

Football 371

Chapter 371 371 Anihilation

[Saturday 24/08/2019, Merkur Spiel-arena, Location: Düsseldorf]

"Take a bow, young man!" Derek Rae exclaimed, his voice cracking under the weight of excitement. "What have we just witnessed? That wasn't football—it was sheer artistry on the pitch!"

Beside him, Stewart Robson could only laugh in disbelief before chiming in, "Derek, I've been in this business for over twenty years, and even I don't know how to describe that. Rakim Rex just made a mockery of three defenders and the keeper—and did it with style! That sombrero to beat two players was ridiculous enough, but did he just set himself up for a volley? Chef's kiss, mate. Perfection."

Derek leaned forward, still riding the adrenaline. "Düsseldorf's defence didn't know whether to tackle, press, or simply applaud! And can we talk about the audacity of that Griddy celebration? They told me he is from the States, but he just delivered a highlight play in true Kobe fashion paying Suttner back with ruthless efficiency."

Robson chuckled. "You're spot on, Derek. I heard one of his academy teammates say he was one of the prettiest players on the field, now I truly believe it." He started going on to analyze the play from the replay. "Yes, he fouled you, but you delivered a world-class assist, maybe that wasn't enough, so you dribbled past 2 players to score a goal, but still not enough? Ok dismantle the defence, score a goal and then dance on them."

"Back in my day I would have hung up my boots if a player I provoked proceeded to destroy me only moments later," Stewart commented as the camera panned over the video of Rakim running towards the corner flag with his hands spread with a wide smile as he stared down the kneeling Suttner.

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[80th]

With the score now sitting at 1:3 Rakim calmed down a bit no longer focusing on solo runs and instead started to link up with his surrounding teammates. The opposing defenders around him were now much wearier of him after he dismantled them not once but twice. However, the damage had already been done as the moment he received the ball on the right flank 3 red figures surrounded him looking as if they were ready for a death match.

Thus, in the 80th minute, Rakim received a short pass from Lars at the edge of the final third and was once again surrounded before he could get going. Staring down the opposing players in front of him he performed a few feints and stepovers keeping them at a respectable distance. None wanted to risk provoking him into a run, but Rakim didn't plan on forcing a run either.

So, when he spotted a gap in between Suttner and Gießelmann he immediately sent the ball to the feet of Volland at the top of the key. Volland controlled the ball with the poise of a seasoned veteran, turning sharply to face the goal. The Düsseldorf defenders, still shaken from Rakim's earlier display, hesitated for a split second—a mistake Volland exploited ruthlessly.

He shifted his weight onto his right foot, feigning a shot, which caused the nearest defender to bite and commit, before slipping a quick pass to Kai Havertz just inside the box. Havertz didn't even look at the ball as he received it. With a single, fluid touch, he flicked it back toward the advancing Rakim, who had slipped through the defensive line unnoticed.

Stunner who only had eyes for him was the only player following him, but he was moving more than his stamina allowed. Having played for 80 minutes there was no way he could keep up with Rakim who

barely played for 15 minutes. He could only watch in despair as the black 22 raised his foot looking to hit the ball for the first time on the right side of the box.

His right foot met the ball with a crisp, controlled volley, slicing through the air with pinpoint precision. The ball curved slightly to the left before slamming into the top-right corner of the net, leaving Düsseldorf's keeper frozen, unable to react. The crowd erupted into chaos, a mix of cheers, gasps, and groans.

For a split second, it felt as if the entire Merkur Spiel-Arena had been electrified. Lions' fans jumped to their feet, setting off a black human wave as they celebrated the young man's hat trick. Back in the stands, Klaus couldn't help but jump and cheer, all thoughts of Sophia's sudden lip lock vanishing in the thrill of the moment. "Did you see that?" he yelled, gripping her arm. Düsseldorf 1:4 Leverkusen

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[91st]

When it rains it pours was the correct explanation for what Düsseldorf faced at this very moment. The final whistle couldn't come soon enough as the players wished to forget this day, hoping it was all just a bad dream. In extra time the stadium resounded with the chants of the away fans while the fickle faction of the home supporters made themselves scarce.

They did not want to be associated with the massacre their team was facing. Because after Rakim completed his hat trick he flipped a switch going into full team mode. Despite the team not overly playing offensive with their lead he managed to assist Volland with a cross to make it Düsseldorf 1:5 Leverkusen

A matter of moments later Düsseldorf's players barely managed to ping a couple passes together when they launched a sudden attack. They seemed to be trying to regain their pride only to fall short at the Bender twins. A quick counter-attacking sequence, one of the many practised in training, saw Havertz with a shot at goal.

Lars had sent a crisp pass to Rakim who cut inwards as he dribbled in his own half. It was easy enough to do on the counter and seeing Volland make another run he didn't hesitate in sending one for him to run onto. A foot race ensued between Volland, Ayhan, and Hoffmann with the striker gaining the upper hand.

Getting to the ball first he was forced wide as he entered the box only to suddenly decide to knock it back across the box with his heel. Like clockwork, the figure of Havertz appeared latching onto the ball as he held off Baker.

Havertz didn't waste any time. With Baker draped over him, he steadied himself with a single touch before rifling a low, driven shot into the far bottom corner. The Düsseldorf keeper dove desperately but was a fraction too late. The ball nestled into the net, and the Lions' fans erupted once more, their chants echoing around the increasingly empty stadium. Düsseldorf 1:6 Leverkusen.

The scoreboard might as well have been a neon sign flashing humiliation. Düsseldorf's players stood shell-shocked, hands on their hips, staring blankly as the Lions celebrated with a jubilant group hug on the sidelines.

Following that goal the referee mercifully blew the whistle, signalling the end of what could only be described as a nightmare for Düsseldorf. The Lions' players gathered in celebration, exchanging high-fives and hugs. Rakim, the undeniable star of the match, calmly walked towards the away stands with the rest of his teammates breathing heavily.

Holding onto the game ball he gave a short bow towards the awa stands with his teammates thanking them for their support. Now that the adrenaline rush was leaving his body, exhaustion was the only thing he was feeling. It was more mentally draining rather than physically but he had gotten the W in the end.

[Ding mission: 'Poke the Bear' Successfully Completed]

- Your Teammate has thrown the gauntlet questioning whether you'd make a difference even if you entered the field. More importantly, he put into question your status as the singularity candidate.

Requirements: Prove to everyone watching that you are different and fully embrace your Monica as the special one.

Reward Mentality Trait: Mamba Mentality 'Garde Unique.'

Note: Become a different Animal and the same beast.

[Ding System detected host has recorded his first Professional Hatrick

Reward: A well done from the system and 3,00 Sp

[Ding...

Chapter 372 372 Little Ben's Plea

[Ding mission: 'Poke the Bear' Successfully Completed]

- Your Teammate has thrown the gauntlet questioning whether you'd make a difference even if you entered the field. More importantly, he put into question your status as the singularity candidate.

Requirements: Prove to everyone watching that you are different and fully embrace your Monica as the special one.

Reward Mentality Trait: Mamba Mentality 'Garde Unique.'

Note: Become a different Animal and the same beast.

[Ding System detected host has recorded his first Professional Hatrick

Reward: A well done from the system and 3,000 Sp

[SINGULARITY MISSIONS: 3]

1) Mr. Bling: Win a major trophy by playing at least 60% of your team's game.

Duration: 10m/2yrs

Completion Rate: 1%

Rewards: Skill Upgrade Voucher

2) Goal Machine: Score 3 Hatricks in a single season.

Duration: 2 yrs

Completion Rate: 1/3

Rewards: Random Potion, 25,000SP

3) Operation Pheonix: Raise Your Player Value to 20 million or above (completed)

Duration: 2 Months

Current Value: 26M

Reward Singularity Skill: Midas Touch

4) [Ding: EGO Mission Untouchable (Completed)]

Dribble Past 7 defenders blocking your way forward: 7/7

Maintain Control of the ball through traffic under all costs: 3/3

Win the ball off a player with a standing tackle: 5/1

Rewards: 10SP

Punishment: -500SP, Concede Goat race early

(Note: there comes a time in a young player's career when they must either tackle their flaws head-on or be content with their success and build upon a shaky foundation.)

"Well, I wasn't expecting the systems provocation leading to me completing the 4th task of the serial mission," Rakim mumbled to himself as he leaned back in the spacious presidential suite bathtub that was filled with ice. "Though I'm not sure what I can do with 10sp maybe buy some gum."

A moment of silence ensued before Eva decided to break the silence, {You feeling better now?} she asked sounding genuinely concerned.

