

## The Revenge of W. C. Faulk

### Chapter 1

I know this is titled Chapter 1, but it most certainly is not Chapter 1. To go back to Chapter 1 would only confuse you, and I have no intention of confusing someone I've only just met. My name is not yet important but I shall tell it to you anyway; William Christopher Faulk. It's not a very auspicious name, nor is it grandiose. I realize auspicious and grandiose are both very pretentious words and for that I apologize. As a matter of fact, pretentious is a pretentious word, but that is neither here nor there. Now that we've been introduced I must warn you that this story is not like most other stories in that it is not meant to be told from beginning to end. No, telling it front to back would not be good at all. I suppose if you are the type of person that prefers to read a story from start to finish you have the ability to flip to the last page and start working backward, although I do believe that may give you a terrible headache, but like I said, it's up to you. Now, where were we? Ah yes, the end.

### Chapter 2

"See, right there, that's where the leak is, in the fuel line. Not enough fuel is getting to the engine." I stared blankly to where the mechanic was pointing. Todd seemed like a knowledgeable mechanic. I mean he had grease on his hands and a towel in his back pocket, that about qualifies you in my book.

"Right right, of course," I agreed. I had no idea what he was talking about but I hoped my intent gaze combined with crossed arms and educated tone would more than convince Todd that I would

know if I was being taken advantage of. Now, maybe it the cynic in me or maybe it's the auto shop that once charged me \$70 to "top off my blinker fluid", but for whatever reason, I don't trust auto mechanics. "How much will that run me to get it fixed?"

"Oh I don't know, figure \$100 dollars for parts, \$300 for labor, plus your tax, title, and licensing fees, that should put you at an even grand." Again I shook my head in agreement. Somewhere my father rolled in his grave (not because he was a car man and knew I was about to get ripped off, but because the lot we buried him on was getting rezoned and was about to become a strip mall. The bulldozing was just getting started).

"How long until I'm back on the road?"

"Shouldn't take more than a week. We've got a few jobs ahead of you but if you leave the keys I'll have her back to you by Sunday at the latest."

"That's fine. I could use a walk anyway." I pulled the car fob off the ring and handed it to him. I grabbed my duffel bag out of the back seat and as I walked out of the garage I examined the rest of the keys on my chain. House key, work key, bike lock key, lock box key, old apartment key I forgot to give back, hotel key I stole in Sweden, key that I have no idea what it opens so I use it to pick out the pesky bits of wax that get stuck in my ears; funny how keys accumulate over time. So there I was, walking out of the garage, keys jingling in my pocket, knowing full well that I would never see that car again.

### Chapter 3

I'm at a diner. Not a chain diner like Denny's or something. I got food poisoning at Denny's once and refuse to go back. This isn't to say that you can't eat at Denny's. You may have had nothing but wonderful experiences at Denny's so I'm not trying to discount that or say that you shouldn't eat there anymore. I'm just stating a fact; I got food poisoning after eating a Grand Slam, (although I must admit, it

tasted delicious going down, just not so much on the return journey). So, I'm at a small diner in the city. I'm sitting at a table by myself enjoying a cup of coffee and pretending to read the local paper that's sitting on the table in front of me. Are you picturing it? No? Is it because you don't know what I look like? That was always a problem for me. Until the narrator described the characters I always had to picture them as bodies with blurred out heads like the white trash people you see on Cops after they light their trailer on fire and run half naked through the woods, the bottom half I might add. So forgive me, I wouldn't want to be imagined as a blurry in so much as that my face is far from blurry, unless of course you are supposed to wear glasses but choose not to do so as to avoid being called "four-eyes." "Four- eyes" in one of those insults that I never quite understood. Glasses don't really look anything like eyes. If someone called me "four-eyes" I would just laugh and say "Ha, you don't know what eyes look like." My face, at least to a person with two eyes, (I can't claim to know what I'd look like to someone with four eyes), is a pretty normal face. I've got brown hair and grayish-green eyes. I shaved yesterday so I've got a little bit of stubble stretching from my ears down to my William's apple. (I call it a William's apple because it's mine, and not that Adam dude's. He can get his own apple). Just underneath my chin there is a spot where hair is yet to grow. I'm 29 years old and still can get it to come in there, it's embarrassing. My hair is messy but not so messy that it looks like I did it on purpose. It's the appropriate amount of messy. Just neat enough to prove that I showered in the past day or so but just messy enough to prove that I'm bad ass who can't be tamed by a wimpy comb. I would assume females, and probably some males, find me moderately attractive. You got a good mental picture? Whoa, not that attractive, dial it back a bit. I'd say somewhere between Tom Brady and Ray Romano and maybe mix in a bit of that skinny deputy guy from the Andy Griffith Show.

