

## OTHELLO: O'Fella

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Ian Jagger - or 'Jags' to his friends - was thin and weedy and generally the type to use words to get the better of someone else. Right now, though, he looked deadly. His face was red. His fists were clenched.

'Olly's my mate,' he snarled. 'Why won't he put me on the team?'

It was half-twelve and he was having lunch with his friend Emmy in the school canteen. Emmy wasn't sure what to say. She knew Jags loved football. But she also knew he wasn't that good. And she knew something else. There was no way Olly would ever put someone on the team if they weren't a good player - even if they were a good friend..

Olly Moore. Girls liked him. Boys looked up to him.

At twelve years old, he was big, beefy and already had to shave once a week. Friends nicknamed him the 'Ol' Fella'. Not that he ever pushed his weight around. In fact, Olly had a reputation for defending smaller kids against bullies. He was also sporty. And when the Year 8 football team needed a captain, Olly was the obvious - and popular - choice.

'He's put that new kid on the team,' Jags was saying. 'Caspar. He only moved to our school two weeks ago. It's not fair...'

He took a deep breath, finished off his chips, then looked up.

'New baseball cap?' he said.

'It's Mona's,' Emma told him.

Dark, where Emmy was fair; reserved, where Emmy was outgoing, Mona was Emmy's best friend. Emmy knew the importance of the baseball cap.



Olly had given it to Mona for her last birthday to show how close they were. It was black, with a big yellow M on the front. Olly said it stood for Mona.

'She dropped it at the park yesterday,' Emmy explained. 'I've been meaning to give it back to her.'

'I can do that,' said Jags, pushing back his chair. He took the cap off Emmy's head and stuffed it in his back pocket. 'Me and Olly need to talk. I'll catch you later.'

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In the event, it was Caspar who Jags bumped into first. He came out of the chemistry lab to see Caspar studying the team list Olly had pinned up on the Football notice board. Jags went and stood beside him. He saw that Caspar was playing up front. And confirmed that he wasn't on the list at all. Not even as a sub.

Caspar noticed it too and asked him why.

'I'm not free for the match that day. Dentist's appointment,' Jags lied. 'But Olly was fine about it. Good bloke, the Ol' Fella,' he added.

Caspar agreed, and was about to tell Jags about how Olly had stood up to some older kids who were picking on him on his first day, when he noticed the time. Training was about to start.

'Oh, Olly won't mind if you're a bit late,' Jags told him. 'I've been meaning to ask you. You on KoolsKool?'

Caspar laughed. Yes, he was. Of course he was. Everyone was on KoolsKool.

'How many friend-links you got?' Jags asked him - and whistled, impressed, when Caspar said it was more than six hundred. Mainly because of his interest in music, he explained. He played the guitar. Lead guitar...

'Hey, me too,' said Jags - and suddenly the talk was all about chords and guitar solos and top tracks they'd downloaded.



When he checked the time again, Caspar was shocked to see that fifteen minutes had passed. Swinging his sports bag up onto his shoulder, he dashed off to the changing room.

Olly was furious.

'No,' he said, when Caspar finally trotted onto the pitch. 'If you can't be bothered to get here on time, you can't play. You're off the team. End of.'

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'What's up with him?' Mona asked Jags when she saw Caspar stomping towards the school gates, head down.

'It's Olly,' Jags said. 'Caspar was a couple minutes late for training. The Ol' Fella must have thrown him off the team. You know what he's like.'

Mona nodded. She did know what he was like. After all, they'd been friends since Reception. Olly demanded loyalty from everyone around him. From his friends. His team. From her.

'I guess Caspar didn't realize just how seriously Olly takes being captain,' Jags was saying. He smiled. 'Why don't you have a word with him?' he said. 'Get Caspar back on the team.'

And, seeing no harm in it, Mona agreed.

'If you're quick, you could catch Caspar up now,' Jags suggested. 'Tell him you'll try and sort things out.'

As Mona ran off, Jags followed her. He saw Caspar's surprise when Mona tapped him on the arm. He watched the pair of them deep in conversation; then Caspar suddenly giving Mona a great big thank you hug - which Jags captured as a photo on his mobile.

'Cute,' he murmured, then headed off.

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‘There’s no I in “team”,’ Olly told Jags later that afternoon. ‘That’s what I told him. Either you take training seriously, or you’re out.’

The two of them were walking home along the high street.

‘And then,’ said Olly, ‘I get this.’

He pulled out his phone and read Jags the text that Mona had sent, asking him - pleading with him - to let Caspar back on the team.

‘I mean, what’s that about?’ he demanded.

‘Maybe she’s interested in him,’ said Jags quietly.

‘What do you mean?’ said Olly.

Jags shrugged. ‘He’s friendly. Funny. Good at football. Brilliant at guitar, I’ve heard...’

Olly stopped in his tracks. ‘You think she likes him?’ he said.

‘I don’t know,’ said Jags. ‘But I’d understand if she did.’

Olly fell silent. He knew it was stupid, but he’d always been jealous of Mona’s other friends. She was his favourite person in the whole world. He hated it when anyone came between them.

‘Oh, and that’s an odd thing,’ Jags added, as they reached Olly’s front door. ‘I could’ve sworn I saw Caspar wearing her baseball cap. You know, the one with the ‘M’ for Mona on the front.’

‘I gave her that!’ said Olly, his eyes blazing.

