

# The Mallrats - Conclusion

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The third and final installment...

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Now locked in the lower Mall level, Mike made out two new well,...human-sized *rats* ...really in the ominous darkness, similar to the one at the top of the stairs. One of them was thin and lanky with much longer pointed ears on either side of its skull. It held its arms out at its sides like a sumo wrestler ready to grapple. It really didn't have hands but rather hair-covered claws with long pointed needles for nails. Despite the poor illumination the emergency lights provided, Mike could make out a long pointed snout with flat black nose that glittered with mucous on the tip. It was sporting an Ozzy Osbourne t-shirt with the singer himself grinning wickedly, greenish ooze seeping through his opened mouth.

*I'm Little Red Riding Hood and this is the Big Bad Rat!*

Beside this beast was a shorter one dressed in a cheerleader's outfit entirely in Fresno High's colours. It wore a bright red skirt and green cotton top with the letters "FRESNO" arranged in an arc on the front that protruded outwards from her breasts underneath. Her long nails were painted a sick shade of crimson. The red eyes burned just as deep as the other two and as it slunk beside one of the emergency lights, Mike could see it's matted fur was cherry red and much longer than the others. Very similar to Beverly's, in fact.

"Beverly? Ramsey...you...you too?" Mike asked between snuffles.

The cheerleader reared back its head in a shrill laugh that echoed throughout the Mall. The laugh was the exact noise Mike had heard before: the high-pitched squeal of annoying radio static.

Mike could stand no more and ran off away from the beasts that were deliberately moving forward slowly to propagate his anxiety.

He started off in the direction of the "Cineplus six" cinemas where he figured he could reach a phone and get help fast.

*They cut the power no way out of this what am I gonna do?*

His hope of escape was abruptly cut short as his path was blocked by the last of the hairy rodents, the one he knew was Stevens.

This one he could clearly see as it stood right under a bright fluorescent bulb in front of the cinema's posters.

This one had the same fur and pointed ears like the others only it's features were more rough and wild. The hair stuck out from its face in all directions and it's pointed snout was curled back in a snarl. Brown whiskers jutted from his nose like small spikes. Saliva dripped from its mouth as it growled, exposing rows of sharp, bright sabre-like eyeteeth surrounding two front buck teeth.

It's hairy eyebrows blended in with the dark fur enveloping its face, making it's crimson eyes all the more menacing.

It wore the Fresno High School jacket in green and red satin with the name "Stevens" embroidered in the upper right breast. Fur poked through the sleeves enveloping the same murderous claws as the others.

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Mike noticed that Ace was still wearing the top-siders only this time the front of the shoe had separated from the sole, forming a flap-like opening from which protruded three long claws serving as its feet. Between the monster's legs was a long, hairy growth that Mike originally mistook for a phallus. However, it began to wave back and forth like a cobra under the spell of a charmer and it was then that he concluded it was in fact the long tail of a rodent.

"Porterhouse...glad you could make it," Stevens hissed. His breath smelt like stale onions mixed with household trash and Mike's nausea kick-started again.

Mike was completely frozen. He couldn't run, fight or think. His McDonald's knapsack dropped to the floor out of his limp grasp. He was like an immobile pole for these rodents to sharpen their claws on.

"We're the *Mallrats*, remember Mikey? Isn't that how you thought of us?"

Mike felt the warm flow of fresh urine down his left leg.

"You guys aren't *real*... rats can't talk...this is crazy!"

"Oh no?" Stevens asked in mock surprise. "We're as real as your *fears* are, Pigpen! As real as your worst nightmare!"

Stevens put a claw into the inner aspect of his jacket and pulled out a can of hairspray. In his other claw he held his Bic lighter.

"C'mon baby, light my fire!" he crooned like Jim Morrison, flicking the flint of the lighter to produce an orange flame.

"NO!!!" Mike screamed and grabbed at his side out of instinct. He pulled on the hilt of his knife which flashed in the florescent light. In one fast motion, Mike slashed the arm of the Stevens-rat, causing it to drop the lighter before contact with the can could be made.

