

EXT. STADIUM FRONT - CONTINUED

Graffiti are covering the high stadium walls. They look more like works of Banksy than of ordinary hooligans. Each of them highlights the importance of the club to the town.

A large billboard of the political party "True Serbia" watches over the stadium. The "honest" face of RADOVAN ILIC with a slogan "for a better tomorrow!".

Slobodan is in front of the entrance, holding the phone to his ear. In his other hand a half smoked cigarette. He is wearing his best three piece suit reserved for weddings, funerals and other special occasions.

Zarko storms around the corner and almost smashes directly into Slobodan who catches him. Without Zarko noticing, Slobodan returns the phone to his pocket.

SLOBODAN

Where have you been!? You are gonna be late! Everybody else is inside.

ZARKO

I'm sorry pop. I was at school with mom. I won first prize at...

SLOBODAN

(interrupts him)

I'll talk to mom about that. There is no more school. It's the summer vacation! From now on I want to see you only at practice! Understood?!

ZARKO

Yes sir!

Slobodan fixes Zarko's hair. Zarko notices the suit.

ZARKO (CONT'D)

Why the suit dad?

SLOBODAN

I want to look sharp today son. Let's just say I have a surprise for you!

ZARKO

What surprise?

Slobodan takes Zarko by the shoulders, stares him down.

SLOBODAN

A big surprise. But never mind that now. Remember what I always told you. You are the best player in the team. Your chance will come. Only hard work and dedication, remember?!

Zarko's eyes light up. It's obvious words like these are very rare to come from his father.

SLOBODAN (CONT'D)

Play your heart out today son! Make me proud! Make us proud!

Zarko hugs Slobodan and runs towards the players entrance. Slobodan looks on as he takes out his phone and dials again.

INT. STADIUM, DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUED

Players of various age are getting ready. Putting jerseys on. In the middle of the room is STJEPAN - in his early 50s. He wears a tracksuit matching the colors of the club and looks more fired up than most of his players.

STJEPAN

(yelling)

C'mon you sons of bitches! Get ready! You have new jerseys. They make you look like a team! What was long time coming, now is here! No more excuses! We had a great season so far. Let's not waste it with two games to go.

Some of the players yell along with Stjepan while the more experienced ones sit on the benches. Zarko enters the dressing room. The team mates don't pay much attention to him. Stjepan singles him aside.

STJEPAN (CONT'D)

(yelling)

Where have you been Cuparich?! School again!? On a Saturday? I told you not to be late again.

ZARKO

Sorry coach. I had to go to school and receive a medal from physics. I have it right here.

Zarko opens up his bag, looks for the medal. Stjepan snaps him back out of it.

STJEPAN
 Physics? Medal!? Don't fuck around
 kid! Sit down!

Zarko sits and looks straight into Stjepan's eyes.

STJEPAN (CONT'D)
 (as calm as he can)
 Listen Zarko. You are an OK kid.
 Maybe good enough to play
 professionally. Who knows. You just
 have to dedicate yourself to this!
 Only this! If you want to make it,
 show me! Only hard work and
 determination pay off! You're on the
 bench today!

The door opens and the chatter between the players suddenly stops. Dead silence. At the door stands MIROLJUB GACHINOVIC - 45 - in an expensive suit and matching designer glasses.

Under his arm is his son - NIKOLA - freshly out of his teens but with the confidence of his father. He wears the same designer glasses.

MIROLJUB
 (calm)
 Why the silence? We have a game!
 Get ready! I just came to wish you
 luck. Nikola. Suit up.

Nikola strolls across the dressing room. Stjepan hands him the number 10 jersey and the captain's armband. Two older players move aside and make space for Nikola. Miroljub hugs Stjepan with one arm as they stand in the center.

MIROLJUB (CONT'D)
 (to everybody)
 When I look at you, I see the pride
 of this town! When I bought the
 club three years ago I never
 imagined we could go this far! My
 brother Stjepan made you into a
 fearless bunch. Now, two more games
 to go, and if we win either of
 them, the club goes into the
 premier division for the first time
 in the club's history!

The players are getting pumped up. Zarko is fired up, fists clenched. Can't wait for the match to start!

MIROLJUB (CONT'D)

And to prove that I believe in you,
I organized a private party tonight
for all players at the exclusive
Modena club. No matter of the
outcome!

Players salute in cheers as "thanks boss", "way to go!" and similar yells are heard from the players.

MIROLJUB (CONT'D)

(passionate)

So go out there and show them what
we've got! Play with your heart.
Play with passion! Show them you're
the pride of this town! Together!
Until victory!

The players jump from their seats, ecstatic. They cheer and hug each other, pumped up! Miroljub shakes a couple of hands as he leaves the dressing room.

EXT. STADIUM, FIELD - DAY

The crowd is half full. A group of young hooligans are lighting flares near the safety railing. Both teams exit the tunnel.

