

## Champions 111

### Chapter 111: Twain's Return Part 1

The Ukrainian player Rebrov had been depressed for the past week. He frowned during training and back at the hotel. After seeing the new manager's way of handling things, he already gave up all hope regarding his future in the team. After this match, he was prepared ask his agent to help him find another team to transfer to.

The manager, Mr. Twain, spoke to many people on the team individually. From Wes Morgan, who had just been transferred over to the first team, to Michael Dawson and Andy Reid, who were about to leave the team. Only he had not been approached by Twain.

He was thinking he had already been abandoned by the manager.

The next day would be their match against Crystal Palace, and the team only did some simple drills on set piece play for 40 minutes before ending the training. Rebrov frowned again, as he left Wilford disappointedly.

Seeing the back view of Rebrov walking toward the parking lot with his head lowered, Tang En said to Walker, who was beside him, "For the match tomorrow, I think we should still let the Ukrainian guy be the starting striker."

"Of course. You chased Taylor to the reserve team, which leaves us with only three possible candidates to be at the front line. Wescarr's abilities are limited, which leaves us no choice but to put Johnson and the Ukrainian guy on the starting line up.

Hearing Walker say this, Tang En chuckled. The day before, Tang En and Walker specifically went to watch the reserve team's match. Taylor was part of the starting line up, and he managed to maintain his good performance throughout the match even after he scored a goal. However, he had no intentions of moving Taylor back to the first team. Tang En wanted Taylor to continue training with the reserve team. His headers were definitely crucial at times to score goals, with the team currently lacking in offensive power and a lack of strikers to be on the starting line up. Walker did not understand Tang En's plans, but he trusted that Tang En knew what he was doing.

On Saturday night, outside Nottingham Forest's home grounds. The team's consistently poor performance had also affected the seat occupancy of the stadium. In the matches before this, the average seat occupancy of City Ground Stadium was less than 20,000, with a large portion of the viewing platform still empty. Under such circumstances, the players were also unable to play well in the matches.

However, today was different. Under the dark starry sky, City Ground Stadium had already turned into a sea of red.

Reporters from Nottingham's local television stations were able to capture on camera the sight of fans rushing to the stadium from all directions, waiting for their turns to enter the stadium. The large crowd formed several long red snakes and waved unstopably while singing the fans' songs loudly. There were even fans who were shouting "Tony! Tony! Tony!" excitedly at the camera.

Even the businesses of the hawkers stationed outside the stadium, which sold various club merchandises, regained much patronage.

A reporter stood in front of the camera with a mike in his hand, while covering one side of his ears with the other hand. Trying his best to suppress the fans' shouting with his own voice, he said, "Did you see this? City Ground Stadium has reawakened! I believe... believe that our Nottingham Forest will also awaken from its deep slumber!"

A BBC reporter, on the other hand, was on the other side of the snaking queues doing his news report for that night. "Just changing the manager is enough to ignite the fans' passion! I believe Nottinghamians must have missed the sight that they have seen today! In the second half of the previous season, most of Nottingham Forest's home games were like this! The failed Collymore has already been forgotten by the people, as the fans welcome back the young manager, Tony Twain, who had led the team all the way into the playoff matches."

Just as he was saying this, a plump person suddenly jumped in between him and his camera. He closed in on the camera and made a drunk belch, before taking in a deep breath and shouted with his eyes wide open, "Nottingham Forest will definitely win! Long live Tony! At night... burp... buy me to a drink!"

Not waiting for the reporter to react in time, the plump man exited the camera amidst the loud laughter of his companions. The alert cameraman immediately shifted the camera toward him and his companions, videoing their back view.

A group of fans wearing Nottingham Forest's red jersey walked together, waving the scarves in their hands while singing loudly some song which they composed themselves.

"Oh oh oh! Generous Tony! Oh oh oh! He treats us to drinks, we love him! He brings us victory, we love him! Forest Forest! Tony Twain!"

While wiping off the sweat on his forehead, the reporter continued with his work. "Erm... reality has proven to us that Manager Tony Twain is regarded very highly by the Forest fans." He caught a glance of another group of drunk fans walking unsteadily behind the cameraman, before hastily ending his report, "This is BBC news reporter, Larry Jackson, reporting from Nottingham's City Ground Stadium. Thank you for watching! Goodbye!"

Even shutting the door tightly had little effect of blocking out the loud singing voices coming from the viewing platform outside. Compared to such an excited group of Nottingham fans, the people inside the changing room were extremely calm. Of course, they only appeared so on the surface.

Assistant manager Des Walker was announcing the starting line up for the match, starting from the goalkeeper.

"Darren Ward, John Thompson, Davy Oyen, Michael Dawson, Wes Morgan, Brynjar Gunnarsson, Jacob Burns, Andy Reid, Gareth Williams, David Johnson, as well as..." He finally called the last person.

Rebrov sat on the chair with his head lowered, as if he held no hopes at all. Then, he heard Walker say, "...Serhiy Rebrov. It will be these 11 people!"

He raised his head immediately. I actually made the starting line up?! However, after giving it some thought, he finally understood—the top scorer Gareth Taylor has been relegated to the reserve team.

Now, the team lacked players for the front line. It was therefore a given that he would be inside the starting line up.

After announcing the starting line up, the changing room became filled with the debating voices of the players. Walker hit the tactics board with force, signaling to the players that the manager wanted to have a word with them.

Waiting for the changing room to quiet down, Twain shouted, "Crystal Palace is ranked third from the last, while we are ranked fourth from the last! What does this match mean? I don't want all of you to feel that 'ah, things are not that bad'. I hope all of you know clearly that, dammit, things are already so bad! Out of the 22 rounds of matches, we have only won four of them, but we lost 13 of them! This result is extremely horrible! Before this match, you guys were on a six-loss streak. I don't care what you guys have been thinking about, but in any case I've had enough of losing, and I don't want to continue losing! Which one of you here doesn't mind losing, raise your hands!" He flailed his arms around, but none of the people listening raised their hands.

"Very good! It seems like all of you don't want to lose anymore." Tang En nodded his head and put down his arm, before glancing at Rebrov, who had his head lowered. "I am a new manager. I don't care how you performed before this, and don't care what the previous manager promised you..."

Rebrov nodded his head. He was listening very intently.

"I will only look at your performances from this match onward. If you perform well, you'll be part of the starting line up! If not, you will be a reserve! It's just that simple. If you want to play in matches, then you better tighten up that winder behind your ass!" Tang En made a twisting gesture, and everyone felt their back tighten for a split second.

Doughty wore a suit and a tie, and was dressed much more formal than his usual office wear. He sat down in the VIP lounge, prepared to watch the match. His financial advisor Allan Adams had already flown back to America after settling the acquisition of Nottingham Forest's shares. There was nothing else left for him to do in England, and Doughty also needed someone to look after his business in America.

Actually, Edward detested watching matches in the lounge, because all the stadiums in England had a rule: anyone watching the football match in the lounge had to wear a tie. This was a rule to be observed strictly, and even if the president of the United States were to come, he had to adhere to it as well.

Doughty did not like to wear a tie as a result of an incident when he was young. He detested everything that tightened around his neck...

However, he was currently the chairman of the club. Therefore, he had to be present at the stadium for all the home matches. Of course, this was the case even when the team performed poorly and had low morale.

He could only try his best to loosen his tie as much as possible. By doing so, he would feel slightly better.

The middle-aged man seated beside him was the opponent team, Crystal Palace's chairman, mobile phone seller Simon Jordan.

Different from Doughty, his tie was wrapped tightly around his neck. He wore an extremely neat suit and was very particular about his clothes.

Before this, when the two of them shook hands and greeted each other, Chairman Jordan did not like the way Doughty was dressed, and spoke with an extremely arrogant attitude. Even though his team was ranked even lower than Nottingham Forest, it still did not prevent this man from saying, in an interview before the match, that his team would definitely beat Nottingham Forest and climb the ranks from here onward. He even tactfully insulted Doughty, as he felt that an American like him that did not understand football should not have meddled with English football.

Faced with all these words, Edward's only reaction was to laugh it off. But who knew about the raging flames inside his heart?

Dammit Tony! You must win this match! We definitely, definitely can't lose to this phone-selling b\*stard!

When Crystal Palace's manager, Steve Kember, saw that Nottingham Forest's forward standing in the kick off circle was that useless Ukrainian player, Rebrov, he laughed. Afterwards, he said to his assistant manager, Terry Bullivant, "Terry, looks like we don't have to worry about our backline defense in this match anymore."

It was almost halfway through the season, and the disastrous performance of Nottingham Forest thus far was able to tell the various managers from League One a reality, and that was that the "Premier League-level shooter", Serhiy Rebrov, who had once been held in high regard, was an utter and complete fake!

As long as he was on the field, Nottingham Forest's opponents could focus entirely on offense, because this 29-year-old forward could not find where the goalpost was located on the field.

The progress of the match also proved this point. Rebrov, who was positioned at the front line, was completely unable to find the right spot to shoot after being marked by big and tall English defenders.

Tang En was shaking his head on the manager's seat, and said, "That Ukrainian has already completely lost all confidence. He doesn't even dare to shoot."

Walker nodded his head in agreement.

Many professional football players have had similar experiences of a loss of confidence after consecutive poor performances, thereby heading toward failure. Serhiy Rebrov was also in the midst of embarking on the path leading toward darkness. If nobody pulled him out of it, then he would continue sinking deeper.

Although that has nothing to do with me... but that would affect this match's results. What I want is victory, and you, Rebrov, are the key player for it!

## **Chapter 112: Twain's Return Part 2**

From the looks of the 30 minutes of the match, Nottingham Forest's performance did not seem to have much difference from the past. They were unable launch an offensive stance that made their opponents afraid. Rebrov's existence instead dragged down the entire team's performance.

Taking advantage of the state of disarray Nottingham Forest's offense was in, Crystal Palace scored a goal at the 39th minute mark of the first half! The scorer was Andrew Johnson, Crystal Palace's best shooter. He had already scored 16 goals in the first half of the season, and was ranked first in the shooter's ranking.

"Oh! Andrew Johnson! This is his 17th goal in the season. Wes Morgan, who had just joined from the youth team, is still too green. His mistake allowed Crystal Palace to take the lead."

Seeing his own team score, Simon Jordan suddenly jumped up in the stadium's VIP lounge, startling Doughty. He was so carried away that he celebrated this goal in front of the home team's chairman, as if his team had already won the match.

Edward knew that this person did it on purpose and wanted to embarrass him. Too abominable!

However, after waiting for Jordan to finish his butt-shaking dance, Doughty still forcibly extended his hand toward him and said, "Congratulations, Mr. Jordan."

At the same time, he was shouting in his heart: Tony, what are you doing?!

When Tony, who was seated on the manager's seat, saw this misplay, he only shook his head and did not say anything else. Morgan was too green, that was something that he definitely knew. But that was the price to pay for utilizing teenagers, and he was prepared to bear the price right from the start.

Walker looked at him before asking, "Is everything just like 11 months ago?"

"Hmm?" Tang En did not understand what Walker was saying.

Walker pointed at the viewing platform and said, "You don't do anything in the first half of the match, and then you make everyone's eyes open wide in the second half."

"You really understand me, Walker." Tang En smiled. "The second half will decide the victor!"

During the time when the match was in progress, Tang En had been trying to make clear a question in his mind. In his memory, after Rebrov had been abandoned by Hotspurs, he had basically left the mainstream football scene. As such, it was unlikely that a Chinese football fan like Tang En could hear much news about him. He even thought that this person had retired. Afterwards, when Tang En once again saw Rebrov appear on the Ukrainian football team during the 2006 Germany World Cup, he was extremely shocked, as if Poborsky was still on the Czech national team.

He remembered that the person who formed the Ukrainian team's frontline duo with Shevchenko was no longer Rebrov, but someone else—Andriy Voronin. However, Rebrov was still a core member of the team. Since he was not playing as a forward, then what position was he playing?