So anyway, there I was sitting at the diner. The man I was waiting for was late. My coffee had grown cold. I wasn't too upset, being that it was dinner coffee and dinner coffee can't really get much worse. After staring at the paper long enough to have made the people in the pictures feel

uncomfortable, I heard the bell ring behind me. A man walked in wearing an EMT uniform. His ambulance was parked outside. He sat down next to me in the booth. I gave him a long hard stare and realizing his mistake, he moved to the open seat across from me. He had almost ruined our entire meeting before it even began. We sat in silence for a moment simply staring at each other. Finally he spoke. "I'm in."

I laughed. "That was it? That was the most dramatic response you could come up with?"

"Really? It wasn't good? I thought it was pretty good."

"Come on man, we're planning the heist of the century and all you can say is I'm in?"

"I thought it seemed like something Vin Diesel would say."

I paused. I suppose that did sound like something Vin Diesel would say. "Fair enough, I'll text you once it's on. Until then, lay low."

Now it was his turn to make fun of me. "Really, lay low? We're planning the heist of the century and the best advice you can give me is lay low?"

He had a point, but laying low sounded like something people did in these situations. I'm not exactly sure what laying low entails, but I imagine it's the distant cousin of taking a nap, and at the moment I was all about that. I made him drive me home in the ambulance, with the lights on of course. Don't judge me, it was a napping emergency.

## Chapter 4

To understand why I was planning the heist of the century one would have to go back a long ways, and since you haven't put up much of a fuss skipping around thus far, that's exactly what we're going to do. So... back we go. Past my first job, past college graduation, past that time I almost got married to a crazy cat lady from Arkansas on a spring break trip, past my first car, past my awkward first kiss, all the way back to the 4th grade playground; to the jungle of youth, to a place where five dollars

and porno mag made you a god among boys. And that's exactly what Rob Liddell had. The porno mag he stole from his brother and the five dollars he stole from me. Mom sent me to school with five dollars every week so as to pay for lunch and every week Rob sent me running to the bathroom so as to hide my tears from the other boys. It wasn't that Rob needed the money. If he had been poor and needed it I would have gladly given it to him. He took it because he wanted it, and when he wanted something he saw no reason why he shouldn't have it. For almost an entire year I was on the lunch welfare system. The other boys in my class knew of my situation and took turns sharing their lunches with me. Tuesdays were always my favorite because on Tuesdays I got to share with Brian and Brian's mom always packed the best lunches. (It wasn't until years later that we found out it was because Brian's mom had been sleeping with the manager of the local grocery store who had been giving her discounts on lunch meats and Oreo cookies.) I suppose I could have told the teacher about Rob's lunch money vendetta, but I would have sooner told "Runny Nose Rhonda" Graysen that I thought she was pretty and trust me, the last thing I wanted to do was tell "Runny Nose Rhonda" she was pretty, so I toughed it out. Now, most of you are looking forward to the point when Rob gets what's coming to him, when my older brother finds him and beats him up or he loses a testicle in a freak kickball accident. But unfortunately I don't have an older brother and Rob still has both his testicles. So the year ended and Rob and I went our separate ways. I never forgot the embarrassment nor the empty stomach. Rob never forgot the naked girls and his half erect penis in math class. I went on to be a few custodial jobs shy of being homeless. Rob went on to being a mogul in the pornography industry. Turns out the 5 dollars he was swiping from me every week went into his investment portfolio, which over time grew into a pretty hefty sum. By the time he graduated college with a degree in computer science and masturbation he was all set to launch his website. With cutting edge technology and an insatiable audience, Rob made a lot of money very quickly, and it was all thanks to me.

