

– Sorting Sherlock

Music Voiceover:

John Watson: *We don't know a thing about each other. I don't know where we're meeting. I don't even know your name.*

Sherlock Holmes: *I know you're an army doctor recently invalidated home from Afghanistan. I know you've got a brother who's worried about you, but you won't go to him for help because you don't approve of him, possibly because he's an alcoholic. More likely because he recently walked out on his wife. And I know that your therapist thinks your limp is psychosomatic, quite correctly I'm afraid. It's enough to be going on, don't you think?*

Music fades in/out.

Shannon: We are back for Round 2 of sorting John Watson here, and this is the big question, the one that... you know, kind of the climax. What house does John belong in?

Drinkingcocoa: All right. Ugh, John Watson! He's very strongly Gryffindor for me because of daring, nerve, and chivalry, the traits of Gryffindor. This is based on my reading of the Sword of Gryffindor, which JK Rowling mysteriously says that it presents itself to any true Gryffindor. What on earth does that mean? My reading of that is that Gryffindor is the name for a personality type that when faced with danger gets this momentary surge of very powerful survival adrenaline that makes them more clear-headed. It's temporary and it's extraordinarily powerful, and this is what Sherlock calls John's "nerves of steel." This is why his hand is steadier when he's under stress. This is why, when he and Lestrade are shooting at the dog, he doesn't even waver at all. Stress clarifies his mind. He focuses on the danger. He deletes distractions. This means that when you need a place to hide, to hide something from a Gryffindor, from John Watson, you hide things within subtleties at times of danger. Just like from Moriarty, you hide things within friendship. Or for Sherlock, you hide things within sentiment. You know how Sherlock could never imagine that the innkeepers didn't put down their dog, because he doesn't understand sentiment, and Moriarty exploits Sherlock's need for cleverness by making up a keycode. So for John, if you want to hide something from John, you put him in a situation of danger and then hide your truth in some sort of subtlety. He won't hear it. Chivalry- that is the overwhelming urge to help someone, especially someone who is less powerful than you are. This is what Sherlock triggers in John. When he needs John to leave so that he can go up on the roof, John knows Sherlock completely, knows how Sherlock feels about Mrs. Hudson, but even that knowledge can be overwritten by John's chivalry, so when he thinks that Sherlock isn't going to go help Mrs. Hudson, he gets so mad that he leaves, and then he sees Mrs. Hudson and he realizes he's been played. He understands exactly what's just happened, but Sherlock took a gamble, and he was right. That is going to work for John. And then daring- as Shannon mentioned this, John leaping on the Golem's back, oh. That actually reminded me of Harry Potter jumping on the troll's back in book one.

All: Yeah!

Drinkingcocoa: And you know, then I just thought, actually there's a lot of Harry and Ron's London friendship in John and Sherlock's friendship. When I...*[inaudible]*... through and they're standing in the hallway and they're just high on- they're euphoric and they're laughing. They've got all this adrenaline going and it reminded me of the Hogwarts Express in the first book, and Harry's just bought sweets from the trolley and he's thinking, I've never had anyone to share with before. And I thought, wow, Sherlock has never had anyone to share adventures with before, and that's what John is there for. He is not loyal to Sherlock until after that chase. He's there for the adventure

together, and then I then realized, oh, that's how Gryffindors get loyal. It's not a Hufflepuff loyalty, it's a Gryffindor loyalty, which is we forge loyalty to each other through adventure, which is, it's like alchemy. There's a fire that forges friendship into true loyalty, under -- that's what they say for the Sword of Gryffindor, that it has to be retrieved under conditions of need and valor, and the quote from Harry Potter that it reminded me of is, "There are some things you can't share without ending up liking each other, and knocking out a twelve foot mountain troll is one of them." This is fire; Gryffindor is the House of Fire, which I think guns are fire. And oh gosh, and then John sacrificing himself at the pool when he lunges for Moriarty and says to Sherlock, "Run." Ron does that, Ron sacrifices himself in the chess game. So, the nature of John's loyalty, the nature of his daring, the way his mind works when he's faced with danger, they all say Gryffindor to me.

Shannon: Brilliant! Brilliant!

B: Can I go next? I want to add to that, what she said.

Shannon: Absolutely!

