



STRANGERS ON A TRAIN

A FOOTBALL MANAGER STORY

Andy Corrigan
Javiera Argandoña



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CREDITS: Story by Andy Corrigan. Art and lettering by Javiera Argandoña. Flat colours by Mariya Juni.

ABOUT THIS COMIC

Strangers on a Train: A Football Manager Story is a comic about a real-life thing that happened to me many years ago on a train to London.

It's not the first time I've written about this surreal event. I told the story back in 2013, in an article called 'My defining moment as a Football Manager' for entertainment website IGN.com.

So why is it now also a comic?

Well, as I get older, I find my writing interests shift. I feel less inclined to hammer on my keyboard to sell videogame hot-takes and more drawn to telling stories in different formats. The most interesting to me is a format I've loved my entire life: comics.

As I, like many other writers, struggle to work my way through the 'big thing' I actually want to write, I'm always looking for short, fun projects I can use to sharpen my skills and boost my confidence (and, if I'm being really honest, distract myself from the daunting nature of that bigger project).

That's what my first comic, **Solace**, was. That's what a handful of other upcoming projects are. That's what this story is.

In looking to past experience and work for short story ideas, the anecdote told in that IGN article simply stood out as a fun little project to adapt. And fun it was.

Not only were there interesting challenges in telling the same story across different formats, but the experience of comics as a collaborative process between writer and artist is equal parts energising and inspiring.

The result is a comic that not only represents the idealised form of real-life events as they live in my head, but also a whole heap of lessons learned about the creative process.

I hope you enjoy the read.



Andy

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Andy Corrigan

Andy is a professional writer living in Adelaide who's now dabbling in writing comics. You can see his other comics and fiction on his website, plus his hobbyist art scribbles over at flameroasttoast.com.

You can follow Andy on various social media platforms via linktr.ee/flameroasttoast.

Javiera Argandoña

Javiera is a professional comic artist based in Chile. Make sure you check out her original comic series, **White Eden**, at tapas.io/series/WhiteEden.

You can follow Javiera on various social media platforms via linktr.ee/argando_a.

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IN MID-NOVEMBER, 2008, I HAD TO TRAVEL FROM BRADFORD TO LONDON FOR WORK.



WITH LUCK THAT USUALLY ELUDES ME, I BAGGED A TABLE SEAT ALL TO MYSELF.



I WASTED NO TIME MAKING USE OF IT.



AFTER ALL, I HAD TO WIN LIVERPOOL A LEAGUE TITLE.

