

FRANK LAMPARD

GAME
CARDS
INSIDE!

FRANKIE'S MAGIC FOOTBALL

GAME OVER!



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CHAPTER 1

“Hop up on the bed here,” said the doctor, peering over the top of his glasses.

Frankie lay on the examination table.

“So, what exactly happened?” asked the doctor.

“I was playing football,” Frankie began, “and my foot caught the ground funny.”

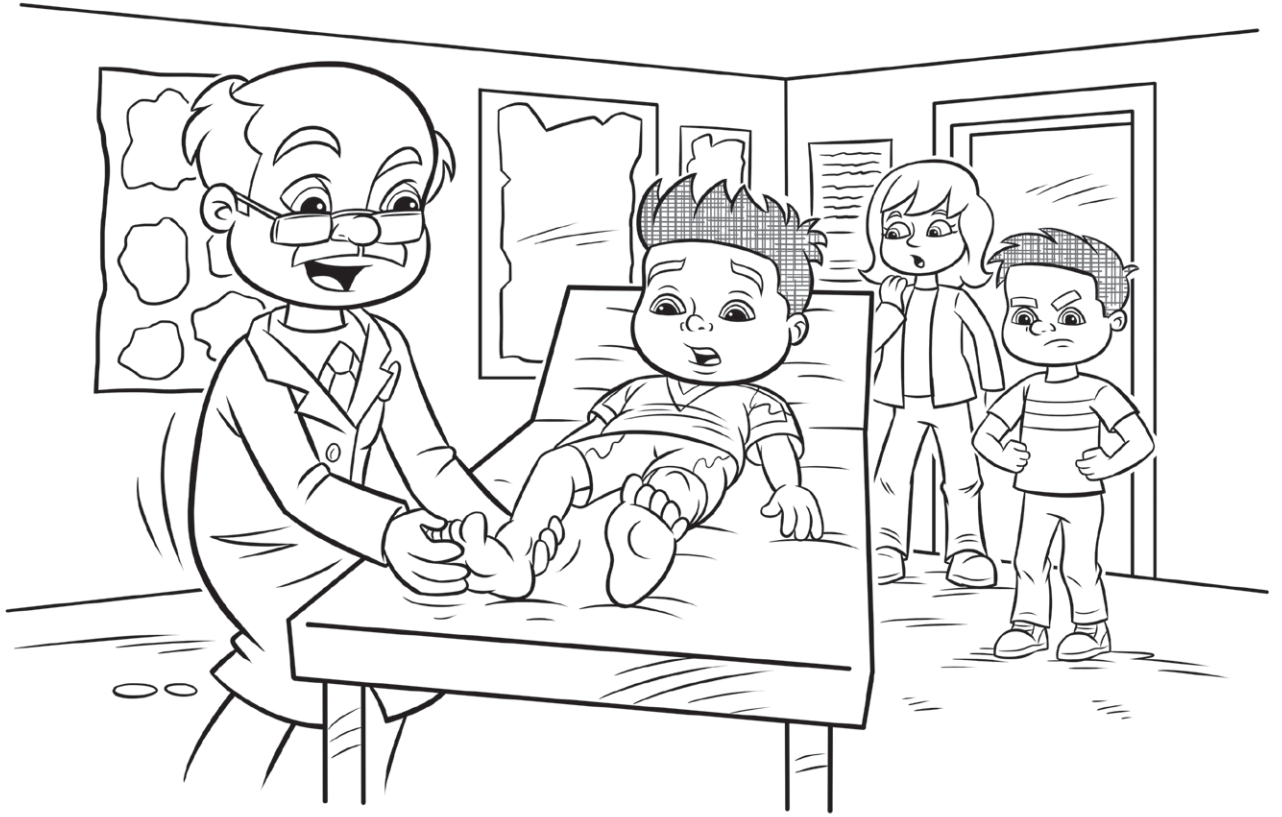
“It looks swollen,” said Frankie’s mum.

“It looks *smelly*,” said Kevin. He was standing by the door of the doctor’s office, and waved a hand in front of his face.

“Can you wiggle your toes?” asked the doctor, ignoring Frankie’s brother.

Frankie did so, without any pain. His mum was right – the right side of his ankle did look bigger than normal.

The doctor took hold of Frankie’s right foot in one hand, and his ankle in the other. “Tell me if you feel any discomfort.”



Frankie lay back and let the doctor rotate his foot. It was fine at first, but as the doctor pushed his toes to the left, hot pain shot up his leg.

“Ouch!” he cried.

“Looks like you’ve just pulled a few ligaments,” said the doctor.

Frankie sat up on his elbows.

“So, it’ll be okay?”

“A couple of weeks’ rest should heal things up nicely,” said the doctor.

Frankie stared at him in horror.

“A couple of weeks! The town under-12 five-a-side tournament is happening in six days’ time.”

The doctor shrugged. “I’m sorry, Frankie – I can’t see you recovering by then.”

“But ...”

Frankie’s mum patted his arm.

“It’s only a game, Frankie. I’m sure your team can find a replacement.”

Disappointment sat like a heavy rock in Frankie’s stomach.

They'd been working towards the tournament for weeks. Thirty-two teams, from all the different schools in town. He felt like he was letting everyone down – Charlie, Louise, Kobi and Hannah.

The doctor brought him a set of crutches. "These should be the right size. Come back early next week and we'll have another look at you. But don't get your hopes up about playing soon. You risk making the injury worse."

"Thank you," mumbled Frankie.

At home later that day, Frankie lay on his bed tossing his battered

football against the wall and catching it again. The crutches leant up against the wall. Only his brother and his closest friends knew the magic the football possessed – the ability to open doorways in amazing worlds.

It's just a shame it can't magic my leg better, thought Frankie.

His bedroom door opened a fraction and Max scampered in. He looked at the football, tail wagging. Frankie's dog loved a kickaround, any time of day.

"Sorry, boy – I'm out of action," said Frankie. He'd broken the bad news to his friends over the phone.

They'd been really nice about it, but Frankie could tell they were disappointed too.

The only person who had seemed pleased was Kevin. His team had more chance of winning the tournament now.

The doorbell rang below, and Frankie heard his mum answer it. "He's in his room," she said. "I hope you can cheer him up!"

Footsteps pounded up the stairs and a moment later Charlie and Louise came in. Charlie had a full rucksack on his back.

"How are you doing?" asked Louise. "Does it hurt?"

Frankie shook his head. "Not much. Have you found someone to take my place?"

Charlie looked very glum. "Not yet. Everyone's already in a team. It won't be the same without you anyway."

"I'm really sorry," Frankie said.

"Stop apologising!" said Louise. "Injuries are part of life."

Frankie was glad he had such good friends. "Hey, Charlie, what's in the bag?" he asked, trying to change the subject.

Charlie's face brightened, as he pulled out his games console and controllers. "We might not be



able to play proper football," he said, "so this is the next best thing: *FantasyScorer2*."

"Cool!" said Frankie. He'd heard about the new football game from other kids. You could play with your friends against all sorts of different teams – on lava pitches, in space, under the sea. There were hundreds of levels. It reminded him of some of the real, crazy adventures he and his friends had undergone with the magic football.

"Where can we plug it in?" asked Charlie.

"My brother has a TV in his room," said Frankie.