

Legends 761

Chapter 761: Transfer Rodeo: Explosive Rumors

"Stall for now,"

"Let's see whether some other clubs will make an offer, but if there's nothing by... let's say a month from now, push ahead with Tottenham," Jason said, nodding thoughtfully.

'Breaking an age-old curse might be an interesting experience,' he thought to himself.

"What should I do with the rest of the offers? The other clubs?"

"Should I reject them outright or tell them you're still considering things?" Adele asked.

"Just string them along for now, don't give them anything definite, don't want to close out our options," Jason shrugged.

"Alright," Adele nodded, thinking to herself that she wouldn't stop there.

If she wanted to cause a sense of urgency among the teams trying to sign Jason, she would have to play with the media a bit.

Luckily, she had been collecting contacts and favors for moments like these and already had a plan to blow up Jason's wantaway attitude from Oporto.

"Today is the 28th, right? Players begin resuming at their clubs from the first of next month for the preseason preparations, right?"

"Will you be heading back to Porto then?" Adele suddenly remembered to ask, having some thoughts about this matter.

"About that... no," Jason said, scratching the back of his head.

"I have a bit of an extra break since I went for International duties earlier and closed out my season a lot later than the other players, but even then, I think I'll take another two weeks or another month of..."

"Depends on how I feel at the time," Jason replied.

"Another two weeks to a month? Why?" Adele asked, surprised. She knew Jason wasn't one to play truant.

"If those guys can still attempt to get me to renew my contract with them after everything that has happened, then I think I have the right to react in a way I feel like as well,"

"Really need to drive home the fact that I won't be staying. I can start working on getting back to match fitness even without being at the club," Jason picked up the menu to order, feeling hungry.

"Oh. Okay, you do that," Adele muttered, thinking to herself that this fitted very well into her plans. She had been thinking of how to ask him to play along, but now that he was taking action on his own, all was well and good.

"Huh? You won't try to change my mind?" Jason asked, surprised by her acquiescence.

Her lips pursed, Adele looked up at him with a mischievous expression.

"... I don't even want to know what you're planning. Just don't do too much," It was clear that she was up to no good.

Anyway, it didn't matter much. He would be a first-time offender for whatever he was about to do so all he would end up with was deduction of a few weeks wages at most even if he took things a bit far.

The days passed and while Jason had headed back to America for an actual break, his media duties over, the world clock kept turning and things kept moving.

The beginning of the month of July saw most football players head back to their clubs to begin the preparations for pre-season and get back to match fitness, preparing for the new seasons.

Meanwhile, the transfer market had reached a feverish high with deals being signed, rumors spreading, new coaches arriving at their new stations, bringing their teams with them or joining the clubs as they were.

All in all, things were moving along in the football and the preparations for the new season was underway all over the professional world.

As the days went along, the fans could keep up with what was occurring at the clubs thanks to the club's social media pages and a few other sources of internal information.

While the fans of other clubs were getting excited about things like new transfers, new jerseys and new addition to the coach staff or the sponsors, the Oporto fans were the first to notice that among the faces resuming at the club for preseason, one face was nowhere to be found.

With reports coming from trusted sources that Jason would not be resuming for a little more thanks to his calendar the previous season, the curious thoughts of the fans were calmed for a bit.

However, soon enough, rumors started showing up regarding interest from other clubs and their thoughts to sweep him up for cheap and sure enough, that sparked outrage from Oporto fans, Jason's fans and Nigerian fans.

The Nigerian fans were especially incensed as this wasn't the first time big clubs had tried to sign Nigerian talents for less than what was their perceived worth, however they could only rage within themselves.

The same went for Jason's personal fans.

The Oporto fans were not as docile. Taking to the social media pages, they expressed their disappointment and annoyance over the situation.

They already knew that keeping Jason at the club was not something that was likely to happen due to the unwillingness of the player himself to stay, however, the fans hoped to make at least a bit of money from Jason so they could get themselves a replacement at least.

Already unhappy with how the interested clubs were only trying to sign him on a free transfer instead of paying a huge fee that would greatly help their finances, seeing them try to sign him for a very low wage didn't make them happier.

They had figured out that the plan of those big clubs was to sign Jason on a free transfer and then pay a fee to trigger the contract ahead of time, however, the fee to trigger the contract ahead of time would depend on how much the wage conditions said.

The wage conditions would serve as a way to measure the player's worth since there wasn't a transfer fee which meant the higher the wage bill, the higher the fee they would get when the club tried to get Jason to join them ahead of time.

Even if they offered Jason a wage bill of over 200k Euros, they still wouldn't be paying any more than 20 to 30 million Euros to get him to join them within the current transfer window.

Yet these people were still trying to scrounge on such a low fee for such a quality player and in turn further reducing how much they would have to pay Oporto to add Jason to their ranks.

How could the Oporto fans not be angry?

While the media was effortlessly turning the football world upside down with all sorts of news everyday, another particular interesting piece of news suddenly caught quite a lot of attention.

Jason had been allowed an extra two weeks of break due to his situation, however 15 days into the month of July and news started surfacing that Jason had yet to report to the Oporto team's training grounds.

The rumors exploded yet again.

Chapter 762: Arrival At the Fiserv Forum

While the rumor mill exploded and various articles dropped their own two cents, taking guesses on what could be the reasons behind Jason playing truant and not yet joining the team for training, the man himself had just landed in Milwaukee with nary a care in the world.

A couple of days ago, he had gotten a ticket to the NBA finals game from Shaq.

Initially, Shaq had made plans to go watch the NBA finals game that could probably win the Milwaukee Bucks their first championship ever, but something suddenly came up and the African blood in him wasn't about to let a \$29k courtside ticket go to waste.

Somehow, he had gotten Jason to agree to buy it from him.

Jason 'agreed' to buy it on credit, but in reality, he hardly had any plans of paying for the ticket... well not for the next year at least.

With a ticket in hand, he had made his way to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, checked into a hotel for a one-night stay and stashed his luggage there before laying down to rest a bit.

After watching the finals game tonight, he planned to head back to Porto tomorrow, cutting his extended break short.

