

The Big Idea – Day 5

We need some help here. We can't do it on our own, he thought. But once we're finished, it's going to be great! ***** The next day, Freddy, Wil and Michael trotted happily over towards Hardy's house, eager to embark on the next stage of the HQ project. Hardy had found paint and paintbrushes, and with the various offcuts of wood that Hardy had been working on before, they were in a position to repair the door and some of the worst holes in the outside walls. 'I'm looking forward to getting on with the inside!' said Wil as they waited for Hardy to open the door. 'It's going to be a lot of work, though', said Freddy, 'if we want to make it really good'. 'I think we need stuff to do in there', said Michael. 'It's even hard to know how big it really is', said Freddy, 'with all that stuff in there. When we've cleared it out, we'll be able to see. Then we can start planning. We can put a dartboard in there, and have the drums, Jimi can come with his guitar, we can keep our bikes in there...' 'Don't forget football stuff!', said Michael excitedly, 'we can store the training gear, we can plan the games, Mr Andrews can come over for team talks...' 'Hi, how're you doing?' Hardy opened the door. 'Fine, let's go!' They picked up the gear from outside the back door. Paint pots, brushes, and wood. They walked jauntily through the garden. Motivated men, on a mission. Hardy had made them each wear one of his Dad's old shirts. Hardy's Dad was no giant, but the shirts made each of them look like something out of the Seven Dwarves. Freddy and Hardy could just about walk without tripping over, but Wil and Michael kept tripping over the ends of the shirt-tails, or over the long-hanging sleeves. Wil was the only one to fall over, but he made the most of it by rolling over twice. His white shirt was now a dirty shade of brown. The grass underfoot was still damp from the huge bucketloads of rain it had received throughout June, and the prospects for July were not that much better. But the day, at that moment, was sunny, and they could feel some warmth on their arms through the thin material of the cotton. Freddy thought that the weather had some potential for being good, without being summery just yet. 'Hang on!' said Hardy as they turned the corner into the clearing off which the shed stood. The clearing was empty, and the familiar break in the tall hedge was visible at the far corner, despite the hedge being overgrown. 'What?' said Michael as Hardy held him back with a firm hand. 'Listen!' commanded Hardy. They stood still for a minute, shirts wafting in the breeze. Not a sound. But then a bang. Then another. Then silence. Then more banging, rhythmical banging, urgent banging. Distant, but not that far away. 'So, someone's working back at the house?' said Freddy. 'Yeh, that's what it sounds like, but...there's no-one in the house'. 'Maybe Jimi came down to help?' said Wil. 'I don't think he's here this week', said Hardy, his voice wavering slightly as he spoke. They stepped forward, half-confidently, half-aware that something was not quite right. No-one really wanted to go first, but no-one wanted to look scared by staying back. In the end, the four of them sort of shuffled forward across the clearing towards the break in the hedge which led to the shed. *****

'Oh, I've just remembered something!' said Hardy, turning go back. 'What have you remembered?', Freddy said. 'I've forgotten', said Hardy. 'I know, you've forgotten something, what is it?' 'I can't remember', said Hardy. 'You can't remember what you've forgotten, but you need to go back for it?' 'Wow, come over here!' Wil had reached the hole in the hedge first. He was kneeling on the ground, and peering round the corner. In the usual place, the hedge. The tree. The rusty wheelbarrow. Hardy's old tricycle rusting in the corner. The shed. But the shed was not alone. The shed was not standing there, quietly, minding its own business. Looking old and forlorn. The shed had company. ***** The door, which was directly facing them, and which they had tried to put back on its hinges the previous weekend, was still propped up in the position they had left it. Sort of closed. But outside there was a large pile of the former contents. The accumulated rubbish of decades was lying in a pile to the left of the building. And the building itself, was full! Of people. Little people. Working. Wednesday 4 July 2007 The Big Idea 266 Hammering. Nailing. Drilling. And laughing. Their silhouettes were visible through the cracked windows of the door and the window in the front wall. At least four or five of them. Some kind of light. The cacophony of different sounds coming from within was loud now. A

hefty hammering, followed by some nifty nailing, some serious screwdriving, and some devilish drilling. And then, always, some light laughter. Like laughing lions. Or happy hyenas. Or joking jackals. 'Who, or what, is THAT?' whispered Hardy, who had not gone anywhere, 'and in my garden, too!' 'Let's watch for a minute', said Freddy, the four of them now crouching down and peeking through the hole in the hedge. As the variety of sounds continued, it was clear that the activity inside the shed was totally concentrated and productive. Although they could not see what was going on inside, they could make out voices occasionally during the silences, talking urgently, rapidly, but positively. After some talk, a quick laugh, then more action. Concentrated action. Banging, hammering and drilling. They watched for maybe fifteen minutes. 'What are we going to do? Whoever they are, they're doing something to our shed, and they're trespassing', said Hardy, his grip tightening around one of the pieces of wood he was carrying. 'Let's try to get a closer look', said Freddy, 'if we go round there and crawl into the hedge, we can probably get a look through the side window'. He motioned over behind and round him, indicating for them to backtrack and try to get closer, even though at the point he was suggesting, there was no gap in the hedge.

When they got round to the side, they found that they could only see anything through the thick hedge by crawling right through the base on their stomachs. Lying there, breathing heavily, now only a few metres from the side of the shed, but fully concealed, they could see the tops of the heads working away inside. And one of them was very very familiar. 'I don't believe it!' Hardy whispered in astonishment, 'what on earth is HE doing there?'