

*The Case of the  
Missing Portraits:*

*A Shurkey Holmes  
Whodunnit?*

**MYSTERY**



**Blessed Are Who?**

# Episode One: The Game's Afoot!

The bus pulled up in front of the Agatha Museum's impressive front entrance. The kids rushed off the bus, eager to finally get where they had been going. They looked up in amazement at the big stone griffins on either side of the massive front door and one by one noticed the figure standing patiently at the base of the steps.

After all the kids quieted down, the curator stepped forward to say, "Welcome to the Agatha Museum, or as we like to call it, the museum of mystery. I am the curator of this museum which means I am in charge of all of the different museum areas and all of the treasures we keep here."

The kids perked up at the word treasure as the curator continued, "Inside my museum you will find million-year-old dinosaur fossils, priceless items from ancient Egypt and ancient China, some of the greatest inventions the world has ever known, and our one-of-a-kind portrait gallery."

With this, the curator spun around and headed up the stairs into the museum. The kids followed close behind as they were led quickly into the museum's grand foyer. The last couple kids noticed a brightly painted van pulling into the lot as they walked into the foyer. The various exhibits branched off from this room but at its center was a special wall with five big portraits hanging in ornate golden frames. The curator stopped in front of the five portraits and let out a great sigh before turning around to face the kids with a smile.



"These portraits are the pride of the museum," the curator said, "You can't find any others like them in the world. This week happens to be a very special week because we are commemorating these portraits with special performances by the world-famous actor Miss Purple. Each day Miss purple will impersonate a different subject from one of these five portraits. In fact, she is already here."

The kids gasped as a giant curtain tumbled down behind the curator and in front of the portraits.

The curator didn't miss a beat and explained, "Miss purple is ready for her debut as the brave, beautiful, courageous Queen Esther!"

Miss Purple flung the curtain open and stepped boldly forward as it settled again behind her.

"Hello. I am Queen Esther of the Persian Empire," she exclaimed, "I am one of the greatest queens in all of history! I had many treasures, the finest clothes, hundreds of servants, and my life was a dream."

The curator, a bit annoyed, interrupted her, "Wait a minute. That's not quite right. Queen Esther's life wasn't nearly that simple."

Miss Purple replied, "Well, I... I am Queen Esther..."

"Miss Purple, did you even actually read the script?" the curator asked.

"Well I might have glanced at it," she replied.

"Well why don't you read it now!" said the curator.

Miss Purple fumbled around in the sleeves of her great royal robes to reveal a notecard.

She mumbled a bit as she read it, "Okay, let's see here... Oh! I see. I... I Queen Esther did not live a dream life."

Miss Purple had recovered her dramatic flair as she continued, "Even though I was selected by the king to be his queen I had to hide my faith. Because I believed in God I was in danger of being treated differently or even attacked. My cousin Mordecai helped me to discover that there were people in my own palace trying to get rid of everyone who believed in God. I gathered my courage and went before the king and uncovered the plot to harm us. I had to reveal to the king that I believed in God and I could have been killed, but the king admired my courage and my loyalty to my people.

He was merciful and set everyone who believed in God free throughout the kingdom!"

The curator seemed pleased while exclaiming, "Now that's more like it!"

"Thank you, thank you," Miss Purples replied, "I am one of the finest actors in the world, as you know. Now I must say goodbye but I will see you again tomorrow."

With that, Miss purple flung the curtain aside and rushed into the recesses of the Museum. But something was amiss. As the curtain swung back and forth the kids could see an empty spot on the wall where Esther's portrait had hung just moments before.

The curator continued, "Everyone give a round of applause to Miss Purple," but soon the curator sensed something was wrong and spun around to follow the kids' looks towards the portrait wall, "Oh no, what's this? The portrait of Esther has gone missing! It was just here. Thief, thief! There's a thief in the museum."

Suddenly a mysterious voice boomed across the gallery in a wonderful accent, "Did somebody say detective!"

The curator replied, "No I said 'Thief, thief. There's a thief in the museum.'"

Wearing a detective's cap while holding a big magnifying glass, the new arrival to the museum stepped forward and explained, "Well yes... I see... I am no thief."

Then with confidence she continued, "But I am the great detective Shurkey Holmes!"

The curator's eyes grew wide, "Shurkey!? I've heard of you. You solved the case of *The Admiral's Missing Marbles*. You're the most famous detective in the world. What are you doing at our museum?"

Shurkey answered, "This is the mystery museum isn't it? I wanted to see your museum for myself. I had to borrow a van from my friends to get here but it was well worth it because I love mysteries! And I love solving mysteries. I'm on the case! But I see that I'm not alone. There are many young detectives in this room today. Now what's the first thing a detective does?"

One child in the second row timidly raised her hand and asked, "Don't you search for clues?"