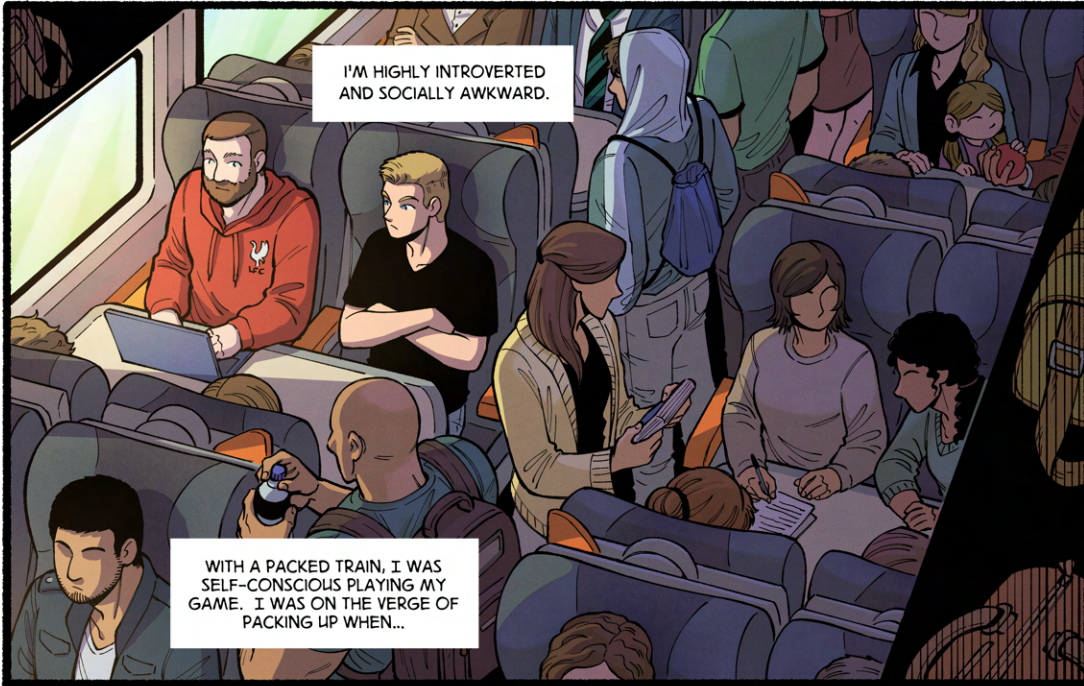




BRADFORD
TO LONDON IS
A LONG TRIP.

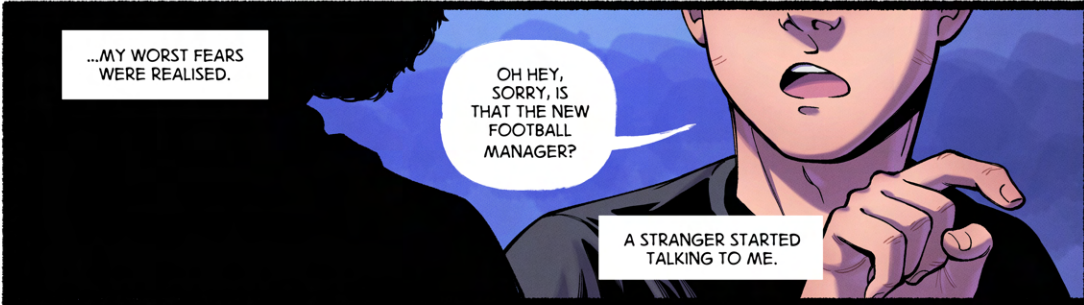


DEEP DOWN, I
KNEW MY LUCK
WOULDN'T HOLD.



I'M HIGHLY INTROVERTED
AND SOCIALLY AWKWARD.

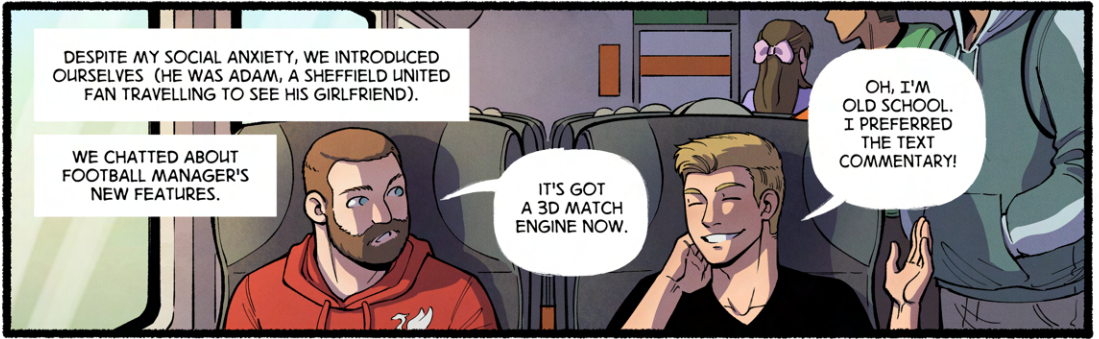
WITH A PACKED TRAIN, I WAS
SELF-CONSCIOUS PLAYING MY
GAME. I WAS ON THE VERGE OF
PACKING UP WHEN...



...MY WORST FEARS
WERE REALISED.

OH HEY,
SORRY, IS
THAT THE NEW
FOOTBALL
MANAGER?

A STRANGER STARTED
TALKING TO ME.

