

Champions 851

Chapter 851: A Letter from The United Kingdom

“Aaron Mitchell! A beautiful bypass to shake off the defense. He swings past the goalkeeper who strikes and sends the football into the empty goal! The ball’s in! Nottingham Forest leads Lyon 2:0 at home. They have basically reached the final!”

The televisions in the home electronics section of the supermarket was showing the live broadcast of tonight’s Champions League semifinal game. There were not many people watching the game there because the semifinal game had nothing to do with their national team. The people who came to shop at the supermarket just glanced at it and left. Only one person stood in front of the television the entire time, watching the game.

Chen Jian forgot that today was the Champions League game at Nottingham Forest when he went out. He wanted to buy some daily necessities at the supermarket. However, he accidentally wandered to the home electronics section and did not move.

He had not watched a game at Nottingham Forest in a long time. He was in the Netherlands and only cared about the team he played for. Nottingham Forest was too far away from him.

He did not expect to encounter his mother team in the supermarket today.

So, he stopped to watch the Forest game.

He started from the 11th minute of the first half and stood to watch until now. The Forest team was 2:0 ahead of Lyon and he was going to stop watching. Nottingham Forest was certain to make it to the finals. There was no sign of Lyon turning the tables throughout the game. There was no suspense in the game and no need to continue watching.

Chen Jian carried the stuff he had just bought and turned to leave here. The televisions were still playing the clamor from the City Ground stadium. That sound faded into the distance and soon Chen Jian could not hear it.

Name: Chen Jian.

Nationality: China.

Age: Twenty-three.

On-field position: Midfielder, defensive midfielder, right back.

Current team: FC Volendam, Netherlands.

He was loaned out to Volendam from Nottingham Forest two seasons ago, when Volendam was still in Eerste Divisie.

In fact, Chen Jian was not a player needed by Volendam. At the time, Volendam needed strikers and defenders, not midfielders. Chen Jian was basically forced onto Volendam by the Forest team because

Volendam was the Forest team's satellite club. As Chen Jian had occasionally played as a right back, he was also barely in line with Volendam's needs.

Due to this, he did not have a good time at Volendam at first. Or it could be said that he did not receive much attention at all. On the one hand, he was forced onto Volendam by the mother team. On the other hand, because he was Chinese, and as a player not from a country with developed football, his nationality worked against him.

Therefore, in the Eerste Divisie team, he could only play for a few minutes occasionally during garbage time to fulfill Volendam's playing requirement for players on loan. Furthermore, he could only play in the right-back position which he was not very good at. He did not play very well. This strengthened the resolve of those who did not like him. Even the Chinese media gradually lost interest in him, and there was rarely news about him in the Chinese media. Chen Jian, who was originally a member of the "European Champions Team", quickly lost the shine and had little news value.

Chen Jian spent the first half of the season under such circumstances. The change in his fortunes came when there were wide-spread injuries in the midfield. He was finally remembered by the manager that he could play in the midfield...

It was his first time in the starting lineup. More than two years later, Chen Jian could not remember the details of the game, but he still remembered that he was named the best player after the game.

He showed a remarkable intelligence during his performance in the midfield. His defense was clean and timely, and his offense was organized. Players who could keep a clear head on the pitch were rare, especially at the Eerste Divisie level.

Since then, Chen Jian's position changed. He became Volendam's main midfielder step by step. He returned to Nottingham Forest at the end of the first season. Following which, Volendam's transfer application was sent over. But after Twain saw a video of his game in the Netherlands, he rebuffed Volendam's transfer request, but said he could continue to put him on loan to them.

In this way, Chen Jian returned to the Netherlands when he had not even have time to end the lease to his rented apartment in the Netherlands.

The second season was a cause for celebration for Volendam. The team was successfully promoted to Eredivisie through a season of hard work. Because of Chen Jian's excellent performance, they once again apply to the Forest team to purchase Chen Jian. Twain refused once more and said that he could continue to loan Chen Jian to them.

Then came Chen Jian's third season with the team. . .

He had not even played a game for Nottingham Forest since he officially became a member of the team. He had never worn a Nottingham Forest jersey. It was accurate to say that he had a little sense of belonging to the Forest team.

He already did have much to do with the matters of the Forest team anymore. So much so that he was not anxious about which day Nottingham Forest was to play the Champions League semifinal. As the season entered its final phase, he must consider his future again. He and the club signed a four-year contract at the time. Three years later, there was still a year left. Where would he go a year later?

Volendam placed a lot of importance on him and hoped he could transfer to the team. Just a day earlier, the Volendam director had approached him and asked about the Forest team. He told Chen Jian indirectly if he was always on loan, the team could not determine and revolve the tactics around him. His position within the team would never be confirmed.

“... No team can use a player on loan as the core. You are very talented, and it has been three seasons. You fit very well with our tactics and there’s a high level of tacit understanding. We all love you, but...”

He did not need to say the next sentence and Chen Jian could understand the meaning. The director was right. If the situation continued, Volendam would have to abandon him. This season, Volendam was mired in in the quagmire of relegation and had a lot to do with Chen Jian’s ambiguous status.

After two seasons of hard work, Chen Jian had proved his ability and gradually became the midfield core the small team, Volendam. But it was not a good thing for Volendam because they could not make long-term plans. They could only play one season and see how it went for the next. How could the team do well in this way?

He was also a little lost. What should he do?

He felt satisfied with being able to play in the professional league in the past. But when he really played in the professional league, he wanted more and was unwilling to be a flash in the pan. He wanted to stay in this circle. He hope to receive a stable environment that neither Nottingham Forest nor Volendam could give him now.

He felt whether he should have given Manager Tony Twain an ultimatum and leave Nottingham Forest to go to a team that could provide him with this kind of environment. He had done well at Volendam. Several teams in Eredivisie and Belgian First Division A had asked his agent if he wanted a change of environment.

He also hesitated about this matter. It was reasonable to say that Nottingham Forest gave him patronage. If it wasn’t for Nottingham Forest, he must now be a security guard somewhere in China, rather than playing professional football to the cheers of the fans at least once a week.

But it was obvious that he could not go on like this...

Chen Jian was troubled by these problems. He had been a little absent-minded lately, and the manager had hinted that he would not make the cut for the starting lineup in the next game.

It was at this time that he happened to see the Forest team’s game in the supermarket, and the red jersey which he had not seen in a while, distracted him a little.

These guys were his teammates, but they had received a lot of glories while he was still adrift and not knowing where home was.

The next day, Chen Jian went to the training base to take part in the training and was called by the manager to talk alone. His words were the same as the director. He hoped Chen Jian could consider putting pressure on the club to transfer to Volendam. Although the situation of Volendam looking to

avoid relegation seemed precarious this season, as long as Chen Jian transferred over, they could have a long-term plan and it would not be difficult to return to Eredivisie.

That was what the manager said but it was unclear how much credibility he could place in his words.

He also gave Chen Jian a small warning at the end of the conversation: next season, Volendam would not continue Chen Jian on loan. They would apply to Nottingham Forest for a striker and a defender instead of a midfielder. That was to say, Chen Jian had to find another way.

Chen Jian did not speak. After hearing this, he did not show his loyalty to the manager and say a lot of things like he loved Volendam, wanted to stay and help the team through the tough times.

The manager did not know what was on the Chinese man's mind. He could only let him go and confirm that Chen Jian was not on the squad list for the weekend game before he left.

Well, he could at least have a good think about his future.

After the training, Chen Jian received a call from his agent, Mr. Xia. Mr. Xia wanted to talk to Chen Jian about next season and his future development. His contract with the Forest team expired in a year's time and whether he wanted to renew his contract with the Forest team or changed to another place. These were the things that the two people needed to discuss.

Chen Jian agreed to meet.

The team had made it to the finals, and Twain was busy again—he was busy sending tickets to his own friends, like Gloria and his wife's friends like Tom Cruise. He had also mailed it to Michael Bernard even though he had decided not to watch the game again. He did not plan for Michael to come, but he wanted to let Michael know that his favorite team had reached the Champions League final again.

Then there was also the adorable Gavin Bernard, whom he would personally go to Gavin's grave and burn the tickets to him.

The rest of the tickets would be mailed out to those players on loan. It was a tradition that Twain had pursued in order to foster the players' sense of honor and belonging for Nottingham Forest. In fact, the club's specialized department could do this kind of thing but in order to express good faith, Twain insisted on doing it. Each ticket sent was accompanied by a short letter, written by Twain himself.

His concern for the players could be reflected from these small details and helped win people over.

He only wrote to the players when he got home. He switched on a lamp and laid out the paper to start writing to every wandering player who drifted outside, telling them that the team was always watching their performances and that they would have a chance to play for the Forest team as long as they performed well. He wished them good health and happiness always. That was basically the content of the letters with the names of different people filled in.

The Forest team had ten players on loan this season, with the youngest being seventeen and the oldest twenty-three.

After he finished writing a letter, he would fold it and put the ticket in an envelope with the corresponding name.

When he picked up the last ticket and looked for the name on it, he saw Chen Jian's name in Hanyu Pinyin.

His hand stopped at the sight of the man's name.

He still remembered when Chen Jian first came to the Forest team. At the time, he was the second runner-up in a talent show and was awarded a year of training with the Forest team. He also vividly recalled asking Chen Jian on the phone if he wanted to abandon his existing life to pursue his ideals in England and how Chen Jian answered. He also remembered how Chen Jian refused when he gave him his first professional contract to change his nationality.

These things happened like it was yesterday, vivid in his mind.

Now, three years later, Chen Jian had one more season left on his contract with Nottingham Forest. He had to consider what Chen Jian's future should be like...

Should he renew the contract, or would it not be renewed when it expired? Would he continue to loan him out for training, or would he be brought back to the team and start playing in the reserves?

Although he did well at Volendam, Volendam's strength was not comparable to that of Nottingham Forest, so his performance at Volendam did not mean that he could meet the requirements of Nottingham Forest. Twain believed that today's Chen Jian was still not up to the standards of the First Team.

He put down the ticket and started to write a letter. He did not use English but wrote in Mandarin. He had not written in Mandarin for many years and was a little rusty. The problem of forgetting how to write some words caused him to stare blankly for a long time when he picked up the pen. In fact, the main reason was that he did not know what he should say to Chen Jian.

It was him who gave Chen Jian hope. But he could not keep Chen Jian for the rest of his life.

After he mulled over it for a long time, he only wrote this sentence on the A4 paper: "Foolish Old Man, how's your digging going at the Taihang and Wangwu mountains?"

Then he folded the paper and stuffed it into the envelope along with the ticket. He patted it gently before he turned off the lamp and got up to go rest.

Shania was in bed and already got ready to "make a baby." She casually asked as she watched Twain undressed, "Writing letters to those players you're sending the tickers to?"

"Yeah." Twain nodded, "It felt a little rusty to do that for the first time in five years, so I wrote a little slower."

"I'm not in a hurry." Shania laid lazily in bed and smiled at Twain, "You don't look like you're in a good mood, do you?"

Twain said as he got undressed, "I just wrote a letter to a silly boy. After thinking about it for a long time, I still did not know what to say. I want to help him, but I'm afraid he's not up to scratch."

"So, you're bothered by this..."

Shania suddenly got up on her knees in bed and hugged Twain from behind, "You can give him a chance. Don't you always say that? It's someone else's business to work hard and try, but it's your business to give a chance."

Twain felt the soft and gentle contact from behind him, and his lower body responded.

He turned around and threw Shania down on the bed, laughing, "You have a point, so to thank you..."

It was a room full of love and passion.

Twain handed all the written letters to the club's staff the next day and they would mail them out. Each letter would be delivered to each corresponding person in person by courier and absolutely not be lost.

For the vast majority of players on loan, the letter in the same envelope as the ticket was nothing but an add-on. The manager said things that seemed to be warm but was in fact the same for everyone. No one was to be the special one.

"Dear so and so, I have followed your performance closely in the so and so team. I hope you can learn useful things from this loan... Tony Twain."

All the letters were the same except for the names.

But for one of the people, he was the special one.

It did not start with "Dear so and so" and it did not end with a signature. The tone was plain and written as if asking about a very ordinary matter.

Chapter 852: The Foolish Old Man

It was a bright and sunny Sunday afternoon, with blue skies and cool breeze outside the window. Chen Jian had no interest in taking in the sun outside. Volendam during the weekends was not a quiet place. As a famous wedding photography spot and a tourist attraction in Netherlands, the place would be bustling and packed with tourists every weekend.

He was watching TV at his place at that moment while his agent, Mr. Xia had just arrived and was making coffee in the kitchen.

Chen Jian's eyes were fixed on the live broadcast of the match between AZ Alkmaar at home against FC Volendam on TV. The match was only 10 minutes old and FC Volendam was already a goal behind.

"You're still watching?" Mr. Xia said as he walked out of the kitchen with coffee in his hands, "This team's standard is just like this. It'll play for a while in the Eredivisie then go back to where it belongs."

Chen Jian did not answer him as he continued watching the match.

Mr. Xia sat diagonally opposite Chen Jian and stirred his coffee with the spoon. After stirring for a while, making some clinking sounds, he asked Chen Jian, "Chen... Have you considered about the thing I told you about?"

Chen Jian turned to look at his agent, "I haven't decided yet, Uncle Xia."

Mr. Xia glared at him and said, "How long do you want to think about this? The season is almost over, this team is definitely going to be relegated." He pointed at FC Volendam on the screen and said, "You say the manager said he's not planning to loan you next season? I told him I don't intend to let you stay at this place. You're already 23 years old, when the new season start in the second half of the year, you'll be 24. Do you really want to waste your golden period in this kind of team?"

Chen Jian fell silent again after these words.

"What's the meaning from Nottingham Forest's side?" Mr. Xia asked after having a sip of coffee.

Chen Jian shook his head and said, "I don't know what do they mean."

Hearing this, Mr. Xia could only sigh helplessly. Nottingham Forest was unlike FC Volendam, he could not scold them the same way he scolded FC Volendam. After all, they were soon-to-be one of the top teams, one of the hottest teams in Europe. Many people made every effort they could but still could not play in Tony Twain's team. Yet his player was already part of the Forest team... Even though he had not played for Forest before.

After sighing, Mr. Xia thought about it and felt even more aggrieved as he complained, "Dong Fangzhuo at least put on the Manchester United jersey when playing for them and they brought him to South Africa, to Hong Kong to play for them. As for you... They did not say anything about you, neither are they excited about your prospects, nor are they not excited... What does Tony Twain mean by this? I've introduced so many Chinese players overseas but I've never seen your situation before."

Chen Jian asked, "Uncle Xia, did you talk to Mr. Twain?"

"What's there to talk about? He doesn't care about me at all... A big shot manager is a big shot manager..." Mr. Xia was getting angrier the more he talked about it as he drank all the coffee in one gulp, "But this time..." He swallowed all the coffee, "I must have a talk with him. There's only a year left on the contract. I must know what plans the club have for you. Otherwise I can't plan your future for you. Chen Jian, do you know... I originally wanted to make you the example of Chinese players playing overseas because you're a full-time player for Nottingham Forest. This was very exciting. But if you keep messing about in this kind of teams, it's useless even if I boasted that you're the combination of Maradona and Pelé. There are an Eredivisie team and two Belgium First Division A teams interested in you now, I believe this is an opportunity for you. You have to cooperate with me and convince the club to agree to a transfer for you."

Chen Jian frowned. He was no longer focused on the match as he said, "I don't think I can convince that person..."

"We'll do it the hard way then! At such a crucial moment, we have to fight for a better future for you even if we have to burn bridges!" Mr. Xia said as he clenched his fist, as if he was very agitated, "Initially when you were loaned out, what did the club say? It was for you to train. It has been two years and you're the main player for this team, leading them to the Eredivisie. If they still don't have any reactions to that, I believe they've never really placed much importance on you. Just like Dong Fangzhuo..." He muttered, "In front of the Chinese media, they always say 'We are not doing this for the Chinese market, that youth really has potential.' But in reality? Chen, do you feel like you're important to them?"

This was a difficult question for Chen Jian to answer. Was he not important? Coach Twain called Tianjin himself to ask to let him chase his dreams in Nottingham Forest, and he even set up a special training menu for him. When coach Twain was still in the Forest team, he took extra care of him. Was he important? After he was loaned out, the club almost did not ask about him at all. FC Volendam would report the performance of the player on loan to Forest once every quarter. Chen Jian knew that this was not a special privilege that he had. Every player on loan would have the same treatment. As for the reports that were sent back, would his be looked at a few more times? He did not know.

Mr. Xia looked at Chen Jian and waited for his reply.

Chen Jian did not know how to answer this question, so he resorted to the same old reply. He shook his head and said, "I don't know..."

"You! You..." Mr. Xia was fuming at Chen Jian's reply, "I'm trying to fight for your benefits, bro!"

Chen Jian knew that everything Mr. Xia was doing was for his own good of course... At least from a financial point of view.

Mr. Xia say down after he finished complaining and stayed silent. Chen Jian did not know what to say either. The room fell into an awkward silence. At this moment, there were cheers coming from the TV and their attentions were momentarily drawn by it.

FC Volendam had equalized.

"How stubborn..." Mr. Xia mocked.

"They have no hopes of escaping relegation even if they draw," Chen Jian said calmly at the side.

This topic gave them another impetus to talk as Mr. Xia continued asking, "Can you tell me what you think, Chen? Do you want to stay at FC Volendam, or at Forest, or at another place?"

Chen Jian did not hesitate this time, "If possible, I wish to play for Nottingham Forest of course."

"Why?"

"Because that's the top league, the level is the highest, and... If I play in a team like that, my parents would find it easier to watch me on TV," Chen Jian replied.

