

Champions 81

Chapter 81: The Reception Part 2

Tang En did not know what was wrong with what he had just said. In short, there was an awkward silence.

Luckily, Robson quickly rescued Twain from the awkward situation. He smiled and said, "Maybe, maybe not. Mr. Twain, did you know I was born in Newcastle, but I didn't get the chance to coach my hometown team until I was 66 years old? Before that, I wandered everywhere, Holland, Portugal, Spain... Mr. Twain, you are much luckier than I, this old man. So, would you like the League Managers Association to provide you with legal assistance for those troublesome charges?"

Tang En shook his head and declined Robson's kind offer. "Thank you, Sir, but I have found a lawyer who will file the lawsuit on my behalf."

"That's good." Robson nodded and said, "Put aside your troubles and enjoy the reception. Have a good time." After that, both Robson and Clough left and walked toward a group of old men. They were the ex-managers of the England National Team. Or perhaps they were rivals when they were managers, but that did not stop them from drinking and chatting together after their retirements.

That was life and football.

No one introduced or warmly welcomed him into the circle, and Tang En had some doubts about Clough's intention in bringing him to the reception. He had not received an invitation from the League Managers Association before. Had Clough purely done it on a whim, or was it because his son, Nigel, had to leave and needed someone to accompany the old man who had just recovered from his operation?

Tang En stood at the door and sized up the lively venue. It was a large bar, but it was not as dazzling and high-society as Tang En had imagined. It was just a bigger place than the average bars people gathered to chat and drink in. People were coming and going as they pleased. Tang En knew some of them back when he was a fan and had seen their faces on television. He also saw rivals he had encountered when he coached the Forest team. But he did not know most of their names and backgrounds.

Ferguson was surrounded by a lot of people who were congratulating the Premier League Manager of the Decade and paying him all sorts of compliments. Flattery was not exclusive to any nation or race; it was popular everywhere. Ferguson smilingly accepted the congratulations from the others. He was in a very good mood after Manchester United overturned Arsenal and won the Premier League title for that season.

But Tang En did not intend to join in the fun. Firstly, he and Sir Alex were not familiar with each other. Secondly, he had a proud character and did not like to follow the crowd. If the crowd were to leave Sir Alex Ferguson alone at this point, he would take the initiative to go up and congratulate him. But if most people were doing the same thing, he would think it was beneath his dignity to do so. He did not necessarily dislike Ferguson and his accomplishments. It was purely driven by his character.

Everyone liked to join in the fun, but he deliberately stayed in the corner. Just like his regular seat in the Forest Bar, he was in the farthest corner. He had walked around till he was in a corner with no one. He

coolly watched the group of people and did not step into the excitement of this circle. These men were the managers of the professional clubs, the real managers. But he was nothing but a substitute who was fired.

Ferguson was the focal point of the room. Even standing before these accomplished retirees, he knew he could have a place that belonged to him.

Tang En randomly found an empty seat and slowly sipped his whisky. Feeling slightly bored, he started playing the “spot a familiar face” game to see how many faces he could recognize.

He recognized a lot of faces that he had previously heard of in name, but had rarely seen. However, he did not see two foreign managers in the crowd. One was Claudio Ranieri, the manager of Chelsea, which was rumored to be in the middle of an acquisition. Perhaps many people in this room did not know what was going to happen, but Tang En knew that very soon, The Tinkerman, Claudio Ranieri, was about to become the object of their jealousy. It was June 27th. If he remembered correctly, on July 1st or 2nd, the Chelsea officials would publicly announce that Abramovich was the official new owner of the London club. Bates had originally bought the Chelsea club for just £1, and now he had sold it for £60,000,000. And with all his debts totally wiped cleaned, it was a good deal. Tang En had a regret: why had he not transmigrated to before 1982, and then been ahead of this Jewish man to buy Chelsea at the cost of a pound?

The other one was Ferguson’s arch-rival in the Premier League for a decade, the French manager of Arsenal, Arsène Wenger.

Tang En thought about it, and Wenger’s absence was understandable. This Frenchman was almost incompatible with the entire English football community. He never sat down with a rival manager after a match to have a drink. Even though that was an English football tradition, “Le Professeur” Wenger had no intention of following it. In his view, many of the English football traditions were decadent and deep-seated problems that blocked the development of football in the country.

In this respect, Tang En fully agreed. He too did not think that it was a good tradition to smoke and drink during halftime and discuss how to play in the second half.

While Tang En was in a daze, someone came up beside him. “Excuse me, has someone taken this seat?” he asked politely. Tang En did not respond, and he reflexively shook his head.

“Thank you.” The person sat down and put out his hand to introduce himself to Twain. “Hello, I’m David Moyes.”

Upon hearing this name, Tang En slightly shook his body to pull himself out of his reverie and turned to look at the young manager with some surprise. He had slightly pale skin, a skinny, sharp face, light-brown short hair, and gray eyes. It was the Everton manager, David Moyes!

“Ah! Hello, I’m Tony Twain. Very nice to meet you.” Tang En quickly reached his hand out to respond in kind.

“Likewise.” Moyes took back his hand and pulled out a handkerchief from his pocket to wipe the sweat from his forehead. “Why are you sitting here alone?”

"I'm not too fond of crowds," said Tang En with a shrug, and then he suddenly remembered that he had forgotten one thing. "Congratulations on winning the LMA Manager of the Year last season."

"Thank you." Moyes gave a modest smile. Last season was the first time he had managed a Premier League team. He had not expected to succeed. Tang En favored this young manager because he had followed the Everton matches closely. Everton received the sponsorship of the Chinese Electronics firm, Kejian, in the 02-03 season. Two Chinese players came to the team to try out and train. Finally, Li Tie successfully remained to play in the Premier League and wore an Everton jersey with Chinese characters printed on the chest.

Tang En did not know what to say next. They would have fallen into an awkward silence, but Moyes suddenly spoke up. "I remember now, Mr. Twain. You're the manager of Nottingham Forest!"

The words stabbed at Tang En's sore spot. He shook his head and smiled bitterly, "I used to be."

"Although I'm managing a Premier League team, our family still regularly watches Preston North End's matches. My eldest son is a loyal fan of Preston North End. He sometimes talked to me about PNE's opponents, but he talked the most about Nottingham Forest. Do you know why?"

Tang En did not answer. He just looked at the smiling Moyes.

"Because the Forest team has an impressive manager. My son said so. The Forest team was the team with the biggest difference in their performance between the first and second half of the season. If you're worried about where to go, it would be better to go to Preston North End. I believe the people there would welcome you."

Behind the three phone numbers in Tang En's pocket, there was no Preston North End name. But Moyes's remarks tempted him a little. He sat in his seat and pondered. Moyes did not bother him. He just drank his wine.

At this time, Tang En saw Clough wave to him from the crowd. He quickly apologized to Moyes beside him. "I'm sorry, the Boss is calling me. It was nice to meet you."

Moyes shook hands with him. "Me too. I hope that one day we can meet on the field. That would be very exciting!"

After saying goodbye to Moyes, Tang En went to Clough's side and found two Asians with black hair standing next to the old man. They were a man and a woman, and they looked like reporters. "What's the matter, Boss?"

"Well, go and help me call Bobby over here."

Tang En nodded. His attention was more focused on the woman. She looked very young, about twenty-something years old. She was dressed in a light gray suit with a pair of slender legs underneath her short skirt. The only thing about her that Tang En somewhat disliked was her short hair. With her back facing him, he could not see her face, so Tang En only quickly glanced at her and turned to look for Robson.

It was easy to spot him because his silver hair was quite striking. Tang En brought Robson to Clough and Clough pointed out Robson to the two reporters and spoke. "These two Chinese reporters asked me why I let you be the manager of the England National Team." When Greenwood left the position of the

England National Team manager in 1982, the calls for Clough to take over the position were more than for anyone else. But in the end, it was Bobby Robson who became the manager.

When they heard that Robson had come, the two reporters turned back. At this point, Tang En was able to see the female reporter's appearance. Tang En breathed a sigh of relief when he saw her pretty face with light make up. He was glad that she did not belong to the "when seen from behind, one wants to get closer, but when seen from the front, one wants to run away" type which was popular back home. Her features were exquisite and quite Eastern Asian. She was indeed Chinese. As for the other male reporter, Tang En automatically ignored him.

The two reporters were rather excited when they saw Robson, and Twain was naturally ignored by them.

Robson laughed when he heard Clough's question. "That was because everyone knew you didn't want to deal with the damn Football Association!"

The reporters laughed, too, and Tang En stood behind them, as quiet and low-key as a personal attendant. His gaze was fully on the beautiful Chinese female reporter. Watching her cover her mouth while she laughed happily, he felt that he did not waste his time coming here today. It was better to have a beautiful woman to admire, than to look up and see a sea of men.

The two Chinese reporters chatted with Robson for a while and left with satisfaction. Tang En's "scenic view" also ended with their departure, so he returned to his corner. Moyes had been pulled by someone to celebrate his first personal award. When he looked at the 39-year-old Moyes who was surrounded by the crowd and showing a smile of success, Tang En felt bile rising in his throat. He never thought he was weaker than others, but this time he had lost at the starting line.

He loathed failure and did not want to be a loser. But on this occasion, he was the biggest loser. Tang En did not understand why Clough had brought him here. He felt annoyed just observing the lively chatter of these people. Ferguson, Eriksson, Moyes... Finding himself among these big-name managers, he had no intention of being a groupie, because he considered all of them his rivals.

One day, Tang En will defeat you all, one by one! This was not an ignorant fellow's fantasy. This was an oath he pledged to himself deep within his heart.

Taking his physical condition into account, Brian Clough and Tang En took their leave of everyone after the cold buffet lunch. They were warm in their farewells, but almost everyone did not seem to see Twain standing beside Clough. For these professional managers, they had seen too many newcomers like Twain, so they did not care about him.

In that circle, if one wanted to gain everyone's attention, wanted other people to surround one, wanted to receive their approval, it was necessary to prove oneself.

Tang En had really wanted to ask Clough exactly why he brought him there once they were in the car. But as soon as he got into the car, the old man dozed off in the back seat. In his light snoring, they returned to Nottingham from Sheffield.

Tang En told Nigel he was not going straight to his house. He wanted to visit the Forest training ground to see it again.

When the car stopped at the gate of the Forest team youth training camp, Tang En and Nigel said goodbye. Then he looked at the Boss who had his eyes closed and seemed to be fast asleep. He opened the door and was ready to get out of the car. Just that moment, he heard Clough's old and faint voice ring out, "Son."

Tang En looked back at Clough with his eyes still shut.

