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How NOT to Rob a Bank

It was the last thing I ever expected. My friend and I were inside a bank, grabbing money out of a vault and stuffing it inside a pillowcase while another friend was smashing any video surveillance camera in sight and keeping watch for police. I really didn't want to be doing this, but I had to.

It all started a few days ago, I was lying in bed one night; it was around 12:30 A.M., technically a Saturday morning, my mom had gone out of town for the weekend to see her sister in Vermont, so it was just my dad, my 11 year-old brother, and I. My dad had left to go to the supermarket to get some food at around 9:00 and I had not seen him back in the house since I went to bed. I didn't really think too much about it, I just assumed he slipped past me as I was watching television and went straight to bed.

As I was lying in bed, about to fall asleep, I suddenly hear the phone ring. I debate in my head whether I should get the phone or not, after thinking it over, I decide to get it. I walk over to the phone, halfway asleep, and mumble the word "Hello", the person on the other end seemed very worried and started talking extremely fast, I could barely tell what he was saying, but I recognized the voice very quickly, it was my dad on the other end, he was calling me from jail.

What I thought was a simple trip to the supermarket for him was actually an intense crime spree. All he told me that he got arrested after a high-speed chase on the highway. He didn't tell me why he was running away from the cops, just that he had been arrested. He told me

he needed me to come get him and that his bail was set at \$2,000. I contemplated whether or not he was joking and thought this could all be a trick, but then I looked at the phone number he was calling from, it was from the Orlando Police Department, that's when I realized he was being serious.

I went to go wake up my brother and tell him our father had just been arrested, but as I was walking towards his room I realized something, how am I going to get \$2,000 to bail him out. I looked through my wallet and all I found was \$85 and a \$50 gift card to Dunkin Donuts. I knew cops loved donuts, but I was pretty sure they wouldn't take the gift card as bail money. I ran around the house looking for any money I could find, I ended up finding \$8 and some extra change. I looked at the clock and realized it was almost 1 in the morning, as tired as I was, I knew I had to find some way to get my dad out of jail.

After looking around the house for money, I decided to call my Uncle Sean, who is also my dad's brother. I hadn't seen my uncle in about three years, even though we lived in the same city. He and my dad didn't really have the best relationship, but I was convinced that he would help out if he knew what was going on. I never really knew why they had a strained relationship, I never thought to ask, I felt like it really wasn't any of my business. I called him around 1:30 and didn't get an answer, called him again 15 minutes later, and still no answer. He was the only family member I had that also lived in Orlando, so I really had nowhere else to turn. My brother was only 11, so he couldn't help at all, as far as money goes, and my mom was in Vermont, so there was no way she could help.

Morning came way too soon, as I woke up around 8 A.M. to the sun intruding through my window. I think this goes without saying but I obviously didn't get much sleep that night. I took a quick look into my brother's room and he is still sound asleep. He had no idea what went

down the night before and I'm sure he didn't have a care in the world, what I would give to be in his shoes instead of mine.

After making myself some scrambled eggs and toast, I decided to give my mom a call to tell her what was going on. She seemed surprisingly calm in spite of recently hearing news that her husband was locked up in jail. She said there were no flights coming from Vermont because of bad weather and she didn't know when she could get a flight back. The conversation ended shortly after that. I realized I had nowhere else to turn and this was my full responsibility now, it was going to be up to me to get the money.

After the conversation with my mom, I sat on my couch and started to sort of reflect on the situation and wondered what was going through my dad's head when he committed that crime. I mean, he has never done anything like this before, to my knowledge anyways. It blew my mind that someone I thought was a mellow, soft-spoken person would end up in prison. I guess my dad had a wild side that nobody really knew about.

I started to think of ways I can quickly get two thousand bucks; this whole ordeal really stressed me out. I felt like I was the parent and I had to bail my son out of jail, but I didn't have a job or any money. This seemed like it was a role-reversal of some sort. This was way too much stress for a sixteen-year-old to handle by himself.

