

During the night there was a clanging sound, like the lid had fallen off the sky or something. Everyone ran into the living room. When I got there they were all huddled together. I was going to get into the huddle too when Samson Two said, “What is it?” And I realized they were all waiting for me to sort it out.

Hasan said, “Is it bears?”

“Bears? Why would it be bears? Wait here and I’ll go and look.”

I opened the front door, thinking, What if it is bears? I couldn’t see any. Or smell anything. I could hear a noise though—a slow, monotonous rumble. But I couldn’t see anything except the Possibility Building. Then I realized the building had changed shape. I stood and watched for a while before understanding what was going on.

They were moving the rocket.

Very, very slowly it was trundling out on its tracks, out in the desert, about three miles away. It was moving along the rails to the launch site. You could barely see anything happening, but if you looked away and looked back, you could see that a bit more of the rocket had shouldered out of the building. It

was like watching the minute hand on a clock. The others all crowded round me and I said, “Come on. Let’s get some sleep. It’s just the rocket. Nothing to be scared of.”

I was thinking, That is so much scarier than bears.

“I want my dad,” said Samson Two.

I knew just how he felt.

Next morning there was a pile of presents waiting for us on the dining table—some rubbery pencil-casey-type things called Personal Inflight Packs and five of the latest Draxcom games consoles (they’re called Wristations). We’d had a visit from Space Santa. Wristations are quietly cosmic, by the way. They’re basically Game Boys that fit on your wrist, but instead of having some squinty little screen, they project the game onto the wall, like in the cinema, so you can have it as big as you like. They all came loaded with Orbiter IV, Stone Age Boneheads and Surfing Eskimos. Except mine, which had Professional Golfer and a test-your-own-cholesterol kit.

There was a note from Dr. Drax explaining that we could pack whatever we wanted in the Personal Inflight Packs (PiPs for short) to take as personal luggage on the trip. We could take anything we liked as long as it fitted in the PiP.

**L)** What was the sound that had woken them up?

**I)** Why were the children looking to Liam to sort out the problem?

**V)** What does ‘a monotonous rumble’ mean?

**E)** Why do you think they are giving them loads of gifts?

**GD)** “That is so much scarier than bears”

What does Liam mean by this?

## ANSWERS:

- L) The sound that had woken them up was the sound of the rocket moving.
- I) The children were looking to Liam to sort out the problem because they thought he was an adult.
- V) A dull and tedious rumble
- E) Because they wanted to 'butter them up' before they go to space!