

Champions 91

Chapter 91: Beautiful Tackle Part 2

On Nottingham Forest's youth team, there were two people Tang En paid the most attention to. The first person was Gareth Bale, who had been personally poached by Tang En from Southampton. He would occasionally take the time to observe Bale's training progress and see if he was improving.

Bale was very obedient. Although Tang En forgot to tell him the reason for switching him over to the position of left back, he still continued to practice his techniques as a left back. Although there were no notable results currently, he still continued to practice. Another thing that Tang En paid much attention to was Bale's free kick practice.

What made Tang En extremely excited was that, after going through proper guidance and practice, this kid's talent in the aspect of free kicks was finally showing. According to Bale's father, Bale loved free kicks. Now, he only did one thing during his physical education classes in school and in his backyard after he returned home—practiced his left foot free kick.

Standing by the side of the field and seeing this kid kicking the ball over the moving human walls time and again, Tang En felt as if he was witnessing the birth of another Beckham. The feeling of achievement from witnessing a player's average abilities gradually become outstanding, was one that could not be expressed with mere words. It was just like, like.... like giving birth to a child and raising him up with one's own hands.

These young players were his children, and Tang En was their father.

As for the other person whom he paid much attention to, it was naturally George Wood. His attention toward Wood was already publicly known, and the entire youth team knew that this silly kid was highly regarded by the manager. However, there were few who could tell the reason why this was so. Wes Morgan was one of those who understood the reason.

After leading the team for four matches, Tang En did not send Wood onto the field even once. Every time, Wood would be on the substitution name list, but he would merely watch from the side. Tang En did not give him a chance to go onto the field for even a single minute. Kerslake thought that Tang En was worried that this kid would go up and injure another person from the opposing team again. However, Tang En, himself, knew very clearly, his reason for doing so.

Did George Wood know? Tang En had no idea. This lad did not speak much usually, and if one did not take the initiative to ask, Wood would not reveal anything. If Wood had something on his mind, it would just sit there and ferment, buried in his heart. Therefore, Tang En decided to have a talk with Wood one day after training.

After a full day of training, the players of the youth team started leaving the training grounds, discussing where they would go and what they would do that night. This was a good chance for them to rest and relax. Tang En and Kerslake never interfered with the players' personal lives, as long as they did not go overboard with it.

After bidding farewell to Kerslake and the rest of the coaches in the office, Tang En hurried toward the changing room. There were still a few players who had just finished showering and were sitting and chatting half-naked while waiting for their bodies to dry. Among them was the youth team's captain, Wes Morgan.

Tang En's entrance interrupted the young men's discussion. He looked around, but did not find George Wood. He asked, "Anyone seen Wood around?"

Morgan stood up and said, "No, Manager. We haven't seen him come back."

"Hmm?" Tang En thought that it was strange. "Haven't seen him come back?"

Morgan nodded his head before pointing to the north. "I saw him walk directly in that direction right after training ended." After thinking for a short while, he added, "And he was hugging a football ball."

Upon seeing Morgan point in to the north, Tang En had already guessed—George Wood must have run off to the second field to do some extra training on his own. This kid!

"Thanks a lot. Hope you have a great time tonight!" Tang En bade farewell to the players and walked toward the second field.

Upon reaching the second field, it was just as Tang En had expected. Under the evening sun, George Wood was continuously doing the same fundamental practices that he had been doing for the past year: headers, passing, dribbling...

Seeing this, Tang En did not feel touched at all. In fact, he was slightly angry. He quickly rushed forward and stepped on the football ball that Wood kicked.

George Wood's eye shifted upwards from Tang En's foot and saw an angry Tony Twain.

Tang En raised four fingers and displayed them in front of Wood's eyes. With a slight tinge of anger in his voice, Tang En said, "Four hours. The maximum training duration that the UEFA has set for youth players." After that, the four fingers turned into two fingers, and it seemed as though the number had been reduced.

"Twenty hours. The maximum training duration for youth teams in a week. Do you know why they had to specifically make such a rule, George?"

Wood shook his head. He did not care much about this. To him, training and practicing was all that mattered to him.

"It is to prevent people like you from doing stupid things like this!" Tang En reprimanded sternly. "Do you know why I stopped your fundamentals trainings here after moving you to the team? If you continue to train for two more hours after receiving three to four hours of highly intensive training daily, your body will crumble before you become successful and famous!"

Tang En said it in an intimidating tone and had originally thought that George Wood would be frightened by it. Instead, he shook his head and replied in a nonchalant manner, "I don't find the daily training of the team too tiring."

Shit! Tang En scolded in his heart.

“Are you King Kong or Hulk? Alright, I don’t care how much your current body can take. In any case, you have to stop training at once and go home!” Tang En stepped and rolled the ball back and forth, as he thought about how he could successfully flick the ball from the ground to his hand in one try. He was unwilling to lose face in front of his own player.

Tang En, who was focused on thinking about how to flick the ball, did not notice that George Wood had already fixated his eyes on the ball, and was following Tang En’s movements closely.

After pulling the ball back and forth around ten times, Tang En estimated that he should only need one try to succeed. He pulled back his right leg forcibly, and rolled the ball back slightly. After that, he kicked the ball forward quickly, and flicked the tip of his foot. He was met with the ball that was rolling back, and it looked just like he had used a shovel to “shove” the ball up!

Haha! I did it! Tang En, whose football skills were extremely terrible, wanted to laugh out loud, but he suddenly felt a gust of wind beside him! Sensing danger, he instinctively arched his body backwards. After that, he saw clearly...

He was not sure for how long, Wood was almost lying on the ground, his body nearly parallel to it. His right hand supported his body, and at the same time his left leg quickly swung toward the ball in the air. The gust of wind that he had felt previously was actually from this leg!

The ball was less than five centimeters away from Tang En’s foot, and looking at Wood’s extremely aggressive stance, if he had just kicked the ball slightly off, Tang En’s right leg would be in a cast the next day, and Tang En would have to come to training with crutches.

Bang! With a loud sound, a few pieces of grass clippings flew in front of Tang En’s face, causing him to squint his eyes uncontrollably.

After which, Tang En landed on the ground on his butt and stared dumbfounded at the row of trees in the north. Wood had actually kicked the ball directly toward the back of the forest. There was a slope there and beneath the dam at the bottom of the slope was the Trent River!

This kid! To have actually kicked the ball so far...That’s not the point! The point is, he was actually able to perform such a clean tackle! If this had happened during a match... it was a defensive move that would rouse the cheers of the commentators and fans. Swift! Accurate! Powerful! It was too perfect! Wood, you are indeed suited to become the support of a team!

George wood did not know what Tang En was thinking about at that moment, as he stood up and was about to get the ball. After running for a few steps, he was stopped by Tang En, who had recovered from his initial shock. “Don’t go, George. Do you know where you kicked the ball to?”

“There.” Wood pointed at the dark forest under the evening sky.

“Wrong. It’s even further than that. Tang En pointed upwards and said, “You kicked the ball to the Trent River. Don’t bother with picking it up.”

“But that’s the club’s ball.” Wood was afraid that the club would make him pay for it.

“Every year, the club loses a countless number of football balls. Losing one more doesn’t affect it much. If your luck is good, I think that perhaps you will be able to see many more football balls in the river during spring.”

“Why is that so?” Wood was confused.

“Because that ball you just kicked would have swam back from the Atlantic Ocean with its offspring! Haha!” Tang En burst into laughter while seated on the ground. However, he suddenly coughed in the midst of his laughter, and frowned. “Ah, dang it! You kicked me!”

He lightly touched the tip of his foot. It was extremely painful there and was probably due to being hit by Wood’s studs.

“Come over, help me up.” Tang En, who was seated on the ground, extended his left hands toward Wood. However, he quickly changed his mind—and extended both of his hands. “Just carry me directly!”

“Why?” Wood appeared to be slightly unwilling.

“Why? You injured me and caused me to be unable to walk. If you don’t carry me, do you expect me to hop back with one leg? In addition, don’t you have a lot of excess energy that you have not used up? Carry me home, this is also a form of physical training. Quick, it’s almost dark.”

Left without a choice, Wood walked over to Tang En and bent over to let Tang En climb up his back. After that, he used his strength and picked him up. A 17-year-old lad carrying a 34-year-old man. The scene was quite comical.

Tang En slightly adjusted his position, so as to make himself feel more comfortable. Aside from the sweat beads on Wood’s body, the benefits of being carried were quite good.

“Hey, George.” Tang En, who was on Wood’s back, patted this kid’s broad shoulders.

“What?”

“Tell me, why do you insist on giving yourself extra training?”

“Because I...” Wood snorted. “I feel that my fundamentals are too weak.”

Tang En smiled. “George, do you know the reason why I didn’t let you onto the field for the past few matches?”

“Because my fundamentals are weak.”

“That is only one of the reasons. Actually, I hoped that you would observe closely from the substitution bench how those teammates of yours, who have received seven to eight years of football training, do it on the field. There is no use in letting you watch those high-level football videos now. You have to start learning from the people around you, learn how they deal with the ball, how to react to the various situations during the match, and remember them by heart. This will become your experience. Remember these experiences by heart, and the next time you encounter a situation where the enemy striker is running in front of you, and you are chasing from behind diagonally, you will then know what the best thing to do is.”

“Mmm.” Wood nodded his head.

“And if you still insist on training after the daily trainings... you may do so; I give you permission for it. However, you have to do it under my supervision, and you can’t spend more than 40 minutes on additional training in a day. In addition, George...”

“Hmm?”

“Although you hit my foot just now, I still have to say that, that tackle of yours was very, very.... beautiful!”

Tang En did not catch Wood’s reply to this, and Wood did not thank him or say anything. However, Tang En could feel that this kid’s walking speed had increased, and his strides had become more energetic.

Chapter 92: The Arsenal Match

August, the hottest month of the year, had passed, and the Nottingham weather gradually cooled going into September. Sometimes early in the morning, Tang En had to put a coat over his T-shirt.

Yang Yan ended her summer vacation and returned to Nottingham from China. During the two-month holiday, she first went to Italy with her friends, and then returned to her hometown after the SARS outbreak in China eased and the travel ban was lifted.

Though he had wanted to, poor Tang En could not go back. He was leading the team matches.

After Yang Yan returned to Nottingham, she gave Twain a call to say hello. She told him that she had returned from her China trip and brought a Chinese gift for Manager Twain, who loved the Chinese culture. It was supposed to be something that would please Tang En, and he would thank Yang Yan.

But now he didn’t look forward to Yang Yan’s appearance as much as he used to. For two months, he had not seen Yang Yan, did not hear her voice, and did not think about her at all. In the past, besides his greatest expectation of leading the team to victory, the thing he looked forward to most was Yang Yan’s Chinese class every week

Later, when school had started, Yang Yan took the initiative to propose cutting the Chinese lessons from twice a week to once a week, because she would be busier than before in the new semester, and she thought that Twain’s Chinese level was already very high. “I’m afraid your level is higher than some Chinese people.” So there was no need to waste time on it.

Tang En now had little time for his Chinese studies, and he did not really need to learn at all. So, when Yang Yan put forward this request, he simply agreed to it, and added that if it was inconvenient for her to come on the scheduled day, she could just call and let him know.

Due to the adjustment of the game schedule, most of the teams’ sixth round of matches were postponed to the end of October, including Nottingham Forest’s. Collymore could finally breathe a sigh of relief. But the media did not intend to let him off just like that. They watched him closely every day as they wanted to see what other excuses Mr. Collymore could find.

If he said the team did not yet have a rapport, that's fine. Now that the team had been given a two-week adjustment period, 12 days should be enough for you to break the team in. No matter how stupid Gareth Taylor was, he should have a little bit of a rapport with the team by now, right? If we continue to lose, then we'll see what else you have to say.

Besides getting his rest every night and studying the former Tony Twain's notes, Tang En now spent his time in Burns' bar, chatting with everyone about the current situation in the football world, and talking about the recent difficulties the Forest team had encountered. If someone wanted him back at City Ground, he would never refuse.

Ever since he found out that Twain often went to Burns' Forest Bar, Pierce Brosnan treated it almost like a second home.

Tang En did not really want the media to get too close to him. He hated the media. So, he always tried to think of ways to drive Brosnan away during the several times he had met Brosnan in the bar.

"Hey, are you going to kick me out again today?" Brosnan stood in front of Twain's seat and looked at him with his hands in his pockets.

Tang En was eating his meal, and when he saw Brosnan, he put the spoon aside. "Damn it, I lose my appetite when I see your face. Why do you still want to come here? You should be working overtime at the office putting together sensationalized news. Where's Kenny?" He lifted his head up and looked around.

"Stop looking. I am a paying customer. He has no right to drive me out, the same goes for you, too." Brosnan took two glasses of beer from the waiter. He took one for himself and put the other one beside Twain's plate. Then he pulled out a chair and sat down.

