

**CHAPTER 3**

**WASTE OF TIME**

‘Come on, lads, let’s be havin’ you,’ Joseph called softly, patting the boys in their bed. Jack and Thomas woke, realising almost immediately that today was Sunday and they were going running with their father.

‘Yeah, Dad, let’s go get em,’ Jack said excitedly, leaping out of bed.

‘We going running, Dad?’ Thomas asked enthusiastically.

‘As soon as you’re dressed and got your boots on,’ Joseph replied, tying the laces in his soft boots and pulling on a coarse woollen sleeveless shirt. Unlike other boxers who believed that running would weaken them, Joseph knew that it would build up stamina and endurance.

The trio stepped into the street and broke into a slow trot, allowing their bodies to warm up before increasing the pace. Jack and Thomas led the way, their boots clattering on the cobblestones. Joseph ran behind, allowing the boys the pleasure and pride of leading the way, knowing they would be lagging behind by the end of the run.

‘Good on you, Joe, I got me money on you,’ called Bert Johnson, a neighbour, standing near his front door.

‘I’ll try not to let you down,’ Joseph replied with a smile.

They ran on to the flats of Deepcar, increasing pace as they went. Their breathing was easy and relaxed. Joseph looked at the boys in front of him, believing that some day one or both of them would be a champion. As they ran the people they passed offered encouragement and wished them well. Nearly all were enthusiastic boxing fans. Here was their local hero, a champion of the underdog and someone to admire, a proud man. The boys enjoyed the running not only for the fitness but also the admiration their father received; they felt very proud as they ran with him.

At the two mile mark Joseph called, ‘Right-o, boys, time to put on the pressure.’ They increased their pace and before long their breathing became laboured and they started to feel the first pain barrier creeping in.

Joseph took over the front to ensure the boys didn’t slow down, and set the pace. Jack and Thomas were close behind, their muscles tired and aching. Joseph, aware that they were flagging, encouraged them. ‘Keep it up boys, you have to suffer some pain if you want to win.’

The worst was still in front of them as they came around the base of a hill and ran up. Jack could feel the fire in his leg muscles as he pushed hard up the hill, determined not to slow or weaken. He looked at Thomas, running alongside. He gave him a pained grin, sharing his father’s determination.

The heat in Jack’s legs increased and his chest felt as if it was being crushed, but he knew he could not give in. As they reached the top and started running down the other side, he looked up to see his home nestled in the village below. He called to Thomas, ‘Go!’

## ***NULLI SECUNDUS - SECOND TO NONE***

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Thomas knew a race to the finish was on. They ran as fast as they could past their father, down on to the flat, over the bridge and to their front door, muscles screaming with pain and lungs wanting to burst. Thomas leaned against the wall gasping for breath and Jack slid to the pavement to take the weight off his aching legs as he breathed heavily.

‘Well done, boys, you’re getting better each time,’ Joseph said as he arrived behind them.

‘How’s that?’ Jack asked with a quizzical look. Thomas looked at Jack and nodded in agreement.

‘I didn’t tell you but I increased my speed earlier today and you still kept up. Well done. I’ll make something out of you buggers yet,’ Joseph announced proudly. The boys looked at him and grinned, pleased that they had impressed their father. ‘Come on, lads, let’s go have some breakfast, you’ve earned it,’ he added as he disappeared into the doorway.