



Written by

Connor Martin

Based on True Events

Wonder Street
JTWAMM

See Naples, then die.

Johan Wolfgang Von Goethe

BLACK

CORRADO (V.O.)
What most people don't realize
about Naples is that it's not
really a city.

"Mambo Italiano" by Renato Carosone.

EXT. NAPLES - DAY (VARIOUS)

Sun bakes pastel buildings stacked high. They look flimsy.

CORRADO (V.O.)
It's a living thing. Filled with
emotion. We all run hot here.

Mt. Vesuvius' slopes into the ocean behind.

CORRADO (V.O.)
I mean they built this place under
an active volcano. The thing has
erupted more than *fifty* times.

Of note as we tour this town: there is trash everywhere.

A pedestrian traffic jam runs up the steep steps of Salita
del Petraio. Yells louder than car horns.

CORRADO (V.O.)
We like to express ourselves. Not
happy or sad. Just loud and louder.

Honks from an actual traffic jam.

Parked cars cover every inch of a cobblestone square.

Piazza del Plebiscito.

Fiat Ritmos and Alfa Spiders hint the decade: 1980s.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Think of Naples as one body. It's
eyes sit in the harbor.

Leathered men wedge chairs into rocks at Mappatella beach.

A cargo ship docks, blocking the sun. One of them launches a
rock at the boat.

It hits the deck and -- CARMINE GIULIANO (20s). Long hair and
a neat blazer. He drops a box, sprawling with its contents.

Commercially wrapped mozzarella that slips into the water.
 The men cackle as Carmine scrambles to save what he can.
 He stands and lifts his shirt, revealing a Glock.
 That shuts them up.

CORRADO (V.O.)
 And its asshole, because everybody
 has one, is in the catacombs.

The San Gennaro Catacombs. Deep. Dark. Damp.

Two teenagers share a joint in the shadows. They retreat as a German tour group marches by.

CORRADO (V.O.)
 But its beating heart? That belongs
 at the stadium.

EXT. STADIO SAN PAOLO - DAY

NAPLES. 1983.

An empty parking lot surrounds the stadium like a moat.
 Concrete bolts upward to form the largest building in Naples.
 A busted sign hangs over the entrance. 'HOME OF SSC NAPOLI'.
 Wind blows loose trash sideways. The sign swings back and forth -- unhinging and CLANGING to the ground.

EXT. VIA CRISPI - DAY

The cleanest street in the city.
 Tall buildings block daylight. Some Bauhaus. Some Baroque.
 A cleaning lady bursts from a battered Fiat Panda and scampers towards one of the more modern builds.

EXT. CORRADO'S GARDEN - DAY

Manicured hedges protected by a barbed wire fence. It's clean. Safe from the chaos. That's what money buys you.
 CORRADO FERLAINO (50s) hunches over a coffee table. Long grey hair hiding a widow's peak.

His getup is one big contradiction. Slacks and tie under a bathrobe. Like a meeting could break out at any moment.

Corrado leafs through a newspaper. 'IL MATTINO'.

His eyes pop as he studies -- a cartoon.

Football players in shredded jerseys panhandle to a very fat Corrado, who squats on a pile of cash.

His cartoon outfit is identical to the one he's currently in.

The headline: 'YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU, DICKHEAD

His face shakes -- he balls the paper and stuffs it into an empty cappuccino cup. Leftover coffee flecks across his robe.

Corrado scrubs, looking up TO THE CAMERA.

CORRADO

I'm not a sensitive man. But it's
hard to not take this shit
personally.

He unfurls the paper again, brandishing it to us.

CORRADO

That doesn't look like me, does it?

BIANCA (30s), Corrado's personal assistant, interrupts our conversation from a window.

She's composed. Plucked eyebrows and slick hair.

BIANCA

Corrado, the maid is here. Can she
clean your office?

CORRADO

I'm in the middle of something.

BIANCA

Is that a no?

CORRADO

She can clean whatever she wants.

BIANCA

OK.

CORRADO

Wait. Wait. Come back.

He holds up the soggy cartoon page.

CORRADO
Does this look like me?

BIANCA
No. Your tie is blue not black.

She dips back in. Corrado takes a second look at the cartoon.

CORRADO
(to us)
When you have enemies in this town,
they always let you know.

BUSHES RUSTLING -- Corrado keys to the edge of the garden.

A head pokes from behind the barbed wire. A TEEN WITH A
UNIBROW stares back at us. Corrado cocks his head.

The Teen tosses over -- a package wrapped in black tape.

It falls short of Corrado into a thicket of blue hydrangeas.

UNIBROW TEEN
Shit!

He drops from the fence, sprinting off.

CORRADO
Hey! What the --

-- BANG -- THE PACKAGE EXPLODES -- Corrado flies back.

Dust clouds the garden. A haze the sun can barely break.

Car alarms BLARE up and down the street as Corrado COUGHS.

He pulls himself up the wall. Blood trickles head to chin.

His neck can barely move, but he turns to look at us again.

CORRADO
For the most part I love it here.

He picks up the remnants of the bomb. The black tape.

CORRADO
But people in this city can blow
things out of proportion.

Scribbled on the package: 'SELL THE TEAM'.

Corrado slumps back to the ground.

CORRADO

Before I tell this story I want to be clear about something: lots of movies say things like "based on true events". Some crap that protects them from lawsuits.

(brandishing the package)

This actually happened. Some kid with a unibrow actually bombed my garden. Ruined my hydrangeas. They germinated from the oldest plant in Italy. So... Anyway...

Corrado swats his own digression away --

EXT. STADIO SAN PAOLO - DAY

Still bleeding, Corrado leans against the stadium entrance.

CORRADO

I bought this club for pennies. Thought it was a steal. A whole football team with my name on it.

He strains and grabs the fallen sign.

CORRADO

A whole, bloated, bankrupt, shell of a team with my name on it.

Corrado barely manages to reattach the sign.

CORRADO

But I wanted this since I was a kid. It's all we care about here.

He points to Vesuvius -- ERUPTING across the Naples skyline.

CORRADO

Vesuvius could burn us to the ground, but our only concern is if Napoli wins on Sunday.

Back to reality. A moped zooms by.

The DRIVER throws a tomato -- smacking Corrado's soiled robe.

MOPED DRIVER

Sell the team, asshole!

CORRADO

We're not winning much right now.

He wipes tomato meat from his shoulder.

CORRADO

I didn't have the money to compete
with northern clubs for talent.
Football is pure capitalism and we
weren't exactly flush with cash.
(sniffing his hand)
Why is it always tomatoes?

Corrado hurls the leftover tomato --

INT. PIZZERIA - DAY

-- pizza sauce, smattering across dough.

A dark, no-frills joint with stone walls.

The pizzaiola, TIZIA (50s), older, composes the pie behind a
smudged glass barrier. Precision. Artistry. A little chaos.

Corrado steps in to block our view.

CORRADO

You see American sports are really
more of an oligarchy.

Tizia nudges past carrying two pizzas to a table of four.

One diner is bigger than the rest. PIPPO (40s).

CORRADO

NFL or NBA owners gate-keep their
sport, deciding how many franchises
exist and who owns them. Then they
limit player salaries allowing for
bigger margins and higher profits.

Pippo cuts a pizza, placing two slices on each plate.

CORRADO

But football is a free market.

A diner reaches for the second pizza. Pippo grips his wrist.

CORRADO

The owner lives and dies by his win
total. More wins. More money to
spend. More of the pie.

Pippo grabs the second pie and folds into one giant slice. He
scarfs the whole thing down. All of it.

Don't worry. We'll come to love this greedy SOB.

CORRADO

And if you lose? No pie for you.

The other diners look back at their meager meals. Corrado snags one of the slices, taking a bite of his own.

CORRADO

It's eat or be eaten with the best teams affording the best players.

He grabs a remote and turns on a small TV in the corner.

Napoli in baby blue keep pace with Fiorentina in purple.

A 1-1 tie with one minute left.

The entire restaurant turns to the screen as -- Fiorentina score again. Pippo keels over onto the floor.

CORRADO

People even blamed me for their heart-attacks.

Corrado makes a stealthy escape outside.

EXT. VIA TOLEDO - DAY

The busiest street in Naples.

People pack like sardines wriggling in a can. Corrado shoves his way back to us.

CORRADO

We had big problems. Like the trash. Somehow my fault too.

He kicks a beer can onto a pile of garbage two stories high.

CORRADO

We were sensitive to how the rest of Italy viewed us. This created tension. Say the wrong thing in the wrong place, you could disappear.

A BUSINESSWOMAN plants her foot in a rotted tomato, slipping.

BUSINESSWOMAN

I'm so sick of this fucking city!
Fuck this place! Fuck Naples!

GASPS -- the entire street freezes -- turning back.

BUSINESSSWOMAN

I'm sorry. I didn't mean it.

The crowd closes in and swallows her whole.

BUSINESSSWOMAN

No! Help! Please!

CORRADO

We had one of the highest
kidnapping rates in all of Europe.

She SCREAMS -- the crowd disperses, leaving a lone high-heel.

An ambulance with a broken SIREN parks in front of the
pizzeria. Corrado ushers them inside.

INT. PIZZERIA - CONTINUOUS

First-responders strain to haul Pippo onto a gurney.

CORRADO

The city needed a hero.

Corrado slinks to the kitchen where Tizia churns out pizzas,
apathetic to the medical emergency.

CORRADO

They needed a star. Someone to put
next to Jesus on their wall.

He slaps the wall where a crude painting of Jesus sits.

A palm SMACKS the back of his head. Tizia. Cigarette in one
hand and dough twirling in the other.

TIZIA

Next to Jesus? Are you stupid?

CORRADO

(to us)

It was my job to find that star. If
I didn't, then I'd get blown to
pieces in my own fucking garden.

Medics wheel Pippo past Corrado and out the door.

CORRADO

So that's exactly what I did.

BLACK

PART I: FINDING JESUS

BIANCA (PRE-LAP)
Corrado? Look at me. Are you OK?

COUGHING. CAR ALARMS. Back to the garden.

EXT. CORRADO'S GARDEN - DAY

Dust settles on the explosion.

Bianca lifts Corrado up and scans his eyes.

CORRADO
Look what he did to the hydrangeas.

She pushes his hair aside, revealing a nasty gash.

BIANCA
How is your head?

CORRADO
(shoving her hand away)
It's fine. On nice and tight. Look.

He hands Bianca the bomb's remains.

CORRADO
Can you believe that shit?

BIANCA
Yes. Unfortunately.

Concrete CRUMBLES -- collapsing the entire retaining wall and exposing his garden to the road.

CORRADO
Fuck.

EXT. VIA CRISPI - DAY

Medics usher Corrado and an IV to an ambulance. Bianca follows with the gurney. Corrado turns back.

CORRADO
I'm not going to the hospital.

BIANCA
He's going.

CORRADO

I have work to do. The transfer
deadline is next week.

BIANCA

You need to stay in bed.

Corrado and Bianca stare each other off. The medic follows
their faces, both too threatening to disobey.

CORRADO

Fine. I'll stay in bed.

(then)

I'll do exactly that. I will stay
in a bed.

BIANCA

Why are you saying it like that?

INT. NAPOLI WAR ROOM - NIGHT

Drop-ceiling tiles sag over a semi-circle of desks.

Light from a projector flickers across faces.

On one side is PINO (20s), dark hair, tight suit, and ANTONIO
JULIANO (40s), grizzled. Scruffy. Napoli's manager.

Bianca pouts opposite them next to Corrado. He's propped up
by pillows on the gurney. An IV stand sits between them.

Technically staying in bed.

Pino slides a finger down the screen. Budget numbers.

PINO

Lete isn't sponsoring us next year
so cash flow will be tight.

CORRADO

What? Why not?

PINO

We're not right for the brand.

CORRADO

It's water. Naples drinks water.

PINO

Expensive water.

CORRADO

They can charge a million lira a bottle for all I care.

He puts glasses on, losing the IV. Bianca slides it back in.

CORRADO

How are we losing money? The stadium is full every week.

ANTONIO

None of those idiots buy tickets.

BIANCA

This isn't good for your blood pressure. It'll get too high.

CORRADO

I like it high. Keeps me energetic.

Bianca rolls her eyes.

BIANCA

We could add security to ticketing.

PINO

Then they'll just stay home.

BIANCA

Christ, it was just an idea.

PINO

(to Corrado)

Why is your assistant giving us advice on how to run the team?

BIANCA

Because you're doing a shit job.

CORRADO

Enough!

Corrado climbs off the gurney and walks to the screen. Bianca follows with the IV cord.

CORRADO

I want to invest more in players.

Surprise hits everyone's faces. Corrado is a *cheap* bastard.

ANTONIO

You what?

CORRADO

Did I speak Chinese? I want a star.

PINO

Jesus. If I knew bombing your house
is what it would take I would've
done it myself.

Pino laughs. Nobody else does.

CORRADO

Who can we afford?

ANTONIO

Right now? Nobody.

PINO

We could look at last year's list.

Pino fishes through a stack of slides, slotting them. He
clicks to a baby-faced Nicola Berti in a yellow jersey.

ANTONIO

Nicola Berti. Midfielder at Parma.

BIANCA

He looks he still breast-feeds.

ANTONIO

He'll play for Italy next year.

CORRADO

I don't have a year.

Another player. Orange hair. Orange jersey. Paul Sturrock.

ANTONIO

Sturrock. Plays for Dundee.

CORRADO

He looks like my gardener.

PINO

He captains for Scotland.

CORRADO

Scotland? Why didn't you say so?

PINO

You're being sarcastic.

CORRADO

Nobody buys tickets to see a
gardener from Scotland.

Corrado sits back down with Bianca's help.

CORRADO
How about Rummenigge?

PINO
He's with Bayern. In Munich.

CORRADO
I know where Bayern is.

PINO
He won't come here.

Why? CORRADO

PINO	ANTONIO
Munich has more amenities.	Because Naples is a shithole.

Antonio and Pino share a look.

ANTONIO
My friend at Barcelona says they're
looking to sell Maradona.

PINO
Antonio, not again. Cut the shit.

CORRADO
Is he any good?

[illegible]

Another look.

ANTONIO
He's a little raw, mentally.

BIANCA
What does that mean?

PINO
He's a thug. A slum kid.

ANTONIO
Remind me what part of Naples
you're from?

Antonio WHISTLES -- two teenage KIT BOYS carry out a monitor.

PINO
What the hell is this?

Antonio grabs the remote.

KIT BOY
Are we buying someone?

ANTONIO
Don't you have boots to clean?

The Kit Boys skulk out of the room.

Antonio pops a tape into the monitor. Scratchy video of a Barcelona game. DIEGO MARADONA (24), a mushroom of bushy black hair and a foot smaller than anyone else on the pitch.

