

# Speed Kills!

by  
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All characters appearing in this work are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

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To Jesus, who heals the broken hearted.

For Jeannie, my loving, wonderful, caring wife and friend.  
Thanks for your patience and prayers.

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# POLICE RADIO CODES

- 10-1 Reception Poor
- 10-2 Reception Good
- 10-4 Acknowledgement
- 10-7 Out of Service
- 10-8 In Service
- 10-9 Repeat Message
- 10-10 Remain in Service
- 10-14 Escort
- 10-16 Prisoner
- 10-19 Return to Station
- 10-20 What Is Your Location
- 10-21 Phone Your Station
- 10-22 Disregard
- 10-23 Standby
- 10-28 Registration Check On
- 10-29 Check for Wanted
- 10-34 Clear or Are You Clear
- 10-87 Meet the Officer
- 10-88 Cover the Officer
- 10-97 Arrived at the Scene
- 10-98 Finished Last Assignment
- 11-6 Shooting in the City
- 11-7 Prowler
- 11-8 Person Down
- 11-10 Take a Report
- 11-11 Check the Area
- 11-13 Injured Animal
- 11-14 Dog Bite
- 11-15 Ball Game in Street

- 11-24 Abandoned Vehicle
- 11-25 Vehicle Traffic Hazard
- 11-27 Felony Record-No Warrants
- 11-28 Misdemeanor Record-No Warrants
- 11-29 No Record-No Warrants
- 11-30 Incomplete Call
- 11-31 Calling for Help
- 11-41 Ambulance Needed
- 11-42 No Ambulance Needed
- 11-44 Coroner's Case-Dead Body
- 11-45 Attempt Suicide
- 11-48 Furnish Transportation
- 11-50 Shake Down
- 11-51 Security Check
- 11-52 Check Welfare
- 11-60 Water Leak
- 11-66 Signals out of Order
- 11-80 Serious Injury Accident
- 11-81 Minor Injury Accident
- 11-82 Non Injury Accident
- 11-83 No Detail Accident
- 11-84 Direct Traffic
- 11-85 Tow Car Needed
- 11-88 Stalled Motorist
- 11-99 Officer Needs Help

- E. T. A. Estimated Time of Arrival
- G. O. A. Gone on Arrival
- Code 2 Urgent, Lights but No Siren
- Code 3 Urgent, Lights and Siren

|           |                              |
|-----------|------------------------------|
| Code 4    | No Further Assistance Needed |
| Code 5    | Stake Out                    |
| Code 6    | Stay out of Area             |
| Code 7    | Lunch                        |
| Code 8    | Restroom Break               |
| Code Blue | Cab in Trouble               |

# CHAPTER 1

## Speed Kills

The tires squealed as the car veered around the corner at 65 miles per hour. The five-liter engine roared as Tom downshifted out of the corner. He shifted into high gear and raced down the country road at 70 miles per hour.

“Whewww!” screamed Bob, who was sitting in the back seat. “You are really jammin’ now!”

“Punch it, Tom!” yelled Bill, who was in the front passenger seat. “See what this thing can really do.”

Tom answered, “All right, boys, hold on!”

He slammed the gas pedal down hard and the sleek black car jumped as it accelerated to 100 miles per hour. The front tires vibrated on the cracked asphalt as the car sped down the roadway.

He had never gone this fast before.

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Suddenly, he noticed a car in his rearview mirror. He saw the red lights of the police car and felt his heart jump to his throat. The blood drained from his face and his knees started to shake.

“Cops,” he said.

Tom thought about speeding up to try to evade them. One mile ahead was a dirt road that led to an abandoned chicken farm that he could turn into to hide. He knew that road like the back of his hand and he knew that the police car wouldn’t be able to follow.

But he also knew that it would not be the right thing to do.

Tom slowed and eased the car to the right shoulder. The police car followed and the bright light of the spotlight filled the car. The police officer got out of the car and walked to the driver’s door. Tom and his friends sat motionless.

“Can I see your driver’s license and vehicle registration please,” the officer said in a monotone voice.

Tom could feel the sweat rolling down his back as he dug his license out of his wallet and handed it to the officer with trembling fingers. The officer looked at it carefully.

“Thomas J. Proctor?” he asked.

“Yes. That’s me,” Tom responded.

“The license shows you to be sixteen years old. You just got your license last month. Is that correct?”

“That’s correct, sir,” Tom responded.

“Well, Tom, I clocked you going almost a hundred miles per hour. Is that correct?”

Tom was a Christian and he did not want to lie.

“Yes, sir,” he answered sheepishly.

“Most people lie about their speed,” the officer continued. “Do you have any excuse for driving so fast?”

“No, sir,” Tom humbly answered. “I guess I was just messing around. I shouldn’t have been going so fast.”

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“Do you know that you could have caused a serious accident?”

“Yes sir. I know.”

“Have you ever been in an accident?”

“No sir.”

“Have you ever gotten a ticket?”

“No sir.”

“Do you think that you deserve a ticket now?”

Tom felt a lump in his throat and he swallowed hard. If he got a ticket his dad would kill him.

“Well,” he stammered. “I don’t want one. But I probably deserve it.”

The police officer looked at him hard.

“But I promise,” Tom added in his defense, “I will never do it again! I’ll slow down. I promise!”

“Do you really believe that if I let you go with warning you will never speed again?”

Tom thought about the question for a moment. “I probably will do it again,” he said in a low voice. “Go ahead and give me the ticket.”

The officer studied Tom’s face carefully.

“Because you were honest with me, I’m going to give you a break,” the officer said. “There is one condition though.”

Tom was relieved because he was not going to get a ticket, but he was worried about the conditions involved.

“I’ll do anything,” he heard himself say.

“Next Friday night, I want you to go on a ride-a-long with me in my police car. Perhaps if you see an accident up close, you might realize how dangerous speeding really is.”

Tom was overjoyed. He thought that he was going to have to clean up the freeway or do community service work.

“Gee, thanks, Officer,” he responded. “How do I get there and what do I have to do?”

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“Here is my business card.”

Tom read the card: “Patrol Officer Robert Spencer, ID #361, Oak Hills Police Department.”

Officer Spencer handed him a paper to fill out.

“This is a permission slip for your parents to sign. Bring it with you on Friday night and come to the front desk of the police station at 5:00 PM sharp. I will meet you there.”

Tom took the paper and looked up at Officer Spencer.

“I’m sorry about driving so fast. But thanks for giving me a break. I promise, and I mean it this time, that I will slow down.”

“I hope so, son. I would hate to have to scoop you and your friends off the pavement with a shovel.” He handed the license back to Tom. “Drive safely now,” Officer Spencer said as he turned to walk back to his car.

Tom looked in his rearview mirror at the police car with the flashing red lights still shining at him. The husky officer slowly walked back to the car and got in through the driver’s door. He was about 35 years old. His blue uniform was neat and well pressed and he had close-cut blond hair that was carefully combed to one side. He moved with confidence without any wasted motion. Tom could see that he knew how to do his job.

The police car turned out to the street and Tom watched it drive away.

“That was a close one,” Bill said. “Your dad would have hammered you if you got a ticket.”

“Yeah,” added Bob. “You skated this time. I guess being honest sometimes pays out.”

“Yeah, I guess so,” Tom said quietly. He felt ashamed because he had been driving so recklessly. And he was worried because he still had to go home to tell his parents. Officer Spencer had forced him into telling them by giving him that

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permission slip to sign. Tom felt like he didn't get away with it after all.

He carefully drove home, obeying all the traffic laws, and dropped his friends off at their homes. Then he had to go home to tell his parents.

## CHAPTER 2

### Confession

“Dad, there is something that I have to tell you,” Tom shyly said as he walked into the living room. His mom was there too, sitting in front of the piano.

“What is it, Tom?” his dad asked as he looked up from the magazine he was reading.

Tom stared at the floor crinkling the permission slip up in his hands. “I have good news, and bad news,” he began.

This piqued his parents’ attention and now both of them were looking at him waiting for the news.

Tom held out the permission slip.

“A police officer asked me to go on a ride-a-long in a police car this Friday,” he said with a weak smile. “Can I go?”

His dad took the paper and examined it carefully.

“Are you going to tell us how you happened to meet this

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Officer Spencer?” his dad asked. “Or is that the bad news that you are waiting to tell us about?”

“Well, it’s not really bad news. I didn’t get a ticket or anything like that. I just got a warning.”

“ Oh,” his dad said sarcastically. “‘Just a warning’. Tell us, son, what did you get a warning for?”

Tom took a deep breath. “For speeding,” he quietly said.

“For speeding!” his mother yelled. “In MY new car that I let you use? I told you that if you ever get a ticket you won’t drive again the rest of your life!”

“I know that is what you said, but I didn’t get a ticket. I just got a warning. And Officer Spencer is really cool. He said because I was honest about what I did, I would only get a warning, but I would have to go on a ride-a-long with him on Friday.”

“How fast were you going when you got this ‘warning,’” his dad asked in a stern voice.

Tom didn’t want to tell the truth, but he knew that he could not get away with lying.

“About a hunnnnmmml,” he mumbled.

“What? I couldn’t hear you. You were mumbling. Did you say a hundred?”

“Umm. Ahh. Yeah?” Tom answered.

“A hundred miles an hour!” his mom screamed. “You could have killed yourself and both of your friends! Do you know what happens if you hit something at a hundred miles an hour? You’re grounded, Thomas, for a long, long time.”

“We trusted you, Tom,” his dad said as he looked him in the eye. “And you broke that trust.”

“I know, Dad. And I’m sorry. Officer Spencer said that if I go on this ride-a-long I might see a real bad accident that might make me drive slower. Can I go?”

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His parents looked at each other and his dad spoke first.

“I suppose that if the officer said that you have to go, then you have to go. But that is the only place you will go for a five weeks. Tell your friends not to call or visit until we are ready to trust you again. Consider yourself grounded.”

“Yes sir,” Tom said. He had not said “sir” to anyone for a long time. Today he said it at least a dozen times. Maybe he was already starting to learn good habits.

## CHAPTER 3

### Oak Hills Police Department

Friday finally arrived and Tom was getting excited about the ride-a-long. He dressed up in a blue striped button down short sleeve shirt and a clean pair of dark blue slacks. He polished his black dress shoes so that he would make a good impression when he met Officer Spencer at the police station.

He carefully combed his curly dark hair to one side and stood up straight in front of the mirror with his shoulders pulled back. He wasn't the biggest guy at his school, but he didn't consider himself a wimp either. He had a green belt in karate, so he felt that he could take care of himself.

It was June but the night air was still cool, so he took a light weight maroon jacket with him just in case it got cold. He brushed his teeth, combed his hair, trimmed his nails and then put a note pad and pencil in his pocket so he could take notes

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about what happened. He was excited and he had a feeling that something important was going to happen that night.

His dad dropped him off in front of the police station at 4:50 PM. Tom took out his notebook and logged the time that he arrived.

The police station was a white stucco building with a well-trimmed lawn in front that was dotted with tall green pine trees. A large sign was posted in front of the building that read: "OAK HILLS POLICE DEPARTMENT."

Tom walked past the sign to the glass front door and walked inside to the counter. A uniformed female officer was standing behind the counter. Over the counter hung a sign with bold red letters that read: "AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY BEYOND THIS POINT."

Tom approached the counter.

"Yes, may I help you?" the officer asked.

Tom shoved the permission slip on the counter. "I am supposed to go on a ride-a-long with Officer Spencer. Is he here?"

Tom was nervous and almost hoped that Officer Spencer had forgotten about the appointment.

The officer behind the counter looked at the permission slip and studied Tom carefully. He felt that she could see right through him and could read his thoughts.

"Just wait here for a minute, Mr. Proctor," she said with a smile. "I will call Officer Spencer. He should be here in a minute.

"Officer Spencer, come to the front counter. Your citizen rider is here," the officer said over the intercom.

Tom saw Officer Spencer hurrying down the hall to the front counter.

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“I am glad your are early,” he said hastily. “We have an urgent call to go to. There is a crazy man with a knife at a liquor store on Broadway. Let’s go!”

Tom didn’t have time to respond as Officer Spencer turned and hurried back down the hallway. Tom followed, walking as fast as he could to keep up. He wanted to look around at the police station but he didn’t have time.

Officer Spencer left the station through the rear doors that lead to the parking lot for the police cars. The black and white cars were lined up like chariots waiting to go to battle. Each car had a rack of blue and red lights in the roof and a large gold badge painted on the side doors. An ominous looking shotgun protruded above the dash of each car, symbolizing power and authority.

“Our car is over here,” Officer Spencer said as he walked toward a police car with the number 32 written on the top. Tom liked the way he said “our car.” It made him feel as if he was part of the police department.

“When we have more time I will tell you about the equipment I have. But now, we gotta get going. Get in and fasten your seatbelt.”

Tom obeyed and got in through the passenger door. He slid across the seat and his left leg bumped the shotgun that was mounted on the floor with the barrel sticking straight up.

“Is it loaded?” he asked.

“Of course it is,” Officer Spencer said without hesitation. “The safety is on, but don’t touch the trigger anyway.”

Tom had no intention of touching the trigger.

The police radio was mounted on the ceiling next to the switchboard for the overhead lights. There were so many switches and buttons it looked like the controls for an airplane. The radio was carrying the voices of several officers who were

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talking to each other. Most of it was in police code, so Tom had trouble understanding what they were saying.

Officer Spencer reached for the radio microphone hanging on the dash and put it to his mouth as he spoke.

“3-32 to Station C. We will be en-route from 10-19 to the liquor store.”

He hung the microphone back on the metal clip on the dash.

“Station C copies,” the lady at the dispatch center answered.

Officer Spencer started the car and sped out of the parking lot. When he reached the street, he turned on the red lights and siren and accelerated down the roadway. The siren wailed as he skidded around the corner to Broadway.

Tom immediately felt the adrenaline rush through his body and felt the excitement of police work. He held tightly to the armrest with his right hand and grabbed the dash with the other.

The police car was speeding down the street as cars pulled over to the side to let them pass.

Officer Spencer was weaving through traffic, being careful not to cause an accident. Tom looked at him and saw the tightness of his jaw as he concentrated on the road. His dark sunglasses shaded his eyes, protecting them from the glare of the afternoon sun.

He deftly turned the steering wheel as he drove with the precision of a race car driver. Tom could see that Officer Spencer had many hours of specialized training that enabled him to drive so well. They accelerated to 60 miles per hour and were in an open stretch of roadway when Officer Spencer spoke to Tom.

“We received a call of a crazy man with a butcher knife who is threatening people at the Glass Bottle Liquor store on Broadway,” he said. “We are the primary unit, so it will be our call. I want you to stay in the car when we arrive.”

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A car pulled out of a blind alley in front of them so that Officer Spencer had to swerve to avoid a collision. The tires squealed as they swerved and Tom had to hold on with all his strength. Officer Spencer was cool and in control as he maneuvered around the car.

He then calmly continued speaking as if nothing had happened.

“If the man with the knife is out of his mind and threatens to hurt anyone, I might have to take him out. If anything goes bad, you stay in the car and pick up this radio mike and say, ‘11-99, Officer Spencer down’. Do you understand?”

Tom nodded and felt the air of danger in the situation.

“Other officers will be coming soon but we will be the first to arrive. They are from across town so it will take about ten minutes for them to get there.”

“I understand,” Tom said. He felt the need to say something and he had a thousand questions but he did not want to disturb Officer Spencer while he was driving.

## CHAPTER 4

### Crazy Charlie

Within minutes they were at the Glass Bottle Liquor store. Officer Spencer cut the lights and siren and slowly drove toward the parking lot looking for the man. Tom saw someone standing behind a phone booth by the sidewalk.

“There he is!” Tom shouted.

The man looked like he was about 60 years old, with gray shaggy hair and a gray stubbly beard. He was wearing a dirty brown overcoat which hung down to his knees. His dark pants were soiled with dirt and he had on old brown shoes with holes in the toes.

“That looks like Crazy Charlie,” Officer Spencer said.

Officer Spencer pulled the police car into the lot and parked on the opposite side. Crazy Charlie turned to look at him. In his right hand he held a 12-inch butcher knife and in his left hand he held a bottle of wine.

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He waved the knife in the air and started yelling profanities, cursing God and mankind alike.

“Stay here,” Officer Spencer ordered Tom as he stepped out of the car. Tom wasn’t about to go anywhere. He wanted to stay as far away from Crazy Charlie as he possibly could.

Officer Spencer cautiously walked toward the man, analyzing the situation. He had not drawn his gun but he held his right hand on the gun handle while he calmly gestured to Crazy Charlie with the other hand that he wanted him to come over to talk to him. Crazy Charlie stood there, leaning to one side and waved the bottle at Officer Spencer in a threatening manner.

“Get away from me, you pig,” he yelled. “I didn’t call you.”

“Charlie,” Officer Spencer began in a friendly but firm voice. “I need to talk to you for a minute. Come over here.”

“I don’t gotta talk ta’ you. I got my rights,” Charlie slurred.

“Charlie, I just want to talk. Put the knife down and talk to me. Someone called to say that you were threatening them. What happened?”

Spencer was now about 20 feet away. At this distance a sober man with a knife could have charged Spencer and stabbed him before he would be able to get a shot off. But Spencer saw how drunk Charlie was and wanted to talk him out of the situation rather than shoot him. Crazy Charlie was a chronic town drunk and Spencer had dealt with him dozens of times.

