

# THE SECRET LIFE OF GONZO INFANTILO

THE PREQUEL TO  
"THE DON AND THE WORLD CUP"



a story by UENK

**THE SECRET LIFE OF**

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# **ABOUT THE PUBLICATION**

Genre: Pulp/Satire

Core Theme: The Industrialisation of Corruption and the Death of Sport Through Bureaucratic Absurdity

***"THE MAN WHO KICKS THE BALL IS MERELY A FOOTNOTE IN  
HISTORY; THE MAN WHO OWNS THE BALL WRITES THE  
RULES."***

***"COMFORT IS FOR AMATEURS; ONE RADIATED POWER BY  
DEFYING THE PHYSICAL LAWS OF TAILORING."***

## PROLOGUE

### *THE BOY ON THE CLIFF*

The Alpine wind howling through the valley of Cheesel possessed the deeply unpleasant habit of tasting like icy meltwater and the bitter disappointment of failed athletic careers.

On a dangerously steep mountain cliff, stood eleven-year-old Gonzo Infantilo. Around him, the alpine meadows bloomed in vibrant, almost psychedelic colours, and the snow-capped peaks stood sentinel over the Swiss landscape. It looked like the back of a postcard that had been aggressively coloured in by an over-enthusiastic tourist. But the look in young Gonzo's eyes was anything but romantic.

He wore his trusty green shorts, sturdy leather hiking boots, and a retro sports cap that largely concealed his haircut, which tragically resembled a cross between a failed cheese fondue and a depressed pony. Under his right arm, he held a classic, leather T-pattern football clutched tightly.

He squeezed it so hard that his small knuckles turned white and the leather seams groaned under the pressure.

Deep below him, in the literal shadow of the massive mountain ranges, lay the lonely, perfectly green football pitch of Cheesel FC. From this height, the players looked like ants. Ants running for their honour. Ants tripping over their own feet. And there, right next to the touchline, sat the substitutes' bench—the cold wooden plank that by now bore the exact, permanent imprint of Gonzo's backside.

Merely fifteen minutes ago, Coach Stucky—a man whose giant moustache was so saturated with the aromas of heavy tobacco and cheap, sour milk that it possessed its own microclimate—had deposited an impressive glob of spit precisely between the toes of Gonzo's brand-new football boots.

"Infantilo!" Stucky had roared to the heavens, the echo bouncing violently off the rock faces. "You've got the tactical vision of a blind mole and the pure baseline pace of an advancing glacier. Football is for men with muscles in their legs and dried mud on

their knees. It's not for pale, skinny little boys who come to training with a calculator and a Serie A diagram. Sit down on that plank. And stay down until the next ice age."

The humiliation burned more fiercely in Gonzo's stomach than the mild lactose intolerance he had suffered from since birth. He had packed his things, stolen the club's leather match ball under his arm, and sprinted up the mountain like a man possessed, away from the pitch, away from Stucky's moustache.

Now he stood here, at the highest point of the cliff. He looked at the ball under his arm. Even at eleven years old, he already understood the fundamental flaw that all those sweating idiots in the valley were making: they thought the game was about the man who kicked the ball. What poverty of mind. What a lack of vision. The man who kicks the ball is merely a footnote in history; the man who *owns* the ball writes the rules.

Gonzo unzipped the heavy backpack resting on his young shoulders. There was no provision in it for a healthy Alpine hike. The bag was stuffed to the brim

with thirty pairs of muddy, foul-smelling, unwashed sports shorts belonging to the first team of Cheesel FC. It was the spoils of a historic deal his mother, Mrs Infantilo, had struck that very morning with the club's treasurer.

"Let them run and sweat for a plastic trophy," Gonzo whispered into the wind, his gaze hardening into the emotionless state of a VIVA bureaucrat in the making. "I am no longer running. From this day forward, I control the logistical chain. Peaceful in the mountains, but deadly in the margins."

He looked up once more at the threatening, purple-pink sky enveloping the mountain peaks of the Swiss mountains. It was a splendid backdrop for the birth of a dictatorship. Gonzo turned around and began his descent, back to the steaming wash-house of his mother, where the true foundations of his global empire would be laid.

## CHAPTER 1

### *THE SCENT OF LAVENDER AND SKID MARKS*

Years passed, and back in the village, the walls of the modest Infantilo home did not smell of the fresh mountain air from the cover, but of a suffocating mist of Marseille soap, bleach, and pure maternal sacrifice. Mrs Infantilo stood over a steaming zinc tub, her forearms bright red from scrubbing.

