

SHERLOCK SAM

and the
KIDNAPPED
GAMER in
TAIPEI



THE DIGITAL
DETECTIVES
DUOLOGY
BOOK 2

By
A.J.
LOW

“The book transported me to Taipei and all these places I’ve never visited. I love drinking Bubble Tea, and now I want to visit Jiufen and Ximending.

The story was exciting and hilarious.

It’s definitely worth reading. 真棒!”

**JAYDEN, 9, WANTS TO BE A GAMER LIKE JILL,
BUT NEEDS TO IMPROVE HIS CHINESE, LIKE WENDY**

“We like how Sherlock Sam works with his sister and friends on all their adventures, and how they cheer each other up when they are going through a tough time. Since we can’t travel because of COVID, we get to ‘travel’ whenever we read the series. This duology is extra fun because the Supper Club gets to meet with their international friends in SnackTown. We can’t wait to read more of the Supper Club’s adventures!”

**ELIAS, 9, WANTS TO BE A VETERINARIAN AND WRITER/
PHOTOGRAPHER/ILLUSTRATOR**

SOPHIA, 6, WANTS TO BE A VETERINARIAN AND ARTIST

“This book is quite easy to understand even if you haven’t read the entire series. The scenes are described vividly but don’t feel lengthy, and there are a sufficient number of twists to keep things interesting.

I would give this book a 9.6/10.”

