

FOUL PLAY THE WORLD CUP MYSTERY

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Reading The Game

One

There was a knock at the classroom door just as Mrs Baker was about to start the English lesson. Danny watched her sigh, then get up off her seat.

‘Read something for a minute,’ she said. ‘In silence, please. I’ll only be outside.’

Then she disappeared into the corridor.

Danny pulled a World Cup guide out of his rucksack. He’d bought it at the newsagents that morning. It had facts on all the players, the stadiums and – most importantly – a chart to fill with scores and other statistics.

Four days to kick off.

It was Monday now. The tournament started on Friday with South Africa v Mexico. The day after that – Saturday – England were playing USA. And Danny couldn’t wait. He had arranged for his friends, Charlotte and Paul, to come round. They’d watch it with his dad.

But what he didn’t know was that none of this would happen.

His friends would not come round. His dad would not be there. And nor would he.

Nor did he know that his dad was standing in reception. Waiting for him right now.

The noise levels in the classroom had risen as Danny was looking at the fixtures and wondering if England could beat USA.

The Americans had been sounding off on the TV, saying that they had beaten England in the 1950 tournament and that they could do it again now. Especially as England had key players missing.

Mrs Baker came back in.

‘Quiet please,’ she said. ‘I have an announcement to make.’

The room went silent. There was something in her voice. Something that suggested excitement.

‘Danny,’ she said. ‘You have to go home.’

Danny stood up, knocking his chair over. This was shock.

It had happened once before: when he was called home because his dad had been in a bad accident. He felt his legs wobble underneath him.

‘It’s nothing bad,’ Mrs Baker said in a soft voice. She knew his history.

‘What is it?’ Danny asked. ‘I don’t understand.’

'Your dad is here. And he has some news. Good news.'

Danny frowned and gathered his bag. He caught Charlotte's eye.

She shrugged, then smiled.

Danny started to walk across the room, edging past tables and chairs and the eyes of his classmates.

'Shall I tell you what's going on?' Mrs Baker said.

'I'm not sure,' Danny answered, smiling at his teacher. There was something playful in her voice. As if she wanted to tell the class.

'It's up to you...' she went on.

'Okay,' Danny said.

'Your dad is here because he is taking you to the airport. You fly this afternoon.'

Danny stopped and faced his teacher.

'Do you want to know where?' she asked.

The noise in the classroom had built now. Danny felt someone tapping him on the back. He ignored it.

'Yes,' he said. 'Please.'

'Danny's father has just been to see the head,' Mrs Baker was talking in her classroom voice. 'And he has arranged for Danny to have the next month off school.

Somehow!'

The noise in the class exploded. Danny picked out words like 'jammy' and 'lucky' and 'it's not fair' from the cacophony.

'Why?' Danny asked.

'Because, Danny Harte, he is taking you to South Africa. To watch the World Cup.'

Danny had to put his hands over his ears, the class was so loud now.

'Go,' his teacher mouthed.

So Danny headed for the door. He looked back at Charlotte again, who waved, but looked slightly sad. Danny waved back.

Then he was in the corridor.

And as he walked towards school reception he heard the chant of *En-ger-land, En-ger-land, En-ger-land* coming from the classroom.

Danny had been to watch football abroad before. He'd been lucky. He'd seen games in Russia and Ghana.

It had happened because, in the last year, he'd found himself in the habit of getting involved with football crimes. Kidnapped strikers. Russian billionaires trying to kill England keepers. That sort of thing. His life had been in danger several times because of his new hobby.

He'd managed to solve three major crimes and saw himself as a sort of football detective.

But this was nothing to do with that.

He turned a corner in the corridor, a smile growing on his face.

Danny didn't need to be a detective to work out what was going on. When his dad had had his accident, he had been blinded. As a result his life had changed a lot. But – also as a result – he'd been given compensation because the accident had been to do with his work as a fireman. His dad had said that one day they'd spend some of that money on something amazing.

This was the amazing thing. Danny knew it.

He could feel a thrill of excitement running through him.

Was this real? Was he really going to the World Cup finals?

He couldn't wait to see his dad. To hear his plans.

But what Danny didn't know was that this would not end up as just a trip to South Africa to watch football. It would end up as his biggest – and most dangerous – case yet. One that would push his skills as a football detective to the limit.

And it would all begin tomorrow...

Two

Danny relaxed once he and his dad were through passport control. He always felt weird at airports.

Men with machine guns. Massive scanner devices. The tension of queues and people with giant bags. None of it put him at ease.

But he was happy when he saw the TV screen in one of the airport lounges. They were at Manchester airport. Heading for Amsterdam, en route to South Africa.

‘How long to take off?’ he asked his dad.

‘Ages,’ his dad replied. ‘Two hours.’

‘Great. The England match is on a big screen over there. The Platinum Stars match.’

‘Can we get a coffee?’ Dad asked.

‘Yes, there are tables,’ Danny said. ‘It’s just over to the left.’

Danny watched his dad nod, sunglasses slipping to the end of his nose. Then he let his dad take his arm and Danny led him across to the TV screen. Dad lifted his stick under his arm and let his son lead him. They were both at ease with the fact that Danny’s dad was blind.

Once they were sat down, with drinks and cakes sorted, Dad carried on with the argument he’d started in the taxi from home.

‘Who’s Capello playing up front?’ Dad asked.

‘Crouch and Defoe,’ Danny answered.

‘Crouch? Why’s he not playing Heskey?’

‘Because Crouch is better,’ Danny said, smiling.

Then he watched his dad shake his head. Dad always did this. He thought he knew best. He was about to start going on and on about how Heskey was the best player because he worked well with Rooney. Danny knew it.

‘He’s got to play Heskey,’ Dad said. ‘Rooney works better off Heskey.’

‘No way,’ Danny said, gritting his teeth.

Dad laughed. ‘Even your friend, Anton, thinks Heskey is the better choice.’

‘Well, he’s wrong,’ Danny said.

‘Anton is wrong? Anton, who is one of the country’s best football journalists? And *you* know more than *he* does?’

Danny decided to say nothing. They'd had this argument so many times before, it didn't seem worth it. And he had argued about it with Anton Holt too.

Danny knew Holt because they had worked together on the football crimes Danny had been involved with solving. And it was true Anton was a famous journalist. But Danny still thought Crouch was better than Heskey.

'Well, we'll ask him when he gets here,' Dad said, smiling. 'He can put you right.'

Danny still had nothing to say. So he looked outside – at the rain sweeping down from the hills. A plane was just coming into land and it sent up an enormous spray as it hit the tarmac of the runway.

Several thousand miles south another plane was coming into land. But this time it was not coming down on tarmac, but on hard earth. A landing strip next to a ranch and a small lake, in the shadow of a range of mountains.

Once the plane had taxied to the side of the ranch, parking under a tarpaulin like you would park a car in England, a man climbed out. He pulled his coat round himself, shivering. Although this was Africa it was cold. He grimaced. It was like being back home in England. The man pushed open the door of the ranch and headed directly towards a room to the right. It looked like an office.

His phone rang immediately.

'Yes?' he said, snatching the phone off the table.

'Mr Gaw?'

'Yes?'

'I have some information for you.'

'Yes?' Mr Gaw's voice was becoming impatient. The man who was reporting to him was a senior policeman. Mr Gaw paid him good money for that information. So he wanted it quickly.

'You asked me to alert you if a certain journalist came into the UK.'

Mr Gaw said nothing. He poured himself a glass of water from a jug.

The voice at the other end of the phone went on. 'The journalist, Anton Holt, has left Amsterdam for Johannesburg.'

Mr Gaw nodded. 'Good,' he said. Then, after pausing, asked 'Are there any other English people on board?'

'Let me check,' the policeman said.

Mr Gaw glared out of the window. He was glad to hear that Holt was coming to South Africa. They had some unfinished business. Holt – with the help of a boy – had stopped him making a lot of money.

Twice.

It was time for revenge. And Mr Gaw was going to take it.

'Mr Gaw. I have two more names.'

'Yes?'

'A Mr Harte. And his son, Daniel.'

'Danny Harte?' Mr Gaw shouted, dropping his glass on the floor.

'Yes, Daniel Harte.'

'And what time do they land?'

'In twelve hours,' the policeman said. 'At Jo-burg airport.'

Mr Gaw nodded. 'Meet me there in *eleven* hours,' he said. 'And come prepared.'

Danny, his dad and Anton Holt walked onto the plane at Manchester airport. Holt had arrived just in time, checking in late.

Half the people on board were wearing football shirts. Holland shirts. England shirts. France shirts.

Danny smiled. He never imagined he'd be going to a World Cup.

The next time he walked on the ground it would be in Africa. Danny smiled. He couldn't wait to get off the plane.

Three

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?'

'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.

One, because of the revenge he wanted.

Two, because Sir Richard had a plan for the 11th 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.

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.

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.'

Four

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

'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.'

Five

Dad was sitting in one of the hotel bars when Danny arrived to join him. Danny was breathless, excited.

‘Dad, the hotel’s doing a competition we can enter.’

‘What about?’

‘You can win a free safari next week. In the days between the USA and Algeria games.’

‘Great,’ Dad said. ‘What do we have to do?’

‘There’s a World Cup quiz,’ Danny answered.

‘Go on then.’

Danny got a piece of paper out. Then he read out the questions to his father.

‘Question one. Which team has won the most World Cups?’ Danny asked.

‘Brazil.’

‘Correct. Question two. Which English player was sent off in England’s last World Cup finals game?’

‘Rooney,’ Dad said.

‘Correct. Question three. In which country was the first World Cup finals held?’

‘Uruguay.’

‘Very good. Question four. What was the score the first – and last – time England played the USA in the World Cup?’

‘1-0 to the USA.’

‘Yes,’ Danny said. ‘And finally, question five. How many Arsenal players are there in the England squad?’

‘None,’ Dad said.

‘Five out of five, Dad,’ Danny shouted.

‘So what do we do now?’ Dad asked.

‘I put it in a box at reception. Then, in an hour they announce the winner.’

Sir Richard rang his man at the hotel. ‘Have they done it?’ he asked.

‘Yes,’ the man said. ‘They just put their entry into the box.’

‘And when are you doing the draw?’

‘In less than an hour,’ the man replied.

‘You know what to do?’

‘Yes, Mr Gaw,’ the man said, smiling. ‘I know what to do.’

Danny was impatient during the wait to find out if they had won the safari competition. He kept an eye on the entry box and saw only two other people put entries in. They had a good chance. It seemed like everyone else was playing golf.