"Nowadays, a lot of people still mention my achievements and glory in this city from time to time." Clough leaned against the seat and murmured, "I had led my team to win two European Cups, one Premier League title, four League Cups, one UEFA Super Cup, 42 consecutive undefeated matches... What do you think of such achievements?"

"Impressive," answered Tang En.

"Then how about when I lost three matches out of six, set the second worst coaching record of the club's history and was dismissed after 44 days, what do you think of that result?"

"Er..." Tang En did not know how to answer the question.

"Now, there are very few people who will mention that period when I was the manager of Leeds United." The old man sighed. Perhaps that was one of the regrets he had in his career as a manager. "Let's go home, Nigel."

All the while, the old man did not open his eyes.

Tang En said goodbye to the two men and got out of the car. Then he stood on the side of the road and watched the white Ford sedan disappear at the end of the avenue. With the wind stirring up his hair and clothes, he thought there was no need for him to question the boss's purpose in taking him to the League Managers Association reception.

Because he already had the answer in his heart.

No matter what my final choice is, I still want to thank you, Boss. This is the second time you've helped me.

Chapter 82: To Stay Or To Go? Part 1

Tang En stood in Wilford Lane, which was shaded by the trees with the incessant song of the cicadas above him. To the north of him was the youth team training ground and to the south was the adult team training ground. Both training grounds were quiet and deserted today.

He knew that the adult team would only begin the formal training tomorrow, and the youth team was still on holiday. Other than the staff, there would be no one else in these two grounds. For them, their long and beautiful vacation was not over yet.

Tang En walked in from the gate of the youth training ground. There was not a single car in the parking lot and the office building door was closed. Both his feet felt hot as he walked on the asphalt road with the scorching afternoon sun beating down on it. Today might be the hottest day of the year.

He skirted around the two-story building and walked toward the sidelines of the first field, and it was empty with no one around. The first and third fields were connected and separated in the middle by wire mesh fence up to seven meters in high. Tang En looked out and saw that there was no one on the third field either. It seemed that the youth team was still on holiday.

Tang En stood on the empty training ground. If he chose to stay, this would become his domain, and Kerslake would become his assistant again. But what good was it to lead the youth team matches? Tang En was feeling a little depressed. In his eyes, the sense of achievement brought by the youth team's match victory was no more than one third of that of the adult team. As he was accustomed to being the focus of attention, what was the point, even, if he led the youth team to win the Youth FA Cup championship?

He looked at the field and decided to leave.

He came to a forked road when he stepped out from the first field. If he went straight ahead, he would return to the main gate. If he turned right, it would lead to the northernmost side of the second field. The quality of the turf in the second field was not very good, so it was rarely used.

Tang En had a completely different feeling from everyone else regarding the second field. He had only been on the second field once after he started coaching the Forest team. That experience occupied an important place in his memory. He had met the adorable Gavin there, and George Wood also gained his first fan.

It was a place of sadness for Tang En. All the events of great joy and sadness for the latter half of the 02-03 season started to turn from there.

Standing at the fork in the road, Tang En felt that all this seemed to reflect the choices he had to face now—move forward and leave the training ground, leave the sleeping Forest; or go right ...What does it mean to go right?

Tang En looked at the path that had been extended to the front and hesitated. He then chose to go to the second field.

As he approached, he found that there was a man on the field, running back and forth between two cone markers.

It was George Wood!

Tang En did not think that he would see him here. Had the clock turned back the time? Was it not June 27th now, but March 21st? Well, there was something different, like Wood did not have a coach around him, and Tang En did not have Michael and his son Gavin beside him.

He stood outside the wire mesh and quietly watched Wood train. Wood did not discover his presence. He just continued to concentrate on doing the most basic exercises.

Tang En stood and watched for about 15 minutes before George Wood finally changed his training routine. He put the two cone markers together with about half a meter gap in the middle. Then he stood five meters away to kick the ball toward the cone markers. Tang En did not understand what he was trying to do. He also did not see this kind of training routine in Kerslake's youth team training or

Walker's adult team training. He had intended to quietly walk away, but now he decided to stay. He wanted to see what was going on.

Wood kicked the ball 10 times. He was obviously not training to shoot the goal, because he was deliberately suppressing the speed and power of his delivery and was very careful about his accuracy. If the football shot past in between or outside of the two cone markers, he would shake his head. If the ball hit the cone marker, he would make a fist.

Then Wood changed his angle and positioned himself at a 45-degree angle to the cone markers to repeat the 10 ball kicks. As before, most of his shots would pass the sides of the cone markers and only very few finally hit the target.

Tang En looked at the distance between the two markers, and then he looked down at his legs and separated them slightly, about half a meter apart. It was exactly the length of the gap between a man's legs when he stood with his legs apart!

This kid was trying to practice passing on his own!

The end of June was the hottest time of the year in Nottingham. In the empty training ground, only George Wood was hard at work and training. The hot season, bad weather, relaxing vacation... he was unconcerned with all of these. And because it was during the vacation, the training ground would not provide a lunch specifically for him. He had to make several round trips between here and his house every day. His training jersey had been soaked with perspiration many times over, so he simply took off his jersey and hung it on the goal crossbar every time he started training and trained shirtless. His muscular, tense body seemed to contain an explosive force. Every time Wood unleashed an action, the sweat would run down his clearly-defined body. His entire person would glisten with brilliance under the scorching sun.

George... If you can't succeed, then no one in the world can! succeed!

In order not to disturb Wood's training, he quietly left the remote training ground surrounded by the woods. Looking up at the sky, Tang En decided to go to one last place.

Nottingham was a city built on hills, with undulating and varied terrains. The church in front of Tang En was built on a small hill. The bricked chapel was not as grand and exquisite as the famous St. Mary's Church in the city center. Like the buildings surrounding it, the ash grey façade was not very impressive. But under the clear blue sky, the chapel, which stood on the green grass, made him feel comfortable. He felt calm just looking at its façade.

Tang En went around the church and walked along a gravel road through the woods. He came to a cemetery surrounded by a forest.

To his surprise, a man was standing in front of Gavin Bernard's tombstone.

"Michael!" He shouted, breaking the quiet atmosphere of the cemetery.

The man turned around and was somewhat surprised to find that the man who had called him was Twain. "Tony? What are you doing here?"

Tang En stepped forward and placed a bouquet of lilies in front of the tombstone. "I came here to do exactly what you came here to do. It's been more than a month, how are you feeling?"

Michael shook his head. He was still in low spirits. "Tony, it's just as well that I ran into you here. I was planning to say goodbye to you."

"Goodbye?" Tang En sensed something was not quite right in the air. "Why are you saying goodbye? Where are you going?"

"Los Angeles."

"America?!" Tang En exclaimed. "Why are you going so far away?"

Michael looked at his son's gravestone and slowly said, "I forgot to tell you that my wife is American. She can't bear the pain and grief of staying here and thinking of Gavin all the time. Now Nottingham is a place of sadness for our family. Everything she sees reminds her of Gavin, the house, the yard, the street outside our door, a neighbor, even a football match... I don't want her to cry all day long. I want to take her from here and return to her hometown. Perhaps it will be better."

Tang En frowned. "What about Gavin?"

"Gavin is not like us." Michael knelt to brush away a few fallen leaves off the tombstone. Then he looked at the golden name on the white marble tombstone. "I can change my feelings about football for my family. But he won't. He'll always be a Forest fan. From birth to death, he will always be."

After those words, he stood up again and said to Twain, "You must be feeling pretty happy? You don't have to be afraid that someone will abuse you in the back of the technical area the next season."

Tang En gave a wry smile. "Michael, don't you even read the football news anymore? I was sacked by the new chairman of the Forest team, and my agency contract has expired."

Michael did not expect this answer, and he stared at Twain in astonishment for a long while to make sure he was not joking. "Damn it! Where will you go? The youth team? Or...?"

Tang En shook his head. "I have asked myself these questions many times in the last two days, and I still haven't got an answer."

"Are you here looking for answers?"

"I don't know."

"Tony, would you like to hear the advice of an old fan who used to follow the Forest team for 44 years?"

Tang En looked up at Michael.

"Although I have decided to leave football, I still recall the first half of my life. The time that I will miss the most, besides Clough's era, is that half of the season when you led the team. Both of you have some similarities, such as passion and attention to details. You are both full of talent and many conditions required for success. I still remember that day Clough came to the team was January 3rd, 1975, and you came on January 1st, a difference of only two days. What a shame. We all may have missed a very legendary story." Michael patted Twain's shoulder and walked past him.

“Goodbye, Tony.”

“Goodbye, Michael.” Tang En stared blankly as the man gradually faded away in the distance.

After his strange arrival in that place, he was in a bar fight with that man, and then they became good friends. In this unfamiliar place, Michael gave him a lot of help that could not be thanked with just words. He had wanted to repay Michael’s friendship with achievements, but all that vanished with the accident.

Chapter 83: To Stay Or To Go? Part 2

Gavin was dead, Michael was gone, and as for himself... his future was uncertain. Where would he end up? He looked around and gazed at the blue sky again. He had arrived there half a year ago. Although his body and instincts had accepted this fact, he still could not accept that he was British in his heart.

Tang En saw an epitaph inscribed on Gavin’s tombstone: “Some are dead, and some are living.”

Covered by the flowers which were placed there, the bottom section of the tombstone seemed to have something else inscribed on it. He knelt on one knee to move the flowers aside and found a line of small words in black. If he had not paid close attention, he would have basically overlooked it and treated it as part of the pattern on the tombstone. The inscription read:

Here rests the most beloved son of Michael Bernard and Fiona Bernard, the most loyal fan of Nottingham Forest, and George Wood’s eternal supporter, Gavin Bernard.

Tang En was struck by this inscription. He had to use his hand to support himself on the tombstone so as not to fall. Staring at the fine line of words on the glossy marble headstone, it was as if it reflected the father and son pair strolling out of the stadium, wearing the Forest team red scarves around their necks. The father was singing loudly to cheer the team on, and then they clapped together and shouted, ‘Forest! Forest!’, the gruff man’s voice mingling with that of the young boy’s, as they gradually walked away.

Edward Doughty was in his office talking to the new manager, Stan Collymore, about the new season when he received a call from Twain.

“Tony, I’m so glad you called me.” He had no intention of being evasive in front of Collymore.

“Edward, I’ve decided to stay on the team. But I’m not going to be an assistant manager to Collymore.” Twain’s voice came out of the phone and sounded vaguely unclear. Edward looked at Collymore sitting opposite him. He did not seem to hear anything.

“I will return to the youth team, but I hope you can agree to my two conditions: First, my youth team will have nothing to do with Collymore’s First Team. He will have no right to interfere in any of my work. Second, if you do decide to change the manager one day, please remember to call me first. After you have thought these over, please call me back.”

