

As I got ready for my evening out in Downtown St. Cloud, Minnesota, my kids were yelling as loud as they possibly could, probably about some LEGO or toy dinosaur. My wife Kelly hopefully had them under control and would keep them semi-happy until about midnight or so when I got back. My friends Forrest, Rob and I were going to grab some food and stop at a local bar to watch the much anticipated college football game between Minnesota and Wisconsin. I put on my sweatshirt, a baseball cap, and some simple jeans and headed out. As I drove and listened to ESPN analysts talk about how they thought the Gophers were going to play today, I looked out the window at the chilly fall night. When I stopped at our favorite pizza place, Dewey's Pizza, our friend Dewey, who owned the place, walked up to me. "Hey!" he said, "Rob and Forrest are inside, special on sausage pizza tonight!"

"Thanks Dewey, can you come with us to the bar down the street to watch the game?" I asked, hoping we could add a 4th member.

"Sure, why not?" he said with a smile. "Just tell me when you're leaving."

I walked into the restaurant and saw Forrest and Rob sitting at our usual table arguing over breadsticks, but they stopped arguing when they saw me. They both had black hair, similar to mine; back in junior high people always thought we were all cousins. "Hey, Rocky!" Forrest hollered, (People always call me Rocky, because my last name is Rockev).

After I told them that Dewey could come and there was a special on sausage tonight, they continued their normal arguments on sports. By the time the pizza came, the argument had shifted to politics. And by the time we were ready to leave we were on our favorite shoe brand. We eventually left with Dewey along with us. The bar was about a block or so down the street. As we were walking I pulled out my phone to check if I had any text messages - only one from Kelly saying the kids were asleep.

Before I could put my phone back it dropped out of my hand, took a weird bounce and somehow rolled on its side into an alley. I walked to the alley with the guys to find my phone and saw an awful scene. A man holding a rifle at another man's head. The victim had a pillowcase covering his head, while the man with the rifle looked like a red ghost covered in a big red bed sheet. I bent down as slowly as I possibly could and picked up my phone without the man looking at me. Sadly the other man heard me and looked through his pillowcase at me. "Help!" he yelled in a gagged voice. The man in red quickly looked over with his rifle pointed at Forrest, Rob, Dewey and I.

“Oh, you guys are dead,” said the man in red. As he shot, I experienced a complete miracle, I dodged the bullet with precision and then took off my baseball cap and knocked the bullet off course enough to miss Rob’s head by an inch.

“How did you...?” Forrest asked with a mesmerized look. I advanced toward the man in red with newfound confidence. Oddly, the terrified one was now the one who had the weapon. I had no idea why or how I was doing it but I was walking towards a man with gun. In the background I could hear one of my friends on the phone, most likely with the police, which was probably helpful. Sadly, my new confidence shattered as soon as he shot. This time, I wasn’t so lucky. The bullet hit Dewey in the arm and he fell down in agony. The man in red sprinted away leaving a gagged man, a shot man and three other very scared and confused men.

“We have to catch him!” I yelled louder than I ever had before. I sprinted, but the man shot again and when I moved to get out of the way, I hit the wall and fell into an empty crate; the bullet missed me by inches.

“Get to my car!” yelled Dewey in agony, “It’s the red one in the back, it has a first aid kit!” Rob and Forrest carried Dewey to the back of the alley. The alley split into two. The man in red was running out one path and a concealed car was in the other. I took the grey cover off Dewey’s car and saw a cherry red Ferrari. Forrest and Rob still carrying Dewey ran up and stared at the shiny red car.

“Dewey, how did you afford this?” asked Rob completely mesmerized.

“Not important,” said Dewey with as much energy he could muster. Rob was a doctor so he sat with Dewey, trying his best to fix him up.

“Hurry up!” said an extremely anxious Forrest, “We have to catch him!” I pulled out of the extremely small parking space and drove as fast as I could into the busy downtown area. The moment I got into the street I saw the man in red holding a gun to the gagged mans head, yelling at a family to get out of their car or the man with the pillowcase dies. The family had a boy and a girl maybe in preschool or kindergarten. I began to worry about my family, and how worried they would soon be about me. The family quickly got out of their Mercedes and sprinted away. The man in red, threw the hostage down in the back seat, and looked back at us. I heard him swear as he drove away, way over the speed limit, then again he had probably done more heinous crimes.

