

# The Journeyman Thief

by Jason Soslow

## *Log Line:*

A delinquent kid on the road to becoming a criminal finds his life changed by a master thief, who takes him under his wing in a scheme of revenge against a former partner.

## *The Pitch:*

JOE is a 19-year-old punk who lives with his grandmother and steals stereos so he can customize his tricked-out Honda. When one of Joe's burglaries goes awry, a mysteriously all-knowing man rescues Joe and puts him in touch with EDDIE CLARE, a carpenter in his 60s who has tapped the kid to be his apprentice. But Eddie is no ordinary carpenter. A veteran bank robber, he's bent on avenging the death of Joe's father, who was killed by MASON WALLACE, a paranoid member of their gang. Now free after 18 years in prison, Mason is planning a big bank job. Forging a deal with the mob, Eddie and Joe must get to the money first, stealing it in broad daylight in the most daring, high-tech bank heist of all time.

## *Synopsis:*

JOE, 19, is well on his way from being a juvenile delinquent to a full-fledged criminal. Scanning the obituaries, he burglarizes the homes of people who are away at funerals. His latest job goes awry when a RUSSIAN MAN comes after him with a sawed-off shotgun. Discovering someone has towed his tricked-out Honda, Joe takes off down an alley, where he is surprised to find a minivan waiting. The driver, WILLIAM "BILLY" WARREN, a paraplegic in his 60s, mysteriously comes to Joe's rescue and, monitoring two police scanners and wearing an armful of digital watches, manages to put a freight train between them and the pursuing cops. Billy tells Joe that a guy he knows is looking for an assistant. It's a one-job offer with a six-figure payoff. He gives Joe a slip of paper with the name and address of Eddie Clare.

The address turns out to be that of a mansion in a wealthy Boston suburb, where EDDIE, a youthful early 60s, works as a carpenter on a remodeling job. Joe is nonplussed when Eddie immediately puts him to work. Eddie insists Joe wear safety goggles... moments before a shard of concrete flies into the kid's face. It's as if Eddie knew it was going to happen. He makes Joe trade in his Honda for a battered pick-up, makes him move out of his grandma's house to an apartment of his own, and tells him to show up the next morning at 6:30. Eddie teaches Joe the techniques of the carpentry trade, but he mentions nothing about the "other job." When Joe shoplifts some tools from Home Depot, Eddie vouches for the kid's potential and gets him a suspended sentence.

MASON WALLACE, late 60s and wiry, with a coldly logical mind, leaves prison after doing 18 years for armed robbery. DETECTIVES LANDRY and DIGRAVIO follow him to a forest site, where they spy on Mason as he digs up a duffle bag containing the loot from an old robbery, now turned to mush. When the ex-con departs, the detectives decide to snatch the booty, only to die from bullets fired by their own pistols, courtesy of Mason. Billy spots Mason driving the detectives' car, and reports it to Eddie. Seems the cops were on the payroll of JIMMY ZARELLA, an elderly Mafia capo. Jimmy has subcontracted Eddie to rob Mason, whom he believes is going to pull a major bank job.

Mason meets partners-in-crime SEAN and ZACH MCNEIL in a bar to plan their next job. The McNeil brothers have brought along tattooed skinhead JAMES, but Mason doesn't trust the new guy. Billy takes pictures of them leaving the bar, but Mason spots him and pumps three slugs into his chest, killing him. Mason answers Billy's cell phone, hears Eddie on the other end, and knows something is up. As they pick up an arsenal of machine guns from a storage facility, Mason pins James against a wall with the van. Suspecting he works for Jimmy, he crushes him to death. James' body goes into a crate next to Billy's.

Eddie finds Billy's vacant, bloodstained car and pays a visit on Jimmy, seeking his assurance that the mob will whack Mason in return for Eddie delivering the stolen loot. Jimmy informs him that Mason's job involves a huge cash transfer, but he doesn't know the date or the bank. Mason, Zach, and Sean set about digging a tunnel in a sewer conduit.

