

## Xenia

by mazaher

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*For irisbleufic. She knows why =)*

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"Sherlock, I'm back!" John calls out of habit as he turns the key in the latch after negotiating the seventeen steps to their flat at 221b Baker Street. He's loaded with two grocery bags and a small cardboard crate of four Strongbow cider bottles, and he *would* appreciate some help, but by now he knows enough not to expect it, so he's not really surprised at the lack of an answer.

"What about roasted duck with gooseberry for dinner? I got cider."

Silence.

"Sherlock...?"

He puts down the bags and crate, peers into the kitchen.

Sherlock is hunched over the table, arms crossed along the edge, nose is practically dipping into a one-pound glass jar filled with a pale golden substance. His eyes are closed, and he's taking deep in-breaths which he holds and then exhales, turning his face a little to the side.

"What's that stuff, and what are you doing?" John has learned that a healthy dose of caution is rather likely to turn out useful when confronted with Sherlock's experiments.

"My borage honey. Fresh shipment from Sussex. I'm catching the scent of last May's rain.

Definitely in a south-south-westerly, but I'm trying to find out if cowslips were also in bloom, so please shut up, will you? I want to concentrate."

John shuts up.

Personally, he's quite partial to Regent's Park honey, with its exciting rose scent and long dry green aftertaste, but he knows about and --truth be told-- he encourages Sherlock's affair with borage. If Regent's Park is a challenge, borage is like going back home to mother. Not the fussy sort, who'll stuff you with spinach and stifle you with woollen vests, but the sort who will listen, eyes sparkling, while you tell her all about the badger carcass you found in the woods, saying all the right things at the right moments, and then allowing you an extra helping of rice pudding at dinner, just because.

*Dicit Borago, gaudia semper ago*, the saying went at the Salernitan School. *Borage does declare: I will comfort your heart.*

Medicine has made some progress since the Middle ages, John thinks, but some things remain as true now as ever. He fishes a cream cracker from the new packet in the grocery bag, grabs a spoon, and gets busy stealing a sample of Sherlock's honey.

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