## Chapter 5

Standing outside the monstrosity of a building, I marveled at the stupidity/brilliance of the architect. I say stupidity/brilliance because of how closely tied the two are. Every stupid idea is one lucky bounce away from being a brilliant one and vice versa. In this particular case, the line between brilliance and stupidity is drawn in regards to the shape of the Liddell Tower. Two lower wings flank a giant skyscraper that rushes off into the clouds. Maybe the architect knew that building was going to house the third largest pornography company in the upper-midwest or maybe he just got lucky, but either way, the building quite obviously resembled a penis. There were even a few trees in the front lawn that stretched upward, really completing the scene in the spring when their leaves began to reappear. So there I was, standing in the rain outside a giant phallus, brief case in one hand, nothing in the other (I thought it might be weird if I told you what was in one hand and not the other). I marched through the row of trees and into the revolving glass door, making sure to get out before I got caught up running around and around; trust me the temptation was there. But this was an important day, and I had to look classy, well as classy as one can look when walking into a penis-building. I walked to the front desk, which wasn't much of a desk at all, more of a flat directory. I found the name I was looking for, Rob Liddell, CEO. Of course his office was the 69<sup>th</sup> floor. Notice I did not say on the 69<sup>th</sup> floor, I said it was the 69<sup>th</sup> floor. Apparently it took an entire floor to fit the office of a CEO. I have never worked in a place where people had fancy acronyms for job titles, so who am I to say that the CEO doesn't need an entire floor, but my instinct says that that's a little over the top. I strolled to the elevator. The door opened immediately when I hit the button. I was slightly disappointed. I enjoyed watching the lights click on above the door as the elevator made its way down the shaft. (I want to point out that I was not actually disappointed; I just made up that anecdote in order to use the word shaft in context. I thought it was fitting considering the circumstances). The elevator slowly made its way up to the 69<sup>th</sup> floor. As it beeped up floor by floor, my mind raced. The doors opened.

“Can I help you sir,” came a slow drawl from a woman parked behind a large plastic desk. I said parked because she was in a wheelchair.

“Yes, my name is Mathias Dudley, I have a 9am meeting with Mr. Liddell.” Now, some of you may be thinking, ‘wait a minute. You said your name was William Christopher Faulk.’ All of you thinking that would be correct. But please, I told this nice receptionist lady a fake name so that I couldn’t be traced after completing the heist of the century. That’s heist 101. Try and keep up.

“Ah yes Mr. Dudley. I see your name right here on the calendar,” she said, pointing a boney and wrinkly finger at an overly large desk calendar. “I’ll ring Robbie and let him know you’re here.”

I’m not sure to laugh or to go “Awwww” when she referred to him as Robbie, so I decided to split the difference; I snorted and as I tried to catch it before it escaped my mouth, I farted. Not a loud fart, but a very airy “pompff.” The receptionist didn’t seem to notice, she was too preoccupied trying to remember how exactly the telephone worked. Finally she managed to hit the right series of buttons to call into Rob’s office. He answered gruffly, “What is it Marge?”

“There’s a Mathias Dudley here to see you; he has an appointment.” There was a pause, I can only assume he did it so as to seem like he had a very busy schedule and was contemplating telling me to come back some other time, but finally he responded. “Send him in please.” That’s what I thought. Anytime a millionaire asks to have private meeting with you to talk about investing in your company you agree. You’re most likely wondering how I become a millionaire. Well it was quite simple. In face it cost me exactly \$100 dollars to become a millionaire, \$98 of that went to paying a kid down at the public library to make me website, \$1.98 of it went to printing six business cards at Kinkos. The other two cents I left in my pocket and I then got swallowed by the dryer. I picked up my briefcase and walked up to the frosted glass doors that lead to Mr. Liddell’s office. I could only see dark outlines through the glass, but could vaguely make out the shape of a desk with a chair behind it, possibly flanked by potted plants on either side. I could have been wrong about the plants, they might have been very chic lamps. I heard the

latch click as Marge unlocked the doors with the touch of a button. I pulled the handle and yanked the door open, stepping into the room that I believed was destined to change my life. I was right....they were plants.

## Chapter 6

“I can’t believe this is happening,” said Rob, holding his head in his hands, seated at one of the chairs in the lobby. He was visibly shaking. I put a reassuring hand on his shoulder. It didn’t stop the shaking but I feel some of his anxiety travel through my arm, down through my leg, make a quick pit stop to tingle my genital region, before exiting out my big toe. “She worked here for five years. I just can’t believe Marge is dead.”

