



Isabella's Painting (Karina Cardinal Mystery #1)

Ellen Butler

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In 1990 Boston's Gardner Museum was robbed of \$500 million worth of artwork. Twenty-eight years later the art remains at large ... until now.

Peeling back layers of lies could save a masterpiece or reveal a killer.

After a long week lobbying on Capitol Hill, all Karina Cardinal wants to do is chill with Netflix and her boyfriend, Patrick Dunne. Instead, she's slipping her aching feet into red stilettos for his parents' annual holiday bash. When she accidentally interrupts Patrick's father in his study, her embarrassment is tempered by suspicion that Martin Dunne and his dapper, secretive guest are hiding something. Maybe the painting she barely glimpses right before it disappears behind a secret panel.

??? An internet search raises her curiosity to full-blown alarm.

If she's right, Martin is in possession of a stolen masterpiece. Infamous because everyone close to it has turned up dead. As in Mafia-style-execution dead.

As she's chewing over which instinct to follow; back off while she still can, or dig deeper for the truth; she crosses paths with FBI agent Mike Finnegan. An old friend and not-quite flame from her college days. When she looks into his warm, mocha eyes, she's tempted to tell him everything.

??? Trouble is, she's already being watched.

And the next move she makes could destroy innocent lives including her own.

??? Fans of Denise Grover Swank, Melinda Leigh, J.D. Robb will adore this gripping mystery thriller by Award-Winning Bestselling Author Ellen Butler.

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Isabella's Painting (Karina Cardinal Mystery #1) Details

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Author : Ellen Butler

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From Reader Review Isabella's Painting (Karina Cardinal Mystery #1) for online ebook

Karina says

Thank you Power to the Pen for providing me with a digital copy of Isabella's Painting by Ellen butler via Edelweiss.

Isabella's Painting is the first book in a series featuring Karina Cardinal, a lawyer turned not for profit lobbyist with a penchant for finding trouble. In this first installment, Karina accidentally catches a glimpse of a priceless Vermeer painting in her boyfriend's father Martin's possession during a Holiday party, a painting known to have been stolen as part of the real life Gardiner Museum heist in 1990. After doing some research of her own to sate her curiosity, Karina's suspicions of the painting's dubious recent history are confirmed leaving her with even more questions than when she started. How did Martin come to possess this painting? Does he have mob ties? What is Karina going to do about it?

I enjoyed this book and not just because the main character and I share the same first name (though it didn't hurt ;) . I found the premise intriguing and the plot compelling. I love me a good art heist. I enjoyed getting to know Karina through her sharp witty humor and her calm under pressure nerves and look forward to reading more of her adventures in the future. Also, what little of we see of Karina's relationship with her sister Jillian reminded me of my relationship with my own sister so I hope to look forward to seeing more development there as well.

Debi says

Isabella's Painting: A Notorious Art Heist Mystery (Karina Cardinal Mystery Book 1)

By Ellen Butler

5+++++++ OMG stars

My first thought after being totally worthless for the 3 or so hours it took me to read this book was...This is one of the best books I have EVER read. I know nothing about art and truly went into this book thinking it sounds interesting and a break from what I have been reading would be awesome. Well... WOW.....Not really sure how to word this review so that this author gets the justice deserved for her talent in putting together words and having me so hung over right now I cant even hardly think.

She seriously grabbed me at page 1 and when I say I could not put this down I mean I was walking around with my kindle practically stuck to my nose and I couldn't read it fast enough which angered me because I loved it so much I wanted to slow down and I couldn't. Karina...what can I say about her...she was so different than most leading ladies and is seriously one of my new favorites. Besides the serious nature of what was going on she had me absolutely laughing out loud in some parts. I love how her story played out and what I loved also was how the relationships all seemed so real and as far as twists and turns, there were a few but I think the biggest twists were that everything played out totally opposite of what I thought they would and I wish I could explain that but I can't because it would give too much away...Let me also say that my next favorite character in this book was Molly and you will see why when you read it, and you must read

it!

I was so excited to see that Book 2 is coming soon and trust me I will be one of the first in line to have this book and I already have this authors page up so I can check out everything else she has written...

I already want to read this again!! Simply perfect!!

Moriah Venable says

Isabella's Painting is the first novel in the Karina Cardinal mystery series by Ellen Butler. This is my first novel by this author.