“Wait... There’s no problem, Tony! I can agree to this now,” Edward hurriedly replied as if he were afraid that Twain would change his mind.

“Thank you. Then I’ll leave you to it. Bye, Edward.”

“Bye, Tony.”

Tang En put his cell phone in his pocket and pulled out the few pieces of paper with the phone numbers and club names on them. He looked at them, crumpled them up, and threw them into a roadside trash can.

Ian Bowyer had already left the team to manage Hereford United. But Tang En still clearly remembered what he said. “Only you can lead the Forest team, Tony.”

That’s right, only I can lead this team to victory. Collymore is nothing but a passing traveler in this Forest.

Stan Collymore, I’ll remain in the youth team and watch how long you can stay.

The trouble with the allegations that Twain might face had also been cleared. Shania’s family did not appoint a lawyer to send a warning notification to Twain, nor did he receive any subpoena from the court. The media later also confirmed that the plump auntie had said those things to Twain in a moment of anger. The lawyer, Jack Landy, had advised Twain to sue the media, which had added fuel to the fire and created the trouble by starting the rumors and exaggerating the incident. Tang En carefully considered it for a long time and decided not to sue them for now. His life had undergone major changes. He now urgently needed to prove himself again at work so that everything could get on the right track again.

But with this incident, those tabloids left a deep impression on him. He would remember their names and then in the future... deal with them one by one. One must know, Tang En was someone who would bear grudges.

Once he had determined his way forward, Tang En threw himself fervently into work. For him, he was basically back to the starting point. After he finally got to know the Forest First Team with great difficulty, he returned to the youth team. Now he must start to get to know this youth team from the beginning. Fortunately, Kerlake would help him assimilate with the team as soon as possible. Tang En did not need to worry on that point.

Instead, he had to be clear about his objective for the youth team—a result he could give to Edward Doughty to prove that he was the best manager for the Forest team and not anyone else.

The First Team had resumed training, and most of the players were surprised when they saw their new manager. They probably did not understand why Tony Twain, who had performed so well in the second half of the last season, was replaced by the new chairman with the inexperienced Stan Collymore.

But this was football. Who could clearly explain what happened behind the scenes?

Edward inherited his old man’s, Nigel Doughty’s, shares in the club. Although he was the chairman, he did not have absolute power within the club. A lot of matters required the board of directors to convene and decide. This was what Edward and his financial advisor, Allan Adams, detested. They wanted to transform Nottingham Forest into a modern enterprise, like the Edwards family’s Manchester United. But the board was very wary of the two Americans and was always a hindrance.

Edward had already invested £500,000 into the club to repay the debts owed to the bank. After the team officially started the summer training, he announced again that the transfer budget for this season was about £3,000,000.

After hearing this piece of news, Tang En could only sigh that the lecher had better luck than him. If he had been given so much money six months ago, he could have guaranteed that the Forest team would now be readying for the Premier League matches, and he would not have been dismissed for the team not being promoted.

Ah, this is really life!

The Forest youth team assembled two days after the First Team, and what slightly gratified Tang En was that the lads were delighted when he appeared at the youth training ground and was introduced by David Kerlake as the new head of the youth team. No one had any objections. Tang En knew that his performance with the First Team had laid a solid foundation for both now and in the future. He had already demonstrated his ability, and now he did not need to establish any kind of authority with the youth team. This group of boys would listen to him. He only needed to consider how to lead the team to play with good results.

Tang En was not quite sure how to coach the youth team, so he simply transferred the same style that he had adopted for the First Team. He just needed to achieve good results. All else would be taken care of by David Kerlake, and everything would be fine. Normally, the youth team would be grooming players to be substitutes for the First Team. But Tang En did not want to pour in his utmost effort for Collymore. He earnestly wished that the lecherous maniac would be fired soon due to bad performance. If he wanted a player from his team, the answer would be, “No way!”

Wes Morgan, who had briefly played a few matches for the Forest First Team during the end phase of last season, had returned to the youth team and continued to be the team captain. With him there together with Tang En, he believed that everything would go smoothly.

As for George Wood, Tang En had agreed to stay, partly because he did not want to see this kid’s career come to a premature end. He knew very well that except for him, no one could manage the kid. If he had left, then it would be harder to predict Wood’s fate. He firmly believed that George Wood had a great talent. In addition, he had seen this kid’s attitude toward football. As long as he had a good coach, there would be another star player in the English football world in the next few years—a ferocious defensive midfielder machine.

Tang En released Wood from his solo training and allowed him to train with the team. He believed with him on the sidelines, the kid would exercise restraint. In addition to his personal skills, the most important part of being a defensive midfielder was teamwork and an excellent awareness. And all these required him to train with the team so that he could accumulate the experience.

When Tang En began to strive again in the youth team, Collymore was not idle. His frequent attendance at various press conferences, cocktail receptions, and dinner parties was a marvelous time for him. That feeling of living again under the spotlight was too wonderful for words.

He threw a lot of the team’s matters to Desmond Walker to deal with. He had dutifully stayed on the sidelines the entire first day that the First Team had begun training. But the next day, he was nowhere

to be seen. According to him, he was on the hunt to recruit players for Nottingham to add on to the team's strengths for their Premier League promotion goal for that season.

It might be so...

Chapter 84: Accidental Success Part 1

The young reporter, Pierce Brosnan, was assigned to City Ground by the newspaper, where a high-profile press conference was about to be held. All the Nottingham Forest supporters were excited about this press conference for the summer's transfer market. Almost all the local media in Nottingham had come, and the London media had also sent people to attend.

Sitting at the table filled with microphones from the various media companies, the newly appointed Forest manager, Stan Collymore, was pleased as punch. The new chairman of the club, Edward Doughty, sat on his right and looked equally pleased. Sitting in between the two men, was a Ukrainian of small stature and the main reason for this press conference. He was the former Tottenham Hotspur striker no one had expected to come to play for a League One team, Serhiy Rebrov.

He was by far the most important big-name player in the League One transfer market! Maybe the new manager, Collymore, who had missed the training sessions, was really out looking for players everywhere.

Two million pounds was the Ukrainian's current price, even though he was worth up to £11,000,000 in 2000 when he transferred from FC Kyiv Dynamo to the North London team, Tottenham Hotspur FC. However, after three years, the former partner of Shevchenko had long become a huge burden that Tottenham had hoped to get rid of the most.

He had 29 appearances in his first season, but only scored nine goals, which was severely inconsistent with his value. Then the Ukrainian striker, who was often mired in a state of injury and illness, had only scored 12 goals for the team in two and a half years. Such a performance was obviously dissatisfactory to the team and the fans. Rebrov was a player who was signed when George Graham was coaching the Spurs. But when Glenn Hoddle became the Spurs manager, he began to gradually be reduced to a substitute.

The Spurs were eager to sell this ineffectual, overpaid Ukrainian striker. And it just so happened that Nottingham Forest needed to bring in a talented, high-profile player who had the power to rally the supporters. The two teams managed to strike a deal. Although the £2,000,000-transfer fee was somewhat low, this "measly" sum was still acceptable compared to letting this player stay on the team and continuing to pay him his salary until he was free to leave when his contract expired, leaving the Spurs without a single cent in return on their investment.

The Forest team was also grateful to the Spurs for their generosity. After Abramovich had become the Chelsea owner, almost all the players had doubled their transfer fees. They were lucky to buy a player from the Spurs "on the cheap."

After serious consideration, Rebrov felt he would rather directly transfer to Nottingham Forest than to be on loan to Turkey.

Collymore had assured him that the team would return to the Premier League at the end of the season. He had also promised him the position of main striker and had shown him his grand plan for the team. All these things touched Rebrov, who decided to “condescend” to join the second-highest division of the English Football League and prove himself again.

Of course, his salary was the highest on the team.

Collymore faced the microphones and said with a smile, “I have assured you that we will be in the Premier League in the coming season. Do you believe me now?”

Rebrov also smiled, took over the press subject and said to everyone, “Nottingham Forest is a great team and once had a glorious history. I hope my arrival will help the team return to the top once again.” His words made a favorable impression on many Nottingham local journalists. The Foresters liked others to mention the former glorious years to them. But this period of history was too long ago and not everyone knew about it. Even the professional players often did not know that this team, which was in the second division league, had acquired such impressive achievements.

Therefore, Rebrov, who had taken the initiative to bring up the past, immediately changed the local media’s attitudes. They originally had not been favorably impressed by this “Premier League parallel import.” And now they believed that the Ukrainian could really contribute to the team. But, had no one ever thought that the Ukrainian was just regurgitating information he had memorized?

Pierce Brosnan was in deep contemplation when he looked at the three people. The Ukrainian striker had not proved himself in the Premier League. Could he prove his ability in League One, which was of a lower skill level? In his opinion, the failure of Rebrov’s Spurs career was not a question of strength, but a result of the incompatibility of his personal style and the English style of football.

Collymore, in Brosnan’s eyes, was inferior to Twain. What Tony Twain could not do, could Stan Collymore do it?

Although he had been ridiculed by Twain, that person was capable, and he would not negate a person due to his personal preferences. Like Tang En, he could not understand the appointment by the new manager of the Forest team. In his view, the failure of the playoffs was not solely Twain’s responsibility, even though he took on all the blame after the defeat. Suddenly he raised his hand, and Collymore nodded at him to indicate that he could stand and ask his question.

Pierce Brosnan was no longer that intern reporter who had stuttered when he was ridiculed by Twain. He looked intently at Collymore and clearly stated his question. “Mr. Manager, the pre-season training has already been underway for 10 days, and you’ve only signed a striker. What kind of lineup do you intend to use to charge into the Premier League?”

When this question was asked, there was a minor commotion at the conference. Some people turned to look at Brosnan, who was standing in the back row with a microphone, and some people looked at Collymore with smirks and wanted to see how he was going to handle it. Others were whispering to each other, discussing the question. The English media had always been widely known for being tough, tricky, and ruthless. It was not their style to gather around one person to sing his praises. It was the fine tradition of the media to stand up and sing a different tune like Pierce Brosnan.

The smile on Collymore's face froze, and then slowly disappeared. And sitting beside him, Rebrov also looked a little awkward, because the person who signed him was Collymore, and questioning Collymore's ability was tantamount to questioning his ability. Only Doughty sat on the side with his arms around his chest and wore an inexplicable smile on his face. As if he were a spectator who had nothing to do with the matter.

Brosnan glanced at him and turned his attention back on Collymore. If this rookie—yes, although Brosnan had only just been confirmed as a regular reporter, to the face of this first-time manager he would be blunt enough to call him a rookie—did not give himself a satisfactory statement, he would not give up.

