THE PILFERED PAINTINGS



Case Ten
22 January, 1891



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We are sitting around the fire at 221B Baker Street listening to Holmes pontificate on the stories from the morning paper when we are interrupted by the frantic clanging of the doorbell. A tall white-haired gentleman in his late fifties is immediately shown in by Mrs. Hudson. Holmes rises from his chair, removing his cherry wood pipe from his mouth, and says, "Ah, Sir Simpson, a not unexpected pleasure to see you. We have been talking, as is all of London, about the theft of the two de Kuyper paintings from the National Gallery last night, so a visit from the Gallery's director is not a surprise. Won't you sit down and tell us what you know of this unfortunate affair?"

Holmes has walked over to the fireplace and is refilling his pipe with tobacco from the Persian slipper that hangs from the mantel. Sir Simpson Whitcomb wearily lowers his tall frame into the chair that Holmes has just vacated and begins his story. "As you may know, about six months ago, July 1st to be exact, an auction was held at Armitage's Gallery for two recently discovered de Kuypers. Before that time there were only six known paintings by that great, but elusive master. Four are in the Louvre in Paris, one in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and one in the private collection of Lord Winslow Smedley of London. So, you can imagine what excitement was caused in the art world when those two paintings were put up for auction. In May, when my head curator, Brady Norris, returned from his holiday in Belgium, he informed me of the impending sale. I immediately went to the Gallery's Directors for authorization to purchase the paintings. As you know, I was successful at the auction and the paintings went to the National Gallery for 125,000 pounds, a large sum but less than we had anticipated. We were fortunate that the auction was held in London on such short notice so many of the buyers who would have raised the bidding were unable to attend.

"The National Gallery has always taken pride in its collection of Flemish and Dutch paintings. The masterpieces of Rubens and Rembrandt have always been popular with the British public, and the de Kuypers were not disappointing in that respect. The de Kuypers became the focal point of the Flemish Room. I am sure you understand the fascination people feel when faced with objects as rare as the de Kuypers. I became absorbed and fascinated with the idea of bringing together all the known de Kuypers. All of the owners of the de Kuypers agreed and in two days the show was to have opened. Now it is postponed, I hope not forever. This could irreparably damage the Gallery, Mr. Holmes."

Holmes, who has been standing in front of the fire, eyes fixed on the flames, now turns and faces Sir Simpson. "Surely the paintings are insured, Sir Simpson?"

"Yes, of course. By Lloyd's. It is the loss of confidence in the Gallery's security that worries me. Other museums will not allow their paintings to be shown if we cannot guarantee their safe-keeping. I have just come from the Metropole Hotel where I met with Jean-Paul Beauclair, the curator of the Louvre, and he will not allow the four de Kuypers in his custody to be hung at the National Gallery for fear they will be in danger. I fear the same response from Amsterdam and Lord Smedley, not to mention all of the future exhibitions that may be cancelled if our security remains in doubt."

"One question, Sir Simpson. Was the show well-publicized?"

"Yes, indeed. It has been public knowledge for weeks. We had no reason to keep it secret. We were anticipat-

ing a large and enthusiastic response from the public.

"When were the other paintings to be hung in the gallery?"

"Tomorrow, Mr. Holmes.'

"And was this also public knowledge?"

"Yes. It was. The press had been invited and a small ceremony had been planned."

"And where are the other paintings now?"

"The Louvre collection is now at the French Embassy. The Rijksmuseum's de Kuyper is in our storeroom. We were to pick up Lord Smedley's in the morning at his London townhouse."

"Thank you, Sir Simpson. I think we have all the facts now. Hopefully, we will be able to clear this matter up in a short time. If we shall need to ask you more questions later, where will we be able to reach you?"

"I will be at my home. Please feel free to call."



AREA SE

6 SE

At the office of Cummins and Goins we ask the dispatcher about the delivery to the National Gallery.

"Okay, sure, let me just find the delivery order. Here it is, from Brady Morris, January 21, 5:30 p.m., pick up 3 crates at 38 Blackfriar's Bridge-road and deliver to the National Gallery!"

11 SE

Constable Lane is standing outside the blackened door to Matthew Cole's room at the Dover Rooms and informs us that the Yard suspects foul play. "At about 2 o'clock this morning a fire started in Mr. Cole's room. Fortunately, it was put out before it spread to any other part of the building. Mr. Cole's body has been sent to St. Bartholemew's Hospital; some of the charred debris from the room was sent to Murray at the Criminology Laboratory for examination."

The doorman informs us, "Mr. Cole has lived here for the past two months. He kept pretty much to himself, and he did not seem to be employed, for he spent a great deal of time in the pubs in the area. I have seen him myself at the Red Boar Inn."

23 SE

Charlie Pickens, one of the three guards of the National Gallery, repeats to us the testimony he gave to Scotland Yard. "At the time the alarm sounded, I was on patrol outside the Gallery. At the moment, I was talking to Constable Parks at the Northeast corner of the Gallery. At the sound of the alarm I went immediately to the east door to stand guard. Constable Parks ran behind the Gallery toward Whitcomb-street blowing his whistle to summon aid."

34 SE

The bartender says that the last time he saw Matthew Cole was two days ago. "Matt has become one of our regular customers over the last few months. Why, just the other day he was here with a heavy-set gentleman who walked with a limp and carried a cane. They spent over an hour here in deep conversation. I didn't recognize the gent, but since he was buying all of the drinks, Matt consumed more than was his wont."

38 SE

We find the owner of the warehouse, Jim Hodges, who tells us, "The warehouse was rented until yesterday by a Mr. Matthew Cole, who had rented it for the week previous. It doesn't look like he did much work in here – it looks like it did before I gave it to him."