Shurkey gave a big smile and said, "That's right. A detective searches for clues. I'm going to need your help with this case. Whenever I tell you I'm searching for clues you need to become perfectly silent, because a clue can be something you see but it can also be something you hear, or even something you smell."

The kids stared at Shurkey in silence. She continued, "I see that you've got it. Well, there's no time to lose. I am off to solve the case of the missing queen's portrait. The game is afoot!

The curator called after Shurkey as she walked boldly off into the museum, "Thank you Shurkey! I feel much better with you on the case. Now it's time for all of us to explore the museum. Find your team leader and head off to your first exhibit..."

*Later that day...*

The kids all crowded again into the portrait gallery at the entrance to the museum. Many were still talking about their amazing experience in the Dinosaur Domain where they'd learned about uncovering the past and even discovered some dinosaur remains. After a moment, the curator stepped in.

"Welcome back to the main hall of the museum," the curator greeted the kids, "Unfortunately our priceless portrait of Queen Esther is still missing. I wonder if we'll ever find the thief?"

"Shurkey is on the case," the voice of Shurkey rang out across the room, "I have mapped out the entire museum from the Dinosaur Domain to the Hall of Inventions, to the Medieval Europe Encounter, even to the Ancient China Area, and finally all the way to the Ancient Egypt Experience. I searched far and wide and high and low and I found... nothing."

The curator chimed in, "You found nothing?"

"That's right, nothing," continued Shurkey, "My instincts assure me that the key to this mystery is somewhere in the museum but I found no clues today."

"I guess it's hopeless," the curator replied.

"Not quite," Shurkey responded, "There's one more place to look. Perhaps the most important place of all... the scene of the crime. A good detective always examines the scene of the crime very carefully. There must be something important to find."

"Oh," was the curator's response, "That's a good idea. Why don't we clear out the area and start a search—"

"Eureka!" Shurkey interrupted as her magnifying glass hovered over a discarded bit of paper on the ground.

"That was fast," said the curator.

"Well I am the world's greatest detective," replied Shurkey, "Let's see what I've found. It seems to be some sort of pamphlet for an 'accessibility plan' and there's a bit of writing on here in pen as well, although it's been smudged a lot."

"Oh that's just the new project that I launched at the museum," the curator responded, "We added a wheelchair ramp to the front entrance and special access to all the museum's areas. We also added several languages to all the exhibit signs, including brail, and now offer a free audio tour in our museum app for all of those languages as well. I'm very proud of our accessibility plan but I don't think it has anything to do with the portrait—"

"Aha!" Shurkey interrupted again, "I have deciphered the writing on the pamphlet. It says 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.' I'm not sure what that means but I'm certain it's an important clue."

Out of nowhere, Miss Purple burst onto the scene and said, "Detective Shurkey, I know who said that."

"Miss Purple, I was wondering when you'd make an appearance," Shurkey replied.

Miss Purple continued, "I know who said, 'blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.' In fact, I think all of the kids here know who said that. Kids who do these words come from?" Miss purple asked the room.

"Jesus," the kids replied in unison.

"That's right. It's called a beatitude and it was given to us by Jesus," Miss Purple continued, "I've been learning about my amazing character from earlier today, Queen Esther. Because she was different she had to

show courage and loyalty just to be able to believe in God. But Jesus has taught us a new way to live. For Jesus, everyone who is different is already included! If you look different, talk differently, or even move around differently you are part of God's kingdom!"

Shurkey scrunched up her face as she was clearly thinking hard.

She finally simply said, "Yes. That is an important clue. And now I'm off to search for more clues. I'll stay here all night at the museum if I have to! In the meantime, no one is allowed to leave town while the case continues."

"Well that's perfectly fine, these kids actually have four more days at the museum," offered the curator, "We will help you solve this case. Now let's all get some rest so that we're ready to continue exploring tomorrow as we return to the mystery museum."

## Episode Two: By Jehovah You've Got It!

The kids had been gathered by their leaders in the portrait gallery of the mystery museum for the second day of their adventure there.

The curator was ready to greet them all, "Welcome back to the mystery museum. Remember that I am the curator of this museum, in charge of all its amazing exhibits."

Shurkey Holmes also stepped forward, "And I am world-renowned detective Sherkey Holmes, here to help you solve the case of the missing portrait. Yesterday we learned about Queen Esther and her courage. She had to save her people because others treated them poorly just because they were different. With God's help, her courage was enough to save the people. She certainly deserves to have her portrait found! But I was only able to find one clue, an accessibility plan pamphlet with the words 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy' written in pen."

"Shurkey," the curator interrupted, "Isn't this just like *The Case of the Elephant's Underpants* that you solved in Mumbai last year?"

"The elephant's underpants?" Shurkey pondered for a moment, "Oh yes, that was a great case but this one is a bit different."