He wasn't exactly looking forward to seeing Mylo's face again, but getting a top-of-the-line facility for him to get back to match fitness was proving a little difficult so he had given up on finding one.

Better to go back to Oporto where he had all those facilities at the ready. The atmosphere didn't matter to him as he wouldn't be staying long anyway.

He didn't want to have to start preparing for the season only after joining a new club, and also, the rumors about him had been getting a little too crazy.

Clearly Adele had been doing a little too much and only his appearance at the club would calm things down a bit.

Going to sleep for a while, he slept till 5:30, waking up to the sound of his alarm. The game would start at 8 and normally gates at the club's grounds could open to spectators anytime from 90 minutes to 60 minutes before the game.

However, this was an NBA finals game and potentially one that could end with one team lifting the championship.

Coming from 2-0 down, the Milwaukee Bucks had won the last three games, staging the comeback of a century so all eyes were on them to see whether they could end things with a bang tonight.

Definitely, the place was going to be overcrowded so a little preparation was necessary.

Of course, most of that didn't concern Jason who had a premium ticket, but he just liked to be prepared, plus there weren't much demerits to arriving early... was what he thought.

However by the time he was done and called a uber, the time he had left had begun to look a little thin.

He had forgotten himself a bit and had taken his sweet time cleaning up and dressing up.

The music he had been playing at a loud volume and singing along to definitely hadn't helped out.

Finally stepping out of his hotel room in a short-sleeve black shirt he wore open, showing off the inner white Evo brand shirt, and a pair of black shorts.

They were topped with suede black evo fenty shoes.

From top to bottom, everything he was wearing was an outfit gifted him to him by Evo... one of the many he had received after signing a sponsorship contract with them.

Apparently, they didn't only make only sportswear and they had made sure to demonstrate that very well to him.

Of course, he wasn't under any obligation to wear their branded outfits all the time.

Adele's negotiation skills had made sure of that, but he was supposed to represent them whenever he could and what better place to do that at an NBA finals game with thousands of people, plus he liked the clothes as they were pretty nice and comfy.

Plus it was hot... only 25 degrees Celsius, but that was the hottest it could get in Milwaukee. It wasn't as hot as many other places Jason had stayed at, but Jason definitely didn't feel like he needed heat.

Also, for once he didn't have to wear a hoodie as for once, he was in a place where most people wouldn't recognize him if he simply went walking down the street.

He was still handsome and definitely still turned heads, but that was because of his face and figure, not because people recognized him as Jason Rose, the footballer.

Americans' greater interest in what they called their own football and the NBA had made sure that most of the sports media presence in the country was on almost anything but football.

Since he wasn't playing for their national team, it was an added bonus.

Stepping out of the hotel comfortably, Jason looked for the Uber he had called, an E-class Mercedes.

Finding and getting into the car, Jason's journey to the Fiserv Forum with a surprisingly chatty driver commenced.

The driver was a die-hard fan of the Bucks himself and carrying Jason to the Fiserv Forum was his last trip for the day. He would be staying behind to watch the game as well.

Only when they neared the court's grounds did Jason begin to regret his earlier actions that had made him a bit late.

It wasn't even 7 pm yet and everywhere was swamped with vehicles and people moving towards the Forum.

The Fiserv Forum was a new ground for the Milwaukee bucks that was opened in 2018 and apart from being able to seat 17000 people for the game, it also had an area called the Deer District outside the stadium filled with screens for anyone who didn't get tickets but still wanted to watch the game with a crowd of fans.

Already, over 30000 people were in the area and the number was only going to keep increasing.

Luckily for Jason, his ticket was premium so he could go in through the VIP entrance, skipping any long lines.

Preparations for the event were very extensive, with guards and police officers available to ensure smooth passing for cars and Jason was soon dropped off at the VIP entrance.

After paying his fare, he said goodbye to the chatty driver and walked into the Fiserv Forum via one of the VIP entrances.

Chapter 763: Seat Set Up

After making his way through the VIP entrance, Jason was guided through the arena's grounds and out to the court.

When he checked in, he had been told that there was a wait-in service for the courtside section and they could order food all while never having to leave their seats

However, Jason was a little hungry and didn't want to wait until he reached his seat before having someone bring him food.

He also wasn't about to download the Bucks app just so that he could order some food at an arena he might not visit other than today.

Instead, he branched at the exclusive restaurant and bought a lemon lime burst craft soda. He would order food later.

He didn't want to carry food all the way to his courtside seat either, he just needed something to stave off his hunger for the time being.

Finally making it into the arena with the seats around the court rapidly filling up, Jason walked up to a staff member for directions.

The staff took one look at Jason's ticket and gave him directions to where his seat would be and Jason walked along, a craft soda in one hand and his ticket in the other, looking for seat number 7.

However, when he finally found seat number 7, he stopped in his tracks and cursed out in a loud whisper.

"Fucking Shaq,"

"Michael fu*king Dapah," he cursed and would have face palmed if his hands weren't busy.

"I shoulda known, I shoulda fu*king known this deal was too good to be true," he muttered with a wry smile as he shoved his ticket inside a pocket and took out his phone, instantly dialing Big Shaq.

The phone rang twice before a click was heard on the other end,

"Hello?" Shaq's calm voice came through the phone.

"Swear you didn't know the seating arrangements of these courtside seats," Jason said immediately.

"What? Huh? It's loud on your end, I can't hear you. Where you at?" Shaq said, raising his voice.

"Where am I at? Ni**a, you was the one who gave me the damn tickets to an NBA game!" Jason replied in hushed, harsh whispers, just barely remembering not to shout.

"Oh, you're at the game? Wish I coulda gone. Hey man, you ain't gonna thank a brother for setting you up real nice eh?" Somehow this time, Shaq could hear Jason.

"Setting me up?"

"You were setting yourself up and I am the lucky one who has to deal with the aftermath of your plot,"

"Were you being for real man?"

"A seat between Megan the stallion, Iggy Azalea and Marsai Martin?"

"I'm looking around but ain't nobody on these court taking more shots than you are," Jason almost laughed when he voiced the situation into words.

"You shoulda just told me, I'd have sold the goddamn ticket myself," he added. He didn't need to watch a basketball game that much.