After a while, my brother woke up and came into the kitchen, the first thing he said was "Where's dad?" "Listen", I said "Dad got into some trouble last night and he ended up in prison", I said. "No way, that's so cool, what did he do?" my brother asked excitedly. "He robbed a bank and tried to outrun the cops in his car." As my brother sat there and smiled in disbelief, I was still concerned about how I was going to get \$2,000 in such a limited amount of time.

I turned on the television to get my mind settled for a little bit, nothing very interesting was on, so I just turned it to the local news. The first story that came up was about a brand new, state-of-the-art bank that just opened in Orlando. According to the news, it was the largest bank in Florida, the news showed the pristine interior of the bank and even showed some of the workers putting large sums of money in a vault. Then it hit me, I knew how I was going to get the money; I was going to rob that bank, tonight.

This was something I did not necessarily want to do, but I had to do it. I was running out of options, my mom couldn't come home, my uncle wouldn't help, this was a completely last resort. To straighten out my conscience a little bit, I promised myself I was only going to take the \$2,000 I needed to get my dad out of jail, no more. But I knew if I was going to do this, I needed a well thought-out plan and a lot of help from outside people.

I called the three most likely people I could trust to help me with this job: my friends Brian, Alex, and Kyle. I explained what I was going to do and asked them if they wanted to help. At first they all thought I was joking, but after explaining what had happened yesterday, they understood why I really needed to do this; they knew that if they were in my shoes I would do the same for them in a heartbeat.

We all met up at my house a few hours after I made the phone call. As they all came inside, Alex said, "Why don't we just pool all the money we have and see if it amounts to \$2,000." After taking out all the money we had, we ended up with \$342, not nearly enough, so the bank heist was still our #1 option. We tried thinking of a devious, elaborate plan to get into the bank, nobody could come up with anything, so we decided to drive down to the bank to scope out anything that could get in our way, like security cameras, alarms, trap doors, you name

it. We all went around very nonchalantly, looking around to find cameras, alarms, anything that could possibly foil our plan.

We took note of the surveillance cameras, which were all in plain site and easy to find, and noticed the large, steel vault that was right behind the bank teller counter. As we were leaving the bank, we noticed an outside stairway that led to a glass door on the second level. We went up the stairs and looked through the door, it was a perfect way to get in, there were no security cameras around and we didn't see any alarms around, either. It was perfect, Alex had a part-time job with his dad at a construction company, so he could easily get a glass drill that would cut a hole through the door. He also had a steel drill that could cut through the vault. We finally had a plan and were good to go. We drove back to my house and I told them to meet me back here at about 12:30 in the morning, they understood and went their separate ways. It was official; we were going to attempt a bank heist.

It was midnight, my brother was already asleep and I was just sitting on my couch, waiting for everyone to get here. I was shaking; I had never done anything close to what I was about to do, and if it wasn't for the support of my friends, there was no way I would be able to do it. I was so nervous, as I think anyone would be if they were in my situation, but I'm sure I wasn't as nervous as my friends who were going to help me. I sat there and thought to myself "These guys could go to jail, if we get caught, and it would be 100% my fault, what a huge risk they are taking for me", but that didn't matter, because there was no way I was going to allow us to get caught.

12:25 rolled around and the nervousness started to hit me even more, I shook it off and knew I had to do this. I went into my room and got dressed; black pants, black long sleeve shirt, black shoes, and a black beanie, I was ready to go. I went to the garage and a flashlight, and an

old pillowcase to put the money in. Everyone started arriving right on time and we were set to go right at 12:30. I was actually very surprised that they all showed up to do this; I knew they had my back 100%. “You guys ready to do this?” I asked, they all responded simultaneously with a “Let’s go!!”

We all piled in my car and set off to the bank. In all my life, I would never even imagine being the leader of a planned break-in, but these guys trusted me, so I had to come through for them. We all sat in the car, wearing all black, other than the panda bear ski mask Kyle had on. We were all quiet, gathering our thoughts; we all knew this was a big moment that could have a huge negative impact on our lives if it goes wrong, but we were willing to accept that. The only conversations that were going on were about Kyle’s unorthodox ski mask. “Where did you get that freaky ski mask?” Brian asked, “I don’t know” answered Kyle, “I found it in my brother’s room, and I have no idea why he has it or where he got it.” The conversation went on, but I didn’t hear the rest of it; I was too focused on the task at hand.