Suddenly Shurkey noticed a hand sticking up that belonged to one of the kids in the last row.

Shurkey addressed the kid, "I think one of our young detectives has something to add."

The kid stood up and said, "Mrs. Detective, I think there's another clue."

"Another clue," Shurkey exclaimed, "Well... let's hear it!"

"Actually, we need to get to Miss Purple's performance," the curator reminded Shurkey.

"Nonsense. There's always time for another clue," Shurkey continued, "Go ahead young detective."

The kid piped up, "Yesterday my friends and I discovered a painting that we think has to do with Esther." The kid and a couple of her friends led Shurkey to the other side of the gallery to the special new wheelchair entrance to the museum.



She continued, "We saw this painting here when we were leaving the museum yesterday. I think you might have missed it because you never left the museum last night."

"By Jehovah, you've got it," Shurkey exclaimed, "The not leaving the museum last night part at least. This painting, on the other hand, seems pretty normal to me."

Shurkey gestured at the painting which featured what looked like a royally dressed woman with a lumberjack's hat and an axe. The plaque of the painting read, "Treester." Shurkey continued to stare at the painting, as if she was just about to realize something.



Suddenly, the curator grabbed her arm and pulled her back toward the portraits and the great curtain while saying, "We are overdue for today's reenactment."

The curtain was thrown aside and Miss Purple appeared in front of the four portraits and the open spot where Esther's had been.

Miss Purple introduced herself as the curtain fell back in front of the wall of portraits, "Hello! I am named Mary but I come from a place called Magdala so my friends call me Mary Magdalene. And I am one of the greatest queens in history with many treasures and servants—"

"No, no, no!" The curator had to interrupt, "Mary Magdalene wasn't a queen. Queen Esther was yesterday. Today you are Mary, one of the closest followers of Jesus."

"Yes, of course," Miss Purple continued, "I Mary Magdalene, closely followed Jesus wherever he would go. If Jesus went up the stairs, I went up the stairs. If Jesus went through a door, I went through the door. If he climbed a tree, I climbed that tree. If he jumped into a river—"

"No, no, no!" The curator was forced to interrupt again, "I didn't mean that she literally followed Jesus everywhere he ever went. Being a follower of Jesus means loving Jesus and sharing that love, just like he asked us to do."

"Oh yes," said Miss Purple, "Let me see here." She pulled a notecard out of her pocket and continued, "Of course that's what I did. I, Mary Magdalene, loved Jesus so much because he loved me so much. He saved my life when I was in a very very bad place and then he taught me so many amazing things along with the disciples. When Jesus died on the cross, I was terrified but I refused to leave his side because I knew that Jesus always did everything for a reason. I would visit his tomb and three days after he had died I saw him. Jesus came back to life! And he spoke to me... to me! Jesus sent me out to tell the whole world what had happened."

"That's right!" The curator offered, "Mary's heart was so full of love that it was bursting and she couldn't wait to spread the news of Jesus' resurrection."

"And now I must say goodbye for today. I'm off to my dressing room," and with these words Miss Purple threw the curtain aside and

rushed off into the museum. The curtain swung wide enough to reveal another blank spot on the portrait wall.

"Another missing portrait!" Shurkey exclaimed as she jumped up to the front, "The portrait of Mary Magdalene is gone! That's two missing portraits. This case is growing by the minute. I must gather more clues."

Before anyone could say another word, Shurkey was off into the recesses of the museum.

The curator stepped forward and addressed the kids, "Well I guess we'll be searching for clues again today. But we'll also be exploring my fabulous museum. I believe that today you'll be spending some time in the Hall of Inventions. That is one of my favorites. You're sure to have fun!"

*Later that day...*

Some of the kids who were exploring the Hall of Inventions noticed that the curator was standing in front of a bright and shiny new sign that hung over a table with plastic building bricks. The sign said, "Free Therapy: mental health and the imagination."

One of the kids was curious enough to ask, "What's therapy?"

The curator explained, "Therapy is when someone who isn't completely healthy gets help in feeling and getting better."

"You mean like a doctor," one of the kids asked.

"Yes it's a lot like going to the doctor," the curator replied, "Therapy is not just important for your body but also for your mind and spirit. You can see a doctor but you can also feel better and get better by using your imagination. You can draw, color, paint, or sculpt, and you can also use your mind to invent and make things, like all of the amazing things in this room."

"I like to build rockets out of my lego," said one kid.

"That's a great example," replied the curator, "You can build anything your imagination comes up with, and it's good for your soul too."

"That's nice," said one of the kids, "But what's that," she continued as she pointed at a painting near the free therapy sign. The painting was oddly familiar. It featured a person kneeling on the ground in front of an

outstretched hand, but the person was wearing an adventurer's hat and had a whip. The plaque for the painting read, "Adventurey."



