



# THE HEIST

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As the lift doors opened, Ciaran heard the noise coming from the office at the end of the corridor. This was surely the place he was looking for. Straightening his blazer, he walked over to the office and opened the door. The room was silent as multiple hologram projections turned to examine him. Ciaran spotted the reason he was called here, Mark Perry sitting at the far end of the room, his expensive suit pristine as always. He looked completely at ease and calm as he placated the angry murmurs from the holograms.

'Please excuse me for one moment.' Mark hit a button on his desk and the holograms fizzled out and disappeared. He sagged with relief, loosening his tie and tearing off his suit jacket.

'What the fuck took you so long?' Ciaran strode over to the desk and sat in an empty chair.

'I got some food on the way here.'

'Food?! I told you to get here as soon as you possibly could!' Mark ran his hands through his hair.

'You can't expect me to help you out on an empty stomach. Besides, you look like you're handling this admirably.' Mark walked over to the window and looked out.

'I've just been stalling them. Talking about possible growth opportunities, reinvestment, just bullshitting them along until you got here. I mean Jesus, if they realise what's happened, they'll crucify me!'

'Surely it can't be that bad. What'd you do?' Ciaran leaned back in his chair. Mark snapped his fingers and the mirror behind the desk slid up to reveal scotch and a single glass. Pouring a glass and throwing it back in a single go, Mark sat back at his desk as the mirror slid back into place.

'Well, I lost some money that I shouldn't have.' Ciaran rolled his eyes.

'No shit. How much did you lose?' Mark tugged at his collar and cleared his throat.

'Forty million,' he muttered. Ciaran leant closer.

'Sorry I didn't quite hear that. How much did you say?'

'Forty million.'

'And how does one lose forty million dollars?' Mark rapped his knuckles on the desk.

'A couple of years ago, this kid called me up with an incredible offer. He had developed this trading software and was getting returns of three and a half percent per month. He said there was a little risk of loss because he sold everything at the end of the days trade,' He shrugged his shoulders. 'So, I bring it up with my clients and they give me their life savings. Everything's going great, my clients get their money back, I skim a little off the top... life's good. Then, one day the guy stops answering his phone, cleans out his accounts and disappears. Textbook Ponzi scheme that took us for a ride.' Ciaran let out a low whistle.

'Well... this seems like a you problem, I'll leave you to it.' He rose to his feet as Mark held out his hands.

'Wait! You've got to help me here. They're expecting their money and I can't bullshit them forever.'

‘What do you expect me to do?’ Ciaran asked. ‘Oh wait, I know, I’ll just pull out my wallet and with my-’ he fished his wallet out of his pocket and made a show of looking inside it, ‘- thirteen dollars and fifteen cents make all these problems disappear!’ He slipped his wallet back into his pocket.

Mark opened his mouth to interject as a green light started blinking on his desk. He fixed his tie, slipped back on his suit jacket and motioned for Ciaran to sit down next to him.

‘Just sit down and play along.’ Ciaran sighed, trudged back to the seat and flopped down.

‘So, we’re playing games now,’ he muttered. Mark sat down and pushed the button.

‘Yeah, it’s called lie through your teeth.’ The holograms flickered back into existence. ‘Sorry about the delay,’ he motioned to Ciaran. ‘My associate, Mr Quinn and I have been discussing the situation and we believe there is a slight, not insignificant, tiny possibility that your money...’ Mark’s shoulders sagged. ‘-is gone. It’s all gone and it’s not coming back.’

The room erupted at this revelation. Some started yelling, others crying. The voices drowned each other out. Only one hologram was silent. It was an older man dressed in clothes that suggested he saw losing millions as just the cost of doing business. He waited till the others around him fell silent before he spoke.

‘I have a question for your associate.’ Mark gripped the arms of his chair as Ciaran motioned to the hologram.

‘By all means.’

‘What are you currently doing to fix the situation our... *misguided*... financial planner has left us in?’ Ciaran glanced at Mark and cleared his throat.

