

The Tattered Book

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FADE IN

INT. SCUTARI MANSION - NIGHT

In the Scutari mansion (Florence, Italy) a long dining table stretches out in front of the patriarch of the Scutari Crime Family. SEVERINO SCUTARI (In his eighties, silver hair, narrow face, arthritic hands) watches five of his sons (they all look like him) and one son-in-law as they talk. They're a handsome group of perfectly attired men.

LORENZO Scutari (silver temples, evil face), the eldest son, sits at his father's right. The servants are clearing the dinner from the table and the women can be heard chatting from the lady's parlor. When the door is closed behind them, a servant makes the rounds with cigars and espressos.

Clearing his throat, Severino calmly asks Lorenzo in his deep gravelly voice;

SEVERINO

Have we got the Bertoli Pharmacy yet?

Five sets of eyes swing to Lorenzo. He lights his cigar and holds it in front of him, eyeing the twirling smoke. He looks at his father.

LORENZO

No.

SEVERINO

That seems a bad message to send to others, don't you think? What more do we have to do to bring them around?

LORENZO

There's no one left but Luca Bertoli. We're running out of leverage, unless we go after the little grandson.

All eyes swing back to Severino. He slowly shakes his head.

SEVERINO

I'd prefer to not go after a grandchild. It seems uncivilized. Put more--

EXT. SUBURB STREET - DAY

HOME OWNER

--Those are all fifty cents each.

CASSI, a pretty blonde in her early thirties is squatted down next to a box of books at a garage-sale. She's holding a tattered old book. Cassi glances up at an older woman, HOME OWNER, standing next to her.

CASSI
The Scutari Legacy... I've never read
this one. Any good?

The cover shows a narrow cobble-stoned alley.

HOME OWNER
My favorite book. I figured it was
time to let go of it.

The woman laughs and shrugs.

CASSI
Is it a drama, romance, crime?

Cassi stands and digs in her shorts pocket.

HOME OWNER
All of the above. It's different for
everyone.

The woman looks at Cassi for a moment.

HOME OWNER (cont'd)
Have you ever wished the main
character would fall in love with the
reader?

Cassi glances up curiously at her serious tone, but the lady smiles innocently and moves away with the fifty cents.

INT./EXT. CASSI'S HOME/YARD - CONTINUOUS

When Cassi gets home she tosses the book on the counter and goes into the back yard to do some weeding. with a full weed bucket, she wipes the sweat off her face with her tank-top and flops into a lawn-chair in the shade.

She gets back up and goes inside to get the book. She returns to the chair and opens the book.

INT. SCUTARI MANSION - NIGHT

SEVERINO
I'd prefer to not go after a
grandchild. It seems uncivilized.
(MORE)

SEVERINO (cont'd)
Put more pressure on Bertoli... he'll
fold. They eventually do.

Lorenzo pulls out his smart phone and types. He slides the phone back into his pocket and finishes his espresso.

INT. BERTOLI MANSION - DAY

At a nearby mansion in Florence sits LUCA BERTOLI with his nephew, ANGELO (8 yrs old, curly black hair), who sits on the floor near his uncle playing his hand-held computer.

The doorbell chimes. Luca Bertoli pulls out his phone and looks at the security IMAGE of his front door. He jumps to his feet. Going to the nearby side table he writes a note and turns to Angelo who stands by his side.

ANGELO
Zio Luca?

Angelo searches his uncle's troubled face.

BERTOLI
Angelo, do you remember where Zia
Emma lives?

At Angelo's nod, he drops to one knee and looks intently into child's eyes.

BERTOLI (cont'd)
Take this to her as fast as you can.
Tell her the bad men are back. Go out
the secret door and run!

Angelo snatches the note from his hand and runs from the room.

EXT. CASSI'S YARD - DAY

Cassi's cat, ANABELLE, hops up onto her lap and rubs her head against the book's spine.

CASSI
How am I supposed to get any reading
done with you around, huh?

Cassi sets the book down and pets her. She picks the book up again, but Anabelle swats at her hand. Accepting defeat, Cassi gets up and carries the book in the house.

INT. CASSI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

That night she pads down the hall with Anabelle at her side. The feline curls up in the middle of the bed. Cassi pulls back the covers and snuggles under the silky sheets and drifts off to SLEEP.

INT. FLORENCE POLICE PRECINCT - DAY

DREAM SEQUENCE

MARCO, a handsome Italian/American man comes out of a bathroom stall. He steps up to the sink and inspects his face in the mirror. He's looking directly at Cassie because she's on the other side of the mirror. He checks for food stuck in his teeth.

MARCO
(to himself)
Marco, you're as ugly as a hound dog.

He leaves the bathroom and heads down a nondescript hallway. Cassi follows at a distance like a sneaky stalker. People are talking around her, but we can't understand what they're saying. It seems jumbled. Marco speaks to two men in the hall in Italian. The room narrows strangely and darkly, then disappears.

END DREAM
SEQUENCE

INT. CASSI'S HOME - DAY

The alarm clock beeping jolts Cassi awake. Rolling over and blinking at the clock sends her groaning and out of bed.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Cassi pulls into a parking spot marked Director of Rehab at a skilled nursing facility. She gets out wearing scrubs, carrying a computer bag, and a lunch bag.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

That night, standing in front of a saucepan, Cassi slowly stirs. Going to the living-room, she grabs the tattered book and carries it to the kitchen. With one hip against the stove, she continues to stir the soup and reads;

EXT. FLORENCE STREETS - DAY

Angelo jogs down the street, his face is intent and focused. Running up a cobblestone alley he pounds on a door. He glances over his shoulder.

A deadbolt slides back and a woman's face appears in the narrow opening. Seeing the boy, EMMA Di Giorno (Italian woman in her thirties with long auburn hair) opens the ancient wooden door wider.

INT. ENTRY HALL - CONTINUOUS

EMMA

Come in Angelo. What's the matter?

Angelo's breath comes out in little puffs. His sweaty hair is stuck to his neck.

ANGELO

Zio Luca told me to run here and give this to you.

Angelo holds out the crumpled note.

She cautiously lifts it out of the boy's palm. Unfolding it, she reads it. Her hand goes to her chest and her breath catches.

ANGELO (cont'd)

Those bad men are back again.

Looking up, Emma slowly nods.

They stand looking at each other for a moment, then Emma grabs little Angelo's shoulders.

EMMA

(rapidly)

Go to the police station and ask for Detective Marco Marino. Show him this and he'll know what to do. Tell him I sent you. Run as fast as you can! Remember... Marco Marino!

Angelo runs out the door.

INT. PRECINCT - DAY

THESE RE-ENACTED SCENES ARE FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES THAN THE DREAMS

Detective Marco Marino stops at the bathroom mirror to check for food stuck in his teeth.

MARCO

Marco, you're as ugly as a hound dog.

He walks down the hall to his office.

INT. CASSI'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Cassi's hip comes off the stove.

CASSI

Marco? The guy from the dream?

She grins, but her grin fades and she looks puzzled.

Cassi pours the soup in a bowl. After settling into a chair at the small dining table, she arranges her bowl, spoon, and wine. After laying a cloth napkin on her lap, she picks up the book.

INT. EMMA'S HOME - DAY

Emma pulls a suitcase down from the closet shelf. Hurriedly she packs. She locks the front door behind her and scurries down the street.

INT. PRECINCT - DAY

Simultaneously the boy bursts through the police station doors. Frantically looking around, he spots the clerk, GIORGA, (heavy-set, Italian, high-pitched voice, compressed lips with a small mouth) looking at him over her reading glasses. Angelo barely reaches the counter, so he circles around to her side.

ANGELO

(panting)

I need Detective Marino, Marco Marino.

His fist clenches the wadded-up note.

GIORGA

Okay little man, calm down.

Giorga stands up and walks slowly to an office door. Angelo follows at her heels. Shooing him back, she opens the door.

GIORGA (cont'd)
Marino, a boy is here to see you.

Angelo tries to see under her ample arms, but she blocks him. A chair slides back on the tile floor and footsteps approach.

MARCO
Thanks Giorga, let him in.

Angelo pushes past Giorga and thrusts out his fist. As though his hand is cramped, he slowly opens it to reveal the paper.

Marco goes down on one knee to be eye-level with Angelo.

MARCO (cont'd)
What have we got here?

Marco reaches for the crumpled note.

ANGELO
It's from Zio Luca and Zia Emma told me to give it to you.

Angelo searches Marco's face as he reads the note.

ANGELO (cont'd)
The bad men are here again.

MARCO
(as he re-reads the
note)
The bad men?

Rising he carries it to his desk and holds the paper up to a magnifying glass.

ANGELO
Yes, they came before and they hurt my uncle. And, and, something happened because my aunt went away.

Angelo struggles to control his emotions.

MARCO
Do you live with your uncle?

Marco asks as he swings a lightweight suit jacket in an arc. As the jacket settles on Marco's shoulders, the holstered gun disappears from sight.

Angelo nods.

MARCO (cont'd)

Good.

Marco places one hand on the small shoulder.

MARCO (cont'd)

Let me give this to our evidence guy,
then I want you to take me there.

Before he hands it over to an officer at a large metal desk,
he pulls out his phone and takes a picture of it.

MARCO (cont'd)

Process it for fingerprints.

EXT. FLORENCE STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Stepping out into the late afternoon sunshine, Marco asks,

MARCO

What's your name?

ANGELO

Angelo Bertoli.

MARCO

(with a grunt)

Of course it is. You aren't by any
chance related to Adolfo Bertoli, as
in Bertoli Pharmaceuticals?

ANGELO

(over his shoulder)

He's my Nonno.

Marco watches the black curly hair bounce with each step.

MARCO

What's your aunt's name?

ANGELO

(over his shoulder)

Emma Di Giorno.

Angelo cuts down a side street and zigzags his way to the
Arno River. Crossing the river is like entering a different
world. It goes from shops to quiet residential. A couple
more side streets and Angelo slows his pace. His steps
falter.

MARCO
 Hey, Angelo, which house is it? I'll
 take it from here.

Marco pulls out a notebook and scribbles something on a
 page. Tearing it out, he hands it to Angelo.

MARCO (cont'd)
 Can you take this to the police
 station? I need to tell them to look
 for the bad guys, okay? Can you do
 that?

ANGELO
 (with a huff)
 We were just there.

Angelo points to the Bertoli door. He turns and jogs back
 the way they'd come.

Marco watches him until he's out of sight. Then he inspects
 the windows of the four-story brick mansion. There's a
 Lamborghini parked half on the sidewalk. He snaps a photo of
 the plates. A buzzer is next to the door with a placard
 reading BERTOLI. Marco presses the button and waits. He
 picks up a package sitting by the door.

ASSAILANT (V.O.)
 (gruffly through the
 speaker.)
 Yes?

Marco leans close to the microphone.

MARCO
 I have a package for Luca Bertoli.

ASSAILANT
 Leave it at the door.

MARCO
 No.
 (apologetic)
 You must sign for it.

ASSAILANT
 Come back later.

MARCO
 (grins)
 No.

Steps can be heard on the stairs. Several metallic clicks
 and slidings are followed by the door opening.

Luca Bertoli's face appears through the narrow opening. Marco puts his foot in the doorway. Bertoli's eyes meet Marco's with an intense pleading look. Marco holds up his smart phone with the photo of the note then hands Bertoli his notepad.

MARCO (cont'd)

Sign here.

Bertoli quickly scribbles on the pad and hands it to Marco. His eyes dart sideways behind the partially opened door. HELP ME is scribbled on the page.

Marco reads it and nods.

MARCO (cont'd)

I'll carry this up for you.

BERTOLI

That won't be necessary.

MARCO

I insist.

Marco places one hand against the door and draws his gun with the other.

Marco puts all his weight on the door and pushes. Chaos ensues as Bertoli scurries backwards, the opponent behind the door loses footing on the slick tile, and Marco bursts through into the entry hall as he shouts;

MARCO (cont'd)

Police!

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

A text alert makes her jump. Frustrated, Cassi reads it.

Grimacing, she stares at the phone for a moment. Cassi stands and takes her bowl to the sink. Returning to the table she grabs the wine and book. She heads to the couch, curls up in the corner, and pulls a blanket over her bare feet.

CASSI

(to the cat)

Do I want to go out with a bunch of
single girls Friday night?

The cat stares at her from her perch on the back of couch.

CASSI (cont'd)
You want me to stay home with you?
Okay.

Cassi texts her buddy: "Thanks for the invite, but I have plans."

The buddy texts back: "With the cat?"

Cassi's brows scrunch together. She texts a "frowning emoji" and picks up the book.

EXT./INT. PORCH AND ENTRYWAY BERTOLI MANSION - DAY

A rugged man (ROCCO, burly Italian with a scar across his face) approaches silently from the street.

Marco's attention is completely focused on the altercation with the assailant.

A switchblade swishes open as Rocco enters through the front door behind Marco.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

CASSI
Look behind you!

Anabelle's ears go back.

INT. ENTRYWAY BERTOLI MANSION - DAY

Marco looks behind him to the silently approaching Rocco. Whipping the guy he's fighting around, he presents an unwilling torso for the blade to slide into. Still holding the stabbed man up, Marco points his pistol at Rocco's face.

They lock eyes before the man turns and jogs away. Marco lowers the guy to the entryway floor.

MARCO
(to Bertoli)
Is there anyone else.

Bertoli shakes his head no.

Marco reaches into the wounded man's pocket and retrieves a key fob to the Lamborghini and a pistol that is tucked in his pants. Marco dials on his cell.

MARCO (cont'd)
Hey, Marino here, send a unit to
Oltrarno. Via Santa Monaca, by the
church.

(listens)
It's a short street! You're
overthinking this... there's a
Lamborghini out front. Hey, send an
ambulance too.

Hanging up he turns back to Luca Bertoli.

MARCO (cont'd)
Why don't we shut the door?

Marco suggests as he closes the heavy wood door.

MARCO (cont'd)
No need for a public scene, right?

Bertoli nods mutely as he stares at the man bleeding on his
white marble floor. A siren blares in the distance.

MARCO (cont'd)
Look at me Signor Bertoli. Are you
alone here?

BERTOLI
Yes, I'm alone, except the maid.

His eyes dart back to the bleeding man.

MARCO
Are you hurt? Is the maid okay?

BERTOLI
Yes, I mean yes the maid is okay.
(rakes a shaky hand
through his hair)
I'm okay.

He suddenly grabs Marco's shoulders and whispers intensely;

BERTOLI (cont'd)
Thank you... I owe you my life.

MARCO
No you don't. I'm a public servant.
It's my job.

Marco assures him as he looks into Bertoli's eyes. Pulling
away he glances at his cell phone again.

MARCO (cont'd)

They're here.

Opening the door, he ushers in two more cops and a plainclothesman (FERSINI, captain, older Italian) who looks curiously at Marco.

FERSINI

What are you doing here?

MARCO

Hey boss. Signor Bertoli sent his nephew to the headquarters to get me.

They all turn to Luca Bertoli.

BERTOLI

No, I didn't!

Bertoli glances meaningfully at the crumpled man on the floor. At that moment the ambulance comes screaming to a stop at the door. They open it and let the paramedics take over the space.

Marco escorts Bertoli up the stairs with Fersini trailing behind. At the top of the steps another door opens to a massive room with sparkling chandeliers and luxurious rugs scattered about the marble floor.

BERTOLI (cont'd)

I sent Angelo to Emma's house.

(shrugs)

She must have told Angelo to go to you.

FERSINI

What made you think you needed help?

BERTOLI

It was just the first thing I thought of. You know my brother and sister-in-law were murdered. I wanted Emma to know these men were back.

Marco and Fersini exchange a glance.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

Groaning, Cassi pushes herself up to the edge of the couch and straightens her legs from their cramped position. She pads down the hall to the bathroom and takes her vitamins. She crawls into bed. Curling into the fetal position she falls asleep.

INT. BERTOLI MANSION - DAY

DREAM SEQUENCE

Cassi is dusting a bookshelf. She's wearing a ridiculous looking maid's outfit. She moves to the next room where Marco is talking to Bertoli. She dusts a table in the corner while keeping an eye on the two men.

Marco glances at her and nods politely.

Cassi freezes with her duster extended towards a vase. She struggles to move but can't. Marco is watching her with a puzzled look on his face. Bertoli turns to look and sees nothing.

END DREAM
SEQUENCE

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

Anabelle's indignant howl jars Cassi awake.

Sitting up in bed, Cassi looks wildly around the room for a moment. Her cat stares at her from the floor with flattened ears.

CASSI
Jeez Anabelle!

Her breathing is labored.