AUTUMN, 11, WANTS TO BE AN ENTOMOLOGIST

SHER SAM

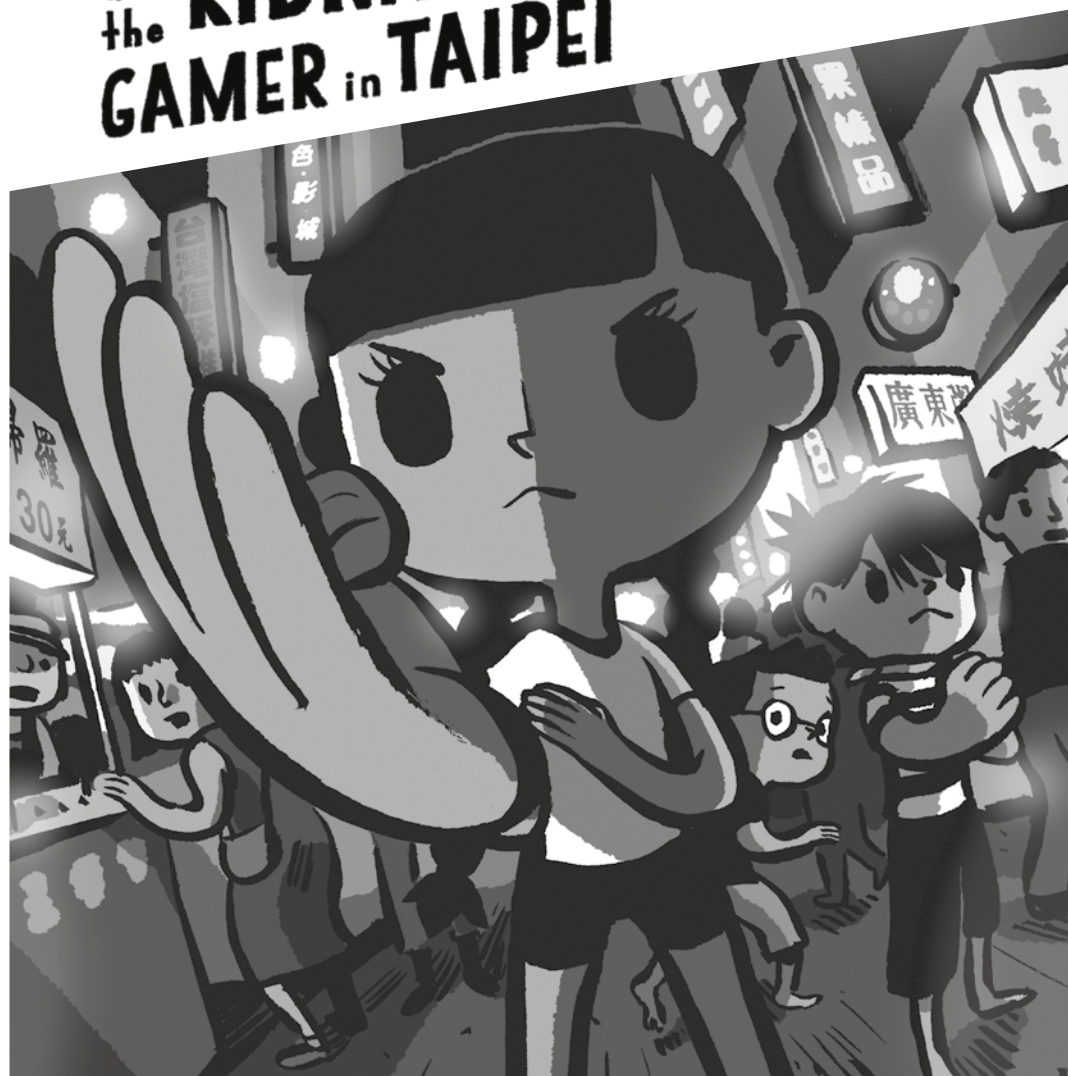
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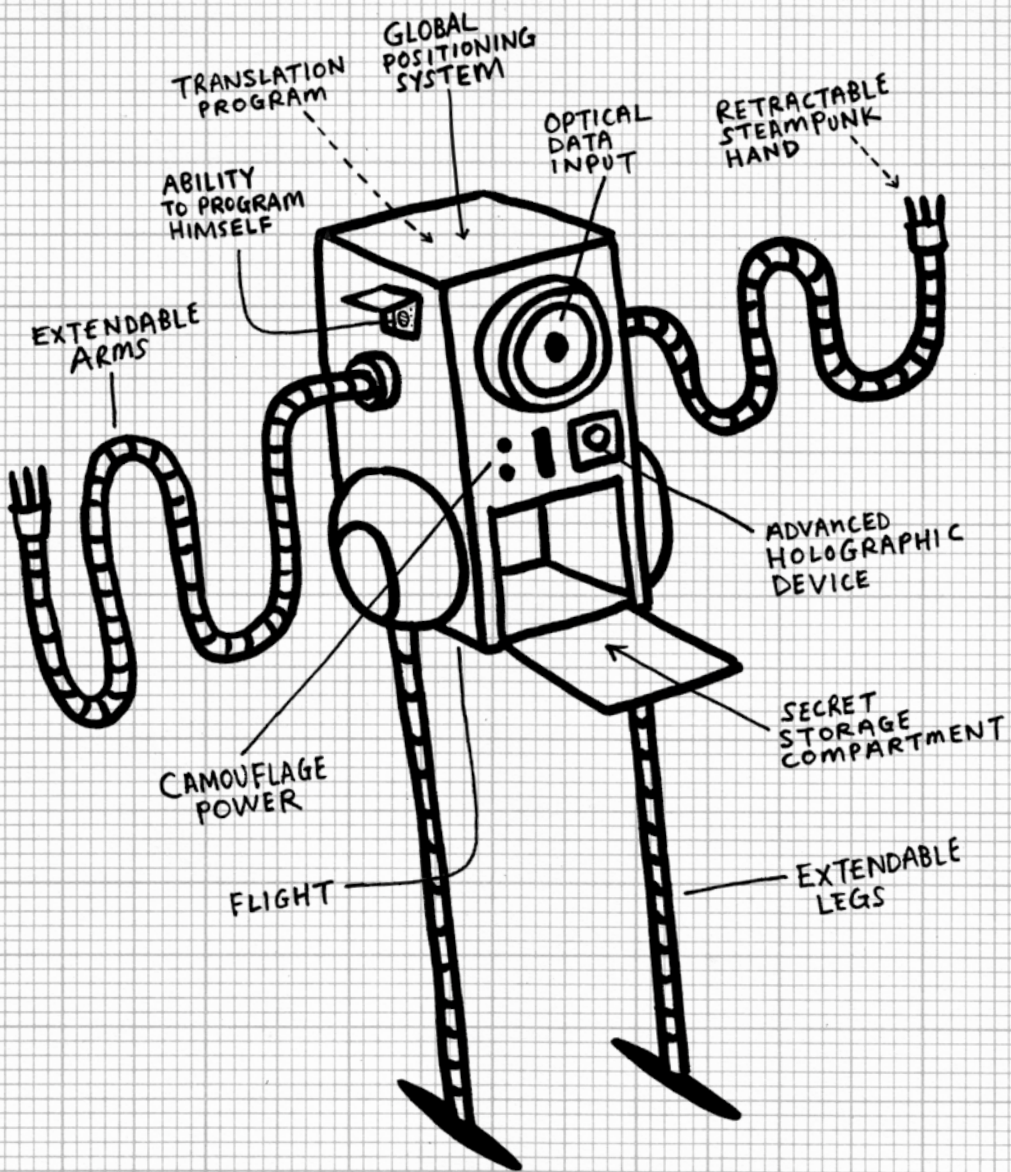
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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

First edition, August 2022.

