

# The Night Watch

ADVENTURE WITH REMBRANDT



ISABELLE  
LAWRENCE

M. de V. Lee

# The Night Watch

ADVENTURE WITH REMBRANDT



BY ISABELLE LAWRENCE  
ILLUSTRATED BY MANNING DE V. LEE



PURPLE HOUSE PRESS  
KENTUCKY

TO THE SHORTHALLS AND DUNBAUGHS  
WITH WARM THANKS FOR THEIR  
HOSPITABLE KINDNESS  
AND MOST WONDERFUL IDEAS



Published by  
Purple House Press  
PO Box 787  
Cynthiana, Kentucky 41031

Living Books for Kids and Young Adults  
[purplehousepress.com](http://purplehousepress.com)

Written in 1952 by Isabelle Lawrence  
Copyright © 2023 by Purple House Press  
All rights reserved

ISBN 9798888180112 Paperback  
ISBN 9798888180143 Hardcover

## *Contents*

1.	The Queen's Rubies	5
2.	In a Spider Web	15
3.	Who Stole the Prints?	27
4.	The Guard Takes Over	38
5.	A Journey into Mystery	52
6.	Box and Pox	65
7.	Shopping for Secrets	74
8.	Paw Prints and a Small Thief	83
9.	He Rides a White Horse	91
10.	Henje Poses	103
11.	Ready to Burst	109
12.	The Joke's on Sam	123
13.	Lost Forever?	135
14.	Two Dogs Follow their Noses	144
15.	Danger at the Dock House	156
16.	The Yard-Cake Party	164
17.	A Ship Sails on the Tide	171
18.	Buttons and the Small Boy	184
19.	Piet Gets in Dutch	196
20.	Proof at Last	205
21.	The Message in Code	215
22.	Who Comes to the Royal Feast?	222



## *The Queen's Rubies*

### CHAPTER ONE

“HI! HA! PIET! JAN!”

“The freeze has come!” Above the shouting sounded the sharp click of steel on ice.

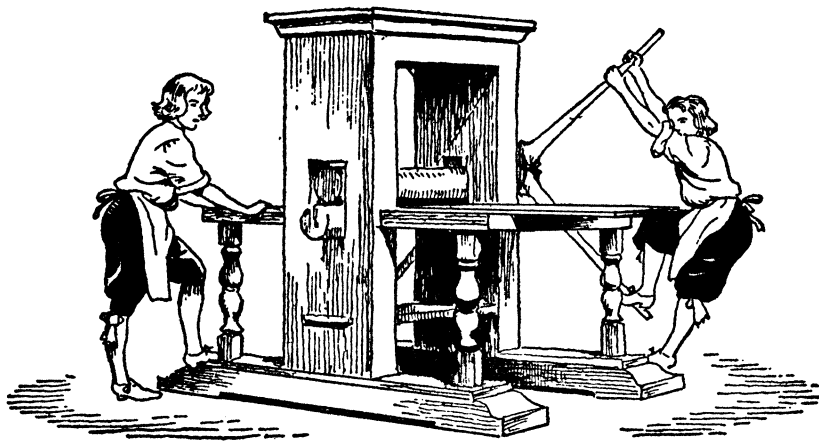
“A holiday!”

“Come, skate!”

It was a crisp morning, this first of December, 1641. Two boys were hurrying across the bridge over a narrow Amsterdam canal. Between them a small golden spaniel uttered yelps of excitement.

More cries rose from the ice below. “Piet! Jan! Get moving. It’s the freeze!”

Freckled Pieter de Hoogh, carrying a market basket full of vegetables, stopped short to stare down at the canal. He wore a short belted jacket, with knee breeches, a wide white collar, and a big, broad-brimmed hat atop his reddish hair. Small Jan Vermeer sprang forward to peer over the railing. His blond head, with its square Dutch cut, bobbed up and down. His silver shoe buckles twinkled in the sun.



On the frozen canal four or five other boys were darting to and fro, waving their red-mittened hands. One took a flop. All the rest shouted with laughter as they ran to help him up. Then they seized hands to swing out, singing:

“The freeze is here!  
No school! We’re free!  
Crack the whip and—off—goes—*he!*”

At that moment all the bells in Amsterdam began ringing at once, *cling, clang, clong!* For on the day when the city government proclaims the ice strong enough to bear traffic, the schools are closed, and young and old take to their skates to make holiday.

“We’ll be there!” Jan screamed. “Piet, do you hear?”

The older boy snorted. “Of course I hear. I’m not deaf, am I?—Look out, you’ll be over!”

At that instant Jan’s hands slipped on the icy rail, his feet flew out behind, and he would have fallen over had not Piet grabbed his ankles. For a moment he hung head down, yelling, to the huge delight of the skaters beneath.

