

Champions 33

Chapter 33: Final Hit Part 1

Jess shook hands with Eugen sadly and then walked to the player's corridor. Despite his help with scoring that one goal, he knew that the worsened situation at the second half of the match was partly due to his performance in the midfield. Tang En approached and stopped him.

"You have done enough, Eoin. Don't worry. Go take a shower and come back to watch us play. We are going to win."

Jess looked at Twain with disbelief about what he just said.

The young manager opened his mouth wide and laughed. "Want to make a bet, Eoin?"

"This is really unbelievable! After Forest scored two goals, and when everybody thought there was no hope for Wimbledon, look at where they are now... from forest having two goals at the first half in four minutes and absolutely at the advantage to Wimbledon showing their full potential with two goals in four minutes. Now it is a draw!" While Motson was commentating, he thought of a question to himself. As long as Tony Twain is managing, will the matches always be this dramatic? With him, it seemed there would always be something to look forward to.

"After losing two goals, Twain has begun to substitute players. He subbed in the young German player, Eugen Bopp, to replace the experienced Eoin Jess. But I feel certain that his decision was based on Wimbledon's first goal, as the second one came way too suddenly and unexpectedly."

It was true. No one had expected the second goal, including the manager, Murdoch. His celebration of the second goal was not as crazy as the first one, as he merely hugged his assistant manager and clapped his hands.

Tang En glanced at him and realized he had become even more annoying than before. If it was really going to end with a draw, he would not attend the press conference so that he could avoid that annoying face. If this old guy were to say something arrogant at the conference, like "we ought to have won the match" or "we could have gotten three goals", Tang En was afraid that he might not be able to control himself and plug the microphone into his big mouth.

Anyway, Tang En was in a damn bad mood! Thank god the performance of the young German made his mood slightly better.

Eugen Bopp made his first tackle, as he stole the ball from Reo-Coker in the central midfield and passed it to Williams at the side. Although they lost the ball in the end, his remarkable performance got applause from the fans and even Tang En gave him a thumbs-up.

Bopp became more active after receiving confirmation and compliments from the fans and his manager. Afterwards, fans and commentators would always remember scenes like these.

Wimbledon had gained possession with their fierce tackling. But Eugen Bopp immediately tackled the ball again. Feeling the pressure, Bopp passed the ball to Andy Reid, who passed to Gareth Williams, but they lost the ball under Wimbledon's continual attacks. Wimbledon decided to make a fast break for

Forest's goal area, wanting to score another goal and win the match. However, the ball got tackled again by Bopp and Scimeca when it just entered the midfield.

Usually in two minutes, possession could go between the two teams three to four times.

Even in the situation when the ball could not be tackled, Bopp would find ways to commit fouls to reduce the opposing team's speed and rate of attacks. His stamina was not a problem, since he had just entered the field. It was at least better than the Wimbledon players, who had been tackling the ball for half of the match.

The result was that neither team could efficiently attack. Each side made many mistakes.

Tang En, on the other hand, was rather satisfied with the situation and said to Walker, "We've successfully delayed them. Bopp has done a great job. Perhaps it is time to give him more opportunities."

Walker agreed with what Twain said about Bopp, but was not optimistic about the current situation. "Bopp's performance in this last season has been commendable. But even if we stop Wimbledon from attacking us, we are still unable to attack. Are you satisfied with a draw now, Tony?"

"Of course a draw is not enough, but we have to give the team some time to prepare and adapt." Tang En was not very confident either. The increase of defense at the midfield was at the expense of lowering their attacking strength. Though Eoin Jess was not good at defending, his passing skills and experience were still commendable. Do we now have to solely depend on Andy Reid?

Tang En suddenly thought of something and asked Walker how much time was remaining in the match.

"Not counting the injury stoppage time, we still have 17 minutes."

"Should be enough. Des, call Cash back."

Bopp has put in a lot of effort to balance the situation, and we cannot just let his efforts go to waste. As the head manager, Tang En had to make the adjustment accordingly, if not he would be the sinner in the end.

The 20-year-old midfielder, Brian Cash, was able to play both wings in the midfield. His ability to pass and shoot was nothing special. As a wing player, his skill to cross from the byline was just ordinary. However, he had one plus point that made Tang En appreciate him, which was his excellent dribbling technique. Cash did not have speed, but was a player who solely depended on his skills.

Because the four key players in the midfield had been confirmed, Cash and Bopp had to be substitutes instead. They might not play at every match, but there were situations that required their specific skills and abilities. Today's match would be an example.

Eugen Bopp's presence on the field proved that Tang En's thinking was correct. Since the defending side had become more stabilized, he needed to counter strike now.

Cash came to the coach's seats, and Tang En told him that he only needed to do one thing when he entered the field. "Break through, break through, and break through! Don't be afraid of Wimbledon's defenders, because they have no more to show. Do you see them panting for breath? Just use your skills

to play with them, irritate them, and break through them! As long as their defensive line is messed up by you, we will get our chance.”

Speaking to this point, Cash asked, “Boss, how much do you want me to stir them up?”

Tang En was stunned and said, “Stir them up until they become juice!”

“Got it!”

“You got it?”

“Yes. Just like cutting an apple into pieces and putting it in a blender.”

Tang En opened his eyes wide and looked at this Irishman. “Oh, god, your analogy is perfect! That’s right. Do it just like that! Except let’s change apple to nuts. Go ahead and smash them to pieces!”

Chapter 34: Final Hit Part 2

Cash subbed in for Gareth Williams who had used up so much stamina from the seesaw battle with Wimbledon and would not be as efficient if he stayed on the field.

Walker watched Twain sub Cash in and was puzzled. “Tony, I thought you said you do not care for possession and spectacular scenes.”

“Des, no tactic is absolute and no manager would refuse to make changes to them. If he did, he would not be a capable manager. I have said that I do not need unnecessary possession, but the problem now is that we don’t even have basic possession. That is why I sent Cash in, to gain more possession. Zero possession is definitely not going to win, and ‘useless possession’ does not mean to abandon possession completely, but to abandon the extra and redundant possession. Do you understand now?”

Walker hesitated and then nodded. “I think I more or less understand.”

Tang En sighed and was thinking that this was the reason why he had become head manager directly, and why some people had to work hard their entire lives to be an assistant manager. “Des, you have to remember what tactics are for. They are just ways of winning the match. If one fails to work, there is always another one. Just like how we change clothes daily. Maybe one day I will no longer use the useless possession theory and change back to the tactic that focuses on possession.”

“Ah! I got it. It means no matter what the process is, you are just looking at the winning result. As long as you can win, it does not matter which tactic you use.”

Tang En glanced at him. “You finally got it, Des.”

Cash soon created a chance for Johnson to shoot, but sadly, the header was too high. This was followed by loud cheering from the viewing platform, which was mostly for Cash.

The players of Wimbledon tackled the ball frequently while defending, using enormous actions. Perhaps they just wanted to show off their vigor. But this kind of defense was Cash’s favorite.

Tackling frequently meant more empty space behind. Defending with big actions took more time, which meant more weaknesses for Cash to find points to break through.

“Cash! He broke through again! Nicely done!”

After a few more rounds of this, Wimbledon started to put more defense on the right where Cash was. Tang En asked Cash and Reid to cross change their positions once Wimbledon tackled Cash. Cash would go wherever Wimbledon had weaker defense, which included breaking through from the central midfield.

His purpose was to mess up Wimbledon’s defense and make it so that their players could not stick to any of Forest’s players. Cash was still full energy, and it was relatively easy for him to run all over the field.

Wimbledon’s manager felt something needed to be done after a few threats had been imposed by Forest on their goalmouth. To adjust, Murdoch substituted his last player, though unwillingly. Before that, he had already substituted two attacking players, which had created the crazy gang vibe. Now he had to take one out, and in the end he substituted in a tall defending midfielder for Morgan, who had used up his stamina. He hoped that his adjustment could thwart Twain’s attempt to control the midfield.

Tang En knew what Murdoch was thinking when he saw his adjustment. As time went by, it would be ideal for Wimbledon to get one more goal. Especially since they had been down by two at the start and then made a comeback to even the score. One more goal in the end would make it the ultimate win for them.

Tang En was not satisfied with this situation on home ground. Furthermore, after being two goals ahead and then giving up two goals, they could not allow Wimbledon to have another goal. Did such a generous team exist in the world?

He had last the board in his hand, and there were only three players on the substitutes’ bench. They were reserved striker Craig Westcarr, reserved backfield Christian Edwards, and reserved goalkeeper Barry Roche.

Tang En was not confident about Westcarr’s abilities, and he might not help with attacking if he were substituted in. The remaining two were defending players. Goalkeeper Ward had done well today, so there was no need to replace him. What can a substitute center back do?

He turned back and saw Edwards doing warm-ups. He was quite tall...speaking of tallness, Tang En suddenly recalled the match with West Ham when Dawson got a header into the goalmouth that not counted by the stupid referee.

Why can’t this be done?

As a result, he decided to use the last substitute board. He let Edwards sub for Dawson as center back, but did not take the captain off the field. Instead, the exhausted Harewood was subbed out, and Dawson was asked to be the striker.

When Edwards heard about this allocation, he almost thought he heard it incorrectly. Tang En explained it to him clearly and asked him to tell it to Dawson exactly—tell him to compete for a header and try to shoot it in. If not, Dawson could pass to other players.

Edwards told Dawson what Tang En said after he was fielded, and Dawson looked at the side in shock. In turn, Tang En gave him a “go ahead” gesture.

Harewood started to apologize to Twain. “Sorry, Boss.”

Tang En felt strange. “Why are you saying sorry, Marlon?”

