

Letters to Juliet

by Jose Rivera

Revisions by Tim Sullivan

Current Revisions by Will Fetters

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Summit Entertainment  
1630 Stewart Street, Suite 120  
Santa Monica, CA 90404

**INT. SOPHIA AND VICTOR'S APARTMENT, NEW YORK -- NIGHT**

A well-decorated one-bedroom in the Meat Packing District.

OPEN ON: Long strands of freshly made pasta hung to dry in the living room. Hundreds of pieces. Draped off lamps, across tables, over chairs, everywhere. It's an extraordinary sight.

Amongst this adornment of noodles, we find a beautiful young woman on the couch working on a laptop, trying to concentrate. She seems a bit distracted by the pasta that surrounds her. She is SOPHIA MARCUS.

Sophia sighs as she looks up from her computer at the sounds of cooking that can be heard coming from the...

**INT. KITCHEN. WHERE:**

A man toils over a pot of simmering tomato sauce. He is a handsome Italian-American with big brown eyes. He is VICTOR.

Victor tastes the sauce he's cooking the way a sommelier tastes wine. Slow and deliberate. He's pleased but subdued.

Victor carefully plates some of that fresh pasta with his sauce and takes it into the living room.

Sophia looks stressed out. She keeps glancing at what looks like a draft of a magazine article, certain parts have been highlighted. She's in the middle of typing something when Victor approaches with the plate of food.

VICTOR  
Here, taste.

SOPHIA  
OK, gimme a second.

Victor waits impatiently as Sophia finishes typing. She sets aside the article and dutifully takes a forkful and eats it. Victor watches her closely as she chews, tastes, swallows.

SOPHIA  
Delicious. Your best yet. Really.

Sophia reaches for the article just as a piece of pasta slips off a lamp and falls onto the page. She picks it off.

Sophia's affirmation hasn't convinced Victor, he tastes just the sauce as if trying to pinpoint a flaw.

VICTOR  
There's not too much garlic?

Sophia looks up from her laptop - a little annoyed.

SOPHIA  
Just enough garlic.

VICTOR  
Too spicy?

SOPHIA  
Good spice.

She tries to go back to work. He's still standing there.

VICTOR  
Maybe it needs more basil?

SOPHIA  
(exasperated)  
Victor I'm saying it's delicious.

VICTOR  
You're saying it's delicious but  
you're not telling me it's  
delicious.

SOPHIA  
Sweetie, please, I have to finish  
this, Bobby needs this tonight, I  
still have to pack, could you think  
out loud in the kitchen? You're not  
doing much for my concentration.

Realization flashes in Victor's eyes. He tastes again.

VICTOR  
That's it. It's too concentrated.

Victor plants a big kiss on a startled Sophia.

VICTOR  
Thanks babe.

Sophia shakes her head and goes back to work as Victor heads into the kitchen muttering to himself.

**EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING, NEW YORK -- MORNING**

The doors of the building open. Sophia and Victor emerge. She is carrying a suitcase as he follows her reading a Gourmet Magazine. They walk down the steps to a waiting cab.

VICTOR  
Passports?

SOPHIA  
Yep.

                  VICTOR  
Tickets?

                  SOPHIA  
Yep.

                  VICTOR  
Apartment reservation?

                  SOPHIA  
Yep.

                  VICTOR  
Euros?

                  SOPHIA  
Yep.

                  VICTOR  
Suitcase?

They reach the cab. She turns to him. Smirks.

                  SOPHIA  
I have mine.

He looks down at his empty hands.

                  VICTOR  
Shit.

He runs back into the building as she puts her case in the trunk and gets in the cab.

**INT. CAB -- LATER**

Sophia waits. The trunk is slammed and Victor gets in.

                  SOPHIA  
JFK please.

                  VICTOR  
Actually, sweetie, I just have to  
make one stop.

She knows where. She just looks at him.

**INT. VICTOR'S RESTAURANT -- DAY**

The restaurant is basically a building site. It's a fantastic space but right now it'd take an experienced eye to fully appreciate it's potential.

Victor is looking at an assortment of light fittings with MARK, his bartender.

Sophia walks through the mess with a slightly detached air of curiosity. BUILDERS are at work all around her.

Her cell rings. She checks the ID. Takes a breath. Answers:

SOPHIA  
Hey Bobby.

**INT. MAGAZINE EDITOR'S OFFICE. WHERE:**

BOBBY BROOKS, editor-in-chief, a rotund, bald, but benevolent looking man is talking on a wireless earpiece in a cluttered office. He's looking at an 8x10 photograph of Donald Trump.

BOBBY  
Why can't we say Trump's comb over wraps around clockwise? I'm looking at the picture we're running with the piece. It's wrapping clockwise.

INTERCUT: Sophia has made her way outside the restaurant.

SOPHIA  
You can say it. You just can't state it as a fact.

BOBBY  
It works better as a fact. It's a fun little detail. People love fun little details.

SOPHIA  
I looked at every picture I could find of him in the last ten years. I talked to his stylist. The hair changes. It's a fact if you qualify with "usually" or "typically"

BOBBY  
People hate qualifiers.

Sophia shrugs as if to say "What do you want me to say?"

SOPHIA  
Those are the facts.

BOBBY  
Yeah well your facts are getting in  
the way of my fun.

Bobby sets the picture aside. A beat.

SOPHIA  
Hey. While I have you. I wanted to  
talk you about something...

Sophia is pacing now. She's visibly nervous - like she's  
debating whether or not to just get off the phone.

BOBBY  
Talk.

SOPHIA  
Well. I was thinking. Since I'm  
going to Italy already. Maybe I  
could try doing a travel piece or  
something as a feature or--

BOBBY  
I have writers that do travel  
features. You don't do travel  
features. You do fact checking.

SOPHIA  
Yeah. I know. I just. I was  
thinking I could try something new.

BOBBY  
Why do you want to try something  
new? You're good at fact checking.  
Too good.

Bobby's Assistant hurries out to answer a ringing phone.

SOPHIA  
I feel like I can contribute more--

BOBBY  
You contribute plenty. My writers  
count on you. They can't do what  
they do unless you do what you do.  
You're good at something, be happy  
for that, be grateful for it, a lot  
of people are good at nothing.

SOPHIA  
Yeah. I guess. It's just--

His Assistant signals that Bobby needs to take the call.

BOBBY  
Keep swinging in your wheelhouse.  
You'll get more hits.

She sighs - deflated. Bobby suddenly remembers something.

BOBBY  
Oh and I need a table at Babbo this  
Friday. Can you take care of it?

SOPHIA  
Seriously Bobby. You do know that  
you have a new assistant?

BOBBY  
I do. But she doesn't know the  
Maitre d'. You do. You got it?

SOPHIA  
I got it.

BOBBY  
You're one in a million kid.

He rolls to that waiting call.

**INT. CAB -- LATER**

Sophia sits staring out the window, lost in her thoughts.  
Victor gets in, breathless and excited.

VICTOR  
Verona here we come.

He notices Sophia not sharing his enthusiasm.

VICTOR  
What's wrong?

Sophia just kind of shakes her head as if to say "nothing".

VICTOR  
What'd Bobby want?

SOPHIA  
To argue about which direction  
Trump's comb over wraps.

VICTOR  
Counter clockwise?

SOPHIA

He still treats me like I'm his assistant. He'll always treat me like I'm his assistant.

VICTOR

It's not that bad. He values you. Hey, you've got job security right?

She just looks at him.

SOPHIA

Right.

Content he's made her feel better Victor dives back into his Gourmet Magazine. They ride in silence. Until.

SOPHIA

I took the job because I thought it'd be a stepping stone... to features, or covers, or something. But there are no steps, there are no stones, there's just Donald Trump's hair.

She sighs - a sigh that's looking for reassurance.

VICTOR

You know you could always come work with me at the restaurant.

SOPHIA

I know. And I appreciate it.

VICTOR

You'd be great in fine dining.

SOPHIA

So I've been told... by you.

VICTOR

You would be. You're beautiful, smart, funny. You could run the place if you wanted.

She smiles.

SOPHIA

You just said I was beautiful. You never tell me I'm beautiful.

VICTOR

You know you're beautiful.



He puts an arm around her and pulls her towards him.

VICTOR  
Come on. Cheer up. Just forget it.  
That's why we're going to Italy  
right? To forget everything... the  
magazine, the restaurant.

SOPHIA  
We're going to Verona to meet the  
suppliers for your restaurant. How  
are we supposed to forget about it?

VICTOR  
It's not just gonna be about the  
restaurant.

SOPHIA  
It's fine.

VICTOR  
It's not just gonna be about the  
restaurant. We're gonna relax, see  
the sights, shop the stores, it  
won't just be about the restaurant,  
I promise. It's gonna be great...

Sophia wants to believe him but still looks skeptical.

VICTOR  
We're going to the home of Romeo  
and Juliet. How romantic is that?

SOPHIA  
Didn't exactly work out for them  
though did it?

**EXT. NARROW STREET, VERONA -- DAY**

A street that embodies true Verona, hidden away from the well-worn tourist routes. A small restaurant runs down one side of the street with tables filled with LOCALS eating lunch.

Sophia sits on the balcony of a rented apartment just above this restaurant. She's reading a guide book to Verona while occasionally looking down on life in the street below.

**INT. RENTED APARTMENT -- BEDROOM -- LATER**

Sophia walks in from the balcony looking at her guide book just as Victor comes out of the bathroom drying his hair.

SOPHIA

So I think we should start with the Verona Arena then head over to the Museo Castelvecchio...

Victor takes the guide book from her, tosses it on the bed.

VICTOR

No, no, no, no, what are you doing? That stuff's for tourists. To discover the true heart and soul of any country, first you have to indulge in it's smells and tastes.

She just looks at him. Sometimes he's so full of it.

**EXT. ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE -- DAY**

A small Fiat Cinquecento races down a road that cuts through the heart of the countryside.

**INT. WINERY -- DAY**

Victor tastes a variety of wines with a dashing VITICOLTORE.

Sophia is trying to talk with one of the FIELD HANDS who just brought in a bushel of grapes when she sees Victor by the wine barrels waving her over with his camera. She sighs.

**INT. IN FRONT OF THOSE WINE BARRELS:**

Victor and the Viticoltore pose with their glasses raised in toast for Sophia who prepares to take their picture.

As her camera flashes we cut to the STILL PHOTO itself.

**EXT. EDGE OF FOREST OUTSIDE VERONA -- DAY**

The middle of nowhere. The kind of place where the mob buries bodies. Sophia seems acutely aware of this.

Sophia and Victor are with a furtive looking MAN dressed in army camo fatigues. There's a SMALL DOG at his side. The man is holding a cloth covered basket. He removes the cloth with a theatrical flourish to reveal a basket full of truffles.

Victor takes one out and smells it. He's awestruck.

VICTOR

Wow.

Sophia checks her watch. Shakes her head.

FLASH CUT TO:

Victor, The Man and Dog posing with the basket of truffles.

**EXT. FARMHOUSE, ITALY -- DAY**

A rustic farmhouse set in the middle of acres of olives.

**INT. OLIVE PRESS -- LATER**

It's dank and dark. No electricity. No indoor plumbing. Victor sits at the end of long table tasting olive oils with a gnarled, walnut colored OLD MAN. There are dozens of bottles of emerald green olive oil in-front of them.

Sophia has wandered to the other side of the room where she watches WORKERS operating an ancient olive press. Something drips on her from the ceiling.

Victor dips a piece of bread in a saucer of oil and tastes it. He's in seventh heaven. He picks up a bottle.

VICTOR

This is the one.

Sophia is talking with one of the Workers when she sees Victor waving to her from across the room with that camera.

FLASH CUT TO:

Victor and his chosen bottle of olive oil posing in front of the ancient olive press with The Old Man.

**INT. CURING ROOM -- LATER**

Victor and Sophia are in a huge ham curing room. It's basically a giant, poorly-lit shack full of ham.

There's a row of cured pig heads hanging from hooks. Sophia stares at one of them. It stares back. This unsettles her.

A BUTCHER slices thin pieces of prosciutto for them to taste. Sophia turns down her taste - still staring at the pig head. Victor tastes his, chews, then closes his eyes.

VICTOR

That's incredible. Can you imagine  
when people in The City taste this?  
(MORE)

VICTOR (cont'd)

I see lines. Wait. Maybe we should have a deli next to the restaurant.

SOPHIA

That's actually not a bad idea.

VICTOR

I know, I know, I'm on fire.

She has a thought. Then takes out her cell and steps outside.

**EXT. MANHATTAN. WHERE:**

Bobby is hustling down a congested street. He's walking fast like he's late for something. His cell rings. He answers.

BOBBY

Bobby Brooks.

INTERCUT: Sophia just outside the shack of ham on her cell.

SOPHIA

What if I did a piece on the food?

BOBBY

An expose on how good Italian food is. Bold, kid. I smell a Pulitzer.

SOPHIA

You know the Mediterranean diet is one of the healthiest in the world? They have the lowest incidences of coronary disease in Europe because of all the pulses they eat...

Bobby shakes his head - she just doesn't get it.

BOBBY

Jesus, Sophia. I gave you a vacation. Go vacate. Get drunk, go to a museum, get drunk then go to a museum.

Sophia looks at Victor through the window getting ready to taste a piece of one of the pig heads. She looks nauseous.

BOBBY O/S

I gotta go. Stop abusing my cell.

SOPHIA

Wait. What if I...

Bobby is about to walk into a high rise.

BOBBY  
Ciao Bella.

He hangs up. She looks at her cell - disappointed, deflated. Then she sees Victor waving her over with his camera through the window. She rolls her eyes and dutifully walks back in.

FLASH CUT TO:

Victor and The Butcher posing with a huge ham between them.

**EXT. CURING ROOM -- LATER**

Sophia and Victor walk back to their car.

VICTOR  
I gotta meet my Durum wheat guy -  
best Durum wheat in North Italy...

She looks at him blankly.

VICTOR  
You know, for pasta.

SOPHIA  
Right.

VICTOR  
If we leave now we should be able  
to get up there before he closes.

SOPHIA  
I think I'll pass.

VICTOR  
Hon? *The best* Durum wheat in all of  
Italy. Aren't you curious?

SOPHIA  
Yeah. Sure. I just... I need a  
break. Do you mind?

He looks at her. A disappointed beat.

VICTOR  
Alright. I'll drop you in town.

She smiles affectionately at his pouting.

VICTOR  
You're missing out though.

She kisses him.

SOPHIA

I know.

**EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE, VERONA -- DAY**

Sophia sits at table on the patio by herself sipping coffee. The town bustles around her. She's got her laptop open. And a blank note book open beside that.

She stares disdainfully at the blinking cursor on a blank word document as if willing it to inspire her.

She finishes her coffee and looks around at the LOCALS and TOURISTS chatting, laughing, shopping.

She looks about ready to give up when something catches her eye through the crowds...

A YOUNG GIRL about fourteen years old is sitting on a curb at the entrance to a courtyard across the street from Sophia.

The girl is reading a letter through a flood of tears. The constant stream of PEOPLE passing by on their way in and out of the courtyard hardly seem to notice her. But Sophia has.

The Girl looks up from her letter and sees Sophia watching her. She looks back through those tears and the crowds. They look at each other long and hard. Sophia smiles. The Girl looks away.

The Girl's shoulders heave with a great silent sob as she takes a last look at the letter, signs it, puts it in an envelope then disappears through the courtyard entrance.