Mr. Xia grunted in reply, "This last point fits your personality. I also know that it will be great if you can play for Nottingham Forest. But...it's too difficult." He dusted his hands and shrugged his shoulders as he continued, "I think you should not hold on to impossible fantasies like this, Chen. The current situation is that Nottingham Forest is not interested in you. Obviously, I'm not concerned about you being dealt a blow by what I'm saying, Chen. You're indeed not good enough to make them attracted to you..." At this point, Mr. Xia stole a glance at Chen Jian and found out that there were no signs of unhappiness on his face. He thought that he was a fellow who knew his own strengths.

"So, the plan I have for you is to train yourself in teams from the Eredivisie or the Belgium First Division A for a few years first, then transfer to a team in one of the four big leagues. First, you have to leave Nottingham Forest. They might be your parent team, but they are no help to your development at all, even hindering your progress."

Mr. Xia started to list down the various wrongdoings that Nottingham Forest had to Chen Jian. At this moment, there was a knock on the door outside.

Chen Jian waved at his agent apologetically and went to answer the door.

There was a young man with a yellow cap and a yellow jacket standing outside. Chen Jian noticed the "dhl" printed on the cap. That was the logo for DHL Express.

"Mr. Chen Jian?" The man smiled and asked in English.

Chen Jian nodded out of reflex, he still did not know why the logistics company was looking for him. Could it be his parents sending food from China to him to add to his meals again? When he thought about that, he turned and looked behind the courier, other than the exclusive yellow dhl van with red stripes, there was nothing else. Could the item be in the vehicle?

After confirming the identity of the customer, the dhl staff took out an express delivery envelope and a pen.

"Please sign here, Mr. Chen Jian."

"Eh?" Chen Jian felt strange looking at this letter.

"It's for you sir, please sign here, Mister Chen Jian." The dhl staff did not show any signs of unhappiness at the hesitation displayed by Chen Jian, instead, he repeated what he said earlier with the addition of honorifics.

Even though he did not know what it was exactly, Chen Jian still signed his name.

After ensuring that there was no mistake, the dhl staff passed the envelope to Chen Jian and politely took his leave.

Chen Jian stood at the door in a daze, holding the envelope until that van drove off.

Mr. Xia felt something wrong when he did not see Chen Jian return after so long and he stood up and walked towards the door, "What's wrong, Chen, who was it?"

"Ah... A letter. But I don't know who is it from," Chen Jian replied as he turned around, waving the item in his hand.

"Open it up and you'll know," Mr. Xia said as he turned back, it was nothing serious, "You have to give what I said earlier some serious consideration, Chen. Nottingham Forest is really not suitable for you..."

He was still rambling on.

Chen Jian opened the envelope and found another red envelope inside. He flipped it over and saw the Nottingham Forest badge.

"It's from Nottingham Forest," Chen Jian did not hear what Mr. Xia was saying at all. He waved the envelope in his hand and continued opening it.

Two pieces of paper fell out from the envelope.

"They sent it to you? What did they send?"

Chen Jian did not answer his agent's question. He bent down to pick up the two pieces of paper, one thin and one thick. The thicker one was actually a ticket.

"UEFA Champions League...Finals...Ticket?" Chen Jian read it out softly. He looked up at Mr. Xia in surprise. Nottingham Forest did not reach the Champions League final ever since he was loaned out, so this was his first time receiving a ticket from Forest, it was no wonder that he was shocked.

Mr. Xia had a sudden realization. He shrugged and said, "This trick again..." He explained to Chen Jian, "Every player being loaned out will receive this ticket when Forest reaches the Champions League Final. Tony Twain thinks that this is a way to cultivate the honor and loyalty of these players to Forest. As for the effect of it, I'll not go into details. They're not treating you any differently, Chen."

Chen Jian looked down at the ticket in his hand. Then he saw that there was another piece of paper in his hands.

It seemed to be a letter, he opened it up. There was just one line on it, written in Mandarin:

"Foolish old man, how's the digging of the Taihang and Wangwu mountains?"

This sentence struck a chord deep inside Chen Jian's heart. He remembered how he answered Twain when he was at the Tianjin Justice Jingtuan School then.

—Chen Jian, for you, when the road to your dreams leads to a dead-end, what do you think is standing in front of you? A wall? No, I'm telling you now, what's blocking in front of you is not a wall, but a huge mountain! Then Chen Jian, if you want to fulfill your dreams, what do you plan to do? Answer me.

—Dig through it, sir!

Dig through it, dig through it... dig through it!

Chen Jian trembled slightly with the letter in his hands.

That voice had already become muffled gradually and there were times when he even forgot this conversation.

I always thought that I had succeeded because I'm playing professionally here and I have an agent, just like any other professional players... But I see, I'm still just digging through the mountain.

If I stop here thinking that I've already dug through that mountain, then I'll be stuck here my whole life. I'll look up and think that the sky that I'm looking at is the whole world. I won't be resigned to this...

The agent, Mr. Xia realized that Chen Jian was acting weird and he asked, "What's wrong, Chen? What's written there?"

Chen Jian looked up, smiled and said, "Dear Chen Jian, the club has always been monitoring your performance very closely, please continue to work hard...something like that. It's just as you said, Uncle Xia, beautiful words to win people over." He folded the letter properly and placed it back into the envelope before showing Mr. Xia the ticket.

"I'll go watch then."

“Me too,” Mr. Xia took the ticket from him, had a good look and returned it to him, “I’ll book one online. I have to find an opportunity to have a good talk with Tony Twain.”

“There’s no rush actually. Let’s wait till after the Champions League final. You’ll definitely not be able to have a private talk with him before the final, Uncle Xia. He’s sure to be extremely busy then.”

Mr. Xia thought about what Chen Jian said and realized that he was right.

“Okay then, after the season is over, you’ll return to China to visit your parents and I’ll go look for him.”

Chen Jian nodded.

“We’re not done yet, Chen. You have to tell me about how you’ve planned for your own future? Don’t tell me things like you still wish to play for Nottingham Forest. That’s impossible, you know? It’s a delusion and empty delusions are pointless. You have to be realistic, your future lies elsewhere...”

Chen Jian waited for Mr. Xia to finish talking before replying calmly, “Sorry, Uncle Xia. I still want to play for Nottingham Forest, at least until the end of my contract.”

Mr. Xia put a hand on his forehead and exclaimed, “Why? To be a star? To let your parents see you on TV every weekend? To win more champion’s trophies? To earn more money? Why?”

This time, Chen Jian smiled and shook his head, “I don’t know.”

“You...you’re really an idiot!” To be stuck with a player like this, Mr. Xia, the agent, had no choice.

Chen Jian could only smile as he looked at him lying down on the sofa, unwilling to acknowledge him.

There are some things that you can’t tell an outsider so easily, Uncle Xia, very sorry.

Chapter 853: The Old Guard is Still Standing Strong

When Chen Jian was debating with his agent in Netherlands about his future, Nottingham Forest was facing their opponent who was second from the bottom in the league—Newcastle.

This match took place at the same time as Arsenal’s visit to Tottenham.

The north London derby between Arsenal and Tottenham might be the toughest match that Arsenal had left in the remaining eight games of the league. That was because it was not an ordinary league match, this was a derby.

Twain was also paying attention to this match, Kerslake was listening to the latest match information on the radio with his headphones. If there was any new happening, he would tell Twain beside him immediately.

The Nottingham Forest players also understood what this match meant to them. They also paid a lot of attention on Arsenal’s game. The whole team could be said to be very distracted.

This was not a situation that Twain wanted to see; hence he had no choice but to keep reminding his players to focus before the game.

The match had entered the second half and the score line between Nottingham Forest and Newcastle was still 0:0. On the other side, Arsenal was leading Tottenham 1:0.

These scores were a little depressing.

Twain also felt that it was not good to keep caring about other people so he stood up from his seat, away from Kerslake's "oral broadcast", and shouted to the pitch for his players to focus and to score.

At the same time, on the other side at Tottenham's home ground, White Hart Lane, even though his team was leading 1:0, Wenger was having a tough time.

Sometimes, the score did not reflect the actual state of the game, especially in games such as a derby.

Even though Arsenal was leading by a goal, they were under heavy pressure from Tottenham.

The Tottenham fans also knew the importance of this game. Some people even hung words of encouragement in the stands for Nottingham Forest playing in the north, "Leave the league to Forest, give us the FA Cup."

As archrivals of Arsenal, they did not mind pulling Arsenal down nor do they mind watching Arsenal lose the crown. The opponent's pain is their greatest pleasure and happiness.

Wenger stood at the sideline anxiously, constantly calling for his team to remind them to watch out for the counter. His brows touched from his frown and he looked very serious.

On the other side, Twain gritted his teeth as he glared at the pitch with his fists clenched and body tensed.

As managers, the pressure on the two of them were intense.

If Arsenal won this game, they would have basically won the league already. Nottingham Forest only had a mathematical possibility in theory—hoping for Arsenal to lose 0:8 in the last game and for Forest to win 6:0. The odds of that happening was too low...

Twain looked at his watch, there was 27 minutes to the end of the match. In other words, there was only 27 minutes to the end of the season.

Carl Spicer was at St. James Park himself as he wanted to witness Twain's failure with his own eyes.

Twain was hesitating about whether he wanted to make a substitution. Newcastle was determined not to give Forest the three points in their home ground. They basically gave up attacking and defended with everyone. Bentley's passes could not even get in. In this kind of situation, should he sub Bentley out?

Two more minutes passed, Forest laid siege on Newcastle's goal. However, the bark is worse than the bite. Twain made his decision and he asked Kerslake to call Moke back from his warmup.

Newcastle was obviously defending against crosses, then let's give them something different.

Moke ran to Twain and called out, "Boss."

Twain who was watching the situation on the pitch turned to look at Moke then pulled him over. He pointed to the pitch and told him, "I need you to get on and use your penetration abilities to create some trouble for the Newcastle backline. Do you understand?"

Moke nodded, "I know what to do Boss."

"Remember, you must cause chaos in their backline."

"Sure thing, Boss."

"Go!" Twain slapped Moke on his back.

The fourth official raised the LED board for a substitution on the sideline. Nottingham Forest making a change, number 7 Bentley off, number 17 Moke on.

At White Hart Lane, Tottenham Hotspurs also made a substitution. 34 years-old, old guard Michael Owen coming on for Croatian defender Corluka.

When they saw 34 years-old Owen coming on, some people from the visiting Arsenal fans broke into laughter.

Did Tottenham Hotspurs have no other players to use? They actually sent someone who could barely run on.

The commentator could not guess what Harry Redknapp wanted to do with this substitution either.

Owen was already 34 years old and he was frequently injured this season. He did not play many games for the team at all. Why would he send someone whose fitness and form cannot be guaranteed on?

"Hey, Tony, there's a substitution over there," Kerslake told Tony with his hands pressing on his headphones.

"Hmm?" Tony did not really care much about the substitution at White Hart Lane, he was paying attention to Moke's performance. He dribbled the ball into a dead end again earlier, making his manager stomp his foot in annoyance.

"Tottenham's substitution. Owen's on."

Twain was familiar with this name. He was stunned for a moment before coming back to his senses, "Owen? Michael Owen? The one who played for Liverpool and Newcastle before?"

Kerslake nodded his head.

Twain rolled his eyes and said, "Is he not retired yet? I thought he already retired since I've not seen him this season."

"He's frequently injured, He hasn't even finished a complete match yet this season," explained Kerslake.

"What's old Harry thinking about? Forget it..." He sighed and pointed to the mini radio in Kerslake's arms, "Keep that lousy thing. There's no need to care about the others. We'll just have to play our own game...and have no regrets."

When he heard that the one who came on was that old guy Owen, Twain even had such a thought— Harry Redknapp is planning to give the League title to Arsenal. Therefore, he had already decided to take his revenge on Tottenham Hotspurs in the FA Cup Finals. Not only must he win, he wanted to give them a proper thrashing and shame them.

Kerslake moved his lips and put his hands inside his clothes, but he did not switch off the radio. Deep inside, he was still anticipating a miracle...

December 14th last year, Michael Owen celebrated his 34th birthday on the hospital bed. At that time, he just suffered a rather serious injury in training and everyone said that he would definitely retire then. In the end, he did not announce his retirement, instead, he claimed that he would do everything to recover and return to the field. Many people thought that it was a joke at that time.

But now, he had indeed returned to the field, even though the season had only one game and 21 minutes left.

The Arsenal goal was right below the visiting fans' stand. He could hear the mocking coming from the stands clearly.

"Hey, old man! Why are you not retired yet?"

"Can you still run, Michael?"

"Be careful, don't get injured again! If you must fall, remember not to fall in our penalty area!"

He ignored them.

He experienced peaks and lows in his professional career, and he had seen everything before. Such taunts could no longer affect his morale.

"This is really an aging strike force..." The commentator shook his head as he looked at this scene, "32 years old Pavlyuchenko and 34 years old Michael Owen. Could Harry Redknapp be planning to break through Arsenal's defense with such a strike force?"

Wenger turned to take a look at the Tottenham Hotspurs' manager Redknapp, who was standing at the sideline too. The old man looked calm and had no expression on his face.

He was behind but he seemed to be calmer than Wenger, who was leading.

Many Tottenham fans could not understand Michael Owen's introduction too. They thought that Redknapp had given up on the game, otherwise, why would he introduce an old man? Boos targeted at Owen rang out from the stands.

To Owen, this was a betrayal...even his own fans were booing him.

Moke successfully broke through the defense of the Spanish left-back, José Enrique, but he had no intention of passing the ball. Instead, he continued to dribble into the area and this caused the Newcastle defense to fall into a state of panic.

Argentine defender Coloccini left Ibišević alone and came forward to cover. Moke did a quick stepover and pushed the ball towards the byline. Coloccini did not fall for the trick and simply followed him, not allowing him to cut in.

With his back towards Coloccini, Moke suddenly nutmegged the Argentine with a backheel and turned 180 degrees using Coloccini as a pivot and cut in near the byline!

Coloccini stretched out a leg to tackle the ball out of reflex but he saw Moke move the ball away in front of his eyes, and his foot managed to catch Moke's foot...

One could have guessed using his knees what happened next.

Coloccini felt a chill within him.

Moke fell with a shout.

The goalkeeper, Tim Krul grabbed the ball and he heard the referee's whistle too.

"Penalty!" The commentator shouted excitedly. Nottingham Forest could not score after laying siege to the goal for more than 70 minutes, but they managed to get an opportunity to score from a dribble.

The Forest players on the field was just as excited as they rushed forward to hug Moke, pat his head and hammer his chest. Obviously, these people did not know that Arsenal was still leading on the other side yet.

In comparison, the Nottingham Forest technical area was much calmer, these coaches knew what was happening at White Hart Lane. Even if they scored the penalty as long as Arsenal was able to maintain this score till the end, Forest would still be unable to win the title.

"Forest got a penalty kick," Wenger's assistant leant towards him and told him.

Wenger smiled.

Even if Forest won with a penalty, it would be pointless. As long as they win this match, the title would almost be certainly Arsenal's. He did not want to judge his opponent, certainly not one that was already defeated.

He remembered one thing though, Twain mentioned before that an one-goal lead is the most dangerous score line in this world. It was indeed rather dangerous for Arsenal to just be leading 1:0. He should remind his players to increase their attack and try for another goal. That way, they could celebrate winning the league title in their archrival's stadium. There was nothing that could feel better than that in this world.

He stood up from his seat and he did not care whether Forest scored their penalty kick.

"Ibišević's penalty! It's in!!"

The commentators were very excited, but the celebrations in the Forest team's technical area was very restricted. They merely stood and clapped, they did not even give each other a hug.

On the pitch however, the Forest players were very agitated as they hugged each other, they were only short of piling on top of each other.

Twain looked at his players and turned to look at Kerslake.

Kerslake knew what he meant and answered, "It's still 1:0 on that side."

Twain thought and said, "Don't tell them about the truth."

"But if they ask us..."

"Then say Tottenham equalized!" Twain snapped.

Ibišević freed himself from his teammates' embraces and ran towards the sideline after scoring. He wanted to know about the situation on the other side.

"It's level! It's level!" Kerslake waved his arms and said, "Tottenham has drew level!"

Ibišević looked at Twain suspiciously because he did not see much agitation in his Boss' face.

"Go back and continue the match! Why do you care about how other people are doing?!" Twain had to lecture him loudly, "Make sure you play your game properly first!"

Ibišević and the other players turned to run back onto the field, only Wood stayed there and looked at Twain, without moving immediately.

Even though the coaches told them that Tottenham had levelled, the surrounding people did not look happy and the Forest fans in the stands did not use any special actions to remind them. This "fact" was very suspicious.

"I think we are very bad actors..." Kerslake complained as he walked back to the coaches' seats.

Twain crossed his arms at the sideline, ignoring his complaint.

"Attack. Press up! Press up!" Wenger were gesticulating to his team from the sideline, "Both Owen and that Russian are not speedy forwards, don't be afraid of their counter-attacks!"

Arsenal's defensive line went further and further forward. They even forgot that this was a derby match.

Wilshere's pass got intercepted but Arsenal's defenders did not fall back to defend. They were waiting for their own midfielders to get the ball back and continue attacking.

Tottenham started their move. A streak of white flash ran past the Arsenal's defensive line and received the ball from the air as Modrić pinged a long pass forward from defense.

"Michael Owen?"

Even the commentator was shocked as he questioned what he saw.

Owen turned to look at the Arsenal defenders behind him, then turned to look at the linesman to confirm if he was offside. The linesman did not do anything, only ran alongside him towards the byline.

Owen then looked forward, Almunia was hesitating whether to come out or to stay back.

Owen did not hesitate, he stopped looking around and dribbled the ball forward!

A deafening cheer exploded from the stands as everyone cheered for Owen at that moment. The Tottenham fans prayed that he could be 10 years younger and become the "Wonder Boy" again. The Arsenal fans, however, were cursing him to fall immediately.