He turned to watch the TV when he realised that staring at the competition box might make more people want to know what was going on. There, he saw images of a road accident on screen. There had been a bus crash in South Africa. Some English people had been killed.

Dad was listening to the news reporter. ‘That’s terrible,’ he said. ‘Imagine how their families must feel.’

Danny watched Dad shake his head.

Next, the news moved onto a story about some football journalists being robbed in their hotel. Then there was more about the stampede at a football ground in the country a few days before. Danny watched with interest – and horror.

And he wondered why he was always so interested in crime and disaster.

Then he looked at his dad, who was listening to every word coming from the TV too.

And Danny realised what it was. He was interested in crime because his dad was too. Since his dad had been blinded, Danny had read dozens of crime novels to him.

That was what they did together. *That* was why he was so interested in crime.

‘Can I have your attention, please?’

Time had passed. Danny had been staring out of the window, watching the trees and a large bird that was hovering above the golf course next to the hotel. The bar was full now. It was nearly time for the South Africa v Mexico game. The tournament opener.

‘Before the opening ceremony begins on the television,’ a man announced. ‘We have the name of the winner of the safari.’

The speaker was the man Danny had seen in the bar the day before. The man in canvas trousers, with the hat. Danny realised why he had looked so out of place. He was

here to talk about safaris. He was nothing to do with football or England. Danny realised he had been wrong to think anything bad about the man.

‘The winner will enjoy an all expenses paid luxury trip for two to a safari at the Mashatu private game reserve.’

Danny sat up, grinning. He knew it was unlikely they would win.

‘And the winner is...’ the man paused for dramatic effect ‘Danny Harte.’

Danny jumped into the air. Then he grabbed his dad. ‘We won it. We won it,’ he shouted.

Then he noticed people looking at him. But most of them were smiling. They seemed happy for him.

‘Well done, son,’ Dad said.

Danny and his dad stayed in the bar as the opening ceremony started. Danny had got hold of an English paper and was reading it aloud.

‘They reckon this is going to be the line up,’ Danny said.

‘Go on.’

‘James. Johnson. King. Terry. Cole. The other Cole. Lampard. Gerrard. Lennon. Rooney...’

‘And?’ Dad asked, grinning.

Danny frowned. His dad was going to start going on about Heskey again.

‘Crouch,’ Danny said.

‘Liar,’ Dad snapped back.

‘Okay, so it says Heskey. But they’re wrong.’

‘You’ll see,’ Dad said. ‘But there is one thing we can agree on.’

‘What’s that?’ Danny asked.

‘That tomorrow you and me are going to watch England play USA in the World Cup finals in South Africa – and we are going to have a brilliant time.’

Danny put his hand in his dad’s hand. They gripped each other for a second, then let go.

And Danny felt good. Good about this trip. Good about the England match. And good about the safari. Everything was perfect.

'Did you arrange everything?' Sir Richard Gawthorpe asked.

'Yes,' the man in the canvas trousers answered. 'The boy and his dad will join me on safari on Sunday.'

Sir Richard laughed. 'Let's hope he enjoys the England game, then,' he said, stifling the laughter. 'Because it is the last game he and his dad will ever watch.'

Six

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.

'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.

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.'

'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.'

Seven

Danny gazed out of the window at the patchwork of ground and forest below. They had been in the air for over an hour and he had been trying to spot animals. The pilot said that they may be able to see herds of elephants from the plane. But, so far, Danny had seen nothing like that.

The feelings of disappointment Danny had had after the USA game were fading now.

How could he feel miserable when he was in a spectacular place like this, about to see wild lions and elephants and more?

And, anyway, he had other things on his mind: the chance that Sir Richard Gawthorpe was in the country too. A long shot, but it worried him all the same.

The matches of the other so-called big teams had irritated him, though. Argentina and Germany had won. And no doubt Brazil and Spain would too. These were teams who were considered contenders for the World Cup. Just like England should be.

The Germany game had annoyed him most. They had won 4-0. Danny had a terrible feeling it would be Germany v England in the first knockout round.

They arrived at *Safari Africa* just as daylight was starting to fade. The small plane bumped to a stop in front of a huge building that looked like it should have been in a European capital city, rather than on a vast plain surrounded by small woods and long grass.

Danny followed his dad out of the plane.

'It smells beautiful,' Dad said.

And it did. The air was fresh and warm.

'It looks great too,' Danny said.

'Describe it,' Dad asked.

Danny looked around him. He told his dad about the hills sloping to the west, long grass and clumps of trees fading into the distance. He described the sky, which was turning red; and the dark silhouettes of birds he could see drifting high over the buildings. And when they got to their luxury safari lodge, he described that too.

It was amazing. A large lodge or cottage just for them. A wide balcony with a canvas awning. And the room was amazing too. The furniture was made of polished wood.

There were cushions everywhere. Fans and posh lights hung from the ceiling.

At the back of the lodge, there was a door. Danny opened it.

'There's a pool!' he shouted.

'A big one?' Dad asked.

'It's sort of medium size. But it's just for us!'

Danny gazed out past the pool and across the plain. The light was fading fast now.

And he could hear all sorts of strange noises. He was used to blackbird and dog noises at home. But these were not blackbirds and dogs he was listening to now.

The lady who had led Danny and his dad to their lodge had told them that their meal would be delivered to their balcony at 8 p.m.

Danny used the time before that to go online. The lodge had a laptop with a high speed broadband connection.

He checked his webmail and found an email from Charlotte. More information about the man she had found on the internet. The man she thought might be Sir Richard Gawthorpe.

It listed his name. James Gaw.

Danny winced. Was that a coincidence. Gaw? Gawthorpe?

It detailed his business dealings. Diamond mining. Tourism. Nothing to do with sport.

Then Danny found the link. The link to the picture of the man that Charlotte had spotted.

When he saw the picture of seven people at some sort of posh dinner, he recoiled immediately. It was the man second from the left. He didn't look that much like Sir Richard Gawthorpe. Not exactly. But if you took away his black coloured hair and lost the sun tan and made him a couple of stone heavier, there was no doubt.

Danny knew it from his gut reaction, anyway.

Mr Gaw, of the Cape Town UK Society, was none other than his old enemy, Sir Richard Gawthorpe.

Cape Town, thought Danny, that was where the next England game was, on Friday.

And he couldn't resist. This was a case for him now. While he was on this safari, he would do some research online. Research to find out the information he needed for when they arrived in Cape Town on Thursday.

And then? Well, Danny wasn't quite sure.

In Cape Town a telephone rang in a luxury apartment.

'Mr Gaw?' a voice asked.

'Speaking.'

'This is Karl de Boer. You left me a message.'

'Yes, Mr de Boer. I have a job for you.'

'But, Mr Gaw. I am busy preparing for our... operation on 11 July. There is much to do.'

Sir Richard Gawthorpe sighed. Then he spoke. 'Mr de Boer. There is a small job I need you to do this week. If this job is not done, the 11 July project will be under threat. Serious threat. And I can only trust this job to you. No-one else can do it. It is too specialised.'

The man on the other end of the line paused. 'You flatter me, Mr Gawthorpe.'

'I do not, Mr de Boer,' Sir Richard replied. 'You are the most lethal and uncompromising man I have ever employed.'

'What is it you would like me to do, sir?'

'I want you to kill a fourteen-year-old boy, Mr de Boer. Can you do that for me?'

Mr de Boer did not pause. 'I can do that. Yes, Mr Gaw.'

Eight

The Land Rover drove quickly along a dusty track, passing trees and fields of long grass. The trees were short and stumpy.

Danny and his dad had to hold onto the sides of the vehicle as it bumped along. And it was so noisy that they had not spoken – to each other or to the game ranger who was driving them. It was hot and dry and Danny could taste the dust from the road in his mouth.

After they had been travelling for half an hour, the game ranger stopped the Land Rover in the shade of a large tree.

There was no one else around.

‘It’s a huge plain,’ Danny explained to his dad. ‘There are trees and small hills in the distance.’

‘Any animals?’

‘Nothing yet.’

They climbed down one of the open sides of the Land Rover. Then the game ranger spoke. He had a deep South African accent that was sometimes hard to follow. ‘If we walk over to the edge there, we will be able to see down to a watering hole. There will be animals there. Danny, why don’t you go and look first?’

Danny hesitated. ‘Is it safe?’

‘Yes. There will be no animals up here. We are on a higher level. The prey doesn’t gather here, so the lions don’t come. Not until night, anyway.’

As Danny walked the two-hundred meters or so to the edge of a precipice to look down at the water hole, he felt a thrill run through him. Was he about to see a lion or a zebra or a giraffe? The light all around him made him feel amazing. It wasn’t like light at home. Nor was the air. It was all so different.

On his way, Danny looked back. He had heard a noise above the conversation of the game ranger and his dad. A click. He gazed back through the heat at his dad. That was when he saw the game ranger holding his gun. A long rifle.

But he knew it was okay. The game ranger had shown them the gun already. Told them it was for protection.

So Danny started walking. To the edge.

Then he heard the click again. The click of the gun.

But he kept walking. Not listening to the voices in his head making up all sorts of crazy crime scenarios. As if he would suddenly hear the crack of gunfire, then feel a bullet hit him on the back of the head. Why did he always do this?

Danny reached the edge of the precipice and looked down. And there he saw a wonderful sight. A watering hole. A herd of zebras drinking. He was looking for lions when he heard an engine start up. Then another.

Was someone else there too? Another group on safari?

He looked back again. Their two Land Rovers were moving. Danny scanned the area for his dad. Then looked at the Land Rovers again. And, although they were over 200 meters away, he could see two figures in the first Land Rover and one in the other.

They were leaving. Danny couldn't believe what was going on. Or work out why it was.

Seconds later, he was alone. On an African plain. And he had absolutely no idea what was going on.

Two hours later Danny was *still* alone. He had decided to wait. But now, with no Land Rover having come back, he knew something was *really* wrong.

Why had the Land Rovers gone off without him?

Was his dad okay?

There must have been something bad happen for them all to go. And that was the problem. Danny just could not imagine what that could be.

Another hour later Danny had stopped worrying about his dad and the Land Rovers.

It was getting colder now. The sun was going down. The sky was a swirl of red and grey, the falling sun catching the clouds.

Last night the sky had looked beautiful from the fancy lodge that Danny and his dad had stayed in. Now it looked menacing.

What now?

Stay here?

Walk back to the lodges?

Danny calculated that they had been driving about 40 miles an hour for half an hour.

So it would be a twenty mile walk. He could do that in three or four hours. It wasn't too hot. He began to walk.

