

STREETSKILLZ II

SILVER'S TREASURE

By Charlie Human • *Published* 2010
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STORY TEASER

Nathi is a soccer-crazy sixteen-year-old from Du Noon township in Cape Town. Now that he's made the Streetskillz team he has the chance to seriously pursue his passion for football. But will it get in the way of his new relationship with the clever and beautiful Rose? However, when two strangers come looking for hidden treasure, sport and love fall by the wayside as Nathi unexpectedly encounters a world of deceit and danger.

CHARACTERS

These are the main characters in Streetskillz:

Nkosinathi, 16

Nkosinathi, or Nathi as his friends call him, wants to play soccer and to have people give him a soccer nickname, like a pro, but he would be happy if his major crush Rose would call him anything, as long as she calls him.

Nathi's father died when he was young, and he lives with his mother and his younger sister.

Rose, 15

Rose is a pretty tomboy who plays soccer and takes no nonsense from anyone. Especially boys. She's really clever and good at schoolwork.

The Professor, 60

The Professor is an ex-professional soccer player who watches all the games in the neighbourhood. Some of the kids say he's crazy, but he might just be the person that can help Nathi get back on the team.

Khaya, 17

Khaya is the captain of a rival team and the neighbourhood bully. His father owns a big taxi business and Khaya lets everybody know about it. The really bad news? He doesn't like Nathi.

CHAPTER 1

"Cross it, I'm open!" I shout.

I spin around as the ball sails over my head, simultaneously launching myself into the air and, taking a barefoot swipe at the ball, I angle it between the two bricks which mark out the goal.

"Goal!" I yell triumphantly, dropping to my knees on the muddy ground, pulling my old t-shirt over my head and raising my hands above my head.

"Nice one Nathi," Rose says as she jogs over, then leans down, pulling the t-shirt away from my face and kissing me on the lips. I kiss her back for a long moment before she unexpectedly pushes against my chest, causing me to topple over into the mud.

"Hey!" I shout, looking up to see her grinning at me.

"Don't punish me for being a soccer genius," I joke, and then take her by surprise, snaking out my hand and dragging her down into the mud with me. She laughs at our silliness and I kiss her again.

"More like a kissing genius," Rose murmurs.

"Um, excuse me," Chippa says, standing over us with the soccer ball under his arm and eyebrows raised "do you think perhaps we can play soccer now?"

The rest of the Dynamites soccer players on the field cheer and wolf whistle as they wait for play to resume.

The excitement, the drama and the amazing festive spirit of the World Cup and the Streetskillz tournament has faded, but the Dynamites have still gotten together to play regularly.

Chippa and I are the only Dynamite players who were selected by Mr. Naidoo, the talent scout who was at the Streetskillz final, to play in his professional street soccer team. But the rest of the Dynamites are always keen for a game, and we're grateful for the chance to practice.

I wipe my muddy hands on my shirt as I get up, and hold out a hand to help Rose up. She grabs it, and then cheekily pulls me down into the mud again with a naughty chuckle. I'm laughing with her when a familiar voice sneers from the side of the field.

"You're not going to last long on the Streetskillz team if you let a girl get the better of you like that."

I look up to see Khaya standing over us with a smirk on his face.

"And what would you know about the Streetskillz team?" Rose says sarcastically, pushing herself off the ground and standing with her hands on her hips, glaring at Khaya.

"Oh, didn't you hear?" Khaya smiles devilishly, "Mr. Naidoo asked me to play in his team."

I get to my feet and watch in shock as Khaya walks away. I had no idea that the township's biggest bully was going to be playing in the Streetskillz team too! This is the worst news ever!

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

He should be confident at what he's doing. He cannot let a big bully set him off. If you want to play soccer you must be confident and determined.

I think if really Nathi wants to play at the streetkings team, he should just work harder and lower his temper for the sake of his career and improve his performance as soon as possible.

I simply think that: Khaya is just jealous that Nathi has risen from nothing and is now outshining him but I'd love to see how the story pans out it's an exciting read can't wait for the next chapter.

What do you think?

Nathi is unhappy about playing in the same team as Khaya. What do you think he should do?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 2

Rose and I hastily pull apart as we hear footsteps coming down the corridor. We've snuck into the art room at lunchtime to steal a little time alone.

"Quick!" I say, opening a supply cupboard and we squeeze in and close the door just as Ms. Mqulo the old art teacher strolls into the room, singing quietly to herself.

I feel Rose's body pressed up against mine as Ms. Mqulo begins to sing more loudly. We can see through a crack in the door that she's begun to dance, clapping her hands together and swinging her hips wildly. Rose giggles and Ms. Mqulo stops dancing and looks around. I stifle a laugh and put my fingers to my lips.

Ms. Mqulo shrugs and then continues to sing as she leaves the classroom.

The coast is clear, but neither of us moves. As I look at my girlfriend, a single ray of light from the crack in the door makes her large brown eyes shine. For the thousandth time I think how beautiful she is, with her brown curly hair falling down about her shoulders and her perfectly formed nose dusted with freckles.

Rose's mother, Ma Lettie, still isn't happy with our relationship, but I can't let that worry me. I would put up with the whole of Du Noon being upset with me, just to be with Rose.

"Are you nervous about tonight?" Rose asks, stroking my neck.

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I shrug, trying to pretend I'm totally cool about it, but Rose isn't fooled. Tonight is the night my mother and I are invited to the first information session with Mr. Naidoo. Not only will Mr. Naidoo reveal what's in stall for his carefully selected Streetskillz team, but I'm going to get to meet the rest of the team and see the training facilities for the first time too.

"Good luck," she smiles, sneaking in one last kiss in the cramped cupboard, "you're going to shine."

Later that day as I trudge back home from the taxi rank, my mind is on fire with thoughts of both Rose and street soccer. I know I have a silly grin on my face as I alternate between daydreaming about her and scoring the winning goal in the street soccer league.

As I reach the small wooden house that I share with my mother, my little dog Ronaldo scampers out from his makeshift kennel wagging his tail. I bend down and scratch behind his ears.

"Hey boy, did you have a good day?"

He barks back, happy to have me home.

"Is that you Nathi?" The door to the little house opens and my mother peers out.

"Nathi!" she cries, "hurry and get dressed, or we'll be late."

I pat Ronaldo one last time and give my mom a kiss on her cheek as I go inside and start to get ready. I'm so excited I can hardly change into the smart new clothes my mother has especially bought for me. I'm going to be part of a real street soccer team!

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

Nothing shud stop nathi now, i feel excited 4 hm ,nw therefore he should just put hs focus on tonyt. **Kuhle**

Nathi he is deeply in love and on the other side he wants to archive his dream thats why he manage for both things and that good. Time management. **Solution**

Wow this story is romantic and i think there are going to be some sacrifices at the end between love and street soccer. **drifter**

What do you think?

What other sports do you like besides soccer? *Our readers recommend this: Rugby: 17%, Basketball: 26%, Cricket: 23%, Nuh-uh. Soccer rules: 32%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 3

Three loud bangs ring out outside our small corrugated iron house. My heart leaps into my throat and I rush outside in alarm to see what's happening. But it's not a gun, nor a gas canister exploding...it's the Professor pulling up outside in his ancient, battered, backfiring car. As usual he's sporting his trademark – an old-fashioned hat perched at a jaunty angle on his head – and today he's dressed in a light blue suit.

"Looking slick Nathi," grins the Professor as he gets out and opens the front door for my mom, while I clamber into the back.

Even though the Streetskillz tournament finished two months ago, the Professor and I have continued training on the muddy patch of ground nearby Du Noon, as he's helped me prepare for the start of the street soccer league.

As the car pulls off we're all talking over each other in excitement, and in what seems like no time at all, the Professor is driving into the parking lot of the sports facility in Milnerton where Mr. Naidoo trains the Streetskillz team. It's a large dome-shaped building with a fountain in front.

The car stops and the Professor gets out and opens the car door for my mom.

"This looks very fancy," she whispers as the three of us walk through the entrance.

"Nathi!" Mr. Naidoo says as he sees us, and hands me a pile of soccer kit topped with a brand new black soccer shirt. It has 'Streetskillz' written across its back in blood-red letters.

"Welcome to the team! Why don't you get changed? I thought we'd have a little warm-up game before I talk to the parents."