A pass swings to him. He jumps -- corralling the ball.

It stays glued to his feet as he runs downfield.

CORRADO
Madonna, look at him.

PINO
The other team is third division.

Diego shoots from outside the box -- clipping the cross bar.

Bianca clasps her hands. It's hard not to root for him. The video zooms to Diego, pounding the turf with his fists.

CORRADO
A bit dramatic.

Antonio shuts off the TV.

CORRADO
You know what I'm going to ask.

ANTONIO
Ten million over three years.

CORRADO
Fuck you.
(then)
Sorry, I just -- no. Let's go with
the other guy.

PINO
Sturrock?

CORRADO
No. Not the fucking gardener. The
Parma player. But he can't ride the
bench. I need him to start.

Antonio nods.

CORRADO
So? Do we like it?

Sure. PINO ANTONIO
He's fine.

CORRADO

I don't know what the hell I pay
you two for. Sarchiaponi.
(to Bianca)
Get this tube out. I feel a fetus.

SARCHIAPONE: AN IDIOT WHO THINKS HE IS SMART.

EXT. STADIO SAN PAOLO - NIGHT

Bianca carries the IV behind Corrado as he limps to a limo.

BIANCA
We don't have money to sign Berti.

I know.

BIANCA
So what's the plan?

CORRADO
You let me worry about that.

She opens the door, helping Corrado in. The limo drives off.

EXT. CICCOTTO TERRACE - DAY

A staple of Naples' beachfront. Aperol-colored umbrellas.

Corrado watches kids play football by the water.

A smaller boy dips the ball through a bigger kid's feet. His teammates go wild, CHEERING him on.

The bigger boy pounds the sand with both fists.

Corrado lights a cigarette and turns to us.

CORRADO

The club was broke. We needed someone with deep pockets. I knew a guy. And a little bird told me he was a shoe-in to become the mayor.

Commotion at the entrance draws Corrado's eyes.

CORRADO

Rome wanted someone they could
influence. This guy was a natural
choice. Because he was an idiot.

VINCENZO SCOTTI (50s) rounds the corner. Poofy hair and
square-frame glasses. A dandy in a bright pink suit.

CORRADO (V.O.)

Vincenzo Scotti. Scum of the earth
and one of my oldest friends.

Scotti grips Corrado's shoulders tight then sits opposite.

SCOTTI

Fuck me you look old.

CORRADO

Your house must not have mirrors.

Scotti lights a cigarette, blowing smoke in Corrado's face.

SCOTTI

You like the hair?

CORRADO

It's nice. Where'd you get it?

SCOTTI

An Albanian woman. Can you believe
that? Some crazy bitch is walking
around Palermo with a shaved head.
All for a thousand lira.

He won't stop talking. Corrado tunes him out. Back to us.

CORRADO

Remember this piece of shit's face.

Scotti chatters through bleached veneers and cigarette smoke.

CORRADO

The shit-eating grin. The fake tan.
That hair. He's one of two people
who will ruin everything for me.

WAITRESS (O.S.)

Anything to drink, Signor Scotti?

Scotti finally shuts up, gawking at a younger WAITRESS.

SCOTTI
An expensive Prosecco. On his tab.

CORRADO
Just Aperol, please.
(then)
Miss, do you watch Serie A much?

WAITRESS
Sure. My boyfriend loves Napoli.

CORRADO
What do you think of Nicola Berti?

WAITRESS
The Parma player? He's fine.

She walks to the bar. Scotti's head bobs with her hips.

SCOTTI
So... Berti?

CORRADO
The transfer deadline is coming up.

SCOTTI
You can afford him?

Corrado shakes his head. Scotti flicks his smoke onto the beach and lights a fresh one.

SCOTTI
Corrado, you're going to lose the fans if you're not careful. Next time they could bomb your car.

Corrado opens his jacket to a bloody bandage on his chest.

CORRADO
You think I don't know that? We're broke. No bank will give us a chance. I need help. Someone who can move mountains in this city.
(to us)
Watch this.

Scotti's lips curl into a grin. He leans towards Corrado.

SCOTTI
Come closer.

Corrado scoots his seat forward.

SCOTTI
You can't tell anyone what I'm
about to tell you, understand?

CORRADO
My lips are sealed.

Scotti puffs his cigarette again.

SCOTTI
They're making me Mayor.

Corrado gasps. Razzie-worthy acting, but Scotti buys it.

CORRADO
No!

SCOTTI
Be discreet. Jesus.

CORRADO
I had no idea. We should celebrate.

SCOTTI
Celebrate what? The city is buried
in a pile of dog shit.

The Waitress drops the drinks off.

SCOTTI
Maybe I can get you the money? The
Banco di Napoli could help.

CORRADO
They'd let you do that?

SCOTTI
Let me? This city needs the team to
succeed. Maybe then they'll stop
kidnapping each other.

Corrado sips his Aperol, mulling.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Banco di Napoli. The Bank of
Naples. As in taxpayer dollars.
Using them to buy a football player
was a massive misappropriation of
funds. And they knew it.

LOAN OFFICER (PRE-LAP)
Absolutely not.

INT. BANCO DI NAPOLI OFFICE - DAY

Brick walls that haven't been washed in decades.

A LOAN OFFICER with thick glasses sits across from Scotti and Corrado. Her arms are folded tight. A non-verbal fuck you.

LOAN OFFICER

We're a municipal function. Not a checkbook for rich people.

SCOTTI

Napoli is an institution. It's an investment in this town.

LOAN OFFICER

This bank loans to profitable endeavors that improve our city.

CORRADO

You're saying Napoli winning won't help the city?

LOAN OFFICER

I'm saying Napoli isn't profitable.

Scotti simmers. Rejection brings out his worst.

SCOTTI

You like your job?

CORRADO

Vincenzo, come on.

LOAN OFFICER

Yes and you can't fire me. Even if these idiots make you mayor.

SCOTTI

But I do control city payroll. It would be a shame if our banking department had to make some cuts.

The Loan Officer frowns.

SCOTTI

Want to take another look?

LOAN OFFICER

Hand it over.

Vincenzo slides a manila folder across the desk.

CORRADO (V.O.)

The bank was pissed. And rightly so. Taxpayers weren't just funding a player's salary. Since we were broke, Scotti listed city assets as collateral. Think about what that means for a second.

INSERT - MASACCIO'S CRUCIFIXION

MASACCIO'S CRUCIFIXION: TEN MILLION LIRA

Famed 15th century artwork. Gold framing.

INSERT - AGENZIA DELLA DOGANA

NAPLES CUSTOMS OFFICE: SIX MILLION LIRA

A non-descript yellow stucco building.

INSET - FERRY BOAT PASSING THE AMALFI COAST

CITY OF NAPLES FERRY (CAPRI LINE): FOUR MILLION LIRA

An old ferry with chipping blue paint. It bobs towards Capri.

CORRADO (V.O.)

They tried to screw me by releasing the funds the day of the transfer deadline. I was too excited to be angry. We were getting a star.

EXT. STADIO SAN PAOLO - DUSK

SERIE A TRANSFER DEADLINE. 1983.

Strawberry pink sunset over the empty lot.

A GATE GUARD sits on a lawn chair. He nurses a giant cone of pistachio gelato and reads another 'IL MATTINO' cartoon.

Corrado sitting on a deflated football, guzzling wine.

The Guard grins -- SCREECHING TIRES jolt him. The gelato pops right onto the paper.

Corrado's black Mercedes rockets towards the gate.

GELATO GUARD

Signor Ferlaino! Wait!

No time. Corrado's car SHATTERS through the barrier.

The Guard gives chase.

Corrado jumps out, hurling the keys at the Guard.

GELATO GUARD

Are you alright?

CORRADO

It's the transfer deadline. Of course I'm not alright.

(at the busted barrier)

Do me a favor and lift the gate next time.

Corrado storms towards the office annex.

The Mercedes starts rolling, still in gear.

INT. NAPOLI OFFICE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Corrado jogs. He talks to us between strides.

CORRADO

People from Parma have three specialties: parmesan, prosciutto, and fucking you at the last minute.

A door at the end opens. Bianca interrupting again.

She's less composed than usual.

BIANCA

We're handling it.

CORRADO

Clearly not.

(to us)

As soon as we got the money, Parma asked for more. And I had to deliver paperwork to Milan *tonight* to get the deal done.

Corrado turns back -- balking at CARLO SGRANCHI (70s). Thick. Mustached. Gordon Gekko suspenders.

CORRADO

What the fuck is he doing here?

BIANCA

Parma asked to speak to our lawyer.

CORRADO

Does Parma sign your paychecks?

SGRANCHI

It's my job to lead all contract negotiations. I'm legal director.

CORRADO

Don't remind me.

SGRANCHI

Coglione.

Corrado shoves past them both. Bianca shuts the door.

COGLIONE: BALLSACK

INT. SSC NAPOLI WAR ROOM - NIGHT

Sgranchi jots numbers onto a notepad with a phone to his ear.

Corrado paces in front of Bianca, Antonio and Pino.

SGRANCHI

They want more money.

ANTONIO

And I want a house on Lake Como.

CORRADO

Offer them another contract year.

Sgranchi nearly drops the phone. The whole room perks up.

BIANCA

We can't afford four years.

CORRADO

We can.

PINO

How?

CORRADO

(avoiding eye contact)

I got a loan from Banco di Napoli.

Carefully muted reactions -- except for Bianca. Corrado can feel her eyes drilling into him.

CORRADO

What? They gave me a loan.

BIANCA
With taxpayer money.

ANTONIO
Jesus, Corrado.

Sgranchi hangs up the phone.

CORRADO
What the fuck did you do that for?

Sgranchi dabs his brow with a handkerchief.

SGRANCHI
He's staying at Parma. His manager
leveraged our offer into a raise.
(then)
He was never leaving.

Pregnant silence.

Corrado taps his hand on his side. A tick.

ANTONIO
We can sign someone next year --

Muffled GIGGLES interrupt. From behind a door.

Corrado sees red.

He storms to the door, yanking it open.

INT. KIT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The two Kit Boys perch on shelves next to cones and balls.

A match plays on the monitor. They clock Corrado in the doorway -- shutting up.

CORRADO
Are we funny to you?

ANTONIO (O.S.)
Corrado, leave them alone.

Corrado cranes his neck to the TV.

The end of a game. Fans corralled towards a stadium exit by attendants in neon.

KIT BOY
It's just the Copa Del Rey. Sorry,
Signor Ferlaino. We'll turn it off.

The score scrolls : 'ATHLETIC BILBAO 1-0 BARCELONA'.

CORRADO
So? What's so funny?

KIT BOY
Not the game. The fight.

Replay shows a Bilbao player, SOLA, spitting at Barcelona's team as they walk off -- a blur of black curls bursts out.

Barcelona's Diego Maradona.

The guy looks rabid.

He charges forward -- kicking Sola in the chest.

The Kit Boys can't help but grin. Pino and Bianca crane over Corrado's shoulder.

He follows with a knee to the face. Blood spatters the grass.

BIANCA
He should play rugby.

Now Diego faces off the entire Bilbao side.

He's barely 5'5" but takes them on one-by-one. And wins.

CORRADO
That's Maradona?

PINO
I told you. He's a thug. It's a shame to see that kind of talent go to waste.

KIT BOY
I think he's a badass.

Teammates finally pry Maradona off.

He turns to the crowd, arms up like he's won a boxing match.

Barcelona fans love it. They cheer so loud the TV CRACKLES.

CORRADO
You like him?

KIT BOY
Yeah, he doesn't take shit from --

Corrado shuts the door in their faces.

INT. NAPOLI WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He turns back to the others.

CORRADO
Think we could sign him?

PINO
You're joking.

CORRADO
He's available, right?

Antonio nods, trying to hide a smile.

BIANCA
Corrado, be serious. He's smaller
than me.

CORRADO
I could sell some of my shares.

Everyone thinks he's lost his mind. Except for Antonio.

CORRADO
OK. Just say it's a bad idea.

BIANCA
It's a bad idea.

Corrado snatches the phone from Sgranchi.

CORRADO
(into the phone)
Camp Nou, please. The Nuñez office.

SGRANCHI
What are you doing?

BIANCA
Having a nervous breakdown
apparently.

PINO
Corrado, the window closes tonight.

He hangs up the phone. Fingers tap his side again.

CORRADO
They didn't pick up.

The room decompresses.

BIANCA
It's for the best.

ANTONIO
Yeah. Now we can be strategic.

PINO
There's actually a Dutch center
back I've been scouting...

The conversation fogs as Corrado stares into the Kit Room
through a door sliver. TV light flickers across the boys'
faces. They're laughing. Gasping. Feeling.

They're fans. Real fans. And they love Diego.

CORRADO
For once I need everyone to listen
to me and do your fucking jobs.

Corrado turns to Sgranchi.

CORRADO
Draw up a contract for Maradona.

PINO
What?

CORRADO
You call Capodichino. Get two jets.
Bianca will help you.

BIANCA
Excuse me?

CORRADO
Come on! Chop! Chop!

Pino hustles. Bianca follows him.

Sgranchi grabs a typewriter, mashing the keyboard.

Corrado pulls Antonio aside. A private moment.

CORRADO
You really think he's a star?

ANTONIO
Argentina calls him El Pibe De Oro.

CORRADO
Golden Boy?

ANTONIO

You get him here, and I'll make him bigger than Vesuvius.

PINO

Corrado, where are the jets going?

CORRADO

I'm taking these freeloaders to Barcelona. Bianca goes to Milan.

BIANCA

Without a contract?

He grabs an envelope from Sgranchi's stack of papers and scribbles on it with a pen: 'NAPOLI TRANSFER - 1984'.

CORRADO

This envelope contains a signed contract between Napoli and Maradona. Drop it off with the league offices. Understand?

BIANCA

But there is no contract --

CORRADO

Understand?

Bianca nods slow. Understanding.

SGRANCHI

I hope you know what you're doing.

CORRADO

God, you're a buzzkill.

EXT. CAPODICHINO TARMAC - DUSK

A limo glides over the tarmac and parks by two Gulfstreams.

Bianca, Sgranchi, Corrado and Antonio step out. Antonio and Sgranchi jog to one jet, Bianca walks to the other.

CORRADO

Have a drink. It'll go by quicker.

He follows Antonio and Sgranchi.

BIANCA

My mother works three jobs to afford her apartment, Corrado.

Corrado stops.

CORRADO

OK? So?

BIANCA

This better be fucking worth it.

She climbs the jet stairs before he can reply.

INT. PRIVATE JET - NIGHT

A Stewardess pours wine for Corrado and Sgranchi. Antonio snores at the end of the cabin.

SGRANCHI

So... Where did you get the money?

Beat.

CORRADO

Scotti is an old friend.

SGRANCHI

Rome is helping. Interesting.