To all our friends and family who let us use their names for our characters, especially the villains





CHAPTER ONE

I could barely hear myself think over the cacophony that seemed to come at me from every direction.

“Don’t you think it’s a little dramatic to use surround sound to complain about rusting, Watson?” Wendy, my older sister asked. She was holding on to her favourite pink-and-green notebook and had been sketching on the metro ride.

“Especially since all you did was run around me yelling ‘I-am-going-to-rust’ using the echo

function on your speakers," I said, glaring at our little brother.

"I-do-not-have-an-echo-function," Watson replied. "I-just-repeated-the-same-words-at-different-volumes-to-mimic-echoes." He sounded inordinately pleased with himself.

"Also, we're not even at the waterfront yet, so there's no water to make you rust," Nazhar said, his nose buried in the Taipei guidebook he was holding. The travel guide was peppered with multicoloured tabs and sticky notes. While everyone else had slept on the flight from Singapore, Nazhar was busy making notes and learning more about the history and culture of Taipei, Taiwan. Unfortunately, while he was steeped in historical facts and cultural knowledge, Nazhar had no sense of direction.

"It's about a 15-minute walk from Tamsui Station to Tamsui Old Street, so we have about five to eight more minutes to go," he added. "I think." He paused and turned the guidebook upside down, squinting at the map.

"Yah, Watson!" Jimmy said, grinning. "You can

whine about rusting once we're at the waterfront!"

I spun around to face my good friend and classmate. "No, don't encourage him! He's literally waterproof! He's not going to rust!"

"I-always-keep-an-open-mind-about-things-as-every-good-detective-should," Watson replied, again sounding inappropriately pleased with himself.

"All of you are making far too much noise this early on a Saturday," Dad whined and immediately winced. He and Mom were trailing behind us, both wearing sunglasses and moving very slowly.

Nazhar looked at his watch. "Umm, it's almost noon already, Uncle Mike. And it's Sunday."

"It'll feel like noon once we've had our coffee, Nazhar," Mom replied, dramatically pressing a hand to her forehead. "Why didn't we have some at the hotel, dear?" She leaned heavily on Dad as they continued to drag each other along the path.

"I believe we decided on bubble tea, but with fresh milk instead of tea, which has a lot of delicious caffeine," he replied. "And guotie.

I distinctly remember a lot of guotie.”

“That was clearly the wrong decision to make, since we barely slept on the plane,” Mom said. She straightened and put on her responsible-looking mom face. “Let this be a lesson to you, children. Adults aren’t always right.”

Wendy, Watson, Jimmy, Nazhar and I looked at one another without saying a word. I’d had two large cups of bubble tea and a dozen guotie on my own, and I was ready for lunch.

Last night, once we had confirmed that Eliza’s suspicions about Jill Su’s kidnapping were right, and her dad had given her permission to continue investigating crimes with us, Inspector Lestrade immediately made the necessary arrangements for us and Officer Siva to fly to Taipei. In an extraordinary show of trust, Mom, Dad and the Supper Club’s parents and guardians had agreed to let us take a week off school to work on this case. However, we would have to watch a few recorded lessons online and do our homework for the week. Eliza was on school holidays, so she was free to focus on the case.

We had arrived in Taipei before dawn and groggily made our way to the serviced apartment Inspector Lestrade had rented for us. Once we had showered, we immediately fell asleep, but Mom and Dad spent a lot of time talking to Officer Siva and the Inspector, as well as calling everyone’s families, including Eliza’s dad, to give them an update. I suspected none of the grown-ups had slept at all.

“What time did Eliza say she’d meet us?” Wendy asked, tucking her notebook into her backpack.

Nazhar looked at his watch. “12pm in front of the Water Front restaurant. We should hurry a little bit. Especially, erm, Auntie Kat and Uncle Mike.”

We picked up our pace, with Watson and Jimmy pushing and pulling Mom and Dad along. Dad tripped on the tiniest pebble in the known universe and grumbled so grumpily Watson was impressed.

We finally arrived at our meeting spot.

It was 11.54am.

“She’s going to show up, right?” Wendy clutched at the straps of her backpack, bouncing on her heels. “She’s not going to change her mind?”