B: Okay, because you were saying stuff that's almost exactly what I wrote down. That's why I was discounting Hufflepuff as any kind of thing to do with John. I feel like his loyalty is very selectively given, and you're right, he embraces his loyalty through danger. I feel like he's reckless, because why would he go to Afghanistan in the first place? I feel like that's a very Gryffindor trait. If he wanted to help people, or to stay home and develop loyalty at home, he would have stayed home. He went out and he seeks danger. He seeks daring situations where you can be brave and courageous for other people. I feel like that was what really like what you said, that was really awesome, that he doesn't give up his loyalty easily. That's kind of what I had to add. I pick him for Gryffindor too.

Roane: Well, I actually think I have to piggyback on this, because, yeah, I really didn't have to think about this much at all. I think John, and I think Gryffindor. I think you are describing kind of a battlefield loyalty, and that's what John's loyalty is. I think you are exactly right that that loyalty wasn't really forged until after he'd kind of been through the fire with Sherlock, and I think, Drinkingcocoa, you're also right in pointing out that Sherlock knew that would be the case.

Drinkingcocoa: Yes.

Roane: I mean, Sherlock takes him on this case, ostensibly to point out to him that his limp is in fact psychosomatic, but I think it's also to kind of cinch that loyalty with like, look! We've had this fabulous adventure together, and now we're going to be best buds forever. Because he read that in John, and I do think that Sherlock is manipulative enough to have done that.

Rachael: So you guys don't think that John was immediately loyal to Sherlock based on the Mycroft scene? That he wouldn't spy on him and...

Roane: I think he was inclined to be. I think the refusal to spy on him was just because that went against his moral compass. That's not a thing that you do. That's not the chivalrous thing to do.

Drinkingcocoa: If you look at the scene right after Mycroft, when John comes to 221B and Sherlock's got the three patches, John doesn't act like someone who's loyal to Sherlock yet. He's really like, "You want me to what?" So the loyalty hasn't formed yet.

Shannon: I don't think loyalty would form right away though in any case. That would be

superficial.

B: Exactly.

Roane: I think John is intrigued there. I think he's like, whoa there's really something about this guy, but I think it takes the realization that being a part of Sherlock's life is going to involve being in danger, which really kind of signs him up permanently. To be like, yes, this is what I want to do, because he is an adrenaline junkie. He does want that constant level of stimulation that he wouldn't get if he was not a part of Sherlock's life, and that he did get in the Army, which I think is why he was in the Army to start with.

B: I didn't read that scene as loyalty, definitely not at the beginning there. I felt like he was just being obstinate to Mycroft. Like he would have just said no to whatever he was talking about, being stubborn.

[laughter]

B: Yeah, he's obviously in a dangerous situation, and that's how he faces dangerous situations. He just kind of puts on a brave face and laughs in their face. He sasses Mycroft so much in that scene, and this guy could kill him immediately. He has no idea who this guy is. So I felt like it wasn't so much loyalty- intrigue definitely, but not diehard loyalty to Sherlock yet. They haven't forged that loyalty yet.

Roane: Yeah, I think no matter who Mycroft wanted him to spy on, he would have had the same sassy --

B: Exactly.

Roane: "No! Because you kidnapped me and you're asking me, so screw you!"

B: Yeah, he's just mad at him.

Shannon: Rachael, do you want to jump in?

Rachael: Sure, I'm going to sound like a broken record, because as a Gryffindor, I am pretty stubborn, and I like to argue that people are in my House. *[laughing]* And I claim John in my House! I think it kind of goes back to... you know, I wavered between Hufflepuff and Gryffindor because John does have this fierce loyalty for Sherlock that goes throughout the series, and I definitely think there's more evidence for a Gryffindor John in Season 1. In Season 1, we have him shooting the cabbie which is really like a daring, brave, kind of reckless thing to do. We have him intrigued, "Could be Dangerous" text along the adrenaline junkie thing that other folks were saying, and then the scene at the pool and the scene with the Golem like was mentioned before. But I do think there's evidence for a Gryffindor John in Series 2 as well. I mean, in terms of John's reaction... so like the whole Baskerville episode is a good example of John's bravery. Sherlock is pretty fucking freaked out in that whole episode for various reasons *[laughing]*, and John is really level-headed and gutsy, even though he goes through this super, super scary experience with Sherlock freaking him out with the microphone, he's brave in that scene. He's just gutsy. I think if there really was a hound there, he would have tackled that hound, because John is totally a fighter, and he certainly exemplifies the fieriness that is a Gryffindor's. It's harder to see in Reichenbach, I think because so much of Reichenbach is about John's loyalty, it's difficult for me to find an example. But, one of the reasons I chose Gryffindor is because... the reason why I loved the show

