

## Getting the Team Together...Day 1

'*There's one now!*', said Wil as they peered over the window sill. He shuddered a bit in the cold of the big house.

'*It's OK, he's gone past*', replied Freddy calmly.

'*No! He's turning back again..!*'. They ducked down low, just so they couldn't be seen.

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They didn't like teenagers. Not one bit. They were a bit scared of them actually.

The way they peered out from behind their hoods.

The way their pants peered out over the tops of their trousers.

The way their trousers dragged along the ground when they moved.

The way they grunted when they tried to speak.

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'*Oi!*', it grunted. They'd been spotted. They both stood up slowly. Freddy was relieved that he recognised the hooded figure from up at the park.

'*Something for you in there!*', he yelled. Still sitting on his bike, the teenager flung something from the street towards the house. They ducked down again instinctively. There was a thud. The bike groaned under the weight as it made its way off up the steep hill.

They both ran to the door to collect the package. Wil just beat Freddy to the door.

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Well, nothing much else had happened that quiet autumn day. Wil had come over. The postman had come with another parcel from mad Auntie Annie. They'd played games with the raindrops on the window.

'*I've got it! I've got it!*', Wil picked up the rolled up paper from the doorstep.

Freddy let him take it. *As usual, let him have it, he can't read it anyway*, he thought to himself as they perched back up at the big oak table in the dining room.

There was silence as Wil, his curly hair just peeking out over the top of the paper, scanned down the back page. Underneath a story about Reading's 1-1 draw with Cardiff, there was a small advertisement.

Wil had only just learned to read, and the newspaper was mostly too difficult for him. His favourite words that he could spot easily were '*Wil*' (his name), '*Springhurst*' (the town they lived in), and '*football*' (the game he spent all his spare time playing). So when he saw a small advertisement that read '*Springhurst will form football league*' (a single sentence containing all his three favourite words),

he was both pleased with himself, and interested to read on. Freddy was not impressed.

*'I don't know why you bother with that, you can't read it anyway'*

*'Look!'* Wil's voice was firm. Freddy went over to him.

*'Springhurst will form football league'*. Freddy read out loud and confident, although he pronounced the last word as 'lee-gew'.

*'What's a lee-gew?'* said Wil.

Freddy read on, slowly.

*'The children of Springhurst will soon have a chance to party kippate in a new dome stick soccer lee-gew. Appley cations are invited from seven-a-side teams in the are-rear.'*

*'What's a dome stick? What are appley cations in the are-rear?'*

*'OK, OK'* said Freddy (whose reading, although good, had some way to go), *'Let's try again'*.

They puzzled through the announcement together and worked out what it meant.

*'Let's do it, let's do it!'* Wil jumped up out of the chair, and for the first time that day a broad smile shone across his small, bright face. *'We can play football, we can play!'*

*'We need a team'*, said Freddy deliberately.

*'A team, a team, OK, how many?'*

*'It says seven a side. We need five more players'*.

*'Five more, five more...we can do it, we know five people, let's do it, let's do it!'*

*'We need five footballers, five people who can play football...'*

Freddy also smiled now, thinking ahead to the glory of winning the first ever Springhurst league. Holding the cup high in his hands. The cheers of the crowds. He would be captain...

*'JoJo!'* His daydreaming was stopped by Wil's shout of delight.

*'JoJo...for what?'*

JoJo was Wil's friend. Freddy had very mixed feelings about her. She was different, certainly, and was funny (well, she talked funny), but he always had some doubts about her as a friend. Or at least as a *mate*. And as a footballer – ugh!

Wil had no such reservations. To him, JoJo was a hero – exotic, exciting, hilariously funny, and similar to him in many ways. She had come to stay with Wil's family during the summer, and was now returning for a full year in their school. She normally lived in France.

Freddy tried to calm down the conversation.

*'Look, we need to think about this. If we put a team together, we need to decide who should play so we need to find people who can play football, not just the first name that comes to mind'.*

Wil looked a bit sad.

*'Don't worry, let's write it down'.*

Wil practiced a few imaginary kicks in the air, as Freddy went off to get some paper and a pen. The imaginary ball flew into the imaginary net for the imaginary winning goal.

They sat down at the table. Freddy wrote down names in his spidery handwriting.

*Freddy...*

*Wil...*

There was a very loud knock at the door. They looked at each other, so involved in the team selection that neither of them really wanted to get the door. Before they had a chance to move, there was another knock, then another. Very persistent knocking.

There was only one person they knew who would knock on a door like that. Hardy. The loudest and noisiest person they knew. Wil went to the door.

*'Guess what, you'll never guess, never..',* Hardy talked quickly and loudly, pushing past Wil into the room.

*'What's up?'*, said Freddy, coolly.

Hardy rambled on for a few minutes about something or other, with the other two only half listening as they looked over their short shortlist of possible players. Hardy looked over Freddy's shoulder.

*'What's that, then?'* he asked, more deliberately this time.

*'We're forming a team'.*

*'OK, I'll do it, I love teams! What sort of team?'*

*'A football team'*

*'Great! I'll be goalkeeper!'* said Hardy. He flung himself across the room saving an imaginary goal. Wil ran over to score from the imaginary rebound. Freddy spoke,

*'C'mon, guys, we need to get a team together. A football team. We have the three of us. Who else?'*

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Find out tomorrow...