

## Flare

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# Flare

by [Minji\\_Fox](#)

## Summary

John has a lot to learn about an elusive species when he ends up living with one.

Like how he doesn't have to change under a full moon, how he is fireproof even if he cannot breathe fire himself, and how he loves the doctor.

## Notes

What have I done.

Not brit-picked, not beta'd.

Enjoy

"You know he's not human right?" Sally Donovan had sneered behind crossed arms at the first crime scene John had ever accompanied Sherlock to.

They had investigated the corpse, Sherlock firing off and shooting out of the building and leaving John merely limping behind. All the man wanted to know was were the nearest main road was to hail a cab but instead he was bombarded with the piss poor attitude of the women before him.

"And I'm the Queen of England," John bit out in irritation, turning away to limp away with a bit of his dignity.

"Freak's a dragon. Dragons don't do friends. They do possessions. They hoard."

"And why should it be any concern of mine?" John quipped over his shoulder.

"No one knows what he hoards. Could be the bodies of short blond doctors."

The man simply huffed out a breath at how stupid that sounded before turning back along his path, eventually finding the desired cab and heading home.

\*

The more John thought about it, the more sense it began to make. The way his companion would sniff about the air when he entered a room and the way he would inhale deeply as soon as they were within a restaurant before deciding if he deemed it worthy enough to eat there. There was no doubt that Sherlock was something inhuman simply from how his ears were sometimes peaking, pointed, from his curls or the way his pupils became dangerous slits when angry or focused.

None of these characteristics, however, revealed that the man was indeed a dragon. The claws and fangs that John could only glimpse at small intervals was the only evidence he found that Sherlock was something more predatory in nature.

It was days after the case involving crazed Chinese acrobats and another failed date with Sarah; during a nice dinner at a café that John found himself asking as politely as he possibly could, "So, a dragon?"

Sherlock merely made an affirmative noise while concentrating on picking the poppy seeds from the bread of his sandwich. "Do you change during the full moon?"

"I'm not a werewolf," he growled out in disgust. "I can change whenever I please."

John chewed his mouthful carefully before asking, "How often do you change?"

"Once a month, every month," was the gruff reply.

The doctor could practically feel the annoyance radiating from the detective. Said detective finally deemed his meal worthy after methodically picking every seed from the bread before

ripping off a piece to place in his mouth. The very sight of the man eating sparked a new question that John blurted out before he realized he opened his mouth, "Do you breathe fire?"

Sherlock snorted, laughed and held his hand in front of his mouth to ensure his food didn't spring free. "No, that would look ridiculous."

The rest of their dinner passed in comfort and good natured laughs, and neither of them mentioned the way Sherlock's left foot grazed the side of John's right and stayed there.

\*

The first time John saw Sherlock as a dragon was the night Moriarty kidnapped John. It was long after the explosive vest was removed, long after the man who was responsible for it came back to interrupt Sherlock's inhaling around John's face, the first time John saw the massive beast that was his best friend was when it lunged at him seconds before the room was engulfed by flames.

\*

"So you are fire proof but you cannot breathe fire yourself."

"Apparently."

John startled at that. "Wait, you didn't actually know you were fire proof when you covered me up from the bomb?"

Sherlock turned his head, the steady beep of the heart monitor picking up slightly.

"Why would you do that, Sherlock?"

The detective merely clenched his jaw, his fangs digging into his lip and the impression of scales danced across his flesh in an enticing wave.

\*

John had returned from the shops hours ago but had only just begun to put the newly purchased food items away. Sherlock sat at the kitchen table, peering into his microscope in the same way he was all those hours before John had even left. "I did a bit of research," John started for an idle conversation.

"Dragons tend to hoard things in massive quantities as soon as they are reproductively mature. Whatever they collect is different for each dragon, but what do you collect?"

Sherlock's eyes flicked up to the doctor and stared, waiting. John merely glanced about the flat, noting that he had never seen any sort of mass quantities of anything laying about. He was also sorely aware of the lack of collection within Sherlock's room after having to drag the man out of the hallway one night after he had collapsed from exhaustion.

"You are.. you know.."