“Here, you!” Piet pulled him in and set him on his feet. “What would you do if you didn’t have me? Someday you’ll get into trouble.”

“I notice you’re the one who’s usually in trouble,” Jan answered cheekily, then ducked out of reach. “Hurry! Let’s tell the master.”

“He’ll want us to work.”

“Not on a holiday, he won’t. Hop along, Kris!” Off he started on the jump, the puppy at his heels.

Piet followed more slowly. The day was fine, the sun shining. Two doors down the street stood the tall, red-brick house belonging to the portrait painter, Rembrandt van Rijn. Piet and Jan were two of his apprentice pupils who lived with him, learning to paint and make prints. How Piet hoped they would not have to stay in, cleaning brushes or mixing paints today!

In spite of the cold some window must have been open, for a roaring sound came forth. “Piet? Jan? Where is my red ruby?”

“Piet,” Jan called over his shoulder, “there’s more trouble. Oh, stop it, Kris!” for the little dog had begun barking furiously. Surely, Jan went on to himself, I haven’t forgotten anything. Still, there was a familiar guilty feeling inside him.

Very softly he pushed at the heavy front door. Piet came behind to give a shove. It yielded so suddenly Jan almost fell into the big hall, floored with marble, every inch of the wall hung with pictures. “Lucky the lock’s not mended yet,” he muttered.

“Jan? Piet? Carel? Simon?” The roar came from above.

“I’ll take the basket to the kitchen,” Piet whispered.

Kris burst into a wild tornado of jumping and noise, while Jan ran for the stairs. Up he pounded, the dog after him, and into the big front room which the master used as his studio. This, too, had many pictures, some standing on the floor. There were jeweled daggers and crossed swords, suits of armor. Jan loved to look at these. Knights of old once wore them, knights who lived in castles, and rescued ladies in distress. At least Jan hoped they had. He always wanted to try on the smallest suit, and was forever struggling to discover how the hinges worked.

But this morning he noticed only what was going on in the center of the room. There, feet wide apart, stood the man who had been doing the roaring. No doubt of it. He was red in the face, heavy eyebrows drawn down over dark, bright eyes, small moustache quivering. Every long, tawny hair seemed to crinkle out from his head. In fact, he looked for all the world like a lion.

Before him an easel held a half-finished picture. Posing in a chair opposite sat the prettiest young woman in Amsterdam, Rembrandt’s golden-haired wife, Saskia.

“I’m here, master,” Jan stammered. Still that odd feeling of guilt! Kris merely waved his plummy tail.

“What of Mevrouw’s red ruby?”

Saskia protested. “‘Mevrouw’ is a title for great ladies, Rembrandt.”

“You are a great lady and all my pupils shall call you so. Are you not my wife? Do I not make beauty for the world?”

“But, master?” Jan hesitated. “All the people you paint, or put into prints, are not beautiful.”

“You are right, yet you are all wrong. Each has something—wisdom, a gift of laughter, kindness which is above rubies.... Rubies! What of my red ruby from the royal jewels of the Queen of England? I bought it for your mistress but yesterday.”

Jan’s bewildered eyes went from the big man to his wife. “But—but it is on her neck.”

So it was, a lovely brooch with a flaming red stone.

The painter waved a brush violently in the air. “On her neck, yes! On her neck! Yet how can it be on her neck in my portrait of her, my otherwise splendid portrait of her, if I have no red paint to grind?”

Jan bit his lip. “I—I forgot to get it, I was so excited. And Piet was buying the vegetables.”

“You were so excited. And why, pray?”

Saskia gave her merry laugh. “If you have no red paint, may I go now? The breakfast dishes are not washed, the baby not bathed.” She turned toward the door. “Oh, there you are, Piet. Have you my carrots?”

“Yes, mistress. They were quite expensive.”

“Then I’d best cook them.”

“One moment, my love,” her husband begged. “You know I need a model. No other could be so wonderful as you. Hand me the green paint, Piet, if you please. There, I make you an emerald instead of a ruby. It goes even better with your golden hair. I wonder now, could the Queen of England change her rubies to emeralds, or guns, as easily?... You know where England is, Jan?”

“Yes, sir, it’s—”

“England is a small island off the coast of Holland. Often, in the days when we were fighting the Spanish, the English were our friends.”

“But, Rembrandt,” asked Saskia, “why should the Queen of England sell us her jewels?”

“Please, sir—” Piet tried to interrupt.

Rembrandt paid no attention. “As you know, we have a great family in Holland, the princes of the House of Orange. Prince Frederick Henry lives at The Hague. But he has little power. Now the English people...” He stood back, brush between his teeth, to admire his picture. “Hum! Not bad! Not—at—all bad! The English people have a king, Charles the First. They think he bosses them too much. So he wants to hire foreign soldiers to make them obey him. That takes money.”

