

One Screwy Day 20

by

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It is a lovely, sunny day. Constable Smith, Constable Morgan and Captain Mental are in a zigzagging queue with wooden barriers. It's hard to say where the line leads to. A sign says it goes on for many miles. Not to worry, short, calming trees are immediately by the sides. The cops are behind and in front of countless families with happily bouncing children. Rollercoasters of all shapes and sizes (from 103 meters high, to 105) are all around and excited screams come from them. Smith puts his hand on Mental's shoulder and comments 'Enough of the fun and talk of winning soft toys for a bit, right Mental? We're police officers.' Mental bows his head with respect 'Of course... Do you have a work related matter deep in your mind?' Smith nods 'Yes, in fact I do. We need to plan how to stop Benny.'

Morgan joins the conversation 'How?' Smith rolls his eyes 'No idea. You should have seen him. He was throwing all sorts of punches and kicks at me. He was a wild animal. When I pulled out my handcuffs and threatened to take him to the local station, he snatched them from me and ripped them in half. Then he kicked me in the face and ran off!' Mental shakes his head and sighs 'Oh, man.' Smith smiles 'It's ok. I'm just a bit bruised, that's all. I've only just found the courage to tell the complete story.' Mental gives a thumbs up 'Well done'. A man in front of the policeman turns to face them 'That's not what I heard. The rumour going round is that you were simply talking to Benny casually and you let him walk away... I bet you spent all your time making that story up.' Smith replies, coolly 'No. Not true. Anyway mind your own business. This is a police matter.' The disagreeing man shrugs his shoulders and turns back.

Mental sighs 'I'm afraid we have bigger problems than Benny. Ever heard of Fred Paul?' Smith scratches his head 'The computer tycoon?' 'Right. He's gone bad.' Smith face palms 'Not another respected member of society gone wrong!' 'It's hard to believe I know.' 'What's HE done?' 'I know this sounds illegal, but he buys shops from other companies, empties them, sacks the staff and places 'up yours' signs in the windows for everyone to see...' Smith widens his eyes 'Wow... That does sound illegal.' Mental looks down 'The thing is, he's contributing to the economy too much...' 'Ahhh... So, what's his brand name?' 'Fred Paul's Meatballs. Sure he doesn't actually sell meatballs, but it's a catchy name and it grabs the attention...' Morgan sighs 'Then before you know it, you realise you've been insulted AND left hungry.'

The queue starts to move. Smith asks a question whilst walking 'So, how many shops have been converted in England?' Mental coughs 'The good news is they are only found here in Charltonham...' Smith wipes his forehead 'Phew!' Mental responds 'However... there are over one hundred in this town.' Smith shakes his head 'No way. Why??' Mental growls 'I don't know. A paranoid policeman would say it's simply because we're here...' 'Us, the best policemen in the country you mean?' 'Right. Prime targets.'

' 'But what is Fred trying to achieve?' 'I don't know. But we're going to find out. One day.'

The queue stops. Mental sighs 'Dammit'. The intrusive man from before faces the cops again 'Hey, I have to show you something!' The man turns back round and points far ahead, just to the left of the line. 'See that? It's one of the meatball shops! See the huge meatball on top of it?' Faint, outraged gasps are heard in the distance. Mental shakes his head 'Dear God! Not in a family attraction!' Smith comments 'Let's investigate... Let's see what's in those damn things. There must be something!' Morgan agrees 'Exactly. Just a sign? I don't buy it. Maybe Fred makes his money from hidden cameras in his shops or something? Maybe he sells the public's details to foreign, hostile governments.' Mental nods 'Good thinking. Let's push passed the crowds and get there, now!' The three do so. It's a long, awkward and often very physical process, but it has to be done.