Sophia watches her go. A beat of consideration. Then she packs up her laptop, puts money on the table and leaves.

**EXT. COURTYARD CASA DI GIULIETTA -- VIA CAPELLO VERONA -- DAY**

Sophia enters a strange, eerily quiet scene. This is the supposed courtyard of Juliet Capulet's house. It's become a shrine to TEENAGE GIRLS, their conversation is subdued. There's an atmosphere of almost religious reverence.

Sophia walks past a group of girls looking up at The Balcony. Another group gazes upon the Statue of Juliet - her left breast polished from years of superstitious touching.

Sophia finally comes upon the girl from the street, so desperate yet so full of hope. She's standing before a wall that's covered in envelopes and letters.

Some are wedged between bricks, others are held in place by chewing gum, but all are addressed to the same name: "Juliet"

Sophia watches as the girl finds a place for her letter. She leaves it and turns to go. The girl is wiping away tears as she passes Sophia on her way out of the courtyard. Their eyes meet.

SOPHIA

Are you OK?

The girl either doesn't understand her or has no interest in discussing her problems with a stranger. She leaves without a word. Sophia watches her go.

BELLA O/S

Her heart is broken.

Sophia turns to find a pretty Italian woman in her twenties who just watched that whole exchange. She is BELLA.

SOPHIA

Do you know her?

Bella shakes her head.

SOPHIA

How do you know her heart's broken?

Nods to her letter on the wall.

BELLA

She wrote to Juliet.

SOPHIA

And?

BELLA

When your leg is broken, you go to the doctor. When your heart is broken, you come to Juliet.

Bella approaches the wall. Sophia follows her. She looks over the dozens of proclamations of love and longing.

SOPHIA

There are so many of them.

BELLA

It's like this every day.

SOPHIA

Why do they do it?

BELLA  
They want answers.

SOPHIA  
That they'll never get.

BELLA  
Says who?

And with that she starts collecting the letters, beginning with the girl's from the street.

Sophia is startled at this intrusion, it doesn't seem right.

SOPHIA  
Hey. Whoa. Wait. What are you doing? You can't do that.

BELLA  
Why can't I?

SOPHIA  
Because it's like taking pennies out of a wishing well or something, these are people's wishes, you can't just take people's wishes.

BELLA  
But then how are we supposed to give them answers?

This throws Sophia. She gives Bella an inquiring look.

SOPHIA  
Who's we?

BELLA  
Come. I'll show you.

They walk out of the courtyard and across an alley to a restaurant. Sophia looks up and sees that it's called: "Lettere a Giulietta".

**INT. LETTERE A GIULIETTA RESTAURANT -- LATER**

Bella walks through the restaurant into the kitchen. Sophia follows. The kitchen is very busy. In the middle of it all is the head chef, ANGELINA, a round woman in her sixties with a no nonsense air about her. She's barking orders at her staff when Bella and Sophia approach. (*Italian in Italics*)



BELLA  
*Mama, this is Sophia, I'm just  
 gonna show her upstairs.*

Angelina smiles at Sophia. Sophia smiles back. Angelina looks at the basket of letters Bella is carrying.

ANGELINA  
*Looks like you'll be having a busy  
 night.*

Bella nods then turns to Sophia.

BELLA  
 This way.

They walk through the kitchen and up some stairs into...

**INT. THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARIES OF JULIET -- LATER**

It's a small modern-looking office just above the restaurant. Big arching windows overlook a courtyard, Posters on the wall show scenes from "Romeo and Juliet" movies of the past.

There are desks and filing cabinets and computers. Three friendly-looking WOMEN look up as Sophia and Bella walk in.

BELLA  
 Ladies, this is Sophia.

Sophia kind of half waves at the smiling women.

BELLA  
 These are The Secretaries of  
 Juliet. We respond to the letters  
 she receives from around the world.

SOPHIA  
 You mean you actually write back?  
 To everyone?

Bella smiles.

BELLA  
 We give answers.

**INT. THE SECRETARIES' OFFICE -- LATER**

Bella leads Sophia on a tour of the office.

SOPHIA  
So? How do you decide which of you  
answers which letter?

BELLA  
We all have our areas of expertise.

They pass a kindly looking woman in her seventies, MARIA.

BELLA  
Maria has been happily married for  
fifty-one years so she tends to  
handle mostly marital issues...

At the next desk is a bookish woman in her late fifties who  
has the air of someone who has seen it all, FRANCESCA.

BELLA  
Francesca made her living as a  
nurse so she usually does illness  
and caring for the sick...

Lastly they approach an diminutive elderly woman reading a  
letter and slowly shaking her head, DONATELLA.

BELLA  
Donatella has twelve children,  
twenty-seven grandchildren, and six  
great grandchildren...  
(obviously)  
She handles family matters.

SOPHIA  
And what about you?

Bella hesitates to answer. The other Women all look up from  
their work with big smiles at this question.

DONATELLA  
Anything to do with love...

MARIA  
Bella is our romantic...

FRANCESCA  
Our *hopeless* romantic...

BELLA  
At least I'm some kind of romantic.

Sophia is still trying to get her head around all of it.

SOPHIA  
So? Who pays for all this?

BELLA

We're all volunteers. We pitch in  
what we can when we need to.

Bella nods. Sophia is blown away.

SOPHIA

Wow.

Maria walks over with the basket of letters Bella collected.

MARIA

We're gonna start reading.

Bella notices Sophia looking curiously at the letters.

BELLA

Would you like to help?

SOPHIA

Oh. No. I shouldn't. I couldn't.  
I'm not much of an expert on love  
or romance or...

Bella gently places a letter written in English in her hand.

BELLA

You just have to read.

Sophia takes the letter.

CLOSE ON: Envelopes being opened with postage marks from all  
over the world.

A volunteer TRANSLATOR works to transcribe some of the  
letters written in foreign dialects.

Sophia and The Secretaries sit reading and sorting the day's  
letters. As they read, we watch their reactions as we hear  
certain portions of those letters read to us by the authors.

The VOICES are young and old, different accents, different  
tones, but all are drenched in the same sense of longing.

ITALIAN GIRL V/O

"Dear Juliet, how do you know when  
you're in love? Can you know?..."

AUSTRALIAN WOMAN V/O

"...Juliet, I don't think I want to  
marry him but I so want to get  
married. What should I do?..."

AMERICAN TEEN V/O  
 "...Is it weird to think sex is gross? I mean cause it kinda is, right? I'm not like weird for thinking that am I?..."

Sophia places the teen's letter in one of several piles.

**INT. THE SECRETARIES' OFFICE -- LATER THAT EVENING**

The letters have been read and sorted. The Secretaries are busy composing their responses - all by hand.

Sophia sits watching Bella write.

SOPHIA  
 Do you ever worry about being wrong?

BELLA  
 What do you mean?

SOPHIA  
 You're giving answers but how do you know they're the right answers?

Bella considers the question for a beat.

BELLA  
 We don't tell anyone what to do, we just share our experiences, we let them know they're not alone. There are no wrong right or wrong answers when you write from your heart.

Sophia smiles at that sentiment.

**INT. JUST OUTSIDE A BOARD ROOM IN NEW YORK. WHERE:**

Bobby has excused himself from an editor's meeting to take a call. The look on his face tell us he regrets doing so.

BOBBY  
 So people all over the world are crazy enough to write love letters and ask the advice of a fictional teenage suicide... and these women are all crazy enough to write back under the alias of the very same fictional teenage suicide... is that pretty much the gist of it?

INTERCUT: Sophia is on her phone in The Secretaries' office. She stutters and stammers - trying to spin it.

SOPHIA

Well. Yeah. No. I'd probably focus more on their moving, self-less attempts to... spread hope, and answer love's unanswered questions.

Bobby considers for a beat - a beat more than usual. Before:

BOBBY

It's not a feature. There's no hook. Get me a hook then maybe, just maybe, I'll let you go fishing... And Sophia?

SOPHIA

(hopeful)  
Yeah?

BOBBY

Next time you call it better be to find out what kind of wine I like.

**EXT. LETTERE A GIULIETTA RESTAURANT -- PATIO -- THE NEXT DAY**

Sophia sits at a table with her laptop open. She's glaring at that cursor blinking on that blank document.

Bella approaches with a huge bowl of pasta topped with steaming meatballs in a tomato sauce.

SOPHIA

I didn't order...

BELLA

My mother's meatballs, they're legendary. Just a little thank you for your help last night.

SOPHIA

"Little"?

Victor approaches carrying the Verona guide book, smiling.

VICTOR

Supplier meetings are officially done. I am all yours as promised.  
(he kisses her)  
You want to check out that Museo... whatever it's called?

Sophia turns to Bella.

SOPHIA

Victor, this is Bella, she's one of  
The Secretaries I told you about.

Bella smiles at Victor but he's not looking at her just now.  
He's caught a scent.

VICTOR

What's that smell?

He looks at the plate in front of her.

SOPHIA

Victor?

He picks up her plate and sticks his nose very close to it  
and inhales deeply. He's staggered by the aroma.

VICTOR

My God.

He grabs her fork and tastes. He groans with pleasure.

BELLA

You like?

VICTOR

D'you know what's in this?

BELLA

Oregano, garlic, parsley, bread...

He shakes his head "no" then pauses for effect.

VICTOR

History. Years and years,  
generations and generations, of  
history. Who made this?

SOPHIA

Her mother.

VICTOR

I have to meet her.

Victor goes without waiting for Bella who looks at Sophia  
curiously then follows him. Sophia is alone at the table.

She looks at the meatballs suspiciously then tastes one.

SOPHIA

That's a good meatball.

**EXT. LETTERE A GIULIETTA RESTAURANT -- PATIO -- EVENING**

Sophia's plate is long since empty. She looks at it and then at her watch. She gets up and heads back towards the...

**INT. KITCHEN. WHERE:**

She finds Victor in chef's whites cooking with Angelina. He looks up at Sophia as she walks in.

VICTOR  
Have you met Angelina?

SOPHIA  
I have.

VICTOR  
She's a genius.

SOPHIA  
She is.

ANGELINA  
He's such a charmer.

SOPHIA  
Isn't he just?  
(holds up the guide book)  
So? You about ready to go?

He hesitates. Victor treads lightly around the following:

VICTOR  
Yeah, sure, here's the thing though, Angelina's offered to let me work a dinner service with her tonight. She's gonna teach me to make that marinara. Can you imagine that marinara in Manhattan?

Sophia is clearly annoyed.

SOPHIA  
And what am I supposed to do?

Bella steps forward.

BELLA  
You could always help us.

Victor jumps all over this suggestion.

VICTOR

Great idea. That is a great idea.  
You write. I'll cook. Win-win.

Sophia just looks at him, thinks about arguing, then doesn't.

**EXT. COURTYARD CASA DI GIULIETTA -- LATER**

Sophia and Bella gather up the day's letters in silence.  
Sophia is clearly still miffed about Victor bailing on her.

BELLA

Your Victor is very... passionate.

SOPHIA

About food. My Victor is very  
passionate about food.

This revelation unsettles Bella she looks like she wants to say something more but stops herself.

They finish collecting and are headed out when Sophia notices a letter they missed stuck on a remote corner of the wall.

SOPHIA

Forgot one.

Sophia jogs back to get it when she pulls it from the ancient wall, a large piece of mortar falls at her feet. She looks back at Bella as if to "sorry." Bella shrugs it off.

BELLA

It happens.

Sophia picks up the piece of mortar and tries to slide it back in place when something catches her eye hidden deep within the newly made crack in the wall. It looks like paper.

Sophia slides her fingers into the crack. She manages to grab the paper and pull it out. She stares in amazement.

CLOSE ON: An envelope. It's old and stained. The writing is quaintly old fashioned in that spidery kind of way.

SOPHIA O/S - PRELAP

Look at the date...

**INT. SECRETARIES OF JULIET OFFICE -- LATER**

BELLA

1951! My God.



The Secretaries are gathered around Sophia who is holding an old handwritten letter.

BELLA

What does it say?

SOPHIA

"I didn't go to him, Juliet. I didn't go to Alfonso. I was on holiday with my parents; he was a local boy, he picked grapes at a vineyard. It was his eyes. I still remember the first time those eyes found me. My parents would never approve so we made plans to run away. We were supposed to meet at that vineyard but when the time came, I couldn't bring myself to go. My parents and I returned to London the next morning. I'm so afraid. I fear the only thing worse than not being with him would be knowing he doesn't want to be with me. Please, tell me what to do. With love, Claire Smith."

Silence. Sophia just stares at the letter, affected.

BELLA

I think she came back. She flew in the face of her parents and her friends to find her one true love. And she made sweet love to her Alfonso for the rest of her life.

FRANCESCA

I think she found him. They had ten children. Then he got old and bald and fat and she wonders every day what happened to that gorgeous Romeo she left her family for.

MARIA

I think she stayed in England where she married a Duke and lived happily ever after in his castle...

DONATELLA

And I'll bet when she's making love to that Duke she's imagining her first love. I do that all the time.

Everyone laughs except Sophia who's still holding the letter.

SOPHIA  
I'd like to write back.

The women all stop laughing and look at her.

MARIA  
Why? She's probably moved.

DONATELLA  
Or died.

FRANCESCA  
Probably moved and died.

SOPHIA  
Probably. But she wanted an answer.

Bella smiles at this she gives Sophia a pen and paper.

BELLA  
So give her one.

CUT TO:

SHOTS OF: The Secretaries quietly going about reading and replying to that day's batch of letters efficiently.

They write dozens of different letters throughout the night.

But Sophia works only on that one letter to Claire Smith. She chooses each word carefully.

**INT. SECRETARIES OF JULIET OFFICE -- LATER THAT NIGHT**

The Secretaries have left for the evening. Only Bella and Sophia remain. Bella looks over her shoulder at Sophia's letter - it's rather long at this point.

BELLA  
Let's hope if she gets it she has some time on her hands.

SOPHIA  
Too long?

BELLA  
No...  
(smiles)  
...not for a novella.

Bella puts on her coat and heads out the door.

BELLA

Lock the door and turn off the lights when you're done, OK.

**INT. SECRETARIES OF JULIET OFFICE -- EVEN LATER THAT NIGHT**

Sophia has finally finished the letter. She addresses the envelope and puts on a stamp. She stretches, yawns. There's a knock at the door. Sophia turns to find Victor coming in with a plate of anti pasti. She smiles. He smiles back.

SOPHIA

Hey you.

He sets down the plate of food and kisses her.

VICTOR

You have fun playing secretary?

SOPHIA

I did actually. I forgot what it was like to just write. It was nice.

VICTOR

I'm glad.

SOPHIA

How'd it go with Angelina?

VICTOR

It was unreal. I thought I was good but she's outta my league. She cooks from feel. No measurements, no timers, no prep, everything's fresh, she's incredible. I could learn a lot from her in a week...

Silence as he lets that last sentence just hang there. Sophia realizes what he's asking, why he brought her the anti pasti. She stops eating it and just looks at him.

SOPHIA

You promised this trip wouldn't just be about the restaurant?

VICTOR

I know. I know I did. But this is a chance to learn sixty years of culinary knowledge *in a week*. It's a once-in-a-life time opportunity for me - for us...

Sophia sighs.

VICTOR

But I haven't said yes yet. And I  
did promise you. So? If you say  
don't do it, I won't do it.

Sophia knows she can't tell him not to.

SOPHIA

OK.

VICTOR

Is that OK like it's really not OK?

SOPHIA

It's just OK.

That's good enough. He kisses her. She tries to smile.