"Isn't that—," the curator rushed off before the kid could finish what she was saying. The crowd of kids wandered off as some played with the building bricks and others went to go see a submarine or super computer elsewhere in the Hall of Inventions.

*Even later that day...*

When the kids arrived at the portrait gallery for the end of their day at the museum, Shurkey was already stalking around the space with her magnifying glass.

"Something isn't right. Something is out of place," she mumbled to herself, "Something isn't right! I can't see what it is. I've looked all over this place. I've even gone over it with my magnifying glass. Something isn't right."

Miss Purple was also there, waiting for the kids.

"Maybe I can help," she offered.

"I'm not sure that we need any acting right now," said Shurkey, "We need some detective work."

Miss Purple replied, "Well I've been learning about my character for today, Mary Magdalene, and she would never give up helping, even if a rude detective refused her help."

"Oh! You're right. You're right, and I'm sorry" said Shurkey, "A good detective never ignores a clue, or an offer of help."

"Oh, wonderful!" Miss Purple exclaimed, "Because I find that when I can't locate something in my dressing room, I just sing and sing and sing and sing and sing, until I find it!"

Shurkey made a big shushing sound and put her finger in front of her mouth.

"You don't like my singing?" asked Miss Purple.

"Your singing is wonderful," replied Shurkey, "But that's not why I need quiet. Listen. I've been looking for a clue but now I think we need to listen."

Shurkey cupped a hand to her ear and continued, "I can hear something. Can you hear it?"

One of the kids jumped up and said, "I can hear it too. It's coming from over here!"

Shurkey and Miss Purple ran over to where the kid was pointing. There on the ground were some plastic building bricks and a smartphone that seemed to be playing a video.

"What's this?" asked Shurkey.

"It's a phone," said Miss Purple, "And it looks, and sounds, like it's playing one of the videos the kids made earlier about invisible heroes. This one is about Mary Magdalene herself. Hey, nobody cast me in any of these videos!" She was suddenly indignant.

"There's also a little note here," said Shurkey, "It looks like someone jotted something down on this scrap of paper. It says, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.' That's another beatitude from Jesus!"

"Yes!" Miss Purple offered, "Today we learned that Mary Magdalene was pure in heart because her heart was full of God's love and she shared it with everyone."

Shurkey looked intently at the note and said, "This case just gets more and more mysterious, but I am sure we will solve it! We will figure out who keeps taking our portraits and leaving these clues."

The curator stepped forward and said, "Well, I think we've had plenty of excitement today. I'm very pleased with everything you kids learned at the museum today and all the great things you made at my free therapy table. I can't wait to see what you get up to tomorrow as we return to The Medieval Europe Encounter. I'll see you tomorrow."

## Episode Three: Eureka!

On the third morning, the kids were greeted by Detective Shurkey, "Welcome back to the mystery museum! I still have not solved the case of the missing portraits but we have some good clues to work with. The first day I found a note that says, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy' and on the second day I found a note that says, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.' We also discovered that those words come from Jesus."

"You also found the phone with the movie trailers," said the curator who happened to be wearing a funny hat and clothes that day, "Detective Shurkey, isn't this becoming like the famous *Case of Captain Snickerbelly's Chocolate Moustache?*"

"I'm not sure that's one of my cases," replied the curator, "But this case is becoming very complicated."

The curator ushered Shurkey out from in front of the curtain and said, "Well now it's time to hear from that most wonderful of actors, the great, the wonderful, Miss Purple!"

Miss Purple threw open the curtain, revealing the three remaining portraits as she stepped forward. The curtain swung back in front of the portrait wall. She was wearing some impressive leather armor.

She introduced herself, "It is I, Deborah. And judging by how I'm dressed, I'm a knight. I slew the most terrifying dragon—"

"No dragon!" exclaimed the curator.

"Then it must have been a sea monster," was Miss Purple's reply.

"No sea monster," said the curator, "You didn't slay anything. But you were a respected warrior. Why don't you just read the script?"

Miss Purple took a moment to refer to her notecard before continuing, "Well it looks like, I Deborah was a judge, and prophet, and general, and musician. Wait what didn't I do?"

The curator had an answer, "you were many things to many people."

"I need a costume change," said Miss Purple as she grabbed a black robe and gavel, "Shouldn't I look more like this if I'm a judge?"

"No," said the curator.

Miss Purple held up a guitar next and said, "Well shouldn't I have one of these if I'm a musician?"

"No, said the curator, "You weren't that kind of judge and you weren't that kind of musician. And where are you getting these props?"

"A good actor is always prepared," said Miss Purple.

The curator continued, "You were called by God to use all your gifts to serve everyone around you."