The resale value of this ticket might even go up to a hundred thousand dollars.

Even then, not many people would sell the ticket and pass up the chance to be seated among these three women if they ever had the chance.

Jason didn't have that problem, but it was too late now.

"Hey, a man's gotta try right? Anyway, you're in my seat now, you take this time to play with the big girls before the season begins again,"

"Your movements have been a little stiff lately, you need to loosen up your groin and waist muscles," Shaq said sneakily and Jason could picture the horrible grin the guy would have on his face as he said that.

"Fu*k you man, you know I can't be doing that bruh," Jason laughed.

"But it's Megan the stallion broooo, Megannnn, you seen the kinda ass she got on her,"

"And Iggy bro, you know I'd just drown in that white chocolate,"

"And Marsai-" Shaq began but Jason stopped him right there.

"Hey hey hey hey, she underage bro, whatchu you even saying?" Jason cut him off.

"She turn 18 in August, she already there gang. Who's counting anyway?" Shaq scoffed.

"The press, The FBI agent listening to this call," Jason listed off.

"Hey FBI agent, I don't mean nothing by that. We just playing for real," Shaq said in a mock serious tone that had Jason laughing instantly.

"Anyway, Marsai's off the table, but the other two are fair game," Shaq continued.

"Bro I'm only going to be here one night," Jason said like that was supposed to mean something and Shaq called him out immediately.

"Like that's supposed to stop a nigga with a face like yours. Even if you don't want Marsai, as soon as Marsai see you, she want you," Shaq rolled his eyes at Jason.

"... Good point, but not the one we need right now," Jason giggled at the thought.

"Anyway you do you man. Crack if you wanna crack, or you can go back to your boring hotel for a night alone with your lotion and the hub,"

"It's a good opportunity for a night you'll never forget. Hell you can brag about this to your kids, that's all I'm saying gang, that's all I'm saying," Shaq said like he was on the higher moral ground.

"Man fuck you,"

"I don't do none of that lotion stuff. I can easily get someone to suck my di*k anytime I need it. Not that I do," slightly annoyed by the lotion part of Shaq's words, Jason said something he normally wouldn't.

"Now imagine if that was Megan or Iggy, or... hm hmmm, you know what I'm talking bout'," Shaq said sneakily, fully taking on the role of the devil's whisper in Jason's ears.

"Man focus on your business," Jason rolled his eyes and ended the call with a click before Shaq got any more words in.

"Why did I even call that nigga,"

"Like that was supposed to change anything," Jason laughed to himself, already regretting his decision to call Michael, however if he was put in the same situation again, he would definitely call the culprit behind the scenario.

After all, looking at the empty seat between Megan the stallion and Iggy Azaela with his seat number on it and Marsai Martin seated behind Megan was enough to shock anyone unless they knew this was going to happen beforehand.

With all that said and done, Jason couldn't put off going to his seat anymore now that his call was over. The game was also past its warmup stage and they were about to begin player introductions.

Taking a deep breath to regulate his breathing, the small smile on his face disappeared as his heart rate calmed and he walked over to his seat.

"Hello ladies," he said with barely a glance at them and sat down, waiting for the game to start.

He was here for a basketball game, simple as that, he told himself, however whether things would remain like that was a mystery.

Chapter 764: New Look

"Well hello there handsome," Megan almost whistled as she was blessed with Jason's side profile.

"I was going to give a piece of my mind to the ni**a who had put himself between our little girl gathering, but now I don't... mind," she paused and almost stammered when Jason turned to her mid-speech, his blue eyes flashing and throwing all her hormones all over the place.

Marsai who was on Megan's side was also pretty shocked when she looked straight into Jason's sapphire blue eyes that gleamed in the light.

"... Well thank God I managed to change your mind," Jason said, a little smile playing at the edge of his lips.

"Hi," Marsai said with a small wave, her actions reminiscent of a shy teenage girl in front of her crush.

"Hi," Jason replied back before looking away and laying back into his chair to wait out the rest of the introductions of the players on the court.

Iggy Azaela had seen the stunned looks on Megan and Marsai's face, but she had also seen a bit of Jason's side profile earlier and while she thought he would be handsome, she didn't understand the reason for Marsai and Megan's stunned looks.

At least until Jason leaned back and she finally got a clear look at his face.

His blue forget-me-not eyes turned toward her when he noticed her looking at him, his head stationary, but they turned back again like he wasn't the least shaken by someone like her looking at him.

That attitude that seemed to dismiss the three beautiful and famous women seated beside him only seemed to attract them even more because for some weird reason, women's psychology made them more interested in guys who didn't seem to think much of them.

They seemed to derive some sort of achievement in making a man who didn't pay attention to them previously, begin to pay attention to them.

Jason however wasn't thinking that far.

As a footballer who dealt with all sorts of stares every week while he played on the field and all around the world, three women looking at him did little to shake him.

He already knew he was quite the eye magnet and his newly dyed hair had made him a bit more eye-catching than usual.

While he and Adele had been fooling around a bit after the negotiations, their conversation had somehow become about which one of them was better at looking good.

This wasn't a competition of their natural beauty... but rather how good they were at accentuating that with clothes, hairstyles and even the way they carried themselves.

Jason had tried to argue that he was better as he had a lot of confidence in his fashion sense, but Adele had fought back with how his hairstyle was predictable and that most of his fashion styles were tilted towards accommodating his long hairstyle.

In other words, he was generic, predictable, and 'so last year'.

And Jason took that personally.

Since she said he couldn't pull off any other hairstyles than his long hair, he was going to prove her wrong.

Of course, it wasn't an easy decision to allow a razor within a meter of his head, but thinking to himself that after a decade of leading in the bet he made with his sister, he could now act like a good brother and let her win.

In the end, he had done his research and then visited the most skilled hair stylist he could find in America.

After a while of brainstorming with Jason, the stylist had gotten to work sculpting Jason's hair from long all the way till mid-length, almost bordering on short.

It was still long enough to reach his neck if he pulled it, but it mostly just stayed in a curly mop on his head.

After reducing the length, the stylist had then styled a modern mullet, reducing the sides of Jason's hair just enough to make the curly middle to stand out.