Eddie gets a visit from Joe's grandmother, MAGGIE. It's apparent they have a history, going back to when Eddie, Billy, and Mason were part of a gang that robbed banks. Seems Joe's late father, Glen, was also a member of the team, but Maggie always told her grandson he was a fisherman. Joe eavesdrops and demands Eddie tell him the truth. At his tidy, low-rent house in the suburbs, Eddie shows Joe a collection of newspaper clippings and photos documenting large bank heists and armored car robberies. At their peak in the early 1980's they were doing around five million a year. They were celebrating on a boat when Mason went psycho and tried to kill them all. Glen died, but Eddie and Billy made it to shore. Billy turned in Mason anonymously, while Eddie went underground, as if dead.

Mason, dressed in a business suit, forces a BANK MANAGER at gunpoint to don a radio-controlled strangulation device, which he hides under his clothing. Forcing the Manager to look away, Mason shifts the decimal point in a transfer order and stamps the Manager's signature to the document. He then orders him down to the vault, past a GUARD, and tricks him into opening it. The Manager places stacks of hundred-dollar bills into a briefcase, which Mason carries to the van, where Sean and Zach are waiting, heavily armed. Pursued by police, the van flips over and crashes into a house. While Sean and Zach rake the neighborhood with automatic weapons fire, Mason knocks a hole through a basement wall and escapes with the loot down the tunnel they dug. Timed explosives reduce the house to kindling, killing both Sean and Zach.

Eddie, who saw news reports of the robbery and shoot-out, explores the rubble and discovers the tunnel. He believes that Mason wouldn't have planned such an elaborate heist for only a million dollars. It must be only the first step in something bigger involving the transfer Jimmy mentioned. Mason surprises Jimmy in the mobster's bedroom, asking him who besides the detectives and Billy he's put on his tail. When Jimmy claims ignorance, Mason reveals that the transfer is being made to another branch of the same bank he robbed.

Eddie figures that Mason plans to hit the same bank that they robbed 18 years earlier, the last job the gang pulled. The bank has since been remodeled, with drywall cladding over turn-of-century walnut wainscoting. Eddie assumes the bank changed only one of the three combination dials on the vault, which means the only things separating Mason from twenty-seven million dollars is a security door and a single number, one to thirty. Through the "error" engineered by Mason, the bank receives ten times its requested disbursement. The only way Eddie and Joe can rob the now-suspicious Mason is to get the money before he does. And that means making off with it in broad daylight.

Wearing large, bulky coats and communicating by means of tiny, earpiece radios, Eddie and Joe enter the bank. Eddie slips into a closet in the BRANCH MANAGER's office and carefully cuts a door in the sheetrock, gaining access to a two-foot gap between the walls of the office and the original masonry. He drills pinholes at strategic spots, giving them camera obscura views of various areas in the bank. Removing flashlights and tools from their coats, Eddie and Joe inflate plastic mock-ups of shrink-wrapped currency, which they switch with the real stuff inside the vault. There's a tense moment when Joe impales his foot on a nail, the ASSISTANT MANAGER reacting to the noise. When two female bank employees come to look at the money, Joe disconnects the wire leading to the security door, preventing the women from discovering Eddie.

***Teaser Ending:***

Later, after the bank has closed, Eddie and Joe await the arrival of Mason and the inevitable confrontation with Jimmy. Eddie, tired of living the life of a fugitive, makes a bold move that surprises everyone and alters the mob's plans for the money.

***Actual Ending:***

Later, after the bank has closed, Eddie tells Joe he's not taking his cut because he's through living the life of a fugitive. Mason enters the bank after having first drilled a hole in the door and raising the interior temperature to 98.6 degrees with an industrial space heater. This effectively disables the bank's infrared sensors. As Mason busies himself with the vault's combination, Eddie and Joe transfer the money to an alley. Eddie returns to fetch the videotapes of the security cameras. Mason is furious when he finds the mock-ups and a note from Eddie. As he goes to his car, Jimmy's goons open fire, cutting him down. Jimmy finds the money, but leaves it, suspecting something's wrong because Eddie refused his cut.

Eddie and Joe part company at a diner, each of them having secretly come away with a bundle of hundreds. The next morning, the Branch Manager is astonished to find twenty-million dollars stacked neatly in the alley. When last we see Joe, he's back at the Eastborough job site, having become a skilled carpenter.