

# THE QUARRY

**Jonathan Grew**

**Queues and Robbers**

Angela was intent on nothing ruining her day. Sure she was running very late for work, the traffic was a nightmare, and some buffoon had parked in the clearway, costing her so many precious minutes. Despite these setbacks she was determined to have a good day today and was excited to start it off in one of her favourite places, the bank. Angela was a born bureaucrat, she had always enjoyed crunching numbers and paperwork and although she

knew she was mostly alone in this regard, she didn't care. She had always found that bank tellers at this bank were like her, especially Susan. Angela only wished that the other people in the bank would share her enthusiasm.

She took a quick survey of the room, noting an adorable old man having a sleep on a chair in the corner and also the security guard leering at her from the other side of the room. Angela noticed Susan as usual was wearing a big smile on her, clearly relishing the challenge of the queue in front of her. She turned her focus to the man in front of her, she could tell just from the back of him that he was having a bad day. Determined to cheer him up with a joke she asked him.

'Banks are always the same huh,' she said to him. 'No matter how much they make the place look nice you can never escape the queues.'

'Heh, yeah,' the man replied somewhat nervously, eyes still glued directly ahead of him. Much to her displeasure she was unable to even crack a smile from the poor man. Undeterred however, she smiled to herself, resolute to have a good day.

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Allan was once again thinking about how he ended up here. Every morning when he turned up to work he felt like he was looking down the barrel of a gun. His life simply wasn't meant to be like this. Allan had been a star recruit at the police academy until he had accidentally tasered the department's beloved veteran police dog. His father had warned him that people with cynophobia (fear of dogs) don't make for good police, but Allan hadn't listened. He had tried to argue that it was the dog's fault for sneaking up on him, but the academy officials wouldn't hear any of it. Seeking comfort, he lowered his hand toward his gun holster and brushed it gently, thankful that his job affords him this concession at least.

Allan realised he should probably be paying attention and began to survey the room. Sitting on the chair was an old man who hadn't moved in a while, prompting Allan to make a mental note to check on him in a few minutes, fearful that he might be dead. He noticed two people talking in the queue for the teller. A fidgety looking man was ignoring the woman behind him, which Allan realised must have been a lover's quarrel. Allan had a fiancé once upon a time, but after the incident she left him, just another thing gone wrong in his life. The

fidgety man began to look increasingly agitated. He kept toying with something in his jacket pocket. Allan could understand that feeling, and once again reached to touch his gun holster. The fidgety man looked over at Allan and immediately looked away. Allan didn't pay him much attention however, thinking that his stare alone was probably enough to intimidate the man.

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Su could see the frustration on their faces and could not have cared less. Whenever she told people she worked at a bank they asked how could she stomach it, how could she work for such a reviled institution. The answer was simple, Su thrived on their hatred. When she had started working at the bank she had been so hopeful and idealistic, committed to working hard and providing an excellent banking experience for her customers. Over time however, her optimism faded, and the bank's soullessness got to her. First they made her wear a name tag with the name Susan written on it, despite the fact her name is Suyong. Senior management had told her it was to make her more approachable to the customers. Then, despite repeated requests and pleas, it was the refusal to install air fresheners in the bank. Every day the same stale smell had ultimately destroyed Su's spirit, and though on the outside she wore the same smile she always had, inside Su was bitter and hollow.

That is why on this particularly busy Monday morning, Su took extra delight in watching the sheep squirm impatiently as she slowly dealt with each customer. She watched as a woman tried fruitlessly to talk to her friend in front of her, and laughed to herself as he ignored her. There was a sleeping old man sitting on a chair in the corner of the room, probably dead Su thought. Allan looked as though he was intense in thought, though often Su wondered if he was capable of thought at all. He was staring in her direction so she called on the next customer, preferring to deal with him than even look at Allan.

'Hello sir my name is Susan, how can I help you today?' Su asked. Instead of receiving an answer however, the man stared at her vacantly as if unable to say anything.

Su slowly began to feel the anger rise up inside of her. She knew that he heard her, how dare this man come up to her counter and not even pay her the decency of responding?

Instead he stands there like a buffoon, hands in his pockets, big stupid coat on. Su felt every muscle in her face strain as she forced them to make a smile.

‘Sir, how can I help you today?’

‘Oh um, yes um, I would like to make a withdrawal.’ The man began to jerk his head downward, lifting his eyebrows as he did it. Su began to wonder if he’s having a fit of sorts until she realised he was indicating to the hand in his pocket. Su stared in confusion before it hit her, a bank robber. Luckily for this bank robber he was gifted with perhaps the only bank teller in the world who would welcome such a situation. The chance to gain some small piece of revenge on the bank was just too good of opportunity for Su to pass up on.

‘Ok sir, I understand completely. Don’t worry about a thing, stay calm and I’ll be right back,’ said Su, who gave the man a wink before leaving. She hurriedly rushed to the room behind her, where the bank kept large amounts of cash in lock boxes before they were moved to other banks. She unlocked one with her key, before filling a bag with cash. Su made sure to keep a terrified look on her face, so any camera footage would show a fearful bank teller, not a sinister saboteur. Su hadn’t felt this alive in years. She hurried back to the man to give him the bag.

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Gus felt absolutely awful, for the past few days he had been bedridden with the flu and though he desperately wanted to be nowhere else rather than bed, he had been forced to go to the bank today. Gus’ boss had called him first thing and told him that the cheque he had received from a client last week had to be deposited at the bank today, to give the business some much needed capital. And Gus, being the good natured, model employee that he was, said that he’d get on it right away. Now that he was in line at the bank, he was regretting his decision immensely.