And then he heard a noise. A noise that stopped him in his tracks and made him duck low to the ground.

A roar.

A low, deep, chilling roar.

And he remembered what the game ranger had said about the lions. That they did not come up to this spot during the day. But that they *did* at night.

It was nearly dark now. The daylight faded quickly in Africa.

Danny looked ahead of him, hoping to see the light from the lodges. And there *was* something.

Two red lights in the gloom.

But Danny was pretty sure that they were not lights. Because he could see more clearly what was ahead – and he knew that there was a large creature looking straight at him.

Nine

Danny squatted and watched. His heart was thumping so hard he felt like he was going to be sick. As his eyes adjusted to the blackness, he saw that there was not just one animal ahead of him. There were three. And he could see what they were now.

Lions.

Three lions.

One of them was moving towards him, slowly, like it knew its prey could not escape.

And its prey was Danny.

Danny had faced terror before in his life. He'd been shot at, chased and left for dead.

But there was something about *this* that was different. It felt final.

Then something happened inside him. And, before he knew it, he was running.

Running hard. And not in the way he had intended. He had *wanted* to try to creep away quietly, thinking the lions might not chase him if he wasn't moving fast.

But instead he found himself running toward the edge of the precipice. Where the game ranger had sent him earlier. And his chest felt like it was going to explode. His legs were aching with the strain. Everything was on full power.

And inside – deep inside – he felt a cold dark fear that he had not felt before. A fear that was turning his legs to jelly. But he ran on with the knowledge that at any moment he could be grabbed. Round the legs? Round the shoulders? By claws as big and as sharp as kitchen knives. By a body three times his weight.

But it didn't happen.

When he reached the edge he jumped. Down. It was a risk. Die in the jaws of a lion – or break every bone in his body in a fall. Or, if he jumped right, he could sit on the ledge, under the precipice. And maybe... maybe get out of this alive.

An hour later, the lions were still there. Danny could hear them padding around and feel the stones and dust that they were dislodging coming down the three metres to where he was sat.

But he was *alive*.

Although his heart was beating hard, it had calmed since the run. At least he was able to think now. Think about what he should do.

Wait. That was what he would do. Wait until the lions had gone. If the game ranger was right, they would leave just before dawn to hunt on the plain. Then he could go.

So Danny sat and watched shapes in the darkness. A dim light reflecting off the watering hole. A couple of stars among the clouds. And the dark shapes his imagination was putting on the ledge with him.

He tried to use the time to work out what had happened to his dad and why the Land Rovers had gone and why he was here alone. But, quite simply, he could not get his mind round it. He leaned back against the rock and closed his eyes. Still thinking.

He woke with a start. There was light now, coming from the east.

Down on the plain there was a scattering of animals. Zebras. Some other darker coloured things. He couldn't be sure what they were.

And there were the lions. Hunting zebra. He saw two of them at first and frowned.

Where was the other one? Still waiting above him?

And then he saw it. The first two lions were closing in on a zebra. Danny watched, fascinated. He had seen chases like this on TV and YouTube before. But, from here, it looked faster. A hundred times faster.

The third lion came in from the side. Seeing it, the zebra swerved. And that was all the leading lion needed. It was on the zebra now, hauling it down, tearing at its neck. Danny had watched every second of the chase. It was amazing and appalling at the same time.

'That could have been me,' he thought.

Danny, knowing he was safe, got to his feet and started climbing. Now that he had no need to fear the lions, he could concentrate on his fears for his dad.

Danny ran a very slow pace back to the lodges. Although it was twenty miles, it was not hot. In fact it was quite cold. If he ran at this pace he could do it. And he had always been fit.

He worked out the way to go by the shape of the hills and other landmarks.

He was tired when he arrived near the lodges. It had taken him between three and four hours. But he knew he had to be careful.

He couldn't just walk into the lodge and expect everything to be as it had been when he had left. There was some sort of threat. He knew that. It was why he was being cautious.

He sneaked round the back of the main building. A back door was open. He found himself alone in the kitchen area. He grabbed a bottle of water and some food from a giant fridge and left quickly. Then he set up watch. Inside a large bush, a hundred metres from his lodge.

Where was his dad? Was he okay? What on earth was going on?

He sat for hours and saw nothing. No one coming. No one leaving. He rested. Night was starting to fall again. Night was when he had decided he was going to go in. Find out if his dad was okay.

But just before he was about to make a move, the lodge door opened and his dad came out. Followed by the game ranger. Dad looked okay. He was walking normally – and no-one was forcing him. That was good.

Danny watched them both get into the Land Rover. Then, immediately, the game ranger climbed out and went back into the lodge.

This was Danny's chance.

Without thinking, he ran. He had some of his energy back now he had had some food and a rest. He did the hundred metres in a few seconds and jumped into the driver's seat of the Land Rover.

Then, remembering everything he had learned on an off-road driving day, he slipped the Land Rover into gear and hit the accelerator.

'Danny?' Dad shouted, reaching out and touching his son's shoulder.

'Yes.' Danny was aware his voice sounded different. Deep, gritty.

'Where have you been? They've had the police out? Search parties.'

'I'm okay,' Danny said. And he wondered why they would have told his dad that. It didn't make sense.

'Have they said you can drive this?' Dad asked.

And Danny started to wonder how he was going to explain everything to his dad.

And, as he did, he caught something in his rear view mirror.

The second Land Rover. Gaining on them.

Ten

Danny did not change the speed of his Land Rover when he saw the other vehicle in pursuit. He didn't want the driver to know he had seen him.

He just drove. Drove at a medium speed. And that was good, because he knew his dad was about to start asking questions. He would need to concentrate on that too.

'Do you want to explain what's going on?' Dad asked.

Danny swallowed. What should he say? Make up a story so Dad didn't just put them on the next plane home? Ask him if he thought the safari prize was a set up? Tell him everything?

But Danny knew, really. He did what he always did with his dad. Tell the truth. That was their understanding.

'I wasn't lost,' Danny explained. 'I was there. They just drove off. I ran back this morning. They didn't send out a search party. It was a lie.'

'Why?' Dad asked.

'I don't know.'

'Danny, is this another of your football detective things?' Dad said.

He sounded serious now. In the past Danny had been open about his investigations.

His dad knew pretty much everything and allowed him to get on with it. He knew what it meant to his son. Mum was another story. But she wasn't here.

'I'm not sure, Dad. But... it could be.'

And then Danny told his dad everything. About the crash and how that was how Sir Richard used to operate. About them winning the safari – and how it seemed dodgy now that it had nearly ended so badly. About Charlotte finding a picture of Sir Richard in Cape Town. The lot.

But he didn't mention the fact that they were being followed. He was hoping that was a problem that would just go away.

Danny checked in his rear view mirror as he was talking. The other Land Rover was still behind. Still quarter of a mile or so back, tracking Danny's speed.

'Do you think Sir Richard is involved in all this?' Dad asked.

'Maybe,' Danny said, frowning.

Danny noticed his dad nodding. 'And you think he's planning something?'

'That's what I want to find out.'

'Can I ask you something?' Dad asked.

'Yes.'

'Why don't we just tell the police?'

Danny had thought of this.

'Because,' he said, 'they would never believe that there is a mad former football chairman on the loose about to do something bad – and that we can't say what it is or where he is.'

Dad paused for a long time. 'So what now?' he asked eventually.

'England v Algeria,' Danny answered. 'Kick off is in a few hours.'

His dad laughed.

'I mean it,' Danny said.

'I know you do,' Dad went on. 'Look. Get this Land Rover to a train station. Then at least I don't have to worry about you driving.'

'I'm a *good* driver,' Danny said.

'I know. But you're also a fourteen year old boy.'

'Okay,' Danny said.

But he knew that it was not as easy as that.

If they were going to stop the Land Rover and get a train, they needed time to do it.

They needed to lose the other Land Rover. That was the only way he was going to get them away safely – and the only way he was going to get to see the England-Algeria game.

He thought as he drove. His dad seemed to understand – because he said nothing.

Danny was tiring of driving when he saw the solution to his problems: a police car half a mile ahead of them on the long road to Cape Town. It stuck out, a white flash amid the dusty roads and hills.

He quickly formulated a plan.

It was a risk, but he thought that, if he hit the accelerator and went over the speed limit, the Land Rover behind him would as well. Then the police might pull one of them over.

So Danny pushed the accelerator to the floor. Instantly the Land Rover rocketed over the speed limit. Just as they were passing the police car.

Behind him Danny saw the other Land Rover speed up too. And behind that, as they passed it, the police car moving off, its lights and siren on.

Now it was 50/50. Who would the police stop?

Either way it would be okay. If the police stopped Danny he would tell them everything and ask for protection. If they stopped the other Land Rover, he and his dad could go and watch the England match and he could worry about everything else later.

'Is there a reason you're breaking the speed limit?' Dad asked.

Danny smiled. He liked his dad. He was pretty cool as dads went. He made a mental note not to forget Father's Day on Sunday.

'I thought we were being followed,' Danny said, looking back to see the police car pull the other Land Rover up, and feeling like the weight of the world had been lifted off his shoulders.

'And are we?' Dad sounded worried.

'No,' Danny said. 'And there's a train station coming up. Let's get into Cape Town and watch England beat Algeria.'

'So long as we're safe now,' Dad said warily.

'We are,' Danny replied. 'We are now.' And, as he did, he punched the air.

But, in the back of his mind, he knew that, once the game was over, he would have to do some serious detective work. To find Sir Richard. Before Sir Richard found him.

But now he wanted to think about one thing: England v Algeria.

Eleven

The stadium at Cape Town was breathtaking.

Approaching it from the city, Danny had not been able to make out of its shape. But, once he was inside, he was amazed. The roof was a huge circle, a black starry night visible above the glare of the stadium lights. And, unlike in the USA game, most of the people were there to support England.

Danny could not help but stare in silence as he led his dad up the steps.

‘You’re speechless,’ Dad remarked. ‘Have you seen Sir Richard?’

Dad had said it as a joke. Danny knew that. But the thought reminded him that there was something going on that he needed get to the bottom of.

In fact, he knew where and when he was going to start. At the Cape Town City Library, tomorrow at 9 a.m. He had seen the library as they had walked to the stadium.

But tonight was about the football. He could forget everything else for now – and enjoy England’s performance. He was *so* excited. Tonight his team were going to play properly and show the world that they were a true footballing force.

By the time John Terry back-passed the ball, nearly letting an Algerian attacker score, Danny felt physically sick. He looked at his dad who had spent thousands of pounds of his own money on this trip. Dad looked glum.

