

Who When Wow, Season 2, Episode 9

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Art Heist

Carly. Hello, Hello and welcome back to the podcast that doesn't really exist! Buckle up everybody because today we've got an episode full of stolen artwork, a ten million dollar reward, and I even get chased by the FBI! I'm Carly Q and this is Who When Wow, The Mystery Edition!

(THEME SONG)

(Soundbite of voices in the distance, printers whirring, phones ringing)

Carly in background. G'morning, Amber!

Coworker #1. Hi Charly!

Carly. Carly! It's Carly.

Carly. As you know dear listeners, I work at BUTTHED as a Junior Temporal Analyst during business hours...

Carly in background. Ooh, love those shoes, Crystal!

Coworker #2. These are slippers. I have bunions.

Carly. But I spend my lunch breaks doing my real work...

Carly in background. Morning Ruby! Hi Jade! Oh! Hi there Stone...

Coworker #3. Whaddup.

Carly. Investigating history's mysteries to bring my findings to you through this fun and WOW- inducing podcast.

Carly in background. Have a great day, everybody!

(Soundbite of Footsteps down basement stairs)

Carly in background. Hmmm..

Carly. As I walked down the stairs into the basement today, I felt like there was something missing. (Soundbite of Carly snaps fingers) But I just couldn't put my finger on it.

Carly in background. Time to get to work.

Carly. My job as a Junior Temporal Analyst is to catalog random historical events that come to me in thumb drive audio files dropped down a tube.

(Soundbite of Thumb drive comes down the vacuum tube)

Carly. And nothing makes me happier than when the historical event is time sealed...Yes! I am so happy! ..time sealed event, that makes me happy happy happy happy happy yes!

Audio File. Event: (BLEEP) 13 pieces of art (BLEEEP) Boston (BLEEEEEEP) 1990

Carly in background. Wicked!

Carly. Because that means it's time to sneak into BUTTHED's, one of a kind, time traveling elevator to go back in time and investigate what's being hidden from this file. Unfortunately.

Carly in background. Oh no... oh my goodness it's only 9:30!

Carly. I do have to wait until lunchtime to use the elevator. Since my clues had to do with art, it got me thinking about the basement and how there wasn't really anything beautiful and joyful down there.

Carly in background. You know, There's really nothing beautiful or joyful down here.

(Soundbite of echoes of dripping water, the hum of florescent lights)

Carly in background. I got it!

(Soundbite of clicking of computer mouse and keyboard keys)

Carly. I decided to search on the computer for some bright and cheery artwork I could frame and display. One, single "hang in there" kitty-cat poster tacked up to the wall, just wasn't enough. Plus, Nibbles hates cats! And I`m obviously more of a rat person myself. Where are you, Nibbles?

(Soundbite of Mouse squeaks)

Carly. Oh good, I'd like your opinion on which art we should order for the basement. My little rat friend, Nibbles and I searched and searched.

(Soundbite computer typing sound)

Carly. Ahh Art Carney, Art Blakey, Art Garfunkel, Art Bell. Oooh, he sounds neat. A-ha! Wall decoration Art! And then we saw it.

Carly in background. It's perfect!

Carly. The cutest!

Carly.in background. Pretty!

Carly. Most jolly ,picture of a fluffy mouse wearing a sunflower as a hat! And this piece of artwork was called, Sunflower Squeaks.

Carly in background..Perfect name for such an excellent art piece

(Soundbite of Fridge opens, glass bottle being removed, fridge closes. Footsteps.)

Lewis. Heeeeyyyyyy there, Carly Q.

Carly. (heavy sigh) I bet you can guess who that is. Yep, it's Lewis, my least favorite fizzy-water drinker at BUTTHED.

(Soundbite of rat squeaks)

Carly. Nibbles tends to scurry under my desk when he shows up.

Carly. What do you want, Lewis?

Lewis. What do you have that I'd want, Carly Q?

Carly. Well, I'm sharing those fizzy waters in the fridge, aren't I?

Lewis. Ahh, These fizzy waters are company property, Carly. The Bureau gets them for everyone.

Carly. Welp, he had me there! Well, thanks for visiting, but I'm actually kinda busy here, so.

Lewis. Busy, huh? Those pictures on your screen don't look like the memo I asked you to write for the Temporal Kaffeeklatsch next week.

