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The Art of Murder

A smoldering barrel, illicit art deals, evasive cash trails... A myriad of motives for murder woven into the unravelling case against the O'Malley family. Jessie O'Malley's presence in the courtroom was art in and of itself, every brushstroke and act placed with precise intention. However, if the prosecution gets their way, she'll be inked with an orange jumpsuit. Jessie is accused of deliberately aiding the meticulously plotted murder of her own brother Declan O'Malley. One verdict decides the fate of the O'Malley Clan's legacy. On a biting cold November night in 2017, Declan was shot, then vehemently hurled out of a window of his home in our own town of Burley, Idaho. This impact shivered through Declan's body, snapping his neck bone as easily as a paintbrush, sealing his fate. Mystic Garcia, artist and Doyle's pub bartender, has confessed guilt for this heinous act in exchange for a reduced sentence. Garcia insists that he was not the ringleader in this scheme— instead, the mere paint on Declan's vast canvas.

“I left after a quick glance at his twisted body.” The jury grimaced at Garcia's colorful retelling of the murder. Detailed. Precise. Explicit. Gasps and winces rippled around the packed room, as if they heard the shattering of the window firsthand.

Garcia's artistic flair couldn't paint over the brutality of his own crimes.

Nor could it disguise the money.

Enter Rowan McGee. Longtime friend of Declan's and local sleuth journalist. She took the stand with conviction to attest to Jessie's character.

“Declan was a very moral man, he had high standards for himself and others.” McGee’s grief was illuminated in her short moments on stand.

McGee waited patiently for Declan’s arrival the morning after the murder. When O’Malley didn’t show, an uneasiness emerged as heavy as ink. This spurred her into action, leading her to the O’Malley residence. McGee crept to the backyard, rounded the corner, and her world was upended by the scene unfurled before her.

Gored flesh. Bone. The corpse of her dead best friend, painted in red.

This bloody and mangled sight traumatized her. It consumed her.

From this anguish, a new obsession emerged.

McGee started a podcast to help “digest her grief” and track down the killer— others sought justice too, so it gained traction. “The clues started flowing in.” Her listeners became a gallery of untrained detectives.

And soon they found something...

An undiscovered gem in the depths of this case. A detail detectives Magumbo and Slade missed.

Detective Magumbo looked at the case from a bird’s eye view. Broad paint strokes filtered his vision. Detective Slade opted for the microscope. Fineline precision ruled his work.

“Slade focused on little details and neglected the big picture completely,” Magumbo expressed, exhibiting their disagreements.

Their approaches clashed like light and shadow. Magumbo was sure footed with his many years on the job. Slade came in detail driven, but allowed frustration to get in the way of his intuitive truth seeking. As such, he abandoned the case.

With his abandonment, Slade’s suspicions of Garcia were filed away as rough drafts.

The case stopped cold. In December of 2020, the investigation was declared unsolvable. Though, McGee's followers' gem brought it back to life.

A sham business was uncovered: Le Finest Works D'Art, which wired payments of \$12,500 compounding to a whopping \$150,000 into Garcia's own bank account during the most desperate time of his life. He claims this money was sent by Declan's own sister Jessie O'Malley as a payment for the murder, disguised under the facade of art commissions.

"Jessie's role is inked irreversibly onto the pages of this case," attorney Bixby claimed.

The money was sent through cryptocurrency. But the thing about crypto?

It's untraceable. A digital dead end.

Thus, the ink runs off the pages of this case.

Garcia escaped the scrutinous eye of investigation during the initial search, despite Slade's suspicions. Garcia only recently pled guilty when presented with the evidence of his crimes, after living with a gnawing, guilty conscience for years. Though suddenly, this guilty conscience was relieved at the prospect of a reduced sentence.

The defense council begged the question, what's stopping Garcia from lying for less prison time if he has the capacity to kill in cold blood?

Now, the presiding jury is tasked with the difficult decision of deciding Jessie's innocence and deliberating on the questions posed in the courtroom.

Did Garcia falsely accuse Jessie of being the orchestrator of the murder solely for the reduced sentence?

Has McGee's podcast fame put the case on a stage, blurring the distinction between actor and victim?

And most importantly, does the prosecution have enough pigment to paint Jessie as guilty without any doubts?

Unease stained the face of judge Keim. The two O'Malleys that are left sat motionless as a still life painting. The courtroom held their breath. The jury retreated to their deliberation room to hammer out their decision. After agonizingly long hours, this jury will render a verdict to this currently unfinished artwork.