

Ziggy Two Step - Courier Extraordinaire

by

Mark Goodwin

SMASHWORDS EDITION

* * * * *

PUBLISHED BY

Mark Goodwin on Smashwords

Copyright 2011 by Mark Goodwin

ISBN 978-1-4659-2080-5

This ebook is a work of fiction. All names, characters, locations and incidents are products of the author's imagination or have been used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, locales or events is entirely coincidental.

Smashwords Edition License Notes

This ebook is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. This ebook may not be re-sold or given away to other people. If you would like to share this book with another person, please purchase an additional copy for each person you share it with. If you're reading this book and did not purchase it, or it was not purchased for your use only, then you should return to Smashwords.com and purchase your own copy. Thank you for respecting the author's work.

Cover design by Jane Sladen

Special Thanks to Jane Sladen (My Partner)

who assisted me and proofread this story

and also

Thank You to My Facebooks Friends

Who Encouraged Me

The Early Years

Ziggy was born and raised in Riverton, a mid-size town located in a small valley in Northern Montana. Population 51,407. Crime Rate Low. Major Tourist Attraction - none to speak of.

His real name was Thomas Edward Haliburton but by the time he was 14 months old, it was largely forgotten. Once he learnt how to stand homus erectus, it was not long before he took his first steps, followed soon after with an increase of speed and forward progression that was not always in a straight line. He zigged left. He zagged right. Rarely did he go straight. To call him Ziggy Zaggy seemed a bit cruel to do to someone who had not passed his 2nd birthday. His Mom, his Dad and his older sister Lynn all agreed that Ziggy was the only proper title to bestow upon him.

At the age of 5, he could just about outrun his Mom. Two years later, it was all Dad could do to keep up with him. Ziggy was known for speed - he was born to run. At the age of 8, Ziggy was tall enough to be able to take 2 steps at a time regardless of the steepness which challenged him. Ziggy never walked up a staircase but rather sprinted upward missing every alternate step. Why climb a staircase one step at a time when you can reach the top in half the time? Soon after, nobody called him Ziggy anymore. Instead they called him Ziggy Two Step.

Now Ziggy Two Step's life was not all that different from most boys his age. He liked to play ball, his favourite ice cream was chocolate chip and he loved to dream of one day being rich. He finished his schooling at the prime old age of 17 simply because his folks didn't have the means to send him on to college. Ziggy Two Step was no dummy though - he just lacked the

resources to acquire an extended formal education which was only available in Golden, a larger town 50 miles to the south.

Monday June 27th

Ziggy Two Step had applied for a job with 5 Minute Courier which was located in City Central, a 4 blocks square area right smack dab in the middle of town. It was a name the town folk adopted for the business part of town and they all got quite a chuckle out of it. Even more so, when the tourists (infrequent though they may be) never could quite grasp the concept. His philosophy in life was time is money and Ziggy was not one to waste it. He was the ideal employee for such a company and they hired him immediately. He was now the newest member of the Bicycle Corps which consisted of him and one other, a friendly and likeable young man who had migrated from somewhere in the east somewhere in the Orient to be more precise. Some of the folks didn't really regard Wung Chou as all that young, principally because he was somewhere near his 70th birthday but he was very fit and young in the mind. He was an efficient bicycle courier but business was booming and he needed help. What a dynamic duo these two would become.

Monday, June 27th was his first day on the job and like any other new job, the day was spent learning the ropes or more precisely, learning the quickest ways to get from here to there. Ziggy was confident because he knew he was fast. A full-fledged member of the Bicycle Corps of 5 Minute Courier. Life doesn't get much better than that. Besides, everyone in town didn't really expect to get their parcel or package within 5 minutes. Heck, that was just the name of the company, right? In fact if you have to courier something from one end of town to the other, it might take 18 minutes or even longer. The town folk never complained.

Wouldn't you know that Ziggy Two Step's first delivery was a package to James Reynolds, the Mayor of Riverton. The mayor's office was, of course, in City Hall. To see the Mayor, if he had time to see you in such a busy town, meant climbing the 12 steps, entering the front door and proceeding to the end of the hallway and turning left ... or zigging left if you prefer. So off goes Ziggy, peddling as fast as he can, down Memory Lane and through the 4 way stop (slowing down of course) to arrive at City Hall in under 3 minutes. He jumps off the bike, heads towards the front door two steps at a time - zigs a bit, attempts to zag to compensate for the zig and collides with Mabel Hines, Riverton's oldest citizen. Her purse goes flying into a rose bush, her cane gets caught between her legs and she finds herself on the sidewalk. She didn't have a clue what hit her.

Ziggy wasn't sure if he had hit something or not but he knew where his duty lay. A package to the Mayor - what could be more important than that? So on he sped, through the front door, down the hallway, slammed on the brakes so he could zig left and crashed into the Mayor's front door. Thankfully it wasn't shut. He bounced off the door, handed the package to the Mayor's secretary, got a fast signature and headed quickly back to his bike.

Flying out the front door, he noticed a lot of people milling around. There was also an ambulance and a police car. He knew something had happened but time is money and he still had three deliveries to make before break-time. Plus he thought, what the heck, if it was really important, he could catch it on the TV back at the office.

