

Champions 881

Chapter 881: On This Night

When Tony Twain stood on the podium in a drenched suit and looking somewhat sloppy, the person waiting in front of him to give out the award was the UEFA President, Michel Platini.

The UEFA's number one figure had a smile on his face as he looked at Twain pulled his wet hair away from his eyes and did not rush him.

Twain had just been splashed from head to toe by the players with the water they normally drank, which happened after he was carried around the field for a round. Twain was caught off guard and cut a sorry figure. He also had to be thankful that the boys did not pour champagne on him. Otherwise, he would have been sticky all over his body, which would be extremely uncomfortable.

Platini had been looking at Twain with a smile as if he was looking at something amusing. It was not until Twain finally tidied his messy hair in front of his forehead, that he finally extended his hand and said, "Congratulations, Mr. Twain."

Twain returned the greeting, "Thank you, Mr. President."

If Twain had been loyal to UEFA in the beginning, the smile on Platini's face would have been even more resplendent at the moment. He would have patted Twain's face and kissed him on the cheeks like how the French did it and said, "Congratulations, my dear Tony."

However, having to now award a trophy to a team from the Premier League made Platini unable to smile in his heart. Five years ago, the Premier League teams, represented by Nottingham Forest and Manchester United, had occupied the top four spots in the UEFA Champions League back to back, much to the UEFA's displeasure. Therefore, every effort was made to curb the influence of the Premier League teams in the Champions League, including covert manipulation of the draw results and the appointment of the referees. Later on, when Tony Twain had a heart attack and Nottingham Forest was in decline, the Premier League whirlwind became a little weaker. Unfortunately, Ferguson broke through layers of encirclement and suppression in the Champions League final before he retired and won the title. The strength of the Premier League could not even be contained by the UEFA's plotting and scheming.

Now it was even more so. Tony Twain came charging back with Nottingham Forest and once again lifted the Champions League trophy, leaving all the European teams to become onlookers. If it were to continue to develop in this way, the UEFA Champions League should simply be renamed as "UEFA Europa League."

It was definitely not the future that the UEFA wanted to see. On their lips, they said that "it is not good for the development of football if a certain nation's league monopolizes the Champions League quarter-finals" when in fact, their real idea was that "after a certain nation's national league monopolizes the Champions League quarter-finals, it is bound to make the other league fans lose interest in subsequent games, which will affect the ratings, and then directly affect the TV broadcast shares. In short, it was all about the money."

The UEFA was not a charity and had no government funding behind it. They had to be responsible for its profit and losses so naturally they had to act accordingly to how the money came.

If there were three Premier League teams and any other national league team to advance in the top four every year, even the most hardcore fans would suffer from aesthetic fatigue one day. What would they do when they suffered from aesthetic fatigue? They would not watch the games, so the television broadcasters would in turn scale back their shares and the advertisers would cut back on their investments. Finally, there would be less and less money.

Platini raised the gold medal in his hand. At this time, Twain should bow his head and let Platini hang it around his neck. But he did not do so. He had not done that for a long time. He was not used to bowing in front of others, even to accept a gold medal. He always took the medal from the other person by hand.

Platini looked helplessly at the unruly man and handed the gold medal to him to his hand.

Twain saw the displeasure in Platini's eyes, even though it soon disappeared. He knew Platini was not happy, but he did not care.

After he received the gold medal, Twain put it into the pocket of his suit jacket straight away, looking unimpressed. The Real Madrid fans must have been furious in their hearts when they saw the scene – the highest honor which they yearned for was actually treated like this by the rude and uneducated English country boor.

Tony Twain carried the gold medal in his pocket and shook hands with a few of the officials behind Platini. Then he walked to the side of the stage and waited with everyone for George Wood to take to the stage.

It was the highlight of the award ceremony – to give out the trophy.

As George Wood stepped onto the stage, his teammates on the other side were making hand gestures at him and whistling. One by one was excited like they had seen a beautiful naked woman- at this moment in their eyes, the "Big Ears" trophy with its wonderful arc reflecting the light on its shiny shell was indeed a beautiful naked woman in a sexy pose seducing them.

Wood bent over to let Platini hang the gold medal around his neck and then he walked with the UEFA president to the podium where the Champions League trophy was set.

"Champion! Champion! Champion!" The Forest players were shouting in unison at the back. They did not care what the UEFA thought about them taking the title. They just knew that the championship title was theirs!

Platini's attention was caught by the sudden outburst of shouts at the back. He turned around to look back at the group of players with a smile of praise on his face. Twain watched at the side as he said in his heart that this official was indeed self-restrained....

Platini lifted and handed the trophy to Wood.

"Congratulations to you all, George. You are the European champions!"

Wood took the trophy unceremoniously and then held it high. His teammates behind him roared as they did the lifting of the trophy action together, "All hail—the champion!"

Meanwhile, countless red confetti burst forth from behind the podium, and many more alternating red and white ribbons streamed down from the roof of the Bernabéu stadium, accompanied by the sudden blaring of the music, "We Are the Champions." In the enemy's lair, Nottingham Forest was crowned as the king of Europe.

This time, they were the king of kings – the Treble winner.

"... We're the champions, my friend! We are the champions, victorious in every battle..."

Amidst the sound of the music, under the rain of confetti, Twain looked up and watched the scene. Those ribbons of streamers fluttering in the air glowed under the stadium's bright lights, as if they were fragments of memories, each with a face and a memory. Eleven years on, he had been living here for so long. Some people's names and faces had faded in his memory, while the others were still clear in his mind. Was it going to end like this?

Looking at those confetti dancing in the night sky, Twain felt somewhat reluctant in his heart as he thought on.

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The reporters at the press conference were getting impatient as Twain was slow to arrive. He had changed into a suit and his hair was toweled dry. He looked more put together than he did when he received the award. Furthermore, he suddenly shook out a red cloak on the stage and acted like he was in a bullfight.

"What do all the Spanish reporters here think of my training? Let's hear some applause." He smiled and said to the people below, looking smug. "We've just killed a giant bull." He made a sword piercing action.

He grinned at the Spanish reporters below whose faces had changed color. He had been looking forward to the meeting today since the pre-match press conference. He was glad that he had the last laugh. The red cloak for the bullfight was not bought in vain.

The faces of the Spanish reporters below suddenly darkened considerably. No one gave him a standing ovation.

It was an open provocation, and the action also set the tone of the press conference – if you're going to provoke, we're going to pick a quarrel.

Michel left after he finished the interview before him. The carnage that was going to happen next naturally had nothing to do with him. After Twain taunted the Spaniards, he took a seat, nodded to the host, who signaled that the reporters could ask questions.

All the reporters raised their hands. Twain did not carefully look at which of the Spanish reporters here were the ones who had treated him with disdain just now or which of the English reporters who might be partial towards him. He simply pointed at someone. The person who stood up was a reporter for the Spanish newspaper . A middle-aged balding man spoke with gritted teeth. Apparently, he was strongly

provoked by Twain's "performance" just now. He said, "First of all, congratulations on your team winning the Treble. Secondly, I would like to ask about Pepe and that red card. He may face a very serious punishment. Do you have anything to say, Mr. Twain?"

Pepe's nasty and violent foul in the game was certain to be the focus of many media attention after the game. The Spaniards would use it to attack Twain and topple the results that Nottingham Forest had achieved. And now, they wanted to spoil the good mood that Twain had just now at the press conference.

Twain raised his eyebrows and put his smile away as he said, "I support Pepe. The impulse was understandable at the time. After all, Real Madrid equalized the score with that penalty shot in the final minute. It's such a coincidence. If it were me, I would be angry." Unsurprisingly, Twain chose to be fiercely protective of his player and he covertly scolded the UEFA.

"Do you support the beating? The Marca reporter followed with the question.

"Under those circumstances at the time, I could understand it even if he hit someone." Twain replied expressionlessly. "If it were me..." Twain paused a little and with a sudden big smile on his face, he added, "... I might perhaps hit someone too."

The reporter of the Marca newspaper looked unhappy and sat down in anger. He was probably figuring out how to write bad things about Twain in the newspaper.

The second person who was called upon was still a Spanish reporter. This time, it was the newspaper. The target was still directed at Tony Twain. But the reason had changed to be about the tactics. "Wasn't it abnormal that Nottingham Forest had repeatedly attacked the Real Madrid players throughout the game, with thirty fouls in one hundred and twenty minutes?"

"It's a normal tactical arrangement." Twain put the responsibility squarely on himself and said, "I instruct them to do so. As you can see, Mr. Reporter." Twain pulled the gold medal out of his pocket. A ray of golden light dazzled under the lights caused the reporter to turn his head to the side and slightly closed his eyes. "We are the champion."

"How can such a champion to take the title?" The reporter was upset by Twain's flippant behavior. What he said was already out of a reporter's scope of questions and somewhat lost rationality.

Twain spread his hands with a look of innocence and said, "Why ever now? We didn't steal or rob. We didn't rely on the referees nor the UEFA and we didn't have the massive home field advantage. We also didn't have the help of a last-minute penalty shot. We're one player short as compared to Real Madrid. Under such circumstances, we still have the championship title. If we had no reason to win the championship, then dear Mr. Reporter, you tell me, is there any other team in the world that had more reason to take...this one than us??" Twain swayed the gold medal in front of the reporter's eyes again. He deliberately wanted to annoy the other party.

"All right, next person." Twain ignored the Spaniard, who was red in the face and biting his lower lip and turned his head to call up someone else again.

It was an English reporter who stood up this time, but in a sense he was still Twain's "enemy"— a reporter from The Sun.

The Sun reporter was well-versed in the way of reporters. He said a few words of congratulation to Twain and asked a few painless questions which were not their purpose. If he were to play along, he wanted something explosive. He was unafraid of attracting hate. If he did not attract hate from people, then he was mediocre. A reporter must have the awareness to not change his colors even if tens of millions of people spat on and cursed on him.

“Mr. Twain, I heard that your contract will expire on June 30th, but you still haven’t renewed your contract with the club until now. Is there anything.... you’re hiding?”

The authentic English paparazzi indeed did a great job. He immediately shocked everyone present. Not many people knew about the news that Twain had not renewed his contract with the club. It could be said that even the Forest players did not know about the matter. He did not expect The Sun reporter to find out about it.

Twain had no choice but to sit up and take notice of the man in front of him.

“It’s a shame that you didn’t go work for the Scotland Yard, Mr. Reporter.” Twain’s words were tantamount to acknowledging The Sun’s story. The discussion below became so loud that the host had to step forward to maintain order.

But the reporter definitely wanted to make things awkward for Twain. He continued, “In other words, you admit that this matter is true. So, may I ask the reason why you choose not to renew your contract?”

Twain was prepared ahead of time and came out with the excuse to deal with Evan and Allan. He said, “I did not want to be disturbed by the terms of the contract and the salary package before the Champions League game.”

“That means it will be renewed after the Champions League, won’t it? Ah, Mr. Twain, you have to understand the feelings of those who care about you and the Forest fans. They must all want you to renew your contract and continue the glory as the club’s meritorious manager...”

These words sounded dignified, but Twain knew that the asshole was not well-intentioned.

“You’ll know when the time comes, Mr. Reporter.” Twain was certainly not to deal with too. He replied and ended the question.

Perhaps because three people had picked a quarrel in a row and spoiled his mood, Twain did not pick casually this time. Instead, he chose Pierce Brosnan.

Brosnan clearly did not know that Twain had not renewed his contract with the club yet. It looked like Twain had indeed covered it up tightly. He looked a little distracted when he stood. He must still be thinking about what had just happened. The questions he asked were also generic and without any news value. There was nothing about the team’s tactical arrangements. He did not praise the performances of a few players to play or talked about the feelings of winning the Treble...

Twain had a ready answer to every question. The two of them seemed to have already rehearsed earlier. The question and answer flower quickly. The other reporters below were earnestly doing shorthand but were shaking their heads inside at the same time – it looked like the show was already over.

After he finished answering these questions, Brosnan suddenly came to his senses. He still wanted to ask, "Tony, is it true that you're renewing the contract after the Champions League?"

Twain was stumped by Brosnan's frank question and his face looked ugly all of a sudden. However, such a look only appeared on his face for less than a second. He immediately returned to a smiling face.

"You'll find out at that time, Mr. Brosnan."

When Pierce Brosnan heard what Twain addressed him at the end, sweat beads appeared on his forehead. He realized that the king of Nottingham Forest was angry. But it reinforced his doubts about Twain's failure to renew his contract with the club.

A year ago, the media speculated about Twain's contract extension with the club. At the time, the Forest Football Club offered him a new five-year contract and more than doubled his current salary. Not only did the salary figure put him up there in terms of accomplishments, it also bumped him up there in the ranks of England's top managers in terms of earnings. Initially, the negotiations went smoothly for everyone and Twain was already ready to sign a new contract. But unexpectedly, Allan forcibly meddled and sold Lennon. Twain said nothing and immediately suspended the renewal negotiations. He even told Evan to wait a year later to talk about this matter.

What Twain did was high-handed at the time and both parties were unhappy. Word on the street and even rumors stated that Twain would leave to coach Manchester United that summer. Although Twain did not leave in the end, which surprised those who thought he should have left, the rumors of a conflict between him and the club were rife and caused a stink for a while. It directly affected the team's summer preparations for the competition. The will of the players in the team was unstable and transfers also tended to stagnate. As a result, the Forest team started the new season slower than the other rival teams. Otherwise they would not have to chase Arsenal so fiercely at the end of the season to capture the title.

Brosnan was aware that Twain and Allan were at odds, but did not expect him to really not renew his contract with the club thus far...

After this final game, it was believed that Evan Doughty would be eager to come up with a new contract. At that time, which course would Twain take?

The Nottingham Evening Post reporter's eyebrows knitted together. He suddenly had a bad feeling about it.

By this time, the man in his eyes had got up to leave, and the host hurriedly announced that the press conference was over. The reporters still wanted to ask questions, but Twain just walked out without even turning his head back.

It should have been a celebratory and joyous press conference, but there was hardly a trace of the festive atmosphere to be felt...

Pierce Brosnan looked around and had such an idea in his mind.

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Instead of going back to the locker room, Twain went straight to the bus parked outside the stadium, where his team was waiting for him.

Twain stepped on the bus and waved his hands as he announced, "Let's go back and celebrate, guys! The season is over, so don't think about anything else. Let's party to our hearts' content! Let loose and play!"

He was greeted by a crowd of people cheering wildly. After a tough season and gritting their teeth to persevere to this moment, what was it all for? It was to hear the boss say these words!

Previously, the boss would always brandish the whip at the back and yelled, "Run! Keep running! Don't let up!" Now that they were finally at the finish line, and also the first to meet the line, they did not have to care about anything. They could stop and take a good breath.

The bus was suddenly lively. Some people were discussing where to go relax during the holidays. Some people were busy calling their families and girlfriends. Some people simply laid back on the seats to take a nap.

Twain did not care how much of a din they made. He sat down next to Kerslake and let out a gentle breath.

"It's finally over, David."

"Ah yes." Kerslake replied with a smile, "I've got to have a good rest for a long time!"

"Me too." Twain nodded.

"You really have to have a good rest. Don't worry your wife too much. You have worked too hard during this period."

Twain gave a grunt of agreement and then adjusted the seat to lean his body back and closed his eyes. He said, "I'm going to sleep for a while. Wake me when we reach, David."

The luxury bus slowly pulled out of the Bernabéu stadium as the stadium lights slowly went out and headed for the hotel where they were staying. Everyone was still making a din in the bus. Leaning next to Kerslake, Twain was already lightly snoring away.

The din had nothing to do with him anymore

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When Twain was woken up, the bus was parked in front of the hotel, and the players had all gotten out of the bus, leaving only him, Kerslake and the driver in the bus.

"Huh? Ah, we're here?" Twain rubbed his face and sat up from his seat. But he forgot to adjust the seat angle, so his back relaxed and he laid back again. The feeling of weightlessness scared him and the expression on his face changed. He only returned to normal after he leaned back to the seat.

When he saw him looking tired like this, Kerslake laughed, "Looking like this, where is the demeanor of a European championship manager?"

"I'm still not fully awake yet...Yawn –" Twain gave a yawn and stretched his back before he sat up again and slightly moved his neck and shoulders which were a little sore from maintaining the sleeping posture. "I had a dream."

He looked at the old partner who had been with him for ten years. The lights inside the bus had gone out, but his eyes flashed in the dark, as if reflecting the lights outside the hotel entrance.

"A good dream?" Kerslake asked, following Twain's words.

"A beautiful dream." Twain nodded with certainty as he got up and left his seat. "A rare beautiful dream." He strode and stepped out of the bus.

There were still many reporters and hardcore fans of the Forest team waiting at the hotel entrance. A commotion broke out when they saw Twain walk down, leaving the security guards and policemen in charge of maintaining order to be on high alert.

Fat John and his group were already inside. When they saw Twain, they started shouting, "Tony! Hey, Tony!"

Twain heard the shouts and waved to them.

"Thank you, Tony! Thank you!" The group of people seemed to drink a lot and looked very excited. They kept shouting "thank you" to Twain. They were obviously thanking him for giving the Forest team the Treble that had never been won even in Clough's era.

Skinny Bill drank the most. He was flushed from his head to the base of his neck. When he saw Twain, he wanted to break through the barrier set up by the security guards and policemen. However, he did not have much strength due to too much drink. He was unstable on his feet and was pushed back by the police. Amid the jostle, he also vaguely shouted out, "Tony... hiccup! Tony, next year... Next year, we'll win... the Treble, the Treble... hiccup!"

Twain waved to him and said, "Certainly."

Then he walked into the hotel lobby. The security guards and police officers were relieved and withdrew to the door. With the help of the favorable location, they kept the frantic fans and reporters outside.