AREA SW

2 SW

Langdale Pike has secreted himself away in a corner of the Societies Club in order to avoid his admirers. He does not look well. "Oooh, my poor head. I believe I had too much to drink at Dame Agnes' bash last night."

"What did you hear there that might be of interest to us?" says Wiggins, apparently too loudly for Pike's liking, as he clutches the sides of his head and rocks back and forth at the sound of Wiggins' voice.

"I heard many things, but nothing quite as loud as that." He pauses for a moment to let the pain in his head subside. "Pierre Donet dominated the festivities, I must say. I could hardly get a word in edgewise. The man certainly has placed himself in the position of art expert. I bet he knows more about those paintings than de Kuyper did himself. Oh, and that Mr. Hypsilanti and his barbaric Greek drinking customs. I don't blame the man, though; he surely was drowning his sorrows."

"His sorrows?"

"He rushed all the way from Greece to bid on the de Kuypers and missed the bidding just by a minute. He travelled three thousand miles and was a minute late. A tragedy, for him at least. I left early because I had other engagements," he closes his eyes in pain, "but I did not leave early enough. Oooh." We take our leave as quickly as possible.

5 SW

We find listed in the Encyclopaedia of Famous Artists:

De Kuyper, Jan (1580-1612). A student of Rubens and a painter in Rubens' studio until his death in 1612. Little is known of his life and none of his work was known until recently. In 1872 the painting Lady in a Rose Garden was discovered in a Brussels church attic by art expert Pierre Donet who attributed it to de Kuyper. This painting now hangs in the Rijks-

museum in Amsterdam. Since then five other paintings, The Unicorn and the Princess, two untitled still-lifes, and his masterpiece, the large Sunset in the Ardennes, all in the collection of the Louvre, and Apple Orchard, in the private collection of Lord Winslow Smedley of London, have been discovered. His paintings indicate an understanding of colour that was to be seen in our time by the impressionist painters, but painted in the bold strokes becoming a student of Rubens. For a thorough study of de Kuyper's style, see Style and Colour of de Kuyper by Jean-Paul Beauclair (Paris, 1878).

7 SW

The barman at the Carleton points his thumb toward alone figure at the end of the bar. "That's him, that's Sir Herbert," he says.

We move down to the end of the bar and join the tall, thin, bearded man.

"Sir Herbert?"

"Yes."

"Could we speak with you for a moment?"

"About what?" Sir Herbert pours himself another brandy from the bottle in front of him.

"About the de Kuyper paintings that were stolen last night from the National Gallery."

"What do I look like, an art lover? I don't know anything about the de Kuypers. Who says I do?"

"Were you not one of the bidders at the Armitage auction?"

He pours himself another drink and downs it before answering. "I was acting for someone else."

"For whom?"

"I can't tell you that. If they wanted to be known they wouldn't have hired me, now would they?"

"Do you know Brady Norris?"

"Yes, we were at Oxford together."

"When was the last time you saw him?"

"I don't remember. We bump into each other from time to time, but we're not close friends."

"Where were you last night around 11?"

"Look, I spend a lot of money on drinks so that I won't remember where I am. Hey, Billy! Bring me another bottle, this one's dead," yells Sir Herbert to the bar-man as he drains the bottle. Billy brings a new one.

"Was I here last night, Billy?"

"For a little while, Sir Herbert."

"Well, I guess you'll have to check the other bars if you want to find out where I was. Hey, who the hell are you guys anyway?"

"We're helping Sir Simpson investigate the theft."

"Well, I don't know anything about it, so why don't you let a man drink in peace."

8 SW

We are informed at the Diogenes Club that Mycroft Holmes is at work where he does not entertain visitors.

13 SW

"I'm convinced this theft was an inside job," says Gregson, when we ask him about the National Gallery investigation. "All the evidence indicates the thief had a key. He appears to have exited through an open window in one of the offices. We're checking out all the guards and the Gallery's staff, and we'll find our man, I have no doubt. But I'm not prepared to name any suspects at this time."

22 SW

Murray is at work at one of the tables littered with chemical paraphernalia. He is in the process of pouring a light brown liquid from a flask into a beaker. He looks at it for a moment and then reaches for another beaker containing a white liquid which he pours into the first beaker. With a glass rod he stirs the mixture into a light tan liquid.

"Mr. Murray, can we talk to you for a moment?"

Murray looks up, lifting his head so that he can see through the glasses that rest precariously on the end of his nose.

"Ah, Waggins, how are you?"

"It's Wiggins, sir. Do you have time to give us some information?"

"Yes, it's tea time. Would you care for some?" He reaches for the beaker on the table in front of him and takes a sip. "No, thank you."

"Suit yourself. Let's see, I bet I know what Holmes would be interested in – 914, the debris from the fire at Matthew Cole's room. The debris consisted of wood, probably the broken remains of a chair, and a piece of a canvas oil painting. They were saturated with kerosene, so I think there is little doubt that this fire was arson. Some of the wood has smears of Prussian blue paint and there was a segment of canvas about 30x50 cm. which I sent over to my brother Mortimer to examine. He's an expert on paint pigment and teaches chemistry at London University.

"Now that I look at it, that's the only case I have received today. If you are looking for anything else, I can't help you."

"Thank you, sir. Enjoy your tea."

56 SW

The butler admits us to the stately mansion of Lord Winslow Smedley and ushers us into a sunny sitting room. We glimpse numerous paintings adorning the walls of the rooms we pass as well as the room where we wait for Lord Smedley. He does not keep us waiting long.