"You want to bribe me with a glass of beer?" Tang En had not finished speaking when Brosnan pushed the beer in front of him.

"If you want more, there's more."

Looking at Brosnan's smiling face, Tang En sighed again. "Very well. If you want to come here to look for me, then do as you please. But I warn you: You're not a reporter here, and whatever we talk about, I don't want to see it in the papers." Tang En used this to flush out Brosnan's purpose in getting closer to him.

If he wanted to get some kind of exclusive scoop here, he would get rid of him right away.

Brosnan nodded. "Of course, I'm just a regular Forest fan after work."

"Very well. Not a bad answer." Tang En pushed the glass back to Brosnan. "I just thought of it, Mr. Brosnan. If I suddenly decide to write a biography one day, I must look for you."

"If there was truly such a day, it would be my pleasure," Brosnan laughed. "In addition, can I ask you a question, Mr. Twain?"

"Okay?"

"Are you getting ready to go back to City Ground?" Brosnan lifted his glass.

The two men's glasses lightly clinked together

"What do I need to get ready? I don't need to prepare. But now is not the time to go back. It's not the right time yet."

No, now was not the best time for Tang En to return to City Ground, and God did not seem to have abandoned Stan Collymore.

Having rested for 12 days, the Forest team had a home match with Sheffield United, the team which eliminated them in last season's playoff match in the seventh round of the league. It was a very important game for the Forest fans. They could not lose that match.

Collymore and the Forest players were obviously aware of the importance of the match, as well. So, it was only a matter of course that they would win the match on their home ground.

Gareth Taylor, who Collymore had placed high hopes on, finally broke out. He scored two goals at the 30th and 56th minutes of the match, bringing the score to 2:1.

At the 75th minute, Andy Reid put icing on the cake. Nottingham Forest eventually won the match amidst the roar of the fans.

Collymore, who had won the match, was very proud. He kept mentioning Taylor's two goals in the interview, both of which were iconic headers.

Of course, it was not entirely without problems. Although Rebrov contributed an assist, the number of goals he scored, as the main striker, was at a standstill since the first round of the league. What was the use of a main striker that assisted more than he could score?

On September 17th, at the eighth round of the league, Nottingham Forest challenged Burnley on an away match and this time, they had a straightforward victory, 3:0.

David Johnson, Andy Reid, and Gareth Taylor each scored a goal. The two consecutive victories and two consecutive matches of Taylor scoring goals made Collymore so happy that he excitedly announced a day off for the team. Then, on the night of the match, he disappeared, and his hotel room was empty. Who knew which beautiful woman he had found to spend the night with.

The two wins in a row enabled Collymore and his beautiful companion to spend the night together and eased the pressure inside him a little. As a manager, victories and defeats were commonplace. Therefore, he could always easily forget the situation he was facing. Tang En's appraisal of Collymore was he was a typical "live in the moment and enjoy while he can, only worry when the worries come" kind of guy. He seemed to never plan the team's future. Once the pressure to win a match had eased, he would go pick up a girl. When he lost a match, he would blame this and that.

He didn't think Doughty was a fool. What could a manager of such level bring to the Forest team? Even the American, who did not understand football, should know better. But why was there no news of activity within the club's higher-ups? Tang En began to pay attention to all the news about the Forest team's finances and the club's board of directors.

Anyway, compared to his previous role as the First Team manager, his current job was as light and easy as if he were on vacation. He had plenty of time to analyze the things he had never been involved with.

Speaking of Tang En's work, the Nottingham youth team was ranked second in the fourth group of the FA Youth Cup. They only had two points less than the top ranked Aston Villa, which was the champion of the 2002 England FA Youth Cup.

The Forest team youth also successfully broke into the third round of the FA Youth Cup. The young players were very fond of Twain's coaching style, because it could bring them victory. Wasn't winning the whole point of playing the match? Winning matches meant that they would be noticed by more people and that they could have a better future. Even if the First Team was not keen on them, they could still have a good frame of mind, couldn't they?

Tang En had never let his players "enjoy the game" during a match, unless the team had a four-ball advantage over their opponents and at the same time the game only had 10 minutes left. He never told the young players that "football is such a wonderful sport." He usually said, "What a wonderful thing it is to win."

The youth team had George Wood's name on the substitutes' list for every match, but he still had not received even a minute of play in a match. To be honest, the other youth players were quite puzzled by Twain's approach. Everyone could see that the manager was very concerned about Wood. He would take him to go to the second field to have additional practice every day after the training. But why did he not let him play in a match? This kid's performance was also quite good during the usual training. Kerslake often loudly praised him.

When no one was around, even Kerslake would sometimes suggest to Twain to let Wood play in a match, but Twain's answer was "wait a little more."

So, this wait became another two months.

When Tang En finally changed his pairing of a black suit with a red round neck T-shirt, he could still feel the morning chill even as he wore a long-sleeved shirt underneath his suit. Nottingham's late autumn had arrived.

The rainy season had also arrived in Britain. Ah, that was incorrect. Britain had a rainy season all year round. It was now a cold, rainy season.

Tang En stood on the sidelines and watched the youth training with a shrunken neck. He simply put up the collar of his suit, but the rain kept pouring into his neck. Kerslake, who was personally instructing the players on the field, looked even worse than he did. His Umbro sportswear was so slick from the rain that it could reflect light and illuminate a person.

Tomorrow was the third round of the FA Youth Cup, in which the Forest team would play a home match against their opponents. It was a strong team from a Premier League club with a world-renowned reputation for cultivating young players—Arsenal!

The Arsenal adult team was a strong team and their youth team was just as strong. In addition to Arsène Wenger, a manager who placed great importance on the building of youth football, they also had a modernized youth training ground, the best youth coaches, and the ability to purchase and groom young players with huge potential from all over the world.

Tang En was not afraid of Arsenal, but he must pay attention to this team. Because there was currently a very special person on the Arsenal youth team.

The exercises carried out in the rain were mainly targeted defense. George Wood was clearly the key figure in training. He was “specially cared for” by the coaching team. The 18-year-old Ross Gardner was a midfielder who came from Newcastle in the summer and was now the main midfielder of the youth team, the core of their formation. James Beaumont, also 18, was Gardner’s midfield partner. He was evenly-skilled and an all-around midfielder.

The coaching team had asked the two to take turns going up and organizing the offense. And Tang En asked Wood to defend against these two men. He was supposed to closely mark whoever was up. If the two people attacked together, he must hold his position well and not allow the other side to easily break through their line of defense. He could not expect there would be anyone around him to help. He must do all of it alone.

“George Wood!” Kerslake blew the whistle to stop the training. He stepped on the mud and marched toward Wood, who was heavily panting and standing in the rain. “You’ve lost your position again! Position, position! How many times do I have to tell you? Defense is not about seeing the other side with the ball. You just f**king rushed up to tackle the ball like an idiot! Look at your front and back, left and right, hold your position to force the other side to shift to the side or turn back. Look what you just did. Gardner got through again!”

Kerslake’s roar in the rain was clear and distinct, and the raindrops around him all shot out. Wood lowered his head and did not speak. The other players took the opportunity to take a breather. The training class had already been interrupted many times. Wood always liked to rush ahead first for his defense, and then the other side would easily bypass him. If he were to mark one player, his performance was not bad. But when he had to hold his defense position... that was where the problem started.

Tang En stood on the sidelines and quietly watched Kerslake lecturing Wood. He was aware of Wood’s current shortcoming. This kid was good at close-marking defense because his abnormal physical ability could make up for the disparity in his experience, awareness, and skills during the one-on-one marking. And a defensive stance relied more on experience and awareness, and these were the things that Wood lacked the most now.

Tomorrow’s game... can we count on him?

Seeing how the players sprinted, tackled the ball, and rolled on the rain-soaked field, digging up one piece of soil and turf after another, Mr. Andrew, who was specifically in charge of the turf maintenance at the training ground, stood next to Twain and frowned in distress.

“Mr. Twain, can’t you go to the second field for the training? We have just trimmed this field, and now look, it’s a swamp!” He complained, “We are going to play on this field tomorrow.”

Tang En looked at this 40-something-year-old turf employee and comforted him, “Don’t worry, Mr. Andrew. I did it on purpose. After the training, you just need to cover up the dug-up grass. You don’t need to put too much effort into tidying up the field.”

“This...” Mr. Andrew did not understand.

“By the way, if it doesn’t rain tomorrow, you will have to water the field even more an hour before the match starts.”

Andrew knew what was going on when he heard Twain. He asked excitedly, “How much water should we use, Mr. Twain?”

Tang En looked at Andrew, who had caught on to it, and smiled brightly. “What if I say you and your men can flood it here... Is that okay?”

Then Andrew chuckled. “Mr. Twain, you’re so wicked! Don’t worry, I’ll get it done well. I guarantee the Arsenal kids won’t feel comfortable playing here.”

Because the match was the next day, training was soon over. At the end, Wood’s understanding of the defensive stance did not improve much. Kerslake sighed at Twain, shook his head, and went back for a shower and change of clothes.

The players ran back to the locker room with their heads down. Only Wood was standing on the field in a daze. His performance that day on the muddy ground was indeed terrible. But it did not matter, it was good for him to know his own shortcomings. Tang En never worried that Wood would lose his drive because of the impact of being reprimanded. His reason for playing football was different from the other kids on the team. He had a tough body and was tenacious.

Tang En stepped forward and patted the dazed Wood.

“Go back and change your clothes. Be careful not to catch a cold.”

Wood looked up at Twain, hesitated a little, and then asked, “Am I still on the list tomorrow?”

“Of course.” Tang En nodded. “Head back quickly. If you catch a cold, I’ll have to remove you from the list.”

Then, Wood ran back to the locker room. Looking at his back, Tang En had a headache about the same worries that Kerslake had.

The sky was dark, because it was cloudy and raining. It was not even 5:30 p.m., and it was dark as night. The patter of rain hit the windows and ground, making a continuous crackling sound. From time to time, someone would run past below the window, both feet stepping on the puddles, the crackling sounds came from far to near, and from near to afar. Because of the weather, the street outside was much quieter. There was no loud noise of children gathering and making a racket and no shouts from quarrelling couples.

Although it was very cold outside, this simple kitchen and dining room seemed particularly warm because of the warm fire, orange lights, and fragrant black tea.

This was the feeling of home.

Although the family of two who lived here had no money, their home was much warmer than Tang En’s cold and empty house.

George Wood, who just had a hot shower, threw all his clothes, which were dirty and wet from training in the rain, into the washing machine. He then scooped in the detergent, pulled down the lid and turned

on the switch. After finishing this task, he returned to the kitchen to help his mother wash the dishes. Sophia sat at the table and cut the potatoes to prepare for dinner, even though it was still quite early.

“George.”

“Eh?” Wood took the clean milk pan out of the water, wiped it dry, put it aside, and picked up a plate and put it into the water.

“If I remember correctly, you have a game tomorrow?” Sophia casually asked as she diced the potatoes with her head lowered.

Wood gave a grunt again. Even in his own home, his words were few.

“Are you on Mr. Twain’s list again?”

“Yes.”

“Are you going to play this time?”

Wood stopped his chore, looked at the running water from the tap in a daze for a moment and then shook his head, “I don’t think so.”

“Why?”

“Maybe I’m still not good enough.”

“What’s considered good enough?” His mother asked.

Wood continued to shake his head, “I don’t know. When Twain thinks I’m okay, then I am.”

“George, you have to call him Mister,” Sophia corrected her son’s impolite behavior.

Wood reluctantly said, “Mr. Twain.”

Sophia smiled, “I think I want to see you play tomorrow.”

With a crash, the plate in Wood’s hand slipped into the water. He turned and looked at his mother, somewhat surprised. “Your body...”

“It’s only walking. Oh, George, don’t think so little of your mother,” Mommy Sophia said and smiled at Wood. But her son did not give in. He just frowned without nodding.

The mother smiled and looked to her son. Her son gloomily faced her with the sound of water rushing behind. Sophia pointed to the sink behind her son and alerted him, “It’s overflowing, George.”

Wood turned around to turn off the faucet and continued to wash his plate.

“George, do you like playing football?” Sophia changed the subject.

Wood shook his head.

“You do not like it, or you do not know?”

“I don’t know.”

“Do you feel happy when you’re playing football?”

“I never think about it.”

“It’s not going to work if you continue this way.” Sophia put down the potato and knife in her hands, then got up and went to her bedroom. Then she took a mirror from inside her room, walked behind Wood, and slowly put the mirror in front of Wood.

Wood looked at himself in the mirror, not knowing what his mother was doing.

“Look, George,” His mother whispered softly behind Wood. “Why do you always wrinkle your brows? Did someone upset you?”

