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opening extract from

Team Trouble

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Chapter 1

'Come on, you reds!' Dad yelled.

Wembley balanced boots on his head, Striker kicked a cushion, Bobby shouted, 'Save,' and Mum blew her whistle. It's always mad at our house on match days.

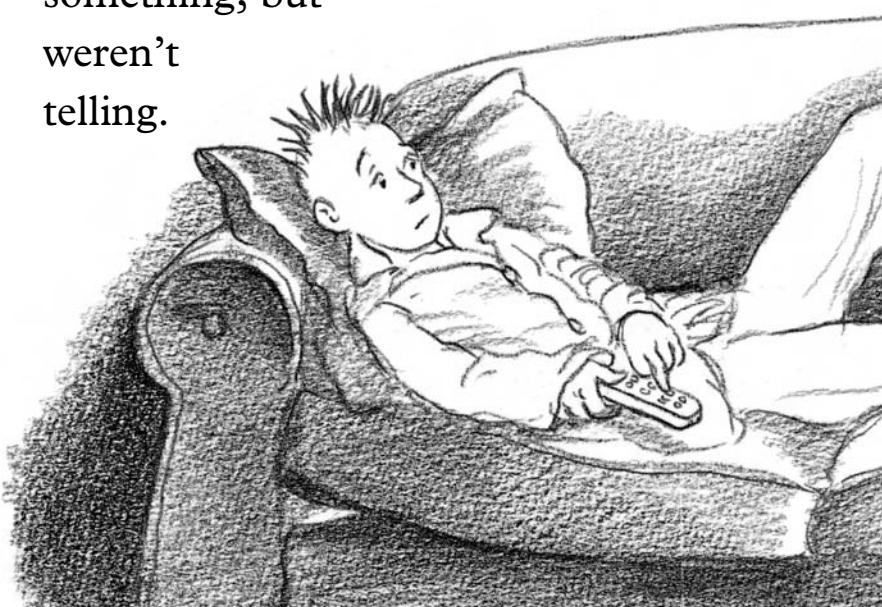
Everyone was ready. Everyone except Semi.

My middle brother was still in his pyjamas, sprawled across the sofa.

Bobby tugged his hand. 'Get dress' NOW,' he ordered.

But Semi just flicked through the channels, changing from a football match to a cartoon. Something was wrong. Very wrong. No one in our house ever switches the football off. And we always go to the match together – like Dad says, we're a team.

Mum and Dad exchanged glances, as if they knew something, but weren't telling.



Nobody spoke as we left. There was a big hole where Semi should have been.

Dad sang louder than usual, as if to fill the gap.

Semi wasn't around to tell jokes, so Bobby started: 'Knock knock.'

'Who's there?'

'Football!'

'Football who?'

'Football hoooligan!'

When our team won 3-0, and the



crowd went wild, I thought of Semi. I couldn't remember him missing a match before, ever.

Next day, when I got home from school the house was strangely quiet. Mum wasn't singing, or dribbling a football round the kitchen. She was staring into space. My big brother, Striker, made her a cup of tea. I curled up in a corner with a football magazine. If I listened, I'd find out what the matter was.

'I think Semi's got your old disease,' Mum said.

'What's that?' asked Striker.

'TT syndrome,' she replied, ruffling his hair.

TT syndrome – what was that? I've always known my brother, Bobby, has Down's syndrome. That's why he goes to a different school from me. A special school. But he's not ill or anything, and he's a brilliant goalie. Now it looked like we had another syndrome in the family. This new one was really serious: it meant not liking football!