Instead of relaxing at home watching Netflix, Karina Cardinal is getting dressed to attend her boyfriend Patrick Dunne parent's holiday party.

While there, she notices Patrick's dad may be up to something that includes the stolen artwork that was taken from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum years before.

The FBI was unable to solve and locate the paintings but with Karina's new information it's possible they may have been found.

I have not read a cozy mystery in over a year and have been wanting to. Reading this novel made me remember how much fun and entertaining they are.

While Karina is not a detective, she is really smart and is able to put clues together. And while working with a friend that is an FBI agent, sparks may fly.

The author did a great job combining an actual event within the story of this novel. I even did some research while reading and discovered more information about the heist which made it all the more to read.

I look forward to the next book in the series as well as the cover. The cover caught my eye before I read the summary.

Cyndi says

Between an annual AAUW author lunch and the author lecture series at the library, I have encountered a few local writers that I really enjoy following. Ellen Butler is one such writer. I've been reading her books since her earliest, and I must say this was probably one of my favorites. It's entirely possible that the fact that this one most resembles my version of DC (associations and government work, not the multi-million dollar houses part) makes it resonate with me the most, but this one just ticked a lot of boxes for me.

To start with, within the last few years, I had read a few articles about the art heist at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. I've looked at the website and read about the theft. It's been in the news quite a bit lately. I was already interested in the subject, so a book tangentially related to the heist was intriguing to me. The

book is a little bit mystery, a little bit action, and just a little bit romance. I appreciate the last as I feel so many books take an interesting premise and focus only on the romance and lose the mystery. Finally, it was interesting and page turning without being overly heavy. Sometimes you just want a good fun read with no agenda.

Karina is a competent, intelligent, and funny protagonist. She's a regular person with a regular job who just happens into this situation. I think a little of the trouble she gets into is her own fault, but then again, it's a sticky situation and frankly, it's fiction! I like the relationship with her sister and her coworker. I feel like her world is a well rounded and well drawn place. I do think this would translate well to screen. It would make a fun series in the vein of the Aurora Teagarden movies on Hallmark.

I'm looking forward to reading the next book in the series.

E.A. says

Isabella's Painting: A Notorious Art Heist Mystery (Karina Cardinal Mystery Book 1) by Ellen Butler was a entertaining, fast pace, fun read, that had me hooked!

My first read by this author and I will tell you I will be adding Ellen Butler to my watch list. I loved her writing style, witty and engaging dialogue, and of course I loved how Ellen turned a real life mystery into a fun, light hearted thriller of an adventure, with a ordinary MC, who just happen to be in the wrong place at the right time.

I was captured right away with this tale, it was like magic. The pacing was on point, the detail was rich and it makes you feel like your right there with our MC, trying to figure out what the hell is going on, and how in the world this crazy adventure sucked you in. It had a touch of romance, family revelations, and of course a smart, well rounded, kick ass female MC, that really made this story shine.

As much as I loved the mystery and the danger, Karina, for me, stole the show and brought this story to life. Okay, yes the other characters were great as well, and were just as well constructed, but Karina, she was on a another level. I can't fully explain it, you're just going to have to read this wonder to find out for yourself.

What that said, I will leave you with my super high recommendation and my stamp of approval. Believe me you will not be able to put this book down.

Happy Reading.

-E.A. Walsh

Fly Girl Wickedcoolflight blogger says

<https://wickedcoolflight.net/2018/08/...>

There is a little humor, a little romance and a whole lot of mystery. And, Oh, I almost forgot, the mob. What could possibly make for a better cozy mystery and fun read?? “Nothing,” I say. It was PURE JOY to read this one. I was engrossed from the get go and loved Karina’s personality. She was witty, self conscious, awkward, and resourceful. I loved her. Ellen built the suspense in the novel well. From the truly secret moving wall, to the anticipation of getting caught investigating. She knows how to put your nerves on end and keep you turning the page. You know I can’t give spoilers, so there isn’t a lot I can say about the mystery with the exception of how much I loved the stairwell scene and how under prepared Karina is to deal with the risks she’s taken. The subway scene is another good one. Nothing like a lady disguised in a scarf and glasses to throw you off the scent. I said there was some humor.

