

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:04,000

Tonight, the biggest art heist in history.

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00:00:04,000 --> 00:00:07,000

Some of the pieces that were stolen were priceless masterpieces.

3

00:00:07,000 --> 00:00:10,000

Some have been taken carefully and unscrewed out of frames.

4

00:00:10,000 --> 00:00:12,000

Others have been cut out.

5

00:00:12,000 --> 00:00:16,000

The men are tied up with duct tape, and they look like hell.

6

00:00:16,000 --> 00:00:20,000

Half a billion dollars in masterpieces gone without a trace

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00:00:20,000 --> 00:00:25,000

and a three-decade search down many paths, all leading nowhere.

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00:00:25,000 --> 00:00:28,000

The thieves knew things that only an insider would know.

9

00:00:28,000 --> 00:00:31,000

This is not a guy who you would pick out of a lineup and say,

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00:00:31,000 --> 00:00:34,000

oh yeah, he's some kind of a criminal mastermind.

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00:00:34,000 --> 00:00:39,000

Now, we'll uncover the top theories behind this perfectly planned heist.

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00:00:39,000 --> 00:00:43,000

If mobsters did steal it, who did they steal it for?

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00:00:43,000 --> 00:00:47,000

Was he assassinated because he knew something about the Gardner Museum?

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00:00:47,000 --> 00:00:50,000

The fact that no one's come forward after 33 years,

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00:00:50,000 --> 00:00:53,000

that's what makes this case one of the world's greatest mysteries.

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00:00:53,000 --> 00:00:56,000

Who orchestrated the Gardner heist and why?

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00:00:58,000 --> 00:01:00,000

The Gardner Museum

18

00:01:00,000 --> 00:01:02,000

The Gardner Museum

19

00:01:02,000 --> 00:01:04,000

The Gardner Museum

20

00:01:04,000 --> 00:01:06,000

The Gardner Museum

21

00:01:06,000 --> 00:01:08,000

The Gardner Museum

22

00:01:08,000 --> 00:01:10,000

The Gardner Museum

23

00:01:10,000 --> 00:01:12,000

The Gardner Museum

24

00:01:12,000 --> 00:01:17,000

8.15 a.m. on Sunday, March 18, 1990.

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00:01:17,000 --> 00:01:21,000

Guards arrive for their shift at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

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00:01:21,000 --> 00:01:25,000

and are shocked to find the security desk empty.

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00:01:25,000 --> 00:01:29,000

They radio the overnight guards but get no reply.

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00:01:29,000 --> 00:01:32,000

So they call the Boston Police.

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00:01:32,000 --> 00:01:37,000

The police find the guards in the basement, bound in handcuffed to the pipes.

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00:01:37,000 --> 00:01:40,000

The men are tied up with duct tape.

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00:01:40,000 --> 00:01:43,000

Not only duct tape on their hands and feet,

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00:01:43,000 --> 00:01:46,000

but also duct tape around their face and their eyes,

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00:01:46,000 --> 00:01:48,000

and they look like hell.

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00:01:48,000 --> 00:01:51,000

The first thing the police did after freeing the guards

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00:01:51,000 --> 00:01:54,000

and getting their statements was search for the museum for evidence.

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00:01:54,000 --> 00:01:57,000

What they discover is places been robbed.

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00:01:57,000 --> 00:02:01,000

The police are shocked at what they see in two galleries.

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00:02:01,000 --> 00:02:05,000

Police find the galleries in disarray with broken glass,

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00:02:05,000 --> 00:02:09,000

paint chips on the floor, scraps of canvas hanging to frames

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00:02:09,000 --> 00:02:11,000

with the paintings themselves missing.

41

00:02:11,000 --> 00:02:14,000

Some have been taken carefully and unscrewed out of frames,

42

00:02:14,000 --> 00:02:16,000

others have been cut out.

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00:02:16,000 --> 00:02:21,000

One piece has also been taken from a third gallery known as the Blue Room.

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00:02:21,000 --> 00:02:25,000

It's the only piece taken from the first floor of the Gardner Museum.

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00:02:25,000 --> 00:02:27,000

The theft is massive.

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00:02:27,000 --> 00:02:33,000

Thirteen pieces of artwork valued today at about \$500 million.

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00:02:33,000 --> 00:02:36,000

The theft is the largest unsolved art theft in history,

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00:02:36,000 --> 00:02:39,000

as well as the largest theft of property in America.

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00:02:41,000 --> 00:02:44,000

The Gardner Museum is a landmark in Boston,

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00:02:44,000 --> 00:02:48,000

modeled after a 15th century Venetian palace.

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00:02:48,000 --> 00:02:51,000

It holds the private collection of heiress and art patron,

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00:02:51,000 --> 00:02:54,000

Isabella Stewart Gardner.

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00:02:54,000 --> 00:02:56,000

Wanting to share her collection with the public,

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00:02:56,000 --> 00:02:58,000

Gardner opened the museum in 1903.

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00:02:58,000 --> 00:03:01,000

She spent about a decade making it to her perfection,

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00:03:01,000 --> 00:03:03,000

and it was a perfection.

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00:03:03,000 --> 00:03:10,000

It was when it opened the largest privately owned collection of art in America.

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00:03:10,000 --> 00:03:14,000

After the robbery, investigators take inventory of the stolen items.

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00:03:14,000 --> 00:03:17,000

Many are one of a kind.

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00:03:17,000 --> 00:03:20,000

The pieces that were stolen were priceless masterpieces.

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00:03:20,000 --> 00:03:24,000

One was a Rembrandt Seascape, known as the Storm over the Sea of Galilee.

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00:03:24,000 --> 00:03:27,000

It's the only seascape Rembrandt ever did.

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00:03:27,000 --> 00:03:29,000

Another piece was called The Concert.

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00:03:29,000 --> 00:03:31,000

It was by Vermeer.

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00:03:31,000 --> 00:03:33,000

It's the only Vermeer that's missing in the world.

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00:03:33,000 --> 00:03:37,000

Those two pieces alone were valued at the time of over \$200 million.