Finally, the trio stop and face the glass door of the mystery building and the short pathway leading to it. A break in the barrier allows them to stroll professionally across the path. Well they try to be professional. There's a lot of mumbled swear words. More groans are heard as the cops halt and point through the entrance and at the offensive, blow-up hand sign in a daze. Mental comments 'I think we should end our fun day out, full stop.' Morgan shakes his head 'Come on. See reason. How many rides have we been on, since we got here?' Smith replies 'Is that all that matters to you?' 'Of course not. But is this situation urgent?' A small crowd are heard in unison 'Yes it is!!' Mental responds 'There you go. It IS urgent. Children's minds are being warped. However, apparently Frank is one of the most elusive businessmen in the world. Stopping him won't be easy.' A man in the crowd shouts 'Some say he's working with that Benny guy!' Smith puts his hand on his mouth and gasps through it 'Oh no!'

Mental makes a fist and holds it up 'Be strong, Smith'. Mental then tries to open the door. It's locked. He tries harder to no avail. He is in danger of losing it - he almost rips the door handle off. Smith shouts 'Careful! You'll get us kicked out!' Mental sighs 'Maybe a member of staff will help us. The so-called shop can't be good for business.' Smith agrees 'Good thinking. But I can't see any around here.' Morgan rubs his chin 'Maybe I could shout for one...' A man from the queue butts in 'I'll shout for one!' Dozens of other queuers butt in, too 'We'll all shout as well! Staff! Staff! Staff!!!' Mental comments to the two other cops 'The morals and conscientious of the British public have impressed me, yet again.' The other cops nod.

The crowd start cheering. Mental peeks around 'What's going on?' Mental then looks towards the front of the line. In the distance, a man in a mouse costume is seen hobbling towards him and his coworkers, on the left of the wooden barrier, meandering around the trees.

Smith literally jumps for joy 'Yes!' Morgan responds with caution 'Calm down, Leo. He might not be in a position to help us.' Mental responds 'Just be thankful he's in a mouse costume and not dressed as a sausage roll...' Smith and Morgan shudder. The latter comments 'Imagine the Sausage Roll Killer going on a huge rant about chefs and killing everyone.' Mental nods 'What a moron.' Soon enough the children's entertainer is in handshaking distance. Mental shakes first, then Morgan, then Smith.

The mouse-man starts a conversation 'What's all this commotion?' Mental replies 'We want to know what this so called 'Meatball' shop is all about. Everyone here is disgusted by it...' 'Oh, tell me about it. The thing is, it's a huge source of income for this attraction...' 'Is that all that matters to you?' 'Listen, without it, we wouldn't be standing here today. Because of all the rampages by people dressed in food costumes, lots of people are afraid to leave the house!' 'Who cares if you're losing customers because of the SRK? We're all going to leave in protest because of Fred! Huh, gang?' The crowd cheers. The entertainer looks down 'You're right. Maybe we could vandalise this one shop...' Mental shakes his head 'No. No vandalism. Just a police investigation...' The mouse clicks his fingers 'Of course.'

The mouse tries to open the door but can't. It's locked. Oh yeah. Mental face palms 'On second thoughts, just smash the door open...' The crowd go wild. The foursome kick and punch the entrance until it cracks. Soon, shards fly everywhere and an extremely jagged gap is big enough to walk (very carefully) through. The four enter the building, knock over the sign and stamp on it like rabid dogs until it pops. Out of breath, Morgan points to what seems to be a business card, on the floor. He picks it up and reads it aloud 'This is the business card of super-cool Fred Paul. If you're willing to sell your business to me at a very reasonable price, please get in touch. Jibbles are about to get jabbled.' Smith sighs 'Not more jibble jabbles?' Mental scratches his head 'I think the phrase is dying out. I don't think it's cool, anymore.' Smith replies 'Never was. Never was.'