This seemed to give Miss Purple the inspiration she was looking for as she went on, "Wait, I've got it! I Deborah was a hero of the people. In a time of great trouble for God's people, Deborah... oh I mean I, Deborah, led them to do what is right and not what is wrong, to listen to God's word. And I even led an army against the cruel general Sisera in order to free the people. My song became a reminder to the people that God fights with all of us for justice. Wow Deborah is great! I mean, I am Deborah and I am great. And that concludes my performance today. I will see you again next time."

Miss Purple rushed off like she had the two previous days, throwing aside the curtain and revealing another missing portrait.

Again, Shurkey jumped forward to investigate, "The portrait is gone again! That makes three missing portraits! This is quickly becoming one of my greatest cases. We need to work extra hard today searching for clues. I need all of you kids to go out and investigate."

"Well that will work perfectly," said the curator, "Because you are all due to head to your next exhibit, The Medieval Europe Encounter."

The kids followed their leaders off into the museum as Shurkey followed behind them.

*Later that day...*

In the Medieval Europe Encounter the kids found all kinds of amazing things like suits of armor, replicas of castle walls, swords and shields, and even life-size models of horses and catapults in a big courtyard. They even found the curator, wearing the same funny clothes and hat from earlier,



standing in a big vegetable garden. As some of the kids were passing by the garden to check out a catapult, the curator waved them over.

"You may think that the most amazing thing in this exhibit is that catapult, but I actually think it's this garden," the curator explained, "You see, we have recreated an authentic village garden from hundreds of years ago. I even wear authentic gardening clothes from way back then."

The curator could tell that the kids were losing interest.

"But that's not even the most amazing thing about this garden," the curator explained, "The most amazing thing is that this garden is able to produce enough food to feed several families every day, and we give it all away! That's right, one of our main goals in creating this garden was to share its produce with the local food bank. They tell us that there are kids who come in looking for our big ruby-red tomatoes each week. It's such a pleasure sharing what we grow with others. Cooperation and sharing was the only way that villages in the medieval period were even able to survive. That reminds me of this amazing way that they used to plan out their crop cycles—"

The curator had lost the kids now and they wandered away to another part of the exhibit. As a new group of kids passed by the garden and the curator started the speech about the garden all over again, the first group passed through the door back inside from the courtyard. They almost bumped into Shurkey who was standing there observing another funny looking portrait. This one had a woman standing upright and pointing the way forward. The woman also had a hardhat and a toolbox. The plaque for the painting read, "Builderah."

"There's something fishy here," mumbled Shurkey as the kids continued on their way.



*Even later that day...*

"Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart," Shurkey kept repeating these words as she paced around in front of the missing portraits.

"We need another break in this case," she continued, "The phone with the movie trailers and the two notes just isn't enough. We need another clue to help us figure out what's happening to all these portraits."

Miss Purple jumped forward and said, "I'm on it! Miss Purple is playing her greatest role yet, a detective."

"Well I wouldn't quite call you a detective but you did help us make a big break in the case yesterday," said Shurkey, "We found that phone with the movie trailers. Now we need to find another clue."

"Why don't you use your magnifying glass too, Detective Shurkey? There's bound to be a clue around here if you look for it," offered Miss Purple.

Shurkey replied, "But I have been searching and searching. There is nothing out of the ordinary. Everything is perfect. Everything is clean. It's almost like it's too perfect. It's like it's too clean. Something is strange here."

Miss Purple noticed something tucked behind the curtain and pulled it out as she said, "Oh somebody left out this vacuum cleaner. We better put it away."

"Wait!" Exclaimed Shurkey, "Eureka! The simplest solution is most often the right solution. Someone has used this vacuum to clean up the scene of the crime. We must see what's inside."

Miss Purple caught on to what Shurkey was saying and opened up the vacuum to find, "Dirt!"

"It's not just any dirt," said Shurkey. "This is nice soil from outside."

"There's also a bit of paper in here," continued Miss Purple as she reached into the vacuum and pulled out a scrap of paper.

Shurkey took the paper and read, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

"I'm meek," exclaimed Miss Purple, "I mean Deborah was meek and today I'm Deborah. From Deborah we learned that the meek are people who humbly use their gifts to help whoever needs them. These are heroic types of people who do a lot to serve and even save others but they don't do it to be praised or rewarded. They're like super heroes, like Deborah."

"This must be another saying from Jesus," said Shurkey, "That makes three of them. I wonder how this all fits together. We're starting to gather a great collection of clues but I think we need more time to solve this case. I'm so close. If I could just figure out what's going on with those paintings—"

"Speaking of great collections," interrupted the curator, "We have a great one for all you kids tomorrow. I'll be showing you the Ancient China Area. We even have an authentic block from the Great Wall of China, and much much more. I can't wait for you to see it. Well, we had better get you off to get a good night's sleep so you're ready for tomorrow.

"I have a feeling I won't get much sleep at all tonight," said Shurkey, "I can never sleep much when there's a mystery to solve. Hopefully I'll have a breakthrough for you all when I see you next!"