After that, was dying it a bleached grey that almost looked white and even shone blue in blue light. Not everything was dyed though and some strands of black and the black ends made the gray pop, creating a contrasting beauty.

With that, Jason's uncaring handsomeness suddenly had a lot more of a caring touch on it and there was no need to mention how much more attractive that had made him all of a sudden.

For the first time in a long time, Jason got to feel air on the back of his neck and flowing through his hair.

It was weird but it did feel nice.

The results of his decision to change his look was more attention from randoms and funny enough, the new hairstyle had made him quite a bit unrecognizable.

At first Jason had thought that the American people didn't care about him and mostly didn't recognize him, but it didn't take much longer of a look in the mirror to realize that his new look was helping a lot.

Funny enough, he was enjoying the whole not being recognized thing.

Back to the court though.

Jason figured out that his new look was probably just that impressive, and maybe his eyes were what caused the attention. They did stand out after all.

Black people with eye colors other than brown were already rare and one with blue eyes were especially rare... At least Jason hadn't seen any other person like him.

Ignoring the staring megastars, Jason caught a sight of one of the attendants of the courtside section and suddenly remembered that he was hungry.

Calling out to the attendant, Jason took a quick glance through the list of the available snacks and began ordering.

By the time he was done ordering, even the attendant was a bit surprised at how many things he had picked and the quantity he had asked for, but glancing at the women beside Jason, he gave a self-knowing nod and walked away to bring Jason's order too.

"He's polite too. Even ordering food for us ladies," Megan started again, trying to start a conversation, but her words surprised Jason.

"Polite? What do you mean polite?" he asked in confusion before it suddenly clicked what she meant.

Chapter 765: New Look II

"Polite? What do you mean polite?" he asked in confusion before it suddenly clicked what she meant.

"Oh. No. That's for me, you can get yours as well. Perks of VIP you know," he shrugged.

"Huh? Is a model like you supposed to be eating that much of that kinda stuff? Isn't your manager going to flip," Megan continued, more than a bit surprised that Jason had ordered all that for himself.

Even she didn't dare to eat that much food at one sitting.

The body tea she had was half genetics, half effort... eating like that would turn her to a Lizzo lookalike in 2 months.

"Oh, I'm not a model and yes, my manager would flip, but I don't care what he says anyway. Not like I eat like this all the time," Jason shrugged again.

His professional schedule was going to resume in about a day so he was eating all his cravings ahead of time.

He had done enough to stay fit most of the break so eating this much wasn't going to do anything to him anyway.

The blood test might look a little crazy when the medical tests began though, but that was only if he was going to be tested within a few hours from now and that wasn't happening so he was good... or at least he thought so.

The women around Jason were now a bit confused as Jason had said he wasn't a model, but he had said he had a manager.

That probably meant he was in the entertainment business, but there was no way someone with a face like Jason would be in the entertainment business in America and they wouldn't have at least heard about him... probably.

'Is he not from around here?' Marsai thought, especially since Jason didn't have an accent that she could put a finger on.

At this point, the game had begun with a jump ball and the two teams were already battling it out for a chance at the championship.

While the Bucks were trying to bury the game, the Suns were trying to win this game to get themselves back on level grounds.

At first, the women on his sides tried to make small talk with Jason, but as the game raged on, even then women had to start focusing on the game, especially with the excessive display of passion from both sides.

Jason had already been drawn in from the start, only barely giving one word answers to Megan who had seemed especially adamant about starting a conversation, and as the game raged on, he found his eyes constantly falling on one particular guy.

It couldn't be helped, Giannis was having the game of his life.

On a stage like this, it was usually more of a strong team effort that won these kinds of games, but this man was making it seem like he was going to personally drag the Bucks to the Championship no matter who stood in his way.

He made basket after basket, ran around the court with passion when on defense, blocked his opponent's shot or stole the ball if he lost his guard, caught the ball on the rebound so many times that Jason lost count.

When the man of the hour hit his twentieth point in just the third quarter alone, all Jason could say was "Damn!"

Giannis was slowly, but surely leading the Bucks to their final win, but the Suns were doing their all to thwart them, fighting for their life as they were.

When the final quarter began, the tension in the air was thick enough that it could be cut with a knife. The Milwaukee Bucks fans who were in the majority were cheering for their players as best as they could, but they couldn't hide their tension, especially with the Suns holding on for dear life, not wanting to give the Bucks the advantage.

It was then that it happened.

The scores of the game was Bucks 92 - 88 Suns and the Suns had just stolen the ball from a Bucks player.

The player who stole the ball, instantly threw the ball forward at his teammate lunging forward, wanting to get the ball as fast as possible on the break.

In his passion, he threw the ball a little too hard and missed his teammate and the ball continued its powerful flight off the court, flying in Jason's direction surprisingly.

It was a bit off Jason's direction that he could have dodged it, but Iggy was on that side as well so it would have hit her, though Jason wasn't thinking that at the moment.

However, he still reached out to catch the ball by instinct, just barely stopping it before it smashed into Iggy who for some reason had her face in the ball's path when she had been over exaggeratedly trying to dodge it even when it wasn't coming at her face in the first place.

With the ball caught firmly in his hand, he pulled it away from the front of her face and without much thought bent his wrist and flicked the ball into a spin from his palm and caught it on his index figure.

He let it spin there for about two seconds before throwing it to Giannis who caught it and nodded at him.

The Suns had called timeout, so play wasn't resuming immediately as the two teams had gathered round to talk things out.

Turning back to his fries, Jason continued eating, not bothering to ask if Iggy was okay.

His catching the ball had made sure that she was okay. It was already cliché enough that he had played hero saving the beauty.

He wasn't about to subject himself to more of that plotline.

Iggy, Megan, and Marsai however, had different ideas.

"Oh, do you play basketball?" Marsai asked, having noticed the ease at which Jason handled the ball earlier.

"Yeah," Jason shrugged.

"Oh, is you in the NBA? You being drafted or something?" Megan asked.

"I play for fun. It's not that serious," Jason smiled wryly, hiding his wry smile with a sip of his drink.

