

## Evidence

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# Evidence

by [JezebelGoldstone](#)

## Summary

Sherlock steals evidence. Lestrade threatens to cut him off murder cases unless he gives it back. Faced with a severe blow to The Work, Sherlock grits his teeth and offers a compromise: he'll tell Lestrade why he stole each and every piece of evidence, and Lestrade can then decide if he gets to keep it.

# Chapter 1

Lestrade was a terrible liar. That was why Sherlock could tell that, at the moment, the DI was telling the truth.

Damn.

“You need me,” Sherlock insisted.

“I’ve been selfish,” Lestrade said. Still totally serious. “I have hardly any unsolved cases in the last seven years, and yeah, a lot of that is thanks to you. But the truth of the matter is that, with or without you, most crimes go unsolved. Adding a few of my cases, and making my career as mediocre as it should be, won’t upset the balance of the universe.”

“There are other DIs on the force.”

“There are,” Lestrade agreed. Still telling the truth, damn him to a hell filled with murders that really *were* committed by leprechauns. “A few of them may even be able to stand you.”

Sherlock fumed. “I won’t get reprimanded. No trial, no community service, no mark on my record. There won’t even be any paperwork.”

“Your brother can take care of all of that, true. But he can’t stop me from telling all the other DIs that you’ve been stealing evidence. Might make them less likely to want to work with you.”

Sherlock grit his teeth. “You,” he said, the word dripping with disdain, “are *not* all that important. I can get cases elsewhere.”

“That’s also true. Well done.”

Sherlock continued fuming.

“You’ll still have the private cases,” Lestrade continued pleasantly, rocking on the balls of his feet with his hands in his pockets. “You may even get some cases from the Met. I’m well aware that I can’t shut you down entirely. Not sure I’d do it even if I could. I can, however, stop working with you myself. And I absolutely will, Sherlock. *I absolutely bloody will.*”

Sherlock had been trying to get the DI to give up for nearly an hour. He’d tried nearly every method he could think of; he’d even stooped to using *emotion*. He had played the sympathy card in a few variations: tried the you-don’t-understand-what-it’s-like-in-my-head card (Lestrade failed to see how that was relevant), the I’ll-end-up-relapsing-without-cases card (Lestrade had first pointed out that he wouldn’t be entirely without cases, and then pointed out that this would bother him less than it would bother John, which Sherlock thought was really low), then the I’m-about-to-have-a-full-on-hair-tugging-and-head-banging-nervous-breakdown (Lestrade had settled in to watch).

Sherlock had tried reason, he'd tried emotion, he'd tried threats of physical violence, he'd tried persuasion, he'd tried blackmail, he'd tried emotional blackmail. . .

Nothing had worked.

Damn.

At last, after pacing back and forth a few times, Sherlock whirled to face the Inspector. "I *can't*," he managed to choke out. "I can't."

"Sherlock," Lestrade began, as though he were speaking to a very young child, "you can't steal all this evidence and then keep it. You shouldn't steal it at all. But since you already have it, you must give it back. Just give it back and we'll forget the whole thing."

Sherlock's hands clenched at his sides. The thought of allowing certain things which were so important to leave the flat was untenable. The fact that he would never even get them back was unbearable. "I. Can't."

"No," said Lestrade, "you can, but you won't."

"Semantics!" Sherlock yelled with a flick of his hand, returning to his pacing. He wished John were here.

"God, when is John getting back?" asked Lestrade.

Sherlock paused in his pacing, and turned to face Lestrade slowly, his eyes narrowing. Then he straightened, and turned to face Lestrade fully. "You think he'd be on your side."

Lestrade smiled. "Maybe not at first. But I'm sure he'd see reason."

Sherlock took a quick step forward. "You do realize that my brother would take care of any charges brought against John, too." His voice was hard, but his mind was whirling. John was still upset about that ASBO, and that had been months ago. Of course Mycroft would get rid of everything, like always, but John also cared a great deal about what people thought of him. Sherlock didn't understand why John cared, but he also didn't want Lestrade telling everyone at the Met that John was stealing evidence. John would be upset.

All of that flashed through his mind in an instant, before he realized that Lestrade was rolling his eyes. "God, Sherlock, not everyone is like that. I wasn't *threatening* John with the same treatment I'd give you, you tosser. I just meant that he'd agree with me and want you to give it back."

Sherlock smiled. Triumph.

"He would not," said Sherlock smugly.

Lestrade quirked an eyebrow. Where and when the *hell* had he learned to do that?

"Whether or not John would agree is neither here nor there," Lestrade said, coming back to the point like a terrier (damn him again). "The point is if you don't give back all the

evidence, *right now*, I will stop working with you.”

“Until I give it back, I know.”

“No, not until you give it back,” said Lestrade. “Then you’d just hold onto it tonight to be an arse and give it back when you started to get bored. No, the terms are these: give everything to me tonight, and I’ll continue working with you tomorrow. Don’t give it all back tonight, and I won’t work with you for an additional three weeks after you return it all.”

