

## Champions 1021

### Chapter 1021: Retirement

Fasal did not divulge Shania's decision to leave the entertainment industry on the 10th of May to anyone else, but Shania still received a lot of attention from the media.

Shania's agent suddenly announced that she was going to turn down her modeling jobs at the fashion shows that would be held in Paris, Tokyo, Shanghai, and New York and that she was willing to compensate for the losses. However, he did not provide a reason as to why Shania had suddenly turned down those jobs, and that has led to inevitable speculation in the media.

Some people believed that Shania was suffering from a health issue because a source claimed that he saw Shania going to the hospital. This conjecture was actually quite close to the truth. The only issue was that they had thought about it too negatively. There were also people who guessed that Shania was not in the mood to work because she was experiencing a problem in her relationship with Twain. However, this guess could not be farther away from the truth. Shania and Twain were well known to be a loving couple, and many regarded them as their role model. There might be a 21-year age gap between the two of them, but they did not have trouble communicating with or understanding each other. In addition, there was no news or reports that have hinted at a problem in Shania and Twain's relationship thus far.

Most of the guesses that the tabloids came up with were nonsensical. They were always trying to think about things in a negative light. Those with good intentions would definitely be able to see what lay beneath the surface.

Twain rarely read celebrity gossip magazines. One reason for it was that he was not a fan of any celebrity, and thus he did not need to read those magazines to understand what was going on in the life of his idol. Another reason was that he spent most of his time on football and had no interest in news that was not related to the sport.

However, he had to read the articles pertaining to his wife. He could not possibly fail to show an interest in what was going on with his wife, even if he knew he could just ask her directly instead of reading about it in a magazine...

The players crowded around to have idle chat during a break in between their training sessions. Likewise, the coaches had formed a group of their own to chat as well. Everyone was discussing various topics that interested them. The coaches were more gossipy than the players were, and they were chatting among themselves. Twain had never thought that elderly men could be this gossipy. They were almost like bored housewives.

"Hey, Tony. Did you read the latest edition of Time Out?"

"The entertainment magazine? You know I don't read those, David."

"I think you should take a look at it. Did you notice anything odd about your wife these few days?"

Twain found Kerslake to be odd. Why would he suddenly care about his wife?

However, Kerslake was a man who has worked with him for several years. He must have asked that question because he had his best interests at heart.

Twain thought about what his wife was like over the past few days. He did not find anything about her unusual. She would always return home with a smile, and everything about her demeanor was normal as well.

Kerslake observed Twain's expression from the side and realized that Twain really did not know what was wrong with Shania. He decided not to explain anything to him, because he was afraid that his words would affect the training session. Twain should just buy the magazine and read it for himself later, he thought.

The training session ended soon after. On his way home, Twain passed by a newsstand and bought a copy of the magazine that Kerslake had mentioned earlier. Time Out was a well-known fashion and entertainment magazine, and it was not hard for him to get his hands on a copy.

Twain saw his wife's name on the cover page and quickly found the article after looking at the page number that was indicated on the cover.

"Shania Twain has surprisingly turned down all her upcoming jobs, and according to her agent, Fasal, she would not be taking on any new jobs either. This is puzzling..."

Twain frowned after reading the article. It was indeed puzzling, but he quickly guessed the reason behind Shania's actions...

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The nanny finished preparing dinner, and Shania waited for her husband in the living room.

Twain came home soon after. However, the first thing he passed to her was not his coat, but rather a fashion magazine.

"What's this about, Shania?"

Twain flipped open the magazine to the page that he had earmarked before, pointing at the article.

Shania glanced at the title and immediately knew what the article was about. A smile emerged on her face as she looked at her husband. "I've decided to retire, Uncle Tony."

Her answer was not surprising to Twain, but he was still confounded. "Why would you want to retire? Aren't you doing well in your job?"

"29 years is considered old for a model. I don't want to continue in this job any longer."

"You could act in movies..."

"You know I don't have the talent for that, Uncle Tony."

Twain was rendered speechless. It was just as Shania had said. He knew very well that she was not particularly talented at acting, and she would definitely not be able to become the main cast of any movie without the help or recommendation from her friends. However, she could not possibly keep relying on her friends forever. She was not the kind of person who would want to do that either.

“But still... You don’t need to retire. What on earth are you thinking, Shania?”

“Before I answer that question, I have a question of my own for you, Uncle Tony. Why did you decide to retire at the end of this season?” Shania smiled and stared at her husband. She did not care about the gloomy look on Twain’s face.

“Because I want to spend more time with you, of course...” Twain answered straight away without thinking.

“And my answer is the same, Uncle Tony.” Shania was pleased that her husband had fallen into her trap. She took a few steps forward and embraced Twain before resting her head on his chest.

“You don’t need to do that at all, Shania. I retired so that I can spend time with you, but you can continue working...”

“I’m not interested in my current job. I just want to stay at home and spend time with you and our daughter.”

Shania’s reason made sense because she has never enjoyed being a model. She did have an interest in acting in movies, but sadly, she did not have the talent for it.

Twain hugged his wife and did not know what he should say. Shania’s decision was too sudden, and he found it hard to accept.

And, most importantly...

“Why didn’t you tell me anything before?”

Shania felt Twain’s arms tighten around her. She knew that her husband was a bit discombobulated.

“I didn’t want to bother you since you were busy with work. Actually, I only came to this decision two days ago after discussing it with Mr. Fasal. I’ve been trying to find a good opportunity to speak to you about it, but I didn’t expect the entertainment magazines to get their hands on the information this quickly...”

Shania’s explanation made a lot of sense, and Twain could not find anything wrong with it either. However, he still could not help but feel like there was more to Shania’s sudden decision to retire. It was not as simple as she said it was...

However, what could her true reason be? Twain did not have a clue.

Twain felt like his wife was hiding something from him as he held her in his arms. However, there was no use in asking if she was not willing to tell him anything. He could only hope that it was not going to be a piece of bad news...

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The tabloid reporters were truly skilled. It only took them a week to figure out the truth behind why Shania had suddenly turned down all her jobs. It was not because she was ill, and neither was it because of a problem in her marriage. It was because she had decided to leave the entertainment industry!

The news of her decision to leave came as a shock to many. Shania was a world-renowned supermodel and Hollywood star who had many fans from all over the world, and she was also the brand ambassador of numerous fashion and luxury brands.

However, such a superstar was going to leave the entertainment industry forever. How could her fans accept such a piece of news?

Shania's official website was instantly flooded with comments from passionate and angry fans.

A large number of her fans did not believe in the news. They thought that the media was just spouting nonsense.

However, Shania subsequently admitted that she was going to leave the entertainment industry during an interview, and her words shattered the last shred of hope that her fans had.

"... I don't wish to make my supporters sad. However, this is a decision that I have to make because I want to spend more time with my husband and daughter in the future. It was a tough decision to reach... However, to me, family always came before career. I can only apologize to those people who like and support me..."

"This is not a break but a retirement. I will not appear as a celebrity any longer. I would like all of you to remember me as Tony Twain's wife and Teresa's mother. I am going to enjoy my life as an ordinary woman from now on."

Shania has always come across as a confident and opinionated woman. She demonstrated her toughness when she insisted on marrying Tony Twain, who was older than she was by 21 years, despite the negative attention from the public. Her decision to leave the entertainment industry behind and take care of her husband and child as a simple housewife was yet another example of her toughness.

It did not matter what others thought, said or did. She would never change her mind.

There were some celebrities who liked to hypocritically claim that they were 'tired of living in the limelight' and that they 'wished to lead an ordinary life'. However, those celebrities would all be looking for ways to capture the attention of the masses once again when they did lead 'ordinary' lives. In fact, they might not even be able to live a week without public attention.

Naturally, there were also people who saw Shania as being just like those celebrities who craved attention. They believed that Shania had only announced that she was going to leave the entertainment industry because she wanted to generate attention for herself and for Dior's product launch in May. Why else would she stay on with Dior when she has turned down all her other jobs?

Their rationale made a lot of sense – all of this must be a publicity stunt by Shania and Dior! They would not change their minds about the matter even though Dior released a statement and said that it was not a publicity stunt. Every action was just a cover-up, many thought.

Shania did not refute those claims. Everything she said would only end up aggravating the situation anyway. Besides, her days of being a celebrity were over, and she did not need to care about what the media thought of her any longer. They could say whatever they wanted. It was not as if their words had any impact on her.

Shania carefully guarded her secret from Twain as she spent her next few days at home. She wanted to keep the truth from him until the very last moment and give her husband a huge surprise. Shania was brimming with excitement as she thought of the day when she would see the look of surprise and happiness on Twain's face.

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The media continued to speculate about Shania's decision to retire over the next few days. Numerous tabloid reporters appeared near Shania and Twain's house in Nottingham, and they would rush up to interview Shania when she left the house or when she returned home. Fortunately, Teresa has been following her celebrity parents around for approximately half a year or so by now and had grown used to seeing hordes of reporters flocking up to her. Otherwise, the sight of so many strangers before her would have terrified her.

Shania gave the same response to every single reporter who came up to her:

"I've decided to retire, and I've already said everything that I'm supposed to say. There's nothing else for me to tell you now."

Some of the more idiotic tabloid reporters decided to interview Shania's husband instead since Shania refused to comment. They hoped to get more valuable information from Twain.

However, they forgot one very important thing. Twain was a man who was notorious for being extremely hard to interview, and all the sports reporters in England could attest to that. The tabloid reporters would definitely not find it easy to deal with him either.

Nottingham Forest's training session ended, and Twain coldly looked at the reporters who had flocked up to him. "I want the reporters who are not interested in sports to leave. I will not answer any of your questions. Don't try to pretend to be a sports reporter either. I know every single reporter who's supposed to have an interview with me here. Everyone else, please leave, or I'll call the security."

Some of the tabloid reporters did not believe Twain's words, and they went up to him pretending to be sports reporters. However, Twain immediately called the security guards and got them to kick the sneaks out. The reporters tussled and yelled about 'the freedom of the press' or 'the public's right to know' as they were being dragged outside, but Twain turned a deaf ear to them. He sent every single tabloid reporter out of the premises and even blacklisted them. They would not be able to enter without permission in the future.

Twain did not have anything against the tabloid reporters. It was not as if he had not accepted an interview from a tabloid reporter in the past. However, the circumstances were different this time around, and he needed to deal with them differently as well.

What are they thinking? This is the worst possible time for them to interview me, he thought. The final Premier League match would be held on May 10, but Nottingham Forest was still in the 7th place! They were two points behind 6th, and there were four matches remaining in the league. If Nottingham Forest would not be able to overtake the sixth-place team by the end of the season, then all the hard work that they had put in this whole season and all the hard work that he had put in for half a season would be for naught!

How could Twain possibly allow those damned tabloid reporters to disturb him and his team now?

The reporters were here to ask Twain about his private affairs, but the truth was that he did not understand what was going on with Shania either. With the end of the season drawing near, he had no choice but to prioritize work for now, and he would think about everything else later. He refused to think about matters irrelevant to football and allow the tabloid reporters to interview him about Shania.

Nottingham Forest had another round of training after Twain had kicked all the tabloid reporters out of Wilford. Twain wanted to prepare his team for the last four matches of the Premier League.

Nottingham Forest would face just one strong opponent in their last four Premier League matches. Perhaps fate was at play here, because the strong opponent that they would have to face was the Manchester United team led by Mourinho. The two sides would meet on Forest's home ground. The match would be Forest's last Premier League match of the season, and also Twain's farewell match.

All three of Nottingham Forest's opponents before their match against Manchester United were weak by Twain's standards. However, half a season ago, Nottingham Forest would not have been able to say with certainty that they would win against those teams.

Twain's plan was to cement Forest's position in the 6th place before the match with Manchester United. This would ensure that the last match of the season would not end up being a death match between the two sides and there would be less pressure on his shoulders as well.

This was the ideal scenario for the team. Why should Forest put themselves in a situation where they would have to fight to the death with Manchester United? They should just ensure that they won their first three matches.

Life was not like a novel. There was no need to leave the biggest and most crucial fight until the end. Twain would not do that and he would not allow his opponents to do it either. In order to climb up to 6th place, Twain had to ensure that his team was able to win three of their four remaining matches, and he also needed his opponent to commit mistakes and lose points. However, he was not particularly worried about the second point, because the current 6th-place team, Manchester City, had a much tougher run of fixtures ahead of them as compared to Forest.

Manchester City would have to face three tough opponents in their four remaining matches, and one of their matches would be a Manchester Derby... Twain did not believe that Manchester City would not drop points in the derby match. Even if the match ended as a draw, Nottingham Forest would still be able to climb up to 6th place based on goal difference.

There were only four matches remaining for the season. There was no room for error for Forest.

The entire team could feel the tension in the air due to their need to battle for 6th place.

## **Chapter 1022: Sixth in League**

The most speculated match in the current league was obviously the Manchester Derby where Manchester City was challenging Manchester United on away ground.

Before this game, Manchester United had the support of all of the Nottingham Forest fans because their loss would give Nottingham Forest a chance to overtake them.

Mourinho was asked this question in his pre-match interview and was proud and arrogant as usual.

“Nottingham Forest? What does it have to do with me? This is the Manchester derby, not the Nottingham derby... Of course we will win, but not for anyone else... Whether it’s the Manchester derby or anything else, victory is what I’m after.”

He refused to answer questions regarding Nottingham Forest or Tony Twain.

Despite this, Nottingham Forest fans would still be supporting Manchester United because they would definitely not support their direct rivals, Manchester City.

Twain did not express any opinions about this match either. Ever since his return, he had rarely expressed his opinions about other people openly, even if it was his old rival, Mourinho.

However, it was unrealistic to say that he did not think much of this match. How could he not care about the match that concerned his own team?

It was just that he did not have the time to care about the match, because the Manchester derby and Nottingham Forest’s match were taking place at the same time.

David Kerslake was sitting in the coach’s seat with his headphones on. He was tuned in to the radio, listening to the latest progressions from the other match. Once there was news, he would definitely tell Twain.

“Manchester City scored; they are leading... D\*amn it! What is Mourinho’s team doing?”

That was how he complained when he heard the news of Manchester City scoring.

The cheers from the Nottingham Forest fans were also reduced.

Twain had his hands on his hips. He stood by the field, not saying anything.

After around three minutes had passed, there was news coming on again. This time, even before Kerslake revealed the news, there was a series of cheers bursting from the stands.

At last, there was a smile on Twain’s face.

“Manchester United have equalized the score!” Kerslake excitedly shouted at Twain. In this chaotic environment, he had to raise his voice to ensure that Twain was able to understand what he was saying.

It was only a brief moment of attention for Manchester United; then Twain focused his attention on the field again. Nottingham Forest was challenging West Ham on away ground so that was not an easy game either.

The score was now 0:0. It was ten minutes after the start of the second half, and the two teams were in a deadlock on the field. The West Ham fans were delighted and chanted, “Even if Manchester City loses, you can’t win anyway! Trying to go to Europe? No way!”

Twain was preparing to do some substitutions, replacing the exhausted Balotelli with Agbonlahor, while making adjustments to move Chen Jian into the defensive midfielder role, allowing Wood to advance a little.