Package #2 was a heavy little sucker. It must have weighed 15 pounds if it weighed an ounce. The manifest on the outside said Urgent: Motorcycle Parts. It was addressed to Los Banditos, 666 Angel Boulevard. Oh shit, why didn't they send Wung out to deliver this one? He still owed Pedro \$50 for the last bag of weed he bought. Luckily for Ziggy, nobody was home so he left it in the mailbox or what might have been a mailbox. He wasn't sure ... it was the first time he ever saw a box attached to a house which had the letters RIP on it.

One more drop off and Ziggy would take a well earned break. "This one should be easy", thought Two Step. A letter to Sam J. Irving, Crown Prosecutor. Oh nuts, no address. Wait. Hold On. All the government offices are in the Dunlap Building. 4 easy steps up, in the door, find Irving's office and deliver the letter. A piece of cake it was.

Back at the Office

Ziggy had just enough time for a coffee and to catch a glimpse of the local news. After all time is money. The local television was reporting on a hit and run which occurred outside the Mayor's office less than an hour before. It seems somebody had tackled an elderly lady. Robbery seems to have been the motive as her purse was never recovered. The lady, Mabel Hines, age 99, was rushed to Jefferson Hospital with undisclosed injuries. Two Step just shook his head and thought to himself: People are amazing. What kind of a dirty scum bag would rob an old lady for her purse. Whatever is this world coming to?

After the Morning Break

Now the rush begins. Wung left the office with 22 items to deliver. Ziggy only had 18 but he had to go further. His first eight deliveries went off without a hitch. Well, almost without a hitch. He did run into one small problem when he two-stepped up the church steps to deliver a small vase inscribed "David Ash". Damn cat coming down the steps should have zagged when Ziggy zagged. That way they would have missed each other. Instead Ziggy tramped on the cat's tail, the cat squealed and scared the crap out of Two Step who tossed the vase up in the air. It landed on the church steps but its lid came off spilling the contents all over the place. Hell, no broom to be seen and no time to clean up. Time is money after all.

On the bike again wwwwhhhheeeee ... off he goes. Drop offs were made to Larry's Drugs, the two gas stations in town, batteries to Lisa's Love Emporium and a brass bell to Captain Ahab. Ziggy was ahead of schedule so he figured on one more drop and then a short break. This was a delivery to the Coyote Softball Team at the edge of town. A dozen soft balls, so the carton said. Down Nightmare Alley, left on Billy Bob, over the bridge and still made it in 7 minutes. "Damn", Ziggy thought to himself, "You are damn good!" He had to waste a minute because nobody was around to sign and finally he saw the coach in the upper bleachers. Time for Two Step to two-step and before you knew it, he handed the package to the coach who was really happy to get his hands on his balls. Ah, now for that well-earned break.

Say it Ain't So

"What's that?", says Ziggy. "Oh, it's my beeper."

"Ziggy here"

"Ziggy, we need you to come back to dispatch. We have a live kidney that needs to be rushed to Jefferson 3rd floor surgery".

"I'm out at the ball field but I'll be there in a flash".

Peddling so fast you'd think the devil was after him, Ziggy sped back to town. The town was surprisingly noisy for that time of afternoon. Ziggy was so concentrated on arriving at 5 Minute Courier, he barely took notice of the squealing brakes, the two loud impacts and the far distant sound of a police siren. Spinning through the revolving door, he grabbed the

Styrofoam container with the live kidney in it and rushed back through the revolving door and headed on down to Jefferson Hospital, the finest two-bit hospital this side of Kentucky. Ziggy made it there in 1 minute 50 seconds flat.

No time to wait for the elevator. It's time to two-step it up two flights of stairs. Ziggy leaves the stairwell and finds himself on the 3rd floor but isn't sure where to go from there. He decides maybe he should head down to where the loud moaning was coming from. Whatever happened to highway direction signs? Every hospital should have 'em. As luck would have it Two Step found himself in an operating room where a patient was lying on a table with the surgeon leaning over him and one hand stretched out at his side as if he was expecting something. Oh yeah ... right ... the kidney !!! Ziggy tossed the kidney over in a lateral motion that even Dan Marino would be proud of. He didn't even bother to get a signature. Ziggy was no fool; it was obvious the surgeon was busy at the moment.

Upon leaving the hospital, Ziggy heard the approach of ambulances but he didn't have time to hang around. He still wanted to do one more delivery and then take a break. Just moments after he left, three ambulances came roaring in to discharge three persons who had been involved in automobile accidents. It was becoming a very busy day in Riverton.

One More Drop and It's Break-time Again !!!

Only down two blocks from the hospital was the video store. A sign on the door said to drop off videos in the slot below. Since the package said it contained videos, that's precisely what Ziggy did and then back to the office he went.

Back to the Office - Another Coffee and More TV

Ah, a cup of java this time and a few minutes to scan the boob tube. Breaking News on Channel 8. There was a three car pile-up at the intersection of Hollywood and Vine. Two dead and two taken to hospital with serious injuries. Also, just one block away, there was a van which crashed into the window-front of Duffy's Tavern injuring an underage youth who had been drinking there. Police were called to the scene in order to keep calm among the throngs of people who appeared to be thoroughly intoxicated. Ziggy couldn't believe it. Nothing like this ever happens in this town. Wonder why? If there's that many bad drivers around, City Council should do something about it.

