

Chapter 2: Chairman Doughty

Tang En did not manage to sleep well for the entire night.

Away from his familiar bed, he tossed and turned on the more spacious bed. His head was filled with various absurd dreams. In his dreams, he saw that he was full of vigor, carrying a travel bag as he stood in front of City Ground's entrance. Afterwards, he stood beside a green and lush football field. Beside him was a middle-aged man with more than 10 young football players surrounding them as they listened attentively. That middle-aged man appeared in his dreams several times, and each time he did, Twain's body stood beside him without uttering a single word, like a statue. After that, he was back at that lush green football field again. However, this time, the middle-aged man had disappeared. Instead, it was his turn to be surrounded by the group of young football players, as he said something to them. And then, the scenery changed. He saw a familiar scene—the football field which he was at that day. A middle-aged man stood beside him as usual. As he directed the match in his trim suit, Twain continued to remain silent. The dreams kept changing, and the man beside him also became increasingly hot-tempered and irritable. Until finally one day, there was no one beside Twain. Instead, an old man stood before him and patted him on the shoulders. His mouth seemed to be saying something, but unfortunately, nothing could be heard.

And then... Tang En woke up.

When he opened his eyes, he saw that the sky was still dark. Outside the windows, the sounds of pattering rain could be heard. He sat up in his bed, and his eyes gradually grew accustomed to the dark room. Looking at the completely unfamiliar furnishings in the house, he still had some doubt about coming to England just like that. He even became a football manager, albeit just a substitute one... He rubbed his face with his hands, in order to make himself sober up, after which, Tang En jumped out of bed and pulled open the tightly shut curtains.

Outside the house it was daybreak, and there were not many people on the streets. The wet ground reflected the lights from the streetlamps and from the cars. It was raining.

This kind of weather made him think about his hometown, a small city in Sichuan Province. It was also a city where it rained frequently. Regardless of whether it was summer or winter, it was always wet. Seeing this kind of morning, a slight cordial feeling bloomed in his heart.

Feeling slightly cold, Twain realized that he was still only wearing his underpants. He quickly put on his clothes and went to the bathroom to wash up.

The place where manager Tony Twain was staying was a place called Branford Gardens. It was a very common residential area called Wilford District, located at the south bank of the Trent River. The home was a very common red brick house in England with a small garden. For a single person like Twain, the house was considered fairly large. However, its size was definitely not considered large in Nottingham. The rent was very cheap, and the most important thing was that it was very near to Team Nottingham's training ground and youth training camp. Walking in the northeast direction for 20 minutes, one would be able to see the gates of the training ground, hidden amidst the forest.

After washing up, Twain decided to go to the kitchen and find something to eat.

Only when he walked to the refrigerator did he notice that the door was filled with paper notes. Upon opening the door, he found a carton of milk and a piece of bread. Then, he simply stood in front of the refrigerator and read the notes while he ate his plain breakfast.

The most eye-catching one was an A4-sized form. Tang En felt dizzy after looking at the content.

6:30 – 7:00, Morning run.

7:00 – 7:20, Breakfast.

7:00 – 7.40, Read newspaper.

7:40 – 8:00 Go to training venue (Remark: for match days, other arrangements)

This was a very detailed day-to-day work-rest planner, and the time allocation was precise to the very minute with a large amount of remarks. From the second that he opened his eyes in the morning, this planner was carried out faithfully, until he once again lay on his bed and closed his eyes to sleep.

“Darned OCD!” To the lazy Tang En, the method of planning out one’s daily life and splitting it into segments down to the minute and filling them in with concrete details was simply a living torture. From the moment his eyes’ opened, his daily activities had been planned out, doing a specific thing at a specific time, and doing some other specific thing during another specific time. This was done to the extent that he even included a specific time slot for the toilet, inside his timetable, showing his ordered habits. Tang En finally understood the reason why Kenny Burns, from the day before, was shocked at the fact that he drank liquor—the old Tony Twain was one hundred percent workaholic through and through, without any emotional appeal, completely unaware of how to enjoy life, and was an inflexible, stubborn machine.... For this kind of person to live to be a 34-year-old was simply a miracle!