The players did not wait for the boss. Instead, they went out in packs of two and three. They had their own ways of recreation and fun, which had nothing to do with the manager. Twain also did not want to join in the fun. He and Kerslake went straight into the elevator to get on the floor where his room was located.

As soon as they came out of the elevator, the two men saw Evan Doughty and Allan Adams standing outside.

Evan smiled and greeted Kerslake first. Then he turned to Twain and said, Tony, we've been waiting for you for a long time."

Although Kerslake was usually carefree and loud, he was not a fool. He knew that Mr. Chairman must have come to look for Twain about something. So, he made an excuse and left first.

Kerslake discreetly left, and Twain continued to stand inside the elevator.

Evan looked at him and smiled again, "If you don't come out soon, you'll have to go back to the first floor."

Twain touched his nose and walked out with his head bowed. He longed to go back to the first floor. Although the idea had been hovering in his mind for a whole year, he still felt complicated when it was really time to say it out. He was very hesitant.

On this night, it was the night of the Champions. It was also a sleepless night for more than half of the people in Nottingham.

The players who had worked hard for a season would also have fun and indulge without restraint on a night like this. It was a night of revelry.

As for the reporters who hurried back from the stadium and the hotel, it was destined to be a busy night of work.

And now, for the three people standing at the elevator entrance, it was... a night for a showdown..

Chapter 882: Showing His Hand

"Shall we head downstairs for a drink?" Tony Twain asked the two people in front of him, as he pointed in the elevator's direction.

Evan looked at Alan before shaking his head. "No, I believe it'll be full of football players there at this hour, and it'll not be suitable for us to appear. Let's go to your room, Tony."

Tony Twain shook the key card in his hand and replied, "Alright. However, I can't offer you two anything else aside from a few bottles of mineral water." He turned to speak to the two guests as he stood before the door to his room.

Evan smiled at him, but Alan remained emotionless. Evan, who was standing beside him, looked like his bodyguard.

Twain invited the other two in after opening the door to his room. He walked in last and shut the door after them.

"What an exciting match, Tony," Evan congratulated him first. At the Bernabeu, Tony Twain was either surrounded by reporters, lifted up by his team and paraded around the stadium, or he was receiving his medal. Evan Dogerty had no way of getting close to him.

"We lost one man to a red card, and the match could have gone either way." In Twain's eye, even though the match was intense, it was not exciting. He took out three bottles of mineral water from the minibar in his room and tossed two of them to his guests, before twisting the cap of his own bottle open and emptying half of it down his throat.

"What matters most is that you won!" Evan replied happily. He was destined to become the most successful club chairman throughout Nottingham Forest's 149-year history, and he might even be known as its "greatest" one. "Aside, how will you handle the matter of Pepe's red card?" Evan asked, not in a hurry to get to the main topic at hand. "Will you appeal against it?"

Twain looked at Evan, who was purposely trying not to reveal his true motive, and laughed. "Appeal? That red card was justified, and it'll be perfectly normal for UEFA to issue a fine. The club should accept whatever decision the officials make. As for the others...they're not your concern, Evan. You wouldn't enjoy battling out in a war of words with those media reporters," he said, signaling that he would deal with things.

"Alright, I can guess what you're going to do..." Evan said, shaking his head. "However, I should warn you not to go too far."

"I know how far I can go," Twain replied, gulping down another mouthful of cool Evian water.

"Your limits..." Evan laughed bitterly. It was all he could do; Twain seldom requested for the club to clean up after him.

Actually, come to think of it, since all these years, the club would never involve itself in Twain's squabbles with the media and not bother itself with either party. Twain had succeeded in focusing the public's attention on his temper and character, instead of linking the issues at hand to the club. In short, his successes were attributed to the club, but when his reputation suffered, it had nothing to do with the Nottingham Forest Football Club.

Twain walked up to the window and opened the glass window before turning the air conditioning off. The night breeze rushed in, causing the curtains to puff up. The wind on the 11th floor of this building was rather strong.

The noise of the crowded streets drifted into the room along with the wind. The mixture of cars honking and fans' drunken chants became very vague in the wind and sounded a little unreal.

"How cooling," Twain said as he opened his arms, as if about to embrace the night.

"Hey, Tony. Do you have any plans for your vacation? I'm not talking about stuff like heading to Brazil to give a talk about the World Cup, mind you," Evan kept beating around the bush, skirting around the main topic at hand.

Tony Twain was not in a hurry as well and took his lead. "I'll be with my wife and I'll go anywhere she goes."

"You're really a great husband," praised Evan.

Twain shook his head in disagreement. "I'm only able to spend time once a year with her. I'm not a great husband...in fact, I don't even know if I have fulfilled my responsibilities as a husband." If it were not for the fact that he had to portray himself as the authoritative figure of a head coach in front of his players, he would have brought Shania back to his room for some intimate moments.

They chatted aimlessly in this manner, with Alan Adams remaining silent during their conversation. He sat beside Evan like an invisible person, drinking mouthful after mouthful of mineral water.

Perhaps, after sensing that Twain was finally getting tired after the intense match earlier on, Evan finally broached the subject matter at hand. "In truth, both Alan and I are here to discuss about your new contract, Tony."

Upon hearing the words “new contract”, Alan discarded his invisible armor and fished out a stack of paper from his attache case, passing them to Evan Dogerty.

Twain’s lips curled. What’s to come will come, and no amount of small talk will be able to stop it from happening.

“You told me that you don’t want to talk about contract renewal before the Champion’s League campaign is over. I’m pleased that it has concluded, and even more so that we’ve won it. Now, the club would like to offer you a new contract – an entirely new one that was drawn up after the competition ended, mind you...Alan put in a lot of effort into this.” Evan Dogerty knew that Twain and Alan were at loggerheads with each other, and he was trying to rekindle their relationship.

Twain did not look at Alan, nor did he reply.

“You’ll stand to gain much more benefits. If you sign it, you’ll be the highest paid manager in all of England!” Evan Dogerty said excitedly. He was not known to be generous, but he had a thorough understanding of Tony Twain’s significance to Nottingham Forest Football Club. If they could retain him, they would be able to recoup any amount of money they had spent on him – whoever heard of a champion who worried about finances?

Twain reached his arm out toward Evan. The latter hurriedly passed the contract over, while he continued describing the wonderful future Twain would stand to gain once he renewed his contract, “...we’ll move into a spanking new stadium next season, and our ticket prices will definitely be increased. However, Nottingham is too small, and we have plans to expand into overseas markets. You’ve won the treble at just the right time! Now, the transfer market is open, and our resources have been boosted. You’ll be able to get whoever you wish!”

Twain ignored Evan’s emotionally charged speech and lowered his head to browse through each clause in the contract. Evan was not lying; it was much more generous than all of his previous contracts. If he signed on it, his annual salary would be as high as 7.5 million pounds. Even though it would not make him the most highly paid manager in the world, he would be very far ahead of his peers in the English Premier League. Wenger’s annual salary of 5 million pounds would not be a threat at all.

That was not inclusive of the perks of being crowned champions. To the Godfather of Championships, winning titles was a piece of cake, as was obtaining prize money.

However, Tony Twain did not think much about all these things. Even though he did not value money highly, he had many ways of earning it. The salary the club gave him was only one of them...

Aside from his salary, he also had many endorsement deals with companies like Armani, the FM series of video games, Gillette razors and Ray Ban sunglasses. He had even signed a contract with BBC television station to work as a special guest analyst during the BBC’s live telecasts of the England national team’s matches, and it gave him another source of income. Also, sales of his autobiography “10 Years” was also pretty good, and it was ranked among the top three most popular books in England for five consecutive weeks. In fact, it was number one on the bestseller list for two weeks. Everyone was extremely curious about England’s most peculiar and mysterious manager, and compared to all of these activities, the fees he collected by writing essays occasionally for various media outlets was peanuts and not worthy of mention.

He had never asked for a raise while signing the previous long 8 year contract with the club, and he led the way for his players. His supporters thought of him as the only coach in commercial football that was not materialistic, and some people also thought that his passion for Nottingham Forest Football Club was not measurable in terms of money. In reality, it was because his 2.7 million pound annual salary was only one-tenth of his total annual income...

Twain glanced over the clauses mentioning his income quickly, hoping to see that he be guaranteed more authority. If they were written in black and white, he would still be able to produce proof to protect himself during the unfortunate event of legal issues with the club.

This would be the last chance he was giving the club.

He was disappointed, however. His authority as a manager was not stated in any clause in the contract. Perhaps, Evan did not think that there was a need to state the obvious, as managers in the Premier League wielded the most influence in the footballing world, even though it had been watered down since the last two decades. Or maybe, he did not want to state it in fear that Twain would use it to hold the club hostage in a dispute. There was also a likelihood that this was Alan Adams' idea; didn't Evan mentioned that Alan drafted the contract? Why would he include anything that would diminish his own influence in it?

Twain shook his head lightly and returned the contract back to Evan.

Evan did not expect that Twain would return the contract untouched back to him. Earlier on, he thought that Twain would sign on it without hesitation after looking at the figures he would be earning.

"Er, Tony?" Evan asked somewhat dazedly, not taking back the contract immediately.

Twain lowered his head, as if having made a very big decision. He used the same amount of effort to raise his head and smiled at Evan. "I'm not planning to sign the contract, Evan."

Evan Dogerty thought he had not heard Twain clearly and stared wide-eyed at him, trying to deduce how much possibility that he was joking from his smile.

Twain guessed Dogerty's intentions and replied, "Stop looking, I'm not joking." He brought one leg on top the other, taking a good look at the still shell-shocked club chairman. He turned his gaze to the calm-looking Alan Adams behind Dogerty and pitied him...

Alan did not have any intention to speak, and Twain remained silent after saying his piece. Evan was still in a state of shock, causing the entire room to fall into a state of silence. It was not an awkward kind of silence, however, because all three of them were thinking about different things. Noise from the streets had died down a little. Probably, the cops, who were supposed to maintain law and order, had finally decided to act.

Time passed by and Evan had long recovered from his shock. He began to ponder why Twain would reject the offer, his expression continually changing. Of course, he may have already came up with an answer, like how Alan forcefully sold Lennon one year ago, causing them to become enemies...but how could he still be so focused on something that happened a year ago? Wasn't this too petty? People have to look forward to the future, and let the past be the past. If he continues staying with us, what title or football star would he not be able to get? What was one Lennon compared to all that?

However, he did not know that Twain did not care about Lennon or Messi, but that his authority had been directly threatened and challenged. He was idealistic like that, and if such incidents happened once, they would keep occurring, and it would eventually drive him mad.

If those crazy Arabs who owned Manchester City forked out 100 million pounds to purchase George, Twain was unsure if he could make the star stay. This was because Alan would definitely get involved; from a purely commercial viewpoint, 100 million pounds could bring in three top-class midfielders who were only slightly less skillful than George. Why wouldn't that be a good deal?

Businessmen would never get it; football was not a numbers game. Some things could never be purchased with money, and had Manchester City won a trophy with all its riches and splurging? They were losers who could not even win the League Cup!

Evan pondered and observed for a very long while. He noticed that both Alan and Tony did not have any intention of making peace with each other, and he began to speak. "I think there must be some misunderstanding about this, Tony..."

Twain shook his head. "I'm tired, Evan. All I want is some rest and to stay at home with my wife. I want to take care of her needs, just like a stay at home husband." He wanted to show his cards and add, "I don't see eye to eye with Alan, and we don't have to force ourselves to work together if we have differing view points. Let's just seek different paths in life from now on," but he changed tack before the words were about to leave his mouth.

"You'll have vacation time."

"Less than a month's worth of vacation time cannot repay Shania for what I owe her over the last 11 years," Twain said very seriously, without any hint of sounding perfunctory. This was because they were the truth.

However, Evan did not believe the reasons that Twain had just gave him. He frowned and kept shaking his head, "Oh, please, don't be like this, Tony...no manager has ever left his post at the age of 45 for such reasons. You're still young, okay? You can achieve even greater things, as long as we stay as a team, don't you agree? Of all clubs in the Premier League...no, in the entire world, Nottingham Forest is most suited for you to display your talents. We need you as much as you need us."

"I admit," Twain nodded, grinning. He spoke the truth.

There were a group of players who he cultivated personally here, and his most ardent supporters were also from the club. There were media people who praised him and played mind games with him, and a club chairman who did not have much influence and did not care about what he was planning most of the time...perhaps, he might only find two of these things in another football club. There was only one Nottingham Forest in the entire world, and it was entirely unique.

Alan Adams might have been the only bad thing in the club for Twain, but he was a lethal thorn in his side. Twain would never scream at Evan and force him to choose between himself or Alan, like a jealous woman in some eight o'clock soap opera on the television.

He knew how important Alan was to Evan, as a co-founder and friend for many decades. Even if it came down to choosing between the two of them, Twain was sure that a distant relation like himself would never stand a chance.

“I only wish to rest. So, even if Nottingham Forest is the only club that’s suitable for me in the entire world, I don’t have any objection, Evan.”

Evan believed that Twain would rebut him, and he was prepared to ask him if it would really be better to go to a club bigger than Nottingham Forest. After so many years, he had long discarded his initial plan of achieving G14 status for the club. Of course, this was directly connected to the dissolution of G14 by UEFA.

“I’m not going to Manchester United, Evan. I’m not going anywhere...hmm, maybe I’ll go to the States; Shania’s career is based there. However, I’m not going to coach there. Do they play football over there? I’m clueless about American Football,” Twain said, turning his palms up, showing a ‘relaxed’ pose.

Evan stared at the grinning Twain, as if he wanted to see through all of him.

Twain stopped talking.

Both of them stared at each other for a while before Evan got up from the sofa. “I hope you’ll take some time to consider, Tony. There’s still a month before your contract will be up, and this contract...” he patted it for effect before continuing, “...you can keep it.”

He was about to leave.

Twain got up to send his guests off. “Don’t waste your effort, Evan. Spend it to look for my successor. I’m quitting, I’m serious,” he said in a very serious tone.

Evan did not reply and merely left with Alan.

He remained silent until both of them walked into the empty elevator. He only erupted in anger after the elevator doors were tightly shut, “Fuck! How could he do something like that!!”

Alan remained silent by his side and listened to his old friend and boss unleash his unhappiness.

“Who does he think he is?! Does he think he’s so great after winning three titles? How could he reject an annual salary of 7.5 million pounds?! Tell me, Alan!”

Evan Dogerty turned around in a flourish and stared at Alan Adams.

“Tell me, did I wrong him in any way? I was cleaning up after him while he spoke arrogantly! I fulfilled all of his requests, and he has basically become the Supreme Emperor of Nottingham Forest in the eyes of the media. Who still remembers that I’m the club’s chairman? But I didn’t care...I really don’t care about such things! I only want him to continue managing this football club, and to win trophies for us! Yet, he’s still unsatisfied, he...fuck him!”

Evan punched the gold plated walls of the elevator, causing it to rumble. The entire elevator seemed to be shaking.

“Alright, I know what he’s actually thinking about. What bullshit about accompanying his wife? He’s only trying to complain that he doesn’t have enough authority. How much does he want? Does he want to directly replace me as the club’s chairman? If that happened, no one will be able to control him.” Evan laughed coldly all of a sudden, before continuing, “The media has created an image of him as the ‘King of Nottingham Forest’, and he really bought it...laughable!”

The lift stopped moving with a ‘Ding!’ and the doors opened slowly. They were at the first floor now.

Evan did not turn to look at his companion, the rage long gone from his face. No one could tell that he had just unleashed a volley of vulgarities in the lift. “Alan, prepare a shortlist of potential successors. I want to see it latest by next afternoon. Then, we’ll start looking for the next coach,” he said calmly.

Alan nodded, before realizing that it would be more prudent not to show Evan that he was all-knowing. As such, he asked, “Aren’t we going to wait for June 30th any longer?”

“A new coach, new plan and new formation will take time to meld. It’ll be too late if we wait until then. We’ll have lost out to our competitors.”

Evan walked out of the elevator as he spoke, with Alan behind him. Both of them walked past the great hall and out of the entrance, before diving into a black sedan that had long been waiting for them, disappearing into the night.

Chapter 883: The Storm before the Night

It wasn’t until noon the next day that Twain met all the Nottingham Forest team members in the restaurant, both players and coaches. There was no one having meals in the restaurant in the morning. Twain knew that these people went through a full frenzy night of partying so all of them must have slept in. Anyways, the season had already ended so he would not ask someone else to knock on their doors.

After the team lunch, they would take a flight back to England, then an open-top double-decker bus from Birmingham Airport into Nottingham. After they arrived, they had an interview with the mayor at the city square, after which they would climb onto the town hall balcony and meet the fans that would gather there. That was their itinerary for the day. There was no arrangement to celebrate during the evening at the City Stadium as the City Stadium was fully closed for final preparations before its demolition.

On the flight from Madrid to Birmingham, Evan Doughty and Allan Adams were in first class seating and did not come to find Twain, thought Twain did not want them to disturb him either. He leaned against his seat and texted Shania to ask where she wanted to go this holiday.

Most of the players continued to sleep on the plane. The beautiful air stewardesses were elegant and careful, but they were also helpless in front of guys who were continuously snoring.

After the plane landed in Birmingham, it was Twain and Wood who were carrying the championship trophy and the first to walk down the plane’s ladder.

Reporters who had been waiting there for a long time swarmed up. In an instant, there were several flashes and some players who were still drowsy almost rolled down the ladder when they looked up.

Twain was interviewed after disembarking and was asked to give an impromptu speech.

“This is a gift to all the Nottingham Forest fans.” He held up his trophy and the silver glinted in the afternoon sun.

Instead of an emotional and passionate speech, he simply waved to the camera, “I love you all.”

