

SHERLOCK BONES

AND THE CURSE OF THE PHARAOH'S MASK





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Buster Books



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Welcome

Sherlock Bones and Dr Jane Catson are world-famous for solving crimes. Each case is written down by Catson, so you can read all about their adventures.



Sherlock Bones

Sherlock Bones is the greatest detective the world has ever known. He never runs away from a puzzle, and always cracks his cases.



Dr Jane Catson

Dr Jane Catson is Sherlock Bones' crime-fighting partner. She's always ready to pounce into action when faced with a sneaky criminal.

Are you ready to help Bones and Catson solve their trickiest case yet? Throughout the story, you will find puzzles where you can put your detective skills to the test. If you get stuck, you can find all the answers at the back of the book, starting on page 169. You can also just enjoy reading the adventure and come back to the puzzles later if you want to. Good luck!



Chapter One

Where on earth was Hastings? My old friend had said he'd meet us outside the café in the market square, but there was no sign of him.

I could see hundreds of cats crowding around the food stalls, but none of them looked anything like him. I wondered if I'd even recognize him after so much time.

I hadn't seen Hastings since he'd moved to Egypt to set up an antique shop ten years ago. I'd written to him as soon as Sherlock Bones and I booked our holiday to El Kitten, a large city on the River Nile, and I'd been delighted when he'd replied and told us where to meet him.

But he didn't seem to be around. Had I got the time wrong?

Bones was standing next to me with his paws folded.

"He's got to be here somewhere," I said, "Keep your eyes peeled."

I lifed my paw to shield my face from the bright sun and looked around.

"My eyes are always peeled, Catson," said Bones. "I miss nothing. Do you notice that jackal?"

He pointed to an animal approaching a nearby fruit stall. "I can tell from the smooth patches of fur under her eyes that she usually wears glasses, yet she has none today. I think she's forgotten them, and I doubt it will end well."

A moment later, the jackal crashed into the stall, sending oranges and apples tumbling on to the ground. The zebra running the stall scowled at her.

"Told you," he said.

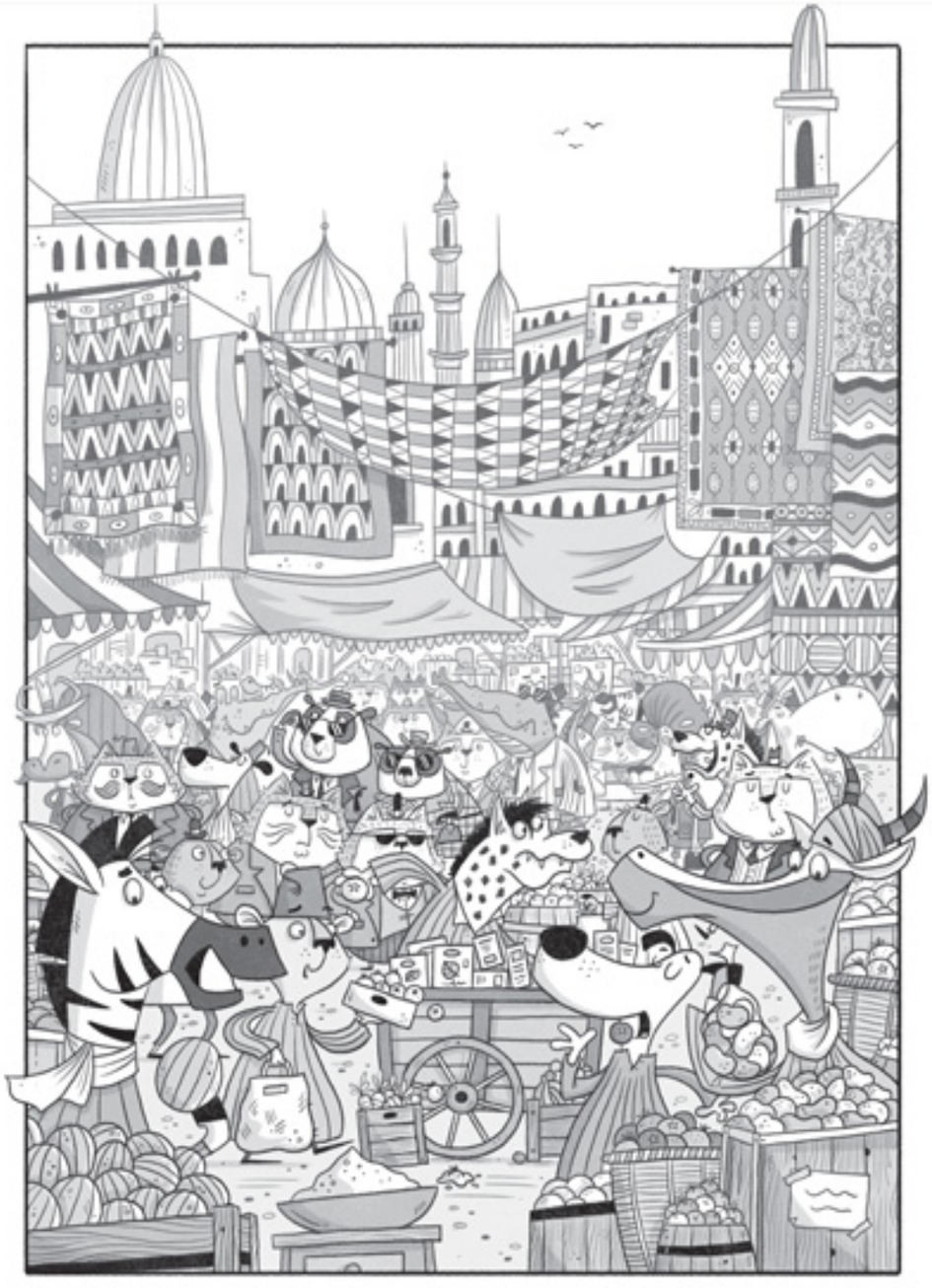
I sighed. Bones is the greatest detective in the world, and loves spotting clues. But I was hoping he'd give it a rest while we were on holiday.

