

FRANK LAMPARD

FRANKIE'S MAGIC FOOTBALL

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CHAPTER 1

Frankie wheeled his arms, trying to keep his balance. Louise slid past, her snowboard cutting through the powdery snow.

“You’re doing great!” she said.
“Just don’t lean back.”

“And keep your knees bent,” called Charlie, whizzing down the slope with his ski poles tucked under his arm.

Frankie managed to stay on his skis and shuffled forward.

I'm doing it! he thought. *This isn't so hard . . .*

"And get out of my way!" yelled Kevin.

Frankie felt something slam into his shoulder and spin him round. He landed with a thump in the snow in time to see his brother skiing past.

"Oops! Sorry, Frankenstein," cackled Kevin.

Frankie took a deep breath of the cold mountain air. Skiing was tough! The fact that Kevin was really good at it made it even more annoying.

Frankie's Austrian friend Heidi brought herself to a halt at his side. "Your brother's not very nice, is he?" she said. "Up you stand, Frankie."

Frankie clambered to his feet, and brushed the snow off his ski suit. "I'm hopeless," he said.

"Not true," Heidi replied. "It's like riding a bicycle – soon it will be easy. Come on, I will stay with you."

Frankie turned his skis and began to slide down slowly. They'd been in Austria for three days, staying with his pen pal Heidi and her family. So far all he'd managed to do was fall

over. It was his first time skiing, but it was new to Charlie too and he wasn't having any problems. Still, it was great being away with his friends and doing something different.

"Be loose," said Heidi at his side. "You look very stiff and tense."

"That's because I'm bruised all over," laughed Frankie.

He began to pick up speed. Right towards a tree.

"OK, lean left," said Heidi.

Frankie did as she said, and steered back towards the centre of the slope.

"Don't look at your feet," said Heidi. "Look ahead."



Frankie gazed at the view beyond – huge mountains covered in snow and pine forests and dotted with chalets. Ski lifts and cable cars full of people drifted across the white expanse.

“Go, Frankie!” said Louise, as he skied past her.

Frankie realised he hadn't fallen over for a while. *Perhaps I'm finally getting it.*

They were here for a whole week over Christmas, staying at Heidi's chalet, so he still had lots of chances to improve. The slopes were even open on Christmas Day. As Frankie drifted to a halt at the

bottom of the run, Charlie was waiting with a raised glove.

“Nice work!” he said.

Frankie high-fived him, grinning.

There was a café at the bottom of the run. Inside, Heidi’s older brother Marc was drinking a coffee. He was a professional ski instructor.

Louise skidded to a halt next to Frankie. “Fancy one more go?” she said.

Heidi pointed with a ski pole to the sky, where Frankie spotted a thick grey cloud coming over a ridge. “We need to go home

soon," she said. "The forecast says we will have a storm later."

"That storm's ages away," said Kevin. "I'm going up again."

He was already clambering into a ski-lift chair.

Heidi's brother emerged, putting on his jacket. "Time to head back to the house," he said.

Heidi pointed to Kevin. "All right. We will get him and hurry home."

Easy for you to say, thought Frankie. I can only go so fast.

"OK," said Marc. "But stick to the easy slope."

They climbed on to the lift. Most of the other people were heading

off the slopes, Frankie noticed. It was Christmas Eve, after all, and they were probably going to get warm and cosy by their fires. Frankie's parents had been decorating the Christmas tree at the chalet with Heidi's mum and dad.

As they rose, Frankie saw the distant cloud more clearly. It was moving fast on high winds. He shivered. The mountains were incredible, but Heidi's brother loved telling stories about all the things that could go wrong – white-outs, avalanches and frostbite.

By the time they reached the top