"Yeah, I don't know why the system's mission got under my skin so badly, despite scoring my first official hat trick I didn't get to enjoy the feeling," Rakim replied before submerging in the tub, letting the freezing ice water calm his mind.

Eva waited a good minute before he emerged from the water. She could have spoken to him despite the fact he was underwater but decided to let him relax knowing just the strain his mind was under during the match. He was practically doing mental gymnastics throughout the entirety of the match.

{I understand, we will have to work hard on seriously dealing with your mental trauma from your past, The Mamba Mentality Trait should help} Eva commented not at all minding the frown that appeared on her host's face as she continued explaining why they had to do this. {Not dealing with it is like having a ticking time bomb ready to blow in both professional and real life. Why do you think it took you this long to acknowledge your feelings for that girl May, not dealing with your mental health not only hurts you but those around you as well.}

Rakim didn't respond to her words as he simply pulled up his system, not willing to open that particular can of worms. He understood why she felt like it was important for him to deal with his emotional health but at this very moment, he just wanted to rest. All these problems would be left for tomorrow's him to deal with no matter the outcome of his choices.

Ding: Mamba Mentality 'Garde Unique.' Trait

-Boost Training Results by 15% When consistently pushing your limits in training

-Has a 30% boost when translating practised skills into a live game, resulting in fewer errors in crucial moments.

-Boost a random stat by 1 grade for 10 minutes when Ego is challenged

[Ding: Post-Match Review]

>Goals scored: (3) = 30Sp

>Assists: (2) = 20Sp

>Cards: 0 = 0Sp

>Final Match score: 1:6 Win: 30Sp

>Match Rating: 9.9

(Note: Congratulations on a beautiful match hope the host keeps up the good work)

"(Sight) Looks like it was worth it just for the Mamba trait," he mumbled to himself as he stared intently at the trait that was glowing in purple and golden light. He leaned back in the ice-filled bathtub, his

muscles still aching from the intensity of the match. The soft glow of the system's interface hovered in his vision. It felt like it was reminding him that he would have to keep trying hard as he had heard stories about the training maniac that was the Great Kobe Bryant.

"I'll just take it one step at a time," he muttered to himself not minding extra training, as a matter of fact, the harder the training the better, as he had caught the gym rat flu early in life.

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[21:30 Home EL Penthouse]

[Favorite Sister: Wow bro, I know you are probably floating in happiness after that performance. This is just a quick congratulations can't call Dad's going crazy trying to get me to buy a couch for the apartment.]

[Mama Bear: Hey son, are you ok? That tackle looked like it hurt make sure to get the doctors to check you out. Matter of fact I'll be calling the club asking for updates, so you better listen to the doctor's instructions, Oh and congrats on the game.]

[Dad: Well, done son I watched your game with the board members and won a bet expect a package in the next 3 days. Oh, and don't mind what anyone says just crush them with more goals, hahaha you had that grown man questioning life on his knees.]

[May Flower: Congrats Babe, wish I could have been there to see it live. I will take you out to celebrate when I get home. Do you think Aqua will mind if I hire a body double to do the photoshoot.]

Rakim smiled at the messages from his family as he took a moment to respond to their congratulatory wishes. Due to the time difference, they were still up and were in the midst of their day. May was the only one who didn't reply right away but he knew she was very busy probably still shooting at this very moment.

"I don't envy her," he muttered to himself remembering how boring these photoshoots can be as you had to wait for hours for only 30 minutes of work. The celebrities getting their pictures taken weren't the ones doing the most work, but it was the background staff who broke their backs so the photographer could get the perfect shot.

As Rakim finished responding to the messages, he couldn't help but feel a sense of relief wash over him. The warm words from his family and May had lifted his spirits for sure settling his breathing as he fully let himself relax. Saying his good night, he quickly tucked himself into bed ready to head into dreamland only to be surprised by a sudden Text message.

[Little Ben: Hi Rakim I know it's late and you're probably tired from your match, but my brother is in trouble, and you are the last person I could think of please help him.] This message caught him off guard since it was a DM on his Instagram, and usually, it would get lost in the crowd of his over a million followers.

However, it seemed like the phone algorithm was working overtime or God had put his hand in the situation. He wouldn't usually open random DM's, but Little Ben was a fan who became a friend to him during his stay in Glasgow. Normally the kid only hit him up for advice on how to train and things to do to hasten his rate of improvement.

Other than himself he had never met a kid who loved the game so much and did his best to improve. So, seeing a message asking for help startled him enough to wake up from his drowsy state and respond to him. [Rex22: Tell me what's wrong I'll help if I can.]

[Sunday 29/010/2019, Location: Cologne Bonn Airport]

In one of the Business suits at Bonn Airport, the figures of the Leverkusen squad can be seen relaxing as they wait for their flight. It had already arrived but in the final checks something concerning was discovered and the team opted to wait for a new plane. The airline company the team had chartered tried to convince them that it was just something minor and they could still fly after some repairs.

However, head coach Bosz was taking no chances with a squad valued at 620 million. Simon Rolfes, the team's managing director gave him a thumbs-up when he heard this. He made sure to complain to the charter company and use his connection to call a second reliable partner to facilitate his team's travel.

The Brazilian players and those from poorer backgrounds were the happiest with this decision. Most of them had taken their first flight due to playing football and wouldn't take any chances with their safety. As a matter of fact, Paulinho and Wendell had been in the process of trying to convince their teammates to march if they didn't get a safer flight.

Anyway, with the flight arrangement being sorted out the players looked much more relaxed as they did their best to entertain themselves. One of them managed to get their hands on a PlayStation after bribing the airport staff and now hosted a FIFA tournament. Rakim, who was doing his best to overcome the upset of the century which was losing to Paulinho, was at this moment nursing his sports drink.

"Who told you to play with yourself in the game when you know they sold you badly," Paulinho said with a bright smile still enjoying his hard-fought victory. He had chosen to go with Leverkusen whilst Rakim chose Celic for the sole reason FIFA hadn't bothered to update his move in the game.

If it was only that he wouldn't mind but they only gave him 3-star skill moves, 64 speed, 67 Acceleration, 70 finishing, and 84 Dribbling. Safe to say he felt heavily violated when he saw this, especially since he only found out today. This whole time he had believed that he wasn't in the game since he barely played 3 months last season.

So, it was only natural that he didn't even bother getting the game, however now he felt insulted looking at his character. They didn't even bother giving him proper processing power when creating his player. The guy literally was a light-skinned guy with dreads tied in a ponytail and don't get me started on the face.

"(sigh) I'm surprised that my fans haven't found this and started roasting me," Rakim replied before deciding to post on his Twitter which like every other celebrity he only used to complain or throw shade.

[@Rex22: Honestly @EASportsFifa This is borderline criminal. Does anyone know if I can sue them for Defamation, my mama can't even recognize whoever this is supposed to be not even minding the stats. #EAWhy #WhyMe]

No sooner had he posted and some sharp-eyed members of the RexNation, who just so happen to be keyboard warriors picked it up. For his own mental health, Rakim decided to not stick around in cyberspace to see the dumpster fire he had just lit.

Like him, most of his fans hadn't expected him to already be in this game. Those who did end up packing him didn't recognize him and would simply quick sell most bronze cards. Thus, given the fact the game had only reached their consoles yesterday, they were yet to catch him lacking in the game.

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[@CelticFaithful67: "Nah, @EASportsFifa really got Rakim out here looking like a create-a-player template from 2005. Give my man his flowers! #EAWhy #RespectTheDream"]

@Rex4GoldenBoot: "64 speed? Did they watch him burn defenders last season or nah? FIFA really doesn't rate ballers from the Scottish League smh."

@BiggestOp: @StoneColdBruce How can you even type that with a straight face, can you lot even play football with a skirt over there in Scotland? As for Rakim, the kid needs to sit down not everyone can be like my boy Mateo doing bits.

@ThePopelsCallsMeDad: @BiggestOp Come over here you Paigen B#\$t@£d and we can talk about the book of Glasgow.

@CashMoneyMark: 10 bands bet he won't, matter of fact 20 if you drop your location right now.  
@BiggestOp.

@BiggestOp: Gott better things to do than this type shi, @CashMoneyMark call your mom rn and slide me my 20 Bands. I take Cashapp, PayPal, BuyBit, Bank Transfer, Mail and Pigeons.

@CashMoneyMark: I know you ain't talk to CashMoneyMark like this. Oh, it's on sight now you goofy-looking a\$\$ boy. Soulja Boy with no crank you suck at music people crash when you rap-looking a\$\$ boy... (Tap to read more)

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@DeadlyDribblez: "64 speed for Rakim? EA must be trolling. The man's faster than my Wi-Fi connection and they did him like this? Unreal. #FIFAFlop"

@FIFAProTips: "Bruh, not only did they nerf Rakim's stats, but they also made him look like he's fresh out of Sims 2. EA, we gotta talk."

