

The Affair of the Noise in the Evening
A Dr Who/ Sherlock Holmes short story by T.R. Peers

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I have remarked in previous accounts on the disturbing tendency of my friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, to lapse into a certain state of melancholy if his incredible brain is not regularly taxed by some new problem. Such was the case on the evening the events of which I now recount. We had not long returned from an excursion to the North, where we had been engaged in a task of some national importance on the regard of a certain magnate of the shipping industry. This investigation, sadly, combined a somewhat sensitive nature with a distinctly humdrum conclusion by my friend's standards, such as recounting it would be both inappropriate, and largely uninteresting.

The latter, at the very least, could not be said of these events.

The Autumn evening was still fairly early, and our most excellent supper of sausages- supplied in gratitude by our Northern client and possibly the best thing to come from the whole affair- was settling nicely. The usual compliments were paid to Mrs Hudson and an evening of pipes and newspapers beckoned. For many a man, a warm fire, a full belly and the *Times* would constitute the fullness of a day well spent, but such things were at best on the periphery of my friend's interest. I watched his quick eyes flash from article to article, searching for the enigma he so craved. The brief distraction of a mysterious burglary in Hampshire was too-quickly dealt with with a swift glance at the horse-racing results, and whilst he deemed the matter worthy of no further attention, I resolved to send a letter to Lestrade in the morning since it seemed to me that knowledge has no power if not employed.

“D'you hear that, Watson?”

My ruminations were disrupted by Holmes' ejaculation. He strode to the window, peering out into the dusk. My own hearing is notably duller than my friend's, who I have known to tune his violin by ear with the most imperceptible teasing of the strings, but it did seem I discerned a curious scraping sound, as if a heavy object were being dragged over coarse floorboards. I remarked to this effect, though offering no confidence in my assertion. My friend continued to look out of the window.

“A fair guess, but no more than that. The sound is- *was*- regular in aspect, with no lumping and bumping, nor any of the oaths that inevitably accompany such an enterprise. There was another element to it too- did you not discern? A note, a series of notes perhaps?”

I opined, half in jest, that the heavy object was perhaps a pianoforte.

“Then you did not hear it.” observed my friend with a light scowl. “No instrument I have played, seen played, or heard played ever made such a sound.” He turned from the window. “Regrettably, a strange noise with no consequence is no case. I fear 'The Affair of the Noise in the Evening' would make dull reading for your acolytes, Watson.” And such was the case named, though we knew not at the time that it was a case at all. The sound was gone now, and all that remained was the clop of hooves as a carriage sped past, conveying who-knew-who to who-knew-where.

From outside again, there was suddenly a shout, a crash. “Perhaps our pianoforte mover has stubbed his toe?” shot Holmes, already turning to seize hats and coats from the stand. I sighed, part in annoyance at the prospect of a trip out into the cooling evening but mostly in relief. The bored man

of leisure with his dangerous appetites was banished, and the Consulting Detective had returned. Down the stairs we flew, passing our esteemed landlady whose tray of biscuits and tea avoided our careen by virtue of her long experience with our demeanour. We crossed the now-quiet street, wet with Autumnal rain, with Holmes, as usual, leading the way. Those fine ears, that keen sense, had discerned our destination well, and soon we came upon what seemed the scene of a carriage accident.

Lying stunned in the road was a gentleman the likes of whom I had never seen. He was attired in a shirt of the most acid yellow on which designs of palm trees and grotesque caricatures of apes were in some manner printed. His trousers were short, ludicrously flared, and similarly garishly decorated, whilst on one foot was some form of open sandal. The other lay in the gutter some distance away. A large pair of dark glasses lay crushed nearby. His face was at once rugged, large and rectangular with an Aquiline nose, and yet at the same time almost boyish. It was streaked with both mud and some blood.

I was briefly torn as to what approach to take. By some mercy I had thought to sweep up my small medical bag as we left the house, and my thought was to minister to the gentleman who had, by the oath of all Doctors on the globe, become by default my patient. Yet at the same time, my friend's profound irritation at finding the scene of remarkable events disrupted by the common man, a sphere which in all fairness encompassed everyone but himself, could be venomous and was oft expressed.

Fortunately in this instance, basic Humanity won out, though on reflection I consider that a live witness is the best evidence in a case that could possibly be preserved. I will not speculate on whether that was my friend's conclusion, but nevertheless he motioned me to attend the gentleman whilst he investigated the scene of the incident. Events soon took on a most peculiar aspect.