Tang En tired his best to search his memories, but during the 06 World Cup, Tang En only paid attention to Shevchenko, and really did not pay much notice to Rebrov. When Crystal Palace's Andrew Johnson scored, he finally recalled, midfielder!

Rebrov was playing as a midfielder at that time!

During the few years when he left Kyiv Dynamo, he turned into a midfielder organizer from a killer. Was there some unknown backstory which he did not know at that time? And would this story be related to Nottingham Forest and Tang En?

Thinking up to this point, Tang En finally understood. He did not know in the previous world, who was the person who made Rebrov play as a midfielder instead. However, it was very clear now that, should the Ukrainian team still be able to make a historical advancement into the World Cup Finals in the current world, then Rebrov who would be playing as a midfielder must be caused by him!

By the end of the first half, Nottingham Forest was temporarily down by one ball on their home ground. Despite Crystal Palace being in the lead, the Nottingham fans on the viewing platform did not appear to be dejected at all. The jeers directed at the manager and the players, which had been prevalent in the past, also did not appear. The fans all believed that Tony Twain's team would not let them down.

The plump John stood on the viewing platform and looked at the players who walked back to the changing room with their heads lowered, as well as Tang En who was standing by the side of the field. He shrugged his shoulders at the people beside him and said, "We all know that this guy loves to go all out in the second half. Lads! Let's go drink some beer to moisturize our throats, we'll be extremely busy in the second half!"

In the past, Tang En would always be the first person to walk to the changing room when the whistle sounded. However today, he stood at the side of the field and waited for someone to exit the field.

Rebrov lowered his head and headed toward the changing room. The depressed him did not see the team's manager walking toward him.

"Serhiy Rebrov," Tang En called out the name of this restless Ukrainian. "If you don't raise your head soon, you will knock into the utility pole."

Startled, Rebrov raised his head, "There are no utility poles on the field." He looked at Tang En who was grinning, and knew that he had been played by the manager.

"Hmm, you know that there are no utility poles on the field, so seems like you are still conscious." Tang En nodded his head. "Don't rush to go back, I have something to say to you. I heard... you failed to qualify for the Ukrainian national football team?"

This question was considered a direct hit to Rebrov's wounds. He remained silent for a while before nodding his head. "Manager, I hope the team is able to put me up for listing either during the winter break period or after the season."

Tang En was not at all shocked at Rebrov's proposal. "Why? Because you failed to qualify for the national team, so you hope to start over from another place?"

Rebrov shared his thoughts. "I think that I'm not suitable for English football, and that coming to England to play in itself, was a mistake."

Tang En shook his head. "You think you finally found the root cause for your poor performance? You really disappoint me... If you want to leave, I won't stop you. But do you think there are still any teams

who are willing to accept you? Oh, maybe some English League Two teams might happily accept you. But are you willing to go to that sort of place?"

Rebrov did not utter a single word, because deep down in his heart, he was also unsure whether leaving the team would solve everything. He was merely taking a gamble.

"I will agree to place you on the transfer market. Not during the winter break period, but only after the season ended. Before this, I will give you 45 minutes as your last chance."

Rebrov raised his head and looked at Tang En, unsure of what this new manager was planning to do.

"If you want to prove your worth to the other clubs, the next half of this match will be your last chance. If your performance still doesn't improve, you can only sit on that bench for the rest of the season. Don't think that I'm threatening you. Better treatment and getting more teams to be interested in you, those things can only be acquired by you. In the next half, you will play as an offensive midfielder." Upon saying this, Tang En turned around and left the field. Rebrov looked at his back, and the last sentence made him go deep into thought.

During the halftime break, Tang En did not criticize the team's performance in the changing room, and only did some adjustments to the player line up. The defensive midfielder, Eugen Bopp, replaced center forward Jacob Burns, who did not perform well. This was a very normal substitution, but Tang En's decisions after that made everyone, including Walker, shocked. He did not substitute out Rebrov who had been constantly underperforming, but instead made the Ukrainian play as an offensive midfielder!

The condition which Tang En gave Rebrov was to make use of his own techniques to create an opportunity for his teammates. Only when the opportunity was prime, would he try to shoot the ball. If he did not have the confidence to aim accurately, then he should pass the ball over to his other teammates in the other positions. In other words, it meant more passing and less shooting for him.

After deploying the tactics for the second half, Tang En's cell phone rang. He looked at the number, and it was actually a call from Doughty.

"Des." He pointed to outside the door.

Walker nodded his head, indicating that he knew.

Tang En walked out and closed the door, before he answered the call.

"Tony!" The call just got through, but Edward's furious voice could already be heard rushing out from it.

"What's the matter, Edward?"

"Can this match be won?"

"Erm, I am unable to promise you anything before the match ends." Tang En looked at the field outside, and saw the reserve players warming up. What he had planned for, was to end the match in a tie. After all, Rebrov still needed time to accustom himself to his new position. Moreover, it was Tang En's first match after taking over the team. It would therefore be unrealistic to have too high expectations for it.

"No! You must win, must win!" Doughty shouted over the phone.

Tang En felt that it was rather strange. “Hey, Edward, does the boss of Crystal Palace owe you a lot of money?”

“No, but I just hate that guy!” Upon hearing this, Tang En could completely imagine how angry Doughty was, and the sight of him shouting at the phone and flailing his arms about. “I hate him very very much! That b\*stard actually dares to look down on me... and our team! Tony, didn’t you say that you only pursue victory? There’s such a chance right now. Defeat him, humiliate him!”

To think that Doughty, who always appeared extremely amiable, would have such an angry moment. Looks like that Crystal Palace boss must have done something extremely overboard.

Tang En pouted, before saying, “Alright, I will try to obtain victory over Crystal Palace.”

“No, not try. You must! Must!” Doughty corrected.

“Alright, alright, I must win Crystal Palace... Must, must.”

Once again returning to the changing room, Tang En looked at the players and suddenly decided to tell them what just happened. Perhaps, it could have quite a considerable effect on them.

“Does anyone know who that call was from?” He whipped out his phone and shook it.

Nobody nodded their heads, but nobody shook their heads, either.

“It was the club chairman.”

Everyone focused their attention on Tang En, wanting to listen to what he had to say.

“Hmm.. He is currently extremely angry with the team’s performance in the first half, because Crystal Palace’s boss looked down on us in the VIP lounge. Crystal Palace’s boss felt that it was a given for us to be losing to his team, and even more of a given that we would lose to them by the end of the match. This made Mr. Doughty, who loves the team, extremely furious. He cannot tolerate seeing the team he loves humiliated by other people. Do you all mind being looked down on by a team that is beneath us?” Tang En asked expressionlessly.

The players were already unhappy with the actions of Crystal Palace’s boss. Someone screamed out, “Of course, we mind!”

“I also mind it a lot, so we have to obtain victory by the end of the second half, to tell them that, low-rankers like them better behave themselves!” Tony Twain, who appeared indifferent just mere moments ago, suddenly erupted like a volcano.

“That’s right!”

“Shut that idiot’s mouth up!” Tang En flailed his hands around violently.

“That’s right!!”

“Make him... reap—what—he—goddamned—sowed!” Tang En emphasized on each and every word he shouted.

“That’s—right—!!!”



### Chapter 113: Tang En's Return Part 3

The excited players jumped up from their seats and shouted with their necks and faces red. Even those who were not on the team in the previous season could not help but clench their fists and feel the boiling blood gush up. The atmosphere in the changing room, which had been sorely missed in the first half of the year, was returning gradually.

Walker stood at the side and looked at Tony Twain, who was shouting together with the players. Even a simple phone call could be used by him to serve his intended purpose... Tony, Paul Hart was not wrong about you; Ian Bowyer also was not wrong about you; "Chief" was even more so not wrong about you. And as for me, I'm really lucky to be able to work with you. But it's a pity... only until the end of this season.

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Tang En's adjustments during the halftime period were completely beyond Crystal Palace manager's expectations. Rebrov was still on the field, but his position had been changed from a forward at the front to a midfielder! Steven Kember tilted his head and looked at his assistant manager, Bullivant, and asked, "Terry?"

Bullivant's responded with a shake of his head, indicating that he was not sure, as well.

Rebrov, who was standing in the middle of the circle and waiting to kick off the ball, suddenly discovered that the field in front of his eyes was extremely wide, and the gaps in between the opponent defenders were that big. A mere change from a forward to a midfielder allowed him to see an extremely different world from before.

He looked at Manager Tony Twain, who was standing at the side of the field and shouting at him while waving his hands non-stop. However, he could not hear clearly Tang En's English which had a heavy accent. It doesn't matter, I know what I should do.

I have very good techniques, I am fast, I am good at dribbling. I won't have any problem breaking past their defensive line! When I was partnering with Shevchenko in Kyiv Dynamo, I was also not a pure forward in the matches where we blasted AC Milan and Barcelona's goalposts. Andriy was at the forefront while I would be at the back. I'd pass him the ball and he'd score the goal.

I am an organizing midfielder! I cannot score goals, but I can assist!

He looked at those tall but clumsy English defenders and laughed. The moment when all of you let me face the goalpost, that will be your doomsday... I guarantee you that.

Walker, who was seated on the manager's seat, saw Twain turn around. He had been shouting loudly at Rebrov to pass more and intercept more, but nobody knew if the Ukrainian guy heard him.

"Tony, why did you suddenly think of letting a forward who has never played as a midfielder during training, play such a position?" Walker asked as he pointed toward Rebrov.

"Rebrov's problem doesn't lie with the fact that he is not good enough, but that he is not accustomed to the style of English football, as well as the defenders' ferocious snatching. As time passed, he lost his

confidence to shoot. After that, he will continue to lose his confidence in his other skills as well. His skills are still there, just not being utilized at the suitable position. The reason why I pulled him back, is so that he would be further away from the defenders whom he's so afraid of. This way, he will have more space to maneuver and assist in offense. His techniques and awareness made him an extremely valuable player in League One. Furthermore..." Tang En looked at the away team manager's seats beside them and giggled, "Crystal Palace's current manager is an idiot. He is worse than his assistant manager. This kind of change will cause him to scratch his head and to make a wrong assessment. We will definitely win this match. Des, you know what? I've suddenly changed my mind."

"About what?" Walker was puzzled.

"Not only do we have to achieve breakthrough in the Cup, I am also thinking of being directly promoted to the Premier League by the end of the season!"

Walker stared with his eyes widened at Twain, whose grin almost touched his ears.

"You don't believe me, Des? Even if we are currently last in the season, becoming the champions of the league by the end of the season is not something unattainable."

Looking at Twain who was brimming with confidence, Walker muttered to himself, "What a crazy plan..."

The match had already started, and Tang En stood up from his seat, getting ready to direct the match from the side of the field. Before he left, he shot Walker a look and gave him an even more shocking goal: "League One Champions, promotion to Premier League, EFL Cup or FA Cup championships, qualifying for UEFA Europa League... This time, I will not fail!"

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John and gang continued watching the match, each of them holding a plastic cup filled with beer.

"Why is that Ukrainian still on the field? Why did Tony not substitute him out? Even I can tell that he is completely useless!" Someone complained.

John shot him a stare and said, "If you're so good, then you go be the manager! Just watch the match. You still don't believe him after all this time? Tony has never disappointed us before!"

Crystal Palace's manager, Steve Kember, was originally in charge of their physical fitness and not a manager. Led by his level of ability, the end result was that Crystal Palace had come in third place from the bottom after playing 21 rounds in the league.

As for Tang En's arrangements, Steve could not tell what purpose it served.

If the forward can't score, then make him play as a midfielder? Manager Tony Twain, the changes in your tactics are based too much on assumptions!

Playing a 4-5-1 formation with two defensive midfielders, are you trying to concede less goals on your home ground? Stop dreaming, my Andrew is in tip-top condition!

