

The Paper Man

by
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Story by
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Based on a true story...

FADE IN:

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

SUPER: "APRIL 3, 1938 - VIENNA"

A small, metal cage sits in a lonely alley. Hatch open. As we move closer, we find a saucer of milk inside - beckoning. Clean and white against the grimy cobblestones.

An ALLEY CAT moves toward the cage, circling. Something telling it the offer is too good to be true... It creeps inside and laps at the milk, when -

The hatch slams closed and the cage is lifted, spilling the milk.

The cat hunkers in fear, but it's too late...

INT. SINDELAR'S PENTHOUSE - DAY - FUTURE

CLOSE ON the lock on a door as it's picked open from the other side...

The door opens and a MAN pushes in, training a Luger pistol around a once grand penthouse. Empty now except for a single Louis XV armchair and a poor child's 'fetzenlaberl' - a RAG BALL.

MAN WITH THE GUN

Quick. Time is short.

THREE WORKMEN enter behind and pull gas masks over their faces. Heavy breath intensifying as the man with the gun places the caged cat in the middle of the apartment...

- First workman decouples a ventilation pipe from the back of the stove to the serpent hiss of gas.

- Second workman hammers a nail through a window frame into the sill.

- The third sabotages the locking mechanism on the front door which bolts shut with finality.

The last nail is hammered, sealing the windows shut.

The man with the gun checks his watch - second hand marching like jackboots - as the workmen gather around the caged cat.

The cat hisses scared, inhaling harder but dying more with each breath, until it succumbs to the gas and falls.

The man with the gun notes the time and motions for the workmen to leave.

Waiting till he's alone, he stoops to the rag ball and holds it in his hands. Shame behind his mask.

CUT TO:

A BLAST OF STEAM clears the tubes of a polished Bezzera espresso machine. Coffee grounds are tamped. The final drops of 'eine kleine braune' drip into a cup like the sands of an hourglass whose time is up...

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - DAY - PRESENT

SUPER: "1933"

CLOSE ON the cup of espresso now held like a dark reflecting pool by a man in his early 30s, MATTHIAS SINDELAR, who silently commands the attention of the PACKED CAFE.

Sitting at the corner table, Sindelar's wary eyes wander outside through the glass, following the chaotic movement of a PEDESTRIAN dodging traffic. The WIND in the trees. A BIRD in flight.

The bird twists away behind the apartments of Vienna's grand Ringstrasse Boulevard, and Sindelar mulls the empty space of the sky, as if drawing a connection between the movements he's just seen.

He finishes the coffee and stands, tall and vulpine in his fine Gerngoss suit.

The cafe falls silent with anticipation as an eager HEADWAITER drapes his overcoat over Sindelar's shoulders.

HEADWAITER

Our humble recommendation is to watch for Monti, Herr Sindelar. They are hyenas, the Italians.

Sindelar looks up to find all eyes on him, but he doesn't seem surprised.

SINDELAR

I will keep it in mind.

EXT. CAFE LEOPOLD - DAY

The patrons and waitstaff crowd the front window to watch as Sindelar is led into a waiting limo.

BANKER

I hear his knee troubles him more.

PAINTER

Did you see a limp?

Grumblings of concern.

MUSICIAN

The pain is his muse. Like
Beethoven losing his hearing.

As the limo pulls away it reveals a billboard - a debonair Sindelar sporting a watch: "THE PAPER MAN TELLS TIME WITH ALPINA."

OVER A CHANTING CROWD...

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

SUPER: "PRATER STADION - VIENNA"

We squeeze through seething throngs of PUNTERS as we approach Austria's massive national stadium from the waist-high POV of STREET URCHINS sneaking their way in beneath people's coats.

Outside the gates, a PUNTER haggles with a SCALPER over a ticket.

PUNTER

That's twenty times face value!

SCALPER

You don't want it, the guy behind
you does.

A MAN behind thrusts his cash. The punter angrily forks up.

PUNTER

For this, they better win.

The scalper pockets the cash.

SCALPER

Tell it to the Paper Man.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

An OLD MAN IN A BOWLER, with the face of a professional worrier, lifts a needle onto a record. Beethoven's "Triple Concerto in C Major, Op. 56."

COACH MEISL

Other teams play with speed and force. Some with violence, but we have always been different...

Before Meisl are the expectant faces of his AUSTRIAN WUNDERTEAM in their red and white jerseys - HAHNEMANN, VOGL, HIDEN, SCHALL, CISAR, SMISTIK, BICAN, URBANEK, VIERTI, ZISCHEK...

...and SINDELAR, whose scarred right knee is wrapped by a team doctor.

COACH MEISL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

What we create is not a goal...

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

MOUNTED POLICE brandish their sabers, forcing back those without tickets, and pull the gates closed.

COACH MEISL (V.O.)

A goal is but a single note...

We follow the street urchins inside, finally revealing the vast arena of Prater Stadium, where a vortex of SIXTY THOUSAND AUSTRIAN FANS wave their red and white flags and trade chants with the sequestered ITALIAN VISITORS.

COACH MEISL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We create music...

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

The Austrians kick off and we are struck by the thunder of legs on the pitch as muscles stretch and bodies impact. Not the game as we know it but a brutish, gladiatorial contest...

- Two players crash their heads together in pursuit of the ball.

- A player slides through ankle-deep mud as his cleats slice through another player.

- The ecstasy and agony of faces in the CROWD that need to win as surely as they need to eat.

Goals are traded viciously by both sides - 1-0, 1-1, 1-2, 2-2 - yet despite the violence the Austrians play with orchestral elegance. Like music incarnate.

EXT. RADIO BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

The longtime Austrian Commentator, SCHMIEGER, calls the game over national radio as Austria seizes possession in the closing minutes.

COMMENTATOR SCHMIEGER
The Wunderteam in time for a final attempt on goal and the chance to maintain their unprecedented winning streak...

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

The Austrian tempo starts 'largo' at first as the ball bobs back and forth through their defense...

COMMENTATOR SCHMIEGER (V.O.)
Cisar to Smistik...

Their tempo quickening to 'andante' in midfield.

COMMENTATOR SCHMIEGER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Hahnemann to Schall...

Then 'allegro' as it's pushed up to the forwards.

COMMENTATOR SCHMIEGER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Zischek to Vierti...

Finding the feet of their veteran striker...

COMMENTATOR SCHMIEGER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
To Sindelar, the Paper Man!

Sindelar plays unlike anyone we've ever seen. Lithe and unpredictable, like a sheet of paper flitting in the wind. Avoiding contact at any cost in order to protect his bandaged knee as if it's both the source of his pain but also his genius.

Sindelar draws in on the Italian goal when his legs are suddenly taken out by a late tackle. Sindelar hunches in the mud, gripping his knee in agony.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Sindelar hunches wearily in the locker room, body bowed in pain.

SINDELAR
Get out. Everyone.

The DOCTORS and TRAINERS hesitate.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)
Get out!

They shuffle out leaving Sindelar with one man...

COACH MEISL
You can't go back out, Matthias.

Sindelar holds a compress to his trick knee, which shivers in pain.

COACH MEISL (CONT'D)
You must give it time to rest.

SINDELAR
There is no more time, Meisl.

COACH MEISL
One wrong hit and that will be it.

SINDELAR
You've been saying that since you found me on the streets of the Favoriten.

COACH MEISL
And every time I've been more right!

SINDELAR
How many more do I have left?! How many do you?

Meisl is silent as Sindelar rises painfully, the sand slipping through his fingers.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)
Listen...

Outside the concrete tomb, a CROWD drones.

COACH MEISL
They only care who wins.

INT. TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Sindelar limps toward the light of the arena as a chant takes shape. A *name*.

CROWD
Paper Man! PAPER MAN!

The noise is a salve, strengthening Sindelar's gait.

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

Sindelar enters the arena to an explosion of light and sound.

CROWD
Paper Man! PAPER MAN!

Sindelar looks at the final seconds on the clock, the expectant faces of his team...

INT. VIENNA CAFES - CONTINUOUS

Listeners hinge on their radios as knuckles whiten around chairs.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

A BOY listens with his PARENTS as a gust of wind lifts a piece of paper from the gutter outside past a billboard of Sindelar selling candy...

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

Vogl takes a corner kick for Austria, arcing the ball across the Maginot of the goal line.

Both teams compress toward it except Sindelar who -

- Heads it over the Italian defender ALLEMANDI...

- Followed by a second header past MONTI...

- Finally smashing the ball with his head for a third time past the goalie SCLAVI!

EXT. RADIO BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Schmieger leaps up breathless as the REF blows the final whistle.

COMMENTATOR SCHMIEGER
Goal and game!

INT. VIENNA CAFES - CONTINUOUS

Strangers from all walks of life embrace - bankers, musicians, artists, police. The game is the tie that binds their world together.

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

Sindelar's team raises him up like a totem for all the world to see.

CROWD
Austria! AUSTRIA!

The Italian team stands in disbelief. Across their faces, an unsettling mix of anger and fear.

EXT. STANDS - CONTINUOUS

In the morbid Italian section, TWO BLACKSHIRT SPIES linger darkly on the stunned Italian goalie, Sclavi.

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

As Sindelar is carried away, something catches his eye in the stands - a SWASTIKA BANNER among the red and white Austrian flags. Gone as quickly as it appeared...

CUT TO:

INT. CABARET - NIGHT

We're in an underground Polynesian-themed burlesque cabaret bathed in blue light with caged parrots suspended over the tables and a cocaine breeze in the air.

A CHANTEUSE - an Anita Berber look-alike dressed in an ostrich feather boa with a slash of lipstick - finishes a provocative rendition of "You're Getting To Be A Habit With Me" for Sindelar and his team as they celebrate.

INT. CABARET - NIGHT

Sindelar is led away into the bathroom by the singer. In the stall, she pulls his pants down.

CHANTEUSE
I've been waiting for this all night.

But instead of giving him a blowjob, she injects Sindelar's thigh above his bandaged right knee with a half-gram syrette of morphine tartrate.

SINDELAR

Two...

Her eyes fall on his knee and she takes out another syrette. Sindelar slumps on the toilet, the pain disappearing as his eyes glaze. His head rocks backs against a poster of himself on a farm fence with a small girl: "THE PAPER MAN PREFERS FRU-FRU YOGHURT."

CUT TO:

OVER the waltz of "Viennese Blood" by Strauss...

- Corsets are cinched tight.
- A Maximillian dress cascades around a herring bone frame.
- A STUNNING WOMAN'S RAVEN HAIR is sculpted into a masterpiece for the night...

EXT. HOFBURG PALACE - NIGHT - PRESENT

Flashbulbs ignite as Sindelar walks with a BLOND MODEL ON EACH ARM along a red carpet to the Hofburg, Austria's royal seat of power for the past thousand years.

PAPARAZZI

Sindelar! Paper Man!

Sindelar waves, as accustomed to the attention as royalty.

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS, Austria's boisterous, diminutive head of state, takes the stage, chest bristling with medals of old battles.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS

Ladies and gentlemen! As
Chancellor of our great nation I
would like to make a declaration...

Dollfuss breaks into an easy smile as he raises a champagne toast.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS (CONT'D)

Everybody waltz!

The FIVE THOUSAND GUESTS twirl in graceful unison across the parquet floor in a kaleidoscope of jewels and scabbards.

INT. HOFBURG PALACE - LATER

Sindelar approaches.

SINDELAR
Chancellor Dollfuss.

Dollfuss embraces him. Fatherly.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS
Matthias! You have met my Minister
of Justice, Herr Schuschnigg, and
head of the army, General Zehner.

Across the dance floor Sindelar brushes eyes with the raven haired woman before she turns away.

SINDELAR
Gentlemen...

INT. HOFBURG PALACE - MOMENTS LATER

Dollfuss hands Sindelar a drink as they step to a balcony alone.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS
For the knee.

SINDELAR
(toasting)
To Austria.

Sindelar finds the RAVEN HAired WOMAN navigating the dance floor with the same grace he navigates the pitch.

Dollfuss smiles paternally. Knows Sindelar's lothario ways.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS
Camilla Castagnola - the new diva
at the opera.

Wherever CAMILLA turns, she draws attention from the other dancers, like an angel cast down to earth.

SINDELAR
Italian?

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS
The greatest voice in Rome. I
stole her from Mussolini.

Dollfuss sees the hook is set.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS (CONT'D)
But that's a story for another
time. I asked you here for a
reason, Matthias.

Sindelar takes a drink. Used to everyone wanting a piece of
him.

SINDELAR
Go on.

The old man draws serious, his public bravado fading.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS
There's a cancer forming in our
country. A party from Germany -
the National Socialists.

Sindelar laughs, uncomfortable with politics.

SINDELAR
I thought it was the Communists
keeping you up at night, Herr
Chancellor.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS
It's the Nazis who are making the
greatest gains - in the alpine
provinces especially.

SINDELAR
But I heard you found their leaders
a new home in the Wöllersdorf. We
have the strictest anti-Nazi laws
in Europe.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS
And unemployment is at thirty
percent. Bars can't contain their
ideas, Matthias.

SINDELAR
But surely they're a fad. Even
Freud says Nazism is out of step
with civilization.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS
Then why is he leaving for London?

Dollfuss isn't sure how to say it...

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS (CONT'D)
 Look - I know it sounds crazy, but
 if things continue, there's a
 chance Hitler could invade.

Sindelar looks at Dollfuss like he's been drinking seawater.

SINDELAR
 Invade? You can't be serious.
 That would mean another war. The
 world would never allow it.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS
 Which is why we'll be alone if
 Hitler's tanks roll across our
 border.

Sindelar can't believe they're having this conversation.

SINDELAR
 What about the League of Nations?
 Versailles?

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS
 Paper is only as strong as those
 who back it, and Hitler has made no
 secret of his desire to reunite
 Austria under Germany's rule.

SINDELAR
 You're serious?

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS
 In one month, I'm putting a vote to
 the people for a free Austria or a
 union with Germany.
 (beat)
 I want you to campaign with my
 Patriotic Front Party.

SINDELAR
 Chancellor...

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS
 The people will follow you,
 Matthias. If we can show Germany
 our unity, Hitler will think twice
 about an act of aggression, but
 only if we act soon.

Sindelar tries to dribble his way out of the conversation,
 but Dollfuss stays on him.

SINDELAR

You give me too much credit. I play a simple game not politics.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS

Soccer is politics, don't you understand?! It's war by other means. Mussolini, Hitler, Franco - they're all using it to show they can dominate. One nation against another. You of all people should be able to smell the gunpowder in the stands.

Sindelar doesn't like the feeling of being boxed in.

SINDELAR

I assure you people don't watch me play for a lecture.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS

Yet you use your gift to sell watches and candy.

SINDELAR

Everybody eats candy.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS

Matthias...

Sindelar sees there's no way out. Darkens.

SINDELAR

What will you pay me?

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS

Pay you?

Dollfuss can't believe his ears.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS (CONT'D)

How can you think this is about money?

Sindelar looks at the gilded crowd. Antipathy forming.

SINDELAR

How can you think this is about anything else? I watched my mother work the washrooms of these people after my father was killed in the war. I shovelled shit for pennies so we could eat once a day.

(MORE)

SINDELAR (CONT'D)

What makes you think I will just give it all away over politics?

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS

Because if you don't, you may have no choice.

Dollfuss smiles. Puts his face back on.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS (CONT'D)

Enjoy the party while it lasts.

Dollfuss leaves Sindelar alone and disturbed.

Sindelar turns his eyes to the dance floor. The crowd dancing the night away like there's no tomorrow...

INT. HOFBURG PALACE - NIGHT

The orchestra strikes up "Blue Danube" and goulash and wine are served by the gallon.

Sindelar finishes his drink and enters the swirl of dancers with his two dates. As he separates from them, he glimpses the RAVEN HAired WOMAN again like an apparition and tries to dance toward her...

Just when it seems Sindelar has lost her for good, Sindelar turns to find the woman before him. Their eyes meet, but when he rotates she's been replaced by one of his blond dates, who meets him seductively.

