PART 1

MATT (VOICEOVER)

Trees! When I was a child, the old tree in the back garden was central to my fun. It was a sentry tower. It was a goal post. It was even a motorcycle. Yes, that tree was my best friend. Until I was 13, when I chopped it down to make an electric guitar.

MATT (TO CAMERA):

Hey Kids! Don’t chop down trees to make musical instruments! You know this remind me of a firm of tree surgeons I came across 2011. They were based in Banbury and they were ripping off elderly people in their own back gardens. They were called – Oaklands Tree Care.

MINI MATT:
Not to be confused with companies of a similar name.

MATT:
He’s got it!

MATT (VOICEOVER)

Oaklands Tree Care was run by this man, Jason Butcher. His specialities: charging over the odds for gardening, inventing jobs that didn’t need doing and leaving work uncompleted.

Just like with Kay Goodband. She called out Jason to trim back her conifers – He left it looking like THIS….

Back then we asked expert tree surgeon James Pinder what he thought….

MATT: It’s a bit of a waste of your time coming here, because you don’t need to be an expert to see how bad that is.

JAMES: No, I mean it’s a simple thing, it should be flat and it’s clearly not. It starts bad, gets worse in the middle and is totally disastrous at the end. It’s just a joke.

MATT: If this was a haircut, you’d ask for your money back but this, Kay paid £2300 for. What do you think of that?

JAMES: £2300? That is absolutely outrageous. That’s ridiculous. I mean, there’s no way you can justify that kind of money for this kind of work.

MATT (VOICEOVER)

As if he hadn’t taken enough liberties, Jason also asked Kay to lend him some money to fix his equipment…

KAY: They said the chainsaw was broken and could I give them a cheque for £700 and they’d get it back to
me the next day.

MATT: Why did you then hand them another £700? Were you scared at that stage that the work just wouldn’t get done otherwise?

KAY: Yes, that they would keep not coming back. And all the telephone calls, they still didn’t come back so, it feels rather stupid, you know I shouldn’t have been hauled in so easily but I don’t know the cost of cutting hedges and trees down.

MATT (TO CAMERA):

We knew his MO was to pick on elderly people and convince them to part with more and more cash. Our next step? Find a house. Put an elderly actor in it and go undercover.

MATT (VOICEOVER)

And here she is. Guess what we called her. Mrs Green. Theresa Green. Get it? Jason didn’t

JASON: Mrs Green

MATT (VOICEOVER)

We told Jason we had one tree to remove and one to trim back, a job that should have cost around a hundred quid.

But he was anxious to create more jobs for himself. Spotting another dead tree, he told us we had a serious problem on our hands…

JASON: This one’s diseased, Mrs Green.

THERESA: Is it?

JASON: Yeah, it’s all diseased.

THERESA: Oh goodness.

JASON: It’s got a disease called “honey fungus”. Unfortunately,

THERESA: What’s it called?

JASON: It’s the whole tree.

MATT (VOICEOVER)

Yeah, It wasn’t the healthiest of trees, but it didn’t have the creeping fungus he claimed to have identified …

JASON: That can spread. That can kill your lawn up to 12 foot back from the tree. That stuff is really, really bad.

THERESA: Is it?
**JAMES PINDER**
It’s not like an oil slick spreading across the garden. He’s trying to scare her into having things done.

**MATT (VOICEOVER)**
Theresa stood firm and told Jason to just crack on with our original two trees.

He worked for just over an hour and charged us 400 quids - four times over the odds.

**MATT:** So, we established that Jason Butcher was charging a lot and that he was making up problems.

**MINI MATT:** But at least he worked safely, right?

**MATT:** You’ve not seen the programme before have you?

**MINI MATT:** Is it like Grange Hill?

**MATT:** No, not really

**MINI MATT:** Or more like Crackerjack?

**MATT:** No, no it’s not like Crackerjack

**MINI MATT:** Or Dangermouse?

**MATT:** To be honest, sometimes it is like Dangermouse

**MATT (VOICEOVER)**
We gave Jason the benefit of the doubt and asked him out for another job.

A new garden this time, a new actor, Jim…

**JIM:** Hello, is that Oaklands?

**MATT (VOICEOVER)**
Again, Jason quoted over the odds to remove two trees.

**JASON:** To take those trees down Mr Curtis, you’re gonna be looking at about £500.

**MATT (VOICEOVER)**
But yet again, he found work that didn’t need doing.

**JASON:** What about your big hedges? Do you want them trimmed?

**JIM:** Well, I can only think about one thing at once.

**MATT (VOICEOVER)**
Jason got to work. But his grasp of safe working practices… well, Well to be honest he didn’t have much of a grasp on anything.

