onto the wood. “But only if you tell me how you made those vampires kill themselves as well.”

John thinks about it for a moment, then nods, “Deal.”

Jason reaches into his jean pocket, pulling out a single, slightly bent looking fag. John’s familiar enough with his own favoured silk-cut after all these decades of smoking them to recognise it as the one he himself tucked behind Jason’s ear earlier, and when the lad holds the end out to him expectantly he obliges him by leaning over to light it.

A tug or two of smoke seems to settle Jason’s nerves some before he begins to talk. “It was my first mission out alone. Or at least it was supposed to be, anyway. Turned out to be some bullshit test set up by Bruce to see if I was ‘ready’, like he couldn’t trust me just to go out and do it right otherwise. Joke was on him in the end, though, since his stupid plan fucked up before it even started.”

“How so?” John asks, settling in for the story. There’s already enough there in the opening for him to unpack about Jason for days, but he wants to hear the rest too.

“He dressed up his butler as one the city’s villains for me to catch, except the act was so good some actual goons took Alfred for the real thing. Bruce got shot in the chaos, then they kidnapped Alfred. As you can imagine, shit got real serious real quick after that.” Jason blows smoke out his nostrils, “That’s when Goldie poked his nose into the whole affair. He was trying out his own new look in the city, but when he saw me... well, turned out the old man hadn’t bothered to tell him he was bringing in a new kid to take over his leotard.”

“Didn’t take it well, I gather?”

“No,” Jason grunts, “Not at first. But then the call came in that Alfred was in trouble. We didn’t have much choice but to pull it together and go rescue him after that.” He taps the ashes off his cigarette into the bowl as well. “Dick was a big knowitall jerk about everything to start with, but... I guess things worked out in the end. He ended up giving me some pointers about being Robin on the fly, cracked a couple jokes about taking me under his wing, and well...”

“That’s where the nickname comes from.” John concludes.

“Yeah.”

“Well, I’ve never heard anyone give Nightwing props for creativity,” he chuckles, “You must’ve been a real bean sprout back then.”

Jason snorts, “Still could’ve kicked your ass.” He gestures across at John, smoke swirling from the end of his cig, “So c’mon, your turn, tell me how you did it.”

Like a dog with a bone, this one.

John drains the last of his tea and stubs out his cigarette before stretching and finally shrugging out of his trench coat. “Easy,” he replies, as he folds and drapes it over the arm of the sofa, “I lied to them.”

“Lied to them?” By the twist of his lips, John can already tell Jason doesn’t entirely believe him, and his next words just confirm it. “You got them to commit *suicide*, you can’t just do that by lying. At least not that quickly.”

“Not technically suicide if they don’t realise they’re doing it,” John corrects. “And it’s not so much lying by words that I did, I lied to their minds. Made ‘em see what they wanted to see, which was me easily reachable on a silver platter. If they’d had their eyes open a bit more, and were less greedy, it wouldn’t have worked, but as it was...” he mimes an explosion with his fingers, “*Poof*.”

Jason’s brow beetles in thought again, “And you did the same thing in the tunnel, made them think that that gem you had really was magic.”

“Mmhm,” John confirms, nodding, “You’d be surprised how much of the craft is just smoke and mirrors. All that big flashy stuff, you don’t really need it so long as people stay people. Let them see what they want and they’re putty in your hands.” he grins savagely, “Or ashes, as it is.”

“Jesus,” Jason says, tapping his cigarette off again before rubbing a hand over the bottom of his face, “I can’t decide if that makes you terrifying or impressive.”

“A little bit of both, I like to think.” John says, looking down at the dregs of his tea and swirling them idly. “In that way, everyone does a little bit of magic here and there. It’s just the difference in belief that marks the size of the feat.”

“You mean like you could only pull off what you did because you believed you could?”

“Exactly.” Smiling, John leans in a little closer towards Jason, “You, Grayson in the other room, even your big old bat bastard of a dad, you’ve all got magic in you. Only difference is, when you’re as grounded in logic and science as you lot are, it don’t matter how much of it you see, you’ll never be able bring yourselves to believe you’re capable of it yourselves. Zatanna speaks backwards, Madame Xanadu reads cards, and I lie to people; only thing that connects us is that we all believe, every single time, that it can work, and so it does.”

Jason shakes his head, “That’s insane.”

“So’s the world,” John says, squinting at the tea leaves, “The universe, even, and yet here we are.”

Out of the corner of his eye, John watches the kid slowly blink at him. Watches everything he’s just said, the madness of the cosmos, a world in which Heaven and Hell, demons and angels, magic and science, coexists try to squeeze itself down into the finite space of Jason’s grey matter. Watches it pry and wriggle into the corners of his reasoning, the part of him that for small minutes channelled an entire city inside his head not even a year ago, and — just for a moment — let him sit basking in all its unearthly horror.