“I did not get more goals...”

Tang En smiled. “You already have two. How many more do you want? You have given your best. Please stop thinking so much.”

After Harewood left, Tang En did not go back to the manager’s seats. Instead, he was standing at the side, with his arms folded, watching the match. He always believed that by doing this, he was able to give some confidence and determination to the players. A manager that always sat in the manager’s seats was never a good one.

The time passed by quickly. There was still no change in the score.

“Without the more goals, this match could end on a boring note,” Motson complained.

What he said was true. By how the match was played, it was not very exciting for neutral fans to watch. Most people would switch to another channel if they saw a match like this. However, it was a different story for the fans of the two teams. They didn’t care about which team played better or which showed off better skills. They cared about which team would win in the end.

Just like their fans, Tang En did not bother with whether his team played well. He only cared whether the team could win this match.

Just another five more minutes before the match reached injury stoppage time. Until then, except for substitutions for both teams, there had been no interruptions. Normally, the injury stoppage time would only be three minutes.

One goal needed to be achieved in eight minutes.

The arrival of Dawson at the front caused some confusion for Wimbledon, and sadly they did not grasp the situation. Dawson was not a striker. He did not know shooting besides heading, and both his passing and dribbling were only so-so. Tang En’s decision was rather risky. If they won in the end, then it would be appreciated. However, if they lost... Tang En might be accused of abusing tactics and misusing the allocation.

The football world was just that cruel. The victor is a king, and the defeated is an invader.

Tang En did not want to be the invader. He only wanted to be the king... Who did not want to be the king?

His feet trembled, and he felt a huge pressure threatening to swallow him, waiting to engulf him. He did not show any of this, as he did not want anyone to see his weakness, especially those omnipresent cameras.

Another three minutes had passed. Forest's fans from the viewing platform were cheering louder and louder, but Wimbledon's fans were rather silent. Tang En looked at the direction of the viewing platform and saw red arms waving everywhere. The fans have not given up yet, so there was no reason for the Forest team to give up.

"Attack! Attack! I do not want a draw!" Tang En was standing at the side and shouting, "Draw is the same as f*cking losing! Give your all!"

He was not worried that Wimbledon would counterattack, as Eugen Bopp's performance was too perfect. He had control over the left, the right, and even the midfield, and Wimbledon could not compete with him.

The fourth official was holding the board for stoppage, and it was three minutes, just as Tang En had expected.

Tang En stared at the board in the hands of the fourth official and started biting his lips tightly. The hope was slowly draining from him. If it were a draw, then undoubtedly, it would be a failure. Even with two goals right at the beginning they could not stay ahead... f*cking sh*t!

Tang En turned back and looked at Michael, as he wanted to see his face now. Must be disappointed. He did not win the match with West Ham, and this match would be the same... but what did he see?

"Forest go! Go! Forest! Forest! Forest Go! Go!" Michael and all the other fans were cheering and applauding for Forest. They shouted those words with order and rhythm. Tang En suddenly felt like crying. These were the real, traditional English fans. They were loyal and never ask for anything back. They loved their team more than anything else. Having such fans, what is there to worry about for the future of Forest?

The 90-minute match had reached the end, and injury stoppage time started.

Eugen Bopp tackled and stole the ball away from Wimbledon vigorously, and then passed to Andy Reid. The 20-year-old player had taken charge of the attacking for the match. The newly substituted Norwegian Wimbledon defending midfielder, Trond Andersen, created trouble for Reid. Both were tangled together, and it seemed Forest's attack was going to be futile again.

The Norwegian kicked fiercely, and there were many times when he kicked directly into Reid's ankle. Reid would have fallen and rolled on the ground so the opposing team would have gotten cards and he would have gotten a free kick. However, that would not have been helpful at that point. A free kick with a distance from the goalmouth of more than 40 meters was not going to help.

Reid was pissed off by Anderson's kicks and tried his best to block him. No matter how hard Anderson kicked him, he protected the ball and looked around for other players.

"Cash? Where is he?!"

Cash had seen Reid's plight, but he could not shout loudly, as that would attract the Wimbledon full back's attention.

At the same time Bopp had seen the struggle in attacking. Though he was only asked to defend by the head manager, he still decided to help Reid.

“Hey, Andy!” Bopp’s voice came from Reid’s diagonal back. “Pass me the ball!”

Reid could not see his teammates, but he still passed the ball according to the direction of that voice.

With no hesitation, Bopp got the ball and made a long pass immediately to where it should have gone a long time ago—to the right side of the field. Brian Cash rushed over as there was no one stuck to him to defend him, and he stopped the long pass. However, two opposing defenders came over just after Cash stopped the ball.

No one had held any hope for Forest’s attempt to attack this time, except for their fans. Motson spoke in his usual tone and speed for the last three minutes of the match. Who the hell knew whether this was going to be Forest’s last attack?

“Brian Cash, there are two Wimbledon players on him...oh! He went through!”

Again there was loud cheering from the viewing platform. Cash squeezed himself through with the ball. Before him, there was a large empty area!

What to do besides increase his speed now?

Cash kicked the ball forward, not bothering with the opponents behind anymore, as he rushed to the end line.

“Leigertwood tries to defend him, he is very fast, he comes up! Cash... nice!” Motson yelled excitedly.

Cash’s flawless dodge had made Motson, who had been a commentator for 31 years, extremely animated. The Irish guy kicked the ball aside when Leigertwood was about to tackle it. While Leigertwood did not get the ball, Cash jumped up and did a header. After that, he ran after the ball and was almost to the end line.

Tang En watched nervously, and when he saw Cash dodge Leigertwood, he began to repeat one word. “Pass, pass, pass... pass the ball!”

Cash adjusted himself a bit, and as if he had heard Tang En’s shouting, he passed the ball to the front of the goalmouth.

“Cash passes the ball, and Michael Dawson gets it! A header... Johnson...Yes! Yes! Johnson! Gooooo!!!!” Motson jumped off his seat with his microphone. “This is a goal at the 90th minute! Last shot! David Johnson! 3:2, Forest!”

The whole City Ground Stadium started to shake when Johnson shot the ball in that had been headed from Dawson. The viewing platform, VIP box, manager’s seats, substitutes’ bench, and even behind the goalmouth... bars outside the stadium, in taxis, in front of the TV... and everywhere, people were jumping around, holding their arms up, and cheering for the victory!

Johnson was surrounded by all his teammates, and even the goalkeeper ran over to celebrate with them. This was their first victory since the 24th league match on the 21st of December last year!

Tan En squatted down with joy and clenched his fist. Then he stood up and looked at the manager’s seats, where Walker hugged Bowyer, and Bowyer’s neat white hair had turned messy. The substituted

Jess, Williams, and Harewood jumped down from the substitute's bench and ran toward their celebrating team. That speed... was not unlike how they had just run on the field.

This was the joy after victory...

"Won! I f*cking won!"

Tang En shouted loudly with extraordinary enjoyment.

Chapter 35: Hello, My Fair Lady Part 1

The day after the match, page nine in the sports section of the Nottingham Evening Post had a large photo, which took up half of the entire page. The photo was taken of Twain shaking his arms and shouting against a sea of red in the stands from the opposite side of the technical area. This was the scene when he celebrated the third goal.

Tang En repeatedly scrutinized this photo while eating a simple breakfast. He had to admit that this photo was well taken, the angle and timing chosen were just right. Of course, the best thing was that the main subject of this photo was Manager Tony Twain.

The caption below the photograph read: "When David Johnson scored the winning goal, Tony Twain celebrated with his arms raised high in the air amidst wildly cheering fans."

The more he looked at it, the more he liked it. Tang En decided to call the newspaper, look for the photographer, and then purchase a large print of it to frame and hang in the house. This was his glorious moment, and he wanted to treasure it forever.

So, he called the Evening Post office number which he found in the newspaper.

The day after each match day was always the busiest day for the British newspapers. People were rushing in and out, busy writing the news pieces from the gathered information, or sending the completed news layouts to the printing press.

There was the constant sound of ringing phones in the newspaper building.

"Hello, Nottingham Evening Post." The receptionist said politely to the receiver. Two seconds later, her professional smile was gone from her face.

Tang En, who was on the other end of the phone, thought it was odd. He just wanted to find out the contact of the photographer and ask him for an enlarged print. Why was his call transferred to the company president's office?

He heard a slight cough coming from the phone, followed by the voice of an elderly man.

"Mr. Twain, hello, I'm Larry Lawrence, president of the Nottingham Evening Post. You can call me Larry."

"You can call me Tony, Larry."

Tang En spoke to Larry Lawrence about his request. Lawrence agreed without hesitation. The photo was shot by their newspaper's photojournalist. Developing an enlarged print was not a problem. He could have 10 prints if he wanted. But Lawrence proposed a condition.

"Interview me?" Tang En was a little surprised. He did not expect the media would come knocking on his door so quickly. But he did not think to refuse. This was a good publicity opportunity for him. Tang En was not afraid of becoming famous. If he wanted to be well-known, the media's influence could not be ignored. But the timing was not good. The team had only won a match. It did not mean that their situation had stabilized. He still had a lot of problems to solve. And now where was he going to find the time for an interview?

"Larry, I'm afraid now's not the time."

"Is anything the matter, Tony?"

From the conversation between the two men, one would think that they had known each other more than five minutes.

"I still have a lot of work to do right now. I don't think I can accept your interview during this period. Although, I wish I could..."

"I understand."

"If you can wait a while, I will be happy to offer a future interview."

Lawrence immediately agreed with Twain's proposal. "That's fine. We'll have the photo that you want sent to you in two days. As for the matter of the interview, you just have to take note of it. When you feel it is right, feel free to contact us, Tony."

