

## **Greatest 321**

### Chapter 321 Advice for Friends

Thirty minutes later, Kasongo arrived together with the Otterson brothers. Zachary was surprised as they came carrying a lot of snacks, including Pizzas and pre-packaged juice bottles. It was as if they were heading for a party.

"What's with all the food?" He asked.

"We figured that you might be hungry, especially after exerting yourself during yesterday's game," Kasongo replied with a grin while taking off his jacket by the door. "So, we decided to bring over some take-away. Moreover, what kind of visitors would we be if we came to your place without bearing gifts?"

"But I already ate breakfast."

"No worries," Kasongo replied, waving his arm dismissively. "We can eat the Pizzas at lunch."

Zachary could only shake his head as he glanced at his countrymate. Kasongo had grown taller over the years. He was already about five feet eight. But what always surprised Zachary was his uncanny resemblance to Raheem Sterling, the future Manchester City winger. Be it the sideburns, the skin shade, and the small face — they were all like a copy of the English forward.

"Say, Kasongo," Zachary could not help but inquire after a moment. "Could you be a long-lost brother to Raheem Sterling, the Liverpool player?"

Both Paul and Kendrick Otterson chuckled on hearing the question. The brothers had also grown up over the years. They were already almost as tall as Zachary and exuded an air of maturity.

"That was a good one," Paul Otterson said as he bumped fists with Zachary in greeting. "We were also wondering whether he was in some way related to that Liverpool youngster. Anyways, how have you been, Zachary? It has been a long time since the three of us got together. You really chucked us when you made it big as a pro."

"That's not the case," Zachary hurriedly explained. "You should understand that I spend most of my time training to better myself. So, I hardly get time for anything else. Moreover, didn't you three also abandon me when I left Moholt? You clearly knew where my apartment was, but you couldn't even drop by once in a while for a visit!"

"Don't mind Paul's words," Kendrick hurriedly chipped in while patting Zachary's shoulder. "We were also trying our best to graduate from the academy and then, later on, to make it into the senior squad. So, we also couldn't find time to hang out."

"That put's my heart at ease," Zachary said with a grin. He also settled in one of the sofas in the living room before continuing. "It's great that you guys have made it into the senior squad. How's everything? Are you coping well?"

"Well," Kendrick Otterson said with a sigh. "Everything is going on okay. But we're still not satisfied with our progress over the years. I'm already 20-years-of-age, while both Kasongo and Paul are already nineteen. However, we still haven't managed to cement our positions as part of the Rosenberg squad. It's really frustrating."

"Take it slow," Zachary said. "Just set a few achievable training goals, and do your best to meet them on a daily basis. With your talent, you should be able to cement your place in Rosenberg's starting line-up within two years at most."

"But that's still too slow!" That time around, it was Kasongo who chimed in. "You're also the same age as us, but you're already the team's superstar. Seeing you on the pitch makes us yearn for more, especially since we were together in the academy."

"Well, my circumstances are different," Zachary said, thinking about his system. "Moreover, have you forgotten that comparing yourself to another is not always good? Just focus on yourself. Set some goals. Try to be better than the person you were yesterday. If you do that on a daily basis, you'll surely improve in whatever you do."

"That's some good advice, Zachary," Kendrick said with a sigh. "But we still believe that we're not doing our best to realize our full potential. Look at Kasongo. When he started training more seriously, he made the match squad yesterday. So, we believe that we can achieve greater goals as long as we practice much more arduously."

"That's true," Zachary concurred. "Hard work during training always pays off on the pitch. But you can't train aimlessly and unsystematically. You've got to realize your shortcomings first—before working on them on the training ground. For instance, if your balance and coordination or passing attributes are below par, you undergo targeted training to improve those aspects of your game. That's the way of true professionals."

"You're right, Zachary." Kendrick nodded. "And that's the reason we've come to you. Could you point us in the right direction on how to train like pros in the future? Any pointers from you could help us a lot as we work on our techniques."

"Oh!" Zachary said, taking some time to organize his thoughts. "At this stage of your careers, it is crucial to solidify your basics first. You've got to perfect your techniques, including ball control, passing, and shooting to the best of your ability. As long as your basics are solid, you'll have a high chance of being named on the match squad."

"Additionally, you've got to work on your fitness day in day out to ensure that you are always in great shape. As long as you are fit, football becomes very easy as you can do plenty of things on the ball without panicking. You can dribble without much effort, take great shots, or even win one-on-one duels if you're in tip-top shape. So, fitness is a very crucial factor for a pro footballer."

"Lastly, I would recommend hiring a professional fitness trainer," Zachary continued. "With a fitness trainer, you'll be able to set achievable training goals and work on them under professional guidance. For instance, if you need to build some muscle, like in the case of Kasongo, the fitness trainer will help you out greatly. The same goes for Paul, who needs to work on his stamina."

"Oh, okay," Otterson hurriedly inquired. "Is there any fitness trainer you can recommend?"

"I can recommend my fitness trainer, Bjørn Peters," Zachary replied. "You should be able to remember him. He was the assistant coach of our academy team."

"Oh! I know Coach Bjorn Peters," Paul Otterson chimed in. "He was the muscular guy who always helped out Coach Johansen in the academy. But I didn't know that he was a fitness trainer."

"Well, he's one of the best fitness trainers in Norway," Zachary said with a smile. "If you happen to work with him just for a year, you'll surely achieve great things. I'll be meeting him in the afternoon. If you're interested, I can ask him to take some time out of his schedule to meet you."

"Of course, we're interested," Kasongo said. "As long as he can help us improve, then there's no reason for us to refuse."

Zachary chuckled. "I'll arrange the meeting time today. However, his fees are a bit high. He might charge you about 6,000 NOK per month just to work with you three times a week."

"That's not a problem," Kendrick said with a grin. "After signing official contracts with Rosenborg, we all earn more than 50,000 NOK per month. So, we can afford the 6,000 NOK for a fitness trainer."

"Then, that's awesome," Zachary intoned. "I'll arrange the meeting today. Just wait for my call."

"Okay, Zach," Paul Otterson said. "We'll eagerly await your news. By the way, Zachary. There's a rumor on some popular sports blogs that you have signed a deal with Nike. Is it true?"

"Yes, it's true," Zachary replied, feeling a bit surprised by the resourcefulness of the media people. "I signed an endorsement contract with Nike just last week. But the Nike representatives are yet to make any announcements. So, I'm wondering how the media learned about the deal."

"Don't underestimate the capabilities of journalists," Paul Otterson said with a sigh. "As long as something happens, they'll surely know about it. But that aside, you should be a rich man at the moment. Isn't that right?"

"Not at all," Zachary said. "I haven't received any payments from Nike as of yet."

"Just don't forget to take us out for celebrations after receiving your first payment," Kasongo chimed in. "We need to celebrate such events to relax our minds."

"Kasongo, why are you always thinking of parties?" Zachary queried. "Can't you think of something else?"

"Don't worry," Kasongo hurriedly replied. "I was only joking with you. But seriously, Zachary! You need to take a few days off from training to relax. You don't have to do it regularly. Even once or twice a month is enough. It won't even affect your long-term training plans."

"I do sometimes take time off," Zachary replied, his tone defensive. "For instance, I was on holiday in Barcelona with my girlfriend during the offseason. Don't you think that that's enough relaxation time?"

"Oh!" Kasongo said, his tone self-effacing. "I forgot that you're now like a married man. You go on vacation, and you don't even call us! Is it because we don't have girlfriends of our own?"

"You are as funny as ever, Kasongo," Zachary said, shaking his head. "But don't worry. If I organize something else, I'll call you, guys."

Kasongo grinned from ear to ear on hearing the promise. "You said it yourself, Zachary. We shall be eagerly waiting for your call during the next few weeks. Don't you forget!"

Zachary chuckled. "By the way, have you guys eaten breakfast yet? Or, should I offer you some breakfast?"

"We have already eaten." That time around, it was Kendrick who replied. "Just give us some juice. It'll be enough."

"Okay."

## Chapter 322 To Florence, Italy

After arranging a schedule for his friends to train with Coach Bjørn Peters, Zachary returned his entire focus to the routine team practice. To prepare for the upcoming Europa League second leg match against Fiorentina, he rehearsed formations, set pieces, and player movements with his teammates for the subsequent five days. Under the guidance of the Rosenborg coaches, the whole team was soon like a well-oiled machine, with all players clearly knowing their roles for the upcoming game against Fiorentina.

Whenever Zachary wasn't training with the team, he would also find time to perform the physical and mental conditioning drills required to master the Robinho-step-over juju. Whether it was day or night, it didn't matter to him. He would work on his dribbling skills either in the system's simulator or on the training ground at Lerkendal whenever he got the opportunity.

Step by step, he slowly pushed the progress of his mental and physical mastery of the step-over juju to above 90%. By the fifth day, when only a single day remained to the second leg match against Fiorentina, he could already side-step on the training ground quite well. He could even take on his teammates and beat them while solely relying on his step-overs.

He was evidently on the cusp of achieving true mastery over the technique. Nevertheless, Zachary understood that he wasn't ready to utilize the step-over skill in official matches.

As long as he couldn't master all the aspects of the juju to more than a hundred percent, it would remain as good as useless. That was because he would be prone to making missteps during critical moments of the game if he tried out a skill that he hadn't made his own. It was the simple—but ugly truth.

"I can only take one step at a time," Zachary resolved. "What's most important is to beat Fiorentina the day after tomorrow. After the game, I'll have roughly two weeks to master the skill in its whole totality and make it my own."