The creature howled in pain as blood oozed from the 6 inch long gash in its forearm. The can dropped from its other claw and rolled on the ground a few feet away. The rat gnashed it's teeth as it nursed the wounded limb with the good claw.

Mike clutched the bloody blade, dumbfounded by his brave actions. His hand was trembling and his whole body felt frozen with fear.

*My dad would be proud I know he would*

Stevens grinned menacingly at Mike as he clutched his bloody arm. "You're tougher than I thought, Porterhouse."

Mike whirled around and saw Ramsey and Beverly approaching to help their wounded ally.

"You're history Cromwell," Ramsey hissed, his pointy snout curling back in a sneer. He raised back one claw and brought it full force in a swat to Michael's frightened face.

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Mike fell to the ground from the impact and felt warm blood ooze down his cheek. A dull throbbing sensation formed in his temple and his mind reeled for a plan.

He still had the knife in his left hand, which he held in front of him as if it was a holy cross warding off a horde of vampires. In the corner of his eye, he could see the lighter on the ground. He groped for it behind him with his right hand.

"Don't come any closer!" he warned the three as they encircled his fallen form. The rats resembled a group of football players all huddled together to punt the life out of a helpless ball.

Beverly let out another of her shrill cries and then said, "He won't hurt the girl he loves, would you now, dear?"

She knelt down to Mike, her filthy, rodent snout protruding in a mock kiss. Her rank breath permeated the air and Mike sunk back in terror. The other two made their disturbing radio-static laughs in the background.

*You trap 'em and then kill them*

In desperation, Mike trusted the hilt of the knife vertically upward causing the blade to penetrate deeply into Beverly's left breast. She froze for a moment over him and then her claws enclosed the hilt as she tried to remove the knife. As she struggled, her red eyes bulged out like melons. She let out a faint gurgle and blood dripped out her open mouth onto the tiled floors of the Mall. Some splattered on Michael's bare leg. After her last dying cry, the female rat rolled onto her side, knife still protruding from her chest.

Mike was crying badly and he kept repeating, "I'm sorry Beverly, I had to. I had to Beverly."

Stevens and Ramsey looked at each other, revolting features contorting with surprise at Mike's actions.

Michael seized the opportunity and lunged for the lighter. With all his might he launched his hefty frame on top of the lighter and quickly engulfed it in his fist.

After rolling onto his front, he spied the spray can lying on its side a few feet away. He dragged his frame towards it, but unfortunately his weight proved to be a hindrance of speed.

Always the opportunist, Ramsey leapt down on all fours and seized Michael's bare leg. Opening his jaws wide, he sank those sharp fangs and buck teeth deep into Michael's calf.

Mike screamed in pain as he felt the stab of ten needles pierce his skin.

Ramsey jerked his head back in one violent motion, tearing out part of Michael's flesh between his teeth. Blood flowed from the wound and accumulated in a small crimson pool on the floor of the Mall.

Stevens stood over Mike's quivering form spread-eagled, his tail undulating with anticipation.

"Not so tough after all, are ya, Butterball?" the rat taunted as saliva dripped onto Michael's belly.

Sweat formed profusely along Mike's brow as he flicked the lighter madly to make a flame. Once, twice, three times and still no flame.

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Stevens emitted a radio-static laugh. "Ramsey, look! This loser can't even work a lighter!" Ramsey joined in the merriment, flesh hanging from between his teeth.

"Now... let's finish him off!" Stevens cried. His red eyes widened in a semi-erotic state of excitement.

Stevens dove downwards, aiming his jagged teeth at Mike's pulsing jugular vein.

Mike could feel the hot, bloodthirsty breath of the rabid beast approaching him, and he felt like he was going crazy.

With one final sweep of the flint, Mike saw an orange flame finally materialize from the Bic. Using the lightning quickness he thought only Bruce Lee possessed, Mike shoved the flame into Stevens' approaching face.

The rat reeled back in a frenzy, shrieking with pain as the hair on its snout blazed brightly. He clawed desperately at his face to douse the flame, red eyes shut tighter than a vault.

Mike took complete advantage of the situation and jumped on the spray can, trying to ignore the pain shooting from the marred flesh of his calf.

