

# Time Freeze

## Chapter 3

ONLY 2 TIME FREEZES LEFT, declares the screen.

Bit of a tragedy that but I've LOVED the first three freezes and I suppose I have to accept that all good things really do come to an end.

"I've selected the following people to take part in the spelling bee at the town hall next week," says Mr Clifton in class the following morning.

I'm hardly listening.

"Mina, Carl, Stella, Abbi and Arjun."

Sid- that's me!

Now I am listening.

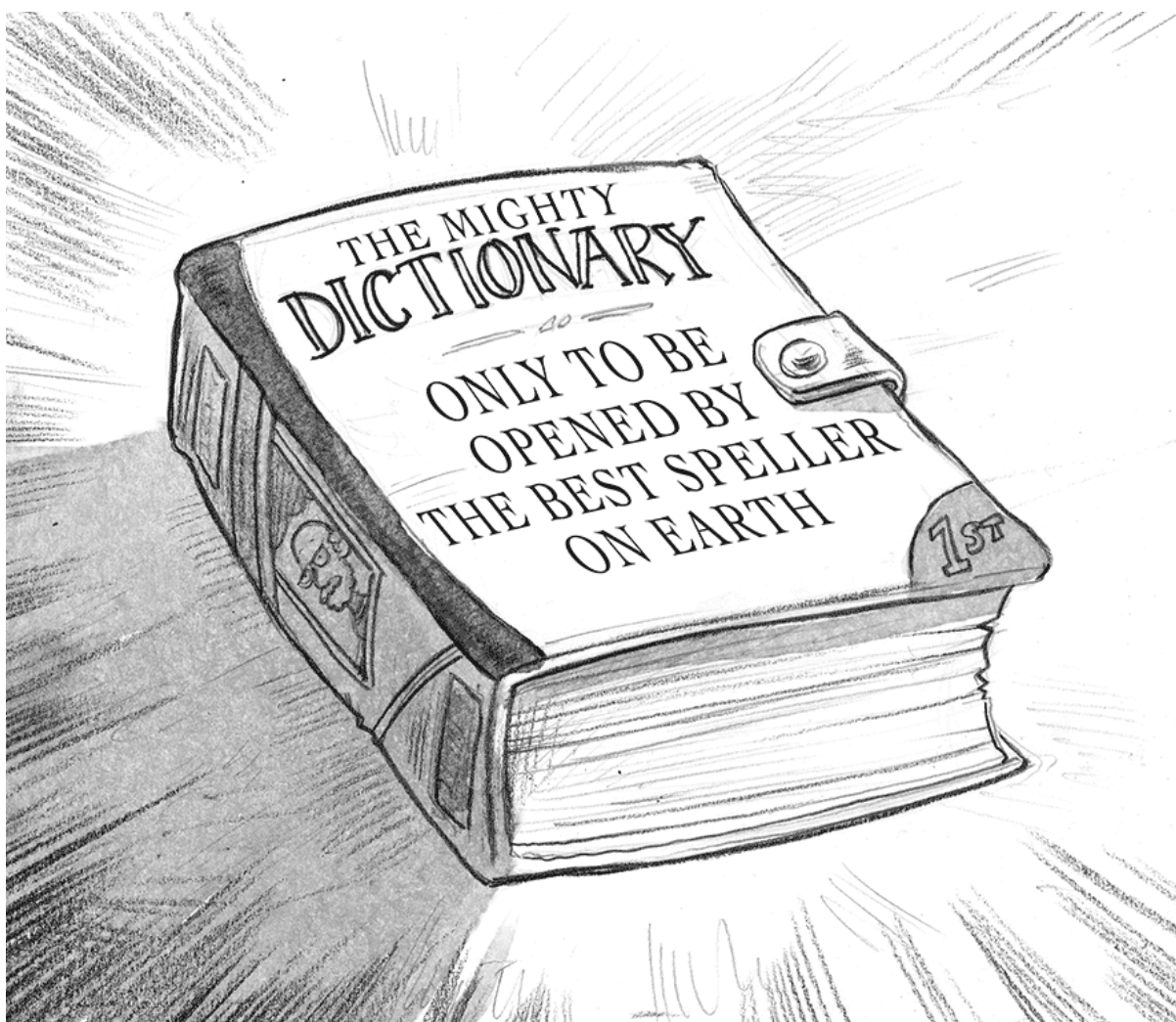
There is no way I am going to take part in a stupid spelling bee, no way. Why has Mr Clifton chosen me?

"The winner will receive a medal and a substantial sum of cash," adds Mr Clifton.

Cash?

A substantial sum?

Suddenly I am the keenest speller in the universe. I am "Mr Spelliverse".



## Time Freeze

I will do anything to win that prize. I will eat a dictionary if necessary. And then a thought parachutes into my head. I have two more time freezes left, haven't I? If they continue to double up then the fifth and last one will be 160 seconds. That's two minutes and forty seconds.

I know this sounds bad and I know it's cheating but if I wait until all of the words have been announced in the spelling bee and then use my 160 second time freeze, I will be able to look up the hardest words in a dictionary that I'll have concealed somewhere. You can check a lot of words in two minutes and forty seconds. It is an evil but cunning plan. And it still leaves me with one other time freeze to use before the spelling bee.

I use it that afternoon.

Petra and I are playing Space Station Battle Heat. By chance it happens to currently be her favourite computer game and mine.