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from the get go was John. He completely drew me in, and I think it's the particular characterization of him as a Gryffindor that makes me love him. In other versions of Sherlock Holmes, Watson can be this kind of boring sidekick. I haven't read the books. I'm comparing it to the Guy Ritchie movies, *Young Sherlock Holmes*, *Elementary*... The thing that defines the BBC Watson to me is that he's a thrill-seeker and he's brave and daring and he does break rules. He isn't just a wet blanket that calms Sherlock down. He has his own edge to him too, and Martin Freeman does such a good job of capturing that edginess that is John.

Shannon: All right. So Katie. How about you?

Katie: Oh my god, I am also going to sound like a broken record, because... okay, I'm a Slytherin myself. I pride myself on being the smartest person in the room, and I sometimes feel like Sherlock, and I do really, really think that John is a Gryffindor. I think, in terms of loyalty, I don't think it formed until Great Game-ish, when the bomb started happening and they end up in the pool about to die. I think one of the scenes that distinguishes that the most is when Moriarty returns after leaving them at the pool, and the bomb is already off of John, and they're talking and Moriarty shows up, and he's like, well, guess what? I'm going to kill you anyway. We see John give Sherlock a look, like go ahead, shoot this guy. We need to get rid of him ASAP. I think that's his definite *[inaudible]* right there. I think someone mentioned the scene at the end of Hounds where there's the dog. They all know they've been drugged, but they're scared out of their pants anyways. You can see him keep a complete calm mind when he shoots at the dog. This is where I applaud Martin Freeman. I've admired his work. I think I first watched him in that Christmas movie... I forget the title...

Shannon: *Love Actually*, yeah.

Katie: I'm like, man this guy is good! And *Sherlock* comes along, and I see him doing a wonderful job with a character who deals with stress and has this psychosomatic limp due to what happened to him in Afghanistan. Yeah, this guy is definitely brave. He's clear-minded whenever something terrible is going on, and I think that is an example of how well Sherlock and John get together. He keeps a calm head when Sherlock does not, and that makes sure they get the work done eventually.

Rachael: I'm glad you mentioned his limp, because I think that's also a Gryffindor quality. Not his limp, but I think having a psychosomatic limp is sort of... it's not letting go of something, and it's kind of a type of stubbornness. It's a view of how he sees the world.

Drinkingcocoa: Yeah, in his body you can see, he gets flooded by so much adrenaline, you can see how hard it is, like he can't discharge it. At the end of *The Great Game*, when they hear the child, everyone is completely horrified, but Martin Freeman shows that John Watson's body has the hardest time containing his distress, and I see that coming out in the psychosomatic limp also. His body suffers for it.

Roane: All of his body language, like the clenching hand thing he does all of the time, just kills me. You can just see when John gets really upset, he's clenching that hand like, I am not going to punch this person, I am not going to punch this person.

Shannon: Obviously, I disagree with everyone, because you all sorted him Gryffindor, and that was my secondary house. So, I kind of made a comment to this effect on my Tumblr. I'm like, oh, we're going to sort today, and I'm going to be the only one sorting for this house, and one of our listeners was like, "Oh yeah, you're going to sort Hufflepuff, aren't you?" And I said, "Absolutely." In fact, I can't see him in anything else other than Hufflepuff. All the points you raise, all of you,

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are all very good ones, but they don't explain John's backstory to me. They don't explain where he's coming from, and they don't really get at the heart of the Hufflepuff in him, and I think heart is key here, because again we see this being referenced over and over again. He's Sherlock's heart, what does that mean? You talk about physical manifestations of trauma, and we have Mycroft making a guess, and being wrong as he is in other instances. It's not that John misses the war, as in he's there for the adrenaline. He misses being a part of something. He misses a purpose, and we see John's clenching and re-clenching of his hand as he walks away from Sherlock's grave, and I'm going to come back to that in a moment, because that's also where he says something that I think brings us full circle, to the very beginning of his story here, when he's first brought on, and we have him talking to Stamford, and he says, "Who would want me for a roommate?" There's a kind of self-pity going on in this moment in John. He's missing a purpose and a sense of belonging. So, what I've been drawing upon, and I mentioned this in our very, very first sorting, some of what influences my sorting is fanfiction. Because I think in many ways the collective consciousness of the people who've read Harry Potter have thought it over, much as those people who've read or watched the BBC show and have written fanfic have kind of extrapolated beyond what we may see on the screen, and I want to say that a lot of my Hufflepuff is looking at work that's been done by a Harry Potter fanfic writer who unfortunately is no longer active, Minisinoo, who wrote extensively about Hufflepuff, kind of to get at, what is it that makes this house unique and powerful? What is its contribution to the four houses that goes beyond what we got to see? Because I think Hufflepuff was also the house that was most underrepresented in the Harry Potter canon. We certainly got to see Cedric Diggory and enjoyed his death, and we found out later...