"This..." Collymore slowly opened his mouth, his eyes scurrying around, and he was still wondering how to answer the reporter's question. "Just as you said, the pre-season training has only been going for 10 days. We still have more time to perfect the team. I think what you will see next is that there will be more high-level players appearing on City Ground, and the team transfer process is far from over." After he spoke, he looked at Doughty, hoping that he would come out and say something on his behalf.

"Yes, the transfer process of the Forest team is not over yet. We believe in Mr. Collymore's ability," Edward Doughty corroborated.

Brosnan apparently did not intend to let them off, so he followed up and asked, "Mr. Chairman. Last season, the team that manager, Tony Twain, was defeated in the playoffs and was stripped of his position. So, I would like to ask, if we were to still remain in League One at the end of the season," as he said this, Brosnan turned to Collymore, "will Mr. Stan Collymore still be sitting here for interviews?"

These words felt quite combative, and the press conference was immediately filled with the presence of gunpowder.

Collymore's bad temper seemed to rise again, and he wanted to open his mouth to censor this overconfident reporter, but Doughty interjected. "Sorry, I never assess something that has not happened yet. If you're asking if Mr. Collymore will be dismissed, you will have to wait until that day when I am able to answer you. All right, everybody," Edward stood up and clapped his hands, "let's go to the stadium where hundreds of loyal Forest fans are waiting."

The reporters got up and crowded around Collymore and Rebrov as they walked to the stadium behind the press conference room.

Pierce Brosnan did not squeeze to the front. He waited for everyone to leave before he followed at a distance. But he discovered that another man had also deliberately fallen behind.

Edward Doughty looked back at Brosnan and saw that he was looking at him, too. The two men stared intensely at each other. Both knew what the other meant, but they did not say anything in the end, and just headed toward the stadium.

When Brosnan was putting Collymore on the spot at the press conference, and Rebrov's arrival attracted half of Nottingham's attention, Tang En was not at the youth training ground. In fact, he was not even in the city.

Collymore disregarded and threw aside the team training. He said he had to search all over the world for the players needed for the team. Tang En was doing the same thing as him. The difference between the two men was that Tang En was not just talking.

The sea breeze caressed his hair and jacket lapel, and the air carried a hint of salty taste. These were the characteristics of a port city.

Tang En breathed in the damp seaside air and continued to focus on the field in front of him. There were many people around. Some were just ordinary fans, and some were like him. They stood there, each with a different reason for watching a fourteen and under youth team training game.

Chapter 85: Accidental Success Part 2

Yes, Tang En came there looking for what he considered in his mind a “wonderkid.” And so were the others. They were football scouts for all the major clubs. Southampton Football Club’s training program is well-known throughout England, and even all over Europe. Football scouts in various disguises often showed up there. Why the disguise? Because the Southampton club was not happy to have their young talent, after taking great pains to groom them, poached by opportunist scouts who didn’t have to spend a single penny.

Well-known football scouts within the circles could not appear there because they were too easily recognized.

Tang En did not have that worry. He was not famous in the scouting circles, and he wore sunglasses as a precaution.

He had been standing there for almost the entire afternoon. But honestly, he was disappointed.

He did not see Theo Walcott, who would be famous in the future. Tang En was sure that he did not just overlook him, because Walcott’s speed was too outstanding. If he had been on the field, he would have spotted him. There was only one explanation for it—Theo Walcott was not here.

This was Southampton’s youth training ground. If Theo Walcott was not there, could it be that he was not in Southampton? Could it be? He was certain that Walcott would be on Southampton’s youth team at this time, still a nobody and unknown to anyone.

Could it be...

Suddenly, an unpleasant thought flashed through Tang En’s mind. He thought of that incident when Lee Bowyer had a scuffle with his teammate, Defoe.

Could it be that the future he was familiar with had changed? Theo Walcott was not in Southampton, but went to some other team that had deep pockets, like Chelsea. Or did he simply not play football and was just a regular English kid who dutifully went to school every day?

“Dammit! What the hell! Damn transmigration!” Tang En lowered his head and softly cursed. The most depressing thing was not the transmigration itself, but to have transmigrated just to find out that what he knew in advance was now useless.

Tang En's foul language caught the attention of the short, portly man next to him. He turned to look at Twain and suddenly asked, "What are you talking about?"

Tang En was confounded by his remark. What do you mean, "What are you talking about?" Can't I mutter to myself without bothering you?

"I heard you said 'transmigration'. What does 'transmigration' mean?" This man seemed to be the type of person who was chummy with everyone, who would get to the point right away and could chat cordially with anyone he met.

"Oh, nothing. I was just talking to myself." Tang En made it obvious that he did not want to be disturbed by this person while working. He quickly closed the topic, leaving no room for the guy to continue the conversation.

But Tang En clearly underestimated this man's congeniality. The portly, middle-aged man nodded and quickly changed the subject. "What do you think of my son?"

"What?" Tang En's brain suddenly crashed. His hard drive light flashed for quite a while, but he did not understand how the two questions, "What are you talking about?" and "What do you think of my son?" were connected. It was as if the topic of conversation had jumped from Earth to Mars.

When Tang En did not speak, he took the initiative to pick up the thread of the conversation. "Are you a football scout? Arsenal? Manchester United? Chelsea? Liverpool? Or Tottenham Hotspur? Hmmm, let me think... maybe Real Madrid? Barcelona? AC Milan? Bayern Munich? Inter Milan?"

The fellow gave a rundown of almost all the names of the famous football clubs in the world in one breath. Tang En was dizzy just listening to him. He waved his hands at the man to signal for him to stop.

"Sorry, I'm not a scout, and I'm not working for any of those teams."

When he heard Tang En say that, the man was disappointed, and his interest in the conversation seemed to lessen. Just as Tang En was about to relax a little and move to a different spot to watch the match, the portly man returned to a previous topic. "What do you think of my son?"

Tang En, who had made a wasted trip, really wanted to rail at this jabbering man, I do not know your damned son! But he suppressed his anger and asked with gritted teeth, "Who's your son?"

The man did not perceive Tang En's angry tone. He extended his pudgy hand, pointed to the field, and said, "He's right over there!"

Tang En looked to where the man pointed, and he saw a group of children running on the field, huffing and puffing.

"Sir..." Tang En was unable to bear it any longer. The growl in his voice had begun to reverberate from his throat. "I asked you who your son was. I did not ask where he was." He was interrupted by the whistle from the field and the sound of cheers around him.

"Ah! The game is over! I'm sorry, I have to pick up my son." The man with the short-circuited brain abandoned Twain and squeezed out of the crowd.

At that moment, Tang En felt like, if he could, he would blow up the planet. His anger was raging in his heart. If someone were to argue with him right then, he would beat that person half to death. If the person who picked the quarrel happened to be that jabbering short, portly man...

That man turned back again and was accompanied by a child who would soon be as tall as him. The chummy man completely failed to notice that Twain's face was as dark as the British winter. He pushed the child forward and introduced him. "This is my son! What do you think? He's great!"

The man's loud voice attracted the attention of a few people nearby. They turned around to look and then kept walking. They had seen too many instances of a father approaching some unknown scout with his son to promote and market him.

No one took a liking to this ordinary child. But when Tang En saw the boy's face clearly, his anger instantly vanished without a trace.

Having just finished playing, the boy's Southampton jersey was soaked with perspiration, and it was stuck to his body, revealing his physique. Tang En gauged the boy's height, which was about 1.5 meters. The body was a little thin for a player. But that wasn't what got Tang En's attention. It was the child's face.

The boy pursed his lips and looked at Twain curiously, which highlighted his distinctive facial features even more. When Tang En first saw him, he thought that the child looked quite distinctive. His mouth was very prominent, which could be described with one word—simian. He looked quite simian.

That appearance suddenly reminded him of someone. So, he hesitantly asked the father next to the child, "Sir, what is your son's name?"

"Gareth! Gareth Bale!" When he spoke his son's name, the father looked proud.

Sure enough, Tang En thought. But he had to make sure.

"Is it G-A-R-E-T-H, Gareth, B-A-L-E, Bale?" He asked with anticipation.

The man nodded. "Yes! Gareth Bale! My son is very talented!"

Tang En also nodded, vigorously. "That's right!"

The number one left back wonderkid in Football Manager 2007 was the future Wales National Team's youngest player and scorer. Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United had been rivals in trying to sign this 18-year-old player. How could he not be a talent? He originally came to Southampton to find the 13-year-old Walcott, but he had unexpectedly encountered his future roommate!

He had lost a player and gained another. It did not matter that he did not find Theo Walcott. In any case, he was destined to belong to Arsène Wenger and Arsenal, and good attacking players were a dime a dozen in the future. But this child in front of his eyes would be the genuine article in a few years! Even a team like Real Madrid was frantically looking for an outstanding left back to replace Roberto Carlos, who was leaving soon. The entire world was short of left backs at that time.

Bale's father, seeing that Twain agreed with his opinion, happily said to Bale, "Look, son! This gentleman also agrees that you're a talent. Don't worry, you will have a promising future!"

The child just gave an indifferent, mumbled answer. He was obviously down and seemed to lack confidence.

Tang En sensed there was more to the story that would explain the kid's demeanor. So he asked, "Excuse me, but can I ask what has happened?"

When he saw that there was someone willing to listen to his grievances, the father just let all out. In the end, Tang En finally put together the ins and outs of the matter, after listening to the man rattle on without touching on the important points in his endless account.

The Welsh boy was indeed the Gareth Bale who was born in Cardiff, who Tang En knew of.

Although Gareth Bale was known as a "football talent" while playing for his school, the youth team professional managers had apparently seen enough "talents." Compared to Walcott, who was a talent that had already surpassed his level, Bale was considered a very ordinary player. Bale's father talked and cajoled for a very long time before Southampton's youth team agreed to his son's six-week trial. Today was the second time he had come. He was just in time to catch a training match. He played the second half, but did not display anything exciting. The little guy was very frustrated.

But when Tang En heard the story, he was so delighted that he wanted to laugh. All he knew of, before he had transmigrated, were Bale's accomplishments. He never knew he had an unknown back-story that was even more brilliant. He really wanted to thank the Southampton youth team coaches for giving him this great opportunity.

If I can't seize this opportunity, then I won't go back to Nottingham today. I'll just jump into the English Channel and drown myself!

The portly man told him that Walcott was in the club, but that he was not on that team. He had already been promoted to the 17 and under youth team. His two days of training time per week weren't even there. He was placed at the King Edward VI School with its AstroTurf field, where he was receiving a liberal arts education and training at the same time. No wonder Tang En had stood there all afternoon without finding him. But now Tang En did not care about a little tiger like Walcott.