Zachary continued training after making the resolution. Even though the sun had already sunk below the horizon in the west, he continued exerting himself and going through various drills on the training ground to condition himself.

That day, he only ended his targeted practice at around nine o'clock at night. He then stretched for a few minutes before taking a shower in the bathrooms beside the training ground's locker rooms. After drying himself and dressing up, he quickly exited Lerkendal and jumped into his R8 GT. Before long, he was cruising on the roads of Trondheim, heading to his apartment to rest for the night. He was eager to get back home since he'd already made plans to spend the night with Camilla.

Wednesday, February 26, 2014.

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The Rosenberg players, who'd made Coach Johansen's match squad, boarded a KLM Airlines flight early in the morning that day and headed to Florence, Italy. They were on their way to play the second leg of the Europa League's round of thirty-two fixture against Fiorentina.

The journey was a pleasant one, without any mishaps. As a result, the plane managed to touch down on the runway of the Aeroporto di Firenze-Peretola five and a half hours later — when the clock was just pointing to midday.

The players, including Zachary, quickly stepped out of the plane under the guidance of the dedicated staff. However, not even a single Rosenberg fan came to welcome them as the club was not famous in Italy. So, before long, they successfully made their way to the airport's arrivals section without much fanfare.

"Welcome to Florence, team Rosenberg," a gentleman who was part of the airport staff said. "You can go through that gate to pick up your check-in luggage."

All the members of Rosenberg's delegation possessed Norwegian identity cards that were valid throughout the entire Schengen area. Thence, the procedures at the airport were pretty straightforward.

In only about thirty minutes, all the players, coaches, and medical personnel had already collected their luggage and quickly exited the airport. Without wasting time, they boarded a bus arranged for the team and were soon on their way to Hotel Villa Gabriele D'Annunzio, where they would spend the two nights in Florence.

On the way to the hotel, Zachary couldn't take his eyes off the various captivating sceneries that flashed by the bus window. The blend of the gorgeous roads and the Renaissance architecture gave the metropolis a unique historical ambiance that could even captivate the minds of the most hard-to-please tourists. Florence was really a beautiful city as far as Zachary was concerned.

"Okay, guys," Trond Henriksen, the assistant head coach, yelled from the front of the bus after a few more minutes of driving. "The schedule is as follows when we arrive at the hotel. We'll first check into our hotel rooms before having our lunch. We'll then rest for about an hour to recover from the jet lag

before going through a conditioning session in the gym at 3:00 PM. After that, you'll all have to return to your hotel rooms to rest. No player is allowed to leave the hotel grounds to tour the city. We don't want any of you to face unexpected incidents before our game tomorrow evening. Are we together?"

"Yes, coach."

"Good," Coach Trond Henriksen said, nodding. "We've arrived. Get ready to alight from the bus."

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As planned, the team only went through a conditioning session at three that evening. After that, the Rosenborg players returned to their rooms to rest as per the coach's instructions.

Of late, Coach Johansen had become much stricter and had even benched a couple of first-team players who couldn't follow his instructions. Thus, all the selected players were on their best behavior that night as they didn't want to get into the bad books of their coach. They all stayed in their rooms without complaint until it was time for dinner.

After dinner, most of the players, including Zachary, gathered in the hotel lounge to watch the UEFA Champions League match between FC Schalke 04 and Real Madrid.

The game was one-sided, with Real Madrid dominating the proceedings from the first minute. Each of the three forwards - Karim Benzema, Gareth Bale, and Cristiano Ronaldo scored a brace, taking Real Madrid's tally to six goals at the end of the night. FC Schalke 04 only managed to bag one consolation goal, curtesy of Klaas-Jan Huntelaar, late in the 90th minute.

Zachary felt his blood boil after watching the complete thrashing by the Spanish giants. Their football was really pleasing to the eyes and their teamwork incredible. Every player had a well-defined role on the pitch, making their football too easy and enjoyable.

Zachary even started considering whether he should also join a giant team after transferring out of Rosenborg. It was a notion that was really tempting, especially to him, a player who desired to play football at the highest level.



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The following morning, the players woke up early. After having breakfast, they traveled by bus to a nearby training ground to go through some last-minute preparations for the game. Under the strict supervision of the coaches, they worked with the ball for roughly two hours and refined their tactics on the field before returning to their hotel rooms to rest.

Zachary, on his part, soon busied himself with watching the past matches of Fiorentina when he returned to his room. He wanted to effectively exploit all the shortcomings of his opponents since the game was akin to a life and death battle as far as he was concerned. So, aside from when he had meals, he spent most of the day on his phone, trying his best to find Fiorentina's weaknesses from the past match videos.

It was a tedious task, for sure. However, Zachary went at it with a hundred percent focus until he could name the personal shortcomings of each of the Fiorentina players. By evening, he already knew well those who were slow-paced and had even crammed the usual habits of most regulars on the Italian side. It was as if he'd turned into an analyst for team Fiorentina.

"Knock! Knock! Zachary, are you in?"

Suddenly, his ears picked up a loud knocking sound followed by the voice of Mikael Dorsin, the assistant captain, from behind the door.

"The door is open, Mikael," Zachary replied, glancing up from his phone. "You can just come in."

Mikael immediately shoved the door open and stepped into the room. "It's already 7:00 PM," he said. "Only two hours remain to the game's kick-off. So, the coach has called everyone down to eat a light dinner before heading to the stadium."

"Oh!" Zachary said after taking a peek at his watch. "Give me a minute to prepare my match gear. We can go down together."

"You seemed quite busy!" Mikael remarked, stealing a peek at Zachary's phone. "What were you doing?"

"I was analyzing Fiorentina's past match videos," Zachary replied as he got up from the bed.

"You're really working hard!" Mikael exclaimed. "How can you handle watching those boring videos all day long, especially right before a game?"

"I simply want to win," Zachary responded. "So, I'm doing my best to gain an advantage over the opponents."

"I guess you're right," Mikael said with a smile. "Since the coach has again given you a free role in the squad, you'll have free reign on the pitch. You'll have to decide how and where to play during the match. So, researching the opponents is really important in your case."

"Exactly," Zachary concurred, slinging his gym bag over his shoulder. "I'm ready now. Let's head down before the team bus leaves us behind."

"Okay."

## Chapter 323 Deadlock

\*FWEEEEEEE\*

The referee blew the whistle to signal the match kick-off at 9:05 PM, sending the whole stadium into an explosion of cheers. The second leg of the Europa League's round of thirty-two fixture between Rosenborg and Fiorentina had finally commenced.

For that game, Coach Johansen didn't make any changes to the squad that played the first leg. Daniel Rønlund, Rosenborg's veteran goalkeeper, was in goal while Mikael Dorsin, Tore Reginiussen, Yerry Mina, and Eric Bailly were holding down the fort in defense. Thomas Partey once again played as the defensive midfielder, while Zachary Bemba and Takumi Minamino were the attacking midfielders. Lastly, Nicki Nielsen, Borek Dockal, and Alexander Sørderlund were the three forwards to complete Rosenborg's 4-3-3 formation.

On the side of Fiorentina, there were a lot more changes made to the squad that'd initially played against Rosenborg in Trondheim. The three players - Josip Illicic, Oliveira Anderson, and Manuel Vargas were not part of the starting line-up. Moreover, their coach had switched from a 3-5-2 shape to a more versatile 4-3-3 formation. From just the set-up, anyone watching the match could tell that he'd prioritized attacking over defending for that game against Rosenborg.

The match proceeded as expected in the first few minutes of gameplay. While being urged on by the thunderous cheers of the home crowd, the men in purple launched endless waves of attacks on Rosenborg's defense like mad. They utilized a combination of wing play while on the ball and high pressing tactics while not on the ball to outplay Rosenborg. Before long, they settled comfortably into the game and dominated the proceedings on the pitch.

The intent of the Italian outfit was evident as they monopolized possession and created several chances in the first thirty minutes. But, no matter how much they bombarded Rosenborg's goal, they still couldn't get an opportunity to score that crucial opener.

Rosenborg's defense was like an impenetrable bastion, warding off all the attacks without taking any damage. The Rosenborg four defenders worked well with Thomas Partey, the holding midfielder, to prevent Fiorentina from converting their clear chances at goal. As a result, the game remained deadlocked at a score of 0:0 as the big clock on the screen indicated that it was almost half-time.

By then, the tension had already steadily built up within the crowd of Fiorentina supporters, forcing them to quieten down. For minutes the anxiety levels were so high throughout the stadium. As a result, the Fiorentina coach was forced to become more active on the sidelines.

"Don't panic!" Vincenzo Montella, Fiorentina's head coach, bellowed at his players from within the technical area. "Settle down and play your own game. Ensure to pass the ball around patiently through the middle and the flanks to break down their defensive shape. We don't need to be anxious..."

His words reverberated across the pitch in quick succession like rounds of bullets from a machine gun. However, he still couldn't improve Fiorentina's situation on the pitch, no matter how loud he clamored and roared. The Rosenborg defense remained impenetrable — and as a result, the score was still 0:0 as the players of both teams headed into the tunnel for half-time.

Coach Johansen's mood was a bit jittery as he swept his gaze across the players who'd just settled down in the dressing room for the half-time break. The first half had been filled with ups and downs, with Fiorentina almost scoring the opening goal on several occasions. But fortunately, his players had managed to put up a satisfying defensive performance to thwart all the Italian side's attempts at goal. They'd played with purpose and followed the game plan to the letter — a fact that delighted the coach.