CORRADO

A happy city is easier to manage.

SGRANCHI

That's what they think, huh?

Sgranchi looks out the window -- to the Barcelona skyline.

EXT. CAMP NOU - NIGHT

CAMP NOU, BARCELONA. SEVEN HOURS TO THE TRANSFER DEADLINE.

A city in its own right.

Buildings so new the paint is still drying. Barcelona's famous blue and red logo covers every last one of them.

The structures ladder up like waves to an imposing arena.

Corrado, Antonio and Sgranchi exit a cab.

ANTONIO

Now *this* is a stadium.

CORRADO

What does that mean?

Antonio starts for the gate and pulls. It's locked.

ANTONIO
Do they know we're coming?

CORRADO
Of course. I called.

BARCELONA CONCIERGE (O.S.)
Mr. Ferlaine?

A golf cart driven by a pretty CONCIERGE pulls up.

CORRADO
Took you long enough.

BARCELONA CONCIERGE
The President likes to give
visitors time to take in the view.

Antonio and Sgranchi load onto the back. Corrado rides
shotgun. They lurch down an alley.

Corrado spots a training pitch.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Barcelona knew we were desperate,
which led to some grade-A fuckery.

He peers closer. Players training. But no Diego.

INT. BARCELONA OFFICES - NIGHT

Glazed walnut walls and a bay window looking out on stadium.

The trio sits across a table from four empty chairs. Corrado
checks his watch then looks at us.

CORRADO
Two hours. That's how long these
assholes made us wait.

A door opens. Corrado rises. Just the Concierge.

BARCELONA CONCIERGE
Anything to drink gentlemen?

CORRADO
Where the fuck are they?

EXT. LEGA CALCIO OFFICES - NIGHT

SERIE A HQ, MILAN. SIX HOURS TO THE TRANSFER DEADLINE.

Wind whips Bianca's face as she stares daggers at an OLD ATTENDANT inside a booth. He scans the transfer envelope.

BIANCA
How does anyone live here? It's
fucking freezing?

OLD ATTENDANT
Where is this headed?

BIANCA
You can't read?

OLD ATTENDANT
The deadline is in six hours.

BIANCA
Do I need to call the person who
signs your paycheck?

The Old Attendant rolls his eyes, grabbing a set of keys.

INT. LEGA CALCIO OFFICES - NIGHT

Green emergency exit lights guide Bianca past cubicles to a glassed-in corner office. A metal dropbox sits outside it.

She pulls out the envelope and drops it in the box.

BIANCA
I better get a fucking raise.

INT. BARCELONA OFFICES - NIGHT

FIVE HOURS TO THE TRANSFER DEADLINE.

Corrado rises.

ANTONIO
Where are you going?

The door opens for JOSEP NUÑEZ (50s). Tailored Brioni suit and a hairline that ends behind his ears.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Josep Nuñez. Barcelona's President.
Notoriously cheap. Very successful.
(MORE)

CORRADO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Twice his team quit over wages and
 twice he hired new players. Still
 won the whole damn thing.

Corrado extends a hand.

CORRADO
 Josep, how are you?

Nuñez cocks his head, looking down at it.

NUÑEZ
 Have we met before?

CORRADO (V.O.)
 OK, since he's being a prick I'll
 also tell you about the time he was
 sentenced to six years in prison
 for bribing Spanish tax officials.
 So not all roses. Dick.

NUÑEZ
 I'd like to introduce Diego's
 manager. Jorge Cyterszpiller.

JORGE CYTERSZPILER (20s) steps in behind. Round face framed
 with greased-up curls. He keeps his distance.

NUÑEZ
 He'll be negotiating for Diego.

CORRADO (V.O.)
 Professional athletes come with
 baggage. Friends or family claiming
 to have their best interest at
 heart. This little fuck-weasel was
 pretty smart though. He kept Diego
 wealthy with a tax-free corporation
 in Liechtenstein. Maradona
 Productions. They made two
 documentaries that never aired.

Jorge sits at the table. He looks past to the bay window.

NUÑEZ
 He's a quiet one.

CORRADO (V.O.)
 Jorge grew up richer than Diego.
 Bought him sodas when Diego
 couldn't afford it as a kid. That
 was enough to get a seat at the
 table of the biggest transfer in
 the history of sport.

NUÑEZ
OK. Let's dance.

SGRANCHI
Where is the player? Maradona?

Nuñez looks to Jorge, who shakes his head.

NUÑEZ
He won't be joining us.

CORRADO (V.O.)
His beady eyes only saw one thing.

We flip to Jorge's POV -- the trio transforms into three piles of cash. A couple bills flutter off the top.

NUÑEZ
The board accepts your offer.

CORRADO
(snapping out of it)
I'm sorry?

NUÑEZ
Your offer to acquire Diego Armando Maradona. We accept.

SGRANCHI
That's it?

NUÑEZ
Leadership is fully aligned. But I don't speak for the player.

CORRADO (V.O.)
There it is.

Jorge leans into Nuñez and whispers in Spanish.

JORGE
Tell him we want five years.

NUNEZ
Tell him yourself you inbred fuck.

Jorge turns to Corrado and flashes five fat fingers.

JORGE
Five years. You understand?

SGRANCHI
I think he wants five years.

CORRADO

No shit.

ANTONIO

We haven't even seen him play.

CORRADO (V.O.)

The guy was already a seasoned pro at taking other people's money. He pulled Diego out of his original Barcelona deal three times. I knew all this, and he still expected me to overpay? Fuck. That.

Corrado puts up three fingers and smiles.

JORGE

Three?

CORRADO

Yes. Tres.

CORRADO (V.O.)

You'll take it and like it. Fucker.

Jorge turns back to Nuñez.

JORGE

Five. Or we're staying.

NUNEZ

I want that cancer off my team.

SGRANCHI

What's he saying?

Nuñez forces a smile.

NUÑEZ

Just ironing out the details.

JORGE

(to Corrado)

Ferrari. You give us one?

CORRADO

Ferrari? He wants a Ferrari?

JORGE

A sports car. And a nice Villa.

NUÑEZ

Diego enjoys certain amenities here at Barcelona.

(MORE)

NUÑEZ (CONT'D)

I've warned him that those things
aren't standard in poorer markets.

ANTONIO

What did you just say?

Corrado rests a hand on Antonio's shoulder.

NUÑEZ

Smaller markets. Sorry.

CORRADO

Fine. Ferrari and a Villa, but for
four years. OK?

A painfully long beat. Jorge holds Corrado's stare.

JORGE

OK. Very good. Thank you.

He grabs Corrado's hand before it's offered and shakes it.

CORRADO (V.O.)

This fucker knew Italian all along.

Nuñez is beaming. He shakes hands with Antonio and Sgranchi
while Corrado and Jorge tighten their grip on each other.

CORRADO (V.O.)

We'd won, right? So why didn't it
feel that way?

Something about Jorge's smile really pisses Corrado off.

EXT. CAMP NOU - NIGHT

The golf cart carries the group past the training grounds
again. Corrado finally spots his prize.

Diego Maradona. Small. Unimpressive. With a big head of hair.

He volleys a ball against the wall -- pausing to watch the
cart pass by. The men hold eye contact with each other.

CORRADO

We need to stop and call Bianca.

EXT. HOTEL CASA FUSTER - NIGHT

THREE HOURS TO THE TRANSFER DEADLINE.

Their cab parks in front of Casa Fuster. An old money hotel with columns that take over the sidewalk.

BIANCA (PRE-LAP) (PHONE)
You sound stressed.

The trio walks inside.

INT. CASA FUSTER LOBBY - NIGHT

Rounded walls. Velvet couches.

Corrado hunches over a dial phone in the corner.

CORRADO
Did you drop off the paperwork?

BIANCA (PHONE)
Yes. I still don't understand how --

CORRADO
I have a plan.

BIANCA (PHONE)
You keep saying that.

CORRADO
Because I do.

Beat.

BIANCA (PHONE)
Get some rest on the plane.

He hangs up and walks to the bar.

INT. CASA FUSTER BAR - CONTINUOUS

Sgranchi and Antonio slump into low-slung couches. Corrado sits in an armchair, too tense to let his back touch it.

A BARTENDER takes their orders.

ANTONIO
I'll have a Heineken.

SGRANCHI
Barolo, please.

BARTENDER
We only have Spanish wines. Rioja?

SGRANCHI

Fine.

CORRADO

Me as well.

BARTENDER

Are you gentlemen Italian?

CORRADO

Yes. From Naples.

The Bartender snorts. Corrado frowns.

BARTENDER

Hope you aren't fans of the
football team.

SGRANCHI

What makes you say that?

BARTENDER

I saw on the news that they're
taking Maradona off our hands.

He shakes his head and chuckles.

BARTENDER

What a shit show. Out of shape.
Loves drugs. Barely plays. That
owner is going to lose his mind.

Corrado turns to us.

CORRADO

This happened too, by the way.
(to the bartender)
Could I change my order to a
whiskey please? Double.

SGRANCHI

Me too.

ANTONIO

Me as well.

BARTENDER

Whiskey. Of course.

The Bartender walks off.

The group avoids eye contact.

CORRADO (V.O.)

I never ordered whiskey again.

INT. PRIVATE JET - DAWN

Corrado watches sun crest over the Milanese skyline as Antonio and Sgranchi sleep in their seats.

CORRADO

(to us)

There was no time to second guess it. Even with the contract done the transfer window had closed. To seal the deal I needed a little magic.

EXT. MILAN - DAY

Corrado strolls past mid-century buildings and shopkeepers opening storefronts. He lights a cigarette.

CORRADO

So here I am. The biggest contract in history but a day too late.

He stops at an open-air café. An espresso slides across the bar and into his hands.

CORRADO

When the press figured out my plan they gave it a nickname.

Corrado takes another drag of his cigarette.

CORRADO

Neapolitan Dementia.

NEAPOLITAN DEMENTIA: THE ART OF FORGETTING.

He shoots his coffee and sprints around the corner.

EXT. VIA ROSSELLINI - DAY

Corrado stops at the Serie A building and collapses against the booth. Like he's exhausted. A younger Attendant.

YOUNG ATTENDANT

Sir? Are you alright?

Corrado clambers to eye-level.

CORRADO

I feel like I ran from Naples. My assistant, she's so clumsy. She --

YOUNG ATTENDANT
Would you like some water?

CORRADO
Please.

The Attendant rushes to the back of the booth.

Corrado smirks, dropping his face when he returns.

CORRADO
(between sips)
I... Need to... Access the offices.

YOUNG ATTENDANT
I'm sorry, sir. It's the weekend.

CORRADO
Of course, I understand. It's just
that my assistant forgot to place
the transfer paperwork in the
envelope she delivered.

Corrado brandishes the Maradona transfer documents.

YOUNG ATTENDANT
I see. That is a problem.

CORRADO
A 13 million euro problem.

YOUNG ATTENDANT
I'm sorry. I just can't --

Corrado snaps his fingers. A fake epiphany.

CORRADO
How about we go up together? You
can check the box for the envelope.

The Attendant debates.

INT. LEGA CALCIO OFFICES - DAY

Corrado follows the Attendant to the transfer box.

YOUNG ATTENDANT
It's in here?

CORRADO
Better be.

Fumbling through keys, the Attendant unlocks the box and sifts through envelopes. There's Bianca's.

The Attendant plucks it out. Corrado clasps his hands.

CORRADO

Thank God. I thought I was going to have to fire her.

YOUNG ATTENDANT

Tell her she can thank me.

Corrado chuckles, stuffing Maradona's contract into the envelope and handing it back. The Attendant drops it in and seals the box.

Time slows as Corrado watches the key CLICK -- locking.

CORRADO (V.O.)

From there Naples changed. Forever.

BLACK

PART II: DIEGO AND MARADONA

YELLING.

The fever pitch of an argument.

INT. PIZZERIA - NIGHT

Flour clouds and cigarette smoke puff together.

All-out brawls. A copy of 'IL MATTINO' flutters over top.

CORRADO (V.O.)

Signing Diego turned Naples into the seventh ring of hell.

Today's cartoon shows Corrado cradling a baby Diego Maradona.

'OUR GOLDEN BOY' -- competing hands tear the paper to pieces.

CORRADO (V.O.)

Opinions were... mixed.

-- BANG -- a bullet pocks the ceiling.

Tizia stands on a chair, gun in hand.

TIZIA

The next person to mention Maradona gets a bullet in the ass. If you're here for pizza have a seat. Otherwise, get the fuck out.

Customers look to each other for a reaction.

Murmurs crescendo back to arguing -- Tizia CRACKS another shot in the ceiling.

Drywall chunks fall on the crowd.

EXT. STADIO SAN PAOLO - NIGHT

A stretch limo speeds towards the stadium.

The Gelato Guard eats a brand new cone. He waves to the car.

RUMBLES.

Shaking pavement.

The Guard keys up to Vesuvius. Still in tact.

He turns back to the limo -- a stampede of white and blue follows behind. Napoli fans chasing the car.

The driver cranes his neck out.

LIMO DRIVER

Open the fucking gate!

The Guard rushes to the gate and pushes it open.

It's held together with duct-tape after the impact with Corrado's car -- the limo SMASHES it.

The Guard puts a hand up to the oncoming crowd.

GUARD

Stop!

They run faster. Like a zombie horde.

The Guard turns to run, dropping his gelato again. Fans knock him over -- engulfing the limo.

Our friend Pippo leads the charge, fully recovered.

His massive hands pry the limo door open to -- Pino.

PIPPPO
It's a decoy!

PINO
What decoy? I'm going to work.

Antonio rushes out of the annex, pulling Pino from the melée.

EXT. CAPRI BEACH - DAY

Canvas daybeds dot Capri's pebbled shoreline.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Someone told the tabloids that
Maradona was staying on Capri.

Again the ground RUMBLES. Ice in a woman's spritz JINGLES.

She tips her sunglasses down-beach to -- the same horde of Napoli fans. Pippo is there as well.

A slight man with Maradona-ish hair wades into the ocean.

PIPPPO
There he is!

They pick up speed. Daybeds and umbrellas pop -- flying into the air. Beachgoers run for their lives.

Fear washes across the look-a-like's face.

He swims out past the break.

CORRADO (V.O.)
But making an entrance was never a
problem for Diego. When he finally
arrived all of Naples would know.

The crowd follows as one. A school of hungry fish.

EXT. SAN PAOLO PITCH - DAY

Fans pile from the stands down to the pitch.

A blockade protects the path of Corrado, Bianca, Antonio and Pino. They walk to midfield.

A flare POPS -- blue smoke billows into the air.

CHANTING -- MA-RA-DO-NA -- CLAP-CLAP-CLAP-CLAP.

ANTONIO

This is dangerous. Too many people.

Corrado scans the crowd's faces. Happy. Joyful. Euphoric. Passionate. Hungry. Aggressive. Crazy. Barbaric.