At this point, he didn't really want to answer any more questions

Chapter 766: Sleep, Sleep, and Even More Sleep

The game continued without any further surprises and by the end of the fourth quarter, the Bucks were leading the game with 105 points as opposed to the Suns' 98 points.

They fell short by quite a bit and despite their desperate fouls in the last minutes to try and force back possession while giving away free throws, they couldn't change the game as their tactic backfired on them.

With Giannis sinking free throw after free throw, the points gap they had been trying to close up only grew wider with each foul they committed.

In the end, the inevitable had happened and the Milwaukee Bucks had won.

The Milwaukee crowd both inside and outside the arena erupted into joyous cheers, reminding Jason of the atmosphere at the Dragon Stadium where he had won the Champions League about a month ago.

All that had nothing to do with him though as despite him being there to watch the game, he wasn't a huge fan of basketball and was even less of a fan of the Milwaukee Bucks.

He was impressed by their play, but he wasn't about to fall in love with the team or the sport just because he watched an iconic game live.

'Try again, basketball,' he thought with laughter as he smoothly disappeared into the crowd that was too busy celebrating to pay attention to him walking out.

Even the few people who looked at him mistook him for a Suns fan who was disappointed his team had lost and was leaving the arena.

A few seconds later, Megan finally noticed that Jason was no longer beside them, but despite looking around almost frantically, she couldn't find him, much to her disappointment.

'I didn't even get his number,' She thought with disappointment.

Jason didn't know what she was thinking and even though he would have been flattered by thought, he wouldn't have cared much, even if he knew.

For now, he only cared about getting back to his room and crashing onto the bed. He had eaten quite a bit while watching the game and that had left him feeling an enormous desire to laze around and sleep for a few hours.

The crowd around the arena was making turning that desire into a reality quite difficult, but somehow Jason managed to find a cab to take him back to his hotel.

Crashing onto his bed, he didn't know when he faded into the black and only awakened hours later.

Remembering that he had forgotten to set an alarm, he stood up with a start and checked the time, only to realize that despite him sleeping till the next day, he hadn't overslept to the point that he couldn't catch his flight.

A few hours later, he was on a flight out of Milwaukee, his final destination...Porto, Portugal.

Getting even more sleep on the long flight, he spent the flight time sleeping, eating, or watching movies.

Not like there was much more he could do anyway.

After many hours, a change of planes, and many more hours, Jason finally touched the ground at Oporto.

Back to wearing a hoodie, nose mask, and glasses, Jason stepped out of the airport and took a cab back to his place.

Initially, he had been thinking of just wearing shades and a nose mask, but he quickly realized that his hair color called enough attention on him, after which it would only be a matter of seconds before he was recognized.

He was way too famous at Porto after all.

Somehow, he managed to make it back to his place without even being recognized by the cab driver and after paying the fare, he got off with his bag and went up to the house.

Taking another glance at a house he had been paying the rent for all this while despite not having come back here for quite half a year, Jason thought wryly at how he had somehow managed to live here for all this while with no one finding out that this was where he actually lived.

It was a nice neighbourhood, but it wasn't an overly expensive or private place, yet he had somehow lived here all this while without his neighbors finding out who he was.

... Or maybe they already knew but were the kind of people who minded their business... or maybe they just didn't know who he was.

Most of the people who lived in the neighbourhood were at least middle-aged people who were clearly working especially hard to live in this neighbourhood so they might not be very up to date.

Also, Jason had a pretty different schedule from an ordinary job, leaving early and coming late due to all the extra training he usually did, so he usually didn't have any time for socializing.

All of these were just thoughts of his own and Jason didn't know anything for sure, however, he did appreciate the silence and lack of disturbance.

Unsurprisingly, his car was nowhere to be found on the roadside beside his house, where he would usually park it, after all he had given the keys to Adele before he left.

Reaching the doors, he smoothly pulled out his key and unlocked it before stepping inside, closing the doors and locking it behind.

The inside of the house looked unsurprisingly clean, after all, Adele had his house keys as well and it seemed she had been doing a bit more than just driving his car around.

Throwing his bag into his bedroom, he once again collapsed onto his couch, tired from the flight. Deciding to watch a movie while he lazed, he put on an Avengers movie, but he was barely half an hour in when he nodded off again.

At this point he had spent most of the last three days in dreamland.

When he finally woke, hours later, he found out that he had company in the form of Adele who had arrived at some point and snuggled into his embrace before falling asleep as well.

Smiling to himself, he stroked her hair for a bit before going back to sleep himself.

There was a long road left for him to achieve his goals in this life, but for a minute, he thought to himself.

'It can't get better than this.'

Chapter 767: Warm Fuzzy Feeling

23rd July 2021

CTFD Portugaia

8:47 am

The training for the day was about to start at the Oporto team's training grounds and players of the team, both from the first team, the reserve team, and the youth squad were arriving at the training grounds one after the other.

At the entrance of the training grounds, there was the usual few fans who came by for a glance of the players and a few straggling reporters of tabloids and all sorts of media were taking as many pictures as possible.

Suddenly, a silver BMW i8 arrived around the corner and drove towards the entrance of the Portugaia.

The fans quickly began trying to guess whose car it was and the player or players inside the car, but some of the more staunch fans who had a lot of knowledge about the players began to mutter almost in disbelief.

"Isn't that Jason's car? Is he back finally?"

That whisper was all it took for all the cameras to be pointed at the car that was slowly driving up the gate as if its driver was in no hurry.

Inside the car, there wasn't only one passenger as Jason had stopped by at Viera's place, meeting up with him before he left his house.

"You know the manager is going to flip when he sees your face, right?" Viera, said laughingly to Jason, not paying any attention to the cameras pointed at the car or the people at the gate.

It was a pretty normal occurrence at this point.

"Maybe he might, maybe he won't,"

"Like I care," Jason shrugged with a little laugh.

One of the beauties of working with a contract was that both sides were only bound to the terms of the contract.

Nothing more, nothing less.

For someone with nothing to lose and no need to get into anyone's good books, Jason had no reason to act subservient or even respectful to anyone at the club.

He was being paid wages to do certain things and there was a code of conduct for any rules he broke.

