

THE HAND OF GOD

Written by

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1. EXT. NAPLES. HIGHWAY. SUNSET

An airplane slices the clear blue sky. The camera, perched on a helicopter, follows it for a second, then turns its attention to a brand new 1929 Isotta Fraschini, seen from above. Shiny, black, and beautiful, with tinted windows, it glides along the deserted highway.

In the oncoming lane, contemporary cars zip by at regular intervals.

The Isotta Fraschini, seen from above, rolls along the highway. The opening credits roll with it.

A pan shot swivels away from the car to reveal to us the most beautiful city in the world: Naples. The camera embraces the city, Vesuvius, the sea, Capri, and the sun as it drops behind Ischia.

The airplane, tiny now, flies into the setting sun.

It's 1984, and this is the title:

THE HAND OF GOD

2. EXT. PIAZZA DEL PLEBISCITO. BUS STOP. EVENING

Traffic and chaos. The shops are still open. Swarms of people.

The Isotta Fraschini pulls over at a bus stop. The back window lowers slowly, revealing the aged, handsome face of a sixty-year-old man. Hair dyed a ferocious black and playboy Ray-bans. He's wearing an impeccable black tux. He calls out in a mellifluous voice.

MAN

Ciao, Patrizia!

Patrizia, surprised, turns. Forty years old, a woman of extraordinary beauty and allure.

She's waiting for the bus, along with a bunch of other people - all of them short, ugly, poor, working class. But none of them - who knows why - seem even to notice that there's a 1929 Isotta Fraschini smack in the middle of 1984 Naples. No one but Patrizia, that is.

PATRIZIA

I'm Patrizia. But who are you?

The man, sitting in the back seat, flashes an amused smile. He takes off his sunglasses, revealing aquamarine eyes.

MAN

What do you mean, who am I? I am San Gennaro.

Patrizia is stunned. The other people at the bus stop are oblivious. They keep waiting for the bus, staring impatiently at the horizon.

PATRIZIA

How do you know my name?

SAN GENNARO

How do I know your name? Jesus, Patrizia, I told you, I'm San Gennaro!

Patrizia glances at the driver: a young man in uniform, complete with a chauffeur's cap, sits behind the wheel.

SAN GENNARO (CONT'D)

Waiting for the 412?

Patrizia nods in bewilderment.

SAN GENNARO (CONT'D)

Who knows when that will be! You could be waiting here for two hours. Want a ride? We can take you home if you like, me and Luigino Serra here.

He nods toward the driver, who turns slowly, revealing a face that is ugly as shit. And then, in a voice like a thief's.

LUIGI SERRA

Pleased to meet you. I'm Luigi Serra.

Patrizia grows suspicious, distrustful.

PATRIZIA

No thanks. I'll wait for the bus.

Silence. San Gennaro stares at her with a vague, inscrutable half smile.

SAN GENNARO

You can't have children, Patrizia, isn't that right?

A chill runs down her spine. All she can do is nod helplessly at San Gennaro.

SAN GENNARO (CONT'D)

So get in then. I'll take you home and, along the way, I'll explain how you can have a child with your husband Franco.

A dazed, numb Patrizia climbs in next to San Gennaro.

The Isotta Fraschini pulls away.

Patrizia, nervous, says.

PATRIZIA

My heart's pounding.

San Gennaro is imperturbable. Luigi Serra, without turning around, comments definitively.

LUIGI SERRA

We know.

3. INT. RUN-DOWN OLD APARTMENT BUILDING. STAIRS. EVENING

A noble-looking apartment building that has seen better days. The crumbling staircase is dark and sinister. In the corners, votive lights dimly illuminate discouraged, defenseless Madonnas.

In the courtyard, Luigi Serra - seen in profile - leans against the Isotta Fraschini, smoking a cigarette like some pretentious dandy.

Patrizia glances around as she climbs the stairs; San Gennaro, behind her, ogles her legs beneath her knee-length skirt.

She turns. He quickly looks away.

PATRIZIA

Where are we going?

SAN GENNARO (REASSURING BUT BRUSQUE)

We're just stopping at my place for a minute. I can explain things more calmly there.

4. INT. SAN GENNARO'S GRAND APARTMENT. NIGHT

San Gennaro flips a switch.

A magnificent crystal chandelier, an enormous antique, which is lying on its side on the floor like a beached whale, a wire running up to the ceiling, illuminates - in a fade in of light - the entrance hall, as spacious as a parade ground.

It's a bare, dilapidated hall, but we can tell that it must have been splendid once, very luxurious.

Patrizia appears in the doorway now, gaping in wonder. San Gennaro next to her.

The sound of dripping water makes Patrizia look up: on the ceiling is a fading fresco, which is slowly being devoured by a patch of mildew. The faces of angels and virgins, besieged by tentacles of encroaching mold.

The pitter patter of footsteps from one of the rooms. They come closer. A nine-year-old boy appears, dressed as a monk. His face is hidden by his habit's pointed hood.

Patrizia is entranced. Incredulous, she exclaims:

PATRIZIA
The Little Monk!!!

SAN GENNARO
Exactly! It's really him, the
Little Monk. Come over here, you
Little Monk, you!

The boy steps closer, pulls 200.000 *lire* out of his habit, and tucks it in Patrizia's coat pocket, without ever revealing his face.

SAN GENNARO (CONT'D)
Now Patri, kneel down and kiss the
Little Monk's head. It brings good
luck, you know.

Patrizia, as if in a trance, bends over to kiss the boy's hooded head. San Gennaro takes advantage of her bending to place his hand on her ass. And says, in an authoritative voice:

SAN GENNARO (CONT'D)
There, you can have all the
children you want now, my pretty
Patrizia.

5. INT. FRANCO AND PATRIZIA'S HOME. EVENING

A contemporary apartment in the Vomero neighborhood.

Franco, a strapping, handsome 45-year-old with that respectable, lower-middle-class look, waits at the door, a severe expression on his face.

The sound of keys in the lock. The door opens and a breathless Patrizia appears.

FRANCO

It's ten o'clock. Where have you been?

PATRIZIA

You won't believe it, but I had to wait two hours for the 412.

Patrizia tries to go around him, but Franco blocks her path. Franco thrusts his hand in her coat pocket and immediately discovers the 200.000 *lire*. He flies into a rage. She is afraid and tries to get away from him, but he forcibly restrains her.

FRANCO

Again? You did it again!

He slaps her so hard she falls to the floor. He hurls himself at her, and is about to start kicking her, but she is faster than he is. She races off, and Franco ends up kicking a brass umbrella stand. He howls in pain.

Patrizia darts across the hall and locks herself in a room. Franco flings himself at the door, pounding and kicking it.

Patrizia, tears streaming down her cheeks, sits on the double bed. Her hand trembles, but she manages to make a phone call.

PATRIZIA

Maria, come quick. Franco's trying to kill me.

6. EXT. VIA SAN DOMENICO PARK. EVENING

The Vomero neighborhood. There, in the middle of a cluster of 1960s apartment buildings is a dignified central square. With plants, parked cars, a slide, and a low wall for hanging out.

Mariettiello, 40 years old, a Nietzsche-style mustache, greasy hair plastered to his scalp, a speech pattern that reveals an intellectual disability, and the eyes of a good soul, is fanatically dusting a spotless, brown Fiat 127. In one hand is a cigarette, which he holds with the grace of a countess.

Near him is Fabietto, 17 years old: an anonymous, good-boy face, typical teenage acne, wavy hair. He's eating a mandarin orange as he stares hungrily at Mariettiello's hand, mesmerized by the way he holds his cigarette.

A pair of twenty-year-old twins goes by on a Piaggio Ciao motor scooter.

FIRST TWIN (IN A LOUD VOICE)
Mariettiello!

Mariettiello turns happily.

SECOND TWIN
Hey, handsome!

Handsome he is not. The twins disappear. Mariettiello laughs. Fabietto smiles. Then he notices something peculiar: Mariettiello has taped a photo of himself leaning against his Fiat inside the rear window.

FABIETTO
That's a little weird, Mario, the photo?

MARIETTIELLO
That way everybody knows whose car it is, Fabiè.

FABIETTO (SMILES)
Do you even have your license, Mario?

MARIETTIELLO
Of course! Papà got it for me.

A woman's voice, breathless and upset, shouts from a window.

WOMAN (V.O.)
Fabietto, come home, now.

FABIETTO
Coming, mamma.

7. EXT. VIA MANZONI. NIGHT

Via Manzoni offers a panoramic view of the sea and the city with its twinkling lights.

Three people, all without helmets, go by on a Vespa 125.

Fabietto's driving. Fast.

Maria's in the middle: 50 years old, plump, short blond hair.

Saverio comes last: 52 years old, he bears a vague resemblance to Jean-Paul Belmondo. White hair, prominent nose.

Saverio, perched precariously on the very edge of the seat, clings with all his might to Maria, who, in turn, clings with all her might to Fabietto.

SAVERIO (DISTRAUGHT)
I'm falling off!

Fabietto and Maria both laugh.

8. INT. FRANCO AND PATRIZIA'S HOME. EVENING

An inferno. The scuffle must have been pretty violent.

Saverio, Maria, and Fabietto freeze in the doorway, their mouths open, gaping at the mess. They're astounded.

Franco is in the hallway, sitting on the floor, his clothes torn, his face covered in scratches. We glimpse Patrizia in the bedroom at the far end of the hall. Her dress has been ripped to shreds.

The bedroom door has been forced open.

MARIA
What is going on?

Franco is on the verge of tears.

FRANCO
She did it again, that whore, okay?
She went and prostituted herself
again.

Patrizia screams from the far end of the hall, desperate to be believed.

PATRIZIA
It's not true! I met San Gennaro,
he took me to meet the Little Monk,
he's the one who gave me the
200.000 *Lire*, he told me I can get
pregnant now. That's why I was
late, you shit of a man, you, so I
could give you a son.

Maria, Saverio, and Fabietto wade through the wreckage to get to Patrizia. Her nose is bleeding.

But Saverio and Fabietto, father and son, both notice something else, at exactly the same time, which pierces them to the quick: in the scuffle, beautiful Patrizia's dress has been torn open, exposing her splendid breasts.

Maria, on the other hand, is focused on Patrizia's bleeding nose. She turns to the males of her family, whom she realizes only have eyes for Patrizia's breasts. She barks severely.

MARIA

Savè, did you even notice that my sister's nose is bleeding? Get me a damp cloth.

Saverio, called to order, bolts for the kitchen. Fabietto, in a daze, continues to ogle his aunt's breasts.

MARIA (CONT'D)

You too? Enough already!

Fabietto snaps to.

Saverio walks from the kitchen to the bedroom, carrying a damp cloth, which he hands to his wife. Patrizia, in a pleading voice, is trying to convince Maria.

PATRIZIA

It really was the Little Monk, Mari, I swear to God.

MARIA

Enough, Patri, please.

Fabietto listens to their exchange, then goes over and joins his father, who is in the hallway with Franco.

Saverio speaks in a low voice so Patrizia won't hear.

SAVERIO

You gotta knock it off, Franco!

FRANCO

She's a whore!

SAVERIO

No, Franco, she's not a whore! She's sick. Even the psychiatrist said so. This thing, not being able to have kids, it sends her over the edge. She's depressed, let's put it that way.

FRANCO

She's a whore.

Fabietto overcomes his shyness to say.

FABIETTO
 What if she really did see the
 Little Monk, Uncle Franco?

Franco and Saverio turn in unison and stare silently at this other crazy creature.

FRANCO
 You're as batshit as she is.

Fabietto, dismayed, catches his father's eyes.

SAVERIO (PATERNAL)
 You keep spoutin' crap like that
 and you'll flunk out. You
 understand your papà?

Father and son hold each other's eye, but it's a complicit look. They're trying not to laugh. If they did, Franco would kill them both.

9. INT. FABIETTO'S HOME. DAY

Early morning. An apartment in the Vomero neighborhood. Lower middle class.

Maria is in the kitchen, squeezing orange juice for Fabietto.

We hear banging coming from the apartment above. Three knocks, to be precise.

Maria snorts, routinely grabs the broom, and bangs three times on the ceiling. As if in response.

FABIETTO
 Mamma, have you ever seen the
 baroness's house?

MARIA
 I used to go all the time when her
 husband was alive. But ever since
 he died, she's never let anybody
 in.

Maria offers Fabietto the orange juice.

FABIETTO
 What's it like, her house?

MARIA

Normal.

FABIETTO

And her husband? I don't remember him.

MARIA

Mr. Attilio? Such a good man. She treated him like a doormat, though. She'd only let him go out on Saturday, and only for twenty minutes. She'd fill out the gambling slip, and he'd go place the bet.

CUT TO:

The kids' room. Decorated in a nautical theme.

Marchino, 26 years old, is sleeping soundly. Fabietto, in the dark, is getting dressed for school.

SAVERIO (V.O.)

Fabietto, wake Marchino up, he's got to go to class.

Fabietto shakes him.

FABIETTO

Marchì, wake up.

Marchino, annoyed, merely rolls over.

Fabietto leaves the room and heads down the hall to the bathroom. The door is closed. His father is there too, waiting impatiently. He issues a command.

SAVERIO

Daniela, out!

DANIELA (FROM THE BATHROOM)

No.

SAVERIO

Come out, right this minute! I have to go to work. Fabietto has to go to school.

DANIELA (V.O.)

No.

SAVERIO (TO FABIETTO)

Did your brother get up?

FABIETTO

Are you kidding! He must have gotten in at four...five.

Saverio snorts in exhaustion. He shouts to his daughter in the bathroom.

SAVERIO

What are you doing in there?

DANIELA (V.O.)

Cutting my nails.

SAVERIO

Can't you cut them in your room?

DANIELA (V.O.)

No.

SAVERIO

Where'd you get all this brashness from?

DANIELA (V.O.)

From you!

Saverio walks off. Fabietto follows his father.

FABIETTO

Papà, do you think Maradona'll really come? Yesterday they said...

SAVERIO (INTERRUPTS)

Don't get it in your head, Fabiè. Can you imagine him leaving Barcelona for this shit hole!

DANIELA (SHOUTS FROM THE BATHROOM)(V.O.)

He's not coming!

SAVERIO

Did you hear your sister? Who knows how she does it, but she acquires of a lot of information there in that bathroom.

CUT TO:

THE FRONT DOOR.

Maria opens the door. Standing there, all dressed in black, as if in mourning, is the corpulent, colossal Baroness Focale. The widow who lives upstairs. 60 years old, 6'2", her face petrified in a perpetually pissed expression, perfidious, and mean, a massive amount of white hair, pulled back in a chignon, and bushy white eyebrows.

Maria lets her in, as a matter of routine.

The baroness, in slippers, shuffles into the kitchen without saying a word, and sits on a stool. Maria follows her.

BARONESS FOCALÉ

Well. Rumors are flying. People are saying you're building a chalet in Roccaraso. Is it true?

MARIA (DOWNPLAYING)

A chalet, is it? More like a two-room condo.

BARONESS FOCALÉ

With a yard! You must be making good money! My dearly departed husband always wanted to buy a house in the mountains. I told him I'd throw him in the trash if he ever did anything so foolish.

Maria isn't even listening.

BARONESS FOCALÉ (SIGHING HEAVILY) (CONT'D)

Anyway...humanity is just horrendous. Did they tell you?

MARIA (BRUSQUE)

No, no one tells me anything. Baroness, would you mind if I kept straightening up while we chat?

BARONESS FOCALÉ

If you must. Have you met your sister-in-law's boyfriend?

MARIA

No, Sunday. We're going to Agerola, we'll meet him then.

BARONESS FOCALÉ

Agerola is such a vulgar place.

MARIA
The air is good.

BARONESS FOCALÉ
Vulgar places always have good air.

Maria steps into the small dining room and straightens her husband's tie. Fabietto is there too, about to go out.

Fabietto and his father catch a glimpse through the glass door of Baroness Focale, planted on her stool.

SAVERIO
Have you noticed that the baroness
looks just like Pope Wojtyla?

He's absolutely right. Maria snickers and goes back into the kitchen.

FABIETTO
It's true, I never noticed before.

SAVERIO
The pope's sexier, though.

They laugh. Saverio nods goodbye to Maria through the glass door. She nods back. He and Fabietto leave the house.

We stay in the kitchen, listening to the baroness and Maria's gossip.

BARONESS FOCALÉ
So your next door neighbor went to
that wedding on Saturday.

MARIA
Ah! How was it?

BARONESS FOCALÉ (PERFIDIOUS)
To hear her tell it, you'd think it
was the wedding of Charles and
Diana. It's all "incredible,
marvelous, enchanting, elegant,
fabulous."

MARIA
Nice.

BARONESS FOCALÉ
What do you mean, nice! Can you
imagine! It had to have been beyond
boorish. Imagine, a wedding on
Procida! Capri I could see, but
Procida!

(MORE)

BARONESS FOCALÉ (CONT'D)

Anyway, she says - but I don't believe it - that Franco Zeffirelli was there, that he kissed her hand somehow and said: "Such a beautiful woman!"

MARIA

Why don't you believe it, Baroness?

BARONESS FOCALÉ

Because Zeffirelli goes the other way! So just imagine if he would dish out compliments to that ugly Graziella!

MARIA

You really don't like Graziella, do you?

BARONESS FOCALÉ

Graziella. She puts on airs! Her, her husband, and their children. They all act so superior, just because they're from Trentino Alto Adige. As if it were some sort of privilege, being from Trentino Alto Adige! They think of themselves as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, these dimwits!

MARIA (IRONIC)

How dare they? When we're from the Kingdom of Naples!

BARONESS FOCALÉ

Don't make fun of me, Mari!

Maria suddenly remembers something she needs to do.

MARIA

Just a minute, Baroness.

Maria runs to the window. Saverio, down in the street, is perched behind Fabietto on the Vespa, waiting. Maria whistles to him, a conventional tune, and Saverio repeats it back to her. Only now can he leave for work. Maria pulls her head back in.

The baroness is disgusted.

BARONESS FOCALÉ

Such sappy sentimentality! My husband loved all that sappy stuff, too.

(MORE)

BARONESS FOCALÉ (CONT'D)

I told him straight away, in rhyme:
 "Attiliuccio, with me it's a no go.
 I am as cantankerous as an army
 general, you know." I'm going
 upstairs, I've had quite enough.

Off she goes, moving like a mammoth.

MARIA

Should I bring you some lunch later
 on?

BARONESS FOCALÉ

Thank you, dear. Leave it outside
 my door and bang five times, as
 usual, so I know it's there.

She says as she vanishes on the landing.

10. EXT. SALESIAN SCHOOL. COURTYARD. DAY

The Salesian school courtyard. In the morning, before class, the boys play soccer there: 25 matches going on simultaneously, all under the watchful eye of four priests.

