

Carry On Camping – Day 6

‘Just calm down down, will you, you’re making it worse’, said Clara, quite calmly considering that her boat was clearly sinking.

‘Calm? CALM? How can I be calm, the boat is sinking, and my foot...my foot...help!’

Hardy’s foot had indeed disappeared in the gaping hole in the bottom of the boat. As he tried to steady himself by holding on to the side, more of his leg slipped down. He was in up to his knee now.

‘Just stay there, whilst I think what to do’, said Mr Andrews, sitting down on a rock. He scratched his chin thoughtfully.

‘There’s no time for thinking...help us!’ cried Hardy, as he slipped further down into the water. The lake seemed to be gobbling him up, and Freddy thought he could see the water grow darker as the shadows lengthened. But maybe he was just imagining that. In his mind he could hear the flapping of wings high above, and the squawks of birds. Vultures maybe. He looked up.

Nothing.

‘OK, I’m coming in,’ a firm, said a quiet voice from behind him. Freddy looked round. There was Michael, pulling off his hooded top to reveal a black no-sleeved shirt, and kicking off his shoes.

‘No – don’t do it!’ Freddy objected, although it was obvious that Michael was going to the rescue. Playing in Freddy’s head now was a thumping tune, as Michael sprinted down the beach. Maybe it was the music from James Bond, or perhaps it was Mission Impossible?

With a huge splash, Michael dived headfirst into the water, and speared like an arrow towards the stricken boat. Clara looked on at the busy figure swimming towards them with a mixture of admiration and fear. For herself, for him. For them. Hardy sank a little further. He whimpered pathetically.

Michael reached the boat.

Michael laughed.

Michael didn’t laugh that much. But he laughed now!

Michael stood up!

The water barely covered his thighs!

Hardy looked at him, as his leg, still stuck through the hole in the bottom of the boat, stopped sinking any further. He smiled weakly and tried to climb out. In pushing himself up, he slipped, and his other leg crashed through the hole in the boat. He was now standing, up to his thighs in water, with the boat wrapped around him like a skirt.

There was much laughing and teasing from the shoreline, until Freddy and Wil, followed by Jaz, leapt into the water and crashed through the shallows to pull Hardy and Clara out of the boat, which

disintegrated into rotten splinters around them. After giving Hardy a thorough splashing, and messing about with Michael's football for a while, they returned to get ready for the night ahead. Mr Andrews tried to regain control of the situation.

'OK, you were lucky this time'. He looked round each one of them in turn. 'But next time, you might not be. So remember, no boat-borrowing, no lifejacket-losing, no senseless swimming and definitely no fancy football in the lifeless lagoon. Got it? Good.'

As they settled down to sleep, Freddy shifted nervously about in his damp sleeping bag.

There was definitely something playing on his mind. He was out at Nightmare Lake. He had already imagined sea creatures, and vultures circling overhead (or was it just that red kite?) One of his best friends had nearly drowned. His favourite football coach had yelled at them. He shifted around again, his head grating on the sharp ground underneath the tent.

Or maybe, just maybe, he was worrying about their next match. A crucial match, due to take place the following Saturday. Images flooded into his head. Dark images. Cackling and laughing. Dark black football kit. Dirty tricks. Yes, that was it, he was definitely thinking ahead to their next match. What would be the outcome? And what would be the score? And would they live to tell the tale?

And soon it was morning. He must have slept eventually, but as he rubbed the sleep out of his eyes, he knew it couldn't have been much. Hardy, amazingly, was still asleep, lying on the ground tangled in the cloth and cords of his hammock, just where it had deposited him as he had tried to get into it one last time the previous night.

'Brrghghh! Brats!' mumbled Hardy as he tried to wake up.

'Arrghhh! R-R-Rats!' stuttered Hardy, as sleep departed him and his eyes opened.

'Lurgghhh! Messy and Weak!' he stammered, followed, as he got up, by a garbled, 'yesss...stress and leak!'.

They gathered around the poor figure on the ground.

'What is he talking about?' said Clara, glaring down at him.

'I think I know...and it's not good news!' replied Wil.

'So what is it?'

'Think about it. On Monday. SATS...Assessment Week! Oh no!'

'And then...', said Freddy, 'the game next Saturday! It's going to be a BAD week!'
