

THE GREATEST OF ALL TIME

Chapter 17 - The Medical

The day dawned crisp and clear.

As promised, Mr. Stein picked the two boys from their new apartment at Moholt student village at 8:55 AM. Zachary and Kasongo had long been ready and were waiting for the scout in the parking lot. They'd dressed in heavy clothing to shield themselves from the morning coldness. They were eager to commence their first day as academy players in Norway.

"How was your night," Mr. Stein asked as the Toyota Carib they were in pulled out of the parking lot, heading into the main road. The aged scout was on the steering while the two boys sat in the back, admiring the sceneries.

"Quite good," Kasongo was the first to reply, smiling. "I slept like a baby the whole night." *NewW novels updates on novelbin.com*

"Same here. The night couldn't have been better." Zachary also responded. His new comfy bed, with silk duvets and cotton bed sheets, was like a heaven on earth to him. He'd entered a deep slumber right after eating a self-cooked delicious dinner the previous evening. The heater in the room guaranteed that the cold outside never affected his sleep. He already liked his new life.

"I'm happy to hear that." Mr. Stein smiled, keeping his eyes on the road. "We'll first head to the NTNU Sports Department where you'll undergo a medical. Your move to Rosenborg BK won't be finalized unless you pass the medical tests there." He added solemnly.

"But we're academy players," Kasongo contested, frowning. "And we've already gone through mandatory check-ups in Lubumbashi. You remember?"

"The academy coaches need to know that you're a worthwhile investment. Of course, I trust that the two of you are fit since I was with you in Lubumbashi." Mr. Stein paused as he rounded a round-about before entering another wider street, with denser traffic. Zachary noticed that there wasn't any traffic jam on the roads of Trondheim. Many people were on their bikes in a side lane, probably riding to work.

Mr. Stein continued his explanation after entering the straight section of the road.

"We'll be trying to give the academy as much information as possible because, in the end, they've to decide whether they want to train you or not. The results of the medical will also help them design a better training plan for you once you enter the academy."

"But what happens if we fail?" Kasongo asked. Zachary also nodded to indicate his doubts.

"No worries," Mr. Stein smiled. "You'll still be allowed to spend six months at the academy before being sent back to Africa. But I have confidence in you. You won't fail."

They spent the rest of the minutes of their car ride in silence. The boys seemed to be worried about the medicals while Mr. Stein was busy navigating the road. A few minutes later, they pulled into the parking lot of the gigantic building housing the sports department. It was roughly six to eight stories high, by Zachary's estimation.

"This here is St. Olav's University Hospital complex," Mr. Stein said as they exited their ride. "The offices of NTNU's Sports Department are in the building. You'll undergo your medical there."

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An hour later, Zachary sat on an exercise bike in a well-equipped room, similar to a gym. He frowned at the medical specialist. The doctor had taken him through hell as an excuse for a warm-up. Every five minutes, the resistance of the bike increased, putting more strain on his limbs. He was already in agony even before the real medical commenced.

[I wonder how Kasongo is doing.] He mused.

He'd been separated from Mr. Stein and Kasongo right after meeting with the medic who was to conduct his medical. The middle-aged doctor had introduced himself as Dr. Øystein before leading him to the gym. There, he'd requested Zachary to warm-up on the bike until he said otherwise. Zachary did not complain but carried out the exercise as instructed. However, it was already close to an hour, yet the doctor wasn't putting a stop to his warm-up. Zachary was frustrated.

"Okay, that's enough," Dr. Øystein intoned. Zachary couldn't tell from his poker face whether he was impressed or not. He hopped off the bike and waited for his instructions.

"Next, we shall carry out the Biodex assessment, which is a test designed to test the strength between your muscle groups," the doctor explained.

After a quick warm-up, Zachary was strapped into a white chair and instructed to extend his leg by kicking out before pulling it back to the starting position. Dr. Øystein requested him to repeat the exercise five times, then again with more resistance for each leg. Pulling the elastic strap, especially with his left leg, tired him out until he was panting like a Labrador running in the sun.

Later, the doctor instructed Zachary to run on a treadmill at varying speeds while breathing into a mask to determine his aerobic capabilities. Zachary had great endurance that enabled him to go through all the required exercises without a hitch. His B+ stamina wasn't only for show.

Throughout the day, he underwent several tests, most of which seemed to be senseless to him. The doctor put him through bone scans, blood and urine tests, plus several other medical check-ups that were alien to Zachary. He spent six hours with the doctor and was only permitted to leave a few minutes after three in the afternoon. He couldn't tell whether he had passed the medical after the doctor finished with the tests. The doctor didn't smile even once during the whole session.

"How was your medical test?" Zachary asked Kasongo once they met in the parking lot.

"I honestly don't know," the short guy replied, shaking his head. "My doctor was one of those serious people who never smile."

"How was yours?"

