



## The Mistaken Masterpiece

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## **The Mistaken Masterpiece** Michael D. Beil

Sophie, Margaret, Becca, and Leigh Ann are back in an all-new Red Blazer Girls caper. In the third installment, Sophie is nose to fist with her arch-rival, Livvy, all while taking care of movie-star Nate Etan's dog, when Father Julian hires the Blazers to help him authenticate a painting. Mayhem and mystery follows as the girls attempt to uncover the truth. Oh, and, uh, Sophie's friend-who-is-not-a-boyfriend, Raf, is back. . . Here's another charming and engaging adventure starring these four every-girl sleuths that's perfect for readers 10-up.

## **The Mistaken Masterpiece Details**

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## From Reader Review The Mistaken Masterpiece for online ebook

### Susan says

The Red Blazer girls on another case! This time there wasn't a huge paper trail as in previous books, but more of a smaller mystery entailing fewer clues. I found it interesting but have to wonder if the audience this book was geared to found the convoluted resolution and cast of characters as difficult to follow as I did.

There was more day to day stuff in this book, like the stories, but I didn't find it so distracting this time around probably because I enjoyed the dog sitting part!

Still an enjoyable story which I think young readers would like.

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### J.D.Staton says

I'm sorry to say that the quality of the books in this series seems to be steadily declining. This book, especially, seemed to be a virtual "Sophie St. Pierre" monologue, with very little action, almost no educational or historical aspects to the plot, and a much larger level of superficiality amongst all of the characters involved in the story (except between Sophie and Livvy). The band continues to be a boring and meaningless distraction, the dog "mystery" feels almost insulting in its lack of realistic possibility, and the constant focus on every aspect of Sophie's inner world removes the valuable insights, growth, and collective wisdom potential of the quartet, as a whole.

There were many times I found myself growing bored with the slow pace of the plot, the lack of mental intrigue and novelty, along with the fixation on "stars". The series is growing ever more shallow, as it moves along, which is exactly the opposite of what growing preteens are supposed to be doing, in my opinion. Thus, it barely receives a 3 star rating, from me.

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### Domo says

I gave this book 3/5 stars because there was too much going on. Between meeting a celebrity pop star, dogsitting the celebrities dog, a masterpiece mystery, romance, broken nose incident and a band that played in coffee houses it was a little hard to keep up with. This book also got slow at times and I didn't really get into the book until the end. But the parts that weren't slow were very intriguing.

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### Claire Jones says

Of course, this book is a mystery book. It all started out with a boring old painting. Father Julian, a priest in St. Veronica's Catholic School, the private school that the Red Blazer Girls attend, ask the girls to authenticate a painting. Father Julian has a painting by a very famous artist named Leonard Pomeroy. Of course, nothing is at it seems. The Red Blazer Girls start investigating pictures from Father Julian's family and start to realize that something is amiss. The further they dig, the more interesting things get. The girls meet a real nice artist but then all of a sudden, he gets really hushed up and nervous. So, the girls investigate and meet a really mean man and woman that are selling art. Except the art they are selling, are forgeries. The

painter in the back, Gus, is forced to make forgeries for them because he made the forgery that was switched with the original without realizing that the people he was doing it for, was using it for a bad purpose. So, Gus is forced to stay there and paint forgeries while the man and woman up front are swindling people's money. Also, a famous actor asks Sophie to dog sit his dog. What Nate, the famous actor, doesn't know is that there is another dog that looks exactly alike and has the same name Tillie. Sophie accidentally switches them up but in the end, Nate gets his dog back along with Gus being set free, the forgers getting arrested, and the original Pomeroy going to Father Julian.

