

## Carry On Camping – Day 1

‘Nice place you’ve got here, lad’, grunted Mr Andrews as he surveyed the base they had built for themselves at the bottom of Hardy’s garden, ‘not bad at all’. ‘We like it!’, said Wil quickly, ‘but...what’s that noise?’ ‘What noise is that, lad, I can’t hear anything?’, Mr Andrews said, rubbing his ears briskly with his gloved hands. There was the usual background noise coming from the base. Jimi and Barry were playing about on the instruments, and the (sometimes) tuneful sounds were interrupted occasionally by a shout of ‘Yeh man!’ from Jimi, or sometimes a threatening ‘Don’t you touch that!’ from Barry, as someone approached his drum kit. Freddy stood by Mr Andrews, who was putting together a complicated-looking structure just outside the shed. ‘\*\*\*\*\* Shall I give you a hand, Mr Andrews?’, said Freddy enthusiastically. He was just pleased to be back playing again, after all the disappointments of the winter. ‘No, I’m OK, lad, this bit...er...er...just goes here, I think’. Freddy turned towards the shed to fetch the others. ‘Where’s Hardy?’ he said, as he silently counted his players. ‘Said he had some kind of special mission...’, said Clara, ‘...he’ll be back in a minute’. ‘Alright, then, let’s get started!’ Freddy rubbed his right ear. There was a crash from outside, and a clanging of metal tubes. ‘Ah...oh...um...this bit goes here I think...!’ said a weak voice, clearly coming from a body, which was now partially hidden under a mass of metal tubing and panels. Mr Andrews was buried under the structure he was trying to assemble. It was supposed to be a clipboard for organising their training moves. ‘Yes, definitely...this tube here...and this one here...I think’. Freddy pulled coach Azalea out from under the clipboard, which was facedown on the floor, with five legs sticking up in the air.

‘Oh well, never mind about that then’, said Mr Andrews, ‘we can do without it’. He gave it a kick with his bony right foot. It collapsed noisily, one leg defiantly pointing to the sky. ‘\*\*\*\*\* What IS that noise?’ yelled Clara, although the drumming had stopped. ‘What’s with the humming, man?’, said Jimi, strolling out of the shed. ‘I don’t know, it’s...it’s getting louder’, said Wil, who had joined them. ‘Well, it’s not loud exactly, but it certainly is annoying... is it your amp?’ said Freddy to Jimi. Just then Hardy appeared through the gap in the hedge, from the direction of the house. He looked very, very pleased with himself. Michael was jogging alongside him, smartly dressed in the new Arsenal away kit, a bottle of water in one hand, the other hand clamped firmly over his right ear. Clamped to his foot (well, almost) was a football, as usual. As they approached the clearing, Michael trapped the ball on the ground, then appeared to boot it high into the tall trees at the far end of the garden. He put the bottle down, and stood quietly with both hands now over his ears. The ball struck the tallest tree high up on the trunk and bounced to the right as they looked at it. It flew some ten metres into the branches of a lower tree, where it filtered slowly downwards and dropped towards the roof of the shed. Perching briefly on the V-shaped roof, the ball slid down towards the guttering, from where it rolled slowly but surely off the front end of the shed and into Michael’s waiting arms. ‘Wow!’ said Wil, ‘how did you do that?’ ‘Practice!’ said Michael, smiling, ‘but...what is that noise?’ He put the ball down again and covered his ears. ‘Noise, what noise?’ said Mr Andrews, whose ears were famous for not hearing absolutely everything. ‘That high-pitched squeaking’, said Freddy. ‘Your roof is leaking?’ said Mr Andrews, gazing over towards the shed. ‘Well, get it fixed’. ‘He wouldn’t hear it’, said Hardy, his arms folded defiantly across his chest.

‘Wouldn’t hear what?’ said Freddy. ‘The mosquito’, said Hardy. ‘The MOSQUITO?’ they all said, almost at the same time. ‘Keeps out teenagers, fixed it myself’, said Hardy, smiling. ‘Well unfix it, I can’t stand it!’ shouted Clara. ‘But it works, I thought it would be good. We don’t want anyone hearing our plans. Look around you, can YOU see any?’ ‘Well, no...but...’, said Freddy, trying to think of a good argument. ‘Oh come ON!’ said Clara, grabbing Hardy’s arm, and frogmarching him back towards the house, ‘you’re going to turn this thing OFF’. You didn’t argue with Clara. So Hardy didn’t. The noise soon stopped. Mr Andrews continued with his preparations. ‘\*\*\*\*\* It’s a long time since we’ve played, my friends, and the opposition can only have become stronger. We will have to play with more

determination than ever'. 'He's even older now', thought Freddy with a kind of sadness, thinking back to last year when Mr Andrews had appointed himself as their first coach. He looked on as the little coach instructed the players on how to defend at a corner, wondering if they could ever repeat the glory of their first season in the league, the six victories, the trip to Athens, and the fun they had had when they met Jimi and Barry for the first time. 'Now, you...you... and you...you go here, in a diamond formation', said Mr Azalea. He scratched his head. 'The ball comes over here, and you...you...and you...you go here, a triangular formation works best in this situation.' He scratched his arm. 'And finally, you...you...you, and...er...you, plus you here, you over there, and you filling the gap in the middle, in a sort of isosceles pentagonal formation, with you at the apex...yes that should work!'

Mr Andrews surveyed the mess of bodies in front of him. Not only did he seem to have forgotten their names, he also seemed to have lost count of how many of them there were. But for Freddy, none of that mattered. They were back. And they had a big game coming up at their home ground of Lancaster Road Park on Saturday.\*\*\*\*\*