

# THE DESTRUCTION OF SOCCER IN THE CITY OF K.

(A Play in Two Periods)

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## CHARACTERS:

Fullback

Opponent

Libero

The Home Team Players:

First

Second

Third

Fourth

Goalie

Official

Coach

Referee

Peasant

Soul

Mrs. Fullback

Opponent's Mom

Ladies from the Public and the Bar:

First

Second

Third

Fourth

Announcer

Author's Note:

*The stage is a cinder soccer field in a small city, there is a suggestion of the audience seating, space in front of goals, locker rooms, but also the adjacent areas next to the field, perhaps even pictures of areas with scenery.*

## FIRST PERIOD

### 1. Exhibition

*(Interior of a small locker room behind the soccer field. The soccer ball is being inflated, the air pumped into the ball turns into the sighs of the Soul, which is hovering somewhere above the area where the game is going on.)*

Official: Give it some more...

Fullback: Enough?

Coach: Some more!

Official: Don't be afraid, give it some more!

Fullback: I would, only if it can take it... *(Faster rhythm of pumping, corresponding sighs of the Soul.)*

Coach: Stop! Enough. *(Pumping ceases, the Soul's sighing as well.)*

Official: We didn't overdo it, did we? *(He bounces the ball on the floor.)*

Fullback: No. It has to be just like this. In the beginning it is almost bursting, and the Opponent is not prepared for that. We'll see what happens later. The ball is the essence.

Official: As long as it can take it.

Coach: The covering is sturdy.

Fullback: It all depends on the Soul... *(The Soul reacts.)*

Coach: Let's go! *(Small city soccer stadium pre-game noise: brass band, audience howling, applause.)*

Announcer: All the soccer fans from our city and the vicinity, welcome

to our championship game. The outcome will decide which team will advance to the next level...

Referee: May the best win!

Everyone: Here, here! (*Simultaneous activities in several areas: home team, Soul, Coach, Official, audience.*)

First: Let's keep it together.

Second: We've got to make it! We didn't train for five years for nothing!

Third: Two points and we advance! We have to, guys!

Libero: The ball is too hard.

Fullback: We agreed to that. We'll startle the Opponent. We'll give it to them so they won't know what hit them! (*From the loudspeakers we can hear distorted fragments of team players' names, and the response of the audience and public.*)

## 2. First Contacts

Announcer: That was the visiting team, and now appearing in home colors: In front of the goal, bearing number one... (*Incredible howling of the audience.*)

Fullback: In a moment they will announce my name. How many people would love to see themselves in my position now!

But there is only one left Fullback. (*Incredible howling of the audience, Fullback is waving his arms.*)

Opponent: So this is the famous field! We'll show it to you today. My first game playing for the adults has to be classy!

Fullback: You won't get through me.

Opponent: Oh, Grandpa, you look pretty worn out. I'll knock you around all I want.

Fullback: Did they put you on the right wing?

Opponent: And you're playing the left Fullback?

Fullback: For a good number of years, my boy. I'll be responsible for you today. And call me by my first name, man, we're not in an office. I am Dustin.

Opponent: Mike. Ouch! You've got a firm hand.

Fullback: And you're a good sprinter. But careful, this is a dangerous territory.

Opponent: You'll get it today, that's for sure.

Fullback: We'll see about that, kid. We've been putting the team together for a good number of years, and now it's starting to come together. We'll win and advance!

Referee: (*Whistle blowing, in a moment insulting screams from the audience.*) I haven't even fired the starter gun, and you can hear them already. The Referee is going to be blamed for everything straight from the get-go, right? If both teams are Catholic and you make a mistake, they will claim you're a Lutheran. And if the home team is Lutheran and the guests Catholic, they will claim you're a Jew. The players look pumped up as if lives were at stake, and the audience ditto! The home team is determined to advance, but I know what I know... The only boss on the field is the Referee! I am holding the reigns of this game firmly in my hands! My rule, gentlemen: Fair play! Ready? (*Signal for the beginning of the game. The game starts.*)

Opponent: Have you been playing long?

Fullback: Twenty five years. I've been on the field longer than you've been around.

Opponent: I can see that.

Fullback: I'm feeling great today! I'll play a good game.

Opponent: You've got a strange field. It hasn't rained for a month and this place is all puddles.

Fullback: Be glad. When it's dry, it's so hard that sparks fly from your cleats.

Opponent: I'm used to grass.

Fullback: All my life I've been playing on cinder fields, it has its charm. Enjoying the game, that's the most important thing. *The Game*. And then, today we're playing for advancement.  
Opponent: Big deal! Second league! I play the Division for the junior team.

Fullback: You got bumped from the first league, we advanced from the third. You are a county seat, and they took our county seat status away from us.

Opponent: I couldn't care less. I'm on loan for this game, and since I'm already here, I'll score two goals and bye, bye, birdie!

Fullback: Just take it easy, kid. You have to count me in. And the whole crew. We have Soul!

Opponent: And beer guts and bald spots.

Fullback: Yes, but also the experience. You were still peeing into diapers when we were playing games on this cinder with other big-timers. This used to be a famous city!

Opponent: That's all in the past. We'll blow you out like a candle by halftime. Look. *(Play.)* You haven't seen that, have you?

I went through you like knife through butter.

Fullback: And you missed the goal.

Opponent: I'm just getting started. Look, I'm going to bypass you again. *(New play.)* Right, left, between your legs, and there you go!

Fullback: And then there's the goalie, too, my friend!

Coach: Why are you treating him with kid gloves? Can't you see everyone's laughing at you? Take him by his pants!

Fullback: That's just the beginning, Coach. And my knee hurts a bit, too. And then, he's just a junior.

Coach: Mid-fielder, start warming up! Number two is having a problem.

Fullback: It's nothing! I'm good! I'm at it, Coach!

Coach: You've got to! Understand? You've got to!

Opponent: *(Another play.)* So, he let you have it? Then start showing us something. Look, my trick number three. *(Fullback's foul.)* Ouch! That's a foul! Referee, did your whistle freeze?

Referee: *(Whistle.)* What kind of talk is that? You want me to kick you out? One more time and...

Opponent: You could have broken my leg! And my legs are everything to me. They came to look at me from Prague... *(To Fullback.)*

If you're honest, you'll admit the foul.

Fullback: I was going for the ball, Referee.

Referee: It was a slide-in and the kid touched the ground with his hand. Free kick! *(Whistling, Referee runs along. Game on.)*

Opponent: I played with my hand? Swine!

Fullback: *(As a conspirator.)* Curse at him so that he doesn't hear you. You could get the red card. They've been after the morals these days.

Opponent: This is morals, according to you? You tripped me, and you were saying something about a fair play.

Fullback: Yes, but the Referee didn't see anything.

Opponent: Because you bought him.

Fullback: Are you allowed to do that? So young and so pessimistic! Why? *(Whistle.)*

### 3. Puddle

*(Home team offense.)*

Libero: More to the left!

Fullback: Center to inside left!

First: Passage!

Second: Assist to the wing!

Third: Forward pass!

Fullback: Shoot!

Fourth: And bang! (*The audience explodes.*)

Opponent: You can't beat us! (*Play.*) Now watch this! (*Panic.*)

Where are you pushing me?

Fullback: Let me tell you my secret: You're trying to get close to the goal, and I will prevent you from doing that. Hey! (*He knocks him down into the puddle.*) Get up or you'll catch a cold.

Opponent: Screw this whole thing! You knocked me down into that mud on purpose!

Fullback: Don't cry. Play on your half, it's dry there.

Opponent: You dirtbag! First, get yourselves a real field, and then try to crawl higher. Every village has grass, only you...

Fullback: The office approved cinder, so everything is alright, kid.

Opponent: What about that puddle?

Fullback: You know, this side of the field is always wet. We don't have good drainage. The water from the hill hits even in the summer when everything is dry. And besides that, the city sewer runs under ground here. It is over five hundred years old. What do you say? That's some history! We are an incredibly old city.

Opponent: Piss water?

Fullback: Don't be so touchy! It filters through the earth. Wait till halftime; I'll lend you a pair of dry shorts.

