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Moore, Christopher. Sacre Bleu

Vincent Van Gogh?s unusual suicide?he shot himself in the chest shortly after finishing a painting, then walked a mile to a doctor?s house?provides the catalyst for revelations about the origins of the painter?s madness in this humorous and layered novel. Lucien Lessard, baker in the Montmartre neighborhood of Paris, has grown up around some of the greatest painters of the age, including Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, and Manet. An aspiring painter himself, Lucien finds that his painting takes fire when his true love, the mysterious and beautiful Juliette, brings him a special tube of ultramarine blue paint from a strange paint dealer known only as the Colorman. As it turns out, Van Gogh also bought his blue from the Colorman, as did most, if not all, of the other famous painters in Paris at the time. And all of those painters also conducted mad, passionate, and ultimately doomed relationships with beautiful women at the same time. Lucien, beginning to piece this together, joins forces with his friend ?the little gentleman,? the painter Toulouse-Lautrec?who, as it turns out, has also bought blue paint from the Colorman and also lost his true love, Carmen. They must discover the secret of the Colorman and the secret of the sacred blue before they, too, end up dead.

Humorous as Moore?s books always are, *Sacre Bleu*, like *Lamb* and *Fool*, also contains a wealth of rich historical detail, clearly the product of meticulous reseach and a deep interest in the material. The painters are all portrayed as vividly as their paintings, and fin de siecle Paris is evoked realistically and colorfully.

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