

The Hardware Store Rebuild: Part One

A 'brickfic' comic-style tale
by Rita de Heer

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It all started one day when the gods exchanged presents. The one in charge of the city's derelict peninsula received a building kit for a large hardware store compatible with the city's residents.

The peninsula happened to be quite a long way off the beaten track. Building anything there would be a precarious business proposition one would say.

The god in charge of the peninsula pressed ahead. She put out a tender and contracted a hapless construction group, Bosley and Co, to build the hardware store.

Bosley, who preferred to be called Boss, had just moved his building yard to the peninsula when the river overflowed its banks. When the flood retreated it took most of the tools and supplies with it.

The building kit arrived soon after and Bosley extracted the plans. He studied them closely. His heart stumbled. He crossed to the site, built three courses and knew he had a problem.

Digging deep for optimism, he said, "That's a laugh! I can't fit through the door. I knew there was something wrong with plans,"



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Walking away from the disaster so far, he smelled the good aromas of a sausage sizzle.

That same hardware store often ran sausage sizzles donating the proceeds to charitable works. There it was, the umbrella and barbecue set with one leg missing, two sausage sandwiches good to go.

Who was cooking them? At least the sausage rolls are the right size, Boss thought.

His people arrived in dribs and drabs over the following week and he put them to work on a flood-proof wall.



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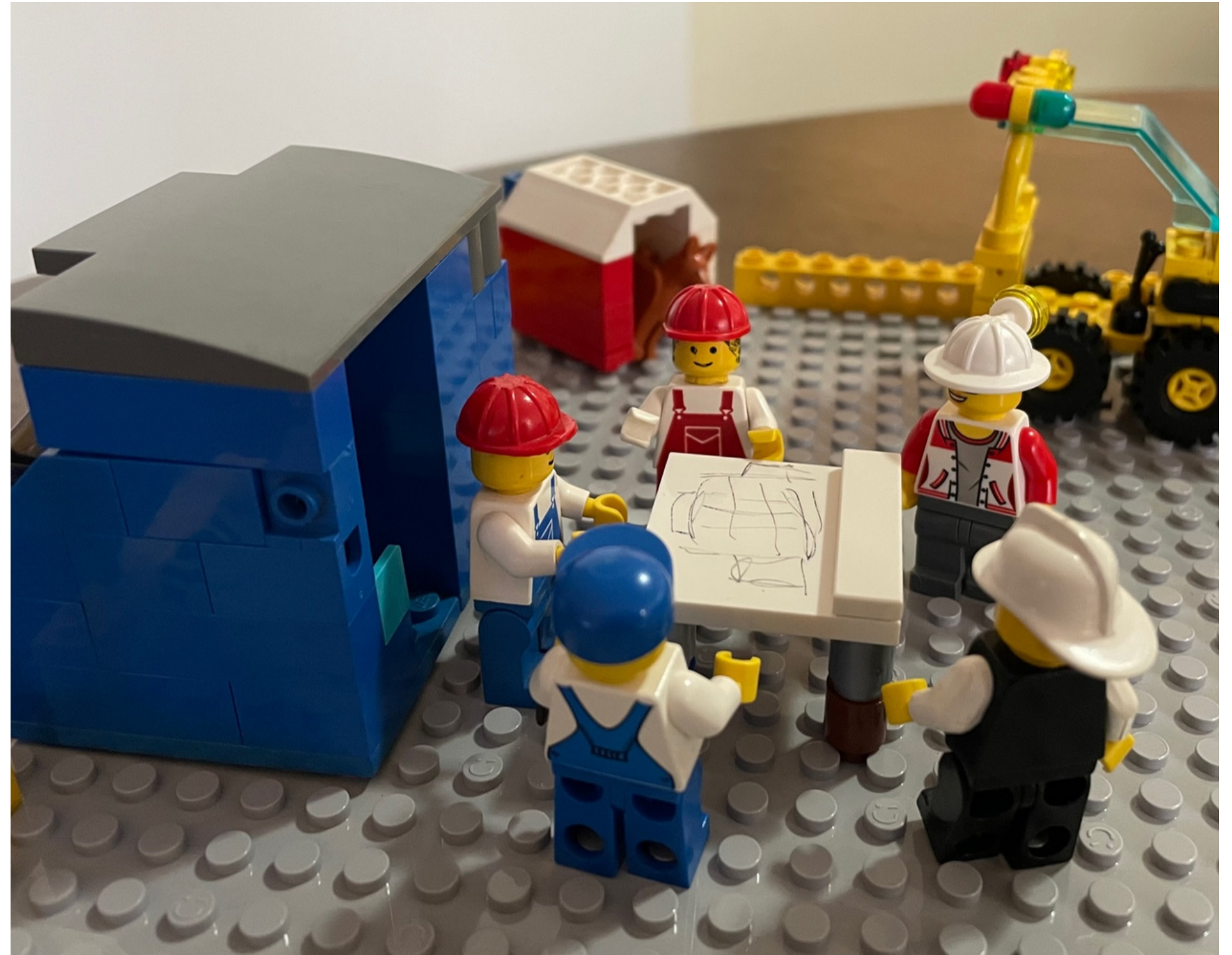
"All right, people," said Boss Builder. "You've all seen by now that the hardware store build is either a joke, or the plans are a misprint."