‘Well, we’ve lodged a complaint with the authorities and are working closely with them to ensure a quick and favourable resolution for all parties within the full extent of the law.’ The hologram crossed his legs and rested his chin on his hands with a humourless smile as the other holograms fizzled out, satisfied with the non-answer.

‘Let’s cut the bullshit here Mark,’ the hologram gave him a withering look. ‘You’ve really stepped in it now, haven’t you?’ Mark slid a finger under his sweaty collar.

‘I wouldn’t use those words exactly...’ The hologram continued unperturbed.

‘I warned you but you bought into your own bullshit and now you’ve gone and dragged this poor sod into your mess,’ he turned to Ciaran. ‘You don’t have any experience in this type of situation, do you?’

‘I’m actually an executive protection agent.’ The hologram snorted and waved him away.

‘Whatever you say. If you plan to fix this situation rather than make empty promises to people that are too stupid to know any better, I feel we can cooperate in a way that is beneficial for all concerned parties... Mark has the address.’ With a final look at the financial planner, the hologram spiralled in on itself and disappeared. Ciaran spun in his chair to face Mark.

‘Well I think that went pretty well.’ he said.

Mark groaned and lay his head on his desk with a dull thud.

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Ciaran watched the rain slide off the windshield of his hovercar as the AI program guided it, slipping in between the congested traffic. He focused on the skyscrapers, rusting and covered with twisting vines. Small strips of neon advertisements poked out from underneath the choking foliage, fighting for Ciaran's attention as he tore past them.

'I can't believe you agreed to the meeting!' He snapped out of his trance and turned to see Mark's face plastered across his windshield.

'Why wouldn't I?' Ciaran said.

'Cause you're a goddamn security systems salesman.'

'Yes, and this is just me simply selling my own personal security system with a slight bending of the truth by claiming that I'm an executive protective agent.'

'Is that even a real thing?'

'As far as he knows, it's a real thing and that's good enough for me,' The hovercar peeled off from the rest of the traffic flow and began to descend from the cluttered skies to the dense jungle streets below. 'Besides it's the right thing to do.' Mark shook his head.

'And people tell me chivalry's dead,' his face softened. 'Just be careful in there mate. I hope you know what you're doing.' With a slight smile, Ciaran shut off the view screen and assumed manual control of the car as it slipped between the trees and into the moss-covered streets.

Reaching the address, he turned off the street and flew past an ornate wrought iron gate embellished with a polished crest. The hovercar handled the twists and turns in the cobblestone driveway with ease as the house came into view.

The house stood defiant against the surrounding forest, its colourful Mediterranean architecture a stark contrast to the harsh concrete used above the jungle. Palm trees lined the path as the hovercar slowed to a halt and shut off under a single lantern illuminating the surrounding vegetation. As Ciaran approached the front door, he saw a drone to his left, hovering along with him at his eye level.

'Mr Quinn? I was unsure you'd actually show up.'

The drone flew off as the door opened and light spilt out the house. He watched it vanish into the darkness and turned to the silhouette standing in the open doorway.

'You might have a defective drone there.' The figure remained at the doorway.

'Not defective Mr Quinn. That is the latest in security technology. It uses scanners to-'

'-to analyse a person's biometric data including their own unique gait. Relatively new technology but I'm sure you're well aware of this with the twenty-million-dollar price tag bundled with it.' The figure raised an eyebrow.

'You seem just full of surprises...please, come in.' The figure moved to allow Ciaran to enter. The figure shut the door behind Ciaran and reached out his hand.

'Nice to meet you face to face Mr Quinn. Walter Langford. I'm grateful common sense has prevailed tonight.' Ciaran shook the hand.

'There's a lot of people who lost a lot of money because of my friend. I just want to try and make it right.' Walter nodded and motioned for him to follow as he walked off. Ciaran followed him and found himself in a sitting room. The centrepiece of the room was a framed picture of Walter and a stony-faced man standing next to him above an antique fireplace. The same man was sitting in an armchair and barely recognised their presence when they entered.

