

Fiume

by

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FIUME

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EXT. A DARK STREET, FIUME - SEPTEMBER 1920.

A TEENAGE GIRL runs down an empty, dimly-lit street. Fireworks burst over the low rooftops behind her, coloring the road blue, then red. The girl glances over her shoulder, laughing. We can hear her pursuer's shoes slap against the wet cobblestones behind her.

The girl's skirts bell out as she turns suddenly into a dark tunnel. She dashes through the corridor, her laughter and footfalls echoing down its length.

As she reaches the tunnel's mouth, a hand reaches out to grab her by the waist. Still laughing, she struggles playfully as a TEENAGE BOY tries to kiss her. He lunges forward and ends up wetly kissing the side of her face. She yelps, withdrawing in mock disgust.

They tumble out of the tunnel and into the street. She laughs breathlessly.

HER

Okay, okay! Stoppit!

She rests her hands on his chest and his hold on her softens. He kisses her, pushing her backward until she is braced against a wall.

INT. BAR - CONT.

From the back window of a bar across the street, a young Italian soldier watches the teenagers.

He is GIORGIO PERETTI - "Gio" for short. He looks about twenty five and wears the rough-spun pants and undershirt of an Italian private's uniform. A small, dog-eared notebook is tucked into his back pocket and graphite stains mark the thumb and index finger of his right hand: a writer.

Gio strikes a match off the windowsill and lights a cigarette. He pushes back the curtains to look at the teenagers again.

LORENZO

Gio!

Gio lets the curtain fall, blocking out the couple. He turns to sit down at a table of soldiers playing cards.

LORENZO, a soldier who looks a couple years younger than the others, leans across the table and places a deck of cards in front of Gio.

LORENZO (CONT'D)

Your deal.

Gio lets his cigarette droop between his lips as he deftly passes out cards between the men.

INT. BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

Cigarette butts and empty glasses litter the table. Lorenzo shuffles the deck with gravity and precision. As he passes Gio a card, Gio stops his hand.

GIO

None for me.

LORENZO

What?

Gio drains the his glass of wine and puts out his cigarette.

GIO

I'm going to head back.

LORENZO

You can't be serious. Already?

GIO

I'm exhausted.

LORENZO

(exasperated)

Gio, come on! One more hand...

Gio waves him off, pushing back from the table. He gives the other soldiers a mock salute.

SOLDIER 1

Ciao, Gio.

SOLDIER 2

(waving without looking up
from his hand)

Night, Gio.

A WAITRESS comes to clear away their empties. A sweaty, disheveled man, FILLIPO SALA, clearly drunker than the rest of the soldiers, eyes her. He looks over at Gio glassy-eyed.

FILLIPO

Just go already, you never bet good money anyway.

Fillipo lunges unsteadily at the waitress. She pushes him off and he nearly tips over in his chair. The men erupt into laughter. He slaps her ass as she tries to walk away.

FILLIPO (CONT'D)
Oh, fuck off, both of you!

The waitress gives Gio an exasperated look as they leave the table. He places a comforting hand on her shoulder.

EXT. STREET - THAT NIGHT

Gio walks through the empty streets. Clouds of smoke linger above him where fireworks had gone off earlier that night.

INT. BARRACKS GUARDPOST - THAT NIGHT

Gio walks into the MILITARY BARRACKS, nodding at a GUARD as he passes. There is an easy sense of routine.

GIO
Theo.

THEO THE GUARD
Night, Gio.

INT. BARRACKS DORMITORY - THAT NIGHT

The dormitory is quiet and dark- most of the men are still out for the night. Gio undresses next to a small cot and climbs into bed. On the dresser next to Gio's bed we see a photograph of two women -one old, one young- and a stack of letters. He lies awake for a few moments before closing his eyes.

INT. BARRACKS MESS HALL - NEXT MORNING

Gio walks through a loud, chaotic mess hall. Soldiers chat and eat at a long communal table. Gio grabs some bread and coffee and edges over to where a clearly hungover Lorenzo is sitting.

GIO
How was last night?

Lorenzo groans and drops his head on the table with a heavy thud.

LORENZO
Don't start.

Gio tugs a newspaper out from under Lorenzo's head. A map of the Fiume area is spread over the front page. He scans the leading article.

GIO

We're in the paper again.

Lorenzo turns to watch as Gio takes a huge bite out of his hunk of bread and reads...

GIO (CONT'D)

"The adventure of Gabriele D'Annunzio, exquisite poet and writer of incomparable prose-

LORENZO

-debatable...

GIO

Shh!

(beat)

"...the adventure...is approaching its end. It has called forth mingled approval and censure, but there is little doubt that the audacity of the enterprise will leave its mark in history. Because of his dramatic military seizure of Fiume last year, that comparatively small city on the Adriatic has been some months the Mecca of many Americans, British, French, Italians and others whose interests and sympathies have been excited by the demonstration that the world is not always better governed by the application of rigorous juridical principles. He and his band of 2,000 renegades are running what he is calling a modern pirate utopia."

Lorenzo snorts.

LORENZO

This writer makes us sound like anarchists.

Gio shakes his head and flips through the article while finishing his breakfast.

GIO

Here, wait, this bit's great-
 "Beneath my room and in the
 adjoining streets there were
 strains of music and singing. They
 came from d'Annunzio's soldiers,
 who were spending the night in the
 brilliant moonlight shining over
 the city and bay. The songs were of
 mixed dialects from all parts of
 Italy and sung in plaintive tones.
 They seemed to breathe the soul of
 Fiume, facing an unknown fate..."
 That was you last night, huh?

A bell rings offscreen. Lorenzo groans. Gio sets his cup of coffee down in front of Lorenzo and stands up.

GIO (CONT'D)

Drink up, I'll meet you outside.

LORENZO

I bet real pirates don't have to do rounds.

GIO

Poor thing.

EXT. STREET - CONT.

Gio walks outside with several other soldiers. Men walking to work fill the streets, splashing through the puddles left by yesterday afternoon's rain. Above their heads, women throw open shutters and put out the day's laundry to dry.

The rest of the soldiers amble down the street while Gio waits for Lorenzo.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The men make their way through an open market where vendors are setting up their stalls. Signs in Italian and Hungarian litter the displays of meat and fruit.

As they pass, vendors offer the soldiers fresh plums and apricots.

A crowd spills out into the opposite end of the marketplace from a side street. Lorenzo looks over at Gio, concerned.

LORENZO

Is he supposed to be speaking this early?

Gio frowns. They pick up their pace as the crowd begins to cheer.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S SQUARE - CONT.

Gio and Lorenzo push their way through the crowded square. Men, women, and children look expectantly at a mansion impressively festooned with flags and banners in red, yellow, and blue.

A small, bald man wearing an eyepatch and an outrageously decorated military uniform addresses the crowd from the mansion's balcony. This is GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO, poet, performer and military man- the leader of the new Fiume state.

D'ANNUNZIO

(heatedly) ...and he swore not to know the first thing about anything, protested he did not want to know the first thing about anything except eat and drink, up to the last piece and up to the last sip; and he concluded with that immortal articulation of his congenital cowardice: "I do not think except with my belly."

At this, the crowd roars with laughter and boos, jostling forward. Lorenzo and Gio are buffeted further into the crowd.

D'Annunzio raises a finger to his lips and the crowd immediately falls silent.

D'ANNUNZIO (CONT'D)

(in hushed tones))

It is a great historical word, Fiumians...

The crowd cheers.

D'ANNUNZIO (CONT'D)

It is a sublime word!

More cheers.

D'ANNUNZIO (CONT'D)
 One worthy of being tattooed, with
 the special Prussian ink, on the
 sublime belly of the one who is not
 to be named...he says "I do not
 think except with my belly!"

A man standing next to Gio yells loudly.

CROWD MEMBER
 Boo!!

D'ANNUNZIO
 But he has been dethroned-

CROWD MEMBER
 Andiamo! Fiume!

D'ANNUNZIO
 -and Fiume is eternal!

Raucous cheering.

D'ANNUNZIO (CONT'D)
 It is true that we were born from
 Italy's womb. But we emerged from
 that hot darkness into the light
 crying for difference, for action,
 for life...and while he calls you
 rebels and me a traitor, the coward
 Italian will say: "I do not think
 except with my belly!"-

D'Annunzio raises his hand in a straight-armed salute.

D'ANNUNZIO (CONT'D)
 -and Fiume will say, "Fiume! Fiume
 does not think except with its
 boldness!"

At this, the crowd begins to cheer hysterically. D'Annunzio
 waves and retreats back into the mansion. Lorenzo looks
 around at the rowdy mob.

LORENZO
 Come on, let's get them out fast.

They begin to shepherd people out of the square.

Sudden shouts and cheers begin to ripple through the crowd.
 D'Annunzio has returned to the balcony.

People flood back towards the governor's mansion. Gio is
 pushed forward by the press of the chaotic mass.

D'ANNUNZIO

Fiume!

D'Annunzio raises a hand and the crowd falls silent. He extracts a piece of paper from his pocket and begins to read...

D'ANNUNZIO

I want to read you something a bit different. For the end of our summer.

(beat)

"All night - how long!
(it seemed the dawn would never come)

With ardour, with mad anger,
I had tried
To revive the flame in our mingled
bodies, in our kisses.
She no longer drank my spirit in
those kisses.
She drank only her own tears in
those kisses."

Confused murmurs spread through the crowd, but Gio is silently captivated.

After a pause, D'Annunzio folds the paper back up and returns the house. The crowd bursts into confused chatter and scattered applause as people begin to file out of the square.

Gio is in a daze from hearing D'Annunzio's poetry, the words still cycling through his head. He pats his pockets, distractedly feeling for his notebook.