## Episode Four: It's Elementary

"Shurkey? Where is Shurkey Holmes?" the curator asked while pacing around the portrait gallery when the kids had arrived at the museum that morning. "We still have not caught the portrait thief and now we are missing three portraits!" The curator addressed the kids as they settled into their seats for the morning performance.

"Did somebody call for a Detective?" a familiar voice called out.

"Actually this time I did," the curator replied.

The familiar voice continued, "I am the great Detective Shurkey and I am here to solve the case. It's just like *The Case of the Shark's Piano* when I discovered that—"

"Hold on a minute," the curator interrupted, "You're not Detective Shurkey."

"Of course I am," replied the figure, "I'm wearing the hat. And I have a magnifying glass. And I'm solving the case."

The curator looked at her doubtfully and said, "You're obviously Miss Purple."

"Well, in all my days I have never been so insulted," replied Miss Purple, "I am the greatest actor in the world. No wait I'm Detective Shurkey! Oh alright. I'm not the detective. Shurkey asked me to distract you all because she is going undercover. In addition to being the greatest detective in the world, Shurkey is also a master of disguise. You will never be able to tell if it's her."

"Oh I see," the curator replied, "Speaking of disguises. Where is your Tabitha costume? Today you are supposed to be playing the role of Tabitha."

Miss Purple turned towards the curtain and said, "Oh it should be right back here."

As she threw the curtain to the side she exclaimed, "It's gone! Another portrait is gone!"

The kids could see that a fourth portrait was now missing.

The curator stepped over to the spot where the Tabitha portrait had been and said, "Detective Shurkey really needs to solve this case, wherever she is."

"Oh this is all so dramatic," added Miss Purple, "I feel like I might faint. But no! The show must go on. Today I am Tabitha. I am a simple person. I spend most of my time helping others—sewing clothes and blankets, collecting or preparing food, and giving all these things to the poor or sick."

"Hold on," said the curator, "That's actually right. Tabitha really did spend her time serving others."

"Of course that's right," Miss Purple replied, "Tabitha... I mean I... was a devoted follower of Jesus' teachings but one day I... died."

With these words, Miss Purple started into the most dramatic, and extended, death scene that the kids had ever seen. Many sighs, tears, and minutes later Miss Purple's version of Tabitha finally died.

"Ok. I don't think it was quite that dramatic," the curator commented, "But Tabitha did die. All of Tabitha's friends missed her so much that they brought the apostle Peter to her body, hoping for a miracle. Peter saw how missed Tabitha was and used the power of Jesus to bring her back to life."

Miss Purple suddenly jumped back up and exclaimed, "I did come back! The love that I showed to others by using all that I had to serve those in need was the same kind of love that Jesus showed. That's the love that my friends had for me! I really wish we still had that Tabitha portrait. She was such an amazing person!"

"We really need to end this case," said the curator, "I guess there's nothing left to do this morning except to head to our exhibit for today. We are exploring the Ancient China Area. There is much to see there, so let's be off!" The curator led Miss Purple and all of the kids off into the museum, including one kid who seemed unusually tall for her age...

*Later that day...*

As is usually the case, several of the kids had to use the restroom while they were checking out the Ancient China Area. They were all having such a great time in the exhibit that they didn't want to miss any of the

massive ornate statues, impressive spears and swords, beautiful tapestries, and especially the dancing dragon. While they rushed through the hall they did notice a commotion coming from a room between the exhibit and the bathrooms. A few kids even stopped long enough to notice the curator moving around boxes, and setting up hanging racks. The unusually tall kid must have had a lot of water to drink that day because she visited the bathroom several times. She didn't seem to notice the curator but did stop each time to look at a painting on the wall outside the room. The painting featured a person sitting down to sew something. The strange part about the painting was that the person had an odd moustache and top hat. They didn't seem to fit the style of the painting but they were there for all to see. The plaque for the painting read, "Top Hata."





At one point, Miss Purple stopped by the room where the curator was busy.

"Ok, I'll take the bait," she said. "What are you doing in here."

"Oh me," said the curator, "I'm just setting up the community clothing room. The old space had to close so I offered up this big extra room we have in the museum until they can find a new home for the donated clothes. We're going to open the clothing room on Saturdays and offer free museum tours at the same time. People in need will be able to take whatever clothes they need, and enjoy our amazing exhibits!"

"Well my friend," Miss Purple said as she started out the door, "I'm actually very glad I asked. I'd love to donate all of my extra costumes."

*Even later that day...*

On this occasion, Miss Purple led the kids back to the portrait gallery after exploring the Ancient China Area.

As soon as they arrived she exclaimed, "Wow it really stinks in here!"

The curator was already there and did not seem to appreciate Miss Purple's observation, "I keep my museum very clean. It can't possibly stink in here."

