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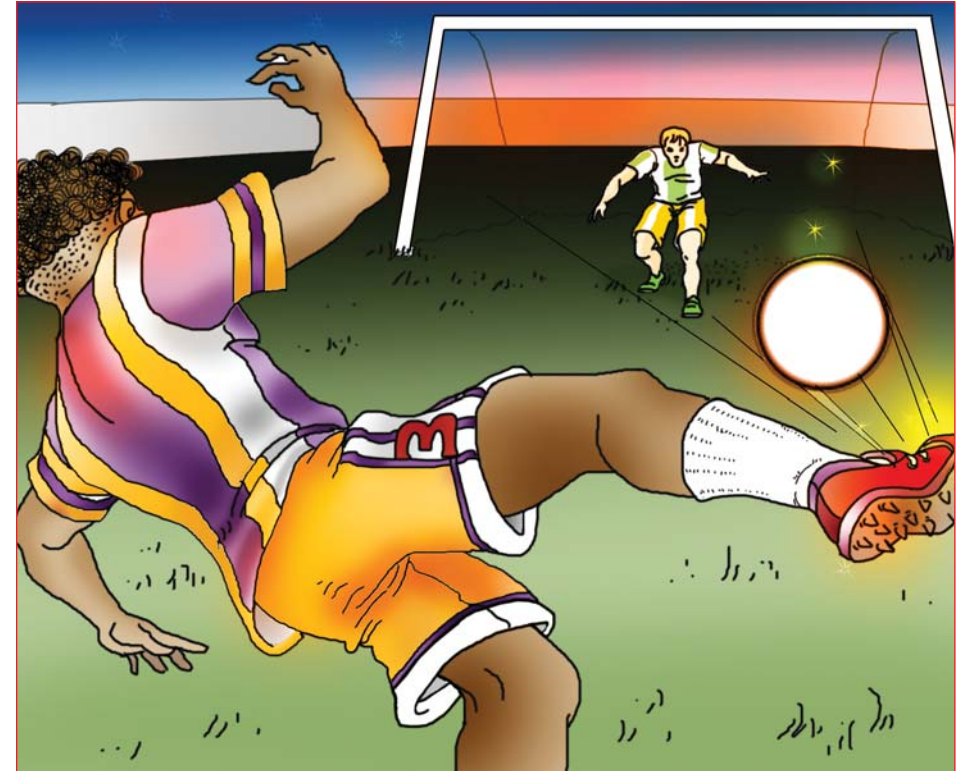
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It was the last minute of the match. Leroy was in front of the goal, waiting for his chance. Bannister was on his left. He had the ball. Bannister looked at Leroy. He passed the ball to him and it came right to Leroy's feet. Leroy kicked it hard and it shot towards the goal ... but was it too high? No ... it was just inside the net! The crowd roared "GOAL! GOAL!", the referee blew his whistle and then ...

BRRRRRRRR! went the alarm clock. Slowly Leroy woke up. He rubbed his eyes. Then he remembered. Today was the first day of the new school year.



Leroy got up and had his breakfast. He wanted to be a footballer. He wasn't interested in school. "Oh, well. It'll be another boring year, I suppose," he thought as he left the house and started walking along the road to school.

At the school gate he saw his friends Dan, Jenny and Tessa. "Hi, Leroy! How was the holiday?" "Great, thanks." "Go anywhere special?" "No, just to my uncle's place in Liverpool." "Sounds nice." "Yes, it was."

Leroy began to feel better. He had some good friends. Perhaps school wasn't so bad, after all. They all started talking about the holidays.



They didn't see the huge car coming down the road towards the school. It moved quietly, like really expensive cars do. They only saw it when it stopped just behind them, outside the gate. It was like something out of a dream - a silver-grey Rolls Royce.



"Wow!" said Dan. "I don't believe it. A Rolls - the latest model, too. The most expensive car in the world." They watched as the driver got out and opened the door. A girl stepped out. She was about fourteen and she had a small, brown leather schoolbag - plain but made of expensive leather. They looked at her, but she didn't look at them. She walked past them into the school building.

"What a snob! She didn't even look at us." "I suppose she thinks she's somebody because she's rich." "I wonder who she is?"



They soon found out. The new girl was in their class. When Mrs Snow read out the class list, they heard her name - Stella O'Regan.



Leroy passed a note to Jenny:  
*She's Mike O'Regan's daughter.*

Jenny passed it back:

*Who's Mike O'Regan?*

Back came Leroy's reply:

*Only the most famous football manager in Britain!*

At the first break, Leroy spoke to Jenny.

