

## Getting the Team Together...Day 8 with JoJo

Meanwhile, Wil and JoJo were out shopping. Jaz was playing a game. Hardy was sleeping. Michael was practicing. Alex was in hiding. Clara was just...well, just being Clara.

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*'Non, non, non! Absolument Non! Je refuse!'*

JoJo put her hand on her hip and turned her head to one side, with her big eyes still staring dolefully at Wil. He put back the blue and white striped shirt he had picked up from the shelf.

*'What about this one?'*

*'Are you crazy? Ze greens just don't go wiz ze grass. We must 'ave somesing wiz style, mon ami! This team will be ze best looking in ze championnat!'*

Wil tried again,

*'But, does it really matter what we look like? We're just going out for a couple of games of football, after all'.*

*'Ah Zut Alors Wil! What are you talking about?'*

*'Well, I just thought that...'*

*'Shurt urp, Wil! A team plays with panache, with pizzazz, with a certain 'je ne sais quoi'!*

*'I don't know what you are talking about'.*

*'I said, 'je ne sais quoi'. It means a certain somesing. A certain élan, a certain flair for ze beautiful game!'*

*'I still don't get it'.*

*'Let me explain mon petit ami. If we, ze playeurs of ze team, feel we are the best, zen we will be ze best. We 'ave to believe in ourselves, we 'ave to aspire to be ze greatest in ze world!'*

*'Oh, come on, JoJo, it's only the Springhurst village league or...'*

*'NON! Never! You must never sink like zat. Zis is the biggest sing in our young lives. To be or not to be, zat is ze question. We must look ze part! We march on our stomachs!'*

Wil laughed, and put his arm around her shoulder.

*'You're crazy, you are!'*

*'You murst understand, Wil, I sink, zerefore I am!'*

Wil thought for a moment about what she had said. Then he stopped thinking. Couldn't make head nor

tail of it. He picked up another kit from the shelf.

*'You see, you are learning! Zis one is murch better! Ze blues and ze reds carry a more profound messarge! Put zis one to one side.'*

Although she was horribly bossy and strange, Wil really liked being with JoJo. Anything could happen, and often it did. Her temper was legendary.

*'Eadbands! We murst 'ave 'eadbands!, she said suddenly, 'and wristbands! Find 'zem Wil!'*

Wil went off to look for headbands and wristbands, whilst JoJo argued with one of the shop assistants about the best colour socks and shorts to match the blue and yellow shirts. Finally they emerged from the shop with a complete kit, and set off back to Wil's house, where Freddy and the others were waiting.

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A few minutes later, Clara and JoJo, having left the room, returned wearing the kit.

Clara burst into the room, shirt hanging over her shorts, one sock down, one sock up.

*'Cool!'*, said Hardy.

A moment later, JoJo.

She had put her hair up in a kind of scrunched up way. Her shirt was immaculately ironed. It was tucked neatly into her shorts, and her socks were perfectly symmetrical around her knees. She wore a single wristband, and, at a slight angle, the headband across her forehead. She carried a bright white football under one arm, smiled nervously, and almost skipped to the centre of the room.

*'She's gonna be trouble!'*, muttered Hardy in Freddy's ear.

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They completed their last training session before the first game. Sitting on the ground with the team arranged around him, Mr Andrews was pacing up and down, giving them a final talking to.

*'Well, lads, this is it...'*, he started.

*'Hu..hmmm...?'*, Clara cleared her throat extravagantly.

*'Ahem, sorry, lads... and lasses...'*, he corrected himself.

*'Lads, and Lasses, we are gathered here to prepare for the biggest game of your young lives. I remember, back in '55, was it? Taking the field against the mighty Arsenal, or was it Chelsea? Anyway, fantastic team they had at that time. No-one gave us a hope of winning the game. And we didn't win it. Lost eight-nil! I got injured. Damn leg broken in two places. But did I cry? Did I roll around on the ground, screaming like a baby? Well, yes I did, actually. But anyway, I got up and carried on, lifting my useless leg by hand whenever I had to go anywhere. In fact I scored. Swung the leg round at the ball, connected, ball flying into the top corner. Goalkeeper dives one way, then the other, ball just flies past his outstretched fingers and almost bursts the net. Goalkeeper gets up and*

*starts yelling at me. Oops, wrong end! Anyway, lads and lasses, this is your moment, once more unto the breach dear friends, you must fight them on the beaches, you must...you must...'*

Mr Andrews looked to the skies for more inspiration.

They all looked at each other in consternation.

*'It's Wanderers first up next week. I've watched them in training. Only got one player to worry about. A kid called Skip. Australian I think. You can do it!'*

With that, he stood up, shook each of them by the hand, and walked towards the setting sun. Silhouetted against the low light, he looked like a great warrior heading off into battle. Apart from the limp.

Jaz spoke next.

*'I don't get it. What was he talking about?'*

*'Don't worry', said Freddy, 'I think he means we should just go out and enjoy it, and that we're actually quite a good team. But we need a name for the team. Any ideas?'*

They all looked at Hardy, whose eyes were tight shut, his head pointing upwards in deep concentration. There was silence.

*'Well, come on then...!'*, said Wil impatiently.

*'Don't disturb me, I'm thinking'*, Hardy replied from behind his eyelids.

Silence.

More silence.

Then a little *'ooh!'* from Hardy, his finger raised in expectation.

Then a little *'no!'* from Hardy, as he forgot what he had thought of.

Then a big *'I've had enough of this!'* from Clara.

Freddy intervened.

*'We need to think up a name for our team, not just say words at random. Football teams are usually called something like 'stars' or 'athletic' or 'town' or 'united'. And we are a junior team, of children'.*

*'Springhurst Town!'* yelled Hardy triumphantly.

*'How about Springhurst United?'* said Jaz quietly, *'or Springhurst Athletic?'*

*'Maybe we need something like 'Springhurst Juniors', something that shows we are young?'*, said Wil.

*'The Springhurst Children?'*

*'NO WAY! That sounds like 'The Railway Children', YUK!'*, said Clara.

*'Ze United Children?'* came a soft, French voice, and then, *'If ze kids are united, zey will nev-air be deevided'*.

*'That's it! We've got it. Stand up everyone! Now, put your hands together!'*

They formed a little huddle in the middle of the pitch. Freddy drew them closer to him. They threw their hands in the air, and Freddy announced the name of the team.

*'We are...(duh, duh, duuuuughhh!)...Lancaster Road!'*

He went over to Mr Andrews's flipchart at the side of the pitch, flipped over Mr Andrews's attempt to draw a picture of a football pitch, and wrote, in large green letters,

*'Lancaster Road!'*

His spelling was still a bit shaky, but Lancaster Road it was!

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*'Lancaster Road it is then. See you next week!'*.

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