

'Academy'

by

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INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Lying in a hospital bed is a young Ghanaian man, EMERICK (18). He has bandages over his shoulder. And has bruises on his face and arms. He seems to be in bad shape. We hear the beeps of machines that are connected to him.

A curtain separates his bed from the bed next to him in a grim semi-private hospital room. We hear more beeps and coughing from the bed next to his.

Emerick looks at the ceiling of the hospital room, covered in foam-core tiles with tiny holes.

As Emerick stares at the holes in the ceiling, one of them dissolves into a football as he remembers...

EXT. FOOTBALL PITCH - DAY

A football is kicked by Emerick. Emerick's footwork is beautiful as he dances and glides around the other players of the opposing team.

Emerick is a center midfielder, able to break up any attack, and move the ball towards the goal.

FOOTBALL PLAYER #1 (O.S.)

Drive it!

EXT. PITCH SIDELINES - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Other players on the bench and the team's COACH (32) are shouting at the players on the field.

COACH

Emerick, yes, son!

EXT. PITCH - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Emerick's dancing past the other team with ease. He kicks the ball through an opposer's feet and then meets the ball at the other side. It is elegant, kinetic, beautiful. The football is an extension of him.

At the goal end of the field is DUNCAN (18), the center forward for Emerick's team. Duncan is tall, white, English. A team player you would see on any team in the UK. There are hundreds of people like Duncan in the football league.

DUNCAN  
Emerick, I'm open!

EXT. PITCH SIDELINES - DAY - CONTINUOUS

COACH  
Duncan's open! Shoot it son!

EXT. PITCH - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Emerick moves down the field like lightning. He sees Duncan just beyond another player from the other team. He shoots with a confident aim.

The ball soars and expertly is caught by Duncan's foot, almost like a magnet.

Duncan turns, and shoots - it slams into the goal confidently.

The referee whistle sounds - GAME OVER.

Emerick and Duncan jump for joy.

COACH (O.S.)  
Go on, Duncan! Go off!

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

We focus on Emerick's face as he stares out, thinking. He sees a nurse and doctor put their items into lockers, which transitions into...

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Emerick and Duncan are pulling off their football boots, as we hear locker doors open and shut. One of their teammates pats Duncan on the shoulder.

TEAMMATE (O.S.)  
Nice work Duncan.

Emerick flinches a bit at this. Clenches his jaw. Duncan doesn't notice.

DUNCAN  
Coach thinks a recruiter from Arsenal is coming next week.

Emerick kisses his teeth.

EMERICK

Pssh, don't be so ridiculous. What do they want with us? Amateurs.

DUNCAN

I guess they heard about our star player, innit.

Duncan smiles. Emerick looks at him, surprised.

EMERICK

You?

DUNCAN

I can't help it if I got mad skills, bruv.

Emerick laughs.

EMERICK

You wouldn't have scored that goal if I didn't pass it to you.

DUNCAN

That's your job. If you wanted the glory you should have worked hard for my position.

The coach passes by and taps Duncan on the shoulder.

COACH

You make sure you play like that next week, Duncan.

DUNCAN

Yes, coach.

Emerick looks up at him.

EMERICK

And what about me, Coach?

The coach isn't really listening as he leaves.

COACH

Yeah, good work. Sure.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A NURSE (27) enters and checks in on Emerick. As she speaks Emerick wakes up from his memories.

NURSE

How are you doing, Emerick?

Emerick groans a bit.

NURSE

We had to knock you out pretty good. It'll take you a while to recover. Can I get you anything, love?

Emerick shakes his head. The nurse nods and goes behind the curtain to the next bed.

Emerick looks over. We can hear her saying something but can't make out the words.

NURSE

How is my boy today?

Transition into...

EXT. PITCH - NIGHT

Emerick is walking home from the pitch. He is on a Whatsapp call with his mother.

MAMA (V.O.)

How is my boy today?

Emerick laughs a little. Kisses his teeth.

EMERICK

He's good, mama.

MAMA (V.O.)

You making your mama proud on the field?

Emerick smiles.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

We zoom in on Emerick's face as we hear the continuing beeps of the machines. Sounds of locker doors.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Duncan and Emerick are getting kitted up to play.

DUNCAN

I'm telling ya, bruv, I saw him.

EMERICK

I don't think so. I saw nobody out there.

DUNCAN

You mad, or what? It's the recruiter. This is it, boy. This is it.

EMERICK

This is what?

DUNCAN

This is my chance. The big time. Arsenal first. Next stop, World cup.

EMERICK

You so sure he's looking at you? They're ten other players.

Duncan playfully punches him on the shoulder.

DUNCAN

Ah I'm messing with ya, bruv.

Emerick isn't convinced.

EMERICK

Yeah, sure.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Focus on Emerick's eyes.

EXT. PITCH - NIGHT

Emerick still on the same conversation with his mama.

MAMA (V.O.)

You making your mama proud on the field?

Emerick smiles.

EMERICK

Yes mama. Helped get the winning goal.

MAMA (V.O.)  
Helped? What does this mean,  
helped. You didn't kick it?

EMERICK  
Mama, that's not my job.

EXT. FOOTBALL PITCH - DAY

Emerick running on the pitch looks to the sidelines. He sees the coach and another man who seems to be THE RECRUITER, standing beside him. They are talking to each other.

He focuses on the game. He sees an opening to take the ball from the other team and speeds up to get it.

