

Favela Street Kid: The Story of Little Pele

Chapter 1

The mid-afternoon sun was hot and unforgiving in the favela. In this heat, roads melted and the sand burned your feet. It had been in the high thirties for over a week now and Little Pele's Brazilian neighbourhood of narrow lanes, jigsaw bricks and corrugated metal felt like one huge, town-sized oven.

What made matters worse was that it was too hot for the tourists. They had been staying in Rio's air-conditioned hotels and villas for the past few days, which, to a street kid like Little Pele who needed to sell his papayas while they were still ripe, meant no money for his family. It also meant he might have to work on the rubbish dumps to earn some money. He had been wandering the streets all day but hadn't sold anything. Little Pele picked up his crate and headed towards Copacabana beach.

On his way, he came across a game of street football.

"Lil' P!" someone shouted. It was Gabriella, his best friend. "It's the final of 1970 - Brazil versus Italy! It's

1-1! We need Pele!"

Little Pele's passion was football. When he wasn't selling papayas or sifting through rubbish dumps looking for something he could sell, he was kicking a ball with his friends. His family were football-mad as well. His parents named him after Pele - the greatest footballer of all time, his dad said. But his family also needed money to live. He looked at the papayas and then back at the game. If he didn't sell the papayas, his family would have no money to buy simple things like bread and water.

Suddenly, the ball flew over to where he was standing. Little Pele controlled the ball on his chest, juggled it between both feet, balanced it on his head, flicked the ball up and trapped it under his foot.

Sell the papayas or score in a World Cup final? Hmm, it was a tough choice...



