KEEPER

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Chapter 1
The Hulk

It isn't easy starting a new school halfway into the year. Most kids who do start late are quiet to begin with. It takes them time to fit in. They sit at the back of the classroom. They stand at the edge of the playground looking lonely and left out.

Not Shane Logan.

I had never met anybody like Shane Logan.

When he started, he hit our school like a wild wind, like a hurricane. He came into our

classroom one Monday morning with our Head Teacher, Mr Rust. Shane slammed the door behind him and the whole room shook.

Mr Rust stared at Shane. He didn't like kids making noise. Shane didn't notice. He just stood in front of the class with his feet apart and his arms crossed over his chest, as if he was waiting for a fight.

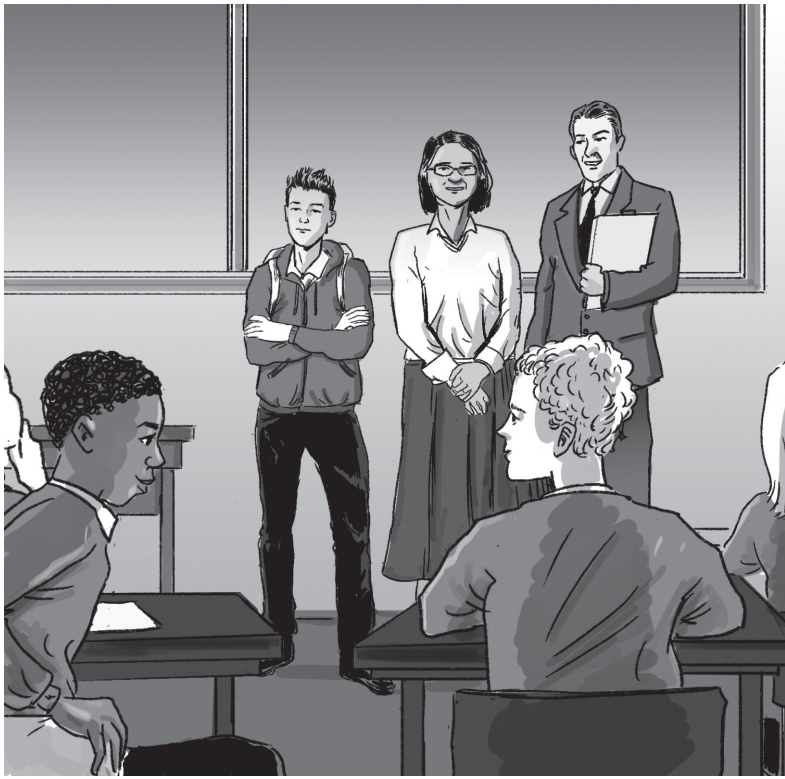
"What's up with the Incredible Hulk?" my mate Danny Osu asked, nodding to Shane.

"Beats me," I said.

Mr Rust looked at Shane again, as if he was trouble. Shane ignored him.

"This is Shane Logan," Mr Rust said to our class. "Shane has just moved here from Yorkshire."

"Leeds," Shane said with a growl in his voice.



"He thinks he's a big grizzly bear," Danny said, shoving me with his elbow.

"He sounds more like an earthquake to me," I told him. "Did you ever hear anybody that loud?"

Our teacher, Mrs Ali, smiled at the new boy.

"Let's all say hello to Shane," she said, then added, "You can sit over there, next to Peter."

Mrs Ali pointed to the empty seat next to me. Shane stared for a moment, then he stomped over and slumped into the chair. The legs scraped on the floor. Mr Rust gave Mrs Ali a sideways look, shrugged and left the room.

Mrs Ali turned back to Shane and smiled again. "We're in the middle of a Maths lesson at the moment," she said. "I'll get you a book at break-time, but for now you can just listen to what we're doing."

Mrs Ali was about to carry on with the Maths lesson when Shane's hand shot up.

"Do I have to stay in at break to get my book?" he asked.

“No, Shane, don’t worry,” Mrs Ali said. “I’ll get the book. You can go out with the rest of the class.”

Shane put his hand down, but it was back up a minute later.

“What if I want to write something down in this lesson?” Shane asked. “I need something to write on now.”

