

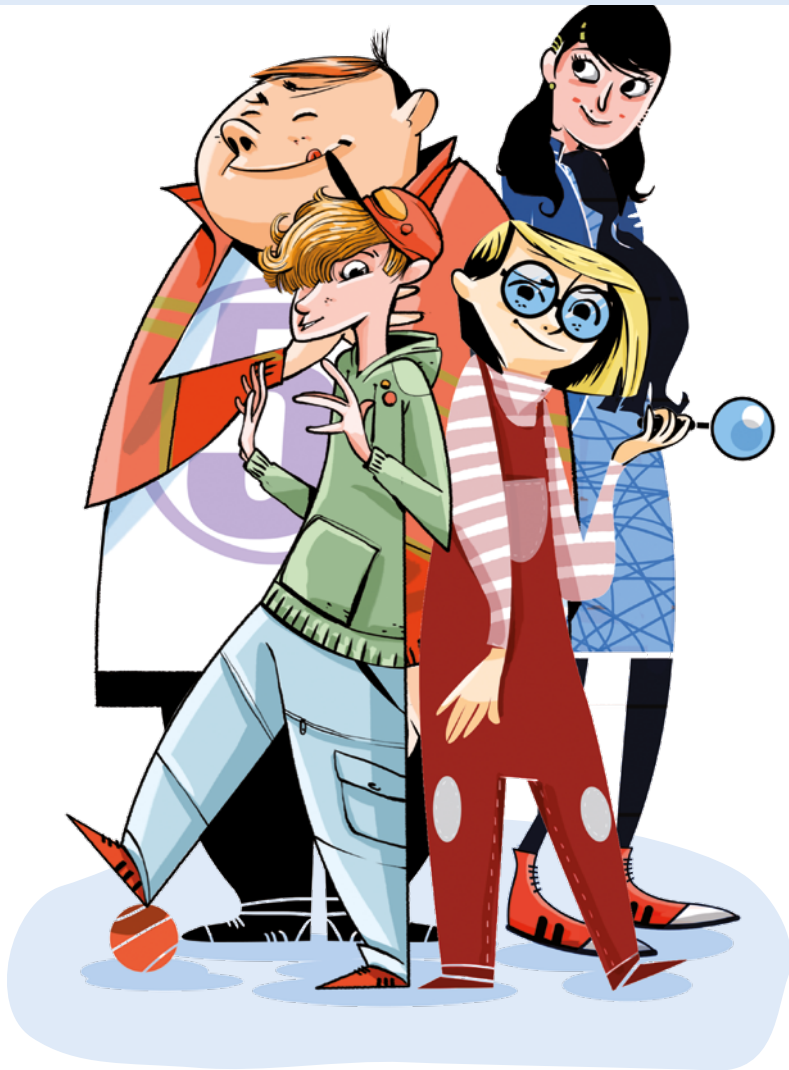
The

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Sherlocks

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Illustrations by Oriol Malet



A Very Sporty Robbery



In the classroom, there was a big commotion while we waited for the Science teacher. Some of the kids were chatting, others were throwing paper projectiles, and some were running up and down chasing each other. Meanwhile, Gomo, Mati, Wen, and I were telling each other about the latest detective story that we had read.