"Do you live on another planet, or something?"

"Why?"

"How come you don't know about Mike O'Regan?"

"I'm not interested in football."

"Everybody knows who Mike O'Regan is."

"Well, I don't - or didn't, until now."

At lunchtime, Leroy and Dan were in the playground. Stella was there, too - standing in a corner by herself. Leroy decided to speak to her.

"Hi, Stella! My name's Leroy. I'm in your class."

"Oh."

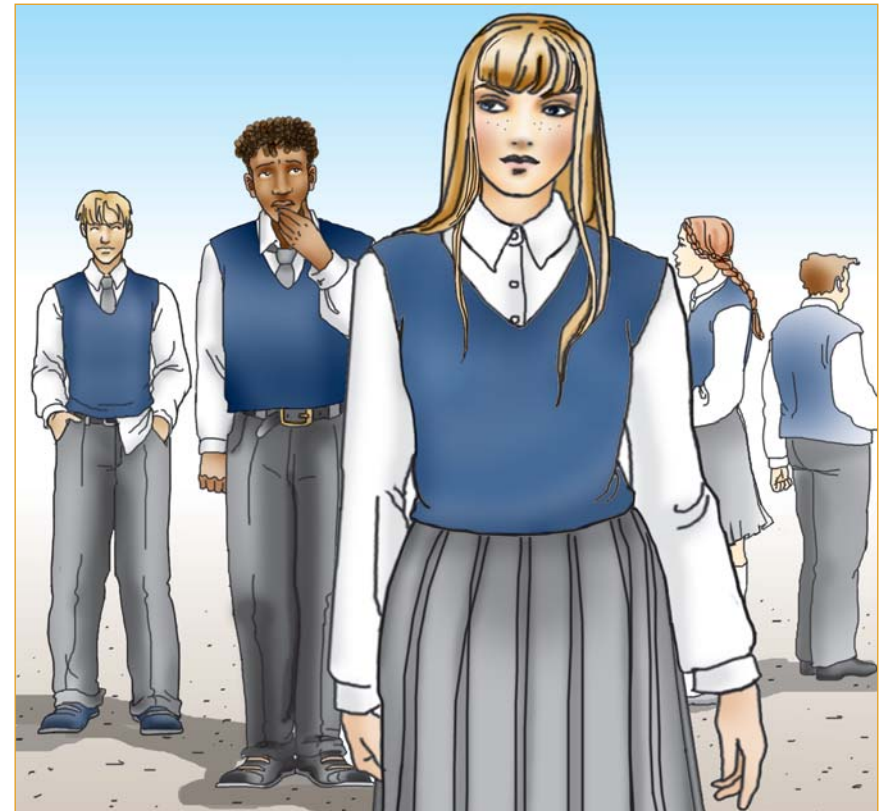
"Is your father Mike O'Regan?"

"Yes."

Stella walked away.

"Did I say something wrong?" Leroy asked Dan.

"Yes, of course you did," Dan replied. "You asked her about her father. She thinks you're just being friendly because of her father."



After school, Leroy, Dan, Jenny and Tessa met at the school gate. Stella was outside the gate, too, but as before, she didn't look at them.

"Shall we speak to her?" asked Tessa in a low voice.

"I tried to speak to her today," said Leroy, "but she didn't want to talk to me."

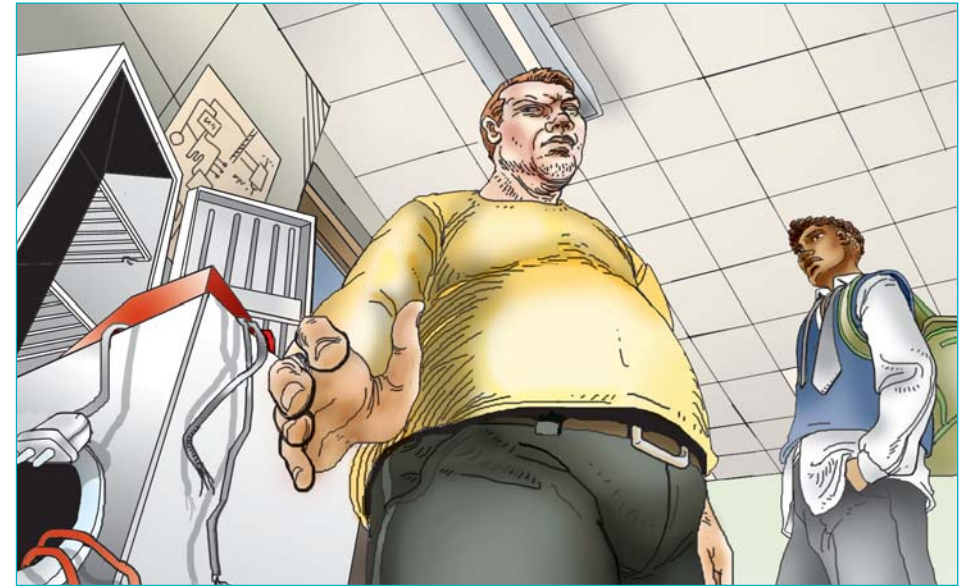
"That's because you asked that question," Dan said.