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### **Ivonne Rovira says**

Father Julian, the priest at St. Veronica's Roman Catholic Church who proved himself invaluable in *The Ring of Rocamadour*, hires the Red Blazer girls in this third title in the smart, charming series. Sophie St. James and her three best friends/classmates at St. Veronica's Catholic School on East 68th Street in Manhattan, now with several successful cases under their belts, agree to help Father Julian. He has inherited a painting supposedly by the famous modern artist Leonard Pomeroy — and it will be worth a great deal only if he can prove it was painted before 1963, when Pomeroy died and his family unleashed a raft of Pomeroy forgeries on the world.

Meanwhile, Sophie St. Pierre along with Margaret Wrobel, Rebecca Chen, and Leigh Ann Jaimes get the chance to meet dreamy teen idol Nate Etan, star of *No Reflections*, a Twilight-like vampire series. But when Sophie ends up with Nate's dog Tilly in a dog-sitting chore, she thinks it's a dream come true. But will Tilly end up being a nightmare? And what about Nate?

Author Michael D. Beil, a teacher at a Catholic girl's school quite like St. Veronica's, wrote a book as good as the first in the series, *The Ring of Rocamadour*, and much better than his sophomore effort, *The Vanishing Violin*. All our old favorites are back: the eccentric, elderly Elizabeth Harriman and her beloved ex-husband Malcolm Chance; Rafael "Raf" Arocho, Sophie's love interest; the formidable Sister Bernadette, and even the wicked Olivia "Livvy" Klack, who may not be quite as wicked after all. We also get to meet some new characters: a sad artist named Gus; Nate Etan's foul-mouthed co-star, Cam Peterson; several of Father Julian's family members, and a nasty brother and sister duo from an art gallery. Whether a longtime fan or a reader new to the series, you won't find this novel a mistake!

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### **Krista (CubicleBlindness Reviews) says**

Sophie is having a great time she's enjoying school, has her best sleuth friends close and has decided to join the swim team. Then BAM! Livvy accidentally breaks Sophie's nose during swim practice. She thinks things are looking up for her when she gets invited to meet THE hottest actor Nate Etan and he asks her to watch his dog for a couple of weeks...for money! Then, the dog turns out to be a menace and eats her shoes and valuable clues in their next problem solving adventure!

The next problem to solve: Father Julian has asked the girls to find out 1. Which signed baseball is the correct one and not a fake. 2. If a painting is really a masterpiece or a fake. Then, a third mystery is thrown in when Sophie begins receiving mysterious packages in the mail. And who is the strange man at the gallery that will not leave the building? And why is Raf acting so weird? And what is Livvy really up to?

The Red Blazer Girls series is so fun! It's got humor, drama and I keep learning new things while solving the mysteries along with the girls. Not only that but I think it's about time I make a trip to New York and visit this famous park this book keeps talking about! (oh, and the coffee treats and pizza sound drool-worthy as well)

My favorite part of this book was how they found out which baseball was the fake, I had my heart in my throat when they discovered the mess! (you gotta read it to find out \*wink) "Oh NO he didn't!" was my verbal reaction.

I have really enjoyed reading the Red Blazer Girls books over the past couple of weeks and have the pleasure to ask the author a couple questions of my own.

You have had many professions in your life, from sailmaker to lawyer to teacher. When in your life did you decide it was right to write?

Sophie's first words in *The Ring of Rocamadour* are: "For as far back as I can remember, I have told everyone I know that I am going to be a writer." That's me as much as it is Sophie. As a kid, I was inspired by the books I read; I was creative, and desperately wanted to be a part of that world. One of my earliest efforts was a screenplay for an 8mm movie I made with my brother and some friends. It was called *The Seaweed Strangler*, and that story was the inspiration for the book that I just finished - my first non-Red Blazer Girls novel.

Having had several different careers, what was it that inspired you to write for young adults?

It took me a while to find my niche in the publishing world. During the 90's, I wrote two and half (unpublished) novels for grownups before my wife suggested that my "voice" - that elusive idea that publishers are always talking about - was a natural fit for the middle grade audience. I wasn't so sure at first, but gave it a shot. I sat down one day and Sophie just started talking. I wrote the first (of many, many) drafts of *The Ring of Rocamadour* in about six weeks!