@RexNationLoyal: "64 speed, 67 acceleration... EA's really out here pretending Rakim didn't smoke defenders all throughout this month. Imagine watching football and still being this wrong, Like the boy had had grown men on their knees questioning life choices.

@VougeScout: Ahem Mr Rex upon further consideration we must resend our offer for you to model in our next magazine. This decision was made carefully upon a lot of consideration and has nothing to do with your Shrek... (ahem) magnificent FIFA avatar.

@TrollingOutLoud: @VougeScout I'm so dead, you have my respect as a fellow practitioner of the troll arts.

@VougeScout: @TrollingOutLoud what do you mean by trolling... Oh S\$it yall for get you saw this this isn't the company email.

@HollywoodJanitor: (Ahem) Have yall seen the new She-Hulk I promise you it's the best thing since sliced bread. Oh, by the way, I heard that Aquaman is releasing a limited edition collector DVD with extended content so get your extra 30 minutes worth of content.

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@ProClubKingz: "Rakim's FIFA stats look like they let the janitor take over the player ratings. Someone explain how this man has 84 dribbling but moves like he's in quicksand?"

@FIFAOverload: "It's not just Rakim, let's talk about EA disrespecting the entire Scottish League. Why does every player move like their controller died mid-game?"

@EA\_Hater\_101: "EA every year: 'This is the most realistic FIFA ever.' Also, EA: gives players stats that look like they were picked at random by a drunk intern. #FixYourGame"

@SweatyGoals45: "Rakim's player design is the least of FIFA's problems. Have y'all tried playing Career Mode? It's like they're daring us to uninstall."

@CouchManagers: "42 Jump Rakim is deadass lacking, but can we talk about how every defender in FIFA 19 is apparently prime Harry Maguire? My Sunday league team defends better than this.

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Back in the airport lounge, Paulinho couldn't stop laughing as the memes rolled in. Since they followed each other and were teammates the algorithm did its thing despite Rakim having left the app. "Bro, not sure if your fans are supporting you or simply throwing oil to the fire." he cackled, showing Rakim yet another meme where his FIFA player was photoshopped into a lineup of random NPC characters.

Wendell leaned over with his phone, grinning. "Yo, this one's got you looking like a character from GTA San Andreas. They even gave you a fake name: Rakeem Rexington."

Rakim groaned, but even he couldn't hold back a chuckle as he proceeded to pick up his phone once firing off a new tweet. ["(Tweet Tweet) @Rex22: @RexNation Someone link me up with Saul and tell him I might have a job for him -\_-!"]

Chapter 374 374 Busy Month

[Sunday 29/010/2019, Location: Cologne Bonn Airport]

An hour later the Leverkusen squad had a new jet fueled up and cleared for take-off. Rakim now sitting in one of the window seats donned a pair of headphones bumping the Ghetto Gospel album by Rod Wave. Since the guy's XXL Cypher was one of the best he decided to give his debut album a chance and he wasn't disappointed.

Leaning back in his chair he closed his eyes letting the music calm his mind. 'It's been a hectic month,' he found himself thinking as he decided to put his Twitter on mute after stocking the flames some more.

{was it really that hectic it's not that much different from what you experienced in Glasgow,} Eva said not understanding his thought process, acting like he hadn't played professional football last season.

'This is different, and you know it, now I am a full member of the team. I can actually feel how the club is planning for my future with them. 'Heck when was the last time a coach decided to rest me just to be safe, I don't burn out despite the fact I only come off the bench?'

To his response, Eva had to actually think about it as it really had been a long time. Usually in the Ace academy, it was every player fighting for opportunities to showcase their talents. Even with one of the best healthcare systems, some players would still opt to hide minor kinks if it meant they could showcase their talents in front of scouts.

[Still scoring in 2 out of the 3 games you played and giving out 4 assists is still pretty good. After 6 Bundesliga matches your team is sitting pretty in 6th position with 13 points just one behind league leader Bayern Munich. Though you should win this Juventus fixture if you guys want any hope in your Champions League journey after that 1:2 loss against Loko Moscow.] Eva stated after moments of silence, seemingly trying to compute his absentminded question.

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[Bundesliga Match Week 3: Leverkusen 2-2 Hoffenheim (31/08/2019) 15:30]

The BayArena buzzed with energy as Leverkusen hosted Hoffenheim. Rakim got his first start for the team on the left wing and was keen to build on his Jaw-dropping performance against Düsseldorf. Early on, Leverkusen controlled possession, their midfield trio of Demirbay, Amiri, and Aránguiz threading passes to stretch the opposition.

Eager to make an impression, Rakim worked with his teammates both up and down the field. He would only take on players when an opportunity presented itself to him, like in the 22-minute. Beating two defenders down the flank with a clever reverse Elastico and roulette he created just enough space to send a grounded cross into the box.

Volland, whose start to the season had been average, didn't waste this opportunity beating his marker and the offside trap to slot the ball past Baumann. That would be the last goal they scored in the first half as they found it harder to break past the Hoffenheim defence. However, it was their opponents who chose to strike back in the 44th minute launching their third meaningful attack on the Leverkusen team.

Posch, after dispossessing Wendell who had overlapped with Rakim trying to launch an attack, immediately drove forward launching a counter. Accelerating forward the right-back used a one-two to breeze past Rakim who attempted to stand in his way. Posch, now deep in Leverkusen's half, slid the ball to Kramarić, who spun away from Jonathan Tah with alarming ease.

Kramarić didn't hold onto the ball long as he threaded a precise through ball to Bebou, who darted into the box. Lukas Hradecky rushed off his line, but Bebou's shot had too much pace, rifling into the bottom corner to equalize just before halftime. That was the last goal of the first half ruining the mood of the home team who had been happy throughout the first half.

Bellarabi and Rakim became more active on the wings after the halftime talks kicking up another gear to torment Hoffenheim's flanks. In the 55th minute, after dancing past two defenders he earned Leverkusen a free kick near the edge of the box. Demirbay whipped it in with venom, and Sven Bender rose highest to nod the ball into the net, restoring Leverkusen's lead. Hoffenheim, however, refused to back down.

With time ticking away, their persistence paid off in the 81st minute. A well-orchestrated corner saw Grillitsch flick the ball towards the far post, where Kaderábek smashed it home with a diving header. Despite a flurry of late chances, including a curling shot from Rakim that struck the crossbar, the match ended in a 2-2 draw.

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[Bundesliga Match Week 4: Dortmund 4-0 Leverkusen (14/09/2019) 15:30]

The Westfalen Stadion was a cauldron of noise as Dortmund hosted Leverkusen. From the first whistle, the home side exuded dominance, pressing high and forcing errors. Without Rakim in the lineup, Bellarabi started and Diaby, fresh off the injury list, sat on the bench looking for his chance to rejoin the team.

However, Leverkusen struggled to match Dortmund's tempo and precision. Favre's version of the Dortmund squad still retained the attacking flow from Klopp with the team as a whole running the most in the Bundesliga. Their effort bore fruit as Dortmund broke the deadlock in the 24th minute when Jadon Sancho danced past Wendell on the right wing, delivering a low cross that Paco Alcácer deftly redirected into the bottom corner.

Leverkusen, rattled by the goal, attempted to regroup, but Dortmund's relentless pressing pinned them back. The second goal came in the 38th minute, courtesy of a swift counterattack. Julian Brandt picked up the ball in midfield and threaded it to Marco Reus, who flicked it back to him with a clever one-two. Brandt's curling effort from just outside the box left Hradecky rooted to the spot.

Leverkusen barely had time to recover before Dortmund struck again in the 51st minute. This time, Achraf Hakimi surged forward from right-back, weaving through the defence before laying the ball off to Alcácer, who doubled his tally with a clinical finish. The final nail in the coffin arrived in the 79th minute.

Substitute Thorgan Hazard found himself unmarked at the edge of the box and unleashed a thunderous strike that ricocheted off the crossbar and in. From the stands, Rakim could only watch the wasps celebrate in glee as they gave his team the same treatment he had given to Düsseldorf in their match. They looked disjointed, unable to respond to Dortmund's ruthlessness. As the final whistle blew, it was clear this was a humbling lesson for the team.

