



Foul Play: The World Cup Mystery

A classroom read by Tom Palmer

Episode 4

(June 10th)

Danny did not sleep well on his first night in South Africa. When he was woken up by his dad in the hotel on Thursday – just two days before England took on the USA – he was still running last night’s crash through his mind. There was something about it that unsettled him. Deeply.

What was it?

He ran it through his mind over and over. The car accident. That it had nearly happened to *them*. And that it had been on a tight corner, with a dangerous drop beneath.

It reminded him of a year ago, when he saw something similar. When Sir Richard Gawthorpe and his crazed Russian billionaire friend had tried to kill an England keeper. It had been a crash just like that.

Danny glanced at the detective novel he had been reading. He read a lot of books like that. It helped him to solve real crimes. And one thing that happened a lot in detective novels was that killers often used what was called the same M.O. – or, Modus Operandi. In English that meant that killers liked to use the same method every time. It was like a footballer, who always fouled players in the same way.

But Danny was pretty sure Sir Richard and his Russian friend had died in a Moscow building that had been bombed. Surely he wasn’t out here. In South Africa. It would be too incredible.

Danny smiled. He was forever looking for crimes, when it was more likely no crime had been committed at all. He knew that about himself.

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The hotel his dad had booked them into was a posh one. It had a huge golf course attached to it and, when Danny looked out of the window, he saw lots of England and USA football fans in team shirts on the course. All walking around in the sun. Men and women.

They were ten miles from Rustenberg. A short drive to the stadium where the two teams would meet in two days.

Danny checked his mobile phone, hoping for a text from Anton. One that would say he had got hold of tickets for Danny and his dad to see the game.

There was no text from him. But there was a text message. It was from Charlotte, back in England.

How is it in South Africa, skiver? It's raining in England. C x

Danny smiled. And he felt a slight feeling of homesickness. But maybe not for home. Maybe just for Charlotte.

Danny was about to text back, when his mind went back to Sir Richard. What if... what if he was here? What if he wanted to do something corrupt during the World Cup? It would be just like him.

He started to text Charlotte, just something friendly. Then he stopped. He'd had an idea.

Need your help. Look online for English ex-pat groups in South Africa. Try and find someone who looks like Sir Richard Gawthorpe in the pics. Is that okay. D x

It was just a hunch. He knew it was crazy. But it would give him an excuse to get Charlotte to reply to him.

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The man who had been driving the black van was still shaken, still thinking about his friend, Andre, who had died the night before.

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But he still had to do what Mr Gaw had asked. Mr Gaw was his boss and had offered him a ridiculous amount of money for his help.

So he sat in the hotel foyer, watching. For the boy.

But all he had seen so far was hundreds of English and American people heading out to play golf.

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Danny and his dad walked down to the hotel foyer at midday. They were due to meet Anton. But when they arrived he was not there.

Dad ordered a coffee, Danny a Coke.

'Do you think he'll get us tickets?' Dad asked.

'I do,' Danny replied. 'Apparently they're not so hard to come by.'

Dad smiled. 'I hope so. I would hate to have travelled all the way to South Africa and end up following the first match on TV.'

Danny looked around him.

The hotel had a pond at the middle of the foyer. It was large and full of fish. There was also a fountain, so you could hear water splashing above the voices of the other hotel guests. There were more people arriving in England tops. And USA tops.

Then Danny saw another man. He was dressed in canvas trousers and a jacket. Utterly unlike anyone else in the hotel. He had a beard and a hat on the table in front of him. When Danny caught his eye the man looked away and started to read a magazine.

Danny shook his head. He was thinking the man could be up to something. Why did he have to see crime and conspiracy everywhere? He was just another hotel guest. Nothing else.

Ten minutes after the drinks had arrived, Anton did too.

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Danny stood up and waved him over. Then he tried to guess from the look on Anton's face if he had managed to get them tickets for the USA game.

Anton joined them, shook hands with Danny's dad, then sat down.

'Well?' Danny said, impatient.

'Two tickets,' Anton said loudly. 'Main stand. Third row from the pitch.'

Danny jumped up again and punched the air.

'Thank you!' he said.

And, as he did, he failed to notice the man in the canvas trousers taking notes, then standing up and heading out of earshot to make a telephone call. And why should he? He had a massive game to look forward to. England versus the USA.

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'Mr Gaw?'

'Yes?'

'I have some information for you.'

'Yes?'

'I know they are staying here. And I know they will be here at least until after the England-USA game.'

'Good,' said Sir Richard Gawthorpe. 'Because I have a fantastic plan. And I have a very important job for you.'

Episode 5 will be published at 8 a.m. on Friday 11th June at www.literacytrust.org.uk/worldcup. Thank you for reading.

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If you are enjoying this story, you can read more about the adventures of Danny Harte in Tom's *Foul Play* series, published by Puffin. The three books to date are *Foul Play*, *Dead Ball* and *Off Side*. Tom also writes the *Football Academy* series for Puffin. You can find out more about Tom and his books – and contact him – at www.tompalmer.co.uk.

(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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Registered address:
National Literacy Trust
68 South Lambeth Road
London SW8 1RL

☎ 020 7587 1842
☎ 020 7587 1411
✉ contact@literacytrust.org.uk
www.literacytrust.org.uk

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