The other part I loved was that this is based on a real life mystery that hasn’t been solved. She did a lot of research on this and it’s described in the acknowledgements at the end so you can do your own investigating if you desire. But I will say, I kind of like her take on the whole heist and can’t wait to see the next Karina Cardinal Mystery in December. If you like cozy mysteries I think this is a definite must read.

Laura Furuta says

Isabella's Painting: A Notorious Art Heist Mystery (Karina Cardinal Mystery Book 1)

By: Ellen Butler

5 out of 5 stars

The story Isabella's Painting: A Notorious Art Heist Mystery (Karina Cardinal Mystery Book 1) by Ellen Butler is a book that I loved reading. It hooks you in from the very beginning and I didn’t want to put it down until I had read the final page. It is a story that includes suspense and mystery. It had me turning pages in order to find out what was going to happen next in both the plot and to the characters. I loved reading about the character of Karina Cardinal. She is a lawyer who is independent and intelligent. Some would also call her a lobbyist on Capitol Hill, however, she would cringe at such a label. She runs into a mystery when at her boyfriend’s parent’s home for a holiday party. What happens next has Karina’s investigative skills and a bit of paranoia working overtime. Is the painting that she has seen one that was stolen so many years ago? Why does her boyfriend’s father have the stolen masterpiece? Now that she has started an investigation into the painting how much danger is she in? Read this book to find out. There are times when this story had me on the edge of my seat. Trying to put together the clues that Karina uncovers is like trying to put together a puzzle to find the truth. The other character that I enjoyed reading about in this story is Mike Finnegan. He is an old friend of Karina’s and works for the FBI. This is a wonderfully written story with some amazing characters. Highly recommended.

vvb says

This mix of mystery and romance led me into the art world and introduced art heists. Loved the feature of Vermeer as he tops my list of favorite artists.

As the protagonist is not a detective, it was interesting to see how she went about uncovering the mystery

with her resources and skills.

There is an FBI connection who is a friend from college days and with sparks of romance that crackle when they interact - makes for a great start for further adventures with the two.

Kerry Baker says

Isabella's Painting: A Notorious Art Heist Mystery by Ellen Butler is the first book in the Karina Cardinal Mystery series. Steeped in history of an actual painting that was stolen this book will take you on an exciting journey.

This is the first book I have read by this author and the first time I had heard of the Boston Garden Museum robbery and I was surprised by how much the author piqued my interest. I loved the idea of the book being based on a real life mystery. Karina as a character was the perfect person to fall into this book with. Her character helped to build up the mystery and suspense while also providing a bit of light hearted comic relief. The author did really well at balancing the two while also creating a fully believable, and fully enjoyable, story. Her writing style had a great ebb and flow to it also. She knew exactly when to build the story and get you as the author involved and when to ease off a little so that it was never too much.

Overall I found this to be an interesting read that was well developed creatively with strong characters to back up the story. I can't wait to see what else is to come from this series and I will certainly be looking into more of the author's work.

Angela says

5 Stars

"On March 18, 1990, in the wee hours of the morning, two men dressed as police officers obtained entry into the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Holding the guards at gunpoint, the thieves marched them to the basement and proceeded to blindfold and handcuff them. Then the pair returned to the upper floors and, for the next eighty-one minutes, stole eleven paintings/drawings and two artifacts valued at \$500 million..... The Gardner Museum robbery is considered one of the highest valued thefts of private property in history. In the years following the heist, FBI, investigative reporters, professional art recovery specialists, and amateur detectives have spent hundreds of man hours trying to locate the paintings. As of this book's publication, all the artworks remain at large. The Gardner Museum has offered a \$10 million reward for information leading to the recovery of the masterpieces."

Isabella's Painting is the first book in the Karina Cardinal Mystery series by Ellen Butler. This is an excellent mystery- with danger, intrigue, action, suspense, humour, drama, the mafia, FBI, and a priceless stolen painting. Even though the story itself is fiction, it is based on a real- life robbery that happened back in 1990- which baffled investigators, and still remains unsolved all these years later. The author has done an amazing job of tying her story together with the actual events, blending the two together quite brilliantly.

