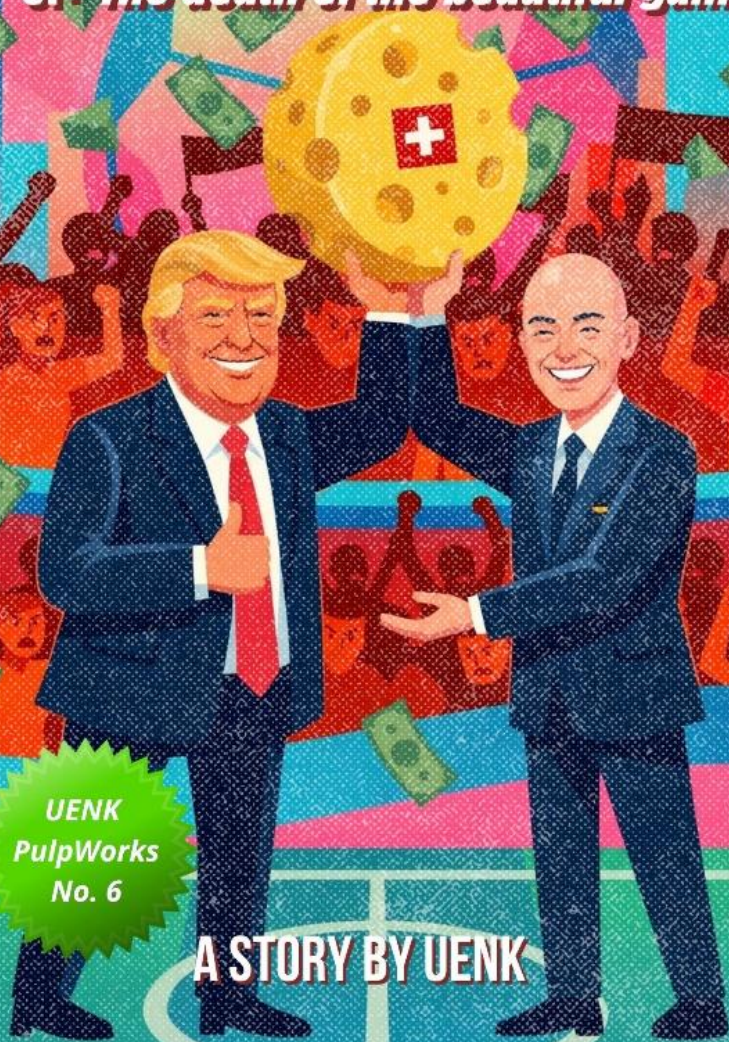


THE DON AND THE WORLD CUP

or: *The death of the beautiful game*



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No. 6

A STORY BY UENK

**THE DON AND
THE WORLD CUP
OR:
THE DEATH OF THE
BEAUTIFUL GAME**

a story by UENK

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OR: THE DEATH OF THE BEAUTIFUL GAME
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About the Publication

Genre:

Satirical Pulp Action / Political Parody

Core Theme:

A biting satire on the death of sport, where the soul of the game is hollowed out and replaced by a grotesque, gold-plated machine of corporate greed, property deals, and overripe cheese.

**** THE LEGENDS ****

*"Football is a game of mistakes.
Whoever makes the fewest mistakes
wins. But the biggest mistake is
thinking the game is about the
rules, rather than the ball."*

**— Johan Cruyff,
legendary footballer**

*"The World Cup is a very important
way to measure people, but it is
also a big business."*

— Pelé, King of Football

**** THE PERSONALITIES ****

*"Listen, I've seen stadiums, okay?
I've seen the best stadiums. But
this? This isn't a stadium; this is a
real-estate miracle."*

— **Dino 'The Don' Trumpino**

*"Today, I don't just feel like a
president. Today, I feel like a
craftsman."*

— **Gonzo Infantilo,
President of VIVA**

FOREWORD

Reality tends to overtake fiction, especially when the world of big money and global sport collide at a gold-paved crossroads. Anyone watching the world stage in recent years has seen characters so grotesque that no screenwriter would have dared invent them. We see men in suits that are far too tight, talking about ethics while lining their pockets with the proceeds of hole-ridden deals; we see property moguls rezoning entire coastlines for the sake of a "friendly" tournament.

It is a landscape perfectly suited for satire. In fact, sometimes satire is the only way to truly grasp the madness.

Meanwhile, the common folk look on. The fans—the people who actually bring colour to the terraces—watch the world's power players in silence, sometimes with cynicism,

but always with a critical eye. In the pubs of Cheesel and the backstreets of the big cities, the people grumble and groan about corruption, the cost of "Ticket Mortgages," and the sheer absurdity of modern football. Yet, beneath that layer of discontent lies an indestructible hope.

Despite everything, we crave that one unforgettable tournament. We want to feel the magic of the ball, to escape the daily grind for a moment, and to believe in a fairy tale—even if we know the giant in the story wears a red tie, and the castle is built of cheese.