I can feel my heart begin to pound with excitement. A warm-up game? I didn't realize I was going to have the chance to actually play tonight!

I feel a surge of pride as I step into the changeroom and pull on my new gear. It's my first real soccer kit and I honestly feel like a real pro as I look at myself in the mirror.

"We're here to play soccer, not to play dress-up," says a familiar voice behind me.

Some of the other boys on the team laugh and I turn to see Khaya standing behind me, already dressed in the black Streetskillz kit.

I feel anger rise in my chest. I'm about to say something when there's a commotion at the entrance to the changeroom and a boy stumbles into the room. He's about my age but he's quite short, has a shaved head and is wearing broken shoes and a dirty collection of rags.

"Hayi, who are you?" Khaya says with disgust. "We don't allow beggars in here."

A few of the guys laugh, but the boy just shrugs and smiles.

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Mr. Naidoo enters the changeroom. He's changed into a tracksuit and has a whistle around his neck.

"Ah, I see you've met Henry," he says. "He's going to be joining the team."

"What?!" exclaims Khaya.

"Henry is a very good player. He played in the Homeless World Cup this year you know."

Khaya, seeing the opportunity, suddenly smiles at the boy.

"Don't worry Mr. Naidoo," he says, "some of the boys have been teasing Henry, but I'll look after him."

Mr. Naidoo smiles. "Thank you, Khaya," he says "Ok boys, let's get out onto the field."

Mr. Naidoo leaves the room and Khaya lets go of Henry and pushes him away.

"You need a wash."

Khaya and the other boys leave the change room but I stay behind with Henry. Here's someone who is going to have an even harder time with Khaya than I am.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

Giving someone love & support is good at all times. Don't judge people by the way they are dressed or the language they are speaking. Nathi knows well how to treat a new person. Their friendship is going to be strong. **Mulalob**

I hav helped sum1, at skul nd at home. I usualy share my lunch box 2 ths hu ar hungry. Nd i gv thm lv, help nd care. I knw dat wat goes arownd cumz around. If i tyk thm 4 grunted i wil b also tyken 4 grunted. As the bible says love the othrz as u lv urslf. **Ms+pastor**

Yes i have helpd many ppl less f0rtunate then me by giving them f0od,cl0thes,money,shoes n wen i do that it makez me feel good i l0ve helping ppl...wen u help sum1 it sh0ws that u appreciate life and things..khaya is just a bully because his trying to make hmself fl gud bt hurting otherz n cnt w8 4 m0re..

What do you think?

Have you ever helped a person less fortunate than you? What did you do for them?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 4

"Don't worry about him," I say to Henry, "Khaya picks on everyone."

Henry gives me a shy smile and begins to change into his new Streetskillz street soccer kit.

Khaya has always given me a hard time, but I can only imagine the kind of things that Khaya's going to say to Henry. He may look like a wreck but Mr. Naidoo had said that Henry had played in the Homeless World Cup. That's pretty impressive.

I hold out my hand as Henry finishes dressing.

"I'm Nathi."

Henry looks up at me with big, blue eyes and shakes my hand.

"Come on," I say nervously, "let's go and play our first game together."

We walk out of the changeroom and down through the Streetskillz facility to an indoor soccer pitch. All of the parents are sitting waiting in anticipation in the fronts two rows of the stands that surround the pitch. I notice two men higher up in the stands staring at me. I look away quickly, feeling a little overwhelmed. They must be one of the other boy's family, or maybe even just soccer fans interested in the new Streetskillz players, I reason to myself, and then push them out of my mind as I start to think about the game we're about to play.

Henry and I jog over to where the Streetskillz team is huddled on the pitch.

"Right," Mr. Naidoo says when we arrive, "this game is going to be an introduction to the kind of games that you'll be playing in the future. The street soccer league that our Streetskillz team is going to be participating in is very competitive. Each of the teams has developed their own unique style of play. Your challenge is going to be to do discover yours."

I look around at my teammates faces and I'm suddenly nervous. These are players that have been handpicked by Mr. Naidoo to play on his team. I've only ever played in one small tournament in Du Noon; this league has fiercely competitive teams from all over the Western Cape.

"Your first opponents," Mr. Naidoo announces, "are the Iron Maidens, an all-girl team from Worcester."

"An all-girl team?" Khaya scoffs, "I thought this was supposed to be an introduction, not a walk-over."

Some of the other Streetskillz team members laugh.

Mr. Naidoo shakes his head. "Don't underestimate the Maidens. They're a tough bunch of girls and they have an interesting style of play. They've thrashed plenty of boys' teams before."

Khaya laughs as everybody begins to warm up.

"They've obviously never played against someone like me then," he says.

Khaya throws me a menacing look as the Iron Maidens take to the pitch in grey and yellow kit. All of the girls are tall and they glare at us fiercely as they begin to warm up. They're all definitely beautiful, with strong, athletic bodies, but they also look mean. One of them, a tall blonde, sees me looking at her and draws a finger across her throat, then points at me.

I gulp. Somehow this doesn't look like it's going to be as easy as Khaya thinks.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

As the game begins,we shall see how streetkillz play. **Little Beautiful**

Defenatly serena wiliams.khaya dnt undaestimate gals they cn suprise u. **Sunday chick**

Its normal 4 Nathi 2 feel nervous but Mr.Naidoo chose him coz he's gud so he must bliv dat he's da best,bliv in himself n not b intimidated by any1. **B Junior**

What do you think?

The Iron Maidens look fit. Which female sports star do you think is the fittest? *Our readers recommend this: Serena Williams: 44%, Layla Ali: 20%, Natalie Du Toit: 35%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 5

The girl standing opposite me scowls. The game is about to start and she looks like she has me in her sights.

Khaya takes the kickoff and dribbles it forward. The Iron Maidens are waiting for him.

"Pass it," I shout as I dodge past the blonde, "I'm open!"

Khaya ignores me and takes the ball forward. He grins at one of the girls and tries a fancy move, obviously trying to impress her. She's not impressed. With an elbow she pushes Khaya off the ball and with lightning-quick footwork dribbles the ball forward. She swiftly executes a long pass to one of her teammates who has anticipated the move.

I run forward to tackle her but she's too quick and spins around, wrong footing me and playing the ball to her striker, who stops it before powering it home into the Streetskillz goal. The girls let out a whoop of victory, gathering round and climbing on the scorer like seasoned pros.

I look around at all the boys on the Streetskillz team: they looked stunned. So am I!

I look up into the stands to see where the Professor and my mom are sitting. Strange – the two

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men I noticed in the stands earlier are still watching me. It's quite odd that they're not looking at anybody else. The whistle blows and I turn my attention back to the game.

"Nice tackle," Khaya mutters sarcastically to me as we walk back for the restart.

What an idiot. I don't mention that if Khaya hadn't been trying to show off we wouldn't have lost the ball in the first place.

From that point on it just gets worse. Khaya hogs the ball and refuses to pass to me, or to anybody that is open. The Iron Maidens are skillful players and masterfully bounce the ball off the sideboards during play – a classic street soccer trick that I'm totally not used to.

Quickly the Maidens rack up the goals, and when the whistle blows for them to finish, the tough all-girl team has beaten us 4-0.

We troop silently back into the facility. Khaya swears under his breath and pushes me with his elbow as he walks past. I glare back at him.

We all have a quick shower, change back into our smart clothes and then join the parents in a conference room.

"As you can see," Mr. Naidoo says to the adults, "the boys need a lot of practice in the art of street soccer. That's why I want them to come and live here at the facility for a month – so that we can train extensively. We'll bus the boys into their schools daily, and will make sure that they have tutors here to help them with their homework. The rest of the time we'll be training hard, sharpening their skills and raising their game."

What?! I didn't realize that playing in the team would mean I'd have to leave Du Noon for a month! What about Rose? What about the Professor and Ronaldo? I can't bear to not hang out with them for a *whole* month!

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

Family is important but in his situation he has to play ball and stop being a baby, seemingly he needs to leave moms lap and be a man he needs to grow up and learn to be without his family and his girlfriend. **Phelo**

I think he shud take tha opportunity, cz rosie nd his m0ther wud undrstand considering hs future. **Kuhle**

He must take this opportunity and stay there for the whole month so he can get more training to better his fitness and skills of playing,even though it'll be a hard decision to make for not seing his family,girlfrnd,ronaldo and professor bt he had no choice bt to agree to stay there.

