

Champions 101

Chapter 101: One-Time Handshake Part 1

Kerslake was spot on. Doughty and Tony Twain did meet each other on Wilford Lane, which was located in between the northern youth training grounds and the southern first team training grounds.

Seeing Twain walk toward him, Edward asked loudly, "Were you looking for me, Tony?"

At almost the same time, Tang En also opened his mouth and asked, "Were you looking for me, Edward?"

The two of them were momentarily stunned, before they burst into laughter together.

"That's great. Look, Tony. We have a very good rapport, and we will definitely coordinate very well with each other," Doughty said as he laughed in front of Tony.

However, Twain lightly shook his head instead and said, "Edward, have we ever coordinated?"

"Of course not at until now, but it's hard to say what will happen in the future. Why were you looking for me, Tony?"

"Why were you looking for me?"

"Looks like our reasons are the same. Let's chat while we walk." Doughty said as he patted Tony's shoulders.

Tang En did not move. He pointed to the north, then to the south, before asking, "Which way?"

Doughty raised his head and looked at the path that was full of fallen withered leaves. "Let's just casually walk along this path."

It was currently late autumn. During the summertime, this path would always be sheltered by the thick trees, preventing the skies from being seen. Tang En had hesitated and pondered about the uncertainties of his future in the same exact spot. Now, the narrow path was already covered by a thick layer of fallen leaves. Upon stepping on them, a puffing sound could be heard, and its soft texture was as if one was walking on a carpet. Just like that, half a year had passed in the blink of an eye.

"Tony, what do you think about Collymore as a manager?" Doughty asked as he stepped on the fallen leaves, with his head lowered.

"Worlds apart from his abilities as a player," Tang En replied.

"Mmm, I observed that as well. He is not suited to be a manager, at least not now."

"Then why did you choose him back then?"

"This I can't tell you, Tony. But I can tell you something else." Doughty shook his head.

"Hmm?"

"Prepare yourself," Doughty said as he stopped in his tracks and looked at Twain.

“Prepare myself for what?” Tang En shrugged.

Looking at Twain’s innocent face, Doughty smiled. “Tony, do you need me to spell everything out for you?”

“Alright, alright. I get it.” Tang En raised his hands, signaling that he knew the meaning behind Doughty’s words. “But can you tell me roughly when?”

“I can’t. Because even I myself don’t know yet. However...” Doughty raised his head and looked at the skies, before continuing. “It should be very soon.”

Tang En had originally wanted to find Doughty in order to shoulder the responsibility for Wood’s assault on Collymore. If Doughty really wanted to fire Wood, then Tang En was prepared to quit his job and follow Wood. Instead, he was hearing such great news—that’s right, I’ll be returning to City Ground Stadium very soon! Going back to the place where I rightfully belong!

Just as Tang En was secretly celebrating, Doughty just had to dampen his spirits. “Oh, I forgot, there’s still one more thing. Perhaps I should let you know in advance.”

From Doughty’s tone, Tang En was able to tell that something was not good. He looked at Doughty and waited quietly for him to finish his sentence.

“You might have to re-select a new captain, Tony.”

“What?” Tang En now understood why he wanted to beat around the bush. “Dawson is leaving the team?!”

Doughty nodded his head.

This news left Tang En extremely shocked, but his shock was not caused solely by the fact that the team’s pillar was leaving. He remembered that Michael Dawson’s departure from Nottingham Forest was supposed to be an incident that took place in January 2005. This came more than one year early!

“How did it come to this?” Tang En muttered.

“Dawson was extremely disappointed by my decision to make Collymore the manager. On top of that, the team’s poor performance and inability to win any matches has also made him lose confidence in the team. And you know that the super clubs tend to be more attractive for young players,” Doughty explained without any intention of shirking responsibility.

“Which team?”

“Huh?”

“Which team is Dawson going to?”

“Tottenham Hotspurs.”

As expected. Tang En suddenly recalled another person and asked, “Aside from Dawson, who else is leaving?”

Doughty looked at Tang En with a face full of shock. "How did you know that there are other people transferring out? You're right. Reid will be also be going to Tottenham with Dawson."

Aside from the timing being different, the rest remained the same as Tang En knew it to be. The players were the same, as well as the club they headed to. There was still another question Tang En wanted to confirm.

"How much did Tottenham pay for the two of them?"

"Eight million."

"Pounds?" Tang En asked.

"Pounds." Doughty nodded his head.

Even the transfer fee was the same.

Seeing Tony Twain lowering his head and not uttering a single word, Doughty thought that Tony was dissatisfied with this transaction. Doughty explained, "Tony, you must know, for Nottingham Forest, which has just recovered from a financial crisis, eight million is not a small amount. We don't have a reason to reject the offer."

Tang En nodded his head and replied, "I understand, I understand. Eight million, eight million.... But Doughty, I want to ask you a question, and you must reply to me seriously."

"Speak your mind, Tony."

"What's your reason for abandoning your business in America and promising your old-fashioned father to return to England to take over this debt-ridden club? What are you after? You are a businessman! Please don't tell me something like devotion to your dad or because of your love for Nottingham Forest!"

Hearing Tang En's question, Doughty remained quiet for some time. Tang En also did not press him for his reply. He simply stood there, while he awaited his answer.

"Tony, if I were to say that it's to earn money, would you believe me?" Doughty looked at Twain.

Tang En looked back at him and determined from his eyes that Doughty was indeed telling the truth. Tang En replied, "I believe you. But you know that there are countless football clubs in this world, and only how many amongst them are earning money?"

"We have our own plans, Tony. I am the club's board of directors' chairman. I am in charge of managing the team and naturally won't wish to make a loss out of it. Didn't Manchester United allow for the Edwards Family earn lots of money?"

Tang En also knew nothing in terms of managing the club, and he did not want to become entangled on a topic that he was not familiar with. So, Tang En redirected the conversation. "Very well, you have your own plans. Do you know which are the sources of income for a football club?"

Doughty nodded his head and replied, "Of course. Television broadcast, various sponsors, player transfers, tickets sales, as well as the development of other related products and facilities."

“Ha, looks like you really did put in a lot of effort, Doughty. Good, you took Manchester United as an example, or rather a goal. Let me tell you from my professional perspective, the method to make money.” Tang En raised one finger and continued, “Television broadcasting fees are one of the biggest sources of income. The more your team’s matches get broadcasted by the television stations, the more broadcast fees you will get. You must be very clear on this point.”

“Mmm hmm.” Doughty nodded his head.

“Then in your opinion, between the broadcasting fees for a League One match and a Premier League match, which one is more?”

“Of course it’s the Premier League.”

“Very good. Then, how many times do you think a sh*tty team barely surviving in League One can have its matches broadcasted? We are currently in League One, and did we get a substantial amount from television broadcast? Didn’t we also experience a financial crisis, just like any other team?”

“Tony, the situation was very complicated. If the independent digital company had not gone bankrupt, we wouldn’t have suffered so much.”

“Alright, I get it. Then let’s talk about sponsors instead. What kind of teams are able to attract more global enterprises to sponsor them? Vodafone, Nike, Adidas, Opel, Coca Cola, Pepsi Cola, Fly Emirates, etc. What kind of teams can attract them? Can a sh*tty team barely surviving in League One do it?”

Doughty was no fool. He already knew what Tang En was trying to get at.

“Doughty, I know that you want to make money, but what’s the most basic foundation for attracting capital? The team must have good results, be able to rise to even higher tier leagues, and win the championships and glory! Attract the attention of the whole world. Only after that, can you talk about the other stuff. You know this logic better than me. What are the fundamentals for winning the championships and glory? Outstanding players and a stable team! Now, you just sold the team captain and the core left midfielder, just for that darned eight million pounds!” Tang En paced back and forth in front of Doughty, flailing his arms about and appeared to be slightly agitated. “If you had waited a few more years, you could have sold them for 18 million, and even up to 38 million! Why? Because we would be promoted to the Premier League, able to win the trophy, and the players would be able to join the National Team! When that time comes, the players’ values will skyrocket and countless clubs would compete to discuss with you their transfer fees. At that time, you can just ask them for any amount you like and demand an exorbitant price. It’s all up to you!”

Tang En paused for a while, and resumed with a significantly calmer tone. “Doughty, I understand your predicament, that the club needs money. You want to make money, while I want glory. We both have very lofty ambitions. But a team that only knows how to sell away their core and star players is bound to have a bleak future. If you believe in me, I can build a solid foundation for your money-making plan. I can’t help you earn money, but I can help you win matches. Do you believe in me, Doughty?”

He looked at Doughty, and Doughty also looked at him.

“I believe you, Tony.”

Tang En nodded his head, "You're right, Doughty. We do have good rapport with each other, and we will coordinate very well. Alright, Dawson and Reid are a thing of the past, let's not talk about them anymore. Is the club's financial crisis resolved?"

"It's resolved. But 10 million pounds is not a small amount."

"It's a cumulative 10 million over the years?"

Doughty began to grin. "That's right. My father already repaid some of it, and I've cleared the remaining debt since my takeover. When you come back, it'll be a completely financially-healthy, zero-debt Nottingham Forest!"

Chapter 102: One-Time Handshake Part 2

"It sounds really exciting. In that case, I don't have to worry about the club not being able to pay the wages of the players and don't have to worry about the chairman telling me before the transfer window, 'Tony, so sorry we are currently in a very poor financial state, so you can only scout for cheap players on the transfer market,' right?" Tang En said as he tried to emulate Old Doughty's tone.

"Of course not," Edward laughed.

"That's great. Don't touch that £8,000,000. Wait for me to use it." Tang En rubbed his hands, as excited as a young kid who had all gotten all of his desired presents during Christmas. The club had been poor for an entire year! He had been watching others feast on meat the whole time, and yet he could not even get a sip of the soup. Now, things were going to be different, and better!

"Oh, that's right. How long will the contract between us be?" Tang En thought of the most crucial question. Collymore only signed a one-year contract with the club. If he was the same as well, then it would not be possible to fulfil and actualize everything he had envisioned previously. Managers are unlike players who can go to different teams every year. The manager is the core of the team, and a manager that wants to be successful must have a plan to build the team. He must also know how he wants the team to play, and buy or sell players according to the tactics that he has in mind. He also has to think about the construction of the youth team, the results of the reserve team, and how to improve on the weaknesses of the team, etc. All of these require time to complete, and although a temporary manager can perhaps obtain success in the short-term based on his own abilities, if the club does not offer him a long-term promise, the club can forget about any good performance from the team in the future. Tang En's experience in the first half of the year was a live example of this.

In most cases, managers of English football teams were much more blessed than managers from other countries. That was because the chances of managers from English football teams being fired were the lowest. On top of that, there were many managers who even offered their meritorious service to the same club for 10, 20-plus years.

Of course, this was also partially related to the differences in football cultures between England and the European continent. In England, the managers mostly assumed the role of managing the team, and they held greater authority. On the other hand, in the equivalent role in European countries, the head coach, merely assumed the role of the coach. He would only be in charge of training the team and bringing

them to matches, and did not hold much authority himself. They could even become the chairman's scapegoat at any moment, or become implicated by the power struggle among the upper echelons of the club. They were also usually the loser who leaves should they engage in a quarrel with the players.

