

Champions 41

Chapter 41: Don't Underestimate... Football Part 1

The issue with George Wood was deemed as settled. Tang En found out that he had made a big mistake before. He had not looked at Wood's physical condition at all and considered which technical characteristics were suitable for which position. It was entirely based on the position that Wood said he wanted to play, and they had arranged the position accordingly. And it wasn't just a football rookie situation. Some professional players who have trained from their youth, did not know which positions they would excel in.

For example, Didier "the Dragon" Drogba, the Ivorian player who later squeezed Andriy Shevchenko onto the bench at Chelsea, originally played the fullback position. The Portuguese striker, Nuno Gomes, had changed his field positions several times, from fullback to midfielder and again from midfielder to striker. The Brazilian national team captain, Cafu, and center back, Lúcio, all played as strikers when they made their debut. They later changed to playing as fullbacks and even became successful and famous. The world-famous striker, Gabriel "Batigol" Batistuta, even changed from playing basketball to playing football because playing football could make more money than playing basketball. And then due to the freak combination of factors, a brilliant celebrated striker was made in the history of Argentina and even the history of football in the world. But Batistuta also admitted that he did not like football at all. Outside of the training ground and football field, he and his friends talked more about basketball at home.

These successful facts gave Tang En confidence, and he thought it would be wise and successful to switch George Wood to become a defensive midfielder. Wood did not have the talent to play a striker. He did not know how to seize opportunities in matches and had no position awareness to place himself between the gaps at the exact moment his teammates were ready to pass the ball. He did not know how to stay calm when he was facing the goalkeeper alone, and to choose the method to shoot.

Some things could be done through training, and some things could only be realized by oneself. If one's talent was not enough, then one could waste an entire career on an unsuitable position.

Luckily, I had the impulse to go watch the youth team's match, otherwise how long would Wood have to keep going down the wrong path? Who knows, maybe two months, maybe four months even? He may have had no potential and been abandoned by the team.

The next day, in an inconspicuous section, the Nottingham Evening Post reported that West Ham United youth team striker, Freddy Eastwood, was injured in an FA Youth Cup match with Nottingham Forest. The post-match diagnosis stated that his right calf was fractured, and he would be absent for the entire season. His recovery time was expected to be as long as 10 months.

A young player's future might be ruined, but no one was worried about this. As long as there had been the sport of football, such things often happened, as common as car accidents.

Professional football was so brutal and callous.

It was match day on March 11th.

Nottingham Forest, which already had a five-match winning streak, would face the previously bottom-ranked Grimsby Town on its home ground.

“Thirty-five matches, won seven matches, drew for eight matches, and lost ...” Tang En looked at the statistics report in his hands and mumbled to himself. “Twenty matches. Scored 39 goals and lost 70 goals. So, this is our opponent.” He could not help but whistle, attracting a lot of players’ attention on the bus.

“Tony, don’t underestimate your opponents,” Walker cautioned, which sounded more like a routine reminder.

“I know, I know...” He was in a good mood, having just settled Wood’s future. He was also very relaxed because they were up against a bottom-ranked team in the league. The team already had five consecutive wins, their morale was high, and it was home ground. Going up against such a lousy opponent, what reason would there be for them not to continue winning?

He got up and turned back to the players on the bus and said, “Our opponents are very powerful!”

There was a sudden burst of laughter on the bus.

“You shouldn’t slack off.” Tang En did not smile when he said this, and the response to him was naturally even more laughter.

“Destroy them!”

“Yeah!!”

Looking at the high-spirited players, Tang En sat down again and shrugged to Walker. “The threat is eliminated.” After that, he turned his head and looked out the window. He could see more and more Forest fans on the roadside as they were getting closer and closer to the stadium.

When the Forest team’s red bus passed them, these fans would raise their hands up high and wave their scarves and flags to greet them. Tang En even saw a poster with a slogan singing his praises among the crowd. Two pretty young blondes wrote, “Tony, we love you!” on their poster.

Tang En waved to them from the window, and the two of them blew kisses at him. He gave a whistle and turned to stare at them until he could not see them anymore. Turning back, Tang En closed his eyes and was still intoxicated.

Hot and pliable chicks, ah, foreign women are open-minded...

The media coverage for this match was clearly a lot more than any previous matches. Nottingham Forest already had a five-match winning streak in the League Championship and had been unbeaten in seven matches after being eliminated from the FA Cup by West Ham. Of course, these were not all the reasons that attracted the media. Twain’s peculiar experience was also an important factor in attracting the public’s attention. Everyone wanted to see the February best manager, who had been struck by one of his players, and what other thrilling performance he would give. In the second half of the West Ham match and the Wimbledon match, his direction during both matches, was considered by many critics to be quite representative of his work.

Tony Twain relished becoming a nation-wide celebrity. Starting from the moment he jumped down from the bus, the media interview microphones almost lined up to the door of the locker room. Everyone asked what the Forest team and he would do in this match, and Tang En just smiled and replied, "Everyone will know when the match is over!"

Everyone will know when the match is over...

This was a wonderful saying. It fully embodied the unpredictability of football matches and the accuracy of the old saying "the ball is round."

City Ground slowly fell silent, but the match was not over yet. On the other hand, more than 1,000 Grimsby Town fans were excitedly looking at the scoreboard. They had enough reasons to celebrate at someone else's home ground.

With four minutes left to the end of the match, it was now 1:2, and the visiting team, Grimsby Town, was leading.

Tang En sat at the technical area. He had already used up the quota for three substitutions. Now, besides sitting here and waiting for the end, there was nothing else he could do.

Yes, he had become the focus of media attention, and he could even guess what the media would rant about tomorrow. The reporters on the sidelines were all aiming their cameras at him, and the sound of the shutter did not stop. But in fact, they were only able to take one shot since the 18th minute, because Twain had not changed his expression since then. He had no expression at all.

Currently, Tang En was trying his best to maintain this expressionless stance, but his heartbeat was accelerating inside his chest. It was not a big deal to lose a match, but he was unwilling to lose this match under such circumstances. Everyone thought they would win. Even he had no doubt about it with everyone singing and cheering for the good news of his six consecutive wins. And what was the result?

Damn it. Tang En could not help wanting to say the F word.

The Forest team was like a headless chicken on the field. Their offense and defense completely lacked organization. As time passed, the visiting team, Grimsby Town, however, became more and more cool-headed.

These Forest players certainly did not expect to play so badly in what should have been an easily-won match. It was like they were moving in quicksand the entire match. No matter how much strength they had, how beautiful their coordination was, how sharp their attacks were, they were completely unable to come to play.

Tang En cast a sideways glance at the other manager, who was directing the match on the sidelines.

Paul Groves was a 37-year-old center back and the manager of the Grimsby Town team. Another player-manager! But unlike McAllister, the Coventry City manager, Groves directed this match in the technical area from start to finish. When he did play, he was the center back and defensive midfielder, and most of the time he was at the backfield watching the matches. He had long learned to use his head to think about the course of the match, which was very helpful in his career switch to manager.

Tang En did not expect that he would be defeated by this part-time manager, but he had long forgotten that he was also a rookie manager with only seven matches of experience.

When this match started, the home fans were full of expectation. The Forest team scored a goal at the 13th minute, and everything was progressing favorably for Nottingham Forest. But at the last minute of the first half, Grimsby Town scored an equalizing goal. And then, three minutes into the second half, the Forest team was hit again, and Grimsby Town took the lead with another goal.

The subsequent time was filled with Forest team's frantic counterattacks and Grimsby Town's full defense. The Forest team had no way in with their goalmouth tightly defended. Now that the match had already reached 88 minutes, it looked like the hope of equalizing the score was fading, let alone any hope of winning.

"Eighty-eight minutes!" reminded John Motson. "We all still remember that scene at the Wimbledon match when the tenacious Forest team scored the winning goal in the match's 90th minute. That was the starting point of their five-match winning streak. Now, can Tony Twain's Forest team still produce a miracle?"

Kenny Burns shook his head in front of the television set. There was so much difference between the two matches. During that match, other than the period when Wimbledon scored two goals, the Forest team performed very well the rest of the time, and basically controlled the tempo of the match with their feet. But this match? When the Forest team scored at the 13th minute, the tempo of the match gradually fell into the opponent's hands. The swift passing that the Forest team had displayed in the previous five matches did not materialize at all, and the result was? For the sole purpose of producing fast speed, the players frequently shot high balls. The success rate was so low that it was appalling to watch.

Watching the match with the eyes of a former professional player, Burns had already pronounced the death sentence for the Forest team in advance. But what surprised him was that Twain was able to see the same problems that he could see.

Why did he not make any adjustments when the team appeared to be shooting long balls to no avail? Why did he let the match continue to deteriorate?

The bar was dead quiet. The fans were all watching the match in the stands. In the last few minutes of the game, everyone wanted a miracle.

Chapter 42: Don't Underestimate... Football Part 2

At the 89th minute, Forest team's Andy Reid brought about what might have been their last attack in the second half. A beautiful two-on-one passing coordination in front of the penalty area. While David Johnson and Marlon Harewood attracted the attention of almost all Grimsby Town players, Eugen Bopp unexpectedly popped in and emerged in the penalty box. Then he received Reid's straight pass and faced the goalkeeper alone!

All the Nottingham Forest fans stood up and waited for the miracle to unfold!

This included Tang En, who stood motionless. He too had rushed from the technical area, hoping to celebrate a goal.

But, Eugen Bopp's power shot went out of the goal.

"Oh—!" The fans made one huge sigh of disappointment.

Tang En threw his jacket to the ground. He did not hide his inner frustration and disappointment at all, even though the failure of the match was largely caused by him. The only thing he could think was—
When I get back, I'm going to make Bopp practice his shooting!

The photojournalists on the sidelines saw Twain's impulsive display and got excited. They had been waiting for this moment. Their fingers quickly pressed on the shutters again to capture Twain's impetuous reaction.

"This was their best chance! But Eugen Bopp wasted it! Hear the sighs in City Ground... the miracle did not happen again; Manager Tony Twain's luck has run out!"

In that instant, when Tang En had just thrown his jacket to the ground, the Grimsby Town manager jumped up. His team had survived the raid, and victory was close at hand. He did not expect to gain three points for this match. Perhaps these would be the precious three points that would determine whether they ended up staying in League One, or if they would be relegated to League Two this season.

Bopp, who missed the crucial ball, laid down on the ground in disappointment with both hands covering his face. He dared not even look at the fans' angry and disappointed faces. For him, he lost a great opportunity to be a team hero and to have all the fans fall in love with him overnight. And the opportunity would not appear for a defensive midfielder like him the next time.

In the wake of Bopp missing the goal with his power shot, the Forest team also lost their confidence and will to fight. For the rest of the match, they seemed to be distracted, as if they longed for the match to end early. Harewood spread his arms helplessly in the opponent's field with no one to pass the ball to him. Although he had scored a goal in this match, he was unable to save his team.

Tang En picked up his jacket from the ground, walked back to the technical area, and sat down.

"Des, you know what? Yesterday I was just here to teach a snotty kid, to warn him not to underestimate professional football, otherwise he would be punished. Now I've made the same mistake as him," he muttered gloomily in a low voice. "I'm entirely to blame for this match, I've lost... I have nothing to say to that."

Des patted Twain's shoulder to comfort him. "Tony, it's good to win successively, no doubt about that. But no one has ever not experienced failure. Cheer up a little." At that moment, he was like a veteran coach, and Tang En was just a player being brought off and deeply disappointed in his performance.