I know what you’re thinking, and you’re right. You missed something, so let me fill you in. I entered the office and went straight for the desk. Rob, like all evil men seated in swivel chairs tend to do, swiveled to face me as I approached. I held my breath. This heist would go very poorly if he recognized me. Thankfully his expression didn’t change as he eyed me up and down, a habit I’m sure he picked up scouting for the adult film industry. I extended my hand. He thrust his out, much like I imagine a Russian dictator would (if they even are allowed to shake hands). His palm was sweaty; at least I hoped it was sweat, who knows what he was doing before he swiveled in my direction. He spoke first, “I hear you have some money you are looking to invest. Mr. Dudley, I assure you, you have come to the right place.”

“I hope so indeed,” I replied, the line sounding much cooler in my head, and also more British for some reason.

“I know what you may be thinking, the adult entertainment industry seems like a questionable marketplace, but I assure you, it is entirely legal and grossly profitable. When the stock market crashed



in '08, people couldn't afford their houses, so they downgraded to apartments, took out second mortgages, found second jobs, but do you know what they didn't do? They didn't cancel their porn subscriptions. When everyone around us was filing for bankruptcy or looking for bailouts, we were reinvesting, increasing capital, and expanding our market. We were about the only industry that didn't take a hit. Mr. Dudley, I can assure, your money would be well taken care of here." If I wasn't mid-heist I might have considered investing whatever money I had. I had to give it to him, he was a convincing salesman.

"What type returns can I expect," I asked, thankful I watched that movie about Facebook a few nights before so I had some intelligent things to say.

"8% percent guaranteed on any investment over \$500,000.00." His response was quick. He was calm and collected. This was not his first investment meeting. This was my first heist, and I was anything but calm and far from collected. I felt as if someone inside me had thrown a superball and it was ricocheting around my chest cavity and if I opened my mouth it would come zooming out into the office. I spoke. Luckily no rubber ball appeared from behind my incisors.

"Mr. Liddell, you have yourself a new investor."

"Good," he said shaking my hand and hitting the intercom on his phone all in one motion, "Marge, can you bring in an investment packet." The door swung open slowly. Apparently Marge had a handicap button somewhere on her desk. She wheeled in, coughing. Rob scowled. "I hate old people," he muttered. She rolled over to his side of the desk and handed him a hefty stack of papers held together by a large paper clip. As she handed them to him she coughed again, harder this time. "Ew Marge. Don't cough on me!" She tried to apologize but her voice was caught up in another cough, this time a more violent one. She began to rock back and forth, unable to control herself as she struggled for air. I patted her on the back, not sure what that would do, but it was better than standing there helplessly. Suddenly, as her upper body swayed in her chair, she lost her balance and fell forward, her

face hitting the carpet with a resounding thump, her arms stretched out behind her. I was too slow to catch her but fell to my knees quickly to assist her back up. The coughing had stopped. Rob gasped as I rolled her over to her front. Her eyes were wide open but they were lifeless. I checked for a pulse.

“Nothing,” I reported. Rob began to, as the kids are saying these days, “tweek out.” “Calm down, calm down, I’m going to call 911.” I got out my phone and dialed. Rob sat in his chair, dazed. “Hello, yes I need an ambulance right away to the Liddell Tower, yes the penis shaped one, yes right away, the 69<sup>th</sup> floor, this old woman had a coughing fit and fell out of her wheel chair and now she’s not breathing, yes I’ll try CPR until you get here, thanks.” I hung up the phone and began chest compressions. I hoped I was doing them right. I even tried mouth to mouth. I know that may sound gross to you out there, and even to me as I re-read this, but in such a moment you’d do just about anything to save someone else’s life. For the next 7 minutes I tried to bring Marge back, every so often checking her pulse. All the while Rob sat in his chair, his eyes glued to the wall, not daring to look at Marge as she lay expired on his carpet. He didn’t look up as the EMT rushed into the room. He didn’t blink when he was told to wait with me out in the lobby. He didn’t flinch as they wheeled out the stretcher with a figure lying on top covered by a white cloth.

So there we sat, Rob trying to pull himself together, me trying to salvage this man’s psyche before getting the hell outta dodge. It would most likely be accurate to describe this past 60 minutes as the wildest investing meeting ever (although I hear some pretty wacky stuff goes on over at Google). However, I can’t say that it didn’t go exactly as I had hoped, or planned for that matter.

## Chapter 7

If you rewind five years, well five years and 37 days to be precise, you’ll see me sitting at a homeless shelter, a woman in a wheel chair sitting across from me. “Explain it to me one more time,”

she said.