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00:03:39,000 --> 00:03:43,000

Some of the other pieces that they took were a few Degas sketches.

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00:03:44,000 --> 00:03:48,000

A manet called Shea Tortononi, which was a painting,

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00:03:48,000 --> 00:03:53,000

they took the fidium off of the first regimental flag of Napoleon,

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00:03:53,000 --> 00:03:56,000

and also a Chinese beaker.

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00:03:56,000 --> 00:04:01,000

Who could have pulled off such a brazen heist, and how did they do it?

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00:04:01,000 --> 00:04:08,000

They really knew their way around the sort of logistical structure of the institution.

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00:04:08,000 --> 00:04:12,000

They were really familiar with the institution's security system,

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00:04:12,000 --> 00:04:18,000

and they navigated the galleries in a way that was around the motion detectors.

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00:04:18,000 --> 00:04:21,000

Not only did the thieves navigate the museum with ease,

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00:04:21,000 --> 00:04:25,000

they appeared to know the security systems.

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00:04:25,000 --> 00:04:28,000

When police initially are investigating the crime scene,

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00:04:28,000 --> 00:04:32,000

they find that all of the security footage tapes have been taken,

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00:04:32,000 --> 00:04:36,000

and they also find that printouts of the motion detector data have been removed.

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00:04:36,000 --> 00:04:39,000

The thieves are, we can assume, believing that they're leaving

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00:04:39,000 --> 00:04:43,000

without any sort of trace of where they've been or what they've done.

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00:04:43,000 --> 00:04:47,000

The thieves knew things that only an insider would know.

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00:04:50,000 --> 00:04:54,000

One of the first people that they looked at as an insider was Richard Atbath.

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00:04:54,000 --> 00:04:56,000

It was a guard that night.

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00:04:56,000 --> 00:05:01,000

He was a security guard, so he knew the security system at the museum very well.

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00:05:01,000 --> 00:05:05,000

He was a 23-year-old self-described hippie who had admitted to coming to work,

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00:05:05,000 --> 00:05:07,000

and he braided several times.

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00:05:07,000 --> 00:05:11,000

He had done things over that year that should have gotten fired,

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00:05:11,000 --> 00:05:15,000

and he just got away with things, and I think he just got lack of days ago.

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00:05:15,000 --> 00:05:18,000

Atbath tells police that on the night of the heist,

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00:05:18,000 --> 00:05:23,000

he noticed a pair of unusual visitors outside of the museum after closing time.

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00:05:23,000 --> 00:05:27,000

Rick looks up at the low-circuit TV monitor.

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00:05:27,000 --> 00:05:31,000

There shows two men ringing the doorbell in police uniform,

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00:05:31,000 --> 00:05:33,000

and one of them says, open up.

95

00:05:33,000 --> 00:05:36,000

We're here to investigate a disturbance.

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00:05:36,000 --> 00:05:38,000

It was St. Patrick's Day morning.

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00:05:38,000 --> 00:05:41,000

In other words, people were parting in Boston.

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00:05:41,000 --> 00:05:45,000

There were revelers out on the street, so two police officers to show up at that point

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00:05:45,000 --> 00:05:47,000

was not that unusual.

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00:05:47,000 --> 00:05:53,000

But Rick's handbook says, if someone comes to the side door and demands entrance,

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00:05:53,000 --> 00:05:57,000

and you cannot get rid of them, you call the police, but he doesn't.

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00:05:57,000 --> 00:05:59,000

Atbath's response really wasn't the best.

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00:05:59,000 --> 00:06:03,000

He said that he allowed these two gentlemen to come in to rest as police officers

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00:06:03,000 --> 00:06:06,000

because he believed that they were Boston cops.

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00:06:06,000 --> 00:06:10,000

Atbath doesn't follow the museum's clear security protocols that night,

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00:06:10,000 --> 00:06:15,000

but what he does do is radio his colleague to come to the security desk

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00:06:15,000 --> 00:06:19,000

because the two police seemingly want to arrest him.

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00:06:19,000 --> 00:06:24,000

The two police officers say to Rick, in a sort of an off-handed way,

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00:06:24,000 --> 00:06:27,000

but convincing to Rick, hey, you look familiar to us.

110

00:06:27,000 --> 00:06:30,000

Do we have a warrant for your arrest?

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00:06:30,000 --> 00:06:35,000

And as Rick explains it, he thought, I better go along with what they're asking me to do,

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00:06:35,000 --> 00:06:40,000

which was to step around away from the back of the table and come out in front of us

113

00:06:40,000 --> 00:06:43,000

so we can get a good look at you.

114

00:06:43,000 --> 00:06:48,000

These two police officers, Lure, Abath, and his co-night guard away from their security desk,

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00:06:48,000 --> 00:06:54,000

which would be the only place that they'd easily be able to call for help from the outside world.

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00:06:54,000 --> 00:06:58,000

As soon as he's within proximity, they immediately place handcuffs on him.

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00:06:58,000 --> 00:07:01,000

And when the second security guard comes in, he too is cuffed.

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00:07:01,000 --> 00:07:03,000

So now these two are totally confused.

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00:07:03,000 --> 00:07:05,000

They're wondering, why are these police officers arresting them?

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00:07:05,000 --> 00:07:10,000

And it's at that moment that one of the police officers says, this is a robbery.

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00:07:10,000 --> 00:07:13,000

They lead them to the basement of the museum, which was very odd,

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00:07:13,000 --> 00:07:16,000

because how would they even know that the museum had a basement?

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00:07:16,000 --> 00:07:19,000

And then they strategically place them about 50 feet apart.

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00:07:19,000 --> 00:07:23,000

They duct tape them in an odd manner, allowing one of the security guards

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00:07:23,000 --> 00:07:27,000

the ability to kind of peek through the spaces in between the duct tape.

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00:07:27,000 --> 00:07:32,000

The robbers say to both guards, before leaving them, keep them all shut,

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00:07:32,000 --> 00:07:35,000

and you'll get your reward in a year's time.

128

00:07:35,000 --> 00:07:39,000

The thieves leave the basement around 1.35 a.m.