"Well it does," Miss Purple replied, "Can't you smell that?"

"Actually, it does smell odd in here," the curator admitted, "Anyway, we need to solve this case."

"We need to search for clues!" Shurkey jumped into the room.

"Whoa! You're back," exclaimed the curator.

"Back?" replied Shurkey, "I never left."

"Oh you mean you were disguised as that really tall kid," said Miss Purple.

Shurkey gave her a look of shock as Miss Purple continued, "of course I recognized you. It was a top notch disguise but you couldn't fool a world-class actor like me. I can recognize a costume when I see one."

"Why don't we get back to searching for clues," said the curator.

"As long as I can get some nose plugs," replied Miss Purple as she stuffed some tissues into her nose.



"I also noticed the odd odor," said Shurkey, "But we can't let it distract us from finding more clues. I've looked all over this place and haven't found anything new. I've also been listening closely in case there is a sound clue like the phone from the other day. We just need to keep looking!"

"If only there was another way to detect clues," Miss Purple commented, "Wow, these nose plugs are really working. I can't smell a thing."

"Wait a minute," said Shurkey, "'Can't smell a thing.' The smell! That could be the clue. It's elementary, my dear Miss Purple. The strange smell is a clue. Where is it coming from?"

Shurkey proceeded to sniff her way around the room until she finally located the root of the smell. The curator was already there starting to pick it up. It was a stinky sock.

"How did this get here," Shurkey thought aloud.

"I have no idea," replied Miss Purple.

"Me too," said the curator, "How could that have gotten there?"

Shurkey turned the sock this way and that in her hands until a small piece of paper fell from it.

Miss Purple picked up the paper and read, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

She continued, "That's like the character for today, Tabitha! Tabitha was blessed because she didn't worry about wealth and popularity, she just wanted to help others. She really cared and because of that she was so loved that it was like she was the most important person around."

"That's certainly true about Tabitha," said the curator, "It's too bad we'll never find her portrait."

"Never fear," said Shurkey, "I have a feeling I'm closing in on the culprit. We will have this one solved soon!"

"I sure hope so," said Miss Purple. "I don't want anything to dampen my final performance tomorrow. I think it will be my best one yet. I can't wait to see you all back here tomorrow at the mystery museum."

## Episode Five: Case Closed

The curator was straight to business on the kids' last day at the museum.

As the kids arrived, the curator immediately introduced Miss Purple, "It's time for our final performance by Miss Purple. Today she is playing the part of Miriam."

Miss Purple entered as usual through the curtain in front of the portrait wall.

She introduced herself, "I am Miriam and I am a fearless prophet. I lived long ago in the land of Egypt and my people were enslaved by the Egyptians. I remember that when I was very young all of my people's little boys were taken away, but my mother put my little brother in a basket on the Nile River. I followed that basket down the river and into the palace of the princess. When she found my brother I ran up to her and asked if I should go get a servant to take care of him. I secretly brought my mother so that he could be raised by his family and still become a prince of Egypt. That little brother was Moses and I am his sister Miriam. As a prophet I listened to God and helped the people escape slavery and find the promised land."

"Miriam really did do all of that," the curator added.

Miss Purple flung the curtain aside to make her exit and discovered the final portrait missing and said, "Another portrait is gone! This is the last one. What are we going to do?"

Shurkey jumped forward, "We are going to solve this case. I'm not waiting around. Let's find a clue right now! There has to be something out of the ordinary here that would give us a clue."

"There's a note right here," said Miss Purple.

"That was fast," said the curator.

Shurkey reached out her hand for the scrap of paper and Miss Purple gave it to her so she read it aloud, "This one says, 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.' It's another beatitude from Jesus! What do all of these things mean?"

"We don't know. You're the detective," Miss Purple replied.

"I think if we get on with our day, the solution might simply appear," said the curator.

"I suppose that might be true, but shouldn't we—," Miss Purple was not even able to finish her question before the curator was ushering her and the kids out of the portrait gallery.

She thought Shurkey might protest but she just stood staring at the empty portrait wall.

*Later that day...*

The kids had a great time in the Ancient Egypt Experience. They got to see mummies, giant statues, and a replica of a pyramid that they could even climb on. The kids' favorite part of the exhibit seemed to be the giant wall of hieroglyphs. These were the special drawings that Egyptians used as their language. They looked wonderful and mysterious on the wall. The kids enjoyed using the guidebooks nearby to try to translate what the wall said. The curator was even there to help them.

The curator also had a clipboard and was asking the kids a question, "What is your favorite book?"

Each answer was written down on the clipboard. The curator even asked Miss Purple.

"*Hamlet*, of course," she replied. "Why are you asking everyone for their favorite book anyway?"

The curator turned to her with a big smile and said, "I'm part of a special team starting a new library here in town. We already have lots of old books here at the museum that I'm willing to let go of but we don't have any books for kids. A special donor has offered to buy the children's books; we just have to come up with the right list of books to get."

