

# **GO FOR THE GOLD**

## **HONCH WILSON ADVENTURE #1**

John W Nichols

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### CHAPTER 1

Henry Wilson snugged the chin strap on his helmet, adjusted his goggles, and tightened his seat belt. He pressed the starter button and the mighty 19 horsepower engine roared to life. Henry's custom trail kart sported beefed-up suspension, a heavy brush bar and screening to protect the cockpit. He intended to use the kart to do something he was sure no one else ever tried. His best friends, Sam and Chuck, joined him for the mission.

“Gentlemen, it is time to take *Destructo* into orbit. Buckle up and hang on tight.”

Henry turned to his copilot. “Sam, is the helmet-cam rolling?”

“Roger, Henry. Video system is go.”

Henry glanced at the mirror to check on Chuck seated behind him. Chuck, the biggest of the boys, was crammed into a tiny space but Henry needed the weight distributed to balance *Destructo*.

“Chuck, are you ready with the parachute?”

“Henry, let’s roll. I’m tired of waitin’.”

Henry revved the engine and the vibrations increased. *Destructo* was ready. Henry shouted to be heard above the throaty roar of the engine.

“Remember, we have to reach Mach 30 before the jump or the mission will be aborted.”

Henry meant 30 miles per hour but Mach 30 sounded faster. He gave his crew thumbs up, released the parking brake, and *Destructo* inched ahead. The path down the hillside was rocky and Henry struggled to keep the vehicle on track.

Henry found the sweet spot in the trail and the ride smoothed. He pressed harder on the gas pedal and was pushed deeper into his seat as the vehicle accelerated.

“Mach 15 and climbing.”

“Roger, Sam. We’re on track.”

Henry concentrated on the obstacles ahead. He had confidence *Destructo* would deliver the power they needed. She was a sweet craft and he was proud to be sitting in the captain’s chair.

“Mach 20. Still climbing.”

“Roger. Holding her steady.”

*Destructo* was in the groove.

“Mach 30.”

*Destructo* reached escape velocity much faster than Henry planned. He tried to modify the trajectory calculations in his head but Sam’s panicked voice interrupted.

“Mach 40. Still climbing. Henry, slow down!”

Henry heard the words but he was focused on the ramp. *Destructo* must hit dead center or they would sail off course. Right on cue *Destructo* climbed the ramp and one second later she was airborne. Henry loved the exhilaration of flying.

Chuck was not having fun. “Henry, we’re gonna’ die!”

Henry kept his eye on the target, a giant red circle painted on the side of Grandpa’s shed.

“Wait for it. Here we go. On target!”

*Destructo* hit the bull’s-eye and crashed through the weathered wood of the old shed. Boards and tin roofing pounded against the protective screen as the kart continued its journey. The brush bar bashed through the back wall and *Destructo* barreled into daylight. Henry had a firm grip on the steering wheel. He needed the wheels straight when they touched down. *Destructo* returned to Earth 15 feet beyond the shed and rolled on.

“Woohoo! We did it. Chuck, toss the parachute.”

Henry killed the engine and watched in the mirror as Chuck released the drag parachute. The parachute filled with air and the vehicle began slowing. Murphy’s Law struck at that moment. Henry heard a pop followed by a twang. *Destructo* picked up speed as the downhill rampage continued.

“Henry, we have a problem. Hit the brakes!”

Henry turned and looked. The parachute was flopping helplessly in their wake. One of the eye bolts holding the cord must have pulled loose from the frame.

“I’ll try the brakes but we’re going too fast.”

Henry pushed the brake pedal. The sound of metal grinding on metal was painful to his ears. Smoke poured from the front wheels but *Destructo* churned onward.

“Brakes aren’t working. Hang on!”

Henry removed his foot from the brake pedal. He knew he was responsible for the safety of his crew. He turned *Destructo* toward Grandpa’s blackberry garden. Henry hoped the bushes, briars, and brambles would slow them down. Then he would try the brakes again.

“Keep your arms and hands in. Tuck your heads.”

“Thorn bushes? No, Henry. Abort! Abort!”

“Too late, Sam. Hang on.”

“Henry, we’re gonna’ die!”

*Destructo* cut a wide path through the wall of briars but thanks to Henry’s warning no arms were shredded. The parachute snagged a couple of large bushes and ripped them out of the ground. *Destructo* was pursued by bouncing blackberry bushes as the journey continued.

“Woohoo! Henry, look! We’re slowin’ down’.”

Henry looked over his shoulder to see the reason for Chuck’s relief. The bushes tangled with the parachute were plowing furrows

in the soft field and creating considerable drag. *Destructo* was slowing and not a moment too soon. Wilson Pond was straight ahead. Henry applied the brakes. *Destructo* stopped as the front tires slid into the pond. Steam rose from the hot wheels.

“Splashdown! Gentlemen, we did it! Everyone OK?”

“Henry, that was awesome. Let’s do it again!”

“Let me out first, Sam. My heart’s poundin’.”

“Don’t worry, Chuck. Once was enough for me, too. Can you help me push *Destructo* out of the pond? We can go back to see what’s left of the shed.”

The boys unfastened their safety belts and Henry waded into the pond. Chuck joined him to push the kart out of the water. Recovering the vehicle was much easier than untangling the mangled parachute.

“All aboard.”

Henry threaded his skinny frame back into the driver’s seat and pressed the starter. The faithful engine roared and he turned two donuts before heading toward the shed via the hole through Grandpa’s bushes.

“Low bridge. Blackberry Tunnel ahead. Watch your arms!”

Henry surveyed the remains of the shed. Chunks of wood lay everywhere and pieces of tin roofing were stuck in the ground like a miniature Stonehenge.

“It worked. The shed is down! I told Dad we could tear it down in one day.”

“It will take a couple of days to clean up the mess.”

“Let me eat a snack before we start. My whole life was passin’ through my mind on that ride. I was sure we were gonna’ die and leave our lunches sittin’ behind for someone else to eat.”

“We didn’t die, Chuck, and Mom sent brownies for dessert. No way I’m leaving those behind.”

“Brownies? I’m feelin’ better now.”

The boys sat in the shade and relived the wild ride down the hillside. Henry patted his trail kart.

“Good girl, *Destructo*. You did it!”