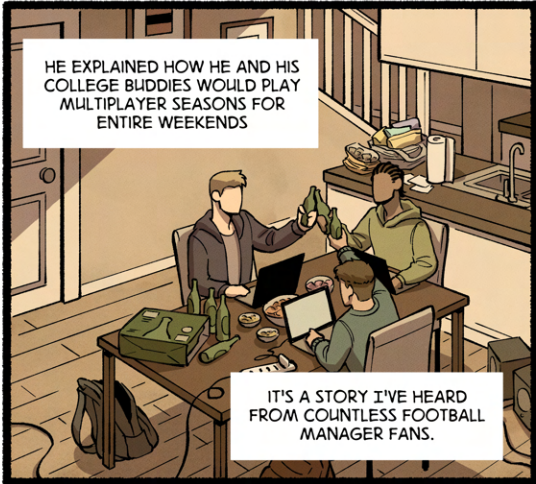


DESPITE MY SOCIAL ANXIETY, WE INTRODUCED OURSELVES (HE WAS ADAM, A SHEFFIELD UNITED FAN TRAVELLING TO SEE HIS GIRLFRIEND).

WE CHATTED ABOUT FOOTBALL MANAGER'S NEW FEATURES.

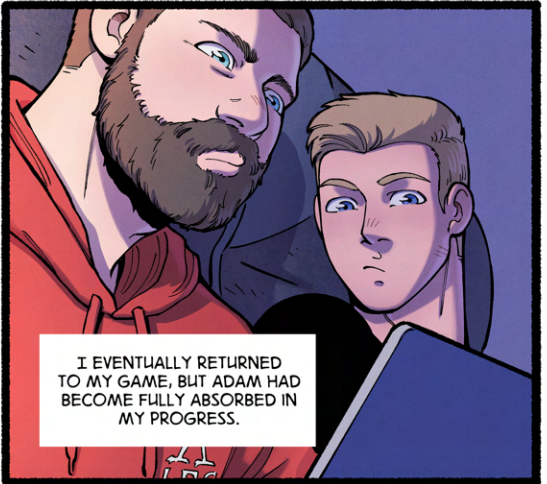
IT'S GOT A 3D MATCH ENGINE NOW.

OH, I'M OLD SCHOOL. I PREFERRED THE TEXT COMMENTARY!

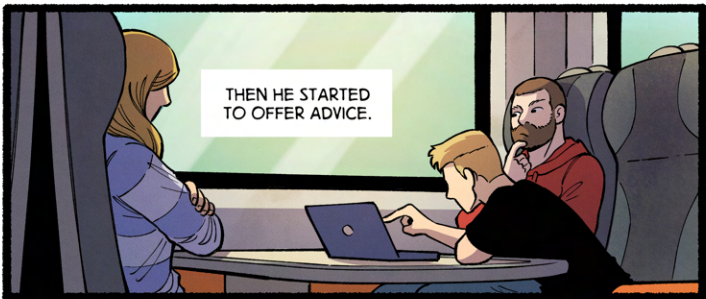


HE EXPLAINED HOW HE AND HIS COLLEGE BUDDIES WOULD PLAY MULTIPLAYER SEASONS FOR ENTIRE WEEKENDS

IT'S A STORY I'VE HEARD FROM COUNTLESS FOOTBALL MANAGER FANS.



I EVENTUALLY RETURNED TO MY GAME, BUT ADAM HAD BECOME FULLY ABSORBED IN MY PROGRESS.

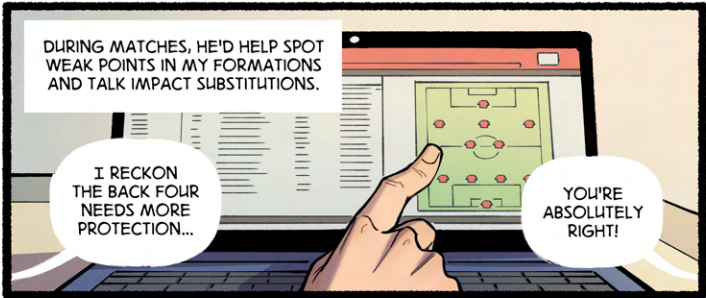


THEN HE STARTED TO OFFER ADVICE.



