

# Parte Nopeo

by **David Myers** email: [todaymyers@gmail.com](mailto:todaymyers@gmail.com)

David Myers  
93 Sterling St.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11225

I went to Naples  
 because all the Italians told me it's where people go crazy  
 went thinking a real epic journey was ahead  
 British Admirals, well respected around the world for their tight upper lips  
 go to Naples my son  
 in the shadow of Vesuvius  
 grabbing at its parts  
 fat women cooking flesh  
 their hands scratching their pubic hair when a cat crosses their path  
 the finest Italian leather, cuffs on pants  
 a shirt pulled tight onto a young brown skin – they put on lotion to make the sun burn  
 them more – that's backwards – to burn them more – not protecting – it makes them  
 more tan.  
 of course, shit, I thought, Naples, open, asking, of course, it eats the sun right up like this  
 and the wind boo hoo ing all the time  
 British Admirals come to Naples  
 see churches with armed guards and bullet holes  
 all the dogs have balls  
 Padre, a cat crosses my path I grab between my legs  
 piazzas are enormous echo chambers late at night  
 a stone city, everyone sitting on stony ground carved out of a volcano, getting stoned  
 bones, dogs barking teeth  
 I sat down, there was a woman – I don't think she came from Naples  
 selling books on the side of the street, it said  
*Lo Stato Sono Io*  
 and the President on the cover was grinning.

1.

The Greeks came over here, thinking  
 they must have been thinking  
 it was magical. They founded Cuma, they settled on Ischia  
 There is a lake nearby that is so sulfuric that when birds fly over it they die  
*can that really be true?*  
 that can't be true – oh we all thought that at some point, grin, that can't be true  
 no it's in the book, look at the next photo  
 a bird tumbling down, dying  
 The Greeks thought that the lake was an entrance to the underworld. Then the Romans  
 came and killed them. then Normans, Spaniards, Bourbons, Germans, Americans, now  
 the Italians have managed to take it over... wait, what do you mean the *Italians?*  
*was Napoleon ever here?*  
 hell, anybody who's really worth anything has conquered the region... hey, how many  
 Napulitanos does it take to defend Naples? No one knows, it's never  
 happened, everyone just stomps their way through here *I'm such a stupid*  
*American kid* I thought *I'm too young for this shit, you wanna go modern, the*  
 Germans marched right up and down these streets, no – we didn't need to be liberated  
 from Mussolini, we believed in Mussolini – and fuck me, who's my President? grinning  
 on top of book covers around the world.

NATO's got a base right around the corner. American Admirals come here and go crazy, surprised that there's no place to hear good American jazz. The place has got the soul for it. Maybe we just can't find it.

Turn on the t.v. There's one American t.v. network that you can get. Guess which? FOX. hello, Bill O'Reilly. hello, *Clueless*.

So, I came here for all of this. Of course I'm going to go a little bit crazy right? I mean, I came over with the hopes of being jostled about, getting my ideology shook up a bit. You gotta travel man, you gotta travel. See something new.

2.

The girls

okay, fantasy number one...

*this part is actually true, it's all true*

okay, so I'm a waiter at a Restaurant on a little tiny island right off the coast of Naples, it connects to the city with a short bridge. When I walk home late at night from work, I walk on that bridge and sometimes, I'm tired and I see the moon and I joke to myself that I'm a wolf. I'm at the edge of the world and I feel like howling.

The Restaurant is open from 6:00 or 7:00pm til about 3:00 in the morning. None of the Napulitanos show up till around 11:00 and then it's packed. It's surrounded by the water and the crashing waves up against the castle that sits always in the distance. The last Emperor of the Roman Empire, Romulus Augustus was locked up in that castle, but I don't know who he is or really care that much.

okay, so at around 2:00am the Motorcycle Napulitanos start riding through. The little island has a loop that the Motorcycle Napulitanos ride on, circling around the island, motorcycling with helmets of hair and slick European sunglasses. Women grab on. You can circle them, tightening up, till they smell you, ears dart up and they start reaching out. *I'm just a lonely American with nowhere to go* throw in a Mingus bass line *I'm just a lonely American with nowhere to go. I came here because it's the capital of the world of beautiful women... I see that you're the Emperor. Lo stato sei tu.*

It's almost sexual watching the Neapolitan women get on and off of these motorcycles all night long. I think, "I'm a lonely American with no hopes, no aspirations, my jaw hanging to the floor." One of the Napulitanos grabs my ass, I turn around, he slaps me in the face and runs off laughing. A whole groups laughs. I laugh. I don't know what else to do. I laugh some more, thinking about that American kid that laughs when you slap him. What a fool.