His not returning to training on time and missing a week of training was only going to result in a warning or a few weeks' fine.

Nothing he couldn't handle.

The windows of the car were tinted enough that no one could see the inside of the car, but the security guards let Jason in as they recognized his car, further fueling the fans and the reporters' curiosity.

At this point, they were already about ninety-five percent certain that it was Jason in the car, but since they hadn't actually seen his face, they actually couldn't tell.

Unfortunately, the actual parking lot was too far away for them to see from the gate so they would have to wait for insider information to confirm whether that truly was Jason.

At the car park, Jason and Viera had already gotten out of the car and were heading inside the lobby.

Jason had a bag over his shoulder, carrying a new pair of boots and a few other things while Viera held nothing, his things already in his locker.

Coming across various staff members, Jason exchanged greetings with quite a few of them, reminding him that despite his issues with the management, the club was still like a home to him where most, if not all the fans loved him.

Reaching the locker room where a few other players were changing into their training kit, Jason's arrival caused quite a surprise to the players who welcomed him warmly.

All the warm welcomes were actually beginning to get to Jason a bit and made him even feel a little nostalgic, a warm feeling rising through his chest.

He did indeed love this club and its people, despite everything that happened between them.

The warm feeling in his heart confirmed that.

The next person arriving at the locker room however, turned down the temperature, instantly cooling out the warm feeling.

Mylo had just arrived and noticed Jason, a bit unrecognizable due to his new look, but he merely turned away and didn't say a word.

Jason also did the same, ignoring him and changing into his training kit before beginning to head out to the field.

Surprisingly, the tense air between Jason and Mylo did little to affect the surroundings as the other guys related with them like things were normal.

From a cold war between them that affected the team, their matter seemed to have been relegated to a mere matter of two people who didn't talk to each other, but worked together.

The other Oporto players were so over what had happened between Jason and Mylo that Jason was a little shocked.

They couldn't deny knowing what had happened between Jason and Mylo, but in the end, that was Jason and Mylo's own life choices and while it might affect how the players related with them or what they thought of them, this wasn't the kind of environment where they would dwell unnecessarily on that matter forever.

Courtois and De Bruyne also had this sort of issue and they were both huge names for their country, yet, after a while, things had gone back to normal despite everyone knowing what had happened between them.

They were even back to playing together.

The same thing had happened here and was unfolding right before Jason's very eyes.

As the victim in this situation and having not been here to witness the gradual change, Jason was a little surprised, but he thought nothing much of it.

Even he was long over Mylo and Sofia.

The reason he wanted to leave Oporto now was that he no longer trusted the club's management and because he wanted a bigger stage, not because Mylo had gotten with Sofia.

At some point, he had stopped thinking about it and didn't even remember it.

Of course, that didn't mean that he and Mylo would suddenly become friends or anything of the sort... in fact, they were still enemies in a way.

Just that at this point, it was so much more easier and less stressful to stay out of each other's way.

With all these thoughts, Jason and the other players arrived around Conceicao, the long-serving head manager of the club.

Chapter 768: One Word

Conceicao, the Oporto head manager, stood on the training field, talking with one of his assistants about the new tactics they would need to employ with the transfer season at its peak.

Some players were bound to leave and some players would be added to the club's roster during this period.

The manager already had plans, but they would have to be adjusted as changes happened to the club's roster.

As they discussed, the players who had arrived for training began gathering around them, ready to begin the team's training session.

After another minute, Conceicao turned to the players, ready to address them when he noticed his wantaway player who had most of the Portuguese media talking about him the last few days.

Nodding at him, he welcomed the players to the training ground and gave them a basic rundown of the day's training plan before sending them off to get to work with the trainers.

Jason was a little surprised that the manager merely brushed aside the issue of him reporting late for training, but he didn't think much of it and just went on to train.

Mylo was a little ticked off about Jason receiving what he considered preferential treatment, but he just scoffed and went on to train as well.

The two of them moved along with the other players to where they would be training, a little distance away from each other, leaving a slightly conflicted Conceicao watching them from behind.

A head manager had many jobs, which included but was not limited to coaching the team, helping with training, setting tactics, signing players, and many others.

However, his primary duty was to win.

A manager was like a CEO of a big company whose job was to direct the staff into producing results and his power was vested by the management behind him.

A CEO couldn't do things that the management didn't give him the authority to do, neither could he go against the management's wishes.

This was why there was always a lot of contractual negotiations between the head manager and the club.

Some managers weren't good at training players, or setting up tactics, or recruiting players so they either delegate that part to their backroom team, or the management brings in someone who can take up that job.

The management might also want to have some autonomy over certain decisions in the club, so before the manager joined the club, these things would be ironed out in detail and a contract would be drawn.

If the management wanted to control the signing of players, thereby taking some of the manager's authority over the club's direction and performance, there would have to be an equal element of give and take in the contract.

It was the reason for all those sky-high release clauses the clubs would pay the manager when they wanted to sack them.

After all, why would a manager have to coach a team without having control over team building and then have to take the piss when his players played like sh*t?

Conceicao had one of those types of contracts.

He directed almost everything as long as the management wasn't involved, but it was written in the contract that they could overwrite his decisions regarding transfers.

They had done it a few times prior, and everytime it left a sour taste in his mouth, but this last situation with Jason was a particularly annoying one.

As a human and as a football manager, he should have sided with Jason after what happened and he would have, but in the end, he was also a corporate dog on a leash.

He controlled the yard as long as his owners weren't interested... even if his owners didn't have the same type of vision he did.

Thinking over the matter, he already knew that Jason was a player who wasn't going to stay much longer at Oporto.

Right from Jason's first match at Oporto, he knew, everyone knew.

Mylo was also a talented kid, even a tad bit exceptional and he also had the makings of something great, but between him and Jason, it was no competition.

Perhaps the management were thinking that since Jason would be leaving much sooner than Mylo who was still not firm on his feet, then they might as well let it happen.

If it couldn't be stopped, then between Jason and Mylo, they should only bother with trying to keep Mylo at the club.

Logically, it was the correct decision and even Conceicao couldn't argue with that, however it was a shame how everything went down.