Carly. That's because I don't know what a, uh... coffee, klatch...what?

Lewis. Kaffeeklatsch! With a K, TWO K`s actually. It's a social gathering with coffee..with a C.

Carly. Why didn't you just say that?

Lewis. Because I have culture. Unlike those pictures you're looking at. You're not buying art, are you?

Carly. If you must know, I'm making a list of pictures for management to buy so I can liven up this basement. Don't you think it could use some charm?

Lewis. Hahahaha You're joking, right? Did you miss the budget email that management sent a few days ago?

Carly. NO I did not miss the email , I read every budget email, top to bottom, forwards and backwards, sometimes I even print them out, when the printer is working.

Lewis. Well, it didn't say art is on the list of important purchases.

Carly. Are you trying to tell me art isn't important?

Lewis. I never said those words, Carly Q. But you should go ahead and ask management what they think. Just make sure I'm there to see their faces when you beg for money for... (chuckles) ART!

(Soundbite of Footsteps as Lewis leaves)

Lewis. See ya, Carly Q... And get me that memo aye-sap! That means As soon as possible!

Carly in background. Two, three, five, seven, eleven, thirteen.

Carly. Some people count to ten when they get angry. I count prime numbers. You should try it. Very soothing.

Carly in background.... seventeen, nineteen, twenty- three, twenty-nine.

(Soundbite of Lunch bell)

Carly. Phew! Saved by the bell! I was getting so frustrated I could've counted to 15,485,863!

(Soundbite of Carly grunts as she opens a desk drawer)

Carly. I pulled my hand-held AI assistant H-dad. out of my drawer to see if he could figure out what the new clues mean.

H-dad. Powering up!

Carly. I plugged in my clues: 13 pieces of art, Boston, and 1990.

H-dad. Analyzing, Analyzing.

Carly. While H-dad did his thing, I collected Nibbles.

(Soundbite of Nibbles squeaks. Backpack zips up.)

Carly. And my backpack and made my way to the time traveling elevator.

(Soundbite of DING! of an elevator. Then elevator music)

Carly. Guess whooooo.

Odie.. Surprise, surprise... It's my basement companion.

Carly. Hello there, Odie! How are you on this beautiful day?

Odie. Is it beautiful? I only see this elevator.

Carly. Well, I thought about that, and.

(Soundbite of Backpack unzips)

Carly. I wanted to make you something to show you how much I appreciate you letting me use the time-travel elevator all the time.

(Soundbite of Paper rustling)

Carly. So, I made this picture for you!

Odie. Oh my goodness. It's... a...yellow ball with sticks in it on top of a person standing on a green carpet?

Carly. Nooo... It's you! On a grassy hill with sun rays beaming on your face. And you're smiling! You do know how to smile, right?

Odie. (pauses, clears throat) This... This is.

Carly. Odie?Are you crying?

H-dad. Analyzing complete! 13 pieces of art. Boston. 1990. It is with 97.032% accuracy that the time- sealed event referenced is the Isabella Stewart Gardner Art Heist.

Carly. Art heist?! People steal art?? How disrespectful.

H-dad. Affirmative! The Isabella Stewart Gardner Art Heist is the biggest unsolved art heist in history.

Carly. Have you heard of this, Odie?

Odie. I have. Apparently they never put new art in the places on the walls where the stolen art stood. There are empty frames throughout the museum.

Carly. Wow! They must think art is really important! Unlike the bosses at BUTTHED.

Odie. What they don't like art?

Carly. They think it`s too expensive, but that room needs something! Am I supposed to look at dark, drab walls all day, every day, for the rest of my life??

Odie..Oh, basement companion. It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see.

(Soundbite of wind chimes)

Carly. Exactly! What I see is ugly walls! And wait, where are those chimes coming from?

Odie. (laughs) Let's get moving, basement companion. Fourty second seconds less for your lunch break. You know the rules... When you go to the past you can't change or stop anything, so don't try. You may observe and ask questions, but do not meddle. Understand?

Carly. Understood.

Odie. When you arrive back in time, a card reader will remain where you came in. Use your keycard and the elevator will reappear. You can also use it to fast forward to other time periods on the file. But you MUST be back here before the end of your lunch break.

Carly. Got it!

