

# THE GREATEST OF ALL TIME

## Chapter 18 - Resolution

After the medical at St. Olav, Mr. Stein drove the two boys back to their apartment before disclosing the results of their tests. He then explained to the boys how they had passed but still needed to undergo one final test before they could receive the soccer academy's scholarship.

"Let me get this straight," Kasongo intoned, frowning. "We passed the medical, but the coach still wants to put us through another test before we sign a contract?" He was as outspoken as usual.

"That's basically it." Mr. Stein nodded.

"Why an under-19 match for me?" Zachary asked, drumming his fingers on the dining table. The slanting rays of the evening sun coming into the small kitchen through the opposite window highlighted the sullen look on his face.

Mr. Stein, seated on one of the chairs on the opposite side, looked at him and smiled.

"Are you scared?" T/his chapter is

"Yes, I'm," Zachary replied honestly.

He was informed that he was to face the under-19 players who'd been undergoing well-tailored professional training from their childhood. He wasn't so naive to think he would best such players—two to three years his seniors.

"Do you watch the English Premier League?" Mr. Stein asked, leaning back in his seat.

The question caught Zachary off guard. He looked at the scout, wondering why he'd brought up the premiership—but nothing came to his mind at that

moment. Nonetheless, he still decided to humor the aged scout with an answer.

"I do." He nodded.

Mr. Stein cast a teasing glance at Zachary before speaking.

"Then you must have watched the Arsenal team of 2003 when Cesc Fàbregas made his debut for the Gunners at the age of 16. That was in an English Premiership club—several tiers above our Rosenborg BK. But the boy Cesc started his professional career at such a young age and still managed to impress in one of the toughest leagues on the planet."

"What about you?"

Mr. Stein seemed more like a coach rather than a scout.

"If you can't even perform in a friendly game of the Rosenborg under-19s, how will you succeed as a professional player later on? Will you be able to compete with boys, talented as Cesc?" The scout queried, locking eyes with Zachary.

The questions hit Zachary's psyche like a blacksmith's hammer on hot iron, molding a determination of steel he'd never possessed in the entirety of his two lives. His eyes lit up as a dozen or so new ambitions streamed through his brain. He desired to be a winner who was able to compete with anybody.

He couldn't help but think about the greats like Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. They had made their debuts in official matches at the ages of seventeen and eighteen, respectively. But they had shined like the stars they were, stumping their names in the histories of their clubs.

Zachary dreamed of such glory and was determined to achieve it.

[I need to start gunning for the top right away.] He deliberated.

He resolved to be the greatest such that if he ever faltered, he would fall close to the top. If he set his sights on besting Ronaldinho but failed, he would at least compare with Neymar or end up as a Mohamed Salah in the future. And that was not a bad thing for him since he was just a failure in his past life.

With the system as support, coupled with his hard work, he believed that he would reach the top sooner or later. He just had to correct his attitude before it was too late.

With newfound vigor, he looked at the scout with a glint in his eyes. "I understand," he said solemnly. "I'll aim for an excellent performance during the friendly match with Viking. You won't be disappointed."

"Atta-boy. That's the spirit." The scout laughed.

"Remember that motivation is only your motor, but you have to steer toward the right destination. I have been a scout for a long time and can tell that you're a talent. Your destination should be the top professional leagues of Europe."

Zachary was embarrassed by the praise since he'd used a system's vitality-enhancing elixir to improve his physique. He simply maintained a poker face as he continued listening to the scout's words.

"Your physique is strong enough to support you in the under-19s. You simply need to grow some extra balls, stay calm, and perform."

"If you do, some doors you never thought existed might be opened." Mr. Stein added, voice turning dramatic at the very end.

"What do you mean?" Zachary hurriedly inquired. He could tell that there might be a hint somewhere in the scout's monologue.

"You didn't hear this from me," Mr. Stein murmured as if he was hiding his speech from a hidden entity somewhere in the small kitchen of their apartment. He looked comical.

"If you play well, you may catch the eye of Rosenberg's head coach. I'm sure that he'll be present for the game since he's looking for new players to join the senior team. You may escape the fate of staying in the academy for a period greater than six months if he notices you."

"Really?" Both Zachary and Kasongo exclaimed in unison, jumping up from their seats in surprise. They longed to play soccer as professionals. Debuting quicker was their goal.

"It's the truth." The old man smiled slyly.

"How can I get into the line-up of that match," Kasongo grumbled like an aggrieved housewife. "And why does Zach get all the good opportunities?"

"Kasongo, don't get me started on your incompetence," The scout said, frowning.

"How can a young sportsman like you have excess body fat? What have you been eating? You better take your fitness training seriously. Otherwise, I'll tell Coach Damata to inform your old man. You can say goodbye to soccer forever." He harrumphed.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Stein," Kasongo pleaded. "I'll train seriously starting tomorrow morning."

"I hope so. But hold that thought. I'll be taking you to acquire your temporary residence permits from the police tomorrow. After that, you'll be able to open a Norwegian bank account where we'll deposit your allowances."

"When do we depart?" Kasongo asked.

"8:30 in the morning," Mr. Stein replied. "We need to finish all your immigration procedures by noon since Zach will need to attend the pre-match training session with the under-19s tomorrow afternoon."

"Kasongo, you'll come with me to check out the gym where the two of you will be training during your first six months here."

"Do we need to pay for the gym?" Zachary cut in before the scout could continue. He'd already chanced upon a small gym in his building's basement earlier that day. It could satisfy all his needs without the need to pay for expensive membership in the city center. He didn't wish to spend his allowance on anything unnecessary.

"You don't have to worry," Mr. Stein replied, smiling. "As long as you use the gym between 6 to 8 AM, you won't have to pay a single cent."

"Oh, that's great. I'll be sure to check it out on Saturday." His training with the under-19s was only on Friday and Monday. He would have the whole weekend to check out the gym.