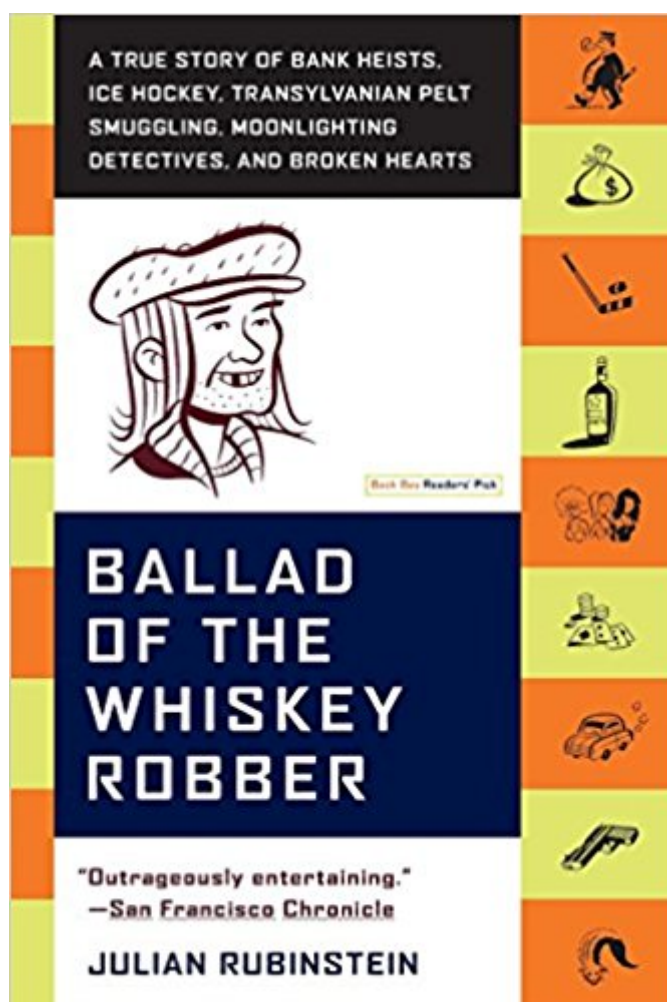


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Ballad Of The Whiskey Robber: A True Story Of Bank Heists, Ice Hockey, Transylvanian Pelt Smuggling, Moonlighting Detectives, And Broken Hearts





Synopsis

DESCRIPTION: Elmore Leonard meets Franz Kafka in the wild, improbably true story of the legendary outlaw of Budapest. Attila Ambrus was a gentleman thief, a sort of Cary Grant--if only Grant came from Transylvania, was a terrible professional hockey goalkeeper, and preferred women in leopard-skin hot pants. During the 1990s, while playing for the biggest hockey team in Budapest, Ambrus took up bank robbery to make ends meet. Arrayed against him was perhaps the most incompetent team of crime investigators the Eastern Bloc had ever seen: a robbery chief who had learned how to be a detective by watching dubbed Columbo episodes; a forensics man who wore top hat and tails on the job; and a driver so inept he was known only by a Hungarian word that translates to Mound of Ass-Head. BALLAD OF THE WHISKEY ROBBER is the completely bizarre and hysterical story of the crime spree that made a nobody into a somebody, and told a forlorn nation that sometimes the brightest stars come from the blackest holes. Like The Professor and the Madman and The Orchid Thief, Julian Rubinsteins bizarre crime story is so odd and so wicked that it is completely irresistible.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This story of a bank robber who captured a nation's sympathy in post-Communist Hungary is a rollicking tale told with glee and flair. Attila Ambrus sneaked over the border from Romania into Hungary in the waning days of Communist rule. After talking his way onto a Hungarian hockey team, he turned to robbery to make some cash in the Wild West atmosphere of the early 1990s in