**JAMES PINDER:** The ladder is not secure, no one is footing it and now he’s climbing it with a chainsaw. There’s nothing to stop him sort of falling off and having a terrible accident at all.
MATT (VOICEOVER)

Even off the ladder he was a danger to himself, waving his saw around like a loon in the back of his van.

I mean, I think he might enjoy chopping things up just a little too much, what do you reckon?

JASON: I’ll smash you right up!

MATT (VOICEOVER)

Just what you need – a destruction junkie with anger issues…. Ooh. Come on now.

When he wasn’t endangering his life or his machinery, Jason was doing what he did best – trying to extract as much money from his customers as possible…

JASON: This willow has got to be your main priority, Mr Curtis at the moment. It needs deading out, because it’s a beautiful tree and you don’t want to lose it, if you leave it as it is, it’s going to end up dying. I noticed your cherry tree could do with a little trim as well. I’ll include that as well. Call it £2100 eh?

JIM: I’ll have a think overnight about that

JASON: Let me do it for you, I’ll knock the odd hundred off, how’s that? Is that fair for you? I’ll do the stumps for nothing, I’ll knock the odd £100 off and call it two grand. That’s cheap.

MATT: So, Two grand – how many week’s pocket money is that?

MINI MATT: None. I got 5k tucked away in a cash ISA. And a buy-to-let portfolio that brings me in the same every month.

MATT: You’re not me.
PART 2

MATT (VOICEOVER)

Yes after charging Kay Goodband £2,300 to butcher her trees, he then quoted US over the odds when we invited him to our houses rigged with secret cameras - AND lied to us about the state of our trees.

JASON: It’s got a disease called “honey fungus”. Unfortunately, it’s the whole tree.

MATT (VOICEOVER)

It was time to confront the man himself.. So we called him out to a job, at a modest bungalow with a few trees and well this happened....

JASON: Do you know what, I recognise you

MATT: Yeah, you would do, Jason. How you doing mate?

JASON: Matt Damon.

MATT: Good to see you. It’s Matt Allwright actually, Matt Allwright from BBC Rogue Traders.

JASON: Yeah I thought it was

MATT: Your honey fungus is totally unconvincing. Here’s how to get back in touch with us.

JASON: Oi Sheree – Rogue Traders!

MATT: Hello Sheree, how you doing there?

MATT (VOICEOVER)

Jason almost seemed pleased to see us!

MATT: Careful on the road there. So um, when you’re taking thousands of pounds off people…

JASON: I’m not taking thousands of pounds off people.

MATT: And either not doing the work…

JASON: I always do the work.

MATT: Or doing the work the you weren’t authorised to do in the first place

MATT: There you go, that’s Jason Butcher from Oaklands Tree Care or Tree Services of Banbury.

MATT (VOICEOVER)

And that was the last we saw of him. Whether or not I’m easily mistaken for Matt Damon remains a hot topic around the office....
MATT (TO CAMERA):
We weren’t the only ones interested in Jason though. Trading Standards had also been having a butchers at his work ... And what they saw wasn’t pretty...

MATT (VOICEOVER)
They’d also come across a number of elderly victims Jason had ripped off

MATT: When you met these victims and heard the stories about the way he was behaving, Jason Butcher, what were your feelings?

MARTIN WOODLEY: When I kept seeing the complaints coming in and seeing the age of some of the victims….my mum’s that age, she’s 80…..the response really is disbelief that they could be going out targeting this sort of people

MATT: It’s difficult to understand, isn’t it, why anybody would do this, if they understood the impact that it could have on the people that they were ripping off.

MARTIN: They don’t see it because they’ve got their money, they’ve gone, so they don’t see what they’ve left behind. They don’t see the problem that that victim will have with the family, when the family finds out. If they could just see some of these victims, some of them might change their minds in what they’re doing.

MATT: Why is it so difficult with cases like these to get them to court?

MARTIN: The people are so elderly and vulnerable … so for them to go to court is very dramatic, so there’s all these fear factors in the victims minds, when at the end of the day, they’ve been conned.

