

Chapter 1

Italy-England

Ben Grey is sitting at his computer. He is reading an email.

From: nicoverdi@webitalia.it
Date: 03 January 7:30
To: bengrey@britstream.co.uk
Subject: Italy-England football match, Saturday 24 February.

Hi Ben! My father has two tickets for the big match! But he can't go. He has to work that day. Can *you* come to Rome and come to the match with me? Please! Ask your Mum and Dad.

Your friend

Nico

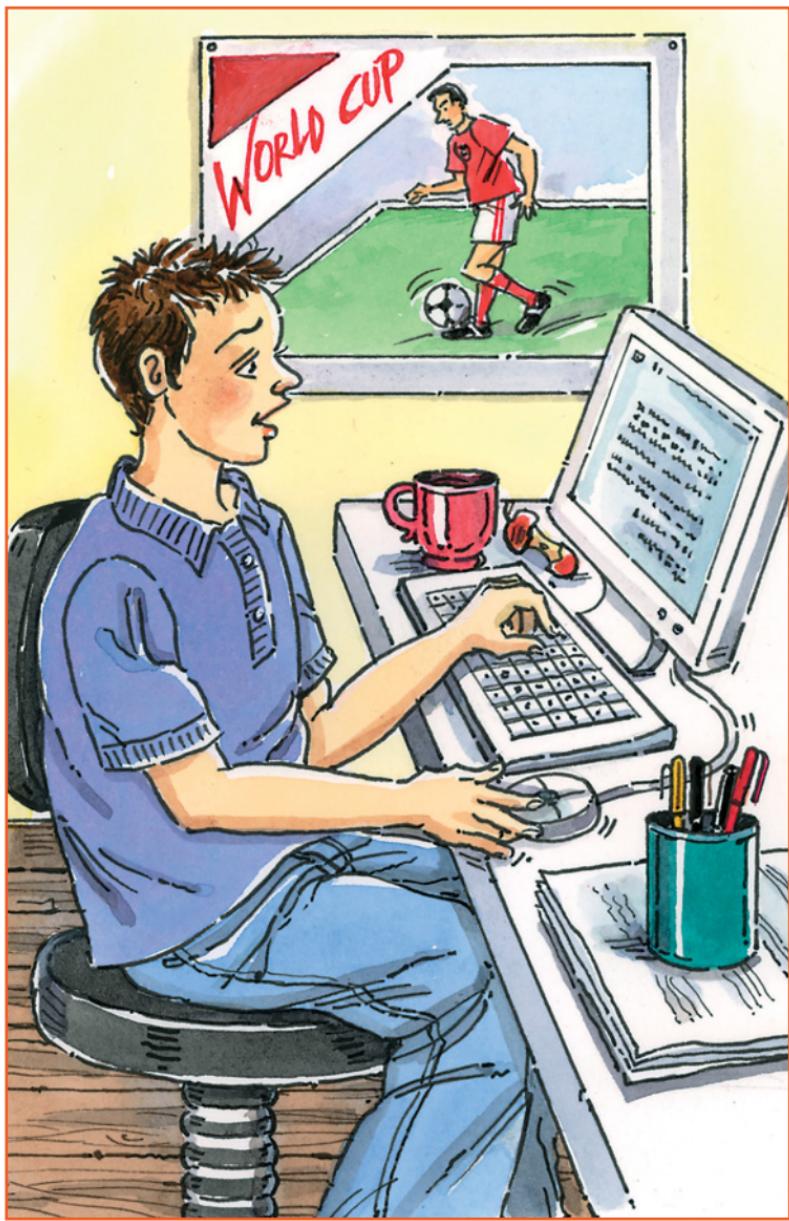
P.S. Come on Friday 23!

The Italy-England match! In Rome! thinks Ben. Yes!

Ben loves football. He is thirteen and he lives in London. Ben plays football at school. He plays football with his friends. And he watches football on TV.