“No, mother.” Wood shook his head.

“Laugh more, George. Don’t you think you’ll look handsome when you smile?”

Wood opened his mouth in the mirror, revealing two rows of white and neat teeth.

“Little Lion George.” His mother ruffled Wood’s shiny black hair that was sticking out messily on his head and looked like a lion’s mane.

After their affectionate exchange, Sophia returned to the dining table. “What do you think of Mr. Twain?” she asked, seemingly casual, but it caught Wood’s attention. “Optimistic and cheerful, he seems full of energy every day. George, you should be like him.” His mother did not notice the change in Wood’s expression, and she bent her head to cut the potatoes in concentration.

“I’ve decided. If it doesn’t rain tomorrow, I will go to see your game.”

While eating dinner at the Forest Bar, Tang En looked up at the television to watch the weather forecast.

“...Nottingham will have little to moderate rain tomorrow, from morning till night, temperature...”

“Yeah!” Tang En pumped his fist. This was the weather he wanted.

Next to him, Burns put down the newspaper and said to him, “You care a lot about tomorrow’s game, Tony.”

“Of course. We will be in the fourth round if we win.” Tang En lowered his head to dig into his meal.

“What are the chances of winning?” asked Brosnan, who sat opposite.

Tang En shook his head. “It’s not easy to say. Arsenal is very strong, and there are a few strong players on their team, especially that Spaniard...”

“You mean Fàbregas? But he’s only 16 years old,” Brosnan shrugged.

“Mr. Reporter, for some people, age is not an issue that affects their performance. We generally call these type of people ‘geniuses’.” Tang En pushed the plate aside, took a gulp of his beer to rinse his mouth, and finished his dinner.

The impact and ripple effects of Tang En’s transmigration had appeared in front of him more and more, but fortunately it did not affect some important events, such as the transfer of Francesc Fàbregas.

Immediately after October 1st, the young midfielder from Barcelona B club was transferred to the London Premier League team, Arsenal. Le Professeur Arsène Wenger could not wait until the transfer window opened next January to get the best player in U-17 World Championship, even though he was still unable to give Fàbregas a First Team position.

“Oh, don’t worry, Tony!” Big John held his glass and said to Twain, “All of us will go to cheer for your team, and hopefully we will not scare those Arsenal kids!”

His words were echoed in agreement by the others, and everyone said they would go to watch the youth team’s game.

Tang En lifted his glass to thank him. “But John, there are only standing tickets for sale.”

The match was held on the training ground. There were basically no tickets for sale. Anyone could watch the game at any time, just had to stand outside of the mesh wire fence beside the field. This, of course, was the “standing ticket” as compared to the plastic seats in City Ground.

“It doesn’t matter. We can even squat to watch the game.”

Bill, who was skinny, interrupted John. “Wrong, fatso. We can squat and watch the game, you can’t. If you really want to squat down, just be prepared to sew your pants! Ah ha ha ha!”

The people in the bar all laughed.

John scratched his head in embarrassment. “Whatever, squatting or standing is fine. But Tony, so many of us are going to watch the game, you mustn’t lose!”

“When have I let you down before?” Amidst the laughter, Tang En replied loudly, “Of course we’ll win!”

Chapter 93: Let Me Play Part 1

Tang En stood on the sidelines of the first field of the youth training ground and watched Andrew lead his men in watering the field. Then he looked up at the sky. Even though it was cloudy, it had not rained.

“Damn it! Weather forecasts can’t be trusted anywhere!” Tang En muttered a curse under his breath. “Is this little to moderate rain?”

Tang En looked at his watch, and it was still nearly an hour before the game began. He signaled to Andrew that they did not have to do the watering anymore.

“You want us to stop watering? Are you sure, Mr. Twain?” Andrew asked loudly as he stood in the middle of the field, holding a running hose in his hands and wearing a raincoat and wellington boots.

“I’m sure! Very sure! If you keep watering, we’re going to change to playing water polo with Arsenal!”

Andrew heard Twain’s answer and waved his hand. The staff gathered up their equipment and left the field. Tang En took a few steps on the field, and it was slippery as if it had just rained. He was satisfied with Andrew’s work.

Before the mid-nineties, the Arsenal playing style, especially in Graham's era, was rough and tough and strictly adhered to the cut and dry "1:0 code". The football ball was just flying back and forth in the air most of the time, which was not very interesting to watch. But since the arrival of the Frenchman, Arsène Wenger, their style of play has had a massive transformation. The Frenchman brought the art of football and stressed on making football entertaining to watch. He paid particular attention to short passes and ground coordination and encouraged his players to show off their personal skills. Today's Arsenal played the most beautiful football in England and was praised around the world.

However, the team that liked to play this way had higher requirements of the venue. The slippery and muddy football field, which was uneven and filled with holes, was not a suitable arena for Arsenal's performance.

Big John and Skinny Bill had arrived. There were a lot of people there. If they had been in City Ground, they would have almost filled a whole section of the stands. They stood in two rows outside the wire mesh fence, occupying half the length of the field. Although not everyone was wearing the Forest team's red jerseys like John, they all had the red scarves, and someone even made a banner overnight and hung it on the wire mesh. Tony Twain's caricature was drawn on it. Although it did not look quite like him, it highlighted his distinctive feature—his messy hair, which he had never taken care of. A caption was written next to his caricature:

Hey, Tony! Give us another victory!

As the wind blew, the caricature fluttered, and it looked like Tony Twain shouting on the field.

Looking at these enthusiastic fans, Tang En smilingly shook his head and then walked over to chat with them through the wire fence. These people were regulars at the Forest Bar, and Tang En clearly knew they were his most loyal supporters. Just as every player has a group of fans and fan club, Tang En, though not a player, had his own fans.

Ah, it felt good to be liked and recognized.

They chatted together for more than 20 minutes. The youth team players came to the field in succession, and then Kerslake led them to the locker room to change and come out to warm up. John and the others began to cheer for this group of kids. Although the youth team often had loyal fans coming to watch, today's number was so many that the players were surprised and excited.

Just as these kids were getting ready to do their warm-ups on the field, their opponents arrived.

With the blare of a horn, a red and white bus turned in from the asphalt road next to the field. The body of the bus was decorated with the Arsenal club logo and name. The bus passed the field and headed for the parking lot. Tang En glanced at it, took his leave of John and the others, and turned back to the home team's technical area, which was actually a few folding chairs for the coaches and wooden benches for the players to sit on.

Very soon, the Arsenal youth team players came in through the main entrance. Tang En saw several familiar faces in the crowd—Francesc Fàbregas, Gaël Clichy, Michal Papadopoulos, Philippe Senderos...

The owners of these names would have roles to play in the international football arena in the future. Now the oldest player was an 18-year-old and the youngest was only 15 years old. After the players, the coaches entered the field.

Liam Brady, the head of the Arsenal youth team, came toward Tony Twain and extended his hand to his opponent. He was a famous Arsenal player, who had once played for Arsenal from 1975 to 1980. He was the core of the team's midfield, the brain on the field, and now the youth director of the Gunners. But Tang En did not know this man. What startled him was the tall man, standing not far behind Brady, with silvery grey hair and a big protruding nose that made him look like a serious version of Mr. Bean—the Gunners manager, the French Professor, Arsène Wenger.

Why did the First Team manager come here? Tang En's brain flashed a trace of doubt.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Twain. I hope this match will be a good one." Brady gave a weak, bland, and useless conventional greeting. He took Twain lightly, as well as the Forest team. So what if they had the top youth training facilities in the United Kingdom? We have the world's top youth teaching system for Arsenal.

"Well, um..." Tang En's mind was filled with questions like Why is Wenger here? What is his intention in coming? Who is directing Arsenal for this match? So, he responded indifferently to Mr. Brady's greeting.

As for Arsenal's famous Mr. Brady, this naturally displeased him. He thought that Twain looked down on him and the Arsenal youth team. So, he did not say more, turned around, and walked back. Tang En's gaze was still on Wenger when he realized another person was suddenly next to Arsène Wenger. Mr. Brady has already walked back? What did he say to me just now? Oh, hell, it looks like I've offended someone again.

Arsène Wenger was talking to Brady while keeping his eyes on Fàbregas on the field. Tang En then understood that the Frenchman must have come to inspect the performances of a few young players.

The 18-year-old French full back, Clichy, had transferred from France's AS Cannes that summer. He had already played for the Arsenal First Team in the Premier League, but he had limited appearances. To maintain his competitive state, Wenger let him participate in the youth team matches. In the same situation as Clichy was the tall Swiss center back, Senderos.

Without a doubt, Tang En had reason to believe that the most important purpose of Wenger's trip to Nottingham was to inspect the Spanish kid whom he had just bought a month before—Francesc Fàbregas.

Fàbregas, who was of a lean build, was warming up on the field. He seemed very confident and without any performance anxiety. Even though he had only been on the team for a month, he looked as if he had been at Arsenal for a decade. Obviously, he would be the core of the team and the key player in the game.

Is there anyone currently on the Forest team who can defend against him? Tang En looked at the Forest players who were warming up on the other side of the field and scratched his head.

Arsène Wenger's arrival had created a flurry of excitement among the football fans watching on the sidelines. He was a celebrity from the Premier League and a world-class manager. Within John's group,

besides being supporters of the Forest team, some of them were Arsenal fans too, because Arsenal played very well in their matches and had excellent offensive.

Someone was so excited that he whistled, "Look! It's that Frenchman!"

"Why is he here?"

"Who cares! Maybe we can ask him for an autograph after the match has ended..."

"Fools!" Big John interrupted their excited discussion and said with a stern face, "Now he is our enemy. Don't show so much enthusiasm! You're humiliating! Come, shout with me. Forest Forest!"

"Forest! Forest!!" A group of men pumped their fists in the air and yelled at top of their lungs.

Mr. Brady had wanted to go out on the field and personally guide the team in their warm-ups. He had just stepped onto the field when he suddenly heard the roar of the fans outside. He got a shock, slipped, and landed on his butt!

"Dammit! Ahh!" Falling on the ground and feeling embarrassed, Brady angrily smacked the ground. As a result, a piece of mud was flung onto his face and his palms were covered with more mud. "What kind of rotten field is this?"

Standing next to him, Wenger had seen Brady's foot slip and wanted to reach out to catch him. But he was too late, and the head of the youth team comically fell to the ground in front of him. Wenger smiled a little as he saw the expressions of the players on the field who had wanted to laugh but dared not to. "Liam, get up. The Forest team must have done this on purpose." He took out a clean towel and handed it to Brady. "Wipe your face first, then wipe your behind."

As matter of fact, Wenger had already noticed the problem with the field. He watched the players' expressions and actions while they were warming up on the field, and then he looked at the repeatedly overturned dirt and turf... He had encountered such a thing in the Premier League, too, but, it seemed that no other team had done it to such an extreme extent as the Forest team. It appeared they were not that comfortable in their warm-ups, as well.

After the warm-up had ended, both sides returned to their respective technical areas to receive their coaches' final biddings.

Chapter 94: Let Me Play Part 2

Tang En did not know what they were saying on Arsenal's side. He only took a quick glance and found that Wenger did not replace Brady to exercise his managerial authority. Instead he just stood to a side with his arms folded across his chest and watched the young Arsenal youth team players gathered around to hear Brady talk. So, he turned his attention back to his team.

"I don't think you need me to say anything more, do you? Do you all know what I like?"

"Victory!" Morgan growled, and his teammates immediately loudly agreed.

“Very good! Arsenal is not weak, but we are also very strong. It has rained every day for a while now, and I have not asked you to train indoors. When you were soaking wet from the rain and rolling on the muddy ground, battered and exhausted, and could only swallow your misery and only complain in your hearts, did you ever think that maybe we should let our opponents have a taste of that feeling?”

Although the players were shaking their heads, the excited looks on their faces were obvious.

“That’s right! The Arsenal boys didn’t think of it either! Go and give them a surprise, lads!”

“Forest! Forest! Victory!” The players roared together in a huddle and ran out to the field.

Wenger’s attention was caught by the shouts coming from the Forest team. He turned to look at them but met Twain’s gaze as he happened to be observing him at the same time.

When Wenger found that Twain was looking at him, he turned his gaze back. But Tang En was still staring at the Frenchman as if he wanted to see through him.

Arsène Wenger... We’ll have a direct fight someday.

After the start of the match, the Arsenal youth team found it difficult to adapt to the terrible field condition. Many of their usually successful coordinated plays became misses because of the field.

The force of their passing diminished. The football would roll several times before it stopped in the mud. If they used too much force to kick it forward, it might directly fly out of the line. If they ran too quickly, they could not brake in time, and if they ran too slowly, they then simply could not receive the ball.

After half an hour, the score was still 0:0. The score had not changed, but their clean yellow Arsenal jerseys for the away match had almost turned black.