Rachael: Enjoyed his death!

[laughter]

Shannon: ...and we found out later that Nymphadora Tonks... After the series is over, we find out from Rowling that she was supposed to be a Hufflepuff, but Hufflepuff is a house of strength and ability and the willingness to act in concert. I've mentioned this before, this idea of kind of being a communal type house, this idea of solidarity, Rowling makes a comment talking about that of the students who stayed to fight Voldemort, the house that had the second largest number was Hufflepuff. Most of them stayed to fight. And you know, they weren't staying to fight because they were adrenaline junkies or because they liked that sort of thing, they were staying I guess because they thought it was right, but they were showing solidarity against something wrong, and I was thinking again about John. We hear about him being an army doctor. He was a doctor who joined the military. I guess these are crucial components of him. The military is not a place for individuals who don't want to fit in and who want to break the rules and kind of screw around. You're not going to succeed if you can't somehow work in concert with others, and I think in the military we see a place for John to find a purpose. His purpose is doing the doctor part; like I said before, he's not a sniper, he's not what we can see as being front line or something. It seems to be that the doctoring is crucial, but what we see him struggling with in the beginning is kind of lacking that group, and Sherlock deduces something really powerful about him. Sherlock deduces John by looking at his phone, and one of the things he comments on is, it's a young man's phone. It might be a brother, it can't be a cousin, because he's an army hero looking for a place to stay, so obviously he doesn't have any family, or none that he's very close to. This is something that came up before when we were sorting Mrs. Hudson, because we were talking about how she forms a family, or in a sense, her own collective and group, and I think that's something that John is missing. When he comes back, he's out of the Army. He doesn't have family to go to. He doesn't have purpose, he doesn't have belonging. He doesn't have a collective, but what he presents for Sherlock is not just an adventure buddy, he does present a strong and stabilizing force. One of the things we see when you hear people talk about the four houses, or things that come in four, are kind of like the different

elements. The air, the fire, the wind, and earth, and Minisinoos says that it draws upon the earth element, Earth is solid, strong, dependable, and warm. It's the Hufflepuff strength and solidarity to help with others. I want to go out also to the heart. This is something else, because I think Gryffindor, we think about courage and the heart and maybe the heart being an emotional place. But another reason why I see John as being Hufflepuff has to do with what he is to Sherlock, is he's Sherlock's conscience. Minisinoos makes this really great case in her story called "Finding Himself" which is a Cedric Diggory story, a Cedric/Hermione story eventually, but the idea here is that what Hufflepuff contributes of the four houses to Hogwarts is its conscience. And we see John doing the same thing when he says to Sherlock "a bit not good." He does provide that element, and again that's a bit of the grounding and guiding element for Sherlock.

Rachael: When I was wavering between Gryffindor and Hufflepuff, the theme that kept popping into my mind was at the end of Reichenbach, where Sherlock tricks John into thinking -- he thinks that Mrs. Hudson is in trouble and he tricks John into leaving, so he can go up on the roof, and how angry John is at Sherlock for, you know, "what are you some kind of machine," he says to him. That heart and that "Sherlock, you need to care about people" is so definitive of John. That kind element that he brings that kind of completes Sherlock to me, I don't see as a Gryffindor thing, so I really -- wavered a lot. And you're making me waver more!