"I understand that you are assisting the authorities. I am not sure how I might help, but I am anxious to co-operate in any way. What can I do for you?"

"What can you tell us about your de Kuyper, sir?"

"I thought myself quite lucky several years ago when M. Donet put me in touch with a Dutch gentleman who had a de Kuyper for sale. It has been the pride of my collection ever since. I shared Sir Simpson's excitement at the prospect of bringing together all the de Kuypers. I can even admit to a bit of pride in being able to supply another 'English' de Kuyper. I certainly hope the paintings are recovered soon."

"May we ask where your painting is now?"

"Yes. I deposited it in the vault of Cox and Company until this matter is cleared up."



AREA NW

1 NW

The nanny tells us that Mr Davenport is, as is his habit, at the office at this time. As we leave, she says "See you soon." with a conspiratorial tone.

18 NW

"Nothing for you today," says Parsons.

19 NW

The maitre d' of Haxell's answers our question:

"Yes, I know Angelo Hypsilanti and Clifton Maddox. They were here last night. Arrived around 10:30 and went straight to the bar. At 11 they were joined by two, uh... er... ladies. They were a rather loud party and went through quite a few bottles of the bubbly."

"What time did they leave?"

"About 2, as I recall."

"Did you happen to overhear where they were going?"

"No. I do know they didn't take a cab, though. They were walking down Whitcomb-street when I last saw them, singing at the tops of their voices. Not very good voices, I might add."

21 NW

We are shown into the well-appointed office of Joseph Armitage. He greets us from behind his desk and motions us to take the empty chairs arranged before him. He is a small man and his slight frame is almost lost in his large leather chair. His thinning hair and pale delicate features make him appear as fragile as the porcelain that decorates his office. "I understand you are here in conjunction with the de Kuyper theft. How may I help you?" asks Armitage.

"Could you give us details leading up to and including the sale of the de Kuyper paintings?"

"I suppose so. For the most part it is public knowledge. It was early June, let me see if I can find the exact date." Armitage opens a leather book that is lying on the desk. Yes, here it is, June 10. On that date I received a visit from Hiram Davenport, a solicitor here in London, who informed me that his client had two paintings by de Kuyper that he wished to auction. This, of course, sparked my interest. It is not every day that such extraordinary paintings are offered for sale. I told him that it would be an honour to handle the sale. My euphoria abated as I learned of the conditions of

the sale."

"And which were those conditions?"

"That the auction had to be held on July 1st and that a public announcement was not to be made until June 23rd! Only one week advance notice! I was flabbergasted. The auction of two de Kuypers would be the art event of the year and two months' notice would not be unreasonable. Unreasonable? It was the only reasonable thing to do. And, as if that were not enough, Mr. Davenport informed me that they had to be sold as a pair. A pair! Well, I informed Mr. Davenport that his client would stand to lose a great deal of potential profit through these restrictions. Davenport said his instructions were clear and immutable. If I could not meet the conditions, then he would have to find an auction house that could. Of course, I accepted."

"Weren't you suspicious? It seems that these are very unusual conditions, or am I wrong?"

Armitage rises from his chair and walks over to the ornate sideboard decorating the left wall of his office. He pauses, his eyes transfixed by the delicate porcelain displayed there. After a moment he turns to us and says, "You must understand. Armitage's is not your local shoe emporium. For three generations we have been the most prestigious auction gallery in London, no, in the world. You get that reputation by putting before the public the best and rarest of objects, not by turning them away. What could be rarer than paintings by de Kuyper? The papers were in order. A Certificate of Authenticity signed by Pierre Donet, the well-known de Kuyper expert. Export papers approved by the Belgian government. Everything was in order. I have been head of Armitage's for twenty years and have dealt with some very eccentric clients. It is our duty to serve the client, to advise him on how he can get the best return on his sale, but in the end it is his decision on how the sale will be handled."

"So you do not know who the seller was?"

"No, I dealt only with Mr. Davenport. I am not sure that he was himself aware of the client's identity. This is not as unusual as it may seem. Many times a seller may wish to keep secret his sale. Most people sell when they are in need of money and for personal and business reasons don't want that fact made public."

"What can you tell us about the auction itself?"

"Not much more than what was in the papers at the time. Unfortunately, it went as I had expected. Due to the short public notice many of the bidders did not show. Sir Simpson Whitcomb was the successful bidder, as you know. I must admit the paintings brought more than I had expected. I had told Mr. Davenport at the time that the bidding might be as low as 80,000 pounds, which is what I had expected. So, when the paintings went for 125,000 pounds, I was pleased."

"Why did they go for more than you had expected?"

"There was some very energetic bidding from Sir Herbert Cofman and Dame Agnes Smedley."

"What can you tell us about them?"

"Not much. Dame Agnes is a frequent participant at art auctions. She bids early but usually drops out once the bidding gets serious. She has gotten some bargains this way. But she is not what I would call a serious bidder. Sir Herbert Cofman comes from a well-known family. His father was a railway magnate and was serving in the Cabinet when he died. My dealings with Sir Herbert have been on the other end. I don't think it is any secret that he has been selling off his family heirlooms over the past year. I assume he was looking to pick up the de Kuypers cheap and resell them for a profit."

"And those were the only bidders?"

"Yes, for all practical purposes. Of course there were other bids but nothing serious. Unfortunately, Angelo Hypsilanti arrived after the bidding had closed."

"The Greek shipping tycoon?"

"Oh, you haven't heard about this?" Armitage returns to his seat behind the desk. Placing his elbows upon the desk and bending his head in our direction, he continues, "Moments after I had closed the bidding Angelo Hypsilanti dashed into the hall. When I told him that he had missed the de Kuypers by minutes, he demanded that the bidding be reopened. I informed him, of course, that once the gavel had fallen the bidding is closed. He was furious. It seems that when he heard of the sale he had rushed here from Greece to participate."