‘Terry passed it back and they nearly scored,’ Danny said in disgust.

‘Are we going to lose this?’ Dad asked.

‘I doubt it,’ Danny replied. ‘It’ll end up 0-0.’ He looked at his watch. There were about twenty minutes left.

When Danny was jolted out of his misery by the booing of the England fans, he looked down at the pitch. It was full time.

He spotted Wayne Rooney speaking into a camera as he marched off the pitch. He wondered what he was saying. He didn’t look happy.

Danny's mind had drifted away from the football during the last few minutes of the match. It had been so depressing to watch, he had been trying to piece together things in his mind instead.

That he and his dad had nearly been involved in an accident when he had arrived in South Africa. A car crash that was just the kind of thing Sir Richard Gawthorpe might have set up.

That Charlotte's and his research suggested Sir Richard was in Cape Town, under the new name of Gaw.

That there had been the weird incident on the safari, with him being left to die in the middle of nowhere, then the Land Rover following them once Danny had got to Dad.

It had to mean someone had tried to leave him out in the wilds on purpose.

And Danny was asking himself *why?* Why would the car crash and safari incident have happened? There had to be a reason behind it.

He had tried to think of reasons that were not to do with his suspicions around Sir Richard. But he couldn't.

He had decided that tomorrow he would try to find out if Sir Richard *was* behind these strange events. And then he would decide what to do.

Sir Richard Gawthorpe switched off his giant TV screen and smiled. England had been bad. Really bad. He started to laugh.

Since he had been forced to leave England, he had wanted the national team to lose.

He wasn't sure if he wanted England to be involved in the final, anyway. Because Sir Richard had plans for the final on 11th July. Plans that would shock the world. Plans that would make his name live forever in the history of football.

He ran through the plans in his head.

Once both the teams were in the dressing rooms, thirty minutes before kickoff, he would strike. There would be no World Cup Final in 2010. And when people looked in the history books, they would see the gap.

And, when they saw it they would remember the name of Sir Richard Gawthorpe.

Danny and his father walked home to their hotel. There was a subdued atmosphere.

The England fans seemed to have given up.

Then a text came through on Danny's phone.

Have you heard a man got into the England dressing room and had a go at Beckham? Was it you?!? Charlotte x

'Someone's got into the dressing rooms,' Danny said to his dad. And at the same time he smiled at Charlotte's joke.

'What? Who? Terrorists?' Dad asked.

'No. It just sounds like a fan. Charlotte just texted me.'

'This can't get any worse,' Dad sighed. 'It's a nightmare.'

But neither of them knew that it *could* get worse – and that it *would*.

And that, if Danny did not find out what he needed to find out, and soon, the World Cup would end badly.

Very badly indeed.

Twelve

Danny woke in the Cape Town hotel room to see his dad, eyes closed, listening to music on his ipod. So he lay there, still half asleep, thinking about the game the night before.

He was already starting to feel better about it. He worked out the Group C table in his mind. Slovenia had four points, England and USA two points and Algeria one. All England had to do was beat Slovenia and they'd probably top the group. Easy.

Then his mind slipped into another gear. His plans for today. The library. That was what he wanted to do. His dad had already said he would be having a day at the hotel. He wanted to sort plans for getting to Port Elizabeth for the Slovenia game – and just chill.

The Cape Town library was massive and hard to find your way around. Eventually, Danny was directed to the business library. This, he was told, was where he would be able to find out about South African businessmen and businesses. And – he hoped – to discover more about the Mr Gaw character that Charlotte had unearthed.

He entered the library. A space so large it was confusing to know where to go first.

He looked at miles of books and files on thousands of shelves. Now what? How was he supposed to find anything out in here?

'Can I help you?'

Danny turned round to see a girl. He took a sharp breath inwards. She was about as tall as he was with short dreadlocked hair and huge brown eyes.

'Erm...' Danny said, faltering. 'I'm looking for some information on a man, an Englishman who lives here now.' Danny was aware his voice was wobbly. He tried his hardest to hide it. He was feeling suddenly shy.

Then the girl smiled. 'Wow!' she said. 'Are you English?'

An hour later, Danny had a small file of papers about Mr Gaw. The papers had details of Gaw's businesses and his home address. There had even been another photograph. Again it looked a bit, but not completely, like Sir Richard.

Now he was sitting in the library café with the girl he had met. She was called Mafuane and aged fifteen. She was on a work-placement in the library.

There were several other people in the café. The nearest was a man with his back to Danny and Mafuane. He was wearing a South Africa football top.

‘So, do you live in Cape Town?’ Danny asked, drinking his coke.

Mafuane nodded. ‘Yes, but out of the city. In another part of town. I can show it to you if you like.’

Danny smiled. He liked the idea. Since they had met they had been getting on really well. They liked the same things and made each other laugh. And he did want to see more of South Africa. What it was really like.

Danny pointed at the papers Mafuane had helped him to find.

‘Is it near here?’ he asked.

‘Yes. I live near where the man you want to know about lives.’

‘Can you show me that too?’

‘Yes. But today I have to work here,’ she answered. ‘Tomorrow I am free.’

This was great. Danny and his dad were not heading on to Port Elizabeth for the Slovenia game until Wednesday morning. He had all Tuesday to look round Cape Town. With Mafuane.

Danny decided he would go to see where Mafuane lived – then he would go on to Mr Gaw’s house.

And, when he was there, he would get to work.

In the past, to solve crimes, he had needed to find out facts about people. People who he thought were going to do something illegal. One of the things he would do – like the detectives did in the books he read – was watch buildings and sometimes go into them. He could do that here. No problem.

What *was* a problem was that the man directly behind them in the café – the one in the South Africa football top – had been listening. And he now knew exactly what Danny was planning.

The man was a Mr de Boer, a South African who was currently being employed by a Mr Gaw.

It had not taken him long to track down Danny and his father. He had seen the boy leave his hotel that morning and had followed him to the library. He was now busy emailing his employer on his iPhone.

“Mr Gaw – The boy is coming to your home tomorrow. To pry. He will be watching your property. I will have three men ready. Please advise me on what you would like me to do with him once I have caught him. And if you want him dead – or alive. De Boer”

Dealing with the boy would be easy. Mr de Boer had hoped that leaving him to the lions on the bogus safari would be enough. But the boy had shown great resourcefulness. In fact, he was quite impressed. He was warming to him.

But de Boer was not in this job to be impressed by fourteen year old boys. He was in it because he wanted money. And Mr Gaw was offering him \$250,000.

It was not a difficult choice.

Thirteen

Cape Town was not what Danny had expected it to be. So far he had only seen the city centre, the stations, the football stadium. And it seemed like any other major city he had been in. London. Moscow. Leeds.

Now he was on a tram travelling up the coast with Mafuane. Out into the real city.

Away from the tourist areas, where real people lived. Danny wasn't sure what he had expected from an African city. But it was not this.

Beautiful sandy beaches. Harbours filled with expensive yachts. Rows of brightly coloured buildings, like seaside houses back home. And a spectacular backdrop. A huge mountain, with a flat top, against a bright blue sky.

Once Mafuane had led Danny from the tram they walked inland. As they walked he caught sight of less well-off areas. Houses made of corrugated iron, but painted the same bright colours as the ones on the seafront.

'We will go to the house you want to see,' Mafuane explained, 'then my mother would like you to come for some food at our home.'

'That would be great,' Danny said. 'Thank you.'

Eventually they reached a street on a steep hill. On the left there was a row of large houses that looked from a hilltop out to sea. They seemed to Danny like they could have been in England. Maybe the kind of thing you would get in a posh seaside town.

Half way up the road Mafuane stopped Danny, and drew him to the side of the pavement, next to a small café. She pointed at the large house at the end of the road.

'This is the house you want,' she said.

Danny swallowed. He could immediately feel the anxiety he had felt when he had come up against Sir Richard Gawthorpe in the past. The time he had been trapped by him in the City stadium. The time he had been chased through a Russian forest by his men.

He started to question why he was here.

But he told himself he was just looking. Nothing else. Sir Richard did not know he was coming. There was no danger.

'I am going to have a closer look,' Danny said to Mafuane. 'Will you wait for me in the café here?'

'Yes,' Mafuane answered.

'I won't be more than an hour,' Danny said. Then he turned and left, once he was sure Mafuane was in the café.

From a high window at the top of the large house, Sir Richard Gawthorpe gazed down. He watched Danny approach through a pair of binoculars. He laughed out loud when he identified the boy he knew so well.

Sir Richard had left the side gate of his property open. Also a door into an outhouse at the side of the main building. He had spread some papers on a desk there.

Papers he imagined Danny would want to look through.

He had set his trap. Now all he had to do was get downstairs and gather his prey. He laughed again.

The house had a front gate. But Danny knew better than to look through there. That was too obvious. He would go round the back. See what he could see.

At the side he found a door. Through it there was a beautiful garden, with tall plants and bushes. It was a risk, but he decided to go inside the garden. He just wanted to see into the house, maybe there would be something through a window that would give him some evidence.

He pulled his mobile phone out of his pocket, so he could take a photo if need be.

In the garden he moved from plant to plant, making sure he did not stand within the sightline of one of the house's windows.

Eventually he saw what looked like an outhouse. A small one storey stone-build shed in the garden. Maybe there would be something in there? It would be no harm to look. It wasn't like he was going in the main house.

He crept up to it and peered in through the window.

Bingo!

There was a desk and some papers laid out on it. Surely they would give him some information.

He moved to the door. But just before he was about to push it he heard a noise. A rustle. He looked round wildly. Suddenly he felt very tense.

But it was okay. It was just some sort of creature. A mouse or a bird moving across dry leaves.

He smiled. He was always jumpy like this, when he was searching somewhere that he should not be.

‘Good morning, Danny.’

For a split second Danny was about to turn round and say good morning back. Then he felt his heart leap into his throat and a violent nausea overcoming him.

He turned slowly. He knew what he would see. Or *who* he would see.

‘We meet again,’ Sir Richard said, grinning, his face twitching with delight.

Danny said nothing. He just looked at the gun his old enemy was pointing at him and remembered the words Sir Richard had said to him the last time they had met, in Moscow, only a few months before. Something along the lines of *The next time I see you I will kill you*.

Danny sat in the outhouse, his legs bound together and one of his hands handcuffed to the wall.

The room was quite bare, except for a forty-two inch TV screen in the corner, the desk with the papers on and the two chairs he and Sir Richard were sitting on.

Sir Richard gazed at him, still wearing his ugly grin.

‘We’re going to have some fun tonight,’ Sir Richard said. ‘Because I am so keen that you enjoy the England match.’

