

## Cold, Wet, and Happy – Day 5

*'It's a chicken', said Wil.*

*'It's not normal', said Freddy*

*'Atishoo!' said the chicken.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*'Don't even get close to them!'* shouted Jaz triumphantly as he scanned through the papers on the huge desk in front of him.

*'It's OK, we didn't, we just turned and ran!'* said Wil, who had been quite upset at the thought that a poor chicken with a runny beak could be in such danger.

*'It's only one type which is dangerous, and they say here that it isn't in this part of the country, at least not yet',* replied Jaz, who had turned his many interests to the subject of avian influenza, and was now considered (at least by his friends) to be something of an expert.

*'Well, I'm not taking any chances',* said Hardy.

*'Yeah, that's obvious',* replied Jaz dismissively, looking up briefly at Hardy whose face was obscured almost completely by a large red handkerchief tied round his head, covering mouth, nose, and one eye. He looked like he was auditioning for a minor part in *Pirates of the Caribbean 3*.

*'You simply cannot catch anything, just look out for any sick or dead birds, and report them',* Jaz added importantly.

\*\*\*\*\*

*'Here you are boys! Just a little something to keep you going!'*

As usual, Jaz's grandma had spent the afternoon in the kitchen, preparing a 'little something' for the visitors. A little something in this case was a vast array of cakes and biscuits.

*'Thank you',* said Wil quietly,

*'Thanks a lot',* said Freddy,

*'Cheers Mrs Chetty',* said Hardy.

Although it was only four-thirty in the afternoon, they tucked into the food with relish, as if they had not eaten for days. Hardy was usually the first to finish, but this afternoon, thanks to his elaborate precautions against bird flu, he was uncharacteristically slow.

He tried first to lift up the mask with one hand and slip the food into his mouth with the other, but had ended up not being able to see his mouth, and had crammed a cream cake against his chin.

His second attempt involved him lifting the mask up with one hand, and then very quickly trying to pick

up the cake and fit it into his mouth before the mask fell back to cover it. This attempt ended up with a mouthful of mask, and not very much cake. He couldn't do it quickly enough.

The third time, he thought that he would lift the mask higher up his face before eating. This left his mouth free of mask. But it covered his eyes. Unable to see where the low table containing the food was, he staggered straight into it, sending the tray of food flying across to Wil (who caught most of it), and himself flying across to Freddy (who caught most of him).

Finally, the solution. He adjusted the mask back into the optimum flu-preventing position, covering nose and mouth, picked up a cake and went over to the bookcase in the corner of the room. By lifting the front of the mask, resting it on a shelf and placing a book on it, it stayed up long enough for him to feed the food into his open mouth.

He also ended up with more food, because the others couldn't stop laughing long enough to eat anything themselves.

\*\*\*\*\*

Later on Wednesday, they all gathered round Wil as he again spread out the paper he had been carrying round for the last week. Stepping forward, still pirate-like, Hardy brandished a pen and was ready to add his own touches to the paper.

*'Hey! Stop that! This is our planning sheet'*, Wil said once again, *'we're planning what to do over half-term!'* Wil looked over to his brother for support.

*'Yeh, leave it out H, we're working out what to do each day!'*, said Freddy calmly.

*'Well, you can leave me out of it, I'll be fine, thanks'*, said Hardy, although his tone of voice was almost willing them to include him in their plans.

Wil knelt down on the floor over the paper. He had drawn nine long vertical lines to represent the nine days of half-term. He had also drawn some horizontal lines across the paper and was beginning to fill in the names of their friends, so that each box in the grid would represent what each person would be doing on each day of the half-term holiday.

Freddy got down with him, holding a pen, and propped himself up on one elbow – his best position for thinking. Propped up on one elbow, pen in hand, he looked like one of the great Greek philosophers they had seen when they had been looking up Athens. All refined and intelligent (*or so he thought, anyway*).

It was hard to concentrate. Jaz's grandma was in the kitchen and although the door was closed, the smells wafting out into the sitting room were so intense, so spicy, that Freddy was mentally transported off to exotic far-away places. Jaz's grandma used loads of herbs and spices in her cooking, and they always made the food taste utterly fantastic.

As he tried to stop his stomach daydreaming, Freddy noticed another smell enter the room. Not altogether unfamiliar, but at the same time also exotic and elegant.

Jaz's Mum had returned!

Now Jaz's Mum was something else! Talk about cool! And she always smelled amazing! She strolled gracefully over to where the boys were hunched over their paper.

*'Good evening Mrs Chetty!'* Freddy said respectfully, *'where have you been this time?'*

Jaz's Mum was always travelling. Often to the USA, and often to appear on some TV show or another.

*'My dear, I've had a few days in LA. How are you boys?'* She stooped down and gave Wil and Freddy a kiss on each cheek, rendering both of them temporarily speechless.

*'We're fine. We're doing a plan for half-term'.*

*'Excellent idea, now let me see...Ah yes! This is the day you need to think about!'*

She stretched an elegant finger over to the date Wil had marked.

14th February.

Valentines Day!

*Ooo-er!*

\*\*\*\*\*