Opponent: You can stick them you-know-where! (*Noise.*)

Announcer: Announcement for the owners of the vehicles that are parked behind the stadium: Part of the street has caved in...

Opponent: What has caved in?

Fullback: Part of the street disappeared under the ground. The drivers will have to pass by the stadium under the Calvary.

All of this is underground shafts around here. Every now and then a house, a tree or a part of road sinks in.

Opponent: I've never heard a thing like that! I hope we're safe here!

Fullback: This is firm! Although hollow... We are an ancient city, though they stole our county seat status. (*Play action.*)

Opponent: Why are you pushing me into the water?

Fullback: That's your fate. If you were a mid-fielder, you would play mostly on dry land. But this way you have nowhere to escape.

(*Foul.*)

Opponent: (*Falls into the puddle.*) Screw this; this isn't soccer, it's water polo. (*Kick off.*)

Fullback: Look what you did! You kicked the ball into the peasant's back yard.

Referee: So what's up? Put the ball back into play or else I will end the game.

#### **4. Peasant**

Peasant: If I feel like it, I will; if I don't feel like it, I won't!

Referee: Whaaat?

Peasant: Sparky, go at them! You're not going to stomp all over my lawn for nothing. Here, behind the fence, I am the boss.

And I won't give you the ball!

Official: These peasants! He raises turkeys, ducks, chicken; poultry shits all over our field, and he is going to put on airs.

Peasant: That's a lie! What would my turkeys do on your cinder?

That's the end of the ball. I will stab its Soul.

Fullback: No, no! Not the Soul!

Peasant: Get away from that fence! Sparky, go catch him! (*Barking.*)

Fullback: (*To Opponent.*) You kicked the ball into his yard, go get it.

Opponent: Are you crazy? I kick for the Division and I'm supposed to run around some back yards fetching the ball? That's what the organizers are for.

Fullback: The peasant is an asshole. We lost in court with him twice. He moved in here from some village, he cheats everyone, has money up the ying-yang, and bribes every court. He

delays us like this quite often.

Opponent: (*Unexpectedly.*) Come on with the ball already, stupid peasant, or else we'll talk on different terms. We know very well how you bought this palace and sold your house in the village. We know what kind of a fraud and thief you are!

Peasant: You! (*Timidly.*) Sparky, come here! Here you go, stuff it in your throat! (*Throws him the ball.*)

Fullback: You stuck it to him. I would have done the same thing but I barely made it out of court intact. I killed two of his geese and a turkey. When we're not playing he chases his poultry onto the field. It is all full of shit, goose shit, chicken shit, and I, as the treasurer of the club, have to collect it all before the game. And they blame me when a player falls into goose shit or doesn't want to hit a header with the dirty ball. Not everyone is a soccer player both in body and soul like you and I. Because I will put my head, hand, and foot anywhere and under any circumstances where the soul of the game requires it. You also went through the water and you didn't have to.

Referee: (*Whistle.*) Play! Referee's ball.

Coach: Enough puttering, guys! Let's go get them while they're still warm, and give it full swing! Don't play with them, be hard!

Official: Play as if the soul was at stake, boys, we're at home! And you've got new cleats.

Announcer: Announcement to the citizens: Part of a vacant house, number thirty, Count Bergholz's Palace, has caved in on the Main Square...

Fullback: My God, now even a palace!

Announcer: We are urging you to come in plentiful numbers to help with the cleanup and try to remove the debris. We will meet tomorrow morning at seven at the Main Square...

Opponent: You say famous old city! Ruins...

Fullback: You're not going to badmouth our city! (*A kick.*)

Opponent: Ouch! Have you gone crazy?

Fullback: We were already a city when the site of your county seat was still a stinking wetland and our city folks were going there to hunt woodcocks! And I, as a junior, was playing exhibition games around the villages, spreading the soccer enlightenment in places where your famous county seat is now: we played period up the hill, the second period downhill! Culture...

Opponent: That's no reason for you to kick me.

Fullback: This city was never conquered by the Tartars or Turks. And they still managed to liquidate us. You know who?

Opponent: Time.

Fullback: Not even! One tiny stinking village. They built a factory there and they elevated it to a county seat. And we were finished. Ever since then our houses started falling, young people are running away as fast as they can, and Gypsies live in the noble bourgeois houses. But that's over now. From this game on the new era will begin. Next year we'll advance even further, any time now we'll be in the first league, and the nation will recognize our vitality.

Opponent: As if! (*Play.*) I've got the ball and it's still nothing to nothing. Watch out for me... (*Fullback fouls, Opponent falls into the puddle.*) Jerk! Can't you play clean at least for a moment? You don't like young players or you can't keep up with them!

Fullback: Don't exaggerate, junior.

Opponent: When the ball is on my foot I can see fear in your eyes. You

are scared that I will come up with something that you won't be able to manage. That I will pass by you and you'll get it from your friends and your coach... You are the enemy of the young players!

Fullback: You're full of crap. You do realize that we are not playing for marbles here but the advancement and five hundred bucks.

Opponent: Big deal: five hundred crowns!

Fullback: We haven't had a premium like that the entire twenty years that I've been kicking here. You are being backed by a rich factory, but we are amateurs. A five hundred note will be of great help to me. Whatever I make I give away on child support, I live in a hole, my TV is on an installment plan... Ever since I got a divorce I've been suffering from a financial drought. See that bag? That's my ex.

Opponent: Compared to you she looks pretty respectable.

Fullback: Man, we used to make a couple! At the time when I was still behaving. Then I started to drink, and she stopped trusting me. But when we win and advance, she'll come back to me for sure! She loves the game. I taught her...

## 5. Love

Fullback: I spent the best times of my life with her.

Mrs. Fullback: I tossed some sawdust on the puddle in front of the goal.

Fullback: *(To Opponent.)* You have no idea how she used to help me, man...

Mrs. Fullback: Sometimes I don't believe that one day there will be a beautiful stadium here any more...

Fullback: What kind of a famous city would it be without a stadium? You can't do everything at the same time. First we have to renovate the old houses, and just fixing the old palace will cost a million.

Mrs. Fullback: Wouldn't it be better to simply tear down the old houses and build a new city?

Fullback: Jesus Christ! You would kill the soul of the city!

Mrs. Fullback: What if we started planting grass. Nicely - bit by bit...

Fullback: God! How beautiful your soul is! You are my nature reviver, cultivator of deserts and wastelands. One day a beautiful stadium will stand here. I saw the drawings. Here we'll have the lockers, over there the green lawn, and in this spot there will be an apartment for the manager. Our little nest...

Mrs. Fullback: Here we'll have a hallway, kitchen, children's room...

Fullback: My love...

Mrs. Fullback: Bedroom...

Fullback: Dear...

Mrs. Fullback: Now we're in bed, Dusty, right?

Fullback: Yes, in bed, sweetie. You and I... *(Ball bouncing, inflating, sexual breathing.)*

Opponent: You mean to tell me you went for it right here, on this cinder?

Fullback: You don't know what love is! Is it my fault that fate gave me this kind of surface for lovemaking? - Do you have a girl?

Opponent: What would I do with a girl in a dorm? I room with a friend.

Fullback: Dorm, that had always been my dream: Men and women under one roof! All the places where I had to make love to my wife... Where? In the corn field, on the roof, at the cemetery, even in a crane...

Opponent: No way!

Fullback: Just imagine: fall, rain, strong wind. Where do you take a girl? So I take her into the cab of a crane. We climbed up to a height of twenty meters.

Opponent: Are you completely insane?

Fullback: In the beginning she was afraid we'd start swinging the crane and topple it over.

Opponent: On a *crane*?

Fullback: Why not? You just have to find room among those control levers... So have you already had a girl like this?

Opponent: Once, but when I started doing my thing, she left in ten minutes.

Fullback: You shouldn't hurry, my friend. You have to handle a girl nice and slow, gently. Meet with her every day, add a minute here and a minute there... I guarantee you that in a month she'll let you take out her gall-bladder.

Opponent: Can I borrow your anesthesia?

Fullback: Remember: slow play with a woman is beautiful, memorable, and the best of all. If you manage that, you'll get your reward. Although it's hard on the wallet.