Usually, on being presented with the stage of some new drama, my friend is taciturn. A piece of evidence is regarded without comment. The occasional mild grunt accompanies a conclusion supported or dismissed. In this case, however, my friend seemed almost stunned.

Some deductions were available even to a dull amateur like myself. The stranger was on the pavement, and was lain in such a position that he must have been thrown there by some impact. His head and torso were both badly bruised- I felt at least one lightly cracked rib- and his brow additionally deeply cut. The position of both sandal and glasses in the road were consistent with their being hurled there by the collision. Yet my friend seemed obsessed with the crushed eye-wear to the elimination of all else. Finally, as I completed my examination and determined the patient would live with some attention, he spoke.

“Watson.” he said, in the low voice reserved for matters of import “If your patient can stand a lapse of your attention, regard these eyeglasses.”

I did so. The frames were of a glossy purple, the lenses almost totally black. Both were crushed in such a manner that the wheel of a carriage, or maybe the hoof of a horse, must have fatally interdicted them. After allowing me to look for a moment more, my friend carefully collected the fragments into a bag. There was no cheery tinkle of glass. I remarked upon this.

“Quite so.” replied he. “These mundane glasses are made of no material I have ever seen. The sandals the same.” He strode over to where the sandal lay in the gutter. The briefest of pauses. I knew my friend well enough to know that he had found some detail other than unusual footwear, and also that he was unready to share it.

He turned, having picked up the sandal, which seemed undamaged. "Let us carry this unfortunate to the safety of the house where you might administer a restorative." he decided "And then, perhaps, to return and investigate his diminutive abode, which would seem to have appeared from the ether in yonder alley."

As we gathered up the recumbent object of our attentions, I stole a glance into the alley which my friend had indicated and was confronted by a most singular sight. In the small yard which lay at the end of the path stood a blue, rectangular pillar featuring what looked like a door into which were set windows from which light streamed. Above this portal lay a sign, upon which were emblazoned the words "POLICE" then smaller writing, indiscernible at distance, followed by simply "BOX". The dilemma was acute- in our hands rested a living man who was in every sense a puzzle, and down this alleyway a building that was no less an enigma. I suggested that rather than take the gentleman to our home, we might instead conduct him to his own.

"A valid contention, but I would think not." replied my friend "It would seem the gentleman is not accompanied, for no friend has hastened to his aid, and I mistrust this blue box, for I tell you now, Doctor, there was no such structure in this place yesterday. In fact, I would wager you a fine pouch of tobacco that it was not there an hour ago. No, for now I think our own quarters will suffice, and my suggestion of stimulation was premature. Assuming the gentleman is not at risk, I suggest we make him comfortable and allow him to find his senses at his own pace."

It seemed to me that my friend waxed somewhat disingenuous in his concern for our 'patient'. Indeed, my suspicions were confirmed when he suggested we lightly restrain our visitor, in case he should return to consciousness in a state of confusion and come to harm. Nonetheless, Sherlock Holmes is not a man given to whimsy and rarely does anything without good reason, so I reluctantly acquiesced. Before we left the gentleman in the care of Mrs Hudson, with whom we left strict instructions to summon us the moment he returned from the umbra, I made a quick check of his breathing, colour and pulse. The first two, I found satisfactory, if a little shallow and sallow. The third instilled a state of shock in me as if I, and not he, had been struck by a Hansom.

"Holmes." I said, in that same low tone he had employed in the matter of the eye-glasses and for much the same reason "This man has two heartbeats."

I would have expected such a pronouncement to bring derision, demands for explanation from most men, but I spoke not with most men. My friend merely nodded and quickly confirmed my analysis by his own measurement. Further, he lightly passed his hand over the gentleman's exposed chest. Turning to me, he spoke in a matter-of-fact tone that belied the wonder of his words.

"This is indeed true, Watson, and it would appear that the reason is that he is in possession of two hearts."

I was suddenly glad both of the restraints, and of our decision to leave the stranger's recovery to Nature. What devils might I have unleashed on the unknown physiology of such a man, if man he was, in an attempt to bring him round? What effect would stimulation have on he with two hearts to stimulate?