A minute later, the referee blew the full-time whistle. The Forest team, which everyone had high hopes for before this match, lost 1:2 to the league's bottom ranked Grimsby Town on their home ground. To others who did not understand Twain, this was not the first match defeat of the Forest First Team under his coaching. But to Tang En himself, this was his first defeat. He still insisted he had won the FA Cup match with West Ham and only lost to the referee.

Hearing the whistle, Tang En got up from his seat. The players passed beside him and walked into the players' corridor with their heads lowered. Walker comforted them one by one. Their disaster was over, but his own... had only just begun.

He looked at the media crowded on both sides of the corridor. This was a tough game, and he had to keep his spirits up to deal with the harsh media. Those people were waiting to mock him.

After the match, Teng En went in the City Ground press conference room.

It was not Tang En's first time there. He recognized some of the reporters interviewing him from the crowd. For example, he saw Pierce Brosnan again.

Sitting next to Tang En was his opponent for this match, the Grimsby Town manager, 37-year-old Paul Groves, who was just three years older than he. He'd led his team to victory, so his mood was very good, and he smilingly accepted the reporters' questions. But the focal point of this press conference was not him.

After answering a few very common questions, he was left out in the cold. Almost everyone's firepower was focused on Tony Twain.

"Manager Tony Twain, everyone thought that it would be easy to win before this match, but it ended in failure. Do you have anything you want to say to that?" The Nottingham local media was most dissatisfied with this match, so the questions they asked were sharp and merciless. It did not matter that they had praised Twain as the best manager, they immediately changed their tune once the match was lost.

Tang En glanced at the unfamiliar-looking reporter who asked the question. He could tell he was from the Nottingham local media, because the reporter spoke with a thick Nottingham accent. "I have nothing to say. Lost means lost. The Grimsby Town manager did well, and his team deserved to win."

The routine answer was clearly not enough to satisfy the media, so someone else stood up and said, "But you and your players were full of confidence before the match, and there was someone who guaranteed the team would continue their winning streak during an interview..."

"Sh*t!" The curse word suddenly burst from Tang En, and everyone was astonished. "Whoever said that, go look for him. I've never said on any occasion that we could easily win, and that we could achieve six consecutive wins. Are you an idiot?" Tang En stood up, leaned over with his head extended out and said, "How could I have known the outcome and mentioned anything about a consecutive win when the match hadn't even started yet? Don't you know anything about football?"

That reporter did not expect Twain to suddenly flare up. He stood still and stared blankly for a while, not knowing what to say or do. Tang En sat back down again, shifted in his seat, crossed his legs and said, "OK, next."

Pierce Brosnan, who had followed Robson in his interview with Twain, thought twice about being embarrassed by Twain. He still regarded this person in front of him with a journalist's fair and objective point of view. There were advantages and disadvantages to this. As for the swearing during the press conference, he thought the reason for it was due to Manager Twain being under too much pressure

after the loss. Having interviewed him before, he thought he understood his motives better than anyone else, therefore Brosnan decided to turn this awkward scene around. So, he stood up.

“Ah!” Tang En, without waiting for Brosnan to speak, spoke first. “James Bond has something to say.”

There was finally some laughter on the spot and the awkwardness was wiped away.

Brosnan did not mind the nickname that Twain gave him. He smiled and asked, “Pardon me, Manager Twain, how will the loss of this match impact the team’s promotion plan?”

This was a reasonable question. Tang En liked these kinds of questions. He did not need to be provoked into a fight with the press. “There will be an impact, but it is uncertain as to whether it will be good or bad. Just like we won’t know what the final score is when a match hasn’t started. The season is not over yet, so we don’t know what the impact of this failure will bring.”

Tang En was tired of this media siege. In fact, he did not know what other tricky questions he would continue to be asked. He was not good at countering the media’s collective attack, so he passed the football to the winner next to him.

“Gentlemen, I think you’re mistaken. It’s Grimsby Town that won this match, not my Nottingham Forest. The winner should be the focal point, right? So... Ask Mr. Groves if you have any questions. I’m sorry, I have to go.” After saying that, he ignored all the surprised looks, turned to walk off the platform, and quickly left the scene.

Brosnan stood on the spot, looked at the back of Twain getting away in a hurry and shook his head with a wry smile.

When he returned to the locker room, Tang En found that the team was all there, no one had left. Looking at the dejected players, Tang En smiled. His mood suddenly changed for the better.

He recalled the halftime break at that match they lost to West Ham two months earlier. That scene right then was what made Tang En happy. A team of unhappy players, after losing a match, was a team with a future. It was contrary to a team that was still smiling, as if nothing had happened after losing a match. At that time, Tang En reckoned he would grab a chair and smash the locker room.

“All right, lads. Don’t be so down. We’ve only just lost a match. We didn’t lose the entire season. Wait till we lose this season before you start crying.” Tang En clapped his hands, which implied that he was back.

As captain, Michael Dawson stepped forward. He wanted to apologize to the manager who trusted him for the failure of the match. But before he could open his mouth, he was stopped by Tang En’s gesture.

“The responsibility for the failure of this match completely rests with me. I have no problem with any of you, you did very well. That’s all I want to say. Now board the bus, go back to the hotel, take a hot shower, change into clean clothes, and just do whatever you want to do.” When he realized that no one made a move, Tang En sighed. “Okay, no one can leave the hotel tonight, and everyone goes to bed on time at 10 o’clock. There will be no break tomorrow, the team will be sealed off for one week’s training, until the next match... uh no, until you win a match.”

“What?!” The players finally reacted. They did not expect such a punishment.

Tang En grinned. "Since you don't want it to be like this, hurry up and get on the bus!"

The group of players quickly sprang from their seats and rushed out of the locker room. Dawson still wanted to apologize to his manager as he passed by Twain on his way out, but Tang En pushed him out instead. "Keep your apology, Michael. Have a good holiday and then come back to train for the match."

Very soon, there were only three people left in the locker room.

Tony Twain, Des Walker, and Ian Bowyer.

"Tony, I think you seem to feel better?" Walker was very concerned about his friend. "What happened at the press conference?"

Bowyer shook his head. "When he stepped through the door just now, I could see that he still did not look too good. Did you feel better because of the team?"

Tang En nodded. "We only lost a match. I do not care about dwelling on such things. The key is I saw good signs in these players, and this defeat was just an accident. We are not off track; the team is still on a fast track to the Premier League. Come on, don't think about the past matches. Let's go to Burns' bar tonight for a drink and unwind for a bit."

After the door was locked, the three men walked side by side to the bus outside the stadium.

After five consecutive wins, the Forest team suffered a defeat. But for Tang En himself, it was just another starting point to a five-match winning streak.

When faced with failure, some people would be resentful or downcast, be fearful as if the world was coming to an end. And some people were still able to find what they needed in the face of failure. So, the former would expect one failure after another, whereas the latter would welcome a new victory.

Chapter 43: Chinese Teacher Part 1

A melodious bell rang out, and the quiet campus suddenly livened up. Crowds poured out from the buildings, and it was full of life everywhere.

Yang Yan was looking down to gather up her textbooks and papers when her friends ran over. "Yang Yan, since class is over, let's go shopping at Victoria!"

Yang Yan smiled and shook her head. "Not today, Professor Schecher asked me come to his office."

"Aww." Her group of friends were very disappointed.

Liu Wei picked up a football from his own desk, held it on top of his head, and tried to scare Yang Yan. "Better be careful, I heard that old Schecher likes to use a talking-to as an excuse to call young, pretty female students to his office for indecent behavior... Oh my!"

Ali shoved him away.

Yang Yan laughed and said, "Ah, Liu Wei, do you think everyone else has a filthy mind like you?" Then she said to her friends, "Go enjoy yourselves, never mind me. Professor Schecher can't stop once he starts talking. I don't think he'll let me go in less than half an hour."

After her friends said their goodbyes in disappointment, Yang Yan waited for another 10 minutes before she got up to go to Professor Schecher's office.

Professor Stanley Schecher's office was on the third floor of the university's main lecture building and the fourth room on the east side. And Yang Yan's classroom was on the second floor of this building.

The professor's office door was wide open, so Yang Yan gave a cough in front of the door and then gently knocked. The deep voice of Professor Schecher came from inside. "Please come in."

Only then did Yang Yan go in.

When the old professor saw it was his student, he stood up from his seat and dropped his glasses in his pocket.

"Professor Schecher, I'm here because in the previous class, I violated..." Yang Yan had just opened with the mental script that she had spent half a day on, when she was interrupted by the professor's raised hand.

"Yang, do you know? You were very lucky that day."

"Oh? Why?"

"Because your encounter was with me, not Professor Pazler."

Yang Yan was even more confused. Professor Pazler was widely recognized as a good man. He usually had a smiling face and kind appearance. Even if he ran into a student, he would be polite in his greetings, and his appearance was meticulous. He was what a lot of girls thought of as a "charming, older gentleman." On the contrary, Professor Schecher, the man in front of her, was strictly known as "Professor Devil", a term the students used behind his back, of course. Why was it better to run into him than Pazler?

Seeing the doubt in Yang Yan's eyes, Schecher smiled. "It's very simple. Pazler, that old man, is a loyal Notts County fan. If he had caught you reading the Forest manager interview in his class, I bet he would have torn up that newspaper on the spot. In Nottingham, Nottingham Forest and Notts County are mortal enemies."

Yang Yan felt that lying was not very nice, so she had to tell the truth, even if she was scolded by the professor. "Professor... I'm not a Forest fan. In fact, I'm not even a football fan. I'm sorry."

She lowered her head after she spoke and waited for the punishment.

But she heard bigger laughter. "Of course. I know you're not a fan. If I don't know my students, how can I teach you? I read that newspaper later. What surprised me was that fellow, Tony, turned out to be such a fanatical follower of the Eastern culture."

Yang Yan listened to the professor's tone. It was as if they had known each other for a long time. She had questions in her heart, but she did not dare to ask them.

Professor Schecher was so excited that he did not notice the puzzled expression on Yang Yan's face.

"You see, this world is so amazing. I like Nottingham Forest, the manager of Nottingham Forest likes Chinese culture, and you... are from China and my student."

"It's really amazing," Yang Yan laughed. She thought, If I told you that I was a tour guide to the manager, and he gave me his phone number, hoping that I would be his Chinese teacher, you would be even more amazed.

"So, you don't have to worry that I'll punish you. You can go now." Professor Schecher extended his hand to see her out, and Yang Yan was eager to do so. She said goodbye and turned, but was stopped again.

"Oh, Yang. I think you should give this little football thing a try. I swear you'll like it."

"I will. Thank you, Professor."

On the way back to her apartment, Yang Yan still could not help laughing aloud at the thought of everything she had just encountered. If Liu Wei had not thrown the newspaper to her but had borne the responsibility himself, maybe he would have rambled on to show off his good personal relationship with Professor Schecher this afternoon.

Yang Yan decided to relate this to Liu Wei and let him go crazy with jealousy.

When she passed by a newsstand, Yang Yan's attention was caught by several newspapers placed in the front row.

The newspapers were all different but had one thing in common. Yang Yan skimmed through and saw that familiar name: Tony Twain.

Not knowing why, Yang Yan stopped and picked up a newspaper with a lot of photos.

It was the biggest-selling newspaper in the United Kingdom, despite its less than stellar reputation, The Sun.

The sports section had been turned to the front. Apparently, this was a promotional tactic to attract passing students to buy. The newsstand owner knew which sports were the most popular in the United Kingdom, and what kinds of sports young people liked best.

On the left section of the newspaper, there were several similar-sized photographs, neatly laid out like a four-frame comic strip.

