

THE SILENT SYMPHONY

Chapter 1: The Boy Who Dreamed in Goals

Part I of Volume 1: The Orphan's Dream

The old television in the corner of Casa de los Niños flickered with static, its ancient speakers crackling as the commentator's voice rose to a fever pitch.

Twenty-two children sat transfixed on the worn carpet, their eyes glued to the screen where AC Milan and Juventus battled for European supremacy in the 2003 Champions League final.

Most of the orphans cheered randomly, caught up in the excitement without truly understanding the beautiful game unfolding before them.

But six-year-old Mateo Álvarez was different.

While the other children shouted and laughed, Mateo sat in perfect silence, his dark eyes tracking every movement on the pitch with an intensity that seemed impossible for someone so young.

His small frame was motionless except for his feet, which unconsciously mimicked the touches and turns of the players on screen.

When Kaká received the ball in midfield, Mateo's right foot shifted slightly. When Pirlo threaded a pass through the defense, the boy's body swayed as if he were the one making the play.

Sister María Elena noticed him first.

The middle-aged nun had been caring for the children of Casa de los Niños for over fifteen years, and she had never seen a child so completely absorbed in anything, let alone a football match.

She had played the sport herself in her youth, before taking her vows, and she recognized something special in the way Mateo watched the game.

"Mateo," she whispered, kneeling beside him. "Do you understand what's happening?"

The boy turned to her, his eyes bright with an intelligence that always surprised the adults around him. He nodded slowly, then pointed to the screen where Shevchenko was making a run into the penalty area.

"Gol," he said simply, his voice barely audible above the television's volume.

Sister María Elena raised an eyebrow.

The ball was still in midfield, nowhere near the goal.

But as she turned back to the screen, she watched in amazement as the play developed exactly as Mateo had predicted. The ball found its way to Shevchenko, who slotted it past the goalkeeper with clinical precision.

The orphanage erupted in cheers, but Mateo remained calm, as if he had simply witnessed something inevitable. He looked up at Sister María Elena with a small smile, the kind that suggested he knew something the rest of the world didn't.

From across the room, Don Carlos Mendoza observed the interaction with growing interest. The orphanage director was a man in his fifties, with graying hair and kind eyes that had seen too much sadness in his years of caring for abandoned children. But he had also seen moments of pure joy, and he recognized that Mateo was experiencing something profound.

Don Carlos had played football himself in his younger days, reaching the semi-professional level before an injury ended his career and led him to dedicate his life to helping children.

He understood the game's power to inspire, to give hope to those who had little reason to believe in dreams. And watching Mateo, he saw something that reminded him of his own first encounter with the beautiful game.

As the match continued, Mateo's predictions became increasingly accurate.

He would point to a player seconds before they received the ball, gesture toward empty spaces that would soon be filled by attacking runs, and even cover his eyes moments before dangerous tackles that could have resulted in injuries.

It was as if he could see the game's rhythm in a way that transcended normal understanding.

When the final whistle blew and AC Milan celebrated their victory, the other children began to disperse, their attention already moving to other activities.

But Mateo remained seated, staring at the screen as the players embraced and lifted the trophy. His small hands were pressed against the carpet, and Don Carlos could see him mouthing words silently, as if he were speaking to the players themselves.

"What are you saying, pequeño?" Don Carlos asked, settling down beside the boy.

Mateo looked up at him with those impossibly serious eyes. "I want to play like them," he said, his voice filled with a determination that seemed far too mature for his age. "I want to make people happy like that."

Don Carlos felt his heart skip a beat. In all his years at the orphanage, he had heard children express many dreams.

Some wanted to be doctors, others teachers, and a few even wanted to be astronauts. But none had ever spoken with the quiet certainty that Mateo displayed. This wasn't the fleeting wish of a child caught up in the moment; this was something deeper, more fundamental.

"Do you know how to play football, Mateo?" Don Carlos asked gently.

The boy shook his head, but his expression didn't change. "Not yet," he said. "But I will learn."

Sister María Elena exchanged a meaningful glance with Don Carlos.

They both knew that Mateo was special, but this was the first time they had seen him express such passionate interest in anything.

Most of the children who came to Casa de los Niños carried invisible wounds that made it difficult for them to dream beyond their immediate needs. But Mateo seemed to possess an inner light that no amount of hardship could extinguish.

As the evening wore on and the other children prepared for bed, Mateo remained in the common room.

He had found a small ball made of rags and rubber bands that the children sometimes played with, and he was attempting to recreate the movements he had seen on television. His coordination was remarkable for a six-year-old, and even with the makeshift ball, he displayed an intuitive understanding of how to control it.

Don Carlos watched from the doorway as Mateo practiced alone, his small feet working the ball with increasing confidence. The boy would kick it gently against the wall, then trap it as it returned, his touch becoming softer and more precise with each repetition.

When he attempted to juggle the ball, he managed three touches before it fell to the ground. Instead of becoming frustrated, he simply picked it up and tried again.

"He has something special," Sister María Elena said, joining Don Carlos in the doorway.

"Yes," Don Carlos agreed. "But talent without opportunity is just a beautiful dream. We need to find a way to nurture this."

They stood in comfortable silence, watching as Mateo continued his solitary practice.

The boy seemed completely unaware of their presence, lost in his own world where the boundaries between dreams and reality began to blur.

With each touch of the ball, he was writing the first chapter of a story that would take him far beyond the walls of Casa de los Niños.

As the clock struck nine, Sister María Elena gently called Mateo for bedtime. He reluctantly set down the makeshift ball and followed her toward the dormitory, but not before turning back for one last look at the television, which now showed only static.

"Tomorrow," he whispered to himself, "I'll practice more tomorrow."

Don Carlos remained in the doorway long after the children had gone to bed, thinking about the boy who had predicted goals before they happened and spoke of football with the reverence of a true believer.

He had seen many children pass through the orphanage over the years, each carrying their own dreams and disappointments. But something told him that Mateo's story would be different.

In the dormitory, Mateo lay in his narrow bed, staring at the ceiling as the other children settled into sleep around him. His mind replayed every moment of the match, every touch and pass and goal.

He could see the patterns in the game, the way players moved in harmony like dancers following an invisible choreography. And somewhere deep in his heart, he knew that one day he would be part of that dance.

The orphanage grew quiet as Barcelona slept around them, but Mateo's dreams were filled with the sound of crowds cheering and the feeling of a ball at his feet. In his sleep, he ran across endless green fields, his small legs carrying him toward a future that seemed both impossible and inevitable. Read full story at novel-fire.net

Don Carlos made his final rounds of the building, checking on each child as he did every night. When he reached Mateo's bed, he found the boy sleeping peacefully, a small smile on his face. On the floor beside the bed lay the

makeshift ball, positioned carefully as if it were the most precious thing in the world.

"Dream well, pequeño," Don Carlos whispered. "Tomorrow, we begin to make those dreams real."

Outside, the lights of Barcelona twinkled in the distance, and somewhere in the city, the Camp Nou stood silent and majestic, waiting for the next generation of dreamers to discover their destiny.

Mateo Álvarez had taken his first step on a journey that would test every ounce of his courage, determination, and love for the beautiful game.

But tonight, he was simply a six-year-old boy who had discovered magic in the movement of twenty-two men chasing a ball, and that was enough to change everything.