Damn Lestrade. Damn him damn him damn him. Three weeks was a long time. He had come up with some clever terms, though Sherlock would never admit it. Lestrade was perfectly correct that had Sherlock intended to return any of the evidence at all, he wouldn’t have done so tonight. He would have waited, just to show he could, and then started returning it when other cases didn’t come in fast enough and he got bored.

But three weeks--- if he was already bored when he returned the evidence, then three weeks-- - usually two weeks without a case was about as much as he could stand. And Lestrade knew it. Damn.

“Lestrade,” said Sherlock, taking an almost desperate step towards him, “*I can’t*.”

It was true. He simply couldn’t.

“Why not?” Lestrade yelled. “What on earth could be so important about any of this stuff that you can’t give it up? Look here,” Lestrade pulled a few folded sheets out of his pocket, “a pocket watch. A penknife.”

“Oh! I forgot about those,” said Sherlock absently, still pacing.

“Well, then, go and fetch them,” said Lestrade.

“Yes, fine,” Sherlock spun and opened the desk drawer without really thinking about it. What he *was* really thinking about was how he was going to convince Lestrade to continue working with him *and* let him keep all the other bits of evidence.

“Here,” Sherlock found the two items in question at the back of the drawer and tossed them to Lestrade. They missed his hand by half a meter, and Lestrade glared at him as he felt around under John’s armchair to retrieve them.

“Good,” said Lestrade as he stood again and started scanning the papers again. “Very good. Now the glass vial.”

“No!” Sherlock shouted. “Absolutely *not*!”

“What’s wrong with you?” Lestrade shouted back. “It’s just a vial!”

“Oh, for godssake,” Sherlock sneered, turning away in disgust. He couldn’t bring himself to explain. It was too--- too *personal*, too none-of-Lestrade’s-damn-business.

Lestrade's eyes were flitting furiously over the papers he was holding. "One glass vial with one metal lid. Honestly, Sherlock, they're cheaper than a bag of crisps. Go to the store and get one if you need it for an experiment or something."

"I do not need it for an experiment," Sherlock snapped. He continued pacing without breaking stride, even when he realized what he'd said, for fear of calling it to Lestrade's attention.

"Then why do you need it?" Lestrade demanded.

Sherlock stood on the other side of the room and faced him, drawing himself up to his full height. "It was an important case."

Lestrade glanced back at the papers he was holding. Ugh. So not only did he have a list of all the evidence missing from NSY, that list also had a physical description of the evidence as well as what case it came from. Great. Just great.

"The cabbie murders? The Study in Pink?" Lestrade raised his eyes to Sherlock's, his brows migrating towards his hair, incredulous.

"Yes. It was a *very* important case." Sherlock began pacing again and hoped he had been imperious enough to put off Lestrade.

Apparently not. "Sherlock, I realize that one was kind of exciting, but honestly--- you solved it in a matter of hours. Anderson worked it. You had to speak to Donovan. Hell, I set up a fake drugs bust and Anderson and Donovan were *in your flat*. Seems to me like you'd want to just forget the whole thing. I can't imagine why something that must have been humiliating would be so important that you would---"

*"It was the first case with John!"*

Then he really did stop pacing. Sherlock looked at Lestrade. Lestrade looked at Sherlock.

After a moment Lestrade cleared his throat and said, "I see."

"Damn it, Lestrade," Sherlock hissed, then resumed pacing.

"Right. Right," Lestrade said. Perhaps he had decided to just call in a forensics team and have them *search* the flat for the missing evidence? Lestrade hadn't threatened to do such a thing, but Sherlock knew he was more than capable of it.

There was the sound of pen on paper, and Sherlock glanced over his shoulder to see Lestrade writing something on the evidence list. "So that one must have been taken by someone else. Lost, or something. Clearly you don't have it."

Facing away from Lestrade Sherlock stopped, eyes narrowing, and glared at the wall. Lestrade was going to let him keep it? No, galling to think of Lestrade *letting* him do anything. Rephrase: Lestrade wasn't going to fight him about the glass vial. Sherlock could keep it, and it wouldn't count against him. But why?

Stupid. Obvious: sentiment. Sherlock rolled his eyes. Lestrade could be so sentimental sometimes. No wonder he needed Sherlock so often.

Oh. But that was. . . oh, brilliant! Sherlock grinned, glad his back was turned. This was perfect. Absolutely perfect. All he had to do was convince Lestrade of the sentimental value of any given piece of evidence and he'd get to keep it.

Except. . . Lestrade was stupid, sometimes exceptionally so, but he wasn't fully brain-dead. If Sherlock tried to keep every piece of evidence Lestrade would realize he was making things up, and then Lestrade would try to take it all and Sherlock would be right back where he started. No, best choose his battles carefully. He would only try to keep the pieces that were *really* important.

And to keep the really important pieces all he'd have to do was tell the truth, or something like it. Lestrade would see the sentiment, and Sherlock would get to keep it.