Sindelar looks again, but the woman is gone...

CUT TO:

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY

Sindelar sits atop a cow in lederhosen as he's plied with rouge for a milk ad.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Let's get it one more time,
Matthias! And action!

Sindelar reluctantly drinks from a milk bottle and the bulb fires.

CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Sindelar hunches over a vanity as he tries to rub the rouge from his face. He stops and stares at himself in the mirror. A clown.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Camilla, the raven haired diva from the ball, has rouge applied as she is prepared by DRESSERS like ladies in waiting.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIENNA OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

Sindelar sits in a box seat overlooking a grand production of Mozart's "Don Giovanni" as Camilla takes the stage.

The diva stands alone, otherworldly in her ash-blond wig and makeup, and as the silence seems like it will consume them all, she pushes back against it with her perfect voice.

Sindelar listens in the darkness as the siren song of her sorrow draws him in...

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - LATER

Sindelar searches the passageways backstage against the current of ACTORS in costume.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Camilla searches her vanity, panicked, when she finds what she is looking for - a simple ring - which she slips on her engagement finger.

SINDELAR (O.S.)

The Chancellor said he stole you
from Mussolini...

Camilla turns, regal. Fiery.

CAMILLA

How dare you! This isn't some
brothel.

Sindelar steps deeper into the room.

SINDELAR

You left before we could be introduced at the ball.

CAMILLA

(quoting his billboards)
But I already know you. "Matthias Sindelar, the best player in the world, is the proud owner of an Alpina watch." When he eats yoghurt, he prefers it to be Fru-Fru. He buys his suits custom at Gerngross, and drinks Meinl coffee exclusively with a dash of milk and two sugars.

SINDELAR

I actually prefer one sugar.

Camilla removes her blond wig, revealing her tumble of raven hair.

CAMILLA

Well, you had me fooled. Besides, you had a date. Or was it two?

SINDELAR

I came to take you to dinner.

Camilla's dressers start to peel her dress away in tantalizing layers.

CAMILLA

I'm hungry for many things, Herr Sindelar -

SINDELAR

Matthias.

CAMILLA

- but not Viennese men. They're like sons who have lived too long with their mothers.

SINDELAR

I didn't realize you were an expert.

CAMILLA

(quoting)
"When he is angry, something laughs in him. When he is moved by something, he rejects it."

SINDELAR

"His commitments are like water,
following his instincts to the
bottom." Musil.

CAMILLA

You read as well as kick?

SINDELAR

I know a place away from the
cameras.

She regards him, deciding...

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - CONTINUOUS

LEOPOLD, the aging proprietor, closes the curtains on the
PAPARAZZI outside. He turns to the two stars - the place to
themselves.

SINDELAR

Thank you, Leopold.

LEOPOLD

The honor is ours, Herr Sindelar.

Leopold's three black-tie waiters, HERMAN, TOBIAS, and FRANZ
bow reverently.

LEOPOLD (CONT'D)

Madame Castagnola, we are great
admirers.

Camilla takes in the charming, cozy space.

CAMILLA

It reminds me of a place back home.

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - NIGHT

The couple dines as the waiters find high art in their work.

SINDELAR

I have come here since I was a
nobody.

CAMILLA

Matthias Sindelar can still
remember such times?

SINDELAR

As if they were yesterday.

Sindelar smiles, but there is pain behind it.

SINDELAR

Why did Dollfuss say he stole you?

CAMILLA

He is fond of saying that. He arranged my escape across the border.

SINDELAR

Escape?

Camilla pauses, still hard for her.

CAMILLA

Mussolini wanted military marches performed at the opera and I refused to sing, so he ordered my arrest.

SINDELAR

I don't understand.

CAMILLA

Fascism is collective insanity. There is nothing to understand. Even the children have lost their minds.

SINDELAR

No - I mean why not sing for him, be free?

CAMILLA

Because that's how it begins. Everyone's little concessions. A song here, informing on a neighbor. Then one day you've given away so many little pieces of yourself they have taken everything.

Sindelar pours himself another drink.

SINDELAR

Well you are safe now. What has happened in Italy couldn't happen here.

CAMILLA

Nowhere is immune.

SINDELAR

You sound like the Chancellor.

CAMILLA

He warned me you would be calling.

SINDELAR

Did he? He failed to mention you were spoken for...

Camilla had almost forgotten about her ring.

CAMILLA

It's not what it seems. I met him in the opera when we were teenagers.

SINDELAR

Young love. I don't have a chance.

Camilla pauses, losing her voice.

CAMILLA

When the Blackshirts couldn't find me, they took him. For weeks our families went to the police, but he was gone. I wear it now, I don't know...to remember.

SINDELAR

I'm sorry.

Camilla wipes her tears, too bold to cry.

CAMILLA

There's no way to make someone believe unless they've seen it. The world can change in a night.

SINDELAR

Normally, they don't cry until the second date.

Camilla smiles despite herself.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)

You have the most beautiful voice I've ever heard.

CAMILLA

I used to hate it. Singing was not my choice. My father wanted a son and my mother dreamed of becoming a singer, so as a little girl I was sent to the Musical Academy of St. Cecilia in Rome.

(MORE)

CAMILLA (CONT'D)

All day singing scales while the other children played.

SINDELAR

Many people would give anything to sing like you.

CAMILLA

And I've given it. People speak of talent like a gift some fairy put under your pillow. But true talent takes every ounce of your being. Your life.

They meet eyes.

SINDELAR

What happened?

CAMILLA

Eventually, I realized my voice was my own and, as I grew older, what at first seemed like just notes and words I came to know as stories. Beautiful stories actually of great love and loss.

SINDELAR

Opera.

CAMILLA

And as I loved in my own life - and lost - I grew into the songs, and they grew into me.

Sindelar is caught by her.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)

What about the Paper Man? Why do you play?

SINDELAR

To win.

CAMILLA

That doesn't seem like much of a reason.

SINDELAR

That's the only song my audience likes to hear.

CAMILLA

It's all anybody talks about in
this city. I don't see it myself.

SINDELAR

Have you been?

Camilla smiles coyly - happy to put his ego in its place.

CAMILLA

Life is too short for games.

SINDELAR

I'd like to see you again.

Camilla takes a sip of wine, their two stars alligning.

CAMILLA

We'll see.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

Sindelar strikes the ball into the net. The team practices
in the empty stadium as a fresh, young player, KARL SESTA,
jogs up to Sindelar.

SESTA

Herr Sindelar. Karl Sesta.

SINDELAR

You're the new midfielder?

SESTA

I've been a fan of the Paper Man
since I was a boy.

SINDELAR

A boy? Christ! You make me feel
like a fucking grandfather!

SESTA

I'm sorry, I...

Sindelar flicks the ball into Sesta's hands.

SINDELAR

Welcome to the Wunderteam, Karl
Sesta.

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

On the sideline, Sindelar fields questions from REPORTERS.

AUSTRIAN REPORTER

How does the Paper Man feel about
the upcoming game against England?

SINDELAR

In life we must ask ourselves how
we shall play - as though making
music, or catching a bus?

As the other players walk from the pitch, Hahnemann, the Wunderteam's thin-skinned second star takes in Sindelar's personal press conference. Envious.

HAHNEMANN

Why don't they just proclaim him a
god and get it over with?

Sesta silently notes Hahnemann's bitterness.

VOGL

If he were a god, Hahnemann, he
wouldn't need you in midfield.

On the sideline...

ENGLISH REPORTER

Mr. Sindelar, would you consider
playing for an English team if the
price were right?

SINDELAR

I don't think I'll be welcome in
your country after what we do to
you.

The reporters laugh, but among them is the 'man with the gun' from the opening. He lifts a black metal object at Sindelar -
- and snaps a photo.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Sindelar enters to find the team huddled around the radio as a familiar German voice rises and falls in waves of rage. The new Chancellor of Germany, Adolf Hitler.

SCHALL

How can one man be so angry? Did his parents whip him senseless every night?

Hahnemann stands apart from the team.

HAHNEMANN

Perhaps there's much to be angry about.

Hahnemann's comment angers the Jewish members of the team.

SCHALL

And thankful for.

COACH MEISL (O.S.)

Turn it off!

Sindelar and the other players turn to find Meisl, surprised by his intensity. The old man glares at Hahnemann, his words final.

COACH MEISL (CONT'D)

There will be no politics on the pitch!

CUT TO:

INT. RADIO BOOTH - DAY

An ENGLISH COMMENTATOR calls the game.

SUPER: "STAMFORD BRIDGE STADIUM - ENGLAND"

ENGLISH COMMENTATOR

It's the long anticipated matchup today at London's famed Stamford Bridge Stadium between England, who brought us the so-called "Beautiful Game," and the Austrian Wunderteam who play it with the greatest beauty. The English with home field advantage and a characteristically vocal crowd...

EXT. STANDS - DAY

The diehard "Shed End" of the stands tosses in a sea of ale as they shout down the AUSTRIAN FANS.

ENGLISH FAN
Back to Berlin, you no-good Krauts!

AUSTRIAN FAN
Krauts are German! We are
Austrian!

ENGLISH FAN #2
You're all the bloody same in our
book, mate!

They throw a Nazi salute and have a chuckle.

INT. TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Sindelar reassures the nervous Sesta as they prepare to enter the arena.

SINDELAR
Remember - play as if you're back
on the streets as a boy with no one
watching.

EXT. STAMFORD BRIDGE STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

The Wunderteam enters the arena and Sesta takes in the vast crowd, looking like he might throw up.

Sindelar extends his hand to Hahnemann as he takes position.

SINDELAR
Hahnemann, for country...

But Hahnemann turns away.

INT. BOX SEAT - CONTINUOUS

A wealthy MAN IN A PINSTRIPE SUIT studies Sindelar's exchange through binoculars.

INT. VIENNA CAFES - CONTINUOUS

The Vienna coffee houses brim once again with PATRONS around their radios.

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - CONTINUOUS

The door opens and the PATRONS part to reveal -

CAMILLA AT THE DOOR.

LEOPOLD
Madame Castagnola?

Camilla feels the eyes of the crowd, out of place.

CAMILLA
I've come for the game.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. STAMFORD BRIDGE STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

Play commences with an England kickoff. Unlike the defensive Italians, the English style is forward-centric. Lethally fast on offense, but exposed on defense.

INT. RADIO BOOTH - DAY

An ENGLISH COMMENTATOR calls the game as England mounts a lightning attack.

ENGLISH COMMENTATOR
It's England with an early attempt
on goal!

But the shot falls wide.

Austria responds, exhibiting their signature musical style as they press into the England half. Sesta is forced to choose between Sindelar and Hahnemann, both in space.

HAHNEMANN
Sesta!

Sindelar is better positioned and Sesta feeds it to him instead of Hahnemann. Beating out two defenders, Sindelar unleashes, pounding the ball into the corner of the net.

ENGLISH COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
A virtuoso strike by the Paper Man,
and the Wunderteam is on the
boards!

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - CONTINUOUS

The patrons celebrate around Camilla, who gets her first sense of the power of the game.

EXT. STAMFORD BRIDGE STADIUM - DAY

On the pitch, Hahnemann stares daggers at Sindelar as they resume position.

A MONTAGE follows as the two teams trade goals...

Sindelar looks up at the scoreboard as the clock ticks down.

England - 3, Austria - 3

Hiden feeds the ball out from the Austrian goal.

ENGLISH COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

The Austrians with a final shot as we move into stoppage time...

The England Captain barks at his team.

ENGLAND CAPTAIN

Come on, you lot! Take 'em out at the knees!

The English muscle Sesta for possession and he feeds it to Hahnemann. But rather than maintaining the rhythm of their passing, Hahnemann forges on alone, seeking glory.

ENGLISH COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Hahnemann with a surprising solo run.

Hahnemann is fast and powerful, beating out several defenders on his own, but the England players descend on him...

SINDELAR

Hahnemann!

Sindelar is in space before the goal...

ENGLISH COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Sindelar with space to spare. Surely it's Sindelar!

But Hahnemann goes it alone and the English seize possession...

ENGLISH COMMENTATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

England now with the chance at redemption! All feet on deck led by Blackpool Jimmy Hampson!

The bodies flood at HIDDEN in the Austrian goal as the stadium rises.

ENGLISH COMMENTATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It's England all the way!

The ball is hammered past Hiden.

ENGLISH COMMENTATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And Houghton brings it home for
King and country! England four,
Austria three!

Sindelar glares at Hahnemann, who stalks off the pitch
without shaking hands with the English.

INT. BOX SEAT - CONTINUOUS

The man in the pinstripe suit watches Sindelar and puts down
his binoculars.

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - CONTINUOUS

Camilla registers the bitter disappointment of those around
her, realizing the game has meaning...

CUT TO:

EXT. ENGLISH VILLAGE - DAY

A Rolls Royce passes over a village bridge as a SWAN flutters
on a pond.

INT. ROLLS ROYCE - DAY

In the back seat, JAMES W. GIBSON, the pinstriped businessman
from the match, quotes from a fistful of newspapers.

GIBSON
"He plays football as a grandmaster
plays chess." "A revelation."
"The greatest player in the world."
The English press couldn't agree
that grass is green, except about
you. Even in defeat.

Gibson hands the papers to Sindelar.

SINDELAR
Politics are ruining our game.

The Rolls enters an estate and the Georgian facade of a manor house comes into view. Gibson smiles like a lover confident of his gift.

GIBSON

Play for us and never the twain
shall meet.

INT. MANOR HOUSE - DAY

Sindelar echoes through the regal main hall with Gibson at his heels.

GIBSON

Consider it, a relocation
incentive. A castle fit for the
people's prince, and the captain of
what I am determined to make the
greatest club team in Europe -
Manchester United.

EXT. ESTATE - LATER

Sindelar takes in the bucolic downs.

SINDELAR

What about the sheep?

GIBSON

More than a Scotsman's wedding.

Sindelar smiles, torn.

SINDELAR

It's the most beautiful place I've
ever seen.

GIBSON

It can be yours with a signature.

SINDELAR

But it's not my home.

GIBSON

Austria's days are numbered, Mr.
Sindelar. France is divided.
America in a depression. And many
in my nation's government regard
Germany's revisionist aims as
justified.

Gibson hands Sindelar a book.

GIBSON (CONT'D)

Perhaps you would read this and reconsider. A sensible man would get out while the getting's still good.

EXT. RITZ HOTEL - NIGHT

Sindelar steps from the Rolls into a mob of ENGLISH REPORTERS.

ENGLISH REPORTER

Mr. Sindelar, are the rumors true you've signed with Manchester?

Sindelar pushes inside.

INT. RITZ HOTEL - NIGHT

Sindelar picks up his room key from reception and the CONCIERGE hands him a note on Gibson's stationery: "Enjoy."

CONCIERGE

A guest for you, Mr. Sindelar...

Sindelar turns to find a PRETTY YOUNG WOMAN.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

The woman, an escort, starts to undress.

SINDELAR

No. You are beautiful, but perhaps you can read to me.

ESCORT

Read? But I've been paid to show you a good time.

Sindelar hands her the book Gibson gave him and she regards it like contraband: "MEIN KAMPF."

SINDELAR

Please...

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

The escort struggles with the text as Sindelar finds the ticket stub from Camilla's performance of "Don Giovanni" in his pocket.

ESCORT

"Volume One: A Reckoning. Today it seems to me providential that fate should have chosen Braunau am Inn as my birthplace. For this little town lies on the boundary between two German states which we of the younger generation at least have made it our life work to reunite by every means at our disposal."

She looks up at Sindelar afraid.

SINDELAR

Go on...

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DAY

The escort sleeps fully clothed next to a room service tray in the early morning light. On the night stand is Sindelar's ticket.

ESCORT (V.O.)

"German-Austria must return to the great German mother country..."

INT. VICTORIA STATION - DAY

Coach Meisl scans the platform sadly.

ESCORT (V.O.)

"And not because of any economic considerations."

I/E. TRAIN - MOMENTS LATER

The train begins to roll as Meisl sits with the solemn team.

