



## Foul Play: The World Cup Mystery

A classroom read by Tom Palmer

### Episode 26 (July 12<sup>th</sup>)

Mafuane ran with Danny's Dad down to the car park. As they approached the crash scene, Mafuane gasped as she saw Holt leaning over Danny's body. Then she cheered as she saw the journalist help Danny to his feet

She turned to update Danny's Dad, but Danny was already speaking.

'Holt was driving –dad, he did it on purpose, really slowly, but the guys who kidnapped me are still dazed. What shall we do, Dad?

Danny's Dad made a quick decision. 'We need to go,' he said. 'Now.'

Then Anton spoke. 'He's right, if we want to have any chance of stopping Sir Richard. The police could be here any minute. They could arrest us. Kick us out of South Africa. Any English people in trouble get deported immediately.

# # #

Mafuane knew they had little time to spare and that it was time she left.

She went over to hug Danny.

'I'm going,' she said. 'I cannot go to Johannesburg.'

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Danny nodded. There was no time to disagree. 'Thank you,' he said, 'for everything.'

# # #

Cape Town was a thousand miles from Johannesburg. Driving to Soccer City took two days. So for the next 48 hours they were safe and had plenty of time to agree how to stop Sir Richard. By the last few miles they had it sorted.

First, they decided that Danny was right: the World Cup blowing up was a red herring. It was so unlike anything Sir Richard had done before. And why else had Mr Annan been killed, but for giving away the secret about the tunnel hole in the ground. So they put all their energy into coming up with schemes to stop Sir Richard from kidnapping the players from their dressing rooms.

Then they worked out an audacious plan to get into the dressing room, stop Sir Richard and save the World Cup from a terrible finale.

Now they just had to put that plan into action.

# # #

Soccer City was an amazing sight. Although Danny had been here for a match before, it looked special tonight. It was, after all, the World Cup final. He gazed around the vast bowl of people and colour. Amazing. Danny could not believe that he was sitting in the stands right near the front, within a few yards of the managers.

'So,' Dad said, before Anton went off to report on the match – and carry his part of the plan, 'what do you think the score will be?'

'3-0 to Spain,' Anton said. 'An easy win.'

'I agree. Maybe 4-0,' Dad added. 'Spain will hammer them.'

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'1-0 to Spain,' Danny said. 'And that's after extra time.' Then he watched his dad and Anton laughing at him, like they thought he was a fool.

# # #

As half time approached, Danny was loving the football. He was quite enjoying seeing Holland's dirty tactics. They were trying to break up Spain's plans by spoiling things. And it occurred to him that *he* was a bit like Holland, trying to put a spanner in Sir Richard's works. But he knew it was time to focus. He was already changed into the Holland tracksuit Anton had stolen from the Dutch bench, just yards in front of them. This was stage one of the plan.

As the half time whistle blew, he felt Dad's hand on his shoulder and took a deep breath

Then Danny crept to the front of the stand and, dressed in his Holland tracksuit, he joined the Dutch squad as they walked off. It wasn't far, so suddenly he was in front of the team, pulling two small bags out of his pockets. He couldn't believe that this was really happening. That he was with the players halfway through the World Cup final. . But inside he felt quite calm.

Meanwhile, Anton found a FIFA official and said he'd been passed a note. It suggested that terrorists were planning to attack the dressing rooms with deadly anthrax powder. The man was horrified and ran towards the changing area.

In the chaos of the tunnel, Danny had run ahead and dumped bags of white dust – talcum powder – on the floor by at each dressing room door. There were so many people about, nobody saw what he did.

He stood back and waited and, as he'd hoped, the FIFA official stood in the way of the two squads.

'Regrettably,' the official said, calmly. 'This area is quarantined. Will the players please use the alternative dressing rooms here to the left?' Quickly, he called on his walkie-talkie for backup.

Danny smiled as he saw the players trudging away from the main dressing rooms and dozens of armed soldiers arrive to stand outside them. There would be no secret attack or kidnap now. It was over.

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Whatever Sir Richard had been planning, they had stopped him.