Chants get LOUDER. Bianca plugs her ears.

BIANCA

If they get any louder the volcano will erupt.

It's a joke, but Pino checks Vesuvius anyway.

Chanting fades. Like a blanket muffling the crowd.

Eyes look to the sky.

The gentle THWAP of helicopter blades bleeds in, then --

THWAP-THWAP-THWAP.

A bright blue chopper crests over the stadium.

Fans ERUPT again. MA-RA-DO-NA.

The blades clear a perfect circle in the flare smoke, lowering to midfield.

Corrado turns to us as wind picks up.

CORRADO

This also happened. His manager put it in the fucking contract.

Chopper blades slow to a stop as they touch down.

CORRADO (V.O.)

Nobody told me about the difference between the superstar that was Maradona and the little boy from Villa Florito named Diego. A god and a scared puppy in one body. We were expecting Maradona that day.

The chopper door swings open.

Jorge exits first, greeting the team one-by-one then gesturing to the helicopter. Out steps Diego.

He's smaller.

CORRADO (V.O.)

Instead we got Diego.

So small he has to hop to reach the ground.

Corrado rushes forward, arms extended.

Diego steps away from the embrace and extends a formal hand.

A goddamn tomato launches from the crowd -- Diego ducks.

CORRADO

Just the way we say hello here!

Corrado covers Diego with an arm and points out the culprit to Antonio.

CORRADO (V.O.)

But all it took was a taste of his talent to make Naples fall in love.

Pino hands Diego a Napoli-branded football.

CORRADO

The only ball you won't score with!

Jorge leans into Diego's ear, translating. Diego grins and yells something back to Jorge.

JORGE

He'll score with this one too!

He drops the ball -- hooking it onto his foot.

The crowd quiets again. Even the nosebleeds.

They're hypnotized.

Diego flicks his foot up, juggling between his feet and putting his arms out to the crowd. Pure showmanship.

He catches it on his head like a trained seal.

Fans lose their minds. LOUD CHEERS. A woman throws her bra.

This is Maradona.

Diego drops the ball to his foot and hammers it -- Corrado flinches as it sails over him and into a goal.

Diego pumps his fist in the air. The crowd goes wild again.

Corrado ushers Diego and Jorge towards the exit.

Another tomato flies overhead.

DIEGO
Why do they keep throwing shit?

JORGE
He says it's how they say hello.

Diego looks up at the fans. To Pippo. Always there.
 His forehead veins bulge through blue face-paint.
 More barbarian invader than ticketed guest.

INT. NAPOLI LOUNGE - DAY

Two couches and a coffee table. Nothing more.

Maradona sits with his hands on his lap. Corrado takes the opposite couch, tapping his fingers against his leg.

CORRADO
 Did you have a good flight?

DIEGO
 Que?

CORRADO
 (making arm wings)
 Your flight?

DIEGO
Ah. My flight. Yes, very good.

CORRADO
 (looking past Diego to us)
 My challenge was to get Diego out of his shell. I had to figure out how to bring Maradona out of him.

Bianca opens the door.

BIANCA
 They're ready for you.

Diego rises.

Corrado follows, flashing a nervous smile to Bianca.

INT. NAPOLI PRESS ROOM - DAY

Press pile to the front of a barebones conference room.

Rows of men in polos and tinted glasses. Cameras FLASH as Diego, Corrado, Antonio and Jorge sit at the front.

JOURNALIST

Are you happy to be here, Diego?

Jorge translates in Diego's ear.

DIEGO

Ah. Si. Yes. Very nice.

Smiles. Approval from the local press.

JOURNALIST

What do you think about our women?

DIEGO

Also very nice.

LAUGHTER this time.

JOURNALIST

Do you like our food?

ANOTHER JOURNALIST

Do you think you'll stay in shape?

The questions speed up. Too fast to answer.

JOURNALIST

How do your skills translate to Italian football?

ANOTHER JOURNALIST

We play rougher here, you know.

JOURNALIST

Were there offers from other clubs?

A BRITISH JOURNALIST chimes in from the back.

BRITISH JOURNALIST

Diego, are you worried about the presence of the Mafia in Naples? The Giuliano crime family?

The room tightens -- vacuum-sealed.

Diego turns to Jorge for translation. Corrado puts up a hand, stopping him.

He grabs Diego's microphone.

CORRADO
I will address this... *disgusting*
question myself.

Mutters of appreciation. Shoulders jostle the Brit.

CORRADO
Naples is an honest city with good,
hard-working people.

Some scattered APPLAUSE.

CORRADO
Your question is an insult to the
city of Naples. In fact I'm too
insulted to even answer it.

Complete quorum. RIOTOUS CLAPPING and CHEERS.

CORRADO
Get him out of here!

The crowd shoves the British Journalist out, slamming the
door behind him. Corrado exhales and pats Diego's back.

Then he turns to us.

CORRADO
Diego was a glass-half empty kind
of guy. But our budget *did* keep us
from delivering on every promise.

INT. DIEGO'S APARTMENT - DAY

Linoleum floors and flickering halogen light.

Middle-class fancy.

Diego enters with his wife, CLAUDIA (20s). Lean. Same height
as him with even bigger blonde hair. Jorge follows behind
them with boxes.

CORRADO (V.O.)
The house was more of an apartment.

A rat patters across the floor.

Jorge SCREAMS.

Claudia skewers it with her heel. She reaches down and pulls
off her shoe. The rat wriggles.

CLAUDIA
Villa my ass.

NOISE OUTSIDE grabs her attention.

She drops the heel and walks to a window, opening it up.

Hundreds of fans. Snaking around the block. The crowd is still chanting. MA-RA-DO-NA.

Pippo leads the chant. Bare-chested and painted blue. A girl under the window hurls her bra at Claudia.

Claudia catches it and rips it apart, throwing it back down.

CORRADO (V.O.)
 Everybody wanted something from him. A photo. A hug. Some money.

She slams the shutters closed.

EXT. STADIO SAN PAOLO - DAY

Jorge steers a Fiat Punto through a crowd of Napoli fans.

CORRADO (V.O.)
 The sports car was a fucking Fiat.

The Guard has given up, focusing on his gelato instead.

EXT. SAN PAOLO PITCH - DAY

A Napoli team drill. Diego runs through a set of cones.

CORRADO (V.O.)
 And winter had turned grass to mud.

He slips, crashing back -- CROWD NOISE smacks us in the face.

We're in a live game now.

CORRADO (V.O.)
 The refs never called a foul. Ever.

A DEFENDER in a black Ascoli jersey blocks out the sun.

ASCOLI DEFENDER
 Keep diving and I'll give you something to cry about.

He nudges Diego with his cleat, then steps over him.

Diego rises to EAR-SPLITTING WHISTLES.

WHISTLES: ITALIAN FOR BOOING.

The ball speeds past.

Diego runs it down and tips it from an Ascoli player.

The crowd changes with quick, bipolar energy.

CHEERS now. Loud ones.

He slaloms through Ascoli players. They can barely react in time. Here come the chants again -- MA-RA-DO-NA.

Diego nears the box.

-- FEET POUND behind from the same Ascoli Defender. Diego winds a leg back to take a shot. The Defender trips him.

Diego crashes -- eating a chunk of turf. He CRIES for a foul.

Nothing. Again.

The crowd reverts to WHISTLES.

Diego limps up. He can barely stand.

Antonio sends a crew out, helping Diego across the pitch.

EXT. SAN PAOLO BLEACHERS - CONTINUOUS

Corrado, Bianca and Pino track Diego from a box.

CORRADO
Go check on him.

Pino rises and follows. Diego hobbles into the tunnel.

GROANS grab Corrado's attention. Goal for Ascoli.

INT. NAPOLI LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Shower steam fogs tile walls. The door opens as Pino enters.

PINO
Diego?

Water RUNS too loud to hear anything.

PINO
Signor Maradona?

Pino rounds the corner to the showers. He pushes clouds of steam aside, reaching a curtain and pulling it back to --

Diego. Butt-naked, hunched over on a bench.

PINO
Diego, are you OK?

He turns around -- flashing Pino his junk. A pencil mustache of white powder coats his upper lip.

DIEGO
Yes. Yes, OK. Is good.

Diego smiles wide, giving Pino a thumb's up.

PINO
OK.

Pino keeps his composure and backs away. Diego holds the fake smile. Ignorant bliss.

EXT. SAN PAOLO BLEACHERS - DAY

Pino leans over Corrado's shoulder and whispers something.

Corrado just stares at the pitch.

PINO
Did you hear me?

CORRADO
Yes.

No reaction.

INT. PIZZERIA - NIGHT

Our favorite spot. Shuttered except for a single table.

The door opens as Tizia ushers in Antonio, Bianca, Pino and Corrado, then locks the restaurant.

Corrado turns to us.

CORRADO
Look at me. This *never* happened.
Understand? Never.

The group sits as Tizia pours glasses of wine.

ANTONIO
So he likes cocaine.

Corrado swats Antonio's chest. Tizia walks off.

ANTONIO
What? She's not going to tell.

PINO
I called Barcelona. They knew.

BIANCA
They must be joking.

PINO
Get this. After they made him stop,
his play went to hell. They say he
plays *better* when he's doing drugs.

BIANCA
Like a fucked up Popeye.

ANTONIO
He played better on cocaine?

CORRADO
For the last time shut up.

BIANCA
We can't let him keep using.

The table stays mum, considering...

BIANCA
Can we?

CORRADO
No. No, of course not.

ANTONIO
Even if we did -- and I'm not
saying we should. How the hell
would he pass a doping test?

Another pause.

PINO
I have one idea.

Pino leans in -- then stops, looking at us.

He beckons the group out of our earshot then whispers.

Whatever he says triggers nods around the table. Alignment.

EXT. VIA TOLEDO - NIGHT

Corrado steps out. He lights a cigarette.

CORRADO

(to us)

What can I say? Diego started
playing better. And we started
winning. Every. Fucking. Game.

MA-RA-DO-NA -- CLAP-CLAP-CLAP-CLAP --

EXT. SAN PAOLO PITCH - DAY

NAPOLI-AVELLINO. APRIL 27. 1986.

Flares block summer sun.

The scoreboard reads "0-0". Two minutes left.

A standings billboard sits at the top of the stadium.

Sponsored by Lete. The *expensive* water.

Napoli is in third place, just behind Roma.

An Avellino striker breaks away towards Napoli's goal.

EXT. SAN PAOLO BLEACHERS - CONTINUOUS

Corrado clutches a cigarette in one hand and his arm rest
with the other.

The Avellino player shoots -- clipping the cross-bar.

Relief washes the stands. Corrado exhales a puff of smoke.

The keeper kicks the ball to midfield.

Avellino steals it back immediately. WHISTLES from the fans.

EXT. SAN PAOLO PITCH - CONTINUOUS

The same Avellino striker dribbles towards goal again. It's
like Napoli's whole team gave up -- except for Diego.

His foot dips in front, yanking the ball away and sending the
striker sprawling -- GASPS from the stadium.

Diego lobs it to BRUNO GIORDANO (20s). Stalky Napoli striker.

Giordano runs with it as the crowd buys in.

EXT. SAN PAOLO BLEACHERS - CONTINUOUS

Corrado clenches teeth so hard the cigarette's filter breaks.

Giordano slips a perfect ball back -- to Diego. He strikes.

The ball sails -- into the back of the net -- goal.

The stadium ERUPTS.

Corrado is knocked back into his seat. Every fan in the stadium jumps up and down. It's mayhem.

And Corrado loves it.

CORRADO

(to us)

They say a local geological
institute registered an earthquake
that day. Right under the stadium.

Diego runs to a corner of the pitch and pumps his fist.

Fans CHEER again. Like he's scored a whole other goal.

MA-RA-DO-NA -- CLAP-CLAP-CLAP-CLAP.

Diego looks up at the crowd, letting a smile creep across his face. He's in control. Full control.

No Diego. Just Maradona.

Giordano bullrushes Diego and hugs him tight. He points to the standings billboard. Juventus sits at the top.

GIORDANO

Next year it'll be us.

DIEGO

I know.

Arm-in-arm they walk back to midfield.

CORRADO (V.O.)

A southern team had never won a
championship. But for the first
time it felt possible. That made
Diego an idol. For better or worse.

EXT. VIA TOLEDO - DAY

Diego pushes his baby daughter, DALMA, in a stroller while Claudia applies fresh make-up.

The family matches in fur coats and sunglasses. Even Dalma.

The familiar STAMPEDE of fans and paparazzi rumbles behind.

They walk faster. Claudia's heel breaks.

DIEGO
Just leave it!

Tizia swings her door open, ushering them in.

Claudia hobbles in on one foot. Diego and the stroller follow behind as the crowd SLAMS into the locked restaurant door.

INT. PIZZERIA - CONTINUOUS

Pressure from the crowd CRACKS the lock open.

TIZIA
I can't hold them much longer! Go!

Diego leaves Claudia and Dalma, running through a back door to the terrace -- the door BURSTS open.

A glassy-eyed PAPARAZZO scans the restaurant, staring from Tizia to Claudia to baby Dalma in her arms.

PAPARAZZO
Where is he?

TIZIA
Leave or I call the police!

Fucking Pippo pops out of the crowd and points.

PIPPO
Look!

Diego hops hedges into another yard outside. The crowd tramples their way to the terrace.

EXT. DIEGO'S BALCONY - NIGHT

Sparks flare. A firework rockets from Diego's balcony.

It POPS over an even larger crowd below to CHEERS.

Diego high-fives Jorge, who lights a second one.

Claudia is holding Dalma, who wears headphones. Diego wrenches her away.

CLAUDIA

Diego! No!

He holds Dalma over the crowd. Like the Lion King.

DIEGO

My daughter!

MORE CHEERS.

He could hold a dirty sock out and they'd still cheer.

The whole thing devolves to a block party. Like just seeing Diego Maradona is enough to celebrate.

Jorge sprays champagne into the crowd.

Dalma starts crying -- Claudia snatches her back.

Jorge slides his palm under Diego's nose. A patch of coke.

He inhales deep and yells, tearing off his shirt.

CLAUDIA

You're both fucking idiots.

Claudia storms inside with Dalma.

Diego throws his shirt off the balcony. It sails into to outstretched hands -- kicking off a brawl.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Fabric walls. Unbuttoned shirts and cheek-high miniskirts.

Sweat everywhere.

Diego's posse dances behind a VIP rope.

A girl eyeballs him from the crowd. She gives her drink's straw a suggestive pull.

Diego locks onto her and winks.

Claudia slots into their eye-line.

CLAUDIA

Keep staring, bitch.

Diego hides his disappointment before Claudia turns around.

She plants a forceful kiss on Diego, gripping his cheeks until the girl leaves.

