

Sherlock Bones and the Mystery of the Vanishing Magician: A Puzzle Quest

Tim Collins

John Bigwood, Illustrator

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In Tim Collins's fun puzzle quest novel *Sherlock Bones and the Mystery of the Vanishing Magician*, a detective dog and his Watsonesque cat companion are embroiled in an epic caper involving hypnosis, a passel of animals, and a series of puzzles ranging from mazes to math problems.

On the trail of Archduke Rover and his golden fetching stick, Sherlock Bones and savvy, nimble Dr. Catson end up in the audience of the Great Otto. The magician asks for a volunteer; Catson, who wants to escape Bones's incessant explanations of the tricks, puts herself forward. On stage, the Great Otto hypnotizes her; she has a vision of chasing lemurs across Paris. After the show, Bones and Catson catch a train where hijinks break out when the Great Otto appears begging for their help with a new, most pressing case.

Punctuated by goofy illustrations and puzzles ranging from simple to challenging, the story is a cheeky send-up of the chemistry between Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. Dr. Catson, with her feisty, take-action attitude, makes a nice counterpoint to Bones, though his use of logic and deductive reasoning still aids in solving the case.

Compelling bad guys abound, and the narrative makes great use of animals' natural characteristics to amplify their strengths and downfalls, from size and strength to unusual dexterity. The referential play extends to famous artwork, cultural sites, and landmarks, including a famous Mona which is at great risk as the story progresses. The illustrations reflect this play as well.

The heroes of the amusing, witty adventure novel *Sherlock Bones and the Mystery of the Vanishing Magician* dash across Europe by rail, foot, and car to protect a priceless treasure.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (September / October 2023)

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