Tang En, of course, knew about those sorts of good traditions in English football. However, Nottingham Forest had already changed their managers eight times in the past eight years. This statistic was rather unfavorable to him.

"How many years do you want, Tony?" Doughty chuckled when Tang En asked.

"Erm..." Tang En wanted to say, "the longer, the better." However, upon giving it serious thought, who knew what the future would be like? Under uncertain circumstances, one should never give an absolute promise and leave some leeway for himself. As such, he rolled his eyes before saying, "Let's go with three years. It's beneficial for both of us."

Edward nodded his head.

"Oh right, I have a condition," Tang En supplemented. "And this condition must be written in the contract."

"What condition?"

"Edward, you are the chairman of the club, while I am the manager of the football team. You are in charge of operating the club, while I am in charge of training the team and bringing them for matches. I will definitely not make any comments regarding the operating state of the club, but you also must not interfere in any and all matters of the team. I will have full say over the purchase and sale of players, and also the continuation of players' and coaches' contracts. Your only role is to give me the money required. You must promise me this. You will not interfere in the matters of the team as the operator of the club. If you can't do it, then I will not sign that contract," Tang En said resolutely and decisively.

This was a matter of principle for him, and there was no room for negotiation. If a manager could not control his own team and was merely an obedient puppet and the loud-hailer of the chairman, then why did he continue to stay in this position?

Regardless of whether he was a football fan watching the matches, or he was a manager of the team, Tang En always disliked a chairman which interfered in the matters of the team. This was completely unrelated to how much the chairman knew about football. If the chairman always liked to flaunt his own knowledge about football, then why did he not come down from the VIP lounge and direct the match himself?

Since you chose to make me the manager of the team, you have to trust and respect my work. Otherwise, you might as well not approach me. That was Tang En's train of thought.

As such, Tang En felt that many of the European football clubs' chairmen could not be considered as good chairmen. Some of these included AC Milan's Berlusconi, Inter Milan's Moratti, Real Madrid's current chairman, Florentino, as well as his future successor Calderon. In comparison, the chairmen of most English football clubs met the selection criteria of the "most outstanding club chairman" award in Tang En's heart. Of course, the chairman who he felt was the closest to that title was Manchester United's chairman—Edwards.

This Englishman, whose name sounded rather unfamiliar, never interfered with Ferguson's actions, even if he threw a flying shoe in the changing room at the team captain and a top football star like Beckham. This person almost never appeared in front of the public. Even though he supported Manchester United for more than 20 years, with the team receiving countless glories and becoming the most profitable football club in the world, the fans widely believed that all of these were completely unrelated to Chairman Edwards. There were even many fans who hated this businessman who wanted to sell off the club at anytime.

However, Tang En liked him because he never interfered in the affairs of the team. But why was Tang En's evaluation of him only at "the chairman closest to that title"? That was because this businessman chairman was too stingy. If he were more generous, then he would be perfect.

Ferguson had even mentioned before, "Conversations with Edwards are always very joyous, until you ask him for money."

Tang En believed that Doughty must have also made Manchester United his goal, and Edwards his role model, when he promised his father to take over a club that he did not love. It had to be known that Edwards had earned more than £100,000,000 from Manchester United over the years.

Tang En hoped that Doughty could have the same attitude that Edwards had toward the team, and at the same time be more generous than Edwards. Hopefully, this would not be a lunatic's ravings.

Edward considered for a while before nodding his head. "Alright, I agree."

Hearing Doughty's reply, Tang En smiled. "That's great! You know what, Edward? I actually don't care if you really like football, or how you look at the team. I also don't care if you wish to make money out of this club. As long as you give me sufficient freedom, I assure you that you will get everything that you want."

Doughty extended his hand. "Look, Tony. I've said before that we can coordinate very well!"

"You're right, Edward." Tang En smiled and nodded his head vigorously.

Both of them shook hands.

After they finished discussing, Doughty mysteriously told Tang En that he hoped Tang En would not leak this news out beforehand. Tang En did not ask for the reason and agreed to it. After which, Doughty then left with peace of mind.

However, when Tang En, who was finished with the day's training, returned back home, the first thing that he did was not to change his clothes and go to the bar and chat with those people there. Instead, he sat in front of his computer and opened the Google webpage. After which, he keyed in the keywords "Nottingham Forest", and began his investigation work.

He wanted to verify a suspicion that he had in his mind right from the start.

When he knew that Collymore's contract was only one year, and he had his suspicions about it already. If it was like what Edward had said during the press conference for signing the new manager, that Collymore was "Nottingham Forest's hope from the outside", then why did he only sign a one-year contract with Collymore—a duration of one year was really considered short for a manager.

At that time, Tang En convinced himself that the reason was that Collymore was a newbie, and that the continuation of his contract would rely heavily on the results of the team under him. This reason seemed impeccable at first glance, but Doughty's confidence during their conversation made Tang En think about some other stuff.

The whole of England knew what kind of a person Collymore was. His personality and his temper were known by everyone. In this day and age of advanced technology, famous people had no privacy to speak of. Then why did Edward do the incomprehensible move of changing managers? Although Tang En's defeat in the playoffs could be used as an excuse, it should not necessarily have resulted in that. At least many people like Burns knew that if he had let Tang En continue, returning to the Premier League the next season would definitely not have been an issue for the team.

And now? On one hand, the team's ranking had fallen to sixth from the bottom, only three points away from entering the relegation zone. Faced with the reporters' accusations, Collymore only knew how to remain silent or shout as a response, completely unable to produce any good solutions. On the other hand, he still had the leisure to dress up like a poor playboy and flirt with the mother of a young player!

The board of directors could actually tolerate such an incompetent coach and let him remain in his position?

All these abnormal situations made Tang En think that he should shift the angle of his focus and thinking, from within the field to outside the field.

Looking at the very dense search results, Tang En directly skipped past all of the websites which were related to Nottingham Forest's history and its latest performance. After going through over 13 pages, his eyes finally stopped and became fixated on a short message.

"... As a result of the team's poor performance, Nottingham Football Club's stocks listed on the London Stock Exchange have been on a steady decline. As of yesterday, they have already dropped to 21 pennies per unit of stock. According to the analysis of experts, if the team's results do not see an improvement soon, then even if the new chairman Edward Doughty appears to be a rich American, the stock prices which had gone up slightly because of his arrival, will continue to fall." Although they had just announced that the club had already gotten out of the financial crisis and repaid all of its debts, this kind of situation was still unpreventable.

"...A noteworthy piece of news for reference: Leeds United, which had been suffering from a financial crisis as a result of their poor results and entrance into the relegation zone, the price of their per unit stock has already fallen to 2.6 pennies! This is the lowest price ever since their entrance into the market..."

This was a piece of news briefly describing the performance of the various clubs recently in the stock market, and had been published four days ago.

Teams which had their stock prices fall as a result of poor performance, were not limited to Nottingham Forest. There was still the pitiful "White Rose" Leeds United.

Tang En re-read this piece of news a few times, before finally stopping at the portion which mentioned "if the team's results do not see an improvement soon, then even if the new chairman Edward Doughty

appears to be a rich American, the stock prices which had gone up slightly because of his arrival, will continue to fall.”

Just as expected!

Tang En leaned against his chair and stared intently at the computer screen. Biting his lips, he fell into a deep slumber.

Chapter 103: Walker’s Farewell Part 1

It was already November, and the matches of the league were becoming more packed. However, Tang En’s job remained the same, leaving the team’s training to Kerslake and occasionally giving Wood some guidance. After the match with Arsenal, everyone knew George Wood’s impressiveness when it came to man-marking, as well as his weakness in zonal marking. So, the coaching staff intentionally reduced his man-marking practices, and instead let Wood participate in more Rondo trainings to train his zonal marking sense. Tang En and Kerslake both agreed that George Wood was a defense genius, and that as long as he trained properly and accumulated more experience during matches, this kid’s future would be bright.

On the other hand, Tang En also focused more of his attention toward the future. Although Doughty did not give him a definitive date for his return, Tang En reckoned that it would be around the winter break. If it were any later, there would not be much use. If it were earlier, it was unsure if Doughty would have finished the things that he had planned to do.

As if to confirm the information that Tang En had searched on the web the other day, Nottingham Forest’s stock prices continued to fall, and had already dropped all the way to 19 pennies per unit.

He knew that it was the time for Edward to act. No, perhaps he had already acted on it.

Then, it was time for him to act, as well.

A scout is a staff-member that could not be lacking in any professional football club. They were familiar with a specific place’s football environment, had wide connections, were well-informed, and had a discerning eye. It was an essential profession that provided the football teams with fresh blood.

The amount of money required to hire a scout was quite considerable. The expenses were not limited to the scout’s salary, but also included the travelling fees, lodging fees, equipment fees, and even the fees used to bribe the family members of the players. Nottingham Forest, which had fallen into a financial crisis, obviously did not care much about their scouts. As a result, most of their scouts left, and there were only three scouts left at the moment—58-year-old football scout Ian Storey-Moore, 35-year-old Dave Johnston, and 43-year-old Colin Hudson.

The latter two were often outside, and were not even locals of Nottingham. They would write letters back to the clubs irregularly to inform about the place where they found talented young players, as well as attach footage of that person’s play—should the conditions permit. It was almost impossible to find them on the team’s training grounds.

As the other scout, Mr. Storey-Moore was in charge of scouting for players in the Nottingham surroundings, and, theoretically, he should occasionally have been seen on the training grounds. Tang En thought for a while. Ever since he became the first team's manager, Tang En had not even seen Storey-Moore even once at Wilford, even though it was said that during that period of time, Storey-Moore had appeared on the team's training grounds before.

This person's whereabouts were elusive. Now that Tang En needed his help, he didn't want to hear that he had to wait at the training grounds for his appearance?

Tang En decided to find Walker, as he must know Storey-Moore's phone number and home address. If Storey-Moore could not be found in the club, then Tang En would phone his house and pay a visit to him.

He just did whatever he had in mind. Tang En was not worried in the slightest bit about the awkward situation if he were to meet Collymore in the first team's training venue. That was because he knew the chances of Collymore appearing at the training venue at that time were near zero.

The team was not performing well, and that idiot seemed to have resigned himself to it.

When Tang En reached the first team's training venue, the team's training had already ended. The players were either showering and changing in the changing room, or they had already left the training grounds.

He saw Walker and another old man standing together, their moods did not appear to be very good. The old man had his back to Tang En while he shook his head, while Walker repeatedly said something.

Tang En hastened his steps and approached them, waving toward Walker who was facing him. Walker saw Twain and said something to the old man, before walking toward Twain.

"Tony, why did you come here to find me? Ever since you went to the youth team, you haven't come here even once."

"Of course, you know, I don't wish to see Collymore. But I came here today with a favor to ask of you. Des, do you know Ian Storey-Moore's phone number and home address?" Tang En asked.

Hearing the name that Tang En uttered, Des was momentarily stunned before he turned around and laughed. "You came here at the right time, Tony." He used his eyes to signal to Tang En, to look at the old man behind him. "You see him?"