Because Chen Jian displayed outstanding performance in this half of the season, his opponents had already researched him. He had suffered many violations in this competition, so why not allow him to retreat a little instead? Let him distance himself from the opposing defenders and allow him to display his rhythm control.

Chen Jian's and Wood's characteristics were indeed similar, but under Twain's coaching, the two did not have a conflict being on the field at the same time. On the contrary, they could combine to become a dual force. Once one has been thwarted, the other would take over his job and continue to lead the advance of the team. This was the advantage of a "dual force".

Twain's adjustments saw effect immediately. West Ham's defense was previously focused on Chen Jian but had now shifted to Wood. Although the playing styles of the two were similar, there was a difference in their capabilities. The opponents were able to defend against Chen Jian but it might not be as easy to defend against Wood.

Wood launched a sudden attack while West Ham United had not yet adjusted. His forceful advancement through the middle path messed up the defensive lines of West Ham and then he passed the ball to Agbonlahor who only came onto the field for a few minutes. Agbonlahor broke into the penalty area and shot the ball towards the goal. The West Ham goalkeeper dived for the ball and hit it out, but this allowed Mitchell, who was coming over from the other side, to take advantage and easily shoot the ball into the goal.

That was when the Nottingham Forest fans in the stands burst into a bigger cheer than the one they gave for the Manchester United goal just now. The people at the coaching seats let out a long sigh of relief. Tony Twain's team excelled in playing from ahead so they had nothing much to worry about. Now more people were focusing on the match on the other field so they only needed Manchester United to win over Manchester City to allow Nottingham Forest to take the lead over Manchester City after the match and become sixth in the league.

This ranking meant that they would likely qualify for the European matches next season.

And Manchester City would be kicked down into the abyss.

Once Nottingham Forest took the lead, they were in full control of the match. The home team, West Ham, wanted to even the score but they were afraid to press forward to attack, worried that they would instead allow Nottingham Forest to score another goal. The commentator for the match was sighing; the match had become hopeless earlier than expected.

On the other field, the game had entered the most exciting phase.

The city derby between Manchester United and Manchester City, after Ferguson's departure, had lost a lot of firepower. With Mourinho's arrival, the two sides were again on each other's toes. It was impossible for Mourinho, with his big mouth, to refrain from offending other people. Coupled with the inner meaning in the Derby, the firepower in the match was at its peak when Manchester United swiftly equalized the score, starting to progress in the other direction.



First, it was a player of Manchester City who did a slide tackle to a striker in Manchester United, making him fall onto the ground. This earned a yellow card for the offender. Following that, a Manchester United player tackled down another Manchester City player out of vengeance, but he was only given a verbal warning, which gave rise to dissatisfaction within the Manchester City's players.

Subsequently, both sides kept playing dirty on the field, giving slide tackles and performing indecent acts for the ball. The head referee had to blow the whistle and give cards continuously.

In the 77th minute, the players of both sides finally clashed.

At that time, Manchester United's midfielder passed a straight ball behind him, and Manchester City goalkeeper Josh Connor came out and pounced on the football, but Rooney, a 32-year-old veteran, was just as hot-tempered. He did not pull back and fiercely charged into Conner.

It was going to be exciting.

Connor slumped on the ground in pain, while Rooney did not have any intention to apologize as he stood up, patted his buttocks and moved on.

He was immediately surrounded by angry Manchester City players who saw their old team captain suffer. The Manchester United players came forward to gather as well, and the two sides bumped into each other aggressively.

The referee's whistle was no longer able to calm them down and in the end, the coaches from both sides had to come onto the field to pull the players apart.

In the face of such a scene, if the referee gave yet another verbal warning and nothing else, this would only create more chaos on the field.

Desperate times called for desperate measures.

So the referee raised his hand and gave one red card to Manchester City and two red cards to Manchester United, one of them for Rooney who started the whole chaos.

This refereeing naturally upset Mourinho, who roared angrily on the sidelines, accusing him of unfairness. If it were not for the assistant coach who quickly pulled him back down, he might have even been sent into the stands.

Manchester City coach Mark Brown was equally angry. He thought that his team was the victim throughout the entire situation, so why did he need to send out a player?

Clashes between the two sides, from the field to the coaching seats, were an integral part of the game. If there were no aggressive scenes in the City Derby, it would be easily forgotten by everyone.

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The news about the conflict between Manchester City and Manchester United, including both sides needing to send out players, was immediately announced to Twain.

Kerslake's excited expression was mirrored by the crowd and many were like him, happy about this news.

The best outcome would be Manchester United winning Manchester City, but after both sides going through this tough battle and injuring their stamina, Manchester United had to suffer their fair share of injury to get this pitiful victory. Then, Nottingham Forest would definitely be able to take advantage of this situation.

Now things were definitely progressing into the “best scenario” they had thought of.

There was also a smile on Twain’s face. It was clear that this was definitely the intended consequence for him.

He was not worried about Manchester United losing on the home field to Manchester City.

On this side, he stepped up his demands on the team’s offense. A one-goal lead was the most uninsured score in the world.

A series of Nottingham Forest attacks then paid off. Wood’s long-range shot scored through the goalmouth for West Ham United, with Nottingham Forest leading 2-0 at home. With less than ten minutes to go, Nottingham Forest taking down this match with a victory was a no-brainer.

But on the other side, the format of the game was much more dangerous.

At Old Trafford stadium, Manchester United’s attack was impacted since they had to send off two players. Manchester City’s moves grew aggressive because they thought that they had been subjected to unfair treatment. They actually pressed Manchester United all the way into their penalty area.

It angered Mourinho and he made a substitution. Instead of increasing the defensive strength, he replaced a defender with a striker, ensuring there were still two players on the striker line. Through this substitution, he wanted to express his ambition to the other Manchester team—we must win!

Then the morale of the Manchester United players was restored. Their potential was supposed to empower Manchester City and they were on the home field as well. Slowly, they took over the situation.

As the match entered injury time, Manchester United attacked Manchester City’s penalty area with their beautiful team coordination on the frontcourt. Lee Barnett, who was dribbling the ball, was tackled down onto the ground by the captain of Manchester City, Richards. The head referee gave a penalty kick without hesitation.

The penalty was a death sentence for Manchester City, giving a penalty kick during injury time. There would not even be time to allow them to even the score.

Manchester City players naturally surrounded the referee for a long time and protested, but to no avail. The referee felt that sending out a man from Manchester City and two from Manchester United did not look good on the home field of Manchester United, so some sort of balance was needed. The tackle by Barnett was then naturally something he could not overlook.

Just like this, Manchester United won the Manchester derby at home with this controversial penalty, beating Manchester City and cementing their first place in the league.

By the time the news finally reached Twain’s ears, he and his team were already in the changing room. This news allowed the whole team to break into a large celebration. Everyone knew they successfully kicked out Manchester City and, occupying the sixth place in the league, they just needed to secure this

position in the last two games, which would allow them to participate in the European matches in the next season.

Not only were the excited players cheering, they wanted to continue celebrating, but their plans were quickly stopped by Twain's gestures.

"There are still two rounds left in the league, we have one game away from home and one home game against Manchester United. If you think you can start celebrating now, you might cry at the end of the last match."

Twain said that coldly.

Suddenly, the jubilant atmosphere in the dressing room came to an instant stop.

"Remember, the season is not over yet, and it's too early to celebrate. These last two games are the key. It is the time of the last sprint. Pals, I hope that you don't let the team down right before the finishing line. If you want to celebrate, wait until the end of the game against Manchester United."

Having said that, he was the first to turn and walk out of the changing room.

The players in the dressing room were silent for a moment before they got out of the room one by one, took the bus and left.

Twain's words were like throwing cold water onto them, but Twain was not afraid that this would affect their morale. If the team that he trained for more than half the season was so fragile that they could not accept criticism, there would be no point in talking about going back to Europe.

Nottingham Forest would have to return to the European matches next season, whether it was for the Champions' League or the European league. They just needed to appear on the name list of the European matches. This was the last gift Twain wanted to give Dunn.

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Nottingham Forest and Tony Twain both got the result that they wanted, but someone was still furious.

"The referee's performance in this game was very poor! My team was wronged, no one should be punished, only that guy wearing black should be punished!"

Mourinho angrily criticized the referee at the press conference. The "man in black" whom he mentioned was the head referee.

"We will raise a complaint regarding the refereeing on this game."

A reporter stood up and asked a question that instantly turned Mourinho from fire into ice.

"Are you worried that these two red cards will affect Manchester United's last-round match against Nottingham Forest?"

Mourinho, who had just angrily abused the referee, did not immediately answer the reporter's question in the same tone. He just stared at the reporter for a while, then answered in a calm voice, "I'm not worried."

That reporter wanted to ask another question, but Mourinho already pointed at another person, and the subject then returned to the conflict in the match that everyone was most concerned about.

The reporter sat down a little reluctantly. He wanted to talk more about the upcoming battle between Nottingham Forest and Manchester United.

Although there were still two weeks to go before the game, the reporter thought that the match in-between could be skipped entirely. The final face-off between Tony Twain and Mourinho, the sequel that was finally happening after many years, was the type of exciting story that was more entertaining than whatever conflict that happened during the match.

How could anyone fail to see that?

### **Chapter 1023: Before the Last Game**

The reporter who had asked Mourinho at the press conference if he was worried about playing against Twain was clearly prescient. While the media in Manchester were still hyped about the aftermath of the Manchester Derby, the media in Nottingham and elsewhere had already promoted the final battle between Tony Twain and Mourinho.

“Mourinho has never won against Tony Twain during his time as a manager.”

Such a record, which greatly embarrassed Mourinho, was once again rummaged through and retrieved from a dust-covered heap of waste paper, to the extent that people who saw the record had a sense of déjà vu. They felt like they had gone back to nine years ago. At the time, the clash between Twain and Mourinho for two games in a season was a unique sight in the Premier League.

Ever since Mourinho was ousted from Chelsea by Abramovich, such a showdown between two madmen had not been seen again. Later in the European tournament, Twain and Mourinho also played against each other but Twain still had the upper hand. It just too difficult to encounter each other in the European arena. During this time, the fight between Mourinho and Nottingham Forest was also in the mix. It was not just a feud between Mourinho and Tony Twain.

What the media were interested in was purely the showdown. It was a battle that belonged only to Tony Twain and Mourinho.

What kind of sparks could fly when two unruly self-important managers collided together?

It was something to look forward to.

Now that the scene was back in the Premier League, how could the media not be excited?

The media was extremely anticipant. Even the record of the two men’s first game had been analyzed again to give fans a renewed look at their feud.

“...It is said that Tony Twain had always tried to ask Mourinho to have a drink together after a game, but Mourinho always turned down the invitation. No one knew why he refused, but Twain finally made it happen. Before the World Cup in Brazil, they had a drink together as respective guest commentators for their national television stations. No one knew exactly what the situation was, and no one saw them

drinking together. Twain himself revealed it in his autobiography, but did not provide any more details...”

“What is the relationship between Tony Twain and Mourinho? They’re opponents... or maybe it is more appropriate to say they are rivals. Their only goal after they met was to beat and crush each other. However, one scene still haunts me: when Mourinho left Chelsea, the reporters rushed to ask Twain what he thought of the incident, and Twain uttered a swear word for Abramovich the moment he opened his mouth. It was a real shock to everyone at the time. People thought Twain would be happy to lose a strong enemy...”

“Therefore, a friendship between men is one of the most puzzling things. If someone were to ask Mourinho, do you plan to make any allowances for Tony Twain in the last game of his coaching career? I’m sure Mourinho would definitely answer, I’ll give him a defeat.”

That was the way it was.

Indeed, a reporter did ask Mourinho. He caught hold of Mourinho at Carrington’s training base and threw the question out.

“Tony Twain will retire from professional football completely at the end of the season. Do you have anything to say about losing such an opponent?”

Mourinho replied, expressionless, “I will use his defeat as a farewell gift to him.”

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“That’s cold...” Twain clicked his tongue, holding a newspaper.

However, he did even better. When reporters asked what he would do to Mourinho, he stated that it was not the time to talk about Mourinho and Manchester United because they still had one more game before that and their opponent would be Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club. Wolverhampton Wanderers have already secured a relegation spot and would be in the English Football League Championship next season. In the face of such an easy opponent to overcome, Twain still implied that they were more important than Manchester United, which was the highest level of contempt for the enemy, not taking the opponent into account at all.

Was Twain really not taking Manchester United seriously? If it was really so, he would never have won so many honors. Strategic contempt for the opponent and tactical emphasis on the opponent were Twain’s methods.

He was just using this to engage in psychological warfare with Mourinho. As for whether it was effective, he did not care. Mourinho was also an expert at psychology, and Twain did not put stock into it. He still had to rely on tactics to deal with Manchester United and Mourinho.

Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club was relegated early and they lacked fighting spirit in the last two rounds. Although it was an away game, it was predicted to be an effortless victory for the Forest team. Such an opponent was not worth too much thought. As a result, Twain’s focus had been on dealing with Manchester United these two weeks.

Mourinho's Manchester United team did not have a sole feature like Wenger's Arsenal. The impression that Arsenal had given people for more than two decades was that its offense was natural and unforced, complex and diverse as well as delightful to watch. However, they were slightly inferior in confrontations and combat, which was the reason why they were not as good as Manchester United in terms of winning championships. On the other hand, Manchester United had continued to use Ferguson's style, with a greater emphasis on physical confrontation and speed in on-ground attacks. They were more balanced and comprehensive than Arsenal.

They had very few shortcomings many strengths. Such a team was seasoned and had a lot of experience. The players had a tenacious fighting spirit and would not give up easily. They would not be complacent just because they were ahead, nor would they lose hope quickly because they were trailing behind.

Such an opponent was the most difficult to deal with.

Nottingham Forest's style was enough to restrain Arsenal, but not Manchester United.

This game would be a real meeting of force with force. If Twain did not want his last game to be messed up by Mourinho, he would have to work hard.

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Twain was preparing for his last game, while Mourinho was trying to get his two players to evade the penalty of suspension, at least during the game against Forest. He decided to appeal to the English Football Association to buy some time. According to the English Football Association rules, a player who had been shown a red card during a match did not automatically start a suspension, but the suspension would only take effect after being examined and verified by the Football Association.

As long as the Manchester United Football Club appealed, it could be delayed. It was just that a delay of two weeks was... unlikely.

Mourinho did not care. He just wanted to appeal and drag it out a little.

At the same time, as a good manager, he could not put all his eggs in the appeal basket. He had to be prepared to play against Nottingham Forest in the away challenge without Rooney and Evans.

If it had been the Nottingham Forest team of half a season ago, he would not be wasting his time on it. Now it was different. He would definitely not underestimate this particular Nottingham Forest team. In front of people, he always appeared to refuse to bow down to Tony Twain, but in his heart, he did not dare to take Twain lightly.

Strength counted for a lot in the football world. The best way to prove one's strength was to gain victories and win trophies. A manager who had won 16 important trophies within 15 years absolutely could not be taken lightly.

Mourinho was not stupid. He knew it was not easy to beat Tony Twain's team. Therefore, he was extra careful.

What were the strengths of Nottingham Forest? What were its weaknesses? How had their condition been in the last few rounds of the league tournament? How was the situation with the team's injuries?

Had the mentality of the players changed with the approach of the end of the season? Did Tony Twain's announcement that he was retiring make a deep-seated impact on the players?