What do you think?

What's more important for Nathi: staying with his girlfriend and family or going away to take this opportunity?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 6

"It sounds wonderful, doesn't it Nathi?" my mom exclaims as we leave, walking outside to where the Professor's car is parked.

"Sounds like a fantastic opportunity," the Professor agrees as we get into the car.

I nod, but I'm still not convinced. I've never stayed away from home before. And having to live with Khaya in the same building doesn't sound like fun at all.

The next day as we're walking down to the taxi rank for school I tell Rose about it.

"They have computers?" Rose says excitedly, "you'll be able to go onto all the soccer forums anytime you like."

"For sure, but it's for a whole month and I won't get to see you or the Professor after school."

"Of course I'll miss you," says Rose, putting her arms around my neck, "but maybe it's meant to be. While you're playing soccer I'll be able to put in some extra studying hours – because I *am* going to win a scholarship to university while you hot up for trials for the next World Cup. And there's always the art room cupboard at break time."

I grin. She's right. "I guess it *is* too good an opportunity to miss."

"Exactly," Rose says, "that's what I love about you, that when you want something you really go for it."

"Most of the time I just want you," I smile naughtily.

"Flattery might just get you everywhere one day, Casanova," she replies breezily.

I'm about to ask her more about this, when I see two familiar men walking towards us.

It's the two men I saw in the stands at the Streetskillz facility. One is a tall, dark dude with dreadlocks and a leather jacket, and the other is a short, chubby blonde guy with a beard. There's something about them that makes me uneasy. Who are they and what do they want from me?

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

Before i used 2 stay at an academy life there is easy if u knw wat u are doing standing on your own cn b a little diffucult bt t only needs u 2 b focusd dedicated that u wil reach ur dreamz abt bulliez dnt worry my dear nathi coz da only 2 stand b4 a bully is prove 2 him that u are wat u claim 2 b last bt nt least abt ur loved ones u wl mis them bt they wil b waiting 4 u and dats an oppootunity dat had knockd unto ur window peep and c wat its like ut there i promise happiness and over flowing olive oil. **Spiceboy**

He's just a talented guy so i thnk there are many soccer teams that wants him,i thnk those guys just wants to take him further with his soccer career.lol. . .who knws they might seem lyk crooks.bt maybe not.

It seems like nathi is in a serious trouble. **Maqhuza**

What do you think?

Nathi thinks that these guys look like trouble. What should he do? *Our readers recommend this: Don't take any risks - get out of there fast: 12%, This is a good time to find out what the men want - there are people and police at the taxi rank if help is needed: 64%, Find some policeman first and explain the men's suspicious behaviour – let the police ask the questions: 23%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 7

The man with dreadlocks flicks an empty cooldrink can onto his foot, and then kicks it to me.

I stop it with my foot.

"Quick reflexes," the dreadlocked guy says, "just like your father."

"You knew my father?" I stammer, "But..."

"Silver?" says the short, blonde guy. "Of course we knew him. He had the best left foot I've ever seen. You should have seen him take a free kick. It was a work of art..."

"Who are you two?" Rose interrupts, her eyebrows lifting and her hands on her hips.

The dreadlocked guy smiles, revealing a gold cap on one of his front teeth.

"The young lady is right to ask," he says with a bow. "Please forgive us. We were so excited to speak to you we forgot to introduce ourselves."

"Very excited to meet you," the blonde guy repeats with a strange smile.

"This is my colleague, Shorty," says the dread dude, patting his companion on the shoulder, "and my name is Jim, but everyone calls me 'Nails'"

"What kind of a name is 'Nails'?" Rose asks.

"A nickname," Nails says, "because of these..." He holds out his right hand to show long fingernails that have been sharpened to a point. "I use them to... play the guitar."

"Gross," Rose mutters under her breath.

"We read about the Streetskillz competition online," Mr. Smith says, "We're soccer fans you see. It seems you put in quite a performance there! We recognized your name. With your soccer skills and surname we just knew you had to be Silver's son."

"Yes Nathi," Nails says, "before Silver died he made us promise that we'd look after you, but then your mother moved and we didn't know where to find you."

Nails puts his hand on my shoulder. I can feel his sharp fingernails through the fabric of my shirt.

"Shorty was Silver's friend," Nails says, "but I was Silver's best friend, and before he died he gave me a great honour."

Nails looks at me with his dark eyes.

"Nathi, your father made me your godfather."

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

He shouldnt trust them they sound like criminals they saw him on the net made research about him and his family and probably thought they could make quick money. **Phelo**

Nathi shouldnt trust them. They should have approached his mother as adults before approaching him. **Black Diamond**

Wel,i definatly dnt thnk Nathi should trust those guys bcs he has neva seen or heard abt thm b4.Most of all,it is not a wise thng 2 go out there trusting strangers.For me,these guys are suspicious nd it looks like thy are here 2 ruin Nathi's life jst because they see that he is such a star in playing soccer.In conclusion,i would advice Nathi 2 jst take hs gf,get out of there as soon as they could.And then report ths matter ryt away.

What do you think?

Should Nathi trust Nails and Shorty? Why or why not?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 8

"What? That's impossible!" I retort in disbelief. "My mother would have told me about something like that."

Nails shakes his head with a sad sigh.

"You must remember that your father spent most of his time working on the mines. He used to visit your mother whenever he could, but he had another life up in Gauteng. When he was injured in the mineshaft fire and taken to hospital, your mother wasn't there at his deathbed. I was. That's when he asked me."

"I...I don't know what to say."

"You don't need to say anything," Nails says, "I know it's a lot to take in right now. But I brought you something I know you'll be able to trust."

He reaches into the pocket of his leather jacket and pulls out an envelope.

"It's a note your father wrote to you when he was in hospital" Nails says as he hands it to me "He asked me to give it you."

My name is written on the front of the envelope. The handwriting is familiar – I recognize it from the letters my mother has shown me over the years. There's no mistaking my dad's handwriting.

The taxi that takes us to school pulls up at the taxi rank and the driver hoots loudly.

"You need to get to school," Shorty says with a smile.

"Yes," Nails says, "what kind of a godfather would I be if I made you late?"

I try to smile but I'm still feeling so stunned by this unexpected news that I can only manage to slightly lift the corners of my mouth.

"One more thing," Nails says, "I'd appreciate it if you don't tell your mother about me yet. Silver never told her about our friendship and I'd like to have a chance to talk to her myself."

I nod slowly, clutching the note from my father in my hand.

"He's really his father's son, isn't he Shorty?" Nails says.

Shorty nods. "Silver would be proud."

"Come Nathi," Rose says, pulling me by the hand, "we need to get to school."

As we get into the taxi my head is spinning.

"I don't trust them," Rose says with a frown.

I look at the letter in my hands. What will it say? Will it explain everything?

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

Wow i luv ths story.i jst wondr wat is in da letter.da gud thng abt ths story is dat its a bit hard 2 predict wat myt happen in da future. **Lu**

Nathi must tell her mother bout this guys i hv a bad feeling thy will ruin his fiture if not n whts supprises me is dat y is syng he must'nt tell his mum watch out man. **Impulsive Lips**

Hai i dnt trst ds ppl,y dont dey want nathi's mom 2 knw abt dem:!!??sumthng smells bad hre,i can feel it,any way love de story kip up de gud wrk. **Young minaj**

What do you think?

Why do you think Nathi's dad wrote him a letter? *Our readers recommend this: To tell him he missed him: 12%, To tell him about his godfather: 39%, To tell him something about his great passion – soccer: 48%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 9

The tension is mounting as the Streetskillz team huddles around Mr. Naidoo on the indoor soccer pitch.

"I know you boys haven't had much chance to practice together," Mr. Naidoo says, "but I believe in throwing you in the deep end."

I look across to where our opponents, The Brazillionaires, are warming up. They're a team from Observatory in Cape Town and are flamboyantly dressed with shirts emblazoned with the Brazilian flag and white pants with colourful ties.

Since leaving Nails and Shorty at the taxi rank that morning, I haven't stopped thinking about the letter from my father. I've taken it out and looked at my father's neat handwriting on the envelope more than once. But it seemed too important to just open it at school, and when the bell had rung I'd had to rush to pack my things to be on time for the Streetskillz bus.

"They look more like gymnasts than soccer players," Henry whispers, nodding toward the Brazillionaires.