ESCORT (V.O.)

"No, and again no..."

The train builds in speed as Vogl spots something out the window - Sindelar sprinting along the platform.

ESCORT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"Even if such a union were unimportant from an economic point of view..."

The team hangs from the carriage, egging Sindelar on.

ESCORT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 "Yes, even if it were harmful, it
 must nevertheless take place."

As the platform ends, Sindelar grabs their hands united and they pull him onboard. Sindelar meets eyes with Sesta - the young player relieved his hero has not forsaken them.

ESCORT (CONT'D)
 "One blood demands one Reich."

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN - NIGHT

FANS cheer and slap the windows at Vienna's Westbahnhof station as Sindelar and the Wunderteam arrive. A YOUNG WOMAN smears a bra against the glass.

SESTA
 Is it always this way?

SINDELAR
 You should see it when we win.

Sindelar is the last to step off when a PORTER stops him.

PORTER
 Your book, Herr Sindelar?

In the porter's hand is the copy of "MEIN KAMPF." In his eyes, a fraternity of purpose.

SINDELAR
 It's not mine.

INT. WESTBAHNHOF STATION - NIGHT

Sindelar steps off of the train and he's mobbed.

CROWD
 Sindelar! Paper Man!

He stops to sign autographs.

INT. LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS

Sindelar climbs inside, surprised to find...

SINDELAR
 Camilla?

The limousine pulls away as the crowd chases them into the night.

CAMILLA

There was talk you might not come back.

Sindelar sees the ring is no longer on her finger.

SINDELAR

Talk.

Camilla leans forward and kisses him, letting her mink coat fall open.

CAMILLA

Then welcome home, Paper Man.

EXT. WESTBAHNHOF STATION - CONTINUOUS

Concealed among the PAPARAZZI, the 'man with the gun' watches the couple leave with his camera.

CUT TO:

INT. SINDELAR'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Camilla and Sindelar make love in his moonlit penthouse.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. LEIPZIG FAIR OFFICES - NIGHT

'The man with the gun' smokes by the one small window, inspecting the negatives of Sindelar and Camilla with artistic care.

He pins the negatives to a colored index card - an SS spy report...

Subject: Matthias Sindelar
Occupation: Soccer player
Political affiliation: Unknown

The man with the gun signs his name "OTTO RICHTER" and conceals the report in the false bottom of a briefcase under a promotional brochure - "VISIT THE LEIPZIG FAIR!"

INT. WESTBAHNHOF STATION - DAY

A platform whistle blows and Otto walks with the briefcase.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. CHANCELLERY - CONTINUOUS

Sindelar approaches the Austrian Chancellery...

INT. WESTBAHNHOF STATION - DAY

Otto trades his briefcase for an identical one with a
PASSERBY...

INT. CHANCELLERY - CONTINUOUS

Sindelar is led up the stairs...

INT. WESTBAHNHOF STATION - CONTINUOUS

The new SS spy boards the train with Otto's briefcase as it
begins to roll out. Destination: "BERLIN."

EXT. CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Dollfuss looks up, surprised to see Sindelar ushered into his
office.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS

Matthias?

SINDELAR

When do we start?

The old man smiles. Ready.

CUT TO:

EXT. MERCEDES - DAY

Red-white-red Austrian flags snap in the wind as an official
motorcade of three Mercedes wends its way through the alpine
foothills of the Austrian Innviertel.

INT. CHANCELLOR'S MERCEDES - DAY

The top is down and Dollfuss shouts excitedly over the wind, relishing the fight.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS

In Vienna, the vote for Austria is safe, but in the country the Nazis have grown in popularity! Today, we campaign in Braunau am Inn, where the little shit was born. The greatest ruse ever pulled is that Hitler is German, and Mozart Austrian! I say we won that trade!

Sindelar and Camilla smile from the backseat. The sun shines. It's a perfect spring day.

EXT. BRAUNAU AM INN - DAY

The motorcade slows through the narrow streets of the gingerbread town. Nazi flags hang from every apartment. Every storefront proclaims its Aryanization. Behind the curtains, the TOWNSPEOPLE watch suspiciously as the outsiders arrive.

DOLLFUSS

Like I said, the Nazis have made some gains in these parts...

INT. TOWN HALL - DAY

Dollfuss speaks before an embarrassingly sparse ASSEMBLY, flanked by Sindelar and the BURGERMEISTER of Braunau am Inn. Behind him is the national symbol of the double-headed eagle.

DOLLFUSS

Austria is a country, but it is also an ideal. For centuries, we have been a beacon of art and culture where people of all kinds have mixed freely. But that ideal - indeed our very existence - is now being threatened by forces at home and abroad.

The locals listen without reaction.

DOLLFUSS (CONT'D)

In one month, I will put a vote to you, the people, for a simple choice - unification with Germany, or a free and democratic Austria. It is my deepest hope that you will vote with my Patriotic Front Party to preserve our nation's independence.

(off the crowd's silence)

The captain of our Wunderteam, Matthias Sindelar, will now say a few words.

Sindelar assumes the dais, nervous.

SINDELAR

Forgive me. I normally speak with my feet.

The crowd softens.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)

Most of you probably think of me as Austrian, and you are right to do so. I am Austrian through and through. But my life did not begin here. I was born a Czech in the Moravian village of Kozlau, the son of a mason - or a "Brick Czech" as we were called in those days. My father was a hard working man who dreamed of a better life for his family, and though we had not been in Austria for more than a year, he signed up at the call of war, never to return home.

Sindelar's eyes rise to meet the crowd as Camilla watches him proudly.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)

Today, however, we face a different war. A war of ideas that has pitted us against each other based on race and creed. And if we do not chose to stand together, our future will be chosen for us.

EXT. TOWN HALL - LATER

A THRONG clamors for Sindelar's autograph afterward, ignoring the Chancellor.

BURGERMEISTER
 (re: Sindelar)
 You're lucky he's not running for
 office.

Dollfuss appreciates the change in his friend.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS
 It's good to have friends in high
 places.

A gang of NAZI HOOLIGANS watches from a corner of the square.

BURGERMEISTER
 For your safety, Herr Chancellor,
 may I respectfully suggest you
 leave before dark.

Dollfuss digests the warning.

Sindelar scribbles "Score one Austria - Paper Man" on an
 election poster featuring an intrepid Dollfuss before a
 double-headed eagle with the slogan: "VOTE YES FOR FREEDOM!"

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTORCADE - DAY

The convertible tops are cranked closed.

INT. CHANCELLOR'S MERCEDES - DAY

The motorcade departs the Aryanized town. The mood in
 Dollfuss' car is somber, pensive. All of them wondering what
 they just saw.

In the backseat, Camilla reaches into Sindelar's hand,
 scared. Curling her fingers around his.

INT. CHANCELLOR'S MERCEDES - NIGHT

The sun has set and the motorcade slows in the evening half-
 light. Dollfuss' driver rubbernecks to see past the first
 car, where a tree has fallen from the surrounding woods
 across the entrance to a single lane bridge.

The driver clucks, annoyed.

DRIVER
 One moment, Herr Chancellor.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

The driver joins the bodyguards from the first and third cars. One of them removes his helmet as they drag the tree to the side of the road.

INT. CHANCELLOR'S MERCEDES - CONTINUOUS

Dollfuss continues to face forward in the passenger seat.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS
 You scored with the people today,
 Matthias. Next time, we will take
 the train, yes?

Sindelar realizes Dollfuss is asking for more help.

SINDELAR
 As you wish, Herr Chancellor.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS
 Good. There is much work to be
 done.

Camilla squeezes Sindelar's hand when muzzle flashes suddenly erupt from the trees.

CAMILLA
 What's happening?!

EXT. BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Caught flat-footed, the drivers and bodyguards are mowed down, and the guard who removed his helmet turns his gun on his fellow guards.

GUNMEN emerge from the trees, joined by the traitorous guard.

INT. CHANCELLOR'S MERCEDES - CONTINUOUS

Sindelar tries to move into the driver's seat.

SINDELAR
 Chancellor, we have to get out of
 here!

Dollfuss unholsters his ceremonial pistol and starts to step out.

CHANCELLOR DOLLFUSS
 Where is there to go?

Bullets punch through the front window and Dollfuss.
Camilla screams, huddling into Sindelar in the backseat.
Feet approach with the crunch of glass.
Suddenly, a rifle butt smashes through the passenger window.
Camilla swallows her scream as a hand reaches through the glass and searches Dollfuss' neck for a pulse. Dead.
The hand pulls away and the gunmen circle the car.
A barrel taps the glass. Sindelar rolls down the window, and the lead gunman peers inside - one of the Nazi hooligans from the town square.
Sindelar stares forward, but the gunman forces Sindelar to face him with the barrel of his gun.

GUNMAN

Look.

Sindelar meets the young man's eyes. In them is a fearless zeal. Like a child in a world without parents.

The gunman fixes on Camilla who stares ahead, tears frozen on her face. The other men shift...

The gunman hands something to Sindelar.

GUNMAN (CONT'D)

Here.

A bloody scrap of paper and a pen.

GUNMAN (CONT'D)

Sign.

The pen shakes in Sindelar's hand as he scribbles "Paper Man." Sindelar passes back the pen and paper.

GUNMAN (CONT'D)

Score one Austria.

The gunmen laugh and return to the trees.

Sindelar stares at his crimson fingers as Camilla cries silently beside him.

CUT TO:

EXT. HELDENPLATZ - DAY

A twenty gun salute fires into the gray sky.

A DARK SEA OF MOURNING fills Vienna's main "Heroes' Square" as a military MARCHING BAND from Dollfuss' old Kaiserjager regiment plays Mozart's "Requiem."

The Chancellor's HORSE-DRAWN CASKET passes and Camilla tosses a rose onto the heap. Beside her, Sindelar takes in the faces of his countrymen, filled not only with sorrow but fear. EGON, the singer who plays "Don Giovanni," stands beside them.

EGON

Who's going to stop them now?

EXT. CHANCELLERY - LATER

A giant election poster unfurls - "VOTE YES FOR A FREE AUSTRIA!"

Kurt von Schuschnigg, the former Minister of Justice, manufactures confidence before an anxious CROWD.

CHANCELLOR SCHUSCHNIGG

Now more than ever, Austria is in the fight of its life! As newly appointed Chancellor, I declare the vote for independence will proceed as scheduled one week from today!

Schuschnigg steps from the stage as an AIDE pulls him aside.

AIDE

Chancellor, Berlin is on the phone. Hitler is requesting you meet with him privately at Berchtesgaden.

Schuschnigg looks pale.

AIDE (CONT'D)

Chancellor?

CUT TO:

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Sindelar arrives with Camilla before the station. She turns to him, fragile. Scared.

CAMILLA
It's happening again. Don't leave,
Matthias. Not now.

SINDELAR
The country needs a victory more
than ever. I'll be back in time to
vote. Hey...

He kisses her.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)
You must trust the people. You'll
see, they won't let us down.

Camilla smiles through her fear, wanting to believe but
knowing better.

CAMILLA
Say 'ciao' to Rome for me.

EXT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Sindelar watches her drive away with her fingers pressed to
the glass. OVER the din of a riot...

CUT TO:

I/E. TEAM BUS - DAY

A tomato splats against a window as the team bus is rocked
violently.

SUPER: "ROME"

Rain washes away the innards of the fruit, revealing a sea of
riotous ITALIAN FANS barely kept at bay by outnumbered
CARABINIERI on the Via Dei Fori Imperiali leading past the
Colosseum.

VOGL
We'll be lucky if they don't feed
us to the lions.

SESTA
(re: the mob)
I'd take lions over them.

SCHALL
Coach, there are rumors the referee
met with Mussolini last night.

The players grip their seats as the bus is almost rocked over.

COACH MEISL

If we are true to our game, we will prevail.

Sindelar looks at the smug Hahnemann absorbing the angry power of the crowd.

INT. TUNNELS - DAY

INTERCUT WITH Sindelar and Camilla as they walk down separate tunnels to take their respective stages...

INT. CHANCELLOR'S MERCEDES - CONTINUOUS

Schuschnigg is flanked by the head of the Austrian army, General Zehner, as they pass inside the fortified gates of Berchtesgaden, Hitler's alpine retreat.

GENERAL ZEHNER

Who knew hell was in Bavaria?

Schuschnigg stares out. Wishing he were anywhere but here.

EXT. STADIO NAZIONALE - DAY

SUPER: "STADIO NAZIONALE DEL PNF"

We erupt into Rome's massive stadium of the National Fascist Party. Unlike the loutish English fans, the ITALIAN FANS are darkly bloodthirsty. Not here to witness victory, but destruction.

Rain pelts down as the intimidated Austrians take the pitch. Sindelar notes the old Italian goalie is missing.

SINDELAR

Where is their old goalie, Sclavi?

HIDEN

(spooked)

No one's seen him since Vienna.

Concerned, Sindelar finds MUSSOLINI in the stands.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. VIENNA OPERA HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Camilla takes the stage in "Don Giovanni" as...

EXT. STADIO NAZIONALE - CONTINUOUS

Sindelar kicks off, but the game that follows is more a one-sided act of violence than a soccer match. If there were any doubt about Dollfuss' warning that soccer had become war, this ends it...

The Italians trip, shove, and hack anything that moves, playing like their lives are literally on the line.

Sesta is blatantly fouled and the crowd howls their approval.

SINDELAR

Ref!

The ref plays on as Sindelar pulls Sesta to his feet.

SESTA

They're not even going for the ball!

The Austrians attempt to maintain their passing game, but the pouring rain churns the pitch into a hellish quagmire, and the political divisions between them undermine their chemistry.

INT. VIENNA CAFES - CONTINUOUS

Back at home, concerned AUSTRIAN FANS huddle around their radios, realizing their Wunderteam is no longer invincible.

EXT. STADIO NAZIONALE - DAY

On the pitch...

- Vogl's legs are hacked and he collapses.
- Hiden is headbutted by Meazza with a spray of blood.
- Schall is slammed to the mud and doesn't get up.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Schall is carried in on a stretcher as the Austrian locker room starts to resemble a triage ward.

SCHALL
This isn't a game...

EXT. STADIO NAZIONALE - DAY

The ref heads an Austrian pass to the Italians, switching possession, and Mussolini applauds.

Vogl gets in the ref's face.

VOGL
This is an abomination!

Sindelar tries to pull Vogl away, but he won't be denied. Vogl fingers Mussolini.

VOGL (CONT'D)
Did Il Duce buy you off? What does your dignity cost?!

The ref red cards Vogl and Sindelar steps between them.

SINDELAR
Go, Vogl! We'll render unto Caesar.

Vogl storms off the pitch and Sindelar glares at Mussolini.

EXT. STADIO NAZIONALE - DAY

The Italians start to mount an attack when Sindelar seizes the ball from Monti and maneuvers up the pitch bent on revenge. Beating out defender after defender as they slide toward him in the mud.

INT. VIENNA CAFES - CONTINUOUS

The Austrian fans tense around their radios, sensing victory...

EXT. STADIO NAZIONALE - DAY

Sindelar beats the last defender and angles toward the terrified Italian goalie, when Monti bears down behind him...

Sindelar draws back to strike but Monti crashes into him, making no effort to contact the ball.

Sindelar is flipped into the air in a tangle of body parts...

Coach Meisl cries out from the sideline as the Italian fans scream for blood.

COACH MEISL
(to ref)
For god's sake! Are you blind?!

The two Blackshirt spies from the Vienna game look on as Monti rises over Sindelar.

Sindelar tries to stand, when MONTI CAVES HIS BOOT INTO HIM, crushing his ribs...

SINDELAR SLUMPS IN THE MUD. Motionless. Powerless as...

The Italians take advantage and drive toward the Austrian goal with an offside pass....

Meazza smashes into Hiden's replacement, PLATZER, in the Austrian goal, bullying the ball over the line to score.

The game is ended.

Italy - 1, Austria - 0

Coach Meisl runs to Sindelar through the mud.