Sherlock gritted his teeth, "Yes John, I am reproductively mature as unfortunate as that is. I do not hoard because it is a disgustingly brainless and primal nesting urge."

"And you are nothing if not above primal urges," John laughed out while closing the cabinet.

"I simply fail to see the appeal of cluttering my home with useless trinkets to den for a brood that will never hatch," the detective spat bitterly.

John was familiar with some basic animal biology, thusly he found himself nervously asking, "Are you saying you lay eggs?"

Sherlock sat back in his chair, finally straightening his posture. "All dragons lay eggs," he said, only mildly offended it appeared.

The doctor took the chair crossed from Sherlock and sat slowly, looking so utterly absorbed in this new revelation that the detective couldn't help the words from exploding from his tongue. "All dragons, once a month, every month will lay their brood, gift the brood to their mate and if that mate accepts them they will fertilize the brood and they will share one of their dens together until the brood hatches. After that the one that laid the brood will chase it's mate from the den to care for the hatchlings while the sire guards the den and delivers food."

John merely sat back a bit, away from the tense words and listened. "Any other questions?" Sherlock snapped out through gritted fangs.

The man couldn't help but whisper, "What do you do with your broods?"

The detective rose from his chair, angrily and abruptly, throwing it back for it to clatter to the ground. It was a flurry of movement as he stormed away and out of the flat. John sat in the silence for only a few tense moments until the deep beating of wings echoed through the windows before drifting away.

\*

It was three months later when John found an extra bag with the rest of the rubbish to throw out. He picked it up like any other bag to take down the stairs when he noticed Sherlock staring at him intently from the couch, almost flinching if the bag was swung a little too hard.

John couldn't help but grit his teeth together in a way that wasn't unlike how Sherlock would when upset, his heart giving a painful lurch inside his chest.

"Just close your eyes," he muttered and walked out of the flat.

\*

"Wonder when he started doing that.." Lestrade had muttered under his breath one day next to John.

"Doing what?" The doctor couldn't help but raise his eyebrows expectantly at the detective inspector. Discovering exactly what happened to Sherlock's brood every month and how much he actually seemed to struggle with it had caused John to turn a little more protective of the man's limitedly expressed feelings.

"Scenting you," Lestrade hushed back, tense shoulders and hand covering his mouth away from the dragon snapping at a younger officer's stupid antics.

John merely quirked his head, his lips thinning in confusion. He glanced over to Sherlock then back to Lestrade, the question clear.

"Oh god, um, well.." the man coughed uncomfortably. "What he's been doing, coming around every so often and just inhaling in front of you. He's trying to scent you, it's kind of a weird non-human courtship thing. Usually they press themselves into your neck or groin or arm pit, somewhere where the smell is strong and just.. familiarize themselves with it. Sometimes they will rub themselves on you, to.. to mark you out as theirs."

"Sure know a lot about this," John commented slowly, eyebrows still raised.

Lestrade's already flushed face reddened even more drastically. "W-Wolves do it too and we get a lot of them."

The doctor merely nodded, expression wistful. "Look mate, you should let him know to back off."

The inspector placed a hand upon John's shoulder in warning. "Dragons are one of those 'one for life' kind of deals so unless you want him like that, you should get him to stop."

The man rolled his eyes, "I doubt he even notices that he is doing it."

Lestrade's voice was gravely serious as he replied, "That's sort of what I am afraid of."

\*

The second time John saw Sherlock as a dragon was after a rather frustrating run in with a woman named Irene Adler. It appeared that maintaining the shape of a human was actually required a lot of concentration, thusly when a drug was introduced into his system, scales were ripping from his flesh and clothing tore under the transformation until the great beast was boxed in the tiny room and many exasperated police officers had to wrestle him out.

It was an uncomfortable truck ride later before Sherlock was nestled back at Baker Street in his bedroom. John stayed with him through the night, fascinated to finally take in the details of his friend's alternative appearance. Much of him was the same, John couldn't help but note. His body slender, his scales the same dark black shade with the chocolate brown gleam as the hair upon his head and down his neck that curled out in a dramatic mane. The most interesting aspect of the creature were the massive wings that were limp and spread throughout the bedroom.