He looked down and took out his notepad from his inside pocket, tore a piece of paper, wrote down his name, phone number, and the address and contact number of the Forest youth training ground. Just like he had handed it to Wood before, he stuffed the note into Bale's hands.

The man looked at Twain strangely, and the child looked down curiously at the words written on the note.

Tang En smilingly said to Bale's father, "Southampton doesn't believe in your son's ability. I believe. If you can, I hope you will bring Bale to the Nottingham Forest Youth team tomorrow afternoon. I think the Forest team will be happy to directly give your son an apprenticeship contract without any trial training."

"Nottingham Forest?!" The man yelled. "And you said you were not a scout!"

"I'm not lying to you, Sir," laughed Tang En. "I'm certainly not a scout. I'm the head of the Forest Youth Department. Very nice to meet you. My name is Tony Twain."

He extended his hand to the stunned father and son.

Chapter 86: Investing In The Future Part 1

The next afternoon, Tang En and Kerslake met the short, portly man and his son, Gareth Bale, at the Forest Team youth training ground.

“I was worried that you wouldn’t come.” Tang En was delighted to see the father and son pair.

“Why wouldn’t we come? Of course, we’re here. I have confidence in my son’s ability. He is talented!” The man shook hands with Twain and Kerslake.

“Yes. But we still have to do a little test.” Kerslake wanted to conduct this in an official manner. Before they met the pair, Twain had told him about the matter. He was worried that Twain was being impulsive again and had picked up another bull-headed kid from the streets who could not play football.

The father was a little upset by Kerslake’s chilly attitude. “Why? Are you doubting my son’s abilities?”

Tang En promptly tried to smooth things over. “Ah, Coach Kerslake is earnest and responsible. You will be most assured with your son training under his care. All right, let’s go.”

The test was very common. One had to complete some technical movements based on the coach’s requirements, and then undergo a simple physical check-up. And if everything checked out, the contract would be signed on the spot.

The test took about half an hour, and Tang En tried to keep his face expressionless or to maintain a faint smile. To be honest, he was a little disappointed when he saw Bale’s performance. Kerslake did not say anything. Perhaps he did not have too much hope to begin with.

Bale was completely different from Tang En’s impression of him.

Unlike the regular FM gamers, although he did indeed begin to learn about this Welsh lad from the game, he had specifically searched well-known foreign video sites for the boy’s match videos to directly observe and gain a more intuitive sense of his style of play. What had impressed Tang En most was Bale’s precise left-foot free kicks.

His ability to kick from tricky angles, powerful and strong kicks, fast speed, ability to strike from a distance—these were the distinguishing characteristics of Bale’s free kicks. The first goals he scored at Southampton and on Wales National Team were direct free kicks.

During the test, Tang En specifically asked Bale to shoot a free kick. His response was a little confusing. He did not at all look eager to show off his unique skill. When Tang En saw this, he thought it was strange. Tang En was even more baffled after his performance of the test—that left back, who was adept in free kicks in his memory, looked as if he had never shot a free kick.

If it were not for this kid’s outstanding left foot technique, Tang En might have thought he found the wrong person. On the other hand, to find two people with the same first and same last name, from the same city, born on the day, and that had the same face... was impossible.

Fifteen minutes later, the physical examination report was sent to Twain. With the current and previous test reports in hand, Tang En asked the Bale father and son to wait outside for a moment, and then walked into the office with Kerslake and the team doctor, Fleming.

Leaving the door ajar, the three men gathered to discuss the results.

Kerslake asked Twain, "Tony, what do you think?"

Tang En shook his head. "I want to hear your opinion first."

"I think we can sign this boy. But I'm still uncertain as to whether he can become a remarkable player," Kerslake voiced his inner worry. "This boy's ability is quite average in all aspects. His physical fitness is not too bad, and he can just about reach the requirements of a player."

Beside him, Fleming nodded in agreement with Kerslake's view. "He's neither good nor bad."

"That means the decision lies with me." Tang En went to the door and peeked through the crack to observe the situation outside.

It was indeed Gareth Bale. He was the right person in terms of looks, age, place of birth, habitual use of his foot... But why was the circumstance so different? Was it because his arrival had really caused a ripple effect to occur in this world and slightly shift everything that he had known from its original position?

The man seemed to be comforting Bale, who looked despondent. The child was sensitive. Perhaps he already knew his test performance was not good. In response, his carefree father was spiritedly patting his son on the head and encouraging him. Tang En could not hear what he said, but he could imagine what it was. My son most certainly is a talented player! Trust your dad! When did your old man ever lie to you?

Ah, another father and son...

Looking at them, Tang En somehow thought of another father and son pair. Michael would now be starting a new life with his wife in the United States. They would probably never have a chance to meet again.

Tang En turned back and said to Kerslake and Fleming, "Let's sign him. I believe we will not be disappointed."

Kerslake nodded. "Okay. I'll go get the apprentice contract."

Tang En opened the door, and the three men came out of the office. The short man looked up at Twain. "What were you discussing inside? Do you need a round table conference to sign my son? I'm telling you, my son is a genius! If you don't want him, you'll regret it sooner or later!"

That's right, fatso. Southampton will regret it in a few years... if they still remember that their youth team once had such a talent.

"Mr. Bale, before that, I would like to tell you and your son a story. Are you interested in hearing it?"

The father and son looked at Twain with puzzlement. They did not know why he wanted to do this. Was it not just a yes or no? Why did he need to tell a story? Why the suspense?

The father shook his head in disagreement, but his son nodded his head.

“Ah! As you wish, son.” The man immediately changed his mind.

Tang En looked at this funny pair and laughed. The man glared at him. “What are you laughing about? Don’t you have a story to tell?”

“Well, it’s like this... Shaun Wright-Phillips, have you heard this name before?”

Both nodded, and Bale’s father added, “The short guy from Manchester City.”

“That’s right. He’s doing well at Manchester City. But did you know he was actually groomed by our Forest team?”

Both Bales shook their heads.

“Despite the fact that his family home was in London, he commuted back and forth to Nottingham to receive his training every week. But Paul Hart, then the Youth Academy Director, told him one day, because he took into consideration that his commute from home to his training was so far, it was not conducive to his growth. So, he hoped he would change to a different club... do you know what that means?”

Bale’s father nodded. “Simply put, the short guy was gotten rid of.”

“Yes. Manager Hart thought that Shaun Wright-Phillips was too physically unfit and that that made him unsuitable for professional football. So, he found such an excuse to get rid of him. Unexpectedly, this kid later went to Manchester, which was farther from London than Nottingham. So far, he has played for Manchester City for one and a half seasons in the Premier League, a season in League One, and 85 games. Hart once said to me...” As a matter of fact, Tang En did not know if Hart had ever said anything to him before, but it did not hinder him from weaving that into the story. “...even though he brought out a star like Jenas, it’s his biggest regret to have let Shaun Wright-Phillips go. I have said a lot of things... actually what I really want to tell you is that the mistake that Manager Hart made will not be repeated by me.”

From the corner of his eyes, he saw that Kerslake had returned with the contract, so he reached out and patted Gareth Bale on his shoulder. “Do your best here, kid. You will succeed.”

Bale nodded hard. Even if he was a person of few words, perhaps all he needed to say was said by his father who liked to chatter endlessly.

After signing the contract in Twain’s office, Tang En reached out and shook hands with Bale. “Very well. You belong to me now. Say goodbye to your father.” Then he waved to Bale’s father and spoke in a childish tone, “Bye, Daddy! I’m not going to miss you!”

Everyone in the room laughed, and Bale, who had had a long face the whole time due to nervousness, finally smiled. Tang En, who was quick with his eyes and hands, took out his cell phone and captured the moment. He then handed it over to Bale before everyone figured out what he was doing, to show him the smile on his face. “What do you think?”

Bale did not speak. His father came over and drew down the corners of his mouth. "It's too blurry and shaky."

"But you can see he's smiling, can't you?" Tang En asked. Kerslake and Fleming suddenly realized that they had not seen the child smile since they had met the father and son.

"Gareth, would you like to hear some advice from me?"

Bale nodded.

"First of all, I would like you to change to playing the position of a left back from today onward. As for the reasons, I will explain them to you in detail in the future." After the test, Tang En found out that Gareth did not play as a left back, but as a left midfielder. But in Tang En's view, letting the child play as a left midfielder was equivalent to wasting half of the left corridor on the left side of the field. He hoped to train Bale to become a player like Roberto Carlos of Real Madrid—when at his peak, the entire left side of the field was his.

Bale hesitated but still nodded in acceptance.

"Secondly, I want to practice your free kicks. I think you have a natural gift for that."

Kerslake looked at Twain when he made that remark. When this kid was doing the free-kick test before, he had been right next to him, but he had not seen any natural gift. He did not understand why Twain was persistent in getting Bale do free kicks.

Bale agreed to this as well.

"Lastly." Tang En used his hands to push up the corners of his mouth to form an arc rising on both ends. "I hope you will be more like this, smiling and confident."

As for this, Bale did not immediately nod his assent. He looked down at his toes and whispered, "They always laugh at me and say I look like a monkey..."

Chapter 87: Investing In The Future Part 2

Hearing his son say something like that, the father who was standing at the side, sighed. It was apparent that he could not do anything about it. Tang En thought he found the reason why the child was so quiet and did not like to talk.

Tang En shook his head. "I don't agree. I think you look great when you smile. If you open your mouth and smile, you look just like the great beauty, Julia Roberts." Hearing this analogy, Bale could not help but laugh. That was too comical. How could a young boy be like a woman?

"Besides, look." Tang En slightly opened his mouth just like Bale, who was standing in front of him. After that, he nodded his head and said to the kid, "Isn't it very cool? Very focused?"

Seeing Tang En nod his head, Bale followed suit and nodded his head reflexively.

"That's the way. Football stars are all like this." Tang En touched Bale's headful of soft, brown hair.

"Besides, you have to learn from your father." Tang En pointed at the short, plump man.

The father and son had similar facial features, but why hadn't Tang En noticed that when he first saw the kid? Probably because his attention had been completely fixated on the chattering. Of course, Tang En did not want Bale to learn his father's habit of chewing his tongue, but instead to learn the confidence that his father displayed—daring to speak up, daring to show off. That would be good enough.

"Your father is very impressive, kid." Tang En knew that this man's endless chattering must have been a result of speaking to his quiet son for a long time.

Bale nodded his head vigorously. "I understand, Mister. Thank you, Mister. I am also very happy to be able to play for Nottingham Forest." Although his voice was very soft, that was the longest sentence that he had said for that day.

"Yes, yes, I know. Now go back and celebrate with your father!"

Tang En sent the two people out, and when they reached the gates of the training ground, he shouted and stopped the man. "Mr. Bale, your son still doesn't have an agent, right?"

