

The Dim Sum Robbery

By Keith Sink

“Two shrimp, four *shumai* and a sticky bun,” Carl said to the girl behind the counter. He was ordering his favorite from *Lucky Shu*. *Lucky's* was a local institution in the International District of Seattle and known to many as a cheap eat. Carl wanted a stop before we went to work.

I turned my nose up at the chicken feet surprise special on the menu. “You know that stuff will be cold by the time you eat it.”

“Ye of little faith. I can eat these in under 5 minutes.”

Carl took the clear box with his order and paid the girl, who was now smiling at him. Carl had this effect on women. He knew exactly when to smile, how long and also what words should be applied to get the biggest response. A rare talent that came in handy in our line of work. It helped us line up our gigs, however he had a habit of leaving embittered women by the wayside. This didn't make it easy for us to stay in one place for long. Seattle was our latest hang out and I kind of liked it here.

“We've never done a job this fast,” I said. “Too many people to watch. Too many variables.” I was running through the time in my head and it just didn't add up.

Carl smiled at the girl behind the counter and gave her a wink. “Trust me Jacob. Have I ever been wrong?”

No. He was never wrong. At least if you were to look at the big picture. Did he deviate from the plan? Yes. Did he cut corners and lose us money at times? Sure. But we always got the bulk of what we came for and no one was ever hurt on either side. Of course, Sammy Diolet may not agree with that last one. Sammy took a bullet leaving him with a limp. But even Sammy didn't blame Carl for the *accident* as it was commonly referred to.

When the praise “have I ever been wrong” left Carl's lips, it seemed to trigger a recollection. “How is Sam, by the way?” he asked opening the door onto King Street.

I moved my hands around my waist confirming the location of my tools. “He says he's fine. No hard feelings.” I felt like Sam was bitter, but I couldn't put my finger on why I thought that. “He wanted me to tell you not to kill anyone.”

Carl smiled and removed a small dumpling from the clear plastic container. “Won't be any killing if we just focus on the task at hand, my friend,” he said. The dumpling disappeared into his mouth.

“OK. OK. I'm just a little nervous. We've never taken a whale this big. Especially nothing in the International District,” I said. I felt the bulge in my right pocket and confirmed the gun was still there.

As we turned the corner down a long street, we began our transformation. Dark sun glasses and a short blond wig complete my wardrobe. Carl went for the red hair. Then came the hats. Mine was a beat-up trucker hat, brown and yellow with a tractor on the front. Carl's had a Mariners logo. He said it was a present. Presents make me nervous because they mean connections. Connections mean loose ends. Something that Carl doesn't worry about but they petrify me.

We passed a homeless person on the corner and Carl stops to give him a five. Carl wanted us to be noticed. Noticed in our costumes, not by what we were wearing earlier.

The man thanked Carl. "God bless and Go Mariners!" he shouted at us as we rounded the corner.

My heart began racing as Carl's voice became more serious. "Ready?" he asked. He didn't wait for a response.

In the movies it all happens so fast, but in reality, it's much different. Your senses become heightened, you see, hear and smell everything in an instant. But your body and the other people there are moving as if under water. People are not expecting a robbery, so they take a little longer to get to where you already are.

It began with a declaration. "This is a robbery," Carl shouted.

I made another pass around the room taking in the details. Two cameras- that were visible, maybe more. Two tellers: one female, Asian, approximately 20. The other a tall blond white male, perhaps 25. Our information was that his name was Thomas. I'm sure it was actually Tommy to his buddies.

I quickly put the business end of my pistol into the face of the one guard as he begins to reach for the Glock in his holster. It's a hobby of mine to be able to quickly determine what gun someone is carrying. Carl likes that about me.

"Don't reach for the Glock," I said. "It will be the last thing you do."

The guard's hand stopped its descent.

"Now pull it out gently and place it on the ground." The guard slowly complied.

Carl's turn. "Everyone raise your hands. Imagine yourself on a roller coaster," he said.

A tall man in a business suit raised his hands *reluctantly*. I moved my pistol in his direction. This guy could be trouble in a few.

Carl on the other hand, never worried about those details. He exuded confidence. He walked over to the business man and handed him his dumpling container. "Mind holding this for me partner?" Carl asked as he released the container into the confused man's hands. Carl plucked a dumpling from the open container and popped it into his mouth. In a muffled voice, he addressed the business man. "Don't eat any."