"The materials list matches the plans," Dan said glumly. "I trucked it all here and what? Store management thinks we're building a club house for kids?"

"I called them about it," Boss said. "They're convinced we have the plans for a full-size hardware store. So, Drew and I decided, we'll build them a full-sized store and charge them accordingly."

"What he means is full-sized," Drew indicated the store's proposed height by raising his hand above his head. "But smaller in area." He brought his arms inward.

"Should be interesting," Wendy said.



5

Next day, a Saturday, Bosley discovered the sausage sizzle in full operation. "Hey there, youngster! I'm Boss Builder. What's your name?"

"I'm Scott. Doing the sausage sizzle stall for my mother, she was called into work."

"Too dangerous while we are coming and going with the run-about, Scott. Would you like to earn a few dollars in the yard?"

"Over in the works yard, Mr Builder? Sure thing!"

"Can't lend you a helmet, it floated away," Bosley said. "But here's a works cap. So we'll know you're one of the crew."



6

Scott walked to the works yard along the safety fence.

Dan drove the run-about, bringing more concrete blocks for the flood-proof wall that they'd decided to start with. Preventing water entry, Bosley hoped, as well as extending the shortage of materials.

"Not enough of these blocks to encircle the whole two base plates," Dan said.

"Point noted," Boss said. "I'm hoping to use them just for the main building."

At the entry gate Scott could see Lore, who would take him to the job helping Trish and Ruff, the site's dog, to tidy the materials section.



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"Dan, get down and help me shift this bbq grill?" Boss said.

"What? you want me on foot when I have the run-about? Won't take me a minute to unhook the trailer. Where will we store this gear?"

"Behind what's meant as the garden section, for now."

"One good thing about this site, I suppose, that it's so far off the beaten track, we only need fence markers? Not the whole eight new-feet height fencing contractors?" Dan said.

"We can't afford fencing contractors. Why we have Ruff, whose bite is at least as good as his bark. And I'm here 24/7."

"You sleep in the shed?" Dan made his voice aghast. "You can lie straight?"



8

"After I dump the foundation blocks, fetch what?" Dan said.

"Park the run-about and help me install the blocks."

"But Boss, the scaffolding is cluttering up the yard. I should get that first."

"But Dan, nowhere here to put it until we get the blocks in place," Boss said.

Dan loved twigging Boss. The guy takes himself so seriously, he thought. He parked the run-about and helped set the blocks up.



9

Beep. Beep. Beep. Dan backed the trailer nearer the wall. A new guy stood to his right, better not topple him. He tipped out the planks and scaffolding supports.

"Dan," Boss said. "I've got Drew here today to help me. You go wrangle the forklift attachment onto the run-about. Boyd will help you get the electrics connected."

"Right-ee-oh, Boss." Didn't explain who the fellow was. "Hey Drew, don't let him run you ragged!"

Drew laughed. "Bosley and I are good, Dan. We're brothers."

"That's good to know!" Dan said.

"You were late getting here," Boss said. "Or you would been introduced. I don't blame you being late, by the way. The road in is a disaster."



10

Scott glanced everywhere as he and Trish worked together.

"We make a good team, Scott," she said. "Dogbox is moved, Ruff is much happier. The rest of the scaffolding planks are stacked and there are just the scaffolding blocks to do now. Do you like pizza? I was thinking for morning tea."

"Cool!" Scott said, realising he was quite hungry. "Thanks, Trish."

Trish looked across at the two men, Dan and Boyd, setting up the run-about with its the forklift attachment. "They'll probably be ready for a bite too. Let me order a couple." she went to the shed to call the pizza place on the site's mobile.



11

Wielding the spanner, Dan fastened every nut he could see but Boyd fussily counted them off from the instructions.

Dan mumbled swears whenever Boyd pointedly pointed at a nut that Dan had missed. "I would've come to it," he complained.

"Lackadaisical, is what you are," Boyd said. "It's not the way to stay alive when you're working with electricity."

"Good thing then that I'm not," Dan said. He hopped onto the run-about. "Are you done?" He revved the engine before Boyd had said. "Whatever squeals or squeaks will need loosening or tightening or greasing. Is how I figure the job is done."

"Good thing you're not my apprentice," Boyd said. "If I was Bosley ..."

"You're not," Dan snapped. He walked away. Went to help Trish and Scott.



12

Pete of Pete's Pizzas rode his beautifully detailed motorbike down the bumpy track leading onto the peninsula.

Though he largely evaded the mud puddles, he could hardly believe anyone would decide to build a hardware store out here.

The poor unfortunates building it had to be going out of their minds about the state of this track! How many broken axles had they already been blamed for?

With two pizzas today for a skeleton crew of six ... "Hey, Lore!" he said. "Good to see you. Quite a long way from the beaten track here to be on watch at the gate?"