Be that as it may, Coach Johansen understood that he couldn't allow his players to relax before the end of the game. He needed to encourage his players to become bolder and launch more attacks on the opponent's goal if they wished to win the fixture and qualify for the next round of the Europa League.

"Guys, can I have your attention?" He said, taking center stage within the dressing room.

All the players immediately quietened down. They ceased all chatter and soon pivoted their attention onto the coach.

"You all played well during the first half," the coach continued. "You followed the game plan perfectly and stayed in proper shape. Thanks to your efforts, we held off Fiorentina and prevented them from scoring. However, we're still in a dire situation since we conceded two goals at home last week. Should we fail to score and win the game during the second half, Fiorentina will still qualify due to the away goal rule."

"So, guys, we all need to do our best and play like never before to score at least a single goal during the second half. One goal is enough to take us through. As long as we get that one goal and continue defending as we did during the first half, we'll be the team playing in the Europa League's round of sixteen. Are we together?"

"Yes, coach."

Coach Johansen smiled, glancing around. "I'm glad we're on the same page," he said. "Now moving on to the tactics. In the second half, we'll continue playing defensively as a team. The three midfielders and two of the forwards will have to keep falling back to help the defenders resist Fiorentina's attacks. However, if there's a chance, we counterattack."

"We'll need to be swift and effective whenever we get the chance. I expect all forward players and midfielders to do their best to link up and score a goal on the counter as soon as possible. Are we together?"

"Yes, coach."

"Good," Coach Johansen said, nodding. He then gave a few more instructions specific to individual players for the next few minutes before sending the team back to the field for the second half. He had already done the best he could to organize his team. The rest was up to his players.

#### Chapter 324 One Goal is Sufficient

Zachary was as hardworking as ever during the first few minutes of the second half. For that game, he played as a true-blue central midfielder. He didn't just focus on attacking but would also constantly fall back to defend against Fiorentina's barrage of attacks.

He understood that Fiorentina was a much stronger team when compared to Rosenborg. He knew that he couldn't let himself relax and leave the defending to his teammates. So, he worked harder than ever and was like a tireless madman in the midfield with his S-graded stamina, endurance, and agility attributes.

Moreover, since he'd studied the weakness and habits of the Fiorentina squad before the game, he was more effective on the pitch. Whenever the opponents had the ball, he was always quick to make a decision since he could easily predict their playing patterns from their previous matches. Thanks to his efforts, Rosenborg prevented the Italian side from scoring the opening goal on several occasions.

The minutes passed quickly, and the clock on the big screen soon indicated that it was the 70th minute. At that moment, Fiorentina had just initiated another attack to break down Rosenborg's defense.

Juan Cuadrado, Fiorentina's right-winger, exchanged a couple of one-twos with Alberto Aquilani, the midfielder, as they cut through Rosenborg's defense. Their teamwork was incredible as they circumvented a series of opponents before making it into the final third. But they soon ran into an obstacle in the form of Eric Bailly when they continued on towards Rosenborg's box.

Eric Bailly was like a ruthless assassin as he slid in to tackle the ball from Juan Cuadrado's feet. With a single merciless sweep, he sent the Fiorentina man tumbling to the ground before securing the ball.

"Foul! Foul..."

The Fiorentina players started shouting at the referee, hoping to claim a free kick. However, all their efforts were fruitless. The referee ignored their complaints and waved the gameplay to continue.

Chance!

Zachary acted with all the haste he could master when he saw the opponents lose concentration for a moment. He quickly ran into space while calling out to Eric Bailly to pass the ball to him.

The Rosenborg players had practiced various counterattacking routines over the past few days in preparation for the game. So, Eric Bailly didn't need Zachary's reminder at that moment. He quickly flicked the ball forward towards Zachary's position to initiate the counterattack.

Zachary's entire being bubbled with excitement when he received the ball in the middle of the pitch close to the center circle. With a single deft touch, he brought it under control before turning around to face Fiorentina's side of the pitch.

Within an instant, he assessed the positioning of both the opponents and his teammates while expertly stepping past an opponent that'd just closed him down. By relying on his high-level spatial awareness, he managed to form a mental map of those around him before taking the first stride towards the other half.

Zachary understood that it was then or never. So, he took off like a race car, accelerating to his top speed within a second. He was soon circumventing defenders while dashing towards Fiorentina's box as if his life was on the line.

At one point, he came across a ruthless tackle from David Pizarro, the Fiorentina midfielder. However, Zachary played a one-two with Takumi Minamino as he skirted around the sliding tackle. Before long, he was already bearing down on Fiorentina's box as a wave of booing descended upon the entire stadium.

The Fiorentina supporters seemed intent on disrupting his rhythm and concentration with their loud voices. However, Zachary was already an experienced old hand on the professional stage. He didn't lose his composure as he slowed down slightly before the box to assess his options.

On his right was his counterpart in midfield - Takumi Minamino, while on his left was Nicki Nielsen, Rosenberg's star striker. Thus, he had the option of either attempting to score himself or passing the ball to one of his two teammates.

Reason always dictated that midfielders make such choices based on the past statistics of the attacking players in the team. However, by following his instincts, Zachary decided to do the opposite. Instead of passing to the more experienced and lethal Nicki Nielsen, he flicked the ball to Takumi Minamino, who was just stepping past the last center back and into Rosenberg's box.

Takumi received Zachary's pin-point through-pass right before stepping into an off-side position. With a not-so-complicated graceful touch, he pushed the ball forward to stride into the box. Before any of the defenders could close him down, he unleashed a curling right-footed shot that easily skirted around the keeper and made it into the back of the net.

ACF Fiorentina 0: Rosenberg BK 1

In the 70th minute, Rosenberg had finally broken the deadlock and scored the opening goal. All the Rosenberg players, including the goal scorer -Takumi Minamino, were ecstatic while celebrating in front of Fiorentina's goal. They sang and shouted at the top of their voices without minding the angry Fiorentina fans glaring at them from the stands behind the goal.

Coach Johansen roared out in excitement, repeatedly punching his fist into the air when Takumi Minamino scored Rosenberg's first goal. For the past few minutes, he'd been worried. He was fearful that his team would have to bow out of that season's Europa League during the round of thirty-two stage.

But since his players had finally gotten the crucial opening goal, he could relax and organize targeted tactics to frustrate Fiorentina. The next few minutes would be about game management, and as a coach, he would have to pull out all his stops to ensure that his team didn't concede even a single goal. So,

without losing a minute, he introduced two more defensive-minded players to his side to increase the resistance against Fiorentina's attacks.

The goddess of luck seemed to be on Rosenborg's side that evening. Although the Fiorentina attackers continued trying their best to break down Rosenborg's defense, there were no more surprises in the final minutes. The Rosenborg players held onto their 1:0 lead until the final whistle sounded by defending together as a team.

#### Chapter 325 Unexpected News

When the final whistle sounded, Coach Johansen rushed into the pitch, yelling at the top of his voice to celebrate Rosenborg's victory. Closely following behind him were the rest of the substitutes and the members of the technical team. They were, at that moment, hopping up and down excitedly like a bunch of kids that'd just chanced upon an ice cream truck. Not even the loud booing by the Fiorentina fans still in the stadium could dampen their jubilant mood.

"Nice game," Coach Johansen said while giving Zachary a bear hug. "That run in the 70th minute was incredible. And great thinking when you passed the ball to Takumi instead of Nicki. None of the defenders expected you to make such a choice. Even I, your coach, was quite surprised by your choice."

"Sometimes, football is all about keeping your opponents guessing," Zachary replied, stepping away from the coach's embrace. "But, to be honest, I was quite anxious at that moment. I couldn't have known that my choice was the right one."

When he passed the ball to Takumi, he'd wished to confuse the opponents. He understood that the Fiorentina coach should've already researched his playing patterns from Rosenborg's previous matches. So, the only way to go at such a crucial moment was to make a decision he wouldn't have previously made so as to catch the defenders off-guard.

"It's good that your choice bore fruit in the end," Coach Johansen said, patting his shoulder. "We might have a chance of even going further than we expected in the Europa League. Keep up the spirit and hard work."

"Thanks, coach," Zachary replied with a smile. They then exchanged a few more words before the coach stepped away to talk and celebrate with the rest of his players.



Zachary, on his part, felt like he'd unloaded a huge burden off his shoulders. He'd finally accomplished one milestone of the system's 2013/14 Europa League Serial Challenge and escaped the retribution for failing the mission. By helping his team qualify for the Europa League's round of sixteen, he would no longer have to worry about paying a 120,000 juju point penalty to the system. At that moment, he was totally relaxed.

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Since it was an away game, the Rosenborg players didn't spend much time celebrating after the game. They only sang a few Rosenborg victory chants in the dressing room before packing their things and boarding the bus back to their hotel for the night.

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Zachary had a light dinner with his teammates at the hotel restaurant after taking a quick shower. The whole atmosphere around the team was still jubilant. Some players even put forward the suggestion of holding a small victory party at the hotel.

However, Zachary quietly excused himself before heading back to his room for the night. He still had to continue his training to master the Robinho-step-over juju when he returned to Trondheim the following day. More than anything, he needed to allow his body to rest so as to boost his post-match recovery. Thus, wasting time partying was a big no for him.

When back in his room, Zachary switched on the television, hoping to pass the time before going to bed by watching the sports news for the day. However, to his distress, he soon found out that most of the channels available were only broadcasting using the Italian language. So, he could only resort to streaming the ESPN News English Channel on his phone by relying on the fast wireless internet within the hotel.

