

HELPING KOFI

Kofi spoke for a long time in a quiet and slow voice, articulating what had happened to him. And telling Danny about his parents' farm and how they'd sold it to help him.

Shocked by the story he was hearing, Danny said nothing throughout. Although he had dozens of questions, he thought it best to wait until the end. He didn't know what to tell Kofi about his fantasy that tomorrow he would be able to go and talk to City's coach. That was, of course, impossible.

But he did know what the right thing to do was.

'You must come home with me. Now,' Danny

said.

As soon as Danny had said it he saw Kofi go in on himself, as if the suggestion panicked him.

‘What?’ Danny asked.

‘It is very kind of you,’ Kofi said, ‘but I cannot.’

‘Why?’

‘I must be here. But it is very kind of you. Please do not be angry that I say no.’

Danny wasn’t angry. But he didn’t know why Kofi was turning him down.

‘Then let me help you,’ Danny said.

‘How?’ Kofi asked. ‘I know you think my idea to speak to the coach tomorrow will not work.’

Danny frowned. How did Kofi know that? Then he smiled. Kofi was no fool.

In fact, he felt that *he* was more of a fool. He wanted to help this boy – in a foreign country, his country. But he had no idea how. It was a big question.

He gazed across at the City Stadium.

And – as he did – the answer came to him.

Anton Holt.

Anton Holt was one of the UK’s leading football newspaper writers. He was also someone Danny knew really well. Maybe he would know what to do.

Danny had met him six months ago when they’d both become involved in the kidnap of England’s leading scorer, Sam Roberts. Between them they’d solved the crime and rescued Roberts. Then four

months after that, they'd travelled to Moscow to watch England, but they became involved in stopping a crazed Russian billionaire from murdering England goalkeepers.

Holt would know what to do.

Holt could help.

'I know a journalist,' Danny said. 'A newspaper writer.'

Kofi nodded. 'Yes,' he said. 'I know what you mean.'

'He can help. He might take you to talk to City. After he has spoken to you.'

Kofi nodded again. 'Is he good?'

'Is he a good person?'

'Yes. Is he good? Like you.'

Danny smiled. Kofi had paid him the best compliment.

'Yes,' Danny said, 'he's good. He's very good.'

And Kofi nodded.

Danny took his mobile out of his pocket. He found Holt's number and called him.

But there was no ringing. Just his answering service.

Danny knew what that meant. Holt had turned his phone off. He was probably with his girlfriend. And his phone would be off all night.

Then Danny saw the time: 8 p.m. He was late.

He stood up quickly. Too quickly. Because Kofi looked panicked again.

'It's OK,' Danny said. 'He's busy. But *I'm* late. I

need to go home. My parents will kill me.'

Kofi nodded. But Danny saw that he had doubt in his eyes. The kind of look he'd had before he trusted Danny.

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Danny walked briskly out of the industrial estate, putting his hoody up. Kofi had agreed to stay where he was. And Danny had taken Kofi's mobile phone, which had run out of power. It was the same model as his sister's, so he said he'd get it charged. Then they'd be able to communicate if Danny wasn't with him.

Danny promised to get Holt's help, then return and tell Kofi everything.

As he came out on to the main road, Danny was met with flashing lights.

A police car. And it was slowing down, the door opening.

Danny didn't know what he'd done wrong – nothing as far as he was concerned – but he knew he had to get out of there. Innocent or guilty. He had too much to lose.

And he also knew that he was scared. Again.

So he did the only thing he could think to do: he ran.