

Testing Times - Day 3

Freddy considered the situation.

They were in Hardy's house. That was OK.

They were in a room, just off the main hallway. That was OK as well.

They wouldn't be in there for long. OK.

It was a bit dusty. He could deal with that.

Michael had found his book about how to speak Spanish. That was not so good, but they could deal with that later.

He looked down again at the writing on the floor. Not good at all. It clearly said *Welcome to the Library*. And it was obvious that it had been written very recently, because the dust was only just disturbed. Sort of scratched out, it was.

Freddy heard a scratching sound from the corner into which he was squinting. Probably just some pipes creaking or something.

The writing was not good, but what happened next, something subconscious, provoked deep anxiety in Freddy's mind. He looked at his watch, again screwing his eyes up to get a proper look in the dimly lit room.

Friday. Friday the thirteenth of June. The day before the tournament. Friday. Friday the thirteenth. Of June. Friday...the THIRTEENTH!

As the thought shot through his mind and landed like an arrow in the centre of a target, something else happened.

All the lights went out.

There was a scream. A girl's scream. It cut through the pitch darkness and buried itself deep within Freddy's brain. The scream was long, and loud, and desperate. Someone from the far side, where they had been looking for the books, stumbled. A grunt. A knocking in the distance. A swear word.

'Ow!' the voice was Hardy's. 'This n-n-never happened before'. The voice was urgent, panicky.

The door slammed. Shut.

There was another scream, then another. This time Clara was joined by Jaz, normally the most phlegmatic of people. If he was worried, they all should be.

Freddy tried to assess the situation, as his heart thumped rhythmically and audibly in his chest. Ten

seconds after the door had shut, there was silence, and to him his heartbeat was amplified to a throbbing pulse that could be heard throughout the room.

Calm, calm, stay calm, he said to himself.

‘Stay calm’, said a small voice.

Stay calm, he said again, almost mouthing the words in the darkness. He ran through the situation once more.

Friday the thirteenth, the day of danger and doom, and dodgy doings! And darkness and doors. He tried to make sense of it all. The Library. The library! Where had he heard that before? And what had happened? Yes that’s right, the library, strange people in white suits...it was all coming back to him now, and the people inside the suits...they were people weren’t they? And then someone had started telling them what to do...someone had taken charge...had waved that little thingy around and saved the day...

These thoughts raced around his brain and took less time to think than it took you to read about them.

Suddenly, a small blue light in the distance. Freddy didn’t know how far away it was, but it illuminated the face of his friend Alec.

Good. He can deal with this, thought Freddy.

‘I’ll deal with this’, said Alec, ‘we’ve just got to find the interstelastic thrusters and reverse the polarity on the groove-finders’.

More silence, as Alec went about his work. In the dim glow of whatever he was holding, Freddy could make out the dark faces of his friends. He just couldn’t get to them across the wide room, because it was too dark to see what was between him and them. So he sat where he was, on the floor, knowing that the words he had read were somewhere just to his left, and that whoever, or whatever had written them, may well be somewhere close by as well.

Alec worked quickly at whatever he was doing, and little clouds of dust would appear illuminated in blue every time he made a sudden movement. He was concentrating on one of the shelves close to where the others were waiting.

‘Yes, it’s here, if we can just...’. The light went out for a moment, to be replaced by a whining noise, and then more silence.

‘Who are you?’

The question came from close to where Freddy was sitting.

‘Eh?’ said Freddy, not looking towards the voice, nor turning his head. He was frozen, his mind desperately trying to work out a reasonable explanation.

‘Who are you?’

‘Erm...we’re...in...the Library’. Even in the terror of the situation, Freddy knew that this was a ridiculous

thing to say.

‘Who are you?’ the voice repeated. Freddy’s heart pounded like a jackhammer.

He could see Alec still working away in the far distance. *Whatever he is doing, he must hurry up*, he thought. His mind also gave him time to think about the voice. Was it an illusion? Was it a person? Was it alive? Was it...dead? It was a small voice, like a child’s, or like a baby’s. Who was it?

‘You are in trouble!’ said the voice.

‘Deep trouble!’ said the voice, ‘I’ll be back’.

There was a brief scratching sound to Freddy’s left. The voice...was gone.