Not that Sherlock kept anything for sentimental reasons, he thought smugly as he turned back to Lestrade, but he supposed he could understand why other people might make the mistake of thinking he did.

"Well, then," Sherlock said, trying not to grin too mischievously. "Let's have it. What's next?"

"Er." Lestrade looked quickly down at the list, clearly deciding to get as much evidence back as he could while Sherlock was being compliant, "one pig's jaw."

That was difficult. Sherlock had stolen it for an experiment, and not because anything notable had happened on the case. However, he'd left it on the kitchen table in a teacup, and John had come down early the next morning and yelled at him for ten minutes before Sherlock started laughing.

John had been so tired he hadn't looked closely enough at the jaw to realize it wasn't human. Sherlock couldn't stop teasing him about the fact that he was a doctor and a soldier and couldn't even tell human from non-human teeth when he saw them.

And John had laughed. True, Sherlock hadn't been *trying* to make him upset, but it wasn't until John started giggling that Sherlock realized it could have gone the other way. Anyone else would have assumed Sherlock was maliciously trying to humiliate them; honestly, with anyone else that would have been true. But not John. And John understood, and John recognized his own foolishness, and every time Sherlock looked at that stupid pig's jaw he could hear the mingled sound of his and John's laughter.

But would that be enough for Lestrade? Sherlock couldn't see anything terribly touching or sentimental in it. May as well explain as best he could. If Lestrade didn't fight him on it, that would be good. If Lestrade decided to keep it anyway, it wouldn't be a big deal.

"John made a mistake," Sherlock said, pulling said jaw out from behind the cushion on his armchair. "He thought it was a human jaw. I only keep the stupid thing around to tease him."

Lestrade chuckled, but held out his hand. Sherlock managed to give the jaw to him without sighing. “Get some cat’s teeth from a vet or something,” said Lestrade, carefully bagging the jaw and putting it in the canvas bag he’d brought along for the evidence. “Besides, I’m sure you have more than enough ammunition to mock him with already. Green plastic coat hanger?”

That was true; Sherlock did have more than enough ammunition. But *mock* John? Rather than tease him? Sherlock suddenly wondered what the difference was, and why the thought made him uncomfortable.

Still lost in thought, he handed over the green coat hanger. He was about to turn away when he noticed Lestrade’s inquiring look. “Donovan was being an arse,” Sherlock explained.

Lestrade rolled his eyes, but he was obviously trying not to smile. “Fine. One floral-print women’s blouse.”

Perhaps the difference between ‘mocking’ and ‘teasing’ was the difference between the way John called him an idiot and everyone else called him a freak? John didn’t mock him; Sherlock knew that. John teased him. But did he do the same to John? Did Sherlock ever mock John? Not that John’s actions were always above mockery, of course--- the man could be exceptionally stupid and *maddeningly* blind sometimes--- so Sherlock supposed he must have mocked John at some point.

Sherlock barely heard when Lestrade demanded the next piece of evidence. He was still pondering as he climbed on a chair and tried to take the solid gold pen out from behind the cow skull on the wall without knocking it down.

Conclusion: Sherlock had mocked John. At some point. Must have done.

Conclusion becomes premise in subsequent inquiry: Did Sherlock’s mockery of John have the same effect on John that other people’s mockery had on Sherlock?

He didn’t realize he had stopped moving until Lestrade pulled the pen out of his hand. No, no, he shook his head as he climbed down from the chair. Pointless inquiry. Not enough data.

Collect more data? How would he go about that? Ask John? Out of the question. Experiment? Promising. How to go about experimenting? Figure out the difference between teasing and mocking, and then do both to John enough to gather a meaningful number of data-points.

Or, alternately, just figure out what mockery was and stop doing it to John.

Change something? Change his own behavior? Change his behavior *because of someone else*? Unacceptable.

“Sherlock!” Lestrade yelled, snapping his fingers in front of Sherlock’s eyes.

Damn Lestrade. Only the threat of losing work with the Met for three weeks kept Sherlock from throwing himself on the settee and working out the entire problem to his satisfaction

right then. He filed the whole thing away for later, thorough perusal.

“What now?” Sherlock demanded, miffed.

“Two silver earrings, shell-shaped, one back missing,” Lestrade replied promptly without consulting his list. Sherlock realized the inspector must have read that item aloud several times before he noticed that Sherlock wasn’t paying attention.

“No,” said Sherlock.

Lestrade sighed. “And why not?”

“John discovered a thesaurus.”

Lestrade’s brow wrinkled; clearly he was trying to work out how on earth this could be relevant. Then his face cleared. “I remember that, I think,” he said. “When you found these in the victim’s pockets, John said your deductions were--- what did he say?”

“Notable, sensational, striking, galvanizing, superlative, and bemusing.” After a pause, Sherlock added, “I don’t think he quite understands what that last means.”

What he did *not* remind Lestrade was that right between ‘striking’ and ‘galvanizing’ John had also called Sherlock’s deductions ‘enchanted.’ He’d only bring that up if Lestrade continued fighting him on this one.