“You don’t need to write anything down for this lesson,” Mrs Ali explained again. “But I can give you some paper if you want.”

“Can I have a pencil too?” Shane asked. “I haven’t got anything to write with.”

That made Danny laugh.

Mrs Ali wasn’t used to being asked so many questions. Her voice sounded funny when she replied, “All right. I’ll get you a pencil and some paper.”

She sighed and placed a sheet of paper and a pencil on his desk. Shane looked at us and grinned.

"Pencil and paper is good," he said with a smile.

"I am glad you're happy," Mrs Ali said.

She had to force herself to smile this time.

*

We were working on our Maths problems when Shane leaned across.

"Hey, Peter, do you guys play football at break?" he asked.

"Yes," I told him. "Lunch-time too."

Shane nodded and said, "Great. I'll join in."

He didn't ask us. He told us.

When the bell went, Shane followed us out into the yard.

"Let's play," he said. "Who's got the ball?"

I showed him the ball.

"What's this?" he asked. It was lighter than a normal football.

"The school doesn't let us have a proper football," I explained. "In case people who aren't playing get hit by it. We have to make do with a lighter one. It's got something to do with health and safety. We get a proper ball when they let us out on the big field at lunch-time – but only when it's dry."

"This is like a beach ball," Shane said, rolling it with his foot. "It's too light. It could go anywhere."

As if to prove his point, Shane booted it. The ball flew over the fence and into the street, bouncing down the pavement.

"What did you do that for?" Danny asked. "That's why we keep the football on the ground. Don't just launch it."

"Don't tell me what to do," Shane said.

Then they were in each other's faces, ready for a fight. I grabbed Danny's arm.

"Don't be stupid," I said. "Let's get the ball back. We're wasting time."

Their stand-off was over as soon as it had begun. Danny and I went up to the fence and got a passer-by to throw it back.

"Thanks," we said.

"Can we try to keep it on the ground this time?" I asked Shane. I added the magic word so he didn't get angry again: "Please."

Shane looked at Danny, then he looked at me. Then he grinned.

"Will do," Shane said.

He played football the same way he walked into a classroom. He was loud and he was strong. He shouted orders and knocked the

other kids out of the way to get to the ball. The trouble was, Shane didn't have much control and the ball just kept running away from him. He was all energy and no skill.

"How do we tell Shane he's annoying people?" Danny said. "He's like a wild thing."

"I have an idea," I said.

I turned around and called Shane over.

"You're tall, Shane," I said. "Do you want to go in goal at lunch-time? You know, just give it a try ... for now."

Shane grinned. "Goal's good," he said.

GOALKEEPING HISTORY

Today, everyone knows what the goalkeeper does and what they wear – but did you know things were very different in the early days of football? Here are some of the ways the goalie's role has changed over the years.

The first football rules didn't even mention goalkeepers

The game began to develop into what we know as football in the nineteenth century. Back then there was no such thing as a goalkeeper – at least not in the way we think of the role today. Instead, any player was allowed to catch the ball as long as they didn't run with it in both hands. It wasn't until 1871 that goalkeepers were introduced into the rules and other players could no longer handle the ball.

Keepers could handle the ball anywhere on the pitch

After the position of goalkeeper became part of the game, the rules on what they could and couldn't do kept changing. At one point they could handle the

ball anywhere on the pitch. The rule that says goalies can only handle the ball in the penalty area wasn't introduced until 1912.

Goalkeepers haven't always worn gloves

Today, professional goalkeepers rarely play without gloves. But before the twentieth century, hardly anyone wore them. Some goalies found other things to help instead, such as Welsh player Jack Kelsey, who used to rub chewing gum between his hands to help him grip the ball! One of the first players to start wearing gloves was Argentinian Amadeo Carrizo in the 1940s.

Goals didn't always have nets – or even a crossbar

In the nineteenth century, most football goals didn't have a net or a bar across the top of the posts. This meant the ball was often kicked high above the goalposts and created many arguments about whether or not a goal had really been scored. It wasn't until 1882 that the rules changed to say that a crossbar had to be placed across the top of the goal and the ball had to be kicked under it. Ten years later, the first net was used in an FA Cup final.