HE SUGGESTED REGIONS TO SCOUT AND STARS THAT WOULD SUIT MY TACTICS.

LET'S SEE WHO'S AVAILABLE FROM CHILE!



DURING MATCHES, HE'D HELP SPOT WEAK POINTS IN MY FORMATIONS AND TALK IMPACT SUBSTITUTIONS.

I RECKON THE BACK FOUR NEEDS MORE PROTECTION...

YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT!



HE'D EVEN STARTED CHEERING THE GOALS. I USUALLY HATE BACKSEAT GAMERS, BUT SUDDENLY I REALISED...



ADAM HAD BECOME MY ASSISTANT MANAGER.



JUST AS I WONDERED WHETHER IT'D BE WEIRD TO SAY THIS OUT LOUD, THE JOURNEY GOT EVEN STRANGER.

A GROUP OF LEICESTER CITY FANS BOARDED THE TRAIN, TRAVELLING SOUTH FOR AN AWAY GAME.



HEY!
THIS LAD'S
PLAYING
FOOTBALL
MANAGER!

IF I FELT OUT OF MY
SOCIAL DEPTH BEFORE, I WAS IN
MY OWN PERSONAL HELL NOW.



THEY BOMBARDED ME
WITH MORE QUESTIONS
THAN ADAM HAD.



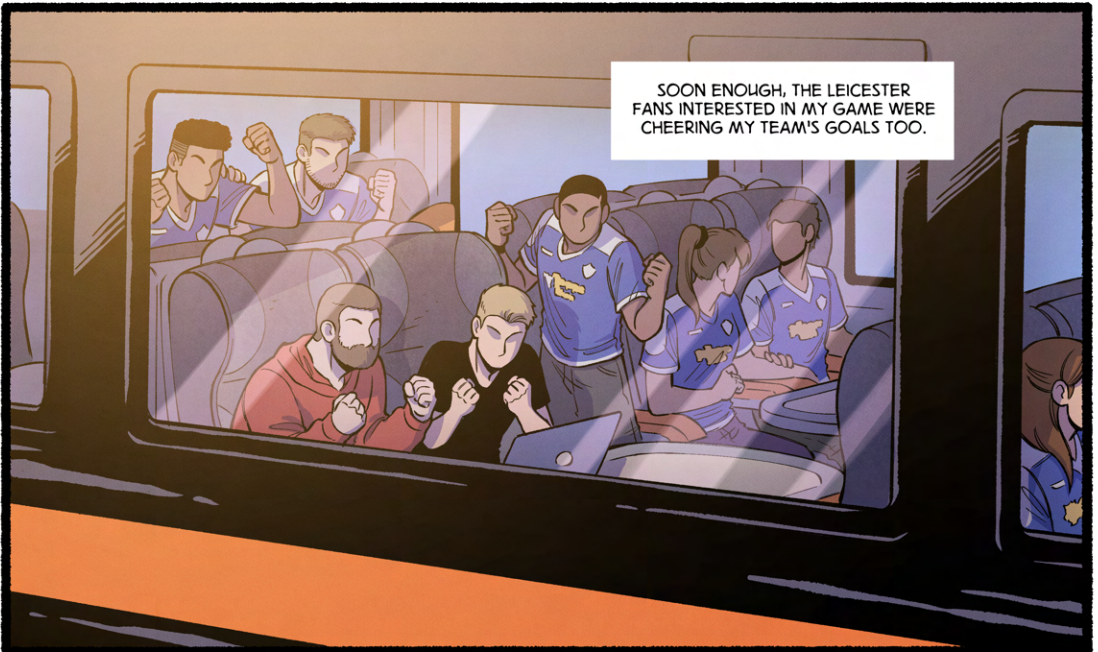
IS THAT
WHO YOU
SUPPORT?!