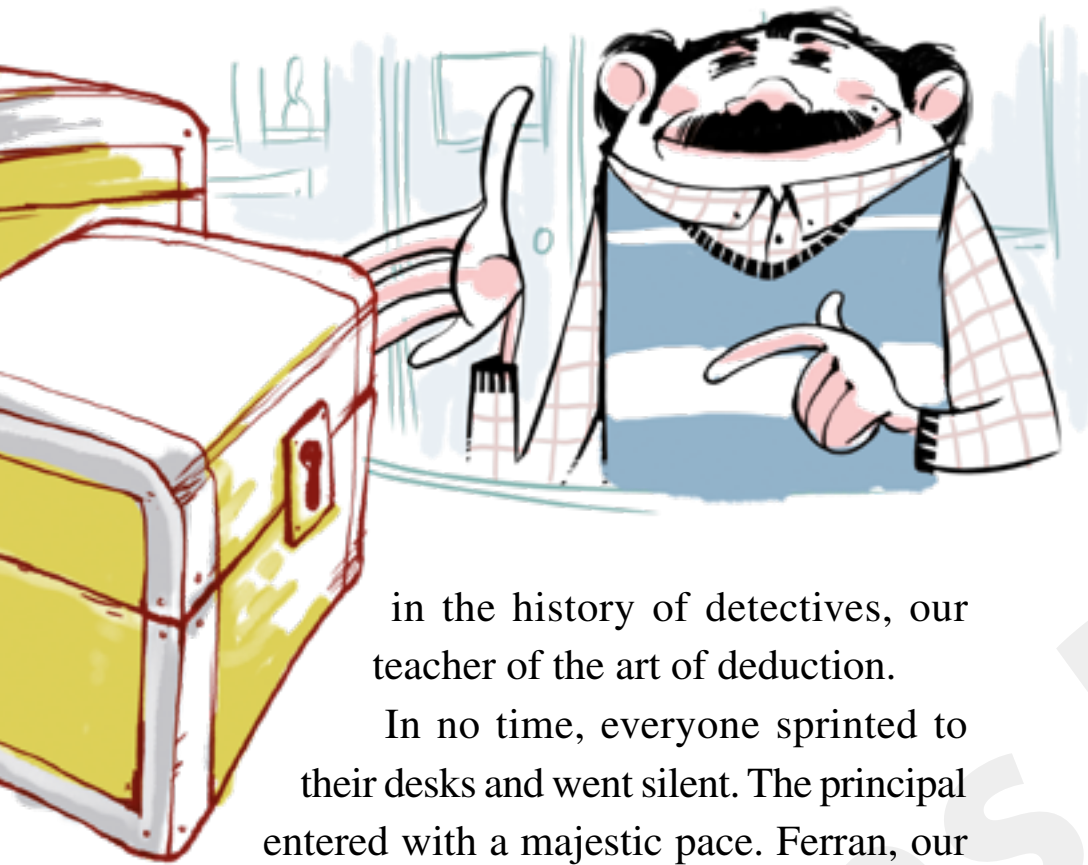
Suddenly, someone let out an alarming scream.

“The principal! The principal’s coming!”

“Hey, Sherlocks, the principal!”

Our classmates would call us Sherlocks because we always had our noses nailed into little detective stories. And Sherlock Holmes was our favorite detective. More than that: he was the best detective





in the history of detectives, our teacher of the art of deduction.

In no time, everyone sprinted to their desks and went silent. The principal entered with a majestic pace. Ferran, our P.E. teacher, was following him with a diabolic smile. And when our P.E. teacher smiled like that, something was about to happen.

The principal was carrying two chests in his hands as if they were trays. They were the size of a shoebox. They were made of wood and were decorated with strips of copper. When he placed them on top of the desk, everyone looked at them expectantly.



“Dear students of 6th C of Ausiàs March Elementary School, you have been chosen, along with the rest of your classmates in the 6th grade, to hold a charity event.

We were done for.

“The Association for the Study of Apert’s Syndrome, a rare children’s disease, is trying to raise funds for their research. With that in mind, they have asked us to have a soccer tournament, together with Tirant lo Blanc Elementary from our neighboring town.”

The soccer fans in the class, who already saw themselves as the stars of the tournament, reacted by shaking their fists, almost hysteric. Gomo, next to me, started looking for green diamonds in his nasal mines.

“We will have an ad campaign” continued the principal, “and any neighbors that come to the semifinals and the finals of the tournament will enter a drawing for two free annual passes to our sports center, where the event will be held”.

“Fran”, Gomo said to me, “we don’t know how to play soccer”.





Charity Event

Just then, the principal grabbed the chests and showed them off with magnificence.