Nico is Ben's friend. He is thirteen too. Nico's mother is English and his father is Italian. Sometimes Nico lives in London and comes to Ben's school. Sometimes he lives in Rome. He speaks English and Italian. He loves football too.

Ben runs to the kitchen. His mother and father are eating their breakfast.



‘Mum! Dad!’ Ben shouts. ‘Can I go to Rome?’

‘What? Rome?’ his mother says.

‘Nico has tickets for the Italy-England match! Please!’

‘No, Ben,’ she answers. ‘You have to go to school.’

‘The match is on the twenty-fourth of February. That’s in the school holidays,’ Ben says. ‘Can I go?’

Mrs Grey looks at Mr Grey. Mr Grey looks at Mrs Grey. They are thinking. Ben watches their faces.

‘Please?’ says Ben.

‘Yes,’ Ben’s father answers. ‘You can go.’

‘But Ben, *you* have to buy your plane ticket,’ says Ben’s mother. ‘You can work in the house and in the garden.’

‘Okay,’ Ben says. ‘Thanks, Mum. Thanks, Dad.’

On 23 February, Ben’s mother and father take him to the airport.

‘Nico’s mother is going to meet you at the airport in Rome,’ Ben’s mother says. ‘Be good, Ben.’

On the plane, Ben is sitting next to a girl. She smiles at Ben.

‘Hi,’ the girl says. ‘My name is Lizzie.’

‘I’m Ben.’

‘Are you going to Rome for a holiday?’ Lizzie asks.

‘No, I’m going to watch the Italy-England match.’

‘Have you got your tickets?’ Lizzie asks.

‘My friend Nico has them,’ Ben answers. ‘He lives in Rome.’

Lizzie smiles again. ‘I’m going to the match too. I’m going with my friend Max. He’s English, but he lives in Italy. He’s going to meet me at the airport.’

‘Have you got your tickets?’ Ben asks.



‘No,’ she says. ‘We’re going to buy our tickets in Rome tonight.’

In Rome, Nico and his mother meet Ben at the airport.

‘Hi, Ben,’ says Nico. ‘It’s good to see you.’

‘Hi, Nico. Hello, Signora Verdi,’ says Ben.

‘Hello, Ben,’ says Nico’s mother.

Lizzie comes and says, ‘Hi, Ben. Is this your friend?’

‘Yes, this is Nico,’ says Ben.

‘This is my friend Max,’ says Lizzie.

Max is tall and he has a thin face. He doesn’t smile. He doesn’t look at the two boys.

‘Can we meet tomorrow at a café?’ Lizzie asks Ben and Nico.

‘Okay,’ Nico answers. ‘I sometimes go to the Caffè Romeo. It’s in a small street near the stadium – the Via Napoli. The match starts at three o’clock. We can be there at...er...one o’clock.’

Nico and his family live in an apartment in Rome. It’s a big apartment near the River Tiber. Ben looks out of the window of Nico’s bedroom.

‘What’s that across the river?’ he asks Nico. ‘There are lights on a big white building.’

‘That’s the football stadium,’ Nico answers. ‘We’re going to be there tomorrow.’ He jumps on his bed and shouts, ‘*Italia! Italia!*’

‘No!’ Ben shouts. ‘England! England!’

Next morning, Signor Verdi, Nico’s father, comes into the bedroom.

‘Good morning, boys,’ he says. He looks at the football tickets in his hand and gives them to Nico.

‘I have to go to work now. Here are the tickets. Put them in the pocket of your coat. And listen, Nico – *don’t* take the tickets out of your pocket! There are pickpockets in Rome and they take people’s tickets.’

‘But can’t they buy tickets?’ Nico asks.

‘No, they can’t!’ his father says. ‘There are no tickets. The match is sold out. Eighty-two thousand tickets! Eighty-two thousand people, and I’m not going to be there.’ His face is sad. ‘Have a good time, boys,’ he says, and he walks out of the room.

Oh no! Ben thinks. The match is sold out. What’s Lizzie going to do? She’s in Rome and she can’t buy tickets for the big match!

This is the German version of **The Football Match**

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