

Let the Games Begin – Day 6

On Friday, Freddy and Wil were alone in the big, cold house, a roaring fire lighting up, and warming up, the sitting room. Their job was to decorate the Christmas tree (which they had done), and to wrap the presents for all their friends. Their Mum had organised a party for that evening, and all the friends would be there.

They went upstairs and prepared themselves for the party. Party clothes. Nice ironed white shirts. Pressed trousers. Cute little bow ties.

Pah!

No way! If they were going to have a party, they were going to look the part.

Freddy put on his cleanest, reddest Liverpool shirt, and a pair of really cool jeans. Slightly baggy, saggy jeans. He looked at himself in the mirror and adjusted the front of his very short hair slightly. He danced briefly in front of the mirror to an imaginary song in his head. The song was Ray singing ‘*You’ll Never Walk Alone*’ on the X-Factor semi-final. *One day that could be me...* he thought to himself.

Wil had tried to dress up smartly, but he had dressed very quickly, with the result that his shirt was hanging out of his trousers, his bow tie was hanging loosely round his neck, and one of his socks was hanging on the curtain-rail - where he had thrown it in the excitement. He couldn’t reach it, so he hopped along the cold wooden floor on his one good foot. The lack of a sock was not going to stop him enjoying a party!

They ran downstairs to start packing up the presents.

‘*Where’s Clara’s?*’ said Freddy.

‘*Dunno*’, said Wil, emerging from a large roll of wrapping paper, then, ‘*Ah, here it is! I chose it!*’

Wil handed the package to Freddy.

‘*This could be trouble, Bro*’, he said.

‘*I know! But it will be fun too!*’.

The package, wrapped in cellophane, contained a dressing-up costume. The package was pink. On the front it said,

Every little girl’s dream – dance like the Sugar Plum Fairy!

For Clara? I don’t think so! They wrapped it up quickly, and Freddy wrote a little note saying he hoped she would like it.

Hardy, a boy who had almost everything, was more difficult to choose for. His Mum and Dad never went to work, because one day, about two years ago, they had bought a lottery ticket and won a large amount of money. These days, they always seemed to be on holiday. But they rarely took Hardy with them. This year he was going to spend Christmas with Wil and Freddy, whilst his parents were off

skiing. Quite sad really, but they loved having him around, and he loved being there.

But what to buy for a boy who had everything? Wil had had a good idea.

'Let's not buy him anything at all. Let's make something for him'.

So they had spent the last week making football cards for him, featuring all his favourite people. They had done them on shiny cardboard which they had cut out, and then coloured them in yellow – just like the real thing. They had done a complete team, including all the Lancaster Road players (they had made Hardy himself a five-star shiny, match winner, best of the best player), and some of the other people they knew. This included Mr Andrews (pictured wearing his 1950s football kit), two of the Hags United girls, and even their Auntie Annie. Eighteen cards in all – the full set.

They wrote on the card,

'To Hardy. The best friend we could possibly have. Have a great Christmas!'

Wil then wrote a little poem on the card. *(But it was much too rude to repeat here).*

They continued wrapping the presents, which included a brand new, silver, World Cup football for Michael, and a dictionary (so that he could look up the meanings of new words) plus a thesaurus (so that he could find words with similar meanings) for Jaz. For Mr Andrews, they had purchased a warm-looking flat cap to cover up his bald little head. The card to Mr Andrews read,

Dear Mr Andrews, thank you for helping us with the team. We're gonna be the greatest! And you will be the Jurgen Klopp of Lancaster Road! Happy Christmas!

They had originally written *you will be the Chris Wilder of Lancaster Road*, but events had sadly overtaken them, so they changed it.

For Alex, they had wanted to buy a spy kit.

'Yeh, but he's got most of this stuff already', Freddy had said, remembering the collection of gadgets and gizmos they had seen in Alex's house.

'I wonder why?' Wil added, thoughtfully.

Alex was not going to be at the party. *'Got to go away for a few days'*, he had said.

'I wonder why?' Wil had said, quizzically.

They went upstairs to finish getting ready. When they came down again, a new package had been put under the tree. About thirty centimeters square, it was elegantly wrapped in luxurious golden paper. Freddy read the label on the outside.

To my darling Freddy-ickles, good luck next year, with all my love, Auntie Annie.

Freddy had his own problems with nicknames, but Auntie Annie was OK – she was madly eccentric, but

they loved the strange things she did, and she was always sending them letters and little packages.

From the inside of the box, they could hear a faint ticking sound. On the outside of the box, on top of the gold paper, was a label. On the label was written, in his Auntie's extravagant handwriting:

Handle with care – magic boots inside!

See you next year!

*Oh OK, then, here's the poem, if you insist...

Hardy, Hardy, you're so cool,

Have a super duper Yule,

You'll be always, in my heart

*And brussels sprouts, they make you...la la-la la-la!**

(*Smart...of course)