MATT (VOICEOVER)
But in this case Trading Standards did manage to persuade some of Butcher’s victims to testify. Including Kay Goodband and Nick Payne, the other victim we featured in our report back in 2011.

A year and a half after our broadcast, the case made it to court....

MARTIN: Thirteen charges was taken, including theft, fraud, money laundering and consumer protection from unfair trading regulations. He pleaded guilty and he was sentenced to twelve months custodial sentence.

MATT (VOICEOVER)
It’s a fantastic result, and one more rogue off the streets... or in this case out of the woods.. if you like

MATT (TO CAMERA):
Upon release from prison Jason Butcher went back to being a tree surgeon which, I would imagine has you quite worried - well have a little bit of faith in human nature!

MATT (VOICEOVER)
Yes, because according to Trading Standards – Butcher seems like a changed man...

*MARTIN*: All his paperwork’s there, he’s complying with all the legislation and now Jason is doing a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay and he’s not causing any more problems. I think it’s a real success story.

*MATT (TO CAMERA)*:

So, it would appear, for the meantime anyway that Jason Butcher has… turned over a new leaf. Give me that. Did that kid write this?
PART 3

MATT (TO CAMERA):

It’s the soap powder doorstep challenge. It’s been 20 years, it must be due a reboot. Come on. Hello, sir. Are you prepared to show your whites to the entire nation?

ACTOR:

Have I won something? Where’s Cheggers?

MATT:

Oh my goodness. Well, at least your roof’s clean.

ACTOR:

I had it professionally cleaned. That is just a way into the story, isn’t it?

MATT:

Yes, it is.

MATT (VOICEOVER)

In retrospect. Not one of our best ideas.

But back in 2013 it still helped us tell you all about Renov8 North West Limited of Manchester, a roof cleaning and repair service, run by Darren Potts AKA Daz. Yeah, Daz. As in washing?

Lauren Carr paid him £130 to repair the uPVC on her roof. Which he did…by painting it…???

MATT:

I am not familiar with the idea of painting UPVC, because it is plastic. But they said they could do it?

LAUREN:

Yes, they said, no problem, and we trusted them. So, they painted it, and by the next day, it had started to come off.

MATT (VOICEOVER):

Lauren rang to complain but Renov8 didn’t answer. And it got worse.

LAUREN:

Whereas we thought originally it could just be sanded down and repainted, we’ve had both a surveyor and a builder out who said that it should never have been painted in the first place, because it’s UPVC and it all needs replacing.

MATT (VOICEOVER)

And the bill for that? £1200.

So was this a typical Renov8 job? To find out, we rigged a house with secret cameras,
called them out to spruce up our driveway and roof and called in expert surveyor Barry Cross to cast an eye over proceedings. Here’s Daz and his assistant, Connor.

**ACTRESS:** Hello.

**DAZ:** Hello. I’m here to do your roof for you.

**ACTRESS:** What will you be doing then?

**DAZ:** Basically, we wash it down then repoint it where it’s necessary. So if any concrete comes out during that pressure wash then that gets replaced and then it gets treated with an anti-fungicidal treatment which just stops it re-growing basically.

**MATT (VOICEOVER)**

Sounding convincing, we left them to it. But once they were let loose on the roof…well let’s just say they didn’t take many precautions to stop themselves falling off.

**MATT (VOICEOVER)**

Witness the incredible ‘walking along the top of the roof without any harness whilst smoking a fag’ trick!!!

**MATT (VOICEOVER)**

You know funnily, Barry wasn’t impressed

**BARRY CROSS :** This is appalling, I hope he’s got nine lives, Matt.

**MATT (VOICEOVER)**

Eight now Barry, hold on, make it seven.

**BARRY CROSS :** The water is cascading off the roof on to the extension lead at the back. This is so dangerous.

**MATT (VOICEOVER)**

But believe it or not, that wasn’t the most dangerous thing Connor got up to.

**MATT:** What is he doing? He is sawing something.

**MATT (VOICEOVER)**

Yep, Connor tried to fashion a makeshift phone charger by sawing through the wet cable....

**MATT:** Oh my god, no

**MATT (VOICEOVER)**
MATT: That’s just the nuttiest thing I have ever seen.

BARRY CROSS: It’s breath-taking because he’s using the same extension that was covered in water

MATT: That won’t even charge your phone!

BARRY CROSS: He needs to be counselled on how to live beyond your next birthday; because that’s three separate things we have seen him do which have put his life directly in danger.

