

## WEEKEND'S HOTLIST OF...

The world's most audacious heists



**Lisa, 1911** Vincenzo Peruggia, who worked in the Louvre in Paris, stole the world's most famous painting, but he was caught two years later when he tried to sell it to an Italian antiques dealer.

**2 Brink's, 1950** More than £1.6 million was stolen from the Boston HQ of the world's leading security company. Only half the cash was ever recovered from a gang of local petty criminals.



**3 The Great Train Robbery, 1963** It was thanks to a Bank Holiday in Scotland – and the subsequent accumulation of post – that the Royal Mail train the gang robbed contained £2.6 million in cash rather than the usual £300,000.

**4 British Bank of the Middle East, 1976** PLO terrorists blasted through a wall to steal gold worth £25 million from one of Lebanon's biggest banks. The money helped the PLO finance terrorism in the 1970s and 1980s.



**5 JFK Airport, 1978** Masked gunmen raided a cargo hangar at New York's John F. Kennedy airport, making off with £4 million in cash and jewels. The thieves were never brought to justice.

**6 The Stopwatch Gang, 1970s-80s** This Canadian trio got away with £8 million from more than 100 banks. Each heist was completed in under two minutes – as timed by the giant stopwatch worn by one of the thieves.



**7 Gardner Museum, 1990** Thieves disguised as police stole £180 million worth of art from a Boston museum. The theft occurred the morning after St Patrick's Day, which may be why the guards failed to check their IDs properly.

**8 Antwerp Diamond Centre, 2003** £85 million worth of gems and gold were stolen from Belgium's top-security diamond stronghold. No one has ever been arrested and the diamonds were never recovered.



**9 Central Bank of Iraq, 2003** On the eve of the Iraqi War, Saddam Hussein's son, Qusay, carried out the biggest bank robbery of all time. US troops eventually found two-thirds of the stolen £600 million in the walls of Hussein's palace.

**10 Central Bank of Brazil, 2005** Crooks spent three months digging a 200m tunnel into the bank, stealing £40 million – none of which was insured.  
*Olivia Fairfield*

## IT HAPPENED TO ME...

# A sixth sense told me I was about to die

**Claire Munoz, 36, was enjoying a meal out with her boyfriend and his mother when she suddenly began to feel strange. What happened next was extraordinary, terrifying and very nearly fatal. Here, Claire, an assistant producer for children's television, who lives with her dog, Nellie, in Glasgow, reveals what happened...**

**T**ucking into my lunch of tuna steak, salad and chips at a local restaurant, I hadn't realised how hungry I was until I saw that my former boyfriend, Dan, and his mother were still eating their meals by the time I'd finished. But before I'd even put my knife and fork down, I began to feel very strange. I was slightly hot and had a mild headache but, more than that, an odd sensation suddenly hit me that I was about to die. It sounds melodramatic, but I can only describe it as a tremendous and overwhelming sense of impending doom. I felt perfectly calm and had no other symptoms – no racing pulse, no nausea or dizziness – but the feeling that I was about to die was so strong that I turned to Dan and said, 'There's nothing wrong with me, but I think I'm going to die. I have to get to a hospital.'

Naturally, he and his mother thought I was overreacting. He looked perplexed to say the least, while his mother tried to appease me with some paracetamol, but I knew that the headache was the least of my worries. Dan said he'd take me home, but I had this overwhelming instinct to get medical help. I calmly gathered my things up and said, 'You finish your meal – I'm going to hospital.'

By now, Dan could see I was serious and so, having left his mum at the restaurant, we flagged down a taxi and drove to the nearest accident and emergency department. Dan said later that he could see my lips going slightly blue, but I had no idea and still felt completely at ease. There was no sense of panic, even though it felt as if I was fighting to stay alive.