Just as he finished chanting in his heart, Nottingham Forest managed to steal Andrew Johnson's ball in the backfield. Gunnarsson passed the ball to Rebrov, who was waiting in front—Tang En had specifically

instructed previously, to hand over the task of organizing Nottingham Forest's offenses to Rebrov, place sufficient trust in him, and hope that they could see a completely different, super player.

Rebrov, who received the ball, discovered that for the first time, there were actually no defenders from the opponent's team rushing up to him, kicking and shoving to steal the ball from him. He calmly adjusted the ball, before dribbling the ball over toward Crystal Palace's defensive line.

"Serhiy Rebrov, he dribbles past one... The second one! It's really hard to believe that this is the Rebrov we saw in the past! He got past the third Crystal Palace defender, breaking into the penalty area—"

Rebrov suddenly discovered that the defenders who had once made him extremely scared, were no more than wooden stakes. Yes, with a change in perspectives, he saw the world in an entirely different light!

Crystal Palace's defender, Darren Powell, rushed forward, but Rebrov agilely avoided him. Right as Rebrov was about to continue his advance, he was tripped by Powell.

"Darren Powell... Penalty! Penalty!" The television commentators shouted.

Not waiting for the referee's whistle to blow, City Ground Stadium erupted into an uproar.

"Penalty—!"

Tang En, who saw this scene unfold, jumped up in joy. Damn, I placed my bet correctly!

The referee ran toward the spot where the foul occurred, and at the same time, pointed his finger at that white spot in the middle of the penalty area—that's right, penalty!

"This is undoubtedly a penalty! Rebrov managed to single-handedly break past the entire defensive line of Crystal Palace and won the team a chance to even the score. His performance is as though he is another person! What did Tony Twain, the magician say during the halftime break? Just from letting Rebrov change his position, this Ukrainian managed to be reborn!"

Rebrov, who fell inside the penalty area, got up on his feet. He saw the Crystal Palace players surrounding the referee and begging for mercy, while his Nottingham Forest teammates ran toward him with their arms open, after which, he once again fell on the field.

Penalty? I was the one who made it happen?

This feeling is really good!

When Andy Reid scored the penalty chance which was created by Rebrov, the viewing platform once again burst out into cheers. They were cheering for Reid, who was about to leave the team during the winter break period. Of course, Rebrov's name also appeared amongst their cheering noises this time.

Nottingham Forest brought the score to a tie, stunning the players and managers of Crystal Palace. After 15 minutes, Rebrov finally scored a goal!

When all of the defenders were trying to prevent Rebrov from breaking through, he chose to shoot from outside the penalty area. The football ball was like a cannonball, directly blasting into Crystal Palace's goalpost!

“Serhiy—Rebrov!” The viewing platform erupted into loud cheers.

“This is the real Rebrov! This is the person who partnered with Shevchenko and made AC Milan and Barcelona experience fear, Rebrov!”

Rebrov was once again pressed against the floor by his teammates, while Tang En was once again hugged by the excited Walker beside him.

“I believe you, Tony! We can, we really can!”

At the same time, Doughty who was in the VIP lounge stood up from his seat and extended his hand toward the depressed Crystal Palace chairman, Simon Jordan. Although he was happy, he did not do something rude like dance and shake his butt in front of Simon Jordan.

“What a pity, Mr. Jordan,” he smiled and said. “Although you share the same name with one of the NBA gods, but it’s a pity that this is a football match.”

Simon Jordan’s facial expression became even more awkward. His hand was extended in midair, unsure of whether he should shake or not...

Outside the lounge, the shouting of Nottingham fans could be heard. “Victory!” Crystal Palace’s chairman’s pale face was just like a streak of lightning in the night sky.

Pierce Brosnan, who was at the news reporters’ seats, looked around the excited viewing platform and looked again at Tony Twain, who was celebrating the goal with the players who were running back. He suddenly thought of that sentence, that sentence which he heard when he was brought to Forest Bar.

That man just stood there amongst a group of worshippers and opened his arms, as if he wanted to hug the entire world. Amidst the “Tony! Tony!” shouting, he was just like a lion, the king of the jungle, leading the pack in their roaring.

“One day, I will return one day! When that time comes, you will hear an even louder cheer!”

Louder cheer... The viewing platform beneath his feet shook amidst this “even louder cheer.” His eardrums started to hurt, and he could not hear anything clearly, but he knew that the shouting was that which welcomed that man back.

#### **Chapter 114: Another Encounter With Millwall Part 1**

The match between Nottingham Forest and Crystal Palace was over. Thanks to the home team’s resurgence of Rebrov and prevailing 2:1 over the rival after much difficulty, their distance to the relegation zone had widened.

After the match, almost all the Nottingham media widely covered the match. All Forest players became heroes, especially Rebrov, whom the media praised to the skies. The media hailed him for regaining his status as a Premier League player.

And what about Tony Twain who directed all that? The photograph of him seeking out Rebrov, and their private conversation on the field during the halftime break, had already made the news headlines. At

the post-match interview, the reporters asked Rebrov, who was elected to be the match's best player for the first time, about what his manager said to him during the halftime on the field.

Rebrov smiled and said, "Nothing much, he just told me to pull back from my position and allow myself to play for me. After that, I saw the world from a completely different perspective."

"...This is Tony Twain. He has the ability to turn something rotten into something miraculous. I agree with the TV commentator during the match who said he was a magician. Look at Collymore's Forest team, and then take a look at Tony Twain's Forest team. All the players are the same players as before, but the team is completely different. We obtained the crucial three points and restored our morale. Listen to the cheers inside the City Ground, the Nottingham Forest is gradually waking up!"

The moving tram gently rocked, and the carriage was empty inside except for a few old men who were having a shut-eye. The tram was traveling through the suburbs of Nottingham. Almost no car horns could be heard outside, and even the pedestrians were scarce. It was early Sunday morning, and Tang En was sitting on Hucknall-bound tram. Outside was the quiet countryside. He looked outside and then looked at the inside. A passenger on the opposite side held up this morning's newspaper and was totally engrossed reading it. On the page facing Tang En was his own picture and a bold headline:

"Tony Twain Returns!"

Seeing this, Tang En softly chuckled. It sounded like "Superman Returns." He had returned to the front page top headline, and the feeling of being worshipped and focused on was quite nice.

On this quiet morning, the inside of this empty tram was completely different from the impressive atmosphere of the City Ground yesterday. Twain leaned his head against the window and closed his eyes to relish the match that had just passed.

I am back again, and this time I will never leave easily.

With a silvery sound of a bell, the tram stopped rocking. Tang En opened his eyes and saw the steeple of the church on the hillside. He had arrived at his destination.

Tang En stepped down from the tram, gave his body a stretch and walked toward the church.

He had not been there for a while since the one time he was there in the summer. In the twinkling of an eye, half a year had passed. He was no longer that unemployed manager Tony Twain who was at a loss and unable to see his way forward.

Because of Gavin, he had decided to stay in the Forest team and wait for the opportunity to return to the City Ground technical area. Now he was back and had led the team to victory again. So, he returned to here again.

For him, the cemetery behind the gray masonry church was the starting point of another journey. And when he was about to stride forward, he should come back here to reaffirm his direction.

Even though it seemed to look quite close by, there was still some uphill distance from the tram stop to the church. Tang En bought a bouquet of lilies from a lonely flower shop on the street and thought about it as he held the flowers in his hand. Then he asked the florist for a card, pulled out his pen and wrote:

–to the most loyal Nottingham Forest fan, the eternal supporter of George Wood: Gavin Bernard.

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There was a group of children kicking a ball in the green area in front of the church. Several of them wore the red Forest team jerseys. They yelled and clamored for the ball. When someone shot a football in between two piles of clothes, they would imitate all kinds of celebratory actions that the football stars would do.

As a child, Tang En often played this way too. However, it was not on such a good lawn, but on an embankment used to dry grains in the sun back home. They would take schoolbags, bricks, old shoes, clothes, baskets ... In short, everything that could be moved to build the goal. And then a group of children would chase a worn-out ball on the embankment. From Tang En's current point of view, even when someone from that group had shot the best "star player" shot, it was actually a sorry sight, but everyone played happily. Next to the embankment was a pond used to raise ducks, where people would often accidentally kick the football into the pond. Even though he played badly, Tang En, a good swimmer, would always be that person who retrieved the ball from the pond every time.

In high school, he went to a boarding school in the city, where there were no shabby embankments and ponds. There was a specialized field, but Tang En had already stopped playing football. He only watched others play from the sidelines. He was the same in college. Until now, he was used to standing on the sidelines to watch others play, and even found a completely different pleasure and sense of accomplishment in it than from personally playing football.

Tang En lingered for a little while around these lovely children before continuing forward. He went around the deserted church and turned to the little path in the woods.

The cemetery was even lonelier than the church. Surrounded by the dense woods, it seemed that the temperature was one or two degrees lower than the outside. Tang En tightly bundled up his coat and went straight to Gavin's grave.

He was surprised when he saw a bouquet of lilies in front of the tombstone. Water droplets were still on the fresh petals. Whoever had left it there was obviously just here. Tang En looked up and around at the cemetery and did not see anyone.

He looked down and noticed a card was also similarly in the bouquet, so he picked it up. There was only a line on it:

To Gavin.

There was no dedication and Gavin's name was misspelled. Looking at that crooked handwriting which still looked inferior to a grade school student's handwriting, Tang En smiled.

He put the bouquet back down and carefully placed his bouquet beside it. After this, he pulled out a cigarette from his coat pocket and prepared to take a puff. The lighter was clicked on, but he watched the leaping flames in a daze instead. Then he took the cigarette out of his mouth and slide it back into the cigarette case.

He had forgotten that there was a child next to him.

So, he squatted down again and looked at the small line of inscription at the bottom of the tombstone.

When Michael had said to him at the bar, “Tony, I’m not going to see the game tomorrow. I will not go to one again,” his face was calm as if he was talking about someone else who was completely unrelated to him. At that time, Tang En thought something must have died in his heart, even to the point that ... he no longer loved football but hated football instead. Because football took away his beloved son.

That day when Michael told him here that he was going to America, Tang En was more convinced that this was the case. Michael hated football and wanted to flee from football.

But when he later saw the fine line of inscription at the bottom of the tombstone, all the impressions that Michael had left him with were instantly flipped.

He loved his son so much, and he also loved football so deeply. He must bury this love deep in his heart, then lock it away, and never touch it again, whether it be someone else or him.

Tang En swept away the dead leaves fallen in front of the tombstone. He then stood up and turned to leave from this humble little headstone.

The Forest team would start training again this afternoon. Three days later, on December 17th, in London, on the southern bank of the Thames, at the Den, they would play in the EFL Cup quarter final match and face their opponent—Millwall

To Tang En, it was a match that they absolutely could not lose!

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Back at the club’s training ground in the afternoon, Tang En went to see the reserve team before the team’s training. At the sidelines of the reserve team’s training ground, he saw Gareth Taylor, who had seen him, too. From the expression in his eyes, he still looked as if he was unwilling to comply with the young manager himself.

But it doesn’t matter ... Kid, if you refuse to comply, then so be it. I just need you to score for me.

He beckoned to Taylor, and the reserve coach called the big guy over.

Tang En looked Taylor, who stood in front of him and was slightly taller than he was, and then turned to go, “Follow me.”

Taylor did not move, “Where to?”

Tang En made a half turn before he turned to look at Taylor, then turned back again, and extended his two fingers, “I’m not in a good mood, so I’ll give you two choices: first, don’t ask and just follow me; or second, you’ll continue to stay here until the transfer market opens in winter. Make your choice.”

After he had spoken, Tang En never glanced at the stunned big guy again. He just turned around and walked away.

Taylor did not expect Twain to so firmly walk away. He stood rooted to the ground for a moment. The reserve team coach lightly patted him, “You’re still not following him?”

Taylor stirred as if he had woken up from a dream and ran to catch up and then followed silently behind Twain. Both men walked to the sidelines of the First Team training ground. The players were already on the field getting ready to warm up at this time.

