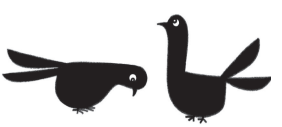
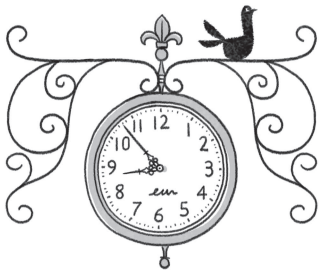


SHERLOCK BONES

AND THE MYSTERY OF THE VANISHING MAGICIAN





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SHERLOCK BONES

AND THE MYSTERY OF THE VANISHING MAGICIAN



Written by Tim Collins
Illustrated by John Bigwood



BUSTER BOOKS



With special thanks to Henry Collins – T. C.

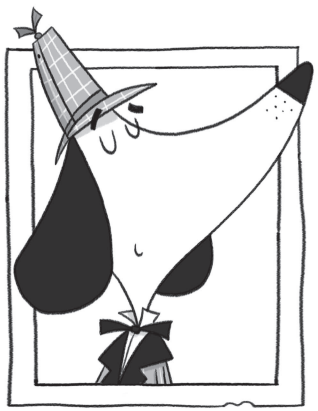
To George and Oliver, may the greatest adventures await – J. B.



Edited by Frances Evans
Designed by Derrian Bradder
Cover design by John Bigwood

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

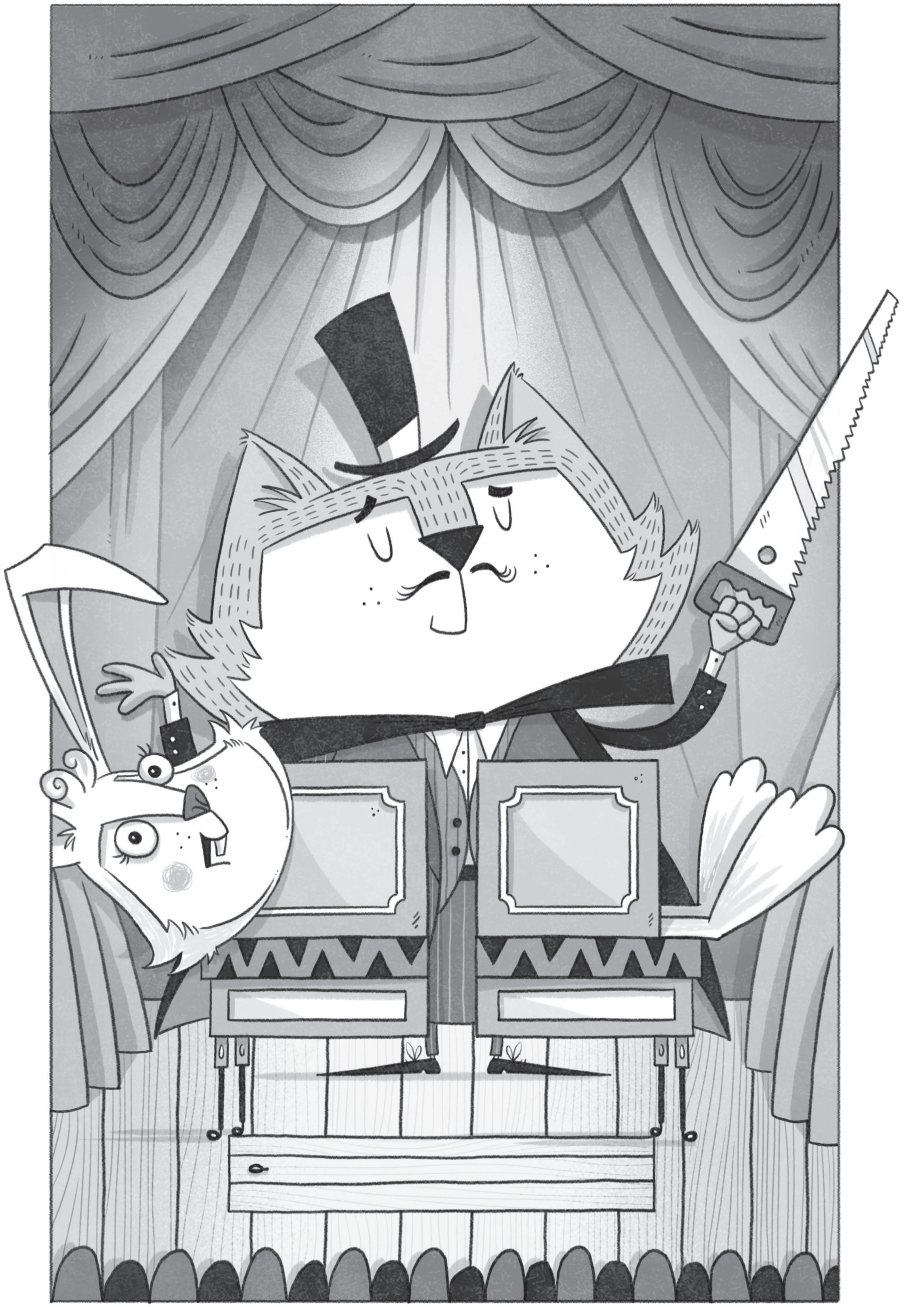
Sherlock Bones is the greatest detective the world has ever known. He never runs away from a puzzle, and always cracks his cases.



