

Champions 71

Chapter 71: The Footsteps of English Premier League Part 2

At the Sheffield United substitutes bench, Warnock walked back and said to a substitute player sitting on the bench, "Are you ready? You're going out to play."

"Yes, boss." The man stood up and took off his jacket, exposing the alternating red and white of the Sheffield United home jersey; the name on the back read Jack Lester.

He came down from the substitutes' bench, stood on the sidelines, and waited for the fourth official to bring him onto the field.

Tang En felt strange seeing a player that he had once coached standing on the sideline in his opponent's jersey, playing against him. The two men stood no more than two meters apart. He frequently glanced at Lester, who was standing on the sidelines, but Lester did not seem to see him. He just stared at the field.

Tang En looked at Lester, and then at Warnock again. What did that old man have in mind with bringing on a striker?

"Hey, Jack." Twain decided to take the initiative to talk to Lester. They had not had a chance to say hello before the game. It should be fine to have a little chat now, and try to figure out what the opposing manager was planning.

Lester looked back at Twain and smiled. "Sir, I didn't expect to meet you under these circumstances."

"Yeah, I didn't expect to either. Hey, Jack, why is Neil bringing you on? You already have two forwards, and their performances aren't bad."

"Obviously, it's so I can beat your team, sir." Lester winked, "As you said before, one has to be worthy of every penny one earns."

Tang En rubbed his head. He had not expected to be tripped up by his own words. "Yes, you're right. We are rivals now... damn opponents!" He lightly swore the last bit as he walked back to his seat.

Jack Lester was brought on to replace Peschisolido, who had scored a goal. He did well, even though he was thirty-two years old. Although he had scored a goal, Warnock clearly did not consider him enough of a threat to Dawson to stay on the field. He needed someone who knew more about the Forest team's defense system to charge and attack. And that person was Jack Lester.

For Sheffield United's substitution, Twain made no adjustments. He sat quietly and watched the game. The situation had not shown any signs of worsening, and he was not required to do anything.

But the dark clouds in his mind were gathering more and more, and pressure was building up in his chest.

"Michael Brown! 2:3! Sheffield United scored in the 68th minute!" Motson screamed. Next to him Mark Lawrenson was dancing for joy.

Motson's voice rang out again just three minutes later. "Steve Kabba! It's incredible, Sheffield United equalized the score! Nottingham Forest has suffered a heavy blow!"

Lawrenson saw that he had hope of keeping his beard, so he was in the mood to give a point-by-point commentary on the Forest team conceding.

"Scimeca's ability is limited. A defensive midfielder fundamentally cannot withstand Sheffield United's offense at all. It had looked like they were playing 5-3-2 formation after Warnock brought off Michael Tonge, but in fact, the formation was 3-5-2 during their attack. The two full backs on the wings pressed on to become midfielders. The intense pressure of five midfielders was not something that Scimeca could bear alone. Once the midfield defensive barrier was lost, Michael Dawson's defensive line was directly confronted with wave after wave of offense, and was unable to stop it. Twain ignored Michael Brown, and now he has paid the price!"

Twain looked at the Sheffield United players, cheering and celebrating the goal. He could hardly believe what he was seeing. In less than ten minutes, the situation on the field had changed so much. What was going on? He was afraid of falling into Warnock's trap, and had tried every possible means to avoid it; but in the end he was still trapped, and was sinking deeper and farther.

He glanced at Warnock and found that the other man was looking at him too. As the two men looked at each other, Warnock shrugged with a smile and turned away without another glance at him.

Tang En felt a burst of fury explode in his chest.

I was tricked! Duped by this damned old man!

Starting with the steady performance of losing two goals in the first half, the old man had been pretending all along, including a half-time handshake. It was all an act, to make him think that Warnock was plotting something and make him paranoid, and then force him to walk into another trap he had set.

He brought off Michael Tonge to trick him into replacing Bopp, thus cutting down one defensive midfielder and reducing the defensive pressure on their midfield. He knew that Twain did not attach too much importance to Michael Brown, who appeared to be a defensive midfielder, so he used him to organize offense. One of those two goals one was personally scored by Brown, and he had instigated the other one. He was the real core of Sheffield United for this match! Tonge was just a decoy!

Tang En was furious! He had always enjoyed the thrill of using manipulative tactics against his opponents, but never thought he would play into someone else's hands. As much as he loathed to do so, Tang En had to admit he was young and inexperienced compared to the 54-year-old Neil Warnock. The difference between the two of them was twenty years of experience.

Twain's bad luck did not seem to be over, and he was doomed to exhaust all the luck from his previous winning streak in this crucial game. The Forest team fell into a panic after Sheffield United equalized the score. Their main right back, John Thompson, twisted his ankle during a desperate fight with Steve Kabba, and was unable to continue in the game.

"Son of a b**ch!" When he saw the team doctor, Fleming, shake his head towards him, Twain swore in frustration. He turned to look at the bench; one of the five substitutes had been used, with four left.

Eventually, Twain's gaze rested on a young-looking kid.

"James, go warm- damn it, there's no time for you to warm up. You have to go play for me now!" He grabbed the kid from the bench and pushed him to the sidelines. "Just do what you did during training!"

Apart from that, he really did not know how to brief the 17-year-old on what he should pay attention to for his debut on the field. James Biggins was a right back, who was only arranged by Twain to make up the numbers in the substitutes' bench for the game. He had not anticipated that he would receive his first chance to represent the First Team.

Seeing the kid trembling as he ran onto the field, Tang En did not have very high expectations of him; he was helpless too.

One had to wonder if young James Biggins ever had a dream like this:

When the team was in danger, as an unknown player sitting on the substitutes' bench watching the game, he was suddenly called up by the manager, who patted him on the shoulder and said to him, "James, our team is depending on you! Go out there and wipe out those bastards! Win this game!"

The assistant manager and other teammates also nodded and echoed, "Yes, yes! You're the only person who can fix this for us, James! You're a genius, you can do it!"

Then, with his head held high and chest puffed out, he set foot on the field and led the team in a comeback to victory under the opponents' disdainful gaze, and finally made all the opponents kneel in front of him, begging for mercy, and surrender...

But the truth was, this type of situation could turn a talented hero famous in one match, but it could also be a blow to a young man who was still full of hope for the future. This kind of pressure was not something that ordinary people could withstand.

James Biggins was well aware of the current situation. The team had gone from leading with a huge advantage, to their opponents catching up. The morale of the team was badly hit when the main player was injured and forced out of the game. But he did not know what he was going to do. What was he supposed to do?

Twain had not told him, and his mind could not think of what he should do.

He was at a loss, and just stood at the right back position, looking at the ruthless Sheffield United players rushing towards him.

Great cheers and applause broke out again in the Bramall Lane Stadium. The Forest fans were collectively silent instead, and not just in the stands. It was a sea of silence, even in the bars of Nottingham.

"Oh my god! What's going on in these twenty-eight minutes?" Motson groaned. "In the first half, Sheffield United did not even score a goal. But in the second half, starting from the 51st minute, they scored four goals! 4:3! Now the home team is leading! Nottingham Forest suddenly went from being in the lead to playing catch up. Poor James Biggins, this is the first time the 17-year-old is representing the First Team on behalf of Nottingham Forest, but he scored a goal against his own team!"

Biggins knelt in front of the goal. The ecstatic Sheffield United players ran past him. The football was lying quietly in the goal. Biggins' head was down, and could not see the other players' expressions. He felt like dying, like he had become a sinner on the team.

Sitting in the technical area, both Des Walker and Ian Bowyer held their heads in their hands. None of them had imagined that this could happen. Their situation was so unbelievably good by the halftime interval, but now it was incredibly bad.

From 2:0, the score had become 3:4. The way this game had been played was truly upsetting.

Standing on the sidelines, Tang En was watching the game numbly. He did not have the energy to care about how excitedly Warnock was celebrating the goal.

It was almost as if he could hear the sound of the footsteps of the Premier League passing him by him, and then the sound gradually drifting away.

What was the meaning of this score? Nottingham Forest had lost to Sheffield United in their home game with a score of 1:2, and now they were behind in this away game at 3:4; the total score was 4:6. This meant that, to enter the finals of the playoffs, they would need to score at least two goals in the remaining eleven minutes to even have hope of being qualified.

This was a very harsh requirement for the Forest team at this juncture.

Due to the presence of Biggins, the Forest team's defense was disorganized, and the morale of their opponents was soaring. For the remaining time, it would be considered good just to not concede any more goals.

Michael Dawson lowered his head to comfort Biggins, who had scored the goal. He had done everything that a team captain could do, but could not bring victory to the team. Perhaps his heart was in more agony than that of Biggins.

Looking at the stupefied players on the field, Tang En asked himself, "Is this the end?"

"Tony! If you can't lead the team to the Premier League next season, I'll make you pay!" Michael's roar came from afar, and Tang En looked back at the stands behind the technical area.

It was a sea of jubilant red-and-white Sheffield United fans. Where was Michael?

Another voice came from his side. "Manager Tony Twain, have you ever thought about what will happen in the end if we can't get promoted to the Premier League this season?"

Can't get promoted, can't get promoted, can't get promoted...

Michael, Little Gavin... No! I can't let this happen. I must not let this happen!

Twain marched back and said to a grave-looking Walker, "Where's Westcarr? Let him play!"

"Twain has brought off his only defensive midfielder, Scimeca, and brought on the 17-year-old striker Craig Westcarr. Can Nottingham Forest team score two goals in the remaining ten minutes by switching to playing 4-3-3? Honestly, I don't have too much confidence... Before this, Westcarr had three experiences of being brought on as a substitute to play and not scoring. His ability is not good enough to

be given this important task. I don't understand why Twain made this adjustment. It's useless!" Motson mercilessly criticized Twain's on-the-spot command. Next to him, Lawrenson was snickering. It looked like his beard was saved. And that was what was upsetting Motson.

Evan Doughty turned his head to look at the television at the corner of the luxury box. Watching the game on the television was clearer than watching the field. Upon hearing what the commentator said, he smiled and said to his father, Nigel Doughty, next to him, "You see, I told you. He can't be depended on."

It was as if Nigel had not heard his son; he was focused on the game. Just when Evan thought he was being ignored again, the old man said in a low, slow voice, "You can say whatever you want, either way you'll be in charge soon. You can do whatever you want..."

As it turned out, the best description of Twain's substitution was "foolhardy." By removing their only defensive midfielder and switching to play a completely unfamiliar 4-3-3 formation, the Forest team became increasingly overwhelmed. They did not know what the manager wanted to do, and they did not know what they were supposed to do. Some players wanted to break through and score goals as soon as possible, while the others wanted to make certain that the defensive line would no longer concede. The team fell apart at the last minute, and was split into two sections. One section was in the front and the other section was in the rear.

Tang En had lost control of the team. He stood on the sidelines and was unable to issue any useful instructions. He could only watch and wait... wait for a miracle.

The cheering in the stands at Bramall Lane Stadium was getting louder, and Sheffield United's manager, Warnock, was already eager to high-five the people around him in celebration. These were his true colors.