“Damn!” I yelled in utter frustration.

“He’s getting away!” yelled Rob, who apparently had fixed Dewey up and made his sweatshirt into a sling for him. Besides the fact we were fitting in a million dollar car chasing a criminal, I still wasn’t too stressed out. My job as a journalist oddly has a lot of pressure and somehow had got me ready for this moment.

We drove for hours without any other cars noticing the fact that the car in front of us had a hostage. We tried to keep our distance from the car, occasionally losing it but finding it again soon. The oddest thing was that we saw absolutely no police officers. Just our luck, I thought. We had left St. Cloud a while ago and it looked as if he was driving southeast towards the Twin Cities.

“There should be policemen near either Minneapolis or St. Paul,” I said with hope.

“And a doctor,” Dewey groaned, then saw the offended look on Rob’s face and quickly added, “that’s inside a hospital with the appropriate equipment, is that good enough Rob?”

“Yes, yes I get it,” he responded. Then, it looked like our luck started to turn, when we saw a police officer pulled over on the highway, looking for anything fishy. Luckily, the man in red with a gun and a hostage seemed fishy enough and she pulled him over. We pulled up alongside them.

“Sir, you are under arrest for...” the police officer started but she couldn’t finish before being shot by the man she was trying to cuff. This added injuring a policewoman to his record of laws broken. Just then the man noticed we were standing right there.

“Oh, you guys again,” he said angrily. He shot. This time, I did the gutsiest move so far; I dove for the gun on the groaning police officer and took it out of her belt rolled around to the other side of the man in red, pointing the gun at him. Then, I realized I must have been shot in the calf without noticing it while diving for the gun, but I had to stay calm and avoid thinking about the agonizing pain in my calf. “Hmmm, getting shot it the calf hurts,” the man in red said with a cruel laugh, “the head’s is going to hurt a lot worse.” At that moment, Forrest came from behind and kicked him in the back. That might have saved me and put me in a position to shoot him, but before I could get the nerves to do it he jumped up, ran to his car and drove away.

“Forrest, drive the police car with Dewey and follow us!” I said, trying to split the groups up best, “Rob and I will take the policewoman with us and fix her up.” We all quickly did as I said, Rob quickly fixed my calf and pulled the bullet out so he could drive, and I could do my best to help our other passenger.

“Thank you,” she said gratefully, “I can’t thank you enough for what you guys did. Oh, and by the way, my name is Nancy.” She had brown hair, blue eyes and looked about maybe 40 or 50, although I didn’t want to ask her.

“My, question is why hasn’t he killed the hostage and why is he driving to Minneapolis and St. Paul?” asked Rob.

“Well,” Nancy began, “these kinds of criminals are not only mentally insane, but love to have attention, and big cities have lots of people.”

“Yes, but also lots of police officers,” I finished.

“Good point,” she said, “I would text your friends to pull over so we can use the radio in the police car.” We pulled over as she commanded, switching cars so Dewey could have his Ferrari and Nancy her police car. She contacted the police in both cities to warn of the incoming silver car, and they confirmed they would make sure to capture it. She also promised to continue following him into Minneapolis.

Before we knew it we were in Minneapolis, the streets were extra crowded because of the football game, which was a home game for Minnesota.

Then, as if someone wiped my goggles while swimming, I realized the man in red wanted attention and he wanted to do stuff in front of lots of people and 51,000 people must be enough for him. “Get to TCF Bank Stadium, before it’s too late!” I yelled at Rob. He quickly changed his course for the stadium. After I explained my reasoning they understood.

“There are some guns in the back!” Nancy said, “We have to stop this guy before people are killed,” she paused, “thousands of people are killed.” We were nervous; we knew that something bad was going to happen if we didn’t go quickly, so we didn’t talk much.

