

Part three: The man who came over the fence

The next Saturday, when mum was working and David was watching Football Focus, a television show that previews the weekend's football matches, on TV, he saw the posh car pull up in front of the old man's house.

As usual a man in a uniform got out of the car and went to knock on the old man's door. And, as usual, he walked alongside the old man as he made his way to the car.

Where does he go? David asked himself. And, why does a posh car collect him? Most people round here have to get the bus or walk. Barely anyone has a car.

David gazed after the car as it went, then turned the television off. Football Focus had finished. It was time for him to get his radio and listen to the first football commentary game of the day.

His mum would be home later and she had promised that they could go for a walk along the canal.

David found his radio in his mum's room. She'd borrowed it to listen to something on the radio that morning. His mum's room looked out over the back of the houses. Into the gardens.

David had never seen anyone in the garden next door. But he looked again, like he always had, since the football had come back over to him so many times.

The garden was empty. No people. No flowers or plants. Not much grass.

And then David saw something else. Someone coming over the fence at the back of the houses. A young man wearing a baseball cap and scarf around his face.

David watched the man walk swiftly across the garden next door, then disappear from view. He waited and then heard something coming from the house next door. Bumps. Noises of someone opening and closing drawers.

Someone was burgling the old man's house!

David wasn't sure what to do.

Should he phone the police? Tell them what was happening?

He decided he should phone his mum first.

The phone took a long time to be answered, but eventually he spoke to her.

'Mum, someone's gone into the house next door. They climbed.'

'What is it David?' she replied. 'I'm at work.'

'I think someone has broken into the house next door.'

'Broken in? Are you okay?'

'Not our house,' David said more clearly. 'Next door. They climbed over the fence.'

'Oh. Are you sure?'

'Yes. Shall I call the police?'

'No,' his mum said quickly.

'Why?'

'I've told you. We mustn't get involved in things like that.'

David knew what she meant. Sometimes if people saw a crime and told the police, bad things would happen to them. In their part of town most people just kept quiet.

When mum had put the phone down, David felt bad. It was wrong that someone was in next door's house. He could still hear them.

Then he had an idea. There was a phone number you could call. Crimestoppers. You could phone and report a crime without giving your name.

David grabbed the phone. He talked to the lady on Crimestoppers and explained what he had seen. The lady thanked him and said a police car would come out to investigate soon.

David sat and looked out of the back window. He hoped the police would come in time.

But they didn't.

After a few more minutes he saw the man in the baseball cap leaving the house, climbing the fence, but struggling this time, because of something he had in his hand.

Then he heard a police siren.

The man in the baseball cap reacted by running in one direction, putting his hands against a wall, then quickly running the other way.

David rushed to the front of the house to look out of the window. The police were looking into the old man's house through the windows. After a while they posted something through the letter box and drove off.

And that was it.