

FIFTEEN

I wanted to have another word with Billy Warren anyway. There'd been something about him when I'd seen him in Faces. It wasn't that he was avoiding me or being guarded, it was the exact opposite and that wasn't right somehow. Had he been trying to knock me off track? That day, as soon as he spotted me he came over and, when I mentioned Cartwright, he'd admitted he'd seen him, then told me about the Russian. He probably wasn't lying about that, because Kinane's lad backed up his story but I reckoned he wasn't telling me everything.

'Remind me why we are here,' said Finney as I rang the bell on the front door of his Wallsend flat for the fourth time.

'I just want another word.' I told him.

Billy eventually answered the door looking bleary eyed, even though it was the middle of the afternoon. He pretended to be pleased to see me.

'I've been leaning on your doorbell you dopey fucker,' I told him.

'Sorry man, had my music on.'

'Bet your neighbours love you.'

'Yeah,' he said, 'but they're old cunts. Er... the thing is I've got a bit of company right now, you know.' He meant he was in the middle of a deal.

'That's alright,' I told him, 'we'll introduce ourselves,' Finney pushed passed him and I followed.

When we got in the flat I told him, 'nice place you've got these days Billy, must be doing alright?'

'I get by,' he said, still with the cocky smile.

'We're not taxing him enough,' I told Finney who nodded solemnly.

'Oh no,' he protested, 'don't be like that. I've got overheads and everything. I'm a good little earner, you know that. The boss knows that.'

I was glad he knew better than to say Bobby's name out loud because when we walked into the lounge there was a bleached blonde piece there. She was wearing a short skirt so tight she had to sit with one bum cheek parked sideways on his sofa. Her legs were stick-thin and she was browner than a burns victim. She looked like her make-up weighed more than she did, yet her enormous, very fake breasts stuck out in front of her like the cantilevered roof on a football stand. She looked up but paid us no attention, returning instead to her nails, which she scrutinised as if they were a crossword puzzle.

'Do I know you?' asked an obviously confused Finney because he clearly recognised her face. He seemed a bit baffled that a bird that looked like this could have any place in Billy Warren's life, even as a customer.

'Yeah, you probably do,' she said airily, which confused him even more. She was acting like she was Angelina Jolie and he was a fan.

'She's a WAG,' I told him and when she gave me a dirty look

I asked, 'which one are you seeing these days love, Stevie or Gary? Or are you between careers at the moment.'

'I'm a model,' she told me, 'and an actress,'

'Yeah,' I said, 'but were you a model before you started shagging that bloke from Spurs?'

'Well *you* recognised me,' she said sharply.

I nodded towards Finney, 'Just because your tits were plastered all over his *Daily Sport* for a week doesn't make you Meryl Streep, now does it?'

Finney was peering down at her now, 'oh yeah, I know you,' and he chuckled, 'you've got a right pair of thruppenny's, haven't you?' he asked her as if the evidence wasn't right there in front of them both.

'Fuck off,' she told him. This was her signal to call her latest lover's name and, right on queue, the toilet flushed noisily and out walked a familiar face to any one who had ever watched Sky Sports or bought a tabloid.

'Bloody hell,' said Finney, 'it's you.'

'Yeah,' mumbled the Premier League player who'd exposed his coke habit as he came out of Billy's toilet sniffing audibly. He was still doing up his fly and I noticed the gold rings on his fingers and the chunky Rolex that gleamed from his wrist. If you added in the diamond earring he probably had twenty grand's worth of bling on him that afternoon just to go and score some blow at Billy Warren's flat. I wondered how much he wore when he really wanted to impress. He turned to his girlfriend, 'what is it babe?'

'These two have been dissing me while you woz like nowhere.'

'Is that right?' he asked, puffing his chest out at me like the hard man he was always telling everybody he was, 'what you got to say for yourselves then?' Either he was completely insane or he was so coked-up already that he actually believed he was capable of kicking Finney's arse, 'you'd better apologise right now,'

I wondered if he'd seen something like this in a movie. If he had, things weren't going to go the way he expected. Belting some

sixteen-year-old apprentice or turning a table upside down in a bar and smashing a few glasses, before the bouncers raced across to protect you from yourself, was one thing but threatening us was an entirely different matter altogether.