“She’ll be here, Wendy.” Mom reached out and draped her arm around my sister’s shoulders.

Wendy narrowed her eyes at our mother, who was slumped against her. “You’re just using me to lean on, aren’t you?” Mom gave a soft snore, her eyes half-closed.

It was 11.58am.

I yawned and rubbed my eyes. I wasn’t as tired as Mom and Dad, but for the past couple of weeks we had worked two big international cases while still going to school and making sure we did all our homework. Wendy even had to take a Chinese test. Fortunately, the other case involving TeaMe, the bubble tea chain run by the superstar Jordan Chen, had been resolved, and we could focus on Jill Su’s kidnapping. We also wanted to spend some time with Eliza and help her deal with the bullies in her school.

“She’s here!” Wendy jumped up and down, waving excitedly.

Eliza was dashing over from a short distance away. As she came closer, I could see the enormous smile on her face. Unlike a few days ago, her hair

was in perfect braids, so I knew she was doing much better than when she had first approached us about the Jill Su case.

“You’re here!” Eliza said, flinging her arms around Wendy and hugging her tightly. They spun around in circles. Jimmy immediately joined in the hug, laughing and grinning his Jimmy grin. Nazhar stood a little distance away, smiling. Eliza turned to him and gave him a big hug as well. She even hugged Watson, who took the chance to complain about rusting and bodies of water.

I remembered what I had to do. I reached into my pocket and took something out to offer to her.

I could sense everyone watching.

“Wow,” Eliza said, extending both hands to accept my gift.

“And it’s the last one...” I said.

“My-secret-compartment-does-not-have-any-more-chocolate-biscuits-either,” Watson added. “Sherlock-ate-them-all-on-the-flight.”

“I think he finished them before we got on the plane,” Nazhar helpfully added.



“Thank you, Samuel.” Eliza cradled the small packet of chocolate biscuits carefully in her hand. She held her other hand out and I shook it.

Eliza turned to my parents, who had found a bench and were both dozing on it. “Hi... Wow, are you all right, Auntie? Uncle? You look...tired.”

“They need coffee,” Jimmy whispered. “They made a grown-up mistake of drinking bubble tea with milk, without any caffeine.”

“I see,” Eliza said, an eyebrow raised. “Well, my school is about a 15-minute walk away, and I thought, instead of eating at one of these touristy restaurants, we could eat at my canteen. The food is really delicious, and they have almost everything you could find in Taipei.”

“Fifteen minutes away?” Dad moaned. “We won’t make it.”

“Why don’t you kids go ahead,” Mom said, waving her hand in our general direction. “You should hang out with Eliza for a bit. We have her mobile number in case of emergency.”

Abruptly, Dad stood up. Mom, who had been leaning on him, started to topple but caught herself

in time. Dad, with a very serious expression on his face, placed his hands on his hips and said, “We have *trust* in our *hearts* for all of *you*.” He spread his arms wide open to end his declaration.

The look on everyone’s face was identical and indescribable.

“Wow,” Nazhar said, pushing his glasses up.

I nudged my sister. Wendy blinked a couple of times, then, carefully avoiding looking at our father, she said to Mom, “You’re letting us go off alone in a foreign land? Who are you and what have you done to our parents?”

As if on cue, Nazhar added, “I thought that vending machine we passed just now looked a little too human.” During one of our past cases, Inspector Lestrade had scared a group of Japanese students by cosplaying as a vending machine that dispensed snacks. It was her way of being inconspicuously conspicuous. Nazhar looked around, his eyes narrowed with just the right amount of suspicion.

“Eliza lives here on her own,” Mom said, once she had finished yawning. “We trust her to look

after you. Is that okay with you, Eliza? You have our mobile numbers, yes?"

Eliza quickly nodded.

Mom whispered something to Dad, who nodded. He dramatically stretched his arms above his head. "We also *researched* how *far away* her school is from *here*." He paused and pointed at his big toe. "It's *not far*, and you *don't* even have to take many turns. Anyway, as long as *Nazhar* isn't the one with the map—"

Mom nudged his ribs, and Dad oofed. My friend's inability to read a map was second only to Dad's.

"What Uncle Mike meant to say was, as long as Eliza takes you guys to her school, you'll be fine. And once you're done eating, give us a call, and we'll meet back here."

* * *

We moved a lot faster once Mom and Dad were no longer with us.