Which means that there are 50 goalies at the nets; 25 balls in play on the field; and 400 teenager boys running around, shouting and sweating.

Total chaos, as you can imagine.

There are scuffles, head butts, falls, players who start running with the ball between their feet, but it's the wrong ball, it belongs to another match, so insults fly left and right. Or someone scores but accidentally kicks it into the net of another match.

Every kid is shouting, pretending to be Maradona, naturally.

One kid makes a cross kick and hits a pigeon flying by. His teammates roll on the ground in laughter.

There, in this orgy of males devoted to an impossible sort of soccer, is Fabietto. He almost never touches the ball.

The bell rings. They all slowly collect their knapsacks and, like deportees, head off to face the school day, under the watchful eyes of the priests.

Fabietto heads for the door too, gazing sadly at his classmates, who are all grouped together in front of him.

He can't stand their laughter, their gaiety, so he puts on his headphones. But we can't hear what he is listening to on his Walkman.

An elderly priest gestures to him. Fabietto sees him and takes off his headphones.

ELDERLY PRIEST
Do you need to make confession?

Fabietto gives him a melancholy nod.

11. INT. SALESIAN CHURCH. DAY

The church is empty. And dark.

Fabietto and the elderly priest sit facing each other on two chairs in a corner at the far end of the nave - a confessional of sorts.

ELDERLY PRIEST (KINDLY)
So Fabietto, do you want to tell me your sins?

Fabietto, his eyes lowered, hesitates.

ELDERLY PRIEST (CONT'D)
Now, now, courage!

Fabietto lifts his head, gives the priest a disarming look.

FABIETTO
I feel alone.

ELDERLY PRIEST
But you're not alone, Fabietto. God is with you.

FABIETTO (SERIOUS)
I don't see him, though. Do you?

The elderly priest looks at Fabietto. And says nothing.

12. INT. BARONESS FOCALE'S LANDING. DAY

An opulent, pretentious gold plaque on the door: "BARONESS ELISABETTA FOCALE".

Below the plaque is a crude pen drawing, which someone tried unsuccessfully to erase. So we can still make out the blurry outline of a giant penis.

Maria sets down a couple of containers of food outside the baroness's door. Curious, she puts her ear against the door, but silence reigns inside. Maria withdraws and descends the stairs. The sound of creaking hinges makes her stop. She turns and sneaks a glance, but all she can see is the plump, bejeweled hand of the baroness who, as stealthy as a thief, collects her lunch through the half-open door.

13. EXT. AGEROLA. FARMHOUSE. DAY

A country farmhouse clings to the cliffs. Far below lies the Amalfi coast and the spectacular blue sea.

It's three in the afternoon. Thirty people - all related - sit at a long wooden table in the shade of an oak tree. They're happily eating a ripe, juicy watermelon.

Uncle Alfredo: 60 years old, a kind face, a cream-colored linen suit - the epitome of old-fashioned elegance - and inconsolably depressed. With two little nephews in his arms, he wearily acts out that silly old nursery rhyme "Vola Gigino, vola Gigetto."

UNCLE ALFREDO

*Vola Dieghito, vola Dieghetto.
Arriva Dieghito, arriva Dieghetto.*

The nephews laugh gleefully. Uncle Alfredo doesn't laugh, though. Lost in thought, he stares blankly into space.

Patrizia and Franco don't say a word. They keep to themselves, frowning and tense.

Saverio and Fabietto, sitting at the table, devour their watermelon as they watch Maria, who is sitting with an elderly woman in an incongruous fur coat, in the shade of a grape vine.

SAVERIO

Look at your mother! Look how she's trying to goad Signora Gentile. She loves making her say bad words.

Fabietto laughs. He catches melancholy Patrizia's eye. She gives him a sad smile. Fabietto awkwardly returns the smile.

Nenella - Saverio's fat, 55-year-old sister - speaks up.

NENELLA

Signora Gentile is the nastiest woman in all of Naples. Everybody knows that.

(MORE)

NENELLA (CONT'D)

But who ends up with her as an in-law? Me! My daughter's married to her son.

FABIETTO

Is she cold?

NENELLA

Cold? Heavens, no, she just wants us all to know that she has a fur coat.

SAVERIO (TO FABIETTO)

Let me tell you something, Fabietto. Signora Gentile never looks anyone in the eye. No one has ever earned the privilege of being loved by her. Which is why everyone desires her.

FABIETTO (TEASING HIM)

That's deep, dad, real deep.

SAVERIO (LAUGHS)

Wiseguy!

Maria, smiling up her sleeve, brings out the shrew in Signora Gentile, who is chomping on a giant mozzarella.

MARIA

Signora Gentile, you're spilling all over yourself.

SIGNORA GENTILE (HER MOUTH FULL)

Fuck off!

Maria laughs to herself. Then she feigns graciousness.

MARIA

Why don't you come join the rest of us?

SIGNORA GENTILE (IN A LOUD VOICE)

Because you people are trash. That's why!

Maria laughs and turns to look at her husband. Nenella, who has overheard Signora Gentile, jumps up, ready to punch her, but Saverio grabs his sister's arm, holding her back.

SAVERIO (IN A LOUD VOICE, TO MARIA)

What nice things does Signora Gentile have to say, Maria?

MARIA

Making use of an elaborate turn of phrase, she says that she holds us in the highest regard.

Saverio, Fabietto, and Marchino all laugh.

Maria joins her family at the table. Annarella, a 20-year-old niece with an enormous nose, asks her.

ANNARELLA

Aunt Maria, why didn't Daniela come?

MARIA

She was in the bathroom. We waited for her for two hours. But then we got fed up.

A NEPHEW (8 YEARS OLD)

Aunt Maria, will you do that trick with the oranges?

MARIA

Of course, dear.

Maria takes three oranges from the table and starts to juggle. Everyone watches in delight. Saverio is proud and incredulous. He addresses the table.

SAVERIO

How the heck does she do that?

Maria drops an orange. The show is over. But everyone claps.

Maria goes over to her sister Patrizia, and asks her sweetly.

MARIA

What's wrong, Patrì?

PATRIZIA

Let me be, Marì.

Maria drops it. Instantly in a good mood again, she says to Nenella.

MARIA

Nenella, you haven't eaten a thing, not even the peppers.

NENELLA (PROUD)

Especially the peppers. I'm doing Weight Watchers.

Her husband, Albertino, hugs her and says proudly.

ALBERTINO

She's already lost three and a half kilos.

SIGNORA GENTILE

If she loses another sixty, she'll snag Pavarotti.

Nenella looks daggers at her, but Signora Gentile doesn't notice, because she never looks anyone in the eye.

Saverio is anxious. He shouts to one of his nephews, a 10-year-old, who is wielding a pair of binoculars. He's keeping watch on the road below, which winds its way up here.

SAVERIO

Riccardino, do you see them?

RICCARDINO

Not yet, Uncle Saverio.

SAVERIO (TO NENELLA)

So what's he like, your sister's boyfriend? Anybody laid eyes on him yet?

NENELLA

No, not yet, but Luisella says he's handsome.

SAVERIO

I highly doubt it, Nenè, our sister's always been butt ugly, and let's admit it, also a little retarded!

Laughter.

NENELLA

Do me a favor, at any rate. Even if you don't like this one either, don't start with your crap. Luisella's a dingbat, she's 42 years old, who knows how she managed to find this moron!

FABIETTO (RECITING BOMBASTICALLY)

As the great poet said, "Lucean
carriere zitellesche,
innanzi"! [comic reference to the
romantic aria from *Tosca*: "E
lucevan le stelle"]

Saverio's the only one who laughs at his son's joke. He says proudly to his brother-in-law Albertino.

SAVERIO

The kid's studying the classics,
Alberti, if you know what I mean!

Here comes Nenella's son-in-law, who owns the farm: Geppino - it's hard to say how old he is - dressed a bit like a rich dandy, with a brightly colored shirt and a pair of striped Bermuda shorts, neatly pressed. A real prick. He says, in an affected, high-pitched voice.

GEPPINO

How's the watermelon? Tell me the truth. A veterinarian friend of mine from Cava de' Tirreni gave it to me. Be honest now, please!

To make him happy, everyone chimes in, mouths full: "Good! Good!" Geppino is delighted, and rejoices like a lunatic, raising his fingers, V for victory.

Fabietto, sitting next to his father Saverio, says.

FABIETTO

Papà, exactly how big an idiot is Geppino?

SAVERIO (IN A LOW VOICE)

Real big. You know what he does, the moron? Turns a blind eye to the sanitary inspections vets have to pass. And in exchange, they give him champagne and watermelons.

FABIETTO

And maybe even a fur coat, for his sister.

SAVERIO

Absolutely! You'll see, sooner or later he's gonna end up in jail. You'll see! Riccardino, anybody coming?

Riccardino studies the path with his binoculars.

RICCARDINO

Nobody, Uncle Saverio.

Saverio, anxious, turns to a 29-year-old niece.

SAVERIO

Silvana, you really don't know anything about Luisella's new boyfriend?

SILVANA

No...Nothing. Only that his name is Aldo.

SAVERIO

What does he do?

SILVANA (UNCOMFORTABLE)

I don't know!

SAVERIO (SEVERE)

You're not telling me the truth, Silvanella. You do know!

Silvana, to save herself further discomfort, leaps to her feet and starts clearing the table.

SAVERIO (TO HIS SON MARCHINO) (CONT'D)

Marchì, does she know?

MARCHINO

How do I know, papà.

Albertino, Nenella's husband, says to Fabietto's brother Marchino, in a loud voice.

ALBERTINO

So Marchì, how's the acting career going?

MARCHINO

Don't needle me, Uncle Albertino.

MARIA (PROUD)

Come on! You have an audition with Fellini on Monday.

MARCHINO

It's not an audition, mamma. Fellini's coming to Naples to look for extras. He's going to see four thousand people.

MARIA

Alright, but it's still an audition of sorts.

SAVERIO

Riccardino, are they coming?

RICCARDINO

Not yet.

CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP OF THE FARMHOUSE.

This is the situation Geppino finds his 8-year-old twins in: one's got his head stuck between the iron bars of a railing, and the other's got his head jammed in an umbrella stand. They're both moaning that they can't get out.

GEPPINO

What kind of morons are you? Get out.

GEPPINO'S TWIN SONS

We can't, papà.

GEPPINO

You mean you've got expanding heads? What are you, jellyfish?! So now I've got to call a blacksmith? On a Sunday, who knows if he'll even come.

He marches off, back to his sister, Signora Gentile.

GEPPINO (CONT'D)

What do you think, Sis? Will the blacksmith come on a Sunday?

SIGNORA GENTILE

Don't Sis me! Anyway, forget about it, you little shit! You still owe him 60,000 *lire*.

Geppino changes the subject.

GEPPINO

Would you like a slice of watermelon, Sis?

SIGNORA GENTILE (IN A LOUD VOICE)

Don't bust my balls, Geppino!

Geppino swallows. The others have heard her and are laughing on the sly.

CUT TO:

THE TABLE IN THE FARMHOUSE COURTYARD AGAIN.

ALBERTINO

Alfrè, if you ask me, Pelè, and even Di Stefano, are better than Maradona.

Uncle Alfredo flies off the handle, as if he were personally offended somehow. Resigned to the monumental stupidity of the human race, he pontificates.

UNCLE ALFREDO

When did you all become so disappointing? Why are you so sure of yourselves? Why do you talk about things you know nothing about? Just focus on eating and drinking, the one thing you know how to do.

Fabietto laughs. Albertino ignores Alfredo.

ALBERTINO

At any rate, did you know, a friend of mine, he owns a bar in Torino, told me that Agnelli's pretty much sealed the deal with Maradona?

Uncle Alfredo grips his chest with his hand, faking a heart attack.

SAVERIO (MILDLY REPROACHFUL)

Albè, don't say such things in front of Alfredo!

FABIETTO

I don't believe it!

ALBERTINO

I swear. Agnelli has coffee at my friend's bar every morning, he confided in him.

MARCHINO

Yeah right! Agnelli goes to your friend's bar!

FABIETTO

Yeah! What a load of crap, Uncle Albertino!

SAVERIO

Fabiè, you really believe Maradona's going to come play for Napoli? That's the sort of bullshit they write to sell papers. Ferlaino's never ponied up. I know him pretty well, Ferlaino. He comes into the bank all the time.

Uncle Alfredo grabs Fabietto's arm and speaks one-on-one to him, his tone is deadly serious.

UNCLE ALFREDO

Fabiè, if Maradona doesn't come play for Napoli, I'll kill myself. You understand what I'm saying? I'll kill myself!

RICCARDINO (SHOUTING)

They're here!

In a flash, everyone leaps from the table - everyone except Patrizia and Franco - all excited to see Luisella's infamous boyfriend. A wild grab for the binoculars!

RICCARDINO (CONT'D)

He's a cripple.

SAVERIO (VERY ALARMED)

What do you mean, a cripple?

NENELLA

He's not a cripple! He must have hurt himself!

Saverio tears the binoculars from Riccardino's hands. He's peering down at the street now: his sister Luisella, obese, about 45, but looks older, is sweating her way up the hill. Her boyfriend Aldo hobbles along behind her: 70, bald, sweaty, limping. He's wearing an incongruous jacket and tie for the occasion.

SAVERIO

What is he, a war vet? He's got a lame leg.

Everyone's all excited. Saverio starts laying on the humor.

SAVERIO (SHOUTING) (CONT'D)

He's ugly as shit.

Signora Gentile laughs to herself for a couple of seconds.

Fabietto and Marchino convulse with laughter. Saverio, pissed off, grabs his niece Silvana by the arm.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)
You knew, you bitch!

Silvana can't keep from laughing.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)
Silvanè, I'm done with you. From now on, I swear on the Virgin Mary, I only love your sister Annarella.

Silvana keeps on laughing with her cousins Fabietto and Marchino.

Nenella grabs the binoculars from him. She takes a look and notices that Aldo, in addition to having a limp, is using one of those devices to amplify his voice to talk to Luisella.

NENELLA
Oh blessed virgin, I feel sick!
He's a monster!

Nenella collapses into a chair.

The kids laugh and start shouting that the monster's coming. Other family members are screaming that they need to close the kids in the house to avoid making a truly shitty impression. They start dragging the kids inside.

Nenella's having trouble breathing. Albertino comes to her aid.

ALBERTINO
What's wrong?

NENELLA
I can't breathe.

ALBERTINO
Okay, let me give you mouth to mouth.

And he does. Distraught, he pulls away and cries.

ALBERTINO (CONT'D)
She's been eating peppers on the sly!

Rebellious laughter. Nenella feels better already.

14. INT. BARN. DAY

To keep them from making a bad impression, the children have been closed in a huge barn, where a dozen or so farm women, young and old, are canning tomatoes.

One of the jars explodes. The children shriek. The women laugh.

15. EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY

They all try to pull themselves together because Luisella and Aldo are finally arriving. The relatives form a receiving line.

Aldo smiles kindly at them all. He introduces himself, speaking with that electronic, amplified voice, and - as if that wasn't enough - exhibiting a squint right eye. He shakes everyone's hand, offering one and all the same servile introduction. Here it is, as delivered to the depressed Uncle Alfredo.

ALDO

A pleasure, I am Aldo Cavallo,
retired carabinieri from the
Veneto, amateur pastry cook, and
official fiancé of your sister
Luisella Schisa. My intentions are
highly serious.

UNCLE ALFREDO (SIGHS IN DEFEAT)

When did you all become so
disappointing?

ALDO (ILL AT EASE)

I wouldn't know, exactly.

Aldo turns and introduces himself to Patrizia. They all try not to laugh.

ALDO (CONT'D)

A pleasure, I am Aldo Cavallo,
retired...

PATRIZIA (INTERRUPTS HIM, WHISPERS)

Go, get out of here. Listen to me.
Just go, now. This isn't a family.
It's a herd of ferocious beasts.

Aldo, shaken, turns to introduce himself to Saverio.

ALDO

A pleasure, I am Aldo Cavallo, retired carabinieri from the Veneto, amateur pastry cook, and official fiancé of your sister Luisella Schisa. My intentions are highly serious.

SAVERIO (SERIOUS)

What intentions?

All the relatives tense.

ALDO

I want to marry her. And make her happy for all eternity.

SAVERIO

All eternity? How about till Christmas. You must be eighty years old.

LUISELLA (FURIOUS)

Saverio!!!

NENELLA

My brother! He's always joking!

She says, giving Saverio the evil eye.

They all try to hide their laughter. Aldo is a gentleman and doesn't bat an eye. He counters with a conciliatory smile.

ALDO

I am seventy years old. I don't smoke, I don't drink, and I exercise every morning. I'm still a vigorous young man.

LUISELLA (WITH AN IDIOTIC LAUGH)

A *handsome* young man!

Saverio is about to reply, but Maria is quicker, eager to keep things from degenerating further. She says mischievously.

MARIA

We must introduce Aldo to Signora Gentile.

Fabietto laughs.

Geppino, greatly alarmed, interjects.

GEPPINO

No, I beg you, not to Sis. What do you say if, to celebrate Aldo and Luisella's engagement, we all go for a swim instead? We can take my new boat.

Exultation and general appreciation at the idea.

GEPPINO (CONT'D)

Are you coming, Uncle Alfredo?

UNCLE ALFREDO

A swim in the sea is always disappointing, just like you!

ALBERTINO

He says that because he doesn't know how to swim.

MARIA (IN A LOUD VOICE)

Signora Gentile, are you coming for a swim?

SIGNORA GENTILE

Go get yourself a *chinotto*!

They all laugh. Everyone but Aldo, that is. He's from the Veneto, and doesn't know that, in Naples, "chinotto" can also be a blowjob.

ALDO

What does she mean by "chinotto"?

GEPPINO

You know, the soda? Chinotto. Mammina wants us to offer you something to drink.

The children have gotten out of the barn and are running to join the adults.

16. EXT. THE ISLAND OF ISCA. SEA/WOODEN BOAT. AFTERNOON

They all go for a swim off the coast of Isca, a tiny island with only a single villa, which belonged to the Neapolitan actor and author Eduardo De Filippo.

A joyous mood. Saverio monopolizes the conversation.

SAVERIO

And so, in honor of my greatly beloved Eduardo, who resided here on the island of Isca, I will recite for you, my beloved Maria, "Si t'ò sapèsse ricère".

Maria is charmed. Everyone is happy. Like an old windbag, Saverio starts reciting a love poem in Neapolitan.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)

Ah si putesse dicere. Chell' c'ò core dice. Quanto sarria felice. Si t'ò sapesse di. E si putesse sentire. Chell'c'ò core sente. Dicisse: "eternamente voglio restà cu'tte.