"Who is he?" Tang En asked in bewilderment.

"The person you're looking for, Mr. Ian Storey-Moore, the team's top scout."

"Ah? Thank God!" Tang En clapped his hands. Such a coincidence! He had appeared in front of Tang En right when Tang En needed to find him. "Thank you, Des." He patted Walker's shoulders, before walking toward the old man.

"Hey, Tony, but..." Tang En seemed to have not heard Walker, as he continued walking. Looking at his back, Walker sighed, "Forget it."

Storey-Moore saw a young man headed toward him, with his hand extended and a face full of smiles. Was it an intention to shake hands? Storey-Moore also extended his hand.

“Mr. Storey-Moore, pleased to meet you. I am Tony Twain, the supervisor of the youth team,” Twain introduced himself.

Moore nodded his head and said slowly, “I’ve heard of you, Mr. Twain.”

Storey-Moore, who was 58 years old, had a head full of white hair. The crevices on his face intersected, and the pair of eyes that had discovered countless youth talents were buried deep within his eye sockets. In the dusk, they appeared to be not very clear, but Tang En was still able to see a glimmer of light flash past amidst the darkness.

“Can I help you?” Moore asked slowly.

Tang En smiled. “It’s like this, I would like to engage Mr. Moore’s help with finding someone.”

Before he could even finish his sentence, Moore shook his head and refused his request. “Really sorry, Mr. Twain. I’ve already decided to retire.”

“What?” Tang En thought that his ears were playing tricks on him.

Walker walked up from the side and sighed. “Mr. Moore came to find me to talk about this matter. I wanted to persuade him to change his mind, but from the looks of it, it seems fairly impossible.” Walker shrugged his shoulders with resignation.

“But...” Tang En looked at Storey-Moore from head to toe and said, “But your body still appears to be in a great shape and can even rival those professional players!”

Moore smiled and said, “Thank you Mr. Twain for your compliment. If you are referring to those players over there,” he pointed in the far direction at the group of Nottingham Forest players who had just exited the changing room and was walking toward the car park and said, “I think I am even better at running than them. But this part of me,” he pointed toward his heart and continued, “is tired.”

Tang En understood. It was yet another person that had been knocked down by Nottingham Forest’s consecutive disastrous results and the bleak future of the team. Faced with an old man like this who had dedicated 30 years of his life to the club, what more could Tang En ask for? Could he say, “Don’t worry, Mr. Moore. I will soon become the master of this place. When that time comes, Nottingham Forest will have a bright future”?

He could not, because even he himself did not know what would happen in the future. No, perhaps it should be said that even though he knew the fates of a few people and the occurrences of certain events over the next few years, he did not know his own fate in the future, not even his fate for the next day.

“Did Mr. Chairman agree to it?” Tang En did not want such an experienced veteran scout to leave just like this. He wanted to personally persuade him to stay.

Moore nodded his head. “Yes, he has agreed to my retirement.”

What is that b*stard Doughty doing! This kind of person is the wealth of the club and should be held on to firmly. How could he let him go? Tang En scolded in his heart. Afterwards, he raised his head and looked at Moore, unwilling to give up just like that.

“Mr. Moore, although you’ve already decided to retire, can I ask for a personal favor from you to find a person?”

Moore looked at Tang En before replying, “A person that can make Mr. Twain so persistent... I would also like to meet him.”

This is considered a yes, right? Tang En smiled. He whipped out a piece of paper that contained the name of the person he wanted to find, and passed it to Storey-Moore.

“Eastwood?” Moore read out the name written on it. “Only this? Nothing else? Is this a surname or a name?”

“It’s a surname... Erm, I don’t quite remember his name anymore.” Tang En was not lying. He had only remembered this person’s surname as it could be easily translated into Chinese: 东木头—Eastwood. As for his name, he really could not recall.

“Mr. Twain, there are more than 10,000 people in the whole of England whose surname is Eastwood—men, women, adults, children, old people... even your hometown is called Eastwood.” Moore shook his head. Searching for this person was akin to searching for a needle in a haystack, and he was slightly inclined to refuse this request already.

Tang En quickly added, “I still have some other information regarding him. I believe it will prove useful to you, Mr. Moore. He used to be a player of Westham United’s youth team, and should have still been there until the last season. I’ve tried searching him up on the internet, but Westham currently doesn’t have such a person. I don’t know where he went.”

Tang En knew this person even before he time-travelled. However, that was only because of a coincidence, and he had not heard of him before that. When Tang En searched Gareth Bale’s football videos on Youtube, he found a video compilation of several young players with a lot of potential called “Best Young Players Outside the Premiership.” This person was one of the players in the video. After that, Tang En specifically went to look for his stats in FM07. What he found shocked him, and was completely beyond his expectations. That kid was very, very outstanding, and the few crucial statistics for the striker were all above seventeen. The maximum points for any statistic in the game was only 20!

Chapter 104: Walker’s Farewell Part 2

FM was a football manager game that was based on reality, and possessed a vast, detailed database about players. If a certain player was considered a genius or a wonderkid in the game, then he would not be too far off in reality. Many players who had been determined as wonderkids in the game previously, were now famous football stars, such as AC Milan’s Brazilian midfielder Kaká, who had just been bought over from São Paulo FC this summer.

It was said that in 2007, there were even managers in England who looked for players with decent potential or abilities based on FM.

The historical record of the person whom Tang En saw in FM, was that he left Westham United in this season. The game would not tell its players why a player left. As for the team which he later joined, Tang En could not remember it clearly. At that time, he did not have such a great memory as he currently did for English words.

“How is he?” Moore asked.

Tang En scratched his head. How should he answer this question? Obviously, he could not say something like he looked pretty good in the game. “I think, perhaps, not bad.”

“Have you seen him play before?”

“Yes,” Tang En lied. “Striker, and rather good with scoring and long passes. I have quite a bit of an impression of him, so I hope you can help me look for him.”

Moore stared at the name written on the piece of paper for a while, before nodding his head. “Alright, I promise to help you Mr. Twain. But I cannot guarantee that I will be able to find him in the end.”

“Thank you very much, Mr. Moore!” Tang En agitatedly shook Storey-Moore’s hands again forcefully.

After sending off Storey-Moore, Tang En did not leave immediately. Instead, he stood by the side of the field and chatted with Walker, cracked a few jokes, and asked about the team’s current situation in the changing room. Tang En was someone who was about to return, and therefore understanding more about the team’s current situation would be beneficial for him to assimilate back into the team.

“Des, how’s the team currently?”

Walker smiled bitterly. “The whole world knows about it. Is there still a need to ask me?”

“What I meant was, how’s the team’s situation in the changing room?”

“Very, very terrible. Completely no fighting spirit, blaming each other, panicky. Just multiply the most horrible situation you can think of by 10, and it should be about right.”

“It sounds like a completely dark hell.” Tang En pinched his chin and pouted. It appeared to be much worse than he had expected. “Don’t worry, Des. The situation will improve.”

“Perhaps so. But in any case, I won’t be there to witness it.” Walker shrugged his shoulders.

Tang En deciphered another message from this complaint. Staring at Walker, Tang En asked, “Why?”

“Tony, I heard that Dawson and Reid are leaving.”

Tang En was shocked. “Who did you hear it from?”

“Everyone is talking about who will be leaving, and some things are just so easy to guess. Dawson and Reid are the only two people in the team who are able to perform on the field, and it isn’t just a one- or two-day thing that the Premier League teams have been eyeing them. The team is scattered.”

Hearing Walker say this, Tang En recalled a line from a movie, "It is difficult to lead the team with the people's hearts scattered."

"I'm leaving as well, Tony."

This sentence was the one which dealt the heaviest blow to Tang En. He jumped up abruptly. "What did you say?"

"Bowyer is doing rather well at Hereford, and he invited me over to help him. I've already agreed to it." Walker had not even finished his sentence, before Tang En grabbed him by his collar.

"B*stard! You can't do this!" He shouted at Walker, his voice was mixed with rage, disappointment, and sadness. "We are the best partners! You train the team, I direct the match. We will go to the Premier League, and we will also win trophies one after another, until City Ground Stadium is unable to fit them all!"

"Tony, I..."

Tang En could not care less about his promise to Edward about keeping it a secret. He shouted loudly, "I will come back soon! Doughty has already promised me. I will return! This darned winter!"

Walker's shock at that moment was in no way inferior to Tang En's. He looked at Tang En, and asked stuttering, "To, Tony... What did you just say? You will be coming back, this winter?"

"Yes." Tang En stood with his back against Walker, as he took a deep breath to calm himself down. When he heard that Walker was leaving, he really felt a tinge of fear—this was the person on the team he was on friendliest terms with. He was not only just an assistant. He helped Tang En with far more than training the team. Walker was the one who guided Tang En into this profession, helped him, reminded him, and took care of him in his life. Was their relationship as simple as one between a manager and assistant manager?

"I was not supposed to tell anyone. Doughty promised me that I will be returning back to City Ground Stadium's manager seat within a fixed period of time." Tang En turned around and saw the shocked Walker. "I was originally looking forward to leading the team together with you, Des."

Hearing this, Walker was like a deflated ball. His shoulders dropped and his head lowered as he said feebly, "If... if only you had looked for me one day earlier. I've already signed a contract with Hereford. My contract with Nottingham Forest will end in June next year, and then I will go to Hereford... At that time, I thought that Nottingham Forest was about to be relegated to League two, and the darkest for the team was finally coming. I don't wish to see the team fall so low! But I am only a goddamned assistant manager. Aside from arranging the trainings daily, I can't do anything else. There are times when I even wished I could personally go onto the field! Darned professional football players."

Walker suddenly erupted like a volcano, shouting at Tang En and venting the accumulated rage and frustration over the past season.

Tang En did not persuade him, did not console him, and did not stop him. He merely stood in his original spot and looked at him quietly.

Ten months ago in Coventry's home ground Highfield Road Stadium's changing room, Ian Bowyer left and returned, telling Tang En that he wanted to leave Nottingham Forest to pursue his own future. Tang En tried to persuade him to stay but to no avail. Furthermore, at that time, he did not even know where his future lay. What could he use to persuade Bowyer to stay?

Now that Tang En had already gotten chairman Doughty's promise and guarantee, he suddenly did not feel like persuading Walker to stay. Walker's reason for leaving were much ample than Bowyer. He had already supported this team on his own for too long. His heart was battered and his body was worn out. What reason did Tang En have to ask him to continue to stay behind under such unknown circumstances?

Everyone has their own life, and everyone will choose their own paths. Whether it turns out to be bitter or sweet, blissful or failure, whether it is thorny and bumpy or a smooth sailing bright future. All of those paths are walked alone. When Tang En was fired from his post, he was undecided for a while before ultimately deciding to stay behind and wait for an opportunity to prove his worth once again. Under such circumstances where Walker was unable to see his future, it was also his freedom to choose to leave.

"Alright." Upon thinking about it, Tang En sighed lightly. "At least we could perhaps still work together for half a season. But it's just a pity. What can we still do with the remaining half of the season? Prevent the relegation of the pre-season favorites?"

Both of them became silent. This goal of theirs sounded really depressing.