'Mr Quinn, I believe you've met my associate, Deon.' Deon did not look up or offer his hand to Ciaran.

'Yeah, we've met before.' Ciaran said. Deon grumbled and shot a look at Walter.

'Enough with the useless formalities Walter,' he turned to Ciaran. 'So, you've done this kind of work before? Because we have both lost money to that idiot financial planner and we want it back as soon as possible.' Ciaran examined the expensive furniture and precious works of art around the room. He noticed an opened *Chateau Margaux 1787* on the table by Deon.

'Yeah cause you're really strapped for cash,' he stared at Deon. 'I'll get your money back, don't worry.' Deon took a sip of wine and motioned with his hand.

'Good. Now, we know the name of the person that ran the scheme Mark fell for. Drake Fenton. We want you to talk to him and get him to tell us where our money is. I don't care how as long as you get what I ask.' Ciaran looked at the two men.

'That's all well and good but he could be anywhere and if he's smart, he's long gone. You have any idea where he could be?' Deon smiled.

'Yes, I believe we have some idea.'

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The man handcuffed to the table looked up as the door swung open and Ciaran entered the room. Ciaran looked back at Deon and Walter and then back to the man who raised a hand in greeting.

'Hey, how's it going?'

Ciaran pulled Deon and Walter out of the room and slammed the door closed.

'Is that the guy who stole all the money?' he said.

They both nodded.

'That's Drake Fenton? And you've just got him locked up in a random room in your house with no legal jurisdiction or backing to do so?'

Deon and Walter nodded. Ciaran massaged his temple.

'Well... you two have really made this easy for me.' He motioned for them to stay there and walked back into the room. The man looked up again as he entered.

'Back again?' Drake said. Ciaran shut the door and pulled a chair along the floor up to the table. Drake winced at the scrape of metal against metal and tried to cover his ears with his hands. Ciaran placed the chair against the table and sat down.

'So, you're the guy that's put the fine gentleman outside in such a wonderful mood.' He said.

'Not happy?'

'They want to string you up outside.' Drake shrugged.

'Could be worse.'

'What do you mean could be worse?'

'Well, at least it'd get me out in the open air.' Drake cracked a smile and drummed his hands on the table. Ciaran lay his hands on the table, palms out.

'People have lost their life savings because of you. Good, honest, hardworking people that have nothing left. Because of you. Why?' Drake's smile dropped and he pulled his hands off the table and onto his lap.

'Look around you. These people have more money than they know what to do with. I mean look at the room we're in now, it's nothing short of excessive.'

Ciaran had to agree with him there. The floor was polished marble with gold trim on the skirting boards and artwork filling up every inch of wall space. Yet there was a thick layer of dust covering everything except for the cheap table and chairs. Drake nodded slowly as he watched Ciaran.

'All of this for a room they'd hardly ever use or even think about. They act like they're elite but strip away their fancy toys, they're just like the rest of us. I decided to show people just how true that is.'

'The other people you robbed are going to be too busy trying to recover some of their life savings to notice that.' Drake looked away.

'I had that all worked out. I was going to reinvest the money and slip it back into their super fund accounts, no harm no foul to the people that matter.' Ciaran stayed silent. Drake kept his eyes on the floor.

'What went wrong?' Drake stayed silent and fidgeted as Ciaran stared him down. They locked eyes and Drake let out a sigh.

'I'd been telling investors for years that I was killing it, you know, that I was making two hundred percent gains on deals and the like.'

'And it was all bullshit?'

'No. Not in the beginning at least. I was cruising, taking folks' money and making money hand-over-fist for a couple of years. Then one of my deals collapsed and I lost most of my capital. At that point, I panicked and tried getting the money back on riskier and riskier deals. I made some money back but I knew which way the wind was blowing,' Drake shrugged. 'It was inevitable and I would have had the good sense to try and get out while I could. But then the deal came.'

