

## Spring Holidays – Day 5

*There was a small pause, as Michael leafed through his folder. Gradually a look of complete horror came over his face. He spoke louder than they had ever heard him before.*

*'NO! ALL MY FIVE STAR SHINIES ARE MISSING!'*

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They spent most of Wednesday morning searching for the cards.

Wil and Michael looked through the folder several times, to see whether the cards had been misplaced somewhere, or if someone had moved them from the correct slots, but they had not found anything.

Hardy had searched around the sitting-room where Michael had left the folder, before they had gone to the tree-house for the sleepover.

Clara had searched her own half-empty folder, and had gone out with Freddy and climbed back up to the tree-house, to see if there were any clues there. Then, she and Freddy had gone back to his house to pick up his Super Sleuth Detective Kit.

He was determined to get to the bottom of this mystery.

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*'You've got to help me'* he said to Clara when they got back to Hardy's house, *'we need to talk to all the possible suspects'*.

*'OK'*, said Clara, *'sounds like fun. Do you want me to apply, you know, any pressure to the suspects?'*

*'Er, no thanks, that won't be necessary. I've got my kit here, so the first thing we need to do is to look at the evidence'*.

Freddy took the folder and studied the gaps where the missing cards should be. He took out his magnifying glass and carefully ran his eye over the transparent sheet that formed the card holder.

*'Hmmm...'* he said in a Sherlock Holmes sort of way, *'very interesting'*.

*'Have you found something?'* said Clara excitedly, *'let me see, go on...'*

*'Wait, if you want to be my assistant, you need to help, and we must not rush this. But there is something there, a smudge or something. Hand me that powder over there'*.

Clara reached over and passed Freddy the fingerprint dusting powder from the kit. He gingerly unscrewed the top from the bottle and gently tapped the base, watching the fine grey powder cover the plastic. He carefully lifted the folder and tapped it gently so that most of the powder fell off again.

In three areas there was a clear fingerprint pattern. Most of the prints were around Michael Carrick and Wayne Rooney on the Man United page. The culprit had definitely been watching the 7-1 destruction of Roma the previous night.

*'Right, let's get the suspects in', said Freddy, 'start with Wil please'.*

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Whilst Clara went out to get Wil, Freddy set up two chairs either side of the small table, and switched on a small wall-lamp. He turned off the main lights so that the table was dimly lit by the weak bulb.

*'Hey, let go of me!'* protested Wil, as Clara shoved him into the room, *'I didn't steal anything!'*

*'We'll see about that, won't we?'* said Clara, pushing Wil down onto the chair.

*'Press here, then here',* she said, jabbing Wil's fingers first onto an ink pad, then onto a sheet of bright white paper, at the top of which she had written,

### *PRISONER NUMBER 1 – WILL - FINGERPRINTS*

*'She is taking this a bit seriously, isn't she?'* thought Freddy as he watched Clara warming to her task of assistant investigator. He turned to Wil, sitting opposite him,

*'Your name, please?'*

*'Oh for goodness...!'*

*'JUST answer the question!'* said Clara, before Wil could object any further.

*'I'm Wil, and I didn't steal any cards?'*

*'Where were you on the night of the 9th April?'* started Freddy formally.

*'You know where I was, I was up a tree with you'.*

*'Please just answer the question'.*

*'I was up a tree, with you and Hardy and Michael. I didn't sleep at all that night, and I didn't see anything. When we returned at 08.00 hours in the morning, the cards had gone.'*

*'But your fingerprints are all over this folder',* said Freddy, studying the intricate patterns on the folder and comparing them with the patterns just taken from Prisoner Number 1.

*'So? Maybe I had a look at his cards sometime, so did you probably',* said Wil.

*'OK, thank you. You are free to leave'.* Clara stepped back, glaring at Wil as he left. She sat down in the chair he had just vacated.

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*'Definitely guilty!'* she said.

*'What makes you say that?'*

*'Ah, you can tell by the look on his face. Fingerprints everywhere. Guilty as sin! Just wants to hide the fact he wanted those special cards.'*

*'That's not what I think. Can you get the next suspect please'.*

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There was a pushing and shoving at the doorway as Clara tried to get Hardy to come forward. He was having none of it.

*'Get on with it, or we'll definitely think it was you!'* cried Clara, again applying her perverse logic to the criminal investigation. Hardy sat down and was fingerprinted. Freddy looked over his notes with his magnifying glass, then looked up slowly at Hardy.

*'I put it to you, Hardy, that you left the tree-house during the night to take the missing cards and to insert them into your own folder. So the crime occurred between the hours of 9.00 pm and 7.00 am, when the rest of us were asleep. Your motive was to build up your own collection, and you knew that the rest of us would not dare to come down from the tree in the dark, therefore you could not be detected'.* Freddy was really getting the hang of this detective thing, *'how do you plead?'*

*'Definitely, one hundred percent, without a doubt, two hundred percent, NOT GUILTY!'* said Hardy.

*'Hmmm, I see, let me have a look at these prints here'.*

Freddy looked hard at the fingerprints taken from Hardy and tried to match them to the three dusty marks on the folder. He stood up and walked around the gloomy room, thinking. Clara, meanwhile, was rubbing her hands together, moving urgently from foot to foot, apparently eager to get her hands on the culprit. Suddenly Freddy half-shouted,

*'Aha! Do you have a pair of gloves?'*

*'Eh?'* said Hardy.

*'A pair of gloves? I put it to you that you were wearing gloves when you committed the crime, as your fingerprints do not match those on the folder!'*

*'Ha! Got you now!'* said Clara from the corner. Unhelpfully.

*'I can never find my gloves, if you want to know the truth, '* said Hardy miserably, *'well actually, I can always find one, but never a pair. I had this one on for a while whilst we were tree-climbing'.*

*'AHA! So, Clara come here please',* said Freddy dramatically.

Clara approached, convinced they had got their man.

*'Place one hand behind your back, and then try to remove a card from the folder'.*

Clara did as she was told, and removed a card, one-handed, without much difficulty.

*'That proves it. You, Hardy, are a major suspect. You may go now, but do not speak to anyone about*

*this matter.'* Hardy trudged forlornly out of the room.

*'OK, we're nearly there. Bring out the prisoner Michael!'*

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*Can you work out whodunnit? Discuss with other readers on the website in the comments section at the bottom of the story page!*

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