At the 91st minute of the game, James Biggins scored a goal with a header from a corner ball, redeeming the goal that he had shot. But this goal did not help the team, because it came too late.

A minute later, the referee blew the whistle at the end of the game and thunderous cheers erupted at Bramall Lane Stadium; the home fans wildly celebrated their team reaching the playoffs, and Tony Twain became the loser again.

The dream that he had striven towards for half a season was shattered. In a flash, his mind went blank and he stood on the sidelines, staring vacantly. He did not even see Warnock walking towards him with his hand outstretched.

The noisy stands faded away, the green stadium disappeared, and his surroundings went dark. The ecstatic Sheffield United players, the dejected Nottingham Forest players, Neil Warnock who had shrugged his shoulders with a smirk, Ian Bowyer who closed his eyes in agony, Des Walker who was trying his best to comfort the players, Michael Bernard wherever he was, and Gavin Bernard who was lying quietly in the ground; these people tightly surrounded Tang En, making his chest tight and short of breath.

He felt a tightening of his heart.

The season was over.

Ten days later, at Bradford City's Valley Parade Stadium... the stadium had a nice name, but did not give Warnock the glory he had dreamed of. His team would concede three goals to Wolverhampton Wanderers, and lose the qualification to advance to the Premier League. Warnock had used all of his energy to deal with the tough Tony Twain and won, but he had exhausted his last ounce of strength while doing so.

Three days after that semi-final game, on May 19, on the southern coast of Iberian Peninsula, at the Estadio Olímpico de Sevilla in Seville, a Portuguese man named José Mourinho would defeat Brian Clough's pupil, Martin O'Neill, by 3:2 in overtime. Portugal's FC Porto would beat Scotland's Celtic F.C. and win the 02-03 season UEFA Europa League.

This victory had made the whole of Europe aware of the young Portuguese coach, who was not used to smiling or saying much, and his group of outstanding players.

But none of this had anything to do with Twain. His season ended on May 16. This was his first season as a professional manager leading a professional team. Although it was incomplete and imperfect, it had profoundly impacted Twain's future.

He would forever remember these two games that he lost to West Ham United and Sheffield United. A voice would always reverberate in his heart to remind him:

How painful it is to fail.

Chapter 72: Picking Up Trouble Part 1

It was almost one month since that soul-crushing semifinals playoff match. Although Tang En had long recovered from the defeat, he still dreamed about being disqualified, and this time he suffered an even more miserable loss—0:4, his team completely unable to retaliate.

The team had already ended all of its matches for this season, and a team like Nottingham Forest, which struggled in the second level of the English Football League, did not have any commercial matches to play. The team had been disbanded on the day after the match, giving the players and managers a long holiday to enjoy themselves.

The 02-03 English Premier League season had long ended its last round of matches on May 11th. The end result was just as Tang En had said. Manchester United, which was trailing behind Arsenal by five points, began to mount a comeback after Christmas. In the end, they even managed to lead Arsenal by five points to become the champions. Tang En won the bet between Burns and him, but he was not in the mood to make Burns pay up, because Gavin had just passed away. The bet that had been made in the bar was disregarded, but Burns fulfilled another promise. From that day forward, all of Tang En's drinks in Forest Bar would be free of charge. After that incident, Burns looked at Tang En as if he were a gypsy fortune teller.

In between, there were many other things that happened. Ferguson kicking a boot at David Beckham took place on schedule, garnering worldwide attention for a brief period of time. Everyone thought that Beckham and Ferguson's 11 years of mentor-mentee relationship had finally come to an end, as well as his fate with Manchester United. However, there was much speculation regarding his next stop, with

most people leaning more toward the idea of him going to Real Madrid. This was because in the previous Championship match, Beckham had been exchanging glances with Real Madrid. However, Real Madrid's president, Florentino, firmly denied that Real Madrid would buy Beckham.

There's no Story Between Real Madrid and David Beckham

Tang En bought The Times from the newspaper stand on the street. He skipped past all the political and economic news and flipped directly to the ninth section, the sports segment. The first thing that greeted his eyes was the large title. The season had just ended, and the media had already started to speculate excitedly about the transfer of some players. The transfer market was like that every year, but that year was particularly crazy and bustling due to the addition of a superstar.

He looked at this piece of news which was reported with a definitive tone and felt extremely disgusted. Looking at the hottest topic of discussion in that year's transfer market from the perspective of someone who had been through it, it could only be described as a farce.

Real Madrid kept clarifying: We won't buy Beckham. How is it possible for us to buy Beckham? There's no way we can buy Beckham! We have a good relationship with Manchester United, and we are all part of the G14. How could we do something like poaching him?!

And everyone else believed them. But in the end, look what happened.

When Beckham, who once wore the Red Devils' captainship armband and fought for Manchester United, held the white-colored Real Madrid Jersey and took a picture with Florentino, as well as Honorary President of Real Madrid, Di Stefano, the Manchester United fans around the world felt that they had been deceived. Yes, they had ample reasons to bear grudges against it. However, if they had been smarter, they would have realized long ago—Real Madrid's promise of "We will definitely not buy someone" should not have been taken at face value. Think about how Ronaldo came over. Beckham going over to Real Madrid was only a matter of course.

Tang En browsed through the newspaper for that day and found out that most of the news was related to Beckham transferring clubs. If his team had successfully been promoted, he would have been really fond of reading those kind of tabloids. However, the matter of fact was that, currently, he was not in the mood to care about the fate of others.

Rolling up the newly bought newspaper, Tang En threw it into the trash and decided to wander around as a form of relaxation.

Tang En had originally wanted to go to China with Yang Yan. After much interaction with Yang Yan, he then realized that Yang Yan had not emigrated, but only came to Nottingham to study. After she graduated, she would return to China. Her family members were all currently situated in Sichuan Province, but a sudden epidemic outbreak completely foiled Tang En's plans.

Over the span of a few short months, SARS had plagued all of China, and there was virtually no place that was lucky enough to be free from it. May was the peak of the epidemic, and even in June, Beijing remained a travel-restricted area. Even if Tang En did not fear death, he had no means of travelling to China. Right after Tang En finished his matches in May, the period when the epidemic was the most serious, he had once pretended to phone the wrong number and called home to check on their situation. Everything was fine, which made him slightly relieved. In any case, Tang En still wished that he

could see his parents with his own eyes and see that they were still alive and healthy. During the one-month holiday, he was mainly busy with trying to get to China, but there was nothing he could do to obtain a visa to travel to there.

As for the other Tang En... He remembered that he was extremely unlucky in the year 2003 and had lost two phones over the span of the first half of the year. He had changed his cell phone number countless times. As such, he could no longer remember the phone number which he had used then. He had no means of contacting himself even though he wanted to, and he could only pray that the other him was just like he was in 2003, safe and sound. As for the two phones which he had lost, he considered them a kind of payment for staving off disaster.

Actually, besides returning to China to visit his parents, he had had another very important goal—to spend time alone with Yang Yan. He had not expected his plans to go down the drain. After muttering “it’s not meant to be”, Tang En whipped out his phone to call Landy to drive him downtown.

It was at that moment, he suddenly realized that there was a girl standing beside him. He was uncertain of how long she had been standing there. From the looks of it, she appeared to be around 16 years old and wore a pleated, red, short skirt, revealing two long, slim, tender legs. The light grey t-shirt had a picture of a cute teddy bear printed on it, which was looking at Tang En.

The girl had dark-brown, shoulder-length hair, with neat bangs on her forehead. Beneath her finely curved eyebrows were a pair of extremely big eyes, and they were so clear and bright that they resembled a clear spring. In addition, Tang En noticed that the girl’s eyes were not commonly seen among westerners. They were not a blue, green, or hazel color, but instead they were the same color as her hair, dark brown.

The girl raised her head and looked at him, while Tang En lowered his head and looked at the girl. In that way, the two of them stared at each other by the street.

Tang En did not know why the girl was staring at him, and he was sure that his face did not have any bread crumbs, butter, or grains of any sort on it. Tang En was also very sure that he had zipped his pants properly before he left the house.

Tang En treated it as a contest of patience, and the winner would be the one that could outlast the other in terms of keeping quiet, forcing that other one to admit defeat.

“Sorry for disturbing. Sir, may I ask if you know the way to 13 Bradford Garden Street?” the girl surrendered first and asked. Her crisp voice contained a sliver of shyness, and she spoke extremely fluent English with a London accent. The words which were spoken from the pink, tender lips were simply a form of enjoyment to the ears.

However, Tang En shook his head and muttered softly to himself, “Too bad it’s a washboard...”

Upon hearing Tang En, the young girl was startled and frantically raised her hands and blocked her chest.

“Mister!” The girl pouted and stared at Tang En as she scolded, “I’m going to call the police!”

“Ah? Police...” Tang En turned his head around and saw a patrolling yellow-vested policeman walking toward him. I can’t be that unlucky, can I? If he got arrested for sexually harassing a young girl, then he could forget about getting through the summer in peace.

Tang En very much wanted to hide, but the policeman seemed to have already seen them and was making his way straight for them.

The girl was extremely happy that the policeman had noticed what was happening, and she walked up to him with the intention of lodging a complaint. “Mr. Policeman, this guy...” She pointed toward Tang En, but realized that the policeman appeared to have not seen her and walked directly past her. After that, he opened up his arms and walked toward the man she was pointing at.

“Ah ha! I really didn’t expect to see you here, Mr. Twain!” the policeman elatedly greeted Tang En. However, both the girl and Tang En were momentarily dumbfounded.

“I saw the last match. Truth to be told, we were extremely unlucky!” As his back was to her, the young girl did not know what kind of expression the policeman had. However, from his voice, it was very easy to tell the mood of the patrolling policeman. “As for that child’s death, I am also terribly sorry... I wasn’t on duty at that time.”

Tang En finally understood—the policeman he met was a Forest fan! He immediately retracted his shocked expression. “I’m terribly sorry, for not being able to let the team successfully promote...”

“No, no, that’s a small matter, Sir. I believe that as long as the club gives you one more year, you can definitely do it. I really like to watch you direct the Nottingham Forest matches, you know why? Because we will always be able to win, haha! Don’t be disheartened! The next season, we’ll definitely do it the next season! Forest! Forest!” The amusing policeman shouted the fan slogan twice before patting Tang En’s shoulder and leaving. He completely did not see that there was still a pitiful girl who was waiting for him to save her.

Upon seeing that the policeman was quite some distance away, Tang En lowered his head and looked at the shocked girl with a triumphant look. Then, he gave her a smile that he thought was most charming and said, “Young lady, what were you going to ask me?”

The girl did not reply to Tang En, but instead softly cursed, “Darn it!”

“It’s not good for girls to utter vulgarities.”

“It’s none of your business!” The girl shot an angry stare at Tang En.

Tang En sized up the girl from head to toe. She was wearing a pair of comfortable white sneakers and a short dress. She had a black and white Adidas sports bag slung across her back. In addition, she spoke fluent English without any Nottingham accent and appeared completely different from the usual English girls. From that information, Tang En knew that the girl was a tourist. He shrugged his shoulders. “I’m only trying to help a foreigner like you out of goodwill... Very well, since it’s none of my business, I’ll leave. Goodbye, little girl.”