The only ones still on Geppino's boat are Luisella and Aldo - he hasn't even removed his jacket and tie - and, in the bow, the beautiful, solitary, snobby Patrizia, sunbathing in a bikini.

Aldo, using his electronic thingy, is chatting endlessly to Luisella. Right now he's explaining how to make sponge cake. It's like listening to the radio. Luisella has already had enough of his blather, and her eye keeps wandering to her bathing relatives, whom Saverio is entertaining with his poems.

ALDO

Then you place a fine mesh sieve over the mixing bowl and add the flour and cornstarch. Sift it. That's the secret that the world forgets: you have to sift it thoroughly, my dear!

Luisella gathers her courage.

LUISELLA (INTERRUPTS ALDO)

Excuse me Aldo, I'm a little hot, would you mind if I took a dip?

ALDO

Of course not, my love.

LUISELLA

Usually I dive in head first, but this time I'd like to show you my "cannonball."

ALDO

Good! Novelty is always nice.

Luisella, fat and stupid, plops in the water like a blue whale, splashing gallons of water on Aldo's suit, but he pretends not to notice.

Saverio, in the water, sees Luisella's cannonball and says.

SAVERIO

The mammal has gone down! Will she reemerge?

Everyone laughs. Everyone but Aldo. Fabietto shouts exuberantly.

FABIETTO

Submersed! Submersed!

SILVANELLA

What does that mean?

SAVERIO

It's a poetic term for "sunk."

MARCHINO (TO FABIETTO)

They've gone to your head, all those classics you study!

Luisella, doing the breaststroke, swims out to meet the others.

Aldo focuses his attention on the only person left in the boat: Patrizia. And, loquacious man that he is, he starts right in.

ALDO

Now, Signora Patrizia, I was explaining to Luisella the various stages of preparation for making the perfect sponge cake. The procedure is far from easy. So...

Patrizia doesn't think twice. She gets up, goes to the stern of the boat, and says to Aldo.

PATRIZIA

Would you let me see that little gadget for your voice?

ALDO

Of course.

He offers it to her. Patrizia, without saying a word, opens it, extracts the battery, and tosses it in the water. Then she hands him back his device, returns to the bow, and resumes sunbathing. Poor Aldo is literally speechless.

CUT.

A silence brimming with awkwardness. All the relatives are back on the boat now, more than twenty of them, so it's crowded. They're toweling off after their swim. And glancing furtively at the prow. Saverio, Fabietto, and Marchino are even more interested than the others. What is so interesting, there on the prow of the boat?

Patrizia. She's still sunbathing, but now without her bikini. Completely naked. She looks like a sun-kissed goddess.

Franco, Patrizia's husband, is a bundle of rage. He would like to explode, but controls himself. He growls between his teeth.

FRANCO

She's crazy. Crazy. Crazy and a
whore!

Amid the silence and general embarrassment, a noise shatters the unreal calm: a midnight blue Gagliotta - the motorboat smugglers prefer - with a Customs police patrol vessel in pursuit, is heading straight for our wooden boat.

Just a few yards from hitting it, the whole family shrieking in fear, the Gagliotta executes a champion turn, forcing the police to swing wide, a maneuver that sends them way off course.

Crazy waves make the boat rock dramatically.

The only one who isn't scared is Fabietto. He has watched the whole thing in astonishment. Because he saw the person driving the smugglers' boat: an obese 21-year-old. We'll meet him later. His name is Fat Armando. Bare chested, hair already thinning, a terrycloth headband with Maradona's face on it. He steers that motorboat so artfully, and, standing there on the bridge, with that confident expression of his, he looks like a Roman emperor.

Fabietto is thunderstruck.

Aldo, who can no longer speak, gestures to ask what is happening. Saverio narrates what we are seeing.

SAVERIO

The Customs police are chasing the cigarette smugglers, but they're not going to let themselves be caught until they've dumped all the goods in the water. At that point, the police can't touch them.

Which is exactly what is happening: Armando is pirouetting recklessly, at an insane speed; the police are trying in vain to keep on him while two other smugglers are busy tossing the entire haul of cigarettes into the water.

At that point, the police slow and the smugglers' boat races off at incredible speed, disappearing into the blue horizon.

Fabietto goes back to peeping at naked Aunt Patrizia. She feels his eyes on her and, with a deliberately erotic inflection, murmurs.

PATRIZIA

Fabietto, would you hand your Aunt
a towel?

Fabietto, trembling, aroused and excited, approaches Patrizia's sumptuous, naked body. She sees him up close now, as he hands her the towel. She eyes his bathing suit, which is a little swollen, and, with unrivaled sensuality, says.

PATRIZIA (CONT'D)

You've gotten big, now, haven't
you, Fabietto?

17. EXT. MASSA LUBRENSE. MARINA. AFTERNOON

Geppino's wooden boat has docked, and our little group is stepping out onto the jetty. Fabietto is in a daze. He spots the smugglers' boat, it's refueling at the gas pump. Armando, all 400 pounds of him, is lying on the wooden bow, eyes closed, smoking like a king taking his repose.

Fabietto can't tear his eyes away from this image. The image of freedom.

18. EXT. AGEROLA. FARMHOUSE. SUNSET

The sun sinks into the sea, painting a sunset that looks like the end - or the beginning - of the world, depending on your state of mind, amid this sweet scenario of spring turning into summer, beautiful images of this small world.

The blacksmith is almost done. In the waning light, he is using a metal cutter to saw open the umbrella stand and free one of the twins.

Sparks illuminate, a second at a time, a row of tired, sweaty farm women. They are sitting in the courtyard, resting now that they have finished canning the tomatoes. They are enjoying the shining spectacle.

Uncle Alfredo, depressed, lying in a hammock, his hands joined in prayer, delivers a heartfelt lamentation.

UNCLE ALFREDO

San Gennà, I beg you, make it so that Maradona comes to Napoli. This is the last chance to recover from this long and wearying disappointment that is life. Understand?

The perfidious Signora Gentile has fallen asleep on her chair under the grape vine. The mozzarella falls from her hand and rolls down her fur coat, leaving a white trail before landing on the ground like a tennis ball.

One of the farm women places a basin of hot water near Signora Gentile's swollen feet.

The blacksmith has finished. The twins are free and happy, but they have lost their sense of equilibrium and are staggering about like boats in a storm, toppling like bowling pins. The farm women look on and laugh merrily.

The group of relatives, silent and weary, is making its way back up to the farm. Shadows lengthening across the dirt road, the salt on their skin, damp towels around their necks, an unparalleled happiness in their eyes.

Aldo, upset and silent now, without the batteries for his gadget, growls and flails his arms at an irritated Luisella. Fabietto and Patrizia, bringing up the rear, smile as they observe Aldo and Luisella argue.

FABIETTO

What's he saying?

PATRIZIA

They'll have to go buy more batteries.

Then Patrizia, wise and knowing, pulls her hair back as she looks up and smiles at Fabietto. A smile that holds everything and thus is indecipherable. Fabietto, petrified, is dying inside, overcome with emotion as, enraptured, he studies her neck and bare shoulders now that her hair is up in a ponytail.

The synthesis of this entire, incredible day. An image that will never leave him. Never.

Aunt Patrizia, like a midsummer night's dream, wanders off. Fabietto, stock still, turns and realizes that he is standing next to Signora Gentile. He stares at her.

Signora Gentile has one foot in the basin of water, one foot out. Her legs are spread. Her corpulent self is sprawled on the chair, ignorant of this incongruous sight. Her head thrown back, her face turned up toward the starry sky. Eyes closed and mouth open, as if prey to some frozen, abstruse, savage pleasure. Fabietto stares at her swollen, inflamed feet, at her legs scored with varicose veins. Signora Gentile, without opening her eyes, as if she senses his presence there, says helplessly.

SIGNORA GENTILE

Don't look at me. There's nothing to see.

19. INT. FABIETTO'S HOUSE. NIGHT

Saverio's in bed, a large blueprint of the chalet spread across his lap. He's put on his reading glasses to see it better.

His wife Maria comes in.

MARIA

So I talked with Nenella for a bit. There's some hot rumors going around.

SAVERIO

Now what?

MARIA (TEASING HIM)

Sizzling even!

SAVERIO (IMPATIENT)

I got it! But what, exactly?

MARIA (LAUGHING)

Aldo gave Luisella a pair of hot pink stockings.

SAVERIO (DISGUSTED)

Please, don't make me sick! Come see the house.

Maria laughs and climbs in bed next to him.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)

Where's Daniela?

MARIA

Where do you think? In the bathroom.

SAVERIO

Look. This is where the fireplace will go.

MARIA (DREAMY)

Jesus, the fireplace. I've always dreamed of having a house with a fireplace.

CUT TO:

IN FABIETTO AND MARCHINO'S ROOM.

The brothers, each in their own bed. They lie there, staring at the ceiling.

MARCHINO

Will you come with me to my audition tomorrow?

FABIETTO

I don't know, I have a math test.

MARCHINO

Exactly. And you always fail. So why bother?

FABIETTO

Do you think Diego'll come?

Marchino takes his time. Fabietto trembles in anticipation, as if the outcome truly depended on his brother.

MARCHINO

No, I don't.

FABIETTO

I do.

MARCHINO

So how would you rate Aunt Patrizia, today, all naked, on a scale of one to a hundred?

FABIETTO

A billion.

MARCHINO

If you had to choose between Maradona coming to Napoli and screwing Aunt Patrizia, what would you choose?

FABIETTO (REFLECTS)
Maradona.

MARCHINO
Good night.

FABIETTO
Night.

Fabietto puts on his Walkman headphones, but we don't hear what he is listening to.

20. INT. TERMINUS HOTEL. AUDITION WAITING ROOM. DAY

The whole spectrum of the most eccentric creatures that Naples can offer is gathered there, waiting: wannabe playboys, elderly ballet dancers, traveling salesmen, acrobats, retired circus workers.

All waiting for the maestro Fellini, whose melodious, incomprehensible voice we hear coming from a room in the distance, talking and asking questions of whoever's turn it is.

Fabietto, intimidated, is hunched on a chair. He glances at all the odd-looking people, but peers above all at the woman sitting across from him: she must be six feet tall, incredibly sophisticated, elegant, refined, and knowingly displaying her perfect, bare leg. It's the middle of the day and we're in a simple office, but she is wearing an incongruous red evening gown. This unforgettable beauty smokes slowly, lewdly, like a real vamp. Not looking any of the others in the face, she wearily lets her long red hair, like Gilda's, fall first to this side, then to that. She could be Scandinavian, or French, or American.

Marchino suddenly exits the audition room.

FABIETTO
How'd it go?

MARCHINO
A disaster. He told me I have a conventional face. I asked him what he meant and he said: you look like a janitor from Treviso.

Marchino starts chatting intensely with another guy. We gather that they're both disappointed. Fabietto, meanwhile, as if obeying an unspoken order, peeks through the half-open door into the room where Fellini is. He can't see the maestro, but he can hear his voice. Fellini is instructing an assistant to hang photos on the wall.

From where he is standing, Fabietto manages to see the photos: all women, all of them fabulous, in all sorts of ways. Vamps and innocents, mothers and prostitutes. Fellini - we can hear his authoritative voice - confidently announces the role each of them will play. Fabietto stands there, open-mouthed, instantly captivated by the magic of this world. Marchino comes up to him.

MARCHINO (CONT'D)
Hey, shall we go?

FABIETTO (IN A TRANCE)
No. I don't ever want to leave this place.

One of Fellini's assistants bursts in, shouting.

FELLINI ASSISTANT
Who's next?

The marvelous woman in red leaps to her feet.

MARVELOUS WOMAN
Me.

FELLINI'S ASSISTANT
What's your name, you splendid creature?

The woman in red speaks with a noticeable Neapolitan accent, which shatters all the erotic charge she emanated when she sat there silently.

MARVELOUS WOMAN
Eugenia Savastano, but everyone calls me "Legs of Positano."

21. EXT. STREET. DAY

Marchino and Fabietto Schisa are on their way back from Marchino's disastrous audition. They walk side by side, sadly staring at the ground.

FABIETTO
Well, so what else did Fellini have to say?

MARCHINO
Nothing. At a certain point, this journalist calls, and Fellini says to him: "Cinema's not good for anything. It distracts you, that's all." Distracts you from what?
(MORE)

MARCHINO (CONT'D)

The journalist must have asked. And Fellini tells him: "From reality. I don't like reality."

FABIETTO

That's all he said?

MARCHINO

That's not enough for you?

They stop at a red light. It turns green, but right as the Schisa brothers are about to cross, they are struck by a totally surreal sight: everyone around them, for about fifty yards, stops moving. They're all completely still.

As if the entire city, or at least this portion of it, had frozen.

Immobile, they're all staring at the same spot. Fabietto and Marchino do likewise, turning their gaze toward a black, two-door BMW stopped at the light. Behind the wheel - without a shadow of doubt - sits the 24-year-old Diego Armando Maradona.

A 65-year-old woman holding a bag of groceries falls to her knees, as if she were in front of the Madonna of Civitavecchia. Hers is the only movement in this stillness.

22. INT. FABIETTO'S HOUSE. NIGHT

Before dinner.

Maria is in the kitchen frying up pizzette. Three bangs on the ceiling. Maria looks up and says to herself.

MARIA

Not right now, Baronè, I can't.

In the dining room, Saverio is contemplating a painting he just bought.

SAVERIO

Hey, Fabiè, do you like this painting I bought? It's a lithograph by Guttuso. Remember, he's one of ours, Guttuso.

Fabietto is trying to convince his father.

FABIETTO

Listen to me, Papà, I swear, it really was Maradona. Ask Marchino when he gets home.

Saverio shows his son the front page of the *Corriere dello Sport*, the sports newspaper.

SAVERIO

What crap! Here, read this: "It's final: Maradona stays with Barcelona."

The front door opens and Marchino comes in. Maria appears carrying a pan of fried pizzette.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)

How'd the audition go?

MARCHINO

Never mind!

Maria suddenly remembers something.

MARIA

Oh, speaking of auditions, I'd forgotten.

She puts the pizzette on the table and disappears down the hallway.

FABIETTO

Marchì, tell papà it really was Maradona.

MARCHINO

It did look like him.

He says distractedly as he places a VHS of "Once Upon a Time in America" on top of the TV.

SAVERIO

What did you rent?

MARCHINO

"Once Upon a Time in America."

SAVERIO

The one with De Niro? Let's watch it later.

CUT TO:

IN THE BEDROOM.

Maria, as furtive as a thief, talks on the phone. She disguises her Neapolitan accent with on a Tuscan one, awkwardly aspirating the letter "c".

MARIA

Signora Pichler?...Good evening, this is Maestro Zeffirelli's assistant... The maestro tells me he met you at a wedding, if I remember correctly, and was particularly struck by your face. "Luminous and vivacious" is how he put it. Now, as the maestro is about to make a film about Callas, and is searching for his protagonist, well, he would like to see you. Do you think it might be possible to come to Rome to meet with him?

CUT TO:

IN THE DINING ROOM.

Saverio is changing channels with an intriguing, homemade remote control: a broom handle, which he reaches out toward the Toshiba. He targets the control panel on the side of the TV set and - a complicated maneuver - presses the button without getting up from his chair.

FABIETTO

Papà, why don't we just buy a TV with a remote, like everyone else?

SAVERIO

Don't talk nonsense! I'm a communist.

Maria reappears from the hallway.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)

Did you go to the bathroom?

MARIA

If only! Daniela's in there.

The sound of someone knocking at the door. Considerable commotion coming from the other side. Maria opens the door.

The entire Pichler family - who live next door - come tumbling in like an avalanche. They're excited, to put it mildly. Graziella, 60 years old, her husband, and three kids, all around 35. They're all enormous, and they're all talking at once, overcome with an irrepressible enthusiasm, so it's impossible to understand a word anyone says. Graziella is about to faint with emotion, so her husband, with his thick Bolzano accent, talks for her.

GRAZIELLA'S HUSBAND

Friends, incredible news.
Zeffirelli's assistant called. He
wants Graziella to star in his next
film.

Marchino would like to die. Maria laughs excitedly. Saverio
stares at her, suspicious.

Uncontrollable commotion and compliments. At the front door,
which has been left ajar, inevitably appears the Baroness
Focale, drawn by all the confusion.

BARONESS FOCALÉ

What's going on here?

MARIA

Fabulous news. Graziella's going to
make a film with Zeffirelli. She's
going to be Callas.

Even Marchino and Fabietto are growing suspicious now.

MARCHINO

How did you know she'll play
Callas?

Maria is unruffled.

MARIA

Jesus, I read it in "Gente".
I smell an Oscar, Graziella.
Remember, don't forget about us
when you get to Hollywood.

Graziella, moved and melodramatic, takes Maria's hand and
says, teary-eyed.

GRAZIELLA

I'll never forget you, Maria.

MARIA

How well you delivered that line!

Graziella is grateful. Then she snaps to, a sudden intuition.

GRAZIELLA

Let's get back home. What if
Zeffirelli calls again?

Shrieking with delight, the Pichler family, like a hurricane,
rushes back home. The baroness, irritated, withdraws as well.

BARONESS FOCALÉ

I'm not going to the première. It's bound to be a vulgar spectacle. I'm going back upstairs, I'm fed up.

Maria closes the door. The entire family stares at the guilty party: Maria.

Marchino and Fabietto laugh, and Maria joins in. But not Saverio. He doesn't laugh. He waits for their laughter to die down and then declares severely.

SAVERIO

You really don't want to knock it off, do you, playing jokes on people? You're gonna kill her, though. You'll kill her.

MARIA

She'll never know it was me.

SAVERIO (SEVERE)

Oh no, Mari, she'll know, alright! Because you are going to go over there right now and tell her it was all a joke. We are communists. We are honest people, to the core.

23. INT. PICHLER HOME. NIGHT

In a dining room that looks like it belongs in the mountains of Madonna di Campiglio - all light walnut - Maria and Fabietto sit at a long table.

Facing them is the entire Pichler family, serious and frowning.

Graziella, who is frustration personified, goes over to a plate rack and flings it onto the floor in rage. Everyone jumps. Then, on the verge of a nervous breakdown, she points her finger threateningly at Maria and says in a thunderous voice.

GRAZIELLA

You Neapolitans...you Neapolitans, it's not true what everybody says, that you're all so nice. You are mean. Wicked. That's what you are. I never want to see you again, Maria.

Fabietto stares, open-mouthed. Then he notices something irresistible on the table: a tray of bread dumplings. He reaches furtively for one. But Graziella is peremptory.

GRAZIELLA (CONT'D)
And you, don't you dare take a
dumpling.

Maria and Fabietto have to struggle to keep from laughing.

24. INT. FABIETTO'S HOME. NIGHT

The phone rings in the middle of the night. Maria turns on the light on her bedside table and answers.