He pries her off.

CLAUDIA

What's wrong? Aren't you happy?

Diego shrugs, looking out at the crowd.

DIEGO

I don't know. I just feel stressed.
Like everyone is watching me.

CLAUDIA

Because you're a star, honey.

Claudia latches back on and kisses her way down his neck.

CLAUDIA

I heard the promoter say the club's
sales grew 3,000% when we walked
in. We'll never have to buy a drink
for the rest of our lives.

Diego looks miserable.

Jorge, shirtless, wedges himself between Claudia and Diego.

JORGE

I need you to meet someone.

He waves through the crowd to Carmine Giuliano.

The harbor worker packing a Glock. Still in a blazer.

JORGE

We have this guy to thank for the
top-shelf candy I'm getting!

Diego lights up. He grips Carmine, pulling him close.

DIEGO

So you're the sugar expert!

He kisses Carmine on the forehead. Carmine laughs.

CARMINE

Carmine Giuliano. Nice to meet you.

DIEGO

Carmine! You're my hero!

Jorge hands Carmine a glass of champagne. Diego puts an arm over Carmine. They clink glasses with Jorge.

A photographer leans into frame and SNAPS a photo -- it's on the front page of 'IL MATTINO'.

EXT. CORRADO'S GARDEN - DAY

Masons rebuild the wall as a GARDENER carts blue hydrangeas.

He does kind of look like that Scottish player.

Corrado stares at Carmine and Diego's photo in the paper.

CORRADO (V.O.)
My most expensive asset had made
the acquaintance of Carmine fucking
Giuliano. The young, charismatic
head of the Camorra or as you
Americans call it: the mob.

INSERT - BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOS

Skin-headed Giuliano foot soldiers puff cigars at a bar.

CORRADO (V.O.)
With patronage and intimidaton they
kept a vice grip on Naples' slums.

The same skin-heads dangle someone from a roof.

CORRADO (V.O.)
And their bread and butter?

Another photo of Diego and Carmine at the night club.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Access to men of power.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Back to the VIP area.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Carmine led the family's two main
operations: South American drugs...

Carmine shakes Jorge's hand, slipping him a dime bag.

EXT. SAN PAOLO BLEACHERS - DAY

Another game. Another goal for Diego.

CORRADO (V.O.)
And sports betting.

Corrado leaps up, revealing Carmine a few rows back. Wads of cash pass down to Carmine from neighboring seats.

Corrado plops back down and addresses us.

CORRADO
Remember. Scotti was one of two
people who would ruin it all. That
bastard is the other. It was the
price of Diego becoming Maradona.
Bigger person. Bigger problems.

On the pitch Diego meets a volley, bicycle-kicking the ball into the back of the net.

INT. CORRADO'S STUDY - NIGHT

Ceiling-height bookshelves and leather furniture.

Corrado sits in the room's biggest chair nursing a healthy pour of red wine. A RAI newscast plays on the TV.

GIANNI ALBERTI (40s), a reporter, stands over a hospital bed.

Lying on it is a small brunette. CRISTIANA SINAGRA (20s).

She clutches a newborn baby in her arms.

GIANNI ALBERTI (TV)
Today at this very hospital, we met
a new mother who has birthed a boy
with a very famous father.

Cristiana is slight. Tentative.

GIANNI ALBERTI (TV)
Miss? What's your name?

CRISTIANA (TV)
Cristiana Sinagra. From Marianella.

GIANNI ALBERTI (TV)
And this beautiful boy -- you say
his father is someone we all know?

Cristiana nods. Coached. She addresses the newscast directly.

CRISTIANA (TV)
 My son's father is Diego Armando
 Maradona. The star of SSC Napoli.

Wine chokes down Corrado's windpipe. He falls to the floor.

Bianca comes in.

BIANCA
 Corrado? Are you OK?

On all fours, he points at the TV.

INT. DIEGO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Claudia swings a TV antenna at Diego -- ripping into the fabric of a couch. Diego ducks behind it.

Dalma sits on the floor, mesmerized by RAI's broadcast fuzzing in and out with each of Claudia's swings.

DIEGO
 It's not mine!

She swats again -- drawing blood from his arm.

Diego yanks the antenna away and lifts it high over her head.

Claudia cowers. Diego -- stops, watching Dalma's head bob along to the RAI broadcast. She's smiling. Laughing.

BLACK

PART III: BECOMING A GOD

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
 Two of football's best meet in
 Mexico City today for FIFA's World
 Cup Quarterfinals.

EXT. ESTADIO AZTECA - DAY

ARGENTINA-ENGLAND. STADIO AZTECA. 1986.

Sun bounces off the steel frame of Mexico's largest venue.

A black bus parts a crowd photographers, parking.

CORRADO (V.O.)
 By 1986 Diego had the sporting
 world wrapped around his finger.

The doors swing open.

CARLOS BILARDO (50s) steps out. Argentina's Manager. Tall with a sharp jaw and giant Adam's apple.

The press barely look up even as players filter out behind.

CORRADO (V.O.)
He could do whatever he wanted.

Diego's turn. Still wearing fur even in the blazing heat.

Photographers spring to action. Everybody wants a piece.

CORRADO (V.O.)
And ruin whoever he wanted.

Diego clocks RAI's Gianni Alberti in the crowd.

DIEGO
I'll answer all your questions if
you get rid of that asshole.

Gianni scoffs -- but the junket obeys, boxing him out.

CORRADO (V.O.)
In fact it was probably thanks to
the press that he got away with...
Well, you'll see...

INT. PIZZERIA - NIGHT

Folding chairs replace dining tables.

Tizia dims the lights of the jam-packed room. Everyone is glued to the tiny TV playing Italy vs. France.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Italy played like dog-shit in '86.

The final whistle. 2-0 for France. A collective sigh.

Wine glasses shatter against the wall.

CORRADO (V.O.)
The rest of the country got on with
their lives. But we still had skin
in the game.

From the back, Pippo changes channel to England-Argentina.

The crowd is back in it. CLAPS. CHEERS --

ENGLISH TOURIST
Come on England!

They turn to an ENGLISH TOURIST. Bald. Red-faced. Drunk.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Argentina belonged to Naples. Just
like Diego. They were one spirit.
And with England it was personal.

INSERT - EPISODE OF 'LA NOCHE DEL 10'

'LA NOCHE DEL 10'. 2005.

Diego's short-lived 2005 Buenos Aires talk show.

DIEGO (40s) is thicker now, in a sequined blazer. His black hair coifs into a mullet tighter than his botox.

He addresses the camera with a crowd sitting behind him.

DIEGO
Those stealing from thieves get a
hundred years of forgiveness...
The English stole a lot from us.

LOUD APPLAUSE.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Did you know Argentina and England
went to war in '82?

INSERT - FALKLANDS B-ROLL

A map of the British Isles.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Greedy colonizers that they were,
England's military claimed a set of
islands 8,000 miles to the south.

We dot a route over two continents to the Falklands, just off Argentina's coast, then -- a televised declaration of war from Argentina's President, Leopoldo Castelli.

CORRADO (V.O.)
South Americans were pissed,
especially Argentina who considered
the Falklands, or the Malvinas,
theirs. They tried to take it back.

CANNON FIRE -- British flags run up cottages.

Argentine frogmen leap from dinghies onto the shore.

CORRADO (V.O.)
 Argentina lost fast. Three times
 more of their men died. Needless to
 say both countries worried the game
 would get... spicy.

BOMBS EXPLODE -- sending Argentine soldiers flying.

INSERT - EPISODE OF 'LA NOCHE DEL 10'

Diego is still preaching.

DIEGO
 We said football had nothing to do
 with war, but they killed a lot of
 us. Shot us like animals.
 (then)
 It was time for revenge.

EXT. ESTADIO AZTECA PITCH - DAY

England's GARY STEVENS dribbles downfield.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
 Stevens carries with room to roam.

THUDDING -- a cleat-first tackle knocks him over. He crashes
 into the Argentine bench.

England players rush ALI BEN NASSER, the game's Ref. No foul.

Argentina's CLAUDIO BORGHI snags the loose ball.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
 Borghi. Burruchaga now. It's
 Maradona -- and he's off.

There's no remedy for Diego. Fluid like water.

Stevens chases behind, gaining on him and tackling.

Diego lifts the ball up -- hurdling Stevens altogether.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
 Only Shilton left to beat!

England's Keeper, PETER SHILTON, runs right at Diego. He's
 taller. Bigger.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
Brash choice from Shilton!

Diego chips the ball over Shilton's head.

Shilton's *just* grabs it. He comes down -- elbowing Diego's head. Diego curls into a ball.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
What a save!

Blood trickles down his face.

Shilton gets up and distributes the ball.

Argentina's turn to plead with Ben Nasser, who ignores them and jogs back to midfield. Diego crawls up.

CORRADO (V.O.)
It was ugly. Winning would require divine intervention. And that's exactly what happened.

SECOND HALF

Argentina kicks off, bouncing the ball between midfielders.

Diego rockets a pass to his forward, JORGE VALDANO.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
Argentina with a dangerous start to the half. Here's Valdano!

Valdano takes a shot -- bouncing it off Gary Stevens' chest.

Diego growls, scuffing the turf.

England's Defender, STEVE HODGE, gets the ball. Valdano blocks his path. Hodge looks back to Shilton.

PETER SHILTON
No! No! Keep it!

STEVE HODGE
I can't!

Valdano calls Hodge's bluff -- running at him.

He lobs the ball back to Shilton in the box. The ball sails high as both teams watch. Hell, the whole stadium watches.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
What's he doing?

Shilton jogs to meet the ball. Diego notices and -- runs.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
Maradona! He won't make it will he?

They both pick up speed, jumping in perfect unison.

Shilton punches towards the ball as they meet mid-air.

Diego is lower by almost a foot -- his cleat presses Shilton's thigh. He's climbing him. Like a ladder.

Shilton has the edge -- Diego's hand rises above his head.

This cheeky motherfucker smiles, touching the ball with the palm of his hand and... pushing it over Shilton's head.

Everyone watches. The fans. The players. The kit boys.

Everyone but Ali Ben Nasser.

He's busy scrubbing a stain on his shirt.

The ball drops -- over the goal line -- the stadium EXPLODES.

Ben Nasser jerks his head up, scanning the stadium for context clues, then -- WHISTLES.

Goal.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
It's a goal! Incredible!

Shilton charges Ben Nasser, wagging a finger.

PETER SHILTON
What? No. Hand ball. It was his hand! Tell him!

Diego just stands there. He looks from Shilton to Ben Nasser.

PETER SHILTON
It wasn't a goal!

BEN NASSER
(to Diego)
Was it a hand ball?

PETER SHILTON
What are you asking him for? You're the bloody ref!

Ben Nasser waits for an answer from Diego.



Diego lifts his head up -- SCREAMING --

DIEGO
Goooooaaaaal!

CHEERS crescendo with his yell. He sprints towards Argentina's fan section flanked by the team.

England's roster crowds Ben Nasser.

Shilton looks like he might bite his face off.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
England wants a handball. They may
be right, but it's no use now.

EXT. VIA TOLEDO - NIGHT

Ocean fog glazes cobblestones on the now empty street.

ENGLISH TOURIST (O.S.)
It was a hand ball!

Pippo hurls the English Tourist out of the Pizzeria.

The crowd inside CACKLES with laughter.

PIPPO
(in a bad English accent)
Cheerio.

He shuts the door, leaving the English Tourist muttering.

ENGLISH TOURIST
It was a bloody hand ball.

Wiping blood from his nose, he rises and walks off.

The final WHISTLE BLOWS --

EXT. ESTADIO AZTECA - DAY

ARGENTINA-ENGLAND. 2-1.

Argentina fans storm the pitch, hoisting Diego in the air.

He bobs in circles above the crowd.

INT. ESTADIO AZTECA TUNNEL - NIGHT

Jorge and Claudia flank a still sweating Diego. A microphone stabs towards his face.

DIEGO
Handball? No handball. It was not
Maradona's hand. That goal?
(then)
That was the hand of God.

Diego winks right at us.

CORRADO (V.O.)
And on that day he became a God.

We track away, watching journalists flood in. Starved rats on a cheese wedge.

CORRADO (V.O.)
There was only one thing left for
Diego to accomplish. And he did.

EXT. SAN PAOLO PITCH - DAY

NAPOLI WINS 1ST PLACE. MAY 17. 1987.

Another FINAL WHISTLE -- more blue and white. This time it's Napoli fans flooding the pitch.

Same joy. Twice the chaos.

We move to the standings billboard. Napoli at number one.

INT. NAPOLI LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Champagne spray coats the lockers. Sticky booze and sweat.

Diego runs side-to-side in a pair of tighty-whiteys.

Armed with a personal champagne magnum, he sprays indiscriminately. Corrado catches a hefty spritz to the face.

Pino finds Antonio and pulls him in for a hug.

PINO
They'll give you coach of the year!

ANTONIO
Maybe we should all do cocaine!

They laugh together -- Corrado shoves in between.

CORRADO
Hey, dumbass, the press are here.

PINO
We were just joking --

CORRADO
Just stop talking.

ANTONIO
Corrado. Relax.

Corrado tries, but he looks -- unsatisfied. His fingers tap against his side again.

Bianca stands on a bench.

BIANCA
OK, everyone. The press have arrived so try to act human. Maybe put some clothes on too.

Dirty jerseys and underwear fly, pelting her.

She ducks downward and opens the door to the press.

BIANCA
(to the journalists)
Good luck.

A JOURNALIST beelines for Diego -- losing the mic as Diego snatches it and runs to Corrado.

DIEGO
Corrado. I mean, *Signor Ferlaino*.
How is it to be champion of Italy?

The whole room quiets to watch his bit.

CORRADO
Very good. Thank you, Diego.

JOURNALIST
Could I have my microphone back?

Corrado shifts. Allergic to the attention.

DIEGO
What will you do to celebrate?
Spend a night with your girlfriend?
Maybe her friends too?

LAUGHTER from the players.

CORRADO
No. No. Now we win the next one.

A wet. Fucking. Blanket.

DIEGO
What? What are you talking about?

CORRADO
We must keep this momentum and let
it carry us into --

DIEGO
Just be happy, man.
(then)
Jesus.

A long, uncomfortable quiet. Bianca plays defense.

BIANCA
Diego. Mediaset wants an interview.

Diego lets Bianca drag him away. The chaos carries on.

He stares Corrado down from across the room. Carmine Giuliano
pops into the doorframe, wrapping Diego in a bear hug.

CORRADO
(yanking Pino's arm)
Is that Carmine Giuliano?

PINO
Yeah. Diego invited him.

CORRADO
Get him the fuck out. If the press
sees they'll have a field day.

JORGE (O.S.)
He stays.

Jorge appears. As if out of thin air.

CORRADO
What?