He waved his hand and was about to walk away.

This time, it was the girl's turn to admit defeat. She shouted, "Do you know how to get to 13 Bradford Garden Street?"

Tang En, who had his back to the girl, got a triumphant smile on his face that only victors wear. After that, he smiled kindly and turned around. "You're really lucky, I happen to live on Bradford Garden Street." The place where they stood was less than 50 meters away from the newspaper stand where Tang En had bought his newspaper, and the newspaper stand was only 500 meters away from Tang En's house.

The girl looked at Tang En with suspicion. Perhaps she felt that this perverted weird man, who stared at her chest not long after they met, did not seem like a good person.

"What? You don't believe me? You think that I'm lying to you?" Tang En opened his hands and shrugged his shoulders innocently. "I happen to stay at 13 Bradford Garden Str..." Upon saying this, Tang En suddenly stopped and looked in shock at the girl opposite him.

".... Street..."

Both of them were momentarily stunned.

Chapter 73: Picking Up Trouble Part 2

After 10 minutes, the two of them were standing outside of Tang En's house. Tang En pointed to his house number and asked the girl, "Did I lie to you? Number 13 of Branford Gardens, the place where I live."

The girl nodded and walked straight to the door, trying to open it as if it was her house.

"Hey! What are you doing?" Tang En was shocked.

"Going inside to rest," the girl turned to him and said.

"But this is my house. I have been here for... for seven years, just me alone and do not have any Auntie Ryan that you claim lives here."

"Liar!" The girl was holding the door handle stubbornly.

Tang En looked at the girl's face, and he suddenly felt there was something similar between his and this girl's personalities. As a result, he took out the key, went to open the door, and said, "Fine, you can come inside and look. You are not going to find your Auntie Ryan."

The girl did not expect Tang En to allow her to go in so quickly, and she stood still and hesitated.

"What? Having doubts?" Tang En laughed.

The laughter triggered the girl's curiosity, and she walked in with her head high. "I am going inside to take a look. You think I do not know that you live downstairs, while my auntie stays upstairs?!"

She walked to the staircase while she said this, and Tang En followed her with his head firmly nodding. "Yes, yes! How nice if there was a beautiful auntie living with me. She would help me cook, and I would wash dishes, and then we would watch TV together..."

The girl stopped walking and glared at Tang En, "Auntie Ryan is 53 years old."

"Huh." Tang En scratched his head. "Well never mind then."

They walked up to the second floor. The girl saw an open door. She did not pay attention to what was inside the room, only the big photo that hung on the wall that faced her. Under a great red background, there was one person standing with his arms shot straight into the air.

The picture caught her full attention, and she approached it directly.

"Hey, this is my bedroom." It was too late for Tang En to stop her.

The girl stood beside the photo and said, "You are really a football manager."

"Well I'm not paid to lie to you." Tang En rolled his eyes. How should I make myself look more like a football manager? Wear sports tees, white sports shoes, and walk around with a whistle hanging from my neck all day? That look is stupid.

"So cool," the girl said and then looked around the whole room. "So this is your room?"

Tang En realized that his room was quite messy at the moment. He had not done his laundry or made his bed. There were clothes thrown on the floor, and the book he had been reading the night before was laying open on his pillow.

The girl's expression showed some disgust for the horrible state of the room, but Tang En, scratching his head, could think of nothing to say except, "All single men are like this. That's enough. Let's go. This is my room, and I did not invite you in here!" He suddenly felt strange about how he behaved. Why was he being so pathetic in front of this "guest"?

The girl hurried out of the room, and Tang En said, "See? No Auntie Ryan."

The girl then pointed to the other three rooms with their doors closed.

"Two of them are guest rooms with no one staying in them, and the other one is the bathroom." Tang En opened the doors one by one to show her.

The girl fell into silence after she saw all the empty rooms with only beds in them. Tang En had no idea what she was thinking, but he had to ask her to leave.

"You have seen it with your own eyes. There is only me living at 13 Branford Gardens Street. I have no idea where your auntie is. Now please leave," Tang En said standing by the staircase.

The girl was in a daze while looking at the rooms, and then she said, "I can pay you. Would you let me to stay here for one night?"

This suggestion was unexpected, and Tang En was taken aback. He realized that the girl was thinking of his house like a hotel.

While the girl was taking out some coins and notes, Tang En frowned.

“Not enough?” the girl asked softly. “But this is all I have...”

“Where are your parents? I think I better give them a call, tell you—” Tang En’s words were cut off by the girl’s screaming.

“Please, no!” She gripped her hands. “If you do not want me to stay here, I can leave now!”

At her reaction, Tang En was even more shocked. He decided to find out more. “I can let you to stay here and will not take your money, but you have to tell me about your parents.”

The room fell silent again after he finished his words. The girl seemed like she was considering or hesitating, and Tang En did not push her to respond faster. For him, it would not be a problem if he allowed this child to stay here one night. He was just quite curious as to why the girl had behaved so strangely this whole time.

After a while, the girl finally spoke. “I actually escaped from my house. There is no Auntie Ryan. I was adopted when I was young, but they treat me badly, and I hate them!” She lowered her head and stood in front of Tang En. Her long hair covered her face. Tang En could not see her, but the girl’s voice was very low. The hatred she spoke of was real.

Now the problem was more complicated and hard to decide about. Would she be any trouble?

The girl did not hear anything from Tang En, and she raised her head and looked at him with a scared look. She saw that Tang En frowned even more.

“All right, Sir. I know my request is unreasonable.” The girl lowered her head again, as her hope was broken, and she picked up her bag to go.

Tang En stopped her using his hand. “I’ll agree to let you stay here, but we have to sign or make some agreements. Something like a rental agreement will do. I do not want to have any problems or arguments with you in the future. This is beneficial for both of us. Do you understand what I mean?”

She nodded vigorously. “I understand fully! Uncle you are such a nice soul!”

Upon hearing the girl’s last sentence, Tang En’s mouth twisted up and then he pointed a finger at her. “I have one more condition. Do not call me uncle. I am not that old yet! This kid... what is your name?”

“Jude, Jude Shania Jordana. You can call me Jude, Sha, or Jor,” the girl answered him, smiling. The afternoon sun that reflected from the windows of the rooms shone on her face. Looking at her happy face, Tang En wondered if the pitiful expression she had been wearing a moment before was just an act.

Tang En continued to ask questions. He at least needed to know the basic information of his temporary tenant.

“Okay, Jude. How old are you?”

“13!” Jude answered clearly, and her answer shocked Tang En.

He tilted his head and examined her from head to toe carefully.

Tang En's height was 186 centimeters, and the little girl in front of him almost reached his throat. At that height, who would believe that she was just 13? Especially with those long legs. Her face, however, was youthful, which matched her age.

"How tall are you?"

Jude thought for a while and then answered Tang En, "Maybe I am 5'3" or 5'4". I'm not exactly sure."

Five-feet-three inches was equivalent to 160 centimeters, while 5'4" was approximately 163 centimeters.

These numbers shocked Tang En again. He really wanted to ask Jude what she ate, and in what way her adoptive parents abused her to make her reach a height that some women might not even reach.

Just casually standing there, her posture was naturally straight, and Tang En thought, She is model material.

The rest was easy to handle. Tang En asked more about her basic information and drafted a simple agreement, which both of them signed. Jude was a Brazilian girl who came across the Atlantic to escape her foster parents who had always mistreated her. Tang En was amazed at her precocious mind.

That night, Tang En brought Jude to the Forest Bar for dinner, and their arrival caused a small stir.

Quite a few people came over to greet Jude with their beer glasses, but immediately noticed Tang En's unfriendly eyes. Jude smiled sweetly and said hello back to the English men, just like how she had greeted Tang En on the street. But Tang En knew how the men would behave once they were drunk.

Several people around Tang En started to tease and make fun of him, even Burns.

"Hey, Tony. Since when did you have a daughter?"

"Haha!" the people around them laughed.

Tang En defended himself, "Oh, Dear Kenny. You know that no one can ever replace you."

Everyone laughed even more, including Burns.

Jude curiously watched the two of them arguing. Everything there was foreign yet interesting to her. She was not afraid of these men with their red faces and their energy. She felt safe instead, although she did not know why.

After they had finished dinner, Tang En did not stay at the bar to continue chatting and drinking with everyone like normal. He had Jude to take care of.

"Bye, guys. I have to go home now." Tang En held Jude's hand and tried to say goodbye at the door.

There was a loud sigh from the bar.

"Tony! Just go home. No one would ask you to stay longer, but Jude can stay!" Burns winked at Tang En.

His words received everyone's support with their laughter. "Kenny's got a good suggestion, Tony!"

"No way!" Tang En showed his fist. "Go home and spend quality time with your wives!"

Tang En and Jude left the Forest Bar filled with laughter.

On the way home, Jude was quite interested in Tang En's relationship with the people in the bar.

"Are you close to them?"

It was just a casual question asked by a curious girl, but suddenly Tang En's heart was touched. He thought about all the people that he had met and the things that he had encountered in the past five months. The first time he met Michael; the exciting halftime and the second half of the match with West Ham United; George Wood who loved his mother and his mother who loved him as well; the happiness of seeing Yang Yan again; the "humble" lesson Mr. Clough taught him; Mark Hodge, who only had honor on his mind; the innocent little Gavin; and the playoffs that were on the verge of success... It was such an unbelievable half year in his life.

"Do you want to hear a story, Jude?"

Jude nodded happily.

"The story is very long, and the ending may not be satisfying. Do you still want to hear it?"

"Yes, yes please!"

"It's from a long time ago...eh, well, it was actually just five months ago..."

As Tang En was telling his story in his deep voice, the two of them walked slowly under the sunset with their shadows trailing behind.

Now that Tang En was no longer living alone, and there was a temporary tenant, he woke up early the next day to prepare breakfast for Jude. When Tang En was alone, his breakfast was always simple with just one bottle of milk and one slice of bread. Now that the girl was there, Tang En had to try to make something better, something more nutritious.

Luckily, there was still some food in the fridge.

One cup of hot milk, an egg, one slice of bread, cheese, and smoked ham. Looking at all the food on the table, Tang En thought a while and then went and got an apple from the fridge, washed it, and put it beside the plate. Since he had transmigrated there half a year ago, he had not once prepared such a delicious breakfast. Even before then, he did not know how many years it had been since he had made a real breakfast. He was definitely out practice, because he had gotten shell in the egg.

After he clumsily finished making breakfast, Tang En noticed that Jude had not yet come down. He thought that she must be tired from all her travelling and wanted to let her rest more. So, Tang En started to read the newspaper at the dining room table.

The name that appeared the most was David Beckham, followed by Chelsea and Bates. The old man had finally given up on fighting off the more than £90,000,000 debt of Chelsea and planned to sell off his club. After months of speculation, lies, and claims, the most likely buyer had finally surfaced, which was the ultra-wealthy Russian Roman Abramovich.

