

## Story-telling by night

by mazaher

September 18th, 2011

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*Absolute silliness. An old children's tale (with a trick) came to mind, and I thought that Sherlock, being Sherlock i.e. contrary on principle, might actually appreciate the neatness of the trick rather than feeling offended by the grown-up conceit inbuilt in the tale, like generation upon generation of children have been.*

*Grandma has a lot in common with a late --and sorely missed-- great-aunt of mine on my mother's side.*

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Sherlock has been actively bored for 6 hours, 13 minutes, 55 seconds when he finally reaches his limit.

It's exactly 11:47:32 pm.

His eyes snap open. He quickly pulls himself sitting up crosslegged on the sofa, draws his blue-grey dressing-gown tighter around his knees, and gestures with a long pale hand to John, who's reading rugby news on yesterday's «Guardian».

"John. Tell me a story."

John peers up from the spread page.

"Tell me a story, \*please\*?"

Sherlock huffs.

"Fine. Tell me a story, \*please\*, John? I have nothing to do, I can't sleep, and you've disposed of my stash \*again\*."

John folds back the newspaper carefully, leaving out the half page he's been reading, and puts it down on the tea-table.

"I tell you a story and you scratch my head."

"Settled."

The situation must be dire indeed; John was ready for much harder, longer bargaining.

He stands, hobbles across the carpet to the sofa, turns his back on Sherlock and sits down at his feet, knees up, scalp within easy reach.

"I'm going to tell you a story my grandma told Harry and me to make us sleep. Tried and true to get results in case of insomnia."

John settles his back more comfortably against the sofa and stretches his bad leg flat on the carpet. Sherlock silently hands him a cushion, which John slips under his knee with a small puff of satisfaction. He lets his head hang back and closes his eyes.

"Begin, then."

"You begin scratching."

Sherlock does, his thin strong fingers weaving their way through John's hair, tips pressing, rubbing just so, nails lightly scratching.

John sighs in contentment.

"Well, this is the story," he says softly, and with a lilting cadence he goes on:

"Once upon a time there was a king, and he was sitting on his sofa.

Bored, he asked his servant: 'Tell me a story.'

The story so began."

"Hm. Suggestive."

"Indeed. But it gets even better later on."

"Let's hear it then."

"Once upon a time there was a king, and he was sitting on his sofa.

Bored, he asked his servant: 'Tell me a story.'

The story so began.

Once upon a time there was a king, and he was sitting on his sofa.

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Once upon a time there was a king, and he was sitting on his sofa.

Bored, he asked his servant: 'Tell me a story.'  
The story so began..."

"...and the little boys and girls all fell asleep, bored out of their minds and too stupid to question the equation in the fractal. Quite clever."

"And the little boys and girls were thoroughly pissed off at being cheated in such an idiotic way, and didn't fall asleep until two-twenty-five in the morning, much to the chagrin of their put-upon parents, who weren't so happy with the promised "results" and banned grandma from ever playing such a trick on their offspring again, considering the ensuing disruption to everybody's sleep patterns. Everybody except grandma, truth be told. She used to curl in bed at night with her neverending supply of Agatha Christies, Rex Stouts and Ellery Queens."

"Did she solve the crimes?"

"Unfailingly. Then she closed the book, took up her tools, and went out gardening. She said gardens have a busy night life."

"A busy night life. Sounds like a plan."

"Rather."

And while the clever servant kept repeating *ad infinitum* a neverending story to the stupid king sitting on his sofa, a different sort of quite brilliant king and a very different sort of clever servant began telling each other a completely new and quite exciting story, which took most of the night in telling, and ended with two very happy boys very deeply asleep on that very same sofa.

The End

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Note: The original Italian version of the neverending story goes like this:

*C'era una volta un re*

*seduto sul sofà*

*che disse alla sua serva:*

*"Raccontami una storia."*

*La storia incominciò.*

*C'era una volta un re...*

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Note: A fitting illustration for what I had in mind as the end of this story can be found on reapersun's Tumblr "A bloo bloo bloo" at <http://reapersun.tumblr.com/post/10437015960/i-feel-like-ive-drawn-this-couch-more-often-than>.

Do go and have a look... Sherlock is folded short on himself and John is stretched loooooong and any sign of boredom has definitely vanished from the scene.

Thanks to athens7 who pointed me to the drawing.