Opponent: Maybe if she saw me play soccer... Her girlfriend said she'd marry me.

Fullback: Don't go crazy, man! If you want a drink of milk, you don't have to buy the whole cow!

Mrs. Fullback: Ouch! I think the time has come.

Fullback: Finally! You know how long I've been waiting for this moment? You'll give birth to my first son!

Opponent: So how many children are you supporting?

Fullback: Three with my wife, three others. The prosecutor absolved me from any further payments. I have to live off something too.

Opponent: Stallion.

Mrs. Fullback: The stadium is not finished, we don't have a real apartment, I'm not going to give birth in a locker room.

And your mother is constantly pickled. I will have to go give birth at my parents' place...

Fullback: Great, go to your mother's. She's a fabulous woman. She will help us get out of this situation. (*Mrs. Fullback is making labor noises.*) Even unborn, I kicked in my mother's stomach. Kicking the ball is the most beautiful thing ever! If they hadn't invented soccer, I would have thought it out myself!

Opponent: I'm leaving these wetlands. The clock is running, and so is the game.

Fullback: Are you cuckoo? Are you uncomfortable here? We've been getting along so well.

Opponent: I'll attack through the middle. (*Play.*)

Fullback: I would advise against that because Libero is there...

He's a vet. One hundred kilos of live weight! (*Opponent attacks, Libero fouls, Opponent is on the ground.*)

Referee: (*Whistle.*) Man, be a bit more considerate!

Libero: I was going for the ball, Referee! It's not my fault he's like a feather. We are not a junior team.

Referee: Enough chit-chat! Or you'll get the card! I decide things here! - And you, boy, get up!

## **6. Opponent's Vision, Fullback's Mouth-to-Mouth**

### **Resuscitation**

(*Raid of the angry home team players, a militant scene.*)

First: County shitheads! They bought the Referee!

Second: And even if they didn't, we'd have a hard time beating them!

Third: They're fast and when they're on offense they know what they're doing!

Fourth: They take hormones, that's why they're so fast!

First: Bullshit! They have a system!

Libero: When we're playing at home, we have to win!

Third: I've had it! I'll let them substitute me.

Fullback: Just wait! If we win, we'll advance. Our city will be famous again. We'll get a new stadium, grass; they will build us brick lockers and hot showers. Imagine how it will be!

Second: But if we lose, we'll go home through the toilet sewer.

Coach: Enough! You have to put everything into the game. Why are you treating them like ballerinas? Huh?

Everybody: Everything!

Coach: Why aren't you taking that center with your head?

Fourth: I have fresh stitches on my head.

Coach: Take this! *(He hands him a helmet.)*

Third: A helmet?!

Coach: Everybody, take one! We have to win by any means! You understand?

By any means! *(He hands out the helmets, then arms them with rifles, becomes their military commander.)*

Swarm, swarm! Three, four! Let's go! *(Team play of the home team.)*

First: Now we're going to show you!

Second: Let's beat them, kids!

Third: Don't be too soft on them!

Fourth: Take them with their socks on!

Libero: We have to destroy them, guys! We're at home! *(The players are running against the opponent team, which is being represented by only one player - Opponent. They start shooting at him. He is standing at the goal pole; he is hit, falls to the ground.)*

Everybody: Hooray!!!

Referee: *(Leaning above Opponent.)* See, you're finished... Didn't

I tell you that there is only one king on the field: the Referee!

If I had whistled, you wouldn't have met Libero. I can

only breathe on you and you'll be standing. You understand?

*(Opponent is slowly getting up. Referee, hysterical:)*

Because I'm holding your entire fate in my hand! Because

I am the judge, and you are only a player who has to obey

me! You can only play as much as I allow you: from here to here!

Everybody: *(Repeated play.)* Hooray! *(Shooting. Opponent falls to the ground, he is lying motionlessly. Opponent's Mom barges onto the stage from the audience.)*

Opponent's Mom: Didn't I tell you? You and your famous soccer!

Opponent: *(Trying to get up.)* Mom, let go. That's my business.

Opponent's Mom: Your business? This is why I never allowed myself to have anything? This is why I pampered you all those years?

Opponent: *(He is trying to get up with his last remnants of strength.)*

I have to deal with this myself! *(He falls back.)*

Official: What are you doing here, lady? Get off the field right now!

Opponent's Mom: He is my son!

Official: He is a player!

Referee: Organizers! What are the civilians doing here? Don't make a mess out of my field here!

Opponent's Mom: What kind of a civilian am I to you, you black devil!

Coach: This is a game, take the woman off! *(They lead her outside. Referee is leaning above the lying Opponent.)*

Libero: He's pretending. I've seen actors like him. Get up, sissy!

Fullback: Enough, kid. You'll get a free kick. Can you hear me, you're getting a chance! *(Shock.)* He's blue! He's not breathing!

Do something with him or he'll croak here! We have to prop his head up and pull out his tongue!

Libero: I didn't know he was such a cry-baby...

Fullback: You're an idiot! I always knew it! You'll kill the boy... *(Conflict.)*

Libero: Me?! I use gloves even to inseminate cows! I've never done anyone any harm!

Fullback: No harm, but who can count the broken ribs... Hold his head! I'll try to massage his heart and the breathing...

*(Massage, then mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, the sound of Soul breathing.)*

Opponent's Mom: *(Barges onto the field again.)* Let go off him! You should be the one so breathe your stinky vapors into him!

Official: Crazy woman! I'll put you in jail!

Coach: Soccer is not for prissy missies! Out! *(They take her out.)*

Fullback: *(To Opponent who is coming back to his senses.)* You scared me, kid! You don't feel like living, or what?! I rescued you from Old Man Death, you owe me a beer.

Opponent: What's the score?

Fullback: If you didn't have the soul of a true soccer player before, now I have breathed it into you! First thing he asks about is the score! Zero to zero! Didn't I tell you not to go through the center? I'm a dirtbag, but Libero is a fouling machine. You'll never get alive through him.

Opponent: I feel like all my bones have been broken. Everything hurts...

Coach: *(Calls back.)* You idiot! Why did you resuscitate him?

Fullback: That's okay, Coach, he's finished anyway. *(He lifts Opponent.)*

Now get up and come over here, it is dryer here.

Now you can run along the line, and don't you start any new tricks!

### **7. Convalescence, Opponent Team's Goal**

Opponent: *(Pushes Fullback away.)* You're a Good Samaritan, right?

You push me into mud and then feel sorry for me. But I can see through you. I came here to play soccer and not survive slaughter! But you and the dirty likes of you will do anything to win. I want to play tomorrow, and in ten years, but with such asses like you, it doesn't make any sense.

Fullback: Calm down! At halftime I'll give you dry shorts, a compress, and we'll agree on fair play!

Opponent: Screw you. My head is spinning from all that bullshit of yours like there's a siren in it.

Fullback: I can hear it too. *(A siren in the distance.)* Hold your head up, kid! You have the Soul of a soccer player - I myself breathed it into you - so go play!

Opponent: You and I have nothing in common. I am in front of our goal, you are in front of yours, and we have nothing in common.

Fullback: And what is between us?

Opponent: An ugly cinder field, mud, dirt!

Fullback: You don't say, and what about the soul? The Soul of the game. She bonds us together. Yes, all of us and everything. Even this field and the mud and the Referee and the audience, this entire melting pot...

Opponent: Don't fantasize!

Fullback: Everything is being held together by the Soul of the game! Round, giant, gorgeous... You can't see her? Can't you

hear? *(Distant sighing of the Soul.)*

Opponent: I can feel something.

Fullback: I believe that you will get to know her soon; I breathed her into you... The two of us cannot be enemies. We probably won't be able to save this game, but we can have a good time together. I'm getting on in my years, you're injured...

When I get the ball, we'll play with it a little bit so that nobody can say anything, and we'll leave the rest up to the others... Get it now? *(Ball comes at him.)* I've got the ball. So take it... You've got it and now it's, like, I'm coming

after you... just pretend...

Opponent: I don't have any strength.

Fullback: Then at least fake some kind of a trick. I'll grab the ball from you and then...