He puts his arm around her as they walk to the door. Sophia  
turns the light off and drops her letter in the out box.

**I/E. VERONA. VARIOUS OF:**

Sophia exploring the streets of Verona.

She walks across the Roman Ponte Pietro to look at the river.

She shops in a street market in the centre of the city.

She tours the Verona Arena and the Museo Castelvecchio.

She eats dinner with Victor and Angelina. Victor is chatting  
up Angelina about the food. Sophia sits quietly sipping wine.

She walks down the chic Via Mazzini casually window-browsing  
all the boutiques. She has a few carrier bags in her hands.

**INT. LETTERE A GIULIETTA RESTAURANT -- KITCHEN -- EVENING**

Victor enjoys himself in the kitchen amongst all the noise  
and chaos. He's chopping, stirring, tasting, the guy sweats  
enthusiasm. He tastes a bowl of meatballs and marinara, nods  
his satisfaction, then refuses to let the WAITER take them  
out.

VICTOR

No, no. I'll do it.

Victor picks up the bowl, makes the sign of the cross, then  
should barges his way out into the restaurant where...

The Secretaries of Juliet are sitting at a long table with Angelina, drinking wine and laughing loudly.

Victor proudly places the bowl of meatballs in the middle of the table and then declares in his best flawed Italian:

VICTOR  
*Ladies, I give you my balls.*

There is a pause before the women burst out laughing.

VICTOR  
Please, help yourselves.

MARIA  
If were thirty years younger I  
would.

The women laugh again and start serving them out.

FRANCESCA  
Attempting Angelina's meatballs...  
either very brave or very stupid.

They all taste them, adjudicating as they chew. For Victor this is sheer agony. All eyes are on Angelina. It seems like an eternity before she starts to slowly nod her head approvingly. The others follow suit and start clapping.

Victor is so overcome that he sweeps Angelina into his arms and kisses the old woman passionately on the lips. Everyone cheers. Angelina is quite flustered and flushed by the kiss.

SOPHIA  
I remember when he used to have  
that effect on me.

Bella laughs and stands up tapping her wine glass.

BELLA  
To our new friends. Who leave us  
tomorrow as they continue onto  
Palermo but will remain in our  
hearts. To Victor and Sophia.

Everyone raises their glass.

ALL  
To Victor and Sophia!

They clink and drink. Victor takes in the moment. He smiles at Sophia like someone trying to keep a secret who can't.

VICTOR  
Sophia?

She turns to see him smiling big at her.

SOPHIA  
What?

VICTOR  
I want you to be my front of house.

SOPHIA  
Your what?

Victor theatrically drops to one knee - playing to the crowd.

VICTOR  
(takes her hand)  
Will you be my front of house?

A beat of confusion.

SOPHIA  
Is that like code or a metaphor or something?

VICTOR  
I want you to run the restaurant.

She just stares at him - flabbergasted. He stands up.

SOPHIA  
What about my job?

VICTOR  
You hate your job.

SOPHIA  
But I love writing. I still want to write. You know that.

VICTOR  
You always talk about taking a step forward, making a change, this is a change.

SOPHIA  
I was thinking more like a change to The New Yorker not Zagats.

Silence. This isn't going how Victor has envisioned.

VICTOR

I want us to do this together. It won't be the same without you.

Sophia doesn't know what to say or where to look. She just stares at him speechless. Before she can answer a subtly handsome Englishman enters the restaurant. He is CHARLIE.

CHARLIE

Excuse me, I'm sorry to interrupt, but are you the Secretaries of Juliet?

BELLA

You found them.

CHARLIE

Great. So which one of you wrote this letter to my grandmother, Claire Smith?

Sophia can't believe it. How fantastic! She steps forward.

SOPHIA

I wrote it.

CHARLIE

It was a very thoughtful letter.

SOPHIA

Thank you.

CHARLIE

Now if you wouldn't mind telling me what the hell you were thinking?

A deathly silence. This is not what she was expecting.

**INT. LETTERE A GIULIETTA RESTAURANT -- LATER**

Sophia and Charlie sit at table removed from the others. Victor is visible in the background serving The Secretaries.

SOPHIA

She deserved an answer.

CHARLIE

Fifty seven years ago maybe. Not now.

SOPHIA

Why not?

CHARLIE

Because she was a fifteen-year-old girl then. She's a seventy-two-year-old woman now.

SOPHIA

I can do math. Math is not a reason not to write a letter.

CHARLIE

It was a teenage infatuation, a holiday romance, can you imagine what could've happened if she hadn't seen sense?

SOPHIA

Well you wouldn't be here, I mean at all. Which I'd have to say would be an upside.

CHARLIE

What good did you think could possibly come from writing her that letter?

SOPHIA

What harm could come from it?

Pause as they eye each other up.

SOPHIA

So that's it? You came all the way from England to give me a lecture, I'm impressed. Or did you just happen to be in town?

CHARLIE

No, I came because I couldn't let my grandmother come on her own.

SOPHIA

Claire's here? Why?

CHARLIE

I think even you might be able to work that one out.

SOPHIA

Oh my God, she's come to find her Alfonso, that's awesome, I want to meet her.



CHARLIE

I want to play for Manchester United but I'm shit at football.

SOPHIA

You honestly don't think she'd want to meet me?

CHARLIE

I honestly think she has no interest in meeting a woman who can manage to jam "oh my God" and "awesome" into the same sentence.

SOPHIA

Did you ask her?

CHARLIE

It just wouldn't occur to her.

SOPHIA

Where are you staying?

CHARLIE

(laughs)

D'you really think I'm that stupid?

SOPHIA

I haven't decided yet.

A beat. Charlie gets up from the table.

SOPHIA

Why did you come here tonight?

CHARLIE

I was just curious to see what kind of imbecile would think writing that letter was such a great idea. I should've known it'd be an American. Good night.

He strides out of the restaurant. Sophia is appalled at his rudeness and is stuck to her chair for a moment.

She looks across the room at Victor serving The Secretaries their entrees. They applaud his efforts. He's beaming.

Sophia thinks for a beat. Then grabs her coat and leaves.

**EXT. LETTERE A GIULIETTA RESTAURANT -- LATER**

Sophia emerges from the restaurant and looks around to see which way Charlie has gone. She spots him and starts to follow him at a discreet distance.

At one point he gets the feeling he's being followed and stops. He quickly turns around just as Sophia ducks into a shop doorway.

Finally he arrives at his hotel and heads inside. Sophia waits for a moment before heading in herself.

**INT. HOTEL VERONA -- RECEPTION -- LATER**

Sophia waits as the RECEPTIONIST looks something up on a computer screen.

RECEPTIONIST  
*Claire Smith - room 32.*

SOPHIA  
Thank you.

**INT. HOTEL VERONA -- CORRIDOR -- LATER**

Sophia walks down the hallway to room 32. She's nervous as she takes a deep breath and knocks on the door. She adjusts her hair and straightens her dress. The door opens. And her face drops as she is confronted by Charlie.

CHARLIE  
(whispers)  
What the bloody hell are you doing here?

He moves out pulling the door semi-closed behind him.

SOPHIA  
I think maybe even you can work that one out.

CHARLIE  
I told you she doesn't want to meet you.

SOPHIA  
You told me it wouldn't occur to her to want to meet me.

A voice comes from inside the room.

CLAIRE O/S  
Who is it Charlie?

SOPHIA  
(shouts)  
My name is Sophia. I wrote the  
letter.

CLAIRE O/S  
Well for goodness sake come in.

Charlie looks daggers at her then reluctantly opens the door.

**INT. CLAIRE'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS**

Sophia walks into the room and there she is, CLAIRE SMITH, a regal beauty at the age of seventy two. She gets up and for a fleeting moment, bathed in a Veronese backlight, she almost looks like the fifteen year old who sent that letter all those years ago.

They take each other's hand and don't let go. They take a long look at each other - so many questions on either side

SOPHIA  
You look like I thought you'd look.

CLAIRE  
Since you wrote to a fifteen-year-old I'll take that as a compliment.

Sophia smiles. Claire smiles. Charlie isn't smiling.

CLAIRE  
How did you find us?

SOPHIA  
Charlie found me, actually.

Claire turns to Charlie who shrugs as if to say "surprise".

SOPHIA  
He told me you were here and said  
you might like to meet me.

CLAIRE  
How uncharacteristically thoughtful  
of you dear.

Slight pause. He looks at Sophia who smiles innocently.

CHARLIE

Well, in the circumstances, it seemed a little churlish not to meet the person responsible for this voyage of lunacy.

CLAIRE

Charlie doesn't approve. Which makes it all the more fun. Would you like some tea? Oh no, of course, you're American. We'll order coffee. Charlie?

He obediently goes to the phone.

**INT. CLAIRE'S ROOM -- LATER**

They all sit having coffee while Claire talks.

CLAIRE

I waited for a reply to that letter for two years. Once I even plucked up the courage to run away and find him. But it only lasted as far as Waterloo Station, I'm afraid.

CHARLIE

So why is it you never mentioned him to me till last week then?

CLAIRE

It was such a long time ago, dear. And I met your grandfather and over the years I did my best to forget that summer in Tuscany and the bronzed Adonis of a boy who kissed me for the first time. He was the first person to ever tell me I was beautiful. And boy did it sound more romantic in Italian.

SOPHIA

I'll bet.

CLAIRE

"Clara, siete cosi bella."

CHARLIE

But you and Gramps were happy enough, weren't you?

CLAIRE

That's exactly right - happy enough. We were a "good couple" with much to be grateful for. Except for you Charlie, you've been the bane of my existence.

Sophia smiles, intrigued by these two.

CLAIRE

Then when Jack died - there's a lot of Jack in Charlie, funnily enough - I grieved profoundly for years. But as time went by his memory became a distant, warm glow, instead of a searing pain in my side. Then, unexpectedly, at odd hours of the day, in my dreams at night, I found myself thinking about Alfonso... which made it all the more extraordinary when, out of the blue, your letter arrived. I'm so grateful you wrote it. There were so many reasons not to.

CHARLIE

I'll say.

SOPHIA

So what happens now?

CLAIRE

Well the thing is, I think we've found him.

SOPHIA

Really? Where?

CLAIRE

Just outside Verona. Quite close to where he used to live, actually.

SOPHIA

No! That's incredible.

CLAIRE

Charlie thinks it's a dreadful mistake.

SOPHIA

It'll be fine, really it will.

Sophia looks at her watch.

SOPHIA

I'm so sorry. I have to go. I'm flying down to Palermo with my boyfriend for a few days before we go home. He's found some kind of weird cheese down there.

CLAIRE

(slightly disappointed)  
Of course you are. Thank you so much for the letter.

They hug. Sophia turns to Charlie who extends his hand stiffly.

CHARLIE

It's been a pleasure.

SOPHIA

I guess your idea of pleasure and mine are two very different things.

For a moment he seems charmed by her directness and honesty. He smiles. Claire gives her a piece of paper.

CLAIRE

My phone number back in London.  
Will you call me?

SOPHIA

I will. I have to know how it ends.

**INT. VERONA APARTMENT -- BEDROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT**

Sophia and Victor are in the middle of packing for Palermo.

Sophia's head is still in Claire's hotel room. Victor is focused intently on packing, he's not really listening.

SOPHIA

I so hope it works out for her...

VICTOR

Hmm.

SOPHIA

I mean imagine if they found each other after fifty years...

VICTOR

That'd be something.

SOPHIA  
Because I found a letter in a wall,  
it's crazy, it's like no story  
that's ever been told...

VICTOR  
Right.

Sophia pauses on this thought. Then the penny drops.

SOPHIA  
I have to write it.

VICTOR  
You can start on the plane.

SOPHIA  
I have to stay.

Victor's listening now.

VICTOR  
Wait. What?

SOPHIA  
I have to know out how it ends.

VICTOR  
What about Palermo? The cheese?

SOPHIA  
You don't need me for cheese. You  
can pick me up on your way back.  
I'll write. You taste. Win win.

Sophia starts unpacking her suitcase. Victor stammers.

VICTOR  
Can't we at least discuss this?

SOPHIA  
I started it. I have to finish it.

VICTOR  
But? Who are these people? You're  
just gonna go off with them? They  
could be serial killers...

SOPHIA  
Killers who oh-so-cleverly planted  
a half century old love letter in a  
wall for me to find. How devious.

She smiles, keeps unpacking. Victor just stands there racking his brain for a reason she has to come with him.

VICTOR  
But? Who's gonna take the pictures?

**INT. HOTEL VERONA -- LOBBY -- LATER**

Sophia is walking through Claire's hotel on her cell phone.

SOPHIA  
I already have the title: "Does  
True Love Have a Shelf Life?"

INTERCUT: Bobby in his office on the phone with Sophia. He's eating Chinese food as he scrolls through and answers e-mail.

BOBBY  
You can't actually think she'll  
find this guy? A hundred bucks says  
he's dead, married or gay.

SOPHIA  
But what if he's not? What if she  
does? What if that spark is still  
there after fifty years?

He can't. He nods to himself. Takes a bite of an egg roll.

BOBBY  
Could be something there.

SOPHIA  
So I should write it?

BOBBY  
You can write it. Doesn't mean I'll  
print it.

Sophia smiles - good enough for her.

**INT. HOTEL VERONA -- CORRIDOR -- LATER**

Sophia is standing at Claire's door. Charlie opens it.

SOPHIA  
Hi!

CHARLIE  
Oh God.



**EXT. STREETS OF VERONA -- DAY**

Sophia, Claire and Charlie walk through the streets towards Juliet's house. Charlie casts a disbelieving glance at Sophia - What is she doing here?

CLAIRE

Alfonso had such a way with plants. Working those fields was spiritual for him. He'd always talk about the land in Tuscany, the way it smelled, the moisture in the soil, perfect for the grapes he'd grow there one day. He used to say all he needed to be happy were days in those fields and nights with me.

Sophia smiles at this.

CLAIRE

When he was working I'd pray for the sun to come out because then he'd have to take off his shirt.

CHARLIE

Nana!

CLAIRE

He was so solid and brown. The sweat would glisten off his back like little jewels. The thought of it still sends shivers down my spine.

CHARLIE

Alright, I think we get the picture.

CLAIRE

What, you don't approve of your old Gran having carnal thoughts?

CHARLIE

Oh for heaven's sake.

CLAIRE

You're such a prude. And you're ageist.

CHARLIE

I am not! I love old people.

SOPHIA  
So long as they're not thinking  
dirty thoughts.

Charlie bristles. Before he can think of a deft reply...

SOPHIA  
Here we are.

They walk into Juliet's courtyard.

CLAIRE  
Gosh, I remember this so well. We  
were on our way home. I was so sad.  
Then I looked up at her and thought -  
she'd know what to do. I'll ask  
her.

SOPHIA  
Sorry it took her so long to get  
back to you.

Claire smiles.

CLAIRE  
No matter. I'm here now.

A familiar voice comes from behind them.

BELLA O/S  
Is this her?

Sophia turns and finds Bella holding a basket of the day's  
letters. Bella is looking at Claire.

SOPHIA  
Claire. This is Bella. She's one of  
The Secretaries.

CHARLIE  
Ah yes, another interfering  
busybody. Perfect.

Neither Bella nor Claire pay him any mind. They smile.

BELLA  
It's such a pleasure to meet you.

CLAIRE  
And such an honor to meet you.

Claire goes to shake her hand but Bella grabs her and hugs  
her and kisses her on both cheeks.