From outside, lively shouts floated in at the half-open window. The bells called louder than ever.

“Oh, dear!” Jan caught Piet’s eye.

“Sir—” Piet began again.

Rembrandt went on, unheeding. “Gossip hath it the English Queen Henrietta has sent someone with great packets of jewels to sell here. This ruby appeared at The Hague last week. We may see more in Amsterdam.”

“Then see that you don’t buy them,” Saskia commented. “Rembrandt, Piet is trying to speak to you.”

“To me?”

Jan plunged in. “Master, the freeze has come.”

“The freeze?”

“The ice! The canals are thick enough to bear. Do you not hear the bells? May we go, sir?”

The artist stopped to listen. Was there a twinkle in his eye? “We seldom have a freeze before St. Nicholas’ Day.” He frowned mightily. “You and all the other pupils, I expect?”

“Yes, sir,” said Piet.

“If you please,” added Jan.

“Great heavens!” Rembrandt threw back his head, to stare at the boy. “All those prints to put through the press, gum to mix, frames to clean! How can we eat if you all go skating every morning?”

Piet was patient. "We are not printing today, sir, with Sam Vool ill and not here to ink the plates."

Rembrandt kept on growling. "In the future I shall take only men pupils. At least their minds will not be entirely on their skates."

Jan eyed him saucily. "It was Sam got this pox that's going round, sir, not we boys."

"Poor Sam!" Saskia sighed.

Rembrandt grinned. "Sam and the pox! He is such a serious young man he will be dreadfully ashamed of his spots. Well, maybe I'd better be serious, too, with six etchings on order for the Prince. This picture of you is my best yet. I shall call it *Portrait of a Young Lady*."

"I don't always feel so young, Rembrandt." Saskia paused, smiling, in the doorway. "Run along, Piet, give my fire a poke, will you? Jan, tell the boys to wear their warmest coats.... Oh, and speak to me as you go out."

"Saskia," the painter sighed, "perhaps I'd better sell the Prince this portrait, too. It will fetch a lot of money. I must find a big box."

Jan cast one more glance at the master. Definitely a twinkle! With a bound he was off to the next room, where the press stood, Kris after him.

"Now," said the painter's wife, "I shall bathe my baby, sweep the house, do the wash, and prepare the herring salad for dinner. If you would not buy the jewels of England's queen, my darling husband, we could afford a maidservant, even a model."

Her husband sat down in his favorite position, elbows on knees, chin in hands. "Saskia, love, when I sell this picture we shall be worth at least five hundred guilders. Regard yourself!"

She put an arm round his neck. "It is beautiful, Rembrandt. I might be a queen, all decked out in silk and jewels.... Rembrandt! Stop wiping your brushes on your coat!"

"I am sorry, my love. Well, all this talk inks no prints. I must go to work."

"Then put on your smock—there's Titus crying!" She was gone.

The painter went back for one more touch on the portrait's straight little nose. Soon there were yellow streaks as well as green on his jacket.

The house had two main floors. The front door opened into a hall paved with great marble squares in black and white. Its high ceiling rested on heavy beams. A round archway led to a smaller back hall with a staircase. To the left of the entrance was a front parlor with long, narrow windows, Spanish chairs cushioned in green velvet, handsome chests, and a couch. Behind it a smaller room held printing materials and one of the presses.

Beyond the hall came the Blue Bedroom, with windows opening on a rear courtyard. Because the house was built on what had once been a dike, the kitchen lay beneath the bedroom. On special occasions they used the bedroom as a dining room, too.

Upstairs, across the whole front of the house, ran the big studio where the master had been painting, and behind it the upstairs pressroom. Back of that was a smaller studio full of everything under the sun. A ladder with a trapdoor led to the attics where the boys slept.

In the pressroom on the second floor all the boys were talking at once.

"Let's go this minute!" shouted Simon Perdock, the tallest, a sallow-faced boy with green eyes and an unhappy expression. Though no one would guess it to look at him, he was a cousin of Jan's. "We have a right to our holiday. It's so cold here my breath freezes like the canals. See the dead clots of peat lying in the fireplace."

"Shouldn't we put away our things? Jan, you're stepping on my red chalk." That was Carel Ovens, a thin, white chap a little younger than Jan. Of course no one paid any attention to him.

“Wait!” Pieter de Hoogh took the center of the floor. He squeezed up his blue eyes in thought. “What about money? My faith, has anyone so much as a stiver? I’ve spent mine for Saint Nicholas’ Day gifts.”

Piet was almost thirteen, Simon a year older, and great was the rivalry between them.

“I have an idea,” Piet went on. “At least, I shall have one in a moment.”

“You and your ideas!” scoffed Simon. “They’re never any good.”

“They are, too, good!”

“They’re not.”

