

The Cult of Eros
an original screenplay by
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FADE IN:

It is before dawn on Italy's Lazio coast, where a video crew has set up on a hill overlooking the sea and in a cabana on the beach. While the screen is black, we hear the slight rushing of waves and then the chatter off screen of the video crew in Italian at the two locations.

GAFFER

Sunrise is less than two minutes.

DIRECTOR

Are we ready to go on the beach?

BODY PERSON IN CABANA

Not yet.

DIRECTOR

What's the problem?

The first pink rays of sunlight peek over the Aurunci Hills.

BODY PERSON IN CABANA

She won't undress. She has never done a nude shoot before.

GAFFER

Ready to shoot in one minute.

DIRECTOR

Why did they send me a whore to play a goddess?

BODY PERSON IN CABANA

She's ready. (A few beats, excitedly)
She just dove into the water!

CUT TO:

EXT. OUT TO SEA - DAY - EXTREME CLOSE-UP

Preceded by heave of seawater, the Goddess emerges from the sea holding a bottle of Venus Olive Oil in front of one of her breasts.

CLOSER IN

The bottle label shows a reproduction of Botticelli's Birth of Venus and we hear GRETCHINA's THEME, the sweetly lambent adagio from the Corelli Concerto #8 and OVER BLACK, the title.

THE CULT OF EROS

EXT. STREET BOSTON NORTH END - NIGHT

A Mercedes limo pulls up to a thirties-era multi-family house in a leafy Boston neighborhood. Street lamps illuminate the upper boughs of mature hardwoods. Two young men emerge from the vehicle, one carrying a stack of pizza boxes. The two young men see a light on in a second story window and press the black button of an old-fashioned doorbell with brass cowling. On the intercom, there is an amplified voice.

VOICE

Who is it?

TULIO

It's the pizza delivery guy.

VOICE

I didn't order pizza.

TULIO

Ma, it's Tulio.

There is a buzz and the outside door unlocks.

INT. TIA FLO'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

TULIO

We have clam, a sausage and mushroom, and a Margherita pie. We might want to warm them up.

TIA FLO

So to what do I owe getting pizzas in the middle of the night?

ARTURO

Two women from Dartmouth.

TIA FLO

(Turning on the gas oven) Well, okay.

Flo reaches reached behind the pantry to get a short handled pizza peel. The tin pantry is cream colored with stenciled scenes of Italy on the outside, Venetian gondolas, the Coliseum in Rome, and the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

TIA FLO (CONT'D)

(Sliding pizzas into the oven)

Your cousin Bertholdo was here earlier. Said he got a call from Sandy saying she needed rosemary to make osso buco. I said, go to the porch and grab what you need.

TULLIO

You can blame me for me the visit.
I told him you had rosemary.

TIA FLO

What blame? Why do I have an herb
garden if not to share with the
family? I was just surprised that
Sandy is cooking Italian.

TULLIO

Why are you surprised? We had veal
scallopine and mushroom polenta at
their place just before Thanksgiving.

TIA FLO

She had us over for corned beef and
cabbage. It was very good. (She sprays
water into the oven, creating a hiss.)

TULLIO

Yeah, she had us over for corned
beef and cabbage once, but then Sandy
made braseola and vegetable lasagna
for Carmella's first communion and
we had veal scallopine before
Thanksgiving at her place.

TIA FLO

Please son, don't raise your voice.
I'll just say this, Italian food is
the best food, the healthiest and
tastiest, and I'm glad that Sandy
wants to learn how to cook Italian.

Arturo returns from a back room with a jug of an Italian
red. Tia Flo is sliding the last pizza onto a cutting board
as Arturo pours the wine into three juice glasses.

TULLIO

It was Arturo's idea. Two young ladies
from out of town approached him at
the Hanover. They are competing in
a rowing competition on the Charles
against Boston College.

ARTURO

They saw me sketching scenery for
Act One of Manon and they asked if I
would do their portraits. I told
them I only did furniture and
landscapes. Then they asked where
they could get a real wood-fired
brick oven pizza.

(MORE)

ARTURO (CONT'D)

(He takes a slug of the red) And I had to tell them that there's no brick oven pie in the North End. So one of them says, I think it was Cody, 'I guess we aren't getting our portraits done and we're not getting brick oven pizza.' That's when I called Tulio.

TULIO

He called at a good time. I had just dropped off a couple of *zhidrool* politicians at the Park Plaza.

TIA FLO

So I owe these young ladies this late night visit and the pizza.

TULIO

After pizza and beer at Panelletaria, they invited us back to the dorm where they were staying. I signed into the visitor log as *Guido Gambone*, and Arturo, as *Silvio Berlosconi*. They had performance-enhancing drugs and beer in their dorm room fridge.

TIA FLO

I have such a handsome son and nephew. After we finish the pizzas, I have something to show you. Arturo, with your work with the old place in Italy, I think you will be especially interested.

INT. TIA FLO'S PARLOR - NIGHT

The room has several pieces of heirloom furniture, including a twenties-era player piano and an antique credenza that holds Flo's "good" china.

A silver plate on the coffee table has cannoli, sfogliatelle, hazelnut biscotti and almond nougat candies that come in small boxes illustrated with Italian scenes. There is a bottle of Sambuca and Tulio is filling three ornate shot glasses.

TIA FLO

I hear Brico is coming back to town.

ARTURO

He's heading to an olive oil conference in Italy right now. But then after that he's coming back to the Boston area.

TIA FLO

I am going to have him over and make some chestnut agnolotti that he always liked.

Flo opens up a genealogy scrapbook and browses through the first few pages until coming to a page with two portraits in profile arranged so the man and the woman face each other. A caption reads, *Filippo, Maria*.

TIA FLO

I think she looks like Theda Bara, the silent film Cleopatra. I don't know if you boys remember her, but your great grandmother was a beautiful woman. Brico and Sandro might have better memories of her. And your bisnonno Filippo Leone was a very handsome man.

ARTURO

Those are great photos. Reminds me of publicity shots of the early Twentieth Century opera stars. (He pops a nougat into his mouth.) We had a production meeting earlier and went through photos of previous productions of Manon. He reminds me of Tito Scippa as Des Grieux.

TIA FLO

You know the story that they emigrated from Italy so that bisnonno could avoid the draft? It's not true.

Tia Flo flips to a sleeve toward the back of the book and takes out an envelope with canceled Italian stamps.

TIA FLO (CONT'D)

Maybe we should have a glass of something stronger than Sambuca. (She pulls out the letter and puts on her reading glasses.)

TULIO

(Kneeling by the liquor cabinet)

What would you like? Amaro?

TIA FLO

I'll take a small glass of grappa, just a half glass, not even.

(MORE)

TIA FLO (CONT'D)

You know Barbara Santora, she's married to Joe the heating guy who did the remodeling at the warehouse a couple years ago. She's into genealogy, has all the computer stuff and she asked me if she there was anything she could look up for me. I asked her to see if she could find any relatives either on the Leone or Principe side still living in the old country. She gave me the name of woman who was the niece of cousin to great-grandma Maria Principe.

Flo extracts the letter from its envelope. Tulio passes around glasses of grappa.

TIA FLO (CONT'D)

(Reading the letter)

Una nozze del fucile da caccia, A shot gun wedding, and there's more scandal. Evidently, great-grandpa had been married before, to an older woman whose family owned the nearby olive groves.

ARTURO

So the story about avoiding the draft wasn't true?

TIA FLO

No. The stone hut in Provincia di Lazio that we bought was not where *bisnonno* Filippo hid out from the army, but where he and *bisnonna* Maria had fled to escape from his first wife's relatives. They had threatened, according to this letter, *tagliare le sue palle*, you know cut off his things. That would have been a big problem for you boys. Well, none of us would be here now. *Bisnonna* was several months pregnant when she stepped off the boat at Ellis Island. So you see, the family story we had known it, was not completely true.

TULIO

It wasn't true at all.

ARTURO

So that explains the triple barrel, 18-shot Pistola con Caricato revolver
(MORE)

ARTURO (CONT'D)

that Sal inherited and now keeps in his desk at the warehouse. To me, fleeing the army or running away so you don't have your nuts cut off, doesn't make a lot of difference. But this story is better. It could be a verismo opera, *Le palle tagliato*, *The Severed Balls*.

TIA FLO

Well, I don't know about that, but these are the genes that you boys have.

EXT: AIRPORT ACCESS ROAD - DAY

There are signs pointing to Departures at Milan's Linate airport as a cab negotiates the warren of roads inside the airport. Brico Leone opens his laptop, waits for a satellite modem to connect, and then views his familiar desktop. He has one new email from Arturo, titled: *You owe me!*

ARTURO V.O.

Brico, Check out the goddess in the attached olive oil video ad I received from Chiarmonte S.P.A. I told their American marketing team that Leone Bros. Wanted to book her for promotions at Cardullo's and other venues. Their response: "Unfortunately Gretchina Visconti will not be available for personal appearances for at least six weeks as she is committed to SOL.

Brico clicks on the attached video icon and watches the time bar as the clip loads. Suddenly his laptop screen glows with brilliant sunshine and the cab is filled with the sound of elegiac Baroque music, the adagio from Arcangelo Corelli's Concerto Grosso #8 (Gretchina's Theme).

The computer screen shows a misty hillside olive grove, a view of the sea, and then an extreme close-up of a woman emerging from the sea foam between the waves. She holds a bottle of olive oil in front of one breast and a voiceover says something about olive oil in Italian. The woman and the music are intoxicatingly beautiful. The ad plays off Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*. As the cabbie unloads Brico's large leather Pullman bag from the trunk, Brico sits for a moment, contemplating the new development that a goddess would be at SOL at the same time he would be there.

Brico leaves the cab with an enigmatic smile on his face and a fifty-Euro note in his hand that he hands to the driver.

CABBIE

Grazie, E' stata una bella musica che stavi giocando. Cos'era?" (Thanks. That was nice music you were playing. What was it?)

BRICO

Non lo so, ma ho intenzione di scoprirlo.

(I don't know, but I intend to find out.)

INT. DESK NEAR LOADING GATE - DAY

Passengers are heading down a gangway to an awaiting airplane. Brico stands behind a woman with frizzy hair discussing her flight status with the gate clerk.

WOMAN

(In a Commonwealth accent)

It was not my fault that the flight from New Delhi was delayed.

She watches the clerk tap on a computer, stare at the screen, and then hit a few keys again. She turns around to speak.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

I've been in airports or on airplanes for thirty hours.

Brico nods sympathetically.

CLERK

Miss Fox, I am sorry for the delay, here's your boarding pass.

INT. AISLE OF 737 AIRCRAFT - DAY

Brico negotiates his way down the aisle to the back of the cabin and, as he approaches his seat, he sees Miss Fox is trying to find a place to stash her carry-on luggage. He steps in and helps her and finds a partially empty bin where he places her luggage.

WOMAN

Thank You.
(extending her hand)
My name is Heni Fox.

BRICO

Good to meet you, I'm Brico Leone.

When the aircraft is about to take off, Brico stashes the newspaper he has been reading, while Miss Fox puts away her

laptop and begins doing the crossword from the in-flight magazine. It is a short flight and the flight attendants deploy with beverage carts shortly after the aircraft is airborne. A male flight attendant wheels his cart between Heni and Brico and places napkins and pretzels on their trays.

FLIGHT ATENDANT

We are offering two complimentary Italian red wines on this flight, an Apulian Red and Sudtirool Cabernet Sauvignon Reserva.

HENI

I'll take the Sudtirool Cab.

BRICO

I'll have the same.

Heni seems relaxed having secured her seat and having a decent red in hand. She tells Brico about her 30-hour flight that started in Auckland, New Zealand.

HENI

Was it yesterday, two days ago? I'm still not sure how the International Date Line works. So this your first VinItaly?

BRICO

Actually, I am working SOL. My Uncle Sal, who runs the family olive oil business tapped me to be the lead for the project to bottle a line of premium, varietal oils. He arranged to send me to SOL to, in his words, "learn something about olive oil."

HENI

I landed a job with the *Auckland Sun-Times* as a local reporter on an affirmative action program, and impressed upper management by bringing a case of premium *Gravels Road Farm* wine to a Christmas barbecue. My father was the assistant winemaker there. I started to do occasional wine pieces and soon I had column.

BRICO

Nice. Your first time here?

HENI

My second.

(MORE)

HENI (CONT'D)

First time I found wanting the accommodations at the supposedly five-star Hotel Catullo, the kind of rundown place that offers discounts to conventions. I found the Gabbia d'Oro, which was really lovely. Not cheap, but I was able to expense it.

Brico looks at his SOL folder and sees:

INSERT

Accommodations: Hotel Catullo (Five Stars).

BACK TO SCENE

BRICO

I am staying at the Gabbia d'Oro as well. We can split a cab ride.

EXT. GABBIA D'ORO HOTEL - DAY

In the middle of the circular piazza in front of a former 18th Century palazzo, there is column topped by a winged lion. A cabbie unloads Heni and Brico's bags, and carries them into the foyer of the hotel.

INT. HOTEL FRONT DESK - DAY

The lobby area is busy with a smartly dressed, good-looking crowd. The desk clerk, whose name tag has the image of golden cage and the name *Fabrizio* engraved on it, hands Heni her room key and rings for a bellhop.

HENI

(Turning to Brico)
Thanks for taxi ride.

Brico nods acknowledging Heni's thanks and hands the desk clerk his passport.

FABRIZIO

Do you have a reservation?

BRICO

Unfortunately I don't.

FABRIZIO

(Looking at his
computer screen)
We may be fully booked.

Brico looks around at the hotel decor, hoping the desk clerk can find him something.

FABRIZIO (CONT'D)

I do have a cancellation, a small room on the third floor.

BRICO

I'll take it. One other thing, where is the nearest rent-a-car location?

FABRIZIO

At the railroad Station. Our shuttle can take you there.

INT. BRICO'S ROOM - DAY

Brico struggles to find a place for his large Pullman upright and clears a space in front of the closet. He unpacks and hangs up shirts, suit jackets and pants. The phone rings.

BRICO

Pronto, questo Brico parlando.

HENI

Brico, this is Heni. Got a second? I got an invite for dinner from a wine writer I know from Long Island. I thought that since you are both from the States, you might like to join us. We are meeting at seven at the *Thirteenth Apostle*.

BRICO

Sounds great, but I am probably more wiped than you were earlier.

INT. RENT-A-CAR LOCATION - DAY (MONTAGE)

- Brico at counter, signing contract
- Clerk handing Brico car keys, map
- Garage where Brico finds his late model BMW sedan
- Brico inside the vehicle, starting the car.

EXT. VINITALY/SOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Brico parks his car in a lot at the Verona Fairgrounds. There is a sign that reads *VinItaly/SOL* pointing to a shuttle stop. The shuttle arrives and Brico enters it along with two men speaking an East European Language.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO VERONA FAIRGROUNDS - DAY

Brico walks past a line of buses and joins a large milling crowd.

Overhead, flags of one hundred nations whip and snap on flagpoles. Dozens of hawkers stand outside the gates selling bottled water, souvenir *tastevins*, and closer in, scalpers trying to buy tickets from official guests.

Brico jostles through this crowd and hands his creds to the gate attendant who validates them under an ultraviolet light. Brico puts the lanyard with creds around his neck and enters the fairgrounds with a group of professionals carrying leather briefcases and talking on cell phones.

INT. PAVILION SIX - DAY

Brico enters Pavilion Six, which is the administrative building. Inside, a single clerk mans a desk in front of roomful phones and computers in carrels for the use of attendees, all unoccupied at the moment. The clerk hands Brico a SOL shoulder bag wrapped in plastic and meal coupons.

INT. OLIVE OIL PAVILION - DAY

Banners hang from the rafters identifying the places on floor for various regions' oils: Toscano, Piemonte, Lazio and a dozen others. At an exhibit that shows water flowing from a mountain stream, he accepts a bottle of *Alpina* water.

His expression suddenly changes as he hears the elegiac Gretchina's Theme from the Venus Olive Oil ad.

TRACKING SHOT follows Brico through the crowd where he finds the Venus booth, which is currently unmanned. Next to it is the display for *Olio D'Itri Societa Cooperativa*.

INT. ITRI COOPERATIVA BOOTH - DAY

A video monitor shows a photo-montage of the Cooperative's olive groves and a display has a stack of olive oil bottles.

FRANZ

I expect she will be back soon. Would you like to try some of our oils?

BRICO

Sure. We are looking for a supplier for a new line of premium oils.

FRANZ

This is our Campo di Nord olio extravergine d'oliva from the province of Latina.

BRICO

This is nice. It has aromas of spring flowers.

FRANZ

The olives are all handpicked. We use stone grindstones. This oil never encounters steel or plastic. What kind of quantities are you looking for?

BRICO

About a metric ton to start.

FRANZ

That would not be problem. Here is my card and a brochure with information on our oils and prices. We hope to hear from you.

A woman returns to the nearby Venus booth.

HERMOLINA

Good Morning. I am Hermolina Ressa. Thank you for waiting. Are you a journalist or with industry?

BRICO

I am with a firm in Boston. We are looking for suppliers for special limited production oils to augment our current line.

(Hands her his card)

Cases of oil as well as balsamic vinegar stand behind her in front of a blow-up of the label for the *di Venere* brand that features a medallion with Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*. A video monitor shows the production cycle for *di Venere* oils with a booming narration, "*Utilizzando methodes artisanal eternal,*" over woodcuts of peasants pressing oil.

HERMOLINA

Boston, of course we have accounts with gourmet food chains there that sell our oil, but you are saying that you are looking to bottle the oil under your own label?

BRICO

Yes. We are developing a line of premium Lazio oils. I understand that the woman in the video is at the exhibition.

HERMOLINA

Gretchina is with a regional manager this afternoon. She was here this morning.

BRICO

I would like to speak with her.

HERMOLINA

(Closely examining
his business card.)

I will give her your card when I see
her.

EXT. VERONA OLD TOWN STREET - EVENING

Warmly lit storefront windows beckon passers-by to dining establishments on or around the Piazza delle Erbe. A sign points to the Casa di Giulietta, and Brico walks the Via Cappelletto. Brico enters a busy wine shop called *Trimalchio's*, where Wines bottle are displayed on antique wooden racks.

INT. TRIMALCHIO'S - EVENING

Brico is approached by a distinguished-looking gray-haired salesperson.

BRICO

Do you have a Valtellina?

SALESMAN

Yes, of course. Are you looking for
Valtellina *Sfursat* or *Superiore*?

BRICO

I like them both.

SALESMAN

You see we have several fine
Superiores, a Triaca Sandomenico
2006, a nice Mamete Provostini's and
this very nice Rainoldi. And a little
pricier, an Inferno Reserva, which
by the way was a favorite wine of
Leonardo da Vinci.

BRICO

I'll take three of each.

In the front of the shop, the salesperson wraps the bottles in white tissue paper and places them in a wooden case box.

BRICO (CONT'D)

I'd like the case delivered to the
Gabbia D'Oro, if possible, and I
would like to take an uncorked bottle
of the Inferno Reserva with me.

INT. THE THIRTEENTH APOSTLE - NIGHT

The packed restaurant is filled with dinner chatter. A *Maitre'd* in a clerical robe leads Brico to a table where two women are huddled in conversation.

HENI

Brico! Glad you could make it. We were just about ready to order.

LISL

Nice to meet you.

BRICO

My pleasure.

(Seeing three uncorked
bottle on the table)

It doesn't look like you need this, but I had it uncorked and we should probably drink it.

Brico removes a bottle of wine from the bag.

HENI

And he brought his own wine!

BRICO

A favorite of Leonardo da Vinci's.

Heni jots a note on the Leonardo factoid and Brico pours the Valtellina Inferno Reserva under the intense gaze of Lisl. A nun-server wearing black clerical robes approaches to take their orders. A bus boy in altar boy garb pours Brico generous portions from a half empty bottles of a white and a red.

HENI

After VinItaly, Lisl and I are doing a tour of Brunello estates and we were discussing where to stay in Siena.

LISL

(Carrying on both sides of a conversation) *The Palazzo dell'uva*, the Grape Palace. No, it's not a former palazzo, but a converted Mussolini-era equestrian school.

Lisl takes a sip of Leonardo's wine and watches the waiter and busboy place food plates on the table.

LISL (CONT'D)

There's a gravel quarry on the other side of the ridge and you can hear
(MORE)

LISL (CONT'D)

TNT explosions at any hour of the night. And they get their house wine from the estate of the Tuscan aristocrat Mazzei, whose ancestor helped Jefferson set up his vineyard at Monticello.

Heni scribbles notes and Brico gnaws on a breadstick.

LISL (CONT'D)

(She is now eating
while still talking)

There's a little village just past the quarry where you can buy the most divine artisanal bread and the local cheese is better than Reggiano. There is even an Art Deco mural in the dining room done by Paolo Savarese, kind of an apotheosis of *Il Duce* with Mussolini being borne aloft by angels blowing trumpets, trailing banners with Fascist slogans like *Storia, Famiglia, Resistenza*.

HENI

(Explaining Lisl's
verbosity.)

Lisl wrote a travel guidebook on
Tuscany

INSERT: VIEW UNDER THE TABLE

Lisl, barefooted, is rubbing Brico's calf.

BACK TO SCENE

Lisl has a come-hither look and Brico takes a mouthful of wine, wipes his mouth with a napkin and tosses it on the table.

BRICO

Excuse me. I have got to make a
phone call.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Couples are walking in; Brico is walking out, talking on his cellphone.

FABRIZIO

(On the phone)

It looks like you do have one message,
sir.

Brico's face becomes animated. Restaurant patrons walk by, entering *The Thirteenth Apostle*.

FABRIZIO (CONT'D)

The message is from Fine Wines of Trimalchio. They will deliver your case of wine at ten o'clock tomorrow morning.

BRICO

Grazie.

Brico drops his hand holding the phone to the side, and re-enters the restaurant.

INT. LISL AND HENI'S TABLE - NIGHT

A bus boy clears plates. Brico nods yes to a question of whether he is finished with his food, but he isn't finished with his wine. He takes big gulps of both the Valtellina and the Tocai. A nun-server approaches and asks whether they would like desert.

NUN-SERVER

We have a pan-forte with pears and plums that we serve with a flight of grappas.

LISL

Sounds perfect to me, low cal. (She laughs)

BRICO

(Leaving several Euro notes on the table.)

Lisl, Heni, It's been a pleasure. I just got hit by jet lag and I have a nine o'clock tomorrow on the legacy olive oils of Lazio. Something exciting like that.

HENI

(Watching Brico leave)

I know how he feels. I'm getting there myself.

INT. SOL MEETING ROOM - DAY

Panelists and guests settle in. A banner hanging behind the panelists on stage says: *Naturalmente Italiano: From Italy with Flavor*. Waiters walk between rows pouring samples of olive oils into small tulip glasses. Brico reads a pamphlet on the table.

INSERT PAMPHLET:

DOP stands for Denominazione d'Origine Protetta The mark is guaranteed by the European Union and was created to promote the authenticity and artisanal characteristics of certain food and agricultural products.

BACK TO SCENE

ANDREA NAPOLI

(Dressed to the nines
in a three-piece
suit)

As co-chairman of the SOL exhibition,
I want to welcome you the world's
premier olive oil conference. I would
also like to acquaint you with the
Denominazione d'Origine Protetta
program. The mark DOP was created

...

As his spiel repeats the info in the pamphlet, the journalists and tasters in the room fiddle with laptops and I-phones and largely ignore him. A man with a three-day growth, dressed in field worker's garb is reading a story about a recent *futbal* game in the tabloid *La Gazzetta dello Sport*. The head of the Lazio olive oil consortium Graziano Paulino clears his throat to get the attention of the room.

PAOLINO

(In accented English)

In your first glass we have poured
an olio extravergine d'oliva Canino.
This district has been renowned for
its olive culture since Etruscan
times.

When the Chairman brings his glass to his lips to taste the oil, the audience follows his lead.

PAOLINO (CONT'D)

You first notice the emerald green
color of the oil, then, on the palate
you feel the smoothness that comes
from very low acid levels of less
than one half of one per cent. For
me the taste is like fresh fruit
picked at peak levels of ripeness.
(He sniffs at the glass and takes
another sip.) The flavor is robust
and there is a peppery aftertaste,
the outstanding characteristic of
this oil.

Many in room scribble notes in their notebooks. Brico simply notes, *Funky in the finish, mildly interesting.*

At the head table, the head of the Lazio olive oil consortium pushes the mike over to a representative of Mark and Spencer.

MARK AND SPENCER REP

I will admit up front that this is one of my favorite oils, partly because of its extraordinary taste and mouth feel. If an olive oil can have a history, this one has it. Classical authors Cato, Horace, and Columella mention Sabina oil. And might I add that the oldest producing olive tree in Europe is located in the Canneto-Sabino region.

The guy in the audience with a three-day growth in field workers pants and a Steinway Piano Tee featuring the wild-haired Beethoven converses with the taster next to him, a woman in a black *Corporette* pants suit.

MAN IN FIELD GARB

(With an Australian accent to the woman.) I would say it's the Carboncello oil that you are tasting. He rapidly tastes all the oils in front of him again, some twice, and quickly scribbles a note or two.

FEMALE TASTER

It's new to me, but I like it.

The third individual on the panel is a bureaucrat from the Lazio section of the Italian Board of Trade.

BUREAUCRAT

Participants in the seminar are invited to watch a video, *Oils of Lazio*. After the film, a seafood buffet lunch will be served in Dining Area "C" featuring wines of the Veneto.

Waiters place baskets of ciabattas and bruschetta on the desks with small cutting boards holding a selection of cheeses from Lazio in front of every person in the room.

INSERT: VIDEO SCREEN SHOWING THE OILS OF LAZIO

The narration is in English and the videography, some of it taken by aircraft showing terrace olive groves, is stunning. The video shows growers and their families feasting on locally produced cheese, wild mushrooms gathered in local forests, and grilled fish just pulled from the sea.

BACK TO SCENE

For a minute, the audience pays attention to the video, but most them revert to computer screens and the cheese samples. Brico however watches closely. The room starts to clear before the video is over.

INT. DINING AREA "C"- DAY

In the buffet line, journalists, seemingly ravenous, fill their plates with greasy fish and cheesy pasta. Servers, dressed in white suits and toques, dump food from large pots into aluminum steam trays.

BRITISH JOURNALIST

With the money the *Eye-Tai's* spent on this conference, they might have gone for a few more quid and served us some gamberi or vongole. I could have gotten fish and chips at home in Paddington.

Brico decides not to brave the food line and just grabs a cold bottle of sweaty mineral water.

EXT. FAIRGROUND OUT DOOR CAFE - DAY

Brico is having a beer and a slice of pizza, while he types on his laptop. He is finishing an email back to Boston with a progress report on the contacts he has made and websites of potentials suppliers. He then clicks on another email in his in-box, an email thread he had been CC'ed on between Leone Bros., Boston and Arturo.

INSERT - ARTURO'S EMAIL

ARTURO V.O.

Arrived in Rome at 4:30 yesterday afternoon. Overnighted at beach hotel Lido di Ostia (interesting experience). Left late morning today and look a leisurely trip down the coast road for an early afternoon arrival here. Weather here is perfect. Massera place primes to be regal.
Arturo

INT. PAVILION SIX - DAY

Much busier than on Brico's previous visit, journalists in carrels are talking on the phone, pecking on keyboards and conferring in small groups.

In the mailroom, Brico pulls material out of his mailbox. Sorting through the mail, he tosses away most of it, but opens an linen paper envelope.

INSERT: TEXT OF LETTER (BRICO V.O.)

Dear Mr. Brico Leone, I am pleased to invite you to a dinner at the Villa Chiarmonte tonight celebrating the products of Chiarmonte S.P.A, including Virgilio aceto balsamico di Modena and di Venere olio extravirgine di oliva. A reception will precede the dinner at six o'clock. I look forward to meeting you. With much respect, Cavaliere Gianni Chiarmonte

Below the printed text is a handwritten note:

Please come, G.V.

As Brico reads the note, the letter trembles in his hand.

INT. LARGE PAVILION - DAY - TRACKING

At the entrance, a large pennant hangs from the ceiling and reads *THE WINES OF TUSCANY*. Brico walks into crowded pavilion, his VINITALY/SOL bag over his shoulder. He step over a broken bottle of red wine, sitting in a red puddle, with two shards of glass being held together by a wine label. He passes display booths serving coveted wines surrounded by eager tasters.

INT: SUPER TUSCAN TASTING ROOM - DAY

A cardboard sign on a tripod says: *Super Tuscan*. There is a sign-in sheet on a pedestal at the entrance where Brico signs himself in as a wine importer. Brico walks down the center aisle checking for Heni, spotting her at the end of the second row back. Instead of pushing his way down the long row, Brico walks up front passing the wine panelists setting up at a low dais, nodding his head in greeting to one of them. He passes behind Heni to take the open seat next to her. Waiters are pouring wine samples in glasses sitting in marked spaces 1-5 on a paper mat.

HENI

(She glances past
Brico to a squat,
bald guy two seats
away in the row.)

I am glad you made it.

(MORE)

HENI (CONT'D)

I was holding your chair and had to go to into super-bitch mode to drive away a fairly persistent asshole.

Brico glances over at the "persistent asshole," who avoids making eye contact with him. His name tag shows him to be the author of the *Flying High with Wine* column for an airline inflight magazine and that his name is Taggert.

BRICO

So what's the deal here?

HENI

(Watching a waiter pour wine into her glass #4) The deal here is that the combined retail price for the five bottles of wine being poured here is well over Euro fifteen hundred dollars.

BRICO

Maybe that's why they are called Super Tuscans. They're super-expensive.

The panel Chairman, Gennaio Arigiano's table tent identifies him as the head of the Tuscan Regional Wine Bureau. A very handsome man in his fifties, he turns his microphone on and begins.

ARIGIANO

(In accented, fluent English)

I am glad to see we have been able to persuade a few of you to shorten your lunch hour today and spend some time with us to taste some *vino rosso*. (Laughter in the room) Joining us today are Mr. Luca Poggio, proprietor of Vinoteca La Scala in Montalbo. (Camera pans to show the master tasters as they are introduced) Mr. Leon Clarke, Tuscan representative of Sotheby's auction house in London, and Mr. Gabrielle Montes, managing editor of *Gambero Rosso*.

After the intros, ARIGIANO swirls the wine in his glass and he then puts his nose in it and takes a sip.

ARIGIANO (CONT'D)

Ornellaia, the nose shows clean, varietal fruit with distinct notes
(MORE)

ARIGIANO (CONT'D)

of vanilla and toasted oak from aging in French oak. The impression in the mouth is balance from the blending of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

He audibly slurps a mouthful of wine.

ARIGIANO (CONT'D)

In the mid-palate we pick up complex cherry fruit and cassis and, if I can be politically incorrect, some tobacco notes along with mature tannins. And the finish is very strong with complex fruit and oak lingering in the mouth. (He spits out the wine and a chorus of fifty or so less audible sips and spits from the other tasters in the room ensues.)

Brico is taking his cue from Heni on how to follow along in the tasting, except that Heni spits out her wine while Brico swallows his. Seeing this, Heni offers him the remainders from her glasses, pushing them over to him. The bald wine writer sitting next to Brico looks on with disgust.

ARIGIANO (CONT'D)

I am going to call on my colleagues Mr. Luca Poggio, from Vinoteca La Scala and Mr. Leon Clarke, of Sotheby's to discuss the wines of P. Antinori.

The Italian and the Brit look at each other to decide who will speak first, then Arigiano passes the microphone over.

POGGIO

So we will follow the list and consider the Solaia next. In the nose we get the essence of blackberry jam, licorice, cassis, and I maybe some tar. What do you think Leon?

LEON

(Knitting his brows,
nose in the glass)

I see that too. Quite agree.

POGGIO

Complex fruit continues in the mid-palate and the payoff is the really deep and lingering finish with layered pitted-fruit flavors and perfectly smooth tannins, a stunning wine.

MONTAGE:

The aria *Libbiamo* from *La Traviata* plays over shots of the wine tasting.

- Brico downing a glass of red
- Two panelists discussing a wine
- The "Inflight Magazine" journalist looking askance at Brico for finishing a glass of wine poured for Heni
- The table of expert tasters spitting out wine in total synchronicity
- Brico accepting another half-glass from Heni
- A disjointed view of the room from Brico's P.O.V.

BACK TO SCENE - LATER

Wine journalists on their feet clapping as the Chairman, ends the Super Tuscan tasting and he and the panel leave.

HENI

(Closing her computer)

Did you learn anything from the wine tasting today?

BRICO

(Eyes bloodshot,
slurring his words)

Yeah. I learned why the experts spit and don't swallow.

Suddenly, Brico is jerked forward in his chair as Taggart bumps into the back of his chair exiting the row. Brico reacts violently, pushing his chair back, knocking Taggart over onto the desk behind him. Wines fly and glasses crash and break. A woman in the audience screams. Brico stands up and grabs Taggart by the collar.

BRICO (CONT'D)

Shit for brains!

HENI

(Pulling Brico out of the fray) Let him go.

BRICO

(Giving the wine journalist a final shove)

Get him out of my face!

In the back of the room, those who have not already left, take notes on the contretemps.

EXT. SUNNY OUTDOOR PLAZA - DAY

Brico is drinking an espresso and picks on a piece of pandoro. Heni is working her email and drinking an Orangina.

BRICO

I hope I didn't embarrass you in there.

HENI

Not at all, got plans for tonight? Lisl and I are heading to the Arena di Verona. RAI is filming an outdoor production of Tosca.

BRICO

Actually I do have plans. I was invited to an olive oil tasting and dinner tonight.

INT: HOTEL WORKOUT ROOM - DAY

Brico finishes up a set, curling 15-kilo dumbbells. He is wearing a yellow "Montauk" tee that shows sweat stains. He downs several folded paper cups of cool water.

INT. MIRROR IN BRICO'S BATHROOM - DAY

Brico is tucking his white shirt into the pants of his blue silk suit. He combs his hair with his fingers.

INT: BRICO'S BMW - DUSK - TRAVELING

The radio is on as Brico speeds down an highway lined with industrial buildings.

BBC RADIO VOICE

As current occupants on the top of the food chain after four billion years of evolution, humans have a responsibility to propagate life within the universe.

Brico lifts a skeptical eyebrow and leans over to change stations, finding baroque music while at the same time looking at a diagram showing the way to the Villa Chiarmonte. Suddenly he takes a left turn in front of oncoming traffic, which draws horns and gestures of the drivers of the oncoming vehicles. He accelerates to gain altitude climbing a hill.

The BMW travels passes brown hills with firs and patches of green vegetation.

Lights from scattered villas and farmhouses coruscate in the distance. A stone bridge spans a gurgling stream. A sign points to *Villa Chiarmonte*.

In the villa's parking lot, Brico parks the car near an adjacent vineyard, whose vines are budding pink. He exits the car and views the Palladian facade of the Villa Chiarmonte, where a few guests are entering the rotunda.

As Brico walks toward the entrance to the villa, a male peacock with its colors displayed struts nearby toward a neoclassical gardener's shed.

EXT: IN FRONT OF THE VILLA CHIARMONTE - NIGHT

Near the Villa entrance there is a table manned by two Chiarmonte employees in uniform Chiarmonte shirts and ties. One of the employees searches an index box, and then hands a badge on to Brico.

CHIARMONTE EMPLOYEE

Be sure to take your complimentary bottles of Venus oil and Virgillio balsamic vinegar when you leave.

INT. CHIARMONTE VILLA ROTUNDA - NIGHT

A large high-ceilinged space is packed with a crowd of animated partiers and the volume from dozens of conversations is almost deafening. Brico plunges into the crowd and picks up snippets of conversations.

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN

(To companion)

Should Berlusconi be charged with political crimes or sexual crimes stemming from his bunga-bunga parties.

Brico smiles. Employees in Chiarmonte livery man hors d'oeuvres and drink tables. Brico picks up a glass of a Chiarmonte private label Merlot off a waiter's silver tray and walks over to view large oil of a Chiarmonte ancestor. A man he recognizes as the guy dressed in work clothes, who had been reading the soccer newspaper during the Lazio olive oil tasting, approaches him and extends his hand.

PETER

I remember you from the SOL conference and I see you are from Boston. I spent some time nearby at the Cornell Ag School in Riverhead, Long Island. I'm from Melbourne.

(Talking to a portrait)

The old timers were tough bastards.

Brico nods in agreement.

BRICO

So what brings you here?

PETER

I'm helping out my childless aunt and uncle who own Two Popes Farm. The oil we pressed last year, I swear to god, it has aromas of violets. None of the of the oils at the tasting came within five points of Two Popes oil.

BRICO

What makes it so good?

PETER

A perfect growing season and perfect fruit, Carboncello. I have a sample in the boot of my car I can give you if you are interested.

BRICO

Absolutely. Let's connect before we leave.

As Peter is approached by another attendee and begins a conversation with him, Brico responds to a touch on his shoulder and turns to be face-to-face with Gretchina Visconti.

GRETCHINA

Mr. Leone, I understand you wanted to talk to me. Something important about olive oil I gather from your card.

BRICO

Well yes, and how did you know it was me?

GRETCHINA

Hermolina's description was very good. Decent-looking, okay maybe she was a little more complimentary. Brown hair curling up over the collar, several day's growth of beard, blue eyes, *un Americano*. You fit the description. Anyway it was Oswaldo who picked you out.

Next to her is a man with a prematurely receding hairline, her agent, Oswaldo. Brico notices that he and Gretchina are wearing the same style platinum engagement rings.

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

So what are we drinking?

BRICO

Signor Chiarmonte's Merlot. (He takes a sip). Actually it's quite nice.

GRETCHINA

Oswaldo, I'd like a glass of the Merlot.

OSWALDO

Signor Leone, can I get you another glass?

BRICO

Yes, thank you.

Brico and Gretchina watch Oswaldo pick through the crowd and queue up in line at the crowded bar. Bartenders are popping corks on wine bottles and guests are waving folding money in the air in hopes of getting expedited service.

GRETCHINA

You still haven't answered my question about why you wanted to see me.

BRICO

I received a copy of the Venus olive oil ad, the one where you play Venus coming out of the sea.

GRETCHINA

Oh, that stupid thing.

BRICO

No, not stupid, maybe a bit hackneyed. You are much more convincing as Venus, well more beautiful anyway than Botticelli's model, Simonetta Vespucci. Having her naked standing on a cockleshell suspended over the water, doesn't work compositionally.

GRETCHINA

But you thought the video ad worked well.

BRICO

Yes, from an ad point of view it was ingenious. From an artistic point of view, the olive oil bottle was a travesty. I would have preferred the video without it.

GRETCHINA

So that is why you wanted to talk to me, to say that you would have preferred to see to me completely naked in the video ad.

BRICO

(Sees the bartender finishing up with Oswaldo)

The reason was that seeing you on video completely captivated me and I wanted to see if meeting you in person would be just as intoxicating.

GRETCHINA

And?

BRICO

I will quote Virgil, *Scio quid sit amor*.

GRETCHINA

Which means?

BRICO

I know now what love is.

