

HG WELLS HAS HIS REGRETS
Episode 14: Dr. Conan Doyle

INT. SPADE HOUSE - BEDROOM

With a stutter, the recording begins.

HG sneezes loudly before talking.

HG

Greetings! This is HG Wells,
Log Set S2, Log 14. And today -

Distant, we hear Jane -

JANE

Oh no you don't, Herbert! Back
to bed, this instant!

HG

(whining)

But Janeeeee...

THEME PLAYS

HG

Jane, I promise you, I am perfectly
alright!

JANE

Are you, indeed.

HG

I am, really!

He sneezes.

HG (CONT.)

That was a complete coincidence.

He sneezes again.

JANE

Of course it was, dear.

HG

(hopefully)

Does that mean that I can record my notes, then?

JANE

(sweetly)

Absolutely not.

HG

This is terribly unfair. I shall have to base a truly dreadful character on you.

JANE

You do that.

HG

Terribly mean. And - and no fun at all.

JANE

Mm-hm.

HG

With no sense of spirit or adventure.

JANE

Whatever you say, dear. Now get into bed and drink your soup.

HG sighs, but complies. He brightens upon seeing the soup.

HG

Ooh, is this leek and potato?

JANE

Your favourite? Of course.

HG

... I take back everything I said before. You're the best wife in the world.

JANE

I know. Here, move your feet. I have a hot water bottle that should take the chill off.

HG sighs with relief.

HG

Warmth... sweet, sweet warmth...

JANE

What on earth were you doing to catch such a bad cold, anyway? You look half-frozen.

HG

... I was in Massachusetts.

JANE

Oh?

HG

Yes - visiting Emily Dickinson.

(trying to distract her)

She was really rather odd, you know, I had a terrible time even getting her to talk to me -

JANE

(interrupting him)

And where were you before that?

HG

The Brontës.

JANE

Did you perhaps go swimming there?

HG

It may have been raining.

JANE

And you -

HG

- Yes, yes, I shouldn't have stood outside in a downpour, but Jane, I visited in July! I was hardly expecting a monsoon!

JANE

(with infinite patience)

Herbert, darling, the Brontës lived in Yorkshire. It's always raining in Yorkshire.

HG

... I knew that.

JANE

Well, regardless, you're not going anywhere. You'll be staying at home until that cold is gone.

HG

But Jane, I must go and visit the next authors on my list!

JANE

You have a time machine, Herbert. You can visit whenever you like.

HG

But if I don't visit now, then I will lose all sense of momentum. You know how I am with any kind of creative activity - if I take even the smallest of breaks, then everything flies out of my head and I'm good for nothing at all!

JANE

Well, why not take the opportunity to do some writing while you're recuperating? I'm sure that having a pen and paper with you can't do too much harm.

HG

But my TIME MACHINE -

JANE

Will wait.

HG

The authors -

JANE

Are literally in another timeline.

HG

(deflating)

I... suppose so.

JANE

Eat your soup, dear. It will get cold, otherwise.

HG sulkily eats his soup.

JANE (CONT.)

Which authors were you planning on visiting next?

HG

I thought I'd start with a cornerstone of English literature and visit Jane Austen in Hampshire; then follow it up with Louisa May Alcott as another American. Hopefully she'll be a little less... shy... than Miss Dickinson.

(suddenly suspicious)

Why do you want to know?

JANE

(faux unconcerned)

Oh... no reason...

HG

Jane.

JANE

Welllllll... I thought - given the circumstances - that I might... go and interview them, myself.

HG

Absolutely not.

JANE

Oh, come on, Herbert.

HG

She's a delicate creature! She needs love and care, and a tender touch!

JANE

The time machine is not a horse. And besides, I've used it before!

HG

I - ok, yes, that is true -

JANE

And I adore Jane Austen's works - it would be very cruel of you to deny me a conversation with her. You still haven't made good on your promise to take me to one of Shakespeare's plays, you know.

HG is defeated.

HG

You're right, of course, my dear Jane. As usual. I have neglected you dreadfully recently, haven't I?

You should interview the next authors. I trust you. And at some point in the near future, you and I and the boys shall take the Time Machine and we will all attend a Shakespeare original.

(as an afterthought)

A cheerful one, preferably.

JANE

I do like his comedies. "Twelfth Night" was particularly amusing. And Arthur told me that he's rather fond of "A Midsummer Night's Dream".

HG

Arthur?

JANE

Our neighbour?

HG

Oh, so we're on first-name terms now, are we?