HAVE
YOU KEPT
THAT DIVING
BASTARD?!*

WHO ARE
YOU PLAYING
AS?!

*THEY WERE REFERRING TO FERNANDO TORRES, WHO A WEEK OR SO BEFORE WAS ACCLUSED OF 'SIMULATION' TO WIN A PENALTY FOR LIVERPOOL.

SOON ENOUGH, THE LEICESTER
FANS INTERESTED IN MY GAME WERE
CHEERING MY TEAM'S GOALS TOO.



SO, LET'S BREAK THIS DOWN.

I'D STARTED THE JOURNEY HOPING TO MIND MY OWN BUSINESS AND PLAY MY GAME IN PEACE.



INSTEAD, I'D SOMEHOW ACQUIRED A REAL-LIFE ASSISTANT MANAGER...

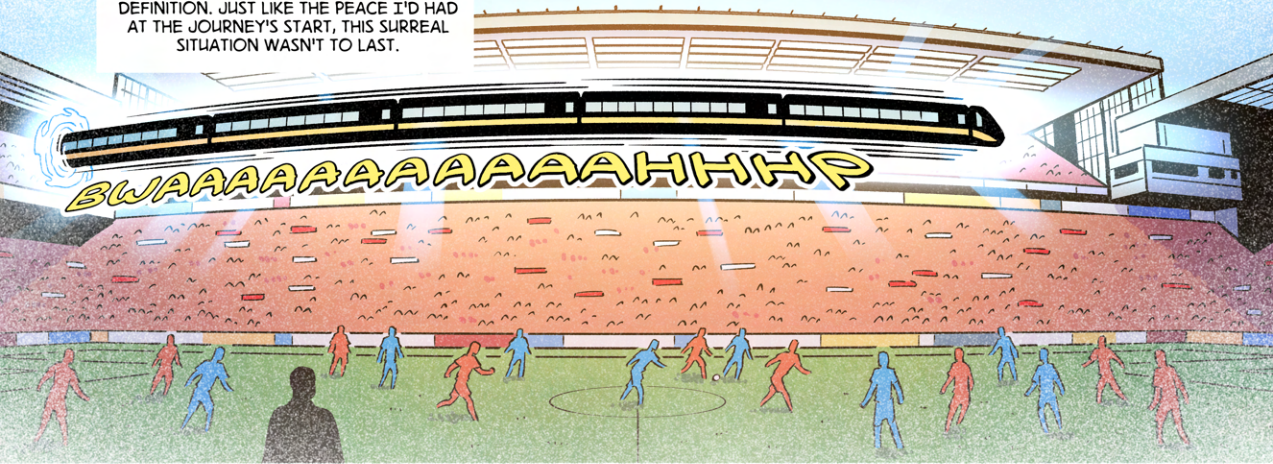


...AND A ROWDY, VOCAL FANBASE.

HONESTLY, I WAS PERPLEXED. INTROVERTS ARE NOT CUT OUT FOR THIS, BUT IT WAS HARD NOT TO ENJOY IT IN THE MOMENT.



BUT, MOMENTS ARE SHORT BY DEFINITION. JUST LIKE THE PEACE I'D HAD AT THE JOURNEY'S START, THIS SURREAL SITUATION WASN'T TO LAST.



AS THE TRAIN APPROACHED LONDON, THE LEICESTER FANS DEPARTED FIRST.

GOOD LUCK WITH THE MATCH!

ADAM ALSO DEPARTED ON LONDON'S OUTSKIRTS, HAVING HELPED KEEP MY VIRTUAL LIVERPOOL SIDE IN THE TITLE RACE.

HOPE YOU WIN THE LEAGUE!

I PONDERED THE STRANGE FOOTBALL MICROCOSM THAT HAD JUST HAPPENED IN THIS CARRIAGE.