Around this white planner, there were also some yellow, green, and red little strips of notes pasted. Different contents were written on each of them. The yellow ones were memos which reminded him when he had any meetings. The green ones were the contact details which he took down on a whim. There were not many of these green notes, hence it seemed that these contact details were ultimately transferred into Twain’s personal phone book. The red ones made up the majority of them. They were important arrangements for the day, and there was one for every day. Tang En continued scanning through the refrigerator line-by-line, and he finally found a red note which was pasted the morning before.

Aside from the date, there was only one line of words written on it:

“This first league one match I’m coaching as manager must be won!!!”

After seeing so many memos left behind by Twain, this was still the first time he saw him use an exclamation point to hint at strong feelings, and he’d used three of them at that.

Looking at the hastily and messily written words on the red piece of paper, it was unlike the rest of the memos. Twain could even imagine what kind of expression and actions that person was making, when he was writing that sentence. He must have clenched his fist tightly, gritted his teeth, full of anticipation and fighting spirit when he used his entire body’s worth of strength to write this vow.

A pity... Tang En recalled what was reported in the news the day before. Team Nottingham Forest had lost 0:3 pitifully in their home ground to the weak Team Walsall. Was it his sudden appearance which snatched his victory away? Tang En wondered as he stared blankly at the refrigerator door pasted full of paper notes.

He must have come up with a comprehensive plan and told his own players the day before the match. But what use was there? The match was still lost. There was a Chinese saying that went like this: Plans always fall behind changes.

One by one, Twain extended his hand and removed the notes on the refrigerator door. In the end, it was only left with the red note which had the words “must be won” written on it. Afterwards, he chucked the notes and milk carton into the garbage can and clapped his hands as he left the kitchen.

When he returned to his bedroom, the daylight was already very bright. Although it was still raining, the number of pedestrians and cars on the roads had gradually increased.

Recalling that he had to go to the training ground at eight o’ clock, Tang En lowered his head and checked his watch. It was just 7:40.

No matter how terrible and absurd reality was, Tang En had become Tony Twain. Being his replacement, he naturally had to do his work.

Tang En was not an irresponsible person. Moreover, whenever he watched football, that was not a time which he thought that victory could be obtained without any effort. He put on his overcoat and grabbed a black umbrella near the door before he pushed open the door and walked into the rain.

Team Nottingham Forest's training ground was also in Wilford District. The east-flowing Trent River made a quick 'N' shape turn, clearing out a large plot of flat land. One century ago, this place was still a big plot of fertile cultivated land and forest. Nottingham was only a small plot of land located at the south bank of the river. Today, the city's development had passed by the Trent River. It had already become a considerably large scale residential area, and Nottingham Forest Football Club had bought a portion of it to build its own training facility.

The narrow and long training ground had been separated into two by a small alley called "Wilford Lane." The Northern side was slightly bigger and was the training ground for the youth team. This youth team training camp was one of the top few youth training camps in all of England. On the other hand, the slightly smaller southern side was the training ground for the first team, also known as "Wilford."

England's rain in the winter was not heavy, but very annoying, as it hardly stopped. Tang En felt helpless. After all, regardless of whether he was in his hometown or the city he moved to after graduation, it did not stop raining once winter came.

The training ground's guard, Ian Macdonald, looked at the drenched Tony Twain with a puzzled look. "Tony, what are you here for?"

Tang En felt that his question was slightly ridiculous. "For training, of course."

Macdonald replied, "But Tony, today is January 2nd, 2003. The football teams have gone on a vacation, New Year's vacation."

Tang En patted his head, as he had forgotten about it.

Seeing him pat his head, Macdonald lightly shook his head. He must have thought that Twain's head was slightly off as a result of the incident the day before.

"I was thinking, it is so, so quiet here. Happy New Year." Twain awkwardly smiled at Macdonald before turning around to leave. At that moment, he also saw a dark red colored Audi A6, stopped beside him.

The back door was opened, and a plump old man appeared from within. Tang En's subconscious mind was telling him that that person was his boss, the football team's chairman, Mr. Nigel Doughty. The next person to alight and follow suit was a middle-aged man. He was around the same age as Twain, tall and experienced-looking. Wearing a casual jacket, he held an umbrella in his hand, mostly sheltering the chairman's head.