At the 32nd minute, the Forest team players seemed to have a little problem with their physical strength. The pace of their attack slowed down, and they began to pass the ball back and forth in the backfield. At this point, the increasingly impatient Arsenal players rushed over the halfway line like a swarm of bees, hoping to score a goal before the end of the first half. They had not expected to be trapped in a quagmire with their opponents.

Wenger raised his eyebrows at the sight of his players’ show of impatience. But he did not make a sound to alert Brady who was standing on the sidelines and directing the match by shouting and yelling.

When Senderos pushed past the center circle after they could not be held back any longer, the only Arsenal player left, other than the goalkeeper, Craig Holloway, was only one center back, Franklin Simek, with a wide expanse of empty space all around him.

Wes Morgan intercepted Arsenal’s Czech midfielder Papadopoulos’ pass and then drove the ball straight forward. For the many young Arsenal players, they were blindsided and had to scramble to kick the ball out of penalty area to crack their opponents’ offensive. But who was in front of them? The Forest players were almost all huddled up in the backfield, playing defense.

They thought it was good that there was really no one from the Forest team on that side. But they did not know that the Forest team had a fast striker—Spencer Weir-Daley!

This single-handed tactic of having the full back driving the ball and doing a long pass to the striker was a drill that Tang En often ran during training. But because Weir-Daley was almost useless except that he ran fast, the success rate was not high. This did not change Tang En's mind, and he insisted on this tactic. Even if it only succeeded once out of a hundred times, as long as he scored this one time at the most critical moment!

Like now...

Weir-Daley quickly ran past Senderos' side, and he seemed completely unaffected by the muddy ground. Senderos was so shocked that he wanted to turn around and chase after the Forest player who was so fast he could not see his jersey number, but he was struck in the face by a blob of upturned mud.

The ball was still in the air and Weir-Daley had already run past the midfield. He was approaching the opponent's 30-meter zone.

John and the others on the sidelines cheered loudly and cheered Weir-Daley on.

"Run, Lad! You can do it!"

The Arsenal full back, Simek, had just started to come up to stop the ball when his feet slipped out from under him. Then he looked up in despair at Weir-Daley sweeping past him from the side.

"Keep running!!"

Weir-Daley, who had received the ball, had only one player left in front of him now—the goalkeeper, Holloway. His opponent already behind him, the rest was simple. Amidst the loud cries from the crowd on the sidelines, Weir-Daley easily moved past Holloway, who had lost his center of gravity, and shot the ball into the empty goal!

The ball was in! The ball was in!

The Nottingham Forest youth team led in the third round of the FA Youth Cup against the mighty Arsenal youth team by 1:0!

John and the rest were so excited on the sidelines that they jostled the mesh wire fence making a rattling sound. It looked as if they were going to push down the mesh wire fence and rush onto the field to join the Forest team to celebrate the goal.

"Well done, lads!" The assistant manager Kerslake stood up to congratulate the players who had run back to the technical area, and Twain applauded behind him. Things were much easier now with one goal. Now that they had the advantage, if Arsenal wanted to win in this away match, it was not going to be that easy!

On the other side, Brady shook his fists angrily and then yelled, "That damn Tony Twain!"

Wenger stood with arms around his chest behind him, and he still did not say a word. But his gaze had now shifted from the field to the sidelines, and his attention had turned from the young Arsenal players to Tony Twain.

He knew how to use the weather and field conditions to lay the foundation for their tactics. If the weather was not favorable to them, he artificially created the conditions which were conducive to them. He made full use of every winning factor that could be used. This youth team manager was not simple.

Ten minutes later, the first half of the match ended. The visiting team, Arsenal youth, was behind the Nottingham Forest youth team by a goal for the time being.

Looking at the players who looked down and were in low spirits since they returned from the field, Wenger suddenly asked Brady who was busy comforting them, "Liam, did you bring any spare sneakers this time? The ones with the long spikes."

Brady understood, and he nodded, "Yes, I did. I'll have them all change into those now." Then he turned to the young players and said, "Change into the shoes with the long spikes and show those little rascals how powerful we are in the second half!"

Suddenly, there was the sound of shoe spikes clashing everywhere. Wenger nodded lightly, as long as the team adapted to this slippery muddy ground, he believed that with the team's overall strength, they could still overcome the Forest team.

As he was thinking about it, he turned his head again toward the Forest team manager. He wanted to see what Tony Twain was doing.

"You've done a great job!" Tang En was loudly praising his players. "When we were running freely on this field, our opponents were frantically trying to keep up with us. Continue to play like this in the second half, increase our tackles on their players with the ball, so that they will keep missing, and then miss again!"

"Yessss!!"

When he heard the cheers coming from the Forest team, Wenger called Fàbregas aside and alone.

"Cesc, how do you think you played in the first half?"

Cesc Fàbregas shook his head honestly, "Not very well, sir."

"And the reason was?"

"Well, I don't want to find an excuse, but the field condition is terrible. I've never played on such a lousy field. The ball can't be dribbled at all." Fàbregas pointed to the field behind him, which was indeed terrible as if it had just been plowed up by a tractor.

Wenger expressed his understanding, "You're right in saying that. The field condition really does restrict your play. But I think, after the first half, you should have already adapted to this field?"

"Yes, sir."

"I want more passes, chest-high balls, reduce the contact between the ball and the ground as much as possible. Less dribbling for the break throughs." Wenger patted Cesc Fàbregas on the shoulder.

"Remember Cesc. You are the midfield, the core of the team, the brain. Use more of this here to play." He pointed to his own temple. "If the situation is not fine, then you change to another method to cope

with it. During a match, the manager can't call you at any time or anywhere to instruct you on the next step. You have to be the second manager on the field."

Fàbregas firmly nodded. "I understand, sir. I know what to do!" He returned to his teammates and looked at the Forest team resolutely because he now had a clear purpose.

Soon after the second half, Tang En felt something was wrong. Cesc Fàbregas, who was trapped in the quagmire in the first half, was revitalized. He was the core of Arsenal's midfield, and his resurgence meant Arsenal was on the rebound.

The young Spanish midfielder oversaw the midfield and managed it. From time to time, Clichy, the French center back would interject from behind him to help break the Forest team defense line. Michael Papadopoulos would receive Fàbregas' pass in the front and then use his skills to break away from the defenders and seek opportunities to score. Senderos, after being censured by Brady at halftime, rarely rushed up to the front in the second half, unless there was a good position for a free kick or a corner kick. Other times he was holding the ground in the backfield and Weir-Daley did not have a chance again.

Arsenal was like a machine. Fàbregas was the core controller of this machine, and the others were operating around him. When he was running normal, the team would run normal. If he was not normal, this team would be in danger.

In the first half, even though this Spanish machine controller was apparently a little short-circuited by the muddy water, he resumed operation again in the second half.

Twenty minutes later, if the Forest team had not been lucky, their goal would have been breached at least three times. Once, Papadopoulos' powerful long shot had almost entered the goal. The Forest goalkeeper, John Lukic, threw himself to block the ball, and the ball slowly rolled toward the goal line. But just in front of the white line, Wes Morgan managed to rush up in time and kick it out!

"Ah!" A loud sigh broke out from the Arsenal technical area, and the Forest team's side breathed a sigh of relief.

"We can't keep going like this," Kerslake said to Twain. "That Spanish boy is too good! His passing is fantastic! He finds our strategic point almost every time."

Tang En squeezed his chin and murmured, "Yes, yes, you're right, David. He's indeed very good. He's very powerful. But do we have someone now who can defend against him?"

Kerslake was rendered speechless by Twain's question. That's right, does the team have anyone who can defend against this best player of the UEFA European Under-17 Championship?

The two coaches stared at Fàbregas, who was very active on the field. They had run out of ideas. Sitting at the outermost edge of the substitutes' bench, George Wood did not care what was happening on the field. He had been fidgeting for almost 65 minutes and honestly could not just sit there and learn anything from his teammates on the field. He sprang to his feet and walked up to Twain, blocking his view.

"George?" Tang En looked up at Wood.

“Let me play.” Wood got straight to the point without any nonsense.

“Now? This is not a good time.” Tang En was right. Fàbregas’ playing exceeded his expectations in this match. He was originally going to let Wood play in this match, but now that he saw Fàbregas’ second half performance, he promptly changed his mind. “In line with the principle of protecting young players...”

“Let me play!” Wood repeated his request.

“Tell me your reason.” Normally, George Wood listened to Twain, and he had only been difficult a handful of times, like his unyielding attitude at the moment.

Wood hesitated for a second, then pointed to a remote corner outside the field and said, “My mother is here, and I want her to watch me play in a match.”

The astonished Tang En looked in the direction that Wood’s finger pointed, and saw Sophia, who was hiding in a corner that was not easily noticed and away from the place where John and the other fanatics were, standing behind the mesh wire fence to watch the game.

“How did she come here?”

Wood was unwilling to explain the matter, so he repeated, “Let me play.”

Tang En looked at Wood’s resolute expression in his eyes, thought about it, and nodded. “Well, go warm up, you only have three minutes, and then come back to me.”

Chapter 95: A Fateful Showdown Part 1

Wood soon returned to Twain’s side, and as he looked at Twain, Twain looked down at his watch. “So soon? Has it been three minutes? All right. Let me tell you what you should do when you get on the field.” He grabbed Wood and pointed at Fàbregas who was running and passing the ball. “Look, the opponent’s number 25, do you see him?”

Wood nodded. “I see him.”

“He’s Arsenal’s midfield commander, the center of the team, and the key to whether Arsenal is able to beat us in this match. His name is Francesc Fàbregas. Remember his name, his face, and his number. Then go up and mark him one-on-one, watch him closely, freeze him. Don’t let him easily receive the ball from his teammates’ passes. Don’t let him pass the ball easily. If he wants to drive the ball to break through, tackle him. Do you understand?” Tang En turned to look at Wood. The lad seemed to be looking forward to playing in this match. He could not stay calm beside Tang En, bouncing and upbeat throughout, as if he were still warming up.

That was the way he should be. He was always stone-faced and had a robotic appearance. Who would like that? A normal lad was expectant, could be stirred up and excited.

“Yes, I understand.”

Suddenly, Tang En's attention was drawn to Wood's bare legs. He frowned and asked, "George, where are your shin pads?"

"I didn't put them on."

"Why aren't you wearing them?"

"I don't like them, they feel uncomfortable."

"That can't be done, go put them. Wearing shin pads is to protect you from injury and harm."

"I won't get hurt."

"Come on, don't talk nonsense. Put them on, or I won't let you play!" Tang En said sternly.

The trick worked, and Wood ran back at once. Watching him carelessly stuff the shin pads into his socks, Tang En shook his head helplessly. Maybe what this kid said was true... there was no one in the world who could hurt him on the field.

When the opportunity of a dead ball came, the Forest team made a substitution. George Wood, wearing number 55, was brought on to replace number 18, James Beaumont.

Brady saw the Forest team make a substitution, and he glanced at Wood's number. "Number 55?" Generally speaking, a player with such a large number, aside from personal preference, did not occupy an important position on the team. He was normally a substitute for the substitutes. All the good numbers had been chosen by the others and when it was his turn, only the numbers after 30, of little value or interest, were left. To wear such a number was as good as announcing to everyone: I am a substitute. I have no ability!

He did not understand why Twain had put this person in.

"Who knows who number 55 is?" He turned to look at the coaches and the team doctors. Everyone shook his head in reply to his question.

No, not only the Arsenal coaches, but no one in the whole world knew who that tall, built number 55 lad was. What position did he play? What was his style of play? How were his kicking skills? What were his strengths and weaknesses? How was his temper? Was he a genius or a loser? Was he a future star player or an ordinary player, doomed to mediocrity?

To the football world, George Wood was a blank canvas. He could be painted on with intricate color and detail, or he could be randomly smeared with a few strokes and then be crumpled up into a ball and thrown in the trash.

Now, in front of the powerful team Arsenal, in front of the insightful Le Professeur, Arsène Wenger, Wood would give his career the first stroke.

What suspense!

When he got on the field, George Wood went straight across half the field to the Arsenal player, Fàbregas, and then stood still, staring at him...

Tang En rolled his eyes, and he heard the sigh of Kerslake behind him.

Everyone at the Arsenal technical area laughed. Brady gave the most exaggerated laugh. His facial muscles convulsed, and he could not speak properly. "Well, well, we now know he's the guy in charge of defending against Fàbregas. Ha ha!"

On the field, Fàbregas looked strangely at the player who was taller and stronger than himself. He judged that he was of mixed ethnicity and handsome.

Number 55? You send a player with such a high number to guard me?

He took his eyes off Wood and fixed his gaze on the Forest manager, Tony Twain.