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[Champions' League Group Stage: Leverkusen 1-2 Lokomotiv Moscow (18/09/2019) 21:00]

The lights of the BayArena burned bright, the Champions League anthem echoing across the stadium. Diaby started on the left, brimming with excitement, looking to make the fans remember his skills after missing a couple of names due to injury. The match, however, began on a sour note for Leverkusen.

In the 16th minute, Lokomotiv's Miranchuk pounced on a defensive error, latching onto a loose back pass and slotting it past a stunned Hradecky. Leverkusen struggled to find their rhythm, and Lokomotiv capitalized again in the 34th minute when Smolov unleashed a thunderous strike from 25 yards out, doubling the visitors' lead.

Rakim came on at halftime for his debut in Europe's grandest competition and took matters into his own hands. In the 62nd minute, he picked up the ball on the left, weaved past two defenders, and unleashed a powerful shot using his Heavy Artillery sending it cannoning off the post and into the net. It was his first Champions League goal, a moment of brilliance that reignited hope.

Leverkusen pushed hard in the dying moments, with Rakim providing a pinpoint cross to Alario, whose header was miraculously saved by Guilherme. The final whistle blew, and Leverkusen suffered a disappointing 1-2 defeat despite Rakim's heroics.

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[Bundesliga Match Week 5: Leverkusen 2-0 Union Berlin (21/09/2019) 15:30]

Back at the BayArena, Leverkusen had the perfect opportunity to bounce back against Union Berlin. The home crowd created a fervent atmosphere, eager for a strong response. Rakim watched the match from the comfort of the VIP box with some other teammates put on the reserve list.

Leverkusen began brightly, with Demirbay pulling the strings in midfield. In the 18th minute, a moment of magic came from Leon Bailey, who burst down the right flank, cut inside, and rifled a shot past Union keeper Rafal Gikiewicz to open the scoring. Union Berlin tried to fight back, but Leverkusen's defence, led by Sven Bender and Jonathan Tah, stood firm.

The midfield duo of Amiri and Aránguiz broke up Union's attacks, launching quick transitions that kept the visitors on their heels. The second goal came in the 54th minute. A slick passing move starting from Wendell on the left flank saw the ball travel through Palacios to Havertz, who spotted Lucas Alario's intelligent run.

Alario controlled the pass brilliantly before slotting it into the far corner. Union Berlin pushed forward in desperation, but Hradecky made two outstanding saves to maintain the clean sheet. As the final whistle blew, the scoreboard reflected their win as they secured another crucial 3 points in the league.



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[Bundesliga Match Week 6: Leverkusen 3-0 Augsburg (28/09/2019) 15:30]

Away at Augsburg, Leverkusen looked determined to bounce back. Rakim, reinstated to the starting XI, made his presence felt early. In the 12th minute, he darted past two defenders on the left flank and squared the ball to Volland, whose first-time shot rippled the net.

Leverkusen's midfield dominated proceedings, with Palacios and Amiri dictating the tempo. Rakim felt like he was on a row and utilized his creativity to constantly unsettle Augsburg's defence. In the 39th minute, he received a long ball from Bender, danced past his marker with a fake shot, and curled a sublime effort into the far corner to double the lead.

The second half saw Leverkusen in complete control. Augsburg's attempts to get back into the game were stifled by Leverkusen's solid defensive pairing of Tah and Sven Bender. Rakim continued to shine, assisting Leverkusen's third goal with a perfectly weighted through ball to Havertz, who calmly finished in the 72nd minute. The 3-0 victory was a statement for the fans showing their fighting spirit after the two shaky matches at the start of the month.

Chapter 375 375 Bayer 04 Plane Crashed

[Sunday, 29/09/2019, 19:45 – Turin, Italy]

The Leverkusen team touched down at Turin Airport under the dim glow of a sunset that cast an amber hue over the city. It was nearly 20:00, and the players still fully felt the fatigue of their travel that was held up due to the faulty plane. Still, they did their best to maintain focused expressions. Rakim adjusted his black SainClair Suit as he stepped onto the tarmac, the cool Italian breeze brushing against his face.

{Welcome to Turin,} Eva quipped in his head, her voice laced with a hint of humour. {The city of Fiat, Juventus, and more defensive lines than you'd care to count.}

He smirked at her words, 'Let's hope their defenders are as sluggish as the traffic in New York,' he muttered under his breath, as he walked towards the shuttle that would take them towards Airport security. The drive was only about 10 minutes and given the fact that the club staff would handle their luggage the players only carried their carry-on. The Leverkusen squad made their way through airport security swiftly, as they were given priority checkout.

Their professional attire drew quite a bit of attention from fellow travellers and some staff, with cameras clicked here and there, but most people gave them space. The fact that airport security did their job to hold back any over-eager travellers who just so happened to be Leverkusen fans travelling out to watch their team play.

Once through, they were met by a sleek team bus, its exterior adorned with Leverkusen's red and black crest, waiting to ferry them to their hotel in the heart of the city. Rakim settled into a seat near the back, his gaze flicking between the glowing city lights outside and his teammates scattered throughout the bus. Some chatted in low tones, while others, like him, seemed lost in their thoughts.

"Turin looks cozy, doesn't it?" Rakim mused aloud, mostly to himself.

"Yeah, it's a beauty for sure; I'm surprised you didn't visit in your academy days. From what I hear you travelled around the world playing in tournaments across the globe." Leon Bailey said from the seat in front of him, a playful grin on his face.

"Naw I only ever came to Millan for the fashion week," Rakim absentmindedly responded to the guy as they drove by the Cappella dei Banchieri e dei Mercanti.

"Fashion week? Are you some kind of rich kid or something?" the Jamaican winger asked out of reflex since he didn't know anyone who was visiting events such as Millan Fashion Week before the age of 16.

"Ha Ha Ha, my parents are comfortable," Rakim replied with a short smile leaving Leon frozen in shock no longer willing to continue this conversation.

The conversation between Rakim and Leon trailed off, leaving the bus humming with a mix of low chatter and the occasional laugh. Outside the window, Turin's streets became livelier as they approached the city centre. The golden glow of streetlights reflected off cobblestones, giving the city its unique charm. Cafes buzzed with evening diners, their tables spilling out onto the narrow sidewalks, while the faint aroma of espresso and wood-fired pizzas wafted into the cool night air.

Rakim leaned back in his seat, letting the scenery wash over him. Eva's voice cut through his thoughts. {You seem unusually quiet. Nervous about tomorrow?} He smirked at her question, 'Nervous? Nah, just excited I finally get to play my favourite player in a real game at that.}

{hmm, just don't let your excitement overwhelm you,} Rakim simply chuckled at her words not planning to hold his punches in the game, after all, what better first impression to give you here if not by defeating him in a Champions League match?

The bus came to a smooth stop in front of a modern hotel nestled between two historic buildings. Its sleek glass façade contrasted sharply with the old-world charm of its neighbours. A red carpet had been discreetly rolled out, and a small group of fans and reporters waited behind barriers, cameras flashing as soon as the players began to disembark.

"Alright, lads, quick and professional," Coach Peter Bosz instructed, clapping his hands to signal their cue. Rakim stepped off the bus, pulling his suit jacket tighter against the breeze. He waved briefly at the fans, his expression neutral but polite, just as he was about to follow Leon inside the building one of the reporter's questions caught his attention.

"Rakim, how do you feel about almost dying?" The reporter asked over the different shouts of other reporters asking questions. The question came from left field leaving him stunned to the point he came to a stop to process the man's words.

"What you talking about?" He immediately asked the NBC reporter not understanding why he would ask him that after all the shooting was half a year ago. Other than that, shooting he couldn't think of a time he came closer to death than when he first opened his eyes in this world.

Now standing in front of the reporter who stood behind the hastily set up barrier he waited for him to clarify. "Your flight FB869 the one your team was supposed to be on reportedly crashed into the Matterhorn Mountain range." The chubby NBC reporter stated instantly freezing the atmosphere as even the players who were about to pass him stopped to listen to what the guy had to say.

Rakim's breath hitched as his mind scrambled to piece together the information. Matterhorn crash? FB869? The connections clicked, sending a shiver down his spine. The faulty plane It could good well have been them if they went ahead with the flight. Leon Bailey, standing beside him, let out a low whistle, his usual grin replaced by a sombre expression. "Man... that's crazy," he muttered under his breath, but his voice carried a hint of disbelief that matched everyone else's reaction.

"The crash has been confirmed; we are still waiting for a response on the casualty list as the plane was on its way to Monaco." The reporter stated before once again asking his question, "How does it feel to come so close to dying again, considering you were shot half a year ago and will this have an impact on your performance in two days?"

Rakim's heart thudded in his chest as he processed the reporter's words, his left hand subconsciously touching his right chest area where the scar from the shooting was. "Are you being serious right now?" he asked the man after snapping out of whatever washed over him.

