



Black Mass: Whitey Bulger, the FBI, and a Devil's Deal

By Dick Lehr, Gerard O'Neill

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Now a major motion picture starring Johnny Depp

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James “Whitey” Bulger became one of the most ruthless gangsters in US history, and all because of an unholy deal he made with a childhood friend. John Connolly a rising star in the Boston FBI office, offered Bulger protection in return for helping the Feds eliminate Boston's Italian mafia. But no one offered Boston protection from Whitey Bulger, who, in a blizzard of gangland killings, took over the city's drug trade. Whitey's deal with Connolly's FBI spiraled out of control to become the biggest informant scandal in FBI history.

Black Mass is a *New York Times* and *Boston Globe* bestseller, written by two former reporters who were on the case from the beginning. It is an epic story of violence, double-cross, and corruption at the center of which are the black hearts of two old friends whose lives unfolded in the darkness of permanent midnight.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In the spring of 1988, *Boston Globe* reporters Dick Lehr and Gerard O'Neill set out to write the story of two infamous brothers from the insular Irish enclave of South Boston: Jim "Whitey" Bulger and his younger brother Billy. Whitey was the city's most powerful gangster and a living legend--tough, cunning, without conscience, and above all, smart. Billy, president of the state Senate, was a political heavyweight in Massachusetts. These facts alone make for an intriguing story, but as Lehr and O'Neill found out, this was only the beginning.

John Connolly, a rising FBI agent and fellow "Southie," had known the Bulgers since boyhood when Whitey rescued him from a playground fight. After investigating organized crime in New York, Connolly was reassigned to the bureau's Boston office in 1975, and was determined to make a name for himself by relying on his old connections. He succeeded in a big way by lining up Whitey as an FBI informant in an effort to bring down the Italian Mafia--a major coup for both the FBI and Connolly. In exchange, Bulger received protection. Though heavily involved in extortion, intimidation, assassination, and drug trafficking, Connolly's "good bad guy" did not receive so much as a traffic infraction for over 20 years. In time, however, the deal changed, and information began flowing the other direction, with Bulger manipulating Connolly and a small group of corrupt FBI agents to further his nefarious network. The criminals and the lawmen eventually became virtually indistinguishable.

Black Mass expertly details the twists and turns of this complex story, painting a vivid portrait of Boston's underbelly and its inclusive political machine, as well as exposing one of the worst scandals in FBI history. It's also an examination of loyalty--to family, home, and heritage--and "a cautionary tale about the abuse of power that goes unchecked." As a final favor, Connolly tipped off Bulger that he was to be indicted on racketeering charges in 1995, allowing him time to go on the lam (he's reported to have access to secret bank accounts across the country). He was added to the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted List" in 1999. --*Sharon M. Brown*

From Publishers Weekly

A triumph of investigative reporting, this full-bodied true-crime saga by two *Boston Globe* reporters is a cautionary tale about FBI corruption and the abuse of power. Gangster James "Whitey" Bulger ruled Boston's Irish mob, and his wary collaboration with the Italian Mafia, which he detested, was the cornerstone of the city's balkanized criminal underworld. (His younger brother, Billy Bulger, was the iron-fisted president of the state senate and later president of the University of Massachusetts.) Few suspected that Whitey Bulger and his partner, crime boss Stevie Flemmi, were both FBI informants; their squealing helped the FBI to put a score of mobsters in jail and wipe out the Angiulo crime family. Here O'Neill and Lehr (Pulitzer winner and Pulitzer finalist, respectively, and coauthors of *The Underboss: The Rise and Fall of a Mafia Family*) maintain that overzealous FBI Agent John Connolly, who was Whitey's handler, and Agent John Morris, Flemmi's handler, "coddled, conspired and protected the mobsters in a way that for all practical purposes had given them a license to kill." FBI agents looked the other way while Bulger and Flemmi went on a 1980s crime spree that, according to witnesses, included extortion, bank robberies, drug trafficking and a string of unsolved murders. This complex, dramatic tale climaxes with a 1998 federal hearing that found that Connolly and Morris had essentially fictionalized FBI internal records to downplay the stoolies' crimes while overstating their value to the Bureau. In 1999, a grand jury probe launched by Attorney General Janet Reno led to Connolly's arrest on charges of racketeering and obstruction of justice (he's now out on bail).

Also named in the indictment were Flemmi, already arrested by state police in 1995, and Bulger, now a fugitive on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List. This in-depth look at the FBI's war against the Mafia includes the first-ever secret recording of a Mafia induction ceremony, complete with pricking of fingers and blood oaths. (June)

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From Library Journal

In the 1980s and beyond, corrupt agents in Boston's FBI protected Irish mob bosses, they said, in exchange for tips on the rival Italian mob. Reporters Lehr and O'Neill finally exposed the scandal in newspaper articles and in their best seller, *Black Mass*. The central participants stand out, but a host of vague minor characters can be confusing. A few episodes bring in trivia, e.g., at "family" dinners we learn who was in the kitchen or what tie someone wore but less of what was transacted. Hasty abridgment? Shockingly documented are the south side mob's loan sharking, gambling, "protection" graft, money laundering, and even horse race fixing. In a grim move, the Irish boss forces an honest family out of their liquor store with a tragic aftermath. At least 21 gangland murders went unsolved until, belatedly, prosecutors had to cut deals with hit men. John Rubinstein narrates adeptly, except in his unconvincing "guttural for bad-guy" quotes. Minor limitations aside, this should have appeal on popular true crime shelves. Gordon Blackwell, Eastchester, NY

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Annette Puente:

Here thing why this *Black Mass: Whitey Bulger, the FBI, and a Devil's Deal* are different and dependable to be yours. First of all reading through a book is good however it depends in the content than it which is the content is as tasty as food or not. *Black Mass: Whitey Bulger, the FBI, and a Devil's Deal* giving you information deeper and in different ways, you can find any guide out there but there is no reserve that similar with *Black Mass: Whitey Bulger, the FBI, and a Devil's Deal*. It gives you thrill looking at journey, its open up your own personal eyes about the thing that happened in the world which is possibly can be happened around you. You can actually bring everywhere like in park your car, café, or even in your method home by train. Should you be having difficulties in bringing the paper book maybe the form of *Black Mass: Whitey Bulger, the FBI, and a Devil's Deal* in e-book can be your alternate.

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