



## Foul Play: The World Cup Mystery

A classroom read by Tom Palmer

### Episode 23 (July 7<sup>th</sup>)

It was the day of the first semi-final – Holland v Uruguay – but Danny was not at the game. Instead, he was locked in a hotel room.

Danny and his dad followed the match build up on the TV all afternoon. They had decided not to go outside. It may be dangerous. Who knew what Sir Richard might have planned for them? They had to lie low. They had to think.

Anton, however, *had* gone out. He had two tasks. One, to talk to the police to see if they would believe the story about Sir Richard planting a bomb in the World Cup trophy. Two, to talk to his boss to see if he would be allowed to write a story about it for the newspaper.

This was their next move. Until it was resolved Danny could do nothing.

Except for *one* thing. He had texted Mafuane. To ask if he could see her a last time.

# # #

Just before kick off in the Uruguay-Holland game, there was a rapping at the door. Seven knocks. That was the code. But Danny still peered through the small peep hole in the door to check it *was* Anton.

It was.

Danny could tell by the journalist's face that his trip had been a waste of time.

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'Well?' Dad asked, turning from listening to the Dutch national anthem. Danny saw images of Robben, Kuyt and Van Persie singing along.

'No and no,' Anton said. 'The police laughed at me and my boss threatened to sack me.'

Danny frowned. But, secretly, he was quite pleased. This meant that they would have to solve the crime themselves. If his dad allowed it.

He knew he had to change the mood to get his way. And quickly.

'Then *we* sort it,' he said. 'We all have tickets to the final.'

'It's too much, Danny,' Holt said.

'What is?'

'This. We can't stop the World Cup blowing up and make sure Sir Richard isn't going to kidnap a player. There are only three of us. And no-one else will have anything to do with it all.'

'Exactly,' Danny said. 'We can't stop *both* things happening. And we don't need to.'

'How's that?' Dad interjected.

'Well, Sir Richard can't be planning *both* things,' Danny said. 'One of these plans is a false trail. We just have to work out which.'

And it was true. Yesterday they had heard Sir Richard explain how he was going to put a bomb into the World Cup trophy and set it off as the winning team lifted it in celebration.

But, a few days before, they had been convinced that the plan was to kidnap players using a secret passageway in the dressing rooms at Soccer City. Mr Annan in Ghana had seemed to almost give that information away.

Before he was murdered.

'So we need to work out which thing is going to happen – and how to stop it,' Anton said.

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'I think it's the bomb,' Dad asserted.

'So do I,' Anton agreed.

Danny looked down at the carpet for a moment. Then he spoke. 'I think that was a red herring,' he said. 'I think Sir Richard made it up to put us off the scent.'

'No way,' Dad said. 'How would he know we were listening in?'

'How many books have you read where someone knew he was being bugged and gave false information?' Danny asked.

Their conversation stopped eighteen minutes into the semi-final. Holland's Van Bronckhorst hit a shot from outside the area. Thirty yards out at least. It travelled like a guided missile into the top corner of the net. All three of them stopped talking, open-mouthed.

# # #

Danny sat up long after the game. It had been a good one. Uruguay nearly coming back to force extra time.

But he was not thinking about the football now: he was running through everything to do with Sir Richard in his mind. They had not been able to come to an agreement about what to do next. His dad and Anton were asleep. They would talk more tomorrow.

One thing they *had* agreed was that no one should leave the hotel room.

Danny was about to go to bed when his phone buzzed. He checked his texts. There was a new one from Mafuane.

**I'm in the hotel lobby. Come and see me. M x**

Danny smiled. She'd come.

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He stood up, excited about seeing his new friend. And, although he knew he should stay in the room, he had to see her one more time. They were leaving for Johannesburg tomorrow. This might be the last time he was ever in Cape Town.

And it wasn't like he was leaving the hotel. He'd be safe as long as he didn't go out into the streets.

Danny opened the door quietly and slipped out.

But, unfortunately for Danny, Mafuane was not the only one waiting for him in the hotel lobby.

**Note for teachers:**

There are still two days left for you to enter the competition to win a visit by Tom Palmer and 100 copies of his novel, *Foul Play*. See episode 20 and its attached exercise for more information.

On Monday next week – with the last episode – a pack of ideas for following up on *Foul Play: The World Cup Mystery* will be available on the National Literacy website.

**Episode 24 will be published at 8 a.m. on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> July at [www.literacytrust.org.uk/worldcup](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/worldcup). The story will be published every school day until Monday 12<sup>th</sup> July. Only three episodes left! Thank you for reading.**

(This story is being written every evening and uploaded each morning. Please accept that although every effort has been made not to have grammatical or spelling errors we cannot guarantee that there will be none.)

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