Then he got into the crowd and left the scene under police protection.

This left a few stunned reporters facing each other. It was not like Twain to give such a short speech.

Only Evan Doughty and Allan Adams knew why – when Twain has decided to leave the scene, there was not much meaning to what else he wanted to say.

Twain forced a smile in front of everyone, but he was not in a good mood. If he were alone, that smile would disappear and he would just stare into space.

He stayed like this, zoned out, until he ascended to the second-floor balcony of City Hall to face the tens of thousands of Nottingham Forest fans below. He only got up when he needed to show up, choosing to hide behind the other players most of the time, his gaze was constantly moving.

Because every time he saw the enthusiastic fans below, he had to think about how to deal with them after he announced the news. What would the people who once supported him think? Would they continue to support him or would they shun him? Would he need to wear sunglasses and dress up differently whenever he walked within the city of Nottingham?

And his players. How would they feel in their hearts if his most loyal players knew their coach betrayed them? Twain did not dare to think about this future. He felt sorry for the team, but he had no choice, he did not want to force himself to stay anymore. Leading the team to the club’s unprecedented Triple Crown may be his only compensation for these people, so this also allowed Twain’s heart to settle a little.

Twain did not tell Shania when he was making the decision, perhaps he could have sought Shania’s comfort and support. But that would also make Shania worry for himself. Twain did not want this to happen, so he chose himself to bear these burden alone.

“Coach! Hey, coach!” Bale called a few times from the side before waking up the daydreaming Twain.

“Ah?” What’s the matter, little monkey? ” Twain called Bale’s nickname.

“They’re all shouting your name.” Bale pointed to the crowds below.

Twain knew he needed to go forward and wave again, so he squeezed towards the front.

The fans below stopped shouting his name when they saw Twain reappeared, then came a huge cheer afterwards.

Twain waved to them with a huge smile on his face.

Wood handed him the microphone from his hand. It was not as simple as just waving his hand, he needed to make a speech.

Twain received the microphone and looked at the people below, his mouth opened but he did not know what to say. So he dazed out on the spot while holding the microphone.

As the cheers faded, Twain realized that he would be exposed to be out of state if he continued dazing. He coughed and began, "Thank you all so much for being here."

Then he got stuck again.

"Well... Thank you again for this... One season of support. He almost said, "the support of the past 11 years."

"We won three of the most important championships. " Twain pointed to the three trophies of different shapes and sizes in front of him. They were the English Premier League Champions Trophy, the FA Cup and the freshly released European Champions Cup. "Here are three love letters for all of you. I love you all. "

When he said this, Twain was not being pretentious and fake. He really loved this group of fans. After all, He has coached this team for eleven years, there were no fake feelings involved.

Someone passionately screamed from below, "I love you, Tony."

There was no shortage of sexy hot girls within the crowds. The players behind him whistled.

"We wouldn't have achieved those results without your support, " Twain continued after the commotion. "I will firmly remember you guys, this day belongs to you, go and have lots of fun!" he gave the microphone to the people around him and stepped back.

"The head coach is a little weird..." Bale muttered to Wood.

Wood looked at Twain and did not respond.

"Maybe he was too tired..." Others were also aware about how weird Twain was as what Bale said. If it was like in the past, the head coach would surely deliver a speech here that would excite his supporters and incite fear in his opponents, then he would bring the atmosphere to its climax. But today's head coach was like a poet. He was a little... sentimental...?

His statement garnered the approval from others. During these days, the head coach was really tired. Everyone saw this; it was definitely not fake. There were only players, hence they would at most be physically tired, but being the coach would involve being emotionally fatigued. If he was tired mentally, he would naturally not have sufficient strength to make an emotional and passionate speech here.

The revelry with the fans continued into the evening. Nottingham Forest's players and the three trophies finally disappeared from the second-floor balcony. Their whole team went to the mayor's dinner, and the fans were also leaving as they would continue to celebrate this great season in their respective bars.

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On the same day, the media also started buzzing.

The Spanish media were not happy with the Nottingham Forest winning the Champions League. They did not think Nottingham Forest had any reason to win the championship and the trophy was stolen by them. Whether it was the team line-up, sports physique or the audience's opinions, Real Madrid was more qualified to lift the trophy than they were.

In addition to criticizing Tony Twain for his lack of championship demeanor in his post-match press conference, they also talked about Pepe's red card. A majority probably wanted to force Pepe to retire, if not they would not stop criticizing about it.

Real Madrid did not speak yet but Angel Torres, the younger brother of the president of Real Madrid, Angel Torres, who had a Real Madrid membership card, jumped out and publicly attacked Pepe, claiming that "Nottingham Forest should have expelled such violent players from the team".

Despite Pepe's public apology in the English media the next day and his tears of remorse, the Spanish people did not waver at all. There were still some Spanish media clamors for Pepe to be banned from matches forever. The reason being "In the final match of the European Champions Cup, in such an important, high-profile game, such violent actions were a disgrace to football, and such a person simply does not deserve to play football!"

Marca was concerned about UEFA's reaction towards the incident. The UEFA's response was swift — in fact everything regarding Nottingham Forest and Tony Twain, like penalty decisions were decided quite quickly. On the second day after the match they had already made a penalty decision: a 15-game ban and a fine of 50,000 euros for Pepe's European-wide matches. That meant that even if Nottingham Forest reached the Champions League final next season, Pepe would miss all 13 games. On top of that, Pepe would be suspended for the European Super Cup at the end of August and then another match in the next season — that is, if Nottingham Forest could still qualify for European competitions, whether it is the Confederations Cup or the Champions League, or for the European Super Cup.

This was a rather severe penalty.

Nottingham Forest did not appeal against this. Instead, they quietly accepted the penalty, so the Spanish media had speculated whether the Nottingham Forest club would also impose penalties on Pepe... Unfortunately, they did not receive any news on this and Nottingham Forest Club did not announce any form of punishment for Pepe — he would not even have a smaller winning bonus.

Pepe was in a very bad mood at first because after calming down, he also felt that he had broken into a great disaster. He even thought about retiring in his mind. If it were not for the coach, he might have just gone ahead and retired.

It was the head coach who found him at lunchtime the next day, pulling him into the corner for more than half an hour and explaining to him about the club and his personal's stance. Regardless of this matter there would be no further complications, so just let bygones be bygones. Twain on his end understood what he did at that time and would not impose any further punishment.

Twain's tolerance and understanding made Pepe grateful and strengthened his determination to remain loyal to the Nottingham team. Now Twain was still dealing with all kinds of issues, and when he was free, he would rebut against those Spanish media on his own forums. These Spanish people would definitely have the opportunity to suffer Twain's scolding.

Most of the English media were speculating about another event that had nothing to do with winning the title — whether the affinity between Tony Twain and Nottingham Forest have come to an end. Ever since the news was exposed, it was like a tropical rainstorm, sweeping the whole English media. As for Tony Twain leading the team to attain the Triple Champions, the news rather became more common and uninteresting in comparison...

The mayor also asked about this matter during the celebratory dinner at the mayor's official residence. The Nottingham team's trio laughed harmoniously at the mayor's concern, as if there were no contradictions at all. Twain continuously promised to "settle down in a few days first then consider a contract extension" and Evan Doughty assured the mayor as he swore that the club would offer their meritorious coach a contract that would match what he had achieved so far.

But the mayor would never know what the three people were actually thinking.

There were players who heard similar news from other sources, running to the head coach during the party and asking if he was really leaving. This was what Twain thought was the hardest to deal with: He did not want to lie in front of his players, but then again, this was not the time to reveal everything. He only entertained them by saying, "You guys will know then." He wanted to pretend to be mysterious so everyone would not blindly speculate.

At the end he simply hid outside alone to enjoy the cold breeze.

This was the corner of the garden of the official residence. It was very dark, and usually no one would come to this place. Twain hid here, thinking that he could get through the night, but he did not expect to meet yet an uninvited guest.

"If I said, 'Hey, what a coincidence!' You wouldn't buy it, would you?" The visitor was carrying a wine glass and it looked like he was coming out to enjoy the cold breeze as well.

Twain looked at him and did not say anything.

The man continued, "You don't have to be like this right, Twain? Since you have decided to leave, then the feud between us should be written off, shouldn't it?"

Twain voice seemed to come out of his nose, "Good evening, Mr. Allan Adams."

Twain was finally willing to talk to him. Allan smiled, "I have not much opinions about you, Tony. Everything I do is based on the financial considerations for the club. It's like everything you think is based on team results. The two of us... well maybe if we weren't handling such matters, could be friends."

"Maybe," Twain said coldly. If it were not for the man in front of him, his affinity with the Nottingham Forest might not have been broken so fast.

"Can I ask you what you're going to do after you leave here?" No, it's not the question asking where you are going with your wife, it's about football..." Allan waved.

Twain thought, then shook his head, "I don't know, no plans. Maybe I'll go some time without touching football." Then he smiled coldly. "Are you still worried that I'm going to Manchester United to become Nottingham Forest's enemy?"

Allan did not say anything, it was as if he was acknowledging it silently.

“I’m not interested.” Twain shrugged. “I can’t be too sure about the far future, but I won’t be coaching any Premier League team in the years to come. ”

He did not say why, but the reason was obvious. Leading the Nottingham Forest for eleven years, this team had long been integrated with him — both entities were one and the same. He was simply unable to imagine himself standing as the manager of another Premier League team and directing them against Nottingham Forest. When he was at Nottingham Forest, he managed to put the rest of the Premier League on the opposite side of Nottingham Forest and made them enemies of Nottingham Forest, so how could he now turn around and become the very enemy he created?

Allan seemed relieved. When they signed the contract with Twain, they had never thought of what was happening today, otherwise he would definitely write in the contract, “Once the two sides decide not to renew the contract, five years upon the expiry of the contract, Party B would not be allowed to coach any team within the same league.” At least now he was a little settled.

Was he afraid of Tony? To tell the truth, he was indeed afraid. He was afraid to become an enemy of Tony Twain. When this guy goes crazy, he throws everything out of the window, he would become a completely different person.

After confirming this matter, Allan had no more reason to talk about the past with Tony Twain, he used an excuse to leave the place, leaving Tony Twain alone behind. Twain looked at the brightly lit doorway, as the noise came out vaguely.

He suddenly felt a little lonely, but he liked this type of loneliness. If it was possible, it was best to keep him lonely until the end of the dinner party, and then he could go back and hug his dear wife.

After spending a moment alone in the dark, Twain returned to the lively hall. Chris Kerslake came to him, “Where have you been, Tony? I was looking for you but could not find you. ”

“Go outside and catch a breather. What are you looking for me for?”

“Well... I heard a little rumor.” Chris Kerslake looked at Twain.

“And you want me to give you validation?”

Chris Kerslake nodded.

Twain hesitated for a while.

“You’ll know by then, David. ” He was still using the same excuse to avoid the question.

“When? If you want to renew your contract with the club, it would be usually around these few days?”

“You’ll find out in a few days, David. ” Twain patted his old partner on the shoulder.

He did not lie on purpose, but he really did not think about how to say goodbye to the people closest to him. After today, the team would be immediately disbanded and everyone could go and settle their own respective matters. Some would go on vacation and they would not meet each other until the next gathering. Because of the World Cup, the first to return to the team were those players who were not

selected for their respective national teams, Twain needed to commentate on the World Cup, so the team would be led by his assistants on the time being. By the time the World Cup was over, his contract with the club would have long been expired.

He also knew that Evan and Allan would not really wait until June 30 to find his successors, and the news would not be able to stay hidden for a few days. Still, he wanted this to drag on, so at least he was able to think of ways to bade farewell to these people.

“If there are any developments, I’ll turn to you first to let you know, David.” Twain laughed.

“Okay...” Chris Kerslake sighed helplessly. “My handphone will be switched on twenty-four seven. ”

“Thank you, David.”

“What are you thanking me for? Sigh, I also don’t know why, but my heart feels a little uneasy. Maybe I drank a little too much?”

Chris Kerslake muttered and turned away.

Twain’s troubles weighed heavier and heavier.

“I’m sorry, comrades. I’m not going to continue to lead you to victory and championship. I have decided to resign automatically when my contract expires because of some conflict between me and the club. I wish you all all the best.”

There were so many people, how could he say all of them in front of them?

Chapter 884: A Storm Brewing

Twain was lying on the big bed at home. He was awakened by the morning sun.

“Good morning, champion manager.”

Shania laid next to him, drawing circles on Twain’s chest with her hair.

Twain squinted his eyes as he looked out of the window at the bright white sunshine and groggily asked, “What time is it?”

“9:47.” Shania glanced sideways at the small alarm clock placed on the bedside table and continued to play the game of drawing her hair around on Twain’s chest.

Twain watched Shania play the game on his chest, and felt a warm feeling rose within his heart.

This was the most important person in his life, so he could not hide this matter any longer.

“Jor.”

“Hmmm?” Shania was a little surprised, and she stopped her hand movements as well. One must know that although “Jor” was Shania’s official nickname, Uncle Tony rarely called her by that name. He had always called her by the name “Shania” since they first met.

“Have you thought about where we’re going for the holidays?”

Shania recovered her composure and continued to draw her circles as she said, "We can go to Brazil. Anyway, the World Cup is being held in Brazil and you have to do the commentary for the games. We can also visit my parents on the way, and then we'll do our own fun things after. After which, you can go do your commentary and I'll head to America." Shania had already arranged for the future plans to be formed.

"That's a good idea." Twain also agreed with Shania's arrangement. But he still had a question, "So what about after the World Cup?"

"Huh?" Shania stopped what she was doing again and looked up at Twain. "Don't you have to be back in the team then? Your team starts to gather on June 20th..."

Twain smiled and watched Shania without answering. The more Shania spoke, the more she felt that something was off. Then she did not go on and stared at Twain, which implied – "Do you have anything you want to tell me, Uncle Tony?"

Twain reached out and gently rubbed his hand on Shania's head as he said, "Well, my contract with the club is soon going to expire and I'm not going to renew my contract with the club." His tone was calm, as if he was talking about something very common.

Shania's reaction was not calm at all. This time she directly pushed her body up from the bed with both hands, opened her mouth, and stared wide-eyed at her husband in front of her.

"I'm going to have a lot of time to spend with you." Twain smiled and spread his arms wide open to draw Shania into his embrace.

Shania laid on top of Twain's chest and still trying to make sense of it. She said "This... You're not lying to me, are you, Uncle Tony?"

"Today is not April Fool's Day." Twain pretended to be angry.

"Well... why are you doing this? You've just won the Treble for the Forest team..." Shania still did not understand. It was reasonable to say that having just won the Treble, this should be the peak of Uncle Tony's career. How could he choose not to renew the contract at this time? "You're not going to another team, are you? Like Manchester United or something..."

Twain continued to laugh, "Did I not just say that I'm going to have more time to spend with you?"

Shania turned her head sideways over so that she could see Twain's eyes as she asked, "What's the reason? I don't understand why you choose to resign at this time."

"Firstly, I can have more time to be with you. Secondly..." Twain hesitated for a little while before he continued, "Allan Adams and I have a contradiction. It's a contradiction that can affect my work. But he and the chairman have a good relationship, so obviously I have to leave on my own."

Shania knew that her husband was at odds with the marketing manager. When Allan Adams forced his way in to sell Lennon, Twain came home angry for several days, which caused Shania to worry for a long time for fear of the provocation to his heart. As a result, she did not have a good impression of the man. The reason was adequate enough that she no longer doubted that she was dreaming, or that Uncle Tony was pulling her leg.

“If you want to resign, just go ahead and resign. My Uncle Tony is the greatest manager in the world, and the people who want to hire him can line up from London to Paris.” Shania held her chin with both hands as she laid on the bed with both her feet swaying behind her.

“Hey, Shania. I’m talking about spending more time with you.” Twain reminded her with a little surprise.

Shania glanced at Twain and said, “If it’s true, then that’s fine.”

Twain wanted to explain himself, but Shania had already jumped out of bed. She said, “I’m going to cook for you. Are you hungry?”

After saying that, she skipped as she ran out.

Twain laid in bed. He did feel hungry. But what he cared more about than the noise rumbling in his stomach was that Shania obviously did not believe what he said...

He laid back on the bed again, feeling deflated, as he looked at the ceiling and sighed.

What a failure. He had gotten so many championship titles that he just had to say he was going to win a title, and the media and the fans and the players would all believe it. But when he wanted to make his wife happy, his wife did not believe him.

Ah, it’s easy to take the champion title but so hard to coax my wife...

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Italian football’s Serie A was long over and Inter Milan, which failed to reach the Champions League final, was dismissed the day after the league tournament ended. As the manager of the team, Mourinho was even less likely to stay at Milan to continue working, even if he was a workaholic. At this point, he was basking in the sun on the beach in his hometown of Setúbal Municipality, Portugal’s third-largest port city.

With his upper torso naked and wearing only a pair of printed shorts, the world’s top-earning manager was lying on a white beach chair with sunglasses on. Next to him was a glass of whisky with ice cubes floating in it on a small round table. His cell phone was placed next to it and underneath the phone was an opened book.

There were plenty of tourists on the beach. Most of whom came here with their families for a holiday and to relax. However, Mourinho was alone, not because he was at odds with his wife. He just wanted to enjoy his time alone. Sometimes he liked to be this way. Whether he was contemplating a problem, or when he had nothing in mind, he felt it was great to have such a quiet time which only belonged to him and he could do anything without anyone to disturb him.

Unfortunately, the time left undisturbed today did not last long.

The cell phone on the round table rang.

Mourinho did not pick it up at first. He laid motionless in his chair, as if he were asleep. Anyway, he wore sunglasses, so no one knew if he was asleep with his eyes closed.

The phone rang for a while before it was automatically cut off. Mourinho did not even turn his head throughout the whole process. He was still enjoying his own contented time.