"What can you tell us about him?"

"He is an enigma in the art world. A man of great wealth with a passion for art. You can find him at most art auctions. It is rumoured that his private collection is one of the best in the world. Last year he bought at auction Rubens' The Kings for 150,000 pounds. I don't know much more than that. That's all I can recall."

30 NW

At the Claridge hotel, the receptionist gives us a bit of information about the events of the previous evening. "Midnight? Yes, I was on duty. I get off at 12:30. I do remember a man, quite heavy, walked with a limp and used a cane. He requested that I send a bellboy to Sir Herbert's room and ask him to come to the lobby. About five minutes later Sir Herbert came down,

talked to the gentleman for a few minutes, and then asked me to have his carriage brought around. Both men left together in Sir Herbert's carriage. They were driving away as I was leaving."

"Is Sir Herbert in his room now?"

"No, he left about an hour ago."

"Did he say where he was going?"

"No, but I do know that he spends a lot of time at the Carleton and at Bell's Baths. But I'm not sure that's where he went."

"Thanks for your help."

36 NW

Pierre Donet receives us in the bar at the Langham Hotel. He is a tall, thin man in his late fifties with salt and pepper hair and a Vandyke beard. He is nattily dressed in the latest Continental style. Donet waves us into the vacant chairs at his table.

"What can you tell us about the theft of the de Kuypers?"

"Nothing, I am afraid. I only arrived in London yesterday afternoon. I had only enough time to settle into the hotel and prepare myself for Dame Agnes' dinner party. I learned of the theft at the party. Such a great tragedy, the loss of two priceless masterpieces after being so recently found."

"What can you tell us about the paintings themselves?"

"Oh, such a beautiful pair of paintings. Summer Solstice has such vibrancy, such brilliant colour. It has that sense of colour which has become the hallmark of de Kuyper. And The Blue Unicorn, it has such soul, the eyes were..."

"We are more interested in where the paintings came from, actually. Could you tell us who the seller was?"

"No, I can't be of much help there. I don't know who the seller was."

"You signed the Certificate of Authenticity, did you not?"

"Yes, I did. I was approached by Mr. Rudolf Steiner, a Berlin lawyer. He was representing a client who owned the two de Kuyper paintings which he wished to have authenticated. This was the first I had heard of these de Kuyper. I tried to find out more about their origins, but Mr. Steiner could not, or would not, tell me any more than that his client wished to remain anonymous and that he was only authorized to show me the paintings. Of course I had to see the paintings, if nothing else. The next day I went to his hotel room and saw them."

"And when was this?"

"Let me see, it would have been the first week of June. June 5th of last year, I believe."

"There was no doubt they were de Kuypers?"

Donet retrieves the bottle of Montrachet from the cooler and refills his wine glass. After he replaces the bottle he continues, "You must understand that authenticating a work of art is not an exact science. I must admit that I had my doubts, but they all vanished once I entered that hotel room. Even from the doorway there was little doubt that what I saw were de Kuypers. Upon close examination I was convinced that they were indeed painted by de Kuyper. For five hours I went over those paintings and could find no fault. The signatures matched, the use of colour, the brush strokes, the type of canvas, everything was in order. What we look for is something out of order. We know nothing of de Kuyper's life. No diaries, no letters, no bills of sale, only his name mentioned by Rubens in two of his letters. We only know the dates of his birth and death from a letter which Rubens wrote in July of 1612 in which he states, 'I am saddened by the death, at age 32, of one of my students, Jan de Kuyper, who held great promise.' That is about all we know of him."

"So you saw the paintings only that one time?"

"No, I saw them a week or so later. On the 15th, I think it was. I was asked by Mr. Steiner to verify that the paintings he was turning over to a man from Lloyd's were the same as those I had authenticated. They were. That was the last I saw of them."

"So you have no knowledge pertaining to the theft?"

"No, I am an artist not a policeman. More Montrachet?"

41 NW

Gordon Dickey explains to us in detail the events of last evening. "I started my rounds at approximately 11:25. I reached Gallery 12 at approximately 11:35 and noted the empty frames where the de Kuyper paintings should have been and sounded the alarm. When Mike arrived he sent me to check the loading entry. I unlocked the office wing door and ran to the loading dock door. It was still locked and barred from the inside. I unlocked the storeroom door and found the art objects there undisturbed. I then checked each of the offices. In Mr. Norris' office I noticed the window unlatched, but everything else in the office seemed in order. A check of Sir Simpson's office, the secretarial office and the library showed everything to be in order. I then stood guard in the office wing until the arrival of the police."

42 NW

"Come now, Wiggins, after all these cases, don't tell me you still need my help," Holmes says to us. "I think you have in hand about all the elements you need to solve this case, now."

47 NW

We await Dame Agnes in her library where we notice several familiar miniature statues including a Venus de Milo. When she joins us we find her to be quite loquacious. "The party that I gave last evening was in honour of the exhibition of the de Kuyper paintings. I invited as my special guest of honour M. Pierre Donet, the discoverer of Lady in a Rose Garden, the first known de Kuyper painting. His presence caused quite a stir of excitement among the guests. M. Beauclair, an old friend of M. Donet's, was very happy to see him. My brother Lord Smedley and Sir Simpson congratulated me for thinking of bringing M. Donet over from Belgium for the opening. Mr. Norris, usually such an outgoing young man, seemed a little taken aback by M. Donet's presence and did not contribute to the evening's conversation as I had hoped. Mr. Hypsilanti and his friend Clifton Maddox added just the right dash of excitement to the affair. M. Donet was the toast of the party, entertaining us all with his jovial anecdotes. His enlightened discussions with M. Beauclair enhanced the appreciation of us all for de Kuyper. Mr. Hypsilanti and Mr. Maddox left early, around 10 o'clock, if I remember correctly, so they were not here when the constable arrived at nearly mid-night with word of the theft. Mr. Norris left immediately, and, after getting the full story from the constable, Sir Simpson asked Lord Smedley if he would be kind enough to drop his wife off at their home so that he could attend matters at the Gallery. Messrs. Beauclair and Donet left together intending, I believe, to have a drink at the Langham Hotel, where M. Donet is staying."