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 own detective skills to the test. If you get stuck, you can find all the answers at the back of the book, starting on page 167. You can also just enjoy reading the adventure and come back to the puzzles later if you want to. Good luck!



Chapter One

The ginger cat pulled out a saw, and its sharp blade glinted in the light. He held it over the rabbit, who screamed and struggled.

"He's going to cut her in half!" I cried.

"Indeed," said Sherlock Bones. "And I know exactly how it's done. Let me explain, Catson …"

"Please don't," I said. "You're sucking all the fun out of it."

We'd been watching The Great Otto's magic show for almost an hour, and Bones had ruined every single trick for me.

My friend's detective skills were great for cracking crimes, but I wished he'd give them a rest so I could watch the show. We'd been in Berlin all week, helping Archduke Rover find his golden fetching stick, and I just wanted to enjoy myself before we went back to London.

So far, Bones had worked out that the doves Otto had pulled out of thin air had actually been hidden under his top hat, and the string of handkerchiefs that had appeared in a puff of smoke had been stashed up his sleeve.

The magician sawed the side of the wooden box and his rabbit assistant wailed. The audience gasped and barked.

"Working out how these things are done IS the fun part, my dear Catson," said Bones. "In this case, you should have noticed that the rabbit's feet aren't moving."

Now that I stared at them, I could see the feet were models made from cardboard and felt.

"The rabbit's real body is hidden in a secret compartment below the box," said Bones. "It's all very simple."

The saw went all the way down, and the rabbit pretended to die. There were mews and whimpers from the crowd as the magician pulled the two halves of the box apart. A hare sobbed and blew into her handkerchief, while a hedgehog reached out and covered the eyes of her hoglets.

There was a moment of horrible silence, then the rabbit opened her eyes, and grinned. The crowd clapped and cheered, Otto pushed the two halves of the box back together, and the rabbit jumped out unharmed.

Otto brought out a single chair and stepped to the front of the stage. He had a top hat, a wide bow tie, and a smart black cloak with red lining.

"For the next part of the show, ladies and gentlemen, I shall need one of you to help me," he said, clasping his paws together. "That is to say, I am looking for a volunteer."

How many handkerchiefs, doves and playing cards can you count in this scene?



I shot my arm into the air. At least if I were on stage, Bones wouldn't be able to ruin things for me.

"Yes, madam," said the magician. "Please come up."

The crowd clapped as I made my way up the steps.

"And you are?" asked Otto.

"Dr Jane Catson," I said.

Otto pointed to the chair, and I sat down.

"I am about to demonstrate my greatest skill of all," said Otto. "Indeed, my most astounding. You shall now witness the power of hypnotism."