When she saw her son enter with the stolen ball and the heavy backpack full of laundry, she nodded approvingly. She wrung out a pair of sports shorts with a mechanical precision that was nothing short of terrifying.

"Good boy, Gonzo," she said, tucking a strand of grey hair behind her ear. "Those boys in the valley think they are kings because they can leather a sphere into a net. But tomorrow they'll come crying to me because their mothers refuse to scrub the skid marks of heavy Swiss sausages out of their kit. Remember what I told you: if you are the one who

cleans up the filth that no one else wants to touch, you own their secrets. And whoever owns the secrets dictates the starting line-up."

The effect of 'Operation Laundry' was noticeable the very next afternoon. Coach Stucky—who loathed the aromas of thirty ripening adolescents ripening in his washroom like spoiled Brie—suddenly saw an 'unprecedented tactical genius' in little, skinny Gonzo. The boy who normally couldn't pass a lamp post without walking into it was suddenly starting as a striker.

Gonzo still rarely touched the ball. He ran across the pitch like a confused goose among the alpine flowers. But every time Stucky considered subbing him, the coach thought of the brilliant white, lavender-scented underpants waiting for him at home, and he left Gonzo on.

It was during those muddy afternoons that Gonzo learned the most important lesson of his life, the lesson that would later form the bedrock of his alliance with Dino Trumpino: Transactions beat Talent.

As he stood on the pitch, watching his teammates clumsily trip over their own feet, Gonzo knew one thing for certain: he was no longer the little boy begging for a place in the game. He had become the director of a liquid currency, the wash-master of power. The only thing he needed now was a larger stage. A stage where he didn't wash the dirty laundry of Cheesel FC, but instead managed the financial deficits of the entire global sporting bureaucracy.

## CHAPTER 2

### *THE LACTOSE EMPIRE IN DECAY*

By the time the glaciers had slowly but irrevocably shifted across the rocks, Gonzo Infantilo had risen smoothly through the ranks of the football bureaucracy. The fondue haircut of his youth was entirely gone, replaced by a skull so monumentally bald and buffed to such a high shine that local mountain guides claimed it could be used as a beacon for stranded climbers on sunny days. He had traded his short trousers and retro cap from the cover for an absurdly tight, dark blue Italian suit. The jacket gripped his torso so unmercifully that his lungs were legally entitled to only thirty per cent of their actual capacity, but Gonzo didn't care. Comfort was for amateurs; one radiated power by defying the physical laws of tailoring. Then, tragedy struck the family. His uncle passed away, leaving Gonzo an inheritance that sounded beautiful on paper, but was an administrative black

hole in reality: the local cheese factory, *L'Oro di Gruyère*.

"It's a disaster, Gonzo," lamented the factory's chief accountant, nervously twitching his braces. "The world has changed. The youth in the cities don't want heavy, fatty Swiss cheese that smells like a damp stable. They want trendy protein shakes, vegan oat milk, and gluten-free rice cakes. Nobody is waiting for an Emmental with holes you can fit your fist through. We are currently producing three hundred per cent more debt than dairy."

Gonzo walked through the freezing, subterranean ripening cellars of the factory. Around him, tens of thousands of heavy, yellow wheels of cheese were stacked up to the ceiling. The stench of fermenting bacteria and ammonia was so intense that the accountant's tooth enamel practically cracked on the spot.

Gonzo stopped in front of a giant wheel of Emmental. He looked at the perfect round holes. Then he looked at his own reflection in a stainless-steel milk tank and saw his own, perfectly round,

bald head. The resemblance was eerie, almost spiritual.

"You're looking at it the wrong way, Jacob," Gonzo said, his voice now an incredibly smooth, liquid purr. "You see bankruptcy. I see an opportunity. If consumers won't eat my cheese voluntarily, then I will alter the laws of global sport so that they have no other choice."

"But how?" the accountant stammered. "We can't force VIVA to sell cheese!"

Gonzo narrowed his eyes into two tiny slits, exactly as he had done as an eleven-year-old on the cliff of Cheesel.

"The men in the boardrooms of international football have a weakness for tradition," Gonzo spoke, gently buffing a non-existent speck of dust from his shiny skull with a silk handkerchief. "And more importantly, they have a weakness for free luxury. We aren't going to sell these cheeses in supermarkets. We are going to 'donate' them to the VIP lounges. Every committee seat decision, every television rights vote, every friendly tournament hosting deal... a free pallet of *L'Oro di Gruyère* will

be waiting. We will become the mandatory fuel of sports diplomacy."