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00:07:39,000 --> 00:07:45,000

After waiting an hour or so to ensure the guards are still tied up, they exit the museum.

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00:07:45,000 --> 00:07:51,000

But first, they take the security tape and a printout of the museum's motion detectors.

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00:07:51,000 --> 00:07:53,000

They make one crucial mistake.

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00:07:53,000 --> 00:07:57,000

The thieves knew to take the security tape and to take the printout,

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00:07:57,000 --> 00:08:01,000

but they didn't realize that the hard drive had stored the movements also,

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00:08:01,000 --> 00:08:05,000

so it could be reproduced, and that's how we know where they went that night.

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00:08:05,000 --> 00:08:10,000

Investigators can now track all the movement through the museum that night,

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00:08:10,000 --> 00:08:14,000

beginning in the gallery known as the Dutch Room.

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00:08:14,000 --> 00:08:18,000

The thieves travel both to the Dutch Room and the Short Gallery.

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00:08:19,000 --> 00:08:23,000

The Dutch Room is where they're taking five important old masterworks,

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00:08:23,000 --> 00:08:27,000

including the concert and Rembrandt's Storm on the Sea of Galilee.

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00:08:27,000 --> 00:08:32,000

And the Short Gallery is where they're taking most of the Degas works on paper,

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00:08:32,000 --> 00:08:35,000

as well as the Eagle Phineal.

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00:08:36,000 --> 00:08:43,000

In all, the thieves were in the museum for 81 minutes, leaving at 2.45 a.m.

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00:08:43,000 --> 00:08:49,000

When the police look at the motion detector data, they find something highly suspicious.

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00:08:49,000 --> 00:08:54,000

The only information shown on the motion detector data in the blue room comes from hours before,

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00:08:54,000 --> 00:08:58,000

when Abeth admits that that was most likely him doing his rounds.

146

00:08:58,000 --> 00:09:02,000

To me, it's the mystery within the mystery. It's the theft within the theft.

147

00:09:02,000 --> 00:09:07,000

Why didn't their footsteps show up in that room?

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00:09:07,000 --> 00:09:10,000

Rick was in that room before the bad guy showed up.

149

00:09:10,000 --> 00:09:13,000

Could he have taken it off the wall?

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00:09:14,000 --> 00:09:20,000

Investigators learn more about Abeth's actions that night that raise alarm bells.

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00:09:20,000 --> 00:09:26,000

We know that Rick Abeth opened and closed the palace road door.

152

00:09:26,000 --> 00:09:29,000

Why would he do that? That was not part of his rounds.

153

00:09:29,000 --> 00:09:32,000

That was not part of the usual protocol.

154

00:09:32,000 --> 00:09:38,000

It looks awfully fishy. Was he signaling the robbers? It's a good time to come.

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00:09:39,000 --> 00:09:45,000

Despite their suspicions, investigators never amass enough evidence to charge Abeth with the crime.

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00:09:45,000 --> 00:09:50,000

This is a man who has lived under a cloud of suspicion for his entire life.

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00:09:50,000 --> 00:09:54,000

But this is not a guy who you would pick out of a lineup and say,

158

00:09:54,000 --> 00:09:57,000

oh yeah, he's some kind of a criminal mastermind.

159

00:09:57,000 --> 00:10:03,000

Ultimately, he moves out of the state, finishes his college degree, and works as a teacher's aide.

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00:10:04,000 --> 00:10:13,000

Then in 2015, he's back in the spotlight after the FBI release a security video from the museum taken a night before the theft.

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00:10:13,000 --> 00:10:21,000

The FBI video shows Mr. Abeth buzzing in a person to talk to him at the security desk, which was against the rules.

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00:10:21,000 --> 00:10:26,000

So it took many years, almost 25 years for the FBI to release that video.

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00:10:26,000 --> 00:10:32,000

The museum and the FBI say we want to know who this person was.

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00:10:32,000 --> 00:10:37,000

Rick was asked, do you know who this was? Rick says, I don't remember.

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00:10:37,000 --> 00:10:43,000

Abeth is giving inconsistent statements to the officers, and they're not buying any of it.

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00:10:43,000 --> 00:10:47,000

But eventually, he's given two polygraphs and he passes.

167

00:10:47,000 --> 00:10:53,000

So if the theft was done by an insider, who is responsible?

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00:10:53,000 --> 00:10:59,000

Whether or not Abeth was the inside man, we know that this was not one person acting alone.

169

00:10:59,000 --> 00:11:04,000

This was a group of people planning and executing this heist.

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00:11:08,000 --> 00:11:17,000

After failing to find enough evidence to charge a night security guard at the Gardner Museum, investigators looking into the case are stumped.

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00:11:17,000 --> 00:11:25,000

The FBI releases sketches of the thieves posing as Boston police in hopes of identifying the suspects.

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00:11:25,000 --> 00:11:32,000

Who were these two men and how did they carry out the theft in the very particular way in which they did so?

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00:11:32,000 --> 00:11:38,000

The sketches reveal the thieves' disguises and present a new angle in the investigation.

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00:11:38,000 --> 00:11:45,000

In any type of crime, the first thing investigators are going to do is look at the forensic evidence that's left behind at the scene,

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00:11:45,000 --> 00:11:54,000

interview individuals who are witnesses, and then look at other situations that occurred in that

area that are like that, other art thefts that were unsolved.

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00:11:54,000 --> 00:11:58,000

These are going to be your primary suspects after the insiders.

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00:11:58,000 --> 00:12:10,000

Investigators are really going to look for key characteristics that may be similar to other crimes committed, whether they involve art or a similar MO by particular criminals.

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00:12:10,000 --> 00:12:18,000

Investigators looked at other crimes in the area. In one particular case, a failed theft at a similar museum.

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00:12:18,000 --> 00:12:26,000

Like the Gardner Museum, the Hyde Museum collection in the collector's former home, and the art is very similar, high value.

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00:12:26,000 --> 00:12:31,000

The Hyde collection has old masters combined with French impressionist works.

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00:12:31,000 --> 00:12:38,000

It's often been called the mini-gardener and is another Palazzo-style museum in upstate New York.