All four photographs had the same view, focused on the technical area below the stands. Tony Twain, wearing a black suit, was the main subject in the photographs. He had different expressions and actions in each photograph.

In the first frame, he had his arms raised up high, and he was grinning with the jubilant crowd behind him. The caption was simple: "At the thirteenth minute, 1:0."

In the second one, Twain was swinging his leg to kick toward the water bottles at the sidelines. Whether he kicked them or not, Yang Yan would never know. The caption read: "At the forty-fourth minute, 1:1."

The third frame showed Twain hopelessly waving his hands. The caption was: "At forty-eighth minute, 1:2."

And in the fourth frame, with a furious expression, Twain was throwing his jacket to the ground in a very exaggerated manner. The caption read: "The end of the match, the Forest team loses."

The headline of this news picture was: "Tony Twain's Match."

Looking at the pictures of Twain, whose expressions were so rich that he could be an actor, Yang Yan thought this person was rather interesting. When they first met, he left her with a refined and polite impression, completely unlike the angry manager in the photograph.

Maybe Liu Wei was right. A man who was a professional football manager could not always be a polite and calm gentleman.

This reminded her of Professor Schecher, whom she had just met alone. The old professor always looked so serious in public, and he appeared to be so exacting and demanding of everyone that he was almost unreasonable. There were only a few students who did not curse him behind his back. But Yang Yan had the privilege to see a completely different Professor Schecher 15 minutes ago, which was an eye-opener for her.

She turned to read the newspaper again. Both Professor Schecher and Manager Twain could show completely different sides to their personalities, and the reason for this was football.

Chinese teacher...

Maybe it's good to have a part-time job, occasionally.

At Twain's messy bachelor pad, newspapers were thrown all over the floor, which made the already horrendous indoor environment even more appalling.

These newspapers were almost all one-sided criticism of Manager Tony Twain's match tactics and on-the-spot direction. Angry rebukes, sarcasm, and whatever contrasting means were used. It really was the old saying "Laughter and anger are arbitrary in all articles."

"These media sons of b*tches!" Tang En was holding The Sun. Although the newspaper had printed the least words among the news reports about him, that unique 'four-frame comic strip' style report clearly had a mocking tone, very thick and strong, like the Italian cream of mushroom soup he ate last night.

"Damn! When I won a match, you licked my *ss one by one and said I was the best manager, young and promising. I lose one match and here comes all the criticism!"

Yes, all the criticism came. From the way Twain chose his players to the Forest team's persisting with the new style for these last few matches, they had all become the reasons for which the media criticized him. In particular, Twain's insistence on "high-efficiency football" was ridiculed as "high-failure-rate football." It was not surprising that Tang En was so annoyed. It was also this group of media, during Forest team's five-match winning streak, loudly proclaiming that this fast and efficient football was in line with the development direction of modern football.

Of course, what made Tang En the angriest was not others' disapproval, but to see that these people criticized him so publicly without restraint and completely irresponsibly with their words. He had no way

to counteract. In fact, he had many retorts and opinions for these b*stards, but there was no way to say them. To ask the club to hold a press conference for this matter? That would be making a mountain out of a molehill.

Infuriated, Tang En was pacing around in the house. It was no use telling others about the agony of being filled with anger and not being able to give vent to it. When he turned into the bedroom and looked up at that huge picture, his mind finally calmed down.

Chapter 44: Chinese Teacher Part 2

The Evening Post's President was a man of his word. One and a half days after that phone call, he had sent someone to deliver the picture, which was already framed. He even went the extra mile to hang it on the wall of Tang En's bedroom, facing Tang En's bed. That way, every morning when Tang En woke up, he would be able to witness that glorious moment first thing in the morning.

Under a sea of red, he was there, cheering and raising his hands.

It was like an oil painting titled "Victory", a piece of artwork that was worth treasuring forever.

Staring at the picture, Tang En thought of the best way to retaliate.

He nodded his head. I was never a pushover, someone who offered his left cheek to be hit, after having his right cheek punched. I might not have any way of rebutting all of your comments about me, but don't think that I will remain silent. The next match... the next match, I'll definitely let all of you come crawling back to me to lick my toes! These bunch of darned, two-faced people!

Tang En raised both his arms high, imitating the pose in that picture. He closed his eyes and fantasized about himself at a loud, cheering stadium, savoring the advance, the joy of victory, and the pleasure of revenge. It was at that moment, Tang En heard his cell phone, which he had placed on the living room table, ring.

Trampling the newspaper all over the floor while running to the living room, Tang En discovered that the number displayed for the incoming call was unfamiliar. After slightly hesitating, Tang En answered.

The next second, he jumped with surprise and joy.

"Yang Yan!"

"Sir, it's me. I've considered for a long while and decided to accept your goodwill and become your Chinese teacher." Yang Yan heard Tang En's childlike laughter on the other side of the line.

"You really did take your time considering it, teacher... but since you've agreed, all's fine. Do you know..."

Tang En sat down and leaned against his chair, before raising his feet and resting them on the table. He lied, "Do you know, because I was unable to get your guidance, I was like a lost ship in the dark, unable to see the lighthouse, going around in circles for two months. If you didn't accept my offer, then I would have completely given up on my interest in Chinese culture."

Ever since he possessed the body of the westerner, Tang En discovered that he had experienced some changes, such as being much more cheerful than his previous self. That was definitely expected, since he could be involved with his favorite thing, football, on a daily basis. The current Tang En had already confirmed his life goals and was no longer that stubborn, proud, and aloof person that he once was. Of course, the reason why he was so excited that day, was largely due to the fact that Yang Yan agreed to be his Chinese teacher.

As he continued chattering on happily, Yang Yan who was on the other end started to become embarrassed from hearing him. "Sir, if you continue to chatter on endlessly like this, I think I will have to change my mind."

"Ah, no! Of course, I will listen to you. If you don't want me to, I won't say a single word," Tang En said, as he dramatically covered his mouth. His eager tone made Yang Yan laugh.

"Sir, why are you so excited?"

"Because I'm in a very good mood today," Tang En casually said as he tried to conjure up something on the spot.

However, Yang Yan immediately saw through the problem and questioned, "Huh? Mr. Manager, didn't your team just lose a match yesterday?"

"Yes... Of course. However, losing might not necessarily be a bad thing. We have to look at this issue from a positive perspective, don't you agree? Alright, let's not talk about that disappointing match. We need to discuss in greater detail you becoming my Chinese teacher. These kinds of details are usually unable to be made clear over the phone, so I think there's a need for us to meet... Where are you now?"

Yang Yan raised her head and looked at the street opposite her. There was a cafe located there, so she gave the name of the cafe to Tang En.

"Okay. I'll be there in, at most, 30 minutes."

Hearing Tang En hanging up in a rush, she then crossed the road and entered the cafe. She sat in a seat beside the window and casually ordered some fruit juice. Yang Yan was wondering if her decision was the correct one. Aside from the reports in the media, she had absolutely no knowledge about this person. She was clueless about his actual personality and clueless about his background. Even though the two subjects were both mentioned in that exclusive with him, Yang Yan felt that in an era where information was constantly exploding, the credibility of the media was no longer what it used to be. Therefore, she often found herself doubting, out of habit, the opinion of the media toward a certain incident. Similarly, she would cast the same doubts on the individuals reported by the media.

If she wanted to become his private tutor, she must have a sufficient understanding of him beforehand. Otherwise... there was no guarantee that she would be safe, especially with a foreign man in a foreign land.

Yang Yan sat in the small cafe, apprehensive about the person she was about to meet. The feeling was just like going on a blind date.

The chimes on the door sounded as someone pushed opened the door and entered. Yang Yan raised her head and looked around. She saw the man at the door who wore a pair of shades, looking around. She

lowered her head and looked at her watch. It was exactly half an hour from the time she had ended the call.

“Hi.” The man was too conspicuous, leaving Yang Yan with no choice but to stand up and wave to him, signaling him over to her seat.

“Sorry, I was stuck in traffic because of a car accident. I didn’t make you wait for long, did I?” Seeing the real person, Yang Yan discovered that the wild and arrogant manager in the newspapers had reverted back to a gentlemanly look, which he had had when they first met. She shook her head and replied, “Nope, time passed very quickly.”

Tang En sat down and took off his shades. He waved his hand to call the waiter over and politely asked Yang Yan in advance what drinks she wanted. Yang Yan looked at her glass of fruit juice, which was completely untouched, and shook her head.

“Just a cup of coffee, thanks.” After the waiter went away, Tang En tilted his head and stared at the girl in front of him. The same girl who had made Tang En think about her day and night, and had made him silently observe her from a certain corner, was now seated before him. She even wore a smile on her face, which was slightly tinged with embarrassment.

Yang Yan finally could not hold back and asked, “Sir, what are you looking at?”

“Ah, nothing. Sorry, I went into a daze. Erm...” When the waiter came over to deliver Tang En’s coffee, he also brought along a piece of white paper and a pen.

“Mr. Twain, please sign an autograph for me!” The freckled English boy said excitedly.

“Alright, but we just lost a match yesterday.”

Yang Yan smiled as she watched Tang En lower his head and sign his name on the piece of paper. After he finished writing in English, Tang En thought for a while, before proceeding to write his own Chinese name, Tang En, crookedly.

“This is....” That boy was unsure of what it was.

“Hmm, you know, I really like the Chinese culture, so this is my Chinese name that I came up with. What do you think of it?”

“I cannot read it, but it’s very beautiful...” The boy left contentedly with his autograph, and Tang En saw Yang Yan’s slightly shocked expression when he turned his head around.

“Haha, surprising right! I have tried learning on my own, although I only know how to write two characters.” He was lying. Actually, he could speak fluent Mandarin and Sichuan dialects. On top of that, he was also well-versed in writing Chinese characters.

Yang Yan, just recovered from her shock, nodded her head while looking lost. “Indeed, it’s very shocking. I didn’t think that you could write Chinese characters. But...” She wrote down Tang En’s English name, Twain, on a piece of napkin.

“I feel like it translates to ‘Tu Wen’ better.”

“Tu Wen? What kind of a weird name is this?”

Yang Yan coughed. This man obviously doesn't know Lawrence, but don't tell me that he doesn't even know this famous author? “Twain, Mark Twain...”

“Ah!” Tang En patted the back of his head. “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer! But I like the name ‘Tang En’ better.”

Yang Yan tilted her head and asked, “Why is that so?”

“I don't know, I just feel that this sounds better, at least better than some ‘Tu Wen’.”

Yang Yan looked at Tang En for a while, before breaking out into a smile. “I also feel that this sounds better, Mr. Tang En.”

“Calling me mister is too formal. You may call me Tang En.” Tang En thought in his heart, My original name in the first place.

Unexpectedly, Yang Yan shook her head and replied, “Mister, this is only our second time meeting.”

Darn! We've already met many times! We were high school classmates! Tang En really wanted to say this to the lady seated opposite him, but he could not.

Seeing Yang Yan's determined look, Tang En conceded.

“Erm, up to you, I guess,” Tang En agreed. That was his second time spending time with her alone. As such, he lacked experience and suddenly did not know what else to say. It was Yang Yan who reminded him. “Mr. Twain, what did you call me here for? I don't suppose its so that we could sit here and stare into space?”

“Oh, of course. We need to discuss in detail your plans to teach me Chinese.”

