

Broccoli and Machinations

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Broccoli and Machinations

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Summary

Sherlock has finally met his match. Watson: a ruthless, fiendish Machiavelli in pigtails.

“Watson, you and I both know that this is unnecessary. You have no physiological reason to continue with this infantile behavior.”

Rosie gave Sherlock a hard stare. It was a good one; but Sherlock was prepared for it. He crossed his arms and looked down at her mulish face, her tightly crossed arms. She attempted a tremble of the lower lip. Sherlock held fast despite the automatic tightening in his chest.

“I dunno what you’re talking about.”

“You know very well what I am referring to, Watson. The lisping may well work on the feeble minded. The wide-eyed stare accompanied by the lisp may well turn others to mush but I am made of sterner stuff. I have faced far more accomplished villains than you.”

“But I don’t *wike* broccoli!” she wailed.

“Aha! You have been hoisted on your own petard, Watson!”

Rosie glared down at her plate with all the concentrated loathing a four-year old could muster. “What’s a petard?”

“And a perfectly pronounced sibilant!” Sherlock crowed, and sat down across from her with a triumphant grin. “Let us save the theatrical cuteness for others, Watson. It has no effect whatsoever on me. And a petard is a rudimentary kind of explosive device; somewhat like an overenthusiastic firework.”

At the mention of the word ‘explosive’, Rosie brightened considerably. “Can I have one?”

“I don’t think your father would approve just yet. Perhaps when you’re five.”

Rosie rolled her eyes theatrically, effectively communicating her utter disdain of overprotective parents and their idiotic ideas. Sherlock was inclined to agree. However, he and John had learnt the hard way that a united front in the face of Rosie’s machinations was essential.

“What sort of explosives can I have now?”

“Hmm.” Sherlock scanned the kitchen thoughtfully, and remembered that there was a new box of baking soda in one of the cupboards. “Well, if you maintain your current levels of pronunciation we shall see if we can produce an minor explosion later.”

Rosie grinned at him, revealing her small sharp teeth. “Brilliant, Sherlock!” she remarked; rolling the R’s and delivering crisp sharp S’s.

Sherlock nodded approvingly and raised a finger. “There is, of course, a time and place for manipulating the feeble minded with a well-timed charming lisp. But your father is becoming concerned, Watson. He has been investigating expensive speech therapists. I will not tolerate this behaviour if you use the lisp to delay bedtime or to make him feel guilty for taking you to preschool.”

“How about getting extra biscuits?”

“Only from Mrs. Hudson.” Sherlock said firmly. “A maximum of twice per week.”

Rosie stared thoughtfully at the ceiling for a moment, then nodded grudgingly. “Okay. Deal.”

She and Sherlock shook hands. It only fitting after an agreement was reached between two professionals. Sherlock rummaged around in the cupboards until he found the baking soda and a packet of sandwich bags.

John came home later that evening to the sound of giggling and loud bangs coming from the bathroom. Sherlock and Rosie were creating explosions and an enormous mess in the bathtub; but the gleeful expressions on their faces was enough to stop his weary protests before they even began.

“Dad! We’ve been experimenting!” Rosie informed him.

“I can see that.” John leant against the door and returned her grin. “It all looks extremely educational. Think it’s nearly time for bed though, sweetheart. After the two of you have cleaned up this mess though.”

“Certainly, Dad.” Rosie informed him, waving a hand in a dismissive fashion before she returned her attention to the volcanic splatters in the bathtub. “We shall attend to it directly.”

John fixed Sherlock with a Look. Sherlock, for his part was looking back at him in an expectant, meaningful fashion. John was clearly missing something here; but it was such a familiar sensation that he didn’t pay much heed. He was tired, hungry and very ready to get on with the traditional sofa and story session that preceded Rosie’s bedtime.

Rosie sighed and shrugged theatrically at Sherlock. “He sees, yet he does not-“

“That’s quite enough of that, thank you.” John interjected swiftly. “Into your jimjams, Miss.”

“I didn’t teach her that!” Sherlock insisted, reaching out for the showerhead so that he could start rinsing out the bath.

John contented himself with a glare while Rosie scampered off to fetch her pajamas. “Came up with that all on her own, did she?!”

“She’s extremely intelligent, John!” Sherlock protested. “I can hardly help it if she retains a large amount of the information she overhears.”

John sighed, fighting back the inevitable softening that occurred whenever Sherlock praised his daughters intellect. She was undeniably clever, but the fact that Sherlock recognised this... the fact that he was proud of his god-daughter and seemed to actually enjoy looking after her... well. It was a bright spot in John’s exhausting life. He gave Sherlock’s back a wry smile. “Think there’s some chili in the freezer. Sound good?”

“Mmm. Make sure you check the label though.”

“Oh believe me, after the pig embryo in the ice cream tub I always do.”

John closed the door to the bedroom softly, and tiptoed into the living room. He carefully avoided the creaking floorboards and only relaxed when he closed the door of the hall behind him. Rosie would use any excuse not to go to sleep. She was always convinced that John and Sherlock were having riotous fun without her, despite the fact that most evenings they seemed to sprawl on the sofa while they ate dinner, watching old episodes of *Inspector Morse* and fighting back sleep. Sherlock kept on meaning to undertake a study of the precise form of intense tiredness incurred by prolonged exposure to toddlers. But as he was unwilling to spend time with children other than Rosie it was unlikely he'd ever manage to get around to it.

"Is the Kraken asleep?" Sherlock inquired, without looking up from his journal article.

"Er... yeah." John scratched his head, bemusedly. "Very strange thing just happened though."

"Mm? Do tell." Sherlock idly turned a page.

"Well, she was about to settle down after the sixth time we read *Captain Slaughterboard Drops Anchor*... and then she suddenly looked me dead in the eye and said 'Daddy, did you know that Sherlock sells sea shells on the sea shore?'"

Sherlock met his gaze expectantly. "And then what?"

"And then she cackled like a loon, said goodnight and sent me on my way!" John exclaimed. "Every bloody S was perfect! The L's too!"

"She was clearly tired of you waiting to notice her progress, John." Sherlock informed him smugly. "We had... something of a breakthrough this afternoon."

"A breakthrough?!" John echoed him incredulously. "You cured her speech impediment *this afternoon*?!"

Sherlock shrugged, getting to his feet and heading for the kitchen. "We had a meaningful discussion."

John felt the familiar combination of frustration and amazement, and was on the verge of demanding more of an explanation when Sherlock stopped dead. He was staring at the remains of Rosie's dinner that still lay on the kitchen table.

"What's the matter?" John asked. It was the usual mess: a minor spill of milk; a few lumps of cold scrambled egg scattered across the formica. Three perfect, untouched florets of steamed broccoli on the edge of a yellow plastic Hey Duggie plate.

"Our child is a genius, John." said Sherlock, in tones approaching horror. He looked wide-eyed at the neglected vegetables and up at John's thunderstruck face. "She played me, and I didn't even notice."

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