We resolved to investigate the mysterious box in search of answers. As we walked back to the alley, we discussed its peculiars, and I recalled a conversation with Lestrade in which he had noted that the Police in America had begun to introduce public facilities by which the general public could summon an officer by means of a telephone, that remarkable device which some claimed would soon supplant the redoubtable telegraph. Apparently the idea had shown merit, and the introduction of such contrivances in our own country was being considered at the highest level. Lestrade himself was sceptical, but had agreed with my comment that none had expected the telegraph itself to

supplant the humble letter, and doubtless few had expected the letter to largely replace the messenger.

“It would indeed seem that this device fits the general profile you describe.” conceded my friend, as we approached the scene “However, I am given to understand that such devices have not yet reached our shores, and yet here this one is. Ah! The words we could not make out resolve- 'Public Call'. Well, that indeed fits your hypothesis. There is, nonetheless, a fatal flaw in your contention- do you see it?”

I strained every synapse. The purpose of the box was written upon it, clear as daylight despite the encroaching gloom, yet my friend was doubtful. Why? Realisation dawned- the telephone and telegraph are united in their need of a wire to send their message. No such wire presented itself, and I presented this observation.

“Quite so, my dear fellow. Now it is possible that this wire is subterranean in nature, but the digging and related works this would require have most certainly not taken place, and as I have told you, this mysterious obelisk was not here yesterday. You recall that as we dined on our excellent sausages, it was raining?”

I pointed to a small puddle by our feet. “Surely this pool presents no mean evidence of that!”

“Indeed!” replied Holmes. “But now observe our artefact. Bone dry. Observe the surrounding yard- no footprints or drag-marks on its muddy surface, barring the tracks of our visitor. No cover or canvas. Were this box present during our precipitation, it was uncovered, and yet it is not wet. *Ergo*, it was not here.”

“But my dear fellow!” I protested “That is surely impossible. The lack of other tracks must also show that no-one could have placed this object here after the rain! Perhaps some great block-and-tackle might be employed to lift it into place, but there is no trace of harness, no rope, no tracks of workers taking the apparatus away. This defies sense!”

Holmes looked at me with that distant gaze of his, where the target knows full well that he is not the recipient, but merely a bystander to great thoughts. “Indeed.”

We turned our attentions to matters less controversial. One cannot place the roof upon a house of fact without first building the walls, and the walls require foundation, so we approached their digging. The tracks leading from the door of the box matched the curious sandal which Holmes had brought with him. They were somewhat erratic, as if the wearer were drunk. My friend chuckled at the suggestion.

“Hah! It would explain how our fellow came to step into the path of a speeding carriage! But no, I think not. We smelt no spirit on the breath of our guest. But remember the glasses! I would opine that these footprints, and the collision, are the actions of a man who cannot see, but for reasons of foolish pride refuses to acknowledge the fact.”

I was forced to agree that a man wearing black-lensed eye-glasses on the streets of London at Autumn dusk would indeed struggle to see, and only pure hubris would compel him to keep them on. That, or some most serious eye condition. Hoping to regain the initiative, I offered another gambit, observing that barring our own, no tracks led to the box. This passed without comment.

It was time to cross the Rubicon of our investigation. We would enter the box. Our initial effort was denied by dint of the door being firmly locked. I was confused as to why an appliance for the use of

the general public, as it was labelled, would be locked against their entry and said so, but this too failed to elicit a response from my friend, who instead produced his set of cunningly-devised lock-picking tools. What followed was, in its own way, a battle to rival the sagas of Homer. I have seen my friend demolish the most fiendish of locks in mere minutes, but this lock defied every prod and probe. Yet at the same time, progress was made- a pick would turn *so* a tumbler fall *so* and yet entry was not availed. Five minutes work passed and the door was un-breached, yet clearly the job was near done. Half an hour, the same. After an hour of this, my friend put up his tools with a rueful sigh.

“This is no lock. This is a trap, a toy- *Zhuge Liang's* stone maze. Its sole purpose is to beguile he who would attempt to pick it into doing nothing else, knowing he must soon succeed.” he snorted in mockery of himself “Zeno's lock! And I, the educated fool, glamoured like the fly into the pitcher-plant!” He stepped back, a small, sad smile on his face. “One for your readers after all, Watson- your Great Detective, undone by a trick lock! There is nothing for it- we must return to the apartment, and either rouse our visitor, or find his key.” He glanced back at his new nemesis “Though on reflection, I doubt the key would avail us anything without the precise knowledge of how to-”

There was a harrumphing noise from the end of the alley, whence we had come. It was at once the least, and yet the most, intimidating sound I have ever heard. Silhouetted against the fading light was a figure who we both knew, *knew* with every fibre of our being was our mysterious guest. The man we had left securely tied to a bed in our house. With Mrs Hudson. My blood was ice, and I wished I had thought to bring my revolver. The figure advanced, with an almost jaunty step.