Danny said nothing. He had not spoken a word since he had been caught.

‘We’re going to watch the match,’ Sir Richard went on. ‘Do you want to know about the fun I have lined up for you?’

Danny still refused to speak.

‘Well, Danny Harte, I will tell you.’ Sir Richard stopped speaking because he was laughing so much. He sounded like a madman. ‘Here’s the fun bit... If England *lose* I am going to let you go. If they *draw* I am going to let you go. But, if England *win* and qualify for the next round, I am going to kill you the minute the final whistle goes.

With this gun. Okay?’

Danny did not answer. He just looked at the floor trying to get control of the torrent of thoughts running through his mind. Trying not to be overwhelmed by the panic that was choking him.

Fourteen

Sir Richard Gawthorpe sat back in his chair, a TV remote control in one hand, a can of beer in the other.

Danny had a coke and some nuts. He decided to eat and drink what he was given, not knowing where his next meal would be coming from. Even though he felt sick with nerves, he decided this was the right choice.

'I'm going to enjoy this game, Danny,' Sir Richard remarked.

Danny did not reply.

For the first few minutes of the England v Slovenia game, Danny was not sure what he wanted to happen. Logically he should not want England to beat Slovenia. Sir Richard had said he would kill Danny if England won and would let him go otherwise.

But he knew that was nonsense, really. Sir Richard was just playing games. He would probably kill Danny anyway.

And what he was *really* worrying about was his dad. Danny's phone had been going all day, but Sir Richard had not let him answer it. His dad would be going out of his mind. Danny could hardly bear the thought.

After twenty minutes, England came down the right wing and the ball flew across the box to Jermaine Defoe. Defoe struck. 1-0.

Sir Richard jumped out of his seat and cheered. Then he turned to Danny.

'Oh dear. It's not looking good for you, Danny, is it?'

An hour and a bit later, Danny was watching the clock in the corner of the screen.

Two minutes left. What did he want? Maybe it would be better if Slovenia scored: it could save his life.

Slovenia packed the England box with attackers. They shot – and England blocked.

Then they shot again, but England blocked it *again*.

Danny could feel his blood pressure rising. His face was stinging. He knew he must look stressed. Because now it was injury time and Sir Richard was glancing at him all the time.

But he still felt glad that Slovenia had *not* scored and proud that, at last, his team were showing the world that they could play!

Then the final whistle went. And immediately Sir Richard switched the TV off and picked up his gun.

‘Do you know how in James Bond films when the villain has Bond trapped and tells him all his plans? And that he does it because he knows he is going to kill Bond?’

Danny just stared at Sir Richard. Not answering.

‘Well, I’m going to tell you what I am planning. Because in five minutes you will be dead.’ Sir Richard paused, then went on. ‘On the day of the World Cup final, I am going to commit the greatest football crime ever. I am going to...’

And then it started. A sound like machine gun fire. Danny couldn’t move: he had had his legs bound since Sir Richard caught him. But Sir Richard could move. Danny was surprised to see him hit the floor. An instinctive act.

Next, the door burst open. And five or six young men came in. In a second they were on top of Sir Richard and another was helping Danny to get his legs free.

At first Danny thought he’d been abducted, until he saw Mafuane standing – and smiling – by the café where he had last seen her. He had read a lot about crime in South Africa. He had been worried that this was perhaps a kidnap attempt. But he did not think that now. He knew he was safe.

‘I see you’ve met my friends,’ Mafuane smiled.

‘We’ve not been introduced,’ Danny replied.

Then he made a point of thanking all five young men who had rescued him. The last of them returned Danny’s phone, which he must have taken from the outhouse.

Danny’s head was still spinning and he wasn’t sure exactly what had happened in there. All he knew was that he was no longer Sir Richard’s prisoner and that his old enemy was now alone in his outhouse with *his* legs tied.

And then Danny thought of his dad. He had to call him.

The phone didn’t even ring once before his dad picked it up.

‘Hi Dad.’

‘Danny. Where are you? Are you safe?’

‘I *am* safe. I’m in Cape Town. I’m sorry. Are you in Port Elizabeth? Did you go to the game?’

'No I did *not* go to the game. I am in Cape Town *looking* for you. Get back to the hotel now. We're leaving.'

Danny immediately agreed to come. After the elation of escaping from Sir Richard, he now felt as low as he ever had. And it was because of the tone of his dad's voice.

Disappointment.

Danny hated disappointing his dad more than anything. He was pretty sure his dad was about to pull the plug on their holiday. Ending his dreams of seeing more World Cup football. And halting his chances of stopping Sir Richard doing whatever he was planning to do.

Fifteen

When Danny and Mafuane reached the hotel, Danny felt strange. He wasn't sure if he would ever see his new friend again. And, over the last two days, he had come to like her – and he did have a lot to thank her for.

But it was quite likely that his dad was about to pull the plug on their trip to South Africa, even though England had qualified for the next round to play Germany. So this *could* be the last time he saw her.

As Danny was stalling, trying to decide what to say, Mafuane suddenly stepped forward and hugged him. So Danny hugged her back.

'If you return to Cape Town, come to see me at the library,' Mafuane said, pulling away. 'My mother would still like you to come to meet her.'

'I will,' Danny said. 'And thank you. For saving my life.'

He felt a strange sadness inside as he watched her walk away. It was like he knew Mafuane really well, even though they had only met a day ago.

But Danny was desperate to see his dad. He had so much to tell him.

The first thing Danny did with his dad was apologise. The second thing he did was tell him exactly what had happened over the last few hours.

Dad sat listening with a stony face. He did not speak at all.

'I'm sorry,' Danny said, finally.

Still Dad was silent. So Danny waited. He knew it was best not to talk. Dad was thinking.

Then, at last, Dad spoke. 'We've been here before,' he said. 'Haven't we?'

Danny nodded.

'Like the time Sir Richard was ready to shoot you in the City Stadium. Or the time you were chased around Moscow by a Russian billionaire.' Dad paused, then went on. 'And each time I have this problem. Do I treat you like a normal dad would treat his son – and come down on you hard? Or, do I let you do what you do, because you need to do it, but will one day end up dead because of it?'

Danny wanted to remind his dad that, last time they had talked like this, he had said Danny could carry on doing these things. So long as he told his dad exactly what was going on.

But he kept quiet. Instinct told him to.

'Well?' Dad asked. 'Just tell me! Why should I let you be involved in trying to solve crimes committed by people who would happily kill you?'

Danny then decided it was time to take a risk. His dad liked truth. So now he was going to get it. 'I do all this because of you,' he started.

'Me?' Dad snapped back. 'How's that?'

'Because when you were in hospital and they told me you you'd lost your sight and had to give up being a fireman – *and* watching football *and* enjoying your crime stories – I would have done anything to help you. So I read your books to you... but then I realised I was reading them for *me* as much as *you*, because I wanted to see who did it and how, and it made me want to solve crimes myself.'

Danny breathed out after his speech.

'Is that it?' Dad asked.

'No, there's more,' Danny said.

'Go on.'

'Because,' Danny said again, 'I don't want Sir Richard and all the thugs like him who use football to make money, or show off, or to do mean things to other people, to do what they do. And because the police never believe what these people are up to. So *someone* has to do something.'

'That's all very noble,' Dad said. 'But you are my son and it is my job to make sure you're safe.'

Danny decided this was, again, one of the times he should not answer his dad.

'It seems to me that, as your parent, I have a choice to make,' Dad said. 'One, I can take you home to England right now. Two, I can let you do what you want, regardless of what could happen. Three, I could make sure I am with you at all times, so I can help you decide whether you can do the things you choose to do. Do you agree that is my choice?'

'Yes,' Danny said.

Dad sighed. 'So now I have to make that choice.' And, with that, Dad stood up. 'Give me some time,' he said.

Watching his dad pace the room, Danny tried to run the three choices through his mind.

Choice one. If his dad said they should go home, Danny would not get to see the Germany game, and nor would he be in a position to stop Sir Richard doing whatever it was he was planning to do on 11th July.

Choice two. If his dad said he could carry on solving crimes, he would be able to see the Germany game and be ready to take on Sir Richard. The only thing wrong with that was that he could quite easily be killed in the process.

Choice three. If his dad was to come with him all the time, it would mean that he would probably not be able to do all the things he wanted to do – and that it might place his dad in danger. On the other hand, his dad was really clever and together they could be a stronger force to stop Sir Richard.

Danny looked at his dad again – and saw that he was ready to make his choice.

Sixteen

After the Germany game, Danny and his dad could not speak. They walked arm in arm away from the stadium in Bloemfontein. There was really nothing to say.

Dad had still not told Danny of his decision about what they would be doing next.

They'd already bought tickets for *this* match and Dad said he would make up his mind after that. Danny would either be allowed to investigate Sir Richard alone, with his dad – or just go home.

It was dark away from the floodlights of the stadium. Night fell quickly in Africa. Danny had been worried that England fans might cause trouble after the game, but there was nothing like that. Just English people walking in silence – with others talking to victorious Germans.

Danny assumed his dad would say it was time to go home now England were out of the World Cup. But he still wanted to see more football. He had dreamed about going to the final to see players like Messi and Kaka in real life. And he also wanted to stay in the country to investigate Sir Richard and whatever it was he was planning.

But all that seemed unlikely now.

When they reached their hotel in Bloemfontein, Dad announced what they were going to do next.

'Right,' he said, loudly in the hotel reception, 'get your bags, Danny. We're getting the next flight.'

Danny shuddered. Back to England. Back to school. Away from the greatest football show on earth. Away from trying to solve what could be a terrible crime.

And he couldn't stop wondering why his dad had had to say it so loudly in the hotel.

So that lots of people had looked round.

The man watching Danny and his father go through the security barriers at the airport smiled. He was sitting in a bar with a full view of the two figures he wanted to see leaving the country.

He started to chuckle, low under his breath.

England were out. And not just out: they had been rubbish. He had particularly

enjoyed England's second goal. Or non-goal. The one that had gone over the line.

He had nearly choked he had laughed so much when the referee had missed it.

And Danny Harte was on his way back to England. That was good too.

Now he could step up his plans for the World Cup Final in the knowledge that the one person who could stop him was about to get on a plane that would take him 6000 miles away.

At the airport Danny did not take much notice of what was happening. He felt sad.

This might be the last time he saw South Africa. His dad dealt with the tickets and the passports. Danny's mind started to drift towards school and the last three weeks of term.

When they had passed through security and went to the departures gate, Danny came to his senses. His dad had told him to lead him to gate 11.

'Dad?'