"Several Europa League matches have just concluded," the voice of the ESPN presenter boomed in his ears when he connected his headphones. "In a shocker earlier today, Red Bull Salzburg managed to defeat the Dutch giants - Ajax. Goals from Mike van der Hoorn, Sadio Mané, and Jonathan Soriano saw the Austrian outfit decimate the Dutch giants 3:1."

"In other news," the reporter continued. "Tottenham defeated Dnipro 3:1 to overcome a one-goal deficit from the first leg and qualify for the round of sixteen. The other Europa League giants, including Sevilla, Napoli, Benfica, Juventus, and Lyon, also emerged victorious from their respective fixtures to qualify for the next round."

"However, there was one unexpected result from today's fixtures. Rosenborg, a team from Norway, managed to defeat Fiorentina 1:0 away from home in Florence, Italy. A goal from Takumi Minamino ensured that the Norwegian giants emerged victorious with an aggregate score of 3:2 at the end of the night. They'll now have to face Juventus in the next round of sixteen. Can they create more miracles and defeat another Italian team? With me here..."

Zachary listened for a few more minutes before switching off the channel. A bitter smile outlined his facial features as he placed his phone to the side. As expected, Juventus had defeated Trabzonspor, the Turkish team. Goals from Arturo Vidal and Daniel Osvaldo had ensured that the Italian giants came out on top at the end of the night. As a result, they had become Rosenborg's next opponents in the Europa League's round of sixteen.

"Damn!"

Zachary could only curse at Rosenborg's poor luck. First, they had to face off against Fiorentina, a relatively strong team in Europe. However, after barely qualifying, they again had to play against an even stronger Italian side - Juventus. As far as Zachary was concerned, it was the most damn luck possible.

"Bzzt Bzzzt! Bzzt Bzzzt..."

Suddenly, the phone, which he'd already placed to the side, started vibrating. Zachary couldn't help but frown, wondering who could be calling that late in the night, especially after a game. But, he was even more amazed after realizing that the phone call seemed to be from DR Congo, his homeland.

"Hello," he said a bit hesitantly after accepting the call. "Who's this?"

"Hello, Zach," a familiar voice answered in French from the other end of the line. "Sorry for calling you this late. It's me, Coach Damata."

"Oh, Coach Damata!" Zachary exclaimed, his tone relaxing. "How are you, coach?"

"I'm okay," the coach replied. "However, I come bearing some bad news. That's why I'm calling late at night?"

"What's the matter?" Zachary asked, his heart skipping a beat.

"Well, it's about your grandma."

"My grandma! What's wrong with her?"

"Well," the coach replied from the other end of the line. "She collapsed earlier today, and we had to rush her to hospital. As I speak now, she's still in a coma, the cause of her condition unknown."

"She collapsed?"

Zachary could feel a sickening pool of dread forming in his belly after receiving the bad news from Coach Damata. A few years ago, he'd even transferred his grandma from Bukavu to a new city to keep her safe. However, Zachary was now hearing that she was facing a life-threatening condition. He couldn't prevent the wave of panic from washing over him as he imagined the worst.

"What are the doctors saying?" Zachary asked after letting out a long, drawn-out breath. "Have they done any tests?"

"The tests are not yet out," Coach Damata replied. "But we should be able to get the results by tomorrow morning."

"Oh!" Zachary frowned. "Which hospital are you in?"

"Centre Médical du Centre Ville," Coach Damata said. "It's one of the best hospitals here in Lubumbashi."

"Oh, okay," Zachary said. "Keep me posted when you get the results."

"No problem, Zachary," Coach Damata replied. "As soon as I get the results, I'll call."

"Thanks for all the help, coach," Zachary said. "Do you need money for the treatment costs, by the way?"

"No," Coach Damata was quick to reply. "There's some good amount of money remaining from the funds you have sent to us over the previous few months. It should be enough."

"Okay, then," Zachary said. "In case anything serious comes up, I'll ask for permission from my coaches and come to that side. But for now, I'll leave everything to you, coach."

"Okay, Zach," the coach replied. "Feel at ease. I'll do my best to take care of her."

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The following morning, the Rosenborg squad boarded a plane back to Trondheim. On arriving at V?rnes Airport, they found many fans waiting for them.

"Shalalalalalala... oh Rosenborg..."

Most of the fans, dressed in Rosenborg's black and white colors, were crowding the airport gate, singing at the top of their voices. They became even more crazed when the Rosenborg squad marched out of the airport gate. The security personnel had to act to keep them in check.

However, all the commotion did not stop the jubilant Rosenborg players from signing a few autographs for their fans. Regular starting players, like Mikael Dorsin, Nicki Nielsen, and even the newly-signed Takumi Minamino, all spent a few minutes signing their names on various items presented by the supporters. They were clearly having a good time since they were smiling throughout the ordeal.

Zachary was also among the group of players signing autographs. However, his thoughts were somewhere else, causing him to frown from time to time.

He hadn't received any update from Coach Damata about his grandmother's condition yet. So, he was very anxious. The noise made by the fans, which had always been like music to his ears, sounded like scratching sounds. He wished to exit the airport and go someplace quiet as soon as possible.

"Zachary," the familiar voice of Coach Johansen sounded from behind him. "You seem out of it! Are you okay?"

"I'm just feeling a bit light-headed," Zachary responded, not wanting to worry the coach. "I just need to sit down for a bit."

"Then, just head into the bus and wait for us there," the coach said. "Your teammates can deal with the fans."

"Thanks, coach," Zachary said. "I'll go now," he added before stepping towards the bus.

He was eager to settle into a quiet place before trying out Coach Damata's phone again. He couldn't feel at ease before understanding his grandma's condition.

#### Chapter 326 Anxiety

Zachary let out a breath of relief as he embraced the sense of tranquility that washed over him when he settled in the back seat of the bus. He immediately fished out his phone from one of his trouser pockets and dialed Coach Damata's number.

However, even after trying time and time again, the call could not go through. The coach was probably in a place with poor network coverage, or he'd simply switched off his phone.

"Damn!"

Not knowing his grandma's condition was the most agonizing torment for him. His stress levels were through the roof as he couldn't stomach the fact that he was all the way in Europe, living comfortably like a monarch, while his only guardian was lying on a hospital bed somewhere in DR Congo, fighting for her life.

He felt even more remorseful after recalling how he'd repeatedly put off visiting his grandma during the previous few months. She'd continuously implored him on the phone to find some time to travel back home. However, he would always cite his training as the perfect excuse without considering her feelings. He hadn't even journeyed back for Christmas during the offseason.

"What to do?"

Chaotic thoughts whirled through Zachary's mind, which was already weighed down by regret. He couldn't help but consider if he should up and board the first flight available back to his homeland. However, after a few more seconds of deliberation, he pushed the notion out of his mind.

A flight from V?rnes to Lubumbashi would take more than twelve hours. If he decided to travel, he wouldn't be available on the phone for the entire duration of the journey. Thus, he wouldn't be able to organize his grandma's treatment remotely if there was an emergency.

"Maybe, I should consult Emily if I don't hear from Coach Damata by the time I reach my apartment."

Zachary's eyes glittered with expectation. Emily, his agent, was a very resourceful person. She could easily simplify even the most complicated of situations since she had connections all around the globe. Thus, she might be the only person who could help him untangle the problematic situation in the quickest way possible.

"She might really be able to help."

A wave of relaxation washed over him after making the resolution. He forced all his apprehensions to the back of his mind before leaning back in his seat and dozing off.

He was totally spent since he didn't even sleep a wink the previous night due to worry. So, he slumbered like a log in his seat without even the slightest understanding of what was around him. He only managed to wake up after a while when one of his teammates tapped his shoulder. But by then, the bus had already pulled up into the parking lot at Lerkendal.

"Guys, welcome back home!" Zachary heard Coach Johansen's voice reverberate across the bus after waking up. "I congratulate all of you upon winning our Europa League round of thirty-two fixture against Fiorentina."

The players responded to the coach with clangorous chanting and clapping. They even started singing a victory slogan until the coach raised one of his arms and requested them to quieten down.

"As I was saying," the coach continued, "Let me take this opportunity to congratulate you upon defeating Fiorentina. We can all stand tall and proud as we managed to eliminate a team that can be considered quite powerful on the European stage. However, we shouldn't allow ourselves to relax since the tournament is far from over." The coach's voice had already turned solemn.

"Two weeks from now, we'll be going back to Italy to face off against Juventus in the Europa League's round of sixteen. As every one of you should already know, the Italian team is one of the undisputable footballing powerhouses in Europe. If we don't make ample preparations, we won't stand a chance against them."

"So, I implore each and every one of you to do your best in the next fourteen days. For the rest of today and tomorrow, you can stay home and rest to recover from the post-match fatigue. However, I expect you to be back on the training ground on Sunday afternoon. I won't tolerate any absentees or latecomers. Are we together?"

"Yes, coach."

"Good." Coach Johansen nodded. "That's everything I wished to communicate. Enjoy the rest of your day." He added before alighting from the bus.

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After saying his brief goodbyes to his teammates and coaches, Zachary jumped into his R8 GT, which he'd previously left in the parking lot at Lerkendal. Before long, he raced out of the stadium gate and was soon on his way to his apartment in Stj?rdalsveien.

Traffic that afternoon was light, and there were no unforeseen factors to delay him on the roads. Thus, he completed the entire journey from the stadium to his apartment in less than twenty minutes. Soon, he parked his vehicle in front of his apartment building before ascending the stairs to his residence on the sixth floor.

"Bzzt Bzzzt! Bzzt Bzzzt..."