From several yards away, Lorenzo waves to Gio and points to a side street where they can meet.

Gio begins to push his way through the crowd.

EXT. SIDE STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Gio meets Lorenzo on the other side of the square and they begin to make their way back to the barracks through Fiume's narrow, winding back streets. Lorenzo fishes an orange out of his pocket and begins to peel back its skin.

LORENZO

What was that about?

GIO

A poem, I guess.

LORENZO
 Why would he even read that to us,
 though?

Gio shakes his head noncommittally and shrugs.

LORENZO (CONT'D)
 Strange. It didn't even sound
 finished.

GIO
 Maybe he was just trying it out to
 get it right.

Gio takes out his notebook and writes as they walk, trying to remember the exact phrasing of D'Annunzio's poem.

LORENZO
 What are you writing?

GIO
 Nothing, I'm just trying...

LORENZO
 Let me see.

Gio shrugs Lorenzo off and hides his notebook from view.

GIO
 Come off it.

LORENZO
 Fine.
 (beat)
 Did you see Olivia earlier? You saw
 her, right? The girl I was telling
 you about? At the market? She's
 gorgeous, Gio. I mean it, really,
 really absurdly attractive. Her
 father is eagled-eyed, though...

Lorenzo prattles on about the local girl. As they round the corner to the military headquarters, the guard's voice calls out:

THEO THE GUARD
 Hey, Gio! The colonel is looking
 for you.

Lorenzo faux-grimaces at Gio.

LORENZO
 Someone's in trouble...

Gio tucks his notebook and pen back into his pocket. He rolls his eyes at Lorenzo and walks into the military offices.

GIO
Thanks, Theo.

INT. MILITARY OFFICES - CONT.

Gio makes his way up a busy staircase. Soldiers rush up and down carrying files and boxes of equipment.

SOLDIER 1
(in passing)
Conti wants you, Gio!

GIO
Thanks.

Gio reaches the top of the stairs. The door in front of him has a makeshift sign that reads "CONTI."

INT. CONTI'S OFFICE - CONT.

Gio enters a cluttered office. COLONEL TOMMASO CONTI sits behind a desk littered with maps. A blonde man in civilian clothes sits across from Conti with his back to the door.

Gio salutes.

CONTI
Gio, good. This is Edward Preston.
He's a photographer from AP.
Preston, this is Private Giorgio
Peretti.

EDWARD PRESTON turns around. He is delicately handsome with ash-blonde hair and full lips settled into a confident half-smile. His rugged clothes contrast with his delicate features--his boots are scuffed and bear the marks of hasty re-soling. The borders of a deep farmer's tan peek out from the neck of his shirt.

EDO
(in a trim English accent)
Edo, when I'm with Italians.

Conti laughs.

CONTI
You're with Fiumians now.

EDO
Of course.

Edward extends his hand and looks intently at Gio.

EDO (CONT'D)
Nice to meet you.

Gio nods and they shake hands. Gio's eyes linger for a subtle beat on Edo's face before turning to look at his commander.

CONTI
Preston needs someone to escort him around the area to take photographs. You'll be his liason until he finishes his assignment here. Preston, you'll have Peretti's services as-needed.

Gio nods.

CONTI (CONT'D)
We all have experience with this sort of assignment given the amount of interest the press has had in our activities, Peretti will be able to take you where you need to go.

EDO
Fantastic. I promise not to let my editor write a puff piece like the one in the Tribune this morning.

Gio smiles. Conti stands up to shake Edo's hand.

CONTI
Thank god for that...You need anything, you let me know.

EDO
Thank you, Colonel.

The colonel shows them out of the room.

INT. MILITARY OFFICES - CONT.

They stand awkwardly on the landing for a beat.

EDO
Let's find somewhere to talk about the project?

GIO

Sure.

The two men walk down the cluttered stairwell. Edo scrambles to manage his camera bags while keeping pace with Gio. They make their way outside.

EXT. MILITARY OFFICES - CONT.

They pause outside the door. The summer heat has begun to bake the pavement dry. Gio lights a cigarette. Edo looks around.

EDO

Is there a hotel nearby? We could get a drink and then I can arrange for a room.

GIO

You haven't found a room yet?

EDO

No, I came straight to the office...

Gio gestures down the street.

GIO

There's a bar at a hotel down the street.

EDO

Do you think they'll have an open room?

Gio shrugs.

EDO (CONT'D)

Well, I guess we'll see, then.

They head out towards the hotel.

EDO (CONT'D)

What did Conti say your position was?

GIO

Private.

EDO

And you're Italian?

GIO
Sort of. I was born there.

EDO
Did you serve in the army?

GIO
(beat)
Are you a reporter or a
photographer?

Edo laughs.

EDO
A bit of both, I guess.

GIO
I served in the Italian army before
coming here.

EDO
Why did you?

GIO
Pardon?

EDO
Why did you come over here?

GIO
I believed in D'Annunzio's mission.

EDO
To reclaim Fiume for Italy?

GIO
Yes.

EDO
But Fiume is it's own state now, it
isn't Italian anymore.

GIO
No, not technically... but it's
under a great Italian leader. It's
fulfilling Rome's legacy.

EDO
Hm.
(beat)
So you've met him? D'Annunzio?

GIO
No, I mean I've seen him speak but
I've never spoken with him.

EDO
Does he really speak every morning?

Gio nods.

They approach a small building across the street. Men file in and out holding telegrams and suitcases.

GIO
The hotel's over there.

EDO
Do you get a lot of tourists?

GIO
Tourists, no. Reporters, artists,
yes.

EDO
Glorified tourists.

Gio smiles. They walk into the hotel.

INT. HOTEL BAR

The hotel lobby bustles with activity. Men in all manners of dress drink and smoke at low, worn tables. There are military officers in uniform, reporters in crumpled suits, and artists in a hodgepodge of shabby clothes, each arranged in like-minded cliques around the room.

Edo winds his way through the press of bodies and finds two open stools at the bar. They settle into their seats.

A bartender approaches them.

BARTENDER
What would you like?

EDO
Beer for me, please. Private?

GIO
Beer's fine, thank you.

The bartender leaves and comes back with their drinks.

EDO
Thank you.

GIO

Thanks.

The bartender looks at Edo's bags.

BARTENDER

Are you looking for a room?

EDO

If you have one.

BARTENDER

Let me check. Name?

EDO

Edward Preston.

BARTENDER

I'll see what I can do, Mr. Preston.

EDO

Thank you, sir.

The bartender leaves. Edo swivels to face Gio.

EDO (CONT'D)

So, shall I tell you a bit about my project and you can tell me if you have any ideas of locations we could shoot?

GIO

Sure, go ahead.

Edo leans down to rummage through his bag, producing a map. He moves an ashtray out of the way and spreads the map out over the bar.

EDO

My editor assigned me to cover reconstruction in the Balkans several months ago. He transferred me to Fiume to continue that research while documenting whatever it is that's going on here.

GIO

(smiling)

Beats me.

Gio picks up his drink and looks around the bar. Around the room, conversations carry on in a half dozen different languages...

the occasional snippet of English breaks through the cacophony of Italian, German, French, Turkish, and Greek. Edo follows Gio's gaze.

EDO

Did all these people come over after the war?

GIO

Most of them. There have been Italians here for generations. The others have come for D'Annunzio...reporters, mostly.

EDO

Almost as bad as photographers.

Gio smiles and takes a deep pull of his beer.

GIO

Where do you want to start?

EDO

Well, I thought we'd start with the important sites of the initial invasion and then move on to look at the impact of the war on some of the local rural communities.

He takes two pens from his breast pocket and hands one to Gio.

EDO (CONT'D)

Just mark where you think would be good to start.

GIO

Ok.

EDO

And I'd like to see D'Annunzio speak as soon as possible. Does he do formal portraits?

GIO

Rarely, and not with journalists.

EDO

Ok. We'll work on that.

Edo writes a note to himself on the back of his hand. Gio finishes his beer and looks down at the map.

GIO

Getting access to some of the military sites and moving around outside the city might be a bit more difficult. Conti's one of the only higher-ups who doesn't mind reporters.

EDO

Ok. Would it be better for me to talk to them or for you to approach them on my behalf?

GIO

I'll try and set you some meetings.

EDO

Great. Then let's start with some local color tomorrow? Markets, harbors, that sort of thing. Is there a vantage point to see the city from?

Gio nods, tracing a route for them to walk tomorrow on the map.

GIO

You can see the city pretty well from back here in the hills.

The bartender returns holding a room key. He sets it down on the bar.

BARTENDER

You're in luck, Mr. Preston.

EDO

Fantastic, thank you.

BARTENDER

Room 21, up the stairs and to the left.

Gio stands.

GIO

I'll leave you to get settled.

EDO

Thank you, Private.

GIO

I'll meet you at headquarters tomorrow morning.

EDO

Yes. See you tomorrow.

They shake hands. Gio makes his way out of the crowded bar as Edo watches him go.

EXT. BARRACKS - THE NEXT MORNING

Edo waits outside of the building, a small camera slung around his neck. A bell rings inside and soldiers begin to flood out onto the street. Edo sees Gio emerge with Lorenzo and steps towards them.

EDO

Peretti!

Gio sees him and nods. Lorenzo watches as Gio walks over to where Edo is standing.

GIO

Good morning.

EDO

Good morning. You ready?

GIO

Sure, let's go.

Lorenzo yells at them as they cross the street.

LORENZO

Ciao, Gio!

GIO

(over his shoulder)

Ciao, Lorenzo!

EDO

Gio?

GIO

For Giorgio.

EXT. VANTAGE POINT ABOVE THE CITY - LATER THAT DAY

Gio and Edo walk along a dirt road high in the hills above Fiume. Cicadas grate loudly. Gio points to the port below.