Our opponents are doing handstands and cartwheels and spinning around on the ground with astonishing rhythm.

"It's called Capoeira," Khaya says with a smirk. "It's a martial art from Brazil. But I wouldn't expect a homeless kid to know that."

"Leave him alone," I hiss.

I'm starting to feel a little uneasy. I've played against some tough teams before, but never against martial artists.

Our team takes its place on the field and the ref blows his whistle for the start. Immediately I

STREETSKILLZ: SILVER'S TREASURE

find myself trying to defend against a muscular midfielder with braids who tries to make a run down through the centre of the field. As I reach him I slide in for a tackle, but the braided Brazillionaire smoothly jumps and flips the ball into the air and over my legs. The midfielder crosses a long ball to his striker who leaps high into the air and effortlessly slams the ball home into the net with a perfect bicycle kick.

The Brazillionaires shout in triumph and run to hug the striker who kisses his hand, lifts it up to the ceiling and then touches it to his heart.

The restart is better with Khaya powering through the Brazillionaire midfield toward their goal. I run into the box and call for the ball, but Khaya ignores me and tries to take a long-range shot. It sails over the goal.

"I was open!" I shout in frustration, but Khaya ignores me.

The game continues and I pull off a good tackle on a Brazillionaire defender to take the ball forward. Khaya runs into the box and calls for the ball, but there's no way I'm going to give him that satisfaction. I try to look for an angle to shoot, but a defender tackles me and I lose the ball.

"Dammit Nathi!" Mr. Naidoo shouts from the sidelines. "You and Khaya are messing up the game!"

I throw up my hands in frustration. It's my first real game for Streetskillz and already the coach is angry with me. But what am I supposed to do? Khaya is being such an idiot!

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

They must put aside their issues en focus on the game! **Sexy**

i think the couch got to fix this before its too late,and he should tell them how important it is to play as a team not as an individual coz you wont make it alone in the field if u dnt play as a team.

Wel i think the coach nids to sit these young stars down nd talk sum sense in2 them show them wats important wats at stake here nd that they shud put their diferences aside wen they enter the field nd wrk as a team nd stop behvin like an empty tin.

What do you think?

Khaya and Nathi obviously have a problem playing together. How is this going to be solved?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 10

"You're two of my star players," storms Mr. Naidoo. "If you can't get along then Streetskillz doesn't have a chance of competing in the league! You need to get over your differences."

Khaya and I are standing in front of our coach breathing hard. The whistle has just blown for the end of the game and the Brazillionaires have beaten us 2-0.

"We will," we say together, scowling at each other.

"Great," Mr. Naidoo says, "then you won't mind that I've put you two in the same room."

"What?" I exclaim. "No, no, we can't..."

Mr. Naidoo holds up his hand. "If you two can't work together then I must find players who can," he says, and then walks away shaking his head.

Khaya looks at me in disgust.

"Now not only do I have to put up with your bad soccer, I have to put up with your bad smell and snoring too! Hayi, this is unfair."

I stalk into the changeroom, taking off my boots and throwing them onto the floor.

"I hate this!" I shout at the wall.

"You need to learn to deal with Khaya," a voice says from behind me.

I turn to see Henry standing behind me. The small teenager's face is concerned.

"It's unfair," I rage, "if Khaya passed the ball to me, I'd pass it back to him."

"Dropping to his level isn't going to keep you on the team." Henry says. "You're going to have to work it out with him. Our team needs to focus on developing our own style. Having you and Khaya fighting all the time is not helping us."

I sigh and nod.

"And I thought I was going to have to help you deal with Khaya."

Henry smiles.

"I've had to deal with people far worse than Khaya on the street."

I know Henry's right. Hard as it seems, I have to try to resolve things with Khaya. But what are the chances of my old enemy responding to an offer of friendship?

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

He must tell khaya tht they must do sumthng gud 4 a team nd make the whole team be :O by them nd the coach be :D wit them. **C ronaldo**

I knw we dnt get alng nt dat i want us 2 b best buddies bt can we try n b civilised 4 da sake of da team u a great player so am i bt let nt battle 2 score points n tryng 2 prove whoz da besttest bt let work 2getha n amaze ppl wit peace sure dat wnt hurting jst tryng dat

Henry is really smart 4 a small boy!Nathi nd Khaya should be playin 4 the team nt themselves even though i understand were Nathi is comin frm he has the responsibility to the team!if the team fails he fails too!he should be the bigger person nd try to get along with Khaya. **Black boo**

What do you think?

What should Nathi say to Khaya to work out their differences? *Our readers recommend this: You're an idiot, and this is all your fault: 1%, I'm sorry, it's all my fault: 1%, We might not get along, but we need to work together on the field: 96%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 11

"Well if it isn't the dog I have to share my room with," Khaya says, pushing his headphones down around his neck.

He's lying on his bed on one side of the room that we're sharing.

I take a deep breath as I drop my bag onto the floor.

"Khaya, we've got to talk."

"Talk? Sure let's talk about what a terrible soccer player you are," Khaya retorts with a snigger.

I sit down on my bed and look across at Khaya.

"I don't know why you don't like me, but I think you're a great player and think we could learn a lot from each other."

"What could I possibly learn from you?" Khaya scowls.

My temper flares and I struggle to keep control of it. But I know Henry is right – my place on the team is at stake if I can't get Khaya to listen to reason.

"I think you're a fantastic player Khaya, you're strong, you're quick and you've got an awesome right foot, but your rhythm is slightly off."

Khaya scowls again, but he sits up and looks at me.

"What do you mean?"

"When you come in for a shot, you're slightly off balance. It makes your shots less accurate."

Before Khaya can say anything I continue.

"What about me? What could I do better?"

Khaya rubs his chin as he thinks.

"You don't have enough explosive power in your legs," Khaya says. "You're technically good, but you should do more sprints to build that power."

I grin.

"You see? I never would have known that. So do you think we can forget our personal differences on the field and play together despite them? Otherwise we're both going to get kicked off the team."

Khaya thinks for a long time and then eventually nods. We shake hands.

"This doesn't mean I like you," Khaya says.

I shrug.

"I can't have everything."

It's only when Khaya begins snoring that I finally feel ready to look at the letter. I take a deep breath and then open it...

Dear Nathi,

I'm sorry that I haven't had the chance to get to know you. I've asked the deliverer of this note to look after you. I've never had the opportunity to introduce you personally, but I want you to think of him as family. He's a good man and my best friend. Your mother is an amazing woman and I know she will continue to raise you well. But I have asked him to be your godfather so that if ever you need some fatherly help there will be someone there for you.

With great affection,

Your father

Ps. I have left you a treasure, something very valuable that I hope that you will appreciate and use to your benefit.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

I think silver's treasure is a soccer talent that nathi has cause obviously it's like father like son.so that means nathi must use his soccer talent to his benefits. **Nikon**

I think it wud b very wise of Nathi 2 show his mum dat leta bcoz if evrythng mentined in dat envelope is true den his mum dservz 2 knw 2 catch up on dis coz Nails asked Nathi not 2

tel his mum n y daz he insist dat unles he has sumthng 2 hide,especialy it may do wit da treasure.so i thnk hs mada wil folo up on dis 1. **b Junior**

Khaya and Nathi will make a great combination i can see that,and hey i do not trust Nails at all. **Maqhuza**

What do you think?

Where do you think Silver's treasure is? Our readers recommend this: *Buried somewhere in Du Noon: 23%, Nails has it: 41%, It's hidden somewhere in Joburg: 35%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 12

"I'm open!" Khaya shouts.

I dribble the ball around the tall, red-haired Maiden midfielder, and then chip the ball over the box and onto Khaya's head. Khaya whips his head forward and drives the ball into the net.

"Yes!" I shout, running over to where the Streetskillz team is jumping on Khaya.

Khaya turns to me and looks at me for a long moment before extending his fist.

I give it a friendly knock with my own.

"Maybe you're not so useless," Khaya says.

"Yeah, maybe you're alright too," I smile.

The game restarts and the Iron Maiden's show that they're not finished yet. They whip the ball through midfield and play it forward. Only great defending by our goalie keeps the ball out of the goal.

Henry jogs up to Khaya and I.

"You know how Mr. Naidoo said we should develop our own style?" he says. "Well how about we work it now? Otherwise we're going to get beaten by the Maidens again."