Eastern Europe. As journalist Rubinstein shows, Ambrus was quite good at it. Taking advantage of poor police work, he took in millions in Hungarian currency and became a headline-grabber. He managed to stay at large for several years while continuing in his role as a back-up goalie on the ice. Rubinstein has a knack for telling a good story, and he captures well both Ambrus's appeal and the atmosphere of the first few years of capitalism in Hungary. Along the way, he introduces readers to memorable characters in addition to the appealing, alcoholic protagonist: the women Ambrus attracts and a Budapest detective driven out of office by the crime spree. While Rubinstein (whose work has been collected in Best American Crime Writing) overwrites at times, he has a rootin'-tootin' style that's a perfect fit for this Jesse James-like tale, which has the chance to be a sleeper that transcends nonfiction categories. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Hungarians loved Attila Ambrus; from Rubinstein's appealing biography, it's easy to see why. Rubinstein tells the story of this goalie-gone-bad with style and wit. He also maintains a historian's impartiality, however, supported by a wealth of meticulous research. One reviewer complained that Rubinstein glossed over the misery of life in 1990s Hungary, but this was his only criticism of an engaging and informative tale. Readers of *Ballad of the Whiskey Robber* may not fall in love with Attila Ambrus as the Hungarians did, but his story will surely entertain them. Copyright © 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I have read this book in 1 day. I grew up in the same area as Attila, was born about 50 KM from his home town of Csikszereda. One thing Julian Rubenstein did so perfectly, that in my humble opinion makes this book a must read for everyone, is he captured the essence of what it means to be Szekely. I am not sure if he meant to do that, but by describing Attila and the way he makes his way in the world is the same faith 650,000 other Szekelys see the world with as well. Its not something that can be described. Its something that has to be lived - yet Julian was able to describe it. I'm not a writer, as he is, so I won't attempt to, just go read the book. I am not saying what Attila did was right - but at least he always knew the difference between robbing a bank or hurting a person and he never crossed the line. Well... he was also really stupid for what he did because he lost 10+ years of his life in prison, but desperation will do a lot to a man - especially a Szekely who is born with enough pride to fill five other people. But regardless of the subject matter, absolute kudos to

Julian for his writing. I hope he writes another book, I would love to read it, he is a terrific storyteller. This is shown in his dedication to the research he did about the subject matter. Finally, someone has not only managed to write a book about Transylvania and specifically about the Szekelyfold that doesn't mention the vampire folklore, but actually he took the time to understand the region and portray us in a positive light instead of one we usually are portrayed in. Backwoods, homeless, useless peasants who don't know how to tie their shoes right. Finally, someone wrote a book in which the Szekelys are portrayed as human beings. That alone makes this, IMHO, a masterpiece. But I could be just a tad biased.

This story is a hilarious comedic romp and adventure. It is especially amazing because the "Whiskey Robber" was a real person and it is a true story! There are some sad aspects in the sense that the reader sees the intimate struggles of people with hardly any money, scarce resources, and a corrupt and inept government and police. But overall the tone of the story is light, humorous, and very entertaining. The whiskey robber himself is brilliant, almost admirable, but foolish at times, too, and the police are comically misled repeatedly. The picture on the cover with the long hair and the missing tooth must be one of the robber's disguises; in his photos he does not look remotely like that. In fact, in reality he is handsome and quite the ladies' man. This story would make an excellent movie - plenty of action, close calls, police chases, and love affairs.

The only negative was the names (being foreign to American ears) at times were hard to keep straight, but the story itself was so interesting you could not put it down. Did not know the story before starting the book it hooked me right away. The hockey angle is what interested me first but robberies and Attila's style and story was fascinating. You find yourself rooting for "the bad guys" after only a few pages. The background material and the cultural aspects of post Communists Budapest was fascinating too. I recommended it for the story, the culture of the time and of course the hockey. He may have been the worst goalie ever!! LOL

I would have never read this book had my book club not selected it but I loved, loved this true story...so well researched and written. very entertaining...a very male dominated story but all the ladies who read the book were quite endeared by the Whiskey Robber, his life story and exploits. Such an interesting character and story. I was particularly intrigued because it mainly takes place in Budapest and I was raised ethnically Hungarian. A bit of history woven in very well, Communism, post-Communism, the introduction of Capitalism. It's interesting how you begin to cheer Attila

Ambrus on. Julian Rubenstein is a masterful writer. Kozenem szepen (thank you very much).

This is an entertaining true story. For me the best aspect is the opportunity to learn about the culture (post Communist Hungary) in which the story takes place. It is like historical fiction in that you learn while being entertained. It also really raised some moral questions worth pondering. Such as, is theft that takes place in a corrupt culture a revolutionary act? It's not Les Miserables, by any means, but I think it's a worthwhile read. I should add that although it is a translation, the prose rises above the bland, soul-less tripe that comprises most current fiction.

I read this book in 2010 while living as an expat in Budapest. Another American put it in my hands and told me: You gotta read this book! Seriously funny, good, and TRUE stuff. Very well written by an American journalist. Gives you a good idea of the last days of communism and first days of democracy in the Eastern bloc, at least in Romania and Hungary. Communism, incidentally, was not practiced the same in all the Eastern bloc countries. Romania was far more oppressive than Hungary, which is why this poor guy--of Hungarian descent and stuck in Romania--hides under the carriage of a train to escape to Hungary. Once in Budapest he becomes a hockey player and then a bank robber. You're not supposed to sympathize with a thief, but in this case you can't help it. He eventually does get caught. I read that he's making pottery in prison now and will be released in 2016. Hollywood should make a movie about this book. Great story! Read it! (Oh, btw, I loved the book so much, I had to buy my own copy.) UPDATE: I just found out that the robber was released in January 2012.

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