"No, Tony! I've thought of it! Perhaps we still have another method to end this season!" Walker suddenly said loudly in an excited manner.

"Hmm?"

"We just defeated Portsmouth in the third round of the EFL cup with a score of 4:2 during the penalty shootout, and the FA Cup has not started yet as well!"

Tang En's eyes were once again lit up.

"Thank you, Des. I promise you that when the time comes, you will have a glorious departure!"

Chapter 105: Gypsies Part 1

One week had already passed since Tang En had gone to look for Storey-Moore and Des Walker. In that period, the youth team played a youth league match in the fourth group. Compared to the previous match, Tang En had given George Wood the chance to play for half the match and his performance remained rather good. In fact, it was even better than the previous match. Kerslake felt that it had to be attributed to Wood's extremely sturdy psychological quality.

"Oh gosh, Tony. This kid doesn't seem to know the meaning of the word 'nervous'!" Kerslake exclaimed.

Tang En laughed out loud and said, "That is because he always played truant during his lessons!"

Of course this was a joke. Tang En did not tell Kerslake that aside from Wood's psychological quality, there was another very important reason for Wood's good performance for two consecutive matches. That it was his mother, Sophia, who had been watching him play from the side of the field.

Wood told Tang En, that he and his mother had reached an agreement—if the weather was good and the sky was clear when he had a home match, he would permit his mother to come watch. If it was raining or it looked like it was going to rain, then she would not be allowed to come.

Hearing Wood's words, Tang En smiled and said to him, "Rest assured, George. As long as it's a match on our home ground, the weather will definitely be good and won't rain."

Sure enough, on the day of the match, the skies of Nottingham, which had just entered winter was extremely clear, with the sun shining brightly. Under the close watch of his mother, Sophia, George Wood also beautifully completed his performance in the second half, helping the team defeat its opponent with a score of 2:1. Tang En made him mark the enemy team's core offensive player. As a result, the core player who had been quite active in the first half, was almost nowhere to be found in the second half. In the end, the opponent team's manager could only substitute him out. Tang En also made use of this chance to let Wood apply what he had learned during his training—become a fixed position defensive midfielder, and serve as the first line of defense instead of marking a certain specific player.

Although he made some mistakes—the entire managerial team was able to see that—this lad was slowly working toward the right direction step by step.

Give him more time and let him participate in more matches. After that... what will we get?

What a highly anticipated future!

At the same time, Collymore's days became increasingly unbearable.

He stayed true to his word and refused to accept all forms of interview from the Nottingham Evening Post. After that, his good days had completely come to an end.

Pierce Brosnan, James Robson, and various other big and small reporters from the Nottingham Evening Post, all became the forefront of the anti-Collymore faction. Even if Collymore was slightly distracted for a split second when he answered questions during the post-match press conference, he would be caught by the Evening Post and be attacked for it. They would also make accusations about him which seemed possible but were actually wrong.

The readers also liked reading these sorts of articles. With the increase in the Nottingham Evening Post's sales, their scolding was taken to a whole new level.

Today was a Sunday, and Nottingham Forest's first team was headed to Wigan for a match. As such, Tang En did not need to go to City Ground Stadium to watch the match. Tang En, who was in a good mood, got out of bed early and made himself a simple breakfast. After that, he watched the morning news on the television while enjoying the wonderful morning. Ever since he knew that he would soon return to the manager's seat in the first team, his mood was so good that it was as if he were able to see sun daily during winter.

The television was rebroadcasting the sports news from the night before. The Nottingham Forest's local television station paid the most attention to Nottingham Forest and Derby County. As for Premier League or any other matches, even those were of a lower priority than these two teams.

Nottingham Forest had been the focal point of the press recently, and it was because of their terrible results as well as that incapable manager.

If Collymore did not come up with anything soon, and the team's results continued to spiral downward, then at the end of the season Nottingham Forest would have the "honor" of becoming the first team that had won the UEFA Champions League, and yet have to struggle in the country's third tier football league.

Looking back at the past glory of this team, and then looking at their current horrible situation, it was really a heartbreaking sight. There were even some newspapers that were unable to hold themselves back from making headlines such as: Former European champion in dire straits, its future bleak and dark! They had already completely stopped believing in Nottingham Forest's ability to make a comeback in the remaining half a season.

The reporters from the TV station casually interviewed a few football fans on the streets, and asked for their opinion regarding Collymore as well as the team's prospects. Tang En watched them interview four people, and none of them said anything positive. Three of them accredited the team's terrible results to Collymore's low standards and lack of professional ethics. At the same time, there were also two people who felt that the club's board of directors should also take responsibility for the current disastrous state of the team.

"If they didn't fire Manager Tony Twain, perhaps we would already be in the top six position of the league!"

"You're wrong, idiot!" Tang En pointed his fork at that plump football fan on the screen and said, "We would be first in the league!"

"If Brian Clough was still around, the situation would not have worsened to this current state," A female football fan shook her head and said painfully to the camera. The male football fan standing beside her, obviously her husband, continued.

"I think that Tony Twain can do it as well. It's a pity that he's currently managing the youth team."

Those words made Tang En feel extremely flattered to have people pin their hopes on him like they did for Nottingham Forest's legendary figure, Clough. Their expectations for him made him feel a sense of accomplishment. He even felt that when he led the team in the second half of the season and advanced all the way into the playoffs, the prestige and expectations that the fans pinned on him then was much lower than they had for him currently, when he became part of the youth team.

Perhaps people tended to place higher expectations for the things that they were unable to attain at the moment.

Right when Tang En was reveling in front of the television, his phone rang.

"Mr. Twain, I've found the person you tasked me to find."

Half an hour later, Tang En and Moore were already onboard the train from Nottingham to London.

“Freddy Eastwood, born in 1983 on the 29th of October in Epsom, located southwest of London. Currently, he is staying with his wife as well as his son, who is not even one-year-old yet, at Basildon.” Moore, who was seated opposite Tang En, remained calm and collected, and he continued to speak slowly. Tang En, on the other hand, was very eager to meet the person. “Once we reach London train station, we will take the subway before taking a bus there.”

Tang En shook his head, and said in a somewhat excited manner. “No, no, Mr. Moore. There’s no need for so much trouble. We’ll rent a car and head there directly.”

Moore remained expressionless, and his body swayed to the rhythm of the moving train. “Mr. Twain, looks like you can’t wait even a minute longer.”

“That’s right, Mr. Moore,” Tang En chuckled. “Truth to be told, I can’t wait to meet him immediately!”

“I can understand how you feel, Mr. Twain. But, I heard that he had been fouled intentionally in a youth match in the first half of the year. As a result, he broke his leg.” Moore said slowly as he looked at Tang En without blinking. At that moment, Tang En had already felt that something was not right. “At that time, he was still on Westham United’s team, and their opponents for that match was—Nottingham Forest.”

The smile on Tang En’s face immediately turned stiff.

They directly called a car rental company at the London train station. A black rental car came to pick them up, driving them toward Basildon, which was located in the northern part of London.

Tang En, who was seated in the car, was no longer as excited as he was when he departed. He sat at the back quietly as he looked out of the windows at the wilderness and buildings which flashed past in an instant.

If Tang En really met Eastwood, how should Tang En approach him after revealing the motive of his visit and his background?

The wilderness outside the car gradually decreased. Row upon row of buildings became increasingly common. They had finally reached Basildon.

After they entered the town, Moore made the driver pull over by the side of the road.

“We will have to walk in from here on.” Moore said to Tang En.

Tang En got out and looked at the environment around him. They were currently at the National Highway Section A127 which connected London and Basildon. There were houses on both ends, and two rows of shrubs which separated these houses from the highway. Despite much of the leaves falling due to winter, it still appeared to be rather dense.

Moore led the way in front without saying anything, while Tang En followed behind him quietly. After his interaction with this old man, Tang En discovered that Moore was not someone who liked to talk. So, Tang En did not take much of an initiative to strike a conversation with him.

After walking for a short distance, the ground below their feet was all muddy and difficult to walk on. The shrubs on both sides of the road also gradually increased. Tang En felt that they were not looking for a person, but observing wild animals.

“Where does he stay?” Tang En could not help but ask.

Right at this moment, Moore stopped. He turned his head around and said to Tang En, “We’re here, Mr. Twain.”

Tang En took a step forward from behind Moore, and then looked around at the surroundings. This was undoubtedly a small residential area, and the area was filled with old-style red-bricked houses. In the middle of the buildings was an empty space that was surrounded by shrub bushes.

After that, Tang En saw that there was a long yellow wagon parked in the middle of the empty space. There was even a white-colored curtain laced with designs of flowers inside the car. Outside the car were two red-colored foldable chairs, three pails full of water and a few empty bottles. At a not-so-faraway distance, there was a rope with both of its ends attached to two trees. On it hung a few clothes with flower designs, which appeared to be female clothes at first glance.

Seeing this sight made Tang En’s mouth gape wide in astonishment. After a long while, he finally recovered from his shock and asked the silent Moore, “This... this is his house?”

Moore nodded his head.

Chapter 106: Gypsies Part 2

Tang En scratched his head, “Have we arrived at an early 1990s’ refugee zone?”

Moore pointed to a yellow long wagon and announced, “The modernized wagon is part of the nomadic way of life, Mr. Twain. Freddy Eastwood, who you’re looking for, is such a Romanichal Gypsy.”

“This sounds like a fantasy novel,” Tang En chuckled. “Can he do divination? The sparkling magic crystal ball, the mysterious cabin with the half-covered hanging screen by the door.”

Moore shook his head. “He can’t. But ...”

“But?”

“It is said that his wife is able to. She is also a Romani.”

Looking in front of him, Tang En had no idea what to say. He came here to find the wonderkid from the game, not a Romanichal Gypsy who was living with his wife in a wagon outside mainstream society.

The white curtain in the third window frame from the left, directly opposite them, swayed a little. Moore called attention to Twain who was still in a daze, “It seems that the sound of our conversation has awakened the owner here, Mr. Twain.”

“Huh? What?”

Tang En’s question was interrupted by the creaking sound of a door opening.

A girl in pink pajamas with messy hair, wearing a black fur coat on the outside—Tang En was not able to say if it was a woman in front of him because she looked too young—stuck her head out of the wagon.

“You two gentlemen, are you here to buy a car?” The girl’s voice was crisp, like the song of a bird in the morning.

“Buy a car?” Tang En thought he had heard wrong.

Moore’s slow, deep voice rang out in his ear again. “He has joined a local amateur team and is helping his father sell second-hand cars when he’s not training or playing.”

Tang En glanced at Moore. “Mr. Moore, do you know anything else about him that you can tell me all at once?”

When Moore was about to open his mouth, the girl jumped down from the wagon and stood barefoot on the grass in the early winter morning. She curiously sized-up at the two visitors. “It appears that you are not here to buy a car, nor are you here for divination. Are you guys sent by the old man Boris?”

“Who is Boris?” Tang En did not understand. With all these things happening, he felt that he should not have gone out today!

“A local councilor.” Moore explained again. “He has publicly condemned them on many occasions that it is illegal to put their home on the community greenbelt. And he has also appealed to the relevant authorities to investigate the matter.”