"Yeah like I'm going to take advice from a homeless guy," Khaya says.

I give him my drop-dead look and Khaya relents.

"Okay, okay, we can all learn from each other," Khaya says holding up his hands, "as long as I don't have to stand too close to him."

I roll my eyes, but nod for Henry to continue.

"The Maidens are strong and the Brazillionaires are acrobatic," Henry says, "what is

Streetskillz good at?"

"We're technically good. Mr. Naidoo has brought together players from all over the Western Cape, and we're the most technically strong team in the league."

"That's right," Henry says, "but we allow the Maidens and the Brazillionaires to dominate us with their type of play."

"He's right," Khaya says, and Henry and I turn to look at him in astonishment.

"We're technically strong but we're all playing as individuals," Khaya says. "We need to pass the ball around more and beat them with our combined skills."

We smile and touch fists together. We've got a game plan! Now all we need to do is put it into action!

The game restarts and Henry quickly passes the ball to me. I chip it over to where Khaya is running up centrefield. Khaya dribbles for a few paces then pulls the ball back and passes it back to Henry. Henry plays a long ball to me and I spin past a Maiden defender and then crosses it to Khaya, who slams the ball into the net with a powerful volley.

The rest of the Streetskillz team erupts in celebration and Khaya grins at Henry and I as we lift him into the air. Khaya may have scored the goal, but he knows for a fact that he couldn't have done it without us.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

i thnk they should start playing their unique ball and keep the possession if they had chances they should convert them.

Playin as a team is the most vital thing to do,streetskillz should play their own football and never allow opponents into da game,the must make sure they keep momentum and ball possession,must convert their chances into goals and always be disciplined. **Soca babe**

Wow! at last Nathi n Khaya r halfway of reachin' out 2 eachada n luk nw da team has myd progres n al bcoz dey've put their dferences aside. **B Junior**

What do you think?

Streetskillz have the beginnings of a game plan. How you would help them develop their own unique street soccer style?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 13

"We may just have the start of a strategy!" Mr. Naidoo exclaims as the team troops happily back to the edge of the field.

We shout and push each other and Henry starts singing "We are the champions," in a high-pitched opera voice that makes us all laugh hysterically.

Khaya punches me on the arm with a grin.

"You're not as slow as I thought," he says.

"And you're not as stupid as you look," I reply, returning his grin.

Mr. Naidoo shakes his head.

"I don't care how you boys do it, but as long as you play well together, I'm happy."

I'm about to reply when I spot Nails and Shorty in the stands. Nails starts clapping and whistling when he sees me looking at them.

"Nathi, who are those guys?" Mr. Naidoo asks, arching his eyebrow at the dreadlocked, gold-toothed stranger and his short sidekick.

"That's..." I start, trying to figure out exactly what Nails is to me.

"That's my family," I say finally, remembering what my father had said about Nails in the letter.

Mr. Naidoo looks dubious but nods and walks back to the changeroom, leaving me to walk over and speak to my godfather.

"Damn good game Nathi!" Nails exclaims. "You were brilliant out there!"

"Thanks," I smile.

"Did you read the letter?" Shorty asks eagerly.

I nod.

"Yes, my father told me to treat you like family."

Nails smiles and walks onto the field, opening his arms.

"Give your godfather a hug, Nathi."

I walk over to him and Nails pulls me into an embrace. He stinks of cigarette smoke and alcohol and I have to hold my breath as the man grips me in a bear hug.

Eventually he releases me, but keeps his hand on my shoulder, and I can feel his sharp claws digging into my skin.

"Have you thought about where Silver's treasure could be?" Nails asks.

I frown and shake my head. I stayed awake thinking about this last night, but I haven't got a clue.

"I could ask the Professor though," I venture, "he might know. He and my father were friends."

"No, no," says Nails quickly, "don't ask the Professor. In fact I think it's better that the Professor doesn't know that we're here."

"Yes," Shorty says, "much better."

"But why not?"

Nails shakes his head. "I always thought the Professor was a bad influence on Silver."

I laugh out loud. "A bad influence? That's crazy!"

Nails digs his claws deeper into my shoulder.

"Don't tell the Professor, Nathi." he says seriously. "Your father asked me to be your godfather because I know what's good for you."

I begin to feel very uneasy. Nails and Shorty are after something. But what could it be?

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

Something is really fish...these guys r 2 secretiv about their presence

These guyz are to something they only want the treasure that belongs to nathi for the fact that they don't want anyone to know about it. **wiseman**

It seems as though Nails and shorty are only after the treasure that silver left behind. They don't really care about Nathi. They are cunning and skimming. **LOLLY POP**

What do you think?

What do Nails and Shorty really want from Nathi?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 14

"So Nails is your godfather?" Rose asks, holding Silver's note in her hands and looking at it in disbelief.

STREETSKILLZ: SILVER'S TREASURE

We're sitting on a bench at school during lunch break.

"Apparently," I sigh, "but there's something really freaky about those two."

Rose rolls her eyes. "You're telling me? Those two are bad news for sure."

She hands the note to me and hops off the bench and stands in front of me.

"You've got to show that note to your mother and the Professor. If Nails really is your godfather then they need to know."

"I think you're right."

"Of course I'm right, I'm always right," she says and then looks around quickly for teachers and seeing none, kisses me quickly on the lips. Several of the girls eating lunch near us laugh and shout encouragement.

"You'd better get to class, lover boy," Rose says with a coy smile.

I watch her until she disappears around the corner and only then do I let out my breath and chuckle. Despite everything going on in my life, when Rose is around it's almost impossible to even think about anything else but her.

I manage to make it through class and start feel excited as the end of the school day comes. This evening is the first real Streetskillz team practice and I'm eager to work on the team strategy again.

Back at the Streetskillz facility I change into my kit and jog out onto the pitch.

"Right," Mr. Naidoo says. "You've seen how tough the league is. You've beaten the Maidens, but for your next game you're going to be playing against the Brazillionaires again, and then after that against the best team in the league – The Dragons – so I want to see you working out there."

We run through some basic training drills and then we work through some set pieces.

"Open," I shout as Khaya receives a free kick from Henry.

Khaya dribbles around the orange cone, where the defender would be, and chips it to me. I stop it with my chest and then slam it into the net.

"Nice," Khaya says as the three of us touch fists, "but remember what I said about explosive power."

I nod. Khaya's right, I need to get off the mark quicker.

We're about to do it again when I spot my mother talking to Mr. Naidoo on the side of the field. What's she doing here?

When I get to her I can see that she's been crying.

"Nathi," she says in a soft voice, "it's the Professor. He's been badly beaten up. He's in hospital."

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

Write n0w i smell nails ,i thnk he is behind the beating of tha prof. **Kuhle**

I dont trust nails nor shorty.Nathi must be carefull. **Maqhuza**

I wonder wo it cld b wo hd beaten proffesor:?touchin n nyc story ey. **Tweet**

What do you think?

Are you a team player? *Our readers recommend this: No, I put myself first: 4%, Yes, it's amazing what people can achieve when they work together: 62%, I'll work together with others if they're prepared to work with me: 32%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 15

"What happened?" I demand as my mom and I walk through the bright, white corridors of the Medi Clinic.

"He was walking down Potsdam Road when he was attacked," she says. "They took his wallet and his hat and beat him really badly."

"Did anybody see them?" I ask, trying to fight back the tears.

"A taxi driver saw men struggling on the side of the road. He thinks there were two or three of them attacking the Professor."

"Why didn't he stop to help?" I ask hoarsely, but I already know the answer.

Crime is a daily occurrence in Du Noon and the surrounding areas. People want to help, but it's just too dangerous.

When we reach the trauma ward my mom stops me and puts her hands on my shoulders.

"He doesn't look good, Nathi."

I nod, shrug her hands off my shoulders and push open the door to the ward. The Professor is lying dead still. His face and arms are bandaged and he has a drip in his arm.

"Professor?" I whisper.

The old man's bruised eyes are closed and he's breathing with a deep, rasping sound.

I walk over to the side of the bed and take one of his bandaged hands.

The old man's eyes flicker and then open.

"Nathi," he rasps, "you can't trust them."

I lean closer to hear him better. "Who, Prof, who?"

"Nails and Shorty," the Professor whispers. "They're bad men, Nathi, tsotis, they convinced your father to miss that penalty for money."

"They did this to you?" I exclaim in disbelief.