In that sense, the World Cup is a microcosm. It reflects everything humanity has to offer: the boundless passion, the brotherhood, and the beauty of the game, but also the greed, the vanity, and the ugly opportunism of the boardroom. It is a mirror in which we see ourselves, magnified

and distorted by the harsh neon lights of the commercial spectacle.

Sometimes, things happen that are simply hard to believe. Moments where the line between an official press release and an absurdist farce blurs entirely. In those moments, when the gravity of the situation threatens to stifle us, there is, thankfully, always humour. Because if we can no longer laugh at it, then they have truly won.

This book is an ode to that laugh. An invitation to stare into the abyss with a wink and to embrace the absurdity.

Enjoy the story.

UENK

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PROLOGUE

The Substitutes' Bench and the Bitter Scent of Ambition

In the sleepy Swiss canton where the mountains are so high the locals suffer from chronic oxygen deprivation, lies the little town of Cheesel. This was the place where a young Gonzo Infantilo took his first steps on the hallowed turf of the local football pitch. Or rather, his first steps towards the substitutes' bench—a spot he kept warm with almost religious devotion. While the Alpine wind howled bleakly past the corner flags, Gonzo sat on a wooden plank that by now bore the exact imprint of his backside.

Gonzo was eleven years old, had a haircut that looked suspiciously like a failed cheese fondue, and possessed the physical stature of a stunted asparagus. While the other boys in the B-team—the region's

rejects who couldn't hit a ball even if it were tied to their laces—dreamed of world-class goals, Gonzo dreamed of something far grander: administrative power.

He stared at the posters above his bed of the Italian greats from the 80s. He worshipped the grace of Alessandro Altobelli and the cold-bloodedness of the strikers who could send an entire nation into ecstasy with a single movement. But in his daydreams, he didn't see himself scoring in the final; he saw himself scheduling the final. He envisioned a World Cup that didn't last four weeks but 365 days. A tournament where every country in the world was allowed to participate, provided they paid a decent entry fee. A tournament where he, Gonzo, would be the referee of fate, the guardian of the trophy, and the sole owner of the television rights.

But the reality in Cheesel was far less golden.

"Infantilo!" roared Coach Stucky, a man with a moustache so saturated with the smell of old milk and cheap tobacco that it possessed its own microclimate. Stucky deposited an impressive glob of spit precisely between the toes of Gonzo's boots. "You're on the bench again today. And tomorrow. And probably for the rest of your natural life."

"But Coach," Gonzo squeaked, rubbing his shiny, never-before-used boots. "I've studied the tactical diagrams of Serie A. If we play in a diamond formation with a false nine—"

"Shut your trap, featherweight," Stucky cut him off. "You've got the vision of a blind mole and the pace of a glacier. Football is for men with muscles and mud on their knees, not for little boys who

come to training with a calculator. Sit down. And stay down."

Gonzo was profoundly miserable. He understood early on that the man who kicks the ball is merely a footnote in the annals of sport, while the man who owns the ball writes history. He felt a burning ambition in his stomach, which he initially mistook for a mild form of lactose intolerance, but which was, in reality, a hunger for absolute control.

As he watched his teammates clumsily trip over their own feet, Gonzo knew one thing for certain: one day, he would no longer have to beg for a place on the pitch. One day, the greatest stars in the world would bow before him. He would become the king of the sport, the architect of an empire where the sun never set. But for the time being, there he sat. On a cold plank in the shadow of the Alps. Waiting for an opportunity that would

come not through talent, but through something far more powerful: a transaction that even Coach Stucky would be unable to refuse.

CHAPTER 1

The Empire of the Don

At the top of Trumpino Tower, in an office where even the toilet paper likely had a gold leaf edge, sat Dino ‘The Don’ Trumpino. He looked out at the view, straightened his silk tie, and inhaled the scent of success—a cocktail of hairspray, steak, and pure power.

"Billy! Get in here, fast. Look at this city. Have you ever seen anything like it? I built this. People said it couldn't be done, but I did it. And now we're going to do it with sport. But bigger. Much bigger," The Don said, his hands playing an invisible accordion.

Billy Fritz stepped forward with the map. "The stadiums are ready, Don. Camp Trumpino I through V. They are state-of-the-art."

"State-of-the-art? Billy, they're palaces. They are the most beautiful things humanity has ever seen. The Pyramids? Boring. The Great Wall of China? A lot of rocks, not many windows. My stadiums... now those are monuments. But we have a problem. A very big problem. And that problem is called Mexico and Canada. They want to steal our World Cup. Can you believe it?"

The Don pointed at the map and pulled a face as if he'd just bitten into a sour lemon.

"Canada... a lot of snow. Nobody likes snow. The Canadians are very nice, but they have no energy. And Mexico? Very hot. And the crime there, Billy... you don't want to be there. We're going to shut them out. We'll say their pitches are full of... I don't know, very dangerous plants. Or bad tacos. The fans will beg to stay in America. 'Please, Don, save us from the snow!' they'll say."

