

Spring Holidays – Day 3

Wil had heard of peoples' lives flashing in front of them.

Which is exactly what happened now, as he slipped down, down, down, into the deep, dark, night.

Freddy heard the piercing scream, and time seemed to stand still. Like in a movie, the scream from Wil below them started loud then faded gradually as he slipped down towards the ground. Although the distance was only a few metres, and the time was probably less than a second, the whole incident seemed to take minutes, hours, even days.

Hardy laughed, as Freddy raced over to the edge of the platform and squinted into the darkness below.

'What, you're laughing? Where is he?'

There was a temporary silence as Freddy continued to look down. Hardy just sat back nodding conspiratorially at Michael on the deck.

Then Freddy heard laughing from below.

'Wil, you OK? What happened? Are you hurt'

'I'm fine. Don't worry, there's a net'. Wil's voice, which seconds ago had sounded as scared and as desperate as it ever had, was now calm, light, and in control. *'I wish you'd told me!'* added Wil looking up through the gloom at the dimly lit platform.

'I'll come and get you, it is a bit slippery', said Hardy, who strolled casually to the edge of the platform and then, equally casually, jumped off it, into the darkness. Freddy's heart gave another minor flutter until he remembered the nets below.

Hardy helped to push Wil from below, up from the springy net strung between the lower branches, onto the main boughs, and up onto the deck. He followed effortlessly up so that the four of them were now gathered on the platform, the torch vaguely illuminating each of their faces against the dark of the tree they were in, and the imposing shadows of the other trees around.

Wil was pleased to be up there finally, but still apprehensive about the night ahead. This was not the 'hot chocolate and a DVD' sort of sleepover he had imagined.

'Whoah! Phew! Wow!' was all he could really say.

'That was a close one. I can feel my heart going boompety-boompety-boom'. Wil put his hand to his chest and held it there firmly. It seemed to help to slow down his heartbeat.

'Boompety-boom? My heart goes thumpety-thump!' said Hardy, feeling his own chest, then crawling over to Wil, *'let's listen'.*

'You're right. It is going boompety-boom', said Hardy, apparently surprised by this.

'Well mine's going da-bah-da-bah...oosh, da-bah-da-bah...oosh...', said Freddy.

'Erm, mine's not beating at all...I don't think', said Michael, his small face wrinkling up in concern through the shadows. He clutched his hand close to his chest and felt around.

'Well, we all know you're pretty cool, but you can't be cool and heartless', said Hardy, inexplicably laughing at what he thought was a great joke. He went over and put his ear to Michael's chest.

'You're holding the wrong side! When I said 'left' I meant on your left as you look down your nose towards your chest, not left as someone else looks at you!'

'Oh, I see', said Michael, not really seeing the point.

'Pootely-poo...pootely-poo...pootely-poo!' sang Hardy as he listened to Michael's chest.

'No way!' protested Michael, *'my heart doesn't go pootely-poo'*.

'Does too, pootely-poo!' sang Hardy again.

'Come on, if we're sleeping here, we'd better get sorted out', said Freddy, changing the subject.

The tree-house had some protection from the weather, with a canvas tarpaulin stretched tautly between some of the upper branches. It also had walls on three sides, but that left one side open to the elements, and there were lots of gaps where the rain and wind could get through.

They settled down on the hard boards, cushioned slightly by the sleeping bags Hardy had brought. Arranged in a star-shape, heads to the middle, Hardy brought out the provisions he had packed.

'Scotch egg, anyone?' he said, offering round four brown round things, looking a bit like cricket balls, but vaguely egg-shaped.

'Er, no thanks', was the general reply.

'Egg sandwich? I made them myself!' he offered, unwrapping from their cling film four rather grey looking sandwiches.

'Er, no thanks', came the reply again.

'How about some cold omelette?'

'Do you have anything without eggs in it', said Freddy, sort of politely, although his stomach was making some strange churning noises.

'Oh come on!' yelled Hardy, *'it is Easter, after all!'*

'Yes', said Michael quietly, *'but that doesn't mean we need eggs in everything'*.

'Eggsactly!' said Wil, *'I b-egg you, Hardy, no more eggs!'*

'Eggxellent! Fine then!' said Hardy impatiently.

'Can't we just have some r-eggular food?' said Freddy.

'Well, I'm getting m-egga egg-xasperated!' said Michael.

'So, you won't be r-eggquiring any of this, then?' said Hardy with a superior smile, pulling out four huge Easter eggs from his bag.

'Wow! Thanks!'

They gorged themselves on Easter eggs. They talked rubbish. They listened to the wind and the rain slapping at the tree-house. They talked some more. Michael stopped talking. Freddy stopped talking. Wil carried on talking for a bit. Then silence. Then a sleepy voice from Hardy's sleeping bag.

'Just sleep, will'ya, it's Easter tomorrow!'

That's easier said than done, thought Wil. Clothes slightly damp from the walk through the undergrowth, bones slightly aching, floor slightly hard, the whistling wind, and a stomach more than slightly full of chocolate. These were not the best conditions for a good night's sleep.

But worse, far worse, was to come.

Drifting into a half sleep, only partly aware of the place and time, Wil slowly realised that all was not right. He mentally checked. Arms, OK. Legs, OK. Toes, wiggle them, OK. Face? Face?

I said, FACE?

N...N...Not OK!

Something hairy, crawling across...!