These questions hovered in Mourinho's mind and he needed to figure them out.

He was already well aware of Nottingham Forest's strengths and weaknesses, having played against this team for so many years. He also understood Tony Twain very well. How could he not? However, knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the other side did not mean that he knew how to deal with them.

Fortunately, he still had two weeks.

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As the league tournament drew to a close, a lot of people had things to do. Some people were busy making a last-ditch effort for the season's goals, either to win the title or to secure a spot in the league. While others were trying to get a good ranking and obtain a bigger share of the broadcast fees after the league tournament ended.

Some others were thinking about their next season.

Dunn was among the last group.

Two days ago, after Nottingham Forest defeated West Ham United by 2:0 in an away game, he received a call from someone claiming to be Evan Doughty, the chairman of the Nottingham Forest club.

Just listening to the voice, Dunn could tell if this man was really Evan Doughty. He had not had any contact with the Forest club for seven years, so it was understandable if he could not recall Evan Doughty's voice. However, he believed the man was the chairman of the Forest Club, as Twain had once told him that Nottingham Forest would contact him during this period to discuss a matter about a contract.

It was just that he did not think it would be the Nottingham Forest club chairman who personally contacted him...

Could Evan Doughty be putting on a show of courtesy? Or was Tony's influence at Nottingham Forest so great that even the club chairman had to show him some face?

Dunn did not want to delve into the issue. It was none of his business. Since Evan Doughty had called, it meant that it was time to think hard about the matter of leaving Notts County and returning to Nottingham Forest.

Actually, Evan Doughty remained skeptical about Dunn. However, he was somewhat hopeful since he was a candidate that Twain had strongly recommended. After all, he still believed in Twain's vision.

They could not speak properly on the phone, and besides, such an important matter had to be discussed face to face.

Evan Doughty and Dunn arranged a time to meet alone and talk.

After all, Evan would have to listen to Dunn's thoughts on the Nottingham Forest team and find out about Dunn's plans to see if he could put the Forest team's future in the hands of a young coach who had yet to achieve any outstanding results thus far.

Although he listened to Twain, he was not a fool without a brain.

If Dunn could really come up with something to his satisfaction, then signing Dunn on would be fine. As for the Notts County team... he would just give some compensation. Anyway, a manager's compensation was not high. Nottingham Forest would still be able to afford the money.

After he agreed to meet Evan Doughty, Dunn ended the call. He began to think about how he could say goodbye to Notts County. After all, it gave him a stable platform to build the team according to his own ideas. They gave him seven years. No matter how terrible the results were initially, he was not pushed out of the manager's position. It was impossible for him to have no feelings for Notts County.

However, he had to pursue a larger stage and a wider sky. The ceiling above his head was not his goal. Tony understood him and thus had given him such an opportunity. He could prove himself again on a bigger stage, lead the Forest team to regain its lost glory and dignity, but also to seek the dream long buried in his heart...

Notts County still ranked in the middle of the English Football League Championship this season, with no hope of promotion. Moreover, the Notts County club's top echelon seemed to have no intention of promotion. To them, the current results were already quite good. Without the support of external funds, it could only position itself at this spot.

Since the club had no ambitions, he would go his own way.

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Pierce Brosnan sat in an office that belonged to him alone. He was thinking about the game in two weeks' time. It would be Tony Twain's retirement game, so reporting on such a highly publicized game would be a challenge.

Many media people were currently focused on the game. If he did not have an incisive point, how could he stand out among such a fierce news competition? Moreover, print media obviously had a disadvantage as compared to television and online media.

Tony Twain was leaving, and the Nottingham Evening Post had curated a special issue. Brosnan was the editor of the topic. He needed to coordinate the staff and resources to strive to make this the best issue he could.

First, however, he needed to identify a theme and an angle. In what way could he delve deeper into the report to achieve the most desired effect?

He simply let his hand go off the keyboard, got up and walked to the bookcase. He began to flip through the materials in there – past issues of the Nottingham Evening Post. He hoped to be able to find some useful materials from them.

When he flipped open the newspaper, a familiar headline caught his eye.

“We Were Raped!”



It was only then that he realized what edition he had pulled. He looked at the date: January 4, 2003. It was the first time he and Twain first took the stage...

Tony Twain in the photograph was still young. The bossy and domineering character was already faintly visible in the position of his eyebrows. Who knew at the time that such a young rookie with shocking language could become the best manager in England's history?

The people and the things of that year...

Brosnan had a sudden flash of inspiration.

Why should he just produce one issue?

How could a single issue be enough to describe Tony Twain's course over the past 15 years?

Brosnan felt that no matter how skilled the reporters who wrote and described Twain's experience were, it would not be as impressive as Twain's own account.

All he had to do was dig out every step that Twain had taken over 15 years and present it to the readers. Then he would let them follow the topic of every issue and reminisce on the ups and downs of the past 15 years together.

It would be sufficient. The "chronicles" of Twain in every upcoming issue would certainly become valuable material worthy of collection.

#### **Chapter 1024: God to God, Dunn to Dunn**

Dunn saw Evan Doughty show up at the cafe's entrance right on time, exactly to the minute of their appointment. Evan Doughty did not bring anyone and nobody near him looked like a reporter. Dunn breathed a little easier.

Evan Doughty stopped at the door and looked around. Dunn did not raise his hand to indicate his seated position. Doughty soon found him. He walked straight up to Dunn and sat down on the opposite side.

The waiter came up and politely asked him what he would like to drink.

It was not a famous coffee shop. Such an ordinary café was common and nondescript. That was why Evan Doughty picked such a place. He casually ordered a regular cup of coffee. He was not here today for a coffee, but to discuss the future of Nottingham Forest with the Chinese man in front of him.

There was probably no precedent of hiring a Chinese man as a manager in European football. The Chinese football standard was very low. How could a good manager be produced in that kind of environment?

If Dunn knew what Evan Doughty thought, he must have felt like crying and laughing. He was a true-blue Englishman, while the much-admired Tony Twain was, in fact, a hundred percent Chinese. He did not know how Mr. Evan Doughty would feel if he knew the truth.

Was it important whether he was Chinese or British?

As long as he had the ability, what difference did it make?

The meeting between the two men officially began when the waiter served the coffee.

“I really did not expect the Chinese lad of back then would reach such an achievement today,” Evan Doughty said as he looked across at Dunn. He was not pretending. In fact, when Twain introduced Dunn to him at the time, he really did not think that the Chinese kid without even a coaching certificate would be here today, sitting face to face with him and possibly facing the future of coaching Nottingham Forest.

“Frankly speaking, Dunn, Although Tony approves of your succession, I still have some doubts. You know...”

“I know. I lack certain experience in coaching top teams,” Dunn took the lead in the discussion. He was not angry because it was true. Having worked in the football world for more than a decade, seven years as a manager, he was already well aware of the only truth in that world: results represented strength, and strength represented everything. He did not have any results worth commendation, so he would naturally be looked down upon.

“Ha, it’s good that you know,” Evan Doughty laughed drily. “Tony thinks very highly of you, and I think he has his own reasons. Let’s not talk nonsense. Can I hear your plans for the team’s future? If you were to coach the Forest team, which direction would you take it?”

Dunn had been thinking about this question since Twain came to him about taking over the position as the Forest team’s manager.

Now he already had a basic answer.

“I think Nottingham Forest needs to be knocked down and rebuilt.”

Dunn’s first words shocked Evan Doughty. He had thought that the foundation Twain left behind would only require minor alterations and adjustments, and it would be fine. It would maintain stability and the results would naturally improve. He did not expect the first notion that this Chinese man came up with was to overturn everything completely.

“Why? Don’t tell me that the foundation Tony has left for you is not good enough.”

Dunn smiled and said, “He did not leave me anything.” Seeing that Evan Doughty was puzzled, Dunn asked, “Other than signing Chen Jian during the winter transfer period, did he propose to you any other players to purchase?”

Evan thought about it carefully. Indeed, he did not. Tony did not mention which players he was going to buy, except Chen Jian. It was reasonable to say that the strength of the team was not optimal, and the winter period was a great opportunity to bolster it. However, Twain was unlike his usual self and did not make any moves in the transfer market. The media had been watching Nottingham Forest throughout January, but the team bade its time with the transfers.

Evan was surprised at the time but did not think of the real reason behind it. He only realized now that Dunn reminded him. So what was the reason for this?

“And isn’t he always switching the players within the team?” When he saw Evan’s expression, Dunn knew he had hit the mark, so he followed up with another question.

Evan looked up and glanced at Dunn. The Chinese man had guessed it again. If Tony had not revealed his reasons to him in advance, maybe he and Twain really thought alike...

To knock the team down and rebuild it?

But was it really necessary to get to this point?

At the thought of knocking down everything that was built before, Evan Doughty felt some heartache.

In fact, Twain did not reveal his ideas to Dunn because he did not want to interfere with Dunn’s intentions. However, from the things that Twain had done, Dunn had deduced what Twain was doing, which was to pave the way for him to take over.

He was really a meddlesome guy...

“Now this team still has remnants of Tony Twain’s direction, but Tony and I have completely different styles of managing. His team may not be suitable for me. Mr. Doughty, do you know why, no matter how many managers you had changed in the last four seasons, you couldn’t get the team back to its former standards?”

“Changing the managers too often?” Evan Doughty comprehended it this way: the managers changed too frequently, so the tactical thinking was not unified. As a result, the players were at a loss and their loyalty to the manager was reduced. Hence, the results were naturally poor.

Dunn shook his head and said, “The root cause was that the managers you changed later were not Tony Twain. Tony had coached the Forest Team for 11 years. Starting from the youth team to the First Team, he had long imprinted on the team that it was useless to change people. The players simply could not accept anything from anyone but him. However, if I took over the team, the situation would be different. Tony can’t come back and stoke the fire again. If you want the team to have long-term development, you have to start over. It was why Tony had been cleaning up the old players without buying new ones during the winter transfer window.”

Hearing Dunn’s rhetoric, Evan Doughty was surprised. He did not expect Twain to think so far ahead. At the same time, he had to view the Chinese man’s abilities in a new light.

“Tony has always wanted the team to get rid of the dependence on him and to be able to shake off his imprint. He has been thinking about it since the time he had a heart attack. However, he never could do as he wished. Just before he retired for good was his last chance.”

Nottingham Forest was on its own. It was not Tony Twain’s Nottingham Forest anymore.

Dunn always remembered this.

At the thought of Twain, and of himself as well, Dunn was suddenly full of confidence in himself. A wave of pride surged in his heart.

He told Evan, “Mr. Doughty, do you want the team to be called ‘a strong traditional Premier League team’ in a few years’ time? Do you want to see the team play in the Champions League every season? I

can't guarantee you that we can lift the Champions Trophy a few years from now. I can't guarantee that I can become like Tony Twain and win 12 trophies in 11 years either. If you just want to win, I can't promise anything. However, I can lay a solid foundation for your team. The foundation would pave the way for Nottingham Forest to become a powerhouse team. Mr. Doughty, do you like to ride in a roller coaster or keep your feet on the ground as you move forward?"

Doughty thought that he had come here to test Dunn, but now Dunn was testing him.

However, he had to face the issues that the man had raised up because these questions were on his mind.

Tony Twain had led the team to win 12 championships in 11 years. In this way, the team was still being described as an upstart. In the past, he was unwilling to accept that once Tony Twain retired, Nottingham Forest might not be successful. As it turned out, when Tony Twain left, Nottingham Forest really could not play well.

What was the reason that caused it? Why was Manchester United able to stay in the top four of the Premier League even when Ferguson left, while Nottingham Forest was in decline?

It really seemed like a roller coaster ride, from the peak to the bottom in an instant.

Did he just want the next championship title or the long-term future?

"Don't powerhouses need to win the championship titles as well?" He asked, still wary.

"A powerhouse team needs the championship titles. But just winning championship titles does not make a team into a powerhouse," Dunn explained to him. "Chelsea won many titles in the Mourinho era. However, had anyone admitted that they were champions? Now that you already have many championship trophies, it's time to satisfy another condition."

Evan Doughty did not ask Dunn what the condition was, because it was sitting opposite him.

"I want to keep my feet on the ground and move forward," Evan finally answered Dunn's previous question. He also answered the question in his own heart.

Dunn laughed.

From 1996 to 2019, he went around in a big circle and came back to the starting point.

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Twain knew about Dunn's contract with the club from the first moments because it was Dunn who called to inform him.

On the phone, Dunn thanked Twain.

"Thank you, Tony."

"You're making me embarrassed by saying that, Dunn," Twain was embarrassed himself and added, "The position should have been yours from the start. I'm just giving it back to you."

“Based on what I had done before, I could stay in that position for maybe half a season. If it were not for you, I wouldn’t have grown like that. Therefore, I want to thank you, not just because I am going to coach Nottingham Forest again. If I hadn’t met you, I might have just paddled through the rest of my life.”

Twain and Dunn both remembered their souls and bodies from before January 1, 2003.

There was a brief silence on the phone.

It was not an awkward silence. Both men seemed to be caught up in their own memories, enjoying the silence, which was left undisturbed.

Me and him, he and I, had it not been for that “accident”, we should have lived our lives separately. What would it be like? No one knew for sure. In short, they had both undergone irreversible changes, and no one could say whether those changes were good or bad for either of them.

Those notes pasted on the fridge, the “must win!!!” note, the familiar face holding a book in the streets of Chengdu waiting to cross the road, the brother in the old home who could not sleep. In the past, those images would mingle together and would not be able to be separated from one another.

“I have nothing to say, Dunn, except wish you good luck. However, you have to be careful. If you do badly, I will not hold back and will abuse you in the media.”

Dunn’s light laughter rang out on the other end of the line.

“I hope I won’t give you the chance.”

After ending the call, Twain was still holding his cell phone.

It had been 16 years. He finally returned the team to Dunn. The last sense of his guilt was gone. Earth to earth, dust to dust. Anyway, a proper ending was a good thing.

What would happen to Nottingham Forest next was beyond his control. He just wanted everything to be okay and hoped that Dunn would succeed. He hoped that he did not misjudge him.

He gave the team 12 years as the captain. Before people could get tired of him, it was better to leave as a dashing legendary figure in the football world.

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Dunn put his cell phone aside and looked again at the stack of papers on the table. This was the contract he had just signed with the Forest club today and it would automatically take effect after the end of the English Football League Championship season.

Nottingham Forest would inform the Notts County club. They must pay compensation to Notts County. Dunn was not worried about Notts County not letting go of him. They could not even keep those players with potential, so naturally, they could not keep him. It was the same logic.

It was just that the Notts County fans might be angry for a while.

Since he joined the Nottingham Forest club in 1996, he had worked his way up from doing odd jobs. He had now truly become the manager of Nottingham Forest. He suddenly developed a dreamlike sensation. Was he really going to coach the team?

He had coached the team briefly once in 2003. However, at the time, the team performed badly, and he was a rookie. Today, he had yet to achieve results that would make people proud while Nottingham Forest had already swept through Europe led by his other self to establish an undeniable presence. Was he capable to lead such a team back on the road again?

Thinking of this question, Dunn smiled bitterly. It was immature to worry about it at this moment. No matter whether he was capable or not, he had already signed the contract. He could not get off the bus, whether he did well or badly.

