

GOAL II

LIVING THE DREAM

CHAPTER 1

Newcastle

‘Goal!’ Everyone shouted when Santiago scored.

The Newcastle United fans loved Santiago Muñoz. He scored goals all the time.

And Santiago loved Newcastle. It rained a lot, and it was often cold. But he had a beautiful home, a fantastic BMW car and cool clothes. He also had a great girlfriend. Her name was Roz.

Santiago came from a poor part of Mexico. His mother left home when he was a boy. Then his father took the family to the USA. Santi lived with his father, grandmother and little brother in Los Angeles. They were very poor. Santi worked hard for his father in the day. In the evenings, he played football. He loved football. One evening a man from England watched Santi. His name was Glen Foy and he was on holiday in Los Angeles. When Glen was younger, he was a famous footballer. He played for Newcastle United. He thought that Santiago was fantastic!

‘Come and play football in England,’ said Glen. ‘Come and talk to Newcastle United.’

Newcastle United! A top Premiership* team!

* England’s top 20 teams play in the Premiership.

So Santiago went to Newcastle. He played well. He scored goals. The team liked him. Life was good for Santiago and Santiago was good for Newcastle United.

Some men in Madrid watched Santiago on TV. They saw the goal.

‘He’s a great footballer,’ one man said. ‘How many goals did he score this year?’

‘Twenty-eight,’ said the other man. ‘Let’s talk to him.’

That evening Santiago and Roz went to an Indian restaurant with some friends. Then Glen Foy came into the restaurant.

‘Glen,’ said Santi. ‘Come and sit with us.’

‘Santi, can I talk to you for a minute?’ Glen asked.

‘Oh, OK,’ said Santiago. He looked at Roz and their friends. ‘Excuse me,’ he said.

Santi followed Glen to the back of the restaurant.

‘Listen!’ said Glen. ‘I had a phone call. Are you ready for this? It was Real Madrid. They like you. They want to meet you.’

‘I don’t believe it!’ thought Santiago. ‘Real Madrid! I’m dreaming!’

Later that evening, Santi told Roz about Real.

‘But you’re happy here in Newcastle,’ she said.

‘I know. I’ve got this beautiful house and a great job. I’ve got you. I’ve got everything.’

‘And you’re Newcastle United’s best player.’

‘Maybe,’ he said. ‘But this is Real Madrid! The best team in the world. Who do I choose? Newcastle or Real Madrid?’

CHAPTER 2

Tokyo

'Real Madrid are in Tokyo. We're flying there tomorrow,' said Glen to Santiago.

'Tomorrow?' said Santiago.

'People work fast in football,' said Glen.

Santiago and Glen arrived at the Park Hyatt Hotel in Tokyo. Santi's hotel room was very cool and he wanted to have a bath. But then Glen called.

'They want to talk to us now,' he said.

Santi went to meet the men from Real. He was nervous. There was the coach, Rudi Van der Merwe, and the two top men, Florentino Pérez and Señor Burruchaga.

'We watch you play a lot,' said Burruchaga. 'You're good.'



'I'm lucky,' said Santi. 'I play for a great team.'

Señor Pérez liked Santi's answer.

'We want you at Real Madrid. Come and play for us!'

'Wow!' thought Santiago. 'This is very exciting.' But he also felt frightened.

'Yes,' he thought, 'I want to play for Real. Every footballer in the world wants to play for Real. But I want to play football. I don't want to sit on the bench. And what about Roz?'

'You must decide quickly,' said Burruchaga. 'Give us your answer by midnight tomorrow.'

Santi went back to his room and tried to phone Roz. She wasn't at home. Roz worked at the hospital. Sometimes she worked at night and sometimes in the day. Santi left a lot of messages. But she didn't call him.

Later, Santi was in the hotel bar. Gavin Harris came in. Gavin and Santi were old friends from Gavin's time at Newcastle. He played for Real now.

'You're going to hate Madrid,' laughed Gavin. 'No rain! No dark, cold mornings! Everyone speaks Spanish!'

'I know,' said Santi. 'But do I say "yes" or "no"?''

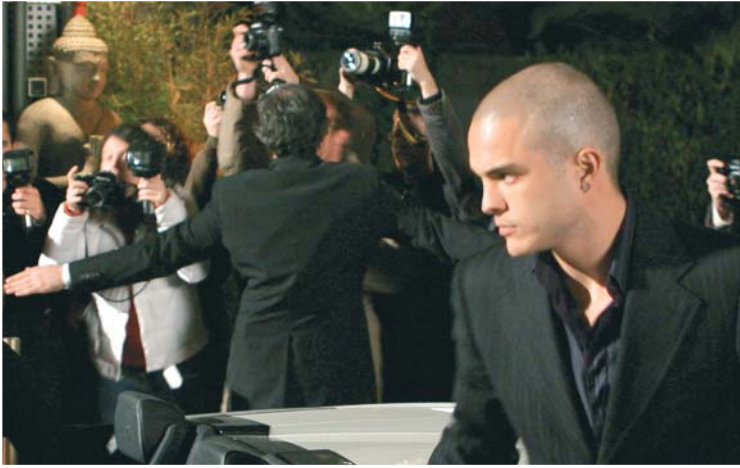
'What?! No one says "no" to Real Madrid.'

Santi looked at his friend and smiled. Gavin was right.

Santi arrived back at Newcastle Airport the next day.

'Hey, Santi! Is it true? Are you leaving Newcastle? Are you playing for Real Madrid now?'

People from the newspapers and TV were all around him. They wanted a good story.



When Santi got home, Roz was angry.

'Why didn't you talk to me first?' she said. 'You're going to Madrid! I heard it on the radio!'

'I tried to phone ...,' said Santi.

Roz went to work. She didn't say goodbye.

Santi felt terrible. 'I must speak to Roz,' he thought.

Santi went to the hospital. Roz was with Mr Ives. He wasn't well.

'So, you're going to Madrid,' said Mr Ives to Santiago. 'But don't take Roz! She's my favourite girl!'

'I'm not going, Mr Ives,' said Roz. 'Santiago didn't ask me. So I'm staying here.'

'Look, Roz,' said Santi. 'I love you, I want to be with you. But this is Real Madrid! It's so exciting.'

'But what about our house? And my job here at the hospital ... and ... I can't speak Spanish!' said Roz.

'You can stay here. You can visit me and I'll visit you. And I can teach you Spanish!' said Santiago.

'OK then,' smiled Roz. 'But I'm not eating paella!'