"Very impressive," I said. "But I need you to look for Hastings. My fur was much longer the last time we met, so he might walk straight past me."

"In that case, you should probably look to your left," said Bones. "There's a cat in a white suit that looks like it was made by the tailors Barkley's of London. No doubt he lived in our great city once."



Can you help Catson spot Hastings in the crowd? He's the only cat wearing a plain white jacket.



I turned around. Hastings was indeed waiting nearby. His fur was greyer and his cheeks were plumper, but he was still the same cat I'd sat next to in feline history lessons. He was wearing a gold medallion with a cat's eye on it, and it flashed in the sunshine as he walked over.

"Hastings!" I cried.

"Catson! You haven't changed a bit!" he said in his loud, deep voice, pulling me into a hug. His medallion pressed into my chest.

He released me, and grabbed Bones' paw.

"And you must be Jane's famous friend," he said. "News of your talent has reached this part of the world, believe it or not. We get copies of *The Morning Terrier* here, eventually."

"A publication fit to line any litter tray," said Bones.

There were large tables outside the café that were shaded by wide, white parasols. Hastings guided us to one and clicked his fingers. A gazelle waiter rushed over, followed by three meerkat assistants. He poured glasses of water for us, while the meerkats lined up behind him.

"Afternoon, Ibby," said Hastings. "We'll have the extra-large platter."

The waiter scribbled it down on his pad and trotted away, with his assistants following.

I glugged the water down. I was so hot, it felt as though steam should be shooting out of my ears and nostrils.

"So, how are you finding life in El Kitten?" I asked.

Hastings gestured to the packed square in front of us. Donkeys, impalas and okapi were thudding around, while dogs in white shorts and cats in black robes weaved between them.

"I'm surprised you need to ask," he said. "Look at all the life in this city. You can never be bored. And we have this amazing weather all year."

I could see why my friend liked it so much. Back home, I could wait weeks for a patch of sunlight worth stretching out in. Here, I could do it every day.

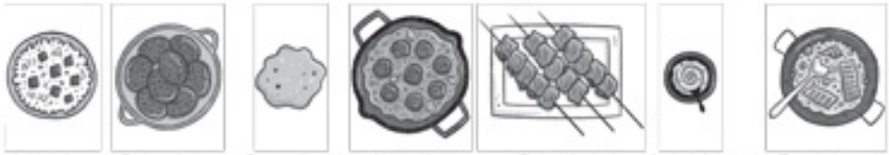
"Plus, I enjoy working with antiques," said Hastings. He smiled and leaned back in his chair. "I seem to have a talent for finding ancient and valuable items."

The waiter reappeared and laid our table with plates of hot food while his staff scurried around behind him.