“Thank you for the clarification, Mr. Moore.” Tang En nodded. He was completely out of temper.

“You’re welcome, Mr. Twain.”

“But, I don’t think you look very much like government people either.” The girl was also observing Twain and Moore while they were talking. “In that case, what exactly are you here to do?” Out of nowhere, she pulled out a deck of playing cards, shuffled them in her hands and played with them over and over. Tang En’s attention was caught by her excellent card skills.

What kind of people are from this family?!

At this time, he heard a burst of “clop clop” sound from behind him. Then a loud and sharp male voice suddenly rang out, “Hey, Sabina! Do we have visitors? Are they here to buy a car or looking for a divination? Is the baby awake, did you give him milk? Oh, quickly go back, you have no shoes on!”

This sudden voice sounded like a machine gun. He was speaking very quickly, and his elocution was unclear, ratatatat, ratatatat... Tang En simply could not catch what he had said in time and then it was over.

He and Moore turned back to look, and a man’s head appeared above the bushes. “Good heavens, he’s really tall!” exclaimed Tang En. Although the bushes were not that tall, they were as tall as a man, and this man looked taller than the bushes. Was he another Jan Koller? No, he remembered this man in the game was not tall at all.

“Mr. Twain, in fact,” Moore corrected Twain’s remark, “he is not that tall. He seems tall to you, because...”

Eastwood looked at these two unfamiliar men in front of his eyes, shook his head curiously, and then came out from behind the bushes.

“...because he’s riding a horse.”

When he saw Eastwood “walking” out, Tang En heard something clicked in his brain.

Moore was right, the man was indeed riding on the back of a black steed! The horse flicked its tail continuously and snorted.

“Oh my god! Am I in the Middle Ages?” cried Tang En. He might never forget what he had seen today for the rest of his life—Tang En’s medieval fantasy trip!

The gypsy couple looked strangely at the man who was scratching his head and wondered what he was doing. At this time, a baby’s cry could be heard in the wagon, and the woman hurriedly ran back. The man jumped down to lead the horse to the woods behind and fasten the reins to a tree. Having done this, he walked back to the wagon, sat down in the chair by the doorway, and studied the two men.

Tang En finally recovered from the bewilderment. He stepped forward, gave a cough, and then introduced himself. “Hello, Freddy. I am... um, I’m...” He was stuck. How should I introduce myself?

“It doesn’t matter who you are, Sir.” Eastwood sat on his chair in a very relaxed manner, shaking his head. “What’s important is your purpose in coming here.”

“Freddy, do you want to play professional football?” Tang En got right to the point.

This question caught Eastwood’s attention and he scrutinized Twain for a long time. Suddenly, he slapped his thigh, rose from his chair, and shouted at Twain, “I remember now! You’re that guy from Nottingham Forest!”

Tang En nodded, “Just as you thought. I’m that guy.” It was a good moniker which saved everyone a lot of trouble.

Eastwood snorted, “Whose fault was it that I was kicked out of West Ham United? You have some nerve coming here to look for me. Are you planning to let me play for you?”

Hearing the other person say so, Tang En scratched his nose abashedly. The matter with what Wood did was indeed a little unscrupulous, but if it were not for that foul, how could he have found out what position Wood was good for? If this person in front of him was not injured at that time, he might not be reduced to the point of playing for an amateur team. But if it did not happen this way, how could they have such a face-to-face opportunity today?

Ah, karmic retribution.

When Tang En saw him, he was certain that this man was the very stubborn Freddy Eastwood in his memory. His slender figure, pale face and brown hair completely matched his impression of his face. It was this man who helped his team eliminate the mighty Manchester United with a direct free kick in the EFL Cup in the 06-07 season.

The only concern Tang En had now was that he could not remember the reason for his abandonment by West Ham United; was it because West Ham thought he had no potential or was it because of his injury?

Did George Wood's foul toward him affect his future ability? Was Eastwood, standing before Tang En now, still the one who would wipe out Manchester United?

Eastwood was still complaining on and on when his wife, who appeared behind him carrying their child, gave a cough, "Don't look for excuses, Freddy. Haven't you always wanted to play professional football? Here's your chance now."

Eastwood was immediately muzzled.

Then the woman smiled at Tang En. "I'm sorry, sir. That injury was really a huge blow for Freddy."

Tang En apologetically nodded. "He has every reason to do this. It is me who should say sorry for that matter."

Eastwood's wife continued, "When Freddy's leg was healed, he had once thought about giving up football and concentrating on helping Dad with his car dealership. I persuaded him to try his luck at the other clubs, and he went to Charlton...."

As his wife was recounting these past events, Eastwood sat in his chair and looked up at the sky as if this had nothing to do with him.

"But when the people at Charlton heard that Freddy had just broken his leg a few months before, they didn't even spare him a minute's chance."

All this was caused by Wood. Although it did not have much to do with Tang En, he shouldered the responsibility for this. "I am sorry, madam. We've come to him now, hoping to make up for this regret." After saying that, he looked at Eastwood and quietly waited for his answer.

"Freddy!" His wife raised her volume to call her husband's name.

He finally lowered his head to look at Twain and grunted, "We Romani Gypsies are particular about fair dealing in our business. Since you have come all the way from Nottingham to find me, you have shown your sincerity. Then I also must show my ability. Or you would be worried if I could still play after my right leg had been broken."

Tang En smiled. "No, I'm not worried."

"This afternoon at the New Recreation Ground, come watch me play in a game!"

This was a Southern Amateur Football League game. What was said to be a game at the New Recreation Ground was only an ordinary soccer field and a small stand made of steel frames. Tang En once lamented outside the Bernabéu Stadium that the Forest team home ground was like a sports field in a high school as compared to the Real Madrid home ground. But now the "Playing Fields" in front of his eyes were 100 percent a "high school sports field."

Almost everyone stood on the sidelines of the field watching the game. There was no billboard to circle the football field, no television broadcast, no large number of news reporters, and no locker room... nothing whatsoever.

Looking at such a surrounding for a match, Tang En felt sorry for Eastwood and at the same time, even more deeply apologetic in his heart.

“Stimson is a good man. When I wasn’t playing, he asked me to come to Grays Athletic. Even though they are amateur games, I can always stay in shape and maintain my feel for the ball. I think he’ll be happy to see that I can return to professional football. To repay him, I’m going to score a lot of goals in this match.” Eastwood said this to Twain before the game, as if scoring goals came easy to him, like he could score as many as he wanted.

And now he was standing in the center circle on the field, getting ready to kick off.

“What do you think, Mr. Moore?” Tang En asked for the opinion of the Forest football club’s former chief scout on the sidelines.

“I have not watched his matches before, Mr. Twain,” Moore answered truthfully. “But those cheers with his name around the field should be able to explain some things.”

“I think so too,” said Tang En with a smile.

The game had only gone on for 50 minutes, and Tang En already could not contain his excitement. He really saw it. He saw the Freddy Eastwood who was exactly the same as that Freddy Eastwood in FM. The wonderkid with player attributes like Scoring – 18, Passing – 17, Free Kicks – 19, Technique – 18, Dribbling – 17, Long Shots – 16, Flair – 18, Acceleration – 17, Balance – 17, Pace – 15!

The spectators around New Recreation Ground shouted Eastwood’s name, worshipping him like a god!

In the 50 minutes, he had already scored six goals! A penalty kick, a free kick, a long shot, a corner kick, and dribbled past the goalkeeper to shoot a goal in! He performed almost every scoring method as if he were demonstrating his shooting ability to Twain.

“What do you think now, Mr. Moore?” Tang En said to Moore standing next to him amidst the cheering sounds.

“Just as you said, Mr. Twain. He is a genius.” Moore’s face finally showed a slight change of expression as he answered with a slight smile. Clearly, the Romanichal striker’s performance also won over the picky old scout.

“He’s only 20 years old!” Tang En applauded Eastwood with the people around him. “He does not belong to such a shabby stadium and a match with no television broadcast and reporters! We must sign him. He will become a sharp tool on the Forest team’s frontline!”

“I agree too, but I have an issue with this from the beginning, Mr. Twain.”

“Huh?”

“Signing new players seems to be the job of a First Team manager.”

Tang En turned to look at the old scout standing beside him. “You can see me as the future Forest First Team manager.” He saw there was a flash in the old man’s deep-set eyes. “Mr. Moore, are you going to reconsider your decision to retire?”

“No, Mr. Twain, I will not withdraw my decision.”

Tang En was a little disappointed when he heard Moore say that. It still did not work. This old man is really stubborn!

“But, just like this, you can ask me for help in your individual capacity, Mr. Twain.” Old Moore still had no expression, but Tang En seemed to see an old man smiling at himself.

There was cheering around him once more. Eastwood had scored again.

Chapter 107: Welcome Back Part 1

Freddy Eastwood’s matter was settled very easily. As he was currently playing for an amateur team, he was valued at a very cheap amount. Nottingham Forest only needed to pay £100,000 to take him away from Grays Athletic. Actually, it was possible to not pay a single cent. However, as Tang En felt bad for Eastwood, he still gave the money. After all, it was because Grays Athletic had been willing to take in a striker who had broken his leg, let him participate in matches to keep him in shape, that Tang En was able to see such an energetic Eastwood.

Both parties signed the club transfer agreement. From the first of January onward, Eastwood would be considered a member of Nottingham Forest.

Tang En, who had just returned from Basildon, heard that night that Collymore’s team had lost yet another match. He knew that this kid was not far away from stepping down.

On Monday morning, the London Stock Exchange Market was open, and Nottingham Forest club announced through a stock market announcement, the changes in the shares of the club—Edward Doughty was currently in possession of 75 percent of Nottingham Forest’s shares through means of purchase.

The news confirmed Tang En’s guesses. He also completely understood what Doughty and his financial advisor had been doing for the past half of the season.

What did it mean for someone to possess 75 percent of the shares of an English football club? It meant that that person would be in an authority position higher than the board of directors, and that the entire club would completely belong to him. He could immediately announce the club’s exit of the stock market, and make the private limited company with a shareholders’ system into a private club. There was also no need for him to go through board of directors’ meetings to carry out any new policies and future development plans for the club, including reconstruction, expansion, new football fields, purchase and sale of players, the appointments of the upper echelons of the club... In other words, he would become the emperor of the club, and no one could go against any decision of his.

Even if Doughty were to say “from next season onward, Nottingham Forest’s season ticket prices will increase by 300 percent, and the prices of the food and beverages sold within the stadium are to be increased by 100 percent”, this would become an unchangeable decision despite the fans’ protests.

Of course, Tang En believed that Doughty would not be foolish to such an extent.

Tang En took a look at the league’s points ranking. As Nottingham Forest had consecutively lost matches, it had already fallen to the fourth last team in terms of ranking. It had to be known that the

last three teams of the league would be relegated to League Two after the end of the season. If Nottingham Forest were to really be relegated, the percentage of shares Doughty possessed would no longer matter.

If he wanted to make the team into a money-making machine that served a few people, the team would have to produce good results.

Tang En knew that it would soon be time for his debut.

Edward! Give me a call! Tell me you need me!

Just as Tang En finished shouting in his heart, his phone suddenly rang.