He closed the contract and put it in the pullout drawer. Then he got up and stretched his back.

Becoming Twain's successor? It was a challenging job. He did not know how people and history would evaluate him in this role in a few years' time.

Would he and Tony be like Paisley and Shankly?

Only time would tell...

#### **Chapter 1025: After Achieving the Goal in Advance**

"The match has ended! 3:0! Nottingham Forest has won!"

The camera was not on the players when the commentator shouted the aforementioned words, and it was not on Balotelli who scored a brace in the match either. Instead, the camera cut to the tactical area and zoomed in on Nottingham Forest's manager, Tony Twain.

Twain had only just stood up when the cameras focused on him, and his assistant manager, Kerslake, patted him on the shoulder. Thereafter, Twain turned around and walked towards where the Wolves manager, Alan Pardew, to shake his hand. The handshake was customary after every football match to show respect to the opponent.

Pardew was not resentful or upset after losing to Twain at home because his team had already been relegated. He told Twain that he did not want him to retire during their handshake.

Twain did not say anything and only smiled in response.

Twain had heard many such comments over the past few weeks. Some of those comments were sincere, and some of them were made out of courtesy. Twain did not care which kind they were. He was going to bid farewell to this sport after one last match, and he did not care about what others thought at all. He was not going to get in other people's faces over their actions or words any longer.

Twain walked away from Pardew and returned to his team shortly after.

The first thing he saw when he walked back was Kerslake's smiling face. "The latest news! Tony! Manchester City has lost!"

Twain smiled when he saw how ecstatic Kerslake was. Manchester City's loss meant that Nottingham Forest had been guaranteed a spot in next season's Europa League, and they would not need to go all out against Manchester United in the next match.

"I don't care if we play terribly in the next match, Tony. I don't even care if we lose! Haha!" Kerslake yelled excitedly amidst the cacophony in the stadium.

"That can't happen, David," Twain shook his head. "I cannot end my managerial career with a loss."

David Kerslake knew that the man before him was still competitive. He did not say anything and only smiled in response.

The news of Manchester City's loss quickly spread throughout the entire Forest team, and it was even broadcasted within the Molineux Stadium, which served as the home grounds for the Wolves team. It was the Wolves' way of congratulating Forest. Only a relegated side like them would be in the mood to congratulate their opponent.

The Forest players hugged each other excitedly after hearing the news. Manchester City's loss meant that their efforts for the past half a season were not for naught.

While everyone else was celebrating the good news, Forest's assistant manager, Freddy Eastwood, was concerned.

"I'm worried that our players would lose their fight in the last match if this goes on," he said to Twain.

His words made sense. Forest's ultimate goal for this half a season was to qualify for the Europa League, and everyone has been fighting to achieve this goal all this time. However, now that the goal had been achieved, the team would surely lose their drive and perform poorly in their last Premier League match.

One just had to look at the Wolves team and how they performed in the match that just ended. They were the perfect 'role model'. Their players were devoid of motivation for the entire match since they knew they had been relegated and there was nothing to fight for. They tried to put up a semblance of a fight before Forest scored the first goal, but their morale was completely gone the moment Balotelli scored a free-kick, and they surrendered on the spot.

However, Forest's opponent for the last match was not an unmotivated team like Wolves. They were up against Manchester United, who was ranked at the top of the table.

Twain did not share Eastwood's concern. He could not possibly let his players walk on a tightrope all the time after all. It was not beneficial to put his team under immense and constant pressure. If the players lost their fight for the last match, then so be it. There were other ways of winning a match besides putting pressure on the players to perform.

In addition, qualifying for the Europa League by defeating Manchester United was never the goal of the team from the start either. The players have trained a lot over the past two weeks, but they have never once trained with that goal in mind. Hence, there was no need to be worried about the players' motivation levels going into the match because they did not intend to rely on the players' fight and determination to win.

However, the situation described by Eastwood could still happen. The players could end up performing poorly because of their lack of motivation. Thus, one of the jobs that Twain and his coaching team had to do over the next week would be to prevent that situation from occurring.

“Don’t worry, Eastwood. It does not matter what sort of problem we run into. There’d always be a solution to it,” Twain patted Eastwood on the shoulder. “Bask in the joy of our victory for now. Don’t fret.”

Eastwood glanced at Twain. “I will believe in those words since you are the person saying them.” He was referring to Twain’s statement of ‘It does not matter what sort of problem we run into. There’d always be a solution to it.’”But what happens once you are gone?”

Eastwood did not know that Dunn was going to take over Forest as the next manager. However, even if he knew, he would most likely doubt Dunn’s abilities as Twain’s successor.

There was probably no one else in the world who would believe in Dunn’s abilities besides Twain.

“I’m not the only qualified manager in England,” Twain answered Eastwood.

He did not expect Eastwood to shake his head solemnly and say, “There is only one Tony Twain in this world.”

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“We have qualified for next season’s Europa League once again. Comparing this result with the results that our team achieved half a season ago would only make us miss Tony Twain even more,” Pierce Brosnan wrote in the Nottingham Evening Post.

“We often use the words ‘he possesses the ability to change the outcome of the match’ when we want to describe an outstanding player, and I would like to dedicate those same words to Tony Twain. He is a man who deserves those words. You might ask, what is the difference between the Nottingham Forest team now and the Nottingham Forest team from six months ago? The current Nottingham Forest team has a new player, Chen Jian, as well as Twain as its manager. Chen Jian was introduced into the team by Twain, and Twain is the man who brought victories to Forest and also led them to sixth place. Frankly, we all knew the truth since a long time ago – Tony Twain is a man who can bring victories and trophies to his team. He is a man who is capable of changing the outcome of a match all by himself.”

The number of events that commemorated Twain increased in number after the match against Wolves ended. No one could bear to see Twain leave the team, and there were more and more voices that called for him to stay at the club. However, everyone knew that they would not be able to change his mind.

The tickets to the home game against Manchester United were already sold out. However, many people were still looking for tickets online. They all hoped to be able to get the chance to send off Twain at the Crimson Stadium.

The Nottingham Forest fans were proud of the fact that they had an outstanding manager like Twain. There were clever vendors who offered fans and tourists the opportunity to ‘take photos’ with Tony Twain by placing a life-sized portrait of Twain outside the Crimson Stadium. Their business was overwhelmingly good, and numerous people wanted to take a photo with ‘Tony Twain’. They even had



customers who had traveled over from faraway lands, and those people stood out with their exotic looks.

The match garnered not just the attention of the local press, but of the press from all over the world as well. The Premier League Management Committee made the decision to broadcast the match live across the world. The Premier League was currently being broadcasted to 256 countries, and there were more than one billion viewers globally. Their decision effectively meant that one billion football fans from around the world would have the chance to witness the last match of Tony Twain's managerial career. It was certainly a high-profile 'farewell ceremony' for a football manager.

Numerous countries began publicizing the match before its kick-off. They advertised it as a unique match that was like no other.

"The farewell match for the most successful football manager in England's history!"

"The feud between two of the most prominent football managers: Tony Twain and José Mourinho!"

"Which team will lift the Premier League trophy in the end?"

A few things made the match a must-watch. Firstly, it was the last one before Twain's retirement. Secondly, Twain and Mourinho have been rivals for over ten years, and it would be interesting to see how a match between them would unfold. Thirdly, the match would determine who would end up as the champions of this season's Premier League. Manchester United might be ranked top of the table at the moment, but they were only ahead second-place Arsenal by a single point. If Manchester United lost to Twain's Forest and Arsenal won against Fulham, then Arsenal would overtake Manchester United and become the champions of the Premier League.

That was an outcome that neither Mourinho nor the Manchester United fans wished to see happen.

The press in Nottingham focused solely on matters related to Tony Twain. The press in Manchester, on the other hand, focused on whether Mourinho's team would be able to retain its Premier League title. Surprisingly, they did not have high hopes about Manchester United's chances of becoming champions – they believed that Nottingham Forest would not go easy on them, because neither their fans nor their players would wish to send off their legendary manager with a loss.

The people who believed that the Forest players would lose their motivation and fight after qualifying for the Europa League in advance were foolish. The match against Forest was undoubtedly going to be a tough challenge for Manchester United.

Mourinho thought the same way as well. He had a solemn expression on his face during his interview, and he did not think that his team could relax despite being in the first place at the moment. When asked about the match, Mourinho said, "...I don't like predicting the outcome of any football match. However, I think my team can defeat Nottingham Forest..."

His words sounded forced. They were more like words that had been said to boost his team's morale than an expression of his confidence.

Then again, perhaps Mourinho was trying to let his opponents become arrogant by deliberately showing weakness. Who could tell what was really on his mind?

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Eastwood's concerns never came true. The players did not appear to have lost their motivation or fight for the upcoming match when he observed them during their daily training sessions. In contrast, they seemed to be brimming with fighting spirit. None of the players wanted to miss out on playing in such an important match due to their poor performances during training.

Eastwood could not help but lament at how great an influence his boss had, and he became even more worried about who would be able to control the players after Twain left...

Twain did not seem to be in the least bothered about all the news that was being published about him at the moment or with how some of the people around him were in a state of worry. He did what he has always done over the past decade. He left the training sessions in the hands of his coaching staff while he stood by and twiddled his thumbs.

He was just like an old man nearing retirement who would turn up at work every day just to make himself a cup of tea and take a walk.

Twain did not take walks and neither did he make himself tea at work. His work only consisted of standing by the side of the pitch at the moment. There was nothing else for him to do now, as he had already finished all that he had to do in preparation for the match against Manchester United. He was busy coming up with the tactics for the match a few days ago, but now that he had finished everything, he was free. All that was left to do was to get the players to practice his tactics, and he did not need to be involved in it. He would only get busy on the day of the match.

The only thing he had to do now was stand by the side of the pitch with his sunglasses on and watch his players train.

However, he has been watching players train for the past 16 years, and he has grown a little sick of it. Thus, he would allow himself to get distracted from time to time nowadays and would not pay attention to their entire training session.

Twain could no longer quite remember who the players in the team were when he first took over as the manager. Back then, he did not know how he should train a football team, and he had very little knowledge about his players. He certainly did not expect that he would go on to become one of the most successful managers in the country at that time.

What would people think if they knew that the real identity of such a successful football manager was actually that of a Chinese football fan who did not know much about professional football?

This was definitely a secret he would need to take to his grave.

A few random thoughts suddenly struck Twain. What if there were other transmigrators or time travelers like him in this world? What if one of those geniuses who contributed greatly to mankind actually came from the future?

Those were certainly interesting thoughts. Maybe Wenger was actually a transmigrator or time traveler who had managed to hide his true identity really well? That would explain why he was skilled in spotting talented youth players.

Twain became lost in thoughts thereafter. When he finally snapped out of his reverie, he realized that the training session was almost over.

The team's assistant managers, Kerslake and Eastwood, gathered the players before them. They were all going to listen to the manager say a few words before they left.

In truth, Twain rarely spoke at the end of the team's training sessions, and it was not mandatory to listen. However, as Twain's departure from the team drew nearer, the players began demanding for Twain to speak to them more. Hence, Twain would always say a few words – be it comments about their training or any other matter, at the end of the training session these days.

The players 'just liked listening to the boss' voice', as Gareth Bale put it.

Everyone wanted to listen to Twain speak, and today was no exception.

Twain saw Eastwood wave at him and he walked over.

"Honestly, I've already said all that I should say, and I can't think of anything else now," Twain shrugged. However, he knew that he had to say something.

"We'll be playing in our last Premier League match of this season in three days' time. After seeing how our training sessions have gone over the past few days, I think we are definitely ready for the match. Frankly, I never believed that any of you would lose your motivation and fight after we achieved the goal in advance. So, tell me. Did any of you lose your motivation for the next match?"

Twain asked this as he looked at the players around him.

"That will never happen, boss!" Gareth Bale was the first to answer, and his teammates nodded their heads in agreement. "We know we still have to bring you victory for the last match!"

Twain smiled happily. He then clapped his hands once and said, "Then isn't the training session over? What else can I say? You are all dismissed!"

The looks of distress on the players' faces caused Twain to smile even more happily.

The day where he no longer had to rake his brains and think about what to say to satisfy his players has finally come. When he was younger, he liked to use impassioned speeches to motivate his players. He felt that speaking in that manner made him look good. However, now that he was old, he did not like to do things in such an eye-catching way anymore. He preferred to use silence and actions to show his strength now.

After all, actions spoke louder than words. A more effective way of hurting one's opponents would be to roll up one's sleeves and fight them rather than spending the whole day scolding them.

Twain might have gotten on with age, but his claws were still sharp and he was still a threat. All doubters were welcome to the Crimson Stadium on the 10th of May, and they would be able to see for themselves if he has truly lost his edge.

**Chapter 1026: Dusk and Dawn in Wilford**

Twain stood on the training ground number 2 in Wilford. A dense forest was in front of his eyes, and the mottled shadows of the woods were at his feet. The day's training had ended, and the players had left, but there was one more man practicing on the training ground.

Twain stood on the sidelines and watched the man who was practicing.

The scene was familiar to him.

In the afterglow of the setting sun under the darkening red sky, Wilford appeared fragmented by the dividing shadows of the forest on the west side. The whole training ground was quiet. There was no sound but the thuds of a football being kicked and hitting the goalpost, net, and wire fence. There was the occasional cry of a bird. It was a big contrast to the noisy scene during the day.

When he was still young, he had been here to watch the man in front of him practice countless times. At that time, the man was only a child.

In the blink of an eye, more than ten years had passed. He himself was about to retire, and the man in front of him was the standard-bearer of the team. At the same venue more than a decade ago at the same time, did Tony Twain think about the future?

While Twain was lost in contemplation, the man on the field had already walked up to him, perspiring all over.

"What are you looking at?" He asked.

"Admiring the scenery," Twain replied. He continued to look at Wilford, shrouded in twilight. "Don't you think everything here is like an oil painting? I also remembered that you once kicked the football straight into the river in the youth team training ground. It was also dusk at the time and the sky was dark. That football could not be recovered in the end. Ha!" He laughed as he talked. "I don't have that many days left to enjoy this landscape."

George Wood turned and followed Twain's gaze. "Hasn't it always looked like this for the last sixteen years?" He was used to looking at it because he stayed almost every day to give himself extra practice. "Stay if you haven't seen enough."

Twain shook his head and said, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder. If I stay, I won't feel that all this is beautiful. I would only take it for granted. I have been in Wilford for twelve years and I've only recently noticed it's really beautiful here. In the past, I had always come and gone in a hurry."

There was a moment of silence between the two men. Twain continued to admire the view in front of him. In fact, the scenery of Wilford was not that striking, but in his current frame of mind, he would certainly be moved.

Did Twain think this evening was beautiful because he had reached the twilight of his coaching career? The sun, which once radiated boundless light and heat in the blue sky, was now setting in the west.

"Go take a shower and change your clothes. Don't catch a cold," Twain said to Wood next to him, breaking the silence.

Wood did not object and just nodded. He turned and walked away.

By the time he had finished, he found that Twain was still on the training ground. He had wanted to go up and say goodbye before he left but he did not expect Twain to stop him.

“Have you thought about the matter of when you’re going to retire, George?”