Hey, Mr. Manager. Is this some kind of joke?

Off the field, even the Forest fans could not understand Twain's substitution.

"Hey! Who's that number 55? Does anyone know?"

"Is he a fool? Standing in front of the opponent and just staring him down?" Someone complained loudly. "What is Tony thinking? Bringing on a big idiot to defend against the opponent's number 25?"

As soon as the man finished speaking, John grabbed hold of him. Big John's angry, wide face appeared in front of him. Like a 22-inch widescreen monitor, it had quite a visual impact.

"Shut your mouth! Don't underestimate him!" John growled.

The man who mocked Wood was so stunned, he couldn't respond.

Someone next to John asked, "John, do you know that number 55?"

Bill nodded and helped John answer, "George Wood. Tony picked him up from the streets."

"How does he play? What's his position?"

This time Bill shook his head. "We've never seen him play, but Tony thinks a lot of him."

Someone in the crowd whistled to express his dissatisfaction.

"All of you shut up!" Big John pushed the poor man aside and shouted, "No one is allowed to doubt his ability!"

"Why, John?" Everyone was asking at once.

"Yeah, he has not proven himself at all! What ability does he have?"

"Because... He was Gavin's hero! He was Gavin's favorite player, and the most promising player!" shouted the angry man as he stared everyone.

Everyone suddenly quieted down.

Big John cleared his throat, took a deep breath, raised his hands, and set his pose. "Chant with me now! Wood! Wood! Wood, Wood, Wood! Grow into a Forest!"

John clapped his hands hard and loud.

"Wood! Wood! Wood, Wood, Wood! Grow into a Forest! Forest! Forest!"

Clap! Clap! Clap!

“Wood! Wood! Wood, Wood, Wood! Grow into a Forest! Forest! Forest!”

Clap! Clap! Clap!

“Forest, Forest — Forest!!”

These people followed John and Bill to loudly chant the adapted cheer to rally George Wood.

Apart from the related personnel of the two teams, they had the largest crowd. When they began to chant, they attracted almost everyone’s attention.

Tang En looked back at John, who was cheering for Wood with a serious face, and grinned.

Everyone in the Arsenal technical area also noticed this sudden outburst. Brady could not laugh anymore. He was a little dumbfounded. Could it be that this was a significant player? To have so many fans supporting and liking him that they even created a cheer for him. This was not how an idiot was treated!

Number 55, exactly what kind of player are you? Are you Tony Twain’s secret weapon?

The attention of the people from the two teams in the technical area was not on the field, and the same went for the players on the field. Almost everyone was turning his head and casting strange and surprised looks at the Forest fans, who were still cheering for Wood as they watched.

The Spanish teenager standing in front of Wood slightly turned his head; his attention was also caught by the cheering fans on the side of the field.

George Wood was the only one on the entire field who had no reaction after hearing the chants. He was still staring at Fàbregas.

Because Twain had said to him, “Mark him one-on-one, watch him closely, freeze him... wipe him out!

Ashley Cole’s substitute for the First Team, the French teenager, Clichy, made a forward pass to Fàbregas, and then focused on sprinting ahead, hoping to do a wall pass and a one-two combination with his teammate. But after he ran, he realized that the football had not been passed as expected.

At almost the same time Fàbregas received the pass from Clichy, he was also bumped by George Wood from behind. So, when he was struggling to keep his balance, he naturally could not pass the football to where he wanted to pass, and the football was kicked out of bounds by him.

Fàbregas complained to the referee that Wood’s action was a foul, but the referee ignored it.

This level of physical collision in England was almost as common as eating and drinking. If every bump required the referee to whistle a foul, the match would be interrupted dozens of times. Not being able to counter the bump from the other side just meant that one wasn’t strong enough.

Seeing how Wood single-handedly and successfully defended against Fàbregas once, Tang En high-fived Kerslake. The boy was performing better than anyone expected. After 10 months of training, he was no longer the kid who was at a loss in his first game and then used his foot to kick and break another player’s leg.

Fàbregas was confident, but George Wood was confident, too. Fàbregas had no performance anxiety, and George Wood didn't know the meaning of the word "scared." So what if you have your gifted teenager and the Golden Player of the UEFA U-17 European Championship? My George Wood was born fearless!

To prevent Wood from colliding into him when he received a pass, Fàbregas had to forge ahead to receive the ball and at the same time, turn it around and make a big detour and adjust the attacking direction. This should shake you off my tail, right?

No!

Fàbregas turned around to find that the hot breath of Wood's exhalation had already been sprayed on his face!

This bastard! He was unwilling to let up on his relentless pursuit!

Fàbregas, who found the football under his foot in danger, quickly adjusted his body. His back faced Wood again, and he was finally able to protect the ball. But had he now just made a big circle? Did this not just render the detour that he had made earlier useless?

His opponent was silent, but Fàbregas could always hear breathing coming from behind his back, like he could not shake off a ghost that was stuck to him.

Chapter 96: A Fateful Showdown Part 2

Can't shake him off?

Still a boy, Fàbregas' competitive spirit rose within. He forcefully shoved backwards a little, hoping to create a little distance that would allow him to move. He did not expect his opponent to remain motionless. It was as if he had struck a huge stone wall, and the rebounded force almost propelled him forward. The stumbling Fàbregas suddenly had an idea.

He staggered forward and knocked the ball ahead, chasing after it. Then, when he felt that pressure slightly ease, he immediately made a feint. He made Wood think that he was going to change his direction to the left, but he quickly moved the football to the right, and turned around at the same time!

The inexperienced Wood was indeed fooled. When he saw Fàbregas' upper body moved to the left, he shifted his focus accordingly. And then he realized that his opponent had fled to the other side!

Has he broken through?

This thought flashed across Wood's mind, and another sentence sounded at the same time, "If he breaks through, then you must foul!"

He did not forcibly return to his center of gravity. Instead he just seized the opportunity to turn left and circled a long way to the right. After taking huge strides, he was now running neck and neck with Fàbregas again!

It was indeed a terrifying burst of energy!

At this point, Wood could choose to continue to close in on Fàbregas, so that he could not easily move the ball and make a pass. But Wood's mind only had the one thought: "use a foul to stop number 25 from breaking through." So, he simply used his foot to kick off the ball, but he also brought down Fàbregas at the same time.

The referee's whistle finally blew, and Nottingham Forest's number 55 had committed a foul.

"Bastard! There wasn't even a verbal warning!" Brady was dissatisfied and complained on the sidelines.

Wenger, sitting next to him, said nothing. Now his attention had shifted from Twain to this mysterious number 55. It was not easy for Cesc to be so pathetic, even if his opponent was two or three years older than him.

Who was he? What was his football performance in the past? How big could his grooming prospects be?

It was interesting that he had come to Nottingham with his team, just to see the performances of Fàbregas, Clichy, and Senderos. But he did not expect to find such an interesting young man.

With Le Professeur's experience and foresight, he could already tell that Wood was not experienced enough, but his physical fitness had greatly made up for the gap with Fàbregas. In addition, Fàbregas was not familiar with Wood and therefore was at a loss. If there was another game, he believed that Wood would not be able to mark Fàbregas so easily. But that was not important. The important thing was that Wenger could see the potential in this kid, a potential diamond in the rough.

Wenger straightened up and turned his gaze toward Tony Twain, who was directing the match on the sidelines. No matter what the final result of this match was, he could perhaps find the man and talk to him after the match had ended.

As Wenger was quietly inspecting Wood from the sidelines, Wood, on the field, had once again successfully blocked Fàbregas' offense. Fàbregas finally found the opportunity to face Wood. He intended to force a breakthrough past this annoying person. He did not expect that the common problem of "slow turn" for defensive players would not be a problem for Wood. Although at the time when he decided to turn his body, he was indeed slow—he only turned when he saw Fàbregas dribbling the ball past him—and it looked like he was a step behind Fàbregas. But what really happened?

Fàbregas found out that he could not outrun this big guy. He always easily appeared beside him. The only thing he was able to take advantage of was that he had more experience than this player. He could trick him into committing a foul, and then he could gain an offensive free kick.

The match seemed to become a one-on-one fight between him and the opponent number 55, but no one raised any objections. This kind of game was supposed to be a contest between the best players.

Arsène Wenger looked at Fàbregas who was exerting all his strength to play against Wood on the field, and thought of how Cesc was still younger.

He said to Brady, "Liam, let Cesc go back." He made a recall gesture.

"Do you mean... withdraw him from his current position?" Brady was surprised.

“Well, from the center midfielder to a defending midfielder. Pull him to that line in front of the full back and farther away from number 55. Let him reduce the number of his assists, use long passes and direct passes to breach the opponent’s line of defense.”

Brady took a glance at Wenger and knew what the decision meant—Fàbregas was forced to avoid number 55’s dominance. A nice way of saying it would be “strategic retreat and diversion”, a not-so-nice way to say “escape”!

“This...” Brady was a little worried that doing so would hurt Fàbregas’ confidence and spirit.

“It’s okay. Cesc is smart. He’ll understand.”

Brady stood up, walked up to the sidelines, and yelled, “Fàbregas!” When the Spaniard looked at him, he leaned his head to the side and waved his hand backwards. “Defending midfielder!”

Fàbregas’ gaze swept past Brady and then stopped at Wenger. Le Professeur was expressionless, he said nothing and did nothing. He nodded and turned to run back.

When he saw his prey did not advance and had instead retreated, Wood was a little at a loss, did he need to follow him?

Just as he was wavering, the defending midfielder, Fàbregas, launched a 50-meter long ball attack, followed by Clichy receiving the ball and passing it to Papadopoulos, whose shot was blocked by Wes Morgan. It was a corner kick! Senderos ran up.

“Tony,” Kerslake reminded Twain.

Tang En nodded in response. “I know.” He looked at Brady who was also loudly directing the match on the sidelines, to let the center back press ahead to score. This guy is very smart. But do you think everything is safe just because you let Fàbregas retreat? Dream on!

Arsenal’s corner kick shot out, Wes Morgan was defeated in the confrontation with Senderos, and the opponent shot a header! This time, the team was saved by the goalkeeper, Lukic. He safely pressed this close-at-hand header attack on the goal line.

“George!” Even though he saw the danger averted, Tang En still shouted, “Did you forget what I said to you?” He pointed to Fàbregas, who was returning to his position. “Mark him! Watch him closely! No matter where he is! Get up there! Mark him closely, mark him closely!” Tang En clenched his right hand into a fist and hit his left palm.

He was not afraid of his tactical arrangements being heard by the opponents. Even if you know, what can you do about it? Unless you change the core of your midfield now, I’m going to crush Arsenal and Fàbregas today.

So, Wood kept close again after receiving his latest instructions. This time, even if the other party retreated to the goal line, he would not hesitate to follow.

“B*stard!” Brady cursed. “Does he not care about the team’s overall formation? Does he not care if this causes the team’s offensive to become chaotic?”

Next to him, Wenger laughed instead. "Of course he doesn't care about those things. He is the one in the lead now, not us, Liam. A one ball lead can change a lot of things. He is standing in a favorable position where he can use tactics which he normally can't use to deal with us. And we... if we can't think of a better way, we can only be led by the nose."

Brady looked at his watch. The match had gone on for another 15 minutes. It was 10 minutes away from the end of the match. "Have you conceded, Arsène?"

"No, I certainly have not. The game is not over yet." Just as he finished his words, Wenger suddenly felt a chill on his forehead. He looked up in doubt.

Tang En also looked up at the sky and saw rain!

It had been overcast for most of the day, but now it rained at the end of the match. It went from no rain to raining, from little to heavy rain. In a very short time, the rain was clear and visible. The weather forecast had reported little to moderate rain today...

Damn it! It suddenly occurred to Tang En that there was someone of poor health still standing on the sidelines. He took out an umbrella, which he had thought he would not need today, from his backpack underneath the chair and called Beaumont.

"James." He saw Sophia still standing in the rain, and the rain was gradually becoming heavier! "Do you still have the energy run?"

Beaumont nodded, "Yes, sir!"

"Very good. See that lady?" He pointed to Sophia and asked.

"I see her, sir."

"Now run over and give this to her! Quickly!"

"Yes, sir!" Beaumont took the umbrella and ran quickly, like he was in a relay race. Tang En's gaze followed him to Sophia. Sophia took the umbrella with some surprise. He also saw Beaumont point back to him and say something. Then Sophia looked at him, and Tang En could see the smile on her face. He made a gesture to open the umbrella, to remind the lady to open the umbrella first before thanking him.

And when Sophia dutifully opened the umbrella and was ready to thank Mr. Twain again, she saw that Twain had already turned his head back to focus his attention on the match again.

The men's black umbrella completely shaded the petite Sophia. Now no matter how heavy the rain became, she would not get wet, not even a drop on her clothes.