COACH MEISL (CONT'D)
Matthias?!

Sindelar meets eyes with Mussolini in the stands, who looks away like the star is nothing more than dirt.

CUT TO:

EXT. BERCHTESGADEN - DAY

Hitler's intimidating private security guards, the SS-FÜHRERBEGLEITKOMMANDO, make way as Schuschnigg's motorcade departs the meeting.

INT. CHANCELLOR'S MERCEDES - CONTINUOUS

The gates shutter behind the motorcade as it builds in speed down the hill.

GENERAL ZEHNER
What will you do, Chancellor?

Schuschnigg stares out as the world around them seems to slide faster out of control.

SCHUSCHNIGG
What choice do we have?

INT. BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Camilla shuffles frantically to her dressing room.

DRESSER
He was injured in the game...

CAMILLA
Injured?! How?

The dresser stops her.

DRESSER
Frau Castagnola, there's more...

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Camilla huddles around a radio with the costumed cast and crew.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Radio Vienna with an official
announcement from Chancellor
Schuschnigg...

INT. CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Schuschnigg sits wearily before a microphone flanked by ADVISERS and GENERALS. When he speaks his voice is fatigued from indecision.

CHANCELLOR SCHUSCHNIGG
Men and women of Austria, today has
faced us with a difficult and
fateful choice...

INT. VIENNA - CONTINUOUS

Schuschnigg's voice echoes through every radio as PEOPLE listen in fear...

CHANCELLOR SCHUSCHNIGG (V.O.)

The German government has presented us with an ultimatum requiring we cancel our vote for a free and independent Austria, and that they be allowed to appoint a Chancellor and government for Austria in our stead. Failing this, an invasion by German troops will take place at an appointed time.

INT. CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Schuschnigg grows emotional...

CHANCELLOR SCHUSCHNIGG

It is my tragic regret to inform you that the Austrian nation is yielding to force. Because we are resolved on no account, even in this grave hour, to spill German blood, I have ordered our armed forces to withdraw without resistance, and to await the decisions of the next few hours.

(beat)

God protect us and Austria.

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

The broadcast concludes with the B-minor melody of Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony" and the cast shares their fear.

DONNA ANNA

I don't understand. What does it mean?

INT. CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

General Zehner closes the shutters as a mob can already be heard outside in the Ballhausplatz. He turns to face Schuschnigg and the others.

GENERAL ZEHNER

God will be hard to find by morning.

CUT TO:

INT. WESTBAHNHOF STATION - NIGHT

The Wunderteam arrives home, but the panicked crush of PEOPLE on the platform is not here to greet them this time. They are trying to leave...

COACH MEISL

Matthias!

Sindelar doesn't wait for the train to stop. He leaps onto the platform but the people ebb against him, too scared to care about the Paper Man in their midst.

EXT. WESTBAHNHOF STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Sindelar staggers out into a Vienna on fire. Cars and buses burn. Embers fill the night sky.

Across the street, MOUNTED POLICE fight to disburse an advancing NAZI MOB.

POLICEMEN

Turn back, all of you! Back to your homes!

The Nazis drown them out with their chant.

NAZIS

One people, one country, one Führer!

The police draw their sabers and move on the mob, but they are cast back by a hail of rocks. The horses rear up and a policeman is thrown to the street. The mob descends upon him, stomping him until he no longer moves.

Sindelar reaches for a PASSERBY.

SINDELAR

What's happening?!

PASSERBY

Get off!

The man tears away and Sindelar turns to the burning city.

SINDELAR

Camilla...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Clutching his injured ribs, Sindelar staggers through the conflagration, trying to avoid the roving bands of PATRIOTIC FRONT SUPPORTERS, COMMUNISTS, and NAZIS. Hurling anything they can find. Shouting for blood.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Sindelar angles away as NAZIS use a lamppost to ram through the door of the Stadttempel, Vienna's main synagogue.

Sindelar rounds a corner to find someone on the sidewalk - Egon, who plays Don Giovanni, still in costume.

SINDELAR

Egon..?

EGON

Matthias?

Egon's foot is crushed.

SINDELAR

Your foot...

The singer is crazed with triumph as he beholds the city on fire.

EGON

It's beautiful, isn't it? We're beating the bastards at their own game!

SINDELAR

Where's Camilla?

EGON

She went to the opera when the looting began.

SINDELAR

Let me help you.

EGON

I'll be fine. Go to her.

Sindelar hesitates but Egon waves him away.

EGON (CONT'D)

Go!

Sindelar glances back as Egon hurls a bottle through a Nazi storefront, howling in agony and ecstasy.

EGON (CONT'D)
Nazi swine!

EXT. RINGSTRASSE - NIGHT

Sindelar sees the opera house in the distance. He pushes toward it through a throng of PATRIOTIC FRONT SUPPORTERS swathed in Austrian flags, when he's recognized.

PATRIOTIC FRONT SUPPORTER
Look, the Paper Man! The Paper Man
is among us!

Sindelar is lifted up like a totem by the crowd and carried away from the opera.

SINDELAR
No...

PATRIOTIC FRONT MOB
Red-white-red until we're dead!

Tossed on the sea of upstretched hands, Sindelar tries to swim his way across the current of people when -

The frontline of Patriotic Front supporters clashes with a COMMUNIST MOB in a thicket of fists, sticks, and fire.

COMMUNISTS
Workers of the world unite!

Sindelar barely dodges a Molotov cocktail as it smashes into the crowd beneath him and he's dropped into the flames.

Sindelar forces his way through the burning people as the fighting nips at his heels.

Sindelar emerges from the mob clutching his ribs and staggers once more toward the opera.

EXT. VIENNA OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

Sindelar arrives and a BLOODY MAN reaches up to him from the gutter.

MAN
Help me...

Sindelar sees the man's swastika armband and strips it off. He pulls it onto his own sleeve as a NAZI MOB approaches.

The bloody man reaches up to the Nazis instead.

MAN (CONT'D)

Help me...

A NAZI pauses to shoot the man in the head. He notes Sindelar's armband and throws him a salute.

NAZI

Heil, Hitler!

Sindelar takes in the dead man at his feet with horror.

INT. VIENNA OPERA HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Sindelar clammers over a burning barricade blocking the doors and creeps into the grand lobby.

Signs of struggle are everywhere. Bodies are strewn. Human-sized strokes of blood are smeared across the marble floor where others were dragged away.

Searching for Camilla, Sindelar lurches between the corpses. All men.

INT. VIENNA OPERA HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Sindelar climbs the staircase to the mezzanine and searches the eerie theater. VOICES approach and he hides himself as TWO NAZIS pass.

Steeling himself, Sindelar steps out.

SINDELAR

Friends...

The two Nazis turn, no more than fourteen. One has a gun.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)

Boys.

The boy with the gun speaks.

NAZI BOY

Who are you calling boys, old man?

The boy probes Sindelar with his barrel. Exploring the power.

NAZI BOY (CONT'D)

Answer!

SINDELAR

I was mistaken.

Sindelar indicates his armband.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)

Look. I'm one of you.

They glance disinterestedly at Sindelar's swastika as if politics is beside the point.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)

I'm looking for a woman. Camilla Castagnola. She's a singer here.

NAZI BOY

Ja, her. They arrested the bitch. You have a cigarette?

Sindelar sheepishly feels his pockets knowing the answer could mean his life.

SINDELAR

I don't.

The boy looks like he might shoot Sindelar.

NAZI BOY #2

Karl, it's okay.

The second boy lights a cigarette over a DEAD USHER.

NAZI BOY #2 (CONT'D)

(re: usher)

He has some.

He holds out the cigarette to his friend with the gun, who inhales deeply like a man.

NAZI BOY

You embarrassed us against Italy by the way.

They walk away snickering as Sindelar remains frozen on the dead usher.

EXT. VIENNA OPERA HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Sindelar lurches back out into the burning night, searching for a direction. He starts to walk toward the Chancellery when he is suddenly clubbed from behind and collapses.

Sindelar looks up bloodied to see his attacker - a PATRIOTIC FRONT SUPPORTER wielding an Austrian flag.

SINDELAR

Please. I'm with you. Look...

Sindelar tries to pull off his swastika armband, when the man drives the flag into Sindelar's broken ribs.

PATRIOTIC FRONT SUPPORTER

Lousy fascist!

Sindelar slumps in the gutter. Loosing consciousness, he fixes on a nearby source of light - a towering, airbrushed billboard of himself in lederhosen spooning the milky contents of a cup into his mouth: "THE PAPER MAN PREFERS FRU-FRU YOGHURT!"

Sindelar blacks out.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. VIENNA OPERA HOUSE - DAY

A new day dawns. The early morning streets are empty. The fire and fury of the night before little more now than tired columns of smoke.

Sindelar stirs in the gutter, wincing from his cracked ribs. He takes in the morning-after world as STREET CLEANERS clear the rubble and POLICE heft the dead into carts.

SINDELAR

Camilla...

Suddenly a sound starts to build. A deafening thrum vibrating through all things.

Sindelar pulls himself to his feet and grips a lamppost as everything begins to shake.

Above, a black LUFTWAFFE BOMBER flies low over the city. Then another, and another. Suddenly HUNDREDS choking out the light of the sky.

Sindelar raises his arm to protect himself from the bombs...

Instead, a sheet of red paper flutters from the sky, coming to rest on the cobblestones. Then another.

Sindelar looks up. Above, the sky is crimson with the fluttering leaflets like a slow motion rain.

One of them lands at Sindelar's feet. He picks it up, revealing a swastika with the slogan: "YOUR GOVERNMENT HAS SOLD YOU TO THE JEWS!"

Sindelar catches another leaflet in mid-air: "GERMANY WELCOMES YOU." Then another: "ONE PEOPLE, ONE COUNTRY, ONE FÜHRER!"

EXT. RINGSTRASSE - DAY

Sindelar limps in a daze along the city's rubble-strewn main boulevard. Beside him, a Nazi flag unfurls in a shop window. Across the street another. Church bells peal.

The sun breaks through the gun-metal clouds as POLICEMEN add swastika armbands to their uniforms and STREET VENDORS waste no time in hawking swastika pins to eager BUYERS.

VENDOR

Swastikas! Everyone should have one!

Sindelar is about to cross the Ringstrasse, when a rumble approaches...

...An endless stream of TROOP TRANSPORTS FROM THE WEHRMACHT EIGHTH ARMY.

The GERMAN SOLDIERS grin under their helmets. Handsome, polished. Order.

From everywhere, terrified VIENNESE run to greet the soldiers, pressing Sindelar toward them. Oblivious to him.

MOTHER

Heil Hitler!

The people have a new god.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHANCERELLY - DAY

Sindelar approaches a GERMAN SENTRY outside the Chancellery, which has been fortified with barbed wire.

SINDELAR

I am looking for someone arrested
last night.

Sindelar hands the boyish sentry his papers.

SENTRY

This is the Chancellery. Why don't
you take it up with...
(recognizing the Paper
Man)
Sindelar?

INT. CHANCERELLY - DAY

Sindelar is escorted through the Chancellery lobby by SS GUARDS as the GERMAN OCCUPIERS replace the paintings of the former Chancellors and Hapsburg royalty with an incoming tide of identical portraits of the new head of state - Adolf Hitler.

Sindelar reacts as a filing cabinet tips off a dolly, spilling thousands of color-coded index cards at his feet.

SS GUARD

Move.

Sindelar is led over the cards, seeing each one has a different name like the one we saw Otto the spy prepare on him.

INT. CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A WORKMAN replaces Chancellor Schuschnigg's old nameplate with one for "OBERGRUPPENFÜHRER REINHARD HEYDRICH."

Sindelar is escorted inside where a young German general, REINHARD HEYDRICH, has documents pressed for his signature, as if the takeover of the country has been planned in such Teutonic detail it now only requires the scratch of a pen.

With a long, sloping face, Heydrich hardly seems older than the man he looks up to find...

HEYDRICH

Matthias Sindelar. The infamous
Paper Man.

Heydrich's eyes are an unblinking blue. Like an open lens. He smiles with practiced warmth.

HEYDRICH (CONT'D)
Perhaps it is you who should be
making signatures?

Heydrich's MALE SECRETARIES depart as WORKERS update the
decor around them.

HEYDRICH (CONT'D)
You have had a long night, I see,
like everyone. Allow me.

Heydrich wipes the soot from Sindelar's cheeks, beholding him
like a new creation.

HEYDRICH (CONT'D)
It is a wonder anyone could
recognize you.

SINDELAR
Obergruppenführer Heydrich...

HEYDRICH
Please, sit.

Heydrich remains standing. He is tall and refined. Musical
in his gestures.

HEYDRICH (CONT'D)
I am quite a fan of yours, you
know. It has been a great,
personal frustration that Germany
has not been able to field a team
such as your Wunderteam. My great
loves in life are music and soccer,
but it is only you who have managed
to combine them so perfectly.

SINDELAR
An acquaintance of mine was
arrested at the opera last night...

HEYDRICH
Your girlfriend, the singer.

Sindelar is surprised he knows.

SINDELAR
Yes.

HEYDRICH
My father was an opera singer and
composer.

(MORE)

HEYDRICH (CONT'D)

My given name comes from one of his songs, "Reinhard's Crime." My middle from Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde." For a time, I even thought I might go into music, but life has had other callings...

Heydrich pours Sindelar a drink.

HEYDRICH (CONT'D)

You have been seeing Frau Castagnola long?

SINDELAR

Since before the assassination.

The word hangs between them as Heydrich hands the drink to Sindelar who stares at it like hemlock.

HEYDRICH

Women will be the end of us, you know? In my youth, I was a signals officer on the battleship Schleswig Holstein. I had enjoyed my time as a single man, but when I became engaged, a former lover complained. Her father happened to be a friend of the Chief Of Naval Operations and I was dismissed for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. With no prospect for a career, I fell into drink. Then one night I heard a speech in a Munich beer hall. Now, I am overseeing the Anschluss of our two nations.

SINDELAR

What does Germany want with us?

HEYDRICH

A common future. Austria - Ostmark as it will now be called - will become the newest province of the German Reich.

SINDELAR

And what if that future is not our choice?

Heydrich regards a leftover statue of Austria's double-headed eagle.

HEYDRICH

Your time for choice is over, I'm afraid. From now on your eagle will look in one direction - Berlin.

Heydrich motions for Sindelar to rise.

HEYDRICH (CONT'D)

Come, I will release Frau Castagnola to your custody, Herr Sindelar, but in the spirit of friendship there is something I would ask of the Paper Man in return...

Heydrich pins a swastika to Sindelar's lapel and the two men meet eyes.

HEYDRICH (CONT'D)

After all, we are both Germans now.

CUT TO:

EXT. RATHAUS - DAY

Dressed in a fresh suit, Sindelar is led before INTERNATIONAL REPORTERS in front of Vienna's gothic town hall.

An SS OFFICER hands Sindelar a bucket and brush.

He walks him along a red carpet to a poster pasted on the cobblestones from Austria's doomed freedom referendum, featuring an intrepid Dollfuss with the slogan: "VOTE YES FOR A FREE AUSTRIA!"

Flashbulbs fire as Sindelar drops to his knees.

He takes in the face of his old friend and starts to scrub until all that's left is stone.

CUT TO:

I/E. JAIL - DAY

Sindelar waits at the end of a barred corridor as Camilla is led toward him.

The gate is unlocked and she steps free.

SINDELAR

Camilla...

She pushes past him, apoplectic.

CAMILLA
Don't touch me.

Sindelar follows her out into the street.

SINDELAR
Camilla!

CAMILLA
How could you?!

SINDELAR
What was I supposed to do?! Leave
you in there?

CAMILLA
It wasn't worth your name!

SINDELAR
My name sells yoghurt and watches!
What's it worth with you in jail?

CAMILLA
Everything! And you gave it to
them!

She lashes out and he takes her into his arms.

SINDELAR
I gave it to you, do you hear me?!
I gave it to you.

She looks into his eyes, struggling to trust as everything
she feared would happen comes true...