Wood stared blankly and then shook his head. He said, “No. I have not planned it yet. But it won’t be when I’m 40 years old, anyway.”

Hearing him say so, Twain laughed silently.

He had only casually mentioned this age and did not think Wood took it seriously.

“I’m not going to advise you to play until you’re 40. You’re definitely better aware of the situation than I am. However, be sure to invite me when you retire. I have to see for myself what kind of scene the sendoff of the greatest team captain in the history of Nottingham Forest will be like.”

Wood was silent for a while and seemed to remember something. It was a while before he said, “It probably will not be better than yours.”

“What’s so great about a manager’s retirement?” Twain shrugged it off and said, “When the game ends the day after tomorrow, it will be over with a press conference.”

Wood did not really know what it would be like when a manager retired because he had not experienced it. According to conventional reasoning, he should have retired earlier than the manager, because it was considered normal for a manager to work for 20 years, while it was not easy for a player to stay that long.

There was a moment of silence between the two men.

Twain did not want to talk while Wood had something on his mind.

After a while, when the red clouds in the western skies had darkened, Wood opened up and said, “I think you’re a little different from how you were in the past...”

“In the past? A little different?” Twain did not understand Wood’s abrupt words.

“Do you feel like your temper is a lot better than it used to be, because of your age?”

“Ha!” Twain laughed. “Is it because you see that I don’t often start a war of words nowadays? And because I don’t scold people to their faces?”

Twain and Mourinho both behaved with restraint in the game against Manchester United. Other than “greeting” each other once at the start, there was no news or active provocation. There was none of the so-called psychological warfare either. This made the media feel very disappointed.

Wood did not say a word, but it could be surmised that he agreed tacitly.

“I’ve been arguing for so many years, I’m tired of it,” Twain waved his hand.

“But I don’t know why...” Wood hesitated as if he did not know what to say, and finally, he spoke out. “I preferred the way you were before... you were very energetic. Everybody liked it.” The “everyone” he meant was not all the Forest players, but the few remaining “old guys” in the team, such as Gareth Bale,

Joe Mattock, Agbonlahor, Mitchell... and so on. It was the group of players who had followed Twain to dominate the football world before his last resignation.

Twain turned to glance at Wood. He did not know what to say. He only reached out to touch Wood's arm.

Retirement was nothing to him. He was just a little reluctant to leave the players whom he had watched grow up. These days, the players used every opportunity to interact with him. He certainly knew what they were thinking. No one could bear to part with him.

However, all good things must come to an end.

Twain did not want to continue the melancholy conversation, so he asked a question of particular interest to himself. "How are things between you and Miss Vivian?"

"Nothing much to tell," Wood was clearly evasive in his answer.

Twain guessed something but did not say it. He went on to change the subject.

"George, do you have any plans for the evening?"

"No," Wood replied.

"Well, then come home with me tonight."

Wood glanced at Twain.

"Shania went to Paris today, and it's a little quiet without here at home. Teresa will be very happy to see you."

Shania left the United Kingdom this morning and flew to Paris to prepare for her last runway show and to attend a thank-you party. However, her social life was much quieter than before. Perhaps because it was known that she was quitting the modeling and entertainment world, people thought that she was no longer a worthy celebrity, so there were much fewer people who would deliberately fawn on her.

It was actually quite good this way. Shania liked it very much. She herself did not enjoy those social activities. Many times, it was because of work requirements and friends' invitations that she could not decline. Otherwise, she would stay at home during her breaks, instead of going around to be on cameras and show off. Although she and Beckham's wife, Victoria Beckham, were good friends, she and Victoria were two completely different people.

With Shania away, Twain felt even lonelier and Teresa also missed her very much. Shania had wanted to take Teresa with her to Paris, but Teresa had to go to school, so she stayed at home in the care of her nanny.

Twain was not worried about their child. The nanny was very, very good and he was sure Teresa would be well cared for.

It was just that he inevitably still felt lonely.

That was why he invited Wood to his house again tonight, even though Wood was reticent and not very talkative. He did not know how to play with kids either. However, without knowing why, Teresa liked to be with her 'older brother' Wood. She would be very happy when Wood was around.

Twain could not see the playful side of Wood, so he could not understand why Teresa especially liked the stern-looking George Wood so much.

If it was not for the fact that the two were so far apart in their ages, Twain would have really worried about the possibility of his daughter falling in love with George in the future... Uh, it was too much of a digression.

When Twain brought up Teresa, Wood could not refuse. He nodded and accepted Twain's invitation.

"Would you like to ask Miss Vivian to come with you as well?" Twain suddenly asked.

"She's working overtime..." Wood realized he had a slip of the tongue.

Twain laughed delightedly.

Amid his laughter, he turned around and patted Wood on the shoulder, signaling that they should go.

Wood did not make a move right away but turned and watched Twain walk ahead. He found the man's back a little hunched. Perhaps because he was laughing?

The last afterglow of the sunset was swallowed by the horizon, and the quiet Wilford was shrouded in the night. A gust of wind blew and the trees behind them rustled. The wind stirred the hair and clothes of the two men. Wood could not help looking back at the inky black woods while Twain walked out without turning his head back.

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Teresa, who had been waiting a little longer than usual for her father to come home from work, relaxed her frown after she saw Wood follow her father into the house.

In Wood's company, Teresa happily spent the first night her mother was away. By the time Teresa went to bed, it was 11 o'clock. Twain wanted Wood to stay at his place since there were many guest rooms anyway. However, Wood did not agree. He wanted to return home.

Unable to do anything about it, Twain had to send Wood out.

At the gate of the yard, while they were waiting for the bus, Twain assumed the role of a fatherly figure and thanked Wood. He also told him that he was allowed to be 15 minutes late for the next day's training session.

However, at the training the next day, George Wood was still the first one to arrive.

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The day in Wilford began early. The mist from the night began to evaporate in the sunlight. The layers of fog rose from the thick woods and were blown by the breeze to every corner of Wilford as well as above River Trent.

At this time, Wilford was still quiet and only the staff arrived early, ready to start the day's work.

Tony Twain came as early as they did. Instead of going to his office, he went straight to the training ground and greedily breathed in the fresh air of the early morning.

The staff members were busy on one side and said hello to Twain when they met him without stopping the work they were doing. Twain strolled alone between the individual training grounds. Stepping on the sodden turf, the hems of his pants and leather shoes would be all wet soon.

He did not take notice of it and focused on the task.

After he finished taking a round of the First Team training ground, he went to the training ground of the reserve team and the youth team. He supervised them all before he went back to the office to rest. Meanwhile, the players were arriving in succession, getting ready to start the day of training.

It was the last day of training before the Forest team's game and also Tony Twain's last training session in his coaching career.

By the time Twain went into his office to take a break, there were already many reporters gathered outside the Wilford training ground, all of whom came to witness Tony Twain's "last lesson." Although they only had 15 minutes of public filming, that did not halt their enthusiasm.

Pierce Brosnan saw Carl Spicer in the crowd. He did not have much of a good opinion regarding the person who had been persistent in smearing Twain. Since he ran into Spicer, he would naturally go up and ridicule him for a bit.

"Hey, Carl," He greeted him warmly as if the two of them were good friends who had known each other for years.

Spicer certainly was aware of who Brosnan was, so he knew the latter took the initiative to greet him not to talk about old times.

"Well, isn't this Mr. Pierce Brosnan, Twain's ordained reporter?" Spicer responded cynically.

The nickname, which was used in the press circle to mock Brosnan, was by no means a compliment.

Brosnan was not angry, but smiled and said instead, "Looks like you're in a good mood, Carl. Is it because the person you hate the most is finally going to say his goodbye?"

Spicer did not hesitate and nodded. He never denied his dislike of Twain in public, which was much better than those hypocrites who appeared to praise Twain to his face but cursed him behind his back.

Seeing Spicer take the bait, Brosnan laughed more smugly as he said, "I'm thinking... Once Tony retires, where are you going to get someone to abuse and maintain the ratings for your show?"

The expression on Carl Spicer's face froze instantly. He was not a fool. He immediately realized that Brosnan tricked him. However, he was unable to answer in the face of such a question. He really relied on abusing Twain until he became famous and eventually a television presenter. And once Twain retired, who would he target next? The admonishment of a person was also an art. He could not attract so many views just by scolding any Tom, Dick or Harry off the streets.



Looking around the English football world, and even the international football world, a figure like Tony Twain, who was widely controversial while receiving many honors at the same time and being very popular with the people, was extremely rare.

Mourinho might barely count as one such manager. However, scolding a foreigner would not attract much attention in England. Mourinho's influence in England was a long way off as compared to Tony Twain.

Although Spicer hated the arrogant and conceited Tony Twain who had made him suffer a lot of humiliation, he also had to admit the one fact, which greatly embarrassed and infuriated him: that once Tony Twain left, he would be out of play!

It was no secret. Everyone in the circle knew Carl Spicer got in a leading position by abusing Twain. Some people were very dismissive of him, even those who equally hated Twain.

Many people laughed when they saw Spicer looking like this. Seeing other people making fools of themselves was a common sport of people all over the world. Even British gentlemen were no exception.

After Brosnan singled out Spicer's biggest point of embarrassment, he ignored the man and turned to focus on the team's training.

Spicer was also thick-skinned – after fighting with Twain for years, he would have already committed suicide if he were otherwise. After the initial embarrassment passed, he stood there as if nothing happened and continued to direct his men to shoot footage of Tony Twain.

His show was not about the Forest team's training. There would always be Tony Twain, alone, in his shot. This also confirmed, in another way, how right Pierce Brosnan was.

Only Tony Twain existed in Carl Spicer's eyes while Tony Twain's eyes held the whole world.

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Tony Twain, whose eyes held the whole world, finally appeared in front of the reporters' cameras.

Today he wore a casual shirt and a pair of dark blue jeans, which looked different from the getup he wore while directing a game on the sidelines. As compared to the managers who were used to wearing sports attire to lead the teams, he did not look like a real manager. However, no one was surprised, because Tony Twain had been like this for sixteen years. People no longer wondered about what they saw.

Twain appeared in front of the public, wearing sunglasses, and caused a commotion. Fans on the east side loudly chanted Twain's name and the cheers only gradually died down when Twain waved to them.

No reporters were surprised by such a scene. They had long become accustomed to witnessing Twain's influence.

They just instructed the photojournalists and camera operators to seize every moment of shooting.

"This is Tony Twain's last training session! Don't shoot anything else, just focus on him!"

Twain did not care how the others filmed him. He was used to it, even though the battle array this morning was a little bigger than usual...

However, he himself deserved such attention.

The one thing good about Twain was that he was realistic. He would take the credit when it was rightfully due. He was never self-effacing.

There was nothing for him to do on the training ground. He watched for a while and saw that the players' performance was normal. The crowd of reporters did not affect them... however, he could not tell what was normal or not at the moment because everyone was running laps for the warm-up ...

Twain observed them for a moment before turning his attention to other areas. The east side was surrounded by many fans, more than usual. These fans were determined to ask for autographs from and photographs with Twain after the game.

Twain's eyes superficially scanned the crowd, but he suddenly fixed his gaze.

He stared at a man in the crowd. He had a strange expression on his face, which was both excited and surprised.

Whom did he see to make him forget everything else?

In the crowd, Fat John, Skinny Bill, and their other buddies surrounded a man.

That man was Michael Bernard, whom Twain had met in Los Angeles before!

### **Chapter 1027: Last Training Session**

Twain held back his urge to walk over to the side and figure out what was going on. He withdrew his gaze from the crowd and focused his attention on the training session once again. He still did not understand why Michael would appear at the training grounds, but he felt that he would get the answer he sought at the end of the training session.

Twain thought he was hallucinating when he saw Michael in the crowd. He wondered if he had time traveled again. Did I time travel back to 2003? Wouldn't that just mean that I am trapped in an endless loop? That was what he thought

He looked at the players who were training on the pitch and heaved a sigh of relief when he saw an aged Bale. If he had time traveled back to 2003, Bale would definitely not have appeared before him.

Twain could finally relax and focus all his attention on the training session once he was certain that he had not time-traveled to the past.

The media was given 15 minutes to take photos of the training session. However, 15 minutes was too short and not enough for the reporters. They wanted to stay longer and take more photos, but the security guards promptly appeared before them.

Left with no choice, the reporters reluctantly packed their bags and left the training grounds. They then waited to be allowed entry into the training grounds a second time for their interviews outside the

premises. The Forest fans, on the other hand, could remain at the side of the pitch. The '15 minutes' rule did not apply to them.

One concern was that a reporter could dress up as a fan so as to remain on the training grounds. However, based on Twain's experience as a manager for the past decade or so, the possibility of that happening was very low.

Only one training session was planned for today since tomorrow was the match day. The players would train in the morning before resting for the whole afternoon. Thereafter, the entire team would check into their hotel and then make way for the stadium the next day.

The players were mainly going to practice on their set pieces for today's training. Set pieces were especially useful when the team needed to break a deadlock in a match, and the coaches would always schedule drills that got the players to practice on their set pieces prior to every match.

However, training did not go very smoothly that day. The players would often commit mistakes, and this resulted in a largely ineffective training session. One of the players who kept committing mistakes was Gareth Bale. He repeatedly failed to send the ball to the assigned spot during training, and it caused his teammates to run to the front of the pitch for nothing time and time again.

What could be causing his poor performance?

Twain decided to halt training for a short while. He wanted to find out what was going on with Bale.

"Bale," He waved at the man nicknamed the 'Little Monkey' and gestured for him to come over.

Bale lowered his head and ran towards Twain.

"What's wrong? Your head's in the clouds."

"Uh... Nothing..."

"Did you quarrel with your girlfriend?"

"No, I did not..."

"Then tell me what's going on. Is there something that I shouldn't know about?"

Bale lowered his head and hesitated for a brief moment before raising his head to look at Twain. "I got distracted when I thought about how this is going to be your last training session, boss..."

Twain did not know whether he should laugh or cry at Bale's words. So I am the problem, he thought to himself.

He then looked at the pitch before him. All the players were looking their way because the training had been paused. Only then did he notice the same emotion that Gareth Bale had just exhibited in the eyes of all his players.

In truth, Twain had lamented about how this was the last training session of his managerial career as well. However, he got rid of those thoughts the moment training began. After all, it was a day just like any other. There might be a few more reporters than usual, but everything else was the same.

However, there would definitely be people who could not bear to see him leave...

Twain quickly realized that this kind of emotion should not appear during training. It would only influence the effectiveness of the training session negatively. It was very important that his players practice their set-pieces because set-pieces might end up becoming the key to winning the match tomorrow.

Bale continued to stand before Twain with his head lowered. He looked like a child who had just done something wrong. But what wrong did he do?

Twain looked at the meek expression on Bale's face and let out a sigh.

"Follow me," he told Bale before walking straight towards his players.

Bale dragged his feet along and followed behind Twain obediently.

Two assistant managers and six coaches watched as Twain walked towards them, but no one said a word. Tony Twain usually would not interfere with their work, because everything that had to be done for today's training session had already been decided during their meeting on Monday. However, if he halted the training session because he had something to say, that something had to be very important.

Twain walked right into the circle formed by the players and stood in the middle. Bale, on the other hand, came to a stop next to Aaron Mitchell. Mitchell bent over slightly and asked him in a hushed voice, "Hey, Little Monkey. What did the boss say to you just now?"

