

*The Case of the
Missing Portraits:
A Shurkey Holmes
Whodunnit?*



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 hot. 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."