

Chapter 14

The torches were burning brightly on the walls of the garden, at least 12 of them, maybe more.

Freddy felt a sense of excitement.

Wilis, standing close to him, felt secure.

Hardy, for all his bravado, was standing to one side of them, but moving closer in, shuffling up so that they could not sense his concern.

Helga was clasping tight onto Clara's arm. Clara was smiling, standing, waiting, at the entrance to the tent.

Little Chris was dancing crazily, laughing, riding his bike in and out of the little white disks on the ground, sprinting round the garden at top speed.*****SPLAT!

Something soft and white hit Freddy on his left arm. He reeled away from Wilis, examining his spot where it had hit,

SPLAT!

Another one hit him on the shoulder. It didn't hurt, but he was aware of the smell that they had encountered yesterday.

WHOOMPH!

Two in quick succession hit Hardy in the chest, and he was knocked backwards. As he stumbled, he fell over the prone figure of Little Chris, who had just been taken out in the centre of the lawn. Uninjured, he was still laughing madly as he tried to get the sticky white mess off his leg.

'Take zat, ha!'

A split second after the crazed voice spoke, a larger white mass caught poor Hardy straight in the face. SPLOOSH! He was still on the ground and the mess covered most of his torso. He grimaced at the sight of it, the sound as it hit, and the smell as it dawned on him what they were dealing with.

*****Outside the garden, Nicholai was directing operations.

'OK, let them have the next round', he instructed JoJo.

She reached into her bag, and pulled out more of the white disks, lobbing them over the wall at the victims inside.

'I need more aim', she called back to him.

'Get up on the wall, I'll pass them up'

She clambered up onto the top of the wall. She could now see her targets more clearly, and started flinging missiles straight at them. Laughing maniacally, she repeated,

‘Take zat, ha, leetle Eengleesh, you want your clue, zen stand up and fight!’

*****They had all been hit, and began to realize that in order to get to the next clue they would have to show some response.

‘We need to return fire, guys, quick, regroup in the tent’.

They started moving back towards the tent for cover from the flying objects, which were dropping all around them. As they reached the entrance, Helga, who had been the only one not to come out, suddenly appeared at the entrance. She stuck her head out, and narrowly missed being hit by a flying camembert.

‘Stay where you are!’ she commanded. ‘Now we fight!’

She had changed into a khaki t-shirt, and had tied a red scarf around her forehead. She was carrying the basket from her bike as she emerged. She bent down in the doorway. They gathered round. A small Boursin caught Freddy on the side of the head, leaving its garlicky trails down his cheek.

‘We are under attack! take cover behind the tent and return fire!’ Helga was in her element.

‘With what?’ piped Little Chris.

‘Take this, and fight!’

Nicholai and JoJo were now both standing on the wall, like soldiers manning the ramparts of a castle. They were silhouetted against the night sky by the light of the torches. Both wore camouflage clothes, and carried rucksacks. They continued pulling their missiles out as the group took cover behind the structure of the tent.

‘Let them have the Camembert!, shouted Nicholai as he launched a series of large Emmentals at the tent.

‘OK, my friend, wiz pleasure!’*****

‘Fight, fight’, said Helga crazily, reaching into her bag with both hands and pulling out a series of artillery rounds – three small Cheddars, a Wensleydale, and two Cheshires. They took them enthusiastically, and started launching them in the direction of the two silhouetted figures standing on top of the wall. Two fell short, and the others, although well-aimed, only succeeded in decorating the wall below them.

‘Ha! Is that all you’ve got’, laughed Nicholai, as he directed two Bries towards Clara, who had broken ranks from behind the tent and had started moving towards the wall. She retreated back quickly.

Helga kept producing more lethal varieties from her basket, both hard English weapons, plus some selected international firepower – a couple of Belgian Blues, and some processed slices from the USA. These were effective when flicked sideways. They then sliced through the air and almost flew towards their target. Wil managed to get one to dip and bobble in the air, before hitting JoJo on the thigh, making her wobble slightly on top of the wall.

The conflict continued, the air full of the stench of battle.

*****Little Chris retreated inside the tent.

‘Give me two of your best Stiltons’, he whispered to Helga, ‘I’m going in’.

‘Take care, little one,’ she replied, attaching two deep blue cheeses to his belt and patting his shoulder in encouragement.

He slipped outside. The others continued launching the heavy artillery towards the wall.

He first moved backwards, and crawled into the undergrowth behind the tent. His objective was to move around the wall, hiding in the bushes, so that he could get close enough to launch an effective attack. He was on his belly now, sliding under the trunk of a tree which had long since fallen. He moved stealthily and quietly along the long side of the wall. They had not seen him. No-one knew he wasn’t inside the tent. He crawled around the corner of the long section and onto the shorter side. Here he was more exposed as there was less vegetation, but two of the three torches on that wall had burnt out, so there was less light to expose him. He looked up at the third torch, and waited. It flickered, popped suddenly, and was out. The wall was almost completely in darkness. He half ran, half stumbled along the length of the wall. Although this took less than 30 seconds, he felt very exposed, especially when he heard Nicholai’s voice yell out ‘Ha, we’ll get you now!’ But in glancing across the lawn he saw that the comment was aimed at Helga, who had created a decoy by running right into the middle of the lawn, lobbing Edams and Goudas as she went. She was a perfect decoy, and he was able to slip unnoticed into the bushes on the long side. He was less than 20 metres from where they were standing.

Crawling along on his belly, flat to the ground, he got to a point where he thought they were. He glanced up, his view obscured by the bush he was standing in, but at the same time concealing him. Three metres above, they were standing on top of the wall, about a metre from each other. He would have to make his shots count. It was all or nothing. He picked up a stone from the ground in front of his face. Just a small pebble. Rocking back into a sitting position, still concealed in the bush, he threw the stone to land on top of the wall, just in front of JoJo. Perfect. It landed on the wall with a loud crack before bouncing off to the outside of the garden.

‘What was that?’ said Nicholai urgently, turning his head to the left to where JoJo was standing.

As he did so, a Stilton, about 20 centimetres in diameter, caught him straight in the back of the head. He wobbled slightly, lost his balance, and jumped off the wall to the rough ground outside.

In the split second that remained to him, Little Chris knew that the second shot had to be the

shot of his life. He stood up, his position already revealed, and drew his arm back, just as JoJo prepared to let him have both barrels of a deadly Roquefort.

Almost in slow motion, the Stilton left his hand and flew unerringly towards its target.

She knew she was done for. The Roqueforts had not left her hands before she took the missile straight in the face and was lifted off her feet and disappeared behind the wall.

‘Sacré Bleu!, she said as she dropped.*****Little Chris walked nonchalantly back to the others, who raced over to him, cheering and laughing.

‘We did it, people!’ said Helga, triumphantly.

‘Mainly down to you and Little Chris’, Hardy replied admiringly. They strolled back towards the tent.

Only one light was burning now, and the garden had returned to its silent state.

As they approached the tent, Little Chris called out,

‘Look!’

A small parachute was descending from the night sky, outlined by the single remaining torch. It settled close to where they were standing. A note was attached.

‘OK, you win. Congratulations my friends. For your next clue, proceed to the empty room with the creaky floor. You will find what you need where the coats are hung’.