Very soon, the phone rang again, and it was not cut off for a long time. The man lying on the chair finally got up somewhat impatiently. Instead of getting up, he reached out to touch his cell phone, put the Bluetooth headset on his ear, and pressed the answer button to say, "Hello."

"José!" It was the voice of his agent and good friend, Mendes. "I have the latest update which I think you'll be interested."

"Is it still about Manchester United?" Mourinho's voice was languid, like the afternoon sun.

Before the end of the season, the English and Italian media were speculating about the rumor that Manchester United was interested in asking Mourinho to take over Martin O'Neill's position. In fact, it was not a rumor. The walls had ears and no secret could stay secret forever in the world. Tony Twain could hide that he did not renew his contract with the club, but it did not escape The Sun. The affair between Mourinho and Manchester United was naturally harder to hide from the omnipotent reporter.

As Mourinho's agent, Mendes did have closer contact with the Manchester United Football Club. Manchester United wanted to reconstruct its glory, so it obviously needed a big-name manager of high quality and prestige. O'Neill's ability was not bad, but he could not control the locker room. Originally, Tony Twain was the most suitable candidate and was handpicked by the godfather of Manchester United, Ferguson, to be the successor. However, he had no interest in any other team except Nottingham Forest. Manchester United only then found Mourinho because they knew the relationship between Mourinho and Inter Milan was not inseparably close.

Although Mourinho had the world's highest salary for a manager at Inter Milan, he had not been happy there. Italy's football environment was completely different from the English Premier League. As a team's manager, he had too many restrictions, like he was walking with shackles around his neck, wrists and ankles. He could not talk about a lot of things because once he said them today and the media embellished tomorrow, then President Moratti would come look for him to have an "intimate long talk" the day after tomorrow. The rival managers had always thought Mourinho was not that great and that he was just a regular manager who talked big and of an unorthodox background. He could get the highest salary only because he could package himself while the Italian academic type of managers felt that it was beneath them to do so. For them, football was football and not to be diluted by anything else. A manager's job was to train the team, develop tactics and direct the game. To become the team's number one star would be to upstage the main attraction.

Sometimes he really missed his time in England. Although there was a club president who liked to criticize or give orders summarily, he could still breathe more freely there.

Like the sea breeze here, the freedom belonged only to him.

"No, it's not Manchester United this time." Mendes's voice on the phone sounded different from usual. Perhaps the signal was somewhat distorted during transmission, or perhaps because Mendes' own mood had changed.

Mourinho soon knew the answer to that question.

“There is a football club that has joined the ranks to compete for you.” Mendes tried to keep the pace of his tone close to normal, but in fact he was a little faster than usual. It could be heard that he himself was very interested in this matter.

“Oh –” Mourinho did not even raise his eyebrows. His tone was still languid. He did not ask which team. Such things happened all the time, whether it was Real Madrid or Manchester United. Their interest in him had not been just a day or two anyway. What he was doing now was to reach out to get the wine glass on the table.

“It’s also an English Premier League team.” Mendes was still keeping it in suspense, even if Mourinho did not cooperate. “This team has just made headlines in the major sports media...”

Mourinho’s hand had almost touched the glass when he stopped. His other hand pushed his body up. It was his biggest movement up until now since answering the phone because he was surprised.

He certainly knew which team Mendes was talking about.

“Nottingham Forest? How is that possible?” Mourinho was so surprised that his voice became much louder. The laziness he felt just now had been swept away, all of which was cleanly evaporated by the afternoon sun.

Mendes smiled and was very pleased with his friend’s reaction. “I have another piece of news, which is related to this.”

“What?”

“The contract renewal talks between Tony Twain and the club had collapsed and he decided not to renew the contract. He will leave automatically at the end of his contract.”

Mourinho’s mood at the moment could no longer be described as “surprise.” Perhaps it would be more appropriate to use “shock.” He still maintained his posture from just now, with his left hand supporting his body and his right hand reaching out to the wine glass.

“The talks fell apart? Was the salary too low?” It was the only reason Mourinho could think of. As one of the most successful managers in the world of football, Tony Twain’s ultra-low salary had always been incomprehensible to people. Mourinho was the same as well.

“No. I got the news from another source that Nottingham Forest offered him the highest annual salary in the English Premier League history.”

The Portuguese coach was completely baffled. Twain was not even satisfied with the highest annual salary. What more did he want?

“If you want to know the reason why, you can call him, José. I only know these details. Twain has kept this matter as top secret, and now the media are waiting for him and the club to announce the success of his contract renewal.” As a friend of Mourinho’s, Mendes naturally guessed what he was thinking at the moment.

Hearing this last sentence, Mourinho’s lips curled up. He knew that Twain was playing with the media.

But he would not call Twain. As he had said many years ago, as long as they were both football managers, they could only be enemies, and not friends.

After he ended the call with Mendes, Mourinho laid back down again and continued to enjoy the time that belonged to him only. But this time his mind is no longer carefree, but in a turmoil like a storm in the sea.

That guy, Tony Twain actually left Nottingham Forest where he had been for eleven years... What the hell is he thinking? Nottingham Forest has just achieved a great accomplishment of the Treble win. It is now time to take center stage and lord it over others. But the manager leaves instead. What will be the future of this team? It's truly worrying...

But in fact, Mourinho was not concerned about these things. He cared only about which team Tony Twain would take over after he left Nottingham Forest. In his view, Manchester United was undoubtedly the most likely. Manchester United had always been interested in working with Twain. Previously, it was because Twain did not want to leave the Forest team that they were unable to recruit him. And now...

After pondering for a while, Mourinho suddenly turned his attention back. Shouldn't this supposed to be Tony Twain's trouble instead? Why am I worrying about it for?

Just as he was clearing the mess in his head and preparing to continue his vacation, his cell phone rang again.

He thought it was Mendes with the latest news again, so he put on his earpiece to answer the phone. What came on was a familiar and yet strange voice, and it sounded excited, "Hey, José! I want to book an appointment for you and me to have a drink together!"

Mourinho stared blankly for a moment and then he realized that the caller was the man who was just on his mind – Tony Twain.

"Did you not quit drinking after the heart attack?"

"For some people, it is necessary to drink together. Other beverages will not do. Anyway, it's just this one time."

"I recall saying that unless we're not enemies in football, otherwise..."

Twain interrupted Mourinho's words to say, "Hey, I've already resigned from Nottingham Forest!"

"Manchester United has an open position."

Twain smiled and said, "I've heard that they're more interested in you. In fact, I'm actually not going to continue as a manager."

Mourinho was stunned by Twain's words. Then he figured it out again – it must have been because of his heart. "But I'm in Portugal now."

"It doesn't matter. I know you're going to do the commentary on the World Cup for the Portuguese television station. So am I. We'll meet up in Brazil!" Twain took it Mourinho's words as he had agreed to his request for a drink.

Mourinho wanted to say something more, but Twain had already hung up the phone. Judging from his voice, Twain's mood was quite good. It was really strange that he could still be in such a good mood after he left something that he had poured eleven years of hard work into ...

He shook his head and laid down again. This time he succeeded in taking a nap without any phone calls to bother him again.

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The next day, the media finally waited for the news they had been longing for – the Nottingham Forest Football Club was going to hold a press conference to announce the latest news of its contract extension with Twain!

It looked like Twain did not deceive them. He did indeed carry out the work on the contract renewal after the Champions League final. There was a result after just three short days.

However, when a large group of reporters came to attend the press conference in high spirits, they found that only Evan Doughty was on the stage without the other lead character, Tony Twain.

Discussions quickly broke out throughout the room. In the crowd, Pierce Brosnan had an ominous hunch which grew stronger with the discussions.

The press conference was brief.

With a grim face, Evan Doughty had announced the news that the contract renewal talks between the club and Twain had been terminated and that the two sides would not renew the contract. It instantly shocked all the reporters present. Even The Sun reporter who had already caught wind of the news earlier, was stunned after the rumor was confirmed.

Then Evan Doughty looked back on Twain's contribution to the team and said that no matter what and where Twain did in the future, he was a man that was forever etched in the Nottingham Forest Football Club's memories and he wished him good luck.

Having said that, Evan Doughty got up and went out, ignoring the reporters who were shouting his name in the back.

The reporters were, of course, full of questions. Why did the negotiations for the contract renewal fail? Which party was responsible? Nottingham Forest had just won the Treble but suffered a major change. What was going to happen in the future? Who would succeed Tony Twain? Where would Tony Twain go after he had left the Forest team?

But no one would come to answer these questions for them.

The venue suddenly became chaotic. Someone rushed out of the door and sped away to leave. He wanted to rush back to be the first to release this piece of news which would absolutely shock the world of European football.

While Pierce Brosnan pulled out his cell phone somewhat in a daze and dialed Twain's number directly.

No matter how many times he dialed, all he heard was, "... Sorry, the number you have dialed is not in service..."

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When a tropical storm formed over the Atlantic Ocean, Tony Twain was sitting on a recliner at Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro. His wife, Shania, was frolicking in the water in a bikini in front of him, while he was earnestly writing a postcard with his head down.

His cell phone was placed next to it, but it was turned off long ago.

“Dear David: If you receive this postcard, you must have known what happened. Thank you very much for the eleven years you’ve spent with me. You’re a good helper and partner in my work. I’m very sorry that I had taken my anger out on you whenever I was in a bad mood. But from now on I promise I’ll never yell at you again. You’re a great assistant manager. You’ve done a great job in the team. I hope you can continue to do that. The team can’t survive without you. Please forgive me again for saying goodbye to you in this way, because I really don’t know how to face you all again...”

Twain stopped when he wrote to this point and looked up at his wife not far away. Brazil’s sunshine was so bright that he had to squint his eyes to admire her energetic sexy figure. He lowered his head again to continue writing.

“... I wish you all the best. Your most loyal friend, Tony. Twain.”

After he finished writing it, he picked up the next blank postcard and placed it on his lap. He continued to bow his head, and occasionally lifted his head to look at Shania’s figure for a moment.

The weather was good today. The salty and damp sea breeze brushed against the branches and leaves of the palm trees by the sea. The wind prompted wave after wave of the azure sea to surge on the pure white fine sand beach with the crashing sounds of undulating tides. The warm sunshine shone on each person’s face, showing their different expressions. Contrasted against the sapphire-like sky, the Copacabana Beach was bustling with activities and people. It was extremely lively.

This was a holiday.

Chapter 885: Traces of the Wind

The soap opera of last night was replaying on television but not many people were watching it. The television in bars was only left on to create a bit of atmosphere. Business here was slow in the afternoons, especially now that the football season was over. Burns was leaning on the bar table, wiping a row of glasses on it while John, Bill and the gang was gathered at a corner, drinking and just passing time.

“Days without football are so boring... Yawn—,” Bill yawned as he stretched his back, tears forming in his eyes.

“You’re like a drug addict Bill. And you’re still so skinny... Ha!” Someone teased him from the side.

“Even if I’m addicted, I’ll be addicted to football!” Bill glared at the person and continued to lie on the table, drawing on the beer mug with his nails, “The days after the football season is over are always the hardest...” He groaned weakly.

“Good thing the World Cup is starting soon. Who has tickets?” John asked next to him.

“Me!”

“I do!”

“The full set!”

Everyone raised their hands.

John laughed as he looked at them, “Great, we’ll be spending the summer together again! Ha ha!”

“Who knows, we might be able to meet Tony,” someone said all of a sudden, everyone chirped in after being stunned for a moment.

“That’s right, he’ll be in Brazil explaining the matches!”

“Oh no, what a dilemma... I want to watch the games live but I don’t want to miss Tony’s analysis...”

The group of people eventually started to chat about Twain.

At this moment, there was a flash on the television screen and the picture changed from an intense gunfight in the streets of London to the news station where a male news anchor with gold-rimmed glasses was seated.

“We interrupt your program to bring you a piece of news that we’ve just received...”

Bill was originally lying on the table, looking around aimlessly when he saw this change on the television. He took an interest to it and decided to look up and see what that news anchor was going to say.

The picture changed again, to a place that he was very familiar with—The City Grounds.

A reporter was standing outside the gate of the City Grounds holding a microphone, he pointed to the building behind him, and said while facing the camera, “Just earlier, Nottingham Forest Football Club called for a press conference. The club chairman, Evan Doughty, announced on the press conference that the contract renewal talks between Nottingham Forest and Tony Twain has officially ended. Twain will no longer hold the position of Nottingham Forest’s manager after his contract is up...”

Bill stood up suddenly, knocking over the chair behind him and the beer mugs on the table. The people around him was stood up in shock as they were afraid that the beer might drip on their pants.

“Hey! Bill! What’s wrong with you?”

“Have you had too much to drink?”

Bill did not react to that. He merely opened his eyes wide as he looked at the television, his mouth was open as if he was scared by something.

John turned back to look at the television, other than a couple of them who were still worried about their pants, the rest looked up at the television.

The television was replaying the scene of the press conference earlier on the screen.

Evan Doughty was seated in front of the table facing the numerous microphones and he said with a blank expression, "...We regret to announce this piece of information. As we were unable to reach an agreement with Mr Tony Twain regarding the extension of his contract, both parties have decided to end negotiations. When the contract is up, Tony Twain will no longer assume the role of Nottingham Forest manager. We thank him for all his contributions to the club in the 11 years he was here, and we are grateful to him for leading the team to 12 champions' trophies. We wish him the best of luck."

The bar suddenly grew silent. The sounds from the television was very clear. Burns also stopped doing what he was working on and looked up at the television.

The beer on the table dripped onto the pants of the people who were still seated, causing a wet patch on their pants but they did not even seem to notice it.

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George Wood was taking a walk with his mother in the gardens outside to soak in the sun when his phone rang.

It was his agent, Wox, "Good afternoon George, what are you doing now?"

"I'm taking a walk with my mother," Wood took a look at his mother leaning on him.

"I see, looks like you haven't seen what's on the television yet. I have a piece of news for you," Wox stopped for awhile before continuing, "Tony Twain has quit."

Wood did not manage to react to it at first because such a thought had never crossed his mind before. But he managed to clear his mind soon and asked, "What?"

"It was on the news just now. Forest and Twain failed to come to an agreement regarding the contract renewal, the contract is not renewed. So, come June 30th, he will no longer be your boss."

Wood stopped. Sophia sensed something wrong with her son and she also stopped to look at him.

Wood did not speak again and he hung up silently.

"George?" Sophia asked softly, "What happened?"

Wood looked at his mother, hesitated before saying, "Boss has left Forest."

Sophia exclaimed in surprise. She covered her mouth with her hands very quickly, but her eyes were still opened wide.

"Mr Twain..."

Wood nodded. His mother must have felt that it was inconceivable, but why did he feel so empty inside? As if he had lost something very important...

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The English Premier League had ended so the English Football League Championship would naturally have ended too. Tang did not stay in England then, instead, he flew back to his hometown in Sichuan

with his fiancée. He wanted to tell his parents about the most important decision in his life himself, it would not do to do it via a phone call.

Tang Jing rested her head on Tang's shoulder, admiring the lush greenery of the Southern Sichuan's scenery. The two of them were on a long-distance coach going towards their hometown from Chengdu. As the manager of the team which is the champion of England, Tang was not very well-known here and they were just like any other ordinary person on the coach.

Tang had never thought that he would be married when he was in his previous life, and with a Chinese woman no less. He felt that he had one person to thank for what he had then——Tony Twain, the person that was him previously, and him now. Even though Tony achieved success in his career, he himself managed to get a family and love. He thought that it was worth it, and he might even have come off better in this deal...

That was why Tang decided to give Twain a call to invite them to his wedding with Tang Jing in the summer, right after telling his parents about his marriage with Tang Jing and paying a visit to Tang Jing's parents——He did not tell Twain in advanced, partly because Twain was very busy then in his pursuit of the treble and partly because he wanted to give Twain a surprise.

This couple who was headed towards a happy new life as a newlywed did not know about what happened on the other side of the globe, but they would probably know very soon.

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The Champions League had ended long ago. Chen Jian did not call Twain, and he did not receive any other news about Twain. However, he felt that he had already made up his mind, especially when he felt fired up together with the team when he saw Forest lifting the Champions League trophy and he could not wait to be part of them.

He thought that he should give his future to this team.

But on the next day, Mr Xia kept dampening his spirits, asking him to not be muddled impulsively. Nottingham Forest is not a place that he could dream of at that time. Achieving the treble would only make them more inclined in buying well-known football stars, instead of developing their own players. Chen Jian would not gain anything by going there and he would finally realize his mistake after sitting on the bench for a few years before leaving dejectedly. That was his future.

He decided to pack up his stuff and return to Sichuan to be with his family. Maybe that would help calm his indecisive heart.

For a few days, Mr Xia kept calling Twain's mobile phone relentlessly, but all he got in return was "The person you're trying to reach is unavailable at this time". He was infuriated and he left Chen Jian to fly to England alone. He wanted to catch hold of Twain and ask him directly about his plans.

Chen Jian returned to China alone.

Suddenly, he received a call from a stranger's number as he was waiting for his flight carrying a large backpack in Amsterdam's Schiphol airport.

“Hi, Chen Jian,” Twain’s Chinese accent sounded weird, but it was not easy for a Caucasian to speak mandarin so well so the minor difference in accent was nothing.

This phone call was from Twain.

“Where are you now?” Twain could hear that the background was a little noisy and he seemed to have heard an announcement.

“The airport, Amsterdam’s airport,” Chen Jian replied.

“Ah, you’re preparing to go home? Can you tell me about your plans for the future?”

Chen Jian fell silent for awhile before making up his mind, “I think, I would like to extend my contract with the club..”

Twain exclaimed softly on his side, before following up with, “I would advise you against doing it.”