The Professor nods. "You must call the police Nathi. Please call the police."

"But my father," I cry, "his note... He told me to treat the person who delivered the note like family. He told me he is my godfather."

The Professor tries to smile and then winces against the pain. "You father wrote that note for me to deliver, Nathi."

The Professor tries to move but gasps at the pain.

"It was your father who gave me the nickname 'Professor' you know?" the old man says. "He used to say that the only thing I was interested in was soccer, so I should become a Professor of Soccer at the University." The Professor chuckles softly at the memory.

"When your father was injured he wrote that note for me to give to you when you were old enough, but it went missing. I thought I'd lost it, but Nails must have stolen it."

Looking at my mentor and thinking about all the kindness he's shown me over the last few months I know that he's speaking the truth.

"Why would they do this?" I demand. "What do they want?"

The Professor looks me in the eye, his injured face frowning.

"They're looking for Silver's Treasure."

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

Cnt wait 4 2morows. Its killin me. Cos i wnt 2 knw wats going on. Tjo. **Snazzy+girl**

Silver's treasure might be minerals ,since he was working in da mines. Am sure Nails wana cheat da boy in a clever way. **Chrisbenwa**

Wow wht a chapter.An interesting turning point.I cudnt figure out hw Nathiz godfather cud nt b knwn by Nathiz mom and family friend. Bt wow! Thanks. **Asah**

What do you think?

What do you think Silver's Treasure is? *Our readers recommend this: Money: 27%, Gold and jewels: 13%, It's not that kind of treasure: 59%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 16

"Why on earth didn't you tell me about these men straight away?" my mother demands.

We're sitting in the Milnerton police station. I've already made a statement and given a description of Nails and Shorty to a Constable Davids. The policeman is busy checking it against the records of known criminals.

"I thought dad trusted them. It said in the note that he wanted me to treat them like family, and so that's what I tried to do."

My mom smooths her hand over my short dreadlocks.

"It's the Professor he trusted," she says.

"Did Dad ever say anything about treasure? He wrote in his note that he left me treasure."

Mom laughs. "Treasure? If there was any treasure he certainly didn't tell me anything about it!"

She thinks for a moment.

"There is a box of things that he kept at the house," she says, "but definitely no treasure."

Constable Davids returns with a sheet of paper. "Jimmy 'Nails' Tlala and

Frederick 'Shorty' Potgieter," he says, handing the paper to me.

It has pictures of the two men and a list of the crimes they've committed.

"Assault, robbery, fraud," I read out loud.

"Very bad men," Constable Davids says, "but don't worry. We've alerted all patrols in the area and they're looking for them as we speak."

"Good!" says my mother. "The sooner you catch them, the sooner I can stop worrying."

"For the meantime I think it's best if you don't stay at home," the policeman says. "Is there somewhere else you can stay?"

"Yes, we can make a plan. Nathi, I'll stay at Auntie Thandi's house until they catch them."

"OK, I'll stay with you."

She shakes her head.

"No. I've already spoken to Mr. Naidoo and he's agreed to have extra security at the Streetskillz facility. We'll both be safer if you're there. Besides, it's not fair for you to have to miss soccer because of these two tsotsis."

We take the taxi back to Du Noon and pack our clothes as well as food for Ronaldo, who is looking forlorn.

"Your cousins will look after him, Nathi, don't worry," mom says with a smile as she takes the little dog into her arms.

I suddenly have an idea. What if there is a clue in my dad's things that might lead us to the treasure? If we could find it, maybe we could put it in the bank to keep it safe from Nails and Shorty.

"Hey, where is that box of dad's things?"

Mom puts Ronaldo down onto the floor and rummages through her old wooden cupboard, finally pulling out an old cardboard box and handing it to me.

"I think its junk, mostly," she sighs.

I look through the box, marveling at the old soccer trophies, an old Kaizer Chiefs scarf and the stub of a ticket to see Chiefs vs. Pirates. At the bottom of the box I spot something shining. I reach in and pull out a notebook. On its cover in silver ink are written the words "Silver's Treasure".

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

Yes,there was this guy who dated my mom.i really admired him,i thought he was different and decent ,until i found out that he had a wife and children,she was only toying my mom,i got really upset and realised that i made a mistake by trusting him!!!(**Curious**

Well yeah ive made tht mistke twice and since thn i neva trustd any1..my bf told me everyday he lvs me and he wana make lve wth me..i so badly wntd him aswl..he said he wnts a bby..i thn resntly found owt he slpt wth my wrst enemy nd she s preg.

Well we all do mistakes aint we? **Dark Child**

What do you think?

Have you ever trusted somebody and later realised that you'd made a big mistake? What happened?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 17

"I don't get it," I worry, flicking through the pages of the notebook. Its just sketches of soccer fields and players, and writing about soccer."

"Well," his mother says with a smile as they walk the short distance from the taxi rank to the Streetskillz facility, "your father was as obsessed with soccer as you are."

"But what about the treasure? It doesn't say anything about treasure."

We reach the entrance and she pulls me into a hug.

"Don't worry about it all too much," she says, "once they catch those two we can figure it all out."

Mr. Naidoo insists that the Streetskillz minibus gives my mom a lift to Aunt Thandi's house.

"You can't be too careful," he says.

I give her a hug goodbye and then watch as the taxi takes her out of the front gate of the facility.

"You ready to play?" Mr. Naidoo asks. "You don't have to if you don't want to."

"I'm ready."

I can feel anger boiling inside me. I'm angry that The Professor has been beaten up. Angry that two criminals lied to me and – worst of all – that I believed them. Soccer is the one thing that I've always believed in, and right now I need it more than ever.

I kit up quickly and run out onto the field where Khaya, Henry and the rest of the team are waiting for me.

"Alright?" Khaya asks me gruffly. "We heard what happened."

"Ja," Henry says "maybe you should take it easy Nathi, you've had a tough day."

"Are you kidding?" I say. "Let's kick some Brazillionaire behind."

We take our places on the field and face off against the muscular capoeeristas. As soon as the whistle blows Khaya immediately plays the ball across to me. I dribble it forward and then thread it through to Henry who is running up the centre of the field. Henry almost reaches the ball, but a Brazillionaire spins out in front of him and flicks the ball to his striker, who takes the ball far forward into the Streetskillz half.

"No!" I shout as the Brazillionaires striker wrong foots the Streetskillz defense and puts the ball into the top of their net.

The striker does a victorious back flip and lands on his feet as his teammates swarm around to congratulate him.

Khaya and I try to get our passing going when the game restarts, but the Brazillionaires are still

too quick and again take the ball from us.

When the whistle for the end of the first half blows, its 2-0 to our gymnastic opponents.

I look into the stands and to my surprise see Rose waving at me. I jog over to the edge of the field.

"I heard what happened," she says with a concerned look on her face.

"I found something Rose. A clue to Silver's treasure, but I don't understand it. There's no map or directions to something that's buried."

"Can I see it?"

"I'll get it."

I jog into the changeroom, pull the notebook from my bag and return to the field. Rose takes it from me and flicks it open, studying the pages intently. After several seconds she laughs.

"You've got it all wrong, lover boy," she says, "this isn't a map to Silver's Treasure... this IS Silver's Treasure."

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

Well i think that it is a life lifting story,it shows us dat people around us do care and they wil always be there 4 us in dificult times. **Miss T**

Wow,the story is intrestng. Rose is a supportve girl and the boys r nw happily united. The tresure may b the map of hw to move wth the ball.Bt lets get it on!The story rocks! **Asah**

Nathi is such a young good boy who needs to work more harder from where he is

What do you think?

What do you think Rose means? *Our readers recommend this: The book is very old and so it's valuable: 25%, There's a map to hidden treasure inside the notebook: 5%, C'mon! If you're looking for treasure take a closer look at the sketches and words: 69%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 18

"Look at this!" Rose says paging through my dad's book. "Your father wasn't just a soccer player, he was a soccer genius!"

She shows me a page.

STREETSKILLZ: SILVER'S TREASURE

"A detailed play book!" she says flicking the page. "Strategies, tips and advice. It's brilliant! Look here, a strategy for playing against a very athletic team like the Brazillionaires. Silver says you need to slow the pace down and keep possession of the ball."

The whistle blows for the start and I smile gratefully at my girlfriend before I head back.

"You're the genius," I yell to her from the field.