'Yes.'

'Gate 11 is for Ghana. We want gate 7 for England.'

'Just take us to gate 11. I know what I'm doing.'

What was this? Why were they going to Ghana?

Then Danny realised. It was probably because it was cheaper to fly to Ghana then on to the UK. Direct flights from South Africa to England would be in great demand.

On the plane, Danny gazed out of the window. He felt miserable. He kept running the image of German players running through the English defence as if it wasn't there.

Why had they been so rubbish?

'You haven't asked me what my decision is yet,' Dad interrupted. And Danny detected a hint of a smile on his face.

'We're leaving,' Danny answered. 'Isn't it obvious?'

Then Dad handed Danny an envelope.

'What's this?' Danny asked.

'Open it.'

Danny tore at the envelope. He could hardly believe what he saw inside.

Two tickets. July 11th. The World Cup final. Danny's dream come true.

‘What’s going on, Dad?’

‘I made my decision,’ Dad replied. ‘There was no way I was going to let you try to get to the bottom of what Sir Richard is up to on your own. You will put yourself in too much danger. So I am going to be with you. Every step of the way. Then I can decide if you are going too far. Okay?’

‘Great,’ Danny said. ‘That *is* great. And these tickets... thank you!’

‘You’re welcome, Danny.’

‘But Dad?’

‘Yes?’

‘Why are we not staying in South Africa? Why are we going to Ghana?’

‘Two reasons,’ Dad explained. ‘One: we needed to be seen to be leaving the country. I don’t doubt for a minute that Sir Richard has been having us watched. So now he thinks we are going home to England.’

‘Clever,’ Danny said. ‘And the other reason?’

‘When you read your file to me yesterday...’ Dad held up the file that Mafuane had prepared for him about Sir Richard. ‘I remember that, last year, Sir Richard – or Mr Gaw, as he calls himself – had a major fall out with a business partner. A Mr Annan from Ghana. They have both tried to take each other to court. And I thought, while we’re lying low, we could pay him a visit. See what he can tell us.’

Danny smiled. He loved his dad. And he loved the way his dad was just like him. A detective at heart. Someone who wanted to get to the bottom of a mystery.

And Ghana would be great. One of Danny’s best friends, Kofi Danquah, the footballer, was from there. And he was visiting his parents in the country right now.

As the plane took off, Danny closed his eyes and smiled. They were going to Ghana.

What would they find out? And would it help them stop Sir Richard Gawthorpe from doing whatever it was that he was planning?

Seventeen

Ghana was hot compared to South Africa. Very hot. The air was thick and sticky on Danny's skin. But it was always hot in Ghana. In *South* Africa it was winter – and a lot more like England.

Once they had come through arrivals, Danny texted his friend, the Premier League City FC player, Kofi Danquah, so that they could meet.

After they had checked into a hotel in Kumasi, Ghana's second city, Danny and his dad took a taxi to some offices in the centre of town. As they drove through the city, Danny stared out at the people there. Some in suits, going to and from offices.

Others in older clothes, selling things like food and tools that they had laid out on cloths by the road side.

Danny described it all to his dad as they went by.

The taxi arrived at the address that they had found in Mafuane's file. It was a two storey building near the Kumasi football stadium.

They were shown into an office, where a large man sat, wearing a white suit and tie.

Mr Annan. Former partner of Sir Richard Gawthorpe. Surrounding him on the walls were photos of himself standing by diggers and half constructed buildings.

The man stepped forward. 'How much money have you brought me?' he asked in a deep voice.

'None,' Danny said. 'We just wanted to ask you some questions about Mr Gaw, your former business partner?'

'I see,' the man replied. 'I don't remember much about him today.'

For the next ten minutes Danny and his dad asked the man questions. But he would not tell them anything. As they spoke, Danny noticed Kofi arriving outside. He could see that several people were mobbing his friend. Kofi was famous in Ghana. Very famous.

Observing that Danny was losing interest in him, the man looked down to the street and saw Kofi. He gasped. 'It is Kofi Danquah! My goodness!'

'He's here to see me,' Danny said. 'He's my friend.'

Suddenly the man changed. Instead of not telling them anything and asking for money, he was now super-friendly.

‘You know Kofi Danquah? Can you introduce him to me?’

Danny knew it might be good to do that, but he hated the idea of using his friend’s fame to get a favour from this odious man.

‘Can you not tell me one thing about Mr Gaw?’ Danny asked.

The man was rushing to the door. He seemed more interested in talking to Kofi than Danny now.

‘Tell us something,’ Danny went on, ‘and I will ask Kofi to talk to you.’

Danny still felt bad about doing this, but if he could find a way of stopping Sir Richard, he figured it was worth it.

‘Okay.’ The man was as excited as a six-year-old boy might be in meeting a footballer. ‘Gaw has plans... he has plans to... I can’t tell you much, but... he has plans, shall we say, to dig a hole.’ The man started to laugh. ‘That is *all* I will say.’

Danny’s mind was working over and over. Dig a hole? What did that mean? And then it struck him. That was what Sir Richard had done before in England. He had kidnapped an England footballer and hidden him in a secret chamber dug out beneath the City Stadium.

So Danny decided to take a risk.

‘Under the stadium?’ Danny asked with a hard voice.

And, as soon as he said it, Mr Annan stopped laughing. He swallowed. He looked alarmed. ‘I have told you nothing,’ he said, his voice wobbling. ‘Go, go, GO!’

Danny and his dad left. The man appeared to have lost interest in Kofi. He looked scared, like he had given a very big secret away.

Outside, Danny greeted his friend Kofi. They saw each other in England all the time, even though Kofi was a Premier League footballer. But it was good to see him here in Ghana, his home country.

They spent the evening together, before Kofi headed back to his family’s fair trade cocoa farm. Kofi gave Danny’s dad a present: a cocoa bean pod.

‘Good luck to Ghana in the quarter finals,’ Danny told Kofi as they parted. ‘Next time it is the World Cup you will be 20 – and playing.’

As Danny and his dad travelled on the coach from Kumasi back to Ghana’s capital, Accra, they spoke in low voices.

‘So what did you make of Mr Annan?’ Dad asked.

‘I didn’t like him,’ Danny said. ‘He just wanted money. And to rub shoulders with celebrities.’

‘You’re right,’ Dad agreed. ‘But what did his face look like when you mentioned digging under the stadium?’

‘He was rattled,’ Danny said.

‘He sounded rattled,’ Dad replied, ‘like you’d hit on something.’

Danny said nothing.

‘So what are you thinking?’ Dad pressed.

‘I’m thinking that Sir Richard is planning something similar to what he did at City FC.’

‘That’s what I’m wondering too,’ Dad said. ‘We need to get to Johannesburg to find out what he is going to do before it’s too late.’

And so the coach headed south to Accra airport, where Danny and his dad would fly to Johannesburg, where the World Cup Final stadium awaited.

Danny tried to sleep, but he couldn’t. The pieces of the jigsaw were coming together for him now. Sir Richard Gawthorpe was planning to do something to players before or after the World Cup final. Maybe.

This was suddenly becoming very serious.

Eighteen

Danny and his dad booked into a hotel near the airport when they arrived in Johannesburg. It was their first time in the city since the day they had arrived in South Africa – and had nearly been run off the road by a large van.

That had been three weeks ago.

Being so close to the place they had flown into made Danny feel homesick for the first time since they'd left England. He missed his mum. But also Charlotte. It was a long time to go without seeing your best friend. He wished he could see her today.

Once they were in their room, Danny and his dad talked over their plans.

'When's the next game at the stadium where they are having the final?' Dad asked.

'Friday and Saturday,' Danny replied.

'So we need to get in there on one of those days?' Dad said.

'Yes,' Danny agreed.

'To see if there's any evidence of what Mr Annan suggested. A hole? Or something like Sir Richard did at City FC? An underground bunker?'

'Anton will help us,' Danny interrupted, referring to his friend the football journalist.

'We find out what we can,' Dad said firmly, 'then go to the police.'

'Yes,' Danny said.

They rested until it was time for something to eat. Once his dad was asleep, Danny texted Mafuane. He wanted to tell her that they were in Johannesburg.

But what he wasn't prepared for was where *she* was.

I'm at that man's house. Watching. A man has just gone in to visit him. A fat man. From Mafuane

Danny texted back.

Be careful. It's dangerous. You should leave.

The next reply came quickly.

They are arguing. I can see them in his garden. Through the side gate.

Danny stopped texting and pressed CALL.

Mafuane answered straight away. She was whispering.

'Get out,' Danny said. 'Why are you there?'

'I wanted to see what was going on. I thought it might help you.'

'But you could be in danger,' Danny insisted.

There was a silence then.

'Do you know who the other man is?' Danny asked.

'I heard Sir Richard call him Mr Aman – or something like that.'

'Mr *Annan*?' Danny asked, suddenly anxious. And then he heard two loud cracks coming down the line.

'What was that?' Danny asked again.

'Shots,' Mafuane said, breathless. 'Mr Aman... he's fallen down. His head... it's...'

'Get out of there,' Danny shouted.

'They're... they're... Oh no... they've seen me.' Danny could hear the panic in Mafuane's voice.

'Run,' he shouted, waking his dad.

Then he heard a scuffling and hard footsteps hammering.

'What is it?' Dad asked, confused.

'Mafuane? Mafuane?' Danny shouted down the line.

And then her line went dead.

Danny redialled her number immediately, as his dad stood next to him, silent.

But there was no reply. Nothing.

'What?' Dad asked, cautiously. 'What is it?'

'Mafuane was at Sir Richard's house,' Danny said, his words spilling out. 'She saw Mr Annan arrive. Then he was shot. Then they saw her. She ran. Then her phone went dead.'

Danny could hardly believe what he was saying. Things had started to develop – very quickly. And not in a good way.

Mr Annan had gone to see Sir Richard.

Why?

Was it to do with Danny and their meeting the day before in Ghana?

Mr Annan had been shot.

Why?

And, if *he* had been shot, who was next?

And, worst of all, Mafuane had been chased – and her line had gone dead.

What was happening to her now?

Too many questions. With no answers. Danny held his head in his hands. This was becoming too much to handle.

Nineteen

Sir Richard Gawthorpe stood gazing from the room on the top floor of his house.

This was his office, the place from where he watched the world. The place from where he was preparing his greatest crime yet.

He was watching three of his men working below. They were carrying something from the side garden to the garage. It was wrapped in a huge black plastic sheet.

The men were struggling. What they were carrying was heavy. Very heavy.

It was the lifeless body of Mr Annan, formerly of Kumasi, Ghana.