Opponent: (*Revives unexpectedly.*) Not so fast, buddy! Woohoo! (*Play.*)

Fullback: (*Panicking.*) What are you doing? Wait!

Opponent: (*Offense at the goal.*) I'm scoring. Goooooal! (*The audience explodes, the Referee whistles; dying sounds, silence.*)

## **8. Fullback's Monologue, Blaming of the Team**

### **Players**

Fullback: This is the end! I would rather see myself dead than humiliated like this. I should have let him kick the bucket on that cinder and not pull his tongue out of his mouth and give him mouth-to-mouth. When I go back to the locker room at halftime, my teammates and the Coach will kill me! And they will be right: I have failed them! It's a disaster! People will stop coming to the games. What will they care about the game if we're still puttering in the same league again? Only those who can use the opportunity will get higher! And years ago when we were young boys we swore to each other that we'd get in to the league for the city. I'm an idiot! What do I deserve? Death! The spectators are leaving the stands... And my wife left too. After a faux pas like this she won't be waiting for me with the kids by the lower goal. We won't be walking down the street, holding hands like lovers, while our children, happy to see us together again, run around us, and friends tap me on the shoulder: You creamed them! Everything is useless. I collected all that goose shit from the field for no reason. Ever since I was a kid I kicked in the cleats that my father kept buying me to make me a star, all in vain! At night I was secretly pulling out the hose and pouring water all over the left field where I play until it was pretty muddy, all in vain! Yes, on this half of the field I was creating the terrain that I liked, that was good for my age, my nature. Mud! (*Reality.*)

Libero: You really fucked up, you bastard!

First: You got him drunk on bread.

Fullback: He's a sprinter! He passed me!

Libero: You chase whores at night, and you drink like your mother. And then you can't keep up!

Fullback: How dare you?!

Libero: You're the same kind of drunk like your mother and the same kind of a criminal like your father! (*Slap in the face.*)

Fullback: You shouldn't have... (*Fight.*)

Libero: Screw all this, why should I embarrass myself with you like this? I'm leaving!

Fullback: Bravo! Send a normal player out on to the field!

Official: Wait a minute! You break up the team and that's not enough for you? I'll substitute you!

Fullback: Only the Coach can substitute me, not just any old official!

Official: If necessary, I will substitute you and your Coach, my friend! The moment he recovers from the shock you're off the field.

Fullback: We have to survive now, and at halftime we'll come up with a new tactic.

Official: No, I'm going to the announcer to notify him of the change.

Fullback: I have never been yanked from the field in my life, so why should it happen today? We've known each other for a good number of years, I could have left, and you always talked me into staying. I wash the uniforms for free; take care of

the field...

Referee: So what's going on, are you being substituted?

Fullback: No way, I have to settle the score.

Official: You bet you have to. You've got six more minutes to do that. *(Whistle.)*

### 9. Settling the Score

Opponent: Do you dare to score? You screw up your team's advancement and you're trying to pull something here? I know your kind. You want to win at any cost. My stepfather was like that. I ran away from home because they didn't let me play. They didn't see any purpose in it. You are doing the same thing. You are preventing me from playing the best I can.

Fullback: And how are you any better than me? You pretend to be dead and then suddenly up perk up like a rabbit and score a goal...

Opponent: I was hitting the bottom but when I heard all that talk of yours...

Fullback: I saved your life! If it weren't for me they would be driving you through the city to the morgue now.

Opponent: Horrible image. Not the morgue, but that city of yours.

Grass is growing in the gutters, roofs are caving in, walls are cracking, roads are disappearing under the ground; this city is a ruin - just like you. Dirty and muddy...

Fullback: Just go ahead. But people didn't stop coming to soccer games because the game is the only thing that makes sense.

And I will sacrifice everything for it. *(Play.)* Woohoo!

*(Falls into the puddle.)*

Opponent: Nice slide-in! You just roll in your mud there...

Fullback: I will sacrifice anything for the game, only it has to make sense! Don't think I'm fighting only for the score;

I'm fighting for the city so that it doesn't die. Through soccer we will make it famous like in the old times!

Opponent: You're fantasizing again?

Fullback: What do you know about the Soul of soccer?

Opponent: Only that it is full of foul air. And that soul of yours receives only kicks - like in real life. Get up from that puddle; you'll catch a cold from all that thinking.

Fullback: Sheez! Shitty peasant! *(There is a chicken on the field.)*

Referee: *(Trying to chase the chicken away by whistling.)* Time out.

Someone take the chicken away.

Fullback: Hush!

Opponent: *(Trying to call the chicken.)* Here, here... *(Horried cackling response.)*

Referee: Organizers, should I end the game?

Official: No way! Boys, let's swarm! Now! *(Cackling.)*

Peasant: Now you're heroes, with a chicken! Let it live, poor thing! *(Chase.)*

First: It got away from you too. We don't need you, we need a rooster!

Libero: Come on, Fullback, jump it!

Fullback: Stop it!

Third: He can't, he has a cold, he would infect it. The peasant wouldn't allow that.

Peasant: Here, here, here...

Opponent: Maybe the chicken likes the guys in black suits...

Referee: *(Throws himself onto the chicken. In a bout of anger he holds the chicken, suffocates it, and throws it on the ground.)*

Peasant: My God, my chicken!

Referee: Throw out that garbage!

Peasant: My beloved chick - is finished! It's been murdered! Just wait, I'll show you! *(Running, he is chasing the Referee)*

*with a pitchfork.)*

Official: *(Breathing heavily next to the Peasant.)* He is the Referee!

Peasant: I don't give a shit who he is! He killed my chicken, that shithead. Now I will kill him.

Referee: *(Running.)* Organizers, so what's going on?

Fullback: *(Fighting the Peasant.)* Come on, come on. It would be an insult.

Peasant: He killed my young hen! You know how many eggs it would have laid? A truckfull! And what did it do to you?

That's very brave, to kill a chicken! Now fight me, if you're a man! *(Takes the chicken, buries it, and erects a cross on its grave.)*

Fullback: *(To the Peasant.)* You'll give him what he deserves after the game! Then you can... And I will join you. The judge has to be beat up in principle! But not on the field. We'll stalk him outside the city, beat him up like crazy, and swear it was the fans from the county. Deal?

Peasant: Get away from me, Judah! This is what you call a game? You'll end up killing each other off anyway. You! Players...

*(He is leaving.)*

Referee: *(Sound of the whistle.)* Play!

Announcer: Dear sports fans, don't be worried. The fire that broke out in the former trade academy building is not dangerous.

Fullback: Hell! We are losing thanks to me and people are leaving. It can't end like this! And I thought I'd save this city that is falling apart through soccer. Oh, if only a man could influence what kind of a field, what kind of a game he will be born into! I was preparing myself for more beautiful games than the ones that I had to play here on this cinder!

Opponent: No fan wants to see his team belly up.

Fullback: We are not belly up. *(Quick warm-up.)* You don't know us yet! We are capable of more. *(Freezes.)* Something has to happen! Again, it's the expectations. New cleats that they may give to a little boy. Maybe sweat pants with the logo of the club... New stadium? It will come! I hope all those teachers, coaches and caretakers didn't pull wool over my eyes! Theoreticians and practitioners! Methodologists and psychologists! Ideologists and disciplinary committees! "At the end of a fairly played game, there is victory! Achieved goal! Wonderful victory of the system, which the leadership, I mean the team, has adopted!" No miracle is happening! No sign of a savior. That's the end of this. *(Attempting play, then falls into the puddle.)*

Opponent: Don't bury yourself alive. I crushed your body with that goal, but your Soul is still alive.

Fullback: Now even the Soul doesn't exist any more...

Coach: Get up from that puddle, man! I've got news for you.

Can't say it out loud. *(Whispering.)*

Fullback: That's impossible. *(Looking into the audience.)*

Coach: You can bet on it!

Fullback: But then I have to... *(Feverish sprint, action play.)* I've got to do it! Assist! I'm going for it! I've got to turn things around! Dribbling to the right, dribbling to the left, then center... and one more... *(Building response from the audience.)*

Opponent: Stop him! He's not one of us! Only his uniform is so muddy!

Fullback: No, you can't take the ball away from me. Too late, kid!