Not only had the people on the sidelines felt the sudden downpour of cold rain that was becoming increasingly heavier, George Wood noticed, too. Although he was still defending against Fàbregas, and Fàbregas had just received a pass and was ready to launch another offensive, he suddenly forgot his opponent and turned to check on his mother.

When he saw his mother holding an umbrella, standing in the same spot to watch him play, his attention swung back to the match. Fàbregas had dribbled the ball and left him behind. He planned to attack. But he had not completely thrown Wood off. It was not even a distance of 10 meters.

Wood turned and charged up to Fàbregas like a tiger and ended Arsenal's offense with a foul. He received a yellow card, and Fàbregas could only angrily slam the ground with his fists, splashing a puddle of muddy water. He had not expected number 55's turnaround chasing speed to be so fast! Or was it the speed of the soul returning?

The rain was getting heavier and more people were holding up umbrellas on the sidelines. Tang En continued to stand in the rain to direct the match. In fact, there was no need to direct anymore. He knew it, and he believed it was clear to his opponents, too.

Wenger took the umbrella that Brady handed over and held it above his head. Listening to the pitter-patter sound of the raindrops on the umbrella, Le Professeur sighed again, "Liam, the match is over. We have lost."

Brady did not speak.

Indeed, under the circumstances of their score behind their opponent, the rain became the straw that broke the camel's back. The field was muddier, the players were agitated, and the core of their midfield was completely frozen by that unknown kid. If they still wanted to make a comeback, the rain would have to be poured back into the skies.

The Arsenal technical area fell into a silence. The sidelines in the distance rang out with the chanting and cheering of the Forest fans. John and others, drenched by the rain, clapped their hands in an accompanying beat to their cheering.

"Wood! Wood! Wood, Wood, Wood! Grow into a Forest! Forest! Forest! Forest, Victory! Hurray! Forest, Forest!"

Chapter 97: The Idiot Collymore Part 1

The referee finally blew the end of the match whistle. The Arsenal players were mostly slumped in the mud, and the Forest players hugged to celebrate their hard-won victory. They had defeated the favorite Arsenal youth team and advanced into the fourth round of the FA Youth Cup!

Fàbregas, who had lost, leaned forward and stood in the rain. He put both his hands on his knees and was panting heavily. The final 25 minutes of the second half were much more tiring than the entire 65 minutes before. There were fatigue and failure, and these were served up to him by that Number 55.

He looked up at Number 55, who was surrounded by his teammates, and was at a complete loss. He was a rookie!

I was actually rendered useless by a rookie for more than 20 minutes! I will never forget this humiliation! Someday, I'll get you back! If we have a chance for another match...

He suddenly straightened himself up and walked off the field with his head held high. He did not give another glance again to the Forest players and that Number 55, who were wildly celebrating their victory on the field.

Despite losing the match, Brady was still gracious. He took the initiative to shake hands with Twain, and Wenger was at his side.

“As I had said before the game, this was indeed a good match.” Having lost the match, Brady appeared to be convinced.

Tang En was in a good mood, and his words were not harsh. “You were excellent, too. You just had a little bit of bad luck.”

Brady did not say anything else to him. He just smiled and walked away. Wenger, who was holding an umbrella, did not follow suit. Instead, he stood before Twain.

Tang En knew that this Frenchman had something to say, but he would not ask first. It would make him look too anxious. He was the winner, so he must maintain a certain reserve.

As a result, Wenger stood in front of Twain with an umbrella, and Tang En stood in the rain in front of Wenger. The two men did not open their mouths to speak. Finally, unable to bear being drenched any longer, Tang En changed his mind and gave in. “Mr. Wenger, may I ask what you want to see me about? If there’s nothing, then I have to head back and change my clothes.”

Then Wenger gave a triumphant smile. “Mr. Tony Twain, I have come to congratulate you. You did a great job, and your team deserved to win the match.” Le Professeur’s gentlemanly praise of Twain made him looked more like a victor.

Compared to this authentic gentleman, Tang En appeared somewhat uncouth. Yes, in front of this Frenchman, who did not even have a drop of mud stain on his trousers, the rain-drenched Twain looked like a country bumpkin.

“Ah, thank you, Mr. Wenger. Is that all?” Tang En suddenly saw from the corner of his eye that there was another man at Sophia’s side. And that person, wearing a purple suit with a pink shirt collar poking from underneath, was definitely not Wood. He was standing in front of Sophia and seemed to be saying something. Because it was sheltered by the umbrella, Tang En could not see Sophia’s expression and reaction. But he was a little worried. He wanted to end this conversation with Wenger as soon as possible and hurry over to take a look.

“Oh, it’s like this. I want to ask about that number 55...”

Tang En had already guessed what Wenger meant even though he had not finished his words. When this lethal-eyed Frenchman asked about a young player, it was because, nine times out of ten, that player had caught his eye. So, he shook his head. “I’m sorry, Mr. Wenger. Wood is not for sale. I will never sell him to anyone.”

Looking at Twain’s decisive and firm attitude, Wenger nodded. “I understand. In that case, goodbye, Mr. Twain. I hope the next time we meet and chat, it will not be in such a place.”

“Of course. I hope so, too.” Tang En knew what Wenger meant, and he wanted to say, “I’m sorry, Mr. Wenger. I think there’s something I need to deal with now.” He had already seen Wood run to his mother out of the corner of his eye. Regardless of who was next to Sophia, or what he was doing, he was going to be out of luck! He had to stop him before Wood caused any trouble.

“Very well, good luck to you, Mr. Twain.” Wenger had not finished speaking before Twain turned and ran off, moving as if he were a professional footballer.

“What an interesting man.” Wenger shook his head and turned to leave the place.

Sophia, who was holding the umbrella on the sidelines, saw Wood surrounded by his excited teammates. She was pleased with her son’s performance and acceptance by the team and felt warmed by Mr. Twain’s meticulous care.

To come watch her son’s game, Sophia specially put on makeup and dressed up before she went out. She looked 10 years younger with her raven black hair put up with a white hairpin on top of her head, her white turtleneck sweater with blue floral print over jeans, and a lovely little bag in her right hand. Standing in the rain with the umbrella, Sophia looked like a flower moistened by raindrops, gently swaying in the wind and rain.

Collymore stood behind Sophia and was completely captivated by this quiet woman. He even forgot his purpose in his coming there. The shouts of the men around him were clear and audible, making him feel even more that in this noisy and cold world, what a wonderful thing it was to have a delicate flower suddenly appear.

The only pity was that the large black umbrella in the woman’s hands did not match her appearance. Such a lovely woman should be carrying a delicate red floral umbrella, looking slender and elegant in the drizzle. Well, of course, today’s rain was a little too much.

Just when the match had ended, Collymore took the initiative to approach. He had plenty of experience hitting on women in the parking lot. Usually after 15 minutes, he would be having passionate sex with his pick-up target in the car.

“I did not expect such a beautiful lady like yourself would come to watch such a boring game.” Collymore stood behind Sophia, and the two people were very close together. “May I have the honor of knowing your name, Miss... Ahhhh!”

Sophia, startled by the voice of a man who suddenly spoke behind her, abruptly turned around, and the raindrops on the umbrella splattered Collymore’s face.

“Oh! I’m sorry, sir. I’m not...” She saw that Collymore had closed his eyes and tilted his head to the side, but looked pathetic because he could not dodge in time and his face was wet with the water. Sophia repeatedly apologized and took out a tissue from her handbag for him to wipe the rain water off his face.

“Ah, there’s no need for an apology, my dear lady,” Collymore said gently. At the same time, he quickly gripped Sophia’s small hand and held it in his palm, feeling the coolness of her fingertips. He was completely unconcerned with wiping the water off his brow.

“Sir, stop!” Sophia did not expect him to grab her hand in such a blatant manner. She tried to struggle free, but the other party held on tightly.

“Ah, your hand is so cold and small, makes one feel so tender-hearted,” Collymore said while basking in the moment.

“B*stard! Take your hands off her!” His musing was awakened by a shout.

A boy, wearing the number 55 Forest jersey and all covered in mud, was standing inside the field. His hands were clutching the mesh wire fence, and he growled at him with a grim face, like an enraged beast.

Collymore glanced at him and frowned, but he did not listen to him and kept his hand as it was.

“Mr. Stan Collymore, I suggest you let go of her hand.” Another voice came beside the kid.

Tony Twain glared at Collymore. He had not finished speaking, and the angry Wood had begun to climb the wire fence.

“Ah! Damn it!” Tang En knew what Wood was going to do, so he rushed up the wire fence, too, hoping to get in front of Wood to stop him. But it was somewhat difficult seeing how fast he climbed.

As a player, Wood was more agile than Twain. He jumped off the wire fence first, rushed forward after landing, and punched Collymore!

“Wood!” Tang En had just straddled the top of the fence and could do nothing to stop it from happening.

“George!” Sophia exclaimed.

Collymore was knocked down and made a splash on the ground. The umbrella was overturned in the rain and swayed gently. As for his hand, he naturally released his grip.

He fell in a puddle and was soaked all over. His brand new suit and shirt were so drenched by the dirty water that their original colors were no longer apparent. His right cheek was bruised and swollen. He was a passionate playboy a moment ago, but now he had become a pathetic, wet dog.

“You little b*stard!” said Collymore, who, humiliated in front of the beauty, got up and was going to fight back. But this time Tang En stood between them.

“What are you doing, Mr. Collymore?” Tang En blocked him and stared at him coldly.

“Move aside! This is none of your business!” The furious Collymore growled and shook his fist.

Tang En had no intention of listening to him. At the same time, behind him, Wood was also misbehaving. He wanted to get at and beat up the man who dared to be handsy with his mother. Sophia was trying so hard to pull him back that the umbrella in her hands fell to the ground.

“George, help your mother with the umbrella, don’t let her get wet in the rain,” Tang En said without turning his head.

Wood stared blankly for a moment, looked at his mother with her hair wet with rain, and quickly rushed to pick up the umbrella. He then shielded it over his mother’s head. He wanted to dry his mother’s face without knowing if her face was wet from the rain or with tears, but his hands were full of mud and so was his jersey. He helplessly dawdled in front of his mother and could not wipe her face.

Still, Sophia smiled and took out the tissue from her bag and wiped the mud from Wood’s hands and the sweat and rain from his face.

Chapter 98: The Idiot Collymore Part 2

“I’ll say it again, mind your own business,” Collymore spoke through gritted teeth and stared at Tony Twain in a very unfriendly way. “That mixed b*stard punched me. I’m going to make him pay!”

Tang En laughed. “Are you talking about yourself, Mr. Collymore?”

Collymore called Wood a mixed b*stard, because at one glance he could tell that Wood was biracial. But he forgot that he was not of a single ethnicity, either.

Tang En’s sarcasm added fuel to the fire. Collymore recklessly shook his fist at Twain, who grabbed it with ease. Although he was once a strong and powerful professional athlete, after many years of immersing himself in the life of alcohol, sex, and excess, Collymore was no longer the fearless sportsman. Now, he just had a showy appearance, and had long been without substance inside.

“Don’t forget where you are, Mr. Collymore. This is the youth training ground. It’s my territory. You’re just the first team manager, you don’t control me.” Tang En gripped Collymore’s fist in his hand, and no matter how hard he tried, he could not break free. “Wood is my player. You want to touch him, you have to ask for my permission first. Did you ask me, Mr. Collymore?” Tang En’s tightened his grip a little, and Collymore’s face turned ugly.

Seeing the conflict off to the side, the fans all gathered around. John asked enthusiastically, “Tony, are you in trouble?”

“No, I’m not in trouble.” Tang En let go of his hand. Collymore groaned and held his fist.

That’s when everyone recognized the first team manager who had previously had his back to them. “Ah! Look, who’s here! Mr. Stan Collymore!” Bill yelled, causing a hissing sound all around.

“Oh, oh, oh! Collymore! Oh, oh, oh! When we were moaning and groaning in the stands, he was whining and weeping in the bed of the nth girlfriend’s house!” The fans sang their self-composed song loudly. Tang En had heard this song sung by the fans in the stands in City Ground. The first time he heard it, he was shocked. But after a few lines, he could not help singing it; he had no choice, the tune was too catchy.

“Oh... my dear, the team had lost again! I am very sad! So very sad! Comfort me!” Bill dramatically threw himself on Big John, causing everyone to roar with laughter.

Seeing how Collymore was taunted and ridiculed by all, Tang En remembered the scene when he first arrived in this world. A year had quickly passed, and he had already received these people’s acceptance and welcome. Now, it was Collymore’s turn to be unlucky.

“You b*stards!” he said. The infuriated Collymore tightly clenched his fists in front of the singing and dancing fans. He seemed intent on pouncing on the fans to grapple with them.