**INT. LETTERE A GIULIETTA RESTAURANT -- LATER**

Claire is the guest of honor at the head of a table with Charlie, Sophia and the rest of The Secretaries. They're eating dinner. The Secretaries are all smiling at Claire.

BELLA

Are you nervous?

CLAIRE

A bit I suppose. What if I've turned him into something he isn't? He's always existed in my mind's eye as a model of perfection. Like a '57 Bentley Continental. What if he's actually a clapped out old Alfa Romeo with bundles of nose hair? What if he doesn't remember me at all - if I was simply not to him what he was to me?

Slight pause as they all think about this. Charlie wades in.

CHARLIE

Right. Let's go home then before it all ends in tears.

SOPHIA

What is it with you? It's like you really don't want this to work out.

Charlie is aghast at such a suggestion - a little too aghast.

CHARLIE

I'm a realist not a fantasist, that's the point.

BELLA

No it's not. The point is you're English.

MARIA

No romance.

FRANCESCA

Lots of cynicism.

DONATELLA

Cold as fish.

CHARLIE

You don't have to be a cold fish to think the idea of true love lasting forever is ridiculous.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
 Actually, come to that, the very  
 idea of true love at all leaves one  
 struggling.

BELLA  
 Well in that case we take it all  
 back.

Everyone laughs except Charlie. Claire smiles softly at him.

CLAIRE  
 Charlie why don't you get yourself  
 out of the line of fire and settle  
 the bill?

He motions for the waiter to bring the bill. As soon as she  
 sees this Angelina comes striding across the restaurant.

ANGELINA  
 No charge.

CHARLIE  
 I'm sorry we couldn't possibly...

ANGELINA  
 I'm sorry, you can possibly.

He looks at her - realizes this isn't someone you mess with.

**EXT. STREETS OF VERONA -- LATER THAT NIGHT**

The Secretaries are walking with Claire, laughing and  
 chatting. Charlie and Sophia follow at a short distance.

CHARLIE  
 You know, I'm not the buttoned up,  
 buttock clenching, killjoy you lot  
 are trying to make me out to be.

SOPHIA  
 Right. We made you argue that true  
 love is ridiculous. Thanks for  
 clearing that up.

CHARLIE  
 It's just that I am genuinely  
 worried for her.

SOPHIA  
 She'll be fine.

CHARLIE

Physically yes. But what if he breaks her heart? What if he laughs in her face? What if he doesn't remember her? Is it so unreasonable for me to worry about that?

SOPHIA

My gut says that'll never happen.

CHARLIE

Then you really do have greater faith in mankind than I do.

They walk on watching the women walking ahead. Sophia smiles.

CHARLIE

You really think it's possible two people can be apart for so long and pick up right where they left off?

Sophia reflects on the question.

SOPHIA

I don't know. I hope it is.

CHARLIE

Why are you doing this?

SOPHIA

To find out, I guess.

(smiles)

Plus I think I've got a bit of a crush on your grandmother.

He looks at her slightly disturbed.

**INT. HOTEL VERONA -- SOPHIA'S ROOM -- NIGHT**

Sophia sits at a desk with her laptop open. She starts to type. Stops for a moment. She closes the laptop. Something doesn't feel right.

**INT. HOTEL VERONA -- NEXT MORNING**

Sophia, Claire and Charlie are loading up the rental car.

SOPHIA

Before we go anywhere I need to be straight with you both. My being here is not entirely selfless. It started as that.

(MORE)

SOPHIA (cont'd)

And I do want to help. But I'd also like to write an article about what happens. I want to tell your story, Claire.

CHARLIE

A bloody journalist! I should've known.

SOPHIA

Hardly. I'm a fact checker. I've never had a word published.

CHARLIE

And you think Gran's story is your ticket to being published. Yeah?

SOPHIA

I think her story is a story worth telling.

Claire smiles her approval.

CLAIRE

Well I think that's simply marvellous. We both get something out of it. It's a what d'you call it? A win win.

Sophia smiles appreciatively.

CHARLIE

I'm so pleased for you both but where, exactly, do I fit in?

CLAIRE

Don't worry, dear. Every story needs a comedy character.

She gets into the car. Sophia smiles at Charlie.

SOPHIA

This is going to write itself.

Something starts buzzing in her bag. She fishes around in it and brings out her cell phone. She grimaces.

SOPHIA

I missed Victor. I had it on silent all night. He's probably frantic.

CHARLIE

I would be. I'd have probably killed myself by now - in a most violent manner leaving a poignant note which would haunt you forever.

CLAIRE O/S

(from inside the car)  
Charlie!

Sophia can't help but smile at Charlie as she dials Victor.

SOPHIA

I hope he's not too worried.

**INT. AN ORGANIC DAIRY FARM IN PALERMO. WHERE:**

Victor's looking anything but worried as he's enthralled with an assortment of samples of a stocky CHEESE MAKER'S finest Italian cheeses. He's a kid in a candy store. He tastes some fresh made pecorino romano. It leaves him speechless.

His Black berry - set on silent - is flashing on his belt buckle. CLOSE ON: The Display. The ID reads: "Sophia"

CUT BACK TO:

Sophia putting her phone away and getting in the car with Charlie and Claire.

CHARLIE

Was he frantic?

SOPHIA

I couldn't get him. He's probably out in the country out of range.

CHARLIE

Or he's working on that note.

Claire smacks Charlie on the top of his head. Sophia laughs.

SOPHIA

How about you? Is there some lucky girl who makes you frantic?

CHARLIE

There is one - was one - until recently, Patricia. But the less said about her the better... so currently, no, I am without "frantic" in my life and the sense of relief is palpable.

SOPHIA  
For everyone I'm sure.

**I/E. CAR (DRIVING) -- LATER**

They travel towards Arezzo, Charlie driving, Claire beside him and Sophia in the back leaning forward between the seats.

SOPHIA  
Victor used to work at this little Italian place in The City. I'd go there to work every week. I'd get a double espresso and a water - no ice. And he'd come by my table, tell jokes, make small talk. Then one week he bought my espresso, a week later he bought me lunch, then dinner, a week after that he cooked me dinner at his place, and three months later I moved in with him.

CLAIRE  
How romantic.

With a longing that tells us this was as romantic as it got:

SOPHIA  
Yeah... it was...

CHARLIE  
So you live with a waiter then.

CLAIRE  
Charlie you're such a snob.

CHARLIE  
I am not. He might have been a bus boy.

SOPHIA  
He's a chef actually. A talented one. He's opening his own place...  
(slight pause)  
It's gonna be great, I know it. He won't let it be anything else.

CLAIRE  
Sounds like quite a catch. Your mother must be pleased.

SOPHIA  
I'm sure she would be.



Claire looks worried she's made a dreadful assumption.

CLAIRE  
Oh dear. Has she passed on then?

SOPHIA  
Moved on is more accurate. She left  
when I was little.

CLAIRE  
I'm sorry.

SOPHIA  
(shrugging it off)  
Don't be. I'm not.

Charlie looks at her in the rear view mirror as she stares out of the window and sees that nothing could be further from the truth as she displays a rare moment of vulnerability.

**EXT. FARM HOUSE, OUTSIDE VERONA -- LATER**

The car stops at a narrow country road in front of an old farmhouse surrounded by meadows and olive groves.

Claire, Sophia, and Charlie look at the old house through the car window. Claire doesn't move. Sophia takes her hand and gives it a squeeze. Claire smiles then gets out of the car.

**EXT. FARM HOUSE -- FRONT DOOR -- LATER**

The trio approaches the door. Charlie glances at Claire. She nods yes. Charlie reluctantly knocks on the door. They wait a moment. Nothing. He shrugs.

CHARLIE  
No one in. Come on. Let's go.

SOPHIA  
Charlie?!

He takes Claire's hand and starts for the car. Then the door opens. They stop and turn as ALFONSO appears at the door... he's 73, dark and ruggedly handsome. Sophia and Charlie gape.

CHARLIE  
(in fluent Italian)  
*Are you Alfonso De Annunzio?*

The man nods. Charlie and Sophia exchange a glance - we've found him! - but alas Claire knows immediately that:

CLAIRE  
That's not him.

SOPHIA  
Are you sure?

CLAIRE  
It's not him.

SOPHIA  
But he looks...

CLAIRE  
It's the eyes.

CHARLIE  
*Do you remember what you were doing  
in the summer of 1951?*

ALFONSO  
(smiles wistfully)  
*Ah, the summer of 1951, I'll never  
forget it, I met the most beautiful  
girl with long, brown hair...*

CHARLIE  
Nana!

But Claire has already turned away, disappointed, and is walking towards the car.

CLAIRE  
They're not his eyes. It's not him.

ALFONSO  
*We married that year ... and she  
gave me nothing but trouble from  
that day on! I curse that woman!*

CHARLIE  
Right...

He and Sophia follow Claire to the car as Alfonso continues raving from his doorstep.

ALFONSO  
*I curse her eyes! I curse her  
teeth! I curse her mustache!*

They get into the car. A beat of silence.

CHARLIE

Right, well that's that. We gave it a fair shot. Can't say we didn't try. Sorry Nana. Truly.

SOPHIA

Are you for real?

CHARLIE

If I actually knew what that question meant, I might attempt to answer it.

SOPHIA

He can't be the only Alfonso De Annunzio in Tuscany.

CHARLIE

He's the only one around here. Are you suggesting we knock on the doors of every Alfonso we can find?

SOPHIA

Are you suggesting we don't?

Charlie looks at Claire. It's obvious she wants to keep looking. Charlie sighs as if to say "Fine".

CHARLIE

This is madness. Total madness.

SOPHIA

How many can there be?

**EXT. HOTEL SWIMMING POOL -- THE NEXT DAY**

Claire is lying on a sun bed in the shade. Charlie swims relentlessly up and down the pool - quite clearly for exercise rather than pleasure. Sophia sits at a nearby table working away at her laptop. She finishes typing.

SOPHIA

Thirty six.

CLAIRE

That many?

Claire sighs. Sophia has an idea.

SOPHIA

I might be able to find some pictures online. Give me a minute.

At this point Charlie hauls himself out of the pool. He has a surprisingly well toned body. This guy obviously works out. Sophia can't help but notice.

SOPHIA  
(quietly to herself)  
Whoa.

She sees Claire smiling at her. She blushes.

SOPHIA  
Did I just say that out loud?

CLAIRE  
I believe "ripped" is the appropriate modern term isn't it?

SOPHIA  
(smiling)  
Ok, here we go, I've found photos of two of them.

Claire takes a look and sighs.

CLAIRE  
No. Sorry.

SOPHIA  
So that leaves us with thirty four.

CHARLIE  
(approaching)  
Thirty four what?

SOPHIA  
Contestants for Italian Idol.

CHARLIE  
Fantastic!

He walks away drying himself off.

SOPHIA  
Is he really unhappy about this or just pretending?

CLAIRE  
A bit of both I think.

Claire watches Sophia working on her laptop as if weighing up whether she's going to ask her what's on her mind.

CLAIRE  
Tell me about your mother.

SOPHIA  
(without looking up)  
Nothing to tell.

CLAIRE  
Indulge a nosy old lady.

Slight beat. Sophia looks at this woman with such kind eyes and sees someone who genuinely wants to know.

SOPHIA  
There's nothing much to say really.  
I was young. I don't remember much.  
Then one day she just upped and  
left. Just like that. No warning,  
no note, no forwarding address, not  
even a goodbye or good luck.

CLAIRE  
How old were you?

SOPHIA  
I was ten.

CLAIRE  
And you haven't seen her since?

SOPHIA  
Don't expect I ever will.

CLAIRE  
That must've been very hard.

Sophia shrugs as if to say "not really".

SOPHIA  
I started packing my own lunches,  
probably ironed a few more of my  
dad's shirts than I would have.

CLAIRE  
You don't ever think about trying  
to find her?

SOPHIA  
I used to. Until I realized that  
she didn't feel like she could  
waste her time on me so why should  
I waste a minute of mine on her?

Sophia looks down in an attempt to control her feelings.  
Claire takes her hand and gives it a squeeze.

**INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT -- NIGHT**

The three of them are having dinner.

CLAIRE

Charlie have you told Sophia about the Green Alliance?

CHARLIE

Can't imagine she'd care.

SOPHIA

Try me.

CLAIRE

Charlie's going to stand for parliament on the environment ticket.

Sophia looks genuinely surprised.

CHARLIE

You know the kind of thing - planting trees, air fare taxes, bicycle lanes, eliminating cars from Central London - great idea, pity it doesn't stand a chance, really.

SOPHIA

That's amazing.

CHARLIE

You look surprised.

SOPHIA

I guess I am. I didn't have you pinned as a "save the planet" type.

CHARLIE

And what type did you have me pinned down for, exactly?

SOPHIA

I don't know. I was leaning towards the "elitist Oxford prig" type but now that you mention it "self-satisfied do gooder" fits too.

CHARLIE

Well thank you very much.

Sophia laughs. So does Charlie. Claire smiles at this.

CLAIRE

Oh don't be fooled by all the  
posturing he's just a little teddy  
bear really.

She ruffles up his hair.

CHARLIE

Get off!

CLAIRE

He's still trying to work out our  
carbon print for this little jaunt.

CHARLIE

Anther good reason not to have  
come.

CLAIRE

He'll have me planting trees for  
months.

(she yawns)

Well I'm off to my bed. You two be  
nice to each other now.

She kisses them both on the head and leaves.

SOPHIA

She's incredible.

CHARLIE

Yeah she's alright.

But with her gone it seems they have nothing to talk about.  
So they just sit there in silence. A pantomime of  
embarrassment. An exchange of awkward smiles. Then finally.

CHARLIE

Right. Well. Time to hit the sack.

Sophia smiles she knows he's just trying to get out of this.

SOPHIA

It must be at least nine thirty.

CHARLIE

Long day tomorrow. Need my rest and  
all that.

SOPHIA

Oh of course.

CHARLIE

Right. Alright. Good night then.

He gets up and strides off leaving her at the table. Then he stops in the entrance. His back is turned to her for a moment then he swivels round and marches straight back.

CHARLIE

Forgive me. Where are my manners?

SOPHIA

I have absolutely no idea.

CHARLIE

I don't know what it is, but you seem to bring out the very worst in me.

SOPHIA

I figured it'd be my fault somehow.

CHARLIE

Please, may I buy you a night cap?

A beat. She smiles politely.

SOPHIA

No thanks. I'm tired.

CHARLIE

Right. Of course. Apologies.

SOPHIA

Accepted.

He stands there for a minute, unsure what to do.

CHARLIE

Well. Good night then. Again.

SOPHIA

Good night Charlie.

**INT. CAR (DRIVING) -- THE NEXT MORNING**

A beautiful day in the Tuscan countryside. They drive along with Puccini's "La Boheme" blaring from the stereo. Charlie is driving. He looks at Sophia curiously in the rear view mirror. Claire notices this and smiles to herself.

La Boheme continues over the next few scenes.



**EXT. ITALIAN VILLAGE -- LATER**

Sophia and Charlie are talking to an OLD MAN wearing a flat cap a baggy black suit, which has seen better days, and a threadbare white shirt. He's sitting outside at a cafe with another MAN playing chess. Claire is standing at a distance watching.

Sophia turns round to look at her and Claire shakes her head.

**EXT. LAKE -- WATER SKI AND WIND SURFING SCHOOL -- LATER**

A speedboat hurtles, arcing, towards the shore. The WATER SKIER behind it lets go and after a few feet sinks into the water near the jetty.

