

## New Year Blues – Day 3

*'Good luck against the M&Ms at the weekend!'*

*'The M&Ms? Eh?'*

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On Friday, up on the top floor, they thought about what Hardy's Dad had said to them.

The house was three stories high, and the top floor almost belonged to Wil and Freddy. Although it was high in the roof space, there was loads of room for them to put out their stuff, and most importantly to leave it lying about, without disturbing the rest of the house. They had to tiptoe over most of it to find spaces to put their feet.

There were two rooms up there, one mostly occupied by Wil's train set, and the other more a dumping ground for all the old toys and games that they had used once, then discarded.

A jigsaw with three missing pieces.

A brilliant radio-controlled Jeep, but with no charger.

Three footballs, but with no air in them.

Actually, the part of the floor they liked best was the landing. At the top of the second staircase, the landing was where they spent most of their spare time. It had two desks, where they did their homework. Both desks were currently covered in football cards. Homework could wait. Also on the landing was a desk with their beloved computer, surrounded by cables, paper, a small rodent, and a keyboard.

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There was a beep from the computer.

Actually, not a beep, more a kind of burp. Jaz had come round the day before and set the alert sound to what he called *'something more interesting'*, so that the computer now seemed to talk to them.

*'Burp!'* it went again.

*'Email...'* said Wil as he pushed the mouse to one side to remove the annoying screen saver that Jaz had also installed. Although it saved their screen, the endless pictures of stars and planets rushing towards them had given Freddy a headache. But without Jaz they didn't know how to stop it.

*'Look'*, said Wil brightly as the screen lit up, *'seven emails!'*

*'Seven emails? We've never had more than one email in one day before...who are they from?'*

*'This one's from jaz at kidzunited dot com'*, he read slowly,

*Hi Boys! How d'ya like the new screensaver? Cool isn't it? I did some research on M&Ms. Couldn't*

*find anything in my books. I Googled it, but all I came up with was pages and pages about the sweets. Did you know that the world record for eating a packet of M&Ms using only your feet is 32 seconds? Are you sure he said M&Ms? There's no team in the league with that name. Seeya later. Jaz*

Wil turned back to the screen.

*'Hey, these are all from the same person...' he said as he scanned the next six emails.*

Over the holidays, he had just finished reading the fantastic *Spy Dog* and his reading had got quicker and more accurate. But even with all this practice, he had trouble with the first line of the second message.

*'This one is from harold at azaleazaleazaleazaleaoops dot com! So are all the others!'*

*'Mr Andrews? On email? It can't be!'*, Freddy looked over Wil's shoulder at the string of messages, *'well, go on, open them!'*

Not one of the messages had anything to indicate what they were about, so Wil had to click on each one of them in turn to find out what Mr Andrews wanted to say.

*'The first one is empty!'*, Wil looked at the blank message in front of him, tried to scroll down the message to see what was written, but there was nothing.

*'Here let me have a look,'* said his older brother, *'no, you're right, there's nothing there'.*

The second email from Mr Andrews was also empty.

The third one had the single word *'oops'* and a row of dots.

The fourth email actually had some words in it.

*Testing, testing, one, two, three*

*Can you hear me?*

*Can you hear me?*

*Ouch, my leg*

Finally, by the fifth message, Mr Andrews had got the hang of email. His message said,

*freeman freeman stop i'm sending you an email stop this is it stop just got an email from the league stop winners get tickets for champions league final in athens stop bye stop ouch stop*

*'Wow! The Champions League final! How cool would that be?'*, said Freddy quietly, almost to himself, although his dreams of winning still lay shattered by the news of Michael's withdrawal.

*'Wow! Athens! How cool would that be?'*, yelled Wil, who had just finished doing a topic on the Greeks.

*'What's the last one about?'*

Wil clicked twice on the final email in the list. Again, Mr Andrews's shaky use of email was evident, but this time he had managed to forward a message that he had received from someone else. The email said,

*dear coach*

*we're playing you on Saturday.*

*would you mind a change of time for the game?*

*we normally play at seven o'clock*

*here is a map of our home ground*

*see you there, and may the best team win!*

*MM*

'So it's not M&Ms, it's MM...', Freddy said after reading the note, 'let's have a look at that map'.

Freddy pressed *print* on the computer, and they studied the map which emerged slowly from the printer. Freddy turned to his brother and asked curiously,

*'A football ground...in the middle of a forest? Eh?*

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