

Godfather Of Champions

Chapter 16: George Wood's Family Part 2

Tang En stared at the woman in a daze until she got up to greet him. "Hello, Mr. Manager."

"Ah... Oh, hello, Madam. I'm sorry, I did not expect you to be so young."

George Wood turned his head to give Twain a glare, then turned to his mother to explain. "He's the Forest team manager. I went to look for him. I wanted to be a footballer. But he turned me down and sent me back."

Tang En looked at Wood's mother, smiled, said, "I'm really sorry, Madam. Your son has never received regular football training, and he's a little bit older now..."

The woman looked at her son with indescribable tenderness and affection in her eyes. "George, can you please go buy some Mascarpone cheese? I haven't made any snacks for you in a long time. I would like to make some tiramisu."

Wood seemed unwilling. His mother pulled out a note from her apron pocket, stuffed it into Wood's hand, and gave him a kiss on his forehead. "Don't worry; go."

Only then did Wood walk towards the door. Before he left, he glared at Twain with a fierce expression. Tang En was a little confused by his stare. How could his expression have changed so quickly?

When she saw her son walk out the door and heard him go down the stairs, she closed the door. The woman abruptly walked up to Twain, took his hand, and led him to another room.

"Um, Madam ..." Tang En was confused. What's going on?

The two entered the room. The woman shut the door, not forgetting to lock it. Tang En then watched her as she rapidly took off her clothes. Perhaps because of her nervousness, her movements were still stiff. Tang En foolishly stared at her with his mouth agape, not even thinking to stop the other person.

This woman had the same wheat-colored skin as her son, and had a delicately curvaceous beautiful *ss underneath the oversized clothes....

She stood in front of Twain, then opened her arms and shyly said, "Come, we don't have much time."

This remark gave Tang En chills. He looked at the woman as he shuddered, then frowned. "What's the meaning of this, Madam?"

The woman walked towards the bed, laid on it, looked at Twain and said, "I hope Sir will give my son a chance, and in return ..."

Tang En stepped forward and pulled the quilt over to cover the woman. "I'm really sorry, but I'm not here for a woman, Madam." This woman's actions had shattered Tang En's beautiful impression of her in his mind. He spoke coldly with a firmer tone.

The harsh remark struck the woman's heart. She suddenly leaned over the quilt and burst into tears. Tang En had originally intended to turn around and leave, but he froze when he saw this woman crying in front of him.

Tang En was inexperienced in love and relationships, and with his character, he did not know how to comfort women. He helplessly stood beside the bed as he said, "Don't cry, don't cry... I'm really sorry, Madam. It's not that I don't want to give your son a chance... What the hell is going on here? Stop crying!" He suddenly shouted at the woman. It worked. The woman immediately stopped crying.

"I don't know why you're doing this. But this is not a transaction for your son. I'm very sorry about him, but I can't let your son join my team. From the perspective of a football beginner, he's too old... I also sympathize very much with your family's situation. But professional football is not a street game. I think it would be better for you to just let him go to school, then find a job after graduation."

The woman wiped the tears from her face. She looked even more captivating with her face rosy from the crying...

Tang En looked at the woman's lovely yet pitiful expression. When he thought of her standing naked in front of him, blood suddenly rushed to his head... It was not that he was the modern Liu Xiahui; it was just that he was not completely mentally prepared to have relations with an unfamiliar woman whom he had only known for a minute. Now that he had calmed down, he felt that this woman did indeed have what it took to seduce him. But now was obviously not the time to be impulsive.

Damn it! He got a grip of himself and turned away.

The woman looked at him and a smile suddenly emerged on her face. Then she began to calmly get dressed, as if nothing had happened. "Mr. Manager, I don't know your name yet."

“Tony Twain. You can call me Twain.” People generally addressed each other by their first name in order to express familiarity. But Tang En was from China, and this was his full name. He was still used to being called “Twain,” not “Tony.”

“Mr. Twain, you must think I’m vulgar. Am I correct?”

“No, I do not.” Tang En shook his head with his back turned to her.

The woman took Tang En’s answer as a perfunctory consolation. She sighed. “You can see it too, how difficult it is for a sickly woman to raise her own child. It’s not easy in this place. I am not asking for your pity. In fact, I am actually content, because God gave me a healthy and strong child. You can turn around, sir.”

Tang En turned around and found the neatly-dressed woman seated by the bed, looking at him with bright eyes. He felt a little guilty as she looked at him.

“I can understand... Madam, can we leave the room and talk? I don’t want to be seen here by your son. Even though we haven’t done anything, there are some things we clearly can’t explain.”

The woman smiled. “Alright. But please rest assured—it takes forty-five minutes to walk to the nearest supermarket that sells Mascarpone cheese and back.”