The gold telephone on the desk rang. It was the direct line to Switzerland. The Don hit the speakerphone.

"Gonzo! My amazing friend from the mountains! How's the cheese? I heard your factory is a bit... well, it's not doing great, is it? A disaster, even. But don't you worry. You're talking to the best dealmaker in the world," The Don roared. On the other end of the line came the smooth, almost liquid voice of Gonzo Infantilo. "Dino, my factory needs a boost. And VIVA needs a host nation that... cooperates."

"Cooperate? Gonzo, we're going to do things nobody thought possible. I have the best stadiums. I have the best people. And I have the shirts. Melany! Show him the shirts!"

Melany Trumpino strolled into the room, waving a shirt so bright a gold that Billy Fritz had to squint.

"It is gold," Melany said in her thick accent. "I make it very shiny. For the power. And the money. Also, it matches my handbag."

"Do you see that, Gonzo?" The Don shouted enthusiastically. "Gold shirts! The other teams will be blinded. Literally. They won't know where the ball is because my players will be shining like little suns. It'll be beautiful. But we need a deal. An 'Art of the Cheese' deal. You give me all the matches—forget Canada, forget Mexico, they're over—and I'll sell your holey cheese in every stadium. We'll call it 'Victory Cheese'. People will love it. They'll say, 'Don, this is the best cheese I've ever eaten, really.'"

"And my percentage?" Gonzo asked cautiously.

The Don laughed, a short, sharp sound. "Billy handles the numbers. Billy's a genius, Ivy League, very smart boy. But listen, Gonzo: we're going to win. We're going to win so hard that people won't even recognise the sport anymore. It's going to be a spectacle. A Trumpino spectacle. And the rest of the world? They can watch us lift the cup. And eat a bit of cheese, of course. A very expensive bit of cheese."

The Don hung up and looked at Billy.

"Prepare the press conference. And make sure the microphone is turned up loud. I want them to hear me crying in Canada."

CHAPTER 2

The Wisdom of Mother

As the chilly Alpine wind whistled through the cracks of their modest home, Gonzo sat at the kitchen table. He stared at his hands, which had never struck a ball hard enough to bend a single blade of grass. He was profoundly miserable. The humiliations dealt by Coach Stucky burned more fiercely in his soul than the carpet burns on his teammates' knees. He felt that burning ambition flare up in his gut once more. He had the laws of physics against him, the laws of genetics, and the coach's implacable moustache. It was his mother, Mrs Infantilo—a woman who viewed the world through a haze of bleach and an indestructible maternal spirit of sacrifice—who held the key to his success.

She stood over a steaming zinc tub, her arms red from scrubbing. She looked up and saw the tears in her son's eyes; with his fondue-style haircut, he looked even more vulnerable than usual.

"Gonzo," she said, wringing out a pair of dripping sports shorts with impressive precision. "Do not weep for a game they won't let you play. The world isn't fair, but the world is for sale. If they won't let you play because you're good, make them let you play because they need you."

Gonzo furrowed his brow. "But how, Mama? I can't run. I can't shoot. I'm a 'blind mole', the coach says."

Mrs Infantilo placed a hand on his shoulder. Her skin smelled of Marseille soap and power. "Look at this mountain of laundry, my son. The boys in the first team, the stars of the region... they are big and strong on the pitch, but at home, they are helpless. They stink. Their

mothers complain. The coach hates the stench in his washroom."

She pointed to a pile of muddy, foul-smelling underpants. "Power doesn't live in the legs, Gonzo. Power lies in solving other people's filthy problems. If you are the one who clears up the mess that no one else wants to touch, then you are the one who sets the rules."

On that Tuesday evening, amidst the vapours of boiling water and bleach, the penny finally dropped for young Gonzo. He understood that loyalty wasn't earned with goals, but with dependency. He didn't need to be the best; he just had to become the most indispensable cleaner in the world of sport.

"Tomorrow," he said, a new, icy glint in his eyes, "I'm going to the club. And I'm taking the soap."

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UENK PulpWorks was born from a lifelong passion for cinema and literature. Drawing inspiration from the shifting tides of global politics and the striking visual language of vintage propaganda posters, I wanted to create something unique for the modern reader. By blending

these influences with today's appetite for fast-paced, punchy content, I began crafting stories under the name **UENK** (pronounced like 'dunk' without the 'D'). On our website, you will find a collection of short stories and novellas, all available through Amazon.

If you enjoyed this book, **please consider leaving a review** on Amazon or our website—it is the fuel that keeps the revolution running. I truly hope you enjoy reading these tales as much as I enjoyed bringing them to life.

This is biting satire and high-octane pulp designed to hook you from the very first page. **Join the Pulp Revolution**—we cut through the noise of fake news with real, raw storytelling.

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