"People could have died and you are here looking to sell tomorrow's paper? You should be ashamed of yourself Sir Colman, I'm truly disappointed," he started off his body language now visibly more confrontational adding the swaying of his dreads made him look like an enraged lion. "You asked me how I feel? Well, I can only thank God for watching over me and my teammates and giving the Club staff the sense to make the right decision. My prayers, my teammate's prayers, and the organization as a whole pray for every unfortunate soul who was on that plane,"

After finishing his words that left not only the reporters stunned, but also his teammates who were ready to hold him back if he went off on the reporter, he walked away heading inside. The rest of the players and staff soon joined them inside, no one willing to answer questions as the tension whipped away the sleepy atmosphere they felt from their journey.

Inside, the hotel was a stark contrast to the chaotic energy of the outside world. The polished marble floors reflected soft lighting, and the towering columns gave off a sense of regality. Staff members in smart uniforms greeted them with nods and smiles, but it was hard to shake the sombre mood that followed them in.

Coach Bosz led the team to the elevators, his stern expression offering no indication of his thoughts on the incident. Once inside the lift, the team stood in relative silence, with only the faint hum of the elevator's ascent breaking the stillness. Once they got onto the floor that the team had booked, they immediately headed for the conference room to meet up with some players who had headed in first.

"Is that really real?" Fredrick Bauer, the assistant manager, found himself saying as his eyes remained glued on the monitor hanging on the wall. He had turned on the TV to set up for the evening film session only to be met with the news channel broadcasting a plane crash. That wasn't enough to peak his attention if not for the headlines ready [Bayer 04 Plane Crashed].

"I am afraid so my friend," Peter Bosz stated with a sombre tone only now remembering to turn his phone back on, sure enough, it blew up the moment he did.

Chapter 376 376: 376 Shadowless Holo Charizard

[Sunday, 29/09/2019, 19:45 – Turin, Italy]

[Rakim Pov]

"Yes, Mum I'm alright we weren't on that plane, so please stop crying," I reassured Mum once again as she struggled to believe I was ok for the past 20 minutes.

The news anchors or maybe it was the paparazzi who seemed to just run with the most attention-grabbing news. So, whilst they hadn't even confirmed that it was the Leverkusen squad on that plane, they ran with the headline. All they needed was the fact that was the plane they were supposed to be on and that was that.

So, while my parents were out for dinner at the country club with a few of their friends one of them spotted the headline on the massive monitor over the bar. Anyone else would have lingered on it since they were outside and couldn't hear what the anchors were saying but not Joe. The man had watched both me and Emma grow up from the shadows as Dad's head of security.

So, he knew well where I was and the moment, he read the headline he jumped from his chair startling everyone. However, a couple moments later they all stood with disbelieving eyes in front of the bar listening as a reporter named Jason Cole talked about the tragedy that befell the Leverkusen squad and wunderkind Rakim Rex.

Given the fact some consider me the Messi/Ronaldo of the US and the following I've amassed there, any news relating to me causes various news programs to have an orgasm. After all, it is not that they don't want to report soccer news in the US, it's just that there hasn't been a Lebron James for the sport. Even with the mounting popularity of the MLS, it still can't compare with the rest of the world as the league is considered as real as WWE.

"Sigh I was so shocked when I saw the news, I almost fainted on the spot, and when I couldn't reach you, I started to think the worst," Mum explained not minding the fact some of her makeup was smudged from the tears she shed.

"I'm sorry I forgot to turn off the aeroplane mode until we reached the hotel. In fact, we only realized the plane crashed when a reporter asked a question" I quickly explained feeling a little guilty since I had realized I was still in aeroplane mode until I got to the hotel. Usually, I keep my phone on DND during bus rides to games, but I'd still get silent notifications of people trying to reach me.

"It's fine I'm glad your ok baby, I'll hand you over to your Dad he's been fidgeting since we got the news. If not for taking care of me he would have also been crying don't let his serious face fool you," She stated with a forced happy smile before directly handing the phone to Dad who had been standing behind her waiting for her to finish.

"How you doing son?" was the first thing he said to me as he looked at me through the screen. I simply nodded at him to give reassurance that I was ok, not willing to reiterate what I had already said since he likely heard it all.

"Dad if you worry much more you will go grey by the morning. I can't leave this world without letting you meet your granddaughter so don't worry," I replied to him trying to lighten the atmosphere as it's quite draining.

"We're not sleeping with each other, we just started dating in the summer after all plus we decided to wait till marriage. Honestly, it's for the best, and it gives us space to discover ourselves without complicating things. So go play some golf or eat some sweets from your secret stash before Mum notices," I quickly corrected already seeing the gears turn in his mind as he connected the dots.

"Won't notice what?" Mum suddenly asked popping up out of nowhere with her makeup fixed looking like she never cried.

"How much I love you, Mum gotta go May's on the other line," I stated before ending the FaceTime call and accepting May's FaceTime call who had been waiting for a while.

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"Calm down May you don't have to fly over just to make sure I'm ok," I told her trying to stop her from packing her bags. From the moment we got on the call she had been frantically trying to pack her bag. She seemed dead set on coming over to make sure I was okay for herself.

"I thought I was supposed to be the one always getting into trouble in this relationship," she asked not hearing my words as she continued to pack. To her words, I had no answer and could only silently watch her vent her pent-up emotions.

"Babe look at me we're all okay and that is a fact," I told her forcing her to stop and look at me with her still teary eyes. "The plane was faulty during last-minute checks and the club refused to fly with it even after the company fixed it. Those vultures must have used it to charter a different flight,"



"But really I'm fine don't fly just because of me you won't be able to spend so much time with the girls once their Uni gets into full swing," I reassured getting a deep exhale of relief that sounded like she just came up for air. "We've, just started our life together you're not getting rid of me so quickly."

"Hmm," she nodded not saying a word as she kept her gaze on me, and if she was here in person, she'd probably be clinging to me like a koala bear.

Just looking at her I knew she had been bawling her heart out after seeing the news. It probably only got worse when she couldn't reach me and unlike Mum who had Dad taking care of her, she had a group of girls who were barely adults. I love my sister and know how mature she is, but she was likely also crying. Speak it and it shall be so, the moment I thought about my sister's state she appeared also donning the puffy eyes.

"Emma why you crying I swear it wasn't me who broke your limited-edition shadowless holo Charizard. So, you guys can stop with the emo girl band look" I stated with a light smile as I looked at my better half stepping into the view of the camera. I could tell she tried to wipe away the tears, but it did little good.

"It's in your collection Dad already snitched on you," She replied with a pout not cracking a smile or showing an angry reaction. This was surprising since it was her prized possession which she had been looking for more than a year.

"What of course not how could it be in my collection Rakim is an honourable man after all," I stated with a straight smile knowing full well that said card was in my collection sitting pretty.

"Don't give me that look," I added quickly, trying to deflect from Emma's watery-eyed glare staring back at me through May's phone screen. She sniffled, dabbing at her nose with a tissue, clearly unconvinced by my attempt at humour.

"You think everything is a joke, Rakim," Emma said, her voice trembling but laced with her usual sass. "Do you even realize how close you came to—" She paused, her voice catching.

"I know," I said softly, cutting her off before she could spiral further. "Trust me, I've thought about it more than I probably should have. But you don't have to worry, okay? I'm here. I'm fine You gonna be stuck with this brother of yours for at least 80 more years."

Emma shook her head at my words "You better. If anything happens to you, who's going to stop Mum from turning me into her business-law-clone version of herself?" she complained not realizing that she would most likely take over Dad's business which is more cumbersome than Mom's fitness franchise.

May's voice chimed in, bringing the conversation back into focus. "Babe, I mean it. If you need me, I'll be there in a heartbeat. The girls can handle themselves for a few days. I'm serious."

I could see the worry etched across her features, and for a moment, the thought of having her here was tempting. But I shook my head. "May, you've got enough on your plate as it is. I promise I'm okay. You don't need to fly across Europe plus I'm not sure I can even get you tickets."

"I promise I'm good, I'll see you in a few days coach is calling for us," I told her trying to bring the call to an end, but it took a couple minutes of coaxing to finally get her to agree to end the call. It was almost like she was asking me to send a proof of life but didn't believe it and thus kept asking for a new one.

Chapter 377 377 Tourist Mode

[Monday 30/09/2019, 7:30 – Turin, Italy]

[Rakim Pov]

"Yo this is crazy, I've had so many people call me trying to check if I'm dead and the dumb ones directly posted RIP Paulinho," The Brazilian striker told me with a sigh as he plopped down on the chair next to me with a plate of fruits and porridge.

