

Getting the Team Together...Day 2

They sat there in silence for a few minutes. Wil scratched his nose. Freddy scratched his head. Hardy scratched his foot. They all had different ways of thinking. Freddy scribbled urgently on the paper in front of him. Wil scratched his nose again, looking thoughtful. Hardy scratched – oh well, don't worry, they all carried on thinking. After five minutes, Hardy spoke.

'Oh I can't stand this, my head's aching. Just think of someone will'ya!'

He got up from the table and went over to the window, staring out onto the houses opposite. Dusk was falling, and the streets were silent.

The houses were close together and similar, and most of them were three stories tall. In one of the top floor windows a few doors down the street, a light was shining. Silhouetted in the light was a small figure hunched over a table. A ghostly light was playing on his face from a screen in front of him. The flickering screen made his face light up alternately blue and red.

'Hey, look over here!'

Freddy and Wil were relieved that the silence was broken, and ran to the window.

'OK – so someone is playing a game, so what?', said Freddy.

'It's...um... Jaz', said Hardy.

'Jazz?'

'No, Jaz'

'Who's Jaz then?'

'You know, that crazy kid, the one who can do numbers in his head'.

'I can do numbers in my head', chimed Wil enthusiastically.

'You can do two plus two...'

'No...I remember Jaz', added Freddy, thinking now, *'he is the guy who is always doing those puzzles – crosswords, number games, Sudoku...'*

'OK, but he also has that football game, and he is BRILLIANT at it. No-one can beat him.'

Freddy scribbled Jaz's name onto the pad. They all sat down again. They all scratched again. Silence. More silence. Hardy sneezed. Freddy coughed. Wil farted. They all laughed.

Still only four names, though. Freddy broke the silence again.

'Let's go and talk to Jaz, then. Maybe he knows someone'.

So they set off to interview their first prospective player.

They crossed the street and walked down the two doors to Jaz's house. There was a light in a downstairs room, and the strange blue and red flashes still coming from the room on the top floor. The three of them entered the front yard together. Hardy pushed through and knocked on the door.

Almost instantly the door opened. So much so that Hardy recoiled, leaving Freddy as the spokesman.

'Hello boys, I've been expecting you...'

The voice came from the smallest, oldest woman they had ever seen. Apart from the suddenness with which she came to the door and greeted them, they were shocked by the fact that she was not much taller than they were. She was wearing a long green sari.

'Come in, come in, Jaz is waiting for you upstairs. I'll make you a nice cup of tea. Just go up'

None of them had spoken a word. They made their way upstairs as instructed, onto a small landing. A smaller set of stairs led to the second floor. They began to climb. As they got closer, they could hear loud noises coming from the room at the top of the stairs. As they reached the door at the top, which was shut, the noise was loud enough for them to have to shout to make themselves heard.

'You knock, then', yelled Hardy, to no-one in particular.

Freddy approached the door. Through the crack at the foot of the door they could see the same red and blue lights they had seen from across the street. Freddy knocked hard on the door. The noise stopped instantaneously and the door opened.

Jaz was still sitting facing away from them, a huge screen inches from his face. He continued playing FIFA21 which was right in front of him. Freddy stepped up over the doorway, and looked around for whoever had opened the door. There was no-one else in the room.

The room was dominated by the huge screen on one wall. All around, hung from the ceiling, were thick heavy drapes and cloths, which had the effect of lowering the ceiling, and of making the room very dark. Apart from the screen, radiating its blues and greens and reflecting them sinisterly off the black walls, a small bed and a wardrobe stood in one corner. Cables, keyboards, and clutter all around.

'Foot pedal' shouted Jaz over the noise, still not turning round. He pointed to a device on the floor, connected to his computer, which evidently operated the door.

'Yeeaaaah!' he yelled, as a goal went in. All went quiet. He turned round.

Sitting down, Jaz was dwarfed by the screen, the chair he was sitting in, the computing equipment in front and to the side of him. He looked like he had been transported to a world where everything was oversized, and he was normal. He smiled at the trio standing in front of him, squinting at them through his glasses.

Freddy didn't know what to say. Looking at the sight in front of him, he wasn't sure that the mysterious and other-worldly Jaz would be quite right for the team. Would he fit in? Could he play?

Just then Jaz turned back to his desk, picked up a couple of papers lying there, screwed them up into a

ball, spun his chair round, threw the ball into the air, stuck his foot out, caught the ball on his foot, then volleyed the paper into a wastebasket positioned in the corner of the room. The ball of paper looped high in the air, and fell directly in the centre of the basket without touching the sides. The trio looked at the basket, then looked back at Jaz.

'You like football?'

'Yup!'

'You want to play in a team?'

'Yup – you gotta team?'

'Yup – you're in!'

And so Jaz joined the team.

As they left, Freddy checked the four names now on his list. Freddy, Hardy, Wil, and now Jaz. But that was it. Freddy looked at Hardy who looked at Wil who looked at Freddy. Who looked back at Hardy. Who looked at himself. They all looked at the floor.

'Actually, I've got an idea...', someone said.