AREA WC

5 WC

"Blimey, Wiggins, don't ya know how much trouble you be putting me to with all these questions you be asking?"

"Come on, Jimmy," says Wiggins, in the humble tone he reserves for his favourite carriage dispatcher, "you know how I appreciate your help. Us blokes got to help each other."

"You be a sweet talker, Wiggins, what time did you say, lad?"

"We'd like to know about two cabs which picked up fares at 47 Upper Gloucester-place. One at 10 o'clock and the other at mid-night. Where did they take their passengers?"

"Okay, let me see what I can find." He picks up the previous night's driver logs and starts going through them. "Ah, here we are. At 10, two people were picked up and taken to Haxell's. At midnight, one passenger was picked up and taken to the Claridge Hotel. So, what else do you need?"

"That's all we need, Jimmy. Thanks."

13 WC

Hiram Davenport listens to our tale and answers our question. "I suppose it will do no harm to tell you that I arranged the auction of the paintings with Armitages according to the instructions of a Berlin lawyer, Mr. Rudolf Steiner."

14 WC

Disraeli O'Brian greets us as we enter the Hall of Records. "Hello, Wiggins. You're usually here ahead of Scotland Yard, but Gregson beat you this time."

"What was he looking for Mr. O'Brian?"

"Well, he had me pull a few police records on suspected and convicted art thieves. Here they are:

Errol Hawk - Convicted of stealing jewels and a small painting in 1887. Released from Millbank in 1890. Convicted of murder in the case of Oswald Mason in 1890. Now awaiting execution at Millbank Prison.

Clifton Maddox - Arrested in 1889 on suspicion of involvement in the theft of a Turner painting from the London home of Sir Charles Chandos. Tried and acquitted.

Jimmy Macbeath - Suspected in several art thefts in London and environs in 1890. Never apprehended

or tried. Whereabouts unknown.

17 WC

At Somerset House we are unable to find any information of note on any of the names we have encountered so far in the case.

20 WC

Brady Norris rests his massive weight on his thick oak cane. His left leg is visibly shorter than the right. This is compensated for by a specially built shoe.

"Yes, Sir Simpson did mention that you might be by to talk with me," responds Norris to Wiggins' introduction. "He said to co-operate with you, so I guess you can come in."

We follow the slow-moving figure down the hall and around the corner into Norris' study. Norris slowly lowers his sizable physique into a large chair. He continues to hold his cane between his legs, resting his right hand on its heavy silver handle. Norris is in his mid-thirties with thick, black, curly hair and long side-burns framing his round face. He looks at us with large brown eyes.

"I don't see how. I can be of much help to you. I was at Dame Agnes' dinner party when the robbery took place. I don't know any more than what I read in the paper."

"Right now we're just trying to piece together what happened. If you could just answer a few questions it might clear up some points for us."

"What is it that you want to know?" sighs Norris.

"Do you have any idea who might be responsible for the theft of the paintings?"

"No, no idea at all."

"Do you have any idea how the thieves might have gotten into the museum?"

"No."

"We understand that you were one of the last people to leave the museum on the night of the theft. Is it normal for the museum to receive shipments after the museum is closed?"

"Normal? No, but I have no control over when the shipments arrive. I was simply informed by the shipping company that it would arrive at that time."

"What was in the shipment?"

"Some sculpture that the museum had purchased."

"Were the de Kuypers the most valuable paintings in the museum or in gallery 12?"

"No, of course not."

"Then why do you think that only the de Kuypers were stolen?"

"I have no idea. I'm a curator not a policeman. I really don't see what good these questions are doing; I've told you I don't know anything."

"Just a couple more questions, Mr. Norris. After you left Dame Agnes' house last night, where did you go?"

"I came directly home and went to bed, and that is what I'm going to do now. I've told you all I know. I'm not feeling well, so if you will show yourselves out, I will bid you a good day."

22 WC

At the Grand Hotel, the clerk winces when he hears us talk about Angelo Hypsilanti. "Yes, we have the dubious pleasure of having Angelo Hypsilanti as a guest. Last night, I hear, the manager was not too happy with him. I understand that he came in with some friends and they created quite a ruckus – singing and dancing in the lobby. They really tied one on. I guess Mr. Hypsilanti is paying the price for it this morning; he left word not to be disturbed under any circumstances."

24 WC

Michael Balfe, the head guard, is waiting for us when we arrive at the National Gallery.

"Were you on duty last night?"