“*Escapology!*” announced the stranger, as if beginning a lecture to a class of obdurate schoolchildren. “Learned a few moves, back in the day- oh wait a moment, horses, smog, Thames still smells like an open sewer- Houdini's still in short trousers, isn't he?” He paused in his step, looking down at his exposed knees “Actually, so am I- thank you!”. The gentleman strode past my friend, sweeping up his discarded sandal from Holmes' hand, and banged through the door of the box carelessly, which slammed shut behind him. We stood in stunned silence for a second.

The door banged open again “Forgot to mention- Mrs Hudson is fine, showed her your note to let me go once I was feeling better. She's putting the kettle on.”

Holmes stood as utterly thunderstruck as I have ever seen him. I recovered my wits enough to ask “What note?”

He flashed a wide smile, and produced a piece of paper in a leather wallet from somewhere inside his shirt. I am well known for my clarity of memory, an essential in archiving my friend's adventures, but I cannot tell you with any degree of certainty what was written upon that paper. At the time, however, I was convinced that it informed me that Mrs Hudson was, indeed, safe and unharmed. Holmes' reaction had returned to his usual quiet observation. The door slammed shut again.

After a moment, my friend turned to me with a strange smile on his face. “Let us return to our lodgings, Watson. I suspect our visitor will be joining us for tea.”

We left the alleyway. My mind was whirling, my mouth full of questions, but Holmes would not be drawn. As we crossed Baker Street, the noise from earlier struck up again- and this time, closer as we were, I could hear those strange, pulsing notes to which my friend had referred. The stairs beckoned us to our sanctuary, wherein waited Mrs Hudson with a steaming pot of tea, three cups, and some most excellent biscuits. Came again that dragging, pulsing, grinding sound. Mrs Hudson

poured the tea.

“Two cups only for now please, Mrs Hudson.” requested Holmes. “Our guest will be rejoining us, but not until he has conducted a thorough search of the roadway. I rather suspect he has mislaid an item of some importance.”

I shot my friend a stern glance. “Am I to understand that you have relieved an unconscious man of his property? For shame, Sir!”

He responded to my half-serious accusation with his usual level glance. “I will admit to picking up the piece in question from the road- as I am sure you will deduce, it was when I retrieved the errant sandal that I discovered it. That said, I believe our man has a rather better reason to return to us. I suspect that he cannot leave.”

Mrs Hudson had left us, exercising her usual powers of discretion, and so it was left to me to challenge this remarkable assertion. Could the stranger not simply hail a carriage?

“Consider the evidence, Watson, the evidence! The 'Police Box' which appears from nowhere over the course of an evening. Let us assume it is some manner of conveyance. We can deduce from the timing of the rainfall that the Box arrived at approximately the time we heard the curious sound. Let us say the two exactly coincide. We heard the sound twice more as we returned- once, heralding departure, once, a second arrival.”

“So he has returned to find his lost- what has he lost, anyway?”

My question was disregarded for the time being, as Holmes continued. “Consider our visitor's outlandish attire. Light, airy, short trousers. Decorations recalling the Tropics. Sandals. This was not a man dressed to visit London. This was a man on a trip to some sun-kissed beach.”

“And yet he came to London.”

“Exactly. He came to London *intending to go somewhere else*. And yet, departing and finding his property missing, he managed to navigate back to the exact same spot? This is a man of great ability and resource. The un-pickable lock which he opens with no key. The mysterious blank note-paper which is to Mrs Hudson a letter from my very person. And yet, such pride that on arriving at the wrong destination, he refuses to remove the darkened eye-glasses he has donned to protect himself from the sun because it is the place at which he has arrived which is wrong, and *not him*.”

“There is an alternative explanation, Holmes. The box might never have moved at all, and the sound might be something else entirely.”