Time to Finish the Deliveries and Call It a Day

The last batch of deliveries was going to be easy. They were all within City Central. Ziggy parked his bike, grabbed five packages and some envelopes which were all destined to businesses inside RPC - The Riverton Professional Centre, and off he went. Another building that had an entrance 12 steps above the sidewalk. A lot of older town folk griped because there were too many businesses like that in town but not Ziggy Two Step. He just two-stepped it all the way up to the front door - zigged a little, zagged a little but nobody got in his way. Nothing delayed him and that's a good thing as time is money !!! 28 minutes later and Ziggy had delivered all his items and just had a few left to go. One of them was a golf club why on earth would someone ...oh heck, doesn't matter... it still needs to be delivered. Ziggy had strapped it on the back of his bike so it wouldn't damage any of the other items he was carrying.

Two blocks further away, Ziggy had to wind his way through the Farmers' Market to reach his other drop offs. He had to slow up more than he would have liked because of all the people shopping for the finest fruits and veggies Riverton had to offer. 22 minutes later he had dropped off all his packages and was even able to make a doctor's appointment on one of his stops. Little did he realize that as he wound his way through the Farmers' Market, the handle of the golf club hooked the awning of Colonel Sander's Live Chickens. The awning came crashing down on the cages containing the chickens and there were chickens flapping and running all over the place. The younger and quicker shoppers were able to get themselves supper at a fraction of the regular price much to the chagrin of the Colonel.

Ziggy's First Evening Off

Ziggy arrived home just after 4 PM. Moma had dinner in the oven.

“What's for supper, Mom”

“Chicken. Got a real good deal in the Market today. How was your first day at work?”

“Pretty good but a little boring compared to what’s been going on around town today. Some old lady got robbed and there were two accidents. But the real cool part was I got to deliver a live kidney just before a patient croaked. The surgeon had his hand out waiting for it when I arrived.”

“That’s nice dear. Now get cleaned up, it’s almost supper time.”

The Following Day - Tuesday June 28th

A heavy clap of thunder woke Ziggy Two Step from a deep sound sleep. Ziggy had been up until 2 AM leaving a trail of cookie crumbs all through the Internet. After having a delicious meal of roast chicken with his family the night before, he had retired to his room to spend a relaxing evening on his computer after his first day of work. He started to surf websites devoted to historical events but soon found himself down the dark alleyways of Cyberspace where all the porn sites are. His intention was to go to bed early, at least by 10 PM so he could be sharp for his second day of work but the naked babes on his screen kept him up so to speak, a lot longer than he planned.

Looking at his alarm clock, Ziggy saw that 7 AM had come and gone. “This was going to be a bad day”, Two Step thought to himself. It was bad enough being tired still, but the weather looked as though it was not going to be friendly to a courier today - especially one who couriers letters and packages on a bicycle.

His shift was to start at 8 AM, so Ziggy had to drag himself out of bed, take a quick shower and then go on down to the kitchen to prepare himself a fast breakfast. A large bowl of corn flakes with bananas and a cup of coffee was going to have to do and should take care of him until lunchtime. Then a stop at Burger King to recharge for his anticipated busy afternoon.

Arriving at work three minutes before he was due, Ziggy checked his bin to see he had eleven letters and four packages to deliver before his morning break. That shouldn’t be a problem because he didn’t take his break for another two hours.

His first delivery was a box of shoe samples for Sam’s Shoe Shoppe on the outskirts of City Central. On his bicycle he hopped, and wheeled on over in less than four minutes. Got a

signature for the package and was encouraged that it might not be a bad day after all. A little bit of rain was coming down off and on but his raingear was adequately protecting him. Now for two deliveries at the Riverton Professional Centre, a block and a half away.

Then the troubles started. A big flash of lightning lit up the sky followed by a tremendous roar and soon after, the rain poured down in such a way that Noah himself would have been praying to his Maker. Maybe it wasn't going to be such a good day after all.

Come rain or shine, hell or high water, a courier's duty could not be delayed. Ziggy started toward the RPC but had to stop at one of the few intersections in town because of the red light. Stopping for a red light was not really a big deal unless you were sitting there giving a new meaning to "a drowning rat". No, today was not turning into a good day!!!

This nasty weather was going to slow Ziggy down. Finally he made it to the Professional Centre five minutes later than he would have liked. The first letter to Henry Highbottle of Highbottle Music was on the third floor and Ziggy ran past the elevator and two-stepped it up the staircase. Two Step was not one to bother with elevators because he was faster than they were and he didn't like to be in a closed-in space. Besides, one of the elevators was out of service and the other was on the sixth floor.

Damn, the door was locked. There was a sign on the door saying someone would be back at 11 o'clock. Rats. So Ziggy had to abort that delivery and move on to the small package in his courier bag. When he brought it out, it started to make a ticking sound and Two Step started to panic ... but then he remembered that when he packed his deliveries, there was a package addressed to Cosmic Clocks on the sixth floor. Phew!!! Two-stepping it up three more flights of stairs, he arrived at their office, made his delivery and hurried back down to the first floor as fast as he could, to make up for lost time.