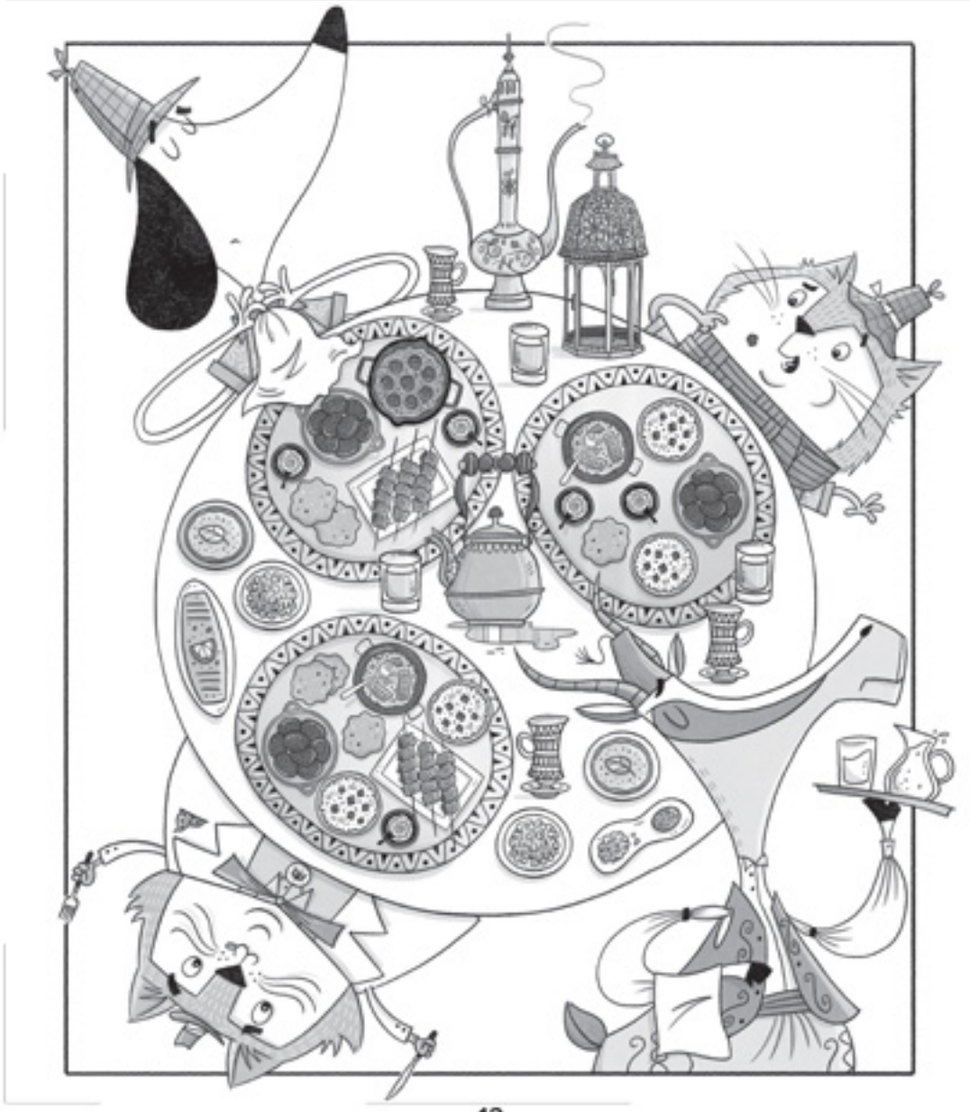
"Eat!" said Hastings. "Enjoy! This is one of the finest restaurants in our town."

I spooned some of the catfood couscous on to my plate and tried it. The blend of tuna chunks, jelly and chopped chillies was delicious, but it soon made the inside of my mouth as hot as the rest of me.

Can you use the key to add up the points on each animal's plate? The plate with the highest points is the spiciest.



1 point 2 points 3 points 4 points 5 points 6 points 7 points



Bones smeared some chunks of grilled chicken and onion over a piece of flatbread and took a bite.

He peered at Hastings. "Your arms seem very strong for an antiques dealer. It looks as though you've sharpened your claws. And there are some specks of gold paint on the ends of them."

I glanced across at Bones and scowled.

"Will you stop examining everyone?" I hissed. "We're meant to be on holiday."

Hastings let out a deep laugh and banged the table with his paw. Our plates almost bounced off.

"Don't worry," he said. "It's my pleasure to see the great Sherlock Bones at work. It's true that I need to keep myself fit for work. I have to lift tables, beds and statues as well as smaller items. And as for my claws, I use them to clean the dust out of precious artefacts."

I tried a few chunks of salmon stew. It was just as tasty and spicy as the other dish.

"But enough about me," said Hastings, turning back to me. "What brings you to our great land?"

"Just a holiday," I said. "Even detectives need a break sometimes."

"Well there's so much to see here," said Hastings, grinning broadly. "I can show you the temples, the swimming pool,

the royal scratching posts. Did you know we have the world's largest string museum here? You could spend a whole day in there."

The museum sounded very distracting. I once found a ball of string behind the sofa back home, and it took me eight hours to untangle it.

"I'm afraid we won't have time for any of that," said Bones. "We're boarding a boat on the Nile this evening, and we're off to visit the tomb of King Tutancatmun."

Hastings' mouth drooped into a frown. He fixed his green eyes on Bones.

"If I were you, I would stay well away from there," he warned. "Forget your trip."

I didn't want to be rude to my old friend, but there was no way we were going to cancel. Ever since the ancient tomb and golden mask of the old cat pharaoh had been discovered a few months before, we'd been desperate to take a look.

"We've come a long way to see it," I said. "We can hardly turn back now."



Hastings leaned in towards me.

"In that case, I must tell you the truth," he said. "There is a curse on that place. Anyone who enters the tomb and gazes upon the mask will suffer bad luck . . . forever."

Hastings broke off and glanced from side to side.

"It's even said that the mummy of Tutancatmun will come back to life and get revenge on intruders," he whispered. "Do you really want to take that chance?"