"He wanted to know why I was performing poorly."

Mitchell stroked his chin. "You did perform poorly today."

"So did you," Bale nudged Mitchell in the ribs.

Mitchell giggled.

"What did you say to him?" Mitchell asked softly after he finished giggling.

"I told the boss that I'm performing poorly because this is his last training session with us."

Mitchell fell silent after hearing Bale's answer. He probably would have given a similar answer if he had been the one who was asked the question earlier.

"Did he say anything to you?" Mitchell asked after a brief moment of silence.

"He told me to 'follow him'." Bale pointed at Tony Twain who stood in the middle of the crowd.

Both players looked at Twain.

Their boss stood in the middle of all of them. He then raised a hand to signal that he had something to say.

"Lads, I can see something in your eyes." Twain was about to make an impromptu speech before his players, and it was probably going to be his last time giving a speech during a training session.

“It’s wrong for you to feel that way now. Do you have any idea what you are doing right now? This is a training session, and we have a very, very important match tomorrow... Don’t tell me that there are some of you here who think that tomorrow’s match is not important because we are already in the top six.”

Twain turned right and left and surveyed the players around him.

“If you have the leisure for thoughts like how this is going to be my last training session with you lot, it only proves that you either think you can win tomorrow’s match easily, or you don’t care about the results of tomorrow’s match. Both of which are not what I want from all of you!”

Twain paused to catch his breath. The sunlight was quite strong today, and a thin layer of sweat had formed on his exposed forehead. Twain felt a little short of breath as he stood under the sun. His physical condition reminded him once again that he had made the right decision to retire.

“I know some of you have not been in Forest for long and are not part of the team that won the Treble years ago. Actually, there are very few players from that team here today. I can understand how those senior players would feel.” Twain looked at where Bale was. He was not sure if it was a coincidence, a deliberate act or a habit, but Mitchell stood to the left of Bale, and Joe Mattock stood to the left of Mitchell. The player standing behind Mattock was Agbonlahor, and the player standing to Bale’s right was Nkoulou. Gago stood to the right of Nkoulou, and Chris Cohen stood in front of Gago. The only player who did not stand with them was George Wood. He stood across from them, with the new players of the team.

“But it’s precisely because I understand how they feel that I’m so upset. Do you all remember the words that are written on the walls of the tunnel? ‘Victory is all that matters’! That is Nottingham Forest’s philosophy. Have you all forgotten?”

Twain stared into the eyes of the senior players on the team. He wanted to see something different from what he saw earlier.

Bale took a step forward. He and Wood have played under Twain for the longest time, and they also had the most experience in the team. However, Wood would not be willing to speak up on this matter, and thus the job fell on Bale’s shoulders.

“But boss... it’s not that we want to lose the match, or that we think we can win the match easily. It’s just.... We just got distracted when we thought about how this is going to be your last training session with us... Yeah, that’s it.”

“Then how do you intend to make me believe that you won’t get distracted in the match tomorrow? We’d be playing in the last match of my managerial career tomorrow, mind you. That’s way more important than my last training session, isn’t it?” Twain winked at Bale humorously. However, Bale did not smile.

Some of the new players laughed at Twain’s words. They clearly did not understand their boss well enough.

Twain did not mind the abrupt laughter. He stared intently at Bale. He wanted the latter to give him an answer that would satisfy him.

What kind of answer could Bale possibly give? Could he possibly say 'I think we won't make that kind of mistake, boss'? His boss would definitely not believe him, and those words might end up angering him instead. His boss might have become gentler now, but no one dared to look down on him. The words that he said on the very first day he returned to the team still remained fresh in everyone's minds –'If any one of you thinks I'm old, then go ahead and try me!'

Those words of his were powerful and they resounded in the players' hearts.

Twain had merely hidden his ambition under a friendly exterior. His past, fiery self could very well surface again if something provoked him.

"I cannot guarantee that we won't get distracted tomorrow, boss..." Bale chose to admit that he was wrong under Twain's intense stare.

"Then I want you to forget about how this is going to be my 'last training session'." Twain waved his hands dismissively. "I want all of you to practice just like you would on any other day. If I see any of you getting distracted during training one more time, I will not hesitate to take your name off the starting list or the team list for tomorrow's match."

Twain walked towards Kerslake and patted him on the shoulder after finishing his words. "I leave everything else to you, David."

"Don't worry, Tony. I'll handle things from here," Kerslake told Twain.

Twain walked away from the crowd and stood by the side of the pitch. He became a spectator once again.

He then sent a cursory glance at the eastern part of the training grounds. The fans were still there, and they seemed to be discussing something excitedly. They must have found the incident from earlier interesting.

The edge of Twain's lips went up. Look at the fans. They are all acting normally. The players should really learn a thing or two from them...

It was clear that Michael Bernard was the center of attention among the Forest fans. Everyone had crowded around him subconsciously. Michael did not say much as he stood in the middle of the fans. It was hard to imagine that he used to be the boss of a group of hooligans and the leader of the Forest fans over a decade ago. He was dressed in a shirt, trousers and leather boots, and he looked just like any other office worker.

It would be even better if he were carrying a briefcase, Twain thought evilly.

He definitely had to go and find Michael when the training session was over. However... he probably would not be able to meet him anytime soon.

Twain thought about the group of reporters who should still be standing outside the training grounds at the moment. He would definitely be busy for quite a while when those reporters heard that they could enter the premises once again...

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The team was finally able to practice normally after Twain had chastised them earlier. None of the players dared to lose their concentration under Twain's watchful eye now. In fact, everyone worked even harder than they used to because no one was willing to be dropped from such an important match due to a lapse in concentration during training. Twain did not want the players to think about how tomorrow was going to be the last match of his managerial career, but it was impossible for them not to think about it. However, the players knew that they had no choice but to suppress those thoughts for now. They had to convert all their emotions and thoughts into their drive for tomorrow's match.

The players wanted Twain to speak to them after the training session was over, but Twain waved his hands and refused their request.

"I've already said all that I should say for now. I'd just be repeating whatever I already said if I gave another speech now. I have no interest in wasting your time. I want all of you to shower and change into a new set of clothes now! Don't catch a cold!" He was about to turn around and walk towards the reporters when he added, "Oh, yes. Let me say this. All of you did very well during the training session earlier."

Twain did not walk towards the fans. He knew that the restless reporters would not let him go.

Just as he expected, he was surrounded by a horde of reporters the moment he walked to the entrance of the training grounds.

Countless microphones, recorders, and mobile phones were thrust out towards him.

"The last match of your managerial career is going to take place tomorrow. Is there anything that you want to say about it, Mr. Twain?"

"I'm feeling peaceful. Thank you."

"What do you think about your chances of defeating Mourinho's team?"

"I don't know, that's not up to me to decide. You should ask God instead. The only thing I know is that my goal is to win."

"Manchester United would be able to retain their Premier League title as long as they win against you..."

"I know that. The fact that I'm still able to encounter such an interesting situation before I retire makes me very happy," Twain smiled. His smile was genuine because the situation was indeed very interesting. He worked hard to prevent his team from being in a situation whereby they were at the mercy of Manchester United, but he did not expect the tables to be turned so that it was Manchester United who was at their mercy.

Twain was not a benevolent soul who would show sympathy to others when there was something that he sought. He was actually the complete opposite of that. He was a vile man who would be more than happy to kick Mourinho into the abyss.

It was true that he drank with Mourinho in Brazil before, but that was all in the past. He had returned to his job as a manager, and Mourinho was his opponent for the next match. That was all that mattered now.

"Do you feel a little sad knowing that today is your last training session with the players?"

If the reporter had asked Twain this question yesterday, he would have most likely nodded earnestly in response. However, Twain had already felt sadness and reluctance to leave yesterday, and he did not want to have those feelings once more today. Besides, he was already 50 years old this year. There was nothing he could not put behind him at this age.

He shook his head and said, "My mind is filled with thoughts of tomorrow's match at the moment. I'm not thinking about anything else now."

There were a lot more reporters than usual today, and as a result, there were a lot more questions as well. Twain patiently answered each and every question that was posed to him. He did not lose his temper or storm away as he would in the past. His temper has certainly improved considerably.

The reporters crowded around Twain and asked him questions for approximately 20 minutes. They only stopped when Twain waved his hands and refused to be interviewed any further.

The players had already left the training grounds by then. Most of the fans who stood at the eastern part of the training grounds were gone as well.

Twain glanced at the fans who had stayed behind, and he did not see Michael among them. It looked like he would have to make a trip down to Burns' bar later. He has an entire afternoon's worth of time to burn anyway. There was no need to hurry.

Right as Twain turned around to walk towards the car park, he suddenly heard someone call his name from behind. The voice sounded very familiar.

Twain turned back around and saw Michael Bernard standing under a tree by the side of the road!

## **Chapter 1028: I Haven't Lost Yet**

"Tony!"

As Twain got rid of the reporters and walked to the parking lot, he heard someone calling his name behind his back. When Twain stopped in his tracks and turned to look back, he saw a familiar face.

By the side of the boulevard, under the lush trees, Michael Bernard stood in the mottled light and shadow. When the wind blew, the leaves rustled, and the light and shadow moved along, making him look rather indistinct as if he were a phantom.

"Your camouflage came in useful, Michael. If you hadn't called me, I could barely see you."

Twain walked over and smiled at Michael, who was standing under the trees.

"Camouflage?" "Michael did not react at first until he looked down at the mottled shadows on his body and then realized it really looked like a camouflage costume..."

He laughed. Twain's joke made him feel warmth.

"Why are you back here? Don't you have to work?"

"I quit my job," Michael said to Twain with a serious look.



The remark froze the smile on Twain's face.

"Just kidding! Ha!" Michael seemed to know how to appear deadpan. His serious expression just now transformed in an instant and was replaced by a happy smile.

"In order to watch your last game, I took three days off and arrived last night."

Twain nodded. No wonder he did not see Michael yesterday afternoon but did see him on the sidelines today.

"From the way you're dressed..." Twain looked him up and down and said, "don't tell me you did not even go home and came straight from the office."

Michael became a little embarrassed and said, "Actually I was on a business trip to Italy and I just applied for leave and came here... I was not on vacation, so I only have these clothes. At least I'm not wearing a suit..."

Twain nodded to express understanding.

"Does your wife know you're here?" Despite talking to the couple in Los Angeles and knowing that Michael's wife no longer cared about the past and Michael's love of football, Twain still could not help but ask.

"I gave her a call." Michael was not joking this time.

Twain believed Michael's words. Michael was now a really nice guy. The former hooligan who had abused him in the pub was nowhere to be seen.

The two men sat down next to the lawn by the side of the road. They did not care that it was actually quite dirty here.

"Thank you for coming to see me," Twain said, looking at the training ground across the road.

"I'm here to say a proper goodbye to the past."

Twain turned his head back and looked at Michael, listening to him continue speaking.

"It has been 16 years, Tony. Time really flies so quickly. Many things have happened to us. But I did not come to you today to talk about the old times."

Twain smiled and replied, "We had talked about the old times that night in Los Angeles."

Michael nodded in agreement.

"Actually, I just wanted to come back and see you."

"It's not as if you have not seen me before or that you're not going to see me later. You talk as if we'll never see each other again..." Twain quipped.

"But this is the last time I see you as a manager."

Twain was momentarily taken aback. He forgot his identity. It was indeed the last time in this capacity, the last time he acted as a manager. No matter what the situation was in the future, he would not come

out of retirement and take a leading position, even if it was the end of the world ... But then again, what did the end of the world have to do with his being a manager or not?

However, a manager... Twain looked up at the blue sky. He had not expected back then that he would be in this position for so long, that he could achieve so much. God, Dear God, what was the purpose of you throwing me here at the time? Was it to give me this dream? But I don't believe you are so good...

Twain gently shook his head. He often used to ponder this question. Then with the passage of time and living well in this world, he slowly stopped thinking of it. There was no need to lament here and now about how heaven made a fool out of him.

Therefore, he changed the subject and asked, "Have you gone to see Gavin?"

Michael nodded and replied, "There was a bunch of flowers. Was it yours?"

Twain shook his head. He made a guess and answered, "Must be George's."

"He still remembers..."

"What are you talking about? Your son was his first fan. How can he not remember?" Twain glared at Michael. Wood was not good at expressing his feelings, but he had a warm heart. If Vivian could eventually conquer Wood's heart, she would be the happiest woman in the world, because she would have found a man of remarkable constancy.

Michael nodded and gave a dry laugh.

"If Gavin were still alive, he would be 29 years old now, right?" Twain asked.

"28 years old. His birthday was July 11th," Michael replied.

"You remember it so well."

"I'm his father!" Michael straightened his chest and answered proudly.

Twain smiled.

"Go to my house at noon and I'll introduce you to my daughter," Twain stood up and straightened his pants. His daughter was still waiting at home, so he could not go back too late.

Michael also stood up, but shook his head and said, "No, John and the others are waiting for me."

Twain gave a shrug to express regret.

"Do you have a ticket?" Twain asked before they parted.

Michael nodded and said, "Yes. After I told John and the others that I was coming, they prepared a ticket for me right away."

Upon hearing this, Twain turned back and looked at Michael curiously. "When did you decide to come back?"

"After you held the press conference to announce your retirement. I just thought I should come back and send you off no matter what."

“Thank you,” Twain thanked Michael for the second time today.

“We’re old friends. I ought to.”

When he was finished, Michael waved to Twain, and the two men said goodbye.

Twain had walked more than a dozen paces when he suddenly heard Michael shout behind him, “Tony! I won’t let you off if you lose the game!”

Twain looked back to see Michael brandishing his fist at him. He was suddenly thrown back as if he had seen the last game of 16 years ago. Before leaving the pitch, Michael had brought his son along. He had brandished his fist at him and threatened to teach him a lesson if the team was not playing in the Premier League next season.

After saying that, the next time he saw Gavin was in the hospital morgue.

Twain stood there in a trance, but Michael did not wait for him to answer. He turned around right away and walked in the opposite direction.

By the time Twain recovered, Michael Bernard’s figure was long gone.

He thought of Michael’s words before he left and laughed.

“How can I possibly lose? I haven’t lost to Mourinho as of yet!”

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Mourinho’s team warmed up at the Crimson Stadium while he gave an interview to a television reporter. Speaking of tomorrow’s game, he was confident and stated that his team would eventually win the league tournament.

“I’m here to win the game and collect the championship trophy.”

Manchester United’s official television reporters were delighted and reassured by Mourinho’s remarks, while BBC television reporters had a different view.

“You have never defeated Tony...”

Before the reporter could finish speaking, Mourinho interrupted his words.

“I’m not interested in discussing the past. Every game is on its own.”

The question greatly ruined Mourinho’s mood. He seemed uncooperative with the next answer, even though the question was from Manchester United’s television station. He was dismissive.

Such an interview naturally did not yield much valuable news. Many of the reporters that came after would complain that the BBC reporter was too tactless with his words. How could he ask Mourinho that question? Everyone knew that Mourinho hated his record of “not defeating Twain” being brought up by other people and used as fodder.

The matter was the same as hinting at Twain’s being unable to produce a biological child despite being married for so many years. It was simply vicious to the extreme.

In fact, Mourinho's inner pressure was greater than Twain's at the time.

