

# PICKPOCKET

Bill Carver

Marc walked around the subway station. Today he was dressed in his hip-hop costume. Baggy jeans drooping off his hips, his underwear showing and layered flannel shirts. His Yankees' cap was on backwards and he had seven chains hanging from his neck. He was dressed so that people shied away from him, but he looked so ridiculous that people paid no attention to him as he wandered around the station looking for his next mark. People would focus on his outfit and not on him.

Marc made his living by picking pockets to steal the wallets of men he'd chosen on the numerous subway stations that kept the people moving in and out of New York City. He would work until he was successful but no longer than two days in a station and then move to another station. This kept the transit cops from recognizing him and linking him to the stolen wallets being reported. Marc worked four days each week and he made a comfortable living stealing from the commuters. He was always changing his outfit but keeping mostly with the hip-hop look. He found it funny that he could look so silly and be so invisible to the people around him because they didn't want to see him.

Marc stopped his walking and sat on a bench facing the subway loading platform and waited for the next train to enter the station. He didn't see anyone he saw currently in the station as a potential victim. He crossed his legs and kept his right hand closed in his lap. On his little finger he had a half inch blade which he used to cut the pants pocket holding the wallet. He had his procedure honed to a perfect operation. He would come up behind his mark and bump him slightly. As he bumped him, he would run his little finger with the blade across the pocket holding the wallet. As he cut with the little finger, his other finger on the hand would reach into the pocket and pull out the wallet. He had practiced and worked it so that he could remove the wallet by the time he had apologized for bumping into his mark. The person he bumped would usually back away from him after they saw who had bumped into them. He would slowly walk away as he moved the wallet into his own pocket.

The next train entered the station and Marc focused his attention on the people leaving the train. Everyone rushed out the doors and they moved quickly through the subway station toward the exits. Marc watched them leave the subway train and evaluated them until one man caught his eye.

The man slowly exited the train, he was the last one off the car, and strolled off the platform into the station. The man stopped and looked at a newspaper kiosk. He slowly read the headlines from the various newspapers held in the kiosk.

The man was well dressed, appeared to be in his mid-fifties and overweight. Marc looked at the man's backside and saw the outline of a wallet in the back left pocket. It was a thicker wallet than most men would carry. Marc knew that the man was the type who kept a lot of his life in that wallet. If that man was a woman he would be carrying a large purse and would keep a lot of his life in the purse. He would have a lot of credit cards and probably an emergency cash reserve in that wallet.

Marc had found his mark.

Marc got up from the bench and moved through the thinning crowd of people toward the newspaper kiosk. His target pulled a paper off the kiosk and opened the paper to the center section and looked over the two exposed pages. He then turned the page over.

Marc moved quickly once he made his decision on his target. People didn't linger in a subway station and he knew that he had to be decisive. He came up behind the man from the mark's left side. Marc had gone into his stagger. His stagger was his effort to appear buzzed and slightly stoned which allowed him to bump into his target. The security cameras in the subway station would see him as a person who had a balance problem which was a common condition on the subway platforms.

Marc slowed and waited for his moment to strike. When the mark started turning the next page in the newspaper, Marc moved in.

The page was halfway turned.

Marc reached the target.

The little finger knife started its cut across the pants' material.

Marc's right shoulder bumped into the back of the target's left shoulder.

Marc's fingers grabbed the wallet as the cut was finished.

The victim leaned forward from the force of the bump.

The wallet came free from the pocket.

"Szuse me." Marc muttered.

The wallet disappeared into Marc's pocket.

The man turned his head toward the left and saw Marc's back as Marc staggered away.

Marc smiled as he picked up his pace through the crowd and headed toward the nearest exit.

The victim shrugged, turned back to his paper and gave a little smile.

Marc reached the street after walking up the stairs from the subway exit. He continued walking forward and then turned left at the first intersection that he encountered. He was anxious to get to the McDonalds located down in the center of this block. He had the stolen wallet in his front right pocket and he was removing the knife off of his little finger. He then put it into its carrying case. He handled the blade

delicately because of its sharpness. He had received more than one nick from the sharp edges and he had learned to remove it as soon as possible and put it away.

The mark sat down on a bench near the kiosk where he had been standing when his pocket was picked. He had felt the bump and realized that he had been robbed, but he had turned around too slowly to see who had taken his money. He had reached around and felt the rip in his pants pocket and shook his head in regret that his pants had been damaged by the pickpocket.

He turned his wrist over to look at his watch and figured how much time he had to wait. He made a mental bet with himself of thirty minutes.

