

FRANK LAMPARD

FRANKIE'S MAGIC FOOTBALL



CHRISTMAS
SPECIAL

FRANKIE SAVES CHRISTMAS



CHAPTER 1

Frankie chewed on the end of his pencil, leaning over his letter to Santa. It was the day before Christmas Eve, and he was having a sleepover with his friends, Charlie and Louise. They sat beside each other at the table in the living room, writing their Christmas lists.

His mum and dad were watching TV. They had a fire roaring in the hearth, and the glow of the flames reflected in the baubles hanging from the Christmas tree. Frankie loved this time of year.

“This is hard!” he said to Charlie and Louise. “What have you guys written?”

Charlie turned his piece of paper around, but all Frankie could see was an untidy scrawl. “What does that say?” he asked.

“New goalie gloves,” said Charlie. He was wearing his old ones and held up his hands. “See – these are really worn out.”



“That’s because you never take them off,” said Louise.

“A good keeper is always ready,” Charlie told her, grinning.

“Maybe,” said Frankie, “but I hope Santa can read your handwriting!”

Frankie had an idea and returned to his own list. He wrote:

Football boots, please (size 13,
red if possible)

Max was lying on the rug in front of
the fire and whined softly.

Frankie added something else to
his list:

Bone for Max

Louise was frowning. "I don't know
why I bother," she said. "I asked for
a new football kit last year, and I
got a yellow dress!"

"What have you written this
year?" said Charlie.

Louise showed them:

A new football kit (not a dress)

“Hey, losers,” said Kevin, barging through the door from the kitchen.

“Found my football yet?” asked Frankie.

Kevin lowered his glance. “I told you – I haven’t touched it.”

“Quiet, you two,” said Frankie’s dad.

Frankie always knew when his brother was lying because he couldn’t meet his eye. The ball had gone missing from his wardrobe a couple of days before. He leant over the table and whispered so his

parents wouldn't hear. "You know it can be trouble, Kev. Seriously, where is it?"

Kevin shrugged. Then he caught sight of their lists and rolled his eyes. "Santa isn't real."

"Leave them alone, Kev," Frankie's mum called over.

"Santa's for little kids," Kevin grumbled. "I mean – how are you supposed to even get these letters to him? The last Christmas post went two days ago."

Frankie realised he was right. Charlie and Louise looked worried too.

"Tell you what," said Kevin. "Let's

use Santa's *special* postal service. He comes down the chimney, so that's how we'll send him the lists." Before Frankie could stop him, he lunged and grabbed all their pieces of paper. Then he screwed them up, pulled back the fire guard and tossed the balls of paper into the fire.

"No!" cried Frankie. He watched the papers blacken and burn to nothing. He turned towards his brother, then spotted that their dad was watching them.

"What's going on?" he said.

Frankie pointed to the fire. "Kev burned our Christmas lists."

“Tell-tale!” said Kevin.

“That wasn’t nice,” said Frankie’s dad, shaking his head. “Go to your room, Kevin.”

As his brother stalked off, Frankie watched helplessly as smoke drifted up the chimney.

“Santa is real, isn’t he, Dad?” said Frankie.

“Of course he is,” his dad replied. “Remember that mince pie we left out last year? *Someone* ate it.”

“That was you!” Kevin called down the stairs.

His dad shrugged. “It wasn’t, actually. And besides, you were

tucked up in bed. How would you know?"

They could all hear Kevin snorting with disbelief from upstairs, but his dad gave Frankie a wink. "Why don't you write your lists again on the computer? We'll email them to Santa."

Frankie grinned. "Has Santa got an email address?"

"Of course he has," said Frankie's dad. "Even Father Christmas has to move with the times."

Later that night they were all in Frankie's room. Charlie and Louise were asleep on blow-up beds on

the floor beside Frankie's bed. Charlie was wearing pyjamas covered in pictures of rockets and spacecraft. His gloves were still on his hands, resting on top of the quilt. Louise's sleeping bag came right up to the tip of her nose, covering most of her ears. She'd said it was the only way to avoid Charlie's snoring.

Frankie couldn't sleep. If Kevin was hiding his magic football, they could be in deep trouble. The football opened portals to other worlds, and in the wrong hands – *Kevin's* hands – he dreaded to think what mischief it could cause.



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