GIO

We came in through the harbor there while the rest of the men circled around the north of the city by land.

Edo snaps a photograph of the bay.

EDO

So you came in by ship?

Gio nods. Edo walks out to the edge of the hillside to take some more photos of the town below. Gio watches Edo as he shifts his weight around, trying to find the shot.

EDO (CONT'D)

Will you stay here?

GIO

For as long as I'm needed.

EDO

How long do you think that'll be?
You must miss home.

GIO

I haven't been home in a long time. There's still a lot to be done here before I go back.

EDO

Like?

GIO

The government is so new here, it still needs our support...if the military presence lessens, Fiume will be vulnerable-

EDO

-from within?

GIO

No, the locals want us here.

EDO

There has to be some dissent, though.

GIO

There ended up being far fewer dissenting native Yugoslavs in Fiume than we thought.

(MORE)

GIO (CONT'D)

We've helped with reconstruction in the city and the surrounding farmland. They would have never had this sort of aid without us being here. What the government is afraid of is being vulnerable to recapture by Italy.

EDO

Italy acting in accordance with the European post-war treaties.

GIO

Some of the treaties, yes.

EDO

Would you be able to keep them away if they really decided to attack?

GIO

(beat)

It depends how badly they want to take us.

Edo considers this while turning away to snap a few more photos.

EDO

I think I have what I need up here.

They head back down to town.

EXT. HILLSIDE - LATER

Gio drinks at a water pump by the side of a house while Edo stands nearby and watches. Finished, Gio looks up and they lock eyes for a second before Gio looks away, embarrassed.

Edo takes a turn drinking from the pump. Gio faces away from him.

EXT. HOTEL STREET - LATER

Edo and Gio round the corner to Edo's hotel.

EDO

Thank you so much for everything.

GIO

You're welcome.

EDO
I'll let the colonel have you back
tomorrow and Sunday and then we'll
go out again at the start of the
week?

GIO
Whatever you need.

EDO
Alright, I'll see you then, I
guess.

They shake hands as they reach the hotel.

EDO (CONT'D)
Thanks again.

Gio waves as he leaves for the barracks.

EXT. BARRACKS STREET - MOMENTS LATER

A group of soldiers are hanging around outside the barracks
smoking cigarettes. As Gio approaches, Lorenzo materializes
out of the group, excitedly flicking his cigarette away.

LORENZO
Gio! *Finally*.

GIO
Hey.

LORENZO
How was he?

GIO
Fine.

LORENZO
Great. So, remember Olivia?

GIO
The market girl?

LORENZO
Exactly.

They walk into the barracks.

INT. BARRACKS COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

They continue through the courtyard that separates the mess hall from the dormitory.

LORENZO

...and so I finally asked, and she said that she would come tomorrow if I could find someone to go with her friend.

Gio shakes his head.

GIO

Lorenzo-

LORENZO

-I know, I know, but just one night! And you love these things anyway.

GIO

Since when?

LORENZO

You know you do.

INT. BARRACKS DORMITORY - MOMENTS LATER

Gio walks over to his bed and lies down, exhausted. Lorenzo sits down on the bed across from Gio's. Gio points to the photo of a young woman tacked to his bedframe.

GIO

I have a fiancée.

LORENZO

Oh come on.

GIO

What?

LORENZO

She's there, you're here.

GIO

You don't even know who this girl is.

LORENZO

I'm sure she's gorgeous.

GIO
Well in that case.

LORENZO
Gio, come on. Please?

Gio covers his face with his hands.

GIO
I really, really don't want to go.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S SQUARE - THE NEXT EVENING

Gio sits between OLIVIA and LUCIA in the middle of a crowd in the town square. Hundreds of people are gathered around the side of the governor's mansion sitting on a haphazard array of mismatched chairs and blankets. An enormous silent film is projected against the side of the mansion. A quartet plays a musical accompaniment below the makeshift screen.

Gio's eyes are locked on the screen. Lorenzo sits on the other side of Olivia, glancing over at her to try and catch her eye. She stares ahead.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S SQUARE - LATER

The girls on either side of Gio are still captivated by the film, but he's getting antsy. Bored, he looks around the crowd. The square is a sea of couples and families. Suddenly, he spots Edo sitting a few rows ahead of him.

Edo is watching the film intently. He reaches into his coat pocket for a cigarette, lighting it without looking away from the actors.

As the film continues onscreen, Gio surreptitiously watches Edo's reactions, as transfixed by Edo as Edo is transfixed by the screen.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S SQUARE - LATER

The film has ended and the crowd has begun to disperse. Lorenzo is listening to Olivia talk about the film while Gio and his date, Lucia, stand together awkwardly. Gio offers her a cigarette. She refuses.

LORENZO
Gio?

Gio turns away from Lucia, relieved.

GIO
Everything fine?

LORENZO
Yeah, could you just help me with
the chairs, I think they're trying
to clear the square.

GIO
I'll take them back, don't worry
about it.

LORENZO
No, no. We can walk them back
together before we go for a drink.
Shit, I should have thought this
through...

Lorenzo looks around as Gio fumbles with the chairs. He spots
Edo.

LORENZO (CONT'D)
Isn't that the guy you're working
with?

He points at Edo who is talking with another reporter type.

GIO
Yeah, it--

LORENZO
Oy!

Lorenzo shouts at Edo, waving. Edo waves back and walks over.

LORENZO (CONT'D)
Hello. Lorenzo.

EDO
Yes, I remember Peretti mentioning
you. Hello, Private.

The men shake hands.

LORENZO
Olivia, this is Edward Preston.

OLIVIA
Hello.

EDO
Lovely to meet you.

GIO
(beat)
This is Lucia.

EDO
Hello.

LUCIA
Hi.

LORENZO
How long have you been over there?
I don't know how we missed you.

EDO
I snuck in a couple minutes late.

LORENZO
Great, wasn't it? Olivia loves
Enrico Roma.

EDO
Which one was he?

OLIVIA
The baron who turns Lucciola into a
lady.

EDO
Oh he was great.

LORENZO
What are you doing with the rest of
your night?

EDO
I'm not sure, I was going to wander
around and find something.

LORENZO
Come have a drink with us.

Edo looks over at Gio.

EDO
I don't want to ruin your date.

LORENZO
Don't be ridiculous! You'll be way
more fun than this mope. Come on,
let's go for a drink and after I've
promised Olivia that we'd go to the
danzante once they clear out the
square.

EDO
Danzante?

GIO
Dance.

EDO
You're sure I won't be imposing?

LORENZO
Seriously, yes!

EDO
Alright.

LORENZO
Shit, the chairs.

GIO
I've got them.

LORENZO
Are you sure?

GIO
Yeah, it'll take two seconds. I'll
meet you back here.

LORENZO
Alright. See you soon. Ciao Gio.

GIO
Ciao, Lorenzo. Goodbye.

EDO
Peretti.

Lorenzo and Edo chat amiably with the girls, heading off in the direction of the bar while Gio gathers up the chairs. He yells after Lorenzo.

GIO
Bring me back something to drink!

He takes the chairs towards the barracks.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S SQUARE - LATER

Gio returns to square. The chairs have been cleared away to make room for a band and a makeshift dance floor. A few tables have been set up around the edge of the square for people to drink at.

Gio pulls out a flask and leans against the wall of the governor's house, looking for Lorenzo in the crowd. He spots him at a table, takes a swig, and goes to meet up with the group.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S SQUARE - LATER

Gio sits at an empty table surrounded by half-drunk wine bottles. Edo plops down breathlessly after a song ends. He's a few drinks deeper than Gio, and it's starting to show.

EDO
Have a drink!

GIO
I'm fine.

EDO
Oh come on!

He pours them each a glass of wine and stares at Gio until he takes the glass.

EDO (CONT'D)
Thank you. Bottoms up.

They drain their glasses. Edo pours two more. He glances over at a disgruntled Lucia who is talking to a group of local girls.

EDO (CONT'D)
Your girl is getting impatient.

GIO
Definitely not my girl.
He always drags me to these things.

Nearby, Lorenzo and Olivia dance closely. Lorenzo tries to dip her and the two of them almost tumble to the ground. Gio and Edo laugh as Lorenzo apologizes profusely and Olivia laughs giddily. Lucia stares at Gio and Edo.

EDO
Well, someone has to dance with her
if you won't.

He gets up and grabs Lucia, spinning her out onto the floor. Gio watches, smiling, and pours himself another drink.

EXT. GENERAL'S SQUARE - LATER

Montage of Gio, clearly drunk, dancing with Lucia to a heavily accented version of "I Ain't Got Nobody". Nearby, Edo dances sloppily with Olivia.

EXT. FIUME STREET - NIGHT

Gio, Lucia, and Edo walk down the street with Lorenzo and Olivia. Lorenzo and Olivia hang back a couple steps, whispering. Lorenzo kisses her on her neck.

They stop at Lucia's door and say good night. Gio walks her up her steps and quickly says goodbye before turning back to the group. Lucia waits for a beat, looking at Olivia and Lorenzo kissing in the street, before shutting the door behind her.

The foursome continue on their way. Up in front, Edo is talking animatedly about the band.

EDO
(slurring)
...and if they had a proper
brass...a proper brass section...

Lorenzo jogs up to Gio and Edo, trying to keep a straight face.

LORENZO
Gio...

Gio waves him away.

GIO
Goodnight, Lorenzo.

Lorenzo and the girl peel off from the group and disappear into a side street. Gio and Edo continue to weave down the street.

EDO
Gio.

GIO
Edo.

EDO
D'you have a cigarette?

GIO
Yeah, here...

Gio fumbles through his pants pockets and eventually produces a crumpled pack. He offers one to Edo.

EDO

Thanks.