"Don't count your chickens before they hatch, Pete," Lore said. "I can see that calculating expression right through your visor."



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Lore carried the pizzas to the planning table, then helped Trish and Scott move over a few scaffolding blocks for everyone to sit on.

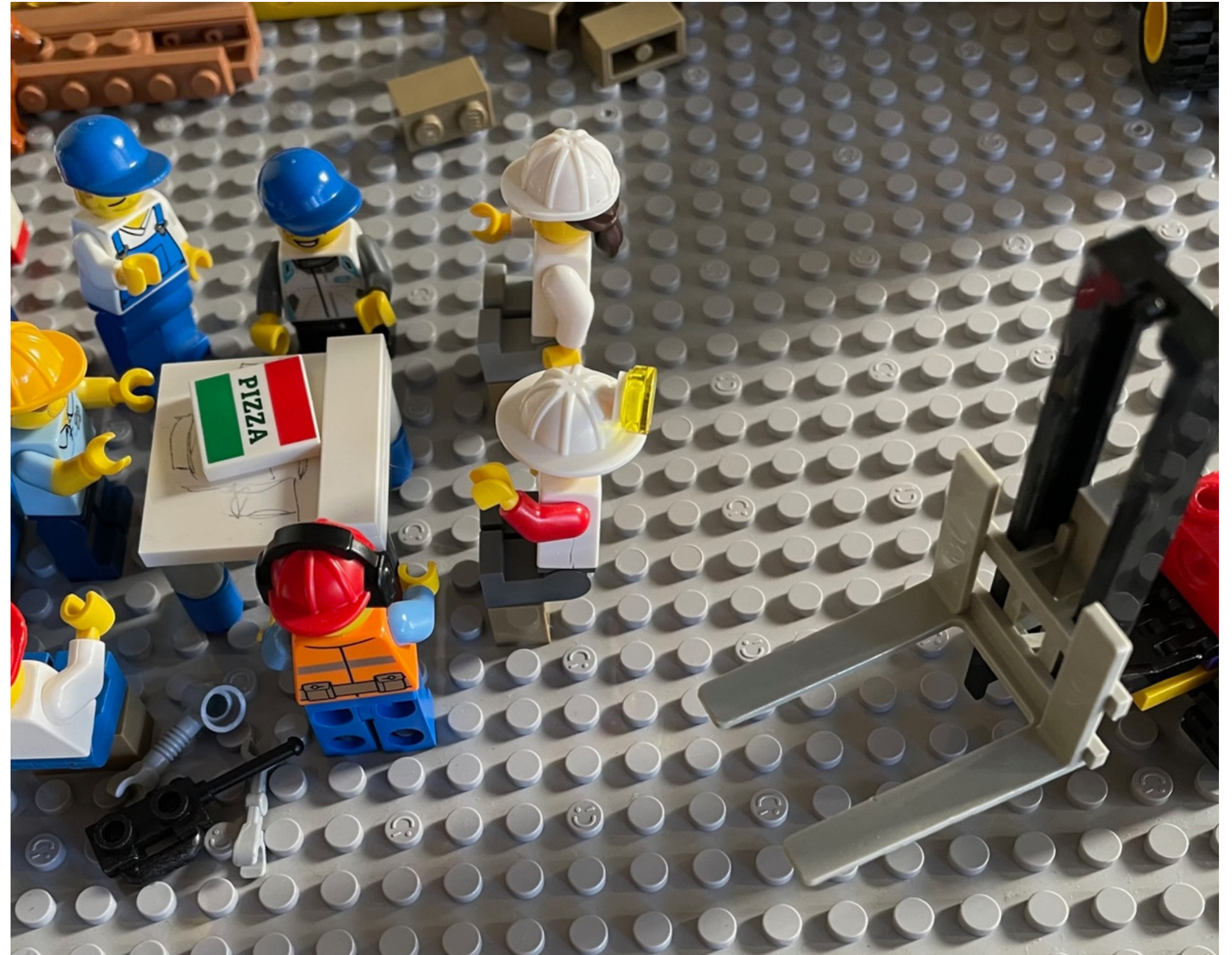
"I've never worked at a place that had pizzas on the house," Scott said.

Everybody laughed. "Nearly everybody here is 'the house', Trish said. "And we all need to eat."

"How are we going with the legals of setting that up?" Lore said.

"Bosley & Co, you mean?" Drew said. "I'll have some forms for you all to sign this time next week."

All you could hear then was people eating. "Better leave a couple of pieces for Wendy," Trish said. "I think hear the semi grinding along the track."



14

Wendy drove the big rig into the work yard and parked so that the load could easily be lifted off with the fork-lift.

She grabbed the spanner-drill and removed the trailer's sides nearest the build.

She had a lot of iffy news, which would have to wait while Bosley pushed his crew to get at least these few beams installed.

"Wen," Lore said. "You're looking toey. Not bad news, I hope."

"News that will wait for the Boss," Wendy said. She suspected that Lore made mischief with the things that she ferreted out.