CUT TO:

EXT. STATION - DAY

BEGIN MONTAGE.

Sindelar and Camilla walk home, shell-shocked by the
political blitzkrieg already taking place around them as all
traces of the past are replaced by the new order...

EXT. CINEMAS - DAY

A WORKER removes the letters "A, Q, N and S" from the film on
the marquee: "ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT."

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

GROUNDSCKEEPERS erase "AUSTRIA" from the scoreboard as military trucks rumble onto the pitch.

Outside the stadium, barbed wire is strung around the perimeter and watchtowers are erected.

EXT. GROCER - DAY

Sindelar's yoghurt billboard is replaced with one featuring Hitler: "ADOLF HITLER CREATES WORK AND BREAD."

EXT. CINEMAS - DAY

Outside another cinema, a WORKER adds "M" and "P" to the leftover marquee letters from "ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT," rearranging them into the new film featured: "TRIUMPH OF THE WILL."

INT. APARTMENTS - DAY

A SERIES OF DOORS are kicked in as an orgy of violent political retribution unfolds against DISSIDENTS and JEWS, including several players for the Wunderteam...

SS SOLDIERS barge into an apartment where General Zehnerh stands in his uniform before his WIFE and TWO SMALL CHILDREN.

A soldier raises his gun to the general's head and fires.

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - DAY

Egon, the opera singer, finishes a cup of coffee when he sees the GESTAPO entering.

He tries to limp unnoticed out the back when they spot him...

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Egon staggers up the stairs with his bandaged foot as the Gestapo pursue him.

EXT. ROOF - MOMENTS LATER

Egon emerges onto the roof and shuffles to the ledge. He takes in the four story drop as the Gestapo arrive.

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - MOMENTS LATER

A body plummets outside. Leopold and his waiters rush to the window in horror to see Egon splayed on the pavement. Dead.

INT. ZEHNERH APARTMENT - DAY

General Zehnerh lies on the floor with his wife, son, maid, and dog. A bullet through each head.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Coach Meisl fits a lifetime into two bags when there is banging at the door. He freezes at the sound as if punched in the chest.

His WIFE looks at him concerned.

WIFE

Hugo?

EXT. MILITARY TRUCK - DAY

Vogl is shoved into the back of a military truck to find Schall from the team already there. His face bloodied.

VOGL

What's happening?!

The tailgate is slammed closed.

END MONTAGE.

CUT TO:

INT. SINDELAR'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

Sindelar peers through his blinds at a column of SOLDIERS marching below.

SINDELAR

No matter what, we will be alright.
Do you hear me?

Camilla nods when there is a knock at the door. They share a look and Sindelar answers cautiously to find -

SINDELAR (CONT'D)

Sesta?

The young player is breathless.

SESTA

Herr Sindelar, the Nazis have arrested the Jewish players on the team. Vogl, Schall.

SINDELAR

There must be a mistake...

Sindelar pulls on his jacket.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)

I will go to Heydrich and sort out this nonsense! He will listen to me.

Sindelar sees the tears in Sesta's eyes.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)

What?

Sesta cannot say. Sindelar seizes him.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)

Tell me, damn you?!

SESTA

Coach Meisl...

SINDELAR

Meisl..?

Camilla gently pulls Sindelar from the boy.

SESTA

...a heart attack when they came for him. Forgive me.

CUT TO:

INT. CHANCERELLY - DAY

Sindelar waits in a line with other well-to-do Viennese holding pictures of loved ones.

SENTRY

Next!

Sindelar steps up where an SS OFFICER has replaced yesterday's sentry.

SENTRY (CONT'D)

Papers.

Sindelar addresses him with an air of entitlement.

SINDELAR

My name is Matthias Sindelar.

SS OFFICER

And for this I am supposed to care?

SINDELAR

I've come to speak to
Obergruppenführer Heydrich.
Members of my team were arrested
last night.

SS OFFICER

The Obergruppenführer is indisposed
to visitors.

SINDELAR

I saw him only yesterday.

SS OFFICER

Yesterday is not today.

SINDELAR

They are members of the Austrian
national team!

The GUARDS tense.

SS OFFICER

There is no such thing anymore.
Austria is now Ostmark. To refer
to it otherwise is a crime.

SINDELAR

They cannot just disappear!

Sindelar addresses his countrymen in line.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)

Vogl, Schall. Tell this man you
know them!

The people stare back silent, scared for their own loved
ones.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)

(to SS officer)

Damn you people! I will speak to
someone in charge!

Sindelar pushes through, but the guards shove him to the ground at gunpoint.

SS OFFICER
Herr Sindelar, you will tell me who
has reported your teammates
missing.

Sindelar dusts himself off and sees the spectral form of Heydrich staring down from an upper window.

SINDELAR
Tell him I have!

CUT TO:

INT. COACH MEISL'S APARTMENT - DAY

A BUILDING SUPERVISOR opens a door and Sindelar enters an empty apartment alone.

He wanders slowly, absorbing the half-packed suitcases. The trophies.

Sindelar picks up something - Coach Meisl's bowler - and his body shakes with grief as the loss finally hits home...

CUT TO:

INT. JEWISH CEMETERY - DAY

A CANTOR chants the "Eyl Malei Rahamim" as the remains of the Wunderteam is gathered for Meisl's funeral.

The casket is lowered and Sindelar meets eyes with Hahnemann, who now sports a swastika on his lapel.

INT. JEWISH CEMETERY - LATER

The MOURNERS depart as Hahnemann breaks from the team.

SINDELAR
Hahnemann...

But Hahnemann walks away.

ZISCHEK
Let him go.

CISAR

There's still no word on Vogl and Schall.

SMISTIK

They've been taken to the stadium. That's where the Nazis are processing the dissidents and Jews before sending them to camps. Twenty thousand they say, and more everyday.

HIDEN

This can't be happening.

BICAN

People just disappear.

CISAR

The game is dead now. The Nazis have closed all the clubs.

VIERTI

The only way to play is for the Germans.

ZISCHEK

You're not considering joining them?

VIERTI

No, but soccer is my life. What else can I do?

They all confront the question. Lost in this new reality.

CISAR

What about you, Matthias? What will the Paper Man do?

Sindelar looks out, for once unable to see through his obstacles.

SINDELAR

I don't know.

SMISTIK

You could always make a killing in stationary...

They laugh sadly and go their separate ways.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY MANOR - DAY

Gibson hovers in his drive as PROJECTIONISTS heft an unwieldy projector from their truck.

PROJECTIONIST

It's the very latest footage, sir.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Gibson, his FAMILY, and STAFF sit in their blacked out drawing room as a newsreel is screened...

NEWS COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

The world is watching...

Footage: Austrians toss flowers at the German Eighth Army as their tanks and troop transports roll across the border. German soldiers fill their helmets from a wine casket and toast.

NEWS COMMENTATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...as German soldiers are surprised by a hero's welcome at the Austrian border in what is being called the War of Flowers...

Footage: Viennese crowd the Ringstrasse to hail Hitler's motorcade.

NEWS COMMENTATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

While Hitler himself returns to his country of birth for a triumphal welcome.

Footage: Hitler speaks from a balcony of the Hofburg to two hundred thousand cheering Austrians on the Heldenplatz as he is flanked by Heydrich and German generals.

HITLER

(in German, subtitled)

In this hour, I can report to the German people the greatest accomplishment of my life. As Führer and Chancellor of the German nation, I can proclaim before history the entry of my homeland into the German Reich!

Footage: Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain speaks outside the House of Commons.

CHAMBERLAIN

This is not a moment for hasty decisions or for careless words. The hard fact is that nothing could have arrested what has actually happened unless this country and other countries had been prepared to use force.

Footage: Sindelar scrubs away Dollfuss' poster.

NEWS COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

While in sporting news, even the Paper Man seems to think that Nazism is best for his country.

Gibson stands and the reel rolls to a stop with Sindelar on his knees.

GIBSON

That's enough.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

A GERMAN SHEPHERD barks at Sindelar as he walks around the perimeter fence that now surrounds the stadium, taking in the barbed wire and watchtowers with his own eyes.

The stadium is a prison.

CUT TO:

EXT. DANUBE RIVER - DAY

Sindelar strolls with Camilla over the Empire Bridge.

SINDELAR

You can still leave. I know people who can help.

Camilla stops at the railing, guarded.

CAMILLA

What about you?

SINDELAR

I can't. Not now.

CAMILLA

Is that what you want, for me to go?

SINDELAR

No, but it's not safe here anymore, not even for me. Heydrich has taken from me what he needed.

Camilla stares down at the dark current.

CAMILLA

I ran from them once before. Who would I be if I ran again?

SINDELAR

Human.

CAMILLA

That's hardly a standard these days.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)

What would we do? You can't play. I can't sing.

Sindelar leans against the railing with her.

SINDELAR

Make a life together. Like normal people.

CAMILLA

What do you know about being normal?

SINDELAR

What do you?

They meet eyes.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)

I can't promise things will get better.

CAMILLA

All we can ever promise is ourselves.

SINDELAR

Then I promise you.

She takes in his vow. Afraid what it means.

CAMILLA
I promise you.

They kiss.

SINDELAR
That makes it official. We will be
useless together.

Sindelar shouts it out.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)
Do you hear that, world?!

Camilla laughs, trying to cover his mouth as GERMAN SOLDIERS
take note.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)
We are officially useless!

CUT TO:

INT. BANK OFFICE - DAY

Sindelar sits dumbstruck across from a BANKER as he reviews a
statement.

SINDELAR
This is all I have left? There
must be something wrong. A decimal
point in the wrong place perhaps...

BANKER
Your lifestyle has been extravagant
to say the least, Herr Sindelar.

Sindelar considers.

SINDELAR
Cash me out.

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - DAY

A briefcase is opened full of money and Leopold looks up -
Before him, Sindelar smiles brashly.

LEOPOLD
What is this?

SINDELAR

Twenty thousand Reichsmarks. The value of your place before the Nazis. I want to buy your cafe.

LEOPOLD

But it's not for sale...

SINDELAR

I need a new career, Leopold, and your life is no longer safe here.

LEOPOLD

But I'm a star now too, see -

Leopold gestures to his yellow star.

LEOPOLD (CONT'D)

So they don't bother me.

SINDELAR

You know what's happening in Germany will soon happen here.
(echoing his teammate Bican)
People just disappear.

LEOPOLD

You're serious? What does the Paper Man know of running a cafe?

Sindelar has lost his career but not his arrogance.

SINDELAR

Nothing I can't learn.

LEOPOLD

But this place is my life's work. Where would I go?

SINDELAR

Paris, Prague. As far away as possible.

Leopold considers, weary. Like he has come too far to pull up stakes now.

LEOPOLD

The first Jews came here with the Romans and after two thousand years we still don't belong.

Leopold's eyes swim regretfully around the cafe. Knows he won't get a better offer.

LEOPOLD (CONT'D)
What about the staff?

CUT TO:

EXT. CAFE LEOPOLD - DAY

Sindelar lifts a new pane of glass into the broken front window with the waiters.

SINDELAR
To the left. That's it!

They stand back proudly when the glass crashes to the sidewalk.

Drunken GERMAN SOLDIERS cheer from the "Cafe Splendide" down the street which is in the midst of changing its sign to "Kaffee Berlin."

EXT. CAFE LEOPOLD - DAY

Sindelar and his waiters set a new pane and step back nervously.

This time, the glass stays. The soldiers JEER.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - DAY

Sindelar switches their sign to "Open."

They wait...

...and wait...

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - DAY

The waiters sweep the empty cafe as Camilla enters with a baguette, furious.

CAMILLA
The bread in all the shops is rock
now!

She hammers it on the counter.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)
 You could build with it. And for
 this I waited two hours! The world
 has gone to shit!

Sindelar turns on the radio. "Deutschland Uber Alles" drones
 on.

FRANZ THE WAITER
 It's all they play.

Sindelar turns the anthem off but a drunken rendition can
 still be heard coming from the Kaffee Berlin, which is doing
 gangbusters with GERMAN SOLDIERS.

TOBIAS THE WAITER
 Everyday, they are full since they
 changed their name.

Sindelar is nervous to put it out there...

SINDELAR
 Maybe we should change ours.

Camilla perks up.

CAMILLA
 I think that's a fine idea.

SINDELAR
 (surprised)
 You do?

CAMILLA
 (facetious)
 "Cafe Hitler" has a certain ring.

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - NIGHT

Sindelar pays the waiters as they close up.

SINDELAR
 Thank you. See you Monday.

Sindelar finds he is short for Herman the waiter.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)
 I'll have the rest for you next
 week, Herman. You have my word.

The waiters depart as Camilla joins Sindelar's side.

CAMILLA
Where will we get the money? We're
broke.

SINDELAR
I'll find a way.

Camilla considers their options sadly.

CAMILLA
I hear people from the opera are
singing at funerals for money...

CUT TO:

INT. SINDELAR'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

An SS OFFICER wanders through Sindelar's penthouse admiring the lavish decor. He stops at a painting. Sindelar hovers like an anxious sales clerk.

SS OFFICER
Exter?

SINDELAR
Gerstl.

The officer turns away.

SS OFFICER
How much for the table?

It kills Sindelar.

SINDELAR
Four hundred Reichsmarks.

SS OFFICER
Robbery.

SINDELAR
It's mahogany. Eighteenth century.

SS OFFICER
Three hundred.

INT. SINDELAR'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

The officer oversees as SOLDIERS heft Sindelar's table down the stairs.

EXT. ZENTRALFRIEDHOF CEMETERY - DAY

Camilla performs "Ave Maria" at a funeral for tips. THE SONG CONTINUES OVER...

INT. SINDELAR'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

ANOTHER OFFICER browses Sindelar's apartment, which is emptier than before.

INT. SINDELAR'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

One of Sindelar's paintings is lugged down the stairs.

INT. VIENNA OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

Camilla's "Ave Maria" continues as Heydrich watches the chorus from "Don Giovanni" perform with a GERMAN MILITARY BAND.

INT. SINDELAR'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Money changes hands and Sindelar's couch is removed.

EXT. ZENTRALFRIEDHOF CEMETERY - DAY

Tears fill Camilla's eyes as she sings while GRAVEDIGGERS shovel dirt onto a coffin. The world dead.

CUT TO:

INT. CHANCERELLY - DAY

MEN IN PLAINCLOTHES enter with authority, casting fear even in the SS GUARDS stationed in the lobby.

INT. CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Heydrich fingers through a report as the men in plainclothes sit impassively before him.

Foremost is Vienna's GESTAPO KRIMINALDIREKTOR, his presence harshly analytical in contrast with Heydrich's more lyrical tendencies.

GESTAPO KRIMINALDIREKTOR

The Gestapo's reports show that the popularity of the Anschluss is deteriorating rapidly, Obergruppenführer. The arrests, rationing, and various restrictions have taken a toll on the general population.

HEYDRICH

These figures can be trusted?

GESTAPO KRIMINALDIREKTOR

They are the optimistic figures. Only fifteen percent of the population can now be counted on as reliable National Socialists. The majority should be considered opponents of the Reich.

Heydrich pushes the report away, masking his concern.

HEYDRICH

Berlin knows of this?

GESTAPO KRIMINALDIREKTOR

Of course.

Heydrich stands. No love lost between these two men.

HEYDRICH

I see.

GESTAPO KRIMINALDIREKTOR

The Ministry of Propaganda has been working around the clock, and arrests are ongoing -

HEYDRICH

With all due respect, Herr Kriminaldirektor, we don't need any more swastikas or midnight arrests. Force can only be prologue. We must now inspire the people here to follow us. Find a way to conquer their hearts.

Heydrich's pretensions grate on the Kriminaldirektor.

GESTAPO KRIMINALDIREKTOR

What does the Obergruppenführer have in mind?

Heydrich puts on a record.

HEYDRICH

May I?

The opening notes fill Heydrich with inspiration as he nurses the embryo of an idea.

GESTAPO KRIMINALDIREKTOR

(re: record)

You're suggesting we conquer them with Wagner?

