

## Chapter 20

*As one of them was finally making a spirited attempt at escape by standing on top of the buggy and trying to use the zimmer as a kind of climbing frame, the shutters on the stockroom door clattered open, and a shaft of light fell upon them. It was 7.00 a.m.*

\*\*\*\*\*

‘You’ve just helped to solve a long-running mystery, kids’, said the store manager as the three old ladies were released from their petfood prison into the custody of three burly security staff.

‘*Meddling kids,*’ yelled one of the group as they were led away.

‘We don’t know how to thank you enough for what you have done. Not only did you stop three dangerous criminals, you also had to endure a night in our stockroom. Please accept our invitation to come back to the store this evening, at closing time, and we will organise a little party to thank you properly’.

\*\*\*\*\*

‘A *party,*’ laughed Wil as they headed back home.

‘Yeh, a party in a supermarket!’, added Freddy mockingly.

‘Don’t be so quick to judge’, said Clara, ‘it could be fun, and they could have sent us away with nothing, after all’.

‘Well, they have sent us away with nothing, so far, what is there to say that we will get anything this evening?’. Freddy was speaking as the older brother, even though his younger sister had come up with the plan and executed perfectly.

\*\*\*\*\*

They spent the day resting from their night out. Freddy popped over over to see Hardy in the afternoon, who had not been seen for several days. It turned out he was quite unwell, and was had been told to rest in bed until they had completed some tests to see exactly what was making him feel poorly.

\*\*\*\*\*

In the evening they made their way over to MegaMart once more. No bus this time, they were picked up in a limousine (run by the MegaLimo company), which was entirely orange in colour, but inside had the most amazing array of gadgets and gizmos they had ever seen. In the course of the half-hour journey they managed to watch three DVDs, make themselves dinner, make ice for their drinks, recline the seats to beds, unrecline the seats to make them seats again, heat the seats, cool the seats, and spend ten minutes wallowing in the jacuzzi.

Drying themselves off, they poured out of the back of the car into the carpark in front of the store.

A banner above the entrance said

'Congratulations Wilis, Freddy, and Clara. Megaheroes'

'Megaheroes', squeaked Clara excitedly, as she pointed up at the banner.

As they made their way to the front entrance, the store manager, slipped out from somewhere and came over to greet them.

'I'm soooo pleased to welcome you back to our store this evening', he oozed, 'and thank you soooo much for what you did last night. MegaMart loves you'.

The smile on his face remained fixed throughout this statement. In fact his features did not move at all. To his left, and just behind him, was a man of the same height, wearing the same beige suit, the same green tie with the knot slightly too large, and smiling the same kind of smile. To his right, was someone very similar.

'Mega-good show', said right-hand man.

'We're mega-glad you showed up, kids', said left-hand man in what sounded like an American accent.

'Yeah, Mega,' chorused a group of about a dozen similarly-clad MegaMart employees.

Freddy could have sworn someone in the group had said, '*suits you, sir*'.

'As a token of our Mega-appreciation for you efforts, please do join us for a cocktail party and then your special reward'.

They went in.

\*\*\*\*\*

Inside, everything was also Mega, except for the party, which consisted of a few glasses of warm apple juice, and some Megasandwiches which looked as if they had been left over from that day's lunchtime, and which tasted as if they had been left over from last week's lunchtime.

'Ergh!', cried Clara as she tried to force down a sausage roll and talk to one of the megaexecutives at the same time.

They chit-chatted for a while, before the store manager finally cleared his throat, tapped his watch on the side of a glass to get everyone's attention, and smiled more broadly than ever.

'Ladies and gentlemen, unaccustomed as I am...' he paused for effect, and a few of the beige suits giggled nervously.

*'I would just like to say a big mega thank you to Freddy, Bill, and Clara for their brilliant performance last night. I am pleased to be able to inform you that our three friends have each been given an ASBO and a community service order, and will be spending the next year teaching knitting and crochet to delinquent teenagers. I'm sure you'll agree that the two groups deserve each other!'*

More cheesy smiling and a big guffaw from one of the keenest young executives (in fact the one who resembled most closely the store manager).

*'Now, children, for your prize',*

He wasn't even looking at them now, as two photographers from the local *Bottom Gazette* had turned up, and were standing just to his left. He spent a few seconds inching towards a large MegaMart sign, bringing his entourage with him in an ungainly shuffle, which only stopped when he was clearly satisfied that the photographers could fit in all the detail behind him

*'Your prize is very simple. You have five minutes in the empty store. You can do exactly what you like.'*

Two of the suits looked nervously at each other. Then they smiled again.

The manager stuck his hand out a suit deposited a stopwatch into it.

*'Your time starts...NOW!'*

\*\*\*\*\*