Father Bale nodded his head and replied, "No, he doesn't."

"Alright then. In that case, I hope you can be his agent."

He understood Tang En's meaning. "Yes. Thank you, Mr. Twain."

Tang En smiled and shook his head. "From today onward, it's me who has to thank you and your son. Goodbye."

After bidding farewell to the delightful father and son pair, Tang En prepared to return. Kerslake was standing behind him, looking at him with a face that was all smiles.

Tang En felt immensely creeped-out by his smile and shrugged his shoulder. "You have something to say, David?"

"Des once told me that the Tony Twain he saw in the past six months had been an eye-opener for him. I intend to say the same words again today. Gareth Bale is only a normal football apprentice, and yet your attitude toward him made me understand the reason why you are regarded so highly by Paul."

Hearing such bare naked praise, Tang En felt slightly guilty. If he had not known Bale's accomplishments in the future, he would not have taken the spare time to care for a small kid that could be eliminated anytime from the professional football scene.

Although he felt guilty, Tang En still smiled and boasted shamelessly. "David, there will be more such eye-opening experiences for you in the future. Hehe!"

Tang En had signed the first player ever since he had become a manager, and it was an extremely important investment for his future. That was because he firmly believed that he would ultimately remain at Nottingham Forest, and rule over City Ground Stadium. That was why he dared to spend so much effort to find young players to join the youth training camp of Nottingham Forest.

At first, Tang En thought that the youth team was merely one football team. However, when he became the supervisor of the youth training department, he found out how terribly wrong he was. Youth team

was only a common term for all of the youth players, but there were many different teams of various age groups under this common term. Nottingham Forest's youth training system was always exceptional and comprehensive. It had a team for each age group, but the players were rarely able to receive training at the training grounds. Most of the trainings were conducted in Nottingham's primary and secondary schools. The players would take cultural lessons while receiving professional football training at the same time. That was the case for Bale, who had just turned 13. He had been assigned to the U14 youth team, and in another two years' time, he would be able to train there every day when he joined the 16 and under youth team. Of course, should Bale's performance be exceptional, Tang En would promote him in advance, like Theo Walcott, who represented "The Saints" in a U14 competition when he was 12 years old. He received the U17 team's jersey from the club when he was 13 years old. By the time he was 14, he was already representing Southampton for their U19 youth matches!

Speaking of this Walcott, Tang En knew that the future had been altered due to his interference. In the original world, Walcott was Bale's roommate at Southampton. Their relationship was quite good, and they would have been playing for Southampton together. Yet now, because of his flagrant interference, Bale and Walcott's fated encounter would completely disappear, just like that.

Nobody knew who would become the roommate of the Little Tiger, Walcott.

After poaching Bale, Tang En stopped going out to search for "wonderkids." On one hand, he could no longer think of any players who he could sign for free at that point. On the other hand, most of the young players with potential had already been signed by other clubs and were under strict supervision. Either that, or Nottingham Forest did not have the ability to attract them.

For instance, Tang En knew that the extremely famous football genius and midfield master, Francesc Fàbregas, was still on Barcelona's B team at that time, troubled and dejected over his unforeseeable future. But in reality, Tang En knew that Wenger had been keeping a close eye on this young man for quite some time. If everything were to go smoothly, he would be brought to Highbury by the French manager in January next year.

With Nottingham's current ability and fame, was it even remotely possible to snatch the players from powerhouses, who had been eyeing them for a long time?

The answer was negative. A team like Nottingham Forest, which was struggling in the second tier English League, had completely no appeal for those young and talented players. Only if they made it to the Premier League, would Tang En be able to compete for players with these powerhouses.

Tang En decided to put the focus of his job on coaching the U18 youth team and George Wood. After letting Wood join in the team for training, his performance made Tang En feel a sliver of relief. Although he was still not good enough, he was almost a completely different kid from a half year ago, who did not know anything. The foundation which he had built over half a year, had finally born fruit, with his moves and posture having some decent form. This time, Wood not only looked like he was playing football, he was actually playing football.

There were times when Tang En thought to himself, Will I be able to nurture a talented midfielder that will be able to shock the entire English football scene? A player just like Francesc Fàbregas, who will be able to amaze the whole of England the moment he enters the field. However, their specialties were

completely polar opposites: one was adept at organization, while the other one was adept at destruction.

Upon thinking about it, Tang En thought it was a pity. How good would it be, if the two of them were able to pair up? One would organize attacks, while the other one would become his body guard. Snatching back the ball once they lost possession, and counterattacking after snatching back the ball. This kind of midfielder duo would be unrivalled!

Hey, wake up! Wake up, Tang En. What are you doing, daydreaming in broad daylight?

Wiping off the saliva on his mouth, the pitiful Tang En still had to face reality. For a poor and no-name youth team manager like him, he had better start by developing the potential from his own team.

The English U18 youth team league was about to begin on August 16th, leaving him with little time left.

Chapter 88: I Will Return Part 1

When Tang En was building up his youth team, Collymore and Doughty were not just standing around. Rebrov had cost Nottingham Forest two-thirds of their budget for this transfer season, but the fans were willing to believe that this expensive Ukrainian would become City Ground's new hero and lead the team back into the English Premier League.

Subsequently, Collymore made the controversial decision to sell Nottingham Forest's previous season top scorer, the league's silver boot, to West Ham United, which had been relegated from the English Premier League. Actually, what everyone was dissatisfied about, was not the sale of their main striker, but that Collymore sold him off at such a low price. West Ham United gave an asking price of £500,000, and he hurriedly sold Harewood away, as if the value of the player would depreciate after a few days.

Of course, there was also information saying that it was because Harewood once talked back to Collymore on the way back to the changing room after a certain training. The two started off as bickering, which eventually escalated to pushing and shoving... But who could confirm the authenticity of a story that took place in a corner away from the eyes of the media?

After that, Nottingham Forest had recruited Danny Sonner from Walsall by means of free transfer. For the 31-year-old midfielder, this was already his third team in three years.

At the end of July, Nottingham Forest also recruited Icelandic defensive midfielder, Brynjar Gunnarsson, from Stoke City by means of free transfer. Aside from being a defensive midfielder, the tall and strong Icelandic could also assume the position of a center back.

In the end, Nottingham Forest managed to beat another club, Barnsley F.C., and recruited Australian player, Jacob Burns, for free from Leeds United, which was in a state of financial crisis.

With new people coming in, there would be people leaving as well. After Harewood departed from the team, the previous season's core center back and Dawson's partner, Jon-Olav Hjelde, was told by Collymore after his contract ended that there was no position for him in Collymore's plan for the new season. Left with no choice, the Norwegian could only choose to leave and decided to free transfer to distant Asia—Korea's K league team, Busan Icons. Another center back who Tang En really admired,

Christian Edwards, was loaned out by Collymore to Oxford F.C., which was in the Third Division. When Tang En heard the news, he sighed. Edwards was already 26-year-old, and for him to play in that league, there was not much hope for him to improve.

The previous season's core defensive midfielder, Riccardo Scimeca, also chose to leave when his contract ended, and the club that had its eyes on him was Leicester. Jim Brennan also left by means of free transfer, and his next stop was Norwich City, another team in League One. Benjamin Gavanon, who was on loan from Marseille, returned to France when his contract ended.

The young defender, James Biggins, who had scored on his own goal during the playoffs and caused the team to lose, had been sold by Collymore at the cheap price of £50,000 to an English League Two team, Queens Park Rangers. This poor young man, his professional career had not yet begun, but it was already almost over.

Before the start of the English League One season, Collymore and Nottingham Forest's gains from the transfer market were as follows:

They spent £2,000,000 to purchase Rebrov from Tottenham, and this was one of the transactions that garnered the most attention. They recruited Danny Sonner by means of free transfer. In terms of selling players, Marlon Harewood had been sold to West Ham United at a price of £500,000, and James Biggins to English League Two team Queens Park Rangers at a price of £50,000. Hjelde, Scimeca, and Brennan left Nottingham Forest by means of free transfer.

There were not many changes in other aspects, and Nottingham Forest maintained their main lineup from the previous season, and even received some strong additions. As a result, the £3,000,000-budget for the transfer window was still left with £1,650,000.

Nottingham Forest's first team was also more or less confirmed for the season.

The two goalkeepers were 29-year-old Welsh Darren Ward and 21-year-old Irish Barry Roche. Ward's position in the starting lineup did not have any issues in either Tang En or Collymore's hands.

The back defensive line was led by the 20-year-old team captain, Michael Dawson, with 27-year-old Belgian left back Davy Oyen, 22-year-old center back Chris Doig, 21-year-old right back John Thompson, 27-year-old French right back Matthieu Louis-Jean, and 19-year-old Scottish left back Gregor Robertson.

The midfield included the newly joined Brynjar Gunnarsson, 20-year-old German player Eugen Bopp, Danny Sonner, 21-year-old Gareth Williams, 20-year-old Brian Cash, 20-year-old Andy Reid, as well as the 32-year-old Eoin Jess.

Strikers included 26-year-old David Johnson, 18-year-old Craig Westcarr, as well as 29-year-old Serhiy Rebrov.

When interviewed, Edward Doughty claimed that he was extremely pleased with Manager Collymore and his work, because Collymore had not squandered away the entire £3,000,000 budget. He said he had sufficiently considered the financial position of the club, which had just recovered from a financial crisis.

The media also took photographs of Collymore personally demonstrating on the training field, during which he appeared to be all smiles, evidence that his mood was rather good. Perhaps he really was preparing to start fresh.

Of course, there usually was only one indication to assess how well the manager was doing—the results of the team. If he could save money when buying players, then he could go and be an accountant. And if he could only personally demonstrate moves, he could continue to be a football player. Even though the current Collymore looked very good now, it did not mean that it would stay the same in the future.

Brosnan looked at the new manager of Nottingham Forest in the picture and went into a daze for a while before throwing it aside. After that, he created a new folder on his laptop, and set the settings of the folder to private. He then named the folder as such—Countdown to the End of Collymore's Class.

On August 9th, the 03-04 English League One season officially began. One day later, Collymore's Nottingham Forest welcomed on their home ground their first opponents for the season, the "Black Cats" of Sunderland.

To Collymore, this was his first big test, and the previous warm-up matches had only been small-scale.

The results of the match left Collymore and all of the supporters of Nottingham Forest extremely satisfied.

After only 19 minutes into the match, the "highest-bid player" Rebrov, who had just transferred over to Nottingham Forest over the summer, had scored his first goal for the team, causing the entire City Ground Stadium to erupt in jubilation.