“I don’t see---”

“I said he had exhausted the English language,” Sherlock cut in, “so he went and found words he hadn’t used before.”

Honestly, even Sherlock didn’t really know why he’d kept the earrings. Sure, it was (as John would say) *amazing* and *fantastic* and *bloody well wonderful* when John actually appreciated Sherlock’s skills, but it wasn’t like he didn’t do that all the time. It was just that this time--- it was that John had thought about it. Put effort into it. Had expected Sherlock to astound him again, and had given himself enough advance warning to prepare. It was--- the *foresight* of the whole thing that made Sherlock keep the earrings. As a reminder that John could, occasionally, be very smart indeed. A sort of trophy for the good doctor.

“Fine, fine, fine,” Lestrade grumbled, looking down at his list again. “One medium-sized grey rock from Edinburgh. Covered in bloodstains, I might add, Sherlock.”

Sherlock shook his head.

“Oh, why not?” Lestrade demanded, clearly exasperated. “This one isn’t just evidence, it’s the bloody *murder weapon*!”

“John had to go undercover and pretend to be from Scotland.”

“You should have taken a picture.”

“I *did*. Besides, Mycroft has enough footage. But John had to use a Scottish accent, and he’s so bad at accents that he had to practice a lot, and he ended up having to use it *all the time*, even when it was just us. I wanted to kill him.”

Lestrade looked at Sherlock for a moment. For the entirety of that moment, Sherlock was impressed. The look Lestrade was giving him was completely unreadable.

“Fine,” Lestrade said, after a moment. There was something else in his voice, though. Sherlock didn’t know what it was.

The next five items were quickly dispensed with. Sherlock had either stolen them to annoy someone, or because someone was annoying him, or because he needed them for various experiments. However, all the annoyance was passed and the experiments were long since finished, so there was no need to argue over any of these bits of evidence.

After that Lestrade shoved the papers towards Sherlock. “Here. It’ll be faster if you just fetch everything without me reading it out to you.”

Sherlock agreed. After all, that way he could just keep what he wanted to without bothering to explain to Lestrade.

Fifteen minutes later, Lestrade was sprawled in Sherlock’s armchair, with one of John’s beers in his hand (he had helped himself to the fridge; Sherlock hadn’t cared, since Lestrade didn’t comment on the contents of the lower-left drawer) looking somewhat stunned at the pile of seemingly random items growing on the table.

“There,” said Sherlock, shoving the list back at him, “that’s the last of it.”

Lestrade took the papers, then immediately thrust them back. “Mark everything you’ve given back.”

“Dull.”

“I’ll read them all off to you and make you answer me.”

“Just try.”

“I’ll use a Scottish accent.”

Sherlock glared at him. Lestrade didn’t bother glaring back.

“Fine,” Sherlock hissed, snatching the papers back, trying to give Lestrade a papercut. It didn’t work.

Two minutes later he handed the papers back, and Lestrade glanced over them again.

“Oh, come on, Sherlock,” he said immediately. “The hairpin from that decapitation in Chelsea? You solved it in minutes, proved it wasn’t even murder, caught a cold on the train, and said it was the worst case you had ever been on. You hadn’t even *met* John yet! Why on earth do you need that one?”

"I don't," Sherlock replied. "I took it because you were being annoying, and after I had it I realized there were a few experiments I could run."

"That was three years ago."

"I'm aware."

"And these experiments are still running?"

"Don't you listen to anything? For godssake, how do you interview witnesses with that appalling lack of short-term memory? I just *said* that I don't need it anymore."

"Fine," Lestrade said through his teeth, "then why don't you go get it?"

"I can't."

Lestrade rubbed his forehead and squeezed his eyes shut. "Sherlock, I swear to god. . . Look, where is it?"

"I don't know," Sherlock said. He could have explained, but. . . this was more fun.

Lestrade glared at him murderously. Sherlock gave him his sweetest smile.

"If ye dunnae bring---"

"Stop that!" Sherlock yelled. "My god, that's pathetic. Cross the border with that mouth and they'd hang you. *John* can do it better!"

"Why the hairpin?"

"I don't know where it is," said Sherlock. Lestrade opened his mouth to reply, so to forestall further comment Sherlock explained, "John hid it."

For a moment Lestrade looked stunned. Presumably he was astonished that someone like John would stoop to Sherlock's level and hide evidence. That, or he was astounded that Sherlock would be unable to find something in his own flat. Both were valid.

"John," said Lestrade slowly, "*John*. Hid evidence. In the flat. *From you*."

Sherlock didn't deign to answer verbally, but looked at Lestrade in such a way that he hoped conveyed just how stupid the DI was.

"I don't understand," said Lestrade.

Unable to resist explaining, especially now that Lestrade had admitted he didn't understand, Sherlock said, "It was his turn. I hid it last time, he hid it this time. After I find it I'll hide it again, and then when he finds it it'll be his turn again. Really, Lestrade, it's childishly simple. You needn't gape like I'm describing how to build a rocket. Or properly fill out an autopsy report."