All I had to do was sigh and Finney moved towards him. The idiot tried to throw a punch which just bounced off Finney's advancing chest. Finney reacted like he'd been hit by a snowball. Next thing, the Premier League's finest had been spun round to face the other way, his arm pulled right up his back. He cried out and tried to struggle but Finney just tightened his grip.

'Steady man,' cautioned Billy but my look silenced him.

'Leave him alone,' screeched the WAG.

'Shut it you noisy mare,' Finney told her and she fell silent. He turned his attention back to the man he held, 'you disgusting cunt,' Finney hissed as he tightened his grip on the footballer, pulling his head back by his ear so he could speak right into it 'all that talent, all that money and what do you do? You piss it all away on coke and slags like that dirty bitch.'

'Get off me,' he was clearly terrified and even the WAG had shut up now, too scared to take exception to being called a slag, or maybe she just recognized the truth when she heard it.

'No,' said Finney, 'I'm going to break your legs, both of them. I don't think a wanker like you deserves to be a footballer.'

Our man groaned in protest as Finney picked him up and dumped him hard onto the floor. He rolled over onto his back and pushed against the carpet with his feet, scuttling backwards across it until he was pressed against the wall.

'Don't go crawling away from me you dirty junkie.' Finney told him. He raised his boot high above the guy's leg.

'Which leg first then?'

'No, no please, not my legs.'

'The right one or the left?'

'Do you even know which one's which?' I asked Golden Boots.

'No, no, don't.'

'What are you on eh? Fifty, sixty grand a week? Got to be. Tell me, tell me now!' Ordered Finney.

'Sixty,' he managed to say without taking his eye off the massive boot that was hovering over those famous legs. Amazing, three million quid a year to a scumbag like this. If he wasn't playing football he would be the one selling the coke. 'How many cars have you got?' asked Finney.

'What?'

'How many?' Finney ordered him, 'go on, tell me!'

'F... Four. No five, five!'

'See he can't even remember,' Finney went to stamp on his leg again and the bloke screamed like a nine-year-old girl. Finney stopped.

'What are they then?'

'Eh?'

'Tell me what you got, those five cars. Name them or I'll break your arms too. You won't even be able to wipe your own arse.'

'A Maserati,' he squealed, terrified now, 'a Ferrari Enzo... a... a...'

Finney raised his leg again, 'a what?'

'A Lamborghini Gallardo, a BMW X5 and... and... a Bentley Continental.'

'That figures,' I said, 'break his legs Finney, he deserves it for the Baby Bentley alone,'

'No! Please!'

Finney raised his foot once more, 'disgusting,' he said again and he brought his boot down as hard as he could.

The girl squealed, the footballer screamed. Finney's boot slammed into the wooden flooring between the bloke's knees. The Bentley-driving tosser screamed again and hid his eyes behind his hands. When he finally realised he was unharmed he barely dared to peer out from behind them.

Finney wasn't through lecturing him, 'when Bobby Robson was captain of England he didn't even have a car! Now get out of here and taking that mingling slag with you.'

'Tell anyone about this and we'll make sure your piss is the most tested in the country,' I told him, 'and my friend here will definitely come back and break both those precious legs.'

Finney let him get up, the WAG followed him sharpish and they both headed for the door.

'Just a minute,' hissed Finney as they reached it and they both froze, 'come here.' Golden Boots reluctantly walked back over to face Finney, 'you haven't said thank you.'

'Eh?'

'For teaching you a valuable lesson,' the Premiership's finest just stared at him like a frightened rabbit, 'well go on then, say it.'

There was a sizeable pause while he tried to find the words, 'Thank you.' His voice was a high pitched squeak.

'What for?'

Another pause.

'For teaching me a valuable lesson.'

Finney nodded, giving them permission to leave. As Golden Boots walked out of the door, I told him, 'welcome to the real premier league.'