Oswaldo arrives with the glasses of wine.

GRETCHINA

(To Oswaldo)

Thank you. Mr. Leone here is not only an expert on olive oil, but he can quote classical authors in Latin.

They are interrupted by music. From the loggia, a violinist and accordionist begin to play Laden's *Canto D'Amore* as Cavaliere and Signora ChiarmonTE emerge from double doors.

INT. THE CHAIRMONTE'S POV - NIGHT

The packed crowd below completely fills the rotunda and comes into closer view as the ChiarmonTEs descend the grand staircase, royally holding hands with elbows bent, arms up in the air. Someone starts to clap and the Cavaliere smiles and gives a hand salute.

INT. BALLROOM (FOOT OF THE STAIRS) - NIGHT

CHIARMONTE

I apologize to my English-speaking friends that my English is so bad.

(MORE)

CHIARMONTE (CONT'D)

But I want to single out my administrator, Victoria Franchi for making this *festa* possible.

Franchi and her husband acknowledge the Cavaliere with raised wine glasses.

CHIARMONTE (CONT'D)

I beg your indulgence, my friends, to view a short ten-minute film on di Venere olive oil and Virgilio aceto balsamico di Modena. And after the film, you are invited to partake of a light supper prepared by Chef Pasca, proprietor of the famed *Lucullus*, in Punta San Vigilio.

Chiarmonte points with an open hand to a serving station set up with plates, silverware and warming trays on the right side of the rotunda, where Chef Pasca takes a short bow.

CHIARMONTE

And please be sure to pick up your samples of our olive oil and balsamic vinegar when you leave.

On cue, the rotunda darkens and a movie screen drops from the ceiling displaying the video's title, *Il Mondo di Chiarmonte*, which appears over a montage of olive groves, vineyards, an a woodcut of the screw of an old fashioned olive press. A voiceover in Italian is intoned by a very deep basso.

VERY DEEP BASSO

Comprende sia le colline e il mare
(there is an aerial shot that pans from a white sand beach to the foam of a receding tide. The next shot climbs a hill and shows the sun sparkling off olive leaves.

The montage continues with pickers placing olives on what looks like a bed sheet and finally a close ups of the label of a balsamic vinegar in a carafe like-bottle and then the label on a bottle of di Venere olive oil. There are subtitles in English.

Brico heads to the bar in the back.

BRICO

(To Bartender)

Is the Merlot all you have?

BARTENDER

(Lifts several bottles
out of a case.)

I have a Pinot Nero.

BRICO

(Tucking a Five Euro
note into a tip jar)

That's what I want.

HERMOLINA

(Approaching the bar)

Mr. Leone, I gave you card to
Gretchina. Have you seen her?

BRICO

Yes, briefly, too briefly, But I
can't thank you enough for passing
on my card.

BACK TO SCREEN

Now showing Renaissance woodcuts.

VERY DEEP BASSO

*Utilizzando mthodes artisanall
eternal.* (Woodcuts show peasants
tending vines and making olive oil
and wine. There is a scene of a
vineyard and then an olive grove.)
*Tutto in conformito con i regolamenti
DOCG.* (A photo shows a Chiarmonte
worker carefully examining grape
juice using a refractometer.)

INSERT: SUBTITLE

Only the finest olive and grapes are used for its Venus Olive
Oil and Virgilio Balsamic vinegars.

BACK TO SCENE

The World of Chiarmonte ends with a view of the sun setting
behind the Arunci Hills while the voiceover intones the
Chiarmonte motto, *Rispetto per il passato, Occhio al futuro.*
(*Respect for the Past, Eye on the Future.*) There is extended
applause.

CHIARMONTE

(Raises his hands to
dampen applause)

Thank you everybody. Enjoy your food.

There is a surge of humanity toward the food service area
presided by Chef Pasca.

Only his tall white toque is visible over the jostling crowd.

INT. HEAD TABLE - NIGHT

The head table is set up on a podium near the foot of the stairway with Cavaliere Chiarmonite and his wife seated in the center. Gretchina sits next to the Cavaliere and he is animatedly talking into her ear. Signora Chiarmonite sits next to event organizer Victoria Franchi. Oswaldo sits at the end of the table away from Gretchina. Fawning liveried staff bow, smile, and serve delicacies and exquisite wines to the head table.

INT. BRICO'S HIGHTOP TABLE - NIGHT

Brico looks on with chagrin at the head table as he sits on a stool at one the high top tables set up on the perimeter of the rotunda.

HERMOLINA

I got us portobello mushroom polenta,
garden salad, and a couple skewers
of the pancetta-wrapped scallops.

BRICO

Looks great. Thanks.

Peter Contadini approaches.

PETER

(Putting down his
plate and a glass)
Mind if I join you? Have you tried
the Pinot Nero? They were holding
out on us before.

BRICO

That's what we're drinking now.
Hermolina, this is Peter Contadina,
Peter, Hermolina. She is with
Chiarmonite, a graduate of the Ag
school at the University of Bolzano.

PETER

(To Hermolina)
Really? I spent a lot of time nearby
on the slopes in Welsschnofen.

HERMOLINA

Yes, we have wonderful skiing,
wonderful food and wonderful wines.
At we have Otzi.

PETER

I have a theory that this bloke Otzi.
(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

(Takes a gulp of wine)

I don't think he was killed by a rival group of hunters, the theory now in vogue, but by a jealous husband.

BRICO

Why do you say that?

PETER

Look at the evidence found with his body. He was very well turned out, Nice shoes, cloak, leggings and loincloth all made from a variety of different animal hides, an *aristo* of his day. He is traveling alone and his last meal, from what was found in his stomach, included chamois and roebuck meat, which you would expect with a hunter. But they also found processed wheat bran, which is eaten mostly in the form of bread, which a hunter does not have access to.

BRICO

(He watches Peter
down a piece of fritta)

And?

PETER

So he had to have bartered for it. He had plenty of neat toys with him when he died: a scraper, drill, flint flakes, a bone awl. I'm sure a fellow as well-equipped as Otzi would have a pouch of honey or a grass bag of berries to swap with a *housfrau* for favors beyond the usual hospitality.

BRICO

So he was sh0ot in back by a jealous husband.

HERMOLINA

Interesting theory.

PETER

After SOL I think I am going to head up Bolzano to check out this Otzi bloke *mano a mano*. (To Brico) In the mood for a little side trip north?

BRICO

I'd like to, but after the conference, I am going to visit an old friend of mine, Rado Mikhailic.

GRETCHINA

(Approaching with a cup of espresso and a biscotti) May I join you?

BRICO

Please.

He pulls out a chair for her.

GRETCHINA

After chatting with the Cavaliere, I can tell you all about the acid levels of various olive oils and the price per ton of different varietals. (To Brico) Did I hear you say you were going to visit Rado Mikhailic?

BRICO

Yes.

GRETCHINA

Is he the Mikhailic who wrote the text *Raffigurante la figura humana*?

BRICO

Yes.

GRETCHINA

I used that text at the Instituto Marangoni. It was like the Bible. How do you know this genius Mikhailic?

BRICO

He was my instructor at the Art Institute in Boston and has been a friend for many years.

GRETCHINA

Really? So in addition to your expertise and achievements with olive oil and art criticism and ability to quote classical authors in Latin, you are a friend of this great man?

BRICO

Well...yes.

Gretchina and Hermolina smile and Peter guffaws, stopping only when he sees Oswaldo approaching.

OSWALDO

Scusi, Gretchina. The Cavaliere would like us to join him in his residence for dessert.

GRETCHINA

Didn't we already have dessert? What's this biscotti and espresso?

OSWALDO

I am only passing on the message.

In the background, the Cavaliere gestures that Gretchina should come and join him.

GRETCHINA

Tell him I'll be there in five minutes. So this genius Mikhailic is friend of yours and you are to going to see him after the exhibition. I would like to talk to you more about Professor Mikhailic.

BRICO

We could do dinner tomorrow night.

GRETCHINA

That may not be possible. But we will see.

Brico watches as Gretchina and Hermolina walk back toward the head table where the Chiarmonte's effusively greet them.

PETER

I admire your ability to crack on a Sheila like that. I'd be tongue-tied.

BRICO

Let's get our swag and get out of here.

EXT. CHIARMONTE VILLA PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Stars are out. No one is manning the greeter desk but there are open cases of olive oil and balsamic vinegar to be had on the honor system. Gravel cracks as they walk to Peter's Land Rover, where Peter gives Brico two bottles of Carboncello olive oil with plain hand-written white labels.

PETER

Here you are. This is my card and the address is on the back. Keep in touch.

BRICO
 (Shaking Peter's hand)
 I will.

INT. GABBIA D'ORO ROOM - NIGHT

Brico is already out of his business-casual attire, has stripped down to white boxers and his yellow *Montauk* tee shirt. The phone message light blinks on. He approaches the room phone with trepidation. After a series of prompts, he hears a female voice.

HENI
 (On voice mail)
 Brico, Lisl and I had a good time at the opera. Hope your reception went well.

Brico crosses his room to get at the box of wine delivered by Trimalchio and picks out a bottle of wine. With a corkscrew from the mini-bar, he opens the dark red. With one hand holding a glass of wine, he lies against three pillows on the bed. Soccer rowdies chant outside in the distance. Brico picks up the phone.

BRICO
 Heni, Brico here.

HENI
 Thanks for returning my call. I'm looking to get a ride in about 8:30 tomorrow morning.

BRICO
 Sure. How did you like the opera?

HENI
 I loved that aria when the painter is painting a blonde woman he has seen earlier that day in the church as the Madonna and his dark-haired girlfriend walks in.

BRICO
Recondita armornia di bellezze diverse.
 The last line, "Tosca it's you" is a lie, typical Puccini prevarication.

HENI
 So you know your opera.

BRICO
 I was rocked to sleep as a baby with these tunes, so it's in my blood, for better or worse.

INT. BRICO'S ROOM - MORNING

A knock on the door awakens Brico. He puts on sweat pants and answers the door. It is Heni, holding a corrugated tray with a paper coffee cup, and a Danish.

HENI

Still planning on going in today?

BRICO

Yeah. Give me ten minutes.

MONTAGE

-Brico's face under a steaming shower head

-Brico slurps from the coffee cup

-Brico brushing his teeth with a bath towel around his waist

-Brico pulling up a pair of loose linen pants

-Brico tying on a pair of Ingelmo walking shoes

-Brico grabbing his SOL bag.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO VINITALY/SOL - DAY

International flags on tall posts audibly flap above.

BRICO

I'm probably going to be leaving early today. It's my last day here.

HENI

Not a problem, I can take the shuttle back. Lisl is giving a travel talk to a group of Canadian journalists tonight. I'm eating at a restaurant called Funghi tonight. They serve mushrooms prepared in a hundred different ways. Interested?

BRICO

Sounds great. But I am not sure how tonight is going to play out. Today is my last day at SOL and I leave tomorrow to visit a friend. I may have dinner tonight with a contact I made at a reception yesterday.

INT. DARKENED SEMINAR ROOM - DAY

A placard on a tripod reads, *Factors in Ripening Selected Cultivars*.

Dr.Sergio Heilmann from the University of Bolzano is in the front of the room and talks to the slide show being projected on a screen.

HEILMANN

The study looked at five cultivars.
Sixty-four volatile compounds were
identified and quantified by gas
chromatography. (He clicks to the
next slide)

Brico begins to tune out, but then he hears the familiar voice of Peter Contadini.

PETER

So maybe we can just wheel gas
chronometers into the groves and we
can all go home.

HEILMANN

That may be a bit premature.(Smiling)
I'd like to keep the human in the
loop for a few more years anyway.
(He clicks to the next slide.) Phase
two will look at eight other
varieties, Moraiolo, Nociara..

Brico has had enough. He collects his stuff and leaves.

INT: ADMIN CENTER - DAY

Brico pulls stuff from his SOL mailbox and in an unoccupied carrel, opens his laptop. He flips through the mail, mostly pamphlets for olive oils and wines and puts them all in the trashcan.

INSERT - BRICO'S COMPUTER SCREEN

He scrolls through his mailbox showing mails from his New York Bank, then clicks on the email, *You Owe Me*, from Arturo and composes a response.

INSERT - TEXT OF BRICO'S EMAIL

BRICO V.O

Arturo, Met Gretchina Visconti at a
reception last night. She's more
alluring in person, but I already
feel a sense of loss in that I may
never see her again. *C'est la Vie*.
Looking forward to catching up with
you. With Love, Brico

INT. GABBIA D'ORO'S LOBBY - DAY

At the front desk, Fabrizio checks Brico's mail box.

FABRIZIO

Nothing, sir.

Brico rides up the elevator, enters his room, put his stuff down, and immediately uncorks a bottle of wine. He riffles through some SOL material and downs the vino. He then gets up to take another bottle of wine out his case, barely looking at its label. He uncorks it and pours himself another glass. He put his head down and falls asleep on the couch.

LATER

The phone rings. He sleepily answers. It is Heni.

HENI

Just calling see what you decided about the evening. I checked on line and they are serving both morels and white truffles this evening.

BRICO

Sounds great, but I am kind of wiped so I am going to hang here for a while and try to recharge my batteries.

After hanging up, Brico takes another a gulp of wine and returns to the couch.

INT. THE DUKE OF VERONA WINE BAR - NIGHT

A nattily dressed and a revived Brico approaches the bar, manned by a middle-aged female barista. Behind the bar is a large reproduction of Titian's Bacchus and Ariadne.

BARISTA

(In perfect British English)

This is a flight of Valpolicello's. The grapes here are Corvina, Molinara and Rondinella.

Brico tastes the wines and seems unimpressed. He watches the Barista pour another flight.

BARISTA (CONT'D)

These are Alto Adige reds, a Lagrein, a Cabernet Sauvignon, a Pinot Nero and a Schiava, which is somewhat of a rarity.

(MORE)

BARISTA (CONT'D)

(She watches Brico gulp down all four wines.) So which one did you like?

Brico points to the glass on his right.

BARISTA (CONT'D)

The Pinot Nero, it's very good, nice limes and cola in the nose.

As she moves on to serve another patron, Brico looks at the wine list. When he sees that she is free, he motions to the barista that he has decided to try some more wines. She sets up four more glasses and fills them a third of the way with a Traminer, a Trebbiano, A Pinot Blanc, and a Tocai.

BARISTA (CONT'D)

Usually I like bone dry whites, but this Traminer is special. (She pours some for herself and puts her nose in the glass.)

BRICO

(Completely blitzed) Yes it is.

Brico closes the wine menu and leaves different colored Euro notes on the bar.

EXT. VERONA STREET - NIGHT.

Brico is almost kneecapped by a small Fiat exiting an alley. He puts his foot up on the front bumper to stop the car's momentum. The vehicle is a taxi and he jumps in.

BRICO (CONT'D)

Al Ristorante Funghi.

As Brico slouches in the back, Verona street scenes flash by in the taxicab's windows. The driver wheels through traffic as if driving a getaway car.

EXT. RISTORANTE FUNGHI - NIGHT

The Taxi parks in front of a restaurant with a mushroom icon on its window. Heni, at a window seat, watches Brico walk up to the door. She smiles and waves sitting at table laden with wine bottles and dishes. Brico enters the restaurant.

BRICO

So you're finishing up?

HENI

I just had a bowl of mushroom bisque and the waiter just brought me this porcini kebab.

BRICO

How was the bisque?

HENI

Would you like to try a bowl?

BRICO

You know, I am an asshole. Instead of having dinner with you here tonight, I was drinking alone in a wine bar worrying about shit I can't control.

HENI

Well let's stop worrying about shit we can't control.

(Amused, calling the waiter over)

Please bring me two more wine glasses and a plate for this gentleman to share the kebob and frittata.

BRICO

You're special.

HENI

No, I am just a gal from halfway around the world who would rather not eat alone.

LATER

A busboy clears the table and the waiter approaches.

WAITER

Would you like dessert?

BRICO

I'm thinking no. (To Heni) I have a bottle of Grappa di Nebbiolo in my room.

HENI

Sounds perfect. I know a fabulous pastry shop where we can get something sweet.

INT. GABBIA D'OR FRONT DESK - NIGHT

Fabrizio holds a telephone to his ear. Gretchina stands nearby seemingly impatient, as she taps on the desk.

FABRIZIO
Non c'e riposta.

GRETCHINA
 Of course, he's out. It's dinnertime.

FABRIZIO
 Perhaps you would like to wait for him in the cafe for his return. A glass of wine of your choice is on the house.

At a table in an area off the lobby, a waiter pours a glass of white for Gretchina. She reads a copy of the tabloid, *Italia Oggi*, and checks her watch.

LATER - BACK TO THE FRONT DESK

Brico and Heni enter the lobby.

FABRIZIO (CONT'D)
 Signor Leone, you have visitor.

BRICO
 Gretchina, I didn't expect you...

GRETCHINA
 I can see that.

BRICO
 But I am very glad to see you. Let me introduce you to Heni Fox, a wine journalist from New Zealand. (To Heni) Gretchina's involvement with Venus olive oils is one of the reasons I am here.

GRETCHINA
 Yes, he was intrigued by a video ad I did in which I was almost naked.

Heni extends her hand, but Gretchina leans forward and gives her a hug.

BRICO
 Why don't we all head up to my room and uncork a bottle of grappa.

From the looks on the two women's faces, this suggestion seems to go over like a lead balloon.

GRETCHINA

I think I'm interrupting something here. I am going to head back to my apartment.

HENI

(Grabbing Gretchina's arm)
No. I think I am the one interrupting. And I have a morning meeting I need to prepare for.

BRICO

Maybe we should stay here and have a coffee.

HENI

(Holding up the bag
from the pastry shop)
I'll tell you what I am going to do. I am going up to my room to party hearty.

Heni enters the hotel elevator.

GRETCHINA

So what do you have to say for yourself, Mr. Leone?

BRICO

I am a complete shit.

GRETCHINA

I agree. Let's take a walk.

EXT. VIA SANTA ANASTASIA - NIGHT - WALKING

Gretchina buttons up her jacket against the evening chill as she and Brico walk toward the Adige River. They pass other pedestrians doing the *passeggiata*.

GRETCHINA

Tell me why you are leaving tomorrow to visit Rado Mikhailic.

BRICO

He has terminal lung cancer. They sent him home to die.

GRETCHINA

That is not good.

BRICO

(Controlling his emotions) No, a gifted artist and teacher, but most of all, just a damn good human being.

EXT. STEPS OF SANTA ANASTASIA CHURCH - NIGHT

A few worshippers enter and exit the church. A beggar asks for alms from passers-by and a devout young man with long blond hair kneels on a step praying and striking his breast.

GRETCHINA

Let's go in and say a prayer for Mikhailic.

Gretchina leads the way up the steps and after entering the church, dips her finger in the holy water fount that rests on the back of the figure of a hunchback. She makes the sign of the cross.

INT. SIDE ALTAR WITH A TOMB - NIGHT

Gretchina lights a votive candle and makes a donation. Next to the sculptured figure on the top of the tomb, there is a sign that indicates the identity of the deceased.

INSERT - SIGN

Nobilis, Doms, Gulielmos de Bibra Eques aureus, Ducatus....

BACK TO SCENE

GRETCHINA

You know Latin. What does it say?

BRICO

His name was William de Bibra, a golden knight, Duke of the Eastern Franks. His brothers were bishops. And then it goes on to say he was an Emissary for Pope Innocent the III, maybe the worst pope of all time.

GRETCHINA

It says that?

BRICO

It says he was an emissary of the Pope. The worst Pope of all time comment was mine.

GRETCHINA

Why do you say that?

BRICO

Godfather to the Inquisition, the dedicatee of the handbook on witchcraft, the *Malleus Malleficum* that was used to hunt down heretics
(MORE)

BRICO (CONT'D)

and burn witches at the stake. He persecuted the Cathars and pronounced a crusade against the infidels and then pocketed money from the sultan to keep his brother imprisoned. He made Tomas de Torquemada inquisitor in Spain. Stole what left of the Vatican treasury and gave it to cronies and his family.

GRETCHINA

I see. Not a very nice person.

INT: GELATERIA MAZZINI - NIGHT

At the *Gelateria Mazzini*, Gretchina gets a cup of giandoia gelato and Brico a cup of pistachio. They exit the shop and converse between taking small spoons of gelato, walking toward the ancient Roman, My Lady of Verona, fountain. They find an unoccupied spot on the lip of shiny granite to sit.

BRICO

How would you like to come with me to Lyublyana to visit Mikhailic tomorrow?

GRETCHINA

It's impossible. I have two meetings tomorrow with Chiarmonete managers.

BRICO

What about after that?

Instead of answering directly, Gretchina stands up, throws away the gelato cup and starts walking across the piazza toward the Corso Porto Borsari. Brico follows her.

GRETCHINA

(Putting her arm out to hail a cab)

Thanks. I enjoyed the gelato. (She gets into the cab.)

BRICO

What about the grappa?

GRETCHINA

(Shutting the cab door) Maybe Heni would be interested?

INT. BRICO'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Brico twists off the cap of a bottle of grappa and pour a large amount into a wine glass.

When he takes a mouthful, his face reddens as his throat burns and his eyes begin to tear. He slumps in his chair and pours himself another hit. He glances at an Italian magazine and then throws it to the floor. He empties his glass and slips out of his trousers. He clicks on the radio and sprawls on the top of his bed. Playing on radio is Hildegard Von Bingen's, *O Jerusalem*. Lulled by the drone Hildegard's music, his eyes close.

LATER

The room phone rings rousing Brico. He drowsily steps out of bed, rubs his eyes, flips on a light, stumbles toward the phone and, fumbling, lifts the receiver.

BRICO

Pronto. Questo Brico.

GRETCHINA

Brico, this is Gretchina.

BRICO

Gretchina. What's up?

GRETCHINA

I am feeling bad. I waited for you tonight. We had a nice walk, got gelato, and then I leave.

BRICO

Don't worry about it.

GRETCHINA

You are leaving tomorrow and I wanted to say good-bye in the right way.

BRICO

I understand and I appreciate it.

GRETCHINA

I am down here in the lobby with Signor DeCecco, who, I see, is finding all of this very amusing.

BRICO

Why are you in the lobby, instead of just coming up to my room?

GRETCHINA

I didn't want to interrupt anything that might be happening in the room.

In the bathroom Brico splashes water on his face and rinses his mouth. Back in the bedroom, he pulls on his slacks. There is knock on the door as he's tucking in his shirt.

He lets Gretchina in.

INT. BRICO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Brico and Gretchina sit at a table near the window overlooking the piazza. A bottle of grappa is on the table along with two water glasses from the bathroom and Brico pours *eau de vie* into each glass.

GRETCHINA

So we have a pleasant walk, you talk to me about the illness of your friend Mikhailic, we tour St. Anastasia, have some gelato and I leave. (She pauses to let some grappa pass through her lips.) So I need to explain this.

BRICO

No. Really you don't.

GRETCHINA

But I want to. There is a lot of pressure coming from Chiarmonte's. And then Hermolina tells me about this Brico Leone who wants to see me, because, she doesn't know why, but she likes you. As I see it, you liked seeing me almost naked in a video ad. But then I meet you and it isn't like with other men. And I find that maybe I like you too, but I say to myself, you have spent maybe a half hour with this man and you think you might want to get to know him better? It frightens me a little and I act stupidly.

An emergency vehicle passes on the ring road, filling the room with flashing lights the sound of a siren.

BRICO

It's understandable.

GRETCHINA

It says something about you that you are friend of Mikhailic and that you are taking the time to go visit a dying friend.

BRICO

You have a meeting tomorrow. Maybe you can come the next day?

GRETCHINA

You are a guest of the Italian government. After the conference, you can come and go as you please. I have contracts and commitments.

BRICO

That's true.

GRETCHINA

Your eyes are telling me you are very tired. I am beginning to feel that way myself.

BRICO

I have had too much wine and grappa. But we should continue this conversation. You could stay here. I can sleep on the couch.

GRETCHINA

That doesn't work. But I have your email and cellphone information. We will talk.

Gretchina gets up and leaves. Brico, semi-coherent, hears his room door slam. He sits on the bed and stares at his almost empty glass.

EXT. BRICO'S BMW - DAY - TRAVELING

Brico is behind the wheel with a coffee cup in hand.

INSERT ROAD SIGN

Arrow pointing to the entrance ramp to Autostrada 4.

BACK TO SCENE

The BMW speeds up the ramp to merge into traffic and passes a slower *Billa* grocery truck with images of apples on its side. Inside the car Brico plays with radio and gets Italian, German, and American Armed Radio stations broadcasting pop, classical music and news in several languages. His vehicle passes the exits for *Padova and Maestre* and road signs indicate the distances in kilometer in large caps and in miles below in smaller numbers. The signs are tracking the distance to Portoguaro, Udine, and Trieste.

INSERT

Map on which Brico has marked out in yellow highlighter his route to cross the Alps. The route uses a road that crosses the Robic Pass and leads to Kobarid.

BACK TO SCENE

Brico's vehicle on the A-4 travels through the industrial outskirts of Padua and Venice. He follows a roadside sign and takes an exit saying Udine. He is soon driving through snow-capped mountains.

EXT: SLOVENIA BORDER CROSSING - DAY

The Welcome-to-Slovenia center is manned by personnel wearing traditional alpine garb.

BLONDE WOMAN

Dobrodosli v Slovenija, Benvenuti in Slovenia. (Welcome to Slovenia)

BRICO

Hvala. (Thank you)

As Brico drives into the Soca Valley, he encounters a series of exquisite landscapes. Sunlight seems brighter here and the colors associated with the forest and sky more vivid. Sparkling streams course through emerald green gorges.

After each turn or switchback, more stunning views uncover themselves like seamless scene changes, each more pristine and more varied in its natural splendors: green canopies, cerulean skies, and the sparkling silver of trickling water over rock faces. Deer, lean and tawny, sprint across the road and disappear in the brush.

INSERT

A sign shows he is entering the town of Kobarid.

EXT. PLAZA IN FRONT OF PARTISAN HOTEL - DAY

Brico parks his car on *Trg Svoboda*, Freedom Square, in front of an establishment erected during the socialist fifties. An Audi and two rusty Ladas are also parked out front. When Brico steps out of the car, he sees an old Hapsburg castle on the top of a hill. The commerce on the square includes a coffee shop, a newspaper kiosk and an outdoor vendor selling grilled sausages.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

A portrait of the Slovenian patriot, a young Edvard Kardelj, shows him in an open collar wearing wire rim glasses, hangs behind the front desk. The desk clerk who greets Brico wears a bad black toupee. He is very friendly and in his bad English, he assures Brico that he will like his room, which has a balcony and a view of the square and the mountains.

BRICO

Can you recommend a place to eat?

DESK CLERK

Our restaurant, the *Roebuck* features local fish and game. And our wine cellar has a number of award-winning Slovenian wines.

Brico and his large Pullman Upright squeeze into a small, ancient lift, its cables and counterweight visible, as it works to rise to the third floor.

The third floor hallway is painted battle ship grey and the light fixture outside Brico's room flickers. He fumbles with the room key, which is attached to a varnished block of wood. Voices in an East European language come from down the hall.

The high-ceiling room has superb views of snow-capped mountains. There is a bed covered with a maroon wool blanket. An ornate mirror backs an old leather-bordered desk blotter. Hotel stationary and an old quill-like ballpoint pen in a holder sit on the blotter. Bookends hold a few hardcover books.

Brico picks up a book in German titled, *Dies Ausghaben des Soca Tal*. The book contains beautiful nature photography of the area he has just driven through. We see Brico put that book down and pick up a copy of Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms* in English. He flips to the title page and sees that it is a pirated version published in Budapest in 1956.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

A black-vested waiter leads Brico to a table overlooking a courtyard with a single ornament, a sculpture of hunter drawing a bow. Brico is seated next to a table with six boisterous male German speakers. There is the mounted head of a sixteen point buck on the wall over a fireplace, where a large log, has been reduced to glowing red embers.

WAITER

I can recommend the Mountain Trout, which was caught just this morning.

BRICO

(Handing the menu
back to the waiter)

I'll take the trout, a glass of Sava Valley Rizling, and the wild mushroom soup.

LATER

Formally dressed waiters place several dishes on Brico's table as he drinks a white from a bulbous wine glass decorated with a painted hunting scene. He checks for messages on his cell phone, sees nothing, and flips his phone shut. He reaches for the bottle of Rizling.

LATER

The waiter clears the plates from his table.

WAITER

Would you like coffee, dessert?

BRICO

(Handing back a thick
leatherette menu)

I'll take a plate of yellow plums, a
flaky nut pastry and a two glasses
of Slivovitz, one glass to take up
to my room.

INT. BRICO'S ROOM - NIGHT

With a plum brandy in hand Brico walks to the window and views a statue in the square of an ethereal looking man in priestly garb. Brico checks the time on his watch, which, still set to EST shows 2:55, while the yellowing, old-fashioned wind-up Yugoslav alarm clock shows 8:56. He undresses to his white boxers, gets into bed, and pulls back the covers. He has in hand the remains of a too-generous pour of Slivovitz, which sparkles in the glow from the small lamp on a night table, and throws it down.

EXT. PLAZA IN FRONT OF PARTISAN HOTEL - DAY

Brico's car windows do not have frost, but just a slushy film that he is able to wipe away with his hand.

EXT: VIEW THROUGH BMW'S WINDSHIELD - DAY - TRAVELING

As the road gains elevation, ice crystals on the trees sparkle in the sun, and the sky takes on a lighter shade of blue. Playing with the radio dial, Brico pulls in Slovenian, Croatian, and Austrian broadcasts, and also hears American voices from Armed Forces Radio.

He opens his cell phone and dials Mikhailic's number. He hears a clacking ring, and after several clacking rings, voice mail picks up.

MIKHAILIC

(Voice mail message)

*To je Rado, ne morem odgovoriti na
vas klic. Prosim, pustite sporocilo.*

There is the sound of a buzzer and Brico leaves a voice mail.

BRICO

Rado, this is Brico. I expect to be
in Lyublyana by early afternoon.
Lots to talk about my meeting with
olive oil lady from the video I sent
you. Looking forward to seeing you.
Ciao, Brico

On the radio, Bruch's sprightly romantic *Scottish Fantasia* accompanies his drive through the drop dead gorgeous landscapes of the southern Soca Valley.

EXT. OMV GAS STATION - DAY

After filling up and checking a map spread out the hood of his car, Brico goes inside looks at available beers. The label of a "Starvation" black IPA features an image of a Horseman of the Apocalypse and indicates that it has eight per cent alcohol. He takes one out of the fridge.

Back inside the car, Brico checks out the road that parallels the course of the Lyublyanskaya River. Outdoor cafes with awnings advertising beer brands appear, fronting the street populated by pedestrians and pigeons. Brico drives by signs pointing to the right as the direction to Lyublanski Grad, the old Hapsburg castle on the hill.

Brico holds the beer bottle between his legs as he drives. Turning onto a leafy residential street, Brico arrives at a classic Viennese Secession residence with a lot of glass and green masonry, Mikhailic's place. Brico takes a last sip from the bottle, pours the remainder into the gutter, and tosses the empty on the floor in the back. He takes out his large Pullman bag from the trunk and puts the straps of his valise and computer bag over his shoulder and walks up to the house.

INSERT: NAMEPLATE

Rado Mikhailic, Doktor Filozofije.

BACK TO SCENE

Brico uses the lion's head door knocker. He overhears an older couple walking by conversing in British English on the sidewalk, then there is the sound of a lock being turned from the inside and the door opens.

TWO-SHOT. MIKHAILIC and BRICO - DAY

The frail physical appearance of Mikhailic jolts Brico for a moment. Mikhailic's hair is long and gray. He is extremely thin and a bit bent over, but he is smiling, and they hug.

MIKHAILIC

Brico, you have found me!

BRICO

Your directions were impeccable.

MIKHAILIC

Welcome to my humble atelier. Here,
I'll take your bag.

Mikhailic struggles to pull the large bag over the threshold.

INT. MIKHAILIC'S HOUSE - DAY

A hallway runs to the left and right of the vestibule. Straight-ahead is a large, airy book-lined room. The sparse furnishings, a sofa, chair, coffee table and bar are in the style of the Viennese Secession.

MIKHAILIC

You perhaps are surprised by the neatness. I would like to say that I have become less of a hoarder in my old age. But credit goes to my cousin Helen who comes every day to straighten up and make sure I take my meds. He collects a bottle and two glasses from the bar.

(Picking up a lit
Gitanes from an
ashtray)

Mind if I smoke? (He takes a drag and coughs) Have a seat. It's not too early for some schnapps.

Sunlight pours in through the glass windows in the back of the house. Brico and Mikhailic face each other on a sofa and a chair. Mikhailic twists the cap off a bottle and pours.

BRICO

(After taking a sip
of the schnapps)

By the shape of the bottle I was expecting Sliwowitz, but this tastes like pears.

MIKHAILIC

You are correct. It's called *Hruska*, comes from Slovakia. I like its smoothness. The tongue doesn't feel the fire of the alembic.

BRICO

It's not as sweet as the Fraise en Bois liqueur we used to drink playing chess.

MIKHAILIC

I got a case of the pear brandy as payment from the organizers of a forum called *God in the 21st Century* at the University of Bratislava at which I spoke. The point of my talk was that God in the 21st century, was no different than God in the tenth century or God in the third millennium B.C. (He takes a drag from the *Gitanes* and expertly sends up smoke rings.) Just a construct created by homo sapiens to salve the indifference of the universe to life on planet Earth. So we haven't seen each other since Leonard Klein's show at the Yaddo gallery, or was it Yahoo, some dump in the East Village?

BRICO

I think it was Yaddo. Sure, I remember the awful food smells in the lobby and the anti-gay graffiti in the elevator.

MIKHAILIC

And Leonard's very bad canvasses named after galaxies and nobody was there, except us. Have you heard anything about Leonard?

BRICO

I bumped in Kara Fleming about two weeks ago at the White Horse.

MIKHAILIC

(Startled for a moment)

Kara. Really?

BRICO

She said that Leonard had become a methadone addict. Went to a Christian boot camp for addicts, straightened out, moved to Carmel, California, and is selling *giclee* wine prints to Clint Eastwood and Francis Ford Coppola for fifty thousand dollars a pop. His wife teaches aromatherapy at the Esalen Institute.

MIKHAILIC

And what is Kara doing?

BRICO

She's the regional director of sales for a line of high-end Italian cookware.

MIKHAILIC

Interesting, two of my best students became a tinker and a costermonger.

BRICO

(Grinning)

The Leone's stopped selling apples in the street a century ago. No it's olive oils.

MIKHAILIC

And you have fallen in love with the olive oil lady.

BRICO

That would be a gross understatement. Let's talk goddess worship.

MIKHAILIC

Yes, I saw the video ad you sent me and she is quite stunning. But this situation calls to mind Pico's *morte di bacios*, the kiss of death. Love at first sight can have serious consequences.

BRICO

The ache of desire, it's a good feeling.

MIKHAILIC

You have it bad. So when do I get to meet this goddess?

BRICO

She's currently involved with some clean up activities. Says she wants to meet you. But I won't hold my breath. She could come tomorrow, maybe the next day, or maybe never.

EXT. LYUBLYANA STREET - DAY - WALKING

The street is busy with vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Brico and Mikhailic walking past a large, imposing building, The Valvasor Museum and then the modern masonry buildings of University of Lyublyana.

They walk over a pedestrian bridge over the Lyublyanskaya River. Rado winces as a young man rides by in an ear-splitting Vespa.

MIKHAILIC

In our century, Descartes' maxim,
Cogito ergo sum, I think therefore I
am has become *Obstrepo ergo Sum*. I
make noise therefore I am.

On the western side of the river, young people, students, are involved in animated conversations or listening to I-Pods. They are dressed for a balmy spring day. Brico and Mikhailic stop at *The Spartacist* cafe and take an outside table overlooking the river.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE TABLE - DAY

A waiter hovers taking their order.

BRICO

I'll take a double espresso.

MIKAILIC

I'll have glass of mineral water and
some Gubanka to share.

The waiter makes a courtly bow and leaves

MIKHAILIC

So you politely have not asked, but
you are probably wondering, how I am
doing. Better, I must say, after
seeing you. (He taps the bottom of
prescription bottle, a pill drops
onto his palm and he tosses it into
his mouth.) Interesting that after a
lifetime of relative sobriety, I
have become a fan of mind-numbing
opiates in my latter days. (He snaps
the lid back on the pill bottle.)

A group of students arrive from the nearby University Library and sort out seating arrangements at an adjacent table. A male student with long black hair leans over and whispers in the ear of a young woman with her hair tied in a bun and lovely swan-like neck. She has a stack of books on the table in front of her. The one on top is a Mikhailic's *Paleolitske umetnosti*, *Pech-Merle in Lascaux*. She turns with a smile toward Mikhailic, who nods benignly back at her.

MIKHAILIC (CONT'D)

It's almost hard to believe we were
young like that once.

(MORE)

MIKHAILIC (CONT'D)

Well, maybe not so much for you, as you are still young and madly in love. But would I go back to being their age?

The waiter arrives and places their orders on the table.

BRICO

I remember you saying in class when you posed the question of whether or not you would choose to live your life over, that you would jokingly deflect the question by saying you might do it if in the next version of life you could avoid the traffic problems caused by the Big Dig or if you could avoid whining students during office hours.

MIKHAILIC

(Animatedly)

See you remember? So it's true that humor is the most effective teaching tool. (He takes a corner of the nut pastry and puts into his mouth.) What you probably don't know is who the whining student was that I spoke of. Do you remember William Spike?

BRICO

Sure, the guy who brought Leibnitz's monads into every discussion we had.

MIKHAILIC

What you didn't know, it is sort of private and I really shouldn't be passing this on, but I guess enough time has passed and the statute of limitations applies here, is that he was not a scholarship student like you were and he had to work part time as grave digger to keep body and soul together. And he would use that as an excuse for unsatisfactory work. When Spike would be recounting his woes in my office-he was living in public housing with his mother who had a twenty-pound goiter in her neck, and again, this was lack of charity on my part, but all I could think of were all the jokes and cynicism of the graveyard scene in Hamlet and I couldn't help but

(MORE)

MIKHAILIC (CONT'D)
 visualizing Spike tossing a skull or
 two out of a grave.

Mikhailic breaks into smile and Brico laughs, but then Rado
 turns serious and quotes *Hamlet*.

MIKHAILIC (CONT'D)
*To what base uses we may return? Why
 not imagine tracing the noble dust
 of Alexander, till we find it stopping
 a bunghole?*

At an adjacent table, two young men are joined in a discussion
 about ancient poets.

YOUNG MAN
 The *Aeneid* is nothing more than warmed
 over Homer. Virgil's most authentic
 work is his *Georgics* where he speaks
 with real authority, as a man of the
 soil, one who has observed that bees
 fed with wine provide better honey.

Mikhailic smiles hearing the young man's statement. Brico's
 cell phone rings. He has a text message.

INSERT TEXT MESSAGE

GRETCHINA V.O
*Left Porta Nuovo at 08:30 this
 morning. Should arrive Lyublyana at
 15:45. Gretchina.*

BACK TO SCENE

Brico looks again at the screen, stunned.