Before we knew it, we could see the stadium. “It’s go time,” I said, trying to sound confident. Nancy, Rob, Forrest, Dewey and I got out of our cars and walked forward, all armed and loaded. We only had to walk a couple feet to notice that the man in red had beaten us here. Injured and confused tailgaters in the parking lot lay moaning on the ground. “I’ll stay behind to help these people, luckily none are dead, but you guys hurry up before that changes,” Nancy said nervously. We did as she said and ran as fast as we could towards the stadium, with me behind the rest because of my calf injury. As we ran we saw the carnage he had inflicted, thousands

were injured, but we didn't have time to stop. We could just see the man in red carrying a hostage and a rifle not far ahead, we were so close, and we had to make it. We were about 600 feet from the stadium and the man about half of that.

At that moment, I knew I had to beat this guy myself and with the help of my friends. I somehow found a way to run faster than the rest of the group.

"Rocky," Dewey said mesmerized, "how in the hell are you...?" but I couldn't focus on that right now, this guy was going down. The only other things in my head, were questions like who was the captive? Why does he want him dead? Why have no police captured him? But, I was still mainly focused on him and me. I ran forward and pulled out my handgun, no more than 50 feet away.

"Hey buddy!" I said with a nervous smile, "remember me?" He turned around fast, but not fast enough, the bullet hit him squarely in the left shoulder. The nearby hiding tailgaters screamed, not sure if it was because of the shot or the fact that Minnesota just scored a touchdown from inside the stadium about 200 feet away. The man in red dropped the moaning hostage and rifle. I could see officers rushing to the scene and my three friends sprinting up behind me. It looked like we had won. Just like Scooby-Doo, I unmasked the bad-guy. After taking the hood off, I saw the man I had just shot. He was pale-skinned with military haircut and looked about 30. He looked into my eyes with absolute anger.

"Hello, Rocky," he said with hate, "looks like the its the end of the line for me." I automatically recognized him. Thomas Salu, he moved away in 10th grade, everyone bullied him because of his obsession with Ancient Rome. He was never really a mean kid, just weird, I always felt bad for him. "I've decided to kill every popular person from our class at St. Cloud High School, doing the first in front of a crowd, just like the ancient Roman arena. I also needed to kill you, not because you were mean to me, but you were popular so it needed to be done to complete the plan."

"BAM! Had I been shot? Was I dead? I opened my eyes. I was outside the stadium. I could tell Thomas was dead by looking down at his body. I looked to the left. The hostage was breathing heavily and holding a gun with the pillowcase off his head. I recognized him immediately, Jim Crane. He was one of the popular kids from our High School and Thomas must have kidnapped him. The police were standing around, looking at us.

“I think we should all go down to the police station,” one said. We drove down with a police escort. The looming question was that why was Thomas not caught by the police? We arrived at the police station and walked in. An officer was at the front. We just caught a man in red breaking the system that lets officers communicate through their cars. They brought a man in similar red clothes up to us. It was Rannah Jenn; he was Thomas’ best friend in high school who was also bullied by many popular kids. He was probably in on the murders too. He probably slipped into the station, heard us mention the man in red inside the silver car and break the system. He was most likely sent out by Thomas to distract the police station while he did the dirty work. I explained this; along with our whole story all the way back to my phone falling into the alley.

They explained we were free to go and Nancy was to get a promotion because of her work and she would be meeting us in St. Cloud later. They gave us a ride back to the Ferrari, and drove Dewey, Jim and I back in a police car while Forrest and Rob drove the Ferrari. I called Kelly and said to meet me with the kids at the police station. I also told her I would explain when I got there. It felt like days, but before we knew it, we were back in St. Cloud.

We arrived at the police station and sure enough, my family was there. They ran up and hugged me. “Where in the hell have you been?” Kelly asked angrily. I explained the entire story to her. After some surprised looks, she agreed to meet me back at the house while I talk to the police for a couple minutes.

Jim walked Dewey, Rob, Forrest, Nancy and I into the station in a small room. He stood at the front.

“I cannot thank you enough for saving my life,” he said gratefully to all five of us. Then, surprisingly pulled out a badge from his pocket. On the badge it read DETECTIVE CRANE. If you guys want a detective job here in St. Cloud, you have proven yourself worthy, its good pay and the five of you, along with me will be working together, any takers?”, Altogether we raised our hands. “Looks like we have five new detectives,” he said with a smile.

“I think we just finish our first case,” I said with joy, “I think the case of the man in red is officially closed.”