Tang En stopped at the sidelines, and Taylor had the self-awareness to just run to the training ground, and he never dared to ask the stony-faced manager another word again.

The players were not surprised that Taylor had returned to the team. Now that the forward line was short of players, it was only a matter of course that Taylor, who had repeatedly scored goals in the reserve team, would return.

Walker just walked past when he saw Twain standing on the sidelines with his lips tightly pursed.

“Des, look at his training performance. If it is possible, put him on the team’s main list. We will play the 4-5-1 formation, defense and offense. He’s an important player. Have the team practice this formation and tactics these next two days.” Tang En said to Walker when he saw him walking past.

Walker nodded and went back when he saw that Twain was moody. When he returned to the training ground, he blew his whistle and shouted, “All right, lads! Start training. Don’t think you can have an easier time now just because you have won a match! Buckle up, from now on you’ll have to pay the debt you owe for the first four months! You have to use all you have to pay back!”

When he heard Walker shout and looked at the players who were startled, a smile emerged on Tang En’s face.

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In fact, with Nottingham Forest’s poor performance in the league, it was truly amazing that they could surmount all the difficulties along the way to advance to the quarter finals of the EFL Cup. Collymore was not completely worthless. At the very least, Tang En could thank him for having led the team and persisted to this point.

Originally a week ago, when the Forest team had just changed their manager, all the major bookmakers were not very optimistic about Nottingham Forest team’s odds of winning for this away match. But after Twain had led the team to defeat Crystal Palace which capped his perfect return, the bookmakers immediately adjusted the odds.

Among them, William Hill PLC, the leading bookmaker in United Kingdom, had the most representative odds.

Although the Forest team had won a match which made a lot of people feel optimistic about the team again, it only slightly improved the visiting team odds of winning when they considered that this was their away game and the team had a new manager. Their situation was not stable yet.

From the original 3 to 1 odds, the Forest team’s odds of winning on an away match became 2.1 to 1.

Tang En did not bet on football, and he also did not like to bet on football. But it was still possible to get a general understanding of the current situation from the odds of the sports betting that had been perfectly integrated into English football. To put it bluntly, although the team had just won a match, there were still many people who did not think that they could beat Millwall in an away match. By the



way, the odds of winning the EFL Cup for Nottingham Forest were only a little higher than their current rival Millwall, according to the major bookmakers.

What did the high payout of the odds mean? That meant that the bookmakers and the public were not confident in them.

For example, in a match where the two participating teams were the home team, Manchester United and the visiting team was an amateur team which could not even afford the hotel costs and heavily laden with debt. Then the odds of the home team winning were 1.1 to 1, and the odds of the visiting team winning was 11 to 1. The former's odds were low because Manchester United's strength was too strong, and they were almost certain to win the match. In order not to lose money in the payout, the bookmakers gave these odds, and everyone knew that this result was easy to come by. Although one invested money, £100 to buy, one could only earn a profit of £10. Although the earning was less and cost more, it was stable and there was no loss. The latter's odds were high. Even if one were to put in £100, one could gain £1,100 if that team won. But the probability of such a result was very low. So, a team with high odds represented that people were not confident in it.

This EFL Cup quarter final match was actually the least attractive of the four matches. What was the point of a match between two League One teams? In the other three matches, there were two matches with Premier League teams battling against each other, and there was also one match in which one of the participating teams was the most popular Arsenal team who always played beautifully.

Besides their respective fans, who would pay attention to this quarter final match?

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A cup of fragrant black tea was placed on the table by the window. It was cloudy and dark outside the window, and it looked as if it would rain at any moment. But this did not affect the relaxed mood of the person, who was enjoying this cup of tea while being engrossed in the newspaper and putting his leg up to lean against the couch. If the weather had been nice, this would have been a wonderful afternoon tea time.

He put down the newspaper, stretched himself, leaned over the couch to take the cup of black tea and turned his head to look out the window. Leisurely as if he were an ordinary tourist, he and the people who were busily walking around him in the noisy lobby where he was, were in two completely different parallel spaces.

For the Nottingham Forest manager Tony Twain, this was a rare pre-game leisure time.

## **Chapter 115: Another Encounter with Millwall Part 2**

With a "ding" sound, a rush of many footsteps came from the elevator direction. Tang En, who was sitting and drinking tea in the lobby by the window, turned his head.

The players, who just had a short break, came out from the elevator. Someone was still yawning. Des Walker quickly came out from among the players, turned around to look at the elevator and loudly urged, "Come on, hurry up! Don't look like you're still half asleep, now is not time for afternoon tea!"

Ever since he had determined the goals and direction that the team was striving for this season, the man had regained his passion for work overnight.

Tang En looked down at his wrist watch, it was 1:55. It was just right for the team to set out at this time. He put the cup back on the table, folded the newspaper which rested on his knee and put it back in the newspaper rack next to his seat. He then got up and walked to the hotel front door.

It is now almost two o'clock in the afternoon on December 17th. At the Scottsdale Hotel in South London, a red coach, printed with the words "Nottingham Forest" and the Forest team logo, parked quietly at the entrance and waited to drive them to their destination, The Den.

When they saw their unspeaking manager standing by the door, the players unconsciously began to trot up and hurry to get on the bus. A few players did not understand why the manager was not happy when they had just defeated Crystal Palace, their direct rival to avoid relegation, in the league.

Since the start of the second day of training after the match, few people had seen Manager Tony Twain smiled.

All the players got on the bus, and Walker walked up to Twain and said to him, "Tony, everyone's here."

"Well. What about the coaching team?"

"They went first, with the equipment."

Tang En nodded, "Good, let's go, too."

Just as he was about to step onto the bus, he suddenly heard someone calling him from behind, "Mr. Twain! Wait! Mr. Twain hang on a minute!"

"Ah, Brosnan." Tang En turned to see the Nottingham Evening Post reporter with his little black leather notebook in his hand, panting as he ran out of the lobby. "What's the matter?"

Brosnan ran up to him out of breath, bent down at the waist and gasped for a moment with his hands on his knees, before he got up and looked at the bus, and said to Twain intermittently, "Very... sorry, could you please give me a lift?"

His request was a bit of a surprise to Tang En. "You want me to let a reporter on the team bus? Brosnan, your request is really... unusual."

"I'm really, really sorry... I overslept, and my colleagues were gone. They must have thought I set off first." Brosnan helplessly explained the embarrassing situation.

"You can call a taxi." Tang En pointed at the street.

"My... my wallet was in my bag which was taken away by my colleagues," Brosnan blushed.

Tang En sighed and looked at this unfortunate man and thought about the nice things he had written in the newspapers on his behalf. Now that he had some difficulty, it would be a little unconscionable if he did not help him.

Walker got onto the bus and found that Twain did not follow behind, and the players all looked out of the window, so he jumped down from the bus, "What's the matter, Tony?" He saw the Evening Post reporter standing next to Twain. "Brosnan, now's not the time for an interview."

"Mr. Walker, I'm not here for an interview."

Tang En interrupted him and said to Walker, "He's a poor bastard who has been left behind by his colleagues because he overslept. And now he has to hitch a ride with us."

Then he waved to Brosnan, "Get on the bus! Be glad you're not a woman."

There were some taboos in professional football that could not be ignored in any country. For example, women were absolutely prohibited to ride on the same bus with the players. That would be seen as an ominous sign of failure. That was why Tang En had said that. If Brosnan was a female reporter, then even if Tang En agreed, the rest of the team would also adamantly oppose having a woman riding on the same bus, going to The Den. Everyone would become very sensitive and superstitious before a big match.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Twain! And, Mr. Walker, thank you." Brosnan gratefully thanked the two coaches and tried to shake hands, but Tang En shoved him up the bus instead.

"Stop talking nonsense! We have been delayed long enough. If you want to thank us, then continue to help us by putting in a few good words in the newspapers!"

"Of course, of course." Brosnan stumbled up the bus and saw a group of players curiously looked at him, so he waved hello awkwardly. "Hello, everyone... I, uh, I..."

Just as he did not know how to explain his abandonment by his colleagues, Tang En came up from behind, pointed at him and said to the players, "This unlucky chap is an Evening Post reporter who overslept and is without a single cent on him!"

"Boo—" There was a gloating hiss and laughter in the bus.

"Mr. Reporter, tomorrow's Nottingham Evening Post front page headline will not be about us advancing to the EFL Cup semi-finals, but you!" yelled a player, which caused the other players to laugh even louder. Even Tang En had a smile on his face. He patted Brosnan's shoulder and motioned for him to sit down next to him.

"No matter what you see or hear in this bus, I don't want to see it in tomorrow's papers. I'm just giving you a lift, but you're not allowed to interview."

Brosnan nodded. "Rest assured, Mr. Twain. I know what I should and should not say."

"That's good. I'm only letting you ride on the bus because I trust you." After that, Tang En stood up, raised his arms and shouted, "Drive! Let us go to Millwall's home ground and destroy those b\*stards!"

"Yeah—!!" The players brandished their fists and echoed in unison, their sluggish energy completely swept away.

Brosnan secretly wiped his sweat, no wonder Twain would not let him put what he saw and heard in the newspapers. These things might only be disclosed later when he decided to retire to work on a book he planned to write about the Nottingham Forest or Tony Twain, or his own personal biography.

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The red bus traveled through the crowded traffic on the London roads. At this time, any road leading to The Den was estimated to have a high traffic flow. Others did not value this game, but the Millwall fans who lived in the vicinity placed a lot of importance on it. They flocked to The Den from all directions to watch the EFL Cup quarter finals. Half a season had passed and Millwall was still in the middle of the League table. Judging from the situation, it would be extremely difficult for them to advance to the Premier League in the remaining half of the season. Therefore, they were pinning their hopes on the “neglected but hotbed” EFL Cup and the FA Cup.

Along the way, they could see cars carrying Millwall fans driving past the side of the Forest team bus. Those fans, wearing in the blue and white Millwall jerseys, would stick their heads out of the cars when they saw the Red Forest bus. They snarled and bared their teeth at them as they brandished their fists and gave them the middle finger. By making out the shapes of their mouths while they were shouting obscenities, they could understand the meaning of their swearing.

Seeing these people reminded Tang En of Mark Hodge. That middle-aged man, who usually looked agreeable, would become an abominable beast when he was at the stands and had even a drop of alcohol. But even so, he was nothing compared to the Millwall’s football hooligans.

After Gavin’s accident, Tang En never heard that man’s name again, nor did he go to the Robin Hood bar where the football hooligans gathered. Maybe Hodge had left football, just like Michael; maybe he was still active in the stands, but just as an ordinary fan; or perhaps he was now leading his men in some corner in the big city of London, where the CCTV cameras and policemen could not cover, and waging a battle with the Millwall football hooligans who defeated them in the ‘battlefield’ last season, all for their glory.

Not only in football, these people were also the black spots in the entire British society and could hardly be eradicated. No matter how the government cracked down on them, these football hooligans who came from the grassroots and had taken root would develop alongside with the growth of this sport, just like the shadows beneath the feet. Maybe some people would sympathize with and understand them, just like he did initially. There would even be some people who would support, envy, desire to join them, become a new football hooligan, brandish their fists, and burn with anger to fight for the honor of their gangs and team.

Since entering the 21st century, there had been signs of a revival in British football hooliganism. They had learned to assemble their crews online, to discuss strategies for fighting against rival firms, and to set out the routes for their destinations, which made it impossible for the police to defend effectively. Tang En was not a saint who loved everything in the world altruistically, nor was he able to stop these young men who were stuffed with muscle and alcohol. He just hoped that a tragedy like Gavin’s would not happen around him again. He regretted not stopping that fight in time the last time. Now he would not allow anyone to harm his friends or anyone else in his life.

Snapping out of his contemplation, Tang En suddenly realized that the view outside the window had not changed for some time. He looked strangely at the front and looked at the back again.