BRICO
 She'll be here in a couple hours.
 (He continues to muse on the
 photoelectric display in front of
 him) She's coming in by rail at a
 quarter to four.

MIKHAILIC
 I'll buy you guys dinner at *Gostina*
 As. It's not far the station.

INT: SAL'S OFFICE, LEONE BROS. BOSTON - DAY

Sal sits behind a large wooden desk. His office is a space
 separated from the rest of the warehouse by chicken wire.
 His son Sandro has brought in boxes with olive oil.

SANDRO

We got these the past couple days.
 (He begins to pull items from a box.)
 This oil came from *Abbreccia Estate*
 and came with half-kilo bags of their
 pasta called *recchietti* and a cheese
 called *cannestrato pugliese*. And
 this package came from the SOL office.
 Looks like Brico had it shipped.

Sandro puts a bottle on the desk with a piece of white tape with handwriting as a label with handwriting identifying the type of oil, *Carboncello*, and the producer, *De due Papi*. He sets up small tasting glasses to evaluate the oils. After pouring a sample, he pushes a glass to SAL's side of the desk.

SAL

A lot of *Frontoia* in the nose in the
Abbreccia, color good, fresh, good
 bite in the finish. Nice, but nothing
 special.

SANDRO

Agree. And this is the *Carboncello*.
 (He pours the second oil, dark green
 in color and opaque.)

SAL

Aroma jumps out of the glass with a
 hint of sweet smokiness like a..

SANDRO

Single malt scotch.

SAL

Yeah, yeah. This would be outstanding
 for *fettuccine carbonara* or *bagno*
caldo.

SANDRO

Or *pasta aglia'olio*.

Sandro leaves and Sal spins his desk chair around and roots through the metal bookcase behind his desk with shelves holding books, spiral notebooks, piles of trade magazines, green ledgers, and a fading color photo of him and his wife on their honeymoon in Sorrento. He pulls out a large-format paperback *A Guide to Italian Regional Olive Oils* and then spreads the book open on his desk. A radio plays the lambent *Intermezzo to Cavalleria Rusticana*. Sal turns the volume up a notch and flips to the section on the oils of Lazio.

INSERT: ITALIAN REGIONAL OLIVE OIL

SAL (V.O)

Carboncello is a robust but elegant, semi-fruity oil, green in color with a sweet initial taste of bitter almonds. Even with its extremely low-acidity Carboncello retains its fresh fruitiness over time.

BACK TO SCENE

Sal begins to type on his computer.

INSERT SAL'S EMAIL

SAL V.O.

Brico,
Sandro and I were impressed with the bottle of the Two Popes EVOO and we want to know more about it and contact its producer. Ciao, Sal

EXT. PATIO OF RESTAURANT - DAY

A bronze statue of a stately, pensive France Preseren sits on a column and presides over the lively action in the square. Brico and Rado sit at a cafe table outside in the sun. Mikhailic scans the front page of the newspaper, *Zurnal*. A waiter with a black apron sets out three glasses and a sweaty pitcher of a Maribor Rizling, along with menus and a wine list. Brico anxiously eyeballs every taxi that approaches.

MIKHAILIC

(Attempting to allay
Brico's anxiety)

France Preseren is known for his poem, *A Toast*, which is now the Slovenian National Anthem. Curiously, his best stuff was inspired by setbacks in his personal life. Perhaps posterity will be blessed with your account of your relationship with Ms. Visconti, not that I am anticipating any setbacks there.

BRICO

Not a writer, sir.

MIKHAILIC

*When both you and I have crossed in
Charon's boat, Even then the glory
will remain your name. More than
Cynthia, Laura, Delia and Corrina,
Time will ever hallow my refrain,
your name.*

(MORE)

MIKHAILIC (CONT'D)

(Mikhailic voice's tails off at the end of the last stanza, as he glances over Brico's shoulder.) Is that her?

BRICO

It *is* her!

EXT. RESTAURANT AND THE SQUARE - DAY

Brico stands and waves to Gretchina, who is about thirty yards away, walking briskly, pulling an overnight travel bag behind her. When she sees Brico, she smiles and waves back. As she approaches, Brico pushes his chair back, stands and hugs her for several seconds.

BRICO

Gretchina, this is Rado. Rado, Gretchina.

Mikhailic, at his courtly best, leans over and kisses Gretchina's hand. Her engagement ring is gone.

BRICO (CONT'D)

Are you hungry? Want to order something?

GRETCHINA

I figured you two would have had lunch, so I had a *panini* and a glass of wine in Trieste. But I'll take a bottle of *acqua minerale*.

Mikhailic waves to the waiter.

BRICO

(Holding a sweaty pitcher over her glass)

And maybe some of this wine? (She nods in the affirmative and he pours the wine.) How was the trip?

GRETCHINA

I shared a compartment on the train from Trieste with two Viennese women who were interesting travel companions. (She makes herself comfortable by sliding her jacket onto the back of her chair.) They had just spent a couple weeks at the beach in Pula and they were talking about how they both cheated on their husbands with two young beach boys,

(MORE)

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

Goran and Jelka. They probably thought I didn't understand German.

MIKHAILIC

Goran and Jelka, mountain man and eloper. These guys are called *galebovi* which mean seagulls because they prey on fish, young women.

GRETCHINA

When I got off the train they were showing each other the gifts that had purchased for their husbands and children.

MIKHAILIC

Interesting isn't it, how society views these kinds of escapades. If two husbands spend two weeks at the seashore without their families, the presumption is that they will cheat on their wives. If two women go on a similar junket, the presumption is that they will keep each other honest.

GRETCHINA

Maybe that's changing. (She pushes her sunglasses back and stares at Mikhailic.)

The waiter brings a liter bottle of *acqua minerale* and sets out three glasses, pouring a half glass in each.

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

I am going to use the bagna to clean up.

She gets up and walks inside. Mikhailic, as if to share a great secret with Brico, leans over the table, and whispers.

MIKHAILIC

From the video, it was obvious that she was very beautiful. (He pauses as if trying to precisely frame a philosophic argument.) But meeting and talking to her, you sense a special, what is it, intelligence, sensitivity, vulnerability? And I sense a gift for human life there with her as well. It is all very alluring. (He signals to the waiter.) We would like a bottle of red wine.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE TABLE - DAY

The waiter ceremoniously lays out linen napkins and three fine crystal glasses whose bowls sparkle with the colors of the prism. Gretchina returns talking on her cell phone.

GRETCHINA

(On the phone)

Okay, *Piazza Palazzo di Citta, Torino*, let me take this down. (She reaches into her purse for a pen and paper. and scribbles a note,) *Ciao*

(She flips the phone)

That was Oswaldo.

BRICO

(To Mikhailic)

Her agent.

The waiter approaches with a bottle of wine sitting in an ice bucket. After extracting a very long cork with its bottom tinged a winey brown, the waiter pours some into the bowl of the glass in front of Mikhailic, who swirls the glass of the purple-garnet liquid that sparkles in the sunlight and put his nose to its edge.

MIKHAILIC

It's perfect.

The waiter pours three glasses and puts the bottle back in the wine bucket. He arranges a napkin around its neck, makes a slight bow and leaves.

BRICO

Cheval Blanc, pretty fancy stuff.
How much was it? I want to split the cost with you.

MIKHAILIC

If you must know, it was four hundred euros.

He waves away Brico gesture to contribute.

BRICO

(After swirling the wine a la the wine experts at VinItaly)

It's pretty tasty. So what is the occasion for the splurge?

MIKHAILIC

It's not every day that one re-engages with an old friend and acquires a new one so accomplished and beautiful.

They all clink glasses and sip the Cheval Blanc.

BRICO

Maybe the best wine I've had in my life. Is it the wine or the company? Perhaps both?

MIKHAILIC

I would say that great beauty can pique the sense of taste as well as other appetites. Think of Helen of Troy. Of course, you know that there were no actual paintings of her, she with the face that launched a thousand ships, the most attractive woman in antiquity. A Greek artist name Zeuxis in the fifth century B.C. was commissioned to do a portrait of her, but he had the problem of not having any descriptions of what she looked like. He found the five most beautiful women of his time and used them all as models, combining their best features to compose his painting of Helen. (He swirls his wine and looks past his glass at Gretchina) Of course, if anyone were to paint Helen today, one model would suffice.

GRETCHINA

That's sweet.

She places a kiss on Mikhailic's blue-veined and bony hand. He holds onto her hand until the waiter returns with two dishes one with fresh figs, another dish with thinly sliced meat. In addition he sets down a basket of warm bread.

MIKHAILIC

I don't think we ordered this.

WAITER

Compliments of the house. (Gesturing to a busboy who is lugging another wine bucket with a bottle of Champagne) And this is compliments of Mr. Tomcic (He nods toward the bar inside) where a gray-haired man doffs his feathered Jaeger cap and bows toward their table.) He says Madame is fairer than Preseren's Julia. Kyril is a good person, our house poet.

MONTAGE

- Waiter takes away empty plates of prsut and figs
- Mikhailic points to an item on the menu
- Waiter brings dishes of smoked mountain trout and pierogis
- Waiter clears the empty bottle of Cheval Blanc and Mikhailic orders more wine from the leather-bound wine list
- Waiter uncorks a Modri Pinot and a Cabernet Frank
- Gretchina tastes the wines and nods her approval and the wines are ceremoniously poured
- Mikhailic looks at a dessert menu and orders
- The waiter brings a bottle of Slovenian Slivovitz and walnut stollen to their table.

BACK TO SCENE

MIKHAILIC

(Nibbling on the
stollen)

Of course Tito was a great anti-fascist partisan leader, but in later years he became an aging sybarite. He had one or two "wives" in each federated republic. Have you ever seen photos of him in a Ruritanian military uniform, his cheeks rouged? Yet he was the only guy in Eastern Europe with the *cojones* to face down Stalin. He died at the medical center here in Lyublyana.

The afternoon sun is beginning to wane. What is left of the food and wine on the table are empty bottles, and empty plates. Weariness shows in the faces of Brico, Gretchina, and Mikhailic.

LATER

Dusk overtakes the square and a wide-angle shot shows street lamps flickering on. Mikhailic is presented with the bill.

MIKHAILIC

(Pocketing his wallet)

Considering the company and circumstances, this will have been perhaps the best meal of my entire life.

INT: MIKHAILIC'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mikhailic leads Brico and Gretchina into his house and points to the direction of the guest room where Gretchina can put her suitcase.

MIKHAILIC

(Mumbling as he walks
away)

I only have one guest room at the moment, the other is in *remont*, but the bed comfortably sleeps two.

GRETCHINA

Impossible!

Gretchina wheels her suitcase down the hall and removes Brico's large Pullman from the guest room and sets it in the hallway.

INT. MIKHAILIC'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Brico is helping a choking and gagging Mikhailic and watches his frail mentor throw up into the toilet. There is a look of concern on Brico's face. Rado stands over the sink and seems to be fighting bringing up more, but doesn't.

LATER

In Rado's bedroom, which has a copy of Ingres' drawing of Nicollo Paganini over the iron bed, Brico helps Mikhailic out of his shirt which had become soiled and wipes his mentor's face. He finds a nightshirt for him and helps him get in between the sheets.

BRICO

Good night. Sleep tight.

MIKHAILIC

Hvala. (He groans in discomfort)

INT. IN FRONT OF THE FIREPLACE - NIGHT

Gretchina sits on the couch in front of the fire. A burning log breaks in two sending a puff of fiery embers arcing into the air. She is dressed in a striped linen nightshirt and matching pajama shorts and is flipping through a stack of art folios.

BRICO

Rado just had too much to drink and I feel responsible.

(MORE)

BRICO (CONT'D)

I should have known that so much
booze mixed with his meds would not
be good for him. He seems to be
sleeping now.

GRETCHINA

He is going to be fine. Take a look
at this. Are you the Brico Leone
who did these drawings?

She takes Brico's hand and pulls him closer on the couch,
where she is looking at an oversized folio titled *Renschner
Exhibit, Boston Institute of Fine Arts*. After flipping through
several pages showing drawings of male and female nudes, she
arrives at a section of similar drawing in the style of Jean
Auguste Dominique Ingres with extremely fine detail at the
focus of the drawing. The attribution is *Brico Leone,
Institute of Fine Arts, Boston*.

BRICO

Yeah, but I have no recollection of
a Rentschner Exhibit.

GRETCHINA

The model is very attractive. Was
she a friend of yours?

BRICO

Kara was a classmate.

GRETCHINA

I didn't know you could draw like
that. Well, I knew you could do olive
oil labels and quick sketches, but
this is very *esthetico*.

BRICO

So you like these drawings?

GRETCHINA

Yes. And the model is very beautiful.

BRICO

But not as beautiful as you are.

INT. CORNER OF MIKHAILIC'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Brico is in the corner of the studio where Mikhailic keeps
his art supplies. He opens the wide, shallow paper drawers
and he feels the sheets between thumb and forefinger for the
right bite as well as color. He selects a cream color paper
and clips it to a board. He also picks up *conte* crayons.

BACK TO FIREPLACE

Brico sits on the floor opposite where Gretchina sits on the couch. A drawing board is propped on his thigh, a snapping fire in the fireplace is in the background. Brico stares at Gretchina who is flipping through art books, breaking up the planes of her face in his mind in quick strokes with black crayon.

INSERT - SKETCH

Black crayon strokes adumbrate the drapery of her nightshirt and pajamas, and then the angle of her head and shoulders, the line of her folded legs.

BACK TO SCENE

GRETCHINA
(Flipping through
Viennese Secession
book)

Do you think Klimt slept with his models?

BRICO

Probably.

GRETCHINA
I understand that happens a lot.
Wasn't that true of Picasso as well?

BRICO

Picasso slept with everybody.

GRETCHINA
So all great artists sleep with their models?

BRICO

It's an occupational hazard. Raphael died in his thirties after overexerting himself with one of his models, who happened to be his wife.

BACK TO SKETCH

Drawing pad shows Brico filling in Gretchina's facial features, her lips, her eyes, eye lashes, and the broad outline of her hair.

BACK TO SCENE

Gretchina is sipping from a brandy snifter.

GRETCHINA

This brandy is nice.

BRICO

It's a pear brandy called *Hruska*.
Ask Rado about how he acquired it.
It's a nice story.

Gretchina stands up, refilling both of their glasses and takes a moment, standing behind Brico, to watch him sketch. After putting another piece of wood on the fire, she takes her place back on the sofa and pages through a bound collection of the journal *Critica d'Arte*.

GRETCHINA

(Leafing back and
forth between two
pages)

This is a pretty story. It says that in the Comasco district above Lake Como, classic Greek beauty can be seen in the faces of the peasants, descendants of Greek colonists settled in the area by Julius Caesar. The beautiful faces of the Greeks appeared in the paintings in the parish church and it is said that the beauty of the villagers derive from the fact that mothers gazed on these figures while carrying their children.

BRICO

So your mother had Raphael's Madonna in front of her during her pregnancy.

With the wood fire in the background, Brico examines what he had on the paper and his facial features show that he likes it. He puts in some final highlights with a white crayon, a sprig of a toxic oleander in its upper right corner. There is thump the floor as the bound collection of the journal *Critica d'Arte* falls to the floor. Brico looks up sees Gretchina slumped over, eyes closed, asleep.

INT. FIREPLACE AREA - MORNING

Gretchina is sprawled out sleeping on the couch while Brico lies inert on the floor. There is the noise of a key turning in the front door and Helen, stout and steady, walks in carrying a cloth bag with provisions acquired at the morning market. A smile shows she is surprised to see two inert human figures sprawled out in the living room.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen has old fashion enameled gas stove and oven. Helen is mixing up a batter that includes fresh blueberries in a large ceramic bowl.

BACK TO FIREPLACE AREA

Brico awakens confused. He sees first his drawing from the previous night and *conte* crayons on the floor, but there is no Gretchina.

He pads barefoot over to the kitchen where he sees a large woman standing at the stove with her hair covered in a kerchief. She has heavy features, a noticeable mole on her chin and jiggly upper arms. Turning away from the stove when she hears him come in, she turns greets him.

HELEN

(With a laugh and a snort)

Dobro Jutro.

BRICO

Good Morning.

She laughs and snorts again.

MONTAGE (WITH GRETCHINA THEME)

- Gretchina shampoos her hair in a steamy shower stall
- Mikhailic slowly and carefully pops pills into his mouth
- Brico pulls out his leather toiletry bag from his suitcase, now in the hallway outside the bedroom
- Gretchina greets Helen with a hug in the kitchen
- An owl flaps it wings, taking off from a Linden tree in Mikhailic's garden
- Brico in white boxer shorts puts away a toothbrush.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Brico examines Gretchina's Acqua Di Parma toiletries and decides to use a bit of her facial lotion. He begins to lather up and shave, standing in front of the mirror in his white boxers. As he scrapes the shaving cream off his face, there is a knock on the door.

GRETCHINA

(With a wet head)

Excuse me did I leave a watch in there?

Brico looks around and sees a leather *Movado Elliptica* watch on a wicker etager holding towels and soaps.

BRICO

(Hands her the watch)

Is this it?

GRETCHINA

Yes, thank you.

BRICO

No problem.

GRETCHINA

By the way, I like your drawing.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Mikhailic is at the head of the table reading the newspaper and drinking coffee. His gray beard hasn't been shaved but his hair is slicked back in classic Slavic-style. The table is laden with bowls of yogurt, berries, a pot of butter, a plate with slices of *prsut* and cheese, an enamel pot of coffee, and a liter bottle of mineral water.

BRICO

(With the book, *The Italian Lakes*)
Feeling better?

MIKHAILIC

Purgings events have a beneficial effect, as unpleasant as they are to experience. So you both slept in the studio last night?

BRICO

We started off with Gretchina evicting my suitcase from the guest room.

MIKHAILIC

I can't say I'm surprised. I'll have Helen set something up in the old office.

BRICO

Gretchina and I covered a lot ground last night, starting with looking at an exhibit catalogue with some drawings I did of Kara Fleming.

(MORE)

BRICO (CONT'D)

Don't remember submitting anything
to the Rentchner exhibit.

MIKHAILIC

(Ignoring Brico's
comment, a smile
appears on his face
as he opens *The
Italian Lakes*)

I remember the crotchety Brit who
ran the bookstore in Bellagio with
the Meerscham pipe carved into a
head of Churchill. And he wouldn't
negotiate the price because the book
contained all its color plates.

BRICO

Do you remember the look on the Brit's
face when said you intended to rip
out the color plate of Isola Mare
on Maggiore and put it on your office
walls because you liked oleanders?

MIKHAILIC

Yes. And do you remember the small
lakeside place on Maggiore where we
got tagliatelle with Alba truffles
and an outstanding carafe vino?

BRICO

The Valtellina and the outstanding
Muscat dessert wine with the hazelnut
biscotti that we brought up to our
rooms.

MIKHAILIC

And the gorgeous Luini fresco of the
Nativity the Duomo.

BRICO

The Luini I remembered was at the
Museum in Milan.

MIKHAILIC

Ah, yes, the sublime blonde virgin,
we all fell in love with her.

The door to the kitchen swings open. Gretchina enters the
dining area holding a wooden platter with a loaf of bread
and a large serrated knife. Helen follows with a plate of
blueberry buckwheat blinis.

GRETCHINA

We leave them alone for fifteen minutes and their talk turns to falling in love with blonde virgins.

Helen, understanding Gretchina's tone of voice, shakes her head in disgust while doling out the blinis.

MIKHAILIC

Yes, a blonde virgin, but one who was painted by Leonardo's protege five hundred years ago.

Gretchina lifts an eyebrow in skepticism and Rado reads a front page story.

MIKHAILIC (CONT'D)

"Tragic accident takes the life of Polish President Kaczynski and other Polish dignitaries, theories emerge."

He takes a sip of coffee to gather his thoughts.

MIKHAILIC (CONT'D)

Freud and Stalin agreed on this point: there are no accidents. Assassination by airplane crash is an old and accepted practice, think of the killing of UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold in 1962.

BRICO

Who would want to kill the Polish President?

MIKHAILIC

He was on his way to a memorial service for the victims of the Katyn forest massacre. So pick from list of potential avengers with personal grievances: an aging member of the ex-patriot London Poles, a Soviet veteran from the Great Patriotic War, a rogue operative from the Russian secret services.

BRICO

What kind of aircraft was he flying in?

MIKHAILIC

A Russian Tupolev 154.

BRICO

There's your answer.

MIKHAILIC

Probably, but you have to remember,
I grew up with this type of conspiracy
thinking.

LATER

Mikhailic is scanning the newspaper, reading an article on
an Early Music concert.

INSERT - AD FOR QUAFFING BARDS CONCERT

Shows a photo of serious looking long-haired group of male
and female musicians holding a mandola, rebec, krumhorn and
a tambour with the title: *Sabota, Cena Vstopa*.

BACK TO SCENE

MIKHAILIC (CONT'D)

The *Quaffing Bards* are quite good.
It is amazing what complex rhythms
and harmonies they can get from their
medieval instruments

GRETCHINA

I am sorry. But, I have to be in
Turin for a meeting next week and
must leave tomorrow. Unfortunate,
because I love early music.

MIKHAILIC

In that case, let me see if I can
find something for tonight.

EXT. MIKHAILIC'S GARDEN - DAY

In the sunny and verdant confines of Mikhailic's garden,
birds chirp and a breeze rustles the foliage. Mikhailic is
leading a tour for Brico and Gretchina who carry steaming
cups of coffee with them. In addition, Gretchina is carrying
The Italian Lakes. Beds of herbs and bush plants are situated
on either side of a brick walk, with roses and azaleas,
budding but not yet blooming. There is a Linden tree toward
the back of the garden with a garden bench nearby facing a
copy of the *Pissing Hercules* statue, whose penis spews water.

MIKHAILIC

The Linden is Slovenia's national
tree. There is a seven hundred year-
old Linden tree near the Austrian
border where politicians met in 1991
to create the Republic and they meet
there every year for political pow-
wows.

(MORE)

MIKHAILIC (CONT'D)

This one is a mere adolescent in comparison, planted in 1899 to mark the birth of the son of original owners, the Landtmann's Fritzi, who unfortunately died on Italian front at the Battle of Kobarid. (He pinches a white honeysuckle flower and sucks the drop of nectar at the nob at the end of its thread-like stamen.) I used a steel engraving of the Hercules from a late 19th century book on Herculaneum for the model. Of course, in those days of the socialist paradise we could not afford to travel to Italy.

Gretchina has been flipping through *The Italian Lakes*.

GRETCHINA

So is this Leone Leoni mentioned here who carved the tomb of Gian Giacomo de Medici in the Milan cathedral, an ancestor of yours? "An individual of singularly forbidding character, avaricious, violent temper, imprisoned for assault."

MIKHAILIC

How did we miss this?

BRICO

We kind of intentionally overlooked it.

GRETCHINA

(Staring at Brico)

So this is the kind of blood you have running in your veins? Perhaps I should be concerned.

MIKHAILIC

There would be issues on your side as well. In Burkhardt's memorable phrase, "the most complete and instructive tyranny of the 14th century was the Visconti of Milan." The heraldry for the Visconti clan, the *Biscione*, was a snake in the grass swallowing a human form with only its head protruding from the snake's mouth. So I would say that concerns about each other's heredity cancel out.

GRETCHINA

As for the *Biscione*, which is now used as the emblem for cars and espresso makers, I have a Visconti family *Biscione* ring.

MIKHAILIC

You do?

GRETCHINA

Yes, I have it with me and I can show it to you later. I always keep it close, in case I need it to approve a beheading or castration.

Mikhailic laughs and Brico smiles wanly.

INT. MUSEUM - EVENING

There is sign in The Lyublyana Museum of Modern Art's sedate reception area that says simply, *Umetnosti Dugan Karriz*, and in parentheses in smaller letters, *The Art of Dugan Karriz*. The print is over a blue and white background of a photo of high cirrus clouds.

Two female bartenders in black party dresses liberally pour white wine. The lively, good-sized crowd is engaged in deep, earnest conversations on art and the meaning of life.

In addition to the sounds of clinking glasses and multiple simultaneous conversations, the sound of beautiful and soulful strains of a solo cello emerges over the din. A young male cellist is wearing a black suit. His assistant, dressed in a black gown, brings him glasses of water, wine or sheet music as needed. Dugan Karriz is dressed in patched jeans and a plaid work shirt. He is huddling with Gretchina.

KARRIZ

Fascinating to talk to an insider from the Milan fashion scene, I am actually working on fabric designs based on the geometric patterns of ancient Slovenian burial cloths.

GRETCHINA

(Bored, showing him her empty glass)
Can I get another glass of wine?

KARRIZ

What is it, the Tocai or the Sauvignon Blanc?

GRETCHINA

I don't care.

INT. ART GALLERY - EVENING

In spite of a NO SMOKING sign, Mikhailic surreptitiously cups a lit Gitanes Bruns in his hand as he leads Brico on a tour of the gallery. He stops to view a triptych showing groups of naked men and women in a hellish Hieronymus Bosch-like environment.

MIKHAILIC

Goran Poric and I were in Professor Branoslavsky's life drawing class together as first year students. He committed suicide at age 34, threw himself in front of a train after bad reviews for one of his shows.

After passing through the section of Poric drawings, Brico recognizes a face in a series of paintings featuring a female nude in seashore setting.

INSERT SIGN

Card identifying the painting reads:

Kara v Naravi (Morje) z Rado Mikhailic (Kara at the beach, by Rado Mikhailic)

BACK TO SCENE

Two other similar paintings show a nude female lying face down sunbathing on a blanket, legs slightly spread. *Kara in Nature (Dunes)* showed a female nude sitting on the sand, contemplating a sandpiper perched on one of her fingers.

MIKHAILIC

Perhaps this answers the question of how your drawings of Kara got into the *Rentchner* show catalogue.

BRICO

Where did you do these?

MIKHAILIC

We were discreet. Way the hell out on the Cape on a stretch of deserted beach between Wellfleet and P-Town. My understanding was that you and Kara had broken up.

Brico doesn't respond for several seconds.

BRICO

We probably had.

MIKHAILIC

(Trying to allay what
he perceives as
Brico's anger)

I had to work mostly from Polaroids
taken very early in the morning before
people showed up at the beach. But
Ms. Fleming would not allow it, unless
(Mikhailic grins, and takes a drag
on his cigarette) I allowed her to
take naked Polaroids of me, sort of
a mutually assured destruction
scenario to keep me from releasing
the photos, very savvy young woman.

BRICO

(Amused)

Let's check out the Karriz exhibit.

INT. KARRIZ EXHIBIT ROOM - EVENING

In an exhibit room done in light grays and blues, a
fashionable young couple discuss the iconography in one of
the paintings that shows a violin with a broken string being
bowed by a disembodied hand.

YOUNG WOMAN

I see it as representing the end of
the tradition of Western music, Bach,
Mozart, Beethoven. The advent of
atonalism.

YOUNG MAN

Absolutely. And what are we to make
of the fact that it is the G-string
that is broken?

A professor with students in tow points to an adjacent canvas.

PROFESSOR

Note that the depressed keys on a
piano with no human hand visible are
playing a minor chord.

Mikhailic and Brico are viewing paintings of unattached hands
holding drum sticks aloft.

MIKHAILIC

Dugan really is a master of depicting
the human hand. Look at these, much
better with more anatomical accuracy
than, say, Durer's *Praying Hands*.

Mikhailic's cigarette expires with a hiss in a plastic cup
holding a residue of white wine and Dugan Karriz approaches.

KARRIZ
 (To Mikhailic)
 You look great.

MIKHAILIC
 Dugan, this is my friend, Brico Leone.

Karriz shakes Brico's hand.

MIKHAILIC (CONT'D)
 I was just telling Brico about how excellent are your depictions of human hands.

KARRIZ
 Yes, well it all about proportions and practice. I use several hands models.

BRICO
 (Unimpressed)
 Excuse me. I am going to get some more wine.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - NIGHT

The cellist and his female assistant are preparing for another set, though only a few guests are left around the bar. Brico is one of them.

BARTENDER
 What can I get for you?

BRICO
 Two glasses of the Friuliano.

BARTENDER
 We are out of that. But I have here something better. Do you like red wine?

BRICO
 Sure.

The Bartender wears a strapless black gown and when she leans over and reaches under the bar, she reveals a lot of cleavage. Finding what she was looking for, she pours from a thick-neck bottle.

BARTENDER
 This wine is reserved for the private party after the reception, a wine that was served years ago to your President Clinton.

BRICO
 (Ironically)
 It must be first-rate then.

The sound of the cellist plucking a string to tune his instrument penetrates the room. There is a moment of silence, and then the smooth, elegant sounds of Bach's Cello Concerto # 1. Brico walks over to the table where Gretchina is.

BRICO (CONT'D)
 Have you seen the paintings yet?

GRETCHINA
 Yes. I got a private tour with the artist. He is very proud of his portrait of hands.

BRICO
 I know. What we have here is red wine served to President Clinton.

GRETCHINA
 I have had too much wine already.
 (She takes a sip.) It's good.

BRICO
 Are you okay?

GRETCHINA
 I am a bit sad tonight. I am happy to have met Mikhailic and Helen, but I'm leaving so soon and this may be the last time I see Rado. He is such vital human being with an incredible zest for life.

BRICO
 You made the best of your chance to meet him, seeing him still at his peak intellectually.

GRETCHINA
 And I am not sure about the feelings I have about you. You are different. You don't seem to want the same things other men want.

BRICO
 What would say if I said all I wanted was you?

GRETCHINA
 I'd say you are talking like other men.

BRICO

Fair enough, when are you leaving?

The cellist finishes the adagio movement. Someone in the reception area applauds and yells *Bravi*. The cellist and his assistant take a bow.

GRETCHINA

I don't have to be in Turin until after the weekend, but I must leave tomorrow for Milan to catch up on some work.

BRICO

Then I am leaving tomorrow as well.

Gretchina takes another sip of wine, and then puts her hand on his on top of the table.

GRETCHINA

Does it matter whether I feel this wanting for you too?

BRICO

My life depends upon it.

Instead of responding directly, Gretchina stands up as if to leave. But before she leaves, she puts her arm on Brico's chair, leans over and whispers in his ear.

GRETCHINA

*Mi piace il mio modo di sentire,
quando io sono con voi. (I feel good
when I am with you.)*

INT. FIREPLACE AREA - NIGHT

Mikhailic twists off the top of another bottle of *Hruska*. He carefully fills three glasses and hands them around. He then pushes around a burning log with a poker, sending a stream of sparks arcing into the air. Tongues of fire reflect in the glasses of eau de vie.

MIKHAILIC

(Taking a sip)

I have to say our two days together will have been too short, but, as it turns out, a surprising and delightful last chapter in my book of life.

GRETCHINA

We'll have none of that!

MIKHAILIC

So when are you planning on leaving?

BRICO

After breakfast.

MIKHAILIC

I hate to see you both leave so soon.
Excuse an old man. I am running on
empty and need to turn in.

EXT. MIKHAILIC'S GARDEN - NIGHT

The *whoopa-whoopa woo* call of an owl punctuates the faint sound of the city beyond the garden walls. Gretchina and Brico sit on a bench next to an orange tree. A full moon casts shadows of foliage on them.

GRETCHINA

Rado has the impression that we are leaving together tomorrow.

BRICO

I want to show you the Soca Valley.
It's like nothing I've seen before.

GRETCHINA

I have heard that it is very beautiful. But I am not sure where we are going after that. You have your olive oil project and when that is done you will go back to Boston. I will go back to Milan and continue my career. So this trip you propose in a scenic road to nowhere.

BRICO

It can be a scenic trip to wherever we want to go. First the Soca Valley, and then meander back to Verona, Milan, Turin, wherever you need to be. (Seems a bit confused where to go next) Gretchina, it's not complicated. I want to spend time with you, the rest of my life with you.

There is serious eye contact between the two. Gretchina finally puts her hand on his.

GRETCHINA

Okay, maybe tomorrow we can look at the map and see where the scenic road leads.

INT. DINING ROOM - MORNING

Helen serves breakfast, while Mikhailic drinks coffee and reads the newspaper. Gretchina puts away her phone in her bag after checking for messages. Brico arrives late with a wet head and a bath towel over his shoulder.

BRICO

So what did you whip up today, Helen?

MIKHAILIC

(Answering for her)

They are called *Guban'ca*, nut rolls.

Brico puts a slice on his plate, pick off of a corner and pops it in his mouth.

BRICO

Zelo Okusno, Helen.

Helen just laughs in response to Brico's compliment. He takes another morsel, washing it down with coffee.

MIKHAILIC

Forecast here shows nice weather all across northern Italy. (To Helen) Lahko naredidve ko_ari za piknik (Can you fix Gretchina and Brico picnic baskets?) (To Gretchina) You are going back by train?

GRETCHINA

I bought a round trip ticket with a return to Milan and I don't want to waste it. (She fishes out the ticket from her purse.) So I'm leaving this for either you or Helen to use to visit me in Milan. I think you have something like a year before it expires.

MIKHAILIC

(To Helen)

Potrebovali bomo samo enega! (We will need only one!)

INT. STAIRS TO RADO'S CELLER - DAY

Mikhailic labors to climb the stairs, two bottles of wine entwined on the fingers of both hands. He puts the wine bottles on the kitchen table and glances at them lovingly.

MIKHAILIC

(Brushing the dust off the bottles)

(MORE)

MIKHAILIC (CONT'D)

These two are your picnic wines.
The red is a Cabernet Sauvignon
Riserva from the Sud Tirol, the white
is an Gruner Vetliner from Austria.
This ice wine from the Rheinpfalz is
a dessert wine to have with the nut
rolls. The Istenic Prestige Extra
Brut is a top Slovenian bubbly if
you have something to celebrate.

BRICO

This is too generous Rado.

MIKHAILIC

When am I going to get a chance to
drink these? I rather you and
Gretchina enjoy them than the peasants
who storm the wine cellar after my
death.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Brico loads suitcases into the trunk of the BMW. Gretchina
wedges the picnic basket prepared by Helen and the bottles
of wine on the floor in the back, At the last minute,
Mikhailic presents Gretchina with a dozen red roses.

GRETCHINA

I will never forget you and your
kindnesses to me, Rado.

When she pulls away, both her eyes and Mikhailic's are
reddened and he gives her a final hug.

BRICO

Give our regards to Helen.

MIKHAILIC

I will. Thank you for everything
Brico.

They hug each other, tears welling in their eyes.

BRICO

I can never repay you for what you
taught me.

MIKHAILIC

I'm sure Gretchina, after witnessing
this lugubrious display, wishes now
that she had left earlier on the
train by herself.

He turns back toward the house and waves good-bye without looking back.

INT. FRONT SEAT CAR - DAY - TRAVELING

The BMW speeds down a highway passing a sign indicating the road is exiting town of Kranjska Gora. The white-capped peaks of the Julian Alps loom large. But instead of heading into the mountains, Brico steers the car south into the Triglav National Park and the Soca Valley. An Austrian radio station broadcasts a panel discussion of operatic arias.

ANNOUNCER

Und jetzt der grosse Tenor Jussi Bjorling und der Bariton Richard Tucker im architektonischen Duett fŷr Bizets, The Pearl Fishers. (And now the great Tenor Jussi Bjoerling and baritone Richard Tucker in the architectonic duet from Bizet's, The Pearl Fishers.)

BRICO

You can change stations or turn it off.

GRETCHINA

No, I like this music and I need to practice my German.

Beautiful melodies accompany the visual beauty of the road through the Soca Valley, rolling verdant foothills with stone castles visible atop vertiginous peaks, silvery, ribbon-thin waterfalls glistening like satin ribbons in the sun wash down mountain crags. The curves in the road follow a sparkling stream and uncover the sun-lit speckled green undergrowth beneath the canopy of conifers. Unseen and lean, tawny deer leap across the road

EXT. OVERLOOK - DAY

Brico, with the picnic basket, and Gretchina who has two glasses in one hand and grips a wine bottle by its neck in the other, walk down a footpath.

They stretch out the blanket on a rock with a spectacular view of the valley and the mountains. Birds from trees higher up coast into view, butterflies flit among low vegetation and squirrels jump from tree to tree in the canopy of oaks. There is the sound of the gurgling of a brook.

The picnic basket that Helen has prepared is now spread out on a blanket. Brico uncorks a red wine and carefully pours it into two wine glasses that sparkle in the sunlight.

GRETCHINA

Food tastes better up the mountains.
Is it the air?

BRICO

True of wine also. (He hands her a glass with the Sud Tirol red.) The mountain air cleans out the distractions in your nose and mouth. The wine opens up quicker.

The picnic spot has all the characteristics of a mountain clime, icy patches, tiny yellow glacial lilies and pink shooting star primroses poking up through melting snow.

BRICO (CONT'D)

When I was a kid, my dad and I went up to the White Mountains in New Hampshire to ski and to climb. I did a snow-capped Mount Washington with him when I was eleven years old. The next year he took me out west and I remember looking out the window of the airplane and being awed by the size and the expanse of the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada's. We hiked Tuolumne Meadows, which is right next to Yosemite.

GRETCHINA

I hear it's very beautiful. I have never been to California.

She spreads some blueberry preserves on a slice of Helen's bread, breaks it in half and gives a piece to Brico.

BRICO

We will have to fix that.

GRETCHINA

So tell me more about your father and the trip to California.

BRICO

The first night in the meadow was magical. My dad watched me prepare the campsite, erect the tent, start the gas stove to boil water to reconstitute a dried wild rice meal and make hot chocolate, clean up after dinner, and then climb a nearby tree to hang our food sack over a branch to keep bears away from the tent.

(MORE)

BRICO (CONT'D)

We watched a blood red sunset as the sun sank below the mountains. A pack of wolves strode through the meadow information about a hundred yards in the distance.

GRETCHINA

Were you frightened of the wolves?

BRICO

As a rule, they stay away from humans. But suddenly my dad picked up his knapsack, adjusted the shoulders straps, and said that he was going to set up his tent on the other side of the crest.

GRETCHINA

Why did he do that?

BRICO

He was saying, you can get by without me.

GRETCHINA

But you were only twelve years old. Were you frightened?

BRICO

No. And what about your Dad?

GRETCHINA

My grandfather was in a Ministry during the Andreotti years, and was somehow involved in the Banco Ambrosiano scandal. Our family was never poor, but there was a certain stigma, so my father left the banking business and became a physical therapist.

BRICO

Still alive?

GRETCHINA

Semi-retired, lives in Aosta. When I was fourteen we went skiing almost every week during the winter. I lost weight and became strong. Before that, I was little fat girl.

BRICO

Your mother?

GRETCHINA
Died in childbirth. And yours?

BRICO
A retired nurse, now an artist in
Rockport.

GRETCHINA
So I have a father and no mother and
you have a mother and no father.

BRICO
My mother would love you.

GRETCHINA
I don't know what my father would
think of you.
(She downs her red.)

In the rays of the declining sun Gretchina and Brico pack up
their lunch material and start the climb back up to the road.