“And yet, move it has. The rain, the mud! If an object has moved once under its own power, it may do so again. I have kept this device” he produced a slim cylinder from his jacket, topped with some mechanism “because I mistrust what a man of such power, and such pride, might wish to do with it. We shall see what lengths he will go to to get it back. Do you have your revolver?”

I had retrieved it on our return. It rested now in my jacket, loaded and ready. I indicated as such.

“Capital. I do not believe you will need it, but as the saying goes, the un-needed presence is better than lack of same when in need. Ah, a tread on the stair, and Mrs Hudson's greeting. Our visitor returns.”

That head poked around the door, followed by a body now dressed in a well-tailored suit. A bow-tie anointed the outfit, which put me in mind rather of a well-to-do schoolmaster. The smile again. Two such studies of character as us could not fail to notice the air of worry behind it, yet at the same time that of confidence. The hunter stares down the onrushing tiger- he knows he has the skills to succeed, but he also knows the price of failure. I have perhaps read too much of Col. Moran's work of late.

“Hello again! I'm the Doctor, we met a few days ago? You tied me to a bed after I got knocked silly by a horse? Thanks for that, by the way- the bed, not the tying. Oh, tea!”

He advanced rapidly on the tea tray, seeming to notice for the first time the third cup. I regarded him carefully- the wounds from his accident seemed completely healed despite the passage of less than an hour since our last meeting. Of course, he had said that had been days ago. Holmes raised an eyebrow as if to communicate that this detail had not escaped him, but then, a detail needed the wings of Mercury to escape my friend.

“Ah, I see you were expecting me. Does that mean that you've got my.....?”

“Device?” returned Holmes. “Possibly, yes. I would ask many questions of you, Sir, but the first two are these- firstly, what is the device you seek, and secondly, what would you give to get it back?”

“It's.. a tool- a very special tool. Unique now, though there used to be loads of them- I can probably make another one but it'd take time, and time is something I'm a little short of right now. Seems to happen to me a lot, which is pretty ironic, really. What would I give to get it back?” he paused a moment, considered. “Jammie Dodgers?”

Onto the plate in front of him, on which already nestled a profusion of biscuits, the Doctor tipped a brightly coloured packet of these 'dodgers', which dispensed round confections. I picked one up- it was, on closer inspection, a sandwich of two biscuits with some form of jam in between, which manifested also as a dot in the centre of its circular form. Realising that here was a discussion in which I was barely qualified to participate, I bit into a biscuit, which also had that happy effect of removing one Doctor from the exchange and reducing any ensuing confusion. In the end, I am relieved to report that I chose to stick with the tried-and-true Digestive.

“I rather think, Doctor, that you will need to do somewhat better than that, though my own Doctor seems intrigued by your offering. Let me continue the negotiations with the belated introductions- I am Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective, and your compatriot in both biscuit-eating and the arts of physic is Dr. James Watson. Now, are you prepared to elevate your offer?”

The Doctor had indeed begun to munch upon a biscuit, which he showed every sign of enjoying until the revelation of the name of his correspondent in this bizarre transaction. On hearing our names, however, he started so violently that I was forced to administer a few solid blows to his back to prevent him choking.

“Wait, wait wait!” ejaculated he, “You're Sherlock Holmes? *The* Sherlock Holmes? This is Baker Street?” He was by now furiously pumping my friend's arm and grinning massively. “Oh, this is wonderful, I never thought I'd get to meet you- I mean I met Doyley of course, introduced him to Touie, lovely girl, shame about the tuberculosis, but never thought I'd get to meet his- oh dear.”

The handshake stopped abruptly, and the Doctor fixed my friend with an intense look. “I never thought I'd get to meet you because you- no, that's not right here- *I* don't exist. Look, I really don't

want to go on about it but I really must get my.. thing back or we could all be in very serious trouble. Actually we're already in very serious trouble but it won't be *too* bad unless” at this point a church bell, or something that sounded very much like it, sounded in the distance “*unless* that happens.”

The bell continued to toll. My friend deployed his coolest gaze upon our visitor, who was by now looking somewhat frantic and very much less assured than when he had entered.

“I still await, Sir, your offer. What will you give me in return for your device?”

The Doctor blanched. He paced around the room, rapidly, twice, muttering under his breath. I caught our names, the phrase 'great detective', something about a man called Doyle again. Suddenly he snapped his fingers and span around on the spot, fixing Holmes with a gaze every bit as intense as that which he had recently received. I felt rather like an ant watching the battle of elephants.