I sat down and looked out over the rows of dachshunds, pine martens and toads. A black cat on the front row had squeezed all her kittens on to one seat, and they were staring and mewing at me. I knew they'd all be disappointed when I didn't fall under the magician's spell, but what could I do? The trick simply wasn't going to work on me.

Otto whipped out a watch on a long gold chain, and swung it in front of my whiskers.

"Focus on the centre," he said. "That is to say, look at the middle. You are feeling very relaxed."

I tried to pick Bones out in the crowd to see if he was scoffing at us, but I couldn't take my gaze off the watch.

"Your eyelids are very heavy," said Otto. "You will close them in five … four … three … two … one …"

He clicked his fingers.

I felt my head droop forward and my eyes close. I tried to open them again, desperate not to fall for it.

With a great effort, I did it. I forced my eyelids apart.

I looked around the theatre. Everything had changed.

The whole place was empty. The Great Otto was gone, as well as Bones and the rest of the crowd. I stepped down from the stage and into the aisle.

"Hello?" I shouted. "Is anyone there?"

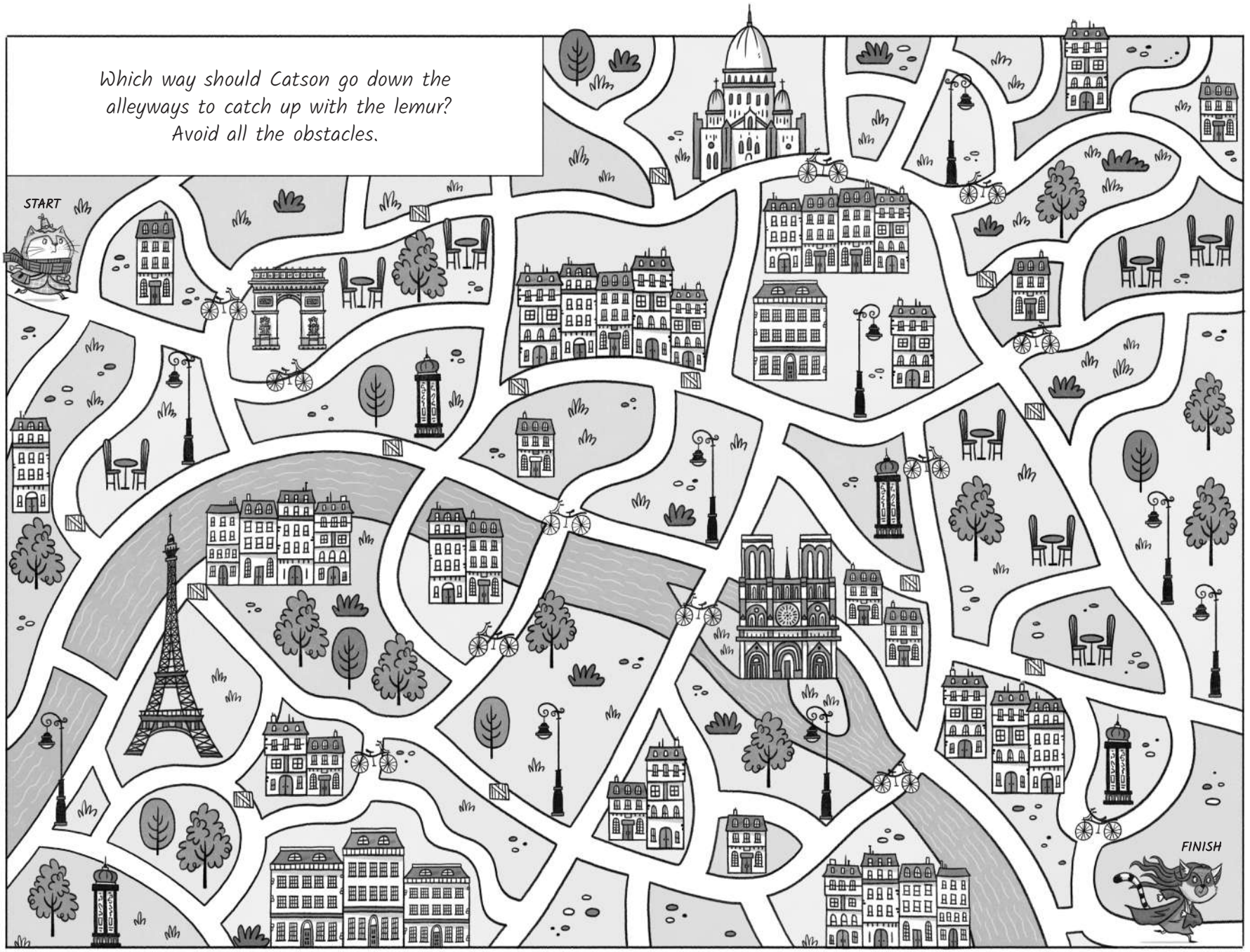
I lifted my paw to shield my eyes against the lights and saw a dark figure with long hair dashing out of the door. I felt like I had no choice but to follow.