Now the media was buzzing about this person and his mysterious property, and some viewed him as some kind of savior of the Premier League.

What pleased Tang En was the fact that there was not much difference between what was happening now and his memory of it from his other life. He had already planned to benefit from the ripple effect all this transfer of clubs would cause once the Russian took over Chelsea.

After thinking about it for a while, Tang En became frustrated. His team did not have any outstanding players to interest the Russian and swindle him with. Michael Dawson was not mature enough, and even if the Russian wanted him, he would not sell him. For those he would like to sell off, there was no reason to think the Russian wanted them in the first place. Furthermore, due to the interference from the Russian, all the clubs would double the price of their players in the near future. As Forest was in such a bad financial situation, it would be almost impossible for them to get any player at a cheap rate.

On second thought, the entering of the Russian was way more harmful than beneficial to Tang En. He cursed out loud and put his newspaper to the side.

He realized that Jude was still not up. The food would be no good cold. So he decided to go up and wake the kid up.

Tang En knocked on the door softly at first, but there was no answer after a few knocks. After that, he shouted, and there was still no reply. Worried, even though there was a girl inside, he took out his key to open the door.

The black and white bag was half open on the floor. Her clothes and belongings had been scattered on the floor. On the bed, the blanket was messy and hanging half off the bed. Under the blanket, there was a small body that was shaking like a poor, frightened cat.

Tang En rushed to the bed.

Jude seemed to be having a seizure. Her face was frowning, her teeth were gnashing, and she was saying something that Tang En could not understand. She obviously had a fever.

Tang En took out his phone, called Landy, and put the phone between his ear and shoulder. While waiting for Landy to answer, he removed the blanket and picked up Jude in just her pajamas and rushed downstairs.

"Landy, where are you? I have an emergency, and I need a car immediately! Please come quickly. It's life or death!"

Landy glanced at his GPS and said, "Three minutes, three minutes at the most."

Then he told the passenger behind him, "I'm so sorry, Sir. Please fasten your seatbelt, because I have to rush over to get someone else." Following these words, there was a loud roar from the motor, and the little taxi suddenly turned to a race car. It drifted into a turn, adjusted back, and immediately rushed in the direction of Branford Gardens Street.

Tang En stood at the side of the road waiting anxiously for Landy's cab. From time to time he looked down at the curled up Jude. Though she was not short, she was still light to carry, and Tang En attributed that to her cruel parents. There was sweat on her forehead, and her hair was wet and stuck to her face as if she had just come up from under the water. Tang En's clothes were also wet from Jude's sweat. The girl's body was sticking to his, which was slimy and uncomfortable.

He looked at the girl whose life was in danger and sighed to himself, I really picked up big trouble this time!

Chapter 74: Tang En's Holiday Part 1

The sharp, penetrating sound of rubber tires skidding to a halt on asphalt outside the the Royal Hospital of Nottingham University, caught the attention of many. The rear door of the black cab flew open before it came to a full stop at the curb. Tang En jumped out of the car with Jude in his arms and did not forget to turn back and thank Landy as well as the kind, middle-aged man whose cab ride had been hijacked by Tang En.

"Thanks, Landy. I will pay you later! And for Mr. Finnan's fare, too!"

He was running the whole time, shouting back at the cab.

That passenger, Mr. Finnan, who was sitting up front with Landy, looked at Tang En, and shook his head. "It is hard to imagine, a professional football manager..."

Landy laughed and started the car again. "Sir, that was the much-loved manager, Mr. Tony Twain. Also, I have to specially thank you for your time, I am so sorry..."

Finnan waved his hand. "That is what a gentleman is supposed to do."

He thought of the scene when he saw Tang En at Branford Gardens Street 15 minutes before and was smiling again. As a gentleman, he had never used vulgar language and felt displeased whenever he heard it. However, he had not taken offense at all when Tang En had thrown around a very liberal amount of curse words in the cab. He could tell it was because the man really cared about the girl. The girl who, even while struggling with fever, still looked pretty.

To cause such concern, the girl must be Tang En's daughter. Finnan looked in the direction of the hospital entrance and prayed in his heart for the father and daughter.

Tang En rushed into the hospital, looked around, and felt that he had lost his sense of direction. Finally, he found the elevator and ran over to it quickly.

At this moment, Ms. Lilith at the registration desk stood up and shouted at Tang En, "Sir, you have to..."

"F*ck the registration!" Tang En replied angrily before she could finish what she was saying.

"I am just... I just wanted to ask you about the patient's condition," She muttered after the fierce man's back, not recognizing Tony Twain.

Tang En saw the elevator was full of people and decided to take the stairs to level four.

The girl's temperature was extremely high, and her pajamas were entirely soaked through with sweat. She seemed to be having a nightmare. More and more she spoke in a language that Tang En could not understand. Her hands and legs were shaking, as evidenced by scratch marks on Tang En's neck. She was obviously in great pain.

Tang En knew nothing about medicine, but he knew that even if a small cough was not treated, serious consequences could follow. Jude's high fever was no small cough.

In late spring 2003, there had been a SARS epidemic in China. Tang En remembered clearly the harm the disease had caused. During that time, even someone with a small cough was treated as a potential SARS patient and was segregated. A high fever was much more serious, of course.

He did not know if there were reports of SARS in England. All of his attention had been on China back then. He had to be cautious. What if this girl had gotten SARS? She spoke fluent classroom English and had an Asian face... What if she came from China? Tang En had no way of knowing, so he did not dare jump to any such conclusion.

After carrying Jude to the fourth floor, Tang En was exhausted. He found room 415. Looking at the closed door, he gave up on the idea of knocking, since both of his hands were holding Jude. Using his leg, he kicked the door.

Professor Constantine was chatting happily with his pretty nurse who he was about to ask out to dinner for that weekend. But before he could, there was a loud bang on the door. Annoyed by the interruption, the professor went over and yanked the door open. Whoever it was better have a good reason for such a rude disruption.

"Professor! Patient!"

"Tony?!" Constantine was shocked to see Twain standing there with a young girl in his arms.

The nurse examined the girl in Tang En's arms and said she appeared to have a serious fever.

"Fever, but Tony, this is my office. I don't treat—"

"Hell!" Tang En cut off the professor, "I didn't know where else to go!"

Constantine nodded, unfazed by Tang En's rudeness. He then turned and asked the nurse to go find some assistance.

The nurse nodded and hurried out. Then Constantine looked at the exhausted Tony Twain and the girl in his arms and asked, "Tony, who is she?"

Tang En gasped heavily. "I just picked her up somewhere..." He did not have the energy to explain anything at that moment.

Seeing this, Constantine tried to comfort him instead. "Don't worry, we'll arrange for a full examination and get her the best treatment. She'll be in good hands here."

While the professor was assuring him, the nurse returned with hospital staff and a gurney. They quickly put Jude on the gurney and rolled her away.

Tang En felt relieved to have the weight taken from his arms, but realized that they were so far past the aching stage that he could not feel anything. Although the girl was not heavy, carrying someone for so long was strenuous work.

Constantine did not go with the hospital staff, as they were not under his charge. He patted Tang En's shoulder. "Come in, I will make coffee for you. Take it easy. She will be fine. So, did you really just 'pick her up' outside?"

The sound of footsteps had finally disappeared at the end of the corridor. Tang En turned back and nodded to Constantine. "I picked her up on the street... big trouble indeed."

Waking from her terrifying nightmare, Jude realized she was not in Tang En's house, but at the hospital instead. She tried to move her neck but her head ached terribly. So she gave up moving and just rotated her eyes around the room. She saw the machines and infusion bag beside the bed, and she saw Tony Twain standing on the other side. His back was to her, and he was mixing something.

She opened her mouth, wanting to call his name. But her lips were extremely dry, and her throat was so sore she dared not make a sound. As a result, she could only turn her head a bit, to look at Tony, who was busy making something for her.

They had only known each other for less than a day.

When she saw Tang En almost throw the spoon away, but then test it in his mouth to see if it was too hot, she could not help but smile.

Chapter 75: Tang En's Holiday Part 2

The soft laughter interrupted Tang En, and he looked back to see Jude staring at him with bright eyes. Suddenly he felt a bit shy. "Eh, it is still hot... You're awake?"

It was an obvious question.

Jude wanted to nod her head, but she didn't have the energy, so she just smiled softly.

"Here, finish this." Tang En gave the cup and spoon to Jude, and she looked at the black pasty substance and frowned.

"What... is this?" the girl asked.

"Sesame paste." In order to get it, Tang En had spent a long time looking for it, and had to go some distance to a larger Chinese supermarket. He did all this while Jude was still unconscious. The "black sesame paste" was a common remedy in China.

A strong fragrance came from the cup and went up Jude's nose. She took a deep breath and tried to take in the smell. It was definitely the smell of sesame.

She really wanted to try the sesame paste, but her hands had no strength to hold the cup and carry the spoon to her mouth.

Seeing that Jude hesitated, Tang En then realized the reason. Patients often need someone to feed them when they're sick. How could he forget that? So, he took the spoon from Jude's hand and held it in front of his own mouth.

Jude stared at him and realized that Tang En was actually blowing on it because he did not want the paste to burn her.

She lowered her head and softly said, "Thank you."

"Thanks for what?" Tang En put the spoon in front of her face.

"We've only known each other..." Tang En gently pushed the spoon into her mouth to stop her from speaking.

Hearing Jude talk like this, Tang En shrugged his shoulders and said, "I just didn't need the hassle of the police asking me why a pretty girl died in my house?"

Jude had not expected his teasing reply. He had a way with talking to girls. In response, she pretended to pout angrily and bit the spoon hard inside of her mouth. Tang En was surprised at the girl's reaction. He tried to take the spoon out of her mouth and failed. He stared at her.

Jude, who was still biting the spoon, gave him a triumphant look.

Tang En laughed, took out his phone, opened the camera function, and pointed it at Jude.

"What are you... ah?!" Jude, alarmed, forgot the spoon, opened her mouth to protest, and the spoon dropped onto the bed.

At that exact moment, Kacha! Tang En pressed the camera button.

"That was too perfect..."

Two days later, Jude was able to leave the hospital. She was diagnosed with a common cough and fever that had been intensified by the strain of travel and not enough rest. Tang En thought it had to be more complicated.

Constantine agreed and said that if the treatment did not continue to work and if the high fever returned, it could trigger a more dangerous illness, such as meningitis.

After she left the hospital, Jude was back to her energetic self again. She had no symptoms, and Tang En was relieved. He had just gone through Gavin's death. Tang En did not want to see anyone around him suffer, even if he had only been with the person for three short days.

Although he knew it was unusual that he already thought of Jude like he did others in his life, he did not think that there was anything wrong with it. The problem was, people got the impression that they were father and daughter. The nurse, Kate, that took care of Jude in the hospital for two days, was always calling them father and daughter. Tang En could not bring himself to explain the situation or Jude's background. Oddly, the name that Tang En did not like, "Uncle Tony", seemed to save him the trouble of explaining. Therefore, he had to let Jude refer to him as such, and it became his permanent name.