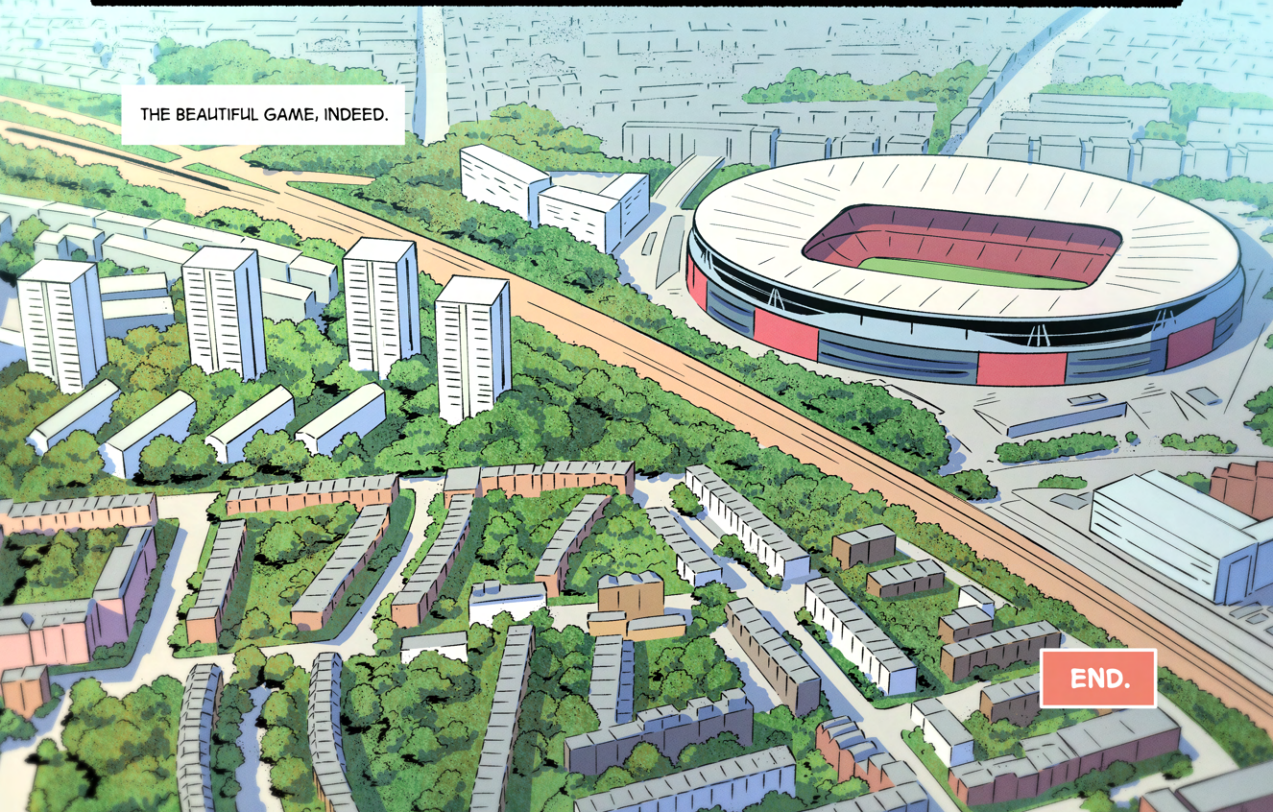
*LIVERPOOL AND LEICESTER CITY FANS HAVE A VERY DIFFERENT RELATIONSHIP IN TODAY'S POLITICAL CLIMATE. IT'S A SHAME.



THEY SAY A WONDERFUL THING ABOUT FOOTBALL IS THAT IF YOU GATHERED PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT WALKS OF LIFE AND GAVE THEM A BALL, THEY'D FIND A WAY TO COMMUNICATE.



FOR A BRIEF, BIZARRE TIME, FOOTBALL MANAGER - A DATA-DRIVEN FOOTBALL SIMULATION - BROUGHT A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE TOGETHER ON THIS TRAIN IN THE SAME WAY.