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00:12:38,000 --> 00:12:48,000

On December 22, 1980, ten years before the Gardner Heist, two crooks are on their way to rob the Hyde Museum when they run into trouble.

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00:12:48,000 --> 00:12:59,000

Two men hijack a FedEx truck. They subdue the driver in the back using duct tape and ether. They tell her that if she behaves and cooperates that she will be rewarded.

184

00:12:59,000 --> 00:13:07,000

Some of the tools they brought along with them were handcuffs, duct tape, and knives to cut the paintings out of their frames, just like in the Gardner Heist.

185

00:13:07,000 --> 00:13:16,000

The operation is called off when the thieves get caught in traffic and realize they can't get to the Hyde collection before closing time.

186

00:13:16,000 --> 00:13:19,000

Authorities eventually catch up to the hijackers.

187

00:13:19,000 --> 00:13:29,000

The FedEx driver is able to ID the two men who subdue her in the back of the truck. They are the con artist, Brian McDevitt, and his co-conspirator, Michael Mori.

188

00:13:29,000 --> 00:13:36,000

The two men are convicted of kidnapping and attempted grand larceny and both spend several months in prison.

189

00:13:37,000 --> 00:13:45,000

Both men are out of prison at the time of the Gardner Heist, but the methodology in both cases is similar.

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00:13:45,000 --> 00:13:56,000

While investigators are looking into the Gardner Heist, they're again drawn to McDevitt and Mori due to the similarities between their attempted robbery of the Hyde collection and the robbery of the Gardner Heist.

191

00:13:56,000 --> 00:14:02,000

The use of duct tape to bind the FedEx driver and the duct tape used to bind the nightguards.

192

00:14:02,000 --> 00:14:10,000

The tools to remove paintings from their frames, as well as this promise of if you behave, you will be rewarded.

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00:14:10,000 --> 00:14:20,000

So Michael Mori, he had an alibi. The other guy, Brian McDevitt, not so much. He didn't have an alibi and he was in the Boston area that night.

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00:14:21,000 --> 00:14:26,000

The FBI spends more than a year investigating Brian McDevitt.

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00:14:26,000 --> 00:14:34,000

Brian McDevitt was a real character. He had a history of fraudulent activity. At one point he even said he was a member of the Vanderbilt family.

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00:14:34,000 --> 00:14:41,000

Later he moved to Los Angeles. He joined the Writers Guild of America and said, I'm a successful screenwriter.

197

00:14:42,000 --> 00:14:52,000

In an FBI interview, Mori told agents that McDevitt used the exact same language in the Hyde attempt that was used during the Gardner Heist.

198

00:14:52,000 --> 00:14:56,000

We know where you live, but if you behave, you will be rewarded.

199

00:14:57,000 --> 00:15:08,000

The FBI are able to draw a connection between McDevitt and the Gardner Heist, given that McDevitt himself has a strong Boston accent, which is consistent with the description that Abbott provided of the two thieves.

200

00:15:08,000 --> 00:15:12,000

And McDevitt himself also seems to resemble one of the early police sketches.

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00:15:13,000 --> 00:15:17,000

In 1992, Brian McDevitt agrees to talk to the FBI.

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00:15:17,000 --> 00:15:27,000

McDevitt sits down with the FBI several times, each time insisting that he's had nothing to do with the Gardner Heist, despite the fact that he's not able to produce an alibi.

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00:15:28,000 --> 00:15:33,000

The FBI also interviews a woman who Brian McDevitt was dating at the time of the heist.

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00:15:33,000 --> 00:15:41,000

McDevitt had this girlfriend who was over the moon with him. I mean, she thought he was like an artistic genius. He seemed very well connected.

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00:15:41,000 --> 00:15:48,000

He had told his girlfriend he was going down to New York the weekend of the heist to attend this big soiree put on by the Writers Guild.

206

00:15:49,000 --> 00:16:00,000

Upon his return, he told her that the FBI may question her and that if they did, she was to tell them that they had spent St. Patrick's Day weekend together, which she ultimately refuses to do.

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00:16:00,000 --> 00:16:04,000

And McDevitt became very irate at the fact that she refused to lie for him.

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00:16:04,000 --> 00:16:12,000

She learns that there was no Writers Guild event over the weekend of St. Patrick's Day. She learns that he may not even be a screenwriter.

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00:16:13,000 --> 00:16:20,000

McDevitt tells her that he was actually involved and had been paid to commit the Gardner Heist and that he has to flee the country.

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00:16:20,000 --> 00:16:27,000

She goes back and writes in her diary that she can't believe what he just told her and she doesn't know how to process it.

211

00:16:27,000 --> 00:16:31,000

And she can't even handle it. It's so huge. And it's so huge, she can't even write it down.

212

00:16:31,000 --> 00:16:39,000

All that's in her diary is that Brian did a terrible thing. He admitted it and I don't know how to process it.

213

00:16:40,000 --> 00:16:46,000

Feeling uncomfortable and overwhelmed by the amount of information that's been given to her by McDevitt, she tells the FBI.

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00:16:47,000 --> 00:16:51,000

When the FBI tries to find Brian McDevitt again, he's gone.

215

00:16:52,000 --> 00:16:59,000

He fled to Malian, Columbia. The FBI were able to trace him there, but he died before they were able to interview him again.

216

00:17:00,000 --> 00:17:06,000

McDevitt's death brought investigators to another stand still with many questions remaining.

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00:17:06,000 --> 00:17:13,000

Was McDevitt himself actually involved in the theft or was he just pretending to have been involved to impress anyone who would listen?

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00:17:14,000 --> 00:17:18,000

But McDevitt isn't the only compelling suspect in this complicated case.

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00:17:21,000 --> 00:17:32,000

In 1997, seven years after the Gardner Heist, a reporter from the Boston Herald gets a strange call from a man who claims to have information on the case.

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00:17:32,000 --> 00:17:35,000

His name is William Youngworth Jr.

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00:17:36,000 --> 00:17:43,000

He's an antique dealer with a criminal past very unscrupulous. Youngworth contacts a reporter at the Boston Herald.