‘That’s what I thought,’ said Jags. ‘I was probably wrong.’ He smiled. ‘But you should go and see her, mate. Clear the air.’

‘I might just do that,’ said Olly.



Jags watched him for a moment as the Ol' Fella strode off, his broad shoulders swaying from side to side. Then, taking care not to be seen, he followed him.

Mona lived in a smarter part of town than Jags and Olly. Her house was big and detached. But today Olly hadn't gone inside.

When Jags arrived, the two of them were standing at the gate. Arguing. About Caspar. About the baseball cap. Suddenly, Olly's anger boiled over and he shoved Mona away from him.

Jags caught it on his phone.

'Nice,' he muttered.

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Close to his home, Jags glanced in through the window of the local corner shop. And there was Caspar at the counter.

He decided to wait for him.

'Hi, mate,' he said when Caspar finally left the shop, a litre of milk in his hand.

'Thought it was you. I was wondering if you'd heard from Olly - if he'd changed his mind.'

Caspar shook his head miserably.

'So Mona didn't manage it,' said Jags. 'Shame. A player as good as you.' He patted Caspar on the shoulder. 'I'll have a word with him,' he said. 'Leave it with me.'

He turned and was walking away, when Caspar called after him, telling him he'd dropped his baseball cap.

Jags acted surprise. 'So I did,' he said, and laughed. 'You can have it. It's too small for me.'

And although Caspar told him that he wasn't really into baseball caps, Jags persisted.



'Why don't you just try it on?'

Reluctantly, Caspar did so, and Jags took a photo of him.

'There you go,' he said, showing it.

Caspar pulled a face and handed the cap back to Jags. 'No,' he said. 'But thanks for the offer.'

'You're welcome, mate,' said Jags, and smiled as Caspar walked away, the bottle of milk swinging back and forward in his hand. 'Time I paid KoolsKool a visit,' he said to himself.

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'No,' Mona gasped when she saw what popped up on the screen.

She'd finished her English homework and was taking a break before starting her maths. Checking the latest on her KoolsKool page. There - and on the pages of everyone in her friend-link list - were three photos, posted by someone called Coolviper.

The first picture was of her and Caspar. They were hugging. Underneath was written:

'Looks like Mona and Caspar have become hash-tag closeasthis. Sweeeeet!'

The second picture was of her and Olly. He'd just shoved her in the chest and she was staggering backwards. He looked furious. She looked frightened.

'Where is it then?' the words underneath asked. 'That baseball cap I gave you. I hope you haven't given it to anyone else!'

The third picture was just of Caspar. He was grinning, the peak of the baseball cap low over his eyes. Under it, the words spelled out what had happened.

'There it is! Well, well, well!'



And under that was the start of the stream of comments. Horrible comments. Everyone had something to say about the three photos...

Grabbing her phone, Mona called Emmy.

‘Have you seen what’s happening?’ she wailed. ‘It’s a nightmare!’

‘It’s all right,’ Emmy reassured her. ‘Everybody knows you. They’ll realize this is a set up...’

But then something else began to happen. As Mona watched the KoolsKool page, she saw that friends were unlinking her. One by one, name after name was disappearing. Tears streamed down her cheeks.

‘It’s all right,’ Emmy was saying. ‘We’ll sort this.’

‘No,’ Mona sobbed. ‘I can’t show my face in school again.’ Ten more names went, leaving just one. ‘Emmy, you’re...you’re the only friend I’ve got left.’

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Next morning, everyone was talking about Mona’s KoolsKool page. Most blamed Mona. Some blamed Caspar. Olly came out of it best – despite the shove. Not that it made him feel any better.

‘I can’t believe it,’ he told Jags. The two of them were standing in the far corner of the playground. ‘I’ve known her so long.’

‘Too long,’ said Jags. ‘Good riddance, mate. You’re too good for her...’

Just then, Caspar walked by with Emmy.

‘There he is,’ Jags sneered. ‘Go on, Ol’ Fella,’ he goaded Olly. ‘Show him what you think of him now.’

Olly squared his shoulders and strode across to Caspar. But before he could do anything, Caspar turned on Jags.



'You posted that photo of me,' he shouted. Then he turned to Olly. 'He's the one with your precious baseball cap.'

Emmy joined in. 'Coolviper's a great name for a snake like you!'

'Me?' said Jags, arms raised and a little smile on his lips. 'I haven't done anything...'

'Ian Jagger!' came a loud angry voice, and everyone turned to see Mr Dixon striding towards them. 'Headmaster's office. Now,' he bellowed.

The others watched him go.

'He planned the whole thing,' Emmy said, turning to Olly. She spelled out everything that Jags had done. 'And all because you dropped him from the team,' she added.

The colour drained from Olly's face. Jags had made him look stupid. And ruined his friendship with Mona. She'd never listen to him ever again.

Without saying a word, he turned and left.

In the empty football changing-rooms, a black marker pen in his hand, Olly looked at himself in the mirror. He felt so bad. Somehow, he had to make amends.

With his fingers trembling, he wrote a word across his forehead. L O S E R. Then he took a selfie of himself, clicked onto KoolsKool and posted it, before sending it to everyone in his linklist.

And that was that.

His reputation was in pieces. No girl would like him any more. No boy would look up to him. For Olly 'Ol' Fella' Moore, it was over.