“This is really good news! The Nottingham Forest manager, Stan Collymore, acted inappropriately toward a youth player’s mother, assaulted the youth director, and abused the fans. Newspaper sales tomorrow will certainly break records. I am the Nottingham Evening Post reporter, Pierce Brosnan. I would like to ask Mr. Stan Collymore this: is the team’s current poor performance related to whether

you have put too much energy into bed?" At some point, Pierce Brosnan, who was interviewing the team, had entered the circle and was clearly taking photos with a phone.

Collymore reflexively raised his hand to cover his face. He knew he was in deep trouble today. Initially, he was just bored and had decided to come watch the youth team's game. He did not expect this to happen.

He looked at the unfriendly faces around him and knew that he would not find a friendly face today. He simply left behind some harsh words before he took off. "Pierce Brosnan? Don't expect my team to grant you interviews!"

"It doesn't matter. I only report on the youth team."

The people around them laughed and sang to send Collymore off.

After he had dealt with Collymore, Tang En turned to the frightened Sophia with the intention to comfort her. "Madam, I'm really sorry that something like this has happened."

The drops of water on Sophia's face had been wiped dry, and she looked paler after a little bit of rain. She shook her head gently. "No need for any apology, Mr. Twain. I would like to thank you for your umbrella. It's you who is soaked through now."

Tang En smiled sheepishly. "This is nothing. A little rain is good for me."

John and the others, who were watching the two of them, had begun to quietly retreat to give them a little privacy.

But...

A car horn wrecked their plans. The Arsenal youth team bus pulled through from the parking lot, leaving Nottingham.

"Oh, damn it!"

"Darn it!"

"Those b*stards!" The crowd began to noisily grumble.

Tang En looked strangely at the fans who reacted oddly, "Hey, what are you guys doing?"

"Don't mind us!" John replied loudly.

Tang En shrugged and then said to Wood, "It's still raining. Don't stay here too long. Take your mother home, take good care of her, and don't let her catch a cold. You played well today! Go back and celebrate a little."

Wood nodded.

After Sophia thanked Twain, she slowly left with Wood supporting her arm. After watching them leave, Tang En turned to John and said, "Hey... I have nothing to say, except... tonight, Burns' Bar! Drinks on me!"

“Oh, oh, oh! Generous Tony Twain! Oh, oh, oh! He invites us to drink, and we love him! He gives us victory, and we love him!” The group of fans immediately danced with excitement, changing the lyrics to that song that they had just used to ridicule Collymore, to praise Tony Twain.

Tang En looked at the group of lovely fans and smiled. He then lifted his hands and sang along with them.

The bus slowed down as it passed by this crowd, so that it would not splash the dirty water as it drove past.

People in the bus noticed the singing and dancing outside and among them was Wenger. He turned to look at the scene outside the window. The animated fans, the number 55 who froze Fàbregas, and the woman who looked like his mother. And of course, how could that one person be left out? He was the core of it all—Tony Twain. He was completely drenched in the rain, but he was still singing with the fans.

This man was very interesting.

At the Forest Bar that night, John and Bill vividly recounted to the others who did not go to watch the wonderful game in the afternoon, how Tony Twain single-handedly faced-off against Collymore in a hero rescue/damsel in distress drama. The group of men were loudly clamoring while they listened.

“Collymore, that incompetent idiot! I’ve been wanting to punch him!”

“The Forest team is now ranked sixth from the bottom! It must be rough for him to have all these good players and to produce such results!”

“He should just get lost and go back to being a stallion. The manager post does not suit him; his battlefield is in the bed!”

“Plus women’s tits and between the legs.”

“Aha ha ha ha!”

The men spoke more and more crudely, stimulated by the alcohol. Tang En was not interested in discussing Collymore’s usual comings and goings. He turned around to thank Brosnan. If he had not shown up that afternoon, he did not know how things would have turned out. Although he was not afraid to fight with Collymore, it was clearly not a good time to use violence to solve a problem.

“I think he’s going to take his anger out on the newspaper that you’re working for.”

Brosnan shrugged. “Just as well. We’ve found the perfect pretext to criticize him without restraint, an excellent chance to only speak negatively of him and not say anything good. You have no idea how long the old guys at the newspaper have been itching to do this.” Brosnan had been hanging out with Twain and the others for a long time now. His tone had become a bit rough, and he was not so careful with his words. If it had been before, he would have said:

“Oh, it’s actually nothing. We may have a reason to criticize him. Several old gentlemen in the newspaper had long hoped to do so.”

Tang En burst into laughter. “Although I don’t like the media very much, I have to admit that sometimes you guys are pretty amusing!”

Brosnan tried to justify it a little. "Uh, sometimes we flatter the team and say things that go against our beliefs. We have no choice. We can't get better press seats if we don't have good relationships with the clubs."

Tang En narrowed his eyes at him. "So, did that mean all those praises I had received from you all earlier this year were just flattery?"

"Ah! No, no!" Brosnan hurriedly waved his hands. "Those were our true words, Mr. Twain. You did a great job for the Forest first team during that half season! It's not an exaggeration, really!"

Tang En raised his glass, clinked it with Brosnan's and muttered, "Anyway, it's still a mouth with two faces, whether it's good or bad, it all depends on what you say and write ..."

At this time Walker squeezed in. He had recently been depressed about the team's poor results. He rarely came there to drink and chat. So, Tang En was very glad to see him show up again. He raised his glass and shouted, "Hey! Des! Long time no see! How have you been lately?"

Walker shook his head with a wry smile. "The team is in the bottom six. I'm in the hot seat every home match. It's like I'm an egg in a frying pan. How do you think I am?"

Tang En chuckled, "You must be missing me now, right?"

"That's right. I miss you, so I've come to see you." Walker took the beer from Burns' hand and sat down. "Tony, I heard there was an incident at the youth team game this afternoon?"

Burns smiled. "Des, you heard right."

Tang En nodded. "It's a small matter. Collymore came to my territory and behaved atrociously. He tried to take liberties with Wood's mother."

"Oh. I heard Collymore was beaten up by someone. Was it you?"

"No." Tang En shook his head. "It was that kid, Wood. I didn't manage to stop him. I blocked Collymore when he tried to fight back. What's wrong?" He saw from Walker's expression that something was up.

"Well, I heard he went to see Mr. Chairman."

When he heard Walker said this, Tang En smiled instead. "Is he a still child who hasn't grown up yet? When he's bullied, he only knows to cry and go home to find mummy for comfort. Don't worry about me, Des."

"I certainly wouldn't worry about you, Tony. I'm worried about Wood. He was the one who hit Collymore," said Walker with a frown.

The other three men sitting around the table were silent. Wood had just shown that he was suitable for professional football. Would he be forced to end his career because he hit someone?

Tang En took a big gulp of his drink, and then said, "There's no need to be afraid. Worst comes to the worst, I'll help him shoulder the blame. If Doughty wants to get rid of me, I'll go somewhere else and coach."

Burns pressed his arm and shook his head. “Don’t talk like this now. Maybe things won’t be as bad as you think.”

Walker nodded. “I’ve just come to warn you in hopes that you will be mentally prepared to deal with this. And everyone knows what kind of person Collymore is. You just tell the truth about what happened, and it should be okay. I don’t think there’s more than five people in the club who like that b*stard. When Collymore transferred back from Southend United to the Forest team, his relationship with his teammates was strained. I was not on the Forest at the time, but whenever I chatted with my former teammates, they almost all mentioned Collymore’s name in their complaints.” Walker looked at his watch, then got up to say good-bye. “I have to go back. Another thing, Tony. When you see Wood the next time, thank him for me.”

“Huh?” Tang En did not respond for a moment.

“He did it beautifully! Honestly, I’ve wanted to punch that jerk for so long.” Walker swung his fist and then turned around to leave the lively bar.

“Don’t be surprised by Walker’s words.” Burns looked at Brosnan with a smile and continued the topic. Walker had left the Forest before, but Burns had always been living in Nottingham. He knew and saw everything that happened with the Forest team. “Des was right when he said that no one on the entire Forest team liked him. To the extent that no one would go up and celebrate with him after he had scored a goal.”

Tang En clicked his tongue. It was truly rare that a player’s relationships with people could be broken down to that extent.

“In order to escape training, Collymore lied about his family, claiming that his poor grandmother would have a serious illness from time to time.” Burns continued, “At that time, the Liverpool manager, Roy Evans, liked him so much that he brought him to Anfield with a record-breaking transfer fee of £8,500,000. Whenever Collymore had a problem, he would help him shoulder it. Whenever Collymore did something wrong, the old man would apologize to the fans at the training ground sidelines—even though almost all the mistakes had nothing to do with him.”

Tang En looked up at the ceiling and tried to imagine a gray-haired old man standing in front of a mob of angry fans, trying his best to placate them and appease their fury. He shook his head with his lips pursed. This manager had a hard job to do, which would drive him to an early grave!

“Evans preferred to shoulder the blame instead of Collymore. But what did he get in return? Collymore slept with his daughter.” Burns shrugged with open arms and did not go on.

Brosnan said, “In other words, it sounds like Wood’s punch this afternoon was not harsh enough. When I saw Collymore, he was like a fly buzzing around a coconut cream cake. It’s not a bad idea to give him a heavy blow and let him sober up. Don’t worry, Mr. Twain. If Collymore is going to be against you, the Evening Post won’t let him go easily.”

After listening to everyone’s opinions on Collymore, Tang En had reached a decision in his heart. “I know what to do on Monday.” He drained his beer from glass to belly in one gulp.

Stan Collymore, you’re a genius on the field but an idiot off it!

Chapter 99: Tang En And Edward Part 1

After an entire week of intermittent rains, the sky was finally clear on Monday morning. For England, which was almost entering winter, this kind of weather was extremely worthy of being cherished. This was even more so for Nottingham City, where the weather was always erratic. One never knew when the sky above his head would become overcast out of nowhere, followed by the sudden splattering of raindrops falling from the sky.

Beads of water hung onto the tree leaves by the side of the road, reflecting the morning sunlight. They were like diamonds that had been left behind in the bushes, and that was all the proof needed that it had rained all through the night.

Tang En stood outside the Chairman's office within the compound of the club's training grounds, which was next to the first team's training field. Des Walker's shouting could be heard continuously, and the sounds of the whistles did not stop at all. It was very likely that Collymore did not come down to the field yet again, and the fact that he was hit the day before, gave him all the more reason to openly give himself a break.

Edward had found such a useless person to be manager. One could hardly fathom what he was thinking when he did that.

Tang En saw his own messy hair in the window. When he woke up in the morning, he only casually dressed himself up and left the house. Half of his shirt and his collar hung out, while the other half was tucked in. The only good thing was that his collar and his buttons were not done wrongly. He flipped over his collar, and used his hands to tidy his hair while facing the window. Tang En discovered that there were a few strands of hair that continued to stand upright obstinately.

He saw beads of water glistening on a plant and wiped his hands across it to wet them. Then, he continued to tidy his hair. Finally, he was ready.

Looking at his reflection in the window, Tang En smiled contentedly. Almost one year had passed, and he had become completely accustomed to this body and its looks. After looking at his reflection in the mirror every day, he finally found his looks more pleasing.

After all that, Tang En turned and entered the building. As soon as he entered, he saw a young lady who swung her hips when she walked, and even though she wore a normal green business suit, she was extremely sexy. The lady quickly walked past Tang En, and Tang En's line of sight followed her. That curly red hair of hers appeared to be like a ball of flames, and it bounced slightly as she walked, varying according to the magnitude of her footsteps.

Since when did the club have a female employee like her? It was at that moment that Tang En realized that he had been away from the core of this club for far too long, and it was gradually becoming more and more unfamiliar to him.

The lady who swung her hips when she walked, suddenly stopped in her tracks before turning around and looking at Tang En. This action gave Tang En a scare, causing him to forget to stop staring.

The lady did not become angry and revealed a professional smile to Tang En. "Are you Mr. Tony Twain?"

Tang En nodded his head blankly.

“Are you here to find Mr. Doughty?”

Tang En nodded his head again, and his field of vision stopped at her chest, once again forgetting to not stare. The depths of those mountains that towered high into the clouds, was the final vanishing point of his line of sight.

“Really sorry. Mr. Doughty is currently not in his office.”

“Oh... Huh?” Tang En finally returned back to his normal self and shifted his line of sight back to the woman’s face. Her looks were above average, and her figure was not bad. He then replied, “Where did he go?”

The woman lightly shook her head, and that ball of flames jumped up again. “Mr. Doughty did not tell me. May I ask if you have arranged an appointment with him prior to this?”

Tang En shook his head and said, “No, I merely... suddenly remembered that I have to find him. He didn’t say when he would be back?”

“No, Sir. Would you like to wait in Mr. Doughty’s office for him?”