This is about the time that you enter my fantasy, my Napulitana, with short blond curls. I'm not sure how you got your hair to do that, but I know it's not natural. You walked right past me, got off one of the motorcycles, but I didn't see which one, you walked right past me, tight jeans, wide hips, a black shirt with it's hands full. You were wearing those Italian leather boots that in any other country I would find overstated and foolish, but somehow, I came here to go crazy and they are just perfect.

But, it's the back that will make me remember you years from now. After you pass me, I see your back, completely uncovered and flexing, arched, a deep tan. It's the only part of you that I can see, your back, sweating just enough that it shines. My hands reach out through my eyes and think of all the things I could learn touching that back, that back,

thick and strong, muscles and fat. *I couldn't hurt you if I tried.* I think of the shapes that our backs could make together. I get creative.

I think about you breaking my heart, and wonder if you already have. Muscles and fat, muscles and fat and that thin layer of sweat, so that it shines. You walk over to one of the Motorcycle Napulitanos. Italian eyes creep out from behind his sunglasses. (It is nighttime, you Italian prick. You *are* driving a motorcycle. I think that you *could* take the sunglasses off and stop looking cooler than me. At least for a second.) The eyes look at me and he puts his hand on the back, pushing hard enough to make an indentation in the flesh. In my head, he says, "First time in Naples, huh? You have no idea, kid. Go back to Iowa, or Texas, or wherever the hell you're from."

And then it's over. You go off with him and I think that's fine that's fine... at least I saw something. That's a good reason to try and live somewhere else. At least I saw something that I can remember. I know something more, I must, the world must be a bigger place after something like this.

When I walked home across the tiny bridge that night I thought about how every time I think I know something it's just ignorance to my lack of knowing.

3.

When I was a little boy, I thought, standing in my kitchen in the Quartiere Spagnolo,  
When I was a little boy  
Stories always had giants in them walking around everywhere that they go. Jack would climb up the beanstalk and harps and other magical things all sat up there belonging to some fat-assed giant with a greasy beard  
Rubbed his fat belly after a shower  
Standing in his kitchen in the Quartiere Spagnolo, sipping espresso  
And rumbled for all those tiny humans living beneath.

At this point, I had found an apartment and a book to read. One of my co-workers told me that all those stories that I grew up on were Napulitano, that I was raised on this city without realizing it. Cinderella is really the story of a Napulitana and her name is pronounced Chindarayla. Then he made a joke about her tits and asked me if the tits in America were as good as the ones in Naples.

"Even better," I assured him, hoping for some local respect.

Then, he dragged me to a corner bookstore, which looked more like his great grandfather's attic and asked the old proprietor for *Lo Cunto de li Cunti*. I thought he was buying me porn. Instead, I got a copy of *Lo Cunto de li Cunti* by Giambattista Basile. Italian title: *Il Racconto dei Racconti*. The 1019 page book is a collection of classic Neapolitan tales, including Chindarayla, written by Basile in the early 1600s. The first twenty pages of the book were still attached at the top as if they were made from one large piece of paper that had been elaborately folded. The book had the text of the stories in both Italian and Napulitano. I read a story in my kitchen, after a shower, in the Quartiere Spagnolo, sipping espresso.

Shirts everywhere, The Spanish Quarter of Naples earned its name in the early 1600s when Don Pedro de Toledo built it and used it to house 6000 Spanish soldiers before their proper barracks could be built. Hanging clothes, shirts everywhere, old ladies play cards out my window until at least 4 am. *Oh boy I found the real thing* I  
*thought to myself oh boy poverty* a house that was bombed in WWII rotten fruit on

*the street with European cobblestone streets oh boy take a picture, but don't let them see your camera.*

They dug this neighborhood out of the side of the mountain. It has steep hills and long walks, kids that are stronger than they look; streets wide enough for one European car to drive down and concrete staircases.

I sat, looking out my window, lonely and happy on an overcast day when I heard a giant walking down these tiny streets.

First,

there were the dogs barking. Some kid named Mauro and his sister Rosaria wouldn't come in the house that was screaming at them. "You'd better come home if you know what's good for you."

more barking, I looked out my window, startled by the booming steps, actually afraid that something might land on me. I heard the pounding sounds echoing through the streets. I thought, "no way this could actually be a giant. I don't believe in giants. Could it be bombs?"