'What was the deal?'

'One too good to possibly be true... but I was at the end of my rope. I thought I could deposit the remaining capital in the investment, wait for that first payment to come back, pull out my funds and redistribute back to the superfunds.'

'And after that?' Drake traced circles on the table with his finger.

'I'd disappear with my small commission and live out the rest of my life away from people like those two fucks outside.' Ciaran strummed his fingers on the table in thought.

'So, you ran a pyramid scheme tricking people out of their money and then got tricked out of your money by investing in a pyramid scheme. Do I have that right?'

'Yeah, the irony's not lost on me.' Drake scrunched his face in pain and groaned.

'Who slid the deal your way?' Ciaran said. Drake stared out into space as Ciaran stared him down.

'Kari Burch,' he said. 'She's a securities trader who told me she had contacts that would allow her to make enormously profitable trades. Apparently, she has the run of the town.' Ciaran nodded his head and got to his feet.

'Thanks for your help. I'll be back if I need anything else from you.' He turned and walked out the door, leaving Drake sitting alone.

Walter was waiting for Ciaran in the hallway. Ciaran brushed past him and pulled out his phone. Scrolling through his contacts, he found the person he needed to talk to as Walter appeared in front of him.

'Well? Did that little fucker tell you where my money is?' Ciaran ignored him and dialed the number. He turned his back on Walter and held the phone to his ear just as the person on the other end picked up.

*Hello?*

'Steve? It's Ciaran. I need you to run a name through your systems for me.'

*Ciaran, I have work to do. You just can't use me to stalk the latest girl that rejected you for whatever reason late at night in some dive bar.*

'Ah, I've missed you too buddy. I need you to search up the name Kari Burch, especially any history you can dig up regarding her business endeavours.' There was no reply for a while.

*Fine. I'll let you know what I find. Now leave me alone and let me do my job.* Steve hung up before Ciaran could reply.

Ciaran slipped the phone into his pocket and turned around to find Walter still standing there. Walter raised an eyebrow.

'Was that one of your CIA contacts?' he said. Ciaran chuckled.

'Post Office, Investigative Branch.' He leant back against the wall. 'Anyway, you're wasting your time with the Fenton guy. The money's not with him and even if he had the money, I doubt he'd give it back to you considering all this.' Ciaran motioned with his hand at their surroundings. Walter's hands curled into fists.

‘So that’s just it? Forget about that vagrant that stole my hard-earned money and just get on with my life?’ Ciaran rolled his eyes.

‘Mate, however you got this rich, I doubt it was from hard work.’ Walter went to say something but Ciaran held up a hand to shut him up. ‘I said the money isn’t with Fenton, that’s true. But I know who the money will most likely be with. Once my guy gets back to me, I’ll know for sure.’

‘If that guy doesn’t have my money, who does?’

Ciaran went to reply just as his phone vibrated. He pulled out his phone and checked the screen before sliding it back into his pocket.

‘Exactly who Drake said.’

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‘What a piece of junk!’

Ciaran swung back to face Drake as they walked out the mansion’s front door. He turned back to his hovercar, admiring the sleek lines and sporty black finish as the light reflected off the windscreen.

‘It may not look like much but she’s got it where it counts,’ he clicked his key and the car’s headlights flicked on and the engine started with a quiet purr. Drake raised an eyebrow as he noticed the dents, scrapes and patches of rust.

‘It could have the Improbability Drive stashed in the boot for all I care, it still looks like it’s going to tip over if I lean too far one way.’

‘Just get in the car. You’re my ticket in.’ Ciaran slid behind the wheel as Drake strapped himself into the passenger seat. Ciaran engaged manual control and drove back down the path, out onto the dark streets. As they drove, he flicked a switch on the dashboard and the car began to ascend above the forest.