"No arguments there," she shouts back with a grin.

I run over to where Khaya, Henry and Chippa are standing.

"We need to slow the game down," I say. "Just concentrate on keeping possession of the ball and keep passing it until we see an opening."

"C'mon! They're already 2-0 ahead, we need to attack straight away." Khaya retorts irritably.

"They're already 2-0 ahead so we can't exactly lose anything by trying things my way, can we?" I persevere.

Khaya sighs. "Ok, let's do this."

We take our positions and wait for the restart. When the whistle blows the Brazillionaires swing the ball wide, but it's intercepted by Khaya. Instead of taking it forward and attacking like he usually does, he passes the ball back to Henry, who immediately passes it to me.

We keep the ball between us, passing it back and forth, looking for an opening. I soon notice that the Brazillionaires start making mistakes when the pace of the game is slowed down.

I spot the defense move out of position and then feint a pass to Khaya, then move the ball quickly forward and crack a long-range shot from outside of the box. The ball curves in the air and smashes like a missile into the top left corner of the net.

"Unbelievable!" Khaya shouts, running and jumping on my back.

Henry jumps on me too and we crumple to the ground.

Using Silver's strategy we dominate the restart with ultra-slow, technical soccer, which frustrates the Brazillionaires so much they lose their focus and begin to get really sloppy.

Khaya takes advantage of the mess and pounds a volley home into the net. Soon after, Henry scores an easy goal from a free kick.

The whistle blows and the Streetskillz team crowd around the goal scorers in delight.

"That was incredible soccer!" Mr. Naidoo exclaims. "Who thought out the new strategy?"

"I'll show you at practice," I say with a grin.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

Yeah, some bully at high school. I hated his guts until we were both chosen to represent our school in reading competition, in order 4 us 2 win I had to get along with him. So until now we still buddies lol

Great story indeed, makes one think of the scenarios we get ourselves in. **Devotion**

I think that's natural for people to hate each other before they could find out that they are useful to each other. It always happens with me whenever I meet people they hate me at first but while time goes on we become friends and not just friends I become useful. **Nikon**

What do you think?

Khaya and Nathi have become friends. Have you ever become friends with someone that you didn't like at first?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 19

"Hopefully those two tsotsis have given up and run back to Jozi by now," Khaya says as we strap on our shin-guards in the changeroom.

"I just hope the police catch them," I say.

"I wish we could catch them," Khaya says smacking his palm with his fist.

I smile. I never would have thought it, but Khaya and I have actually become pretty good friends. Last night I told the older boy all about what had happened with Nails and Shorty. I also told him about Silver's Treasure, the notebook filled with soccer strategies and game plans. The two of us stayed up half the night discussing the different plans my dad had detailed in the book.

"Let's go teach the rest of the team," Khaya says lacing his boots.

We walk out onto the pitch and join the team sprawled on the floor around Mr. Naidoo.

"Thanks to Nathi, Khaya and Henry, we have a game plan to work on," Mr. Naidoo says. "Since they're working so effectively together I'm going to let them take you through it."

I take the lead, talking the team through some of the drills in my father's notebook.

While my practice sessions with the Professor had been all about my individual soccer skills, Silver's notebook is about working as a team on the field. And I'm amazed at the depth of my father's understanding of soccer. In his notebook is a strategy for every kind of opponent: physically strong opponents like the Brazillionaires are to be dealt with by slowing the game

down; technically strong opponents are to be handled by using bursts of speed and power. Silver had thought of it all.

After an hour of drilling, trying out new ways of passing the ball quickly and effectively to each other, Mr. Naidoo blows his whistle. We crowd around him again.

"Your next game is against the Dragons and will be your first game in front of a full audience."

As I listen to him I feel my palms getting sweaty. I'd played in front of a crowd at the Streetskillz tournament earlier this year, but they'd just been locals from Du Noon. The street soccer league draws a much bigger crowd.

"There's one other thing," Mr. Naidoo continues, "this game is going to be filmed and televised live country wide. You're all still young but this is a great opportunity for those of you hoping to become professionals one day to reveal your talents to the world."

My heart pounds with excitement. We're going to be on TV!

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

They mst play as usually lyk they play without da cameras. **boy**

I think he should just play the game and forget about cameras he can only think about them after the game like for interviews and celebration.he must just act normal or professional.

Nikon

Wow!Evrythn' 4 Nathi simz 2 b cumin' 2geda n he atlast found da treasure n its helpin' hm n soon wil b on tv,dis is goin' 2 hs big break ever,i hope they catch Shorty n Nails. **B Junior**

What do you think?

Nathi is nervous to be on TV. What should he do? *Our readers recommend this: Act like a professional soccer player: 6%, Strike a pose and smile at the cameras: 1%, Just ignore the cameras and concentrate on the game: 92%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 20

"You look seriously hot in that soccer kit," Rose says as I lace up my boots.

The crowd is filling up the stands at the Streetskillz facility and I keep looking nervously over at the TV cameras scattered around the pitch. Above the pitch is a large screen where the crowd can watch replays. I take a deep breath.

"Hey relax," Rose says, "even if you don't make an impression with your unbelievable soccer,

STREETSKILLZ: SILVER'S TREASURE

you're bound to win over the fans with your handsome good looks."

She winks at me.

I can't help from grinning despite my nerves. I run my hands through her hair and pull her close to me.

"Dude, I'd love to hang out getting cozy with you, but don't you think you should be bonding with your team right now, and not with me?"

"You get my attention completely and then you send me away – what is this?" I joke.

"Oh, you know. Pull them in close and then tell them to speak to the hand. Isn't that what keeps men interested?" Rose teases. 'Get out of here and go kick some butt boyfriend!'

Shaking my head in amazement, I jog down into the changeroom where I find Khaya dressed and ready to roll.

Khaya smiles when he sees me enter.

"Who'd ever have thought we'd be happily playing on the same team?"

I smile back.

"If you were wearing your Leopard's kit and I was in my Dynamite gear, I'd happily whip your behind," I laugh. "But it's different today."

I suddenly feeling a surge of adrenaline as I think about the game that's about to begin.

"Today we forget all about that. Right now we're Streetskillz."

Khaya nods and holds out his hand. I grip it and the two of us look at each other.

"Streetskillz," Khaya says and I nod.

We form a line with the rest of the team. We're so hyped up we're all jogging on the spot as we wait for Mr. Naidoo to lead us onto the pitch.

"You've all proven that you're good players individually, that's why you're here," says Mr. Naidoo, "but only recently have you started to play like a team."

His eyes flick across to Khaya, Henry and I.

"Although a team is a unit, it needs a captain. He holds up an armband between his fingers. It's hard to decide but I think we all know who should wear this today."

Mr. Naidoo looks at all of the players individually before his eyes rest on me. He holds out the armband. I take it and put it on.

The stands are full and the crowd roars as we jog out into the lights. The cameras swing round and follow us as we make our way towards our positions. I do my best to ignore them.

There's another roar as the Dragons make their way onto the pitch. I've seen video footage of them playing, but up close they're far more intimidating. Their captain is a tall Asian guy with long, dark hair and fierce tattoos wrapped around his forearms. The team marches out in unison, like a well-oiled machine.

I start running through strategies in my mind. The Dragons look incredibly strong as well as technically proficient.

I'm deciding between game plans when something on the screen above the pitch catches my eye. I look up and feel like I've been kicked in the stomach. There, sitting in the crowd, are Nails and Shorty.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

He should continue to play at his best immediadly if he gets a chance he should alert the coach. **Phelo**

Obviously nails n shorty doesnt knw dat their wantd or they wouldnt be da.nathi mst focus on da game evn though hs nt comfotable n prove 2 thm dat hs da bst n jst smile wn they luk at hm so dat they dnt gt suspicious.at hlf tym he mst tel mr.naidoo 2 cal da police while he entatin dam so dat they dnt run away. **MATEKELE**

He should just ignore them and play da game and then during halftime he should inform mr naidoo and warn his gf 2 b careful cos nails and shorty might kidnap her...

What do you think?

Nathi is sure he's just seen Nails and Shorty in the crowd. What should he do?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 21

The ball sails toward me and I stop it with my chest, then play it forward. My mind is racing. Nails and Shorty are in the audience! The Dragons tall captain checks me with a heavily tattooed forearm and then pushes me off the ball.