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00:17:43,000 --> 00:17:52,000

He makes it clear that he didn't steal the paintings, but he says, I know where the paintings from the Gardner Heist are, and I can help you facilitate their return.

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00:17:53,000 --> 00:17:58,000

Youngworth told him that he'd not stolen the paintings, but he could supply them to be recovered.

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00:17:59,000 --> 00:18:06,000

He tells reporters that he would be willing to return these pieces to law enforcement if the conditions are right.

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00:18:06,000 --> 00:18:32,000

In a surprising twist, one of Youngworth's demands is the release of his good friend Miles Connor from prison.

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00:18:33,000 --> 00:18:38,000

At the time, Connor is serving 10 years for transporting stolen art.

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00:18:38,000 --> 00:18:46,000

And Miles is a very cunning guy. He's very well known to the police around Boston, both for art and antique theft.

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00:18:46,000 --> 00:18:56,000

Youngworth and Connor have history. They've been involved in criminality together, and it's quite possible that all of this information that Youngworth is offering is nothing more than a scam to come up with money.

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00:18:56,000 --> 00:19:08,000

Miles Connor is a name that came up very early in the investigation. He was and probably still is one of the most notorious art thieves in America.

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00:19:09,000 --> 00:19:17,000

In the 1970s, he was caught by an undercover FBI agent in an attempt to sell stolen Andrew Wyeth artworks.

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00:19:18,000 --> 00:19:27,000

Now at the same time, around 1975, while he's out on bail, Connor and some associates walk into the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and they steal a Rembrandt.

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00:19:29,000 --> 00:19:39,000

Miles calls his lawyer a year later and says, tell the FBI if they want to get their Rembrandt back from the MFA, I'll give it back to them, but they've got to do a deal with me.

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00:19:39,000 --> 00:19:48,000

I want a deal. He gets the painting to be brought back. He goes into court. They allows him to serve the terms together as one eight-year sentence.

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00:19:48,000 --> 00:19:51,000

So Miles thinks he's got some leeway.

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00:19:51,000 --> 00:20:00,000

Investigators wonder, could Connor be connected to the infamous Gardner Heist? If so, Youngworth isn't talking.

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00:20:00,000 --> 00:20:15,000

Youngworth doesn't give much information because he has a list of demands before he fully cooperates. He tells the FBI, if you fulfill these demands, I will get you back the paintings that you're looking for.

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00:20:16,000 --> 00:20:24,000

Both the FBI and the Boston Herald Reporter are skeptical and demand proof that William Youngworth really does have the paintings.

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00:20:25,000 --> 00:20:34,000

Subsequently, the two men set up a clandestine meeting. The Boston Herald Reporter is picked up by Youngworth in the middle of the night and driven to a warehouse in Brooklyn.

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00:20:34,000 --> 00:20:44,000

In this warehouse, Youngworth unfurls a painting that the two men then examine by flashlight. The Herald Reporter believes he has seen Rembrandt's Storm on the Sea of Galilee.

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00:20:44,000 --> 00:20:56,000

He then returns to Boston where he publishes an article called *We've Seen It*, where they demand further evidence but argue that they have seen and know the location of at least one of the Gardner Heist paintings.

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00:20:57,000 --> 00:21:01,000

The Herald's Reporter stays on the story and demands even more proof.

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00:21:02,000 --> 00:21:09,000

Youngworth produces paint chips from what he claims to be the Rembrandt. And paint chips are very distinct from different time periods.

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00:21:09,000 --> 00:21:15,000

Tracing something like lead can actually tell you what era a paint was made in.

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00:21:16,000 --> 00:21:21,000

The Herald then turns over the paint flakes to the FBI for more detailed analysis.

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00:21:21,000 --> 00:21:28,000

In doing the scientific testing, we're able to determine that the paint chips themselves are about 350 years old.

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00:21:28,000 --> 00:21:36,000

And the materials being used in those paint chips are consistent with the place and time in which both Rembrandt and Vermeer are painting.

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00:21:36,000 --> 00:21:40,000

But in the interest and turn of events, they do not match the Rembrandt painting.

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00:21:41,000 --> 00:21:51,000

Despite being dated to the same era, the paint chips Youngworth turned over were found to contain oils and pigments not found in the museum's stolen Rembrandt.

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00:21:51,000 --> 00:22:00,000

The Gardner Museum felt the investigators didn't do a thorough investigation, that they didn't compare those chips to every item that had been stolen.

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00:22:00,000 --> 00:22:08,000

There was never a comparison done to see if possibly they could have come from the Vermeer, who was a contemporary of Rembrandt.

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00:22:09,000 --> 00:22:17,000

At the end of the day, we don't know where Youngworth procured these paint chips. All we know is that they don't match Rembrandt's storm on the Sea of Galilee.

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00:22:18,000 --> 00:22:27,000

The officials from the Gardner Museum were left wondering whether or not investigators could have done more in terms of the comparison of the chips that were found and have to ask,

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00:22:27,000 --> 00:22:31,000

was this possible that Youngworth did in fact have the Rembrandt?

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00:22:32,000 --> 00:22:39,000

Neither Youngworth nor Connor are charged in the Gardner case, but Connor claims he has info to share.

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00:22:40,000 --> 00:22:47,000

He said he thought about robbing the Gardner Museum. He also said he never did it, but he did say he thinks he knows who did.

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00:22:48,000 --> 00:22:57,000

The Gardner Museum heist is a high stakes crime, but not a violent one. The thieves get in and out without shedding a single drop of blood.

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00:22:58,000 --> 00:23:08,000

But as the FBI goes hunting for suspects in Boston's underworld, they start to realize that a fortune that big may be worth killing over.

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00:23:09,000 --> 00:23:25,000

Boston in the 90s is one where organized crime continues to be rampant, and with organized crime also come law enforcement informants working with law enforcement to help them solve crimes and gain leniency on the crimes that they themselves are committing.

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00:23:26,000 --> 00:23:35,000

Notorious Art Thief Miles Connor is no stranger to making deals with the FBI, and he points them to a dizzying new array of suspects.