“Come on, Charlie. Put the knife down so I can talk to you.”

“I don’t have ta’ talk ta’ you. I got rights ya’ know.”

“Of course you have rights. Tell me what the problem is. Maybe I can help.”

“Problem? You can’t help me wi’ my problems.”

“Give me a try. Maybe I can do something.”

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Charlie raised the knife and waved it at Spencer.

"I'll tell you my problems. That no good foreigner who owns this liquor store won't sell me no wine. That's the problem. Now what are you gonna' do about that?"

"Put the knife down and I will talk to him about it."

"No!" Charlie said as he approached Spencer. Tom saw Officer Spencer grip his gun and unsnap the holster. Tension filled the air.

"Don't come any closer," Spencer warned. "I've known you for a long time, Charlie. Haven't I always been straight with you?"

"Yeah. You been fair ta' me. But that no good liquor store guy, he don't treat me right."

"I'll talk to him about it, Charlie. Now just put down the knife and we can talk about it."

Charlie stopped advancing and looked at the knife. He then looked toward Spencer and swayed back and forth as if he were going to fall over. His wrinkled face look confused and tormented by the effects of the alcohol.

"Come on, Charlie," Spencer said. "Just put the knife and the bottle down and come over to talk to me. We'll work things out together."

"You promise?"

"I promise."

"You gonna arrest me?"

"If you keep that knife in your hand much longer I might have to shoot you. I don't want that and you don't want that. Put it down and we can talk. Maybe I'll just take you to detox."

"You always been fair ta' me," Charlie said as he dropped the knife. He took a long drink from the bottle and put it down. He then began to cry, mumbling to himself.

Spencer bounded over to Charlie, taking out his handcuffs

as he ran. He took Charlie's right hand and pulled it behind his back.

"I don't want ta' be arrested," Charlie said crying. "I didn't do nothin'"

"Yeah, I know, Charlie. I have to handcuff you for my own protection. When the other units get here, I'll talk to the store owner and try to find out what happened."

"I didn't hurt no one. I'm not a criminal. I'm just the town drunk. That's all. Just an old drunk."

Spencer quickly handcuffed him while he was still confused and disoriented. He knew that drunks often have wide mood swings and are more dangerous than most drug addicts. He kept his cool but he did not believe in taking any unnecessary chances.

When Charlie was handcuffed, Spencer patted him down to look for weapons. He had a pack of cigarettes in one pocket and three dollars in the other pocket, but nothing else. Spencer then walked him over to the car where Tom was sitting. As they approached, Tom could see how filthy the man was. His pants were wet around the crotch area where he had urinated on himself. Two police cars had arrived and were pulling into the parking lot.

"I want you to sit in the back of my patrol car while I talk to the store owner," Spencer told Charlie as he opened the back door.

"I don't want no trouble," Charlie mumbled with slurred speech. "Jus' take me home. I don't want no trouble."

When Charlie stepped into the car Tom got a whiff of the most foul stench that he could imagine. A sharp, pungent odor filled his nostrils and he wrinkled his face in disgust. Charlie smelled like stale booze and filthy clothing. He hadn't taken a bath in months and his hands were black with dirt. His teeth

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were green and his hair matted down in places with mud and sticks.

Tom felt like he was going to throw up. He leaned out of the window and took in two big gulps of fresh air.

“Pretty disgusting, isn’t it?” Spencer said with a grin.

“How can you stand it?” Tom asked.

“Well, it’s a dirty job, but somebody has to do it. How do you like police work so far?”

“It’s not boring, that’s for sure,” Tom answered, gasping for air as he spoke.

“You can get out of the car and come with me if you want. Officer Hamilton will watch Charlie for a while. I have to talk to the store owner to find out what really happened here.”

Officer Hamilton got out of his police car and walked toward Officer Spencer.

“Hamilton, will you watch Charlie for me while I go inside to find out what happened?”

“Be glad to,” Officer Hamilton answered. “Is Crazy Charlie drunk again?”

“Yeah, as usual. He had some sort of a problem with Nassar, the clerk in the liquor store. I’m going to interview him to find out what really happened.”

Officer Hamilton looked in the back seat. “It looks like Charlie is already asleep,” he said. “I’ll stand by until you get back.”

Tom was glad to get out of the car. He closed the door behind him and heard Charlie wake, cursing and swearing at everything in the world.

## CHAPTER 5

### The Investigation

Officer Spencer walked ahead of Tom as they went to the store. Tom looked at the polished black gun-belt and wondered what all the leather pouches were used for. He hoped that later Officer Spencer would explain his equipment to him.

They went into the store and saw the nervous store clerk standing behind the counter.

“Did you get him? Did you get that crazy man? That man is a maniac,” the clerk said in broken English.

“Yes, sir, he is being detained,” Officer Spencer answered. “But I am not sure what he did yet so I need to talk to you for a few minutes.”

“That crazy man. He wanted to kill me. He is the robber who has been robbing all the stores around here.”

“Why do you think that he is a robber?”

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“My cousin tell me about it. He say that a crazy man rob all the liquor stores in town. I think that be the man, huh? Maybe I get a reward?”

“Before we talk about a reward, I think that you should tell me what happened.”

“I am in the back room putting bottles on the shelf. That man come to the counter. I see him from the back and I think he be the robber. My cousin, he tell me, you know.”

“Yeah I know,” Officer Spencer answered. “Tell me what he did next.”

“Well, he don’t do nothing. I no give him the chance. I take the stool, and I hit him on the head.”

“Did he have a knife in his hand? Did you see any weapons?”

“No. He no have knife. But I have knife. It be a big butcher knife I use to cut boxes.”

“Did the man do anything threatening? Did he say anything about robbing the store?”

“No. He no say nothing. I no give him chance. I think he be the robber. My cousin told me, you know.”

“Yeah. I know your cousin told you about the robbery series that has been going on. But you have to tell me why you thought that this man was the robber. Did he threaten you? Did he have any weapons? Did he give you a demand note?”

“No. He don’t do nothing. I no give him the chance.”

Officer Spencer put down his note pad and carefully studied the clerk.

“You mean to tell me that you hit that man with a stool because you thought that he was a serial robber, but you did not see a weapon, he did not threaten you, and he said nothing about taking your money?”

“That’s right. I hit him because he be the robber.”

Officer Spencer sighed and looked up at the ceiling.

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“And the knife that he had? That was your knife?”

“Yes, that my knife.”

“How did he get the knife?”

“When I hit him with stool, knife fell out of my belt holder. The man fall on top of knife. When he get up, he take the knife and run outside. Then I call police. I think he want to kill me.”

Spencer rubbed the back of his neck and tried to remain professional.

“Well, sir, I am afraid that I have some bad news for you. That man that you hit with the stool is not a robber. He is a local drunk that came in here to buy a bottle of wine. You hit him without good cause, which makes you guilty of assault. Charlie is so drunk right now that he doesn't remember what happened, so I don't think that he will place you under citizen's arrest.”

“What you mean arrest?” the clerk interrupted. “He be a robber. He can't arrest me.”

“No, he is not a robber and yes he can arrest you,” Spencer said with assertion. “But I don't think he wants to do that right now. But tomorrow he might remember what happened and change his mind. If he does that, you had better get a good lawyer because he will probably sue you for everything you have. You can't go around hitting people over the head just because you think that they might be a robber.”

“What you mean? You no take him to jail?”

“No, I'm not going to take him to jail, but I will take him to the alcohol detox center so that he can sober up. I need your name and address so I can make a report.”

Officer Spencer took out his note pad and made a few quick notes. When he was finished, Tom and Officer Spencer left the store.

## CHAPTER 6

### Alcohol Detox Center

“What are you going to do with Charlie?” Tom asked as they walked back to the car.

“We are going to take him downtown to the alcohol detox center. He will have to stay there for at least four hours, or until he sobers up. The counselors who work there will feed him dinner and encourage him to join Alcoholics Anonymous.

“You mean that he will have to sit in the car with us all the way downtown?” Tom asked, wrinkling his nose.

“All the way downtown,” Officer Spencer said laughing. “We’ll open all the windows and I’ll turn the fresh air vent on in the car. That should help a little.”

They approached the car and Charlie was asleep in the back. Officer Hamilton was leaning on the car writing a report. He looked up as they arrived.

*SPEED KILLS!*

“Old Charlie is fast asleep,” Hamilton said. “What did he do anyway?”

“He didn’t do much of anything besides get drunk and act stupid,” Officer Spencer answered.

“Did he have that knife with him when you got here?”

“Yeah, but I’m not going to arrest him for it. He dropped it after I convinced him that it was the best thing to do. As a matter of fact, he’s the victim in this case. That store clerk thought that he was the serial robber and hit him over the head with a chair.”

“You’re kidding?”

“No, I’m not kidding. Everyone around here is so paranoid about the robberies that are going on that they suspect everyone. Charlie is a victim of vigilante justice.”

“I’ll give a wanted bulletin to the clerk so he won’t make the same mistake again,” Hamilton said as he dug through his clipboard for the bulletin.

“Here it is,” he said pulling it out.

The bulletin showed a black and white hazy picture of a man in a dark coat standing in front of a sales counter in a liquor store. He was wearing a black knit cap and black gloves. He was holding a stainless steel revolver in his right hand pointing it directly at the clerk.

It read: “WANTED- ROBBERY SUSPECT- Described as a male with a dark complexion, 30 years old, six feet tall, dark neck-length shaggy hair, muscular build with a dagger tattoo on the right side of his neck. ARMED AND DANGEROUS.”

“He has been responsible for eight robberies this month,” Officer Hamilton said. “He always hits on Friday night between ten and midnight. Maybe tonight will be the night we get him, Spencer.”

“I think we have a good chance at it. During the last robbery

he shot the clerk in the arm and fired two shots into the ceiling. He sounds like a real bad criminal.”

“Well, if you run into him, be careful,” Officer Hamilton advised. “And don’t be afraid to call for back-up. We’re beat partners and I’m here to help.”

“Same here,” Officer Spencer said. “I don’t plan to die a hero. I’ll call if I need help. You do the same.”

Charlie stirred in the back seat and started moaning. “Where am I?” he asked.

“You’re on the bus, Charlie,” Officer Spencer told him. “You’re going downtown to detox. Go back to sleep and I will wake you when we get there.”

“Okay.” Charlie snorted as he fell back to sleep.

“Hey, Hamilton, it’s nice talking to you but we gotta go. I want to get Charlie out of my car before he stinks it up for good.”

“Catch you later,” Hamilton said as he left toward the store to give Nassar the wanted bulletin

Tom and Officer Spencer got into the car and rolled down all the windows. It helped some, but the car still reeked of cheap wine and stinky Charlie.

“Do you think that we will find that robber?” Tom asked.

“Could be,” Spencer answered as he started the car. “He has been hitting this area pretty hard lately. It has been two weeks since the last one so he is due for another. If you see anything suspicious, you call it out, okay?”

“Sure. I’ll be glad to,” Tom said proudly.

Officer Spencer got on the freeway and drove 70 miles per hour all the way to detox. It was the only way to get the smell out of the car. He pulled into the front parking lot of the detox center and Tom bailed out of the car into the fresh air. The sun had just set and the air was getting cool.

*SPEED KILLS!*

“Wake up, Charlie,” Officer Spencer yelled as he opened the back door.

Charlie stirred and opened his eyes partway.

“Come on, Charlie, let’s go. Time to get up.”

Charlie woke up a little more and tried to get out of the car. He caught his left foot under the seat, but he was so drunk, he couldn’t figure out how to get it free. Spencer helped him get his foot free and then helped Charlie out of the car. When he stood up, his knees buckled so that he had to be half carried into the detox building. Tom had never seen anyone that drunk before.

They went inside and Spencer signed the register to admit Charlie to the detox center. Charlie stumbled to one of the cots lined up along the wall and passed out on the mattress.

“How can anyone get that drunk?” Tom asked. “Does he enjoy it?”

“Charlie is an alcoholic. His body craves alcohol and he thinks that he can’t get along without it. It is killing him and he doesn’t know it. How old do you think that he is?”

Tom looked at Charlie’s wrinkled face and gray beard.

“At least sixty years old, I would guess.”

“You’re wrong,” Spencer answered. “Charlie is forty-three years old. He has been drinking since he was twelve and it has taken a toll on him. He’ll probably be dead in a couple of years. People like him don’t eat right and don’t care for themselves properly. There is more human suffering, violence and disease from alcohol abuse than from all of the street drugs combined.”

“Boy, after seeing him, I don’t ever want to drink,” Tom responded.

“I hope so, son. If it gets a hold on you, you could end up just like him.”

The portable radio squawked and Tom heard the dispatcher say, “3-32. 3-32, respond to Fourth and E Street on a report of

## *SPEED KILLS!*

a three-car collision with injuries. Medics and the fire department will be en-route.”

Spencer took the portable radio from his duty belt. “Thirty-two copy. I’ll be from detox,” he said. He turned to Tom. “Let’s get rolling. That is a busy intersection. It could be a serious accident.”

Officer Spencer bolted toward the door with Tom following behind him. They rushed to the car and jumped in. Officer Spencer started the car and sped off toward the freeway with the siren wailing and the red lights flashing. Tom again felt the adrenaline rush through his veins at the excitement.

## CHAPTER 7

### The Deadly Accident

Five minutes later they were near the scene of the accident. Officer Spencer drove down Fourth avenue toward E Street and Tom saw the wrecked cars in the intersection ahead of them.

It was a three-car pile up. A white Nissan Sentra was in the middle of the intersection with the left side crushed in. Next to it was a dark blue pick-up with the front end smashed in. The pick-up had apparently ran through the red light and hit the Nissan. A green van had tried to avoid the collision and went out of control and crashed into the light pole across the street. The van was hung-up on the curb with one rear wheel still spinning.

Two people were lying in the street next to the pick-up. They were in the back of the truck when it hit the car and they were thrown out to the street during the accident. Tom

## *SPEED KILLS!*

couldn't see who was in the cars, but knew that there had to be serious injuries.

"Unit 3-32 to Station C, we are 10-97 on the scene," Officer Spencer said into the microphone as he parked the car.

"Station C copies," the radio crackled. "Be advised that medics will be delayed. They were involved in an accident on the way to the scene. A second unit has been dispatched but they are from a distance."

"3-32 copies," he answered.

"Oh great," Officer Spencer said with stress in his voice. "Well, Tom, it's up to us for now. You are going to have to help me take care of these people."

Officer Spencer quickly unsnapped his seatbelt and reached toward the dash to hit the switch that unlocked the trunk. The trunk popped open.

"Tom, I want you to go to the trunk and get the medical kit. It is a white steel case with 'First Aid' stamped on the cover. Bring it to the wrecked cars and we will see what we can do to help the injured."

Without another word Officer Spencer slid out of the car and ran to the white Nissan Sentra. Tom quickly unsnapped his seatbelt and got out of the car. He was surprised but happy that he was asked to help. He walked to the open trunk to get the first aid kit. The trunk was full of all types of emergency equipment. There were two boxes of road flares on the left side next to a red fire extinguisher. In the center there was a spare tire and jack that had fallen off the mounting bolts due to the high speed driving that Officer Spencer had to do to get to the accident. On the right side of the trunk was a box of yellow plastic line tape that said "POLICE LINE-DO NOT CROSS." Under that was a large iron wrecking bar with a sharp hook at one end and a pry flange at the other end.

## *SPEED KILLS!*

He couldn't see the first aid kit, so he lifted up the tire to look underneath it. He picked it up a few inches and saw the white steel medical box wedged under it between the tire and the jack. He reached under the tire and pulled on the box with the other hand, but it was stuck fast.

He knew he had to get it out fast, so he picked up the pry bar and pried the jack out of the way so that he could free the medical kit. It finally popped loose so he reached in and grabbed it. He dropped the tire and ran to help Officer Spencer.

"Here is the medical kit," Tom said when he arrived at white car. Officer Spencer was trying to pull open the car door to free a lady who was trapped inside.

"Thanks, Tom, I'm going to need that. The two boys who were thrown out of the truck have head injuries and I think that they have internal bleeding. One is unconscious and the other is in shock and disoriented. And I am going to need that pry bar you brought to free this lady from her car. Good thinking, Tom."

Tom looked at his right hand and realized that he had brought the bar with him. He was in such a hurry he forgot to leave it behind.

"What do you want me to do now?" Tom asked.

"Do you know first aid?"

"Yes," he answered. "I took a first aid class in the Christian Cadet Corps. I'm a little rusty, but I think I remember how to put on a bandage."

"Good. I want you to see how those boys are doing. Put a compression bandage on the head wounds, and make sure that the one in shock doesn't walk away. Tell him to sit down and stay calm. We don't want him to go unconscious and fall down, hurting himself more."

Officer Spencer took the pry bar and turned to pry on the

## SPEED KILLS!

crushed car door of the white car. Inside the lady was screaming hysterically about her baby who was trapped in the rear seat. Tom ran toward the pick-up to help the injured boys. The driver, a teenage boy, was slumped over the steering wheel with blood streaming from his head. He wasn't moving.

The passenger in the front, who was also a teenage boy, had hit his head on the windshield, causing it to shatter. He was leaning back in the seat moaning, holding his bloody head. Neither of them were wearing seatbelts.