You have been able to capture the humor and drama that young girls experience expertly, why did you decide to write the book with girls as the detectives instead of boys?

That was definitely the result of teaching in a girls' school. I teach freshman English, and while my students are a couple of years older than Sophie and her friends, they provide the inspiration. Leigh Ann's declaration (in *The Vanishing Violin*) that ". . . I'll bet your first punch is way more memorable than your first kiss" is a paraphrased version of something one of my students said during a play rehearsal. I thought that was just about the funniest thing I'd ever heard, and I wrote it down in my "ideas" notebook immediately.

You currently reside in New York but previously are from Ohio and New York is a BIG part of the books.

What kind of inspiration do you get from the city that helps you plan the mysteries? A special music store or museum or coffee shop that inspired the places you write about?

One of the things I've tried to capture in the books is the girls' nonchalance about living in "the city" (as everyone who lives here refers to it). People (like me) who move here from other places are in awe of the place, but to kids like my students and the students at St. Veronica's, it's just home - they know no other way of life. (When I first told my friends back in Ohio that my students rode the NYC subway to school every day, they couldn't believe that parents could be that reckless with their own kids' lives.) As for specific places that inspire me, the Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, which is connected to the school, was the model for the church in *The Ring of Rocamadour*. Regardless of your religious views, this gothic masterpiece is worth a look if you're in town; the stained glass windows some of the most amazing ones you'll see on this side of the Atlantic. During the summers, when I'm writing full-time, I take the dogs for a walk in Central Park almost every morning. It's a wonderful place, and the walk gives me a chance to think about what I wrote the day before, and to plan the next few pages.

When you plan your quizzes for your classroom, are the questions as difficult to answer as some of the problems in the books? (For example you had the girls try to find which name doesn't fit into a list of classic character names).

Not so much on quizzes or tests, but I try to give them some creative research assignments that force them to dig a little deeper than your basic Wikipedia entry. For example, I do send them on a Dickens "treasure hunt" every year, in which they have to find all kinds of strange details about his life and books. Full disclosure: it's more fun for me than it is for them. But hey, life is unfair like that sometimes.

How many Red Blazer Girls' books do you plan on writing? (Because I for one cannot wait to see what can happen next!) Or do you have any other books you are working on?

I'm working on the fourth RBG book right now, which will publish, I believe, in December 2012. It's set

during the two weeks before Christmas, so that timing should be great! But I promise that won't be the end of "the girls" I still enjoy their company, and my publisher has expressed interest in continuing, so . . . As I mentioned above, I also recently finished my first non-RBG book (it's in copyediting as I write this), which will publish next spring/summer. It's a coming of age story about a boy from New York who spends a summer vacation at his uncle's lake house in . . . you guessed it, Ohio! While he's there, he finishes the monster movie his dad started years before, and solves a mystery about him in the process. My editor and I haven't quite settled on the title, but I can tell you that the working title was The Seaweed Strangler! Thanks for taking time to review The Mistaken Masterpiece and for inviting me to answer a few questions for you. It's a great blog, by the way!

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### **Brett says**

I adore the Red Blazer Girls. They're resourceful geniuses, & they're tweenage girls who are actually nice. The mystery in this one involves a painting that is a possible fake, & Sophie & the gang are trying to determine when it was painted based on dating old pictures. Sophie's also dealing with dog-sitting for a movie star (& that's not complicating her love life with friend-who's-more-than-a-friend Raf AT ALL) & trying to make peace with a girl who seems to absolutely hate her. Could she be the newest Red Blazer Girl waiting to happen? Michael D. Beil better write about these girls for a long time to come.

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### **Elizabeth says**

The Red Blazer girls are back in their third adventure, as they once again have to solve several crimes. The mysteries this time around involve mysterious packages, famous paintings, and a dog who just isn't herself.