Drake shielded his eyes as the harsh neon glow of the cityscape hit them as the car broke the tree line. Ciaran flicked another switch on the dashboard and the windscreen darkened to help dim the light entering the car. The car kept ascending, merging with the traffic as the AI took over control. Ciaran turned to Drake.

‘So, where’s Kari?’ Drake shot him a sideways glance.

‘You’re really going through with it huh?’

‘You better believe it. I’ve been hired to do a job and I’m going to do it.’ Drake rolled his eyes and watched the hovercars at a standstill around them.

‘Look, you got me out of that hellhole and I’m grateful for that. I truly am. But you don’t owe those pricks anything. Let’s say you do get their money back. How much of that money I stole impacts their quality of life?’

‘That doesn’t matter. It’s not right.’

‘Why isn’t that right? That money is a tiny sliver of their wealth. You’ve seen that palace they live in. You think the money I stole is going to leave them begging in the street? Fuck no. Meanwhile, people throw away their life savings just to try and enjoy their golden years. They see what guys like



that have and they want it, just for a brief moment. They'll never get it though, and that's a sick joke. But I'm wrong for trying to improve vulnerable people's lives.'

'Don't use that as an excuse to stroke your ego, Robin Hood. Now where am I going?'

'Even if I told you, there's no way she's giving back the money.'

'You don't know that.'

'It's common sense.'

'Then I guess we've got to employ some common sense of our own.' Ciaran reached back behind his seat and pulled out an M9 pistol and placed it in the cupholder. Drake's eyes widened.

'Jesus Christ, what the fuck dude! Shooting her isn't going to get the money back.'

'Relax, it's a pellet gun.' Drake stared at him and kept an eye on the gun.

'You're fucked up dude.' Ciaran smiled as the traffic began to move.

'Makes life interesting.' They sat in silence as the traffic flowed faster, the neon streaming past them. Ciaran hummed to himself drumming his fingers on the dashboard to the beat. Drake stared straight ahead, his face pale as the vibrant lights washed over him. The silence between them was shattered as Ciaran's phone rang and Steve's face appeared on the windscreen.

'Hey Steve, you dig up anything interesting on our mysterious securities trader?'

*Couldn't dig up a lot which wouldn't be too interesting in and of itself. But I looked closer and it gets really interesting. Turns out your mystery woman is a bit of a phoenix. Eight failed business ventures in eight years. Each business was in a different industry; hospitality, retail, construction. She's had a business in almost every industry.*

A list of Kari's businesses replaced Steve's face. Ciaran let out a low whistle as he ran his eyes over the list.

'Quite the collection. Seems like she's a classic run-and-dumper. You find anything else?'

*Just that her most recent business address is smack dab in the middle of the downtown financial district. I've sent it through to you now.*

The address replaced the list as Ciaran fired up the hovercars GPS and punched it into the system.

'Thanks, Steve. I'll let you know if I need anything else.' Ciaran shut off the call and reclined as the AI calculated the quickest route to the address. Drake turned to him.

'What the hell is a run-and-dumper?'

'Just someone who starts up a company, gets a heap of small investors onboard then just takes the money, declares the business bankrupt and moves onto the next one, leaving the investors out of pocket,' Ciaran smiled. 'It used to be illegal years ago but after everything that's happened, no one's marching in the streets about rich people losing money.' They both fell quiet again as they entered the city centre.

Unlike the streets far below and outer districts buildings, the skyscrapers and buildings in the city centre were free from vegetation. Advertisements plastered the buildings' exteriors, the neon

signs lighting up the streets as if it was the middle of the day. They pulled up to the front of the building that matched Kari's address and the car shut off. Ciaran seized the gun out of the cupholder and stepped out of the car, sliding the gun into a shoulder holster and pulling on a jacket over the top of it. Drake got out of the car as well and stood next to Ciaran on the footpath.

Ciaran patted his pockets, frowning before leaning back into the car and pulling out a type of portable recorder.

'What the hell is that?' Drake asked.

