

### Getting the Team Together...Day 3

The next morning, Freddy and Wil were back at the same table, now with four names on their list. Freddy, Hardy and Wil, plus Jaz. But that was it.

There was a clatter at the front door as the post dropped through. Wil sauntered over to the door to pick it up. In his hand the usual collection of glossy leaflets and junk mail. He flicked idly at each one before discarding it. The last one caught his eye as it flopped into the bin. A picture of Phil Foden slotting the ball into the net against Dortmund, with the words *'Win, win, win'* above his head.

*'We could do this,'* exclaimed Wil, *'look!'*

Freddy glanced over at the bright paper in his friend's hand. Just stuck through their door. For no reason.

*'Good idea,'* said Freddy, *'if we count up how many doors there are in the street, we could make some advertisements and put them through the doors. Great idea, let's do it. Right, you go and count the doors'*

*'No way, you count them'*

*'Ah come on, it was your idea...'*

After some discussion they decided that they would both go out onto the street to decide where they should post their leaflets. Freddy took his pad and pen with him. Wil was going to do the counting. They started at number three, right at the bottom of the street, close to the bus stop. There were around twenty houses on each side of the street.

A dog barked. Loudly. Viciously. From the hallway of number three.

*'Right – not that one. I'm not posting anything there'*. Wil moved on up the street, as Freddy crossed number three off his list.

They counted off a dozen or so houses, excluding number thirteen where the fearsome Mrs Bucket lived, and number nine which was empty, boarded up, and scary. When they got to number nineteen, a familiar voice stopped them.

*'And what do you think you're doing, young man?'*

The voice came from Mr Andrews, whose house it was impossible to pass, day or night, without getting noticed. Mr Andrews had fought in the war, and walked with a terrible limp. His explanation of why, was always different.

*'Now, lad, did I ever tell you about the time when this piece of shrapnel got me in the leg...'*

*'Now lad, you remember how I got this – stung by a scorpion in the deserts of North Africa...'*

*'Ah, lad, of course I'm still suffering from the time that bomb blew up under my chair...'*

But it was unwise to pass Mr Andrews without greeting him, as he was prone to shouting insults down

the street after you if he felt he had been ignored.

*'Good morning, Mr Andrews!'*, shouted Freddy in greeting. Mr Andrews was also rather deaf.

*'Ah, good morning, lads, what are you up to this morning, then?'* He struggled over to see what they were doing.

*'We're going to post some leaflets'*, Wil said.

*'Roast some peanuts? That's a damn funny thing to be doing in the street. In my day if you started roasting peanuts in the street you'd get in a lot of trouble for it, I don't know, the young people these days!'*

He almost always, especially if he misheard something, finished his sentence with the words *'young people these days'*.

*'No, Mr Andrews?, we are forming a soccer team'*

*'Topped off with clotted cream? Are you mad, peanuts and clotted cream, that's a damn funny combination. I bet that Heston Blumenthal is behind this. I don't know, the young people these days!'*

This went on for some time, before they managed to get Mr Andrews to figure out what they were doing. Once he was on the right wavelength, there was no stopping him.

*'I remember back in '53, I think it was, or was it '54, anyway, I remember it well, Stanley Matthews, ah yes, the Wizard of the Dribble, against Wales, I think it was, or was it Scotland? I remember it well, a hundred thousand people in the ground that day, every single one of them cheering for Sir Stanley, or was it Sir Alf? I remember it well, I was just a young lad then, of course, no more than twelve years old, or was it fourteen? I remember it well...'*

Again, this went on for some time, until finally Mr Andrews screamed in agony, clasped his leg, and said,

*'Ah lad, don't know if I ever told you about my leg. Fell out of a plane over Nyasaland. Agony it was. Never been the same since. Football eh – talk to my grand-daughter Clara. She'd be good.'*

Finally, Mr Andrews may have said something sensible. Freddy jotted the name and house number down on his pad, and they moved on, anxious to avoid further discussion.

When they reached the top of the road, near the park, they had a total of thirty-four house numbers on the pad, having excluded also number thirty, which had been demolished when Mr Andrews had called the AA out to fix his car, and had misheard the instructions from the repair man who had said *'you'll just have to wait'*.

Mr Andrews had heard it as *'you must accelerate'*, and the car had lurched forward, through the front garden of number thirty, and ended up in the sitting room.

Freddy and Wil had just turned to go back down the road when Wil yelled out,

*'Ow!, what was that!'*, and clasped the back of his leg. Before he could say any more, Freddy received a

stinging blow to the thigh.

They looked down and saw the two small stones which had hit them, then turned to the direction from which the missiles had come.

Sitting on the grass, a small pile of pebbles beside her, a girl. Blonde hair. Smiling.

*Clara.*

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