When Tang En, who was seated in the crowd, saw the Ukrainian and his teammates hugging each other, he knew that the future had been irreversibly altered, and that these kinds of changes were occurring at the center of Nottingham Forest and would gradually expand. It was like a rock that had been thrown into a peaceful lake, and the ripples, as a result, pushed the fallen leaves on the surface, scaring away the shoal of fish beneath the water. After the ripples on the water have disappeared, the lake and whatever was beneath it would cease to be what it used to be.

In Tang En's memory, Rebrov had indeed come to England's League One before, but that was one year later to West Ham United. After playing for only one season, he returned to the Ukrainian team, Kyiv Dynamo.

Tang En knew that these changes were definitely a result of him coming there, because they were all things that were related to him. He had no power to change the situation, and he could only hope that the changes were not too big, or rather, he hoped that those memories of his would still prove to be useful when he needed them.

At the 41st minute, French right back Matthieu Louis-Jean, who had been thrown into the reserve team by Tang En the previous season and yet heavily utilized by Collymore this season, scored his first goal in Nottingham Forest.

Seeing this scene, Tang En kept shaking his head. The player that he did not regard highly had just scored a goal under someone else. Would that not make the media think that Collymore replacing him was the correct choice?

In the second half, neither team scored any goals, and it ended with a score of 2:0. Collymore and his team had a good start to the season.

When the crowd was dispersing, the fans beside Tang En were excitedly discussing the future that the new manager was able to bring them. Tang En, however, was not interested in the subject at all. He squeezed out of the crowd with his head down and left City Ground Stadium without even thinking about looking back.

Three days later, Collymore's team won Port Vale in the first round of the EFL Cup. Although they successfully advanced, this match was extremely tough for them. Collymore did not expect Nottingham Forest, a team in the English League One, to be forced to a 0:0 score by a League Two team after 120 minutes, only claiming victory from a penalty shootout. It was no wonder that after the match, the media grudgingly said that Nottingham Forest only advanced because of their good luck.

Although the second match was not won that convincingly, Collymore still received praises and recognition for the two consecutive wins, and he became Nottingham Forest's new figurehead. The fans and the media were still looking forward to the kinds of results he could bring to the team.

In the newspapers, the media used flattering terms which had been used to praise Twain in the past, simply replacing Twain's name with Collymore. However, if there was anyone who thought that Twain hated to be compared to Collymore, and that he hated all the news reports regarding Collymore, then he would be sorely wrong. Tang En had long made up his mind to watch every single Nottingham Forest home match from then on. In addition, he would also pay special attention to all of the news regarding Nottingham Forest and Collymore, even if they were regarding the board of directors or management. He was making preparations for the day he would return to that position.

It was just like what Tang En had said to Professor Constantine, after being selected as the best coach for February. I, Tang En, am just the kind of person that has belonged there from the day I was born. Born to become a manager, born to pursue victory. The current dormancy is merely to pave way for the explosion in the future... Doughty is absolutely right. I am still not stable and mature as a person, or else I wouldn't have lost to that old man Warnock in Sheffield.

But just you wait. When I reappear before everyone, I assure all of you that you will see a completely different Tony Twain.

Chapter 89: I Will Return Part 2

On the 15th of August, while Collymore and the first team departed from Nottingham for Reading to challenge their home team, Tang En's youth team welcomed their first round of opponents in the youth league—Leicester City.

Unlike Reading, to where most of the media followed Collymore, the youth team's training grounds were desolate. Aside from some parents and relatives of the young players, there were only two groups of reporters present. One was Nottingham Forest's official website, while the other one was the Nottingham Evening Post.

Tang En looked strangely at the refined young man who was standing beside him.

“Mr. Reporter, the first team’s match is in Reading, not Wilford,” Tang En playfully reminded the news reporter, Pierce Brosnan.

“I know that, Mr. Manager.” Brosnan stood there, without any intention of leaving.

“If you know that, then why aren’t you leaving? The match takes place tomorrow. If you go now, you can stay overnight and interview the Nottingham Forest players regarding their exciting night lives.”

“How exciting, Mr. Manager?”

“Erm...” Tang En looked at the sky and replied, “You’ll have to ask Mr. Stan Collymore about that.”

Brosnan laughed. “Mr. Manager, I was worried that you wouldn’t recover, but it seems that I was wrong.”

“Hmm?” Tang En thought what he said was strange and asked, “Why would I be unable to recover?”

Brosnan looked at Tang En and discovered that his shocked expression was not feigned. Brosnan shook his head and replied, “Never mind, it’s nothing.”

“Alright, that’s the end of our chatting time. Why aren’t you leaving already?”

“I won’t leave, Mr. Manager. I won’t just be here today. I’ll be here in the future as well. From now on, I’m in charge of reporting on the Nottingham Forest youth team.”

Tang En opened his mouth wide. After scratching his head, he muttered, “Up to you...” Then, he returned to the resting area of the team and made the final preparations for the upcoming match.

Brosnan suddenly stopped him. “Manager Twain! Can I ask you a question?”

Tang En turned around and looked at him. “Speak.”

“Regarding our match with Leicester, how confident are you in the team’s victory?” Brosnan whipped out a small notebook and prepared to take down Tang En’s reply as he flipped the pages.

Tang En waved his hand. “There’s no need to take notes. The question that you just asked is extremely meaningless.”

Brosnan was slightly shocked, as he did not expect this to be the reply that he would receive.

“Of course we will win. What other questions do you have?”

Hearing this classic Tony Twain reply, Brosnan smiled and shook his head. “I don’t have any more questions to ask.”

When Tang En returned to the team, the young players were already changed into their jerseys and had formed a circle, awaiting his lecture. Tang En looked at the blue sky above his head, and then looked at the hopeful looks on these kids’ faces. If a person had done something very impressive, then that impressive thing would come to symbolize him and be mentioned on many occasions. What Tang En did at halftime during the match against West Ham United was remembered by everyone. Upon returning to the youth team, Wes Morgan must have vividly illustrated to this group of kids everything he had seen or heard about Tony Twain.

Although that had not been Tang En's intention, he had to admit that Morgan had done him a huge favor by doing so. Young people were the easiest to gain adoration from, and he, Tony Twain, was undoubtedly the idol of this group of boys. They would listen to anything that Tang En said.

It was good that way, as it saved him a lot of trouble.

In the distance, the young players from Leicester also surrounded and listened to their manager. They were wearing blue jerseys that only had numbers and not names on them. However, they were just like the young lads from Nottingham Forest and were players who had received professional football training.

Aside from the fact that the empty Wilford Youth Training Grounds lacked a three-story tall viewing platform and enthusiastic audience, Tang En felt that the current environment that he was in was no different from professional matches.

"Listen up, guys," Tang En said with a stern look on his face. "I was just interviewed by that reporter over there, and he doubts your abilities. He thinks that all of you will have a hard time performing against the youth team of a Premier League team." Tang En pointed to Pierce Brosnan in the distance.

Having been provoked, the young players immediately shot their gazes toward Brosnan, shouting and waving their fists at him. Brosnan, who was kept in the dark, had no clue why they were behaving that way toward him. He waved back in a friendly way, but the young men did not reciprocate.

"Alright, alright. Don't scare that pathetic reporter." Tang En clapped his hands, telling them to put their focus back on him. "The youngest among all of you is already 17 years old. For most of you here... no, perhaps for all of you, your goal is to become a professional player, to become a star like Michael Dawson, and to play a match in City Ground Stadium while wearing a red Nottingham Forest jersey with your own name on it. Am I wrong?"

The young men shouted in reply, "No! Not at all!"

"That's what we want!"

"Very well." Tang En nodded his head. "You guys are no longer eleven- or twelve-year-old kids who are content with playing four hours of football every week and spending the remaining time as good kids in school with your bags on your back. All of you have signed a professional contract with the club and are professional football players. Am I right?"

"Yes! Yes! We are professional players!" the young lads shouted as they waved their fists. If it was not for their still very youthful faces, their physiques might have convinced one that they were professional players playing for the first team.

"Therefore, when you all are unable to win the next match, when you make people feel that you are unable to attain victory, you will be looked down upon by them." Tang En once again pointed at Pierce Brosnan. "Just like that. I know that all of you are unwilling to submit, and I have already given that guy a tongue-lashing! I've already told him—we will definitely win! He will regret ever looking down on all of you!"

"That's right! He will regret it!"

Tang En extended both of his arms, signaling for them to quiet down and let him finish his sentence. "But! We all know that talk is cheap and bragging is something that anyone can do! I want you to prove with your actions in the coming match that I'm not wrong! Make that reporter who looked down on you regret his ignorance!"

As the young men started to become agitated, Tang En shot a glance to the side and saw that George Wood, who was standing at the outermost part of the crowd, had his fists clenched tightly as well, and was biting his lip forcefully. Although he would not be fielded in this match, Tang En was extremely happy to see Wood react like this. This was a good opportunity to instill his football philosophy in the group of young lads, and he could not stop there.

"All of you must remember!" Tang En waved his arms forcefully and swatted them toward the ground. "Manager Tony Twain's football is a victorious football! From the moment that you change into the jersey inside that changing room, get rid of all the random thoughts inside your head! The only thing that you should think about is how to obtain victory! You have to tell yourself: I must win today! And not 'what if I lose'!"

"We must win!" Wes Morgan took the lead and shouted loudly, and the group's victory announcement attracted the guest team's attention. They watched the bunch of maniacal opponents with strange looks.

"We—must—win!"

After 90 minutes, guest team Leicester City's youth team left the venue crying as they returned home with a score of 4:1. They had been completely frightened and stunned by the group's fierce display during the match.

Brosnan, who was by the side of the field, was happy that Tang En had won. However, the Forest youth team did not seem to like him at all, as they made faces and shook their fists at him while they ran back to the changing room.

Just as Brosnan was thinking that it was preposterous that the whole team hated him, Tang En walked up to him with a radiant smile on his face and said, "Mr. Brosnan, look for me tomorrow afternoon at Forest Bar. I'll treat you to some drinks. I really got to thank you for this match!"

Brosnan scratched his head, not understanding why Twain had suddenly become so friendly. But Brosnan still happily accepted his offer. "I will be there, but what is there to thank me for?"

"I, uh... just need to thank you."

The next day, Brosnan was at Forest Bar with Tony Twain, Kenny Burns, and several loyal Forest fans. They were drinking beer together as they watched the live broadcast of the match in which Nottingham Forest challenged Reading F.C.

Under the bright afternoon sun of Reading Town, Nottingham Forest played the most miserable match of the season. Rebrov, who had high hopes placed on him, exposed his old problem of being unable to adapt to the English football style. Faced with the tall, bulky builds and rough playing style of the Reading defenders, he was at a loss of what to do and did not manage to accomplish anything. As a result, he was subbed off the field 60 minutes into the match.