Chen Jian was surprised, was the person on the other side not the manager of Nottingham Forest, Tony Twain? If he was, why would he not stand on the side of the team?

“You haven’t been watching the news lately, right? You’re not paying much attention to Nottingham Forest, are you?” Twain laughed, “I resigned.”

Chen Jian was so shocked that his hand trembled and he almost dropped his phone. This was too unbelievable... It was like meeting a ghost in the day.

Twain could guess the reaction of Chen Jian then. He left Forest too suddenly. The contrast between winning the trophy and leaving the team immediately after was so big that normal people would not be able to accept it.

“You should know, Chen Jian. I was the one who decided to sign you, because I had high hopes for you. However, who would have expected things to be like this now?” He was naturally referring to the matter of him leaving Forest, “I don’t know who my successor will be, and I did not recommend anyone to the club. So, I don’t know what kind of attitude the new manager will have towards you. I don’t even know whether the club will offer you an extension to your contract. If I were still here, I’ll definitely give it to you, but it was a pity you did not sign then, and you don’t have the chance to sign it now.” Twain smiled and said, “Your agent was right, Chen Jian. Nottingham Forest is a very materialistic club. They do not have the patience to wait for a young man to grow slowly, unless you’ve demonstrated extraordinary potential.”

But I don’t have this kind of talent. Chen Jian said in his heart. He knew himself best.

“Your dream is to play football professional, you can do that anywhere, no? I think it’s not time for you to go to Nottingham Forest now, just like what your agent said, moving to a small team and taking things one step at a time would be more beneficial to you.”

“You mean...to let me leave Forest for a smaller club?”

“I’ve heard that there are teams in Netherlands and Belgium who are interested you, even though those are not one of the top European leagues, it would help to train you too.

This suggestion made Chen Jian lose heart a little. He had finally managed to muster enough courage to face the new challenges in Nottingham Forest.

“Even if you extend your contract with the club, you’ll still be loaned out as you cannot play for Forest without a work permit. If you don’t play, you’ll be wasting your golden years. So my suggestion is for you to transfer to a club that’s interested in you, able to provide you with playing time, guarantee that you will be trained, and at the same time, you should be waiting for your national team to call you up, get more experience and fame as well as games for your national team...”

Chen Jian interrupted Twain, “Mr Twain, if I don’t intend to play for Forest anymore, why would I care about the number of games I play for my national team?”

“If your performance is good, what if there are other teams in the English Premier League interested in you? For example, teams like Manchester United, Arsenal, Liverpool and Chelsea... If you cannot apply for a work permit when they come knocking on your door, wouldn’t that be a pity?” Twain explained with a chuckle.

Chen Jian thought about it in his mind and he felt that it was a fantasy. However, he did not rebuke Twain.

“In short, if you think about it from your angle, Nottingham Forest is not suitable for you currently.”

Chen Jian fell into deep thoughts, everything he heard today was too shocking. Tony Twain actually resigned, and he even called him to persuade him to not stay in Forest... He even suspected that everything he saw and heard for the past few days were all an illusion.

This world is crazy...

“I... Er, let me consider, Mr Twain.”

Twain laughed again, “You don’t have to tell me that, I’m not in-charge of those things now... Make your own decision and be responsible for your own decision. I’m just giving you an advice; I’m not asking or ordering you to do anything. Think about it carefully, you have one more year on your contract anyway. Take the path that you’ve decided on yourself.”

After saying these, Twain hung up.

Chen Jian sat on the chair and spaced out holding his mobile phone. He was still digesting what Twain said in his mind.

He did not expect that just in the space of a few days, there would be a major upheaval in his future. Ever since he decided to leave the school, his homeland, his hometown for his dream of playing football professionally, he did not walk an easy path. However, he had never regretted it. He could only continue to walk on.

Chen Jian did not think for too long this time, when the broadcast in the airport reminded him to start boarding the plane that he was supposed to be on, he called his agent, Mr Xia.

“Uncle Xia, you don’t have to look for Mr twain anymore. I’ve decided, if there are any clubs in Belgium or Eredivisie interested in me, then give them a call. I have to board my plane now, that’s all Uncle Xia. Give me a call when I land if there are anything you want to let me know.”

With that, he hung up and walked towards the boarding gate with his carry-on luggage.

A huge booming sound outside the window attracted his view. Outside the floor-to-ceiling window, a plane just took off into the blue skies and disappeared above it, leaving only a white trail behind.

Chapter 886: The World Cup

When Dunn and Tang Jing in faraway China learned that Twain had resigned from the Nottingham Forest Football Club, just a day after the Forest Club announced the news, the advanced internet had already allowed them to know what happened on the other side of the globe, even in the remote town of South Sichuan.

And in within the day, the entire world's sports media would treat this matter as a piece of sensational news to report.

In Italy, Sky TV's newscaster had a strange look on his face as he announced the news. It was clear that even he could not believe that he spoke about how the "Godfather of Nottingham" had ended actually ended his glory in the Forest team in this way.

In Spain, the Spanish media, which were still complaining that Nottingham Forest had "stolen" the Champions League title through improper means, had collectively lost their voices – they did not know what to say in the face of such news.

A manager who just won the Treble for the team had suddenly resigned. Perhaps the term "individualistic" could no longer describe him simply. It was only during this time that the usually self-proclaimed sharp-witted reporters realized how poor their vocabulary was.

In China, there was even a web portal dedicated to Tony Twain as a special topic. It was immediately very popular with people posting messages. China's CCTV Sports Channel also produced a forty-five-minute-long feature program that comprehensively reviewed Tony Twain's eleven years of ups and downs at Nottingham Forest.

On the internet, the Nottingham Forest fans had long been stunned and left head-scratching. Some people wept in pain about Twain's departure in the forum, indignantly denounced the club's top brass for being ungrateful after getting what they wanted from him and getting rid of him now that he had served his purpose... And the other portion of the people expressed that they did not like the Forest team just because they were catching with the times and like Tony Twain. They chose to stand with the club's senior management and thought that it was okay for Twain to be gone and it was not like the world revolved around him. Furthermore, there were a number of rumors that Twain was very dissatisfied with the annual salary and package that the club had offered, that he was fighting with Evan Doughty for the same woman, and Twain's real character was not that great.

The most commonly expressed emotion from the fans of the other teams was one of gleefulness. To them, the most troublesome foe had finally come to an end, and the teams which they supported had regained hopes of winning the title. In addition, they were also delighted to see the usually arrogant Forest fans who walked with their noses up in the air were currently in a state of infighting.

In England, the news of Twain's resignation even overshadowed the England national team's preparations for the World Cup. As for the Treble winner, Nottingham Forest,... it was even more pathetic. The accolades that the media gave them a few days ago, were not to be seen now.

Carl Spicer apparently did not expect Twain to choose to leave at the team's most glorious period. It suddenly left him with a sense of loss in his focus – he would not be able to find someone to scold in the future. How would his show stand out among so many football television shows without criticizing people?

Later in his special edition of BBC's program, Lineker helplessly half-joked and said, "I really don't know if this is good news or bad news. But I'm sure that's good news for the other nineteen managers in the Premier League. Because their strong enemy finally left. For the others, this must be bad news, because the Premier League has since lost one of its most special features..."

Many reporters and friends wanted to find the leading man in the event and hear what he had to say. But whenever they made a call, the message always prompted that the phone was turned off. This time, even Pierce Brosnan, who had been considered a reporter exclusively used by Twain, also did not receive any first-hand information, resulting in him being given a dressing down by the newspaper editor. He experienced the feeling of when he first came to the newspaper as an intern reporter. In this way, the storm of all kinds of rumors intensified.

Until the end of the year, when the Associated Press selected the top ten sports news of the year, the news of Tony Twain's departure from Nottingham Forest was ranked fourth, showing how much influence he had at the time.

There was another example. Capello joked in an interview with the reporters and said, "I should thank Tony Twain. Because of him, you guys bother my team a lot less."

...

When the storm had swayed everyone from side to side till they were dizzy and helpless, Tony Twain and his wife were enjoying themselves all over Brazil. This time he really did not go near football anymore. Children could be seen performing or playing street football everywhere in Brazil, but as long as Shania was by his side, Twain was fully concentrated on her – he just stared at his wife, as if his wife was the only person in the whole world.

Shania enjoyed this kind of treatment very much. She did not wonder whether Twain's sweet nothings of "from now on, I'll only be with you till the end of time" which he repeatedly confessed to her, were true or not. She did not care whether those words were true or false words to just to make her happy. She just wanted to enjoy the time together.

If it had been for the World Cup, Shania would have wanted to have fun longer and crazier. She had never been so happy in the eleven years since she met Uncle Tony. Because she no longer had to worry about waking up one morning to Uncle Tony gone. Then only to find him lying in the hospital's intensive care unit with marks from the insertions of tubes, nurses coming in and out to unhook the apparatus, and the doctor standing at the side almost having the "I am sorry" written across the face.

She often had such nightmares, especially when she was alone in the United States. They were particularly intense. She woke up terrified every time. Then she would gasp for air in the dim light of the

lamp and her entire body would be soaked in sweat. Before, Shania would sleep without the lights on. Later, after Twain had his heart attack, she developed the habit of sleeping with the lights on, even when she was held in the arms of Uncle Tony in Nottingham.

This woman's heart finally felt safe for the first time, which made her feel contented.

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Good times were always short-lived. Although this World Cup was held in Brazil, Twain could not always stick to Shania's side. If there was a game in Rio de Janeiro, Twain would be able to stay with Shania every night. It could not be helped if he went to the other cities. Unfortunately, only one of England's three games in the group stage was played in Rio de Janeiro. If they wanted to continue to come back and enjoy the sunshine and beauties in bikinis at Copacabana Beach, then they must advance into the semifinals in one go.

During the run-up to the World Cup, the English media finally remembered that they still had a team playing in the World Cup. So, they were predicting the team's future in the World Cup one by one. It was no different from any previous tournaments – "This is the best team in England's history. It's the favorite to win the title."

Twain first met his short-term colleague at the BBC, John Motson in the lobby of the hotel he was staying in. This was also the first time since the matter that he had appeared in front of the media.

Motson looked at Twain with interest. Looking at him, he was unable to hold back and said with a chuckle, "It looks like nothing has changed. Just like the Tony Twain from before."

"Nonsense." Twain did not hold back either with a face of disdain. He said, "You only came to this conclusion after looking at me for half a day?"

Motson laughed even harder, "Ah Tony, Tony, you're the number one sinner in the world of English sport..." He shook his head and patted Twain on the shoulder as he said, "The whole world is going crazy about you leaving the Forest team, and yet you're on a scenic tour in Brazil with your wife. What am I supposed to say about you?"

"Then don't say anything, John." Twain shrugged. He had expected the media's reaction. He was also satisfied with the kind of madness that happened because of him – even when I had left the position, I can still let the world tremble!

"Maybe I should exercise the power of my position and get an exclusive interview with you..." Motson mused as he stroked his chin.

"Don't even think about it. The World Cup has started, and no one cares about what I'm doing now. It's a shame, I'm already old news." Twain smiled and spread his hands. But there was no trace of regret in his voice at all.

Motson snorted, "The paparazzi's noses are relentless. They can smell what attracts them from your body. You wait and see. At that time, you'll face reporters all day." He glanced to the side.

It was the World Cup news center here. The media from around the world would gather here to manager the latest news from various games and training venues in Brazil, which they would then

transmit back to their home countries to present to those television viewers, newspaper readers and Internet users.

Therefore, it was also the paparazzi's home base here as well. Twain was really "deep in the tiger's lair" this time.

He also noticed this point. There were already some reporters here next to him whose eyes lighted up when they saw him. The light was like the glint that radiated from a vicious gangster's eyes when he set his sight on a large box of gold.

Twain looked at these people and also gave a snort. He harped on in Mandarin, "What's there to be afraid! Different situations call for different action!"

Hearing him popped out with something he did not understand but knew which country's language it was, Motson suddenly had an interest in Twain's talent in the language. He said, "You speak Mandarin so well. I heard you even have a column in China's sports newspaper. Why did a Chinese TV station not come to you to do commentary on the World Cup? You're very eloquent."

When Twain heard him say so, he suddenly shook his head like a rattle-drum and said, "No way. Be a commentator for them? They will replace me at halftime interval."

Motson stared as if he had heard something of interest, "Is it the lack of freedom of speech?"

Twain continued to shake his head and said, "It's culturally different. Some remarks are acceptable to the British, but it does not mean that the whole world can accept them. It's as if the Europeans don't ask 'have you eaten' when they meet, but the Chinese always used this in greeting."

Motson gave a clap to signal that he understood him. He said, "It's like how we always start with the weather."

Twain did not shake his head this time. He gave a smile and then came up with a Chinese saying, "The young man is promising and still worthy to be taught."

Motson did not ask what that meant. He smiled and patted Twain on the shoulder, signaling that they have to go. Their work was about to begin.

The World Cup was also about to start.

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Brazil was a country brimming with passion, like the babes in bikinis who went shopping in the streets like no one was around. People from various countries came here to cover the World Cup, would choose to use this kind of local conditions and customs to open with. Twain was not interested in these. He and Shania had already covered all these things.

He seemed more dedicated than any of his colleagues. Completely leaving football for less than a month, his life was full of football. And he discovered a very important question – when he faced football again, his nuclear-powered heart was moving vigorously in his chest. Whenever he faced football again in the middle of the night, when all was dark and quiet, he could hear his heartbeat clearly as he laid in bed.

That heart seemed to have gone quiet while he was frolicking by his wife's side. Twain could not feel its existence. And now, it seemed to be alive again.

The discovery surprised him as much as Columbus's first discovery of America, while there was a fear deep down at the same time. Because he had just said not long ago that he would accompany Shania for the rest of her life. But now he could not resist the temptation his former lover, football. His heart was wavering, and a crack appeared.

When he was doing the commentary on a game, he would be distracted as he listened to the thunderous cheers and songs coming from the stands. His point by point commentary were not so sharp and nimble. Sometimes it would attract the puzzled glances of his partner, Motson.

In a trance, Twain seemed to be back on the small City Ground stadium, standing on the sidelines and clenching his fists as he cheered the team's goal.

He thought of the big picture that had been hanging on the bedroom wall. He stood in front of the sea of people in red with his arms wide open, as if he was embracing that sea of rage. He had been in Brazil for so long that he did not know how much dust had gathered on the picture.

Maybe... There was something in his bones that was not so easy to quit...

Twain sighed in his heart and felt that he was too useless. Only a few World Cup games and the original resolute thought in his heart was already a little shaky.

Perhaps it was due to Brazil, a country filled with all kinds of passions customs. Their football had impassioned Twain.

The Brazilian women looked good, but the Brazilian football was even better to look...

In the end, England lost once again to the Brazilians four years later. This time their results were worse than the previous time. The last time they were in the top four, but this time they did not even make it to the top eight.

In the round of 16, England was unlucky enough to encounter the host, Brazil. After the game, the English media complained that Brazil had taken full advantage of the "home field advantage", which was a covert way of stating that there was something wrong with the referee. But the Brazilians did not care so much. Why would a winner bicker about a loser's complaints?

But in Twain's view, the reason England did not go any further in this World Cup to reach the finals was not because they encountered the host ahead of time, and the unspoken words that implied Capello was old. It was simple, but also unimaginable – George Wood was not in good form.

After coaching Wood for ten years, this was the second Twain had seen him in poor form. The first time was when Eastwood had retired.

Motson wondered why Wood's condition was bad. Twain was also puzzled. The media all over England wondered too. Twain even wondered if something was wrong with Sophia.

Capello liked and trusted Wood. It appeared he had the intention to let him succeed Gerrard. But unexpectedly, George Wood's performance in Capello's last World Cup was a disappointment, completely without the aggressiveness and ferocity that he displayed in his club's squad. Up against

Brazil's Kaka, he was played with till he was confused and disoriented. Kaka was also bewildered as to why the constantly ferocious Wood played as if he was a hypnotized sheep in the game. He followed and ran after him several times but did nothing and let him get away. If it had been before, perhaps he would have already shoveled him from behind. Even though he might have gotten a yellow card, he could still make the opponent feel fear and shock. Then it would be much easier to defend. If he was met with a tough character, he would fight to death with the opponent and compete who was tougher in the end.

Used to such a George Wood, Kaka was really not used to George Wood being soft. As a result, for more than twenty minutes into the game, the Brazilian core player's performance was not good either. In the beginning, the English reporters even thought it was to George Wood's credit. Then they discovered that something was wrong. England was done once Kaka and Brazil realized it.

Wood was England's first line of defense, like the body's immune system. Now that the first line of defense had collapsed, even if England was a two-hundred-pound strong man, he had collapsed like a house of cards when the wind blew.

At the end of the ninety-minute game, there were tears in the eyes of his teammates around him. George Wood's eyes were a little confused. On the big screen behind him, the score for the match was displayed as 0:3.

Boasted by the English media as the strongest ever England team, they were wiped out and completely defeated when they faced the last World Cup's second runner-up team.

Twain did not care about England's defeat. But there were some people among his colleagues next him who had wiped tears in their eyes. For them, the quadrennial dream was over again. Twain watched with a detached point of view. But in his mind, he thought these people could be intoxicated with the dream once every four years, but how many more years before the Chinese fans could dream just once? Would it really be like 2002 when they could try confidently for the first time forty years?

When he thought of it, his cold eyes turned into a sneer.

You sons of bitches do not know how lucky you are.

He was not sad or concerned that England was out of the game. What worried him was George Wood's condition. Although he was no longer the manager of Nottingham Forest, he would still subconsciously think of himself as a member of the Forest team. Therefore, he did not feel proud that the performance of the Nottingham Forest team captain as well as the talent that he had personally groomed, was so bad.