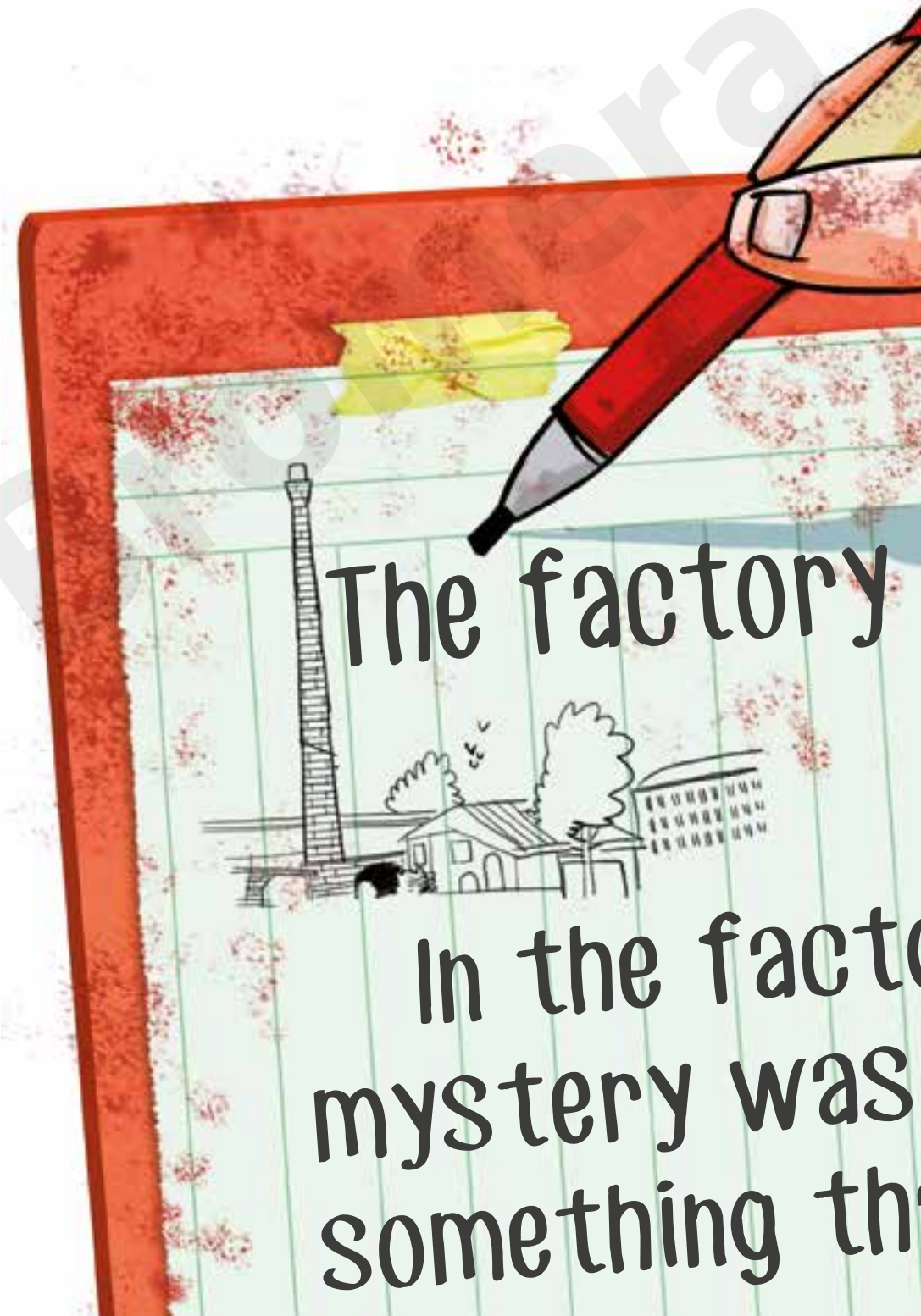
“In these chests,” he said, “we will turn in the collected funds and, eh-hem! I hope to be the one who, representing our winning school, has the honor of...”

Gomo raised his hand. I believe he had one of his diamonds on the tip of his finger.

“Can we not just do a writing contest?” he asked.

The group of soccer fans started to protest with

their fists and everything. It wasn't such a bad idea. I could have even been able to write one about the abandoned tile factory on the outskirts of town. My paper definitely would have been very constructive.