The match ultimately ended with Nottingham Forest losing 0:3. From the beginning to the final score, the match went extremely terribly, with no way for Forest to come back!

When the match broadcast was nearing the end, the television screen suddenly showed Collymore's stunned close-up. Waves of coordinated shouts suddenly erupted inside Forest Bar. "Tony! Tony! Tony! Tony!" These fans, who were watching the match, shouted Tony's name as if they were on the viewing platform rooting for the team.

Tang En and Brosnan stood in the middle of the fans. Brosnan was startled by the sudden shouting. He looked around the bar, and discovered that almost everyone inside the bar was standing up and clapping their hands while shouting Tony's name.

In contrast to Brosnan's surprise, Tang En was extremely calm. Or rather, it should be said that he viewed the occurrence as a given.

"Mr. Twain, this is..." Brosnan said in bewilderment.

Tang En opened his mouth, revealing two rows of neat teeth. Just like a lion, the king of the beasts that was respected and surrounded by the rest of the animals, Tang En shot a look at Brosnan, before shouting at a volume so loud that he could almost blow away the ceiling. "Mr. Brosnan, one day, one day, I will return! At that time, you will hear cheers much louder than this!" He opened up his arms, before clenching his fist and punching it up in the air.

Chapter 90: Beautiful Tackle Part 1

As the team that had reached the last round of playoffs the previous season, Reading was seen by Nottingham's media as Forest's main competitor for promotion to the Premier League. In the first round of matches, Reading had been forced to a draw by Ipswich. Therefore, as long as Forest won against them in the second round, Forest would be able to widen their point difference with Reading.

However, who could have guessed that Nottingham Forest would suffer such a miserable defeat?

"0:3! This is really a complete defeat!" That was the evaluation given by John Motson, the commentator, after the match. It was clear that he, too, understood exactly what awaited this new manager one week after the match—typhoon-like warnings!

The completely unmotivated Forest!

The crushing defeat of Forest!

Collymore helpless!

0:3!

Ever since the start of the press conference after the match, the tips of the media's spears had all been pointed at the team's manager, Stan Collymore. It was now Collymore's turn to have a taste of the blame which Tang En had once faced in the past.

Collymore had become the target of blame for all of the mistakes during the match: The initial lineup, the substitution lineup, his shots calling, player substitution, halftime adjustments, etc. As for the other players Collymore had bought during the summer transfer window, their performances were not good either. However, those were not considered too serious a sin, because everyone's attention was still focused on the most expensive Rebrov.

Faced with the tall and burly English defenders, Rebrov was completely unable to adapt, causing the audience to begin missing Harewood, who had continuously performed well in the second half of the previous season. The striker, whose techniques were gradually maturing, had already scored goals during both rounds on his new team.

The Nottingham Evening Post even brought it up: Who was the one who chased away our best striker?!

Who? Of course it was Manager Collymore.

Faced with the sea of complaints, Collymore managed to quickly and completely shirk his responsibilities. He felt that the reason as to why the team was unable to score any goals during the match with Reading, and could not do anything against their concentrated defense, was due to the team lacking a strong center forward. Looking into the camera lens, he said sternly, "Before the summer transfer window closes, I will make a request to the club's board of directors and buy a strong center forward! When that time comes, I will let all of you see what the true Nottingham Forest is!"

Edward Doughty consented to Collymore's request enthusiastically. On the 20th of August, three days before the third round of matches, he brought a strong center forward to Collymore—Gareth Taylor. This 30-year-old center forward formerly from Burnley, was 1.88 meters tall, weighed 85kg, and was good with headers. He had been on loan from Man City to Burnley in the second half of the 00-01 season. After scoring 4 goals in 15 matches, he then joined the team for free. After that, he was fielded a total of 18 matches in the next two seasons, and scored 32 goals. The numbers were very equal, having scored 16 goals in 40 matches in both seasons. As a center forward from a League One team, one could not ask for too much, and the result was impressive enough.

Collymore's words gave Burnley F.C. the heads-up to hike the price. This burly player's value suddenly inflated from £2000,000 all the way to £550,000, before Edward Doughty could finally bring him to City Ground Stadium to meet the media and fans.

During the press conference meet and greet session, Collymore happily patted Taylor's shoulders and announced to the media, "I'm extremely happy to obtain Taylor. He is a very good player. With him on our team, we will be able to blast away the gates of all the teams in League One!"

Blast away all the gates of the teams?

Cardiff City laughed as they left City Ground Stadium contentedly with their three points, while leaving Collymore with a score of 1:2, as well as a mess to clean up after.

The guest team, Cardiff City, scored two goals 10 minutes into the match, completely beating Nottingham Forest senseless. It was only at the 70th minute that Reid managed to score a goal with a free kick, but it was already too late. Collymore sent the Rebrov-Taylor striker combination out, but the pair, which he had high hopes for, did not score a single goal, causing him to lose face completely.

Faced with the media and fans who were already complaining, Collymore found yet another excuse. "Taylor has only been with the team for a short three days, without even having time to have a combined practice with them. Not having chemistry is extremely normal. But I believe that as long as I'm given a bit more time, I assure you that you will see a strong Nottingham Forest!"

Well said!

How beautiful it sounded!

Feeling the immense pressure from the outside, Nottingham Forest and Collymore finally won a match. They defeated Coventry City in their away match with a score of 3:1. However, what made things awkward for Collymore was that his trusted Rebrov and Taylor still did not score any goals. The first two goals were scored by Andy Reid at the 19th and 61st minutes respectively, while the third goal was scored by David Johnson at the 85th, and who was substituted in at the 77th minute. They were completely unrelated to Rebrov and Taylor.

Four rounds into the season, and the team's best scorer was actually Andy Reid, who was positioned in the midfield, with a total of three goals.

The 20-year-old Reid had a weekly salary of £1,000, while the 29-year-old Rebrov had a weekly salary as high as £11,500, the highest salary on the team. In terms of salary, Reid was not even one-tenth of Rebrov's, and yet the number of goals he scored was three times that of the Ukrainian's. What irony!

Just when Collymore thought that he could finally catch a breather, on the last day of August, Nottingham Forest welcomed Norwich City on their home ground in the fifth round of the league. Forest was forced to a 0:0 draw in a home match. Before he assumed his managerial position, he promised the media and fans that they would be able to see beautiful offensive football, insinuating that the previous style was not beautiful at all. What about now?

In terms of the quality of the players, perhaps his predecessor Tony Twain's Nottingham Forest was not as good as the current one. However, they had been able to crush Stoke City with a score of 6:0 on their home ground. Collymore's team, on the other hand, was not able to win even against Norwich City, not managing to score a single goal.

Rebrov could already clearly hear the jeers from City Ground's viewing platform directed at him. Taylor was also not having a good time, as he had a height of 1.88 meters, and yet he was unable to score even a single header.

Goals! Goals! Goals! We need to score goals! the media was shouting, and the fans were also questioning why a £2,500,000-striker combination could not score a single goal.

After five rounds of the 03-04 English League One season, Nottingham Forest, which had been previously regarded by the media as the favorites to advance into the Premier League, had two wins, two losses, and one draw, and was ranked 12th in the season with a total of only seven points. Those kinds of opening results were even worse than Paul Hart's in the previous season.

The Nottingham Evening Post did a short survey on the streets of Nottingham, and the fans who felt that Nottingham Forest would return to the Premier League by the end of the season, had already decreased to 36 percent from the original 71 percent before the season began. Sixty-two percent of the fans felt

that this terrible situation was the result of Manager Stan Collymore's incapability. On top of that, 4 percent of the people surveyed even felt that, should Stan Collymore continue to be the manager of the team, it would not be possible for Nottingham Forest to remain in League One by the end of the season—next season, people would find Nottingham Forest's name on League Two's roster.

Before he promised to become the Manager of Nottingham Forest, Stan Collymore thought that it was easy to be the manager of a team, as simple as scoring a goal was to him. However, he was currently in a fix.

Collymore was completely clueless regarding the means to improve the team's results. Perhaps he could only hope that Rebrov and Taylor, whom he had pinned his hopes on, would have an explosive performance and score a goal soon to salvage the situation.

Collymore had thrown the planning of the training to Des Walker during the preparation phase before the start of the season, showing no interest in it. He was even regularly absent from practices. God knows where he had gone to... perhaps lying in the arms of some woman, or vomiting in front of some toilet bowl in a drunken state.

Regarding Collymore's habits, Des Walker was felt very helpless. He had reminded Collymore several times to pay attention to his actions as the manager of the team, as they would negatively affect the players, as well. However, Collymore simply rebutted him saying, "I am the boss here."

Seeing the team's low morale as a result of their poor performance, even Walker, as the assistant manager, felt dull. Walker suddenly missed Twain, who was sent back to the youth team, and wondered how he was doing on the northern side.

If he was here, he definitely would not have allowed things to develop to the current state. I really don't know why Mr. Chairman fired Twain from his post... Hey, Mr. Chairman, seated high above on the second floor, please open your eyes. Collymore is better than Twain? Can someone tell me, in what way is Collymore better?

While Collymore was blamed for the team's poor performance, Tang En's youth team, on the other hand, had gotten a three-win streak in the fourth group of the youth league. The three wins were, 4:1 against Leicester on home grounds, 2:1 against Derby County on away grounds, and 1:0 against Walsall on home grounds. In addition, the team had even won 2:1 against West Bromwich in the first round of the FA youth cup on the 19th of August, advancing to the second round. On the 27th of September, they would be welcoming Bradford youth team on their home grounds.

When Tang En was in charge of the youth team, he discovered his own strengths and shortcomings. Just like when he was on the first team, he was still not adept at training the players. Although he could perhaps say something general, such as advising a certain player to train more on a certain aspect, he could not give specific details regarding the training plan. Deep within his heart, Tang En understood that perhaps that would be the shortcoming that would accompany him for the rest of his managerial career. However, he also did not have plans to improve his ability in this aspect. A person's time and energy is limited, and one being good in one aspect would invariably cause him to be lacking in another aspect. Becoming an all around talent was impossible for Tang En, who had only joined the scene recently.

Although his ability to train the players was lackluster, his ability to direct the match and tune the psychological state of the players made assistant manager David Kerslake extremely ashamed. This person, who was an apprentice under Paul Hart together with Twain, also felt that Twain leading the youth team was too much of a waste of his talents.

A certain day after training, Kerslake pointed to the training field of the Wilford training ground and said to Tang En, "Tony, your field is not here." He then pointed to the north, which was where the City Ground field was located, and said, "Your field should be there."

"David, you're right. My field is there. But not now. I'm still waiting," Tang En muttered as he looked at the evening sky in the north.