

Godfather Of Champions

Chapter 19: The Hearing Part 1

Chapter 14 The Hearing Part 1

Although it was already nine o'clock in the morning, the world outside of the car window was dark as if it were night. The oncoming headlights were dazzling. The heavy raindrops beating on the car windows made a continuous pitter-patter sound. The windshield wipers stopped for a second before starting again to clear the windshield of the immense amount of rainfall which had affected the driver's line of sight.

"This is why I hate this country," Edward Doughty, while driving, said to Tony Twain sitting in the passenger seat.

"Why?" Tang En did not understand.

"England with her fish and chips, tea, damn weather, and lousy food." Edward chuckled drily, his tone full of disdain. "English winter is like a damp wool sweater from the washing machine, the kind that is not even spun dry."

When he got in the car and found that the driver was actually the Chairman's son, Edward Doughty, he was somewhat flattered. But their interaction while on the road made him realize that this middle-aged man was the same as himself. Maybe he had his own business in the United States, but he was not so terrible, even cracked a harmless joke occasionally. Like the joke just then.

Tang En burst into laughter, and he found this metaphor very vivid and amusing.

"Mr. Doughty..."

"Just call me Edward. My father's not here."

"Uh, Edward... I think you're very amusing," said Tang En.

Edward shrugged in an American way. "I'm not like the old-fashioned Brits."

"Aren't you British?"

"No, no, I'm American. Do you want to see my passport?" Edward spoke English with an American accent. Tang En could not differentiate, because with his background of

Chinese education, he did not even know what was considered “London accent.” “But I’m not the same as the Americans who were born and raised there, at least I could tell the difference between football and soccer. I left Nottingham at the age of six and went to Houston, where my aunt was, and I love Houston’s sunny beaches.” Tang En realized that Edward Doughty was chatty, talked almost nonstop.

“Palm trees, bikinis, brilliant sunshine, white sandy beaches... Well, you’ll never see such a place in England. What do England’s beaches have? Dirty mud, cold winds, big waves, lots of strange rocks, and unlicensed shellfish pickers. So, I left here at the age of six, went to school there, and settled down and got married. I only come back here for the holidays, and I rarely come back to England in the winter, which is simply a nightmare!”

Tang En couldn’t help but laugh. “Edward, you don’t seem like a 45-year-old. You’re like a 25-year-old.”

“Thanks for the compliment. In fact, I’ve just been too confined after staying with my stiff father for a long time.”

Tang En strongly agreed, but he did not say anything. He thought of the Chairman calling him to remind him of the locker room tradition. The British were stubborn and conservative, regardless of how they tried to make their appearances unconventional, they still felt the importance of traditions in their bones. The older British generation even more so.

They were extremely proud of their history, be it football or anything else. In fact, for Tang En, this sort of pride had already been long gone. Because he came from a country with 5,000 years of history. Five thousand years ago, whether there were any Englishmen was another question...

In comparison, because Americans with their lack of long history were more pioneering than the British, Edward truly fit the American image.

Tang En thought of a question. “Edward, you said you rarely come back in the winter. Why are you here this time?”

Edward glanced at Tang En. “Occasionally I do come back in the winter...”

This was obviously an excuse. Tang En did not believe that Mr. Chairman would be so kind as to get his son to drive him. Letting a son who grew up in the United States and a member of a professional English football club meet was evidently not just to satisfy his son’s curiosity. Since he was unwilling to say, Tang En did not ask again.

Tang En did not speak and turned to look out of the window at the English countryside. There was an awkward silence, but he was not interested in filling it. Now he had to think about how to deal with those people at the Football Association.

Edward seemed to have read Twain's mind. He slightly shook his head and said, "Don't worry, the club has hired a lawyer for you. You can let him handle everything."

"Thank you." Tang En politely expressed his appreciation, and the car returned to silence.

The dark red Audi A6 sped through the M1 highway, leaving the English countryside and hills behind. Two hours after their departure from Nottingham, they arrived at the world's top ten international metropolis, London.

Instead of going straight to 25 Soho Square in London where the Football Association was located, Edward drove to a café.

"The lawyer, Landy, is waiting for us here."

Jack Landy, 46 years old, was an anonymous lawyer in a small law firm in London. He wore a pair of black-rimmed glasses, with neatly-combed hair, a beige coat, and sat upright in the café with a black briefcase at his side. When his client came up to him, he rose to his feet and greeted him like a gentleman.