As he got on his bike, he heard another roar. "More thunder", thought Ziggy. Little did he realize that there was an explosion on the 6th floor inside the repair shop of Cosmic Clocks.

Turning left on Maple Avenue, Ziggy drove out of City Central and headed towards the City Dump which was on the outskirts of town. As he approached the compound, he had to zig and zag a few times to avoid some of the residents living nearby. The rats were never pleased to have outsiders visiting them.

The Riverton population had decreased by five before Ziggy successfully delivered the pay cheques to Refuse Inc. He had felt some bumps along the way but figured the dirt road was just a bit too rough.

He was now fifty-five minutes into his workday so he was far from tired but he was soaked to the skin. So much for Jungle Jim's Rain Gear being the best in the world! "Have to hurry home and get a dry set of clothes first chance I get", Ziggy said to himself... but that time wasn't now. Only ten minutes to deliver his next item to Penny's Parrots.

The package had a big yellow label attached to it indicating that it was "Urgent". It was parrot feed that Penny had ordered three days ago as her parrots were literally starving to death. The supplier couldn't ship it until the night before as they had run out of stock.

Luckily for Ziggy, he was only a half-mile away and made it in under seven minutes despite the road construction and pouring rain. As he pulled up, he noticed that the town undertaker had his hearse parked there.

"Wow"!... this was going to save Two Step some time because he was able to give the hearse driver the three letters for Fred's Funeral Home. Had he arrived just a few moments earlier, he would have seen the driver loading the hearse with four small coffins.

Upon entering her store, Penny was in tears but did seem to cheer up when she saw him.

"Thank God", she said to Ziggy. "I never thought you would get here in time. You saved my life. You saved my parrots' lives". She failed to mention though, that four of them hadn't made it. The twenty parrots left would survive and she was grateful for that. She signed for the parcel and gave Two Step a \$20 tip which surprised the heck out of him. Just his second day on the job, and he gets his first tip and twenty bucks at that! It's going to be a good day after all!

The last seven deliveries were made without a hitch except for the soaking of one Angus McTavish, the only Scotsman in town who drank too much scotch. Ziggy was peddling hard so he could gain a few minutes to run home and didn't notice the large puddles he was driving through. He was so wet that he was unaware that his ankles were getting wetter by the minute.

Since Ziggy had finished twenty minutes before his official break, he was able to make a fast detour home and change into some dry clothes. Thankfully, it looked like the storm had passed so all he needed was socks, a pair of jeans, a T-shirt and sneakers. No underwear - Ziggy liked to dress commando-style.

He even had time to watch a little bit of news while he made himself a cup of coffee. He'd be back at the office in time to get his second batch of deliveries. Sally King, the news anchor, was mentioning about an explosion in the Riverton Professional Centre earlier this morning. The police had received a call from someone claiming responsibility for it saying it was in retaliation for a poor repair job made to an antique clock.

One dead at the scene and four with life-threatening injuries.

"I'm a lucky man", thought Ziggy. "To think I was there this morning too. I could have been hurt. You never know when your number's up". Ziggy had completely forgotten about the package he delivered to Cosmic Clocks.

A Busy Day for the Riverton Police

Meanwhile, the Riverton Police had been busy. With two car accidents, a mugging and dozens of fugitive chickens yesterday, and now an explosion within City Central, Chief Ulysses Grant was being pushed by Mayor Reynolds for answers. Detectives were interviewing people who might have witnessed any of the events.

The many reports prepared by the Riverton detectives gave them very little hope of recreating the events or solving the crimes committed. The only thing consistent in all the reports was that many people had seen a man on a bicycle speeding in the areas just

moments before. Some said he wore a red bicycle helmet, others said blue and one witness even said she thought he was wearing a football helmet.

Nobody seemed to agree on anything except for the speeding bicycle. All constables were told to keep an eye out for any speeding bicyclists in town. This was especially easy for Officer Jack Taylor, known to all town folk as “One-Eyed Jack” because of having lost an eye while serving overseas in Vietnam.

Channel 8 was continuously reminding its citizens to also be vigilant for anybody speeding on a bike. There was hardly anyone in town who wasn't talking about events of the last day or so. Riverton had, up until then, been one of the quietest towns in Montana. In fact the last serious car accident had been over a year ago and it was nearly three years since the last mugging. Some of the more paranoid members of town were even starting to speak of the end of the world. Such were the conditions in Riverton on that June 28th morning.

Wung Chou

Wung Chou, the senior member of 5 Minute Courier's Bicycle Corps, never went to work without his Sanyo Walkman. As he weaved in and out of the traffic, he always listened to classic rock on WRPU 94.5 on the FM dial. Usually it was non-stop rock but today they were interrupting the music to update citizens of what was going on around town. He heard what some of the witnesses had reported and was relieved that he never wore a bicycle helmet, although it was the law. However, he was sure that Ziggy did wear a helmet but couldn't remember the color of it. After all, Two Step had only started work with him the day before.

Wung had been the owner of a Martial Arts Studio but gave it up in his early fifties when his students were giving him more bruises than he was giving them. He was going to retire and catch up on his oil painting but after a few years became restless, so he went back to work. Today, at age 70, he was the oldest bicyclist in town.