Suddenly, his phone, which had been quiet the entire morning, started vibrating from inside one of his pockets. He immediately fished it out with all the haste he could master before glancing at the screen.

The next moment, he couldn't help but smile with relief as the call was from Coach Damata. But even though he was impatient to find out about his grandma's condition, he still decided to first enter his apartment before accepting the call.

"Hello, Coach Damata," Zachary spoke into the phone while stepping into his living room. "Your phone hasn't been available for the past twelve hours. What happened?"

"I'm sorry, Zach," Coach Damata responded. "The network kept going on and off yesterday night. So, maybe that's why you couldn't reach my phone."

"Okay! So, what's the status? Are the results of the tests out?"

"Yes," Coach Damata responded. "They've just released the results of the imaging tests a few minutes back, and it's bad news."

"What did they find?" Zachary hurriedly asked as he fought down the dread. "What could be wrong with my grandma?"

"They say that it's a tumor in her brain," Coach Damata answered with an audible sigh.

"A tumor!?"



Zachary felt like his whole world was turning upside down. The fear and anxiety pressed closer, in tune with the terror rising inside him. He couldn't help but tremble as a sensation of powerlessness overwhelmed him.

From his little biological knowledge, he understood that a tumor in the brain was a very life-threatening condition. Very few patients could survive after being diagnosed with such a terrible ailment. It was almost like a death sentence.

"Is it cancerous?" He hurriedly asked after recalling some more information about tumors.

"Ahh!" Coach Damata stammered a little as if he didn't know the answer to the question. "Zachary! I think you should talk to the doctor to find out more about the specific condition of your grandma. He's here with me, and I'm passing the phone to him."

"Hello, Zachary," another deep and raspy voice soon sounded from the phone speakers. "I'm Mathias Mathembo, and I'm the doctor handling your grandma's case."

"Hello, doctor," Zachary responded. "So, can you give me the details about my grandma's situation?"

"Well," the doctor said after clearing his voice. "When we put your grandma through imaging tests today morning, we discovered an abnormal area in her brain that should be a tumor. However, what we haven't determined as of yet is whether the tumor is cancerous."

"For that, we would have to conduct a more specific test called a biopsy to determine whether the mass of abnormal cells in her brain is benign, premalignant, or even malignant."

"So, is this biopsy test for the brain life-threatening?"

"Since biopsies are less invasive procedures, the risks to a patient are almost insignificant," the doctor replied. "Your grandma won't be in any life-threatening situation when we're carrying out the procedure."

"Since you have assured me that there are no risks, you can go ahead and do the test," Zachary said.  
"Can you give me an estimate of how long I need to wait for the results?"

"Four days," the doctor answered.

"That long!" Zachary exclaimed.

"You need to understand that we'll have to carry out several tests on the sample obtained through the biopsy before we can come up with a diagnosis," the doctor said. "We can't afford to make any mistakes in cases like this. So, that's why we need the four days."

"I understand," Zachary intoned. "Go ahead and carry out the test. The old gentleman with you will clear the bills. Otherwise, thanks for all your efforts, doctor."

"You're welcome."

After ending the conversation with the doctor, Zachary exchanged a few more words with Coach Damata before hanging up the call. He then dialed Emily's number and explained his grandma's situation to her. He even told her about the biopsy test that the doctor had just mentioned.

"I'm sorry to hear that your grandma is ill," Emily said after listening to his account. "But, worry not. I, as your agent, will do my best to support you through the situation."

"Thanks, Emily," Zachary said. "So, what's the way forward? Should I ask for permission from the club management so that I can travel back to DR Congo?"

"I implore you not to do that, Zachary," Emily said from the other end of the line. "I understand that you're anxious. But, before we get the results from the biopsy test, you can't make any rash decisions. We need to handle the situation calmly."

"Okay, I understand."

"This is my suggestion," Emily continued. "In your stead, I'll head to Lubumbashi with a doctor who can assess your grandma's situation. If we find that her situation is very life-threatening, we can even consider transferring her to European countries with first-class medical facilities for treatment. You can then link up with her there instead of traveling back to Congo."

"That's a good plan," Zachary responded. "But, when can you get time to travel to Lubumbashi?"

"If there are available tickets for sale, I'll travel today," Emily responded. "Just send me the contact information of one of your people in Lubumbashi that can act as my guide when I arrive there."

"Thanks a lot, Emily," Zachary responded. "You're a life-saver, and I owe you big this time around."

#### Chapter 327 Arrangements

In a room within the private ward of the Centre Médical du Centre Ville located in Lubumbashi, DR Congo, a tall, middle-aged man with a physique on the thin side and a chubby woman stood by a hospital bed. They were Marie and Joseph Bemba, who were Zachary's only surviving aunt and uncle. In other words, they were the only children birthed by Zachary's grandma, still alive. At that moment, their gazes, tinged with a sense of worry, were fixed on the pale old lady wired to several medical machines on the hospital bed.

"Joseph!" The chubby woman in a patterned African-style dress said abruptly to break the silence. "Do you think mom will make it through this?" She spoke fluent Swahili like most of the people in Eastern Congo.

"I really don't know," the middle-aged man replied while stroking his goatee. "She has a tumor in her brain. So, we can only pray for a miracle and wish her a quick recovery. The rest is in the hands of the Almighty."

There was a prolonged silence in the room for a few seconds before the woman spoke again. "That nephew of ours, Zachary, is making it big as a pro footballer in Europe. I have seen him a couple of times on TV. He should be very wealthy. Maybe, he'll be able to find a way with all the money he has."

"From what I hear, he's a very prideful and distant person," Joseph said with a sigh. "He might not really care about this old grandma of his."

"Don't say that," Marie said, shaking her head. "You don't understand the situation because you haven't visited mom in a while. From what I gathered, our nephew cares a lot about mom. After purchasing that house in Lubumbashi for her, he has even continued sending her large sums of money every month."

"Really?"

"Yes, I'm sure about this," the chubby woman replied. "But what surprises me is that he wires all that money through that stranger, Coach Damata, instead of contacting us, his only relatives. Even right now, the Damata fellow is the person handling all the hospital bills. Our nephew seems to trust him a lot."

"Young people these days!" Joseph Bemba sighed, shaking his head. "They really don't value family ties. Why trust a complete stranger over us, his relatives?"

Marie, the stout woman, just shrugged in response before returning her gaze to the old lady lying on the hospital bed. What followed were a few more minutes of silence between them. Only the beeping sounds made by the medical machines continued interrupting the stillness in the room.

Suddenly, the door of the hospital room creaked open. With a steady gait, which was surprising for an aged man, Coach Damata marched into the room. But he wasn't alone. Behind him were Dr. Mathias Mathembo, the medic in charge of their mom's case, and two Caucasians - one aged male and another a stunning female.

Both Joseph and Marie were quite startled. The two whites didn't seem like they were part of the team of medics working at the hospital. But what were they doing in their mom's hospital room?

Coach Damata soon resolved their doubts. "Let me introduce you first," he said with a smile while pointing to the beautiful Caucasian lady behind him. "This lady here is Emily Anderson. She's Zachary's agent and here to organize his grandma's treatment in his stead. With her is Dr. Brian Sanders, a neurologist sent by Zachary to help."

A neurologist!

The two siblings gasped in wonder while exchanging glances. To move a neurologist from another continent in less than a day should have cost a lot. But Zachary had achieved such an almost impossible feat. How rich was that nephew of theirs?

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"Who are they?" Emily asked suddenly, glancing at the two.

"Madam," Coach Damata replied. "These two are Joseph and Marie Bemba, Zachary's uncle and aunt."

"Zachary's uncle and aunt!"

Emily was a bit startled. She couldn't help but give the two another glance as her lawyer-senses tingled.

Zachary had discussed his family issues with her on several occasions. However, he had never mentioned that he had an uncle and aunt who were still alive. Thus, they must not be on good terms with him.

"This is troublesome," she deliberated.

She wanted to organize the transfer of Zachary's grandma to Europe for treatment. But before that, she would have to acquire permission from the old lady's immediate relatives. So, if the two siblings intervened, all her arrangements might crumble.

"Miss Emily!"

As she was still pondering, the chubby woman that was Zachary's aunt stepped forward and extended her hand. "Nice to meet you." A smile outlined her plump face.

"Nice to meet you too, Miss ...or Mrs. Marie Bemba." Emily shook her hand while maintaining a professional smile.

"It's Mrs..." the lady corrected with a chuckle. "I've been married for more than ten years."

Emily beamed before turning to the thin, tall middle gentleman who was Zachary's uncle. "It's a pleasure to meet you too, Mister Joseph." She extended her hand.

"Nice to meet you, Emily," Joseph replied, taking her hand. "Thank you for taking care of our nephew, Zachary. And thanks a lot for traveling all the way from Europe to help us out."

"Don't mention it," Emily said with a dismissive wave of her hand. "Zachary's every matter is my responsibility."

It was at that moment that Dr. Mathias Mathembo coughed slightly. "I think we should step out of the patient's room before continuing the discussion," he suggested. "The noise may affect the patient adversely."

"Okay," Emily agreed readily before turning to the middle-aged Caucasian beside her. "Dr. Sanders! Do you need to examine the patient before we step out of the room?"

Dr. Brian Sanders exchanged a glance with Dr. Mathembo before shaking his head. "There isn't much I can learn by just looking at the patient. I'll have to study the blood and imaging tests results before coming up with a preliminary diagnosis."

"Is there anything you need?" Emily asked again. Her most valuable client, Zachary, had tasked her with taking care of his grandma. So, she had to be meticulous in whatever she did.