CASSI (cont'd)
I'm sorry I hit you. I was dreaming I
was frozen like a statue.

Swinging her legs over the side of the bed, she reaches down to pet the cat's little head. Glancing at the clock Cassi groans. Getting up she steps around the cat to go into the bathroom. The nightlight shining upward casts an eerie blue glow on her face. Leaning against the vanity she inspects herself.

CASSI (cont'd)
What's the deal here? Maybe I'm
taking too much melatonin?

Crawling back in bed, she snuggles up to the pillow and lays with staring eyes.

INT. REHAB GYM - DAY

At the end of the day, an elderly man, FRED (wheelchair bound, partially paralyzed on one side, thick glasses) rolls up to Cassi's tiny office in his wheelchair.

FRED
Why're you still here? You should've been gone hours ago.

CASSI
(not looking)
Because I get interrupted constantly.

Cassi says pointedly as she flips through the pile of documents with one hand and maneuvers the mouse with her other hand. She clicks as she glanced back and forth between the screen and the paperwork.

FRED
You need to go home.

Cassi glances up to see if he's serious.

CASSI
(turns back to the screen)
I'm almost done. This HMO report is due tomorrow.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Tucking her feet under her butt on the couch, and making sure her wine is within reach, she opens the book.

INT. BERTOLI MANSION - DAY

When Fersini leaves, Bertoli turns to Marco.

BERTOLI
The less people who know about this, the better. My days are numbered as it is.

MARCO
Who do you think is responsible for this? Why'd you call me?

BERTOLI
I didn't call you--Emma did.

Marco maintains his expectant expression.

BERTOLI (cont'd)
Okay, I told Emma if I have another
encounter she was to contact you.

A woman (Cassi) comes in the room wearing a weird maids
costume. Marco nods politely at her.

MARCO
Who do you think is responsible for
this?

He repeats while keeping his eyes on the maid who appears to
be struggling to move. Her arm is extended with the duster
fluttering as she wiggles.

BERTOLI
The Scutari Family.

Marco looks at Bertoli and sighs.

When he glances back to the maid, she's gone.

MARCO
As in Severino Scutari?

Bertoli nods mutely.

INT. PRECINCT - CONTINUOUS

Marco strides through the precinct door.

Giorga is at her desk looking busy. She stops typing to
stare disdainfully at him over her reading glasses.

GIORGA
Busy morning?

MARCO
Yep.

He goes straight to his office. Closing his door with a
snap, Marco goes to his computer and clicks the mouse. He
starts typing fast.

He walks down the hall to Fersini's office, who waves him
in. Marco tosses the report on the desk.

Sitting down Marco starts with a question.

MARCO (cont'd)
Do you know the Scutari Family?

Leaning back in his office chair, Fersini nods.

FERSINI

Of course.

MARCO

Bertoli says the Scutaris are behind this attack because he won't give into their coercion and blackmail. I advised him to send the little guy away.

FERSINI

What little guy?

MARCO

The nephew, Angelo. He came here and got you.

FERSINI

Why don't you start at the beginning,
It's Marco's turn to lean back.

MARCO

Do you know Emelia di Giorno?

FERSINI

Doesn't ring a bell.

MARCO

I met her in the U.S. a long time ago. Our parents were friends. This morning Angelo Bertoli went to her and gave her this message from Luca Bertoli; *The bad men are here again.*

FERSINI

(raises one brow)
The bad men are here again? That's all you had to go on?

MARCO

According to Angelo, the bad guys refers to some entity who harmed his uncle previously.

Marco slides the wrinkled note across the desk.

MARCO (cont'd)

Let me recap... here's a time line. First the arrival of the note. I had Angelo guide me to his uncle's home. Then I sent him here to get him out of the way.

(MORE)

MARCO (cont'd)

I buzzed the door to the mansion, Bertoli answered, showing obvious signs of distress through the narrow opening. I suspected someone was with Bertoli. He wrote on my notepad, *Help me*. In the scuffle one man was wounded... by his partner's knife--

FERSINI

--mortally wounded.

MARCO

Ah, he died?... Scar-face escaped. I chose to stay and interview Bertoli because I didn't want to leave him alone with the guy on the floor.

FERSINI

Wait.

(holds up a hand)

So Bertoli believes Scutari is behind this?

Marco nods as he tips back the metal chair.

Fersini groans and pinches the bridge of his large nose.

FERSINI (cont'd)

Does it get any worse?

MARCO

(stands)

Probably.

With a casual salute, Marco leaves.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

Cassi glances up at the clock and groans. She shuts the book and stretches. She walks slowly down the hall to her room. Anabelle is already curled up in the center of the bed.

EXT. FLORENCE STREETS - DAY

DREAM SEQUENCE

Cassi twirls as she crosses the Piazza del Duomo between the massive Duomo and its baptistry. She stops to stare at the giant bronze doors of the baptistry.

When she turns toward the Duomo, she sees Marco striding past her. He's on his cell.

Cassi trails along.

Marco glances over his shoulder as he walks and talks on his cell. Cassi's a couple of feet behind him. She smiles. Marco's step falters and resumes.

Marco looks at Cassi again, who's still the exact same distance behind him.

Marco stops in his tracks and faces Cassi. She almost runs into him. They stand for a split-second staring at each other.

His phone buzzes a text alert. He looks down.

END DREAM
SEQUENCE

INT. CASSI'S HOME - DAY

Cassi stands in the shower with wet hair and a towel wrapped around her.

In pajama bottoms and tank-top, she pads down the hall to the kitchen. Unplugging her cell phone, she checks her messages

Next she texts her sister: "Can we meet for coffee."

EXT. CAFE - DAY

KATE waves from a bistro table in the shade. Cassi goes inside to order. Coming out, she flops into the chair and gives a weak smile.

Kate's face changes to real concern.

KATE
Hey Sissy, what's up? Are you okay?

Cassi slowly shakes her head as her eyes well with tears. She fiercely blinks them back.

CASSI
I need you to take me seriously with what I'm about to tell you.

KATE
I always take you seriously!

CASSI
(small smile.)
No, no you don't.

KATE
Well, okay... not always. What's
going on? Are you terminally ill or
something?

Looking down, Cassi fiddles with her napkin. Taking a deep
breath, she looks pleadingly at her sister.

KATE (cont'd)
What's up?

CASSI
I think I need help, like maybe I'm
having a nervous breakdown or
something.

KATE
Are they over-working you again at
that stupid hospital?

CASSI
No, nothing more than usual.
(holds up a hand)
Really. I know it's a stressful job,
but I've been doing it for a long
time, and I kinda like it.

KATE
And?

Cassi sips her iced coffee. She heaved a huge sigh.

CASSI
Okay, I got this old tattered garage
sale book about this detective in
Florence, Italy. And, and... well, I
can't stop thinking about him. About
the story... about the guy. I feel
like I'm somehow being pulled into
the story.
(looks up seriously)
Like, really being pulled into the
story.

KATE
I don't get it, so it's a really-
really good book?

Cassi shrugs restlessly.

CASSI

No. I mean I dream about it. I dream about things before I read it. Then the next day when I read the book, there it is! And Marco sees me--

KATE

--Marco?

CASSI

Yes.

KATE

In your dream?

CASSI

Yes. No, well both, but usually in the dream.

Cassi waves her arm around helplessly.

CASSI (cont'd)

I mean once I think he saw me when I was dusting the Bertoli Mansion.

After a long pause.

KATE

What's the name of the book?

CASSI

The Scutari Legacy.

Kate says nothing.

CASSI (cont'd)

I don't know what to do? Am I crazy?

KATE

Well, yeah. That seems fairly obvious. I just don't know in what way. I've never heard of someone having a relationship with a book character. Is he cute, this Marco dude?

CASSI

Oh yeah, gorgeous.

KATE

And he sees you?

CASSI
That's what is freaking me out! The last time I dreamt about him he definitely saw me.

KATE
No, he didn't because it's not real-- it's a dream! In the dream you saw each other, and rode a pretty pink pony together! It's a dream, Cassi.

CASSI
But when I read the book, he saw me.

KATE
He saw you, or did he see a woman? A woman you want to be?

Kate holds a hand up at Cassi's impatient gesture.

KATE (cont'd)
Don't get defensive. I'm asking good questions.

CASSI
(hangs her head)
I know.

KATE
You need to throw it away.

CASSI
I haven't read it since Wednesday, but it's all I think about. It's consuming me.

KATE
Are you still dreaming about him?

CASSI
No. That only seems to happen when I'm reading it.

Kate gently puts her hand over Cassi's.

KATE
You should probably get rid of it.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - DAY

When Cassi gets home, she goes straight to the book and opens it.

EXT. FLORENCE STREETS - DAY

Marco sets off towards his apartment. As he cuts across the Piazza del Duomo, he pulls out his phone.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - DAY

Cassi scrambles to close the book. She immediately goes to her garage and puts the book in the garbage pail next to the back door. With a forced calm, she goes down the hall to the spare room and rummages through her book shelf.

EXT. CASSI'S YARD - CONTINUOUS

Cassi goes out to her garden, settles into her chaise lounge and opens Jane Eyre.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

That night Cassi plops on the couch with her laptop and searches Duomo Florence on the internet. Clicking the images icon, she gives a deep sigh of wonder. The baptistry doors fill the screen.

Later, Cassi sits in the dark room. The laptop screen has gone dark. Anabelle is sprawled out next to her. She glances at the clock. Setting the laptop aside, she heads down the hall to bed.

She wakes up at three in the morning and stares, unblinking at the ceiling.

CASSI (V.O.)
(internal dialogue)
God, I need help. I asked for a good man, one I'd love and respect.

She rolls to her side in the fetal position.

CASSI (V.O.) (cont'd)
(internal dialogue)
But, God, I meant a real human. How could I possibly have a relationship with Marco? He's not even real.

A tear slowly slides into the pillowcase.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - DAY

Anabelle watches curiously from her cat-tower while Cassi puts her running shoes on and grabs her key.

She comes back red-faced and sweaty. She rummages through her fridge.

She sets her coffee table with a placemat, cloth napkin, and a wineglass. Her eyes go to the garage DOOR as she prepares the meal. She scoops spaghetti on her plate. Sitting down, she turns the TV on.

As soon as the show's over, she cleans up. Her eyes stray to the garage DOOR again.

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Cassi's in the garage. Like an addict she tentatively pulls the book out of the can. It opens to the last page she'd been on.

EXT. FLORENCE STREETS - DAY

Marco sets off towards his apartment. As he cuts across the Piazza del Duomo, he pulls out his cell.

EMMA (V.O.)

Mark, I'm so scared.

MARCO

Don't tell me where you are. I don't want to know. I just want to know you're safe.

EMMA (V.O.)

I'm safe, but I'm worried about my family, Mark.

MARCO

Well, that's legit.

EMMA (V.O.)

Anyway, how can I help you?

MARCO

Let's meet.

Marco glances over his shoulder to see the maid (Cassi) a couple of feet behind him.

She smiles. Marco's step falters and resumes.

As soon as he hangs up, he turns to see if she's still there and almost runs into her. Their eyes lock. His phone beeps. Marco glances down and back up and she's gone.

He stands scanning the crowd from the steps of the Duomo. She's simply gone. Marco shrugs and continues his journey home. He texts Fersini. "Following a lead. Be back tomorrow afternoon."

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

Cassi carries the book into the house and curls up on the couch:

EXT. FLORENCE STREETS - DAY

In a narrow winding alley, Marco digs his keys out of his pocket and stops at a door. A dog immediately starts barking and leaping at the door.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As he enters, he hands JACK a dog treat and pats him on the head.

MARCO

Good boy.

The brown and black mutt wags his entire body with joy. Jack follows him to the kitchen, panting. Marco goes down the hall.

MARCO (cont'd)

Come on Jack, let's go for a walk.

Jack barks as he prances around Marco's feet. Marco tries to get the halter on the dog.

MARCO (cont'd)

Sit still!

Jack freezes just long enough to get the leash hooked and then he drags Marco through the front door.

INT. CASSI'S HOME NIGHT - NIGHT

Cassi flips the book shut and rearranges her legs under her butt. She sits deep in thought. She's relaxed. Getting up she finishes the last sip of the wine and carries it to the kitchen.

EXT. FLORENCE STREETS DAY

DREAM SEQUENCE

Cassi follows Marco down an alley. They approach a crowded corner. Marco steps into a shop. Cassi furtively looks around the doorway. He's at an ice cream counter.

Cassi goes in and grabs the next gelato the teen sets in an ice cream cone holder. He looks stunned at the empty holder.

Out in the alley, she takes her first lick. A masculine chuckle draws her attention. Marco is watching her with a grin on his face. Cassi smiles back and takes a big bite.

He steps toward her and is immediately cut off by the crowd. She feels herself being drawn by an invisible dream-force backwards. Finding herself on the next street, she resumes eating the gelato.

Marco comes around the corner, walking toward her, but a man is behind him... following him. She tries to speak but is unable, so she points dramatically over Marco's shoulder.

END DREAM
SEQUENCE

INT. SNF - DAY

Cassi's working at her pc when Fred peeks around the corner.

CASSI

Hi Fred. Give me a second to get this
in the computer. I'm almost done.

Fred nods and quietly watches her work as he slowly rolls back and forth using his feet.

When she finishes, she rolls toward him in her office chair. He backs up and lets her pass. Cassi props her feet up on the treatment mat.

FRED

You're working late again.

He comments in his gravelly voice. The left side of his face is slack. Drool forms at the left corner of his mouth.

She nods.

CASSI

End of the month.

She reaches up and swipes the corner of her own mouth as a hint. He wipes his mouth with his right hand.

FRED

You seem preoccupied lately.

CASSI

I think I may be losing my mind.

FRED

(laughs)

Well, you're in good company!

CASSI

I'm serious, Fred. I'm so obsessed with this book I'm reading, I even dream about it. But that's not all. The stuff I dream about hasn't happened yet in the book. Then I read it the next day and viola! There's the scene I dreamt. It's creepy.

FRED

You probably read it a long time ago and don't remember.

Cassi stares blankly at him.

FRED (cont'd)

Or maybe you're going crazy. Is it a good book?

CASSI

Yeah, it's a detective story set in Florence, Italy.

(shakes her head)

But, that's the thing... I've seen places in my dreams that I've never been too.

FRED

Never even seen pictures?

CASSI

I don't think so, I mean I've seen pictures of the Duomo and the Ponte Vecchio I guess, but never the baptistry doors. And I looked up pictures of the baptistry doors. They look exactly like I saw in my dream.

They sit silently thinking. Fred rolls back and forth. Cassi sinks her chin to her chest.

CASSI (cont'd)
Do you think I'm losing my mind?

He doesn't answer right away.

FRED
Well, it isn't normal, so we have two options here; One, it's mental. You are imagining this entire scenario. Kinda like a hallucination. Or maybe you're creating an alternate world because this world isn't working for you.

CASSI
(long pause)
What's the other option?

FRED
It's true.

CASSI
It's true?

FRED
Yeah. There're lots of things in this world we don't understand. Like paranormal activity and stuff. Or mind readers or psychics, you know?

CASSI
(with a laugh)
I don't believe in that stuff.

FRED
You believing in it, or not believing in it, doesn't make it true or false.

CASSI
But what do I do about it? I can't just keep going on like this.

FRED
Why not?

Fred blinks owlishly behind his thick glasses.

FRED (cont'd)
It's not hurting anyone. Pretty soon you'll finish the book and everything will go back to the same old boring way it was before. I say have fun.
(MORE)

FRED (cont'd)
 Try to figure out a way to
 communicate with him... what's his
 name... the detective?

CASSI
 Marco. Funny you should say that--
 I've tried. For some reason in my
 dreams, I'm usually mute. At least I
 am with him. One time I pointed at
 the bad guy. That saved his life--see
 what I mean! I'm losing it.

Taking a deep breath, she blurts out.

CASSI (cont'd)
 In the actual book, I've read about a
 woman who I think is me. In last
 night's dream, we had a gelato
 together. I can't wait to get home
 and read it to see if the book talks
 about it.

(leans forward)
 I'm going give him a note with my
 name on it.

Fred nods and rolls back his chair.

FRED
 Get home and read it and let me know
 tomorrow how it goes.

He pauses and turns back towards her.

FRED (cont'd)
 I think giving him the note is a good
 idea.

CASSI
 So you don't think I'm crazy?

FRED
 (over his shoulder)
 I didn't say that.

EXT. CASSI'S YARD - DAY

Cassi comes outside wearing a baggy sundress, carrying a
 salad and her book. She sits at her bistro table on the back
 porch and eagerly opens the book:

INT. PRECINCT - DAY

Marco enters the precinct. He sails past Giorga as she stares at him over her reading glasses. He sits at his desk and studies his old-style desk-calendar.