INT. INSIDE THE CAR - DAY - TRAVELING

Gretchina has a map spread out in front of her in the
passenger seat. Brico peers through the windshield at a
road sign which points to the left.

ROADSIGN

Kabine v Nebo .5 km

BACK TO SCENE

Brico makes the turn, and the welcoming sight of a group of
cabins with smoke spiraling skyward from a fireplace comes
into view.

BRICO
I think we found it.

GRETCHINA
This looks very nice.

INT. LOBBY OF THE CABINS - DAY

Gretchina and Brico carry their bags into reception area,
where a fire snaps and hisses in the fireplace. A group of
German tourists drink fruit juice and nibble on snacks. Brico
and Gretchina hand over passports and Brico gives his credit
card to a desk clerk dressed in traditional Slovenian peasant
garb.

DESK CLERK

So, one night stay, very good. While you wait, feel free to try the blueberry juice and the pastries.

Brico and Gretchina sit in the timbered common area in front of the fire, drinking complimentary blueberry juice and noshing on sauted wild mushrooms in a quinoa pastry. There are day-old copies of the *Financial Times*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Corriere della Sera* on the table in front of them. A cleaning man enters and informs the desk clerk that Gretchina and Brico's cabin is ready.

GRETCHINA

Perhaps it will be a good thing to spend the night here. (She is scanning the folder that described amenities and focuses on the picture of a sauna.) After all the eating and drinking of the past couple days, maybe sweat some of the fat away.

DESK CLERK

Here are your passports back. You are of course welcome to use the library here. There is a sign-up sheet for sauna and massage at the desk. You have Cabin A which at the end to your left and you can bring your car up to the side to unload your luggage.

EXT. THE CABINS - DAY

Four cabins all with one glass wall in the back that looks over the high plateau are arranged two on each side around the office area. Brico and Gretchina carry their luggage into their cabin, which is decorated in a woodsy style that was elegant yet folksy.

GRETCHINA

There is only one bed here. Didn't you ask for two beds?

Brico puts down the bottles of wine, the remains of Helen's picnic basket, and his laptop on a desk and walks back toward the bed to answer Gretchina question.

BRICO

All the cabins are the same. But look, there are really two featherbeds here with two comforters and a space in between, so in essence there are two beds.

(MORE)

BRICO (CONT'D)

(He points to the three inches of wood of the platform bed between the two feather beds.) We will both be safe.

LATER

Brico is chilling alone in an Eames chair, fireplace crackling, reading a book from the Cabins library *The Tragic Empress*, a biography of the Habsburg Empress Elizabeth. The book cover, shows a beautiful woman with long braided auburn hair, more in the style of the Pre-Raphaelites, than a formal royal portrait.

He sips on some of the remaining Sud-Tirol red, while flipping through the book, reading about murder-suicide involving the Empress' son, the Habsburg Crown Prince Rudolf and his lover Baroness Mary Vetsera. He flips through tipped in photos of Grand Tour Locations.

INSERT - NINETEENTH CENTURY PHOTOS

- The pyramids at Giza
- Cap Martin on the French Riviera
- The coast of Lake Geneva
- Bad Ischl, Austria where she had become engaged to the Emperor Josef

BACK TO SCENE

Brico gets up and pokes the logs in fireplace and the fire roars. Back in his chair, he takes a sip of wine and resumes reading *The Tragic Empress*.

INSERT - PAGE FROM BOOK

V.O. IN A BRITISH ACCENT

A mysterious fairy-tale princess, on September 10, 1898, the Empress was assassinated by an Italian anarchist who meant to murder someone else.

BACK TO SCENE

Brico looks up from the book and sees Gretchina enter the cabin with a wet head after showering.

GRETCHINA

The sauna is very nice.

(MORE)

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

There was old couple from Romania there when I arrived. They had birch branches and were slapping each other with them. I declined their offer to get whipped.

Brico lifts an eyebrow and smiles. Gretchina has some chewy cookies from the reception area.

BRICO

Would you like the sweet white wine or bubbly with that?

GRETCHINA

Bubbly.

Brico peels away the foil and cage off the bottle of Isteni_Prestige Extra Brut. The cork pops with enough velocity to hit the ceiling of the A-Frame. The bottle foams over Brico's fist while he fills their flutes. He hands one to Gretchina

BRICO

To us and our scenic trip to nowhere!

GRETCHINA

Yes, to this beautiful place.

EXT. DECK BEHIND THE CABIN - DAY

The deck protrudes into a wild meadow, song birds chirp, small mammals scurry through the brush and high in the sky, there is wide sweep of the wings of a circling raptor. Brico and Gretchina sit in wooden Adirondack chairs.

BRICO

Maybe because we were talking about it earlier, this reminds me of Tuolumne Meadows.

He leans over kisses the back of Gretchina's hand. But she ignores his gesture and instead she reads from a pamphlet, *ivalski in rastlinski svet doline Soce* (Flora and Fauna of the Soca Valley)

INSERT - PAMPHLET - GRETCHINA V.O.

Nearby Triglav National park provides habitat to hundreds of animals typical of the mountain environment, including almost 100 bird species, brown bears, lynx, foxes, badgers and chamois, mountain ibex, golden eagles, black grouse and several species of deer.

BACK TO SCENE

BRICO

And one goddess!

GRETCHINA

Can we get room service here?

INT. CABIN - EVENING

Through the window to back deck, the declining sun colors the meadow and the horizon in pinks and grays. Staff set up a table with linens and silverware next to the window overlooking the deck. A uniformed steward pops open a bottle of an Austrian red and pours into two crystal glasses.

STEWARD

Dober Tek.

He bows and leaves.

BRICO

What did he say?

GRETCHINA

(After taking a spoon of mushroom-barley bisque) I think he said *Bon appetite* in Slovenian. This soup is very good.

BRICO

I am happy we came here together.

GRETCHINA

Yes, this is all *bellissimo*.

LATER

Dusk has settled over the meadow. Brico uncorks a bottle of ice wine.

INSERT - ICE WINE LABEL

Franc Rozman - Staneta vinoto_ Rizling Ledeno vino, 10% alkohola

BACK TO SCENE

Gretchina cradles a glass of ice wine that reflect tongues of flames from the candlelight. She takes a sip sending "tears" down the side of the glass.

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

This wine is very nice.

BRICO

Mikhailic, I have learned from this trip, is a bit of a wine connoisseur.

GRETCHINA

I loved the red wine we had in Preseren Square, but not so much the wines we had at the artist's reception.

Suddenly the sound of a loud crack on the plate glass, causes Gretchina to scream. The large head of roebuck looms menacingly, seemingly at the edge of their table. Outside the plate glass is a large splattering of deer blood. Brico, recovering his composure, looks at the buck staring with feral eyes on the other side of the plate glass.

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

He's beautiful.

BRICO

He's also wounded.

The roebuck puts its head down as if to charge again, but discouraged by the invisible barrier, he executes a *pirouette*, hooves tapping on the wooden deck and then leaps back into the darkness, flashing a white, kidney-shaped rump patch.

GRETCHINA

That was frightening. Or magical.

BRICO

(Recalling a snippet of poetry)
Wounded Deer leaps highest-I've heard
the Hunter tell-Tis but the Ecstasy
of death. And then the Brake is
still.

GRETCHINA

That's beautiful.

BRICO

That's Emily Dickenson.

Gretchina stands up and walks over to bed. She lights a candle on the bed table, pulls off pink socks, unzips her jeans and then begins to unbutton her blouse. She stares aggressively at Brico.

INT. THE FEATHERBEDS - NIGHT

Naked, Brico and Gretchina kneel, arms around each other's waists. The adagio of a Vivaldi violin concerto plays on the radio in the background. Brico puts his hands on her hips, and draws them up, feeling the curves of her waist.

When his hands reach her breast, Gretchina pulls him to her and, for the first time, they kiss, a long lingering kiss. He kisses her thighs and her legs spread. As they roll onto Gretchina's feather bed, she moans, *Bricky, Bricky, Bricky*.

LATER

Gretchina's head is on her pillow asleep while Brico is sitting up watching the play of light and shadow on ceiling from the candle flame. He leans over to turn off the radio and Vivaldi goes silent. He reaches over Gretchina's motionless body, picks up the candle, and blows out its flames, and darkness fills the cabin.

EXT. BREAKFAST AREA - DAY

A middle-aged couple passes a camera back and forth to look at photos. The name "Otto" is mentioned and there is loud laughter, seemingly at Otto's expense. A waiter pours Brico a cup of coffee and put down a baskets of fresh figs and muffins on the table.

WAITER

Will your friend be joining you?

BRICO

Yes.

WAITER

So how was your night?

BRICO

It was very comfortable. We had an interesting visit from a buck.

WAITER

So that was the noise last night.

BRICO

He came right up on the deck. I thought that he was going to break in. He was bleeding from his ears and splattered some blood on the sliding door glass.

WAITER

I'll send somebody around to clean up and just leave the coffee pot here. Do you want to order or wait for your companion?

BRICO

I'll wait for her.

While waiting, Brico opens up his computer and scrolls through his email. He has a mail from Arturo.

INSERT: COMPUTER SCREEN W/ARTURO'S MAIL

ARTURO (V.O.)

I arrived at Rome-Fiumicino this morning and should be at the Massera place in Sperlonga by late afternoon. I'm looking forward to seeing you there in a few days. Lots to talk about.

Brico seems to consider a reply but closes the computer instead. In the background, the conversation between two of German speakers suddenly ceases. Brico looks over and, following their eyes, sees Gretchina approaching, dazzling in a lacy, white peasant dress.

GRETCHINA

They have great shower soap. (She sits down, pours herself a cup of coffee) Tangerine and a touch of lavender. Have you ordered?

BRICO

I was waiting for you.

GRETCHINA

Let's get some more coffee, and I'll be okay with the figs and rolls.

BRICO

Let's take a photo. (He opens his laptop and he and Gretchina lean in toward the computer screen, composing the two-shot.)

WAITER

(Waiting for them to finish)

Very nice.

BRICO

We'll take another pot of coffee. And do you have melon?

WAITER

Yes, we have Collective Farm Woman melon.

BRICO

We'll try it.

LATER

Brico works on his computer, while Gretchina looks over a map. The waiter brings another pot of coffee along with halves of the white-fleshed Collective Farm Woman Melon in wooden bowls.

INSERT - BRICO'S EMAIL

BRICO V.O

Sal, The conference in Verona was enlightening. You have recieved several EVOO's in the last week or so. Visit with Mikhailic was soulful. Road back through the Soca Valley was extraordinary, especially traveling with Gretchina Visconti. Looking forward to hooking up with Arturo soon. Ciao, Brico

ATCH: Photo, Me and Gretchina.

BACK TO SCENE

GRETCHINA

Before you join your cousin on the topless beaches of Sperlonga, you must meet with Signora Guicciardi in Milan. This will be a very important meeting Brickly for both of us.

(She take spoonful of melon.)

BRICO

And who is Signora Guicciardi?

GRETCHINA

She is a retired soprano who I have known since my time at St. Agnes. She is like an aunt or a *matrigna*.

BRICO

Stepmother?

GRETCHINA

Yes, a stepmother. You will like her. She has a fabulous apartment and interesting friends.

EXT. SPERLONGA BEACH - DAY

A beach boy screws a blue umbrella and a wine bucket near a beach letto. Arturo waits for him to finish and then hands him a Euro note as a tip. Stripped down to beach togs, he scopes out the scene wearing sun glasses with a sweaty glass of white wine in his hand.

He makes eye contact with a group of blonde Scandinavian men and women at nearby umbrella and lifts his glass toward them.

LATER

Arturo is sitting with an open laptop between his legs, scrolling through his inbox.

INSERT - ARTURO'S INBOX

Shows him putting the curser on an email entitled, SOL, Mikhailic, Soca Valley, etc, As he reads, his face shows interest, then a pleasurable smile. And when he opens the attachment, the photo of Brico and Gretchina, he pumps two fists in the air.

ARTURO
Unfuckingbelievable!!

Arturo muses on the email, then composes a reply.

INSERT - ARTURO'S EMAIL

ARTURO V.O.
Brico, You owe me a long, detailed narrative of your visit with Mikhailic and your hook-up with Ms.Visconti!

BACK TO SCENE

Arturo signals to the beach boy.

BEACH BOY
Signor?

ARTURO
A bottle of Prosecco, please.

LATER

The Beach Boy screws an ice bucket in the sand. After he rotates the bottle of Prosecco in the ice, there is a pop when he opens it and he partially fills one of the flutes.

BEACH BOY
Cin-Cin!

ARTURO
Grazie.

A man from the nearby blanket with a wispy goatee approaches with two women, one a flaxen blonde and the other a brunette.

MAN WITH GOATEE

(With what looks like beer bottle in hand) You have something to celebrate, so we bring you something we use for celebration in Finland, *sahti*. This is a home brew made for the wedding of my niece. Would you like to try some?

ARTURO

Sure.

MAN WITH GOATEE

(Opening a bottle and handing it to Arturo) My name is Timo and this is my wife, Marya. And this is Cita. She and her husband are both journalists, but she lost her husband in Rome.

ARTURO

(Takes a sip, then to Cita)

Interesting. Sorry about your husband.

CITA

(Laughing, in perfect English) What Timo meant to say was that my husband left the tour in Rome. He is sportswriter and is covering a Finnish player on the Roma soccer team. Right now, they are speeding to Naples in a Testarossa to cover Roma's next match.

ARTURO

Okay. Glad to clear that up.

TIMO

I am sorry. My English is not too good. So what are we celebrating?

ARTURO

Let's have some bubbly. (Hands the other champagne flute to Cita and fishes out two plastic cups from his beach bag and gives them to Timo and Marya.)

Arturo pulls the bottle of Prosecco from the ice bucket and pours everyone a glass. He then positions the computer so everyone can see.

ARTURO (CONT'D)

My cousin Brico went to Verona to meet this woman. And he did.

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

Showing Gretchina and Brico cheek to cheek after breakfast at the Cabins in the Sky.

BACK TO SCENE

MARYA

She is very beautiful. Has she done any film?

ARTURO

I don't know. But she has done video.
(He clicks on the
Venus Olive Oil clip)
Here it is.

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

Plays the Venus Olive Oil ad. A beautiful woman preceded by a heave of seawater surfaces through lacy sea foam between waves. The soundtrack of the video plays lambent Baroque music.

BACK TO SCENE

Everyone huddles over the computer. The video's elegiac Corelli adagio competes with sound of actual waves crashing, wind blowing, and the screams of sea birds.

CITA

The allusion to Botticelli's Birth of Venus is cleverly done.

TIMO

I agree. (He adjusts the crotch of his bathing suit.) Yes, very good ad.

MARYA

(Pulling her husband back toward their umbrella) Thank you for the wine.

EXT. VIEW OF SEA AND SAND - DAY

Sailboats elegantly cut through the waves, while seagulls circle overhead. Couples hold hands walking along the shore. There is a medley of sounds, the cawing of birds, a conversation between a mother and child in Italian, *Questo pera molto dolce*, she says, handing him a pear, while the

camera pans three generations of blonde women, grandmother, mother and daughter tanning topless. Arturo glance over to see the youngest woman applying sunscreen to her nipples.

A radio from a nearby blanket plays the old Bobby Darin hit, *Somewhere Beyond the Sea* and a competing radio broadcast has the excited voice of a Italian news announcer talking about an Alpine tragedy involving an avalanche, *Quattro morti, tre perduta*. (Four dead, three lost.)

BACK TO ARTURO'S UMBRELLA

Cita sits on the sand, drinking a red wine now from the champagne flute.

CITA

I am somewhat limited in job opportunities. The market for news in Finnish is literally the size of the market for Armenian language news. My husband does sports, so he gets to travel more.

ARTURO

You speak English very well. Have you considered working for CNN?

CITA

Sure, but do you know how many applicants they have for their European positions?

Arturo nods. He understands.

CITA (CONT'D)

I probably need to go back and get my suntan lotion.

ARTURO

How would you like to join me and Alaric for dinner tonight?

CITA

Who is Alaric?

ARTURO

Alaric is a cat keeping an eye on me while I stay at his house.

Cita appears skeptical.

CITA

I see! And what are you and Alaric having for dinner?

ARTURO

(Improvising)

Tortellini *con quattro formaggio*,
heirloom tomatoes with radicchio
salad, a sesame ciabatta, pasta with
a cream sauce. And lots of red wine.

INT. MILAN APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Gretchina and Brico stand with their luggage at the front desk manned by a smartly dressed concierge. The concierge emerges from closet where he has found Gretchina's mail, two large bundles of mail, each tied with a thin, buckled leather strap. Gretchina asks Brico if he can carry her mail and she and, an almost comically burdened, Brico enter the elevator.

INT. GRETCHINA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gretchina leads Brico into her apartment. Her door opens to high ceilings, hardwood floors and late afternoon daylight streaming through windows on three sides. The furniture is sleek Dino Boffi modern. There are a few eclectic touches. Gothic gargoyles bracket the window that overlooks the Gothic towers of the Milan Duomo. Terracotta planters hold shiny-leaved indoor orange and lemon trees. They walk into Gretchina's bedroom and Brico unburdens himself of suitcases and mail, putting them on her bed.

LATER

Brico stands by a window in the bedroom that overlooks the spire of Milan's cathedral. He has a glass of red wine in hand and can hear Gretchina in the next room taking a seemingly endless series of voice mails off her machine. Gretchina suddenly rushes in while taking her clothes off and dropping them on floor as she heads to her closet. There, she checks out several outfits.

GRETCHINA

Do you have a suit, a suit jacket?
Your presence will be required at a
reception at Signora Guicciardi's
appartamento. You must do well there.

BRICO

And you?

GRETCHINA

I will be there later. First I am
meeting with Oswaldo for a glass of
wine.

INT. MASSERA KITCHEN - EVENING

Arturo and Cita clean up after dinner. There are two empty bottles of wine on the table. Cita puts down a large bowl of leftover cheese tortellini on the floor for Alaric, who quickly devours the entire bowl

EXT. MASSERA PATIO - NIGHT.

Lights from other Sperlonga dwellings sparkle down the cliff. The strand far below next to the ocean is marked by street lamps and the distant dock lights are strung out like a filigree of Christmas decorations. On the sea, the lights of pleasure craft bob among the waves. Above it all is a milky canopy of starlight. Arturo and Cita prop up their feet on each other's chairs.

CITA

I guess this is what you think when
you think about an Italian vacation.

ARTURO

(Massaging the bottoms
of her feet)
Yeah, good food and wine, good
weather, and beautiful people.

CITA

I wonder where Alaric is?

ARTURO

Prowling somewhere, whatever tomcats
do at night.

Arturo lets go of her feet and grips her ankles and then her calves. Suddenly they hear strains from the violinist down the stairs practicing the aria "M'Appari" from Flotow's *Marta*.

ARTURO (CONT'D)

That's beautiful. Here's a little
known opera factoid, the opera *Marta*
that this music is from was President
Lincoln's favorite opera.

CITA

I didn't think they had opera in
America back then. (A few bars of
solo violin hang in the air.) Let's
go inside.

She grabs Arturo hand and pulls him into the house.

INT. MILAN APARTMENT - NIGHT

The sound human voices and the tinkling of glasses greets Brico he steps off an elevator and walks directly into an apartment. A dozen or so guests congregate near a wine bar, another dozen or so linger near the food service area, and the largest group stands around, or sits on a sofa next to a ceiling-to-floor window overlooking the rooftops of Milan.

BRICO

Buona sera. Sono Brico.

Agnello, his contact, has long, curly blond hair, a slight build, blue eyes and professorial wire rim glasses.

AGNELLO

Ah, Brico, we are so glad to meet you. Would you like something to drink?

BRICO

I'll have whatever you're having.

Agnello takes a bottle and wine glass off the adjacent linen-covered table and pours Brico a glass.

AGNELLO

Yes, a glass of the Super Tuscan red, Sassicaia.

BRICO

I may have had this at an interesting Super Tuscan tasting at VinItaly.

AGNELLO

So let me set stage for you. Renata has been having these soirees on the opening night for each production at Scala since she retired. There she is standing next to Signor Guicciardi near the window in the silver sequined dress. It's like she just walked off the set of Act III of *Traviata*.

BRICO

She's quite stunning.

AGNELLO

Yes, still, and what a voice. And over there by the piano are the young Romanian tenor Credescu and his wife. He is singing Nemorino in *Elisir d'Amore* next month. Some say he is the next Alfredo Kraus, but I don't know.

Madame Credescu wields a champagne flute like a weapon talking to a knot of theatrical people. She has bobbed black hair and wears a tight sequined party dress with a slit in the front runs from between her breasts to her navel.

BRICO

Interesting outfit his wife is wearing.

AGNELLO

That group of men with the gray suits with the, how do you say it in English, trophy wives? Those are colleagues of Signor Guicciardi. They are in some kind of businesses. The striking woman to their left is Francesca Marigniana, who is, I think, may be a former girlfriend of Berlosconi's. I don't know what she does.

An anonymous comment coming from a group of young men is heard by both Agnello and Brico.

YOUNG MAN

E lui Gretchina chiavare? (Is he the one screwing Gretchina?)

Agnello turns to see his friends.

AGNELLO

And these *ragazzone*, I think the English word is *riff-raff*, they are pretty much run-of-the-mill hangers-on, typical failed personalities of the intellectual class.

BRUNI

Thank you, brother Agnello, for the kind introduction. (He is a short, stocky guy with curly brown hair and a wiry beard framing a dark pox-marked face. He extends his hand.) Hi Brico, I'm Ernesto Bruni.

As Agnello introduces the others they step forward to shake hands with Brico.

AGNELLO

Colossi is a former instructor at the Jesuit seminary in Rome. Fabrizio sang Luigi in *Il Tabbaro* at the Puccini Festival in Torre del Lago last summer.

Fabrizio looks to be in his late twenties.

FARIZIO

Yes, an underwhelming debut. One reviewer said, "While Mr. Del Longo's singing was at best indifferent, he looked every inch the part of a louche seducer."

AGNELLO

He is being modest. He and Renata had a charity concert for St. Agnes school for girls that raised over a half million Euros. And here is Claudio, who owns the gourmet food and wine shops, *Quasi Bella Cucina*. So who is this new soprano we are going to see tonight singing Tosca?

BRUNI

The Czech, E-len-a-dutch-kov-a.

COLOSSI

Supposed to be the next Callas.

FABRIZIO

Mmmm. Well, I'm not so sure.

BRUNI

(Munching on a shrimp
amuse-bouche)

No, not Callas, one step, maybe two, below.

CLAUDIO

I don't know. Hers was the angelic voice for the Pepato cheese commercial that vamped *O Mio Babino Caro* from Gianni Schicchi that got millions of hits on the internet.

BRUNI

What does it say that almost every one of Puccini's big arias have been used in a cheap film or background for a cheese commercial?

BRICO

It's says money chases great art. The money is now in cinema. It is no accident that the best contemporary composers write for the movies, Nino Rota, Mark Isham.

BRUNI

Rota yes, lovely stuff.

Francesca enters the fray wielding a flute of bubbly.

FRANCESCA

What it says is that his music is divinely inspired. Who will be listening to these annoying "Kids" in a hundred years?

COLOSSI

In terms of the mass consciousness of the human race, Puccini's leitmotifs, like Rodolfo and Mimi's, *Dunque e proprio finita*, will be to our time what the melody of *Lamento di Tristano* was to the middle ages.

BRUNI

I only agree with you only that that Puccini could write good music for television commercials if he were alive today.

Signora Guicciardi enters, sidles up to Francesca.

SIGNORA GUICCIARDI

Who is this musical paragon you are speaking about who could write music for cheese commercials?

BRUNI

Puccini.

SIGNORA GUICCIARDI

Why are you speaking ill of the Maestro?

BRUNI

We are not speaking badly of him. It may be that we find these Puccini's operas more and more satisfying as if they are answering some deeply felt future nostalgia.

SIGNORA GUICCIARDI

You will be punished for speaking blasphemy. But worse than blasphemy, you will be punished for boring our guest. What circle of hell is reserved for bores?

COLOSSI

Perhaps the first circle, Limbo.
Waiting around for eternity would be
very boring.

BRICO

No, I don't think so. Dante's view
of limbo was very orthodox, a place
for unbaptized heathens, like Ovid,
and Horace. Actually, I think they
would be very engaging companions,
especially a story spinner like Ovid.

There is nodding and general agreement in the group that
Ovid would be an engaging conversationalist in the waiting
room before having one's ticket punched to pass through the
pearly gates.

AGNELLO

Certainly it would be better than
being stuck in Limbo with Bruni.

There is an eruption of laughter at Bruni's expense.

SIGNORA GUICCIARDI

Some of these young men missed their
callings as priests. In any case, I
must show you the gallery. (She grabs
Brico by the elbow and leads him
toward a marble staircase.)

INT. MILAN GALLERIA - EVENING

Gretchina and Oswaldo sit across from each other at a bistro
table. Oswaldo is checking out a menu, while a waiter hovers
nearby.

OSWALDO

Do you want anything to eat?

GRETCHINA

I'm not hungry.

OSWALDO

Two glasses of Capriano red, *per
piacere*.

(to Gretchina)

I had lunch yesterday with the
Chiarmonte's at their farm. The
Cavaliere is very proud of his Garda
Lemons, so every course featured
lemons.

Gretchina seems completely uninterested in this chit-chat, but comes alive when the waiter ceremoniously serves glasses of red.

GRETCHINA

(Nodding to the waiter)
Grazie signor. (To Oswaldo) So what is Torino about?

OSWALDO

Ah, Torino, yes, a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Impatient, Gretchina looks away from Oswaldo and looks at a man walking by, talking to the Bichon Frise he holds in his arm.

OSWALDO (CONT'D)

First, I need to say that this opportunity is a direct result of the viewing of the Venus olive oil ad by a senior executive at Alfa Romeo. So, we are talking about an endorsement contract.

GRETCHINA

(With piqued interest)
Really?

OSWALDO

I proposed a million Euros a year and they didn't bat an eye. (He finishes his wine and looks at his watch.) If you are interested, I can arrange for a corporate jet to pick us up next Monday.

GRETCHINA

Suppose I can't make it next Monday?

OSWALDO

I will need to make new appointment.
No easy, *ma possibile*.

INT. MARBLE STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Renata Guicciardi leads Brico up the wide stone staircase with a highly polished marble balustrade lit by crystal ceiling chandelier.

RENATA

My husband and I are opting out of the *Tosca* performance.

(MORE)

RENATA (CONT'D)

He and two of his business associates are meeting with a vendor of ancient coins from one of the Gulf emirates. Very shady deal. Agnello and the others departed for *Scala*. I haven't heard from Gretchina.

BRICO

She is meeting with her agent.

RENATA

Okay. I hope you were not too bored speaking with Bruni. I really think he made a mistake leaving the Jesuit seminary in Rome. But he was twice caught fondling young boys in the confessional.

At the top of the stairs, she pushes open a door to a dark gallery and, with a rheostat, turns on cones of light from ceiling spots, bringing to life about ten large gilded framed canvases, mythological scenes, Tuscan landscapes, and portraits of Milanese nobility.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

Renata leads Brico through the gallery.

RENATA

Gretchina says you do wonderful portraits. I would love to sit for you.

BRICO

Drawings, I have never done portrait oils.

RENATA

(Pulling him to a small room of the gallery)

Okay, a drawing, a portrait drawing.

INT. SMALL OFFICE - NIGHT

The room of the gallery has a tiny stone fireplace. Shelves are crammed with operatic scores and memorabilia and photos of opera's and opera stars of the past cover the walls. Renata pushes open French doors that open to a balcony overlooking the street. Traffic noise from the Via Brera, and a slight breeze billow past the curtains. Brico wanders around the room, looking at the photos hanging on the wall.

INSERT - PAN OF PHOTOGRAPHS

- Black and white glossies of Renata as Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amore*
- As Elvira in *L'italiano in Alfieri*
- With some dark-eyed tenor as Mimi and Rodolfo in *La Boheme*.
- An opera program from the *Theatro Metastasio* from 1976.

BRICO

Do you still sing?

RENATA

Sometimes, yes. I will sing an entire concert for you, if you do this drawing that you have promised.

Renata fumbles around trying to thread the spool on an ancient reel-to-reel tape player. She pushes a button to start the tape and large, clear plastic spools turn emitting first the sound of tape hiss, then the *clink, clink* of a piano accompaniment, then the explosion into the room of two operatic voices, a soprano and a tenor.

SOPRANO (RENATA)

No, no, Turridu!

The music plays. It is the duet between Santuzza and Turridu from *Cavalleria Rusticana*. The tenor's voice is rough, overbearing, domineering, and hectoring. The young Renata's voice pleads with him in a pure and vulnerable soprano. Renata mouths the words, an otherworldly look in her eyes,

LATER

Renata turns off the tape recorder and leads Brico out of the office back into the gallery

RENATA

I was a mezzo-soprano. Never sang Santuzza on stage.

BRICO

But that duet was very beautiful.

RENATA

Yes, it was a great opportunity for an unknown to sing with Alfredo Kraus.

As Brico and Renata begin to descend the stairs, a harsh voice is heard from downstairs.

SIGNOR GUICCARDI

Renata! Renata! We were looking
for you two.

RENATA

(Descending the
staircase)

He said he would do my portrait.

SIGNOR GUICCIARDI

(Putting a bear hug
on Brico)

Yes, a portrait, very good, an
artiste. (To his wife) You got a
call from Gretchina. She said she
was going to skip the opera and was
going to get pizza at DiGennaro's.

INT. LA SCALA - NIGHT

Tosca is being staged. The last notes of the great Act One
aria *Recondita Armonia* ring out, "*Tosca, sei tu!*" It is
greeted with waves of explosive applause. Wild calls of "Bis"
and "Bravo" tumble down from the upper reaches of the house.
A tenor milks the applause, bowing and scraping.

Agnello is on his feet, clapping enthusiastically. Bruni is
also on his feet clapping next to him. Agnello feels what
might be the vibration in his pocket. He looks at his cell
phone screen and walks back to the lobby amid the chaos of
standing "O." In the lobby, Agnello works his cell phone.

INSERT: CELL PHONE MESSAGE

GRETCHINA (V.O)

After a stressful meeting with
Oswaldo, I am famished and heading
to Di Gennero's for pizza. Are you
able to join me?

BACK TO SCENE

Agnello jogs down the steps, the gray edifice of La Scala
behind him.

EXT. OUTSIDE PIZZERIA - NIGHT

Both Fashionista and Bohemian types wait in a long line
winding around *alfresco* diners enjoying pizzas at sidewalk
tables. Renata, with Brico in tow, cuts in at front of the
line, where a waiter greets her.

WAITER

Signora Guicciardi, what can I do
for you?

RENATA

I am meeting a party with a young lady here.

WAITER

Perhaps by the window?

There are tables near the window that Gretchina is pushing around, reseating another couple at an adjacent table and pushing two tables together to make room for her projected party of four. Agnello is standing, awaiting Gretchina's final disposition of the seating arrangements. He smiles and waves when he catches sight of Brico and Renata.

INT. WINDOW TABLE - NIGHT

Through the window, passersby on the sidewalk walk by chatting and gesticulating. Gretchina and Renata sip from large bowl glasses of a red. Brico and Agnello hold sweaty bottles of Sant'Ambroseus beer. Brico has clam shells on his plate from the clam pizza he has been eating. Gretchina cuts slices of the Pancetta pizza and gives them to Renata and Agnello.

GRETCHINA

We were at Savini's and I could have dined there, but dinner with Oswaldo is like eating with an adding machine.

AGNELLO

You are probably better off eating here.

GRETCHINA

What's was more irritating, he arranged a meeting in Torino with *Alfa Romeo* to discuss an offer as a spokesperson. We fly out Monday to Torino. Part of the deal is that I get to use the Alfa of my choice.

Hearing that, Brico and Agnello simultaneously pick up their bottles of beer and take long drinks. At the same time, a waiter brings a third pizza to the table, a *Pizza Margherita* with shredded fresh basil on top.

AGNELLO

Personally, I would choose the Alfa Romeo *Copetizione*.

RENATA

You could talk to Lorenzo Da Vico, that handsome race car driver you made the olive oil ad with in Umbria.

Brico looks like he has just been punched in the gut.

GRETCHINA

The first thing I'll have to do is
get a driver's license.

Agnello spits out beer into a napkin, laughing out loud.

LATER

The waiter brings the check and a busboy clears the used
napkins, mostly empty pizza pans and plates with pizza crusts.
The conversation is slowing down when Renata suddenly
introduces a new topic.

RENATA

While I was showing Brico my gallery,
he promised to do a portrait drawing
of me.

GRETCHINA

You are doing a portrait drawing of
Renata?

BRICO

Possibly. If it works out, yeah.

GRETCHINA

(Looking sternly at
him)

He says he came to Italy to look for
olive oils for his family business,
but he really came to create a
portfolio of portraits of women.

LATER

The group stands up and moves away from the table. Brico and
Agnello insert credit cards into their wallets while Gretchina
and Renata converse privately.

RENATA

(Kissing Brico on
both cheeks)

I hope you can join us for dinner
Sunday. And take good care of
Gretchina. She is precious to us.

BRICO

Thank you. Yes, of course I will.

Renata and Gretchina walk out of the restaurant. Brico turns
to Agnello.

BRICO (CONT'D)

I'd like you to come down to Sperlonga
and meet my cousin Arturo.

AGNELLO

We will see what life throws at us
but, yes, I would like to meet your
cousin.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Brico and Gretchina are in the back seat, where Gretchina checks herself out in a hand mirror.

BRICO

I must have left my cell phone at
your place.

GRETCHINA

I am glad that you made it. But you
were very quiet tonight.

BRICO

I guess I talked myself out at
Renata's reception.

The taxi wheels around a traffic circle amid a cacophony of automobile horns.

GRETCHINA

Yes, Renata said you did very well
at the reception, holding your own
with Bruni, Colucci, and the others.

She looks out the taxi window at the maelstrom of traffic and puts her hand on his thigh and smiles.

EXT. MASSERA PATIO - DAY

A blue morning sky dazzles overhead and the sea sparkles in the distance below. Arturo and Cita work on a large pot of coffee, finishing up a breakfast.

CITA

Have we seen Alaric this morning?

ARTURO

No. Did we kill him with the
tortellini?

Cita adjusts her sunglasses as she flips through the fashion glossy *La Vita di Donne*. Arturo's cell phone rings and he clicks to answer it

ARTURO (CONT'D)

Ah Caterina, Buon giorno!

He signals to Cita that he will only be a minute, but she gets up and walks to the edge of the patio.

Arturo scribbles some notes on the front page of a newspaper. After finishing the call, he joins Cita at the edge of the patio.

ARTURO (CONT'D)

That was Caterina Strozzi. She's a soprano I worked with in Boston who lives in Rome. I invited her down here and she will be able to come because her voice coach's parents have a villa in Terracina. I'm thinking we can get a recital going with Arno Principe down the landing.

CITA

(Pointing to a small
black fig tree nearby.)

Look, there is our ravisher of tortellini.

About ten feet down the slope, Alaric lies under the shade of a fig tree on his back with a swollen belly and eyes wide open.

INT: GRETCHINA'S KITCHEN - DAY

The morning sun streams through the windows as Brico examines the shiny chrome Savinelli coffee machine with its water pressure gauge, piston, levers, a sculpted handle and an ornamental eagle perched on top. He finds ground coffee in a glass-fronted cabinet and fills the machine with water and coffee. There is the hissing of heating water and also the sound a shower running as he picks on a pastry he had purchase earlier at a local grocers. His computer is open.

INSERT - HOME PAGE FOR MERIDIANA AIRLINES

Shows a jet lifting off from a runway.

BACK TO SCENE

Gretchina enters the kitchen, toweling her hair off, looking radiant after showering.

GRETCHINA

(Pouring herself a
cup of coffee)

I see you figured out the Savinelli.
It took me two months. So did you
sleep well?

BRICO

My sleep was O.K.

GRETCHINA

I thought I felt you tossing and turning.

BRICO

There was a lot to digest from yesterday.

GRETCHINA

I have lunch at two with the food buyer at *LA Rinascente*. It's a favor for Signor Chiarmonte, as we will talk about Venus oils. It would be nice for you to join us.

Brico pauses before responding and looks at his surroundings, the sunshine pouring into the room and through the window the spires of the Milan Duomo.

BRICO

I have to be at Linate this morning for an eleven o'clock flight to Rome.

GRETCHINA

You are leaving today?

BRICO

Yes, I really need to give my cousin a hand with the olive oil project.

GRETCHINA

You could do some olive oil research at *La Rinascente*. Adrianna can set up a tasting.

BRICO

I have already paid for the flight.

GRETCHINA

Renata is going to be disappointed as well. She is expecting you for dinner on Sunday.

BRICO

I have a couple weeks or so of work talking to producers, negotiations that my cousin is setting up. The sooner I get to work, the sooner I can finish and come back to Milan.

GRETCHINA

I think you are punishing me for my meeting in Torino.

BRICO

(Reaching for her
hand)

No, I am punishing myself. You talk about joining you for lunch at *La Rinascente*, but I need to feed my soul.

GRETCHINA

Feed your soul? What does that mean?

BRICO

(Losing some of his
resolve)

I'm not sure.

GRETCHINA

(Perplexed and
frustrated)

I will pack you a bag with water and snacks for your trip.

LATER

Brico and Gretchina, along with Brico's Pullman upright, stand near the front door. Gretchina hands Brico a small white bag with black rope handles imprinted in black with the logo, *FENDI*.

BRICO

We could get together in Sperlonga after your Torino trip.

GRETCHINA

(Leaning over and
kissing him on the
lips)

Be safe Brickky.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

As Gretchina's Theme plays, Brico stands alone next to his Pullman upright in an elevator holding Gretchina's snack bag. The elevator doors open to a bustling lobby. Camera moves in for close-up of his face, which shows he is conflicted about taking the next step. The elevator doors begin to close and Brico hits the button to open the doors. He steps out of the elevator with his bags.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERMISSION

FADE IN:

INT. BUSINESS CLASS CABIN - DAY

The cabin crew collect refuse and Brico hands over an empty split of red. The cockpit crew announces in three languages, Italian, German, and English that aircraft is preparing to land at Rome's Fiumicino Airport. Outside the window, the sun glints off the waves of the Tyrrhenian Sea.

INT. AIRPORT BAGGAGE AREA - DAY

Brico grab his large Pullman bag off the carousel and follows signs toward the rent-a-car center.

INT: AVIS RENT-A-CAR COUNTER - DAY

Brico produces his passport, State of New York and International driver's licenses, and credit card. The clerk is on the phone checking Brico credit worthiness to rent top of the line creamy white 4.5 liter, 440 horse power *Porsche 911 Cabriolet*.

CLERK

Leone, LIMA, ECHO, OSCAR, NOVEMBER,
ECHO Yes, his American Express
Black Card comes up as valid.

INSERT - MAP ITALIAN COASTLINE

The clerk highlights the route in yellow from Fiumicino to Sperlonga.

