

The Rockefeller Adventure

By Nina Vigil

"Are you sure about this?"

We're standing at the top of the stairs looking down into the basement. Nelson Rockefeller's basement, to be exact. I'm trying to convince my friends to come down with me and check out the art.

"Yeah." I say. "Why not? I've heard there's like a hundred paintings down there."

Farah fidgets with her hair. "Well, if the grown-ups see us, we'll get in huge trouble."

"Aw, c'mon! They wouldn't get us in trouble for looking at art, would they?"

Farah considers this. "I guess not."

"Then let's go!"

In case you're wondering why we're at Kykuit, the Rockefeller mansion, my friend Grace's parents are on a tour. And Farah, Emma, Ava and I got to come!

On the way down the stairs, we speculated on what might be down there. "Maybe there'll be some Picassos!" Grace exclaims.

"And maybe Frida Kahlos!" I add.

"And who knows what else!" Emma pipes up.

When we finally reach the bottom step, we are not disappointed. There are at least ten paintings in this hallway.

We start walking around and checking them out. "Look at this one." Ava says. "It looks like a bunch of random people-things made out of weird shapes. I think it's a Picasso."

Grace is examining another abstract one. It's essentially just circles with designs on them.

Emma and I go over to look at another one. Again, it's abstract and appears to be a guy lying on a table with a bunch of ladies watching and what I think is a flying cat. I mention this to Emma, and we start laughing.

That's when Farah says, "Oh my god! There's a person in here!"

Everyone whirls around. I notice someone slipping behind a door and shutting it really fast. Then Grace points to where a tapestry used to be hanging. "That tapestry is gone!"

We look at each other and silently agree on what to do.

"After that dude!"

We take off after the person. Grace flings open the door. We race down a dark hallway I didn't even know existed and catch the guy disappearing behind a turn. Everyone zooms down the hall and ends up outside.

Just being outside makes it so much easier to chase someone. The thief, carrying what is evidently a tapestry, is only a few yards away. I notice he's wearing black (of course he's wearing black, it's a criminal thing) and doesn't have a lot of hair.

The chase continues down some stairs, around a couple balconies, down some more stairs, and into a room. The room is filled with cars. Fords, Chryslers, and Dodges. So this is where Nelson kept his various automobiles.

"That's a *lot* of cars." Ava says out of the side of her mouth.

The burglar jumped into a shiny white Chrysler and drove for the door. Now what? "There is *no* way we can catch up to that guy." Emma shakes her head.

"Maybe not on foot." I say. "But in a car..."

"Wait a second." Farah gapes at me. "Are you saying we should *drive* after him? Are you crazy?"

"I might be. But we can't just let him get away with it." I hop into the front seat of a Ford and examine the controls. Wow. Driving is a lot more complicated than I thought, judging by all these buttons and levers.

My friends climb in. Ava rides shotgun. And me? I'm driving.

In the next ten seconds, I have to learn how to drive or let a criminal steal a tapestry worth thousands of dollars.

I pull the lever nearest to the wheel. By sheer luck, that's the right lever. The car starts. I put my hands on the wheel and press down on a pedal.

The Ford lurches out of its parking area and through the doorway. I have just done the impossible. I am the first ever ten-year-old to learn to drive.

The bad guy is heading down the road. I stomp on a pedal, but we stop. "That's the wrong one!" Ava yells. I quickly change pedals and start off down the road.

The bad guy is heading into Sleepy Hollow and is clearly breaking the speed limit. I check the speedometer and adjust it so we're at the speed limit exactly. "Get ready, guys. We're driving at 60 miles per hour."

You haven't lived until you've been in a car chase through Sleepy Hollow, New York at 60 miles per hour.

The thief peeled around a corner. I made a sharp left around the curb, only to find that he was getting away. I glanced back at my friends in the back seat. "Do you think it's okay if I surpass the speed limit for a couple seconds?"

"I guess so. Nobody's looking," Emma says.

I speed up a little, and soon we're gaining on the tapestry thief. Once we're sufficiently close, I slow down.

Then the guy stops in front of a house. I slam on the brake and signal for everyone to get out quietly.

The robber gets out of the car. I silently open the car door and sneak out with my friends right behind me. "Grace, you do the honors."

Grace pounces. She runs up and leaps onto the guy. Ava slams the car door and charges in, wielding a fearsome stick. I run into the fray with Farah and Emma right behind me.

So far, it's going well. Grace is punching the tapestry thief over and over. Ava is hitting him with her stick and twirling it like a baton. Farah sneaks up and yanks the tapestry out from under his arm, and I grab his leg and trip him.

Thank God for Emma's phone. Some minutes later, the authorities were arriving. "Well," Grace said to me, "this has been one crazy day."

"Yeah. When you said *we're going to Kykuit*, you forgot to mention the tapestry thief and the car chase."

The End