

The Twickenham Trials – chapter 2

Twickenham Stadium, Friday 18 September

Woody, Rory and Owen have just witnessed the theft of the Rugby World Cup trophy at a posh function next to Twickenham Stadium. They have been told by a mysterious girl – Rose – that they have to recover the trophy before the tournament kicks off on Friday evening. They have no idea who she is and what she's talking about, but they have decided to go along with it.

Woody, Owen and Rory headed for the exit. Time to start their quest.

A large man in a purple jacket blocked their route to the door.

'Not yet, lads,' he growled.

'What?' Woody asked. 'We're staying in the stadium hotel. Just there. Can't we just...'

'Not yet. There's a curfew a mile around the stadium. You know why. No one moves until it's lifted. Understood?'

Woody nodded and led his two friends away from the door.

'So now what?' Owen asked.

'We make a plan,' Woody said. 'Once they let us out, we'll be ready.'

'How?'

'Teamwork,' Rory said. 'Rose said teamwork.'

'Go on then,' Woody challenged. 'Show us some teamwork.'

'Well,' Rory said. 'We need to pool everything we know. Then see where it leads us.'

Owen told the others he'd spotted the boards behind the trophy wobble.

Rory reminded them about the electricity leads he saw moving.

'Is there anything else?' Woody asked.

The three boys stared at each other for a few seconds.

'So, the wires moved,' Owen volunteered. 'Because someone was behind the trophy stand?'

'But the wires moved at least ten seconds after the cup had been taken,' Rory said. 'There was no one there.'

'Which means?' Woody pressed.

Rory paused. 'Which means that the wires were disturbed outside this building by whoever it was making away with the trophy. Which means that wherever the wires go could be where the trophy went.'

Although the boys were making progress, they terminated their conversation when two large men came to stand very close to them. And not just any two men, but two England players from 2003. Two Rugby World Cup winners!

'So, if the police don't find the trophy...' one of them said.

The other player laughed. But it was not a happy laugh. 'If they don't find it, and if it is not on that stand for the opening ceremony in a few hours, then it will be a disaster for England and a disaster for rugby union. Full stop.' Thirty minutes after the trophy had been taken, an announcement was made. The trophy had still not been

found. People were – at last – permitted to go. If anyone was staying in the stadium hotel, they were told, they had to go straight there. No hanging around.

As the three boys left, they noticed several police vans and cars outside. Two helicopters in the air, searchlights scanning the ground. Dogs barking. The search was on for the trophy. The boys decided to do as they were told and go to their hotel.

For now.

They crept out of the hotel at 3 a.m.

There was no-one on the reception desk.

Outside, the helicopter searchlights and dogs had gone. All the police vehicles too.

But someone was watching them. Someone with a thermal imaging camera, tracking and recording their every move.

Rose.

But the boys did not know that. They were focused on their quest. Nothing else.

Woody took the initiative. He led the other two around the edge of the stadium, past the entrance gates and towards the prefabricated building where they had been the evening before. It was dark. It was cold. It was almost perfectly silent.

They moved slowly. Barely daring to breathe. Silent gestures. Wordless. Until they found themselves round the back of the building from where the trophy had been taken.

They quickly located what they had come to see. A thick bunch of black electric leads came from the side of the building towards a stream that ran between Twickenham and a school on the other side. Rory could just make out the words Chase Bridge School over the door, illuminated by street lights.

Above the stream was a scaffolding structure carrying the wires over the water and into the school grounds. Through what looked like a school garden, then an area of the school grounds being used for more pre-fab buildings.

‘Over there,’ Rory grinned. ‘They must have taken the trophy over there.’

The other two agreed.

Woody had an idea. ‘Let’s...’

‘HEY YOU BOYS. GET BACK HERE NOW.’

None of them looked to see who had shouted. They just ran. Away from the voice. But almost immediately they hit a fence, turned right, then hit another fence.

No way out.

Trapped.

Owen’s instinct was to climb the wire fence. The others followed. They climbed, dropped down, then scrambled across the stream.

The water was up to their waists. Ice cold.

They heard dogs barking at the same time.

‘What now?’ Owen gasped.

‘In the water, where the guards can’t see us,’ Woody said. ‘And under the water, so the dogs will lose our scent.’

Five minutes later the three boys were still lying in a metre of water, only their heads showing.

The dogs’ barking had stopped. The shouting too.

‘What did the girl mean?’ Owen asked weakly.

‘Rose?’ Rory asked, hearing his own voice juddering with the cold, just like Owen’s.

‘Yeah, Rose. When she said we had been chosen?’

‘She was just crazy,’ Woody contributed. ‘I told you.’

‘But she knew,’ Rory contradicted Woody. ‘She knew the trophy was going to be taken.’

Woody had no answer for that. All three boys lay in the cold water, feeling it soak every thread they were wearing, then chilling their flesh to the bone.

Just fifteen metres away, hidden underneath a Portacabin and with cam cream on her face to avoid light reflection, Rose was filming the three boys. And recording their conversation. She smiled as they speculated about who she was.

They’ll find out soon enough, she thought, smiling again.

After two more freezing minutes, Woody began to crawl downstream. ‘Come on,’ he said.

‘Where to?’ Owen whispered.

‘That bridge. The one under the road. We might be able to climb out of here, sneak back to the hotel.’

‘But what about finding the trophy?’ Rory complained. ‘If we don’t...’

‘Forget it Rory,’ Woody snapped. ‘We’ll freeze to death if we don’t get out of this river now. Hypothermia. Have you heard of that? Anyway, the trophy’s not going to be in some old stream, is it? It’ll be long gone.’

Owen and Rory followed. They were so cold and uncomfortable now, they knew they had to get out of there.

Once they were under the bridge, they rested, waiting to take Woody’s lead. A car passed over the bridge.

‘The plan is to climb out the other side. Go over the road. Then the hotel. Dry off somehow...’ Woody went on.

Owen was listening and nodding. But Rory was not.

‘What was that?’ Rory interrupted.

Owen and Woody looked at Rory.

‘What was what?’

‘When that car came past its headlight reflected off something above us.’

‘Up there?’

‘Yeah.’

The three boys gazed upwards. There was nothing to see but blackness.

‘Are you sure?’ Owen asked.

‘Yeah.’

‘Get on my shoulders,’ Owen said to Woody.

Woody shrugged. Water was dripping off him. He was freezing. How much worse could this be?

Woody balanced as Owen heaved him up so that he could touch the underside of the bridge.

‘Show us where,’ Owen gasped.

‘Left a bit. Right a bit. Yes, it was about there.’

Woody put his hand into a cavity above him. He was terrified of having a rat brush against his hand. Or worse, bite him. But he didn’t tell the others that.

Then – suddenly – he felt something cold and smooth at his fingertips.

‘There’s something here,’ Woody said quietly.

Questions

Is the smooth object hidden under the bridge the trophy – or something a lot more dangerous? What could it be?

Why do you think Rose is filming the boys?

Did the boys show teamwork on their quest? How many ways did they show it?

The next chapter of *The Twickenham Trials* will be published here before 6 a.m. on the morning of Monday 21st September. Enjoy the first weekend of the Rugby World Cup!

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