We arrived at the bank after the 10-minute car ride; I made sure to park in a small area behind the bank, so that nobody could see the car. I looked around the car and could tell that everyone was a little nervous, as was I. “Let’s do it.” I say as last words of encouragement. We all get out of the car and head up the stairs to where the glass door was. Alex carried both the glass drill and the steel drill, I carried the pillowcase, and Kyle carried a baseball bat to smash the cameras. When we got to the door, Alex put down the steel drill and turned on the glass drill. He cut a perfect-sized hole in the door with ease, I told Brian to put the glass drill back in the car and be the driver just in case we needed a quick getaway.

Brian went back to the car and we started piling through the large hole in the door, one by one, we got in and snuck downstairs. We worked our way to safe while trying to avoid any

security camera we saw, we got to the vault and Alex started drilling as I held the flashlight. Little by little, the steel started to chip away. While Alex and I were standing in front of the vault, Kyle's job was to smash and destroy any video surveillance camera he could find and be on the lookout for police cars. Eventually the vault opened and a sea of green paper was before us, the ticket to get my dad out of jail was right in front of us.

I took out the pillowcase and started counting money and put it into the bag. Once I got to two thousand, we were set to go. We walked upstairs and crawled out of the glass door we came in and got outside, we all felt accomplished and frankly, thought this was going to be a lot harder than it was. We walked downstairs and my heart sank instantly, there were two cop cars with an officer in each car, waiting for us right next to my car, with Brian already in hand cuffs. We were screwed.

As we stood on stairs, frozen, two thoughts went through my head: the first one was that we could drop the money and run separate ways, every man for himself. The second thought, which was a bit more realistic, was that we accept defeat and have the officers arrest us. Needless to say I went with the second option, there was no need to get into any more trouble than we already were in.

The four of us were taken in both cop cars, Kyle and I in one, and Alex and Brian in the other. While in the car, we sat in silence, I was just thinking about how the cops could have found us, I mean, there were no alarms that went off, I guess the cops just saw my car behind the bank and thought it looked suspicious. Then I am sure Brian, being the nervous person he is, told the cops everything as soon as he was questioned.

I couldn't believe we were in a holding cell. It happened so fast, one second we were successful, and before we knew it, we were caught and in jail. We were all kept in the same

holding cell and each got one phone call, since we were all minors, we had to wait for our parents to come and bail us out. This was going to be a problem for me; my dad was also in jail and my mom was in Vermont. I called the only person I could, my Uncle Sean. I got on the phone and heard it ring again and again, as usual, no answer, so just I left a message and hoped for the best. I was out of options; the only thing I could do was just sit there and wait for someone.

While we were sitting in the cell, I gave a big apology to all the guys, I knew this was all on me and it was my fault. They said there was no need to apologize and said they knew what they were getting into when they agreed to help. One by one as they were picked up by their parents, who by the way all seemed furious, as well they should be. I sat in the cell, knowing I was going to be there for quite a while. As I was sitting there on the metal bench, I realized how much this experience has made me grow as a person, I now know that I have friends I can count on to do anything for me, although after this experience, I would understand if they never wanted to do anything for me again. I also learned that I am willing to do anything to help out a family member in need.

About 2 hours went by after everyone else was taken out and I was still in sitting in the cell, alone; I guess better alone than with a 250-pound criminal. Then all of a sudden an officer came to my cell and unlocked it, "See you in court" he said as I quickly walked out. I went to the lobby of the police station and my Uncle Sean was sitting there with a smirk on his face. "You're welcome", he said right as I got into the lobby. "Thanks, is my dad out too?" I asked him, "Yea, I got him out too, he was transferred to a different jail so I had to make a bit of a drive, but he's safe at your house, now come one, let's go." For the first time in the last few days, I was finally relieved, my dad and I were out of jail and safe, for now anyways.