BACK TO SCENE

Credit approved, Brico waits for the Porsche 911 Carrera to be brought around. He sits on a vinyl chair nibbling on a biscotti from Gretchina's small boutique snack bag. Finally, a white uniformed mechanic comes by.

MECHANIC

(Hands Brico the keys
to the car)

Enjoy.

EXT: BRICO'S VIEW OF THE ROAD - DAY - TRAVELING

There is a sign pointing to Autostrada 12 and Roma, but Brico passes that exit and instead takes the road straight ahead.

INSERT - ROAD SIGN

Shows distance to *OSTIA 8 KM, ANZIO 54.5 KM*.

BACK TO SCENE

There are blue skies above and the blue of the sea on the right. He passes through Anzio. On his right are the ruins of number of Roman villas facing the sea, including the villa of the Emperor Nero. Outside town, the road is lined with modern villas, beaches, and seaside restaurants. Leaving Anzio he passes a rocky promontory as the road moves inland.

LATER

Brico drives to the town of Sabaudia with its white limestone buildings on a Roman grid and parks on the side of the road, next to a park.

EXT. LONE WOLF CAFE - DAY.

Sitting at outdoor cafe underneath a *Nostro Azzuro* umbrella Brico nods to a busboy who brings him a liter bottle of mineral water. Opening his computer, Brico composes a new mail.

INSERT - BRICO'S EMAIL

BRICO V.O.

Arturo, Left Milan this morning and arrived at Fiumicino an hour ago. I'm at The Lone Wolf cafe in Sabaudia having pasta, grilled Bronzino and a Vermentino di Gallura. See you in an hour or two. Brico

BACK TO SCENE

The waiter brings Brico grilled fish with a head on it and begins to fillet the fish, its white flesh gleaming in the sunlight. Brico tucks into the fish and washes it down with white wine.

EXT. BRICO'S PORSCHE - DAY - OVERHEAD

Gretchina's theme plays as Brico is back in the driver's seat of the 911 as it whips around the Monte Circeo promontory with the blue sea to his right and hilltop villas and grapevines to his left. He enters an urban area, the town of Terracina, and he leaves town entering a tunnel that goes through a hill with the landmark temple to Jove on top of the precipice.

EXT. ROAD COMING OUT OF TUNNEL - DAY - OVERHEAD

The 911 speeds into the sunlight and crests a spectacular ridge looking over the sea. Brico, at the wheel, negotiates switchbacks on the Via Roma at high speed.

INSERT - ROAD SIGN

SPERLONGA .6 KM

An arrow points straight ahead.

BACK TO SCENE

Brico leaves the 911 in a public parking area unattended, ignores the self-service parking machine, presses a button on his key chain, watches the convertible top come up, and locks his vehicle. He walks up the road toward San Leone church.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Arturo, clad in rope sandals, a beat-up Gold's Gym tee-shirt, and frayed cuffed blue jeans steps forward to shake Brico's hand. They take an outdoor table.

BRICO

You've gone native fast.

ARTURO

The gods are smiling on us, Brico. Signora Tondi who lives across from the Massera's told me that she has never seen the weather this nice this soon. Her husband worked in Cinecitta, has great stories about Antonioni and Wertmuller. And the beach scene here is incredible.

An elderly man, a waiter, approaches.

ARTURO

We'll have a Margherita, a Quattro Stagione and two Peroni's. (To Brico) So tell me about Ms. Visconti.

BRICO

You saw the photo I sent you from Slovenia. It's a picture of a guy totally content, totally satisfied aesthetically, and physically with life on Planet Earth. As we are having dinner in our in the cabin, a buck comes out of the dark and charges our patio window and scares the shit out of us. Before that, at Mikhailic's, she didn't even want to sleep in the same room with me.

ARTURO

That's a great scene with the charging Buck, epic. It could be a Wagnerian opera, *Die wilden mariage des Kunstlers und der Walkyre*.

BRICO

And we had great road trip back to Milan, stopping for lunch at Cividale del Friuli. I proposed to her by suggesting we go to a jewelers across the square to get wedding rings.

ARTURO

So what did she say?

BRICO

She said, *Bricky, I don't care so much about this bling stuff*.

ARTURO

She's loaded with bling.

BRICO

That's another thing. When she met Mikhailic and me in Lyublyana she wasn't wearing an engagement ring she had worn earlier. She evidently had an engagement of convenience with her manager, some *zhidrool* named Oswald.

ARTURO

So she dumped the guy.

BRICO

That's the happy ending to Act One. But then at the start of Act Two, she meets him for lunch in Milan and he delivers a proposition to her about a gig as a spokesperson for Alfa Romeo at a million Euros a year and the use of an Alfa of her choice.

ARTURO

So what car did she choose?

BRICO

We don't know yet. That comes later in Act Two. She flies out tomorrow to Torino on a corporate jet.

The waiter arrives with the pizzas and beers and Brico and Arturo help him make room on the table.

BRICO (CONT'D)

There was discussion at the pizza joint about what car she should choose. Someone suggested she talk to a Formula One Driver she made an ad with. And this guy Agnello, cool dude, suggests she choose an eight cylinder beast, a Spyder 8C, and Gretchina reveals she doesn't even have a driver's license!

ARTURO

(Laughing)

It sounds complicated.

BRICO

Complicated? When I first heard about the business deal and everybody in her crowd talking about what a great opportunity it was, I felt like killing myself. What really bummed me after meeting her crowd was the realization that Gretchina's world could never be my world.

ARTURO

So is she going to come down to visit us?

BRICO

She has my cell, email and the address for the Massera place, but it's a long shot that she'll come. It hasn't been a week since I took that photo in the Soca Valley and now, instead of bliss, I am in a state of confusion, anxiety, and self-doubt.

ARTURO

That's what the love disease is all about.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Brico parks the 911. unloads his luggage and he and Arturo enter an elevator. Arturo enters a code and presses the button for Level Four and the elevator begins a smooth ascent

ARTURO

The code is 0-2-1-4-2-9, the birthdate of Massera's mother, Gloria.

BRICO

That's the date of the Valentine's Day Massacre.

The elevator door opens to the patio outside the Massera place that has an expansive view of the ski and sea.

EXT. PATIO - DAY

A series of white villas spread out below and beyond is the blue waters of the sea.

BRICO

This is incredible. It puts Wellfleet and Montauk to shame.

ARTURO

Let's take look inside.

INT: MASSERA HOUSE - DAY

Arturo leads Brico past the chef-quality kitchen, through the living room with glass wall on two sides showing magnificent views of the sea and sky, to the master bedroom. French Doors open to a balcony overlooking the beach and sea. A modern birch platform bed is located on the opposite wall and sits on a white Dhurrie rug. Over the bed is a copy of John William Waterhouse's exotic and erotic *Circe*.

ARTURO

What do you think?

BRICO

This is even more luxe than Gretchina's place in Milan.

Arturo leaves and Brico opens his Pullman on a luggage rack and pulls out his toiletry bag.

INT. EN SUITE BATHROOM - DAY

Brico enters the bathroom with black marble walls and copper colored floors, tiles and fixtures. There is a spa-quality shower, with a half-dozen shower heads. When he applies toothpaste to his brush, he is startled for a moment when he sees a human head behind him in the mirror. He turns around, and sees that it is Herm, a Roman fertility statue showing a male head atop a column with male genitalia carved into the column at the anatomical correct space. He finishes brushing, splashes water on his face and dries it with a copper colored towel. He grabs the genitalia of the Herm before entering the shower

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The afternoon sun pours into the kitchen gleaming off the dozen copper pots and pans that hang from a ceiling pot rack.

BRICO

I like the Herm in the bathroom.

ARTURO

Isn't that great? There's one in every bathroom. When the Holy Name parish closed down in Boston, I bought a *Scourging of Christ* station of the cross at a rummage sale and hung it over my toilet. But the Herms are much cooler.

There is a sweaty bottle of mineral water, an open bottle of red wine as well as generously filled fruit basket on the table. Playing on a CD player is an ethereal soprano voice accompanied by equally ethereal harpsichord riffs.

BRICO

Music is nice. Who's the soprano?

ARTURO

That's Caterina Strozzi, singing *Nemmen coll'ombre d'infedelta* from Handel's *Serse*. She'll be down in a couple days. If we find someone to play the harpsichord, we can get a live performance.

Brico picks up the CD jewel case with a picture of an attractive soprano with thick ringlets of dark hair.

BRICO

I'm torn between heading out with you and exploring the town or taking a nap.

ARTURO

You look beat dude. If I were you, I'd chill before I crashed.

INT. BRICO'S BEDROOM - DAY

He darkens the room by closing wooden blinds. Then he pours a glass of red, props up a pillow against the headboard, and sits back on the bed and takes a booklet out of his SOL bag.

INSERT - BOOKLET

Oliveti D' Italia has a see-through plastic cover that shows the topics the booklet covers, *Who they are* - a consortium it's constituted by Unaprol and Delverde and *Mission* - use natural processes to achieve quality. The legend at the bottom of the page says, *Welcome to the World's largest olive garden!*

BACK TO SCENE

Brico flips to the next page and sees graphs and charts and then closes the pamphlet. As his eyes shut, the pamphlet slips out his hand and falls to the floor.

DREAM SEQUENCE

The Doctor from Neo-Natal comes into the waiting room, where Brico has been reading a medical bulletin on the care of infants printed in Italian, German, and English. "I am sorry, I do not have good news. The baby was still-born." "And the mother?" "I am sorry, but we have bad news there as well." And as Brico walks away from the clinic in the rain; his gut is torn.

BACK TO SCENE

Jolted out of REM sleep, Brico sits bolt upright in bed, dazed. He clicks on a light. A clock shows that it is three o'clock in the morning. In his white boxer shorts, he opens the balcony door, letting in roar of the surf. He steps outside, still rattled by his nightmare. In the distance he sees the waves of the sea painted with a stripe of moonlight.

EXT. STONE STEPS - DAY

Brico, sandals slapping against the stone, jogs down the two hundred or so steps from the town of Sperlonga to the beach, a beach bag over his shoulder. It is a sun-washed morning and when he reaches the beach he sees umbrellas and beach beds spread out on the strand in colorful rows, catamarans bobbing in the surf, and hears the squawks of gulls. He selects a spot, puts down his beach bag, and a young man with sun-bleached hair wearing uniform navy blue shorts trudges through the sand toward him.

BEACH BOY

The umbrella with the beachbed is three euros per hour. You pay when you leave.

BRICO

Okay!

As the beach boy screws a blue umbrella into the sand and pulls over a lounge chair, Brico undresses down to baggy orange swimming trunks and lathers himself with tanning lotion. When the beach boy is finished, Brico hands him a two euro coin. From his beach bag he pulls out a bottle of water, and Volume 1 of J.F. Bury's *History of the Later Roman Empire*, which he opens to bookmarked page.

INSERT - BOOKMARKED PAGE

BRITISH V.O

While in all ancient monarchies,
 religion and sacerdotalism were a
 political as well as social power,
 the position of the Christian Church
 in the Roman Empire was a new thing
 in the world, presenting problems of
 a kind no ruler had hitherto
 encountered.

BACK TO SCENE

Brico is plugged in with earphones, which play the ancient
 drug rock anthem *Spoonful* and he surveys the beach scene.
 Eight-year-old boys with shorts hanging below their knees
 splash in the low surf. To his right, an attractive young
 couple assiduously lotion each other bodies with sun block.
 He takes out his ear buds, runs to the shore, dives into the
 crest of a wave and begins a butterfly sprint out to sea.

EXT. OUT TO SEA - DAY - TELESCOPIC

Brico's wet face, just above water, grimaces as he grabs his
 cramping leg underwater. His head then slips under water.
 For a moment the sea is still. Then there is a splash of
 seawater as he pops up from underwater and begins to
 backstroke back to shore.

EXT. OUTDOOR SHOWER - DAY

Brico stands on a sisal mat under a cone of water, massaging
 his thigh. He glances over to the next shower where a woman
 in a copper colored bikini just a shade lighter than her
 bronzed skin puts her face in the cone of cold water, and
 then shimmies her body to get all parts of it under the spray.
 Two young boys follow her and hop up and down under the cold
 shower.

INT. BEACH CONCESSION - DAY

Brico sits at a table with a blue-checkered tablecloth, with
 a glass of wine and a plate of seafood *frito misto*. The woman
 and the two kids from the shower sit nearby. He amuses the
 young boys by holding deep fried *gamberi* above his head and
 then biting off the heads of the crustaceans. The woman
 smiles, catching him at his shrimp head trick.

WOMAN

(With a German accent)

So you are an American on holiday?

BRICO

Yes and...

WOMAN

How did I know? I saw you swimming energetically before. Only Americans come to the beach to exercise.

BRICO

You are correct. I am from Boston and my name is Brico Leone.

Brico and the woman, who introduces herself as Birgit, shake hands. Her two boys in the background trying to mimic Brico's shrimp head trick with slices of pizza.

BRICO (CONT'D)

So how's your wine?

BIRGIT

Oh, it is okay. It's just a local red. Would you like to try it?

BRICO

(Takes a sip)

I think it's what you want at the beach. Light, fruity.fruity. I'd guess a young Sangiovese.

BIRGIT

So you are in the wine trade?

BRICO

No, but I was at a professional wine tasting a week or so ago. I am kind of working with olive oils right now. And you?

BIRGIT

I am an art professor from Freiburg on leave after being in Rome to view the Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling after its cleaning. My sister and I decided to meet up on coast for a short vacation. She is back at the motel napping.

BRICO

So what did you think?

BIRGIT

Well of course, it's a magnificent piece of art, but the homosexuality of Michelangelo is portrayed so prominently in his work.

(MORE)

BIRGIT (CONT'D)

It is not merely a matter of pretty boys with well-developed torsos, but the use a male model, his lover in fact, to model the Virgin Mary.

BRICO

These are interesting ambiguities that the church fathers preferred to overlook because of Buonorotti's genius.

BIRGIT

The ability to overlook sacrilege for genius, this is perhaps a good thing that was not understood by reformers like Martin Luther.

She searches Brico's face for a reaction, seems to care what he thinks. He nods in agreement.

BRICO

Sage point you make.

(His face shows he is torn about continuing this conversation.

Suddenly he gets up and shakes her hand.)

You have two beautiful boys. Not surprising as they have a beautiful mother.

EXT. BRICO'S UMBRELLA - DAY

Brico reaches behind the lounge and pull the umbrella over to get more shade. He pushes ear buds into each ear. Through his blue blockers glints of light reflect off waves journeying to shore, inky blue with foamy lace in their guts. They crash and spread out, expiring when they color the dry sand of shore dark brown. In his ear buds comes the sound of an ancient rock fugue, *Tales of Brave Ulysses*, with an aggressively driving lead guitar governed by a wah-wah pedal and a violent drum rhythm in the background. Brico nods in cadence with the music.

LATER

Brico wakes up on his beach lounge, roused by the scratchy sound of wood being turned to penetrate the sand nearby. He turns toward the noise and sees the tanned leg of a young man and, as he glances up, the grinning face of Fabbiano, the young man who runs the beach concession, who is setting up an ice bucket on a post.

BRICO

(Pulling out a sweaty
bottle of a *Vermentino*
di Gallura out of
the bucket.)

Who ordered this?

FABBIANO

Da tua cugina.

BRICO

My cousin?

He glances up and sees Arturo approaching in street clothes.

ARTURO

(Sitting on the edge
of Brico beach lounge,
he flips Brico a set
of keys)

The 911 is amazing. Turns on a dime,
has jackrabbit acceleration. What
are you paying for it?

BRICO

With my ten per cent credit card
discount, it comes to a hundred Euros
a day.

ARTURO

Wow!

BRICO

It's an early mid-life-crisis splurge.
(In a Long Island
accent)

I think I deserve it. By the way
where is the woman you are half-in-
love with?

ARTURO

Cita unfortunately has to spend time
with her husband. He showed up this
morning in a red Testarossa driven
by a bud from the Roma Soccer team.

BRICO

So she's interrupting her beach fling
by spending time with her husband?

EXT. MASSERA PATIO - EVENING

Three candles burn on an outside table, their flames leaning
and jumping in the soft breeze.

Brico is sitting on a chair watching the waves in the distance roll in toward the shore under the light from the moon. Alaric is in his lap and he is scratching the purring cat behind its ears. The elevator doors open and Brico looks up. It is Arturo holding a bag of food he brought back from dinner at the *Delmare* restaurant near the Finnish tourists' hotel.

ARTURO

What happened to you?

BRICO

Is it that bad?

ARTURO

It looks like you were in a brawl.

BRICO

Because I felt winded swimming today, I decided to get in some aerobic work and foolishly sprinted up the steps returning from the beach. It was dark and I tripped. At first I thought I had broken my nose, because I had a very bad nose bleed.

ARTURO

(Gently squeezing Brico's nose)
No I don't think so.

With a soft cry, the cat jumps down from Brico's lap.

BRICO

So how was the meeting with Cita's husband?

ARTURO

It was okay. He's a nice guy.
(concerned, staring
at his cousin)
Jesus, Brico, be more careful.

INT. BRICO'S SUITE - MORNING

The balcony door is open letting in the squawk of gull, who protests Brico's presence. In the bathroom, he throws water on his face and stares at his wounds in the mirror. In addition to the dried blood around both his nostrils, his left eye looks blackened and there are scrapes on his cheekbone. He shake some pills onto his open fist, tosses them into his mouth, then put his head in the sink and drinks directly from the faucet.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Brico pours himself a cup of coffee and sits down at the table along with his laptop. The front door opens. It is Arturo, who a warm loaf of bread in a string bag. He puts the bread on a cutting board.

ARTURO (CONT'D)

I mentioned the retired violinist from San Carlo. His wife bakes fresh bread every morning. When I told them you had arrived yesterday, Signora Pacelli said to come by this morning, she would have a loaf of fresh bread for you.

BRICO

That's pretty nice of her. (He cuts himself a slice)

ARTURO

Maybe stop by and thank her yourself?

Brico opens his laptop and clicks on his email. He stares at the screen for several seconds before opening an email that had fixed his attention.

ARTURO (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

Brico lifts an eyebrow and stares at the screen some more.

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

GRETCHINA V.O.

Bricky, You did very well Friday night but not so well yesterday. Renata did not understand how you left after accepting her invitation then not fulfilling your promise to sketch her portrait. You will have to make it up to her. I wish you well in the olive oil business.
Gretchina

BACK TO SCENE

BRICO

It's not exactly a love note.

ARTURO

No. But the fact she wrote even to bust your chops is a positive.

BRICO

You believe that? I don't.

ARTURO

The time the email was sent is significant. She was thinking of you before getting on her flight to Torino. The chiding was pretty light considering the grief she probably took from this Renata. Don't be concerned about the lack of affection in the note, as effusive emotions probably are not her style.

Brico appears not to be swayed.

ARTURO (CONT'D)

So are you going to write back?

BRICO

Probably, eventually.

EXT. FLIGHT OF STEPS - DAY

After going down the the steps from the Massera patio, Brico knocks on a door with a mini-garden on the landing. An elderly woman answers the door.

LORETTA

Buon giorno.

BRICO

Buon giorno, Signora. Thank you for the fresh loaf of spinach bread.

LORETTA

So you are Arturo's cousin Brico?
Arno vieni qui, abbiamo un visitore.

Her eyes run over his facial injuries. Her husband, Arno comes over, shakes his hand and stares momentarily at the left side of Brico's face.

BRICO

Last night, I fell, *sono caduto sulle scale*. It was dark.

ARNO

Si, sulle scale. He fell on the steps at night. *Forse l'unguento?*"

LORETTA

Si, l'unguento. (The ointment.)

EXT. PATIO HERB GARDEN - DAY

Loretta pulls open the glass door that leads to her patio, where she picks herbs, violets and a stalk of aloe and puts them in a basket.

BACK INSIDE

ARNO

Your cousin Arturo is very active person always coming and going. And he has a beautiful blonde woman who visits him.

BRICO

I am looking forward to meeting her. Did Arturo tell you he does set design for the Boston Opera?

ARNO

(Somewhat disconcerted)

No.

BRICO

A soprano who lives in Rome that he worked with in Boston might be visiting him.

ARNO

And who is that?

BRICO

I am not sure. Caterina somebody.

ARNO

Ah!

Loretta works with the items she picked from the garden, squeezing a copious amount of a clear viscous liquid from a stalk of aloe. She use a pestle to grind a fistful of violets and a clump of a yellow five-petaled flower into the aloe into a paste.

LORETTA

Perhaps you can sit up here, on a chair at the table.

Brico sits on an upholstered dining room chair as Loretta applies *l'unguento*.

LORETTA (CONT'D)

Tell me if this hurts.

Brico's face shows pleasure not pain as Signora Pacelli applies the ointment.

She takes his hands, and rubs some of the ointment on the pad of his hand.

BRICO

It feels great. So you mix aloe,
violets and what is the yellow flower?

LORETTA

E l'erba di San Giovanni. In English
I think it is called St. John's Wort.

She presents Brico the mortar, now covered with plastic wrap.

LORETTA (CONT'D)

Use this two times a day, in the
morning and at night. You will feel
better in maybe three, four days.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Brico's eyes are closed on a lounge under an umbrella. Footfalls in the sand awaken him. He turns his head to see what had brought him out of his reverie. There is the thud of leather, the thumping of a footfalls in the sand and the cries of raucous play. Arturo approaches.

ARTURO

Want to play?

BRICO

Sure.

MIKKO

These guys over there challenged us.

Blonde like a beach bum, Mikko points to the edge of a dune where several teenagers wearing *Umbro* shorts had set up cones and were kicking a soccer ball. Mikko and his wife, Cita, who looks like an Olympic swimmer in a navy blue one piece, are nursing Peroni's.

Hanne, a professional soccer player, takes a swig from a bottle of mineral water, places it in the sand and begins juggling a soccer ball, finishing with a bicycle kick pass to Mikko who is jogging toward the teenagers.

HANNE

We need a sixth player.

SYLVIO TOSTI

Scusi, I'm from Ponza and play a little futbol.

HANNE

Okay we have our six.

INSERT - CHALKBOARD - DAY

Near the improvised soccer pitch there is a chalkboard on a post that shows the current match. The teenagers have chalked up *Azzurri*. Mikko, soccer ball under his arms, makes up the name *Cita's Guys* on the spot and chalks it on the board. The teenage soccer players smile, kick a ball around, and *Cita's Guys* point to members of the *Azzurri* they are going to "cover."

MIKKO

I'll take the ten-shirt.

Sylvio, Hanne, Cita, and Arturo choose an opponent, leaving Brico a short, muscle-bound kid in a hardman tee shirt.

BRICO

I have the mesomorph.

The match starts With Mikko passing the ball to Brico. He traps it nicely, but when he tries to dribble around the mesomorph, he has the ball taken off his foot, which starts an *Azzurri* counter-attack that spits sand in his face. With only Cita and Mikko back defending, Brico charges toward the kid in the hardman tee and when Brico trips in the sand, he knocks him over, the ball dribbling to Mikko who lofts it to Hanne, who taps it between the cones. The mesomorph lays on back with his arm in the air looking for a foul.

ARTURO

(Lifting the teenager
to his feet)

No foul, he got all ball.

The next play, Hanne strips an *Azzurri* player and has easy goal, but back-heels a pass to a charging Sylvio who taps it through the cones. There ensues the back and forth of the game, when notably, Brico crushes an *Azzurri* with a sliding tackle in the back of the knee and sends him rolling in pain on the sand. With the score 5-0 *Cita's Guys* take their foot off the gas. Arturo and Brico play with wine cups in hand and *Cita's guys* play a man down while Cita goes back to her umbrella to get more sunscreen. In the end the *Azzurri* win 10-8 and keep possession of the pitch.

After the match, Mikko pops the tops of the some home-brewed Finnish *Sahti*.

MIKKO

What happened to your face?

BRICO

I tripped running up the steps last night.

HANNE

(Referring to his AS
Roma coach)
Sangelli would like him. The guy
plays hurt.

Glasses and bottles are clinked to the notion of playing
hurt. Cita puts her bottle down, picks up a towel and walks
toward the outdoor shower and the concessions.

MIKKO

So you two are here studying olive
oil?

BRICO

Studying, tasting, buying.

HANNE

And you spend your off time at a
topless beach. Nice job.

They shake hands all around. Brico, Arturo and Sylvio decline
the Finns' offer to join them at the concession for lunch.
Sylvio now has retrieved a cool bottle of wine from his
blanket, and pours glasses for Brico and Arturo.

ARTURO

This is great. It gets the evil taste
of the *Sahti* out of your mouth.

BRICO

(Rinsing his mouth with the wine)
Agree.

SYLVIO

It is my wine. It is called
Biancolella. I am from the Island of
Ponza just west of here, on my annual
sales trip.

ARTURO

(Holding out his glass
for another pour)
I'll take a case.

SYLVIO

This year's vintage will be ready in
November.

ARTURO

That's a deal breaker. We're leaving
in a week or so.

BRICO
 We can purchase a couple cases for
 Massera.

Arturo nods in agreement.

EXT. BRICO'S UMBRELLA - DAY

Arturo reclines on a beach lounge, wine glass in hand. Brico and Sylvio assist him in killing the bottle of *Biancolella*.

ARTURO
 So what do you think about Cita?

BRICO
 I think she's beautiful.

SYLVIO
Molto bellissimo.

ARTURO
 Do you think Mikko knows?

BRICO
 Knows what?

ARTURO
 About me and his wife.

BRICO
 (Savoring a sip of
 the light red wine)
 Of course he does. She probably told
 him.

Sylvio smiles.

SYLVIO
 Thank you for the chance to play a
 little *futbol*. I need to rejoin my
 family. Here is my card. Let me
 know if you want to order any wine.

EXT. SPERLONGA - NIGHT

On the top of the cliff, the lights of the Sperlonga evening sparkle. The town comes to life with the well-dressed citizens doing the *passaggiata* and gaslights illuminating sidewalk cafes.

EXT. LANDING ACROSS FROM THE MASSERA PLACE - NIGHT

Arturo rings the door bell and it chimes from the inside of the house. Gennaro Tondi, tanned, receding hair slicked back, answers the door, a glass of red wine in hand.

TONDI

Arturo, Brico, I am glad you could
make it. Come on in.

A television is playing loudly in the corner of the living room where two teenage boys, Gennaro's grandsons, watch spellbound, the quiz show, *Quiz and Wax*. Their legs are sprawled over chair arms and their attention is fixed on the television screen where a scantily clothed man is being tortured in a dungeon.

TONDI (CONT'D)

Michele, Giorgio, get over here.

The boys, who are about thirteen, dutifully shuffle over and, introduce themselves to Arturo and Brico.

GIORGIO

You are going to enjoy nonno's pizza.

Michele shakes hands with Brico and Arturo.

MICHELE

Sirs, it is good to meet you.

The boys return to the T.V.

TONDI

My wife and their mother are in Paris to see the Balenciaga Spring Runway show, so I have custody of the boys for a few days. Pour yourselves some wine or beer.

Gennaro had set out a board cut from driftwood laden with antipasti on the kitchen island along with three uncorked bottles of wine and a bucket of iced beer. In the background is a ceramic Valoriani pizza oven with lapping flames visible through its open firebox.

BRICO

That's a nice pizza oven.

TONDI

We special ordered it. I hope you guys like you pizza well done.

BRICO

(Pouring a red at the
kitchen island)

Count me in as a fan of pizza
caramelization.

The kitchen wall is covered with photos of summer visitors from Cinecitta in Rome.

There are images of actors and actresses, film directors and screenwriters. There are photos which include a close-up a young Franco Zeffirelli lifting a pizza off a peel checking its doneness.

TONDI

(Spreading a soft
cheese on a round of
dark bread, as a
scream emanates from
the television in
the next room)

Quiz and Wax is actually quite clever.
My friend Simone Damiani came up
with the concept. It plays off the
old American quiz show, *The Newlywed
Game*.

Another round of screams emanate from T.V causing Michele and Giorgio's to raucously laugh.

TONDI (CONT'D)

The quizmaster is a dominatrix and
the set resembles a dungeon. When
the male partner, who is almost naked,
incorrectly answers a question, the
dominatrix pours hot wax on the guy
and pulls hair out his body. That's
what the screaming is all about.

BRICO

The show must have a huge female
demographic.

TONDI

(Opens the oven door
to check the pizza)

It has a considerable male audience
as well, as you can hear from those
two.

ARTURO

(Referring to photos of stars of
Italian cinema pinned on the walls.)
Friends of yours?

TONDI

More or less. In the Eighties, I had
bit parts in some B movies.

He slips the peel under the pizza in the oven, pulls the
pizza out of the oven and lifts the crust to check its
doneness and then returns the pizza to the oven.

TONDI (CONT'D)

Another minute. Maybe "C" movies would be a better categorization, crime and slasher films. I worked with directors like Enzo Castellari and Lucio Fulcio, not Antonioni or Fellini.

ARTURO

(Looking at the photo of Marcello Mastroianni on the wall.) And Marcello?

TONDI

A great actor and a great man, I worked with him in *That Night in Varennes*. (He pulls the pizza out of the oven.) He was from Frosinone, about fifty kilometers from here.

ARTURO

Doesn't sound like "B" flick to me.

TONDI

It was a nice piece of work. I had a bit part. I played a horse holder. My one line was to a horse, "Whoa." I think it took five takes.

The Margherita pie with a caramelized crust slips easily off the peel onto a cutting board and Gennaro takes it to dining area. Leaving the television on, where a long series of commercials were playing after the credits ran for *Quiz and Wax*, Gennaro's grandsons head to the dining room table.

TONDI (CONT'D)

When Marcello died in 1994, they put black crepe on the *Fontana di Trevi* to honor his role in *La Dolce Vita*.

MICHELE

Why did they do that?

His younger brother Giorgio gazes idly at an automobile ad playing on the T.V.

TONDI

Why? It was because the Fontana di Trevi was the site of the most famous scene in the movie. After wandering the streets of Rome at night, Marcello finds Anita Ekburg doing a Salome-like dance in the waters of the fountain and then he joins her.

ARTURO

That was the scene that caused the film to be banned in Boston by the Legion of Decency. It's pretty tame stuff by today's standards.

TONDI

Tame, perhaps, but still very erotic.

The sound of a familiar, lambent melody plays on the television. It is beautiful Corelli adagio from the soundtrack for the Venus Olive oil ad and both Brico and Arturo react by glancing at the television.

TONDI (CONT'D)

You have seen this before?

BRICO

Oh yeah.

TONDI

The woman in the video is the famous model Gretchina Visconti and the video was shot not far from here, on the beach near Fondi. Luca Pontano was the director.

ARTURO

Haven't heard of him.

TONDI

He was the second unit director for Pupi Avati in *Fratelli i Sorelli*. He did some highbrow films for RAI, Shakespeare adaptations, stuff like that.

ARTURO

So how did he wind up shooting video ads?

TONDI

Well, he had a problem with (Gennaro makes the universal mime for drinking, lifting his hands to his mouth and tipping his hand.) But he had a nice story about Signora Visconti.

Both Arturo and Brico turn away from the television after the the freeze frame of Gretchina's face, dewy with seawater, then goes to black.

TONDI (CONT'D)

Evidently, she had never done a nude shoot before and was reluctant to take her clothes off in her cabana. All the while, they were losing the perfect lighting of the sun coming over the Aurunci Hills. So Pontano got on the phone and yelled at a staffer from the agency that had cast Visconti and asked, "*Why did you send me a whore to play a goddess?*"

Both Arturo and Brico grin. The kids get it too.

TONDI (CONT'D)

But when she emerged from her cabana and once the cameras started, she executed her role as Venus emerging from the sea perfectly. In one take I understand.

BRICO

So I actually met Gretchina Visconti at an olive oil exposition in Verona. It seemed we had a lot in common, luxury olive oil, and an acquaintance with the artist Rado Mikhailic. I invited her to come down here, but it's a long shot that she will come.

TONDI

Wow. Let me know if she does come down. I'd love to meet her.

BRICO

Sure. But like I said, it's a long shot that she will come.

INT. MASSERA DINING ROOM - NIGHT

There is a half-liter bottle mineral water on the table and a pomegranate quartered on a cutting board.

ARTURO

So what did you think about Gennaro's story about the olive oil shoot?

BRICO

It's a great story. Sounds like Gretchina.

The doorbell rings and Arturo goes to the door. Cita is gripping a bottle of bubbly. She also has a music CD, "Children of Darkness," by an Icelandic composer named Hilmar.

LATER

Arturo pours three glasses of the golden bubbly and he, Brico, and Cita raise their glasses in a toast.

CITA

To life, our wonderful life at the beach!

They clink glasses in a toast and then Arturo clicks a remote while Brico studies the cover of a CD Jewel Box with an image of an Old Man drinking from a mug, alone. Then the stereo plays the solemn, music of *Ars Moriendi*, from Hilmarson's *Children of Nature*.

BRICO

Ars Moriendi, The art of dying, very nice, one can imagine dying to such music.

CITA

But first one must grow old. The film is about growing old and, like King Lear, being abandoned by one's children.

During a break in the music between movement seven, *Escape*, and movement eight, *Coffin*, Brico gets up to leave.

BRICO

(Hugs Cita and kisses her on the cheek.)

Thanks for sharing the CD. It's beautiful. I'll see you in the morning. I'm wasted.

INT. DINING ROOM - MORNING

The table is set up for breakfast. Brico pads out to the kitchen and sees Arturo cutting up some melons.

ARTURO

Good morning.

BRICO

(Taking a slice of melon off the cutting board) You must have gotten up early.

ARTURO

Sit down. I don't know if we ever got to bed last night.

Brico is scanning an English language newspaper as Cita enters wearing only one of Arturo's sport shirts.

Emerging from the shower, combing her hair back, she looks dazzling. She pours herself a cup of coffee.

ARTURO (CONT'D)

Cita is thinking about taking a job with an international network, maybe as an intern in the U.S. I told her you would be the perfect person to talk to.

BRICO

Where would you like go?

CITA

Probably New York.

BRICO

I can help you there. I worked with a woman who knows everybody in the New York media market.

INSERT: BRICO'S COMPUTER SCREEN

BRICO V.O.

Constance, The trip to Italy and the travel to Slovenia to visit Mikhailic all went well. Thru my cousin, I have met an engaging journalist, Cita Tikkonen. She is a news anchor in Helsinki, fluent in four languages, and extremely telegenic. She is interested in pursuing a position in New York. Any ideas? Thanks, Brico.

BACK TO SCENE

Brico repositions the laptop on the table so that Cita and Arturo can see the draft.

BRICO

Is this what we want to say?

ARTURO

You didn't mention that she is drop dead beautiful.

(He turns to give Cita a kiss, but she dusts him off.)

BRICO

Extremely telegenic suffices.

CITA

This is good, thank you.

(MORE)

CITA (CONT'D)

Do we want to also say that I won the Aline Saarinen award two years ago for the top female news anchor in Finland?

BRICO

(He types)

Is that how you spell her name?

CITA

Yes.

ARTURO

Aline Saarinen, any relationship to the architect Eero Saarinen?

CITA

She was his wife and a news anchor in New York during the very primitive days of television.

INT. COOPERTIVO FONDI OFFICE - DAY

Dieter wears a black beret indoors with a black cable pullover. He is pretty much the whole operation at the cooperativo's office. After greeting Brico and Arturo, he takes a seat behind a cluttered desk.

DIETER

(English with German accent)

So you're looking to buy some olive oil. What kind, how much?

BRICO

Small amounts up to one ton. I understood from meeting your representative Franz at SOL that you can provide small quantities.

DIETER

Yes, that's all we can provide, small quantities.

DIETER (CONT'D)

We use only artisanal methods that yield small amounts of oil. Of course, we are happy to entertain the possibility of partnering with an important U.S. firm such as *Leone Brothers*. Would you like to taste?

Dieter goes over to a cabinet and, using the space between fingers on both hands, carries upside down eight tasting

glass to his desk. He cleverly sets them upright on the table, then he pours four different olive oils for Brico and Arturo from bottles without labels but with what looked like laboratory test numbers on pieces of white tape. The colors of oils vary from greenish yellow to light gold.

ARTURO

I like number two best and number four second.

BRICO

I like those two as well. But I give the edge to number four. So what are the varieties we are looking at?

DIETER

Actually, there are only two, Frantoia and Pendolino. I have given you two samples of each. One, an oil made from earlier harvested fruit, and the other from later harvested fruit. You have both chosen oils made from late-harvested fruit.

ARTURO

(Re-tasting)

Interesting.

DIETER

The later harvested fruit has lower total acidity levels and more developed flavor components. But there was a down side. Lower acidity levels means that the oil is more susceptible to spoilage, so that is the trade-off you must make.

LATER

Dieter, Arturo and Brico exchange business cards and Dieter gives Brico and Arturo sample bottles of the oils they tasted.

BRICO

One of us or the Leone Bros. Boston office will be in touch.

EXT. COOPERTIVO COURTYARD - DAY

Brico unlocks the Porsche and stashes the box of olive oils. Arturo belts himself in.

ARTURO

We got schooled by Dieter.

BRICO

I don't see it that way. (He turns the ignition and the engine roars.) It's just part of a steep learning curve.

INT. CAMBIO RESTAURANT (TURIN) - DAY

In the elegant, hushed interior of the Cambio, white-jacketed waiters hover at tables and the sound of a solo violin can faintly be heard over conversation and the clinking of silverware and glass.

At a table where Gretchina Visconti and Caterina Sforza sit, a waiter is ladling asparagus soup from a tureen into elegant china bowls. Another waiter wraps the neck of a chilled white wine with a thick white linen napkin and places it back in a standing ice-bucket.

CATERINA

(Spreading a soft cheese on a breadstick) So how did you leave it?

GRETCHINA

He said he would contact me on his way back. He is flying back to the U.S. out of Malpensa.

They are sitting in a red banquette near a clever pastiche on the wall showing two *putti* reading a newspaper, one wearing a pair of eyeglasses. A window behind where Gretchina sits shows Turin's busy Piazza Carignano.

CATERINA

So this was the day after you met with Oswaldo?

GRETCHINA

Yes.

CATERINA

And he knows you two are not lovers?

GRETCHINA

Yes, I explained to him about the engagement rings.

Caterina thinks about all of this, while she uses a spoon to accept an olive pit, placing it on a discard dish.

CATERINA

Your time together went well?

GRETCHINA

Yes. Lyublyana was fabulous. I fell in love with Mikhailic and his cousin Helen. His garden was like a sacred place.

CATERINA

Gretchina, that all sounds lovely.

GRETCHINA

But then he said he had to leave to feed his soul.

CATERINA

(Thinks about this,
takes a sip of wine)

Is he a refugee from the priesthood?

GRETCHINA

No, he's not religious at all.

CATERINA

He invited you to join him with his cousin at a villa in Sperlonga?

GRETCHINA

I am not sure how sincere the invitation was. He was going out the door. And I sent him an email and he didn't respond.

CATERINA

He's at the beach. Maybe he doesn't have email.

GRETCHINA

He one of those satellite modems.

CATERINA

Whatever. I don't see the conflict between your offer from Alfa Romeo and his offer to join him on the beach.