Odie. I'll drop you off two days after the art heist. Ready?

Carly. Ready!

Odie. Here we go! Oh and I don't cry, those were allergies!

(Soundbite elevator ding and travel noises)

Carly. You know this elevator could also use some artttttttt?!

(Soundbite of elevator landing, doing, loud voices crowded together)

Carly. The elevator dropped us off in the alley next to the Isabella Stewart Gardner museum. Right in the heart of Boston, Massachusetts.

Carly. There's not much to see in this alley but garbage! Let's go get a better look at the museum, Nibs

(Soundbite rat squeaking)

Nibbles. I'll go with you, but I might come back and have at these dumpsters. Boston always did have top-notch trash.

(Soundbite of Footsteps)

Carly in background. Wow...

Carly. The Gardner Museum was absolutely beautiful! I don't know much about architecture, but the building looked like a white, brick palace with huge windows and tall chimneys on the roof.

Carly. When was this museum built, H-dad?

H-dad. Isabella Stewart Gardner and her husband, Jack, started to consider building a museum to house Isabella's large art collection in 1896. Construction began in 1899.

Carly. A whole house just for their own art?!

(Soundbite of the crowd swells)

Carly. It sure is crowded out here. I guess stolen art is a big deal.

Nibbles. So, what's the plan? Should we sneak in a side window? Or find a crack in the foundation to shimmy through?

Carly. Nibbles, you know I am not a rat, right?

Nibbles...Well, nobody's perfect.

(Soundbite of Feet scurrying towards them)

Carly. That woman looks like she's coming right towards us. Quick! Hop in my backpack, Nibbles.

(Soundbite of Nibbles squeaks, backpack zips up)

Curator. Oh, thank goodness! I've been waiting and waiting. Are you the FBI agent sent to investigate the art heist? Please say yes. I can't possibly go on like this.

Carly. Ah Yeessss...? Yes! That's me, FBI, Federal..BI

Curator. Fabulous. I'm the curator of the Isabella.

Carly. I am Special Agent... Custard.

Curator. Custard? Like a pie?

Carly. Custard like pie, Yes

Curator. Okay! Let's get to it. We don't have a moment to spare.

(Soundbite of creak of a door opening. Door closes behind them as they walk inside, sounds of the crowd outside cease.)

Curator. Welcome to the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum!

Carly. The museum looked like someone's house, someone's BIG house, so many paintings and sculptures, with colorful wallpaper and comfortable chairs.

Curator. Seventy five hundred works of art, fifteen hundred rare books, and seven thousand historical objects. Thirteen less than there were last week.

Carly. If you had to guess what happened here, what would you say?

Curator. I don't have to guess too hard. We have motion detectors. The whole thing took exactly eighty one minutes.

Carly. Hmm. Well Let's retrace the steps of the thieves.

Curator. Good idea. Follow me, please.

(Soundbite of footsteps echo. A heavy, squeaky door is pushed open)

Curator. This is the side entrance of the Isabella. It's locked and monitored by our security guards.

Carly. Monitored by guards? How did the thieves get in? [chuckles] Were they wearing police uniforms, or something?

Curator. Why, yes. Yes they were.

Carly. Oh.

Curator. You're good at this.

Carly. It is a gift, it is also a curse.

(Soundbite of More footsteps)

Carly. Do you have cameras?

Curator. Not inside.

Carly. Why not?

Curator. Why would we record what you can experience with your own eyes?

Carly. Huh?

Curator. This is the Dutch Room. The pilferers cut Rembrandt's paintings called Christ in the Storm of the Sea of Galilee and A Lady and Gentleman in Black from their frames.

(Soundbite of Backpack unzips slightly, Nibbles squeaks)

Nibbles. (whispers) A lady and gentleman wearing black were cut? I am not prepared for violence!

Carly. (to Nibbles) Shh, Nibbles. (to Curator) So, when you say "cut", you mean that the thieves cut the painting named A Lady and Gentleman in Black out of their frames when they stole them?

Curator. Yes!

Nibbles. Oh. Nevermind.

Curator. Can you imagine the audacity? In this room, the removed two paintings, an ancient Chinese bronze beaker and one of Rembrandt's self-portrait etchings.

(Soundbite of Footsteps as they walk into a different room)

Nibbles. Do I smell pie? Oh I'm out of here.