He was also not in form for his commentary work in this World Cup commentary. The frequency of the usually popular wonderful and clever remarks was also not high, which was in some way related to Wood's poor form.

But it was not clear why Wood was not in top form. He did not know, and he did not inquire either, because he was not anyone to Wood anymore, so there was no need to care everything about this person. He just wished that the terrible form had nothing to do with Sophia.

Even though England was knocked out, Twain's job was not over. He was still in charge of working with Motson until the final.

After England's elimination, the English media put the blame for the loss on two men. One of them was George Wood and the other person was Capello. So, the combative Twain dedicated to protecting these two men in his column. In fact, he mainly did it to defend Wood, but he did not want to be blatant about this kind of thing. So, he defended Capello as well and admonished those media in his article. He did not make much sense, nor did he analyze the data. Anyway, everyone in the industry knew that even if Tony Twain was reasonable, his reasons and arguments were preposterous. Rational people would not quarrel with him. People who quarreled with him were not fools and had other agendas of their own.

Amid the clamor, the pressure on George Wood gradually lessened – Twain was still fiercely protective of his young till now. And he did not care about Capello. What storms had the old fox not weathered? He did not need his help to relieve the pressure.

Twain's only regret was that, because of his poor performance at the World Cup, George Wood was destined to miss out on this year's awards for the European Footballer of the Year and FIFA World Player of the Year even though he had won the Treble.

As a defensive midfielder, the opportunity to be able to earn these personal honors was so precious...

At the thought of this, Twain gnashed his teeth, feeling somewhat resentful towards George Wood for failing to meet expectations and impatient to see improvement in him.

F**king George why are you in such bad form?!

Chapter 887: A Call from London

After England was eliminated, they could still comfort themselves, "We were at least eliminated by the champion!"

The host of the East, Brazil, finally had a shot at the cup on their home ground and this meant Kaka finally completed his World Cup dream – just like Ronaldo from before, when he first won the World Cup, he was only a side character. But this time, he relied on his own capabilities and hard work to become the core of the Brazil team, finally leading the team to get the championships. For him, this championship was of more value.

If it was necessary to ask him what regrets he still had after obtaining this year's World cup, he would definitely mention out his regret of not winning George Wood in his best state. This made him a little discontent after winning the World Cup...

Just before the end of the World Cup, the England team had already spread the news of changing the roster.

Capello's contract with the English Football Association was due to expire right after the World Cup, and with England's performance during the previous tournament not being satisfactory to most people, the Football Association would not offer to renew his contract. Hence after the expiry of the deadline, Capello ended his job in England, as he returned to Italy and officially announced his retirement.

Afterwards, the Football Association would then start the selection of a new head coach for the team.

The media had made a list of possible candidates. The list, which had not been officially recognized, was compiled by the media based on their experience.

Tony Twain, who has just resigned, was in the list, but he had the lowest probability. The simple reason was that when he was still the Nottingham Forest manager, he gave the Football Association trouble several times, and in the minds of the Football Association officials, Tony Twain was a hard-to-discipline hedgehog, and he should be avoided whenever possible. Another reason was that it was rumoured that Manchester United and Twain were in private contact and that a preliminary agreement may have been reached between both parties.

Motson, who just ended his role as the World Cup commentary, also asked him about this, mainly asking whether Manchester United had really invited Twain to coach. Twain nodded as he did get a call from the top management of Manchester United, but he refused as he did not want to snatch Martin O'Neill's job, and just like what he told Allen, he was unable to accept the fact that he needs to become Nottingham Forest's opponent and play against Nottingham Forest in a competition.

"What about the England team?"

Twain shrugged, "The Football Association didn't look for me, don't listen to how media said that that was some list up for selection, it is all fabricated."

Motson then laughed, "Okay, why not you just come and work for us on BBC 5 tv station, to analyse the game or start a special program in the show. With your eloquence and influence, you don't have to worry about the ratings."

Twain declined Motson's kind offer, "I just want to be with my wife."

Motson did not believe this, "Come on, I know you can't live without football at all. "

Twain touched his nose and asked curiously, "Why?"

"It's very simple. I can't imagine what else you can do after leaving the world of football..." Motson quipped. "After finishing the job and go relax? "

"I have to go and reunite with my wife." Twain smiled apologetically.

"You..." Motson pointed to Twain, shaking his head helplessly, "Never mind! "

Instead of returning to the United Kingdoms with the people from BBC, Twain left directly for Rio de Janeiro to continue accompanying with his wife.

Although he was still a little concerned about Motson's words, but after more than twenty days of separation from Shania today, he really wanted to put on wings and fly directly to the side of his wife.

After returning back to Shania, Tony Twain was way more passionate as compared to before the World Cup. This made Shania feel weird, but afterwards she just thought it was a show of "absence making the heart feel fonder" .

Only Twain knew that he was trying to refute Motson's words with practical action, trying to deny that thought that was still struggling in his heart.

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The \$15 million mansion in Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, was a shared property between Shania and Tony Twain. In previous years when Tony Twain and Shania decided to purchase it, it was during the economic global crisis which impacted the whole world, \$15 million was already \$4.5 million less than its original price, and even so, it was still quite expensive...

Twain did not want to live in such a mansion, he did not have the habit of hiring a housekeeper, so no matter how big the house was, it would only contain Shania and him, occasionally the house would be used to host friends from both parties. But the only reason why Twain was willing to buy the house was not because it was sufficiently huge, but because behind it was the Pacific Ocean.

Standing on your own balcony, he could enjoy the magnificent sea, it also had a private beach, such an environment deserving \$15 million was not a scam.

Twain liked this type of an open environment, especially the sea. He was born within the city, hence during the first half of his life he did not genuinely see the great ocean. So, today he wanted to mend this regret.

The house also had another advantage – it was close to his old friend, the Beckhams' mansion in Beverly Hills, walking there would take at most 15 minutes. He could count them as neighbors.

Tonight, Twain and Shania are here to dine with the Beckham and Tom Cruise couple, along with some other Hollywood stars.

It was the second day they came to Hollywood from Brazil.

The journey-weary Shania was still in her bed, as Twain had already done his morning exercises on the beach behind the house. He sat directly on the beach, letting the sea continuously wash over his body, as he was looking out at the sea.

The ocean that had been sleeping all night was gently rippling in front of him, bringing a little smell of sea salt. He took a little breath to sniff it.

It's nice not to get up in the morning and immediately think about how to lead today's game.

That was what Twain was thinking.

Behind him came a slight "ssh ssh" sound, as Twain turned and got surprised. Shania walked out only in her three-point underwear, as she was still having sleepy eyes. She had something in her hand.

"It was too damn noisy, I can't sleep at all... This call was made five times..." Shania handed the thing in her hand to Twain, as she pouted while sitting beside him, leaning her head onto Twain's shoulder.

"Go back, don't catch a cold." Twain pushed her and looked at the unresponsive phone. "Is the call not coming anymore?"

“It’s hot inside and it’s much cooler here.” Shania pouted. “I promise there would be another call in less than five minutes.”

As soon as the voice dropped, Twain’s cellphone, in his hands, rang.

“You see!” Shania made a grimace face at Twain and continued to snooze on his shoulder.

“Hey, I’m Tony Twain” Twain discovered that the phone number was unknown and was never recorded in his phone book. “But I don’t care who you are, do you know what time it is in Los Angeles? Seven in the morning!” He was upset that this damn phone call had disturbed his wife’s dream. And since the caller was a stranger, that was no need to be polite.

“Ah, I’m sorry, Mr Twain. I didn’t know you were in Los Angeles, I thought you were in Brazil.” The caller was a man with a extremely low voice, although he was apologising, he did not sound humble at all. “I’m Shaun Barclays. I believe you must know who I am now right?” The voice started to laugh.

Twain was no stranger to this name, as it was the current executive of the English Football Association. Twain’s anger immediately reduced by half as this call really came out of the blue. Why did he even call him in the first place?

“Well, Twain, it’s about this. I have a plan here, I don’t know if you will be interested. ”

Twain rolled his eyes as he had already guessed what Barclays was calling him for. But he did not say it, but instead waited quietly for the other side to say it. As a successful coach, he had to be more reserved. But in his mind, the answer was already clear.

“As you know, Capello and our contract has ended. ”

“Yes, I’ve realised. ”

“We are now looking for the next manager of the England team. And I think you’ll be the most suitable one. ”

Twain acted surprised, “Why? I think this position and I should be very far away from each other. Although the surprise was pretended, but what he said was true. Twain knew what his image was in the Football Association, why would the Football Association look for such a disobedient head coach to manage the England team? At least before this call, he felt that it was weird.”

England’s leading figure laughed, “Championship. Isn’t the 12 championship trophies the Nottingham Forest team you led gotten enough to prove your worth?”

Twain was laughing in his heart. Mr Barclays was not praising him initially when he was discussing about him before.

When Shaun Barclays took up the position recently, there was a night press conference when he was asked about his review about Tony Twain, he pressed onto his temple while painfully answered, “If he could properly manage his mouth, I’ll thank the heavens.”

Later, Twain did not lessen his criticisms on the Football Association, so he often took a booking from the Football Association. Barclays’ name was firmly in his head. It was rumoured that whenever

someone within the Association asked Barclays about his impression of Twain he would answer it with a hint of humour, "You mean the name that was always appearing in the booking?"

It was clear that the Football Association boss's impression of Twain was not good.

Although today Mr Barclays' attitude to him was much better, but Twain did not want to claim his sentiments. He said, "But you know, the club and the national team are two very different things, Mr. Executive," he said. Success at the club does not mean success in the national team..."

The old fox, Barclays could tell the sarcasm behind Twain's voice, and he did not show any disappointment or any emotion, but said quietly, "Don't be in a hurry to refuse, Mr. Twain. You can think it over. The people and I agreed that the next England manager should be an Englishman. "

Since the other party already gave him face, Twain also did not make enemies everywhere as he used to in Nottingham Forest to attract all the attacks onto himself. So he also gave face to the other party "Okay, I'll consider this offer."

After saying that he hung up the phone, as he looked down at his wife, who was still leaning on his shoulder.

"You actually did not reject him directly." Shania's words shocked Twain, he was about to defend himself, but Shania continued talking. "You don't have to care about me, the key is what you want to do."

She poked her head onto Twain's shoulder.

"I won't say yes, " said Twain as he gently touched her hair. "That was just to not make Mr Barclays too uncomfortable and look too ugly."

Shania sneered, "When did 'Mad Dog Tony' become so gentle? "

"Who gave me that nickname?" Twain glared.

"Marca newspaper. They still hate you." Shania raised her head with a smile.

Twain noticed that she was hugging her arms as he put her arm around her and brought her into the house. "Be careful not to catch a cold." As for what the Marca newspaper said about him, he simply just did not care.

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Although Twain thought he had already turned down the English Football Association, the English media did not think the same way. In an interview with the English media, Barclays personally admitted that the Football Association and Tony Twain had contacted, which pushed Twain, who was previously ghosting the media, back to the front stage.

Within a day, the media in England was crazily hyping Twain in the chance that he might take over the commander position in the England team.

Twain did not change his cell phone, so he got a call from Pierce Brosnan. Brosnan wanted to ask him if this was actually true. Twain admitted that Barclays had called him, but he did not agree to be the head

coach. This made Brosnan a little disappointed as after knowing Tony Twain had left that world of football, he then knew how lonely he was.

“Actually, I think you can seriously think about it, Tony...”

“Why?”

“I think you should be a football coach... I can't imagine you not doing something related to football. ”

This is the second time Twain has heard someone say that to him.

“Aren't you seeing it right now?” Twain snorted, and then hung up in a hurry.

God d*amn it, why is everyone saying this? I just wante to accompany my wife...

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The evening banquet was held as scheduled, as Hollywood celebrities from all walks of life carefully dressed themselves, and then brought their partners to the banquet. Shania was quite well-liked in this social circle but Twain usually only see many of these movie stars in the movies.

Outside the mansion gathered several United Kingdom and English reporters, many were reporting for an entertainment channel, while some were for sports. The sports reporters were clearly here to find Tony Twain. Beckham had retired long ago.

For the party, the Twain couple hired a team to take charge of the party, they did not have to bother with cooking nor waiting the tables. They just needed to entertain the guests.

The party was lively, but Twain's mood was still affected by incident in the morning. On this day, the phrase “England national coach” would always suddenly appear in his mind and haunt him.

Beckham saw through Twain and thought he was distracted as he quipped, “What's up, Twain? Are you jealous seeing Shania becoming the main lead.”

Twain glanced at the crowd who was surrounding Shania as she was entertaining everyone, “Why would I be jealous...” Looking at the good friend in front of him, the only guest here who has a common language with him, he suddenly thought to himself, “Maybe I can try asking David?”

“You look like you're having something on your mind, what's wrong?” Without waiting for him to speak, Beckham has already taken the initiative to show concern.

“I, uh... David. I got a call from the Football Association today morning. ”

“The English Football Association?” Beckham asked back, but he was not surprised.

Twain nodded.

The star on the other side started to laugh, “I am not surprised.”

This time it was Twain's turn to be surprised, “Why do you say that?” ”

“If I was a Football Association official, I'd call you, Tony. Now that they're all over the world looking for a new coach, how can they miss you out? ”

“But I’ve decided to leave football and just stay with Shania. ”

Beckham squinted as he looked at Twain.

“You don’t believe me?” Twain asked.

“Do you think anyone believes that, Tony?”

Twain would have liked to retort directly: “Why not?” But he suddenly remembered that Shania, Motson and Brosnan had expressed varying degrees of doubt about his thoughts. And compared to two outsiders, Motsan and Brosnan, the most vital thing is that even his wife who sleeps together with him every day did not believe this, this problem was really serious.

“Tony, I don’t doubt your feelings for Shania. But I, too don’t doubt your feelings about football. You’re born for football, and I can’t think of how you’re going to live after leaving from football. Beckham put his hand on Twain’s shoulder and said to him with a serious tone.

“But I’m still living fine.” Twain spread his hands.

Beckham laughed as he squinted his eyes.

“You don’t believe me again?”

Beckham patted him on the shoulder as he took back his hand. “Well, don’t think about that, just enjoy the night, I’ll introduce you to some new friends...”

He pulled Twain to the raucous crowd, where the lights were bright as a unforgettable night had just begun.

Chapter 888: It’s Not Easy to Find a Job

The deafening sound of the song reached his ears. Twain could not tell what they were singing as his ears were filled with a booming noise, as though there were waves hitting the shore.

There were tens of thousands of arms waving ahead of him and they looked like the lush Sherwood Forest.

Twain realized that he was situated in the familiar City Grounds. The stadium with a capacity of 30,000 people was totally full then. However, he was not in the manager’s seat at the sideline, he was on the stands instead.

On the pitch below, an intensive match was going on. He looked at the home team’s manager’s seat and he was stunned for awhile as he saw himself managing the team there.

What’s going on?

Twain looked at his hands, but he could not see anything from his hands. If that man managing the team on the side was Tony Twain, then who was he?

The other Tony Twain was standing on the sideline, a little nervous and a little excited. He leant forward with his fists clenched in front of his chest and paid full attention to what was happening on the pitch.

Twain looked beyond him and got a shock. He recognized the away jersey of West Ham United.

Why was it West Ham United?

Looking at Nottingham Forest on the other side, many of the players were unfamiliar to him. Twain did not see George Wood amongst them, no Gareth Bale, Eastwood, Pepe... He did not see those people, not even Albertini, van der Sar or Hierro from the earlier days.

What kind of Nottingham Forest was this?

Nottingham Forest was defending while West Ham was on the offense. Twain had to squint his eyes to look for a while before he could tell from the movements that the person holding the ball was Joe Cole. Was Cole not at Chelsea? When was this West Ham United from?

Joe Cole deliberately controlled the ball in midfield, or more accurately, he wanted to show off his dribbling skills in front of his opponents. When Twain saw this, he gave a cold snort and said, "Idiot!"

Under the press of the Forest players, he did not pass the ball, choosing to continue dribbling in an attempt to bring the ball out from within the surrounding Forest players. When the third Forest player came for the ball, Joe Cole lost the ball from under his feet.

The following scenes were very familiar to Twain, because these scenes happened in front of him quite often.

The Forest player who got the ball passed it to his teammate on the side and his teammate passed the ball forward. The third Nottingham Forest player ran forward from a position level with the opponent's defensive line. The timing was perfect and even Twain himself could not help but shout, "Beautiful."

And the fans around him had already raised their arms cheering long ago.

The Forest striker received the ball from behind the whole West Ham United's defense and those confused West Ham United players were still raising their hands in protest to the linesman and referee to indicate that this player was offside.

The Forest striker calmly stroked the ball towards the far corner when one-on-one with the goalkeeper, the ball flew past the West Ham United's goalkeeper and into the goal...

"Boom—!!" It felt like a ton of TNT exploded next to his ears.

"Forest Forest! Nottingham Forest!!!"

This was the only sound coming from the stands.

The massive soundwave not only crashed upon Twain's eardrums, it also crashed upon his heart. He felt a dull pain in his left chest, and he touched it with his hand. He did not feel anything unusual, instead, he managed to feel the strength of his heartbeat directly with his hand.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

It was rather powerful, so powerful that it felt like it was going to jump out from his chest cavity.

With his hand on his heart, Twain's gaze fixated on the man below.

That man was not as excited as the players on the pitch, at least that was what it looked like on the surface... He merely looked up at the surrounding stands. The Nottingham Forest team song rang out from the stands and Twain could even sing along to it—This rhythm was too familiar to him as he had heard it no less than 1000 times.

“We’ve got the whole world in our hands! We’re the best team in the land!”

After looking around, that man opened his arms within the songs and he leaned backwards, looking straight up into the sky and he seemed to enjoy this moment very much.

