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The Misadventures of Ricky Ranger: The Treehouse

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Supplemental Chapter 6 – The Road Ahead

The Treehouse

The tree at the end of the road was quiet now. No hammering. No laughter. No treehouse. Just the old oak standing tall, its branches empty.

Ricky, Max, and Eli stood beside it, their bikes resting in the grass.

“It’s weird without it,” Max said.

“Feels like the woods got smaller,” Eli added.

Ricky didn’t say anything at first. He just looked up at the branches where they’d spent so many afternoons. The fire had shaken him more than he wanted to admit, but something else had been bothering him too – something he didn’t talk about much.

Brian.

He’d been a problem for years. At school. On the bus. Sometimes even on this very road. Ricky never knew what Brian would do or say, only that it wouldn’t be good.

Ricky finally spoke. “I think I’m done building stuff for a while.”

Max nodded. “Same.”

Eli kicked at a stick. “So what do we do now?”

Ricky looked down at his bike – the chipped paint, the squeaky chain, the crooked handlebars. It wasn’t much to look at, but it was his. And suddenly, he knew exactly what he wanted to do.

“I want to fix this up,” he said. “Make it faster. Stronger. Better.” Ricky thought about his cousin Johnny, whose bike was so fast it seemed to glide over the road – the kind of speed Ricky secretly wished he had.

Max grinned. “Now that sounds like a project.”

Eli added, “My dad’s got tools. We can tune it up.”



Ricky felt a spark of excitement – the good kind. The kind that didn’t involve fire trucks or lectures or danger.

They hopped on their bikes and started riding toward Ricky’s house. The wind felt good on Ricky’s face, and for the first time since the fire, he felt like he was moving forward again.

But as they rounded the bend near the old mailbox, Ricky’s stomach tightened.

Brian was there.

Not new. Not mysterious. Just the same kid who had been giving Ricky trouble for years – shoving him in the hallway, knocking books out of his hands, making fun of anything he could think of.

Brian smirked as they approached. “Nice ride, Ranger,” he said. “Hope it doesn’t fall apart like your treehouse.”

Max muttered under his breath. Eli shook his head.

Ricky kept pedaling, eyes forward, hands tight on the handlebars.

He didn’t know what Brian wanted. He didn’t know why Brian always picked him. But he did know one thing:

Whatever was coming next...

it was going to involve this bike.

And Ricky wasn’t sure if he was ready –

but he knew he’d have to be.