To secure the surplus stock that was already beginning to turn, Gonzo ordered half the inventory to be hidden deep within the ice caves of the surrounding Alps; the very same glaciers that had formed the backdrop of his childhood. In the glacial crevasses, isolated from the world, the cheese mutated into a substance so sharp, so pungent, and so unforgettable that it became a strategic weapon of pure leverage.

Gonzo knew he had outgrown the laundry chain. He now possessed liquid, edible gold. It was time to leave the valley for good and consult the master architect of total sporting dominance: the great patriarch in his secret Alpine bunker, Zed Bladder.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### ***THE ALPINE BUNKER OF ZED BLADDER***

High above the snow-capped mountain peaks that shot into the heavens on the cover of the Swiss mountains, a bitter storm stripped the last remnants of humanity from the rocks. Here, at an altitude where the locals suffered from chronic oxygen deprivation, lay a camouflaged Cold War bunker. This was the place of exile for Zed Bladder, the fallen king of global sport.

Gonzo Infantilo stepped out of the all-terrain vehicle, his tight suit frozen stiff by the glacial wind. He knocked three times on the heavy steel door. The lock clicked. Inside, the atmosphere was a grotesque mixture of rustic Swiss warmth and the cold atmosphere of a mafia headquarters. Framed shirts of deceased football legends lined the walls, illuminated by the flickering light of an open hearth where stacks of old VIVA financial ledgers served as firewood.

At the head of a massive oak table sat Zed Bladder. The man had elevated corruption to a fine art form. He sliced off a paper-thin sliver of air-dried beef with a golden pocket knife and eyed Gonzo with a heavy, yet razor-sharp gaze.

"Gonzo," Bladder whispered, his voice sounding like pebbles being ground in a glacial mill. "My favourite laundry assistant from the valley. I hear you have the administration of the Swiss association firmly in your pocket."

"I learned from the best, Master," Gonzo said, bowing politely—as far as his tight jacket would allow. "But I am stuck. The traditional associations, the Germans, the English... they talk constantly about 'sporting integrity' and 'historical ethics'. They are blocking my plans to commercially optimise VIVA."

Bladder laughed, a short, dry cough that sounded like an envelope full of cash tearing open.

"Ethics? Sporting integrity? What beautiful, expensive words for people who simply haven't received the right offer yet," the old patriarch smiled. "Listen well, Gonzo. The mistake the big

countries make is thinking their vote is worth more because they have more citizens. But in the statutes of VIVA, every vote is equal. The vote of a tiny island nation in the Pacific, where they still kick a ball made of palm leaves, weighs the same as three-time world champions Germany."

Bladder leaned forward, the flames of the hearth reflecting in his wrinkled face.

"You don't need to convince the big footballing nations, Gonzo. You buy the small island states. And how do you do that? Not with complicated television deals. You give them 'development aid'. You turn up with a suitcase full of cash, or better yet, with that stinking surplus dairy stock of yours. You host a fondue evening for their executives. The mountain air and the melted cheese make the mind weak. Before the night is out, they will sign any piece of paper you put in front of them."

Gonzo felt the familiar burning ambition flare up in his gut—the exact hunger he had felt thirty years ago on the cliff of Cheesel. The circle was complete. His mother's wisdom regarding other people's dirty

laundry melted perfectly into the grand macro-strategy of Zed Bladder.

"And remember the most important rule of this boardroom," Bladder whispered, driving his golden knife into the oak table. "The ball is round, Gonzo. But the table where we make the deals is square. Make sure you are always sitting at the head of that table."

When the inevitable happened a few months later, and Zed Bladder had to clear the field following a series of highly unfortunate "misunderstandings" with the FBI and tax authorities, his most devoted pupil stood ready in the wings. Gonzo inherited not just Bladder's network of dependent island nations, but hijacked the presidency of the most powerful organisation on earth with an overwhelming majority: VIVA—the *Vested Interests & Victory Alliance*.

The transformation of the mountain-walking asparagus from the cover was now complete. Gonzo Infantilo had become a polished cyborg of administrative dictatorship. And he was ready to

unleash his ultimate masterpiece upon the world:  
the 365-Day Plan.

## CHAPTER 4

### ***THE CHEESE POLICE AND THE BLINDING AUDIT***

With Bladder's legacy secured in his inside pocket, Gonzo transformed VIVA into a private militia of conflicts of interest. His first official act as president was the creation of a brand-new internal security division: The Cheese Police. Men with the emotional depth of a freezer unit were poured into tight, yellow uniforms, complete with an insignia of a smiling wheel of Emmental on their chests. Their mission? To enforce Gonzo's dictates across all member associations. Anyone refusing to sign his contracts received a visit from this yellow brigade, who subtly reminded them of the 'dirty laundry' VIVA still held in the cellar.