The management had made a mess of the situation instead of handling it well and keeping both sides satisfied if they couldn't keep them happy.

Anyways, since the management could decide that since they couldn't keep Jason at the club much longer since he was going to leave anyway, then he could decide not to punish Jason for what had happened... since he was leaving soon anyway.

Conceicao thought this wryly, but thinking back to his meeting with the other department heads about whether to activate Jason's extension clause or not, he could only hope that the management didn't interfere again.

While Jason was training, completely unaware of what the manager was thinking, many reporters were already writing their reports after news that Jason had returned to training surfaced.

"Wantaway player returns to training. Will he stay?"

"Transfer talks a bust? Jason returns to training"

"Jason at the Portugaia. One last goodbye?"

"The team is complete again. Trouble for competitors in the coming season?"

All sorts of headlines filled the news and the online sports space as many reporters tried to put their own two cents out as to Jason's reason for the sudden return to training.

As a player seemingly at odds with his club and missing training for a week, did he suddenly get cold feet and decide to come back, or was there something else to the story that they didn't know?

Many people wanted to know and the reporters were itching to find out the truth hidden away.

However, apart from the rumors of offers that Jason was entertaining from other clubs, there wasn't anything concrete anywhere... at least as at then.

Jason unknowingly was about to change this because two days after he joined the team for training, Oporto had a pre-season game against Losc Lille.

Jason had been half-expecting it, but he sat on the bench throughout the game. Honestly, he was already a bit surprised that he was even on the lineup, even though he didn't play.

Being at a stadium with a football game going on and not being allowed to play made him take the final step.

He had already made a decision since the first day at training that he would be answering one of the teams calling him, but he had not said a word to Adele yet, deciding to hold on for a bit longer, but that decision had changed.

He wanted to play.

So he called Adele and started with one word...

"... Tottenham,"

Chapter 769: Old Face, New Skills

With the go-ahead word from Jason, Adele sprang into action, getting in contact with the Tottenham side that had been eagerly waiting for his decision.

Adele also took the chance to demand a higher salary, stating that if Tottenham could increase the wage per week to 190k Euros, then Jason would sign with them immediately... as long as they could work out everything else.

Of course, Jason was already ready to sign with them for the 160k they had offered before, but Tottenham didn't have to know that.

To Adele, if they could pay the 200k to a player who had fallen from grace like Ndombele, who was Tottenham's highest-paid player alongside Harry Kane, England's greatest striker since like forever, then they should be able to cough up more for Jason.

For Tottenham, deciding to pay an additional 30k Euros that could be added to someone else's wage budget was a trying decision, but the new manager, Nuno Espirito was putting pressure on the club's management to bring in Jason.

According to him, it would be the steal of the century and could help lead the Tottenham team to winning their first domestic trophy since like forever.

It took a little more time to convince them, but two days later and they were back to contacting Adele for further discussions and all the other terms.

At this point, a deal had already been agreed on in principle so now both sides had to agree on things like bonuses, seasonal salary increments (if any), appearance bonuses, goal bonuses, e.t.c.

Once that was over, Tottenham would then have to negotiate with Oporto to get them to terminate his contract early so that he could join them in this same transfer window.

This was when things would get tricky, as both Jason and Adele knew that the Oporto board would not want to let go of him easily, and annoyingly enough, they still had the six-month extension card that they could play to make things difficult for him.

They could only hope that since it made no sense to keep him here, they would just ask for a bit more money and then allow the contract's termination.

While this was happening, Jason had to watch another friendly between his club and Roma, this time from the bench as well.

It was a lot more bearable when he thought that he would be joining another team soon and would get a lot more game time, but it still wasn't a good feeling having to watch from the bench.

If this was two years ago, he would have been a lot more patient, but it seemed his experiences in the last two years had changed him that much.

In the end, the match had ended in a 1 - 1 draw thanks to the efforts of a young guy called Vitinha scoring a much-needed goal in the 89th minute.

Jason had been especially impressed by the guy's play.

The guy was a tireless monster. What he lacked in physique, he made up for with effort and technique.

When defending, he would chase tirelessly and when he was with the ball, it was almost impossible to get the ball off him.

His efforts kept Oporto in possession most of the time and his playmaking skills weren't far behind either.

He wasn't much of a passer, but he could take the place through places others couldn't before releasing it to the forwards.

If not for the wastefulness of the forwards in the game, Oporto should have scored two extra goals, which would have come thanks to this guy.

Jason remembered him from his first season at the club. Back then, Vitinha was still in the Oporto B team and Jason knew that the guy had gone on loan to the Premier League side, Wolves, in the previous season.

Clearly, the guy had come back with a point to prove.

With players like him and Viera on the pitch, Jason could not help feeling more like jumping on the field, after all, who didn't like having good teammates.

Jason could already imagine many different ways they could combine their abilities to break down the opponent, but unfortunately the ideas remained in his head.

****31st July 2021****

The negotiations between Jason's side and Tottenham was over and Tottenham was already negotiating with the Oporto side on a fee to terminate Jason's contract.

Matters were already out of Jason's hands and the man in question was walking out of the tunnel with the other substitutes of the last friendly game of Oporto's pre-season.

This was the only friendly that was being played at the Oporto team's home stadium so a lot of the team's fans were at the stadium.

Once again, Jason was on the bench and this time he wasn't even surprised. He just followed along with the other players to the bench.

Along with him were Vitinha and Viera who were surprisingly also on the bench along with him. After Vitinha's performance impressed him, Jason had taken the initiative to speak more with the guy.

As someone who loved to learn from other people, Jason built a rapport with Vitinha trying to learn from him how he moved.

The guy used the simplest of moves, though highly technical, but not flashy, and that was all it took him to smoothly glide across the pitch when he was in possession.

Jason was a pacey dribbler who usually had to pair flashy moves to confuse his opponent with sudden bursts of acceleration so he could escape them.

He had learnt while in the Serie A that this method had its limitations because it mostly relied on players coming at him.

If his marker only kept falling back while blocking his path, there wasn't much Jason could do. Learning Vitinha's simple style of escaping opponents with just body feints and efficient movement would definitely help a lot.

