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Masked “Superheroes” foil Police Dragnet ■ Vigilantes Blamed for Robbers’ Escape

By JOHN STEPHENSON
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Two masked vigilantes claiming to be “superheroes” yesterday thwarted a major police operation aimed at capturing a gang of serial bank robbers.

The Park View Dollar Store robbery in Park Boulevard left one of the vigilantes in a serious condition after he was shot by a senior police officer – and police and city officials outraged.

A senior official at police headquarters said months of intelligence and surveillance work had been ruined by the actions of the masked men, who call themselves the “Terrific Two”. The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, claimed yesterday afternoon’s events had created the most significant embarrassment in modern police history.

Officials at City Hall have launched an inquiry into the police handling of the robbery. Mayor Robert Wallace has called on Police Commissioner John Simpson to order a full-scale

Criminal Investigation Division inquiry into the identities and backgrounds of the two vigilantes, who are currently in custody.

Witnesses described farcical scenes at the Park View Dollar Store as the two masked men ran in front of a squad of heavily armed SWAT officers surrounding the store. Police sources say the squad was just moments away from leading an assault on the building.

One of the masked men, who was wearing a black tuxedo and a black mask, shouted at startled police and onlookers: “Fear not good citizens, I have a mask.” A witness claimed that the other masked vigilante, who was also wearing a cape, shouted at the robbers: “Let’s see how you hold up against the stare.”

Upon hearing the shouts, the robbers, armed with automatic and semi-automatic weapons, sprayed the store window with bullets, sending police and onlookers scrambling for cover behind cars, a dumpster and even a baby stroller. Believing the two masked men to be connected with the police operation,

the robbers quickly forced two of the store’s customers out of the building at gunpoint.

Instead of backing away from the robbers, who were constantly threatening to shoot their two female hostages, the two masked vigilantes blocked their path. As police screamed at the two men to get back, the tuxedo-clad man, aged in his early 30s, shouted at the robbers: “Hark, you must comply with the rules and balance of the universe and release these good citizens.”

As one of the robbers was clearly heard threatening to shoot the vigilante, Captain Craig Curtis, of City CID, was observed by scores of witnesses as he shot the self-proclaimed vigilante wearing the tuxedo. His partner, aged in his mid-20’s, looked on in disbelief as the robbers took advantage of the confusion created by the gunshot to escape in a nearby car.

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