**The Hospital Flip**

**Table of Contents**

**CHAPTER 1**

Tricks and Crash………………………………………………………………………4

**CHAPTER 2**

The Hospital………………………..……………………………………………………6

**CHAPTER 3**

The Check-Up………………..………………………………………………………….9

**CHAPTER 4**

Sneaking Out………………….………………………………………………………11

**Chapter 5**

The Punishment…………………………………………….…………………….…16

CHAPTER 1

Tricks and Crash

Tom was skateboarding on the street with Billy and Lewis, the neighbor kids. They practiced their hospital flips all summer long, and this was the day that Tom would finally nail it. This was a big deal to Tom because he was the youngest of the neighbors. He was 7, Billy was 9, and Lewis was 12. Lewis had been skateboarding the longest, but Tom was a quick learner. He was courageous and never backed down from a challenge.

“Ahh, Tom! You almost had that one,” Lewis called out. “I bet if you practice your kickflips and ollies a few more times that you’ll be able to land the hospital flip.”

“Yeah, man, my ollies are solid, and my kickflips are alright,” Tom said. “Combining them for this one is hard. I keep kicking the board too far out when I turn it around in the air. Show me again.” Lewis dropped his board on the ground, and Tom was so mesmerized by his footwork that he didn’t notice Billy grinding on the railing beside him. *WOOSH,* he rode by and blew Tom’s hat off.

“Watch it, Billy,” Tom said. “I’m learning the hospital flip from Lewis. Go practice your grinds over there.” Tom pointed over to the other side of the street. Billy shrugged his shoulders and went across. Tom watched Lewis a few more times before he took a deep breath and tried again. “Alright, man. I got this,” he said.

Lewis and Billy watched from the side of the road as Tom put his board down in front of him. “First, I’ll practice in one place then I’ll add it into my straight skate down the street. We’ll be ready for Venice Beach Skatepark by next weekend!” Tom landed the first 2 practice runs almost perfectly. “Ok, here I go,” he said as he rode down the street. Tom glided on the road like hockey skates on ice. He was so sure he could land this new trick, and he did! Lewis and Billy cheered when he landed his latest trick the Hospital flip! Tom looked back, at his cheering friends, raising his arms above his head in triumph; grinning from ear to ear!

Suddenly, Tom noticed the cheers stop and heard them turn into shouts. Billy and Lewis were shouting, “stop! Stop!” while running towards him. Quickly Turning forward, Tom then saw Charlie's ice cream truck suddenly right in front of him, as if it came out of nowhere! He tried to avoid the big vehicle, but it swiftly swerved directly into his path!

Tom, remembered seeing his skateboard fly through the air as his friends ran in his direction, shouting “Tom!, Tom!”.

The last thing Tom heard was the screech of the truck tires with the familiar music of Charlie’s ice cream truck.

Tom, now, seeing nothing but black smashed into the ground and laid still. The world was now silent to Tom but hectic and noisy to everyone who witnessed the collision.

CHAPTER 2

The Hospital

“Oh my gosh, oh my gosh. I am so sorry, Mrs. Jolly. I am so so sorry. Let’s get him to the hospital right away,” Charlie, the neighborhood ice cream truck driver, apologized. Lewis and Billy ran home to ask for a ride to the hospital. They wanted to follow Tom to make sure he was ok. Wendy scooped Tom up in her arms and ran to her van. “John! John! It’s Tom. We’re going to the hospital. Grab the kids and get in the van. Now!” Wendy shouted frantically while she tried to keep Tom awake.

“Mom, what’s going on? My head hurts,” Tom said as he struggled to keep his eyes open. “It’s ok baby, we’re going to get you fixed up. It’s ok. Just stay awake, Tom.” Everyone hurried into the van and rushed to the hospital.

Charlie followed behind them, and Lewis and Billy were on their way.

When they arrived at the hospital, John stopped the van abruptly outside of the emergency room doors. Wendy held Tom in her arms and dashed inside. “Is Dr. Sampson in today? My son, Tom was in an accident and needs to see a doctor right away,” Wendy exclaimed. “Yes, mam. Let me page him,” the nurse answered.