George Wood’s mother made a cup of black tea for Twain, then the two sat at the dining table. She continued to peel the potatoes she would use to make dinner and told Twain the story about herself and her son in the meantime.

From their conversation, Tang En learned that George Wood had had a rather rough life. His mother, Sophia, was Jamaican, and she had a mixed parentage of Jamaican and Brazilian; a standard mixed-blood beauty. When she was seventeen years old, she fell in love with a tall, handsome British crew member. It quickly developed into a kind of earth-shattering passionate love and the two people quickly progressed to the stage of marriage. But Sophia’s family did not approve of this marriage, so they set out and found her a marriage prospect who was the son of a family that owned businesses in Jamaica.

What happened next was the stuff of almost all cliché romantic novels. Between her family and love, Sophia chose the latter, and eloped with her boyfriend, the crew member, to an unfamiliar country: England. On top of this, she was already three months pregnant

The boyfriend did not want this baby, but Sophia insisted on giving birth. Because of this, the two lovers quarreled for the first time. In the days that followed, the two of them argued constantly. In the end, the boyfriend left a sum of money with Sophia and ran off to continue being a carefree crew member. Later, Sophia gave birth to George Wood in

a rundown hospital in Southampton. "Wood" was his father's surname. The young Sophia used it to commemorate that unforgettable love.

Because of the lack of nutrition she had during the pregnancy, plus the fact that she was often angry, Sophia's body was very weak after George's birth. Despite this, she had to work everywhere in order to earn money to support herself and little George. But because Sophia had come to Britain on a tourist visa and prolonged her stay after the visa had expired, Sophia was not registered in the British census. In other words, she was an unregistered resident; an illegal immigrant. It was impossible for illegal immigrants to find any work with good benefits. To find a better job and a cheaper house to live in, Sophia moved around with little George, who stayed in Portsmouth, London, Birmingham, and finally Nottingham.

The heartless rat she had been in love with had left; he had not contacted her, and disappeared without a trace, as if there had never been such a person in the world. Sophia gradually forgot about him and devoted all her love and care to her son. In this way, they supported each other for seventeen years. Wood knew of his father's existence, but he had told Twain that the man was dead. It was clear how much he must have hated his own father. George, who graduated from junior high school at the age of fifteen, did not go to a high school with the goal of going to a university, nor did he go to a vocational school where he could learn a trade. He chose to go directly to work. He had done all kinds of jobs like being a supermarket cashier, an express delivery courier, a gas station pump attendant, and a mover. But the money he earned was not enough for a family with a mother who could need medical treatment at any time. Tang En also understood why Wood wanted to be a professional player. The media always portrayed professional players as being young and rich upstarts; anyone would be green with envy.

Tang En could see that Sophia was really frail. Whenever she spoke more than usual, she would have to stop and take deep breaths, and would occasionally cough violently. From this mother's brief description of the past, he could not imagine how much the young mother had suffered. But one thing Tang En could be certain of was that Sophia had experienced what ordinary people would absolutely find hard to bear.

One could imagine the scenario; a young woman in the prime of her youth full of yearning for love and the future had followed her love to the unfamiliar United Kingdom with plans to start a new life. She had dreams and aspirations. But seventeen years later, in front of Tang En, she was a woman who had been mistreated by life and left with a broken body. It was hard to explain this change from a "young lady" to a "woman" in a few words.

Perhaps because the topic was too heavy, and he did not wish to allow Sophia to continue to recall the unbearable past, Tang En took the initiative to change to a lighter subject. Because he was the manager of a professional team, he naturally spoke about the exciting game that had taken place a few days ago. Tang En did not know whether Sophia liked football, but she was fascinated. When Tang En talked about what he had

said to Roeder during their handshake and the West Ham United manager's complex expression of astonishment and indignation intertwined, Sophia laughed along with Tang En.

George Wood almost slammed the door open and rushed to the second floor in a single breath. To his surprise, he saw that his mother was sitting at the dining table with that Manager Twain, pleasantly chatting. When his mother saw him appear at the door, she glanced at the clock on the wall in some surprise.

"Only fifteen minutes... George, you didn't go?" Sophia rose to greet her son.

Wood took out the plastic bag behind him and inside it was the Mascarpone cheese his mother had asked him to buy.

Tang En noticed that George looked ruddy and out of breath. He held back a smile. This kid must have run there and back. But to be able to complete the usual forty-five-minute journey with a simple fifteen-minute run meant that the kid's physical fitness must be very good.

Looking down at his watch, Twain felt he should go back because it was getting late. He got up to leave. Sophia was not very enthusiastic about the idea of him staying for dinner. She only asked her son to walk Mr. Twain down the block. A seemingly rich stranger in this area would look like a mobile ATM. Anyone would be envious if they saw him, and it would be dangerous if there was no local to escort him.