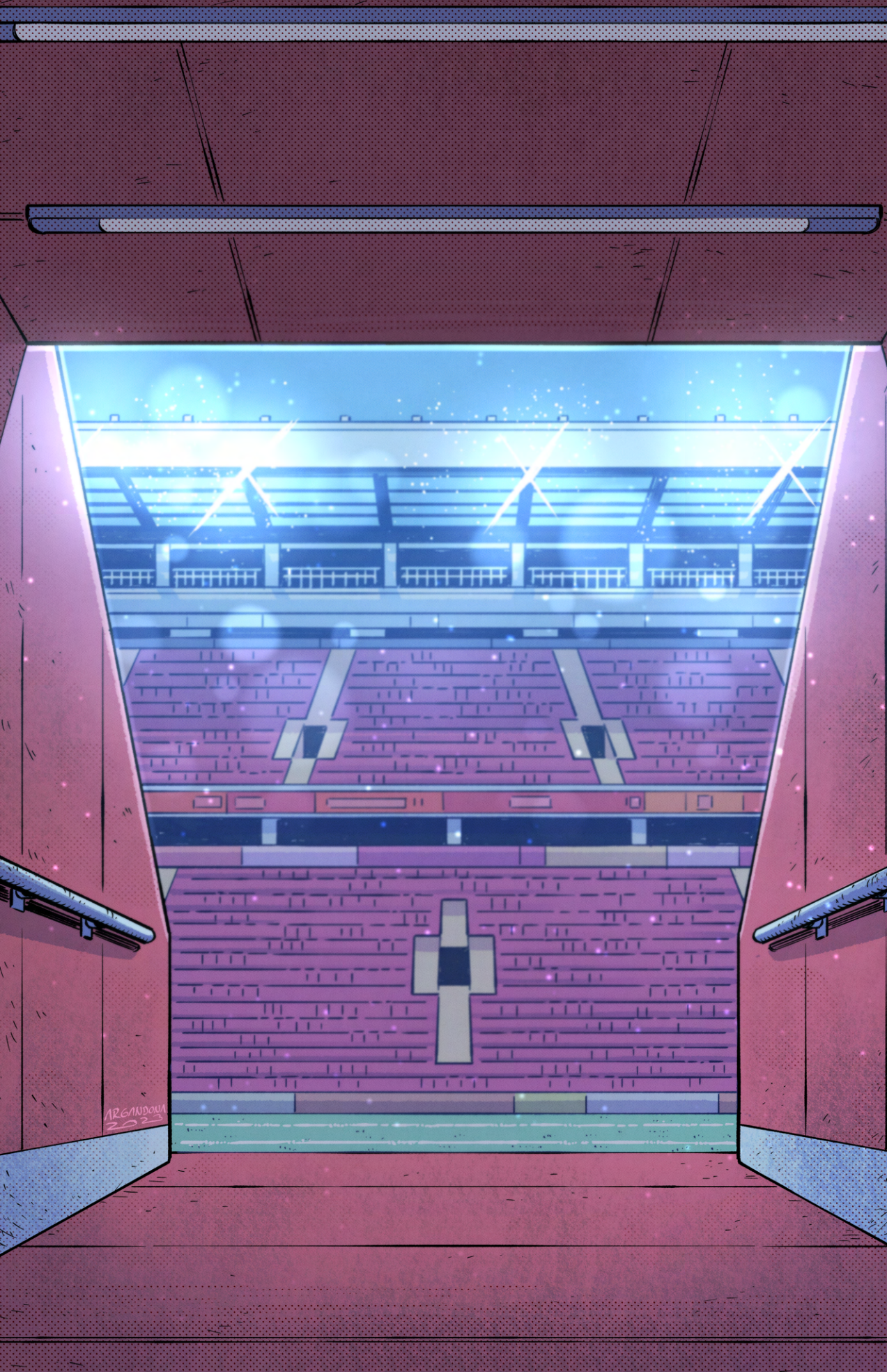
THE BEAUTIFUL GAME, INDEED.

END.

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ARANDORA
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