“Mrs. Jolly, what’s the trouble? What’s happened to Tom?” Dr. Sampson asked when he came through the emergency room doors.

He passed his charts off to the nurse and motioned for Wendy to bring Tom to the bed to the left. “Let me take a look at him,” Dr. Sampson said. He put his stethoscope up to his ears and listened to Tom’s breathing. “Tom, can you take a deep breath for me?” Tom was awake but groggy. He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “What happened?” He asked, laying down on the bed. “My head hurts, and my arm feels tingly. One minute I was skateboarding and the next I was laying on the ground.”

Charlie, John and the kids, Lewis, Billy, and Lewis’s mom, Ms. Hill, ran toward Tom. “Oh Tom, I’m so so sorry. I thought you waved at me and were boarding out of the way. I turned the truck too quickly. I am so so sorry. What can I do? What can I do?” Charlie apologized profusely. “It’s ok, Charlie. I was boarding and just landed the trick I was practicing all summer. It was the hospital flip. I was excited I landed it and wasn’t paying attention.”

“Your first what?” Wendy asked. “Hospital flip, Mom. Lewis, Billy, and I have been practicing for Venice Beach Skatepark, and I finally landed this trick!” Tom answered. Excitement returned to his voice.

“Tom Jolly,” John started. “If you want to skateboard again on our street you have got to be more careful. Pay attention! And you,” John turned to face Charlie. “Slow down when you’re bringing your ice cream truck around our neighborhood. Kids are always playing out there. You know that, man. Come on.” Charlie put his head down and his hand on Tom’s. “I truly am sorry. I hope you’re ok.”

“He’ll be just fine,” Dr. Sampson started. “He just needs some ice on his head and a cast on this arm to straighten out that wrist. You’re one lucky kid, Tom. Be more careful out there. I’ll get you fixed up with a cast, and then you can go home. You need to take it easy for a few weeks.”

“A cast?! Cool!” Tom exclaimed. “How long do I need to wear it? Can my friends sign it and put cool stickers on it? How long before I can board again? We’re going to hit up the skatepark with the pros next weekend!”

“You certainly will not!” Wendy snapped. “You scared me to death, Tom Jolly. You will stay home and rest, and when you go to school you will rest, and when you come home from school, you will do your homework! There will be no more skating on our street!”

“But, Mom,” Tom whined. “Please, Mom, I finally landed the flip. I have to show it off in the park.”

“Well, to be honest, Wendy,” John chimed in. “He did land the *hospital* flip so perfectly he ended up in the *hospital*.” Everyone, even Wendy, cracked a smile at John’s lame joke. “Come on, honey, we’ll get some tea while we wait for Dr. Sampson to finish up with Tom’s cast.” John motioned for everyone to follow him. They all went to the cafeteria to have some tea and juice while Tom was fitted with his cast.

CHAPTER 3

The Check-Up

Tom was on his way to the hospital to have his cast removed and couldn’t wait to get back on his board. “Dad,” Tom asked. “Can you please take Lewis, Billy, and I to the skatepark this weekend? I have been listening to the teachers at school and doing my homework and resting as Mom said. It’s been 6 weeks since she let me out to skate. I know I’m not allowed on the street anymore because of the accident, but can we please go to the park?”

John shook his head, looked at Tom, then at the road, then back at Tom’s arm. “Tom, I don’t know if it’s such a good idea you going to the skatepark. I think if you wait a few more years, you’ll be more ready. Lewis is 5 years older than you. His mom lets him go because he has been skating for a long time. You are a beginner. The skatepark is too advanced for you.”

Tom folded his arms and let out a big sigh. “Fine,” he said. “But if Dr. Sampson says I’m fine to skate then I think I should be allowed to go with Lewis and Billy.” “Let’s talk about it when we get home,” John said.

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“Alright, Tom,” Dr. Sampson started. “It looks like your wrist is as good as new. You’re ready to hop…”

“Uhh Dr. Sampson, do you agree it is a good idea for Tom to take it easy and keep practicing at home before going to the skatepark?” John interrupted. His eyebrows raised to signal to Dr. Sampson that they did not plan to let Tom go. Dr. Sampson looked at John, nodded, then winked at Tom and replied, “Oh no, Mr. Jolly. This kid is ready. I think he can handle it.” John tried to be angry, but he knew that Dr. Sampson was right. All they needed to do was to convince Wendy.