Then Ramsey was upon him.

The rat tore his shirt apart with its claws, exposing Mike's large, bare torso. Its mouth grinned with anticipation as it prepared itself to feast on his midsection.

Mike pressed down on the aerosol can, not knowing which way the nozzle was pointed. Luckily for him, the mist fired in the rat's direction and when Mike brought the lighter into its pathway, a huge blue flame shot out like a mad dragon.

Ramsey's face began to melt instantly. His whole rodent features caved in. The red eyeballs rolled back in their sockets in agony, flame completely devouring the surrounding flesh.

The snout had become a collage of fire and fur. Ramsey also swatted his snout madly as Stevens had done earlier. The flames danced to the back of his head and pointed ears, completely engulfing his cranium. It looked as if he wore a diver's helmet made entirely of fire.

Mike ran the last burst of flame up and down the rat's entire body, mimicking what was done previously to the tree outside of Fresno High. Ramsey jerked in some sort of wild dance as he was completely consumed with fire. The skin on his body began to bubble and his primal screams echoed throughout the entire vacant Mall.

It let out a primal scream, arching his back as death enveloped his soul. It or he then fell to the ground, a steaming, writhing, unrecognizable mass of burnt ash.

Stevens meanwhile had managed to put the minor flame on his face to rest, causing his features to appear all the more deformed with lumpy pink boils.

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Michael's self-made torch was quickly dying out as the gas from the lighter diminished.

"C'mon, you little shit. Show me what ya got!" Ace taunted. His voice was no longer as loud and shrill as it once was, but now low and shaky with uncertainty. For once the great Ace Stevens was losing confidence and Mike thrived on it.

He whipped out the switchblade knife from the inner pocket of his jacket whose silver blade reflected the remaining dying flames from Ramsey's corpse.

Michael turned quickly and ran for the escalator, tossing the useless lighter behind him. Stevens bounded after him, slashing the knife in the air inches behind Mike's fleeing form.

Mike scrambled onto the escalator steps and quickly glanced behind him to see just how much of a lead he had. To his horror, Ace the rat threw himself on the escalator steps like a mercenary in a mine field. His ungodly claws slammed the blade of the knife onto the step Mike had been on seconds earlier, red eyes blazing.

*This is the dream. It's coming to life! It's real! It's all too real!*

In a fit of desperation, Mike slammed the aerosol can down hard on the head of Ace once and then twice for good measure with all his might. He felt the side of the can dent with each contact.

Stevens was dazed by the assault and had to shake his rodent cranium to clear away the stars he now saw.

Mike seized the blade by the handle and jerked it from the stair violently, losing his balance in the process. He painfully fell on his back on the pointed escalator steps.

Stevens regained his composure and leapt into the air onto his hapless victim like a jungle cat, his deformed face contorted in a mask of rage.

Mike thrust the knife out in front of him, closing his eyes and silently praying. Ace's flight in the air felt like it was in slow motion lasting minutes, rather than split seconds. His chest landed square on the tip of the blade which imbedded itself deep into the beast's heart.

He screeched in pain as he impaled himself, arms spread out in some twisted embrace. He twitched and convulsed on the knife as he wrestled with death, his mangy face inches from Michael's.

After a few final spasms, the monster's lifeless body finally hung limp on Michael's trembling torso.

Michael flung the body aside with disgust, watching wide eyed as the corpse of his ultimate adversary rolled pathetically down the steps of the escalator like a rag doll. The knife stood erect just below Ace's sternum in triumph.

The pain in Mike's calf was excruciating and the blood from the claw mark on his face was desperately trying to solidify itself into scar tissue. He was out of breath and out of energy. Every muscle and ligament in his body throbbed with pain. His shirt was now mere ribbons hanging from his chest. He felt like he had just run a marathon and his nerves had been worn down to nothing. All he wanted right now was to wash up and go to sleep. He wiped a grimy hand down his face and tried to regain his composure.

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The whole Mall appeared to be in a dim haze. He studied the remains of Ramsey, Beverly and Ace and was violently sick to his stomach.