Everyone liked Wung. Well, almost everyone. Like all small towns, there was a racist group who figured if you weren't white - it wasn't right. They complained to town council that Wung was a menace and it was rumoured that he was responsible for half the Chinese population that lived in the area known as Tiny Peking. They wanted Wung to be sent back whence he came. The problem was that he was born and brought up in Wet Grass, a village

just 20 miles west of town. The other thing was that Wung could only speak about 10 words of Cantonese and had obtained a Masters Degree in English.

Twice today he was pulled over by the police but once they realized who he was, they just told him to slow down a bit and wear a helmet, then allowed him to go on his way. He eased his speed a tad but time is money after all and Wung was on a rushed schedule.

Wung had just delivered a letter to the accounting firm of Hoskin and Smith when his cell phone vibrated.

“Lucy here”, came the voice from his office. “Your nephew Sung Ho is in the hospital. He was hurt in the explosion over at the RPC. You’d better get your ass over there”.

“Oh my, yes, I am on my way. Bye”.

That was his next delivery anyway. He had medical supplies to drop off at the front desk. Looking somewhat worried, with good reason, he asked where he could find Sung Ho. He was told Sung was still in surgery but was expected to be out very soon. Wung still had some parcels to deliver but he was in no shape to do so. Nor did he want to leave the hospital without being sure that his nephew would be okay. He called Ziggy who agreed to swing by and pick up Wung’s deliveries.

Ziggy Returns to Work

Now in dry clothes and with the weather improving, Ziggy finished his morning break and sped down to Jefferson Hospital to pick up Wung’s courier bag. It was going to be a busy day - maybe not such a good day after all. Combining the two courier bags, and after sorting them in such a way that he wouldn’t have to double back, Two Step headed for Barney’s Bowling Alley, about five minutes from the hospital. Barney’s was located at the top of Cliffside Lane, the steepest street in town. Why it was called a lane nobody knew - it was a four lane highway a mile and a half long.

Ziggy had got about half way to the top when the courier bag shifted on his bike and an Olympic bowling ball fell out. The ball was the latest in bowling technology. It weighed five pounds, solid but yet had elasticity and could bounce which gave bowlers an edge against bowlers with conventional balls. You could easily see its bouncing ability as it headed on down the "lane". Two cars swerved and narrowly avoided the round projectile but Eddie's Ice Cream truck didn't fair so well. The ball crashed into the front of his truck, damaging the radiator. The impact was so hard that the back doors of the truck flew open and barrels of soft ice cream went rolling down to Chestnut Street.

Near where the two streets joined, was a bible study group which was having an outdoor meeting. All at once, throughout the neighbourhood, you could hear the sounds of people rejoicing.

Ziggy arrived at Barney's, jumped off his bike and went to get the bowling ball... no ball!

"I could have sworn it was in Wung's bag. I know I had it. Wonder where the heck it is", thought Two Step as he scratched his head in utter confusion.

He didn't have much time to think about it before Lucy called from Dispatch. He needed to go to the airport to pick up a shipment of live cockroaches which were urgently needed by The Department of Disease Control. Cockroaches were thought to be the blame for crop failure and sick farmers in the state of New Mexico and Riverton had the most advanced research facilities in North America.

The cockroaches were packed in a Styrofoam case with tiny holes to allow enough air inside to keep them alive. It was lightweight and encased with three large rubber bands. Inside were several dozen of the biggest cockroaches outside Jamaica. Ziggy put them on his bike and secured them with a bungee cord. The day had improved, certainly the weather had. However, just after Ziggy left the airport to return to the centre of town to deliver the roaches, a strong wind came up. The bungee cord he used was old and frayed and the wind banged it against the metal frame of the bike. Ziggy was doing about 20 mph when the bungee cord broke and the case went flying. The case broke open and sensing freedom at last, fifty or more cockroaches scurried to the nearest safe haven they could find. That safe haven happened to be the town's only greasy spoon restaurant - Tony's Food Shack. It was kind to be called a shack because it hardly qualified, healthwise, slightly better than an outhouse but it did serve the best burgers in Riverton. Its burgers were the only thing that

kept City Hall from revoking Tony's license despite the fact that he already had several health violations against him.

Again, Two Step had no knowledge that he was missing his package until he arrived at the Department of Disease Control. He was already worried about reporting the loss of the bowling ball and now he had to worry about the cockroaches. This was going to be a bad day!

Back at Police Headquarters

Sergeant Bilco's phone wouldn't stop ringing. Calls of gloom and doom were coming in. There were reports of a bowling ball attacking people and sidewalks slippery with ice cream. There were no reports about the fugitive cockroaches - mainly because the public was unaware that they were on the loose. Mind you, Tony who owned the Food Shack knew. He didn't know that they were cockroaches on the run and he didn't know where they came from but he knew he had them. He saw a family of them running across his kitchen counter. Thank God, his customers couldn't see past the kitchen door and he wasn't about to tell anyone. He had enough problems with the Health Department already.

Captain Grant had his door closed and wasn't seeing anybody. He was on the phone listening to Mayor Reynolds roar at him about how the town was coming apart. Grant was given an ultimatum to get things under control soon or look for a new job. He also was expected to identify and apprehend those responsible for the ongoing chaos.