Furthermore, his voice had turned deeper and rougher from shouting during matches, and he even sounded older when he spoke. A 13-year-old girl calling him uncle was nothing, as long as he was not a creepy uncle.

Jude was very happy, and she always called him “Uncle Tony” even when she didn’t want anything. It was a pet name. At first, Tang En thought that she only called him that when she wanted something from him. But soon he realized that wasn’t the case at all, and he left it alone.

Once they were home, Tang En realized that his precious holiday time was almost over. This was his first holiday after becoming a manager, yet in the end he had done nothing.

The first third of his vacation had been spent in the pain and self-pity regarding his failure as a manager. His head had been very muddled during those days. The middle third of it he had been busy applying for a visa to China, which had ultimately been denied. And the remainder of his holiday was already partially used up because of Jude’s arrival.

Tang En felt that he could not spend his time like this anymore, and he looked at Jude who had just recovered from her illness, and thought that he should take her somewhere fun. The poor girl had come from a bad family life. In the last three days, whenever Tang En asked about her parents, the outgoing girl would become silent immediately. It would be nice to give her some relief from all that.

About Jude’s future, Tang En didn’t allow himself to think. He could not think of any solutions, and he was not used to planning for things that had not yet happened. If the real Tony Twain were there, he might know what to do and how to handle it. Tang En only wanted to enjoy the rest of his vacation.

At the next morning’s breakfast, Tang En looked at Jude who was eating a breakfast prepared by him and chatting away, and asked her what kind of place she would like to visit.

The little girl thought for a while and then shook her head. “I don’t know.”

Tang En sighed and had to decide on his own. He knew he didn’t want to stay in the U.K.

He scanned the entire map of Europe in his mind and at last targeted the Iberian Peninsula that was located in Southern Europe.

“Let’s go to Spain!” Tang En made the suggestion, and Jude raised up both of her hands to show that she agreed.

“Okay! Spain!”

Actually Tang En’s decision to go to Spain was because there were some football clubs there that he had been interested in for a long time. Nottingham Forest was unable to compete in European matches, so he could use his holiday to observe and learn from these really powerful teams. If time had permitted, he would have taken a football trip around Europe to Spain, Italy, France, Germany, Netherlands, and even the Eastern European countries.

Since he was already in Europe, not taking the chance to get in touch with these famous football clubs that were always on TV, would have been a waste.

Sometimes Tang En’s mind as a fan was hard to resist. But at least he hadn’t embarrassed himself by doing something silly like asking Michael Dawson for his autograph at the training ground.

For Jude, Tang En’s suggestion of Spain was perfect. She was excited about the sun and the beaches in Spain.

Girls always had unrealistic fantasies at all ages. However, Tang En did not know this, and he was just glad that Jude agreed to his plan.

After that, everything was easily settled. He bought the plane tickets, and Tang En's football trip around Spain would start with the two clubs in the capital city of Madrid!

Chapter 76: The Holiday Is Over Part 1

"Look! This is the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium!" Tang En stood under the huge white wall, and pointed at the name on the wall as he said it happily. But Jude just yawned. They had been in Spain for a few days, and she thought that they would go to the beach or do some sightseeing. She had not expected that they would be visiting a stadium so early in the morning.

"Uncle Tony, have you not seen enough stadiums in your work?"

Tang En was so impressed by the grandiosity of Bernabéu Stadium that he did not see the dissatisfaction on Jude's face and in her tone. He shook his head. "How can that kind of middle school level stadium be compared with this football palace?"

This time Jude purposely yawned louder and with exaggeration, and Tang En finally noticed.

"Aren't you awake yet? I thought I asked you to go to sleep by 11 last night."

His reply made Jude feel hopeless, and she rolled her eyes and stopped yawning. "I did. I was just exercising my face muscles, a beauty trick."

"You are too young to be thinking about such things," Tang En laughed. After a few days of staying with this girl, he felt that she was very cute.

Sometimes he thought that if the girl really did not want to return to her adoptive parents, he could apply to adopt her. Though he did not know if he would feel like having a kid around in the future, he kind of liked his current life with the company of this outgoing angel. He was rarely bored, and having someone to bicker with made life more interesting.

"You really love football," Jude said it in a sarcastic tone.

"Don't you like it? I thought you came from Brazil." Tang En glanced at her.

"Of course! I am Brazilian. I like football, too. So let me change my words.... you do not just like it! You are obsessed with it! Obsessed!" Jude pointed at Tang En and announced loudly, "You are obsessed with football, just like how you can be obsessed with women!"

"What do you know about obsession with women!" Tang En let go of Jude's hand and pointed at her. "Football and women are two separate things. Are you hungry now? C'mon. I'll take you to get something to eat."

Jude thought it was weird that they were leaving. "Are you not going in?"

Tang En raised his head and looked at this magnificent stadium, then shook his head.

“Jude, I am a football manager. You know that right?”

Jude nodded, but she had no idea why he was asking.

“If the day ever comes when I enter this place,” Tang En pointed at Bernabéu and said, “then there will only be two possible reasons why. One, because I brought my team here for a match. Or two, because I own the place.”

Tang En’s back was to her when he said this, and Jude could not see his face.

“Let’s leave here and go to lunch! I’ll take you to eat the famous Madrid ragout.” Tang En held Jude’s hand and left the football palace of his heart without looking back.

In the following days, Tang En took Jude to the home stadium of Madrid, Calderón, the home stadium of Barcelona, Camp Nou Stadium, and also to the Mestalla Stadium, which was the home stadium for Valencia. They rushed over to different cities as if they were running out of time, then roughly and briefly visited the stadiums in each city, and then went to the next destination.

Jude could only look at her beloved sun and beach from a distance, as well as the rippling sea far away from the windows on the train when they were passing the outskirts of Barcelona.

Although she had physically been in Spain for a week, she felt no different than being in Brazil or England. Did we go to Paradise City Malaga? Did we watch the famous bullfights? Did we go to the last land of heaven on the Mediterranean, Formentera Island? Did we go to the Seville Cathedral? Did we even go to Catedral de Santa Eulalia de Barcelona? We have not gone anywhere yet. All the hundreds of pictures in that phone’s gallery are of football stadiums!

She sighed and looked at Tang En, who was sleeping beside her, and pouted.

The vacation that she had been looking forward to would be over soon. So boring!

Tang En, who was so sleepy, and Jude, who was pouting about the trip, did not know that while they were running around Spain, someone was frantically searching for them in England.

The gentleman Finnan’s ritual was to read The Times newspaper after he finished his breakfast. After carefully reading the latest financial and political news, he saw a photo in the corner of one of the pages.

It was a notice for missing person. The extremely worried parents were asking for the public’s help in finding their daughter who ran away from home. Beside the photo was a clear description of the girl, including her name, age, and height.

The photo caught Finnan’s attention. He was sure he had seen her before. Then he realized that it was the girl from the cab, the sick one that had been curled up in Tony Twain’s arms.

Although he did not know the whole story, he felt it was his responsibility to call the number in the notice about the missing girl.

While waiting for their flight at the Madrid Airport, Tang En tried to sort through the photos in his camera. This was indeed a huge, time-consuming process, and Tang En did not expect to finish it in just this one short hour. Jude was sitting opposite him, kicking her legs back and forth. The constant movement of the two snowy white legs was very distracting.

Tang En kept his original position, but was secretly looking up to examine the little girl closely.

She seemed to be bored and did not sit still on the chair. She was looking around as if she did not know what to do. Sometimes she pouted while watching the planes landing and taking off outside the window. And sometimes she took out her nail file to file her nails. Then her attention was soon on the long beard of a man who sat diagonal to her.

That's when Tang En realized that the whole time his mind had been on football and famous teams, and that he had unintentionally snubbed Jude. Despite this, Jude had not acted pissed off at all in front of him, and the most she ever did was sigh a lot or pout.

Tang En decided to try to do something for her, and he got up said, "Jude, I'll be back in a while. Just wait for me here."

When she heard Tang En talking to her, the sadness on her face immediately faded, and she nodded. "Okay, I will wait for you here."

Coming out of the waiting area, Tang En looked around the terminal for a souvenir gift shop. He had meant to buy her something, but he forgot about it when they were in the tourist places. It was hard to find something suitable now to make up for it.

Tang En was just looking around without any particular plan, and then he found a shop that sold souvenirs. The soft toys posing cutely in the display case caught his attention. He was sure that girls liked cute little creatures like them.

He went into the shop to pick out one that Jude might like. There are so many of them! Which one would be best? Finally, he stopped on the largest soft toy, and it was a Totoro. He remembered when he first met Jude, there was a mini Totoro hanging on her bag. This is the one!

After returning to the waiting area, Jude was still filing her nails with her head lowered, though there was nothing much left to file. Since she was distracted, Tang En decided to tease her.

He quietly went over behind Jude's seat and put the stuffed Totoro slowly in front of the girl. Tang En purposely lowered his voice to emulate the sound of Totoro.

"Waaaaa!" Jude almost jumped off from her chair from fright.

Tang En could not help but laugh loudly as he watched her pop up in her seat.

Jude realized that she had been teased by Tang En and frowned. She sat with her lips tightly closed and did not say anything. She only glared at Tang En, but Tang En could not see any real anger in her eyes. He handed over the soft toy to Jude, who was pretending to be agitated.

"See, this is for you. At first, I said I was taking you on a trip, but it turns out that you accompanied me in my pursuits. I have totally forgotten about your feelings." Tang En felt embarrassed as he said this, and he nervously touched his nose and scratched his head with his free hand and did not know where to put.

Jude made a "hmm" sound in reply to Tang En, noticing his embarrassment. But then she took the soft toy and hugged her face into the fluffy Totoro.

"Totoro!" she shouted with excitement into its fur

Seeing her mood was better, Tang En felt relieved.

His holiday was over, and he needed to face the new training for the upcoming season when he got back to Nottingham. Although the team was still on their holiday, he, as manager, had to prepare in advance. What if his work got super busy and irregular? Then how was he going to take care of Jude? He had to face the question that he had been avoiding for a week.

After one week's time with her, Tang En discovered many adorable and pleasing things about Jude. He felt that perhaps his life would not be so bland with the company of this outgoing little girl. Before he met Jude, his life was actually very simple and boring. Except for his job, he spent most of the time in bars and occasionally looked forward to Yang Yan's lessons.

If Jude also enjoyed spending time with him, why not just adopt her? Especially since she had been adopted by cruel parents. Actually, the real reason for wanting to adopt her—that Tang En kept hidden in his heart and maybe even from himself—was that this 13-year-old intelligent little girl made him think of another child, who would be around the same age as her, but would never have the chance to show his smile.

“Jude, do you still want to go home? Uh, I am referring to your home in Brazil.”

Jude shook her head while she was happily playing with Totoro.

“Then...you...” Tang En did not know how to ask that question.

“I can just live with Uncle Tony. Don't worry. I will not make any trouble for you!”