(Soundbite of Nibbles squeaks, her feet scurry along the floor)

Curator. Next, in the Short Gallery, five Degas drawings and a bronze eagle finial were taken.

Carly. What's a finial?

H-dad. A finial is an ornament at the top, end, or corner of an object!

Curator. Who was that?

Carly. Oh! This is just my device that gives me information. Like a computer.

Curator. But computers are huge. How could you be holding one in your hand?

Carly. Uh, you know, top secret FBI stuff. You actually never saw this.

Curator. Uhm, okay?

Carly. Back to business. Is that all the pieces that were stolen?

Curator. Almost, Manet's painting called Chez Tortoni was also taken from the Blue Room, as well. Thirteen priceless works of art in all! How do you plan to track them down?

Carly. I need you to leave, please.

Curator. Excuse me?

Carly. To solve this case, I need to fully become one with the space. Yes, that is true. I need to be left alone.

Curator. Okay, but I will return soon.

Carly. Thank you.

(Soundbite of A door closes)

Carly. Phew, I wasn't sure she was actually going to leave! So, what do you think happened, Nibbles? Nibbles? Where are you?

(Soundbite of Nibbles squeaks, scurries towards Carly)

Nibbles. I'm back!

Carly. Where'd you go? You were scoping out the dumpsters, weren't you?

Nibbles. No! How could you? Although that is a very good idea.

Carly. Nibbles.

Nibbles. Sorry, actually I ran off to spy on the detectives in the security room. Turns out one of the security guards, Rick Abath, was working during that night. Apparently he submitted his resignation not long before the heist.

Carly. Hmm... so, one of the security guards was already planning on quitting his job. So we need to find out if Rick was the security guard that opened the side door for the thieves.

Nibbles. The curator was right! You are pretty good at this...

Carly. Thanks!

Nibbles. Cause apparently he was the security guard that opened the side door! He actually went against museum rules and let the thieves into the museum.

Carly. But the thieves were disguised as police officers.

Nibbles. Yeah, ya gotta respect the badge, I guess. Even if its plastic. He let em in, they tied him and the other security guard up and then they spent more than an hour robbing the joint.

Carly. Eighty one minutes.

Nibbles. Eighty one minutes.

Carly. Something seems fishy about this. I feel like there's more to it, MAYBE.. It was aliens dressed like police!! An extraterrestrial art heist!

Nibbles. Do Aliens even like art?

Carly. I don't know, but remember, even when you don't think it could be aliens... IT COULD BE ALIENS!!!

Nibbles. You will never give up on aliens, will you?

Carly. Cosmically speaking, NO.

Nibbles. Of course not.

Carly. H-dad what info do you have on the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum security guards?

H-dad. Analyzing. Rick Abath has never been removed from the suspect list, but he was never formerly charged either.

Carly. Well, that stinks. Does the FBI have any other theories?

H-dad. Another theory is that the art was stolen by known art thieves Myles Connor or Brian Michael McDevitt.

Carly. The plot thickens... Let's go pay a visit to these art-stealing people!

H-dad. Myles Connor was in prison during the heist and the FBI could never build a case against Brian Michael McDevitt.

Carly. Another dead end!

H-dad. The final FBI theory is that The Mob is responsible.

Carly. The Mob?

H-dad. An organized crime secret society that operates outside the law, but works hard to become accepted parts of the neighborhoods and cities where they live.

Nibbles. He's right. The art world often is tied to organized crime.

Carly. How do you know?

Nibbles. I have friends. I know people, well, not people, rats. But you get the idea.

Carly. Not really?

H-dad. A reward of ten million dollars was being offered for information leading to the recovery of the thirteen pieces of stolen art.

Carly. TEN MILLION DOLLARS?!

Nibbles. TEN MILLION DOLLARS?!

H-dad. Dollar sign emoji! Bag of money emoji!

Carly. Ten million dollars is a lot of money. I think that shows how important art is.

Nibbles. I could buy a thousand dumpsters full of the world's best trash! And maybe one of those fidget spinners. I love those.

Carly. And I'd buy my own time-traveling elevator so I could go wherever I want, whenever I want!

Nibbles. That's it?

Carly. Maybe a fidget spinner too. They are fun.

Nibbles...I know, right?