Zarko, along with other substitutes, goes towards the bench. He notices MAJA in the crowd and waves at her. She waves, apparently at him, until Nikola sprints by and Maja keeps waving at him.

To hide his unreturned wave Zarko turns to Slobodan who waves him back. Slobodan is nervously eating sunflower seeds, spitting them on the floor.

The referee stands at the center, blows his whistle and the music turns up:

EXT. STADIUM, FIELD - DAY - MONTAGE

A catchy, Coca-Cola commercial like, song plays. From various angles we watch the game:

- The ball is kicked from the center of the field.
- Hard tackle goes flying, misses the ball but hits a player.
- The home team concedes a goal from a defensive mistake.
- Scoreboard shows it's the 20th minute as Nikola grabs his

calf and collapses to the ground injured.

- Miroljub in the stands looks over the game.
- Zarko is called to enter the field. Takes deep breaths and storms onto the field.
- Zarko is having the game of his life. Until half time he scores one goal. The score 1:1.
- In the second half two more mistakes from the home team get the score to 1:3.
- Zarko doesn't give up and scores two more to level the score to 3:3, minutes from the end.
- In the last minute, the away team scores with the help from a bizarre mistake from the home goalkeeper. The match ends 3:4.
- Throughout all this, Slobodan looks on from the stands, more agitated than proud. Maja can't hide her smile.

End MUSIC. End MONTAGE.

EXT. STADIUM, FIELD - DAY

Zarko is stormed by an overweight drunk reporter who can't hide his delight. Obviously a town local. He takes out his most prized possession - a voice recorder, 10 years old.

REPORTER

(ecstatic)

Congratulations! Too bad for the final score. But three goals! Not since the great Zoran 'the bomber' Milovanovich have I seen a display like this! Can we get a few words?

ZARKO

(befuddled, out of breath)

Well OK. I'm happy for the goals but unhappy that the team... We lost. But you know, you know, we have to look forward! One more game to go...

As Zarko is giving his first ever interview and his words fade, we move across the stands to see Miroljub inside the VIP stands. He looks on at Zarko.

EXT. STADIUM FRONT - EARLY EVENING

Zarko steps out from the players entrance and Slobodan embraces him. Zarko's brief confusion turns to satisfaction as fathers hugs are reserved for only great achievements.

SLOBODAN

Well done son! I'm so proud of you.

Zarko is delighted but doesn't say a word. He closes his eyes and tightens his arms around his father. After a moment they let go.

SLOBODAN (CONT'D)

C'mon. Lets get home!

EXT. WALK HOME, DIRT ROAD - EARLY EVENING

Father and son walk side by side. Only nature sounds can be heard, like they are million miles from civilization. Zarko is still ecstatic, can't stop mentioning the game.

ZARKO

(almost rambling)

...and then I faked him! And then the shot! And right into the upper corner of the goal! Like I practise in the yard every day! Did you see it dad? Did you see it?

SLOBODAN

(smiling)

Of course. Great goal.

A silent beat as they walk along. Zarko calms down, looks at Slobodan.

ZARKO

So dad?

SLOBODAN

Yeah son?

ZARKO

What was the surprise you had for me?

SLOBODAN

(disappointed)

Well son. You know my friend Sale?

ZARKO

No. I don't think so.

SLOBODAN
 Never mind. We used to go to school
 together. Well, now he is a big
 time football agent.

Zarko stops in his tracks. Could it be? Dad actually knows
 someone who's an agent?

ZARKO
 (surprised)
 Wait! He's an agent? A football
 agent!? He can get me a trial at
 Barcelona? Real Madrid?

SLOBODAN
 (laughing)
 I don't think he's such a *big time*
 agent. But he knows some managers,
 has connections. I told him about
 you.

ZARKO
 (nervous)
 Really?! Where was he? Why didn't
 he come? Will he come?!

Slobodan looks at his son. He puts his hands on his
 shoulders. After a long beat.

SLOBODAN
 He had some business this week. But
 he promised me he will be there for
 the last match. Don't worry. Just
 play your best.

ZARKO
 (delighted)
 Oh! Thanks dad! You are the best! I
 love you.

Zarko runs into Slobodan, hugs him as hard as he can.
 Slobodan embraces him, looks at the distance. His eyes seem
 lost.

SLOBODAN
 (silent)
 I love you too son.

INT. CUPARICH HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - EVENING

It seems we are looking from a deep hole. Only faint light
 gets inside. A hissing sound is heard followed by a gush of
 water which fills the hole up.

We move from inside the sink to reveal Irene doing the dishes by hand. As she is scrubbing one plate her wedding ring falls into the sink. She quickly turns off the water.

IRENE
Oh shit. Not again.

Back from inside the sink we see Irene's face looking down at us. Her finger goes inside, poking for the ring. No luck.

