

*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."