*kids screaming, think about World War II, they had domestic dogs then, they had radios, they had shirts and pants, women's undergarments hanging on clothes lines, in World War II this neighborhood was bombed, this is exactly how it felt.*

I thought of my great uncle, who flew a plane over Naples once, and hit a small plastic button. Who opened a chamber in his airplane, letting gravity do its work, letting Naples pull a bomb down toward itself, not fighting it any longer. My great uncle, whose booming voice crashed on the streets of the Spanish Quarter. Giants, I thought.

bombs, On September 11, 2001, I was in America when two buildings in New York were relieved of their duty and let go. The pilots released the buildings and let the city pull them down upon itself, let us finally destroy ourselves like we always knew we would. The string that held them up was cut. The bombs fell, the buildings tumbled to the ground. *This was the booming, this was the giant, walking down the tiny streets, dogs barking, I'm an American outside America, I'm scared, don't let them see my camera, I want to see the world.*

Boom Boom Boom. I think I see townsfolk trembling.

Then, slowly, water fell from the sky and the grey clouds revealed themselves. I said every cuss word I could think of: *shit, balls, pussy, snot, fart, stronza, vafanculo, merda, gnocca, puttana, porca la miseria!*

It's just rain. It's just thunder. I am an enormous idiot. I'm sitting in my kitchen thinking about WWII and 9-11, when I should be out in the world, making friends with Italians, walking up and down these rainy streets and embarrassing myself in front of others. Fable, over.

I called Remo on the phone and asked him what he was doing later.

Fee Fi Fo Fum.

4.

"You look even worse than yesterday," grumbled a smiling old voice from behind the counter. Let's talk about Napulitano customer service for a minute, shall we?

I was eating *un gelato con brioche* in this ugly ugly city that destroys it's monuments, flashes it's under-kept residents with pride and hides from you anyone who's taken a bath or helped his fellow man.

None of this is really happening I thought to myself

My actions have no consequences... it's like I'm dreaming while awake... these fools don't know me... they aren't real...

*Is this as big as I can dream? Is Naples my fantasy, the best I could come up with? Maybe I never left my own uninspired imagination...*

I stood in this crap corner store, gorging myself with gelato, determined to find something sweet melting on my lips

while the owner behind the counter insulted his charmed customers

Nobody in this town treats anyone else with any respect.

"Signora, I see that to you, gravity has not been kind."

sugars upon sugars upon sweet egg bread.

If ice cream makes anything better, than certainly gelato can improve this town that didn't even care to notice my arrival

a stupid town that doesn't speak English, often doesn't even speak Italian

what good are you?

I asked the *Napulitanos*, who couldn't understand me. "It's a global economy, you fools."

you can't use the internet

you can't communicate without moving your hands

you're a port city in a world that has discovered air transportation.

*3 Napulitanos and 1 American walk into a bar*

your churches have bullet holes in them

your piazzas are crime centers that have to be patrolled by heavily armed guards

*Remo, Fabrizio, Mauro and the American, hungry, walk into a bar on a Friday night.*

your traffic signs don't work

all your kids have broken arms because no one bothers to learn how to drive and you let 10 year olds ride the family Vespa alone in the dark hours of the night

*"Bòna serata signora," dice Remo alla vecchietta dietro il bar, "Mi chiedo se ci può dare una cortesia..."*

Naples, you ugly whore

I asked someone for directions and she told me I had to pay her

I don't believe a word you've said to me

you're a liar and

you'd tell me anything just to get a buck out of my pocket

*"Noi tre siamo poveri guaglióni. Non abbiamo nemmeno una ragazza, non abbiamo niente da fare questa venerdì, e tengiammo fàmma stasera. C'è l'hai qualcosa piccololina che potremmo utilizzare per riempire le nostre pànze vuote?"*

You don't give correct change

you shit all over what should be national monuments

you have as much history as Rome but tourists don't come because they are scared

you can't get it together to stop killing each other and start making some money

you turned your grand capital square into a parking lot for a whole decade

A *Napulitano* told me that *panoramicamente* there is no city in the world compares with Naples. I asked him if he'd ever been to another city. He said no.

*"Remo," dice la vecchietta, "vieni ka ogni venerdì, e ogni venerdì ti do quaccòsa di magnà. Trovi un lavoro mi mangiolino."*

What a ridiculous place to build a life

What a ridiculous place to temporarily plant my dreams.

Everything is a complicated ritual. I could never just buy anything, always haggling.

-“I’m just trying to buy a watermelon you asshole. Does 60 cents really matter?”

-“One can always sharpen his skills,” he said, making his best sage-like face.

*two months ago that would have been funny*

What an asshole, I thought, paying him a whole euro extra, just to show him it didn’t matter. “I knew I should have asked for 2 more euros!” he exclaimed, pronouncing his victory.

*well, my country could beat up your country you poor bastard. you may be some charming street vendor in a beautiful location, but your GDP is pathetic and natural beauty doesn’t count for nothing. it’s just fluff, like a dumb musical or shallow movie. that doesn’t compare with the recent cultural achievements of America. our awesome domination is everywhere. you can’t compete with MTV, my friend. you may have won this one, but only because this is a stupid thing to think about anyway*

Hearing my thoughts embarrassed me.