JORGE
Diego wants him here. So he stays.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Did he really just big dick me in
my own locker room?

Corrado's shoulders heave as his breathing speeds up.

CORRADO (V.O.)
In my stadium? My club? My city?

A CHANT breaks out. Players ignore the press, circling Diego.

PLAYERS
Fuck Milan! Fuck Rome! Naples is
our only home!

CORRADO
I need to sit down.

Bianca ushers Corrado out of the room.

PLAYERS
Fuck Milan! Fuck Rome! Naples is
our only home!

CORRADO (V.O.)
I'd lost control. Naples belonged
to Diego now.

INT. PIZZERIA - DAY

Tizia scrubs the wall next to her painting of Jesus.

CORRADO (V.O.)
He did unite the city, but not with
Italy. With each other.

She positions a framed headshot of Maradona above it.

EXT. MAPPATELLA BEACH - DAY

A sullen crowd wears funeral black.

A casket lowers into a rowboat.

On a rock above, a priest stands. Wait. It's Pippo in a
priest's outfit. He tosses a lit match into the boat.

Smoke billows upwards.

Three manikins are piled on top of the casket. They wear
jerseys from major Italian clubs.

Juventus. Roma. Milan. Even Inter.

Fire WHOOSHES up to CHEERS from the crowd. A mock funeral.

PIPPA
Fuck Milan. Fuck Roma. Fuck Inter --

CROWD
And fuck Juve!

Pippo kicks the rowboat into the harbor.

SCOTTI (PRE-LAP)
You are an incompetent, useless...

INT. GRAND HOTEL PARKER - MORNING

Grey clouds matte behind a window.

Guests dine in a marble foyer. Most are too busy gawking at Scotti and Corrado to enjoy their meals.

SCOTTI
Miserable, fat, ungrateful...

Scotti wears a white suit brighter than his veneers.

Corrado watches the weather roll in, unbothered as Scotti vibrates with anger. He sips his coffee.

SCOTTI
Donkey-fucking piece of garbage --

A waiter interrupts the tirade with two croissants, then scurries off on a glare from Scotti.

SCOTTI
The Prime Minister called me at 4
this morning. You know why?

CORRADO
I'm sure you're about to tell me.

SCOTTI
They had a fucking funeral at
Mappatella for the Northern clubs.

INSERT - THE FUNERAL

The funeral pyre burns higher as the crowd CHANTS.

CROWD
Fuck Milan! Fuck Roma!...

Pippo does a jig on the rock. Surprisingly spry for his size.

Burnt jersey pieces bluster in the wind -- catching the sails of neighboring boats. Fire spreads to half the harbor.

Fishermen rush buckets of water to save their vessels.

INT. GRAND HOTEL PARKER - DAY

Corrado does a shit job of hiding his smile. Scotti's lips quiver so fast they might fall off.

SCOTTI
Don't laugh. This isn't funny.

CORRADO
I don't know about that.

SCOTTI
They're asking for early repayment.

Now it isn't funny.

SCOTTI
The government doesn't think I can do my job. If I don't show a balanced budget they'll impeach me.

Corrado pulls apart his croissant, biting into it.

CORRADO
We had a deal. It's a 10 year loan.

SCOTTI
You don't have the money?

CORRADO
I do. I just think the cash is better spent on things Naples cares about. Like the team.

Scotti turns a darker shade of red.

SCOTTI
You slimy little shit.

He swipes their coffee cups -- they CRASH to the floor.

SCOTTI
(yelling)
You screwed me!

Scotti storms off.

Corrado takes another bite from the croissant.

Chocolate filling spills onto the table. He shrugs at us.

CORRADO

I got greedy. So what? I'd tasted victory and wanted more. We all wanted more. Naples needed more.

He exhales through his bite and stares back out the window.

CORRADO

We should have won more.

INT. NAPOLI PRESS ROOM - DAY

NAPOLI FINISHES SECOND. MAY 15. 1988.

Corrado takes the podium with Diego and Antonio. Glum faces.

JOURNALIST

Corrado, with today's loss Napoli failed to win another championship. What do you say to fans that expect greatness from Napoli every year?

Corrado sighs.

CORRADO

I would apologize to the city of Naples on behalf of the club, the staff, and *especially* the players.

Diego's jaw clenches. He can't help but glare at Corrado.

CORRADO

They're paid to be the best. That's not what I saw this season. Losing four of five games is unacceptable.
(then)
We'll make changes to the staff.

Antonio's turn to look at Corrado -- who ignores them both.

JOURNALIST

Anything to add, Diego?

DIEGO

Second place is still a very strong result. Losing is never good, but we qualified for the UEFA Cup. Most clubs would be lucky to achieve --

CORRADO

And that's why they're below us in the standings. We expect more.

Diego stops.

The press let the silence linger.

JOURNALIST

Mr. Juliano, as a manager I'm sure
Corrado's words sting a little.

ANTONIO

He's right. We should have done
better. And we will. As long as
Corrado doesn't fire me.

Nervous CHUCKLES around the room. Corrado smiles.

CORRADO

(to us)
I fired him that night.

EXT. STADIO SAN PAOLO - NIGHT

Antonio hauls a duffel bag to his car.

Silhouetted in an office window is Corrado, watching.

INT. NAPOLI OWNER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Bright blue walls. Backlit liquor bottles.

A KNOCK at the door.

CORRADO

Come in.

It's Jorge. Corrado waves him in.

CORRADO

What does he want now?

JORGE

A transfer.

Beat.

CORRADO (V.O.)

Fuck.

Jorge and Corrado sit opposite on matching blue couches.

CORRADO

You like these couches? They're
designed by Herman Miller --

JORGE
Olympique Marseille is interested.

Corrado scoffs.

CORRADO
Diego is our biggest star. The
offer will have to be high.

JORGE
They'll match the price. Any price.

Corrado adjusts, trying to get comfortable. He can't.

CORRADO
I don't understand.

JORGE
Naples is too intense. He needs
less pressure.

Jorge lights a cigarette and leans back into his couch.

CORRADO
Well if he wants to negotiate an
exit, he needs to tell me himself.

JORGE
No. He doesn't.
(puffing)
It's not safe here. The city is too
messy. Especially with the Mafia --

CORRADO
You mean his friends?

JORGE
(ignoring him)
He doesn't feel any joy in his
game. Diego needs to feel joy.

CORRADO
Joy? Or drugs?
(catching himself)
Sorry.

Corrado rubs his forehead.

CORRADO
I'll think about it.

He looks up at their lone Serie A trophy encased on a shelf.

EXT. SAN PAOLO PITCH - DAY

NAPOLI-SAMPDORIA. 1-1. JUNE 4. 1989

WHISTLES pelt Napoli's players as the game ends.

Diego looks the stands. To Corrado's seat.

CORRADO (V.O.)
I was in a cold war with my own
fucking employee.

BIANCHI (O.S.)
Diego! Press! Now!

Diego turns to OTTAVIO BIANCHI (40s), Napoli's new manager.

CORRADO (V.O.)
I hired a new manager named Ottavio
Bianchi. Real hard-ass. Never put
up with Diego's crap.

Bald with a weak chin. He doesn't smile. Ever.

He passes Diego and pats his neck a too hard.

Diego resists the urge to take a swing. He composes himself
and walks to journalists at the edge of the pitch.

JOURNALIST
Diego, is it true that you want to
leave Napoli?

DIEGO
I'll play where I'm wanted.

JOURNALIST
What do you mean? Naples loves you.

Diego points to the crowd. Still WHISTLING.

DIEGO
Look at them. We haven't lost a
match all year and this is the
thanks we get? They're spoiled.

JOURNALIST
So you are leaving?

He looks past the press to the tunnel. Corrado has made his
way to the opening, watching Diego.

DIEGO
Corrado is the boss. Ask him.

More questions come.

Diego walks past Corrado and avoids eye contact.

DIEGO

Sell me.

CORRADO

No.

Corrado watches Bianchi chew out a set of Napoli defenders.

CORRADO (V.O.)

The team wasn't having fun. We worked them so hard that six players quit. But we were playing better. And we won. Again.

INT. NAPOLI LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Diego pulls a vial of coke from his locker, tapping out a generous bump.

He closes the door -- face-to-face with the Kit Boys.

DIEGO

The fuck are you looking at?

Diego lunges. They bolt from the room.

CORRADO (V.O.)

He wanted out. But I couldn't do it. To save the city, I would have to break Diego.

He inhales, slumping against the wall.

EXT. PIAZZA PLEBISCITO - MORNING

The mother of all traffic jams.

Cars condense across the square. Police usher them to the exit. They leave a wake of trash and skid-marks.

A Policeman locks the entrance with a chainlink fence.

CORRADO (V.O.)

The situation in Naples started to get better.

Street sweepers haul away trash piece-by-piece.

The square is cleared. Clean as a whistle.

A shoe THUDS against a ball. It drops onto the cobblestones.

Two boys in Napoli jerseys play football across the square.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Or worse. Depends who you were.

EXT. MAPPATELLA BEACH - DAY

A foggy day for once.

The same shipping boat unloads boxes of mozzarella.

WHINING SIRENS bleed in from the distance.

Carmine Giuliano looks up the road. Even the old men along the beach crane their necks to the noise.

He turns back -- to a police boat.

Red lights flickering against the fog.

Blacked-out vans skids to a halt on the street.

A BEEFY COP steps out as the police boat docks. The old men on the beach stand to watch.

The Cop points at a box. Carmine shrugs. Nothing to hide.

Police seize the box and kick it open. Plastic sacks of mozzarella balls.

Shutters open on nearby buildings. More onlookers.

The Cop pulls out a knife -- washing away Carmine's smile.

He stabs into the mozzarella balls and pulls.

Water and cheese splatter, making way for dime bags.

Spilling from the mozzarella like eggs. The same ones Carmine gave Jorge in the night club.

Now cuffed, Carmine is loaded into a van by the police.

Gentle APPLAUSE filter in from the surrounding buildings. The old men on the beach flip Carmine off again.

INSERT - MUGSHOT OF CARMINE GIULIANO

A black and white mugshot of Carmine. Still smirking.

CORRADO (V.O.)

Carmine cut a deal and threw his family to the wolves. You'll never guess who they booked the same day.

INSERT - MUGSHOT OF VINCENZO SCOTTI

Still dressed to the nines. His fake hair is a mess.

CORRADO (V.O.)

That fucking hair. They stuck him with corruption charges. But not for the election campaign. Turns out he embezzled some cash from Italy's 1990 World Cup bid. We'll talk about that more in a minute, but can we take a second to recognize my fucking luck here?

INSERT - PRISON GUARDS SHAVING SCOTTI'S HEAD

Tears run through Scotti's spray tan.

CORRADO (V.O.)

The bad guys went to jail and my debt was gone with the arrest thanks to Italian tax laws.

Scotti watches his luscious locks fall to the ground.

CORRADO (V.O.)

The city didn't need football to solve their problems anymore. It was a good thing. At least it was supposed to be. But I think Diego missed the attention. Part of him liked to be needed...

INT. DIEGO'S BATHROOM - DAY

Shutters block daylight.

Diego lies in a pool of sweat. Coke dusts his nose.

Somewhere baby Dalma is CRYING.

He reaches into a pocket and pulls the coke vial out.

His hands struggle to keep a spoonful balanced -- a KNOCK throws him, spilling coke on his shirt.

DIEGO
What the fuck!

Claudia yells from outside the door.

CLAUDIA (O.S.)
Dalma has a fever. I need to take her to the doctor.

DIEGO
So what do you need me for?

CLAUDIA (O.S.)
Aren't you going to help?

Diego pinches coke from his shirt and sniffs it up.

Claudia groans, walking away.

CLAUDIA (O.S.)
You're a sad little man, Diego.

A change of heart.

Diego pulls himself up -- slipping and CRACKING his head on the sink. He winces.

DIEGO
Wait!

Diego swings the window shutters open. Claudia exits the front door with Dalma in her arms.

PAPARAZZO
Diego! Over here!

A lone PAPARAZZO jumps from behind his bushes.

PAPARAZZO
What's that on your face?

Diego looks in the bathroom mirror, scrubbing his nose.

EXT. STADIO SAN PAOLO - DAY

Diego stumbles through one of Bianchi's training exercises.

CORRADO (V.O.)
He was completely out of shape. It got so bad that we benched him.

He pivots around cones, knocking one over and taking a weak shot that fizzles short of the goal.

EXT. SHEREMETYEVO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

A 1990 Hawker jet with 'PIBE DE ORO' emblazoned on the hull.

CORRADO (V.O.)
We played Spartak Moscow in the
Euro Cup. Diego didn't even travel
with the team. He took his own jet.

A black SUV sits by the staircase. Corrado stands at the top of the stairs.

Claudia plays defense, blocking the jet's door.

CORRADO
Wake him up.

CLAUDIA
He's too tired. I tried.

Corrado looks through the window. Diego sprints over two seats, still in the fucking fur coat.

CLAUDIA
He wanted to go to the Red Square.

CORRADO
Excuse me?

EXT. THE RED SQUARE - NIGHT

Cloud-height buildings lit from the base.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Diego fired Jorge after he refused
to let him buy that jet. Nobody was
left to tell him no.

Diego, Claudia, and the JET PILOT gawk from a metal barrier across the square.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Or that trespassing on government
property in Russia was a bad idea.

Diego shoves barrier. Metal CLANGS across the square.

CLAUDIA
Diego! No!

He wiggles through and struts towards the palace.

PILOT
Fucking football players.

Claudia and the Pilot chase. Diego reaches the front door.

RUSSIAN GUARD
Stop!

A RUSSIAN GUARD. Giant. Beady-eyed. He trains a machine gun to Diego's forehead.

INT. PARLIAMENT STUDY - NIGHT

Book-shelves box in a room with a crackling fire.

The three of them sit on a couch at gunpoint.

CLAUDIA
Are we going to die?

DIEGO
I don't know. Just stop talking.

The door opens -- FOOTSTEPS round the couch.

BORIS YELTSIN (60s). Russia's PM. Grey suit. Big shoulders.

DIEGO
Is that --

PILOT
Boris Yeltsin.

CLAUDIA
Who?

PILOT
The fucking Prime Minister.

He walks up to Diego, crotch inches his face.

Yeltsin grips his shoulders. Diego prays under his breath.

Yeltsin leans forward and -- kisses Diego's forehead.

YELTSIN
Maradona?

DIEGO
Yes. M -- M -- Maradona.

Yeltsin grabs Diego's hand and shakes it hard.

He starts LAUGHING. The Guard LAUGHS too. Diego joins in, nudging the others.

IT'S A FUCKING PARTY

Diego FIRES the Guard's gun out the window.

The Pilot dances in a taxidermied bear costume.

Yeltsin and Claudia giggle over pours of Vodka.