"What question?" asked Jenny and Tessa together.

"Oh, let's not talk about that now," said Leroy. "See you tomorrow."

As he walked away, he noticed a black car. It was parked opposite the school gate. In it there was a man and a woman.

"Perhaps they're police bodyguards for Stella," he thought. How wrong can you be?



After school, Leroy went to his father's workshop, as usual. He walked past all the old televisions, fridges, cookers and washing machines towards the office at the back of the workshop. The door was shut and Leroy could hear a loud, angry voice inside. Suddenly the door crashed open. A red-faced man pushed past Leroy and walked out.

Leroy went into the office. His father was sitting at his desk with his head in his hands. He looked terrible.

"What's the matter, Dad?" asked Leroy.

"We're finished," said his father. "That was Jack Silver, the owner of this building. He's going to put up the rent to £2000 a month. It's just a trick, though."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, he knows very well we can't pay that much. He wants us to leave. Then he can sell the building."

"Don't worry, Dad. We'll think of something. Shall I ..."

## VOCABULARY

page

- 3 *shot* moved suddenly and quickly  
*roared* all shouted at the same time (because they were excited)  
*rubbed his eyes* pressed his fingers into his eyes and moved them backwards and forwards
- 5 *snob* someone who thinks they are better than other people
- 9 *rent* money you pay to sb for using a room or building that belongs to them
- 10 *stared at* looked directly for a long time at  
*pick sb up* go in a car to the place where sb is waiting and collect them  
*victim* sb who has been hurt, killed or made to suffer in some way as a result of a crime  
*kidnap* take sb away and keep them as a prisoner, usually demanding money for letting them go
- 11 *fails to meet driver* did not meet the driver (although people expected her to meet him)  
*missing* not where they should be, so no-one can find them  
*ransom note* a note asking for money for letting a prisoner go  
*gang* a group of criminals who work together  
*demands* says in a very firm way that they want  
*tapped* touched gently and lightly with his fingers
- 12 *suspect* sb who the police think has probably committed a crime  
*shoplifting* the crime of stealing things from shops  
*burglary* the crime of going into a building and stealing things  
*sentence* a punishment given by a court, usually saying that sb has to spend some time in prison  
*robbery* the crime of taking sb's money or property  
*released* allowed to go from the place where they were kept  
*mugging* an attack on sb in a public place, in order to steal things  
*borstal* a special prison for young criminals  
*charged with* officially accused of having committed a crime  
*violence* using physical force against sb  
*acquitted by court* the court said officially that he was not guilty of the crime  
*insufficient* not enough  
*evidence* facts and other things that help to prove sthg  
*armed robbery* a robbery done by sb who is carrying a weapon (usually a gun)



# QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

## Chapter 1

### *Before reading*

- 1 What do you want to be in the future?
- 2 How did you feel on your first day at your school? Why?

### *After reading*

- 1 Why did Leroy and his friends think Stella was a snob?
- 2 Why did Leroy speak to Stella in the playground?
- 3 Why do you think Stella didn't want to talk to Leroy?
- 4 Who said: "Do you live on another planet, or something?"  
Why did they say this?

## Chapter 2

### *Before reading*

- 1 Do you know any true kidnap stories?
- 2 What special problems may the children of rich and famous parents have?

### *After reading*

- 1 What is Leroy's father's job?
- 2 Why did he look 'terrible'?
- 3 What was the 'breaking news'?
- 4 Why did Leroy call his friends to a meeting?

## Chapter 3

### *Before reading*

- 1 How do you react when you are in a frightening situation?  
Do you keep calm, or do you panic?

### *After reading*

- 1 What did the woman say to Stella about her father and letting her go?
- 2 Why was it difficult for Stella to escape?
- 3 This is what Stella heard two of the kidnappers say. Fill in the gaps in the conversation.

"..... the hurry?"

"We've only got ..... days. The .....  
come back from holiday ..... week. What happens  
if ..... pay up? ..... do with her?"