"Michael Owen..." Kerslake suddenly stopped halfway back, listened carefully and mumbled under his breath.

"What?" Twain frowned as he asked.

"He's dribbling the ball...onside...one on on..." Kerslake continued to mumble.

"He's dribbling! He's very fast, onside! Totally onside! What's Senderos doing? Why is he raising his arm? Fall back! He's one on one!" The commentator could not help but to complain, "This is not the sprinting speed that a 34 years-old old guard should have! Michael Owen! He seemed to have returned to 16 years ago for a moment..."

Owen was indeed very fast, so fast that Wenger was shocked too.

Almunia decided to come out because Owen was going to enter the penalty area.

He saw Owen's right foot nudged the ball slightly while running just when he rushed out...

The ball flew over his head and ended in the goal behind him.

At that moment, White Hart Lane was silent.

"One on one... Almunia came out... Lob... Goal!! It's a goal!!" Kerslake shouted all of a sudden and jumped up as if he was mad, "It's a goal! Tony!! Tony! It's a goal!! Tottenham has levelled the game! They've really equalized this time!!"

He turned and shouted towards Twain while pointing to the radio in his hand.

Twain did not ask, "Really?" Instead, he snatched the headphones from him and put them in his ears.

"...Beautiful lob from Michael Owen! Almunia could not react at all! I feel for him. The Arsenal team did not expect Owen to still have this kind of sprinting speed! One error of judgement of their defense gave Owen a chance like this. He dribbled with the ball for 30 meters and levelled the match at 1:1 with a beautiful lob!! I heard that Nottingham Forest has taken the lead at Newcastle with a penalty. Tony Twain's team has a lifeline now!!"

At the same time, cheers suddenly rang out from the visiting stands. Those Forest fans who were closer to the pitch waved their mobile phones and radios in their hands and shouted towards the pitch.

"They've scored! They've scored!! Tottenham, Tottenham has scored!"

"Tony!" Kerslake clenched his fist and gritted his teeth as he looked at Twain, "A miracle has happened!!"

Twain did not smile, he was in a slight daze. Has it really happened? Arsenal really conceded an equalizer? Will there be a delay in reporting and Arsenal has already scored immediately? He looked around aimlessly and passed the headphones back to Kerslake, "The game is not over yet, it's too early to celebrate."

He turned around and shouted towards the pitch:

“Score another goal! Score one more! Seal the victory! Watch out for their counterattack... focus!!”

This time, the Forest players believed that Tottenham had really levelled the score and their morale was boosted. For a moment, they actually forced the whole Newcastle team to be stuck inside their own defensive third.

“Owen! Owen! Owen!” The voices from the stands at White Hart Lane boomed into the sky.

The old guard, Owen, extended both arms and ran on the pitch. It had been very long since he last enjoyed such cheers and felt the cool breeze on his face. He felt like he had wings and was flying freely in the sky.

When he got seriously injured this season, some people advised him to retire with dignity. But he said, “Injuries are like my wife. I’m already used to being with them all the time. I will not retire because I want to continue playing, I feel that I can continue playing.”

Everyone joked that he was in denial and being boastful then.

But now, everyone who mocked and laughed at him had shut up. What showed on their faces were shock, awkwardness, embarrassment and respect now.

At that moment, even injuries were defeated by this strong old guard. He gave those people who exclaimed, “Hasn’t this old guy retired yet?” a tight slap on their faces. The slap really felt good...

Wenger hung his head and nobody could see the expression on his face then. Annoyance? Anger? Regret? Doubt? Helplessness?

None of these mattered now.

Wenger had always believed that a professional player’s career and competitiveness would start going downhill after 30. That was why he always did what he could to cleanse his team of all the “old players” above 30 years old, why the young talents that he trained could have so much room for development. There was nothing wrong with that and Arsenal agreed with that club philosophy.

But this scene today was indeed rather ironic. He was defeated by an old guard whom he never placed much importance on. He was totally defeated and he could not even come up with a reason for it...

What could he say? What kind of expression should he show in front of the cameras?

He could only look down in silence.

The next day, when Nottingham Forest won the hopes of fighting for the league title again, and news of Arsenal settling for a draw after the goal from old guard Owen got published in the papers, Owen received a postcard from his own mailbox.

Written on it was:

Your goal saved the life of a person. Thank you, Michael.

It was not signed.

Chapter 854: Our City Ground Stadium

The number of fans who travelled to the City Ground Stadium increased as the time for the last match of the Premier League drew near.

Twain would sometimes drive by the City Ground Stadium when he made his way home from Wilford, and he would see the entrance to the stadium surrounded by hordes of flowers and Nottingham Forest scarves that swayed gently in the wind.

He knew that all those items had been left behind by people who wanted to bid farewell to the City Ground Stadium.

The red City Ground Stadium was reflected on the clear surface of the Trent River. On the opposite end of the river was the Meadow Lane Stadium, which serves as the home ground for Notts County.

Twain and Dunn were working in two separate places that were situated very close to each other. But, the two have never met each other after they bade farewell a year ago.

There were two days left till the last match of the Premier League. Twain drove over to the City Ground Stadium after finishing his work for the day. The sun was close to setting by the time he reached.

There was a greater number of Forest fans who had made their way to the City Ground Stadium to say their farewells today. The fans knew that they did not have much time left on their hands. The City Ground Stadium would be demolished during the summer after Forest plays their final match in two days' time, and a new sports and recreation center would be built in its stead.

Twain parked his car by the river and turned on the stereo. He listened to Dolores O'Riordan's gentle voice as he admired the scenery of the City Ground Stadium against the backdrop of the setting sun.

A feeling of warmth surged up from within him as he gazed at the stadium. He would have felt nothing but coldness inside of him right now if he had not transmigrated and gone through the life that he did.

He had fought for 11 years in this very stadium. He had always complained about how small the stadium is, and how it is not able to house more spectators and thereby lead to greater pressure on their opponents.

Evan Doughty eventually came to agree with his sentiments as well. The size of the stadium did not reflect the results, standing and reputation of Nottingham Forest.

Twain did not change his opinion about needing a bigger stadium, but he still felt a little reluctant now that he had to bid farewell to it.

He did not buy flowers, attach a card to it and leave it at the entrance of the stadium like the rest of the fans did. All he did was to recline against the bonnet of his car and gaze at the stadium with his arms folded before his chest.

11 years might have passed since he transmigrated, but Twain still vividly remembers all the emotions that he felt in the stadium when he was first placed in charge as a manager.

He felt a sense of belonging to the City Ground Stadium when his team sent West Ham into a frenzy by scoring two goals consecutively. He liked the fervent atmosphere in the stadium, and he enjoyed the cheers and singing voices that came from the stands. He did not regard those sounds as cacophonous. To him, they were sounds that were even more pleasant to listen to than the best music in the world.

He was 34 years old back then, but he is 45 now. Those 11 years have become a part of his life that he is unable to erase.

To the City Ground Stadium however, 11 years is nothing more than a tenth of its 'life'. It has quietly stood by the Trent River for a long period of time, and it has seen the rise and fall of Forest.

All the heroes who have left a name for themselves in history did so on its grounds, and it was much older than all the trophies in the trophy room.

It did not matter how arrogant and conceited Twain was as a person. Even he has to bow before the stadium.

115 years passed by in the blink of an eye. Everything that happened during all those years have now become nothing more than a part of history. The City Ground Stadium might be bathed in golden light right now, but its red exterior was still conspicuous even if viewed from a distance.

Countless people have left bouquets of flowers before it as a way of remembering and saying farewell to the stadium.

Twain was lost in his thoughts as he leant against the bonnet of his car.

Someone recognized him from afar and approached him.

"Tony?" The person who approached him squinted his eyes to look at him. He could not see properly due to the glare of the sun.

"Kenny. It's been a while." The person standing before Twain was the boss of the Forest Bar, Kenny Burns.

"It has definitely been a while since you moved houses."

"What could possibly have led you to leave your bar behind and make your way over here?"

"How could business be more important than saying goodbye to a dear friend?" Burns pointed at the City Ground Stadium behind him.

It was only then that Twain noticed that Burns was holding onto a bouquet of flowers like the rest.

"Do you have the ticket to the last match of the Premier League?" Twain was going to give Burns one if he did not have the tickets.

"I'm a season ticket holder, Tony."

Twain chuckled. "I've never seen you at a match before."

"I will definitely go and watch the last match. Also, it won't just be me. Some of my friends will be coming down too."

“Brosnan told me that he’s trying to plan some farewell event for the City Ground Stadium, and that he was trying to gather some of the ex-Forest players for it. Looks like he has already reached out to you?”

Burns nodded his head. “I would’ve attended it without his invitation anyway. It’s a shame that the boss can’t make it.”

The ‘boss’ that he was referring to was not Tony Twain but Brian Clough instead. Clough was Burns’ manager back then.

“Mrs. Clough has also agreed to attend the event.” Twain said.

It was great that Mrs. Clough could turn up at the event, but both of them were well aware that Mrs. Clough would never be able to replace the boss. Neither of them meant to disrespect Mrs. Clough with those sentiments, but that was just how that felt.

The conversation died at the mention of the deceased Clough and a silence settled between the two.

Against the setting sun, Dolores gently sang,

“I had a dream, strange it may seem... Open my eyes, I realize, this is my perfect day... Hope you’ll never grow old. Hope you’ll never grow old. Hope you’ll never grow old. Hope you’ll never grow old...”

“Tony...”

“Hmm?”

“There’s something that I’ve been meaning to say. I hope you don’t mind.”

“Go on.”

“I have to thank you for not saying that you would get people to forget about Brian Clough even though you’ve achieved great results at this club.”

Twain snorted. “Ha! I’m not a fool. I really respect the boss as well.”

“It doesn’t matter how well the club is performing right now. To us, the boss and what he has achieved are irreplaceable. I suppose you can say it’s just us being obstinate.”

Twain smiled and said, “If you dare to say that there is someone who is better than him as a manager, then a stroke of lightning will flash across the sky and hit you on the head. I don’t want to be hit by lightning, and I’m sure you don’t either.”

Twain’s words caused Burns to laugh, and the slightly despondent atmosphere between them dissipated as a result.

Twain was actually alluding to something with his words. Several years ago, when a team led by Nigel Clough, or Brian Clough’s son, faced off with Manchester United in the FA Cup, a reporter asked if he agreed with the statement that Ferguson was the most outstanding manager in the British footballing scene, to which Nigel Clough responded, “It’s hard for me to say because of my family connections. If I said Sir Alex, a bright light might come crashing down from above and hit me on the head!”

“I wouldn’t say I was the best manager in the business. But I was in the top one.”

Those were the words that were said by Clough, and they have also been inscribed onto the base of Brian Clough's statue that is situated at Old Market Square.

"You two are a little alike..." Burns shook his head as he looked at Twain. "I think he'd be proud of what you have achieved."

"No." Twain disagreed with Burns' remark. "He'd have scolded the living daylights out of me on the papers. Just because I said that the referee was unfair."

Burns smiled happily at Twain's words. After a while, he averted his gaze back onto the stadium, and his mind wandered off again.

He began reminiscing his younger days where he fought with Manager Clough and his teammates. The stadium is still the same as the one that he played in back then, and even the cheers sound the same, but the people from back then are long gone.

Now, the stadium is about to be demolished, and the only things he has to remind himself of those times are the memories within his mind. But, there would come a day where he turns old and his memories get foggy.

When that day comes, what can he use as proof that his memories are real?

Twain's mobile phone that he left in the car rang. He reached into the car to grab it.

It was a phone call from his wife Shania asking him when he would be coming home.

"Ah. I'm currently at the stadium, and I ran into Mr. Burns..." Twain explained to his wife over the phone.

Burns snapped out of his reveries and smiled at Twain. "Go back home, Tony. Your wife is waiting for you."

Twain shrugged. "I still want to chat with you a little longer."

"I'd definitely come down to watch the match during the weekend, Tony."

"Are you trying to put pressure on me?" Twain turned and looked at Burns as he opened his car door.

"Are you telling me you are scared of pressure?"

Twain smiled. "We'd definitely win. But, as for whether or not we'd become champions of the Premier League, that still depends on the outcome of the match between Arsenal and Manchester City."

"What an exciting season. I wish you all the best."

Twain sat in the car. He then poked his head out of the window to wave at Burns. "I wish Nottingham Forest all the best."

He then drove away from the City Ground Stadium while being bathed in the orange glow of the setting sun.

Burns, on the other hand, started walking in the opposite direction towards the entrance of the City Ground Stadium where all the other fans have gathered, with a bouquet of flowers in his hands.

The next day, the Nottingham Forest players saw Pierce Brosnan and a cameraman make their way into the training grounds under the accompaniment of Allan Adams.

Twain frowned when he noticed Allan Adams beside Brosnan, but he said nothing in response.

When all three individuals passed by in front of him, he smiled radiantly at them. "What a rare sight. I wonder what brings you here to our training grounds today, Mr. Reporter?"

Brosnan was about to open his mouth to speak, but he was cut off by Allan Adams.

"It's like this, Tony. Mr. Pierce Brosnan is intending to do a feature article on the City Ground Stadium, and he hopes to be able to interview the team about their thoughts and feelings towards the stadium..."

Brosnan smiled and nodded his head by the side.

"Is that so... All right, go ahead. But, I must remind you not to let it drag on for too long. They have just finished their training and have yet to change into a new set of clothes. If they were to somehow catch a cold..." Twain pulled a face. "It won't be good for either of us, right?"

Twain turned around and left after finishing his words.

Brosnan felt a little awkward, because the very first person he had to interview was Tony Twain...

Allan could tell that Twain was upset, and he knew the reason behind his bad mood.

The first-team manager has not spoken a single word to him ever since he intervened and forcibly sold Lennon to another club. However, Allan was unwilling to reveal the strained relationship between him and Twain before the media, so he quickly explained to Brosnan, "Don't mind him. He doesn't like to be disturbed, especially since there's a big game coming up..."

"Haha! We understand, Mr. Adams." Brosnan said with a laugh.

To Brosnan, Twain was not acting the way that he did because 'a big game is coming up and he doesn't like to be disturbed'. Rather, it was because Twain was just a temperamental person, so it was normal for him to treat a person well on certain days and coldly on others.

The interview went quite smoothly due to Allan Adams' presence. The players were all well aware of Allan's status and position in the club.

Twain stood at the side with his arms folded and watched on coldly.

Once Brosnan was done interviewing the players, he went up to Twain to ask for an interview.

Allan Adams did not follow after him immediately. He hesitated for a moment, seemingly intent on keeping a distance between him and Twain.

"Tony. Can you talk about the final match that will be played at the City Ground Stadium?"

Twain continued to pull a long face as he looked at the two reporters. "We will bid farewell to City Ground Stadium with a victory." He did not go on to give an inspirational and passionate speech about how he would lead his team to become champions of the Premier League.

If it had been any other reporter interviewing Twain right now, he or she would have followed up with a question about why he did not say that he was going to bid farewell to the City Ground Stadium by becoming champions.

Brosnan did not ask Twain the question because he knew Twain well, and he knew how complex the whole situation was.

Even if Forest was able to defeat Sunderland at home, their fate of becoming champions would still rest on the outcome of the match between Arsenal and Manchester City.

The entire Nottingham Forest team surprisingly did not display even a twinge of optimism towards the possibility of them becoming champions of the Premier League. Even their arrogant manager, Tony Twain, refused to comment about whether they could become champions as well.

Carl Spicer announced in his show that he had ordered a new and trendy table from Ikea for Tony Twain.

Astonishingly, Twain did not say anything in response to Spicer's comments. His lack of reaction left the media very disappointed.

However, there were still many other areas that the media could focus on.

Will the champions of the Premier League be Arsenal or Nottingham Forest?

Will the two ex-Forest players in Manchester City go easy on Arsenal due to their personal grudges against Twain?

Bendtner had spoken up regarding the rumor that he would go easy on Arsenal in an interview that was conducted a day ago. "I am a professional football player. What I care about is not who becomes the champions of the league. I only care about attaining victory for my team."

As for Ashley Young, he confirmed that he would leave Manchester City for Liverpool at the end of the season. He indicated that he would like to bid farewell to Manchester City with a victory.

Neither player mentioned a word about Twain.

Fat John, Skinny Bill and their gang gathered at the Forest Bar a day before the kick-off of the final match of the Premier League to create the banners and flags that they would use during the match. There were several other Forest fans who also gathered at other bars to do the same thing.

The Nottingham Forest players went through their last training session at Wilford. Tony Twain set aside some time to analyse Sunderland's game with his coaching team. They had already studied everything that they could about their opponent for the entire week, but they still wanted to analyse Sunderland a little more because they could not think of any other thing that they could do instead.

Perhaps they could somehow help Manchester City defeat Arsenal by analysing Sunderland on a much deeper level?

As the day approached sunset, the number of fans who gathered at the City Ground Stadium entrance began to dwindle in numbers.

The only things that remained were the flowers and scarves that continued to sway in the breeze.

Thompson Isaksson, who worked as a football ground staff for Forest and helped to maintain the grasses at the training grounds and at the stadium, appeared before the flowers that had been placed at the entrance of the City Ground Stadium.

If someone were to ask him whether the most memorable thing he ever did as a football ground staff was to help Forest defeat Barcelona by creating a 'one and only' stadium for Tony Twain, he would definitely shake his head and disagree.

To him, the most memorable thing that he did as a football ground staff was stepping onto the turf at the City Ground Stadium and maintaining it.

He had already decided to retire at the end of the season. He regarded it as an honor to be able to retire alongside the City Ground Stadium.

Today, he had come to say goodbye to the City Ground Stadium alone. The next day, he would return here with 30,000 other Forest fans, and he hoped to be able to witness the moment where Nottingham Forest bid their stadium of 115 years farewell by clinching the champions trophy.