"Same," Zachary replied, fastening his jacket. "I can't tell whether I passed or not. The doctor didn't disclose anything."

"Do you think that they could send us back?" Kasongo queried, frowning.

"I don't think so. This was just an academy medical. They don't need us to play matches right away. So, as long as we don't have any latent injuries, we shall pass." Zachary assured his friend.

"I hope so," Kasongo murmured.

"Stop worrying." Zachary patted his back. "Let's wait for Mr. Stein. He'll give us the results today as we are head home."

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Concurrently in one of the offices of NTNU's Sports Department.

Dr. Alexander Øystein presented the results from the medicals to Mr. Stein and another middle-aged gentleman. The gentleman was Boyd Johansen, the interim head coach of the NF International Academy in Trondheim.

"My Friend, Martin. You managed to acquire a perfect specimen on your trip." Dr. Øystein laughed. He was all smiles and had done away with the poker face he had presented to Zachary.

Both Mr. Stein and Coach Johansen didn't reply but just waited for the doctor to continue.

"The boy Zachary is very fit for his age. It's like he has been through professional training over the past three months. His skeletal range of movement is simply excellent. I checked his joints and pelvic muscles and noticed that they were in great shape. I can boldly hypothesize that he has good lower-body mobility and perfect body coordination."

"Are you sure that he wasn't part of a professional team?" He inquired, looking doubtfully at Mr. Stein.

"He's just about to make sixteen. Which professional training could he possibly get in Congo? Does he have any red flags? What about his left leg?" Mr. Stein's words came out at the pace of a machine gun. He'd heard some rumors about Zachary's left foot being injured and wanted to confirm their validity. He even ignored the advice of the Nantes' scout and insisted on recruiting him.

"What injury?" Dr. Øystein scoffed. "As a doctor, I can tell you this. The boy's bones have never experienced any fractures. The strength of his left foot is phenomenal. I tested it several times to check for any weak spots in his leg-muscles, but there were none."

"That's great news for me," Mr. Stein yelled, smiling.

"We still don't know anything about his soccer skills," Coach Johansen cut in.

"Didn't I hand you my report about the boy?" Mr. Stein frowned.

"You didn't carry out any practical tests to measure his skills." The interim head coach shook his head, sighing. "You just let him play against none professionals who might have been amateurs at soccer, for all we know."

"What did you expect? You want us to just fix him into the academy without knowing his skills?" He questioned.

"I will test the boys myself in a real match next week. I can only determine if he qualifies for the scholarship then."

"But there are no under-16 matches this month," Mr. Stein argued.

"There's an under-19 friendly game with Viking on Tuesday next week. I'm adding him to the line-up." Coach Johansen smiled at the scout.

"Are you serious? He's just fifteen."

"If he is as good as you make him out to be, there isn't a need to worry. As they say, a diamond is a chunk of coal that did well under pressure. Does he have high game intelligence? Let's see if your boy is a diamond or a waste when he is under pressure during the game." The coach stated nonchalantly.

"Alex, help me out here." Mr. Stein turned towards the doctor after noticing that he couldn't reason with the coach. "The boy hasn't trained with the team yet. However, he's now pushed into a group with members, three years his seniors. He'll face a high risk of injury."

The doctor turned and started typing on his computer as if he'd never heard a word from the scout. He seemed to be implying that he wouldn't take part in their argument.

"Martin," Coach Johansen cut in. "My decision is final. He'll train with the boys on Friday and Monday before taking part in the game on Tuesday. I don't need him to do much in the game. He just has to perform above average."

"Doctor, what about the other boy?" The coach turned his attention back to Alexander.

"Oh, yes. My colleague tested the second boy. I've his report here." The doctor said, picking up one of the files on his desk. He looked through the file before continuing.

"He's average. Not too fit but not too shabby either. He has good lower-limb strength and good stamina. However, his body fat is slightly on the higher end. His test didn't find any red flags within his body. So, he can join the academy." He concluded his account, closing the file.

"High body fat?" The coach mumbled, frowning. "I'll give him only a month to get fully fit. Otherwise, I'll have to send him back after six months. I hate lazy players the most."

"Why're you doing this?" Mr. Stein asked.

"Doing what?"

"Picking on the players I've brought in?"

Coach Johansen looked at the scout and shrugged. "I treat all my players the same. As long as the two boys meet my requirements, they'll have nothing to worry about."

"Doctor. If there is nothing else, I'll be heading to the training grounds. My players are waiting." He excused himself, leaving the other two men in the room.

"Boyd is sometimes a pain in the ass," Mr. Stein commented after the coach had left.

"You have to understand that he's under a lot of pressure to perform. Setting stringent selection criteria is one of the strategies he's using to meet his goals. He's still an interim after all."

"Nah," Mr. Stein shook his head. "I'm guessing that he's related to one of my foes on the board. What do I tell the boys now?"

"It's as if you've just become a scout," the doctor exclaimed. "Tell them the truth."

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