The bus had stopped and just like them, all the surrounding vehicles had stopped too.

“Des, what’s going on?” He asked Walker in the front.

Walker looked back at him and shrugged, “I don’t know. We’re stuck here.”

Tang En stood up and looked inside the bus. All the players seemed unaware of anything strange. They were all busy with their own things, listening to music, resting with their eyes closed, on the phone, or chatting with their teammates.

So, he sat down again. He did not know what was going in front of them. Anyway, it was a traffic jam, and there was nothing to be done except to wait patiently. He hoped it was only temporary and would not delay the game which was about to start soon.

He glanced outside the window again. He could not see past the traffic in front and at the back. Even if he wanted to let the driver turn the bus to look for another way out, it could not be done with all the cars around them.

As there were more anxious drivers honking their car horns outside the bus, Tang En felt disturbed by these ear-piercing intense noises. He suddenly felt a sense of foreboding emerging inside him, like the dark clouds gathering in the sky.

The players in the bus began to notice the situation outside when the bus driver could not help but urgently press on the horn. Someone stood up and looked around, someone took off his headphones, pointed outside the window and chattered with the others, while another opened his eyes from taking a little breather and stared strangely at the stagnant traffic outside the window. Tang En noticed the little commotion inside the bus. He looked back, waved downwards and said loudly, “Sit down and continue with what you’re doing!”

The bus was quiet again, but Tang En could not erase the puzzled expressions on the players’ faces.

And the dark clouds inside him gradually gathered with the incessant car horns outside and without any sign of the traffic moving.

He looked down at his watch, and it was half past two.

The kick-off time was three o’clock sharp!

Just then, Walker’s cell phone and Brosnan’s cell phone both rang at the same time.

Walker looked at the number and said to Twain, “It’s the coaching team...” and then pressed the answer button.

Brosnan also looked down at the number and excused himself to Twain, “It’s my colleague.” Then he got up and went to the front of the bus to answer the phone.

“Hello? You’re all there... Us? We’re still on the road ...” Walker looked out of the window at the motionless traffic. “It’s a traffic jam... It’s serious! Yes, what? They’re warming up?” His voice grew anxious and at the same he looked at Twain.

Tang En looked down at his watch again, a minute had passed, there were only 29 minutes to the start of the game!

Damn it! He cursed in his heart.

On the other side, in the front, Brosnan’s voice grew louder. “Yes, I’m sorry, Mr. Robson, I overslept. Where am I now? I’m on the bus with the Forest team, and I’ve gotten a ride on their team bus.... No, I think we’re in a traffic jam. What? A car accident?!” Brosnan could not help screaming loudly, then he turned and apologetically look at Twain, hoping that he was not annoyed. “Are you sure, Mr. Robson? You’re certain. Well, I don’t know if I can.” He looked at all the players who had stood up and did not continue.

The players in the bus were no longer quiet, they stood up and looked around in a panic, whispering to each other.

Tang En had ceased to ask them to be quiet. In fact, he could not ask. He turned his head to look out of the window, and there was an increasing steady stream of restless horns. He forced himself to calm down in this environment. At this time, everyone in the entire team looked at him and placed all their hope on him. He was the team manager and someone whom everyone would choose to trust in an emergency. He must not show the slightest bit of panic.

Suddenly, he saw a building by the street in front of them which looked like an entrance to an underground pedestrian tunnel.

He got up from his seat, walked to the driver’s side and asked, “How far away are we from the stadium?”

“About five miles, sir.” The driver looked at the map shown by the GPS satellite locator on the bus and replied.

Tang En nodded, “Please open the door!”

Then he turned to the players on the bus who were at a loss and said, “Lads, there’s good news now: you don’t have to warm up on the field later.” He pointed to the open door, “There’s also the bad news: leave all your odds and ends in the bus and let’s all run now! We’re taking the underground!”

### **Chapter 116: On The Subway Train Part 1**

A subway train accelerated and departed from the platform. The loud blasting noises reverberated in the tunnels, becoming increasingly distant. The subway platform once again regained the silence it had previously.

It was the last carriage, and there weren’t too many people inside it. Before the Nottingham Forest players got on, there was only an elderly couple with a child. Upon getting on the train, the players were

able to find a series of empty seats which were together. Walker made all of them sit together, just in case. Tang En stood on the aisle, grabbing on to the handrail.

He specifically chose a carriage which looked empty. Although the players were not wearing the red Nottingham Forest jerseys, and did not have any Nottingham Forest logos on, he was still worried... After all, there were football stars on the team like Rebrov, Michael Dawson, and Andy Reid, who appeared frequently in newspapers and on television. Nobody knew whether they would be recognized. They were currently on the turf of Millwall fans, and he did not want to create unnecessary trouble before the match.

That elderly couple kept glancing at them, as if they identified who they were. However, Tang En was not worried about the two old people and child. Even if they were hardcore Millwall fans, their fighting strength was simply too weak,

Millwall's football hooligans were extremely famous throughout the whole of England and were regarded as one of the strongest and most brutal groups, along with the football hooligans of a few other teams. Although not all of Millwall's fans were football hooligans, when faced with an enemy football team after drinking a tad too much... then even God could not guarantee their safety.

Millwall's football hooligans would throw Molotov cocktails and tear gas at bars which fans of other teams frequented, in order to force them out of the place. After that, they would take advantage of the thick smoke and use sticks and chains to welcome those unsuspecting people who covered their heads and noses. Regardless of gender or age, anyone who supported enemy teams was a target of their assault.

Once you understood what kind of people the Millwall football hooligans were, you could understand why Tang En was being so careful.

Prior to this, Tang En had warned the players not say anything on the train, and to shut their eyes and pretend that they were asleep. As for those who were more easily identifiable... straighten their collars, or bury their heads, or block their faces with newspapers... In any case, no accidents were to happen.

But speaking of which... Could the number of accidents today be anymore? Tang En tilted his head and looked at Brosnan, who stood behind Tang En with his head lowered, as if he felt that his presence on the train made the team's luck turn bad.

Tang En nudged him, and whispered softly, "What are you doing? You are not a woman... even though your character resembles one... Haha!" Tang En started laughing. Currently, there did not seem to be any danger, so he could be slightly at ease.

"... Arriving at the next stop, New Den Stadium in 10 minutes. Arriving at the next stop, New Den Stadium in 10 minutes." An electronic voice announcing the next train stop could be heard in the train carriage.

Tang En lowered his head and checked his watch. It was currently 2:39 p.m., and they would reach their stop at 2.49 p.m. He also did not know how far this train station was from the stadium. Even if the stadium were to be right outside of the train station, it would also take at least 10 minutes for the players to run to the changing room, change, and then come out. By then, it would be 2:59 p.m., leaving him no time to even plan any battle tactics.

Tang En looked at the players who were seated on the two sides of the carriage. Although they appeared to have heeded his instructions on the surface, Tang En was still able to tell that they were secretly surveying their surroundings. There were even a few players who were not as famous, looking around as if everything was completely fine. It was apparent that the players were still somewhat excited with regard to this special method of travelling to an away match. They did not need to wrack their heads over the tactics arrangements, or whether there was sufficient time. They didn't have to worry, because all these problems were on the backs of the managerial team.

Being a player and being a manager were two completely different feelings.

Tang En decided to conduct his pre-match tactics preparation meeting in the train carriage. This was perhaps the most special meeting conducted in English football. Tang En coughed a few times, reminding the players that they did not need to keep up their pretense anymore.

While waiting for everyone to focus their attention on him, Tang En squatted down on the aisle of the train carriage. He lowered his voice, trying his best not to draw any attention to them. "I think everyone knows what kind of a situation we are in currently, so I shall get straight to the point. These two days, we mainly focused on defending and counterattacking during our trainings, so everyone also knows that..." He did not complete his sentence, because he saw that all the players' attention was directed to somewhere behind him.

He turned his head around, and saw the scene which he did not wish to see the most. A group of people dressed up like football fans were standing at the connecting part of the carriage, a few of them even wearing a blue-white Millwall jerseys. That group of people used an extremely unfriendly gaze to look at Tang En, as well as the players which surrounded him.

"Darn it!" Tang En turned around and cursed. After that, he told the players in a soft voice, "All of you, get back to your seats. Nobody is allowed to say anything, and nobody is to make any noise. Leave everything to me."

After that, he stood up and looked at those ill-intentioned bunch of people.

The group of people had already rushed into this carriage, while the old couple rushed along the child and escaped from behind the Millwall fans, running to another carriage. All that was left was them. With the door located in the middle of the carriage as the boundary, they were in the left half of the carriage, while Tang En's team was on the right half.

Nobody said anything, and only the loud noises from the tunnel could be heard. The body of the train shook slightly, and Tang En stood in the middle of the carriage. He faced those "ill-intentioned" fans, with his players behind him. They had just sworn on the train that, he would not let anyone do harm to the people around him, and the time to fulfil his promise was now.

You want to do harm to my players? You have to get past me first!

Tang En and the other party stared silently at each other. The air seemed to be frozen, causing the atmosphere to become extremely pressurizing.

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John Motson was in charge of commentating for one quarter of the matches for the EFL Cup. He was originally not supposed to be commentating this match, but after knowing that Tony Twain had immediately gotten a victory upon returning to lead the team, he suddenly could not hold back the curiosity in him. As such, he decided to apply to commentate this match, which was bound to lose in terms of viewership as compared to another quarterfinals match. In the eyes of this old commentator, a match between two League One teams was much more attractive than a match between Tottenham Hotspur and Middlesbrough.

In the Stadium, the home team Millwall were already doing their warm-ups, but there was still no sign of Nottingham Forest.

The manager seats and reserve seats were completely empty. It was said that aside from a few coaches who came early to place the equipment, no one else was present. Even the Nottingham Forest coach bus was not here yet.

Motson sat on the commentator's seat and put on his headphones, silencing the loud noises which came from the viewing platform in all directions. Millwall's fans were singing and shouting non-stop, appearing to be extremely optimistic.

It is currently less than 15 minutes to the start of the match, and Nottingham Forest is still not here yet... What exactly is Tony Twain and his team doing?

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Aside from the loud noises from outside the train, there were also a lot of heavy breathing noises coming from within the carriage. Tang En hoped that this group of people were merely normal Millwall fans. However, after seeing their expressions and eyes, he understood that this time, he was extremely unlucky to have met a bunch of fans which were not ordinary.

Even though this group of people did not say anything, Tang En was able to get the following information from the looks on their faces:

Get rid of the bunch of Nottingham Forest b\*stards in front of us and our team will be able to win without even playing, successfully advancing into the semi-finals of the EFL Cup!

Tang En believed that under the effects of alcohol, it was really something that they would do.

Now what? He did not have the confidence to beat over 10 people in a fight. Regardless of the situation, the players were not allowed to fight with fans, or else what awaited them would be a long term ban on matches. Just like Cantona who did a flying kick on a Crystal Palace fan. Even though the other party insulted his family, he had still been banned for eight months.

But... did that mean a manager could fight with the fans? Tang En had not really thought about this question before.

Walker, who was behind Tang En, whipped out his phone and wanted to call the police. However, he saw the signal on the screen of his phone and softly cursed. They were currently underground, and the signal was not as good compared to if they were on ground level.

Even if they wanted to call the subway police over, it was most likely not possible as well. That was because the team was in the last train carriage, and the only way out was from behind the Millwall fans.

Brosnan whispered to Tang En from behind, "Mr. Twain, hang on till we get off the train. Before I get on the train, I already phoned my colleagues. I believe they will have already called the police along with them."

"Thank you so much, Brosnan. In order to express my thanks, I allow you to record everything that you see from now on, and publish it on the newspaper." Tang En stared at the fans, while saying this to Brosnan who was behind him. "Do you have a digital camera with you?"

"No, Mr. Twain."

"Use your phone instead then."

The fans opposite them got a scare upon seeing the short man behind Tang En whip out his phone and aim at them.