Edo begins to hum a song from earlier in the night as he lights his cigarette. After a drag, he casually offers it to Gio. Gio takes it without hesitation.

They walk and smoke together, with Edo occasionally breaking into a couple bars of song before the two men dissolve into laughter. They turn the corner onto Gio's street. Gio hesitates before asking...

GIO

Hungry?

Edo puts out the cigarette on his heel.

EDO

Starved.

INT. MESS HALL - CONT.

Gio leads Edo quietly into the empty canteen, crossing the room to slowly open the door to the kitchen. Edo can barely keep in his nervous laughter.

GIO

Shh!

Edo makes a supplicating gesture. They enter the dark kitchen.

INT. BARRACKS KITCHEN - CONT.

Gio turns and peers into the icebox. A loaf of bread on a nearby prep table catches his eye. He tosses a piece to Edo before tearing off some for himself and moving off into the pantry.

EDO

Oh my god, this is good.

GIO

(from the pantry)
Cheese?

EDO

Yes!

Gio comes back into the kitchen with a plate of cheese. He leans against a prep table next to where Edo is standing.

GIO

Shh!!

EDO

You shush, no one's back from town yet.

GIO

How do you know?

EDO

Look-

He points through the kitchen windows to the dark dormitory windows.

EDO (CONT'D)

-no lights.

Edo triumphantly takes a piece of cheese off of Gio's plate and pops it into his mouth. He begins to softly sing the song from earlier in the scene as he sways around the room. Gio struggles to remain stern.

GIO

Edo. They'll have my head if they know we're in here.

Edo grabs another piece of cheese off the plate and sings louder through his mouthful.

GIO (CONT'D)

Edo!

Edo sings even louder. He tries to lunge for another piece of cheese but Gio whisks the plate away from him. Off balance, Edo stumbles into the table but doesn't stop singing or waltzing around the room.

Gio sets the plate down behind his back and steps towards Edo.

GIO (CONT'D)

(playfully menacing)

If that's how you want to do this...

Edo circles around the table to get away from Gio, singing at him. Gio chases him. Edo runs to the door but drunkenly fumbles with the lock for a beat too long. Still in hot pursuit, Gio crashes into him.

Hysterically laughing, Edo whips around and Gio puts his hand over Edo's mouth to muffle his loud laughter. After a beat, they both still, realizing how close together and alone they are.

Gio's hand slips down. Edo kisses Gio roughly.

They embrace, desperately grabbing at each others' clothes and bodies. Edo pushes Gio further back into the kitchen until they hit a table.

After a while, he drops to his knees and undoes Gio's belt and pants. Gio breathes heavily, clutching Edo's hair.

Edo sits back on his heels, wiping his mouth. Gio leans against the kitchen table with his eyes closed. Edo stands up and kisses Gio. They look at each other for a beat until...

...A door slams in the front of the building.

GIO (CONT'D)

Shit.

They hurriedly rearrange their clothes.

GIO (CONT'D)

(sharply)

Stay here.

Gio walks out into mess hall, closing the door behind him. Edo listens through the door...

LORENZO (O.S.)

You're still up!

GIO (O.S.)

Yeah, just about to go up...

Their voices grow fainter as the two men leave the front office building and cross the courtyard to the dormitory.

Edo turns away from the door to look out the window. A light goes on in the dormitory.

He stands in the dark for a moment before picking up his jacket and quietly slipping out of the kitchen.

EXT. ST. VITUS CATHEDRAL - THE NEXT MORNING

A mix of townspeople and soldiers file into the town cathedral. We pick out Gio from the crowd. From inside we can hear the beginning of a Latin mass.

PRIEST (O.S.)
*In nomine Patris, et Filii, et
 Spiritus Sancti.*

Gio moves forward into the church.

INT. ST. VITUS CATHEDRAL - CONTINUOUS

People crowd into the small church. Every pew is filled to the brim and chairs are scattered in haphazard rows to accommodate the large congregation. By the time Gio enters the building, there is nowhere left to sit.

PRIEST (O.S.)
*Fratres, agnoscamus, peccata
 nostra, ut apti simus ad sacra
 mysteria celebranda.*

The congregation kneels as Gio looks for a place to sit or stand. As the priest stops talking, he and the rest of the latecomers kneel in place:

CONGREGATION
*Confiteor Deo omnipotenti et vobis,
 fratres, quia peccavi nimis
 cogitatione, verbo, opere et
 omissione, mea culpa, mea culpa,
 mea maxima culpa. Ideo precor
 beatam Mariam semper Virginem,
 omnes Angelos et Sanctos, et vos,
 fratres, orare pro me ad Dominum
 Deum nostrum.*

PRIEST
*Misereatur nostri omnipotens Deus
 et, dimissis peccatis nostris,
 perducatur nos ad vitam aeternam.*

CONGREGATION
 Amen.

The congregation rises. Gio edges through the crowd to an empty spot near the back wall. He bows his head in prayer and asks for God's mercy:

PRIEST
 Kyrie eleison.

CONGREGATION
 Kyrie eleison.

PRIEST
 Christe eleison.

CONGREGATION
Christe eleison.

PRIEST
*Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu
Christe, Domine Deus, Agnus Dei,
Filius Patris;*

Gio leans back against the wall to watch as the priest begins to speak the next part of the mass. The weight of his actions the night before begins to bear down on him.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
...tu solus Altissimus, Jesu
Christe, cum Sancto Spiritu in
gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

CONGREGATION
Amen.

A flash of light in the upper galleries catches his eye. Looking up, he sees Edo taking photographs in the lofted area to the right of the altar. Sunlight glances off his lens.

Gio quickly looks down, panicked.

PRIEST
Oremus.

The congregation kneels again after the call to prayer. Gio bends his knees to the ground. He didn't expect to see Edo here. The room is silent apart from the creaking of the pews and the rustling of fidgeting children. After a few beats, the priest's voice cuts through the silence.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Amen.

CONGREGATION
Amen.

Gio rises and sneaks a glance up to the gallery above the altar. Edo is gone.

EXT. ST. VITUS CATHEDRAL - LATER

After mass, the congregation spills out onto the church steps. The eclectic mix of Fiume's citizens is highlighted by the diverse crowd - soldiers in uniform mix with local families in their Sunday best and artists in a range of flamboyantly disheveled costumes. Gio tries to leave the square without attracting any attention, but Lorenzo spots him.

LORENZO

Gio!

Lorenzo works his way through the crowd to Gio's side. Gio waits reluctantly.

LORENZO (CONT'D)

I waited for you at breakfast this morning! Where were you?

GIO

I'm sorry I forgot to tell you...I got up early and couldn't come back to the barracks in time to eat.

LORENZO

Doing what?

GIO

Nothing...errand for Conti.

LORENZO

On a Sunday?

Lorenzo stops suddenly and looks around the crowd.

LORENZO (CONT'D)

Shit, Gio. I almost forgot. Have you seen Edo?

Gio's head jerks up at Edo's name. He tries to conceal his startled reaction. Lorenzo continues obliviously:

LORENZO (CONT'D)

He asked me last night if he could photograph us having lunch with the rest of the guys after church and I told him to meet us here but I haven't seen him yet...

GIO

I doubt he remembers.

LORENZO

We weren't *that* drunk.

GIO

(beat)

I don't like you letting him butt in like this.

LORENZO

What?

GIO

I don't know...he's a reporter...it feels like he's everywhere all of a sudden and we don't really know him at all.

LORENZO

You know him better than any of us, spending all that time showing him around. I thought you liked him.

GIO

He seems a little off, that's all.

LORENZO

You're so paranoid when you're hungover! Relax, he's fine.

Gio avoids eye contact. Lorenzo tries to save the moment.

LORENZO (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Gio...I thought you were getting along.

Gio tries to close the book on the subject as quickly as possible.

GIO

I don't care, he seems alright, he's going to be gone soon anyway...

LORENZO

He really seems fine to me.

GIO

(trying to pull a smile)
Forget it. You're right, I'm in a weird mood.

Lorenzo shoves Gio playfully, shaking his head. After a beat, Gio stops and turns to Lorenzo.

GIO (CONT'D)

Are you going to wait for him? I've got to get back.

LORENZO

Yeah, I'll see you there.

Gio waves as he slips back into the crowd and down a side street. Lorenzo waits for Edo to turn up.

INT. BARRACKS ENTRANCE - LATER

Gio passes the busy mess hall as he walks upstairs to the dormitory.

INT. BARRACKS DORMITORY - CONTINUOUS

Gio sits down on his cot, unbuttoning his uniform shirt. The midday heat has started to build. He lights a cigarette.

After a beat, Gio reaches underneath the bed and pulls out a stack of letters in neat, feminine handwriting, setting them down next to him on his bed.

He takes his notebook out of his back pocket and rips out what looks like a half-finished letter. Reading it over, he fumbles absentmindedly in his shirt pocket for something to write with. His graphite falls out of the pocket and rolls onto the floor. As he stands to pick it up, Gio steps on the pencil, crushing it into several pieces.

GIO

Shit.

He squats down to see if any of it is salvageable. Finding nothing, he roughly sweeps the crumbs of graphite under his bed.

Gio sits back down and folds up his letter, putting it on the pile with the others and returning them to their place under his cot.

INT. BARRACKS MESS HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Downstairs, the soldiers have returned from mass. Meat and fruit are scattered down the long dining tables. Edo is sitting with Lorenzo at the far end of the room. Gio joins them. Lorenzo looks up.

LORENZO

Where did you go?

Gio nods at Edo stiffly. Edo is obviously better at keeping his cool than Gio is. Gio turns to Lorenzo.

GIO

(glancing at Edo)
Writing to Ana.

LORENZO

She'll be happy about that.