Doughty saw Twain who was standing by the road, and automatically extended both of his arms to hug Twain. "Tony, I saw yesterday's news. Forgive me for not calling you, my son just came back from America to visit me. Are you alright?"

Twain was slightly shocked at the boss' attitude towards him, and replied frantically. "I think I should be... alright. Thank you, Mr. Chairman."

Nigel let go of Twain and said to him as he pointed at the middle-aged man standing beside him, "My son, Edward."

Edward Doughty extended his hands of his own accord, "Hello, pleased to meet you. Mr. Coach..."

His father beside him interrupted him, "Edward, I've said it many times. Don't call him 'coach', you have to say 'manager'. We are in England, not America."

Edward smiled apologetically at Twain, "Sorry, Mr. Manager."

Tang En also extended his hands, "No worries. I'm also pleased to meet you, Mr. Doughty."

Chairman Doughty interjected from the side once again, “My son just returned from America. He has been staying there since he was young, and has become unfamiliar with England. He is now an ‘American’ who grew up watching the NBA.”

Toward this kind of sarcasm, Edward could only smile helplessly. He did not attempt to argue.

Standing before him was the boss who paid his salary, Tang En recalled from the red note on the refrigerator. He felt that he had to explain the defeat from yesterday, even if he had to lie. “Er, Mr. Chairman, regarding yesterday’s defeat, I am terribly sorry...”

Unexpectedly, his boss patted his shoulder lightly, and instead began comforting him. “Tony, I also don’t like to lose, but this is not a responsibility that you should shoulder yourself. These two seasons...” At this point, Doughty gazed into the horizon with his somewhat troubled eyes and muttered a mouth of vulgarities, after which, he retracted his gaze. “Do a great job and don’t think too much. I won’t give you any pressure. Happy New Year, Tony.” He lightly patted Twain’s shoulder before turning around with his son to enter the team’s training ground.

Tang En stood at the door and saw the chairman’s stooping figure. Beside him was his son, Edward, who was supporting and sheltering him with an umbrella. Seeing this, he could not express himself with words. What exactly were the feelings he had? He had readily accepted the fact that he had become a football manager, but he was unable to emotionally accept this team within a day’s time. He did not have much of an understanding regarding Nottingham Forest, aside from the fact that it had a glorious past. He also was not a fan of Team Nottingham Forest.

However, the pat on his shoulder from the chairman, made him feel a sense of warmth in his heart. As a “foreigner”, this kind of warmth was extremely precious to him. He had made up his mind to do his job well, to his fullest capability. Not merely out of spite from those bunch of drunkards, but also to not let down Mr. Doughty’s trust in him—even if he does not know that the person he was trusting was not the Tony Twain who he was familiar with.

“Happy New Year, old man...”

After leaving Wilford training ground, Tang En strolled aimlessly through the streets. The rain had already stopped, so he might as well have used the umbrella as a walking stick.

There were several times more pedestrians on the road than when he had just left the house. It was a given, seeing that it was a public holiday. Everyone roamed the streets and played with their friends. It was New Year's after all. However, this kind of festive mood did not belong to Tang En, as the current him was not in the mood to enjoy the festival.

He felt that it was strange that he could read and understand every English word as though he was born with this ability. He was as familiar with this country's language as he was with Chinese, as well as some other life skills. However, he had forgotten some other important things.

As though there was a lapse in his memories, he could not remember how Tony Twain trained the team, nor how he came up with the battle tactics. He was also not very sure of his human relations with the other people from the club, his influence, or his reputation. As such, he could not understand why Chairman Doughty was so cordial to him. It was only in spurts that those lost memories would resurface and stop in his mind for a very short moment, before once again disappearing.

However, he knew what kind of person Tony Twain was in the past. He was well-behaved, a man of few words, serious in his work and a hardworking, steadfast person. In terms of his private life, he was like an ascetic monk. He neither smoked nor drank, and did not have much experience in love. He had never visited places of promiscuity, and had only rested at home aside from work. He was like the giant dull clock at London Bridge, conscientiously and inflexibly making each and every sound. He loved silence, and the only thing which could be considered his pastime was putting on his headphones and listening to classical music in his room.

After fishing out some relevant information of Tony Twain in his mind, Tang En could not help but exclaim, “Damn! This is simply someone who

lived in the middle ages. He's so boring! How can there still be someone like this in the world?!"

