

SPY PUPS

TRAINING SCHOOL



ANDREW COPE

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ALWAYS LEARNING

PEARSON



1. The Mask with Two Faces

‘Follow me, folks!’ the museum guide called. ‘You’re about to see one of the most important pieces of art in the whole world – and we’re proud to have it on display in our very own Metropolitan Museum of Art, right here in New York!’

A crowd of tourists and a teacher with a party of schoolchildren followed the guide through a narrow tunnel into a round, windowless room. A circle in the middle of the room was roped off, leaving a strip of open floor around the edge. As the crowd shuffled in and lined up behind the rope barrier, two men in dark suits slipped into the room and stood behind the crowd, one on either side of the tunnel.

If anyone had looked at the pair, they would

have had a shock. The two men were identical in every detail, except that one had a mole on his right cheek and the other had exactly the same mole on his left cheek. Nobody did look, though; they were all too busy peering at the shadowy object roped off in the middle of the room.

‘Here we go,’ said the guide. ‘Feast your eyes on the Janus mask!’ He flicked a switch and a powerful spotlight snapped on.

The crowd gasped. The mask in the centre of the room was made of pure beaten gold; it gleamed softly as it turned on its pedestal. It



had two identical faces, one at the front and one at the back.

'Can I try it on?' asked a small girl.

'Sorry, sweetie,' said the guide. 'This isn't a fancy dress mask. It's priceless! It dates back to early Roman times and it's the only one of its kind.'

A boy raised his hand. 'Why does it have two faces?'

'Good question, son,' said the guide. 'Janus was a Roman god who could see both forward into the future and backward into the past, so the mask-maker gave him two faces. You could say Janus had eyes in the back of his head, just like your teacher here!'

The schoolchildren giggled.

'Yes, I do,' agreed the teacher. 'That's how I know some of you are eating candy right now, even though I told you no food in the museum!'

The children stopped giggling and there was a rustling as sweets were reluctantly pushed back into pockets. The adults in the crowd chuckled and then everyone turned back to studying the golden mask.

Everyone except the two dark-suited men. They were busy checking out the museum

security instead. Their cold blue eyes took in the lasers, the security cameras and the pressure pad under the mask. Finally, they both focused on a thin steel ring set into the floor around the pedestal. They frowned. The steel ring was something new. What was it for? What did it do? Their eyes met and they both gave the slightest of shrugs.

Just then a boy in front of the men eased a bag of jelly babies back out of his pocket. The pair shared a smile and then bent down, one on each side of the boy.

‘Teacher said no candy, kid!’ hissed one of the men.

The boy jumped and, at the same time, the other man nudged his arm. A jelly baby flew from the bag, sailed over the rope barrier and bounced on to the floor beside the steel ring. The two men watched with interest to see what would happen next.

The jelly baby was instantly sliced in half as a cylinder shot up out of the steel ring. The cylinder zoomed upwards with a metallic hiss and locked into a groove in the roof, sealing the Janus mask behind a pillar of steel.

In the moment of stunned silence that

followed, one of the dark-suited men plucked the remaining jelly babies from the boy's hand. The boy began to cry.

'Simon!' roared the teacher. 'Was that your jelly baby?'

'It wasn't my fault! It was those nasty men!'

Simon turned and pointed behind him, but there was nobody there. The men had slipped away.

'Jelly baby, Brad?'

'Thanks, Chad. Don't mind if I do.'



Brad and Chad Onkers strolled away from the museum into Central Park, chewing on Simon's jelly babies. They found a quiet bench and sat down side by side.

'We must,' began Brad.

'Have that mask,' finished Chad.

'It's us!' began Brad.

'In gold!' finished Chad.

The Onkers twins turned on the bench so that they were back to back, and posed as the Janus mask. It was a spooky sight. Their spiky blond hair was exactly the same length and thickness, their noses had identical bumps across the bridge, and their chins both had a cleft down the middle which made them look like tiny bums. The only way to tell them apart was their moles.

'So. It's agreed. We steal,' began Chad.

'The Janus mask,' finished Brad.

'In time for,' began Chad.

'Our birthday next week,' finished Brad.

'Better than any cake!' they said together.

'But how,' asked Brad.

'Do we do it?' finished Chad.

'It'll be our toughest job yet,' said Brad.

'Let's think on it,' said Chad.

They sat on the bench until they had finished Simon's jelly babies, then they both shook their heads and stood up.

'Nothing yet,' said Chad.

'Me neither,' admitted Brad. 'We'll figure it out. We always do. Meanwhile, I gotta get to work.' He pulled an FBI badge from his pocket and hung it round his neck. The badge had his photograph on one side, and the words SPECIAL AGENT B. ONKERS ON the other.

'I gotta get to work too,' said Chad, pulling a set of skeleton keys from his pocket and running them through his fingers.

'What's the heist this time?' asked Brad.

'Those two Picasso paintings in the mansion you were protecting a few months back.'

Brad's blue eyes gleamed greedily. 'They'll look lovely hanging on our wall. You got the codes for the burglar alarm?'

Chad nodded and tapped the side of his head. 'It's all in here. The layout of the mansion – everything. That night I spent there posing as you was very useful. You know, Brad, every art thief should have a twin working in the FBI!'

'And every FBI agent should have a twin working as an art thief!'

'Two heads are better than one,' said Chad.

'Or two faces,' said Brad.

The Onkers twins leant their identical faces together and gave an identical evil laugh.