

SYNOPSIS OF “THE BOYS WHO CRIED WOLF”
by Patrick Kendrick

The Boys Who Cried Wolf is the story of a group of firefighters who, when faced with losing their jobs, conspire to steal a painting (Gauguin’s “Agony In The Garden”) from the Norton Art Museum, in West Palm Beach, Florida (the fictitious Orchid City). The title of the story is inspired by the children’s story of the Boy Who Cried Wolf. The correlation comes from the heist team’s plan to rob the museum, which entails activating a “water-flow” alarm, time and again, until no one shows up to investigate the alarm anymore.

The fire department is led by a crooked Fire Chief who is in league with a politically motivated Mayor. They have been making cutbacks that negatively affect the department’s operations. Their goal is to make the firefighters look bad by increasing their response times to emergencies by cutting back on man power, then sell out the department to a private fire protection agency, for which the Mayor and the Fire Chief will receive kickback money.

All of the firefighters have personal reasons for becoming a part of the heist team. Alan Watts, our central character, lost his wife in an auto accident when there were no emergency vehicles available to respond to the call. Gil Stark, lost his nephew, Jimmy Morrow, a young firefighter, when there weren’t enough firefighters at a structure fire. Luke MacCormick’s position has been cut and he was involved in an off duty fight with policemen, violating city policy so he will be terminated. Woodrow Clay has contracted HIV, and the department is saying he contracted the disease off duty and he will be terminated. Liz Guthrie, is pregnant with Jimmy Morrow’s child. Dating other fire department members is forbidden and she will be terminated. Danny Mendez was also in the brawl with MacCormick, and a prior arrest record was discovered, which is against fire department policy. He, too will be terminated. Finally, there is Carl Jansen, the training officer, who, unknown to the others is in league with the Fire Chief. Jansen is told his position is being cut, too, and so he is invited into the heist team. He goes along to find out information which he intends to detail to the Chief. He is the Judas in the group. The correlation to the Gauguin painting, which depicts Christ awaiting the betrayal of Judas, is complete.

Watts, however, is more than he seems. On the surface he is a strange loner; a former artist who was drawn to the fire department but, since the death of his wife, has become an inspector working in the Fire Prevention Bureau. He resists the love he has for Rea Soto, his former sister-in-law because of feelings of guilt, a direct contradiction to the Zen philosophy he professes to follow. But, he is also a genius who knows people, perhaps better than they know themselves. He manipulates the entire scheme and all the players in it. The future of all these people rest in his hands. The payoff is an unexpected outcome, fantastic for some, devastating for others.