After half an hour, they had finished finalizing all of the details. Taking into consideration the unique nature of Tang En's job, he had limited time to learn Chinese, so they only arranged for two classes every week. Weekends were definitely out of the question, as Tang En had to lead his team at matches. Home matches were still possible, but if it were an away match, he would be away for two to three days. In the end, they finalized the lessons on Monday and Thursday nights, and Yang Yan would have to give lessons to Tang En at his house. The payment would be £10 an hour.

Should there be any last minute changes, they each had to inform the other party.

After they finished discussing, Tang En offered to treat Yang Yan to lunch, but was rejected.

“Hehe, so sorry. I already arranged a lunch appointment with my friend.” Yang Yan smiled and left. Looking at her back, Tang En felt that he had let a nimble butterfly slip away and felt slightly dejected.

However, soon after, he readjusted his mood. Since he would be able to meet her twice a week, there was still a lot of time.

Chapter 45: Nice Guy Mr. Coppel Part 1

In order to prove that he really loved Chinese culture, as well as to have some sort of evidence for being “self-taught”, Tang En went to all the old and new bookstores in Nottingham that afternoon. He bought all the books he could find about China, regardless of whether they were in Chinese, English, French, or German.

After dragging a car-full of books home, Tang En was annoyed. He could not find any place to put them. The two cupboards in Tony Twain’s house were filled with football-related items, from newspapers to magazines, to various data collected by Tony himself. There wasn’t the slightest gap for the new books. Tang En did not want to move the data, which had already been so carefully categorized. So, he had no choice but to stack all of the new books on the floor.

Anyway, ever since he had arrived, the house had always been in a mess. He had been used to living as a bachelor and did not think that there was anything wrong with it.

However, when Yang Yan came over the next day, she was shocked at all the books scattered all over the floor. By the end of the first lesson, the amount of time spent on the lesson was minimal, as Yang Yan’s “helpful” habits resurfaced and helped Tang En tidy up his room.

Tang En served as her assistant, and he could only mischievously chuckle whenever he saw Yang Yan sigh and shake her head.

“You know... a bachelor staying alone tends to be like this. Ah! Actually, you don’t have to do this. I can just hire someone to do it.”

Yang Yan finished tidying up the living room and could finally catch a breather. She shook her head and replied, “I’m not used to giving lessons in this kind of environment, so... forget it, since I’ve already finished tidying up.”

Tang En smiled embarrassedly, but he was actually enjoying it deep inside his heart.

Yang Yan stood at the door of the bedroom and chanced upon the picture hung on the wall. She had seen it in the newspaper before, and it suddenly piqued her interest. She went in to admire it.

Tang En watched Yang Yan’s silhouette. Since the start of junior high, that girl had been the target of affection of many people. She was understanding and helpful, and with virtually no shortcomings at all. At that time, Tang En was still a stubborn and weird-tempered bookworm. However, puberty was something that every teenager underwent, and even Tang En fantasized about receiving the affections of the popular girl. However, never did he expect that a day would come where such a situation like this would occur—the lover which everyone longed for, was tidying up and cleaning his house, spending time alone with her.

The only pity was that, while Yang Yan was still that same Yang Yan, he was no longer her classmate, Tang En. It was not that Tang En did not think of telling his true identity to Yang Yan, but the thought only flashed through his mind for a split second, before being instantly rejected. First of all, he was unsure if a time-travelling body-possession story would be well-received by her. Secondly, he did not know if he would lose his job, should anyone get to know the truth. For his current self, he understood that even if he were to be unemployed, he could still rely on a decent welfare provided by the government. However, being a football manager had become his dream job and not merely a job that supported his lifestyle.

As such, faced with his very familiar classmate, Tang En could only act as if they had just met. The feeling was really unbearable, especially during the few instances when they experienced awkward silences. During those moments, Tang En wanted to discuss with Yang Yan about some of the interesting happenings during their junior high days—even though there were only a few instances that he could recall.

Returning to his senses, Tang En decided to enter the room and help. Walking into the bedroom, he discovered that Yang Yan was not busy, but instead stood below that photograph, admiring it with her head raised.

“Erm, this was a gift to me from a certain newspaper office, which enlarged the photo before giving it to me.”

“Very beautiful,” Yang Yan exclaimed. “The choice of background, composition, color, timing, meaning... they are all excellent.”

“I feel the same way. The only reason why I decided to keep it, was because the person captured in the photo was me and not someone else.”

Yang Yan turned her head around and smiled at Tang En. “Mr. Twain, you are really not a humble person.”

Tang En shrugged his shoulders. “In the world of professional football, the thing that is least needed is humbleness.”

Speaking of football, Yang Yan had become a bit interested. That was because, after being in England for two years, she had only recently discovered that many people around her were actually football fans, many of whom were die-hard. It turned out that Yang Yan had originally thought of football as something which had nothing to do with her life, as if it were a completely different world. However, this perspective of hers had been changing gradually.

“Then what is the most necessary quality?”

“Confidence. The belief that you are much more exceptional than others. The belief that you are the best. You have to work toward your goals based on these two beliefs.”

“You aren’t afraid of over-confidence becoming arrogance?”

“If you have the ability to back it up, then there’s nothing wrong with being arrogant. In the football world, there are countless numbers of players who possess this kind of personality. If you don’t have the ability, and yet you insist on being arrogant, then you only have to wait for your demise. Those people are not worthy of pity. They have already been automatically disqualified from the football world by the rules it is governed by, and therefore it is unnecessary for us to worry about it.”

Yang Yan sat on a chair, while she continued to look at the picture. She remarked, “From what you’ve just said, I feel like football is just like an animal world, where it’s survival of the fittest.”

Tang En snapped his fingers. “You’re absolutely right. Professional football is essentially a harsh and cruel world, where it’s survival of the fittest. Those with the ability live, while those without it die. Here, there’s no trust in tears and no need for sympathy and comforting. It’s purely a man’s world.”

Hearing the last sentence, Yang Yan turned her head around and asked, "A world that doesn't welcome women?"

If Tang En hadn't understood the meaning behind those words, then he would have looked like a complete fool. "No! Of course women are welcome! We welcome any female that likes football to join. In the eyes of the masses, football is closely associated with two things. One is music, and the other is beauty."

"But I'm no beauty..." Yang Yan shrugged her shoulders and said as she pouted her lips.

"What did I just say? In the world of football, humbleness is not needed. Do you wish to enter this world?"

Yang Yan looked at the serious-looking Tang En, and smiled. "Alright, I'm a beauty, the most beautiful person in the entire world!"

After shouting those words, the two burst into a laughter.

Tang En decided to strike the iron while it was hot. "If you're interested, you can come watch my team play. You don't have to buy tickets, I have some."

Yang Yan smiled and said, "If I'm interested, I'll give you a call."

"Alright. I have a small suggestion for you. If you want to enjoy the full pleasure of football and understand the secret as to why it is so attractive, you must..." Tang En stopped here, and waited for Yang Yan to ask him. However, he discovered that Yang Yan only looked at him and did not have any intention of opening her mouth. As such, Tang En could only surrender.

"Alright... You've got to have a team that you support. If you watch a football match from a neutral standpoint, more often than not, it's boring, and the match doesn't live up to your expectations."

"Why is that?"

"Virtually all neutral football fans like to see beautiful goals and amazing offenses, but that's idealized football." Tang En practically gave this newbie football fan a lesson on interest in football. So who was the one giving lessons to whom now... "The actual situation is, if all matches were played like this, people in my position would all have to retire. Because in most situations, playing like that will not win matches. Then what's the point of professional football managers? It's to lead his own team to victory. So, if you want to experience the most charming point of football, you have to choose a team to support and dedicate your entire mind and body to it. That way, when you watch their matches, you will experience joy and sadness according to their performance. And that is an extremely wonderful experience. Regardless of whether they win or lose, it is still the same. The sadness and pain after a loss, the joy after a win, as well as the delight when the team experiences a narrow escape."

Tang En looked at the photo on the wall and mumbled, as if he had returned to that fateful day when they faced off against Wimbledon. Hours after the match, Tang En was still in a state of shock and trepidation. However, the feeling of his heartbeat accelerating was simply too good. It was just like consuming drugs. Once you become addicted, you can never forget about it.

Yang Yan realized that Tang En's gaze had shifted away from her, appearing to be lost in thought once again. Standing before her, Tang En's hair was slightly messy, and the buttons on his shirt were not done up properly, either. One side of his sleeves were rolled up to his elbow, while the other side was not buttoned up and was wide open. His house was also extremely messy. This image was completely unlike the "gentleman" whom her friend described him as.

The polite, gentlemanly, unruly and wild football manager, and the unkempt bachelor... Exactly which one was the real him?

In addition, what really puzzled Yang Yan was that she could see the shadow of another person in him. At times, just for a split second, he appeared to be very, very similar to that person. Yet in reality, they were two completely different people. One was an Englishman, while the other was Chinese.

"Alright then. I shall choose your team. From now on, I am a fan of Nottingham Forest."

Tang En lowered his head and looked at Yang Yan, who gave him a mesmerizing smile.

"In that case, I shoulder a huge responsibility."

"Why?"

"Because I have a new supporter. And as the manager of the team, I cannot let my supporters down. Erm... Do you think these words are mushy?" When Tang En said this, he discovered that Yang Yan was still laughing. Was she laughing at him?

Yang Yan shook her head and replied, "No, I think it's wonderful. Mr. Twain, I believe that you won't let your supporters down."

Chapter 46: Nice Guy Mr. Coppell Part 2

The next day, Tang En led the team, and they rushed to the venue for the away match.

It was the 36th round of the English League One season, and because of the previous match which they lost, Nottingham Forest's ranking had dropped to seventh place. However, they were only four points away from the third team, and their situation was not extremely hopeless. Although the media's criticisms were still ongoing, Tang En paid no heed to them. But contrary to how he handled it, after training, Tang En would read to the players the comments that had been published that day about Nottingham Forest. Of course, he only picked the negative ones to talk about.

Walker did not understand, but Tang En told him that he would understand it once the date of the match was nearer.

Brighton was their opponent for this match. Prior to then, they were the fourth last team for the season, and were only one point away from the relegation zone. Hence, they desperately needed a win.

Perhaps others might feel that it would be a tough battle for Nottingham Forest. To challenge a team that had to prevent relegation, on their home ground, would not be a sure win even for prestigious clubs. However, Tang En felt that his team could do it.

Tang En had not spent all of his efforts the past few days on a woman. He had carefully analyzed Brighton's results for the past 11 rounds with three draws, four losses, and four wins. Those three match outcomes usually alternated, and there was rarely a case where they won a few matches consecutively. That revealed that the team was very unstable. In the previous round, they had attained victory on their home ground, but that was insufficient to prove that this team's home ground win rate was high. Up till then, in the 18 matches for which they had had home ground advantage, they only won five of them, scoring 23 balls and conceding 28.

No matter how he viewed it, Tang En refused to believe that his team would lose to this kind of team. However, he had also learned his lesson and described Brighton as an extremely terrifying team, insisting that the away match would be an uphill battle. Faced with Brighton's threatening challenge, he had to be slightly more careful. When interviewed, Tang En said that Brighton would definitely be able to obtain a satisfactory ranking by the end of the season, and even said that he had been a fan of Steve Coppell since he was young. Under Coppell's lead, Brighton would definitely have a bright future ahead.

In actuality? Tang En had never seen this person play before. In fact, he did not even know that there was such a high-profile player in Manchester United's history. After all, he was not a die-hard Manchester United Fan. As for whether the previous Tony Twain had seen him play before, Tang En was not sure. Former member of England's representative team and Manchester United star player, Steve Coppell, retired in 1983 when he was 28 years old due to an injury. That period when he was at Manchester United, was one of Manchester United's darkest periods in history. At that time, Manchester United was still struggling bitterly in League Two. This winger took part in 396 matches during his time at Manchester United, and scored 72 goals. Additionally, he had taken part in 42 matches as part of the England National Team, and scored seven goals. During his most glorious times, he was Manchester United and England's only choice for right winger.