"Just relax," Tom heard himself say to the boy. "An ambulance is on the way."

Tom turned his attention to the boy standing outside the truck.

"You will be okay," he said. "I want you to sit down and wait for the ambulance."

"Where am I?" the boy said. "What happened? Who are you?"

Tom smelled the alcohol on his breath.

"You have been in an accident. You have a head injury and you need to sit down."

He took the boy by the shoulder and firmly pushed downward to help the boy to the ground. The boy complied and sat down next to the injured boy who was unconscious. Tom hastily opened the first aid kit and took out a compression bandage and a sterile gauze pad. He put the gauze to the wound on the boy's head and wrapped the bandage around it.

"I want you to hold this tight," he ordered. "It will stop the bleeding."

The confused boy did as he was told without question. Tom saw the confusion in his eyes and noticed that one pupil was extremely dilated, indicating a possible concussion. *I hope the ambulance gets here quick*, Tom thought to himself.

*SPEED KILLS!*

He looked at the boy on the ground and saw a big gash on his forehead that was bleeding profusely. When he was thrown out of the truck he hit the pavement face first. Tom unwrapped two gauze pads and pressed them against the wound. They were immediately soaked with blood so he took two more pads and added them on top.

He put pressure on the wound and wrapped a compression bandage tightly around the victim's head. When he finished, it looked like the boy had an Indian turban on his head but it worked to control the bleeding. The blood soaked through the wrapping but Tom knew that the pressure would slow down the blood loss.

"Tom!" Officer Spencer yelled. "If you are finished, I need your help over here!"

Tom jumped to his feet and ran to help Officer Spencer. He was using the pry bar to hold the door part-way open, but he was unable to pull the lady out of the car.

"When I pry the door open, I want you to reach in and pull the lady out."

"What about my baby?" the lady screamed. "My baby is in the back seat."

"We will get your baby in a minute," Officer Spencer said. "First we have to get you out so you can help us get your baby."

He looked at Tom and winked.

"Tom, are you ready?"

"Ready, sir," Tom answered.

"When I pry, you pull. Let's go."

Officer Spencer pried on the door putting all of his strength into it. The metal creaked as he pulled it apart and the door began to open. Officer Spencer forced the door open about 18 inches and Tom reached in to pull the lady out of the car. The seatbelt was still locked in place so he quickly took out his Swiss Army knife and cut the seatbelt out of the way.

*SPEED KILLS!*

“Okay, ma’am,” Tom said. “You have to get out so that you can help us get your baby. When I say go, I’ll pull and you try to push yourself out.”

“Okay, I understand,” she said.

Tom grabbed her by the shoulders. He saw that both of her knees were bloody and realized that she probably had injuries to both legs. He looked toward the dash and noticed that the electrical wiring was starting to smolder. He then realized why Officer Spencer was in such a hurry to free her. If the car caught fire, she would be dead for sure.

“Go!” he said and pulled her toward the opening. She twisted her body and let out a shrill scream when she bent her legs.

“Don’t think about the pain,” Tom encouraged. “We need you to help us free your baby. Now, push! Push yourself out of there!”

Tom had said just the right thing and the lady overcame her own pain and twisted out of the wreckage. When she was all the way out she fell to the ground and Tom held her head up to keep her from hitting the pavement. The pain had been so severe she lost consciousness.

“Good job, Tom,” Officer Spencer said.

“Let’s get that baby now,” Tom advised.

“I already did,” Officer Spencer responded.

“But you said...”

“I know what I said. It’s too late. The baby didn’t make it. I couldn’t tell her until we got her out of the car. It was the only way. Any minute now the car is going to catch fire.”

On the ground, a few feet away, Tom saw a bundle wrapped in a baby blanket. Officer Spencer got the baby out first, but it didn’t survive.

“Help me take the lady to the sidewalk.”

*SPEED KILLS!*

Tom and Officer Spencer picked up the lady in a fireman's carry, locking their arms together under her body and lifting her up together. They supported her with two arms under her legs and two arms behind her back. They lifted her up in the sitting position and carried her to the corner.

She was still unconscious but moaned in pain when she was moved. A group of people had gathered on the corner and several offered to help. They laid her down and Officer Spencer asked one of the bystanders to take care of her until the ambulance arrived.

## CHAPTER 8

### Saving Lives!

Officer Hamilton drove up in his patrol car and parked near the wrecked cars. He got out and approached Officer Spencer.

“What can I do to help?” he asked.

“That white car is about to catch fire. We need to pull those two boys from the pick-up truck and get them to safety. Tom and I will get the driver out. You help the passenger out and take him to the sidewalk.”

“Will do,” Officer Hamilton responded.

They ran to the pick-up and saw that the white car was filled with smoke. The smoke was caused by the wiring insulation burning, which causes a very toxic smoke. A few breaths of it can cause permanent lung damage.

Officer Spencer opened the driver’s door on the pick-up. The young driver was still slumped over the wheel with dark red

blood caking up on his forehead where he hit the steering wheel. A pool of dried blood had formed on the floor below the steering wheel.

"This doesn't look good," Officer Spencer said as he reached in to pull the boy out. "Normally we wouldn't move anybody until the ambulance arrived, but this truck is too close to the burning car. If the fuel tank ignites, we are all in trouble."

As he pulled the boy out, his head fell backward and Tom recognized the face.

"That's my friend, Bob!" he said. "He was with me in the car last week when you stopped us."

"Help me get him out. Maybe you can help to save his life. He doesn't look very good."

They took him out of the truck and used the same fireman's carry to take him to the sidewalk. They laid him down and Officer Spencer kneeled down to check his breathing.

"He's not breathing," he said.

He then put two fingers on the carotid artery in the boy's neck and held them there to feel for a pulse.

"There is no pulse either," he said. "We have to start CPR."

Tom had taken the Red Cross CPR class and received his certification. He knew what to do.

"I'll do the breathing," Officer Spencer said. "You do the chest compressions."

"Anytime you're ready," Tom answered.

Officer Spencer tilted Bob's head back and made sure that his airway was clear. He placed a plastic breathing mask on Bob's face and blew in with two short breaths. Tom saw the chest rise as the life-giving air filled his lungs.

Tom leaned over his friend and put both of his hands on the boy's chest to apply pressure.

"One, two, three, four, five," he counted as he gave five even chest compressions to get the heart pumping.

## SPEED KILLS!

Officer Spencer gave two more breaths and Tom followed with five more compressions. Officer Spencer then stopped to check for a pulse.

“No pulse,” he said. “Repeat.”

He again gave two breaths and Tom followed with the chest compressions. As he did the compressions he looked at the lifeless face of his friend. Just a few hours before he was kidding with him at school. Now he was on the corner of a dark street trying to save his life.

*Oh please God,* Tom prayed silently, *please don't let Bob die.* Tears welled up in his eyes at the thought of his friend dying.

“One, two, three, four, five,” he counted.

Officer Spencer gave two more breaths and stopped to check the pulse.

“I have a pulse,” he said. “Stop CPR. It is a weak pulse but at least he is alive. Let's hope that he can stay alive until he reaches the hospital.”

“Thank you, God,” Tom said quietly. In the distance he could here the ambulance sirens and felt a wave of fatigue swell over him.

“You stay here and make sure he keeps breathing. I'm going back to get the other boys,” Officer Spencer said as he got up to leave. “And put a pressure bandage on his head. You just saved his life. You wouldn't want him to bleed to death now, would you?”

Tom smiled and started to apply the bandage to Bob's bleeding head. He was surprised how calm Officer Spencer was in the light of all the pain and death that was around him.

A minute later, two ambulances arrived and the paramedics went to work on the injured. They took one look at Bob and immediately called for the Life Flight helicopter to come to take him to the hospital. The paramedic put an I.V. in Bob's arm and put an oxygen mask on his face to help him breath.

“Did you put this bandage on?” the paramedic asked Tom.

“Yes sir,” Tom answered.

“Good work. It looks like you stopped the bleeding.”

Tom didn’t bother to tell him that he had just saved his life. It really didn’t matter who did it. Bob was still alive and that was what counted the most.

Within minutes, the Life Flight helicopter was at the scene and landed in a vacant lot across the street. The noise of the rotors was deafening as it settled down on the ground. Bob was placed on a gurney and the paramedics rolled it across the street to the helicopter.

“We’ll take it from here,” the paramedic told Tom. “You can see him later at the hospital.”

They quickly put him in the helicopter and immediately left the ground to take him to the Critical Care Unit at the hospital.

When the helicopter left, the air became suddenly silent and still.

Tom finally had a moment to reflect on the situation. He looked around and was reminded of a battlefield scene that he had seen in an old war movie. The smoldering car had ignited into a flaming inferno and the firefighters were desperately working to put it out. The ambulances were lined up on the corner with several paramedics attending to the injured. There were now four police cars on the scene with red lights flashing as several officers worked to direct traffic to the side streets. The whole scene seemed almost unreal. If he had not been actually been a part of it, he wouldn’t believe that it had happened.

Officer Spencer approached and put his hand on Tom’s shoulder.

“We’ve done about all that we can do for now,” he said. “You did a good job. I’m sure that your friend will be all right.”

“I hope so. I’ve never saved anyone’s life before. I guess I am kind of shaken up.”

*SPEED KILLS!*

“I know how you feel. The first time I did CPR I was pretty shaken up too. You will feel better later on. Let’s go to lunch. You can get a cool drink and something to settle your stomach. I’ll buy.”

They walked to the police car together and got in the car.

## CHAPTER 9

### Code 7

“Unit 3-32 to Station C, are we clear for Code 7?” Officer Spencer said into the microphone.

“Unit 3-32, you’re clear,” the dispatcher answered.

“What is Code 7?” Tom asked.

“Is the most important code that we have,” Officer Spencer answered with a smile. “I asked if we were clear to go to lunch.”

“I can only understand half of what you say on the radio. What do all those secret codes mean?”

“They aren’t really secret codes. They are just a way of saying important things without using a lot of words. We try to keep the radio clear of unnecessary talking. Someone might be in trouble, and we don’t want to cover their transmission by useless talk. During lunch I will show you the ‘secret’ code sheet that we use. Maybe it will help you to understand what we are saying.”

*SPEED KILLS!*

“That sounds great,” Tom said. “Will you tell me what you carry on your gun-belt too?”

“Sure. I’ll be glad too.”

They drove several blocks and Officer Spencer pulled the car into a McDonald’s and parked in the lot. They got out and walked side by side to the entry door. People looked at Tom as he walked next to Officer Spencer. He held his shoulders back and tried to act casual. Tom was starting to like police work.

“Do you get tired of everyone staring at you all the time?” Tom asked as they walked.

“It used to bother me, but now I guess I am accustomed to it. You just have to be careful about what you do or say. I try to remain professional and courteous at all times.”

They walked into the restaurant through the big glass double doors and went to the service counter. A friendly girl behind the counter looked up as they approached.

“Hello,” she said. “Can I take your order?” Tom recognized her from high school. “Tom?” she said. “What are you doing with a police officer? Did you get arrested or something?”

“No,” he answered. “I’m just on a ride-a-long.”

“Well, you be careful out there,” she said with a smile. “Now can I take your order?”

Tom ordered a Big Mac with fries and a Pepsi. Officer Spencer ordered a salad. The girl gave them their dinner and they carried it to an empty booth and sat down.

“Well, Tom, how do you like police work so far?”

“It is a lot different than I thought it would be.”

“What did you expect?”

“I thought all you did is write speeding tickets and then hang out at the donut shop all night.”

“Well I usually do, but since you were along, I asked those people to have that accident so you could see something exciting,” Officer Spencer said with a grin.

## SPEED KILLS!

“I didn’t mean anything bad by that,” Tom said defensively.

“I know you didn’t. Most people think that all we do is eat donuts and drink coffee. Either that or shoot people and go on wild car chases. I wish that everyone could go on a ride-a-long to see what actually happens.”

“Do you think that anything else exciting will happen tonight?”

“You never know what is going to happen. We could spend the rest of the night driving around giving tickets, or we could get into some really wild stuff. That is the great part about this job. Every day is a new adventure.”

“You said that you were going to tell me what all those radio codes mean,” Tom said.

“Oh, yeah. I have a list here that I can give to you.” Officer Spencer reached in his shirt pocket and took out a folded piece of yellow paper. He handed the paper to Tom who opened it up.

“Wow,” Tom said. “You have to memorize all those codes? There must be at least fifty different ones.” Tom studied the list.

- 10-1 Reception Poor
- 10-2 Reception Good
- 10-4 Acknowledgement
- 10-7 Out of Service
- 10-8 In Service
- 10-9 Repeat Message
- 10-10 Remain in Service
- 10-14 Escort
- 10-16 Prisoner
- 10-19 Return to Station
- 10-20 What Is Your Location
- 10-21 Phone Your Station
- 10-22 Disregard

*SPEED KILLS!*

10-23 Standby  
10-28 Registration Check On  
10-29 Check for Wanted  
10-34 Clear or Are You Clear  
10-87 Meet the Officer  
10-88 Cover the Officer  
10-97 Arrived at the Scene  
10-98 Finished Last Assignment  
11-6 Shooting in the City  
11-7 Prowler  
11-8 Person Down  
11-10 Take a Report  
11-11 Check the Area  
11-13 Injured Animal  
11-14 Dog Bite  
11-15 Ball Game in Street  
11-24 Abandoned Vehicle  
11-25 Vehicle Traffic Hazard  
11-27 Felony Record-No Warrants  
11-28 Misdemeanor Record-No Warrants  
11-29 No Record-No Warrants  
11-30 Incomplete Call  
11-31 Calling for Help  
11-41 Ambulance Needed  
11-42 No Ambulance Needed  
11-44 Coroner's Case-Dead Body  
11-45 Attempt Suicide  
11-48 Furnish Transportation  
11-50 Shake Down  
11-51 Security Check  
11-52 Check Welfare  
11-60 Water Leak

*SPEED KILLS!*

11-66 Signals out of Order  
11-80 Serious Injury Accident  
11-81 Minor Injury Accident  
11-82 Non Injury Accident  
11-83 No Detail Accident  
11-84 Direct Traffic  
11-85 Tow Car Needed  
11-88 Stalled Motorist  
11-99 Officer Needs Help  
E. T. A. Estimated Time of Arrival  
G. O. A. Gone on Arrival  
Code 2 Urgent, No Lights/Siren  
Code 3 Urgent, Lights/Siren  
Code 4 No Further Assistance Needed  
Code 5 Stake Out  
Code 6 Stay out of Area  
Code 7 Lunch  
Code 8 Restroom  
Code Blue Cab in Trouble

Criminal Codes

187 Homicide  
207 Kidnapping  
211 Robbery  
240 Assault  
245 Assault with a Deadly Weapon  
261 Rape  
288 Lewd And Lascivious Acts  
314.1 Indecent Exposure  
415 Disturbing the Peace  
459 Burglary

*SPEED KILLS!*

487 Grand Theft  
488 Petty Theft  
594 Vandalism  
647 Disorderly Conduct  
647a Child Molest  
647f Drunk in Public  
10851 Stolen Vehicle  
10852 Tampering with Vehicle  
20002 Hit and Run  
22350 Speeding  
22500 Illegal Parking  
23152 Drunk Driving  
23110 Throwing Object at Vehicle

“When I was in the police academy I had to learn all of them. We use them so often that it is like a second language to us. You could learn them too if you tried hard enough.”

“Can I keep this?”

“Sure you can. You can buy a police scanner at any electronic store and you can listen to all our radio transmissions.”

“That sounds pretty neat. I think that I will ask my parents to get me one for Christmas. Maybe I will hear you talking.”

“You probably will. Say, how is your lunch coming along? We only have a half hour.”

“I’m almost finished. Do you still have time to show me what you have on your gun-belt?”

“Yeah, I think we have enough time.”

Officer Spencer took his gun out of the holster and held it up for Tom to see.

“This is a forty-five caliber semi-automatic handgun. It has a removable magazine that holds seven rounds of ammunition. There is another round in the chamber.”

## *SPEED KILLS!*

Tom looked at the powerful looking black handgun. He wasn't sure how it worked so he didn't want to touch it.

"Is it loaded?" he asked.

"It is always loaded. And even if I take the magazine out..." Officer Spencer pushed a button on the side and the bullet holder slid out, "...it is still loaded. There is always one bullet in the chamber."

Officer Spencer put the magazine back in the gun and re-holstered it.

"A few years ago an eleven-year-old boy took a gun like this to his school. He found it at home and wanted to show off to his friends. He was showing it off and pushed the release button and slid the magazine out of the gun. He thought it was unloaded, so he pointed it at a young girl and pulled the trigger. The gun fired and killed his friend right in front of him. You should never touch a gun unless you are under proper supervision."

"I agree with that," Tom responded. "My dad takes me target shooting sometimes, but I never touch his gun when I am at home."

"That is a good rule to follow. It will keep you alive and prevent you from hurting someone accidentally."

Officer Spencer put the gun back and unsnapped a black leather pocket in his belt. He reached in the pocket and took out a pair of stainless steel handcuffs and handed them to Tom.

"These are my handcuffs. I carry two pairs with me when I am on duty because often I will have to arrest more than one person. I keep the handcuff key on my key-ring that is hooked to my gun-belt."