"Hope you're at least a little hungry," Trish said. She served Wendy the remaining pizza.

"Oh, good. Pizza again," Wendy said.



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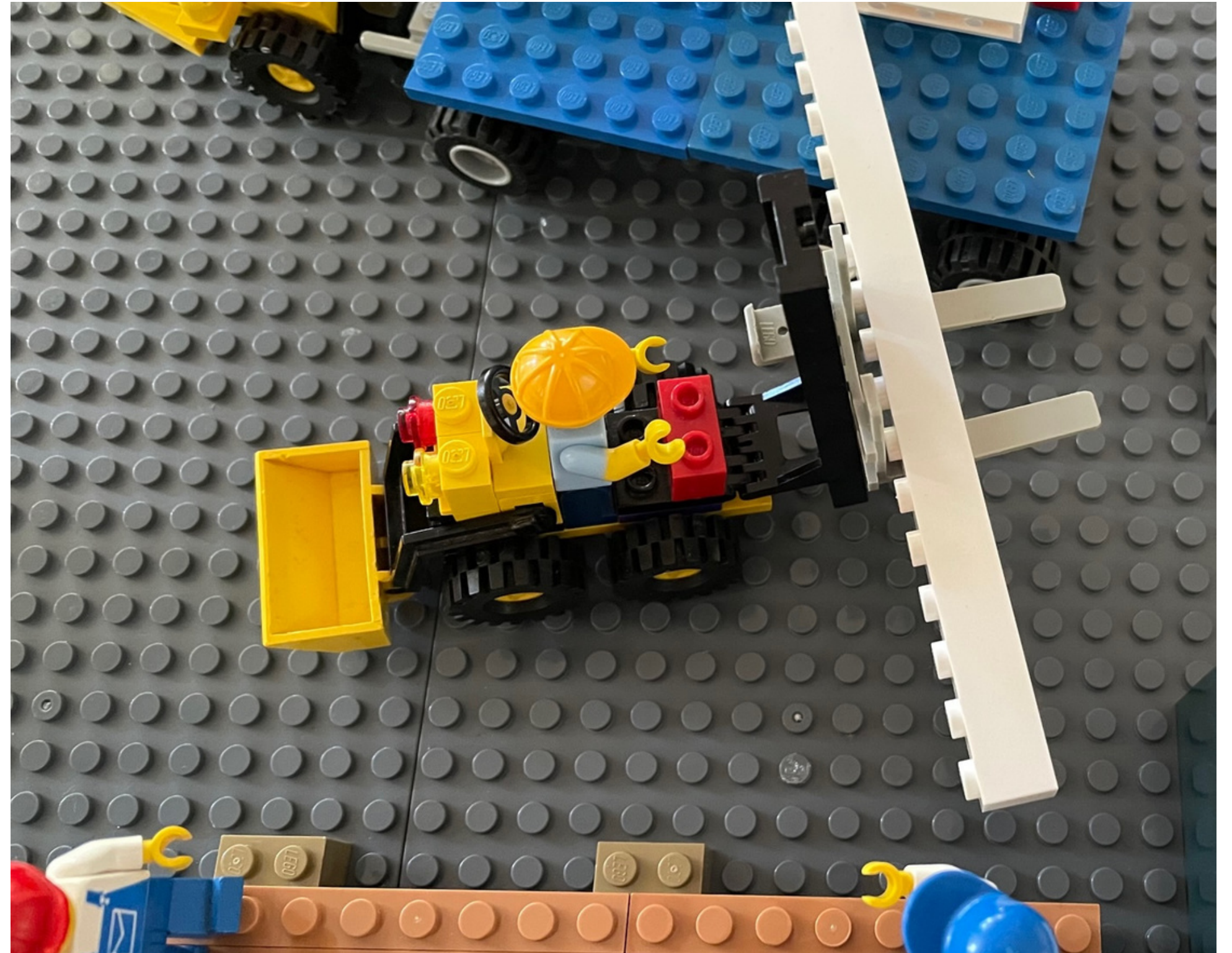
Drew worked the forklift, lifting the beams from the truck. Boss and Dan stood ready to steer the beam into place.

“How come Drew is driving and I’m not?” Dan said.

“You’re supervising while Drew is getting practice,” Boss said. “We need to have two of every skill in the crew. In case one of you is off sick.”

“Who’ll be boss when you get sick?” Dan said.

Bosley didn’t answer. “Watch out! Here comes the beam!” They’d achieve only another two rows of beams today, rail deliveries to the peninsula that slow. At this rate the contract would give out years before the end of the build.



16

"Just the base and these screens," Boss said.

Then we finally knock off for what's left of the weekend?" Dan said. "If I was boss, I wouldn't come in at all on the weekend."

"Mmm," Boss said. "If you were boss, we really might go broke."

"Temper! Temper!" Dan said.

"Yeah, I am in a temper. Go home. Don't let me take it out on you."

"Gee, Boss! Too nice," Dan complained. "Toughen up." He helped finish and stayed on-site till Bosley walked him to his truck.