Irene opens up the door under the sink and reveals the garbage disposal unit. She opens it up and among other leftovers she finds the ring.

Just as she slips it on Slobodan enters.

IRENE (CONT'D)
How did it go?

SLOBODAN
Great.

In no mood to talk, Slobodan throws his tux on the sofa and rushes to the other side of the room.

INT. CUPARICH HOUSE, BATHROOM - CONTINUED

Slobodan enters and locks the door behind him. He starts to breath heavy. He takes out his phone from the pocket and dials. No answer! Shit!

His hands start to shake. Drops of sweat appear as he manages to turn the water on. From his inside pocket he pulls out a bag filled with pills. Takes a couple, downs them instantly.

He clenches the sink with both hands. He looks at himself in the mirror. Eyes wide, panicked. As his vision blurs, muffled sounds of screaming and gunshots intensify as we...

EXT. RIOTS - FLASHBACK

...are in the middle of a full blown riot! Smoke everywhere. Burning cars. Gunshots. Chaos! Civilians running for cover. Women screaming. Slobodan is in the middle of it.

Wearing a police uniform, about 10 years younger he holds a pistol in his arms. Hidden behind an army vehicle, all hell breaking loose.

He sees a young mother carrying a hurt child in her arms, screaming for help. Slobodan takes a few deep breaths. Stands up and fires! After a few shots he stops and watches on.

INT. CUPARICH HOUSE, BATHROOM - CONTINUED

Slobodan throws water on his face, keeps staring himself down as the shakes in his hands slowly fade.

EXT. CUPARICH HOUSE, FRONT YARD - NIGHT

The spider is forming his net in the top corner of the goal. We are so close to him one might say he looks cute. It looks like he notices something and as quickly as he can, the spider climbs upwards to the crossbar. From nowhere a football ball flies into the goal, knocks the spiderweb down.

On the other side of the yard, Zarko stands, football boots on. His goal celebrations are cut short by headlights approaching the gate.

From a beat up VW2 golf, a person exits, holding a beer can in his arms. He opens the gate and lets the car inside. As he comes into the light, Zarko recognizes him. It's his brother OGNJEN. Even though he is only 25, he looks more like 35, and the beer in his hand surely isn't his first of the day.

Zarko runs towards Ognjen, goes in for the hug. Ognjen just pushes him away. Continues towards the parked YUGO.

OGNJEN

Stay out of this kid! I don't have the time.

The VW2 golf parks and two respectable gypsies exit. The shorter of the two clearly runs the show as he is wearing something resembling a suit.

GYPSY

This it?

OGNJEN

Yeah! Hook it up. It hasn't been driven in a while, we'll have to push it.

GYPSY

Looks like a piece of shit.

Without a word, the larger gypsy man takes out a towing cable and connects the VW2 golf to the YUGO. The shorter gypsy takes out a wad of bills, counts about a half and gives it to Ognjen.

OGNJEN

(annoyed)

What the fuck is this? We said two thousand?!

GYPSY

That was before I saw the car.
Trust me. That is good enough? No?

As Ognjen is counting the money, Slobodan appears on the porch. Wearing his night guard uniform. Through the dark we cant see his face, but the clenched fist says enough.

Without a word he comes up to Ognjen, turns him around. BAM! A single blow to the chin lays Ognjen out like a ton of bricks.

Slobodan picks up Ognjen from the ground, Ognjen does his best to defend himself but to no avail. Even though Ognjen is bigger than his father it's no use against Slobodan's sheer determination and disgust.

SLOBODAN

(mad as hell)

You fucking gambling idiot! How many times did I tell you? How many times!?

Slobodan lands another blow to Ognjen's face, he flies to the ground like a rag doll. Zarko runs to his brother, tries to help him up.

ZARKO

(to Slobodan)

Leave him alone dad! Get up!

Ognjen pushes Zarko who falls into the dust. Ognjen stands up, spits blood.

OGNJEN

Fuck you old man! Why don't you have another beer?!

SLOBODAN

How dare you talk to me like that!
You son of a bitch! That car is not yours to sell! You give me the money!

OGNJEN

Fuck you! No way! Leave me alone!

SLOBODAN

You ungrateful piece of shit.

The gypsies have completed their job. YUGO is connected to the VW2 golf. Ognjen backs out of the yard, throws the beer can at Slobodan who blocks it with his hand.

The YUGO is dragged away by the VW2 golf, slowly disappearing in the distance. Slobodan stands in the yard for a brief moment and goes for the gate without a word.

Behind him, Zarko is laying in the dirt, looks towards the gate. Tears show up in his eyes. With the move of his sleeve Zarko clears them from the face.

In the background, Irene is standing inside the house. She has been watching the entire scene from the window. With an indifferent look on her face she turns off the light.

END ACT ONE