"Has anyone ever escaped from these?"

"Not yet. But there have been a few people that were so big their wrists didn't fit in the handcuffs."

*SPEED KILLS!*

“What do you do then?”

“If they are cooperative I will politely ask them to get in the police car and ride to the station with me. Most of them comply. If they want to fight, we have to get a pair of leg cuffs to restrain them.”

He put the handcuffs back in the pouch and took out his pepper spray.

“This is called pepper spray. It is actually cayenne pepper that is mixed in a solution and put in a pressurized spray canister.”

“What does it do?”

“When it is sprayed in the eyes it causes intense pain and irritation. Imagine you have a mixture of chili pepper and soap in your eyes. It would hurt severely and you would stop doing whatever it was you were doing. It doesn’t cause any permanent damage and can be washed out with water.”

“That sounds like it would really hurt.”

“I’m sure it does, but if that doesn’t work I would have to use my baton.”

Officer Spencer took his black baton out of the holder and held it up for Tom to look at.

“This is called a side-handle baton. It is about twenty-four inches long with a short handle on side for gripping. It can be used for striking, or for defense if someone were to take a swing at me. I rarely use it, but it is a effective weapon if I need it.”

“Wow. You have some neat stuff. Do you have a bullet-proof vest on too?”

“All the time. I wouldn’t get into the police car without it.”

“How much does all of your equipment weigh?”

“Everything together weighs about thirty pounds. That is why I have to exercise regularly to stay in shape. If I have to chase a suspect, I want to be able to catch him.”

*SPEED KILLS!*

“3-32,” the portable radio urgently squawked. “Can you break for a call?”

Spencer took the radio out of the holder.

“Unit 3-32, go ahead,” Officer Spencer answered.

“Respond to a domestic violence call at 81 Fifth Avenue, apartment A-2, on a report of a man beating a woman. Unit 3-28 will be en-route to cover you.”

“Unit 3-32 copies. We will be from the 600 block of Main Street.”

Officer Spencer put his portable radio back in the holder and turned to Tom.

“Let’s go, Tom. You can finish lunch later.”

Officer Spencer jumped out of the booth and hurried toward the police unit. Tom left his French fries on the table and quickly got up and followed. When Tom arrived at the car, Officer Spencer had already started the engine and was ready to go.

## CHAPTER 10

### A Family Fight

The engine roared as the black and white police car turned out of the parking lot to the street.

“What is going on at the apartment?” Tom asked.

“We don’t know for sure right now. Apparently someone called the police station to report some kind of a fight in the apartment. It is usually between a husband and wife or boyfriend and girlfriend. We won’t know for sure what is happening until we arrive.”

“Is it dangerous?”

“It could be. Many officers are hurt or killed every year on domestic violence calls.”

“Do you want me to stay in the car when we get there?”

“You seem like you know how to take care of yourself. You can come along, but stay out of the way. If they want to fight, I don’t want you to get hurt.”

## *SPEED KILLS!*

“I’ll be careful, I promise,” Tom said with a smile. It made him feel good to know that Officer Spencer had enough confidence in him to let him come along.

Within minutes they were in front of a rundown, two-story brown apartment building. They parked in front of the building next to the cracked sidewalk. Officer Hamilton arrived at the same time and parked on the street behind Officer Spencer’s car. They all got out and met on the sidewalk.

“Have you ever been here before?” Officer Spencer asked Officer Hamilton.

“Yeah, I’ve been here several times. The last time I was here, the guy hit his girlfriend with a beer bottle and almost knocked her out. I arrested him and he spent the weekend in jail.”

“Did the case go to court?”

“We were scheduled to go to court but the lady changed her mind and decided to drop all charges. They have two kids and she did not want them to think of their daddy as a jail bird. He was supposed to leave town to live with his mother in Indiana. It looks like he’s back.”

“Well, we had better get in there before they kill each other,” Officer Spencer advised. “If they are both still there, you ask the man to step outside to talk to you. I’ll talk to the lady and the kids inside of the apartment.”

The two officers walked to the apartment side by side. Tom followed a few feet behind so he wouldn’t be in the way. He looked at the officers from the back and noticed how authoritative they looked with their black gun-belt loaded with all their equipment. The black aluminum baton clanged against Officer Spencer’s radio holder at each step.

“Here it is, apartment A-2,” Officer Spencer said as they reached the first ground level apartment. Across the courtyard curious neighbors opened their curtains to see what was

happening. The portable radios hissed with the voices of other officers who were engaged in their own conversations. Arguing could be heard inside of the apartment.

“You’re just a no-good drunken bum!” a female voice shouted.

“Oh yeah?” a deep male voice responded. “You’ve spent all our money on your drugs and your no good friends!”

“Our money!” she screamed. “You haven’t earned a cent in two years!”

“Well I’m going to get a job this week.”

“You have been saying that for six months!”

“If I do get a job, you’re going to spend it all on drugs anyway!”

Officer Spencer had heard enough. He rapped on the door loudly and spoke.

“This is the police. Open the door. I need to talk to you.”

“You see what you did now?” the man said angrily. “Now the cops are here.”

“I didn’t call them,” she responded. “A neighbor must have.”

“Open the door,” Officer Spencer ordered.

“Okay. Okay. I’m coming,” the man said.

The door opened slowly and Officer Spencer pushed it open the rest of the way and walked inside. Officer Hamilton followed and Tom waited at the doorway.

“You can’t come in here!” the man yelled. “This is my house!”

“We are here to investigate a fight,” Officer Spencer said with authority. “The law demands that we do a complete and thorough investigation before we leave. We can talk here, or you can come to the station and talk about it there.”

“It’s cool, man,” the angry man responded. “I didn’t do nothing wrong. My lady and I just had an argument. That’s all.”

“Would you step outside for a minute and talk to my partner?”

“Yeah, I’ll do that,” the man answered. “I didn’t do nothing wrong. You can’t arrest me for nothin’.”

“That’s our decision to make. Just step outside for a few minutes and talk to Officer Hamilton.”

The man complied and went out to speak to the officer. Officer Spencer and Tom stayed in the apartment and talked to the lady. The apartment was dirty and stunk like rotten food. On the stove was an old greasy pan that was used to cook bacon. The grease was starting to rot and green mold was growing on the side of the pan. The cupboards were open but there was no food in them.

They stood in the kitchen of the tiny apartment and could see into the dining room, living room, and bedroom. Dirty clothing and beer cans were strewn all over the floor. In the bedroom, two young girls, ages six and eight, were huddled together on the only bed in the house.

“A neighbor called to report a fight,” Officer Spencer began. “As I told your boyfriend, we have to investigate the call to find out what happened.”

“We just argued. That’s all,” the lady responded.

She was about twenty-two years old with stringy dirty blonde hair. She had a deep scratch on her left arm and a red bruise on her right cheek.

“How did you get that bruise?”

“I fell down and hit the T.V.,” she answered with a sneer.

“Ma’am, we are only here to help. Now tell me the truth. How did you get that bruise on your face and the scratch on your arm?”

“Okay,” she answered with a sigh. “My boyfriend got mad at me for spending all the money and he hit me. I tried to fight

back and got a scratch on my arm. But I don't want you to arrest him. He just drinks too much sometimes. That all. He doesn't mean it."

"It is a felony to cause that type of injury."

"He's the father of my two children. I don't want them to think of their daddy as a criminal."

Officer Spencer looked around the apartment.

"Does he live here with you?"

"Sometimes he does. He was out of town for a month and just got back."

"Who takes care of your kids?"

"I do," she answered as she looked around the room. "Oh, you are worried about this mess? Well I just didn't have time to clean up today. It is normally not this bad."

Officer Spencer looked in the cupboard and found an old bag of rice but no other food. He opened the refrigerator and saw a spoiled gallon of milk, one orange, and a six pack of beer but nothing else.

"Did you kids have dinner tonight?" he asked.

"Yeah. I got a hamburger and fries for them."

"Did they have breakfast?"

"Of course. They went to the neighbors and had a bowl of cereal. Are you going to take my kids away?"

"I am not sure what I am going to do yet. First we have to deal with your boyfriend. He hit you, and is guilty of a crime. Do you want to place him under citizen's arrest?"

She looked at the floor as a cockroach ran across the floor and hid under the stove.

"Yeah. Okay," she finally said. "Do I have to sign something?"

"All you have to do is sign the citizen's arrest form. We will take him to the station and do the booking."

## *SPEED KILLS!*

He took the form out of his clipboard and showed her where to sign. She quickly signed it and handed the pen back. Officer Spencer filled out her name and address on the front and went outside to speak to the man who was still outside the apartment talking to Officer Hamilton.

“I am going to have to place you under arrest for hitting your girlfriend,” Officer Spencer advised him.

“What?” the man yelled. “I didn’t do nothin’. I ain’t going anywhere with you.”

“Put your hands behind your back,” Officer Spencer ordered.

The man turned and started to run toward the street. He ran two steps, when Officer Hamilton tackled him and they both fell to the ground. The man kicked at Hamilton and tried to squirm free.

Officer Spencer stepped in and grabbed the man by the right wrist and put a wrist lock on it. He twisted the wrist, which caused severe pain to his wrist and the man grimaced and screamed.

“You’re breaking my wrist,” he yelled.

“Stop fighting and put your other hand behind your back,” Officer Spencer ordered.

He continued kicking at Officer Hamilton and tried to pull away.

Officer Hamilton got up and grabbed the other wrist and applied the same type of wrist lock. He twisted the arm and the man stopped fighting. He was face down on the concrete with both of the officers standing over him, trying to get him handcuffed.

“Put both hands behind your back and you won’t get hurt,” Officer Spencer said forcefully.

“Okay. Okay man. I give up!”

## *SPEED KILLS!*

Officer Spencer took the handcuffs out of the case and quickly snapped them on the man's wrists. The man calmed down and lay on the ground panting with his hands cuffed behind his back. Officer Hamilton stood back and wiped the dirt off his uniform.

"Oh, shucks," he said. "I just got this uniform cleaned."

"You can change at the department," Officer Spencer said. "Help me get this guy up and to your car. If you take him to the station for me, I'll come later and finish the booking. I need to stay here for a while and talk to this lady about her kids. It looks like child neglect to me."

"You stay here and take care of those kids," Officer Hamilton answered. "I'll do the booking on this guy. It will give me great pleasure to personally slam the jail cell door behind this poor excuse for a father."

They lifted the man to his feet and ushered him to the police car, each of them holding tightly to one arm. He was cussing and swearing at them all the way to the car. They put him in the back seat and Officer Hamilton sped off to the station.

## CHAPTER 11

### Child Neglect

Officer Spencer turned to Tom, who was standing nearby.

“Well, Tom, what do you think of police work now?”

“You guys were really something,” he responded. “That guy didn’t have a chance. It looked as if you rehearsed the whole thing.”

“We do a lot of training for that type of situation. When it actually happens, it all comes back automatically.”

He tucked in his shirt and started walking back to the apartment.

“We need to check on those kids. I think that they have been neglected and need some help. It looks like their parents are more concerned about beer and drugs than they are about their children.”

“What are you going to do?”

*SPEED KILLS!*

“I might have to arrest her and take the kids to the Hillside Receiving Home. They take care of abused and neglected children until a good home can be found for them.”

They reached the apartment and went inside through the open door. The lady was standing in the kitchen leaning against the counter, drinking a can of beer.

“Will you put the beer down for a minute so I can talk to you,” Officer Spencer firmly asked.

“It’s my house. I don’t have to,” she answered back.

“Put the beer down!” Officer Spencer ordered.

“Okay, okay. Just relax. I can drink it later.” She put the beer down on the counter. “What are you going to do with my boyfriend?”

“He is going to jail and will have to go to trial in about thirty days. Are you going to be in town then?”

“Yeah, I’ll be here. Where else can I go? I live in this dump.” She looked around the apartment in disgust. The two girls were still huddled on the bed in the only bedroom. They had dirty faces and long stringy hair that matched their mother’s. A look of fear and uncertainty was in their eyes.

Officer Spencer turned to the lady. “I need to talk to your children for a few minutes.”

“Yeah, go ahead,” she said as she lit a cigarette. “They didn’t get a bath yet today. I was going to give them a bath but my boyfriend started yelling at me. The apartment is usually not this bad.”

She stayed in the kitchen as Tom and Officer Spencer went into the bedroom to talk to the girls. They were wearing dirty linen pajamas that looked as if they had been the only clothes they had worn for weeks. The bottom of their feet were black with dirt. The youngest one was clutching a brown teddy bear that was missing both eyes.

*SPEED KILLS!*

Officer Spencer sat down on the bed next to them and spoke in a friendly voice.

“Hello. I am Robert Spencer from the police department, and this is my friend, Tom.”

The girls looked at him with wide open eyes but said nothing. Dried tears stained their pale thin faces.

“What a nice teddy bear,” Officer Spencer said as he motioned to the stuffed animal. “Does it have a name?”

“His name is Brown Bear,” she shyly said.

“What a nice name that is. Is he your friend?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Do you have any other friends?”

“Just my sister. Mommy doesn’t want me to play with the other kids that live here. She says that they are bad.”

Officer Spencer turned to Tom. “Tom, I want you to look around the house and take notes about the living conditions. I need to interview these kids for a few minutes. When you are finished, tell me what your opinion is. I know that I can trust your judgment.”

“I am glad to help,” Tom said as he took his notepad from his pocket.

First he looked around the bedroom and took note of the dirty clothes that littered the floor. In the corner was a pile of empty beer cans and crumpled potato chip bags. The closet was open, but all of the clothing was on the floor. Tom walked to the closet to look inside as a large cockroach ran across the floor and hid behind the clothing.

He stepped back and walked to the bathroom, which was connected to the bedroom. He went inside and saw that it was worse than the rest of the house. Black mildew covered the bathtub, which had not been used for a long time. There was no soap in the bathroom and the toilet roll holder was empty.

There were no toothbrushes and no toothpaste in the medicine chest.

Tom looked back at the children and a sad feeling came over him as he looked at their innocent faces. They were abandoned and alone in the world and had no one to take care of them. The person that they trusted the most—their mother—had no concern for them or their well-being.

*This just isn't right*, he thought to himself.

He finished the inventory of the room and went back to Officer Spencer and told him what he saw.

"That is what I expected," Officer Spencer said thoughtfully. "This is a classic case of child neglect. It doesn't appear that they were beaten or hurt in any way. Their mother is just too busy with her own problems that she doesn't have time for them."

"What do you plan to do?"

"The children will be taken to Hillside Receiving Home for a few days until a foster family can be found. I am going to arrest the mother and charge her with child neglect."

"What will happen to the children?"

"We hope that the parents will come to their senses and learn how to take care of the kids properly. If not, they will either be placed with a relative or live with a foster family. Anything would be better than this cockroach motel."

Officer Spencer took out his portable radio to contact the dispatch center.

"3-32 to Station C."

"Station C copies, go ahead."

"I need a transport unit to come to this address to assist with an arrest. I will be taking two children to Hillside Receiving Home and I will be arresting their mother for child neglect."

"Station C copies. A unit will be en-route."

## SPEED KILLS!

He put the radio back in the holder and turned to the children and gently spoke to them. “Well, girls,” he began, “I would like you to come for a ride in my police car. I am going to take you to a special place where some nice people will be taking care of you for a while.”

“Is that where bad people go?” the oldest girl sadly asked.

“No, that’s not where bad people go. It is where good girls like you go to get some good food and some nice clothes to wear. They even get some really neat toys to play with.”

The girls felt a little better when they heard that they were going to get some new toys. Tom and Officer Spencer helped them pack a few belongings into a paper sack and walked them out to the police car.

“Tom, I want you to wait out here with the kids while I go to place their mother under arrest. I don’t want them to see their mother being handcuffed.”

An assisting officer came to the apartment building but parked in the back lot so the kids would not see their mother being taken away. Tom stayed at the car with the kids. They looked so weak and frail sitting in the back of the car clutching their meager belongings. They were totally dependent on other people for their survival and their parents had neglected their basic needs.

Tom tried to start a conversation with them but they were so afraid they would not talk. A tear came to his eye when he thought about how they lived without any love in their life. *Why doesn’t God do something about this?* he thought angrily.

With his next thought, he answered his own question and felt ashamed of his doubt. God was doing something. He sent Officer Spencer and Tom to the house to help these children.

Tom waited by the car patiently and thanked God for the caring parents that he had. He promised himself that he would be more appreciative of what God had given him.

## *SPEED KILLS!*

A few minutes later Officer Spencer returned to the car. "Let's take these children to Hillside Receiving Home," he said as he got into the car. "The other officer volunteered to do the arrest paper work for me. That way we can stay in the field so you can experience more police work."

They drove to the receiving home and took the children inside to check them in. They were met at the door of the dormitory-like building by a friendly lady with a warm smile. She immediately developed a warm bond with the children and ushered them inside.

The door closed behind them and Tom and Officer Spencer were left alone in the lobby.

"We did our part," Officer Spencer said. "Now it is up to these good people to help them the rest of the way."

"Do you think that they will be okay?"

"They will probably never live a normal life. Much of the damage has been done and they will have to live with that the rest of their lives. We just have to hope that things will get better for them."

The portable radio interrupted their conversation.