Drew had already left, Dan saw from the tyre marks. He had a nasty suspicion that Bosley intended staying the night. Even the whole rest of the weekend.



17

Arriving early, Trish and Wendy tripped over a bunch of stuff piled in the middle of the work yard.

"There goes your tidy-up," Wendy said. Trish laughed. "What do you think this big pink thing is?"

"Let's try and get it installed before anyone else gets here?" Wendy said.

"You mean before Boss comes out of hiding in the shed?" Trish said.

"Boss rises with the sun these days," Boss said, appearing from round the corner. He held up a bucket. "Water for my wash." Wendy started dragging the orange staircase to the back corner.



18

"Need to finish the back wall this week," Boss said.
"Three rows of greys today."

"The six of us should have no problem knocking that over," Dan said.

Trish laughed. "No knocking over, please." That fellow on the gad-about ... do we know you?"

"Sorry," Boss stepped forward. "Tim is a friend of mine. We were talking and he got interested. I said he should come over. Try the work, see if he likes it. Anyone have a problem?"

"You've got a lot of friends for a person who rarely leaves the work site," Dan said.

"I've got a problem with him," Wendy said. "As safety officer. He isn't wearing a hard hat and neither are you, Boss."

"I have it at the top of the shopping list," Drew said. "Get hard hats."

"Boss and I have been sharing I'm sure you've all noticed," Dan said.

"Could be there's a spare 'hard' cap in the shed," Boss said. "And keep out from under wonky overhead structures Tim. Until we get more hard hats."

"Roger that," Tim said.



19

Boss drove the run-about to where the crew sat taking-five. "What's up?"

"We were about to send Dan to get a tree to put on the highest point," Drew says. "Since the back wall is done."

"And discussing what we'll do to celebrate," Wendy said.

"The front wall will be higher," Boss said. "Plan a doozy for when that's up."

"You're driving my run-about?" Dan said.

"Keeping in practice. You're riding my gad-about?"



20

Trish and Boss were somewhat nervous. The Department for Safe Playground Equipment had sent an inspector. The job's first.

Decker, as he introduced himself, first walked around their installation at ground level. "Take note of what you see while I clamber over the structure," he said. "Six eyes are better than two."

"Who first?" Decker said when he arrived back on the ground.

"Well, you nearly fell headfirst tipping over the top balustrade," Boss said.

"Both the side roof structures need supports," Wendy said glumly.

"I hate to say it since I put them there myself, but the lower balustrade sections are too weak," Trish said. "And the bottom step is still loose despite that we gave it special attention."



21

Time went by effortlessly while they solved the problems of the build aka never enough materials and always having to make do.

The inside of the whole front wall looked suspiciously like a mock-up. "Never mind," Bosley said again. "We'll fix all this next shipment of materials."

One after the other they brought their private stashes of bricks and timber to the site, donating them to their company, to keep the build going.

What came were the makings of the roof.

"Are they mad?" Wendy said. "What are we looking at here?"

"It's the roof beam I was telling you about," Boss said.

"You dint say it was all in one piece," Drew said.

"Sounding quite truculent, brother!" Boss said.

"I told you I couldn't get a crane."

"No way can we get that up in one piece," Dan said.

"We're a smart bunch," Boss said. "We will find a way."



22

"Hey, we got someone new?" Trish said. "Where are the others?"

"Trish, this is Tim. Trish, Tim. You met him last build," Boss said.

"Hope you didn't sack everyone else?" Trish said. "That was a joke, but still?"

"Hardly," Boss said. "Need more people, not fewer."

So?"

Boss chuckled. "I sent Wendy and Dan to #BrickResales with a list. Dan to drive back another frontend loader, Wendy with the semi."



23

"Not much left of the jittery structure now," Drew said. He drove the runabout, lowering the pieces and setting them out of the way as the build was taken apart.

"You might as well get your gloves on," he said. "We are to take apart this pink elephant and put it back together so as it will pass its test."



24

"Is Boss always so wordy?" Tim said.

"When he's nervous," Trish said. "There has got to be something going on that we... and the rest of us ... are still in the dark about."

"That makes me wonder if we'll even get paid," Tim said glumly. "I should've asked for money up front."



25

"Right, that all hardly moved a centimetre and didn't wobble," Trish said. "Have a go? Just remember to dip your head at the top of the stair."

"I'll pass," Tim said. "I'm going home. I want to drop by the ninja wizard on my way, ask him what's going on."

"What? Please explain!" Trish hurried after Tim.



26

What are we actually doing here?" Drew said

"Attaching shinies to the cladding," Boss said.

"I get it. We're playing Twenty Questions. Why do we need cladding suddenly? We had a perfectly good brick wall?"