This was what Tang En wanted to hear, and he grinned. However, his heart frowned. The child thinks that this is going to be an easy thing. Though Tang En had never adopted any children, he knew that the process would be complicated. It looks like this summer is going to be busier than usual. Maybe I'll have to find that lawyer, Jack Landy, to ask about legal procedures for adoption.

Tang En could not stand it as he watched Jude hugging the Totoro who was almost half her size. He shook his head and laughed. It was quite unexpected that he did not have wife, but had a child instead.

Chapter 77: The Holiday Is Over Part 2

Thinking of the lawyer, Tang En took his phone from his pocket. He had been shutting off his phone since he left Nottingham, as he did not wish to be disturbed in Spain. Because they were on their way home, he turned it back on.

He had just turned his phone on, when he saw that he had many messages. He glanced through all the names. There was Des Walker, Kenny Burns, and Ian Bowyer. Most of them were from people he knew. Perhaps these were all just casual calls. Then Pierce Brosnan's name appeared. The reporter had Tang En's number, but had never contacted him before. Tang En continued to scroll down and saw that Walker had sent him five messages in one day.

The content of the messages was generally the same, asking where he was, explaining that there was something urgent, and for Twain to call back as soon as he saw the text.

Tang En knew that Walker was not the kind of person who would mess around with him. If he was that anxious, it might mean that something major had happened.

So, he gave Walker a call.

“Tony? Tony! Tony where are you?” He had just answered and Walker immediately came at him with the question.

“I’m in the airport in Madrid.”

“Oh, Sh*t! You’re traveling?”

“Eh, yes. I went to Spain.”

“Do you always shut down your phone when you travel?” Walker interrupted Tang En again.

“Hey, Des. What’s going on?”

There was silence from Walker’s side for a while, and then he sighed, “It’s not something I should tell you over the phone. You just hurry back and find us at Forest Bar. The only thing I can tell you is that, Tony, you have a big problem to settle!”

Jude did not notice the change in Tang En’s facial expression, as she was still playing with her Totoro toy. Tang En put his phone down and zoned out.

What kind of trouble? Serious to the extent that even Walker, who was always calm, was panicking?

Tang En brought Jude back to Branford Gardens Street in Nottingham and saw that a group of people was waiting for them. There was a white Ford car parked in front of his house with a middle-aged couple in it. The lady had a nice body with a lovely figure, and the man looked like a well-mannered, white collar type. In addition, there was a fat woman with them and a bunch of reporters all carrying cameras with excited faces. The mob was completely blocking the way from Tang En’s small garden to his house.

Tang En stared at them. The abusive parents have found her? Fine. It would be better if this could be talked over face to face.

The woman saw Tang En and Jude, who was holding hands with him, and she became excited.

“Jude! Jude!” She shouted, walking toward her to take her hands, but Jude avoided her.

Tang En tried to protect the girl behind him and attempted to talk nicely with her parents. “Ma’am, I think—”

He was cut off by the lady who screamed, “Give me back my daughter!”

The man came up to pull back the overly excited lady, and then he nodded politely to Tang En. “I am sorry. My wife really misses her daughter.”

Tang En was kind of pissed off at the neurotic woman, but he calmed a bit with the man who seemed more reasonable. “I understand, but I think we still need to—”

Before he finished his words, the man was frowning and yelling at Jude who was behind Tang En.

“Jude Jordana! Have you had your fun? The holiday is over!”

Tang En could feel that Jude was frightened, and he said to the man disapprovingly, “Please mind your words, she is a child...”

The man did not bother about Tang En and, continuing to stare at Jude, said to her in harsh tone, “Jude, do you want me to repeat my words? Do you know how worried your mom was? As soon as we heard you were here, we came to wait for you, and we’ve been waiting for you for days! It’s time to come back with us, now!”

Tang En was confused by what was going on, and he turned back to look at Jude, who was hiding behind him. The girl hugged the Totoro toy in front of her, only showing her eyes, which looked at the two men with fright.

“Jude, what is he talking about?” Tang En frowned.

The girl kept silent for a while, but eventually lowered her head down. She said softly, “They’re my parents.”

“Your abusive adoptive parents?”

The man looked at Tang En, wondering what in the world he was talking about.

Jude shook her head. “They are my biological parents. Sorry, Uncle Tony. I lied to you. There are no cruel adoptive parents. My dad and mom wanted me to train as a model during vacation, but I didn’t want to. I hate the boring training and the vicious trainer! So I just told them that I came to England to visit my Auntie, and then I came here...”

Tang En closed his eyes and shook his head. He actually got conned by this little girl! Do my instincts and better judgment drop when faced with cute children? He opened his eyes and saw the fat old woman approaching him. And this is the Auntie Ryan that Jude spoke of? God... I even imagined living with her!

The man pulled Jude away from Tang En and said, “I am thankful to you for caring for Jude all this time. We’re sorry about the trouble she caused you. Thank you.” He said the words with very little heart and then took Jude to the car.

The door closed. Tang En saw Jude look back at him, and then she was hugged tightly by her weeping mom.

The old woman came up to him and shouted angrily, “You better have a good lawyer! You can expect a court summons soon!” After spewing the harsh words, the old woman also went to the car, which sank down when she got in inside.

When she was yelling at Tang En, all the reporters were taking pictures as if they had finally obtained some valuable news. However, Tang En was in no mood to bother about the old woman’s threats and reporters’ harassment. He was stunned and just blankly watched the car drive off. In the car, Jude sat in between her parents with her head lowered and did not turn back.

The large stuffed Totoro toy had been left on the road, and its white fur had some dust on it, which made it seem dirty.

Tang En bent down, picked it up, and dusted it off softly. After that, he sighed while looking at this poor creature with round eyes and its mouth opened, yet unable to talk.

He then turned and looked at the frenzied media reporters. Unexpectedly, he did not throw any harsh language at them and only walked back to his house with his luggage.

The holiday is over, isn't it?

Although Tang En did not really feel like it, he still went to Burns' Forest Bar to meet Walker. For him, losing Jude and possibly getting a court summons was too much trouble. What else could be more serious than that?

But Walker had news that would shock Tang En out of his muddleheaded state.

"Tony, we heard about Jude. But I advise you to put that out of your mind because you have bigger trouble." Walker put a few Nottingham local newspapers on the table and told Tang En to read.

–Nottingham Forest receives financial support from America!

–Nigel Doughty has officially retired, and his son Edward Doughty is going to replace him as the new chairman of Nottingham Forest

–New chairman, new manager

Below this news was a picture of two people. Tang En recognized the one on the left as Edward Doughty. The one on the right, who was shaking hands with Edward and grinning from ear to ear, he did not recognize.

"Who is he?" Tang En pointed at the photo and asked.

Walker answered, "Stan Collymore. The new head manager of Forest."

Tang En looked at Walker unbelievably, his eyes widening with the growing anger and shock. Walker looked away and said softly, "Edward said he wanted to contact you, but your phone was off. The League matches are going to start on the 9th of August and it's already the end of June. He said that the team needed to confirm the head manager as soon as possible."

"So my manager's title is f*cking useless now?!" Tang En shouted. Too many awful things had happened in one day, and he could no longer suppress the anger in his heart.

Burns put his hand on Tang En's shoulder. "Calm down, Tony."

"How can you ask me to calm down, Kenny? When the team was handed over to me, what was the situation? We made it to the playoffs, and now he wants to replace me! What do you—"

"Tony!" Burns raised his voice and tightened his grip on Tang En's shoulder. "You're forgetting... the word 'substitute' has always been in front of your title!"

Tang En was stunned to hear this. Burns was right. He was just a substitute manager. Though he had done so much for the team, and Nigel had said that he would fully support him, there had been no contract made that removed the "substitute" from his title. What gave him the illusion that he was already the real manager?

Walker continued to explain. "Tony, though Edward's decision is very unacceptable from an emotional standpoint, the truth is, he did not do anything wrong. The contract you signed with the club as a substitute manager was until the end of this season. Originally, Nigel had said that he wanted to have you sign a formal contract after your performance in half of the season. However, who knew that he would announce his retirement right after this season?"

Tang En collapsed in his chair and muttered to himself, "So, I must return to managing the youth team with nothing gained for my efforts? Right?"

No one answered his question. He gazed intensely at Edward Doughty and Stan Collymore on the newspaper, as if he could see through them.

Chapter 78: The New Manager Part 1

Twain stood outside the gates of the Wilford training base. Ian MacDonald noticed that he had stood outside for several minutes, but had not come in.

"Tony?"

Twain turned to look at the old guard. "Evan's not here yet?"

MacDonald shrugged and shook his head. "It is only eight o'clock, he won't be here this early. He's been coming in at nine o'clock for the past week or so."

Twain nodded and walked towards the guard's room. "Do you mind if I sit here a while?"

MacDonald opened the door. "No, I don't mind at all. Sometimes it's pretty boring to sit here alone. It will be nice to have someone to accompany me and chat with."

Twain stood at the door and looked at the small guard room with a chair, a table, several spread-open newspapers, an antique-looking radio, a water glass, and a kettle. The room could not sit two people at all; there weren't even enough chairs.

He simply leaned against the door frame.

MacDonald looked at Twain. "Tony, you know about... the matter?"

"Which matter?" Twain was a little distracted. He leaned against the door frame, but his gaze was on the small white building inside the gate.

MacDonald glanced back at the newspaper that was on the table. It was no wonder Twain had responded this way.

Ex-Forest manager was suspected of kidnapping an underage girl!

Manager Tony Twain was going to face charges!

Collymore talks about the new season: I'm back to lead the Forest team out of this quagmire!

Polls: 46% of the Forest team fans support Collymore coaching the team, 42% are against and 2% do not care.

Both of those major events were headaches for Twain.

Just as MacDonald was hesitating whether to repeat his question, Twain spoke first instead. "Ian, do you like Collymore?"

MacDonald did not expect this question, and did not know how to answer. Twain could clearly see that he was in a predicament. So, he gave him a smile and said, "It's okay, Ian, tell me what you really think."

"Umm... How I should say it? I think most of Forest's fans will love that guy, even though his behavior outside of the field was embarrassing... It's complicated." MacDonald had finally given his opinion of Collymore. "We have complicated feelings about that guy."

"Love and hate?" Twain asked.

MacDonald nodded. "Yes, we miss the glory days when he played for the Forest team, but at the same time we don't like the scandals he made outside the field."

"Well, in that case, do you think he can lead the Forest team back to the Premier League?"

MacDonald pondered Twain's question for a long time. Looking at the old guard's awkwardness, Twain knew he did not need an answer.

He picked up the newspaper on the table and looked at the three poll figures. As if talking to himself, he said, "Well, I'm happy that at least 42% of people support me. Bye, Ian."

Twain went through the gate and walked to his office—if it still belonged to him.

When he heard Twain's tone, MacDonald suddenly felt a trace of unease. "Tony! You will stay on for the Forest team, won't you?"

Twain looked back at the white-haired old guard and smiled. "Maybe. No one can predict the future, Ian. You know me... the man who never makes plans for the future. So..."

MacDonald nodded. "I understand. Good luck, Tony."