John had never been this close to a dragon before and he found that he couldn't help but reach his hand forward to touch his friend's short snout and watch it twitch under his hand. He huffed out a laugh at the sensation before he found himself dragging the same hand over the jawline of the dragon, starting when he felt the throat work in a swallow. The doctor glanced up quickly, locking eyes with his friend. The same unnamable changing pale irises greeted him, pupils blown wide from the drug still ravishing his system.

"S-sorry," John stammered, pulling back.

Before he was too far, his jumper was snagged by claws. Not wanting to risk tearing his clothing, John stayed absolutely still. Sherlock gave a low grumble and inhaled deeply, scenting John's mind supplied, before letting go and slipping back into unconsciousness.

\*

Things got out of hand during a Christmas party at Baker Street. John had agreed to host a small get together for the holidays. The fire was roaring, the tree lit with beautiful colors, and everyone drank and was merry. Everyone except Sherlock, who sat in his chair with his head tilted back and his eyes closed. He didn't seem overly upset so John took it as a good sign.

It wasn't until later that Sherlock began to scent the air, which caused John's current girlfriend to nudge his leg. "John," she hissed out under her breathe, quietly enough for the dull chatter of the rest of the guests to drown her voice from them. "Is he scenting for you?"

"That's ridiculous," John defended as equally hushed. "There are plenty of people here, he could be trying to pick up anyone."

She continued to give John a skeptical eye until after the arrival of Molly. The cute faun stammered her apologies, blaming her tardiness upon the traffic. Before any unnecessary comments were made or the drinking got too far, Mrs. Hudson had declared it officially time to open gifts. The energy was almost palpable in the room as everyone happily opened wrappings. Mrs. Hudson receiving some new cookbooks, Molly opened a silly keychain of a cat, Sherlock snorted at the set of labels, Mycroft and Lestrade both gaining bland ties, and John's girlfriend marveled at the necklace he had gotten for her. All was well within the group until Mrs. Hudson called out to him, "John, dear, there is one more for you. Must have missed it."

After some good natured jokes and a friendly pat or two, John unraveled the ribbon from the small box and opened the lid. The room grew deathly silent as the doctor pulled out the scale from the container. He looked over to Sherlock, everything for him seeming to flow in slow motion as the detective was still leaning his head back, eyes shut, everything about him nonchalant except for his clenched fist draped over the armrest. The ripple of scales through flesh almost hypnotic.

Something must have shown on his face, because Molly gasped lightly, Mrs. Hudson smiled sweetly at him, and his girlfriend stormed out of the room in an angry huff. Time seem to snap back into place abruptly, John raising quickly to chase after his girlfriend, his gift clenched in his fist through the entire argument.

\*

"So, courting me."

Sherlock hunched down lower over his project while John sat in his chair with the newspaper half obscuring his face. "Mycroft told me the exchange of scales is a declaration of intent."

This still did not seem to prompt the dragon across the room to respond. The doctor folded his paper and sat forward to perch on the edge of his chair. He licked his lips, suddenly feeling the entire room was too dry for his liking. "How many more steps to this before I am expected to give you a proper answer?"

Slender fingers stilled over newspaper clippings, "Three."

John twisted his own hands together, looking anywhere in the room but for the detective. He tried a few times to force his voice to work before he was able to huff out, "And what is the next step?"

It seemed to take an eternity before the man was able to lock eyes with his companion, another life time to pass with them staring before the reply was hushed over the room, "For you to fly with me."

\*

It was hours of prepping the newly purchased rock climbing equipment to the beast of his best friend before John felt secure enough for the dragon to take off at whiplash inducing speed and hurtled into the air.

Yet once the initial fear of plummeting to the ground faded only to leave the exhilaration of soaring through the air without an aluminum barrier of a plane. Long swoops and surging upwards into the clouds lit the doctor's face in sheer wonder. After several twists and elegant falls through the sky, John loosened his hands from his companion's mane, and upon the next nearly fetal swoop toward the earth, he rose his arms and shouted in glee.

They flew for hours before cruising calmly near the edge of the clouds, John couldn't help himself from reaching and touching the moist white flurries and thought himself a bit cliché for doing so before settling his arm back down to his side and just watched the world moving below.

