**Love Heist**

Screaming dancers filled the streets. The fear of incarceration was imminent. But it had not always been that way and circumstances had changed. James watched the events unfold; his face pushed hard on the ground in a perfect symmetry. He thought on recent events and wondered if Daphne was dead under crush of law enforcement. But then again, these days she seemed to live forever.

The day was sunlit, cool, wintery: a city scene. Shadows passed between buildings in a way that was rectangular and decisive, filling the spaces between buildings with purpose. Soon, only a few hours from now, a report would be filed somewhere that James and Daphne (whose surnames remain redacted and unimportant) entered a bank in the central business district at precisely 9:17am, having crossed the road after exiting from a hotel across the street. The report noted the duo wore no masks and appeared to act in a brazen and foolhardy manner. But this was hardly an accurate characterisation of events. And in any case, Daphne had been musing for some days now that this was to be a final scene, without a need for planning. She would argue that they were simply lovers in a hurry.

Stuck and unmoving now, in the minutes after the failed heist, James gazed out from his sidelined face. He recalled an earlier time before the chaos. They had spent the night in the well-appointed hotel room, their bodies falling in and out of one another, half sleeping, half waking, half fucking. Intertwined and ambiguous, so typical of lovers who cannot help but flout logic and causality. When James woke up in the early morning, she had been sitting on his face. A moment of silence before the rise of current calamities. It would be a day of juxtaposition.

The light was different then too, and James recalled the sun slowly, inevitably, reaching into the hotel room just after the dawn. Daphne stood by the window, her dress temporarily transparent against the sunlight, silhouetting her body into possibilities. He found himself embarrassed by the scene, wishing he knew her just a little less, briefly lamenting that her idea and her true self would soon exist before him in a hard boundary. It was only a matter of time, he thought, before he knew too much. Once, many months ago, James had attempted to explain his theory that that true love is discrete, just singular moments that must never be threaded together. Continuity needed to be avoided at any cost. But when attempting to expound the details, but Daphne laughed just like she always did. She said language is for fools.

A little later that morning, just after they pushed through the final throng of morning commuters on the busy city street, about to burst into bank to start the melee, she had turned to James and smiled. She mentioned, all too casually, she had also organised a surprise and blew him a conspiratorial kiss. Then they were inside.

Upon entry, there were usual horrified gasps, that quickly turned to a stick-em-up style cacophony. The security guard, a burly type, had never entertained such scenarios seriously and was quickly immobilised. Daphne screamed at patrons to get down on the floor and they complied quick-as-a-flash. A middle-aged man fainted. A bank teller, unsure of which way to turn slipped and fell awkwardly, hitting her head on a counter on the way down. Blood rushed down her face, some of it landing on Daphne’s dress as she headed to the centre-stage of the space. James found the developments unsettling but his commitment to all the versions of his screaming lover remained comfortably intact.

Demands were made. A bag was filled to its brim with cash. But immediately upon being filled it was dragged to between counters and soon most of the loot was soon strewn across the floor. Hostages faced the realisation that these were haphazard and error-prone types, that these people were unhinged tension and exacerbated there fear, because they knew death is prefaced by a lack of professionalism and feared a random death, doing, and these thieves seemed unhinged. In the distance the inevitable sound of coming sirens had already started, the law rushing to descend on the scene.

But James noticed there was something else in the scene: there was loud music was playing somewhere, some kind of dance beat, seemingly coming from outside the bank. He turned to window facing the street, trying to make sense of it.

And Daphne spoke, standing behind him now, in a voice suddenly soft and contrasting.

“Look baby, look. Just look. I got you something. A surprise! Just *look*”.

He looked out on the unexpected scene a large troupe of dancers. It was a flashmob! There were dressed as sexy police officers. The street traffic police officers gith closed, maybe as many as fifty. The choreography was tight, well-rehearsed. Commuters reached for their phones, unsure of the related incident to the bank heist reaching its theatrical pinnacle. Unsure what was real and what was theatre.