As for his results as a manager, this person's most glorious days were in 1990, when he brought Crystal Palace to the grand finals of the 89-90 season of the FA Cup. However, he lost to his former team, Manchester United. After that, he led Crystal Palace and attained third place in the English First Division (then England's highest league). That was also Crystal Palace's best results throughout its entire club history.

Although Manchester United could be considered England's most successful team after "The Reds" Liverpool, the splendid players from this splendid team who went on to be managers usually did not have good results. While Manchester United had the tradition of nurturing great football players, it did not have the fertile soil for nurturing great managers. This was really weird, as they had the greatest manager in the past 20 years of English football, Sir Alex Ferguson. However, the players under this manager did not seem to perform well as managers, and even his assistants did not produce exceptional results when they went on to coach on their own. The most distant instance went as far back as 1998, when Brian Kidd, then Sir Alex Ferguson's trusted aide, tried, for the first time, to coach a team. However, after 44 matches, he was fired from his post by the upper echelons of Blackburn. The most recent one was the Portuguese manager, Queiroz. His time as the manager of Real Madrid was perhaps the season which Real Madrid fans and he do not want to recall for the rest of their lives. In the 100 years of Real Madrid's history, the first consecutive five-match losing streak happened during his time.

Before Tang En time-travelled, Manchester United's former captain, Roy Keane, was the manager of Sunderland, and the prospects of being promoted to the English Premier League were very good. It remained unknown as to whether this Irish man could change Manchester United's awkward history.

The reason why Tang En went to great efforts to put on a show like this, was to let Coppell and his team think that Nottingham Forest was afraid of them. Hence, Tang En remained low profile from the very start. Whenever the media asked about his plans for this match, Tang En would reply, "For such a tough away match, if we are even able to get one point, I will be very content." It was the complete opposite of the confidence he showed when his team was on a five-match winning streak.

Later in the hotel room, Tang En took the local news reports and read to Walker line by line.

"Brighton full of confidence, not a single point to be lost on the road to avoid relegation!"

"Take another look at this—Coppell unafraid of best manager... tsk tsk!"

Walker sat on the sofa and asked, "What do you think? Even the Nottingham media thinks that we are likely to lose for this match."

"This is what I wanted to see, Des. I wish for the entire world to not have any hopes for us. Now do you see why I did those things after training?" The "those things" which Tang En referred to were his sessions of reading the bad news in the newspapers to the players. Every time the players heard about the criticisms by the news reporters and the media, they would become extremely furious.

Walker smiled and nodded his head. "You are too evil, Tony."

"In this world, it doesn't pay to be a nice guy." It was better to give the nice guy card over to the opponent's manager and to tell him this after beating him, while shaking his hand. "You are such a nice guy, Manager Coppell." In order to emphasize his meaning, he would repeat the phrase "nice guy", until the person started to tear up.

Brighton's Withdean Stadium, which had the capacity to hold up to 7,000 people, had no empty seats. Brighton's home ground jersey was white and blue, causing Tang En to think that he had arrived at Argentina's home ground. The only difference was that the people were much fewer. But the fans' enthusiasm did not pale in comparison to the crazy South Americans.

"It's only 7,000 people, there's nothing to be afraid of." Amidst the deafening noise in the stadium, Tang En muttered to himself as he entered the changing room. The players were already geared up and prepared to move out, merely awaiting his orders.

"All of you have been belittled by them. They treat you all as worthless, and the entire world doesn't believe that you can win." Tang En shook the newspaper in his hand and said, "Tell me, what do you guys plan to do?"

Dawson took the lead and stood up. He shouted, "To defeat them!" After which, everyone else followed suit and shouted the same words as him.

"Very good." Tang En, Walker, and Bowyer all smiled.

After 90 minutes, the whistle signaling the end of the match sounded. The trainee journalist from the Nottingham Evening Post, Pierce Brosnan, who had accompanied the team over to the away match,

shook his head. “Yet another match with a satisfactory result, but the process was extremely close and exhilarating.”

Brighton’s fans had 100 reasons to be discontented with the results of the match, because their team had perhaps 100 reasons they could win the match. However, the end result was that the guest team Nottingham Forest left with three additional points.

1:0, Nottingham Forest wins! David Johnson, the Jamaican player managed to score a rebound 16 minutes into the match, snatching three points for the team.

Once he won, Tang En no longer put up his act and appeared extremely arrogant in the press conference after the match. His replies were extremely short, and the words he said were so unclear, to the extent that many reporters were unable to hear him clearly even after straining their ears. He had a classic look of not caring much for them. Only when answering Pierce Brosnan’s questions, did he say a few more words.

Among the two managers, one was unwilling to cooperate, while the other was somewhat dejected from losing the match, and hence did not say much. This press conference only lasted for 10 minutes, before ending haphazardly. The reporters were all dissatisfied, but what could they do? If the other party did not feel like speaking, they could not force them to do so.

When they parted, Tang En suddenly went up to Coppel and grabbed his hand. He could finally say the words which he had been concocting for the past two days.

“You are a nice guy. I wish you good luck, Mr. Coppel. Nice guy!” He shook Coppel’s hand forcefully. Then, he left the confused Steve Coppel behind, disappearing from the sight of the masses.

After winning that match, Nottingham Forest once again returned to the promotion group. Ranked sixth in the league, if they were able to maintain the ranking all the way till the league ended, it would guarantee them the opportunity to enter the playoffs. As for the newbie manager, Tony Twain, who only took over in the middle of the season, this was already an exceptional result. Therefore, he told Coppel that he was a nice guy, because at the moment when Tang En needed a win the most, and needed three points the most, this manager immediately offered it to Tang En. If that did not qualify him as a nice guy, then what did?

The results of that match once again reaffirmed that those who could play football very well, might not necessarily become an outstanding manager. The skill level of a player had no direct correlation to one’s competency in coaching a team. At least in Old Trafford, “star players” and “star managers” would never become synonymous.

Chapter 47: George’s Fans Part 1

On the 20th of March, Nottingham Forest’s opponent would be their arch-rivals, Derby County.

However, in regard to this opponent, various Forest fans were filled with love and hate—extremely complicated feelings toward them. In terms of the relationships between the two clubs, Nottingham Forest and Derby County were rival clubs. However, the most loved and respected person from

Nottingham Forest's history actually came from Derby County. That person was none other than Manager Brian Clough, who created Nottingham Forest's most glorious days in the club's entire history.

Tang En did not know much about the history of these two clubs, and therefore could not understand why Derby County and Nottingham Forest would become arch-rivals. It was Walker who told him one of the main reasons. "In year 1898, Derby County had entered the FA Cup finals for the first time. At that time, their opponent was us, Forest. That match ended with a score of 3:1, with us triumphing over them. That was our first time becoming the FA Cup champions, while Derby County's people went home in tears."

Tang En was surprised. This took place over more than 100 years back, and yet they still can't get over it. It was indeed 100 years' worth of cumulative hatred... Sigh, is there ever an end to revenge They should be more tolerant and peaceful.

The 90-minute match ended. Tang En looked at the score on the electronic scoreboard. Hearing the sharp jeering noises which came from Pride Park Stadium's viewing platform, Tang En knew that Nottingham Forest and Derby County's 100-year grudge would continue. It was precisely because of countless people like himself, who caused this kind of situation to last for 100 years.

The score reflected on the electronic scoreboard was 0:3. According to the internationally accepted rules, the home team's score was in front, while the away team's score was behind.

Nottingham Forest scored three goals on Derby County's home ground, and attained three points, causing the 20th ranked Derby County to drop by one rank, only one rank away from entering the relegation zone.

If Derby County ultimately ended up being relegated, then Nottingham Forest's performance in this match would definitely be one that "contributed greatly" to it.

However, Tang En never cared about the well-being of his opponents. For his team to have an overwhelming victory in an away match was the best result that he could have asked for.

Harewood scored two goals, while the other one was scored by Andy Reid. Compared to the first half of the season, Harewood's performance in the second half was as if he was a different person. He even stood a great chance to compete for the position of League One's best shooter.

The only regret from this match, was that both of the starting players from the backline defense would be absent from the next match. Michael Dawson had been suspended from the next match due to the accumulation of yellow cards, while his midfielder partner, Jon Olav Hjelde had sustained an injury in the last moments of the match. After the match, according to team doctor Fleming's diagnosis, Hjelde had sprained his ankle and might have to rest for two weeks.

Tang En did not take it to heart, as it was a good opportunity for the substitute players to train in an actual match, and also for the main players to rest up. Therefore, he could not be happier with this situation. After all, Hjelde's injury was not too serious.

Edwards' performance during the match against Wimbledon was rather good, and he could definitely be part of the starting lineup. The 21-one-year-old Scottish defender, Chris Doig, was not too bad, as well.

However, the training which took place the next day only lasted for 20 minutes, before Tang En's plans to switch Doig in had been completely foiled. Doig had, during a non-intense physical contact, fallen down in pain, while hugging his knee area.

Fleming rushed up to inspect Doig's injuries, before running to Tang En's side and whispering to him softly, "Cruciate ligament, at least two months."

"Dang it!" Tang En cursed softly with his head lowered. Two months basically meant that Doig could not participate for the rest of the current season. The season would end in May, and it was already March 21. "Gary, take him to the treatment room, and treat him properly. Give him some confidence."

Fleming nodded his head. Calling for the stretcher, he brought Doig, who was in pain and agony, off the field.

Due to the injury, the training had been temporarily paused. Tang En expressed his intentions for the team to carry on with their training, while he made a trip to the youth training grounds. The first team no longer had any useable center back, and at the same time, he also wanted to check on that kid's performance after changing to a different position.

The youth training grounds were relatively quieter than the first team's training grounds. There were not many fans who came over to watch the players train, and most of the spectators were the family members of the young players. Only when they held youth matches there, did the place become slightly livelier. During those times, there would also be various scouts from other football teams. Nottingham Forest's youth training was famous throughout England, and therefore it was not rare for scouts to appear.

Tang En did not walk around the fans' viewing area outside the metal fence. Instead, he took a direct shortcut—from the office area straight onto the training field.

Seeing Tang En return here yet again, Kerslake walked up to him and smiled. "Worrying about that kid whom you picked up from the streets?"

Tang En shook his head. "Not this time. I'm in trouble, David."

"Tell me more about it. It is no easy feat for our best manager to be met with trouble."

Tang En smiled helplessly. Ever since he got the best manager award, many people in the club used it to mock him. "Among the five center backs on the first team, one had been suspended from the accumulation of yellow cards, one injured his ankle and has to rest for two weeks, and the last one just sustained an injury in his cruciate ligament, and has to rest for at least two months."

Kerslake frowned. "That is really troublesome indeed. There's still two left. What about Dawson, who could support an entire match?"

"He is the one who had been suspended from accumulating yellow cards."

Kerslake blew his whistle.

"Give me some recommendations. Which players are useable from your side?" Tang En's tone was as if he were choosing things in the market.

“It just so happens that there’s a lad who is not bad. I also think that he should train in matches on a higher level. But... you have to choose yourself.” Kerslake winked at Tang En.