He couldn't pin point when the shimmer of Sherlock's scales made his heart seize within his ribcage, but the declaration slipped out vaguely, "Absolutely amazing."

\*

As it was, John was not the only one who enjoyed flying. It must have been two or three times a week when Sherlock would dig out the harness and ropes from behind the sofa and toss it all at John before hurrying out of the flat, the ripple of his skin holding back from transforming almost frightening.



They found themselves walking down the pavement a few months after the air time sessions started, looking for a good rooftop to take off from that day. "If you like to fly so much, why didn't you do it more before?"

Sherlock adjusted the empty bag slung around his shoulder a bit before answering, "It didn't feel so marvelous before."

John found himself smiling through a flushed face, almost completely missing how his companion stopped right outside a store front. He backtracked a bit to peer into the glass, allowing his gaze to follow where Sherlock's own eyes were locked. It was some sort of artsy store, the item under the intense scrutiny of the detective was an elaborate throw pillow with integrant swirling embroidery in shades of gold. "Sherlock?"

The man visibly struggled to tear his eyes away to glance at John before walking away from the store. The doctor stood there for another moment in confusion before jogging to catch up to his friend.

\*

The next week there was a thunderous pounding up the stairs in the middle of the night before John's bedroom door was flung open with Sherlock shouting at him. The doctor fumbled with his lamp before grumbling, "What, what, I'll get dress, wait."

"John, did you buy this?" Sherlock shrieked his alarm, brandishing the pillow like some sort of fierce weapon.

It took him a moment of rubbing his eyes into focus before the man could answer, "Yea, seemed you liked it."

It was interesting to witness the hurricane of different emotions and actions cross the detective entire figure. First he grinned excitedly like he would if Lestrade called with a particularly exciting murder before he pulled the cushion to his face and audibly inhaling through the fabric. His outward exhalation was turned into an antagonized groan. "Do you have an idea what you have done?"

It was so muffled through the pillow that it took John a moment to process what the Sherlock had said before being able to respond lamely with, "Uh, bought you a present?"

Another groan sounded before the dragon pulled the fabric away from his face. "You added to my collection," he scowled down at the offending item before turning to look at the man still seated in his bed. "That's apart of courting John, it's very intimate."

"So you hoard fancy pillows?" The doctor found it very hard to fight off the grin that threatened to break over his face.

Sherlock, however, was not as amused. Instead his face scrunched up in utter revulsion. "No! I collect effort."

A confused tilt of his head was all signal the man needed before whirling off in a tangent. "I collect things that have taken effort to create. Time, passion, sentiment. It has to be something worked on diligently, slaved away over, something made by nothing more then force of will, skill, and ro bust determination."

John shifted a bit, "Pretty keen eye to see when something isn't manufactured."

The dragon scoffed, "Naturally."

"Was adding to your hoard a part of the courtship steps?"

"Yes."

The doctor laughed a bit, "Would have been stuck on this step forever if we were waiting for you to add to my hoard."

John didn't ignore the painfully fond smile that was sent his way before Sherlock backed out of the doorway and down the stairs.

\*

The first time John kissed the detective was after being found cowering away in a cage at the Baskerville labs.

He couldn't help but cling to the form of the taller man, eyes wild and alert for danger and he hardly noticed the whisper in his ear declaring another step was eli minated .

\*

They stayed out of London for an extra night and John lost himself in the sco rching heat of a fireless dragon, slow and tender promises of adoration with every flex and push of their bodies together.

\*

John walked past the sitting room of the flat and headed up to his room as soon as he got back from work, utterly exhausted from the night long chase and following work day that eliminated any chance of sleep. He struggled o ut of his coat in his room, slipped off his shoes, and pulled back the blankets to freeze at the sight of a dozen small nearly opaque eggs.

*...gift the brood to their mate and if that mate accepts them they will fertilize the brood...*

The doctor pounded down the stairs in a panic, shouting out as he did. "Sherlock! Sherlock! In my bed, is that-"

John froze at the doorway of the sitting room upon catching the ragged side of his flatmate , best friend, and lover. Sherlock was hunched over with his face buried within his palms. "Are you alright?"