After saying goodbye to this mother, Tang En walked towards the main road, accompanied by Wood.

Daylight went away quicker in the winter, so it was now dark. The streetlights were already lit. Wafts of sweet-smelling milk drifted from some people's homes, and this chaotic place finally had some warmth. There were fewer loitering hooligans, and the children who wanted money were still there. When they saw Twain, they would come up to ask for money. But when they saw Wood, they would grimace at him and give him the middle finger. Tang En could not see a child's innocence in them at all.

To find innocence in such a place? Even Tang En smiled wryly.

Looking at George Wood with his head lowered as he walked silently, and after having heard the story about him, Tang En felt that this kid was mature beyond his age. But he had not succeeded in his self-marketing to Tang En in Wilford.

"Hey, did anything happen... between you and my mother?" Wood suddenly asked.

"Your mother was very hospitable, we had a chat about some interesting things together. I told her about my work and she was very happy to listen. Besides that, she told me some things about you too."

Wood seemed relieved. Tang En's next sentence made Wood nervous again, however.

"Your mother is really beautiful. I wouldn't have been able to tell at all that she has a seventeen-year-old child."

Wood stopped and turned his head to stare at Twain. He said fiercely to him, "Don't get any ideas about my mother!"

With his arms spread out, Tang En asked, "How could I?"

The young man who cared for his mother grunted and turned to continue to lead the way. But his low growl still very clearly reached Twain's ears.

"If you dare to get any ideas about my mother, I will kill you!"

Tang En knew this kid was serious, and that he loved his mother more than anything.

"You may rest assured. I would like to live a bit longer." He shrugged.

When they reached the busy main road, Tang En thanked Wood, but Wood did not turn back. "I can take a cab back. You should go home too." Tang En felt a little odd.

"My mother asked me to send you to the car." Wood shook his head.

Tang En smiled, and did not reject the act of kindness. The two men stood on the cold and windy street. They did not see a taxi for a long time. Wood saw Twain looking around and wondered, "Don't you have a reservation?"

"What is that?" Tang En looked puzzled. He had always put his hand out to hail a taxi by the roadside in his country. Why did he have to make a reservation for a cab in the United Kingdom?

"There won't be any available cab on the streets for you." Wood was even more baffled. Is this man really British? "It's because petrol is too expensive. If you want a cab, you have to call the cab company to get a car, or you can directly call for a familiar driver. Are you really British?"

So, this is it. Tang En flushed with embarrassment, but he had to save face in front of the child, so he glared at Wood.

"I was just momentarily distracted. I forgot. Actually, I have ..." From his pocket, he took out the business card the driver had left him yesterday and dialed the number on it. After stating his name, the other party very enthusiastically asked Tang En for his current location, and then said he would be there in fifteen minutes.

The two went back to waiting in silence again. Wood was not a person who liked to speak first, and Tang En felt like he had nothing to say.

The driver was punctual, and his car was parked in front of Tang En in fifteen minutes. George Wood, who had finished his task, turned to go, but was stopped by Tang En.

He tore a note from his carry-on notepad and wrote down his name and phone number, as well as the address of the Forest training ground. Then he handed it to the somewhat astonished Wood.

“Take it. Come look for me tomorrow at 9:30 A.M. at this address written here. If the guard at the gate asks, just say I asked you to come.”

Wood still did not react, and he did not answer, so Tang En simply stuffed it in his hand.

“I can give you a chance, but it’s up to you whether you can be the best player in England, kid.”

With that said, Tang En got into the car and closed the door. The driver, also a fan, started the car, then quickly blended into the traffic flow like a drop of water flowing into the river.

Tang En looked back and saw Wood still standing under the street lights in the cold wind like a statue. Behind him was Sneinton in the dusk, and opposite him was the brightly lit bustling downtown. On the A612 highway, Manvers Street divided this city into two distinct worlds.

The seventeen-year-old George Wood desperately want to make money to take his mother to escape from there. Without a high school education, he could only depend on football if he did not want to die in the streets someday or go to prison. Today’s experience had made Tang En feel that real professional football was quite different from the European football that he argued about with other people in pubs or tea houses back in his country. The latter was the most beautiful side of the sport, like the world on the left side of the road. The former, however, was far from what those fans back in his country thought of as charming; it was a side that was deliberately forgotten about, but truly existed. It was brutal and tenacious, just like the right side of the highway, the Sneinton slum.

That gate was already open, and underneath the gorgeous surface, Tang En saw the darkness he had not known before.

It’s indeed a brand-new world, he thought to himself.