After he hung up the phone, Tang En was a little conceited. He did not expect to be in the media's good graces so soon. It was a good sign. It meant as long as they win, everything would be fine. His current objective was to strive for the team to maintain this condition while solving the problems that were revealed during yesterday's match in training.

However, one thing was quite certain: he must uphold his victory-centric thinking. In addition, he must also let the players feel it. A team, from the manager to the players, in pursuit of victory at any cost, would be invincible.

With the photograph issue sorted, Tang En was in a very good mood, and there was no training today. According to the usual custom, the day after a match was time off to let the players rest and relax. Of course, if they had lost by a big score, Tang En would cancel the break and revise it to make the team repent with lots of training.

It had been a busy and stressful time. It was time to relax. So, he decided to go out for a walk.

Nottingham had one of Britain's top universities, University of Nottingham. The university also had an affiliated branch in Ningbo, China. Therefore, many Chinese students came there every year to further their studies and enhance their education. In the streets of Nottingham, one could always see yellow-skinned, black-haired, Chinese-speaking students.

But whether there were Chinese in the City Ground stands, Tang En was not sure.

Whenever there was a rest day, even if it was only half a day, Tang En would never stay at home and sleep in. His thinking went like this: he had a rare 'travel abroad for free' opportunity. If he did not make good use to explore and enjoy the foreign environment, he'd let down the God who had let him transmigrate there. Of course, for Tang En himself, to feel the most authentic and best British way of life was to go to all kinds of pubs. He felt that mankind's greatest invention was the brewing technique, the greatest profession was a brewmaster, the greatest building was the pub, and the greatest glass products were bottles... and so on.

It would be a mistake, though, to think that Tang En was going to the pub to spend the rest of the day. It was only nine o'clock in the morning. None of the pubs in Britain were opened yet, so even if he wanted to go, he would not be able to.

He had always heard that the University of Nottingham had a beautiful landscape. He decided to go to the university campus for a stroll. Maybe he might even meet a pretty student from China, and then develop a beautiful foreign love relationship.

Tang En did not call the taxi driver Landy James, whom he was already familiar with. He decided to experience Nottingham's public transportation system.

The city of Nottingham was actually very small. This was a common feature of British cities. Apart from an international metropolis such as London, most cities might only be the size of a county in China, perhaps not even that.

Tang En realized this when he brought the team to their match in Coventry. Once one of Britain's four major cities, it was about the size of a county. The same was true of Nottingham. After more than 20 minutes of a rocky bus ride, Tang En was already at the campus gate of the University of Nottingham. The University of Nottingham had many campuses, but Tang En only knew of the large campus west of the city center.

The University of Nottingham campus was vast and beautiful. People who did not know they were on a campus would think they were in a park. Seen from afar, there was a white square tower partially hidden behind a row of trees. When he walked closer, he discovered that it was not a single tower, but an entire white building, the square tower was only the highest section in the middle.

Tang En stood in the middle of the road and was a little stumped. The campus was so big that he did not know where to go. It would be funny if he were to get lost.

Just when he was hesitating, a very pleasant voice came up next to him, and said in English, "This is the main school building of the University of Nottingham."

Tang En turned to see a dark-haired girl standing beside him, smilingly gazing at the white building. "Isn't it beautiful? Pure white. If the square tower was changed to a dome instead, it would be the enlarged version of the White House."

But this Nottingham Forest team manager simply did not hear the girl's next words. It was as if he had been struck by lightning, staring blankly on the same spot. Who did he see?

Her beautiful black hair was tied into an easy ponytail. Her puffy down jacket did not cover up the youthfulness of her body or that already familiar beautiful face.

It was his high school classmate, the prettiest girl in class whom he had a crush on for three whole years—Yang Yan!

The world is really small ...

“Sir? Sir!” When she found that this foreign man was ceaselessly staring at her, Yang Yan was a little annoyed. But she still maintained a basic courtesy and did not slap this foreign lecher. Instead, she turned to leave.

Tang En regained his composure, realizing that it was inappropriate to stare at a girl like that. He quickly apologized. “I’m really sorry, I suddenly thought of something and went into a daze. I’m terribly sorry.” He slightly bowed. Formerly, Tang En was only 1.7 meters tall, a typical Sichuan man’s height. Yang Yan was already 1.65 meters tall in high school, an ideal beauty’s height. Currently, Yang Yan was the same height. Tang En, on the other hand, had become a Caucasian more than 1.8 meters tall. Things were already not like before. They were no longer familiar to each other. That moment when Tang En saw Yang Yan, he really had the impulse to call out her name, but his inner logic stopped him. Now they were strangers meeting for the first time.

When she found he was actually quite well-mannered and was courteous with his words, the unpleasant moment just before was cast aside by Yang Yan. She smiled and said, “Sir, are you a tourist?”

“Huh?”

“I saw you standing here, looking a little lost.”

“Ah, yes! I’m a tourist.” Tang En responded. “I’ve heard the University of Nottingham is one of the most beautiful universities in England, so I’ve come to see it. But it’s too big here, I don’t know where to turn... Besides, I’m afraid of getting lost.”

Yang Yan cover her mouth and smiled. This man was disarmingly frank.

Tang En was in a daze again. During high school, Yang Yan was a good student in the eyes of the teachers, her parents’ well-behaved daughter, the ideal girlfriend in all the students’ hearts. At that time, almost all the boys in class liked her, but very few had the courage to confess. Those brave forerunners who summoned up the courage after much difficulty were rejected by a smiling Yang Yan. Later, there were rumors that Yang Yan’s family was preparing to emigrate, and that she was a girl going abroad and looked down on Chinese men. Many of the boys were indignant about this for a long time. Tang En was not a popular figure in class. He had an odd temper, few friends, and no luck with the girls. He could only gaze at girls like Yang Yan from afar.

After graduating from high school, in less than two years, he heard that Yang Yan really had gone abroad. And another two years later, everyone in the online alumni network saw her photos taken in the United Kingdom. In the photos, Yang Yan was even more beautiful and moving, her figure womanlier. So, everyone was unanimous in their praises, saying that the beauty was all grown up. Someone even joked that the foreigners had an unfair advantage. To this, Yang Yan’s consistent response was “Ha-ha.”

Tang En was surprised that he remembered all these things so clearly. He’d thought that school life had bid him farewell since he graduated from college. Although he would occasionally go on the alumni

network, he never left a message. Even if he did leave a message, those people would not know who he was. When he first applied to join the alumni network, it even triggered a big 'who is he' discussion among the classmates, but he still passed the application in the end. Who could have approved for him to join?

He only knew that Yang Yan's family emigrated to England. He did not know it was Nottingham. What was he supposed to say? Fate brought them together to meet each other thousands of miles away?

"If you don't know where to go, I can be your free tour guide." Yang Yan was not aware of what Tang En was thinking. She looked at the people coming and going on the campus and said, "I go to school here. I'm very familiar with this place."

Ah, she's still so enthusiastic.

Tang En nodded. "Okay, you can be my guide." It was the first time that Tang En was in such "intimate" contact with Yang Yan. How could he miss this opportunity?

He thought of his original intention in coming to Nottingham today: maybe he might even meet a pretty student from China, and then develop a beautiful foreign love relationship.

Now from the looks of it, he might have some hope. Today's Tang En was no longer that odd-tempered young boy with a slight inferiority complex.

Now I'm a 34-year-old mature man... But I wonder if this body is still a virgin?

Chapter 36: Hello, My Fair Lady Part 2

Yang Yan was not a professional tour guide. Her introduction was not planned or organized; she simply said whatever popped into her mind. But Tang En did not care about these things. He did not have the intention of increasing his knowledge of this university. The only reason he willingly followed the inadequate tour guide everywhere, and had made the pointless trip in the first place, was because she was Yang Yan, the girl whom he had once had a crush on for three years.

When they arrived at a statue, Yang Yan pointed to the barefooted bronze statue holding a bunch of fresh flowers in its hands and said to Twain, "This is D. H. Lawrence. He wrote 'Lady Chatterley's Lover', 'Sons and Lovers', and other novels. He is a local famous literary figure in Nottingham, even possibly as famous as Byron."

"Huh?" Tang En looked puzzled and had absolutely no idea how influential this Lawrence was. But he knew Byron. When he was in high school, he had occasionally heard one or two verses from his poems. It was normal that a high school student might know of Byron. However, the novels of D. H. Lawrence (David Herbert Lawrence) at Tang En's high school might still be described as capitalism's fantasies.

When she realized that this man knew nothing of the figure who made Nottingham renowned in the world, Yang Yan's "presumptuous" fault emerged again. "Sir, are you not from Nottingham?"

"Why do you say that?"

Tang En actually wanted to say, "No! I'm not! I'm from China, and I'm your classmate ..."

“I’m from Eastwood, northwest of Nottingham....”

Yang Yan looked at him with her eyes wide open. “Sir, are you joking? Even a six-year-old boy from Eastwood knows who Lawrence is.”

“Who?”

“The most controversial and unique writer in the 20th century British literature. Even now, the novels he wrote are still disdained by the mainstream literary circles in the United Kingdom. They refuse to accept and admit his works.”

“Why?”

“Because his novels all depict the life of the mining class, and ridiculed and mocked the wealthy aristocracy. The class differences were very strong. The British literary circles considered Lawrence to be a sex writer, and considered what he wrote to be left-wing literature. In addition, his novel ‘Lady Chatterley’s Lover’ was banned for decades in flagrant violation of the prevailing social mores.”