He stands abruptly and goes down the hall to Fersini's office. Marco finds him hunched over his keyboard with a look of grim determination on his face.

MARCO

Hey boss, what's up? You look unhappy.

Fersini leans back in his chair with a huff.

FERSINI

I'm just trying to do this report using the new documentation program.

MARCO

(laughs)
We'll figure it out.

Marco shuts the door behind him and sits down.

MARCO (cont'd)

Someday this will seem ridiculously easy to us.

FERSINI

Yeah, then they'll come up with something new. Did you pick up any intel?

MARCO

I did, and I want your permission to go south to follow a lead. I imagine I'll be gone for several days.

FERSINI

Several days? Where?

MARCO

I'd rather not say, sir.

They eye each other for a moment and then Fersini nods.

MARCO (cont'd)

I'll keep in contact.

EXT. FLORENCE STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Marco's POV. He steps out into an alley with his cone as Cassi steps in. He watches her through the window from the crowded alley as she goes up to the counter. When she comes out she tosses her shimmering blonde hair over her shoulder and takes a dainty lick.

She looks him directly in the eye and takes a big bite. He smiles. As he takes a step toward her, the crowd cuts him off. He watches in frustration as she scurries backwards and turns the far corner of the block... all the while going backwards. It's the weirdest thing to see. Marco turns around and goes the other direction.

As soon as he steps into the adjacent alley, he sees her coming towards him. His step falters when she starts opening and closing her mouth like a fish out of water. Is she choking? Then she starts pointing behind him like a pantomime acting out a drama.

Marco can't resist the urge to look over his shoulder and stops in his tracks to face his adversary--Lorenzo Scutari.

LORENZO

Officer Marino, you've been busy lately.

MARCO

Detective Marino. It's a busy town.

He waves his ice-cream cone nonchalantly.

LORENZO

My family seems to interest you.

Lorenzo straightens his perfect cuff.

MARCO

Every family interests me. Your family just happens to be big... and busy.

Marco's attention is diverted by the sound of pebbles being scuffed. He turns around and sees Rocco approaching. Cassi is gone.

MARCO (cont'd)

(sarcastic)

A cousin, perhaps?

LORENZO

As you said, it's a big family.

He steps to the side to keep both in view.

MARCO

Okay, what do you want with me?

LORENZO

(quiet monotone voice)

It seems you are a little confused about how things work here in Italy. We are not in your wild-west. Here people protect each other. The stronger families take care of the weaker ones. The Scutaris have a great responsibility.

MARCO

As a stronger family?

LORENZO

Yes, we are blessed to be able to care for our little brothers and sisters.

MARCO

At a cost?

LORENZO

Our responsibility to protect is expensive. We only need some help to defray the costs... similar to having a security system installed.

They look at each other silently for a moment.

MARCO

Even if they don't want it?

LORENZO

If your child didn't want your protection, wouldn't you insist on it... for their own good?

MARCO

I'm not talking about little children. I'm referring to adults who can and want to take care of themselves. They want to spend their money on the security system of their choice.

Marco licks his gelato calmly.

LORENZO

That's the American in you talking. Italians are different. They depend on their stronger families. You wouldn't understand.

MARCO

You're right. I don't understand. But I do understand Italian law, and it's against the law to force someone to pay for a service they don't want.

LORENZO

Has someone complained?

MARCO

Are we done here? Or do you have a police question for me?

After Lorenzo stares hard at Marco, who returns his glare unflinchingly, he finally signals Rocco with a twitch of his head. They both walk away.

Marco watches them until they turn the corner as he munches his gelato. Then he turns and walks the opposite direction.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Two hours later he's on the high-speed train.

EXT. CASSINO STREETS - DAY

DREAM SEQUENCE

Cassi is sitting on a bus-stop bench looking around curiously. A bus stops before her and opens the door. Cassi jumps up and trots over and climbs in. It seems incredibly long from the inside. The bus driver doesn't acknowledge her, so Cassi waves her hand in front of his eyes.

END DREAM
SEQUENCE

EXT. CASSI'S YARD

Cassi jolts awake and stretches. She picks up the book from the ground and starts reading again.

EXT. CASSINO STREETS - DAY

Marco strolls down the busy business street in Cassino, Lazio.

INT. SECURITY GADGET STORE - CONTINUOUS

Marco enters a security-system store.

GIAN

Can I help you?

Marco turns to answer GIAN SCUTARI (Gian is pronounced as John, tall slim, similar in looks to Lorenzo)

MARCO

No, I don't need help. I'm just fascinated with security gadgets. You have quite a variety of devices.

GIAN

Thank you. It's my job and my passion.

MARCO

I've seen a lot of different systems over the years that's for sure.

GIAN

Do you have a favorite?

Marco swings his gaze back to Gian.

MARCO

In my experience, the effective ones are the ones people remember to turn on.

GIAN

(laughs.)

Yes, they are more effective that way. Do you live in the area?

MARCO

I'm actually down here on vacation from Florence. Tomorrow morning I head over to Alvito.

GIAN

Alvito? Why Alvito?

MARCO

It's supposed to be a quiet and peaceful little town. Do you know it?

GIAN

Yes, actually I live there.

Marco feigns surprise.

MARCO

I'll be there for a couple of days. Maybe we can meet for a coffee or dinner? I'd love to hear a little about the town from a local.

Gian pulls a business card out of his wallet.

GIAN

Shoot me a text when you get there, and we'll set up a coffee date. There's a great café overlooking the valley.

Marco tucks the card in his wallet.

MARCO

Thanks, I'll be there before noon. By the way, I'm Marco Marino.

GIAN

Gian Scutari.

They shake hands, and Marco leaves with a satisfied smile on his face.

INT. BUS - DAY

The next morning he hops on a bus with his duffel bag. He takes a seat in the back. At the next stop, he sees Cassi climb aboard. She waves her hand in front of the driver's face, but the driver doesn't react.

EXT./INT. CASSI'S YARD AND HOME - NIGHT

Cassi flips the book over and stares dreamily across the yard. Abruptly she laughs and stands up. Before going to bed, she writes her NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESS on a piece of paper. She sits on her bed and ponders the piece of paper. Her pajamas don't have pockets. She finally puts it in her palm and wraps a rubber-band around her hand.

INT. BUS - DAY

DREAM SEQUENCE

Cassi walks down the crowded aisle of the bus. She can see Marco watching her. She has a moment of crushing shyness and freezes in her steps. She sinks into the nearest seat.

The bus rolls through the countryside. Cassi opens her hand and looks at the crumpled note. She tries to casually look over shoulder to see Marco. He looks straight back in eyes. Cassi whips her head back around.

At the little hillside town of Alvito, she scrambles off the bus and hurries down a narrow lane. It comes to a dead end. Marco stands at the top of the lane looking down. Cassi watches him slowly walk down the slope -- sexy as hell. She's trapped. Her breath comes in little puffs. He's five feet away from her when she holds out her hand, palm up with the folded paper fluttering in the breeze.

His lips move, but his voice delays and echos like in a tunnel.

MARCO

Who are you?

Her throat refuses to function. She looks mutely at him and vanishes.

END DREAM
SEQUENCE

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

The ceiling in her bedroom appears. Cassi bursts into tumultuous tears and buries her face in her pillow. She finally flops on her back and stares at her ceiling. Anabelle hops up on the bed and hovers over her. Giving a little meow, she sits down and watches Cassi.

CASSI

(whispers)

Hello sweetie, Momma's back. Though
someday I may not be.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - DAY

The next morning as she sits on the edge of the bed, she looks at her empty palm.

CASSI

The note.

She searches her bed, but it's not there. She rushes to the kitchen for her cell phone to see if she's gotten an email. Sticking out her bottom lip in a pout, she finishes getting ready for work. A DING-DING from her phone sends her flying to it. An email! She opens it and looks disappointed. With a dramatic sigh, she leaves for work.

INT. SNF - DAY

Cassi comes out of an office with a group of coworkers. Fred is sitting at the front door watching people come and go. She bends down and whispers in his ear.

CASSI

Wait 'til you hear what happened last night!

Fred gives his lopsided grin.

That evening as she sits before her computer, Fred rolls into the doorway.

FRED

Well?

CASSI

Just a sec.

She types the last entry. Digging in her heels, she wheels out into the gym on her little round clinical stool.

CASSI (cont'd)

It happened again. I did what you said and wrote my name and email address on a piece of paper. I rubber-banded it to my hand, and in my dream I held it out to him.

FRED

Did he take it?

CASSI

I don't know. It was fluttering in a breeze and then I woke up.

Fred looks skeptical.

CASSI (cont'd)

(importantly)

I searched my room and can't find it.

INT./EXT. CASSI'S HOME/YARD - DAY

As soon as she gets home, she leaves for a run.

Then she gets her dinner, her wine, the book AND her phone.

Elbowing the sliding door open, she heads for her bistro table to read.

INT. BUS - DAY

Marko's POV: Cassi, wearing faded jeans and a t-shirt, walks down the bus aisle. Marco watches as she recognizes him and freezes. She slides into the nearest seat. Marco chuckles. He laughs again when she tries to slyly look back at him. She whips her head back around.

EXT. ALVITO STREETS - CONTINUOUS

In Alvito, she scrambles off the bus and quickly walks away. He keeps her in sight until he gets off the bus and follows her. She rabbits down a dead-end alley. She looks frightened as he approaches.

Suddenly she thrusts out a hand with a piece of paper fluttering in the breeze--then she vanishes. Marco stands staring at the spot where she'd been standing. He looks around, but there's nowhere she could've gone. He looks stunned.

EXT. ALVITO COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Later, Marco walks around the corner on a steep hill. He pauses at the hairpin turn to look out over the valley. He resumes his climb up the steep road until he stops and looks up at the stone walls of a villa.

The sound of a car alerts him to keep moving. Marco is walking away when he hears his name called out. Turning, he waves and walks to the sleek little sports-car. Gian sits watching him suspiciously.

MARCO

I thought I'd check out the castle.
(points up the road)
Am I almost there?

GIAN

Almost. Just around the corner.

MARCO

Whew, good thing. I don't think I could go much further. Do you live up here?

Marco asks as he looks away over the valley. When Gian doesn't answer, he looks back at him. Gian is still looking at Marco.

GIAN

Yeah, I live up here.

MARCO

It's beautiful, so I'll see you at the Café Dolce at two?

Gian nods and watches Marco walk off.

EXT. CASTLE - CONTINUOUS

Marco sits on the castle wall looking out.

MARCO

(to himself)

I wonder what was on that paper?

EXT. CASSI'S HOME - DAY

CASSI

What?

Cassi abandons her meal and goes into her room and searches again. Finally she gets on her hands and knees and finds the crumpled paper under the bed. Sitting on her heels, she forlornly fiddles with the paper.

CASSI (cont'd)

Oh well, I'll try again tonight.

She goes back to her dinner and continues reading:

EXT. ALVITO CAFE - DAY

Quickly scanning the tiny establishment, Marco picks a seat facing the door. Gian comes in moments later.

They order espressos and pastries and sit in the corner overlooking the green valley.

GIAN

So, where's the accent from? America?

MARCO

Yes. Born here, raised there, came back here. Now I live in Florence. How about you? Were you born here?

GIAN

No, no. I was born in Florence. I have a lot of family there. A big family.

MARCO

I love Florence. But look at this.
(waves a hand toward
the window)
This is amazing. The castle I walked up to was great and nobody there... no guides or anything. In Florence there's a placard for every stone.

GIAN

Castello di Alvito. It's a peaceful place. My children love it. It's nice to have a place where they can play and be safe.

MARCO

Safer than Florence, for sure. We've got the gangs and the old mob families. Is there much crime here?

GIAN

No mob families down here. Too quiet. Too poor. The Church was the ruling power for centuries, but those days are gone. Now it's just a sleepy little valley full of museums and artifacts, but I don't miss Florence.

MARCO

Do you miss your family?

GIAN

Not all families are fun to be around... mine isn't.

Marco stays silent.

GIAN (cont'd)

I shouldn't have said that. It's not their fault I'm so different. I think I was born into the wrong family. I'm the second to youngest of nine.

(MORE)

GIAN (cont'd)
My father and older brothers are
arrogant and cruel. All they care
about is power.

Marco pulls the business card out of his pocket to look at
it.

MARCO
Scutari sounds familiar. Is it an old
family name?

Gian nods.

MARCO (cont'd)
How does your family feel about you
living so far away?

Gian gives the elegant Italian shrug.

GIAN
Father feels I should be closer, but
Mother understands. She keeps my
brothers and father in line for me.
Really, she's the only reason I go to
Florence.

MARCO
What about your sisters?

GIAN
They married and two moved away as
quickly as possible. So, how about
you? Are you married with a house
full of babies?

Marco laughs.

MARCO
No, I'm not married. I've never met a
woman who interested me enough.

GIAN
What do you do for a living?

MARCO
I'm a detective. When I worked in
Chicago, there were mob families that
would harass local businesses and
then offer to protect said businesses
from the mob's harassment. What a
scam. I was on a task force to take
down these bullies, so I have a
little, uh... experience.

GIAN
Did you succeed?

MARCO
In some cases.

They sit for a moment munching their pastries.

GIAN
How about a home cooked meal?
Tomorrow night at my house?

MARCO
I'd love that.

EXT. ALVITO COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

DREAM SEQUENCE

Cassi struggles to climb a steep incline. Marco's hand appears. She takes it and he yanks her up like she weighs nothing to land on her feet next to him.

They stare silently at each other. Without a word he turns and continues walking with her hand still in his. He leads her to the edge of the castle wall to a majestic view of the green valley.

He looks at her and smiles.

Cassi opens her mouth to speak, but he stops her with a finger to her lips.

MARCO
No. Don't speak. It seems that every
time you try to say something, you
disappear.

He drops his hand. She smiles and nods.

MARCO (cont'd)
I wish I knew more about you though.
You don't look Italian.

She shakes her head no.

MARCO (cont'd)
Let's sit and enjoy the view. Sound
good?

Cassi looks around and points to a flat spot on top of the wall. They sit side by side for a long time.

MARCO (cont'd)
So, you're not Italian. Are you
English?

She turns to him attentively as she shakes her head no.

MARCO (cont'd)
European? No? Okay, how about
American? Yes, okay. We're getting
somewhere. Why are you here?

Cassi opens her mouth to answer, but the air warbles and he
slides away from her.

END DREAM
SEQUENCE

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

She sits on her couch in the dark. Anabelle comes in and
gives a tentative meow.

CASSI
Hi sweety. Come on up here and let's
have a cuddle. I need to talk. Funny
I should say that. That's actually my
biggest problem right now. I can't
talk in my dreams with Marco. Can I
be honest with you?

Anabelle closes her eyes as she purrs.

CASSI (cont'd)
I'm really, really frustrated that he
can't hear me. I mean I try to make
myself heard, but nothing comes out.
Maybe this psychosis is a
manifestation of my shyness. Here I
am, finally trying to communicate
with a guy I actually like and he
can't hear me. To add to that, if I
try too hard, we are separated. I
mean really, Anabelle, does that seem
fair to you?

Cassi slides down a little to rest her head against the back
of the couch and props her feet on the ottoman. She strokes
Anabelle's fur as she talks.

CASSI (cont'd)
I wonder if he's real? I want so
badly to communicate with him.

She sighs as she lazily looks out the window into the darkness.

CASSI (cont'd)
I forgot to give him my email
address.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - DAY

Cassi wakes in the morning in her bed. She swings her legs to the side and massages her neck. She stumbles into the kitchen and starts the coffee pot.

In the bathroom she stares at herself in the mirror.

CASSI
This is becoming a habit, missy.

INT. SNF - DAY

Cassi's at her desk. She hears the approach of a wheelchair and sighs. It's Fred. He pulls up to her tiny office.

FRED
Bad timing?

CASSI
Sorta. But I need to eat, so I might
as well stop for a minute.

She closes the file she's working on and pulls her bowl of leftovers closer.

FRED
Whatcha got today?

CASSI
Just chicken soup. What did you have?

FRED
Some unidentifiable meat and mushy
veggies.

CASSI
You're on a soft food diet. What'd
you expect?

He doesn't answer as he rolls back and forth.

FRED
How's your romance coming along with
the Italian detective?

Cassi rolls her eyes as she chews.

CASSI
I never should've told you.
(around her food.)

Fred grins unrepentantly.

She chews her next bite slowly.

CASSI (cont'd)
I'm still dreaming about him and his
story. I still can't speak. Every
time I try, the dream ends. The last
dream he asked me questions and I
nodded yes or no.