HEYDRICH

Of a kind. Yes.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - DAY

Sindelar enters to find the waiters on edge. He follows their eyes to the lone patron -

THE GESTAPO KRIMINALDIREKTOR.

Sindelar approaches concerned.

SINDELAR

May I help you?

GESTAPO KRIMINALDIREKTOR

Herr Sindelar, your foray into the hospitality business has been brought to the attention of Obergruppenführer Heydrich. He has generously proposed the Austrian National Socialist Party hold their next function at your establishment. You would be compensated of course...

The Kriminaldirektor scans the decor.

GESTAPO KRIMINALDIREKTOR (CONT'D)

But changes will be required.

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - DAY

Camilla paces before Sindelar like a caged cat.

CAMILLA

"It would be our honor?" You let these butchers celebrate themselves here? Are you mad?!

SINDELAR
What choice do we have?!

CAMILLA
Choice?
(playing Sindelar)
How about - "We are new,
Obergruppenführer." "We couldn't
possibly accommodate such a crowd."
"We don't serve Nazis!"

SINDELAR
Enough! This is the world we live
in!

CAMILLA
And I chose not to!

Camilla storms out.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - DAY

The Gestapo Kriminaldirektor supervises the Aryanization of the cafe.

- The international newspapers are replaced with the official Nazi rag, the "Volkisch Observer."

- The stove is stuffed with copies of "Le Monde," the "London Times," and the "Washington Post," their burning headlines raising the prospect of another great war.

- The portrait of Jerzy Kulczycki, the patron saint of coffee, is replaced with Hitler.

- A Nazi flag is strung from the rafters.

The Kriminaldirektor takes in the transformed cafe and salutes the portrait of Hitler.

GESTAPO KRIMINALDIREKTOR
Heil, Hitler!

He turns to Sindelar and his waiters who respond half-heartedly.

SINDELAR/WAITERS
Heil, Hitler...

CUT TO:

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - NIGHT

A banner reads, "Welcome Austrian Nationalist Socialist Party." The event is thick with NAZI OFFICIALS laughing and drinking when one of them spies a RAT scurrying along the baseboard.

The waiter on the piano loses his place in the tune as he notices the rodent and alerts Sindelar with a nod.

Sindelar angles toward the rat when -

NAZI OFFICIAL (O.S.)

Excuse me.

A NAZI OFFICIAL holds up a long, black strand from his goulash. A SECOND OFFICIAL pulls out an identical hair.

SECOND OFFICIAL

I have one too...

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - MOMENTS LATER

Sindelar storms into the kitchen.

SINDELAR

What's happening with the goulash?!

Camilla shrugs as she stirs the pot.

CAMILLA

Why? What's wrong with the goulash?

Sindelar presents her with a palm of hair.

SINDELAR

Hair - yours. And there's a rat out there too! Where did the cat go?

CAMILLA

The cat was tired. He needed to rest.

SINDELAR

(realizing)

You're sabotaging this. Willfully defeating the purpose.

Camilla is defiant in her guilt.

CAMILLA

And what purpose would that be?

SINDELAR

Our survival!

Sindelar storms back into the dining room, when he is accosted by a LARGE GERMAN not wearing the military or party uniforms of the others.

COACH HERBERGER

Herr Sindelar, when they told me the Paper Man had taken up behind a coffee bar I had to see it with my own eyes.

SINDELAR

I'm sorry...

The man holds out a big hand.

COACH HERBERGER

Sepp Herberger.

SINDELAR

(knows of him)

Reich coach for the German team.

Herberger smiles warmly.

COACH HERBERGER

Obergruppenführer Heydrich has sent me to inform you that a reunification match is to be played between the remains of the old Austrian Wunderteam team and the new Greater German team.

Sindelar is inscrutable. Herberger fills the silence.

COACH HERBERGER (CONT'D)

The match is a matter of state importance, and the Obergruppenführer would be honored to have the Paper Man take the field on behalf of Germany. One of your best players has already joined out of patriotic duty.

(beat)

Accommodations would be made of course for your position as striker.

SINDELAR

What about my players who have disappeared, Vogl and Schall? What accommodations have been made for them?

Herberger lowers his voice as their conversation attracts attention.

COACH HERBERGER

I do not set the policies.

SINDELAR

And I am finished with the game.

Sindelar tries to walk away but Herberger grips him.

COACH HERBERGER

Herr Sindelar, the match will proceed with or without you. Participate and you will find appreciation from the highest levels of the Reich. Don't and you risk great hardship.

SINDELAR

Are you threatening me, Herr Herberger?

COACH HERBERGER

Think of it as a sincere warning from one sportsman to another.

SINDELAR

My future is here now.
(re: Nazi paraphernalia)
We just redecorated.

An officer interjects with a pen and paper.

OFFICER

Please - an autograph for my son from the Paper Man.

Sindelar signs and hands it back. The officer looks at it - instead of "Paper Man" it reads "Matthias Sindelar."

SINDELAR

The Paper Man is no more.
(to Herberger)
You can tell that to Heydrich.

Sindelar stalks away and Herberger stares after him, more concerned than disappointed.

I/E. CAFE LEOPOLD - DAY

Camilla pursues Sindelar as he sweeps up after the event.

CAMILLA

You must play, Matthias, but for Austria...

SINDELAR

The game is a setup to take away what little pride we have left.

CAMILLA

Or a chance to restore it. I can't believe you're going to let these bastards win!

SINDELAR

They've already won! Haven't you seen the map? We no longer exist!

CAMILLA

You know Austria can't win without you!

SINDELAR

What happened to a normal life?

Camilla points to Hitler staring down at them from the wall.

CAMILLA

What about this looks normal?

Sindelar tosses the broom.

SINDELAR

I'm done playing games!

He storms out, but Camilla follows him into the street.

CAMILLA

How does it feel to be angry?!

Down the block, GERMAN SOLDIERS cat call from the Kaffee Berlin.

Camilla gives them the finger.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)

Go back to the real Berlin!

CUT TO:

EXT. VIENNA - DAY

Sindelar shrugs his jacket against the cold as he wanders the ghost-like city. Gone is the old 'gemutlichkeit' gaiety of the cafes and shops. Even the colors seem to have been distilled away to create the piercing red of the ubiquitous Nazi flags.

Across the street, HUNGRY VIENNESE line up outside a bakery where fresh cakes used to crowd the window. Above the store is a poster: "BULLETS BEFORE BREAD!"

CUT TO:

EXT. QUELLENSTRASSE 75 - DAY

It's getting late as Sindelar slouches through the Vienna ghetto of Favoriten as if WALKING BACK IN TIME...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. WESTBAHNHOF STATION - DAY - PAST

BEGIN MONTAGE

A TEN YEAR OLD SINDELAR follows his MOTHER and FATHER off a greasy train. They have the dog-years look of peasants, and in their hands they carry everything they own.

MOTHER

Come, Matthias.

Little Sindelar looks up at the station sign - "VIENNA."

EXT. FAVORITEN DISTRICT - DAY - PAST

The Sindelars slump into the rough and tumble Favoriten, stopping before a decrepid apartment building. "Quellenstrasse 75."

FATHER

This is it.

Sindelar fixates on a group of URCHINS playing soccer in the street as a goal is scored.

INT. QUELLENSTRASSE 75 - DAY - PAST

Sindelar enters their "rental barrack" apartment to find his mother in tears. In her hands is his FATHER'S CAP.

MOTHER
Matthias...

EXT. FAVORITEN DISTRICT - DAY - PAST

Sindelar sprints as if he can outrun the news of his father's death. He finally buckles in an alley and throws up.

EXT. FAVORITEN DISTRICT - DAY - PAST

Dirty and gaunt, Sindelar meanders behind a MOUNTED POLICEMAN with a brush and pail, staring hypnotically at the HORSE'S ASS.

The horse's tail starts to lift, and Sindelar draws closer, when something distracts him in the gutter -

A FILTHY RAG.

INT. QUELLENSTRASSE 75 - NIGHT - PAST

Sindelar reaches under the bed and pulls out a basket of rags. He adds more from his pockets.

INT. QUELLENSTRASSE 75 - NIGHT - PAST

Sindelar's mother returns exhausted to find him waiting with the rags.

MOTHER
What am I supposed to do with
filthy rags, Matthias?

INT. QUELLENSTRASSE 75 - NIGHT - PAST

Sindelar sleeps curled around the basket as his mother works late to stitch the rags into the embryo of a sphere...

INT. QUELLENSTRASSE 75 - DAY - PAST

The world is on its head as Sindelar opens his eyes with his ear to the floor. Before him, the rags have been knitted into a "fetzenlaberl" - a RAG BALL.

EXT. STREET - DAY - PAST

The rag ball bounces off a wall as Sindelar kicks it alone in an alley. A stone lands in the dirt next to him.

Sindelar turns to see one of the boys from the street game.

EXT. STREET - DAY - PAST

Sindelar plays in the rough pick-up game. He dribbles between the other boys, using the topography of the street - a lamppost, the gutter, walls. An early genius in his feet.

Sindelar pounds the soggy ball through two coal drums at the end of the block. As he retrieves it, TWO MOUNTED POLICE gallop up and the urchins scatter.

POLICEMAN #1

Halt!

The policemen draw their sabers. One of them goes to spike the ball, but Sindelar dives for it and the horse spooks, trampling him.

Sindelar writhes in the gutter as the policeman eyes the boy guiltily.

POLICEMAN #2

Let's go. He knows better than to play in the street.

The policeman pulls the ball off his blade and they ride off.

The other children gather solemnly to ogle Sindelar's MANGLED RIGHT KNEE.

INT. VETERANARIAN - DAY - PAST

A VETERANARIAN examines a skin disease on a rambunctious SOW when he sees Sindelar in the door with his mother. The little boy is ghost-white from pain.

MOTHER

We can't afford a doctor. They said perhaps you could help.

The vet's eyes fall on the boy's gruesome knee.

INT. VETERANARIAN - DAY - PAST

The vet wipes the scalpel he had used on the pig. He sets a stick between Sindelar's teeth.

VETERARIAN
This is going to hurt.

Sindelar fixes on the ceiling, when his body is suddenly electrocuted with pain. Tears stream from his eyes, but he doesn't make a sound.

EXT. VETERANARIAN - DAY - PAST

The vet lays Sindelar on a horse-drawn cart as blood seeps through the bandage.

VETERARIAN
...And no more games or he'll never walk again.

The vet slaps the horse and the gray sky passes above as Sindelar is pulled away.

INT. QUELLENSTRASSE 75 - DAY - PAST

Sindelar sits alone in the window, watching the urchins play soccer in the street below.

A sheet of paper flits in the breeze and Sindelar notices it. When he returns to the game, he refocuses on the fluttering of legs, the movement of the ball. Drawing a connection...

INT. QUELLENSTRASSE 75 - DAY - PAST

Sindelar pulls out the basket that once held the rags and stacks three plates in it.

Taking a seat, he hooks his foot under the handle and lifts the basket with his bad knee. Wincing, he sets it down.

Outside, the kids cheer a goal. He lifts the basket again.

INT. QUELLENSTRASSE 75 - DAY - PAST

Sindelar's mother departs.

MOTHER
I will try to bring food tonight.
Stay out of the street.

She closes the door and Sindelar sits alone.

INT. QUELLENSTRASSE 75 - DAY - PAST

Sindelar pulls out the rag ball and tentatively taps it in the air with his bad leg. He taps it again. Higher.

INT. QUELLENSTRASSE 75 - DAY - PAST

Sindelar grips his way down the rickety staircase.

EXT. QUELLENSTRASSE 75 - MOMENTS LATER - PAST

Using the ironwork fence as a crutch, Sindelar nervously touches his bad leg to the ground and takes a step. Then another.

Sindelar hops along the block in a SERIES OF SHOTS through time as his gait quickens into a run. Almost as good as before...

EXT. STREET - DAY - PAST

CLOSE ON Sindelar's bandaged knee as it bobs and weaves past a succession of incoming tackles. His style is no longer direct and physical like that of the other boys, but artfully evasive. Like a sheet of paper in the wind.

On the sideline, a man in a bowler - Coach Meisl - scouts the FIFTEEN-YEAR OLD SINDELAR. He holds a schilling out to a BOY next to him as Sindelar scores through the coal drums.

COACH MEISL
Who's the invalid?

END MONTAGE. BACK TO PRESENT...

CUT TO:

EXT. QUELLENSTRASSE 75 - DAY

Sindelar finally comes to a stop before the drunken pile of stone that is now Quellenstrasse 75. His home as a boy.

He looks to where the street kids used to play, but there are no children now - only one of his old billboards graffitied with a Hitler mustache and the slogan "THE PAPER MAN PREFERS HITLER."

Sindelar finds a broken brick in the gutter. He steps to the poster and starts to SCRUB AWAY THE IMAGE OF HIS FACE.

VOICE (O.S.)
What are you doing?

Sindelar finds a LITTLE BOY wearing the white knee-high socks of the Hitler Youth.

LITTLE BOY
I will report you.

Sindelar seizes the boy.

SINDELAR
You're a boy! What do you know
about politics? Why don't you go
play?!

The boy is scared. Sindelar lets him go and the boy flees.

Sindelar sees the curtains twitch around him. Growing paranoid, he drops the brick and edges away. Only half himself removed.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

A door is kicked in and Sesta is dragged from his bed at gunpoint.

SS SOLDIER
Karl Sesta?!

SESTA
What is this?!

Sesta is smashed unconscious.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

A military truck passes through the gate as we are finally witness to the truth of the stadium...

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

Sesta slumps in a long line of PRISONERS being processed - Jews with yellow stars, dissidents without.

SS SOLDIER

Next!

Sesta hobbles up.

SS SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Name?

SESTA

Karl Sesta.

SS SOLDIER

Occupation?

SESTA

Soccer player.

The SOLDIERS share a look.

I/E. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Screams are heard as a soldier bangs on the door of the team's old locker room.

SOLDIER

Karl Sesta!

Terrified, Sesta is shoved inside, where there is now blood on the walls...

CUT TO:

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

His face a bloody pulp, Sesta is lined up on the pitch with hundreds of other PRISONERS, including Chancellor Schuschnigg and the Jewish players on the Wunderteam, Vogl and Schall.

A whistle is blown and the prisoners drop to prone position. The whistle is blown again and they bury their faces into the ground, CHEWING THE GRASS WITH THEIR TEETH.

Sesta stands in disbelief when he's struck to the ground.

SS SOLDIER

You think you're too good to cut grass?!

The soldier mashes Sesta's face into the ground.

SS SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Chew!

Sesta looks at the players next to him biting the blades.
Choking on his tears, Sesta does the same.

We PULL BACK on hundreds of people inching their faces across
the pitch...

CUT TO:

EXT. SINDELAR'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Sindelar returns home and slows as he sees a man huddled in
the cold on his stoop, shrouded in his breath.

SINDELAR
Cisar..?

CISAR
Matthias...

The Austrian defender looks like a ghost of his former self.
They embrace.

SINDELAR
What has happened to you?

CISAR
Heydrich has arrested Sesta.

SINDELAR
Sesta - the boy?

CISAR
Hahnemann informed on him being a
Jew.

SINDELAR
But Sesta isn't Jewish.

CISAR
His mother was...

CUT TO:

EXT. CHANCERELLY - DAY

Once more, Sindelar steps to the guard post outside the
Chancellery and hands over his papers.

SINDELAR
Tell the Obergruppenführer I am
here about the game.

INT. CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Sindelar is escorted before Heydrich.

HEYDRICH
Herr Sindelar...

Sindelar remains standing.

SINDELAR
Release my players and I will play.

HEYDRICH
For Germany?

SINDELAR
For Austria.

HEYDRICH
Austria no long exists.

SINDELAR
Then for Ostmark as you call it.

HEYDRICH
You assume your participation is so important? I have already heard from Coach Herberger that you are finished with the game.

SINDELAR
What you want won't work without me. The game won't count to our people unless I play.

Heydrich is taken aback by Sindelar's directness.

