



## Foul Play: The World Cup Mystery

A classroom read by Tom Palmer

### Episode 6

(June 14<sup>th</sup>)

Danny and his dad walked with the crowds as they approached the stadium. The atmosphere was amazing. Danny looked at his dad and saw him grinning. He could not believe this was happening to him.

He was about to go into a football stadium in South Africa. To watch England's opening game. In the World Cup finals. And he felt more excited than he had ever felt before in his life.

Dad gripped Danny's arm as the crowds got heavier, closer to the stadium.

'That noise is doing my head in,' Dad said.

Danny laughed. Every other person seemed to have one of those long plastic trumpets. Vuvuzelas. When one of them was pointed in your direction you knew about it. And Danny understood that his dad – being blind – would feel it worse than most people.

# # #

The Royal Bafokeng Stadium in Rustenberg was amazing. Huge. Packed. Colourful. Noisy. Danny felt a rush of adrenalin as they emerged from under the stand. The floodlights were on. The sky black. The pitch a vivid green under the lights.

The feeling reminded him of his first ever game. When he was very young. His dad had taken him, when his dad could still see. They had come out into the stadium then, and it had been a night match like this one.

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'Do you remember my first game?' Danny asked his dad. 'That night match? Against Wolves? Well the pitch looks just like it did that night.'

'I do,' Dad said. 'It was bright green.'

'It's just like that,' Danny told his dad. Then he looked to his right. The team line-ups were listed on a giant screen. Seeing them, Danny sighed.

'Seen the teams then?' Dad asked.

Danny grimaced. How did his dad do that? He could hear the most insignificant of sounds Danny made and get it *spot* on.

'Yes,' Danny answered.

'I take it he's picked Heskey, then' Dad said.

'Yes.'

'Who's in goal?'

Danny sighed again. 'Green.'

'Great!' Dad said.

'You reckon?' Danny replied. 'I'd have gone for James.'

'No,' Dad said. 'Green is a safe pair of hands.'

'I'm not so sure,' Danny said. He was starting to feel nervous about the game now. He would have liked to see Joe Cole in the team too. Not Milner.

# # #

Danny would probably remember the two main events of the game for the rest of his life.

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The first was when Gerrard scored. The noise in the stadium was fantastic. A roar. And Danny realised there must be thousands of England fans. Again, he couldn't believe he was there, seeing what most England fans would be watching on TV thousands of miles away. He knew this was a once in lifetime experience.

The second came after he had started to feel nervous. The USA were getting too much space. They were having attempts from long range. And then, one of the USA players shot and everything seemed suddenly to go into slow motion.

The ball bounced in front of Green.

He crouched.

Then, somehow, he was scrambling backwards... and the ball was in back of the net.

It felt to Danny like someone had punched him in the stomach. He looked down as he heard USA fans all around him. Shouting. And making whooping noises.

'Who scored?' Dad asked, in a deadpan voice.

'I don't know,' Danny replied, 'but Robert Green made a right mess of it.'

'You're just saying that,' Dad said.

'I'm not,' Danny replied.

Danny did not think he could feel much worse than he did at that moment. Then he felt his phone vibrate in his pocket. A text from Charlotte.

### **I think Sir Richard is in South Africa – Charlotte**

# # #

After the game, Danny and his dad waited for the stadium to empty before they headed back to the hotel. It was safer for them.

'How are you feeling?' Dad asked. 'You've been quiet since the second goal.'

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'Grim,' Danny answered.

The 1-1 score had made him feel deflated. But the text from Charlotte had worried him more.

He wanted to talk to her. He doubted she had made a mistake. She had been involved when Danny had taken on Sir Richard before. They both knew that he was capable of anything. And, if he was in South Africa, he would be planning something pretty bad. Sir Richard seemed drawn to football – and trying to make money out of it in unpleasant ways

'Maybe David James *would* have been a better choice,' Dad said, trying to draw his son into a conversation.

'Maybe,' Danny muttered.

'But we've got this safari to look forward to now,' Dad went on.

'He's trying to cheer me up,' Danny thought. 'And he is right. I'll have a think about Sir Richard on the safari. I'll get Charlotte to do some more digging. At least there is no way I can bump into Sir Richard at a ranch in the middle of nowhere.'

Episode 7 will be published at 8 a.m. on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> June at [www.literacytrust.org.uk/worldcup](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/worldcup). Thank you for reading.

**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](http://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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