At the hospital I felt pretty stupid when I said to the receptionist, 'I don't know what's wrong with me, but I think I'm going to die.' She called a doctor and I was taken into a side room. As I was being examined, I passed out. The last thing I remember is a sign saying 'Emergency in Progress' being turned on at the door.

More doctors started rushing around me. A drip was jabbed into my arm and an oxygen mask was put over my face. At one point I was wrapped in what looked like tin foil to keep me warm – I think I'd gone into shock. I was shaking uncontrollably and someone was asking me the name of my next of kin. I can remember lying there



**'I'd just finished my tuna when I began to feel very strange. I suddenly had an overwhelming sense of doom and an incredible urge to get to a hospital'**

thinking, 'Ah well, I'm going to die, but I'm pretty happy with what I've done with my life. This isn't so bad.' I was so calm about it.

At some point I blacked out completely. Apparently, I was in the emergency room for five hours while the doctors tried desperately to stabilise me. As they wheeled me out to intensive care, Dan, who had been waiting outside all the time, overheard one of the doctors saying, 'I didn't think she was going to make it'. It must have been terrifying for him.

Much later, when the consultant, Dr Kirkwood, visited me, I asked her what had happened. She said she suspected I'd had scorboid food poisoning, which is caused by a bacteria on some fish, and I'd experienced a huge anaphylactic shock – a sudden catastrophic allergic reaction involving the whole body. She said that if I'd

arrived ten minutes later at the hospital, I would have died.

The sense of impending doom I experienced is one of the rarer symptoms of this type of food poisoning. While doctors don't know what causes it, they think it might have something to do with your blood pressure dropping quickly, which triggers some kind of survival instinct in your brain. She said A&E departments always take it seriously, because often it's the calmest people who have something really wrong with them, rather than those who are screaming and crying.

I was in intensive care for three more days before I was allowed to go home and rest. The whole experience shook me up very badly. I used to eat anything and everything, but afterwards I became completely paranoid about the same thing happening to me again, and became a very picky eater.

I was terrified of tuna. It sounds ridiculous now, but I couldn't even bear to be in the same room as a tuna sandwich – I thought I'd inhale fumes or bacteria from it. Even today, I'm still very wary of any kind of fish, and foods such as strawberries and peanuts, which can cause allergies in people. I'm also terrified of bees and wasps. I've been stung many times in the past and so I know I'm not allergic to them, but I have this fear that, if I'm stung again, I'll go into anaphylactic shock.

I was given an EpiPen – an adrenaline-filled syringe that people with serious allergies can inject themselves with if they have an attack – and I became paranoid about having it with me all the time. I'd take it with me even when I crossed to the other side of a room. It was taking over my life.

I was then working as an environmental co-ordinator and would have to go to conferences and stay in hotels, but I refused to eat any meals I hadn't prepared myself. Obviously, this became impractical. I started having

panic attacks, sometimes up to two a day, which was very traumatic. So I changed jobs and broke up with Dan. I was only 25 and I think it was all part of me trying to re-evaluate my life.

Until the day of the attack, I'd always thought you could control phobias, but you can't. I'd eat something like a salad and, even though the rational part of my brain could see there was no tuna in the dish, I'd be shaking uncontrollably, feeling my pulse, terrified of getting that 'sense of impending doom' again. But I never did.

For months I suffered from panic attacks, so I was referred to a therapist, and it took me nearly four years to feel normal again. Now I'll eat salmon, herring and fish and chips, and I'm gradually introducing other foods back into my diet. But I'll never feel quite the same again. ■

*Jill Foster*

**THE ASHES** First played in **1882**, the Ashes is a Test cricket series between England and Australia • **100,000** cricket fans travelled to the Swalec cricket ground in Cardiff for this year's opening weekend • England have won **97** Tests against Australia, compared to the Aussies' **131** • **36** – the lowest ever Ashes score, achieved by Australia in **1902** • **186** – the record for most wickets taken in the Ashes, held by Aussie Shane Warne • **89.79** – Donald Bradman's Ashes batting average