Opponent: He's gone crazy.

Fullback: No one and nothing can stop me now. *(Kick.)* Goooooal! *(The audience explodes.)*

Referee: End of the first period.

**SECOND PERIOD**

## 1. Exhibition

*(Again, the interior of the locker room at the soccer stadium. During the break between the first and second periods the ball is being inflated, the pumping of air is corresponding with the sighs of the Soul, which is again hovering somewhere in space above the field.)*

Fullback: Finally, we tied the score.

Official: We did, but a tie is not enough!

Coach: We have to change tactics. We were playing with an overinflated ball, now let's make it soft. Softer ball, harder game!

Official: Good idea.

Fullback: Should I let some air out? *(The air is hissing, the Soul is breathing out.)*

Official: Let's pump new air in it. *(To Coach, confidentially.)* What did you tell him that he scored such a grand goal just like that?

Coach: That his father was released from jail and is sitting in the audience. *(The hissing stops.)*

Official: Are you crazy? *(Hissing again.)*

Fullback: The Soul gets a transfusion and the team will win the game! I know, Coach, that it was a trick.

Coach: That's what I say. Just keep pumping, keep on pumping. *(Heavy sound of the pump, tragic sighing of the Soul.)*

Fullback: *(Faster pumping, more passionate response of the Soul.)* The game is a brilliant thing.

Official: Do you remember when years ago you wanted to leave the city to go to school - I didn't write you a letter of recommendation? *(The sound of the pump stops.)* Sorry...

*(Heavy rhythm, painful sighs.)* But if I had signed that, our city would have lost a great player and this fantastic goal. And maybe even the advancement! *(Faster rhythm of pumping.)* Do you understand?

Fullback: Everything for the game! For the fame of our city!

Official: Finish this up; I'll go talk to the Referee. Is that clear?

Coach: Just add more air, pump it.

Fullback: This should be enough! Now it's great. *(He bounces the ball on the floor.)*

Announcer: Both teams are entering the second period with the same line-up, the score is tied, one to one. We hope that our fans will support our team, which, as we all know, is fighting for advancement...

Fullback: Notice the gap, guys. Be careful! We've got to trick them somehow!

Coach: So let's get moving! Stick it to them, guys, from the get-go! No white glove treatment! Go at them straight from the gut!

Official: You don't mean to say you're afraid of those county shitheads! *(Cursing the opponent.)*

Fullback: Those guys who dragged a bull onto the church tower to graze on the grass that was growing there?

First: Those guys who beat up a piece of sausage with whips because they thought it was a giant worm?

Second: They bought the players from the entire county and now they're being macho...

Third: They sent little brats from junior teams against us.

Libero: Bastards! We're going to show them!

Referee: *(Burst of enthusiasm, on the side.)* Finally it's here! The unique opportunity! You lived to see it. All those Sundays and holidays that you were away from home were not wasted. And my wife will finally recognize it. If someone wants to win, he has to pay. The players have to play, but from here - to here, wherever the Referee says! I said it:

A good judge can make or break the game. Boys, show it to them! *(Whistle.)* Play!

## 2. Intimidation

Fullback: Well, the second period is not the first one. We have to win!

Opponent: So war it is? I'm ready.

Fullback: Second period, that's not for juniors but for adults.

Opponent: Or old age for you. You are groggy.

Fullback: Me? No, I'm not.

Opponent: No?

Fullback: No. I'm only relying on myself because the only thing you have in the game is what you haven't lost.

## 3. Ass Goal

Opponent: *(Action play.)* Trick number four.

Fullback: *(Falls to the ground.)* Shit! Goalie, run forward! *(The Opponent is in front of the goal all by himself with the ball.)*

Liberio: No, wait on the line!

First: So what am I supposed to be doing?

Fullback: We're finished... *(The Opponent tricks the Goalie.)*

Opponent: Watch out, gentlemen, now it's coming! Just watch how gently I send this ball into the box! With my ass...

Referee: *(Running.)* Darn, I will have to whistle and acknowledge the goal.

Official: *(Running along the Referee.)* Don't do that! Six!

Referee: I can't deny what the entire stadium saw! *(Drum roll like that which precedes a climactic circus stunt.)*

Opponent: One!

Official: Seven! Think of something!

Opponent: Two!

Referee: The Delegate is sitting upstairs, he can see everything!

Official: He's my family. Eight grand!

Opponent: Three! *(Kick.)* Gooool!

Referee: *(Whistle.)* No goal! Turn around! Show me your number!

Opponent: Why? Have you gone crazy?

Referee: Not a chance. I'm giving you a yellow card! This is a soccer field and not a circus! Making fun of the opponent with your ass and offending the Referee on top of it!

Fullback: *(To the Official.)* How did you do it?

Official: I'll bribe even Death, I only have to have the money.

Referee: *(To the Opponent.)* These guys want to play after a week of hard work and you're making idiots out of them? If I didn't feel sorry for you I'd give you the red card! *(Whistle.)*

Free kick!

Opponent: Idiot!

Fullback: You need to play and not whine.

Opponent: Let me play for real. The audience, they're only people too!

Fullback: *(Hugs him around his shoulders.)* There, there, don't take it so hard. You didn't score a goal, you got a yellow card.

Pull yourself together. Sport is beautiful: nothing, nothing happening for a long time, and then - boom, a goal...

Opponent: Oh, you're such a source of hope. Here, have a kick! *(Fullback kicks the ball into the stands.)* Boom! You kicked it out of play. I'm playing again, what will you do?

Fullback: I'll take it. *(Play.)*

Opponent: No luck.

Fullback: Off you go into the puddle! *(Play.)*

Opponent: No luck this time either. I'll give you a chance. *(Ball, Fullback's kick.)* Smashed out of play. Phooey! It's hard to watch.

Fullback: If I don't play, you won't play either. I can only kick it - into the mud, out of play, into the Peasant's back yard, into

God's windows, or just like that, to hell! I'll demoralize you.

Opponent: You know, tell me, but as if I were your own son: does this satisfy you? Does it make you happy, are you having fun? And you are telling me something about a Soul? You've got a rag there instead!

Fullback: Yes, this is not exactly it. (*Sitting down and taking off his cleats.*) Not that I'm not doing well, but this is not the kind of performance I'm used to seeing in myself.

Opponent: You can't cheat years, old man...

Fullback: Years? It's more like the cleats. They are brand new. When they brought them from the store I tried both of them on, and nothing. And now I could die how tight the right one is.

Opponent: We don't buy cleats in stores, we have them custom made for us.

Fullback: Screw this kind of justice! I've been straddling in the same worn-out pair for thirty years, now I'm dying here in a new pair, and these snotnose brats are getting the cleats special order, custom made!

Opponent: I'm not going to run around in a ninety crown second hand pair!

Fullback: What are you blabbing about? What second-hand pairs? They were four hundred crowns!

Opponent: Take them off. On the inside, see, there is a stamp of the second-hand shop. I know these.

Fullback: (*Looking inside the cleat.*) Damn! And I personally signed that they were four hundred! (*Yelling.*) Swines! You're cheating us out of money!

Official: Why are you yelling?

Fullback: Shouldn't I? You bought fifty pairs of cleats in the secondhand shop and pocketed three hundred crowns on each pair! The net profit? Fifteen grand!

Official: Quiet... I didn't keep it. We have to give something to the Referee and the Delegate...

Coach: What's going on here? Why did you take off your shoes? We have to play full steam!

Fullback: You owe me for half a year's worth of laundering the uniforms, and you gave it to the Referee...

Official: ...so far only five grand.

Fullback: Only? What about the rest?

Official: Every denied goal costs something! And how are we supposed to pay for the exception that we're playing on cinder?

And the new stadium building is also not going to be approved for free...

Fullback: I've been slaving here for twenty years, playing, doing the laundry, being the treasurer...

Official: Stop it or I'll have you substituted!

Fullback: Don't try to pull that one on me!

Coach: Now you're making waves when the opponent is almost flat on his back? Go back to the field and play like a gladiator!

Official: Have you forgotten your oath? You don't love your city?

Fullback: That I don't love my city? (*On the verge of crying.*) I only want to know how come nobody told me anything.