MATT (VOICEOVER)

Miraculously, Connor didn’t electrocute himself, so soon turned his attention to our driveway and their promise to pressure wash it with fungicidal solution.

All they used was water – there was no sign of any weed killer.

And Daz finished the job by giving the garden one final watering of his own… Compounded by the fact that straight afterwards, he did this:

DAZ: Right I’ll leave you to it then

ACTRESS: Nice to meet you, thank you

MATT (VOICEOVER)

Oh no! He hasn’t washed his hands!

Six days on, we went back to inspect the work.

MATT: That’s not moving.

MATT (VOICEOVER)

There were pools of water in the garage. The gutters were full of mud from the roof, and the muck that fell out of the gutters was blocking the drains.

When we invited them out to a second house, it was the same story. Same dangerous working practices. Same dodgy work.

So it was time for Daz’s doorstep challenge. Soap box in hand, I made my move whilst Darren was quoting for work in another stooge house we’d set up…

ACTOR: You wouldn’t mind just grabbing that do you?

MATT: Hi Daz, Matt Allwright, BBC Rogue Traders. Are you prepared to take part in the Daz doorstep challenge and show your face to the British public, because what we have seen is you have been rinsing your customers. Hi there Connor. Yeah, might be best to start packing up mate. How’s it going alright? See what we have seen in two instances now, two different jobs is that you promise to do work, including
cleaning gutters, putting down fungicide, using weed killer and you don’t at all actually. People pay for this, pay good money for these jobs to be done and you don’t do them at all.

MATT (VOICEOVER)

Daz didn’t want to chat about the quality of his work – but what about health and safety?

MATT: The other thing you need to watch out for.

DARREN: Get out me car

MATT: Connor there, yeah. You’re putting Connor at risk by the way that he’s having to do his job. You leave him up there by himself -Daz you’re leaving Connor there by himself, up on a roof slipping around…How did Connor get that…

DARREN: Get out the BLEEPing car now

MATT: How did he get that limp he’s got?

DARREN: What you doing? BLEEPing idiot

MATT: Radford street, near Salford Daz, that was a job where tiles did need replacing, that’s part of the service you’re supposed to offer, but you didn’t. Connor, watch out on those roofs mate. You’re going to get yourself in trouble, you’re gonna get hurt.

So Daz… In fact he’s vanished!

MATT (TO CAMERA):

I love it when a joke comes together.

So whatever became of Darren “Daz” Potts? Is Connor still in one piece? Well it’s funny you should ask, because you weren’t the only one glued to your Television set that night..

MATT (VOICEOVER)

The eagle eyed folks at the Health and Safety Executive were watching too!

MATT GREENLY: Walking round the roof, no precautions, no scaffolding to stop him from falling, he really is, he’s pushing his luck there. And of course, you’ve got Darren, his boss watching him carry out those risks.

MATT (TO CAMERA):

Anyone in control of people working at height is governed by the Working at Height Regulations, which tell you what you have to do to be safe…

And not look like an idiot.

MATT GREENLY: There was nothing there at all to stop either man from falling off the roof and it’s quite obvious from what we saw that that’s a serious risk of them suffering injury, maybe even death from that sort
MATT (VOICEOVER)

The HSE decided that our film contained enough evidence to mount an investigation...

MATT GREENLY: We determined that there were effectively two sets of breaches here, one for the company who've got a legal responsibilities and one from Darren Potts himself because he was seen watching his employee walking around at risk, and actually on the roof with him, putting himself at risk as well.

MATT (VOICEOVER)

They decided it was worth a prosecution for both Darren Potts and Renov8 for breaches of the regulations.

MATT GREENLY: It was put before the magistrates’ court where both parties, the company and Mr Potts pleaded guilty. So they were fined £1000, Mr Potts was given 200 hours community service and both parties were forced to pay HSE’s costs of £1255 each.

MATT (VOICEOVER)

So three and a half grand and Darren Potts ordered to do his bit for the community... Renov8 North West has now been dissolved and Daz is registered as an energy surveyor. Which hopefully means he's nowhere near a ladder...

MATT: You see, small me – yeah money’s useful, but it’s not as important as stopping someone from losing an eye

....Or getting electrocuted.....

....or falling off a high roof.

MINI MATT: Onto a spiked railing!

MATT: Has anyone ever told you you’re a bit weird?