

Hostage

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There was a crash in the night. Suddenly, I started awake, my forehead damp with sweat. Dad was never this drunk, I thought. I got up out of bed and crept to the door. Silently, I ducked through the door frame, letting my Postman Pat pyjamas blend into the darkness. Stop! The almost silent footfall of a man stealthily skulked down the stairs. Almost silent. The man muttered into his radio "All clear. Let's get out of 'ere. Gives me the creeps!" And with that, he went. As he turned, I caught sight of a tattoo on his shoulder. A knife.

The front door slammed shut and I darted through the house searching for drugs or something equally as illegal. Nothing seemed out of place. Suddenly, a thought occurred to me: I hadn't checked my parents' room yet. Quick as a flash, I ran to my mum and dad's room. They weren't there. A sense of unease grew in my gut, my hair standing on end, like a predator. A cornered predator. As I scoured their bedroom, fervently hoping that it was just mum playing a game of hide and seek, I found a note underneath her pillow. It said:

Come to Brawler & Son in three days' time. Bring your dad's notebook. Only then will we give your parents back. If you don't, they will suffer.

My hopes fell. How was I going to save them from a blood thirsty gang - well, I was assuming they were blood thirsty? The last job I had to do was tidy my room last weekend. This may not prove quite as easy! A few moments went by and then I realised: why should I want them back? All they did was make me brush my hair, do my teeth, tidy my room and deny me access to my Nintendo Switch. No. I would live life without them, after all, how hard could it be?

I decided to start my day with a bowl of the most sugary cereal I could find. I needed a treat, I thought. It was only fair. After that, I decided to go to the cinema to see Home Front Battle 3 Attack. My parents would never have allowed that! When the film finished, I trudged home, half expecting a plate of Mum's lasagne on the table. Lasagne! Just what I needed! I went home and got out the recipe book. Eagerly, I flicked through the dog-eared pages and found (hallelujah!) the lasagne recipe! My heart sank. I had no idea how to preheat the oven to 136° or boil an egg in a frying pan! In the end, I had to put up with with 'ready-made lasagne'. It tasted horrid. All I had wanted was a plate of my Mum's legendary lasagne, but I had ended up with slop from a supermarket, sloshing around my plate.

I went to bed. The truth was, I missed my parents. I missed their overreactions when I got a cut, their comforting hugs, their food and, most importantly, their love.

My dreams that night were haunted by disfigured men, holding my terrified parents captive and at one weird point, Donald Duck with a sword.

Light seeped through my curtains, frantically searching for dark corners to invade and conquer. Groggily, I opened my sleep-ridden eyes and fell out of my bed, Postman Pat

pyjamas on display to all. I got up and dressed, sweeping my bed-hair from my azure eyes. I travelled down the stairs on my nan's stair lift and made my breakfast: rice crispies, coco pops, sugar, honey on toast, baked beans and butter. Mum's worst nightmare. During the night, I had made up my mind. I couldn't live without my parents. I had to get them back. I was going to go tonight. I was going to check out this deal and see what I was getting myself into.

At around midnight, I got up and prepared. I crept out of the house, letting my dishevelled form slip deep into the shadows. Tap, tap, tap. Footsteps. I quickly threw myself at the perimeter wall of Brawler & Sons, and not a moment too soon. A guard, dressed entirely in black, came round the corner. I briefly considered trying to take him down, but then I remembered that I would lose the element of surprise if I acted too soon. I waited until he had turned, and then crept silently along the wall. I could hear an unnerving howl – human pain or wolf distress? I shall probably never know.

Barbed wire was coiled on top of the perimeter wall, spinning a deathly web. How I got in was simple: I headed to the back door. Just get this over with, I thought. And that was when I made the most stupid mistake ever. I touched the doorknob. Immediately, an alarm blared, almost shattering my earbuds. Then I made stupid mistake number 2: I ran. My footsteps rang out through the air, and about two seconds later, four rough hands grabbed my legs and arms, making me crash down to the ground. I was too bruised to move. Smelling victory, the guards lifted me up, then started walking me towards the building. We were already inside when I realised I had a weapon. I had a shard of glass that I picked up when I was walking back home after the cinema incident. I reached into my pocket and drew out my shard of green glass. As quick as lightning (even if I do say so myself), I plunged it into my captor's arm. Letting out a cry of pain, he dropped me and, desperation lending me strength, I raced off pursued by the remaining guards. I needed to lose them! Racing down the corridor, I heard bangs behind me. Guns! Grey blurs flew past me but, miraculously, I was not hit. They were all bad shots: soon I would find out the reason why.