HEYDRICH
The Paper Man can do more now than kick a ball, I see? You have become a politician. And what if I were to agree?

SINDELAR
We play at Prater.

Heydrich grows annoyed.

HEYDRICH
Prater is being used for other purposes.

SINDELAR
Prater is the national stadium.
Would you perform Wagner in the
street?

Heydrich considers. Gives in too easily.

HEYDRICH
The match will be held at Prater in
one week.

SINDELAR
I'll inform my team.

Sindelar starts to leave when Heydrich stops him.

HEYDRICH
Herr Sindelar -

Heydrich smiles, knowing Sindelar might have cards but the
game is his.

HEYDRICH (CONT'D)
There is one condition of my own...

EXT. PITCH - DAY

Herberger oversees a practice game with his thoroughbred
GERMAN SQUAD.

COACH HERBERGER
Faster, faster, I say!

A MESSENGER arrives with a note.

MESSENGER
Herr Herberger, from
Obergruppenführer Heydrich.

Herberger reads it, tense.

COACH HERBERGER
So, we have our game...

He looks up as Hahnemann fires the ball into the net.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - DAY

The curtains are drawn as the old Austrian Wunderteam is
gathered, including Sesta, Vogl and Schall.

They all look tired, and the ones who were imprisoned are emaciated. Sindelar captains the conversation, using salt and pepper shakers to represent the two teams. Salt for Austria.

SINDELAR

The German game is fast and physical - a combination of the English and Italian styles that maximizes their speed and power.
(echoing Coach Meisl)
But if we're true to our game, we can prevail.

VOGL

Who even knows what our game is anymore? None of us has played since the Anschluss.

SMISTIK

And the Gestapo confiscated our jerseys.

CISAR

The game will be an embarrassment, just like they want.

VIERTI

They will crush us.

SINDELAR

Enough!

They fall silent.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)

Would you rather be on your way to Dachau, or waiting for a knock on the door? This game is your freedom!

ZISCHEK

But, Matthias, the SS has put tails on all of us. We can't even practice without them taking notes.

Sindelar considers.

SINDELAR

I know a place, but first we must bid farewell to our German friends.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAFFEE BERLIN - DAY

Otto, the SS spy, maintains a bead on Cafe Leopold as a WAITER clatters a coffee in front of him.

WAITER
Coffee.

Otto tastes the bitter sludge, and nudges it away. Down the street, he sees Sindelar leaving.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Otto trails at a distance as Sindelar rounds a corner at the end of the block. Otto picks up his pace.

I/E. BUS - MOMENTS LATER

Sindelar steps onto a bus.

The bus starts to move, when Otto hops on board and flashes his ID at the nervous DRIVER.

Sindelar squeezes along the CROWDED aisle toward the back. Otto edges after him, but when he gets halfway Sindelar turns...

Otto looks in dread. It's Herman the waiter in Sindelar's clothes.

EXT. CAFE LEOPOLD - CONTINUOUS

Sindelar exits the cafe and heads in the opposite direction of Herman...

EXT. VIENNA - DAY

BEGIN MONTAGE.

The other players ditch their SS TAILS in various ways...

- Walking through a bar and out the back.

- Scrambling over the rooftops.

- Getting lost in the lines of hungry VIENNESE waiting for food at the market.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. QUELLENSTRASSE 75 - DAY

Sindelar waits on his old stoop with a ball as his team arrives from different directions. Once more, the curtains along the block twitch, but this time...

MATCH CUT TO:

The block is thick with CHILDREN and PARENTS cheering the expert pick-up game.

The ball switches between the players' feet as they key into each other's movements like an old song.

Sindelar strikes the ball between the coal drums and fetches it from the gutter one more time.

When he turns back, his team watches him. Ready.

CUT TO:

INT. SINDELAR'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

The same SS OFFICER wanders through Sindelar's apartment, devoid of furniture.

SS OFFICER
There is hardly anything left.

SINDELAR
Business at the cafe has been slow.

The officer stops.

SS OFFICER
How much for these?

On the shelf are Sindelar's trophies. His history.

CAMILLA
They're not for sale.

The officer holds up a fistful of cash.

SS OFFICER
One thousand Reichsmarks.

Sindelar looks at the money. Needs it.

SS OFFICER (CONT'D)
And you will throw in the lamp.

INT. SHIRT VENDOR'S APARTMENT - DAY

KNOCKING on a door. The door is unlocked and an OLD MAN peers cautiously through the crack. Can't believe his eyes...

SHIRT VENDOR
Sindelar?

SINDELAR
You used to sell souvenir shirts at
the stadium?

INT. SHIRT VENDOR'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Sindelar gazes around the meager apartment in search of something.

SHIRT VENDOR
After the Nazis closed the stadium,
they took them.

SINDELAR
You have no way of getting more?

Sindelar presents the Reichsmarks from his trophies.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)
I can pay.

SHIRT VENDOR
I'm sorry, the person I bought from
has disappeared. It is impossible.

The old man wants to say more but he's scared.

SINDELAR
Well then, we'll just have to make
do without. Good night.

Sindelar leaves and the vendor closes the door. When he turns, he finds Sindelar has left the money on the table. The vendor's eyes shift guiltily to a bible on his bookshelf...

CUT TO:

INT. SINDELAR'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Camilla puts on earrings, wearing the same dress from their first date.

SINDELAR (O.S.)
It still fits...

Camilla turns to find Sindelar in his tux.

CAMILLA
(re: dress)
I had it taken in.

SINDELAR
You're a vision.

He kisses her.

CAMILLA
Why won't you tell me where we're
going?

SINDELAR
It's a surprise.

CAMILLA
You know I don't like surprises. I
actually hate them.

He places a scarf around her eyes.

SINDELAR
I know...

CUT TO:

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - NIGHT

White and red petals cover the floor as Camilla is led
blindfolded into the candlelit space...

SINDELAR
Voilà.

Sindelar removes the blindfold and Camilla has to hold back
her tears.

CAMILLA
Matthias...

The Nazi paraphernalia is gone and the cafe has been
transformed into the same place of romance from their first
date.

HERMAN THE WAITER
The Sindelar reservation?

Camilla takes Sindelar's hand.

CAMILLA

Yes.

Sindelar walks Camilla to their table along the path of white and red cloth petals, and she realizes the Nazi flag is missing.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)

The flag...

Sindelar smiles. Cat that ate the canary.

SINDELAR

The shops were out of flowers.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - NIGHT

The cafe is alive again as Sindelar and Camilla chat and laugh, and the waiters perform their work once more with their old high art.

EXT. CAFE LEOPOLD - NIGHT

In the shadows across the street, Otto, the SS spy, hunches in the dark cold. He takes in the warmth of the lovers, and puts away his camera. Letting them have tonight...

CUT TO:

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

The day dawns as the stadium is prepared for the final game...

- Barbed wire is rolled up and the watchtowers are dismantled.

- "OSTMARK" is painted over "AUSTRIA" on the scoreboard, and "GERMANY" is added as the visitor.

- Blood is scrubbed from the locker room walls.

- Chalk lines of the pitch are redrawn and goalposts are returned.

- German Shepherds leap into the back of military trucks, and the trucks rumble off the pitch.

We HOLD ON the empty arena. No sign of what happened here.
No sign of what's to come...

CUT TO:

INT. SINDELAR'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

SUPER: "APRIL 3, 1938"

Up all night, Sindelar watches the sun rise naked in his last remaining chair. In his hands is his childhood RAG BALL.

INT. CHANCELLOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Heydrich buttons his uniform, checking himself in the bathroom mirror. Ready for the big show.

EXT. TOWN SQUARES - DAY

Speaker rigs are erected in town squares in the early light as the world prepares to listen...

CUT TO:

INT. VIENNA CAFES - DAY

The old PATRONS return as if from a long hibernation, their jackets slack and airy now with holes.

EXT. HELDENPLATZ - DAY

The first PEOPLE enter Vienna's main square, huddling around the speakers and their cigarettes.

INT. BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE - DAY

The FOREIGN SECRETARY catches his AIDES listening to the pre-game commentary. They switch it off, busted.

FOREIGN SECRETARY
Gentleman, the Prime Minister
wishes to be kept apprised of the
score.

They switch it back on.

AIDE
Yes, sir!

INT. PARIS CAFE - DAY

FRENCH PATRONS crowd a radio for the game, when a MAN ENTERS.

MAN
A coffee, please.

The man takes off his hat - it's LEOPOLD.

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

Camilla files into the stadium for her first game. A drop of water melts on the back of the shoulder of the MAN before her. Then another. She gazes up. It's snowing.

As the arena comes into view, Camilla is overwhelmed...

CAMILLA
My god...

The stadium has been transformed as if for the Nuremberg rally.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The Wunderteam enters their old locker room, taking in the white walls, which until yesterday were covered in blood.

SCHALL
They beat me for days in here.

Vierti steps to Meisl's old record player, which has been smashed.

VIERTI
So much for music.

Sindelar enters carrying a box.

SESTA
The shirts have arrived.

The team opens the box, but their faces spell disappointment.

ZISCHEK
Gray?

Vogl takes one.

VOGL

At least they aren't making us play
naked.

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

Heydrich waits tensely as a convoy of limousines arrives
outside the stadium. A NAZI REICHSLEITER and high-ranking
PARTY APPARATCHIKS step out.

NAZI REICHSLEITER

Reinhard!

HEYDRICH

Thank you for making the trip from
Berlin.

NAZI REICHSLEITER

We wouldn't miss it for the world.

CUT TO:

INT. RADIO BOOTH - DAY

Commentator Schmieger leans into his microphone one more
time.

COMMENTATOR SCHMIEGER

Sixty thousand souls are gathered
here today at Prater Stadium to
witness this match between the
Greater German team and Austria's
former Wunderteam, now renamed
Ostmark...

EXT. HELDENPLATZ - DAY

Vienna's main square has been transformed into a vigil of TWO
HUNDRED THOUSAND Austrians, silently waiting.

COMMENTATOR SCHMIEGER (V.O.)

...while reports are that twenty
times that number are tuning into
the game by radio around the world.

Otto wanders, surveilling the people. Uncertain like them.

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - DAY

Once again, the patrons tense around the radio.

COMMENTATOR SCHMIEGER (V.O.)
And the Germans take the pitch...

EXT. TUNNEL - DAY

The teams line up in the dark tunnel like bullets in a chamber.

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

The GERMAN TEAM pounds onto the pitch led by Hahnemann to mechanical applause from the crowd.

Fit and large, they line up before Heydrich's directors' box and stare disciplined into space. MANNHEIM, SIFFLING, URBAN, GELLESCH. The fascist ideal made flesh.

EXT. DIRECTORS' BOX - CONTINUOUS

Heydrich admires his team with the confidence of a foregone conclusion.

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

The Wunderteam enters the hushed arena. Sindelar takes in the hopeless faces in the stands - some we recognize from the cafes, streets and riots. Ghosts now haunting their old lives.

Vogl notes the freshly cut grass.

VOGL
Sesta, I think you missed a spot.

The team swallows their grins as Sesta stares daggers at the Germans.

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

A WEHRMACHT MARCHING BAND belts out "Deutschland Uber Alles" as both teams extend a Nazi salute to the directors' box.

Sindelar holds the salute, meeting eyes with Heydrich.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

The ref flips a Reichsmark and Sindelar calls it.

SINDELAR

Tails.

The ref reveals the toss - the single-headed Nazi eagle.
Hahnemann locks eyes with Sindelar.

COMMENTATOR SCHMIEGER

And the kickoff to Austria...

INT. RADIO BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Commentator Schmieger glances at an SS GUARD assigned to his booth.

COMMENTATOR SCHMIEGER

Correction, Ostmark.

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

Sindelar starts the game, but the Germans quickly set a physical tone under Hahnemann's command, walling off the Austrians' passing lanes and forcing them to backpedal.

Sindelar is reluctant to engage and his team picks up on it, falling into disarray like an orchestra without a conductor.

Hahnemann intercepts an anemic pass from Sindelar and mounts a blitzkrieg counterattack.

Caught flatfooted, the slower, smaller Austrians struggle to regroup as the Germans rifle the ball up the pitch...

Hahnemann to Urban...to Gellesch...to Mannheim in mid-stride...building in speed and power... The German style more Wagner than Mozart. Brutish, raw, inexorable...

Mannheim pushes the ball to Siffling, who drives up the wing. The Austrians scramble to fall back as Siffling arcs the cross into the advancing German frontline and...

HAHNEMANN HAMMERS THE BALL THROUGH HIDDEN WITH PUNISHING FORCE.

INT. RADIO BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Commentator Schmieger tries to put his heart into it.

COMMENTATOR SCHMIEGER

Goal!

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - CONTINUOUS

The patrons listen crestfallen.

COMMENTATOR SCHMIEGER (V.O.)

And Germany is on the boards with
only minutes into play...

EXT. HELDENPLATZ - CONTINUOUS

Otto regards the downtrodden crowd shuffling in the cold.

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

Groundskeepers update the scoreboard as the crowd reacts with
schizophrenic applause, unsure which side is theirs...

Germany - 1, Ostmark - 0

The Germans return for the kickoff and Hahnemann brushes past
Sindelar.

HAHNEMANN

Score one Germany.

Sindelar returns to position, avoiding the disappointed eyes
of his team.

EXT. STANDS - CONTINUOUS

Alone in the stands, Camilla watches Sindelar, sensing
something isn't right...

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

Play resumes and Sindelar continues to backpedal. The
Austrians barely survive the waves of attacks led by
Hahnemann...

Mannheim glances the ball off the Austrian post and the
German coach barks his annoyance.

COACH HERBERGER

Put them away!

Sindelar glances at Meisl's empty bench on the Austrian side, and something in him seems to turn.

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

The clock ticks down on the half with Germany in possession, when Sindelar suddenly stretches to intercept the ball...

Starting Austria's first real counter, Sindelar threads the ball to Sesta...then to Vogl...who pushes it back up to Sindelar... Not quite music, but a harmony.

Sindelar looks ahead to the thicket of the German defense and sees a path we don't. He flits past a defender, then another. For a moment like himself again...

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - CONTINUOUS

The patrons squeeze toward the radio...

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

Sindelar beats the last defender and draws into the penalty box against the goalie. He's about to strike, when he hesitates...

Sindelar fires wide and the whistle blows for halftime.

INT. STANDS - CONTINUOUS

The crowd slackens. The Nazi boy who had accosted Sindelar defacing his billboard registers his FATHER's sadness.

INT. BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The aides draw straws.

AIDE

Who's going to tell him?

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

The Austrians slump off the pitch as Vogl pursues Sindelar toward the tunnel to the locker room.

VOGL

Matthias, what's wrong?

SINDELAR
Nothing. Why?

VOGL
You're not playing like yourself.

SINDELAR
I missed. It's not the first time.

VOGL
You don't miss from that range.
Vierti, me - we miss from that
range, but not you.

Vogl stops him at the tunnel.

VOGL (CONT'D)
How long have we played together?

Sindelar's anger rises as he feels trapped.

SINDELAR
What do you want from me?!

VOGL
(re: crowd)
The same as them. For you to play!

SINDELAR
They've come for a wake!

VOGL
They've come to believe again!

SINDELAR
You've seen what they believe in!
Tasted it with your teeth for god's
sake!

Sindelar tries to walk away but Vogl seizes him.

VOGL
Yes! Damn their hate! They have
been wrong, monstrous, but they're
scared. This is our chance to
remind the world who we were - who
we still are.

SINDELAR
What will it change? You think the
Germans will just disappear if we
win?

VOGL
 Whatever Heydrich traded you for
 defeat, we're not worth it.

Sindelar can't look him in the eye.

VOGL (CONT'D)
 They have taken everything else
 from us, Matthias. Don't let them
 take this.

Vogl walks away and Sindelar sees Sesta has overheard. The
 young man glances at his hero and follows Vogl into the dark.

Sindelar looks down the tunnel to the crowd...

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The team squabbles as Vogl enters with Sesta.

CISAR
 What did he say?