Around the time of these feelings, I was paid a visit by a friend I had made while in Northern Italy. Tomás was a tall German man with dreadlocks. He, unlike most Germans I’ve met, did not speak English, which created a situation that got us a lot of attention in public places. You could see the question sitting between the Napulitanos’ eyebrows, “Why are those two out of place white men speaking Italian together?”

Tomás came for a visit and we decided to get something to eat. Wandering around the Castello Nuovo, I asked him about his adventures in the last few months.

He had been organic farming his way across Northern Italy. Many farms had deals—if you could call them that—where you can show up, work all day in the field, and then at night they feed you and give you a place to sleep. As he was recounting the past few months on farms, I found myself wondering what he does if he wants a Snickers Bar. All this work on the farms day in and day out and he only gets the room and board for the night? Does he have no comfort? Chocolate? Am I a fat American for wondering?

Then Tomás had the fantastic idea of eating at the nearby McDonalds. I hadn’t been since I was a child and was so conditioned off them by my mother that the suggestion of going by my German friend pulled a double-take out of me. He promised it would be delightfully ironic to travel all the way to a foreign country to live, only to eat in a McDonalds, which every country has and which is exactly the same everywhere you might go.

As we were sitting, eating our Big Macs with the special sauce, I shared with him how happy I was to be in McDonalds. I had grown angry at this city and angry at myself for not making a better time of it. In the nights after work, I had taken to buying small bottles of scotch—not all that common in Naples—and stumbling around the Centro Storico drinking, watching young children commit harmless crimes. One night I caught myself sitting in dried piss on the back steps of a church, watching what I’d guessed to be a nine-year-old slash the tires of a local man’s car. I tried to figure out what was worse, piss on a church, a drunken American wasting his time in this beautiful city, or this kid committing petty crime in the early hours of the morning. Tomás wore a listening face while he played with his dreadlocks. The special sauce somehow took all my troubles away. I was home in all this mass-produced thousand island dressing; sweet, fatty and familiar.

I tried to tell Tomás about the few dates I had been on, “Le ragazze sono strane qua, Tomás, é non capisco perché fanno le cose che fanno, ma sono anche proprio bellissimi...piú delle ragazze tedesche, sono sicuro. É che buoni baci che danno!” I wasn’t pulling it off and Tomás knew it. He smiled politely and dipped his fries in mayonnaise. When he finished, I walked him to the train station and sat on the curb outside with him waiting for his train to come.

“Isn’t there some famous British Admiral who came to Naples and went crazy?” I asked.

- I’m German.

- I know.

- So, I wouldn’t know about British Admirals. Seems like a fun city though.

I told Tomás that I was glad he came to visit and, sure as I was that I would never see him again, that I hoped his future was full of bright things.

I walked home thinking about how much I prefer Napulitanos over Germans.

5.

grinning

I came to Naples to lose my head.

Famous for its pick-pockets and quick hands

getting my hair cut once in the Quartiere Spagnolo

those hands chopping fast, flying, around my head in an old barbershop

the kids would run in and out, dancing to Michael Jackson and Shakira

I thought about losing my head

where does it go?

I thought

All these things flying around always, these dumb British Admirals and American Kids,

who go somewhere dangerous but safe enough

so they can “lose themselves in the scenery”

that’s me

ah, glorious O’Nnapule, it’s time to say goodnight

I’m so proud of myself, which is ridiculous to say, proud of taking a vacation?

I thought about losing my head

*How long do you have to be somewhere for it to count as living there?*

snip the barber was so animated snip snip that I was unsure which hand movements

were cutting my hair and which ones where just gesticulations

how do you make an Italian shut-up? Hold his arms down.

I hitched a ride to the train station from a 17-year-old girl in her parents car who waved at me when I left as though she’d actually miss me. Not having much to talk about, I shared that until living in Naples for a while I had never heard of Totó, who seems to be the most famous Napulitano ever born.

“É il napulitano Charlie Chaplin,” she hollered, her face in disbelief.

She told me the story of one of his famous quotes:

You know the street Partenope Avenue, right along the water, yes? It's name comes from the founding of the city. The Greeks, when they came here founded Cuma, which is the oldest Greek settlement in Italy. The *Cumani* came here and founded Partenope, which became a quickly growing city, but then, it was destroyed. So, they had to found a new city, or *nea polis*, for all the *partenopeos*, which made Napoli, which, for you, is Naples. So, Totó... he was talking to an interviewer once who accused him of not being a full blooded Napulitano. (I think his mother was from another city.) He said, "Si si si, hai ragione tú. Non sono completamente napulitano. Sono un parte napulitano e un parte nopeo."

I kissed her goodbye and headed home.