

THE GREATEST OF ALL TIME

Chapter 16 - Arrival In Trondheim City

Tuesday, August 17, 2010.

Zachary checked the time on his watch. It was 10:00 PM.

[Travelling sure is hard.] He sighed.

Together with Kasongo and the two Norwegians, Zachary had taken a morning flight from Lubumbashi to Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia. That was the first stop-over on their twenty-two-hour journey to Trondheim, Norway. After a four-hour rest in the airport, they joined the boarding queue of an Ethiopian airlines flight heading to Amsterdam. Due to their well-organized paperwork, they faced no challenges going through customs. They then boarded an airport bus that transported them to the plane that would fly them to Amsterdam through the night.

Zachary turned his attention to the planes he could see flashing by through the window. Men and women in reflector jackets moved around them, towing loads of cargo or shouting instructions. A few airport vehicles, Zachary could not identify, were parked beside the planes as well.

"Are the two of you nervous?" Mr. Stein, on his left, probed. On his back lay a gigantic backpack that shouldn't have been carried by a man his age. Zachary had volunteered to help him with the luggage, but the old man had refused.

"Nope," Kasongo, standing opposite them, replied. He was dressed in designer clothes and shoes that made him look like a rapper rather than a soccer player. His white timberland boots were especially eye-catching in the dimly lit bus.

"Traveling on a plane is much more comfortable than a ride on a bus. I enjoyed the flight from Lubumbashi to Addis-Ababa. The food was delicious." He added, smiling.

"Have you flown a lot previously?" Kristin asked from beside him.

"Well, just about once a year. My dad takes us on vacations every festive season. Last year we were in France. But this will be my first time in Norway." Kasongo answered, smiling.

Zachary chose to stay out of the discussion. He was slightly ashamed to mention his fears to the group, especially with Miss Kristin present. The truth was he was terrified by planes. No matter how luxurious the furnishings inside the airplane were, it would never be more than a flying metal tube to Zachary. The fact that this was his first trip out of DR Congo amplified his fears. He was frightened by the thought of being more than 30,000 feet off the ground. There were so many things that could go wrong at that altitude.

Nonetheless, he was eager to reach Trondheim City. There, he would finally begin his journey to become a soccer pro on the European scene. That was the single thing he had been dreaming about his whole past life, and now it was all finally coming true. It was the only thought that had kept him brave enough to endure the long journey.

"What about you, Zach?" Mr. Stein asked, turning towards him. "Are you nervous?"

"Well, I don't like planes," Zachary replied honestly. "I just want the journey to end as quickly as possible."

"We'll get there. Don't worry." Mr. Stein patted his back.

They spent the rest of their short ride on the bus in silence before boarding the plane. At 10:30 PM, the plane took off. They were in the skies.

Zachary was seated beside Kasongo in a 2-seater on the row closest to the window. The Norwegians were situated behind them in the economy class section.

Zachary felt better knowing that he was in Boeing-747, a jumbo jet. He'd not heard of one, en route to Europe, crashing in the year 2010 of his previous life. He ignored Kasongo who was watching movies and forced himself into slumber. Zachary woke up the next morning as the plane descended into Amsterdam.

They didn't spend much time in the Amsterdam airport. With Mr. Stein's help, the two boys quickly got through the customs and immigration procedures at the airport. In a short while, they were allowed to board another plane to Trondheim, Norway.

Zachary let out a breath of pent up air when the plane touched down on the runway at the Værnes Airport in Trondheim after another two hours of flight.

"Welcome to Trondheim." Mr. Stein smiled at the two African boys as he got up from his seat. "How was the flight?" He asked.

"Okay," Zachary replied.

"Exciting," Kasongo laughed.

"That's great." Mr. Stein smiled. "We need to get you settled in by noon today.

"Let's head to customs right away."

The two boys followed the Norwegians and were soon out of the plane. This chapter is updated by novelbiin.co/m

"It's very cold," Zachary commented once they were out into the open air.

"Don't mind the weather," Mr. Stein consoled. "You'll soon get used to it." He led the way down the airstair of the plane.

"I hear that in winter, the temperatures may drop to a bare minimum of -4 Degrees Centigrade," Kasongo commented, wrapping his scarf tightly around his neck.