“They are!” Jan sprang to Piet’s defense and gave Simon a poke in the ribs.

“Watch out for the prints!” Piet cried, as the two backed into some sheets of paper drying on a low table behind them. “You *are* clumsy, Simon. Down, Kris! He’ll be in them, too.”

Simon held off wriggling Jan by one ear. “Now I have a plan. Let’s sell a couple of the prints we’ve made from the master’s plates. With Sam sick he’ll never know how many were ready.”

“That would be s-s-stealing,” Carel stuttered in distress.

“Rubbish! We make ’em, don’t we? And we each pay him a hundred guilders a year to teach us. I expect a few of them belong to us.... Stop it, Kris! He’s always nipping at my ankles.”

Piet sucked in his lips and shook his head. “Simon, Kris knows you’re a bad lot, and a very bad influence on the rest of us.”

Jan interrupted. “Mevrouw van Rijn said we were to speak with her on our way out.” He began winding his muffler about his throat. “Come along, you fellows.”

“In an instant,” Simon called. “I’ve lost my mittens.” They heard him stamping round as he ran up to the attic. Simon’s feet were enormous.

The mistress was downstairs in the Blue Bedroom. This had blue walls and chair seats, a built-in bed with blue curtains, a

straw cradle, a linen chest, a huge cedar-wood cupboard, and a tiny one just like it for the baby’s clothes. Titus, splashing in a basin in the center of the floor, was very small indeed. In fact, it seemed hardly possible anything could be so small and yet make so much racket. However, when he saw Jan he stopped squalling at once and looked round. Simon came in with his mittens, his cloak wrapped about him.

“Titus wants Kris,” Saskia declared. “Where is he?”

“I’ll get him.” Piet bounded for the stairs. “Kris! Oh, Kris!” What was that rustling sound? “Kris!”

Wagging all over, the little dog came down with Piet.

“Here he is! I found him just outside the pressroom door.”

Titus reached up to pull one of those soft, flappy ears. “May we take him with us?” Jan begged Saskia.

“He’ll cry all day if you don’t. Now”—she wrapped her son in the woolen towel in her lap, as if he were a bundle of wash, wedged the package firmly between her knees, and leaned over to tighten Carel’s muffler—“now, what about money for cakes? Of course you’ll want some buckwheat poffertjes. Was there anything left from your shopping, Jan?”

“Oh!” The boy clapped a hand to the pouch at his side. “I forgot to give it back to you. The fifteen stivers for the red pigment I didn’t buy.”

“Fine. Use that!”

“All of it?” Carel asked.

“It’s not much among the four of you.”

“Five,” Piet corrected her. “Kris, you know.”

She nodded. “Of course. Three apiece.”

Simon considered. “Buckwheat poffertjes are three for a stiver. That’s three poffertjes apiece and one two-stiver gingerbread man.”

“But, mevrouw,” Jan worried, “suppose the master wants the paint?”

“He’s made an emerald now. He’ll never think of it again. Hurry up! Have you all your mittens? Piet, wear your fur cap.”

“Yes, yes,” they chorused dutifully.

In the lower hall Rembrandt was wandering about. Piet put a finger to his lip, and they started to tiptoe out silently. The master let them get almost to the door, then suddenly shouted, “Boo!” They all jumped.

“Now, my lads, when I was your age I liked money for gingerbread men.” He reached for his pouch.

“But, sir—” cried Jan. Simon kicked him on the ankle.

Piet and Carel swallowed a couple of times. If someone really *wanted* to give you money.... Piet’s conscience got the better of him. “Mevrouw—” he began.

“—gave us some,” Jan finished it.

“Isn’t that lucky?” Rembrandt’s face had a wry twist. “I don’t seem to have a penny. Begone, then!”

They made for the street.

*The freeze is here! A holiday—come, skate!” All the bells in Amsterdam suddenly began to ring, and with a rush we are off on a lively tale of fun and adventure in the studio of the great Rembrandt, told with the sure skill and spirit that have made Isabelle Lawrence’s books favorites for decades.*

*It’s a fascinating story, in which fact and fiction are deftly mingled. With Jan Vermeer and Pieter de Hoogh imagined as apprentices in Rembrandt’s studio, Henje, a young English girl whose father is in Holland on a secret mission, the great artist himself, his lovely wife Saskia, and other picturesque Dutch characters. Don’t forget the puppy, Kris, always in the center of every event!*



*From the moment when Henje, lost in the streets of Amsterdam, is rescued by Jan and Piet, events move with exciting speed. There is the mystery of the missing prints, the drama of painting the great *Night Watch* picture, danger and adventure when a baby is kidnapped, fun and frolics on St. Nicholas’ Day, woven into an absorbing plot that will delight all who read it.*

*Purple House Press*



Living Books for Kids and Young Adults  
purplehousepress.com