“Violation of social mores?” Tang En found this reason somewhat incomprehensible.

“Well...” Yang Yan bit her lip and replied, “It was the explicit description of sex and pornography...” She felt that it was inappropriate to talk about such matters in front of a stranger, so she turned the conversation back on track. “Do you know that Lawrence was from your hometown, Eastwood?”

Tang En knew he had made a fool of himself, so he face-palmed himself, not knowing what to say. Suddenly, he was saved by the bell. A group of Chinese exchange students, clad in bright red Tang suit jackets, approached them and shouted Yang Yan’s name.

“Yang Yan, Yang Yan!”

Yang Yan looked back and greeted them with a bright smile on her face.

“Happy Spring Festival, everyone!”

“Happy Spring Festival to you too!”

“Gong Xi Fa Cai, may you have a prosperous New Year and achieve academic success! Ha ha!”

A group of dark-haired Chinese people were laughing together, and Tang En already felt somewhat unfamiliar amidst their conversation, yet it was such a familiar language that he stood in amazement.

Spring Festival? Is it already the Spring Festival today?

Yang Yan remembered that there was someone behind her, so she turned to Twain and said in English, “Happy Spring Festival! Today is our traditional Chinese festival, just like your Christmas...” Then she repeated slowly in Chinese, “Chun Jie Kuai Le! Gong Xi Fa Cai!”

Tang En opened his mouth, seemingly wanting to follow her words. In the end, he decided not say them aloud.

Of course, I know what the Spring Festival means: family reunion, Chinese New Year's Eve family dinner, ringing in the new year, Chinese New Year TV special, being together with my parents and relatives, having dumplings on the 15th of the first lunar month, the wish to have an abundance every year ...

Homesickness irresistibly welled up in Tang En's mind, and was made stronger when he saw Yang Yan's smiling face especially.

He lowered his head and took out his small notepad from his pocket to quickly write down his phone number and English name, then handed it to Yang Yan. He said, "Miss Yang Yan? I admire your knowledge very much, and I have been an admirer of the Chinese culture for a long time. I always hoped to learn Chinese and about the Chinese culture. If you don't mind, I would like to invite you to be my Chinese teacher. This is my number. Once you've thought about it clearly, you can give me a call. I have some urgent business to attend to and I need to leave now. Thank you very much for being my tour guide, thank you very much! Goodbye, and I also wish you a Happy Spring Festival!"

After a barrage of words, Tang En turned around and hurried away from this place filled with the festive atmosphere and group of people.

Yang Yan held the note in her hand. She had not had time to respond. At this time, her friends next to her came closer.

"What's going on? Who's that man?"

"I think he looks like a young Al Pacino, so handsome!" Someone was becoming smitten.

Yang Yan glanced at her friend, "I don't think ..." Then she looked down at the note in her hand and slowly read the English name scrawled on it, "Tony... Tony Twain?"

A guy shouted when he heard this name.

"Tony Twain? What's he doing here?"

"Do you know him, Liu Wei?" Yang Yan asked that guy.

The guy passed her a newspaper with a big photograph on it: Against the backdrop of a raging red tide, a man clad in black pumped his fist and shouted.

"Him," the guy said to Yang Yan while pointing to the man clad in black in the image. "That's Tony Twain. The Nottingham Forest manager."

Yang Yan stared at this image for a long time, and then asked a question that made shocked the guy.

"What's Nottingham Forest?"

The guy jumped up angrily, but did not know how to explain the Forest team's brilliant achievements and the status in this city to the girl who had never watched football, nor understood it. In the end, he just said, "In short, Nottingham Forest is the most successful football club in this city and has a glorious history. Tony Twain is a professional football manager. That's all you need to know."

"Oh, it turns out that he's also a celebrity." Yang Yan laughed at the guy. "Liu Wei, are you regretting that you did not get his autograph or something?" Then she handed the note to the guy, "This is his signature and phone number."

The guy refused. "I'm not a Forest fan, and I'm not so crazy that I would ask for an autograph first. You keep it. He gave it to you."

The girl next to her chimed in, "Yes, that's right. Did he not want you to be his Chinese teacher? This is a good opportunity!"

"What opportunity?"

"In the beautiful and quiet European campus, you met a polite gentleman, and he asked you to meet up again ... Oh, a solemn gentleman and a beautiful governess! What a romantic story!" The girl, who had been smitten just a while ago, snapped out of her daydream only to become enamored again.

"Ali, have you been reading too many romance novels?" Facing this group of friends whom she had made in the university, Yang Yan could only helplessly smile.

"No, Ali was referring to 'Jane Eyre,'" Another girl said seriously as she held her glasses to her face.

Ali immediately reached her hand out and swooned, "Oh, Rochester! Do you think I don't have a heart and soul just because I'm short and plain? If God had given me a little wealth and beauty, I would have made it hard for you to leave me just as it was hard for me to leave you ..."

Everyone laughed, and Yang Yan also laughed happily along with them. In the midst of their laughter, she looked down at this note, and ultimately decided not to throw it away. Instead, she folded it up and put it in her pocket. She came from a well-off family and did not need to work to earn money for her tuition or to support herself. Besides school, she had plenty of spare time to do her favorite things, such as go shopping with her friends, or find a quiet place to read. But she still wanted to keep this work-related contact number.

Why? She herself was not clear about it either. Maybe it was because his surname sounded like that person's name?

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As Tang En quickly walked through the campus, he searched his mind for this year's calendar. Every start of the new year, he had to check when the Chinese New Year would begin each year.

I remember!

Tang En stopped in his tracks.

February 1st is Chinese New Year's Eve, and February 2nd is the Spring Festival. That's right!

Yesterday was Chinese New Year's Eve, and he had led the team to victory since he coached the First Team. Today was the Spring Festival, the most traditional Chinese festival, and the most important; the Spring Festival!

For the past month, he had felt like his brain had almost short-circuited from his transmigration, and that he had been busy living in this unfamiliar world. He had actually forgotten about this very important matter. How are my parents now? Are they healthy? Will they panic about losing their son? He had never thought too much about his parents, as he was the same person even before he transmigrated. Now he felt that he was being very unfilial.

How many years had he not been home for the Spring Festival? Two or three years, or even longer?

In 2004, he had found a job in Chengdu, just a year after graduating from university. In an effort to remain in the city, he decided not to go back for the Spring Festival. He only made a call home on Chinese New Year's Eve to send his greetings. During the 2005 Spring Festival, he had already had two jobs. Although he received an invitation at the end of an alumni reunion, only a few people still remembered him. The other people were doing very well in their careers and lives, while he had accomplished nothing. Feeling down, he simply decided not to go home and damage his reputation. He would not know what to say when his parents asked him about his work. During the 2006 Spring Festival, he changed jobs again, and still used the phone to send his Chinese New Year's greetings to his parents on the way to Shanghai for business. Then, during the 2007 Spring Festival, his job was stable, and he did not have to travel work, but he simply did not feel like returning home. So, he came up with an excuse to tell his parents why he could not return home that year. As he listened to the exploding Chinese New Year's Eve firecrackers, he called again to send his greetings. He felt that he had been numb to such a traditional festival like the Spring Festival, and that it was all the same to him.

It had to be said that Tang En was not a filial child. Even if he seldom took the initiative to call home to contact his family, he had always kept the words from his heart within him. He had been this way since he was young. He had gotten used to it, and did not feel anything was wrong with it.

But now... in 2003 Nottingham, England, for the first time, he had a strong urge to call home. He wanted to hear his parents' voice, even if it were only a sentence.

He took out his cell phone, searched for his home phone number in his memory, carefully entered the numbers, then stood under a big tree and waited for the call to connect.

After what seemed like an eternity, Tang En finally heard a familiar voice on the other end of the call.

"Hello, who's this?"

This was his mother's voice!

He heard the voice of his mother and heard the sound of the firecrackers and television faintly through the receiver. The television host shouted, "Chinese New Year! Happy Chinese New Year!" For a moment he forgot to speak, for fear that he would not hear the voice coming from that distant world if he spoke. It seemed like all he had to do was take a whiff and he would smell his mother's fragrant cooking. Sweet and sour crispy fish, eight treasure rice, braised pork belly, braised pork knuckle, fish-shaped rice cake, glutinous rice meat dumplings... And how could he forget the homemade waxed sausages and meats? These were more delicious than the damn fish and chips that could only be seasoned with salt and malt vinegar. Tang En's mouth watered.

His mother on the other end of the phone did not hear anyone talking, so she asked a few strange questions again, then finally hung up the phone when she did not receive a reply.

Tang En stirred. He had missed the chance to greet his mother. But he did not have to call again. He was satisfied knowing his parents were still living well, and everything was as usual. If something were to happen to him, his mother's voice would not be so calm. Regardless of who was attached to his body now, as long as he treated his parents well, Tang En was content.

Tang En leaned against the tree trunk, looked up at the blue sky, and let out a long breath.

Although the day had not yet passed, Tang En felt incomparably wonderful. He not only knew his parents were currently doing well, but he had also met the prettiest girl in his class whom he had had a secret crush on in a foreign country—even though she could not recognize him.

His mood was turning for the better after just feeling homesick, so he decided to go somewhere.

Chapter 37: Natural-Born Manager Part 1

When Sophia opened the door, she was surprised to find that the person who rang the doorbell was Manager Tony Twain.

“A gift for you.” Tang En put the gift into the woman’s arms, and then entered without an invitation.

“Mr. Manager...”

“Tony, call me Tony.”

Sophia looked at the visibly excited Twain, not knowing what had happened. “Mr. Tony...”

“Sophia, I’m recently fascinated by the mysterious eastern culture—the Chinese culture! Do you know what day it is today?”