Lestrade did a passable impression of a goldfish for a few more seconds. Then he snapped his mouth shut, swallowed, and said, “You and John play a *game* consisting of hiding a hairpin on each other?”

Repetition. Boring. “How do you solve *any* cases without me, Lestrade?” Sherlock asked, doing his best to sound honestly curious.

Lestrade held his gaze for one more moment before snapping his eyes back to the evidence list in his hand. “The Italian hairdresser’s handkerchief?”

“Burned to ashes.”

Lestrade glared at him.

Sherlock smiled.

Lestrade said, “Sixteenth-century gold doubloon?”

Sherlock had really, *really* hoped he wouldn’t ask about that one.

The case hadn’t been that exciting, or that horrible. Not even murder. Antiques smuggling. Solved in less than twelve hours. However, during those twelve hours, there had been the usual chases, escapes, surges of adrenaline, and shots exchanged. Hand-to-hand combat skills had been tested and found worthy. Sherlock had received a few cuts; John had been punched rather viciously in the face. There had been no lasting damage, and it had only happened because Sherlock had accidentally distracted him, so it wasn’t like the doctor needed to be embarrassed by it or anything. It was hardly different from any other case. Neither Sherlock nor John had been closer to death than before. In fact, there had been several other cases, before and since, when it had seemed much less likely that they would both make it home.

But when Sherlock had sent the *thug* who had *dared* harm *his doctor* through a window, something bright had fallen from the man’s pocket just before he exploded through the glass with a cry. Still breathing heavy from exertion, Sherlock had stooped down beneath the window and carefully shifted through the few bits of glass and detritus on the floor until he’d found it.

A real, gold, sixteenth-century doubloon.

John had come up behind him, rested a hand on his shoulder. Sherlock braced himself for an immediate quiz about his injuries and whether or not Sherlock was okay, but instead John had breathed, “Is that real?”

“Don’t know,” Sherlock replied.

“Wow,” John said. “I wonder. . . I bet it’s *pirate* gold.”

He knew that Mycroft (the meddling git) had told John of Sherlock’s childhood fascination with pirates. Sherlock glanced up at John sharply, thinking his friend was mocking him, but instead found that John’s eyes were round with wonder. He carefully reached out and took the doubloon from Sherlock. He examined it in the faint light coming in through the window,

turning it over and over in his small, steady hands. Sherlock rose and stood next to him, watching the gold of the coin against the gold of John's fingers.

A groan from outside the window had brought them back to reality with a jerk. John had slipped the doubloon into his pocket, where it remained until they were safely ensconced in a taxi and on their way back to Baker Street.

Sherlock still wondered, sometimes, at the way things occasionally went with John. There were times when they just--- they just *did* things, no talk or explanation required, that would later confuse Sherlock. How had John known, as soon as Sherlock turned his head, exactly what he was going to ask for? How did any of this work? Sherlock later reached the tentative conclusion that it must be a friendship thing and left it at that.

In any case, Sherlock had turned to John to ask to see the doubloon again, just as John had turned to Sherlock. His eye had instantly gone to the cut on Sherlock's bare knuckles, while Sherlock's eyes seemed to be unable to tear themselves away from the rapidly-spreading bruise on John's face.

Without a word, John had reached into his pocket and pulled out the coin. It glimmered faintly in his palm. Sherlock reached for the coin, and John caught his hand.

They didn't look at each other again until they were in the sitting room; and even after that, they never talked about it. But it had become habit, now, whenever he was in a really black mood, for Sherlock to take out the gold doubloon and hold it between his own palms. It was like it was happening again: that taxi ride of unknown length, when he and John had both looked out their own windows, hands on the seat between them clasped together like they were drowning, the coin warm between their palms.

Lestrade glanced up at him. Sherlock must have lost a few seconds there. "No," he said.

"Sherlock---" Lestrade began.

"I said no!" Sherlock yelled, fisting his hands and pacing again.

"It's worth a small fortune!"

"Not my problem."

"This isn't just some hairpin you can keep for your own amusement. This is serious. People will notice this one, they'll come looking---"

"They won't come looking for anything else, then?" Sherlock asked sarcastically.

"Wonderful, then, I suppose I can just put all this back," he said as he moved towards the pile of evidence on the table.

Their conversation got rather loud after that, but he was glad he'd managed to distract Lestrade from the doubloon. Sherlock was pretty sure he couldn't part with that one if his life depended upon it.

"Hey! Hey!"

Sherlock finally realized that John's voice had joined the yelling.

That was . . . bit not good.

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Notes

Wow, sorry for the epic italics!fail in the first chapter. It's all fixed now. (By which I mean there actually ARE italics, so it makes much more sense.)

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Their conversation got rather loud after that, but he was glad he'd managed to distract Lestrade from the doubloon. Sherlock was pretty sure he couldn't part with that one if his life depended upon it.

"Hey! *Hey!*"

Sherlock finally realized that John's voice had joined the yelling.

That was. . . bit not good.