There was no answer from the detective who just seemed to slump further forward. The ex-soilder took a deep breath, then another, but no matter how many times he tried to force enough air into his lungs to speak, nothing happened. Eventually, Sherlock spoke, low and pained. "Just leave them there, I will take care of it."

John took a step back until he found himself up the stairs and back in his room, staring down at the brood. His legs felt weak and unstable as he made his way around to collect his clothing for a shower before he found himself in front of his bed again, clothing bundled tightly in his arms. If he refused the brood, Sherlock would suffer as he did every month, but if he accepted then he would become a father. Were humans even compatible with dragons in that regard? Would Sherlock ever forgive him if he refused? It was an infinitely large decision, but one John felt he should have been dwelling on the entire time. All the steps of mating were done and now was the time to decide. To decide how deep his love went for the man down the stairs.

The man turned his face and looked at the door.

He reached forward and picked an egg out of the brood.

\*

When John emerged from the bathroom, he was greeted to a gangly detective curled upon his bed, facing away from the door. The bed was empty of the rest of the brood, the sheets neatly pressed and almost undisturbed by the figure upon them. The doctor approached cautiously, his delicate treasure clutched close to his chest. "Scoot over?" he nudged the bed gently with his leg.

Sherlock moved his body without complaint, almost falling from the edge of the bed. John maneuvered himself carefully to lay down facing the other man. "Turn around.." he whispered out, and held his breathe as the taller man did as requested slowly.

His eyes were shut tightly, his expression almost grief-stricken with pain.

"Sherlock.."

Eyes fluttered open, glossy with moisture but no tears feel. The pain on his face smoothed out to it's regular nonchalance. He stared at the doctor for long minutes before John began to reach his arms outward and unfurl his fingers to reveal the tiny egg. Pale eyes darted downward and back up to darker blue irises. The silence was nearly deathly with shock before the human whispered out into the delicate air.

"I love you."

\*

For the next two weeks, Sherlock fretted about the flat when he wasn't curled protectively around his egg. Things were moved, things were cleaned, things were absolutely destroyed if they didn't feel or smell right. Mrs. Hudson got a right hoot out of him, absolutely taking delight at his energy being put forth to more purposeful actions then his boredom induced

tantrums. She would stand about the flat and just smile, occasionally preen the mousy brown feathers that dotted up her arms, and would offer help to the man if he became at a loss on what to do with something.

It was toward the end of the second week when she finally gave into her curiosity, puffed up some of the feathers around her face before asking John, "What have you done to the poor lad? It's almost like the unfortunate dear is struck with nesting urges of all things!"

Sherlock's entire body whipped around from where he stood in the kitchen and looked upon the older woman in a panic. "Now I remember back when me and my late husband, bless his rotten soul, we tried to have chicks once, we did. Would fret about just like Sherlock right now, yes, waiting to know if it worked. You know the bit dear, I'm sure. All of them were duds, never had those little peepers, no sir."

"Mrs. Hudson," the detective choked out in alarm.

She seemed completely unfazed, "Now now, I will let you to it. Do let me know when you both are sure it took."

John sidestepped out of her way, the woman almost having a very literal spring in her step. The doctor couldn't help but grin as he caught her excited whispers of "Might be having a wee thing in the home again, oh my!"

John attempted to look to Sherlock, maybe to share a meaningful look or something as they usually tended to do, only for the man to whirl out of the room abruptly. He raced up the stairs, taking them two at a time and John couldn't help but follow him in a daze.

He stopped within the doorway to his bedroom, watching as Sherlock carefully curled himself around the egg still stationed in the middle of the sheets. John couldn't help the blissful smile that curled onto his face with the knowledge that upon the bed surely laid the one person he loved the most in his life along with potentially the one thing in his life that he would come to love just as deeply. "How do you know if it took?"

The man on the bed shifted a little to glance at his companion, making a low noise of confusion. John huffed out, "My uh, you know.." He made a motion with his hand toward his groin. "How do you know it took."

Sherlock then looked away with a grumble as he curled himself in tighter, "After the two week marker since the egg is fertilize, it will begin to give off an odor."