"Yes, I was. There were four guards on duty when the thefts occurred: myself, Gordon Dickey, Warren Early and Charlie Pickens. Our shift starts at 4 p.m. each day and the routine never varies. Upon our arrival at 4 o'clock we prepare the Gallery for its closing at 5, and the day of the robbery was no exception. By quarter past 5, all of the employees of the Gallery had left with the exception of Sir Simpson and Mr. Norris. It is their custom to remain until the Gallery is secured. At half past 5, Sir Simpson informed me that he was going to his home and I personally let him out through the main entrance. Mr. Norris informed us that he was staying on because he was expecting a delivery. At approximately a quarter to 6, a Cummins and Goins delivery wagon arrived. Charlie and I helped Mr. Norris and the delivery men to unload one large crate and two smaller crates bearing the stencil of Jardine's into the storeroom through the loading dock door. After the delivery men had left, Charlie locked and barred the loading dock door. I left Mr. Norris in the storeroom to check his shipment and returned to the guard room. At half past 6, Mr. Norris informed me that he had locked the storeroom and that he would be leaving for the evening. I let him out through the main entrance. I

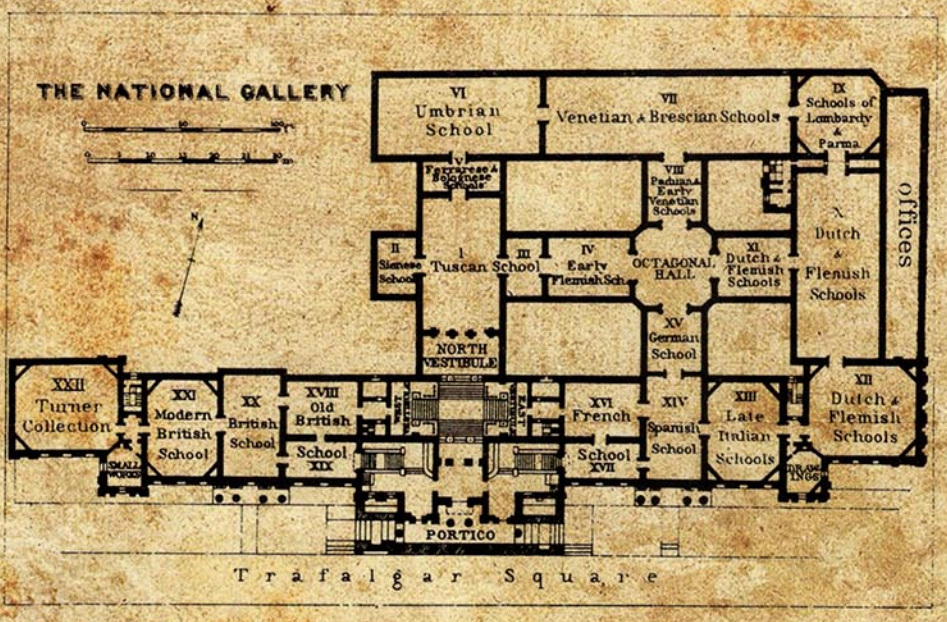
then made my rounds, checking all of the doors in the office wing to make sure they were secured, and I locked the door to the office wing.

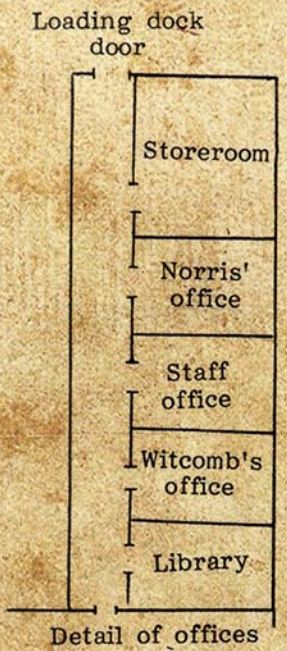
"At 7, the bell rang at the main entrance and there was Sir Simpson in the company of a French gentleman, whom Sir Simpson introduced as the curator of the Louvre. He informed me that he wished to show Mr. Beauclair the gallery in which the de Kuypers were hanging. I accompanied them to gallery 12 and waited there while they admired the two paintings and discussed the placement of the other de Kuypers for the show. At half past 7, I showed them out through the main entrance and locked the door when they left. As he was leaving, Sir Simpson informed me that he would be at Dame Agnes Smedley's for the evening should he be needed.

"Our routine consists of having one guard on patrol outside the Gallery and two patrolling inside, with the fourth remaining in the guard room by the main entrance. One of the inside patrols covers the British west wing coming back through the north vestibule, octagonal hall and back around to the entrance. The other follows a counterclockwise route through the east wing, checking the office wing as he passes the Dutch and Flemish rooms before passing through the northern galleries and the vestibules..

"I took the 11 o'clock rounds through the east wing. At that time, which would have been around 11:10, the paintings were in their proper place and in good order in Gallery 12. I checked the door that leads to the office wing, then continued on around to the guard room. Then Gordon made his rounds following the same path I had just made, except when he arrived at Gallery 12, he found that the two de Kuyper paintings had been cut from their frames. I answered his alarm – that was about 11:35 – and sent him to check the loading entry and the office wing.

"The only keys to the outside doors are kept in the guard room or in the custody of the patrolling guards. Sir Simpson and Mr. Norris, the only members of the staff to have keys, have keys only to the office wing door and the offices and storeroom in the office wing. Those are the events of that dreadful evening as I remember them. The other guards have given their statements to Scotland Yard and have returned to their homes."





27 WC

The receptionist informs us that Jean-Paul Beauclair has left with an inspector from Scotland Yard. They've asked for a cab to London University. From their conversation, they seemed to be in a hurry to go see someone called Mortimer Murray.

43 WC

We find Mortimer Murray in his office in the midst of a heated debate with Jean-Paul Beauclair. Inspector Lestrade stands to one side watching Beauclair and Murray who are seated at a table. On the table between them is a charred section of a predominantly blue painting, its subject matter no longer recognizable. No one seems to notice us as we enter and stand just inside the door.