GRETCHINA

You don't?

CATERINA

And the weather in Sperlonga should be lovely this time of year.

EXT. MASSERA PATIO - DAY

Brico's bare feet are up on the patio wall as he pens in answers to a crossword. He looks up and sees Arturo and Cita in beach togs leaving the house.

ARTURO

We're heading out now.

BRICO

I'll catch up with you guys later.

INT. MASSERA WINE CELLAR - DAY.

Brico pulls the string for an overhead light and a well-stocked wine cellar comes into view. Stacked wooden wine boxes are stamped with the names of famous French and Italian estates. Brico picks out two bottles of light red.

LATER - BACK ON THE PATIO

Brico uncorks the second bottle, pours himself another glass of the light red. His computer is open and he ignores two new mails, both from olive oil vendors he had met at SOL. He takes a sip of the wine, and opens up a draft messages to Gretchina and edits the text.

INSERT - BRICO'S EMAIL

BRICO V.O.

Gretchina, In response to your email,
all I can say is I love you and I
need you. The sun is shining here,
but without you, I live my life in a
perpetual shadow. Brico

A whoosh indicates that the mail has been sent. Brico looks out to sea. He pours himself another glass of wine.

LATER

Brico pours the last of the second bottle of the Aleatico. The book, J.W. Bury's, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, is splayed open on the patio. Brico chugs the glass of the wine then turn around to lay prone on his lounge chair. His eyes close.

HOURS LATER

Brico blinks out of deep REM sleep.

CITA

(Pushing his head
back down)

Lay still. (She rubs cool, skin care cream on his red back.) You would be burnt but you had a good tanning base base and I think you will be all right.

ARTURO

(From inside, amid the sounds of the clanging of pans) Dinner in ten.

Brico is a bit gimpy standing up and walking into the house. In the kitchen area Arturo is putting pasta into a hissing pot of steamy water.

ARTURO (CONT'D)

We saw your German friend with the two kids. She approached us and asked about you. Told her you were wiped and were taking the afternoon off.

Arturo sets out plates on the dining room table. Cita arrives from the wine cellar with two bottles of red and Arturo spoons out pasta.

BRICO

These are great, as good as the ones Tia Flo used to make. (He chews on a gnocchi.) Get them in town?

ARTURO

Got them from Signora Pacelli. She made them this morning for dinner and had a few extra.

BRICO

(Spearing a gnocchi
with his fork)

The woman is a saint.

LATER

The trio finish off dinner with chilled yellow watermelon for dessert. The sugar in the melon's flesh glistens in the candlelight and Arturo pours shots of amaro.

ARTURO

This is a Ramazzotti, a little less bitter to my palate.

BRICO

So I wrote to Gretchina.

ARTURO

(To Cita)

Gretchina is woman in the olive oil ad.

(To Brico)

So what did you say?

BRICO

I basically admitted that I was a pathetic love sick-puppy. What do I have to lose at this point?

ARTURO

Your dignity, your manhood.

BRICO

I lost those a long time ago.

(He gets up)

I'm going in for a shower. Dinner was great, thanks.

LATER

In the candlelight, in the dimming light of day, Arturo and Cita each down more shots of amaro. Sitting close, facing each other, they have the legs up on each other's chair.

CITA

I can't tell if your cousin is serious or if you are serious when speaking to him?

ARTURO

He is very serious? I am half-serious.

CITA

So he is very much in love with this woman?

ARTURO

Yes. We spent time parsing emails from her, sure symptoms of the love sickness. *Amavit et amissis melius quam numquam amarentur.*

CITA

And that means?

ARTURO

It is better to have loved and lost, than to never have loved at all. It's from Saint Augustine, who spoke from experience.

INT. MASSERA'S - MORNING

Brico walks into the kitchen barefoot. There is an uncorked half bottle of red on the counter along with several pieces of stemware of various sizes in the sink. He opens up cabinets until he finds coffee, and then fires up a Bialetti. He walks out to the patio and picks up a cloth bag at threshold. Inside the bag are castagnole frites, and a note.

INSERT - NOTE

LORETTA V.O

Brico, I hope you are feeling better.
Loretta

BACK TO SCENE

Cita walks out to the patio, her hair is still wet from a shower.

CITA

Maybe we partied too hard and too long last night.

BRICO

Is Arturo still sleeping?

CITA

I am not sure he is sleeping, but he is still in bed.

BRICO

Did you see Constance's email?

CITA

No, My computer is at the motel.

BRICO

Here, take a look.
(He turns the computer around so Cita can read it.)

INSERT - CONSTANCE'S EMAIL

CONSTANCE V.O.

Brico,
If Cita comes to New York, she can avail herself of my place until she gets her feet on the ground.
Constance

BACK TO SCENE

CITA

So, this is very good?

BRICO

If nothing else you will enjoy staying at Constance's place on the Connecticut coast. It's different from this, but spectacular in its own way.

CITA

So what do you think?

BRICO

I think you have a decision to make.

Brico heads to his bedroom to change into beach togs. He bumps into Arturo who was has just showered and shaved.

BRICO (CONT'D)

What are your plans for today?

ARTURO

To rehydrate.

BRICO

I've got some good news for you and some bad news.

ARTURO

Go ahead, give me the bad news.

BRICO

Take a look at this. Rado died.

Brico passes him a copy an *International Herald Tribune* folded to show Mikhailic's obit.

INSERT-OBIT

ARTURO V.O.

Rado Mikhailic, author, artist and educator, died on Saturday night at his home in Lyublyana, Slovenia. In recent months, Mr. Mikhailic had been treated for throat cancer. At the time of his death, he was professor emeritus at the University of Lyublyana.

ARTURO

I guess it's not a big surprise. Still... So what's the good news?

BRICO

Talk to Cita.

EXT. SPERLONGA BEACH - DAY

Brico is under his umbrella, toweling off after a run along the shore. The beach is crowded. In his ear buds, he listens to music by Machaut sung by angelic boys choir. He has the Bury book in hand, but soon the book drop from his hand and it falls on blanket as his eyes close and he falls into REM sleep.

LATER

The sound of scratching in the sand awakens Brico. He opens his eyes and sees the well-developed and tanned calves of Fabrizio, the Roccomonte beach boy. He is screwing an ice bucket into the sand. Brico look up toward him quizzically.

FABRIZIO

Dai tuoi amici. (From your friends.)

Brico looks back toward the concession, where he sees two other concession boys trudging through the sand, lugging a table, chairs, and a wine bucket. Behind them, familiar figures are walking toward him, Gretchina and Agnello.

When she reaches his umbrella, Gretchina puts an arm around him and kisses him on the cheek. She then imperiously orders the beach kids to hurry up with pouring the wine and setting up the small table.

GRETCHINA

(Picking up the Brico's copy of J.F. Bury's *History of the Later Roman Empire*) And I thought he had come to Sperlonga to look at the topless women.

Agnello smiles and Gretchina strips down to a turquoise Nero Perlo two-piece.

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

(Her fingers caress
the wounds on Brico's
face.)

Bricky, did you get into a fight?

BRICO

Yeah, with the stone steps leading
up to town.

GRETCHINA

I think the steps won.

They sit around a table laden with platters of *frito misto*, gamberi, mullet and bream, all with their heads intact, a plate of raw cozze, a basket of the local bread and a plate of olives gleaming in the bright sunshine. A sweaty ice bucket holds a bottle white wine.

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

Agnello was heading to Sorrento to pick up his American girlfriend, Stim. So I thought I could hitch a ride with him.

AGNELLO

(Laughing at her
Freudian slip)

Kim!

GRETCHINA

And he said he was going to take up your offer and visit you and your cousin in Sperlonga. He asked me if I wanted to ride with him. So I thought, yes, why not? The weather should be nice there this time of year. And of course I got that very nice email from you.

AGNELLO

Kim is researching a Ph.D. dissertation on the wine and food bars of Herculaneum and Pompeii. I told her that my understanding was that most of those establishments had been closed for some time and offered to take her to the wine bars on the Riviera di Chiaia in Naples. Currently, she is looking into the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii, the series of paintings there showing young women reaching puberty being initiated into the cult of Dionysius.

GRETCHINA

So is this what your friend Stim is studying at Pompeii, initiation into the Cult of Eros?

AGNELLO

Dionysian cults.

BRICO

They're the same. Eros is the last figure painted in the murals at the villa.

AGNELLO

Her primary study is the food and wine sold by street vendors in Pompeii and Herculaneum.

BRICO

(Takes a sip of wine.)

Still related to Eros. Both Dionysius and Eros are called *Eleutherios*, the liberator.

LATER

The sun's declination sprays colors onto the blue sky.

AGNELLO

I am going to have decline your offer to stay overnight. I need to get to Sorrento to meet Kim tonight. I'll catch up with you on our return.

GRETCHINA

And I look forward to meeting this woman who is an expert on the erotic lives of Roman virgins.

Brico and Arturo smile.

LATER

Gretchina slips on Brico's yellow Montauk tee shirt.

GRETCHINA

(Observing Brico's facial wounds, five-day growth and dark tan)

So Bricky, you have changed from being a businessman in Verona, to being a beach bum in a very short time.

BRICO

It's true.

She puts her sunglasses in a case, and then lies next to him putting her head on his chest. She closes her eyes and Brico rubs her temples.

BRICO (CONT'D)

You are getting sleepy. Maybe we should go up to the house.

GRETCHINA

But first I must tell you something.

BRICO

Okay.

GRETCHINA

I can only stay here for five days.

BRICO

I am just happy you could come.

EXT. TOWN OF SPERLONGA - EVENING

Brico and Gretchina walk through town, passing other pedestrians carrying baguettes and bottles of wine in knit bags. They reach the stairs leading up to the Massera place and Brico takes a misstep.

GRETCHINA

(Grabbing his arm to steady him)

No more fighting with the steps!

BRICO

I have some bad news.

GRETCHINA

What's that?

BRICO

I saw in the newspaper that Rado had died.

GRETCHINA

That is very sad.

They are silent while climbing the rest of the way up the steps. When they reach the landing outside the Massera house, Brico recites a poems.

BRICO

This is what Mikhailic called a nursery rhyme for adults."Because I could not stop for Death, He kindly stopped for me. The carriage held but just ourselves and immortality."

GRETCHINA

That's nice, but sad.

BRICO

That's Emily Dickenson.

INT. MASSARA'S - NIGHT

The door is unlocked when Brico pushes the door open. It is darkish inside and Brico flips on a set of overhead spots that reflect of the sheen of the harpsichord, light up ochres and greens of Isfahan rug in the living room, and, in the kitchen area, a huge fruit basket on the kitchen table.

GRETCHINA

(Finding her bag just
inside the door where
Arturo had put it)

This is fabulous. Looks like a Marco
Castelletti house.

BRICO

Could be, there's an *Italian
Architectural Digest* in one of the
bookcases that features the house
design.

GRETCHINA

So you and your cousin are renting
it?

BRICO

Actually not. Let's wash up, get
something to drink and we can talk
about it.

EXT. BRICO'S BALCONY - NIGHT

Brico brings a bottle of *acqua minerale* to the balcony off his bedroom. A candle burns in a squat Tiffany candle holder. Waiting for Gretchina, he flips through *The Italian Lakes*. He stops reading when he sees her walk out from the bedroom, wearing a dark green *Cabins in the Sky* tee shirt.

GRETCHINA

So that is a very beautiful bathroom
with all the black marble. But what
is that strange column with the head
and private parts of a man?

BRICO

It's a Herm, a good luck charm that
wealthy Romans put in their atria so
guests could rub its genitalia for
good luck and fertility.

GRETCHINA

I did not touch it! So you did not
answer my question about how you and
your cousin found this place.

BRICO

As I understand it, back in the twenties, my great-grandfather helped out Salvatore Massera by taking in his wife and kids, while Sal was serving a sentence at a federal pen.

GRETCHINA

Why was he sent to prison?

BRICO

For doing what his son and grandson did and still do, sell wine and booze. So times change, in those days it was called bootlegging and if you were caught, you went to jail. Today, you get to own a place like this. What I remember was seeing old man Massera, with tears running down his face, telling the story years after of how my great-grandmother Maria baked a pannetone for Salvatore Massera at Christmas every year he was locked up.

GRETCHINA

So your family is like the family in the movie *The Godfather*.

BRICO

Oh yeah. Corleones, Leones, there's little difference.

A couple stars hang over the horizon, still lit with dark reds and pinkish gray light.

BRICO (CONT'D)

(Noticing Gretchina was looking sleepy.) Do you want to head inside?

GRETCHINA

Not yet, but I am a little cold. Are there extra blankets?

BRICO

I'll get you one.

LATER

Brico re-emerges from inside with a large black quilt emblazoned with the emblem of a Vermouth producer and he lays it on Gretchina's lap. She puts her legs up on his chair to share the warmth of the blanket.

GRETCHINA

How long do you intend to spend here?

BRICO

Arturo and I are wrapping up our market research and there are only a couple tasks remaining, one of which was a farewell to Sperlonga party that Arturo is planning to mark our departure. All of which should conclude in a week at the most.

Gretchina, who had been rubbing Brico's legs under the blanket, now closes her eyes and her head falls over on her shoulders. Brico blows out the candle, lifts Gretchina off her chair and carries her to the bedroom, tucking her in. Her eyes opened momentarily when her head hits the pillow.

GRETCHINA

Grazie. (She pulls up the blanket to cover her shoulders)

BRICO

No, thank you. (He undresses and gets into bed with her, then clicks off the light on bed table.)

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Arturo is breakfasting on bread, cheese and fresh Abate pears. Brico enters the room wearing only cargo shorts and a white, sleeveless, tee shirt. He pours himself a cup of Joe.

ARTURO

So did you and Gretchina hook up yesterday?

BRICO

She's still sleeping.

ARTURO

Have to say I was shocked when she appeared at the door.

BRICO

Not as shocked as I was when she appeared on the beach.

Arturo cuts a fresh fig in half while he begins to tell Brico how he had spent the previous evening with the Finnish tour group in Terracina at a restaurant called *Centosedici*.

ARTURO

I had grilled Branzino.
(MORE)

ARTURO (CONT'D)

The Finns all had pizza. Said they couldn't get good pizza in Finland.

BRICO

Where's Cita?

ARTURO

There was a retired couple from the TV station at the dinner and she talked to them about the opportunity she might have in New York. Then they all went back to their hotel to continue the conversation.

Brico helps himself to the cheese and fig on Arturo plate.

ARTURO (CONT'D)

(Looking at an email)

Looks like Caterina Strozzi is going to be able to join us.

BRICO

Who's she?

ARTURO

She's a soprano I worked with in Boston who lives in Rome. She is under contract to do an opera in Warsaw in the spring, so it wasn't clear that she could come, but her voice coach's parents live in Terracina.

BRICO

And where are we going with that?

ARTURO

Well, we have Signor Pacelli, you met him. He used to work in the pit at San Carlo. I thought we could get a little recital going.

Gretchina enters. Brico and Arturo rise to greet her.

BRICO

Gretchina, this my cousin Arturo. You met him briefly yesterday.

GRETCHINA

(After giving Brico a good morning kiss)

Buona mattina, Arturo.

ARTURO

Buona mattina. Glad you could make it down here.

GRETCHINA

So you are the one who sent Brico the video showing me half-naked?

ARTURO

Yeah, I guess.

Gretchina helps herself to the cheese and fig on Arturo plate.

GRETCHINA

Then maybe I have you to thank for meeting your cousin.

ARTURO

Do you want breakfast?

GRETCHINA

No. I am alright with the coffee for now, but thank you.

She continues to nibble from Arturo's plate.

EXT. SPERLONGA BEACH - DAY

Under a beach umbrella, Gretchina sunbathes on a lounge, listening to Machaut's *Magnificat* through earplugs. Brico is thumbing through a copy *Uomo Moderno* featuring bathing togs. Suddenly, Gretchina grabs his hand and pulls him off the blanket. They head toward the water and walk across rippled, muddy sand. When they are ankle-deep, she stops.

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

Maybe the water is too cold.

BRICO

As the great American philosopher Vince Lombardi said, cold is just a state of mind.

Brico runs toward the incoming waves, splashing, until he plunges into the dark green and white netting of a wave belly.

EXT. UNDERWATER SHOT - DAY

Brico strokes out to sea underwater in the greenish, water-filtered sunlight.

ON SHORE

Gretchina splashes some water on her legs, and decides the water is too cold to go in.

She scans the waves looking for Brico.

BACK TO UNDERWATER SHOT

In greenish sea water, Brico is struggling.

BACK TO ON SHORE

Gretchina looks around. There are no lifeguards on the beach.

BRICO'S POV

Looking up through the water, the sunlight is very dim.

EXT. TYRHENNIAN SEA - DAY - TELESCOPIC

Something pops out of the water about thirty meters out. A figure bodysurfs on top of a wave. It is Brico spouting water like a whale. He steps on shore dripping and pushes his hair back off his forehead.

GRETCHINA

Bricky, you scared me. Why did you swim so far out.

BRICO

The other day, when I went swimming, I cramped up. Today I felt I was swimming inside a warm, protective cocoon. It felt really good and I didn't want it to stop.

EXT. BRICO'S UMBRELLA - DAY

Brico is shaking his hair dry with a towel. Gretchina is penciling in an answer to an Italian magazine crossword.

GRETCHINA

So maybe you know the answer, the clue is "*Arbitro antic del sesso.*"

BRICO

How many spaces?

GRETCHINA

Eight.

BRICO

And *sesso* means sex?"

GRETCHINA

Yes, eroticism.

BRICO

What comes to mind is Petronius
Arbiter who wrote the Satyricon, but
Petronius is nine letters.

GRETCHINA

No that's good. (She pencils in P-E-T-
R-O-N-I-O.) And esistenziale vino is
Est, Est, Est.

Finished with the puzzle, Gretchina lays face down on the lounge, un-hooking her bikini top, and Brico applies tanning lotion to her back. When he is finished, he tosses the sun tan lotion back into his bag. He can hear, in the background the thumps and yells of beach futbol.

INT. ROCCOMONTE CONCESSION - DAY

Brico waits in line. Two women in red bikinis speak a Slavic language to themselves and perfect Italian to the concession staff. Brico orders several salads and plates of seafood, paying with crumpled Euro notes.

EXT. BRICO'S UMBRELLA - DAY

A beach boy screws a wine bucket into the sand and then twists a bottle of a light red in an ice bucket. He places small rattan trays under the umbrella between Brico and Gretchina's lounges.

BEACH BOY

Tutti Bene?

GRETCHINA

Perfetto, signor.

A small pile of herbs and spices muddies a shallow, square olive oil dish with a hand painted view of Sperlonga on its bottom. There is a similar dish that holds wrinkled, dried-cured black olives. A wire basket was piled tall with deep-fried gamberi, branzino, and squid.

Slices of a garlic-sesame ciabatta lay in a wicker basket next to a carafe of olive oil. In a corner of the tray is a bowl of *rotelli* in a basil pesto sauce. They eat off green plates with hand-painted illustrations of the town of Sperlonga. Brico dishes out more *pasta al pesto*.

BRICO

There is a cottage not far from here
where my great-grandparents lived
before immigrating to America.

(MORE)

BRICO (CONT'D)

I was planning to visit it with Arturo, but he suggested perhaps you might like to see it. We can stay there for a night or two.

Listening, Gretchina breaks off a piece of branzino with the heel of her fork.

BRICO (CONT'D)

Some years back, my Uncle Sal on his honeymoon purchased the cottage for his father. We thought it was the locale where my bisnonno was hiding out to avoid the being drafted, but it turned out he was fleeing the family members of his jilted fiancée. We rented the cottage to a series of farmers until Arturo got interested in fixing up the place for his MFA Thesis.

GRETCHINA

So this cottage is very *primativo*?

BRICO

Arturo has made some improvements over the past few years, but yeah, I understand it is still quite rustic.

GRETCHINA

You know that I only have a few days here before heading back to Torino?

BRICO

We could do one or two nights.

GRETCHINA

Maybe one night.

BRICO

We'll leave tomorrow morning and pack a picnic lunch.

EXT. MASSERA PATIO - DAY

Cita is doing yoga on the patio in a pink spandex bodysuit. Attila watches her with interest from his perch on the wall. Arturo is tapping keys on his computer.

ARTURO

So you got a response from Brico's contact in New York?

CITA

Yes. It was a very nice email. She said I could stay with her while I got set up in New York.

ARTURO

Are we skipping the beach today?

CITA

I think so. I can work on my tan here on the patio. I'm having a late lunch with Elli later. Our talk went well last night. Do you have a recommendation of a restaurant in town where we can meet?

ARTURO

How about here? We can do some more *Quatro Formaggio*. The cat would like that.

EXT. SHORELINE - AFTERNOON.

Gray clouds and a sprinkle of rain has caused most sunbathers to leave their umbrellas and head back into town. Brico and Gretchina walk holding hands toward the end of the beach in the direction of the Grotto of Tiberius, the ruins of the Roman Emperor's shore villa.

BRICO

(Pointing ahead)

This is the grotto of Tiberius. Let's see what's going on in there.

He leads Gretchina over crusty sand exposed by the receding tide. The nearby beach is empty except for shore birds and a lone figure using a metal detector to search for coins in the sand. Brico and Gretchina pass a flimsy wooden slat fence and they enter the two thousand year-old playground of a Roman emperor.

INT. GROTTO OF TIBERIUS - DAY

The walk on a rock ledge circling the pool of seawater.

BRICO (CONT'D)

When Tiberius went swimming, he had young boys that he called his little fishes perform felatio on him. This was the dining area. When they discovered the grotto in the sixties, it was filled with statuary.

They sidle further along the ledge and find another recessed cove.

BRICO (CONT'D)

There was a statue here of Odysseus blinding Polyphemus. This was the guest bedroom area.

GRETCHINA

They had beds in here?

BRICO

The Romans had couch-beds called *lecti*.

Gretchina squeezes his hand and they look into each other's eyes. Brico pushes Gretchina's wet hair off her forehead with his fingertips and kisses her on the mouth, pressing against her while she leans against the wet rock wall.

GRETCHINA

This is a public place, Bricky. Somebody could walk in here.

BRICO

Our defense would be we were playing the roles of Tiberio's house guests.

She pulls him toward her and put her lips on his mouth. Brico kicks off his shorts and Gretchina grabs his hard penis, while Brico's hand explores under the fabric of her bikini bottom. Her hands grip his back and pull him toward her. Brico pulls down her bikini bottom until it is raveled around her ankles. She kicks it onto his shorts.

He leans over her and probes between her legs with his hand. She searches for his erect penis, grabs it and positions it to slip inside her.

He puts his mouth on hers and after flipping her bikini top up, exposes her breasts. Hands on her waist he clasped their bodies together. Gretchina moans, *Bricky, Bricky, Bricky*. When it was over, they stood in place motionless against each other, deep breathing in cadence, feeling the sweet aftershocks of aerobic, erotic sex, endorphins coursing through their lower bodies like *petite orgasmes*. After a minute or so, Gretchina starts rubbing the back of his neck and when Brico pulls away, he leaves an opalescent drop of semen dangling off her pubic hair.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE GROTTO - DAY

They emerge into sunlight. Mist arises from the ground. A troop of green and tan uniformed Italian girl scouts are about to enter the grotto. The troop leader, a woman about thirty, reads from a notepad.

TROOP LEADER

Mascheroni servito da portalampada.
(Grotesque masks served as
lampholders.)

The scouts at the front and the back of the line carry miner's lights and one girl in the middle of the line carries a first-aid kit and wears a Red Cross vest.

GIRL SCOUTS

(In sing-song)
Buon giorno, signor e signora.

GRETCHINA

Buon giorno, giovenetti.

Brico lifts an eyebrow as the girls pass to enter the grotto.

EXT. MASSERA PATIO - EVENING

Cita, Arturo and Elli are engaged in conversation, which Brico and Gretchina hear while climbing the stairs to the Massera landing. When they arrive on the patio, Arturo stands up behind the table laden with mostly empty bowls of food, wine glasses and dinner plates to make introductions.

ARTURO

Cita, Elli, this is my cousin Brico
and his friend Gretchina.

CITA

So you will join us?

ARTURO

You have to try these farfaletti
that Signora Pacelli made for us.

GRETCHINA

We are so messy from the sand and
the rain. (She pushes some strands
of wet hair back from her forehead.)
Perhaps we should clean up first.

ELII

You are both enchantingly deshabelle,
please stay. (To Brico) Cita is
excited about the opportunity to
move to New York.

BRICO

Constance is the perfect person to
provide her entre into the New York
media market. She knows everybody
whose anybody.

GRETCHINA

Brico is like the traveling man, who knows a woman everywhere he goes all across the world. I'm his Italian girl.

BRICO

Gretchina is my Northern Italian girl who keeps her boyfriend warm at night.

GRETCHINA

Does it say that in the song?

ARTURO

No.

GRETCHINA

(To Brico) Why did you say that?

ARTURO

It's a different song.

ELLI

(Smiles, but changes the subject)

Brico, how well do you know the woman who has offered to sponsor Cita in New York?

BRICO

I've known her professionally for four or five years.

ELLI

So you worked together?

BRICO

She is a freelancer and covered several events that I organized.

ELLI

Have you seen her recently?

BRICO

I saw her at an event the night before I left New York. We may get together on July 4th for a yacht club regatta on Long Island Sound.

ELLI

Nice.

LATER

It is darker outside now and candles flicker atop the outdoor table.

ELLI (CONT'D)

We are taking a bus to Monte Cassino tomorrow. I understand that they still have a dress code there. Women have to cover their arms and shoulders and men have to wear long pants.

ARTURO

I guess you would not want to offend the other religious pilgrims arriving in air conditioned tourist buses.

BRICO

You should find it rewarding there, despite Arturo's sarcasm. It's been a sacred place for over two thousand years, even before Benedict arrived. And the monastery also has the secondary significance as the site of the battle of Cassino in World War Two, which exceeded even the *Iliad* in its bloodiness.

ARTURO

Don't we all want to go there now? (He laughs.)

Gretchina excuses herself. She embraces Elli who stands to say goodbye and they kiss each other on the cheek. Arturo and Cita then offer to walk Elli back to her motel on the other side of the beach. Brico is left alone with a glass of wine and a stunning view of the sea at night.

INT. BRICO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brico is pleased to see that the lights are still on in the bedroom. Gretchina is wearing reading glasses, reading *Cotto e mangiato*, Cooked and Eaten, a cookbook written by a woman with an Italian T.V. show.

BRICO

You are getting into cooking?

GRETCHINA

After I met the food buyer at La Rinascente on the day you left, she took me to her manager who gave me a set of Il Paderno cookware.

BRICO

Cool.

(MORE)

BRICO (CONT'D)

So you have a cookbook and luxury cookware. Does that mean you are going to buy some groceries?

GRETCHINA

(Archly) You are just going to have to wait and see, Mr. Leone.

EXT. SHORELINE - DAY

Cita and Gretchina walk the beach together in the morning mist, cradling cups of fresh-brewed Joe. They carry their sandals as they walk barefoot in the surf.

CITA

The olive oil video you made generated a lot of interest among the Finnish community.

GRETCHINA

The men just liked seeing half-naked.

CITA

No, it was more than that, the beach, the sunrise, the music.

GRETCHINA

What do you think of Mister Brico Leone?

CITA

He's helping me find a position in New York.

GRETCHINA

Apart from that?

CITA

Elli thought you and Brico were a great couple.

GRETCHINA

She did?

CITA

She said you were strong enough to handle his personality and that he was confident enough to handle your success.

LATER

As Gretchina and Cita walk up the steps to the Massera place, they hear Signor Pacelli practicing his violin.

GRETCHINA

So I understand you are married.

CITA

Yes. My husband was down here for a couple days before you arrived.

GRETCHINA

It is maybe none of my business, but what about your relationship with Arturo.

CITA

My husband and I like and respect each other, but we have any open marriage. He knows about Arturo and played *futbal* on the beach with him.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The breakfast table hold slices of Napoletano Verde melon, a melon with a dark green husk and pale yellow flesh, a ciabatta, a quarter wheel of Bel Paese, and a plate of black oil-cured olives. Brico and Arturo are studying maps when Cita and Gretchina come in through the front door.

ARTURO

While you two visit the ancestral Leone cottage, Cita and I plan to go to the *Ganymede* restaurant for a seafood dinner that I had promised her. I know the chef there, Sabato DiPietro, from an earlier visit to the area. We will eat in the kitchen watching the chef prepare our meal.

CITA

Yes, we are going to get grilled Branzino with the heads still on. He is obsessed with eating fish with the heads on.

ARTURO

You need to look at their eyes to tell if the fish is fresh.

GRETCHINA

But you can't tell after the fish is cooked.

ARTURO

They show you the fish before they cook it. It keeps the fish moister and it tastes better.

BRICO

I am staying out of this one.

ARTURO

Later this morning, I'll call Roberto Falcone to let him that you two are coming.

BRICO

Who is he?

ARTURO

Roberto is the latest in long list of Falcone's who tend the property. He can help you with the generator, a real piece of shit, and will bring you clean towels and sheets.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE ROAD - DAY - TRAVELING

Brico is testing the Porsche's gearbox, negotiating the curves and switchbacks that lead through highlands terraced with olive groves overlooking the sea. Closer in Gretchina, hair blowing in the wind, eyes protected by sunglasses, takes in the beauty of the landscape, occasionally turning around to fiddle with her bag in the back to get a bottle of water or tanning lotion. Brico turns onto a rutted gravel road. Gretchina waves to an old farmer dressed in black, driving a wooden mule cart laden with ripe red tomatoes. The old guy stares back at the sleek 911 as it drives past him and his bored animal. At the top a rise, there is a sign along the side of the road.

IMBERT SIGN

Reads *XIII Sec* and points to a footpath that leads to a small stone oratory.

BACK TO SCENE

GRETCHINA

We might want to check that out later.

BRICO

Do you want to stop now?

GRETCHINA

No, Let's walk there later.

The Leone cottage is about a half kilometer away on a rise to the right. There are fields of green on the hillside to the left in the distance. The tires spit gravel as the car crunches to a stop. There is almost total silence here, except for the tweets of small birds.

BRICO

Buying this place is the most extravagant and impulsive thing my Uncle Sal ever did. While visiting the area during his honeymoon he found himself at dinner with his contacts for his trip, a third cousin who lived in Formia, who dabbled in local politics and knew the current owner of the cottage, Gaetano Piantadosi, who was using it as a barn for sheep.

Brico is at the front door trying the padlock with the key Arturo had given him.

BRICO (CONT'D)

When Sal got back, he convinced my dad, and my Uncle Lou to chip in to buy the property. The exchange rate at the time was unbelievable and they got it for like five thousand dollars. The caretaker was still keeping animals in the place until Arturo began renovating five-six years ago.

He tugs on the lock and with a clang it separates from the shank and he lifts it off the hasp. The door swings open to a cool interior, a large, sparsely furnished room with plank flooring, low-beamed ceiling and a fireplace. Brico and Gretchina enter with their bags. A mantelpiece has grinning gargoyles holding bunches of grapes in tiny squirrel-like hands. A nineteenth century armoire stands next to a rope bed with a mattress.

GRETCHINA

(Hanging a blouse in the armoire.)

I like this place, reminds me of the rustic cabins my father and I stayed at while skiing in the Alps.

EXT. BACK OF THE CABIN THE CABIN - DAY

Brico and Gretchina sit at an outdoor table on wooden Adirondack chairs. A flock of goats graze on a distant hillside adjacent to a small farmhouse, where wispy smoke from a stove spirals then disappears into the air.

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

(Flipping through Arturo's thesis)

Your ancestors were very attractive.

BRICO

Evidently my great-grandmother was a hot number in her day. My great-grandfather left his betrothed at the altar to elope with her.

GRETCHINA

And your great grandfather was a very handsome man. (She looks at Brico for a resemblance)

BRICO

A pretty good guy too.

GRETCHINA

You told me how he took in the wife of Massera.

BRICO

I have a his trophy of his for winning a pinochle at a parish tournament in the thirties in Boston, and even his first communion cross from *Sancta Famiglia* church in Fondi from 1905.

GRETCHINA

So your family was religious?

BRICO

They shared the cultural norms of their time.

Gretchina looks around at the rustic countryside and says she is going to take a walk and look for wildflowers. She leaves.

INT. CABIN'S KITCHEN - DAY

Brico opens up a bottle of red wine on the dining table and pours it into a juice glass. While surveying the interior of the house, he stops at the bookcase next to the fireplace where he finds familiar texts on the top shelf, Abelard's *Historia calamitatum*, the Loeb Library edition of Tertullian's *De Spectaculis*, and Hippolyte Delahayes's *Les legende hagiographique*. He opens it up to the bookmarked pages dedicated to Saint Agatha.

INSERT - SAINT AGATHA'S STORY

BRICO V.O.

Agatha was arrested as a Christian, tortured and sent to a brothel to be mistreated.

She suffered a month of rape, assault,
was stretched on the rack, and had
her breasts cut off with pincers.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE COTTAGE - DAY

A small, rusty three-wheeled vehicle struggles up the slight
rise to the cottage and parks next to the sleek Porsche.
There is a knock on the door.

FALCONE

Buon giorno, Brico. I am Roberto
Falcone. Arturo called me and said
you were coming.

Falcone has grey stubble and leathery face that evidences a
lifetime of working out-of-doors. He carries a stack of bed
linens and towels inside and places them on the bed.

EXT. GENERATOR ENCLOSURE - DAY

Brico unlocks the steel mesh door to generator enclosure. A
small internal combustion engine is connected to an electrical
generator, a row of three batteries and a power inverter.
Brico kneels next to the generator, checks the gas and oil
levels and connects a wire to the spark plug.

BRICO

Let see if we can get this bad boy
started.

He pumps a primer, and then pulls the starter cord. The
flywheel spins ineffectively.

BRICO (CONT'D)

Arturo was right, this a piece of
shit.

Roberto, saying nothing, kneels on the ground next to the
generator and, without a wrench, unscrews the spark plug
with his bare hands. With a pocketknife he scrapes and gaps
the plug, then re-screws it into the motor. He nods to Brico
to give it another try. Brico whips out the starter chord
and the motor putt-putts to a start.

ROBERTO

You need anything else?

BRICO

No. We're good right now.

ROBERTO

Bene.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Brico walks down a gravel road, where white wildflowers sprout between the tall grasses that surround olive trees.

INSERT SIGNPOST

Has an icon of a church and reads: *XIIIth Sec. 100 m.*

BACK TO SCENE

Brico sees Gretchina sitting on the ground outside the oratory with a glass of wine. Nearby there is what looks like a new grave marked by a wooden cross. A brass medallion secured on the cross carries an inscription in Latin: *Viator, vina voluptate sicut vinum dum licet, ubi sum.*

GRETCHINA

Brico, what does that say?

BRICO

It says, traveler, drink your wine with pleasure while you can as there is no wine where I am.

Gretchina considers the message from the other side.

GRETCHINA

I do not believe in these things. Still, I would like to light some candles.

INT. SMALL ROMANESQUE ORATORY - DAY

There is a relief of a roman cross on one wall and underneath it, a stone shelf with two votive candles in small red glass candleholders and a small bunch of dried flowers. Affixed to the wall under the cross, there is an oval medallion with a photograph of a handsome young man with a mustache. Brico lights two candles and drops a couple Euro coins into the offering box. Gretchina studies the human being represented in the medallion and, she blesses herself.

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

Do you think he is the one who is buried outside?

BRICO

Could be. Over seven centuries, probably hundreds of now dead human beings used the oratory to pray.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Brico and Gretchina make small talk walking back to the cottage.

BRICO (CONT'D)

With Roberto's help, I was able to start the generator

GRETCHINA

That is a good thing, especially for dinner.

BRICO

And we can have a concert of Caruso and Melba with our humble bread and cheese meal.

GRETCHINA

This feels right being here. What is it, the fresh air, the solitude?

BRICO

Maybe it's about going back a hundred years to a simpler time.

GRETCHINA

I noticed in Arturo's book that there were dirt floors until recently and they kept the animals inside.

BRICO

They had to protect the animals from thieves and predators.

GRETCHINA

So the people slept with the animals?

BRICO

Sure. Think about the Christian nativity story, the stable at Bethlehem. Things hadn't changed that much here in two millennia.

GRETCHINA

(She stops in her tracks.)
We don't have many glasses. Maybe we should go back and get the glass I left on the grave.

BRICO

Don't worry about. I think we have enough and we could always use coffee cups.

INT. CABIN KITCHEN - DAY

There is an old-fashioned round light fixture glowing dimly over the stove, where a pot of water is coming to a boil. The the boil turn to a hiss and then the water turns white when Gretchina dumps a bag of gnocchi into the water.

BRICO

What happened to our simple bread
and cheese supper?

GRETCHINA

I thought that since it has all been
about me since I came to Sperlonga,
I would do something for you and
make you pasta.

A scratchy recording of Caruso singing Colline's aria *Vecchia Zimarra* from *La Boheme* plays on the victrola.

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

It's a sundried tomato, dry cured
olive and pignoli pesto sauce from
Adrianna, the food buyer at *La
Rinascence*. You remember the day you
left me in Milan? I had a meeting
with her promoting Chiarmonte
products. I told her about you leaving
and she gave me this jar of pesto as
a gift for you. She was sure that we
would get together again.

Gretchina gets up to move the record player needle to play
the aria *Vecchia Zimarra* again.

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

How did you know this was one of my
favorites?

BRICO

I didn't know.

GRETCHINA

Most arias are about love and sex,
but in this one a philosopher gives
up his most valuable possession, his
overcoat, to buy medicine for a dying
woman. Even at Saint Agnes, they
taught us the story, how when the
basso could not continue in Act IV
of *Boheme*, Caruso sang the aria for
him. For a tenor to sing basso is
not so hard, but to sing an aria in
an opera house with an audience, you
have to be a great maestro.

Waiting for the end of the aria, she conjures up a basso voice, singing the end of the aria as a duet with Caruso.

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

Addio, fedele amico mio. Addio.
Addio. (Goodbye my faithful friend,
 goodbye, goodbye)

She smiles seeing the astonished look on Brico's face.

BRICO

That was pretty great.

GRETCHINA

Girls have a lot of time on their hands at a convent school and pick up a lot of silly tricks.

INT. COTTAGE BEDROOM - EVENING

Gretchina and Brico sit on the floor leaning against the bed. Through the open back door, there is a lonely night landscape in clear relief in the moonlight. A white candle burns in a straw-covered wine bottle.

BRICO

I wonder if Filippo and Maria had their futures plotted out when they were huddled in this hut, maybe burning olive wood in the fireplace like we are doing, waiting for passage to America to escape the wrath of Filippo's jilted fiancé's relatives.

GRETCHINA

I think from the story you told me, they were not thinking that far ahead.

BRICO

They certainly could not have guessed that a great-grandson of theirs would be staying here almost a century later.

GRETCHINA

I don't think so.

BRICO

And staying here with a goddess...

Brico combs her hair back off her neck with his fingers and plants a lingering kiss there and then brushes his lips up to her ears. She arches her neck and sighs.