“Alright, I’ll wait awhile then.” Tang En thought that since Kerslake was with the youth team to oversee things, there was nothing much for him to worry about regarding training.

“This way please, Mr. Twain.” The lady returned to lead the way, and, therefore, Tang En could once again admire the lady’s walking style.

The lady brought Tang En inside Doughty’s office, and placed a cup of water next to him before taking her leave. However, Tang En stopped her.

“This... Erm, Miss. I haven’t seen you in the past. Are you new here?”

The lady smiled and nodded her head. “Yes, Mr. Twain. I am Mr. Doughty’s personal secretary, Barbara Lucy. You may call me Barbara.”

“Ms. Barbara, you are not British, are you?” Tang En asked, as Lucy spoke with a fluent America accent.

“Yes, Sir. I am from Liverpool, but I lived in America when I went there to study.”

“Oh.”

“Mr. Twain, do you have anything else you want to ask?”

“Erm, I guess not. Uh, no more.”

“Then I’ll take my leave. Goodbye, Mr. Twain.” Barbara Lucy politely bade farewell to Tang En, before turning around and leaving the room.

Tang En looked at her as she closed the door, and then shrugged his shoulders. He curled his lips in an attempt to imitate the way Ms. Lucy spoke, and mumbled to himself, “Good morning, Sir. No, Sir. Alright, Sir. Thank you, Sir. Goodbye, Sir... Are you producing English robots for domestic sales?”

When Tang En was the only person left inside this spacious room, he could finally take a good look at the inside of the office. There was a new computer on top of the boss's desk, causing the old room to be momentarily filled with a modern feel. There were many other changes like this in the room, and the room appeared to be vastly different from the last time he had seen it.

He still remembered the last time he was there. He had just time travelled to Nottingham Forest a few days before and was about to head to London for a hearing for badmouthing the Football Association. It was at that point, when old Doughty said to him with all smiles on his face, "Don't worry, Tony. The club will give you its wholehearted support."

Half a year later due to health reasons, this old man who supported him passed the baton on to his son Edward Doughty, the man who drove him to London in the past.

Support me?

Thinking back, these words were currently extremely ironic. If you supported me, did you offer me a conversion contract after I led the team on a five-win streak? If you supported me, did you call me after the team lost during the playoffs, to comfort me and to repeat those words which you had said to me previously?

There was absolutely nothing.

Old man, right from the start, you never once considered my future seriously. Anyone can pay lip service. Thinking back on the first half of the year, I've been extremely foolish. To have been striving and chasing after a carrot on a stick, chasing it non-stop... I should have left this place with style right from the start.

But....

Tang En remembered the tombstone that was quietly erected in the graveyard behind the small church.

...Nottingham Forest's most loyal fan, George Wood's supporter forever...

Old man and Edward... Do you really think that I chose to stay behind for my unparalleled love and loyalty for the club?

If I was alone, I could leave anytime I wanted. It's no big deal! But there's still two children here who I'm worried about—one is extremely smart and sharp, while the other one is quiet and honest. It's just that I can't stop worrying about them. Although one is already in a deep slumber underground, the other one is still alive!

Tang En took in a deep breath, causing him to regain his composure once again.

Suddenly, Des Walker's angry voice flew into the room via the open window. "Get your damned spirits up! Take a good look at yourselves! You are worse than those casual players!"

Tang En walked to the windows and opened the curtains, wanting to take a look at what was going on during the first team's usual training. In the end, the situation which he saw made him shake his head and sigh.

Almost everyone on the training field was listless and distracted. Even the team captain, Michael Dawson, had also lost his exuberant fighting spirit. His brows were knitted into a frown, and his footsteps were slow.

This was the Nottingham Forest which he had known?!

What the heck is this idiot Collymore doing! Tang En thought as he smashed his fists into the wall.

I painstakingly made the team recover their fighting spirit and confidence, and your blind meddling has caused the team to revert back to their old ways overnight!

Seeing the scene on the training field, Tang En really wanted to rush forward and kick the butts of those professional players one by one. They were nowhere as likeable as those young lads from the youth team.

Des Walker shouted a few more times before he stopped, realizing that it was futile. The team was currently ranked sixth from the bottom and had an eight-match losing streak. The morale of the team could not get any worse, and even Nottingham Forest's listed stocks had been affected, plunging downward dramatically. What more could he do as the assistant manager?

Bowyer was extremely lucky to have kept the most beautiful memories of Nottingham Forest, and not have to deal with this infuriating Nottingham Forest!

Tang En no longer wished to continue looking. He discovered that he had waited for Edward for too long, but there was still no sign of him returning. Who knew where he had gone to? Perhaps he was hiding somewhere and did not wish to meet Tony Twain!

Pushing open the door, Tang En almost knocked into Ms. Barbara Lucy. Fortunately, he managed to dodge in the nick of the time, or else he would have definitely been scalded by scorching-hot coffee.

Cling! The ceramic cup dropped onto the floor, shattering into pieces upon making a clear cracking sound. The fragrant and rich coffee was spilled all over the floor.

"Ah! Sorry, so sorry, Mr. Twain! Did you get burned? Did I dirty your clothes?" Ms. Lucy panicked and shouted. She was at such a loss of what to do, even her pitch changed.

Instead, Tang En started laughing. "Of course I'm alright. I only pity that cup of coffee. Were you going to give it to me?"

"Yes, Sir. I was afraid that you had been waiting for too long."

Lucy squatted down to pick up the pieces, and Tang En bent over as well to help her out.

"It's alright, I was about to leave." Tang En placed the shards of the cup onto the tray, before dusting off his hands and standing up.

Lucy, who was still squatting down, was somewhat shocked. "Are you not going to continue waiting, Mr. Twain? Perhaps Mr. Doughty will be coming back soon?"

Chapter 100: Tang En And Edward Part 2

Tang En looked down at her from above. Through the neckline of the light yellow shirt, he was able to see clearly the Mariana Trench that was inside. "It's alright. I think Edward must be busy with something. In addition, I also have my own things that I have to do. Goodbye, Ms. Barbara." Waving his hand, Tang En turned and left.

His original bad mood had been uplifted from the mere sight of seeing this "female robot's" other side. No, she was no robot at all.

Lucy tilted her head as she looked at Tang En's back, as if she was deep in her thoughts.

Kerslake, who was supervising the training field from the side, heard sounds of footsteps going past him. He felt that something was amiss, but he did not pay much heed to it. Kerslake only asked casually, "You're back so quickly, Tony? Or did you leave something behind? Or you suddenly dared not meet that Yankee?"

"Are you referring to me, Mr. Kerslake?"

"Wa!" Kerslake jumped up in fright. After recovering, he discovered that the person standing beside him was not Tony Twain, but the chairman of the football club and the person who he had just called a "Yankee," Edward Doughty.

The young chairman of Nottingham Forest was dressed very casually. He wore a yellow jacket over his green sweater, light-blue jeans, and white sports shoes. He was completely different compared to that father of his who, no matter the occasion, always wore a neat suit and combed his hair neatly before appearing in front of other people. Edward appeared to be extremely energetic, but completely unlike the chairman of a traditional English football club.

"Mr. Chairman. You... Why are you here?" Kerslake was so shocked that he was tongue-tied, as Doughty clearly overheard Kerslake calling him a Yankee.

"I heard that you defeated Arsenal two days ago, so I came over to congratulate you all. I can't do that?" Unlike his father, Edward did not look into the other party's eyes when he spoke. Instead, he tended to look around.

"Of course you can. But in actual fact, we only defeated the youth team of Arsenal. It's nothing much, actually."

Doughty coughed twice before saying, "No matter the case, you should be rewarded for winning. Congratulations, Mr. Kerslake, you did a great job." Edward extended his hand to shake the hand of the assistant manager of the youth team, David Kerslake.

"Thank you for your praise, Mr. Chairman. But the main bulk of the credit should go to Manager Twain."

Edward nodded his head and asked, "Where is Tony?"

"Hmm? You didn't see him on your way here?" Kerslake felt that it was strange. Edward was even more puzzled than him.

"Oh? I didn't see him. In that case, he went to the first team?"

"He went to find you, Mr. Chairman."

“Ah...” Edward scratched his head. He had come to find Twain, but Twain had gone to find him instead. The two of them even missed each other on their way. He casted a look of boredom to the field, but soon had his attention completely stolen by one of the players on the field.

The players were currently undergoing Rondo training on the field. The training usually had four or five people forming a small circle, whereby the people in the circle would continuously pass the ball to one another. The only requirement for them was that they could only touch the ball once every pass, and there would be another player inside the circle in charge of snatching the ball. The snatcher could use any and all means, except fouls, to touch the ball. This type of training that seemed like a mini game could raise the player’s proficiency in ball passing, and at the same time improve their teamwork. The training was also conducted in a small area at a fast pace, which was extremely similar to real match situations.

Due to his exceptional performance during the Saturday’s match, Kerslake arranged for Wood to be the ball snatcher as a form of reward. The person, whose pass got touched by Wood, would not get to join the circle and snatch the ball. Instead, he would be required to run one lap around the training field as punishment.

Edward was not knowledgeable about football, and naturally, could not understand the meaning and purpose of such training. However, this did not stop him from noticing George Wood, who was snatching the ball in the middle of the circle. In a short five minutes’ time, he had already made all five of the people in the outer circle change once—all of them had been made to run one lap around the field. His speed was extremely fast, regardless of it being when he was turning around, when he was sprinting, or when he was kicking the ball. It was almost as if he was already in front of the receiving player when the ball had just been passed, causing the teammate who was caught off-guard to let Wood successfully intercept the ball.

“Very impressive. His speed is fast and his actions are forceful! Just like a hunting dog who is familiar with the smell of the football ball.” Edward exclaimed.

Kerslake followed Edward’s eyes and looked over at Wood. Kerslake smiled “Are you talking about him? Mr. Chairman, George Wood is a genius that Tony Twain found from the streets! A defense genius!”

While they were talking, another person left the circle for his punishment. This person was Ross Gardner, the player with the best passing techniques on the team. He did not proceed to run his punishment lap, but instead ran directly to Kerslake and complained, “Manager, this is too unfair. The circle is too small. Before we even receive the ball, it’s intercepted by Wood.”

“Then do you have any better suggestions, Ross?” Kerslake did not scold Gardner who took things on his own accord, but instead directed a question back at him.

“Expand the circle, Manager.”

“Until how big?”

Gardner turned his head around and looked at the rest of the people who were extremely busy with Wood, before saying to Kerslake, “A 15-meter radius circle.”

“Oh no, this wouldn’t meet the objectives of training all of you,” Kerslake said as he shook his head.

“But... Manager.” Gardner appeared as if he had something on his mind, but did not dare to say.

“Is anything else the matter, Ross?”

“Manager... Aside from Wood, the rest of us unanimously feel that your objective is not to train our passing, but instead to train Wood’s defense.”

Kerslake could no longer hold it in and burst out in laughter upon realizing that these kids were rather smart. That’s right, that was his idea. “Alright, alright, expand the circle to a radius of 15 meters. But you still have to run your lap, Ross.” Kerslake said as he winked at the disappointed Gardner.

Gardner lowered his head dejectedly and proceeded to do his lap. Edward, who overheard their conversation by the side, became even more intrigued by George Wood. Hence, he continued to stand there and observe for another 10 minutes.

Although the distance of the players’ passes increased after the circle was expanded, their success rate increased as well. Those who were passing the ball were happy, but it took an immense toll on Wood. He was running inside the circle back and forth with all of his energy and was finally unable to keep up with the speed at which the ball was being passed. However, he was not disheartened by it, and continued running back and forth after the ball.

Kerslake, who was by the side of the field, was shaking his head instead. This lad still only knew how to make use of his physical fitness to chase after the ball, but how could a person outrun a ball that was being passed around by so many people? Kerslake took a bow at Edward, who was standing beside him, and said, “Sorry, Mr. Chairman...” He pointed to the field.

Edward knew what he was trying to say, so he nodded his head and replied, “Go get busy. I have to go back as well.”

“Goodbye, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps you might be able to meet Tony on your way back.”

“Haha, I hope so too. Goodbye, Manager Kerslake.”

Looking at Kerslake who was striding over to the field after blowing the whistle to signal the pausing of the training, Edward turned around and left the training field. When he was quite some distance away, he could still hear Kerslake’s shouting.

“Position! Position! How many times have I told you, George Wood! Don’t just chase after the ball blindly, you got to judge you and your opponents’ positions, before deciding your next move!”

Edward raised his head and looked at the bright, clear sky. At the same time, he listened to the chirping of the birds and the manager’s energetic shouting, while he breathed in the fresh air that was accompanied with the fragrance of soil. Edward suddenly had the impulse to scream at the top of his lungs—this is the club that would soon belong to me, Edward Doughty, alone!