FRED
Sounds like twenty questions.

She nods.

FRED (cont'd)
Did you give him your information
yet? I mean on the piece of paper?

CASSI
No. I forgot.

At his look of disbelief, she says;

CASSI (cont'd)
I was caught up in the moment.
(scoots closer)
It was beautiful, Fred. To the south
of Rome is this beautiful valley.
It's so green. And we went to an
abandoned castle and sat on the wall
together.
(lowers her voice)
We held hands.

Fred stares at her for a moment, then wags his shaggy head.

FRED
Maybe I shouldn't have encouraged
this.

CASSI
(laughs)
You're probably right. It's all your
fault. Well, I'd better get back to
work. See ya around.

She rolls backwards to her desk, and he spins his wheelchair around and disappears.

INT./EXT. CASSI'S YARD/HOME - DAY

The next day, a Saturday, she wakes up late and refreshed. She pours herself a cup of coffee and sits out in the yard in her pajamas with her book.

EXT. ALVITO STREETS - DAY

That evening Marco turns into the yard of Gian's home. A stout dog, DUCA, trots up to him. Marco stands still while the hound sniffs his pant-leg. When the dog's tongue flops out and its tail wags, he knocks on the door.

INT/EXT. GIAN'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Gian swings the door wide and waves Marco in. BERNADETTA Scutari comes forward with a hand extended. Marco politely takes it and they kiss each other's cheeks. He pulls a bouquet of flowers from behind his back. Her face lights up with feminine joy. She thanks him profusely and rushes off to the kitchen.

Two young girls bounce into the room and crowd at their father's legs. AGATA looks shyly up at him, while her bigger sister, IZABELLA, smiles at him. A teenage boy, SAMUEL, rises from a chair to come solemnly forward to shake Marco's hand.

GIAN

Would you like a beer or a glass of wine?

MARCO

I'll have wine, please.

Marco follows him to the spacious kitchen.

Gian gathers a bottle and two glasses and leads the way past the kitchen to the large open glass doors. The paved patio commands an amazing view of the valley. Gian waves to a set of chairs placed around a low table. He pours a glass of wine and hands it to Marco. Samuel hovers in the doorway.

GIAN

Join us, son. Get a glass, I only brought two.

Samuel returns with a glass and pours some for himself and settles into a chair.

Bernadetta brings out a charcuterie board.

SAMUEL

Babbo says you live in Florence,
where my grandparents live.

MARCO

Yes, that's true.

SAMUEL

I haven't been there since I was
little. Babbo prefers to keep us here
in the south.

MARCO

Your father is a wise man to choose
carefully where his son goes and whom
his son spends time with. That is the
ultimate sign of love and respect for
your child.

Gian smiles slightly as his son looks curiously between the two men. Samuel turns to Marco again.

SAMUEL

You're a policeman, yes?

MARCO

I'm a detective.

SAMUEL

I've always wanted to be a policeman
or a judge.

MARCO

Why is that?

Samuel squares his skinny shoulders and answers seriously;

SAMUEL

I want to help people, to defend the
victim. Ever since I was little, I've
detested the bully. I don't
understand why people have to be so
mean to each other!

MARCO

Yes, the eternal question. Until we
understand why people are evil, we
must defend the good.

(MORE)

MARCO (cont'd)

As Giovanni Falcone said; 'Who is silent and bends his head, dies every time he does it; he who speaks and who walks with his head up dies only once.'

SAMUEL

Giovanni Falcone is my hero!

Marco looks at him with interest.

MARCO

You are quite the history buff, Samuel. That was a very long time ago.

GIAN

He's always been fascinated with history.

(to Samuel)

But you know how that ended for Falcone. Dead. He and his wife, a judge, killed in a car bombing. It was horrible for Italy, figlio mio.

SAMUEL

No Babbo, it was good for Italy... maybe not him being killed but what he did, what he started, was very good.

MARCO

Choosing to put an end to the power of the Cosa Nostra was a death sentence for Falcone and he knew it.

Marco taps his temple.

SAMUEL

Isn't your job the same way? Isn't being a detective a dangerous job?

MARCO

Indeed.

GIAN

Samu, you must follow your heart. You still have time to make this decision.

(lifts his wine glass)

To bravery combined with wisdom.

MARCO AND SAMUEL
 (pronounced chin chin)
 Cin cin.

Marco picks up a paper-thin piece of prosciutto. Wadding it up with his fingertips he pops it in his mouth.

The girls come out followed by the dog. Agata promptly climbs onto Gian's lap, while Izabella takes the empty seat. The dog hovers hopefully at Izabella's side.

IZABELLA
 No, Duca, dogs don't get cheese.

EXT./INT. GIAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT/CONTINUOUS

Hours later, Gian waves Marco back outside while the family does dishes. Sitting on the dark patio with indoor lights dancing past them, Gian hands Marco a cigar and a glass of Port.

Marco lights the cigar.

Duca stretches luxuriously on the grass.

GIAN
 A dog's life.

MARCO
 Yeah.

GIAN
 So...

Gian turns to look at Marco through the shadows.

GIAN (cont'd)
 What's the real reason you're here in Alvito? I assume it has something to do with my family?

Marco sips his port.

MARCO
 Hmm.

Samuel steps outside, but a warning look and a flick of his father's hand sends him back indoors. They both draw deeply on their cigars. Through the haze Marco turns his eyes to Gian.

MARCO (cont'd)
 I'm trying to learn and understand them. I don't know what you have to do with your family. I would like the Scutaris to stop extorting businesses in Florence, but I'm guessing that's not going to happen without a struggle.

GIAN
 You mean a fight?

MARCO
 Is there another way?

Silence reigns. A dog barks in the distance causing Duca to lift his head and perk his ears toward the valley below.

GIAN
 I don't know,
 (sighs deeply)
 Why did you seek me out?

MARCO
 Emma di Giorno met you in Florence. She felt you were a decent person, so I came to see for myself.

GIAN
 Emma di Giorno?

MARCO
 She felt you were different from your family. I agree, but that doesn't help me. I was hoping I could use you somehow to get to your father and brothers, especially Lorenzo. Now that I know you, I see it's not possible. I want you and your little family to stay away from this.

GIAN
 Thank you for that. In turn I'll admit I don't have much power in my family. They consider me to be weak.

Gian tapped his ash in a tiny bowl.

GIAN (cont'd)
 Can you tell me what they've done?

Marco blows the cigar smoke out in a thin stream.

MARCO

The Bertoli family owns a pharmacy in Florence. They claim their father had been threatened by your father to bend a knee to the Scutari protection. Signor Bertoli refused because of the huge potential for the pharmaceutical drugs in the criminal drug market. He felt it was bigger than himself or even his desire to remain independent. He was brutally beaten. The eldest son also refused to bend to your father and then to Lorenzo. He and his wife were murdered. Now the other son is being threatened, so Emma, his half-sister, reached out to me.

Silence follows this. Gian sighs deeply.

MARCO (cont'd)

I can't tell you how much I've enjoyed myself tonight. I'll leave tomorrow for Florence and continue my investigations. If you can think of anything that would help me end this peacefully, let me know.

GIAN

Understood. And now it's time for my Detta's famous tiramisu.

As they enter the kitchen door, Samuel is standing by the living-room window. Marco glances at the open window and back at the boy. Samuel holds his gaze. Marco looks to Gian who is watching his wife dish up the dessert. Back to the boy who's still watching him.

MARCO

It was a pleasure getting to know you, Samuel. How old are you?

SAMUEL

Sixteen, I'll be seventeen next month.

Marco smiles at this response.

MARCO

Are you planning to go to college?

SAMUEL

Yes. Do I need a college degree to be a policeman or a detective?

MARCO

Not necessarily to be a policeman,
but to move up to detective it helps
and of course you need experience.
Being a detective allows you to work
on big national cases.

SAMUEL

Like mafia cases?

Striving for a light casual tone, Marco answers;

MARCO

Sure.

He turns thankfully when Bernadetta calls them to the
kitchen for dessert.

EXT. ALVITO COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Marco sits on the castle wall alone and gazes sadly out over
the valley.

MARCO

(quietly)

Why can't she speak? Why am I so
interested in this gorgeous little
ghost?

Marco grunts in frustration.

EXT. CASSI'S YARD - DAY

Throwing the book down, Cassie jumps to her feet and walks
in circles hugging herself. She picks up the book and plops
back down and opens the book.

EXT. FLORENCE STREETS - DAY

That evening as he walks home, he calls LIA (His sister,
small wiry, energetic, talks fast).

LIA (V.O.)

Mark!

MARCO

Hi Sis, how are ya? Are my nephews
driving you crazy?

LIA (V.O.)
 Absolutely... the little monsters.
 The twins think Kyle is a toy, so I'm
 constantly saving his life. Tony is
 working crazy hours since he became
 management. I feel like a single mom.
 How are you doing? Why'd you call?
 (yells)
 Maverick, put Kyle down! Right now!
 Hold on Mark.

Marco listens in amusement.

LIA (V.O.) (cont'd)
 (away from the phone)
 You're all doing a time-out if you
 don't knock it off!
 (to Marco)
 So, why'd you call?

MARCO
 I just wanted to hear your pretty
 voice screeching at my innocent
 little nephews.

LIA (V.O.)
 I dare you to babysit them--then
 we'll talk about their innocence. Are
 you in Milan?

MARCO
 No, I'm in Florence.

LIA (V.O.)
 When are you coming to visit?
 (calls out)
 Boys, guess who I'm talking to? Uncle
 Mark!

The boy's voices rapidly approach the phone and they all
 talk at once.

LIA (V.O.) (cont'd)
 No, no, I'm not giving you the phone!
 Just say hello.

She sounds like she's physically struggling as she fights to
 keep possession of the phone. Three voices shout hello and
 ask unintelligible questions.

LIA
 Okay, that was a mistake.

The noise level suddenly drops.

LIA (cont'd)
I'm locked in the bathroom now.
What's up?

MARCO
Nothing, I was just thinking about
you. Have you heard from Mom and Dad?
Are they still on that cruise?

LIA (V.O.)
They should be back this weekend. It
would be nice if you could come see
'em before they go back to the
States. I know Mom's been really
missing you.

MARCO
Okay, I'll try to get a few days off.

Marco hangs up as he puts his key in his door. Jack barks.

EXT./INT. FLORENCE STREETS/CAFE - DAY

Marco and Luca Bertoli walk away from the Bertoli Pharmacy
to a small café and sit in a corner with their coffees.

MARCO
I just wanted to check on you. Did
you get Angelo away?

BERTOLI
Yes, thank you for that. My mother
was thrilled to have him.

MARCO
I haven't made any headway on your
case. Is there anything new you can
tell me? Has anyone from the Scutari
family tried to contact you?

BERTOLI
Every morning since that visit a man
is standing guard at the pharmacy
doors. He never says anything to me
or my employees. He's just there. I
was wondering if you'd set that up?
Or is it Scutari?

MARCO
It must be Scutari. I'll come by in
the morning. What time do you open?

BERTOLI
Ten o'clock.

INT. KATE'S HOME - DAY

Cassi arrives at her sister's home.

CASSI
I'm starving. What're you feeding me?

Cassi sets a bottle of wine on the counter.

KATE
Your favorite.

CASSI
Awesome!

Cassi comes around the kitchen counter sniffing the air.

CASSI (cont'd)
What's my favorite?

Cassi opens the oven and looks.

KATE
Ribs and baked potatoes. Good old
comfort food.

BRETT
Hey Sis!

BRETT gives her a hug before he uncorks the bottle. He pours the wine in three glasses and holds his up.

BRETT (cont'd)
Here's to any excuse to make ribs and
drink good wine.

KATE AND CASSI
Cheers.

Kate eyes her sister over the glass of wine.

KATE
You seem to be in a much better mood
then you were the last time we spoke.

Cassi smiles sheepishly and shrugs.

KATE (cont'd)
I'm glad you threw that crazy book
away.

Her eyes narrow as she catches Cassi's guilty expression.

KATE (cont'd)
You did throw it away, right?

Cassi bites her bottom lip and shakes her head slightly.

Silence reigns while Kate's eyes bore twin holes in her sister's reddening face.

Brett looks back and forth between the two in confusion.

BRETT
What's this all about? What book?

KATE
(accusingly)
Cassi is reading a detective story
set in Italy.

She turns from Brett's blank look and points at Cassi.

KATE (cont'd)
And she thinks she's part of the
story, that she has met this
fictitious man, and that she's
falling in love with him-who-doesn't-
exist.

CASSI
I did try to throw it away, but I
couldn't. I'm really enjoying it and
I don't see anything wrong with that.
If it starts affecting my sanity,
I'll get rid of it!

KATE
Too late! It's clearly affecting your
sanity!

CASSI
What makes you say I'm crazy? I'm
content. I'm healthy. I'm working.

Kate throws up her arms in frustration.

BRETT
Whoa girls, reign it in. Let's drop
it for now and enjoy this wine and
delicious food.

Cassi looks her gratitude and Kate grunts.

EXT. KATE'S BACK YARD - DUSK

They are sitting on the back porch.

KATE

Okay, I'm calmer now. Could you tell me what happened... why'd you started reading it again?

Instead of answering right away, Cassi sits twirling her wine glass. She finally looks up.

CASSI

I put it out in the trash can in the garage. A couple of days later I gave in and grabbed the book and started reading it again.

(gives her sister a dramatic look)

I admit it, I'm weak.

BRETT

Have you looked to see how it ends?

CASSI

Nooo... I never, ever read the end of a book to see how it ends.

BRETT

Well, maybe just this once? It might be kinda interesting or even helpful.

EXT. FLORENCE STREETS - DAY

DREAM SEQUENCE

Cassi sees colors spinning like a kaleidoscope. The swirling suddenly stops and she's in a giant piazza with a merry-go-round. As Cassi stands watching the children go around and around, a man walks past her. It's Marco.

Marco looks back and sees Cassi. He turns and walks away toward a nearby alley.

Cassi looks at the paper in her palm and at his retreating back. She follows him.

Marco stops and waits for her. She hands him the piece of paper. He grabs it quickly before she can disappear, but she stays. They stare at each other.

END DREAM
SEQUENCE

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

Cassi lays on her side looking at the dresser. A slow smile lifts her cheeks as she looks at her empty palm. Rolling onto her back she stretches full-length and falls back asleep.

EXT. RUNNING TRAILS - CONTINUOUS

Cassi runs on a trail. It's overcast and the wind whips her hair and clothes.

EXT. CASSI'S YARD - DAY

She's curled up on her couch with her book. Her fingers flick the BACK PAGES, but she doesn't look:

INT. PRECINCT - DAY

When Marco sees Fersini walk past his office, he gets up and follows him to his office.

MARCO

Hey, got a minute?

FERSINI

No.

Fersini sits down with a grunt.

MARCO

Good.

(Marco sits down
anyway.)

I'm going to shoot up to Milano to see my parents. I'll be available by phone and still following up on the Bertoli case. Scutari has one of his goons planted out front of the pharmacy.

FERSINI

Where are you going with this case? Unless Bertoli is willing to file charges, we've got nothing.

MARCO

True. That's why I'm still working other cases. I feel like we're in the calm before the storm.

Fersini points to the door.

FERSINI
Have a good visit with your folks.

EXT. FLORENCE STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Marco is walking across a piazza when he catches a glimpse of Cassi. He turns to walk down an alley.

Marco stops and waits for her. She hands him the piece of paper. He grabs it quickly before she can disappear, but she stays. They stare at each other.

MARCO
Why do I keep seeing you? Are you
real?

She nods but then looks doubtful. She shrugs.

MARCO (cont'd)
(laughs)
You don't know if you are real?

She shakes her head and grins.

His expression suddenly turns serious.

MARCO (cont'd)
(softly)
You must be a figment of my
imagination because you're too
beautiful to be real.

She looks down.

MARCO (cont'd)
Have you told anyone about this?

Cassi looks up, nods, and makes a face.

MARCO (cont'd)
Didn't go over well, huh? I haven't
had the guts to tell anyone yet.

Her eyes drop to his mouth. She quickly looks away.

He reaches out and cups her face with his palm. He gently turns her face back to his and she melts away under his touch. Marco stands motionless with a sad look on his face.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

The next morning Marco stands at the train platform with a cup of coffee and his duffel-bag slung over one shoulder. The high-speed train squeals to a stop and Marco rushes to his train car. The door swooshes shut behind him.

INT. LIA'S HOME - DAY

He knocks on the door of his sister's condo. Lia opens the door calmly. He peeks around her.

LIA
Tony took the boys to the park. I
want them worn out when Mom and Dad
arrive.