“In return for my sonic screwdriver” he said, firmly, at last naming the mysterious gewgaw “I will give you the greatest mystery you have ever encountered. You can't solve it- it doesn't have a solution- but I will let you see it. Now, do we have a deal?” He thrust out his hand. My friend considered a moment, and then, incredibly, reached into his jacket and handed over the device without a word.

The Doctor immediately swept up the 'screwdriver', which began to glow green at the tip and emitting a noise rather like the *cicada* of the East. He flicked it expertly in his hand and stared at it intently, though there was no gauge upon the gadget that I could see. “Yes, thought so, growing by the second. Causal instability, some sort of dimensional imbalance I'd imagine. Come on!” With this, he turned and ran out of the room. We looked at each other. There was no decision to make.

The three of us sped through the house and out into the darkness. We were heading, inevitably it seemed, to the alleyway where the mysterious Box resided. The dull chimes echoed closer by the second. As we ran, I asked the question burning in my mind. What did he mean, that he didn't exist?

“Where I come from, you two are in books- very good books.” We dodged around another carriage and crossed the street. “I was on my way to Kallias VII for the solar flare festival, great party. Six arms, the Kallians, wonderful piano players. Think the star must have gone off a bit early, some sort of exotic radiation flipped the materialisation circuit into the wrong mode and shunted me off into another dimension.”

We splashed down the alley towards the Box. The rain had started again.

“Anyway, realised I'd ended up in the wrong place, tried to leave, but she won't let me go. Sulked in the Vortex for a bit and then dropped me off here again. Not sure why. Thing is, neither of us belong here- not me, not her, and if we stay too much longer something is likely to go seriously wibbly. Anyway, it's time for your mystery, Mr Holmes. Meet the TARDIS.”

The Doctor pushed open the door of the Box- the TARDIS- and motioned us inside. Holmes entered first, with me hard on his heels. I cannot say that what we saw defied description, because it is in fact simplicity itself to describe. Explanation, however- now that is a different matter.

It was bigger on the inside, than on the outside.

I jumped back as if the Afghans were shooting at me. I stepped out of the door, and walked all around the TARDIS. I stepped back in again. Nothing had changed. My friend stood a little way into a chamber of deep blue, surrounded by machinery the function of which I could not begin to

guess. At the centre of this room stood a hexagonal counter, surmounted by a great column of light. It was beautiful. Terrible. *Alive*. There was no need to ask who 'she' was.

“Everyone does that!” the Doctor laughed at my consternation. “Everyone has to go outside and check!”

“Almost everyone.” I replied with a certain quiet pride. My friend stood there, looking slowly around the room. His searching eyes seized every detail. His matchless mind strove to put together the pieces of an impossible puzzle. He paced towards the central counter- I knew he was counting his steps, for he was Sherlock Holmes. He knew exactly where he should be, and also exactly that he was not there. And then, in that moment of pure, terrible wonder, I saw his face.

I will never, ever again compare my friend to a simpleton, but this is the one occasion on which I must. I once helped care for an asylum patient who had spent most of his life confined for the safety of all, and accompanied him on his first trip into the outside world. I saw his look of utter amazement at the smallest bird, the merest squirrel, the smell and feel of grass on his bare feet. It was that expression, of an intelligence drinking in all of existence at once for the first time, that I saw on the face of Sherlock Holmes at that moment. And then, like a rainbow at nightfall, it was gone. The impassive mask of the Great Detective fell into place, but it did not matter. The mind behind those eyes had been galvanised in a way it had never before experienced.

“So.” remarked my friend, as if discussing the weather “T.A.R.D.I.S, then?”

The Doctor had by now stepped over to the central counter, which seemed the bridge of his impossible vessel, and was pulling levers and turning dials. “Yes!” he called back dismissively over his shoulder.

“Time, then, is the first. You stated you had been gone for days, and yet to us it was mere hours, and in this time your injuries have healed. Your vessel, then, moves in the dimension of Time as well as in that of Space. This gives us the fourth, and the last. To refer to such concepts so simply, by their very names, suggests a name derived by a child, not a scientist who would dress up such concepts in the Greek and the Latin to confound the common man. I would suspect, then, a conjunction, let us say 'And'. You state that in attempting to move through Time and Space, you inadvertently moved in Dimension, suggesting the three are related parts of a triumvirate. Your vessel's name, therefore, represents Time And Related Dimensions In Space.”