He turned to find his flatmate standing in the doorway, glaring at them. John was wearing jeans, and the red button-down shirt, and his black coat, and there were raindrops in his hair, and sometimes he looked so small and soft Sherlock felt the unreasonable and frankly alarming urge to try to lift him.

"I've just gotten off a *long* shift at the surgery," John turned the full force of his glare on Sherlock, "where I work to pay *our* rent," turned to Lestrade, "so he can solve cases for *you*. So if you don't mind, I'm going to have a nice cuppa, and you two are going to keep it down to foghorn level. Understood?"

Sherlock nodded. Out of the corner of his eye he caught Lestrade nodding, too. For the second time that night, Sherlock found himself impressed. When he put his mind to it, John could be very. . .impressive.

John had flicked the kettle on before Sherlock remembered that he must, at all costs, keep Lestrade distracted from the doubloon.

"John!" Sherlock cried, rushing to the kitchen. "He wants to take the hairpin."

The glare was entirely gone from his face when John turned to look at him. Then he glanced around Sherlock to look at Lestrade. "Why?"

"It's evidence," Lestrade said, all calm professionalism again. "Turns out there's quite a *lot* of evidence missing, so I decided to come get some of it back before it becomes a problem on

desks much higher up than mine.”

John nodded absently, then turned back to the kettle. Sherlock felt as though he was watching John circling for a fight, though he couldn’t imagine why that should be. The doctor leaned against the counter, and didn’t move until the kettle clicked off. Then he opened the two drawers and one cupboard necessary to make a cup of tea. Three cups of tea, actually, one of which was waved in Lestrade’s direction before it was set down on the table, the second of which was thrust into Sherlock’s hands before he could object, and the third of which was scooped up by John. Neither Sherlock nor Lestrade took their eyes off the formidable doctor until he had sat down at the table and drank half his tea down in one go.

Then he looked at Lestrade, and his face was hard. “Did he put you up to this?”

Lestrade blinked. “Sorry. What?”

“Him,” John said, jerking a thumb towards Sherlock where he still stood next to the table without looking at him. “Did he put you up to this? Somehow manipulate you into asking me for the hairpin?”

“No,” Lestrade said. He waved the evidence lists vaguely. “I’ve a list.”

John glanced between them a few times, before his face relaxed. Sherlock hadn’t realized how tense he’d been until he saw John smile. “Oh, bollocks,” said John. Then he smiled up at Sherlock. “I was sure you wouldn’t find it for at *least* another week.”

“How unfortunate,” said Sherlock.

John nodded, drained his mug, and stood. He went, not to the living room, but to the sliding door that separated the living room from the kitchen. Fumbled for a moment with the latch, then drew out a long hairpin.

“That’s cheating!” Sherlock cried. “You hid it there last time!”

John handed the hairpin to Lestrade, then turned to look at Sherlock with what the younger man thought might have been the most beautiful, honest, wide smile he’d ever seen. “I know. And you’ve looked *everywhere else*, haven’t you?”

“Devious,” Sherlock murmured appreciatively, aware that a grin was spreading across his own face.

Sherlock jolted when Lestrade cleared his throat. How long had he been staring at John’s smile? John didn’t seem startled by the sudden noise, though, so perhaps it hadn’t been for that long.

“Is there anything else you can’t find?” John asked.

Sherlock opened his mouth, even got out the words “Lestrade, your wife,” but it was too late.

Lestrade spoke over him, saying to John, “There’s still a missing gold doubloon.”

Sherlock's mouth snapped shut. John immediately shot him a glance, but he managed to carefully blank his face before the doctor's eyes reached his own.

John didn't know that Sherlock still had the doubloon. He had been very, very careful to make sure John believed that Sherlock turned it in to the Yard the next morning. He'd even made a point of making sure John could see it when he handed it across the counter. He'd simply waited for John to get distracted, and then snuck back and stole it again.

"A doubloon?" John asked. His voice was quiet. His eyes were on Sherlock. His question was almost certainly directed at Lestrade.

"Yeah," said Lestrade. "You remember. From that smuggling case a few months back. Something about the man's shoes being undone, causing him to accidentally fall through a window?" He laughed at the weak joke, but neither Sherlock nor John reacted.

"I see," said John. Sherlock was worried that, indeed, he might.

Then John drew his eyes away from Sherlock's, and the younger man found that he could suddenly breathe. When had he stopped, exactly?

No sooner had the thought crossed his mind, however, than he stopped breathing again.

John turned to Lestrade and said, "We don't have that one. I'm sure of it."

"Look, John," Lestrade began, but John cut him off. "No. Sherlock turned that in the next morning. I saw it with my own two eyes. I'd know if he'd gotten it back."

Lestrade sighed.

John smiled at him, completely guileless. Did he really not know? "We don't have it, Greg. Sorry."

Lestrade looked like he was trying to think of something else to say, some other way to persuade John over to his way of thinking, but then John walked briskly over to the coffee table. "Wow," he said, "that's quite the pile of junk. I didn't know half of this was evidence."