Twain came up with a conclusion on his own. The current body which he possessed did not belong to him. It belonged to someone from the middle ages, called "Tony Twain." As such, he possessed the natural instincts that allowed him to be familiarized with the English lifestyle. At the same time, his heart as Tang En was beating inside this body, so he possessed a character that was completely different from the instincts of this body.

Now that he thought about it, he still had to thank that disgraceful experience of the day before. Now that everyone knew about his head injury, he would not have to worry about anyone having any suspicions regarding Tony Twain's immense change in character.

Tired from all the walking, Twain sat down on a long bench by the street to rest. After that, he began to ponder seriously, what he had to do to become a successful manager, in order to not let down the chairman's hopes for him.

He pondered for half a day without any leads. He did not know how to train a football team, nor how to lead the team to victory. The Football Manager game he used to play was utterly useless in this situation. As for the Nottingham Forest players, he was also completely unfamiliar with them. At least, the current him was not familiar. He could not gesticulate like he was used to when he would watch the rebroadcast on television and make comments like, "The manager should send this guy out," "move that player to the left side," "let that person assist actively..." Faced with an entirely unfamiliar football team, Twain was unable to comment no matter how much football he watched.

The worse thing was, there was not much time left for him to make preparation. The team was on break for one day, and they would re-assemble the next day in preparation for the third match of the English FA Cup on the 4th. Their opponent would be West Ham, which came from the Premier League.

Now that Team Nottingham Forest had suffered three consecutive losses in the English FA Cup, and the newly appointed manager had become a laughingstock in the telecast, their morale was at an all-time low. Although West Ham did not have an impressive record in the Premier League, they were still much stronger than Team Nottingham Forest.

Twain laughed bitterly. "When it rains, it pours...If this is what fate has in store for me, then I can only say: what a piece of shit you are!"

The vexed Twain raised his head and saw a rather large-scale bar around the corner of the opposite street. Looking at the English words 'Pub' written on it, he decided to go inside and have a drink, temporarily tossing aside his woes.

"Travelling to England is also not without its good points, at least there are bars all over the place." Tang En muttered to himself as he crossed the road, pushing open the reddish-brown door.

Hearing the sound of the door opening, a middle-aged man behind the bar counter in the midst of wiping cups raised his head and said, "Sorry, it is still not operating hours. I forgot to hang the sign on the door..." However, when he saw who the person was, he was stunned.

Tang En was also stunned, because he recognized who that person was. That was the person who had treated him to a drink the day before —Kenny Burns. The day before, he had been immensely short-tempered, and messed up the bar. To think that he had come here yet again!

Tang En's immediate reaction was to return outside. He raised his head, looked at the sign board before entering, and looked around the bar. He could not help but scoff, "How the heck did I even walk here?"

Burns looked at him with a slight interest and said, "Looks like that accident caused our Tony Twain to have a change in character."

That was a good opportunity for Tang En to extricate himself from an awkward position. Following the flow, he replied, "I know, the past him..."

Er, I did not swear and was as gentle as a woman. Still not open? Then I'll move on to another..." Just as he was about to leave, Burns' hearty laughter resounded from behind him.

"Don't waste your efforts. There won't be any bars that are open before 11:30 in the morning."

Twain turned around embarrassingly and said, "I... I rarely come, so I don't know."

"Not rarely, today is only your second time in a bar. I've said before, you used to live like the purest puritan. You don't mind me talking to you like this, right?"

Tang En shook his head. He was an atheist and was not religious. As such, he did not care about which religious camp people thought he was in.

Burns walked out from the bar counter and waved toward Twain who was standing by the door. "Since you're already here, don't leave. In any case, I am rather bored alone. How about chatting with me? Of course, my treat."

It just so happened that Tang En was also looking for someone to talk to. Blinking his eyes a few times, Twain asked, "The purest scotch whisky?"

Burns laughed out loud and replied, "That's right, from my hometown, the most authentic scotch whisky! But please don't press a wine glass against my face."

"Ah! That incident...My sincere apologies."

"It's alright. It is common for fights to occur in bars. It is easy to become excited after a few drinks, especially when it comes to football matches..." Burns nodded his head to express that he understood.