The doctor's face scrunched up at that, not really looking forward to any questionable smells. "Since you are not a dragon, it shouldn't affect you at all."

"Affect me? Well, how does it affect a dragon then?" John made his way to the other side of the mattress, climbing in with caution.

Sherlock seemed to wait till he was settled before he continued. "The odor is suppose to trigger chemicals to be released into a dragon's brain, my brain. It will tell my body not to lay

another brood until this one is hatched and out of the hatchling stage. This odor, call it a pheromone, will urge me to care and protect it until it is mature."

"How long is the hatchling stage?"

"Four years."

John found himself reaching out and entangling his fingers with the detective. "How long till it hatches?"

"Four months."

The solidier felt a surge as he choked out a nervous laugh, "My god, that's really soon."

Sherlock merely made an affirmative noise, his eyes already closed and his breathing becoming deep and relaxed. John couldn't help the underlining panic from surfacing. In four months, he could become a father. They would become fathers. And he knew absolutely nothing about dragons except from the bits that Sherlock would share on occasion. Through the haze of fear, he was able to feel the light squeeze against his fingers and for a delirious moment, he felt that this would be the biggest thrill of his life.

\*

Every waking moment there after, John researched dragons and how to care for one.

\*

With the discovery of every wrangled body sent more and more protective panic through the doctor. Someone was trying to set up Sherlock for feral dragon attacks and judging by the troops of police officers bustling into his flat, someone had finally planted enough evidence to warrant an arrest. Sherlock stumbled down the stairs for the first time in the last three months, and was immediately swept up in handcuffs with a tranquilizer aimed at his person.

"Stop it, god damn it, stop! He didn't do anything! He's been here! He's been with-"

John was cut off as a deep throated snarl ripped through the air and Sherlock tore away from his captors as he shifted, giant wings flailing about and blood flecking across the walls and floor. The tranquilizer clicked as it fired into the beast's flank, and in moments Sherlock was crashing to the ground.

"Who was injured?" someone had called out and there was a resounding echo of negatives before John tried to kneel forward. He was surged away, promised that the monster was a danger to him, and he couldn't help but stare at the gashes on his lover's scaled wrists. They oozed blood down the stairs and onto the pavement as he was hauled into the truck and carted off.

In that moment, John's entire world seemed to shatter around him.

\*

John stood in the street, looking up at the rooftop of the hospital. Sherlock stared down at him, his found in his hand. The doctor's phone beeped once with a message.

*Call him Hamish, please. - SH*

John was running toward the building, John was screaming out, John was consumed in a shadow as heat seemed to whirl around the air as fire streaked the sky, and John was still as he watched Sherlock fly off.

\*

The next three years were a grueling misery for John. Research alone was nothing to prepare him for the challenge of raising the squirming pink lizard like creature once it had broken free from it's shell.

First was the squeaking. All hours of the day or night, the newborn would squeak. Squeak when it was hungry, when it was soiled, when it was cold, when it just wanted to smell John's jumpers. After long months of the insistent noise, John became used to each and every little meaning the tiny being was trying to inform him of.

Then came the squirming. The more mobile his little child became, the more worrisome John became. His deepest horror was that the baby would fall from the bed or become squashed when hidden within the sheets of the bedding. The doctor had tried as much as he could to have the little hatchling sleep in a bassinet or other infant furniture with it's favorite heated blanket to no avail.

Then came the biting. After scales had set in, the same rich dark tones that Sherlock had sported, so did the teeth. It was mildly inconvenient at first, the same pin pricks of pain made by incredibly tiny teeth, but as the child grew, so did his razor sharp fangs. And nothing was a better teething toy then his papa it seemed.

Mycroft had dropped by unannounced almost a year since Hamish had hatched. He displayed no sense of shock for the small dragon curled in John's lap, only a bit sorrowful. That day, the elder Holmes stayed late into the night teaching his nephew how to change into a human. John nearly wept when he first laid eyes upon his child, pale skin and dark hair, and held him close for the whole night.