Karina Cardinal is a lawyer turned lobbyist in Washington D.C. She's smart, independent and hard-working. She's doing well, with a good career and a great boyfriend. Even though she and Patrick haven't been together all that long, things are getting serious between them and everything seems to be pointing to them taking the next step. But, when the two attend a Christmas party at Patrick's parents place, Karina

inadvertently sees something she wasn't meant to- a painting which was stolen nearly three decades earlier and was part of a much bigger heist. Karina can't believe her eyes and proceeds to do some investigating. What she uncovers places her in quite a predicament- not only jeopardising her job, her relationship, and her morals- but also her life. When an old college friend, now FBI Agent, joins the mix, things get really interesting....

This is a fantastic story, that had me totally engrossed from beginning to end. It has a fast pace, a smooth flow and was really easy to read. The characters are really well crafted into fully realised individuals. There must have been an incredible amount of research that went into the planning of this book, because there are so many elements woven into this story, small inter-connected details which gives the whole thing authenticity- and making it entirely believability, and also quite memorable. This book has a complex, and multi-layered storyline which is brought to life by the vividly descriptive story-telling, and by Ms. Butler's meticulous attention to detail/s. She has woven a very polished mystery, full of surprises which kept me guessing the whole way through.

I can't wait to dive into "Fatal Legislation" (Book #2), due for release in December 2018.

Thank you, Ms. Butler!

NhaughtyV says Damn the Zon Save the Reviews says

Ok, show of hands, who here's guilty pleasure is spending a day watching the mystery movies on the Hallmark channel? Fess up! I know I'm not the only one!

Karina Cardinal, known to her friends as KC, is a lawyer turned lobbyist that has stumbled upon a long lost stolen piece of art work. Torn between wanting to do the right thing and report it to the authorities or keeping her soon to be in-laws and fiancé safe, she sets out to solve the mystery on her own. But when the crime escalates from theft to threats to physical attacks, KC realizes she is in way over her head. Can KC's college friend now FBI agent Mike Finnegan help her out of this mess, or will the curse surrounding the painting be unleashed on her and those she loves.

Isabella's Painting by Ellen Butler has the ease and flow of an old fashioned mystery novel with some laugh out loud snark between the characters that makes this an enjoyable and fun read. So put away that TV remote! There is no need to binge watch the next season of NCIS, when you can curl up with your fav beverage and dive into this Karina Cardinal Mystery. Highly recommend and hope this will be an ongoing series.

**I received an ARC for which I voluntarily provided an honest review. **

Erin says

I give Isabella's Painting: A Notorious Art Heist Mystery (Karina Cardinal Mystery Book 1) by Ellen Butler, 5 stars.

Karina has a life she loves. She works in Washington DC, her job keeps her busy, but she loves it. Her

boyfriend is wonderful. He understands her love of her job and how it keeps her working long hours at times. But he is there for her. So when he parents, who happen to be very well-known in Washington society, throw their annual holiday party and she is asked to attend, she accepts. She knows this is a big deal to both her boyfriend and his parents. While attending the party at their house, she happens across a hidden painting his dad has. Her curiosity gets the better of her and she decided to do some research. This looks just like a painting from an infamous museum heist! Is it real? Why does he have it? Should she tell anyone? Can she live with herself if she doesn't?

This is the first book I have read by this author and I now have a new author to follow! I absolutely loved it! There is so much going on that you will quickly be wrapped up in the suspense and will not be able to put it down until it is done. Karina is a great main character, she is very real and quite human. She struggles with her problems just like any of us would do. That is what helps make this book so great. But let us not forget the story itself. I believe it is based off a real heist, but either way the story is fantastic. There are so many twists and turns, you will never guess what will happen next.

If you are a fan of suspense and thrillers, with a strong female lead, this book is for you!

Jill Elizabeth says

I thoroughly enjoyed this one - despite a few head-shaking moments... I was familiar with Ellen Butler's historical fiction (the very enjoyable *The Brass Compass*) and looking forward to seeing how she would handle the transition into contemporary fiction. She handled it with aplomb - which should not have surprised me, because the topic she chose - stolen artwork - was one she clearly spent nearly as much time researching as she did the female spies of World War II, and with just as successful a result, to my mind.

The premise here is interesting, as are the characters (for the most part - a few felt like stereotypes, but in hindsight I think that was the point). There is a great narrow-miss romantic backstory with an FBI friend that makes for some fun sexual tension though - I'm hoping for more Mike in future books. He's a great foil for Karina; they are similar enough to make their long-term friendship not only believable but enjoyable to partake in, yet different enough to serve as great cross-characters when the situation gets a little less than crystal-clear, legally (which, as you might imagine from a mystery, happens with some startling regularity).