Marc reached the door of the restaurant and entered. There was a small crowd at the counter and he pulled up his pants as he got behind the person who was last in line. He couldn't understand how anyone could walk and feel comfortable with their pants halfway down their butt. He re-notched his belt and smoothed down his shirts and resettled his clothes as the line moved closer to the counter.

He ordered a coffee and muffin when it was his turn and he pulled a few bills out of his shirt pocket to pay for his purchase. He received his change and in a few moments he received his order. He walked carrying his tray to the back of the restaurant to an unoccupied table that was surrounded by empty tables. He knew the slow times of all the restaurants near the subway stations that he worked.

After sitting, he took a sip of his coffee and scanned the area. No one was paying attention to him. He smiled and removed the mark's wallet from his pocket and put it on the table in front of him.

Horace Wiggleman looked at his watch and found ten minutes had passed since he sat down.

Marc looked around once more at the other patrons and opened the wallet that he had laid on the table. He pulled out a stack of cards from the left pockets of the wallet. He started looking through the stack one item at a time. He put the credit cards in one pile and other papers such as business cards and lists into another pile. In the end he had four credit cards that he could pass on to his credit card scam contacts and he smiled to himself at the name on the cards.

Horace Wiggleman.

"What a dumb name." He muttered to himself.

In the pockets on the right side of the wallet, he pulled out another stack. There were two more credit cards, Wiggleman's driver license and more business cards. Marc looked at the stacks in front of him and shook his head in wonder at how much of

the mark's wallet held worthless things. It just made the wallet fatter and more tempting to a pickpocket.

He grabbed the credit cards and driver license and put them into the front pants pocket.

Then Marc smiled as he moved to the important part of the wallet, which was the cash pocket. He reached into the wallet and pulled the bills from the wallet. He always took the cash last, building up anticipation.

Horace Wiggleman looked again at his watch and found fifteen minutes had passed since he sat down.

Marc fanned the bills and saw that they were not in any denomination order. He saw ones, fives, tens and at least two hundred dollar bills during the fanning. He looked around again and then started sorting the bills. He put them on his lap under the table so no one could see him sorting out the cash.

The ones he put them on the extreme left leg. The fives went on the right next to the ones and then the tens. He mentally added them up in his mind. He put the first hundred down and as he grabbed the next hundred-dollar bill. He dropped the bill and he gave a squeal of pain and muttered a curse as he turned his right hand over and saw the blood from a cut across the palm of his right hand.

He dropped the bill down and closed his fist. He grabbed a napkin with his left hand and opened his right hand. He pressed the napkin against the cut and closed his hand around the napkin. He grimaced from the burning pain in his hand.

After a few seconds he used his left hand to turn over the hundred-dollar bill that had cut him. There was a half of a razor blade taped to the bill where it would be grabbed for anyone who was handling the bill.

A message was written on the back of the bill.

Horace Wiggleman looked again at his watch and found that it was twenty minutes since he sat down. He shook his head at losing his mental bet.

Marc read the message that Horace Wiggleman had written in his small but legible handwriting.

*Dear Thief, your hand has been cut and you are now bleeding. The blade has been coated with a fast acting poison. You should be feeling the burn. In two hours you will start feeling the symptoms and in six hours you will be dead. A hospital will not be able to diagnose you in time to save your life. Your only chance is to return to where you stole my wallet and within two hours. I have the cure. Horace Wiggleman.*

Marc stared at the message and it took him three readings to understand the

message that Horace had written on the back of the bill.

Marc shook his head and laughed in disbelief that Horace had done this to him. He opened his hand and pulled off the napkin. There was blood on the napkin but the bleeding had stopped. He grabbed a fresh napkin and closed his hand around the napkin.

He reached across his lap and put his left hand in his right-hand pants pocket and pulled out credit cards and the drivers license. He placed them on the top of the table.

Marc muttered, "Horace, you beat me. You worthless piece of —." He stopped talking to himself as an employee with a rag stopped at the table next to him to wipe it down. The girl looked over at his table, then checked him out. She then looked at the wallet and stacks that he placed on the table. She then turned around and hurried away back to the counter area.

Marc didn't like her looking at his table and he rapidly put Wiggleman's stuff back into the wallet's pockets and then he put the cash, regretfully, back into the wallet. He thought about taking some of it, but he needed the antidote more than he needed the money. He put the wallet into his front left pocket

He moved quickly toward the exit as he saw the employee who had been wiping down the tables talking with a manager. He was through the door as the manager turned toward him and watched him as he left the restaurant.

Marc quick-walked down the street toward the subway station that he had left earlier.

Horace had been waiting thirty-five minutes when Marc sat down heavily next to him on the bench.