Sophia shook her head blankly.

“Spring Festival!” Tang En raised his volume and climbed up the stairs as if he were the owner of the house. “Last year has passed, the New Year has arrived, no matter how many unhappy things have happened, they should be cast aside in our minds. It’s a day of happy celebration! So, I brought you some gifts.”

Sophia opened the gift box, and a violet dress lay softly within. She gasped lightly.

“I hope you like it. I’m not very good at picking out ladies’ clothing.” Tang En looked up upstairs.

“Where’s your son?”

The youth team had a match yesterday, and today was supposed to be a day off, but Tang En had not seen Wood since he had come in.

“George went out.”

Tang En looked back at Sophia, who was still standing downstairs. “Madam, do you mind if I have my lunch here?”

Sophia laughed. “Of course not. Do you like mutton curry, sir? That’s a delicious dish from my hometown.”

“That’s fantastic! I like good food.” In reality, Tang En was not a foodie, otherwise he would have starved to death from being transmigrated to England. “Do you have any pasta here?”

Sophia nodded.

“To express my thanks for your warm hospitality, I’ve decided to make you a new Chinese dish that I’ve just learned. Come on, what are we waiting for?” He waved to Sophia.

At lunchtime, when George Wood came home, he found his manager sitting at the table with his mother, chatting and laughing.

“Why are you here?” Wood’s eyes were not very friendly.

Tang En looked back at the kid, his face was a little dirty and his clothes were torn.

“Why? Can’t I be here?”

“George, what happened to your face? Go wash and get ready for lunch.” Sophia stood up to ease the tension. “Mr. Tony specially came to see your mother and also brought a gift.” She went into the bedroom to bring out the dress, held it in front of her and asked her son, “Is it nice-looking?”

George glanced at it, and then obediently went to wash up. “You bought it at the Cattle Market?”

Tang En shrugged and did not explain. This dress cost him £50, and there would almost certainly not be a £50 dress in the Cattle Market.

The Cattle Market was once a market for Nottingham farmers to buy and sell cattle and livestock. Of course, there were also other side trades for other things. It was like a big market place, very lively. But now that there was no longer the sale of livestock at the Cattle Market, it had become a second-hand goods market, where one could totally buy everything from second-hand television sets to old books and CDs. Many people in Nottingham would head there to save on the goods they wanted.

Sophia did not mind where the dress was bought. She seemed like she was often in and out of the Cattle Market. “As long as it looks nice.” She happily returned to the room to hang her dress and came out to wait to eat with her son.

Originally, it was just a regular lunch. But the dining table was set with Sophia’s exquisitely-cooked mutton curry and sweet corn porridge, as well as Tang En’s delicious Chinese noodle dish with sauce ‘Zhajiangmian’, using the pasta noodles and the meat sauce that was directly made from the leftover mutton. Together with fruits, potatoes, and other vegetables, the meal became somewhat festive. The three of them sat around the dining table and enjoyed it at their own relaxing pace.

When Tang En asked Wood about his situation on the youth team, Wood did not say much. Just said it was fine. To what extent, Tang En could not know. He had been very busy lately and did not have a moment to spare to check on the youth team. He could only wait for this busy period to be over before he could go.

After lunch, Tang En smiled when he saw that Wood wanted to go out but did not feel at ease to do so. How could he not know what the boy was thinking? So, he tactfully took the initiative to say goodbye first.

Sophia was a little disappointed. She had wanted Twain to stay for afternoon tea. Tang En gave an excuse of an afternoon appointment and took his leave.

Looking at Wood’s look of relief, Tang En secretly laughed. This mommy’s boy was still a child...

In the afternoon, Tang En was drinking at the Forest Bar while chatting with Michael and the others. After that victory, the two men seemed to have resolved their misunderstanding. Tang En learned that Michael's name was Michael Bernard, who was the leader of the Forest fans in the vicinity and highly regarded among the fans. Even a lot of Forest players knew him.

No wonder he was able to urge so many people outside the field to mock him.

Knowing Michael's background, Tang En felt the need even more to have a good relationship with this man. However, it was still a little hard for the two of them to put aside their egos and figure a way out of the awkward situation. So, the best way to improve their relationship was by winning. As long as the team kept winning matches, this relationship would naturally become warmer.

Tang En was well aware of this. There was not just one Michael, but other people who were still hostile toward and distrustful of him so far. He said nothing in front of those people. Any threats or begging would be to no avail. The only way to get these people to change their attitudes and become his supporters was to win matches and keep winning.

After a day's rest, Tang En poured himself into training again.

If during the training before the match with Wimbledon, the players had still had some doubts about Twain's proposed style of playing, then they had now fully accepted and believed that he could lead them to victory. And from one victory to another.

Chapter 38: Natural-Born Manager Part 2

On February 9th Nottingham Forest played their 31st match in the English Football League Championship. It was their home match with Crystal Palace. Four minutes after the start of the match, the Forest team's young Captain, Michael Dawson, made use of a corner kick and scored the first goal with a header. The atmosphere of City Ground was sparked from the very beginning.

Soon after in the 59th minute, Marlon Harewood scored another goal to lock down on a victory. Andrew Johnson scored a face-saving goal for Crystal Palace only at the 75th minute. That man later transferred to Everton in the 05-06 season after Crystal Palace failed to advance in the league. He then immediately became The Toffees' number one striker. At one point, he was a hopeful for the Premier League Golden Boot. But during this match with Dawson's defense, he had very few chances.

With the 2:1 victory over Crystal Palace, Nottingham Forest had scored two consecutive victories. As their disparity with the top half of the league points table was not huge, the Forest team's ranking leapt to sixth place. They had the same points as Norwich City, and once again pushed the other team down with the advantage of another complete victory.

Being sixth in the league was a morale-inspiring ranking, because according to the English Football Association's regulations for teams to be promoted from the English Football League Championship, the first and second ranked teams could be promoted straight to the Premier League, and those ranked third to sixth were eligible to join the playoffs to determine the last team to be promoted to the Premier League.

Nottingham Forest's 32nd match was postponed until April 16th. This gave the team a chance to rest and adjust. Tang En continued to carry out his tactical thinking of "less ball control, quicker passing" in training. No one objected to this as everyone had witnessed the results.

On February 22nd, their 33rd match of the English Football League Championship, Nottingham's home match was with Stoke City. This match left a very deep impression on Tang En, and also left the 31,000 home fans with a wonderful memory of that afternoon.

From the second the referee kicked off with his whistle, the match completely fell in line with the Forest team's rhythm.

Marlon Harewood became the Forest team's biggest contributor during this match. After the match he was awarded best player. His performance was steady throughout February, and he was even elected the best player in the EFL Championship for that month. In the 13th minute, Harewood received Andy Reid's pass, drove the ball into Stoke City's goal, and unveiled the prologue to the Forest team's carnage.

In the 24th and then 28th minute, within these four minutes, Harewood scored two more goals, completing his hat-trick for that match.

The entire City Ground was full of jubilant voices for the 23-year-old English striker. Even Tang En did not expect this match to start so smoothly. His rapid offensive play completely stunned Stoke City, leaving them confused and disoriented.

He had thought that Harewood would take it easy after scoring a hat-trick, but unexpectedly at the last minute in the first half, he scored again.

At that moment when Harewood scored, Tang En suddenly felt his seat shaking. He turned to see everyone on the substitutes' bench and in the technical area jump up. Walker faced him, giddy with excitement.

"4:0! Harewood is unstoppable! This is his seventh goal in three consecutive matches! The Forest team is an unstoppable force, after experiencing five embarrassing rounds of defeat, they have a complete reversal, a winning streak!"

Stoke City absolutely lost their fighting spirit. Just eight minutes into the second half, like icing on the cake, David Johnson gave the Forest team a five-goal lead.

At this time, Tang En's opponents brought on a very unfamiliar number and face. In fact, Tang En found everyone looked unfamiliar. The difference was that some of the people's names he had more or less heard of. This time, even the name of the player being brought on sounded very unfamiliar—Kris Commons.

He might be the only trouble that Stoke City brought to the Forest team. Once on the field, Commons was very active in the wing. With his breakthroughs and crosses, Michael Dawson no longer dared to press on with his attacks as he wished. In the left wing where Commons' main attack was, the Forest right back, Thompson, was disoriented by his breaks. If the Stoke City strikers had not lost the heart to continue fighting long before, perhaps they might have scored.

Seeing the danger, Tang En made an adjustment. He replaced Williams and brought on Cash, who had played remarkably in the match with Wimbledon. He used Cash's outstanding offense to suppress Commons' assists. Sure enough, Commons soon had to give up attacking and shift to defending.

The crisis lifted, and the match was back in Forest's hands. The remainder of the time was no longer spent in suspense.

In the 85th minute, Eoin Jess used a direct free kick to set the score at 6:0 for the team. The City Ground Stadium went into a frenzy.

The fans had rarely seen such a gratifying match in the past few years, and Twain had regained their former respect and confidence. This match also struck Stoke City into the relegation abyss. They only had 28 points at the end of the 33rd match. Their ranking was the second lowest. Before this match, they were still the fourth lowest in rank. The English Football League Championship rule was that the three lowest ranking teams be relegated to League Two.

After the encouraging hugs and celebration with the players, Tang En stood on the sidelines. He was not as excited as the first victory. He knew that the three consecutive victories were only a start, far from over.

Stoke City's players hurried away with their heads lowered. Tang En noticed the young player brought on in the second half, number 24, Commons. He was biting his lip and seemed to have tears in his eyes. He wondered if the kid was playing on behalf of his team for the first time. Perhaps this defeat would leave him with an indelible memory. But it might have been a good thing for him to experience failure.