'We'll need bloodwork to authorise the transfer to the bank as quickly as possible.' He tossed it to Drake who caught it as they scoped the target. 'We could use fingerprints but getting those take too long and looks too obvious.'

The building was one of the largest in the district. Ciaran and Drake both looked up at the towering superstructure in front of them.

'Let's do this then.' Ciaran said.

Together they crossed the footpath, pushed open the polished doors and walked up to the front desk. The interior of the building was sparsely designed with an extravagant taste. A uniformed security guard watched them enter from behind the desk.

'Can I help you two gentlemen?' the guard said. Ciaran motioned to Drake.

'We're here to see Ms Burch. My client needs to see her regarding his investment strategy urgently.' The guard looked dubious.

'Really? Well, I'm going to need some identification from the two of you before I let you past.' Drake handed over his driver's licence.

The guard examined it before handing it back and pressing a button on the desk. The duo walked past the guard without a second glance. Behind the desk were rows and rows of computers with a centre aisle leading to a set of lifts along the back wall. They both walked to the back wall and called a lift.

Ciaran scanned the room and noticed everyone staring at them. He adjusted his holster as the lift doors opened and they stepped inside. Drake pressed the button for the top floor. The doors closed and the lift ascended in silence. Ciaran pulled out his gun, checked there was ammo in the chamber and slipped it back into the holster. He noticed Drake was fidgeting and sweaty.

'Don't worry, just let me do the talking,' Ciaran said 'Just make sure that you get some bloodwork.' Drake nodded and wiped his brow. The lift slowed to a stop and the doors opened. Kari Burch was typing away at her computer and looked up as Ciaran and Drake stepped off the lift.

'Who let you onto this floor? I don't have an appointment booked at this time,' she said. Ciaran waited until the lift doors closed and he pulled the gun out from his holster and pointed it at Kari.

'My client made an investment recently and wishes to withdraw it. Now.' Kari stopped typing and went to reach under her desk. Ciaran clicked the safety off the gun.

'Keep your hands away from the panic button please.' Kari froze and placed her hands on the desk, palms facing up. She looked from Ciaran to Drake and the realisation dawned on her.

'So, you're trying to get your money back using these bully boy tactics? Oh, I've seen many sad things in my time but this one takes the cake.'

Ciaran motioned with the gun and Kari stood up. He noticed a large oil painting that looked out of place in this sparse office.

'Open the safe please.' He waited as she gave him what she must have thought was a confused look. He sighed. 'The safe behind that oil painting. I want you to open it up and I want you to open it up right now.'

She still didn't move.

Ciaran handed Drake the gun and walked over to the painting. He ripped it off the wall and tossed it across the room, revealing a high tech safe installed in the wall. He grabbed Kari and pushed her over to the safe. She looked back at Drake with the gun aimed at her and entered in a code and the door opened. Ciaran walked up behind her and looked into the safe. It was full of stacks of bills and he whistled Drake over.

Taking the gun back from him, he kept it on Kari as Drake grabbed a sack from the table nearby and started shovelling the stacks into the bag. Once he had emptied the bag, he shut the safe door and slung the bag over his shoulder. Kari looked at both of them.

'If you've got what you came for just get out before I call the cops,' she said. Ciaran grabbed the back of her jacket and pulled her towards the lift.

'Nice threat, but the cops were rolling as soon as you entered that safe combination. One of the best features of that safe model and unfortunately for you that means we need you to come with us for just a little bit longer.' Drake called the lift and the doors slid open. The trio got in the lift, with Ciaran resting the gun against the back of Kari's spine. 'We're going to walk out this lift and out the front door and if you say anything, you'll get a bullet in your back.' Drake looked away, uncomfortable with the situation.

