

THE GREATEST OF ALL TIME

Chapter 15 - Gearing-up For Norway

"Please, Kasongo," Zachary beseeched. He looked up at the sky, tinged orange by the slanting rays of the setting sun.

"Just ten more balls, and we'll go back to rest." He moved back and positioned himself just a few steps outside the arc of the 18-yard-box. Discover new chapters on [nove\(l\)bin\(.\)com](http://nove(l)bin(.)com)

"But these better be the last," Kasongo replied. "The training has me worn out. I'm on the verge of collapsing. How do you manage to keep this up every evening?"

Zachary ignored the comment and signaled his friend to toss the ball.

Dusk had descended upon Lubumbashi. However, the boys were still in the Kibassa-Maliba stadium. They were doing personalized training.

Zachary was highly motivated since he was doing most of the shooting. Kasongo merely tossed balls to him.

"Ready," Kasongo hollered out. "Set, and go." He tossed another ball with his hands towards the arc outside the 18-yard-box.

Zachary focused on the incoming ball and swung his left foot, pulling the trigger. He caught the center-bottom half of the ball, sending it whooshing at a low angle into the back of the empty goal.

"Another!" Zachary shouted while running back to his original position.

Kasongo tossed another ball. Zachary hit it squarely and unleashed a carpet-shot that also found the target. For the next few minutes, Kasongo tossed balls while Zachary unleashed volleys that found the target.

"GOAL," Zachary jubilated after hitting the last ball accurately. He felt like he had scored in a major competition.

Three weeks had elapsed since the day of the trial match attended by the scouts. After being selected for a sports academy in Norway, Zachary had immediately begun working on his arrow-shot. He believed he would advance it into a G.O.A.T skill after the day's training. So, he opened the system interface to view his progress.

USER MENU

*USER STATS

*G.O.A.T MISSIONS

*SYSTEM SHOP (locked)

*SYSTEM LOTTERY (locked)

*SNOOPING TOOL

NB: Pls level-up the system to unlock more functions.

After helping his team win the trial match, the system rewarded Zachary by unlocking its snooping-tool-function capable of spying on the talents of others. However, using the tool had almost shocked him out of his boots. The day

after the trials, he found out that Stephen Mangala, Edo Kayembe, and Miché Mika were all A-grade talents.

Zachary couldn't compete with the three of them in terms of talent alone. So, he upped his training routine after realizing he had accidentally unlocked another G.O.A.T skill when scoring the first goal in the trial match. If he couldn't beat them on talent, he resolved he would defeat them through hard work and skills.

Zachary calmed his mind and clicked on the G.O.A.T-skills tab in the User-Stats menu.

->G.O.A.T Skills: 2

(i) ZINEDINE VISUAL JUJU

(1st-level: Progress: 10.001%)

(ii) ZACHARY-ARROW-SHOT

(1st-level: Progress: 1%)

Zachary's mood lifted. He raised a fist in celebration after viewing his G.O.A.T-Skills tab.

He had discovered another G.O.A.T skill in his user stats at the end of the trial match three weeks prior. He right away concluded that it was unlocked when he scored a goal from a long-range shot. It seemed the system could capture his best plays during games and turn them into potential skills.

Zachary had realized that as long as he improved his individual skills beyond a certain threshold, they had a chance of being registered in the G.O.A.T-skills of the system. His arrow-shot was one such skill.

It improved the power and accuracy of his shots from outside the box.

It had been at a measly 0.0001% when he first discovered it. However, with daily shooting practice for three weeks, he had managed to raise it to a 1st-level-progress of 1%.

Zachary had come to the realization that his G.O.A.T-skills, whether acquired from the system or self-trained, could only be leveled up with practice and playing real matches. Even the Zinedine-Visual-Juju had improved by 0.001% after he participated in the trial match and training sessions of the TP Mazembe reserves. He was falling more in love with the system.

"What are you looking at?" Kasongo's voice sounded from behind him. "I often see you spacing out, especially after training. Are you okay?"

Zachary turned around to face his friend before flashing a smile and replying, "I was replaying the feel of striking the ball on the volley in my mind. Doing that helps me improve my shooting form." Zachary lied.

He couldn't tell Kasongo he was looking at a system interface. That carried the risk of problems later on. He made a mental note to desist from opening the system around others.