I stared at my friend. Suddenly, the wonders of the TARDIS paled against the very human brilliance of the incomparable Sherlock Holmes. I realised I was gaping and closed my mouth hurriedly. The bell, which was clearly some manner of alarm, tolled once again in the fathomless depths.

The Doctor paused in his work, crossed back towards my friend. “Oh, you are good, aren't you? It's not your fault you occasionally cheat, you're written that way. I wonder who's writing this, it can't be Doyley. They'll probably slip up somewhere. You're just about right, anyway, except it's just 'dimension' and 'relative', and it was my grand-daughter who came up with it. Children see to the heart of things, don't they? By the way, got to ask- why didn't you go outside and check how big she was?”

“It was unnecessary.” came the reply, possibly the first thing I had correctly anticipated that day. “I had already observed the size of the vessel on my previous visit. That data was unlikely to change.”

The Doctor looked at him, suddenly almost sad. “I wish I could take you with me. Show you.. everything.”

Holmes brought him up short, though I rather fancied I saw the faint glimmer of a tear in his eye. “We both know that is impossible. You and your vessel must leave this... reality lest Creation itself reject you, and should Watson or I journey to yours, the same would occur. Too, I function only in the world to which I have adapted, like Darwin's lungfish. I have memorised the scent of every brand of tobacco sold in London, the pitch and chime of every bell and horse-hoof, the plan of every street. I take data, apply logic, reason and science, and produce facts. In your 'Kallias' of the six-armed pianists I would be of no more use than a child, and less able to learn. No, here is where I must be, in my London, in the writings, as you contend, of Mr. Doyle. Now, the bell tolls. Is there a case?”

“I don't know!” admitted the Doctor, exasperated. “She won't move- absolutely refuses to budge from this spot. She's even created a localised time bubble so time out there is only moving very slowly whilst we're in here.” The bell again. “She's really worried about something.” He stroked the controls, speaking soothing words *sotto voce*.

“I had deduced both.” replied my friend, displaying in one small sentence both his legendary mind, and occasional lack of tact. “Watson left and entered again after about an hour despite conducting his understandable five-second circuit of reconnaissance, and your vessel is intended clearly to be disguised, hence its unassuming aspect. It would hardly attract such attention to itself without good reason. In fact, I would suspect that now we three are within, the *alarum* is no longer to be heard without.”

“Yes, yes, very good!” snapped the Doctor, in the manner of a master whose pupil has perfectly written his name in copperplate without answering the test question. “I still don't know why she won't just *leave*. I've found the right space-time co-ordinates for the solar flare, I've got the right course all laid in and plotted, but throw the switch and..” he did so “nothing! What do you want?” he shouted at the ceiling.

I opined gently that perhaps the pernicious presence of my friend and I might be the cause. Both titans of the mind looked at me with mild scorn.

“Of course that's why it didn't work just *then!*” chided the Doctor. “What I don't know is why it wouldn't work *before*. I came back in here after I got out of your little prison back at Baker street- nothing. Just grinding the gears. I've got the screwdriver back, I know the anomaly is coming from here- still nothing. Actually, nip out for a sec, let's make sure.”

Holmes and I stepped out into the rain. Holmes shot me a sly glance. “Sometimes, my friend, you are quietly brilliant.”

The sound came again from the TARDIS behind us. Its image shimmered and wavered, looking for all the world as if it were made of glass, then gradually returned to a fully corporeal state. Even as we took in this latest wonder, Holmes continued quietly. “A fine pair of over-thinking fat-heads we turned out to be! Dr. John Watson has seen to the heart of the matter, like the good Doctor's granddaughter.”

The Doctor stepped out of his vessel. His hair was matted and unruly, his clothes stained with sweat. No master of deduction was needed to guess he had spent some hours in his bubble of time, wrestling with his stubborn vessel.

“Come along.” stated Holmes, simply, and strode off down the alley.
“He's got it, hasn't he?” asked the Doctor mournfully.

“Apparently I did.” came my bewildered reply.

The Doctor stopped dead. He smiled. He chuckled. He began to laugh, and for the first time I truly beheld his eyes. In those eyes, was everything. The sadness and joys of a thousand lifetimes. Stars, born and dying. The beginning and end of existence, and the simple wonder of a child with the wisdom of the Ancients.