"For now, there's nothing I require," Dr. Sanders replied. "You guys can go do your own things. As for me, I'll discuss the case with Dr. Mathembo first—to find out about the patient's exact situation. Then I'll come to look for you."

"Okay, take your time," Emily said with a smile. "And thanks for all your help, doctors."

"You're welcome."

Emily then turned to Zachary's uncle and aunt. "Coach Damata! Joseph! Marie! Can we step out and leave the doctors to do their own thing? We also need to discuss a few things."

The two siblings and the coach exchanged glances before nodding in agreement. It seemed like they were also eager to talk to Emily.

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Ten minutes later, the four of them had already settled on a corner table in the hospital's canteen. Silence reigned supreme on the table as the afternoon sunlight streamed golden through the window, illuminating the space around them.

"So, Miss Emily!" Coach Damata was the first to break the silence. "As you already know, the doctors conducted a biopsy test on Zachary's grandma yesterday. We're still waiting for the results."

"That, I know," Emily responded after taking a sip of her juice. "And I also know that the test results should be coming out three days later. But we can't afford to wait for that long without doing anything."

"What are you implying, Miss Emily?" It was the plump woman - Marie Bemba, who asked the question.

"We all know that the old lady has a tumor in her brain," Emily said, leaning back in her seat. "Whether it's cancerous or not, it doesn't matter. She'll still have to undergo surgery to remove the tumor, whatever the case."

The other occupants of the table nodded in agreement.

"So," Emily continued, her voice turning solemn. "What we need to do now is to move the old lady to a hospital with adequate facilities and skilled medical staff to handle the tumor. To increase her chances of recovery, we need to do this fast before her condition worsens. We can't afford any delays. And that's why I'm here."

There were seconds of silence on the table before Joseph Bemba leaned forward and spoke: "So, what plans does Zachary have? Where does he intend to take our mother for treatment?"

"Zurich, Switzerland," Emily answered. "The city has some of the best neurosurgery centers in the world. They've world-class experts who'll be able to handle your mother's case."

"What about visa issues and passports?" Coach Damata asked. "Will you be able to complete the travel arrangements for the old lady in a short time?"

"You can leave the issue of the visa requirements and the travel arrangements to me," Emily said, her tone confident. "Through my contacts, I'll be able to arrange everything within forty-eight hours, at most."

"That's great news," Marie said with a smile. "However, there's one more issue we haven't sorted out. From my understanding, Zachary is always busy since he's a professional footballer. So, who'll take care of our mother when in Europe? Should we send her out there without anyone to care for her? Isn't that like abandoning her?"

Joseph Bemba also nodded to indicate that he was concerned.

"I do get your point," Emily said a bit hesitantly. "But there are specialized nurses who'll take care of your mother in Europe. Moreover, Zachary will also start taking time off to visit her often."

Marie Bemba shook her head. "I think that would be irresponsible on our side. As her only surviving children, we can't allow our mother to travel alone in her condition to Europe. If you were in my shoes, Miss Emily, would you agree to such a proposition?"

"So, what do you suggest?" Emily asked, feeling a headache coming.

"One of us has to travel with her to monitor her treatment," Marie said, her tone solemn. "If that's not possible, we can look for other options rather than sending her off alone to Europe."

"Give me a minute," Emily said, picking up her phone. "If you don't mind, I'll have to consult Zachary about this."



"Go ahead," Marie said with a shrug. "If possible, I also want to talk to Zachary."

"Okay."

## Chapter 328 Training Hard, Even When in the Face of Adversity

Although Zachary was quite worried about his grandma's condition, he still forced himself to continue his targeted training. He couldn't afford to relax since he was determined to master the step-over skill before Rosenborg's next game against Juventus.

He'd already completed 99% of the mental conditioning and 97% of the physical training required to grasp the juju. So, if nothing unexpected transpired, he would be a proud bearer of a phenomenal defense-splitting dribbling technique in roughly three days.

That day, Zachary was busy in the gym working on strengthening his lower body under the guidance of Coach Bjørn Peters, his fitness trainer. Even though it was the second day off for the Rosenborg players to rest and recover from the match fatigue, he still gave his all during practice.

Lower body strength was necessary for footballers since most plays incorporated single-leg actions, stop-and-go movements, sharp turns, and explosive sprints. It was a must for pro players to hone their leg strength to perform these actions efficiently and explosively. Moreover, powerful and flexible legs were not easily susceptible to injuries, especially while performing high-risk moves like dribbling and slide-tackling.

During his previous life, Zachary had heard that Cristiano Ronaldo, a player who was the bearer of incredible side-stepping skills, used to wear ankle weights quite often in his earlier years. The aim was to strengthen his legs and make them powerful enough to perform the dribbling actions on the pitch without any strain. The habit had helped CR7 a lot, allowing him to avoid career-threatening injuries that had brought down many other incredible talents in football history.

Since Zachary understood all the benefits of whetting his lower body strength, he would, of course, follow the example of CR7. As a player who wanted to master the art of dribbling and push it to the highest level possible, he couldn't neglect his legs.

He was in high gear when he performed the lower body strengthening exercises that morning. Be it the squats, the lunges, the deadlifts, and the Bulgarian split squats — he went at them as if his life depended on it. As practice went on, he gradually forgot all his worries until his thoughts were only on what was before him. Due to his high immersion in the routines, he started sweating buckets. But he didn't dare stop until he completed all the repetitions required for the session.

"Don't sit down yet," Coach Bjørn Peters hollered, clapping his hands. "Let's go through a stretching routine before you rest."

"Aye, coach," Zachary replied after chugging down some water.

"Are you ready?"

"Yes, I'm ready."

"Okay, then," the fitness trainer said. "Let's begin with the upper body stretches. We'll gradually move to the shoulders, then the waist, and end with the lower body. Are you with me?"

"Yes, coach."

Coach Bjørn Peters then got into position and started demonstrating the routine. He performed the actions slowly, with the spirit of coaching his client. He was really a considerate fitness trainer.

Zachary only watched for a few seconds before also getting into action. He mirrored the coach's every motion, beginning with the neck stretches, then the arm swings, and so on.

He only relaxed after he went through all the repetitions. By then, he was again sweating buckets and out of breath.

"That marks the end of our session for today," Coach Bjorn Peters said, grinning. "I'm proud of your progress over the past three months."

"Thanks, coach," Zachary responded after chugging down more water.

"So," the coach said a bit hesitantly, "going by our initial agreement, we should be ending our coach-client relationship after today's session. I believe you've already met your goals as your agility and explosive speed attributes have improved significantly. So, what plans do you have? Do you want us to keep working together?"

"Yes, of course," Zachary responded immediately. "If it's okay, I'll renew your contract as my fitness trainer as soon as possible. What say you?"

"I'm happy to keep working with you," Coach Bjorn Peters replied with a smile while extending his hand. "Just send the contract to me when you're ready, and I'll immediately sign it."

"Great," Zachary said, taking his hand. "I'm looking forward to more training sessions with you, coach."

Coach Bjorn Peters beamed and settled down on one of the benches in the corner of the gym. The midday sunlight streamed through the window, giving a glossy tint to his face. "Since you've already achieved your initial goals," he said, "we'll have to change your fitness training plan for the next six months. We'll include more endurance and strengthening regimens to build your capacity to perform at a higher level for longer periods while also improving your resistance to injuries. What do you think?"

"That's a good plan." Zachary nodded, also settling down on the bench—besides the coach. "However, I feel that I should also continue honing my agility. I'm sure that I haven't reached my ceiling yet."

"Sure," the fitness trainer said. "I'm not suggesting that we remove agility routines from your training plan. I'm only saying that they won't be the main focus. We need to set another achievable goal and work towards it during the next few months."

"Bzzt Bzzzt! Bzzt Bzzzt..."

Zachary's ears picked up the vibration of his phone from a nearby bench before he could respond.

"Excuse me, coach," he said, standing up. "Sorry, I have to take this call as it might be important."

"Go ahead," Coach Bjorn Peters answered. "Our session is already over. So, you don't have to worry that I'll fault you for receiving a call in the middle of practice." He added in a joking manner.

Zachary beamed, shaking his head before stepping towards the other bench. He could feel his heart beating loud with anxiety as he scooped up the phone and glanced at the screen. As expected, the call was from Emily. But what had she learned when she visited his sick grandma in Lubumbashi? Was the old lady's condition stable? Zachary was uneasy as he pressed the accept button.

"Hello, Zachary," Emily's vibrant voice rang in his ear the next moment.

"Hello, Emily," he replied.

"I have already visited your grandma in the hospital," she said in French.

"How's she?" He replied in the same language.

"Although she is on Oxygen therapy, the doctors say she is stable for now. She even woke up once before sinking back into a coma."

"Thank God." Zachary relaxed a bit after hearing the bit of good news. "So, when will you start making arrangements to transfer her out of DR Congo?"

"I have already made a few arrangements," Emily said hesitantly. "However, there is one issue we need to sort out. Your aunt and uncle are by my side. They insist that one of them has to travel with your grandma to monitor her treatment in Europe."

"You mean Marie and Joseph?" Zachary queried, feeling his mood sink.

"Yes."

"People!"

Zachary had to do his utmost to push back the anger that was almost erupting out of his core. His uncle and aunt had fought for his grandma's farm immediately after her passing during his previous life. Without caring for his grandma's honor, they even chased him away from the place and discarded him on the street. So, he was sure that they would do the same if his grandma met misfortune in his new life. They were true-blue vultures in human skin as their greed would never allow them to value family bonds.