"Mr. Beauclair, I am not an art expert, but I am an expert on paint pigments and their chemistry. I am telling you that any art work which contains Prussian blue is not from the seventeenth century; the process to create Prussian blue had not yet been discovered!"

We take the risk of interrupting this discussion between experts to briefly question Jean-Paul Beauclair on the disappearance of the paintings.

"I'm deeply afflicted by the loss of the paintings. Happily, the theft didn't occur while the De Kuyper collection from the Louvre was exposed. I regret not having been able to examine the two paintings carefully. It seems that the circumstances of the auction in which they were acquired by the National Gallery could put into question their authenticity. As the sale took place in such a brief span of time, most of the main buyers of artwork in the world, among which I number, didn't have the chance to be there. There are many people without scruples in the world of art, and I'm certain there are buyers ready to acquire the stolen De Kuyper, buyers who would be so happy to add the paintings to their collection that the means of acquisition would matter little to them. Good God, at the reception at Lady Agnes', last night, there were collectors such as Mr Hypsilanti, and maybe even her own brother, Lord Smedley, who would have no qualms in increasing their personal collection. Happily, the presence of my old friend Pierre Donet allowed me to spend a good evening. Donet is even more of an expert than I am when it comes to De Kuyper. I've known him for a long time, ever since the Beaux-Arts. We were both aspiring to become painters, but fate has chosen otherwise."

Murray suddenly takes the magnifying glass lying on the table, as well as a long and fine needle, and uses it to piece through the painting.

He then looks at the spot with the magnifying glass.

"Look at the smoothness of that hole! Surely you are familiar with the needle test. This paint can't be more than 30 years old at most."

We exit as quietly as we entered, leaving the two men locked in their stubborn argument, neither willing to yield in this battle of science and ego.

AREA EC

4 EC

Warren Early has very little to tell us about the theft. "When the alarm sounded, I went immediately to the main door and stood guard until Scotland Yard arrived."

11 EC

At the Bell Baths, we come up empty-handed. "Sir Herbert Cofman has not been in today."

15 EC

Jardine's informs us that the shipment of Nubian art consigned to the National Gallery was delivered to a warehouse at 38 Blackfriar's Bridge-road on the instructions of Mr. Brady Norris five days ago.

17 EC

We are shown into the office of Frank Peters, underwriter for Lloyd's. "Good afternoon, gentlemen. How may I help you?"

"We understand that you are the insurer of the de Kuypers. What can you tell us?"

"Yes, I am the underwriter for both the National Gallery and for Armitage's Gallery so I have been involved with the de Kuypers from the beginning. On June 12, Joseph Armitage met with me to take out an insurance policy on the two de Kuypers. This is a standard procedure for Armitage's as they are responsible for the articles in their keeping until they are sold. I issued a policy of 100,000 pounds on each painting. I went with Charles Armitage, Joseph's son, to pick up the paintings in Brussels. There we met Pierre Donet and he verified that the paintings we were picking up were the same as those he had authenticated as de Kuypers. When we had done so, we returned

to London and turned the paintings over to Armitage's Gallery. As I said, we also handle the insurance for the National Gallery, so when they acquired the paintings they continued the same policy. I hope the paintings will be recovered. We are offering a 10,000 pound reward."

"Do you have the Certificate of Authenticity in your files?"

"Yes, we keep all of the papers in our vault. I have them here if you would like to see them."

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY

This Certificate certifies that I, Pierre Donet, have examined the two paintings known as Summer Solstice & The Blue Unicorn, and testify that to the best of my knowledge and ability, I ascertain these paintings to be the work of Jan de Kuyper.

Donet

30 EC

Henry Ellis is eager to talk about the theft of the de Kuypers. "I half expected it," he says, "because something seemed fishy about this whole de Kuyper affair from the beginning. Not that I know a thing about art, but my European contacts told me of substantial consternation among elite art collectors over there when they heard that the two paintings were being auctioned on such short notice. It's unprecedented. They're sure there's a reason -- perhaps a behind-the-scenes agreement to exclude certain people from bidding. Who knows? Let me tell you, though, that quite a few people are angry at not getting a chance to bid. And when Europeans get angry..." Henry gives us a wink. We thank him for the tip.

34 EC

Clifton Maddox' landlady tells us that he is not home. "I haven't seen him since yesterday."

35 EC

Quintin Hogg is familiar with the theft and the facts. "A real puzzler. Leaving motive aside, think on the mechanics of the crime. I know the museum guards personally, and can truthfully call them the best guards in London. Alert, punctual, honest and swift when need be. Michael, the head guard, is as honest a man as there is. So – how did the thief get inside? I'm sure the guards carefully locked all the doors and windows. They comb the museum at closings to ensure no one remains inside. And we have no evidence of forced entry. How was it done? Answer that, my friends, and you've solved 90% of the case. The who and why will come easily after that." He wishes us luck.

36 EC

"I know of many criminals who are capable of stealing paintings. Most of them are in jail. You can probably obtain information on them at the Office of Records., However, if it was an inside job, any common thief could have taken part in spiriting away the goods. Once inside the protective wall of the museum, it doesn't take an expert to steal paintings. For all we know, it's a pick-pocket, moving up in class, that you're tracking down. That would be a kick, eh?" Edward Hall kicks his leg once and heads quickly off in the direction of the criminal court.

38 EC

"Sir Jasper, have you done an autopsy on the body of Matthew Cole?"

"Indeed, I have. I can tell you that Mr. Cole died from a blow to the head. Absence of smoke in the lungs indicates that he was dead before the fire started."

52 EC

"Hey, mates, what brings you to this neighbourhood?" "Hello, Porky. We're working on the National Gallery theft. Can you help us out?"