Marco chuckles as he hugs her.

LIA (cont'd)
Ya want a coffee?

At his nod she leads the way to the little kitchen.

LIA (cont'd)
American or espresso?

She holds up the moka and points to the drip coffee maker.

The locks in the front door make noise. Marco runs over to hide behind the door. The door opens and chaos enters the house.

Marco leaps out and yells with both arms in the air like a bear. MAVERICK and STYLER scream and attack him. KYLE screams and clings to his father's leg until he realizes it's his uncle. The twins grapple Marco to the ground and Kyle climbs on his stomach. TONY watches from the doorway.

MARCO
For the love of God, Tony, help me!

Marco's muffled cry comes from under the dog-pile.

TONY
Oh no, you brought this on yourself.

Tony and Lia leave him to wrestle with their sons.

TONY (cont'd)
Lia, this is our chance to run away.

Marco joins them in the kitchen. His hair is standing straight up on one side and his shirt is twisted around his body.

A knock at the front door sends everyone that direction. Amazingly, when the door is open to reveal an older couple, the boys behave like they're civilized. Lia dives into her mother's arms while Marco embraces his father.

MARCUS

Son, I wasn't expecting to see you!

MARCUS MARINO holds Marco at arm's length.

MARCUS (cont'd)

You look like you've been fighting.

MARCO

I was ambushed.

Marco points to the three innocent looking boys.

SUSAN MARINO holds out her arms as tears well in her eyes. Marco envelopes her in a hug.

She whispers as they rock back and forth;

SUSAN

Hello Marky. I've missed you so much.

MARCO

I've missed you too, Mom.

INT. LIA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Lia quietly closes the door for the boys room. She comes back into the kitchen which is littered with a finished meal. Tony pours small glasses of limoncello for everyone.

Susan leads Marco to the couch in the other room. She pats the seat next to her invitingly.

SUSAN

So, tell me all about your job and everything happening in your life.

Marco sits sideways facing her.

MARCO

Nothing special, just fighting crime.
How's Babbo's heart?

SUSAN

He's fine since they put in the pacemaker. He has so much more energy.

MARCO

That's great. How're you feeling?

He takes her hand in his and gently rubs her arthritic knuckles.

SUSAN

Oh, I'm fine. Just getting older and a little creaky.

She reaches up and pushes back a little lock of his hair. She peers into his soul with her clear blue eyes.

MARCO

What's going on Marky?

He hesitates.

SUSAN

(teasing)

Is it a girl?

MARCO

Yes and no.

He breaks eye-contact and clears his throat.

MARCO (cont'd)

I don't know if I'm seeing a ghost or if I'm having a psychotic breakdown.

Marco looks pleadingly at her.

SUSAN

Are those the only two options?

MARCO

Kinda.

(looks down at her
hand still in his)

So... Several times, in completely different places,

(he looks up)

I've encountered this amazing woman... I mean, I think she's amazing, though I've not been able to talk to her... well I can talk to her, but she can't talk to me because she, she....

Marco's voice trails off.

SUSAN
Because she?

In a barely audible voice he answers.

MARCO
Because she disappears if she tries
to speak.

SUSAN
She runs away?

MARCO
No--she like, disappears, like poof!

SUSAN
Goodness, that sounds supernatural.
I've never met anyone who's had an
experience with ghosts, but I've read
about it, and of course they've made
movies about it.

MARCO
The weird thing about it is she gave
me this piece of paper with her email
address on it.

Marco digs the paper out of his pocket and hands it to her.

She reaches cautiously for it.

SUSAN
Oh my.

MARCO
Yeah.

SUSAN
I don't understand how a ghost can
give you a real piece of paper.

MARCO
Me neither. She almost always shows
up at a critical point in this case
I'm working on. Several times she's
warned me and possibly saved my life.

SUSAN
Maybe she's an angel?

MARCO

I never thought of that. That's a lot less creepy. The problem is I want her to be real. I think about her all the time.

Susan fingers the paper.

SUSAN

Have you tried writing to her?

MARCO

Nooo.
(hangs his head)

SUSAN

Why?

MARCO

I don't know. I guess I'm afraid she's not real or something.

SUSAN

That's silly. What's there to be afraid of? It'll be fun. If it gets weird, then just block her emails. You have to take chances, son. If I hadn't taken a chance on that crazy Italian, you wouldn't exist.

She points towards the noisy kitchen.

SUSAN (cont'd)

I only ask that you tell me all about it. Just give me a quick call or text when something happens.

Marco pulls out his phone and opens his email app and types. His finger hovers over the send button. He pulls his finger back.

SUSAN (cont'd)

Did you send it?

Susan leans forward and tries to see the smartphone screen.

MARCO

Not yet. I need to think about it for a minute more.

She laughs and stands.

SUSAN

Come on, let's join the others.

Marco stands and holds the phone out to his mother.

MARCO
Here, you send it.

She takes the phone and touches the screen and hands it back to him.

EXT. CASSI'S YARD - DAY

Cassi laughs as she sets the book down. She goes in the house and opens the fridge. After staring at the lack of interesting prospects she opens the freezer. Grabbing a package she throws it in the microwave.

When her phone DOUBLE beeps, she grabs it and opens the email app. Her whole body freezes. After hovering her finger over the email from Marco, she finally touches it. She sets the phone down like it's hot. She walks in two circles with her hand clutching her stomach before she picks up the phone again.

CASSI
(reading aloud)
Hello mystery woman.

Cassi sets the phone down and mechanically goes back to chopping vegetables. Anabelle hops onto the bar-stool across from the kitchen counter and sits down.

CASSI (cont'd)
(to the cat)
He wrote to me. Now what? What am I supposed to say?

Anabelle maintains her silence.

CASSI (cont'd)
Come on... you've gotta help me here.

She glares at the cat.

CASSI (cont'd)
Nothing? Okay, I guess I'll have to figure it out without your help... thanks a lot.

Anabelle stares unblinkingly at her.

CASSI (cont'd)
Fine, I'll respond.

She snatches up the phone and types;

CASSI (V.O.)
 (as she types)
 Hello Marco.

Before she sets her phone down it rings. Cassi jumps and drops the phone. With shaking hands she picks it up.

MEDICARE COORDINATOR (V.O.)
 Hi Cassi, sorry to bug you but there's a data entry error on the Medicare billing.

CASSI
 Thanks, I'll fix it.

INT. LIA'S HOME - DAY

DREAM SEQUENCE

Cassi is sitting on a chair hanging on the wall wearing pajamas -- cross-legged, elbows on her bare knees, watching the family eat breakfast.

She watches Susan, her ally, carefully. As usual no one sees her... except Kyle, who points at her and garbles something unintelligible. Cassi stares into Kyle's eyes.

Lia absently lowers his chubby little hand.

LIA
 Eat your food, Kyle.

He ignores her and points again. This time he is clearer,

KYLE
 Chair.

Lia glances in the direction of his finger, and turns back to her own breakfast. Kyle gives Cassi a toothless grin.

Marco has his back to her, but he notices Kyle's preoccupation. Finally, he turns to look and jumps up from his seat. His chair flips over backwards and instant silence follows.

Kyle claps his hands.

Cassi lifts her palms helplessly and grimaces.

Marco calmly rights his chair and sits back down. He glances at his mother, whose eyes are riveted on him. He nods his head slightly and continues eating. Everyone stares at each other and finally start eating again.

Susan turns back to her food with a furrowed brow.

Cassi struggles to get down from the chair.

END DREAM
SEQUENCE

INT. CASSI'S KITCHEN

Cassi rubs her eyes the next morning as she waits for the coffee to brew.

CASSI
(to herself)
Why a chair?

INT. SNF - DAY

Cassi is standing in the rehab gym when Fred rolls in. She walks back to her office to get her sandwich and comes back to sit cross-legged on the therapy mat.

FRED
What's the latest on your detective?

She keeps chewing. He keeps rolling back and forth.

CASSI
I gave him my email and he wrote to me.

Fred stops rolling. He stares at her with big eyes.

FRED
Seriously?

Cassi nods.

CASSI
He wrote; *Hello mystery woman.*

FRED
(blurts out)
Holy Crap! Did you write back?

CASSI
Yep. That was yesterday. He's up in Milan this weekend visiting his parents at his sister's house.

FRED

So, it's not timed exactly like our days?

CASSI

I can't figure that out. If I don't read it for a couple of days, when I pick it up again I start right where I left off.

Cassi takes another bite.

FRED

Oh.

(long pause)

Do you know how it ends? Have you read the ending?

CASSI

No! I can't do that. What is it with you guys?

FRED

Why not?

CASSI

I don't know--it'd be like watching the end of a movie you've never seen before. It just doesn't seem right.

FRED

But dreaming about and communicating with a fictitious character from a book seems right?

Fred gives a lopsided grin.

Cassi grabs a nearby strip of THERABAND and throws it at him. It flutters and lands on his lap. He picks it up and waves it.

FRED (cont'd)

Wow, what a temper! Have you told anyone else about him?

CASSI

My sister, but she doesn't get it. She thinks I'm nuts.

Cassi tears the crust off the sandwich and shoves it in the baggy while he watches her in silence.

CASSI (cont'd)
I wish my dad were still alive. I'm
glad I've got you.

FRED
Well, I'm glad you told me. It's
interesting in my otherwise boring
world.

She grins at him around a mouthful.

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

The next morning Marco walks past Rocco standing at the pharmacy entrance. Marco has slicked back his hair and is wearing glasses. Rocco watches him suspiciously. He goes behind the counter. His phone rings.

MARCO
Gian, what's up?

GIAN (V.O.)
Samuel is gone. Please keep an eye
out for him up there in Florence.

MARCO
I'll watch for him. Would he go to
his grandfather's home?

GIAN (V.O.)
I really don't know. This is not like
him to leave without telling us
exactly what he's doing. We're
frantic.

MARCO
Okay, I'm on it.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

Cassi yawns big. As soon as she's eaten and fed the cat, she crawls in bed and drifts off to sleep.

INT. HOSTEL - DAY

DREAM SEQUENCE

Cassi is sitting alone in a sparse room fit for a monk. Various hotel sounds penetrate the thin walls.

The door opens and a teen enters--Samuel Scutari. He goes straight to the bed and sits down. Pulling a duffel bag closer he digs around for a moment and pulls out a neatly folded dress-shirt, which he puts on over his t-shirt. He steps to a small mirror and knots a tie around his slender neck.

Cassi steps up behind him and he sees her in the mirror. He spins around with a gasp, but she's gone.

EXT. PHARMACY - CONTINUOUS

Cassi flashes to Marco's side inside the pharmacy.

Marco jumps in surprise when he sees her suddenly in front of him. She holds a finger to her lips and motions him to follow her. From behind a cluttered window, she points to the Samuel standing at the front counter.

MARCO

What the hell?

(whispers)

That's Gian Scutari's boy, Samuel.

She nods.

MARCO (cont'd)

What's he doing here?

Cassi shrugs her shoulders. She points to the pharmacist threading his way towards them.

BERTOLI

This is an applicant for a job. Do you want to sit in on it?

Bertoli can't see her.

MARCO

No, I'm going to let you handle this one. He's someone I know, and I don't want to be recognized.

BERTOLI

Do you recommend him?

MARCO

I don't know him that well, but he seems like a good kid. His folks are good people.

Marco ignores Cassi when she jabs him in the arm. Bertoli goes to Samuel. Marco turns on Cassi.

MARCO (cont'd)

What?

Cassi brows snap together and she opens her mouth to argue.

END DREAM
SEQUENCE

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

Cassi wakes up with a frown on her face.

Hopping out of bed, she struts to the kitchen with stiff angry steps to turn on the coffee maker. She checks her phone and groans.

CASSI

Are you kidding me? Why do you always
call in sick on my busiest day?

She throws on a pair of scrubs and hurries out the door.

INT. SNF - CONTINUOUS

She passes Fred in the hall before lunch and says a quick hello as she rushes past him.

EXT. SNF YARD - CONTINUOUS

Later, Cassi goes out the back door and takes a deep breath. She wanders to a shady tree and pulls her phone out. Sitting on the grass, she thumbs through her messages.

CASSI (V.O.)

(as she types)

I can't believe you'd involve a
sixteen-year-old boy in this case,
Marco? Seriously? What if one of
those goons recognizes him and
kidnaps him or something?

Her finger hovers over the send button. She pushes send just as Fred rolls up on the sidewalk. He stops and watches her silently. She returns his gaze.

FRED

You're up in arms. What happened?

CASSI

Ah, nothing. Just a rough day because
Carolyn called in sick.

FRED
She does that a lot. What's the latest on your Italian?

CASSI
(looks down)
Actually, I just emailed him.

Fred rolls back and forth. He waits.

CASSI (cont'd)
Last night, in my dream, he did something stupid... in my opinion. So I just now wrote him and told him what I thought.

Cassi bites her bottom lip as she waits for Fred's response.

Fred's mouth twitches as he tries to hold back a smile.

FRED
So, you're already fighting?

With her lip still clamped between her teeth, she nods slightly. Fred laughs out loud.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Cassi is sliding into her car when her phone double-pings. Sitting with the air-conditioner on high, she opens it.

MARCO (V.O.)
What are you talking about? Do you know something I don't know?

CASSI (V.O.)
(as she types)
Yes, I shouldn't have said anything.

She pushes send and drives home.

Double-ping!

MARCO (V.O.)
Why? Do you see into the future?

INT. CASSI'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Cassi slowly walks down the hall to her room. She returns to the kitchen wearing a baggy sundress to eye her phone. She opens the fridge to look blankly at the shelves. Finally she picks up her phone and writes;

CASSI (V.O.)
(as she types)
I have dreams about you.

Her forefinger quivers over the send button before she presses it.

Cassi goes to the garage and pulls a container out of the freezer. She pops it in the microwave and pours herself a glass of wine. She takes a sip and eyes the book sitting on the coffee table. She turns her attention to her phone when it double-pings.

MARCO (V.O.)
That's funny because I thought you were a dream... or a ghost or maybe an angel. Sooo, let's talk about something else, something neutral.

Cassi smiles, but she doesn't respond. She carries her bowl of food to the couch and curls up with it in her lap. She picks up the book.

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

Marco's POV. He jumps in surprise when Cassi suddenly appears in front of him. She points to Samuel.

MARCO
(whispers)
What the hell? That's Gian Scutari's boy, Samuel. What's he doing here?

Cassi shrugs her shoulders. She points to Bertoli threading his way towards them.

BERTOLI
This is an applicant for a job. Do you want to sit in on it?

MARCO
No, I'm going to let you handle this one. He's someone I know, and I don't want to be recognized.

BERTOLI
Do you recommend him?

MARCO
I don't know him that well, but he seems like a good kid. His folks are good people.

Marco ignores Cassi when she jabs him in the arm. Bertoli thanks him and goes to Samuel. Marco turns on her.

MARCO (cont'd)
What? He's safe enough here.

She opens her mouth to argue and disappears. Marco growls in frustration. Pulling out his phone, he calls Gian.

MARCO (cont'd)
Gian, Samuel is in Florence. He applied for a job at the Bertoli Pharmacy. What do you want me to do?

GIAN (V.O.)
Is he safe?

MARCO
Not necessarily, no. I'm here and will stay in the pharmacy as long as he's here.

GIAN (V.O.)
Does he know you are there?

MARCO
No. He hasn't seen me yet, but it'll be hard to keep an eye on him without him seeing me.

GIAN (V.O.)
I'll be there tonight. Can I stay at your place?

MARCO
Absolutely, what time are you coming in?

GIAN (V.O.)
Six.

MARCO
Okay, I will make sure he gets to wherever he's staying safely.

GIAN
Text me your address.

Marco hangs up. He goes back to watching Samuel. He pulls his phone out again and writes to Cassi;

MARCO (V.O.)
(as he types)
So, what's your name... I can't keep
calling you 'mystery woman' forever.

Glancing through the window, he makes eye-contact with Samuel. The teen slowly winks at Marco and returns his attention to the clerk training him. Marco chuckles to himself as he shakes his head.

INT. MARCO'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Marco stays back in the recess of the door and ushers Gian in. With the door shut they give each other a shoulder-to-shoulder embrace. Marco takes Gian's duffel and tosses it on the couch and hands him a beer.

Gian takes a deep swallow while Jack noisily sniffs his trousers.

GIAN
How's Samuel?

MARCO
Impressive kid you got there, Gian.

Marco leads the way back to the front room. He points to the couch with the duffel on it.

MARCO (cont'd)
It opens to a bed if you want.

They sit down and contemplate each other.

GIAN
I have no idea what to do. I need
your advice.