Isaksson felt as though he was looking at his younger self as he gazed at the City Ground Stadium against the setting sun.

He stood quietly out in the open with a small smile upon his wrinkled face as a breeze caressed his skin.

"... This is our City Ground Stadium. It is as old as our granddad. It will still be here by the Trent River even when we all become granddads... It will still be here by the Trent River till the day we die... We will all die one day, but it will never grow old nor die, because it is our City Ground Stadium..."

There were not a lot of people who could still sing the song that Isaksson just sang. It was a song that the Forest fans dedicated to the City Ground Stadium when Isaksson was still young. The melody was simple and the lyrics were down-to-earth.

Sadly, technology was not as advanced back then. The fans were not able to record their songs by themselves, and there were no professional music companies who would help fans record their songs into CDs and then release them to the public either.

Darkness enveloped the streets, and the streetlights came to life.

Isaksson sang the song softly under his breath as he turned around and left.

Chapter 855: A Suboptimal Situation

"The weather is fine today." On the Wilford training ground, Bale shaded his eyes with his hands and looked up at the sky. In his vision, his surroundings were clear as a crystal and the sun was vibrant. "We will play our last league game under such good weather."

"That's good. I hate the rain." It was Şahin who said this and, as a technical midfielder, the pitch being wet was torturous for him.

The team had just finished a training session and was getting together to rest. The atmosphere in the Forest team had always been good, so even during the training break, they would get together and chat.

The conversation naturally shifted to the ownership of the league title. Nottingham Forest's players were sensible and everyone knew that it was not their team that decides whom the league title belonged to.

"I called Bendtner yesterday." Bale said, as everyone looked at him.

"I asked him if he was starting in the match. He was sure he was starting. And then I hoped for him to do his best to beat Arsenal..."

"You actually went to beg him?" Pepe said dismissively. Until now, there were still people in the team who could not approve of Bendtner leaving the team as a traitor back then.

So many years have passed...let bygones be bygones." Bale pouted. "And I didn't 'beg', I only wanted him to bring up his sportsmanship..."

"How did he answer that?" Some teammates were more interested in Bendtner's reaction.

"He did not agree or reject. "

Pepe then snorted next to him, "Look at the way he is now, leaving Nottingham Forest, what did he get? No champion, no honor for so many years. Playing the Confederations Cup every year was his highest pursuit..."

Bale knew Pepe looked down on Bendtner, hence he did not go on.

"Don't bother yourself with what happens to others, just focus on winning this match of ours," said Wood, who had been listening. He was right, it was pointless, and was simply "nonsense". Everyone had no interest in continuing to talk about the subject.

"If, and I mean if, if we don't win the league, how would our coach eat a table?" Ibišević tried to make his tone sound like a joke.

But everyone stared at him.

"Well, okay, okay, let's not talk about this..." Ibišević raised his hands.

"Hey, are you guys under a lot of pressure?" Tomorrow's game..." It was Woodgate who said that.

"Are you under a lot of pressure?" Someone next to him immediately rebutted.

Woodgate replied honestly, "A lot."

"I'm still ok..." Pepe lay on the grass with a strand of grass in his mouth," As long as we win the game, being able to be the champion depends on the results between Arsenal and Manchester City. But I still want to say, putting my fate into other people's hands, makes me unhappy."

"I'm not happy, too. "

"Me too. "

The group of people echoed.

Pepe looked at the white clouds in the blue sky and muttered, "Our pressure is no greater than the coach. Every time I see the head, I think, I would never want to be a coach after I retire, at least not to be a head coach ..."

As everyone heard him, they all looked over to see coach talking to the coaching team about something.

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"I always thought the team was not very competitive..." Eastwood, as a coach who just switched over from a full-time player, was clearly more aware of his teammates' mental states than any other coach.

Twain did not speak, he just looked over there. Chris Kerslake laughed, "So, how do you think it should be, Freddy? Should we get everyone together and shout slogans?"

Eastwood did not care about Chris Kerslake's words, as he frowned and said, "Perhaps it was the reality that we are unable to guarantee victory even after winning the matches demotivates everyone..."

Chris Kerslake wanted to object, thinking that Eastwood was worrying mindlessly. Nottingham Forest had been with him for nearly a decade and he knew the team better than anyone else. But Twain opened his mouth first and said, "You're right. Don't just talk about them, sometimes I think about this reality, I also lose my fighting spirit ..."

Chris Kerslake opened his mouth and looked at Twain in amazement.

Twain bowed his head as he stood silent for a moment before started talking again, "I f*cking hate this feeling, placing my fate into other people's hands, and it's even someone that I hate, it feels helpless."

Eastwood looked at the coach and did not reply, he could understand this feeling because he was feeling the same way.

"I have a lot of ways to make sure we win against Sunderland, whether tactically or psychologically, but don't feel very motivated now. Do you think Wenger will give us such a chance? Will they make mistakes? If I were Arsène Wenger, I would ask the team to defend once they scored a goal, as this time 1:0 and 5:0 were of no difference." Twain told his colleagues, "The Football Association prepared for two scenarios, they took two Champions Trophy to both the Emirates Stadium, and us here. But the trophy that came to us is a replica, because everyone thought that Arsenal's chances of losing the title are too small.

"A month ago I promised everyone a better tomorrow, that we could win the league, the FA Cup and the Champions League three times and becoming triple champions. But now it seems that the probability is too small, it's no wonder they're feeling unmotivated."

Twain looked at the watch. Break time was over and his face immediately changed, "Well, forget what I just said, don't let them sense anything unusual. Keep training!"

He was revitalized in an instant. Eastwood had seen a similar scenario once, that was after Nottingham Forest's 3-2 win over Aston Villa in the 31st round. Twain was also tired initially and then instantly rejuvenated, seemingly two different people.

Was this his way of self-regulating?

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“Well, this is the end of today’s training, I hope you don’t play too late and have an early break.” Twain spoke to the team before concluding the training. “Tomorrow’s game is very important. This season of hard work will be decided in the 90 minutes. But don’t be too nervous, it’s just a league game.”

Twain waved and let the team disperse.

He was the last person to leave the training base, and when he picked up his belongings before driving away, he saw Pierce Brosnan waiting at the door. After seeing him come out, Bruce waved to him frantically.

“Is there any issue, Mr. Journalist? I’m in a hurry to go home, it wouldn’t be nice of me to make my wife wait.”

“The media’s been quiet these two days. I would like to ask you, Tony, are you sure you don’t want to say anything?” Bruce came up and asked.

“What would you like me to say?”

“We all thought you were going to use psychological warfare again... Against Wenger and Arsenal, to put some pressure on Manchester City...”

Twain looked at Bruce, thought for a while, and said, “Okay, then. Just say that I celebrate preemptively for Arsenal for obtaining the title and, to be honest, I don’t think Manchester City poses any threat to Arsenal. They have already qualified for the Confederations Cup and have no additional desires. And you know Manchester City and us have shared a very strained relationship... I’m prepared enough to say that Arsenal’s win over Manchester City would be a definite thing, after all, the two teams are not on the same level. Of course against Sunderland, we will win as I said I would have a victorious match to bade farewell to the city stadium.”

Having said that, he pointed to Bruce’s little book, “Have you written it all down?”

“No more?” Bruce was a little surprised.

“No, that’s it. Just upload what I said without changes. There’s still a day left anyway.”

After dealing with Bruce, Twain drove away.

Bruce looked at his quick notes, as he really could not find anything worth hyping up ... He was telling the truth. First of all, Arsenal and Manchester City were really not on the same line. Secondly, Manchester City did qualify for the Confederations Cup early and arguably had no desire for the last game. Thirdly, the relationship between Manchester City and Nottingham Forest was bad and that was true that they did not have to work hard to beat Arsenal in an unnecessary game to let Nottingham Forest reach the top, they were not the modern new citizens of the new century. Fourthly, now that McClaren was the Manchester City manager, this man and Twain’s personal feud was enough to write a book. What reason did he have to fight with all their might with Arsenal to help Twain? He might even deliberately send the three points to Arsenal and then watch gleefully as Twain suffered. Fifthly, Bendtner, Ashley Young and Twain’s relationship was not good either, and there was no need for them

to help Twain's team to win the title and try to beat Arsenal, even if Nottingham Forest were their initial team. But having left for so many years, that relationship was long gone. Sixth ...

There was no need to analyze anymore. If he were to go any further, Manchester City not automatically scoring into their own goal was giving face to Tony Twain already.

"What kind of psychological warfare is this?" Bruce frowned. "When did the truth become a means of psychological warfare?"

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"George, tomorrow is the last round of the league, right?" Sophia asked about her son. Wood nodded.

"I watched TV and it said your chances of winning the championship are slim?" Wood nodded again.

"Well..." Sophia hesitated, "Then wouldn't Mr Twain have to eat a table in front of the media?"

Wood looked up at his mother. "The chances are just slim, it is not a sure loss, don't worry, mum."

"But if you and Arsenal both win, wouldn't the championships be still theirs?"

"Arsenal could also lose or draw. They might not win for sure."

Sophia wanted to speak more, but when she saw the look on her son's face, she chose to shut up. She did not know much about football, and since her son said that there is hope, then she would trust him.

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Gareth Bale recently found a girlfriend, but the girl was not a public figure, just an ordinary beautiful girl who was still a college student. The two met at a ball and fell in love. They were still dating, and the girls liked Bale's star status, which makes her feel proud in front of her classmates.

Tonight, Bale had dinner with the girl at her place, and then, as the girl sat, dreaming that they were going to have a passionate night, Bale suddenly offered to go home.

"Go home?" The girl stared at Bale as if she had heard something ridiculous.

"Yes, I have to go home."

"Oh, don't be like that. Gareth. You're not a child anymore, do you have to go home to sleep at 9:30 every night?" The girlfriend put her petite body on Bale in the hope that she could use her sexy body to keep her boyfriend. "Your parents are not with you, and even if you stay with me overnight, they won't say anything..."

Yes, Bale had moved out of his home and was living alone, and it was not the first time he stayed at his girlfriend's place. But tonight was special.

Bale placed his lips on his girlfriend's mouth, but to her disappointment, he did not stick his tongue in, but instead only touching for a bit before leaving.

"Not today, Shannon."

Bale escaped the girl's embrace, as he could feel his girlfriend's disappointment.

“Because tomorrow is the final round?” Shannon sat on the bed, looking at her boyfriend.

Bale looked back at her. As it was summer, Shannon was only wearing a sling dress, and now the sling had slipped to the shoulder, revealing a large area of her white swaying chest, if it was any lower he could see that reddish spot. She really had a good figure ... Bale exclaimed in the mind. But such a temptation would be of little use to him.

Gareth Bale nodded.

Suddenly the girl became a little willful, as she asked aloud, “Me or football?”

Bale was stunned as he was asked upon such a question, he did not find the question difficult to answer, he just did not expect Shannon to ask such a low-standard question...

He looked at the beautiful girl, who had almost stripped everything, and shrugged, “From tonight till tomorrow, I love football more.”

Having said that, he opened the door and walked out.

The girl, who felt insulted, grabbed her pillow and threw it at the door, then threw everything that she could throw onto the floor, as she lay down on the bed and cried. She and Bale had known each other for three months, and it was the first time she saw him being so ruthless.

It seems like sleeping with him was not sufficient to understand him...

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Bendtner and Ashley Young sat in a bar on the second floor of the hotel, where his teammates usually relax, drink, play billiards, chat and dance to the music. The team’s goal had been achieved this season, and this last round of the league was more like a walk-through. After 90 minutes of play, they can immediately pack their luggage to enjoy a holiday.

Bendtner knew that at another hotel not far from here, Arsenal’s players must have gone to the room early to rest under manager Arsène Wenger’s supervision. Compared to them, Manchester City’s teammates seemed like they were on holiday in London.

A teammate walked past unsteadily with a beer in his hand and asked aloud, “Nicklas, how have you been in summer?”

“Go home.” Bendtner replied.

“You are really boring...”

The man muttered and poured a half-glass of beer, and then raised the glass to Bendtner. Bendtner then raised his glass of wine out of courtesy, but did not drink it.

After the people left, Ashley Young who was beside Bendtner, then turned at said, “Look at what they look like... I bet we’ll lose at least three balls at the Emirates Stadium! There was a slight disgust in the tone.

“It’s normal to relax, it’s been a tough season and we got the League Cup early anyway.” Bendtner had no expression on his face.

Ashley Young heard Bendtner say so, but laughed out loud instead, "Ha! The goal of a team that claimed to be the richest team in the world was to only reach the Confederations Cup ... You know why I am going to leave? Liverpool doesn't pay me as much as I am paid here, but I long for glory, and Manchester City can't give that to me. "

The music was loud, Ashley Young was not afraid of people overhearing what he said.

"That is how it is here..." he laughs, pointing to his indulgent teammates, "when they move from other teams, they will constantly claim that 'I will help Manchester City win the title', 'I'm not here to get a good salary' ... But the truth? It was still the money that was more practical. Without fighting spirit, the players in the dressing room are only concerned about how much they can get more the next time till they renewed their contract, where to play after the weekend game, how many beautiful women they will get in the post-season holiday. I also care about these, but I care more about the championship!"

"I've had enough. Even if Liverpool didn't look for me, I would've asked to leave."

Bendtner listened silently to his team-mates' complaints and asked, "Can Liverpool give you the title?"

Ashley Young responded, and he knew what Bentner meant by asking that. As long as Nottingham Forest were present, Liverpool would have to be under pressure, they were initially second this season, but because of Nottingham Forest, they were forced to be third. Last season, Liverpool were top of the league until the 30th round of the league, but the last league title was given to Nottingham Forest, and then back to ... Forget it, stop thinking about it.

"At least . . . There's a bunch of players out there who want to win the championship, not a bunch of people like these ... If they can get paid, even if they are to sit on the audience seating, they would be okay with it." Ashley Young found the difference between Liverpool and Manchester City, as he specifically reiterates "professional players".

This time it was Bendtner's turn to be silent, Ashley Young was accurate, as he had nothing left to say.

The atmosphere in Manchester City's dressing room had been poor all these years. Head coach McClaren was not the kind of iron-fisted coach who could hold down the dressing room. To be honest he lacked charisma and was too different from Tony Twain. Coupled with the fact that the Manchester City hierarchy are people from the UAE, there was a lack of desire to keep the players loyal to the club. Even Manchester City fans jeered at their players at home games, at those "mercenaries" who came just for the money. This team was really different in the Premier League: everyone knew that Manchester City had no chance to win any title, and coming to Manchester City was to say goodbye to the championships. But every year there were still a lot of players moving to Manchester City because they could get a higher salary than their former owners. Instead of going to places like Qatar to seek gold, they could stay in the sights of Europe's top competitions and mass media.

The two people were silent for a while, perhaps realizing that it was not always good to think bad about their teammates.

Later, Ashley Young sighed, "I now think Nottingham Forest is really unlucky, the last round of the league their opponents are not strong, but Arsenal's opponents definitely weak as well. The boss did not arrange for me to start, I would rather not play at all for the whole game, lest being a disgrace. The boss himself, perhaps is all looking forward to watching Nottingham Forest lose their championships..."

Bendtner glanced at him, "I don't think the boss is that narrow-minded. He's a decent person."

"Yes, a good man. What a good person to be able to bring out such a dressing room... I would rather have an iron-fisted coach who could get the team in line with so we can get a big salary and the honor to fight out. How good would it be..."

Ashley Young poured the beer from the glass in one breath, then got up and left.

"I'm going back to my room to rest, this music is really awful."

Bendtner watched his teammates leave, he did not return back to his rest but continued to sit in the same position, playing with a glass full of wine, but he did not drink it at all.

Chapter 856: I Am Ready, What About You Guys?

11th May, sunny, the highest temperature after noon was 31 degrees Celsius. The final round of the English Premier League would all start at three-thirty in the afternoon.

Tony Twain got out of bed at seven in the morning. His wife was even earlier than him and she was already busy making breakfast for him in the kitchen.

He was not anxious to wash up and change, instead, he sat on the bed and dazed for a while. Was this day just like any other day? No, this was a special day. Not because the champion would be decided on this day, but because of the complexity regarding how the title is decided.

He remained dazed on the bed, as if he was still not fully awake yet.

After he stayed silent for a period of time, he rubbed his face and got off the bed.

A new day had begun. How would he feel when this day ended?

Shania went forward for a morning kiss after she saw Twain coming down. Twain pouted and said, "I haven't brushed my teeth yet."

Shania kept reminding Twain not to be too agitated over the course of breakfast, it was not a big issue if he was not able to win the league title.

Twain thought that Shania was being inauspicious by saying that and he said with a black face, "Can't you say something nicer?"

Shania rolled her eyes and replied, "You're being so nervous so early in the morning. What will you do during the match?"

"Me? Nervous?" Twain could not help but laugh. However, he would find it difficult to laugh very soon as he felt his heart beat much faster than usual.

Shania looked at him as she realized that Twain had fell silent again.

Twain laughed awkwardly, "Seems like I'm really a little nervous..."

Shania placed her forehead on Twain's head, smiled and said, "I know you love to be the champion, but don't make me too worried too."

Twain nodded softly.

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His teammates staying in the same room as him was still sound asleep when Bendtner sat up on his bed. It looked like they had a crazy night last night. The smell of alcohol in the room was proof of that.

Ashley Young's concern might very possibly be a reality this afternoon — This Manchester City team was totally incapable of stopping Arsenal. Even if Nottingham Forest demolishes Sunderland by a score of 90:0 at the City Ground, it would be pointless.

He turned and look at Robinho who was not always in line. The Brazilian's nightlife was really rich... The fact that he was still sleeping here and not at the side of some other woman should have shocked him.

Bendtner jumped out of bed wearing only his underwear and drew the curtains. Bright sunlight gushed into the dark room immediately and fell straight on Robinho's face.

