

Bonsai

by mazaher

January 5th, 2012

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"I've never begged for mercy in my life". *Sherlock's repartee at Irene's comment feels more serious than warranted by the situation. I wondered what trigger could extract from him such a bit of personal information.*

Also, tomorrow is canon! Holmes birthday.

Dedicated to athens7, a little bit of c for all the h.

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January 5th, 4:58 pm

"He was strangled with a length of the wire used to bend the bonsai's branches," Sherlock announces. "You will find wire of the same brand and diameter in Mrs. Coburn's possession. Check the fingerprints."

"Motive?"

"Why, Lestrade, it's obvious. He beat her four years in a row in the Chelsea Flower Show competition. Rivalry is invariably most rampant where the goal is trifling."

Sherlock turns to leave, followed by John. As they step out of the conservatory, they pass by a heap of half-withered stubs, naked roots exposed, a few leaves still clinging to the artificially contorted branches. Sherlock averts his eyes and hastens on. John hears him mumble under his breath, but doesn't catch his words.

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January 6th, 06:23 am

John is a light sleeper. Sherlock's muffled whimper has him instantly awake and alert. In the faint light of the unshuttered window, he can see Sherlock stretched belly down at his side, hugging the pillow and visibly trying to control his breathing rate.

"Sherlock..."

A hand is raised, stopping at once his words and the touch he was offering.

Wait, Sherlock is asking.

So John waits. He waits without moving, without speaking, staring at the ceiling and trying as best he can to radiate calm and comfort. If he is Sherlock's heart, the least he can do is to keep beating as steadily as he can.

Finally, Sherlock sighs, and when he speaks his voice is cool and collected.

"Don't lose sleep over me, John. It was nothing."

"It was something. Want to tell me?"

"Nothing of importance."

"It keeps us both awake, it must be important. Anything to do with bonsai trees being thrown away?"

The slight intake of breath from Sherlock tells John he's surprised him. Now he's bitten a good hold, he won't let go.

"Discarded. After all the pain of being pruned and shaped. What a merciless waste."

"I've never begged for mercy in my life, John. Or, when I say never..."

So there must have been a time --one time-- when Sherlock swallowed his pride and begged.

"They didn't tame you, did they? You held your own shape despite the cutters and the wires. But at one point... Did it help, that time?"

"Once they've been clever enough to have you begging, you can be sure they're clever enough to not renounce the advantage, John. Begging never helps."

John tries to imagine how early and how spectacularly the Holmes brothers must have been failed by *someone* (their parents? teachers? who?) for them to become the loneliest, the most mistrustful, and two among the most ruthless people he knows. He's glad he can't.

"I used to have fears," Sherlock continues after a moment, his voice slow and hushed.

"I manipulated them to make my body do things I wouldn't have been able to do otherwise."

"Like what?"

"I can still cry on cue," Sherlock says lightly, but his smile is tight-lipped in the half-light.

"In time, I stopped caring. I find that now there isn't much I fear anymore. Except for you, of course."

"Me?"

"More precisely: where you are concerned. Even knowing it wouldn't help, I would still beg for you, John."

"Then we must arrange things so that it never needs to happen. Meanwhile, Sherlock, happy birthday. In fact, I'm quite glad you were born."

"Oh. Thank you."

The beginning of a pearly-gray dawn is creeping up above Marylebone. A thin early-morning chill settles on the pillows and on John's nose. But he can nuzzle up against Sherlock's warm throat, listening to his heartbeat slowing down at last into sleep, and he finds he doesn't mind after all.

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