MARIA
Hello.

WOMAN (V.O.)
Has your husband talked to you?

MARIA
You bitch, what do you want?

WOMAN (V.O.)
He hasn't talked to you yet? Well,
tell him he better.

She hangs up. In the meantime, Saverio has woken up as well. And he's afraid.

CUT TO:

FABIETTO AND MARCHINO'S ROOM.

In the dark of the night, Marchino and Fabietto, sitting immobile on their beds, listen to the shouts and stomping coming from the rest of the house, which is all lit up.

MARIA (SHOUTS) (V.O.)
You're going to leave that whore,
now, you hear me? You promised me
you'd never see her again.

FABIETTO (TO MARCHINO)
Who is she talking about? Aunt
Patrizia?

MARCHINO

What Aunt Patrizia! She's talking about Signora Villa, papà's colleague. He's been seeing her for years.

SAVERIO (SHOUTS)(V.O.)

I can't! You know it's complicated.

VOCE MARIA

The only thing that's complicated here is your genital apparatus.

Marchino can't help but laugh at that.

But now we hear the sounds of a a violent scuffle.

CUT TO:

IN THE HALLWAY.

Saverio, in a rage, tries to enter the bathroom, but the door is locked.

SAVERIO (SHOUTS ANGRILY)

Daniela, get out of there.

DANIELA (V.O.)

No, you get out.

Saverio, filled with rage, storms into the bedroom and slams the door.

All of a sudden, we go from hellish chaos to an unreal silence.

CUT TO:

FABIETTO AND MARCHINO'S ROOM.

Fabietto can't stand the deafening silence. He gets up and leaves his room, in pajamas. He's only 17, and his acne is so bad that he is completely ostracized.

Barefoot, he heads down the hallway.

Fabietto is afraid, he doesn't know what to expect from this silence. He opens the door to the living room, which we have never seen before - the door has always been closed. The room is shrouded in shadows, with flowered sheets covering the furniture, to keep it from getting dusty.

In the middle of this vast, strange room, Fabietto catches sight of his mother from behind, standing there in the dark. She is holding three oranges, trying to juggle them, but is having a hard time. She starts to cry, a low rattle that gradually grows louder, stronger. A frightening sound.

Marchino appears and gently takes Fabietto by the arm, saying.

MARCHINO
Let's go back to bed.

CUT TO:

IN FABIETTO AND MARCHINO'S ROOM.

Fabietto and Marchino, sitting on the edge of their beds again.

But their mother's sobbing, which they can hear from the dining room, is overwhelming. Devastating pain. And it simply doesn't stop.

Something happens to Fabietto which he has never experienced before: his legs start to shake, jerking uncontrollably. It's almost like an epileptic attack. But it's not. It's a panic attack.

Marchino goes over, puts his arms around him, tries to soothe him. He whispers insistently.

MARCHINO
Don't think about it. Think about
Aunt Patrizia. Think about
Maradona.

Fabietto is still trembling like an epileptic.

MARCHINO (ALARMED) (CONT'D)
What the hell's wrong with you?

The phone rings again. Again, the world comes to a halt.

CUT TO:

IN THE KITCHEN

Maria, in a rage, hurls herself at the phone.

CUT TO:

THE BEDROOM.

But Saverio is quicker. He answers. Listens silently.

Marchino and Fabietto appear at their bedroom door. Maria arrives, in a frosty rage.

MARIA

Pass me the whore.

But Saverio gestures to them all to keep quiet. He listens attentively, not saying a word. They all wait. Saverio, as if in a trance, merely says.

SAVERIO

Okay, ciao.

He hangs up and looks at his wife and sons.

In a daze, Saverio says.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)

That was Filippo Anzalone, a colleague of mine. He stayed late at the bank, dealing with all the paperwork. He wanted to let me know right away.

The others look at him uncomprehendingly.

MARCHINO

What?

Then, in a flat voice, Saverio says.

SAVERIO

Thirteen billion in bank guarantees. Napoli has bought Maradona.

Marchino and Fabietto are weeping. And we'll never know what for!

Fabietto whispers to his brother.

FABIETTO

We have to tell Uncle Alfredo right away.

25. INT. BANK OF NAPLES. DAY

The Bank of Naples headquarters on Via Toledo is a majestic example of rationalist architecture, laden with polished marble and spacious halls that inspire a certain reverential awe.

Fabietto enters cautiously. He eyes a doorman and asks deferentially.

FABIETTO
Saverio Schisa.

DOORMAN
Fifth floor. Third door on the right.

Fabietto heads toward the elevator. Every now and then a man goes by in a jacket and tie, or a woman in a suit. Fabietto searches for signs of a possible Signora Villa on every female face.

CUT TO:

SAVERIO'S OFFICE.

A typical bank manager's office. A glass divider gives on to a large room where a dozen or so employees are stationed around a large table, all on the phone, all talking non-stop.

Fabietto, alone in his father's office, stares at the table of bank employees. No sign of Saverio yet. The thing that strikes him most are the shoulder rests they all have, which cradle the receiver against their ears. He's never seen one before.

He shifts his gaze to his father's desk, and notes that there are photos of him and his brother Marchino, but none of his sister.

Saverio comes in, wearing a jacket and tie. He makes an effort to appear normal.

SAVERIO
Hey Fabiè, happy birthday.

He kisses him on the cheek.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)
You've never been here before?

FABIETTO

When I was little, but I'd forgotten.

SAVERIO

So, what are you doing tonight, to celebrate? Have you made plans with your friends?

Fabietto, uncomfortable, doesn't reply. Saverio is embarrassed.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)

I won't be coming home tonight, unfortunately. So we won't be able to celebrate together. Mamma is real pissed, you know...

FABIETTO (INTERRUPTS HIM)

I don't have any friends, papà.

Saverio freezes. He doesn't know what to say.

Fabietto turns his back to him and says, all in one breath.

FABIETTO (CONT'D)

All I have is you and mamma, and I try to stay close to Marchino. But it gets harder all the time, he's eight years older than me.

Saverio comes out with something truly inappropriate.

SAVERIO

Don't you have a girlfriend?

FABIETTO

Yeah, right!

Saverio tries to act like a normal father, but he can't. He goes over to his son, takes him by the shoulders and turns him around to face him. He looks him in the eyes, which are brimming with tears. He tries to comfort him, in his own way.

SAVERIO

Look. Soon, and I mean very soon, you're going to have yourself a girlfriend, and all this sadness, you won't even remember it anymore.

Fabietto nods, struggling to hold back his tears.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)
But listen to your papà. Let me
give you a little advice.

Fabietto waits.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)
The first time...the first time,
just take what comes. Understand?
No need to go for subtleties.
Even a dog-face will do. You just
have to get this first time the
fuck out of the way, understand
what your papà is saying?

Fabietto can't help but laugh. Even Saverio starts laughing,
a little relieved. They've managed to reconnect, at least for
a moment.

Saverio puts his hand in his jacket pocket and pulls out an
envelope.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)
Your birthday present.

Fabietto opens the envelope: a season ticket for the soccer
stadium. Fabietto can't believe his eyes. Saverio is glad.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)
Curva B, naturally.

Fabietto, in a daze.

FABIETTO
Thank God.

Saverio, as he goes to put on his coat, says.

SAVERIO
Don't thank God, thank me, I'm the
one who bought you the season
ticket.

Saverio looks at his watch, in a rush.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)
Walk with me a bit?

Fabietto nods. His father grabs his coat.

26. EXT. VIA SAN DOMENICO PARK. DAY

Maria, sad, makes her way along the flower-lined street, lugging two heavy bags of groceries. She catches sight of Mariettiello, polishing his brown 127 Fiat. When he sees her, he stops his polishing and runs to help her.

MARIETTIELLO
Signora Maria, let me help you.

MARIA
Thanks, Mario.

She hands him the grocery bags and they walk together toward her building.

MARIA (CONT'D)
How's your papà, Mario?

MARIETTIELLO
Papà loves me.

Maria is jolted with tenderness. When they are almost at her building, Maria glimpses her son Marchino, hunched furtively behind a car, kissing a splendid girl with all the passion of young love. She pretends not to see him, and keeps walking with Mariettiello to her door.

27. INT. ELEVATOR. DAY

Maria, Mariettiello, and the grocery bags make their silent ascent in the elevator. Maria catches her reflection in the mirror. She scrutinizes her face, and finds that she is sad and exhausted, that she has grown ugly and old. Her eyes begin to fill with tears. Mariettiello notices. He is dismayed, but says nothing. He does do something though. He takes a big black marker out of his pocket and starts drawing on the elevator wall: a giant cock. Maria, astounded, says to him.

MARIA
Mario, what are you doing?

Mariettiello, in an innocent, natural voice, replies.

MARIETTIELLO
I wanted to make you laugh, Signora Maria.

And Maria, in the midst of her tears, finds the strength to do just that.

28. INT. GALLERIA UMBERTO / PIAZZETTA SERAO. AFTERNOON

Fabietto and Saverio stroll through the Galleria. All of a sudden, as if seized by a melancholy memory, Saverio stops in his tracks and stares at a gated archway. Fabietto looks at his father, whose gaze is glued to a specific point at the entrance.

FABIETTO

What?

SAVERIO

See that column over there?

He gestures with his eyes to a column near one of the shops, with a boy leaning against it.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)

I spent the entire war leaning against that column. I was younger than you. Then, one day, Luigino, the doorman's son, came to get me.

FABIETTO

And he took you far away!

A smile chases away Saverio's melancholy.

SAVERIO

No, just to there, to Piazzetta Serao. Come see.

Saverio leads the way. He opens the gate and, still talking, they step inside the tiny, empty Piazzetta Serao.

FABIETTO

What was there?

SAVERIO

A fifty-year-old lady. For a bit of sugar, or anything to eat, really, this lady would give us kisses, long and slow, on the mouth. And since we kids were all different ages, she had set out bricks for us to stand on, to accommodate all different shapes and sizes.

Silence. Saverio's smile has disappeared and the melancholy has returned to his face.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)

Ingenious, wasn't it? Women are always ingenious.

Fabietto studies his father's face. Saverio broods, cloaked in sad memories.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)
So actually, Luigino really did
take me far away.

Saverio turns, as if on a tour of painful memories. He points in the direction of Via Roma. We see a slice of the street - people racing by.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)
And down there, on Via Roma, that's
where I first saw your mother. She
was running toward Piazzetta
Augusteo, that's where the bomb
shelter was, where we'd go during
the raids. She was late. And
worried. And beautiful.

His eyes glisten with tears.

FABIETTO
She still is.

SAVERIO
Yes, she still is.

But his voice is sad, and lacking conviction. Saverio places his hands on Fabietto's shoulders. Gives him a serious look.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)
Fabie', stand by your mother.
Understand?

Fabietto nods. Saverio turns and, walking boldly, disappears into the Galleria Umberto. Fabietto follows him with his eyes.

29. INT. FABIETTO'S HOUSE. NIGHT

The evening of Fabietto's birthday. He and his mother - and a whole lot of melancholy - sit at the table together, making milk porridge.

MARIA
Really? Are you sure all you want
for your birthday is milk porridge?
Don't you want me to make you
something special?

FABIETTO

Milk porridge is special. Besides, I remember, when I was little, and papà would go to Milan for work and you didn't feel like cooking, we would make ourselves some milk porridge and then you'd let me sleep in your bed.

MARIA

Maybe he wasn't really going to Milan.

Fabietto doesn't know what to say. Maria tries to chase all these sad thoughts from her head.

MARIA (CONT'D)

What do you want to do after high school?

FABIETTO

Philosophy.

MARIA

What's that?

FABIETTO

Or maybe learn to play the guitar. Oh! I don't really know.

MARIA

You want to play the guitar? Then play the guitar. You have to do what you like.

She speaks with a loving tenderness we haven't seen before. Then she sinks back into thoughts about her husband.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Well, I kicked him out because I had to! But I'll let him come back in a few days. Besides, where's he going to go? To her? To a woman who doesn't even know how to make milk porridge? Where else is your father going to find it so good?

Fabietto says nothing. His mother continues to brood.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Yes, I'll have him come home on Thursday, so that Friday we can take the furniture to the house in Roccaraso.

(MORE)

MARIA (CONT'D)
 They finally finished it.
 I made you tiramisu, you want some?

FABIETTO
 What about Marchino?

MARIA
 We've lost Marchino. I saw him with
 a girl today. Very pretty, I have
 to say.

Fabietto is surprised. Saddened, he absorbs the blow. His mother notices and tries awkwardly to cheer him up.

MARIA (CONT'D)
 Want to play hide and seek?
 Remember how you'd always hide in
 my closet?

FABIETTO (SNORTS)
 Mamma, I don't fit in your closet
 anymore.

MARIA (AN EMOTIONAL SMILE)
 You're right. You've gotten big.

30. EXT. VIA SAN DOMENICO PARK. EVENING

Fabietto and Mariettiello have given themselves over to the evening's silence. Fabietto sits on the low wall, legs dangling, while Mariettiello untiringly dusts the hood of his Fiat 127.

MARIETTIELLO
 I meant to get you a present,
 Fabiè, but I forgot!

FABIETTO
 That's okay, Mario. It's the
 thought that counts.

They hear a voice.

KID (V.O.)
 Marièttiello!

Mariettiello turns. The twins race by on their Ciao motor scooter.

DRIVING TWIN
 Hey, handsome.

OTHER TWIN

We brought you some pizza!

He hurls a steaming Margherita pizza at Mariettiello and then they zoom away.

La pizza hits Mariettiello and his 127 head on.

Mariettiello laughs stupidly.

Fabietto grows even sadder. He gets on his Vespa and drives out of the park.

30A. (EX 55) EXT. STREET/GALLERIA UMBERTO. NIGHT

Sad and melancholy, Fabietto roams around on his Vespa. He slows down when he gets to the Galleria Umberto, from which emanates a strange, blinding light. Fabietto parks and heads for the entry.

It's like entering a whole new world. Revealing. A different reality.

The first thing Fabietto sees is a man hanging upside-down, a rope around his feet, in the center of the Galleria. Perfectly illuminated, he sways as like a dead man, dangling thirty feet above the floor. To Fabietto's eyes, it is a powerful, perfect image. Unique.

Fabietto spots a bunch of onlookers huddled behind a barrier. He joins them, but a bit off to one side, where it's less crowded. From here he can hungrily observe the galvanizing appeal of a film set. His eyes shine watching the grip crew mounting the dolly, the electricians up on towers angling on the lights, the photography director and his crew gathered around the queen of cinema - the majestic 35mm camera - and the agitated comings and goings of young assistants, whose specific duties escape him.

Fabietto is bewitched by it all. He likes everything about it.

Nearby is a young nerd with small glasses who seems as interested as he is in the glittering life of the set. Fabietto asks him.

FABIETTO

What is it? A Fellini film?

YOUNG NERD

No! It's a film by a director named Antonio Capuano.

FABIETTO

Where is he?

YOUNG NERD

He's not here yet. He only arrives when they're ready to shoot. And he doesn't have a car pick him up at his house. No. He walks to the set.

He is bursting with joy as he says this, the nerd who knows everything.

The director's absence excites Fabietto.

A stocky, muscular man with brusque mannerisms directs a dozen or so frightened extras to a certain point. He makes it clear that they are not to move. Fabietto studies the extras, and realizes he recognizes one: Legs of Positano. But now, in modest dress and no makeup, she has lost all the cockiness and glamorous appeal she exhibited in Fellini's waiting room.

A persuasive female voice catches Fabietto's attention: a charming 20-year-old with a French accent is speaking loudly with the assistant director.

FRENCH ACTRESS

So can you remind Capuano please?
I'm at Galleria Toledo.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Relax. He knows, he said he would be there.

FRENCH ACTRESS

Tell him he won't regret it, the show is really beautiful, and it's doing well.

As she says this, she feels someone's eyes on her. She turns and distractedly catches sight of Fabietto, who is staring at her with a dazed, insistent look.

Fabietto, embarrassed, quickly looks away.

The actress goes back to talking with the assistant director.

31. INT. FABIETTO'S HOUSE. NIGHT

The phone rings. Maria picks up the receiver.

MARIA

Hello.

Silence on the other end. She loses her patience immediately.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Hello. Who is this?

Then, out of the silence, comes the familiar sound of Maria and Saverio's whistle. It's Saverio on the other end. He whistles soft and tender.

Maria listens as an involuntary, instinctive smile appears on her face.

CUT TO:

BEDROOM.

Maria and Fabietto are in the same bed together, like when Fabietto was little.

Fabietto sleeps the way all teenagers do: pimples showing, mouth open, irregular breathing.

Maria doesn't sleep, because she is watching her son. Her eyes betray her emotion as she caresses his cheek.

32. EXT. STADIUM. DAY

Curva B. Sunday afternoon. Napoli-Lazio.

Fabietto is by himself in the heart of the stadium, Ultras all around him. Like everyone, he is focused on Maradona's prowess. The scoreboard reveals that we're stuck at nil nil. The Ultra leaders, standing on the railings, are incessantly inciting the fans to cheer on the team.

All of a sudden, a super fat kid climbs on the railing. It's Fat Armando. He's screaming.

ARMANDO

So guys? We wanna make ourselves heard, or what?

But clearly he's not one of them, because the Ultras all start shouting "stupid, stupid" and the leaders, in no uncertain terms, tell him to get down from the railing. He follows orders.

But Fabietto has recognized him and decides to go meet him. He elbows his way through the crowd and saddles up next to him. He wants to say something, but lacks the courage.

All of a sudden, Maradona scores.

Instant bedlam. Everyone is hugging everyone else. Armando and Fabietto hug and shout as if possessed.

They're all still cheering when Maradona scores again, an extraordinary, unforgettable blind lob. Armando and Fabietto go wild.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)

Oh, Fatso, you really do bring good luck! We gotta watch all the games together!

They turn their attention back to the game. Fabietto furtively studies his new friend, then plucks up his courage.

FABIETTO

I've seen you before, you were driving that smugglers' motorboat at Massa Lubrense.

ARMANDO

Could be. The sea is my life, man!

Hat trick. Maradona scores from the corner. The stadium explodes.

33. EXT./INT. ROCCARASO. CONDOMINIUM BUILDING. NIGHT

The final pieces of furniture to be moved. Two young guys are in the yard, maneuvering a bulky couch through the French doors. Maria is overseeing the operation. Saverio is in the yard, smoking a pipe.

Tourist season is over, so there is nothing but silence and darkness.

All of a sudden, the two movers turn and stare at the hedge, as if they've heard something. They look worried. Maria notices.

MARIA

What's going on?

Neither mover answers her. They put the couch down and continue to peer at the hedge.

Saverio notices them now as well.