Vitinha had also been very open to training together with Jason as he saw Jason in a very good light and admired him quite a bit.

They had both gone on loans out of the club the previous season, but while Vitinha had only managed to make 19 appearances for the Wolves side, proving to be a solid player, Jason had done exceptionally well and even won the Champions League in a much tougher team than Wolves.

Also, since Vitinha wasn't around to witness the whole fiasco between Jason and Mylo, he didn't walk in eggshells around Jason like some of the other guys were doing.

Hence, the last few days, they had been training together and had gotten much closer.

While they sat on the bench, the players in the starting lineup marched onto the pitch and began the pre-match formalities.

Chapter 770: Heart

Fweeeeee

The referee's whistle signaled the game's kickoff and the ball was quickly passed back by the Lyon side.

The Lyon side didn't bother playing around too much and launched an attack immediately.

This was a pre-season friendly so the matches were without consequence and the managers were using this period to try new things and get the players used to the tactics they would be using during the season.

Thus, the Lyon side didn't feel the need to play it safe. The Oporto side thought the same as well so this was definitely going to be an interesting match.

With a long pass from Toko Ekambi to Slimani who had rushed forward, they tried to unsettle the Oporto players, but the Oporto players were not the kind to be easily confused by a center forward dashing around like a headless fly.

Slimani however, wasn't trying to dribble past and instead held up play so that his teammates could rush forward.

Then he released the ball back to a teammate who tried to whip a cross into the penalty box where Marcelo, a centerback from their team had rushed forward into.

The Oporto players immediately went on the defensive, but the Lyon player was clever with the ball, faking the pass the first time and escaping the block before pushing the ball clear and whipping it forward into Oporto's penalty box.

During this time, Slimani had also rushed into the penalty box to join the fray and with more Lyon players in the box, the Oporto defenders couldn't mark everyone and the ball found Marcelo who lunged at it head first.

{In to the waiting head of MARCELOOO!!!} the referee screamed with bated breath only to be let down when the ball flew narrowly wide of the post.

{OHHHH!!! Smart overlap there from the center half there, adding to his duties and making things that much harder for the opponents}

{With that many players in the box, it gets much harder to defend. Unfortunately they couldn't make it count}

{Oh, it's a quick goalkick from Diogo Costa!} the commentator's dissection of the earlier attempt was broken when the Oporto goalkeeper quickly received the ball from the ball boy and took the goalkick as quickly as possible, sending the ball upfield with a powerful punt.

{Sent upfield quickly. They might be trying to catch Lyon out with all their players still forward!}

The ball was brought under control by Diaz who caught it with amazing ease before darting forward down the left flank.

He wasn't alone on the flank and the Lyon right back tried to hold him back, buying time for his teammates to rush back, but Diaz wasn't going to give up this chance he had gotten that easily.

Suddenly pushing the ball forward and keeping up with it with electrifying pace, he tried to push past the wing back, but the Lyon man quickly increased his pace in response, trying to stay ahead of Diaz, but that was exactly what Diaz wanted.

The moment the guy turned his back on the Oporto winger, Diaz swiftly cut in to the right. The Lyon guy instantly tried to change direction as well, but no sooner had he turned right to cut Diaz off when Diaz turned back to the left again.

Once again, the Lyon man turned back to the left, but he soon realized he had fallen for Diaz's tricks when Diaz turned back to the right again.

At this point, Diaz was charging forward at the pace he wanted, while the Lyon man had no choice but to keep running ahead of him while looking over his shoulder to try to keep Diaz in his sights.

He couldn't even stop running at this point because the moment he tried to turn, Diaz would sweep past him.

Not wanting to allow Diaz to get any further, he decided to bite the bullet and tackle him now even if it might lead to a yellow card.

His mind made up, he slowed down and made as if to turn. Diaz thinking this was his chance, tried to burst past, but was swiftly swept off his feet by the alert Lyon player.

Fweeeeeee!

{He's gone down! Is that the penalty box or right at the edge!?!} the commentator's words stunned the Lyon player who had made the tackle.

Because he had been running forward while looking behind him, he didn't realize how far Diaz had pushed him and it looked like that was about to cost him.

The referee ran forward, pointing his hand to the penalty spot, deciding on a penalty for Oporto.

The VAR was in his ear and had told him that Diaz had been tackled just inside the penalty box, much to the dismay of the Lyon players.

The Lyon players' moods soured even further when the referee reached into his pocket and showed the Lyon right back a yellow card.

{It's early, just four minutes and there's already a lot of excitement in this game. We're about to see even more with this penalty to the Oporto side}

Mylo put the ball down on the spot, ready to take the penalty.

Fweeeeee!

{Can they take the leaaaa!!!?}

{They do! Well taken penalty!}

Mylo barely beat Lopes with a powerful shot into the bottom right corner before running off to the sidelines to go celebrate in front of the fans.

The fans in the stadium cheered loudly, enjoying the prime entertainment they were being served this early in the game.

The game resumed shortly after with a kickoff from the Lyon side and without much time wasting, they began attacking once again.

The Oporto team returned the energy, defending when needed and launching the ball forward the instant they were in possession of the ball.

Diaz's flank especially received a lot of service as that side had become a weak spot thanks to the right back who now had a yellow card.

With a yellow card on hand, he had to spend a lot more time considering his tackles instead of going through with them and the Oporto side intended to make use of this situation to the fullest.

In the 30th minute of the game, Diaz once again broke free from the Lyon right back and sent a cross infield, but the ball was blocked by Marcelo who tried heading it back.

The ball found Olivera who ignored Mylo's call for a pass and hit the ball at the goal, trying to score from long range.

Lopes had almost jumped in the ball's direction when it bounced off a Lyon player trying to block and the ball was deflected to the opposite side from where he had been trying to jump.

Barely recovering, he jumped at the ball and barely managed to get his fingertips to it, catching it and pushing it back infield.

Lopes hoped a teammate would reach it first and clear it, but Oporto's second on-field striker made sure that wasn't happening.

Hitting it into the back of the net after it bounced once, Toni raced down the sideline, pointing at the fans. The fans cheered with even more energy than during the first goal celebration.