"If you're going to play against each other, you can't lose your tempers or scream at each other," Mum has warned us on more than one occasion.

Today, we are fairly evenly matched. I have destroyed her Lead Space Warrior but she has captured some of my most powerful Laser Bolts. We are both quite calm. We're pretty even. No tempers or screaming. But then she goes and breaks my Double Red Force Field.

If you know Space Station Battle Heat, you'll know this is something of a disaster. In a nutshell, it means that you are far less protected and that your opponent will get the chance to steal loads more of your stuff and give your Mother Ship a good old bashing.

I am beginning to sweat. I can't let my sister beat me at this game. She'll tell all of my mates and it will be humiliation city. I try several slick moves to take out her Double Red Force Field too but my attempts are in vain. She is now smiling smugly and I don't know how much more I can take.

"Pause the game, I need to get a drink," I say, trying to sound as casual as possible.

"Really?" she asks, "or is it that you just don't like being battered?"

I scowl at her and hurry to the kitchen. I grab a quick drink, pull out the green disc and switch it on. 80 SECONDS TIME FREEZE, it informs me. I'm right about the doubling up thing.

As I near the sitting room, I hit the "GO" button.

Everything in the house stops dead still.

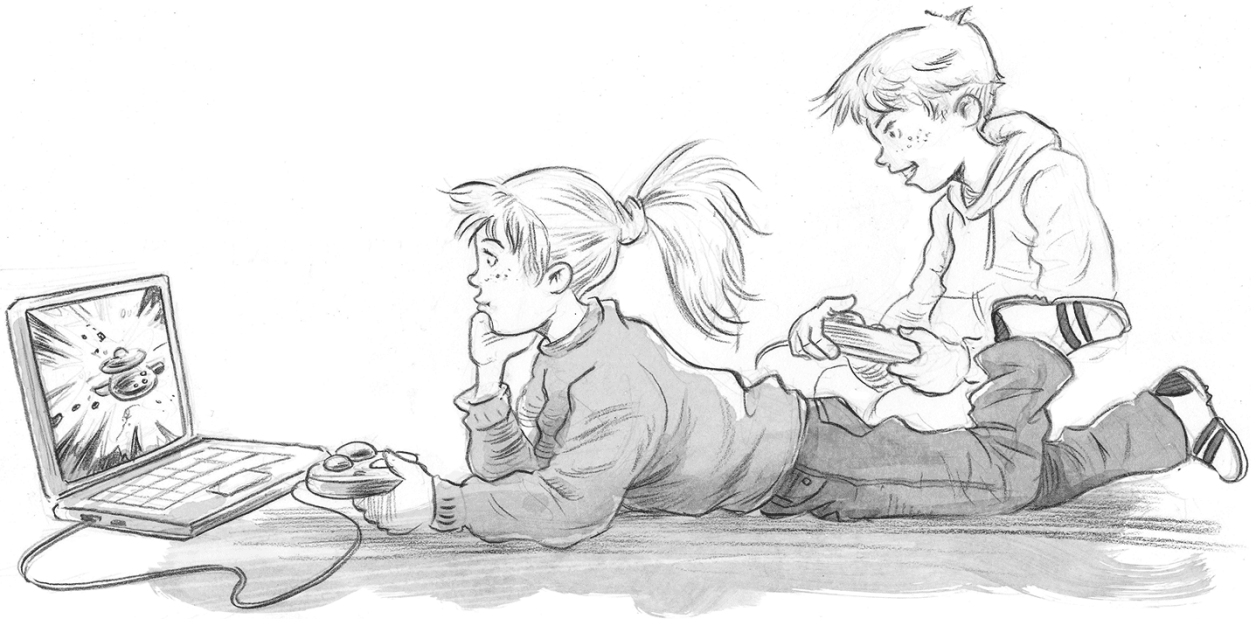
I sit down on the floor, glance at my motionless sister and then get to work. Not only do I restore my Double Red Force Field, I also take out hers. Then I snatch back the Laser Bolts she nicked from me and grab piles and piles of hers. I also make a huge hole in the front of her Mother Ship, which will cause her all sorts of problems, and form an Electric Ant Storm in the back quarters of her Refuelling Ship.

Let's see how she enjoys all that!

The pause stops.

ONE TIME FREEZE LEFT.

## Time Freeze



I stash the disc and Mina's voice explodes. "HOW ON EARTH HAVE YOU DONE ALL THIS!" she yells. "A second ago, I had the upper hand and now you're smashing me. It's not possible!"

"Anything's possible if you know the right strategy," I reply.

She throws down her controller and stands up. "What is going on?" she demands. "You've been acting weirdly recently and this is part of it. What's the trick, Arjun? What have you got?"

I stand too. "I've got nothing but a fantastic brain and quick hands," I reply.

"LIAR!" she snaps. "You've got something recently, haven't you? Some sort of gadget or gizmo that's helping you do weird stuff?"

"Don't be ridiculous!" I reply, trying to stop my cheeks going red.

"Empty your pockets," she says.

"Forget it," I say, putting a hand in each pocket and clasping the disc protectively.

"Fine," she says, "but I'm onto you Arjun." She storms out of the room.

"You don't know what you're talking about!" I shout after her.

But I am worried. Her suspicions make chills go down my spine.

I have to keep the disc a secret from her, at least until after the spelling bee.

If not, disaster could ensue.