"We won't have any soccer matches in such weather. Our seasons usually end by early December." Kristin cut in as they continued hurrying across the tarmac of the airport.

It was 9 AM, one of the worst times for an African to arrive in Northern Europe during autumn. Zachary was assaulted by the chilly breeze cutting through his heavy jacket. He began shivering before he even reached the bottom of the airstair.

[Coming from Africa and stepping into Europe is like descending from a warm oven into a freezer.] He mused.

At that early hour, the lounges of V?rnes airport were very serene. The people moved with ease, quiet rivers of humanity freshly roused from their slumber. The floors were clean and white, reflecting both the early rays and the artificial lights.

Since their group had already been through European immigration procedures in Amsterdam, they didn't spend much time in the airport. They presented their travel documents and exited the airport only after forty minutes.

A Rosenberg van collected them from the airport and transported them to the city. The city wasn't what Zachary expected. He expected to see skyscrapers like those in American movies all around Trondheim. But medieval buildings covered the majority of the cityscape. Trondheim itself was beautiful and charming, with neat roads and unique urban architecture. The streets were glorious in their inception. The sidewalks made of smooth grey stones, joined with such precision that the joins were almost invisible. The buildings were nothing short of historical, the bastions of the city's pride, stamping its status

as one of the eco-cities on the planet. Zachary noticed that there was no garbage or sewage on the streets as they traveled through the city. The city was very clean compared to either Kinshasa or Lubumbashi.

"We've just passed the Nidelva River. That is the Nidaros Cathedral. There's a soccer pitch around there where you could train in the future." Miss Kristin pointed at a medieval grey church building in the distance as they crossed a bridge. She'd appointed herself as the guide of the two African boys.

"Miss Kristin," Zachary intoned. "Where will we be staying?" That was his main concern at the moment.

"Moholt student village," Kristin replied, smiling. "We're almost there. You'll like the place."

After another twenty minutes, by Zachary's estimation, the Rosenberg van pulled into the parking lot of the student village. Tall brown buildings, roughly six stories high, loomed around them.

"This is the largest student village in Trondheim City," Mr. Stein said after they exited the van with their luggage in tow. "Usually, this place is reserved for international students at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology." He continued.

"However, we've agreed with the university's office of international relations. They've allowed us to house our international students here as well. You'll be sharing a four-room apartment with two of our other academy players from Sweden."

"Come on. I'll show you to your apartment." The old man smiled as he led the way out of the parking lot and into one of the buildings.

Kasongo and Zachary followed while Kristin remained in the van.

A minute later, they stood in a well-furnished apartment on the fourth floor of the building. In the living room, there were two huge fridges, a cooker, sinks, furniture, and other household appliances Zachary didn't recognize. The room was well illuminated by the rays of the morning sun coming in through a huge window that overlooked the parking lot.

[This is utopia.] Zachary concluded.

He couldn't help but compare the apartment with his house back in Bukavu that had no access to both electricity and piped water.

"Choose one of the rooms on the right," Mr. Stein instructed. "Room 1 and 2 are already occupied by your housemates who are still away on holiday." He smiled.

Zachary selected room number four whereas Kasongo chose number three.

"Okay then," Mr. Stein smiled. "Here are the keys to each of your rooms. You can unpack and rest today. I will be here to take you to meet your coaches tomorrow morning." He handed each of them an envelope with their names.

"There is food in the fridge if you wish to cook. Try not to move around unless you have to. But if you need to buy something urgently, head over to the supermarket just across the parking lot where we were. The money for the week is also in the envelope."

"Any questions before I leave?" He asked, looking at both Zachary and Kasongo inquisitively.

"Do we start training tomorrow?" Kasongo inquired.

"The coaches will decide after your medical tomorrow," the scout replied.

"Zach, don't you have any questions?"

"Not at the moment," Zachary replied, smiling. "We can talk tomorrow about everything else." The long journey had worn him out. He needed to rest and

prepare for the meeting with the coaches. There was no need for him to worry about anything as long as he had food in the apartment. He was glad he had safely arrived in Europe and looked forward to beginning his soccer training.

"Okay. It's good that you're calm." Mr. Stein nodded. "Be ready by nine o'clock tomorrow morning. We'll head over to the academy then. But don't do anything you wouldn't if your parents were around." He warned.