That was actually something which Paul Hart often made his assistants do, when he was still on the youth team. He would make them watch the team train, and tell him their observations. Paul Hart used this method to train Twain’s and Kerslake’s observation skills, as well as their understanding of the training classes. This kind of game-like training provided a solid foundation for Twain to later become the coach of the youth team, as well as to be promoted to the first team. Many others were unreceptive toward the method, as they felt that the ones receiving training should be the players and not the managerial staff. Hence, only the withdrawn and quiet Twain at that time, completed Hart’s requests without uttering a single word. This was also one of the reasons why Hart valued Twain. Hart felt that “seriousness” was the foundation of all success, and that was his lifelong message. However, few could accomplish this, and it just so happened that the unsociable guy from Eastwood, Tony Twain, was one of the few who accomplished it.

However, Tang En was no longer able to recall all those things, as a lot of his past memories had vanished alongside that incident. He did not know the reason why Kerslake did it, and merely treated it as a form of game between old friends, for him to make a gamble.

The two managers stood at the sideline, providing an immense form of motivation for the young lads training on the field. After that match, Tony Twain did not promote anyone from the youth team, but this did not affect the youth players’ confidence and attitudes toward the future at all. The only thing they could do was give their best performance on the field, and attract the attention of the manager from the first team.

After looking for around 10 minutes, Tang En’s first sentence after he turned his head around made Kerslake laugh.

“How come I don’t see George Wood anywhere?”

“As expected, you are here for him, Tony.”

Amidst Kerslake’s loud laughter, Tang En could only scratch his head in embarrassment, as he only said it as a slip of his tongue.

“I’m making him train alone on the second training field, starting from the most basic and simplest trainings, the simplest ones... to the extent that they can’t get any simpler.”

“How’s he doing?”

“Unable to tell at the moment. But you’re right, Tony. He is much more suited to play those positions which require stamina and physical contact, as his body physique is one that makes people go green with envy. What kind of food did he eat when he was growing?”

Tang En recalled Wood’s family situation and shrugged his shoulders. “Who knows, perhaps his mother couldn’t even squeeze out a single drop of milk at that time.” This kid’s body was so robust and strong, it must have been because his mother, Sophia, gave him everything. She gave all of the most nutritious food, all of her love, hope, and even dedicated her life to this illegitimate child.

“Alright, we should get back to the topic at hand. Even I get sidetracked by you, David. I’ve found the person I came here for.” Tang En did not point at the training field, but his eyes were fixated on someone. A black young man with a shaved head, in the 10 plus minutes of training, had displayed all of the essential techniques required of an exceptional center back. “Number six. I want him. Have him come along with me immediately and report to the first team.”

Kerslake laughed and said, “Tony, you really are Hart’s most highly regarded person. That’s right, the person I wanted to recommend to you was indeed him. Wes Morgan, an excellent 19-year-old young lad. He is the captain of the youth team, Jermaine Jenas and Michael Dawson’s successor.” Upon his introduction of the player, Kerslake shouted from the sideline, “Wes! Come here!”

After that, everyone stared enviously as they watched their captain run toward the two managers.

“The rest of you—continue training!” Kerslake shouted again, making the rest of the young lads behave. They already knew that Manager Twain had accomplished his goal for coming there.

Morgan excitedly ran to the two managers and asked, “Sir, what’s the matter?” Actually, he already knew what was in store for him.

Tang En raised his head and looked at him. His face appeared slightly more mature than his actual age, and even looked as if he was slightly older than Dawson. “How tall are you, kid?”

“Six feet two inches tall, Sir.” Morgan’s voice was slightly hoarse, as if he hadn’t recovered from a cold. The voice really suited his appearance.

Tang En nodded his head. That was around 1.88 meters tall. He continued to ask, “Weight?”

“One hundred and ninety-eight pounds, Sir.”

That’s about ninety kilograms. This build... is essentially a heavy tank. Tang En was very satisfied. This was exactly the kind of player that he wanted, one that could give his opponents psychological pressure just from looking at his appearance.

“Ok, Wes. I’m not one who likes to beat around the bush. From today onward, you will train with the first team. If you perform well, you will receive a contract to join the first team, just like Michael Dawson and Andy Reid. Do you understand?”

Morgan nodded his head and replied, “Understood, Sir.”

Morgan did not say much, and did not become carried away just because he had been promoted to the first team. Tang En liked this kind of mature and reliable attitude, as that was also one of the most important qualities required of a defender.

“Very well, come with me.... Erm, you may go collect your stuff from the changing room. Do you have anything there?”

“Only a few sets of clothes, Sir.”

“Go get them. You have three minutes.”

Tang En had just completed his sentence, and Morgan turned around and ran for the changing room.

This time, it was Kerslake's turn to speak. "What do you think about him, Tony?"

"Better than what I expected. His power, springing ability, explosive power, and control are all very exceptional. However, the first team and the youth team is different, you know that... I'm here to find an emergency player for the team. I think that even after these few matches, he will still become a substitute player. Dawson and Hjelde's combination is already very compatible. I can't possibly tear those two apart."

Kerslake nodded his head to express that he understood where Tang En was coming from. "If he doesn't have much chances to be fielded at your side, let him play for me in the youth league."

"No problem."

While the two of them spoke, Morgan was already running toward them, with his clothes hugged. "I'm ready, Sir."

"Let's go."

After bidding Kerslake farewell, Morgan followed after Tang En's footsteps. The two of them, one in front and one at the back, made their way for the first team's training ground.

The rest of the players saw Morgan and Tang En off with envy, but Kerslake immediately shouted at them. "All of you, get back to training! Rather than be envious of others, all of you are better off training and improving yourselves!"

Chapter 48: George's Fans Part 2

On the way back, Tang En chose to go through the fans' area, because that was the only way he could pass by the second court. He was still worried about Wood and decided to check out how this kid was doing.

It turned out that when Tang En arrived at the second training field, he saw a small child clinging to the wire mesh, looking at the field with his full attention. He was so focused that he did not even notice Tang En and Morgan approaching, until he realized that the sky suddenly turned dark.

He raised his head and looked up in bewilderment. The skies were blue and the clouds were white. The weather was still great.

Tang En was amused by this cute child, but he purposely made a stern face and spoke in a deep, gruff voice. "Hey, kid! Who let you in? Do you know that this is a restricted area? For trespassing, I'll let the security arrest you!"

Who would have thought that the small child would be completely unfazed? He didn't even look at Tang En and continued staring at the training field. He also replied in a deep voice, "Manager Tony Twain, do you intend to make the headlines in The Sun for threatening a small child?"

Morgan, who was standing behind the two of them, could no longer hold it in and burst out in a laughter. In fact, his laughter grew louder by the second. Tang En turned around and looked at this person. His previous impression of this black man made him assume that Morgan did not know how to

laugh at all. Seeing that Tony Twain was looking at him, Morgan frantically covered his mouth. "Sorry, Sir."

Tang En curled his lips, indicating that he did not mind. After which, he turned his head around and continued to tease this child. "Erhem. Alright, boy. Tell me who your dad is. At this time, you should still be at school. Truancy is not good. I'll have your dad spank your butt back at home."

The small child did not seem to care at all. Morgan saw that this kid's expression was one of nonchalance. The little kid replied, "Who are you trying to fool? I've ended school a long time ago!"

Tang En did not expect this child to be so smart, leaving him speechless. Right at that moment, a familiar male voice was heard. "I seem to have heard someone threatening my son. Is he tired of living?"

"What terrible luck! Michael, you actually have such a smart and cute son. I'm too shocked!" Tang En stood up and looked at the man in front of him. It was indeed the fan, Michael Bernard, who got into a fight with Tang En at the Forest Bar, an exemplary case of "no discord, no concord."

Bernard's hand was holding a can of coke. It was evident that he had just returned from getting his son a drink.

"Should I take it as a compliment for my son, or are you insulting me?"

"Either one is fine. It's up to you." Tang En blinked his eyes. "You brought your son here?"

Bernard nodded his head, before handing over the coke to his son. "I picked him up from school, and he said that he wanted to come here and take a look, so I brought him here."

"But the rest of the youth team is training at the first training field." Tang En thought that it was weird, as young kids tended to like those famous football stars instead. Coming here instead of going to the first team. On top of that, he was not looking at the first training field. What exactly was he looking at?

Bernard pointed at the training field. "Two weeks ago, my son declared during dinner that he had become this person's fan."

Tang En looked in the direction that Bernard's hand was pointing. George Wood was doing some header practice in the empty training field. Wood specifically had a manager to accommodate him. The manager threw the ball to Wood, and Wood jumped up to head the ball back. After looking at it for around half a minute, he was merely doing the same old repetitions of the same action, which was very dull and dry.

It seems like David also regards this kid highly, to actually get a manager to train him personally... Tang En touched his chin. I was almost fooled by that guy.

However, Tang En still did not understand why a small child like this would become Wood's fan. He did not have beautiful techniques, nor did he have any fame. In fact, he did not even participate in matches very often, and was repetitively practicing the fundamentals, which the audience would find boring, daily. Therefore, Tang En asked, "What do you like about him?"

"He is very strong!" The small child revealed his own arm and gestured with it.

Strong? Tang En turned his head and shot a look at Morgan. After which, he said to the small child. "This guy over here is also very strong."

The small child raised his head and looked at Morgan. Morgan bent over slightly, intending to leave a good impression on the small child. Unexpectedly, the brat pouted and said, "But he's not handsome enough."

This time, it was Tang En's turn to burst into laughter. The tank man's gloomy face was really too funny.

Paying no heed to Tang En who was almost rolling on the ground in laughter, the brat continued, "I've been observing him train for a very long time, coming here daily after school. Then, I found that he," The brat pointed at Wood and said, "is always doing the same thing. At the start, I found it to be very boring and not fun at all. Then, I thought I would see if he would also find it boring and stop training. So, I secretly made a bet in my heart with him, and I bet that he would definitely give up. And I come here to look every day. Later I discovered that he was like a robot, never getting tired, never resting, even that person..." He pointed at that coaching staff. "Even if that person went to take a break, and he was still training. I deeply respect him, because he defeated me! I've decided to become his fan!"

After hearing the small child's words, Tang En looked at Bernard and said, "Michael, you have a genius son. He is very impressive. This is not out of politeness. I mean it from the bottom of my heart."

Bernard nodded his head. "Is there even a need for you to state the obvious? My son's the best!" Although his tone was tough, his gaze toward his son was filled with love and pride.

Who would have known that the fan who was always shouting, and even had a fight with him, would have such a tender side to him? It was an eye-opener for Tang En. He then turned to look in the direction of the training field, observing Wood, who was still doing his header practice. Tang En had been thoroughly touched by this kid.

Perhaps because he had really heard Tang En's words in City Ground's changing room, he decided to plunge himself in training now, threatening 24 hours a day. It was true that he did not know football. It was true that he was a newbie that had only been in contact with football for three months. It was true that his family was poor and had no means of providing better living conditions for him. It was true that he shouldered a burden that peers of the same age would be unable to shoulder. But he did not play tricks and treated this "job" seriously. He trained hard and dedicated effort and sweat that was too difficult for others to imagine. He believed Tang En's reputation was "guaranteed by the banks", and he believed that if he continued training like this, he would eventually become a superstar who earned £12,000 a week.

After being there for three months, Tang En had seen so many different types of players. Some of them wanted to become superstars, while some of them played for their passion for the game. Among them, some of them were very gifted, while some were just ordinary. There were some who did not have many plans for the future, while there were others who had lofty aspirations. There were too many people... But after seeing so many people, Tang En discovered that, perhaps only this little rascal, who dared to come knocking on the door and advertised himself as England's best player, would really become England's best player.

No, he had to. For his mother, he must!