Marco looks searchingly at him for a moment, then asks,

MARCO
Why are you here, Gian.

GIAN
I don't know. I just knew I couldn't
stay down in Lazio when my boy is in
danger.

MARCO
How well does your family know Samuel
by sight?

GIAN

They probably wouldn't recognize him in person. They just get the yearly Christmas card with a photo of us.

Marco leans back in his chair and reaches down to scratch Jack's ears.

MARCO

We need a plan, but first we must have a goal. What outcome do we want?

GIAN

To keep my son safe.

MARCO

(softly)

Okay, in that case we just kidnap him and drag him back to Alvito.

Gian hangs his head. When he looks up at Marco his eyes are full of fatherly anguish.

GIAN

I also want him to be respected and to grow into a courageous man.

MARCO

Let's finish this conversation after we eat. I'll go get us dinner while you settle in. What sounds good?

GIAN

I could use some comfort food. Do you know anyplace close that makes good gnocchi?

MARCO

I know just the place. I'll be back in twenty-thirty minutes.

INT./EXT. STREET/HOSTEL - CONTINUOUS

Twenty minutes later, Marco is in the shadows watching the hostel. No one's lingering within sight. Marco pulls his baseball cap lower and hunches his shoulders. He walks up to the entrance with a slight limp.

He asks the girl at the front desk if he can look around. She smiles and nods. She waves a hand to the inner courtyard.

He wanders around the common space until he sees Samuel sitting on a couch with a laptop open on his lap.

MARCO
Staying busy, huh?

Marco settles into the adjacent chair.

Samuel glances up.

SAMUEL
Oh, hello Detective Marino. Yes, I'm trying not to fall behind with my studies.

MARCO
Your father will be happy to hear that.

SAMUEL
Have you spoken to him recently?

Marco nods.

MARCO
I just picked up some dinner.
(pause)
I was going to get up a nice bottle of wine. Would you like to join us?

Samuel's expression is comical as emotions war within him. Anxiety, fear, resentment.

MARCO (cont'd)
No problem if you can't. He understands that you're *working*....

SAMUEL
He knows I'm working?

MARCO
Yes.

They eye each other.

SAMUEL
(defiantly)
I don't have anything to say.

MARCO
Maybe you could listen. I think he knows a little about your... work.

Samuel lets out a dramatic sigh.

SAMUEL

Give me a minute to put my stuff
away.

Marco smiles as he watches Samuel sling his daypack over his skinny shoulder. Marco pulls out his cell phone and looks at it with a puzzled frown.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

CASSI

(laughs)
Fine! I'll write.

Cassi stands and stretches. She types into her phone as she walks.

CASSI (V.O.)

(as she types)
My name is Cassi Weyman. I have a cat
named Anabelle. I'm a physical
therapist. I love to read... maybe
too much.

INT. MARCO'S HOME - NIGHT

When Jack hears his key in the lock he rushes to the door barking.

MARCO

Yeah, yeah, yeah... I know you're a
ferocious watch dog. Stay down. This
is Jack.

Samuel smiles as he holds out his hand to be sniffed.

Marco steps into the kitchen to give father and son some privacy. When he re-enters with the dinner and wine, they're standing in the middle of the room in a hug.

MARCO (cont'd)

Let's get down to business.

Gian steps away and swipes moisture from his eyes. Samuel eyes his father with concern.

SAMUEL

I'm sorry Babbo.

GIAN

It's okay son. Some day when you have
children, you'll understand.

(MORE)

GIAN (cont'd)
I'm very proud of you, but not knowing where you were or if you were okay was, was, it was too much. Next time you decide to do something like this, face me like a man. Tell me and deal with my reaction. But to run away with no word? No, son, that's not how it's done.

Samuel hangs his head.

GIAN (cont'd)
Come here, my little Samu.

Gian wraps Samuel in another brief hug. Marco sets the bowl of pesto gnocci on the table.

MARCO
Let's eat while it's hot.

They dish up and eat in silence for a few minutes.

GIAN
So, business. Tell me what your plan is and what you've discovered so far.

Samuel reaches for his wine and takes a sip.

SAMUEL
Right now my plan is to observe. I want to be right out in the open--yet unseen. As a cashier, I can do that.

Marco and Gian exchange a glance with brows raised.

MARCO
Okay, and then what comes next.

Samuel lets out his breath slowly.

SAMUEL
Don't get mad, but I've already contacted my cousins. We've decided to gather more of us who don't want to follow in Nonno Scutari's footsteps. We're going to take jobs at the smaller places who don't want his protection.

GIAN
Why?
(holds out both hands.)
What will that accomplish?

SAMUEL

Babbo, you know he would never allow
one of us to be hurt.

Marco's cell phone double-pings an email. He doesn't look.

GIAN

(to Marco)

Would that work?

MARCO

Is it true your father wouldn't hurt
one of his grandchildren?

GIAN

Absolutely, it's the Italian way.
Nothing is more important than your
grandchildren.

MARCO

What about your brother, Lorenzo?
Would he allow a niece or nephew to
be hurt?

GIAN

I'm not positive. He's less... less
sentimental than my father.

SAMUEL

How about hurting his own son?

GIAN

Drago?

SAMUEL

No, Matteo. Drago is too arrogant.
Matt's a good guy.

MARCO

You think Matteo would turn against
his own father?

SAMUEL

I know he would.

Both men stare at him in surprise.

GIAN

I didn't know you even knew him!

SAMUEL

Babbo,

(MORE)

SAMUEL (cont'd)
(patronizing tone)
We're on social media together. We
talk all the time.

GIAN
I had no idea.

SAMUEL
We're all on a group my cousin Zeta
set up. I've already enlisted six of
them to get jobs at different
businesses.

(taps his temple)
The Scutaris are very smart, Babbo.
We're not all dumb Italian mobsters.

Marco laughs.

MARCO
You've got guts. I'll give you that!

Gian shakes his head in amazement.

GIAN
Okay, so what's next after you all
get...

SAMUEL
--infiltrated.

GIAN
Yeah.

SAMUEL
We don't know. Zeta thinks we should
just wait and see what happens. Pippa
agrees, but thinks we should notify
the police first.

MARCO
Can I have a list of your cousins and
where they are working?

SAMUEL
I think so, but I will ask first.

Samuel types rapidly on his cell.

GIAN
How many of you are there?

Samuel glances at Marco, who can't stop chuckling.

SAMUEL

Eleven.

(counting off with
his fingers)

So far we have Zeta, Pippa, Matt,
Tom, me, Massimo, Nico, Mimi,
Christiano, Allegra, and Dafne.

MARCO

How in the world did you figure out
which places to apply to?

SAMUEL

Matt got us the intel.

GIAN

Whose idea was this?

SAMUEL

Well, mine. I got to thinking about
it the other night when I overheard
you and Detective Marino talking. I
thought if you put Zio Lorenzo in
jail, others will just replace him.
Even if you kill him, he'll be
replaced. I thought maybe if we took
them down from the inside, that might
work.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

Cassi closes the book and goes down the hall chuckling to
herself. Anabelle is already curled up on the bed.

CASSI

Move over, you little bed-hog.

She says as she crawls under the covers.

INT. MARCO'S HOME - NIGHT

DREAM SEQUENCE

Cassi sits cross-legged on Marco's kitchen counter wearing
leggings and a tank top. She looks around curiously. She can
hear the guys talking. Marco's voice grows louder as he
comes towards the kitchen.

He stops in the doorway. He's looking down at his phone. She
watches him as he reads. A smile lifts one corner of his
mouth.

He raises his eyes and jumps back--one hand going for his gun. His body relaxes in a millisecond when he recognizes her. Glancing over his shoulder, he scurries into the kitchen.

MARCO
 (whispers)
 You're going to give me a heart
 attack!

She grins.

MARCO (cont'd)
 Oh, you think that's funny, huh? I
 wish I could just show up at your
 house and see how you'd react.

He steps up to her and puts one hand on her knee. She gazes wistfully into his eyes.

They both turn to look at Jack when he whines. He's looking directly at Cassi.

MARCO (cont'd)
 I think he sees you.
 (turning he calls)
 Samuel, do you want dessert?

SAMUEL (O.S.)
 Sure, I'm always hungry. I'll help
 you.

MARCO
 No, no, I'll make it.

Marco looks desperately between Cassi and the front room.

Samuel comes in the kitchen followed by Gian who has his empty wine glass. Marco lets go of her knee and turns to the freezer. Gian comes directly towards Cassi. She leans sideways to give him access to the bottle behind her. Gian sits at the barstool next to Cassi. He watches Marco carefully. Jack goes up on his hind legs to get a better look at her. Marco hands the gelato to Samuel.

GIAN
 Are you okay, Marco?

MARCO
 Oh--yeah. Yeah, I'm completely fine...
 I'm good.

Marco puts one palm on the back of his head.

MARCO (cont'd)
I have a lot to think about and plan
for. A lot of unknowns.

Cassi sticks her thumb on her nose and wiggles her fingers
at him. Marco maintains a deadpan expression.

SAMUEL
(around a mouthful of
ice cream)
You look like you've just seen a
ghost.

Marco gives a wry smile.

MARCO
Actually this house is haunted by the
ghost of some crazy lady.

Cassi sticks out her tongue. Both Scutaris look in the
direction of his gaze.

SAMUEL
Is she here now?

Samuel asks in a hushed tone as he sets down his bowl and
looks more intently around the room.

GIAN
(teasing)
Right here?

Gian asks as he sweeps his hand to indicate the kitchen. He
touches her leg and jumps back knocking over his wine glass.
Cassi disappears.

END DREAM
SEQUENCE

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

Cassi comes down the hall in pajamas. She pours herself
coffee and sits on the couch looking through the window.

When her cell double-pings, she snatches it up and reads;

MARCO (V.O.)
Hello Cassi, it's kinda creepy that
you see me. It's weird that you know
so much about me. I wish I
understood.

CASSI
(as she types)
I don't understand it any better than
you do. Let's just leave it at that
for now. By the way, Jack can see me.

She pushes send and goes back to eating and watching TV.

INT. SNF - DAY

Cassi's at her computer when she sees Fred's white sneakers
come around the corner.

CASSI
Give me a sec. I'm almost done with
this.

He nods and watches her profile while he rolls back and
forth. When she spins away from the computer and grabs her
lunch, he rolls back as he asks;

FRED
It's a beautiful day. Wanna sit at
the picnic table?

She nods and holds the back door for him. When they arrive
at the picnic table, he sets his brakes.

FRED (cont'd)
Help me sit on the bench.

CASSI
You don't need help. I'll spot you.
Stretch out your legs first.

She orders as she sets her stuff down.

Fred stretches out his legs as straight as they'll go while
he waits until she's behind him. He struggles to his feet.
In lurching half-steps he turns to the bench.

CASSI (cont'd)
Sit slowly, or I'll make you do it
ten times.

He sits slowly and carefully.

FRED
So, how's your detective doing? Any
further developments? Did you guys
make up from your fight?

CASSI

(laughing)

He's doing good. We write to each other a lot now. I think it backs up my theory that I'm mentally ill.

She says with a grin before she spoons a bite of tuna salad into her mouth.

FRED

You know an awful lot about mental illness. Have you ever heard of anything like this?

She shrugs and takes another bite.

FRED (cont'd)

You don't seem too concerned about it.

He gives a lopsided grin. He puts his paralyzed arm on the table making him appear normal.

CASSI

I think I'm getting used to it. And now that we're emailing each other it doesn't seem like it's in my head so much.

FRED

Can I see the emails?

She slows her chewing to a stop and looks intently into his eyes. He puts out his palm and wiggles his fingers invitingly.

FRED (cont'd)

Come on, you can do it. It's not like I don't already know everything... right? Unless... have you had cybersex?

CASSI

Fred! Nooo, I haven't had cybersex or even dream sex with him.

He wiggles his fingers again.

FRED

Come on.

CASSI

Okay, Dad.

(MORE)

CASSI (cont'd)
(smiles)
My fear is if you don't see it, then
I'm insane or a liar.

FRED
You're not a liar, and I doubt you're
insane.
(wiggles his fingers)
That leaves the possibility that this
is really happening.

Cassi pulls out her phone and goes to her email thread with Marco. She looks at it for a moment.

He puts a pair of reading glasses on.

She sets the phone in Fred's palm and bites her bottom lip.

He looks at the screen, occasionally scrolling with one gnarled finger. He hands the phone back to her.

FRED (cont'd)
It seems pretty straightforward from
what you've already told me. What's
next? Are you going to tell him about
the book?

CASSI
Maybe... I'm not sure.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - DAY

Cassi walks into her house full of happy energy.

CASSI
Hi Anabelle. How's my girl?

Anabelle trots down the hall at her master's heels.

CASSI (cont'd)
I'm going to go for a run. Wanna go?

Cassi scratches the cat's chin. She tears her scrubs off and throws them in the overflowing laundry basket. She pulls on her running clothes and shoes.

CASSI (cont'd)
(to Anabelle)
We'll have a girl's night tonight,
okay? Just you and me.

After she gets back and cools down, she picks up the book and goes to the back yard.

She sets a giant glass of ice tea on the little bistro table and settles herself with the book.

INT. MARCO'S HOME - NIGHT

Marco stands from the table and heads for the kitchen. He stops in the doorway to check his phone for emails. A smile lifts one corner of his mouth as he reads the message.

MARCO
(to himself)
So, her name's Cassi.

He raises his eyes and jumps back--one hand going for his gun. He recognizes Cassi sitting cross-legged on his counter. He glances over his shoulder and goes to her side.

MARCO (cont'd)
(whisper)
You're going to give me a heart
attack!

She grins.

MARCO (cont'd)
Oh, you think that's funny, huh? I
wish I could just show up at your
house and see how you react.

He steps up to her and puts one hand on her knee. They gaze at each other. Both turn to look at Jack when he whines. He's looking directly at Cassi.

MARCO (cont'd)
You're right, I think he sees you.
(turning he calls out)
Samuel, do you want dessert.

SAMUEL
Sure, I'm always hungry. I'll help
you.

MARCO
No, no, I'll make it.

Marco looks desperately between Cassi and the front room.

She grins. Samuel comes in the kitchen followed by Gian who has his empty wine glass. Marco turns to the freezer. When Marco turns back around he sees she's still sitting on his countertop. Cassi giggles silently. Jack goes up on his hind legs to get a better look at her.

MARCO (cont'd)

Jack! Down.

Marco hands the gelato to Samuel.

Gian sits at the barstool next to Cassi. He watches Marco carefully.

GIAN

Are you okay, Marco?

MARCO

Oh--yeah. Yeah, I'm completely fine... I'm good.

He puts one palm on the back of his head trying to not look at Cassi.

MARCO (cont'd)

I just have a lot to think about and plan for. A lot of unknowns.

Cassi sticks her thumb on her nose and wiggles her fingers at him. Marco forces a deadpan expression.

SAMUEL

(mouthful of ice
cream)

You look like you've just seen a ghost.

Marco gives a wry smile.

MARCO

Actually, this house is haunted by the ghost of some crazy lady.

Cassi sticks out her tongue. Both Scutaris look in the direction of his gaze.

SAMUEL

Is she here now?

Samuel asks setting down his bowl and looking more intently around the room.

GIAN

(teasing)

Right here?

Gian sweeps his hand to indicate the kitchen and touches her leg. He jumps back knocking over his wine glass. Cassi disappears. The wine spreads across the counter.

GIAN (cont'd)
What the hell?

MARCO
No worries. Samuel, hand me that
towel.

Marco calmly wipes the wine up and hands the bottle to Gian.

MARCO (cont'd)
The glass didn't break.

SAMUEL
(excitedly)
What happened Babbo? Did you sense
her?

GIAN
It was just my over active
imagination. I thought I touched
something solid right here.

Gian waves his hand through the space she'd been in.

GIAN (cont'd)
See, nothing there.

They go to the den.

SAMUEL
So, be honest, does our plan have
merit?

MARCO
Gian, what do you think?

GIAN
(to Samuel)
If Detective Marino thinks it'll
work, then results outweigh the risk.
(to Marco)
I'll stay here with you, if you don't
mind.

MARCO
No, I don't mind. I'll be gone most
of the time though.

SAMUEL
You get to stay with the crazy ghost
lady! How cool is that?

Samuel looks around the room.

GIAN

Lucky me.

Marco leaves Samuel and Gian and goes down the hall to his room. He pulls out his phone and emails Cassi.

MARCO (V.O.)

(as he types)

What are you doing right now?

CASSI (V.O.)

Reading about you.

MARCO (V.O.)

(as he types)

Reading about me? Maybe you can help me with my case... you seem to know what's going to happen next.