He lifted something, and Sherlock registered distantly that John was gently holding the pig's jaw. That seemed important, for some reason, but Sherlock couldn't quite grasp why.

Sherlock ignored them both as they continued talking. He was too focused on riddling out what exactly all this evidence pointed at to bother with what they were saying.

Sherlock had wanted to keep the pig's jaw. And the earrings. And the other things. And Lestrade had obviously understood why they were important, even if it abruptly seemed that Sherlock didn't. Sherlock couldn't part with the coin, not if his life depended on it, and why? What reason could there possibly be for such attachment to such an object? Was this, perhaps, another occurrence of the mysterious friendship things?

Eventually Lestrade left; Sherlock only bothered noticing because it meant that he and John were alone, now, and what on earth was either of them going to say?

“So, the doubloon?” John asked, coming back into the kitchen. He didn’t sound upset. Or angry. Or embarrassed. Or . . . anything, really, other than calm and politely inquiring. “Drink your tea,” he added.

Sherlock took a sip. It was cold and disgusting. He took another sip anyway.

John took his own cup to the sink, turned his back to Sherlock. “Can I see it, please?”

Sherlock set his now-empty cup down next to John, because *he* certainly hadn’t wanted the tea, so of course he wasn’t going to wash the cup. He heard John huff as he walked out of the kitchen towards his room.

In a minute he was back, and John’s hands were dry as he took the doubloon from Sherlock’s.

“You never mock me, John,” said Sherlock, suddenly remembering what he’d meant to ask John.

Had he meant to ask John? Or had he meant to avoid the topic? Oh well; nothing to be done now.

John glanced up at him, clearly confused. “Never on purpose,” he said.

“No,” Sherlock insisted, “no, you just never mock me. You tease me. And I tease you. And I - - and I mock you, John.”

John shrugged. “Well, yeah. But only sometimes.”

Sherlock didn’t know what to do. He mocked John sometimes. Sometimes, Sherlock treated John the way everyone else treated Sherlock.

“When did I start mocking you?”

John tilted his head, looking up at the ceiling. “I don’t know,” he said. “Day two? Day three? Certainly felt like you sometimes *made* a mockery of me from day one.” He giggled, then turned his attention back to the coin he was still holding.

He giggled.

John giggled.

John told Sherlock that he’d been made a mockery of from *day one* and laughed about it.

The words were all lined up behind Sherlock’s teeth, ready to jump out and demand John explain to him why the hell he stayed, why in God’s name he stuck around if Sherlock mocked him, if Sherlock made him feel like a freak, but before the words reached air John was talking again.

“What other evidence did you refuse to part with?”

"I refused to part with *any* of it. Lestrade's been learning, though, I'm afraid, and I was forced to strategically give up some of the more unimportant items."

"And the important ones?"

"I argued, and Lestrade relented."

"All right, then," said John, "what were the important ones?"

Sherlock told him. Though John kept his head tilted down towards his hands while Sherlock spoke, Sherlock could still see his face. They were standing two paces apart, so the angle wasn't ideal, but it was enough to allow Sherlock to see that John was mentally placing every piece of evidence Sherlock listed. He could see the wheels turning in John's head, could see when John finally placed which case it had been, could see the fresh confusion as he wondered why Sherlock would want a keepsake from that.

Sherlock could also see when John finally realized why Sherlock had kept every item. What Sherlock could *not* see, much to his chagrin, was what conclusions John was drawing about Sherlock's reasons.

Once Sherlock was done, there was silence. Neither of them moved. Sherlock didn't know what to do.

"Is there anything else you've taken? Things that may not be evidence, but that are keepsakes nonetheless?"

Sherlock opened his mouth to answer just as John lifted his eyes. His eyes, which were so, so blue, and *clear*, met Sherlock's, and the younger man blamed the sudden dizziness for why he accidentally blurted out, "I stole Lestrade's ID."

"Yeah, I know," the crinkles on John's face that Sherlock liked best, the laugh lines, deepened as John smiled. "You've got a stack of them. I've seen."

"No," Sherlock said, realizing that if he were pacing he wouldn't be able to keep staring at John. He began pacing furiously, then reached into his pocket and pulled out Lestrade's ID. "I meant just now. Tonight. I picked his pocket right after you got home."

"Why?" John asked.

Sherlock didn't answer, just kept pacing.

"What on earth could you want to commemorate about tonight?"

Sherlock stopped pacing in front of the fireplace. He had once received an electric shock, and quite aside from the unpleasantness, one of the things Sherlock remembered the most clearly was how rigid his every muscle had gone at the touch of the electricity. Just then, it felt like he was being shocked again.

"Hey," John said. Sherlock hadn't heard him move, but John's hand was warm and steady on his shoulder. "I'm not going to bite you. Or hurt you, or leave you, or mock you, or whatever

it is you're scared of. Just tell me."

"I'm not *scared*," Sherlock spat.

John walked to stand in front of him, and why did John's smile have to be so damn soothing? "Well, then, if you're not scared, tell me what you're trying to commemorate?"