After a short walk, we arrived at Eliza's boarding school. It was enormous. There were several multistorey buildings arranged in a squarish U-shape. In the distance was an Olympic-sized pool, a tennis court and a basketball court. Eliza pointed at one of the buildings and told us it was the campus dorm where she stayed. She would give us a tour later, but first, we were going to the canteen for lunch.

"It's our school holidays, so the campus isn't as crowded as it usually is," Eliza said as we walked. "Some of the students have gone back to their home countries or to wherever their families are in Taiwan. But there are still quite a few people around, including the teaching staff, so the canteen is still operating."

"You're lucky," Wendy said, linking her arm through Eliza's. "Your family came to visit you!"

Eliza stopped and stared at Wendy.

"It's us!" Jimmy said. "Did you not know?"

"I—" Eliza bit her lower lip and looked down at the ground. "I can't believe you're all here. But—"

“Did you get permission to bring visitors on campus?” a voice asked from behind. We swung round.

A tall girl stood imperiously with two girls flanking her. She had extremely short, cropped hair and rectangular glasses. The other two could have been twins, with their blunt fringes and shoulder-length straight hair. The tall girl was in a white blouse and plaid skirt while the other two girls were wearing T-shirts with the exact same design but in different colours, and shorts.

Eliza straightened. Her face was expressionless. “I did,” she replied with an edge to her voice. “Not that it’s any of your business.”

The tall girl laughed, a sharp mocking sound. She was smiling, but her eyes were mean.

“So brave now that your *friends* are here.” She had somehow turned the word “friends” into a sneer.

“Eliza has always been brave,” Wendy said, stepping between them.

The tall girl’s eyes narrowed. Her two shorter friends took a step forward.

“Xiang Yun!”

Almost immediately, the tall girl’s expression shifted. She quickly turned, a sweet smile on her face, her chin slightly lifted. She stood with her hands linked behind her back. Her entire demeanour had changed. Her two friends, like marionettes, mimicked her pose.

A slender man with wire-frame glasses and dark, floppy hair hurried up to us. He was dressed in a checked blue shirt and grey slacks, and carrying a stack of books.

“Aren’t you girls supposed to meet me in the school library in five minutes?” he asked. His voice sounded stern, but he was smiling slightly. “Oh, Eliza! I didn’t realise you were still here. Xiang Yun said you wouldn’t be able to help with our second-hand book sale.”

“Did she?” Eliza asked, crossing her arms.

Xiang Yun smiled that same sweet smile and shrugged. “I knew you would be busy with your friends who are visiting. They’re from your old school in Singapore, right?”

“Ah!” the teacher exclaimed, hefting the books

up more securely. "Are you the famous Supper Club that Eliza wrote about in her introductory essay? I'm Mr Liao, her form teacher. I would shake your hands, but as you can deduce with your renowned detective skills, my hands are full of used books to be put up for sale." He laughed at his own joke.

We introduced ourselves, and he invited all of us for a tour of the library.

"If it's okay, Mr Liao, I was going to take my friends for lunch first," Eliza said. "I can hear Samuel's tummy grumbling already."

My hands flew to my stomach. I grinned sheepishly.

"Of course! Young people need to eat to grow. All of you are so skinny," he said, shifting the books to one arm. "C'mon, girls, let's get cracking. Eliza, have fun with your friends! I'll see you later."

Xiang Yun smirked at us before she and her friends hurried after Mr Liao.

"Skinny?" I said. "Did he call me skinny?" I wondered if the teacher needed his glasses changed.

"Wow, is he your teacher?" Wendy said. "He's

so handsome. He looks like that TV star in the xianxia show with the giant snake!"

Eliza rolled her eyes. "That's why Xiang Yun, Anastasia and Qixia constantly volunteer to help him out." She made air quotes around "help".

"If-Dad-were-here-he-would-totally-ask-Mr-Liao-for-an-autograph," Watson said.

Jimmy nodded. "So would Mama."

"Ha Na would try to cast him in one of her dad's productions," Wendy added.

Dad and Jimmy's grandmother were Korean and Chinese drama addicts, and were constantly gossiping about the latest shows and actors. Ha Na's dad was a Korean TV producer, and she had taken it upon herself to help him out (usually without his knowledge).

Nazhar cleared his throat. "What did you write about us?"

"Just that all of you would be helpless without me," Eliza replied, sticking her tongue out. She was trying not to smile.

"Well, you did bring us a case no one else in the world would have spotted," I replied, nodding.

“So I would say your essay has merit.”

“Speaking of the case, let’s get some food and you guys can give me updates,” Eliza replied. She started walking towards a passageway I deduced would lead us to the canteen.

