

JEFFREY ARCHER

THE NUMBER ONE BESTSELLER

200

100

500

250



THE ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT

THOU SHALT NOT BE CAUGHT

JEFFREY ARCHER

THE ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT

PAN BOOKS

TO NEIL AND MONIQUE

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BOOK ONE

THE TEAM PLAYER



AS HE OPENED THE DOOR the alarm went off.

The sort of mistake you would expect an amateur to make, which was surprising, as Connor Fitzgerald was considered by his peers to be the professional's professional.

Fitzgerald had anticipated that it would be several minutes before the local *policia* responded to a burglary in the San Victorina district.

There were still a couple of hours to go before the kick-off of the annual match against Brazil, but half the television sets in Colombia would already be switched on. If Fitzgerald had broken into the pawn shop after the game had started, the *policia* probably wouldn't have followed it up until the referee had blown the final whistle. It was well known that the local criminals looked upon the match as a ninety-minute parole period. But his plans for that ninety minutes would have the *policia* chasing their shadows for days. And it would be weeks, probably months, before anyone worked out the real significance of the break-in that Saturday afternoon.

The alarm was still sounding as Fitzgerald closed the back door and made his way quickly through the small store room towards the front of the shop. He ignored the rows of watches on their little stands, emeralds in their cellophane bags and gold objects of every size and shape displayed behind a fine-mesh grille. All were carefully marked with a name and date, so their impoverished owners could return within six months and reclaim their family heirlooms. Few ever did.

Fitzgerald swept aside the bead curtain that divided the store room from the shop, and paused behind the counter. His eyes rested on a battered leather

case on a stand in the centre of the window. Printed on the lid in faded gold letters were the initials 'D.V.R.' He remained absolutely still until he was certain that no one was looking in.

When Fitzgerald had sold the hand-crafted masterpiece to the shopkeeper earlier that day, he had explained that as he had no intention of returning to Bogota, it could go on sale immediately. Fitzgerald was not surprised that the piece had already been placed in the window. There wouldn't be another one like it in Colombia.

He was about to climb over the counter when a young man strolled past the window. Fitzgerald froze, but the man's attention was wholly occupied by a small radio he was pressing to his left ear. He took about as much notice of Fitzgerald as he would of a tailor's dummy. Once he was out of sight, Fitzgerald straddled the counter and walked to the window. He glanced up and down the road to check for any casual observers, but there were none. With one movement he removed the leather case from its stand and walked quickly back. He leapt over the counter and turned to look out of the window again to reassure himself that no inquisitive eyes had witnessed the burglary.

Fitzgerald swung round, pulled aside the bead curtain and strode on towards the closed door. He checked his watch. The alarm had been blaring away for ninety-eight seconds. He stepped into the alley and listened. Had he heard the whine of a police siren, he would have turned left and disappeared into the maze of streets that ran behind the pawnbroker's shop. But apart from the alarm, everything remained silent. He turned right and walked casually in the direction of Carrera Septima.

When Connor Fitzgerald reached the pavement he glanced left and then right, weaved through the light traffic and, without looking back, crossed to the far side of the street. He disappeared into a crowded restaurant, where a group of noisy fans were seated around a large-screen television.

Nobody gave him a glance. Their only interest was in watching endless replays of the three goals Colombia had scored the previous year. He took a seat at a corner table. Although he couldn't see the television screen clearly, he had a perfect view across the street. A battered sign with the words '*J. Escobar. Monte de Piedad, establecido 1946*' flapped in the afternoon breeze above the pawn shop.

Several minutes passed before a police car screeched to a halt outside the shop. Once Fitzgerald had seen the two uniformed officers enter the building, he left his table and walked nonchalantly out of the back door onto another quiet Saturday afternoon street. He hailed the first empty taxi and said in a broad South African accent, 'El Belvedere on the Plaza de Bolivar, *por favor*.' The driver nodded curtly, as if to make it clear that he had no wish to become involved in a prolonged conversation. As Fitzgerald slumped into the back of the battered yellow cab, he turned up the radio.

Fitzgerald checked his watch again. Seventeen minutes past one. He was running a couple of minutes behind schedule. The speech would have already begun, but as they always lasted for well over forty minutes, he still had more than enough time to carry out his real reason for being in Bogota. He moved a few inches to his right, so as to be sure the driver could see him clearly in the rear-view mirror.

Once the *policia* began their enquiries, Fitzgerald needed everyone who had seen him that day to give roughly the same description: male, Caucasian, fiftyish, a shade over six foot, around 210 pounds, unshaven, dark unruly hair, dressed like a foreigner, with a foreign accent, but not American. He hoped that at least one of them would be able to identify the South African nasal twang. Fitzgerald had always been good at accents. In high school he had regularly been in trouble for mimicking his teachers.

The taxi's radio continued to pump out the views of expert after expert on the likely outcome of the annual fixture. Fitzgerald mentally switched off from a language he had little interest in mastering, although he had recently added '*falta*', '*fuera*' and '*gol*' to his limited vocabulary.

When the little Fiat drew up outside the El Belvedere seventeen minutes later, Fitzgerald handed over a ten-thousand-peso note, and had slipped out of the cab before the driver had a chance to thank him for such a generous tip. Not that the taxi drivers of Bogota are well known for their overuse of the words '*muchas gracias*'.

Fitzgerald ran up the hotel steps, past the liveried doorman and through the revolving doors. In the foyer, he headed straight for the bank of elevators opposite the check-in desk. He had to wait only a few moments before one of the four lifts returned to the ground floor. When the doors slid open he stepped inside and pressed the button marked '8', and the 'Close' button