Official: The team knows, we were only keeping it a secret in front of you. You're too talkative. Like your father...

Fullback: I almost thought somebody was getting rich here at my expense.

Official: (*Hugs him.*) You mean these peanuts? The city is poor and we are the last faithful ones. Today or tomorrow I will quit this whole thing. Then you will become the Official - you'll get all the benefits too.

Coach: Let's go!

Official: I always got you out of trouble, whether it was child support, military service, or a pardoned sentence.

Fullback: *(Curses.)* Shit, they're tight! Crappy second-hand cleats!

Coach: That's okay. We'll give you back your old ones.

Referee: What's going on? If he can't play, carry him outside the lines.

Official: He'll be alright in a second. He's got something in his eye. *(They throw him cleats that look like big clown's shoes.)*

Opponent: Sweetie, maybe.

Fullback: Sweetie...! *(Brief walk down memory lane, which is reminiscent of a slapstick performance.)*

Mrs. Fullback: *(Hanging the laundry on the clothesline strung across the goal.)* Don't call me sweetie! You're getting on my nerves with that.

Fullback: But why, sweetie?

Mrs. Fullback: We live in a hole with three tiny tots, twice a month you throw me a couple of crowns...

Fullback: I'm doing the best I can, sweetie.

Mrs. Fullback: Mondays you wash the uniforms, Tuesdays to Fridays you have training...

Fullback: *(Reaching for Mrs. Fullback standing on a chair.)* We all have to go through training.

Mrs. Fullback: And on Saturdays you sleep because you need your strength for the Sunday game. This is what you call life?!

Fullback: *(Hugging her feet.)* I still love you like I've loved you many years ago, and you know it. Come on, just for a second...

Mrs. Fullback: I know you. And you'll make another kid! That's over now. *(She kicks him away.)*

Fullback: But I love you...

Mrs. Fullback: You only love your ball!

Fullback: Do you know this trick with your left foot? *(He gives her a "heel".)* You have to know the ball like you know your own woman...

Mrs. Fullback: Then pack your things and go live with your ball! I will never make you a real man.

Fullback: Come on, sweetie! *(He reaches out to her; she pushes him into the puddle.)*

Opponent: She kicked you out, right? Man, play already. I guess you're still in love with her.

Fullback: Love, my boy, will hit you like a tram hits an elephant. A woman will fall in love with you because you play soccer, and the moment she marries you she forbids you to play. But what am I without my wife, without children?

Opponent: Get ready, I'm playing.

Fullback: You should go easy on me for a second or it will be the end of me. I'm a complete idiot. I probably put the cleats on the wrong feet. Left shoe on the right foot.

Opponent: Game is game, time is running...

Fullback: Wait! *(Fog envelopes part of the field.)*

Referee: *(Dressed all in black like a symbol of death, he is carrying an old-fashioned sink on a stand.)* Time is merciless. I will whistle and end this soon. Game over. Everything will be empty here. The helpers will lower the flags, take the nets off the goals, it will start drizzling, the city will be immersed in fog. You'll be alone in the locker room, everyone has left you, you are definitely alone on this earth. That's the end. You don't have the strength to get up, turn on the lights, pick up the strewn uniforms, shorts, cleats. Go to a pub where someone might pick up your tab. You are embarrassed by life. Even the game doesn't work any more... Here's the sink. Here's the razor. Pull up your sleeves!

Fullback: Not in this uniform. (*Changing clothes, putting on the Captain's stripes.*) I never thought I should reward myself for all those years with the Captain's stripes... Fucking team! I'll put it in my coffin myself...

Referee: The razor! Waking up the morning after the game is horrifying, you're stiff, every joint is aching, you can hear the creaky sounds of a rusty machine that hurts. If everything is the same, at least the outcome should be different. You know who you're doing this for?

Fullback: (*Reaction of the Soul.*) I will keep doing the laundry, ironing, sweeping; but I have to have the fucking feeling that my work is beneficial for the people of this city, and that through my game it will find its old fame!

Referee: The world needs players! Even though this city cannot be saved by the game... (*Instruction.*) Music! (*Funeral procession.*)

Fullback: I don't have to have anything, but don't touch my Soul! (*He is listening.*) But this is not over yet. The game is still on! The game is not over yet! (*Throws away the razor, knocks the sink over, throws himself into the game. The music turns into a swift march.*)

Opponent: (*Dribbles, Fullback falls.*)

Fullback: (*Resigned, on his own.*) It's no use; I'm just having a bad day today. What can an old, worn-out guy do against his fate? I'm out of luck! If I could only have a drink now... (*His head turns upwards.*) Hey, you, the Soul of the game! Come to rescue of your humble servant who is committed only to you! (*Silence, pause.*) Where are you? Soul of the game, come help me...

Opponent: (*Yells.*) Goal! (*Fullback falls.*)

#### 4. Fatherhood

Opponent: (*Singing to himself.*) I love the curly-haired Katie, I just might, I cry for her, day and night... Two to one, old man, what do you say? You won't score two goals in twenty minutes even if you shit in your pants!

Fullback: How do you know that song?

Opponent: My mom loved to sing it to me.

Fullback: Wait a minute... where are you from?

Opponent: Didn't I tell you? I come from the same village as the Peasant. Although now I play for the Junior Division of the county...

Fullback: Some twenty years ago we played an exhibition game there. First the game, then drinking, then dancing, and playing games with the girls... Hot summer night, the stars and the grass, and that song... How old is your mother?

Opponent: Thirty-nine.

Fullback: And you have a father?

Opponent: Of course I do.

Fullback: A stepfather.

Fullback: Darn! Come closer. Stop, I'm telling you! So there. (*He is checking his head.*)

Opponent: Are you crazy? That's obstruction in the game! Referee!

Fullback: I knew it!

Opponent: What?

Fullback: Look! (*Moved.*) Here in my hair, I've got the same spot as you... My son!

Opponent: (*Running away.*) Are you crazy? What am I, a cuckoo child? Your imagination is running wild.

Fullback: Only my son, my own blood can be kicking like this...

Opponent: Let me go! Are you gay? Or are you trying to claim other people's goals? (*He is playing.*) Look, I got beat by my own son... You would like that. I don't need a father. Not any more. You said it yourself that the second period is adulthood.

Fullback: You would deny your own father... You're tearing my soul apart...

Opponent: You see that school on the hill? I used to commute there every day by bus. And in between periods I used to watch this soccer field and longed to see myself in uniform number seven, charging the goal and scoring. Everything in this city used to make me ecstatic, until some good soul told me that my father lived here. I used to walk the streets and look into men's faces. What if this guy is my father? But finding out that he's a whiny kicker who picks up women from three counties and makes children all over the world...

Fullback: You're mine! Because of your sharp tongue...

Opponent: I wanted my mom to go to the authorities and state the name of my real father. You know what the official did? He sent her away.

Fullback: Swine! He's been stealing from me all my life as much as he could. Right here on this field where I tasted victory and defeat, hard times and love.

Opponent: He told her to present evidence, and she sang "I love the curly-haired Katie..." (*Piping sound.*)

Fullback: Don't move! Sometimes they come out of the sewer...

Opponent: Phooey! Rats. Also a city invention! How can you let that vermin crawl all over you.

Fullback: It's nature. They are moving into the basements. You've got one under your cleat. Let them pass through. See, he kissed your foot. You'll have luck.

Opponent: I can't take this. (*Stomping, horrified squealing. Sudden roar of engines.*)

##### **5. Militant Offense**

(*Deafening roar of engines.*)

Fullback: You see him? It's in front of the goal.

Opponent: What is?

Fullback: The tank, are you blind? It ploughed through the railing and took it across the field up to the net. Hey, you, what is this supposed to mean? This is a game! You understand?

Tank on the field. In our field. In my field. (*Shouting.*)

This is not just any old field! Each year we celebrate May Day here. The Victory Day. We have dances here. (*To the Opponent.*) And the Annual Fair with Confirmation...

Here I tasted victory, as well as beautiful moments of love.

Opponent: So what if war broke out, it has been going on the entire period, and we know nothing about it?

Fullback: That's impossible. They would have announced it...