“Ha Na, Chihiyo and Luis are still looking through Jill Su’s videos from the day we pinpointed something weird happening, and they’re also going to monitor her new ones. And, like you recommended, they’re keeping an eye out for any other Blue Lightning influencers profiting from Jill’s personality change,” I said. Our friends, the international members of the Supper Club, lived in Seoul, Tokyo and Mexico City, but we were all in contact via Instanoodlegram, SnackTown and LunchBox. “Plus, Inspector Lestrade has arranged for us to meet Ms Lin from Blue Lightning Agency later today at 4pm.”

“Wait—today?!” Eliza exclaimed. “Why didn’t you say so earlier?”

“You said we were going to have lunch,” I replied, confused. “Surely that would take precedence over a meeting more than three hours away?”

“Samuel!” Eliza said. She stopped and stared at me. She then flung her arms around me in a big hug. I hugged her back. “I missed you too,” she said softly before she released me.

“C’mon, guys,” she said. “Let’s eat, and, like Mr Liao said, get cracking. I have so much to tell you all.”

ooo

CHAPTER TWO



“When you said we needed to meet again, Inspector, I wasn’t expecting you to return with five children and a robot,” Ms Lin said as she stood up. She had been seated behind her large desk and walked forward to greet us.

Ms Lin Yuqin is the head of Blue Lightning Agency who represent Jill Su, Pat the Cad and Jordan Chen’s media career. The last time I had spoken to her was over video call on Inspector Lestrade’s mobile phone.

She crouched down in front of Watson and stared

at him. “Fascinating. Is he remote-controlled?”

“I-am-controlled-by-no-one,” Watson replied.

Ms Lin’s eyes flew open, and she abruptly stood up. “It speaks?”

“This is Watson from the Wonderful Watson’s Online Detective Agency, and the Supper Club,” Inspector Lestrade said. “You’ve met Sherlock Sam, Singapore’s greatest kid detective, before. And they are the rest of the Supper Club: Wendy, Jimmy, Eliza and Nazhar.”

Ms Lin arched her right eyebrow, tapping a manicured finger against her lips. “Ah yes, Sherlock Sam and the Supper Club. You made quite an impression on me the last time we met, Sherlock.” She paused. “Do you have representation yet? Because I can see all of you on TV. Perhaps an animated series too.” She pointed at Watson. “Your merchandise would be a gold mine.”

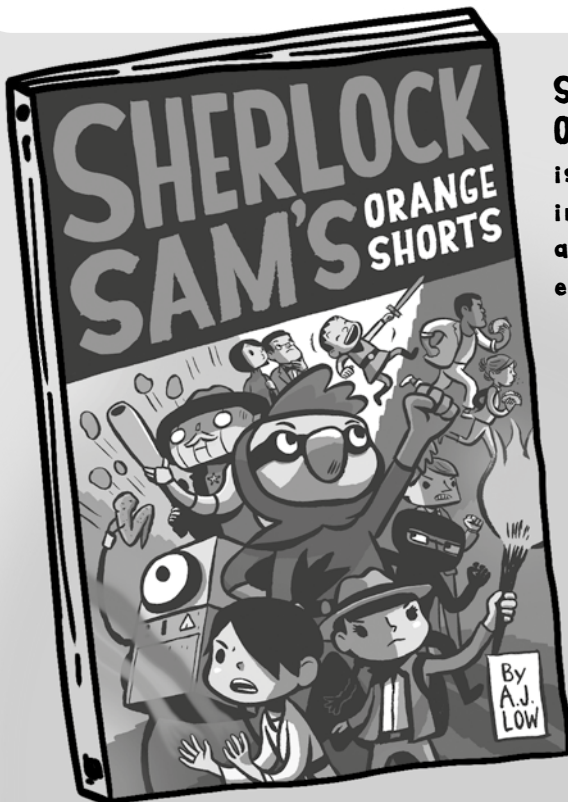
“We’re not here to talk about representation, Ms Lin,” I said. “We want to know why you lied about Jill Su the last time we spoke.”

Ms Lin sighed heavily and gestured towards the large couch in her office.

SHERLOCK SAM'S ORANGE SHORTS: THE SECOND PAIR!

How many alternate versions of Sherlock Sam, Watson, Wendy, Jimmy, Nazhar and Eliza are out there? And are those Ha Nas, Chihiyos and Luises we spy invading the multiverse? What's going on?!

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“This is my favourite Sherlock Sam book.
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