H-dad. Receiving file... Hold for audio from August, 2015. Statement from the U.S Attorney's office: "The video footage released today shows an unidentified man exiting an automobile and then being allowed inside the Museum, against Museum policy, by a security guard 24 hours before the heist occurred."

Carly. Wait... does that solve the case?

H-dad. The images of the car and man are of very low resolution. The FBI is asking for the public's help in identifying him.

Carly. Wow! That means someone unidentified went into the museum the day before the heist! This is a huge piece of the puzzle! We should go talk to Rick Abath.

Nibbles. Let's go.

(Soundbite of Door opens)

Curator. Excuse me, Agent Custard?

Carly. Uh, yes! That's me.

Curator. Well see that gentleman over there with the coffee, That`s Special Agent Powell from the FBI. He has a badge and everything. So, who are you again?

Carly. Uh oh... Lunch break is over! Excuse me.

(Soundbite of Footsteps as Carly runs, chased by the curator)

Curator. Get back here, imposter!

(Soundbite of a door is pushed open and we hear the crowd out front again)

Curator. Someone stop her!

Carly. Nibbles here comes the FBI, hurry! Let's get to the card reader! There it is! Whew come on! We're there right behind us.

(Soundbite of ding, Carly falls into the elevator. The doors close and the elevator takes off, crazy time travel noises. And then suddenly it all ends with a thud)

Carly. Phew! That was way too close!

Odie. Whoa what happened, basement companion?

Carly.(out of breath) Nothing I can't handle!

(Soundbite of Carly struggles to her feet)

Carly. And then I saw it.

Carly. Odie! I love that you put the picture I drew of you up on your wall.

Odie. No one has ever drawn a picture of me before. It deserves to be displayed.

Carly. I was blushing.

Carly in background. Ah, shucks.

Odie. So, did you learn anything important about the mystery?

Carly. Lots! There's still an active list of suspects, including a museum security guard who was on duty that night. And now there's surveillance video showing an unidentified person being let into the place the night before the crime was committed. That could be a new lead!

Odie. You sound like a real gumshoe.

Carly. Oh! Sorry. I was in a lot of alleys and I don't know what I stepped in.

Odie. No, No gumshoe means detective. You sound like a real detective.

Carly. Oh well In that case,Thank You!

Odie. So the paintings are still missing?

Carly. Yep. The FBI is still looking for them thirty years later. And there's a ten million dollar reward!

Odie. Oh, If I had that kind of money I could finally go on the World Elevator tour, a vacation visiting all of the world's most glorious elevators. Maybe someday.

Carly. That sounds..fun? I also learned that it's not just art created by professionals that matters. Whether it was made by professional artists or amateurs like me. ALL art is important and for everyone to enjoy!

Odie. I completely agree. Enjoy the rest of your day, basement companion.

Carly. And enjoy your new art!

Odie. It really does look like me, except I'm smiling.

(Soundbite ding of elevator door opening.)

Carly. I realized this week that who stole the Isabella Stewart Gardner art isn't as important as the fact it was created in the first place. And someone thought it was important enough to put in a museum.

(Soundbite of Crayons on paper, furiously coloring)

Carly in background. A little green and some blue...

Lewis. Heeeeyyyy, Carly Q! Or should I say, Picasso? The wall is almost fully covered with drawings. Are you spending precious company time coloring?

Carly. It's our lunch break, Lewis. And I'm making my OWN artwork to spruce up the place.

(Soundbite of Papers rustle as Lewis picks up Carly's drawing)

Carly. Hey, that's not done!

Lewis. What even is it?

Carly. It's a bottle of fizzy water, your favorite. I was drawing it for you.

Lewis. For me?

Carly. You give me a hard time, Lewis, but I think we could be good friends. Maybe.

Lewis. (holding back tears) Maybe. There's something in my eye.

(Soundbite of Lewis' footsteps as he leaves)

Carly. I might not be able to get management to spend money on professional art, but I can use my own art to make this place a little brighter and make people a little happier ! I'm so excited to see what I'll learn on my next time- sealed adventure back in time. Until then, I'm Carly Q signing off from your favorite podcast that doesn't exist! Hey, maybe you could make some artwork of your own, you can even draw me. And Nibbles, and a couple of aliens. Send it in! Ok Bye!