But Sir Richard was not happy. The things that Mr Annan had told him had made him deeply anxious. A boy had been to see Mr Annan in Ghana. A boy and a blind man.

Sir Richard knew that that must have been Danny Harte.

He let a smile form on his lips. He had to admit that Danny Harte was a brilliant adversary. Sir Richard had seen him leave the country with his own eyes. But not for England, as Sir Richard had assumed. For Ghana.

Sir Richard's face clouded over. His cheeks and forehead turned a deep red.

Mr Annan had told him that the boy had mentioned a hole. A hole underneath the stadium.

How had he known? Or did he know? Was he guessing?

And where was he now?

Sir Richard had his people watching all the airports, but there had been no sign yet of Danny Harte.

And he had another question. The girl. The girl his men had chased. Was she something to do with Danny Harte? He always seemed to have girls around him.

He had a man watching the girl too. Just in case.

Sir Richard Gawthorpe stopped thinking about the boy. He didn't have time for him.

He had a job to do. Tomorrow he would be attending Uruguay v Ghana at Soccer City in Johannesburg. And there he would run through his arrangements for 11 July.

He knew his plan would be a success. But he would enjoy double checking tomorrow anyway.

Danny was sitting in a cafe in Johannesburg as the body of Mr Annan was being

removed from Sir Richard's garden. He was with his dad and Anton Holt.

'So the girl –Mafuane – is okay?' Anton asked.

'Yes. She texted me last night,' Danny said, 'but I told her to lie low.'

'And now you want my help?' Anton said.

'Please,' Danny replied.

'And your advice,' Dad interrupted, 'about what is *safe*.'

Anton nodded. 'Okay. You've told me everything about Sir Richard. I believe you.

But the police won't. So what can I do to help?'

'We want to get into Soccer City tomorrow,' Danny said. 'We want to be near to the dressing rooms before and after the match.'

Anton laughed loudly. 'You do know that is almost impossible?'

Danny shook his head. 'We need to,' he said.

'Did you see the news today?' Anton went on. 'The man who got into England's dressing room after the Algeria game was in court. He was let go. But he had to pay a fine. And the newspaper who were maybe involved are in court too. Some people think the newspaper got him in there. And you want me to get *you* in?'

'You have to,' Danny said firmly.

'I can't.'

'Why?'

'Because I could lose my job,' Anton said.

Danny didn't know what to say. Anton was right to be worried.

Then Dad was talking. 'Do you want to help Danny?' he asked.

'Of course...'

'So why did you become a football journalist?' Dad asked a second question.

Anton answered quickly. 'Because I love football.'

'If you loved football,' Dad said, 'then you'd help Danny, because Danny is *doing* this for football.'

'I know,' Anton said, 'but my job...'

'What good is a job that you do because you *love* football, but where you can't do what you want to do to *help* football?' Dad asked. 'Maybe you are in the wrong job.'

Anton Holt paused. Danny was about to interrupt, but he felt his Dad's hand on his, meaning 'Shut up.' So he kept quiet.

After a minute Anton spoke. 'Okay. Your dad's right. So I'll do it. Tomorrow. But, I have to warn you, when we try to get you into the stadium it could end badly, really badly.

But neither of them knew *how* badly it could end. It would be bad if Danny was arrested. It would be bad too if Holt lost his job.

But it would not be as bad as if they bumped into Sir Richard Gawthorpe, who was scheduled to be at Soccer City for the same game ... at the same time ...in the same part of the stadium...

Twenty

It was Friday morning, the day of the first World Cup quarter finals. The Netherlands had just kicked off against Brazil in Port Elizabeth. In less than five hours the second match would kick off in Soccer City, Johannesburg.

The World Cup was about to get serious.

Danny led his father through the corridors as he followed Anton Holt into the Soccer City stadium. He still felt sick that England weren't one of the eight teams left in the tournament. But he had to put his disappointment to the back of his mind. He had a job to do.

Anton led him up a staircase made of steel and glass. Then under the main canopy of the stadium, light breaking in through a huge dome above them.

From the outside, the stadium was the most amazing Danny had ever seen. He had been to Wembley in London, the Luzhinki in Moscow and the San Siro in Milan. But this was something else. Huge. Coloured like an African pot. Reflecting the light of the sky.

Inside it was amazing too. Everything was massive and beautiful and he really felt like he was in one of the great sporting arenas of the world.

But up ahead there was a line of men. Men in black security uniforms.

Anton had said he would try to get Danny near to the dressing rooms well before kickoff. But he also said it might be impossible. They may not be able to get past security.

This was the test. They walked up to the line of men.

'No one is to pass here,' one of the security men said, stepping forward.

'We have special permission,' Anton argued. 'I am an accredited journalist. I am writing an article about the dressing rooms.'

Anton showed the man a piece of paper. And the man nodded.

'This is okay. But not the boy and the man. Just you.'

'They're *with* me,' Anton said.

'They have no papers. They will stay here.'

Danny frowned. He had expected this. He needed to get in. To see the dressing room. He had an idea that Sir Richard had created some sort of secret room beneath the Soccer City stadium. Like he had done at City FC. That was his theory. He needed to see the dressing rooms to help prove it.

But they had got as far as they could. The security men had no intention of letting them through.

In the dressing rooms there were two men. A senior member of the security staff and a tall English man. Sir Richard Gawthorpe.

‘Let me see the secret door,’ Sir Richard said, checking the entrance behind him was closed.

The dressing rooms were huge and light. There was a space for each player to sit and put all his things. Large and white, each was like a small cupboard.

The man ran his hand along the back of one of these spaces and pulled a lever.

Then he removed a large board from the back of the space, revealing a narrow corridor. As Sir Richard bent to peer in, the man flicked a switch and a string of lights illuminated the corridor. Beyond it there was a medium-sized room, completely hidden from the rest of the world.

‘How many men will you have in there?’ Sir Richard asked.

‘Ten. All armed. And the same number in the room hidden next to the other dressing room,’ the man replied.

‘Good,’ Sir Richard said. ‘Then at half time during the World Cup Final, we will strike. You must come to my home in Cape Town so we can go through the final plans. Yes?’

‘Of course, Mr Gaw.’

Danny stepped forward to confront the security men. ‘Anton is writing an article for a children’s newspaper in England. We want the children of my country to see what a wonderful place South Africa is,’ he said. ‘Please let me go too. I need to report on it as well.’

‘Okay,’ the security man relented, smiling. ‘Seeing as you are a child. But the other man must stay here.’

Dad nodded. He was okay with that.

So now Danny and Anton were rushing to the dressing rooms, following the directions they were given.

When they found them they went straight in. He wondered if there would be anyone in there. He had thought he heard voices.

But there was no one. In either of them.

Danny didn't know what to expect from the dressing rooms. But he was disappointed and elated at the same time.

Disappointed that – however hard he looked – he could not find any evidence of anything that Mr Annan had referred to. No hole in the ground, whatever he had meant by that.

Elated because he was in the same rooms where the players would be preparing for the World Cup Final in just over a week.

'There's nothing,' Anton said.

'I know,' Danny replied, gutted. 'So what now?'

'I don't know,' Anton answered.

'Well, I do,' Danny said. 'I have to get into Sir Richard's house in Cape Town again – and find the answer there. If it's not *here*, it must be there.'

When Danny had gone the senior security man came back into the dressing room and opened up the panel.

Sir Richard stepped out.

'Tell me,' he asked, 'was that boy medium height with short brown hair?'

'Yes, Mr Gaw.'

'Good,' Sir Richard smiled. 'In a week's time we will have kidnapped the two teams competing in the World Cup final. And that boy – whose name is Danny Harte, by the way – will be fish food at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean off Cape Town.'

Twenty One

Outside, in a cafe that overlooked Soccer City, Danny sat frowning. However long he looked at the stadium in all its glory, it could not lift his spirits.

Dad had made it clear. 'Going to Sir Richard's house is *not* the next option.'

'So what is?' Danny asked. He knew it was a crazy and dangerous idea. But that was his plan. It was simple, direct and the *best* plan.

'The police,' Dad said.

Danny watched a large black limo drive past, then slow down and park a hundred metres away. Must be some World Cup dignitary, he thought.

'But there's nothing to tell them,' he said, answering his dad. 'We found no proof in the stadium.'

Dad shook his head. 'We go to the police. We tell them everything. They are bound to do something.'

'Like what?'

'Watch him. Investigate him.'

Danny looked across at Anton. Anton was nodding.

'See, even Anton agrees with me,' Dad said.

And Danny frowned. How *did* his dad do that?

In the black limo, Sir Richard sat back and stared at the two men and the boy. After a moment, he turned to the two men sitting opposite him.

'You see him?'

The two men nodded.

'I want you to watch everything he does,' Sir Richard said. 'Report to me on the hour, every hour. And when you get the chance, kill him.'

The two men nodded again.

Danny followed his dad and Anton out of the mobile police station that was set up in one of the public squares in Johannesburg.

Danny ran through the words he had used to tell the police what he knew.

There is a former English football chairman who now goes under the name Mr Gaw. He is planning something for the World Cup final. Something in Soccer City stadium. And something to do with a hole in the ground or a secret room underneath the stadium.

It was no wonder they had laughed at him. He sounded mad to *himself*.

They sat outside the police point in the square. The day was cooling down. It was going dark rapidly.

'Can we go any monitor his house *now*?' Danny asked.

'Too dangerous,' Dad snapped back.

Danny wished he was doing this on his own. His dad had decided to be by his side all the time – and Danny was used to working alone. Solving crimes with your dad telling you what was okay and not okay was not easy.

Then Anton spoke. 'What if we *all* go? We watch the house together. I have something I can use.'

Anton drew a thin black box from his bag. It looked like an iphone. Anton drew a fine, almost invisible microphone from it.

'What is it?' Danny asked.

'Journalists aren't supposed to use these,' Holt said, 'but it's a...'

'... listening device,' Danny stuttered. His eyes gazed at the small object Anton was toying with.

'What if,' Anton said, 'we plant this by his house. We don't have to go in. We can just put it on a window. Then we can hear anything said inside. How about it?'

Danny nodded vigorously. This was better than he expected. Then he looked at his dad.

'Dad?'

Mr Harte was silent for what seemed like ages.

Danny knew what he was thinking. Was this a risk? Would Danny be in danger? Could they solve whatever it was Sir Richard was up to by just planting a bug? If he said yes, they would have to travel to Cape Town together tonight. Danny might even get to see Mafuane again.

Finally Dad spoke.

'Okay,' he said. 'Let's do it.'