"You lousy —"

Horace held up his hand to stop him. He said, "You've got nerve. Thief. Where's my wallet?" Horace then turned his hand palm up to receive his wallet.

Marc grimaced at Horace. He then slowly reached inside his pants pocket and removed the wallet and then slapped it down on Horace's open hand.

Horace smiled as he opened the wallet and looked into his wallet. He ruffled through the cash and then glanced over the stacks of papers and cards in the wallet's pockets.

"I assume that everything is here?"

"Yeah."

"Good."

"Where's the antidote?"

Horace smiled and reached into his shirt pocket and removed a small bottle.

Marc reached for the bottle and Horace pulled his hand back from Marc. He

asked, "Don't you want to know why I'm doing this?"

"You're a psycho."

Horace, offended, pulled back from Marc and said, "That's not true."

"Couldn't go by me. Just gimme the bottle. You got your wallet back."

"Yes. But the reason is that I'm looking for someone."

"How sweet. I'm not your type. Go to the personal ads if you want to find someone. Poisoning someone is not the most friendly way of meeting someone."

"No. You don't understand."

"Don't care."

"If you want the antidote, you'll care."

Marc sighed and waved a hand at Horace to continue.

Horace looked at Marc for a few seconds and then said, "Months ago I had my wallet taken from me in a subway station. I had some important documents in that wallet and the pickpocket that took that wallet messed up my life."

Marc shrugged.

"Those documents couldn't be reproduced and I lost a lot of money from that theft and I'm still trying to recover from it. I want that pickpocket. So I troll subway stations looking like an easy mark and wait for someone like you to take advantage. I know what my pickpocket looks like and I want him. You're just a fish to throw back into the water after being reeled in."

Marc shrugged again and rolled his eyes as he turned his head away from Horace.

Horace shook his head at Marc. He said, "Okay. You don't care. Here's the bottle. Drink it down."

He held out his hand toward Marc with the little bottle in his palm. Marc turned toward Horace and took the bottle out of his hand. He unloosened the top of the bottle and gave another look at Horace.

Horace nodded his head.

Marc put the bottle to his lips and flipped his head back and he drank the contents of the bottle. Marc took the empty bottle from his lips and then he stood up. He flipped the bottle into the nearest garbage can.

"Good bye psycho. What's to prevent me now from going to the police and reporting you?"

"You're a thief. You don't deal with the police. How will you explain it? And besides the bottle you drank will prevent you from producing evidence that the cut that the bill gave you was poisoned."

Marc turned his back to Horace and walked away shaking his head.

Horace smiled at the back of the departing pickpocket.

Horace sat on the bench and put his wallet into the back pocket of his pants that wasn't damaged by the latest pickpocket that he had snared.

Marc reached the top of the stairs from the subway station to the outside sidewalk. He slipped his hand into his pocket and removed a credit card that he had not returned to the wallet. He took a gamble that Horace Wiggleman would not look through his large stacks of cards to confirm that everything was returned. Marc was heading for the nearest Internet café to rack up a lot of charges on this card as his revenge before Horace realized that this card had not been returned. He slid the card back into his pocket.

After walking two blocks Marc collapsed.

Horace looked at his watch and noted that time had passed for the pickpocket now to be dead. Horace was a bitter man and he had made it his life's mission to rid the city of the men and women who stole from the unsuspecting. He lied when he told the latest victim that he knew the person who had stolen from him. He didn't, but if he kept poisoning enough people he figured that he would eventually get the person who had stolen from him. He laughed to himself how gullible the pickpockets were. The poison was actually in the bottle that they drank not on the razor blade. He coated the razor blade with a pepper solution to produce the burn. He needed the wallet back which was why he had the poison in the bottle that they drank. Also, it would do no good for Horace to actually reach in there by mistake and poison himself if he was out and forgot to carry around the antidote.

He got up from the bench and walked toward the subway platform as the latest train pulled into the station. He decided to move to the next station up the line.

He still had two more bottles in his pocket.

The two detectives were in the hospital looking over the body as he lay on the table. The first detective had arrived when the hospital called and the second had joined him after he reported in for his shift. The first detective turned over Marc's hand and pointed to the cut that had been made by the razor blade.

"Our third one in two weeks with that identical cut. Want to bet that he's a pickpocket by trade also?"

"No bet. We got ourselves a serial vigilante."

"Not for long. We got us a real good clue this time."

"What's that?"

"We found it in the front pocket of his pants. I have a name to investigate and probably some prints to work with."

The first detective held up baggie.

Inside the baggie was a credit card for Horace Wiggleton.

The End

©2010 by William F. Carver