"It can't be that coincidental, can it?" Tang En muttered as he picked up the call.

It was indeed Doughty, but his purpose for finding Twain was not to ask him to return to City Ground Stadium, but to tell him unexpected news.

"Tony, I just received a call, telling me that Collymore has been assaulted in a small alley outside a bar, and that he is currently being sent to the hospital. Do you know any news regarding this matter?"

"Ah?" Tang En was stunned for a while, before shaking his head and said, "No, I don't know. This incident won't have any negative repercussions, will it?" Actually, he really wanted to say, "Who assaulted him? I want to write him a letter to express my thanks." However, thinking that such an incident had happened when Doughty had just taken control over the club, there would undoubtedly be some negative association.

"Maybe yes, maybe no." But upon hearing Doughty's voice, he seemed to not be worrying much at all. "I'll make a call to verify. I was afraid that you were somehow related to this incident."

Tang En thought of someone. Rolling his eyes, he said, "No, why would it be related to me? You know I've been busy recently with Eastwood's matter."

"Mhmm. In that case, I'm relieved. By the way, Tony... Are you ready?"

"I've been ready for half a year, Edward."

Amidst the laughter of the two of them, Tang En hung up the call.

Tang En stood up and got dressed. Although it was already close to 10 p.m., he had to make a trip.

Sophia looked at the old Quartz clock hung on the wall anxiously. The hour hand had already passed 10, while the minute hand was pointed to six. It was already half past ten.

One hour ago, she made Wood go out to buy some things. With Wood's speed that could rival track and field athletes, he only required a little bit more than half an hour to come back. But now...

She heard an anxious knocking sound coming from the door on the first floor. She hurried to the windows and peeped through the small gap in the curtains. The person whom she saw knocking on the door shocked her—Tony Twain!

It is already so late. Why is Mr. Twain here?

Sophia wanted to go down and open the door, but right when she reached the staircase, she made a U-turn and returned to her room. Standing in front of the mirror, Sophia took her comb and tidied her hair despite the fact that her hair was not messy at all. After confirming that no issues could be spotted from any angle, an exultant smile akin to that of a young girl appeared on her face before she joyously ran to open the door.

Waiting for the female that was extremely shocked by his sudden visit to tidy up her looks, Tang En had already been out in the cold wind for about a minute knocking on the door several times.

Just as the disappointed Tang En was about to leave, the door creaked open. The light from within the house leaked out, sprinkling on Tang En's feet. Tang En lowered his head, only to see the figure of a woman standing inside the house.

He was slightly shocked. "Madam?"

"Mr. Twain, why are you here?" Sophia was slightly panting and her face was slightly flushed. Her pair of bright eyes were covered with a thin layer of mist, unknown whether it was due to the fatigue from sprinting, or a result of some other reason...

"Erm, I'm here to look for George. Is he around?" Actually, when Tang En asked this question, he already knew the answer.

Sophia made way for the door and replied, "He went out to buy something. Please come in Mr. Twain. It's cold outside."

Tang En hesitated for a while, but still walked in.

The tenant residing on the first floor had not come back. Perhaps he was still working hard outside to make a living. Currently, there were only two people in the house, himself and the woman in front of him. Suddenly, Tang En's heart raced.

"Mr. Twain, do you still not add anything to your red tea?" Sophia was making tea for Tang En.

"Yes.... Erm, no need to trouble yourself, Madam. I'll leave as soon as I see George." Tang En wanted to stop the enthusiastic female owner, but it was apparent that it was no use. Sophia opened the refrigerator and took out two boxes of biscuits, before turning around and waving the biscuits at Tang En.

"Do you like milk-flavored or chocolate-flavored?"

"Both are fine with me."

As such, Sophia placed both boxes of biscuits on the table, before taking the plates from the cupboard. Seeing Sophia's happily busy look, Tang En gave up on persuading her, as long as she was happy.

Before he knew her, how often was she so energetic, with a brimming smile on her face?

Sophia seemed to have wanted to get the plates from the highest row. Seeing her tiptoeing with great effort yet unable to reach when she extended her arms, Tang En decided to help her.

He stood up and walked to Sophia, standing behind her. Then, he extended his arms and easily touched that row of plates.

“Did you want this, Madam? Erm..” Tang En, who asked this question, felt that something was amiss.

Unknowingly and accidentally, both of their bodies were touching each other. Despite this being the winter and they wore proper clothes, the awkwardness caused was still inevitable.

The room was momentarily silent. The yellow light cast a vague, joint shadow on the wall beside the two of them. If Tang En put down his hands which were raised up high, it would look as if he was hugging Sophia.

Sophia was not tall, so when Tang En stood behind her, her hair happened to be right under Tang En’s nose. A clear fragrance could be smelled alongside the smooth hair, and he could not help but greedily inhale a breath.

Tang En felt the body that he was in contact with, tremble. He instantly regained his senses and immediately took a few steps back. Slightly at a loss of what to do, Tang En explained to Sophia, “So, so sorry! I.. I didn’t do it on purpose. Sorry! Sorry.” He was still holding on to the porcelain plate in his hands when he was flailing his arms around. The light reflection made it seem as though he was an acrobat.

Sophia was tickled by Tang En’s actions. “Can you pass me that plate, Mr. Twain?” She extended her hands naturally, but her cheeks secretly revealed a slight blush.

Tang En looked at the plate in his hand embarrassedly, before handing it over.

Sophia stood in front of the table with her head lowered, as she transferred some biscuits onto the plate. Her long, black hair lowered like a waterfall. Seeing this, Tang En recalled that incident from just now. Did that fragrance actually come from her countless strands of hair, or from the naked and exposed neck?

Shutting his eyes, he suddenly missed that feeling.

He could clearly feel the burning ball of flames that was in contact with his body at that time. The air was filled with mesmerizing fragrance that was extremely elusive. When one wanted to catch a hold on it, it would escape right from the tip of the nose.

“Smells really good,” he lightly sighed.

When Tang En opened his eyes again, he discovered that Sophia was looking at him and smiling. The biscuits were already placed on the plate, and the fragrance of the tea filled the room.

Chapter 108: Welcome Back Part 2

“Mr. Twain, what smells good?”

“Tea... As well as....” Feeling Sophia’s intent gaze at him with her head tilted, Tang En silently cleared his throat and mumbled, “I was saying, nothing much...”

The room was dimly-lit, and there was a beautiful lady in the room. Tang En lowered his head as a form of cover-up as he tried to resist an impulse that could not be expressed with words. It was no wonder that Collymore had expressed his interest for Sophia in public. Her natural charm was indeed enough to make anyone fall for her.

“Mr. Twain?”

“Hmm?”

“What are you looking at?” Sophia smiled as she asked Tang En.

“I am... Err, I’m admiring an oil painting.”

“Oil painting?”

“Yes... Mona Lisa...”

Right after he finished his sentence, Sophia’s face blushed red with embarrassment, and she lowered her head shyly.

Ah! Darn it! This is simply too ridiculous! Tang En silently scolded in his heart. He originally did not want to say this, but upon seeing Sophia, he suddenly lost control over his own tongue. Wood, Wood, if you don’t return soon, I’ll... I’ll!

The creaking sound of the door opening was heard coming from downstairs.

Tang En, who had been caught in an internal struggle, finally let out a sigh of relief. He sat paralyzed on the chair. God! My back is drenched in sweat!

Following a series of hurried footsteps, Wood appeared at the door of the room. When he saw Twain, who was seated before the dining table, he was stunned.

Sophia walked up to Wood and took over the bags from her son’s hands. While doing so, she asked concernedly, “Where did you go, George? Why did you spend more than an hour... Oh!” She frowned upon smelling a strong alcoholic smell emanating from Wood. “You went drinking, George?” Her tone became slightly sterner.

Hearing Sophia say this, Tang En turned his head and stared at Wood intently. There were no bruises or cuts on his face. Shifting his gaze slowly from top to bottom, Tang En finally saw a black mark on Wood’s pants in his knee area. Although it had been repeatedly dusted off by the owner of this pair of pants, Tang En could still tell that it was definitely a shoe mark.

“No, Mom.” Wood shook his head.

Sophia had no intentions of letting Wood off the hook. She used her hands to fan the air. “Then what is with the alcoholic smell coming from you?”

“On the way back I passed by a bar street, and met with a few drunkards. They were hard to deal with, so I spent quite some time trying to get away from them.” Wood tried his best to make himself appear as though nothing happened.

“Open your mouth, George.” Sophia made clear her intentions for Wood to open his mouth, to take a whiff of his breath.

Wood did as he was told. Sophia went close to her son’s mouth and took a deep sniff with her nose. Then, she gently rubbed Wood’s cheeks and said, “Go wash your face. Look at you, full of perspiration on your face. Mr. Twain came to look for you specifically, and has waited for a very long time.”

Wood shot Twain a look, before obediently heading to the bathroom.

Sophia smiled apologetically at Tang En. Tang En shrugged his shoulders to show that he understood, and the suspicions in his heart had been confirmed. It was time to bid farewell. So, he got up and said to Sophia, “So sorry Madam. I think I should be going. It’s getting late after all.”

Hearing Tang En say this, Sophia made no attempts to cover up her disappointment, and the smile on her face disappeared. She of course knew Tang En’s request was very normal, and she did not have any reason to hold a man back in her house at around 11p.m.

“What a pity, Mr. Twain,” Sophia sighed, pointing to the red tea and biscuits left untouched on the table. “You haven’t eaten anything yet.”

Actually... If not for Wood’s timely return, perhaps Tang En would have stayed for the night. He saw Sophia’s disappointed face, which had lost all radiance, and said consolingly, “Madam, I think... There are plenty of opportunities like this in the future.”

Hearing Tang En word it like this, Sophia happily raised her head, with the radiance on her face restored.

At that moment, Wood emerged from the bathroom and frowned slightly. After that, he leaned against the door and looked at the two people in the room without uttering a single word.

Tang En saw him come out, immediately shifting his eyes away from Sophia’s face and waved at Wood. “George, I’m leaving. Are you not going to send me off?”

Standing outside the house, Tang En chatted with Wood casually while waiting for Landy to come and fetch him. He knew that Sophia must have been watching them from the windows on the second floor. Wood did not want his mother to worry too much and Tang En felt the same way as well.

“George, I have something to tell you.” Tang En decided to test the waters so as to confirm his guesses. “That scoundrel who was all over your mom the other day has just been beat up by someone. Do you know who did it?” When Tang En said this, he stared intently at Wood, hoping to be able to spot some traces from his reaction.

But he was disappointed. Wood did not even bat an eyelid at that.

“I don’t know.” His voice also did not have the slightest fluctuation in emotion.

This brat!

But you are too calm, to the extent that you don’t seem to be hearing this news for the first time. You’re still too green to be playing with me.

The suspicions in Tang En's heart were all quelled, but he did not expose Wood. He only smiled and nodded his head, "Very well, I was worried you were the one who did it. If it's not you, then great."

The street in front of them became lit-up by two bright, circular lights. From this, Tang En knew that the driver, Landy was there. He decided to bid farewell to Wood, but suddenly recalled something else. "Oh, and... Hmm, I think, if there are no mishaps, perhaps from tomorrow onward, I won't be able to train with you and direct your matches anymore."