He scooped up his McDonald's knapsack and twisted his mother's knife loose from Beverly's bosom. After wiping the blade on the sole of his shoe, he then placed it in the sack.

He didn't know what was going to happen to him now. Would he be charged with murder? Would anybody believe his supernatural tales of man-sized rats that were ready to tear him to shreds? Probably not, but he had the corpses and wounds to prove it, he supposed. His mother Marge would have a fit and probably enroll him in a military academy or send him off to the funny farm.

He figured he would make his way upstairs and call an ambulance and the police from the payphone outside the main entrance.

He slowly climbed the escalator, dragging the bad leg behind him. He winced with pain at each step and desperately fought back the urge to cry.

The silence and darkness of the Mall was eerie enough to send chills up his spine as he ventured up to the top.

He wiped the sweat from his brow and saw the same dark windows of "GNC", "Lady Foot Locker" and the dancing pyramids on the computer screen in the bank on the top floor.

He made his way over to the wide open entrance doors and felt a warming in his heart as he viewed his green Schwinn waiting there for him, even though he was much too tired to ride anywhere at this point.

It was precisely when he had one foot out the door that "Wall" Edwards grasped the back of his neck and pulled him right back in.

The huge rat rotated him around and focused its red eyes on his horrified face. It smiled broadly exposing the same razor-sharp fangs Mike had become so intimately familiar with. The huge snout breathed hot, rank air in Mike's face and he knew that he was inches away from death. He was so weak and defenseless, this massive rodent could pretty much do anything it felt like.

Edwards hoisted Mike up into the air, pulling at the skin at the back of his neck. Mike hollared in agony that was so intense he thought he would pass out. Edwards then ran both of his claws around Mike's protruding girth and squeezed against its hairy chest with all of its awesome might.

Mike felt the pain radiate from his spinal cord to his fingers as the beast squeezed him tighter and tighter. He could feel the pressure rising in his head and the throbbing sensations he had amplified ten-fold.

The tongue of the huge rat lolled out of its mouth as if it were about to sit down for a feast. Still keeping him in the fatal hug, the rat slammed Mike against the hard wall of the Mall entrance, forcing a huge breath of air out of Mike's chest.

From the corner of his eye, Mike saw the red handle of the fire alarm. He groped with his left hand for the handle as the pressure on his spine got worse. Simultaneously his right hand scrambled to get a hold on the zipper of the McDonald's knapsack, firmly hooked around his shoulders. When he finally felt it, he yanked it for all it was worth and managed to jam his fist inside. He groped madly for the kitchen knife as he felt his

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liver being compressed into a pancake.

The left middle finger extended madly, trying desperately to hook that alarm. It came centimetres away in an annoying tease.

*Oh God don't get any flashy ideas like tearing my head off because if you tried, you would probably be very successful.*

He felt a sudden surge of hope as he felt the hilt of the knife come into contact with his probing fingers in the bag. He firmly grasped it and slashed through the vinyl bag like it was butter. He then desperately jabbed the blade deep into the side of the huge rodent.

Edwards instantly let his grip on Mike go as it clutched it's side with pain. Now that he was free, Michael yanked on the fire alarm, evoking the high-pitched scream to pierce the vacant Mall.

Mike seized the knife handle and withdrew it from the rodent's diaphragm causing Edwards to let out a roar that shook the building.

As the rat doubled over with pain, Mike plunged the blade deep into the nape of its neck, causing it to have a series of epileptiform convulsions and eventually sprawl on the ground, tongue hanging limply from the side of its mouth.

Mike's chest heaved from the effort and stress of the evening. Four down and none to go. He slumped down against the wall of the building and tried to think his burning pains away.

He had proved himself to be a hero overcoming insurmountable odds, just like the Terminator and Indiana Jones. His dad would surely have been proud whether he was a snivelling weasel or a hardened blue-collar truck driver.

He knew that from this point on his life would never be the same. He had passed Go, did collect his \$200 and was beyond the point of return.

It was when he saw the flashing red lights of the ambulance and screeching tires of the fire engines outside the Mall entrance that he actually began to smile. And it really did feel good to smile.

FIN

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