The Dragon takes the ball into the Streetskillz half, but luckily I manage to tackle him and play the ball safely out to Chippa.

Khaya jogs up to me.

"That's Tong," he tells me, "he's incredibly good. You need to watch out."

"I saw them!" I hiss.

"What?" Khaya says, "Who?"

"Nails and Shorty!"

Khaya's eyes widen but he has no time to reply as Chipa passes the ball over to him. Khaya moves the ball forward and then chips it back to me. I sidestep a Dragon player, take the ball to the edge of the box and take a long, half-hearted shot at goal.

Khaya calls a time-out and grabs me by the arm, leading me over to where Mr. Naidoo is standing.

"Nathi saw those two tsotsis here," Khaya says, "We've got to do something."

Mr. Naidoo looks surprised. "Really Nathi?" he says. "The police are looking for them. Surely they wouldn't come here?"

Suddenly I feel doubtful. Maybe I hadn't really seen them?

"Well, don't worry," Mr. Naidoo says, "I'll speak to security about it. Even if they are here they won't be able to get to you."

He pats me on the shoulder.

"Now get out there and concentrate on the game."

I smile and nod, but I can't get the image of Nails and Shorty out of my mind.

The game restarts and the Dragons push forward, Tong passing the Streetskillz defense and drilling a goal into the top right hand corner. The Dragons roar.

Khaya jogs over to me.

"So what's the game plan?" he says. "You're the captain, tell us what to do!"

I stare blankly at him. I can't think of anything but Nails and Shorty.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

He must forget they are there or just be professional.he must think about his future and his father's strategies. **Nikon**

The same way they played wit da brazilionarez,they shud play wit dat pace.I Shorty n Nails wil b thre until da game ends so Nathi musn't wori,Mr.Naidoo wil tyk care of it. **B Junior**

Play the ball arOund 2 feet nd thr might get a opportunity.

What do you think?

Nathi is so distracted by the two criminals that he can't think of a strategy to beat the Dragons. What should Streetskillz do? *Our readers recommend this: Give up: 5%, Slow the pace down like they did with the Brazillionaires: 21%, Speed the pace up. The Dragons are strong but they don't seem that fast: 73%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 22

As the whistle blows for the end of the first half, I turn away from the TV cameras in shame. My head is spinning. I don't know whether Nails and Shorty are actually in the stands, or whether I just imagined it. On top of that, I'm the captain of Streetskillz and I can't even think of a strategy to beat the Dragons!

As I'm walking with downcast eyes towards the change room one of the facility's cleaning staff, a short, bald man named Douglas, waves me over.

"Nathi, there are two policemen looking for you outside. They say they've caught criminals that they want you to identify."

My heart leaps. Nails and Shorty have been captured!

"Thanks Douglas!"

I detour off the field and into the foyer of the facility. With Nails and Shorty arrested I'll be able to concentrate on beating the Dragons.

I walk out into the parking lot and see two men in blue uniforms standing in the shadows. I wave to them and jog over. It's only when I'm right next to them that I realize my mistake.

Nails reaches out and grabs me round the neck. I lash out with my feet, but Shorty hits me hard in the stomach. I drop to my knees gasping for air.

"You didn't think we'd let you have Silver's treasure that easily did you?" Nails jeers.

"It isn't money, you idiot," I cough, trying to catch my breath and stand up.

Nails pushes me to the ground again.

"Gold then? Jewels? We stole your father's note from that old fool the Professor years ago, so we know it exists."

"It's a notebook! The treasure is a notebook my dad wrote in."

"You're a liar," Smith snarls, "and if you're not going to tell us where it is, we're going to have to torture it out of you."

He grabs me by my soccer shirt.

"Let's get him into the back of the van," he says to Nails.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

Yes,i would have asked douglas 2 come with me and show me where exactly those policeman are. **Curious**

I knew tht thy wuld catch hm..bt its nt abt tht nw..nathi shuld find a way 2 escape n b bck on da game cz hs team nidz hm..nw he shuld thnk of a strategy 2 runaway 4 nails n shorty..mmmh hw abt hm tlng these tsotsi tht da treasure is in da changing room in hs bad..tht thy hv no choice bt 2 let hm or if they cum along thn thy wl catched..bt its stl nt gud..he jst nid sumthng up hs sleeves...mmmh lets wat hppn nw..khaya?henry?...whr r u?ur team mate nids u as u nid hm..**Leonardo**

Dougus cud hlp 2 idntfy short nd nails 2 de true police man if he wsnt hrd 2 brin nathi 2 dem.yoh its nt gud being folwd nd beatin 4 smthng dat isnt urs nor de 1 doing al dis.shorty nd nail dcrvs 2 go to jail period nd wt hpnd 2 de securty dat mr naido put 2 look 4 dis idiots in de statium.yai dis isnt fair nd if i ws hm i'd fal 4 dat tric 2 cos i knw it cud clear my mind of thngs nd concentrtr on de game.:(**Lolly**

What do you think?

If you were Nathi would you have handled this situation differently? Our readers recommend this: *Yes, I would have told somebody where I was going before I left the field: 45%, No, I would probably also have fallen into this trap: 18%, Right now, I think I'd be thinking up an escape strategy really fast: 35%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

CHAPTER 23

Nails and Shorty drag me over to an old van in the parking lot. I try to scream for help but Nails clamps his sharp claws over my mouth.

I struggle desperately and try to sink my teeth into Nails' dirty hand. Nails lifts it to hit me, then suddenly unexpectedly drops to the ground screaming and holding his face. Shorty rushes towards me, but is also hit by something and doubles over in pain.

I turn to see Khaya picking up another stone. As Nails tries to get up, Khaya flings the stone at him, hitting him hard on the elbow. Mr. Naidoo and three security guards run out of the facility and grab the two men roughly.

Khaya grins. "I'm told I have a mean aim," he says, bouncing another stone up and down in his hand.

STREETSKILLZ: SILVER'S TREASURE

The security guards handcuff the two men and make them lie face down on the cold gravel of the parking lot.

Mr. Naidoo puts his arms around the two boys shoulders.

"While they wait for the police, I believe we have the second half of a game to get to."

Khaya and I jog back into the facility and onto the pitch. My head is suddenly clear and I sense a strategy clicking into place. As I watch the Dragons returning to the pitch I notice that although they're strong and they work well together as a team, they're a little slow.

I call Khaya and Henry over.

"Speed," I say urgently, "we need to pick up our speed. They're bigger than us, which means they're also slower. If we push the pace and don't give them time to react, they won't be able to stop us."

Khaya and Henry nod and then run off to spread the strategy to the rest of the team. I look across at Tong who is standing and staring at me. The Dragons captain smiles and flexes his muscular, tattooed forearms. I smile back. I know we have a good plan.

The game starts and I immediately explode forward with the ball, taking Tong and the other Dragons by surprise. I push hard through their midfield and pass the ball to Khaya, who whips through the centre. Khaya is incredibly fast and beats the defense easily, faking a shot to wrong foot the goalie and then slamming the ball home into the net. The score is level at 1-1!

The Dragons restart and try to maintain possession, but Henry speeds down the left wing and catches the midfielders by surprise. He chips the ball to Khaya who volleys it across to me. I take the ball in mid-run and race past the Dragon defense, taking a shot and curving the ball round into the corner of the net. 2-1! I'm almost crushed as the Streetskillz team pile on top of me in joy!

Through the pile of bodies I see a familiar, if somewhat battered, face in the crowd. The Professor smiles and raises a bandaged arm triumphantly.

We manage to hold on to our winning streak until the final whistle blows. Then we go crazy with celebration in the middle of the pitch. When our winning fever starts to subside, I walk past the cheering crowds, past the TV camera and into the stands where Rose is waiting for me.

I'm so elated that Streetskillz managed to steal the match back that I feel like I'm walking on air as I take the stadium steps two at a time.

Rose is smiling as I sweep her into his arms. As she kisses me passionately I'm sure I hear the crowd roar in approval.

The cameras zoom in, transmitting our victorious kiss to the big screen...and the big, wide world.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/19/

I luvd it,it was a mal storie..wish bafana had a player like nathi. **Erney**

This is a very good story,it kept me captivated the whole time.well done to the autor.looking forward 2 reading more of ur stories. **Ariel**

It was a great story and interesting nd educational..i learnt dat u musnt trust pple dat easily.
Lee