Who made Arsenal bite so closely at their heels?

By the last round of the league tournament, Manchester United was two points ahead of Arsenal, with its net goal advantage taking the lead. In the final round, as long as Manchester United tied with Nottingham Forest, they could defend their title. If Manchester United's last game was played against any team other than Nottingham Forest, under the situation of finishing their season's target ahead of schedule, the chance of Manchester United winning was higher. However, it just so happened that it was Nottingham Forest...

Mourinho never thought Tony Twain would let him off the hook, just like he would absolutely not let Tony Twain off the hook in the same situation. These two men wanted to step over each other's dead bodies to take the top stand. How could he show any mercy?

It was also this reason that put Mourinho in a bad mood lately. He always showed a grim face to everyone. He was under more pressure than anyone else was. If he lost the game, it was not as simple as losing the league tournament. For him, his career as a manager could still be very long. He could still win as many league titles as he wanted in the future. However, if he were to lose to Tony Twain, he would never have a chance to break that ridiculous bullsh\*t record again. After Twain retired, he naturally could not lead the team and compete with him. He would bear the shameful record of "never having defeated Twain" forever and never live it down...

He felt terrified just thinking about it!

If it became a reality... How could a man as proud as Mourinho accept it?

There was one more reason for Mourinho's bad mood – Rooney's absence had upset him. Although Rooney was already 32 years old, he still had an important role in the team as an experienced striker. His absence was a big loss to Manchester United's ability to fight.

Plus, it was an away game...

Was there ever a last-round league game that was unluckier than this?

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Compared to Mourinho, Twain was calmer and more collected during interviews before the game.

"He has never beaten me? To tell you the truth, I'd almost forgotten about the matter..." Twain looked amazed as if he had really just recalled this. However, no one would believe his words. The media was hotly publicizing the feud between the two men these days and repeatedly mentioned their common history. How could he forget it?

"I don't think the past record is of any help to the game tomorrow. No man ever steps in the same river twice," Twain, who said this, looked like a philosopher, but he was just putting on a smokescreen. Mourinho certainly did not believe that Twain would let him off the hook just because they had drinks together once. However, some people in Manchester United would believe it.

"Manchester United is a very strong team. We lost to them in an away game in the first half of the season, so I can't say for sure I will win tomorrow's game."

Twain adopted a humbled stance and appeared modest as if he could not pose a real threat to Manchester United's position.

Before the game against Arsenal, Twain had vowed that his goal was to win the game. At the time, people thought that it was just talking to boost morale. In fact, the Forest team could not have won against Arsenal in the away game. As for the result?

Arsenal lost on its own home ground to Nottingham Forest.

Now he himself stated that Manchester United was very strong and spoke humbly at present. Naturally, it implied that he thought his team had little chance of beating Manchester United.

When all was said and done, which of his words were people supposed to believe?

Twain did not care what other people thought. He went on:

"The last game? No, I don't see it that way. It's just a regular league game. Yes, a regular league game." Twain repeated it as if he was worried that others would not believe him. "My coaching career has been very successful. I don't need to rely on winning this game to have a perfect ending."

It was true on closer inspection. As a manager, he had won all the championship titles there were to be won. What could possibly be better than this to complete a successful coaching career? As for getting entangled in a game, perhaps Twain would really throw the last game? Did he and Mourinho not appreciate each other's talent?

The media thought so and it was directly reflected in their programs and articles.

As a result, in the football program that night, there were experts who predicted that Manchester United would win big in tomorrow's game and the defending champion title definitely belonged to them.

At the end of the show, they even showed footage of Twain talking about his life after retirement. "I'll take a break for a while. I will take a nice long trip with my wife and bring our daughter along. And then... I haven't figured it out yet. Ha-ha!"

Twain's laughter on the television was a little insincere. The show host, who was optimistic that Manchester United would be able to defend their title, also laughed. He thought that Tony Twain really looked harmless and Mourinho's league title was definitely his to take.

The game had not started yet. How could a man, already thinking about life after his retirement, withstand and compete against a man who must win the game or else end up with a ruined career?

### **Chapter 1029: There Is Only One Tony Twain**

There was no need to say more than was necessary about every situation before the last game because it was no different from what happened before in those important games in history. The only difference was that most of the fans who came to watch the game today were not wearing any Forest jerseys with the names and numbers of certain players. Instead, they wore commemorative T-shirts in either red or white colors.

The commemorative T-shirts were already on display at Nottingham Forest's souvenir shop long before Twain held a press conference to announce that he was definitely retiring at the end of the season. They came in either red or white. The front of the t-shirt looked like the Nottingham Forest jersey, while the back had two numbers. The number "12" on top represented the 12 years Twain had coached the Forest team, and the "12" on the bottom represented the 12 championship titles that Twain had led the Forest team to win. Above these two sets of "12" was Tony Twain's name.

Almost every fan passing by in front of the camera would turn their backs to the camera to show the two sets of "12" and Tony Twain's name, and then give a thumbs-up.

As a reporter, Pierce Brosnan wore such a t-shirt to the live coverage of the game.

Twain's team was doing warm-up inside as the fans lined up outside the stadium.

Both teams carried out the warm-up a little early today because the final round of the league tournament had to start at the same time, and the Forest Football Club prepared a small farewell ceremony for Twain to be held before the kickoff. So, they could only arrange for the warm-up time to be earlier.

The fans who first entered the stadium were busy looking for Twain's figure below in the stands, but they did not get what they wanted. Twain was stopped by Evan Doughty at the door of the locker room and had not come out yet.

"Tony, you've only got 15 minutes in the locker room," Evan reminded Twain, for fear that once he got caught up with his speech, he would forget the time. "We have to kick off at the allotted time or we'll be penalized. You know this game is very time-sensitive..."

Twain waved his hands impatiently. How could Evan be so garrulous today? "I know, isn't it just a fight for the league title? It's almost like our home team is in a supporting role."

Evan chuckled. In the eyes of many people, the Forest team would indeed play a supporting role today. Manchester United was equally in a supporting role. The real protagonist was this man in front of him.

When he faintly heard the live broadcast outside reminding that the warm-up time was nearing the end, Evan took his leave of Twain and turned to walk away.

Twain, on the other hand, returned to the locker room to wait for the players to come back so he could say a few final words. Evan was worried that 15 minutes were not enough for him to speak. However, Twain was no longer the old Twain of more than a decade ago who liked to talk volubly and make impassioned speeches. He had nothing to say. 15 minutes were more than enough for him.

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As the two teams warming up outside began to exit from the field, the big screen on the Crimson Stadium removed the emblems of the two teams and the time display and faded to black.

There were not many empty seats in the stands by this time. The fans outside the square also dwindled as the number of spectators increased. Some of the people without tickets had gone to nearby pubs early, waiting to watch the live broadcast on television.

After the last of the Forest players left the pitch and entered the tunnel, the stands were full, and few fans could be seen at the entrances. The big screen, which had been black since the beginning, gave a flash and then a word appeared on the dark background.

“He.”

Then the single white word faded away and blended into the background.

The image flashed again and slowly brightened. Tony Twain’s silhouette appeared on the screen.

Loud cheers suddenly broke out in the stands.

The image faded out again and was followed by one of Tony Twain and Evan Doughty. The two of them shook hands in the middle of the screen and an open document was placed on the table below. It was a photograph of Twain’s first renewal of his contract with the club.

After the image faded out, a sentence appeared on the black background:

“This was the best contract in the club’s history.”

The remark drew cheers and applause at the scene.

As the fans looked up at the two big screens at both ends of the stadium, the staff members were carrying clean-up trophies to the pitch, one glittering trophy after another. The different-shaped trophies were carefully lifted out and placed on the turf in the center circle.

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In the locker room, Twain was telling his players the mission of the game.

“Did I lie to you about what I said yesterday?” Twain asked.

The players sitting around him shook their heads one by one.

Seeing the answer, Twain laughed and said, “Very good. Listen, guys. This game is just a regular league game for us. However, our opponents are under a lot of pressure. It is a game that they can’t afford to lose. Should we give them a break and throw the game? Absolutely not! I’m not going to talk nonsense. You’re all professional players. I just hope you can look up at the words on the wall when you’re making your appearances.”

Having said this, Twain repeated the tactical arrangements that were laid down last night. He wanted to make sure every player on the pitch knew what he was going to do.

“There’s nothing new about our tactics, and our old rivals should have studied them. But whether they have any way of curbing them after studying them thoroughly is another matter...”

Twain spread his hands and shrugged.

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The footage of Twain leading the team to win every championship was being played on the big screen.

From the first EFL Cup to the last UEFA Champions League title, each trophy had a short segment.

“...Even if we have to climb! We’re going to climb up too!” A green field appeared on the screen and the Forest players were sitting around on the ground with Twain crouching in the middle. On closer inspection, many of the players were unfamiliar-looking. Many people almost forgot their names now, and Twain in the frame was very young-looking. This was the picture before the penalty shootout of the 2004 EFL Cup final. At the time, a number of players left the team after the Forest team’s promotion to the Premier League. “Losing at the last step is no different from losing at the first step. We will all be considered losers! We have to win! We must win!” Twain in the picture roared with his fists clenched. His appearance inspired not only the Forest players in the picture but also the live spectators 15 years later.

Cheers and applause rang out for a long time.

However, the scenes that thrilled them even more were still coming.

The screen gave a flash. The flag of the UEFA Champions League fluttered in the wind at the Olympic Stadium of Athens. The next second, Albertini used a banana shot to break AC Milan’s goal. The Forest fans in the stands cheered the goal as if they were there. Some of them even shouted Albertini’s name, “Demi! Demi!”

There was one regret in this game. As Twain did not want it to be special, he always claimed it was just a regular league game. Therefore, he did not send tickets to old friends before the game, as he had done in the final games before. It was not known if those people would come...

In the stands, a man nudged his friend with his elbow and said, “Hey, they’re calling you, Demi.”

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“...Nottingham Forest’s tactics are nothing out of the ordinary. George Wood and Chen Jian must be their midfield hub. You need to put a tight grip on them. Our midfield and backfield should boldly press forward and ferociously intercept in the midfield. We cannot give them too much space and time to take the ball. As long as we can force them to be flustered, our winning rate will increase dramatically.”

In the Manchester United locker room, Mourinho was analyzing the Forest team’s tactics and setting out their own.

Unlike the joyous atmosphere outside, the mood in the away team’s locker room was so heavy that it could almost be cut with a knife. Everyone was listening quietly to the manager for fear of missing a word.

Everyone was like this as the game was very important for Manchester United. They had failed and were defeated in both the Champions League and FA Cup this season. They could only compete for glory in the league tournament. They must not lose in this last game. Otherwise, they would really end up with nothing this season.

They did not know if they should say they were lucky or not.

The opponent of the last round of the league tournament was Nottingham Forest, definitely not a weak team. However, they had almost completed their goal of the season ahead of schedule and one could expect them to be a little lax.



However, it was Tony Twain's farewell performance... Could his team allow a defeat to spoil the mood?

Mourinho did not know what was on his players' minds. He just repeated the tactics to be used in today's game over and over again, while at the same time reducing the pressure on the players to have them stop thinking so much, keep their sense of normality and treat the game as a regular league game.

To be honest, Mourinho himself did not believe it when he said that it was going to be an ordinary league game. There was another reason for it, if not for the issue of which team the league title would belong to.

It was Tony Twain's last game. Although he was in the locker room, he could guess what was going on outside. In a moment, there would be a ceremony specially prepared for Twain. His players had already received a request from the Forest Club to join in and line up at the exit to welcome Twain as he made his appearance.

What a big procession! To think that Ferguson's last game before his retirement did not even have such a welcome formation...

His team agreed to the request, but he would not be in line to applaud and welcome Twain as he made his appearance. That he should pay homage to Twain? Over his dead body!

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As both teams completed their pre-match preparations and walked out of the locker rooms early, the big screen above the stands was still playing a documentary about Twain.

This time it was the 2006 Champions League final. In that game, Nottingham Forest, which was one player short in the opening 18 minutes, took a one-goal lead until the 76th minute. Eventually, Barcelona scored two goals in a row and the team lost the championship trophy due to a visibly marked decline in fitness. That game was a heavy blow for Twain and his young Forest team.

This time, the content that appeared on the big screen had never appeared on any public media before.

It was a video of Twain's terrible rage in the locker room after the game.

"...The imprinted shame of a loser? A sh\*tty silver medal?!" If a piece of content was ed on the public media, there would be censorship of any foul language and all one could hear was the constant beeps. However, the version that was played in the Crimson Stadium was unadulterated. There was absolutely no blocking of words or processing. It was the real Twain.

"There's only one champion. What is the silver medal for? The junk shop? To go out with a smile and act as a prop for the winner? To make their championship title look more resplendent? To suck up to them?! I won't go! Isn't Barcelona great? Let them have it!"

Then, as soon as the image changed, Twain held out his arm and put up three fingers in front of many reporters. "This is the third Champions League trophy in the history of Nottingham Forest, thank you!"

In the next second, Twain took the stage with a grim face to collect the silver medal. Then he walked down and went straight to the entrance of the tunnel, where he hung the silver medal on the neck of a young ball boy. Having done all this, he walked into the tunnel and disappeared before the eyes of the public, not caring about how it looked to all the people present.

Seeing him do so, the fans at the Crimson Stadium not only did not feel that their manager was rude and ungracious, but broke out with more cheers. Some people even clapped and stamped their feet to cheer on Twain's performance.

They liked such a rampant and untamed Tony Twain. Perhaps a different man would act in a more refined manner, but Twain suited the public perfectly. Nottingham was full of people with personalities that despised authority. They were all proud, from Robin Hood to Brian Clough. Tony Twain was no exception. No one would be surprised by Twain's conduct. Such a manager was the best in their opinion.

How could he have won 12 championship trophies in his 12 years of coaching career without this imposing manner of despising every authority in the world?

Did anyone think he was arrogant? He must be a loser!

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Amid the cheers, the players from both sides came out. Instead of going to the field directly, they lined up on both sides of the tunnel, waiting for the main protagonist to appear.

The big screen in the stands faded to black again, and a sentence appeared slowly on it:

"Let's welcome..."

The fans who saw the remark shouted in unison, "His Majesty the King!!!"

Amidst the roars of "His Majesty the King", Twain came out of the tunnel.

He saw the players from both teams line up waiting for him, as well as the club chairman, Evan Doughty, who was standing behind the championship trophies in the center circle. Of course, he also saw the signs and posters hanging in the Robin Hood Grandstand.

He raised his hands and waved to everyone. He walked among the applause of the players on both sides and went all the way to the trophies in the center circle before stopping.

The black screen and words on the big screen were gone, replaced by an image of Tony Twain's "coronation" upon his return to the City Ground Stadium after successfully defending the Champions League title. In the picture, he was dressed in a red-and-white royal cloak, holding his crown high and facing the glittering stadium grandstand, dotted with twinkling lights that came from the cameras' flashes.

Evan Doughty handed the wireless microphone to Twain, pulled him to stand behind the trophies, and then retreated.

The reporters flocked to the front of the trophies and formed three rows. The first row of people sprawled on the ground and held the cameras in their arms. The second row of people knelt on one knee, holding the cameras. The third row of people stood behind the first two rows and was busy with the tripods.