"What the heck are you trying to do?" They shouted and were about to rush forward, but were stopped by Tang En.

"Let's not be agitated, gentlemen." Tang En now knew that these people did not drink much actually, and that things weren't extremely terrible yet. "As you can see, this short mister over here is a news reporter." Tang En said as he pointed to Brosnan, who was behind him.

"A reporter!" The effect of this term on the group of people, was one that Tang En had hoped to see.

What kind of people did the football hooligans hate the most and were most afraid of? Aside from the police, it would be the media. That was because, even when these people wrecked havoc, they did not wish for reporters to take pictures of their faces and appear in the headlines the next day. This would mean that they would lose the opportunity to watch matches.

## **Chapter 117: On The Subway Train Part 2**

The English specifically set up a record for football hooligans. As long as one's name was captured inside the records, he would be banned from watching football matches at the stadium. For such fanatical fans like them, banning them from watching games at the stadiums would be akin to depriving them of their lives.

Seeing the group of people in front of him suck in a deep breath, Tang En smiled. "Of course, if any one of you doubts my words, I can ask him to display his reporter pass."

After Tang En finished, Brosnan whipped out his pass from his pocket, which was originally hung around his neck.

"I think you guys must know who I am, so I won't do any self-introduction here." Tang En signaled for Brosnan to step back. He stood at the forefront and said while pointing toward the door at the side, "With this door as the boundary, you guys stay there, and we will stay here. We'll play our match while

you will watch your match. Everyone will be safe if nobody crosses the boundary.” Tang En clapped his hands. “Isn’t this suggestion fantastic?”

“Why do we have to listen to your arrangement?” A bald man shouted from within the crowd.

Tang En looked at him, before pointing toward Brosnan who was behind him. “If you hope to not be able to watch a live match at the stadium in the future, I am completely fine with you coming over.”

“Darn it! Even if I were to not watch a match for the rest of my life, I also have to...” The bald guy waved his fists at the back of the crowd.

Tang En saw through his bluff and understood. So, he waved his hands at the other party. “And what? Sir, over there, I feel that you will be more convincing if you say these words in front of your comrades. If you hide behind the crowd and keep asking for a fight, what if a fight really breaks out? Will you then push the others in front of you instead?”

Hearing Tang En word it in this manner, the group of football hooligans naturally turned their heads around and looked at the bald guy.

“Come out. If you really want to hit me, then stand out here in front of me on your own. Let me see how big your fist is.” Tang En took a step forward and stopped right in front of the boundary he had set, as if he was not at all worried about the other party really hitting him.

The players behind him were all worried for him. In fact, Dawson was already prepared to lunge at the person if he dared to touch Twain. He did not have the leisure to care about the bans or punishments that would be meted out.

The bald person felt rather guilty under the silent stares. As such, he gritted his teeth and made his way to the front.

Looking at his actions, Brosnan shouted, “What are you doing? I’m warning you...”

Tang En waved his hand to interrupt the agitated reporter. “It’s alright, Mr. Brosnan.”

The bald person soon in front and looked at Tang En with a face full of smiles and confidence. After that, he turned around and looked at his comrades who remained silent. At that moment, he felt as though he was that slice of beef in between a sandwich...

Tang En was actually very nervous deep down in his heart. He had been carefully choosing his choice of words, and was afraid to antagonize the group of people and rouse their violent tendencies. The only thing he could do right now was to stall for time as much as he could. Once they reached the train station, the crisis should be averted. As gutsy as this group of people were, they would definitely not dare to get physical in front of a reporter and the police, right?

He was here to bring the team to play in the match, not to get into a fight. However, he could absolutely not show any signs of weaknesses in front of this group of people. He had to act tough, and make them feel that even if they were to come together all at once, Tony Twain was not afraid at all!

Tang En was currently thinking... if only he had something like a nunchaku or some sort, he could at least put on a bluff and deter them. On top of that, he could imitate Bruce Lee and shout a few times, and it would most probably make them beat a retreat.

Seeing the awkward look on the bald guy's face, Tang En shrugged his shoulders and said, "Look at how good this is. You guys stay there, while we stay here. We don't interrupt with each other. Pal, we're here to play in the match, not here for a war. What's your name?"

The bald guy reflexively answered, "Simon." Before he could even complete his sentence, he had been pulled back by someone. Following that, another man who appeared to be in his fifties stepped out from behind.

"Mr. Manager, I also don't wish for the wretched media to say after the match, that Millwall's victory wasn't clean." The man pointed at Pierce Brosnan behind Tang En. "Of course even more so, I don't wish for my people to be on the police's blacklist for this kind of thing. We won't do anything," he said as he opened his hands.

Tang En nodded. "Is that so? Then I have to thank you for that." Although he said it like that, Tang En did not turn around and walk back. Instead, he continued to stand there, in between the fans and the players. Deep down, Tang En did not really believe the words of these kinds of people. Ever since Gavin's death, Tang En always detested football hooligans as well as all Millwall fans. Perhaps it was a prejudice, but Tang En did not intend to change his perspective.

The only pity was that he did not have time to tell the players what tactics to use, and how to play during the match.

The train carriage regained its peace, like before those football fans first entered. The two groups of people stood on the two ends of the carriage respectively. In the middle of the two groups were their bosses, who stared at each other silently. Neither side would avert their gaze, because that would be seen as a sign of cowardly escape.

Just like that, they stared at each other, remaining calm and not showing any signs of anxiety or impatience. Even the frequency of their breath was normal. They didn't think about anything, had no expression on their faces, and no feelings from their eyes. They would not show the other party even the slightest flaw and would not let themselves be at a disadvantage.

This was even more tiring than directing the World Cup finals!

Just like that, the air grew heavier amidst the silent exchange. Even Tang En did not know how much longer he could last. He hoped he wouldn't collapse. It was as if the temperature in the train carriage rose, and visible beads of sweat appeared on the foreheads of both parties. Tang En could even feel a drop of sweat rolling down his eyebrow. If he did not blink, it would enter his eye...

Just as Tang En was put in a tight spot, a voice was heard from the top of train carriage. "Entering New Den Stadium station, entering New Den Stadium station..."

The darkness outside of the windows reached its end, and flashes of light could be seen.

Not just Tang En, but almost all of the Nottingham Forest people heaved a long sigh of relief.

They had reached the train station of the match venue.

The train slowly decelerated, and Tang En saw reporter Robson who had once interviewed him at City Ground Stadium. Beside him were reporters from other media, as well as more than 10 policemen in black and bright yellow vest. Tang En knew that this contest with the fans had finally ended.

When the train stabilized and the door opened, the man made a gesture to invite him out. Tang En did not move, and waved his hand for Walker to lead the players off the train first.

Only after the last Nottingham Forest player exited the train carriage did Tang En turn around and walk out. When he was getting off the train carriage, a gust of wind came from the direction of the tunnel, blowing past Tang En. Only then did he realize that his shirt was already completely drenched.

Seeing Tang En come out of the train, the reporters rushed up, with their mikes almost blocking his path.

“If you have any questions I’ll address them after the match. Now could you please let my team go to the stadium?” Tang En answered loudly. He pushed away the reporters blocking his way, before running behind the players to catch up to them.

James Robson saw Pierce who was looking around the moment he got off, and pulled him over. “You brat. You made us extremely worried!”

Instead, Brosnan smiled and said, “Mr. Robson, I think I’ve gotten the best news! Mr. Twain has already allowed me to write the happenings on the subway train and publish them in the newspapers!”

Suddenly, a hoarse shouting voice could be heard coming from the entrance, resounding throughout the entire subway station. “Hurry! Hurry! We have less than 10 minutes’ time! Now is the time for all of you to warm up, get running!”

Brosnan turned his head toward the exit. Although they could no longer be spotted, their shadows were still elongating and visible on the stairs.

“Perhaps you’re right. Now, I am slightly regretful as to why the person that overslept wasn’t me.” Robson patted Brosnan and continued, “Let’s go, the match is about to begin.”

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What made Tang En think of himself as lucky, was that the exit of the subway station had a straight pedestrian walkway to the entrance of the stadium. The stadium was around 500 meters away from the subway station, and was not considered far. What was even luckier for him, was that because the match was about to begin soon, this road which should have been extremely crowded, was only left with the hawkers and very few football fans. As such, his players were able to practically run into the changing room without much interruption.

One minute later, the panting players pushed open the changing room’s door. Tang En stopped at the entrance unable to even catch a single breath, shouted loudly, “Change into your jerseys, make sure you wear them correctly! Boots, shin guards...”

Frenzied sounds could be suddenly heard coming out from the changing room.

Tang En turned his head around and looked at the panting Walker. “Walker, you’ve only been retired for one year... you should train your body.”

While panting, Walker replied, "Let's not talk about that now... Tony, you are too awesome! Without doing anything, you were able to stop the other party!"

Dawson, who was in the midst of putting on his shirt, also interjected, "That's right, that's right! I think that everyone was scared stiff at that time. Boss, your performance is too admirable!"

Reid added, "That's right. To be honest, I did not know what to do."

Tang En was extremely happy that everyone felt the same way. Although it was an accident, his prestige among the players had increased yet again. "Andy, it's just that you are too timid... Alright! Enough of the chatter! Quickly change into your clothes, we'll be going on the field! I dare bet you that those b\*stards from Millwall must have thought that we were already extremely exhausted, and that they could easily obtain victory. Now, it's time to tell them how sorely wrong they are!"

### **Chapter 118: The Hard-Nosed Millwall Part 1**

When the Millwall fans in the stands saw the sorry sight of the Forest players hurriedly running out, they roared with laughter. It set the tone for the match—this was not going to be a civilized and friendly game, but a real fight-to-the-death knock-out match!

Moreover, the relationship between the Forest fans and the Millwall fans had been tense since Gavin's incident. So, the Millwall fans were more than happy to jeer at the nearly late Forest team.

Tang En came out of the passageway and stopped at the sidelines to look up at the stands. Large areas of blue color were interspersed with white color. And the red color was squeezed into a corner, surrounded by the blue and white colors, but tenaciously jumping. Those were the waving arms of the Forest fans.

An away match? Jeering? We'll give you something to laugh about later, Tang En snorted in his heart and walked to the technical area. On the field, Dawson was the captain, and he was in front of the referee with the other team captain to do the coin toss to pick a side.

That small-built man was the Millwall team captain, Dennis Wise, who had played for Wimbledon and Chelsea before.

Wise was an English player who Tang En had a deep impression of. Because a long time ago, roughly before 1999, Tang En was a Chelsea fan for several years. At that time, Chelsea was not known as The Ruble Army. With Zola, Vialli, Gullit, Poyet, Wise, de Goey, Flo... and so many star players, they played what Gullit termed as "sexy football." In the Premier League, they represented the blue force and Arsenal represented the red force, and they competed with Manchester United for several seasons.

The first jersey that Tang En bought was Chelsea blue jersey, and he especially liked that lion on the Chelsea crest. Later, with the departure of Gullit, Vialli, Flo, and other players, and as Zola grew older, Tang En also gradually became a "universal" fan with no favorite team. But that blue period of memory was left in Tang En's mind.

As the Chelsea team captain of that period, Wise was a player that Tang En was very fond of. He liked his bold style, his courage and daring to go up against Keane and Vieira.

When he cheered and pumped his fists in front of the television for this small-built man, he never thought that there would be a day where he would lead a team that was his opponent and enemy.

If the players on his team were defeated by his boldness, it was very likely he would curse him out instead of cheer for him.

Tang En shook his head and tossed the old memories out of his head. I'm Tony Twain, the Nottingham Forest manager; I'm Millwall's enemy and rival! I'll fight to the death with you today!

For getting the championship for the EFL Cup to qualify for the UEFA Europa League next season, this was the most feasible option that Tang En had chosen from countless options in his plan to promote the team's prestige and rebuild the team within a short period.