Despite him not doing anything but the same dry and repetitive training over and over again, he had managed to get himself a first fan of his own.

Tang En suddenly felt that he should give the not-yet-successful Wood some form of reward. So, he shouted outside the wire mesh, "George!"

His loud voice even shocked the birds in the trees behind. There was no reason for Wood and the coaching staff to not hear him. As expected, both of them halted the training, turning their heads around to look in Tang En's direction.

"Rest for a while!" Tang En waved his hand at that coaching staff and said, "Let Wood come over for a while."

The coaching staff recognized that the person who interrupted their training was the first team's manager, Tony Twain. He said a few sentences to Wood, and what followed soon after was Wood running over, with a face full of bewilderment. He was very strong, but his strength was different compared to Morgan's. Morgan's type of strength was discernible at a first glance, while Wood's could only be felt and understood upon closer interaction. Looking at this lad's running posture, Tang En was very satisfied with the training program which Kerlake had planned for him.

"What's the matter? I'm in the middle of my training." Although there were four people at the sideline, Wood only had eyes on Tang En. On top of that, his tone was not very nice.

"I know that you're training. Will it kill you to take a short break?" The tone of Tang En's reply was also unlike one between a manager and player. He waved at Wood and said, "Here, come closer."

Wood closed in obediently, to the extent that he was almost sticking to the wire mesh. Although he did not know why Tang En called him over, he didn't raise any objections.

Tang En turned his head and asked Bernard's son, "Do you have a pen?"

The small child took out a large signature pen from his bag. That was practically a necessity for all football fans. Tang En took the pen, and stuffed it into Wood's hands. Then, Tang En made young Bernard stand close to the wire mesh as well, pulling and straightening his clothes.

"Give him your autograph."

Wood was slightly stunned at what Tang En had said. Wood thought that he had heard Tang En wrongly and did not move his hand, which was gripping the pen.

Tang En repeated himself another time. "Give him your autograph. George, he is your first fan. You can't treat him so coldly. Squat down and give him your autograph!"

This time, Wood obediently did as he was told. The hand which was holding on to the pen was still trembling, and he did not proceed with his autograph even after resting it on the child's shirt for quite some time.

"You don't know how to write your own name?" Tang En smiled upon witnessing this scene.

"I... Of course... I know!" Wood exerted some strength and signed his own name on the young child's red-colored shirt: George Wood. Those words were crooked and slanted.

Tang En seized the opportunity and mocked him. "So ugly! Who knows, it might even be uglier than this fan's handwriting. Haha!"

Wood paid no heed to Tang En's mocking and passed the pen back. After which, he asked, "Can I return to my training?"

This lad was really insensitive. Shouldn't he have patted the young fan's head, said some pleasantries, and indulged in the moment? To have said something like "Can I return to my training," really spoiled the mood. Tang En waved his hands and snappily said, "You may go back!"

Wood turned around and ran back, without any lingering affections. Looking at his back view, Tang En complained softly, "He really doesn't have the potential to become a great star."

The child did not seem to care about Wood's attitude. He lowered his head and looked at the name on his shirt, before turning his head around and said to his own father, "George Wood! Dad, look!"

Michael Bernard touched his son's head affectionately and said, "If you like it so much, you should treasure it."

Tang En followed up and said, "That's right! Treasure it well, this is Wood's first autograph. When he becomes a superstar in the future, you can sell it for a huge sum of money."

Young Bernard made a face at Tang En and said, "I won't sell this jersey ever, even if I don't have money to buy Forest's new jersey!"

Seeing his serious tone, Tang En smiled. Hey, George, did you see that? Your number one loyal fan. Now, you have one more reason to become a superstar.

Even after receiving his idol's autograph, young Bernard still continued to stay behind and root for Wood. Tang En obviously could not continue to stay here. Tang En and Morgan left after bidding the father and son farewell.

"Wes, have you ever been asked by a fan for your autograph?" Tang En, who was walking in front, asked.

"No, Sir."

"Alright, don't worry. You will get your chance soon."

When Tang En and Morgan reached the first team's training grounds, a golden shepherd dog came running toward them, giving Tang En a scare. Since when did the training grounds allow dogs inside?

This dog circled around him and wagged its tail excitedly.

Morgan saw that the dog was evidently very happy, and so he squatted down and extended his hand. The dog extended its tongue and licked, causing Morgan to laugh uncontrollably.

Tang En shot Morgan a look and said, "You really like dogs, don't you?"

"Don't tell me you don't like them, Sir?" Morgan continued to play with this dog that appeared out of nowhere, even forgetting to look at his manager's facial expression.

Tang En was frowning. The gloominess in his face reflected his current mood. Indeed, he did not like dogs. When he was working in Chengdu City, the entire streets were filled with dogs, and it was not uncommon for one to step on dog feces when they went out. However, the current issue was, while dogs could appear in parks and streets, they should not appear in football training grounds. He wanted to find out who the dog's owner was and teach him a lesson, making sure that in the future, he would not dare make Nottingham Forest's training ground his backyard for walking his dog ever again.

"That's enough, stop playing with that dog. I'll bring you to the training field."

Morgan bade farewell to the dog reluctantly, but got a pleasant surprise when he found out that that dog was following behind him. "Sir, its following behind us! It likes us!"

"Yes. It is following you, it likes you." Tang En stopped in his tracks and saw that Old Bowyer was not directing the team's training at the training field, but was instead chatting outside with another old man. In front of the old man who could not even stand up steadily, Bowyer's attitude with his head lowered made Tang En extremely shocked. That old man was not as fat as Nigel Doughty, so he was definitely not Mr. Chairman. Who else could he be?

As Tang En watched in bewilderment, their conversation ended. The old man extended his hand and patted Bowyer's face lightly, and Bowyer appeared as if he was a small child. This scene was simply too comical!

After that, that old man whistled and the shepherd dog, which had been jumping around Morgan, ran over to that old man instead, wagging its tail and jumping around him.

Morgan regretfully looked at the dog, which had run far away, while Tang En looked curiously at that old man. He had just rummaged through the deepest parts of his memories, but doing so did not give him any information regarding this old man. Could it be that even Tony Twain did not know him? Or was it that.... this part of his memory had been damaged when he was knocked down?

Bowyer saw the old man off. Right as he finished doing so, he turned around and saw Tang En.

"Ian." Tang En wanted to ask Ian who that old man was, but he did not expect Bowyer to be so happy to see him.

"Tony! You're back?" Bowyer was so happy that his voice was even one pitch higher.

Tang En nodded his head. "That..."

"It's so regretful. Why was it that every time you make a trip to the youth team, someone comes over to try find you?" Bowyer did not give Tang En the chance to finish his sentence.

"Ah?" Tang En was confused. That unfamiliar old man came here to find me?

Bowyer nodded his head. "Boss originally wanted to meet you, but you weren't in. So he invited us over to his house tomorrow afternoon! Invited us! You know? Tony, there's very few people who have been invited over to his house for a tea. When I was still a player, I could only envy Trevor Francis, because only he had been invited over before. That lucky guy!"

Tang En had never seen Bowyer behave like this before. He was just like the young Bernard just now, extremely excited because he had gotten his idol's autograph. When he spoke, he was even tiptoeing. His mouth was wide open, as if he had seen an alien.

"Who is boss?"

This time, it was Bowyer's turn to look at him as if he had seen an alien.

"Has your head not recovered yet, Tony? Or is it that... you just knocked your head again?"

Seeing Bowyer's serious expression, Tang En realized that he must have asked an extremely foolish question. However, he really did not know who "boss" was!

Chapter 49: The Real Legend Part 1

"The term 'legendary figure' has been overused, but he was the real 'legend'."

— Arsène Wenger, Arsenal Manager

Driving down the A52 highway was a 2001 red Ford Focus with four men inside. Among these men, three were extremely happy and one of them was grumbling non-stop.

"Kenny, I have a question for you. Is your bar not open for business today?"

Burns shrugged his shoulders and replied, "I'm the boss, not the bartender. I don't have to stay there all the time."

Tang En rolled his eyes and then turned his head around to look at Walker, who was seated beside Burns. "And Walker, why are you here?"

Walker smiled foolishly and did not answer him. Burns and he were in the back seat. They were so excited, as if they were groupies who were on their way to attend their idol's concert.

Looking at these two guys' foolish expressions, Tang En turned his head around and complained. "This is unfair. The people Boss wanted to invite were me and Bowyer, so why are the two of you tagging along?"

"Don't be so petty, Tony. I'm sure boss would like to see us pay him a visit."

"That's right, the more the merrier."

Tang En did not know what he to say. Sighing, he said to Bowyer who was driving, "Let's play some music."

Bowyer pressed the play button on the car radio, but the music that came out made Tang En jump in fright. It really was a jump, and Tang En's head would have definitely hit the ceiling of the car, if not for his safety belt.

That was because what came out of the radio was a group of fans shouting and screaming, just like what he heard during the matches.

“This is music?”

The two in the back seats burst into laughter, and Tang En remained silent after listening to them. He discovered that he had a very obvious “generation gap” with these three people. The three of them appeared to get along with each other very well, and they knew many things which Tang En did not know. For example, “Boss” and this “music.”

After the fans’ screaming ended, music finally started to play, and he was momentarily stunned when he heard the first sentence. It was the song that he often heard playing at the matches, Nottingham Forest’s song “We’ve Got the Whole World in Our Hands.”

“This isn’t the fans.” Tang En said in bewilderment.

Bowyer shook his head. “What you’re listening to right now was sung by us.”

“And me.” Burns added from behind.

“This was recorded in a recording room in the past, by the entire Nottingham Forest team.” Walker continued to give a slightly more detailed introduction to Tang En. “At first, it was a television program that invited them—at that time I still wasn’t at Forest—to sing this song on the program. After that, it was made into a record and released.”

“The sales were pretty decent, too,” Bowyer said proudly. After that, he hummed the tune of the song and became increasingly louder. Then, Burns and Walker also joined in the choir.

Filled with the men’s proud singing, the car drove past the road sign which displayed “Derby.”

Brian Clough. To Tang En, who had time-travelled over from China, this name was very unfamiliar. However, to the entire English football world, it was the most extraordinary name. Even though he had long since retired, he still possessed a substantial amount of influence in that circle. He could reprimand the players and managers whom he did not take a liking to, and even a big-shot like Sir Alex Ferguson would not dare to talk back, should he be scolded by him. To describe it with a commonly used line in movies, it would be—I may no longer be in Jiang Hu, but tales of me still live on.

Ever since he stepped foot into the football world, the name had appeared countless times, along with all sorts of miracles. When he was still a player, he set the record for the fastest player to score 200 goals. He represented Middlesbrough and Sunderland in 296 matches, and scored 267 goals. Between the two, he scored 204 goals in the 222 matches that he played for Middlesbrough, and 63 in the 74 matches he played for Sunderland. This was an extremely terrifying scoring rate. However, his career as a player was extremely short-lived. He retired at the mere age of 29 due to an injury, and consequently walked the path of being a manager.

What really made his name renowned throughout the world and caused him to become a generation’s “godfather of football”, was precisely the manager position.

Derby County, which had just lost to Tang En, was currently ranked 21st in the league and faced with financial crisis. However, despite the miserable situation they were currently in, they had also had their glorious days. Their most glorious days were called “Brian Clough’s Generation.” Just from hearing the name, one knew who that team’s manager was at that time.

During the 1966-67 season, Clough became the team's manager. He used two years to transform the team, from struggling in the Second Division (equivalent to the current League One), to becoming the Second Division champions. After that, they also became the First Division champions in the 1971-72 season. One season later, his team managed to reach the semifinals of the UEFA Champions League, but unfortunately lost to Juventus, which was said to have bribed the referee.