"Thank you. And good luck to you too, Ian."

After leaving MacDonald, Twain turned and continued ahead. Just then, he heard the roar of the engine coming from behind, and the clatter of iron gate opening. Without turning his head, he knew who was coming.

A familiar dark red Audi A6 parked beside him. Evan Doughty got out of the car and walked around it towards Twain. "Good morning, Tony."

"Good morning, Mr. Chairman," Twain replied.

"Oh, come off it! We don't have to be so formal!" Evan used the tone of two old friends reuniting, and patted Twain's shoulder. "I know you have something you want to say to me, and it just happens that I'm looking for you too. Let's walk and talk." He tapped the car window to tell the driver to take the car to the parking lot first.

He and Twain then walked to the training ground.

“It was really hard to find you. Was Spain fun? I heard there are a lot of amazing nude beaches!”

“The trip was okay.”

The two men did not head to the office for a serious sit-down discussion. Instead, they stood at the sidelines of the training ground and watched the turf maintenance workers preparing for the first training two days later, while appearing to have a casual chat.

“Tony, I know what you’re here to talk to me about.”

“Evan, do you really know Stan Collymore?” Twain asked. He wanted to know why his successor was not Terry Venables, Stuart Pearce, or anyone but Stan Collymore.

Other than his beautiful goals, he was infamous for his continuous string of scandals. This was a man who was called “a complete dog” by the British media.

When he was still a footballer, Collymore had started off in Crystal Palace and, because he was unable to adapt to professional football, had gone to the Southern League’s semi-professional team, Southend United.

It was there that he had quickly become the top striker, and attracted the attention of the then Premier League team, Nottingham Forest.

It was in this Premier League football club that Collymore had become a real star player. Because of his outstanding performance, he transferred to The Reds in Liverpool for a high price of 8.5 million pounds, and then became a stunning superstar player at Anfield Stadium’s Kop.

He and Fowler, his attacking partner, swept across England, where they were naturally chosen for the English national team.

However, the brilliant striker was ruined by his unbridled lifestyle.

Robbie Fowler and Steve McManaman were Liverpool’s famous playboys. Whenever they got together, no elaborate introduction was required; one could imagine that the key words to describe them were “raunchy, beautiful women, and sex.”

In 2001, Collymore transferred to Real Oviedo, which was still in La Liga. However, three months before the end of the contract, he suddenly announced his retirement, which was a huge blow to the team. After that, the team was relegated to La Liga 2, and dropped down three levels within two years, reduced to the fourth division of the Spanish league.

And Collymore continued his controversial and raunchy lifestyle outside the field.

After retiring, Collymore quickly found a job as a guest football commentator on BBC Radio 5 Live, but did not settle down.

After his ex-girlfriend, Ulrika Jonsson, who was the English national team’s manager Eriksson’s rumored girlfriend at that time, published an autobiography describing him as “a beast” and “a monster.” Collymore, severely damaged by it, threatened to release a compromising videotape of Ulrika for sale!

Collymore's lawyers used a lot of vivid phrases to describe the kind of impact that this videotape would have. Furthermore, he said that his employer wanted to release the tape to the world, and he had the digital copyright, film adaptation rights, and so on. As long as someone had the money, everything was up for discussion. There was absolutely no concern about copyright or likeness infringements.

It scared Ulrika to tears.

What happened next was even more outrageous.

Collymore was exposed by two reporters at The Sun for his participation at sex-in-the-car parties; simply put, he hooked up with gorgeous women in England's famous woodland parking lot in Staffordshire, and then had sexual relations with them in or outside of the car. The woodland parking lot was known to everyone in British celebrity circles, because the car park was among the best car parks in England, and it was also a hunting ground for some celebrities. Cory was obsessed with this lifestyle, even though four miles away from the parking lot, his childhood sweetheart and wife, Estelle Williams, was waiting for him to come home every night.

Later, he even declared that this was the future lifestyle of England. This angered the British public and for a time, and he became the subject of everyone's contempt.

Under an enormous amount of pressure, Collymore was forced to resign from BBC 5 station, publicly apologized in the media, cried for public forgiveness, and pledged to be a new person.

And then...

"And then you gave him a chance to be a new man again, Evan." Twain said with a hint of irony.

"I know about everything you just said, Tony. You and my dad both thought I knew nothing about football in this country but I'm actually quite aware. Allan Adams recommended Collymore to me and I have seriously reviewed his resume. I don't think we can negate a person's future because of his past. There are many examples of retired players becoming good managers: Kevin Keegan, Stuart Pearce... not to mention, and the legendary figure of this team that you all admired the most, Brian Clough, was also a player who directly became a manager."

Twain quietly looked at Evan Doughty and did not express any opinions on his unconvincing examples and excuses.

"And...Tony, you may not know this yourself, but personally I've always treated you as a friend. You have a straightforward personality, and I like that very much." Evan Doughty looked at Twain.

"What am I supposed to say? That I'm overwhelmed and flattered by your favor?" Twain shrugged his shoulders. He did not appreciate the sentiment, "Since you think of me as a friend, then you would rather trust a person who is dodgy in his personal affairs than trust in a friend?"

Chapter 79: The New Manager Part 2

Edward Doughty squinted in the stadium under the hot sun, and then turned to Tang En. "Tony, I watched the playoffs. Do you know why I did not choose you?" He did not continue, but was waiting for Twain to give the answer. If Tony Twain were smart enough, he would know the reason.

“Because I lost?” Tang En answered.

Edward smiled and did not reply.

“So, just because I failed, you chose a newbie. What if he also loses at the end of this season? Are you going to find someone else to replace him? Edward, do you really know anything about this sport?!”

Tang En raised his voice and questioned him.

Edward did not become angry in the face of Twain’s anger. He looked up at the blue sky, and then looked at the training grounds in the distance. A glitter reflected from the sun shining on the green turf, caused by the water drops left by the sprinklers.

“Tony, you can be Collymore’s assistant manager. I believe that you would do a good job together.”

Edward spoke slowly as he gazed far away.

Tang En looked at Doughty, the new chairman of the club, and shook his head in disappointment.

“Edward, I hope you know that I, Tony Twain, would never be anyone’s assistant, and no one deserves to have me as his assistant. I am glad that you treat me like a friend. See you.”

After he said this, he put on his sunglasses and left the place without hesitating.

He had no idea whether he had any chance to come back there. Yes, he planned to leave. Before he was too emotionally invested, it would be easy to leave Nottingham with no hesitation.

Twain’s dismissal by the new chairman had spread through the industry very quickly. In his pocket he already had three paper slips with other club’s contact numbers written on them. Those who called him said, “We were truly impressed by your achievements and coaching style during the last half season, and my club will always welcome you, Mr. Tony Twain.”

This slightly improved Tang En’s mood, because he knew that the effort he had put in during the half season was not totally meaningless, and that he would be accepted elsewhere. Although none of them were Premier League teams, there were two teams that were the same level as Forest. The last one was from League Two.

Tang En went out the main gate and said goodbye to Ian MacDonald, and then walked home slowly down the quiet boulevard. While he looked at the patches of training ground that showed through the dense forest, he knew that it was time to make the decision. Whether to stay here and be the manager of the youth team, or go to another team and be their manager.

Tang En was long gone, but Edward Doughty remained standing at the side of the field as if he had great interest in the work of turf maintenance. Actually, he was only staring through the training ground, looking at the sky.

The sound of footsteps came up behind him and then stopped.

“He’s gone already, Edward?” someone with a sharp voice asked.

Edward nodded. “Yes, he left.”

“Is he going to leave this place?”

"I am not sure, but I think perhaps."

"Such a pity," the voice replied. "If only he had more patience..."

"Actually, I can understand him, Allan. Anyone who was in his position would choose to leave immediately. It would be a miracle if he stayed," Edward Doughty sighed.

Edward turned and looked at the man behind him with golden hair. "Allan, we will succeed, right?"

Allan Adams, Edward Doughty's financial advisor and his roommate at Harvard University, was his most trusted assistant and friend. He nodded. "Don't worry. My plan is perfect. The financial situation of this club is worse than we estimated, but I still see great potential in it. You must do this in order to own the club yourself."

Edward nodded to show that he understood. "But..." He looked in the main gate's direction, shrugging his shoulder. "I really like Tony. If he became our enemy in the end, that would be too unfortunate."

Whose misfortune would it be? Forest's? His? Or Tony Twain's?

Tang En did not forget there was another thing for him to deal with while he was making a decision about his future. The media that had been camped outside his house had not left yet, and it seemed that they had planned to stay there even longer. Tang En felt like a guy going to meet a prostitute whenever he came and went from his house, like he was avoiding being seen by people.

Tang En really wanted to use Chinese to scold those idiot reporters who shouted, "Readers have the right to know the truth!"

At least he was able to control himself. There was no reason anyway, because they would not understand Chinese. Besides, everything was so up in the air, he did not want to create more trouble.

Tang En hid himself at home that afternoon, searching for the lawyer Jack Landy's phone number. He needed to find out about the court summons that he might face.

"I told you, Mr. Twain, that you would be famous," Landy laughed after listening to Twain describe the whole story. He did not seem too worried. "I have already heard of your story from the newspapers. Although you insist that you did not, nor ever would kidnap a child, that means nothing in the eyes of the law. But the real problem is that the media is reporting that a professional football manager is suspected of kidnapping a girl. I've seen the photos and reports... Mr. Twain, have you received a court summons yet?"

"It's only been a day, how is that possible?" Tang En asked.

"So let me evaluate your current situation, Mr. Twain."

Tang En suddenly interrupted Landy. "Mr. Landy, have you started charging me already?"

Landy laughed. "Not yet, Mr. Twain. This is a free consultation to thank you for allowing me to experience some dramatic moments in the FA Cup. So, back to the subject. If the relationship between you and the girl is as you have described, I think there is no need for you to worry. First of all, the girl's parents are the ones who must decide whether to prosecute you, and not her English auntie. Also, international prosecution is difficult. Even if they really want to prosecute you, they'll have to make their

way to England. Honestly speaking, if the girl has nothing to say against you, then why would her parents come all the way here to prosecute you? When you returned the girl to her parents, she was healthy and happy, right? Am I making sense to you?”

“Yes,” Tang En replied.

“I think anyone in their right mind would not prosecute you. If it were not for you caring for her, who knows if they would have gotten their child back? But don’t forget that, according to the law, your actions could be considered as kidnapping. However, if they do not intend to prosecute you, or if they do, but the court rejects the case, you will be considered innocent. Of course, if you do receive a court summons, do not worry. I will be your lawyer and plead your case. Additionally, Mr. Twain, I have a piece of advice for you.”

“Yes?”

“If the girl’s family does not intend to prosecute you, you might consider prosecuting the media that has damaged your reputation. Actually, I have always hated The Sun. If this really happened, I will be more than pleased to be your lawyer. But not for free, of course.”

Tang En laughed out loud. His bad mood surrounding the “prosecution” rumor was immediately gone. “What a brilliant idea, Landy! Yes, I will definitely think about this plan.” He pulled back the curtain and looked at the reporters who still waited outside his house.