EXT. CASSI'S YARD - DAY

Cassi stands and stretches.

CASSI

Come on Annabelle, we've got chores to do before bedtime.

INT. MARCO'S HOME - NIGHT

DREAM SEQUENCE

Cassi is sitting in the center of a bed. She looks around curiously. Then she hears Marco talking to Jack. She frantically tries to climb off the bed, but no matter how hard she tries, she still can't reach the edge in time.

Marco stops in the doorway. At first he looks surprised, and then he smiles at her dilemma. He holds out a hand.

MARCO

Here, let me help you. I absolutely cannot handle having you on my bed. I'm not that strong.

She lets him pull her to the edge in a comical twisting of her body until she almost falls to the floor.

MARCO (cont'd)

(laughing)

Are you doing this on purpose?

She shakes her head hard and blushes. Still on her hands and knees, she crawls rapidly across the room on all fours. Marco trails behind her. Jack trots alongside her playfully. She stops near a chair.

Marco has a hand over his mouth as he laughs. She glares at him.

Jack barks and pants and tries to lick her face. Cassi pushes the dog away as she tries to climb onto the chair.

MARCO (cont'd)
 (holding out his
 glass)
 Want some wine?

She nods.

Marco hands it to her. She takes one sip and wakes up.

END DREAM
 SEQUENCE

EXT. CASSI'S YARD - DAY

The next morning, Cassi comes out back with the book and a cup of coffee. She sits on the lounge and opens the book.

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

Marco works at pill counter with his cell phone between his ear and shoulder.

MARCO
 Hi Mom. Quick question. Do you think
 I'm nuts?

SUSAN (V.O.)
 I don't know, son. Is this ghost
 causing problems with your life? Are
 you getting paranoid or anxious?

MARCO
 No. I look forward to her
 appearances. But I think I'm kinda
 falling for her. I mean if she were
 real, I'd probably be dating her. I
 don't think I'm supposed to be
 falling in love with a ghost.

The bell chimes for the door and Lorenzo walks in.

MARCO (cont'd)
Gotta go Mom. Love you.

Marco steps out of view. He watches through a narrow opening between medical equipment. Lorenzo takes several arrogant steps in and stops to look around as though he were the owner. When Lorenzo's eyes land on Samuel, his brow furrows. He pauses near Samuel, who returns his stare boldly.

SAMUEL
Hello, Zio Enzo.

Lorenzo looks startled.

LORENZO
Samuel? What are you doing here?

SAMUEL
I work here. I started yesterday.

Lorenzo clenches one fist as he starts to turn back towards Bertoli's office.

Samuel interrupts his action.

SAMUEL (cont'd)
Zio! Signor Bertoli doesn't know I'm
your nephew.

Lorenzo turns back to the teen, his fist slowly clenching and unclenching.

LORENZO
Why are you in Florence? I could've
gotten you a job, Samuel.

SAMUEL
I know, but I prefer to do things
myself...my own way.

Lorenzo nods stiffly and marches out the door.

Samuel and Marco look at each other with raised brows.

INT. MARCO'S HOME - NIGHT

That evening Samuel, Gian, and Marco sit around munching pizza and discussing the incident.

Marco's phone dings an email.

CASSI
 (as she types)
 Good wine last night... thanks.

Marco sets the phone down with a puzzled look.

GIAN
 So, Lorenzo knows you're here. Why
 did you tell him so soon?

SAMUEL
 I'm trying to go about this bluntly
 and out in the open because this
 family does everything so
 deceitfully.
 (reaches for pizza)
 We're creating something new, Babbo.

Silence reigns for a moment.

GIAN
 Have any more cousins gotten jobs?

SAMUEL
 Pippa, Matt, Massimo, and Nico.

Marco stands and goes down the hall while they're talking. He steps into his bedroom doorway and abruptly stops. Cassi is on all fours in the center of a bed. She's frantically trying to climb off the bed, but no matter how hard she tries, she still can't reach the edge.

At first he looks surprised, and then he smiles at her as he shuts his door. He holds out a hand.

MARCO
 Here, let me help you. I absolutely
 cannot handle having you on my bed.
 I'm not that strong.

She lets him pull her to the edge in a comical twisting of her body until she almost falls to the floor.

MARCO (cont'd)
 (laughing)
 Are you doing this on purpose?

She shakes her head no. Still on her hands and knees, she crawls rapidly across the room on all fours. Marco trails behind her watching her narrow butt swing back and forth. Jack trots alongside her playfully. She pulls herself up onto a chair.

Marco has a hand over his mouth as he laughs.

MARCO (cont'd)
 (holding out his
 glass)
 Want some wine?

She nods.

Marco hands it to her. She takes one sip and disappears. The glass lands on the floor and breaks. Marco heaves a big sigh and goes to the kitchen.

Both Gian and Samuel look curiously at him, but he just holds up a hand and walks back to his room with a roll of paper towels.

INT./EXT. CASSI'S HOME -DAY

The next day, Cassi gently lays the top crust over the meat pie and slides it into the oven.

Double ping:

MARCO (V.O.)
 I don't know if I want to hear the
 answer to this question, but are you
 single?

Cassi giggles.

CASSI (V.O.)
 (as she types)
 Yes, I'm single. I think you are too,
 right?
 (looks sad)
 What's it matter whether or not we
 are single? We are figments of each
 other's imaginations. That doesn't
 lead to much of a future does it?

Anabelle rubs against Cassi's calves, her tail circling around her leg invitingly.

CASSI
 (to the cat)
 Come help me pick out what to wear.

Cassi carries her cat down the hall. She sets her on the bed and starts rummaging through her sundresses. She holds up a baggy red dress with bright flowers on it and a light blue one with white flowers.

CASSI (cont'd)
Which one? You decide. I always have
to pick out what to wear.

She wiggles first one then the other in front of the blank
stare of Anabelle.

CASSI (cont'd)
Okay, lick yourself if you want the
red one, and scratch yourself if you
want the blue.

They stare at each other until Anabelle lifts a back paw and
scratches her neck.

CASSI (cont'd)
Okay, blue it is.

Cassi strips to her underwear and sports bra and drops the
blue dress over her head.

She goes to her refrigerator and pulls out the ingredients
for a salad and starts chopping.

Kate and Brett arrive in a whirlwind of noise and activity.
Kate sets two bottles of wine on the counter and hugs Cassi.

KATE
Hi Sissy, smells delicious. Is that
Granny's tourtiere?

Cassi laughs.

CASSI
Yep... your favorite.

Brett hugs her and digs the opener out of a drawer.

Cassi pulls the cheese and salami board out of the fridge,
then they pour the wine.

CASSI (cont'd)
Let's go out back. It's a beautiful
evening.

Brett sets the charcuterie board on the table and they
settle into their chairs to relax and chat when Cassi's cell
double-pings.

She snatches up the phone.

MARCO (V.O.)
I hold to the theory that you are
real to me, and that's good enough.

Her happy smile freezes when she looks up to see both Brett and Kate watching her.

CASSI

What?

KATE

Nothing... It seemed as though that was an important text and it made you smile. That's a good thing. Do you have a beau?

CASSI

It was an email and no I don't have a beau, little Miss Nosey-Pants!

Half an hour later she's in the kitchen checking on her meat pie and pulls her cell out to answer Marco.

CASSI (cont'd)

(as she types)

Hello handsome, it's good enough for me too.

She pushes send and grabs the salad bowl and dressing.

They're on the main course when Marco writes back. Cassi casually picks up her phone to see who it's from.

MARCO (V.O.)

Do you think we'll ever meet in a normal, non-disappearing way?

Unconsciously, she slides one palm over her heart. When she looks up both Kate and Brett are looking at her curiously.

BRETT

Is everything alright?

CASSI

Oh, yeah, no, everything is fine. Just a therapist wanting to take some vacation time off.

Cassi's cheeks flame at the blatant lie.

KATE

(sing-song)

Liar, liar, pants on fire. You only blush when you lie. Is it a guy?

CASSI

Yes, but I don't want to discuss it yet.

(MORE)

CASSI (cont'd)
(holds up a hand)
Please, Sissy. Just give me some
time.

KATE
(defensively)
Fine!

Brett clears his throat meaningfully. Kate takes another
bite. They all chew quietly for a moment.

KATE (cont'd)
I'm sorry. I don't know what gets
into me... I guess I just want you to
be as happy as I am.

CASSI
I do too, but until they clone Brett,
I'm stuck waiting.

BRETT
(to Kate)
See, I told you she wasn't a dumb
blonde!

KATE
Oh, you're so funny I forgot to
laugh!

Kate makes a face at him before turning her attention back
to Cassi.

KATE (cont'd)
Are you still reading that detective
novel?

CASSI
(to Brett)
Does she ever stop?

He shakes his head and takes a sip of his wine.

Kate looks at her sister with brows raised, waiting for an
answer.

CASSI (cont'd)
Yes, I'm still reading the novel.

KATE
Are you still dreaming about it?

CASSI

Yeah. If I read the book, I always dream about him, I mean it—the book, that night. I'm getting used to it though.

BRETT

You dream about what you read?

CASSI

Uhm, no. The other way around. I dream what is going to come next.

Cassi bristles under their incredulous looks.

CASSI (cont'd)

Hey, look... I don't have any control over this, okay. I like the novel and it's not hurting me to dream about it. I admit I wish it were true, because he's exactly what I'm looking for in a man, but isn't that what novels are all about? They're make-believe.

That night she sits in her underwear and tank top on the couch. The book sits next to her and her phone is cradled in one hand. She stares at the wall with that glazed-over, fixated stare. Finally, she blinks and giving herself a slight shake, she opens her app and rereads the email.

MARCO (V.O.)

Do you think we'll ever meet in a normal, non-disappearing way?

Slowly she types;

CASSI (V.O.)

(as she types)

I don't know. This is all such a mystery to me.

She heaves a big sigh goes down the hall.

INT. MARCO'S HOME - NIGHT

DREAM SEQUENCE

Cassi appears in Marco's hallway. She follows the voices to the kitchen. Gian and Samuel are working side-by-side preparing dinner. Jack trots after her. She reaches down and rubs his ear. She takes a seat on a barstool just as Jack runs to the front door with his tail wagging wildly.

GIAN
(calls out)
We're in the kitchen.

Marco comes in and stops in his tracks when he sees Cassi. He smiles and turns his attention to his guests.

Samuel is watching him intently. He looks to the empty corner Marco had smiled at and back again.

SAMUEL
Is the ghost-lady here again?

Glancing at her, Marco smiles again.

MARCO
She is.

Both Gian and Samuel looks startled.

GIAN
Really?

MARCO
Really, really.

Marco laughs at their expressions.

MARCO (cont'd)
Don't worry about her, she's here a lot.

Marco sniffs the air and comes around to see what's in the large pan. Gian blocks him.

GIAN
Hey, back off. Get a beer and relax.

Marco laughs as he pulls a beer out of the fridge. Popping it open, he sits next to Cassi and presses his KNEE against hers.

SAMUEL
Just here at your house?

MARCO
No, actually I see her all over the place. Kind of like a stalker.

Cassi slugs his arm.

MARCO (cont'd)
Ouch!

GIAN
(to Marco)
Enough ghost-stories. Are you ready
to eat?

MARCO
No, give me a minute to wash up.

Marco grabs his beer and heads down the hall with Cassi and Jack at his heels. Once in his room, he shuts the door. He sets his beer down and swiftly pulls her into his arms and kisses her.

It takes a second of surprised hesitation before she melts into his passionate embrace. They pull apart and eye each other, breathing heavily.

MARCO (cont'd)
What the hell am I supposed to do
about this Cassi?

She watches him mutely.

MARCO (cont'd)
I don't know how much longer I can do
this.

He raises both arms and lets them drop at his sides.

MARCO (cont'd)
(pleading)
I want you to be real.

Cassi steps forward and gently cups his strong jaws. Going up on tip-toes she kisses him lightly. As she relaxes into his embrace she heaves a sad sigh.

END DREAM
SEQUENCE

INT. SNF - DAY

She goes to her office and turns on her computer. Pulling the stack of paperwork closer, she starts typing.

Fred peeks around the corner into her office to catch her with her elbows on her desk and her chin resting on her knuckles.

FRED
Hey, kiddo. You okay?

She rolls her head to the side and gives him a weak smile.

CASSI

Yeah... no.

At his look of concern she pushes off from the desk and rolls out of her office on her swivel chair.

CASSI (cont'd)

I'm fine. I just have a lot on my mind. How're you?

FRED

Good. Did you already eat lunch?

Fred asks looking at her empty hands.

CASSI

Nah, I forgot to bring a lunch.

She reaches for a pile of clean towels and starts folding them.

CASSI (cont'd)

I'm not hungry anyway. I'll eat a protein bar later.

FRED

Okay little girl... spit it out. What's up? Did you finish your book or something?

She laughs.

CASSI

No, I'm still reading it.

He nods and rolls back and forth.

She stops folding and fiddles with a towel.

CASSI (CONT'D)

(dreamily)

We kissed last night.

FRED

So you finally had dream sex?

CASSI

Fred! We just kissed.

(suddenly serious)

I think I'm going to look at the ending of the book tonight.

FRED

Hmm, you scared?

CASSI

A little, but I think I need to know. It's not a fun mystery anymore. I've really fallen for this guy. I feel like I've met my soul-mate or something. But he doesn't know much about me because I still can't speak.

FRED

But now that you're writing to him, is he getting to know you?

CASSI

I suppose.

Cassi grabs another towel.

CASSI (cont'd)

I know what I'm getting ready to tell you is crazy, but I think he likes me... a lot. He told his mom that he was falling in love.

INT./EXT. CASSI'S HOME/YARD - NIGHT

That night she flops on her couch. Her stomach growls. Cassi gets up and dumps granola in a bowl. She takes the cereal outside to her bistro table.

She goes back in for the book. Sitting down, she scoots the bowl closer and bends her head in prayer.

CASSI

Dear Jesus...

(long pause)

I have no idea what to pray for,
Amen.

She picks up the book. As she crunches on the granola she thumbs the tattered BACK PAGES, but doesn't open them.

INT. MARCO'S HOME - DAY

GIAN

Enough ghost-stories. Are you ready to eat?

MARCO

No, give me a minute to wash up.

Marco grabs his beer and heads down the hall with Cassi and Jack at his heels. Once in his room, he shuts the door.

He sets his beer down and swiftly pulls her into his arms and kisses her.

She melts into his passionate embrace. They pull apart and eye each other, breathing heavily.

MARCO (cont'd)
(whispers)
What the hell am I supposed to do
about this?

She watches him mutely.

MARCO (cont'd)
I don't know how much longer I can do
this.

He raises both arms and lets them drop at his sides.

MARCO (cont'd)
(pleading)
I want you to be real.

Cassi vanishes. His torso rolls forward as he covers his face with his hands.

MARCO (cont'd)
(whispers)
I feel like I'm falling in love with
you.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

Cassi stops chewing.

CASSI
You feel like you're falling in love
with me?

Cassi sets the book down and looks up.

CASSI (cont'd)
Seriously God? Why would you do this
to me?

INT. MARCO'S HOME - NIGHT

Marco snarls at the empty room. He goes into his bathroom and splashes cold water over his flushed face. He glares at his face in the mirror.

MARCO

Why? Am I supposed to be learning something from this?

He sits on the edge of his bed with his head in his hands again and stares at the floor. He can hear Samuel and Gian's voices in the kitchen. Shaking himself, he goes to the kitchen.

MARCO (cont'd)

Boy, it sure smells good.

He notices the set table and smiles.

GIAN

Take a seat. Samu, bring the wine.

Gian follows Samuel with a bowl of steaming pasta. He sets it in the middle of the table.

MARCO

No way! You made carbonara?

Marco asks as he leans forward to smell the creamy bacony sauce.

MARCO (cont'd)

This is my favorite.

They all heap huge mounds onto their plates.

GIAN

I hope you like it. I had my wife send me her recipe.

Marco scoops a spoonful into his mouth and groans with pleasure. Silence reigns as they all eat.

MARCO

The bacon is perfect. This is the best carbonara I've ever had.

GIAN

Good. Eat as much as you want because I didn't make anything else.

MARCO

What? No second course?

Gian grins at this good-natured bantering.

MARCO (cont'd)
 (to Samuel)
 So, what's the latest with your
 operation? Are all the cousins in
 place?

SAMUEL
 Actually yes.

Samuel answers and turns his attention to his father.

SAMUEL (cont'd)
 I was going to tell you tonight. Nico
 was the last to get hired at a big
 bakery Mimi works at. She told her
 father.