FIRST MOVER

There's something out there, on the other side of the hedge.

They all turn to look. A rustling noise. Maria, Saverio, and the mover are all alarmed.

The rustling grows louder. Saverio tries to reassure them.

SAVERIO
It's just a cat!

SECOND MOVER
Or a wolf!

MARIA (WORRIED)
A wolf?

Saverio is afraid too, but he tries to hide it.

SAVERIO
Come on! It's a cat. Or a dog.

Now, a hoarse sound from the other side of the hedge. The first mover sounds scared.

FIRST MOVER
That's a bear.

Saverio laughs sardonically.

SAVERIO
Yeah, right! A bear in Roccaraso!

MARIA
I'm going in. I'm scared.

FIRST MOVER
Me too. Why don't you come in too,
sir.

Maria and the two movers go inside.

SAVERIO
What nonsense!

But he's alone now, standing in the yard in front of the hedge.

Maria and the two movers are at the window, watching Saverio out in the yard.

Saverio, alone out there, stares at the hedge, pretending not to be worried. He calls out in a falsetto voice.

SAVERIO (CONT'D)
Meow! Hey kitty kitty!

Just then, a huge, hairy mass rises up like a hurricane on the other side of the hedge, and lets out a rough growl. Lit from behind, it really does look like a bear. Maria and the movers scream.

Saverio, in a total panic, makes a run for the door. He races up the stairs, but is so frightened that he trips and falls into the house, landing flat on his stomach as his pipe rolls across the floor.

MARIA (SCREAMING IN TERROR)
Saverio, he's right behind you!

Saverio, overcome by panic, squeals senselessly.

A solemn voice behind Saverio.

SOLEMN VOICE
And now, Saverio, the bear of Roccaraso is going to gobble you up in one bite.

Saverio rolls over and sees the bear inside the house, but it's clear that it's actually a man in a bear suit. In fact, he now removes his furry mask to reveal the face of the third mover, the youngest of the group.

Maria and the other two movers convulse with laughter.

Saverio is really pissed. Panting, he says.

SAVERIO (TO MARIA)
What kind of idiot are you?! You could have given me a heart attack. You need to knock it off with these damn pranks, Maria!

Maria can't even speak because she is doubled over with laughter. As are the movers.

Saverio struggles to get up. His leg hurts. He locates his pipe and tries to get a hold of himself. Maria, still laughing, opens her purse, takes out some cash, and tips the movers.

MARIA
Well done, guys. You were terrific. And you - the bear - you deserve a little something extra.

34. INT. ALBERTINO AND NENELLA'S HOUSE. DAY

It's unbearably hot. Everyone is gathered in a pleasant dining room, along with a forest of electric fans and bottles of ice water. The whole troop of Saverio's relatives is there: Albertino, Nenella, Silvanella, Annarella, Luisella, Aldo, Geppino, Signora Gentile in her incomprehensible fur coat, and a swarm of children. They're all watching the historic game of the 1986 World Cup: Argentina-England. Uncontrolled excitement.

An endless chorus of enthusiastic shouts to egg on Maradona. Joy reigns supreme.

SILVANELLA (TO SIGNORA GENTILE)
Signora Gentile, aren't you
sweating in that fur coat?

SIGNORA GENTILE (SCORNFUL)
Chic women do not sweat. And I -
when are you gonna get it through
your thick skull - am chic!

They all laugh up their sleeves.

The doorbell rings. Geppino, all sweaty, gets up and leaves the room.

He arrives at the front door, opens it: two carabinieri in uniform. Geppino blanches.

CARABINIERE
Good evening. Geppino Lettieri?

GEPPINO
Good evening. Yes, I'm Geppino.
What's going on? We were watching
the game.

CARABINIERE
The game is over.

Geppino trembles.

35. INT. FABIETTO'S HOME. DAY

To try and beat the heat, the TV set has been moved out onto the balcony, thanks to an extension cord. Sweaty and excited, they're all huddled together to watch the Argentina-England match: Saverio, Maria, Fabietto, Marchino and his girlfriend, Mariettiello, Baroness Focale, and Uncle Alfredo.

All of a sudden, on the TV, Maradona, like a puma, bursts out of nowhere and executes his famous Hand of God goal. Everyone explodes.

Only now do we see that the same thing is happening on lots of balconies: unrestrained explosions of joy from the inhabitants, who have all moved their TVs outside to escape the heat.

Saverio exchanges joyous gestures with a tenant across the way, as if to say: what a goal! Maria, vacillating between joy and melancholy, observes her husband, who is an orgy of happiness.

Mariettiello rejoices in an unseemly manner, posing as if he were a bodybuilder in front of a mirror. Baroness Focale, immobile and restrained, looks at Mariettiello the way you'd look at a strange and unpredictable beast.

Marchino celebrates by kissing his girlfriend. Fabietto looks at them, feeling extraneous. Then Marchino's girlfriend kisses him on the cheek, a gesture which only partially makes up for his solitude.

Uncle Alfredo, hand on his heart to ward off a heart attack, sniffs smelling salts and watches the replay on TV. Tears in his eyes. Then he pontificates proudly.

UNCLE ALFREDO

With his hand! This god has scored
with his hand! He has avenged the
great people of Argentina,
oppressed by the ignoble,
imperialist Falklands War. A
genius! Genius! Genius! A political
act. A revolution!

Uncle Alfredo weeps as he says all this, grasping Fabietto's arm.

UNCLE ALFREDO (CONT'D)

He humiliated them, understand? He
humiliated them!

Now, Saverio and Maria, happy and moved, have gone back to watching the match. They hold hands. Fabietto gives them sidelong glances. He is happy for their rediscovered happiness. Happy and moved.

36. INT./EXT. ALBERTINO AND NENELLA'S HOUSE. DAY

The game continues on TV, but no one's following it anymore. They've all flocked to the window, to see what is happening down below. Out on the street, the carabinieri are putting Geppino, in handcuffs and in tears, inside the police cruiser. They pull away, sirens blaring. Signora Gentile stands in the street all alone, wrapped in her fur coat, staring severely as her brother is taken away. A tragedy.

The group inside withdraws from the window. The mood is one of mourning now. No one speaks. They all sit or lean against the wall, reflecting sadly on what has transpired.

Signora Gentile comes back inside, looking as impassive as a painting. She is still sad, but now her eyes are filled with rage instead of tears. No one dares look at her.

Signora Gentile turns a perfidious eye on Albertino and Nenella. Her words cut like a knife.

SIGNORA GENTILE

It's your fault. All your fault
that they arrested my brother. You
knew he was swindling and you
didn't stop him. Because the only
thing you care about is money.

Dismay. Everyone throwing sidelong glances at everyone else.

Nenella finally speaks up: she goes over to her granddaughter, who is riding a kid's bike with training wheels, and says.

NENELLA

Ludovica, let Grandma have your
bike a minute.

The little girl gets off.

NENELLA (CONT'D)

Signora Gentile, you have really
busted my balls.

She grabs the bicycle and before anyone has time to stop her, hurls it at Signora Gentile.

Signora Gentile bombards Nenella with unrepeatable insults.

A tremendous brawl ensues, a lynching rather: Nenella, Albertino, and all the others, children included, throw themselves at Signora Gentile, beating her up.

Silvanella and Annarella rip her fur coat off. Silvanella, livid, puts a lighter to the fur. Signora Gentile realizes what is happening and starts screaming like one possessed.

SIGNORA GENTILE

Noooo, not my fur! Don't you dare,
you fucking little bitch!

In all the ruckus, no one notices that, on TV, Maradona, after a 50-meter breakaway, is making the most beautiful goal in the history of soccer.

Final score: Argentina-England 2-1.

FADE TO BLACK.

37. INT. FABIETTO'S HOME. DAY

Saverio, in the living room, is putting a pair of Rossignol skis in their bag.

Maria, a bag over her shoulder, sticks her head in Fabietto's room. He's in there, studying.

MARIA

Fabiè, sure you don't want to come
to Roccaraso with us?

FABIETTO (CHEERFUL)

We're playing Empoli tomorrow,
Mamma. I can't not go to the match.
Diego's expecting me.

Maria smiles. She goes over to give him a kiss and says.

MARIA

There's some gnocchi in the fridge,
you just have to heat them up.

FABIETTO (IN AN IRONIC, DECLAMATORY
VOICE)

*Poscia, più che 'l dolor, potè il
digiuno. (Then hunger proved a
greater power than grief - Dante,
Inferno)*

MARIA (REFLECTS)

Sometimes your mother just doesn't
understand you.

38. INT. ROCCARASO. MOUNTAIN CONDO. NIGHT

The fireplace is lit.

Maria is knitting in front of the fire.

Saverio pokes inexpertly at the flames. The fire flares up. He goes back to his chair, sitting next to Maria. He picks up his book again: "A Man," by Oriana Fallaci.

Maria is tired, her eyes droop as she knits.

Saverio is tired too, he keeps nodding off. The book drops into his lap. They are both falling asleep.

Maria sticks her knitting needles between the cushions of her chair. Eyelids heavy, she turns to Saverio, takes his hand, and, soft as a whisper, whistles their tune.

Saverio, eyes closed, instinctively whistles back the same tune. Maria, half-asleep, mumbles.

MARIA

Watch out for the bear.

Saverio, drifting off, smiles.

Happy and satisfied now, they slide into a deep sleep.

39. EXT. VIA SAN DOMENICO PARK. EVENING

Fabietto, a Napoli scarf still around his neck, and Mariettiello, smoking, are sitting side by side on the low wall, lazing silently. Mariettiello doesn't inhale - he only smokes to look sophisticated - but the way he holds his cigarette, like a sacred relic, makes Fabietto smile sardonically. He studies his friend's extravagant, joyous way of smoking.

An Alfa Romeo Giulietta approaches at full speed, then slams on the brakes. It's Marchino and two friends.

Fabietto's and Marchino's eyes meet. Fabietto is immediately alarmed - his brother's face is sheer tension.

MARCHINO

Fabiè, we have to go to Roccaraso.
Now.

FABIETTO

What's happened?

MARCHINO
Mamma and papà are in the hospital.

40. INT. HIGHWAY. CAR. NIGHT

Marchino's friend Maurizio drives the Giulietta at 135 an hour. Marchino next to him. Fabietto and Marchino's other friend in the back.

All Maurizio has to do is flash his high beams, and all the other cars instantly get out of his way.

No one says a word. Fabietto turns and looks at the guy next to him: haggard-looking, studded leather jacket, in a cold sweat.

Fabietto looks away. He puts on his headphones, but we don't hear what he is listening to.

41. INT. CASTEL DI SANGRO. HOSPITAL. NIGHT

Breathless, disheveled, walking briskly, Fabietto, Marchino and his two friends step inside the vast, deserted hospital entryway. It's the middle of the night. A young doctor is there, as if he were expecting them. They go over to him. The doctor looks at 17-year-old Fabietto.

MARCHINO
Schisa. We're their sons. What happened?

The doctor, uncomfortable, doesn't respond right away. Then he says.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Wait here a minute.

He disappears inside.

Marchino and Fabietto nervously pace back and forth.

The friend who drove collapses on a chair, exhausted from the relentless speed.

Another doctor arrives. But she doesn't know what to say either.

FEMALE DOCTOR
Just a moment, excuse me.

Marchino starts to cry. But not Fabietto. He stares blankly, fixing his eyes on a sink.

Another doctor arrives. 60 years old. As awkward as the others.

DOCTOR

There was a carbon monoxide leak in your parents' house.

Fabietto stares at him open-mouthed.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Your mother passed away at home. Your father here in the hospital.

Marchino, in tears, babbles.

MARCHINO

A and...then? Th...that's all?

DOCTOR

Your father, before he passed, said something.

MARCHINO (IN A FEEBLE VOICE)

What?

DOCTOR

"Don't joke, Mari."

Fabietto finds the strength to say, his voice breaking.

FABIETTO

You have to let me see them.

The elderly doctor shakes his head.

DOCTOR

It's better that you don't!

Fabietto begins to shout, piercing the unreal silence.

FABIETTO

You have to let me see them. You have to let me see them. You have to let me see them.

He tries to run past him, but the doctor blocks him.

DOCTOR

They are unrecognizable. It would only frighten you.

Fabietto keeps shouting, over and over.

FABIETTO

You have to let me see them! You
have to let me see them!

The doctors, Marchino, and his friends forcibly carry Fabietto out of the hospital, him still shouting all the while.

42. EXT. CASTEL DI SANGRO. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT. NIGHT

The silence of the mountains.

In this semi-deserted parking lot, Fabietto, Marchino, and the two friends lean against the Giulietta. Staring at the ground. Marchino is crying. Fabietto is not.

A little ways off, the female doctor exits the hospital. She has finished her shift. She walks hand in hand with her son, a 10-year-old kid, chubby, glasses, and an incongruous green loden coat, which makes him seem like quite the "little man." They are almost at their car when the doctor says to him.

FEMALE DOCTOR

Wait here, Matteo, I forgot
something.

She goes back inside. Her son in his green coat waits by the car.

The boy starts to stare at the four guys leaning against the Giulietta. They stare back.

They all just look at each other.

The boy takes off his glasses, breathes on the lenses, wipes then with a cloth, like a grown up. Then he goes back to staring at them.

Out of the blue, Maurizio, still staring at the boy in the green coat, says stupidly to him.

MAURIZIO

Yeah, fuck-face?

The boy doesn't even understand the insult.

Fabietto, Marchino, Maurizio, and the other friend can't help themselves. Slowly but surely, they go from grieving to snickering, their eyes still glued to the ground.

43. INT. NAPLES. CEMETERY. DAY

They are placing the caskets in the burial niches.

Marchino's girlfriend and friends have clustered around him, to try and bolster him.

Fabietto leans against a wall, not even watching. All the relatives we met in Agerola process by him. Albertino, Nennella, Luisella, Aldo with his electronic gadget. They all offer their condolences.

Fabietto, like an automaton, doesn't speak, doesn't cry. He lets himself be kissed. Now it's Luisella's turn. She is sobbing.

LUISELLA

Why don't you cry on your aunt's shoulder? Crying will do you good!

Fabietto gives her a ruthless look.

FABIETTO

E se non piangi, di che pianger suoli? (If you do not weep now, when will you weep? Dante - Inferno)

Luisella does not understand and walks away in tears.

When it comes to cousin Silvana's turn, Fabietto asks.

FABIETTO (CONT'D)

Geppino?

SILVANA

He asked permission to come, but they wouldn't let him. But they've given him a single cell, thank God.

FABIETTO

Papà used to say that Geppino was an idiot.

SILVANA (SIGHS)

It would have been better if he'd told me that before I married him.

Fabietto smiles slightly. Silvana smiles too. Annarella intervenes.

ANNARELLA

Daniela didn't come?

FABIETTO
Of course she did.

ANNARELLA
Where is she?

FABIETTO
She went to the bathroom for a second.

Uncle Franco comes over now. He kisses Fabietto.

FABIETTO (CONT'D)
Aunt Patrizia didn't come?

FRANCO
She's not well, Fabiè. They admitted her to the psych ward.

Fabietto is disappointed. Aunt Patrizia was the only person he would have liked to see.

FRANCO (CONT'D)
Go see her sometime. She'd like that. You always were her favorite nephew.

A noise catches Fabietto's attention, causing him to turn: they are placing his mother in the niche. Fabietto stares but does not shed a tear. Then he senses a presence before him. He is surprised to discover Signora Gentile in front of him. She stares at his chest, not looking him in the eye. Fabietto doesn't say anything. Signora Gentile takes her time, then quotes dryly:

SIGNORA GENTILE
*Per me si va nella città dolente,
per me si va nell'eterno dolore,
per me si va tra la perduta gente.*
(Dante's Inferno, inscription on the gates of Hell)

Only now does she lift her perfidious eyes to his face. But those perfidious eyes glisten with emotion. Then she walks off.

Uncle Alfredo comes over next. He kisses Fabietto.

UNCLE ALFREDO
Why didn't you go to Roccaraso? You like to ski.

FABIETTO
Napoli was playing. I had to see
Maradona.

Uncle Alfredo's eyes light up. As if he'd had a revelation.
He grabs Fabietto's arm and says excitedly.

UNCLE ALFREDO
It was him! It was him who saved
you!

FABIETTO
Who?

UNCLE ALFREDO (AS IF IN A TRANCE)
It was him!
It was the hand of God!

And he really believes it.

44. EXT. SAN PAOLO STADIUM. DAY

It's clouded over, and threatening to rain.

Napoli is practicing. The event is open to the public.

A few onlookers watch from the stands.

Fabietto and Marchino are among them. Fabietto, in jacket and good trousers, rests his chin on his hands. They've come right from the funeral to the stadium. Sad. In a daze.

They're watching Maradona practice free kicks. He has set up a barrier of fake metal men. A ball boy places ball after ball for him and Maradona practices his cross kick. The goalie dives but can't block it. Goal.

FABIETTO
You don't want to try being an
actor anymore?

MARCHINO (SHRUGS)
Cinema is too hard. And besides,
I'd have to go to Rome...

Maradona, like an automaton, repeats the same exact kick, twenty times in a row. Always from the corner. He always scores.

Then, as if those kicks were the most natural thing in the world, he has the ball boy hand him his sweat jacket and heads for the dressing room.

Marchino says to Fabietto.

MARCHINO (CONT'D)

Do you know what that's called,
what Maradona just did?

FABIETTO

Free kick.

MARCHINO

No, it's called perseverance.
Something I will never have. So
you're going to have to have it,
Fabiè.

45. INT. FABIETTO'S HOME. NIGHT

The empty house.

In all its details. The broom handle for changing channels.
The video of "Once Upon a Time in America" still sitting on
the VCR. The orange juice squeezer in the kitchen. The broom
for communicating with the baroness in a corner.

Fabietto, impassive, stares at all these things.

The doorbell rings. Fabietto opens the door. Standing on the
landing is Graziella, their neighbor from Trentino, her
cheeks stained with tears. Without saying a word, she hands
Fabietto a plate of bread dumplings. Fabietto forces himself
to smile as he accepts the plate.

FABIETTO

Thank you.

He closes the door again. Banging coming from the ceiling,
it's Baroness Focale calling. Fabietto ignores her, sliding
down the hallway instead.

CUT.

IN THE BEDROOM.

Fabietto stares at his parents' bed, the phone on the
nightstand. Everything is still. Fabietto tries to cry, but
he can't bring himself to. He hears his sister's voice,
calling to him.

DANIELA (V.O.)

Fabietto.

He gives up trying to cry and steps into the storage room,
adjacent to the bathroom.

The two rooms are separated by a large frosted-glass window, through which the siblings can talk.

DANIELA (V.O.)
Did you cry?

FABIETTO
I can't.

DANIELA (V.O.)
What are you going to do now?