Morgan continues reading 'Oh yeah, my phone number. Here it is...' (Phone number kept secret by me, Simon). Smith comments 'I say give him a ring...' Morgan looks puzzled 'What should I say?' 'Just that you're willing to sell your Evil Hawaiian store. Then after you've lulled him into a false sense of security, say you're a cop and that you have proof he's been working with crook Benny Orman.' The mouse scratches his ear 'I don't know. Fred isn't the kind of person you want to get on the wrong side of. He'll most likely try to ruin you...' Morgan raises his chin 'I'm not scared.' The mouse responds 'If you're sure...' Mental gives a thumbs up and smiles with admiration.

Morgan pulls his mobile from his pocket and dials a number. He then taps his fingers on the device and waits.

Then he speaks cheerfully 'Hello, Mr. Paul! How are you?... Great. Long story short, I want to sell the Evil Hawaiian store I own. Are you interested?... Yes I am selling tons and tons of pizzas, people go crazy for them... Yes, it is a good destination. The best... You're planning a huge 'up yours' sign right now as we speak? Great!' Morgan's tone turns aggressive 'Now why are you working with that scumbag Benny Orman?...' You heard... I have proof. I saw you together, sharing a milkshake!' Smith waves his hands and mouths dramatically at Morgan 'No! That's too specific! You clearly have no proof!' Morgan corrects himself 'No, I meant I saw you together. That's it... No milkshake. Well who knows?' The mouse covers his head with his hands.

Morgan continues the call 'Well, you should believe me because I DID see you together, I'll say it again. Maybe you were enjoying an ice cream with flake?... No, I'm not Captain Mental, I'm one of his fellow policemen... What do you mean you'll reveal Mental's darkest secret if we don't leave you alone?... Hello?... Hello?...' Morgan goes white 'He's hung up.' Mental stutters 'W-what do you m-mean he'll reveal my darkest secret? Do you think he knows about the murdered pet fish cover up?' The mouse scratches his head. Morgan responds 'That Chief of Police really has gotten you into trouble, hasn't he?' Smith joins the conversation 'I think he's bluffing. He didn't say what the secret was, did he? He knew he would scare you as EVERYONE has secrets... Apart from maybe Chief of police Thomas Peterson, the greatest policemen of all time...'

Mental nods 'Great thinking. You know what? I'm going to call Fred and say I know HIS secret. Morgan comments 'Worth a try.' Mental grabs his phone from his pocket and dials a number. He speaks immediately 'I know your darkest secret, Fred... How do you know I'm bluffing?... Because that's the technique you used? Aha!' The other three shout 'Got him!' Mental continues 'Now tell me where you live so I can arrest you... What for? How about outraging public decency?... Yes I am talking about your signs!... They're simply signalling the number one? Oh come on... Why are they doing that, then?... Because you're number one? Do you realise how offensive that is?'

Smith and Morgan go red. Multicolour policemen. Mental continues 'Even if you are a criminal I'd never catch you as you're too elusive? I do know where you live actually, I misled you before... Where?... London?... Birmingham?... Manchester?... Glasgow?... No I'm not listing UK cities in order of size... Is it Newcastle?... Sheffield?... Dammit. You're not in space, are you?... It's just that you're acting like a super villain... You're planning to launch a big 'up yours' sign in space to offend people who are using home telescopes?... Oh you were joking... But now you're actually considering doing it? I don't have to listen to this anymore.' Mental throws his phone to the ground, smashing it.

Smith winks at the shaking with rage Mental and talks to him
'Don't worry about Fred. He'll get what's coming to him.'
Mental smiles 'Of course.' Smith continues 'How about we all
enjoy the rest of the day, here?... Apparently the world's
longest rollercoaster is coming up...'
Mental's eyes light up 'Sure. Let's all have fun... For once!'
The mouse agrees 'Would you like to go to the front of the queue?'
Mental coughs 'Err... I don't know... It seems unfair to everyone
else...'
The mouse laughs 'Oh, no! Everyone here would love it
if you accepted my gesture! Let's ask them!'
The mouse turns to the crowd 'How would everyone like these three heroes to go
to the front of the line??'
The crowd scream encouragements.
Mental sheds a tear 'Thank you SO much!'