The kid was quite good. It was a pity he was not on the Forest team... Andy Reid lacked a good enough assist. In case of a bad condition, or injury, who was going to strike first in the Forest team's left midfield?

When March came around, the spring air grew more and more pronounced. Nottingham Forest seemed to revive from the cold winter. New branches grew out of tree trunks, and soft buds sprouted from the branches. Their progress continued to march on.

On March 1st, the Forest team's away match challenge was with Watford. Before this match, Watford was ranked eighth in the league. They only had a three-point gap away from the Forest team. After this match, the Forest team continued to strengthen their fifth position in the league, while Watford slipped to the twelfth in the league.

It was 1:0! The Forest team chalked up a valuable three points in the away match, though the process did not seem quite convincing. Because the home team dominated from the beginning to the end of the match, it was like the replay of Forest's previous match with Stoke City. But Tang En's battle plan issued to the team before this match was for them to defend to the last and then look for opportunities to counterattack. Andy Reid succeeded in the 68th minute, kicking a long ball that silenced the Vicarage Road Stadium.

In this match, the Forest team had four shots at the goal in total, two of which were shot within the goal area, and one scored goal. The rest of the time they were confined within their own half of the field, struggling to defend against their opponents' offensive.

John Motson, who was in charge of the broadcast commentary, had said more than once during the match, "Is this still the Forest team that had the winning streak and wiped Stoke City clean with six goals in the last match?"

After Reid scored a goal, Tang En's face still looked grim. Walker and Bowyer were also worried that the opponents would breakthrough the team's goalmouth at any time. Luckily, their defense, led by Dawson, managed to resist all the attacks, and luck helped a little, too. In the end, Forest team, which was heavily criticized by Motson, won their fourth consecutive win.

No matter how battered they were on the field, the players were at least able to unwind on their way back to Nottingham.

March 5th was another away match. At the Priestfield Stadium, the Forest team brilliantly defeated Gillingham 4:1. Forest's performance continued to amaze everyone. This was an away match as well, and their performance was completely different from the previous match. Once the match started, they went charging in and respectively scored goals at the ninth, 19th, 48th, and 52nd minutes. Four players scored four goals, and they were respectively, David Johnson, Marlon Harewood, Andy Reid, and Gareth Williams.

The home team only scored a consolation goal at the 82nd minute.

The Forest team's morale surged with their five-match winning streak, even though their ranking dropped to seventh. Due to one less match previously and the other teams' outstanding performances, it did not affect Forest's mood. Nowadays, everyone believed that at the end of the season the team would be able to compete in the playoffs. If their luck became better, they might also be directly promoted to the Premier League.

Photographs of Twain directing the matches and participating in the post-match press conferences appeared in various newspapers and magazines, and he was also rated the best manager of the English Football League Championship in February. Almost all of England now knew that the Forest team had a top-notch manager who had been knocked out by one of his players.

It was the first personal honor that Tang En had received, holding the champagne at the technical area in City Ground. He asked the Evening Post reporter who was there to interview to take his picture.

He fulfilled his agreement with the Evening Post president and accepted their interview at the most appropriate moment.

In charge of the interview with Twain was the Evening Post leading reporter, James Robson, and the photographer who came along with him was an old "acquaintance" of Twain's—Pierce Brosnan, that delicate and refined intern reporter. Apparently, he came to learn from Robson and to gain experience. He was not leading the interview.

In addition to being about the recent five-match winning streak, the interview's biggest focus was on why the former Tony Twain and the current Tony Twain were so different.

With regards to this question, Tang En had already done some preparations. He called Professor Constantine in advance, who had not appeared for some time, to come to City Ground. Several people

sat in the technical area and listened to this old chap, renowned in the British academia world, mitigate the mysterious rumor about Twain's condition.

James Robson and the others listened to a lot of interesting stories, from India, America, Spain, and even distant African countries... but did not receive the best answer to "what caused Tony Twain to change so much." Later, the reporter could only attribute everything on "the mysterious natural phenomenon that science cannot explain at this time" and "the impact of the accident."

When Tang En saw the other person jotting down all these in the little notebook, he was rather satisfied. He'd gone looking for Constantine to safeguard against this in the first place. It was just that he did not expect to have found an expert authority whose words actually carried some weight. Tang En knew this from the way the three reporters looked at the old chap when he had introduced Constantine to them just now.

The interview was a great success, and Tang En felt pleased. With all the recent wonderful occurrences, the Chairman was also delighted with the team's performance and had repeatedly promised him that he would still be the team's manager next season. He was more determined than ever to be a football manager.

After he'd sent off the three reporters, he returned to the stadium with Constantine.

Tang En stood on the sidelines of the grassy green field and looked around the empty red stands. There were three cleaners sweeping the stands, and turf-maintenance workers in the distance trimming the turf to keep it flat. They were preparing for the Forest team's next home match against Grimsby Town.

The sunshine was nice and comfortably warm on the skin.

"Professor. Do you know?"

"Eh?"

"My previous wish... was just to be a young team manager like Paul, who was passionate about grooming young footballers."

The professor sat behind Twain in the technical area and crossed his legs to get a taste of being a manager.

"Some people may not necessarily find out what they truly excel at, what they really like to do, what they truthfully should do in the entirety of their lives. I'm a lot luckier than those people." Tang En turned around and looked back at Constantine looking around, smiled and asked, "How does it feel?"

"Ah... The view is not as good as up in the stands." Constantine shrugged. "I don't quite understand how sitting here can allow you to see the overall view. When I was sitting in the box a few matches ago, there were spots which I couldn't see as well."

"In fact, there will be blind angles no matter what when we are using our eyes to see." Tang En pointed to his head. "The manager's overall view is here. If he's smart enough, there will be no blind angles here. Just like you hold all those complicated formulas and data in your mind."

Constantine squinted for a moment at Twain, standing in the sun, and then nodded. "Tony, you certainly are the right person to be seated here." He stood up and conceded the manager's seat.

Looking at the rows of seats in front of him, Tang En smiled. "Yes. I like this seat. I was born to be seated here."

Chapter 39: Don't Give Up, Kid! Part 1

Best Manager: Tony Twain!

A young man in the classroom was engrossed reading a newspaper he was holding, when suddenly next to him a girl's voice rang out, "Liu Wei."

The startled guy's first reaction was to shove the newspaper under the table. Then he saw Yang Yan covering her smiling mouth. "Yang Yan, you gave me a scare, but the class is supposed to be progress..."

"So, you do know that we are in class now?" Yang Yan pointed to the newspaper in his hand. "Didn't you say you're not a Nottingham Forest fan?"

"Er ..." the young man spread the newspaper on the table again. "I'm a fan of all football. And since the Forest team manager's so passionate about the Chinese culture, of course I must support. Oh yes, didn't he invite you to be his Chinese tutor? Did you give him a call?"

Yang Yan had forgotten about the matter. After being reminded by Liu Wei, she then recalled that she'd put that piece of paper in her notepad and never flipped through it again.

"No, I forgot." She shook her head.

"You," Liu Wei rolled his eyes, "really have the heart to let a polite gentleman feel hurt?"

Yang Yan shrugged and rested her chin on her hand. "Why do you all think he is a polite gentleman?"

Liu Wei shoved the newspaper toward Yang Yan. "I have never thought that football managers should be gentlemen, especially excellent qualified managers, all the more should not be."

After he finished speaking, he sat still and pretended to look like he was listening carefully.

Yang Yan found it odd, so she looked up and saw the lecturer of this class, her university professor, Stanley Schecher, walking toward her with an unpleasant expression.

She glared at Liu Wei, who pretended as if nothing had happened, Yang Yan could only awkwardly accept the fact that she had no other way to stuff the newspaper into somewhere else.

"Yang, I think you have to explain to me what this is... Well?" Schecher glanced down at the newspaper on the table and then took it to look at it carefully for a moment. Throughout the exchange, everyone in the classroom looked at them. Yang Yan lowered her head and dared not utter a word. She knew that Professor Schecher was widely known to be strict in the academy. To contradict him might worsen the consequences. Since he had already seen it, she should simply admit that she was reading the newspaper during class time.

She waited until Professor Schecher finally put down the newspaper. "Is this yours, Yang?"

Yang Yan glanced sideways at a serious-looking Liu Wei and nodded.

“Not bad. I didn’t know you were a fan of the Forest team. Come to my office on Wednesday morning.” After passing judgment on Yang Yan, Professor Schecher looked at Liu Wei again and spoke with a cold voice. “Liu, change your seat for the rest of the lesson.”

Liu Wei knew that his actions had long been seen by the professor. He shook his head and shrugged his shoulders, then got up and went to the vacant seat at the back of the room.

“Oh yes, by the way,” Schecher called out to Liu Wei, “I’m a Forest fan.”

The classroom, hushed a moment ago, suddenly burst out in riotous laughter with a mix of excited cheers and applause. Even Yang Yan could not help laughing when she saw Liu Wei’s stunned expression.

Professor Schecher returned to his lecture. Liu Wei also conscientiously picked a seat in the last row to sit down and listen to the lecture again.

Yang Yan peeked at the newspaper on the table.

Below the eye-catching headline was the main content of the interview in point form:

An accident shaped the best manager ever.

Unforgettable five-match winning streak.

Tony Twain adores the Eastern civilization.

Tony Twain adores the Eastern civilization....

Yang Yan stared distractedly at the photograph of Twain in the newspaper.

With the team’s five-match winning streak, a surging morale, and February’s best manager, Tang En felt he was able to divide his attention to take care of another person.