His feet get the ball with ease, but the other player locks his foot around Emerick's and Emerick trips over and falls hard onto his shoulder.

He yells in pain, grabs his shoulder. His face scratched from the fall.

He looks up through his pain and sees the recruiter looking away. The coach looks disappointed.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

We see the wrapping on Emerick's shoulder. The bandages on his face. We hear his thumping heart beat, loud over the machines. We see an x-ray on a light-box near the beds. The light-box fades into an aerial shot of the football pitch....

EXT. FOOTBALL PITCH - DAY

A REFEREE is standing over Emerick.

REFEREE (O.S.)  
You good?

Emerick looks at the sidelines. Looks for the recruiter. The coach points at Duncan and the recruiter nods his head.

Duncan is pumped and ready to get the game going. He's annoyed at all the fuss around Emerick.

DUNCAN  
C'mon! Let's go! Let's go.

A fury crosses over Emerick's face as Duncan clearly couldn't give a shit about him. Emerick angrily nods his head to the referee that's he's good. He stands up. He rubs his shoulder. Spits in his hand and rubs it on the side of his face to soothe the pain. Rage is written on his face.

We hear the referee's whistle. Play begins.

Emerick effortlessly gets control of the ball again. He starts running with the ball. Dancing around.

We see his feet like a blur. It is spectacular. His face shows a gritty determination.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Focus on Emerick's face. Heart beat. Machines beeping.

EXT. PITCH - DAY

Focus on Emerick's face as he drives down the pitch.

EXT. PITCH - NIGHT

Emerick on the call with his mum.

MAMA (V.O.)

Helped? What does this mean,  
helped. You didn't kick it?

EMERICK

Mama, that's not my job. The  
midfielder always passes to the  
scorer.

MAMA (V.O.)

Well make it your job, I want  
everyone to see how good a player  
my boy is. You can never win if  
you don't take your chance.

EXT. PITCH - DAY

Focus on Emerick's face. Duncan is open to score the goal as Emerick flies past the other players.

We hear the rest of the phone-call as Emerick marches on.



MAMA (V.O.)  
You making friends? Girlfriends?

EMERICK (V.O.)  
Not yet.

Emerick looks at Duncan. We hear the coach.

COACH (V.O.)  
He's wide open, son. Pass it, PASS  
IT!

Emerick sees Duncan but keeps forging ahead. Another  
OPPOSING PLAYER is running up to block Duncan.

MAMA (V.O.)  
Good, my boy doesn't need to be  
eye red {selfish} and get some  
trouble in his life.

EMERICK (V.O.)  
I'm not selfish Mama.

Sounds of heartbeat, machines beeping. Emerick continues  
on.

MAMA (V.O.)  
Well make professional and we can  
talk girlfriends. They're trouble.  
Wahala. {trouble}

EMERICK (V.O.)  
(tearing up)  
Mama, please.

Emerick charges towards Duncan, anger in his eyes. Is he  
gonna take Duncan down?

DUNCAN  
(shouting)  
What you doing, bruv, you gone  
mental!

COACH (V.O.)  
Pass it, you twat!

MAMA (V.O.)  
My son is not a failure!

EMERICK (V.O.)  
Mama, please. Stop.

Emerick charges past Duncan and kicks ferociously towards  
the goal.

As the ball soars through the air, we see Duncan behind Emerick, his face in shock. The OPPOSING PLAYER that was charging to block Duncan can't stop his momentum and SLAMS into Duncan. Duncan flies onto the ground.

We hear a deafening CRACK. Emerick looks around and sees Duncan on the ground, grasping his leg, in sheer agony. He runs over.

The ball continues and hits right into the back of the goal perfectly.

But Emerick hasn't even seen that he scored, he's too concerned for his friend.

The sounds of heartbeat and machines beeping.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Emerick is in his bed. The nurse comes in.

NURSE

I think, young man, you are ready to be discharged.

EMERICK

Thank you nurse.

NURSE

The surgery was a success, very minor tear in your shoulder. Should be back on the pitch in a week, maybe two. But take it easy!

EMERICK

Yes, nurse.

He looks over the curtain dividing the bed.

EMERICK

How is he?

The nurse pulls back the curtain to reveal Duncan. Smiling. His leg in padding.

NURSE

Ask him yourself.

DUNCAN

Game over, bruv. Game over.

EMERICK

Broken?

DUNCAN

Yeah, boy. No way I'm going back.

EMERICK

I'm sorry.

DUNCAN

I didn't see him coming neither.  
Much my fault as yours. Listen, if  
you didn't have that fancy  
footwork I wouldn't be so  
distracted, would I?

Duncan laughs at his own joke. Emerick smiles.

Suddenly Emerick's phone starts ringing. He sees a caller  
ID. 'Coach'.

EMERICK

It's coach.

NURSE

Hey. Keep the noise down, boys.

DUNCAN

Ah leave him, luv, let him take  
just this one.

He smiles and winks. Emerick takes the call.

COACH(V.O.)

How's my star player?

EMERICK

What, coach?

COACH (V.O.)

Well, you gotta be if Arsenal  
wants ya, ain't that right, my  
son?

Emerick looks up at Duncan, in guilty shock. We hear the  
referee's whistle, his heartbeat, the medical machine,  
his mama's voice. Duncan's face is questioning. Emerick  
is about to open his mouth.

**THE END**