I looked down at my wrist watch. "Ten seconds," I said.

Carl knew he needed to be at the counter. A pretty Chinese girl with her hands raised high, looked back at him. She went from chewing her gum to swallowing it whole with an audible gulp.

"As I said earlier, this is a hold up. Place all the bills in your drawer into this bag," Carl reached into the front of his jacket and withdrew a black back pack. He handed it to the teller.

He smiled at the girl and she lowered her gaze to the drawer and filled the bag. I walked around the room ensuring our other guests were all in agreement that it's "not their money", "it's insured", and "it's not worth dying over". I looked back over at the guard and saw him slowly reaching for his baton.

Before I could react, Carl's pistol moved in the direction of the guard. His eyes didn't leave the teller. "I wouldn't do that Reginald."

The guard stopped and tilted his head. He was wondering how this guy knew his name. I *doubt* the bank manager even remembered the guards name.

"Reginald. That *is* your name, isn't it?" Carl turned to face him. "You live at 12534 SE Thomson with your wife and two kids," Carl recited the information Sammy gave us. "If you're thinking about being a hero, keep in mind that I will end you and then I'll end your family. It's kind of my thing."

"Twenty seconds," I said.

The guard's arms returned to full height.

Carl returned to the teller. "Faster sweet heart. I don't have all day." He leaned over the counter and into the young teller's face. "If there's a dye pack in here, I'll end you Ellen Wong. I hear you have an uncle who works for the Seattle PD. Shame if anything happened to him." Her hands trembled. She took a breath, put her head down and focused on the stacks more carefully this time. The message got through.

A muffled pounding sound came from the back of the bank.

The bag was handed over the counter to Carl. He nodded to the teller who was visibly shaken. "Thank you, ma'am."

"Thirty seconds," I said.

We walked to the door. I hid the pistols in a thin backpack I pulled from my coat. Carl put his in as well and withdrew a thick black disc from his pocket. He pressed a button on the top and a blue light blinked; slow at first and gradually faster, and faster. He slid the puck across the floor to the center of the bank. "Enjoy the show," he said as he turned for the door. On the way out Carl grabbed the empty container from the business man. Everyone turned to the disc on the floor. A scream and a gasp preceded the group dropping to the bank floor. They covered themselves and turned away from the device.

Outside we left through the side alley and then separated. I to a dumpster on King where I hid a change of clothes and a ratty old black backpack to which, I transferred the pistols. Carl went south to do his wardrobe change in a nearby alley.

Three days passed before I looked up Carl. Carl and I met at his grandmother's trailer. She was away in Boca on one of her romantic weekends, so we had the place to ourselves. Carl offered me a Scotch, served in a small canning jar. He liked to use these little glass containers to serve drinks even though his mom had much better glassware in the next cabinet over.

"Not a bad heist if I do say so myself," I said.

"Good intel made the difference," Carl said. "To good friends." We raised our glasses. We both looked at each other and added, "To Sam."

A knock on the door interrupted our toast. Carl backed away from the door and pulled a pistol from his rear waist band. He moved over to a side window and pulled back the curtain.

He opened the door where someone bowled him over with a squeal.

I ran to the door and closed it. "Geeze. Elly. Why don't you bring even more attention to us?" I said.

Ellen Wong was on Carl, smothering him with kisses. Carl wrestled with her for a moment and then jumped to his feet, pulling her up with him. Elly gave him another kiss.

Elly chomped down on her gum with increased ferocity. "That was awesome. I've been on pins and needles for the last three days. This is huge," Elly extended her arms to the ceiling and let them fall to her side. The smell of her bubblegum filled the trailer.

I pulled down a nicer glass and mixed Elly a drink. Taking the drink, Elly gave me a peck on the cheek. "You missed our toast," Carl said, raising his glass.

"To good friends," Carl said. I interjected. "to the inside woman," I said raising my glass to Elly.

Elly gulped down her drink then she punched Carl in the arm. "What was that shit about my uncle?" she said. Carl looked surprised. "Oh, that. I just wanted to make it look like we had intel on everyone," Carl said, giving her his best smile.