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00:23:35,000 --> 00:23:44,000

Now in around 1991 he hears that connections that he has within the mob are going around bragging about having committed the Gardner heist without him.

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00:23:48,000 --> 00:23:55,000

While in prison, Miles Connor states today that he was visited by an old friend who introduced him to Robert Donati.

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00:23:55,000 --> 00:24:03,000

Now Robert Donati was a soldier, a worker with the Patriarcha Mafia family out of New England.

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00:24:04,000 --> 00:24:09,000

Back in 1974, Connor says that he cased out the Gardner Museum with Robert Donati.

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00:24:09,000 --> 00:24:12,000

Didn't actually follow through with the break end.

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00:24:12,000 --> 00:24:17,000

Later in jail, he finds out that Donati actually went ahead and robbed the museum anyway without him.

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00:24:18,000 --> 00:24:21,000

And Donati hasn't been especially discreet.

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00:24:21,000 --> 00:24:27,000

Bobby Donati is going around town bragging about having committed the Gardner heist and having buried the paintings.

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00:24:27,000 --> 00:24:36,000

The speculation is that Donati is planning to ransom the paintings back to law enforcement to help free a fellow mobster.

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00:24:36,000 --> 00:24:39,000

He wasn't doing it for money, he was doing it for a friend.

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00:24:39,000 --> 00:24:47,000

Donati, I guess, believed that if he stole these paintings maybe he could make a deal and try to get this friend's sentence reduced.

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00:24:48,000 --> 00:24:54,000

With Donati there's another red flag. He was caught with police paraphernalia. That's another connection to the Gardner case.

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00:24:54,000 --> 00:25:01,000

In 1991, about a year after the Gardner heist, Robert Donati disappears.

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00:25:01,000 --> 00:25:07,000

Robert Donati was found in the trunk of his car. His throat was slashed so deeply he was almost decapitated.

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00:25:07,000 --> 00:25:12,000

There was a gang war going on. Was he assassinated because of the gang war?

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00:25:12,000 --> 00:25:19,000

Or was he assassinated because he knew something about the Gardner Museum and he had the art in his possession?

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00:25:19,000 --> 00:25:26,000

It's chilling to think that beyond a robbery that this could now also be tied to a murder.

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00:25:26,000 --> 00:25:34,000

After the hit on Donati, the FBI scours any properties attached to him but never finds any of the Gardner works.

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00:25:34,000 --> 00:25:43,000

He could have put those paintings anywhere. I mean these guys had safe houses all over the place and perhaps the knowledge of where he put them died with him.

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00:25:43,000 --> 00:25:51,000

Donati may very well have stashed some of those paintings and if what he said was true then the location of those paintings died with him.

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00:25:51,000 --> 00:26:01,000

Now there have been rumors of a painting showing up here and a painting showing up there but every time law enforcement tries to follow up on those leads, they come up with nothing.

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00:26:01,000 --> 00:26:07,000

But Donati's death doesn't stop the FBI from investigating more Boston crime family members.

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00:26:07,000 --> 00:26:12,000

The trail leads next to a friend of Donati named Bobby Gentile.

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00:26:12,000 --> 00:26:25,000

Bobby Gentile was friends with a lot of different Boston area mobsters. He knew Bobby Donati, he knew a lot of these characters and it's believed that at some point he took possession of at least two of these paintings.

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00:26:25,000 --> 00:26:38,000

So a federal judge authorizes a search warrant for Bobby Gentile's home and inside Gentile's house is a list of all the items that have been stolen from the Gardner Museum with little price points on them.

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00:26:38,000 --> 00:26:48,000

And next to the price points is the Boston Herald article from the day after the theft. So after Gentile's house is raided, he of course remains a suspect.

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00:26:48,000 --> 00:27:00,000

The investigation on Gentile remained open for three years. He ultimately sold a gun to an undercover FBI agent. He received a five year sentence for a family possession of a firearm.

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00:27:00,000 --> 00:27:09,000

The FBI tried to flip him, tried to get him to come in and talk about the paintings that he supposedly had, what he never would speak about it.

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00:27:09,000 --> 00:27:18,000

Bobby Gentile never admitted anything to do with the Gardner heist. He did his time, got out of jail in 2019 and died in 2021 at the age of 85.

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00:27:18,000 --> 00:27:34,000

In 2013, while Gentile is still alive, tips from the FBI informants point investigators to other members of organized crime. A pair of low level gangsters named George Ricefelder and Leonard DeMuzio.

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00:27:34,000 --> 00:27:47,000

Both Ricefelder and DeMuzio appear similar to the early sketches of the two police officers and they also have long rap sheets of theft and other sorts of violent crime in the Boston area.

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00:27:47,000 --> 00:27:54,000

The FBI did background investigations and they were successful in getting some of the relatives of Ricefelder to talk to them.

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00:27:54,000 --> 00:28:09,000

During the background investigation of George Ricefelder, they sit down with his brother Richard.

They show him a picture book and he immediately pointed to the Shae Tortonian and he said, hey, I've seen that. It was in my brother's apartment.

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00:28:09,000 --> 00:28:18,000

So in addition to Ricefelder being mobbed up, as they say, he was also linked to the robbery or the possession of one of the paintings.

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00:28:18,000 --> 00:28:22,000

But soon the investigation hits a familiar snag.

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00:28:22,000 --> 00:28:32,000

Ricefelder meets an untimely death. He dies of a cocaine overdose. Investigators go to his home. They look for the painting. They find nothing.

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00:28:32,000 --> 00:28:42,000

Shortly after George Ricefelder died, his longtime criminal partner, Lenny DeMuzio, he disappeared and then a few months later he was found dead as well.

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00:28:43,000 --> 00:28:52,000

Four possible suspects, all turning up dead, just as investigators close in. To some, it seems like more than a coincidence.

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00:28:52,000 --> 00:29:07,000

There were many mafia members who were associated, involved around the Gardner Heist and it would be in their best interest to not speak on that criminality. Bad things could happen if they shared information that they know.