“See! I told ya, Dad! I told ya!” Tom said with excitement. John let out a big sigh, smiled, put his hand on Tom’s shoulder. “Well, all we have to do now is convince your mother.”

“Dr. Sampson, can you write me a note that says I can skate?” Tom asked. Dr. Sampson smiled and said, “I sure can. But you listen to your mother. She loves you and just wants you to be safe. Maybe skip the hospital flips this time.” He winked as he wrote Tom a note.

CHAPTER 4

Sneaking Out

“Mom! Mom!” Tom yelled. He burst through the front door of their house and raced to find his mom in the living room. “Dr. Sampson said I’m ready for the skatepark with Lewis and Billy! Look! No cast.” He twisted his hand this way and that to show how strong it was. “Tom,” Wendy shook her head. “I just don’t think you’re ready for Venice Beach Skatepark. All the pros go there. I think you’re doing great, but I just worry about you getting hurt. Let’s go next summer after you’ve had more practice.”

“But Mom! Dr. Sampson said I could go.” Tom complained.

“Tom, we said no. We will take you to watch the pros on the weekend. Next summer you can give it a shot.” John said.

Tom stormed upstairs to his room. Alan was there building a solar system for extra credit at school. “Tom, wanna help me with this? You can paint Jupiter! It’s so cool. It has a storm on it that has been storming for years!” Alan asked. “Leave me alone, Alan. I don’t want to build a stupid solar system. I want to skateboard with everyone else.” Tom replied. He climbed onto his bunk bed and buried his face in his pillow. “Come on, Tom, help me out. This is for extra credit, and you know you need it!” Alan joked. “Leave me alone!” Tom shouted back. Alan shrugged his shoulders and kept working on his project.

“Time for dinner!” Grandma Helen called. Anne raced to get Alan and Tom from their room. Tom refused to join them, so Anne and Alan went down for supper. “Tom won’t come down,” Anne said.

“Let’s give him some space. I’ll go have a talk with him after dinner,” John said. The Jolly’s all sat down to the table together while John and Wendy served everyone’s food.

Meanwhile, upstairs, Tom was getting his shoes and board ready. He called Lewis and Billy to meet him outside to take the bus to Venice Beach Skatepark. Tom peeked downstairs and could hear everyone talking at the table. He tip-toed quietly down the stairs and out the front door without making a sound. Once Tom reached Lewis and Billy, he leaped for joy and was proud he made his first escape ever. He knew he would get in trouble if he got caught, but he just had to skate with the pros.

“Dude, I can’t believe you snuck out,” Lewis said.

“Yeah man, aren’t you scared you’ll get in trouble? Our moms said we could go, but we didn’t say you were coming,” Billy added.

“They’ll never know. They’re having dinner now, and my Grandma made dessert so they’ll be at least an hour. That’s enough time to get down there, do a few tricks, and get back before they even notice I’m gone,” Tom said with confidence. The boys all headed for the bus, ready to prove themselves to the pros.

When they arrived, the place bounced with the sound of music and crowds surrounding the sunken bowl. Lewis, Billy, and Tom walked over to the bowl, and their eyes widened. They stared at the skaters doing all sorts of crazy tricks. There were people of all ages there. Young kids doing wallies and older pros trying out their triple sets.

Tom was mesmerized. Billy and Lewis had been there before, so they dropped their boards and joined in. Tom was hesitant to start, but once he slid down the side of the bowl for the first time, he knew he had made the right choice to sneak out.

Back at the Jolly’s house, everyone was finishing up dinner. “Why don’t you go check on Tom,” Wendy asked John. “Let’s give him a bit longer to calm down. I’m sure he’ll be hungry soon.” John replied.

Anne and Alan helped clean up the dishes while the family went outside to enjoy some tea on the patio. When they finished the dishes, Alan went back up to his room to finish his solar system project for school. “Tom?” He whispered. “Tom? Are you asleep?” Alan went over to Tom’s bunk and nudged the blankets. He pulled the blankets back to see pillows in a line and a soccer ball. “Mom! Dad!” Alan called out. “Tom’s not here!” Wendy and John rushed upstairs and hollered for Tom. When he didn’t answer, Wendy looked at John and said, “I bet that boy went to the skatepark. Quick! Let’s go.”