Robinho blinked as he was woken by such a radiant beam of sunlight.

"Who turned on the lights?" He asked groggily as he covered his face with one hand and squinted his eyes.

"Robbie, it's morning," Bendtner replied loudly with gusto.

The confused Brazilian finally became a little bit more awake.

"It's morning?" He blinked hard and saw that the light that woke him up did not come from the lights, but from the sun instead. He mumbled, "What the...what time is it?"

"7.30," Bendtner smiled at him.

"Oh, for god's sake..." Robinho flopped back down on the bed, "It's so early! Let me sleep a little longer..."

"It's time for breakfast Robbie," Bendtner said as he acted dumb.

"You can go..." Robinho covered half his body with the blanket and waved weakly, muttering, "Don't care about me..."

"What time are you planning to sleep until?"

"Until I wake up naturally..." Robinho fell asleep after saying that.

Bendtner opened his arms and shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

He believed that Robinho was definitely not a special case. Many of the Manchester City players were like this last night and McClaren could not care less. To him, the team had already completed their task ahead of time. The final league match was not important, and it was natural for him to let the players relax. As long as they did not go sleep around, why should he stop them from drinking? In the English footballing world, one could not say one was a professional footballer unless one could drink!

Robinho was going to start in this game...

After 11 years of arrogance, Tony Twain was finally going to receive his karma. The team facing Arsenal was a Manchester City team who had surrendered even before the match.

Logically speaking, he should be happy about it, but he did not feel any joy in his heart at all.

After washing up and changing, he saw Ashley Young yawning as he walked out of the room next to his when he exit.

“Good morning...Yawn—”

There was a drop of tear.

“Didn’t you sleep very early? Why are you not awake yet?” Bendtner asked, puzzled.

“Don’t even talk about it...” Ashley Young looked to be in pain, “Shaun was exceptionally excited last night and forced me to play poker with him. He’s the leader of the team and I couldn’t say no...” He yawned again as he recounted his tale.

“Who won?”

“I did...” But there was no traces of the joy of winning on Young’s face, “That bastard Shaun said that I can forget about sleeping until he won... But his card skills are really damn lousy! In the end, I tried very hard to finally let him win one game but it was already 3...”

Ashley Young’s pain made Bendtner sympathize with him. Good thing Robinho’s interest in alcohol and women outweighs his interest in gambling with his roommate.

Even the captain Shaun Wright-Phillips was behaving like this, one could just imagine the strength of the team.

Bendtner walked towards the elevator with Ashley Young, who was still half asleep, as they prepared to go for breakfast.

“Wake me up later on if I fall asleep on the dining table.”

“I think you’ll not fall asleep, you’ll stab yourself in the nostrils with the fork, ha!” Bendtner laughed, “You’ll be the first professional footballer in history to injure yourself with a fork during a meal!”

“So what... I’m not playing anyway, this might be better. If I injure myself, I don’t even have to go as a substitute...” Ashley Young mumbled as he entered the elevator.

They were alone in the massive elevator and it felt very empty.

“Yawn—,” Ashley Young stretched, “One more game, and I’ll be free. Goodbye Manchester City, I won’t miss you at all! Hey, Nicklas, aren’t you going to plan about your future?”

Bendtner was silent.

Ashley Young was not expecting an answer from Bendtner as he leaned on the wall of the elevator. The icy cold feeling dissipated a little bit of his sleepiness.

He suddenly fell into a state of reminiscence as he thought about his days playing in a red jersey. His salary then was way lower than what he was getting now, but he was happier...

He wondered if Bendtner was thinking the same?

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Wenger was enjoying his coffee slowly in the restaurant of the hotel he was staying at, taking a break with his assistants. The players just had an early lunch and were resting in the room.

His assistant manager, Pat Rice, brought him a piece of good news, "Someone told me that he witnessed the Manchester City players partying in the bar until way past midnight. We're facing an opponent who has no desire to win. We're definitely going to win this game!"

Wenger smiled and refuted him, "You cannot say something like this until the last second, Pat." However, this refutation lacked conviction. Even he felt that Manchester City was so slack that they were not a threat.

Pat did not pay much attention to this warning as he said happily, "I'm now sympathizing with Tony Twain. His team is trying so hard to win their game, but they will never expect that our opponent will be a team like this. Even I think that we're a little too lucky, maybe it's really fated that we'll be champions this year!"

After hearing what he said, Wenger thought for a moment and instructed, "Don't tell the players about the opponent's situation, and don't let the reporters have any contact with them, these reporters will only mess things up. Let our players think that Manchester City is still as before, an opponent that requires us to give our best. Pride and underestimating the opponent, I don't wish these to happen in this match."

Pat Rice nodded. He knew about Wenger's temperament. Arsene was not one to be highly conceited.

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When Wenger and his assistants were resting in the hotel, talking about their opponent that afternoon, Twain received a call from Pierce Brosnan.

"Um, Tony... There's something that I don't know whether I should tell you..." Brosnan was being very hesitant on the phone.

Twain felt that everything was not normal today and he felt a little impatient.

"Just speak your mind, Mr. Reporter."

"I heard that the whole Manchester City team was partying all night in the bar last night..."

Twain chuckled silently, "That's not surprising, Mr. Reporter. The impact of your news is getting worse."

"Aren't you worried about the fate of you and the Forest team?"

Twain laughed out loud this time, "Am I supposed to fly to London, grab McClaren by the neck and force him to show some sportsmanship by doing his best?"

Brosnan had no answer to that.

“Mr. Reporter, I don’t care where you got this piece of news from, but I hope that you will not disturb my players with it. ”

Brosnan promised.

“Good, thank you for calling me specially to tell me this,” Twain hung up the phone after thanking Brosnan.

“Who was it, Tony?” Kerslake asked when Twain returned.

“An old friend concerned about the prospect of our title challenge,” Twain dodged the question. He pointed at the hotel lobby, “Tell security to help me chase all these reporters away. My team requires ample rest and I do not want to see any form of disturbance.”

Both Kerslake and the hotel security were not surprised by this sudden decision from Twain. They knew what kind of manager Tony Twain was. Fighting against the media was part and parcel of his life, as normal as eating or sleeping.

In the eyes of the media, Twain’s reason for doing this was obvious — He was nervous. This manager who never showed any weakness in front of others finally had a moment of nervousness... This was something worth writing about.

Twain did not care about how the others perceived him. He had to ensure that his players were not disturbed by all this nonsense before they entered the pitch. No matter what happened on the other side, my team’s resolve to win the title must not be affected. Even if there is only a 0.0000000001% chance, we have to do our best.

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The last round of the 13-14 English Premier League season would start together at 3.30 pm in the afternoon. 45 minutes before the start of the matches, four buses set off from four different hotels, going towards their destinations.

Two of them were headed to the Emirates Stadium while there other two were headed to the City Ground.

Nottingham Forest’s bus was a little quiet, unlike the atmosphere in the past when they were headed for a home game. Maybe this peculiar last round made everyone lose interest in conversation.

Twain also sat alone in the front seat, turning his head to look out of the window silently. Even him, the soul of the team, was acting this way, what more those under him.

The oppressive atmosphere in the bus finally got broken by Kerslake’s booming voice when they reached the stadium, “Get off quickly, get changed and prepare to warm up!”

Twain got off last. He took one look at the media and fans gathering around and entered the tunnel without waving at them nor accepting any interviews from the reporters.

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When Bendtner got off the bus, all he saw around were Arsenal fans in their red and white jerseys. The Manchester City fans in blue were few and far between, whether in terms of numbers or strength, they were completely defeated.

The Arsenal fans were shouting at the Manchester City players, waving their fists, the slogans in their hands, their scarfs, in an attempt to create more pressure for them.

Bendtner wanted to laugh when he saw this.

There's no need to work so hard, we've already surrendered...

Go cheer your team on, congratulations on winning the league title.

Bendtner walked forward and there was a reporter who attempted to rush in to interview him. He was blocked off by security and he shouted, "Bendtner! You almost joined Arsenal before. Do you have any special feelings facing Arsenal in the final round of the league now?"

This question made Bendtner stop, but very soon, he continued to walk forward, shaking his head.

How many years ago was that? That's right, Arsenal wanted to sign him then, but he chose Nottingham Forest in the end. If he had chosen Arsenal...where will he be now?

This question was pointless, he could not be bothered with it.

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Wenger looked serious and solemn as he told his players returning from their warmup, "We're leading by one point, but I want you to forget about this one point. Manchester City is not a weak team, if you underestimate them, you'll suffer a heavy loss. I'm not trying to scare you; this is a fact."

"I don't wish to see the English Premier League trophy flying to Nottingham after 90 minutes. The trophy that was brought to the Emirates Stadium is the real deal, keep it here!"

The cultured and elegant French manager, Wenger, was a little agitated. A rare sight.

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On the other side, McClaren allowed the Manchester City players in the changing room to listen to music, do whatever they wanted. Bendtner sat silently on his seat after changing into his kit, resting with his eyes closed. Manager's team talk? McClaren had never managed to say anything meaningful. He might as well rest instead of listening to him talk.

Robinho, who only woke up at nine, looked full of energy now as he juggled with the ball wearing only an underwear. His technique was indeed good, and he would often do moves that would cause his teammates to exclaim in shock. He could still move freely in the small changing room. The only question was how much of his form now could be brought onto the field later.

"Hey Robbie! It's not time for a Nike commercial now, don't be so excited!" Someone from the team shouted teasingly.

What he got in return was a nutmeg by Robinho after a stepover. The surrounding team members all laughed at this maneuver as they started to get noisy, booing their teammate who got nutmegged.

Ashley Young was among them. He was very relaxed as he did not have to start this game and he would be joining Liverpool next season. Nobody would work too hard for the game later. To them, the summer break had already started!

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Sunderland's manager, Roland Nielsen, was boosting the morale of his team loudly. The team seemed a little downhearted. Facing a Nottingham Forest team who had to win to ensure they had a chance of winning the title away was really the greatest misfortune that this team could have...

"Don't give up! As long as we defeat Nottingham Forest, we'll be able to escape relegation! Think about it, my friends! We're way luckier than our opponents — They might not even win the title even if they beat us! At the very least, fate is still controlled in our hands now. Don't throw this chance away easily! Sunderland must not be relegated!"

"Don't think that Nottingham Forest is undefeatable just because they are in second place now. In fact, as long as we take our chances, victory could be ours too... They have to defeat us at home to have any hopes of winning the title. This is immense psychological pressure for them. At the same time, even if they can defeat us, it's up to the results of the match between Arsenal and Manchester City to decide if they can be the champions, their players are well aware of that... So, in reality, on one hand, Nottingham Forest is facing immense pressure, on the other hand, they have insufficient drive. This is our chance, grab it, defeat them! Let us stay in the Premier League!"

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Tony Twain entered the changing room and closed the door behind him. The noise from outside lessened a lot. Everyone lifted their head to look at their leader, their captain.

"There's something that you guys know a lot about, and I don't want to repeat it here. What I want to say is..." Twain scratched his head out of habit. Because of this habit, his hair was always in a mess, "Don't care about the situation on the other side, you have to play this game properly. Do you remember what I told you during halftime of the Arsenal match? If we can't even win our own game, what rights do we have to fight for the title? This is still applicable now. If we lose to a team like Sunderland, then Arsenal doesn't even need to play Manchester City to win the title."

"This is not what I want to see. Us Nottingham Forest has always been a team that never gives up. We didn't give up in the two Champions League finals, that's why we're the champions. It's the same this time. Ignore what the others are doing, finish our job. Sunderland thinks that we can be bullied easily, then let's show them what a big mistake that is."

Fortune favors the bold. When the chance comes, I want everyone to be prepared for it," Twain's tone was not impassioned, but everyone could feel the strength within what he said.

"I'm ready, what about you guys?"

He asked the players in front of him calmly.

Chapter 857: The Stubborn One

The starting whistle for all 19 matches of the English Premier League blew at the same time at 3.30 pm on 11th May. The last round of the 13-14 season of the English Premier League started together.

Every Nottingham Forest fan in the stands of the City Ground brought a radio with him, paying attention to two games at the same time. The first is the match between Forest and Sunderland happening in front of them, the other is the match between Arsenal and Manchester City all the way in London.

From the radio, Arsenal had all the advantages right from the start of the game whereas all the players from Manchester City were not on form at all. The Forest fans on the stands started to curse Manchester City and McClaren.

The game between Forest and Sunderland was more like a normal game. Sunderland was going all out in the away game with Forest for survival and Nottingham Forest was unable to get any initiative on the field despite being in a home game.

Twain sat on the manager's seat with a stern look on his face, staring at the match in silence.

Kerslake's task was not here. He was seated at the side, listening to the broadcast of the match on the radio with the headphones. The expressions of his face changing along with the commentary from the radio.

After five minutes, he took off the headphones and told Twain by his side, "Arsenal has all the advantages... Manchester City does not care about this game at all..."

Twain smiled and said, "That's normal. Manchester City has no reason to go all out in this game at all."

However, he was gritting his teeth in his heart: Damn you Manchester City! Watch how I destroy you the next time we meet!

He did a good job regarding security. None of the Forest players knew about the situation at Manchester City and they stepped onto the field with unlimited confidence and hope. He treated it as him lying to his players, but it was better than telling them the truth before the game and watching them lose motivation.

He only wished that Manchester City could have a little fight inside them, but it seemed like that was going to be too much to ask...

McClaren, Manchester City... He had met the worst combination that he could ever meet in a thousand years.

Ignore Manchester City, we can't count on other people... Ask our guys to press on in attack. If we continue to let Sunderland drag the game out, the players' mental state will take a turn for the worse..." Twain walked to the sideline after saying this. He did not shout, nor make any hand signals, he merely stood there with his arms folded. He knew that the players knew what he meant just by seeing him at the sideline.

After that, Nottingham Forest increased the intensity of their attack, committing more players forward in attack and the two full backs started to actively assist the attack.

The commentator kept saying that Nottingham Forest and Sunderland were not of the same level. Forest was way stronger than Sunderland, so there was no doubt that Forest was going to win this game. The only uncertainty was the number of goals that Forest would win by...

Following that, he commentated on this match but the topic of discussion switched over to London as he talked about the match between Arsenal and Manchester City. The players on the field might not know what was happening in the Etihad Stadium but the spectators were very clear. Even if the commentator did not say anything, the Forest fans would switch channels on their remote control frequently.

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Ten minutes later, there was news of a goal from the Etihad Stadium. Nobody knew which side scored yet until the scrolling marquee at the bottom of the TV screen indicated that Arsenal had scored on the 16th minute, the scorer was Van Persie.

The City Ground burst out with a loud boo when they knew about this news. Even if the one controlling the ball was a Forest player, the booing still continued.

The players were stunned momentarily and they knew what the reason was.

Kerslake wanted to tell Twain about the latest situation but Twain stopped him with his hand, "I know by listening to this booing."

Kerslake remained silent.

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Van Persie sprinted like a madman amidst the deafening cheers in the stadium. Behind him, his Arsenal teammates were roaring with their fists clenched.

Wenger also ran out from the manager's seat in agitation, jumping around.

Leading after just 16 minutes, he had a reason to be happy indeed.

The Arsenal fans from the stands swarmed forward in an attempt to get closer to their hero. Everyone were screaming Van Persie's name.

On the other end of the field, the Manchester City players did not react to conceding this goal. They were expressionless. Rather than saying they were shell-shocked, it would be more accurate to say they did not care.

Ashley Young looked down as he sat on the substitute's bench. He did not want the others to see the laughter on his face — This was Manchester City. The same Manchester City who were so full of passion and drive to overtake Manchester United, Milan, and dethrone Real Madrid as the best club in the world!

McClaren was a little displeased, maybe the reason was just because they conceded so early. However, despite being displeased, he merely complained a little at the manager's seat and did nothing, his butt did not even leave the seat.

Bendtner stood in the center circle waiting for the restart. Opposite him was Robinho, with a nonchalant look on his face.

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“Manchester City resisted symbolically for ten minutes,” Kerslake described what happened to Twain after the booing stopped, “They committed very little players in attack, the forwards were isolated, the gaps between the lines were huge, as if they had no united tactics. The defense wants to defend, the forwards...” He stopped for a moment here, “The commentary kept mentioning Bendtner, his name popped up the most for Manchester City. He is very active but he could not get any support from midfield.”

Twain did not mention anything about Bendtner’s performance, he merely said, “Ignore what happens there, we’re still level here...”

Sunderland was very fierce in fighting for the ball, pressing all over the pitch without considering if their stamina could take it. Such pressing also gave the Forest team some considerable problems. Whether it was the defenders or the midfield players, they could not control the ball properly under such pressing, much less build up an attack. The energy that Sunderland was displaying in their desire to survive made things very difficult for Nottingham Forest.

And now that Arsenal was leading, for a moment, their morale was shaken...

Some would think : Arsenal is already ahead, what’s the point even if we beat Sunderland?

The others placed their concentration on the match between Arsenal and Manchester City. Even though they were physically in the City Ground, they were already at Etihad Stadium in spirit.

How could they continue playing a game like this?

Twain stood at the sideline and frowned.

“This is not a match that I wanted to see...” Twain muttered in his heart.

After that, he shouted for Wood loudly, “George! You’re the captain! Do something! Look at your team! Look at their eyes!!”

Wood heard Twain’s voice, turned to look back and realized that everyone was rather distracted.

He was not the type of captain that liked to shout or use motivational speech to inspire his team and its morale, compare to words, he preferred to express his meaning with actions directly.

So, when Sunderland attempted to continue using their high-press to push Forest back, George Wood returned the favor immediately with a foul. This foul gave his a yellow card and the combined protests of the Sunderland players, but he won claps as loud as thunder from the stands, as well as a different look in his teammates.

