

## ***CAUGHT IN THE ACT***

Danny had been here before: a Portakabin yard next to the City Stadium.

Six months ago he'd ended up here hiding from a burglar he'd been filming. That time it'd been late at night and he'd ended up witnessing the kidnap of his favourite footballer, Sam Roberts. A footballer he'd helped to rescue. It had been his first real case as an unofficial private investigator. And nearly his last. The kidnapers had not been impressed by the successful start to Danny's career in solving football crime.

*This* time it was broad daylight. So he'd had to be

careful, squeezing through the fence, then finding a gap between two Portakabins from where he could watch the City Stadium entrances. But he was confident that he had made it without being seen.

Danny's plan was to just sit and watch. Most people thought that detectives chased around and got into fights on a daily basis. But Danny knew better. He'd read too many mystery stories. They sat. They watched. And often that was it.

It was 1 p.m. now. He could stay here until 5 p.m. if need be. Then he'd have to go home, or his mum and dad would be wondering where he'd got to.

Danny always had a set of things in his bag. Things to help him. Not quite gadgets – he didn't have chewing-gum that could burn through metal

like Alex Rider or fancy cars like Young Bond. But he did have a small video camera, a pair of light binoculars, a notebook and a pen. That would have to do for him. He wasn't backed up by MI6 or anyone like that.

As Danny settled down, his mobile buzzed in his pocket. He fished it out and saw he'd had a text. From Charlotte.

**Where r u ? C x**

He wondered what he should answer.

Be honest? Say he was at the City Stadium?

Or lie?

Danny realized that he'd lied to her already. Saying he wouldn't come down to the stadium. And

she knew he wasn't at school. He considered a few decent lies.

He'd had to go home to help his dad.

His grandad had had an accident.

His sister was in trouble.

That sort of thing.

But he knew he couldn't. So he texted back:

**City Stadium. Sorry. D x**

Then he flicked his phone shut and slipped it into his pocket. He didn't want to know Charlotte's response – he had things to get on with.

The reason he had come to the City Stadium was to watch. If the club was having secret meetings, but saying nothing to the press, then they'd be

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making sure no one saw people coming and going. They'd drive them through in cars with tinted windows, so the press wouldn't see who they were. And bring them in round the back.

And that's what Danny had a great view of now.

There were plenty of press reporters at the front. Before he'd come to the Portakabin yard, Danny had sussed out the front gates. Six journalists standing around. So there must be something going on. It was impossible that the press would send so many people if they didn't have inside information.

Now that he was in position, Danny tried to remember how best to stake somewhere out. The principles were: keep yourself in the shadows, wear dark clothes, don't move about. Then you wouldn't

be seen. After that the key was to watch – and record – everything. Make notes. Who is going in? Who is coming out? What are they carrying? Who are they with? What do they look like?

He was good at this. He knew what he was doing.

He settled down.

Quiet.

Still.

Watching.

After half an hour he'd seen nothing. But he knew how to be patient. To wait.

He shifted his feet to get comfortable.

And then he heard something. Behind him.

As he turned to see what – or who – it was, he noticed something ahead of him too. A shape. A

silhouette between the Portakabins.

His mind was filled suddenly with memories. The last time he'd hidden here. Being chased by two burglars he'd disturbed. The fear that they might get him. The fear of what they might do to him.

But this wouldn't be them. This could be anybody. People from the football club. People from the Portakabin business. Security guards.

He hadn't expected to run into trouble this quickly.

Then Danny heard a voice. Coming from the figure ahead of him.

'Excuse me, son. Can I ask what you're doing?'

Danny was faced with a policeman. And his mind went into escape mode: should he turn, stand up

and get away, through the hole in the fence?

But as he turned, he heard a noise, behind him. Again. Then he saw another policeman standing *there* too.

He was trapped between two Portakabins. One policeman in front of him, one behind him. It was hopeless.

The first policeman was still looking at him. And he realized how odd he must look. Crouching here. A bag full of things. Dressed in dark clothes.

Danny didn't know what to say. He was paralysed. His heart going so fast he had to breathe deeply and slowly to control himself.

'Nothing,' he said at last.

He felt stupid as soon as he had said it.

‘Nothing?’ the first policeman said. ‘You know you’re trespassing?’

Danny thought about playing ignorant. But he knew it always looked pathetic on *The Bill* when someone who’d been caught doing something wrong pretended they didn’t *know* it was wrong.

‘I’m just watching,’ he said. ‘I’m not doing anything illegal.’

‘But you know you are trespassing. And truanting, perhaps.’

Danny paused. He felt terrible. His mind was just starting to come out of shock and realize what the consequences of this situation might be. One, he might be about to be arrested. Two, he might have a police record. Three, his mum and dad, and how

they would react to this.

Danny felt like his blood had turned to ice in his veins.

‘Do you understand what I’m saying?’ the policeman said.

Danny nodded. This was the police. You had to do what the police said.

‘I’m just watching,’ he said again, standing up.

‘Watching what?’ the policeman said, moving back a step.

Danny decided to be honest. ‘The stadium.’

‘The stadium?’ the policeman asked. ‘Why?’

‘I want to know what’s going on.’

‘Why?’

‘Because something is going on. And no one is

saying what.'

The policeman nodded. 'The football club have alerted us to the fact that some people are trying to gain illegal access to the stadium,' he said. Then he added, 'I'm arresting you for trespass. You are not obliged to say anything, but anything you do say will be noted down and may be used in evidence. Do you understand?'

Danny nodded. He understood. But he didn't feel like he was there. Except that he felt sick. His mind was flitting off in a dozen directions. Charlotte. Paul. Emily. School. His dad. His mum. And how this would make them argue even more.

'Do you have anything to say?'

Danny shook his head. He could feel hot tears

forming in his eyes. Because he'd just had another thought. A terrible thought. If he was being arrested, did it mean that he *would* have a police record and that now he could never be a police officer? Did it mean he could never be a real detective?

The policeman went on, reading Danny his rights.

'You will be detained to enable further investigations to be carried out regarding the offence and/or as to whether or not you should be reported. You will be taken to a police station where you will be informed of your further rights in respect of detention.'

But the words sounded distant, like they were coming from a car radio parked halfway down the street.