JANE

Please don't be difficult, darling, he really is rather nice once you get to know him.

HG

I don't want to get to know him.

JANE

That's not very neighbourly of you.

HG

Maybe I don't feel very neighbourly.

JANE

Well, that's a shame.

She starts getting ready.

JANE (CONT.)

Do you have the coordinates for the next authors?

HG

Oh... you're leaving already?

JANE

Well, it seems like a good time to. The boys are being looked after elsewhere, and you're laid up in bed... I may as well set off while things are all going well.

HG

I mean, that does make sense, but -

JANE

By the way, dear, I've asked someone round to look after you while I'm gone.

HG

Jane, dearest, I'm a grown man. I don't need looking after.

He sneezes.

JANE

I will believe that once you have proven to me that you have the ability to wash your own socks.

HG

I - ok, fair enough.

(curiously)

So who have you asked to come over?

JANE

Oh, he should be here any moment now.

The door flies open.

DOYLE

Well well, Wells!

PAUSE.

HG

No. No! No, no, no. Jane, I flatly refuse to stay even in the same house as this man. I will be perfectly fine on my own. And if that means I catch pneumonia and die, then so be it!

JANE

Don't be ridiculous, Herbert. Arthur will be perfectly well behaved. Won't you, Arthur?

DOYLE

Of course! Not a peep from me, what!

JANE

And besides, he's a Doctor!

HG

I refuse to believe that man has even been within spitting distance of a Hippocratic Oath.

JANE

(warningly)

Be nice.

HG

But Jane -!

He sneezes.

DOYLE

Now then, HG, heard you've got a touch of the sniffles, eh? Nasty things, colds. I've found a brand new tonic that ought to put you to rights in an instant.

HG

Don't you come near me with that stuff!

JANE

Goodness, Herbert, it won't do you any harm to take your medicine. You will keep an eye on him, Arthur, won't you?

DOYLE

Not to worry, Dr. Doyle is on the case! We'll have a jolly good wheeze, won't we HG?

Evil, indecipherable muttering from HG.

DOYLE

That's the ticket! I will havelots to keep us out of mischief, as I'm working on a new short story.

JANE

Oh, what's it about?

DOYLE

(starting off habitually cheerful, but moving into despair)

It's a -! Well, it's - it's a...

(mumbling)

It's another Sherlock Holmes story.

JANE

Really? I do love your Sherlock
Holmes adventures, Arthur.

DOYLE

Sadly, most of the public seem to
agree with you. The Strand wants
more content to placate the fans...

He quickly bounces back to full capacity again.

DOYLE (CONT.)

HG! I see you're writing something
new again - capital! Perhaps I
could take a small -

HG

No.

DOYLE

Not even a -

HG

Absolutely not.

HG is in an absolutely terrible mood. Jane seizes her moment.

JANE

Well, I think I'd better be off.

HG

No! Jane! Wait!

Even Doyle is sounding a little apprehensive at this point.

DOYLE

Erm, Jane, perhaps you could wait
just a second -

JANE

No, no, I really must go. Time and time machines wait for no woman, and all of that!

Now, let's see. Into right-hand drive -

Clunk.

JANE (CONT.)

Ah, that's more like it. Everything seems set up -

HG

Jane, love of my life, please will you -

The Time Machine starts! Over the noise -

JANE

(blithely)

I really am dreadfully excited to meet Miss Austen and Miss Alcott. Thank you so much for loaning me the Time Machine. And thank you, Arthur, for keeping an eye on Herbert!

HG

(EXCUSE me)

Now, wait just a minute -

DOYLE

You're welcome, but - steady on, now, Jane, don't you think -

JANE

Sorry, I can't hear you! See you soon! Take care!

HG

Jane, don't leave me with -!

The Time Machine disappears. HG and Doyle are left alone together. Long pause.

DOYLE

So... would you like to hear about an absolutely fascinating book I read on fairies recently?

HG

(with utter vehemence)

NO.

RECORDING ENDS.

CREDITS

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This episode of H.G. Wells Has His Regrets was written and produced by Francesca Mylod-Ford, with assistance from Emily Hancock.

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This show was created and executive produced by Emily Hancock.

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Catherine "Jane" Wells was voiced by Georgia Fisk
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was voiced by Nathan Donnelly

This podcast is fictitious, and all characters within are merely fictional interpretations of the people they're based on and are not to be taken as serious or accurate portrayals.

We'll end the episode with a quote from George Eliot's *Middlemarch*: "And, of course, men know best about everything, except what women know better."

Thanks for listening.