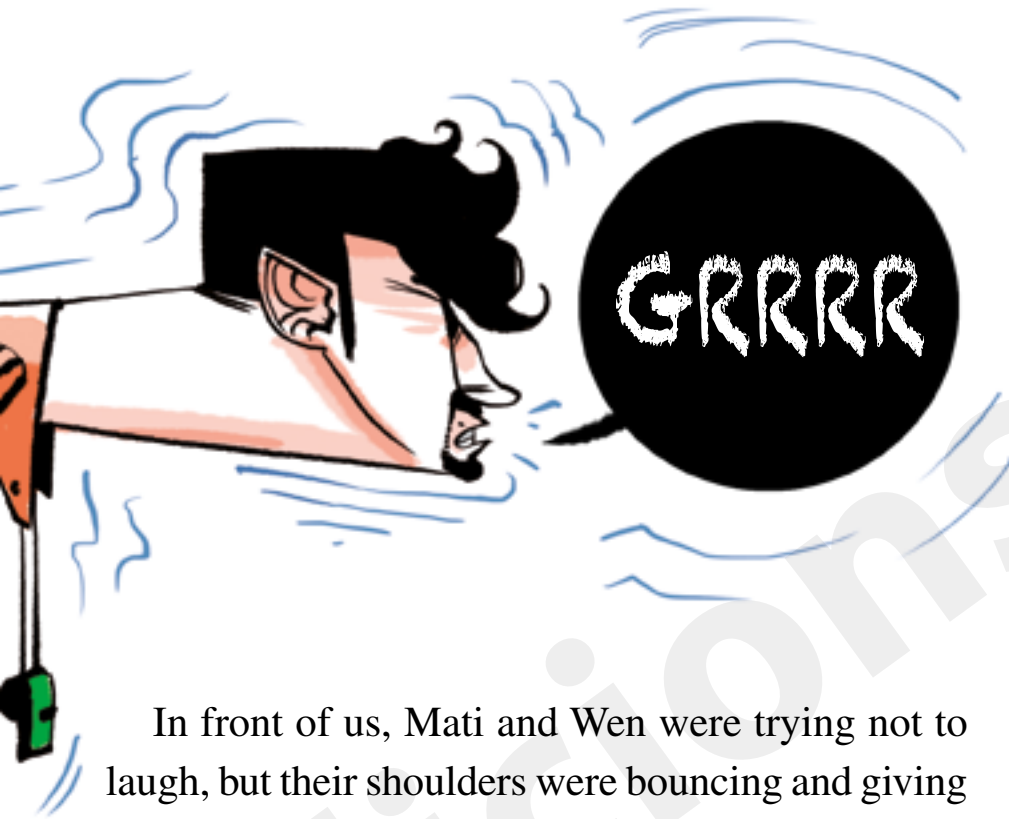




Gomo's question didn't get an answer. But Ferran almost shot out an eyebrow when he looked daggers at Gomo. The walls seemed to shake with his...

As I said: we were done for. Or better yet – dead. Gomo and I had miraculously survived P.E. classes up until now. By the skin of our teeth. We would jump like chickens, run like ducks, and the only thing we would achieve with our push-ups would be having Ferran tell us that we had jelly for muscles. We would do our best. We would sweat like sponges. But let's face it – Gomo and I wouldn't ever be athletes, much less competitive ones. Because we liked sports. Of course, sports were one thing, and competitions were another. And Ferran seemed to ignore that.

But a tournament! A soccer one! That implied team play, strategy, kicks, dribbling, shots in search of that desired...



In front of us, Mati and Wen were trying not to laugh, but their shoulders were bouncing and giving them away.

“Your teacher will give you all more details” the principal concluded, picking up the chests while Ferran seemed to rub his hands like a starving ogre.





Ninety minutes running around a minefield! I'll confess: even playing against a zombie, I could go crazy with a ball between my feet. Everybody knows how unpredictable zombies are.

"I'm sure you guys will do great" Wen said to us as we left class.

"No, no we won't do great" I said. "We're not ready to do well".

"We won't even be ready to do badly" Gomo added.

Mati tried to play it down.

"It's only soccer" he said. "And it's for a good cause. It doesn't matter who wins".

"Go tell that to the principal or to Ferran."

"If we lose, he'll make us run with shackles tied to our feet for the rest of the year."

Mati and Wen laughed at Gomo's comment. They didn't see themselves with a bullseye on their back, where a soccer player receives congratulations and applaud for a masterful play, or insults and poisoned darts for a slip-up.



Charity Event

However, everything changed for Mati and Wen the next day, when we discovered the *details* of the tournament that Ferran had pinned up on the announcements board.

Everything was perfectly explained: the days and times for practice, the dates of the matches, the teams, and...



The boys playing. Or rather – the boys and girls playing. Because the teams could be co-ed if the trainer found it opportune. And, just like Gomo and me, Mati and Wen didn't know how to play soccer either. Carla and Susanna, on the other hand, could do magic with a soccer ball. But we could hold each other's hands. Without an athletic bone and with Ferran as our coach, the four of us could consider ourselves...



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