# # #

Twenty yards away a man with a fake FIFA pass stood watching through a large window. Nobody saw him kicking the walls of the small room he was in, making a line of holes in the plasterboard. Nobody heard his rage.

That boy.

That boy had stopped him again.

Sir Richard exploded out of the room, almost knocking the door off its hinges. He ran at Danny, who was walking away to tell his Dad it had worked. He had chosen a quiet corridor as a route, wanting to avoid anyone associating him with the chaos.

He heard the footsteps behind him too late.

Before Danny could do anything, Sir Richard was on him, his hands clasped round his neck. Danny kicked and shouted, but he could not get the older, heavier man off him.

Sir Richard released the pressure on his throat to move his face right up close to Danny.

He whispered in Danny's ear. 'I always said that next time we met, I would kill you. And here we are.'

Danny took the seconds he had to shout properly. 'HEEEELLLLLLLLLLLLLPPP.'

And it was enough. Three uniformed officers came running and pulled Sir Richard off him.

'Who are you, sir?' they asked Sir Richard.

The Englishman did not answer.

'He's Sir Richard Gawthorpe,' Danny said. 'And he is wanted in England for serious crimes.'

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'In that case, sir,' the lead policeman said, 'we'd like you to come with us and meet our police colleagues from your home country.'

# # #

It was a relief for Danny and his Dad to watch the rest of the match safe in the knowledge that Sir Richard Gawthorpe was being deported to England that night.

And the second half was great. Better than the first. But, as extra time was played out, Danny became more and more tense about the match. He laughed to himself. It felt good to be worried about something that was not a matter of life and death.

And when Iniesta scored the winner, he turned to his dad and shouted above the noise. 'I told you: 1-0 after extra time!'

'I'm proud of you, Danny,' Dad said. 'But please can you stop all this detecting business now?'

Danny didn't answer.

Instead he described to his Dad the pictures, on the big stadium TV screen, of Spain walking up to receive the trophy.

When Casillas was handed the World Cup, Danny's heart started hammering. He felt more nervous now than he had when he had been eye to eye with Sir Richard.

What if...?

But, as you know by now, the World Cup did not blow up when Casillas lifted it.

You also know that Spain won the trophy.

But what you don't know is that – on the plane back to the UK – Sir Richard Gawthorpe somehow disappeared. And you also don't know is what he is planning next.

But you can be sure that he will be back. And that Danny Harte will be the first person on his hit list.

(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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**Tom would like to thank his wife, Rebecca, for reading every chapter ever night and making lots of brilliant suggestions. If you can dedicate on line books, then this one is dedicated to her.**

### **Final note for teachers**

First of all: thank you for reading this story to the children every day for over a month. We really appreciate you engaging with the project so wholeheartedly. Please can you thank the children for reading it – and for all their lovely letters to Tom. As a special thank you, there's a certificate to print out at [www.literacytrust.org.uk/worldcup](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/worldcup).

Today's exercise is for the children to play 'What Kind of Reader Are You?' a tour of what they like to read, hopefully starting a class discussion about what they love and hate in books. The exercise will be available later today at the page where you downloaded this last episode.

Children are encouraged to:

- choose their own path through the quiz
- discuss why they made their choice
- talk about other books they like
- have a vote on their favourite book in the whole class

The whole World Cup Mystery will soon be available as a free download in one document at [www.tompalmer.co.uk](http://www.tompalmer.co.uk) or by emailing [info@tompalmer.co.uk](mailto:info@tompalmer.co.uk)

As promised, the *World Cup Mystery* follow up activities that may be useful will also be available for download later today:

- Children are very welcome to write to Tom Palmer, c/o Puffin Books, 80 Strand, London, WC2R 0RL.
- Read the first chapter of any –or all – Tom's books. The first chapters are available for free at [www.tompalmer.co.uk](http://www.tompalmer.co.uk)
- Do some of the activities and games available on Tom's website, available at [www.tompalmer.co.uk](http://www.tompalmer.co.uk)

Finally, the winner of the competition to win 100 of Tom's books and a visit from him in the autumn is Harewood Junior school. I apologise to the rest of the schools: your entries were brilliant. We'll be touch with the winner very soon.

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