Claire, Sophia and Charlie walk towards the jetty as the speedboat approaches. THE INSTRUCTOR jumps out, he is a bronzed seventy-three-year-old man with an enormous pot belly, covered in gold jewelry and masses of white body hair. Beneath his stomach he is wearing the tiniest, most obscene, inappropriate thong you've ever seen. When he turns to someone and flashes his weary, pitted, buttocks their way. Claire utters a little shriek. Sophia tries to suppress a grin but Charlie is beside himself with laughter.

Sophia hits him playfully. The man waves as they approach but from Claire's horrified look it obviously isn't him.

**EXT. CHURCH -- LATER**

They are with a sweet looking PRIEST, dressed in cassock and hat, outside his church. He is holding both of Claire's hands as he shakes his head gently. He is not her Alfonso. Then he makes the sign of the cross over Claire as a blessing.

**EXT. PALAZZO -- LATER**

They drive a tree-lined street to a gorgeous stately Palazzo.

CHARLIE

You sure we've got the right  
address?

Sophia double checks.

SOPHIA

This is the place.

**EXT. PALAZZO -- FORMAL GARDENS -- LATER**

They are talking to a very handsome, beautifully dressed and groomed Italian man. This guy is probably a COUNT. He shakes his head. Claire smiles.

COUNT

Alas it wasn't me. If it had been  
I'd've never let you go.

And with that he kisses her hand.

**EXT. PALAZZO -- DRIVEWAY -- LATER**

They walk towards the car. Claire is still slightly flushed.

SOPHIA

What is it with you and Italian  
men? They just fall at your feet.

Charlie takes one last look at the Palazzo. He sighs.

CHARLIE

Such a shame. I think I could've  
been happy here.

Sophia and Claire exchange looks.

**INT. OLD FOLKS HOME, SIENA -- LATER**

Sophia, Claire, and Charlie wait patiently and quietly in a waiting room. Sophia is trying to stay upbeat but the sight of so many ill and lonely OLD PEOPLE has definitely lowered the mood of all three.

A NURSE comes to them holding the arm of yet another ALFONSO, a sweet man, bald, wearing sunglasses, with a bright smile. He walks right up to Claire.

ALFONSO

*Your face... it is so familiar...*

Sophia and Charlie exchange a hopeful glance.

CHARLIE

*Alfonso, this is Claire, do you  
remember Claire?*

ALFONSO

*Claire! Of course. Of course.*

Alfonso takes off his sunglasses to get a better look at her. Sophia and Charlie instantly look at Claire. It's not him.

SOPHIA  
(quietly)  
Shit...

He's confused her for someone else. Claire plays along so as not to hurt the sweet old man's feelings. She hugs him.

CLAIRE  
It was good to see you, Alfonso.

ALFONSO  
*You too, my angel. Thanks for  
visiting! Come back soon!*

He waves to them as they go - they made his day.

**EXT. OLD FOLKS HOME -- PARKING LOT -- LATER**

They walk to the car in silence.

CHARLIE  
That's it for today I think.

SOPHIA  
One more?

CHARLIE  
She's exhausted.

CLAIRE  
I am.

Sophia sighs.

**INT. HOTEL ROOM NEAR SIENA -- NIGHT**

Sophia is on her cell in her room. Her notebook is open on the desk next to her laptop. She's clearly been working on the story. The remains of her dinner are on a plate nearby.

SOPHIA  
I hope we're doing the right thing.  
She's so full of hope one minute  
then deflated the next. The ups and  
downs are killing me, I can't  
imagine what's it like for her...

**INT. SMALL RESTAURANT IN PALERMO. WHERE:**

Victor has a Bluetooth ear piece in. He's paying close attention to every detail about how the restaurant is running and not paying any attention to what Sophia is saying. Thus:

VICTOR

I'm glad you're having a good time.

SOPHIA

Did you listen to a word I just said?

VICTOR O/S

I miss you beautiful.

Sophia rolls her eyes - he's so transparent.

SOPHIA

Miss you too.

A WAITRESS brings Victor a plate of food. He smiles his thanks and wafts the steam coming towards his nose.

VICTOR

If you could see the plate of food  
I've just had put in front of me...

Victor eagerly lays a napkin in his lap.

VICTOR

Hey. Can I call you back? I feel  
like I should have all my senses  
for this.

SOPHIA

Yeah. Sure. Enjoy.

Sophia hangs up. She sighs a sigh that says "Did my boyfriend really just get off the phone to pay attention to a meal?"

**INT. SOPHIA'S HOTEL ROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT**

Sophia sits at the desk with her laptop open. She's looking at that cursor blinking at the end of a full page of writing.

She smiles - pleased at this.

There's a knock at her door. She answers. It's Charlie.

CHARLIE

She's gone to bed - shattered, poor  
thing.

SOPHIA  
Think she'll be OK?

CHARLIE  
Oh, yeah, yeah she'll be fine.  
Tough as old boots that one. Don't  
be fooled by the frail old lady act  
- she's Churchill in a dress.

Sophia laughs. Charlie smiles. He clears his throat.

CHARLIE  
You fancy a spot of dinner?

SOPHIA  
I already ate. I needed to get  
started.

He sees the notebook and laptop.

CHARLIE  
How's it coming?

SOPHIA  
Slowly.

CHARLIE  
Am I in it?

SOPHIA  
You are.

CHARLIE  
Can I read some then?

SOPHIA  
No.

CHARLIE  
Oh go on. Please.

SOPHIA  
When it's finished. Maybe.

CHARLIE  
But how am I to be sure that I'm  
being properly portrayed?

Sophia smiles.

SOPHIA  
You're just going to have to trust  
me.

CHARLIE  
Just a peek. A sentence or two.

He tries to look over her shoulder. She blocks his view.

SOPHIA  
You don't trust me?

CHARLIE  
(matter of fact)  
You're an American.

Sophia can't help but laugh.

CHARLIE  
You're sure you won't let me read  
just a bit to ease my mind?

Sophia shuts the door. From the other side of the door:

CHARLIE O/S  
Is this one of those situations  
where you're really saying the  
opposite of what you actually mean?

SOPHIA  
It's not.

CHARLIE O/S  
Right. Good night then.

SOPHIA  
Good night.

They each remain where they are on either side of the closed door smiling and waiting for the other to move. Finally he moves away and she leans back against the door, more than a little charmed.

**INT. HOTEL NEAR SIENA -- LOBBY -- THE NEXT MORNING**

Sophia is waiting in the lobby writing in her notebook. Charlie comes down the stairs and over to her.

CHARLIE  
Gran's not feeling well.

SOPHIA  
What is it? What's wrong?

CHARLIE  
I don't know.

SOPHIA  
Should we call a doctor?

CHARLIE  
Best just let her rest.

Sophia suddenly looks and feels very guilty.

SOPHIA  
I shouldn't have pushed her.

CHARLIE  
It's not your fault. Truth is she made her decision the moment that letter arrived. And neither I nor the entire regiment of the Household Guard would've been able to stop her from coming.

SOPHIA  
But if I hadn't come back from the airport...

CHARLIE  
If you hadn't come back from the airport I would've been denied the pleasure of spending a day in your glorious company showing you the sights of San Gimignano and Siena.

Sophia smiles - she feels better already.

SOPHIA  
You can actually be quite charming when you put your mind to it.

CHARLIE  
Oh, don't let it fool you.

**INT. CAR (DRIVING) -- LATER**

They drive together through the Chianti countryside.

SOPHIA  
So what's your story, Charlie?

CHARLIE  
Not worth telling really. Certainly not worth writing about.

SOPHIA  
Can't I just be curious?

CHARLIE

You can be whatever you want.

SOPHIA

Okay. So how does a guy your age come to live with his grandmother?

CHARLIE

She lives with me actually.

SOPHIA

Well that makes all the difference.

CHARLIE

It does rather.

SOPHIA

How does the rest of the family fit in? Mom, Dad, brothers and sisters?

CHARLIE

I'm an only child.

Sophia laughs - of course he is.

SOPHIA

Why doesn't that surprise me?

CHARLIE

...And my parents were killed in a car crash when I was fourteen.

Sophia's mouth is still open from laughing but she now seems incapable of either shutting it or speaking. She just stares.

CHARLIE

Hit head on by a tourist driving on the wrong side of the road. An American tourist.

He reaches over and gently pushes her jaw closed with the tips of his fingers. A beat.

CHARLIE

I've had ambiguous feelings towards anything American every since.

SOPHIA

Understandable.

Charlie smirks - trying to ease a maudlin moment:



CHARLIE

Could have something to do with my cynicism and pessimism and general lack of faith in true love lasting forever. Not a great believer in happy endings I'm afraid.

SOPHIA

(quietly)

Oh God, Charlie... Jesus...

CHARLIE

Yes, well, they weren't much help either. But Gran stepped in and took this angry, bereft and shockingly unpleasant young man under her wing and made me, well, into the superb specimen of screwed-up manhood you see before you now.

He laughs. She doesn't. She puts her hand on his arm.

SOPHIA

I'm so sorry.

He looks at her hand on his arm and raises his eyebrows, gently mocking her. She quickly takes her hand away.

CHARLIE

I owe everything to that woman. She looked after me when no one else would... when no one else could...

SOPHIA

And now it's your turn.

CHARLIE

Right. She...

Charlie's voice cracks with emotion. He smiles at her.

CHARLIE

Sorry. Momentary slip. Won't happen again.

Sophia smiles at his English stiff upper lip then looks away out of her window to spare him any embarrassment.

**EXT. SAN GIMIGNANO -- DAY**

WIDE SHOT: Of this beautiful town on a hill top with it's thirteen medieval towers standing proudly against the deep blue Chianti sky.

Charlie and Sophia walk through the narrow lanes of the town.

**EXT. SAN GIMIGNANO SQUARE -- DAY**

They walk through the ancient square.

**EXT. CHIANTI COUNTRYSIDE -- DAY**

They drive through the countryside with the roof of the car down. Sophia's hair blows around her face so she can't see. She laughs as she tries to tie it up. Charlie smiles.

**EXT. CATEDRALE DI SANTA MARIA THE "DUOMO", SIENNA -- DAY**

They stand outside the wonderful facade of the cathedral. Charlie takes her picture. Then poses with her and holds the camera out in front of him and takes another of them both.

**INT. CATEDRALE DI SANTA MARIA THE "DUOMO" -- LATER**

They walk through the interior.

**EXT. THE MANGIA TOWER -- DAY**

They walk to the three hundred foot tall Mangia Bell Tower.

**INT. THE MANGIA TOWER COLLECTION -- LATER**

They walk up four hundred steps to the top. It's hard work for Sophia who stops for breath. Charlie shouts encouragement from the top. She laughs, exhausted, and follows.

**EXT. THE MANGIA TOWER VIEWING PLATFORM -- LATER**

They take in the extraordinary view high over ancient Sienna.

**INT. PINACOTECA NAZIONALE - PALAZZO BUONSIGNOR -- DAY**

They walk around the National Art Collection.

**EXT. PIAZZO DEL CAMPO, SIENNA -- DAY**

They walk across the world famous square past the Fonte Gala (Fountain of Joy). Sophia looks like she's really enjoyed herself. It's been the kind of day she never had with Victor.

**EXT. PIAZZO DEL CAMPO, SIENNA -- LATER**

Sophia sits outside a cafe. Charlie appears from inside with two of the largest ice cream cones you've ever seen.

SOPHIA

Little indulgent don't you think?

He gives her a cone.

CHARLIE

Ah but the thing is, they're calorie free. Clever buggers the Italians.

She looks at her cone suspiciously as he starts to eat his.

SOPHIA

No way.

CHARLIE

Yes way. Thousands of calories free with every mouthful.

Sophia laughs - not at joke but at him for making the joke.

SOPHIA

That was bad.

CHARLIE

I thought it was funny. You've no sense of humor.

She pushes his ice cream into his face. He takes it away to reveal his nose and mouth covered. His stone faced seriousness and slight look of hurt make her laugh.

SOPHIA

*That was funny.*

He wipes his face with a napkin.

CHARLIE

It's just as well I'm a gentleman otherwise I might be tempted into some sort of juvenile revenge.

SOPHIA

I'm grateful believe me.

They sit eating their cones for a beat. She looks at him.

SOPHIA

I had a great time today. It was nice actually doing the tourist thing with someone. Thanks.

He smiles. She studies him for a moment.

SOPHIA

What's the real reason you're so against Claire being here?

CHARLIE

(smirks)

Every good story needs an antagonist right?

She's not letting him off that easy.

SOPHIA

There's something else going on in that head of yours. You jealous?

CHARLIE

Of an old man I've never met. No.

SOPHIA

So? What is it? Are you worried you'll lose her?

CHARLIE

Something like that.

They sit quietly eating for a beat. Charlie shrugs.

CHARLIE

Okay...truthfully? It's just that I feel, if we find Alfonso and Gran discovers that leaving him all those years ago was, indeed, the biggest mistake of her life... then what does it say about me and my family? It makes it all a bit of a sham doesn't it? If they're meant to be then were we not? It's like we're second best.

SOPHIA

But you know that's not true.

CHARLIE

Maybe. But it feels true.

She looks at him as she tries to work this through. He leans forward, noticing something on her face.

CHARLIE

You've got something on your...

With that he pushes her ice cream into her nose. She screams. There's ice cream all over her face. He gets a napkin and gently wipes it off. When he finishes he doesn't move away. Suddenly both their cell phones ring. They look at them.

CHARLIE

Patricia.

SOPHIA

Victor.

Neither of them answer. Charlie looks at her - surprised.

CHARLIE

You didn't answer. Very naughty.

SOPHIA

Neither did you.

CHARLIE

But I have a good excuse. She's a tiresome, self-centered neurotic. She's mad. Madder than a mad cow. Your Victor on the other hand is a dashing handsome chef about to become a New York culinary sensation, sounds like everything any girl could ever want.

Sophia smiles as she knows what Charlie's saying is true.

SOPHIA

He is, I suppose...

Her smiles fades. She looks at him sincerely.

SOPHIA

(almost to herself)

What if I'm not just any girl?

Charlie smile diplomatically - he's not gonna go there.

**EXT. HOTEL NEAR SIENA -- DUSK**

Charlie's car pulls up. He and Sophia get out of the car. They walk towards the hotel in silence. Until.

CHARLIE

Sophia...

She stops and turns. He suddenly looks a little nervous.

CHARLIE  
I just wanted to say... about  
today... uh... what I mean is...

SOPHIA  
Me too.

She smiles then turns and walks away.

**INT. HOTEL NEAR SIENA -- LOBBY -- LATER**

Charlie and Sophia walk back into the hotel past the bar and then both stop. They walk back a few steps and look into it. There sitting at the bar, large cocktail in hand, sits Claire looking perfectly fit and well as she laughs with the BARMAN.

CHARLIE  
Feeling better?

CLAIRE  
Right as rain dear. Thank you.

CHARLIE  
(slowly)  
Good...

CLAIRE  
So? How was your day? Did you two  
get along alright without me?

She smiles sweetly as both of them realize in the same moment what she's been up to. They share a look and a smile.

**EXT. CEMETERY NEAR FLORENCE -- NEXT DAY**

Claire, Sophia, and Charlie are escorted through a cemetery by an old GRAVE DIGGER. They stop. The Grave Digger points at a new tombstone and goes off silently. They stand together.

SOPHIA  
(silently; to herself)  
God, no. Please, no.

They look at the grave from a distance. Claire slowly approaches it as Charlie and Sophia hang back.