The Red Blazer girls mysteries are quick and entertaining reads. Relationships and storylines from the previous two books are continued in this installment, so it's good to read these in order. Tai Alexandra Ricci does a nice job of voicing most of the characters, except for Elizabeth. Ricci leaves unnaturally long pauses between her words for some reason. Otherwise it's a great audio production.

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### **Georgia says**

I loved this book!

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### **Anne says**

I didn't get very far with this one. Some of that might be that the book seemed to expect me to know the characters already (it's not the first in the series, apparently, just the one GoodReads thought I might like). Some of that might be that I'm very skeptical about first person present tense narratives. The two or three chapters that I did get through had a lot of teen social interactions with no hint at all of a mystery. I think the social interactions were somewhat realistic; I just don't enjoy that sort of thing very much.

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But, if my thirteen year old daughter would read mysteries and would accept recommendations from me, I'd probably suggest this series to her.

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### **Mary says**

The third in the Red Blazer Girls series, this latest outing does not disappoint. The girls are asked to help discover if a painting is REALLY that of a famous artist - and in find themselves caught up with a gallery that may be copying famous paintings. Meanwhile, Sophie meets a famous actor and winds up taking care of his dog, and discovers that there's more to her rival Livvy than meets the eye.

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### **Rebecca says**

It all starts when Sophie's arch enemy Livvy accidentally breaks Sophie's nose during swim practice, then the famous young movie star Nate Etan (starring in the vampire movie being made from that bestseller, 'No Reflections') eats at Sophie's father's French restaurant and falls in love with the food to the point at which he agrees to let Sophie and her friends spend a day on set with him in appreciation. That morphs into him asking Sophie to take care of his dog, Tilly, for a few days while he's out of town, and then Father Julian at St. Veronica's (the girls' school, where they wear their famous red blazers) asks the mystery-solving Red Blazer Girls to help him authenticate a painting, and...well, it all gets a little complicated from there!

This is such a fun series for girls who like mysteries but aren't ready for or interested in anything dark or violent. There are no deaths, no violence (except the accidental nose-breaking), and the villains get their due. Clever readers can follow the clues and figure things out before Sophie does, so it's really more of a mystery for people who like puzzles rather than murder. I think the only drawback for me was that part of the story was told in hearsay, because Sophie wasn't involved in a part of it and had to hear about it from her friends. It would have worked better in first person. But still, a great mystery series to recommend to middle school girls.

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### **Victoria says**

I like these girls and all their differences & adventures!

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### **Faith says**

A fun mystery with a cast of smart 7th grade detectives

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### **Michael Fitzgerald says**

Who on earth with a book that requires French, English, and other accents hires a reader who is so bad at these? I understand that someone probably felt that her voice was "perfect" for the seventh grade girl narrator, but every time the narrator's father speaks it's just dreadful, like an awful caricature. And that

French father's name is Guy. Which is not like Guys and Dolls. Hint - it's French. There's even a specific point in the book (p.29) that mentions how impressive it was that someone says it correctly - and the narrator says the name wrong!

Also, why is anyone in the narration business if they don't know that "mischievous" does NOT rhyme with "devious." It occurs multiple times in this book - just look at the spelling!!!! I might cut the average person slack on this, but IT'S YOUR JOB!!! I also heard things like "farmiliar" - come on, Mr. Actual-Catholic-Girls-School-English-Teacher, do your job!

I think I am done with this series. I guess I was hoping for more of the Catholic school setting and associated intellectual references. These are now just any pre-teens. I have no need for the girly romance nonsense, which gets tired real fast. And the stupid fashion crap. The girls act much older than they are supposed to be (age 12) - and what coffeehouse in New York City gives a Friday performing gig to some rank beginners in a little band who can play a grand total of four songs? And this idea that grown ups (pretty much all of them) just adore these girls and treat them like adults is not believable. They are 12!!!! This time we throw in movie stars. Of course. Clearly, I am not in the target audience.

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