“Christ,” the kid eventually says, letting what’s left of his cigarette fall into their makeshift ashtray before shaking himself free of the conception, “It’s way too early to be thinking about this kind of shit.”

John didn’t expect any different, though he does allow himself a brief moment of disappointment. This one’s got more ties to the land of the mystical than any of the others after tiptoeing through the light at the end of the tunnel and back again, but still, he clings to reason just the same as his mentor. Needs it to survive if he doesn’t want to go mad.

John can’t exactly begrudge him that choice. Ignorance has its own bliss, after all.

“Fair enough,” he says, dropping his head against the back of the sofa for a minute, “Wanna shag instead?”

Jason must have picked up his mug to finish off the last of his tea, because the next thing John hears is him coughing and spluttering — hacking up a lung it sounds like. China clinks against wood as the kid sets the mug back down so he can thump himself in the chest to clear the blockage. “What the *fuck*, Constantine?!” he demands.

“What?” John says, grinning and keeping his eyes focused on the ceiling, “You were up for seconds last time, you got something against going for a third?”

“Dick is asleep in the next room!” Jason hisses.

That’s not a no, so far as John can tell, and with one inch he’ll always take a mile. “Thought you said you tranq’d him?”

“I *sedated* him — don’t make it sound creepy, you asshole.”

“To-mah-to, to-may-to,” Twisting onto his side to look at Jason now, John smirks licentiously, “Either way, he’s not going to know.”

“That is so not the point.” Jason glares back, folding his arms across his chest.

“Isn’t it?” John asks, “When your only protest is what your ‘brother’ might hear, it doesn’t exactly come across as a no on what *you* want.”

“Maybe what I want is to punch you in your overly smug face.” The kid threatens.

“Well I’ve never turned down a bit of rough as foreplay,” John idly scratches the front of his neck. Jason sputters, going bright red, and he grins, “Oh relax, luv, it’s just an offer. No world-ending incentive this time around, I promise. I like you, thought you liked me, but if you honestly want to say no, I won’t be offended.”

Jason crunches his arms tighter together as he leans back onto his end of the sofa. His eyes are tight slits as they look John up and down, highlighting the green in them more than the blue, and he can feel the same — almost maddening — contradiction in them that he remembers seeing in Jason before. The constant war between what he wants and what he’s afraid of being seen as wanting.

Whoever sowed the initial seed of that fear deserves more than a slap in John's opinion, but since he's pretty sure they're already getting their dues down below at this point, the one to deliver it won't be him.

"You ever get tired of being a cocky asshole?" Jason asks, finally.

"Nope," John shoots back cheerfully, "Do you?"

"If I do, you won't ever find out."

The kid moves like a panther when he wants to. Lithe, savage muscle wrapped up in a skin of civilisation. John barely has a second to register it before he's being slammed against the back of the sofa, heavy weight in his lap and Jason's teeth biting his lip. It splits apart like wet tissue paper; the spark of pain that sets a deeper hunger raging underneath.

"Careful, luv," he manages hoarsely, the moment he can breathe, "Mind the goods."

"I thought you said you liked rough play." Jason replies, now with dark intensity.

"I do," John replies, "I just like being able to walk still in the morning, too."

"Should've thought of that before you asked, then."

John can taste his own blood on the next kiss, and hits back by grabbing a thick handful of Jason's hair and giving it a harder than necessary tug. He remembers how much the kid liked this before, and just like the last time, Jason gasps, his back arches, and John gladly takes the opportunity to seize control of the kiss. It's rough, more passionate than nuanced, and the taste of blood and cigarettes mixing on their tongues only adds to that edge.

Soon enough, they're rutting like teenagers on the sofa. Which is mildly acceptable for Jason, but hardly so for John — especially his back.

"You want to take this to a bedroom?" he asks.

Jason shakes his head, focused on undoing the buttons of John's shirt after nearly strangling him while getting his tie off. "Only got one here, and Dick's in it."

"That does rather put a crimp on things," John acknowledges, very distracted by the calloused hands suddenly exploring his chest. He doesn't remember the kid being this aggressive about it last time, but maybe the third go around really is the charm to get him to open up all the way. "Have to make do here, then. Got lube?"

"Also in the bedroom, and no," Jason says, answering the question before John can ask, "I'm not going back in there for it."

Slightly disappointing, but all right, John can tell when something's a fuse waiting to be lit. "That's fine, luv, plenty of ways we can have fun without any."

"Oh yeah, I know."



Whatever Jason's got going for him in taking a more commanding role this time around, John approves of it. He shoves his hands up under the lad's shirt at the same moment Jason moves his head down to mouth at his neck, dragging his fingernails over sensitive skin and delighting in the sharp hiss he gets as a result. A bite is his reprimand, and John shudders pleasantly as he jerks his hips back up under Jason's, causing the boy to groan before he drops a hand down to squeeze a generous handful of his arse.