Opponent: He's coming at us... Let's pretend he's not here and let's play.

Fullback: What am I, an idiot? I will be aiming at the goal, the ball will bounce off the belt or the tower, it will go off and it will be my fault! My father has been sitting in jail for a joke like that for a good number of years...

Opponent: You're scared shitless. Maybe there's a real soccer player inside...

Fullback: Yeah, right...

Opponent: So what's going on? Go find a bottle with gasoline!

Fullback: You would screw it up! No, we have to choose a different approach. After all, I am the treasurer of this field. (*Ceremonial irony.*) Your Majesty Iron! (*Iron creaking.*) To the left, if you would please! (*Tank shoots, explosion.*)

Opponent: On the ground! That was a big one! He hit the pole! He sliced off the club pennant.

Fullback: And I thought it was a county tank. Exercises... Game over! This has nothing to do with sports! White flag! Or you

know what? Let's still try to play and see what he does!

Opponent: You won't get me to do that now!

Fullback: Come on, that will do it. The game is international. Everyone loves soccer - a priest, an atheist, a sissy, a general.

Oopsy!

Opponent: *(Flatly.)* Woohoo!

Fullback: There you go! You can bet he'll turn off the engines in a moment. *(The engines go silent.)* Didn't I tell you? *(Ecstatic.)*

The game is beautiful. The game makes all of us one big happy family...

Opponent: But where is everybody else? The players, the audience? Did they leave us here on our own?

Fullback: Everyone has to deal with this apparently by himself. I'll kick it so high it'll disappear in the clouds. *(Kick, in a moment the tank shoots. Explosion.)*

Opponent: He hit the ball!

Fullback: That does it! First he interrupts the game where everything is at stake, then he destroys the pennant and now the ball.

I'll show him!

Opponent: You're no match for a tank.

Fullback: You go exercise, show us your sprinting; I'll crawl to the locker room and put some sugar in his gasoline tank. My father used to do it during the war.

Opponent: He's been sitting in jail since the war?

Fullback: After the war he did the same thing to an official from the county. He used to come here to do the survey for the future stadium. We always treated him to food, drinks, he promised everything, he went to the bathroom, took a dump, flushed and revved his engine back all the way to the county seat. When this went on for a good number of years, my father poured some sugar into his gas tank.

Opponent: *(After Fullback crawls away.)* My God, this is not playing for peanuts any more! I was doing well the entire game and now all of this can be over! *(He is running.)* What if he hits me? *(Sound of an approaching tank.)* That's it, I'm off...

Fullback: *(From deep inside.)* Just wait! It's done. Now he's getting sugar into his veins! Now it's in his cylinders! Now he's making caramel and his engine will die! *(The tank goes silent.)* Get it? You can congratulate me!

Opponent: Bravo! *(They are happy. Suddenly the loudspeakers come on very loud.)*

Announcer: Number two and number seven! Game over! It's no use! Give up! Come off the field.

Opponent: And that's it!

Fullback: Let's run! *(They are running; suddenly the sound of engines comes directly at them.)*

Opponent: See what you've done?

Fullback: We were in the best part of the game and suddenly game over! *(Again the sound of the tank comes on.)* Shit! *(They run in circles.)*

Opponent: That's it for me. What do I have to do with this? I'm still a junior!

Fullback: *(Explodes.)* You motherfucker! Running around the grass in dry shorts! Custom made cleats! You like that! If your mother didn't give you some upbringing, I'll teach you some manners! *(Suddenly the sound of a helicopter comes from above.)* Wait! Hide yourself in the sewer and when they leave, run away! *(The Opponent disappears; Fullback gets entangled in the net behind the goal.)* Fall is coming... First leaves are falling and they got caught in the net... It is a great anti-aircraft hideout... You won't find me here...

*(The roar of engines stops. Fullback is whispering from his hideout.)* Here, you lost a little boy, you won't find him. And so that he wouldn't be afraid, his mommy will take the palm of his hand and start tickling him: A little mousie cooked her oatmeal... she gave a little... *(Laughing. Serious.)* When I say: A rat cooked his oatmeal, it's not the same! *(Bursting with laughter.)*

Official: *(After a long pause.)* Game over, boy. You're not going to jail, I did what I could, but you're finished with soccer in our city. Give me your cleats, the uniform, the inventory. Fullback: What did I do? I play the game, mind my own business, and suddenly they charge onto the field! What right do they have? Onto the field! And into my game! They destroyed the pennant! The ball!

Official: No loss of life.

Fullback: And the facts themselves: the game, play, players, audience?

Official: And the sugar? Like father, like son. You've been keeping it under cover for so many years.

Fullback: *(To his teammates who are stretching.)* If you're friends, you won't play without me.

Libero: The game must never stop under any circumstances. You said it yourself.

Fullback: What a rip-off. I've been washing your uniforms for free for years, drawing lines on the field, managing everything here, and now you're cutting me loose?

Official: It may change in time. I'm sorry; you're in the way now!

*(The players are running, playing with the ball that has been shot, it is deflated.)*

Opponent: *(Noise of a manhole cover.)* There's so much shit there, man!

Fullback: We're an old city. And over there underground, one hundred years worth of shit is our witness!

Opponent: They cut you off? Your own people? From your own city? You've been kicked out and that's why you're in a bad mood. You're as cold as ice.

Fullback: Me? The world is my oyster! Screw your game! I've got my own game! *(Explosion of orgies, music, dancing, champagne popping.)* You know how many chicks I have? As many as the holes in that net in the goal! *(Explosion of boisterous laughter.)* And now one more story, ladies! When the hotel was burning, I threw myself into the flames and pulled out an old lady, her granddaughter, two suitcases and a St. Bernard.

First: And you didn't burn? *(Laughing.)*

Fullback: No! Only my hair and my eyelashes! And I got this scar! Look!

Second: Mmmm... that's a nice reminder.

Fullback: Be careful so that it doesn't bite you!

Third: You're so wild!

Fullback: Is this the mouth that is saying that? And whose hand is this? And who does this little froggy thigh belong to...?

First: And whose is this burnt hair?

Second: And whose is this whole package? *(Laughter, women screaming. Then audience noise explodes, reality.)*

Fullback: It's all worthless shit! Maybe three more children will be born...

Opponent: Don't exaggerate.

Fullback: If I were supposed to live without soccer, I would flood the world with illegitimate children. And then again, if it weren't for women, I would never survive being kicked out... *(Yelling.)* Let me back onto the field, or I will ruin your population statistics! *(Newborn baby crying, laughter.)*

Maybe this is all much simpler. *(He throws the rope across the goal pole and hangs himself. A funeral band walks through the area; we recognize the faces of Fullback's teammates in the dark.)*

Opponent's Mom: Why are you staring? Do something!

Mrs. Fullback: Where did they dig you out?

Opponent: Mom, you are here? *(He is pushing her away from the hanging man.)* This is not your business. He decided for himself.

Opponent's Mom: He was the first man who had me.

Mrs. Fullback: Leave him alone! She comes out of nowhere and starts making waves. Let him hang there! He got what he deserved! He was making kids wherever he went. But to take care of them, that was too much for him! Don't touch him!

Opponent's Mom: I can't just leave a person hanging like this, out of nowhere.

Mrs. Fullback: What do you care? What do you have to do with him?

Opponent's Mom: You'd be surprised!

Mrs. Fullback: Get the hell out, you shitty peasant!

Opponent's Mom: What did you say?

Mrs. Fullback: What's with you?

Opponent's Mom: *(Grabs her hair.)* I guess you will respect only a firm hand! I never had a chance to live with him for even a week! I saw him for half a day when he came to our village to play the game. And then dancing, „I love the curlyhaired Katie...“, a night in the woods! Just a few hours, but I can't forget them.

Mrs. Fullback: So you were one of his chicks? *(Turns into offense.)*

You want him to marry you, right? You want him to pay for your brat! But if he pays you, he'll pay less for my children!

No, my dear! You should have worn a steel chastity belt!

I know him! Just leave him alone, let him turn cold! At least as his widow I'll get a pension!

Opponent's Mom: Screw your money. I never wanted a penny from him. I haven't seen him for twenty years. But I'm not going to let a person die like this in front of so many eyes.