Thirty minutes after getting an earful from Reynolds, Grant called in all members of the police force, both on duty and off, and told them he needed results and fast. Everyone was brought up-to-date on all the incidents and each officer hit the streets to find those responsible - some by foot, others by squad car.

What - No Lunch Break?

Ziggy suddenly realized it was already past his lunch hour. He had planned to stop at Burger King but he was behind schedule and he sort of lost his appetite. He was more concerned about telling his boss that he lost two shipments. It didn't take long before Lucy called to tell him to return to the office because Joe, his boss, wanted to see him.

“But I still have a load of deliveries to make.”

“Joe says never mind the deliveries. He wants you back here, pronto!”

“Okay, okay, I’m coming”

Ziggy chained his bicycle in the company garage and headed towards Joe’s office on the second floor of the building. His two-step was gone and he walked slowly up the stairs. He was about to knock on his boss’s door when it was suddenly opened. There he was standing face to face with Joe whose face looked so red it was about to explode.

“I got two complaints in the last hour. Barney didn’t get his bowling ball and the Department of Disease Control didn’t get their cockroaches. What the hell is going on, Ziggy?”

“I ... I ... I don’t know.”

“What do you mean you don’t know? Why didn’t you deliver the ball? What about the cockroaches?”

“I ... I ... I don’t know what happened to the bowling ball. I thought I had it but when I got to Barney’s, it wasn’t in my bag.”

“What about the cockroaches?”

“I picked them up at the airport, strapped the box to my bike but when I stopped at Disease Control, they were gone.”

“Good God, Ziggy! I can live with the bowling ball going missing. I can always give Barney some extra cash and he’ll let it go. But live cockroaches? They might be disease infected and

YOU don't know what happened to them? If this gets around, my business is ruined. I want all the parcels and packages back 'cause I can't trust you with them. From now on, you just deliver letters. I'll do the damn packages myself. Leave the packages with Lucy and get the hell outta here before I fire you!!"

"Yes Sir, Sorry Sir", said Two Step as he retreated from the office. He dropped off all his packages. There was a good side to all this. Ziggy only had a handful of letters to deliver and then he was finished for the day. Maybe today won't be so bad after all. Really, how could it get much worse?

Tony's Food Shack

It was now mid-afternoon and Tony's always started to get busy this time of day. A lot of truckers and employees from Sherwood Farms would start coming in to have the specialty of the house - burgers and fries, along with a pint or two of the best as Tony did have a liquor license. Just a limited license only for beer and wine but selling them sure helped pay the bills.

The cook on duty didn't know about the roaches. It was something no one knew about except Tony and Tony hoped to keep it that way. It wasn't long after the crowds started coming in, everyone noticed the burgers tasted different. They were a little crunchier but better tasting. Word quickly spread and Tony's was busier than ever.

Jefferson Hospital - Time 4:00 PM

Sung Ho was wheeled out of the Recovery Room. He had suffered a broken arm and severe lacerations to his abdomen. No organs were damaged.

Wung Chou was allowed to see him and was pleased to see that Sung was conscious and quite alert. In fact Sung was anxious and so full of energy that Wung was taken by surprise.

"Uncle Wung, I know who delivered the bomb to our repair shop. It was Ziggy. He gave me the package and I put it on a table next to some other clocks that were being repaired. I

turned away and headed back to the front of our store when all hell broke loose. There was a big bang, glass and wood flying everywhere. I was blown into a wall. I looked down and my right leg was bent all wrong and I was bleeding from some glass that flew into my stomach. It was me that managed to call 911.”

“My gosh, did you tell the police?”

“I didn’t see them. I passed out before the police arrived. I don’t remember anything else until I woke up from recovery.”

Wung called Joe and told him what he had just heard. Joe remembered that Ziggy did have a parcel to deliver to Cosmic Clocks. Surely Ziggy didn’t switch parcels. Ziggy was never in trouble with the law. He wouldn’t do something like that. Still, Joe knew he had no choice but to contact the police.

Police Headquarters - 4:27 PM

Captain Grant was relieved to finally get some concrete information on the case which was causing him the biggest headache. All these unsolved incidents were really taking a toll on him. He mustered what energy he had left after being on duty for the last day and a half. He spoke to Wung and Sung and got enough information to put out an APB to locate and apprehend one Thomas Edward Haliburton a.k.a. Ziggy. Suspect was believed to be riding a bicycle and could be carrying a courier bag marked 5 Minute Courier.

Ziggy was just about to deliver his last letter to the City Tax Office which was just across the street from the police station. Captain Grant had stepped out for a well needed smoke and some fresh air to clear his head. That’s when he spotted Ziggy parking his bike between the Municipal Building and City Hall. Grant ran across the street as Los Banditos came roaring around the corner. Grant managed to avoid colliding with Pedro Gomez, the leader of the pack. Pedro tossed some profanities at the Police Chief but the Chief never heard him. He got to the other side just as Ziggy was about to two-step it up the ten stairs to the Tax Office.

Ziggy saw something out of his peripheral vision and turned to see what it was. That’s when Grant grabbed him by the arm and wrestled him to the ground. Once Ziggy was on the ground, he was handcuffed and hauled up to a sitting position just before he got to the stairs.