Upon hearing Twain's words, Wood turned around and looked at him. "Are you leaving?"

"Yes, I'm leaving." Tang En suddenly thought of teasing this rigid child, as he nodded his head.

"Where to?"

"To the south."

"Is it very far?"

"I think it is..." Looking at this child who still did not reveal any signs of reluctance, Tang En was slightly disappointed... Don't tell me that there isn't any semblance of teacher-student relationship between us?

Wood remained silent for a while, before turning around and said with his back to Tang En, "Oh, then goodbye."

This scoundrel!

Tang En decided to stop playing along, and shouted as he waved, "Hold on! Forget it. I was lying to you. Although I am indeed going to the south, I am only going five meter away from the youth team training grounds—the width of a small alley!"

Just as he finished speaking, Wood immediately turned around and stared at Tony. The look on his face was definitely not one of joy, but of anger after realizing that he had been deceived.

Faced with this child's angry look, Tang En was somewhat at a loss of how to explain the gimmick which he thought of on the spot. He could only continue his sentence somewhat awkwardly. "Erm, if everything goes smoothly, I'll be the manager of Nottingham Forest's main team from tomorrow onward. When that time comes, I'll have to leave the youth team, but you have to continue to train and play for the youth team."

Landy, who was not far, sounded the car horn to rush Tang En.

"I have to go, George. I hope you can continue to listen to Mr. Kerslake and the other coaches, train hard, and play seriously. You are doing very well right now, and all of us feel that if you can continue on like this, then earning £120,000 a week is not an issue!" Tang En knew the one and only thing that could motivate this kid was not glory or passion. There was only one keyword—money!

"Continue performing well, kid! I will keep an eye on the youth team at all times. If you perform well there, I will promote you to the first team. At that time, you will receive an entirely different contract... Do you know how much salary you can at least get when that time comes?"

Wood shook his head.

Tang En did some mental calculation. With the club's financial position improved, the salary of the players should also increase in tandem. If Wood really continues his outstanding performance at the youth team, and he successfully enters the adult team, his weekly salary would be no less than £1,500. So, he said to Wood, "At least £1,500 every week! And that's excluding other monetary rewards!"

Only then did Wood's facial expression finally change. It appeared that he was very satisfied. Tang En was also very satisfied with Wood's expression, and therefore smiled as he waved toward him. "Work hard! Remember, George, regardless of where you are, the better you perform, the more money you will get!"

Tang En turned around and got in the car. The cab left very quickly. Wood stood in front of the door for a while before entering the house.

Sophia saw Wood return, and asked, "George, what were you guys talking about?"

Wood's mouth opened and revealed a rare smile. "Money. Mom, we will become rich very soon."

Sophia's extended her hands and caressed her son's hair lovingly. "Silly boy. George, you have to listen to Mr. Twain. He is a very very good person." When she was saying this, Sophia looked out of the window at the pitch dark streets. Tony Twain's car had long driven off.

Wood escaped from his mother's tender touch and suddenly asked, "Mom, do you like him?"

Hearing her son ask this, Sophia became flustered. She immediately retracted her gaze and looked at Wood, before averting her eyes again. "Ah, no no, it's not possible! How... How can it be?" She tried her best to avoid her son's eyes.

Hearing his mother reply in this manner and looking at her reaction, Wood did not say anything. He only continued to look at his mother silently, as though he could see through everything.

Sophia coughed and looked at him with a stern face. "Alright, George, you should go to sleep soon."

"Goodnight, Mom." Wood kissed Sophia on the cheek.

"Goodnight, George." Sophia returned with a kiss on George's forehead.

Wood returned to his own room, closed the door and turned off the lights.

Sophia sat in front of the dining table and placed one hand on the table, resting her chin on it as she stared blankly at that red tea which had already turned cold, as well as the biscuits which were left untouched. She recalled her time alone with Twain. Time no longer had any meaning, and everything around her appeared to be frozen in time. After that, it was stored inside a picture frame and stowed away in her heart.

She lightly sighed as she removed the plates and cups from the table.

When she turned around, Wood's unlatched room door was being softly closed.

"...There were six of them! Six strong rugby players! I don't know where they came from and I haven't met them prior to this. Just when I was about to leave, they assaulted me in an alley! It was a sneak

attack, sneak attack! Otherwise I wouldn't have lost to them. Who do you think I am? I am Stan Collymore!"

"Hahahahaha!" Tang En and Edward, who were watching the television, could no longer hold it in and burst out laughing.

Collymore, who was lying on the hospital bed while being interviewed, illustrated his own "one versus six" heroics with his saliva splashing in all directions. Tang En, who knew what really happened, doubled over in laughter. As for the reason why Doughty was laughing so happily, it was because of an entirely different matter.

The television program which they were currently watching was only the news, and the videos played during the news would usually not be live broadcasts. So, it was not possible for that unlucky guy who had shouted "I am Stan Collymore" to be currently as excited as when he was being interviewed.

The reason was very simple, because his contract with Nottingham Forest had been officially terminated as of that morning.

Nobody expressed any form of shock, bewilderment or protest at this. When the team's performance was so terrible, Collymore had still gotten himself into a scandal. If he wasn't fired, then who would be? Even though Doughty could not avoid having to shoulder the blame of "erratic decision-making", but... surely nobody expected this club chairman who possessed 75 percent of the club's shares to resign and transfer away all of his shares, just because he had hired a bad manager?

Stan Collymore ended his extremely disastrous career as a manager after half a season. This experience would no doubt be remembered by him forever, regardless of whether he would continue going down the path of being a manager.

As for Collymore's successor, there was almost no suspense at all.

At that time, was there anyone else more suited for this role than him?

"It's about time, Tony. Let's go." Doughty looked at the watch on his wrist.

"Mhmm." Twain nodded his head.

The two of them stood up and pushed open the door of the chairman's office. Ms. Barbara Lucy was already waiting for them outside the door.

On the first floor, a dark red Audi A6 waited quietly near the gates. The driver was seated there waiting for further instructions, with the car doors already opened.

This car would be headed toward City Ground Stadium, where numerous reporters would be waiting at a press conference.

There was even a small group of fans assembled outside the stadium. They were led by a fat guy, and all of them were wearing the red Nottingham Forest jersey as though they were dressed to watch a match. They were singing loudly as though there was no one else in the vicinity, in front of the reporters and cameras. These fans that had attracted the attention of the reporters raised a large cartoon portrait in the air. And written beneath the head were these words:

Welcome back, Tony!

Chapter 109: The Discipline Of The Team Part 1

On Monday, December 7th, the players, who had just finished their one day of vacation after the match, returned and were back in training. Most of them appeared to be inattentive because the team had just experienced an important personnel change that would affect their future.

As the players were changing their clothes in the locker room, they were discussing their new manager—it was not a “new” manager for some of them.

Some people were excited, some people were frustrated, and some people were scared.

Serhiy Rebrov sat bare-chested on the bench and leaned against the wall. He did not know whether he should feel dismayed or terrified now.

It was ironic that the managers who had trusted him always got dismissed. This was exactly the same situation he had at Hotspur.

At that time, he was brought to North London from Kyiv Dynamo by the Hotspur manager Graham. The club and the manager had high hopes for him, and the £11,000,000 illustrated very well how high that expectation was. But? Not long after, Graham was fired because of the team’s poor performance. Rebrov’s own performance was also unsatisfactory. When the new manager Hoddle brought on six new players in one shot upon his arrival, Rebrov knew his time at White Hart Lane was coming to an end.

Tottenham Hotspur had once wanted to sell him. He and Shevchenko had formed a dream team of striker combination that year at the UEFA Champions League, and now he was of no interest to anyone. Later, he was temporarily on loan to Turkey’s Fenerbahçe team. His performance was still poor. He only scored one goal in half a season.

During this period, he not only lost his position in the club, but also lost his position on the Ukraine national team.

That summer, Shevchenko had just won the UEFA Champions League in AC Milan. He received a hero’s welcome on his return to home for holiday. When he appeared in front of the Ukrainian people with the UEFA Champions League trophy, the square broke out in great cheers, as if the trophy in his hands was not the UEFA Champions League but the World Cup.

And what about him? Reduced to a point where no one wanted him!

Why were their outcomes so different when they became famous as partners in the first place?

In the rainy winter of London, he could not see through the heavy dark clouds overhead. Was it the same now under the sky of Nottingham?

Am I really not suitable for English football? Was it a mistake to decide to go abroad to earn my living at that time? Why did Shevchenko succeed in Italy, and I, his partner, couldn’t?

In fact, Rebrov's situation was not fine in this team now. As the team's most expensive and famous star player, he held the highest weekly wage, but completely contributed nothing to the team. But no one could say that the Ukrainian did not do his best and took the money without doing his job. He was cautious and conscientious in training, and never put on the airs of "a Premier League striker." No one saw him being lazy. Sometimes his performance and condition during the training was also quite good, but he just could not find the goal on the field during the match.

It was baffling.

Another person who looked like he had a heavy load on his mind was the team's young captain, Michael Dawson. But his reasons were different from Rebrov. He stood in the middle of the locker room and watched his noisy teammates in a daze.

Why was the chief back?

The veteran player, Eoin Jess stood up, looked at the dazed Dawson and frowned. Michael, you can't be like this. You're the captain, you cannot show the slightest indecision or hesitation.

He walked up and touched Dawson, whispering his name, "Michael, Michael."

"Huh?" Dawson snapped out of it and looked at Jess, somewhat confused.

Jess sighed in his heart, and then said to him, "Tell everyone to go out. We took so long to change our clothes. If the boss finds out, he will certainly be angry."

"Oh, right. Yes, the chief hates the most being late for training and things like that," Dawson nodded and muttered.

When Tang En was leading the team last season, he would be on the training ground earlier than the team every day. Although he did not care much about the concept of time in his personal life, he was disciplined at work. If he said to start training at nine o'clock, then running out of the locker room at ten seconds past nine o'clock would get one laps as a punishment.

In fact, regarding this, Tang En had learned from his high school teacher in charge of his class. When the school bell was about to ring, that stern teacher would stand outside the door to catch any late students. He thought this was a good trick, so he used it.

Dawson looked around the locker room and the coaches were there. At this moment, he should take the responsibility as the captain. So, he clapped his hands and said loudly, "All right, everybody! Get dressed, we're going out for training!"

Not everyone listened to him. When everyone else had gotten up and gone out, Gareth Taylor was still sitting on the bench, and had not changed his clothes.

Collymore's indifference to the discipline of the team had naturally fostered the players' slack habits. Taylor, who had been a newcomer transferred to the Forest this season, had already scored 10 goals and half the season was not over yet. He was the Forest team's top scoring forward, so he deliberately put on some airs.

Dawson wanted to go up and grab this nonchalant man and push him out. But Jess stopped him and shook his head.

Helplessly, he gave Taylor another glance, then Dawson and Jess ran out.

It was drizzling under the gloomy sky. The rain was not heavy, but it was cold enough.