I rushed forward, and shoved the door open, only to discover that I was in a completely different city. We'd been watching the magic show in Berlin. But now I was in Paris. I could see the lights of the Eiffel Tower rising above the dark street ahead of me.

The figure was running away. She turned back to look at me, and I saw she was a lemur with large black rings around her eyes, wearing an old-fashioned green dress.

She pelted down the street, moving faster than a cheetah who's desperate for a wee. I knew I'd have no chance of catching her, but I felt I had to try.

Which way should Catson go down the alleyways to catch up with the lemur? Avoid all the obstacles.



I found myself turning into a side street on my right, and taking a winding path down dark alleyways to a crossroads with a green newspaper kiosk on the corner. The lemur was approaching from my left now. I'd taken a shortcut, and felt very pleased about this.

I pounced on the lemur, grabbing her by the waist. But she shrank beneath my grip until all that was left was her dress, and her long brown hair, which turned out to have been a wig.

I was staring at it in confusion when I heard the click of fingers, and the sound of hundreds of animals laughing.

"And you're back in the room," said Otto.

I opened my eyes. I was still in the theatre, where I'd been all along. I'd just pounced on a fluffy clockwork mouse, and the audience were finding it hilarious.

"Let's hear it for our volunteer, ladies and gentlemen," said Otto, clapping his paws. "That is to say, let's all thank her for being such a good sport."

I left the stage to loud applause. I was happy to have entertained the audience, even though I had no idea what I'd done.



Bones explained it all as we walked back to our hotel. "Otto said the toy mouse wanted to tell you something important, and you chased it all around the stage, with a very stern expression. I think even the magician was surprised at the speed of your pounce."

We passed under a huge stone gateway topped with a statue of a winged cat riding a chariot.

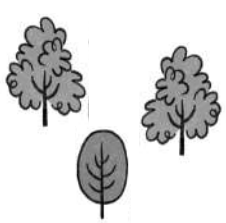
"I didn't feel like I was going after a mouse," I said. "I thought I was chasing a lemur with long brown hair. Do you think it means anything?"

"Nothing at all," said Bones. "Your brain just throws up random images when you're under hypnosis."

We arrived at our hotel, and the door doberman smiled and stepped aside. It was going to be a shame to leave this plush hotel and return to our messy kennel.

"So you believe hypnosis is real, then?" I asked. "I thought you'd say it was all nonsense."

"Of course it's real," said Bones. "It's a serious craft that takes years to learn. It might be performed by stage magicians, but it's no mere trick."





We were passing through the lobby when the German shepherd dog behind the counter held out a white envelope.

"Message for Mr Sherlock Bones!" she barked.

Bones grabbed the envelope and took out the letter inside.

"Anything important?" I asked.

"Not really," said Bones. "Our train tomorrow afternoon has been cancelled, so we'll have to take an overnight one to Paris and change there. It shouldn't add more than a few hours to our journey."

The image of the Eiffel Tower rising before me as I chased the lemur down the street shot back into my mind.

"Paris!" I cried. "That's the city I saw when I was hypnotized. This proves that my vision meant something after all!"

"It proves nothing," said Bones. "Except that your mind is racing, and you need to sleep."



Whatever Bones thought, I was convinced my brain was somehow trying to warn me. Something strange was going to happen to us in Paris. I was sure of it.