“Okay Ziggy, the gigs up. You’re under arrest!”

He was read his Miranda rights after which Grant hauled him back across the street and placed him in a holding cell. Everything in his possession was catalogued and placed in a bag for safekeeping. That is everything except his bicycle and his courier bag - they were tagged with Ziggy’s name on them. Inside the courier bag, the police found his delivery manifests for the current day and the day before. Sergeant Bilco’s phone was no longer ringing off the wall and he was given the task of perusing the manifests.

It didn’t take long for Bilco to realize that Ziggy was in most (if not all) of the places where hell had been breaking loose in town. He checked delivery times against incident times. There was a correlation. Captain Grant had gone home to catch up on some much needed sleep. Ziggy was safely contained in a holding cell and would be there at least until the next morning when he faced a Judge. Bilco’s shift didn’t end until midnight which gave him plenty of time to put a report together regarding Ziggy Two Step’s recent whereabouts.

Jefferson Hospital - 10:00 PM

The emergency room at Jefferson was in overdrive. Fifteen people were rushed in complaining of severe diarrhoea, vomiting and stomach pains. Twelve of them had eaten at Tony’s Food Shack just hours before. Three had not eaten at the Shack but they had ordered take-out from there. All had eaten burgers. Doctor Stetson, the head doctor that night, made an emergency call to the Department of Disease Control. They in turn called the Riverton Police Department. Reports were quickly made by Stetson’s staff and forwarded to Sergeant Bilco who was in charge while his Captain slept. Another urgent call was made to Judge Henry Hingley who received it on his cell phone whilst dining with the town’s local Madam. Hingley was annoyed at the intrusion but was grateful they had not called his home. His wife always went to bed early and the call there would have woken her up.

Bilco met with the Judge in his Chambers an hour later. The Judge prepared a Closure Order against Tony’s Food Shack and Detectives Claymore and Meech descended on Tony’s just as his last patrons were leaving for the night. They did not arrest Tony but they took his business keys away from him and secured all the doors to the Shack with steel bars and heavy padlocks. Tony found himself on an unexpected vacation.

Wung Hears of Ziggy’s Arrest

As soon as Wung knew Ziggy had been arrested he walked over to the Police Station and asked to see him. Permission was granted since Wung personally knew Ziggy and he was quickly escorted to the holding cell to see his friend. Two Step was kept isolated because, being the suspect of a bombing, he was considered to be dangerous but wasn't considered dangerous to Wung. Besides, everyone on the police force knew that Wung was a Black Belt.

Ziggy professed his innocence to Wung and he was believed. They had known each other even before Ziggy became a bicycle courier. In fact, eight of Wung's grandchildren went to school with Ziggy. Two Step's only run in with the law was the time he got caught smoking a joint behind a coffee shop. That was the time he had skipped his school lecture on the dangers of smoking.

Wednesday, June 29th - Early Morning

Channel 8 News had been broadcasting all night long that a suspect had been apprehended for the Cosmic Clock Bombing. Details were still sketchy and the suspect's name had not been released. The suspect was to appear in court very soon and when the station had more info, they would broadcast it. The town was hysterical - hysterically relieved. There never was a bombing in Riverton since it became a town back in 1842. Yes, there were a couple of explosions. In 1905 when the coal mine blew up and again in 1927 when Sachmo's Moonshine Factory did the same. Otherwise - nothing, nada, zilch.

Captain Grant arrived in time for the staff coffee meeting. Sam J. Irving, the Crown Prosecutor, was there as well. Grant and Irving had meticulously gone over the report Bilco had made and they were confident that they had a solid case against Ziggy Two Step. Sure, it was mostly circumstantial, but Ziggy's manifests clearly showed him "on location in each of the trouble spots that had occurred over the last two days". It was hard for anybody in the police station to believe that he was not responsible for all the disasters. Oh, wait - there was one person who didn't believe it. That person was Ziggy Two Step.

It was early afternoon before the court could hear the charges against Ziggy. The most serious charge was that of bombing Cosmic Clocks. He was charged with the death of one person and the injury of four others. Then the police charged him with the death of two persons and the injury of three others as a result of two accidents in Riverton on Monday. He was also deemed responsible for a group of drunk citizens outside Duffy's Tavern, also on that same Monday. A

fourth charge was laid against him for the damage to Colonel Sander's awning and the loss of forty-eight live chickens. But that wasn't the end of the charges. No Sir-ey Bob.

It was apparent to the police and agreed to by the Crown Prosecutor that Ziggy had carelessly allowed the invasion of a species detrimental to the public health - the cockroaches.

The only things that went right for Two Step that afternoon was the fact that he was not charged with the mugging of Mabel Hines. The police thoroughly searched Ziggy's belongings but could find nothing linking him to the mugging. Lucky Ziggy.

Judge Hingley, still pissed over Ziggy's intrusion into his dinner last evening with Madam Matilda, declined bail. Back to the cell he went.

Riverton's Judicial System

The judicial system in Riverton is relatively simple and fast compared to those big cities such as Diamond, East Virginia and Black Hole, West Carolina. Heck it is even quicker than that cow town, Bull's Delight over there in Idaho.