Although tomorrow was the match, Tang En decided to pitch the First Team training to Walker and Bowyer and head over to the youth team to have a look. He hoped that George Wood had not gotten him into any trouble.

Twenty minutes later, Tang En stood on the empty training ground, tapping on his head.

Today was the FA Youth Cup match, the Forest youth team should be playing now at the City Ground. This head of his was of no use again, completely mixed up.

He took out his cell phone and called Landy to say that he would like to take his car to go to the City Ground.

The parking lot outside the City Ground was deserted. If it had been a day later, it would be difficult to find a parking space when one was late. When he got out of the car, the only other thing he could hear aside from the thin applause, was the sharp whistle.

It seemed that the match had been going on for a while, and he wondered how Wood was performing.

Tang En admitted he had some expectations of this kid...

When the First Team manager, Tony Twain, appeared on the sidelines, the first people who took notice of him were the players on the field. David Kerslake followed the players' gaze and saw Twain walking toward him.

"Tony, what are you doing here?" Kerslake rose to greet him.

"I've come to see if the youth team has any outstanding players," Tang En graciously said, taking the seat that the youth team assistant coach rose and gave to him and sat next to David. After the somewhat unfamiliar assistant coach walked away, Tang En lowered his head and asked Kerslake in a low voice, "David, did that kid cause you any trouble?"

Kerslake knew that Twain must have come at this time for that person. He smiled and shook his head. "He had a fight with his teammates just a few days after he joined."

Hearing this, Tang En looked up and stared at Kerslake in astonishment. "Why didn't you tell me? What was the fight about?"

Kerslake shrugged. "Just a spat, I felt there was no need to tell you. A member of the team mocked him by saying he was 'raised by a whore', then he suddenly rushed up, threw a punch, and knocked the other person to the ground. If the other people at the side hadn't reacted so quickly, he probably would have thrown a few more punches. Four men, Tony... four guys used all their effort before they could pull him back. That kid is simply a raging bull."

Tang En nodded. "Raised by a whore." Swearing was quite common in the UK, as if it were "damn it." In China, sometimes it might just be a "modal particle." However, Sophia was the most important person to Wood. He would absolutely not allow anyone to impinge upon her. Whether it was a joke or something serious, Wood would not allow his mother to be insulted. This incident also gave Tang En a reminder that he must never swear at him using terms like "raised by a whore" or "son of a b*tch," otherwise he would definitely kill him.

"How was it resolved?"

"The one who started this whole thing was tossed to Notts County at a super low price."

"That's not very good, David... How was the playing skill of the young man who was sold?"

"He was pretty bad. He had no future."

"Oh, you did well! I support you with this punishment decision. What did you do with Wood?"

"I punished him with laps, to run 30 laps." Kerslake's lowered voice was a little excited. "He completed them easily! Fred, the fitness coach, was dumbfounded! This kid's physical fitness is excellent!"

Tang En nodded, he'd already expected this result. "David, if you're going to punish him next time, I suggest you'd better let him run 40 laps with weights. OK, let's watch the match... How long has it been?"

"Coming up to 70 minutes."

The two men turned their gaze toward the field. Because the First Team manager was watching from the sidelines, the Forest youth team players played with vigor, hoping to impress the manager and become a First Team player. Just like Jenas, Dawson, and Reid.

The scoreboard on the sidelines showed the match score so far: 1:0. The home team Nottingham Forest was ahead of the visiting team West Ham youth team.

Tang En easily found George Wood on the field. After a few months of training, his basic skills were decent, but... as a striker, his position awareness had barely changed from two months ago.

“David, do you think that Wood has the potential to be a striker?” He spoke aloud the doubt he had always had in his mind.

“I was going to talk to you about this, Tony.” Kerslake shifted in his seat and lowered his voice again. “Two months of training, most of the time I let him do the basic drill, because I realized that his shooting standard is terrible.”

“Oh?”

“During the shooting practice, even if it was empty at the goalmouth, he could not even score a goal out of ten balls. Let’s not even talk about driving and shooting a ball to get in a goal. He had absolutely no idea how to shoot a goal in, I had to teach him. But... damn, this kid’s temper is awful. He does not listen at all, still wants to do it his own way. If it weren’t for you, I’d have already kicked him out.”

There was a big gap between the before and after evaluations... He just said his physical fitness was excellent, and now he said he wanted to kick him out.

“If it weren’t for our main striker, Jeffrey, injured from being shoveled by the opponents, I wouldn’t have brought him on. Tony, if you’d watched his first few matches, you’d agree with me. God, letting him play forward will only make a mess of our offense,” Kerslake jabbered on with his grumble.

Tang En sucked his teeth after hearing it all.

“When was he brought on?”

“About 10 minutes ago.”

“Do you have his player statistics?”

Kerslake called back the assistant coach, who had just walked away, asked the question, and then shook his head. “Nearly twelve minutes, no shots, no successful passes, no headers, no fouls, no offenses received, nothing whatsoever...”

Tang En glanced toward the field, frowned as he looked at George Wood, who was working really hard, but failing to grasp the game. David Kerslake’s words were repeated in his ears.

Kid, is this your future?

Perhaps I never had the keen eye of a professional manager... George is not suitable for professional football at all. This matter is really very cruel to him, I gave him a very big and beautiful dream, and now I have to tell him to wake up from the dream? Pretending to care and tell him, “George, I think it’s

better for your future if you go back to being a mover..." After seeing what had happened to George's family, Tang En felt like he could not say these words.

He was not a compassionate man who tried to please everyone. However, at the sight of that strong and optimistic mother, Tang En felt that no matter what, he wanted George Wood to succeed, so that he could afford to pay for his own mother's treatment. A son who was a mover, earning two hundred pounds a week, and did not even have enough money for the treatment and medicine... That should never be the future of that beautiful mother.

But what could he do? A star player was not someone a manager could groom into being. It was up to the player. Talent and hard work were essential. Wood worked hard, but he had no talent.

Kerslake realized that Twain suddenly stopped talking. He was just frowning and staring at the field. He did not know what this man was thinking, so he did not disturb him and just watched the match in silence.

Chapter 40: Don't Give Up, Kid! Part 2

Outside the field, Tang En was worried about Wood's fate, and on the field, Wood worried about himself, too.

He was not blind or a fool. He saw Tony Twain's sudden appearance on the sidelines and knew that this was a good opportunity to show himself. His surrounding teammates were trying hard to perform well and he was not willing to fall behind. But...

No one was willing to pass the ball to him, because if it were to be passed to him, it would only cause the team's overall performance to look bad. Everyone would not get the chance to perform. That bunch of players would normally have a few laughs together, but when it came down to that moment, who would not consider themselves first? There was nothing to be done. This was the cruel nature of professional football. One could not whine about others not giving them a chance when one did not have the strength!

Looking at his teammates—how the more they pressed on, the closer they got, and how instead, as a second striker, the more he kicked the farther away he was from the goalmouth—Wood wondered if his performance was over just like that? He thought that taking off the red jersey to return to continue be a mover, a job that did not require any skills and position awareness—as long as he had the strength he could do it—was the most suitable for an uneducated clod like him.

But when he thought of his beloved mother at home, he was not willing to admit defeat.

The more this kid kicked the farther back he went... Tang En shook his head lightly. If the striker was 40 meters away from the goal, would he still pose as a threat? This stupid kid, if he doesn't charge into the goal area, how is he going to shoot the ball into the goal? If he doesn't get a goal in, how is he going to convince others of his ability? I know it's asking too much of you especially when you've only just started playing the last two months... But even just one goal can save your career, you b*stard! Even if it means using your hand to score a goal, as long as you do it in such a way that the referee cannot detect!

Tang En looked down at his watch and did a bit of mental calculation. It was less than five minutes till the end of the match. Looking at Wood's condition, there seemed to be nothing to look forward to.

He got up from his seat with the intention to leave early. He could not say to Wood, "Don't waste your time here." The best approach was to get away from here.

Kerslake looked up at Twain. "Not watching anymore, Tony?"

Tang En shook his head in disappointment and said nothing. Then he turned and walked toward the players' corridor.

At this point, Nottingham Forest was finally awarded a corner kick though successive attacks. Except for the goalkeeper, almost all the players rushed into the opposing penalty area. They intended to score a goal to leave a good impression on the First Team manager.

Only George Wood was foolishly standing between the penalty arc and center circle, though he was 1.85-meter-tall, he did not think to join in to compete with a header.

When the corner kick was taken, none of the Forest players managed to receive the ball. The football was headed off by West Ham and flew directly to the right wing.

A West Ham player wearing the number 8 jersey stopped the ball beautifully and then turned to make a surprise attack!

The few Forest fans in the stands booed. At this time the Forest team's own penalty area was empty, with no one else except the goalkeeper.

"Damn it!" Kerslake cursed.

Upon hearing the fans booing, Tang En turned around to see what was happening on the field.

Then he saw that West Ham's number 8 was dribbling at a high-speed while all the Forest players were staring blankly on the other side of the field, not even trying to defend. Perhaps they did not feel they could catch up with him at all...

But someone appeared in his sights.

George Wood!

"Where did this b*stard come from?" The West Ham youth team manager did not expect that there was still a Forest defender.

He slashed through the field and chased the dribbling West Ham player; the speed of his pursuit was amazing! Looking at his swift figure, Tang En suddenly felt a sense of déjà vu, as if he'd seen it somewhere before ...

The distance between Wood and the player dribbling the ball was shortened in a flash.

"Good heavens..." exclaimed the assistant coach next to Kerslake. "His speed is really fast!"