CHARLIE  
This was what I feared most...

Charlie trails off and watches as Claire approaches the grave - her back to us. She stops and kneels.

Sophia and Charlie stand there saying nothing. Claire stands up and walks back to them. She Long pause.

SOPHIA

Is it...

CLAIRE

It's not him. My Alfonso's middle name was Paolo. It's not him.

Relief washes over Sophia. But not Charlie who still stands there with concern etched all over his face.

SOPHIA

OK. So? We keep looking.

CHARLIE

No.

They turn to him. And wait for him to say more but he just stands there silently staring as if trying not make a scene.

SOPHIA

Charlie, it's not over.

CHARLIE

Yes it is. It's over. I'm done.

SOPHIA

But--

CHARLIE

(snaps)

Don't you see what we're doing?  
What we're putting her through?  
What if it had been him? What if  
there's another grave around here  
with her Alfonso in it? I'm sorry,  
Gran, I am. But this is the end of  
the line for me. I can't do this.

Claire looks at her beloved grandson and can see the sincere concern and pain on his face. She takes his hand. Sighs.

CLAIRE

OK.

SOPHIA

You're giving up? Just like that?

CLAIRE

He's right dear. It's too much.

Sophia stares at Charlie. She's stone faced.

CHARLIE

What?

SOPHIA

This is what you wanted all along.

CHARLIE

No. What I wanted was for you to never have written that letter. What I wanted was to never come on this ridiculous goose chase.

SOPHIA

Why are you so desperate for this to fail?

CHARLIE

I'm trying to protect her. Because unlike you I can't just stand idly by and watch her get hurt.

SOPHIA

What is that supposed to mean?

CHARLIE

It means you're not here for her. And you're not here 'cause you're some romantic who wants to believe in love lasting forever. You're here for the story. Here to see how it all ends. Doesn't matter to you if it's a happy ending or a sad ending as long as it's compelling right? As long as there's drama.

CLAIRE

Charlie. Please.

Sophia just stands there stunned, hurt.

SOPHIA

You think that's true?

Charlie shrugs as if to say "isn't it?".

CHARLIE

I'm just looking out for her.

SOPHIA

You're not. You're not walking away for her, you're walking for you.

They look at each other. Both fuming. Both pretty sure they've crossed a line.



CHARLIE

She's dealt with enough grief in her life. She's lost her husband, her daughter, her son-in-law. Now you come along and set her up to lose someone she already lost fifty years ago. But why should I expect you to understand. You don't know anything about real loss.

This cuts her. She just looks at him for a moment then walks over to the car and gets in the back seat.

CLAIRE

You're wrong, Charlie. She lost her mother. That was very wrong.

CHARLIE

It's different.

CLAIRE

It is. Her mother chose to leave her. You always knew your parents loved you.

She walks back to the car leaving him to think for a moment.

**INT. CAR (DRIVING) -- LATER**

They ride in silence as the sun sets. A very unsmiley car.

**INT. HOTEL NEAR FLORENCE -- EVENING**

Sophia sits at the dressing table brushing her hair. There's a knock at the door. She thinks for a moment whether to answer it. Another knock. She gets up and opens the door. Claire is standing there.

CLAIRE

Just wanted to make sure you were alright.

SOPHIA

Of course I am. Totally fine. Hey we gave it our best shot didn't we?

CLAIRE

We did.

She sees the hairbrush in Sophia's hand.

CLAIRE

May I?

SOPHIA

(a little taken aback)

Sure...

She goes back to the dressing table and sits. Claire stands behind her and starts to brush her hair.

CLAIRE

One of the great unsung luxuries in this world - having someone brush your hair.

SOPHIA

(smiles)

Yeah I guess it is.

CLAIRE

My mother used to do it for me.

They continue in silence, then slowly tears begin to fall down Sophia's face. It's clearly the first time anyone has done this since for Sophia since she was a little girl.

**INT. RESTAURANT FIESOLE -- LATER THAT NIGHT**

Claire, Sophia and Charlie look at their menus in silence. Charlie steals glances at Sophia who just studies her menu. He looks at Claire who raises her eyebrows interrogatively as if to say "ball's in your court." He clears his throat.

CHARLIE

I should apologize. I was wrong.

SOPHIA

You should or you are?

CHARLIE

Didn't I just?

SOPHIA

I'm not sure that you did.

Claire intercedes.

CLAIRE

An apology, dear, is when you look at someone straight in the eye with contrition and sincerity and actually say the words "I'm sorry."

He does his best under the scrutiny of his grandmother.

CHARLIE

Sophia, I'm sorry... enough  
contrition and sincerity for you?

CLAIRE

Six out of ten.

CHARLIE

What'd you want me to do, get on my  
knees and beg?

Charlie starts to do just that. Sophia smiles. She stops him.

SOPHIA

Please don't. I'm sorry too.

Claire smiles as the tension eases. Charlie picks up a wine  
list.

CLAIRE

Excellent. Now that hostilities are  
over. Let's get drunk.

Sophia laughs as the waiter comes over to Charlie.

CHARLIE

A bottle of your best local Chianti  
please.

The waiter goes off to fetch the wine.

CLAIRE

So, Sophia, what for you now?

SOPHIA

Back to Verona, see Bella and the  
girls, then fly home I guess.

CHARLIE

With the dashing handsome Victor.

She seems slightly perplexed by his saying this and he looks  
embarrassed like he just thought out loud. She smiles.

SOPHIA

With the dashing handsome Victor.

Somehow, though, the prospect doesn't seem so alluring.

CLAIRE

Despite what my emotionally stunted  
pig of a grandson thinks, you did a  
wonderful thing for an old lady...  
I'll never forget it.

SOPHIA

Even though it led nowhere?

CLAIRE

It's been an adventure. There  
aren't many adventures left at my  
age. And It didn't lead nowhere. I  
got to meet you didn't I?

SOPHIA

I guess. Though a new friend isn't  
much consolation for an old love.

CLAIRE

Depends on the friend.

Sophia smiles.

CLAIRE

Unfortunately you had to meet  
Charlie, but then we can't have  
everything can we?

SOPHIA

It wouldn't have been quite the  
same without him.

CHARLIE

Thank you?

SOPHIA

My pleasure.

He looks at her - not all sure what that means.

CHARLIE

You have a knack of saying things  
which could be taken as gorgeous  
compliments or sarcastic digs.

SOPHIA

It's taken years of practice.

The waiter arrives with the wine. He pours them a glass each.

CLAIRE

To Alfonso, wherever he may be.

CHARLIE/SOPHIA  
Alfonso...

They raise their glasses and drink.

CHARLIE  
Damn that's good wine.

CLAIRE  
(looking at the bottle)  
Isn't it?

She smiles broadly.

CLAIRE  
But then so it should be.

She turns the bottle round to them.

CLAIRE  
Look at the label.

Charlie picks it up and reads it.

CHARLIE  
"D'Annunzio", How do I know that  
name?

Sophia and Claire share a smile and a shake of the head.

CLAIRE  
I sometimes find it hard to believe  
I'm actually related to you.

SOPHIA  
You don't think...

As the penny drops, Charlie beckons the SOMMELIER.

CHARLIE  
Excuse me. The makers of this wine.  
Are you familiar with them?

SOMMELIER  
I am. Yes.

Claire hardly dare ask.

CLAIRE  
And is there an Alfonso Paolo  
D'Annunzio?

SOMMELIER  
Signora, there are three.

**INT. SOPHIA'S HOTEL ROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT**

Sophia is at her laptop typing. She looks out of the window for a moment and sees Charlie wandering out of the hotel into the garden. He looks up at the sky and then lies down on the lawn, his arms spread-eagled. She smiles.

**EXT. HOTEL GARDEN -- LATER**

Sophia comes out of the hotel and wanders over to him.

SOPHIA  
You OK?

CHARLIE  
Just looking at the stars.

She lies down beside him.

CHARLIE  
You can see the Milky Way.

SOPHIA  
It's beautiful.

CHARLIE  
It's awesome.

She laughs and hits him. Charlie is no longer looking at the night sky.

CHARLIE  
You have a wonderful laugh.

SOPHIA  
You have a wonderful frown.

Slight pause. They both look away.

CHARLIE  
So what do you think will happen tomorrow?

SOPHIA  
If it's him?

CHARLIE  
Oh it's him alright.

SOPHIA  
How d'you know?

CHARLIE

Because we've come too far, it'd just be too unfair if it wasn't.

SOPHIA

Charlie? Am I hearing right? Is that optimism I detect?

CHARLIE

I'm capable of it on occasion.

SOPHIA

Well whatever happens, something tells me they'll be great friends.

CHARLIE

I hope so. She deserves it.

SOPHIA

She does.

CHARLIE

And what about you? What's in the stars for you and Victor?

We can tell Sophia has been thinking about this.

SOPHIA

Wish I knew.

CHARLIE

Successful business? Marriage? Lots of dashing children?

SOPHIA

Successful business, marriage, lots of kids, Victor becomes a celebrity chef, travels the world cooking for royalty while I stay at home microwaving leftovers for the kids.

CHARLIE

And you think *I'm* cynical.

SOPHIA

When it comes to cynicism and love we're not even in the same league.

CHARLIE

Sounds like we'd make quite a pair.

SOPHIA

Shame I'm spoken for.

CHARLIE

You don't strike me as the kind of girl who'd let anyone speak for her?

She smiles. He sits up. He's confused.

CHARLIE

So what about all that romantic true love codswallop you peddled about Gran and Alfonso then?

SOPHIA

I want them to prove me wrong. That's all. I want to believe two people can reconnect and it can all be OK. I'm clinging to the wreckage of "there's always hope."

Charlie looks at her. It suddenly makes sense to him.

CHARLIE

Because of your mom. Yeah?

She looks at him. Shrugs as if to say "probably".

SOPHIA

It's what a shrink would tell me.

They lie there in the grass in silence for a moment.

SOPHIA

You know all the things your parents are supposed to give you - safety, food, a roof over your head - the one thing everyone takes for granted is the most important... unconditional love.

She smiles at him bravely. A tear falls down her cheek. He leans over and wipes it away. She manages another smile.

SOPHIA

Sorry. Momentary slip. Won't happen again.

He smiles at her humor. She looks at him. He looks at her. There's a moment. Then suddenly he kisses her. And she kisses back, hungrily, passionately. For a few seconds they're unaware of anything but each other.

Then Sophia's head catches up to her heart. She pulls back.



SOPHIA

Okay. Time out. Not good. I mean too good. So really not good.

She gets up and heads back into the hotel. He stands up.

CHARLIE

Sophia... wait... I...

She starts running and she's gone. He pauses a moment then walks into the hotel. As he does so we see Claire standing in her bedroom window, smiling gently, having observed it all.

**INT. HOTEL LOBBY -- THE NEXT MORNING**

Claire is sitting in reception. She looks a little anxious. Charlie comes down the stairs.

CHARLIE

She's not in her room.

CLAIRE

Have you checked the dining room?

CHARLIE

This is my fault.

He goes over to the desk.

CHARLIE

Has Miss Marcus checked out?

He looks at the register.

RECEPTIONIST

No.

CHARLIE

Have you seen her at all this morning?

RECEPTIONIST

I'm afraid not sir.

At this point Charlie sees her coming into the hotel. He is hugely relieved.

CHARLIE

Sophia.

SOPHIA

(a little too brightly)  
Morning!

CHARLIE  
Everything alright? I thought...

SOPHIA  
Thought what?

CHARLIE  
Nothing. You OK?

SOPHIA  
Yeah. Why wouldn't I be?

Claire smiles - registering their awkwardness. Sophia turns to her.

SOPHIA  
Are you excited? I'm so excited.

**EXT. ROAD IN FIESOLE -- LATER**

Bright and early. The car speeds along a dusty country road along the perimeter of a vast vineyard.

They pass a sign that says "D'Annunzio Vineyards. 1961".

**EXT. DRIVEWAY -- D'ANNUNZIO VILLA -- LATER**

The car stops at a large farm house nestled in the midst of the vineyard. The vines are bursting with young blue grapes.

As Claire steps out of the car, she looks around and sees something in the distance that nearly stops her breathing.

A handsome YOUNG MAN, around 16, shirtless, solid and brown from the sun, he works repairing an irrigation line. He looks up and sees the three strangers in his driveway and smiles a shy welcome.

Claire can't believe her eyes.

CLAIRE  
My God. That's him. That's Alfonso.

CHARLIE  
That can't actually be *him*.

SOPHIA  
If it is then I'm writing a completely different article.

CLAIRE  
*Are you Alfonso D'Annunzio?*

ALFONSO III

*Yes, ma'am.*

At that moment, a middle-aged man comes round the corner. He is ALFONSO D'ANNUNZIO, JR., Alfonso III's father.

ALFONSO III'S FATHER

*Did someone call me?*

CLAIRE

*Are you Alfonso D'Annunzio too?*

Before he can answer a voice comes from inside the house.

DON ALFONSO'S VOICE

*I know that voice.*

Suddenly a sweet old man, tanned from the sun, comes stepping out of the house. He is DON ALFONSO PAOLO D'ANNUNZIO.

He looks at the three strangers - then focuses on Claire. Without saying a word, Claire smiles, she knows this is him. The young man from all those years ago. It's the eyes.

As she walks toward him, he stares at her, disbelieving, as years and years flicker through his memories.

DON ALFONSO

*Claire?*

She nods. The tears are already starting to form. And she's not the only one as Sophia hastily wipes a tear away.

Claire and Alfonso stop opposite each other. They stare into each other's eyes, older certainly, yet indelibly etched in each other's hearts. There's a long silence. Neither sure what to say or do. Claire manages a coy little smile.

CLAIRE

*Sorry I'm late.*

Alfonso smiles. He opens his arms. She walks into them.

Claire and Don Alfonso embrace. Everyone watching, smiling.

Something prompts Sophia to look down. It's Charlie's hand reaching out for hers. She takes it and looks up at Charlie. He turns to her, his eyes looking suspiciously tearful. He's about to say something but can't. She smiles.

SOPHIA

*You're welcome.*

**EXT. D'ANNUNZIO VILLA -- OPEN FIELD -- SUNSET**

A space behind the D'Annunzio house filled with tables and trees. The vineyard's all around. Don Alfonso's big family is out en masse to celebrate the reunion of their patriarch with his childhood sweetheart.

Four generations: CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN. Tables laden with food.

Claire and Don Alfonso sit together drinking and catching up after the years of separation.

Sophia is surrounded by sprightly D'Annunzio grandchildren who play a game with her. She stops and looks around as she realizes someone is missing.

She goes off in search of Charlie.

She finds him alone by some trees staring at the horizon. He's deep in thought. She takes a moment to just watch him. She smiles then walks up slowly.

SOPHIA

He's a widower, just lost his wife two years ago. And now Claire. Here. On his doorstep after fifty years... how does that happen?

CHARLIE

You made it happen.

Sophia smiles. Charlie goes back to staring at the horizon.

SOPHIA

Happy or sad? I can't tell.

CHARLIE

Bit of both actually. Happy for them. A little sad it's over.

SOPHIA

Mission accomplished.

CHARLIE

If you like.

SOPHIA

You have to admit it was kinda fun.

CHARLIE

It was.

Pause.

CHARLIE  
About last night.

SOPHIA  
Don't worry about it.

CHARLIE  
Really?

SOPHIA  
Mistakes happen.

CHARLIE  
A mistake. Yeah.

