



## Foul Play: The World Cup Mystery

A classroom read by Tom Palmer

### Note for teachers:

Good morning!

Midday today is the deadline for schools 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 12<sup>th</sup> the last episode will be published along with a pack of ideas for following up on *Foul Play: The World Cup Mystery*. All of it will be available on the National Literacy website, [www.literacytrust.org.uk/worldcup](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/worldcup).

Thank you for sticking with the story to the end. I'll try to make it worth it.

Tom

### Episode 25 (July 9<sup>th</sup>)

'Go. Quickly,' Danny whispered.

But Mafuane was already shuffling away at speed along the air conditioning tunnel. She had heard the men too. When she looked back at Danny, he caught sight of her eyes. She looked terrified.

And Danny felt guilty. Guilty that he had got an innocent South African girl involved with this life or death situation. *He* was used to things like this. *He'd* been led to a cellar

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to be shot in England, chased through woods by a heavily-armed private army in Moscow and nearly run over in Ghana.

But, what he wasn't used to was being caught. He always got away.

Until now.

Because, as he moved to follow Mafuane, he felt something grip his foot.

A hand.

And the hand started to pull.

Danny was helpless as he felt himself sliding back along the air conditioning tunnel. Then in utter panic as he found himself plunging, with his captor, down back into the store room.

At one point in the tussle, he heard Mafuane shout his name. And, as he fell, he shouted back. 'Go. Just get away.'

Danny landed hard on top of one of the men in a black suit.

He looked up. The other man was standing with a gun pointed directly at Danny.

It was the end.

# # #

Danny's dad was already awake when he heard the hammering on his hotel room door. He instinctively felt that something was wrong. Danny was not in the room.

He opened his door. He knew it was Mafuane.

'They've got Danny,' she said, coughing the words out between her gasps for air.

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'Kill him, Pieter', the first man said.

'No. It will make too much noise. We have to take him. The car is at the back. We drive him to the coast. Shoot him. Dump him in the ocean. Easy.'

They had bound Danny's hands with plastic ties. They had also put a length of tape over his mouth. He was helpless. But he didn't have time to think. He had to focus all his energy on trying to breathe through his nose.

# # #

Dad and Mafuane stood at the lifts waiting. But nothing came.

'Are there any stairs?' Dad asked.

'Yes,' Mafuane replied.

'And where's Anton?'

'I knocked on his door too,' Mafuane said. 'No-one answered.'

There was a door adjacent to the lifts. Beyond it you could see out into the hotel car park.

'Shall we go down the stairs?' Mafuane asked. 'The lifts are taking too long.'

'Okay,' Dad agreed. 'Let's go.'

But as they did, an alarm went off.

'A fire door,' Dad said without hesitating. 'They must be taking Danny out downstairs. We need to do something quick.'

Mafuane looked down the staircase into the car park. Three figures were moving quickly across the car park below. Danny's dad had been right. How had he known that? Then she remembered. Danny said his dad had read loads of crime books: he knew just how to second-guess what a criminal might do.

'It's them,' Mafuane said, looking closely. 'Right underneath us.'

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'What can we do?' Dad asked.

'Nothing,' Mafuane said, helplessly as she watched Danny being led across the car park by the two men in suits.

For a couple of seconds the pair of them stood helpless. This was terrible.

And then Mafuane saw something else happening in the car park. A car had put its lights on and was moving towards the three figures below. Fast.

'There's a car,' Mafuane said. 'It's driving at... oh no!'

'What?' Dad shouted. 'What is it?'

Mafuane spoke quietly now. 'The car has hit them. All three of them. Quickly.'

Mafuane grabbed Danny's dad's hand and led him down the stairs. She felt sick and wobbly, but she knew they had to get down there.

As they ran down the staircase, Mafuane had to wonder if Danny's obsession with the World Cup blowing up; and with Spanish or Dutch players being kidnapped were quite so important now.

Because, quite simply, Danny might be dead.

**The next – and final – episode will be published at 8 a.m. on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> July at [www.literacytrust.org.uk/worldcup](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/worldcup). 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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