

BANG!

Menomonie, Wisconsin is located in western Wisconsin in Dunn County. It is right off of I-94 that runs right through it. It has a population of around 16,000 people and it is home to the University-of-Wisconsin Stout. The Red Cedar River runs right through it. This is the setting of where the unlikely bank robbery at Kraft State Bank took place; in a quiet and (mostly) crimeless town, in western Wisconsin.

The rain is pouring down heavily. The windshield wipers are on full speed, cleaning the windshield rapidly. It is windy out, taking the car back and forth without my control. We pull up to the curb on 5th street, next to the furniture store by the Kraft State Bank. The rain isn't stopping people from being in town. There are men and women running errands nearby, their shoes squeaking with every step. Everyone is dressed in what looks like their nicest clothes; black suits completed with a white tie. It looks different than what I had pictured in my head. The bank itself is an old brown building with a sign that reads "Kraft State Bank." It is gray, rusty, and looks like it needs repairing. There are automobiles lining the street, which is surprising because the bank is just opening. People are trying to stay out of the rain, hurrying in and out of their vehicles.

I look over at Tommy. His face is as white as a ghost. "Ready to go?" I ask him. "As ready as I'll ever be," he responds. Francis nods in agreement.

"Good luck you guys. I'll be on the lookout for when you guys come out," says Frank. He had volunteered to stay in the car and be ready for the getaway. That was a job we all wanted, as it was the safest. But per usual, Frank had gotten his way.

The three of us grab our guns and tuck them into our dress coats. We had this planned out for months now, but I was still scared we would get caught. I open the door slowly and step out of the car.

As we walk up the drenched sidewalk, we try our best to not look suspicious. With every step I take, I know I am one step closer to committing a crime. I feel the cold metal of the gun rub against my skin. It scares me and the hair on my arms stands straight up. Tommy and Francis both look just as nervous as I feel.

We reach the door. I can see myself in the reflection, as I reach down to grab the door handle. I look weirdly shaped, as the gun is tucked under my coat. I tell myself, *it's now or never*. There are few people in the bank, as it is just opening. As soon as we get in the door, Tommy yells "Everyone get to the ground." The three of us pull out our guns and threaten to shoot anyone who refuses. There is a quiver in his voice. He must be just as nervous as me.

I give Francis *the look*. He needs to get the money quickly, if this plan is going to work. Me and Tommy try to distract others while Francis gets the cash. Out of the corner

of my eye, I see a man running to pull the alarm. *I need to get him*, I think to myself. But it is too late. *Oh no. We are going to get caught.*

The alarm rings. It makes my ears ring and my head starts to hurt. I am sweating.

“Hurry,” I yell out. Francis comes running out from behind the vault.

“Someone has pulled the alarm,” I inform the other two.

“It will be okay if we hurry,” says Francis.

“How much did we get?” asked Tommy. *There is no time to get excited over the money. We have to make sure we don’t get caught.*

“I think about \$90,000,” replied Francis quietly.

As we hurried to the front door, me and Tommy grabbed two people to keep as hostages. This was not a part of our plan, but it felt necessary so there weren’t as many witnesses. *We could also use them as shields to protect us.* I grab a woman by the shirt and lug her to her feet. She is stumbling. I can’t tell if she struggles to walk or if she is trying to break free from my grip.

It looks as though Tommy has grabbed a middle-aged man in a black suit and is dragging him towards the door as well. Francis is making a run for it, doing everything he can to make sure he doesn’t lose the money.

I push open the front door, shoving the older lady out first so she will be hit by any bullets that come my way. I see that Frank is in the middle of the road with his gun pointed at anyone who tries to come near. *This was not part of the plan.* As I accelerate, my legs feel like jello. *It must be the nerves.* I drag the woman and run as fast as I can. As we step off the curb, she goes tumbling down. I see her hit her head. *There is no point in saving her. It will only lead to getting caught.*

There are gunshots everywhere, that I just seem to be noticing. My heart is pounding. *I cannot get shot, I want a share of that money we just stole. Hurry, hurry, hurry.*

Bang! All of a sudden there is a gunshot that is louder than any of the previous. I feel an excruciating pain in the middle of my back. *Did I just get shot?* I stumble, but keep on going. I have almost reached the car. My vision is blurry but I can make out that Frank, Francis, and Tommy are all already in the car. Along with another body, which must be the hostage Tommy has taken. They are yelling loudly. It must be at me.

“Hurry, we are going to get caught.”

I can hear the vivid sound of police sirens. They are slowly getting closer and closer but I can’t see them. Yet again, my vision is blurry and it is getting harder for me to walk. *I must really have gotten shot.*

I reach the car and Francis holds the door open for me. I am shaking and he guides me to sit down on the cloth seat. We are crammed in tight, 5 large guys in a little

black car. Before I can get settled, Frank pushes on the gas and we all shift backwards. Everything is still blurry and my back is in horrendous pain.

We are rapidly driving down the road. The windows are rolled up, in case any gunshots are fired by the police. This makes the car stuffy and hot. I feel dizzy and like I might faint. The stuffiness of the car isn't helping that either, just making me feel worse.

Frank doesn't seem to care that he is flying through red lights.

"We need to go faster," he shouts angrily. It seemed as though he thought the car would speed up by him saying that aloud.

BANG! There is another gunshot, and this one is the loudest one yet. I look over slowly to the seat next to me. The man in the black suit seems to be unconscious. *He must have been shot. That is a crazy thing to do. Why did they do that?*

My head keeps getting heavier and heavier. I can't hold it up much longer. It feels as though it is attached to my neck by a thin string that is about to break.

The door opens and I thump to the ground. My whole body flops into the grass and my head hits the ground with another forceful hit. It is getting hard for me to breathe. I realize that I am dying.

This is not what I pictured when I imagined myself dying. I imagined being surrounded by loved ones in my house. I imagined being comfortable and being able to say goodbye to the ones I love the most. But instead, I am here on the prickly grass all alone, in horrible pain. I question the choices that I have made in my life. If I hadn't robbed that bank, I would never have gotten shot. I wouldn't be in this position right now. As I take my last few breaths of air, I realize how precious life is and how quickly it can end. We should never take it for granted.

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