

Right Place, Right Crime

Come on, come on. Hurry up.

I took another slow, deep breath and studied the digital clock on the wall behind the bank tellers. *Yikes!* I'd promised Jennie I would meet her at the bus terminal by two o'clock, and it was already 2:05. The bus was going to leave at 2:30, and we needed to both be on it. Problem was, there were still six people in the line ahead of me. I guess I was going to be sprinting back to the depot.

Then again, I knew I'd be bolting from the bank before I'd even walked in.

Come on already.

My hands were shaking up a storm so I wedged them in my jacket. *Be cool, Oliver. Stay frosty.* I felt the note with my right hand and squeezed it. Did it even make sense? Would the teller call over the manager?

I studied the three bank tellers (two females, one male) wondering which one I'd get. What

if I got him, the big dude? Could I still go through with it? What if he called my bluff? “*You got a gun? Yeah right. Let me see it.*”

But I was sure—pretty sure, anyway—they were trained *not* to argue during a robbery. And it wasn’t really a bank robbery, was it? Well, okay, it was. But not a huge heist or anything—more like a petty crime. A *misdemeanor* maybe (whatever that is). I wasn’t planning on cleaning out the bank. I only wanted what my teller would have in the till. And that’s what my note said: GIVE ME ALL YOUR TWENTIES. I HAVE A GUN.

Yup, it was clear and concise. No stupid pre-amble, just the universally understood threat that a nut with a gun might shoot-up the place unless he got what he wanted. The bank teller would glance down at the paper, read it, maybe read it again, and then (hopefully) open the cash drawer and hand over enough money for two bus tickets to Miami—to a new life.

I listened as the second teller asked for a client card from her customer. *Client card*? Did they always want to see one before starting a transaction? Would it look suspicious if I pushed over my note *without* a client card? *Rats!* My name was on the stupid thing.

I decided to keep my client card in one hand and pass the paper over with the other. Yeah, that would work, I reasoned. And I should probably have it ready so I wouldn’t be fumbling for it in front of the teller.

I fished out my wallet and with shaky hands began pulling out plastic, searching for my client card. MasterCard (*transaction denied*), Air Miles (*not enough points for a lousy coffee*)—ahh, found it...

Something suddenly flicked out from the inside compartment of my wallet, from behind my client card. It seemed to happen in slow motion, and I seemed to be watching it from three different angles. It was like Jerry Bruckheimer was in that bank, directing an action scene of my

messed-up life. The condom left my wallet, spiraled through the air, and hit the polished tile floor eight feet from me. I stared in horror as the little package skidded and landed logo-side up.

Un-friggin-believable!

Three months ago—that's called a trimester, by the way—I couldn't find the thing, and now when it's too late (90 days too late!)...there it is. And in the middle of the floor of a bank—a bank I was about to rob!

I pulled my baseball cap down a bit more—*cameras everywhere...don't look up*—and scanned the heads in front of me. Everyone was looking at the tellers on the right and no one noticed my wayward condom over on the left.

Whew!

"Hallo," an old female voice said from behind me.

I ignored the owner of the voice and moved two spots closer to the counter.

"I think you may have dropped something," the same voice croaked, only louder.

I turned my head just enough to see a cane shoot out and point accusingly at my condom. The cane grabbed everyone's attention and everyone glanced over to see what it was aiming at.

"That's not mine," I said softly, not wanting to attract more interest.

"I think it is," she insisted. "I saw it roll over there—over toward the cake."

For the first time, I noticed a table six feet beyond my condom. It was one of those cheap folding tables, with cheap balloons taped to the sides. An equally cheap-looking cake sat in the middle of the table growing bacteria. Half the cake was missing, so I couldn't make out what the ugly pink icing letters had spelled. But a banner over the table congratulated the bank for being around for two-hundred years. *Good for them.*

"I'll save it for you," the old lady said.

I twisted sideways again. “Huh?”

“Your place in the line-up,” she said helpfully. “Don’t worry. I’ll save it for you if you want to fetch what you dropped.”

“I didn’t drop anything,” I said, hoping my tone was firm enough to end further debate.

The people ahead of me snaked closer to the tellers and I followed.

“I can go and get it for you,” she said. “Maybe it’s your change purse.”

“It’s not mine,” I said through clenched teeth.

“Yes,” she mumbled behind my back, “I think it’s your coin purse.”

A new voice joined the discussion. “Look, buddy, we both saw you drop the rubber. Why make a big deal about it? Just pick it up.”

I turned all the way around and saw a bearded head towering above and behind the old lady.

“A...a...condom?” the old lady tried out the word, like she’d never said it before in her life. “You mean...*that’s* a prophylactic?” She used her cane to jab the air around my condom with disgust.

“It sure is, lady,” Shaggy said, grinning at me with obvious pleasure. “That’s for sex.”

She snorted and looked down at her feet, not wanting anything to do with a pervert who carried a condom in his wallet.

Good.

The tellers efficiently dealt with another round of clients, making me next in line.

My heart began to thump wildly. In fact, the rush of blood through my ears was so loud, I almost didn’t hear it when the lady behind me said, “You’re a litterbug.”

I turned around. “Look, I’m sorry, mam. I’m in a real hurry here, but I’ll pick it up when—”

“If you don’t pick it up right now,” she said, cutting me off, “I’m telling on you.”

Her threat was ridiculous, of course, but I didn't want any more trouble from her before I started my own trouble. So I padded across the bank and scooped up my condom. When I turned around the old lady was strutting over to a teller that had suddenly become available. I shook my head. *Thanks for saving my spot.*

Shaggy was so amused by everything he allowed me back in line.

"Next please."

It was the male teller and he was waving me over to his window. *Here we go.* I walked to the wicket, placed my note on the counter, and pushed it toward him. I shoved my right hand back in my jacket and got ready to aim two gun-like fingers at him.

But he ignored the paper. Instead, he typed something on his keyboard and called the manager over.

Now what?

"Client card?" he asked, still not touching the note.

Oh, oh! I stared at my bank card, unsure if I should give it to him.

Just then, the manager arrived behind the teller. She leaned over a shoulder, studied his monitor, and nodded. "Congratulations," she said to me.

"Huh?" I groaned.

"You're Matt's two-hundredth client today," she beamed. "And you won two-hundred dollars."

"Thanks," I said, snatching my note off the counter before Matt could grab it. "That's great."

The bank manager signed a slip of paper and gave it to Matt. Then she left.

Matt grinned at me and began counting out crisp twenties. "Good thing you didn't go for it," he said.

“Wwwhat?” I wiped my sweaty forehead with my sweaty hand. “Go for what?”

Matt laughed. “The cake. I saw you walk over to the table and eye it.” He leaned forward conspiratorially. “If you’d stopped to eat a piece, I’d be giving this money to someone else. Plus it tastes like sawdust, so you didn’t miss anything.”

I smiled weakly.

Matt went on, “I think that cake was lucky for you.”

I shook my head. “More like the condom.”

Matt frowned and looked confused. “The *what?*”

“That condom may have saved my life.”

“Umm...okay,” he said slowly. “So... how can I help you today?”

I pushed one of the new bills back at him. “Can you break a twenty?”