Twenty Two

They travelled to Sir Richard's house in a hire car. Anton was driving. He used several techniques to make sure they weren't being followed. Techniques Danny told him about.

Danny knew a lot about crime – *and* how to solve it.

Why?

Because Danny had read dozens of crime stories to his dad. His dad loved detective books, but he usually forgot the details of each story. Danny, however, remembered everything. How to avoid detection. How to follow someone without being seen. How *not* to be followed yourself.

He realised that reading books had done him some good. A lot of good.

When they arrived at some traffic lights near the house, Danny slipped out of the car. They had decided *he* would plant the bug. He knew what the garden was like and he was the fastest runner.

And, if he didn't come out of there in sixty seconds, Anton would go in with his camera and make whatever happened next was front page news.

Running along the side of the garden wall, Danny felt sick. The last time he had been here Sir Richard had come close to killing him. He wanted to turn and run the other way. But something inside him gave him the strength to go on. He had to plant this bug: it could be the difference between a terrible thing happening – or not.

Danny moved quickly into Sir Richard's garden. The gate was open, like the last time. He saw the back window of the house. Near the shed. He crept, keeping low, avoiding being seen. He hoped.

Once he was there, he stuck the small plastic disk Anton had given him to the window. It was hard to believe that what was little more than a sticker would be able to pick up any conversation in the house. But he believed it would. He trusted Anton.

Once Danny had joined Dad and Anton in the car, he tuned in the receiver to pick up the conversations they were after. Then they waited, barely daring to move inside the small VW.

After half an hour of silence and shuffling sounds, they struck gold: the conversation that turned all their thoughts about Sir Richard's plans on their head.

'So everything is ready, Joseph?' That was Sir Richard's voice.

'Yes. We have finished the job.' Another voice. Obviously someone called Joseph.

'Tell me again what will happen.'

The man called Joseph explained. 'We have placed the device inside the top section of the trophy. It will not go off at all unless you press *this* button.'

Danny imagined Sir Richard looking at a small handset. Maybe like a TV remote control.

'But when you do hit this button,' Joseph said, 'the trophy will explode.'

'Good,' Sir Richard said.

'When will you do it, Mr Gaw?' Joseph asked.

'The moment the winning team holds the trophy aloft. Then it will be seen on every TV screen in the world.'

Danny, his dad and Anton sat staring at each other. They were too shocked to speak. *Now* they knew what Sir Richard was really up to.

He had placed a bomb in the World cup trophy. And after the final, just as the winning captain lifted it above his head to celebrate, it would explode.

It was terrible.

'We have to tell the police,' Danny said. He knew his dad had been right about trying to involve the police. This was too serious for them to prevent.

But Dad was shaking his head.

And Anton weighed in. 'The police said that if we go to them again with our "crazy stories" they will deport us.'

'So what now?' Danny asked. 'Do we just let him do this?'

Nobody spoke.

And that gave Danny time to think. About whether they *could* do anything. And about the other thoughts in his head. That it had been so easy to get the information they wanted. That Sir Richard had not sounded like he normally did when he was explaining his plan. That something was not quite right.

Whatever it was, Danny knew they had four days to sort it. Or there would be a major catastrophe.

Twenty Three

It was the day of the first semi-final – Holland v Uruguay – but Danny was not at the game. Instead, he was locked in a hotel room.

Danny and his dad followed the match build up on the TV all afternoon. They had decided not to go outside. It may be dangerous. Who knew what Sir Richard might have planned for them? They had to lie low. They had to think.

Anton, however, *had* gone out. He had two tasks. One, to talk to the police to see if they would believe the story about Sir Richard planting a bomb in the World Cup trophy. Two, to talk to his boss to see if he would be allowed to write a story about it for the newspaper.

This was their next move. Until it was resolved Danny could do nothing.

Except for *one* thing. He had texted Mafuane. To ask if he could see her a last time.

Just before kick off in the Uruguay-Holland game, there was a rapping at the door. Seven knocks. That was the code. But Danny still peered through the small peep hole in the door to check it *was* Anton.

It was.

Danny could tell by the journalist's face that his trip had been a waste of time.

'Well?' Dad asked, turning from listening to the Dutch national anthem. Danny saw images of Robben, Kuyt and van Persie singing along.

'No and no,' Anton said. 'The police laughed at me and my boss threatened to sack me.'

Danny frowned. But, secretly, he was quite pleased. This meant that they would have to solve the crime themselves. If his dad allowed it.

He knew he had to change the mood to get his way. And quickly.

'Then we sort it,' he said. 'We all have tickets to the final.'

'It's too much, Danny,' Holt said.

‘What is?’

‘This. We can’t stop the World Cup blowing up and make sure Sir Richard isn’t going to kidnap a player. There are only three of us. And no-one else will have anything to do with it all.’

‘Exactly,’ Danny said. ‘We can’t stop *both* things happening. And we don’t need to.’

‘How’s that?’ Dad interjected.

‘Well, Sir Richard can’t be planning *both* things,’ Danny said. ‘One of these plans is a false trail. We just have to work out which.’

And it was true. Yesterday they had heard Sir Richard explain how he was going to put a bomb into the World Cup trophy and set it off as the winning team lifted it in celebration.

But, a few days before, they had been convinced that the plan was to kidnap players using a secret passageway in the dressing rooms at Soccer City. Mr Annan in Ghana had seemed to almost give that information away.

Before he was murdered.

‘So we need to work out which thing is going to happen – and how to stop it,’ Anton said.

‘I think it’s the bomb,’ Dad asserted.

‘So do I,’ Anton agreed.

Danny looked down at the carpet for a moment. Then he spoke. ‘I think that was a red herring,’ he said. ‘I think Sir Richard made it up to put us off the scent.’

‘No way,’ Dad said. ‘How would he know we were listening in?’

‘How many books have you read where someone knew he was being bugged and gave false information?’ Danny asked.

Their conversation stopped eighteen minutes into the semi-final. Holland’s Van Bronckhorst hit a shot from outside the area. Thirty yards out at least. It travelled like a guided missile into the top corner of the net. All three of them stopped talking, open-mouthed.

Danny sat up long after the game. It had been a good one. Uruguay nearly coming back to force extra time.

But he was not thinking about the football now: he was running through everything to do with Sir Richard in his mind. They had not been able to come to an agreement about what to do next. His dad and Anton were asleep. They would talk more tomorrow.

One thing they *had* agreed was that no one should leave the hotel room.

Danny was about to go to bed when his phone buzzed. He checked his texts. There was a new one from Mafuane.

I'm in the hotel lobby. Come and see me. M x

Danny smiled. She'd come.

He stood up, excited about seeing his new friend. And, although he knew he should stay in the room, he had to see her one more time. They were leaving for Johannesburg tomorrow. This might be the last time he was ever in Cape Town.

And it wasn't like he was leaving the hotel. He'd be safe as long as he didn't go out into the streets.

Danny opened the door quietly and slipped out.

But, unfortunately for Danny, Mafuane was not the only one waiting for him in the hotel lobby.

Twenty Four

Mafuane was waiting at the centre of the hotel foyer. She was wearing jeans and a tee shirt, just like Danny. There were no hotel staff in the foyer. Only two businessmen, talking over a drink.

'Hello Danny,' Mafuane said, slightly shyly.

Danny smiled. 'I'm really glad you came. I wanted to thank you again for saving me that day. And for helping watch Sir Richard.'

'You're welcome,' Mafuane replied.

Although it was great to see Mafuane, Danny sensed something uncomfortable between them. Kind of the same feelings he sometimes had at home with Charlotte.

He cast his eyes around the hotel foyer, wondering what to say next. That was when he saw the two businessmen again. Both in black suits. A bit like the Russian bodyguards he had seen a few months before when he was in Moscow.

The men both locked their eyes onto Danny. One stood. The other ran his finger across his throat. And Danny realised that he had made a terrible mistake.

These were Sir Richard's men, not businessmen. And Danny had no back up.

Instinctively, Danny grabbed Mafuane's hand and pulled her towards a corridor.

'Run,' he said, softly.

And they were running, bursting through an entrance, lines of hotel room doors either side as they sprinted the length of the corridor.

Danny did not need to look back to know the men were coming after them. Their footsteps were hard and loud on the carpet behind them.

As they ran, Danny could hear Mafuane's breathing. Like a heavy panting. But she was keeping up with him. And they were still holding hands.

The men were not gaining on them. But Danny knew he could not run flat out like this forever. They had to find somewhere to hide.

But where?

After another few seconds they reached a turn in the corridor. A right angle. Danny hoped it would offer options. But when they got *round* the corner, he saw, to his horror, that it was a dead end.

A dead end with two doors.

Danny opened the first. A staircase, with a fire extinguisher sat at the top of the steps.

He opened the second. A storeroom with a huge vent going upwards, easily wide enough for even an adult to climb up. Something to do with the hotel's air conditioning, Danny thought.

He had seconds to decide what to do. The men would be upon them by the time he counted to ten.

But all he needed was *one* second. He had already formulated a plan. He opened the staircase door and pushed the fire extinguisher slowly down the stairs. There was a terrible racket as it hit step after step.

Then Danny led Mafuane into the store cupboard. He pointed to the back of the cupboard and the vent.

'Go up,' he said.

Mafuane did not need to be told twice. She started to climb into the vent. Danny did the same when it was clear.

They climbed for several seconds, making their way into the air conditioning system that squirreled through the hotel. But, once Danny heard the men coming, he stopped and told Mafuane to be silent.

So they both lay in the air conditioning vent for what seemed like a lifetime.

As they did, Danny wondered what the men would do if they found them. But he didn't really need to wonder. He knew.

They would kill them.

That would be their orders. He had no doubts.

Danny listened as the men went down the staircase, then come back up. He had to try to stop breathing to avoid being heard when the door of a storeroom opened

So now he had a problem. A big problem.

Would the men find them?

And, if they did, what would they do to him?

And, if they didn't, would Danny be able to get out of the hotel to Johannesburg to stop Sir Richard's plans?

Danny's mind was working as fast as his heart. He was desperate to get his breath back, so he could think more clearly.

But he didn't get the chance. Because, as he was looking into Mafuane's frightened eyes, he heard a scraping noise.

At first, he didn't know what the noise was. but then it dawned on him.

Someone else was climbing into the air conditioning vent.

And they were coming Danny and Mafuane's way.

Twenty Five

'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 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.

'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.'

'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.

Twenty Six

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.'

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 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.’

‘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.

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. 'HEEEELLLLLLLLLLLLLPPPP.'

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.'

'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 Inesta 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.

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.