Vogl meets eyes with Sesta.

VOGL
 Nothing.

INT. SHIRT VENDOR'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The old shirt vendor switches off his radio and moves to his
 bookshelf. Removing his bible, he reveals a cubbyhole
 stuffed with a dusty linen bag...

INT. GERMAN LOCKER ROOM - DAY

An SS OFFICER enters, confronting Herberger before his team.

SS OFFICER
 Coach Herberger, the
 Obergruppenführer is not satisfied
 with the score.

COACH HERBERGER
 Please, I am speaking with my team.

SS OFFICER
 This is a concern of the Reich.

COACH HERBERGER
 This is a game not a battlefield!

SS OFFICER

Then you are mistaken about what
this is.

SS GUARDS file in behind the officer and he addresses the
team directly.

SS OFFICER (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, the Obergruppenführer
requires a decisive victory today.
It does not matter how.

CUT TO:

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

Sindelar hunches on a bench alone and confronts his gruesome
boyhood scar - the source of his pain and the genius of his
play.

CAMILLA (O.S.)

Matthias...

Camilla emerges from the shadows.

SINDELAR

My whole life I've played with the
fear I'd never be able to play
again.

She kneels before him and traces her fingers along the scar.

CAMILLA

Now there are no more games.

Sindelar agonizes over telling her the truth.

SINDELAR

Heydrich will kill us both if we
win.

CAMILLA

Kill us? What do -

SINDELAR

It was the only way he'd release
the Jewish players before they were
sent to the camps.

Camilla falls away as the shock sinks in.

CAMILLA

Why didn't you tell me?

SINDELAR
Because we can still make a life,
even in this. A family.

CAMILLA
Throw the game...

Sindelar feels the crushing guilt.

SINDELAR
Yes.

CAMILLA
Does the team know?

SINDELAR
No.

Camilla's eyes fill with tears, realizing what she'll never have. Sindelar senses where's she's headed...

SINDELAR (CONT'D)
Camilla, no...

CAMILLA
What choice do we have?

SINDELAR
You could have left!

CAMILLA
But I stayed! They'll never stop
unless someone stands up to them,
Matthias.

SINDELAR
But it's just a game.

CAMILLA
It's more than that and you know
it. War is coming. What will we
tell the world?

SINDELAR
Camilla...

She kisses him tenderly.

CAMILLA
Be their Paper Man one more time,
Matthias. I will wait for you.

Camilla leaves him alone in the dark.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Sindelar enters and the team falls silent. In the middle of the room is the dusty bag from the cubbyhole.

SCHALL

From the old shirt seller.

Sindelar eyes the bag as the team fixes on him, wanting to believe...

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

Sindelar leads his team onto a clean dusting of snow in their SOUVENIR NATIONAL JERSEYS.

EXT. STANDS - CONTINUOUS

Camilla is surprised by the show of solidarity but the crowd around her remains downcast.

EXT. DIRECTORS' BOX - CONTINUOUS

The Berlin delegation is confused.

NAZI REICHSLEITER

You said you'd confiscated their jerseys, Reinhard?

HEYDRICH

(covering)

What good would it be if they didn't look like Austrians we were beating?

They laugh, but Heydrich stares daggers at Sindelar.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

The Germans kick off for the second half, resuming harder and faster, but this time the Austrians start to play again like the team we remember...

As the Germans push to score, the Austrians fight back harder, forcing the enemy into a series of botched shots and forfeited possessions.

COACH HERBERGER

Come on!

Sindelar takes the ball from Hiden in goal and leads his team in a counter, conducting them up the pitch in a series of rhythmic passes. 'Largo' at first, as if picking up an old instrument, their tempo quickening to 'andante,' then 'allegro.' Finding their music again...

EXT. STANDS - CONTINUOUS

The crowd stirs around Camilla. Sensing it...

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

Vogl presses up the wing but is cornered by Germans and concedes the ball back to Sesta...

Sesta looks for a way forward again, but the German defense walls up around him. Left with no options, the young player releases the ball to Sindelar in a Hail Mary pass...

Choked by defenders on all sides, Sindelar pauses with the ball in a split-second of decision. Then pivots lighting fast...

...and FIRES THE BALL THROUGH A SLIVER OF DAYLIGHT BETWEEN THE DEFENDERS INTO THE GERMAN NET.

INT. RADIO BOOTH - DAY

Commentator Schmieger jumps to his feet.

COMMENTATOR SCHMIEGER
Goal for Ostmark!

INT. VIENNA CAFES - CONTINUOUS

Patrons leap for joy.

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

The ref reluctantly signals the score and the Wunderteam gathers around Sindelar in shock at the surprise goal. But as the thrill of the goal fades, the team realizes the STANDS ARE DEATHLY QUIET.

EXT. STANDS - CONTINUOUS

Camilla takes in the people around her, stunned as if by the sound of a shot.

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

The team looks up in bewilderment.

SCHALL

They're afraid, but we don't have to be.

SINDELAR

(re: Germans)

They'll come for us now.

Sesta speaks up.

SESTA

So be it.

Sindelar returns to his position and meets eyes with Heydrich, stone-faced in the stands.

The groundskeepers sheepishly update the score...

Germany - 1, Ostmark - 1

The ref whistles for the resumption of play and Hahnemann stares down Sindelar...

CUT TO:

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

The game tips into violence as the Germans intensify their aggression and the compliant ref turns a blind eye.

As the stadium clock marches through the second half, the Germans launch wave after wave of attack on goal, but each time the Wunderteam denies them.

EXT. PRATER STADION - DAY

The final minute ticks down and Sindelar eyes the morbid faces in the stands. Not too late to turn back...

Sindelar looks to his team and meets eyes with Sesta, who waits to see if Sindelar really is the hero he grew up on...

The ref whistles for the resumption of play and Sindelar finds Camilla in the stands, THEIR FATE NOW HIS TO DECIDE...

Sindelar takes possession from Hiden in goal and looks at the whole field ahead, choosing their last song as we hear the looming cello of Beethoven's "Triple Concerto in C Major, Op. 56" once again...

The song is soft and slow at first, and as the ball bows through the Austrian defense, it lays the foundation of their harmony. Each pass fortifying their resolve. Who they were, who they are again...

Sindelar picks up the tempo, pushing the ball up to midfield as the Germans hear them coming. 'Andante' to 'allegro.' The notes gathering in strength and beauty. Every instrument playing its part...

As the 'arco' strokes of the defense yield to the 'pizzicato' rhythm of the midfield, they press into German territory. This is it.

Sindelar takes the ball. The chance to be their Paper Man one last time...

One by one, the Germans come for him, trying to shut him down, but he flits between them like a sheet of paper in the wind. 'Allegro' to 'prestissimo.' His legs pluck through the defense in a flurry of unexpected chords. Drawing the Germans in with a siren song.

Hahnemann closes the gap. Eyes on Sindelar, not the ball. The entire German defense converges like a wolfpack...

The clock ticks down the final seconds...

Sindelar enters the penalty box as the enemy comes to destroy him...

Hahnemann barrels into Sindelar, crushing him like paper, but not before Sindelar strikes...

BULLETING THE BALL THROUGH THE POSTS.

The final whistle blows.

INT. RADIO BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Commentator Schmieger leaps up.

COMMENTATOR SCHMIEGER
Goal and game to Ostmark!

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - CONTINUOUS

The waiters and patrons embrace.

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

The Wunderteam sprints victoriously before the directors' box.

EXT. DIRECTORS' BOX - CONTINUOUS

The Berlin officials shift around Heydrich.

NAZI REICHSLEITER
I don't understand, Reinhard. Is
that it?

EXT. STANDS - CONTINUOUS

In the stands, the people seem unsure how to react...

EXT. HELDENPLATZ - CONTINUOUS

...while the crowds in the main square are equally uncertain.

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

The team slows before Sindelar who lies curled in agony in the frozen mud.

VOGL
Matthias...

Sindelar stares at his right knee, broken for good.

INT. RADIO BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Commentator Schmieger leans in with concern.

COMMENTATOR SCHMIEGER
The Paper Man appears injured...

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - CONTINUOUS

The cafe falls quiet...

EXT. STANDS - CONTINUOUS

Camilla pushes through the stands toward Sindelar.

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

The team hangs Sindelar from their shoulders.

SCHALL

We won, Matthias.

Sindelar takes in the depressing silence of the stands, overcome by the futility of the sacrifice they've made.

SINDELAR

For what?

EXT. HELDENPLATZ - CONTINUOUS

The crowd starts to ebb from Vienna's main square as the bleak reality sets in again - the SS soldiers monitoring their departure, the swastikas hanging from the Hofburg where the waltz was once held...

EXT. STANDS - CONTINUOUS

Sindelar limps off the field with his team's help as Camilla pushes toward him through the stands.

CAMILLA

Matthias!

Camilla clutches the fence over the tunnel and sees his leg. Sindelar meets eyes with her sadly, then looks to the crowd a final time. His countrymen defeated even in victory...

But as the team retreats to the mouth of the tunnel, something starts to happen...

VOGL

Wait.

They stop.

VOGL (CONT'D)

Listen.

It's faint.

EXT. HELDENPLATZ - CONTINUOUS

The people in the main square hear it too as they slow their departure.

Otto, the SS spy, looks up at the speakers curiously.

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

Sindelar faces the crowd as it grows around them. A CHANT.

CROWD

Austria...

Hahnemann and the German team hear it too.

EXT. STANDS - CONTINUOUS

The chant spreads through the stands like a slow awakening as people remember their voices.

CROWD

Austria! AUSTRIA!

Over and over. Like an idea.

The Nazi boy looks up as tears run down his father's face.

FATHER

Austria! AUSTRIA!

He joins his father.

NAZI BOY

Austria...

EXT. PRATER STADION - CONTINUOUS

Sindelar meets eyes with Camilla as she smiles at him through her tears -

They won...

EXT. HELDENPLATZ - CONTINUOUS

In the main square, the crowd hears the chant through the speakers. They search one another, questioning if they are in this alone or together, and one by one they join in one voice...

CROWD
Austria! AUSTRIA!

The soldiers push toward the speakers, but the crowd tightens around them, shouting in their faces.

Loud enough to be heard around the world.

EXT. PARIS CAFE - DAY

Leopold sets down his coffee with tears in his eyes.

EXT. COUNTRY MANOR - CONTINUOUS

Gibson, the Manchester United owner, listens to the cheering on the radio as his children play outside in a game of fighter plane.

His eyes fall to the soccer ball in his hands and he turns it like a globe, knowing this is only the beginning.

EXT. DIRECTORS' BOX - CONTINUOUS

The Berlin delegation leaves Heydrich alone as he levels his dark gaze at Sindelar. A debt that must now be repaid.

EXT. HELDENPLATZ - DAY

The chant echoes around Otto as he turns sadly from the crowd. His final part to play now.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - DAY

Champagne is uncorked like a gunshot.

The team celebrates. Laughing, drinking. For a moment, like things used to be...

Sindelar glances at GERMAN SOLDIERS posted out front. He limps to Vogl in the crowd.

SINDELAR
Go now, Vogl. Tell the others.

VOGL
Matthias...

SINDELAR

Go. Herman has everything you need. You'll be met at the border.

Sindelar nods to the waiter at the kitchen door, and Vogl grips his arm.

VOGL

Thank you.

The Jewish players quietly escape through the back, but Sesta stops before Sindelar.

SESTA

Please...

In the young man's hands are a pen and paper.

SESTA (CONT'D)

From the Paper Man.

Sindelar's hands shake with emotion as he signs and gives it back. Sesta smiles through his tears and follows the others to freedom.

Camilla moves to Sindelar's side, afraid to be apart. Everything feeling heightened now with the recognition of the end.

CAMILLA

Let's go home.

CUT TO:

INT. SINDELAR'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

AS FROM THE OPENING, the final nail is hammered through the sill, sealing the windows shut.

Otto looks anxiously at his watch through his gas mask as the caged cat expires.

Waiting until he is alone, Otto stoops to Sindelar's rag ball and holds it in his hands. Shame behind his mask.

CUT TO:

INT. SINDELAR'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

CLOSE ON the lock as the door is opened from the other side...

Sindelar and Camilla enter on edge to find the apartment empty. Sindelar closes the door behind them, and it clicks shut with finality.

Camilla drapes her coat over the one chair left.

CAMILLA
I'll make us something.

He kisses her.

SINDELAR
Something light perhaps.

Camilla disappears into the kitchen and Sindelar stands alone. His eyes fall on his childhood rag ball.

In the kitchen, a pot of water is placed on the stove and the flames beneath it hiss...

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - CONTINUOUS

The waiters clean up from the party, when Otto enters alone. He takes a seat and Herman approaches nervously.

OTTO
How does he take his coffee?

HERMAN THE WAITER
Sir?

Otto stares ahead.

OTTO
The Paper Man.

HERMAN THE WAITER
With milk and one sugar.

OTTO
I should like the same.

A blast of steam clears the tubes on the Bezzera as Otto's coffee is prepared.

INT. SINDELAR'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

The pot of water boils...

INT. CAFE LEOPOLD - DAY

Otto's coffee is served. He takes a sip as his eyes pool with sadness.

INT. SINDELAR'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

Sindelar stare out the window at the cold sun of the day. Once again his eyes find a bird twisting in flight as it disappears over the rooftops.

Suddenly, there is a crashing of pans in the kitchen...

Sindelar looks to the sound, concerned.

SINDELAR

Camilla?!

Sindelar tries to move to the kitchen but finds himself dizzy.

Steadying himself, he stumbles in to find Camilla collapsed on the floor, staring into dead space.

SINDELAR (CONT'D)

Camilla?

She whispers, barely conscious.

CAMILLA

Matthias...

Sindelar turns off the stove but finds a colorless gas still hissing from the pipe.

SINDELAR

We have to get out!

Camilla stares at him terrified, paralyzed with hypoxia.

INT. SINDELAR'S PENTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Supporting himself against the wall, Sindelar drags Camilla into the drawing room. Setting her down, he pulls on the front door but it won't unlock.

Sindelar staggers to the windows but they won't open. As his movements weaken, he finds a nail buried in the wood of the sill. THE APARTMENT IS A GAS CHAMBER.

Sindelar pounds on the glass but his force is gone. As the life ebbs from him, he realizes there's only one thing left for him to do...

With hardly the strength to move, Sindelar swivels and the room extends out before him like the length of a pitch.

He takes a step toward Camilla, but his legs fail him...

Digging his fingers into the floor, he instead starts to crawl to her, gasping as IMAGES flood him...

- *Stepping off the train in Vienna as a young boy.*
- *Waking up to the sight of the rag ball his mother made.*
- *Meeting eyes with Camilla for the first time at the waltz.*

Hand over hand, Sindelar wills his body across the floor as he sees...

- *Camilla's smile at their first dinner at Leopold's, then their last. The love in her eyes that he needs to return.*
- *The rag ball appears at his feet as he plays as a boy once again, weaving his way through the opposition. A sheet of paper in the wind...*

Sindelar pulls himself up Camilla's body, drawing level with her. His lips meet hers, and in their eyes are tears, not of fear, but of love for the last thing they see.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. ZENTRALFRIEDHOF CEMETERY - DAY - PRESENT

It's a sunny day today as elaborate tombs crowd the horizon in Europe's largest cemetery...

SUPER: "The Gestapo ruled Sindelar's death suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning and closed the case without an autopsy."

We PULL IN ON the thousands of tombs...

"Hahnemann played for Germany in the 1938 World Cup, where they were eliminated in the first round."

Among the tombs, we find one. Not a temple to the dead, but a simple, onyx headstone with the bronze relief of a face we have come to know - "Matthias Sindelar - The Paper Man."

"On May 27, 1942, Heydrich was shot by Czech gunmen on his way to meet Hitler. Three years later, Allied forces arrived in Vienna."

Beside the headstone, a lone candle burns low...

"In 2000, Austria voted Sindelar their "Sportsman of the Century." Every year, players gather at his grave to honor their Paper Man."

FADE OUT.