"Zachary, are you there?" Emily said, switching to English. She probably didn't want the French-speaking people near her to understand what she was saying.

"I'm still here, Emily," Zachary said.

"So, what do you think? Should I prepare travel documents for one of them?"

Zachary let out a breath. "I'm really sorry to say this. But, you know Emily! Even though they are her biological children, I really don't want them near my grandma. I would prefer that we ignore them and continue with our arrangements."

There were a few seconds of silence before Emily spoke once again. "Ignoring their requirements might be a bit difficult. As her biological children, they have a right to monitor their mother's treatment. Moreover, they can even make decisions regarding the course of her treatment. So, unless your grandma had previously left a written clarification stating that you're the sole person that can make crucial decisions regarding her life, we can't ignore their claims. Is there such a document?"

"No," Zachary said dejectedly. A bullet had ended his grandma's life much earlier during his previous life. Thus, there was no way for him to predict her changed life trajectory. He would never have imagined that she would develop a tumor in his new life. So, how could he have anticipated the document Emily required?

"If there's no clarification, we'll have to put up with them for now," Emily said. "It doesn't take a lot of effort on my side to prepare travel documents for one of them. You only have to turn a blind eye and choose one of them to travel with your grandma."

Zachary sighed, sinking onto the bench in the gym. He switched the phone to his other ear before saying: "Fine. Then, let's go with the lady - Marie Bemba. At least, she might be able to help out in taking care of the old lady."

"Noted," Emily replied, her tone relaxing. "She even wanted to talk to you. Should I give her the phone?"

"No!" Zachary replied hastily. "I can't entertain her at the moment. Just make up an excuse for me."

"Okay, fine," she said. "If the emergency medical visa application procedures proceed according to my expectations, we'll be able to move your grandma to Zurich the day after tomorrow. I'll keep you posted if there are any other developments. Just push yourself to focus on your training and leave everything else to me."

"Thanks a lot, Emily," Zachary said, his tone appreciative. "You're really a life-saver. I know I've said this many times, but I really appreciate your efforts."

"Don't mention it," Emily replied. "Just one more thing. Make sure you talk to your coach about the condition of your grandma. Tell him some of your plans and make sure that he understands that you might have to travel out of Norway often in the near future. I'll also give the Rosenborg management a call to clarify the situation when I travel back to Europe."

"Okay," Zachary said. "I'll talk to Coach Johansen later today."

"Good," Emily said. "I have to go now as I still have to handle your uncle and aunt this side. Stay strong, and take heart. You'll get through this."

"Thanks, Emily," Zachary replied. "Have a good day."

"You too."

Chapter 329 100% Mastery

After completing training that day, Zachary thought of Emily's advice and straightaway headed to the head coach's office. Although he found the door slightly ajar, he still knocked a couple of times and then waited quietly by the side.

"Come in," the voice of Coach Johansen sounded from inside the room a few seconds later.

Zachary immediately pushed the door wide open before stepping into the spacious office. He immediately realized that Coach Johansen was in the middle of watching one of Juventus' past matches on the big screen beside his office table.

On looking closely, he managed to learn that the Italian giants were facing off against Galatasaray, the famous Turkish club. However, they were still one goal down even though the clock was already pointing to the 89th-minute mark. For sure, they would most likely lose the game.

Zachary remained standing quietly on the side as he followed the game besides the coach. The game gradually moved into extra time, but nothing unexpected happened. Juventus did not manage to score the equalizer and eventually lost the game.

"A nice game, isn't it?" Coach Johansen said, standing up and turning towards Zachary. "Good execution of tactics by Roberto Mancini to frustrate Juventus' powerful midfield. He organized his side well, enabling them to beat the Italian giants 1:0 in that UEFA League group match that was played back in November last year."

Zachary's curiosity was a little bit piqued. "Who scored?"

"Wesley Sneijder," the coach answered. "He scored Galatasaray's only goal of the match in the 85th minute."

"Oh, Wesley Sneijder..."

Zachary wasn't surprised. Wesley Sneijder was a very skilled player who was undisputedly one of the best midfielders in the world during his prime. He even had a chance of winning the Ballon d'Or in 2010 if the Dutch could have triumphed in that year's World Cup final against the Spaniards.

But an even more surprising fact was how the midfielder's performance declined in only a couple of years. It took only a few unfavorable transfer moves and a couple of injuries to reduce a player who was almost at the top of the world into another nondescript athlete. It was truly unfortunate!

Thinking about all that, Zachary comprehended how easy it was for even the best footballers to lose their form. As long as a player was down on his luck and didn't work hard, then the performance on the pitch would gradually decline.

So, Zachary again resolved to continue working hard and trying his best to improve his skills throughout his career. No matter the circumstances he faced, he couldn't stop. Relentless toiling was the way forward if he yearned to have a long and successful football career.

"If we prepare well for the game, we can also overcome the Italian giants," Coach Johansen said, interrupting his thought process. "As long as we take all our chances and maintain discipline in defense, we can win. Don't you think so, Zachary?"

"Of course, we can win," Zachary said, nodding. "Football is played on the pitch, not on paper. So, even if they have big-name players, we can still overcome them if we do our best and get our tactics right."

Coach Johansen chuckled. "I'm very pleased with your optimism, Zachary," he said. "By the way, why are you here? Shouldn't you be home, recovering from the post-match fatigue?"

"Coach," Zachary said, letting out a breath. "There's something I need to talk to you about." His tone had turned glum.

"First, have a seat, Zachary," the coach said, settling in his office chair. "What is it?"

Zachary took up the seat in front of the coach's table. "My only guardian, my grandma is sick," he said. "As I speak now, she's in a coma and on Oxygen therapy."

He then told the coach about the actual condition of his grandma and his plans for her treatment. He ended the whole account by informing the coach that he might have to travel out of Norway repeatedly in the coming weeks.

"I see," Coach Johansen said, leaning back into his seat after listening. "I'm sorry to hear that your grandma is ill." His expression then flickered a few times as his eyes narrowed. It was as if he was deep in contemplation about something.



"So, when do you wish to travel out of Norway?" The coach continued after a few more seconds. "Can you be more specific so that we can factor your absence into our plans?"

"I'm not sure yet," Zachary replied. "However, I would like to be there when my grandma undergoes the operation to remove the tumor in Zurich."

"Then, first find out the exact dates when you'll be traveling before asking for permission from the club management," the coach advised. "For now, stay strong and continue training. Don't let this unfortunate circumstance become a major roadblock in your career. Okay?"

"Yes, coach," Zachary said, nodding. "I understand."

The coach nodded. "Don't worry. The club will be with you throughout this hardship. Moreover, from what I know, tumors are easily curable in today's world. Many people survive and recover after suffering from brain tumors. So, take heart and continue praying for your grandma's quick recovery."

"Thanks, coach."

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For the next three days, Zachary continued working hard. Aside from taking part in the team training sessions, he also found time to sharpen his mastery over the step over the skills. Whether it was night or day, it didn't matter. His immersion in the step-over practice routines was exceptional. It even helped him forget his worries, and slowly by slowly, he pushed both his mental and physical conditioning states for the skill to 100%.

Early morning on Wednesday, after he'd just finished going through a cone dribbling drill at Lerkendal, the long-awaited system's notification rang in his mind.

"Ding"

"The user has completed all the required mental and physical conditioning routines to master the Robinho-Step-Over Juju," the system AI intoned. "However, to conclude the whole process, the user will now have to receive a few more experiences and first-person perspectives of using the skill from the system. Is the user ready to receive the information from the system at the moment?"

Zachary didn't reply right away. He first packed his things and returned to the dressing room before taking a shower to cool himself down. After that, he settled on one of the sofas in the then empty player's resting lounge before summoning the system.

"System," he gave a mental command. "I'm ready to receive the information. Please, begin the information transfer immediately."

"Command received," the system's AI replied. "Loading the required data packages for the Robinho-step-over juju. The system will start transferring the information into the user's mind in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, and 0."

A slight tremor went through Zachary's mind when the countdown reached zero. Soon, foreign memories started flooding his mind as the information transfer started. They rooted themselves in his consciousness, making him feel like he'd already performed the step-over skill millions of times. It was a marvelous sensation that filled him with confidence. And at that moment, he was sure that he would be able to perform step-overs even with his eyes closed in the future.

"Wonderful."

A smile lit up Zachary's face as he stood up from the sofa. He immediately picked up a ball from the nearby rack and started performing step-overs there in the lounge.

He dribbled the ball around the room by relying on only the technique for the next few minutes. His feet were like the rims of a moving bicycle as they flashed over the ball repeatedly without end. Anyone else who could chance upon him at that moment would judge that he'd mastered the art of step-overs and pushed it to the highest level.

"Sweet."

Zachary ended his session and settled back on the sofa with a smile. With the skill finally in his repertoire, he'd gained another weapon to take on Rosenborg's next opponent - Juventus. As long as he could play his cards right during the two legs of the fixture, then he might really help his team qualify for the Europa League quarter-finals. Zachary could feel his hopes shooting through the roof and soaring to the skies just by imagining the scene.

"Bzzt Bzzzt! Bzzt Bzzzt..."

Suddenly, his phone started vibrating in his pocket, ruining his merry mood. He fished it out hurriedly and glanced at the screen. The next moment, he felt a wave of anxiety wash over him as the call was from Emily.