Alan and Anne stayed home with Grandma Helen and Grandpa Henry while John and Wendy drove to the skatepark. When they arrived, they pushed through the crowds to get to the bowl. Their eyes went from angry to amazed as they watched their son boarding with everyone there. “He really is quite good,” John said. He looked at Wendy with a half smirk on his face. “Yeah,” she admitted. “He is outstanding. Look at that!” She pointed at Tom as he attempted to skate up the bowl on one side then down the other.

“Oh my gosh! Mr. and Mrs. Jolly,” Lewis said. “What are you doing here?” He looked down at his board then back up to the Jolly’s. “We’re keeping an eye on Tom. He really is ok.”

“Not now, Lewis. I’ll talk to you later,” Wendy replied. Tom may be good, but she was angry that he snuck out of the house.

“Dude! Tom is going to try the hospital flip again in here. Check him out,” Billy said astonished. “Oh uh, hi Mr. and Mrs. Jolly. How uh, how are you?” He asked nervously.

“Not now, Billy,” John said quietly. All eyes were on Tom as he flipped the board around with his feet. People were amazed to see someone so young attempting such a difficult trick. It was as if he were moving in slow motion. He rose off the board like a bird out of a tree. He twisted the board around, lifted his feet, and landed back down gracefully as he glided up the other side of the bowl. The crowds cheered. Even Wendy and John cheered for him.

“Oh, man! Did you guys see that? Did you see it?” Tom asked his friends with excitement. His happy face turned worried when he noticed his parents standing over him. “Tom Jolly!” Wendy exclaimed. “Get your butt into the van right now!” She pointed towards the parking lot. John followed. Lewis and Billy widened their eyes at Tom and shrugged their shoulders. “Good luck, bro,” they whispered.

CHAPTER 5

The Punishment

Tom was so stoked that he had landed the hospital flip in front of so many experienced boarders, that he wasn’t worried about his punishment. Wendy and John were silent the whole way home. Tom waited for the talk. He waited for the yelling. He waited to be grounded. He waited for anything. But nothing happened. His mom and dad said nothing. When they got home, they said nothing. Tom went up to his room and told Alan all about the awesome skatepark. He asked if his mom and dad were angry. Alan told him they left the house so fast he didn’t know how they felt. He assumed that Tom would be in trouble too.

Days passed, and still not a word from John or Wendy. Tom tried to apologize, “Mom, Dad? I really am sorry I left without telling you. I knew you wouldn’t let me go, and I just had to show off my new trick. I’m sorry I broke the rules.” Wendy and John looked at each other, then looked at Tom. “Ok,” they responded. Then they would go back to whatever they were doing.

For days, Tom tried to apologize. He talked to them. He washed the dishes. He tried his best on his homework. He ended up joining Alan in his extra credit project without being asked. He tried everything to apologize and just felt like nothing worked. They were still mad.

“Mom?” Tom asked. “Mom, I am sorry I snuck out. I won’t ever do it again. Please talk to me.” Tom had a tear in his eye. He really missed family game nights and just hanging out together. For days, no one spoke to him besides his brother and sister.

“Tom,” Wendy answered. “You really scared us. You are only 7 years old. You cannot be sneaking out of this house and going anywhere without telling us where you are going and who you are going with.”

“Yeah, Tom. We know you think you are ready for Venice Beach Skatepark and you showed us tonight that you are, but you also showed us that we cannot trust you anymore,” John added. “If you want to go skate again, you have to tell us when you are going and who you are going with. There are terrible things that happen to kids who go out at night alone. You have seen the news. You have listened to your mom, and I explain the dangers of going out at night and talking to strangers. You know what you did was unsafe and unacceptable.”

Tom lowered his head. “I know. I really am sorry.”

“We know you are sweetheart,” Wendy hugged Tom. John joined in too. When they let go, Tom looked up, gave a half smile, and said, “at least the hospital flip didn’t take me to the hospital twice?”