

The Forty-Seven

A key to the mystery

slavering hordes from without: the supernatural threat feared by the Forty-Seven, apparently, has a propensity to salivate.

Great Visual Representations in Science, unproduced episode: would Mulliner, a chemist by training, have found iconic significance in the periodic element tables of Newlands, Mendeleev or Meyer?

looked like a corpse, but he was full of life: argyria, a rare condition usually induced by ingesting large quantities of silver compounds or colloidal silver metal, produces a distinctive blue-grey or blackish pigmentation of the skin, which is often said to resemble the pallor of death. If the photograph was produced in black-and-white, the condition would not be apparent.

regularly locked himself away in solitude for three or four days: the period of a full moon's influence is often reckoned as three nights.

allowing his nearest opponent to break the tape: as the second-placed runner, Mulliner became a silver medallist, and apparently retired with his ambitions achieved.

orb web: spun by, among others, the *Argiope argentata* or silver argiope spider.

Stuff of our salvation: taken literally, implies that "Forty-Seven" is a material.

Poor Miss Finch: sensation novel (1872). Twin brothers, vying for the affection of the blind heroine, are distinguishable only by one brother's dark-blue skin pigmentation. This is the result of consuming silver nitrate as a cure for epilepsy.

Buenos Aires: capital of Argentina.

keen to draw connections: Jack Childs, probably addressed formally as John, was a tall (long) man with a wooden leg. Mulliner may have been thinking of Long John Silver, particularly if Childs had been invalided from the Royal or Merchant Navy during the War.

forty-two: atomic number of molybdenum, a hard transition metal identified and isolated around 1780. Little-known, with uses mainly confined to alloy production, and has no folkloric significance.

source of the source: the phrase "the curious incident of the dog in the night-time" is taken from Conan Doyle's 'Silver Blaze,' a Sherlock Holmes short story published in 1892.

Vampires were on our side: vampire-werewolf conflict is the theme of various sources in popular culture such as the 2003 feature film *Underworld*, though this was probably not on Childs' mind (most likely, he was simply bored of Luff's obtuseness).

1960, March the thirteenth: full moon.

somewhere in South Yorkshire: Sheffield, alongside Birmingham and London, was a major centre for the British silver-working industry.

round white projector beam... eyes tracking to the screen... staring him in the face: Luff is confronted by, firstly, a glowing white disc (resembling the full moon), and then, as he turns, the display wall of a typical school chemistry laboratory, where we might reasonably expect to find a periodic table of the elements. Positioned near the centre of a short-form periodic table is a square approximately as follows:

47
Ag
silver
107.87

Luff, as a non-chemist, has no inkling of the relationship between the element and its atomic number before this point – hence the extent of the sudden realisation.