Drake grabbed Kari's arm as they reached the ground floor and the doors opened. She winced and ripped her arm out of his grip. Ciaran saw Drake slide the device into his pocket and prodded Kari with the gun. She started walking towards the front door, Ciaran behind keeping close as Drake brought up the rear. The workers at the computers watched them as they walked, keeping out of Ciaran's line of sight. The guard at the desk got up to try and stop them but sat back down as Ciaran levelled the gun at him. They reached the front door and kicked it open as the night air hit them.

*DROP THE GUN AND GET ON THE GROUND!*

Police cars encircled them as they exited the building. Ciaran froze as the police spotlights focused on them.

'Shit thought we had more time.' he said. Drake looked at the police cars and tried to defuse the situation.

'Don't worry! It's just a pellet gun.' Ciaran looked at Drake.

'Now you've done it.' He pushed Kari away, tossed the gun aside and ran for the car, clicking the remote to unlock and start up the car. Ciaran slid over the bonnet and dove into the driver's seat. Drake followed him and tumbled into the passenger seat. Ciaran initiated manual control and

floored it, slipping in between a gap in the police cars, gaining altitude and heading deeper into the city centre. The four police cars dispersed and gave chase.

The deeper they went into the city centre, the heavier the traffic flow. Ciaran gripped the wheel as he weaved in and out of lanes, ignoring the honks and beeps each of his manoeuvres produced. He glanced in the rear-view mirror at the growing wave of police behind them as reinforcements were called in. Drake's voice dragged his attention off the police behind them.

'Uh, Ciaran...'

Ciaran's attention shot to the road in front of the car and his eyes widened. The buildings closed in on the street, narrowing the airspace. Cars were at an absolute standstill with no room for Ciaran to slip past.

'Shit.' He shut off the car's mag locks, his stomach rising into his throat as the car began to lose altitude.

Just not quick enough.

'Shit, shit, shit.' Ciaran said as the traffic drew closer. He slammed the brakes as Drake covered his face and looked away. Their car dipped lower and lower as the police followed them. The car's roof scraped the traffic's underside as the car dropped further and slammed into the road. The shock almost tore the wheel from Ciaran's hands as he struggled to keep the car under control. The car fishtailed and slid under the traffic above, sparks kicking up as the hover mags scraped along the road.

Ciaran wrestled back control of the car and reactivated the mag locks at full power. The car shot off the ground and rose in altitude, now past the gridlock. Ciaran and Drake looked at each other and let out a sigh of relief.

The sigh died in his throat as he glanced at the rear-view mirror.

The police had made it through and were reeling them in inch by inch. Drake noticed Ciaran's reaction and looked out the back window at the police closing in on them.

'What the hell, pick up the pace!'

'I've got my foot to the floor!' Ciaran said.

'Then why are they gaining on us?' Before Ciaran could answer, a mag lock damage warning appeared on the windscreen in front of them.

'Yeah, that'll do it.' Ciaran said. As the car flew down the empty road, they passed a four-way intersection. Drake checked the passenger side mirror and saw more police flood out from the intersection and join their fellow cops.

'Don't worry, just let me do all the talking,' he mimicked Ciaran in a high-pitched voice. 'So, what now genius?' Ciaran swung the car off the lit main road and onto a dark side street with the police in tow.

'We need to get that money deposited before-- shit!' he shouted as the car's narrow headlights reflected off part of a police roadblock. Ciaran swerved the car around the roadblock and kept driving. The closest police cars smashed into the roadblock and dropped out of the sky. The remaining police drove around the wreckage and continued the chase.

'Where's the banking district anyway?' Ciaran said. Drake activated the GPS and pulled up the map.

'It's over the other side of the city.' Without warning, a police car cut out of a side street in front of them.

'You've got to be fucking kidding me.' Ciaran slammed on the brakes and twisted the wheel to the left. The car slammed into the police car. The driver side door crunched and swung drunk on its hinges as Ciaran floored it down another side street. The remaining police cars slammed into the stationary car, flipping it end over end and blocking off the entrance to the side street Ciaran had driven down.

Ciaran smiled as he shut off the headlights and started winding his way through the back streets towards the banking district.