Twain seemed to have heard what that man was thinking.

I love this noise! I love this smell! I love this stirring spectacle! I love everything here! I love football!

In the stands, Twain also could not help but to open his arms and close his eyes, enjoying this choir that would probably sound like noise to normal people. This was really the most beautiful voice in the world...

When Twain opened his eyes again and the noise around him had completely subsided just like the tides, however, there were the faint sounds of the tides coming from outside his window. What he saw was not the green field and the spectator stands filled with spectators, just the white suspended ceiling above.

This was his home.

After about 10 seconds, he finally realized what was going on. He was not in the City Grounds Stadium. He was merely lying inside one of the bedrooms of his mansion in Los Angeles, Beverly Hills.

It was just a dream.

Twain gently removed his arm that was stuck under Shania’s head and then closed his eyes while covering his face.

He wanted to make himself sleep again, maybe he might be able to return to the City Grounds in 2003.

He remembered what match it was— The FA Cup on January 3rd, 2003. Nottingham Forest, which was still in the English Football League First Division then (Later known as English Football League Championship), playing against West Ham United in the English Premier League. That was the first official match that Twain took charge of as the manager of Nottingham Forest, and they fell to a 2:3 defeat at the hands of the referee.

Twain did not know why he would dream of a match from so long ago. However, he would very much like to return to the atmosphere of that match.

That was because he suddenly missed that feeling—Embracing victory with open arms amidst the cheers of tens of thousands of people. It felt like the whole world was in his hands and he was the master of everything. It would not be wrong to say he was God at that time.

Unfortunately, his efforts were for naught. He was exceptionally awake after he woke up and he could not go back to sleep.

Twain was a little bit frustrated that he could not find the feelings he had initially. He tossed and turned in bed for a while but as he was afraid of waking Shania, he decided to get out of bed and walk towards the open windows in just his underwear. The sea breeze blew against the curtains and there were ebbs and flows on the curtains just like the tides outside.

Twain was lost in thoughts as he looked at the greyish sea outside the windows.

After some time, he felt a shirt being put onto him.

“Be careful, don’t catch a cold,” Shania reminded him while snuggling up from behind him.

Twain held Shania’s hands, feeling the warmth of his wife.

None of them spoke after that and they snuggled together quietly.

Twain broke the silence after some time, “Shania.”

“Hmm?”

“Sorry...”

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In fact, even though the media had indeed been stirring up news about Twain becoming the new manager of the England national team for a few days, it was just to attract the attention of the general public, a publicity stunt. Any reporter who had any sense of reason would not think that Twain would really take that position. There were many candidates for that position that the media speculated on and Tony Twain was the one with the lowest probability. It was very simple, nobody believed that the Football Association would ask someone that they could not control to manage the England team. No matter how many trophies he got, it was not as important as being “receptive to command”.

The Football Association did not announce who the candidates that they were interested in were. When interviewed, they would only say things like, “He’s not a bad choice”, “He’s not a bad choice either”.

The media was very helpful as they gave the Football Association a list of the candidates. Every candidate had a probability of being chosen at the end. Tony Twain was at the bottom of the list with a probability of only five percent. The evaluation of the senior experts was, “Unless Shaun Harvey is crazy, otherwise, there is no chance that he will bring disaster upon himself.”

Shaun Harvey publicly said that they would choose amongst the Englishmen first for the position of England’s manager, so no matter how impressive a foreign manager was, he would have to wait for his chance. However, there were not many Englishmen who were suitable for this position. The only people whom the public thought was good enough for this position were Everton’s manager, David Moyes and the manager of England national under-21 football team, Stuart Pearce. Martin O’Neill was not a bad choice either, but it was a pity that he was from Northern Ireland.

McClaren was out of the consideration as he had already been deemed a failure. Even though he wanted to prove himself again, the Football Association took a lukewarm attitude towards him.

Venables were capable but he was already 71 years old, a little too old. He also clearly stated that he had no interest in the position of England’s manager.

The media combed through the whole English Premier League and they had no choice but to tragically admit that their football league was dominated by foreign managers... A high-level English manager was rare. When Tony Twain was around, people hated him, and now that he was no longer around, they finally realized that he was the only one that was holding the fort for English managers.

The media was not the only one who did not think Twain would be the next England manager. Even the Football Association did not think it was probably. Harvey's call to Twain was just a formality—As the best local manager, even though he had already resigned, he still had a certain amount of influence. It would simply not do if he was not informed about England's search for a new manager... So, even if they did not think it was likely, they still had to put on a show and when the media asked about it, they had to say, "We believe that Tony Twain is the most suitable candidate for England right now. 12 trophies in 10 years proves everything."

In his mind, Harvey thought that if Twain really agreed, then it was either Twain who was mad, or the world that was mad.

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"Why apologize to me?" Shania hugged Twain from behind and asked softly.

"Do you remember me saying that I would quit and keep you company? Now, I realize that I might..." Twain grew silent for a while as he was still very conflicted inside his mind, "...not be able to do it. So, I'm very sorry, Shania."

Shania rolled her eyes as she leaned on his back, "I thought you were having an affair!"

"Er..." Twain did not expect this reaction from Shania.

"Did you really think that I fell for your lousy sweet talks, Uncle Tony? I did not believe what you said when you quit. If that was true, you would have quit when you had your heart attack."

"I..." Twain realized that Shania was right, he had no answers for it.

"The real reason why you left Forest was because of your conflict with Allan Adams," Shania let go of Twain, allowing him to turn and face her, "You've never thought that you would leave football."

"No..." Twain wanted to defend himself.

Shania interrupted him again.

"Ok Uncle Tony. It doesn't matter what you think, I'm already very satisfied," Shania smiled at Twain, then changed her expression rapidly, and sighed, "From the moment I decided to fall in love with you, I've mentally prepared myself for this—The love that I receive will always be a little lesser."

Twain hugged the woman in front of him.

"Sorry, Shania. Sorry..."

What could he say other than this?

He was indeed feeling guilty towards Shania. Because his love for football had not really disappear, that was why the love that Shania received would definitely be discounted.

“Are you going to call the Football Association’s executive?” Shania looked up from Twain’s embrace.

Twain shook his head, “No, at least not for these few days.”

“Huh? Didn’t you tell me these because you’ve decided to manage England?”

“I didn’t say I must manage England. That position is not for human...” Twain kissed Shania’s head. Harvey’s phone call merely served to make him really understand how much he loved football. It did not mean that Twain was interested in that position now. He did really take a good look at the invitations that he received previous now...

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Shania and her husband left Los Angeles within less than five days and boarded a plane towards Spain.

There was a piece of news that was absolutely confidential. If the Marca or Diario AS knew about it, their jaws would drop.

The piece of news was that Florentino had already contacted Twain the day after the Champions League final, asking him to be the new manager of the Galácticos. Twain was contemptuous of that invitation then, but now... He had to give it a serious consideration and listen to the conditions that Florentino offered.

Both parties met for a meal, had a good chat, and Twain left Madrid.

It seemed like he was not fated to work with Real Madrid—Florentino was unable to satisfy the only condition that Twain had; Tony Twain must have absolute authority in building the team, nobody was to interfere with it, not even Raúl González.

The first condition that Twain put forward when he met the Spanish property magnate was this. Florentino considered for very long before shaking his head.

There was nothing left to discuss after that. If this condition could not be met, there was nothing left to discuss.

It was a good thing that this was not publicized, otherwise both parties would not be able to back down in good grace.

Twain and Shania flew back to England straight after leaving Madrid. This was the first time he was returning to England after resigning. He was not here to discuss with the Football Association’s executive about managing the national team. He was merely there to attend the wedding of Tang and Tang Jing, a very small and private wedding.

Twain was still joking at the expense of this pair of newlyweds on the wedding, saying that he was the real matchmaker and they should bow to him.

He had a lot of fun and it appeared as though he was not concerned about work at all.

In fact, other than Real Madrid, there were also invitations from Juventus and Bayern Munich on his hands. He had to make a decision quickly because the new season was going to start in slightly more than a month’s time, the Bundesliga had only a month left.

When he was in England for the wedding, he contacted both clubs on the phone. However, the conditions that both clubs offered were unable to satisfy Twain's requirement. Either they did not want to give up full authority, or they could not guarantee enough transfer budget—Twain had enough of a tough life at Nottingham Forest. Now that he was changing a team, he did not want to experience life with a tight budget again.

Hence, he was unable to work with Juventus and Bayern Munich too.

When Twain looked at the job openings he had in his hands again, there was only the manager of the England national team left.

Who would have thought that someone of the Godfather of Champions' caliber would end up like this, it was not easy to find a job...

Chapter 889: A Change of Manager

David Moyes was the first candidate to reject the English Football Association. He stated that he was happy to stay at Everton and did not want to change his working environment. Furthermore, it was too exhausting to be the manager of the England national team. The manager was under watch by the reporters three hundred and sixty-five days a year. There was no idle time twenty-four hours a day. And one also had to guard against those tabloids, such as the fake Sheikh incident and so on.

He did not like that kind of life. Therefore, he publicly rejected the Football Association. Everton later issued a statement on their website to clear up the earlier rumors and confirmed that Moyes would remain at Everton.

The English Football Association had offered an annual salary of up to eight and a half million pounds for the new manager, which made the position appear to be a highly coveted and drool-worthy job. But in fact, it was actually a hot potato. The eight and a half million pounds salary was the annual salary of a manager which led the team to win the UEFA European Championship. In addition to the other incentives, the new England manager could earn more than ten million pounds a year. But all the managers knew how difficult the England manager's position was.

Not only did he need to have enough fame and prestige to control those big-name star players who had been spoiled rotten by the media; he was required to have real ability and solid learning to withstand the questions from experts; Moreover, he also needed to have the awareness of an entertainment star, and could not gripe being under the magnifying focus of the media all the time.

After mulling over it for a period, Stuart Pearce also decided to give up the well-paid job. He said that he would prefer to continue working in the Under-21 youth team in response to questions from the reporters and that developing young players was the way forward for English football.

The two men's consecutive announcements of their withdrawal left the Football Association in an awkward position – it was estimated that no one would take over the job within the scope of local managers.

They could only set their sights abroad.

There were a lot of good managers overseas, such as Scolari, Mourinho, Ancelotti, Hiddink and so on...

But the chief executive officer of the Football Association, Shaun Harvey still wanted to find a good local English manager. said the issue was “a good thing Barclay still wants a good coach from England. Foreign managers were not easy to manage. If there were still no results in the end, the Football Association would also be criticized that it was “because they chose a foreign manager.” A local manager was much easier to manage.

However, Moyes and Pearce were not interested. In particular, Pearce, who was specially cultivated by the Football Association, got cold feet at the last minute. He did not have the same drive as he did when he was a player which disappointed Harvey.

Just as he was worried about the matter, he received a surprise phone call.

“I’m in London now. I think we can talk about it in detail...” The man who said that was Tony Twain.

Twain was actually tempted. It would be impossible for the Football Association to stop halfway this time...

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While the English Football Association was fretting about a new manager, so was Nottingham Forest. They had already made an overture to Mourinho, but Mourinho was not interested in them. It was not that he thought a small club like Nottingham Forest could not keep a big shot like him. Mourinho himself was a manager with a very individualistic character, so he did not like to go to a team with another person’s deep imprint. It would be too hard to get off to a good start. He was not interested in being anyone’s second generation and he certainly did not want to live in Tony Twain’s shadow.

No one wanted to come to Nottingham Forest after they searched outside for a successful manager. Hiddink had agreed to coach the Forest team, but the terms he gave were unacceptable to Evan Doughty. The legendary Dutch manager still wanted to remain as the manager of the Netherlands national team. Evan was not looking for a part-timer, so he would never allow him to have a foot in both teams. As a result, Hiddink’s encounter with Nottingham Forest was brief.

The other managers were very interested in the Forest team’s position and also keen on the annual salary figure, but the Forest team was not interested in them. These people were usually second-rate coaches. Evan did not think they could handle the current championship team.

In the end, after Nottingham Forest went through a lot of hard work in July, they finally poached the Manchester United manager, Martin O’Neill. The former Nottingham Forest manager was, by all accounts, the most suitable for the Forest team. Martin O’Neill had the ability and certain fame. And the most important thing was that he had a much milder temper than Tony Twain. Such a person was very easy to discipline.

O’Neill’s departure triggered a chain reaction. Manchester United stepped up the momentum of their pursuit of Mourinho after losing O’Neill and eventually persuaded Mourinho to switch teams from Inter Milan to join Manchester United. His arrival was seen by the Manchester United officials as a starting point for the Red Devils to rebuild its glory. It was mentioned on the same terms as when Liverpool signed Shankly, Manchester United signed Ferguson and Nottingham Forest signed Tony Twain.

For their part, Inter Milan could not do anything about it other than to express their regret. Manchester United was desperate, and even covered the penalty fee for Mourinho's default in the contract. It looked like not having won a title for years in a row, made Manchester United, which was accustomed to winning titles during Ferguson's era, a little flustered. They did whatever it took in order to get a good leader at the helm.

At this time, Inter Milan had to find a manager, so they contacted Tony Twain. Unfortunately, Twain had already reached an agreement with the English Football Association – he was going to officially coach the England national team.

He only had to wait now for the Football Association's official announcement.

During the negotiations with Harvey, the two sides had agreed on the terms. Although the English Football Association was similar to the Chinese Football Association in some areas, they would not interfere with the manager's work, which was the point that Twain was most satisfied with. He did not care about the other things. Some people were worried that after becoming the England manager, they would be kept under watch all the time. Twain was not afraid. He felt that fighting against fate and destiny was nothing compared to fighting against people because it was boundless joy to fight with people.

It was the case at Nottingham Forest, and it would be similar going to the England national team.

The Football Association's idea was that they had let the word out that they must find a home-grown English manager this time lead the England national team. Since Twain offered to take the initiative, they had no reason to turn a blind eye or refuse. As long as everyone could reach an agreement, then they would let Twain be the manager.

The two sides hit it off, and the result was that the candidate whom the media thought of as the least favorite was the eventual winner, who was now with the English Football Association.

Two days later, the English Football Association held a press conference together with Tony Twain to officially announce the news at the meeting. At that time, a lot of people would definitely be taken aback by the news.

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Martin O'Neill started his first day of work at Nottingham Forest today. He would meet his team for the first time. It was an ordinary meeting, but O'Neill was nervous and even restless. It was all because the last manager of this team was... too brilliant.

He and Twain were not considered close, but they were also friends. Because he never publicly said anything bad about Twain. It was enough to make someone like Twain think of it as a friendship. One must know that there were a lot of people who cursed and abused Twain every day.

Now he had to face the enormous influence left by his friend. He was also a successful manager and naturally was unwilling to live in the shadow of others.

Perhaps it could be said that how hard Martin O'Neill's job was from another point of view.

While waiting for the new manager to arrive, the Forest players were changing their clothes in the locker room. But it was Tony Twain whom they were discussing instead.

“I read yesterday’s news that said a reporter had filmed the boss with that old man, Harvey. Do you think the boss is really going to coach the England team?” Bale asked.

“Who knows, I don’t think it’s very likely. The Football Association hates the boss...” said Mitchell, frowning.

“Hey, why do you care so much about that... I think we’d better think about how different the newly arrived Mr. Martin O’Neill will be from the boss.”

“How different are they? We can talk about it for a day and a night. The boss is the most unique and you can’t find another like him in the whole of England... No, no, in the entire Europe. Not even Mourinho can be compared to him!”

“Why do you think the boss wanted to leave...” Bale asked again.

All the talk immediately disappeared. Some people even sighed lightly. This question troubled a lot of the Forest players. They thought about a number of reasons, such as the boss’ poor health, a problem in the boss’ family, the boss and the club’s top brass could not get along, the boss was tired of coaching in the same team for eleven years in a row, or the boss had betrayed them...

Twain had never explained the reasons for his sudden resignation in the media, so there were a lot of rumors outside. Some of which were very close to the players’ speculation, so that they felt confused and did not know whom to trust.

The impact of Tony Twain’s sudden resignation was still very much present today. Some of them still did not understand why the boss chose to leave suddenly at that time, but they could clearly feel that the boss was gone. It felt as if the team had lost something very important and the will of the players fell apart. It would not be easy to gather together again.

Kompany had already been sold to Italy by Allan before O’Neill came to the Forest team. Without Twain’s obstruction, Allan could sell anyone, as long as the other side could offer the price that would tempt him.

Following immediately was the sale of Leighton Baines. He went to Everton in the Premier League.

These two players brought in a revenue of twenty-seven million pounds for Allan Adams. If Twain was there, he would surely berate Allan Adams but there was no one who could stop the businessman.

The Forest team was unhappy with the top brass for driving the boss away and also dissatisfied with the sale of two of their teammates. A growing number of people within the team had already lost faith in the team. Ironically, just two months ago, this team won the great Treble and became the only team to do so in the European football arena in fifteen years. At the time, they must have thought they could continue to create brilliance and become the strongest team to unify Europe. If football also took a leaf out of the NBA and had a championship ring, all ten fingers and even toes were not enough to hold them when everyone retired... A future of that kind was really beautiful!

Rome was not built in a day, but one night would be enough for it to collapse.

The dreary atmosphere in the locker room was interrupted by a man.

“Don’t dilly dally and let the new manager think you’re all professional players who like to be late.” George Wood was the one who spoke up. He had already changed into his training uniform, stood at the door of the locker room and looked coldly around his teammates inside the room.

He seemed to have recovered from the blow of his boss’ departure. His poor performance at the World Cup had also become a thing of the past. He was still the hardest working and serious one in training. He also spoke more words now than before. It was just that the expression on his face ... had become colder.