"You're lucky, my ex-wife tried to claim my insurance directly and now I've got them hounding me trying to up the rate, something about me being a high-risk client," Bellarabi stated with an exasperated tone, looking quite haggard as if he had been through a battle.

"That's still calm bro, my friends and acquaintances tried to sell my story to Netflix for a quick buck," Wendell commented with an indignant smile as he pierced the slice of mango on his plate with his fork.

"My family was also worried, my girl even threatened to hop on the next flight to support me so I can relate with you guys," I commented with a knowing nod as I took another bite of my porridge with pieces of broccoli cut into.

"Bro shut up, don't compare your hairy-tail-type family to us," Paulinho commented as he proceeded to push my head in mock anger. "I had to watch this guy field calls for hours with people crying trying to make sure he is ok. It's not just his family, his fans are wilding on the internet too, looking like they will start World War 3 at any moment, and he wasn't even hurt."

"Yeah, I think I saw a guy from Texas threaten the airline with a rocket launcher if any harm befell you?" Bellarabi stated sounding almost accusatory as he pointed at me with his fork as if I was the one who had mobilized the madman.

"Bro it's Texas, the land of the free, literally," I simply retorted knowing just how crazy that country can be. "To be fair I don't even know what to say anymore. People are wild. All this drama, and we've still got to lock in for tomorrow's game against The Goat from Portugal."

"Dang, you're right but I can't even spare a thought to the match with all the drama," Bellarabi stated already dreading all the BS the media had stirred up with their false news. He for one didn't care about it much but the extra distraction wasn't something he needed right now, especially in a Champions League match against CR7.

"Whether you are mentally ready or not, get moving before Bosz comes in here and starts yelling about professionalism. You know he'll have us doing drills in the parking lot if we're late for the morning brief." Havertz exclaimed at the other end of the table, having dealt with his fair share of emotional quarterbacking with his loved ones.

"Facts," Wendell agreed, standing and stretching. "Last time someone was late, he had us running suicides while forcing them to watch on the sidelines. So don't anyone be a hero, you heard. Following his words the players proceeded to wolf down the rest of their breakfast before quickly dispersing to their rooms to get ready.

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[08:00 – Turin, Italy]

"We had a different program planned for today, but all this mess has put a wrench in that. From the looks of it, none of you could focus even if we proceeded with training. So, we have decided to give you the morning off, we will meet at 2 pm for a light training session." Coach Bosz stated after we all gathered in the hall designated for the meeting.

His announcement caught everyone by surprise, but no one was going to argue with the boss after getting free time. Quite a few players began to fidget in their seats already wanting to set off into the beautiful city of Turin. Coach must have noticed this too and didn't bother holding them back after giving a few more instructions.

As soon as Coach Bosz dismissed us, the room buzzed with energy. Players scattered, already making plans for how to spend their unexpected free time. Wendell and Paulinho were huddled near the door, talking about exploring Turin's famed coffee culture, while Bellarabi muttered something about tracking down a decent barber.

I also wanted to explore the city but decided to go change into some comfortable clothing not willing to walk the streets of Turin in Leverkusen Tracksuits. Nothing against the Tracksuits but they practically shine that bat signal on me letting everyone know I'm a professional footballer.

The streets of Turin were alive with the hustle of a Monday morning. I had managed to slip out of the hotel unnoticed, wearing a pair of Amarie Denim jeans and a white Pac T-shirt, my dreadlocks tucked under a black cap. I chose not to wear my GLD chain or any jewelry other than a simple silver chain knowing full well that these tourist cities are also known for their dark sides.

The number of doe-eyed tourists that come here each year only to donate their valuables, practically keep the lights on in the city. Anyway, why tourists feel the need to flex their money in unfamiliar streets without adequate protection didn't matter to him. My disguise wasn't perfect, but it was enough to keep most eyes off me and at best they'd consider as just another Doe-eyed tourist.

The city had a unique charm. Baroque architecture lined the streets, interspersed with modern cafes and boutiques. The aroma of fresh espresso wafted from open shop doors, mingling with the faint hum of conversations in Italian. From the little Italian I knew I was able to navigate the streets and hold simple conversations.

After 20 minutes of just strolling through the heart of Turin, I found myself in Piazza San Carlo. The square was bustling with locals and tourists alike, enjoying their morning routines. I stopped by a small café on the corner, tempted by the inviting scent of fresh pastries. A friendly barista greeted me, his cheerful demeanour matching the warm ambience of the café.

"Un caffè e un cornetto, per favore," I said, my accent causing him to chuckle.

"You're not from around here, are you?" he asked in English, handing me my espresso and croissant.

I smiled. "No, just visiting for a few days."

He studied me for a moment, his eyes narrowing. "You play football, don't you?"

I hesitated, not wanting to draw attention. "I dabble," I replied with a grin, hoping that would end the conversation.

He didn't press further but offered a knowing nod. "It's unsurprising ever since Ronaldo came here, everyone wants to dribble around the world. Anyways, welcome to Turin. Enjoy your stay."

I thanked him and took my food to a nearby bench, where I could people-watch without feeling too exposed. Turin's rhythm is distinctly different from any other city I've been to over the years. Despite it being a modern city, it felt more like a blend of a Victorian city with people donning warm smiles as they got on with their morning routine.

Even those racing off to work wore polite smiles as they interacted with their peers. It wasn't too long until the first street performance turned up at around 10:30 am. It was refreshing to be a part of it, even if only for a moment.

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[11:15 – Via Roma, Turin, Italy]

Continuing my exploration, I wandered along Via Roma, one of the city's main shopping streets. The designer stores lining the boulevard tempted me, but I wasn't here to shop. I stopped by a street vendor selling gelato and indulged in a scoop of pistachio, savouring the creamy texture as I made my way toward Parco del Valentino.

"I feel like I cracked the code to a perfect date," I muttered to myself as it made sense in my head that if I took May here or another city neither of us had been to, just exploring would be an adventure of its own.

{Host that's called going on holiday,}

Chapter 378 378 Monkey Boy

[Monday, 30/092019, 11:15, – Via Roma, Turin, Italy]

Ignoring Eva my gaze travelled towards the figure of an elderly man sitting on a bench, sketching the skyline with impressive precision. His easel was battered, and his hands trembled slightly, but his focus

was unwavering. The way his hands danced on the canvas was a mesmerizing sight and before I realized I was sitting adjacent to him on a nearby bench watching him paint.

Beautiful work," I commented, admiring the intricate details of his sketch the moment he put down his brush. He glanced up, his eyes twinkling with pride. "Grazie, giovane. You like art?"

"I appreciate it," I said honestly. "But I could never create something like that." I truthfully responded as I looked at the painting depicting the image of the street as the rising sun cast a beautiful glow.

He chuckled. "Everyone has their art. What is yours?" Hesitating for a moment I confidently answered him. "Football."

"Ah," he exclaimed with a bright smile before proceeding to fish in his bag pulling out an iPhone 5 after a few moments. It looked as new as if it had just left its box a few days ago and looking at the careful nature he handled it as if he was trying to solve pie told me all I needed to know. "The kind of art that makes people dream. Don't underestimate its value."

A moment later he showed me a picture of him and Diego Maradona standing next to each other. Flicking to the next page I saw a picture of him a couple of years older standing next to an alien Inter Milan kit. If that wasn't enough the next picture showed him standing next to the smiling magician Ronaldinho Gaúcho himself in an AC Milan kit.

Before I even realized I was flipping through his gallery looking at one Serie A Icon after another and each time he was posing with them. The pictures weren't fake either as there weren't any similarities in the pictures, some were even in casual locations like a Cafe. Pirlo, Baggio, Maldini, Zanetti and Nesta were just a few of the notable names that I could recognize. The one that broke the camel was the picture with my favourite player donning a black and white Juve kit.



'Hey Eva, I'm starting to think that this guy might be the Main Character,' I found myself saying not willing to accept that this old man is just that lucky to meet all these legends who have shaped Italian football. 'With his luck, he might have a signing system,'

{Would like for me to request a one-time memory wipe procedure due to mental trauma?} she simply questioned with a neutral tone, giving me the feeling that even she was flabbergasted at this turn of events.

"Sigh, Wait is that, Garry Nevel?" I asked the old man caught completely off guard at seeing the Englishman's face after seeing so many Serie A Icons. "Haha Yes, Garry is ok despite being English," he stated as I handed him his phone prompting a few anecdotes on how the two had met.