Tang En and Walker stood at the corridor entrance from the locker room to the training ground. It was now 8:59. They did not have an umbrella, nor did they wear a raincoat and pullover. They just stood there and let the cold winter rain gradually wet their hair and clothes, and then drip down their necks into their bodies.

They waited, and still did not see a figure running out.

Seeing this embarrassing scene, Walker shamefacedly said to Twain, "Collymore ... never care about the discipline of the team."

Tang En nodded, "I understand. I don't expect a coach who doesn't always come to the training ground to be able to bring out a group of players who respect discipline and have the concept of time. It's just that it's a bit unexpected for me that not a single player has come out." He looked down at his watch, and it was nine o'clock sharp.

"Let's start counting the time, Des."

Walker nodded and began to start the stopwatch.

When the number jumped to 47 seconds, someone finally came running out and it was Andy Reid.

"Boss!" Reid was a little excited to see Twain's long-lost face, "Long time no see!"

Tang En smiled and nodded. "Indeed, Andy, it's been a long time. You look stronger than before."

Reid scratched his head, feeling somewhat self-conscious.

"What about the others?" Tang En asked.

"Oh, they're still in there, Michael's hurrying them." Just as he spoke to this point, Reid suddenly remembered that Twain disliked the players being late for training, and he suddenly stopped talking.

Tang En looked at him and laughed mischievously, "Andy, you're forty-seven seconds late. You know what to do?"

"Uh, I'll run the laps." Reid turned to run and was called by Twain again.

"Don't worry, you're not the only one today. Go to the field and wait."

Reid's Adam's Apple swallowed a little, he knew that everyone was going to have a hard time today. So, he obediently moved to the side. But why did he still felt like he was looking forward to something... like he was expecting a good show about to be staged.

Then there were more people coming out from inside, and most of them saw Twain standing on the sidelines waiting for them and happily came up to greet him. Tang En responded with smiles and said nothing about running laps for being late.

Seeing Twain's performance, Reid grew more excited. He forgot that he was also on the punishment list. He folded his arms around his chest, cheerfully watch the show at the side. At the same time, he

counted the number of people who came out and how many unlucky ones who were still inside and did not come out.

Michael Dawson appeared in front of Twain together with Jess and he looked slightly uncomfortable when he saw the manager. It was Twain who took the initiative to say hello to him, "Michael!"

"Chief..."

"You look a bit down in the dumps. What's the matter? Your girlfriend kicked you out of her bed?" After he said that, Walker and Dawson both laughed.

"Without Chief, she wouldn't dare to kick me."

"Well, that's good. I wouldn't know how to explain to the reporters if I lost a midfielder because you had a falling with her in bed. Ha ha! Go on." He patted Dawson on the shoulder. "Oh yes, how many people are there left in the locker room?"

"Only one, Chief."

Tang En nodded.

Dawson ran toward Reid and found that he was looking at the passageway entrance, smirking.

"Hey, Andy, what are you doing?" He asked, puzzled.

"Ah, it's Michael!" Grinning, Reid pulled him forward, and placed him to stand beside him so as not to block his view. "Is that dawdler Taylor, still in the locker room?"

Dawson nodded, "He hasn't even changed his clothes."

Reid smiled even more happily. "Awesome! I haven't been able to stand that guy for a while now. Just wait for a good show, Michael!"

"Hmm." Dawson understood what Reid meant and he also knew what Twain was going to do. He waited in anticipation for Gareth Taylor to come out.

The players were standing on the training ground in twos and threes and the coaches were on the sidelines. The new manager, Tony Twain, and his assistant, Des Walker, were standing at the entrance of the passageway and facing the locker room direction.

Rebrov found this a little strange. Why had they not started the training? Was everyone not here yet? What were they waiting for?

Chapter 110: The Discipline Of The Team Part 2

He looked left and right and found that his Forest teammates who had been on the team since last season did not seem surprised by the situation, but instead they smiled and faced the direction of the locker room together with the manager. Only the few "newcomers" who arrived this summer were just as puzzled as he was.

It looked like they were all quite familiar with the new manager. His face was full of smiles as he greeted everyone, which seemed kind of nice. Maybe they would get along nicely... maybe.

Just as Rebrov was feeling uncertain about Twain, the last man in the team, Gareth Taylor, came out from inside.

Seeing him, Walker stopped the stopwatch and handed it to Twain.

Tang En took it and looked at the time shown: five minutes forty-nine seconds. As he tossed the stopwatch back, he muttered to Walker, "Women change clothes faster than he does."

Walker shrugged. He had become accustomed to Taylor's way of dragging his feet and no matter how many times he had said something to him, it did not work. If he tried to punish him during training, Collymore would say, "Oh my god! I used to do that frequently when I was playing. As long as he can score goals, why should you care if it takes him 10 minutes or 10 hours to change his clothes?" After that, the discouraged Walker simply did not care anymore.

With his head lowered, Taylor was still fastening the belt on his shorts as he was walking out. He obviously did not see Twain and Walker standing at the side. Seeing how he was about to walk past them without looking up, soft laughter could be heard in from the training field.

Tang En turned his head and glanced at them, and the laughter stopped at once. Walker called out to stop the last man.

"Taylor."

When he heard someone call him, Taylor finally raised his head. When he clearly saw the two men standing in front of him, he immediately realized he might be in trouble.

The assistant manager Des Walker, and an unfamiliar man, both had the same expression on their faces—straight-faced and unsmiling.

"Uh, what's the matter, coach?"

Walker did not speak, but the unfamiliar man next to him said, "Gareth Taylor, you were transferred from Burnley at the start of this season with a transfer fee of £550,000. You represented the Forest team for seventeen rounds of League Championship games and three cup matches and scored 10 goals and had one assist. These statistics are not too bad."

Taylor could not understand what this man was trying to do. He could only stand there and remain silent.

"But you're in the wrong place." Tang En pointed to the northeast side. There was another training ground behind a row of trees and wire fence. "You should be training on the fourth field."

"What?" Taylor thought he heard wrong.

Tang En nodded in affirmation, "Congratulations, Mr. Taylor. From now on, you're a member of the reserve team."

Not to mention the shock on Taylor's face, Walker had no idea that Twain's approach to dealing with it was this. The new manager had decided to put changing the locker room atmosphere at the top of his list when he heard about the general situation of the locker room.

"Why?" Taylor became anxious. He knew the straight-faced man in front of him was the new manager. "Why do you want me to go to the second team?"

"Because you're much better than the third team." Tang En gave a shrug of his shoulders. After he had said that, he turned to walk toward the training field and ignored the poor thing who was tardy.

This answer stumped Taylor for a moment. He looked at the back of Twain and looked at his teammates on the field. Before that, they had gathered to chat and joke together in twos or threes, and their expressions looked as if they were waiting to watch a good show. And now they were quickly assembling and lining up!

He suddenly realized that those good days where he could go to bed an hour later at night and wake up an hour later would never return.

Walker followed behind Twain and whispered the worry in his heart. "Tony. I know you want to reshape the team discipline, but isn't this way too direct and brutal? Taylor does procrastinate, but he's still the team's number one striker. He plays a large part in us advancing to the quarter-finals of the EFL Cup."

Tang En looked at the players who had knowingly lined up in two rows on the training field ahead, smiled, and then turned his head to Walker and said, "Des. It is necessary for them to understand now that the only irreplaceable person within this team... is me."

Then he marched up to the group of players who had become well-behaved.

"The earliest one of you was 47 seconds late." Tang En raised his hands and pointed to his watch on his left wrist with his right hand. "And the latest person who came out was one minute and 32 seconds. I don't care why you were late, even if you say you were shaving your legs in the locker room. It doesn't concern me. All I know is that you guys are late for your training by one minute and 32 seconds!" He yelled. "I don't care how the previous manager trained you. Now I'm the manager, your boss! I want you to know the importance of discipline in the team. Anyone who violates that discipline will be punished!"

He looked at the silent players and then pointed to the sidelines.

"A lap for every 10 seconds, 13 laps in total. I'll discount you that two seconds. All right, all of you run now! I'll double the laps if you try to slack off!"

The players who had expected the result had no objections. All of them ran to the sidelines with their heads lowered and started to run the first lap of their 13 laps.

Rebrov looked at the man who turned and spoke to the assistant manager and followed behind his teammates to run laps without protest.

This manager is totally different from Collymore.

After about a week of observation, the team's training situation made Tang En very satisfied. In fact, with Walker around, the team's training schedule had been without any problem. The key was no one checked these players and told them that they must follow the rules. Collymore indulged the players,

which was like he indulged in himself, and he suffered the consequences of his own actions. Tang En was not going to be as stupid as he was.

When they first met, he had already used practical actions to inform the group of undisciplined and disorganized players. Here, I am the boss. Whoever doesn't want to do it, Taylor is the example. He must be very lonely on the reserve team and anxiously waiting for someone to accompany him.

Of course, Tang En also knew to act within limits. After using Taylor as a "sacrificial lamb", the team performed to his satisfaction and he did not raise a big stink anymore.

During the training, he rarely expressed his opinion. Everything was like last season. He would watch on the sidelines. Walker and the rest of the coaching staff oversaw the training, and Tang En was very pleased with their work. Since he had decided to hand over the training to the coaching team and had already reviewed and passed the training program, it would seem disrespectful to the work of the coaching team if he were to interject. This type of behavior was also what Tang En found the most annoying.

He only needed to let the players know he was there. So, he stood on the sidelines and wore his sunglasses, looking cool like Keanu Reeves in "The Matrix."

The media had polarizing views of Twain's appointment.

The out of town media were not optimistic about Twain's coaching prospects. Nottingham Forest's goal this season should be to avoid a relegation, and not a promotion. But to a young team manager suddenly taking over the team, he had to face a team morale that had hit rock bottom like the Nottingham Forest Club's share price, tackle a nervous and divided locker room, and lead a team that would bid farewell to the two main players during the winter break. The news that Michael Dawson and Andy Reid would transfer to Tottenham Hotspur had been announced during the winter break, and this had caused the fans to resent the club's top brass and Collymore. But, as it was previously said, no one could change any of Doughty's decisions. It might be too difficult to complete the mission to avoid relegation.

In response to this, the local media in Nottingham gave a rebuttal. Pierce Brosnan applauded the club's board of directors' decision to appoint the new manager in an article in the Nottingham Evening Post.

"....If the reason for being down on him was due to the terrible atmosphere in the locker room and the low team morale, then did the Forest team, that Mr. Twain took over on January 3rd this year, have a favorable atmosphere and a show of solidarity throughout the ranks? Was the morale running high and were they united in their striving? What was the result last season? From the fourteenth place, we advanced into the playoffs, and it was the team with the greatest progress in its ranking in that season. I have the same view as many of the Forest fans: if there is anyone else who can lead the team now, it must be Tony Twain!"

Tang En was very grateful to Brosnan speaking on his behalf, but he knew very well that it did not matter what each side of the media had said about whether he could lead the team or not. The only convincing proof were the results from leading the team. If they won, it meant that he led the team well. If they lost, it meant that he did not do a good job.

Next, Nottingham Forest would play in a home match against their direct rival to avoid relegation—the third lowest ranked, Crystal Palace.

This was going to be an uphill battle.