

The Big Idea – Day 2

Just then, there was a frantic rustling sound from inside the shed, and a small object shot out of the door and beneath their feet. At the same time, a distant but heavy rumble of thunder shook the ground.

‘Er...OK...perhaps we’d better wait til tomorrow’.

‘Come on, man’, said Jimi, stepping forward, ‘it’s not so bad, we can use this for light’. He produced a small torch from his guitar case. As he switched it on, it glowed briefly from the tiny filament, then went out. Jimi switched it off again, then on again. Again, the bulb glowed briefly. Then out.

‘Yes, OK, but I’m not sure’, said Freddy again, stepping back from the door and looking round again. Another rumble of thunder made him even less sure.

‘Hey was that lightning?’ he said, visibly concerned.

‘Nah, man, that was just my torch’, said Jimi, twisting the top of the torch to try to wring a bit more out of the batteries.

A huge clap of thunder, much much closer this time, made them all jump. Freddy thought he felt the ground shake under his feet.

‘Right, we’re going’, he said, turning to Jimi, half pulling him away from the doorway. Rain was starting to fall. Not light rain, and not a downpour, but those heavy summer raindrops, each one seemingly self-contained and powerful, splashing extravagantly on the grass.

‘There’s floods everywhere at the moment, we must go, have you seen the news?’ said Freddy, trying a different angle for his argument. The raindrops, still huge, fell a little faster. The group turned to leave the clearing where the shed stood.

As they turned to the exit, which was a gap in the high hedge, a vivid bright light jabbed into the ground just the other side of the gap. Freddy had never seen anything like it before. He shielded his eyes with his right hand. Looking through the gap in his fingers, he even imagined he saw a wisp or two of smoke just through the gap where the bolt had hit the ground. Or maybe had hit a tree in the next clearing. Or maybe hit someone standing there? He looked round quickly. Hardy, Jimi, and Wil were still beside him. But they were transfixed. Staring at the now empty space beyond the hedge. Which milliseconds before had been filled with light.

‘Er...man...’ said Jimi. A huge crash of thunder erupted apparently just over their heads. The eye of the storm. The centre. The epicentre. Right in the middle of it. The most dangerous part.

‘Er...man...’ said Jimi again, *‘er...that wasn’t my torch’.* It was one of the most obvious statements in history.

‘We...we...we...can’t go on. We’re....well...trapped!’ he said. For the first time, they heard Jimi sound less than totally cool.

‘If we go out there, we’ll get fried’, said Hardy, *‘there are too many trees, the lightning will get us’.* He

sounded desperate. *'There's only one thing for it! We need to shelter...r in there'.*

Minutes ago, the dark, damp, dangerous-looking shed had been the one place they didn't want to go. Now, it seemed to be their only hope. The whole group turned to look at the opening, its door lying abandoned on the ground. The doorway was dark, forbidding, like the opening to a long tunnel, with an unknown destination. They turned again to the gap in the hedge, which led to the relative safety of the big garden, and the house beyond. Warmth. Food. Drink. Maybe hot chocolate. A warm bath.

Crackkk!

Another huge bolt of lightning came to earth somewhere close and to the left of them. There was the sound of splintering wood and a creaking noise as the tree it had hit swung precariously in the wind.

Without a word, they made a beeline for the doorway, and almost jumped inside, turning around as they got in, so that they could at least benefit from the remaining light in the garden. Clouds shifted overhead. Big threatening grey clouds. Almost black. Constantly moving. The eye of the storm.

Jimi wrestled with his torch again. The barest light struggled out of it, but only the lightning really allowed the shed to reveal its secrets. And then only for a split second at a time. They huddled together, just inside the doorway.

'Well, now we're here, and we're stuck here, we might as well look...', said Jimi, as another mighty rumble of thunder interrupted him. He turned and took two or three paces into the dark.

'Aw, man!' there was a thud as his head hit something hard above, followed by a rapid fluttering and squawking sound. Two pigeons struggled out towards the faint light of the doorway. The others instinctively ducked down to let them out.

As Wil ducked down, he took a small pace towards the corner, and his foot landed in something. Something soft. Squishy. Whatever it was oozed up over his shoe, and made contact with his ankle. He reached down to brush it off, then thought better of it. He let out a quiet *oorghhh!* sound. A disgusting smell wafted up to his nostrils.

More scrabbling. Another *'aw!'* from Jimi.

'What's up?' cried Freddy into the darkness. Something else, larger this time, scrabbled its way past them and out into the garden. Freddy turned to see something shoebox-sized, black, with a long tail, racing across the clearing.

'I can't see anything!' said Jimi, as sheet lightning this time lit up the sky above, and the inside of the shed through its cracked windows.

'Ah that's better, an old mattress, a bike, aw...what was that?'

There was a thump as Jimi fell.

'Owaggh, my knee...what's this now? There's this kind of a raised bit here.'

They could hear Jimi panting in the darkness. Hardy called out.

'Are you OK?' he actually sounded concerned for his cousin.

'I'm OK, man, thanks, I just tripped. I'm coming out again. I'll just try the torch one last time'.

As he reached close to the back of the shed, Jimi's torch caught a glint of silvery light in the far corner. Lightning flashed again overhead. More distant this time. The thunder was quieter too.

'It really is dark now, but the storm is passing', said Freddy, *'I really do think we should go now, really I do'.* His tone sounded more measured, but still anxious. Wil shivered. Hardy shuddered.

'Yes, let's go!' said Hardy.

'OK, man', said Jimi, *'but you'll never guess what we've got here! This is going to be awesome!'*