No one dared to defy George Wood who was like this. They did not even look face to face at him. A group of people kept their heads down and changed into their clothes and shoes in a hurry. Some people who had clearly changed their clothes, also untied their shoelaces and tied them once again, as if it would be a little tighter this way.

Then the players rushed out and marched to the training ground in twos and threes.

Over there, David Kerslake was giving Martin O’Neill a basic account of the current situation. He tried to avoid mentioning Tony Twain’s name. He did not want the new manager to have any other ideas.

“... We have just sold Kompany and Baines before, but fortunately they were no longer the absolute mainstay of the team. Pepe and Woodgate are fit to play at as center back partners. We have Gareth Bale and Joe Mattock as the left backs. Bale can attack and defend. Mattock is younger and has more potential... Although our rear defensive line is the best in England, but I think it will be nice if we have another high-level substitute goalkeeper... Tiago is a little old and his form is slipping so fast that he didn’t have many chances to play last season. Tony said that if the team wanted him to... Uh.” He suddenly shut his mouth because he realized that he had inadvertently mentioned that person’s name.

O’Neill smiled amiably and said, “Tony was right. Some people don’t have to stay in the Forest team all the time. The Forest team has the most united and harmonious locker room in the whole of Premier League, but that doesn’t mean we are a nursing home here, what’s more, a public nursing home.”

Kerslake marveled inside that O’Neill seemed to be easy to get along with and he continued with the introduction.

By this time, all the players had arrived at the pitch. They had gathered on the other side and were doing warm-up activities under the leadership of the fitness coach.

O’Neill was observing quietly as he listened to the assistant manager’s introduction.

What gift would this team that had swept across Europe and made the enemies terror-stricken, have to give to the new captain for the first time? How long could he stay on this ship? O’Neill could not think about these things. There was only one person on this mind – Tony Twain. He was keeping his mind as close as possible to Twain’s, speculating about how Twain led the team so that he could find the fastest approach for himself to fit in with the team and turn the team into Martin O’Neill’s own team.

When the team finished its warmup, O’Neill walked over and said hello to them, “Hello, gentlemen. I’m your new manager, Martin O’Neill. I believe you’ve heard of my name, haven’t you?”

Some of the players in the team laughed, while the others muttered in low voices, "What did he call us? 'Gentlemen?'"

It's awkward. I still like to be called 'guys.'"

"Shh, they have different styles. Be careful not to let him hear..."

In fact, O'Neill heard it. He had a smile on his face and acted as if he did not hear it at all.

He smiled on the surface, but he was laughing bitterly on the inside. It looked like it was not going to be easy to make this team his own...

Even though the Forest players were not yet aware of the difference between the new coach's temperament and that of his predecessor's, they soon learned the difference between how Manager Martin O'Neill led the team in training than that of the boss.

Twain always liked to leave the specifics and tasks to the rest of the coaching staff. He just stood on the side and watched. Occasionally, he would stepped forward and say a few words. He looked cool impeccably attired and wearing his sunglasses.

On the other hand, O'Neill wore a tracksuit and even personally demonstrated during training. It obviously had something to do with him being a great footballer once. Judging from the results of the training, O'Neill was better than Tony Twain. At least some of the players thought so.

Among the Nottingham Forest players was a stubborn "Team Tony Twain." They would spurn the other people and coaches other than Twain himself. Although they did not give the new manager trouble on the surface, their hearts were full of contempt as they waited for the new manager to make a mistake so that it could become something they could hold and use against him.

The dyed-in-the-wool faction was reluctant to admit that O'Neill was more outstanding at training than Twain. They felt that O'Neill's on-field command and mental ability must not be as good as the boss's. Anyway, football ultimately depended on the outcome of the game, and not the training results.

After the morning training ended, everyone left, each with his own thoughts. Martin O'Neill went to see his immediate boss, the club chairman, Evan Doughty.

"How do you feel after your first day of work, Martin?" Evan asked with a smile.

"Very good. Everyone was very cooperative. It's a great team." O'Neill did not tell the truth. He lied to cover up those troubles.

Evan smiled and shook his head, "Don't lie to me, Martin. I know this team. They're like Tony Twain's temper, smelly and tough." He did not have a look of disgust on his face when he said this. He only gave a slight smile as if he was making a joke about an old friend. "I think some of them are not convinced by you, but it's okay. They will know it after winning a few games. You must know the tradition of Nottingham Forest is quite simple – victory is ten million times more powerful than any sweet talk."

Martin O'Neill muttered inside his heart: It's also ten million times harder than sweet talk.

At this point, Evan shrugged. He suddenly remembered that this tradition did not have a long history because it was Tony Twain who brought it to the Forest team. Indeed, this man's influence was really

found everywhere in Nottingham Forest... like the ghost of an ancient castle which had not yet dispersed. He felt a little uncomfortable and changed his expression. His smile became milder as he said to O'Neill.

"You can make a purge list. We have to rebuild the team. Other than the core players who cannot be touched, you can do whatever you want with the others.

O'Neill was a little surprised to hear the club chairman say this. He looked up at the man in front of him, his eyes full of confusion.

"If you want a team that completely belongs to you, I think a proper purge is necessary, Martin. It's time to reshuffle."

O'Neill was silent for a moment and then nodded, "Very well. I'll give you a purge list after I observe for a period of time. It will include the players who need to be sold and bought. It will all be there."

With that, O'Neill took his leave of Evan Doughty and left the chairman's office.

Standing outside underneath the sun, he suddenly understood why Tony Twain wanted to leave Nottingham Forest at such a glorious time. There were not many managers who had the capability to compete with club chairmen. Old monsters like Ferguson were rare. When the chairman of a club interfered too much in the affairs of the team, it meant that the team was dangerous.

It was the same when he was at Manchester United and now it was the case too at Nottingham Forest. It looked like the successful club chairman was confident about himself.

How long could he hold on in such an environment?

O'Neill did not know. He only hoped that he could regain his rightful place in the team with one victory after another.

Just like how his predecessor did, obtaining one victory after another, he would keep running forward and not give anyone a chance to stop and catch one's breath. Even if he was tired, he had to grit his teeth and keep running.

Luckily, I do not have a heart disease.

O'Neill shook his head as he walked toward the parking lot.

Chapter 890: The New Manager of The Three Lions

Translator: Nyoibo Studio **Editor:** Nyoibo Studio

The noses of the media were very sensitive. Even though the English Football Association had not officially announced the news about them reaching an agreement with Tony Twain, the news had already been leaked by The Sun.

However, they phrased it as a question, "New head of the Three Lions?"

The picture next to the headlines was a photo of Tony Twain.

The first thing Twain did when he saw this news was to switch off his phone. Otherwise, he would be bombarded by countless annoying phone calls that day.

The Football Association would be calling for a press conference the next day anyway, they would be able to ask what they wanted to ask then.

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Next day, At the English Football Association in London SOHO square, the Football Association and Twain attended a press conference here and officially announced Twain's taking the role of England's manager.

Media from all over the world gathered at one place to witness it.

Even though he had been the manager of a football club for 11 years, it was still his virgin experience as the manager of a national team. He specially wore a new suit today, and also wore a tie, a rare occasion.

When he reached the venue, there were countless camera flashes even before he said anything which stunned the Football Association's executive, Shaun Harvey.

When the two of them are seated, Harvey officially announced that Tony Twain would be taking up the reins as England's national team's manager.

"We're very happy to be able to get Tony Twain to take up the role of England's manager. Amongst the many candidates, Tony Twain's results was the key to him being chosen. His results when he was with Nottingham Forest are very satisfactory for us. We're very confident that the England team will be able to welcome the new dawn under Tony Twain's guidance."

Twain and the Football Association signed a two-year contract. The target was to win the European Championship, and depending on the results of that competition, they would decide if the contract would be extended to the World Cup.

Next, it was time for Twain to give a short speech about him taking up the post.

"Leading the England team is a new challenge to me, and I like challenges."

Once Twain said that, he sat back, and it meant the reporters were free to ask questions.

It was short indeed...

The first reporter to stand and present his question was from The Times. His question was still acceptable, "Mr Twain, the best result that the previous manager, Capello, achieved was fourth place in the World Cup. May I ask if you have a specific target?"

Twain was about to answer when Harvey interrupted from the side, "Our target is the European Championship."

Twain glanced at him, then nodded and said, "Yes, the short-term target is the European Championship."

The questions after that went further and further away from the topic.

The reporters were obviously more interested about the reason Twain resigned from his post as Nottingham Forest's manager. Tony Twain did not give an explanation for it yet, and Nottingham Forest Football Club did not reveal more information.

The reporter from The Sun stood up and asked, "Mr Twain, what was the motive for you to leave Nottingham Forest when you're at your most glorious moment?"

Twain looked at Harvey. The Football Association's executive also felt very awkward.

Therefore, Twain opened his arms and said, "I'm sorry, this is the press conference by the Football Association regarding the new England manager, not a press conference by Nottingham Forest Football Club. You're at the wrong place, Mr reporter from The Sun."

This moment had finally arrived. The reporters were exceptionally excited. They had not seen Twain for a month, but Twain were still unfriendly to them. When he was at the club, he did not have a good relationship with the media. They should be under no illusion that things would change and they would work in harmony now that he was with the England national team.

The media used Twain to attract more attention and readers by provoking him whereas for Twain, going against the media was one of the greatest source of happiness for him. Being a manager of a football team comes with a lot of pressure, there had to be a way for him to vent it out. Going against the media was not bad way of doing so.

The reporters of The Sun wanted to continue asking but Harvey finally interrupted again, "Mr reporter, please ensure that your questions are relevant to the main topic today, otherwise we have the rights to not answer."

"Alright, Mr Harvey. I have a question for you," that reporter smiled and nodded, "As the English Football Association, you've undoubtedly chosen Tony Twain as the manager of the national team because of his results. Is the Football Association worried that Mr Twain's big mouth might bring about some unnecessary trouble for the team and the Football Association?"

"Um..." Harvey secretly cursed under his breath, "We believe that Tony Twain will be mindful of his actions."

Twain took over from him, "Don't worry about this, I'll definitely not bring any trouble to the Football Association or the England squad. In fact, I'll only retaliate if someone else takes the initiative to provoke me. I also hope that we'll be able to coexist peacefully in the days to come," when he finished, he glanced at the reporter from The Sun with a look that suggested there was a hidden meaning within.

When it was known that Twain was attending the press conference, Pierce Brosnan was sent to London by the chief editor in the hope that his personal relationship with Twain would bring him some exclusive news. Too bad Twain had switched off his phone and he could only attend the press conference like the other reporters.

He was picked by the host and he stood up to ask his question. Like the reporter from The Sun, he really wanted to ask Twain why he left Forest, but he knew that he would not get any answers by asking that, all it would do was to destroy the relationship between him and Twain.

"Mr Twain, can you reveal some of the principles that you would build your team around?"

“All the English players have a chance to be chosen into the national team. I do not care about their fame, or even what their names are, I’ll only look at their form and their attitudes. People who are lazy have no place in my team,” Twain replied indicated an “iron hand”, but that was within everybody’s expectations. That was the kind of manager that he was. He was like this when he was in Nottingham Forest, he would not take no for an answer and nobody could oppose what he said.

Brosnan did not continue asking and sat down. Another person stood up, “Mr Twain, when you were at Nottingham Forest, you thought that Forest was the best team in England. Would you build the team around the English players in the Forest team then?”

Of course, Twain knew that this person was questioning if he would be biased towards the English players in Nottingham Forest in a roundabout way. He did not bother to explain, “No, I won’t do that. I’ll be impartial in choosing my players,” This did not accord with his character and style.

He nodded and said, “If they perform well, why not?”

Appointing people based on favoritism is bad, but there is also a saying that says one should appoint people based on their merits. Compared to the players of the other teams, he was more familiar with the Nottingham Forest players, therefore the Forest players would naturally look to him for some help. Twain did not avoid this topic, in fact, he was prepared for it.

If the media were to criticize him, the reason for that would not be because he picked too many Forest players, but because he lost the match. Therefore, the national team was no different from the club, as long as one won, there would not be any problem.

After he understood the fundamentals of the problem, things became much simpler.

Twain handled the rounds of questions by the media perfectly, showing no weakness. After resting for more than a month, it did not look like it affected him at all. When the press conference ended, Harvey was very satisfied with Twain’s performance—He did not cause any problem in the press conference indeed.

He only hoped that it was not a rare occasion

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After the press conference, news of Tony Twain taking up the role of England’s manager was on all major prints, television, radio broadcast and the internet. Twain became the hottest news topic.

His pictures were all over the newspapers.

BBC was planning to invite him for an exclusive interview.

Kerslake was having breakfast while reading the latest newspaper. He flipped to the sports section straight.

What he saw was a front-page picture of Twain. He was wearing a bespoke suit with a tie, a stern expression on his face.

Kerslake was reminded of the way he left Forest when he saw Twain’s picture. There was no doubt that Twain lied to him, promising him that he would be the first to know. In the end, news of it spread like

wildfire amongst the outside media before he received a postcard with a tropical bikini lady from Brazil that Twain sent telling him that he resigned.

This was a sudden news, but Kerslake was prepared for it. Him, as an assistant manager, knew very clearly that Twain and Allan had a rocky relationship. But he did not expect Twain to really abandon the team that he had painstakingly managed for 11 years just because of this reason. He was really an enigma; one cannot predict what he would do using normal logic...

In Kerslake's opinion, leaving at the highest point was a very difficult decision. However, he did not know that Twain had been considering about this problem for a whole year and he was still hesitant at the end. If Evan's actions did not disappoint him so much, he might still stay in Wilford. Initially, he had the intention of leaving because of the row with Allan, but he eventually realized that Evan, with the smiling face, was also against him, that meant that he did not have to struggle anymore, it would be much easier for him to just leave.

Kerslake sighed at the way fate works while holding the newspaper before putting it down and continuing with his breakfast. At this moment, his phone rang.

Looking at the phone number, it was actually from Tony Twain!

"You finally called, Tony. Are you here to apologize?"

"I'm very sorry, David. I did not know that the club would call a press conference so quickly... I sent the postcard as soon as I reached Brazil," Twain knew what Kerslake meant by apologize and he did owe his partner an apology. He also had a favor to ask of him.

"Forget it, let bygones be bygones. Do you need me for something?" Kerslake did not want to dwell on that matter as it was pointless.

"It's like this, David. You should have know that I'm now England's manager, right?"

"I'm reading the papers, you look too stern in the photo."

"Ha!" Twain gave a laugh, "I'm now a general with no army, there's no one to help me... I intend to invite you to join England's coaching team. We work well together, there won't be any problem!"

Kerslake stopped eating and fell silent for a while.

Twain did not rush him, he knew that this was a sudden news and he had to give him some time to think, "You don't have to give me an answer now, David. You can take a few days to consider and call me after that..."

"No, I reject your offer, Tony."

"You can really take a few days to consider it, David."

"I've already considered it just now," Kerslake was firm in his answer, there was no room for discussion.

"Okay then... Can you tell me why?" Twain knew he could not persuade Kerslake because he did not like to force people to do things that they did not want to.

"I love Forest, Tony. After you left, Forest was in a mess. The new manager, Martin O'Neill doesn't understand this team at all. I have to stay and help him get acclimatized to the team as soon as possible. Now that you're gone, if I leave too, I don't know what will become of this team..."

Twain felt his face flush a little when he heard what Kerslake said. He had been forcing himself to ignore news about Forest because he was afraid that he would feel heartache—The team of champions that he built himself had already sold two of the players, and word was they were going to keep selling. When the new season begins, how many of the original members would be left of the treble-winning Nottingham Forest team?

"If Tang was still here, I might have said yes. Oh yes, why don't you ask Tang?"

Twain thought to himself that it would be pointless to ask him, the answer would be the same as Kerslake's. He wanted to be a manager, and he was doing well in Notts County. Why would he leave the team that he had been leading to be an assistant manager for him in the England national team?

"Sorry that I can't help you, Tony. I wish you all the best."

After he hung up the call from Twain, Kerslake picked up the newspaper again. He was in a daze for quite awhile as he looked at Twain's picture on the paper.

"Who was it so early in the morning?" His wife asked, wiping her hands as she came out from the bathroom. She was giving their son a bath.

"An old friend," Kerslake replied as he put down the newspaper again, finishing up his breakfast.

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Twain was troubled by the fact that he had no suitable coaching team now—Even though his coaching team was very good in the club, they were not willing to join the England team. When Capello became manager, he brought an all-Italian coaching staff. From assistant manager to goalkeeping coach, fitness coach, they were all Italians. When Capello left his post, these Italians left England with him, leaving nothing for Twain. He had to first build his coaching team before he built his team.

He gave Roy Keane a call next, hoping to invite him to be England's assistance manager. As expected, Keane rejected him.

"I'm Irish, Tony," Keane gave a strange laugh, perhaps due to the strange nature of Twain's invitation, "How could I possibly be an assistant manager for the England team? Have you ever seen an Argentine being an assistant manager for the Brazil national team?"

Twain realized that he was not a very popular person. Other than a few friends, he was actually unable to find anymore potential partners. Those friends of his were all managers of a team, for them to drop what they were doing and be his assistant manager? They would have to be crazy to do so.

Even though the Football Association recommended a few candidates for him, Twain still hoped to look for one himself. That was because that way, the coach that he found would be the one that he really needed, and they would be able to work together and achieve more with the same effort.

He needed an assistant manager, a goalkeeping coach, a fitness coach and a psychologist. The most important one amongst them was an assistant manager. Twain's managing style meant that he needed

an able assistant manager to support him so that he did not have to worry much about the training, and he could focus more on the tactics and analysis of their opponents.

This assistant manager did not need to be very famous, just able and would listen to what Twain said. Twain was able to control the changing room himself, an assistant manager who had a mediocre character might even have a better effect.

Where would he find an assistant manager like that?