I don't know very much about the art world - particularly the stolen art world - or the Dark Web, and found those bits fascinating. I do know a bit about being a young DC lawyer in the policy/trade association world, having been at various times all of those things, and found those bits generally quite credible and well managed. There was one BIG "oh come ON?!" moment for me though, and I can't tell you what it is because it's a spoiler, but suffice to say that I can't imagine a lawyer as smart and generally savvy as Karina making the decision to act as she did - a decision that is, admittedly, necessary to trigger the action and resolution, but nevertheless one that I can't imagine making in her place... (You'll know it when you get there, trust me.) Still, fortune favors the bold I suppose and without this decision and its attendant suspension of disbelief, it's difficult to see where things would have gone - or at least, where they'd have gone in as interesting and enjoyable-to-read a way, so I'm willing to concede that in the end it advanced the story more than it made me roll my eyes (by far). And as the lone exception to an otherwise very credible story, I'm more than willing to call it a success on balance!

If you are looking for a female protagonist who serves as a sort of grown-up lawyer version of the spunky Nancy Drew and sassy Veronica Mars, I say give Karina Cardinal a try. She's got the stick-to-it-iveness of

both of them, along with a take-no-prisoners sensibility that brings her to choices (like the one so obliquely referenced above) that may not be comprehensible to the average person but are wholly within her indomitably straightforward character. It was a thoroughly enjoyable tale, and I look forward to more adventures!

My review copy was graciously provided by the author. This provision in no way affected my decision to review it or the content of said review.

Pam says

Isabella's Painting: A Karina Cardinal Mystery Book 1 is by Ellen Butler. This is a cute mystery novel that is fast-paced and even has a little humor in it. The characters are well-developed and the plot is interesting. It keeps your attention and is very easy to read. You can easily read it in one day.

Karina Cardinal loved her life in Washington, D.C. She was a lawyer and a lobbyist who worked very hard at her job and enjoyed what she was doing. Her sister lived close and taught school while her parents were in Colorado. She was dating a very nice, wealthy young man, Patrick Dunne and life seemed to be going very well. She and Patrick had been invited to his parents' Christmas party and she had enjoyed it so far except her feet hurt and she really needed to sit down but was locked into conversation she couldn't get out of. Patrick's Mother finally gave her a chance to break free when she asked her to find Patrick's Father in his library and tell him that someone was here he needed to speak to. Gratefully, she went to the library and knocked on the door. Thinking he invited her in, she opened the door and felt something move beside her. Seeing nothing, she didn't think anything of it. Marty Dunne was talking to Christophe O'Brien when she came in. He walked back out with her and she sat with him visiting while he ate. Soon, Patrick found her and she went on to enjoy the party. Later that night, she wandered back to the library thinking about what she had seen. She found a button on Marty's desk and it opened a section above the fireplace where another picture was secreted. She only caught a quick glimpse of the painting before she heard Patrick looking for her. The unexpected hidden painting took hold in her mind and she couldn't get it out of her mind. Why did he hide that painting when all the other ones he had were on display? What had she stumbled on to? Can Karina figure out what is going on with a painting that appears and disappears? Just who is following her and why? Why is her friend Mike, who also happens to be an FBI agent suddenly getting in touch with her again? Wonderful reading.

Francis says

Isabella's Painting by Ellen Butler is the first in her Karina Cardinal Mystery series. We are introduced to Karina, the hero of the series, as she gets caught up in solving the mystery of a strange painting she suspects may link her potential father-in-law with a major art theft.

Karina is a great character! She reminds me of Catherine Morland from Northanger Abbey in the ways that she snoops around to uncover the secrets of her too-perfect boyfriend and his family. Unlike Catherine, though, Karina's suspicions are more the product of her observant and analytical mind than novel-fuelled fantasies. Karina is a lobbyist for a medical organisation and so has a law degree and strong morals which make her a perfect lead for this series!

It's a really enjoyable book! The mystery is enthralling and the romance enticing. The story is well fleshed out with supporting characters and various events giving the main characters time and space to develop. The story is told from Karina's point of view, which works well as we find out her suspicions but can't find out if

she's right or not until she does.

For me, this is a five star book and I'm looking forward to reading the next book in the series. I'd recommend it to art fans and people who like a bit of mystery with their romance!
