

CHAPTER FIVE – BOMBS AWAY

Just moments after pulling into at Hollywood Mall, Tim, Harold, and Paul parked their multi-speed Schwinn bikes precisely two feet away from the dumpsters. At this specific locale they would be only five feet from the maintenance shop, which had a built-in ladder that led to the mall's roof. Parking anywhere else would waste time - thus could potentially be devastating.

After batting the kickstand of his bike in place with his right foot, Paul stood stiffly at attention as he gazed sternly toward his two fellow conspirators. “Now remember, men – the second your foot hits the roof, scramble toward the center of the building. Once there, quietly run south. We'll meet behind the Sears sign. Any questions?”

“Just one,” Harold said. “What if we need to use the bathroom while we're up there?”

Tim heaved a large sigh as he shook his head in disbelief. “You must be kidding!”

“I just thought I'd ask,” Harold said, defensively holding his arms in front of his chest.

“Listen. If either of you need to pee, you better do it now,” Paul said, interrupting the one-on-one taking place between his comrades. “You're definitely not going to get a chance to do it later.”

“But I can't do it right now,” Harold whined.

“Why not?” Tim asked, his eyes like glazed spears staring in Harold's direction.

“Because you'll be watching me.”

“I seriously doubt that,” Tim said, chuckling. “But if we did, would it matter anyway? Do you have something we don't?”

Harold looked down and began to stare at the texture of the asphalt surrounding his feet. “No.”

“Then go stand in that gap between the dumpsters and do your thing,” Paul instructed him. “And I promise we won't watch.”

While Harold headed toward the dumpsters, Tim and Paul quietly reviewed their plans one last time. Upon Harold's return, one-by-one, the three of them climbed up the ladder and made a dash across the mall's tar-and-stone-covered roof.

“We're safe for the moment,” Paul said, as he continually searched the parking lot for signs of any security personnel.

As they carefully removed the water balloons from the plastic bags and sat each of them gently on the warm flat roof, the boys continued to keep an eye on the main entrance that led into Sears. Minute-by-minute, time quietly continued to tick away.

“Hey, Paul,” Harold suddenly whispered.

“Yeah.”

“Isn't that our principal, Old Man McFarrelly, with his wife and kids getting out of that clunker over there?” Harold said, pointing to a blue Ford SUV.

Paul took a quick glance. “You're right. It is.” An evil grin appeared on his face.

“The way he paddled me at school last year,” Harold began. “I'd love to drop one of these beauties on top of him,”

“Let's do it,” Tim said, quickly reaching down to grab the balloon the closest to him.

Sliding to the edge of the roof like a pack of cats getting ready to pounce on a frightened mouse, the boys crouched down and patiently waited for the principal to reach the sidewalk below them.

The precise second the McFarrelly family strolled within range, “Bombs away!” Paul yelled, as they simultaneously released their WMDs, (Weapons of Massive Dampness).

“What the heck?” Principle McFarrelly bellowed as a bright red water balloon exploded across the front of his face, instantly dampening his pink Sanford shirt.

“Hey, you hooligans,” an unknown male voice almost immediately yelled out from somewhere beneath the store's entrance way. “Come down off that roof.”

“Make us!” Harold shouted back.

Before Paul could identify whose voice was yelling at them, Harold picked up a green balloon and threw it.

“Heaven forbid, Harold!” Paul yelled, as he stared at the thoroughly soaked burly mall security officer now standing directly below them. “What were you thinking? Didn't you realize who that was?”

“Sure did,” Harold said, proudly displaying a smug look across his face.

“Then why did you do it? Didn't you realize that would get us in big trouble?”

“I didn't like his attitude,” Harold offhandedly replied.

Watching the officer below, Paul noticed the guy had yanked the two-way radio off his belt and appeared to be calling for backup. “Let's get our behinds out of here – and fast!”

At once, the boys jumped to their feet and made a mad dash for the ladder. Heading across the roof and down the ladder was definitely not going to be a problem. However, the instant they hit the black asphalt below, the Mall's side doors burst wide open and three dark-haired, burly security guards rapidly began to streak toward them.

“Grab your bike and let's get out of here. And no matter what, don't even think about stopping until you reach you know where,” Paul yelled as he swung his leg over the red, two-wheeled racer that he had borrowed from Harold's brother.

Dirt and gravel haphazardly flew from behind Tim's rear tire as he burnt rubber speeding away from there. However, as Paul proceeded to follow, a familiar, metallic, clanking sound resounded from just a short distance away. “Oh. Oh. Where's Harold?”

Turning his head, he noticed the chain on Harold's bike had somehow popped off the main sprocket. And, unless he took immediate defensive action, the three security guards that were chasing them would soon be all over him.

“Get off your bike and run with it,” Paul yelled in Harold's direction as he slammed on his brakes and grabbed a large handful of gravel that was surrounding his feet. He then commenced to ride in wide circles around the security guards in a deliberate, and hopefully, intimidating manner.

“Hey, officers! Eat this!” Paul said, eventually tossing the handful of jagged stones with all of his might as they tried to grab him. He then slammed his bike in high gear and peeled out of the mall's parking lot as fast as his two legs could pump.

“Boy, that was close,” Harold exclaimed, between grasping breaths a few minutes later as he leaned his bike against the side of the main building in David's Park.

“You got that right,” Paul agreed, while hitting the brakes so that he could park his bike, as well.

“Don't get too relaxed, guys,” Tim interjected. “We're going to need to hurry up and flip Harold's bike over so we can get that chain back on. Those mall pansies might have called for reinforcements.”

From the way Tim's face had turned a deathly pale, Paul had the feeling that he wasn't the only one worried that the security guards might have called the police. If they did, then they truly did need to get away from there since the park they were in was only a couple blocks away from the mall.

“Grab the chain guard and pull it to the right – out of my way, Tim,” Paul said, shortly thereafter. “It will make it a lot easier to get the chain on.”

As Tim followed the instructions that had been given him, Paul carefully guided the chain over the main gear, then gave the pedals a quick turn. Instantly, Harold's bike was as good as new.

“You know, guys,” Harold proclaimed, as he watched Tim place his twelve-speed back onto its wheels. “This adventure was wee bit more scary than I prefer, and we almost got ourselves into big trouble. I don't think I want to throw water balloons off the top of the mall anymore.”

“This was too scary?” Paul said, echoing his friend as he hopped on the seat of his bike. “Why didn't you think about that before you hit the guard with the water balloon? If you hadn't done that, we might have had a chance to get off the roof before they located us.”

“I know,” Harold said, looking a bit contrite. “I just didn't think.”

At first, Tim remained quiet, as if in silent agreement. However, moments later....

“Actually Paul,” Tim said, interrupting his friends just before they started the five-mile journey back toward his house. “Harold is right about one thing. It's good to have fun. But next time, I think it would be a lot better if we do it in a way that's a lot safer.”

Shrugging his shoulders, Paul made a slow, wide turn to the right and began to head toward Polk Street.