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00:29:08,000 --> 00:29:16,000

The silence wasn't necessarily surprising. That's a part of my culture. But if we speculate about where the paintings could be, they could be anywhere.

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00:29:16,000 --> 00:29:23,000

They could be buried in the ground. They could be in the storage unit. They could be in somebody's house or on a boat somewhere. You know, we never know.

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00:29:24,000 --> 00:29:38,000

Much of the Gardner Heist investigation has focused on the thieves who stole the artwork from the building. But where did the paintings go next? And who would have the power and the money to buy them?

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00:29:38,000 --> 00:29:49,000

There's a few things that really bother investigators and myself about this case. The paintings that were taken and all the artwork that were taken are so famous that they could never be sold.

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00:29:50,000 --> 00:29:56,000

You can't just walk into an auction house, hopefully, and put up one of these works for auction.

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00:29:56,000 --> 00:30:08,000

It's hotter than hot. You know, it's white hot. It's so famous. It's so valuable. And it's so reported on. I mean, this was a story that made headlines across the globe.

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00:30:08,000 --> 00:30:18,000

Generally, artwork is recovered when there's a death and someone contacts authorities to say that they found something or it's recovered in the midst of another investigation.

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00:30:20,000 --> 00:30:26,000

In 2017, the Gardner Museum doubles its reward, but no new leads emerge.

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00:30:26,000 --> 00:30:34,000

Despite the fact that there's a \$10 million reward, no one has come forth with any information that has led to the recovery of any other works.

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00:30:35,000 --> 00:30:43,000

It's pretty puzzling to think about why the works that were stolen were actually taken and more expensive works were left behind.

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00:30:43,000 --> 00:30:54,000

The thieves, we know, spent about 81 minutes moving systematically through both the Dutch room and

the short room, removing what some have described as a laundry list or a shopping list of artworks.

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00:30:54,000 --> 00:31:03,000

Although some of the paintings that were taken were masterpieces, unique pieces that can't be reproduced or should be recovered, there were some pieces that were not that valuable.

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00:31:04,000 --> 00:31:14,000

The day-guess sketches were not that valuable. The final off of the flag, the Napoleonic Regimental flag, was valuable but not to the point of these paintings.

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00:31:15,000 --> 00:31:24,000

So there wasn't a lot of rhyme or reason for some of the thefts. The most expensive painting there was a Titian, but the Titian, the rape of Europa, is massive.

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00:31:24,000 --> 00:31:27,000

So you couldn't really walk that out of the museum.

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00:31:27,000 --> 00:31:37,000

They avoided Titian's rape of Europa, but they took Vermeer's The Concert and some of these smaller works on paper suggesting that there was a plan as to what would be taken.

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00:31:37,000 --> 00:31:40,000

Investigators begin to shape a new theory.

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00:31:41,000 --> 00:31:55,000

The art market itself is full of collectors whose sole purpose is to acquire works that they then keep in their own private collections, which are essentially the private storage for wealthy collectors.

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00:31:55,000 --> 00:31:58,000

And we don't have any way to track what's traded and sold there.

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00:31:59,000 --> 00:32:11,000

That person would have to be very wealthy tied to the black market, very well-versed in how the art market functions, very well-versed in how the museum market functions.

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00:32:11,000 --> 00:32:35,000

Taking together the works really present as a hodgepodge. But if you consider that the thieves may have been working from a private collector's shopping list, who had holes in his or her collection to fill, and you consider the market value of the works together too, it makes that shopping list's theory much more plausible.

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00:32:36,000 --> 00:32:48,000

Not only would this require spending hundreds of thousands, if not millions, on ordering, smuggling, transportation and storage, you also have the idea of why aren't they just spending that much money on the legitimate market.

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00:32:49,000 --> 00:32:59,000

At the time, Ann Holly, director of the Garden Museum, believed that someone had come up with a personal list of things that they wanted to steal that really they never had any intention of selling.

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00:32:59,000 --> 00:33:05,000

This was a list of things that this person really just wanted to possess and enjoy for themselves.

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00:33:06,000 --> 00:33:15,000

So if someone is collecting and prizing these works for their own personal viewing, that requires a lot of storage space and a lot of secrecy.

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00:33:16,000 --> 00:33:19,000

There are some suspects that fit the profile.

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00:33:19,000 --> 00:33:31,000

So in 2013, Pablo Picasso's stepdaughters reported a couple of pieces missing from their collection. Turns out they were sold by a Swiss dealer to a Russian oligarch.

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00:33:32,000 --> 00:33:40,000

Ultimately, a dealer was charged with handling the stolen goods and selling them on to the Russian collector, who eventually returned the works to the Picasso family.

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00:33:41,000 --> 00:33:51,000

This is one of the most frustrating theories of the ma, because it forces us to just wait to see if someone slips up in the black market or on the open market.

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00:33:52,000 --> 00:33:57,000

Anybody looking to purchase these items has got to understand that they can't really show them off.

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00:33:58,000 --> 00:34:02,000

You know, you start talking at your Christmas party about your Vermeer, the word will get out.

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00:34:02,000 --> 00:34:15,000

So if anybody wanted to purchase them after the fact, it had to be somebody who just wanted to look at them for himself or herself, and that's why they probably have had a difficulty getting rid of the items.

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00:34:18,000 --> 00:34:27,000

The Gardner Museum heist has always had an air of sophistication about it, but there may be even more layers to this crime than investigators first thought.

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00:34:27,000 --> 00:34:39,000

The Gardner Museum investigation is still an open case, and even though the Statue of Limitations

has run on the theft, the Statue of Limitations has not run on the possession of the artwork itself.

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00:34:40,000 --> 00:34:52,000

Authorities are still trying to find the stolen items for sure. They're still interviewing people, they're still following leads, they're still using traditional law enforcement techniques, so it's an ongoing investigation.

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00:34:52,000 --> 00:34:57,000

If the paintings are safe, who has them, where are they and why?

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00:34:58,000 --> 00:35:01,000

The answer may be hiding across the Atlantic.