"Curator?" Miss Purple keenly asked.

"Yes, Miss Purple?" the curator replied.

"Are you the special donor?" she asked.

"Let's just say that a couple of the mystery museum statues have been sold to another museum, and they just happen to be the same price as a 1,000 kid's books."

A few of the kids heard this whole conversation. They hadn't realized how much the curator cared about kids like them. These kids also noticed the weird painting hanging by the "favorite book" clipboard station. It featured a woman wearing sunglasses and holding a speaker. The painting's plaque read, "Blarem."



*Even later that day...*

The curator led the kids from the Ancient Egypt Experience back to the portrait gallery at the entrance to the museum. Some extra guests were there for the week's finale. They included the museum's art, science, music, story, and games experts. Shurkey Holmes was already there looking

intently at the odd painting by the wheelchair entrance with the plaque that said, "Treester."

Shurkey waited until all the kids came in and then said, "I've solved the case."

Everyone was surprised.

Shurkey continued, "That's right. I've solved *The Case of the Missing Portraits*."

Everyone watched as Shurkey reached up to the painting. Some of the kids even gasped as she pulled off the hat and the axe. Finally Shurkey removed the "Treester" plaque revealing that it was covering up an original plaque that read, "Esther."

"This is the missing Esther portrait," Shurkey stated confidently, "I even know where all the portraits are located. You'll find them hidden throughout the museum with fake disguises and plaques like this one."

"How could that be?" asked Miss Purple.

"That could be because the mastermind of the whole plan place them there, and that mastermind is—"

"Stop," a new voice rang out across the room. It was the museum's art expert confessing, "I did it!"

"No I did it," said the museum's science expert.

"It was me," said the museum's storytelling expert.

"I took the portrait," said the museum's music expert.

"I'm the one who did it," said the museum's games expert.

"What in the world is going on here?" exclaimed Miss Purple, "Did everyone do it?"

"Not everyone," said Shurkey, "But the whole museum staff did work together to pull it all off. My only question is why?"

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. That's why," said the art expert.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. That's why," said the science expert.

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth," said the story expert.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," said the music expert.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God," said the games expert.

"Of course! It all makes sense now," said Shurkey, "These leaders took these portraits because they were inspired by the Bible characters in the portraits."

"Oh I see," said Miss Purple, "I got to be each of those characters for a just a little bit. Esther, Mary Magdalene, Deborah, Tabitha, and Miriam all inspired me to be like them. These museum experts just moved the portraits to the places in the museum where they really belong."

"And the mastermind of the whole thing... was the curator," said Shurkey.

"The curator, but that's not possible," said Miss Purple, "Each painting has gone missing during one of my performances. The curator was right in front of everyone during each of those performances."

"How true," said Shurkey, "That's the brilliance of this plan. Let's consider the clues. We discovered a note on the accessibility plan pamphlet. We found a note with the phone that had invisible hero trailers. We found a note with the vacuum filled with garden soil. We found the note with the stinky sock. And today we found another note."

"There wasn't anything special with that note," Miss Purple pointed out.

"That's what I thought at first," Shurkey replied, "But I had a suspicion, so I went and checked the note against the "favorite book" clipboard. They're using the same type of paper!"

"That's the clipboard that the curator was using," said Miss Purple, "In fact, the curator also had smelly socks in the new clothing room by the Ancient China Area. The curator had soil in the Medieval Europe Encounter's garden. The curator even had building bricks at the "free therapy" station in the Hall of Inventions. And now that I think of it, the curator was pretty proud of the special accessibility plan too. The curator did do it! But how? Nevermind how, arrest the curator!"

The curator stood in silence for another moment then finally said, "How could I do anything else after I learned about Jesus' beatitudes? I had to get out into the world to be the sort of person that Jesus said was blessed. These characters and Jesus' beatitudes teach us that being blessed means making yourself a blessing to others through including others, sharing God's love, protecting others, serving others, and making peace! I had to make the museum share that same message."

The curator looked sadly at Shurkey, "I guess you'll have to arrest me now."

"Actually," said Shurkey, "I don't have to arrest you at all. The portraits are still in the museum, and as the curator you're in charge of the portraits and all the exhibits which means you can put them wherever you like. No crime has been committed. In fact, I think you've done a really good thing."

"Do you really think so?" asked the curator.

"I sure do!" Miss Purple chimed in.

"That's a huge relief," said the curator. "I've been nervous all week long about you solving the case."

"It was my pleasure to solve this case, even if it turned out not be a crime I was solving but instead a mystery of faithfulness," said Shurkey, "This might be my greatest case of all. *The Case of the Missing Portraits*, where the portraits weren't really missing, they were telling the amazing story of God's love. Case closed."