"You've been improving really fast with your long-range shots." Kasongo smiled. "Three weeks ago, you could only hit 1 out of 10 balls on the volley accurately. But today, you were able to do it ten consecutive times. I can't fathom why the French teams left you out."

"Why do you keep bringing up the French teams?" Zachary frowned. He wanted to put the failure of that day behind him. However, Kasongo brought up the topic regularly.

"Hahaha," Kasongo laughed. He used his sleeve to wipe the sweat off his forehead. Tossing more than 100 balls to Zachary had tired him out.

"It's my luck we'll be going to the same academy. We do make a great team." A smile as big as a crescent moon lit up Kasongo's face.

"Has your dad finally signed off on your trip to Norway?" Zachary inquired. Kasongo had been complaining for the past two weeks about his stuck-up dad's refusal to sign the consent forms he needed to join a soccer academy in Europe.

"Yes." Kasongo grinned. "Coach Damata helped by talking to him. He had to post a letter from Mr. Stein detailing how the sports scholarship would include a study bursary. My old man only agreed after being assured that I could continue schooling even in Europe."

"Cong's." Zachary laughed, patting the short guy's back. "I told you to involve Coach Damata earlier. But you kept on delaying. You could have finalized all this paperwork without any hassle."

"Is all your paperwork finished? I mean permits, visa, consent forms, and police letters?"

"Hahaha. The coach helped me get my visa over a week ago. He even flew to Bukavu to meet my grandma for the signing of the consent forms. I'll fly out of the country next Tuesday." Zachary grinned. He was close to achieving the first objective in his new life.

Zachary had discussed the responsibilities and benefits he would be receiving in Norway at length with Mr. Stein. He now knew he had to train at the NF International academy, in Trondheim City, for six months before he could join the Rosenborg under-16 squad.

Alongside all the soccer training, Zachary had to take upper secondary education, also sponsored by Rosenborg. He would receive a monthly

allowance of 14,000 Norwegian Kroner, provided he performed well in the academy and didn't fail high school. That was an amount he never got a chance to earn in his past life.

"Eehh. That fast!" Kasongo exclaimed. "You're not even going to say goodbye to your grandma?" Kasongo frowned.

"I would have loved to see her. However, I didn't want to risk traveling back to Bukavu." Zachary smiled ruefully.

"Why?" Kasongo looked at Zachary with confusion.

"There are many militia groups in the surrounding regions," Zachary whispered, looking around. "What if I get kidnapped when I'm this close to achieving my dreams? The risk will be even greater if the rogues back home hear that I'm heading to Europe. They might even resort to kidnapping my grandma for ransom if I succeed as a pro."

"I'm only protecting my grandma by not visiting." Zachary sighed, smiling ruefully. In his past life, He had ignored the rogues thinking they were just simple thugs. However, he knew better in this life. Most were rebels gearing up for the M23 rebellion, an armed conflict destined to break out a year and a half later. Zachary didn't wish to be a hero by attempting to stop the war from happening. He had no influence whatsoever in the Congo. He needed to evacuate his grandma before the conflict began.

He remembered that roughly a year and a half later, she had died after being hit by a stray bullet while on a church mission to Goma.

[I need to move her before that happens.] Zachary resolved inwardly.

"Do you need my help?" Kasongo asked anxiously. "I could move your grandma to Kinshasa."

"No, thanks." Zachary shook his head. "The capital has its own challenges. It's no better than the war-torn areas especially if you lack money. I'll move her to Lubumbashi as soon as I have something saved up."

"If you need any help, don't forget to approach me," Kasongo intoned solemnly. "I'll help in any way I can."

Zachary nodded before diverting the topic.

"When do you plan to travel to Norway?"

"Not sure yet."

"You need to speed up your paperwork. Mr. Stein and Miss Kristin will be with me on the same flight next Tuesday. We should travel together." Zachary suggested.

"I'll try my best," Kasongo concurred.

"Let's gather the balls and head to the hotel. It's getting late. Mr. Stein must be waiting for us." The two had moved into a new hotel with the Norwegian scouts after being selected for the scholarship. Zachary no longer had to worry about his friend's security. His only wish was that the remaining six days would pass quickly so he could continue his journey in Europe.

**** END OF 1ST VOLUME: ESCAPING FATE ****