"What's the use of being fast?" Kerslake replied. "He's not a damn defender! He's never practiced f*cking defense..."

He had not finished his sentence when he saw George, who was running at a high-speed, turn his body over and fly forward with his feet in front and head at the back. Then using the force of that momentum, mercilessly... mercilessly stamped on that dribbling player's foot! Sent flying by Wood's kick, the West Ham player with the ball flew straight over the sidelines, along with the rolling football.

"Oh my God!"

"Bloody hell!"

The managers of both teams exclaimed at the same time. Because in the completely empty stadium, they had clearly heard a snap just then, it had to be the sound of a bone fracture ...

The West Ham player, who was sent flying with a kick and tossed out of the field, never got up again. Instead he held on to his right leg and rolled back and forth on the ground. West Ham's team doctor had already rushed over.

The referee's whistle shrilled continuously on the field, while the West Ham players rushed to the offender in succession. But they were all stopped by the Forest players, and there was some physical confrontation between the players. It was not that they were thinking of Wood, they were actually thinking about the opposing players—ever since they saw Wood, with one punch, knock out their own team's biggest and strongest player, Eddie, and how he almost went into shock, no one would dare to mess with him again.

By the way, Eddie was that unlucky chap who was later sold off at a low price to Notts County. From a League One team to a League Two team, the turning point of his fate came because he used his usual way of swearing "raised by a whore" to insult a rookie who could not play football.

The Forest team players thought that George Wood, who did not perform well in front of the manager, must be in a bad mood and because of that, his temper would be violent. The West Ham players who rushed up to him would be just like sheep in a fierce tiger's eyes, and they did not want a big bloody battle on their home turf.

The referee expended a lot of effort to separate both teams' players from each other. He then walked up to George Wood, who had just scrambled up from the ground and raised his hand. A bright red card flashed past his eyes. He was sent off the field.

Kerslake covered his face and did not want to watch. Even if Twain did not say anything, he knew that this kid's time at Nottingham Forest was over, completely over!

At this point, Wood had completely lost his spirit. He lowered his head, walked mechanically to the locker room, not caring about the yells of the surrounding West Ham players and manager. He also not seeing his youth team manager, David Kerslake, shaking his head in disappointment. Even when he passed by Twain, he did not stop for a second and just walked back in with his head down.

He was closely followed by the West Ham's team doctor who hurried past Twain with his team carrying a stretcher with the West Ham number 8 lying on top, in agony. Their destination was not the visiting team's locker room, but the nearest local hospital.

Tang En looked at the back views of these people, shook his head lightly, and then turned to the home team's technical area.

It was not easy to return to normal on the field, and Kerslake also had no intention of making any adjustments anymore. In any case, when George Wood was on the field, the Forest team was equaled to having only 10 players anyways. He turned and was surprised to see Twain coming back again. But just as well, it was time to lay all the cards on the table. Twain brought him in, it should be Twain to bring him away.

So, he approached him.

When he saw Kerslake open his mouth, Tang En rushed to speak first. "This really is a mess."

Kerslake nodded in agreement.

"Our quarrel with West Ham just got bigger, didn't it?" Tang En asked.

Kerslake continued to nod in agreement. This man in front of him was still being remembered by East Londoners for his curse of their First Team's relegation, and now the youth team had crippled their main striker.

"What are you going to do?"

Kerslake said to Twain without hesitation, "Tony, I think we should give him up."

"I disagree with you, David," Twain laughed. "I finally found the most suitable position for this kid."

Kerslake was a bit taken aback. He had not expected that this foul would instead change Twain's opinion on Wood.

"Able to rival a striker's speed, have a stronger body than the center back, the stamina to run back and forth from this penalty area to that penalty area for 90 minutes, aggressive tackles... Can you guess which position this is?"

The youth team manager thought about it, and then said, "Defensive midfielder."

"The answer is correct!" Tang En happily clapped his hands. "It's the defensive midfielder! It doesn't matter if he can't shoot, many defensive midfielders will not necessarily be able to score 10 goals in their lifetimes..."

"But, Tony. Wood is already..."

"David," Tang En said firmly. "Giving him another chance also gives me a chance. I believe in my vision. You know what? Although that was a disgraceful foul, and a failed defense, from there I saw all the qualities that a great defensive midfielder should have. Letting him be the striker was our fault. This responsibility should not be his! Give him another chance!"

The two men stared at each other, after a while Kerslake relented and looked away. He then nodded and said, "All right. I'll let him practice defense the day after tomorrow and start training afresh!"

Tang En smiled, "Thank you, David. I'll handle Wood." Patting Kerslake's shoulder, Tang En turned and walked toward the home team's locker room.

Kerslake called out to stop him, "Tony, why not the center back?"

Tang En gave a wave of his hands, "This way we may give our opponents a few penalty kicks every match."

George Wood was showering alone in the locker room, with the crashing sound of water. He stood motionless under the shower nozzle, letting the water spray on him.

When he saw the opposing team's number 8 got the ball and broke through, he only had one thought at that time which was to stop him. But he did not want to commit a foul, only he did not know what best to do. So he chose the simplest way, which was also the stupidest. Now that he was sent off with a red card, it was all over. He was simply not suited to play football. He just wanted to rely on professional football to make money for his mother's treatment and to support them. It was entirely his own wishful thinking.

Forget it, better go back to being a mover...

I just thought of my mom smiling at the table and saying, "My George is also a professional footballer."

His heart ached. The biggest blow to him was disappointing his mother's trust and hope.

Turning off the tap, Wood walked out of the shower and started to get dress in front of his locker. At this time, he heard the door behind him, but he had no interest in turning around to see who came in.

"You're a miserable punk. With your hair stuck to your forehead, still dripping down with water, you look just like a dog that fell into the river and got dragged out." Tang En leaned against the door frame and said in a mocking tone.

Wood stopped moving his hands, but he still did not turn around.

"Tsk tsk. You received one red card, and it's like the end of the world. Hey, little boy, is this your first red card? Your silence means you admit it's true... Should we go out for a drink to celebrate? Oh, I think professional footballers can't drink." Tang En seemed to be performing a one-man show. He asked the questions, but wasn't waiting for Wood to reply. "Look at you now... Do you want to go home? Cry for 'mummy', asking for milk..."

"Bang!" A sharp sound interrupted Tang En's words, and he was startled. He then found the door of the locker next to Wood had been dented in. The whole locker was made of iron...

"Shut your stinking mouth!"

Tang En snorted, fully expressing his contempt for this kid's threat. "If you think you can hit me, you can go ahead and try. Don't think that everyone in the world is the same as that useless thing you knocked down with a punch. Looks like you're full of energy. I'll just ask you one question: Do you still want to continue playing?"

Wood finally turned around, and Tang En found this kid's eyes were red. He did not know whether it was due to despair or anger.

"You're a f*cking liar! You lied to me, and said I could become a football star, so I lost my job to come train with you! You want to hear my answer? My answer is—f*ck you!" Wood roared furiously.

“I lied to you? Kid, you can get struck by lightning with your groundless accusation,” cried Tang En. “Which idiot came to my door and said, ‘I think you should sign England’s best star player?’ Who was it? Isn’t it the man standing in front of me? What did I say? ‘Never underestimate professional football, or it will punish you’. I said that, didn’t I? Do you think professional football is so simple that you can be as good as a superstar player after two months of training? What kind of place do you think this is?” Tang En abruptly raised his volume, unleashed the imposing manner he used to direct matches in front of 30,000 spectators and roared, “Where do you think you are? This is the City Ground’s locker room, used by the First Team! All the players here are professional footballers, and which one of them did not have to go through more than 10 years of hard training before they had this chance? You’re just a damn rookie idiot with two months of training!”

While Tang En was admonishing him, Wood was unable to retort. In fact, he did not know what to say.

“Do you think this locker room is for people like you? If it weren’t for turf maintenance at the training ground, some of you may not even be able to step foot in this room in your lifetime! For more than 120 years, countless men, 100 times better than a clueless fool like yourself, have used this room. Some of them were the best of professional footballers, successful and famous. Some were just nobodies who have long been forgotten. Why is there such a difference? Because the latter looked down on professional football. They did not take seriously the work that brought them honor, money, beautiful women, fame, and status. So, professional football punished them, made them become worthless with all their money, beautiful women, fame, and status all gone overnight! And now it’s your turn, lad ...”

Tang En looked at the silent Wood, with an imperious expression. “You’re expelled by a red card. Your terrible performance was appalling, and there’s completely no potential at all. Anyone can pronounce your death sentence right away. You’re finished, the match is over! But, do you concede? Have you given up? Are you willing to disappoint your mother? Answer me!”

Wood bit hard on his lips, and his hands clenched into fists. He was slightly trembling everywhere in his entire body.

“This match is over, and there’s still the next match. You lost here, and you still can win it back in the next match. But if you quit here and run home crying like a baby, then I tell you, you’ll never get a chance to win back what you’ve lost! Never!” Tang En said to him angrily as he took a step forward and got in Wood’s face.

“Now, answer me: Do you still plan to play football? Do you still want to be a superstar who earns £120,000 a week?”

“Tell... tell me, how can I do it?” Wood finally spoke again, his voice trembling.

Tang En sighed with relief inside, and his tone became much softer. “Listen to me, go back. Go back to the training ground, train yourself according to the new position the coaches have arranged for you. Listen to every coach, don’t talk back, don’t lose your temper, and use 24 hours like they are 72. Then prove yourself again in the next match. Step by step! Don’t be impatient, and don’t quit halfway. You will succeed, I promise!”

Looking at Wood’s eyes, Tang En added, “My credit is guaranteed by the bank, kid.” Then he grinned.