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The Fix

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Chapter 1

First to score

Blake stood in front of the tall steel gates. There were bars across them, and a big chain and padlock. A KEEP OUT sign hung on the front.

"OK, man." Blake said softly. He grinned and looked at his friend, Dan. "Let's break in."

Dan grabbed the middle bar of the gate. He pulled himself up onto the top and jumped down. A second later Blake was clambering up after him. In two swift moves he was at the top of the gate. He saw Dan waiting below him.

"Quick," Dan whispered. "There might be a security guard."

Blake nodded. But he didn't climb down – he stared ahead. In front of the gate was a line of turn-stiles. Beyond those lay the curved roof of the stadium. And beyond that was the pitch.

It was dark but Blake knew the grass would be in perfect condition. Just as he knew that the stadium building gleamed with fresh paint and the seats in the stands were unscuffed and unbroken.

This was the Holton City Stadium. It had been built in Holton City, with some Lottery money and money from local business. It was brand new – a

home for all the local football teams, from Second Division Holton City, to the City Colts team Blake played for.

“Blake, will you friggin’ hurry up?” Dan whispered.

Blake shook himself and climbed down the gate.

“Where now?” Dan said.

Blake thought for a second. Their plan had been to explore the stadium. No one had played any matches here yet. In fact it wasn’t open to the public for another ten days. The opening match was going to be the Cup Final for all the Colts teams in the region.

“The pitch, man,” Blake said. “I wanna be the first person to score a goal on the new pitch.”

“Yeah, man.” Dan laughed. “Except *I’m* gonna be the first one to score.”

“Oh yeah?”

They raced to the turn-stiles, then scrambled over them. A dog barked in the distance.

Dan grabbed Blake’s arm. “What was that?”

“Just a dog.” Blake grinned. “Miles away.”

“Well let’s keep the noise down,” Dan whispered. “OK?”

They charged up some stairs, along the top of the stand, then down onto the pitch. The grass shone in the moonlight. Blake yanked his bag off his

back and pulled out his football. His heart thumped hard and fast as he dropped the ball onto the pitch and kicked it towards the Holton end.

Dan dived forward in a clumsy tackle. Blake tapped the ball sideways, then did a swift step-over. He kicked the ball again, harder this time. It flew up the pitch. Blake raced after it, speeding up as he ran. Every part of him was focussed on the ball. This was what he loved. This was when he came alive. When it was just him and the ball.

"Oi. Blake. Wait," Dan's heavy foot-steps pounded up the pitch.

Blake was sure he could out-run Dan to the goal. Dan was a good defender. But Blake was the fastest runner on their team. Holton City Colts' star striker. If City Colts won the Semi-Final on Saturday, he would be playing here, on this pitch, in the Final in ten days' time.

The sound of a siren blasted across the pitch. Blake spun round. "What the hell's that?"

Dan was fumbling in his pocket. He pulled out his phone. The siren noise sounded again. Even louder.

"Is that your *ring tone*?" Blake asked.

Dan pressed at his mobile, frantic to shut it up. The siren noise stopped.

"Hey, Dan," Blake made a face. "I thought you said to keep the noise down?"

"D'you think anyone heard?" Dan looked round, his eyes big and scared.

Blake gave a sigh. “I don’t think anyone’s here, so no,” He looked more closely at the phone. “Is that new?”

“Yeah, it’s a video phone. The best on the market for…” Dan stopped.

Dan’s face went red and he turned away. He was always getting new stuff. He had his own laptop at home and always wore the latest football gear.

Blake was lucky if he got a new pair of boots when his feet grew. It wasn’t his mum’s fault. Just that his dad never sent her any money.

Dan kicked the ball up the pitch, then ran after it.

“Oi, pass it, man.” Blake yelled. He was annoyed he’d let Dan win the ball. “Pass it.”

Dan got to the edge of the penalty area. He smashed the ball. It sailed into the corner of the net.

“Yeees!” Dan’s cry rang out round the stadium.

“Ssssh!” Blake sighed. He didn’t feel much like congratulating Dan but he had to admit it had been a great goal. “Nice one,” he said. “Power *and* accuracy. Might even impress Coach.”

Dan grinned. “Nearly as good as that one you scored against the Tigers last month.”

Blake shrugged. He always got embarrassed when people talked about the goals he’d scored. But Dan was right. That volley he’d made on the turn

in the match against the Tigers had been pretty cool. His good mood soared back. He started running up the pitch, so as to fetch the ball out of the goal. But at that minute, a dog barked. It sounded close.

He turned. Dan was a few yards away, his mouth open with horror.

And then, behind Dan, Blake saw it – a large guard dog. It was inside the stadium, leaping onto the pitch, running straight towards them.

“Get them, Bullitt,” shouted a deep, male voice. “Go on, boy. Get the bloody vandals.”

Blake’s heart pounded. “Leg it,” he yelled. “Run.”