FABIETTO
I thought I'd watch "Once Upon a Time in America."

DANIELA (V.O.)
If you wait for me to come out, we can watch it together.

FABIETTO
Okay, but when are you coming out of this bathroom?

DANIELA (AFTER A MOMENT)(V.O.)
I don't know.

A thin, sad smile crosses Fabietto's face. He makes to leave the storage room, but there's his sister's voice again.

DANIELA (V.O.)
Do you know why papà could never make up his mind to leave Signora Villa?

FABIETTO
No, I don't.

DANIELA (V.O.)
Because eight years ago, they had a child together.

Fabietto is speechless. He reflects. And then says in an angry voice.

FABIETTO
When did you think you were going to tell me?

Daniela doesn't answer right away. She attempts a response.

DANIELA (V.O.)
When you were bigger.

FABIETTO
When would that be?

DANIELA (DECISIVE) (V.O.)
Now. You're bigger now.

46. EXT. VIA SAN DOMENICO PARK. EVENING

Fabietto, Mariettiello, and the twins are sitting on the wall together, doing nothing.

MARIETTIELLO
I liked your mother.

FABIETTO
But not my father?

MARIETTIELLO
No, not your father.

Fabietto doesn't react. Mariettiello awkwardly places his hand on Fabietto's shoulder, to console him.

47. INT. HOSPITAL. ROOM IN THE PSYCH WARD. DAY

Bars on the windows. Bare rooms. And, sitting next to a window, Aunt Patrizia. But she is no longer the beauty she once was. The meds, the pain, the forced hospitalization, have transformed her into the memory of a beautiful woman. Now it's only a mask of pain that stares at Fabietto from a twin bed. Patrizia finally breaks the excruciating silence.

PATRIZIA
How are you?

FABIETTO (FEELING GUILTY)
I can't bring myself to cry, Aunt Patrizia.

PATRIZIA
Don't worry. It means that it's not time yet. What do you want to do when you grow up, Fabiè?

FABIETTO (EMBARRASSED)
I'm ashamed to tell you. Besides, it'll never happen. It's a crazy idea.

PATRIZIA
Well, if it's crazy, you're talking to the right person.

They both smile slightly. Fabietto musters his courage.

FABIETTO

A film director. That's what I'd like to do.

PATRIZIA

What a wonderful idea, Fabiè! Call me if you make it, I'll be your muse.

They laugh slightly.

FABIETTO

You already are my muse.

Patrizia gives him a pained smile. And then takes his hand.

PATRIZIA

Do you remember that night you came to my house, you, your mother and your father? That night when Franco beat me?

FABIETTO

I remember every time I ever saw you, Aunt Patrizia.

Patrizia nods, as if it were inescapable.

PATRIZIA

I know.

They look at each other. Fabietto is embarrassed.

PATRIZIA (CONT'D)

That night, Uncle Franco and I made up. And we made love. And you want to know something, Fabiè? I got pregnant. But the next week, Franco beat me again, and I lost the baby. I got by on pills for a while, but I couldn't take it anymore, so I said: bring me here, or I'll kill myself.

Fabietto is speechless. They look at each other.

FABIETTO

Aunt Patrizia, do you remember when you told me you saw the Little Monk?

She nods sadly.

FABIETTO (CONT'D)

I believed you.

Patrizia looks up at him, her eyes brimming with tears. Then she blows him a kiss.

And for an instant - but only for an instant - she is beautiful again.

48. EXT. SALESIAN SCHOOL. COURTYARD. DAY

The usual chaos in the courtyard, where 25 soccer matches are being played simultaneously. 25 balls flying, 400 boys running around like maniacs, shouting, colliding. Fabietto is one of them.

But all of a sudden, for no apparent reason, Fabietto stops running. He stops playing and, right there in the middle of all that kicking and sweating, he bursts into uncontrollable sobs.

Some of his classmates notice, and are embarrassed. One makes to go over to him, but another grabs his arm, holds him back.

So that's how it ends, with Fabietto weeping while the soccer goes on around him, without stopping. Without ever stopping.

The elderly priest who confessed him sees, though. Standing on the edge of the field, he watches Fabietto.

49. INT. SALESIAN CHURCH. DAY

Two chairs facing each other at the far end of the deserted church. The priest is listening to Fabietto's confession. They look at each other.

ELDERLY PRIEST

Do you feel alone?

FABIETTO

Not anymore. Now I *am* alone.

ELDERLY PRIEST

God is always at your side.

FABIETTO

He should have been at their side.

ELDERLY PRIEST

He was, he was at your parents' side, too.

FABIETTO

What a load of crap. And you,
Father, will go to Hell for all the
crap you say.

They glare defiantly at each other, without saying anything more.

50. INT. FABIETTO'S HOME. NIGHT

Fabietto sits staring at the dusty video of "Once Upon a Time in America." He has decided. He's going to watch the film. He picks up the cassette, removes the wrapping, and is about to put it in the VCR when the banging from the ceiling distracts him. It's the baroness. Fabietto snorts. He puts the cassette on the VCR. And goes to the door. Picks up his keys. And leaves the house.

51. INT. BARONESS FOCALÉ'S HOUSE. NIGHT

The mammoth Baroness Focale opens the door, wrapped in a brown velvet dressing gown that looks more like a curtain.

FABIETTO

What's wrong, Baroness?

BARONESS FOCALÉ

There's a bat in the living room,
Fabietto. Do you know how to get
rid of him?

FABIETTO

I can try.

BARONESS FOCALÉ

Thank you, Fabietto.

She leads the way through the house. Fabietto is surprised and curious, seeing this mysterious house for the first time. From the kitchen, which is completely anonymous, we end up in a hallway with old beige wallpaper. Sinister shadows reign here, pierced only by a blanket of dim votive lights that illuminate - just barely - dozens of photographs, all of the same subject: the baroness's dead husband. All in black and white, all taken when he was young and fit.

FABIETTO

Is that your husband, Baroness?

She nods and sighs. She opens the door to an ancient living room.

BARONESS FOCALÉ

It's in here, the bat.

Fabietto steps into the room. The baroness quickly closes the door behind him, leaving Fabietto alone with the bat.

All is still. Silent. The only illumination is a dim light coming through the window. Fabietto is afraid. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a small black shadow flaps about madly, heading right for Fabietto. Terrified, he instinctively crouches on the floor. He grabs for the door handle and sneaks out of the room, carefully closing the door behind him.

He's in the hallway again now, alone with the saintly images of the dead husband. Fabietto is more afraid than before. He hears the baroness calling him.

BARONESS FOCALÉ (V.O.)

Fabietto, I'm in my bedroom.

THE BARONESS'S BEDROOM.

Fabietto, shy and embarrassed, appears at the door and peers into the shadows. The hideous baroness is in her four-poster bed, leaning against the headboard. She's wearing a loose nightgown, covered in lace. Nothing else.

All around her, on the dresser and the nightstands, are countless more photos of her husband as a young man, lit by dim cemetery lamps. Fabietto looks around uncomfortably.

BARONESS FOCALÉ

Did you get rid of him?

FABIETTO

It seems an impossible task, Baroness. But I trapped him in the living room.

BARONESS FOCALÉ

That's fine. Besides, I never use that room. Now, sit down.

Fabietto, embarrassed, sit on the very edge of the foot of the bed - the only place to sit in the whole room.

BARONESS FOCALÉ (CONT'D)

How are you? Do you miss your parents?

FABIETTO

What a fucking ridiculous question, Baronè!

The baroness gives a quick laugh.

BARONESS FOCALÉ
You're right. It is a fucking
ridiculous question.

They sit there silently. Fabietto studies the photos.

FABIETTO
Do you think about him all the
time, your husband?

BARONESS FOCALÉ
Attiliuccio? No. I've forgotten
him. Just as you will forget your
mother and father someday.

FABIETTO (PREEMPTORY)
No, I'll never forget them.

Baroness Focale, with more compassion than we thought her
capable of, says maternally.

BARONESS FOCALÉ
It's time to look to the future,
Fabiè.

Fabietto nods politely.

FABIETTO
I should be going.

He gets up and heads for the door. She follows him with her
eyes. And calls out to him just as he is about to cross the
threshold.

BARONESS FOCALÉ
Fabietto, could you do me a favor,
could you bring me my brush, on top
of the dresser?

Fabietto goes over to the dresser, which is covered in photos
of her dead husband, and gets her brush. He brings it to her.

BARONESS FOCALÉ (CONT'D)
One last favor: Would you brush my
hair?

As she says this, she lets down her long white hair, which we
now see covers the whole length of her back.

Fabietto is embarrassed. He stands there like a fool because
all that loose, long hair on an old woman reveal two things:
an unexpected intimacy, and the twisted déjà vu of youth.

BARONESS FOCALÉ (CONT'D)
Sit behind me and brush my hair.

Fabietto, trembling, hesitant, sits behind her and starts brushing her long hair from top to bottom. But as the bottom coincides with her tailbone, Fabietto is already stirred up.

The baroness leans forward slightly to make Fabietto's task easier, and in doing so her nightgown opens a little. Fabietto can't help but peek at her cleavage, prey to her enormous, sagging breasts. She is well aware of this, and in fact says to him.

BARONESS FOCALÉ (CONT'D)
Are you looking at me?

FABIETTO (HIS VOICE TREMBLING)
Yes.

He keeps brushing, and peeping. After a while...

BARONESS FOCALÉ
Okay, Fabietto, that's enough.

A little disappointed, Fabietto gets to his feet, goes over to the dresser, puts down the brush. That's when the baroness says to him.

BARONESS FOCALÉ (CONT'D)
Why did you put it back?

FABIETTO (HESITANT)
Because I'm done.

BARONESS FOCALÉ
Not at all. You still have to brush my slit.

Fabietto stares at her uncomprehendingly.

FABIETTO
What do you mean, your slit?

It's at this point that Baroness Focale does something unimaginable. She pulls up her soft nightgown, spreads her large, flabby legs, and exposes her giant, dark sex, bristling with black hairs.

BARONESS FOCALÉ
This is my slit.

She says with a terrifying wink. Fabietto, astounded, stretches his neck like a giraffe to gaze at that dark cave between her legs.

BARONESS FOCALÉ (CONT'D)
 Attiliuccio used to call it my
 super pussy.

This super pussy sparks Fabietto's primordial excitement. He goes over to her, crouches at her feet, reaches his trembling arm toward her dark cave, and begins brushing the baroness's super pussy. She throws her head back in lascivious, immoral pleasure.

BARONESS FOCALÉ (CONT'D)
 Now put down that brush and climb
 on top of me.

Fabietto, in a sort of erotic, electric trance, does what he is told. He comes face to face with the baroness. When he is only an inch away from her face, his expression changes from arousal to doubt: he realizes that the baroness looks just like Pope Wojtyla. She is incredibly ugly.

But the baroness knows and understands. Which is why she says.

BARONESS FOCALÉ (CONT'D)
 Don't look at me. Bury your face in
 my shoulder and think about a girl
 you like.

Fabietto obeys, and says to her.

FABIETTO
 Okay.

BARONESS FOCALÉ
 Now tell me what her name is.

FABIETTO
 Patrizia.

BARONESS FOCALÉ
 Good. Now you have to do two
 things. Move like this inside of
 me, and call me Patrizia.

The baroness, her hands on Fabietto's hips, guides his movement. Fabietto follows her lead, giving himself over to the rhythm, and ten seconds later, panting the name "Patrizia," he has already come.

Now, lying there, feeble and forgotten on top of her, he sighs heavily, as if he has freed himself of all the worries of the world.

The baroness laughs gently, a veil of sadness on her face.

This is Fabietto's first time. And as his father had advised him, he did not go for subtleties.

BARONESS FOCALÉ (CONT'D)
You're big now.

FABIETTO
That's the second time I've been told that recently.

BARONESS FOCALÉ
And do you know what makes you big?

FABIETTO
No.

BARONESS FOCALÉ
The fact that you and I have a secret. Now go!

Fabietto rouses himself, gets to his feet, and starts to zip up his fly. He is happy and says proactively.

FABIETTO (SMILING)
That was great. Next time...

BARONESS FOCALÉ (INTERRUPTS HIM)
The next time will be with a girl your age. I have completed my task.

FABIETTO (DISAPPOINTED)
What was that?

BARONESS FOCALÉ
To help you look to the future, Fabiè.

Fabietto understands. His eyes are shining now. Eyes that look to the future.

52. (EX 53) EXT. WATERFRONT. VIA CARACCILO. NIGHT

Fabietto drives his Vespa along the shore. Headphones on, an unlit cigarette between his lips, a moronic expression on his face - the look of one who has touched happiness. With a sigh of relief, he glides along the waterfront, floating past beach houses and lovers, all full of life.

53. (EX 54) EXT. NAPLES. STREET. NIGHT

Fabietto, on his Vespa, goes from the beach to Piazza Trieste e Trento.

He passes the San Carlo Theater, and notices the entrance of Galleria Umberto. He stops, parks his Vespa, removes his headphones, and heads for the entrance.

54. EXT. GALLERIA UMBERTO / PIAZZETTA SERAO. NIGHT

The Galleria is empty. Fabietto's footsteps echo in the silence as he walks. When he gets to the gate that gives on to Piazzetta Serao, he turns, sensing someone's presence. On the other side of the gate, in the piazzetta, he glimpses a woman verging on 50. A timid, unassuming prostitute, neither ugly nor beautiful: the picture of normality. She is staring right at him. They gaze at each other through the grating. Then she gestures to him, inviting him to join her. Fabietto, adopting the incongruous attitude of a man of the world, responds with a smile and a shake of his head. She swallows his refusal, she's used to it, hers is a lifetime of refusals. But Fabietto keeps staring at her. She becomes irritated and says.

PROSTITUTE

What the fuck are you still staring at?

Fabietto, embarrassed, immediately looks away. Tail between his legs, he hurries off to his Vespa.

55. (EX 52) INT. FABIETTO'S HOME. DAY

Fabietto and Marchino, each in his own bed. Marchino is asleep. Fabietto is awake, staring at the ceiling, a satisfied look on his face. Marchino wakes up, stares at his brother. And yawns.

MARCHINO

We're thinking of going to Stromboli this summer. Want to join us?

FABIETTO (STARING AT THE CEILING)

We'll see.

Marchino looks more closely at his brother, intuits the truth.

MARCHINO

You fucked!

FABIETTO

What?!

MARCHINO

Yeah, yeah! That's it! You fucked
yesterday, for the first time!

He laughs. Fabietto turns bright red, but then he starts laughing too.

56. INT. GALLERIA TOLEDO THEATER. HALL. NIGHT

Black.

On stage, a candle is lit. The feeble flame illuminates the 20-year-old actress we saw earlier, who holds it in her hands. From what we can tell in the darkness, she is beautiful, wearing nothing but a white, transparent robe that reveals her perfect body.

She recites the final lines in her French accent.

FRENCH ACTRESS

Spartans, when death comes for me,
I shall not be found.

She blows out the candle. Blackness again. The audience applauds. The lights come up. The actress thanks the public with a joyful smile.

Fabietto is in the audience. He sits open-mouthed: for the beauty of the actress, for the performance, for the warm atmosphere. He claps enthusiastically, peering around for Capuano. But in vain. The French actress, up on stage, searches as well. But she can't find him. More resounding applause. The director, 50 years old, appears on stage. Hand in hand with Juliette, they thank the audience.

57. EXT. QUARTIERI SPAGNOLI NEIGHBORHOOD. GALLERIA TOLEDO. NIGHT

Small groups of spectators linger in the alleyway outside the theater.

The French actress is chatting with Capuano's assistant director.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

I'm sorry, Juliette, Capuano wanted
to come but he couldn't make
tonight, either.

JULIETTE (DISAPPOINTED AND WORRIED)

Have I done something to upset him?

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

No! Not at all! It's just that he's really wrapped up in editing the film.

Fabietto, hiding behind a column like a thief, listens attentively to their conversation. His eyes are glued to Juliette, but this time she doesn't notice him.

A small group of young actors gesture to Juliette. She kisses the assistant director on the cheek and heads off with her friends.

Fabietto watches it all with death in his heart.

Disconsolate, he heads down an alleyway. A Yamaha XT 600 motorcycle brakes daringly right next to him. Fabietto is afraid and steps back. But the driver is none other than Fat Armando. He smiles at him.

ARMANDO

Bello, what are you doing here?

FABIETTO

I went to the theater.

ARMANDO

I haven't seen you at the stadium anymore.

FABIETTO (EMBARRASSED)

I...I've had some difficulties.

ARMANDO

Get on.

FABIETTO

Where?

ARMANDO

What do you mean where? Climb on. Let's get ourselves a beer.

FABIETTO

Really, I...

ARMANDO (RESOLUTE)

Really, you don't have a damn thing to do. Come on, get on!

Fabietto, hesitant, climbs on the back of Armando's motorcycle.

58. EXT./INT. VIA MARINA. PUB. NIGHT

A notorious spot for dock workers, teeming with shady-looking Americans and Neapolitans.

At the bar, Fabietto is still on his first beer, whereas Fat Armando, in Bermudas and flip flops, is already on his seventh gin and tonic. He's not drunk, though.

ARMANDO

What did you say your name was,
Fatso?

FABIETTO

Fabietto Schisa.

Silence. Armando looks around, lights a cigarette. Fabietto keeps stealing glances at him. Observation, it's his specialty. Then, to break the silence, he says.

FABIETTO (CONT'D)

You're a smuggler, right?

ARMANDO

At the moment. But I want to be an
offshore pilot. You?

FABIETTO

Cinema, maybe.

ARMANDO

You want to open a cinema? Good
idea. If you want, I know a guy who
could lend you some money!

Fabietto equivocates. An American girl saddles up to the bar. Armando doesn't waste any time.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)

You're beautiful, you know?

Her boyfriend appears instantly, a big American brute. He places himself between his girl and Armando, gives him a stern look.

Armando doesn't lose his cool in the slightest. He gives the American a weary look. Fabietto is already panicking.

AMERICAN

What do you want?

ARMANDO

What?

AMERICAN
What do you want?

Armando turns to Fabietto.

ARMANDO
Hear that? He said: go fuck your mother.

FABIETTO (TERRIFIED)
No, he didn't say "go fuck your mother!" He asked you what you want.

ARMANDO
No way, Fatso, I heard him fine, he said "go fuck your mother."

Fabietto is about to try to explain again, but he doesn't have time before Armando leaps to his feet and head-butts the American in the mouth. Caught off guard, the guy goes reeling backwards. Armando, without giving even the Holy Father time to think, and despite the fact that he is wearing flip flops, starts kicking the American like crazy.

Everyone is screaming, running away. Fabietto trembles with fear in the middle of the bar.

The American, writhing on the ground and oozing blood, pulls out a knife.