They look at each other, both not telling the truth, both knowing it, neither has the courage to take the first step.

SOPHIA  
(ever so slightly fishing)  
I mean there's no need to apologize  
if that's what you're trying to do?

A beat as he decides which way to go.

CHARLIE  
Right. 'Cause that's what I was  
trying to do. I was trying to  
apologize.

SOPHIA  
But there's no need.

CHARLIE  
Course not. Good.

SOPHIA  
Great.

CHARLIE  
Sorted.

Another awkward silence. Sophia tries to fill the silence.

SOPHIA  
(overly flippant)  
Bottle of chianti, an Italian night  
sky, and some childhood trauma, I  
could be anyone's.

That's not what he wanted to hear. He looks hurt.

CHARLIE

Guess you'll do anything to get your story.

That came out colder than he meant it. She look's hurt.

SOPHIA

What does that mean?

He shrugs. They look at each other long and hard, trying to read each other. And then Claire suddenly approaches.

CLAIRE

I shouldn't have come here.

They both just stare at her for a beat.

CHARLIE

*What?*

SOPHIA

What is it Claire? What happened?

CLAIRE

Too much has happened, dear. It's been fifty years. I'm behaving like a school girl. You were right, Charlie. This was selfish and impulsive and I'm sorry.

Don Alfonso appears at Claire's side.

DON ALFONSO

Claire...

She smiles softly at him.

CLAIRE

I should go. It was good to see you again. Really.

Sophia looks at Charlie as if say "Do something." He takes Claire's hand.

CHARLIE

You can't just pitch up here out of the blue and then bugger off. It's just not fair on the poor bloke.

Claire turns to Don Alfonso.

CLAIRE

It was foolish. Barging back into your life like this.

(MORE)

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
How could we possibly pick up where  
we left off a life time ago?

He smiles warmly at her - he understands what she's feeling.

DON ALFONSO  
Claire, my angel, slow down. It  
won't happen in a day. Nothing  
worth doing is done in a day.

Claire sighs. Calming a bit.

DON ALFONSO  
We'll talk... Be friends... have  
dinner... take it slow... we'll  
write letters... you can tell me  
about Jack... and I'll tell you  
about my bladder operations.

This unexpected image makes Claire smile despite herself. As long as he's bravely confessing things:

CLAIRE  
I have varicose veins.

DON ALFONSO  
So do I. And my *hearing*.

CLAIRE  
My eyes are going.

DON ALFONSO  
We're a little old, like Da Vinci's  
Last Supper, falling apart a  
little. But what a masterpiece, no?

He takes her hand. Looks in her eyes.

DON ALFONSO  
What are you afraid of?

CLAIRE  
Maybe I'm afraid to be happy again.

DON ALFONSO  
There are so many worse things to  
be afraid of at our age.

He takes her hand and smiles sweetly. She smiles back comforted by his words. They hug each other reassuringly.

He turns to Charlie and holds out his hand. Charlie takes it.

DON ALFONSO  
 Come. I'll show you some vines that  
 are even older than me.

Charlie turns to Sophia.

CHARLIE  
 You coming?

Sophia looks at him - still a bit hurt. She shakes her head.

SOPHIA  
 You go. I should get back.

CHARLIE  
 You sure?

SOPHIA  
 Need to get to work on that story.  
 That's what I'm here for, right?

A silent beat.

CHARLIE  
 Right.

They look at each other. Both looking like they want to say more. Neither does. Then they turn around and walk away.

**EXT. SOPHIA'S HOTEL ROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT**

Sophia's lying on the bed writing on her laptop when her cell phone rings. She answers.

SOPHIA  
 Hey. How's Palermo? Still need me  
 to pick you up tomorrow morning?

INTERCUT: Victor getting of a small single-engine plane.

VICTOR  
 It was great. I'm back. Caught an  
 early flight. Can you come get me?

Sophia is startled, taken aback.

SOPHIA  
 Oh. Yeah. Sure. OK. Uh. On my way.



**INT. SMALL HOTEL NEAR FLORENCE -- PARKING LOT**

Sophia heads down to the Fiat Cinquecento. She gets in and drives off. Just as soon as she's out of sight...

Charlie's car arrives at the hotel. He gets out and walks in. Claire follows him.

**INT. FRONT DESK -- LATER**

Charlie is at the front desk with Claire.

RECEPTIONIST  
She left a few minutes ago.

CHARLIE  
She did?

RECEPTIONIST  
For the airport.

CHARLIE  
The airport? Did she leave a message?

The receptionist looks.

RECEPTIONIST  
No sir. No message.

Pause.

CHARLIE  
I can't believe she'd run off.

CLAIRE  
It's simple. She's frightened. Go after her Charlie.

CHARLIE  
No. She's not...

CLAIRE  
Oh don't be so proud.

CHARLIE  
I'm not. Really. It's for the best.

CLAIRE  
Don't make the same mistake I did.

Pause. He looks at her. She smiles warmly and strokes the side of his face. He suddenly sprints out of the hotel.

Claire turns back to the Receptionist.

CLAIRE  
We'd like to check out please.  
We're gonna be staying with friends  
for the rest of our trip.

The Receptionist starts processing the paper work.

**EXT. VERONA AIRPORT -- NIGHT**

Charlie runs into the Terminal.

**INT. TERMINAL -- LATER**

He rushes up to the departure monitor. The only New York flight on the monitor has closed. He's too late.

He looks at it carefully then leaves, disconsolate.

**EXT. VERONA AIRPORT -- NIGHT**

Charlie walks out of the terminal back to the car park structure. As he does so, Sophia can be seen further down the concourse with Victor loading his luggage into the Fiat.

Charlie waits in line for the paying machine.

If only they'd turn round. But they don't.

Charlie doesn't see her and she doesn't see him.

**INT. SMALL HOTEL NEAR FLORENCE -- LATER THAT NIGHT**

Sophia and Victor walk into the lobby.

SOPHIA  
Why don't you take your luggage  
upstairs, I'll be up in a minute.

VICTOR  
Sure.

He goes to kiss her. She moves imperceptibly so that the kiss lands on her cheek instead of her lips.

**INT. FRONT DESK -- LATER**

Sophia walks. There is now a FEMALE RECEPTIONIST on the desk.

SOPHIA

Have you seen Mister Smith or his grandmother this evening?

FEMALE RECEPTIONIST

They checked out about an hour ago.

SOPHIA

Checked out? Are you sure?

FEMALE RECEPTIONIST

Definitely.

SOPHIA

Did they leave a message?

FEMALE RECEPTIONIST

(checks)

No miss.

SOPHIA

Oh. OK.

She thinks for a moment. Then Victor appears.

VICTOR

I was thinking we could head over for one last meal with Angelina.

He notices her lost in her head.

VICTOR

Everything alright?

SOPHIA

Yeah... Yeah... everything's fine.

He puts an arm around her and leads her out of the hotel.

**INT. LETTERE A GIULIETTA RESTAURANT -- LATER**

Victor and Sophia sit together. Victor has polished off a plate of Angelina's meatballs. Sophia hardly touched hers.

Bella comes to clear their plates. She smiles at Sophia. Sophia can only manage a meek smile back. A beat.

VICTOR

...I did a lot of thinking while I was in Palermo. About the restaurant, about it's future, about our future.

(MORE)

VICTOR (cont'd)  
 And I realized I can't do it  
 without you. I want you with me.

Sophia shakes her head.

SOPHIA  
 Victor, I...

Victor theatrically drops down on one knee. Sophia has look on her face that says "Oh God, here we go again".

VICTOR  
 Sophia? Will you be...

SOPHIA  
 Victor, I don't want to run your...

Before she can finish the sentence, Victor pulls out and opens a jewelry box. There's a diamond ring in it. She gapes.

VICTOR  
 My wife?

Sophia just stares at the ring. She's speechless. She just stares. Victor slides the ring on her finger before she answers. Now she's staring at it on her finger.

**EXT. SOPHIA'S HOTEL ROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT**

CLOSE SHOT: Of the diamond sparkling on her finger.

Sophia stands at the window, ready for bed, looking at the garden below, where she and Charlie lay looking at the stars the night before. Then she looks at the ring. She sighs.

Victor comes up behind her and wraps his arms around her.

VICTOR  
 We should get some sleep. Early  
 flight tomorrow.

SOPHIA  
 Yeah.

She takes a last look at the garden and follows him in.

**EXT. D'ANNUNZIO VILLA -- CHARLIE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT**

Charlie stands in his bedroom window looking out at the Italian night sky. He looks sad.

FADE TO BLACK.

**INT. VICTOR'S RESTAURANT -- EVENING**

It's not big but beautifully put together in a provincial Italian style. All along the walls are huge blown up photos of Victor and his Italian suppliers - the truffle hunter, the butcher, etc. - which Sophia took in Italy.

The place is packed. Not a table empty in the house.

WAITERS and WAITRESSES scurry about. LINE COOKS fire entrees. And at the center of it all, in his element, is Victor barking orders, he's intense but enjoying every second.

We pick up Mark - Victor's bartender - taking an entree off the line. He carries it through the restaurant to the front of the house where we find Sophia sitting by herself at the bar. He sets the entree in front of her with a smile.

**INT. VICTOR'S RESTAURANT -- BAR -- LATER THAT NIGHT**

Things have calmed down some. The place is still crowded but the dinner rush has subsided.

Victor is out visiting tables of HIGH SOCIETY TYPES. They bathe him in praise. He plays the role of humble well. Sophia watches him from the mostly empty bar where she sits sipping a glass of wine. Mark is polishing wine glasses behind the bar. He sees her watching him.

MARK

Can you believe how quickly it's all happening? He deserves it.

SOPHIA

I can. And he does.

MARK

You must be proud of him.

She smirks - maybe a little tipsy from the wine.

SOPHIA

I must be.

The Bar Tender gestures to the ring on her finger.

MARK

Have you set the date yet?

She looks at her diamond.

SOPHIA  
 We're still... "waiting for things  
 to settle down."

**INT. VICTOR'S KITCHEN -- LATER**

Victor and his STAFF are finishing up for the night. Prepping for tomorrow. Sophia walks in with her coat on.

SOPHIA  
 You about ready?

Victor doesn't even glance up from what he's doing.

VICTOR  
 You know what. Just go ahead. I'll  
 catch up. See you at home.

Sophia sighs in a way that tells us this has become routine.

**INT. SOPHIA AND VICTOR'S APARTMENT, NEW YORK -- NIGHT**

Sophia at home alone on her couch with her laptop.

We find her as we first found her up late working on a column. Only without the drying pasta hung everywhere.

And without Victor.

She's not working so much as staring at the screen. It's too quiet. She glances at the clock: It's three a.m.

**INT. BAR -- HAPPY HOUR**

Sophia is out with friends having drinks. She's with a GROUP OF COUPLES. Victor is conspicuously absent.

**EXT. SOPHIA AND VICTOR'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT**

It's the middle of the night. Victor snores in the bedroom.

Sophia sits alone on the couch watching TV looking bored. She has a thought. She searches through her desk drawer and pulls out the little slip of paper that Claire wrote her number on.

She checks the clock. It's 3:30 in New York. 9:30 in London. Not too early to call.

She dials the number. There's an English ring tone. After a minute an answering machine picks up:

CLAIRE (V.O.)  
 Hi. You've reached Claire and  
 Charlie. There's no one here at the  
 moment. But if you'd like to...

At this point the phone is picked up at the other end.

CHARLIE O/S  
 Hello?

Sophia freezes. She can't speak.

CHARLIE O/S  
 Hello?

In the background Claire can be heard.

CLAIRE O/S  
 Who is it dear?

CHARLIE O/S  
 Don't know. Hello?

She quickly puts the receiver down - heart pounding.

**EXT. STREET, NEW YORK -- EVENING**

Sophia approaches Victor's Restaurant from across the street.  
 She stops and watches through the front window.

Victor is visible in the open-air kitchen at the back,  
 cooking, ordering, examining plates on the service pass.

It's fully booked again.

PEOPLE who haven't booked are being turned away. At the front  
 of house desk - where Sophia could've been - stands a  
 beautifully elegant HOSTESS.

Sophia so clearly doesn't feel a part of this. How quickly  
 things move on. She sighs and crosses the street.

**INT. VICTOR'S OFFICE -- LATE NIGHT**

A closet-sized office in the back of the restaurant. Sophia  
 and Victor eat together in silence. This is the time they  
 spend together now.

VICTOR  
 Bono was here last Friday.

SOPHIA

Nice.

They go back to eating in silence.

**INT. VICTOR'S RESTAURANT -- LATER**

Sophia is on her way out when she passes a chubby man eating alone. It's Bobby. He's got a tomato-stained napkin tucked in his shirt just below his chin. Sophia approaches. He smiles.

BOBBY

Your boy can cook.

SOPHIA

So I've heard.

BOBBY

Thanks for getting me the table.

SOPHIA

It's what I do.

He smiles. Pulls out a chair for her.

BOBBY

Sit down. Have a drink with me.

She does. He signals the waiter to bring another wine glass.

BOBBY

So... I finally got around to reading those pages you sent me...

Sophia's not exactly sure what he's talking about.

BOBBY

"Does True Love Have a Shelf Life?"

SOPHIA

Oh. Right. What'd you think?

BOBBY

Not bad. I liked it. I think people would like it.

SOPHIA

Who are the "people" you're always referring to?

BOBBY

Advertisers mostly.



She smiles. Bobby pours her a glass of wine.

BOBBY  
Why didn't you finish it?

Sophia isn't quite sure what he means.

SOPHIA  
You didn't like the ending?

BOBBY  
There is no ending.

SOPHIA  
Of course there's an ending. She found him. They reconnected.

BOBBY  
You never answer your own question. You never followed up.

Sophia's not sure where he's going with this. He smiles like he knows something she doesn't.

BOBBY  
It's the grandson isn't it?

SOPHIA  
*What?*

BOBBY  
I read what you wrote remember. It's all there on the page.

SOPHIA  
I hardly wrote anything about Char-- I mean the grandson.

BOBBY  
Exactly.

Sophia shakes her head. Takes a gulp of wine.

BOBBY  
Well like I said it showed potential. Maybe it's time we talk about the next step. Maybe there is more you can contribute.

SOPHIA  
Like contribute creatively? Or...

BOBBY

Slow down. You got potential. But you got work to do. You got a voice but you don't always use it.

SOPHIA

But you want me to try something new?

Bobby smiles. He shrugs playing coy.

BOBBY

Come into my office on Monday. We'll talk.

Sophia suddenly can't stop smiling.

**INT. BEDROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT**

Sophia is changing for bed when she hears Victor come in. She's still smiling. Victor walks into the room yawning.

SOPHIA

Guess what?

VICTOR

Too tired to guess. Just tell me.

SOPHIA

Bobby liked my story.

VICTOR

What story?

SOPHIA

Claire's story. He says I've got a voice. He wants to talk about maybe taking the next step. Isn't that great?

VICTOR

Yeah... Yeah... Very gr...  
(he yawns so "great"  
sounds like "gruh")

Victor's too tired to show any enthusiasm. And we get the feeling even if he weren't he wouldn't. He yawns again.

SOPHIA

That's all you got is "very gruh"?

He flops down on the bed. Kicks off his shoes.

VICTOR

I'm happy for you. I've also been  
on my feet for nineteen hours.  
G'night.

He closes his eyes. Sophia just stands there watching him.

SOPHIA

Victor this isn't working.

He opens his eyes but doesn't look at her.

VICTOR

And whose fault is that?