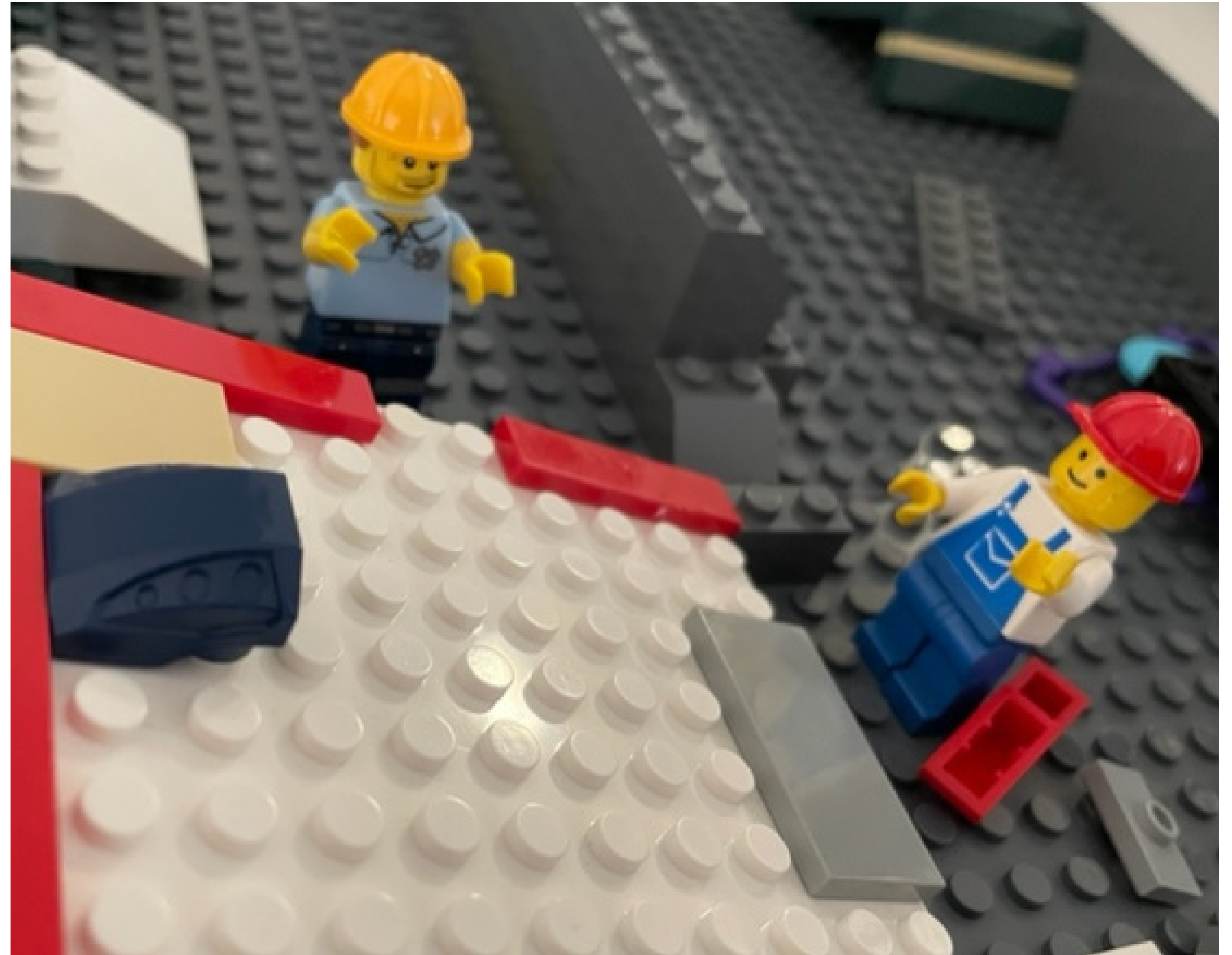
"We need all the bricks we have on site for the facade," Boss said.

"Help me think this through," Drew said. "I'm your brother. A share-holder in the business, I thought."

"New materials have suddenly become unaffordable. If we want to get paid, local salvage yards must be our go-to suppliers from now on."

"%#*€¥," Drew said. "Random tile design?"

Boss nodded while he grabbed tiles that came to hand and slotted them into place.