Armando sees the knife and says lucidly.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)
Now that is something I had not anticipated. Let's get outta here, Fatso.

FABIETTO
Right, but with dignity.

Armando turns and looks at Fabietto. He is both amused and impressed by his remark. The American is coming closer. Armando and Fabietto flee without dignity.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE BAR.

The American races out, wielding his knife, but he is just in time to see them, already in the distance, racing off on Armando's Yamaha.

59. EXT. VIA MARINA. NIGHT

The obese Armando, straddling his motorcycle, cigarette between his lips, does a wheelie all the way down Via Marina. Hanging off the back, on the edge of the seat, clinging to Armando's enormous belly, Fabietto is insane with fear. In a feeble, desperate voice, he manages to say.

FABIETTO
I'm falling off.

ARMANDO
Nobody falls when they're with me!

Fabietto uses all his strength to hold on to Armando's voluminous girth. And, after a long time, he is finally happy.

60. EXT. SANTA LUCIA. TOURIST PORT. NIGHT

At the pier, surrounded by identical blue smugglers' motorboats, Armando is seeing to the final preparations before setting out. Fabietto looks worried.

FABIETTO
Where are we going?

ARMANDO
Dancing. Twenty minutes and we're already on Capri.

Fabietto is dubious. Armando stares at him and smiles.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)
I'm gonna make you have fun!

He casts off, the motor stutters, and they head out into the night.

61. EXT. THE SEA. MOTORBOAT. NIGHT

The blue motorboat aims straight for Capri, moving at an insane speed. Armando at the helm and, next to him, Fabietto, all excited.

On their faces is that sort of happiness you only live once. In your youth.

All of a sudden, in the middle of the gulf, far from Naples and Capri, Armando lowers the throttle and turns off the engine. The boat stops.

Silence suddenly. Only the sound of the sea lapping against the boat and the creaking of the wooden deck.

ARMANDO

Now I'm gonna show you something
real nice.

Armando takes a big plastic bag out of a storage compartment, opens it. Safety flares. He shoots them off, painting three trails of light across the night sky.

Fabietto and Armando, in raptures, watch the spectacle. It doesn't last long though, and they've used up the only three flares.

Then Armando takes out a small plastic bag from his pocket, pours some coke on the motor footplate, cuts some lines, takes out a 50,000 lire note, rolls it, snorts, then hands the bill to Fabietto.

It's obvious that this is Fabietto's first time. He gathers his courage and snorts a line too.

Then they relax on the bottom of the boat, sitting in the silence, in the dark, in the middle of the sea, in the light of the moon.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)

You know how an offshore hull
sounds when it's going at 200 an
hour?

FABIETTO

No, how?

Armando, as if in a trance, makes the sound of the boat hitting the water.

ARMANDO

Tuf...tuf...tuf tuf...tuf...

Fabietto looks at him and laughs. Armando keeps going though, eyes closed.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)

Tuf...tuf...tuf...

Fabietto stares at Armando.

FABIETTO

You're nuts!

ARMANDO (SNICKERS)

No, I'm not nuts. I'm young. Aren't you?

FABIETTO (SAD)

No, no I'm not.

Armando opens his eyes. He gives Fabietto a serious look, taking in all the pain on his face.

62. EXT. CAPRI. PIAZZETTA. NIGHT

Everything's closed. Not a soul stirring. The chairs at the bars are all stacked up. Armando and Fabietto are the only people there. They're sprawling in two wicker chairs they've claimed.

ARMANDO

We made a mistake! We shouldda gone to Ischia! It's a morgue, Capri. I thought some places would still be open at 4.

FABIETTO

Just as well. I don't know how to dance.

So they sit there like that, disconsolate, tired, in the absolute silence of the heart of the night.

Then, in the distance, they hear a clicking sound. Footsteps and high heels. Someone appears in the distance. Fabietto and Armando turn and look. Two people are making their way toward them. From the far end of the piazzetta, as exotic as a Middle Eastern fairy tale, come a dumpy old sheikh, 5 feet tall, accompanied by a female who incarnates all the vulgarity of beauty, or - if you prefer - all the beauty of vulgarity. Slim, sheathed in a sparkling minidress covered in sequins, which seems to be slipping off her. Fabietto, entranced, murmurs.

FABIETTO (CONT'D)

Khashoggi!

ARMANDO

Who the hell is that?

FABIETTO

The world's richest man. And she is...what's her name?

Khashoggi and the girl are walking right toward Fabietto and Armando, who don't take their eyes off this odd couple for a second.

Armando concentrates solemnly on the girl's ring: a diamond the size of a candied almond. Fabietto, his jaw dropping, moronic, can't take his eyes off the girl. She feels his eyes on her, and when they walk by, she says indignantly, in a thick Venetian accent.

SHEIKH'S GIRLFRIEND

What are you looking at?

Fabietto, humiliated, immediately lowers his gaze. Armando rushes to his friend's defense. He says to her, in even thicker Neapolitan.

ARMANDO

Go fuck yourself, you dog!

She doesn't understand a word. She stares at Armando as if he were speaking a foreign language, but she senses that, whatever it was, it wasn't kind. With the arrogance of the nouveau riche, they ignore Armando and Fabietto and disappear down a side street.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)

Come on, let's go for a swim.

63. EXT. CAPRI. BLUE GROTTO. DAWN

It's all for them, the magnificent Blue Grotto at dawn. One of the most beautiful places in the world.

Fabietto and Armando swim in the turquoise glow, as calm and clear as an Alpine lake. They are happy.

ARMANDO

After a night like this, you know what we've become, Fatso?

FABIETTO

No, what?

ARMANDO

Friends.

Fabietto smiles at him. Armando smiles back, revealing an unimagined goodness.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)

So we're gonna go do something.
I'll introduce you to mamma, papà I
can't, cause he's in jail, and then
you can introduce me to your
parents someday.

FABIETTO

We can only do the first part.

ARMANDO

Why?

FABIETTO

Because I'm an orphan.

It's the first time he says it, and a lump rises in his
throat. Armando, beneath his 400 pounds, has the sensitivity
to understand. He doesn't say anything, just gives him a
serious look. And then, after a while, he says.

ARMANDO

Let's head back, I'll let you drive
the boat.

Fabietto, to avoid showing how moved he is, sinks below the
surface of the water.

64. EXT. MOTORBOAT. EARLY MORNING

A spectacular summer morning. The blue motorboat plows
through the waves at frightening speed, heading for Naples
there in the distance, majestic and slumbering.

Fabietto, happy, is steering. Armando stands at his side, the
wind ravaging his hair.

They cross a motorboat going in the opposite direction. It is
coming closer. Armando's jaw drops in surprise. He's all
excited, can't take his eyes off it: an Offshore hull,
aerodynamic, white with its sponsor painted on the side,
speeding like a rocket, piloted by three men with helmets and
goggles.

They look at each other the way you do at sea: for as long as
you can.

65. EXT. THE PALLONETTO OF SANTA LUCIA. DAY

Fabietto stands in front of a tumbledown building, a bag
slung over his shoulder. Armando appears on a narrow little
balcony above.

ARMANDO

Hey Fatso, come up a minute so I can introduce you to mammà.

66. INT. ARMANDO'S HOUSE. DAY

Armando, in his mother's bedroom, is packing some clothes in a bag.

It's a small house, modest but well-kept. The only other room is the kitchen. Fabietto stands here, facing Armando's mother, who is sitting in an armchair. A TV set in the corner.

She's about 50 but looks 10 years older. Cigarette in her mouth. All she does is stare at Fabietto. He's embarrassed, feeling himself scrutinized like this. After a while, Armando's mother says to her son.

ARMANDO'S MOTHER

Armà, Feola was looking for you, for that thing.

ARMANDO

Yeah, I know, I talked to him, we'll do it when I get back. There's still time.

ARMANDO'S MOTHER (TO FABIETTO)

Ok, exam's over. You look like a good kid.

FABIETTO

Thank you, Signora.

ARMANDO'S MOTHER

Where are you going?

FABIETTO

Stromboli.

ARMANDO'S MOTHER

Where's that?

FABIETTO

Sicily. It's an island.

Fabietto, uncomfortable, glances at Armando, who is finishing packing. His mother continues to stare at Fabietto, then says definitively.

ARMANDO'S MOTHER

Armando's a good kid too.

Fabietto nods.

67. EXT. FERRY FOR STROMBOLI. DAWN

The bridge. Armando, in a sleeping bag, sleeps flat on his back, like a beached whale. Fabietto in a sleeping bag next to him.

A little ways away, at a coffee table, Marchino, his girlfriend Gigliola, Maurizio, and five other friends, guys and girls, are merrily playing backgammon.

Fabietto wakes up, slips out of his sleeping bag, looks around sleepily, and then, there she is, in the distance: Stromboli, unforgettable, backlit by the dawn.

Fabietto, excited, goes over to the railing right as the volcano sends up a spectacular spray of lava.

Fabietto's jaw drops. He is ecstatic. He turns and can't believe his eyes when a second spectacle materializes right before him: Juliette, the beautiful actress from that theater in Galleria Toledo, stands next to him. Fabietto can't resist. He says.

FABIETTO

Hey, I saw you at the theater, you were terrific, and also really beautiful...

Juliette turns to him, her eyes brimming with tears. She interrupts him and says in her marvelous, theatrical French accent.

JULIETTE

The dawn just kills me. It really kills me. How about you?

Fabietto, caught off guard, stammers.

FABIETTO

Me...me...let's say it gives me *saudade*.

JULIETTE

What's that?

FABIETTO

That typical nostalgia South American soccer players feel when they come play in the Italian leagues.

JULIETTE (DISAPPOINTED)

Ah, I see.

She goes back to watching the volcano, ignoring Fabietto.

Fabietto, on the other hand, is in a daze. He steals glances at her.

From the backgammon board, Gigliola realizes what's going on and gestures to Marchino to look at his brother. They smile mockingly as they eye Fabietto who, awkward and shy, stands there like a dummy, gaping at Juliette.

Armando wakes up, rubs his eyes. He notices Fabietto standing next to Juliette.

Fabietto makes a heroic effort to win Juliette's attention again.

FABIETTO

Anyway, as I was saying, I've seen you...

JULIETTE (INTERRUPTS HAUGHTILY)

Everybody's already seen me.

FABIETTO

Let's not exaggerate now. People have other things to do too...

JULIETTE (ANNOYED, INTERRUPTS)

Might it be possible to enjoy the dawn in silence?

Fabietto is dismayed.

FABIETTO

Sorry.

She doesn't pay him any further attention.

68. EXT. PATH UP THE VOLCANO. DAY

Fabietto and Armando make their way up the volcano under a punishing sun. The path is as steep as a diamond-level ski slope.

Armando is done in by the effort and the heat.

ARMANDO

Where the fuck are you taking me?
Your mother's cunt, Fabiè.

Fabietto turns around. Armando is overcome with guilt.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)
Sorry, I didn't mean to...

FABIETTO (INTERRUPTS)
It's okay.

He laughs.

ARMANDO
I'm not gonna make it, Fabiè. I'm about to burst! I'm heading back down, see you tonight.

FABIETTO
Okay.

Armando turns back. Fabietto continues to climb the volcano.

69. EXT. VOLCANO CRATER. SUNSET

Fabietto has reached the top of the volcano, which offers one of the most beautiful lunar views on the entire planet.

Fabietto looks around, his eyes glistening. Then he pulls on his headphones, but we don't hear what he's listening to.

70. EXT. FORGIA VECCHIA BEACH. DAY

Fabietto and Armando, sitting on the black stones under the noonday sun, stare greedily, surprisedly, at a point further down the beach, more remote, with lots of rocks.

They're surprised because Marchino, Gigliola, and their other friends - both sexes - are going naked. Happy and carefree, they swim, dry off, and joke around, indifferent to everything except the happiness of their wonderful bodies and their youth, which looks as if it will never end.

Armando gazes at the girls, his eyes filled with desire. But then says defeatedly.

ARMANDO
I feel like crying!

FABIETTO
Me too.

But they don't. They don't laugh, either. They just sit there, ready to gaze at that spectacle of nudity till the end of their days.

71. EXT. STROMBOLI WATERFRONT/BAR. NIGHT

A little, open-air bar along the island's dark waterfront. Fabietto and Armando, sitting with two beers and very few other customers, are half-watching a soccer match on the TV hanging in a corner.

Fabietto is bored. He gets up, goes to look at the water in the dark. Down on the beach, all alone, is a girl. She has brought two candles with her and is reading a book.

CUT

Fabietto hesitates, then decides to join her. It's Juliette. She looks up at him.

JULIETTE (AMUSED)
Have you been looking for me,
saudade?

This time Fabietto is prepared.

FABIETTO
I've been looking for you for three
days. If I didn't find you, I would
have killed myself. You are - to me
- what the dawn is to you. You kill
me.

Juliette laughs.

JULIETTE
You practiced that.

FABIETTO
No, I merely sketched it out on the
climb up the volcano.

She's beautiful in her simple summer dress. And she does something that really is going to kill Fabietto. She takes his hand and, as if it were nothing, leads him down to the beach.

Armando, still at the bar, turns and sees Fabietto and Juliette step onto the beach. Armando's face is tinged with a strange sadness.

72. EXT. BEACH. NIGHT

Fabietto and Juliette walk along the beach.

JULIETTE
What's your name?

FABIETTO

Fabietto. But my friend Armando calls me Fatso. Even though he's the fatso.

JULIETTE

Shall we go for a swim?

FABIETTO

Are you nuts? It drops off really steep after a few meters.

JULIETTE

So? Don't you know how to swim?

FABIETTO

Sure, I know how to swim, but in the dark, with fifty meters of water below me, that scares me. And besides, I saw some jellyfish this morning!

JULIETTE (AMUSED)

I guess I should let you go again.

As she says this, she slips off her dress. In just her underpants now, she runs to the water.

JULIETTE (CONT'D)

I hate scaredy-cats.

FABIETTO

So do I.

Fabietto, beside himself with joy, sits on the water's edge and gazes at Juliette as she swims.

Fabietto trembles with excitement.

After a while, Juliette emerges from the water and goes and curls up next to him, like a little girl. They don't kiss or anything, they just stay like that, sitting close. She notices that he is trembling.

JULIETTE

Are you cold?

FABIETTO

Yes, because I'm excited.

She smiles. In a feeble voice, he ventures a question.

FABIETTO (CONT'D)

Do you want to go out with me?

JULIETTE (LAUGHS)

No one's used that expression with me since I was in junior high.

FABIETTO

I'm an old-fashioned type. And...anyway...you know, by chance...what do you say?

JULIETTE

No, I don't want to go out with you.

Fabietto is crushed. He lifts his eyes to the sky, at the unbelievable canopy of stars. He recites.

FABIETTO

E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle. (And so we emerged to see - once more - the stars. Dante, Inferno)

JULIETTE

What's that?

FABIETTO

Jesus! It's Dante!

Juliette kisses him suddenly, a kiss of infinite sweetness. Fabietto doesn't know how to kiss, because this is his first time, but he does his best.

73. INT. GUESTHOUSE. NIGHT

Fabietto quietly enters their simple twin room at the guesthouse. He turns on the bedside lamp. And notices that Armando's bed is empty. Then he spots a note on the nightstand, written in a shaky, uncertain hand:

"HAVE FUN, FABIETTO. I HAVE TO GET BACK TO NAPLES. STROMBOLI'S NOT THE PLACE FOR ME. IT MAKES ME A LITTLE MELANCHOLY."

Fabietto is sad again.

74. EXT. STROMBOLI PIER. NIGHT

The ferry is about to depart.

Those who are staying behind dive from the pier, shouting goodbye. Such is the tradition here.

75. EXT. FERRY. NIGHT

Armando, his face veiled in sadness, sits at the stern. Smoking and drinking a beer. Behind him, in the distance, the volcano erupts. Everyone lets out an amazed "oooh". Everyone except him. He doesn't even look. He turns his back to the island.

76. EXT. FORGIA VECCHIA BEACH. DAY

Fabietto and Juliette have joined the nudists on the rocks.

Nearby are Marchino, Gigliola, and their friends, happy and full of life.

FABIETTO

What time are you leaving?

JULIETTE

Two. I'm taking the hydrofoil. When are you coming back?

FABIETTO

As soon as possible. As soon as I find a space on the ferry. That way we can see each other in Naples.

JULIETTE (CHANGING THE SUBJECT)

Armando's your best friend?

FABIETTO

Yeah. To tell you the truth, he's also my only friend.

JULIETTE

Are you always so honest?

FABIETTO

For now, yes. What about you? Are you honest?

JULIETTE

I hope to be, in the future.

FABIETTO

What are you going to do when you get back to Naples?

JULIETTE

I'll pick up with the theater for a while, but then I'm starring in Capuano's new film.

FABIETTO

Fantastic. They say he's really good, Capuano.

JULIETTE

Yeah, he's a genius. And you, what do you want to do when you grow up?

FABIETTO (UNCONVINCED)

I might go into banking, like my father.

JULIETTE

But it's not what you want to do.

FABIETTO

No. I'd like to be a film director.

JULIETTE

So you have to go to Rome.

FABIETTO

But you're in Naples!

Juliette doesn't reply. He steals a glance at her. She blushes.

JULIETTE

Come on, let's take one last swim.

They get up and, naked, walk toward the water. Fabietto is embarrassed, but Juliette is easy. They swim out toward the horizon, but then stop. Just in front of them is a platoon of jellyfish, beautiful and menacing. Fabietto, afraid, decides to swim back to shore. Juliette, on the other hand, stares at the jellyfish, then fearlessly dives down ten feet. That's how she avoids them. Carefree, she keeps swimming out to the open sea.

77. INT. NAPLES. ARMANDO'S HOUSE. DAY

A tiny, decrepit bathroom. Armando, cigarette between his lips, sits in the small bathtub -- it's not big enough to do anything but sit. Deep in thought, he stares at the shiny void of mismatched tiles.

His mother, also with a cigarette and a resigned air, perches on the edge of the tub. She washes her son's back with a soapy sponge. She's done now.

ARMANDO'S MOTHER

Rinse off, Armà. Feola's waiting for you.

77A. EXT. STROMBOLI. WATERFRONT. SUNSET

Fabietto, dressed now, with his bag over his shoulder. Marchino, dripping wet, barefoot, in nothing but a bathing suit. They walk side by side, the setting sun hanging on Strombolicchio behind them. Every now and then a three-wheeler Ape zips by, loaded with luggage.

MARCHINO

Why don't you stay another week?
It's only August 9th.

FABIETTO

No, I was lucky to find a space on the ferry. And besides, I'm going to be with Juliette.

He says happily. Marchino is less certain.

MARCHINO

Be careful?

