



## Foul Play: The World Cup Mystery

A classroom read by Tom Palmer

### Episode 3

(June 9<sup>th</sup>)

Once the plane had climbed to 30,000 feet and the seat belt signs had gone off, Danny leaned across the empty seat next to him and looked back three rows to where he knew Anton Holt was sitting.

Danny and Holt had travelled on a plane before. To Moscow, when they had to stop a crazy Russian billionaire trying to murder England goalkeepers. So Danny knew that Holt was scared of flying.

Danny smiled at his friend. 'Do you want to come and sit here with us?'

Holt nodded and joined Danny. Dad was asleep, so they spoke in low whispers.

'So have you got tickets for the England games?' Holt asked.

'We've got them for Algeria and Slovenia,' Danny said. 'But not USA.'

Danny was very disappointed about this. He desperately wanted to see the first England game. And it was only three days away.

Holt nodded. 'I see...'

Danny wanted to ask Holt if he could help. Football journalists could get hold of tickets. Danny knew that. But he was always asking Holt for favours, so he didn't want to push his luck.

'Maybe...' Holt said, stopping himself.

'What?'

*Transforming Lives*

'Well, maybe...' Holt paused. 'No, it's nothing.'

Danny knew his friend was teasing him now, so he kept his mouth shut. He wasn't going to give Holt the satisfaction of winding him up. And just then an air steward came round, offering drinks, so the journalist stopped talking to him altogether. And Danny was left fretting whether he would get to see the USA game or not.

Holt grinned once they were alone again. 'I'll see what I can do,' he said.

'Really?' Danny said.

'Yes. But no promises.'

# # #

Mr Gaw, as he called himself now, told the two men who were stood in the underground car park at the airport what he wanted them to do.

Once briefed, the men climbed into two vehicles. A silver sports car and a large black van. The vehicles revved their engines and moved away slowly.

Then Mr Gaw took a lift from the car park up to the viewing area, just in time to see a huge KLM 767 land on the runway.

He checked his watch and smiled. This plane was the plane carrying Anton Holt and Danny Harte. Now he would have his long-awaited revenge.

Less than two years ago Mr Gaw was been known by another name. He *had* been Sir Richard Gawthorpe, owner of City FC. And things *had* been going well. He was making a lot of money.

One plan he came up with was to kidnap his own player, Sam Roberts, and to sell thousands of shirts with the player's name on the back. But the plan had failed because of a fourteen year old boy. And that boy was on the KLM plane that had just landed.

Sir Richard smiled. He wanted to stop this boy from coming to Africa.

*Transforming Lives*

One, because of the revenge he wanted.

Two, because Sir Richard had a plan for the 11<sup>th</sup> July. A plan that was so spectacular, it would go down in the history of the world as the greatest kidnap ever.

# # #

Danny led Dad through customs and described everything he could. He wanted him to take in everything. The colours. The scenery outside. The sky. The football images everywhere.

'It smells different,' Dad said, now they were outside. 'And it sounds different. I love it.'

Danny grinned. He could still not believe he was here in South Africa. Here for the World Cup. Just a week ago he had seen the England players pass through here on TV.

# # #

Above them, on a walkway, a man was peering down. As soon as he saw Danny, his dad and Holt, he started keying into his mobile phone.

# # #

Holt quickly found them a taxi, so they could make their way to their hotel. They climbed in, putting their bags in the boot.

As the taxi moved away, none of them noticed the silver sports car come in close behind them. Nor the large black van tailing the car. They were on their way. They were too excited.

They had been driving for an hour when it happened.

*Transforming Lives*

At first the roads had been congested. But, after a little while, the car started to move faster. And they were driving up a hill, the ground falling away to a steep slope to the left.

The taxi driver was asking Holt about England, when he flashed his lights at a silver sports car, allowing it to move into the gap ahead of him.

At the same time a black van moved in beside them in the next lane.

Immediately as it did, the silver sports car braked violently. The taxi driver swerved to his right to avoid it, but he had nowhere to go, as the black van seemed to be moving across at the same time.

The driver swerved onto the edge of the road, the taxi's tyres sending small rocks into a precipice.

Danny stared down the hill. Everything was in slow motion. He felt sure the taxi would crash down into the void. He started to clench his arms and legs into his body, in anticipation.

But then a miracle happened.

The taxi driver somehow got ahead of the silver sports car. And the black van – moving to its left – hit it.

Danny heard a crash and looked round. The silver car had disappeared. He looked at Holt.

They were not moving now. The taxi driver had managed to stop.

'Where's the car?' Danny asked.

'At the bottom of that hill,' the driver said. 'Are you okay?'

Everyone nodded. But Danny's heart was hammering like he'd never felt it hammer before.

# # #

*Transforming Lives*

When Sir Richard Gawthorpe answered his mobile phone he expected to hear that all his worries were over. But, as the driver of the black van described what had happened, his face clouded.

‘Follow them,’ he said. ‘Find out where they are staying. Then call me. Yes?’

The black van driver said yes. ‘But what about Andre, the other driver?’ he asked.

‘Andre is dead,’ Sir Richard said. ‘He is history. Follow the boy. We will decide what to do next when he arrives where he is going.’

Episode 4 will be published at 8 a.m. on Thursday 10<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.)

*Transforming Lives*