GIAN
 Tomorrow ought to be interesting. I'm
 sure once word gets out, especially
 to the wives, it will all move fast.

Samuel nods seriously.

INT. PRECINCT - FOLLOWING DAY

Marco sits at his computer typing. Data flashes up onto the
 screen about CASSIE WEYMAN. He jumps guiltily when his cell
 rings.

SAMUEL (V.O.)
 We're all going to grandfather's home
 at noon. Wish us luck.

MARCO
 Please be careful.

Marco types into his phone to Cassi;

MARCO (V.O.)
 (as he types)
 Well, here it goes... if you're the
 praying type, now would be good. The
 kids are heading over to Grandfather
 Scutari's home. I can't imagine how
 he's going to take it.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

Cassi's cell double-pings an email alert. She grabs her
 phone and reads the email. With a smile, she tips her head
 back and closes her eyes.

CASSI

God please bring peace to the Scutari family and help the grandfather listen to the kids.

(bites her bottom lip)

Am I allowed to pray for a character in a novel?

EXT. FLORENCE STREETS - DAY

Marco stands facing the mansion of Severino Scutari.

The last grandchild arrives to the little cluster gathering on the cobblestone street. A couple of minutes later SEVINO, DRAGO, and GIANLUCA approach the group with chests puffed out. The fifteen enter the giant front door. ZETA, being the oldest of Samuel's group, assumes the lead. The three bad ones follow.

INT. SCUTARI MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Severino Scutari is seated at his massive mahogany desk. He leans back in his leather chair to survey his pride and joy. One gnarled hand rests on the desktop with slowly tapping fingers.

MRS. SCUTARI, his elderly wife, sits in her corner of the couch with a crochet project spread out next to her. Her hands are idle as she watches.

They spread out in a fan around his desk. Drago, Gianluca, and Sevino stand back like body guards.

Zeta takes a deep breath and commences her speech.

ZETA

Nonno, we come here today with all of our love and admiration for you and Nonna. We dedicate our lives to you. We will always take care of you both physically and financially.

Severino raises a thick eyebrow.

SEVERINO

(sarcastic)

You will take care of me?

ZETA

Yes... until your last breath, regardless of the decision you make today.

His thick eyebrows shoot together at this ultimatum. Before he speaks he sees his wife looking pleadingly at him. She gently shakes her head. Severino pauses. He looks at each of the strong determined Scutari youth.

SEVERINO

A decision?

Zeta takes a deep breath and glances at her cousins. Samuel nods encouragement to her and takes her trembling HAND in his. One by one, they clasp hands.

ZETA

(dramatic)

We will not participate in the Scutari Family business--ever. We want to pursue our own lives in our own ways. We reject evil and embrace good.

She lifts her small pointed chin. Grandma smiles.

SEVERINO

This doesn't sound like a decision to me.

SAMUEL

You must decide to bless us, or withhold your blessing. Either way, we'll still take care of you and Nonna.

Letting go of his cousins' hands Samuel places a hand on top of Severino Scutari's hand. Zeta places her hand on Samuel's. The hands begin to pile up on his. A granddaughter comes around his desk and perches on his knee.

Another presses into his side. Several place hands upon his shoulders. Tears stream down their grandmother's wrinkled smiling face.

SEVERINO

And you?

Severino gruffly asks his three grandsons who remain apart.

SEVERINO (cont'd)

What do say?

Drago steps forward and answers;

DRAGO

We'll accept *your* decision.

He reaches in and puts a hand on his grandfather's sleeve. Sevino does the same, but Gianluca holds back with anger and disappointment on his narrow face.

GIANLUCA

I will respect your decision about my cousins, but will follow my father.

Gianluca answers with a piercing glare at his sister, Zeta.

Silence reigns in the crowded room. Nonna Scutari dabs at her tears with a handkerchief.

SEVERINO

You have my blessing.

The granddaughter on his knee kisses his cheek. They all smile their relief as they embrace each other.

SEVERINO (cont'd)

And you, Gianluca, will answer to me--not Adelmo. I am still the head of this family. I will speak to him.
(looking around the group)
and your fathers too.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

Cassi sighs happily. She puts the book down to savor the moment. Her book marker is about three-quarters through the book. Anabelle swats playfully at the paperback.

Cassi picks up her cell and taps out an email to Marco,

CASSI (V.O.)

(as she types)
Well, that went well. I hope Gianluca can accept the new way. He worries me. I've had a horribly long day, so I'm heading off to bed now. Have fun with the paperwork!

As Cassi gets up. Anabelle succeeds in knocking the book to the floor. Cassi looks down at the open book in confusion. The pages are BLANK. She picks it up to thumb through the end of the book--all blank! She fans the pages back to where she'd left off to see there is only one more printed page. She sits back down. Her brows are scrunched as she reads;

EXT. FLORENCE STREETS - DAY

Marco glances down at the text from Samuel to his father and himself: "All is good. Nonno has given us his blessing."

Marco heaves a sigh of relief. Out of the corner of his eye he sees Gian step from an alley. He nods to Marco before crossing the street to enter the front door.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

CASSI

(shouts)

That's it? Are you freaking kidding me?

Anabelle lays her ears back in concern.

CASSI (cont'd)

Why would that lady sell me this book knowing it's defective? Huh?

She demands of the feline. She slams the book down and stomps down the hall. That night she tosses and turns until she falls asleep around three o'clock.

EXT. FLORENCE STREETS - PRE-DAWN

DREAM SEQUENCE

Cassi walks slowly down the deserted streets, moving from lamplight to lamplight. Her face shows dreary sadness. She climbs the short incline to the Ponte Vecchio and sits down on a ledge to look at the sepia landscape. A scuffle of feet turns her attention to the opposite direction she'd come from. A man is walking toward her. His gait is familiar.

Marco stops several feet from her and looks at her in surprise. Silently he approaches and sits next to her. They interlock their fingers and watch the horizon slowly lighten. Brilliant oranges, yellows, and peaches creep across the underbelly of the clouds.

He lifts her fingers to his lips and kisses each knuckle. Cassi snuggles at his side until the sun's rays are fully upon them.

MARCO

How 'bout a cup of coffee? Can ghosts drink coffee?

She shrugs with a sad smile.

Marco watches her expressive face with concern.

MARCO (cont'd)
Something's wrong?

She nods and lifts one hand to touch his cheek.

END DREAM
SEQUENCE

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

Cassi lies for a long time staring dry-eyed at the ceiling. Anabelle is curled at her side with her tail draped over her eyes. Cassi rolls onto her side and gently pets the cat.

CASSI
Well, the good news is I had one more
dream about Marco.

She lets the cat's tail slide through her fingers.

INT. SNF - DAY

Fred's sneakers appear around the doorway followed by his faded jeans. He leans forward and peeks around the corner. Seeing her watching him, he smiles and rolls the rest of the way in sight.

CASSI
You'd make a good burglar.

He gives her his lopsided grin.

FRED
You look like death warmed over.

CASSI
Gee, thanks.

She waves him back as she grabs her little lunch bag. She clambers onto the therapy mat and pulls a gym towel over to make a placemat. She pulls out a container of diced chicken and an avocado. Sitting cross-legged, she halves the avocado and scoops the contents into her bowl.

FRED
That doesn't look appetizing.

CASSI
You're just jealous.

He silently rolls back and forth while she forks the mixture into her mouth.

FRED

So, what's the latest on the detective? You still having an affair?

CASSI

Fred! I'm not having an affair. You're incorrigible.

FRED

I hope that's a compliment.

CASSI

It's not.

(with a laugh)

I think last night was the last. The book ended abruptly with like twenty blank pages left. I can't even tell you how bummed I am.

FRED

I have a question; if you dreamt about him last night, then you'd read it in the book today, right?

CASSI

CASSI (cont'd)

That's how it worked in the past, but there's no more writing. It's blank.

FRED

Oh.

Looks thoughtfully at her.

CASSI

What?

FRED

Nothing, just thinking.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - NIGHT

That night she makes dinner and pulls out an old book. Before opening it she writes to Marco;

CASSI (V.O.)

(as she types)

Hello handsome, the book ended abruptly, but I had one final dream about you last night. We sat on the Ponte Vecchio and watched the sunrise. It was magical. Since I won't be able to read about it, you may not be able to experience it. I can't help but wonder what will happen to you? Are you just a figment of my imagination?

She sips her wine and watches a hummingbird flit from flower to flower outside her window. Double-ping;

MARCO (V.O.)

Hello beautiful, let's hope the sunrise dream comes true. It sounds magical.

She gets up and places *The Scutari Legacy* where she can see it from the couch. Next Cassi goes into the kitchen and returns with a tiny lavender glass vase. She sets it next to the book.

She comes in from the back yard with a little spray of flowers. She sticks it in the vase.

Cassi sits back down and looks at her little shrine to Marco. On impulse she takes a photo and sends it to him.

Double-ping;

MARCO (V.O.) (cont'd)

Great pic... is that my book? I keep waiting for our sunrise. My meeting with Signor Scutari was interesting. He is an amazing guy. Reminds me of the Godfather. It appears Lorenzo wants to keep the business going, he has only been able to recruit Gianluca so far, but even that isn't a sure thing. The grandmother seems to have gotten through to him.

Cassi hugs herself.

MONTAGE

She replaces the flowers in the vase every couple of days.

END MONTAGE

INT. SNF - DAY

Her phone double-pings while she's walking down the hall. She makes a detour to the bathroom.

MARCO (V.O.)

Hi beautiful. Sorry I haven't written. Been super busy trying to close this case. Last night the whole Scutari next-gen showed up at my house with pizza. It was a good time. It feels like a new Florence is blooming. I'm at the office, so can't write much. I didn't want you to think I was ignoring you. You're constantly on my mind.

EXT. CASSI'S YARD - DUSK

When Cassi gets home, she grabs the jar of peanut butter and goes to her chaise lounge. It's already dusk and peaceful. She puts a teaspoon of the peanut butter in her mouth as she types on her phone;

CASSI (V.O.)

(as she types)

Hi handsome, it was good to hear from you today. I had a crazy busy day today, or I would've written back sooner. I'm sitting in my pretty garden eating peanut butter while I'm still wearing my scrubs... gross. One more spoonful and I'll change and take a shower, I promise. I love you.

Cassi's finger freezes over the phone.

CASSI

What in the world? I love you?

She turns to the cat.

CASSI (cont'd)

I don't even know him. How could I love him? I'm definitely deleting that.

Cassi taps her phone with her forefinger to delete it. She pushes herself up and goes inside. Pulling out a frozen dinner, she shoves it in the microwave and goes down the hall stripping as she goes. Twenty minutes later she slouches down in the couch cushions with the dinner on her belly and a book open.

Double-ping;

MARCO (V.O.)
It's dawn and I'm sitting on Ponte
Vecchio waiting for you to join me.

CASSI (V.O.)
(as she types)
I wish I was there. Instead, I'm
eating a microwave dinner and reading
Jane Eyre. Have a good day Marcus.

MARCO (V.O.)
Sweet dreams, beautiful. P.S If you
don't show up this morning, I'm going
to find you. Remember, I'm a
detective!

Cassi sighs a wistfully as she looks at the book propped up
on the shelf. She goes outside and returns with a fresh
bouquet.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - DAY

Cassi greets Kate with a hug as she and Brett come in. He
uncorks the wine.

BRETT
How's your week been? Anything new
with the detective guy?

Cassi holds her glass out for a pour.

CASSI
I finished the book.

KATE
Oh....

Kate pauses with her wine glass in mid-air.

KATE (cont'd)
So, no more dreams?

CASSI
No more dreams.

Kate stares at her intently.

CASSI (cont'd)
What?

Brett watches the two sisters. Cassi finally caves under the stare.

CASSI (cont'd)
I started emailing him a while back.
We're still writing, but I can't see
him anymore because the book ended
when he solved the crime. Remember, I
only dreamt about him after I read
the story.

BRETT
Wow. That's crazy cool.

KATE
It's crazy weird! And how in the
world are you able to email him?

CASSI
Kate, look at me.

When Cassi has her sister's attention, she continues;

CASSI (cont'd)
I'm really sensitive about this,
okay. Please don't make fun of me.

KATE
(nods)
Okay, I promise.

CASSI
He's talked to me, but I've never
been able to talk to him because I'm,
like, mute or something in the
dreams. Since he started writing to
me, I can respond.

KATE
Respond in your dreams?

CASSI
No. We write when I'm awake.

Cassi lifts both hands helplessly.

KATE
I wanna see 'em.

BRETT
Katie, leave her alone.

Cassi looks down at the kitchen counter.

CASSI
I don't know if I'm ready for that.

She looks up with a wry smile.

CASSI (cont'd)
Maybe after two glasses of wine.

KATE
Okay, it's a deal! Grab the chips and guac. Brett bring the wine.

CASSI
We have a word for what you're doing in my line of work. It's called perseverating.

Kate tosses her hair over one shoulder and ignores her sister. They follow her to the patio.

EXT. CASSI'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Later, while seated around the patio table, Kate pours another glass of wine for Cassi.

KATE
There, drink up Sissy. I want to read those emails.

CASSI
(laughs)
Good lord! Don't you ever stop?

Both Kate and Brett shake their heads.

Cassi takes a big sip of the wine.

CASSI (cont'd)
Okay, what the hell. You can read them.
(pulls her phone out)
You're never gonna relent until you read them anyway.

She hands the phone to Kate. Brett looks hopefully at Cassi.

CASSI (cont'd)
Sure, you can read them too... why not? My private life is apparently not private.

They ignore her as they pour over the emails. Finally, Kate hands her the phone back.

KATE

I'm sorry Sissy, I guess I didn't believe it was real.

CASSI

It probably isn't, but it's real to me. It makes me sad that I can never meet him.

BRETT

Why can't you meet him?

They both look at him like he's grown an extra head.

BRETT (cont'd)

What? He's got real fingers to type out a message. Maybe he's got a real human body.

Cassie laughs as she stands.

CASSI

I need to check on dinner. Be right back.

INT. CASSI'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

As soon as she gets in the house, she emails Marco;

CASSI (V.O.)

(as she types)

I miss seeing you.

She slides the phone into the back pocket of her shorts. Double-Ping! She pulls her phone back out.

MARCO (V.O.)

Same. I've never even heard your voice. What are you doing tonight? Anything fun?

Cassi stands with one hip against the counter while she responds;

CASSI (V.O.)

(as she types)

My sister and her husband, Brett, are here for dinner tonight. I pulled a pork loin out of the freezer, and I'm baking potatoes. I picked some grapes and strawberries for dessert.

MARCO (V.O.)
Sounds good! What time do you want me there?

CASSI (V.O.)
(as she types)
Lol, seven o'clock and bring wine!

KATE
Is this the book?

Cassi jumps in surprise.

Kate is across the room. She touches the spine of the book next to the miniature vase of wild flowers.

KATE (cont'd)
May I?

Cassi nods mutely. She puts a hand to her stomach as she watches her sister open it to the first page.

CASSI
Okay.

Cassi crosses the room and takes the book from her sister.

CASSI (cont'd)
That's all I can handle.

She places the book back in its spot.

CASSI (cont'd)
Let's go outside... it's a gorgeous night and I've been cooped up all week.

Kate asks as she follows her to the slider.

KATE
When's the last time you dreamt about him?

CASSI
Last weekend.

The doorbell startles them all.

KATE
Are you expecting someone?

CASSI
No.

Cassi opens the front door and stands there with her mouth open and wide eyes. She makes several little gasping noises.

MARCO
Hello beautiful.

Marco looks at her in concern. He glances over her shoulder as Kate, and Brett arrives to investigate. Kate smiles at this handsome stranger and nudges her sister.

KATE
Aren't you going to introduce us?

Cassi doesn't even blink.

Brett reaches around Cassi's shoulder to shake the poor guy's hand and suddenly he knows.

BRETT
Marco?

Marco reaches for his hand.

MARCO
Yes.

He hands over a bottle of wine and adds;

MARCO (cont'd)
She told me to bring wine.

BRETT
I'm Brett and this is my wife, Kate.

Cassi is still staring with an open mouth. Kate becomes a statue like Cassi.

MARCO
(to Brett)
Are they always like this?

Brett shakes his head with a laugh.

Cassi sucks in a shuddering breath and blinks back tears as her face contorts in a very unflattering way.

MARCO (cont'd)
Cassi?

Marco reaches for her hand.

MARCO (cont'd)

(gently)

Can you speak? I'm so afraid you will
vanish if you do, but I have to know
if you're real.

He watches tears stream down her face.

She dives into his arms and sobs. After a couple of awkward
moments, she pulls back and says;

CASSI

Hello handsome.

FADE OUT