## CHAPTER 12

### The Gang Party

“Unit 3-32, respond to a loud party at 422 Zenith Street. The person who called said that there is a crowd of a hundred out-of-control teenagers there drinking beer.”

“Unit 3-32 copies,” Officer Spencer said into the microphone. “This should be a good one. That is a known gang hangout. Last month there was a drive-by shooting at that house and two sixteen-year-old boys were injured by stray bullets.”

“Do you want me to stay by the car this time?”

“Good idea, Tom. I wouldn’t want you to get in the middle of a gang fight.”

They drove to the area of Zenith Street and stopped two blocks away to wait for the other units to arrive. It is always best to come into a dangerous situation with a show of force. Five

## *SPEED KILLS!*

other police cars soon arrived. Two of them stayed with Officer Spencer while the three others stopped on the next block so they could approach from different directions.

“Unit 3-32 to all units at the scene, are you in position?”

“Unit 3-28, in position.”

“Unit 3-34, ditto.”

“Unit 3-24, I’m ready when you are.”

“Unit 3-32, copy.”

Tom sat back in the seat and gripped the armrest. His whole body tensed as he felt the excitement in the air. Officer Spencer reached over and unlocked the shotgun that was poised next to Tom’s leg. In the distance at the party house, the deep, rhythmic beat of a bass drum echoed down the street.

Officer Spencer unhooked his seatbelt, picked up the microphone and gave the order.

“Unit 3-32, to all units at the scene, let’s move in!”

He shoved the car in gear and activated the overhead lights as he roared down the dark street. He turned the corner of Zenith Street and could easily see which house the party was at. A house in mid-block was lit up and a crowd of people were gathered in the yard. In front of it, a dozen low rider cars were parked in the street and on the sidewalk.

He drove the police car to the party house and hopped the curb, parking on the front lawn directly in front of the house. In one easy motion Officer Spencer quickly stepped out the car and walked toward the front door with his hand resting on his gun. Five more police cars pulled up on the scene and five officers ran toward the house as a show of force.

The loud boom box reverberated a steady beat that matched the flashing of the red and blue lights of the patrol cars. Tom stayed in his seat with wide open eyes taking in every sight.

“This is Officer Spencer from the Oak Hills Police

## *SPEED KILLS!*

Department,” he heard Spencer yell. “The party is now over. Shut down the music. I want everyone to leave in an orderly fashion.”

Three heavy Hispanic gang members with sleeveless tee-shirts and tattooed arms defiantly stood in the doorway blocking the entrance.

“Hey, pig,” one of them shouted. “This is my house and these are my friends. If you want them to leave, then you have to go through me.”

“I’m going to ask you once more,” Officer Spencer said as they stood face to face. “I want the party shut down. There are minors here and you are serving alcohol. If you do not comply, you will be arrested.”

“Well arrest me then!” were the last words the man spoke.

Officer Spencer stepped forward and put a come-a-long hold on the man’s right arm and used an arm-bar to push him to the ground. The man fell hard on the ground, knocking the wind out of him. An officer jumped in and grabbed the other arm, twisting it behind the man’s back. Seconds later, he was handcuffed and was being dragged kicking and screaming to a waiting police unit.

Three officers took out their batons and held the crowd at bay while the man was being taken away. The two big tattooed gang members at the door were cussing and swearing at the officers but did not dare approach. The partygoers saw the arrest and started to run away from the house, jumping over cars and fences as they fled. Most of them were younger and were afraid of being arrested. It would be impossible to arrest everyone at the party, so the officers’ main concern was to stop the party before gang violence erupted.

Some of the hardcore gang members tried to look cool and slowly walked to their cars. Most of them had on white tee-

shirts and baggy black pants. Their greasy hair was slicked back and many had tattooed arms. The girls had thick dark hair and were wearing black blouses and black slacks.

In the shadow, near a hedge Tom saw a tall thin figure wearing a dark trench coat. He passed in front of a street light and Tom noticed that he had long stringy dark hair. He seemed to be trying to avoid detection by walking between cars as he headed away from the house.

The man had crossed the street and met up with a group of gang members on the sidewalk directly across the street from Tom's location. Tom slid down in the seat to avoid being seen. The man stepped into a second street light and as he turned his head, Tom saw a dagger tattoo on the right side of his neck. The same type of tattoo that the serial robber had. The man stood with several other gang members talking to one another.

A short stocky gang member in the group turned and pointed directly at Tom and was saying something to the group. They all turned and stared at Tom. Tom gripped the shotgun barrel with his left hand, waiting for the worst.

The tall one in the dark coat said something to the others and four of them crossed over directly toward Tom. The man in the trenchcoat crossed his arms and waited on the far sidewalk.

Tom gulped hard but knew he had no where to run. If there was going to be a fight he wanted room to maneuver, so he got out of the car and leaned against the door with his arms folded.

"Hey, Mr. junior pig," the stocky one said to Tom as he approached. To his left was a skinny one with buck teeth and a shabby goatee. They all had on dirty white tee-shirts and baggy dark pants that were pulled down below their waist.

Tom carefully sized them up in his mind. The stocky one had a big mouth but was knock kneed and probably couldn't fight very well. The skinny one looked like a wimp and Tom felt that he could put him down with one side kick.

## SPEED KILLS!

To the right was a fat guy with his arm in a cast. The cast had been signed by his gang buddies in all styles of gang graffiti. Tom wasn't worried about him.

The guy next to him would be the toughest opponent. He was silent and carefully eyed Tom, looking him up and down. The group stopped about five feet from Tom and the silent one stood in a fighting stance, resting his weight on his right leg with both arms waist high in front of him. If it came to a fight, he would be the first one Tom would have to take out.

"Mr. Junior pig," the stocky one continued. "I'm talkin' to you. Show me some respect."

"What do you want?" Tom calmly asked.

"I want you and your little piggy friends to leave us alone. Unless you are going to arrest me. Are you going to arrest me? Come on, arrest me, junior cop," he taunted.

"I'm not going to arrest you," Tom answered. "I'm just here on a ride-a-long. Why don't you and your friends leave before you get into trouble?" Tom stood up straight with his right foot back.

"You're the one that is going to find trouble," the skinny one said as he took one step forward.

"I don't want any trouble," Tom said in as friendly a manner as he could muster.

"Well you got it now," the fat one said. "Do you see this cast? I broke my arm in a fight with the Eastside Longos."

"It looks to me like you lost the fight," Tom responded.

"Oh yeah," the fat guy said defiantly. "You shoulda' seen the other guy. He is still in the hospital."

"We sure taught him respect, didn't we?" the skinny one said laughing. "We got a sawed off twelve-gauge in our car over there and that will make anybody respect us."

Tom looked across the street at the lowered metallic blue Chevy Impala with dark tinting on the side and rear windows.

Mounted in the rear window was a fancy gold sign that read “Low and Slow Car Klub.” Tom glanced at the license plate and immediately memorized the unique plate, “LOWGLIDE.”

“I told you,” Tom repeated. “I don’t want any trouble from you. I respect you as people but I don’t think that you need a shotgun to get respect.”

“Oh, yeah,” the silent one finally said. “What do you know about respect? Were you born in the ghetto? Did your old man beat you when you were a kid? You don’t know nothin’, man! Nothin’!”

He took a step forward and the skinny kid put his hand on his chest holding him back.

“No, Blackie,” he implored. “This is not the time or the place. Cops are all over the place. We would get busted for sure, man. Come on. Let’s go. We can get the junior cop later. Toker wants us to do a job tonight. Let’s get out of here before the cops hassle us.”

Hey, man,” Blackie said pointing at Tom. “I’m not finished with you yet. You watch your back. I’ll teach you to respect me!”

They backed away and crossed to the other side of the street with Blackie yelling as they walked. “I’ll teach you to respect me! You just watch your back!”

Tom watched them join up with the rest of the group and they all piled into two cars. Blackie and his gang got into the blue Chevy low rider. The guy with the dark coat got into a green Cadillac with three other gang members. They drove away in tandem with the boom boxes throbbing to the beat of a popular rap song about killing cops. Tom breathed a sigh of relief as they turned the corner and were out of sight.

“Did you make some new friends?” he heard someone say behind him. He turned and saw Officers Spencer and Hamilton walking toward the car.

## SPEED KILLS!

“I saw those gang bangers talking to you so I thought we had better see if you needed cover,” Officer Spencer said. “It looked to me like you were taking care of yourself. What did they say to you anyway?”

“They were just trying to act tough. One of them bragged about having a twelve-gauge shotgun in his car. He said that last week they shot some guy with it.”

“I remember something about that,” Officer Hamilton said. “Last week there was a keg party out by the old glider field. A bunch of Eastside Longo bangers tried to crash the party and a big fight broke out. Four people were stabbed and two were shot with a twelve-gauge shotgun. I’ll bet that those were the guys who did the shooting.”

“I got their license plate if you need it,” Tom added. “And they called the gang leader ‘Toker’. I think that he was the guy wearing a trenchcoat with the dagger tattoo on his neck.”

“A trenchcoat?” exclaimed Hamilton.

“And a dagger tattoo?” Spencer blurted.

“It sounds like it could be the serial robber, doesn’t it?” Tom said. “I thought so too but there was no way I could have left to tell you about it. If I tried to leave, they would have thought I was a coward and started a fight for sure.”

“You did the right thing, Tom,” Officer Spencer said. “At least now we know who to look for. Let’s run that name and license plate in the computer to find out who it is.”

The party was over and most of the people had left. The last of the cars parked on the lawn were driving away, so Tom and Officer Spencer got into their car and drove a few blocks to an empty church parking lot and parked.

“How do you check a license plate?” Tom asked.

“Just watch and learn,” Officer Spencer said as he picked up the microphone. “Unit 3-32 to Station C, the party is disbursed, and the units are clear.”

“Station C, copies,” the dispatcher answered.

“If you are clear, I need to run a license plate and two subjects.”

“Go ahead,” the dispatcher responded.

Tom handed him the paper that he had written the information on.

“The license plate is L-O-W-G-L-I-D-E, and the subjects use nicknames of Blackie and Toker.”

“Please stand by,” the dispatcher answered.

Officer Spencer turned to Tom.

“The dispatcher will run the names and the license plate in the statewide computer system to find out what information we have on them. If the car was ever used in a crime or even had a parking citation it will show up in the computer. If either of the subjects were arrested using the nicknames you gave me, we will have information on them also.”

“How much information can you get from the computer?”

“We can get their true names, their address, phone number, how many times they were arrested, who they hang around with, and even a listing of tattoos. We can put any combination of facts in the computer and come up with some information.”

“Station C to 3-32, are you ready to copy the information?”

Officer Spencer took his pen out of his pocket and got ready to write on the notepad mounted next to the shotgun.

“Go ahead,” he answered.

“The vehicle is a 1968 Chevrolet Impala, registered to Juan Vargas who is also known as, ‘Blackie.’ He has a series of arrests two pages long that range from possession of marijuana to attempted murder. He is twenty-two years old and has spent nineteen months in jail. He is a member of the Market Street Gang and has two outstanding warrants for robbery.”

“He sounds like a real bad guy to me. Any information on Toker?”

*SPEED KILLS!*

“Toker is listed as a companion with Blackie during a robbery attempt last year. The case was thrown out of court because of insufficient evidence. Toker is listed as thirty years old, six feet tall, one hundred and sixty-five pounds, dark complexion with a tattoo of a dagger on the right side of his neck. He has one warrant for selling drugs.”

“Thanks for the information,” Officer Spencer responded. “Make a copy of that and send it to the robbery investigator working on the series. It sounds like he could be the guy that we are looking for.”

“10-4. Station C copies. Station C out.”

“It looks like you hit the jackpot, Tom,” Officer Spencer said as he turned to Tom. “Those are some real bad dudes that you were talking to.”

“I don’t think they liked me very much. I hope I don’t run into them in a dark alley.” Tom didn’t know that he would meet them again. “Blackie said he was so mean because he was from a bad home and his father beat him when he was a kid.”

“All of them have some kind of excuse,” Officer Spencer said. “They blame their parents, their bosses, the government, society in general and they will even blame God for their problems.”

“How can they blame God? It looks like they bring most of their problems on themselves.”

“Most of them do.”

The radio suddenly crackled to life.

## CHAPTER 13

### The Robbery

“3-32, respond to a silent robbery alarm at the Glass Bottle Liquor Store in the 400 block of Broadway.”

It was the same liquor store where they picked up Crazy Charlie earlier that night.

“Unit 3-32 copies,” Officer Spencer answered.

“This is it, Tom. The one we have been waiting for.”

He started the car engine and pulled out of the parking lot, throwing gravel and dust from the rear tires.

“When we get there, I want you to stay in the car,” Officer Spencer advised as he sped down the street. “This guy is armed and dangerous and will shoot. I’ll park behind the cement trash bin in front of the store so you will be out of the line of fire. There should be other police units on the way.”

“Station C to 3-32, be advised that your cover units will be

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delayed. That prisoner from the party kicked out the car windows and three officers are trying to restrain him now.”

“3-32, copies,” he responded.

“It looks like it will be just you and me for a while. I will wait for as long as I can before going in. I don’t want to take any unnecessary chances. Do you remember what I told you to say on the radio if I get into trouble?”

“Sure I do,” Tom answered. “I am supposed to say ‘11-99, officer down’ and then I am supposed to tell them where we are.”

“Exactly right. I don’t think that it will come to that, but you never know for sure.”

It was dark outside with only a half moon shining in the sky to light up the night. Most of the people had gone home for the evening but there were still a few cars on the road. Tom looked out the window at the quiet sidewalk that was lit up with only an occasional streetlight or a sign from a store window. A street person was standing next to a rusty shopping cart as he dug in a trash can for scraps of food or aluminum cans.

They drove down the quiet street through the business district toward the liquor store. The closer they got, the more tense Tom became. A hundred different scenarios ran through his mind about what he thought might happen. In each of them he imagined the robber shooting at them, injuring Officer Spencer. He didn’t like those thoughts so he pushed them from his mind and tried to concentrate on the immediate situation.

Then he remembered that no matter what happened, God was still in control.

*Please God, he silently prayed, make everything turn out okay.*

The Glass Bottle Liquor Store came into view on the left side of the street about half a block ahead of them. The parking lot was empty and the neon sign above the store flickered bright

## *SPEED KILLS!*

red with the word "LIQUOR." Officer Spencer slowed the car as he approached, turned off the headlights and toned down the volume on his car radio.

"I am going to park behind the concrete dumpster next to the curb," he said. "I want you to stay in the car. I am going to get out and walk to the edge of the block wall to try to look inside. If he is still in there, I want to get him before he shoots anyone."

"I understand," Tom responded.

Officer Spencer shut off the engine and silently rolled to a stop behind the concrete trash Dumpster. The Dumpster was about six feet high and twenty feet long. It acted as a shield and hid the car from the view of the robber who was still inside of the store. When the car stopped, he quietly opened his car door and stepped outside. He pushed the door closed but did not let it latch shut.

Tom waited apprehensively in the car as he watched Officer Spencer shuffle his way to the end of the block wall. He held his hand on his gun as he peered around the corner to look at the store.

The lights were on inside of the liquor store so he had a clear view of everything that was happening. Nassar was behind the counter with both hands in the air. In front of him, on the other side of the counter, the robber was standing and was pointing a black handgun directly at Nassar.

He was wearing a dark trench coat and had collar-length stringy hair. On the right side of his neck was a dagger tattoo.

It was Toker, the Market Street gang member who was at the party.

He held the gun tightly in his right hand and raised it to shoulder level as he pointed it at the terrified store clerk. Nassar's cousin had been right. The serial robber was going to rob his store tonight.

## *SPEED KILLS!*

The glass entry door was propped open so Officer Spencer could hear the robber yell at Nassar.

“Put the money in a bag!” he screamed as he shook the gun toward him. “If you mess with me, I’ll shoot you, man! I’ve done it before and I can do it again!”

“Don’t shoot me,” Nassar pleaded as he reached in the open cash register to take out the money.

“No tricks or I’ll shoot,” the robber threatened.

Nassar’s hands shook as he pulled a wad of money out of the register. Several bills dropped on the floor as he stuffed the money into a brown paper sack.

“I saw that!” the robber yelled. “You are trying to hold out on me, aren’t you? I’ll bet you want to keep some of the money for yourself! I’ll teach you to mess with me!”

Officer Spencer knew what was going to happen next but he had little time to stop it. As if in slow motion, he saw Toker squeeze the trigger on the black semi-automatic handgun. The hammer rocked back into the firing position and was poised at the apex.

Officer Spencer grasped his handgun and pulled it from the holster. He raised it to eye level to take aim as the hammer on Toker’s gun fell on to the firing pin. The gun should have fired but the only sound was the steel click of hammer hitting metal. Toker forgot to load a bullet into the chamber before coming in to rob the store.

“Ah, crud,” Toker said in disgust as he reached up with left hand to pull the slide back to load a bullet in the chamber. Nassar saw his opportunity to flee so he jumped across the counter past the robber and hit the ground in a full run. Officer Spencer had his gun fully drawn and was pointing it at Toker.

“Drop the gun!” he shouted.

Toker let go of the slide on the top of the gun and fired one

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round at Nassar, who was still running toward the open door. The bullet missed and shattered the plate glass window next to him. He then raised the gun and leveled it at Spencer. He fired a second round that hit the corner of the concrete wall that Officer Spencer was standing behind. He ducked behind the wall as chips of broken cement splashed into his eyes.