After watching his foul, Twain continued to shout. “Don’t just stand there! This is our match! It’s our own match! Score some goals! You bastards!”

Nottingham Forest regained their composure after being scolded by Twain and finally scored three minutes later.

The score was Bale. He put the ball in the Sunderland's goal with a direct free kick. This fit the Sunderland tactics — Frequent tackling will lead to more fouls, especially closer to the danger areas. This gave Forest many free kick opportunities. Bale already had three other free kick opportunities before this goal, putting two above the bar and hitting the wall directly with another.

This time, he finally grabbed his chance and took a beautiful free kick, over the wall and squeezing within the far post. The goalkeeper could not dive in time and could only watch as he conceded a goal.

The stands erupted in massive cheers. The oppressed feeling that the Nottingham Forest fans had finally had a reason to be released. They indulged in the celebration for the goal and did not want to think about the fact that Arsenal leading was still leading Manchester City.

“Gareth Bale! Beautiful free kick! No wonder what's the situation between Arsenal and Manchester City, his goal gave the Forest fans some breathing space!”

Bale was being embraced by his teammates, however, all he was thinking was : I wonder if Shannon is watching this game...

This goal also relieved the tension that Twain was feeling in his heart. His team was leading Sunderland, that way he could continue to look forward to...a miracle.

The way he looked as he waved his fists on the sidelines made Shania worried as she sat in the VIP area...

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After Sunderland fell behind, there were also cheers that rang out from another stadium. That was the home ground of Portsmouth. That was because the Portsmouth fans were very clear that the results between Portsmouth and Tottenham did not matter as long as Sunderland lost.

At this moment, all the Portsmouth fans were cheering for Nottingham Forest as they forgot to pay attention to their own game. They even hoped that Nottingham Forest could win the league title so that Portsmouth can stay in the Premier League, that was the best scenario.

In the Premier League, there weren't many fans supporting Nottingham Forest. The Portsmouth fans would usually not forget how Forest scored six goals in one half and humiliated them 7:4. But this time, they were at the mercy of Nottingham Forest. At this time, they might be the only supporter for Nottingham Forest, an ally... They would be an “ally” who could only help to shout of some chants.

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Since Forest was leading Sunderland, then if the situation continues as it was, Sunderland would not be much threat to Forest. The Nottingham Forest fans started to hope that Manchester City could try to make a good showing, even forcing Arsenal to a draw would be good, Arsenal was only leading by a goal after all. Did Tony Twain not say that a one goal lead was the most uncertain lead? Then let Arsenal have a taste of this uncertainty!

Too bad their hopes were crushed.

Before the end of the first half, at the 44th minute, there was news of another goal from the Etihad Stadium. The scoring team was still Arsenal. A long shot from Fàbregas helped Arsenal to a 2:0 lead before the end of the first half.

The commentator of the Forest game sighed after hearing this news, "The match has ended early, Arsenal has won the league title. It doesn't matter how many goals Nottingham Forest scores against Sunderland now. I suddenly feel that Nottingham Forest is so solemn and stirring..."

Not just him, every Forest fan watching on the TV fell silent then.

It looked like there was no longer any hope for this season's league title.

Twain stood with his head hung at the sideline when he heard the news, not letting anyone see his expression. He suddenly felt a wave of fatigue.

A man's abilities are limited indeed. One does not always get the returns one wants just because one has worked hard...

He only realized that his shirt was totally soaked with sweat now.

He stood on the sideline, expressionless and silent until the end of the first half.

The stands were filled with boos for Manchester City and Arsenal, but what was the point of that? They would not be able to hear the boos from here anyway.

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Bendtner felt annoyed at the cheers coming from the Etihad Stadium. They were not cheering for Arsenal, instead, they were mocking Manchester City's uselessness mercilessly. As part of the Manchester City team, he was being mocked as well naturally.

But he did not accept this mocking because he had been working very hard all this while. He only lacked support...

He took a look at the substitute's bench, Ashley Young was seated on the seat with his eyes closed, as if he was asleep. It was a little hot this afternoon, yet he could actually be so calm over there. Had he completely lost hope for Manchester City as he expected?

Bendtner thought about how he would perform in this game if he was also confirmed to be leaving the team next season.

It was hot, the sun was so strong that it made people groggy. Would he avoid running as much as possible? Would he show up for work but did not exert himself? Would he be full of imagination for his new life and did not care about this game?

It was a pity that he did not have the chance to verify it.

The whistle signifying the end of the first half was like music to the ears of the Manchester City players. They could finally return to the cooling changing room to rest for 15 minutes out of the direct sunlight. As for this game... Arsenal is already leading by two goals, do we have to continue struggling?

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When the referee blew two whistles to indicate the end of the first half, Twain was the first person to turn towards the tunnel. The fans on the stands were still showing their displeasure at the match between Arsenal and Manchester City by booing. However, this booing sounded very unpleasant to the ears of Twain.

He felt very tired and wanted to lean on something.

If he gave up like this, he probably did not have to bear such torment.

No!

When entering the tunnel, Twain clenched his fist. He could even hear the beating of his heart clearly.

I love to make things difficult for myself!

I will never give up until the last second! .

Chapter 858: The Special One

Two stadiums, four changing rooms, yet the atmosphere were totally different.

In the home changing room of the Etihad Stadium, the Arsenal players were relaxed as they listened to music and discussed excitedly about how they were going to celebrate this league title that they worked so hard for. Not even Wenger thought that Forest could create a miracle again, even though he just found out that Nottingham Forest was leading 1:0 at home.

Manchester City's performance in this game today did not surprise Wenger —— There was indeed no need for Manchester City to work hard for this game. Nobody wanted to get injured in the last game of the season after all. If they went all out knowing that their opponents were Arsenal who would do everything for the league title, it would naturally be difficult for them to avoid injuries. They might as well just show up for the game and then go for a vacation after that.

Meeting an opponent like this during the last match of the season was really lucky for them. On the other hand, look at Tony Twain's situation —— Sunderland, a team who must beat Forest to be able to stay in the Premier League.

Under such circumstances, if Arsenal still could not become champions, Wenger did not know what other opportunities there could be for his team to win the league.

After two years, getting the league title back from Nottingham Forest. There would be no regrets even though they were knocked out of the Champions League by them.

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At Sunderland's changing room at the City Ground, manager Nielson was giving a passionate speech in the middle of his team with his fists clenched, "It's just a goal! Arsenal is already leading by two goals. The Nottingham Forest players will definitely know about this news during the halftime break. What

does this mean for them? It means their league title is gone! Their morale and confidence will both be dealt a severe blow, and this would be our chance... Defeat them and let us stay in the Premier League!"

The players all looked fired up by his speech. Boss is right, Nottingham Forest will definitely be affected by it, and that will be our opportunity, we just need to take the chances for a couple of counter attacks... For our survival in the Premier League, we'll go all out for these 45 minutes!

If not now, then when?

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Arsenal's changing room was exuberant and relaxed, Sunderland's changing room was filled with unrest and hope. Nottingham Forest's felt more like the calm before the storm.

All the players enquired about the situation in the other stadium from the coaches and teammates on the substitute's bench the moment they left the field. They heard loud boos coming from the stands twice during the match and they wanted to confirm if it meant that Arsenal was leading by two goals.

The answer were unanimous. Both the coaches and their teammates told them about this cruel fact with a helpless look and nodding motion.

For a moment, everyone grew silent as they sat in the changing room, not knowing what to say or what to do. They could only wipe away the sweat on their bodies like a machine.

Twain was in the changing room all this time; he did not say anything either.

The Forest players were all hoping that their boss would say something then, even if he was scolding someone. Otherwise, this silence would be too unbearable...

Bale opened his mouth to speak but stopped himself, he turned to look around and found that everyone had habitually looked down. He started to hate this action all of a sudden.

Are we going to just give up like this? Even Boss, who's usually so arrogant, has accepted this result?

This unbearable silence lasted for five whole minutes.

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Brazilian samba music was playing in the changing room. Manchester City had so many Brazilian players that it was becoming more and more like a Brazilian team. Robinho, Elano, Jo, Alex... All these players from Brazil were twisting and turning along with the music in the changing room, as if they were enjoying the fiesta again this year.

There were also people joining in, everyone's thoughts were no longer on the game.

Bendtner was the only one who felt pain as these samba music were like extensions of the Arsenal fans' mocking, reverberating in his ears. He felt as if his head would explode. He hated the atmosphere of the changing room and he would rather everyone sit squarely while manager McClaren kicked the door in to give all of them a scolding.

He might feel more comfortable if there were shouts and curses of, "What bullshit was that in the first half?"

He covered his head with the towel he used to wipe away his sweat, leaned on the wall, closed his eyes and tried his best to calm down.

But the noisy and happy rhythm of the music made his efforts for naught. All sorts of weird thoughts popped out in his head along with the music.

Are we going to continue like this for the second half?

Can I request to be substituted? Hmm... probably not, I guess? Then I should find a chance to get two yellows, or injure myself... Anyway, I don't want to play anymore.

What kind of lousy game is this, we've already lost our will to fight before the match. Is it a proud and honorable thing to watch others lift the champion's trophy in front of us? Are these people dancing in the changing room not ashamed of the current score line? Do they wish to fail? Didn't we get together to form a team to win and be champions?

Bendtner lifted his head slightly, he saw Ashley Young watching the performance of Robinho and co with a smile on his face from under the towel. The smile was cold. At that moment, he started to envy Ashley Young, because... He is finally free.

Bendtner had a thought.

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After allowing the awkward and unbearable silence to continue for five minutes, Tony Twain finally stood up from his seat. Along with his action, everyone's eyes were on him.

"Everyone knows about the situation of the other game, I'll not go into it. Is this result making you depressed? We worked so hard in the first half and we only managed a one goal lead whereas Arsenal got a two-goals lead so easily? I have to admit that this result is not to our advantage. I have no way of asking you guys to become champions because the way to becoming champions is not in our hands," Twain said as he opened his arms.

"All we can do now is to play our own game. Forget about the championship for now," Twain said. He looked at his players and realized that they did not have much reaction. He smiled, "Are you guys depressed because of what I said? You thought that I will stand here, wave my fists and shout that victory belongs to us and the championship belongs to us, didn't you?"

The players did not answer, but Twain could guess from their expressions.

"I just want you to put down your burdens. I've been thinking about this question earlier, if we continue to play with the burden of being champions on our backs, we might even lose to Sunderland in the second half... Don't, don't look so unbelieving," Twain pointed at a few players and said, "Your minds are filled with Arsenal, Arsenal, Arsenal... You don't even know who our opponents are today, do you? Newcastle? Tottenham Hotspurs? Or... Real Madrid? Fellows, when you're looking at the target far away, pay some attention to your feet. If you get tripped by a small rock, you'll become the laughingstock of everyone. When that happens, not only would Arsenal win the league title, they can also mock us for our incapability without remorse!"

“Indeed, we’re behind Arsenal by one point. Arsenal has a very comfortable lead, that’s a fact too. But this should not be a reason for us to give up. Play this game against Sunderland properly, don’t give them any chance to come back, next...” Twain stopped when he reached here. What should he say next? Pray to God that they would become champion? Wait for the blessings of lady luck?

“No,” Twain shook his head, “Even if the whole world doesn’t believe in us, we have to believe in ourselves. Arsenal cannot announce that they’re the champions until the last second of the game! Similarly, you cannot announce that it is the end! Let me tell you guys, I have not given up yet, I’ve never given up! I’ve always believed that my team is the best team in the world, and we should logically achieve all the glory. Some people are worried for me, if I lose the league title, how am I going to eat a table? Let me tell you guys... I’ve never thought about this problem because I firmly believe that we will not lose!” Twain shook his fist with vigor, his tone suddenly becoming very passionate. “If you do not have the same state of mind as I do, you won’t be able to smile at the end of this intense fight! It is always better to believe in yourselves instead of believing in others! I’ve said it before, do you remember who your opponents are in this game? Let me tell you, it’s Sunderland! That unlucky team that is destined to be relegated! Crush them!”

If there was an apple in Twain’s hand now, he might just be able to crush it.

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Nielson was making his adjustments to the tactics for the second half. He was confident that he found a Nottingham Forest’s loophole.

“Their state of mind is not balanced now. A one-goal lead is not enough for Twain. This is Tony Twain’s habit, he’ll definitely want his team to press more in attack, that will be our chance... The two Forest full backs were very active in the first half, they’ll probably be even more active in the second half. Everyone said that Tony Twain is conservative, but deep inside, he is a very crazy man, he can continue to press forward in the second half for victory. That’s why I want you to launch an attack the moment you intercept the ball, pump the ball forward. As long as we can enter the penalty area once, it’ll do!”

The tactics board was all messed up by him and he kept talking non-stop. He could not care if his players understood him, all he could think of now was, “There’s not much time left, I have to let them know what to do in the second half!”

“Continue to press them over the whole pitch and tactical fouls... Of course, try to foul them further away from our penalty area. Don’t be afraid of being exhausted, I’ll emphasize it again — This is the last game of the season, if you don’t go all out, this will also be your last game in the Premier League. Run even if you’ve a cramp! If you cannot continue to create pressure for them, you’ll be the ones at a disadvantage!”

“Don’t be afraid to make mistakes, get the ball back if you lose it. Be more ferocious and they’ll be afraid of you! Think about what Forest is feeling now. Their championship is gone!” Nielsen even repeated this last sentence three times.

Nielson was not an impressive tactician, otherwise Sunderland would not have been in this situation — — The Irishman Quinn still had the backings of a rich financial group. But he was not an impressive speaker either, under the current special circumstance though, what he said still had some provocative

effect. The Sunderland players' eyes turned red and they were prepared to fight till the end in the second half.

Tackle the arrogant Nottingham Forest and destroy their dreams of winning the title as well as ensuring their own safety. This season would be perfect.

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The samba music finally ended, but Bendtner did not feel that his torment was over. Because McClaren was preparing the tactics for the second half...

Robinho was still bobbing his head on his seat, as if the music did not stop. He had already been substituted. At the start of the second half, the main striker was being substituted for the young striker in the team, the 20 years-old Jack Reed. He had only played five times for the team this season, all as a substitute.

McClaren was already training the rookies for the team.

As the top scorer of the team, Bendtner was still considered an important member and he would continue to play in the second half.

Bendtner really did not know whether this was a good or bad thing for him. When McClaren announced that Jack Reed would be replacing Robinho, he secretly stole a glance at Ashley Young and found out that he was also looking at him, only he could not hide the sympathy he had in his eyes.

At this moment, a sentence popped up in his mind.

People from Nottingham Forest were always a tough fit to the environment they were in. That was because that man was too special, so the team that he brought up was also too special, and people coming from that team would naturally be special too.

If Nottingham Forest were in the same situation now, that man would probably give everyone in the changing room a piece of his mind. He could not tolerate failure, much less failure without any fighting spirit like now. It was very tiring to play for him, seriously, it was as if he was being forced to run forward by a mace every day without stopping.

But one day, when they were allowed to stop and take a break, to catch their breath, they would find out that they had run up the mountain when they looked up. That was when they could finally straighten their exhausted bodies, take a deep breath and take a good look at their surroundings.

They could see all the mountains in a single glance...

Chapter 859: The Explosion in Silence

When the second half began, the Forest fans were still paying close attention to the latest developments in the other game. When they heard from the radio that Robinho had been taken off at the start of the

half, they started to scold McClaren. Taking off the main striker for a young player, even an idiot knew what that meant.

Twain also heard about this from Kerslake and he shrugged. They could not depend on other people after all, they could only believe in themselves...

Sunderland started the second half as if they were on steroids and launched attacks after attacks on the Forest goal. The speech by manager Nielsen had the desired effect.

But did what Twain say had no effect?

Sunderland was very prone to unforced errors in their hotheadedness and their full pitch pressing, which meant they would "intercept the ball and lose it again."

Forest took advantage of these unforced errors and launched a counter attack after intercepting the ball, threatening the Sunderland's goal immediately.

The Sunderland players did not expect themselves to be the Forest team's prey when they were dreaming of defeating Nottingham Forest once and for all in the second half. The Scottish international goalkeeper, Gordon, gave up after the second try.

Forest was launching an attack from the flank then. Bale came forward and played a one-two over the top with Fernández and crossed the ball. The ball was punched away by Gordon, but it did not go far. Gago took a long shot outside the penalty area and the ball took a deflection off the Irish defender, Paul Mcshane.

The ball did not deflect into the goal, but it fell to the Forest striker, Ibišević's feet instead. The Bosnian did not need a second invitation and took a shot. The ball flew straight into the empty net.

"Nottingham Forest leads Sunderland by 2:0!!"

The second half had only begun for four minutes and Nottingham Forest extended their lead. This goal was a very heavy blow to Sunderland — They wanted to score a goal, but they conceded a goal instead. So much for staying clear of relegation... It all looked like a joke at that moment.

Ibišević punched the air in celebration after scoring.

Forest could not control the match between Arsenal and Manchester City. The only thing they could do was to score as many goals as possible in the game against Sunderland and vent their anger on them.

However, if Manchester City could not draw or defeat Arsenal, it would not matter how many goals they scored, it would be a futile resistance.

Twain was not as agitated as before when his team scored. He merely waved his fist and sat back down to continue and wait for news from the Etihad Stadium.

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"The two goals by Arsenal brought this match to an early rubbish period. This is not what we want to see... Manchester City appeared to have no motivation at all. If the second half continues this way, the officials from the Football Association can shake the hands of Arsenal's chairman, Hill-Wood and

congratulate him early," the neutral commentator was obviously displeased that the heavily anticipated match would be so one-sided.

What he wanted to see was an exciting match, with both sides unwilling to surrender and fight till the final moment. Add that to the match between Forest and Sunderland in the other stadium, they would be able to see the fight to the death between these four teams keep the suspense of the league winner to the final second.