She looks at him. He sits up with a frustrated sigh.

VICTOR

You see? This is why. This is why I  
wanted you with me. I asked you to  
be my front of house precisely to  
avoid this situation.

SOPHIA

You asked me to be your wife. And I  
never see you. That's the  
situation. There's no avoiding it.

He yawns.

VICTOR

Do we have to do this now? You're  
being unreasonable.

SOPHIA

There isn't anything reasonable  
about love, Victor.

Victor can see where this is headed. He gets defensive.

VICTOR

You knew what the restaurant was  
gonna require... You knew I'd be  
working long hours... You knew what  
it would mean... You knew there'd  
be sacrifice... *You knew that...*

Silence. They look at each other.

VICTOR

You knew this was who I was.

SOPHIA  
 And what I'm trying to tell you is  
 I'm not who I was.

He's silent at this - what can he say.

VICTOR  
 I didn't do anything wrong.

She walks up to him.

SOPHIA  
 You're not wrong. I'm not wrong.  
 We're just wrong for each other.

And there it is. She takes off her engagement ring and places  
 it in his hand.

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. NEW YORK CITY -- WEEKS LATER**

The leaves are starting to turn in central park.

**INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY**

Sophia is in her weekly staff meeting with Bobby and all the  
 rest of his WRITERS. Bobby is at the head of the table.

BOBBY  
 ...And finally I need a follow up  
 on last summer's piece on the  
 mayor. I know a week in city hall  
 isn't anyone's idea of a vacation.

Bobby looks right at Sophia.

BOBBY  
 You got it?

She nods.

**INT. A SMALL STUDIO IN THE CITY. WHERE:**

Sophia has moved. The place is furnished but still coming  
 together.

She's working on her laptop. She seems to be immersed fully  
 in what she's writing. She's focused not stressed.

There's a knock at her door. She answers and finds a MAILMAN who hands her a thick bundle of forwarded mail - presumably from Victor's. She sorts through it.

Then she stops at an envelope. It has an Italian stamp and post mark. She opens it quickly. It's an invitation.

CLAIRE'S VOICE

Mrs. Claire Smith and Don Alfonso  
D'Annunzio invite you to the  
wedding of Mrs. Claire Smith to Don  
Alfonso D'Annunzio.

Then scribbled across the bottom in large letters.

CLAIRE'S VOICE

Please come darling. You must.

Sophia beams.

**INT. EDITOR'S OFFICE -- DAY**

Sophia stands in front of Bobby. He looks at the invitation.

BOBBY

You going to finish that story?

He hands her back the invitation. She looks at it.

SOPHIA

I don't know. I don't think so.

BOBBY

Really?

A beat as he takes this in. She kind of shrugs.

BOBBY

I'll give you the week.

She smiles.

**EXT. SMALL CHURCH IN TUSCANY -- DAY**

PEOPLE are starting to arrive at a beautiful Medieval Italian village church. A taxi pulls up and Sophia gets out.

She looks stunning in a simple pale suit. She looks nervous as she surveys the picturesque scene.

She walks towards the church.

**EXT. SMALL CHURCH IN TUSCANY -- LATER**

As she enters the church and makes her way through the crowd of GUESTS, young and old, we can tell that she's looking for:

CHARLIE O/S

Sophia...

And there he is. She turns to find him smiling at her. Dressed in a traditional English morning suit, tails, waistcoat, the works. One might even say he looks dashing.

He approaches. She suddenly seems very nervous.

SOPHIA

Hi!

CHARLIE

Hi.

SOPHIA

(forgets she already said)

Hi...

They do an awkward hug/kiss on the cheek thing.

SOPHIA

You look great.

CHARLIE

I'm glad you came. You look pretty good yourself.

SOPHIA

How could I not? Come, I mean, not look...

CHARLIE

I got it.

A beat of awkward silence. They smile at each other - smiles that say "Why is this so uncomfortable?" Finally.

CHARLIE

You came alone?

SOPHIA

Yeah. I did. Sorry I didn't RSVP. I just moved.

A beat as Charlie registers this.

CHARLIE

It's fine. Whole thing's been a bit  
of a shotgun affair really...  
(he smiles at her)  
I'm glad you came.

She smiles hoping it's for the reason she thinks it is.

DON ALFONSO O/S

There she is. There's our angel.

Sophia turns to find Don Alfonso beaming at her. She's visibly taken aback at his appearance. He's so much thinner, and what little hair he had left has turned a shade greyer, he walks with a cane now and has a pronounced limp but still he looks like royalty in a fine Italian tuxedo. His grandson, Alfonso III, escorts him on his way.

Don Alfonso stops and kisses Sophia on both cheeks.

DON ALFONSO

Thank you for coming.

SOPHIA

Wouldn't miss it for the world.

CHARLIE

*Papa, they need you at the altar.*

He smiles and kisses Sophia's hand before continuing on into the church. Sophia watches him limping on that cane. She turns and looks at Charlie. She doesn't even have to ask.

CHARLIE

He fell. About two months ago. He and Gran were walking in his fields. Tripped on vine. Shattered his hip. Had to have it replaced.

Sophia watches Don Alfonso smiling and welcoming guests as he slowly makes his way down the aisle.

SOPHIA

That's terrible.

CHARLIE

Saved his life actually.

Sophia turns back to Charlie who takes a breath before:

CHARLIE

He only fell a few feet but the hip  
shattered like a vase.  
(MORE)

CHARLIE (cont'd)

(beat)

A tumor had hollowed it out.

Sophia just stares - speechless.

SOPHIA

Is he OK... Is he...

CHARLIE

They think a year, maybe two, maybe more, maybe less. Different doctors give different answers, none of them straight, you know how it goes.

SOPHIA

My god... How awful...

Charlie looks with a smile at Don Alfonso who has finally made it to his place at the altar. He shakes his head.

CHARLIE

Actually they've been extraordinary. Really. It's humbling. They're living proof that if you find love for even the shortest moment, you have to grab it with both hands...

Charlie catches himself being sincere. He tries to play it off with a wry shrug and smile.

CHARLIE

Tis better to have loved... and all that.

She manages a smile back.

SOPHIA

And all that.

They look at each other for a long moment. Sophia looks as if she's about to say something when...

PATRICIA O/S

There you are.

At that moment a strikingly beautiful English woman in a gown that matches Charlie's suit approaches. She is PATRICIA.

PATRICIA

You need to get outside. She'll be here any second.



Sophia just stares at her. Momentarily speechless.

CHARLIE  
Patricia. This is Sophia.

Doing her best to hide her disappointment:

SOPHIA  
Hi.

Realization flashes in Patricia's flawless eyes.

PATRICIA  
*The Sophia.*

CHARLIE  
The Sophia.

Sophia shrugs and smiles.

PATRICIA  
Oh it's so nice to finally meet  
you. You're kind of a legend around  
here you know.

A silent beat. Patricia turns to Charlie.

PATRICIA  
I'll see you up there. Don't trip.

CHARLIE  
As if I'm not nervous enough.

She kisses his cheek, smiles at Sophia, and heads off down  
the aisle.

SOPHIA  
She's beautiful...

CHARLIE  
Yeah. Scrubs up well I suppose.

SOPHIA  
And is she...

Before she can ask the question an old Italian limousine  
rolls to a stop at the front steps as Alfonso III walks up.

CHARLIE  
And there she is. Places everyone.  
(to Alfonso III)  
*Can you show Sophia to a seat?*

Alfonso III hold out his arm. Sophia takes it. She looks at Charlie. He looks at her and smiles.

CHARLIE

Show time.

Charlie heads out to the white limo as Alfonso III ushers Sophia down the aisle. The church is idyllic, festooned with white flowers everywhere. The floral arrangements at the end of the pews contain bunches of dark purple grapes.

The Secretaries of Juliet are together in a pew. They wave to Sophia as she passes. Bella, ever the romantic, is already crying, handkerchief in hand.

When Sophia gets to a seat she looks to the altar where Don Alfonso stands waiting for his bride. He turns to look at Sophia. He smiles sweetly then closes his eyes for a few seconds in a silent expression of gratitude. She smiles.

Then the organ begins and a hush falls over the congregation.

Charlie escorts Claire down the aisle. She looks beautiful. All the excitement and radiance of a teenage bride.

As they pass she sees Sophia and her whole face just lights up. She gives her a discreet wave. Sophia smiles and waves back but it's all too much and the tears begin to come.

Charlie walks Claire to Don Alfonso. He gives her away.

**EXT. SMALL VILLAGE IN TUSCANY -- LATER**

THE WEDDING PARTY is led through the narrow streets of the village towards the vineyard by a loud brass band.

VILLAGERS outside bars stand and applaud. Others lean out of upstairs windows throwing confetti, whistling and cheering.

Alfonso walks arm-in-arm with Claire at the center of it all.

Beside them. Patricia and Charlie and Alfonso's son and grandson.

And lastly the gathering of GUESTS. Sophia is among the first cluster just behind the wedding party. Everyone's eyes are on The Bride and Groom except Sophia who's watching Charlie.

The parade continues. It's a colorful, joyous carnival of an occasion. A day not soon forgotten in this little village.

**EXT. D'ANNUNZIO VILLA -- OPEN FIELD -- SUNSET**

Tables have been laid for the wedding feast. The BAND plays, CHILDREN run around. FRIENDS and FAMILY chat and laugh.

At the head table sit the bride and groom. Charlie and Patricia are seated on either side of them.

Sophia is at another table with the Secretaries of Juliet. She steals glances at Charlie over her glass of wine.

Charlie stands and taps his glass. Everyone turns to him.

The band stops and silence falls. Charlie clears his throat.

CHARLIE

It's been a sincere honor giving away my Gran today. Though she's left me in the market for a room mate if anyone knows anyone... some light cooking and laundry required.

This gets a chuckle. Charlie smiles at Claire as he says:

CHARLIE

I'm not allowed to make a speech...

Someone shouts "Shame!"

CHARLIE

So I'll just get right to it then... Ladies and Gentlemen, may I present for the first time Mr. and Mrs. Alfonso D'Annunzio...

Everyone stands and cheers. Claire and Alfonso kiss.

CHARLIE

Now I believe Mrs. D'Annunzio would like to say a few words... Gran?

Everyone claps. Claire kisses Charlie and stands. He sits.

CLAIRE

I won't keep you long as I'm sure most of you have heard the story of how my husband...

Everyone cheers and whistles at the first mention of the word. She smiles. It gets quiet again.

CLAIRE

Fifty-seven-years ago I wrote a letter that asked a question.

(MORE)

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
 Fifty-seven years later I got an  
 answer.  
 (she looks right at)  
 Sophia? Dear? Would you stand up?

Sophia hesitates then stands reluctantly. She turns red with embarrassment. Charlie smiles at this.

CLAIRE  
 Sophia gave me my answer.

Everyone starts clapping and cheering her as Claire unfolds a piece of paper. Sophia recognizes it - turns redder.

CLAIRE  
 She wrote me a letter. This letter.  
 Without it, none of this would've  
 been possible, none of us would be  
 here today, and so it seems only  
 fitting to share some of it...  
 (she starts reading)  
 "'What' and 'if' two words as non-  
 threatening as words come. But put  
 them together side-by-side and they  
 have the power to haunt you for the  
 rest of your life: 'What if?'"...

She looks at Sophia now and basically reads the letter to her as if no one else were there.

CLAIRE  
 "I don't know how your story ended.  
 But I know that if what you felt  
 then was love - true love - then  
 it's never too late. If it was true  
 then it why wouldn't it be true  
 now? You need only the courage to  
 follow your heart..."

Sophia is looking at Charlie who looks straight back at her.

CLAIRE  
 "I don't know what a love like that  
 feels like... a love to leave loved  
 ones for, a love to cross oceans  
 for... but I'd like to believe if I  
 ever felt it. I'd have the courage  
 to seize it. I hope you had the  
 courage to seize it, Claire. And if  
 you didn't, I hope one day that you  
 will."

She folds the letter and looks at Sophia - we can see the glaze of tears forming as everyone starts clapping.

Charlie sees those tears forming too.

Sophia looks at him sitting there beside Patricia and then abruptly turns and walks off away from the gathering.

The tears have started to fall. She wipes them away.

SOPHIA

I'm sorry, I have to go.

Charlie watches Sophia go. He catches Claire looking at him as if to say "What are you waiting for?" A beat.

Then he gets up and goes after her.

**EXT. D'ANNUNZIO VILLA -- LATER**

Charlie walks around to the front of the house.

CHARLIE

Sophia?

He walks to the front door and calls inside.

CHARLIE

Sophia?

He walks round the corner towards the vineyards and looks down the rows of fruit laden vines.

CHARLIE

Sophia?

He goes back towards the house and then spots her in a first floor window redoing her make up in front of a mirror. A vine grows up this side of the house up to and beyond the window.

He walks up to the house and shouts from below.

CHARLIE

*Sophia?*

She looks out of the window - it should, of course, be reminiscent of Shakespeare's balcony scene.

CHARLIE

What are you doing?

SOPHIA

I'm leaving.

CHARLIE

Why?

SOPHIA  
I shouldn't have come here.

CHARLIE  
Did you listen to what Gran just  
said? To what you wrote?

SOPHIA  
I'm happy for you. She's gorgeous.  
Not at all how I imagined.

CHARLIE  
Who?

SOPHIA  
Patricia.

CHARLIE  
Patricia? She's my cousin.

SOPHIA  
Your cousin? Good God. Is that  
legal in England?

CHARLIE  
Different girl. Same name. She's  
like a sister to me. And a daughter  
to Gran. We practically grew up  
together after, you know...

This gives Sophia pause. She looks down at him.

CHARLIE  
Don't go.

SOPHIA  
Why? Why should I stay, Charlie?

He starts to climb the vine towards her with some difficulty.

SOPHIA  
What are you doing?!

CHARLIE  
The thing is I've watched Gran and  
Alfonso over the last few months...  
and I've realized... that I can't  
wait fifty years to say...

He's level with her now but has to pause to get his breath.

CHARLIE  
...I love you, Sophia.

SOPHIA  
What?

CHARLIE  
That kiss wasn't a mistake. Poorly  
timed yeah. But not a mistake.

SOPHIA  
You love me?

CHARLIE  
I do.

SOPHIA  
So why are you looking at me like  
that?

CHARLIE  
Like what?

SOPHIA  
Terrified.

CHARLIE  
I remembered about half way up the  
vine I'm a bit scared of heights.

She looks at him. Smiles.

SOPHIA  
I love you too.

Slight pause. She leans into kiss him. But he doesn't move.

SOPHIA  
So are you gonna kiss me? Or...

CHARLIE  
I would. Yeah. It's just that I  
appear to have lost my foot--

And with that he disappears from the window - screaming all  
the way down until he hits with a thud.

SOPHIA  
Charlie!

She looks down to see him lying prostrate in a bush.

**INT. MAIN HOUSE -- LATER**

She rushes through the villa, down the stairs, and out  
through the hall to the front yard.

She runs up to him. He's moaning in pain.

SOPHIA  
Are you OK?

CHARLIE  
(groans)  
Please tell me no one saw that.

Sophia looks up and sees the entire wedding party looking at Charlie lying there.

SOPHIA  
No one saw it.

CHARLIE  
Good.

SOPHIA  
Can you move?

He stays completely still as he smiles.

CHARLIE  
Only my lips.

She leans over and kisses him as Claire and Alfonso watch approvingly from a distance. As we...

FADE TO BLACK.

"LA FINE"