Diego pulls a Russian nesting doll off the shelf and drops it to his feet, juggling left-to-right.

LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT-RIGHT -- HEY-HEY-HEY-HEY.

The room CLAPS along.

LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT-RIGHT -- he misses -- the doll SHATTERS to pieces. Smaller dolls roll out across the floor.

Diego stares. Color drains from his face.

Yeltsin grabs another doll and brandishes it. It's hard to tell if he's angry or just drunk.

He holds it for a moment, then -- SMASHES it on the floor.

The others join, SMASHING nesting dolls of their own.

EXT. HAWKER JET - DAY

Corrado watches Diego snore through the jet window. A wine bottle rolls off his belly.

He stomps back down the stairs and into the SUV.

CORRADO (V.O.)
When Marseille's offer came I had
to at least consider it.

Claudia watches the car tear into the distance.

INT. NAPOLI OWNER'S OFFICE - DAY

Corrado scans a contract with Olympique Marseille letterhead.

He looks out at the parking lot.

Diego's face decorates at least a dozen handmade flags flapping against the gate. He's fucking everywhere.

Corrado looks back to the contract.

INT. DIEGO'S APARTMENT - DAY

Diego bobs Dalma in his arms, eyes glued to a Mediaset newscast on TV. The phone RINGS -- he picks up.

DIEGO

Anything?

DIEGO'S AGENT (PHONE)

Not yet. They could still be working out the details.

DIEGO

OK. Thanks.

Diego slams the phone down -- ANOTHER RING -- Diego picks up.

DIEGO

Hello?

WOMAN (PHONE)

Is Claudia home?

He hangs up.

DIEGO

Tell your friends to stop calling!

CLAUDIA (O.S.)

You don't own the phone!

MEDIASET REPORTER (TV)

As of this hour the deadline has passed on a surprisingly quiet Serie A transfer window.

Diego's headshot flashes across the screen.

MEDIASET REPORTER (TV)

Napoli's Diego Maradona, a star we expected to move, will reportedly be staying put --

DIEGO

Goddammit!

He hurls his phone at the monitor -- the receiver lodges in the glass -- spidering the display.

CORRADO (V.O.)
I was holding him hostage. And I
paid the fucking price.

Dalma starts CRYING.

DIEGO
She's crying! Come get her!

CLAUDIA (O.S.)
Why don't you be a father for once!

Diego slumps onto the couch and bobs Dalma on his lap.

BLACK

PART IV: NAPLES IS NOT ITALY

CORRADO (V.O.)
Remember how Italy hosted the 1990
World Cup? Well, guess who they
picked to play Italy in Naples.

EXT. VIA TOLEDO - DAY

An Argentina flag under a window. Tomatoes splatter over it.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Just as things were getting better
our identity got called into
question. Naples was in Italy, but
our golden boy was from Argentina.

A woman cranes her neck back out the window. She dumps a box
of tomatoes over her attackers.

CORRADO (V.O.)
The minute they announced the match
it was all anyone thought about.

A chain reaction. Red fruit flies in every direction.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Including Diego.

INT. NAPOLI WAR ROOM - DAY

Corrado sits next to Ottavio. Pino clicks through headshots
on the projector. More players.

PINO

What about Fernando Gomes?

A Portuguese player with a tall forehead.

CORRADO

He and Diego would pair well.

BIANCHI

Is he a hard worker?

PINO

Who cares? He's a star.

MUFFLED SCREAMS.

CORRADO

What the fuck was that?

INT. NAPOLI OFFICE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They filter out. The Kit Boys are already tracking the noise down the hall.

KIT BOY

It's coming from the gym.

Corrado leads.

INT. NAPOLI GYM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The SCREAMS get louder. They reach the gym door.

Pino presses his face against the door's windowpane.

CORRADO

What is it?

PINO

See for yourself.

Corrado shoves in to -- Diego. Sprinting shirtless on a treadmill and SCREAMING bloody murder.

It's terrifying.

BIANCHI

He never uses the treadmill.

CORRADO

Can he be here in the offseason?

PINO
You want to tell him he can't?

Diego's abs flex as he speeds up. They're glistening.

INT. NAPOLI GYM - CONTINUOUS

He squats 150 kilos unaided. The bar sags.

CORRADO (V.O.)
This maniac got in the shape of his
life. He was clean. No drugs. No
alcohol. Not even pasta.

Diego throws a couple more plates on and braces.

A forehead vein throbs as he pushes -- SCREAMING again.

CORRADO (V.O.)
And he was doing it all to beat us.

EXT. SAN PAOLO PITCH - DAY

Corrado and Bianca spy from the tunnel.

Diego takes shots on an empty goal. He hits the top corner
over -- and over. Perfection.

CORRADO (V.O.)
It made me wonder: if he was the
best player in the world when he
was on drugs, who the hell was he
when he was sober?

Diego nails another shot and turns to us.

DIEGO
A fucking god.

CORRADO (V.O.)
You can guess what happened next.

EXT. STADIO SAN PAOLO - DAY

ARGENTINA-ITALY. JULY 3. 1990.

Traffic snakes all the way to city center. Fans on foot climb
over the cars. A march to the stadium.

One boy pulls off his coat to reveal a Maradona jersey. Pippo
passes him and SWATS him over the head.

PIPPPO
Don't be stupid. Take that off.

The boy strips the jersey off and tucks it into his pocket.
Pippo keeps moving. He slips Maradona's jersey back on.

INT. CORRADO'S STUDY - DAY

Shafts of light break through closed shutters on Corrado's watch party. He fiddles with the remote.

Bianca watches him struggle.

BIANCA
Do you want me to --

CORRADO
I've got it.

Corrado presses another button. He hits it harder.

The TV flickers on.

CORRADO
There, you see?

BIANCA
Zitto. The game is on.

The broadcast pans to Argentina's fans. One throws a flare.

BIANCA
You didn't want to be there?

CORRADO
No. It's not Napoli playing.

Video of the tunnel. Diego walks to the locker room.

JOURNALIST (TV)
Diego, today Naples roots against you. How does that feel?

DIEGO (TV)
Napoli's colors look more like Argentina's than Italy's.

BIANCA
Shit. He's right.

Corrado puts a cigarette in his mouth.

JOURNALIST
Anything to say to your fans?

DIEGO
No. No. They know I love them.

JOURNALIST
Come on. For the people of Naples.

Diego rolls his eyes, turning to the broadcast camera.

DIEGO
OK. Fine.

Corrado still hasn't lit the cigarette.

DIEGO
I want to remind the fans that
Naples is not Italy. In fact, today
is the only day they will claim
you. But me? I am a Neapolitan
every day of the year.

BIANCA
What a bunch of bullshit.

CORRADO (V.O.)
It was a really good line.

Corrado lights his smoke.

INT. SAN PAOLO TUNNEL - DAY

Diego stands at the front of Argentina's squad. Italy's
stands next to them.

The tunnel ceiling shakes. Concrete flakes both teams' heads.

Competing CHANTS accompanied by STOMPING.

The Ref, MICHEL VAUTROT nudges past. Short-haired. French.

Diego breaks out of the tunnel with a smile on his face --

INT. SAN PAOLO PITCH - CONTINUOUS

WHISTLES.

Louder than ever.

A tomato splats across his boots. He kicks it off.

DIEGO
What is it with this city and
fucking tomatoes?

Diego puts his smile back on and waves. Whistles BEAT LOUDER.

A direct response.

INT. CORRADO'S STUDY - DAY

The Argentine anthem. Players sing shoulder-to-shoulder.

WHISTLES drown out the whole thing as the camera pans to Diego. He's muttering.

BIANCA
What's he doing?

CORRADO
Probably can't remember the words.

Bianca chuckles. Corrado looks -- worried.

EXT. SAN PAOLO PITCH - CONTINUOUS

Diego is swearing under his breath.

DIEGO
Fucking inbred shits. I gave this
city everything. Everything I had.
This is how they repay me?

The anthem ends.

DIEGO
(to us)
Fuck them all.

Vautrot's WHISTLE takes us to kickoff.

KICKOFF

Italy wins the ball.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
Schillaci passes to Donadoni.

ROBERTO DONADONI, Italian midfielder, waits for it.

Diego slips a foot between his legs and pulls the ball out.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
And Maradona already dangerous!

He kicks it high to his teammate, GUSTAVO DEZOTTI.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
Dezotti now. With Maldini baring
down. Dezotti back to Maradona!

Diego launches upward and heads the ball -- out of play.

INT. CORRADO'S STUDY - DAY

Diego pounds the turf with his fist.

BIANCA
God, he's good.

CORRADO
I know. That's why we pay him.

Corrado pulls his chair closer.

EXT. SAN PAOLO PITCH - DAY

Argentina attack again. Diego bullets past PAOLO MALDINI, an Italian defender.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
Maradona with the ball.

He reaches the box.

Diego's eyes get big. Like a dog tracking a treat.

This is it.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
And here comes Ferrara.

Diego takes a shot -- a foot swats his ankle. He topples.

CIRO FERRARA, the culprit, shrugs it off and steals the ball.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
Oof. Questionable tackle.

Diego clutches his shin. Vautrot motions for him to get up.

WHISTLES rain down again.

Pippo is the loudest of the bunch. He reaches into his pocket, hurling another tomato.

PIPPPO

Go to Hollywood if you want to act!

Two feet sidle up to Diego.

FERNANDO DE NAPOLI. Italy midfielder and Diego's Napoli teammate. He extends a hand.

DE NAPOLI

Diego, get up. Come on.

Diego stays committed to the flop.

DE NAPOLI

You're embarrassing yourself.

Diego slaps the hand away and muscles to his feet.

He meets De Napoli's eye-line -- spitting on the turf.

DE NAPOLI

Don't be an asshole. We're friends.

Diego shoves past him.

DE NAPOLI

Hey, I'm talking to you.

De Napoli grabs his jersey -- Diego turns, pushing him.

They mash foreheads. Like bulls.

DIEGO

Don't touch me.

The crowd loses it.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)

Coaches should get involved here.

Benches clear. Players from both teams pull them apart.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)(PRE-LAP)

Schillaci! All alone in the box!

FIRST HALF

A ball bounces off the gloves of PUMPIDO, Argentina's keeper.

SALVATORE SCHILLACI, Italian striker, lunges for the rebound.

He kicks --

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
Goal! Italy draws first blood!

Schillaci throws his hands in the air. He runs to the stands and mimics Diego's celebration. He even pumps his fist.

Diego catches his breath at midfield. His vision blurs.

INT. CORRADO'S STUDY - NIGHT

Bianca claps as Corrado watches the replay.

BIANCA
We could get Schillaci.

CORRADO
Why? We won without him.

Corrado turns back, laser-focused. Bianca studies him.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
Again Maradona distributes in
traffic. He's got the whole team.

EXT. SAN PAOLO PITCH - DAY

Second half. Italy's defense circle Diego like sharks.

He dribbles out of a tackle -- then slips the ball through another one's legs. They keep coming.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
I'll just say it. I don't think
I've ever witnessed this level of
football before. Just incredible.

Diego blows a kiss to the crowd, carrying the ball upfield.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
Maradona plays a volley to
Caniggia! Nice opportunity here!

Caniggia launches high above two defenders.

He heads a ball just out of reach for Italy's keeper, ZENGA.

Goal.

Diego grins so wide his lips could tear.

He tackles Caniggia to the ground, kissing his face, then gets up and sprints to midfield, SCREAMING.

His scream PITCHES HIGHER as he passes Schillaci, leaning into his ear. Schillaci shoves him off.

SCHILLACI
Fucking psychopath.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)(PRE-LAP)
The final minute now. A last chance
for Argentina to upset the hosts.

ONE MINUTE LEFT

Play is slower. Diego gets the ball then passes it right back. Italy doesn't even give chase.

Neither side has anything left.

INT. CORRADO'S STUDY - NIGHT

Corrado hangs off his seat. Four more butts in the ash-tray.

Bianca moves to a bar cart.

BIANCA
I'm getting a drink. Want one?

CORRADO
Yes -- no -- yes -- I --

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
Maradona charges downfield again!

Bianca turns back, forgetting the drinks.

Diego is alone with the ball.

EXT. STADIO SAN PAOLO - NIGHT

Bright halogen breaks through evening haze.

Sweat coats the whole stadium. The fans. The Ref. Diego.

He gives it everything he has. His vocal chord WHEEZE. Like they could snap -- GALLOPS from behind.

Maldini chases, gaining fast.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
 Oh, Maldini is hot on his heels!
 Time is already expired!

Diego reaches the box.

Zenga comes out of goal, ready to block the shot.

Diego braces to kick. He looks past the goal. At the stands.

Rows of Neapolitans. All watching with sad eyes. Ready to have their hearts crushed.

He softens -- Vautrot WHISTLES the ball dead.

Time's up.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
 Regulation ends with a tie, so on
 we go to penalties.

INT. CORRADO'S STUDY - NIGHT

Corrado slumps back into his chair.

Bianca places a rocks glass into his hand. Whiskey.

CORRADO
 I told you I don't drink that.

BIANCA
 Make an exception. This shit is
 stressful.

Bianca untucks her dress shirt and sprawls on a couch opposite Corrado. She turns up the TV volume.

Pumpido does jumping jacks in goal.

FRANCO BARESI, Italian defender, tees off first.

Behind him Italy's team stands shoulder-to-shoulder.

The Argentines stand opposite, holding hands.

EXT. SAN PAOLO PITCH - NIGHT

Baresi jogs to the ball and hits it to the left --

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
 Goal!

YELLS of joy. High-fives for Italy's entire team.

Diego grits his teeth.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
Now Serrizuela for Argentina.

JOSE SERRIZUELA readies the ball.

He's quick. Zenga doesn't have time to settle before the ball rockets -- hitting the cross-bar, then --

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
It's in! Argentina keeps pace!

Argentina fans' CHEERS are drowned out by WHISTLES.

Goals keep coming:

BAGGIO sinks a crawler to the right for Italy.

BURRUCHAGA fires into Zenga's face, giving him a bloody nose.

DE AGOSTINI scores off the pole for Italy.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
I think we may be here all night.

OLARTICOECHEA chips one just out of Zenga's reach.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
Now Donadoni for Italy.

Donadoni fires right -- into Pumpido's hands.

Blocked.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
A massive play for Argentina!

Donadoni crumbles to the ground. Diego's jaw slacks open.

INT. CORRADO'S STUDY - NIGHT

Bianca drinks straight from the whiskey bottle now.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
With a chance to knock Italy from the cup here comes Naples' prodigal son, Diego Maradona.

CORRADO (V.O.)
It all felt scripted. Too perfect.

Diego keeps his eyes on the goal.

INT. SAN PAOLO PITCH - NIGHT

His gaze never leaves the net. Even when setting the ball.

Three steps back, counting them under his breath.