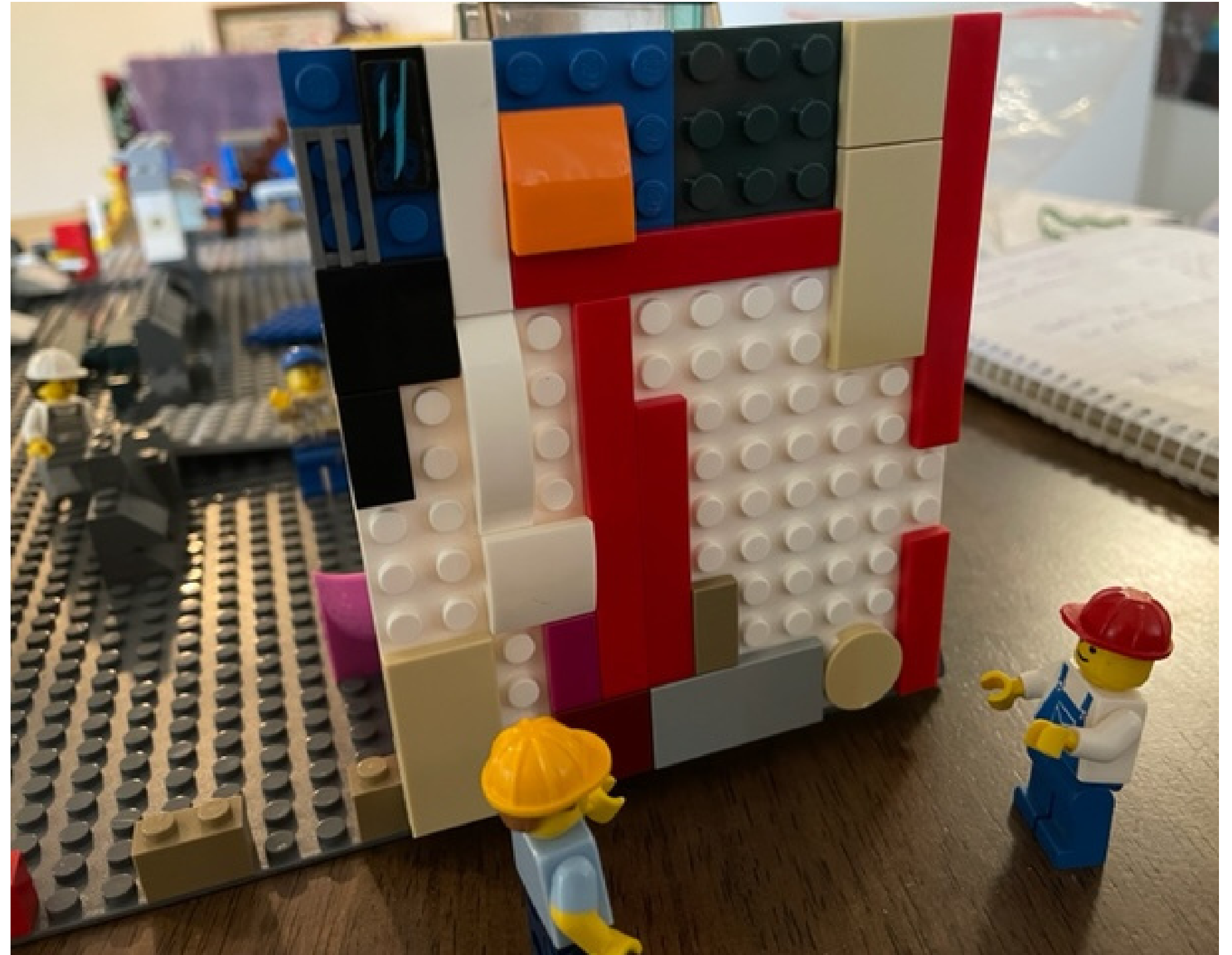
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"I don't like it," Boss said. "In fact I hate it. We can do a lot better than this."

"Not a lot of time but easy to fix," Drew said. "We can get more but different tiles and hire an artisan who does that sort of stuff regularly."

"Pay them with what?" Boss said.

"Leave that part to me."



28

"What's this? A stop work meeting?" Boss said.

He stepped down from the runabout after getting a lift back to the the yard. Four of his workers were gathered in a circle with two strangers.

"These are union reps?" he asked Trish. "You want to intro?"

"They are reps from the owners," Tim said. "They're finding it hard to recognise their store in what we are building."

Drew joined them. "What have you told them so far?"

"The truth," Trish said. "Shortage of materials and so as a result difficulty with working to plan. Plus, that when Boss finished what you two were doing, one of you would take them to see."



29

"Boz, why don't you go charm the owners,"
Drew said behind his hand. "I see the
delivery approaching. I'll deal with them."

"Don't call me that," Boss said.

"I'm sick of calling you by a title. Boz, half
your given name, should do you. Do us
proud."



30

"What am I looking at, young man?" Ms Sander said.

Boss saw Ms Bee roll her eyes at Ms Sander's abrasive manner. So, OK, he had maybe only one attitude to worry about. "We're looking at the store's front wall, Ms Sander."

"What are the holes down near the doors? Are they on the plans, Bee?"

"No Ms Sander," Bee said.

