

## Chapter 1:

A pen. Beautiful, but still it's a pen. It was a Cartier pen, shiny, heavy and with the Milan emblem on it. But still, it's a pen. Full of blue ink. I held it, playing with it in my arms like a baby does with his first toy. I looked at it from different angles, trying to find a significance of it. It gave me a headache just thinking about it..

“And don't use it to sign the contract with Juventus!”

At least Galliani joked about it. As a leaving gift, I expected something more than this comedic moment. 10 years of Milan had passed just like that. Nonetheless, I smiled. Because I know how to laugh, well and good. “And thanks for everything Andrea”

While Galliani was speaking behind his desk, I took a look around his office. I knew the room by heart, an office inside the general headquarters at Via Turati. In there we had many happy memories, composed of contracts signed with other pens, but I still hadn't seen many of the photos that he had in this room. The photos were mainly of those unique days in the club's history, with players celebrating holding the trophy in the air. Milan were worried that I had lost my desire to run, that is why I felt sad. Galliani felt sad too. Tullio Tinti (Pirlo's agent) too. We left without regrets. 30 minutes later I was out of there. When you love it takes time when that love dies, but an apology could help.

“Andrea, our coach Allegri thinks that you can't play in front of the defence anymore if you stay with us. He would like you in a different role: still in midfield, but on the left side.”

There was just one problem: I still thought I could give my best in front of the defence.

“Even with you on the bench or in the stands, we managed to win the Scudetto. Also, from this year the club has changed policies. Those older than 30 years, the contract will only be renewed for 12 months.”

Another problem: I had never felt old, and didn't feel old even in this moment.

“Thanks, but I can't accept that. And Juventus have offered me a 3 year contract.”

I declined. Without even speaking of the salary, I declined. In those 30 minutes with Galliani, money was never brought up. I only wanted to consider myself to be an important part in the centre of the project, not just a player to rotate with.

The cycle was over, and I felt the need of a new experience. I had started feeling that I didn't belong there anymore when one day when I was heading for training in Milanello, I didn't have the desire to train and go in the locker room. Didn't feel like changing clothes. Didn't feel like working. I had no problems with Allegri, the problem was with the air I was breathing. I knew

these walls, that in the past made me happy and protected me, but something just wasn't right. There was an inner feeling that I had to move, that I had to breathe a fresh air. The poetic life I had lived started to feel like a routine, and this was something that worried me. Even the fans, after applauding me for all those years at the San Siro on matchdays, felt like they wanted something new. They wanted new faces on the Panini album stickers, to tell other stories. They were used to what I did, my movements, my inventions, they weren't impressed anymore. In their eyes, the sublime suddenly became very normal. "He can't do what he used to anymore". For me this was very hard to accept. Thinking about it, it was a bit of an injustice. It hurt my stomach, thinking how I could find the desire I lost again.

I immediately approached Nesta, friend and brother, team mate. We went through a lot of things together, and he has always been my room mate. During half time of one of our thousands of playstation games we played against each other, I confessed "Sandrino, I'm leaving".

He wasn't surprised "I'm sad, but it's the right thing to do"

He was the first to know, after my family. I told him everything. It's never easy leaving a place you know everything, including secrets about. This world has given me much more emotions that I've given, without a shadow of a doubt. Sometimes I felt sad, other days I felt good and pure. I learnt one lesson: Tears are good, they show who you really are. I didn't hold back. I cried and wasn't ashamed in doing so.

When I was getting back from injury, I called my agent everyday. Ambrosini and Van Bommel were playing in front of the defence, my role was covered.

There were always some good news of clubs interested in me. My discomfort made others fight for me. I was like the X on a treasure map. Everyone approached me, even Inter. If that happened, there would have been earthquakes in Milan. They called Tinti, asking him a simple question, "Would Andrea come back to us?"

Tullio asked me, " Would you go back to Inter Andrea? This is what they want"

They wanted me. But they were slow, they wanted to know how the league table was going to finish, who would be their coach, what the objectives were going to be. I was directly contacted once by them. I remember clearly, it was a Monday morning as soon as the season finished.

"Hello Andrea, it's Leonardo."

It was Leonardo, at the time Inter's coach.

"Finally I have the go ahead from Moratti to start dealing with you."

Amongst other things, he told me great things about Inter, how he had desire and felt good

there. It could've been an amazing experience; returning to a place where I had already been.

“Andrea, in the new Inter you will be a key player.”

To be honest, I thought about it, but I was never going to accept it. It would've been too hard on Milans fans, something they didn't deserve.

“Thank you for your interest Leo, but I can't. Last night I signed for Juventus...”

With which pen I signed, I will never tell.