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The windshield of the car was covered with mechanical and technical warnings as Ciaran and Drake pulled up to the bank they needed to make their deposit. Ciaran shut down the engine and set the car down on the street with a loud crash. He grabbed the sack of cash and got out of the car. Drake followed suit and stepped onto the footpath.

'Can't believe we're doing all this to get those rich assholes their money back,' he said.

'Who said we were giving those two their money?'

Without warning the car fell to pieces in front of their eyes, chassis and engine parts scattered along the road. Ciaran clutched at his chest and suppressed a sob. Drake rolled his eyes and spotted a beat cop watching them as he reached for his radio.

'C'mon.' He grabbed Ciaran and dragged him into the bank. They ran to the first free bank teller and Drake plopped the sack on the desk. 'We need to deposit this money into Mark Perry's account right now.' The bank teller chewed their gum and shot the two of them a look.

'You'll need Transfers and Deposits on floor five.' Ciaran grabbed the sack and was about to run to the loft when the teller piped up. 'Oh yeah, the lift's out of order.'

Ciaran and Drake noticed the stairwell at the same time and took off, slamming the door open and taking the stairs two at a time. The stairwell door swung shut as the first of the police officers entered the building.

Ciaran was panting and out of breath by the time he reached the fourth floor. Drake was in the foetal position in the middle of the third and fourth floor, unable to even crawl. As Ciaran reached the fifth floor, he stumbled out of the stairwell and through the door of the transfers department. The lone worker sitting behind his desk looked up as he entered.

'Something I can do for you buddy?'

Ciaran dropped the bag of money on the desk.

'Deposit. To. Mark Perry.' he said in between deep breaths. The guy placed the bag behind his desk and typed on his computer.

'You got authorisation?'

Ciaran reached into his pocket for the device they'd used on Kari.

It wasn't there.

He searched his pants pockets.

It wasn't there either.

'Where the hell is that piece of... shit!' Ciaran ran back out the room into the stairwell, sliding down the rail from floor five to four and saw Drake halfway between floor four and five, moving with the speed of an arctic tundra.

'I fucking hate stairs,' Drake moaned. Ciaran ignored him and searched him for the device. Finding it, he ran back up the stairs as the sound of footsteps pounding on the stairs floated up to them. Drake tried to follow him, crawled up a couple of steps and slipped back down to the third-floor landing. 'Fucking stairs' Drake said as he lay there and waited for the police to reach him.

Ciaran reached the fifth floor again and slammed the device down on the desk. The bank worker plugged it into his desk and clicked the mouse a couple of times. A printer next to him fired up and printed out a single sheet of paper. He handed it over to Ciaran.

'Here's your receipt and thanks for banking with us today.' As soon as he took the receipt Ciaran heard the sound of multiple guns being drawn. He turned around to see police officers filling the room, their weapons pointed straight at him.

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'You get one call. Make it count.'

Ciaran watched the police officer walk away as he dialled Mark's number. He picked up straight away.

*Mark Perry speaking.*

'Mark, it's me. Did the money go through?' Mark was quiet before answering.

*Yeah, it showed up in my account yesterday. Where the hell are you? I have to talk to you. The police come in here asking me a bunch of questions and then I see on the news Deon and Walter are in police custody.*

'Mark, I'm in jail. Cops nabbed me after I deposited the money a couple of days ago.'

*Jesus, I'm sorry to hear that. When are you getting out?*

'Not sure. They've got me for aggravated assault and dropped the charges for stealing the funds off Kari once Drake explained what happened. We're still both going to jail and the lawyer's saying probably two years. All things considered, I don't mind as long as the money got back to the people that needed it.' Mark was silent. Ciaran waited for him to speak but there was nothing.

'They got their money back, right?' Mark coughed.

*Well uh, that's the thing... it happened again.* Ciaran held the phone closer to his ear.

'What do you mean, it happened again?'

THE END