Two days ago, his grandma had been transferred to Zurich for treatment. She'd stabilized and even woken up a couple of times after arriving in Switzerland. However, Zachary understood that he couldn't celebrate until seeing her biopsy results. If the tumor happened not to be cancerous, her chances of recovery would be very high. But if the results were the other way round— Zachary could feel a shudder racing along his spine while thinking about the possibility. He was really nervous, especially since that day was when the biopsy results would come out.

"Morning, Emily," Zachary said after placing the phone next to his ear.

"Morning, Zach," Emily replied from the other end of the line. "How are you? Are you training hard?"

"Of course," he replied. "I'm already at the pitch as we speak now."

"Great," Emily said. "I'm glad you're still working hard."

"Emily," Zachary said, his tone edgy. "I'm a big boy. Just give it to me straight. How are the results of the biopsy test?"

Emily sighed audibly. "The doctors say that it's not the worst-case scenario."

"Meaning?" Zachary pressed, his heart pounding fast and hard in his chest.

"The tumor in her brain is not yet cancerous," she replied. "However, they discovered that it's premalignant. That means that the abnormal mass of cells is not yet cancerous, but it does have the potential to become malignant in the future."

"Oh my God!"

Zachary couldn't stop his mood from sinking after hearing the biopsy test result.

### Chapter 330 Preparations

Zachary understood that any illness that comprised the word malignant in its characterization was related to cancer. That meant that it was very life-threatening to a patient. So, if his grandma's tumor was premalignant, her situation was obviously serious.

"Zachary!" Emily's edgy voice once again resounded from the phone speakers. "Are you there?"

"Yes," Zachary replied, taking a long breath to calm himself. "I'm listening. So, what are the doctors in Zurich suggesting? What plans do they recommend for her treatment?"

"I've just had a long talk with Dr. Brian Sanders, the neurosurgeon who traveled with me to Lubumbashi," Emily said. "He explained that since the tumor is premalignant, it has a very high risk of turning cancerous if not treated as soon as possible. Moreover, in the case of your grandma, the tumor is pressing against both the cerebellum and temporal lobe. It can't allow her to have a moment of peace due to severe symptoms, like impaired muscle coordination and constant drowsiness, among others. So, the recommendation is to undergo surgery as soon as possible. The longer we wait, the more severe her condition becomes."

"Then, let the doctors give us an appointment so that she can undergo surgery right away," Zachary suggested. "If it can be tomorrow, then the better."

"That's not possible," Emily replied. "I already consulted the specialists here at the University Hospital Zurich. They say they need to carry out more tests before planning her exact course of treatment. So, the earliest she can undergo surgery is six days later. That'll be on Friday, the 7th of March."

"That might be too late." Zachary frowned. "Can't we push for an earlier date?"

"Zachary!" Emily replied. "You have to note that the neurosurgery centers here in Zurich are among the best. There are always long lines of patients from all over the world waiting for treatment. That means that it's almost impossible to push for an immediate surgery appointment unless the patient is in a very critical condition."

"But my grandma is also in a critical condition."

"Not according to the doctors," Emily said. "She collapsed in Lubumbashi probably due to overworking while suffering from the tumor. However, after receiving preliminary treatment here in Zurich, she's now quite stable. So, you don't have to worry."

"Okay," Zachary said. "Then, go ahead and schedule the surgery for next Friday. If there's anything you need, don't hesitate to contact me at any time."

"Okay, Zach," Emily said, her tone relaxing. "Arranging matters, whether big or small, is my specialty. So, don't worry. I'll ensure that your grandma has the best care possible while here in Zurich."

"Thanks, Emily," Zachary responded. "I'll also come to Zurich on Thursday, before the surgery. For now, I leave everything in your hands. How's my aunt, by the way? Is she causing you any trouble?"

"Not at all," Emily replied hurriedly. "She's very attentive to your grandma's treatment and doing her best to support her. She hasn't given me any trouble."

"Then, that's a relief," Zachary said. "Take care, and don't forget to contact me when you need anything."

"Okay," Emily said. "Have a good day, and continue training hard. Everything will be okay in time."

"Thanks, Emily."

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Since Zachary had finally gotten to know the day when his grandma would undergo surgery, all arrangements became easy. He first requested permission to travel the following Thursday from the club management that very day.

Since there weren't any official matches scheduled during the upcoming week, the club administration granted him the authorization the following day. They allowed him a four-day travel window, from Thursday to Sunday. However, he had to return to Lerkendal on Monday, 10th of March, 2014, to partake in the last three days of Rosenborg's training for the Europa League match against Juventus.

Everything was in order, and all he had to do was wait. He was also no longer very anxious since he often received regular updates on his grandma's condition from Emily. So, with a calm heart, he returned his focus to training.

As the team delved deep into the preparations for the Europa League game, he noticed that Coach Johansen had become more hyper and overly strict with his requirements. He didn't allow any players to rest on their laurels for the next four days and even supervised their fitness conditioning himself.

Additionally, the coach insisted that all players practice their penalty-taking skills on top of refining the match tactics on a daily basis. As a result, the team training sessions became more intense and often lasted longer due to the added routines.

However, none of the players, including Zachary, raised any complaints as they all wished to win their upcoming fixture. Most individuals even started putting in extra hours to hone the other aspects of their game since they desired to impress the coach and make his line-up.

In that manner, the days flashed by quickly, and soon it was Thursday. It was finally the day when Zachary would separate from his teammates and travel to Zurich to be with his grandma when she underwent surgery.

That day, he woke up early in the morning after spending his night with Camilla. He packed his luggage and said his goodbyes before boarding a taxi cab to the airport.

Thirty minutes later, he boarded a Scandinavian Airlines flight and was soon well on his way to Zurich.

On the plane, his expression would flicker from time to time as he watched the fluffy clouds flashing by the window. Since he couldn't predict the outcome of the surgery, his heart was already racing and his mind in a chaotic mess.

Would his grandma win against the tumor? Would she recover completely?

Many doubts whirled through his mind until he dozed off and became oblivious to everything around him.

Meanwhile, in Turin, Italy.

The day had dawned crisp and clear. The morning sun shone brightly in the sky, bathing the Juventus Training Center in its warm light.

In one of the rooms of this famous training facility, the Juventus players had already gathered to attend their routine tactical meeting before the actual team practice session. The likes of Paul Pogba, Gianluigi Buffon, Leonardo Bonucci, Andrea Pirlo, Arturo Vidal, and Carlos Tévez, among other famous players, were all focused on the big screen in front of the room.

They were in the process of reviewing Rosenborg's Europa League round of thirty-two first leg match against Fiorentina. They watched without any change of expressions when Fiorentina scored the two goals as that was nothing surprising. Most didn't even raise an eyebrow when Zachary scored Rosenborg's first goal. However, they couldn't help but gasp in shock when he netted the second one in the 94th minute.

"Did he want to kill the keeper?" Pogba mumbled, a grin outlining his face. "What a funny guy."

The rest of the players chuckled before continuing to follow the game. Very soon, the match ended, and the players turned to their coach for the actual analysis of the game.

"Okay, guys, let's focus," Antonio Conte, the head coach of Juventus, said with a smile. "You just watched Rosenberg's game against Fiorentina. What do you all think? What do we need to look out for to win against them?" He glanced around, sweeping his gaze across his players.

Arturo Vidal, one of Juventus' central midfielders, raised his hand.

"Yes, Arturo!" The coach pointed at him.

"We freeze their midfield," he replied. "As long as we compact the midfield and ensure that their key player doesn't receive the ball, we'll win. One of us can also man-mark the Zachary fellow throughout the match for better efficiency. His dribbling is not that potent, so we can contain him if we use our brains and stop his runs through the midfield. I'm volunteering to be his marker if the rest don't mind." He added jokingly.

The rest of the players laughed at that before turning toward their coach. Their mood was light and merry, without any earnestness. It was as if the match against Rosenberg wasn't crucial for them.

"Guys, listen," Antonio Conte said, his tone solemn. "I know most of you might think that Rosenberg is a team that lucked out and barely defeated Fiorentina. You might also believe that you guys will be able to squash them with your might since you have more depth and experience among yourselves. However, let me warn you that that attitude is very problematic, especially before a game."

"I have watched some of Rosenberg's previous Europa League matches for this season," he continued. "And my conclusion is that they aren't a team to take lightly. We need to approach that game as if we're facing another giant in Europe. Otherwise, we might bow out of the Europa League after the next stage. Are we together, guys?"

"Yes, coach," the players replied, more or less in unison.

"Arturo!" Coach Antonio Conte turned towards the midfielder again. "You volunteered to be Zachary's marker in the Europa League game against Rosenberg. So, you'll rest this weekend for the Serie A game against Fiorentina. What do you think?"



"Coach," the midfielder replied, frowning. "I don't need to rest to handle the Zachary fellow. Even if I play the game on Sunday, I'll still be able to contain him easily."

Coach Conte shook his head. "Don't take him lightly. He is a dangerous player. From the game we just watched, you should've noticed that he never stops when on the field. He's ever running around and falling into various positions by relying on his incredible speed and stamina. So, keeping up with him to mark him tightly will be almost impossible if you're fatigued. And that's why I need you to rest this weekend. Okay?"

"Yes, coach," the midfielder replied reluctantly.

The coach nodded with a smile. He then went over the analysis of Rosenborg's tactics against Fiorentina before talking about their weaknesses in detail. He only ended the tactical meeting forty minutes later when he'd expounded on all the issues related to Rosenborg.

He understood that his players weren't yet ready to take on the Norwegian giants. However, he believed they would be if he held more such tactical meetings over the next few days. He just had to do his job as a coach to fix their attitudes, and they would be able to squash the opponents like bugs.