



# Ballad of the Whiskey Robber: A True Story of Bank Heists, Ice Hockey, Transylvanian Pelt Smuggling, Moonlighting Detectives, and Broken Hearts

By Julian Rubinstein



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By Julian Rubinstein

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. His opponents: a police chief who learned how to be a detective via dubbed episodes of Columbo; a deputy so dense he was known only by his Hungarian nickname, Mound of Asshead; and a forensics expert-cum-ballet teacher who wore a top hat and tails on the job.

Part Pink Panther, part The Unbearable Lightness of Being, part Slap Shot, this uproariously funny, award-winning book tells the remarkable story of a crime spree that galvanized a forlorn nation and made a nobody into a somebody — a tale so outrageous that it could only be true.

--WINNER, Borders 2004 "Original Voices" Non-fiction Book of the Year.

--FINALIST, 2005 Edgar Award, Best Fact Crime.

--A New York Times "Editors' Choice"



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- Sales Rank: #457340 in Books
- Published on: 2004-09
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.50" h x 1.25" w x 6.38" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 336 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

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.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

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.

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From [Booklist](#)

It was in October 1988 that 21-year-old Transylvanian Attila Ambrus found himself on the streets of Budapest with nothing but a glint of cleverness, which quickly landed him a position as third-string goalie for Hungary's best hockey team. However, failing to supplement his nonpaying job with janitorial work, or sales of Parker pens and illegal pelts, Ambrus began a series of 29 armed robberies that lasted seven years and captured the imagination of ordinary Hungarians. The robberies were distinguished by their outrageous success, of course, but also by Ambrus' "fortification" of choice (hence the moniker Whiskey Robber). Rubenstein offers a well-detailed narrative of Ambrus' robbery spree and the efforts of earnest but underfinanced policeman Lajos Varju to catch him. Readers may agree with the author's implication that Ambrus' journey was quixotic, or they may look at these desperate acts and the sad conditions in Hungary that spawned them and say it was all just a crime. *Alan Moores*

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**Mary Gale:**

Have you spare time for the day? What do you do when you have far more or little spare time? Yes, you can choose the suitable activity with regard to spend your time. Any person spent all their spare time to take a go walking, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open or read a book allowed Ballad of the Whiskey Robber: A True Story of Bank Heists, Ice Hockey, Transylvanian Pelt Smuggling, Moonlighting Detectives, and Broken Hearts? Maybe it is to become best activity for you. You know beside you can spend your time with the favorite's book, you can better than before. Do you agree with it has the opinion or you have different opinion?

**Timothy Patrick:**

The book with title Ballad of the Whiskey Robber: A True Story of Bank Heists, Ice Hockey, Transylvanian Pelt Smuggling, Moonlighting Detectives, and Broken Hearts has a lot of information that you can understand it. You can get a lot of advantage after read this book. This specific book exist new expertise the information that exist in this guide represented the condition of the world now. That is important to yo7u to know how the improvement of the world. This specific book will bring you throughout new era of the globalization. You can read the e-book with your smart phone, so you can read that anywhere you want.

**Pauline Lipman:**

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**Gordon Woods:**

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