"Marco, let's get a picture together," I told the man after seeing quite a while conversing with him about this and that. Listening to him talk about his adventures travelling around the country following his hobby of drawing and watching football.

The fact he isn't even from a rich family and simply earned his wealth along the way made his story much more interesting. By the end of his narration of how he witnessed the Great Maradona lift the Serie A trophy in 1987 with Napoli. By the end of it, I had truly become his fan wondering how Netflix hasn't picked up his movie rights yet.

He didn't let my request down either as he quickly acquiesced to my request. "Sure, I wouldn't miss the chance to get a picture with a future king of the pitch, though I doubt you will have an easy time against the old lady tomorrow." He responded with a bright smile, surprising me with the fact he not only knew I was a footballer but also who I was.

"Hahaha, make sure to watch the game then Marco, I will show you my art against my Idol," I replied with a bright smile before we proceeded to take the pictures one for him and another for me on my phone.

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[12:30 – A Random Skate Park, Turin, Italy]

After saying goodbye to Marco, I continued exploring the city and found myself at a skate park nestled next to a street football court. The area was alive with energy—skaters executing tricks on ramps while a 5-vs-5 Street football match drew a lively crowd. The court was small, enclosed by metal fences, with graffiti covering every surface.

That added with the viewers banging against the fence added a lively aura to the ongoing match as the players pulled into their bag of tricks. One of the players, a wiry teenager with messy hair and a Barcelona jersey, caught my eye. He moved with confidence, weaving past a defender before performing a rainbow flick over the next one to send a pass to his teammate.

The Bald man with a Brazil R9 kit chested the ball down before rifling a shot towards goal not giving the keeper a chance to react. "Whoooo, let's go Carlo (Bom, Bom, Bom)," A few eager spectators exclaimed before proceeding to bang the metal fence causing a chain reaction.

The game wasn't over though as the team that had just conceded kicked off quickly. A slightly chubby boy wearing a Messi kit picked up the ball and proceeded to dribble through the opposing team. You heard me right dribble not bulldoze, the man was practically a ballerina as he glided past the opposing team.

"Amazing right, that is Turin FC little Messi. If not for this weight he would be playing Juve Academy and Ronaldo if Sarri wasn't blind. Plus, he's only 14 so the moment he locks in like Kai Cenat he's going to be the Messi of Italy and not just Turin," a voice called out, pulling me from my thoughts. I turned to see a young boy, probably no older than ten, staring up at me with shining eyes.

"You're right his technical skills are a notch above the rest, but if he doesn't lock in as you said little man his ankles will give out," I honestly responded already seeing the unnecessary strain his ankles were placed under. Having spent most of my football journey working on strengthening my ankle strength and mobility spotting, this wasn't hard.

However, this guy's problem wasn't the same as mine where I worked to prevent future injuries caused by tackles and my own skills. His problem caused by his weight was forcing his ankles to work at 120% every time he performed a change of direction at high speed. The best way to describe it would be that his ankles and knees were forced to bear the pressure of all his extra fat and would eventually give out like overused F1 tyres.

"Liar My Big brother is just fine he is going to be as good as Messi" the boy retorted after hearing my words snapping me out of my thoughts. "Sure, I simply responded seeing no need to argue with a kid on my day off.

"hmpf, you're just jealous of his talent," He retorted before running off to find his brother who had just scored the wing goal with a self-assisted overhead kick. Sighing at this, I simply leaned against the fence looking into the park, feeling the urge to try my hand on the court.

"Hey did you call me fat, Monkey boy,"

Chapter 379 379 2Pac

"What is going on over there, why is our little Messi arguing with that foreigner," a dark-haired teenager at the side of the street football court asked a nearby spectator.

The spectator, a wiry man wearing a Juventus scarf, leaned against the metal fence. "Not sure," he replied, his eyes glued to the scene. "That guy just showed up, said something to little Anto, now it looks like he and Leonardo are about to square off. You know how these kids are—any excuse for drama."

The teenager chuckled, crossing his arms. "Well, he'd better watch out. Our Messi's got a temper, especially when someone questions his skills."

On the court, Rakim found himself standing in front of the chubby kid who was doing his best to turn his XL kit into an XXL. The moment he called him a monkey a part of him felt like channelling his inner Tyson, but rationality took hold. For one he had much worse stuff from players on the field or even fans and two he grew up in white America.

Turns out that just because your family is rich Racism still remains prevalent and just takes on a different type of beast. Kids in school asking if they can say the N-word if it's in a song or trying to excuse it because of that. The worst of it is the innocently racist questions like, 'Have you watched Roots? Does it look like I was born in the last century?' You speak good English like I ain't lived here for most of my life, "I'm not a racist. I have several Black friends,' Bitch so do I and they swing on sight,"

Doing his best to ignore the passive-aggressive ideas that popped into his head Rakim did his best to retain his cool as the fat wannabe Messi went on a trade of English and Italian. "If you think you're so good, why don't you prove it? Let's see if you can even keep up with us." He suddenly stated with a confident smile after going on a slew of Italian words that were spoken too fast for me to understand.

"You know what Teletubby Boy, you have finally said something smart. Let's play a quick game I've already lost enough of brain cells here." I responded before proceeding to take off the shades I had

bought on the way and the black cap hiding my dreads. "Your Carlo mind if run with you guys for a rematch?"

"Y'yeah, I mean of course you can but ain't you Rakim the Dream aka Mr Showtime himself aka The Special One?" The bald man named Carlo responded with a stunned expression obviously recognizing who exactly was standing in front of him.

The moment his words fell a respectable teenager stated with a light smile, "Why is Carlo D\$*k riding so hard?" His words immediately caused nearby people in the peanut gallery to make similar statements.

"I don't know but he finna choke if he doesn't stop soon," a second guy commented instantly setting off a tirade of comments as Gen Z logic took over.

"Maybe he is trying to tell us something," another guy commented lowering his voice, but it was still audible. "That he takes it from..."

"Shut up! This guy is Rakim Rex, He will be playing against Ronald at the Allianz Stadium tomorrow," Carlo quickly retorted, stopping the gossiping onlookers and earning Rakim a few second glances.

"Why You lying Carlo, I heard Rakim died in a plane crash yesterday, may he rest in peace," A stylishly dressed man stated before explaining what he had read in the morning news.

"Yuh, Carlo do your research if you want to lie next time," Leonardo commented from the side before he proceeded to walk to his side of the pitch with his teammates.

"Fake News!" Carlo exclaimed only to be met with more ridiculing gazes. "What You think you're that orange guy from America or something?"

Carlo could only sigh in disappointment as he proceeded to guide Rakim towards their side of the half. He had thought the guy looked familiar the whole time Anto and Leonardo were arguing but a part of him didn't want to believe it. That last part was what held him back especially since he had seen his clips of him destroying professional defenses. So random street ballers disrespecting someone who is considered a young phenom around the world didn't make sense to him.

"Hi, you can call me Mr Showtime, but my Mum calls me her baby, but I think Rakim is good enough," Rakim stated the moment they huddled together causing the air between the six players to grow silent.

"Hahaha Good one bro, Carlo where did you get this Joker?" A teenage boy who goes by the name of Jason wearing a PSG kit stated causing the others to burst out laughing.

"Well, Jason," Rakim said with a smirk, casually bouncing the ball between his feet, "I got my jokes from the same place I got my skills—straight from the source." With a swift flick of his ankle, he sent the ball spinning up into the air, catching it effortlessly on his head and balancing it on his forehead. The next moment he suddenly tilted his head forward locking eyes with Jason across from him. "But don't worry, I'll keep it light on you guys. Wouldn't want anyone leaving here crying."

The group erupted in a mix of laughter and mock protests, but Carlo cut through the noise. "Alright, alright! Enough talk. Rakim or not let's see if my boy here can actually back it up, Ben you mind sitting this one out?"

"No prob's, things were getting too hot anyway, Leo Pig looks like he wants to skewer us," The blond man in his 30s stated with a tired smile as he took some laboured breaths. One could easily tell he was

only playing here for recreational purposes. "Thank you," Rakim told the man grateful for him giving up his spot.

With a quick nod, Rakim stepped onto the makeshift street court, taking a moment to absorb the atmosphere. The gritty texture of the concrete beneath his Samba Classic sneakers, the faint smell of sweat and asphalt in the air, and the sharp clang of the chain-link fence rattling as spectators jostled for better views—all of it was a far cry from the pristine grass of a professional stadium. But that didn't matter. Here, it was all about the love of the game and proving yourself, no matter who you were or where you came from.