INT. KITCHEN AREA OF CABIN - MORNING

Brico glances at a note on the kitchen table.

INSERT - GRETCHINA'S NOTE

GRETCHINA V.O.

B, I went out for a walk.

EXT. OUTDOOR SHOWER - MORNING

The shower is enclosed by a lattice frame. Brico's head under a sunflower sized shower head. The water is cold and he shivers. Birds circle above, cawing.

INT. KITCHEN AREA OF CABIN - MORNING

Brico enters the house, a bath towel around his waist. Gretchina, who has recently returned is sitting at the kitchen table.

GRETCHINA

So the shower works?

BRICO

Yeah, But I forgot to turn the water heater on last night so I got hot water only at the end.

GRETCHINA

I walked down to the little church and saw that the glass that I put on the grave was gone.

BRICO

So we are not as alone up here as we thought.

GRETCHINA

Should we be frightened?

LATER

Brico stands by the stove, measuring coffee into a simmering pot of water. Gretchina is setting out breakfast on the table, a loaf of bread, a hunk of the Bel Paese cheese, and a wedge of melon. He carefully decants the coffee into mugs. The back door is open letting in a shaft of morning sun, and the lilting trills of bird songs.

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

Tell me more about your life in New York. Cita was very happy about the contact you arranged for her. So you know a lot of important people?

BRICO

I knew a lot of bureaucrats who thought they were important people.

GRETCHINA

This woman you arranged to meet Cita in New York, she is an important person?

BRICO

Constance is a good person. I'd like you to meet her.

GRETCHINA

But you are going back to Boston, not New York?

BRICO

Constance invited me to a Yacht Club regatta on Long Island Sound this summer. We could drive down ninety-five to Cos Cob where she lives.

GRETCHINA

Do you remember when we left Mikhailic's and we talked about the scenic road through the Soca Valley? I said it was scenic road to nowhere and you said it could be a road to wherever we it to go. So where do we want this road to go?

BRICO

After lunch in Cividale, I said we should go and pick out an engagement ring at the jewelers across the square and I meant it.

GRETCHINA

There is more to this than buying bling. I have my contract with Alfa-Romeo. You have some kind of deal with your family business

BRICO

I have eight month's severance pay left. My place in Cohasset is paid for. Now that SOL is over the olive oil project will be less demanding on my time. You have an outstanding opportunity in Turin which in no way prevents us from doing what we want to do in terms of our relationship.

Two small songbirds fly into the cottage through the open back door chirping loudly, chasing each other in a circular blur, but they fly out quickly.

BRICO (CONT'D)

If you can postpone your Torino trip for a day or two we can spend another couple days together visiting Peter, the Australian guy from the Chiarmonte reception, along with his aunt and uncle. They make the best olive oil I've had on this trip. After that I can drive you to Torino. We can drive up the coast, stop in Portofino.

GRETCHINA

Have lunch at *U Batti*? I love their *scampi al segreto*.

BRICO

(Has no clue about *U Batti*)

Absolutely.

INT. MASSERA KITCHEN - DAY

Caterina chews on a breadsticks and sips red vino while standing by the stove. It is lunchtime and guests are assembling in the Massera dining room. Bottles of the artisanal olive oil samples stand on the counter along with a tray of floured fresh pasta. Caterina and Kim, who has beautiful blue doe-eyes and a sweet southern U.S. accent, stand over a steaming pot of water and a pan of sauce.

CATERINA

Everybody in Italy has their own recipe for carbonara, but there is a lot of misunderstanding about this dish. (She tosses fresh fettuccini into a pot of hissing water.) It is a simple dish, pasta, oil, parmigiano, pancetta, herbs and a little egg, but it is not a poor man dish. Many people think so because the *carbonari* were revolutionaries, but they were aristocrats and bourgeoisie. The one mistake people make is to use cream, which was too difficult to handle in the cities in those days, so I never use cream with this dish.

KIM

Really, see I would use cream.

(MORE)

KIM (CONT'D)

Italians have been eating versions of carbonara, pasta with pork, oil and cheese since the time of the Middle Ages and that the association with the nineteenth century revolutionaries is a patriotic myth. And where is your family from?

CATERINA

Calabria.

KIM

Ah, I see. (She lifts an eyebrow) The cream integrates the flavors from the cheese and the pancetta.

CATERINA

Maybe you want to make the sauce? (She offers Kim the wooden spoon.)

KIM

No, no. You are doing great. Just put in some cream.

CATERINA

Ar-tu-ro! (She trills in a loud operatic soprano.) I need another glass of *vi-no!* *Su-bi-to!*

INT. LEONE COTTAGE BEDROOM - DAY

With bright sun pouring through the windows, Brico and Gretchina strip the bed, pack, and clean up the cottage. Gretchina moves outside with a bottle of red.

EXT. BACK OF COTTAGE - DAY

Brico and Gretchina sit on wooden Adirondack chairs surveying the sunny landscape of rocky grasslands and grey-green olive groves on the surrounding hills where sheep graze.

GRETCHINA

This was very nice and as when we left Rado in Lyublyana, I feel a bit sad.

BRICO

Why?

GRETCHINA

I feel that here I had a chance to visit with you in a good way and with the spirit of your *bisnonno* and *bisnonna*.

BRICO

I felt that too. We can always come back.

GRETCHINA

Of course we can. But let's have one more glass of wine before we leave.

BRICO

Okay, one more, but we don't want to be late for Arturo's party.

(He raises his glass
in a toast.)

To Bianca and Filippo!

EXT. POV FROM OUT AT SEA - NIGHT - TELESCOPIC

From out at sea, the town of Sperlonga on top of the cliff glitters jewel-like. Closer in, the gaily lit patio of the Massera place with a well-dressed crowd, milling and conversing comes into view.

EXT. MASSERA PATIO - NIGHT

Gennaro Tondi wears a black pressed silk Gucci suit jacket and loose tan silk twill slacks with his arm around the waist of his wife, Mirella. They chat with Arturo near a bar manned by a beautiful redhead in a black sequined dress, who is uncorking a bottle of red wine. Timo and Marya look on, a bit bewildered by the luxury of Massera place. Cita explains to them how Brico and Arturo secured it for a month.

CITA

Their great-grandparents helped out a gangster's family while he was in prison.

Arturo is huddled with Gennaro and his wife.

ARTURO

That's Gretchina over there by the door talking with the Caterina Strozzi, who will be doing a short recital later.

GENNARO

Good-looking crowd you have here.

Gennaro's eyes pan the assembled guests and he takes a sip of red wine. Then his eyes go back to Gretchina and linger there. At a table, Arno Principe uncases his Amati, sticks it under his chin, plucks a couple string and then turns the tuning pegs and starts bowing the instrument.

ARTURO

(Getting the attention of the assembled partiers on the patio) During my stay here, I've had the good luck of meeting neighbors who have become friends. I am speaking of Mr. Gennaro Tondi, film actor and pizzaiolo. His wife, Mirella, assured me upon my arrival, that we would be enjoying a string of beautiful summer-like days and we have.

Gennaro, grinning, leads the applause for his wife.

ARTURO (CONT'D)

Equally important has been the friendship of Carmella and Arno Principe. Carmella has taken upon herself to be a primary food source for two feckless bachelors. And we have been privileged on many nights to be serenaded by the seductive and sweets sounds of Maestro Pacelli's violin. And he has agreed to perform an overture for our special evening. And after dinner, we will have a little musicale from Caterina and Vittorio.

Arno Pacelli bows, fiddle in hand. He waits for the applause to die down, and then draws his bow over the violin strings releasing a long plangent line from that instrument. It is the solo from the Largo of Locatelli's Opus 3, *The Art of the Violin, Concerto No. 2*. Gretchina puts her head on Brico's shoulder as they sit next to other on the patio wall, coruscating lights from craft out at sea behind them.

LATER

With the last notes of the Locatelli resonating in the air, Arturo starts the chorus of *Bravos*. Signor Pacelli bows from the waist, and the caterers, Simonetta and Lucchino, who had been standing near the entranceway, duck inside to put the finishing touches on the food service.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The table is laden with plates local seafood, mussels in a local white wine, garlic and herb sauce, and large shrimp from the waters around Gaeta. Grilled branzini lay side by side, one eye up on a platter. There are bowls of risotto and several types of pasta and trays of antipasti. Side-by-side tureens hold bisques and soups.

The Tondi's, each holding a plate of olives and glasses of red wine approach Gretchina and Brico.

GENNARO

So Arturo says you two took a day or two off to take a drive south of here. Did you take a little jaunt to Capri, the Amalfi Coast?

GRETCHINA

No, Itri. We stayed at rustic cabin with outdoor plumbing.

Mirella seems taken aback.

BRICO

We were off the grid and had to use a gas generator. But Gretchina was able to cook a dinner of sun dried tomato, black olive, and pignoli pesto over potato gnocchi.

The Tondi's seem impressed.

GRETCHINA

Yes it was only us, and the wild animals and I think someone else who took our wineglass from a gravestone.

The Tondi's are confused, but amused.

BRICO

Let's get something to eat.

Guests juggle plates and glasses inside and on the patio in candlelight under the night sky. Various groups carry on simultaneous conversations.

KIM

I am a fellow in Archaeology at the Ancient World Joukowsky Institute at Brown University studying the wine and food bars at Herculaneum.

VITTORIO

Impressive.

GRETCHINA

Yes, she is also an expert on the erotic lives of Roman virgins.

And...

LORETTA PACELLI

I can tell your pasta is hand made
and your ingredients are primo.

LUCCHINO

We believe in farm-to table.

SIMONETTA

Yes, we source our cheese from Azienda
D'este in Parma and our seafood from
Gruppo San Zeno in Gaeta.

And...

GENNARO

I was always curious why there was a
painting of a louche Dionysius among
the series of illustrations meant to
initiate young Roman maidens into
adulthood.

KIM

It's simple. Dionysius was the most
popular god among Roman women.

LATER

ARTURO

Okay everybody! I believe our artists
are about ready to provide us with a
musical dessert. Two years ago in
Boston, I worked with Caterina in
Cavalleria where she brought down
the house singing *Santuzza*. So I
suggest you get a glass of your
preferred beverage and head to the
living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Close-up of Vittorio shows his hand resting on the harpsichord
keyboard, with super-intensity showing on his face, veins
bulging on his brow. He noodles a few notes.

VITTORIO

Caterina has chosen *Che faro senza
Euridice* from Gluck's *Orfeo*. As you
know the story, when Orfeo is grieving
over his wife's tomb, he cries out
to Eros, to bring her back to life
or let him die. So Eros agrees to
help him out. But there was always a
catch to these stories.

There is laughter and Vittorio waits for it to subside.

VITTORIO (CONT'D)

Here the catch is that he can go to the underworld to find Eurydice and bring her back to life, but he must not look at her until he reaches the surface of the earth. But as he is guiding her by the hand, careful not to look back, she chides him for his behavior, saying he does love her anymore and says she wants to return to Hades. This is too much for Orfeo, who turns to express his love, and she immediately falls lifeless at his feet.

The room groans.

VITTORIO (CONT'D)

Since this was the 18th century, before the 19th century convention of tragic endings, here we have a happy ending. When Orfeo tries to kill himself, he is stopped by Eros who takes pity on him and rewards his deep love by bringing Eurydice back to life.

There is an audible *aaagh* of approval. Caterina turns to the audience, smiles and begins to sing.

CATERINA

Che faro senza Euridice. She repeats again Orfeo's plaint, what will I do without Eurydice? And builds to the aria's climax, belting out, *Dove Andro? Che faro? Dove Andro, senza il mio ben, Senza il mio ben, Senza il mio ben? (What do I do? Where do I go without my love?)*

Someone shouts Bravi! Others stand and applaud. Vittorio and Caterina take bows.

EXT: PATIO WALL - NIGHT

Brico and Gretchina sit on the stone wall at the edge of the patio. There is a creamy canopy of stars above them and pinpricks of lights from craft bobbing on the sea below.

GRETCHINA

I thought your cousin was just a playboy, but he has very artistic friends.

BRICO

And Arturo is very artistic. He designs sets for the Boston opera.

GRETCHINA

Really?

BRICO

I heard Agnello say he is stopping for two days in Carmignano.

GRETCHINA

Yes. He is going to a wine tasting with Claudio at Villa Capezzano to drink very expensive Tuscan wines. That interferes with my schedule.

BRICO

But you are not going back with him in any case. You are coming with me to Frosinone and I am driving you back to Milan. Remember our date at *U Batti*?

Blue-vested caterer's assistants lug trays of leftover food to an awaiting panel truck on the ring road. Brico and Gretchina are about to re-enter the house when they bump into the Tondi's's who are exiting.

GENNARO

(Leading his wife by the waist)

We can't keep up with these young people anymore.

Mirella's face shows that she is blitzed. She is make a dancing gesture with her hands, indicating that she is ready to continue to party. She hugs Gretchina, then Brico. She looks into his eyes and seems about to kiss him on the lips, but plants a kiss on his cheek instead.

BRICO

Thanks for coming.

GENNARO

Fabulous party.
(To Gretchina)
Great meeting you.

Gennaro leads his wobbly wife to their landing.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The guests, sprawled on couches, chairs, and sitting on the floor are exchanging shots from a bottle of grappa with Arturo

liberally measuring double jiggers. Timo is passed out on one of the couches. The tongues of flame from twenty or so white vigil candles in small glass holders illuminate the living room space with a mysterious aura.

ARTURO

(Looking like a Magus
in the candlelight)

Caravaggio's painting of Cupid was based on Virgil's verse *love conquers all, let us yield to love*. It's an icon to a puissant Eros.

Kim is sitting on the floor in the lotus position. Agnello sits on a chair behind her, rubbing her shoulders.

KIM

You would have to say that there is implicit affirmation of the value of budding sexuality and fertility in the women who participated in these rites. But I am not sure it rises to the level of eroticism.

CITA

So you are saying the fact that they saw sex was used for reproductive purposes is not erotic.

KIM

Yes. Behind these rites is the necessity of female fertility. Think of the fertility goddesses like Ceres and some of the strange statuary of a wolf goddess with dozen of mammalia feeding broods of offspring.

VITTORIO

(Noodling a few notes on the Harpsichord) Or the neolithic Venus of Willendorf, nothing erotic there.

KIM

Really what we are talking about sexuality as a stand-alone drive. Think of the tomes written about the sociological effect of the birth control pill.

(Kim arches her neck in pleasure as Agnello rubs her behind her ears.)

ARTURO

We can safely dismiss the musings on love in Plato's Symposium. Aristophane's bizarre theory that men and woman were originally stitched together and wheeled around like cartwheels is absurd on its face. Socrates assertion that the love of wisdom is the highest form of love is just a self-serving thesis of an old sophist whose stock-in-trade was peddling dialectics to seduce Athenian youth.

VITTORIO

Among ancient texts, the Old Testament was as erotic as any. Think about the Bride's Reverie in the Song of Solomon, *My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrhh resting between my breasts.*

ARTURO

The episode of David and Beersheba is fairly erotic as well.

KIM

They would prosecute David as a sexual predator today.

Agnello has been anxious to contribute and finally butts in.

AGNELLO

My feeling is that Eros fires the soul, as well as the body. The human spirit feels open to every sensory detail in the physical world and an acute sensitivity to every stimulus, achieving for a brief period the mystical objective of living in the moment.

He makes purposeful eye contact with the faces illuminated by candlelight arrayed in a circle around him.

AGNELLO (CONT'D)

And I would say that all of us here over the past few days have willingly chosen to participate in activities prompted by this inherent human disposition.

VITTORIO

Love is just an animal instinct then.

AGNELLO

To the contrary, I believe eroticism involves spiritual, intellectual and perhaps aesthetic choices. It is not like a school of thought or religion, but an inherent human disposition. It requires the complete dedication of the human personality to its tenets.

Timo begins to snore. Marya rouses him.

CATERINA

What you are talking about is a cult.

ANGELLO

Yes, the cult of Eros.

ARTURO

(Sees Gretchina and
Brico entering from
outside)

And here they are, the chief priest
and priestess of the Cult.

All eyes turn toward Brico and Gretchina.

BRICO

What the fuck are you talking about?

ARTURO

We were talking about love and Eros. And we stipulated (slurring his words a bit) that Socrates had it wrong in saying the love of wisdom was the most important form of love. And that Giordano Bruno had it right, that eroticism was the strongest form of love.

BRICO

You're good so far.

ARTURO

I guess what I was trying to say, and I said it very inelegantly, is that you and Gretchina are exemplars of the power of erotic attraction.

BRICO

You dug your way out of that one.

Brico and Gretchina leave.

EXT. BRICO'S BALCONY

From where they sit, they see the moon paint a white stripe across the blue-black sea and the lights of a few pleasure craft in the distance.

GRETCHINA

After all the partying, it is nice to be alone.

Brico hands her a glass of Hruska.

BRICO

Agree.

GRETCHINA

This is the stuff we had at Rado's.

BRICO

He gave me a couple bottles the night we met with the hand artist at the Lyublyana Museum.

GRETCHINA

So what were you and Arturo talking about?

BRICO

He seemed to be riffing off Plato's Symposium with the others. He was a little bit loaded.

GRETCHINA

So we are leaving tomorrow?

BRICO

Everybody is leaving. The Massera's arrive next week to spend the summer and we head out to Frosinone to visit Two Popes Farm, owned by Peter's aunt and uncle.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Guests are coming in and out, grabbing a cup of coffee and picking fruit out of the fruit bowl, writing down contact information to keep in touch in the future. Some are washing dishes and sweeping up.

ARTURO

Hey everybody, there is a cleaning crew from the caterers coming in...

Arturo's statement is ignored, as the sink is crowded with dishwashers and wielders of dishtowels.

Gretchina approaches Caterina, who is chatting with Brico, pulling a luggage bag with one hand.

GRETCHINA
You were divine last night.

CATERINA
Thank you.

BRICO
Caterina has invited us to her premiere in Warsaw next February.

CATERINA
Barbiere was the premier production at the Warsaw Opera in 1833.

GRETCHINA
Very nice. (To Brico) And maybe we take a ski trip to the Tatras?

BRICO
Sounds good to me.

Vittorio approaches.

VITTORIO
(To Caterina) Are we ready?

ARTURO
Hey guys. I appreciate that you made time to come down here.

CATERINA
We enjoyed it. I learned all about making pasta carbonara.

Caterina and Vittorio leave.

ARTURO
(To Brico)
So I'll see you in Boston.
(To Gretchina)
And maybe see you there as well?

There is a several second clinch between Arturo and Gretchina. She kisses him on both cheeks.

ARTURO (CONT'D)
I am heading down to pick up Cita. She found an airline flight to avoid the hellish twenty-four hour train trip back to Finland and is riding with me up to Fiumicino.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE MASSERA PLACE - DAY

Suitcases are lined up on the patio. Brico locks the door to the Massera place and puts the key into a lock box.

EXT. COASTAL ROAD - DAY

The 911 heads up the coastal road with the top down. Brico and Gretchina's hair fly in their faces.

GRETCHINA

So how far away are we from the Contadinis?

BRICO

An hour and a half maybe.

GRETCHINA

I talked to Oswaldo this morning. Told him we needed to postpone the meeting in Torino.

BRICO

What did he say?

GRETCHINA

He said he could arrange that and it actually worked better for him. But he lies all the time.

The Porsche roars through the tunnel heading towards Terracina. When the car exits into bright sunlight, there are roadsigns to beaches to the left.

BRICO

If you look behind us you will see the ruins of the temple to Jove Anxur on top of the mount. Anxur was the deity of the pagan tribe who first settled here. When the Romans took over, they adopted Anxur as a god by adding Jove to name--the name of their chief god.

GRETCHINA

(After turning around to look)

I think the Romans had too many gods.

LATER

There is a tower of the town on the top of the hill and scattered rock piles, ruins of the Roman city of Frusino. The 911 crosses over a river.

GRETCHINA

I think we turn here. And we look for a sign pointing to *Fattoria di due Papi*. Why is it called Two Popes farm?

BRICO

The patron saints of Frosinone are Popes Silverio and Ormisda.

GRETCHINA

That makes sense.

BRICO

The nice part is Silverio was Ormisda's father.

GRETCHINA

How can that be?

BRICO

There were actually a number of fathers and sons who were popes. This was back in the sixth century before celibacy was mandated for priests.

GRETCHINA

So nepotism is older than celibacy.

BRICO

Much, much older.

EXT. FARM LANE - DAY

An older woman in a black housedress waves as the car approaches a farmhouse. She holds a bunch of freshly picked peas in the pocket made by lifting up the bottom of her apron. Gretchina is the first one out of the car to hug Bianca.

GRETCHINA

It is so good to see you.

Hearing the commotion, Filippo emerges through the front door wiping his hands on his coveralls.

FILIPPO

Such a beautiful couple!

He leads Gretchina and Brico around to the back of the house, where there is an in-ground swimming pool and another house.

FILIPPO (CONT'D)

We have such a big family from all around the world and we don't want them to stay in hotels when they visit.

INT. GUEST HOUSE - DAY

Filippo pushes open an unlocked door with his foot and enters a kitchen with a red tiled floor and puts the food and wine bags on an old-fashioned Formica kitchen table. Sunlight pours in through windows dressed with chintz curtains.

INT. GUEST HOUSE BEDROOM- DAY

Filippo takes Brico and Gretchina's bags to a big bedroom with heavy dark wood furniture and a portrait of a grim Contadini ancestor in a wing collar over the bed.

BRICO

We aren't taking Peter's bedroom are we?

FILIPPO

No, he sleeps under the stars to be close to the olives.

EXT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Slender and dark-haired, Angelica towels off after doing laps. Brico and Gretchina sit nearby at outdoor table under a pergola with climbing pink and red clematis.

ANGELICA

(In heavily accented English)

I am staying with Padrino Filippo and Madrigna Bianca while doing an internship in pastry-making at the San Giorgio Institute of Cuisine.

GRETCHINA

So are you going to demonstrate some of your skills for us?

ANGELICA

Yes. But I cannot compete with madrigna. I made sesame cookies we can have later.

GRETCHINA

I love sesame cookies. Everybody is trying to make me fat.

EXT. DINING TABLE - DAY

Filippo is quaffing the red wine from a juice glass, which he now raises for a toast.

FILIPPO

To our young and beautiful guests,
may they live a hundred years!

Glasses clink. Then, bowls of food are passed around and Bianca cut slices of the fresh baked bread, as Gretchina pours mineral water into water glasses.

FILIPPO (CONT'D)

So Peter says that it was only a month ago that you two met at an olive oil fair.

GRETCHINA

Yes, he introduced himself to me by criticizing Botticelli and quoting Virgil in Latin. Then, I learned that he is a friend of the great maestro, Rado Mikhailic.

Filippo, confused, smiles.

BRICO

Rado was my instructor at the Institute of Fine Arts in Boston. And it was after the Chiarmonte reception that Peter gave me the samples of your olive oil. When I sent the samples back to Boston, my uncle loved your oil.

GRETCHINA

And Brico drove me back to Milan and we stayed in a cabin in the mountains, where a deer attacked us while we ate dinner.

BIANCA

Scusi, my English is not too good. You say, *attaccato da un cervo*?

BRICO

Yes, we were having dinner in our room and an injured buck crashed into the glass wall.

GRETCHINA

Then, he took me back to Milan and abandoned me to join his cousin on
(MORE)

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)
the topless beaches of Sperlonga.
This is how they research olive oils.

LATER

Bianca returns after drawing another ceramic pitcher of the red from the cask.

BIANCA
I was like the farm girl in so many stories. I didn't know any men except those in my family. And then this man shows up on my father's farm looking for a job with the green hat with the feather of the mountain soldiers. I fell in love with him and I am in love with him now more than the day we were married.

GRETCHINA
What is your secret?

BIANCA
Every morning when I wake up I am happy to see his head resting on the pillow next to me.

INT. GUEST HOUSE KITCHEN - EVENING

Brico and Gretchina are sitting at the kitchen table, nibbling on pieces of watermelon.

GRETCHINA
Brico, I have something to say. Two drug store pregnancy tests have come up positive.

BRICO
Our night in the Soca Valley was more epic than we thought.

GRETCHINA
Yes, I think so. Bricky, I want the baby.

Brico is silent for a moment then he reaches across the table for her hand and places a kiss on it.

LATER

Darkness is settling on the landscape outside and, inside, candles burn on a table. Brico has his leg up on his Gretchina's chair as she applies the *unguento* to his leg.

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

So how does that feel?

BRICO

It smells and feels great. I think now we need to get some bling.

GRETCHINA

Is that a marriage proposal?

BRICO

Yes.

GRETCHINA

Maybe we should look at some bling then.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brico and Gretchina are lying on the bed, the door is open to the feral world outside the cottage evidenced by the cacophony of insect stridulations. A shaft of moonlight falls on Gretchina's face showing her in repose, but Brico is awake.

He gets out of bed wearing just boxers, finds a bottle of analgesics in his toiletry bag and he swallows a handful without water.

EXT. DINING AREA UNDER THE PERGOLA - DAY

Peter is sitting alone at the outdoor breakfast table. When Brico approaches, he stands up to and shakes his hand.

PETER

Congratulations. I hear you are getting married.

He spreads olive condite on a crust of bread and takes a bite.

BRICO

So that got around fast. How was your trip north?

PETER

I was a bit disappointed in the Ice Man. Had to look through a small porthole to see him and the bloke was kind of shriveled. I didn't feel that I could really connect with him *mano a mano*. And I exchanged one or two emails with Hermolina and she stiffed me.

BRICO
So Bolzano didn't work for you?

PETER
Can't say that it did. So, what are you guys going to do after you tie the knot?

BRICO
We're working on that out now.

INT. ATTIC STAIRWAY - DAY

Brico labors up the stairs, holding onto the railing, sometimes pulling his right leg, the one with the injured foot to occupy the same step as the left foot. When he reaches the top, he sees Bianca and Gretchina in what looked like a large sewing room. A lunette on the gabled wall lets in sunshine. Clothing and fabric are scattered about.

GRETCHINA
This is Bianca's wedding dress. She has offered to let it out for me to wear to the wedding. But I think that's too much work. I can just wear my white peasant dress.

BIANCA
It is not too much work.

BRICO
I like your peasant dress.

GRETCHINA
(She puts on a veil
and vamps around the
room)
But I will accept her offer of her wedding veil to protect my innocence from the gaze of the profane.

INT. PRESS HOUSE - DAY

State of the art high-tech olive oil presses and shiny cylindrical machines with computerized controls are arrayed in an immaculately clean ground floor room. Empty wooden lugs are stacked haphazardly next to a wall where a calendar and clipboard hangs on hooks.

PETER
(Showing Brico around)
The major issue with olives as with grapes is oxygenation.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

The industry standard for first cold press oil is to press within twenty-four hours of picking. We always press within ten hours. And we press at dawn, usually with temperatures close to 20 degrees Celsius. This allows us to use riper fruit with lower levels of acidity.

Peter opens a door to a stairway and he and Brico walk up to an office-like area.

INT. UPSTAIRS PRESS HOUSE - DAY

Filippo sits at a desk in front of a broad window showing an expansive view of the olive groves. There are two bottles of *Fattoria di due Papi* olive oil on the desk both with handsome Art Nouveau labels that show the two popes, local patron saints Silverius and Ormisda, each holding an orb and scepter.

FILIPPO

Is it time?

BRICO

Yeah, it's eight-thirty in Boston.

Filippo punches a button and a couple numbers and turn the phone toward Brico, who dials the number for Leone Bros. There are few rings and then a gruff voice answers the phone.

SAL (on the phone)

Sal here.

BRICO

Sal, this is Brico. I have with me Filippo Contadini and his nephew Peter.

Peter and Filippo identify themselves on speakerphone.

SAL

My son Sandro is here with me. He's going to help me with the metric and Euro conversions, because I can't think that fast. I just want to tell you guys up front that the sample bottles of your oil that Brico sent back to us, and I'm not going to play games with you, are the best fucking olive oil I have ever had. I just need need to know that the oil I buy from you today is going to be of the same quality.

PETER

The samples were from our *Criterion* line. Some of the bulk oil we will be providing you will be similar oil. Some of it will be our better quality oil from our *Ambrosia* line.

SANDRO

(To Sal on the Phone)

Could be our *L'Olio Bello* gold and platinum label oils. (To the callers)
We are looking for quantities of one metric ton for the first year.

FILIPPO

Not a problem.

INT. LEONE BROS OFFICE - DAY

Sandro is running the numbers on an old-fashioned adding machine. Sal is sipping Joe from a cardboard cup.

SAL

What about price?

PETER

(On the phone)

Four dollars U.S. per kilogram.

SAL

Is that for your *Criterion* or *Ambrosia* oil?

BACK TO UPSTAIRS PRESSHOUSE

PETER

That is the price for the *Criterion*, similar to the sample you tasted. Assuming you want twenty-five percent *Ambrosia* oil, we are selling that to you at the same price as the *Criterion*. In effect, it is a thirty percent discount on twenty-five percent of your purchase.

SAL

(On the phone, to Sandro)

Is that what we want, Only twenty-five percent *Ambrosia*?

BRICO

(Interrupting)

I would go with the seventy-five-twenty-five split, even though that risks running out your most profitable product line. There is a considerable literature on the use of scarcity in establishing markets for luxury products.

SAL

See, that's why he's a marketing genius. So we go with seventy-five-twenty-five split.

(To Brico)

So, Artie tells me that you are traveling with the olive oil goddess.

BRICO

There is a woman traveling with me, but I am not sure she is a goddess.

PETER

Oh come on, she *is* a bloody goddess.

SANDRO

What I saw in the olive oil video justifies the usage of the word *goddess*.

SAL

My nephew Brico is the luckiest son-of-a-bitch in the world.

EXT. SAINT ANTHONY RECTORY STEPS - DAY

As Brico and Gretchina ascend the steps to the rectory of the abbey church of Saint Anthony in Ferentino, a woman in a black veil scurries down, making the sign of the cross.

INT. ABBEY - DAY

A nun in a simple habit of a black dress, white blouse, and a pectoral cross escorts Gretchina and Brico into the rectory. The reception room with its utilitarian furniture could be the waiting room for a lawyer or a dentist, except for the large reproduction of Giotto's *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata* that hangs on one wall.

GRETCHINA

I feel like I am back at St. Agnes's, waiting to go into the principal's office.

A slightly rotund and mostly bald Padre Andrea emerges from his office.

PADRE ANDREA

Such a beautiful couple! Please come in.

INT. PADRE ANDREA'S OFFICE - DAY

The office is crammed with books and the priest's desk is covered with papers.

BRICO

You have many books in English.

PADRE ANDREA

I did my novitiate at the Franciscan Monastery in Olean, New York, where I became a Buffalo Bills football fan. (He smiles, but then his face turns grave.) Gretchina and Brico, marriage is the most beautiful of sacraments as it joins two human persons to share one life together. It was no accident that Jesus performed his first miracle at a marriage feast, turning water into wine, a very good wine at that.

BRICO

After attending several wine tastings recently, I can vouch for the steward in the parable sying the miracle wine served last was surprisingly good, as usually the best wines are served first.

PADRE ANDREA

We know that Jesus was a bit of a wine connoisseur as wine is mentioned over twenty times in the gospels. (He pauses a moment to get back on track and looks at their application) So you are applying for an immediate marriage without publishing the banns *propter claudicatum*, on the basis of a limp?

BRICO

Yes. I am sometimes gimpy in my right leg and I almost drowned a week or two ago when my leg failed me.

GRETCHINA

Yes, and he frightened me by staying underwater so long.

PADRE ANDREA

(To Brico)

Perhaps it would be wise for you to limit your exposure to the sea.

(To Gretchina)

Marriage involves an aspiration to a transcendent love that bridges your brief existence in this world to your everlasting reward. So Gretchina, do you feel this kind of love for your betrothed, Brico?

GRETCHINA

Yes.

PADRE ANDREA

And Brico, do you feel this kind of love for your future wife, Gretchina?

BRICO

Absolutely.

PADRE ANDREA

And the church specifies that one of the goals of Holy Matrimony is procreation. Do you intend to have children?

Brico and Gretchina smile at each other.

BRICO

Definitely.

PADRE ANDREA

As important as love is, I want to ask you both if you feel affection for each other.

GRETCHINA

When we first met in Verona, he was nervous and unsure of himself, but then he started to talk about wine and quote classical authors and I thought, this Brico is different from other men.

PADRE ANDREA

And you found that appealing?

GRETCHINA

Yes, I did, very much.

PADRE ANDREA

Brico, do you recall that meeting?

BRICO

I will never forget it.

PADRE ANDREA

And were you nervous, as Gretchina indicated?

BRICO

Not so much nervous as concerned. I could not help noticing that she and her agent were wearing identical engagement rings.

GRETCHINA

It was to discourage men from trying to date me.

PADRE ANDREA

Ah, It seems that strategy did not work! Brico, do you feel affection for Gretchina as well as love her?

BRICO

On a trip I had to meet my friend Rado Mikhailic in Lyublyana, he was dying of cancer and his cousin Helen was acting as his caretaker. Gretchina joined me there.

GRETCHINA

I had used Mikhailic's text, *Raffigurante la figura umana*, in design school and was impressed that Brico was a friend of this genius.

BRICO

Gretchina knows a little Slovenian and formed a bond with Mikhailic's cousin Helen and they worked together to make breakfast.

GRETCHINA

She taught me how to make blueberry blinis.

BRICO

I like the way she is as comfortable dealing with all kinds of people.

PADRE ANDREA

Signor Leone and Signora Visconti, I
will see you at the church on
Saturday.

INT. JEWELER SHOP - DAY

With its plush carpet, soft music, and smell of dried eucalyptus in the air, Miglioredifortuna has the air of a class operation. There is the tinkling of the doorbell as Brico and Gretchina enter and soon the owner, Sebastiano Salviano, emerges from the back of the shop in a black suit, a jeweler's loupe hanging around his neck.

SEBASTIANO

Can I help you?

GRETCHINA

We are looking for wedding rings.

SEBASTIANO

Yes, of course. Do you want a custom-designed ring? Or would you like to see what I have in stock.

BRICO

We are getting married in forty-eight hours.

SEBASTIANO

In that case, I will show you what I have in stock. (He unlocks a glass display case.) You see here we have gold and platinum wedding bands. Which do you prefer?

GRETCHINA

Gold.

SEBASTIANO

White or yellow.

GRETCHINA

I think yellow.

BRICO

Fine with me.

SEBASTIANO

Twenty-four or eighteen carats?
Eighteen.

GRETCHINA

Eighteen. And We would like a width of two and a half millimeters.

SEBASTIANO

(Makes a note on ring
sizes and band width)

And for the Signora, we have in a size seven this lovely five carat diamond surrounded by purple amethysts. (He takes the ring out of its box and hands it to Gretchina.) It happens that it is now on sale.

BRICO

Right, so what's the sale price?

Signor Sabato checks his computer, writes down a figure on a note pad and then uses an adding machine to calculate the price, all with a somber face.

SEBASTIANO

For you, right now, and because I see how beautiful it is on the Signora's hand, I can sell it to you for almost no profit for forty thousand Euros.

BRICO

We'll take it.

GRETCHINA

Brico, the ring is gorgeous, but isn't that more than we want to spend?

BRICO

We're going to do this only once, right?

EXT. FERENTINO CAFE - DAY

Brico and Gretchina sit at an outdoor cafe overlooking the Lepini Hills. Gretchina cleans her sunglasses with a thin cloth, puts them on, and looks around the piazza. On the table in front of them is an earth-colored ceramic pitcher painted with a Frosinone scene, it's bottom half covered with dewy condensation.

Gretchina and Brico nibble from bowls of black, green and red olives, and a platter with bread slices and a chunk of Pecorino Romano cheese. A woman in her thirties arrives with artichoke crepes and salads and places them on the table.

WAITRESS

Anything else? More acqua minerale, pane?

BRICO
Thanks. We're good.

Gretchina picks at her crepe.

GRETCHINA
We have a church, a priest, and a
wedding ring, but we don't have a
wedding party.

BRICO
I am going to ask Peter to be Best
Man.

GRETCHINA
What do you think Angelica as Maid
of Honor.

BRICO
Sure, an all Contadini wedding party.

EXT. OUTSIDE MIGLIODEFORTUNA - DAY

The front door of the jewelers is locked with no evidence of Signor Salviani when they peer inside. Brico raps on the door glass, then turns away from the door and looks at the street scene while looking concerned. The back of a small three-wheeled truck is overfilled with red and white flowers heading to a wake or a wedding. A gray-haired couple walks down the street, the woman using a cane, the man guiding her by the elbow. Gretchina and Brico stand on the sidewalk in front of jewelers frustrated.

GRETCHINA
Maybe we come back in the morning?

BRICO
(Pissed)
Yeah.

A sound comes from the jeweler's front door. It is Salviani in a leather work apron unlocking the door.

SALVIANI
After five o'clock, if someone is
not in the display room, the front
door locks automatically. I have
only some polishing to do to finish.

INT. MIGLIODIFORTUNA - DAY

Brico and Gretchina sit on tall chairs in front of the jewelry case, holding hands. There is sound of a whirring grinder coming from the back room.

BRICO

I had given up on the guy.

GRETCHINA

I'm just glad we're getting the rings.

The grinder noise ceases and they wait some more. Then, Salviani emerges from the back room. He has doffed his work apron and is wearing his black jacket and tie again.

SALVIANI

I think you will like these.

INSERT

An extreme close-up of the wedding bands shows the jeweler had stamped the inscriptions *Ti amo Brico* and *Ti amo Gretchina* on the inside of the bands, instead of etching them.

BACK TO SCENE

SALVIANI (CONT'D)

Those should last forever. As I hope, your marriage does as well. Are you happy with them?

GRETCHINA

Yes, very much so.

INT. GUESTHOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brico hands Gretchina a small glass of a Moscato port. She takes a sip before going back to her copy of *DOMUS*. Brico takes his glass of port to the desk and opens up his computer. There is an email from Arturo sent from Rome.

BRICO

Take a look at this.

INSERT - PHOTO

A photo taken at the *Fontana di Trevi* shows Arturo and Cita tossing coins into the fountain over their shoulders.

BACK TO SCENE

GRETCHINA

Very nice. So maybe they are wishing they can meet again in New York.

BRICO

It's a given that they will see each other again. While you're here, let me take a photo.

Brico hasn't shaved for four days and his hair, like that of Renaissance bravo, curls over his ears and collar. Gretchina brushes her hair back and leans toward Brico and the computer camera. Brico emails the photo to his mother.

INSERT - BRICO'S EMAIL

BRICO V.O.

Dear Mom, Gretchina and I are getting married the day after tomorrow. I know that seems rash, but the circumstances for doing it now are compelling. We are with friends here that feel like family. We will then honeymoon in Portofino and head to Milan and figure out where to go from there. Love, Brico

Gretchina adds a postscript.

GRETCHINA V.O

Signora Leone, I am anxious to meet you and want to extend an invitation to visit us at our place in Milan. Let us know when you want to come and we will take care of everything. Gretchina

After sending the message, Brico deletes the postscript, and then forwards the edited mail to the rest of the family.