By the time they finished what they were doing, there was a series of sounds of shutters being pressed.

For the reporters, especially those who were lying down, with the 12 trophies of varying sizes placed in front of Twain, it was a real imposing sense.

After he waited until the reporters finished taking photographs, Twain held up the microphone. When they saw his action, everyone in the stadium gradually quieted down without any reminder. The thunderous cheers, which came wave after wave earlier, gradually faded, and eventually completely disappeared. Everyone was waiting to hear what Twain had to say.

Twain initially thought that he had seen countless big spectacles and would be unaffected by today's scene. However, when he was just getting ready to speak, he found that he was a little choked with emotion.

He quickly shut his mouth. He did not want the 60,000 spectators to hear his voice shaking. That would be mortifying.

Still, he did not escape. The high-tech televised broadcast immediately cut a close-up to Twain's face. His teary eyes were exposed to everyone.

Seeing him look like this, shouts erupted in the stands: "Stay, Your Majesty!"

Listening to the shouts, Twain just waved his hands and motioned for them to calm down. As the scene became quiet again, he subdued his emotions and said into the microphone, "Thank you..."

Having uttered these two words, he could not control the emotions in his voice.

Twain only realized at this time how much he hated to have to leave everything behind. He could not even say 'goodbye'.

As he struggled to speak, no one made any other sound. They were waiting quietly.

Twain bowed his head and was silent for a moment. He finally got his emotions under control again.

He cleared his throat and said, "Thank you all, thank you."

In response, countless arms waved at him in the stands.

The live broadcast began to play the song that was originally used to send off Albertini. It was Sarah Brightman and Andre Bocelli's "Time to Say Goodbye."

When the song played, a man in the stands also wiped the corners of his eyes. He remembered the past from many years ago.

"It's time to say goodbye, Tony..." He sighed.

"I am proud and honored that I have coached this team for 12 years. I am proud and honored that I have only coached a football club team at Nottingham Forest in my life. It was not I who shaped Nottingham Forest. It was you who shaped me," Twain reached his hands out to the fans in the stands and the players who were standing on the sidelines.

Applause rang out.

"Today is my last game and I hope you enjoy..." With this, he took a pause.

Everyone thought he was going to say, "...the game."

However, Twain turned his head to the other side and found Mourinho behind the crowd. His old rival was expressionless.

"...I hope you enjoy Nottingham Forest's victory to the fullest."

Twain looked at Mourinho and laughed.

As soon as that came out, the expression on Mourinho's face did change, and he no longer looked as calm as he did just now.

Having messed with an old rival, Twain was in a good mood. The melancholy of parting no longer oppressed him.

Twain raised his hands again and waved them around.

"90 minutes later, let's say farewell again! Goodbye, guys!"

Having said this, Twain put down his microphone and continued to stand in the center circle to wave. Another round of cheers erupted in the stands. The Forest players stood at the side and watched as their boss reveled in the cheers alone. They were also applauding. Gareth Bale even whistled. They were now full of motivation and fighting spirit. They were eager for the game to start right away so they could rush up to tear Manchester United to pieces.

Whom did the league title belong to?

What does it have to do with us? We just want to give a victory to the greatest manager in Nottingham Forest's history as a send-off!

You are the embodiment of victory, the godfather of champions. In this last game, only a victory is fit for you, boss.

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Twain had already retreated from the field. The staff members moved the 12 championship trophies back to the honors room and the reporters returned to their respective posts. The players from both sides made their appearances again, and the cheers in the stands gradually stopped.

A line of words appeared on the two big screens:

There is only one Tony Twain!

### **Chapter 1030: Old Antique**

Mourinho definitely did not underestimate Nottingham Forest and Tony Twain, so he was not surprised when Nottingham Forest launched an aggressive attack on his own home court.

However, despite this, the difficulty of the game still gave him a headache.

Nottingham Forest was bent on taking down Manchester United on their own home court and planned on using the victory to bid farewell to their head coach. One could tell from their expressions during the game that they wanted to fight for the league championship.

Manchester United naturally did not want to give up the victory of this match so easily. If they were to lose to Nottingham Forest, it would basically mean that they threw away the league championship. Who would want to fall right in front of the finishing line?

The game was in a deadlock from the start. The competition from both sides of the midfield was super intense. In this match, George Wood and Chen Jian were initially supposed to lead the offense, but Manchester United's heavy pressure forced them to stay in defense. Likewise, as Wood and Chen Jian were defending the center path, Manchester United's offense was unable to get in and unable to threaten the goalmouth of Nottingham Forest.

The midfielders were unable to organize an effective attack but Nottingham Forest was not panicking. They had other ways, like long passes.

Wood and Chen Jian pulled their positions to the back, becoming full-backs and basically camping at the defensive line instead of running forward to attack. While organizing an attack and holding the ball, they would simply see who had a chance ahead before sending a long pass over. Mitchell was 2.1 meters tall and as conspicuous as a lighthouse at the front, making a long pass over then allowing him to further pass the ball or hold it. However, other than his outstanding height, he also had impressive dribbling techniques and was able to control the ball under his feet without much issue.

Balotelli, on the other hand, was running near Mitchell, looking for a chance to shoot the ball into the goal.

By comparison, Manchester United was a notch lower in terms of their offense without Rooney, and long passes were impossible even if they wanted to do them. Their striker, in front of Nottingham Forest's defensive midfielders, looked overly thin and weak...

To deal with Manchester United, Twain used two weeks to allow his team to become more solid. Their style of play was much more stable and so were their in-between actions. However, from the first half of the competition, the priorities of both teams were not on attacking but instead on stopping the opposing offense with small actions that would not be seen by the referee.

This was the last game where Twain would be the head coach, but the first half was not exciting at all. The high-quality offense from both sides was limiting. However, the fans on the audience stands were still enjoying the game and thought it was worth watching. The Manchester United fans were concerned about whether their team would be able to obtain the championship. So they did not really care about what the scene was like; they were not like Real Madrid or Barcelona fans who prioritized the outlooks of the game over the results. Nottingham Forest fans were likewise not the kind of group who focused on a beautiful game. They would be happy as long as the team won.

Only a part of the neutral fans would think this global live-streamed match was a little uninteresting, but the intense collisions were still exciting. It was a football match so it was not like there would be a goal, an exciting shot, or an incredible save every minute. However, a true fan would not let go of any small detail that occurred during the game.

And there were plenty of details in this game...

When Balotelli made a high free-kick, the scene was not showing Balotelli. Instead, they cut over to Twain, who was in the coach seat. Twain, in the shot, was violently shaking his head, regret plain on his face. Then the camera panned to Mourinho. The Portuguese was expressionless; it was almost as if he was not worried that his team would fail in its defense at all.

Next up, George Wood did a tackle on Manchester United's midfielder, Adrien. As a result, Adrien, who was three years younger than Wood, was defeated and lost his possession of the ball in front of Manchester United's penalty area. Upon seeing this scene, Mourinho's face changed immediately and he repeatedly complained about to his assistant, who was beside him.

Nottingham Forest, on the other hand, took the opportunity to launch an attack. That was their most threatening attack in the first half. Wood passed the ball to Chen Jian, who was putting up a stance for a long shot but instead held the ball and passed it to the middle road as he saw Gareth Bale who was running forward. Mitchell leaned on Manchester United center-back Evans to take control of the ball as Balotelli ran forward past him, attracting the attention of Manchester United's full-backs. Just when everyone thought that Mitchell was going to pass to Balotelli, who was running forward, Mitchell suddenly used his heel and kicked the ball behind him. Gareth Bale has already run into the penalty area, where he was neither offside nor guarded.

Bale did not hesitate when such a great opportunity was presented to him and made his shot immediately.

The ball went straight into the corner, but luckily, Manchester United's goalkeeper, Ruffy, was focused as he swiftly dived and hit the ball out of the goal.

The attack brought a huge cheer and applause from the stands; it was counted as one of the rare highlights of the first half. Twain did not feel regret at seeing the ball miss, but Mourinho immediately stood up from his seat. In the face of Nottingham Forest's smooth flow of offense, he could not sit still.

Actually, Manchester United, only needed a draw against Nottingham Forest to win the championship. However, Mourinho had never considered this possibility in his mind. He knew that Twain's capabilities were limitless, so if his plan was simply placed on the level of "drawing to gain victory" the final result might be a loss. If he were determined to win, the team would more likely obtain their desired result.

Then Manchester United made an adjustment. Nottingham Forest was too confident, while Manchester United was hiding at the back. Mourinho wanted the team to press forward, using one or two high-quality attacks to lower Nottingham Forest's spirit.

10 minutes after the adjustment, the whistle ending the first half was blown.

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"0:0! Mourinho should be satisfied with the scoreline. His team just needs to secure a draw in the last league match to win the league championship with a goal advantage," The narrator John Mortensen described it like this, but in Mourinho definitely did not think it this way.

In the dressing room, Mourinho was relentless in his criticism of his team's performance in the first half.

“Do you know what kind of game this is? This is a match to determine if we’re about to turn into heroes or laughing stock!”

Mourinho was flaring up at the players, partly because he thought of the competition between him and Twain. His players were not as competitive as Twain’s and it was embarrassing for him.

In contrast, Twain praised his team’s performance in the first half.

Generally speaking, Nottingham Forest was pulling ahead in the first half although there were not many quality offenses. The sturdy play that Twain set up for his team were making Manchester United very uncomfortable.

Twain did not say much other than the praise he was doling out, as if this were a usual league game. These people were professional football players who had played countless league games. They had been training for this since they were young, so they were supposed to be able to handle this although their opponents were a little stronger and the stakes of the game were greater. It was only a pity that he was unable to continue leading them.

He left the rest of the time to the players. Pushing open the doors, he went out.

Twain had a lot to say, but he could not. He was afraid of disrupting the players’ emotions and mood; he would not know how to feel if the players lost the match because of him.

Twain came to the tunnel alone. The workers there saw him and he saw them as well. He waved at them, signaling that nothing important was happening and that they should continue doing what they were doing. He had only wanted to take a breather.

Twain had a reputation in this field; no one would dare to approach him without his encouragement.

Hence, from inside the chaotic football field, he was able to gain a period of silence.

At this time, Twain suddenly wanted to smoke. He had not smoked since his heart attack, and it had been exactly ten years since he quit smoking. Strictly speaking, he should never smoke or even think about doing it but he suddenly felt like having just one last cigarette today. He wanted to light up a smoke.

He patted his pocket—of course, it was empty.

Twain chewed his lip.

Although he would return to the stadium in the future, it would be impossible for him to return as a head coach. Upon leaving, would he still have feelings for this position? Twain discovered that he did not have any. Maybe it was because the feelings he had for this stadium were too shallow due to the short history. If it were the stadium in the city, perhaps he would feel otherwise. Back when the city stadium was about to be demolished, he even specifically drove back to see it one last time, going so far as to meet Kenny Burns during the sunset and chat with him for a while.

Now in this modern and beautiful stadium, there was no way he could develop similar feelings.

He remembered the first time he came there. He always gave “the smell of history” a snort of contempt. He had thought it was a term for outdated things, hence he looked down on the old infrastructure and

artifacts in the club. Little did he know that one day, he would be the one reminiscing about those “outdated antiques”.

It must be because he had become as old as those old antiques.

Since the outdated and backward were about to leave the stage, retiring during this time would not count as humiliating, right?

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By the time Twain returned to the changing room, the players were already preparing to leave for the game under assistant Kerslake’s instructions. Twain was waiting by the entrance of the changing room as he tapped their shoulders, sending them into the field.

There was not much difference between the first and second halves. Although Mourinho wanted his team to strengthen their offense, Nottingham Forest’s defense was still secure as ever. However, Nottingham Forest still continued to use the long passes just like in the first half to harass the defense of Manchester United, not allowing them to press forward as easily.

As time went on, Manchester United’s attack began to wane because they felt that even if they got a draw in the end, the league championship would still be theirs.

A draw was in fact what Manchester United wanted as a result— what was a victory over Nottingham Forest against the championship? However, on the side of Mourinho, it was an outcome that he could not accept. Even dismissing how dangerous this mindset of aiming a draw was, it was a personal feud. Mourinho would definitely not allow his team to draw against Nottingham Forest.

Twain was retiring after directing this game. If it ended in a draw, wouldn’t that mean that he had never been able to beat Twain?

That was not going to happen!

Mourinho rose from the manager’s seat as he shouted over the cheers of the Nottingham Forest fans. He wanted his team to strengthen offense, sending both midfielders in the attack.

Mourinho was not happy with the prospect of a draw and the Nottingham Forest players were unhappy with the scoreless tie.

Mitchell was in a good unguarded position but Balotelli did not see this. Instead, the latter chose to shoot the ball himself at the goalmouth and missed. Mitchell could not stand Balotelli’s actions as he complained loudly, “What are you doing? My position is far better, can’t you see?”

Balotelli ignored him. He only shook his head and regretted that he had missed an opportunity.

His attitude has upset Mitchell. Balotelli’s relationships with other people within the team had always been average. As he wanted to walk forward and argue with Balotelli, Wood pulled him back.

“That bastard! Doesn’t he know that we need to pull ahead and score to win?” Mitchell complained to Wood.



“You don’t have to be the one to bring up the issue,” Wood pointed at the side of the field. Mitchell gave a look and fell quiet.

They all saw the head coach rise from his seat and walk to the side of the field.

In the next second, they heard Twain scream.

“Mario! What are you doing?! You should pass the ball!” His voice could still be heard even in such a noisy environment. It really made people suspect he had a loudspeaker within his body. “Pass, pass, pass! Pass the ball to your teammates who are in better positions! You are no longer a child, you don’t need me to teach you this kind of stuff!”

In fact, he roared loudly the players were not able to hear clearly what he was saying, but the words expressed an attitude—their boss was very angry!

Balotelli was not well-liked within the team. He did not give face even to George Wood but he was respectful to Twain. Seeing how Twain was angry, he immediately knew it was because he did not pass but instead chose to shoot.

Therefore, he waved his hand towards Twain, indicating that he would definitely do better next time...

Only after this did Twain return to his coaching seat and sat down.

This little detail delighted the narrator, Mortensen.

“Tony is still the king here, though he didn’t mean to show it. But if the always unruly Balotelli looked tame under his instruction, no one would suspect otherwise.”

Balotelli, who had just been reprimanded by Twain, became more humble. Once he had other chances, he always passed the ball and did not dare to play the game on his own.

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There was really nothing much to talk about in this last match. Nevertheless, for the Manchester United fans, it was intense and unnerving.

As the second half of the game time faded, there were more and more exciting scenes. Perhaps due to the mood of the two coaches, the two teams started to become more competitive.

Wonderful shots began to appear, and of course, more wonderful saves also happened from time to time. It must have been a pleasure for the neutral fans.

However, despite the excitement, the score was still 0:0. No one was able to score a goal.

During that time, Nottingham Forest hit the post once, while Manchester United hit the crossbar once. Both teams seemed to have bad luck.

The match time passed quickly after the exciting offenses back and forth between the two teams.

It looked like this match was about to end with a 0:0 score.

If that were the case, the Manchester United people would be thrilled, because it would mean they had successfully secured the championship. Only Mourinho would be unsatisfied because he would no longer have the chance to win over Tony Twain...