One... Two... Three...

Zenga claps his gloves together and flexes his neck.

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
For all his talent, Maradona isn't
a penalty specialist. This really
could go either way.

Diego clocks the crowd. The boy in his Napoli jersey flips him off. He closes his eyes, inhaling... then opens.

Zenga's feet bounce back and forth on the line.

Diego takes two long steps and -- Zenga jumps early.

The shot is clear as day. Easy. Money.

He rolls the ball left to a wide open --

BBC SPORTSCAST (V.O.)
Goal! That's it! It's all over!

Argentina's team ERUPTS.

They pile onto Diego, who breaks free and runs in the direction of Argentina's fans.

He meets each Italian WHISTLE with a wave goodbye.

DIEGO
Ciao! Ciao! Ciao, Napoli!

A tomato flies -- Diego dodges it and sticks out his tongue.

He CACKLES -- THUD -- a glass bottle hits his back. Diego stumbles, catching himself and looking at the crowd.

No whistles. No boos. Just quiet. Angry quiet.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Naples had finally united with
Italy... In a shared hate of Diego.

The WHISTLES bleed back in.

Burruchaga drags Diego to the tunnel.

Trash rains down from the stands.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Argentina lost the final to West
Germany in Rome. Italy cheered for
the Germans that day. And we *hate*
the Germans.

INSERT - COVER OF IL MATTINO

A graph of celebrity headshots on the cover.

'THE MOST HATED MEN IN ITALY'

CORRADO (V.O.)
They did a survey of the most
unliked men in Italy that year.
Diego was first. Over Saddam
Hussein. Saddam fucking Hussein.

An unflattering headshot of Diego at the top.

CORRADO (V.O.)
He lost the press. And the people.

INT. SUPERIOR COURT - DAY

Dark wood. Frescoes of Lady Justice on the ceiling.

A JUDGE perched on her bench scans some papers.

Silhouettes from the press crowd a glass door.

Cristiana Sinagra sits on one side of the aisle with baby
DIEGO JR and some friends. Mostly women.

Diego sits opposite with his lawyer.

JUDGE
OK. In the paternity case brought
against one Diego Armando Maradona,
I find the defendant liable and
responsible as the child's father.

She SLAMS a gavel -- the women celebrate, hugging Cristiana.

EXT. DIEGO'S APARTMENT - DAY

The front door to Diego's apartment swings open to Claudia.

Dalma in one arm and a suitcase in the other. She presses through a smaller paparazzi crowd.

Diego gives chase.

DIEGO
Claudia, get inside.

He grabs her shoulder -- she trips, nearly dropping Dalma.

CLAUDIA
Eat shit and die!

A sedan pulls up with her friend at the wheel. Claudia enters the passenger side. The friend throws her bag in the trunk.

They drive off -- leaving Diego in the street.

Cameras CLICK-CLICK at point-blank range.

PAPARAZZO
What did you do this time, Diego?

Diego grabs a camera and hurls it over a fence.

INT. DIEGO'S APARTMENT - DAY

Blankets over shutters. Pure darkness.

Diego lies prostrate on the couch. His fingers tap on his side now. He's inherited Corrado's anxiety.

The phone RINGS -- Diego scrambles, picking up.

DIEGO
Claudia?

CARMINE (PHONE)
Diego? It's me.

DIEGO
Oh, Carmine. Hi.

CARMINE (PHONE)
Are you alright?

DIEGO
Yeah. I thought you were in jail.

CARMINE (PHONE)
Guess I'm too slippery for them.

Diego chuckles.

DIEGO
Of course. Good for you, man.

INT. CARMINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tight on Carmine.

He leans on a bed-frame and presses the phone to his shoulder. There's a cigarette in his mouth.

CARMINE
Listen, I just saw the news. What that judge did to you is terrible.

DIEGO (PHONE)
The thanks I get for winning championships, I guess.

CARMINE
This city owes you more. We all do.

Carmine reaches for his cigarette with two handcuffed hands.

CARMINE
Is there anything I can get you?

DIEGO (PHONE)
Like what?

CARMINE
I don't know. Your usual maybe?

INT. DIEGO'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Diego sits up and scans the room. Mostly-empty.

DIEGO
Do you want to just come over?

INT. CARMINE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

We follow Carmine's eyes to the same Cop who arrested him. He wears a headset plugged into Carmine's phone and nods.

CARMINE
Yeah. Let's do it.

INT. DIEGO'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Diego paces.

DIEGO
Great. It's been lonely since
Claudia left.

CARMINE (PHONE)
She'll come back. I know it.

DIEGO
Thanks. See you soon.
(then)
Oh -- one more thing.

CARMINE (PHONE)
Yeah?

DIEGO
Could you bring some girls too?

INT. CARMINE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carmine's eyes pop. Jackpot.

The Cop smiles and gives him a thumb's up.

CARMINE
Girls?

DIEGO (PHONE)
And cocaine. Obviously.

CARMINE
Right. Obviously.

Diego hangs up. The Cop removes his headset.

COP
That was fucking perfect.

Carmine extends his handcuffs to him.

COP
Those stay on.

EXT. CORRADO'S GARDEN - DAY

Corrado is back to reading the paper at his coffee table.

The Gardener carries the biggest blue hydrangea yet towards another hole. He falls, dropping the plant.

CORRADO
You know how expensive those are?

GARDENER
Relax. It's a bush.

CORRADO
It's a blue hydrangea. That one
germinated from the *second* oldest
living plant in Italy.

The Gardener corrals the flower's loose roots.

CORRADO
Stop. I'll take care of it.

Corrado walks over, scooping the hydrangea with ginger hands.

He lowers it into the ground. Cornflower-blue petals that
match Napoli's jerseys. Corrado pats the dirt down, smiling.

BIANCA (O.S.)
Corrado, you have a visitor.

Corrado rises, locking eyes with a blonde man in a suit.

GIACOMO VERHALER (30s). Handsome. Put-together. Frosty.

BIANCA
This is Giacomo Verhaler. He's with
the city.

VERHALER
The state.

Corrado shakes Verhaler's hand.

CORRADO
You don't look Italian.

VERHALER
I'm from the north. Trento.

CORRADO
Ah! An Austrian!

VERHALER
No, it's still Italy.

CORRADO
How can I be of service?

VERHALER

I'm on dispatch from my department
to investigate fraudulent --

CORRADO

What department? I know a lot of
people in government.

VERHALER

The state police.

CORRADO

Ah.

Corrado forces a smile.

CORRADO (V.O.)

Shit.

VERHALER

We're handling the embezzlement and
racketeering charges brought
against Vincenzo Scotti.

CORRADO

Good. Good. Cleaning things up.

VERHALER

He undersigned a loan to your club.

CORRADO

Yes? And?

VERHALER

It matches the sum used to acquire
Diego Maradona from Barcelona.

CORRADO

Sorry, what exactly is the problem?

VERHALER

The Prime Minister's financial
policy has us taking a closer look
at accounts written off as a part
of criminal cases. If we want to
clean up a shithole like Naples,
we'll need every penny we can find.

Bianca bristles. Like she might say something. Corrado stares
her down.

CORRADO

I already wrote off the loan.

VERHALER

We're pursuing full repayment. Over a five year term, if that helps.

CORRADO

We can't pay it back that quickly.

CORRADO (V.O.)

This was true.

CORRADO

I was told I had total immunity.

CORRADO (V.O.)

This not so much.

VERHALER

Oh! You have total immunity?

CORRADO

Yes.

VERHALER

Why didn't you say so? In that case we can just forgive the loan.

Corrado's shoulders decompress. Off the hook. Maybe.

VERHALER

While we're at it, maybe we should make you mayor. You clearly know how to spend the city's money.

Verhaler keeps going.

VERHALER

They'll build you a statue. Maybe even a national holiday too.

CORRADO

Get the fuck off my property.

VERHALER

Payment is due end of the month.

Verhaler starts to the door, then stops.

VERHALER

By the way, we're arresting Diego Maradona on drug smuggling charges. Prostitution too. But I'm sure he has total immunity as well.

Corrado watches him leave. Fingers shake, tapping. Fast.

BIANCA
Corrado? Are you alright?

He clutches his chest.

His heartbeat THROBS.

BIANCA
Corrado?

He stumbles back, smushing the hydrangeas.

Bianca crouches over him. He can barely get the words out, but uses his last breaths to address us.

CORRADO
In the end... It was Naples that gave me... The heart attack.

BIANCA
Who are you talking to?

EXT. DIEGO'S APARTMENT - DAY

The biggest paparazzi crowd yet.

Police escort a hand-cuffed Diego into a van.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Italy took the Argentina game personally. *Especiallly* Naples.

They shove him into the back -- slamming the doors.

CORRADO (V.O.)
This isn't rock-bottom, by the way.
In the 90s, if you had money you could get out of jail in an hour.
All they had taken was his dignity.

Diego watches from the van window like a dog. Cameras continue to flash.

CORRADO (V.O.)
But then they took his purpose.

INT. DALLAS PRESS ROOM - DAY

1994 WORLD CUP. DALLAS. 1994.

The press are better behaved than usual, taking seats in an auditorium. Big podium. Big stage. Big spotlight.

Stepping to the podium is SEPP BLATTER (60s). Swiss. Round eye glasses. A neat suit that's too tight.

BLATTER

I will now read FIFA's decision
concerning the case of banned
substance use in World Cup matches.

He reads from a sheet in front of him.

BLATTER

The 1994 FIFA World Cup USA
committee concluded through
analysis that urine samples
provided by Argentina player Diego
Armando Maradona tested positive
for substances not allowed by FIFA.

The room unravels to whispers. Blatter talks over them.

BLATTER

This will result in a fifteen month
ban from all football activities,
effective immediately.

PROTESTS. He's losing the room.

BLATTER

Including! Including! Please!
(the group settles)
Including club football, which Mr.
Maradona cannot participate in
regardless of jurisdiction.

Blatter loses them permanently.

An Argentine delegate charges the podium, TALKING OVER
Blatter in Spanish as he tries to finish.

CORRADO (V.O.)

I never even got a chance to say
goodbye. Or thank you.

EXT. DIEGO'S APARTMENT - DAY

Pino and Bianca stand behind Corrado as he RINGS a door bell.

No answer -- he goes to ring again.

BIANCA

You've rung it five times. He's
clearly not home.

Corrado moves back, yelling up.

CORRADO

Diego?

An old woman pokes her head out a window.

OLD WOMAN

Would you knock it off?

CORRADO

Sorry, madam. I'm looking for the Maradonas. Are they in?

OLD WOMAN

In? They moved out, thank God.

She shuts her window. Corrado turns to Pino.

CORRADO

Do you still have the spare?

Pino fishes into his pocket.

INT. DIEGO'S APARTMENT - DAY

They crack the door to an empty apartment.

Cardboard boxes. That's it.

BIANCA

She wasn't kidding.

PINO

I'll cancel his contract.

CORRADO (V.O.)

Like a cowboy in a Western, he rode off -- but not into the sunset.

Corrado picks something off the ground.

CORRADO (V.O.)

Into a giant avalanche of shit.

The copy of 'IL MATTINO' featuring Italy's most hated men.

INT. CORRADO'S STUDY - NIGHT

Corrado watches TV.

NEWCASTER (TV)
Disgraced footballer Diego Maradona
was arrested today in Buenos Aires
on new drug-related charges.

A video shows Diego hauled across a rough-looking Buenos Aires block. He's fatter and has missed a couple shaves.

Corrado looks up at us.

CORRADO
I sold the team. It wasn't the same
without Diego. To me he was Napoli.

Tears pool in his eyes.

CORRADO
I tried calling. He never answered.
I hope he knew it was me.
(then)
He deserved to be remembered the
right way. But what could I do? I
was just one man. And he was a god.

He exhales, swallowing the tears and smiling.

EXT. DIQUE LUJAN, BUENOS AIRES - DAY

Bright lights and cameras at the edge of a gated community.

Rain pours on an Argentine crowd watching a BBC REPORTER.

BBC REPORTER
A crowd has gathered outside the
community where football legend
Diego Maradona was resting after a
near-fatal cardiac arrest. He died
of Coronavirus this evening.

BLACK

CORRADO (V.O.)
But in all my sadness I forgot one
very important thing...

INSERT - LIVE FOOTAGE OF NAPLES' MARADONA TRIBUTE

Fire. Flares. Flags as tall as buildings.

Enough vigil candles to light an Arctic winter.

CORRADO (V.O.)
 Naples is not a city.

Bouquets adorn the feet of a giant Maradona mural.

CORRADO
 It's a living thing, filled with
 emotion. With love. With heart.

A grandmother hobbles up with her granddaughter's help. She
 reaches into her coat -- pulling off her bra.

DAUGHTER
 Nonna, what are you doing?

She grabs the bra and scoots her away.

It's like every one of the million mourners lost a lover. A
 son. A brother. A friend.

Night falls.

CORRADO (V.O.)
 Diego's death awakened something in
 us. The city's heart was beating
 again. Everyone could feel it.

Mourning turns festive -- flares POPPING. Fireworks CRACKING
 into storefronts. The harbor is on fire again.

MA-RA-DO-NA -- CLAP-CLAP-CLAP-CLAP.

Someone leads the CHANT from the top of Salita Del Petraio.

Of course it's Pippo.

Worse for wear but still alive. He pumps his fist and carries
 an oxygen machine in his free hand.

CORRADO (V.O.)
 Diego would've loved to see this. A
 parade all for him.

MA-RA-DO-NA -- CLAP-CLAP-CLAP-CLAP.

EXT. CORRADO'S GARDEN - DAY

Corrado in his 90s. Still spry. Still smoking.

He cuts a sprig from the now burgeoning blue hydrangeas.

CORRADO (V.O.)
It feels like he *is* here. Somewhere
in the city. I can't explain it.

Corrado twirls the sprig in his fingers.

INSERT - CORRADO PAYING HIS RESPECTS

Helped by a middle-aged Bianca, Corrado cuts a path to Maradona's mural. The crowd parts for him, CLAPPING.

He lays the hydrangea flower at the foot of the wall.

CORRADO
You know, there was one thing Diego
was very right about.
(turning to us)
Naples is *not* Italy.

EXT. STADIO SAN PAOLO - DAY

An even bigger mural climbs the concrete columns.

Flowers and framed photos pile around the entrance as Napoli fans swarm in.

It's game day.

CORRADO (V.O.)
Naples is fucking Naples.

A new sign hangs over the entrance.

STADIO DIEGO ARMANDO MARADONA. 2021

CORRADO (V.O.)
And that's the way we like it.

NIGHTFALL

Mid-match now.

Drums THUMP along to CHANTS -- a goal.

CHEERING ERUPTS -- shaking our camera a little.

The new sign swings back... And forth...

Then steadies.

THE END