"I'm gonna kill you pig," Toker shouted in anger. Two more shots rang out and zinged into the distance as they ricocheted off the block wall.

Nassar turned and ran down the street away from the store, not stopping to look back. Officer Spencer blinked, rubbing his eyes and trying to get the concrete fragments out. Tom sat in the car with wide open eyes, grasping the armrest as the events unfolded in front of him. Officer Spencer reached for his portable radio.

"Unit 3-32 to Station C, I am taking rounds. Repeat, I am being fired on. Send cover. Code 3!"

"Station C, copies," the dispatcher responded. "All units, 3-32 needs cover now! Any clear unit start for the Glass Bottle Liquor Store at 400 Broadway."

Officer Spencer reached around the corner with his gun in his right hand and fired three shots at Toker. Toker dove behind the counter as the bullets shattered bottles on the shelf behind him, drenching him with whiskey.

"I'm gonna kill you, cop," he yelled as he wildly fired two more shots at Spencer that did not even come close to hitting him. He then turned and ran toward the back of the store to the storage room, knocking over cases of beer as he ran.

## CHAPTER 14

### The Chase

Officer Spencer left the cover of the block wall to pursue the robber. A man that was this dangerous had to be stopped before he killed an innocent person.

He followed the edge of the block wall to the store and glanced inside to see if Toker was still there. No one was in the front of the store but banging sounds could be heard from the back of the store. The rear door had been locked, so the robber was trapped inside like a mouse in a trap.

Tom could no longer see what was happening because of the block wall in front of him but he could hear the loud banging sound of the robber trying to knock down the rear door. He prayed to God to protect Officer Spencer.

Officer Spencer was cautious but he knew that he needed to do everything that he could to catch the robber before he

## *SPEED KILLS!*

escaped. He bent low to the ground and slowly walked past the plate glass window to the entry door. His heavy boots crunched on the broken glass that littered the sidewalk in front of the store. He quickly stepped inside and ran to a large beer display near the door and crouched behind it. In the back room the robber was still trying to break the door down.

Bang!...Bang!...Bang! "You no good stinkin' cops," the robber yelled as he slammed a steel pipe against the door. "Your never gonna get Toker. No, sir, I'm too smart for you."

He banged on the door again and yelled out, "I ain't never goin' back to jail! I'll kill every one of you before I'll let that happen."

The door lock suddenly sprang loose and Toker ran out of the liquor store into the dark alley behind it. Officer Spencer heard him running away and sprinted to the storage room to find the door wide open and the room empty. He took out his portable radio and advised the dispatch center of the situation.

"Unit 3-32 to Station C, I am in foot pursuit of the robber, also known as Toker. He is wearing a dark coat and is armed and dangerous."

"Station C copies, your cover units are still en-route. They should be there in a few minutes."

Officer Spencer heard the sound of footsteps disappearing in the alley so he ran out the broken back door to pursue the suspect.

Tom sat in the car and felt very alone as he listened to the radio. He wanted desperately to help but he knew there was nothing that he could do.

## CHAPTER 15

### Gangsters Return

A low reverberating noise filled the air. Tom perked up his senses and looked around to determine the source of the sound. He had heard it before but he could not remember where. He twisted around to look down the street but saw no movement. He looked the other direction and saw only the lonely flashing light of the “Don’t Walk” sign on the corner.

The sound became louder and a rhythmic beat began to develop. He remembered where he had heard the noise. It was the bass speaker on the boom box that was in the gang car that he had encountered earlier. The sound grew louder and Tom scanned the area for the car but still saw nothing. He knew that if the gang members found him alone, there would be trouble .

Suddenly, a sleek, metallic blue low-rider car turned the corner in front of him and parked on the sidewalk with the

bright headlights pointing directly at him. Tom squinted and read the license plate as a cold chill ran up his spine. The license plate read LOWGLIDE.

The car doors opened and four gang members slowly climbed out of the car. It was the same group that had confronted Tom at the party. The gang member with the cast approached the car first. Blackie walked behind him.

"Hey, look what we have here," he said, "Mr. Junior pig has come to our part of town to visit us."

The gang laughed and walked toward the police car that Tom was in. Two of them stood by the passenger door where Tom was and two of them stood by the driver's door. Tom felt like he was surrounded. He wanted to reach for the microphone to yell for cover, but he knew that other police units were already en-route. He hoped that they would get there in time.

Tom cracked a weak smile and spoke, "How are you guys doing tonight?" He wanted to buy time until help arrived.

"What are you doin' in my part of town?" Blackie spoke with a threatening tone in his voice.

"I'm just here waiting for Officer Spencer to get back. He is just around the corner. He will be back any minute."

The gang broke out in cold laughter and looked at each other like they knew something that Tom was not aware of.

"You pig friend is not coming back," Blackie spoke.

"You know that robber that the cops have been looking for? Well that's our homey, Toker. He ain't never gonna get caught."

"How did you know he was going to be here tonight?"

"We know about everything that goes on in this town. Toker set this whole thing up just so he could kill a cop. And your cop friend is the one that is goin' to die."

The skinny guy spoke up in a squeaky, stuttery voice. "The-

the cops have too much po-po power in our turf. It's ti-ti-time for us to-to-to fight back."

"Shut-up, Flaco," Blackie said. "You talk too much."

"I wa-wa-was just..."

"Just shut up, would ya'? Let me do the talking. I'm the leader."

"No, you're not," the one with the cast said. "Toker is the leader."

"I am the leader when he's not here!" Blackie yelled. "You got that, Cripple? If you have a problem, let's take care of it right now! I'll break that other arm of yours and then we will know who the leader is!"

"No, Blackie," Cripple said backing down. "I don't have a problem with that. No problem Blackie. You're the leader when Toker is gone."

"That's better," Blackie said as he took out a comb and slicked back his hair.

"What are we gonna do with the junior pig?" the stocky guy with knock knees asked.

Tom sat in the car watching the conversation around him. He felt out of place and did not like the thought of Blackie deciding his fate. The radio continued to crackle with the voices of other officers who were still en-route to the scene. Only minutes had passed but it felt like hours.

Blackie leaned into the open car window and whispered to Tom. "What should we do with you, Mr. Junior pig? Are you ready to show me some respect?"

"I told you before," Tom answered confidently. "I respect you as a person."

"You respect me as a person, but you don't like what I do? Is that right, junior pig?"

Each time he said "junior pig" he spit toward Tom. Tom

mustered up all the self-control that he could find to maintain his control. *Jesus was spit on and he didn't get angry*, he thought to himself.

"That is correct," Tom answered. "I don't approve of what you do. You may not realize it but you are a sinner and need Jesus to be your savior."

Blackie's face became red with anger.

"Are you goin' to start preaching to me now?" he said as he slammed his fist on the top of the car. "Do you think that God can save my soul? Let me tell you something, there is no room for God in my life. I do what I want! I say what I like! And no one - no one - is going to tell me what to do. Especially a junior pig preacher like you!"

Blackie reached into the car and grabbed Tom by the collar and yanked him out of the car through the open window. Tom was caught by surprise so he was unable to fight back. He was surprised at how strong Blackie was.

"I'm going to teach you respect!" Blackie yelled as he threw Tom to the ground. Tom landed hard on his face as he hit the concrete. A sharp pain stabbed his left cheek and the sounds became distant. He was starting to go unconscious but he knew that if he did, he would be killed for sure.

He rolled over to his back and saw Blackie and the other gang members standing over him, laughing.

"That is your first lesson in respect," Blackie said with an evil grin.

"This is le-le-lesson number two," Flaco said as he raised his foot over Tom's head to stomp on him. The foot came down hard but Tom rolled away from it to avoid getting hit. Flaco missed and his foot struck the sidewalk hard.

Tom jumped up and stood with his back to the car, facing his enemies. A thin trickle of blood rolled down his left cheek on to his blue shirt.

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“I don’t want any trouble,” he implored. Tom could have used his karate skills to break Balckie’s knee with one kick but he wanted to give them every chance to give up first.

“Well you got lots of trouble, junior pig,” Blackie said, spitting as he talked. He stepped forward and swung at Tom with his right hand, which was clenched in a tight fist. Tom reached out with his left arm and easily blocked the punch and then immediately responded with a swift side kick to Blackie’s rib cage.

“Oofff,” Blackie managed to wheeze as the wind was knocked out of him. He doubled over holding his stomach and the stocky gang member stepped forward and swung at Tom with a right cross. Tom stepped out of the way of the punch and countered with a double jab. The gang member stepped back with a shocked look in his eyes as he attempted to collect his composure.

“I told you,” Tom advised. “I don’t want any trouble. Let’s end this right now.”

Out of the corner of his eye he saw Cripple run back to the car and open the trunk. The three other gangmembers stepped away from Tom and looked toward the car. Cripple stepped out from behind the open trunk and aimed a sawed-off double barrel Mossberg twelve-gauge shotgun at Tom.

## CHAPTER 16

### Run for Your Life

“Now it is time for your last lesson in respect,” Cripple shouted.

“Blow him away. Shoot him! Shoot him!” the other gang members taunted.

Cripple liked the power that the gun gave him and smiled wickedly as he slowly walked toward the police car that Tom was standing next to.

“I want you to show respect now, junior pig,” Cripple said, leveling the twelve-gauge at Tom.

Tom stood silent. He wanted to flee but knew it was not the right time.

“I want you to say that the Market Street Boys are the best set in this town,” Cripple said. “And I want you to say that you are no good trash and you have no right to be here in our territory.”

Blackie spoke up, adding, "I want you to say that your God is not here. And that the only God that is real is in the barrel of that shotgun."

Tom held his ground and said nothing. Cripple continued to approach and stopped when he was just a few feet away from Tom.

"Raise your hands, junior pig," he ordered.

Tom slowly raised his hands and held them up shoulder high. He kept his palms toward Cripple so he would be ready to strike when the opportunity came.

"I say that the only God that counts for anything is in this gun," Cripple said smiling. The illusion of power the twelve-gauge had given him had taken him over and he felt invincible.

He brought the gun closer and held it against Tom's cheek.

"I say God is in this gun," Cripple continued. "And I want you to show respect by kissing this gun barrel."

He pressed the barrel against his lips and Tom backed his head away.

"Kiss it," Blackie encourage. "Kiss the gun and we will let you go."

Cripple stood in front of Tom with the gun pointing at his face with his finger poised on the trigger. In the distance, Tom heard the sound of sirens. Help was finally arriving but he feared that it was too late.

"The cops are coming," Flaco advised.

"Do it now!" Blackie urged.

Cripple looked Tom directly in the eye and pulled back the hammer with his thumb. Tom quickly stepped right and crossed his left hand in front of him, knocking the gun barrel to the side. The gun fired with a deafening roar next to his left ear and he felt the heat from the hot lead fly past his face. The pellets hit the flashing light bar on the police car and it exploded into thousands of blue and red fragments.

## *SPEED KILLS!*

Tom spun around and jumped across the trunk of the police car, sliding across it and landed feet first on the ground. The concrete wall was ten feet away so he sprinted for his life for safety. Shouts were coming from the startled gang members who were on the other side of the car.

“Shoot him! Shoot him!” someone shouted.

Tom turned the corner and heard the explosion of a second shot being fired as the concrete next to him shattered and rained down on top of him. He was in a race for his life.

He sprinted as fast as he could away from the gangmembers toward the alley which ran behind the stores. He was not familiar with this part of town but he knew that he had to get away in a hurry. They had tried to kill him twice and he knew that they would try again. The shotgun only held two bullets, so they had to reload before shooting again.

Tom ran to the liquor store and turned left between two buildings and then cut to the right down a dark alley. He heard the sound of the police sirens getting closer but he could not wait around for them to arrive. The gang members were shouting cuss words at him, threatening to kill him in a dozen different ways.

They were confused and arguing amongst themselves about what to do but finally decided that two of them would get in the car and drive around to look for him. The other two decided to chase him on foot. Tom heard the boom box echo bass sounds against the buildings as the car drove away. He slowed to a trot and then heard the distinct sounds of running footsteps advancing toward him.

“I think he went this way,” Blackie shouted.

Tom resumed his sprint and ran away from the sound of the voices down the dark unfamiliar alley. The back of the businesses faced the alley which was littered with trash and

discarded pieces of broken equipment and furniture. A brackish puddle of water had settled in the center of the pitted asphalt alley. A dim moon lit up the alley and cast ominous shadows in the darkness. Tom had never felt so alone.

“There he is!” Blackie shouted. “Come on, Shorty, let’s get him. Do have that twelve-gauge loaded yet?”

Tom heard footsteps running behind him. His heart pounded in his chest as he stepped up his pace, looking side to side for a safe haven. They had a clear shot at him and he knew that he needed to get out of that alley fast.

“He’s getting away!” Blackie yelled. “Give me that gun. I’ll shoot him myself.”

Tom saw a service alley about one hundred feet ahead of him to his left. He dug deep inside of himself and found a reserve of energy that pumped him up enough to sprint the last hundred feet. A large steel trash bin was at the alley entrance. Tom reached the trash bin and cut sharp left, sliding on a puddle of water on the greasy asphalt.

His feet slid out from under him and he fell hard on the ground scraping his left elbow to the bone. A shot boomed behind him as the pellets blew an 18-inch hole in the steel trash bin that was between him and the gang members.

“Shucks, I missed!” Blackie yelled.

Tom jumped to his feet and went straight down the unlit alley that was bordered with large brick buildings on both sides. He had no idea where it led to but it was his only way of escape. The footsteps echoed behind him as Blackie and Shorty ran toward the service alley.

Tom reached the end of the alley and was stopped by a solid brick wall that was three stories high. To his left and right were windowless buildings that rose up thirty feet into the air. The footsteps got closer as he frantically searched for a way of

*SPEED KILLS!*

escape. The dim moonlight could not penetrate past the high walls, so he floundered around in the blackness.

The pursuing footsteps grew ever closer. Tom looked back toward the alley that he had come from and saw the silhouette of Blackie and Shorty, who had just reached the side alley. The only thing that was saving him now was the cover of total darkness.

“Where did he go?” Blackie asked.

“I saw him turn down here. He has to be in this alley.”

“I’m going to shoot to see if I can hit him.”

“No. Don’t do that until you can see what you are shooting at. That is our last bullet.”

“What do you mean, ‘our last bullet’?”

“I was in such a hurry, I left the rest of them in the car,” Shorty answered.

“You stupid idiot! You can’t do anything right!”

“Well if you think you are so smart, why don’t you go down that alley and get that punk junior cop?”

“I think I will,” Blackie answered.

They turned and began walking into the alley. Tom hunched low to the ground and tried to control his breathing.

“Junior pig,” Blackie yelled into the darkness. “I’m comin’ for you! I’m going to blow you away with my twelve-gauge and then I am going to go find that cop friend of yours and blow him away too. That is, if Toker didn’t get him first.”

Tom’s eyes slowly adjusted to the darkness as he looked around for a way of escape.

Blackie continued with his voice echoing in the dark alley, “It is time for us to take back our neighborhood. The cops don’t have a chance. We outnumber them ten to one and we have better guns than they do.”

“And we don’t care about no one’s civil rights,” Shorty said with a laugh.

Tom felt along the wall with his hands and bumped into a steel railing that led to a staircase which went down to a basement. It was his only option, so he grabbed the rail and used it to guide him down the concrete stairway. At the bottom, he found a door that led into the basement of the brick building that he was next to.

The door was locked with an old rusty padlock that hadn't been opened in a long time. The sound of the footsteps grew ever closer. He had to do something fast. He pulled on the door handle but the door would not budge.

Tom reached into his pocket, took out his Swiss Army knife and opened up the blade. He firmly pried on the rusty screws that held the latch on the door to attempt to pry it loose.

"Where are you, junior pig," Blackie taunted. "I'm comin' to get you."

The first screw popped loose. Only three more to go.

"Maybe he is not here," Shorty said.

"He has to be here," Blackie responded. "This is the only place he could have gone. He must be holed up in a corner somewhere like a scared rat."

He was right. Tom was scared. But he was not about to give up. He continued to pry on the lock and finally the last screw came loose.

"There he is!" Shorty yelled from the top of the stairway.

"Just like a rat in a trap," Blackie said. "Get out of my way, Shorty. I want a clear shot at him."

Tom looked up and saw the two gang members ten feet away staring at him. Shorty moved to one side and Blackie slowly and deliberately raised the shotgun to eye level.

Tom had to move fast. He slammed his shoulder against the door, which made a loud creak as the door started to move.

"He's getting away," Shorty yelled. "Shoot him while you still have the chance!"

## SPEED KILLS!

A surge of adrenalin ran through Tom as he slammed his shoulder into the door a second time. The door creaked and groaned but sprung open. He stumbled inside and fell to the ground as a thundering shot boomed out behind him. Hot lead pellets sprayed around him and he felt a sharp burning pain in his left hand.

He ignored the pain and jumped to his feet, running forward in the darkness. He ran head first into a stack of shipping boxes and stumbled to the ground. Behind him he heard the voices of Shorty and Blackie who were arguing because he missed the shot.

*This is not the way to do it, Tom thought to himself. Don't panic. Get a hold of yourself.*

Tom got to his feet and felt his way through the pitch black basement. The air was damp and smelled musty. The basement had been locked and unused for a long time. The darkness was his best defense. If he couldn't see where he was going, then his enemy wouldn't be able to see him either.