This would be a deserved match fit for the intense fight for the English Premier League earlier in the season.

If Arsenal were to win the title so easily, it would be so unfair to Nottingham Forest whom had been working so hard to play catch up... At the very least, Manchester City should work hard to give Arsenal some excitement.

The Arsenal fans definitely had a totally different thinking as compared to this commentator. They were singing and dancing on the stands, jumping around and they could not wait for the referee to blow the whistle to signify the end of the match now. The beer that were prepared to celebrate winning the title were already out and there were fans who could not wait any longer, lifting up the banners and slogans to celebrate winning.

The Arsenal substitutes were chatting in a relaxed manner on the substitutes' bench. Wenger became the person who was paying the most attention to the match. He was not overly optimistic, even if there was a 99% chance of them winning, he did not want to appear too excited before the end of the match.

Pat Rice just told him that Nottingham Forest had scored again on the other side. They were like Arsenal now, having a two-goals lead.

Wenger laughed as he knew that Sunderland would not pose much of a problem for Forest. Even if they were to perform up to 200% of their abilities in their fight for survival, they still had 300% distance between them and Nottingham Forest, what good would that do?

That was why it was enough for him to have a one point advantage for his team before the game. What remained was very simple. Arsenal just had to play their own game, ensure that they did not make any mistake and not be forced into a draw by Manchester City, they would be champions. Rice were very concerned about Nottingham Forest, but he did not really care much about the circumstances that Tony Twain was in.

Jack Reed, whom was sent on by Manchester City in the second half did not have much experience. Other than being good at running, he was not a problem for Arsenal. Wenger could not be bothered to send someone to mark him. As for that Bendtner... He was still a problematic person.

Half of the Arsenal's defense were already marking him, and he could still be as active as the first half. He was an abnormality in Manchester City.

What was he seeking exactly?

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“There is still no information from Arsenal’s side. Arsenal has slowed down their game and have started to go for ball possession. Their fans have already started the celebrations early. Manchester City still doesn’t have many chances...”

Kerslake went close to Twain’s ear and told him.

Twain remained silent for a while, then shouted the names of his players for them to continue attacking.

He could only vent his frustrations on Sunderland now...

10 minutes later, Nottingham Forest scored their third goal. Pepe was the scorer.

It came from a corner this time. Bale took the corner and Pepe leapt for the ball and headed it into the goal close to the post.

Three goals down, Sunderland had completely lost their will to fight. Their lofty sentiments and aspirations from halftime had been dispersed by the two goals in the second half. It was to be Nottingham Forest’s time to perform next.

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When news of Nottingham Forest going 3:0 up reached Portsmouth’s Fratton Park, there were thunderous cheers. The Portsmouth fans knew their team were sure to stay in the Premier League and Sunderland would take their place to be relegated to the Championship. Everyone were grateful to Nottingham Forest for their “magnanimous act” and hoped that they would win the league title as they wished.

The Tottenham fans also did not wish to see their city rivals lift the Premier League Champions’ trophy. Since the results of this game did not matter anymore, there was no need for them to continue facing each other with enmity on the stands. Therefore, the Tottenham fans cheered along the Portsmouth fans, congratulating them for staying up and cursing Arsenal to lose the league title at the same time.

The only thing lacking was the fans from both sides hugging each other and cheering together.

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“67 minutes have gone in the game. Nottingham Forest is leading Sunderland 3:0 while Arsenal is still leading Manchester City 2:0. There are 23 minutes to the end of the match. Earlier I said that Arsenal had a 99% chance of winning the title, I have to correct myself, this chance is now 99.5%,” the commentator commentating on the Arsenal and Manchester City game said.

“The fourth goal is coming... It’s in! Nottingham Forest is leading Sunderland 4:0... Poor Sunderland,” the commentator commentating on the Nottingham Forest and Sunderland game did not sound that enthusiastic. He also felt that there was no point for Nottingham Forest to score so many goals. In his mind, Twain’s team had already lost their sense of reasoning and are now just venting their frustrations without care for Sunderland’s feelings. Not only were they causing them to be relegated, they were venting their anger at not being able to win the title on the poor Black Cats (Sunderland’s nickname).

The Forest fans were not cheering much for the goals now. Their attentions were all away from this match, they had already flown to London. If Manchester City did not buck up, it would not matter how many goals Forest scored.

Fat John stood there watching the game. His butt had left his seat ever since the game started and he was surrounded by his friends. All of them had the same feeling of worry for the future of the Forest team.

Someone even thought about the personal grievances between Manchester City and Forest.

"I heard that Ashley Young did not start and Bendtner is the only ex-Forest player on the field... Would that fellow throw the game on purpose?"

"Manchester City does not have a good relationship with us, it's hard to say, something like this..."

"Is it because we've been too arrogant previously, making enemies everywhere..."

"Bullshit!" The direct Skinny Bill stared angrily at the person saying that, "The victors have the rights to be arrogant. It's their problem for hating us, does that have anything to do with us? Damn it!" He was also worried for Forest and he frowned and did not care about that unlucky chap anymore.

"Actually..." The fatty started to speak. His voice was low, just like his mood, "We should do something to cheer the team on, but I don't have any mood to sing at all..."

"Sing, John! Do what we have to do! Don't let those rascals treat us as a joke!" Bill was angry again, he clenched his fist and said to John, "Even if Forest doesn't win the title this season, we'll walk out with our heads held high! Sing!"

John took one look at his partner and nodded furiously, "Sing!"

Following that, the songs cheering Nottingham Forest rang out from the stands. Their singing woke many indecisive fans up and drew their attention back to this game. More and more people joined in, the voices became louder and clearer.

"With the game down to the last minute, do you think it's over?"

"There's little time left as the referee looks at his watch and your heart goes, 'Forget it, we still have the future'—"

"The cheering song gradually loses its voice, and some people begin to leave early. A bunch of beer cups are strewn about in the stands, and it's a mess!"

"The Forest team's number 11 steps forward and he said, 'No! The game isn't over yet! Don't be too happy!'"

"Don't—Be—Happy—Yet!"

"Don't be too happy! Don't be happy yet!"

The Forest fans seemed to be roaring at Arsenal.

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The Nottingham Forest fans roared hysterically in desperation, whereas in the Etihad Stadium, the song “We are the Champions” rang out from the stands.

“...We are the champions, my friends! And we’ll keep on fighting ’til the end! No time for losers, ’cause we are the champions of the world!!”

Of course, there were some Arsenal fans who put out banners mocking Nottingham Forest to save their efforts.

Bendtner could not see their banners, nor did he mind them, but the some “We are the Champions” really agitated him.

His hard work served as the greatest contrast for the celebration banquet of others. He seemed like a clown for running his lungs out for 70 minutes.

What am I working so hard for?

Look around me, look at my teammates, they are all just putting on a show without having to suffer. Under such a hot weather, I’ve been running until I’m on the verge of cramping up whereas their jerseys are not even wet with sweat!

Bendtner felt unhappy about it, what kind of teammates were he playing with?

Why is he playing with these people...

When the Arsenal defenders were passing the ball back and forth at will in front of him, Bendtner clenched his fist.

Sweat dripped down from his forehead, down his cheeks. He felt that the inside of him was hotter than this weather.

Play if you want! I’m not playing anymore!

Arsenal’s attack ended. Joe Hart pumped the ball forward with and Bendtner worked hard to get the first ball. He headed the ball to Jack Reed at his side, the young man who just came on in the second half.

This kid could run, had speed and stamina, but his technique and sense were very lacking. He was already 20 years old and who knew if he had a future. He wanted to dribble by himself and shoot after getting the ball — He already wasted so many such opportunities previously — He wanted to prove himself in front of McClaren. Him, along with Bendtner might be the only ones left in the Manchester City team who still had the will to fight.

But he heard Bendtner roar, “Give me the ball!!”

To Reed, Bendtner was an authority figure in the team, and he was one of the steadiest strikers in the team. His status and authority were not something that a rookie like him could challenge.

Hence, when Bendtner roared like this, he could only pass the ball over as instructed.

But he kept running forward after passing the ball with the intention of playing a one-two with Bendtner. He did not dare to roar, "Pass me the ball back!" Like what Bendtner did, he only ran forward, hoping that Bendtner could understand his intention.

It did not matter if Bendtner could understand his intention, but the Arsenal defenders certainly did — — This pass and run's intention was too obvious, only a fool would be fooled.

The Arsenal's drew back along with Reed and there was a space in between Bendtner and the Arsenal's backline. What was worse was... Bendtner was totally unmarked.

This kind of chances did not come often, especially when your opponent was Arsenal. It might be because Arsenal slacked off due to their two-goals lead and they thought that they could win easily, and that Manchester City would not be a threat to them. That was why there would be such a space in defense. Bendtner did not even have a chance to think about how that happened. He moved the ball forward, took a step and lifted his leg...

He was 32 meters away from goal...

An outstanding long shot!

Almunia dived and stretched his arm as long as possible, his body extended but he did not touch the ball. Nobody in the penalty area touched the ball.

The silver ball flew across the grass of the Etihad Stadium, across the players and penetrated the defense of Almunia's fingers!

The ball hit the net ferociously with a "whoosh".

"Ah... Ahhh! It's a goal! It's a goal!!" The commentator jumped from his seat and roared with his arms raised.

The Arsenal fans watching the game on the TV were a little unhappy at this outburst of his — — Why were you not so agitated when our team scored?

"Nicklas Bendtner! Nicklas Bendtner!! A beautiful goal! He shocked everyone! Including his teammates!"

After scoring, Bendtner ran towards the stands where there were the most Arsenal fans, put his left hand behind his back and planted a right finger on his pursed lips to make a "shut up" sign.

His teammates were all stunned where they stood, they did not expect the goal to come so suddenly, so much so that none of them ran forward to embrace him and celebrate his goal. Only when the loud boos from the Arsenal fans started did they react to it and rushed forward to embrace Bendtner tightly, patting his head and congratulating him for his goal.

Even though Manchester City had no desire to get anything from this game, it did not mean that they wanted to throw the game. If their teammate scored, it was still something to be happy about.

Facing his teammates rushing over to celebrate with him, Bendtner gritted his teeth as he wanted to get rid of them and continue his celebratory action. But they really embraced him too tightly...

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“Tony!” Kerslake, who was listening to the radio, shouted suddenly.

However, Twain waved at him and made a “shh” sign with his hand. At the same moment, there was a loud cheer from the stands. Sunderland had possession of the ball then...

“I already know, David.”

Twain turned back and smiled at him.

David Kerslake was so agitated that he clenched his fist, almost jumping up, “Bendtner! It’s a goal by that kid, Bendtner!”

The name of the scorer surprised Twain a little.

The cheers were still continuing as the voice of the broadcaster came up over the live broadcast in the stadium, “73rd minute, Arsenal 2: 1 Manchester City, scorer... Nicklas Bendtner!”

Hurray—!!” The Forest fans shouted together, totally forgetting the hatred they had for this traitor when he left.

At that moment, they worshipped Bendtner as if he was still the Danish kid in red. Back then, he was still thought to be the main striker for Nottingham Forest for the next 10 years...

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Wenger was furious about the goal that they conceded. He kept waving his arms towards his assistant manager Pat Rice as he sat next to him, complaining, “What’re our defenders doing? What’re our midfielders doing? Did they think we’ve got this in the bag? Five seconds before Bendtner took his shot, we had no one within a 10 meters vicinity to him!”

After he finished complaining, he stood up and walked to the sideline, putting up two fingers on his left hand and his index finger on his right as he shouted to the field, “The score is 2:1 now! 2:1!”

This score line made him nervous. The explosion of Bendtner after being oppressed for 70 minutes made him uneasy too.

He did not know why, after all, his team was still in the lead and other than Bendtner, the rest of the players in Manchester City were not a threat.

Yet his heartbeat hastened without warning. He was a very rational manager, but sometimes he would trust his instincts.

His instinct was: They could not let the Dane continue his performance!

Chapter 860: The Final Three Minutes

Arsenal might still be leading 2:1, but Manchester City’s goal has given Nottingham Forest an immense confidence boost. They felt like all the hard work they had put in up till that point was worth it.

The fans started singing Bendtner's song and cheering for Manchester City at the stands. They had completely put their feelings of hostility towards Manchester City aside.

The Nottingham Forest players began to get even more lively on the pitch as well. They were relentless against a Sunderland side that had lost all will to fight.

The Forest players could not help Manchester City score goals against Arsenal. All they could do right now was to try and score as many goals as they could so as to boost their confidence and hopes of becoming champions of the Premier League.

If they could, they really wanted to score at least six goals against Sunderland in this home game.

Sadly, Forest was slightly down on its luck. Almost all the Sunderland players had retreated backwards to defend, and Forest was not able to score a goal at all.

The 3:0 score was enough for Forest to win the game. Thus, Twain slowly began directing his attention towards the match between Arsenal and Manchester City.

This final league match sure is exciting...

As a fan, he absolutely adored the excitement, but as a manager, he absolutely despised it.

The match entered its 80th minute. However, there were no further meaningful news regarding the match between Arsenal and Manchester City ever since Bendtner's goal.

The Forest players and fans started getting tense. If the match were to end with a 2:1 victory for Arsenal, Forest would not be able to clinch the champions trophy.

Everyone hoped that Manchester City would work harder and turn the match around.

However, they could not decide the outcome of the match just with their thoughts or hopes alone.

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Bendtner was tightly marked by Arsenal's defenders. If one defender was not enough, then two would be employed to mark Bendtner.

Arsenal was hell-bent on 'freezing' Bendtner and not letting him have a chance to move about on the pitch. There were times where Bendtner could do nothing but stand rooted at a spot. He could not even retreat backwards to help with his team's defense.

Even the toughest of men would feel exhausted after running about non-stop for 80 minutes under a scorching weather of 32 degree Celsius.

However, Bendtner did not want to make his exhaustion known, because he was afraid that McClaren would substitute him and take him off the pitch.

This was perhaps the most tiring match he has ever played in throughout his life. Not only did he have to battle with his opponents on the pitch, but he also had to battle with his own manager.

He was not giving his all because he wanted to help Nottingham Forest become champions. He just did not want to see the hard work he had put into the match so far end up being humiliated by others. If he

were to get substituted, then everything would be over for him, and his goal would have been utterly meaningless.

In order to conceal his exhaustion, Bendtner forced himself to run all about the pitch. He tried to find a way to break through Arsenal's defense, and also tried to act as a decoy so as to provide more space for his teammates to make their runs into the penalty box and shoot at the goal.

Sadly, Jack Reed was not able to capitalize on all the chances that Bendtner had created for him. If it had been Robinho, he would definitely have scored at least two goals by now.

Reed was eager to play in matches and prove himself as a player, but his techniques, experience and spatial awareness were not up to mark just yet, and he still had a long way to go before he could play like Robinho.

Wenger was slightly upset with Arsenal's defense as he watched the match by the side. His team had focused all their attention on marking Bendtner, but they had missed out on marking the young player Reed.

Wenger began to throw a temper by the side of the pitch. At the sight of Wenger's unhappiness, Philippe Senderos ranted to his team captain Fàbregas. "That lad doesn't pose a threat at all... I think things would be much worse if we were to let Bendtner make his runs freely... The greatest threat in the Manchester City team is Bendtner. We'd be able to win this match as long as we mark him tightly. I don't think we need to be scared of any other Manchester City player. I really don't know what the boss is worried about... Even if Bendtner does manage to score a goal, we'd still win the match anyway..."

Fàbregas agreed with his views and told him to act as he saw fit. He would help in defending against Reed when the situation calls for it.

Senderos and Fàbregas were not the only players who thought that way. In fact, the entire Arsenal team thought the same way as they did. They were all exhausted and wanted to take it easy after running about under such a scorching sun for close to 90 minutes.

Why should they work so hard if Manchester City isn't even going to threaten their goalpost?

They should slow down their tempo and not try to fight for the ball so aggressively like before. It would be all right to let Manchester City move up and attack them. All they needed to do was to mark Bendtner.

There were even some Arsenal players who started to fantasize about the scenes at the end of the match where they would lift the champions trophy, just like how many of the fans were as well.

Bendtner would have been disappointed if he were to overhear Senderos and Fàbregas' conversation.

He thought that Reed's liveliness on the pitch would help to take away some of the attention that had been placed on him by Arsenal's players, but it was clear that Senderos was smarter than he thought and he did not take the bait.

Bendtner was slightly lucky to have scored with his long range effort from before, but Arsenal did not even give him the chance to be lucky now. He would be defended against when he is still about 10 meters away from the penalty box.

Manchester City relied solely on Bendtner for its offense. There was not a single player left on the current Manchester City team who could organize the team's attacks after Elano was taken off the pitch.

Bendtner had to actively retreat backwards to pick up the ball and pass it about. He would not even have the chance to touch the ball if he continued to stand at the front of the pitch...

The match had turned into a battle between a single player and an entire team.

Wenger looked at the watch on his wrist. There were 10 minutes left till the end of the match. He and his team would become the champions as long as they pull through these 10 minutes.

For some reason however, the 10 minutes felt like an eternity to him...

He kept reminding himself in his mind: We would become the champions as long as we don't commit mistakes. Our destiny is in our own hands.

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Bendtner ran all over the pitch looking for a way to break through and shoot for goal. He tried attacking from the left, then he tried from the right, but they were both futile attempts. He lacked support from the midfield. Even if he managed to create a moment of a chance, the ball would not reach him on time, and all his efforts up till then would be for naught.

He had depleted a lot of his stamina by then, and his pants got heavier and heavier.

Looks like he can only rely on himself to score a goal...

Bendtner furrowed his brows under the sweltering sun. He was starting to feel a little dizzy from the heat.