"Like this then, is it?" John asks huskily against Jason's temple, "Or maybe you've got something else in mind?"

Judging by the way his belt is being opened, Jason does. Not that he's going to give it to John free of charge, "Depends, can you say please?"

"I'll sing Puff the Magic Dragon backwards if that's what it takes to get more of you," John grins, and oh yeah, that makes the kid lose it enough to go red all over again, just the way he likes him. "But sure enough, pet. *Please.*"

"I have no idea what that song is, but the fact you said it is still stupid." Jason grumbles against his neck.

"I'll fill you in later," John promises, then — with a flick of his fingers — moves his hand round to the front of Jason's jeans and undoes them. "If you like."

The boy's cock is hard and thick in his hand, red hot with all the blood pumping through it, and already slick from pre-come. John gives it a few rough strokes, feeling the way every cell in Jason's body seems to jump to attention at the same time. The kid's breath is warm and moist against his neck; his hair smells like gunpowder and strawberry shampoo, with just a hint of garlic mixed in with sweat. And well, that last part is John's own fault, so he won't say a thing about it, but he certainly does have some regrets about playing his little joke now.

They're lucky the sofa is big and deep enough that John can sit well back and give Jason room to move without either of them having to get up. Perched nimbly on his knees, the kid manages to unbutton John's belt and slacks in turn, before opening up his zipper and reaching inside. "You dress like an old man, you know that?" he murmurs, eyes leaning green and bright between his dark eyelashes as he lifts his head back up to kiss him again. "Shirt and tie all the time."

"I am an old man," John laughs in answer, "And the way I dress can't be all that bad, considering where you've got your hand right now."

Jason squeezes tight enough that it's as much of a warning as it is a pleasure, "My hand can go elsewhere if you don't shut up."

"Fair enough, squire."

It gets messy after that. Mouths meeting, hands wandering. John already knows the taste of sweat on Jason's skin, but it's a pleasure to learn it all over again as they work together. Different this time, less intense without a city flowing through their heads, but just as a passionate. The closer he gets to coming, the more Jason seems to come alive. Seems to

forget all the borders and boundaries he wraps around himself, head thrown back and lips wet and glistening with ecstasy. He's like something wild being let out of its cage, and John thinks again of the panther he compared the kid to earlier, all shadows, sharp teeth and lean muscle.

They don't shed enough clothing to touch everywhere, but scratch marks and bruises still manage to mark their skin. John feels his heart stutter, the soreness of his scalp as his hair is pulled, and when Jason — finally too impatient to wait any longer — takes both their cocks in the same hand, his stomach ripple and tighten unbearably until heat floods through and he comes hard enough to see stars.

A second, or perhaps a minute later (who can really tell these days?) the kid follows suit, biting his lip in a largely useless effort to keep quiet before slumping forwards and down in against John's chest.

"Jesus," Jason pants, trying to get his wind back, "Fuck."

"None of that now," John murmurs back, a tad dazed, "Get us both in trouble."

When he can, he reaches up with his (mostly) clean hand to pet the thick black curls of hair that sit on top of Jason's head. He's still half-convinced the kid has Irish blood in him, even if Jason doesn't want to talk about the possibility, and enjoys the way the strands feel soft and clinging against his fingers. He even starts to hum, some merry little ditty he vaguely remembers Kit singing in his kitchen back in the old days when they were still together.

But Jason, young and restless in the worst ways, doesn't take long to recover from the buzz they're sharing, and after five minutes of peace is quick to push himself back up again. "I need a shower," he declares, not quite meeting John's eyes now. "You can have one after I'm done, if you want."

"Probably will," John acknowledges lazily, to cover any disappointment. Walking out with jizz up your stomach is, after all, not a good look or feel for anyone. "Though I was thinking that maybe after that brother of yours is up and gone we could make a proper go of it again later. That is, if you're up for another round."

Jason pauses in the middle of pulling his shirt back down from where it's bunched up under his armpits. His eyes are sharp like flint as he thinks it over, working through the possibilities and the vulnerabilities of saying yes like a goat chewing cud.

"I guess that depends on how long you're planning on sticking around this time," he eventually answers, still unwilling to be direct.

It's the closest John can hope for to a blatant invitation, becoming slowly versed in Jason's language as he is. "Got nowhere else to be right now, and never know, probably more spooky shite I could take a look at in this town before I do go."

And that's putting it lightly. He could spend a thousand years exorcising Gotham's ghosts if he wanted to, and (more importantly) if he had the lifespan. John doesn't exactly want to go

opening the kid's head to all that knowledge, though. Not with him being as much of a bleeding heart to the suffering of others as he is.

His response earns him a stiff nod. Then Jason's up on his feet, fastening his fly and heading deeper into the apartment where the bathroom apparently lies, "Guess we'll see." his parting words.

Grinning, John settles back on the sofa and watches him go.

## End Notes

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