The FA Cup match schedule was too long and the odds of encountering strong teams were high. This option was discarded by Tang En first. The EFL Cup was the championship that the Premier League teams placed the least importance on within the three major championships. Many teams even used the EFL Cup as the place for their youth team and reserve team to warm up and condition. And the EFL Cup schedule was very short. The two semi-final games for the EFL Cup were held in January and the final match was in February. In other words, Tang En could focus his energy on maintaining the team's position within these three months and strived to take down the championship. And then they could concentrate all their efforts to qualify for the Premier League.

Tang En had a team building plan in mind and a list of players to buy. Since he had transmigrated to this world, he had an advantage that no one else could match. For example, he knew some players who were still unknown now but would become talents later on. Or he knew the right time to buy players in the future and when to spend the least amount of money to get the highest profits.

If the Forest team continued to remain in League One, then the chances of getting those players would be slim. He should at least get his team to the top 20 teams in the Premier League or qualify for a European tournament.

When he was a fan, Tang En did not place much importance on the UEFA Europa League, thinking that it was just an adjunct to the UEFA Champions League. But now he deeply realized the role of the UEFA Europa League.

This was the first coordinate of Nottingham Forest's getting back on track again!

Therefore, this match, no matter how bad the situation that they were facing was—the traffic jam, meeting the rival fans on the subway, the hard-nosed team—none of those could stop Tang En's conviction to seek victory.

A sharp whistle sounded, immediately followed by a surge of a tremendous earth-shattering clamor, and jolted Tang En awake, who had been lost in thought.

As he glanced around the stadium and looked at the crazy fans in the stands, he knew that the match with Crystal Palace was just a warm-up. The real game had only just begun now!

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Rebrov had originally wanted to show off his personal skills in front of the Millwall players, but he had just move the football before it was kicked out by Wise. The referee's whistle rang and caused a hissing sound of dissatisfaction from the stands.

Looking at Wise with a fierce look on his face and gritted teeth and listening to the endless stream of hissing and abuse, Rebrov realized today's match was far more difficult than he'd imagined.

Tang En, who witnessed this scene from the technical area at the sidelines, muttered to himself, "The hard-nosed Wise, the hard-nosed Millwall team, the hard-nosed Millwall fans..." He now felt more and more how awful it was that he could not give the team specific tactics because they had encountered the rival fans on the subway.

If football could be paused like basketball, he would make changes accordingly. Unfortunately, he could only wait until the halftime interval and hope that their opponents did not score a goal in the first half.

For the defensive counterattack, the two defensive midfielders were the key, and he hoped that Eugen Bopp and Gunnarsson would be able to hold on.

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"Fifteen minutes have passed! The match is going at a speed of a hundred miles per hour and the ball is zipping over the heads of the players. Under the leadership of their captain 'The Roaring Mouse' Dennis Wise, the Millwall players have launched a frenzied offense and attack against the Forest team. Any footwork tricks and tackles were crushed by the ruthless closing in of the 'Double Lions'." Motson summarized the 15 minutes of the match in such a way that was both accurate and vivid.

In the first half of the season, under the leadership of the Forest team's new manager, Collymore, who used to play the forward position, the team once again returned to the tradition of paying particular attention in containing the situations and the fondness for playing with meticulous coordination. With regard to the failure of Collymore's coaching career, the tactical side of things only accounted for a tiny fraction of the reason, but it could not be overlooked.

He asked the players to do more ground coordination, even in front of the penalty area, they must pass the ball as far as possible into the goal area before shooting a goal. At that time the commentator's appraisal of the Forest team's style of play was, "Collymore hopes that his striker will be able to get past the goalkeeper and then shoot the goal when the goalmouth is empty."

This style of play looked very good, but it was too complicated and difficult to score a goal.

In order to take on this characteristic of the Forest team, Alan McLeary, the Millwall manager, specifically designed the offense tactic of pressing on and tackling the opponent. At present, he was quite successful.

The kind of momentum that the Millwall players were showing at their home ground totally intimidated the Nottingham Forest players who were exhausted and tormented from having to switch to riding the subway because of the traffic jam, then encountering a group of seemingly vicious fans, and battling and fighting them. Plus they had to deal with the tension and panic of having to run hundreds of meters in a hurry to quickly change and get ready for the match and only pathetically emerge on the field three minutes before the start of the match.



Yes, that was exactly what was happening in the match now. The Forest team was gradually losing it. It was almost impossible to say that the things which had happened before the match did not affect the team. But what could Tang En do? This was luck. He only hoped the team would be able to make it through this period until the halftime interval when he would have plenty of time to adjust the team. He still believed there was no problem in defeating Millwall.

The key to it all was the Forest team must defend its core against the wave after wave of offensive from Millwall.

The situation was not good. Gunnarsson and Eugen Bopp were overwhelmed and in a frenzy. The pressure on Michael Dawson and Wes Morgan was also very high.

Within the Millwall formation, besides Dennis Wise, there was another player which Tang En recognized, an Australian attacking midfielder wearing the number 4 jersey, the 23-year-old Tim Cahill.

Tang En knew him through the 2006 World Cup in Germany in the Australia versus Japan match where Australia had a remarkable massive reversal at the final moment. Cahill alone scored two goals and became a hero. It was also that match that made Tang En an Australia fan during the World Cup. Unfortunately, they lost to Italy in the end.

At the present moment, Cahill was not as mature as he was at the World Cup, but his offensive ability was enough to give Tang En a headache.

Nottingham Forest finally had a chance to counterattack after great difficulty. The ball had just been passed to David Johnson's foot, and it was intercepted by the Millwall midfielder, an Australian player, Kevin Muscat with a ferocious tackle.

"Foul!" Tang En leapt up from his seat in the technical area. It had been a tackle from the back!

But the referee ignored his shout, and David Johnson fell to the ground in pain. But Muscat kicked the football to the captain Wise, who returned to assist, before Wise organized the offensive again.

"B\*stard! He didn't even whistle at a tackle from the back!" Tang En waved his fist and cursed. But other than the fourth official who paid a little attention and glanced at him, no one else heeded his complaint.

## **Chapter 119: The Hard-Nosed Millwall Part 2**

Walker also stood up to protest. Just as they were all dissatisfied with the referee's decision, Millwall started a speedy offense on the field.

Wise passed the football to Cahill ahead of him. Then Tang En saw Cahill dribble the ball straight along the wing, very close to the sideline and past Gareth Williams. After entering the 30-meter area of the Forest team, he made a feint and suddenly changed to cut through to the inside!

This move deceived the right back, John Thompson, from the Forest team who came up to defend against him. Next, he dribbled the ball across, and Eugen Bopp came up to tackle. He put his hands up to block the German teenager and continued to dribble towards the middle zone.

At this point, the Millwall strikers were crossing into the penalty area and interweaving inside. They broke through the Forest defensive line.

Upon seeing this, the scene that Tang En saw in the 2006 World Cup suddenly appeared in his mind. Tim Cahill, who also wore the number 4 jersey, was at the arc in the penalty area, ran up in an assist, and almost lifted his leg...

“Don’t let him shoot! Foul! F\*\*king foul!” yelled Tang En. But his voice was soon drowned out by the loud cheers.

Cahill, number 4, had suddenly ran across to kick the ball into the goal!

The football entered through the small gap between Michael Dawson and Wes Morgan! With a gust of wind and brushing across the grass tips, it flew into the net past the hands of the Forest goalkeeper, Darren Ward.

“Goooooooooooooal! Tim Cahill! What a beautiful long shot, he alone defeated the Forest team’s entire defensive line! The twenty-three-year-old new star! Such unparalleled momentum! The home team, Millwall is in the lead!”

The Millwall players hugged together to celebrate the goal, and Tang En and his assistant, Walker, complained to the fourth official about Muscat’s foul.

“That was obviously a foul! You don’t even blow the whistle for a slide tackle from behind, what are you doing?! Do you have to wait for that damn Aussie guy to break my players’ legs before you do something about it?” With his mouth wide open, Tang En sprayed spittle at the fourth official as he yelled.

Millwall’s center back, the deputy captain, Kevin Muscat was considered “notorious” in England. He even had the title of “The First Butcher.”

Not long ago, he broke the leg of a player from Charlton. Although he received £750,000 pounds of retirement compensation, he would never play ball again.

There was a long list of names who had fallen under the feet of this 1.8-meter-tall center back: Craig Bellamy, Dugarry, Lazaridis...

Luckily, Johnson dodged at the critical moment, otherwise his name would have immediately been on the list.

When Tang En was badgering the fourth official, the Millwall manager, McLeary decide to come up and butt in. He said sarcastically to Twain, “Mr. Twain, you’d better look into your own problems and not trouble the referee.”

Tang En widened his eyes and stared at the other man, “You are a b\*stard who has just gotten off lightly, and you have come to gloat?!” He really wanted to pounce on the nasty jerk and give him a punch, but unfortunately if he did that, he would also have to leave—McLeary, naturally, would be sent directly to the hospital.

The Millwall fans who saw this scene from the stands naturally booed at Twain, and the fans who were closer in distance loudly hurled abuse at Tony Twain, their voices clear and audible.

The fourth official, who was sandwiched between the two managers, had no choice but to give them a slap on the wrist and issue a warning to each of them, "Both of you, return to your area. Whoever leaves his technical area again, I will have the referee issue you a penalty to go to the stands! Go back now!"

He waved his hands. The Millwall manager raised his head as if he were a victorious rooster and marched back. And Tang En, who was still swearing, went back to the technical area unwillingly. In fact, he knew in his heart that as long as the referee decided to count the goal, no matter how much noise he made, he could not change the result. This was not the 1982 World Cup in Spain, the absurd era whereby the referee could be made to change the score when the crown prince of a small West Asian country threatened to leave the match.

They still could not hold in the end! The situation was becoming increasingly unfavorable. With a goal in hand, Millwall could completely withdraw and defend their half of the field, and then they could make use of their brutal defense and home ground momentum to block the Forest team's counterattacks and maintain the score of 1:0 to the end.

This was the scenario that Tang En did not wish to see the most.

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When the match resumed, Millwall's performance seemed to confirm what Tang En had in mind just now. They deliberately reclaimed their defensive line and then used vicious and brutal defenses to stop the Forest team's counterattacks.

David Johnson was twice violated by Muscat again within 15 minutes. When he stood up with a limp, the punishment for the perpetrator was merely a verbal warning from the referee.

In this way, the Forest players were enraged by this sort of defense from Millwall, and this anger was further ignited by the home ground fans' incessant booing, laughter, and jeering.

Full of youthful vigor, when Eugen Bopp saw his teammate assaulted by the Muscat again and again, he was determined to find the opportunity to retaliate against him and to let him know that the Forest team was not to be trifled with!

When Muscat had just stopped a pass through a suspected foul slide tackle, he rushed forward. He looked like he wanted to seize control of the ball. In fact, he used his upper arms to push the other man in the ribs. The impact lifted the unprepared Muscat from the ground!

The referee blew his whistle, and the surrounding Millwall players rushed up. The Nottingham Forest players also joined in. There was a loud hiss from the stands.

It was a chaotic scene.

"This b\*stard!" Tang En scolded Bopp from the sidelines. "Isn't this just what Millwall wants? He's too immature!"

Because of the referee's hurried whistling and a few clear-headed players from both sides, a fight did not happen. The referee called out Eugen Bopp and gave him a yellow card.

The Millwall players were dissatisfied with this result. They believed that a red card should be given for such an intentional foul. The referee ignored their complaints and called Muscat aside to give him a few

words of admonishment. Muscat thought that this matter was okay, and he was still complaining. He did not expect the referee to also raise his hand to flash a yellow card in front of his eyes!

The Millwall players rushed around the referee again. The booing from the stands also switched their target to the referee.

Tang En who saw this scene from the sidelines, snorted, "They have gotten what they want with a cheap shot and still pretend like it's nothing, from the manager to the players, to the fans, all of them are sons of b\*tches!"

Walker sighed. He was powerless in the face of such a match. Everything was against them.