EDO

Ana?

LORENZO

His fiancée.

EDO

Ah, right. Did one of you tell me about her last night?

GIO

I'm sure it came up.

LORENZO

I'm sure... she's the reason he won't let himself have any fun while he's over here, after all.

Gio breathes deep, quieting his shaking knee under the table. Edo and Lorenzo continue the conversation that Gio interrupted.

EDO

What were you saying?

LORENZO

Well, it's not always like this, all this food around. Rations were slim over the winter. The farmers weren't used to having so many of us in the city.

EDO

But it's better now?

LORENZO

We helped them loads. Expanding farms, sending men out during the harvest.

EDO

The farms weren't damaged during the war?

LORENZO

A lot were bombed out but we've helped rebuild enough to support the city.

Edo chews this over.

EDO

How close are they to town?

Across the room, Filippo is loudly recounting stories of his conquests, using another soldier as a prop. Lorenzo turns to watch and Edo follows his gaze. Filippo has one hand around the other soldier's neck and is gesturing with the other.

FILIPPO
 (bellowing)
 ...my dick was so far down her
 throat she couldn't breathe...

The men sitting around him laugh hysterically as Filippo mimes forcing the other soldier to go down on him. Acting for the crowd, he suddenly pushes the soldier away with mock disgust.

FILIPPO (CONT'D)
 Get up! What are you doing, you
 think I'm bent?

Lorenzo laughs dismissively and returns to their conversation; this happens all the time. Gio's face is impassive.

LORENZO
 It's a couple miles before you hit
 farmland... it'd take a while on
 foot.

EDO
 Does the army have cars?

LORENZO
 Two... three if you count Conti's
 jeep but it's always breaking down.

EDO
 Do you think we could borrow it?

LORENZO
 The other two have to stay with
 D'Annunzio's HQ, but maybe Conti's.
 Gio?

GIO
 Yeah, should be fine.

EDO
 That's great! Can you talk to Conti
 or shall I?

Gio avoids eye contact with Edo.

GIO
 I'll take care of it, no problem.

LORENZO

Jealous. You two get to go off with the car and I'm stuck here with a bunch of fat, out of work soldiers.

Gio lights up at this.

GIO

Come with us! He can tell Conti how badly he needs you.

EDO

Yeah, of course!

LORENZO

Great. We can go Friday.

Gio looks around the room absentmindedly. His eyes catch Fillipo's for a second too long. Fillipo glares back and mouths "What?"

Gio glances down quickly and pushes away from the table.

GIO

I'm going to the bookstore, do you need anything?

LORENZO

I'm fine.

EDO

I'll walk out with you.

Lorenzo looks quizzically at Edo.

LORENZO

Didn't you want to take pictures?

EDO

(joking smoothly)
Of that?

Edo gestures at the men gathered around Filippo. Filippo is motioning lewdly again, this time at one of the girls who works in the kitchen.

EDO (CONT'D)

Doesn't need to happen now. I'll come back another time.

LORENZO

Alright, I'll see you on Friday.

EDO
See you.

GIO
Ciao, Lorenzo.

Lorenzo smiles at Gio as Gio walks away from the table. Edo follows him out the door.

EXT. BARRACKS STREET - CONTINUOUS

Gio takes out his cigarettes and lights one. He does not offer another to Edo. They stand awkwardly for a few beats before Edo breaks the silence.

EDO
Gio--

GIO
(firmly, not making eye
contact)
--Peretti.
(beat)
I was drunk.

EDO
I know. We both were.

GIO
It was a one time...I mean, I'm
not...you aren't--

EDO
(jumping in quickly)
--No, no. Of course.

Gio takes a drag of his cigarette and stamps it out even though half of it is left. He looks over uncertainly at Edo, making eye contact for the first time since they left Lorenzo.

GIO
I'll see you.

Edo nods. Gio walks down the street to the bookstore as Edo watches. After he turns the corner, Edo leans down and picks up Gio's unfinished cigarette. A soldier comes out of the barracks.

EDO
Have a light?

EXT. BARRACKS BACK DOOR - DAY

Lorenzo drives up to the back door of the barracks in a worn down military car. He honks the horn excitedly.

LORENZO

Gio!!

He waits a beat before honking the horn again. Gio emerges from the back door with some food wrapped in butcher paper. He hops in next to Lorenzo.

LORENZO (CONT'D)

Ready?

The car sputters before they speed away.

EXT. HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

Lorenzo and Gio pull up to Edo's hotel. He's waiting outside on the curb with his camera bag slung across his shoulders.

EDO

Hey boys.

He dumps his camera in the backseat of the car before climbing in. Lorenzo reaches back to muss Edo's hair.

LORENZO

You ready to go, chum?

EDO

(fending Lorenzo off)

Alright, alright, let's go.

The car drives away.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - LATER

Fiume and the ocean are just visible in the background as the car drives down a dirt road. The morning sun is still low on the horizon.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE (FARTHER NORTH) - LATER

The sun is farther overhead. The roads are rougher this far from the city. Lorenzo tries to explain where they are to Edo over the loud engine.

LORENZO

(over his shoulder)

For about an hour out of the city,
there's hardly anything but woods.
The soil's no good for farming- too
rocky. Farms will start to turn up
as soon as we get far enough from
the water.

Gio rests his head against the side of the car and looks out the window. Edo quietly takes a photograph of Gio from the back seat before turning his attention back to the landscape.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE (FARTHER STILL) - LATER

Here and there along the edge of the road, tall wheat fields start to emerge.

The remains of a small vineyard appears to the left. The car begins to sputter and slow.

LORENZO

Shit.

The car continues to shudder. Lorenzo pulls over to the side of the road a few yards from the vineyard entrance.

They get out of the car. Edo walks into the vines while Gio and Lorenzo stay behind to check on the engine.

GIO

What's wrong?

LORENZO

I'm not sure.

Gio pokes around the engine some more before going to the back of the car and peering inside the tank.

GIO

Shit.

He rifles through the back of the car.

LORENZO

What?

GIO

The tank is empty and they didn't
give us a spare petrol tank.

LORENZO

The winery?

GIO
Yeah, let's look.

EXT. BOMBED VINEYARD - CONTINUOUS

Many of the vines are dead. Those that have survived are overgrown and full of fruit.

At the end of a dirt road that winds through the grapes there is a large house that has been badly damaged by a fire. The roof over the front of the house has collapsed and the windows are entirely shattered.

Edo takes photographs of the house while Lorenzo and Gio eat grapes as they walk down the rows of vines. They settle into a comfortable silence while Edo works.

EXT. BOMBED VINEYARD - AFTERNOON

Gio sits on the overgrown lawn next to the house. He watches quietly through the empty windows as Edo moves around the inside of the abandoned building.

Lorenzo calls out from the woods behind them.

LORENZO
Gio!

Gio bounces to his feet, meeting up with Lorenzo by the edge of the property. They climb through a patch of brambles and find a small farmhouse.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Walking around the farmhouse's perimeter, they discover a small vegetable garden and a dilapidated barn. Edo catches up with them.

LORENZO
Do you think anyone lives here?

EDO
I dunno...

Edo walks over to the front door, pushing it in gingerly. Gio walks over to the barn. He can just see what looks like a petrol can inside the door.

GIO
Lorenzo!

Lorenzo walks over and sees the petrol can. He tries to open the door to the barn but something from the inside is blocking it. The building's old wood frame creaks ominously.

LORENZO

Is there another entrance in the back?

He goes to investigate. Gio leans against the barn. Tall grass has taken over part of the lawn, obscuring the house from his view.

He takes out his notebook. It's quiet this far into the countryside. He closes his eyes and drifts off...

A crash comes from inside the barn. Lorenzo pulls the door open triumphantly.

LORENZO (CONT'D)

Come help get this out!

Gio stands and stretches. He and Lorenzo carry out a large drum of petrol and set it down outside with a heavy thud.

GIO

(dubiously)
Should we roll it?

LORENZO

It's not that far, come on.

Just then, Edo emerges from the house, followed by an old man.

EDO

Gio! Lorenzo! This is Ambruzze, he owns the farm.

(confused beat)
What are you doing?

LORENZO

(quickly, to Ambruzze)
Signori, I'm so sorry, our car ran out of petrol and we thought that the farm was abandoned.

Ambruzze waves off his apology.

AMBRUZZE

I can see why you thought it was empty. Edouardo was quite startled when he found me.

He and Edo grin at each other.

AMBRUZZE (CONT'D)

(to Gio)
Your name?

GIO
Giorgio Peretti.

LORENZO
Lorenzo.

He shakes hands first with Gio, then with Lorenzo.

AMBRUZZE
I offered your friend some lunch,
but he said we couldn't eat without
you. Do you want to come in?

Lorenzo nods eagerly.

EDO
We don't want to impose...

AMBRUZZE
Nonsense, come in.

Edo smiles, raising his hands in acquiescence. They follow Ambruzze into the house, wiping the rust from the old petrol drum off of their hands.

INT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ambruzze leads them into a large dining room. In front of the table there is a painting easel and a basket of vegetables. He motions to Edo.

AMBRUZZE
Help me with this.

They move the easel aside. Ambruzze disappears into the kitchen, Lorenzo dawdling after him.

Gio looks over uncertainly at Edo before sitting down at the table. Edo walks over to a long bay of windows and looks out into the woods. He glances over and grins at Gio before he starts humming "St. Louis Blues."

Lorenzo and Ambruzze return carrying trays of food.

GIO
Thank you so much.

EDO
Yes, thank you.

AMBRUZZE

I rarely see anyone here, it's my pleasure to entertain company.

EDO

No one lives in the vineyard?

AMBRUZZE

No, not for years. The vines stopped yielding like they used to. They couldn't afford to stay. Moved into town.