He had been struggling with all the media that was everywhere he went, but Landy’s words cheered him up.

After he hung up the phone, Tang En looked at the Totoro soft toy that he had placed on his table. Actually, he was not fond of this kind of fluffy soft toy, but he kept it in his room. The cute Totoro did not at all match Tang En’s masculine bachelor-pad.

He was not sure why he kept it. Maybe he just sat it there and forgot to take it out. Or maybe it was for other reasons?

Uncle Tony? Uncle Tony! Uncle Tony...

Tang En turned his head, but he could not hear anything.

That clear and melodious calling had gradually faded.

Chapter 80: The Reception Part 1

After tossing and turning in bed the entire night, Tang En was still considering that question—should he stay in Nottingham Forest?

...What were the pros and cons of leaving or staying, what kind of effect it would have on his future, how it would impact his life, and whether success would be guaranteed if he were to move to a new city and start again...

These questions circled in his mind, making him feel distracted. It was as if his brain had become an old computer that would always stop responding for a period when he was dealing with those tedious problems.

When dawn came the next morning, Tang En still had no clear answer. He hated making detailed plans for his future and was not good at predicting his own fate. He had avoided such multiple-choice-type questions as much as possible in his past 26 years, and now he could avoid them no longer.

Yesterday, he almost impulsively blurted out, "I have decided to leave Forest!" in front of Edward. As the saying went: "If there's no place for me here, there will be a place for me somewhere." But after one night, Tang En hesitated when that initial anger from the deep sense of abandonment gradually faded.

At this point, it would be so nice if someone could counsel him and recommend something from an objective point of view. Or even if no one could give advice, someone to just listen to his troubles would be nice.

Tang En climbed out of bed and planned to start a new day, even though he did not know what to expect of that new day.

He had just finished washing up in the bathroom when he heard his cell phone ring in the bedroom.

Could it be another club that had taken a liking to him and wanted to talk to him about managing their team? Feeling uncertain, Tang En ran back to the bedroom and answered the call from an unfamiliar number.

A female voice said, "Mr. Tony Twain?"

"Ah, it's me, I'm Twain. Who's calling?"

"Sorry, I forgot to introduce myself. I'm Barbara Clough, Brian Clough's wife."

"Oh!" Tang En immediately changed his tone and even unconsciously straightened his body. "Mrs. Clough. What can I do for you?"

"Don't be so nervous, child," Mrs. Clough laughed on the other end of the line. "Do you have any plans today?"

Tang En shook his head without hesitation. "Nothing, ma'am. I'm free all day."

"That's great. Brian would like you to accompany him to the League Managers Association's reception."

He did not understand why the old chap would suddenly want to bring him to a reception. They had not had any form of contact since he had visited Clough. But the experience of that day had left a deep impression on Tang En. He knew that the old chap did everything for a reason.

"It would be my honor to do so, ma'am," Tang En quickly replied with a nod. "Would you like me to pick up Mr. Clough at your place?"

"Oh, no. There's no need. Nigel will pick you up in his car. They know where you live. You just wait at home. I think they should almost be there."

As soon as Mrs. Clough finished, Tang En heard the honking sound of the car horn from outside. He pulled open the bedroom curtains and saw a white Ford sedan parked down the road.

“Oh my God! Look who’s sitting in that car!”

“It’s Brian Clough! How long has it been since he last showed up?”

“Hey, Clough, how’s your health?”

“I heard that you’ve just recovered from a liver transplant. Will you please... can you open the window and accept a brief interview?”

The reporters near Tang En’s house suddenly became excited after they saw the car appear, and their camera flashed repeatedly around the white Ford sedan.

Tang En saw the scene from his bedroom on the second floor. Without Mrs. Clough telling him, he already knew who was sitting in the car.

“Yes, ma’am, they are here.”

“Well, go on, child. I hope you’ll have a good time.”

“Thank you, Madam. You have a good day, too.”

Tang En hung up the phone and threw a jacket on as he ran down. To be invited by this legend to participate in the reception... it would be a lie to say that he was not secretly pleased. At this point, Tang En admitted he was as happy as a child who had been brought to the playground by his parents as a reward for good grades. As for what he should choose for his future, he had already put it in the back of his mind.

Opening the door, Tang En slightly calmed himself, and then strode toward the car.

When the reporters saw Twain come out, they immediately pointed their cameras at him, and there were some who wanted to ask him questions. But Tang En did not give them the chance. He quickly got into the car and closed the door tightly.

The old man sitting next to him reached his hand out and said to him, “I am very glad to see that there will soon be a second Fleet Street near your place.” Fleet Street was synonymous with the British media, because all the British newspaper corporations and television stations were once concentrated on that street in central London. Of course, now with the relocation of many media companies, the street was no longer such a place.

A middle-aged man sitting in the driver’s seat laughed. Tang En could not see what the other man looked like, but he knew that this man was Clough’s son, Nigel.

Tang En was a little embarrassed. He reached out and shook hands with Clough, and then Nigel turned around, smiled, and shook his hand. “Nigel Clough. Nice to meet you.”

The reporters outside the car pressed their camera shutters in a frenzy to take pictures of these three men together. Even though they did not know why Clough had come there to meet Tony Twain, they could always use these photographs for something.

Seeing the enthusiastic crowd outside, Brian Clough held Twain's hand again and gestured to him to face the window and smile. Tang En did not understand why he had to do so, but he did it anyway. This roused the media again, and the flashes made Tang En a little dizzy. But when he was about to crease his brows, the old man said to him, "Smile, son."

With their faces smiling, they just shook hands and gave the reporters a full minute to take their pictures. Then Tang En looked at Clough in puzzlement.

The old man gave a wry grin. "During my time, the press was like this too. You have to learn to make use of them." Then he knocked on the back of the driver's seat. "Let's go, Nigel."

The reporters gave way to the car. It looked like they were still quite afraid of Brian Clough. As Tang En was watching the reporters holding their cameras, he repeatedly thought about Mrs. Clough's parting words to him.

The League Managers Association was unfamiliar to Tang En, as if it were a new firm suddenly emerged from some dark corner. But in fact, this was an influential organization in the English football world. Founded in the 1990s, it was the only official representative organization of the football managers in England.

This union was divided into two different associations—the executive board and the non-executive board. The difference between the two was the responsibility for specific management matters. Brian Clough was the Vice President of the non-executive board, along with Sir Bobby Robson. And the President of the non-executive board was Kevin Keegan, who was less experienced and younger than they were. The Chairman of the executive board, responsible for specific management matters was Howard Wilkinson, and the Chief Executive was John Barnwell. Dave Bassett, Sir Alex Ferguson, and David Pleat were all committee members of the executive board.

The members of the League Managers Association were mostly managers and assistant managers of the 92 football clubs, as well as the managers who had been laid off for less than a year. Based on this condition, Twain could still be counted as a member of the League Managers Association.

This reception was not simply for everyone to get together to drink and chat—although there would be drinking and chatting. There was another reason to gather everyone. First of all, it was to congratulate Sir Alex Ferguson who had just won the Manager of the Decade in the Premier League 10 Seasons Awards. Secondly, it was to congratulate the Everton manager, Moyes, on being elected and awarded with the 2002-03 LMA Manager of the Year by the League Managers Association.

Nigel took his father and Twain to the reception at Sheffield, said he would pick them up at two o'clock in the afternoon, and then drove away. Tang En was a little surprised by this.

"Isn't Mr. Nigel coming with us?" On the way, Tang En had heard that Nigel was a manager, too. However, he was only part time, as he was also a player for the team he managed. He had led his Burton Albion team and won the Southern League Cup in the 01-02 season.

Clough shook his head. "He's only a player-manager of a non-league team. He's not eligible for this reception. Besides, he's busy with his own matters. Let's go."

The reception was held at a small hotel bar on the second floor. Tang En was dazzled when he followed Clough and stepped through the door. He saw many people who he could only normally see on television screens, mingling and chatting with their glasses in their hands in the reception hall. At one point, the England National Team Swedish manager, Eriksson, walked past him to the most central part of the room where most people congregated.

His gaze followed Eriksson and found that this England National manager's target was Ferguson, surrounded by a cluster of people!

These were all the big-name managers!

But Tang En's heart rate did not increase, his mouth was not dry, and he was not tongue-tied or weak in his hands and legs. Because the real world-class manager was standing beside him.

A red-faced old man with silver hair welcomed Twain and Clough when he saw them come in through the door.

"Brian, how's your health? I heard you had a liver transplant at the beginning of this year." He spoke with a strong voice, and his movements were vigorous, which were completely incongruent with his aged appearance.

Clough slightly shrugged his shoulders. "I think the old boss up there, God, doesn't want me to come up yet."

The silver-haired old man chuckled and turned his gaze to Twain, who stood beside Clough. "Mr. Tony Twain, I'm glad to meet you."

"I'm also very pleased to meet you, Sir Bobby Robson." Tang En respectfully extended his hand to express his respect for that famous English manager.

"I heard that you had some trouble recently. Do you need help from the League Managers Association?"

Tang En did not know which "trouble" Robson referred to. He deliberated for a moment, then he decided not to talk in riddles with the manager and pretend to know when he did not. So, he asked, "I'm sorry, Sir. But which trouble are you referring to?"

Robson laughed again. "I forgot you have more than one trouble!"

A waiter holding a tray came up and stood next to the three men. Robson took a glass of red wine for himself and then got a glass of whisky for Clough. Tang En hesitated for a bit before he chose a whisky for himself.

With a drink in his hand, Clough was more animated than when he first stepped in. He said to Robson, "I think we should suggest that the association set up an annual Most Unlucky Manager award, and you can then personally hand the first trophy to him." He pointed at Tony Twain with the glass in his hand.

This time, Tang En and Robson laughed together. In his first meeting with Clough, Tang En had experienced this old Englishman's humor during conversations, and now he became the target of his humor. But he felt very happy. Why? Because it meant that Clough treated him as one of his own people.

After laughing, Robson said to Twain, “Stan Collymore was a good footballer, but not a good manager. I don’t understand why the new chairman of the Forest team chose him.”

“It’s very simple: because Doughty, that old man’s son, is an American.” Clough shrugged and said, “Bobby, do you expect those Yankees to understand our sport?”

Although the topic of their discussion was related to him, Tang En seemed to be more like an audience. He could not quite interrupt the conversation between the two football bigwigs. He stood beside Clough as if he were the boss’ personal assistant—if Clough were to take off his suit jacket, he would surely have had Tang En hold it for him.

He did not mind holding his jacket or helping the manager with little things. But he disliked the feeling that somehow, he was being excluded. So, he decided to express his opinion. After all, they were discussing his business, weren’t they?

“Um, thank you for your concern, Sir Robson. But I think maybe it’s time for me to have a change of scenery,” said Tang En who pretended to be light and easy.

Clough did not follow up on Twain’s words. He brought his drink to his lips, but he was looking blankly ahead at the spot where most people were. No one knew what was on his mind. Tang En did not know, either. There was a momentary awkward silence between the three men.