Just as the 365-Day Plan—the megalomaniacal vision to stretch the World Cup across three hundred and sixty-five days a year to dump *L'Oro di Gruyère's* entire stock—was about to launch, disaster struck.

The FBI raided the building.

Six agents in dark blue jackets, led by Chief Investigator Miller, marched straight into the glass boardroom in Zurich. Miller carried a dossier so thick it would give the average lawyer a spontaneous hernia.

"Mr Infantilo," Miller snapped, shining a bright, portable halogen lamp directly into Gonzo's face. "We have documents indicating massive fraud, bribery of island states, and illicit global dairy streams. Talk. Now."

Gonzo remained icy calm. His suit was so tight he literally *couldn't* shake. He looked directly into the piercing beam of the halogen lamp.

At that moment, something occurred that the FBI Academy had never prepared its agents for. Gonzo's skull, buffed that very morning with Swiss precision-wax, functioned as a flawless parabolic mirror. The harsh halogen light struck his bald head and reflected with the devastating power of a lighthouse directly back into the pupils of the six agents.

"My eyes! Good lord, I'm blind!" screamed one of the agents, stumbling dazed into a marble pillar.

Miller held his hands over his face, but the blinding glare of Gonzo's administrative purity sliced right through his fingers. "Turn that lamp off! Turn it off!"

"I am doing nothing, Mr Miller," Gonzo said, his voice dripping like warm syrup. "That is simply the sheer transparency of VIVA reflecting at you."

## CHAPTER 5

### *THE GOLDEN LINE TO NEW YORK*

While the FBI agents were still seeing spots and waving their arms in the air like blind men, Gonzo reached into his briefcase with his spotless silk gloves. He pulled out a razor-sharp silver knife and a hefty chunk of glacier-matured *L'Oro di Gruyère*. He walked up to Miller, who was wheezing with his back against the wall. Gonzo knew from the dossier that Miller suffered from a mild form of lactose intolerance. A perfect strategic vulnerability.

"In Switzerland, Mr Miller, it is a legal tradition to conclude a formal audit with a tasting of national cultural heritage," Gonzo whispered, forcing the pungent chunk of cheese hard into the open, gasping mouth of the investigator. "Chew. Swallow. And experience the taste of the Victory Alliance." The combination of the intense ammonia fumes, the blinding reflection, and the sudden dairy onslaught was too much for Miller. His stomach began to rumble dangerously, and his brain

switched entirely to survival mode. In a state of deep, cheese-induced confusion, Miller grabbed his pen and signed the document Gonzo slid before him—a statement in which the FBI officially declared VIVA to be the most ethical organisation on earth, and formally registered the FBI as a principal sponsor of the perpetual World Cup tournament.

"Thank you for your cooperation," Gonzo said smoothly, as the Cheese Police escorted the weeping agents to the exit.

Ten minutes later, peace had returned to the marble catacombs. Gonzo stood behind his desk of polished obsidian. He looked up at the wall, where the framed, unwashed sports shorts from his childhood hung—his compass, his reminder of the Cheesel FC bench.

The FBI had been neutralised. The Cheese Police manned the glacier passes. The factory's debts were about to be vaporised by billion-dollar deals. He had completely outgrown the boy on the cliff from the Swiss mountains; he now owned the ball, the rules, and the stomach lining of his opponents.

Only one thing was missing: a partner who was just as shameless as he was. A man who spoke the language of pure power with the accent of a roaring bulldozer crushing a historic monument.

Gonzo walked over to his desk and picked up the heavy, golden telephone—the gift from the anonymous oil sheikh. With a shiny finger, he dialled the number of a notorious skyscraper in New York City.

The connection went through. On the other end of the line came the familiar, confident roar of a man who had recently had his toilet seats plated in 24-karat gold.

Gonzo smiled his most polished VIVA smile.

"Ciao, Dino? It's Gonzo from the mountains. I have an idea. It smells a little bit like cheese, my friend, but I swear to you on the very soul of the game: it tastes like gold..."

**THE END ???**

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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.

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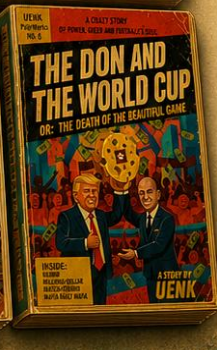
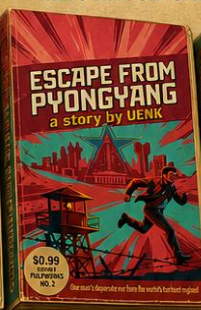
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