After he was able to assume a human form was when he also seemed to be adamantly against the idea, preferring the strut around and shrieking unintelligibly at John. It was half a year longer before he had to call Mycroft for help. Since Sherlock's accusation of being a feral beast, no inhuman member of society was allowed to assume a true beast form in the public. A package arrived not even a day later with a gold bracelet fit for a child with a note, *should he wear this in skin he shall not sprout scales.*

The first time John truly felt like the worst parent in the world was during his first outing to the store with his child. Hamish seemed fine at first, focused on the world around him. He became restless within the store, hissing at smells he didn't particularly like. Then he began to claw at his wrist, trying to dislodge the gold charm that circled it. It took numerous battings of the child's hands away before John snatched the boy's hand and almost growled out, "No."

He by no means spoiled the child, but the stern tone once only used in his military days had startled the toddler into high shrieking wails. Nothing soothed him till they were back at Baker Street where John finally removed the bracelet for his child to burst into scales and hide.

It took a long time for John to instill ground rules for Hamish to follow. Human outdoors and when there were guests at home. He felt it was simple enough and earned only minimum complaints from the child. All of his friends came by in rare apart visits to dot and spoil the boy. It was during one visit by Greg close to the child's third birthday, when he threw a tantrum so large it rivaled one of Sherlock's own. Greg couldn't help but to sit back as John tried to sternly stop Hamish from trying to remove the band. He ignored the cries of "papa off, papa no" and the last time he tried to bat the boy's hand away, he was greeted by his child biting him. He clamped down and tore into the doctor's hand with a deep growl, and John just sat in shock as blood riveted down from the child's mouth. He could hardly hear Greg's alarmed "Fuck, John, are you alright?" Eventually, Hamish released his hand and began to sob, "sorry papa," over and over again. By the end of the night, John had to get Mrs. Hudson to watch over his sobbing child while Greg took him to get his hand stitched closed.

A knock came to the door a few weeks following Hamish's third birthday and when he opened the door, he found himself with a face full of flowers. It took him a moment to register pale eyes peaking out from over the bouquet. "Sherlock?"

"I'm sorry it has taken so long to return," he breathed out from behind the mess of petals. "As it turned out, losing my trackers took more time then anticipated."

John maneuvered the other man's arms out of the way briefly before burrowing himself into the detective's lean chest. "I will be mad at you later," he breathed out in a shaking sigh. "God, I've missed you.."

A creak in the floorboards interrupted the embrace, both heads traveling down to the little dragon frozen in their gaze. John let out a small laugh, which seemed to startle the child enough to bolt up the stairs. "Was that..?"

"Yea, give him a minute."

Several minutes had actually crept by before John hauled himself up the stairs to retrieve the boy and carry him down to the sitting room. The doctor smiled and tried to get the child to wave, when Sherlock locked eyes upon his scarred hand. "John? What happened to your hand?"

The man in question paled as this elected gurgling sobs from Hamish who could only gasp out, "Papa, Papa, Sorry," into the neck of his shirt.

Sherlock rose from his chair and in a couple of long strides, was enveloping the pair in an embrace. John couldn't help but let out a stained laugh before turning his head to sob as well. They all stayed snuggled together for a long time, tears stopped and noses whipped, and kisses exchanged.

\*

Months passed since Sherlock's return and John almost had to rub his eyes or do a double take every time he walked into or became a member of the domestic bliss that was his family. It warmed his heart to such a degree that the man almost felt it would be unhealthy for that much love to clog a room but everyone remained as sturdy as ever.

It was a late Friday night when Hamish started to doze next to his father on the sofa with a picture book dangling from his lap. Upon a couple of one on one bonding sessions with his son, Sherlock had managed to talk the little boy in remaining human for extended periods of time. "Hamish, I believe it is bed time."

It was fascinating as the child drowsily crawled into Sherlock's lap and was subjected to being carried up the stairs. By the time the elder dragon came back down into the sitting room, John had moved into the vacant seat upon the sofa. Sherlock looked at him a bit sorrowfully, "I've missed so much."

John hummed out an affirmative, "You won't miss much with the next one."

"The next one?" Sherlock's voice strained, pitched a little higher in surprise.

"If you would like another," the man amended.

The detective grinned rather wickedly, his tongue spilling a stolen line from John's past.

"Oh god, yes."



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