Sherlock reached a decision. No matter what John did, John would be kind about it. And if Sherlock didn't say it now, not even the gold doubloon would be able to save him from the blackness he could feel hovering.

John was looking at him, kind and concerned, so Sherlock managed to whisper, "To commemorate when and how I realized you just might love me."

Never had John looked happier. Never had Sherlock more violently wished to die than when John shouted, "Wrong! Totally wrong!"

Sherlock tried to turn away, but John caught him by the shoulders. "No 'might' about it, daftie. You stole that ID to commemorate the night you finally figured out that we're in love with each other."

If John's hands weren't so very, very warm on his shoulders, right through all his clothes, Sherlock might have froze. As it was, all he could do was look down at John.

John, who was patient and teased him and didn't leave when Sherlock mocked him. John, who could stitch any wound and comfort any hurt and kill any villain, who could make Sherlock eat when he didn't want to, could make Sherlock *feel* whether he wanted to or not. John, who was so handsome Sherlock's chest clenched and his hands fisted at his sides.

John, who was staring up at him with such undisguised affection Sherlock couldn't help but ask, very quietly, "You. . . you love me?"

John nodded. "Of course I do, you daft git. Have done for ages. And *you* have been in love with me since that first day at Bart's. Now shut up and kiss me, or I'll give Lestrade's ID back to him."

There was nothing Sherlock would have liked to do more than kiss John. Unfortunately, he wasn't quite sure how to go about it. But he didn't want John to think he wasn't willing, so he squeezed his eyes shut and puckered his lips and leaned down.

John giggled. "Silly git," he whispered. Then he slid his hands down Sherlock's arms and took his hands. Laid his hands against John's own shoulders. Then both of John's arms slid up his chest, and over his neck, and cupped his face between his palms the way Sherlock clenched the doubloon between his hands when he was trying to scare the blackness away.

"Relax your mouth," John whispered, tugging Sherlock's head down at an angle, and John must have tipped his head back, because Sherlock could feel John's breath on his face, and even though it was warm it made Sherlock shiver. He tried to relax his lips, but he had never

been more frightened in his life, and he knew that all he could do was press his lips into a line and squeeze his eyes tighter, and would John think that meant he didn't want- - -

John pressed his lips to Sherlock's.

It was warm and chaste and neither of them opened their mouths- - - Sherlock suspected John didn't want to overwhelm him, for which he was grateful. After a moment it felt like John's warmth was melting him straight through, and he spread his hands on John's shoulders. But that wasn't enough, so he wrapped his arms around John's back and pulled him as close as he could and held him as tight as his arms were able. He fit against Sherlock's chest wonderfully, all warm and solid and unreasonably soft.

"Oh, god," John breathed against his mouth. Then he pressed his lips once more to Sherlock's, briefly, before using his hands to draw Sherlock's face lower. Sherlock held on tight and let John do as he pleased.

John kissed one corner of his mouth, then the other, then his jaw, then his cheek, his nose, his cheekbone, his eyelid. . . John's lips skipped over Sherlock's face, and in between kisses John was muttering nonsense. "You're so beautiful. . . God, I can't even tell you. . . I want you so much. . . for so long. . . wanted you for so *long*, Sherlock. . . Sherlock. . . Sherlock. . . God, I love. . . I love you *so much*. . . Oh, god, Sherlock. . ."

When Sherlock couldn't take it anymore, and knew that if he opened his eyes he wouldn't be able to bear the look on John's face, Sherlock wrenched one of his hands away from John's back to hold the side of his face and guide their lips together again. This time John didn't hold back nearly so much. Sherlock was already overwhelmed, anyway, and a quick learner. Therefore, this kiss was a bit. . . different. Not so chaste.

A ridiculous thought popped into his head, and Sherlock immediately pulled back slightly, opening his eyes. He was treated to the sight of John squeezing his eyes tight shut and following his lips with his own, clearly desperate for more. The sight made Sherlock feel incredibly smug, though he couldn't quite pinpoint why.

"You," Sherlock began, his voice far more hoarse than he'd expected. He blinked in confusion. John opened his eyes, and Sherlock couldn't help but smile. "You wouldn't *really* give Lestrade's ID back to him."

"Mmmmm nope," said John, smiling, tapping a brief kiss to Sherlock's chin before pulling back to look at him again. One of his arms had migrated away from Sherlock's face to wrap around his waist, and he tightened this arm to draw Sherlock impossibly closer. "Never."

From that day forth that particular ID never left 221B. Sherlock had wanted to keep it on the bedside table, but John tossed it through the door, saying that having a picture of anyone that close to the bed made it feel like someone was *watching them* and gave him the creeps. He looked so adorable when he was creeped out Sherlock kissed him again, and made a mental note to take him to as many haunted houses that fall as he could possibly find.

Even when Lestrade called the next morning- - - Sherlock and John didn't hear their phones ring the first few times- - - and cursed a blue streak at Sherlock and John and anyone else

who happened to be listening, they never did give it back.

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