EDO

But you stayed?

Ambruzze nods.

AMBRUZZE

I grow what I need and sell my paintings when I can.

EDO

You sell them?

AMBRUZZE

There wasn't always a place for them, but there have been buyers coming in to Fiume since D'Annunzio took over.

Lorenzo looks around the room, chewing over the sparse furnishings.

LORENZO

Were you married?

Gio looks over sharply at him for asking such a personal question. Ambruzze shakes his head.

AMBRUZZE

Not for a long time.

There's an awkward silence for a beat.

AMBRUZZE (CONT'D)

And you? Do you have a wife?

LORENZO

Not us. Gio has someone, though.

GIO

We're just engaged.

AMBRUZZE

(joking)
Why didn't you bring her over,
then?

Lorenzo laughs-- this is a question he's asked Gio before.
Edo looks over at him with thinly veiled interest.

GIO

A combat zone isn't really
somewhere you would want to bring
your future wife...

AMBRUZZE

(laughs)
No, I suppose not!

Gio fiddles awkwardly with the chipped rim of his glass. Edo
glances at him before returning to his lunch.

EXT. AMBRUZZE'S FARMHOUSE - LATER

Ambruzze is leading Edo on a tour of his small property. A
field in the back of the property has gone fallow and rusting
equipment is clumped around the crumbling barn. Behind them,
Lorenzo and Gio are lugging the petrol cans back to the car.

AMBRUZZE

It's gotten to be a bit of a mess.

EDO

It's a big property to manage
alone.

AMBRUZZE

Yes, it is. All this grass, and the
barn...

He halfheartedly pulls a few weeds.

EDO

And you've no one to help you?

AMBRUZZE

I don't need help, we're just
getting old together...the wrinkles
and splinters- just nature taking
its course.

EDO

But you can still grow enough food
to live on?

AMBRUZZE

Of course, I don't need much.

EDO

I feel bad that we took your food.

Ambruzze waves him off.

AMBRUZZE

I told you, I love the company.
There haven't been this many young
people here since well before the
end of the war.

Edo smiles and pauses as they reach the damaged barn. He examines the weakening support beams.

EDO

What do you do for food in the
winter?

AMBRUZZE

I store what I can save in the
barn.

EDO

But the roof...

AMBRUZZE

It only caved in in February...
winter's a way off yet, I'll find
someplace in the house.

In the distance, Lorenzo hollers at Gio as they try to get the petrol past the wooded border between Ambruzze's property and the winery.

Edo climbs into the barn cautiously, surveying the damage.

EDO

The supporting beams look a bit
shaky and the roof is eaten
through, it's about to completely
fall apart.

He emerges from the barn, wiping his hands off on his pants.

EDO (CONT'D)

I can fix it.

AMBRUZZE

No, I don't have anything to pay
you with.

EDO
Nonsense, I can photograph you.

AMBRUZZE
No, that's not-

EDO
-It's perfectly fair. I'll
photograph your life here and fix
your roof in return for bothering
you and taking your image.

AMBRUZZE
It's not enough, Edo.

EDO
Alright, find a way to buy the
materials and I can use the
military's car to bring them over.
We'll have it done by the end of
the fall.

AMBRUZZE
I can't imagine the others would
want to help you.

EDO
They've got to- Gio does, at least.
And Lorenzo will be a good sport.

AMBRUZZE
I don't know...

Edo looks back at the house, twisting a piece of grass in his
fingers.

EDO
You can paint me something.

AMBRUZZE
Really?

EDO
Yes, it's perfect. You sell those
in town, they must be worth
something.

AMBRUZZE
A painting for a barn, I'm robbing
you blind.

EDO
Good. We have a deal.

They shake hands firmly. A car starts in the distance.
Lorenzo yells faintly:

LORENZO

Edo!

EDO

I should get back.

Edo and Ambruzze walk back to the house. At the doorstep:

EDO (CONT'D)

Thank you for lunch.

They clasp hands.

AMBRUZZE

Thank you, Signor Preston. I look forward to your next visit.

EDO

We'll be back soon.

Edo waves as he runs to meet the car, high-stepping through the brambles at the edge of the yard. Ambruzze lingers at the window.

EXT. BARRACKS STREET - SOME DAYS LATER

Edo loads the car with wooden boards and measuring equipment.

EDO

Giorgio! Andiamo!

Gio and Lorenzo emerge from the barracks. Lorenzo carries a big basket of bread and smoked meat. He sets everything down in the car. Gio gets in the driver's seat as Edo gets in on the other side.

EDO (CONT'D)

You sure you can't come?

LORENZO

Commander's orders. Gio will take care of you.

Lorenzo bangs on the side of the car and goes back into the barracks. Edo yells after him in a mock-romantic voice.

EDO

Won't be the same without you.

Lorenzo blows him a kiss.

EDO (CONT'D)
(to Gio)
Ready?

Gio wrestles with the gearbox as Edo steadies the mounds of equipment stuffed into the back seat.

EXT. AMBRUZZE'S FARMHOUSE - LATER

Gio and Edo pull up to the farmhouse. Ambruzze comes out to meet them.

AMBRUZZE
Edo!

Edo jumps out of the car to shake his hand. Gio walks around to the back of the car and begins to unload the rough-cut boards.

AMBRUZZE (CONT'D)
Leave that, Giorgio! Come in and have some coffee.

Gio shakes sawdust off his hands as they walk into the house.

EXT. AMBRUZZE'S FARMHOUSE - LATER

Gio and Edo measure the length of the barn as Ambruzze sketches nearby.

EDO
Move a bit closer to the wall...

Gio adjusts his position to mirror Edo's.

EDO (CONT'D)
...perfect. How long is that?

GIO
Twelve meters.

EDO
Ok. That's 12 x 16. Let's do the pitch of the roof next.

Ambruzze intervenes bossily.

AMBRUZZE
Some water first, Edo. Go get the pitcher and some glasses from the shelf above the stove.

Edo raises his eyebrows at Gio who hides a smile.

EDO
Yes sir, right away sir.

While they wait for Edo to return, Gio watches Ambruzze work. The old man clutches three colored pencils in his left hand, rotating them out to his right as he needs them. Spidery lines unspool across the thick stack of newsprint.

AMBRUZZE
(without looking up)
Are you an artist, Giorgio?

GIO
No, sir. Not at all.

Edo returns.

EDO
He's lying.

He sets down the tray of glassware.

EDO (CONT'D)
He's a writer, I've never seen him without his notebook.

GIO
No, it's not art, just notes.

AMBRUZZE
Well you certainly brood like an artist. Doesn't he?

EDO
Hm.

Edo pours them out a glass of water each.

AMBRUZZE
Alright, back to work, ruffians.

EXT. AMBRUZZE'S FARMHOUSE - LATER

Gio sands down the edges of the splintering hole at the center of the roof as Edo wrenches out the nails from boards that have rotted through. Edo hums and sings under his breath as they work.

GIO
What are you singing?

Edo smiles and starts singing the words to the song- "When the Moon Shines on the Moonshine."

EDO

"The mahogany is dusty, all the pipes are very rusty, and the good old fashioned Musty, doesn't musty anymore...All the stuff's got bum and bummer, from the middle of the Summer. Now the bar is on the hummer and "For Rent" is on the door..."

BOTH

"But in the mountain tops, far from the eyes of cops, oh how the moon shines on the moonshine so merrily..."

The roof creaks ominously.

EDO

Uh oh...

They laugh nervously.

EXT. AMBRUZZE'S FARMHOUSE - LATER (SIESTA)

Gio lays in the tall grass with a half-eaten plate of food and his open notebook next to him. He drifts in and out of sleep. Edo and Ambruzze murmur in the distance.

Edo walks over quietly and takes a photograph of Gio as he sleeps. Gio wakes up, sees Edo, and smiles.

INT. FIUME BAR - THAT EVENING

Gio and Edo sit in a bar, sweaty and disheveled from the day's work. The bar is chaotic and claustrophobic compared to the quiet, open field next to Ambruzze's house. They're both flushed and a little tipsy.

EDO

When did you meet?

GIO

We grew up together.

EDO

In Italy?

GIO
Outside of Naples.

Edo takes a sip from his beer.

EDO
It's beautiful there.

Gio perks up.

GIO
You've been?

EDO
No, but I've seen photographs.

GIO
I think you'd like it there.

EDO
Why did you leave?

GIO
I was drafted.

Edo nods; he's heard this story before.

EDO
So you got engaged before you left.

GIO
No... we waited until I came home.
I hurt my leg and got discharged.

EDO
Where?

GIO
Dusseldorf.

A beat.

EDO
But you didn't get married when you
came back?

GIO
I came here.

EDO
Do you think you'll stay long? With
her waiting back home?

GIO
As long as I'm needed.

EDO
And your fiancée doesn't mind?

GIO
I guess she does, but she's
patient.

EDO
(wryly)
Lucky man.

GIO
She knows we'll be married when I
come back.

EDO
Sounds like you've got it all
figured out.

GIO
I guess so, yeah.

Edo laughs and polishes off his drink.

EDO
Do you want another?

GIO
Sure.

Edo brings their empty bottles to the bar and chats with the bartender for a moment before strolling back to their table with fresh drinks.

GIO (CONT'D)
How much were they?

EDO
Don't worry about it... my "thank
you" for helping with the barn
today.

GIO
(beat)
I would have helped anyway... I
like it there. It reminds me of
home.

EDO
Your family are farmers?

Gio is uncomfortable with how many questions he's answered tonight. He looks down at his drink.

GIO

Um, sort of- we live near the sea,
my father is a fisherman. But it's
quiet there like it is at home.

Gio takes a pull on his beer and looks up at Edo.

GIO (CONT'D)

What about you?