After that, he left the team and transferred over to Nottingham Forest. He created an entirely new "Forest Dynasty", which dominated English and European football. In addition, Derby County, because of the sturdy foundation left behind by Clough, managed to once again become the Division One champions for the 1974-75 season. However, they relinquished the championship title in the following year, when they lost to the Spanish overlords, Real Madrid.

As for Clough's accomplishments after he became Nottingham Forest's manager, there was not much need for any further illustration of them. Anyone who had some knowledge of the English and European football world during the seventies and eighties era, would know that the main color for that period was red. That was because both the teams that dominated European football wore red jerseys. One of them was Liverpool, while the other one was Clough's Nottingham Forest.

If he were only remembered because of his results, then Clough would be no different from most managers. However, in actual fact, he was the most special manager, among all the managers in the entire history of English football. His charisma could rival that of Liverpool's most noble Captain, Bill Shankly.

Regarding all that, Tang En completely agreed. It was evident from a glance at the three men's expressions beside him. He felt that this was very similar to his past schooling experience. A good teacher would always make his students miss him, even after they graduated, and they always treated him with a respectful attitude. On the contrary, a useless teacher would only make his students curse and mock him, even after they graduated.

Clough was precisely that kind of teacher who was exceptionally outstanding.

Just getting the Best Manager of the month for February award was enough to make Tang En extremely happy for a very long time. However, when he stood before Clough, he was like an ant that stood before a tall mountain. He was merely a small dust particle under Clough's feet.

And today, he was about to meet the most charismatic manager throughout the history of English football. Seeing the increasingly crowded streets, he suddenly felt an exceptional feeling rise from the bottom of his heart—I am not merely having afternoon tea with an old man who has retired from the position of a manager. Instead, I am paying my respects to the emperor who had created the Forest Dynasty.

After his retirement, the old manager's house was no longer in downtown Derby. He had bought a small estate which somewhat resembled a farm, at the North-Western outskirts of Derby. He was living in solitude outside of town, and there was only a narrow and difficult-to-walk path that connected his place to the bustling town.

The car was so bumpy on this road that Tang En got motion sickness from it. He did not expect that such a noble manager would actually live in this sort of place. Looking at the muddy road beneath the car wheels, it was highly possible that the road would become even harder to pass over when it rained.

“We’re here,” Bowyer suddenly said. Tang En discovered that there was a red brick house in front of him, which stood out amongst the low-standing forest. It appeared to be no different from the usual brick houses he saw in the country. This place was so inconspicuous that Tang En was slightly disappointed.

They had just gotten out of the car, and they were already able to hear a series of dog barking sounds. Then Tang En saw a golden shepherd dog rushing out from the courtyard, directly lunging at him.

“Wa!” Tang En used his hands to block his face, as he shouted. He was really afraid of dogs.

However, this shepherd dog only rested its paws on his shoulders and extended its tongue, puffing as it tried to lick his face.

Seeing Tang En’s agitated state, the three others started laughing. “Hey! Tony, it just wants to get intimate with you,” Walker said, laughing.

At that moment, an aged, yet slightly sharp and loud voice could be heard from the courtyard.

“Looks like Sam really likes you, kid.”

Hearing this voice and turning from Tang En who was being “intimate” with the dog, the other three stopped laughing and stood respectfully.

An old man slowly sauntered out from the courtyard. He looked at the three guys standing at the side, before mumbling to himself, “Oh my, I only prepared two guests’ worth of tea sets. Walker, what brand of juice do you like?”

Upon hearing this, Walker was stunned. “Boss, I’m of age...”

The two others lowered their heads and tried their best to hold in their laughter, but they ultimately could not contain it and let it out.

The old man did not care about Walker’s protests, and instead turned his head and looked at Burns. “It’s been so many years, and you still haven’t become a tad more handsome, Kenny.”

Burns awkwardly smiled. “Boss, you know it... I don’t like to do plastic surgery.” When Burns was still a player, it had once been publicly announced by his own manager that Kenny Burns was the ugliest player that he had ever signed.

Upon hearing his reply, the old man laughed. Then, he looked at Tang En, who was still being “intimate” with the dog, and sighed. “Who would have thought that you would also like Sam so much.” He whistled, and the huge dog immediately let go of the pitiful Tang En and ran back to its owner.

Only after Tang En vigorously wiped off the saliva on his face, did he manage to see the old man standing before him.

His looks were frail. His eye bags were swollen, and his eyelids drooped, making him seem as if he were not fully awake yet. Was this the legendary manager, Brian Clough, who shook the European football scene in the past? Tang En felt that reality was indeed very distant from dreams.

“Are you very disappointed?” Clough’s words gave Tang En a fright. This old man was spot on.

“Oh, are you intending to reassess me now?” Clough continued.

Tang En shrugged his shoulders and said, “Evaluating others is the job of the Human Resource Department.” Faced with this sharp-eyed old man, it was the first time that Tang En felt at a loss for what he should say. It appeared that his premonition on the way here was right.

“You’re wrong, kid. What do you think the manager does?”

“Brings victory to the team.”

“That is only one part of the job scope.” Clough waved his hands. “Come on in. I think the cookies should be done by now. Let us chat while drinking tea. I really liked that show you put on during the FA Cup halftime.”

Bowyer purposely lagged behind and waited for Tang En to pass by him before, whispering to him, “The boss really likes you, but his character is just like that. Don’t take it to heart.”

Tang En nodded his head. “I like this kind of character.”

Bowyer smiled. “We like it, too.”

Chapter 50: The Real Legend Part 2

The sun at 3 p.m. in the afternoon reflected in through the large glass window and shone on the table. The circuit of gold that was inlaid on the ceramic cup looked glittery in the sunlight. The golden yellow cookies looked as if they had been naturally baked under the sun and smelled delicious. Black tea with sugar, in the warm afternoon, with people gathered for chatting formed the traditional English high tea.

Mrs. Clough had finished preparations and was sitting beside her husband. She smiled and listened to the guys’ conversation. Her husband had just completed a liver transplantation surgery and was still in the recovery phase. She felt relieved now that the doctor had said that the operation was quite a success. The old man’s excessive drinking and smoking habits in his younger years, had threatened his health and, ultimately, his life.

His condition especially worsened after he was no longer the manager of Nottingham Forest. There was a period of time when Mrs. Clough felt her husband had even lost the hope and will to live. Thus it was such a pleasure see her husband being so energetic for once.

Walker was telling Tang En’s locker room story. Clough started laughing when Walker said a group of fans appeared inside the changing room and stunned the players and had Bowyer shouting. Bowyer was embarrassed under Clough’s teasing laughter.

Tang En had suspected he would be the subject of the conversation for high tea. As a result, he did not expect Clough to ignore him after he laughed at the story. Clough went on to ask the three old colleagues to update him about their lives and at the same time recalled the times they fought together and the funny things that happened in the changing room in their time, as well. Tang En, as a listener, learned a lot about them. Bowyer and Burns were both key players that followed Clough to the championship of the UEFA Champions League twice. Even Walker was just a junior in front of them. What about Tony Twain... though his position was the highest among the four, he had the least to say. He did not have many things to say as he had no knowledge or memory about football in the 70s and 80s. He could only use it as an opportunity to boost his knowledge.

If he were just a football fan, he would have been so proud and delighted to be there talking with them. He probably would have given his full attention, listening closely to the old players' and managers' stories. But as a professional manager, he was depressed.

At first, he was expecting to receive compliments from this king and to be the spotlight of their conversation. He had imagined them all praising him, assuring him, and encouraging him. Yet, none of that happened.

He started to feel distracted and turned to look out of the window more often. Although he thought his actions were natural and that he hid them well, someone still observed them.

As Walker finished the last cookie, Clough stood up with his wife's help. "I think it's time for me to walk my dog." In response, they also stood up and bowed farewell to Clough and Mrs. Clough politely.

Tang En pouted while saying goodbye to them, feeling quite disappointed. Nothing had happened that afternoon, and he felt that he wasted the whole afternoon's precious time for nothing.

They waved to Clough who was holding his pet dog, Sam, outside of his house, and then the four of them drove back to Nottingham.

On the way back, Walker realized that Twain's mood was not good. He rolled his eyes as he figured out the reason.

"Tony, want to listen to a story?"

"Okay." His reply sounded very depressed. He looked exactly like a child that had not gotten his way. Walker snickered in the back.

Burns saw Walker's face, and he tried to ask him what was up. Walker hinted and secretly pointed at Twain, and Burns guessed the reason.

"Have you heard of Roy Keane?" Walker asked.

"Of course I've heard of him. Who hasn't? The current captain of Manchester United and the leading defending midfielder in the Premier League and even the whole of football."

"When Keane played his first match as a player for Forest, despite losing the match, his performance was not bad. Everyone was talking about this Irish young man who represented Forest for the first time, and they were all asking, 'Hey, who the hell is that guy?'"

Twain shrugged his shoulders in the front seat. "Except for the final result, it was a successful first showcase."

"Everyone thought like that, and Keane was no exception. Then the next day, before training, Keane saw the boss in the changing room, and the boss asked him his name..."

Tang En interrupted Walker. "There's no way that he would not remember the name of a player that he had just fielded for the first time the day before."

"Of course he remembered, but he asked anyway. Keane just sincerely answered, 'Roy'. After that, do you know what the boss did?"

"No idea." Twain shook his head.

Walker laughed. "The boss took off his dirty boots that were full of mud from walking his dog around the field. Then he said to Keane, 'Roy, could you help me clean these?' And with no hesitation, Roy agreed immediately."

At that point, Tang En turned and looked at Des Walker, who smiled.

"You finished with the story?"

"There is still an ending left. The young guy who helped the boss clean his shoes has since become the leader of Manchester United and the captain of the Ireland National Team."

Twain and Walker looked at each other. After a while, Twain nodded and said, "I got your story. Thank you, Des."

"You should thank the boss. If you really want to show your appreciation, just treat me to some drinks tonight." Walker elbowed Burns, hinting that he would have more businesses.

"No problem. You can drink all you want!" Upon understanding Clough's intention, Tang En's mood got much better, and his voice raised.

As he watched the road that extended before him, Tang En felt that what he had learned that afternoon would be meaningful for his entire life. Clough had indeed told him something extraordinarily important.

Blake, you are just a newbie who just joined less than half a year ago, and no one cares about you. It's too early for you to be proud and arrogant!

The golden shepherd dog was jumping around happily in front of the old man. He went into some bushes and frightened a few wagtails. The wagtails chirped as Sam apparently enjoyed invading their home very much.

After criticizing the shepherd's home invasion, the beautiful yellowish-green birds hovered at the forest edge, flew in front of the old man, and then far out of sight.

Sam was back from the bushes. The old man bent down and scratched his neck. "Such a bad boy you are. You scared our guests away. Wagtails... I have not seen them for a long time."

Sam moaned and seemed sad. The old man laughed, firmly patting his back. "All right, I know you didn't mean it. Go and continue to play!"

Sam cried happily and ran away, and then the old man made his way up slowly. He looked past Sam, beyond the pasture, beyond the old windmill by the river, beyond the forest ahead, and beyond the city that looked dim... beyond all the way to somewhere far away.

The short forest was scattered around in the early spring. The fallen leaves of the last autumn had long been dissolved into the soil. The fresh and green grass had grown in the charming breeze. It brought about the fishy smell from the soil as well as the scent of the grass. This was the smell of spring.