Shannon: All right, so our last question then. What would you think John's patronus would be? I had a lot of fun with this one. I'll start if you guys don't mind and then I'll call on the rest of you. A lot of mine had to do with John's role and again it's kind of influenced by my sorting, and I see loyalty as being very key, and I was thinking of how John's kind of going along with Sherlock in pursuit of crime and helping him sniff out things, and so I thought of him as a kind of dog. I think canine was appropriate, but then I thought what dog specifically? And I thought, you know, a search and rescue dog, one that would be useful in the pursuit of information and crime. And maybe, but to help people. Preferably living people? So I was thinking an air-scenting dog and not necessarily one that's looking for cadavers. But I was also thinking, well, maybe we need a really good solid dog, one that is not super excitable, and one that might be a bit English. So I was thinking that maybe John's patronus would be a bloodhound.

Rachael: Aww.

Drinkingcocoa: That's really beautiful.

B: Mine's really similar. I also went with dog, but I with a different type. I went with a German shepherd.

Shannon: Oh!

B: Just because they're fiercely loyal. They're also very intelligent dogs, they can also be really obedient, I was feeling the soldier side maybe. He knows how to protect and be fierce and loyal, so I felt like a German shepherd would be a good -- they also can be served as service dogs or rescue dogs as well, so I felt like that could embrace all of John's personality in there. Also, they need to have mental stimulation or they need to exercise or else they become timid and fearful, so I felt like also John needs to have activity, he needs to have something to do. And that was good with a German shepherd, too. So, dogs.

Drinkingcocoa: That's so funny because, B, this is another time that I agree with you completely. *[laughter]* Because I also chose a German shepherd.

Shannon: Why did you pick a dog though? What's with the dogs?

Drinkingcocoa: Well, I looked for an animal that's beautiful and intelligent, and I thought a guard dog that is loyal, protective to the death, but only of its chosen pack. And I wanted a dog that he looked a little bit like Martin Freeman, too. But anyway!

[laughter]

B: They can be really sweet but they can be really dangerous, too.

Shannon: But they're also search and rescue dogs, and I almost went with them, but I thought, no, I wanted an English one and I wanted one that looked a little more like Martin Freeman, too, and I thought it did more than the German shepherd did! *[laughing]*

Drinkingcocoa: I guess not.

[laughter]

Shannon: All right, so let's see, who's next? Katie, how about you?

Katie: This is gonna sound kind of strange. Okay, most listeners probably won't know what this is, but I think his bravery and attitude is similar to that of a nene, which is a Hawaiian bird -- I'm from Hawaii -- it's a Hawaiian bird, nenes mostly live on other islands other than mine though so I haven't seen them all that often. But they're aggressive and protective of their land and their younger birds, you know, and yeah, they're pretty tough.

Rachael: Cool.

Shannon: Roane, what about you?

Roane: Well, I have to admit the very first thing that popped into my head was a dog as well, but I'm going to go with a wolverine.

Shannon: Wow. Why?

[laughter]

Roane: Just because they're a lot tougher and a lot meaner and a lot stronger than their size suggests. And they're very vicious when they're cornered.

Shannon: All right. So Rachael?

Rachael: So I did this kind of backwards. I picked the thing that popped into my head that would be the funniest, and then rationalized it, and so I picked a hedgehog.

[cheers and laughter]

Shannon: Oh no!

Roane: Somebody had to go there!

Rachael: Yeah, somebody had to go there. So I read a little about them to see if I could justify it in any way, and found out they're nocturnal. And they do this thing called "anointing," which is a ritual where, whenever they encounter a new scent, they lick and bite at the source and then form a scented froth in their mouth and they put that all over their tongue and their spines. So I can't really --

Shannon: This sounds like a slashfic I read once.

B: I could say!

Roane: That's what I was gonna say.

Rachael: Anointing fic. Totally we should have somebody write that. But I mean, hedgehogs are... they look really cute but they prick you if you pick them up, just like John's kind of scrappy and he has some bite, he can definitely fight... *[laughing]* I'm trying to rationalize this. So, the function of their spines is also protective, and I think John definitely has this protective nature of Sherlock that is very similar. I don't know if he's ever anointed Sherlock or done anything like -- well, he kind of has!

Shannon: Many times. *[laughing]*

Rachael: Like when he punches out the cop! Yeah. The other thing I learned about them is that they once apparently had to make a hedgehog-safe McFlurry tube at McDonald's, because they used to get stuck in McFlurry containers and I don't know how that could pertain to John but --

Drinkingcocoa: I'm sort of speechless!

[laughter]

Shannon: That's awesome. That's it for this sorting roundtable. Stay tuned for the next one when we sort Molly Hooper! So that's it, and thanks, everyone, and thanks for sorting! Bye!

All: Bye!

Music fades in/out.