Leonardo, already positioned with his team, smirked and clapped his hands. "Alright, Monkey Boy let's see what you got." Rakim grinned, rolling his neck to loosen up his green eyes now gleamed with a dangerous glint as he locked eyes with the boy. "Let's get the show on the road Leo Pig,"

The ball was placed at the centre, and since Carlo's team had lost the last round, they kicked off the match. Knocking the ball back towards Philippe who played in the back line with Tony. The defender didn't stop the ball but merely flicked it to his chest before juggling it as one of Leo's teammates charged at him.

Philippe didn't even bother taking him on as he knocked the ball over to Rakim with a volley. In part, he wanted to see what this guy could do after the little he had seen and another part of him believed what Carlo said about this guy being a pro baller. Rakim deftly received the ball with his heel flicking it up and seeing the elephant charge of Leo he watched the guy in a 2Pac shirt perform a deft sombrero.

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Rakim smirked as he performed the sombrero, the ball soaring over Leonardo's head as if time slowed. The crowd erupted in gasps and cheers, the chain-link fence trembling with the energy of spectators slamming their hands against it. Followed by the loud rhythmic sound of Family ties blasting through the speakers, adding more energy to the atmosphere.

None of this mattered to Leonardo though as he animatedly turned, his face red with frustration, only to see Rakim casually catch the ball on his chest. He didn't sprint forward and instead performed a lofted rebona pass forward into the path of Carlo. The pass was picture-perfect sailing just past the last defender dropping into his path.

Not hesitating he took his shot on the bounce before he could enter the semicircle marking the box. A muffled thud rang out as he sent the ball rocketing forward slicing through the air like a bullet, aimed for the top corner. The goalkeeper could only leap into the air in a star jump as he tried to mark the angle of the Handball goal.

The metallic clang of the ball smacked the crossbar before it nestled itself into the back of the net. The crowd exploded, a chaotic symphony of cheers, whistles, and shouted praise for Carlo's strike. Carlo himself proceeded to run towards a corner where a guy holding a camera was and got sturdy followed by the rest of his teammates matching his vibe.

Soaking in the adulation of the crowd they celebrated with genuine smiles. "Not bad for a banker, eh?" Carlo quipped, winking at Rakim as they exchanged a quick fist bump on their way back to their half.

Rakim jogged back to his half with a smirk, nodding at Carlo's celebration. The crowd was still buzzing, the energy infectious as the music transitioned to another beat-heavy track. "Banker or not," Rakim said, "you're doing alright, but let's turn it up a notch."

Leonardo grabbed the ball, his expression dark as he set it down for the restart. "Don't get cocky, Monkey Boy," he spat, but Rakim only laughed, adjusting his Amari Jeans as he took a low stance, ready for the challenge.

The game resumed with Leonardo's team tapping the ball to their left winger. The guy, tall and wiry, tried to sprint past Philippe with a quick step-over, but Philippe stuck out a leg and intercepted cleanly, sending the ball rolling to Rakim on the right wing.

Rakim controlled the ball with his instep, his movements fluid, almost hypnotic as he turned on his axis directly skipping past an opponent. He let the next defender close in as he dribbled forward, a short, stocky teen with a shaved head. As the boy lunged, Rakim pulled off a swift Akka 3000—rolling the ball with one foot before snapping it around the defender's outstretched leg with the other. The crowd was left stupefied not expecting the new guy to know one of their familiar moves.

They had acknowledged his playing ability after the first goal but only now did they realize he might be a baller. They couldn't believe it and most waited to see if he could recover the ball as they watched the defender stumble, desperately trying to recover. However, Rakim simply danced by the guy so nimbly that by the time the opposing player turned he had already taken control of the ball.

But Rakim wasn't done. With two more players closing in, he flicked the ball toward the wall of the court. It ricocheted back to him, perfectly angled to bypass one of the defenders, leaving him flat-footed. The second defender tried to body him off the ball, but Rakim used his low centre of gravity to spin away, flicking the ball through the narrowest gap between the defender's legs.

"Nutmeg!" someone shouted, and the spectators hollered, banging on the fence like wild animals.

With the path clear, Rakim charged down the sideline, but Leonardo wasn't about to let him go uncontested. He sprinted across the court, his stocky frame closing in fast. Anticipating the challenge, Rakim turned his body to shield the ball, keeping his movements tight. As Leonardo reached out to shove him, Rakim leaned into the contact, using the momentum to execute a 360 Roulette, spinning off the defender and leaving him grasping at thin air.

"Too smooth!" a voice yelled from the crowd, followed by laughter.

Now at the edge of the semicircle, Rakim faced the goalkeeper, who was nervously shuffling on his line. Instead of shooting, Rakim leaned back and faked a strike, freezing the keeper in place. In the same motion, he scooped the ball upward and off the wall behind the goal, letting it bounce once before spinning back into play.

Carlo, perfectly positioned near the far post, volleyed the ball mid-air with his weaker foot. The ball struck the back of the net cleanly, and the celebration was instant. "Goal!" the commentator-like voice from the peanut gallery shouted as Carlo once again began his celebration with another dance.

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[10 minutes Later]

A shocking scene unfolded on the court and the viewers could hardly believe what they were seeing. Leo and his Turin stars were gasping for breath trying their best to chase after the ball, but the new guy wouldn't let them even get a whiff of it. The only time they regained possession of the ball was to restart the match after conceding.

"Could that guy really be Rakim?" One of the viewers asked his friends around him as they watched Carlo score his 9th goal of the match. The guy somehow found the ball at his feet or near him whenever he was free in front of the goal, it was honestly spooky.

"Not you too, didn't you read the BBC say he died with the rest of the team. I agree that this guy is a baller and that they look pretty similar but isn't that normal for their kind?" Another lad commented

from the side not willing to believe that a professional footballer was just as good in street football as those who have dedicated a few good years to the sport.

"haha Bro that's too far, you're giving him the same respect Lukaku receives." someone else commented with a light smirk not understanding why his friend was showing such A-grade sportsmanship to a random black player.

"Haha, you're right but isn't that what the cops in America say when they shoot one of them by mistake." The second guy commented with a smirk as he watched Leo initiate what would be his last attack.

The guy now moved with more determination not because he wanted to win but simply to salvage his pride. The guy he had started this with didn't even take him seriously and the humiliation he felt at this moment was beyond what he had ever experienced.

So, he wasted no time charging forward with the ball at his feet. Passing it to his teammates didn't even pop into his mind. Leonardo stormed forward, his jaw clenched, and eyes narrowed with frustration. The ball stayed glued to his feet as he weaved past two of Rakim's teammates, using raw technique and strength.

His teammates shouted for a pass, but Leonardo ignored them, focused solely on facing Rakim one-on-one. Rakim stepped forward, a calm smile playing on his lips. He crouched low, ready for the challenge, as the crowd roared in anticipation. Leonardo launched into a hard feint to the right, but Rakim didn't bite. Instead, he waited, reading Leonardo's movements like an open book.

As Leonardo lunged left, Rakim reacted instantly, stabbing the ball away with a precise tackle. The ball ricocheted toward the wall, and in one fluid motion, Rakim sprinted after it, catching it before it could bounce back fully.

With a deft touch, he flicked the ball upward against the wall, letting it rebound over a defender rushing to block him. The defender stopped short, bewildered, as Rakim caught the ball with a pirouette, spinning away from the pressure with the grace of a dancer.

The spectators were losing their minds, pounding on the chain-link fence so hard it seemed like it might collapse. Now free on the sideline, Rakim saw another defender closing in. He slowed, baiting the opponent into a tackle, and when the player lunged, Rakim deftly lifted the ball over his sliding body, catching it on his other foot.

Leonardo, now angrier than ever, came barreling toward Rakim again. This time, Rakim backed toward the wall, trapping the ball against it with the sole of his foot. Leonardo hesitated, confused, as Rakim pressed his back to the wall and performed a cheeky flip-flap to push the ball past him. Using the wall for leverage, Rakim pushed off and darted around Leonardo, reclaiming possession before the stunned defender could even turn.

Reaching the edge of the semicircle, Rakim slowed again, his head up as he surveyed the court. The goalkeeper stood frozen, unsure whether to rush out or stay back. Rakim feigned another shot, drawing the keeper off his line, then casually dinked the ball against the wall beside the goal. The ball rebounded across the box, where Carlo, once again perfectly positioned, volleyed it into the net with a thunderous strike.

"That's ten!" someone shouted, counting Carlo's goals. Rakim didn't celebrate long as he dabbed his teammates goodbye before heading to the exit

Crossing paths with little Anton he gave the boy a light smirk as he once again donned his cap and shades. "You know you're right the little Piggy is a once-in-a-century talent, he'll probably surpass Messi at the buffet table.