After only thirteen days, on Tuesday July 12th, Ziggy Two Step was brought to trial. Appointed to defend him was the Public Defender, Hilda Rose Brackenworth. She passed her Bar Exam earlier in May. Though inexperienced, she had been at the head of her law class and she was considered to be most tenacious. Even Sam J. Irving, the Prosecuting Attorney, would readily admit that Hilda was no pushover.

9 AM Courtroom #4

"All Rise. Judge Henry Hingley presiding."

Judge Hingley enters the court wearing his freshly laundered judicial robe. It was the first time it had ever been dry-cleaned since he became a judge twenty-two years ago. But after all, today was a special day. That decrepit member of society, Ziggy Two Step, the person

responsible for screwing up his dinner engagement and thereby responsible for him not getting his just desserts from Madam Matilda, would pay for his crimes today.

“Be Seated!”

And so the trial begins. The Judge reads the charges against Thomas Edward Haliburton. He addresses the jury of eight men and four women. He asks for Opening Arguments.

Sam Irving was in top form and he was going to prove beyond a shadow of doubt that Ziggy was an intelligent and masterful criminal but did have one major flaw. He didn't have the ability to escape the long hand of the law.

Hilda Rose Brackenworth was also in top form. She told the jury that Ziggy was an unfortunate person who was always in the wrong place at the wrong time. She claimed that the prosecution only had the slimmest of circumstantial evidence but did not have enough real evidence to prove the charges against her client.

During the next three hours, witnesses were called to testify against Ziggy. Hilda cross-examined all but one. The witness she did bother to cross examine was Reverend Arthur Kingsley who claimed to have seen Ziggy running out of the Riverton Professional Centre just moments before an explosion rocked the building. This was the same Minister who claimed to have seen God swimming in Dollar Lake the year gone by. Hilda figured everyone remembered his vision and why bother to waste her time on somebody so unbelievable.

Everyone was tiring so a recess was called. Channel 8 broadcasted to their TV audience giving a general description of the judicial process occurring in Courtroom #4. Residents of Riverton were all glued to their televisions.

More witnesses again in the afternoon. The Crown had many to present. Hilda cross-examined them all.

By 4 o'clock the Crown still had a long list of witnesses to call. It looks like this trial would go on for days given all the charges laid against Thomas Edward.

Court was adjourned and everyone headed home, including the jury. The trial lasted until late Friday Morning.

All the witnesses had given their testimony. Both Sam and Hilda were tired and both would be glad to hear the final verdict, whatever it might be. Closing Arguments were made and the jury was sequestered to a small room to the left of the courtroom in order to reach a verdict. There was no dissention. It took the jury less than an hour to reach their decision.

The Verdict

Immediately after the jury came back, so did Judge Hingley who asked the foreman if a verdict had been reached. Truman Walsh, rose and addressed the Judge and informed him that they had reached a descision.

“The Jury finds Thomas Edward Haliburton not guilty of all charges.”

A hush went through the courtroom. Nobody could believe it. Surely, the justice system failed the citizens of Riverton.

Breaking News on Channel 8. Mostly everyone was stunned. It was truly a sad day for their small town.

Late Evening - Friday

Ziggy was released immediately once the verdict was announced. He grabbed a taxi and fled home even before the on-the-spot reporter from the TV station could catch him. Once he arrived home, he went to his room, closed and locked his door to make sure not even his family would disturb him. All he wanted at the moment was some peace and quiet - time to be with the person he trusted most - himself.

It was just after 8 PM when his mother called him to answer the phone in his room. Ziggy did so reluctantly. A voice on the other end asked for an interview. The lady had a beautiful voice with a Spanish accent. Realizing he could not avoid reporters forever, he agreed to meet for a short interview. That beautiful sounding voice was all he needed for encouragement.

They agreed to meet in Central Park where Riverton's largest oak tree stood. She wanted to meet him right away and how could he resist. He hurried on over and found that he had arrived before the reporter. There was a bench nearby so Ziggy sat down and waited. Barely was his butt on the bench when three members of Los Banditos came from behind some trees and threw a sack over Two Step. He heard somebody say that they should make sure to put the rope around him and tie it up tight.

"See, I told you Pedro, that I could get him out with my sexy voice."

Shit! Rats! Damn! Ziggy realized he had walked into an ambush. What he didn't know was what they were going to do with him.

"Okay boys, toss him in the truck. We don't have a whole lot of time."

Ziggy found himself lifted and thrown unceremoniously into the back of a truck. What kind of truck? What did it matter?

A short ride later, Ziggy was again lifted off the truck. He heard a heavy door open and he realized he was being put inside some kind of room. Smelled like a farm but he knew they hadn't driven far enough to reach one. Still, he was sure he could smell hay.

Pedro Gomez was pleased. Payback is a bitch!.

"That's what you get for not paying me for that bag of weed you got from me."

Pedro and his gang had put Ziggy in a cattle car on a train which would be leaving moments from now. It was a brilliant idea that the gang came up with following Ziggy's acquittal. If

they ever did get caught for their actions, they knew that Judge Hingley and the citizens of Riverton would look the other way.

So there Ziggy was, wrapped and tied up in a gunny sack, laying among a pile of hay.

Where was the train headed? Pedro didn't know nor did he care. Would anybody in town really care?

THE END