"Go down there and get him!" Blackie yelled.

"But it's dark down there."

"Get in there, you coward! He knows who we are and what we look like. If he turns us in to the cops we will go to prison for sure. We have to kill him."

Tom did not like the sound of those last words. He was in a race for his life and had to outsmart them if he wanted to live.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of death," suddenly leaped into his mind. *This is as close to the valley that I can get*, he thought. *God, it's up to you to help me out of this. I need you now more than ever.*

He looked back toward the door and saw two shadowy figures at the door.

"You don't have a chance, junior pig," Blackie threatened. "Give up now and we will let you go."

## *SPEED KILLS!*

Tom knew Blackie was lying. If he was caught, they would never let him go. He quietly tip-toed to the far side of the basement, feeling for an exit. His hand hurt terribly and it felt wet and sticky. He knew that he had been shot but he couldn't see how bad it was. He bumped into a cardboard box that contained rags so he selected the cleanest one and tightly wrapped it around his injured hand.

"Where are you at, pig boy?" Blackie said from the far side of the basement. They had turned the wrong way and were getting farther away from Tom instead of closer.

Tom felt along the cold concrete wall and felt a round steel handrail. The handrail led to a staircase that went up to a doorway that went into the main building. He quietly climbed the stairway and stopped when he came to a door at the top. He put his good hand on the knob and tried to turn it. It was stuck.

He was afraid to make any noise but he had to get the door open so he twisted the knob as hard as he could and wiggled the door. The door popped open but the noise had given away his location to the gang members.

"I hear him over there," Blackie said.

Tom heard them stumbling across the basement, tripping over boxes as they approached. He quickly pushed the door open and stepped inside to an old machine shop that had not been used for a long time. He shut the door behind him and searched for something to secure the door.

The building had opaque skylights on the ceiling which allowed some moonlight to enter the room. Tom found a pile of steel pipes near the door and picked up a four foot piece. He propped one end of the pipe against a table leg that was bolted to the ground and placed the other end against the door. He firmly shoved it into place when he heard footsteps coming up the staircase on the other side of the door.

“He’s in here,” Shorty shouted and he pushed against the door trying to get it open.

“He locked it.”

“We have to get him. Let’s kick the door in.”

Loud banging echoed through the building as they kicked on the door. Tom didn’t want to wait around for them to get through, so he ran to the far side of the building to look for an exit. The windows had been boarded up with plywood and the door was protected with a steel grate that was locked with a large padlock.

He needed a tool or a pry bar to loosen up the plywood so he could escape. The banging continued and it would be only minutes before the pipe holding the door would bend enough for them to enter.

Tom found a large toolbox under a workbench and dug through it, searching for the proper tool. He found an 18-inch steel pry bar with a large hook at one end. He ran to the boarded up window and used the bar to pry up one corner of the plywood. The nails creaked and suddenly gave way and the plywood came loose. He pried on the rest of the nails around the edge of the plywood and was able to pull the wood off the window.

The large sheet of plywood fell to the ground just as the door at the back of the shop burst open. Tom looked out to freedom through the thick plate glass window. A sign was painted on the outside of the glass which said “Arnold’s Tool and Dye.”

“Well Arnold,” Tom said aloud. “I’m sorry about the window but I have to break it.”

Loud footsteps came running toward him from the back of the building. He turned his head, closed his eyes and swung the heavy pry bar at the glass. The bar struck the glass with a sharp cracking sound but the glass did not break. The footsteps grew closer at every second.

## *SPEED KILLS!*

Tom cocked his arms back while holding the bar with both hands and swung again, smashing it against the thick glass. The glass shattered and large pieces of plate glass fell all around him. One large piece hung precariously from the top like a guillotine, swinging back and forth ready to drop at any second.

“There he is!” Blackie shouted as he rounded the last corner.

Tom leapt out of the shattered window into the freedom of the night and ran into the street. He looked left and right for help but the street was vacant. The eerie yellow streetlight lit up the pavement as he sprinted across the street to a trailer park on the other side.

Blackie and Shorty were at the broken window and Shorty jumped through the hole first. As he did, his foot caught a shard of glass on the bottom edge and he fell down with his right pant leg stuck on the broken glass. The movement shook loose the sharp glass hanging from the top and it fell straight down on Shorty’s leg, cutting a deep gash in his calf.

He screamed in pain as the glass cut him. Tom did not stop to look back, but continued across the street to hide behind the old trailers parked in the mobile home park. Perhaps there he could find help.

## CHAPTER 17

### The Stand-Off

Blackie was delayed by Shorty's injury and stopped for a moment to help him. Tom ran into the mobile home park, trying to distance himself from his attackers. The trailer park was dark and quiet. Everyone had gone to bed for the night and locked themselves inside away from the dangers of the city.

Tom needed help so he ran to one of the trailers and pounded on the door.

"Help! I am being chased! Call the police!" Tom screamed as he banged on the door.

There was no response so he called out again.

"Help me, please! Call the police!"

The porch light came on and a gruff voice was heard from inside of the trailer.

"Get out of here, you punk," a man said.

*SPEED KILLS!*

“You have to help me please. I am being chased by gang members who want to kill me.”

“How do I know you are telling the truth? Get out of here before I call the cops.”

“Yes,” Tom answered anxiously. “Call the cops! I want you to.”

“Are you being a smart aleck? Are you trying to make fun of me? Get out of here before I have to shoot you!”

The door opened a few inches and a shotgun barrel slowly eased through the opening, pointing at Tom. He heard the distinct sound of metal hitting metal as the loading slide was pulled back and a round was loaded into the cocking shaft. The slide was pushed forward and he heard the shotgun shell go into the chamber. The gun was loaded and ready to fire.

“Get out of here or I will shoot,” the man threatened. “We don’t need your kind around here causing trouble in the middle of the night.”

Tom knew better than to argue with a man with a shotgun so he stepped off the porch and ran away down the driveway between the trailers. He did not know how much time he had before Blackie would continue the chase. He expected him to leave his friend behind to resume the pursuit.

Tom slowed to a walk and listened to the night. In the distance he heard the sound of a police radio. By this time other units had arrived and were looking for him and for Officer Spencer. The noise of the radio was moving away from Tom as the car drove through the side streets searching for them.

He was about to call out when he heard the slapping sound of running feet hitting the pavement. Blackie had left his friend behind and had resumed the deadly chase. Tom decided not to yell for help again because he did not want to let Blackie know where he was.

## *SPEED KILLS!*

He continued walking away from the footsteps and looked at his hand to survey the damage. Unwrapping the bloody cloth he discovered that a shotgun pellet had pierced the web of his left hand between his thumb and forefinger. The bleeding had slowed but he could see a hole where the pellet had penetrated.

The injury wasn't as bad as he had originally thought but he would need a doctor to sew it up. He found a clean spot on the cloth and wrapped his hand tightly to control the bleeding. He left his fingers and thumb protruding from the bandage so he would be able to fight if he needed to.

"I'm comin' to get you, junior pig," Blackie shouted into the night. "You hurt my homeboy, Shorty, and now you are going to pay."

Tom heard the desperation in Blackie's voice and could tell that he was on a vendetta of revenge. Blackie sounded like a madman. He would not give up until he had either killed Tom or been defeated in the process.

Tom turned to his left and started jogging toward a wide street that ran next to the trailer park. He hoped to find an open business or a telephone where he could call for help. In the meantime, he had to do everything that he could to stay alive.

He reached the street and saw a large abandoned warehouse on the opposite side. One block to his left was the business district and the liquor store that he had just escaped from. If he could make it back there, he would be able to find help. He turned left and jogged up the street to the business district.

The ominous sound of a throbbing boom box filled the air and Tom stopped to determine where it was coming from. Fifty feet ahead of him the metallic blue low-rider turned out of a driveway and blocked his path. Two of the gang members, Flaco and Cripple, were in the front seat calling to him.

"Hey there, junior pig, where have you been?" Cripple said.

## SPEED KILLS!

“We have been looking everywhere for you. Why don’t you come here and play with us? We won’t hurt you.”

They laughed and gestured for Tom to walk to them. He heard Blackie’s footsteps approaching from behind so there would be no way to escape in that direction. If he ran down the street the boys in the car would easily catch up to him and run him over. He had only one choice left. He had to make a run for it to the warehouse across the street.

Tom took in a deep breath and stepped off the curb at a full run. He had taken two steps when he heard the engine on the Chevy roar as the gang members accelerated to cut him off. Without looking back he placed one foot in front of the other in rapid motion, his eyes glued to the old dilapidated warehouse across the street. He took in deep breaths and pumped his arms hard to help gain speed. The tires squealed as the car charged toward him.

*Run, Tom, run,* he thought to himself. *Run for your life.*

The other sidewalk was only a few feet away as he took his last sprinting steps. He sailed over the curb and stepped once on the sidewalk and placed the other foot on a low block wall that surrounded the warehouse parking lot. The car engine roared behind him and he heard the crunching sound of metal hitting concrete as the car jumped the curb and ran into the block wall.

He stepped off the wall into the asphalt parking lot just as the car bumper smashed against the wall he had jumped over. The front bumper was hung-up on the wall and the gang members cursed at him through the open car windows. Without slowing, Tom ran across the parking lot to the brown steel-sided warehouse.

He found a large sliding door that was partially open so he quickly stepped inside. He turned and pushed it closed behind him to help conceal his location. The air was suddenly quiet

## *SPEED KILLS!*

except for the forbidding echo of the steel door closing. A metal pin was hanging on a chain attached to the door so he grabbed it and slid it into the locking flange.

He was out of breath and exhausted. The gang members would not give up their quest for him but he felt that he had a few minutes to rest and collect his wits. It was time to make a plan.

A security light outside of the building cast some light inside. The building was all steel construction with a high ceiling that was supported by heavy upright steel columns. The building was empty except for a few pieces of broken equipment and discarded papers that littered the floor. Tom walked to the far side, his footsteps echoing at each step.

His left hand throbbed in pain but there was nothing he could do to relieve it. His throat was parched from thirst but he had no water. The enemy was behind him and he did not know which way to go to escape. He would have slumped to the ground in total despair if he did not have faith in God to help him.

His thoughts suddenly turned to Officer Spencer who was being set up for an ambush. That is, if he wasn't already dead. Tom found a purpose for continuing on. He had to find Officer Spencer and warn him about Toker. Toker was probably leading him away from the liquor store to a place where he could sit and wait for him. Tom decided that he had to escape so that he could warn Officer Spencer. It sounded like an impossible task, but it was good enough to give him a reason for going on.

A shotgun blast rang out in the building, echoing like a kettle drum. Tom instinctively held his ears and looked around for the enemy. A second shot sounded and he saw fire blasting through a hole in the door next to the locking pin.

"I'm comin' for you, junior pig," Blackie screamed through the hole. The words echoed through the empty building, which made them sound even more threatening.

A hand reached inside to pull the pin from the lock. Tom turned and ducked into a doorway that led into a series of offices that were attached to the warehouse. The room was much darker than the warehouse so Tom felt his way along the corridor past the open office doors. Rain had leaked into the building, making the carpet damp and the air smelled of mildew.

He turned a corner into a larger room and saw a shadow move in the corner. Could it be that one of the gang members had somehow entered from the other side and was waiting to ambush him?

Tom lunged for the figure, knocking the person to the ground. To his surprise, the man gave little resistance and Tom easily got on top of him and held his left hand in a wrist lock.

"Don't hurt me! Don't hurt me!" the man yelled. The voice was not that of a young gang member but of an old man.

"Who are you?" Tom asked.

"I'm just a bum. I ain't got no money. Please don't hurt me."

"I'm not going to hurt you," Tom said as he let go of the wrist. "What are you doing here?" Tom asked.

"I live here," the bum answered matter-of-factly. "What are you doing here?"

"Three gang members are chasing me with a sawed-off shotgun and they are about to kill me."

"Oh," the old man said thoughtfully. "Is that what all that ruckus was about?"

"I would like to talk to you, but they will be here in a couple of minutes. If I don't get moving, I'll be dead."

"Which way are you going to go?"

“I’m not sure yet. Any way that I can find out of here.”

“I can help you out of here,” the old man said. “Those gang members have bothered me enough in the past. I’d be glad to help.”

“Well great. I could use it. But we better hurry, they will be here any time now.”

“Follow me,” the man said as he hobbled toward a door on the opposite side of the room.

Tom complied and followed the weak looking old man to the door. He wore a dirty gray suit and walked with a limp as he shuffled toward the opening.

“This is my secret way out,” the man whispered as he opened the door.

“It doesn’t look very secret to me”

“Just be patient, son. Be patient. Follow me.”

Tom followed him through the doorway and the man tightly shut the door behind him. It did not have a lock so Tom did not feel very safe yet. The hallway was pitch black. He listened to the man as he walked and stayed right behind him. They went about twenty feet down the corridor when the man stopped and took Tom by the hand. Tom was surprised and immediately pulled away.

“Trust me,” the man calmly said.

Tom had no other choice so he let the man take his hand. He pulled it forward and placed Tom’s hand on a wooden ladder that led upward.

“This will lead to a crawl space that goes to a roof exit. It is dark up there so you will have to follow the rope that I laid out. When you reach the end of the rope, you will find a ladder that goes up. Climb the ladder to the roof and you can lift up the hatch to get out of the building.”

“What about you?” Tom asked. “Aren’t you coming?”

*SPEED KILLS!*

“I am old and crippled. I will just slow you down. The gangmembers know that I live here. I don’t think that they will bother me.”

In the far corridor Tom heard shouting as the gang members approached. They were kicking open doors and yelling threats at Tom.

“You no good pig-loving preacher,” Blackie cursed. “First you hurt my friend and now you wrecked my car. I’m gonna kill you real slow now. Come out, you coward, and face me!”

The old man pushed Tom toward the ladder.

“It is time for you to go.”

“I don’t even know your name,” Tom responded.

“Joe. That’s all. Just Joe the Drunk. Now go!”

Tom sensed the urgency in his voice and scampered up the wooden ladder to the attic. He crawled into the attic and found the rope that Joe had told him about. He tried to crawl as quietly as he could to avoid detection from the gang members who were only a few feet away. He had gone about thirty feet when he heard voices below him.

“Where could he be?” he heard Cripple ask.

“Ma-ma-maybe he went out th-th-the other side,” Flaco answered.

“That’s impossible,” Blackie said. “There is no way out of the building on that side. I have been in here dozens of times. He must be hiding in here somewhere.”

Tom stopped moving and lay still where he was at. If they heard him, Blackie would start firing into the ceiling to try to shoot him. Tom decided to wait until they left that part of the building.

“Hey old man,” he heard Blackie yell.

“What do you want,” he heard Joe respond.

“I’m lookin’ for a friend of mine,” Blackie continued. “He is a white kid, wearing a blue shirt. Have you seen him?”

*SPEED KILLS!*

"I ain't seen no one. I'm just an old drunk. Now leave me alone."

"I don't believe you," Blackie said in an angry voice. "I think that you saw him and you are hiding him somewhere."

"I don't know what you are talking about," Joe responded.

Tom heard a loud slap, and then a groan as Joe fell to the ground.

"I think that you are lying, old man. I am going to have to beat the truth out of you."

"I don't know nothin' about no kid."

Blackie kicked him hard in the ribs and Joe moaned in pain.

"Tell me where he is at!" Blackie yelled. "Or I'll blow you away with this shotgun."

Tom had to go back to help his friend. He squirmed in the tight attic in an attempt to turn himself around and hit his foot against a roof brace. The voices below became silent and Tom stopped moving.

"You don't know where he is at, is that right, old man?"

"I don't know nothin'"

"You either have big rats in your attic, or you are hiding that preacher kid up there."

Blackie directed his next statement to Tom.

"Hey, junior pig! I have your friend down here, and I am pointing my twelve-gauge at his head. Come down and I won't shoot him."

Tom waited for a silent moment before responding.

"Don't hurt him," he yelled. "I'll be down in a minute. Just let him go. He didn't do anything to you. I'm the one you want."

"You're right, junior cop. You are the one I want. I don't need this lying drunk no more."

Tom heard the hammer on the shotgun cock back.

"No...."he shouted. "Don't do it!"

*SPEED KILLS!*

Blackie pulled the trigger and the sound of the shotgun blast filled the building.

“You’re next, junior pig.”

Blackie pointed the gun at the ceiling and pulled the trigger. The pellets ripped through the drywall next to Tom’s right leg and smashed against the steel roof panels above him.

Tom didn’t want to wait for him to reload. He found the guide rope and scurried along the access platform until he came to the end of the rope which was next to a steel roof ladder. He didn’t want the gang members to follow so he quickly cut the rope and threw it to the side.

Two more shotgun blasts ripped through the ceiling ten feet behind him. Blackie had anticipated his direction and was randomly shooting into the ceiling. Tom grabbed the first rung of the steel ladder and pulled himself up. The attic was pitch black so he had to feel his way along. He had climbed fourteen feet up the ladder when Blackie again fired into the ceiling. This time he was much closer and the pellets flew past him and ricocheted off the steel panels.