Mrs. Fullback: But why? He died as he lived. Stop it!

Opponent's Mom: Aren't you ashamed?

Mrs. Fullback: I'm only taking what is mine. I was the one to wash his pants and shirts! I was the one who had to listen to him snore, burp and fart for so many years! I was taking care of children while he was chasing the ball and women from all around the field!

Referee: *(Sound of whistle, he barges onto the field.)* So what is this now?

Official: My God!

Libero: It was you who killed him!

Coach: Really, I've never had a better defense...

Referee: He was born - he died. That's the whole game.

Libero: Bastards, what did he do to you? That was just a game, not life.

Official: I'm just an official, whatever they tell me to do, I do. *(Sobbing.)* I wanted to put him in the line-up, I swear.

Referee: Now it's too late. For him, this game is over.

Coach: Maybe we could still manage to do that.

Opponent's Mom: *(Runs in and cuts off the hanging man.)*

Fullback: *(Cheerfully, to the Official.)* I'll take you at your word. I'll play!

Official: He's a fraud!

Mrs. Fullback: I knew it! Not even his own death is sacred to him!

*(Opponent's Mom bursts into laughter, the Referee whistles.)*

Referee: The civilians, out of the field! Organizers, let's play!

Official: So let's go out! (*To Fullback.*) You're in, but under the same old conditions. You'll be doing the laundry, watering the field, drawing the lines... We'll pay you when we have some money.

Coach: The most important thing is that he's alive. But don't let just anything living replace you. Be firm!

Referee: I'm giving it an extra five minutes!

Coach: Charge, boys, now everything's at stake! We still have a chance.

## **6. Fullback's Vision**

Opponent: (*Play.*) Bim – bam – boom! Woohoo!

Fullback: (*Frightened.*) Wait, have you gone crazy? Now it's only me here! (*He is alone in front of the goal.*)

Opponent: That's exactly it! It will be a huge goal and we will take two points. Well, shyster, where do you want it? Perform an act...

Fullback: What can I do alone in such a big goal? He will put it wherever he wants to and then it will be my fault! You won't score, you'll see...

Opponent: What am I, a leper? With a chance like this even a blind man could score!

Fullback: Soul of the game, help me! I can hypnotize you, my boy.

Opponent: Nothing will help you now, this will be a goal. One. – (*Drum roll like in a circus.*)

Fullback: We are staring into each other's eyes, the ball and I, we are penetrating each other: I penetrate the Soul, the Soul penetrates me. It will grow bigger so that it doesn't miss the head, and my head has to draw it in!

Opponent: – and one is two – (*Big ball on the scene.*)

Fullback: The moment his foot touches the ball I have to fly out towards it, and capture it with my magnetic forehead...

Opponent: – three! Woohoo! Now try and catch this, you old fart!

Fullback: I have it in front of me! I have to stick out my head, tense up and close my eyes with delightful expectations.

Opponent: My dear mother! Is he going to catch that one?

Fullback: To feel its touch on my forehead, the light in my closed eyes will shatter into pieces during the impact, and the loving and devout ball will absorb me inside. (*The ball hits Fullback's head, Fullback is embracing it, he penetrates it; inside the giant bubble he is hugging the Soul.*) Where am I?

Soul: Yes. You are hovering in the darkness. It is just you and I. But everyone else is here and we are playing with them. All your women, all your children, officials, coaches, referees, players, the audience, the entire carnival of that misfortunate game.

Fullback: But it's not over yet. And only you can save it. Who else if not you? Only soccer, only the Soul of the game can redeem us. Oh, the Soul of the game, have mercy on us. Be with us and save soccer. And reveal to us, unworthy players, how to win this game that has been entrusted into your hands.

Soul: Yes, its fate is in my hands. But the ball is in the truth and the truth is in the ball. You have to believe in the game more, and do less thinking about whether you will win or lose, because the game is important, and not the result; because only the game is eternal!

## **7. Concussion of the Brain, Opponent's Mouth-to-Mouth Resuscitation**

Libero: Bravo! You saved a clear goal!

First: The ball hit him right in the head!

Second: Get up! Can you hear me? You saved us!  
Third: He's not moving - and breathing either!  
Fourth: It was a really big bang.  
Opponent: Why are you just standing around? We have to do something, guys. Give him mouth-to-mouth...  
Libero: Why me? He stinks like a barrel.  
Opponent: Idiot! Let me get closer to him... *(He gives him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, the motif of the Soul.)*  
Fullback: *(Comes to his senses.)* What's happening to me?  
Opponent: I rescued you from Old Man Death. You owe me a beer...  
Fullback: What's the score?  
Opponent: You are a true sportsman. You're spitting your soul, and you're asking about the score. Two to one, but now that you have a little bit of my steam inside you, you may perform a miracle.  
Fullback: How much time till the end of the game?  
Opponent: About three minutes. Maybe less.  
Fullback: This game is called for technical reasons and will have to be repeated!  
Referee: A flood would have to come in order for that to happen! Or an earthquake! A volcanic eruption!  
Fullback: *(Running away.)* Exactly!  
Referee: Play.  
Opponent: Where are you running? The game is not over. *(Mockingly.)* I'd love to trade uniforms with you...  
Fullback: The old sewer is here in this hill. One only has to unlock the floodgate and all that shit, all that crap is going to float to the surface. All those papers and applications that the officials from the county were wiping their asses with! All those agonizing pleas to save the city! It's now or never...  
*(Destruction of the field, fire engine sirens, crowd noise, people screaming.)*  
Coach: Everyone, save yourselves!  
Peasant: This is great! I can start raising coypu, they will do well here...  
Official: *(With enthusiasm.)* Referee! You know your job.  
Referee: *(Whistle.)* I am terminating the game prematurely due to an unplayable terrain!  
Official: Very well then! The game must be repeated!  
Opponent: So that's how it is! You thought it all out!  
Fullback: You wanted some action! You breathed Soul into me. I did all this just for you. For soccer and the city, and for her.  
Can you hear her?  
Opponent: No. Who?  
Fullback: The Soul of the game. Call me father at least once...  
Opponent: Even if it was really true, never! Get off the field already!  
*(Fullback shakes his head in disbelief, leans to the Official. The Opponent kicks his ass. Sudden explosion. Silence.)*  
**8. Cataclysm, the Game is Eternal**  
*(Opponent and Fullback are facing each other.)*  
Opponent: Have you noticed how it suddenly turned so quiet?  
Fullback: The players stormed off, they turned off the loudspeakers, maybe even the power...  
Opponent: No, this is a different kind of silence. In this city even silence is rabid. *(Destruction of the space.)* Watch out!  
It's here. *(Panic.)*  
Fullback: Oh my Lord!  
Opponent: No! Let's run behind the goal!  
Fullback: Stop! Don't move! *(He is holding the Opponent in his arms.)*  
Opponent: Sheez! Sheer horror!  
Fullback: No sign of the city...

Opponent: Isn't it behind the upper goal?

Fullback: Look at this! No, it's not. The city is gone. Only the field remains. The city has sunk in, or slid down, or moved somewhere.

Opponent: I can see something in the distance... But it's very fuzzy. Everything around looks different somehow...

Fullback: The horizon is different.

Opponent: It's all over... (*Standstill.*)

Fullback: Not all. The field remains. (*Stretching.*)

Opponent: Shall we continue to play?

Fullback: The game is not over. We have to finish it. The game must not stop. We have to finish the game and keep finishing it.

Opponent: I'll try, but it seems to me that everything here is different...

Fullback: Look, something is left here. The Soul...

Opponent: (*Ironically.*) The Soul...

Fullback: Can you hear it? Kick the ball and you will feel it immediately. (*They kick the ball. The Soul is singing, dancing.*)

Opponent: Am I a fool? So I'm playing. Watch out, I'm coming.

Fullback: I'm ready!

Opponent: Here I go, attacking. Dribble to the left!

Fullback: Slide-in on the right!

Opponent: Dribble to the right!

Fullback: Slide-in on the left! (*A synthetic sound, symbolizing the Soul of the game, sounds over the player's words. The stage goes dark.*)

The End