“Alright Marge, here is how it will work. I’ll set you up with a job at Liddell Tower through a temp agency. We’ll put in a disability clause in your contract making it really hard for you to get fired without a lawsuit on the back end. While you work for Mr. Liddell I want you to find out where he keeps his money in his office. I know it’s there somewhere, probably in a safe behind a picture or under the carpet. Once you find out where it is, find the combination. Then, once you know all that, you wait until I’m ready.”

“How do you know he doesn’t put all his money in the bank?” she asked, a valid question.

“Because, Rob Liddell is a giant douche, it’s in his DNA, there is no growing out of it. Every rich douche I’ve ever met has kept a load of money in their office so when they are having a bad day they can take it out and look at, touch it, do lines of coke with it. Trust me, he has money stashed in the office, and probably a lot of it.”

“Okay, well how do I get the money out of the office without him noticing? And even if I do get it out without him noticing, I’ll definitely be the main suspect once he finds out it’s gone.”

“Both good observations Marge. But you see, this is where our plan transcends mere robbery and becomes a heist.” Over the next hour or so I detailed my plan to Marge who was completely on board and oddly excited by the mouth to mouth part. She would have plenty of time to practice fake dying before the heist was too take place, so I wasn’t worried about her performance. I choose Marge because she was homeless and had no family that would put up a fuss if she pretend died at work, plus I figured a steady job might do her some good. She found the information I requested within the first three months of working for Liddell and spent the next 4 years and 9 months waiting. Finally, about a month ago, I called the office to schedule my appointment.

So, what really happened that day? Well, the meeting went exactly as I previously described it, to the letter. But once Marge entered with the stack of papers the game was on. She fell to the floor, surprisingly much harder than I expected, showing true dedication to her craft, and I followed her down. She made sure to control her breathing as I pretended to take her pulse. Once Rob began to freak out her performance grew much easier. As long as she remained relatively still Rob would be none the wiser. I pulled out my phone and pretended to dial three numbers, instead only dialing one, my speed dial number 1. My EMT friend from earlier, Doug, answered after the first ring. I tried as hard as I could not to touch Marge's breasts as I did my chest compressions but once or twice my hands might have wandered from her rib cage, although I don't think she minded because during the mouth to mouth portion of our performance she tried slipping me the tongue twice. Thankfully Doug arrived and told Rob and I to wait in the lobby as he tried to save Marge. Rob didn't find it odd that only one EMT showed up. I hadn't expected him to; most people tend to be pretty oblivious to details when their secretary dies in front of them. As we waited in the lobby, Marge and Doug moved the potted plant on the left side of the desk to reveal Rob's large safe. Marge quickly punched in the code, 6969, of course, and spun the wheel to open the door. Furiously they lined the stretcher with the stacks of bills. Doug helped Marge up onto the stretcher and packed the remaining wads of cash all around her, finally placing a white bed sheet over her. He put the room back in order and wheeled her downstairs and into the back of his ambulance. With the lights flashing he drove about 3 miles before shutting them off and parking outside an amusement park. He transferred the money to three duffel bags, one he gave to Marge, one he took, and the other he left in a locker outside the water-park, taping the key to the underside of a bench just outside the house of mirrors. Rob called a couple of cabs, one for him and one for the very much alive Marge. The two parted ways, never to see each other again. Years later I thought I saw Marge on a bus but it turned out to be crack-head in an old-timey judge wig. After leaving the

tower I headed to my car, careful to not look directly into the security cameras mounted to the parking garage walls. Eventually Rob would realize what had happened and come looking for us, but Doug was not a certified EMT, he just bought an ambulance from a black market auction so he would be near impossible to find, and Marge had been using false identification since the 60's so good luck tracking her down.

What about me? Well, all Rob knew about me was what was written on my business card, "Mr. Mathias H. Dudley, Enterprise Consulting (439)- 762- 3968" (If you spell, "Hey Rob FYou" on a phone that's what the number comes out to be). Rob would be smart enough to review the security cameras from the parking lot, if they hadn't been taped over by the time he realized his money was gone, so just to be safe, after I retrieved my share of the money from the amusement park locker, I crawled under my car with a hammer and pounded on the fuel line until it cracked. I then drove it to the shadiest looking auto body shop in town, guaranteeing that the car would stay off the street for a week and that it would never be reported if I simply left it there. Tax, title and licensing fees my ass Todd.