Tom continued to climb as fast as he could. His left hand throbbed and he felt a sharp pain each time he grabbed a ladder rung. His hand was bleeding again but there was no way he could stop to tighten the make-shift bandage. He was twenty-five feet up the ladder when he came to the roof hatch.

It was unlocked so he shoved hard with his free hand, pushing the steel hatch up. The hatch lifted and fell backward with a loud clang.

“He is on the roof,” he heard a voice say far below him.

“Let’s go outside. We’ll catch up to him when he gets off the roof.”

Time was working against him so Tom pulled himself to the roof and looked around to survey his location. The roof was a

*SPEED KILLS!*

large flat area that was slightly pitched toward the sides. The outside edges were lined with a parfait that extended three feet above the roof line. If he hid behind it, no one could see his location from the ground.

Tom ran toward the street side that bordered Broadway. He crouched low and peeked over the top to look around. He was higher than most of the buildings in the area so he had an excellent view.

## CHAPTER 18

### The Showdown

To his left, about 500 yards away, he saw the liquor store where the robbery had occurred. Officer Spencer's car was still parked there but no one was around it. Beyond that, several blocks away, he saw two police cars slowly driving down the back alleys, with spot lights on looking for him and Officer Spencer. They were in the wrong location but there was no way that Tom could tell them.

He looked to his right. About 150 yards away, he saw a lone figure in a dark trench coat climbing a roof access ladder to a building that was across the street. Tom recognized the thin figure. It was Toker. He was setting up the ambush for Officer Spencer. Tom had to warn him of the danger.

But first he had to get off the roof.

Tom squatted low and hurried to the south side of the building which was next to an alley. He did not know how long

it would take the gang to get there so he had to hurry. He looked over to the edge at the alley, which was about forty feet below. A drop that far would be deadly.

A steel rain gutter pipe protruded from the roof and spilled out in the alley. That was the only way down, so Tom scaled the parafit and stepped on to the drain pipe. It was sturdy enough to support his weight but he would have to hold on tight to make it all the way to the bottom.

He eased his body down and held the pipe with both hands. He then slid one foot down the side of it until it came to rest on a support bracket. Now, he was ready to make his descent. He had trouble grasping the pipe with his injured hand so he wedged his fingers behind the pipe to gain support. At each step, he scrapped the skin from his fingers but it was the only way down. He felt like a fly on a wall. If Blackie found him like this he would be able to pick him off with the shotgun with no problem.

Tom neared the ground when he heard the sound of the boom box reverberating through the air. He hated that sound.

He still had ten feet to go when the car turned into the alley and the bright headlights illuminated his position. He froze in mid-step, expecting the worst. Perhaps they wouldn't see him, he thought.

The car stopped with the boom box sounding as the three remaining Market Street Boys got out of the car. Blackie had the shotgun in his right hand and casually leaned it over his right shoulder.

"Hey there, junior pig," he yelled to Tom. "It looks like this is the end of the line for you."

"It ain't over until it's over," Tom answered back.

"Well I have the twelve-gauge and I say that it is over," Blackie said as the other gang members responded in laughter.

"Too bad your cop friends aren't here to help you," he said.

“Yeah,” Flaco said. “They-they-they’re on the other si-side of town looking for you. Huh-huh-huh,” he laughed.

“You had better pray to your God because I am going to shoot you right there,” Blackie calmly said. He appeared to be enjoying the situation.

“You’re doing the wrong thing,” Tom said. “Let me go.”

“I’m not going to let you go now,” Blackie responded. “Not after all we have been through. You almost killed Shorty with that piece of glass. And you wrecked my car.”

“I didn’t do that. You did it to yourselves.”

Tom was getting tired of hanging on to the pipe and felt his grip slipping. His left hand was bleeding more and blood was starting to run down his arm to his elbow.

“This is it, junior pig,” Blackie said in a determined tone of voice. “It’s time to meet your maker.”

He brought the gun up to his shoulder and took aim at Tom. This was the third time Tom looked down the barrel of that gun and he didn’t like it. The car stereo steadily beat out the rhythm of a popular rap song as the singer sang a rhyme about shooting another gang member.

Blackie was ready to shoot. Tom waited to the last second and released his grip, free falling to the ground. Blackie pulled both triggers and both barrels fired with a loud explosion spraying pellets against the wall where Tom’s head had been. Pieces of hot lead and plaster rained down on him as he fell ten feet to the ground.

He hit the ground hard and lost his balance.

“Shucks,” cursed Blackie. “I missed again!”

Tom didn’t wait for him to reload but jumped to his feet and ran down the alley away from the car. He had no idea where the alley went to but knew that he had to get away fast. He heard the three gang members shout threats at him as they pursued him.

## *SPEED KILLS!*

The floor of the alley was covered with trash and broken pallets. He had run about forty feet with the gang chasing him when the alley turned sharply to the left. It was the only way for him to go so he turned and followed it another thirty feet when he came face to face with a brick wall that rose twenty feet into the air. This time, there were no doors, no windows, and no bums named Joe to show him the way. He was alone.

Blackie turned the corner and slowed to a walk. To his right walked Flaco and to his left was Cripple.

"This time, there is nowhere to run," Blackie said confidently. "I don't know if I want to shoot you now, or break both your legs first and watch you beg for mercy."

"You don't have to do either," Tom responded. "What you are doing is wrong. If the police don't catch you, you will one day have to face God and answer for your crimes."

"Don't tell me about God," Blackie said angrily. "He can't save you now. You are tired, you are hurt and you are outnumbered three to one. You don't have a chance."

"That's what they said about David and Goliath."

"What are you talkin' about?" Blackie said as he turned to Flaco. "Flaco. You get the first chance at him. Go on. Beat his brains out."

Flaco smiled as he spit on his hands and rubbed them together. He had brown crooked teeth that looked as if they never had been brushed in his lifetime. He reached in his back pocket and pulled out a six-inch butterfly knife. With a flick of his wrist the knife opened up displaying a razor sharp double-edged six-inch blade.

Tom had a green belt in karate but he had never trained with a real knife. He tightened the bandage on his left hand and held his hands in front of him, preparing for the attack.

Flaco approached and stopped about six feet away, slowly

waving the knife in front of him. Tom danced lightly on his feet, waiting for the attack. Flaco reached forward with the knife and Tom kicked at it with a side kick. He hit Flaco's wrist but Flaco managed to hold on to the knife.

"You fight li-li-like Bruce Lee," Flaco said. "Bu-bu-but you are not good enough to stop me."

"Stop talking," yelled Blackie. "Stick him."

"Yeah," Cripple said. "Stick him real good."

Flaco eyed Tom carefully and switched the knife from hand to hand. When the knife was in his right hand, he lunged toward Tom with a jab.

Tom stepped aside and let the knife go past his body. He grabbed Flaco's right wrist and twisted hard as he used his left leg to sweep his legs. Flaco lost his balance so Tom grabbed him by the right shoulder and slammed him into the wall. Flaco moaned and slid to the ground unconscious. The knife fell out of his hand, clattering on the pavement.

Tom turned to Blackie, who was about fifteen feet away. He still had the sawed-off shot gun resting on his right shoulder but Tom expected him to lower it and fire at any second. Tom took the offensive and charged at Blackie at a full run.

Blackie looked startled and backed up as he lowered the gun. Tom jumped in the air and hit Blackie square on the chest with a leaping sidekick. Blackie fell backward and lost his grip on the gun, which fell to the ground. Tom fell on the ground next to Blackie but immediately jumped to his feet.

"I'm gonna kill you, junior pig," Blackie threatened and he lifted himself up.

"Quit now, while you still have the chance," Tom said.

"Not in your lifetime," Blackie answered as he swung at Tom. Tom moved to the side and grabbed Blackie's wrist and pulled him forward into a stack of wooden pallets. Blackie hit the pallets headfirst and fell to the ground unconscious.

SPEED KILLS!

Tom saw the gun about ten feet away and looked at Cripple, who was deciding if he should pick up the gun or not.

“Don’t touch it,” Tom ordered.

Cripple looked him in the eye, then turned and ran out of the alley to the street. Tom stepped over to the gun and picked it up. The present danger had passed but he was still concerned about Officer Spencer. He had to find some way to warn him.

Tom held the shotgun in his right hand as he walked out of the alley. At the end of the alley, near the street, the low rider was parked with the lights on and the boom box blaring a song about cop killing. Tom walked up to the car, pointed the shotgun through the open window and fired one shot into the stereo, blowing it to pieces. The music stopped and the night was silent. Tom smiled.

He found a few loose shells on the back seat so he picked them up and put them in his pocket.

*I might need these to help Officer Spencer,* he thought.

He then jogged across the street to try to stop Toker.

## CHAPTER 19

### The Final Conflict

The street looked a lot different from the ground. He had only gotten a glimpse of the building that Toker was staked out on for the ambush. Now Tom had to find which building he was on, and he had to help Officer Spencer.

He crossed the street at an easy jog, holding the sawed-off shotgun at his right side. He felt uncomfortable with the gun and had no desire to use it. But Toker was going to kill an innocent person and Tom thought that he might be the only one who could stop him.

Tom looked down the street at all the buildings and tried to remember which one Toker was on. He knew it was a two-story white building and estimated that it was about 150 yards from his location. There were at least five white buildings that fit that description, so he would have to guess which one it was.

He passed a pizza restaurant, a dry cleaners and two clothing stores and came to a pawn shop that was painted white and had a large blue cloth awning on the front. He stepped back into the street and looked up but was unable to see if anyone was on the roof.

To the right of the building he was facing he saw a narrow walkway that went to the back side of the store and came out in a service alley. Tom walked into the walkway, hoping to find Officer Spencer to warn him. He did not want to call out Officer Spencer's name because Toker would hear and it would give away his location.

Tom quietly came out of the walkway into the dark alley. He listened for any sounds but heard nothing. He had hoped that he would be able to hear Officer Spencer's police radio but the alley was silent. He looked to the right and saw several large steel Dumpsters against the wall behind the buildings. To his left he saw a small parking lot and a steel access ladder on the building that went to the roof of the pawn shop. He would have a better view from the roof so he decided to climb the ladder.

He tucked the shotgun in his belt and grabbed the ladder with one hand. He placed his left foot on the first rung which made a loud bell sound that echoed through the alley. He stopped in his tracks and listened for any movement. He did not want Toker to hear him coming. He waited without moving for several minutes until he felt it was safe to continue.

He was more careful about how he climbed the rest of the ladder and slowly made it to the top as he carefully placed each foot on the ladder rungs without making any noise. He reached the top and grabbed on to the low parfait with his right hand and pulled himself up. Tom peeked his head over the top and looked around for any sign of Toker. The flat gray roof was cluttered with air conditioning equipment and vent pipes, but no one was there.

## *SPEED KILLS!*

Tom grabbed the edge with his other hand and slowly, as quietly as he could, pulled himself up. He slid over the top and eased himself down on the sandy asphalt roof.

He heard soft shuffling footsteps on the top of the building next to the pawn shop. Tom placed his face flat on the cool roof and lay perfectly quiet. His heart pounded as a bead of sweat rose up on his forehead. If Toker was looking in his direction he wanted him to see only a loose pile of clothing.

A few minutes later, he heard the footsteps move away from him. His plan had worked. At least now he knew where Toker was at.

When he felt it was safe, he lifted himself up to his hands and knees and slowly crawled toward the edge of the building. The parffit was two feet above the roof line so he had some cover. After several long minutes, he came to the edge and cautiously peered over the top.

The other building was about three feet lower and eight feet away from the building that he was on. Between the two buildings was an eight-foot separation with a straight drop twenty feet to the ground.

He studied the roof of the other building carefully and saw a dark figure hunched against a large air conditioning unit near the back side of the roof. It was Toker. Toker was looking down into the alley and was holding a black handgun in his right hand.

Tom looked past Toker into the alley and saw a shadowy figure moving in the alley on the far side. A light reflected off a shiny badge and Tom knew it was Officer Spencer. Toker had set up the ambush with great care and now he was ready for his attack.

Tom had to act fast. He remembered the shotgun that he had but could not use it because Toker was between him and

Officer Spencer. If he shot at Toker, Officer Spencer would be in the direct line of fire. Tom took the shotgun out of his belt and quietly laid it on the roof.

Toker raised his handgun and took careful aim at Officer Spencer.

Tom stood up and placed his right foot on the top of the parfait. He leapt up, pushing off the wall with all his strength and flew through the air toward the other roof. He fixed his eyes on Toker, ignoring the twenty-foot drop to solid concrete that was below him. He screamed a bloody war yell as he sailed across the abyss.

Toker was startled and turned his attention to Tom.

“Aiiiiii...!” Tom yelled as he landed on the other roof.

“What the...?” Toker said in disbelief.

“Officer Spencer! Watch out!” Tom screamed as he ran toward Toker.

Toker began to turn as he held the black handgun at waist height. Tom was approaching at a full run as Toker raised the gun to aim. When Tom was ten feet away he jumped in the air with both feet in front of him and yelled a karate threat.

“Kaiee!” he sharply yelled as both feet struck Toker’s gun hand. The gun was deflected to the side as he pulled the trigger and a shot rang out. The bullet struck the air conditioning unit and zinged into the distance.

The momentum carried Tom into Toker and he fell against him as both of them tumbled to the roof. Toker landed on his back with the gun still clasped in his hand as he waved it wildly in the air. Tom was on top of Toker and grabbed for the gun with both hands. He twisted hard and slammed Toker’s hand down hard against the low parfait.

Toker held on to the gun but reached out with the other hand and hit Tom hard on his left cheek. Tom felt a sharp pain

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as his wound started to bleed. Tom kept his hold on the gun hand and Toker again struck with his free hand, hitting him hard in the face.

Tom slammed Toker's hand down again and the gun came loose and fell to the alley below.

"You punk kid! You're gonna pay for that," Toker threatened.

"You're under citizen's arrest," Tom shouted.

"You ain't man enough to arrest me," Toker responded angrily as he grabbed Tom by the throat with both hands.

Tom felt Toker's bony hands tighten around his neck. If he could not get free he would be unconscious in less than a minute and Toker would kill him. Tom reached out with both hands and pressed against Toker's face as hard as he could, trying to break the grip.

Toker twisted his body and Tom fell to his side. Before he could get his balance, Toker jumped on top of Tom and resumed the choke hold. Toker stared at Tom with angry eyes as he squinted with determination. His only intent was to squeeze the life out of Tom.

"Die, kid, die," Toker growled in a deep voice.

Tom was not about to give up so he kicked up with his right leg and hit Toker on the back of the head. He grabbed both of Toker's hands and tried to pull them free as he felt his energy drain from him. His lungs burned in pain at the lack of oxygen and he saw white spots in front of his eyes.

Toker faded away into a black shadow when Tom heard footsteps running toward him.

"Let him go," he heard Officer Spencer say.

Officer Spencer reached around Toker from the back with one arm and applied a carotid restraint hold to his neck. The hold is a special police tactic that will cut off the blood supply to

*SPEED KILLS!*

the suspect's brain, but will allow air to go into the lungs. It is one of the quickest way to render an assailant unconscious.

Ten seconds later, Toker was unconscious and became limp and released his hold on Tom. Tom saw Officer Spencer pull Toker to one side, lay him down and quickly handcuff him. Tom smiled and drifted off into unconsciousness.

## CHAPTER 20

### A Successful Ending

Tom became aware of a throbbing pain in his head. He remembered the fight with Toker but did not know where he was at. He tried to stir himself awake but was unable to release his mind from the dark grip of sleep.

*Am I dead?* he thought. *Maybe I lost the fight after all?*

“Tom,” a voice said.

He had heard the voice before but he could not recognize it.

“Tom. It’s time to wake up now.”

It was his mother. Perhaps the whole thing was a dream. Perhaps it was time for him to get ready for school.

Tom forced his heavy eyelids open but saw only bright lights and blurred images. He blinked several times and images around him came into focus.

Above him he saw the face of his mother and father. He looked down at himself and discovered that he was laying in a

hospital bed covered with a white sheet. He had a large bandage on his left hand and bandage on his cheek.

“What happened?” he rasped. “Is Officer Spencer okay?”

“I’m right here,” Officer Spencer said. “And I am fine. The question is, are you okay?”

“I’m not sure yet. What happened to Toker?”

“Right now he is sitting in a jail cell waiting to go to trial. He won’t be out for a long time.”

“And what about those other guys? The guys that wanted to shoot me?”

“Officer Hamilton found them knocked out in the alley near their car. They are in jail too.”

“Oh, good,” Tom said as he sighed a sigh of relief.

“You had quite a night,” Officer Spencer said. “We are still trying to figure out what happened. When you feel better, you are going to have to tell us all about it.”

“I’ll be glad to,” Tom said with a weak smile.

“In the meantime,” Officer Spencer continued, “You need to stay here and get better. You have a life-saving medal coming to you. The mayor is going to present the medal to you personally.”

“That’s great.”

“And I would like you to join the Police Explorer program that we have at the police station. I am going to be your personal sponsor.”

Fatigue overtook Tom and he started to fall asleep.

“But, Tom,” he heard Officer Spencer say, “I want you to promise me one thing.”

“What is that?” Tom said sleepily.

“I want you to promise that you won’t get into this kind of trouble again. It is too dangerous and I don’t want you to get hurt.”

“I promise,” he said with a smile and drifted off to sleep.

Tom didn’t know that even greater adventures were to come.