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# MISTER MANIAC

Part six

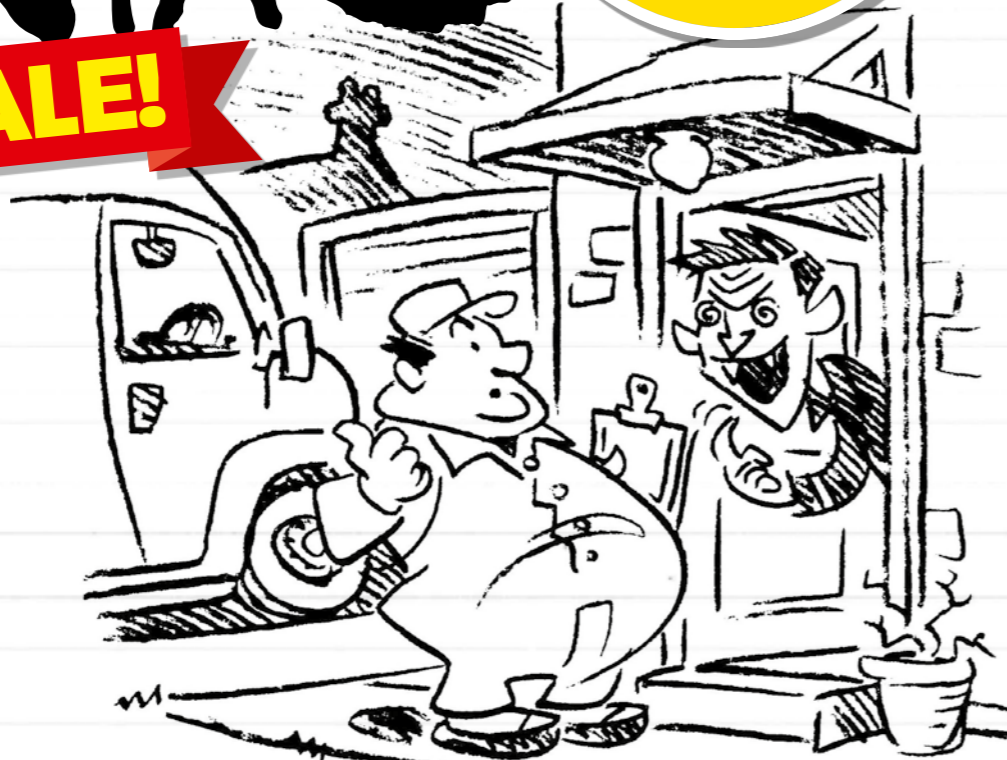
**THE FINALE!**



Jimmy had assembled the closest he could get to a crack team. Petey 'Powerarm' McGrew was in (those bulging biceps could come in handy even if his putrid breath probably wouldn't), as was Stan Crumpant, the class bore, but a boy with his own binoculars – something of a rarity on the Frecklington Campus.

Not that Jimmy's sidekicks shared his personal attachment to the case – they were in it almost entirely for the quarter of toffee bon-bons he'd promised them should they all make it through their mission.

It hadn't exactly been a rollercoaster evening so far. For five hours they'd sat up in that oak tree overlooking Mister Maniac's semi-detached, semi-normal house with its seemingly normal driveway, perfectly normal garden gnomes and standardly normal Vauxhall Vectra parked, normally, outside.



The time was just approaching six o'clock in the morning. After Jimmy had snuck away from his room at eleven o'clock the previous evening, he'd put out an instant messenger rallying call and the boys had assembled outside the front gates of Frecklington High.

It was Petey's idea to leave a note in the school postbox.

"Dear teachers," it read, "we have embarked upon a highly secret, extremely dangerous secret mission. If we don't report to school this morning, send police (with back-up) to 66 Elm Field Avenue at once. And bring energy drinks."

Yours truly,  
Jimmy, Petey and Stan."

But now, here they were, approaching daybreak, without a wink of sleep, and with nothing to show for their investigation so far. There'd been no sign of Mister Maniac, no sign of Charlie and, almost disappointingly, absolutely zero sightings

of any despicable behaviour whatsoever. Then, suddenly, and without warning, there was movement. An unmarked delivery van pulled up to the normal-looking driveway and a hairy, fat and furtive driver scampered out.

The front door inched open. Finally! A first sighting of Maniac. The spindly figure craned his neck out from under his porch and scanned the street like a kestrel scouring for field mice, then with a solitary finger, he beckoned the driver towards him.

What followed was a drop-off in supplies that could have kept an entire army going for a year. Industrial quantities of bread, cheese, peanut butter, jelly, soap and hair wax came steadily off the truck and in through Maniac's front door.

Either he was opening a supermarket in his back garden or something wasn't quite right.

Jimmy jumped forward to get a better look, but as he did so he slipped and snapped a branch in the desperate attempt to steady



himself. A loud crack rang out up the street and Maniac stopped dead, his eyes darting towards Jimmy's lookout.

The boys held their breath. Their hearts stopped. But Maniac and his guest went back to their business, seemingly satisfied that a stray cat, or early bird, was the cause of the commotion.

Phew.

That was all the encouragement Jimmy needed to swoop. As soon as the delivery was complete and the hefty driver had motored off, he signalled to his posse to follow him as he darted across the street.

As they skirted around the back of the house, to their astonishment the back door was swinging open in the early morning breeze.

Peering inside, Jimmy, Petey and Stan were



teenage sweat, the awful sound of wretched sighs and heaves, and their lives flashed before their eyes.

Maniac raised a hand high. Jimmy prepared to feel the force of his palm striking down upon him...

And then it stopped and Maniac's world came crashing down. Quick as a flash, Mr Sternquiver and Ms Ramshackle burst through the front door and tackled Maniac to the ground.

The note! It had worked! They were saved!

subjected to a quite astonishing sight.

Chained to rows and rows of treadmills, sweating and lurching their way through what looked like the most punishing, interminable training regime, were the missing schoolboy captains from across the county.

There was Charlie at the front, huffing and wheezing his way through a 10-kilometre run, kept going only by a questionable green substance, hooked up to his arm by a drip.

It was like something from a horror show, a footballing sweatshop.

The trio edged inside.

"Charlie," called out an exuberant Jimmy.

But before Charlie could answer, Maniac was upon them.

They were cornered. And as Maniac leered towards them, his menacing arms outstretched, they were hit by the stench of

"We're sorry," pleaded Sternquiver.

"We should have believed that he was evil," offered Ramshackle.

As Jimmy released the captains from their shackles, police cars swarmed up the driveway. Finally, Mister Maniac had got his comeuppance. He wouldn't be coaching football in this, or any other county, for a very, very long time.