I was getting out of breath so I started looking for a hiding place. Shots rang out behind me. Yes! I spotted a cleaner's cupboard. I darted in and made myself scarce between the bottles of bleach and suspicious-looking boxes and needles. I felt a sharp jab and recoiled. Just a sharp utensil, I thought. I waited until the loud footsteps had gone and then crept out. I kept to the shadows, creeping silently through the long, winding corridors until I saw a large metal sign saying: 'Cells'. My heart leapt, as surely this was where my parents were being kept? I ran through the door, not at great speed because suddenly I felt like all of my strength was seeping out and I was feeling dizzy. I stumbled through the corridor, going from empty cell to empty cell. My head swam, and I was so exhausted I could barely walk. There was one cell left. Thinking the worst, I tripped and stumbled towards it. I peered in. two skinny, starved people stared back. Mum! Dad! I found them! They were the last things I saw before I heard a yell, and everything went black.

I came to, still exhausted, and found I couldn't move. My prison was a minute, grey room. A person in a black suit and a silver tooth in the side of his mouth stood at the door of the cell. "So then. You came one day too early. Why d'ya do it?"

“Let me go!” I said. He laughed. A cruel laugh. He took out a cigarette and started to smoke.

“Don’t get any ideas of escaping, kid. I’ve got a .62 revolver in my pocket. I am a ruthless man, so don’t underestimate me.”

“I said let me go!” I shouted, anger rising up inside me.

“Shut it, or someone gets hurt!” he snarled, drawing his silver revolver and pointing it at my head. “Let me tell you a story. From the moment your parents were seized and you received the note, we have been watching you. We hacked into your Nintendo and displayed the message saying you couldn’t access it. We also planted cameras and microphones in your house so we knew when you decided to... visit, shall we say. When you came, we turned off all security and the guards that chased you were notified beforehand not to harm you, otherwise they would have shot you down in seconds. Also, when you hid in the cupboard, we injected you with a drug to take your strength and knock you out .”

“What do you want, you, er... villany villain!” I said. Names aren’t my strong point, in case you were wondering. “Well,” he drawled, taking out another cigarette, “it’s not that simple, child. Your family have something that I want. Your telephone book!”

I burst out laughing. “Ha! What do you want that for? To call Nanny McFee?!” I burst into another round of laughter. When I had finished, he said, “Your father is a DNA scientist.” This wasn’t news to me – Dad had told me that before. “I want to establish contact with his boss at MI6. The details are not in his phone but in his little, green notebook which we didn’t find in the house and the whereabouts of which we haven’t extracted from your dad ... yet. We can use the information in it to pretend to be your father and persuade MI6 to inject the PM with a fake covid-19 vaccine. To cure him, we’ll be able to name our price!”

I felt the fury rising up inside me, so I bunched up a ball of saliva in my mouth and spat it at him. Seeming not to see or feel it, he said, “We will take you back to your house in the morning where your insignificant life will end if you don’t find the notebook.” With that, he left. All of this information filled my brain, but the only important thought was: escape.

Having got some of my strength back, I stood up and pointlessly tried to break down the walls with my shoulder. Then I tried the bars. They didn’t budge either. I had about an hour before a guard came and drugged me again. I ran through a list of escape options, but none of them seemed they would work. Suddenly, I had an idea. With my fist, I smashed the light bulb in my cell. I searched through the pieces and picked out the wire. I grabbed it and presently jimmied the lock. A patrol of guards marched past me, carrying large black canvasbags slung across their backs. Thinking quickly, I darted over to the corner where the remaining bags were, emptied one of them out and zipped myself in. Now it was just a matter of waiting until the guards came back.

On my way out of the compound, I could hear my parents being let out of their cell for exercise. Quickly, I made a hole in the bag and dropped to the ground. I then ran up behind my parents’ guard and threw my remaining glass shards at him. As he dropped down in agony, clutching his face, I knocked him out. My parents and I didn’t waste a second but darted between the packing crates, always keeping to the shadows and finally emerged onto a busy road where we merged with the throng of tourists, restaurant and cinema-

goers. We ran home and did use my dad's green notebook – to end our nightmare and arrest everybody at the compound.