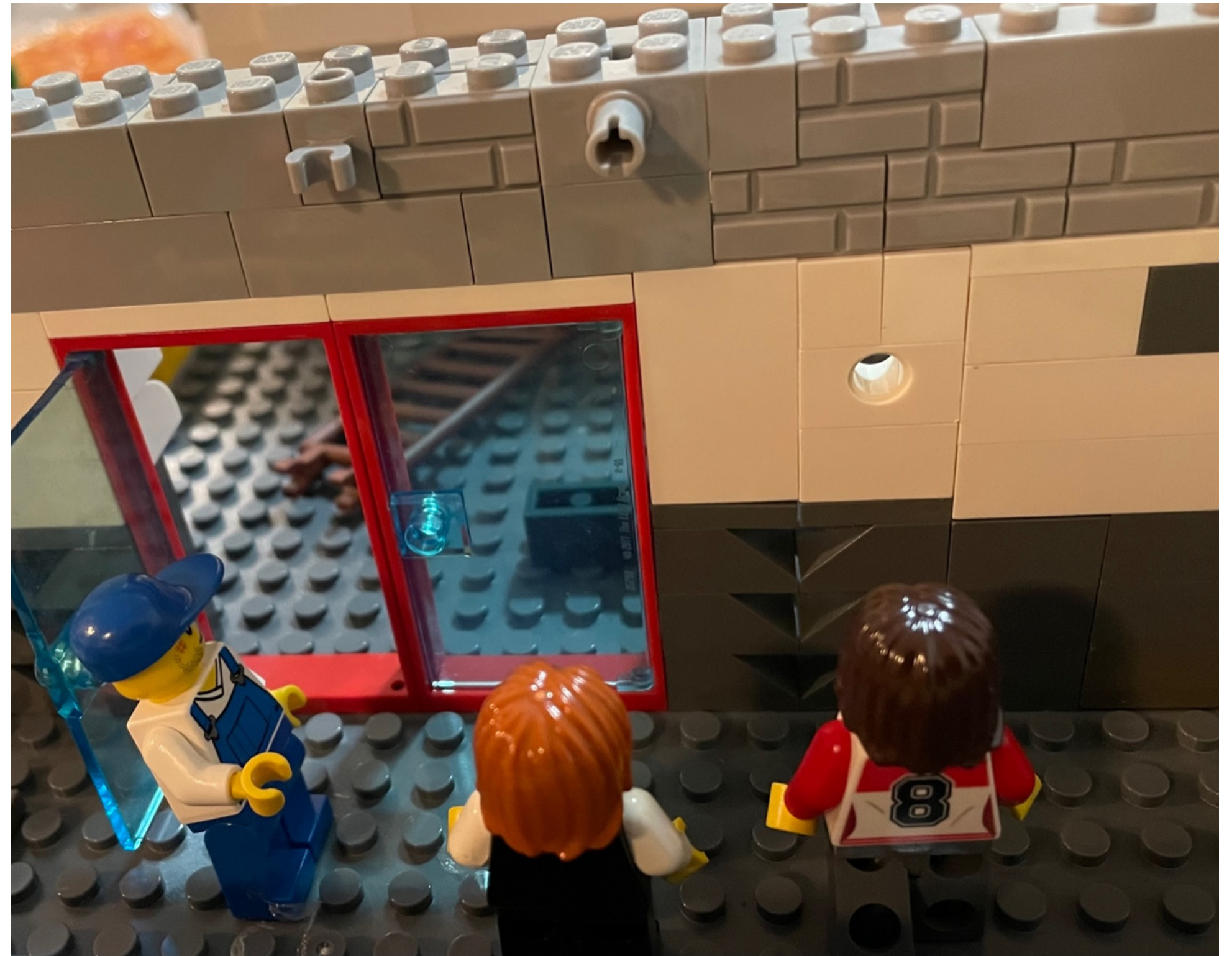
"Decorative ventilation holes," Boss said. He didn't want to start so soon on the troubles he had had getting building supplies.

"What about the extrusions at the top of the wall?"

"They are temporary anchor points that will help us raise the primary roof beam."

"Mmm," Ms Sander said. "Where to next?"

"We should walk to the other end," Boss said.



31

"I'm not happy," Ms Sander said. "I designed the playground as a free-standing structure. Why hide it like this?"

"We had Decker come out to inspect it? You know him?" Boss said. "He didn't like the set either. It's unsafe. Wobbly-wobbly. He wouldn't trust his kids on it, he said."

"So it is safe now?" Ms Bee said.

"There are still a couple of points of concern," Boss said.

"Is it useable?" Ms Sander said.

"I don't trust it," Boss said. "All materials supplied by your people were said to be compatible with every other material on the market. That hasn't been the case."

"Mmm," Ms Sander said. "Next?"



32

"What on Earth is this?" Ms Sander said.

"One of the two sidewalls," Boss said.
"Cladded temporarily with tiles we had laying around."

"Why not use the beams that we provided?"

"Because the plans provided could've made a clubhouse for kids, with walls 3 new-feet high. When we inquired with your office, they assured us they want an actual store. We had to draft out a whole new build."

"Mmm," Ms Sander said. "You have anything else to show us that will convince us?"



33

"You're looking at the back wall," Boss said. "About half of the white bricks are what you provided. The other half we sourced second-hand. The white rows, what there was of them, represent the walls on the plan provided."

Both the company's reps were silent.

Boss continued. "The dark grey row is all ours. The grilled windows are all yours, the light grey bricks ours. As are the black inserts while everything dark green is yours."

"You're saying just thirty percent of the build is ours," Ms Bee said.

"This no time to show off your lightning speed calculations, Bee!" Ms Sander said.

Boss grinned. He kept his ideas to himself. Walked the women to where they'd parked their transport, well out of the way of the site.

