

Illness Strikes - Day 3

Standing in front of us, talking to us, and giving us this flag...’, Wil held it up for emphasis, ‘my hero... Theo Walcott!’

‘I can’t believe it!’, said Hardy on Friday morning, *‘you met Theo Walcott! It’s not fair!’*

‘Yes, well, I think it’s better to play than to meet players’, said Michael quietly, gently playing keepy-uppy with an orange he had found in the fruit bowl on the table. The others were hunched over the latest news from the league.

Hardy and Michael had spent most of their half-term at the same football course.

‘You were so lucky at that dribbling game...’, Hardy said to Michael.

‘Hmm, thanks,’ said Michael in his usual quiet way, *‘it seems the more I practice, the luckier I get!’* He flicked the orange up off his knee and caught it on the back of his neck, where it stayed perched. Hardy willed it to fall.

‘Come on, you weren’t so bad’, Michael continued, *‘that save you made from Skip was amazing!’*.

‘Yes it was, wasn’t it’, replied Hardy, apparently rising in height with pride at the compliment, and then leaping instinctively to his left, and catching the orange as Michael flicked it towards him.

Jaz was deep into the latest fixture list, looking at their six remaining games.

‘Well, Hags should be easy enough, and Derby, but the others might be more difficult, especially as the final match will be against Butterfield.’

‘Urghh, hmmm, urghh!’, coughed Mr Andrews, *‘It’s on March 31st, we need to be well up for that one my friends!’*

‘Are you OK, Mr Andrews?’, asked Freddy.

‘Hurrghhh....did I ever tell you about my leg, lad? Erhersksk!... Much worse than this, just a touch of cough....atishoooo!’ Freddy pulled back slightly as Mr Andrews wheezed and spluttered.

‘Urghurgh’, said Hardy quietly, putting his hand to his mouth politely.

‘Eh-heh-heh...!’ said JoJo, even more politely, wiping her mouth with a small pink handkerchief.

‘Yes, as I was saying’, said Jaz, *‘it’s back to Hurst Rovers tomorrow, and we lost to them last time’*.

‘There are no easy games...huuogh...any more. All the teams want to beat us. They put out their best seven every week. Eheh....excuse me.’ Freddy clutched his throat as he spoke.

There was a mass outbreak of coughing in the room.

'Urghhh-eh-heh! Don't get me started...if one does it, everyone will!'

'I-hi-ih-ihighh!', coughed Clara, as if to confirm this.

'What you need is a good dose of carbolic soap and cod liver oil. Didn't cure the cough but it made you think twice about coughing again', said Mr Andrews.

Hardy coughed again, and again.

'You want some, lad? I'm sure I could find some for you somewhere'.

'No thanks', said Hardy hastily, *'I...think...I'll be OK'*

'Oh no, please no, keep away!' came a more distant voice from the room next door.

'What was that? What's up with HIM?' said Clara.

The sound was coming from next door and the sound was coming from Wil.

'Ooohhoohoo, NO!' said the voice, then, *'ahhahah...uh huh uhuh...eee!'*

Wil was apparently laughing uncontrollably, then...*'that'll do, you know its good for you'*.

There was a dramatic oughing from next door. There was a dramatic coughing from Hardy.

'It's called called Mick's chest rub. She always uses it on us. Always makes you laugh, even if you're really ill. Which I'm not', Freddy added quickly, stifling a cough.

Wil staggered into the room, still half laughing and half crying from his mother's treatment, closely followed by his Mum, who wafted the tub of Mick's around the room at the assembled group of coughers and splutterers.

'Are you surethat you can play football tomorrow morning? The weather forecast is for a cold start. I don't think you're fit for it'.

'We're fine, Mum', Freddy said, swallowing hard. There was a light cough from someone.

'They'll be OK, bit of urghhurghhurghwoosh...fresh air will be good for them!', wheezed Mr Andrews, unhelpfully.

'Well, if you're sure...', added Wil and Freddy's Mum.

'Cool...', said Michael.

'Uhuh!', coughed Freddy in agreement.

'Ehheh!', spluttered Wil.

'Thi-ih!', said JoJo delicately.

'Aha...agh...agh...yes!', said Clara.

'Ergh..hurgh...ighighigh...ogogogog...pwlll...urgghhh...pwf..pwf...ishis...ooooooooo!', said Hardy, falling over.

He really did seem bad.
