

## **Illness Strikes - Day 6**

*'Roy of the WHAT?' said Clara.*

*'The greatest footballer who ever lived', said Michael.*

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*'Welcome again to the airwaves of Radio Springhurst, and welcome to the World Book Day Springhurst Top Ten Countdown! Brian and I are here to run through the books that YOU, the children of Springhurst, have voted your favourites over the last year. Well, Brian, the votes are in, now, shall we commence the countdown?'*

*'Yes, Ron, well...and the winner is...F...'*

*'NO! Brian, we have to go in reverse order, you can't announce the winner yet!'*

*'Reverse order, you say?'*

*'Yes, all awards are given in reverse order!'*

*'OK, I get it. Ahem, ahem... Is winner the and, well, Ron, Yes... F...'*

*'NO! Brian, not backwards, just start with number ten and work upwards'.*

*'Oh, yes, OK, maybe you'd better do it. I'll do the number one, then'.*

*'OK, Brian, good idea'.*

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*'And at number ten, we have that blonde bombshell, that force of nature, that teenage tearaway, Mr Andrewslex Rider, in Stormbreaker, by Anthony Horowitz!'*

*'Yes!'* said Alex, running his hand through his blonde hair, and smiling coolly at the others. The device on his belt gave a short beep and vibrated urgently. He looked down at the message scrolling across the screen,

*'Sorry guys, gotta go, something's come up. See you all tomorrow!'*

With that he glided out of the room, flinging his jacket casually over his shoulder as he went.

*'Where does he keep going to?'* wondered Freddy aloud.

*'And why's he always in such a hurry?'* added Clara.

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The radio crackled on.

*'At number nine, Brian, a new entry this year, unexpected this one eh Brian, not sure I know about this one...at number nine...is Kidscapism Football Stories for Children!'*

*'Yes, Ron, it's about football, and it's got stories for children. I've heard it's very good, although I haven't read it myself. Says on my card that it features a team called Lancaster Road'.*

*'YESSSS!' they all cried in unison.*

*'Well, Brian, I'll check that one out later. Let's move on to number eight. At number eight, after thirty-five years on the chart, that perennial favourite, The Hobbit, by J.R.R.Tolkein!'*

*'I'm reading that at the moment', said Michael, 'it's about a little guy called Bilbo Baggins, who lives underground and has to battle goblins and things'.*

*'Yeah, I love that bit where the dragon fights the ladybird, that's brilliant!'*, said Clara. Michael looked at her questioningly.

*'Have you actually read it? I'm halfway through and there haven't been any ladybirds so far'*

Clara looked down at the ground. Her face went a shade of deep pink.

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*'At number seven, we have...Jamie's Dinners, by Jamie Oliver!'*

*'I voted for that one!'*, said Jaz, just finishing off the last crumbs from a packet of crisps.

*'You can't read it though, can you?'*

*'That dinner lady at school did, I bet', replied Wil, 'that one who says "d'ja want some right pukka broccoli, my darlin'?"'.*

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*'And Brian, I'm very pleased to say that at number six, a personal favourite of mine, Goldilocks and the Three Bears!'*

*'I've read that one'*, said Clara quietly.

*'Well, I suppose there are some younger ones voting for these books', said Freddy dismissively.*

*'Look, it's not that I don't like reading, I just don't have much time for it. I read at school'*, said Clara, sort of hopefully.

*'Ten minutes at bedtime, that's all. Sometimes I can't stop'*, said Michael, *'the book I'm reading at the moment is a bit scary. Sometimes I go under the covers with a torch and pretend I'm somewhere deep*

*inside Bilbo's cave. It's great!*

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*'Halfway through now, and at number five, book-pickers, is the first entry from Mr Roald Dahl, Danny the Champion of the World!'*

*'Oh I love that!' said Wil, 'it's all about a guy who goes out with his Dad to catch things, and his Dad gets trapped and he has to go and rescue him, and he drives a car, all by himself...and...and...'*

*'Yes OK, it is good. Check it out', said Freddy, 'let's keep listening, I want to see who's number one'.*

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*'Number four, now, and at number four, this book has been on the charts an unbelievable one hundred and seventy years!'*

*'Surely he means seventeen years...he's read that wrong?' said Michael.*

*'Wait...' said Freddy.*

*'An incredible one hundred and seventy years, one of the most famous books of all time...at number four, is Oliver Twist, by Charles Dickens'.*

*'Oh, I know that one!' said Wil excitedly, 'you gotta pick a pocket or two!', he sang, diving onto the sofa where Jaz and Michael were sitting and trying to reach into their pockets.*

*'Oi! Leave it out!'*

*'I'm the Artful Dodger', Wil continued, 'I dodge here, I dodge there, I'll dodge anywhere!'*

*'Well be quiet, or you won't get any more gruel...' said Freddy.*

*'Food, Glorious Food!' sang Wil again. He really could get quite annoying.*

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*'At number three, for all you ghost-lovers out there, is Lemony Snicket's A series of Unfortunate Events. Can you guess who that one is by, Brian?'*

*'Er...Lemony? I mean...Snicket?'*

*'Yes Brian, that's right, well done'.*

*'That sounds good', said Clara quietly, 'I might try that one. I like unfortunate events'. She glared gloomily at the others.*

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*'We're nearly there now, Brian, at number two, we have that great work of modern literature, the*

*trillion-selling, record-breaking J.K.Rowling classic Barry Pooter and the Collosal Telephone'.*

*'I haven't read that one, Ron'*

*'No Brian, sorry, where did I put my glasses?'*

*'They're on your head, Ron'*

*'Oh, thanks Brian, yes, sorry listeners, at number two, let's get this right, Hardy Potter and the Philosophers Stone. One of the most famous books ever written. Has universal appeal. Boys love it, girls love it'.*

*'I've seen the film', said Clara.*

*'Read the book first, then see the film. If you see the film first, it spoils the book'.*

*'Nah, if you read the book first, it spoils the film', replied Clara.*

*'Look, not every book is made into a film. Books are great. Look, we've got this to take to Hardy', said Freddy, producing a copy of the Dangerous Book for Boys, 'not that he needs to be any more dangerous!'*

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*'And now, children, the moment you've all been waiting for...at number one, the winner by a mile, the favourite book of the children of Springhurst...open the envelope Brian...Brian?'*

*'Ahem, yes, the envelope, I'm sure I've got it here somewhere...'*

*'Brian is just searching his jacket pockets, listeners, are here we are...and the winner is, Brian...'*

*'And the winner is...FA Premier League Shoot-Out Folder 2006-2007!'*

*'Right, thanks, Brian. There you have it, people, the children of Springhurst have spoken! Your favourite book for World Book Day 2007 is...the Shoot-Out folder!'*

*'Yes!'*, Clara waved her Shoot-Out folder above her head. Finally.

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*'Look, we've got a match tomorrow, it's the rematch against Hags United. We'd better get ready. Here, take this'. He handed Clara a copy of George's Marvellous Medicine by Roald Dahl, 'you'll love it, you really will!'*

Clara took the book, a shy smile on her face.

*'OK, see you tomorrow!'*

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Just as they were leaving, the phone rang again. Wil went to pick it up, again. It was Hardy, again. He was still ill.

*'Can't make it tomorrow, sorry'*, he croaked into the phone.

A short story about Hardy's hospital visit, complete with crazy doctors and travels through time, will soon be available to registered users through the website. Please check back regularly here: Hardy's Hospital Horrors