"Gees, picture pinchin' is out o' my league. I don't know anything about that. I hear that Greek bloke is talkin' to Maddox and you know what they say about him."

"What do they say?"

"Well, they say that Greek bloke will do anything for a picture he wants. And Maddox is rumoured to have obliged some folks in that area. But they're just rumours, mind you."



Questions

Part One

1. Who was responsible for the theft of the de Kuypers from the National Gallery?

2. Why were the de Kuypers stolen?

3. Who murdered Matthew Cole?

4. How was Donet involved in the case?

Part Two

1. Was Herbert Cofman involved in the theft?

2. What was the wine which Donet enjoyed?

3. Where does Angelo Hypsilanti live?

SOLUTION

We are seated at Baker Street along with Sir Simpson. Holmes is standing silently in front of the fireplace, his eyes fixed upon the flames. Other than a monosyllabic greeting, he has not said a word since we arrived five minutes ago. Finally he turns towards us and addresses Sir Simpson.

"I guess the best way to start, Sir Simpson, is to give you a factual account of what has happened. I think it would be best if you wait until I have finished the complete story before asking any questions."

"Whatever you wish, Mr. Holmes," agrees Sir Simpson.

"To start with, there are no de Kuypers. They are all forgeries. Forgeries made by one man. It has to be one of the greatest art hoaxes in history and done to satisfy the ego of its perpetrator, Pierre Donet.

"Donet is a very talented artist, but the style he loved and in which he was expert had been declared passe by the art world. He set out to create de Kuyper: he wrote his biography, he painted his pictures and the art world embraced this created image. Many major art historians placed de Kuyper in the category of a minor master; art investors raised him to the category of a major master. What started out as an exercise to demonstrate the fickleness of the art establishment turned Donet into a world-respected art expert on de Kuyper and it turned out, for Donet, to be quite rewarding financially. This whole story is not without its humour.

"The next chapter in the story must have given Donet great satisfaction. Brady Norris, not knowing that the de Kuypers were forgeries and Donet the forger, but being familiar with Donet's work, approached Donet and proposed that he forge a de Kuyper painting. One can only imagine the will power it took Donet, upon hearing this proposition, to hold back the laughter. How could Donet pass up such an offer? He agreed to Norris' plan. He would forge two de Kuypers and authenticate them. Donet saw no reason to enlighten Norris to the fact that he had forged all the known de Kuypers.

"Norris informed you of the upcoming sale of two de Kuypers. He made sure the National Gallery would be the successful bidder. Everything went according to plan, until you upset it."

"Me!" exclaims Sir Simpson.

"Yes, you arranged for the de Kuyper show bringing together all of the de Kuypers and the leading experts, and putting the spotlight on the two paintings. Remember, Norris didn't know that the other paintings were forgeries; he thought that only the National Gallery's were. He panicked, afraid he would be found out. He made plans to have the de Kuypers stolen. He hired Matthew Cole, a minor thief, to help him. He smuggled Cole into the museum in the crate that arrived the day of the robbery. He gave Cole his keys; the rest was simple.

"Norris arranged to meet Cole after the robbery and retrieve the forgeries. Perhaps Cole, thinking he had possession of valuable masterpieces, tried to demand a higher price for his labour. Or perhaps Norris panicked at the idea of a witness and potential blackmailer. For whatever reason, Norris killed him, thus both lowering his overhead and getting rid of a witness with one blow of his cane. He then set fire to Cole's room hoping to destroy evidence of two crimes at once.

"That's the story of how the perfect crime went wrong," concludes Holmes.

"Unbelievable," responds Sir Simpson.

"What about Herbert Cofman?" asks Wiggins.

"He helped his friend Norris, but he knew nothing about the forgeries or the murder."

"And Donet?"

"Donet was here to enjoy the spectacle of the art world paying homage to his creation. How could he miss it? It was the crowning touch to his genius. Norris came to him with his fears, but Donet told him not to worry. If he had only believed Donet, everything would have worked out to his satisfaction.

"Well, Sir Simpson, that's the whole story. We should summon Lestrade and let him handle the arrests."

"What will happen to Donet?" asks Wiggins.

"I think you will find that he is on his way back to Belgium. I don't think he will suffer any legal repercussions. The museums will just put the paintings in storage and keep their reputations intact. I don't think they want Donet in prison with time to write a book on how he hoodwinked the art world."

HOLMES

Holmes has solved this case by following 6 leads: National Gallery (24 WC), Cummins & Goins Delivery (6 SE), Warehouse (38 SE), Matthew Cole (11 SE), H.R. Murray (22 SW) and Mortimer Murray (43 WC).
His score is 100 points.

SCORE

Part One

1. Who was responsible for the theft of the de Kuypers from the National Gallery? Brady Norris (25 points).

2. Why were the de Kuypers stolen? Norris was afraid they would be found forgeries (25 points).

3. Who murdered Matthew Cole? Brady Norris (25 points).

4. How was Donet involved in the case? He was the Master Forger of all the de Kuypers (25 points).

Part Two

1. Was Herbert Cofman involved in the theft? Yes, he drove the getaway carriage (10 points).

2. What was the wine which Donet enjoyed? Montrachet (10 points).

3. Where does Angelo Hypsilanti live? At the Grand Hotel (10 points).

To tally your score, add the points obtained by answering the questions, then count the number of leads you've followed (don't count the "free" leads indicated above). Then compare the number of leads you've followed to that of Holmes (6 leads in this case).

If you've followed more leads than Holmes, subtract 5 points from your score for each extra lead. If you've followed fewer leads than Holmes, add 5 to your score for each lead fewer. You'll thus get your final score.



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