James smiled, mesmerised by an unfolding scene. It was all so Daphne, he thought. A being of grand gestures, she formed the world into such unexpected shapes. And today, after all, was a kind of anniversary, maybe of love or death. He marvelled at her ingenuity, her organisational skills, the inevitable secret rehearsals that must have happened. But at was same time he was distracted, watching her standing in that same dress she wore in the hotel, and the angle of sunlight had moved. He planned to tell her that true love is really about the time of day. His gaze toward her was, enamoured and delighted became all too much and they crossed the floor, movie-running to each other. She yelled at him to fuck her as he grabbed her, and he pulled at the back of her dress.

The bloodied bank teller, apparently a perennial victim of awkward locations, was on the floor and underneath their kisses. Glancing down at her, James started to expound. Head wounds, he explained, are far worse than they appear, one must ignore the blood and focus on the opportunities at hand. This experience, he explained, would come to be a defining moment in moment an erotic life, and yes it would condemn to her unmanageable fantasies, and yes it would lead her to make unreasonable demands on all the lovers in her life, but this was unavoidable. But the bank teller heard none of this, instead terrified and stuck, looking away from the maniac, screaming her screams into the soundtrack of the dancers outside as the real police arrived outside on the scene at last.

Daphne laughed at his incessant need for explanations and his ridiculous and half-baked take on psychology of all situations, his endearing inability to focus. He turned back to her how, reaching around her waist as she pulled at this shirt, and it was at about that time that Daphne was shot in the neck by an arriving police officer. James felt the bullet’s impact on her body, an immediate change in the temperature and rhythm of her body. He turned to the bloodied bank teller telling her not to panic, that this too could prove to be a moment of insight. But it all felt like an empty sentiment and then the bank teller and James started to cry but for different reasons.

The social commentary on the morning’s unusual events (which would dissipate in less than a single news cycle) revealed the unexpected gunfire was perhaps related to the parameters of the normality being far exceeded. The unplanned excessive force was restorative gambit, an attempt to replace boundaries to the sights and sounds that overwhelmed both spectators and participants, embodied most of all in the impromptu dance number that was unfolding in the street.

James unexpectedly found himself decidedly uninterested in rationalising on such matters. He let Daphne go, her true priorities in the face of mortality made stark. She slowly stumbled away from him, his connection receding from her exponentially. She was pale now, a surprise witness to her life’s altogether speedy dissipation. She stumbled through bank doors, past the police officer who was unsure of a follow up move, and her dress, blood soaked and half pulled down, still caught the sun coming through, and James through how unfair that might never fuck her again. Then she disappeared through the exit out in the street, where the dancers had started to lose formation, the officers had begun to take charge.

James rushed after her, altogether unsure of an appropriate speed, unable to reach into life’s drama to find suitable parts. Outside was a scene of confused police, indecision about more gunshots, horrified by this blood-soaked woman who might have proved to be a pop culture icon in an earlier time but was just another scene in the age of information. She had fallen to the ground now, and James tried followed her, the view blurred by his tears as he was set upon by the police and his face was pushed hard into the ground as control of the situation was re-established.

He hoped, vaguely and without malice, for a similar death, maybe a well-timed aneurism, a heart attack. He wondered if Daphne might come to be disappointed by his survival, he thought of his ex-wives, his children, points of his life impossible to bring into focus, all those details that had never really come together. And from his sidelined faced, a clock on top of a city building, indicating twelve minutes had passed. And he could even see eyes darting, face stationary the hotel they had spent the night.

Much later in his life, when wandering halls with madmen and having endless time to think slowly on unfocused things, he would try and piece it all together. She had planned it secretly, she had connections to the art world. And for many he would later philosophise, on the matter, this is how life was small snatch of time, theory collapse into madness and by that time, that the bank heist was a legitimate response to a legitimate life, the only possible choice he could make. At that time his loneliness and sorrow was so intense and engulfing and he lived only in the darkest of moments, and he would think of those three views of her sun dress in those three locations and knowing that this great love would reduce to a point and be forgotten as all things are and he would wonder lost in the world, with some vague memory of sunlight to live out a life that would be altogether too long.

But all that was in the future. Lying here now with his unmoving face, it seemed the sound and details would never dissipate, and still the screaming dancers filled the streets, and a fear of incarceration was imminent.