"Good morning, gentlemen." Although he was just a small-time lawyer in a small law firm, he was quite dignified. Even the gesture of merely reaching out with his hand had an air superiority. Lawyers in other countries mainly belonged to the upper echelons of society. It was even more so in a conservative country like Britain, where they still preserved the custom of wearing the white wigs when appearing in court to this day.

Tang En was dismissive. What's so great about a lousy lawyer with no real accomplishments? He had little contact with lawyers back home in China, but this Landy's behavior gave him a less favorable impression on lawyers. He perfunctorily shook hands with the other man.

Edward once again read Twain's mind and patted him on the shoulder. "Well, let us sit down and talk. I've given Landy all the materials relating to this matter."

Even though Tang En did not like the lawyer that the club had hired for him, he had to admit that Landy's dedicated attitude and professional integrity were rather good.

Landy took a stack of information out of his briefcase and placed it on the table. "Mr. Twain, I beg your pardon. On January 5th, the last sentence of your speech at the Royal Hospital of Nottingham University was unwise."

Tang En could not remember. "Which sentence?"

Landy looked up at Tang En. "You said, 'I know, some people want the Premier League team to advance, rather than us with no money nor power.'"

Tang En nodded vigorously. Now he remembered he did say so. "What about it?"

Landy simply pushed the stack aside and then looked seriously at Twain and said, "If, Mr. Twain, you had only spoken about your doubts and accusations against the referees, that would have been very normal complaining from a manager who had just lost a match. But you deliberately added that last remark and now it has turned into distrust of the full transparency and professional conduct of the English Football Association. As far as the FA is concerned, this is the one thing that annoys them the most, and it is the remark that makes this whole affair become problematic."

Tang En shrugged. "If it wasn't problematic, then we wouldn't be hiring you, Mr. Attorney?"

Landy stared blankly for a moment, then realized that Twain was right. If he could solve it himself, why would he need him? One must know that this job was hard to get. Not everyone who went to a Football Association hearing would call a lawyer.

He gave a cough and pretended to have a sip of coffee to slightly ease some of the tension. Edward just sat there without saying a word and quietly watched the two exchange words.

This pause allowed both parties to resume their discussion without continuing to dwell on the earlier uncomfortable topic.

"Um, Mr. Twain. I believe the FA will ask you to explain that comment at the hearing. If you do not wish to receive tougher punishment, you have to convince them that you're not aiming at the FA."

"In all honesty, I was never against them."

"There's no point in you saying this to me here. You have to make the FA believe. The problem is that it's not going to be easy to convince them. Let me give you some background information. When Mark Palios, the Chief Executive of the English Football Association, took over, he declared that he would take strong measures against English football's scandals and anomalies. And Mr. Twain, your words signaled to the public that the FA is not as clean as they have advertised." Landy saw that Twain seemed too ready to open his mouth to justify, so he reached out to stop. "Leave your words for the FA. Whether you meant it or not, after the media's exaggeration, everyone believes that you meant it that way."

Tang En finally learned the clout of English media. He grabbed his head with both hands and softly mumbled, "Those media b*stards!" A few days ago, he was still feeling smug about being a media figure.

Seeing him like this, Landy shrugged his shoulders. "You only realize it now? But there are pros and cons in using your status to deal with this matter."

“What’s my status?”

Landy glanced at Edward and then said to Twain, “Nottingham Forest is no longer the Forest team of the late 70s and the early 80s. You all do not have any influence in the football world. You’re just the Forest team’s two-bit manager.”

Tang En and Edward nodded at the same time. They did not really have much affection for the Forest team, so when Landy said that, they did not feel there was anything wrong with that fact.

“And then?” Tang En asked.

“Because of your insignificant status, you can therefore let the FA not take you seriously and be lenient. Or you can also let the FA take this opportunity to severely punish you, give Palios a chance to lay down the law.”

Tang En understood. If he were a man like Sir Alex Ferguson, the Football Association would probably have to consider the influence of the Manchester United Club in the football world and let the punishment go. At the same time, even Mourinho, a big-name manager, had been made an example by the Football Association numerous times. Pros and cons.

When Landy had explained up to this point, Tang En already understood what he had to do.

“I know what I’m going to do.” Tang En finished his coffee in one gulp, as if he was drinking water. Seeing Twain like this, Landy slightly smirked.