Fabietto turns, a worried look on his face. He stops.

FABIETTO

Of what?

MARCHINO

Of everything.

They exchange a serious, solemn look. Fabietto has something he wants to say.

FABIETTO

Marchì, listen to me. Mamma and papà aren't here anymore. And we aren't rich. We have to think about what we want to do when we grow up.

Marchino is ready with his answer, sincere and resolute.

MARCHINO

No, Fabiè. I don't want to think about that. It's the summer. It's August 9th. I want to think about Gigliola, about getting high, about my friends, pizza, laughter, and sunsets like this one. I want to think about happiness, Fabiè. Don't you?

Fabietto doesn't reply. Marchino insists.

MARCHINO (CONT'D)

Don't you?

Fabietto is touched.

FABIETTO

Honestly, after what happened to
mamma and papà, I don't know if I
can be happy.

They look at each other, these two brothers. They are both
moved. Marchino instinctively hugs his brother and gives him
a big kiss on the forehead. When he pulls away, he says, his
eyes sparkling with joy.

MARCHINO

Have a good trip, Fabiè.

And before Fabietto can even respond, Marchino runs off. He
jogs along the beach and dives into the sea, framed by the
setting sun. Happy. Fabietto, sad, follows him with his eyes.
Then he turns and heads toward the ferry, along with other
passengers leaving the island.

78. INT. NAPLES. MERGELLINA. CAR. NIGHT

Armando climbs in a Golf parked in the piazza. Next to him is
a 60-year-old, bald and anonymous looking.

ARMANDO

Hey, Feola.

Feola shows him a packet wrapped in scotch tape in a bag. He
hands it to Armando.

FEOLA

So Armà, it's real simple. You
board the sailboat, hand Chihuahua
the goods, and he hands you the
money. You count to make sure it's
all there, and you leave.

ARMANDO

And if it's not?

FEOLA

That's not a realistic hypothesis.

Now Feola hands him a gun. Armando is afraid. He stares at
Feola, who grins.

FEOLA (CONT'D)

You don't have to use it. It's just to let 'm see that we're not assholes!

ARMANDO

I don't want to do this, Feola.

Feola doesn't lose his cool. He says.

FEOLA

I talked with those guys with the Offshore motorboats. They want to see you, next week, in Rapallo. They're willing to give you a try.

Armando gives him a serious look. Feola returns it, then snorts some coke. He offers a line and a rolled up bill to Armando, who reflects for a second, then snorts it. He makes up his mind, Armando does. He tucks the gun in his belt, takes the bag, and gets out of the Golf. He heads for the waterfront.

79. EXT./INT. PIER. SAILBOAT. NIGHT

Armando boards a 26-foot sailboat. He looks around. All is quiet. He goes down into the cabin. A 70-year-old with dyed hair and a chihuahua in his arms is waiting for him.

ARMANDO

Are you Chihuahua?

CHIHUAHUA

You must be Armando.

Armando opens the bag and puts the packet wrapped in cellophane on the table. Chihuahua takes out a scale, weighs the packet. Then he hands Armando a briefcase with the money. Armando starts to count when Chihuahua says drying.

CHIHUAHUA (CONT'D)

Problem.

Armando turns. Behind him, inside and outside the cabin, are about twenty police officers. Chihuahua is one of them. In fact, he's the one handcuffing him.

Summer's over.

FADE.

80. INT. CINEMA. EVENING

Projected on the screen is an absolute, magnificent image: a man hangs upside down, thirty feet from the ground, a rope around his feet. He sways in the deserted Galleria Umberto I, in a nightmarish silence and a blinding light.

Fabietto, along with a few other spectators, is watching in amazement Capuano's film.

It's the scene he saw being shot.

81. EXT. PALLONETTO. ARMANDO'S HOUSE. DAY

Fabietto stands under Armando's balcony. He shouts up to him.

FABIETTO
Armando. Armando.

Armando's mother leans out. She doesn't say a word. They just look at each other. Her eyes glisten. Fabietto frowns, he realizes that something has happened.

82. INT. FABIETTO'S HOME. NIGHT

Fabietto is home alone. Devoured by sadness. He calls Juliette, but one of those odious answering machines picks up.

So he turns on the TV and flops on the couch. He uses the broom stick to change the channel.

Incessant pounding from above. The Baroness wants to see him.

Fabietto puts on his headphones to block out the baroness's banging.

We don't hear what he's listening to, though.

83. INT. PRISON. VISITING ROOM. DAY

Armando and Fabietto sit facing each other amid the hellish chaos of the prison visiting room, where fifty other people are doing the same thing: talking.

Armando is wasting away. Oh, he's still fat, for heaven's sake, but he's really been put to the test. The two friends look at each other, not knowing what to say at first. It's Armando who finally breaks the ice.

ARMANDO
She's pretty, your girlfriend.
What's her name?

FABIETTO
Juliette. But she's not my
girlfriend.

Fabietto is sad. Armando scrutinizes him.

ARMANDO
Once summer's over, they don't give
a shit about you.

FABIETTO
I've been calling her for three
weeks, but she never answers.

ARMANDO
Women are like that. They make us
want them.

Fabietto can't help but laugh.

FABIETTO
What do you know about that?

Armando turns gloomy.

ARMANDO
You're right. What do I know?

FABIETTO
How are you doing here?

ARMANDO
I can't complain. I even get to see
my father in our hour outside.
Luckily, I had a few days of
vacation with you before I ended up
in here.

FABIETTO
How many years did they give you?

ARMANDO
I'm still awaiting trial. Maybe
fifteen, maybe ten. But let's not
talk about sad stuff.

FABIETTO
We can't talk about anything, then.

ARMANDO
What? Are you mad?

Fabietto shrugs.

FABIETTO
The incredible thing is, you're the one in jail, but I'm the unhappy one.

ARMANDO
You're not unhappy. You're mad. Orphans are always mad.

Fabietto looks up suddenly, eyeing Armando.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)
Sure, okay, I know, I have my mamma and papà, but let me tell you, I'm an orphan too, in one way or another! Anyway, you're alone, Fabiè. That's your problem.

Fabietto nods, fighting back tears.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)
But you're free. Free!
Don't you ever forget it.

Fabietto nods.

FABIETTO
What can I do for you?

ARMANDO
Go see mammà every now and then. She took a liking to you. And if you can, come see me again, too.

Fabietto nods. He gets up, makes to go. Armando has something else to say, though, which he does with a tenderness we haven't seen before.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)
Anyway, I know you won't do either one, but I love you just the same.

84. INT. GALLERIA TOLEDO. NIGHT

Juliette is on stage. She's delivering one of those monologues that actors are always over the moon for.

She despairs, she spits, she plays the crazy, the epileptic, she throws herself on the floor, she soils herself, rails, screams, cries.

The hall is packed, everyone hanging on her every word.

Fabietto is there, one of the devoted spectators.

Juliette's been going on for a good while with this virtuoso performance when a voice cries out from the audience.

VOICE IN THE AUDIENCE
Juliette, cut!

The audience is amazed. Juliette stops. Then shouts furiously.

JULIETTE
Who said that?

VOICE IN THE AUDIENCE
Me. Capuano.

Antonio Capuano gets to his feet. He's 55, a lean, nervous physique, a tight-fitting T-shirt and jeans, glasses with thick lenses, curly grey hair.

Capuano has no mercy, like all those who love the truth.

CAPUANO
Cut, Juliette, cut. You've entered onto the ornamental now, it's all tinsel, zero nuance. You've become self-referential, you're fraying at the seams. All in all, Juliette, you've busted my balls!

The audience is stunned. Speechless. As is Juliette, who runs behind the curtains, devastated.

Capuano applauds theatrically. And shouts.

CAPUANO (CONT'D)
Brava! You've buggered off! Now's when you deserve a round of applause. It's what everyone here wanted, but they didn't have the courage!

Fabietto is appalled. Capuano ups and leaves.

So Fabietto dashes behind the curtains to go console Juliette, but he gets there too late.

The aged theater director is already there, embracing and consoling Juliette, which all leads to a kiss.

Fabietto, pierced to the heart, watches for a second. Then he runs off.

85. EXT. STREETS. NIGHT

Fabietto, in tears, runs down the street. Without realizing it, he has caught up with Capuano who, a sweater draped over his shoulders, is walking quickly down Via Roma.

Fabietto, excited, falls in with him.

FABIETTO

Capuano, Capuano, I'm Fabietto
Schisa.

CAPUANO

What the fuck do I care who you
are!

FABIETTO

I'm a big fan of yours.

CAPUANO

I got admirers coming out my ass! I
like conflict, kid. Understand? If
there's no conflict, there's no
progress. If there's no conflict,
it's all just sex. And sex isn't
good for anything.

Capuano's walking so fast that Fabietto has to run to keep up with him.

86. EXT. VIA POSILLIPO. NIGHT

They're practically crossing the whole city on foot. Capuano doesn't even break a sweat. Fabietto is exhausted, but he doesn't give up. He keeps up, staring right at him.

CAPUANO

You still here? What are you
looking at?

FABIETTO

Nothing. Looking is the only thing
I know how to do.

CAPUANO

What do you want from me?

FABIETTO (LIKE ONE POSSESSED)

What do I want? Everything.
Everything. That thing you said in
the theater...it really shook me. I
didn't think one could do that, get
up at the theater and start
protesting.

CAPUANO

One doesn't do it, in fact. But I
do. I do whatever the fuck I want.
I am free. Are you free?

FABIETTO

I'd rather answer that some other
time.

That makes Capuano smile. Fabietto grows more confident and
speaks honestly, openly, all in one breath, an outpouring
that's been ready to burst for a long time.

FABIETTO (CONT'D)

Life, now that my family has
disintegrated, the way it is now, I
don't like it anymore.
Capuano, I don't like it anymore!
I want another life, an imaginary
life, like the one I had before.
Reality, I don't like it anymore.
That's why I want to do cinema,
even if I've only seen three films,
four max.

Capuano laughs mockingly. They turn and head toward
Marechiaro.

CAPUANO

Cinema! Cinema! Everybody wants to
do fucking cinema. But you need
balls to do cinema, kid. You got
balls?

FABIETTO

I strongly doubt it.

CAPUANO

Well, if you don't got balls, you
need a lot of pain. You got any
pain, kid?

FABIETTO

Pain, yeah, I just told you my
pain. On that front, I'm doing just
fine.

CAPUANO

What did you tell me? Your pain?
No, that's not pain. That's hope!
But hope only makes for comforting
films. Hope is a trap.

FABIETTO

They left me all alone, Capuano.
That's real pain.

CAPUANO

It's not enough, Schisa.
Everybody's been left all alone! So
you're alone? Well, bust my ass!
You're hardly unique. Listen to me,
kid: forget about your pain and
think about having fun. Then you'll
have done cinema.

86A. EXT. MARECHIARO. BEACH. DAWN

They've arrived at Marechiaro beach. It's cold, but Capuano,
as if he does this all the time, strips down to his underwear
and wades into the water.

CAPUANO

You have to have something to say.
You got anything to say, Schisa?
Because fantasy, creativity,
they're nothing but false myths.
They're not fucking good for
anything!

Fabietto, standing on the beach, stammers.

FABIETTO

I don't know if I have anything to
say. How am I supposed to know?

CAPUANO

Uff! How the fuck do I know!
Me, I've got four things to say.
Only four. You?

FABIETTO

I don't know, I thought I'd go to
Rome, do some cinema, that way I'd
figure out if I'm cut out for it.

CAPUANO

Rome? The great escape? A fucking
stopgap! In the end you always come
back to yourself, Schisa.

(MORE)

CAPUANO (CONT'D)

You come back here. Back to your failure. Because everything's a failure. It's all shit! Understand? No one escapes his failure. And no one ever really escapes this city.

Capuano dives in, takes a couple of strokes. He surfaces again and says.

CAPUANO (CONT'D)

Rome? Jesus! What the fuck are you going to do in Rome? Only assholes go to Rome, have you seen how many things there are to tell in this city?

He gestures broadly, inviting Fabietto to look around.

Fabietto follows Capuano's sweeping gesture. Now, standing here, he embraces the entire city with his eyes.

Dawn is breaking. In this moment, Naples is the most beautiful city in the world.

Capuano, standing waist-deep in the water, looks at him and shouts.

CAPUANO (CONT'D)

Is it really possible that this city doesn't offer you anything to say?

Fabietto is more excited than he has ever been. They look at each other. Capuano's provoking him. One of his specialties.

CAPUANO (CONT'D)

In short, Schisa, you got anything to say? Or are you just a shit like everyone else?

Fabietto crushes his emotion, buries his tongue in the hollow of his cheek. Capuano doesn't give up. He keeps shouting.

CAPUANO (CONT'D)

You got something to recount, or not?

Emotion burns on Fabietto's face. He bursts out.

FABIETTO

Yes! Yes, I do have something to recount.

CAPUANO (SMILES PROVOCATIVELY)
Ah! Finally! Well tell me, then!

Fabietto, his eyes glistening, bursts out again, shouting at the top of his lungs.

FABIETTO
When they died, they didn't let me see them.

Fabietto pants with emotion. His eyes glisten.

Capuano grows serious now. He stares at Fabietto from the water. And reflects. Then he shouts, his voice piercing the stillness of the dawn.

CAPUANO
Don't come apart, Fabio.

Fabietto starts. He is moved. He takes a step back, as if to take his leave - he's afraid. Capuano shouts to him again.

CAPUANO (CONT'D)
Don't come apart, Fabio.

Fabietto is deeply moved.

FABIETTO
Everybody calls me Fabietto.

CAPUANO
Well now it's time they called you Fabio. Don't come apart, Fabio.

Fabietto backs away, his eyes still fixed on Capuano, who keeps shouting, as if giving an order.

CAPUANO (CONT'D)
Don't come apart!

Fabietto keeps backing away, overcome with emotion. Capuano yells to him like one possessed.

CAPUANO (CONT'D)
Don't come apart, Schisa.
Don't ever come apart!

Capuano, far away now, shouts one final thing.

CAPUANO (CONT'D)
Listen to me, don't go to Rome.
Come see me. I'm always here. We'll make cinema together, kid.

And with that, Capuano dives and starts swimming freestyle. When he stops and turns to see if Fabietto is still there, he notes regretfully that the kid is gone. Capuano says to himself.

CAPUANO (CONT'D)

Go fuck yourself, Fabietto Schisa.
You didn't understand a fucking
thing!

87. INT. FABIETTO'S HOME. EARLY MORNING

Fabietto goes to enter the bathroom, but the door is closed, as usual. His sister's in there.

He heads for his parents' room. That door is closed too. Moans of pleasure coming from inside. Marchino and Gigliola are in there.

So Fabietto goes back to his room. He sees the unmade beds, his and his brother's, the photos of Maradona hanging on the walls, a broken clothespin jammed in the shutter pull, to keep it from dropping.

Fabietto goes to the dining room. The TV is on: footage of all the Neapolitans who have spilled out into the streets to celebrate Napoli winning its first championship.

Fabietto listens, devoid of emotion. He switches off the TV. He takes in the dining room and the kitchen with his eyes, one final embrace. He catches sight of the "Once Upon a Time in America" video, forgotten and covered in dust. No one ever saw it, that film.

Now he thinks he can hear Baroness Focale banging with her broom. Fabietto smiles.

Then Fabietto, determined to escape his ghosts, grabs his bag and rushes out of the house for good.

88. EXT. VIA SAN DOMENICO PARK. DAY

In the silence, he makes his way out of the neighborhood. He spots Mariettiello next to his Fiat 127, which he is polishing carefully while smoking in that voluptuous way of his. Their eyes meet. Fabietto stops. Neither one says a word. Mariettiello gives him a melancholy look. Which Fabietto returns. Then he slips away like a thief. He doesn't have the courage to say goodbye. Mariettiello allows himself a voluptuous puff on his cigarette, with all the class of an English nobleman. A melancholy Baroness Focale watches through the window as Fabietto departs.

88A. EXT./INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL. ROOM / COURTYARD. DAY

Patrizia, with her ruined, absent face, sits near the window with bars on it. The TV is on, the same crass celebrations for Napoli's victory. She's not even watching. She's gazing out the window, down into the courtyard.

Fabietto appears in the courtyard, his bag over his shoulder. They look at each other. Fabietto smiles at her. She smiles too, a faint hint of a smile. They hold each other's gaze for a while, then Patrizia beckons to him. Fabietto goes and stands under her window.

She grabs the remote control and switches off the TV. She stares at the buttons on the remote. Turns it over. Stares at the back of it.

Fabietto, standing down in the courtyard, watches her. Patrizia hurls something out the window. It lands on the ground. Fabietto picks it up: the battery from the remote. He smiles, then looks up at the window again. But Patrizia is no longer there.

89. EXT. HISTORIC BUILDING. DAY

Fabietto lurks behind a car with his bag. He stares at the front door of this handsome bourgeois apartment building. The sound of car horns and shouting. Motor scooters zipping past, waving Napoli banners. Happiness reigns for everyone but Fabietto.

The door opens and a beautiful woman, about 45 years old, emerges with her 10-year-old son, who is carrying a Napoli banner. Fabietto follows them with his eyes. Merry and carefree, they make their way down the street, joining other fans. Fabietto, impassive, watches them until they turn a corner and disappear from sight. Then Fabietto does something he has never done before. He puts a cigarette in his mouth and lights it. Awkwardly feigning the nonchalance of adults.

Now - not before - now he's big. Fabietto has grown up.

90. INT. FABIETTO'S HOME. DAY

The bathroom door suddenly swings open. Fabietto's sister Daniela comes out for the first time. 30 years old, blonde. She looks at the camera, her eyes brimming with tears. Perhaps she realizes that Fabietto is gone.

91. INT./EXT. TRAIN. DAY

Fabietto sits in a train compartment, near the window.

The train slowly comes to a halt in the middle of nowhere, in the countryside between Naples and Rome.

The train conductor appears in the hallway and announces.

TRAIN CONDUCTOR

We've had a breakdown. We'll arrive
in Rome an hour behind schedule.

Fabietto doesn't bat an eye. An air of sadness about him.

Then he hears a whistle, as if someone is calling him from outside. It's the same whistle his parents used to use to convey their love.

Fabietto turns and looks out the window: there, in the middle of the countryside, standing still and staring at Fabietto as he whistles, is the Little Monk. His pointed hood hides his face.

Fabietto looks at him and smiles.

The train slowly starts to pull away.

The Little Monk removes his hood, revealing his face. He looks like a young Maradona. He waves at Fabietto with his tiny hand.

Fabietto smiles back at him.

Then he looks straight ahead and puts on his headphones. Only now, for the first time, do we hear what he is listening to on his Walkman.

A song called "Bullet proof," by *This Is The kit*.

BLACK. Closing credits.