“Of course you did!” he finally gasped. “Of course you did, and both of us clever fools were too caught up in ourselves to spot it! Tell Mr. Sherlock Holmes that the Doctor will be sweeping up in the road whilst he gets everything else we need.” He disappeared back into the TARDIS. I noticed that the bell had ceased its chimes.

I reached the front door of 221 Baker Street just as Holmes was coming out. In his possession was a satchel containing a most bizarre assortment of items. The Doctor's packet of 'Jammie Dodgers', meticulously re-packed. A discarded swab from my medical kit. The carefully bagged remains of the Black-Lensed Glasses.

“We were most fortunate.” opined Holmes. “Mrs Hudson was about to venture a Jammie Dodger. We might have been forced to resort to your stomach-pump, castor-oil, and some fairly inventive chemistry.” He suddenly stared. “Good Lord, Watson- you didn't eat one of them, did you? There are two missing, and the Doctor only ate one that I saw! Speak, man!”

I related my apparently fortuitous Digestive, and that the Doctor was 'sweeping the road'. My friend seemed much mollified. I was relieved that my day-saving observation, whatever it might be, had not been spoilt by a disastrous biscuit. We came upon the Doctor shortly afterwards at the scene of his accident, crouching in the road with his 'screwdriver' in operation. He looked up at our approach, and took the swab Holmes offered.

“Ah, you thought of that then- of course you did, silly thing to say. There we go!” The cicadas buzzed, and before my stunned eyes the bloodstain upon the swab, which I had used to clean the Doctor's cut, disappeared. It appeared the Doctor had done a similar vanishing trick on the blood on the road.

“Some of it got away, of course- rain and all that- but it shouldn't have enough mass to cause a problem so long as we get everything else.” he looked in the bag “Ah! Yes, this looks like everything. You missed a few tiny bits of my sunglasses, mind you. Shame about those, Donna gave them to me- nice girl, big mouth though. Don't worry, anyway, I got them. Now, to the TARDIS!”

I stopped in the street. The darkness seemed to mock me, but no more than my two mad, brilliant friends.

“I am not moving until you explain what we are doing! This seems less like solving a case, and more like destroying the evidence!”

Holmes gave me another of those looks. The master was disappointed in the pupil, but chose to reward him for his efforts. The Doctor took a quick glance at his watch, and the cicadas buzzed from the 'screwdriver' again. The green glow lit the scene eerily.

“Ah, Watson.” sighed Holmes. “You had it, you really did! When we were inside the TARDIS, why would it not move?”

“Because we did not belong in it, and things which do not belong are in some way dangerous to

move.” I replied.

“And therefore, when the Doctor attempted to leave after his escape from our clutches?”

The light began to dawn in my dull brain. “We had his screwdriver!”

“Indeed. It did not belong. It was in a world in which it did not, *could not* exist. And so she refused to leave.”

“The 'sun-glasses'? The Jammie Dodgers?”

“Quite so. Had you dared that confection, I dread to consider the consequences.”

The Doctor chimed in, beginning to walk to his vessel “Oh come along! Don't worry about the missing one, I ate it on the way over- got most of the crumbs dealt with.”

We returned to the TARDIS, staying outside as the Doctor made one final check of his vessel for any of our alien detritus. Finally, all appeared to be in readiness. We stood at the threshold of that marvellous machine, the satchel returned to our possession along with Holmes' small specimen bag. Smiling broadly, that traveller shook both our hands once more.

“Well, here we are. Time for me to be off. I'd wish you two good luck, but you won't need it. Better not say anything else- spoilers!” he said that strange word like it were the name of the Devil Himself. We returned his goodbyes, Holmes taking one last look into the interior of the TARDIS, that great mind churning, masticating the data. Then the door was closed. We stepped back as the noise that had started the whole affair filled the air one last time. The machine pulsed, faded, was gone.

We waited a minute or two, but the sound did not recur. The Doctor, our mysterious visitor, was finally free. We returned to the house, fobbed off an astonished Lestrade with a copy of the *Times* with the result of the 6:30 at Newmarket ringed, and retired for brandy and cigars. As we settled into our chairs, my friend suddenly erupted into that peculiar, short laugh of his.

“Ha! Watson, we never did address the greatest mystery of all!”

“How so, Holmes?”

“Doctor *Who*?”