EDO

Hm?

GIO

I mean, where is your family from?

EDO

Well, my father is from Cornwall,
that's where they live.

GIO

When was the last time you were
home?

EDO

A while ago now, I guess. I've been
on assignment for a long time.

GIO

Do you know where you'll be next?

EDO

No. I guess I might go back to the
London office for a while before
they send me back out, but I don't
really know. It depends what
happens here over the next couple
months.

GIO

You mean if the new state lasts or
not?

EDO

Yes.

Gio changes the subject before things get too awkward.

GIO

What's Cornwall like? Is it near
London?

EDO

Not really. It's beautiful. Quiet and small but really beautiful. It's in the south, near the sea, but the ocean there is much rougher than here or in Naples and the water is freezing cold.

GIO

What did you do there? When you were young?

EDO

Stupid, small town things. We sailed and drank and were always climbing things, for some reason. Nothing virtuous or terribly exciting.

GIO

Same as us, then.

EDO

Yeah?

GIO

(nods)

A lot of sailing. The boats were the only places we could drink without getting caught by our mothers and their friends.

EDO

I used to take my sisters out in the boat to see how fast I had to go to scare them. I miss the water when I'm away from it. I can barely stand being inland on assignment.

Gio mulls this over.

GIO

Are you working tomorrow?

EDO

I was planning on shooting in the markets in the morning.

GIO

What about in the afternoon?

EDO

Nope, nothing planned.

GIO

Good. I have somewhere we should shoot.

(beat)

I'm going to go piss, do you want another drink?

EDO

Sure.

EXT. FIUME PORT - NEXT DAY

Gio guides Edo through the city port along a boulevard crammed with fishing gear and sailors. They pass rows of huge ships before coming to a jetty made of precariously balanced stone slabs.

Gio begins to climb over the rocks. Edo smiles: this is the most reckless he's seen Gio since they met. They scramble across the worn slabs.

GIO

One of the first people I met here was a fisherman. His family was originally from Sant'Angello which is a few towns over from where I was born...

They reach the top of the jetty.

On the other of the port, sheltered by a bend in the coast, is a SMALL COVE. A boat, sails wrapped in waxed canvas, is anchored near the shore.

GIO (CONT'D)

...I helped get him food when the Italians threatened cut us off from trading internationally, and he lets me take out his boat.

Gio leads Edo down to the cove.

GIO (CONT'D)

You said you missed being on the water, so I thought I could show you a fishing town I go to on days off.

Edo hums with excitement.

EDO

On the boat?

GIO
Yeah, you said you could sail so I
thought...

Edo swings a leg over into the sailboat.

EDO
This is fantastic.

They grin at each other mischievously. Gio takes off his boots and ties them around his neck before cuffing his pants and wading into the water. He plunges an arm into the water and lifts the boat's anchor out of the ocean. His movements are practiced; this is where he feels most comfortable.

EDO (CONT'D)
Do you need help?

GIO
I've got it.

Gio pushes the sailboat into the ocean. Edo reaches out an arm to help Gio out of the water.

They paddle out of the cove and raise their sails.

EXT. OCEAN - LATER

Gio steers the boat as Edo tends to the rigging.

EDO
I've missed this.

GIO
When I was in the Army, we went inland almost as soon as I was drafted. I didn't see the ocean for the three years I served.

EDO
I can't remember the last time I was on the water at home. It's so much calmer here, though.
(beat)
Do you write out here?

Gio hesitates before answering.

GIO
A little. It's quieter than in town.

EDO
Yeah, it is.

Edo leans down to touch the water. Water streams around his fingers.

As the coast sweeps by, houses start to come into view along the water. Gio points to a bay.

GIO
We can stop in Bakar for food.

EXT. BAKAR COAST - LATER

Gio and Edo walk back down a rocky beach carrying camera bags and a loaf of bread. The boat is anchored nearby. Edo leans down and takes off his shoes. The rocks are sharper than he thought...

EDO
Ow. Shit.

Gio laughs, expertly stepping over the rough stones until he gets to the soft sand by the water. He sticks the loaf of bread under his arm and takes off his shoes, knotting them together so they can hang around his neck.

GIO
Come on.

EXT. BEACH - THAT AFTERNOON

Gio sits on the beach writing in his notebook. Edo strolls over lazily.

GIO
Hey.

Edo flops down next to Gio.

EDO
There are some really amazing rocks
about a mile down the coast.

GIO
Rocks?

EDO
What?

GIO
Nothing...you're just very
excitable.

Edo laughs while Gio shakes his head. Edo fidgets with his camera and looks out at the water restlessly. Gio turns back to his notebook.

EDO
Do you want to go for a swim?

GIO
I didn't bring a costume.

EDO
We'll figure it out.

Gio hesitates, looking around him for another excuse. Edo shrugs, jumps up, and walks towards the water. He strips down to his shorts as he goes down the beach. Gio watches him go in. Edo swims out into the water.

Gio looks down the beach- it's empty now and they've barely seen anyone else all day. Edo splashes around.

EDO (CONT'D)
Gio!

Gio puts his notebook down and gets up slowly. A loud boat passes in the distance, snapping him out of it.

GIO
I'm going to go find some firewood,
it's getting cold.

He walks up the beach towards the treeline. Edo watches him go before diving under.

EXT. WOODS - CONT.

Gio pushes through the forest, his movements becoming more and more frantic as his feet catch in the underbrush. He reaches a clearing and catches his breath, hands shaking.

He sits down against a tree and flips through his notebook until he finds a blank page. He starts to write something before crossing it out harshly. "I want" is still visible on the page.

EXT. COAST - LATER

The sun sits low over the ocean. Edo and Gio lounge on the beach on opposite sides of a dying fire. Edo cleans his camera meticulously while Gio watches.

GIO
How does it work?

EDO
The camera?

GIO
Yeah.

Edo gets up and brings his camera bag over to Gio. He sits down and fishes out a 35 mm camera and a roll of film. He turns the camera over and undoes a clasp on the back.

EDO
Do you want to try loading it?

He hands the roll of film to Gio.

GIO
You sure?

EDO
It's simple, you'll get it on your first try.

Edo opens up the back of the camera and lays it across Gio's knees.

EDO (CONT'D)
The film reacts to light, so you have to keep it covered inside this canister until it's loaded in the camera. You hook the tail of the film in here...

He points at a cavity on the left of the camera while unhooking a clasp so that Gio can nestle the film canister inside the camera.

EDO (CONT'D)
...and then spool the film across this window and onto these sprockets on the other side.

GIO
But then that piece of film is exposed to light.

EDO
It's fine.

Gio tentatively drags the negative across the shutter window and fumbles with the sprockets on the other side.

EDO (CONT'D)
Here, let me.

He leans over to guide Gio's hand. The negative catches on the sprockets.

EDO (CONT'D)
Now close the back...

Gio shuts the back of the camera.

EDO (CONT'D)
And the clasp...

Edo turns the camera on its side and shows Gio a small clasp that closes with a loud "click." Gio smiles triumphantly.

EDO (CONT'D)
And now you take a couple of frames so that the exposed film moves onto the spool and fresh film is in front of the shutter. This button here.

Gio presses the trigger once but can't figure out how to push it down again.

EDO (CONT'D)
Turn this.

GIO
Got it.

Edo steps in, unfolding the bellows and setting the aperture.

EDO
And now you use these rings on the lens to control focus and how much light is let in and that's it, really.

GIO
Can I take one?

EDO
It's getting dark, so you'll have to keep your hands very still.

Gio shifts so that he's facing Edo. After playing with the focus and shutter for a moment, Gio inhales deeply to steady his hands. Edo looks directly in the lens. Gio snaps the picture. Gio lowers the camera.

After a beat, their smiles waver and breath grows heavy. They kiss softly. Gio lets himself have this for a moment, leaning into Edo. Edo reaches up to cup Gio's face. His touch jars Gio, who turns away abruptly.

GIO

We need to go, it's getting late.

EDO

You're right.

They get up. Edo gathers up his equipment as Gio walks down to the water with an empty wine bottle. He fills the bottle with seawater and brings it back up the beach, pouring it out over the dying embers.

The two men wade into the water and help each other clamber into the boat.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

Gio and Edo sail back down the coast to Fiume as the dusk deepens. They move easily and in synch, maneuvering the rudder and sails in tandem.

EXT. COVE - DUSK

Gio gets out of the boat, bringing it to the beach. He waits for Edo, who gets out of the boat hesitantly. He walks to Gio.

EDO

Thank you.

Gio smiles.

GIO

You're welcome.

EDO

There's a lot more to photograph along the coast, maybe even film. I have a friend in Venice who might be able to get us a camera and film stock..

EDO (CONT'D)

(beat)

...And spending the day with you-

GIO

-I liked that.

EDO

Good.

Gio turns to climb over the jetty and return to town. Edo follows.

INT. BARRACKS DORMITORY - LATER THAT NIGHT

Gio lies in bed. The dormitory is dark and quiet, silence punctuated by the occasional snore or rustling bedsheet. His heart pounds in his ears, the day running through his mind over and over.

After a while, his body quiets. He closes his eyes and allows himself a faint smile.

EXT. OCEAN - SOME DAYS LATER

Far from shore, Gio and Edo sail recklessly. The morning sun slants over the water. Mist sprays up as a small wave hits them broadside. Gio grips the rudder hard as Edo laughs giddily.

EXT. VILLAGE - SOME DAYS LATER

Gio waits outside of a wine shop in the middle of a small town square. Edo comes out carrying two heavy jugs of local red wine. Gio tries to take one from him, but Edo dodges him, running into the street. Gio chases after him.