He suddenly remembered his past, when he still wearing a red Nottingham Forest jersey and was not a Manchester City player yet. His main task back then was to provide chances for his partner van Nistelrooy to shoot at the goal by attracting the defenders over to him.

How he wished that he too, had a partner who could attract Arsenal's defenders over to him right now...

In the past, he had always dreamed of becoming a solitary hero. He would be the star player in the team, and he would also be basked in applause from the crowd after each and every match. The media would constantly report about him, and he would be extremely popular and famous.

However, he has finally come to realize now that not everyone can become a solitary hero...

I am so tired...

Bendtner had lost all trust in his teammates. He had stopped passing the ball to them, and he would bring the ball forward himself.

However, the result was the same. The ball would be intercepted by Arsenal's defenders.

Three minutes had passed. The entire Manchester City team had snapped out of their euphoria and excitement of scoring the goal earlier.

There were 10 minutes remaining in the match, but none of the Manchester City players was willing to fight with Arsenal to the death. It would be great if they could level the score, but it was not like they would die if they lost the match, so why should they try so hard?

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Twain looked down at his watch on the 83rd minute of the match.

Kerslake was silent beside him. Twain did not know if he was not making a sound because he was paying attention to the radio, or if he was feeling dejected about how Manchester City had yet to score another goal.

Forest had just scored their fourth goal of the match, and they were leading Sunderland 4:0.

Twain decided to perform three substitutions consecutively and use up his quota for the match.

Ibišević was substituted by Nicolás Millán, Fernández was substituted by Cohen, and Gago was substituted by Tiago.

Both Millán and Tiago did not have much chances to play in games this season. Thus, Twain sent them onto the pitch so as to ensure that the two were qualified to receive a medal should the team end up becoming champions in the end.

As for whether or not they would really end up receiving a medal... No one knows just yet.

Wenger might have thought that time was passing by extremely slowly, but it was the opposite for Twain. He felt that time was passing by too quickly. The fourth official had already lifted the board to signal that there would be three additional minutes to the game, but he still did not hear any new updates about the game between Manchester City and Arsenal.

It was only then that Twain realized that he was about to reach the end of a 90-minute match.

The fans who had been singing and cheering earlier at the stands all went silent. Everyone felt disappointed.

It looks like Forest would not be able to perform a comeback at the end despite their efforts. The title of being Premier League champions was starting to slip away from them.

Twain stood by the side of the pitch. He had pressed his lips together tightly, and he had an awful expression upon his face.

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The second half of the match between Arsenal and Manchester City had only kicked off two minutes after Forest's match against Sunderland. Hence, it was only the 87th minute of the match for Arsenal and Manchester City when Twain saw the fourth official lift the board to signal the additional stoppage time.

McClaren used up his last substitution for the match on the 87th minute.

Ashley Young was a little surprised when he was called off the substitution bench.

He quickly finished his warm-ups, and before he even knew it, he was already standing on the turf in the Emirates Stadium. He had been pushed out onto the pitch by the coaching staff hastily and he was still feeling a little dazed from the sudden change in events.

He noticed that Bendtner was looking at him. Sweat was pouring down the latter's face like a river.

Young understood why Bendtner was looking at him.

All right, looks like I'm the only person in the entire Manchester City team who can help him...

He ran towards his position on the pitch. Bendtner pulled him over and was just about to open his mouth in between pants when Ashley Young cut him off with a wave of his hands.

"I know what I have to do. I just need to pass the ball over to you, right?"

Bendtner nodded his head.

"Wait for it at the front." Young patted Bendtner on the shoulder before running away.

Bendtner suffered a cramp shortly after Ashley Young got onto the pitch. He suddenly fell to the ground while he was trying to snatch the ball away at the front of the pitch. He pressed a hand over his calf, and his expression was one of agony and pain.

Ashley Young bolted over and helped to press down on his leg.

McClaren did not react to Bendtner's injury, because he had used up all his substitutions for the game.

If Bendtner was not able to continue with the game, then Manchester City would have to play with 10 men.

Bendtner's cramp was an unexpected event, but he was back on the pitch after the team doctor and his teammates helped him with his injury for two minutes.

Additional stoppage time was given as a result of Bendtner's cramps. The fourth official held up a board, and the time that was shown was 5 minutes!

The Arsenal fans at the Emirates Stadium began booing in discontent. They wished that the match would end right away. Five minutes of stoppage time was ridiculously long to them.

Bendtner would limp a little every time he walked on the pitch, but it was impossible to tell that he was injured when he ran. He continued to run about the pitch tirelessly as he looked for a chance to break through Arsenal's defense.

Ashley Young had the most stamina out of all the Manchester City players on the pitch right now. His pace troubled the Arsenal defenders, who were eventually left with no other choice but to split up their forces. Some of them had to switch from marking Bendtner to marking Young instead. Bendtner finally felt the pressure on him lighten a little after Young's arrival.

Senderos also did not seem to be marking him as tightly as before either. Perhaps he did not deem Bendtner to be as much of a threat anymore after he suffered from a cramp earlier.

Ashley Young suddenly crossed the ball into the middle of the pitch!

Bendtner jumped up into the air to head the ball, but he headed nothing but air. The ball fell into the hands of Almunia who had rushed out of his goalpost, and Bendtner subsequently crashed onto the ground.

Almunia hugged onto the ball in his arms and refused to kick it away. He looked down at Bendtner, and was planning to only kick the ball away after Bendtner had made his way out of the penalty box.

Bendtner enjoyed lying on the ground, because it meant that he could take a rest. Nonetheless, he could not lie there forever. There was not much time left in the match.

Bendtner climbed to his two feet after sensing Almunia's gaze on him. He then slowly ran away from the penalty box.

The ball flew over his head as he ran.

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A queer silence filled the City Ground Stadium for the final three minutes of the match. Both the Sunderland fans and the Nottingham Forest fans did not care about the match that was being played before them. They had their minds elsewhere.

The Sunderland fans were busy wiping their tears at the stands after knowing that their team was going to be relegated. As for the Nottingham Forest fans, they were all engrossed in listening to the radio for the latest updates from the Arsenal match.

The referee's whistle that signalled the end of the match resonated loudly and much more clearly within the silence.

"The match is over!" The commentator said. "Nottingham Forest has beaten Sunderland 4:0 at home. But, it looks like their dream of becoming champions of the Premier League has gone up in flames..."

The Forest players on the pitch quickly rushed to the side to ask for the latest news from their teammates regarding the match between Arsenal and Manchester City the moment the match ended.

They could not conceal the sadness and disappointment on their faces when their teammates told them the score had remained 2:1. The players then sat by the side of the pitch and waited for Arsenal's match to be over. All they could do then was to wait.

Twain could not sit down like his players did. He still had to shake hands with Sunderland's manager.

Nielsen was in low spirits given how his team had just been relegated. Similarly, Twain was also downhearted, and both managers only gave each other a simple handshake before turning to leave.

Nielsen walked onto the pitch to console his players, whereas Twain sat down at his seat in the technical area and spaced out.

The Sunderland fans began applauding their team's efforts. They knew that their team had tried their best. It was a shame that they had to face Nottingham Forest, who were hell-bent on achieving a victory, for their final match.

The Nottingham Forest fans did not leave the stadium. They stayed behind at the stands and continued to listen to the news from the radio.

The FA officials who had been sitting in the VIP room stood up to shake hands with the chairman of Nottingham Forest Football Club, Evan Doughty. "It's a real shame... This was an exciting match."

However, Evan was not willing to admit his loss just yet. "The match over there has not ended."

That's right. There were still three minutes remaining in the match at the Emirates Stadium.

His words made the FA officials feel a little awkward.

There are only three minutes remaining in the match. Are you saying that a miracle could happen? It's already quite the feat that Manchester City was able to score a goal in that match. It means that they did put in effort and they did try to compete against Arsenal.

The trophy that they had brought over to Nottingham was nothing but a replicate. The real one is in London right now.

Don't tell me Forest still dreams of becoming champions?

Stop dreaming!

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Arsenal's substitutes had all crowded collectively by the side of the pitch. They were all waiting to rush onto the pitch and celebrate with their teammates the moment the match ended.

The Arsenal players on the pitch all had their heads in the clouds by then. What they wanted to hear the most then were the three blows to the referee's whistle, and what they wanted to do the most was to hug their teammates and celebrate becoming champions of the Premier League.

Who cares about the match?

The Arsenal players certainly did not care. Manchester City was hardly even a threat against Arsenal ever since they entered stoppage time. Even their best player Bendtner was not able to create any chances for his team due to a lack of stamina.

Wenger sat nervously on his chair. He pressed a hand against his chin and stared at everything that was happening on the pitch.

Pat Rice, who sat beside him, did not share his nervousness. He started giving high-fives to the other coaches to celebrate their victory.

They knew that Forest had just ended their match with Sunderland and that they had won 4:0.

However, those things did not matter to them, because Arsenal was still going to become the champions.

Ashley Young made his way down the left flank. The Swiss midfielder on their team, Valon Behrami, passed the ball over to him.

Young did not pass the ball away. Instead, he brought the ball forward by himself and tried to force his way into Arsenal's penalty box.

He then crossed the ball into the middle of the penalty box, but his shot hit Sagna on the body before flying out of bounds. Manchester City was awarded a corner as a result.

Manchester City's defenders all rushed up towards Arsenal's penalty box from the back. They instantly became players that the Arsenal players had to mark as well.

"I want all of you to defend this ball at all costs!" Almunia roared before his goalpost. He was feeling a little nervous. His heart was beginning to beat faster and faster as the match approached the end.

If they were to let in a goal... They would be finished.

Almunia could not shake off the negative thought.

Bendtner squeezed his way through the crowd. His head was hung low and he was panting heavily. He was so tired and he desperately wished that he could lean against the body of one of the Arsenal defenders for support.

Ashley Young walked over to take the corner. He carefully positioned the ball on the pitch, and even made sure that the Nike logo on the ball was pointed in the direction of the goalpost.

The players shoved and pulled each other in the penalty box. Before the ball could be sent into the penalty box however, someone fell to the ground. The referee immediately blew on his whistle to halt the match.

Deafening boos erupted from the stands. The player who had fallen to the ground was a Manchester City player. The Arsenal fans all thought that he was trying to win a penalty for his team by pretending that he had been fouled by the Arsenal players.

The referee did not award Manchester City with a penalty, and neither did he punish the Manchester City player for diving. He called the players from both teams over to him and spoke to them. He wanted them to calm down and avoid excessive physical contact.

The atmosphere in the stadium became tense in the final two minutes of the game.

Wenger stood up from his seat and walked to the side of the pitch. He had pressed both his lips together and was staring at the pitch anxiously with a clenched jaw.

After ascertaining that all the players were not misbehaving in the penalty box, the referee made his way away from the penalty box and signalled for Ashley Young to kick the ball.

Ashley Young did not raise his hand and then run up to kick the ball like what some other players would. He sent the ball straight into the penalty box the moment the referee signalled that he could kick the ball.

His shot had happened so fast that it caught all the Arsenal players off guard.

As the Arsenal players all stood dazed at the ground, one player had jumped high into the air within the penalty box.

Straighten your back. Exert force. Swing your head. Attack the goalpost!

The ball flew into the goalpost and all Almunia could do was to wave his hands, as though he was waving goodbye.

Goodbye, Premier League champions...

The Emirates Stadium fell silent.

The commentator was the only one who made noise amidst the silence as he roared, "Arsenal's hopes of becoming champions have just been crushed by Bendtner! He has headed the ball into the net adeptly! He has scored a brace in the match! 2:2! Arsenal has now fallen a point behind Forest! How dramatic can this be? Even the best scriptwriters in Hollywood can't write a plot like this! This is football for you! This is the football that so many people are crazy about!"

Bendtner ran towards Ashley Young after he scored the goal. The two hugged each other and began rolling about on the pitch. Their teammates rushed towards them and flung their bodies on top of theirs.

It was supposed to be a match in which there was a clear winner.

But, the efforts of one man has introduced suspense into the match at the end...

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Twain stood by the side of the pitch and Kerslake stood beside him. It had only been three minutes since the match ended for them, but they felt as though three years had gone by.

The City Ground Stadium was silent. It was as though no one was present in the stadium and everyone had left.

Everyone in the stadium was waiting for the latest news from the match between Arsenal and Manchester City.

Everyone was hoping that a miracle would happen.

Suddenly, a voice was broadcasted throughout the stadium.

It was the voice of the commentator who was commentating on the match between Arsenal and Manchester City. His voice was hoarse, impassioned, and a little gibberish...

"Arsenal's hopes of becoming champions have just been crushed by Bendtner! He has headed the ball into the net adeptly! He has scored a brace in the match! 2:2! Arsenal has now fallen a point behind Forest! How dramatic can this be? Even the best scriptwriters in Hollywood can't write a plot like this! This is football for you..."

The City Ground Stadium regained life in a flash. Everyone lifted their heads to listen to the broadcast absent-mindedly. It soon dawned on them that whatever they were hearing did indeed come from the match between Arsenal and Manchester City, because they had just heard the same voice from their radios.

Deafening cheers erupted in the stadium thereafter.

Kerslake fell to his knees by the side of the pitch. He held onto the radio in his hands and tears streamed down his face.

Twain did not get worked up and jump into the air. He slowly sat back onto his seat at the technical area. He felt like his heart was about to fail him.

The players around him all started shouting at the top of their voices. The last minute goal excited them too much.

The voice being broadcasted throughout the stadium did not stop. Everyone in the stadium lowered their volume, because their attention had been seized by the commentator's voice once again.

"... The referee has gestured for Manchester City to not drag on with their celebrations. Arsenal's players are all protesting... The match starts once again... A long shot! Fàbregas has performed a long shot!"

Everyone in the stadium had their hearts in their mouths when they heard the commentator raise his voice abruptly.

"Brilliant save by Joe Hart!"

The Forest fans in the City Ground Stadium all cheered, "All hail Hart!" in response.

"A corner... This is perhaps Arsenal's last chance to attack for the match. The referee is looking at his watch. The match might end the moment the ball fails to land in the back of the net after being kicked from the corner..."

Everyone's hearts was in their mouths once again.

Twain lowered his head and covered his face with his hands. If he could, he also wanted to plug his ears...

Who is the bastard who came up with this? Whoever came up with it is obviously out to stimulate his weak heart!

"Almunia has rushed over to Manchester City's penalty box as well..."

The Forest fans began to boo at the stands.

"All the players have squeezed themselves into Manchester City's penalty box. Manchester City was able to level the score with a corner kick earlier. Can Arsenal win the match by doing the same?"

The boos grew louder in decibels. This time however, the fans were booing at the commentator's words.

Don't jinx it!

Twain was still able to hear his own heartbeat despite the cacophonous environment he was in. He suddenly felt like time had slowed down.

Why has the corner not been taken yet? Did they score or did they not? Just tell me right now, pal...

"Almunia was not able to head the ball... Senderos...!"

The commentator dragged out his last word as he shouted. His actions terrified Twain so much that he nearly jumped off his seat.

Twain might not have jumped off his seat, but there were many other people in the stadium who did.

“The ball has gone over the bar!”

For f*ck’s sake...

Twain wanted to swear at the commentator for scaring him. He was so frightened by the commentator’s words that his heart had really stopped for a moment back then.

Deafening cheers erupted from the stands. The cheers were like rolling thunder, and they electrified the stadium.

Everyone was certain that Forest had become champions of the Premier League, because the commentator went on to announce loudly, “The match is over! Nottingham Forest are the champions of the Premier League! They have successfully defended their title!”

The Forest players embraced one another tightly.

It was not easy for them to become champions this season. In fact, they might even have relied on luck a little. It was definitely much more difficult for them to lift the trophy this season as compared to the previous season...

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The referee blew on his whistle to signal the end of the match.

Arsenal’s players could not believe what had just happened. They stood rooted before Manchester City’s goalpost. Each and every one of them was dumbstruck.

Fàbregas lowered his head. Van Persie raised his head to the skies and sighed. Wilshere balled his eyes out.

They were so close to being champions...

Arsene Wenger stood by the side of the pitch silently and was not able to speak for a long period of time. Behind him, the Arsenal fans could not believe what had just happened either.

The red Emirates Stadium was just like a volcano that had erupted for 90 minutes, but now it had stopped and was starting to cool down ...

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Evan Doughty reached out a hand towards the FA officials with a smile on his face. “Please make the necessary preparations to present the trophy to us, sir.”

“Ah...” The FA officials were feeling very awkward. They could not believe that the trophy would change owners in just three minutes.

“Uh, congratulations on becoming champions.”

Evan smiled merrily. He then raised his head proudly and accepted the well wishes from the FA officials.

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Twain was just about to sit back down on his chair to rest when he was suddenly hoisted up into the air by his players. They then carried him about the stadium to bask in the cheers from the fans.

Twain sat on the shoulders of his players and waved at the stands.

It had not been easy for them to become champions of the Premier League this season, and it was perhaps the most unforgettable champions trophy he has ever achieved throughout his entire managerial career so far.

Twain smiled happily at the fans. Shania heaved a sigh of relief after seeing Twain's smile from the VIP room.

15 minutes later, the players returned to the pitch to receive the trophy from the Football Association after changing into t-shirts that had been specially designed to celebrate the team becoming champions of the Premier League.

Twain and Wood were the two individuals who lifted the Premier League champions trophy high into the air.

The 2013-14 Premier League season came to an end amidst the cheers from 30,000 fans. Nottingham Forest has bade farewell to the City Ground Stadium by attaining their fourth Premier League champions trophy.

However, becoming champions of the Premier League was not a way for Forest to bid farewell to their season. On the contrary, it signalled the start of their journey.

Six days later, the FA Cup trophy awaits them at the Wembley Stadium.

11 days later, the Champions League trophy awaits them at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium.

Becoming Premier League Champions was nothing more than the start of a great season ahead.