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Prof. Fleshner

ART - 1110

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It's Me, I'm the Amateur

“Ms. Black, you’re under arrest for burglary,” the police officer told me as I was bent over his car with my hands behind my back, 10 cop cars in tow surrounding the State Hermitage Museum. He quickly puts the cuffs on me and pats me down for any weapons. Now, I know what you’re thinking, *how did I get here?* Well, it’s a long story. Sit back, I’ll tell you.

This morning, July 7th, 2019, I had set out on a journey. After many hours of flights and jet lag from hell, it was finally time to execute my plan. I came all the way from Sacramento, California to get my hands on one piece of art: Leonardo Da Vinci’s Benois Madonna. Lost for centuries only to be discovered and named by the man that held the piece in 1909 (“Benois Madonna”). Oh how I wished to have it in my personal collection, even if every other artwork I owned had been collected ethically. But it was all ok, or so I thought. I had a well thought out plan. I was simply going to get a ticket in, stay in the bathroom air vents until close, escape, get to the painting in room 214, which is within a hallway marked as 207 on their tour guide (“What to see in the State Hermitage Museum”). This would allow me to get the painting in peace and avoid being caught. Now I know what you’re thinking, *they check the bathrooms*. But I hid in the air vents, and they didn’t bother to check there. I had this plan created in January, and I had finally got the guts to execute it. So there I was, getting a ticket. The man behind the counter was so sweet. I almost felt bad for what I was going to do next. As I walked into the gallery, I looked

at all the wonderful artworks. The Venus Tauride was another of my favorites, but it's made of marble, which is far too heavy to steal just by myself. So I settled on the Benois Madonna.

After checking out the first floor, I ducked into the women's bathroom just by the large set of stairs next to the Venus Tauride ("What to see in the State Hermitage Museum"). I had already scanned the stairs for cameras and saw none in sight. It was just before close, and the bathroom was dead silent. I quickly took the minitool out of my pocket and began unscrewing the holes in the air vents above. I climbed in slowly, the cover in hand. I took 3 of the 4 screws and zipped them back into their original holes. I had done it; I had made my way into the air vents. I now only hoped they wouldn't notice the missing screw when checking the bathroom, and to my advantage, the security guards noticed nothing. I stayed there for roughly an hour, when I slipped my hand out of the corner of the cover, unscrewed all of the screws once more, and slowly climbed out of the vent. It was my time. I screwed all the screws back and emerged from the bathroom, watching for guards on my way out and listening for any footsteps. After hearing none along the stairs, I quickly paced up the stairs and into the hallway where the Benois Madonna sits. *Oh God. Oh No*, I think. *The painting's missing already?* I had planned this seven months ago, in January, and I finally mustered up the courage to steal the painting. Of course now it would go missing. *What in the world did I miss?* I quickly got onto my phone and did a quick Google search, "Leonardo De Vinci's Benois Madonna Painting," only to find: "IT'S IN ITALY!?" ("Da Vinci's Benois Madonna is on display in Italy") I said, out loud. Yes, I know, I am totally the genius to be stealing a painting. I heard footsteps quickly approaching my location. I darted down the stairs and ran into the first of many guards I would encounter. He got on his walkie-talkie and said, "Security, sound the alarm. We have an intruder." Quickly, I raced out of the way and the alarm began to ring. Running into guard after guard, I finally had made

my way to the exit. I pushed open the door to the 11 cop cars sitting outside, guns pointed in my direction. This was it. I raised my arms and surrendered. And we're back to where we started, arrested for burglary, or the officer said breaking and entering. I guess I have sincerely learned why art is bought, not stolen.

“Benois Madonna.” *Discovering da Vinci*. Discovering Da Vinci,

<https://www.discoveringdavinci.com/benois-madonna>. Accessed Feb 17, 2022.

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<https://advantiko.com/en/countries/russia-en/what-to-see-in-hermitage/>. Accessed Feb 17, 2023.

“Da Vinci’s Benois Madonna is on display in Italy.” *Archaeology Wiki*. Jun 6, 2019,

<https://www.archaeology.wiki/blog/2019/06/06/da-vincis-benois-madonna-is-on-display-in-italy/>. Accessed Feb 17, 2023