The ice in Elly's glass clinked as she pointed at us with an index finger. "What the hell was the black disc thingy by the way?" she asked shaking the now empty glass at Carl.

"That was my idea," Carl said. "I wanted to slow down your response. Give everyone a reason to move slower after we left - give us a few more minutes."

"Well it worked," Elly said. "They had us locked down for a while until the bomb crew could confirm it wasn't real."

"And you," Carl pointed at Elly. "How did you get the bank manager to leave his phone behind?"

"Oh, that?" Elly put some more ice into her glass and poured herself a drink. "I placed a few memo's around the office about hygiene. Found some articles from the CDC on how bad it is to use a cell phone while in the bathroom. I followed it up a few days later by talking with a coworker about it within earshot of Mr. Henderson. He's the guilty sort - easy to manipulate." Elly finished her drink. "I locked him in the men's room just before you arrived. A small wedge in the door frame did the trick. Had to make sure this thing went off without a hitch."

After a few more drinks, we got down to business. We took out a small amount of money for incidentals and to pay Sam for the intel. The rest was given to Elly to hold for the time being.

We said our good byes, with Elly planting a big kiss on Carl hugging me as she left with a black duffle bag of cash.

Carl called Elly a week later and schedule a time to meet. She gave us the name of a hotel in Yakima off Highway 12. "It's the one where we spent that wonderful night in June. Where you said we'd run away together after the heist." Carl smiled at me and gave me a thumbs-up.

"You book the room, Elly," Carl told her over the phone. "Jacob and I will meet you there on the 5th."

The hotel was on the edge of town. A good spot if you need to get away from the long arm of the law. The man at the desk didn't look up from his computer, he just passed the key along. I wasn't sure if this was an outcropping of his relationship with his clientele, or if he was just too preoccupied with his solitaire game.

The door opened to a squalid room with 80's furniture. Two queen-sized beds, with mismatched coverings adorned the room. A black duffle bag sat at the foot of the farthest bed. Carl went to the bag, opened it and pulled out a small yellow sticky note. Carl read the note and then passed it to me. He settled on the bed.

"Thanks for the cash. And don't worry about my uncle, he's actually a dentist. Enjoy the consolation prize." Carl opened the bag wide so I could see inside. Hundreds of small pink candies peered back at me—bubble gum.

I thought Carl was made of stronger stuff, but I was wrong. Soon after the duplicity, he began falling apart. Carl lost his edge and it was taking its toll. One night in a neighborhood bar, he began babbling about the heist and that's when I knew I had to end our relationship. The cops found Carl in a dumpster in the *SoDo* district the next night. Sam agreed to take care of it for me *pro bono*. It was the least I could do for Sam. I was told it was done quickly, which is all I wanted.

Elly was another matter. I didn't want to kill her. I know it doesn't make sense, but I spared her. That doesn't mean I let her off the hook.

I found her held up in a nice hotel in Las Vegas. It took me awhile to find her trail, but Sam has friends who owe him some favors, so it only cost me a few thousand to get the information. She moved from hotel to hotel, not as fast as one would expect. Perhaps she thought it would throw me off her trail. But I found her splurging a little. I followed her and met her in her suite later that night. I wasn't invited in, but I found my way into the room. "If you make a scene, I will kill you."

"You don't want to kill me," she said sitting on the edge of the bed.

I lowered my pistol and placed it on the edge of my chair.

"Your disloyalty killed Carl," I said.

"Carl told me how you had a thing for me," she said leaning forward comping her gum.

I thought of Carl. Our friendship and the time we spent together growing up in Portland. I raised the pistol and moved closer.

Placing the muzzle against her temple I whispered, "If you leave now, without drawing attention, you can go." She nodded, packed a small bag and moved to grab a black duffle from the closet. I stopped her by grabbing her wrist. "That's not yours." She swallowed her gum, turned and left without a word.

Elly probably felt relief I didn't take her life. Or she could be thinking right now how I cheated her. It doesn't matter. I unzipped a small backpack and removed a cloth bag. I unrolled the bag from around the glass I took from the trailer. Placing it on the nightstand alongside one of Carl's black pucks. I reached for the phone and called 911. I looked over at the clues and remembered our celebration. Let the police work it out with these little clues.

Copyright © 2019, Keith Sink.