"Des, how much longer do we have before the end of the first half?" asked Tang En when he heard Walker sigh.

"Nine minutes." Walker looked at his watch and said, "Tony, the situation is not so bad... At least Bopp didn't get sent off, and we didn't lose any more balls."

Tang En interrupted him, "You'd better not say that before the first half is over. In addition, Bopp will miss the EFL Cup semifinal match due to this yellow card—that is if we can make it to the semifinals. Gunnarsson is also in danger, he also carried a yellow card from the previous game."

Upon hearing what Twain had said, Walker did not know what to say for a long time, and stood with his mouth open. The situation was worse than he thought.

"Let the entire team regroup. Do not press on, so that Millwall will not fight back. It's easiest to lose the ball in the midfield right before the end of the game." Tang En instructed, and Walker got up to convey his intentions.

Now they could only hope that the score would not change before halftime. They could still make a comeback at 0:1. If it were 0:2 in this situation, it would be very difficult to make a comeback.

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The referee broke up the Millwall players buzzing around him like annoying flies. Muscat's yellow card could not be changed like the score. In fact, they should be glad that the referee only showed the card now, otherwise the center back's previous actions were enough to get him sent off twice.

The game resumed, and once the Nottingham Forest players took the ball, the hissing in the stands became louder than before. The Millwall fans believed that Eugen Bopp should be sent off right away. They even thought that the entire Nottingham Forest team should be sent off.

The group of fanatical home fans began to verbally attack the Forest players on the field, insulting their families and all their female relatives. They changed their tactic, hoping to provoke the Forest players. Not only that, they were also trying to attack the Forest fans in the visitors' stands.

The Den appeared to be the scene of a noisy foul language competition. This type of swearing and booing was only suspended when the Millwall players had possession of the ball. As soon as a Forest player touched the ball, the noise would start again. It was like a well-trained symphony orchestra.

Tang En did not take such noises to heart. He had led his team to many away matches, and this was not the first time that he had encountered such a scene. Even though when the noise started, and he felt like a heart attack could be brought on just listening to it, it no longer affected his mood in the end.

Suddenly, a song came from the stands behind the technical area, from far to near, and as it became louder, it was getting increasingly clearer. Not only did Tang En hear it, but even the players on the bench and the members of the coaching team were so shocked that they stood up.

Then this voice spread to the entire stand, the Millwall fans, ruddy from their drinking, sang excitedly with their arms in the air:

“There was a kid named Gavin! He used to like Nottingham Forest! And now he’s lying on the ground, his trampled face was all smashed up! All smashed up! Get lost and go home! All you Nottingham b\*stards, that dead boy is your example!! Oh, oh, oh, oh! Gavin, Gavin! All smashed up! Yea, yea, yea, yea! Gavin, Gavin! All smashed up!”

Tang En’s heart suddenly tightened and almost stopped beating.

### **Chapter 120: Provocation Part 1**

“There was a kid named Gavin! He used to like Nottingham Forest! And now he’s lying on the ground, his trampled face was all smashed up! All smashed up! Get lost and go home! All you Nottingham b\*stards, that dead boy is your example!! Oh, oh, oh, oh! Gavin, Gavin! All smashed up! Yea, yea, yea, yea! Gavin, Gavin! All smashed up!”

Tang En turned his head around and stared at the Millwall fans. They were singing it all together. They were either waving their fists or pointing their middle fingers. With their mouths wide open, their sharp teeth were revealed, as if they were fierce-looking wild beasts. Wrong, they were not wild beasts, they were worse than beasts.

Tang En stood beneath the viewing platforms with his back to the field and gave a death stare to a few Millwall fans that were still making faces at him. His lips were bitten pale, his face ashen-colored, his neck stiff, and his entire body trembling.

Walker, who was beside Tang En, noticed his abnormalities. Walker, of course, knew what those fans were singing about, and he was also very angry. But when he saw Tony’s look, it was as though he wanted to rush up and fight those fans!

“Tony, Tony... Calm down!” Walker pulled back Twain, but to no avail.

All of the players on the substitutes’ bench heard the song by the fans, which used “Gavin” in its lyrics. They also stood up and stared at those fans. The song was extremely loud, and it could be heard throughout the entire stadium.

Hearing the ear-piercing song, Brosnan stood on the reporters’ seat and clenched his fists rightly. He had never imagined he would encounter such a despicable thing while reporting a football match! In order to provoke Nottingham Forest, the fans of the opposing team actually shamelessly used the name of the small Nottingham Forest fan who had passed away, in the lyrics of an insulting song!

They had already achieved their objective. It appeared that Nottingham Forest had indeed been affected by the song coming from the viewing platform. After hearing the song, Michael Dawson and Andy Reid became exceptionally angry. However, they could only take it out on the Millwall players, which in turn gave the Millwall fans a reason to sing the song even more loudly.

There were already signs of the match losing control.

Tang En still stood below the viewing platform with his back to the field, and the group of fans noticed him. Seeing that he did not look pleased, they continued to sing the song even more loudly.

They were smugly taunting each and every person on Nottingham Forest.

Suddenly, the silent Tang En punched the awning above the technical area. Crash! Following that, the plastic baffle shattered into countless pieces, falling onto the seats!

“Tony!” Walker and the other people from the managerial team were shocked. They thought that Twain would rush onto the viewing platform after that, and quickly hugged him, dragging him backwards.

The fans near the technical area saw this scene, and were momentarily dumbfounded. However, they soon recovered from their shock, and scolded Twain, “Who doesn’t know how to shatter a few pieces of plastic board? Come up and hit us if you got the guts!”

“Nottingham b\*stards!”

“Idiots! Cowards! Trash! You and your team are all trash!”

Tang En’s punch not only drew the outburst from the fans, it also attracted the attention of the fourth official, as well as the camera.

“Mr. Twain.” The fourth official walked to Tang En, and said to him with a stern face, “Intentionally destroying the stadium’s facilities is a punishable offense.”

“Do as you wish!” Tang En turned his head around and stared at the fourth official as he said fiercely, “Are you intending to ban me from the field? How much is the Football Association intending to fine me? If I am punishable for my offense, then these people...” He broke free of Walker, and roared as he pointed to the gloating Millwall fans on the viewing platform, “These people! They should all go to goddamned hell! Can’t you hear what they were singing? Can’t you hear?!”

Walker also stood out and protested, “We are here to play in the match, and not for those b\*stards to insult our dead fans! We are lodging an official protest right now.”

Of course, the fourth official had heard the singing on the viewing platform. As such, he was currently speechless after being asked by Tang En. After standing there dumbfounded for a while, the fourth official finally replied, “Alright, I will write all of these inside the match records. I believe the Football Association will conduct investigations regarding everything that has happened during this match. But I hope all of you can remain calm. After all, the match is still going on.”

Tang En tidied up his shirt before saying to the fourth official, “I am very calm, very very...goddamned calm!”

After which, he turned around and shouted at the players on the field who had been distracted by these happenings on the side of the field. "What are you standing there in a daze for?! We are still trailing, so you guys better buck up! Shut the mouths of those b\*stards on the viewing platform!"

Tang En's voice was so loud that even the television broadcast managed to record it, especially that line "those b\*stards on the viewing platform!"

The fourth official looked at Twain. Tang En also stared back at him with an unfriendly look, and said domineeringly, "What's the matter? Mr. Referee, are you also going to interfere with the things that I'm shouting when I'm giving instructions to my players?"

Hearing him say this, the fourth official turned around and returned to his original position.

Right when everyone thought that the match was about to return back to normal, an even greater accident happened on the viewing platforms.

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Ever since the Millwall fans started singing the song which insulted the innocent young football fan, Gavin, who was killed in a football hooligans' brawl the previous season, the Nottingham Forest fans at the southern viewing platform became increasingly agitated. However, the Millwall fans near the southern viewing platforms continued to rub salt into the wound and provoke them.

"Your team is just like that small brat, vulnerable and fragile! Trampled and smashed up by us! Trash! Scram and eat sh\*t!"

"Oh oh oh oh! Gavin Gavin! All smashed up! Yeah yeah yeah yeah! Forest Forest! All smashed up!"

With the team they were supporting currently trailing behind as well as being provoked by the Millwall fans seated opposite them, the red-eyed Forest fans collectively rushed toward the barrier formed by the police, and were quickly chased away by the police. At the same time, the Millwall fans who had been itching for a fight for a long time also took advantage of the chaos and rushed toward the viewing platform of the Nottingham Forest fans. Faced with such an attack from both sides, the defense line formed by the police was in danger!

"Darn it! Son of a gun, let me teach them a lesson!" The Forest fans roared as they collided into the human wall.

"Dang! Comrades, let those Nottingham bumpkins know our fearsomeness! For Millwall! For the lions — ! Screw their entire family!" The Millwall fans began to tear out the seats, before throwing them at the group of Forest fans while swearing loudly.

"You will pay the price for whatever you have just done! B\*stards!" The Forest fans were also unwilling to be outdone, and retaliated by tearing out seats and throwing them back at the Millwall fans.

"The ones who should know their place should be you idiots! Take a look at whose territory this place is!"

"I couldn't care less! You southern b\*stard!"

Bam bam!

Crash! White and blue plastic seats flew back and forth across their heads. The viewing platform, when viewed from below, was in an utter mess.

Under the aggressive pushing by the two parties, the fully-equipped riot police were about to cave in. Seeing that they were unable to deal with the situation, they requested support through the walkie-talkie on their shoulders. "This is the fifth viewing platform! The fans are rioting! Requesting back up! I repeat, this is the fifth viewing platform... Darn it. You, back off!"

Seeing the crowd gushing forth, the riot police which was requesting assistance frantically waved their batons, in a futile attempt to break up the red-eyed fans from both sides.

In the end, it was no longer a fight between the Nottingham Forest fans and the Millwall fans. Instead, it evolved into a three-way chaotic fight between the Forest fans, Millwall fans, and the riot police!

The match was practically paused, with everyone's attention drawn toward the fight in the vicinity of the southern viewing platform.

Motson had stopped commentating immediately after hearing the Millwall fans' singing. That was because he completely did not know how to commentate on that kind of match and those kind of fans. Only now, upon seeing that the situation was getting out of hand, did he furiously say in the broadcast, "This is simply the disgrace of English football! football violence had left us for many years, and that devil is now back again!"

More and more riot police in their bright yellow vests and transparent helmets ran toward the fifth viewing platform, holding their shields and batons in their hands.

Although the Millwall fans quite some distance away from the fight were unable to directly participate in it, these passionate fans continued to sing the song on their own viewing platforms, cheering on their comrades who were fighting at the forefront. It was considered an away match not only for the Nottingham team players on the field, but also for the Nottingham Forest fans.

There were signs of the conflict expanding, with some of the people from both parties even throwing the seats onto the field!

Seeing such a situation unfold, the head referee could only blow the whistle to pause the match. This was already not an issue of the match. He had to wait for the stadium to regain order, before he could allow the match to resume. If the situation continued to worsen, then he could only terminate the match. As for the results of the match... the Football Association should most likely choose another date for a rematch after investigation. In addition, in order to prevent another fan rioting incident, the rematch would be held at a neutral venue, with a limited number of fans from both teams able to watch the game live at the stadium.

Perhaps there would be some people who thought that such a result would be something that Tang En and Nottingham Forest hoped to see. That was because with the match postponed to another day, the 0:1 score would cease to exist, and they would not be down by one ball.

However, Tang En did not think of it this way.

The players on the field stood on the field stunned as they watched the shocking scene unfold on the viewing platform. Even the Millwall players did not seem to have expected that their fans would be so



fanatic. Luckily... English football fans were unlike their Italian counterparts who liked to wave flames while watching the matches. Otherwise, the viewing platform would definitely be burning and filled with smoke.

Tang En hugged his chest and stood at the side of the field, with Walker positioned beside him. They looked at the riot unfolding on the viewing platform expressionlessly. The match that day... was really "wonderful"!