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00:35:02,000 --> 00:35:14,000

There were a lot of Boston Irish individuals who were sympathetic to the IRA, Irish Republican Army, which at the time was in deep conflict with the British Army in Northern Ireland and was looking for independence.

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00:35:14,000 --> 00:35:33,000

The Irish Republican Army, the IRA, was in fact a violent group fighting for what they viewed as Irish freedom and uniting Ireland, and for many years they used any tactics necessary, whether it was bombings or kidnapping or murders.

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00:35:34,000 --> 00:35:47,000

And a lot of the criminals in Boston were funneling money, arms, and they could to try to help the cause. So some individuals thought it was possible that the IRA may have been involved in the theft of the paintings.

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00:35:48,000 --> 00:35:54,000

The 13 artworks themselves would be used to barter in order to gain money and weapons for the IRA efforts.

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00:35:55,000 --> 00:36:03,000

The chief proponent of this theory is Arthur Brand, a Dutch private investigator known as the Indiana Jones of the art world.

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00:36:03,000 --> 00:36:13,000

A renowned art detective, Arthur Brand, is known for recovering artworks for governments as well as recovering things like a \$25 million Picasso from a yacht.

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00:36:14,000 --> 00:36:25,000

He believes that the paintings themselves are located in Ireland, having been taken there after being smuggled out of the United States in an effort to raise money for the cause of the IRA.

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00:36:26,000 --> 00:36:29,000

The IRA has been linked to art theft before.

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00:36:29,000 --> 00:36:46,000

They broke into Sir Alfred Bates' home where they stole 19 works, including a Vermeer. That Vermeer today is valued by some at around \$100 million. These works they attempted to use to barter for the freedom of some of their IRA compatriots.

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00:36:47,000 --> 00:36:51,000

They were going to try to ransom them back to the insurance company or whoever would pay them.

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00:36:51,000 --> 00:37:03,000

Authorities foiled the plot and the paintings were retrieved within weeks. But there has never been an overt IRA demand over the Gardner paintings and that makes investigators doubt Brand's theory.

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00:37:04,000 --> 00:37:14,000

There's no indication the IRA ever had these paintings. They've never come forward to try to get a ransom. Remember there's a \$10 million reward. If they were trying to fund something, they would have gotten the reward.

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00:37:14,000 --> 00:37:32,000

Where is the IRA going to be exchanging these works to get money and arms? It's most likely not going to be in Ireland, which means then they're going to have to smuggle the 13 most well-known works in the world at the time off an island onto some place like mainland Europe without getting caught a second time.

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00:37:33,000 --> 00:37:38,000

Some think the key link was one of the biggest mob figures in the Northeast at the time.

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00:37:38,000 --> 00:37:58,000

James Whitey Bulger is the leader of the Irish gang in Boston in the 80s and the early 90s and he became one of the most powerful, not the most powerful criminal in Boston. They made their money through extortion, drug dealing, gambling, murder, whatever it took.

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00:37:59,000 --> 00:38:14,000

In addition to being a criminal, Bulger is a longtime FBI informant so you think if he did know something, he'd say something. In Boston, if anybody stole as much as a candy bar, Bulger's going to know about it so he's a prime candidate to have information about the Gardner heist.

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00:38:15,000 --> 00:38:19,000

But there was never any evidence connecting Bulger to the crime itself.

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00:38:19,000 --> 00:38:34,000

In 1995, five years after the Gardner heist, he's charged with the whole slew of crimes related to racketeering, murder, extortion, drug dealing, all sorts of very serious offenses and Bulger goes on the rock.

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00:38:35,000 --> 00:38:43,000

And ultimately he gets caught in the summer of 2011, 16 years after he fled Boston in Santa Monica, California.

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00:38:43,000 --> 00:38:52,000

Whitey Bulger was convicted of several crimes, which included 11 murders. He was given ultimately two life sentences and charged with racketeering.

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00:38:53,000 --> 00:39:02,000

Not only was he a very savvy criminal, but he was getting tipped off by corrupt members of the FBI so when he went into prison, that of course made him a target.

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00:39:03,000 --> 00:39:05,000

During his time in prison, Bulger began to fear for his life.

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00:39:05,000 --> 00:39:18,000

If Bulger was willing to exchange information about the Gardner heist to ensure his safety, he never had the chance. In 2018, without a deal in place, Bulger is murdered in prison.

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00:39:19,000 --> 00:39:25,000

Some believe that they know what Bulger may have revealed to the FBI, given that it's known he shipped arms and drugs to the IRA.

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00:39:26,000 --> 00:39:38,000

Now that Bulger has been beaten to death in prison, there's no way to confirm anything from him,

but up until the day he died, he never gave any indication that he knew where Gardner Museum's artwork was.

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00:39:39,000 --> 00:39:47,000

Investigators like Arthur Brand are still scouring Europe for any sign of the paintings, but so far, nothing's turned up.

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00:39:48,000 --> 00:39:53,000

This artwork belongs in Boston. Hopefully someday they'll be back hanging in the Gardner Museum for all of us to see.

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00:39:54,000 --> 00:40:01,000

There's always going to be a reminder of this heist. Even for 33 years, because of the will, Isabella Stark Gardner left when she died.

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00:40:02,000 --> 00:40:09,000

It states that nothing can be changed, nothing can be moved into the museum. So if you go today, you're going to see empty frames where the paintings were.

365

00:40:10,000 --> 00:40:16,000

We won't become a world class city until we get our artwork back. You can see those empty frames. They're heart-breaking.

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00:40:16,000 --> 00:40:26,000

You walk into the Dutch room now, it's like walking the first person at awake, sadness, loss. And that's a loss for Boston.

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00:40:29,000 --> 00:40:42,000

More than three decades have passed since 13 works of art were stolen from the Gardner Museum in Boston. So far, not a single one has surfaced, denying the art world some of its greatest treasures.

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00:40:42,000 --> 00:40:50,000

But with that \$10 million reward still out there, hope remains that these masterpieces will come home soon.

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00:40:51,000 --> 00:40:56,000

I'm Lawrence Fishburne. Thank you for watching History's Greatest Mysteries.