BRICO

Do you want to send anything to your friends, your father?

GRETCHINA

(Resumes flipping through the magazine.)

They will find out when we get back to Milan.

INT. COTTAGE KITCHEN - DAY

Sunshine is breaking through the morning mist. Brico is working on his computer while Gretchina reads *Il Tempo*. There is a knock on the door, and Brico gets up to answer. It is Peter, with an old green World War I ammo bag over his shoulder.

PETER

Not interrupting anything, am I?

BRICO

No, just having breakfast. Have a seat. Would you like a cup of coffee?

PETER

I'm over-caffeinated at the moment, but I'll take a dram of that (points to the bottle of Moscato Port and Brico pours him a glass) Thanks, mate. So Bianca and Filippo convened a council of the family last night to discuss the marriage. They talked about flowers and getting this thirteen-year old phenom *La Ucellina* to sing at the church. An argument erupted whether a *pasticciere* in Sabaudia or Terracina made better *sfogliatelle* and that's when I couldn't take the earbash anymore.

BRICO

Gretchina and I were doing our part visiting with Signor Salviana.

PETER

How did that go?

BRICO

You know, in the end it went well.

Brico takes off his wedding band and shows it to Peter.

PETER

I like the stamped inscription, sort of puts your brand on it.

BRICO

Gretchina is happy with the rock we got her.

GRETCHINA

I am. But you will have to wait until Saturday to see it.

PETER

I look forward to that, but here is why I came by today.

Peter reaches over and pick up an old green army ammo bag that had two tuck buckles. He clicks them open and he sorts through a Swiss army knife, a multiple hex key tool, and a bottle of insect spray, until he finally finds what he was looking for, a small figurine carved in stone.

PETER (CONT'D)

I want to explain what this to you before the wedding and you open a box and see a stone inside and think,
(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

Good old Peter, he got us a stone
from the outback as a wedding gift.

Brico examines a carved figure that looks like a nautilus shell with an extended head and tail that loops around to make a bottom-heavy figure eight. He passes it to Gretchina.

PETER (CONT'D)

It's a Maori marriage loop. The intertwining symbolizes the joining of man and woman. And the figure eight suggests that they will enjoy their marriage for, if not infinity, for a long time. This is an actual late nineteenth century loop and the couple had fifty years of marriage.

GRETCHINA

Thank you.

PETER

I'll let you two finish brekkie.

He downs the remainder of the Moscato Port and slams the glass down on the table.

EXT. TABLE UNDER THE PERGOLA - DAY

Gretchina is reviewing the wedding planning list compiled the previous evening by the Contadini brain trust. She has a bottle and glass of cold sparkling water. Bianca and Angelica approach the table.

BIANCA

Gretchina would like to talk to you.

GRETCHINA

I would like you to be in my wedding party.

ANGELICA

I don't know what to say. I'm honored. But I don't have a gown and I am not sure what I am supposed to do.

BIANCA

Don't worry. Godfather will take you into town this afternoon and buy you a lace dress to match Gretchina's. At the wedding, Ti' Pietro will show what to do.

GRETCHINA

And if you want, I will share my
make-up kit with you and show you
some professional tricks.

Angelica seems excited by Gretchina's offer.

EXT. SIDEWALK CAFE BOSTON NORTH END - DAY

Arturo and Tulio sit outside in shirtsleeves at the Hanover Cafe. On the table are the face cards of the Trevisiano Scopa card deck that show tarot figures, while the backs of the cards have an Escher-like cube design.

TULIO

So, Brico is going to tie the knot
with this woman Gretchina. Be honest
with me. You guys were over there to
hook-up with good-looking women. It
had nothing to do with olive oil.

Arturo looks up after laying down a *Cavallo*, a card showing a horseman with a club in his hand.

ARTURO

You couldn't be more wrong. It had
everything to do with olive oil. We
closed yesterday on a tremendous
deal that Brico engineered.

Tulio plays an ace of swords. A *Racing Form* next to him shows circled entries for the last two races at Rockingham. Arturo plays another *Cavallo*, and sweeps up the remaining cards on the table, gathering them into a pile.

ARTURO (CONT'D)

(Squeezing the pile
to gauge the number
of cards)

Twenty-one. So I have *carte, primera,*
and *settebello*. (He pulls the seven
of coins, out of the deck like a
magician.) And we split *denari*.
Speaking of good-looking women, you
said you got an invite from Kimberly?

TULIO

Yeah, she invited me up to Hanover
for some kind of pizza and movie
deal. (He uses his thumbnail as a
toothpick and waves away the waiter
who had brought their change.)

(MORE)

TULLIO (CONT'D)

She has a nice dorm suite up there at Dartmouth, but they really do have lousy pizza and I had to sit through *Citizen Kane*. I swear to Christ, the worst fucking movie ever made.

Arturo flips opens his cell phone to answer a ringtone.

ARTURO

Arturo here. I just got back a couple hours ago... I'm great, how are you?...Yeah I saw that, she is more beautiful in person... He tripped on the steps leading up from the beach... I think so. I'll check when I get back home. Ciao.

TULLIO

Tia Jo?

ARTURO

Yeah, she's looking for the phone number where Brico is staying now. Probably wants to congratulate him on the engagement.

INT. COTTAGE BEDROOM - MORNING

In addition to the usual pot of coffee, bread, cheese and fruit, Bianca brought them a plate of round Italian wedding cookies for breakfast. Brico and Gretchina nibble on the cookies with their last cup of coffee.

BRICO

Are you ready for this?

GRETCHINA

What do you mean?

BRICO

In *Cividale* you said that you didn't think about marriage much, but if you did, you wouldn't want to be married in an old, dark Lombard church after of a mass for the dead. This Saint Anthony's is an old, dark thirteenth century church.

GRETCHINA

But there will be no mass for dead today.

She walks into the bathroom to check her hair.

BRICO

No, but do you know, who is buried there, right in the middle of the apse? Pope Celestine V, the only popeto resign the papacy, until Pope Benedict decide recently to cash in his 401 K. Dante consigned him to the antechamber of hell for his resignation from the papacy.

He stands behind her, tying a black tie into a Windsor knot

GRETCHINA

(Fingering the loose
end of his tie)

Bricky, you look nice wearing a tie.
Where did you get it?

BRICO

It's Filippo's. By its width, I'd
guess he got it in the seventies,
probably used it for funerals.

There is loud thumping on the door. Brico answers the door. It is Peter, who has been waiting in his Land Rover with the motor running. He now sticks his head in.

PETER

Let's hit the frog and toad. (He
glances at his watch and shuts the
door.)

GRETCHINA

What did he say?

BRICO

I think he said we need to go.

They leave, Brico closing the door behind them, squinting into the bright sun and limping into the vehicle.

INT. LAND ROVER - DAY - TRAVELING

A flower bouquet sits in the backseat of Peter's vehicle, white and red roses. A cooler in the back sits on the floor. Gretchina puts the bouquet of white roses up to her nose, smiles and reaches for Brico's hand. Peter wheels the vehicle out onto the road.

BRICO

How far away are we from the church?

Peter turns and looks at Brico and Gretchina, taking his eyes completely off the road.

PETER

Fifteen to twenty minutes.

GRETCHINA

Where's Angelica?

PETER

She's riding with Bianca and Filippo in the limo. Wearing lippy, she's looking like a full-grown spunk.

Peter has his eyes off the road again, fishing around for something in the ice bucket in the back. He pulls out a sweaty bottle of bubbly.

PETER (CONT'D)

(With the bottle in his hand)

Over there on the right are the ruins of the Roman amphitheater. (Then over his shoulder, he passes the bubbly and two champagne flutes to Brico and Gretchina) The aqua minerale is not going to do it, mates.

Brico hands a flute to Gretchina, who, reacting to Peter's bag of tricks and eccentric manner of driving, smiles. Brico rolls down the window and pops the cork, which flies out the window and bounces on the road.

GRETCHINA

(Sampling the sparkling wine.)

I like this.

PETER

I might want to wet my tongue a bit myself.

He leans over the front seat and passes another flute back for Gretchina to fill. Brico pours and Gretchina leans forward to hand Peter the glass.

PETER (CONT'D)

Thank you, mam. This is nothing special, just a *Paringa Brut*, an old faithful sparkler that has toasted a number of festive occasions.

Weather-beaten masonry buildings come into view as the road enters a built-up area and the vehicle passes a road sign that says, *Ferentino*. Another sign shows an icon of a church:

INSERT - SIGN

San Antonio Abate .8 km

BACK TO SCENE

The road winds out of town away from houses and shops that cluttered near the road, passes a cemetery, and a cleared field. A large Romanesque church comes into view on a rise to the right along with dozens of parked car on its access road. A crowd mills on the church steps. All eyes turn to the Land Rover as it pulls in front of the church.

PETER (CONT'D)

(Taking the empty flutes from the back) Do you have everything?

BRICO

Ring, bride, groom, check, check, check.

Gretchina fits Bianca's veil onto her head and at the same time, Peter comes around and opens their door to a hundred or so sets of eyes. When Brico steps out of Land Rover and holds Gretchina's hand, the assembled crowd claps. She hands the bouquet to a seven-year-old girl with flaxen white hair and a frilly white dress and the wedding ring to rosy-cheeked ring bearer.

GRETCHINA

Fate attenzione a questo.

RING BEARER

(A bit nervously)

Si, signora.

Bianca and Filippo are the first to greet Gretchina and Brico, embracing and kissing them. Angelica approaches and confers with Peter. They all speak in such rapid Italian, Brico really doesn't get much of it. But he understands Filippo when he says, "*E magnifico,*" and points to a bright blue in sky.

The wedding party forms, with Brico and Gretchina in front, Peter and Angelica behind them and the ring-bearer and the flower girl following. Bianca and Filippo lead the other guests walking toward the church.

Padre Andrea is on the top of the steps of the front portico. He is wearing a white robe with a rose-colored cincture and waits for the wedding party to approach.

PADRE ANDREA

Are you ready to do this?

BRICO

Yes.

GRETCHINA

I think so.

PADRE ANDREA

Then, let's do it.

INT. ST. ANTHONY ABATE - DAY

Padre Andrea leads the wedding party into nave the church where they are greeted by the blast of trumpets and an organ playing Mendelssohn's Wedding March. Two altar boys swinging censers join Padre Andrea. A trio of musicians dressed in black sit in the transept with ancient instruments, a reed organ, a viola da gamba and a crumhorn in a small chapel to the right. A young girl standing with them wears a white blouse, a blue skirt, white socks and brown Mary Janes. She is *La Ucellina*.

As he walks down the aisle, Brico senses the reed organ has switched to a familiar motif to accompany the procession.

BRICO

(*Sotto voce to
Gretchina*)

This is Dufay's Magnificat.

GRETCHINA

I think so.

The reed organ ceases playing and *La Ucellini's* voice echoes in the rafters of the church.

LA UCELLINI

*The Lord possesses me. My soul
magnifies the Lord*

The *Magnificat* ends and is replaced by the sound of rustling in the pews.

PADRE ANDRE

It is fitting that we celebrate the sacrament of matrimony in a church dedicated to Saint Anthony, protector of marriageable girls. And I would say that today, in the spirit of gender equality, that he is also the protector of marriageable boys.

A hushed affirmation comes from the pews.

PADRE ANDREA

There is no happier task for me than to bless the union of Brico and Gretchina, male and female, alike in
(MORE)

PADRE ANDREA (CONT'D)

spirit, compatible in their love. It is no accident that John sets out the Marriage at Cana as the place for Jesus's first miracle. By turning water into wine and very fine wine at that John is saying that marriage is to meant to be joyous, maybe even a bit intoxicating. Now I would like you all to rise for the marriage of Gretchina and Brico.

The sound of shuffling comes from the pews. A number of older women fish for handkerchiefs from their purses, including Bianca, who, in the second row, is daubing tears off her cheek.

PADRE ANDREA (CONT'D)

Gretchina, your eternal soul has in it the pure spirit of God and you also have within you the beautiful spirit and intelligence of your essential humanity. Most importantly, you have in your heart precious love for this man, Brico. Is it your intention to share your great love and spirit with him even after death separates you?

GRETCHINA

Yes.

PADRE ANDREA

Brico, your eternal soul has in it the pure spirit of God and you also have within you the beautiful spirit and intelligence of your essential humanity. Most importantly, you have in your heart precious love for this woman, Gretchina. Is it your intention to share your great love and spirit with her even after death separates you?

BRICO

Yes.

The ring bearer approaches. The couple turns to face each other and Brico slides the ring on Gretchina's finger.

PADRE ANDREA

You are now married in the eyes of God and Man.

Gretchina lifts her veil and she and Brico delicately kiss with only their lips touching. The reed organ player plays a riff on Mendelssohn's wedding march as Padre Andrea chats with the bride and groom.

Padre Andrea leads the recessional out of the church, shaking hands and chatting briefly with parishioners near the aisle and the music changes to the Bach-Gounod *Ave Maria* with *La Ucellina's* voice soaring to the rafters.

EXT. CHURCH STEPS - DAY

Peter and Angelica are the first to meet the newlyweds, while in the crowd there are several cameras, including video cameras, pointed up at the bridal couple.

PETER

So, how does it feel?

GRETCHINA

It is something we wanted to do and we did it. So this is a good thing that feels good. (She removes the wedding veil, shakes her head and combs out her hair with her fingers.)

PETER

That is a beautiful rock.

BRICO

I'm just glad I could talk her into letting me buy her some bling.

INT. SCALA HOTEL ROOM - DAY

The third story bridal suite is filled with flowers and gifts and overlooks a piazza where hotel staff and local vendors are doing set up for the wedding feast. Peter and Brico sip Aussie Paranga Brut.

PETER

So are you leaving on your honeymoon tonight?

BRICO

How far is Portofino?

PETER

I'm not sure exactly, it's about five hours from here to Florence if you don't stop or encounter any problems, then probably an hour and a half to the coast. But in your souped-up buggy, you might be able to knock off an hour or so.

Brico gives some thought to the desirability of making a five hour road trip later in the day.

BRICO

We'll probably leave tomorrow. Won't give us a lot of time in Portofino but I'll make it up to her.

GRETCHINA

(Enters wearing a pink-beige silk flapper dress) So what are you going you do to make up something to me?

BRICO

I was talking about leaving for Portofino tomorrow instead of today.

GRETCHINA

And how will you make that up to me?

BRICO

I was thinking of a couple nights at the Ahwanee Inn in Yosemite with a side trip to Napa this summer, then follow-up by accepting Caterina's invitation to catch an opera in Warsaw, maybe with an excursion to the Tatras for some skiing.

GRETCHINA

You see, this is why I love him. He is so smart and, as Hermolina described him, so decent looking.

She begins to kiss him on the lips and he embraces her. Peter, embarrassed, leaves the room.

EXT. PIAZZA - DAY

Brico and Gretchina encounter Padre Andrea when they walk down to the piazza.

PADRE ANDREA

(Pointing to the blue skies)

The lord is smiling down at you today.

Wedding guests mill in the piazza and check out with whom and where they want to sit. Musicians are sitting in the shade under the loggia. The head table begins to assemble. When the wait staff has poured all the guests a glass of prosecco, the musicians play the drinking song *Libbiamo* from *La Traviata*, stopping when Peter stands up with the clinking of knives on crystal.

PETER

My friends, we have come here to celebrate the marriage of Brico and Gretchina. If you will excuse me, because my Italian is not that good and as most of you cannot speak Australian, I am going to try to use the English language. (He beams at the newlyweds and takes another sip of the prosecco.)

He puts his right hand on the table to steady himself.

PETER (CONT'D)

I believe I know how to pick a friend and when I first met Brico Leone I knew I had found special and *swaggie* bud (tearing up a bit). And Gretchina (He stares at her, while pointing to her with an open hand.) What can I say that can add to what you all can see, except to say that she is as beautiful on the inside as she is on the outside.

He lifts his glass.

PETER (CONT'D)

So please toast with me, Brico and Gretchina, may they live a hundred years and have a hundred children. (He throws his glass back.)

There are sounds of glasses of bubbly clinking and of shouts of salutes to living a hundred years in English and Italian. A Borsalino is thrown into the air.

GRETCHINA

(To Brico)

Did he just wish for us to have a hundred children?

BRICO

Yeah, he did.

At the head table, the newlyweds sit in the middle, with Peter sitting next to Brico and Angelica next to Gretchina. The *Contadini's* sit to their right, and, to their left. Padre Andrea has the seat next at the end of table of the next to Bianca on the other side, smiling and chatting with parishioners from San Antonio Abate before taking his seat. A handsome young man squats behind Angelica's chair, chatting with her.

BIANCA

Forse Angelica sarai prossimo? *Maybe Angelica will be next?*

FILIPPO

(Looks at the young couple and shrugs)

Chi Diavolo lo sa? *Who the hell knows.*

Waiters serve from large bowls of salad and pasta and pour local whites and reds into sparkling crystal. Brico examines the label of the white wine.

BRICO

Sabina white wine was a favorite of the Roman poet Horace.

PETER

This Barbera di Anagni (He grips a bottle of the red by the neck and takes a slug) is a favorite wine of P. Contadini.

LATER

A secondi of *Pollo sprezza alla sabinese* is served along with large scampi, and grilled sea perch.

GRETCHINA

I am glad I wore a loose dress.

BRICO

Well, you are eating for two.

LATER

The dinner service is being cleared, while the musicians play *La Mattinata*. The band stops playing and Filippo rises from his seat.

FILIPPO

My friends, I would like to share with you a story. When I was in the army, I carried with me with me Dante's *La Vita Nuova* to give me hope that I would survive the war and find love in the future. I underlined the poet's words, *my lady's gifts are beyond human understanding*. So I hoped to meet the woman with these gifts if I survived and she is the woman who has been at my side for sixty-five years.

(MORE)

FILIPPO (CONT'D)

(He pauses to look toward his wife.)
But these words also apply to the
beautiful woman sitting to my left.

(meaning Gretchina,
he raises his glass)

*Che l'amore con discorsi delizia
sempre nelle loro menti.* (May love
with its delights always remain in
their lives.)

Cheers and salutes from the crowd fill the piazza as Signor Contadina sits down and the wait staff begins serving dessert and coffee. Bowls of Italian pastries and wedding cookies are set on tables along with fresh figs, plums and almond candy. Waiters pour espresso, grappa and sweet Vin Santo. Children rip open small boxes and unwrap *Torrone*.

Brico sips from glasses of the sweet wine and grappa and chews on a crunchy, flakey *sfogliatelle*. He and Gretchina accept congratulations from a line of wedding guests, who hand over boxes with wedding gifts. Friends of Peter, officers who wear the dashing dress white uniforms of the Italian Air Force, shake their hands and give them a framed, signed squadron flag. Padre Andrea comes by to thank them for inviting him to the wedding feast and to give them a blessing before he leaves.

PADRE ANDREA

Everything, the food, the wine, the
weather (He kisses the tips of his
fingers.) *Perfetto*.

Brico and Gretchina stand to thank him and Gretchina leans over to kiss him on the cheek. When the priest leaves, an angelic five-year old girl led by her mother approaches the head table, holding in her hand a wedding gift of *Ciociarria*, the traditional peasant sandals of the area.

LITTLE GIRL

E questo viene dalla nostra citta,
per ricordarci.

(And this is from our
town, to remember us)

GRETCHINA

Grazie. (Accepting the gift, then to
the girl's mother) She is so precious.

Brico and Gretchina strap the sandals on each other to the sound of applause from the wedding guests. Suddenly the musicians strike up a loud tune with a heavy beat, accompanied by a tambourine. Six dancers in traditional garb pirouette into the piazza. And soon, rhythmic clapping from wedding guests accompanies the beat of the music.

Arm in arm, the dancers execute a traditional dance, the *Saltarello*, pairing off in a suggestive dance. A hoarse boozy voice from the crowd yells above the music, *far ora*, and others join in calling on the dancers to "do it now."

The lead dancer, a black-haired beauty, flings off her traditional bonnet and her hair swirls around her head as she executes leaping pirouettes to approach the head table. There, she extends her hand, inviting Brico to join her. He smiles, but shakes his head no. But the rhythmic clapping to the beat of the music and the suggestive motions of the dancer for him to join her continue. Peter stands, energetically waving him on.

When Brico begins walking around the table toward the dancer, the rhythmic clapping turns to applause and when the beautiful dark-haired dancer grabs Brico hand, there were shouts in Italian for the reluctant bridegroom to "go to" her, and then cheers as Brico hesitantly begins to step to the music.

Brico is getting into dancing the *Saltarello*, when shiny soles of his new sandals slip on a wet piece of pavement causing him to trip backwards. His head glances off the head table, sending glasses, bottles, and plates flying, and then it cracks against the pavement, drawing blood. The applause, the twirling of dancers, and then the music stops, replaced by screams.

The first one on the scene is Peter, who lifts Brico's head off the pavement. Gretchina kneels next to Brico squeezing his hand, as if that would make him come to.

BRICO

So how was I?

PETER

You were aces, bro. Just promise me that you will never try that dance step again.

During the time it takes to get Brico back in his chair and to examine and wash the bruises on his elbow and cheekbone, the dancers cease dancing and the vocal celebrating of the wedding guests turns to an undertone of concern. But then after making a assessment of Brico wounds, Signor Contadina stands up and gestures that the celebration should go on.

FILIPPO

Si pregame di divertirsi tutti, sta bene.

(Please everybody celebrate, he's fine.)

And with this reassurance, the chatter of the crowd resumes and the musicians start to play *La Tarantella*. The head table now empty, shows the remaining clutter of a wedding feast.

INT. WEDDING SUITE - DAY

The room is filled with flowers and gifts. A doctor closes his black bag.

DOCTOR

He will be okay. Here is a bottle of *Tylenol con codeine* if he has any pain later.

The Doctor leaves the room.

LATER

GRETCHINA

These are very generous gifts.

She opens a gift box from Cavaliere Angelo La Rocca, a friend of the Contadinis, that contains matching his and hers *Patek Phillippe* watches.

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

We have five cases of wine, one case of *aceto balsamico di Modena*, and this, (She briefly looks at the gift tag that reads *The DeMartino's* before ripping open a package with gold plated Sambonet Italian flatware.) This set is lovely. We'll use it at our first dinner party.

Other gifts area are a facsimile of the 1471 edition of Boccaccio's Decameron, a case of *Vecchia Romagna* brandy, matching silk Kimonos, and a case of *Amadei* Tuscan chocolate.

GRETCHINA (CONT'D)

What is your favorite gift?

BRICO

The watches are nice, but the bibliophile in me is intrigued by the Boccaccio.

GRETCHINA

Mine is the marriage loop that Peter got us.

BRICO

Well yes, that is sort of special. Especially if it works for fifty years as promised.

Sound of applause comes from the piazza below and Gretchina looks out the window.

GRETCHINA

Maybe we should go back down and join the party? Let everybody know that you are all right.

BRICO

You go and give them the medical update. I am going to rest a while.

EXT. PIAZZA DE BONCAMAGNI - NIGHT

The Saltarello dancer has changed gears and with a male dancer is dancing the *pas de deux* from Swan Lake.

LATER

Dancers are bowing, taking applause. The piazza is emptying out. Gretchina, accompanied by Peter, heads back to the hotel to get the wedding gifts to load in the Land Rover. Brico is dead asleep on the bed.

INSERT - Close up of the bottle of *Tylenol con codeine*

Shows it is half-empty.

BACK TO SCENE

Gretchina sits next to Brico and holds his hand. He opens his eyes and sees the faces of Peter and Gretchina looking at him, concerned.

BRICO

Is the party over?

GRETCHINA

It's time to go home now.

INT. GUESTHOUSE - NIGHT

Brico is on his computer emailing his mother, cousins and Uncle Sal about the day's activity.

INSERT - BRICO'S EMAIL

BRICO V.O

Cara Famiglia, Today we gained another member of the family, as Gretchina and I were married at the church of Saint Anthony Abate in Ferentino. The Contadini's and their friends arranged a classic Italian wedding
(MORE)

BRICO V.O (CONT'D)

feast. I was enlisted to dance the *saltarello* after drinking too much wine, I slipped, gashing my head on a wet pavement. Not to worry though. I'm alive and well back at the Contadini guesthouse after being seen by a local doctor.

BACK TO SCENE

As Brico clicks the send button, there is a knock on the door. Gretchina answers and sees Bianca standing there, a pot of herb tea and a plate of pignoli cookies in hand.

BIANCA

How is he?

GRETCHINA

He is okay.

BIANCA

Bennissimo. Let me know if you need anything.

A computer chime signals an almost immediate response back from Brico's email to his family. It is from his mother.

BRICO

Look at this. (With Gretchina looking over his shoulder, Brico opens the mail.)

INSERT - JOSEPHINE'S EMAIL

JOSEPHINE V.O.

Dear Brico and Gretchina, I am so very, very happy for both of you and happy as well to have acquired such a beautiful daughter-in-law. I accept your invitation to visit you in Milan and insist on you visiting me in Rockport as soon as possible. Brico, I am a little concerned about your falls. They may be the result of something as simple as hyperglycemia or vertigo, which runs on the Leone side, but I am going to do a little research and will get back to you. Love, Josephine.

LATER

A candle's flame leans and flickers from a soft breeze sifting through the screen door.

Gretchina washes the scratches on Brico's cheeks and temples, with his head in her lap, and applies Carmella's herbal unguent.

GRETCHINA

Bricky, I hope that the fighting with steps, tables, and paving stones will stop.

BRICO

I am going to blame the sandals for this one.

GRETCHINA

I will get rid of the sandals.

BRICO

Don't do that. I like the sandals.

GRETCHINA

Your mother is very sweet. She seems very concerned about your falls.

BRICO

She's a typical mother. And a former nurse, which makes it worse.

GRETCHINA

So how are you feeling now?

BRICO

I have the most beautiful women in the world next to me. *Sono contento.*

INT. COTTAGE - MORNING

Gretchina awakens to the loud chatter of jays and crows and the persistent cooing of doves. When she looks over and sees a reposing Brico, she seems happy to see his head on the pillow next to hers.

LATER

Gretchina come backs from the shower wearing a dark blue pullover knit dress. Brico has awakened, but is struggling to pull on his pants. There is a knock on the door of the cottage. It is Bianca, bringing a pot of coffee, a plate of fresh figs, cheese, olives and a loaf of warm bread. Gretchina meets her outside the door where they chat.

BIANCA

How is he?

GRETCHINA

I think he is okay.

BIANCA
Did he sleep well?

GRETCHINA
Yes, I think so.

Gretchina puts the tray down in the kitchen area of the guesthouse and sets out two breakfast places. Brico is slow to come to the table, and he takes a wrong step when pulling out a chair to sit on, but is able to steady himself with the back of the chair.

BRICO
I drank too much yesterday. (Takes a bite of a fig) And my head hurts a little.

GRETCHINA
Do you want to take a pill? (She pours hot steamy black coffee into his cup.)

BRICO
Nah, I just need to re-hydrate.

Brico empties his glass of juice.

GRETCHINA
When I went to the shower, I saw Peter all dressed up. He said he was going to Mass, which surprised me. I didn't think he was religious.

BRICO
You never know in life.

GRETCHINA
Did I overhear you and Peter talking about the drive to Portofino yesterday?

BRICO
Yeah, I'm figuring seven hours with lunch somewhere en route. Stop at some small Tuscan inn, get some pasta, drink some rough red out of a carafe with a warm loaf of crusty bread.

GRETCHINA
So when do you we leave?

BRICO
I shower, we pack, offer our profound thanks to the Contadinis, and hit the road.

Gretchina sips on coffee when footsteps are heard and then a knock on the door. It is Filippo.

FILIPPO
Breakfast okay?

GRETCHINA
Yes.

BRICO
Perfect.

FILIPPO
You have a call from Signora Leone,
your mother.

Brico struggles to stand up and turns to Gretchina.

BRICO
Can you take the call?

INT. CONTADINI'S KITCHEN - DAY

The phone in the Contadini's kitchen is an old-fashioned black wall dial phone with the receiver hanging on the side. The receiver is off the hook and is placed upside down on top of the unit. Two kids, the ring bearer from the wedding and his sister, are finishing up slices of yellow watermelon and cups of *cafe au lait* at the kitchen table.

GRETCHINA
Hello.

JOSEPHINE
(On the phone)
Is this Gretchina?

GRETCHINA
Yes. Brico asked me to take the call
for him.

JOSEPHINE
This is Josephine. I am so happy for
both of you. And I am so glad to be
able to finally talk to you. You
look very happy together.

GRETCHINA
Yes. I think so.

JOSEPHINE
Gretchina, here is why I called.
(MORE)

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)

Maybe I shouldn't have done it, but after Brico's email yesterday, I opened the package with the results of his exit physical from Doyle-Dietrich.

GRETCHINA

No, that was okay.

JOSEPHINE

They recommended another cranial MRI, this one with contrast, to determine if the small white spot on the film indicated a small brain tumor.

GRETCHINA

So what does that mean?

JOSEPHINE

It means that the radiologist who read his film thought there was a chance of the existence of a brain tumor and recommended a second MRI to determine if one actually existed.

GRETCHINA

So Brico needs to have another MRI?

JOSEPHINE

No. From the symptoms Brico has shown, the falling, the forgetfulness, it's clear that he has a brain issue.

GRETCHINA

So are you saying he has a brain tumor?

JOSEPHINE

That's what his symptoms suggest.

Gretchina grips the phone with shaky hands and looks at the two kids playing at the breakfast table as if they lived in another world.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)

Gretchina, brain surgery has become routine and I know the best neurosurgeon at Mass General.

GRETCHINA

So what do we do?

JOSEPHINE

I know this is rotten way to spend
your honeymoon, but the best course
now is to have Brico flown back to
Boston for brain surgery.

EXT. PATH BACK TO THE COTTAGE - DAY

It's bright, sunny day, but a distracted Gretchina seems not to notice the blue skies, the pasta drying on white sheets, the flowers planted along the walk, nor does she taste of the tears running down her cheeks. When she opens the door to the cottage, she screams. Brico's chair is overturned and he is lying sprawled on the floor.

EXT. LAND ROVER AT A MILITARY CHECKPOINT - DAY

Peter's vehicle enters the checkpoint to the Frosinone Italian Air Force Base. He hands over his license to a guard who looks into the vehicle and sees a beautiful woman with a man slouched next to her in the back seat. He waves them through.

INSIDE THE VEHICLE - MOVING

GRETCHINA

This is a good idea your mother had,
to be very careful in dealing with
this.

PETER

That's right mate. (He turns around
to look at Brico slouched in the
back seat.) Have the medicos look at
you and fix what's wrong with the
old bod.

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

A taxiing medical jet arrives at the terminal where Brico, on a gurney shivers. Gretchina tucks her suede jacket around his shoulders.

BRICO

Did we remember the Carboncello
samples?

GRETCHINA

(Her eyes welling-up
with tears.)
I am sure we did.

FLIGHT LINE TECH

Please stand back.
(MORE)

FLIGHT LINE TECH (CONT'D)

He pushes a green button and the gurney rises to the level of the jet, where it is handled by white-uniformed EMTs.)

Gretchina watches Brico being handled like a piece of oversized luggage. Peter goes over documents with the flight crew.

INT. MEDICAL JET ALOFT - DAY

With the roar of jet engines in the background EMTs work behind a curtain, unbuttoning Brico's shirt and putting gel on his chest where they attach monitors. An oxygen mask is strapped on his face and the needle for an I.V. drip is inserted into his arm.

GRETCHINA

(Poking through the curtain)

How is he doing?

She is immediately blocked by a female EMT.

EMT

He's doing fine.

Brico lies trussed up on the gurney, head and body belted down, masked with an oxygen device, with monitors and tubes stuck on and in him.

EMT (CONT'D)

All his vital signs look good. It's best if you return to your seat. We will call you if we need you. Do you need something to relax?

Gretchina shakes her head no and takes a final look at Brico, blowing him a kiss. Brico, strapped in and sedated, has heard Gretchina's voice and strains to catch glimpse of her.

LATER

About ninety minutes into the flight, the co-pilot is explaining to Gretchina, who sits in a jump seat in the flight deck, the various instruments in the cockpit.

CO-PILOT

You can see on radar we have some thunder boomers to the north east.

The door to the front cabin opens and Gretchina seems to brace for bad news when she is addressed as "Mrs. Leone" by a female EMT.

EMT

Your husband's vital signs are still very good. (She touches Gretchina's shoulders.) Blood pressure is a bit high, but that is to be expected.

Gretchina eyes are red and she squeezes the stone Maori marriage loop.

INT. BEHIND THE CURTAIN - DAY

A radiologist signals to the female EMT to look at a film of a brain scan. He points out a couple of irregularly shaped white blotches on the film, talking in tones just loud enough to be intelligible over the sound of the jet engines. He outlines with his finger the features on the image that indicated that the growth in Brico's brain was a Glioblastoma.

EMT

What is your level of certainty?

RADIOLOGIST

Ninety-nine percent.

In the front Cabin, Gretchina has her reading lamp on and a virtually untouched in-flight meal in front of her. When an EMT approaches, she prepares for the worst.

EMT

Mrs. Leone, your husband would like to see you.

Gretchina parts the curtain and goes to the back of the plane. She sees Brico sitting up on the gurney, chewing pieces of shaved ice from a plastic cup. She sits next to him.

BRICO

It is so good to see you, but it is even better to feel you. (He grips her hand, then her forearm, like a blind man.)

GRETCHINA

It is great to see you sitting up, talking.

BRICO

Yes there is something we should talk about. In my life, you have been the only woman I have ever truly loved.

GRETCHINA

Yes, I believe that.

BRICO

And I hope, whatever happens, that my love will always be with you. (He tips the cup back to get another piece of ice.)

GRETCHINA

So I can say to you Brico that you also are the only man I have ever truly loved.

He squeezes her hand tighter and smiles at her and then closes his eyes. Suddenly, bells ring out and a monitor loudly beeps. The EMTs escort Gretchina out from behind the curtain. From the front of the plane, Gretchina can hear the thumping on Brico's chest and the quick and crisp verbal exchanges between the technicians.

INT. BEHIND THE CURTAIN - DAY (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Brico sees his father, grandfather Muzio, and great-grandfather Filippo, standing at the head of a long line in a gray mist that reaches to a dark cloud at the horizon. Everyone is staring at him but not speaking. Mikhailic's face suddenly looms large and says, *I am glad you are joining us*, but then before Brico can reply to him, the vision of Rado fades from view.

He is on an aircraft. He can hear jet engines roar and feel the G-forces that come with turns and climbs. He is in the window seat looking out in the night sky vainly trying to detect the comet Kahoutek. "Don't bother, it's gone," Mikhailic says fading back in, just his head looming large. "And it won't be back for another 2700 years, but come and see something more beautiful."

Brico strains to reply to Mikhailic, but can't force the words out of his mouth. "You will find that out soon," Mikhailic says, reading his mind.

Rado's face disappears again and a broad purple landscape stretching into infinity comes into view. There is a black meandering creek and on other side was a female figure who is sure is Gretchina. He calls out to her, but she does not respond. Why isn't his wife responding? He tries shouting louder but then no matter how loud he shouts, she can't hear him. He settles for trying to catch his breath, but cannot. The screen goes dark.

EXT. RUNWAY APRON AT LOGAN APT - NIGHT

An ambulance drives away from the flight line, replaced by a hearse. Josephine, Sal, Arturo, and Tulio look up and see the light of the descending medical jet.

INSIDE THE PARKED MEDICAL JET

There is a private moment with Gretchina and the body of her husband. She caresses his hair. Runway strobes intermittently flash through the aircraft windows, spotlighting the tears running down her cheeks.

BACK OUTSIDE

Waiting in the night are Brico's mother, her brother-in-law Sal and nephews Arturo, Sandro and Tulio, the last two physically supporting her, holding her up by the shoulders. When the body bag is lowered and unzipped, Josephine, distraught, collapses and hugs the body of her son.

JOSEPHINE

You weren't supposed to die before me.

Arturo has his hand on his aunt's shoulder, observes her grief as well the dead body of his cousin. Gretchina descends the gangplank and Josephine rushed up to her.

GRETCHINA

You had a beautiful son who I loved very much.

JOSEPHINE

And he had very beautiful wife who he loved very much.

When he sees Brico's wife and mother embrace, Sal wipes tears away. He stands immobile looking into the night sky.

A WIPE shows Sal still standing on the tarmac after the hearse, Gretchina, Josephine and other mourners have left. He is startled to feel a hand grip his shoulder. It is his son, Arturo.

ARTURO

C'mon dad, let's go. It was fated.

EPILOGUE (ONE YEAR LATER)

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

A seagull is perched on a weather vane, squawking while looking over the broad blue waters of the bay. Three stories below, a car door open and slams shut. A woman, Caterina Malapiero, exits the vehicle pulls an overnight bag behind her.

INT. SCREENED-IN PORCH - DAY

A blue-eyed baby boy suckles on Gretchina's single exposed breast. Though she hears the doorbell, Gretchina continues to stroke his silky hair and lets him finish. When the baby is done, she put him on her shoulder and burps him.

Philomena, an au pair, leads the visitor onto the bright sunlit porch and takes the baby from out of Gretchina's hands.

GRETCHINA

Thank you. (She gets up and hugs Caterina.)

Caterina and Gretchina embrace and kiss each other on the cheek. Philomena rocks the baby in her arms.

CATERINA

Que bellissimo bambino! (She smiles at the baby and the baby smiles back at her.)

A cool sea mist sifts through the window screens making chintz curtains billow. Sunlight glints off the glass tea service. The squawking of gulls in the distance is heard.

CATERINA (CONT'D)

So all this was Brico's?

GRETCHINA

Yes.

On the wall is the matted and framed drawing Brico had done of Gretchina in Mikhailic's library as *Flaming June*.

CATERINA

He was quite a talented artist.

GRETCHINA

He was a student of the great Rado Mikhailic.

INT. GRETCHINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Gretchina takes Caterina's overnight bag and leads her up a stairway, then higher up on a circular stairway. The guest room they enter has glass walls on two sides, with one overlooking the bay, where a speedboat carves out white curves with its wake. Gretchina opens double doors and invites Caterina to sit outside. The two women sit opposite each other in rattan chairs.

CATERINA

You look well. How are you doing?

GRETCHINA

I am okay. The Leone's take good care of me. Brico's cousins bring me provisions from Boston ever week. I get around in my little Fiat.

CATERINA

I saw it in the carport. It's cute.

GRETCHINA

I drive it to the shopping center to buy a bottle of milk or wine.

CATERINA

I was asked to give you this.

Caterina pushes an envelope across the table. It is Oswald's *Montenapoleone* stationary and is marked for Gretchina's eyes only. She rips open the envelope and pulls out a note.

INSERT - NOTE

OSWALDO V.O

Gretchina, I have been in touch with Alfa-Romeo. Their previous offer stands. Let me know how you would like to proceed.

BACK TO SCENE

Gretchina carefully slips the note back into the envelope. Caterina awaits her answer.

GRETCHINA

Tell him we are not yet ready to return.

THE END