Gus had wrapped himself in a coat before he left and despite that he was still cold. He felt his forehead and found it hot to his hand and also drenched in sweat. The line was moving at a snail’s pace, but Gus knew that if he could make it through this queue, then everything would be okay. Gus made note of the old man asleep in a chair, thinking to himself that he’s got the right idea. He stared at the wall in front of him, trying to distract

himself when he heard a voice behind him. It took Gus a few moments to realise the voice had come from the woman behind him, and she was in fact talking to him. Unsure of what to say, he gave the most generic answer he could think of, hoping that it would be enough to placate her.

‘Heh, yeah.’

Gus held his breath for a few moments, praying she wouldn’t respond, and breathing a sigh of relief when she didn’t. He reached into his pocket to feel for the cheque, relief flooding through him when he felt the edge where it had been ripped from the chequebook. Out of the corner of his eye he could see the bank’s security guard staring at him, looking at him briefly before turning away. Gus always felt guilty when people of authority stared at him, even if he had done nothing wrong. He suddenly realised he was at the front of the line and stepped toward the teller.

‘Hello sir my name is Susan, how can I help you today?’

Gus lifted his head to speak to the teller and was immediately lost for words. Standing in front of him was perhaps the most beautiful woman Gus had ever seen, smiling, just for him. While Gus did not have the most confident way of talking to women usually, he had never before been left speechless. He knew he should say something; in fact he was terrified that with his silence he was instantly destroying any chance of getting to know her.

‘Sir, how can I help you today?’ She still had the same smile on her face, much to Gus’ relief.

‘Oh um, yes um, I would like to make a withdrawal.’ The words had left his mouth before he even had time to process them. Gus knew he wasn’t here to make a withdrawal, but he was still somewhat lost for words. This nervousness, coupled with his fever, resulted in Gus instead using his head to motion towards his pocket where he kept the cheque in a delirious attempt to communicate.

‘Ok sir, I understand completely. Don’t worry about a thing, stay calm and I’ll be right back,’ she said, winking as she left.

Gus could not believe his luck, she had winked at him! Not only had he met an amazingly beautiful woman, but a smart one as well. She was able to understand what he had meant just by him gesturing towards his pocket. However, the fact that this did not make any sense soon began to dawn on him. How on earth could she have possibly known what he

meant when Gus barely knew what he meant? His thoughts were interrupted however by Susan returning with a bag. She handed it to him with a cautious smile. Confused he opened the bag and looked inside, finding it filled to the brim with bundles of cash.

‘Woah woah woah,’ he said. ‘What are you doing? Why are you giving me this?’ Susan looked at him, a confused expression drawn across her face.

‘Aren’t you robbing this bank?’

‘I’m robbing this bank?’ said Gus, perhaps a bit too loudly.

It was at this exact moment that Gus knew he had made a terrible mistake. The entire room had frozen and all eyes were immediately focused on him. He turned towards the security guard, who was wearing a big grin on his face as he reached for the gun in his holster.

‘Freeze scumbag! Do not move an inch or I swear to God I will blow you away!’ Gus froze, too terrified to even breathe at this stage. ‘Okay,’ said the security guard, ‘now slowly put the bag down and put your hands on your head.’

Gus immediately complied. However, as he slowly put the bag down, a gun shot rang out.

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Michael loved banks. He loved watching the people inside of them go about their lives, each with their own set of unique set of problems. Michael used to be just like them, that was, until he started robbing banks. Admittedly it had been quite some time since he had robbed one however, and he was unsure his body was still up for it, even if his mind was. This was to be his last hurrah, one last job before he kicked the bucket in just a short few months. He had chosen this bank for the simple fact that its lone security guard was Allan. Though he might be a bit trigger happy and a hothead, he was a buffoon, meaning it would be easy for Michael to get the better of him. So Michael had decided to spend the day scoping the place for the upcoming robbery.

He had watched the sick man with the flu come in, feeling sorry for him as he joined the queue. He had then watched the woman behind him come in, clearly trying her best not to

let the bad day get to her. Michael also watched Allan with much amusement, laughing to himself as he made notes of Allan's frequent penchant for daydreaming. He was also acutely aware that the Korean teller was wearing perhaps the fakest smile Michael had ever seen, which Michael realised meant that she probably would not care if he tried to rob the bank. Michael also noticed however that no one really noticed him. Sure they glanced at the old man sleeping on the chair in the corner, but that was about it.

It came as a shock to Michael then, when he heard the man with the flu say he was robbing this bank. Michael wasn't sure but was pretty positive he heard the inflection of a question being asked when he said it, but right on cue Allan had pulled out his gun and began yelling at the top of his lungs. Michael watched in amusement as the sick man put the bag down and began to lie on his stomach. It then occurred to him that there was no better time to rob this bank. He had a bag full of money and a distracted security guard.

Michael stood up, pulling a gun from inside his jacket and fired a single shot into the air. Before Allan could even react, he had his gun aimed at him.

'Ladies and gentlemen this is a robbery. Allan, if you would please put your gun on the ground.'

Allan didn't need to be told twice and quickly put his gun on the ground before lying on his stomach and placing his hands behind his head. Michael walked over to the sick man and picked the bag up.

'Thanks for this,' he said. He flashed a glance at Su and winked, before heading toward the door. Outside he is pleased to see his car right where he left it. Although, when he parked it he didn't realise it was in a clearway. Michael laughed to himself and jumped in the car, driving away.