EXT. AMBRUZZE'S FARMHOUSE - SOME DAYS LATER

Gio lounges with his notebook in the tall grass while Ambruzze and Edo drink together. Ambruzze wanders back inside and Edo stalks towards Gio, taking his photograph before he notices. Gio glances up at him, squinting in the sun. Edo touches Gio's hair softly before crouching down next to him.

EDO

What are you reading?

GIO
A speech that D'Annunzio gave a few
weeks ago.

EDO
You copied it down?

GIO
I tried to.

EDO
Can you read me some?

GIO
Sure.

He flips to the end of his notes and begins to read slowly.

GIO (CONT'D)
"All night - how long!

(it seemed the dawn would never
come)

With ardour, with mad anger,

I had tried

To revive the flame in our mingled
bodies, in our kisses.

She no longer drank my spirit in
those kisses.

She drank only her own tears in
those kisses."

EDO
Sad.

GIO
He didn't finish the poem, I'm sure
the end was beautiful.

EDO
And happy.

GIO
(laughing)
Probably not.

Edo turns away to play with a long stalk of grass.

EXT. ISLAND COAST - SOME DAYS LATER

Edo eagerly clambers over a boulder along a rocky coastline. Broad slabs of stone jut out over the water, divided by deep, narrow ravines. Gio follows behind slowly, grinning as Edo stumbles and sheepishly regains his footing. They both wear thick sweaters: fall has come.

EXT. ISLAND COAST - SOON AFTER

Gio and Edo walk along a narrow beach. As they round a bend in the coast, a small structure comes into view.

They beat through the tall grass and climb up to the house. The crumbling, stucco-walled hut stands at the top of a hill in the middle of the small island. Edo takes photographs of the dilapidated building while Gio leans against a wall and looks out over at the water.

Edo stares at Gio. Gio looks at his wet hair, his teeth, his lips.

They kiss hard, leaning against the stucco hut.

EXT. ISLAND - SOME TIME LATER

The sky darkens. Thick peals of thunder boom out over the water. Rain has started to pour down, leaking through the roof of the crumbling hut at the island's center.

Edo runs out, hurriedly putting on his shirt. Gio follows soon after, slipping on his boots. They holler unintelligibly at each other, laughing as they scramble down to the beach and drag their boat into the water.

EXT. COVE - LATER

Edo struggles to pull the boat ashore while Gio gathers together their equipment. The rain has slowed.

INT. EDO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gio writes at the desk, wet hair sticking up in all directions, while Edo lies in bed in his pajamas watching Gio work.

EDO

Gio?

GIO
 (absentmindedly)
 Hm?

EDO
 Would you read me something?

Gio turns to look at Edo.

GIO
 More D'Annunzio?

EDO
 No, something you've written.

GIO
 Hm.

Gio smiles and looks down at the page he was working on. He picks up the sheet of paper and lies next to Edo. He suddenly feels shy.

GIO (CONT'D)
 I haven't... I don't really read
 anything out loud...

Edo grins and looks at him expectantly, reaching out to push Gio's hair away from his face.

EDO
 Go on, then.

Gio takes a breath and tries to put on a serious face but can't keep from smiling.

GIO
 (flustered)
 Well I'm not going to be able to do
 this if you keep *looking* at me like
 that.

EDO
 Gio...

GIO
 I'm serious!

EDO
 Okay, okay.

Edo quiets down and looks at the bed. Gio takes a deep breath...

GIO
 (laughing)
 No, I can't. I can't. I'm sorry.

Edo looks up and bangs the mattress emphatically.

EDO
 Go on! Gio!

GIO
 (laughing)
 I don't...

EDO
 Please!!

GIO
 Alright, alright. But you need to
 turn around.

EDO
 You're serious?

GIO
 Yes.

Edo rolls his eyes and turns on his side away from Gio. Gio begins to read.

GIO (CONT'D)
 (slowly)
 Wisps of words left unspoken
 Hang heavy between us,
 Lingering like
 Exhaled smoke,
 Hot breath on a car window.

Edo turns back to watch Gio as he reads.

GIO (CONT'D)
 If only
 My fingers had traced
 Secret words on salted glass...
 Syllables to linger
 In midsummer sweat.

Gio looks over at Edo awkwardly. Edo smiles and leans up to kiss him. He murmurs against Gio's lips...

EDO
 That was great.

GIO
 Thank you.

EDO
Will you stay?

Gio pulls away.

GIO
I don't think that's a good idea.

EDO
You could leave early, before the barracks wake up.

GIO
Edo...

EDO
We've been careful.

GIO
Not careful enough, I've barely been at the barracks other than to sleep.

EDO
It's so cold at night now.

GIO
What about the hotel staff?

EDO
I don't care.

GIO
I do.

EDO
Come on...

Edo reaches over and takes Gio's book away from him. He kisses Gio until Gio begins to respond, clutching at Edo's arms, chest, hair.

EXT. BARRACKS COURTYARD - THE NEXT MORNING

Soldiers are lined up for morning roll call. Gio runs in and tries to slip into line without being noticed. Lorenzo looks over at him quizzically. He mouths:

LORENZO
Where were you?

Gio avoids eye contact, catching his breath.

GIO
 (lowly)
 Later.

Lorenzo smirks. Roll call continues.

SOLDIER
 Giorgio Peretti?

Gio snaps to attention and salutes.

GIO
 Present.

The soldier continues down the line of men, calling out their names. Gio tries to act normal, but is clearly on edge.

EXT. BARRACKS COURTYARD - LATER

After roll is called, the soldiers loiter in the courtyard smoking and chatting. Gio shares a cigarette with Lorenzo. Lorenzo takes a drag and passes it over to Gio.

LORENZO
 So, where were you?

GIO
 Nowhere.

LORENZO
 You weren't here last night. Come on! Tell me.

GIO
 Nowhere, really!

LORENZO
 Gio.

GIO
 I promise.

LORENZO
 (beat)
 (incredulously)
 Oh my God, no!

GIO
 I don't know what you're thinking,
 but it's not right.

LORENZO
 Lucia!

GIO

What?

LORENZO

I can't believe that you got her there. You cheating cheat! Hah!

Gio relaxes and forces a smile.

GIO

Yeah.

LORENZO

No! Ah, I knew this would happen eventually.

Lorenzo shakes his head and takes the cigarette back from Gio.

LORENZO (CONT'D)

What did she tell her parents?

GIO

I have no idea.

LORENZO

This is why you've been such a ghost lately. It all makes sense.

Gio smiles sheepishly. Across the courtyard, Fillipo bellows at Lorenzo, loud and disheveled as per usual.

FILLIPO

Lorenzo! We gotta go!

Lorenzo passes his cigarette back to Gio and slaps him on the back.

LORENZO

I've got patrol. Your secret's safe with me.

As he walks away, Lorenzo mimes making out with his hand. Gio forces a laugh.

After Lorenzo and the rest of the men leave, Gio takes a deep pull from Lorenzo's cigarette. As he exhales, the smoke billows up to meet dark, ashy clouds. He walks inside.

EXT. AMBRUZZE'S FARMHOUSE - MONTHS LATER - MORNING

Gio boots crunch against the early morning frost. He carries an armful of lettuce from a small, newly-built greenhouse back into the kitchen.

INT. AMBRUZZE'S FARMHOUSE - CONT.

Edo sits at the kitchen table, talking to Ambruzze as he putters around the kitchen. They turn as Gio comes in the door and closes it firmly behind him, shutting out the cold.

AMBRUZZE

Ah, thank you, Gio.

Gio eases in next to Edo.

EDO

...I really think it could work.

GIO

What?

AMBRUZZE

He's being impractical.

EDO

A gallery.

GIO

Where?

EDO

In town.

Gio looks between them, confused- this is the first he's heard of Edo's plan.

AMBRUZZE

We can't afford it, Eduardo, as much as I love the idea.

EDO

Nonsense. You could move to town with me, we could set up a space for you to paint in and a studio where I could take portraits for a fee, and then have a space to show your art. You're the one who's already selling pieces.

AMBRUZZE

I barely sell anything at all.

EDO

Well then that's why we should be in town where people can see your studio and you can show your work!

AMBRUZZE

And what would I do with the farm?

EDO

Sell it?

AMBRUZZE

No. No, I couldn't bear to do that.

EDO

You can't live all the way out here alone, Ambruzze. It would be exciting in town! New things to paint and good supplies!

AMBRUZZE

And you would want to stay here in Fiume? Give up travelling.

Edo glances at Gio.

EDO

I've been thinking about it.

AMBRUZZE

(abruptly)

Eduardo, we'll talk about it later. Gio looks like he's about to fall asleep, he's so bored.

GIO

Me? Never.

EDO

(getting up)

We should get going, anyway. Concert's at seven and we have to drive back.

AMBRUZZE

Alright, enjoy.

They shake hands fondly. Gio runs out to get the car started.

AMBRUZZE (CONT'D)

Your painting will be ready after I work on it tonight, ok?

EDO

Fantastic. I'll come back tomorrow
or the next day. We can finish
planting in the greenhouse.

AMBRUZZE

Alright. Goodnight, Edo.

EDO

Goodnight, Signori.

He walks out the door. Outside, a car door slams. Ambruzze
returns to fussing over the stove.

EXT. FIUME STREET - THAT NIGHT

Gio walks down the street with Lorenzo, Olivia, Lucia, and a
very excited Edo.

EDO

Toscanini, I can't believe it!

EXT. GOVERNOR'S SQUARE

A large, makeshift bandstand has been erected in the middle
of the square. Inside, an orchestra is beginning to tune up
their instruments. The snow has been trampled to slush by
people flooding in to find a place to see the stage.

The group walks into the square with Edo in the lead. He
weaves through the crowd, finding them a spot with a good
view. Lorenzo passes along a flask. Lucia sniffs it
cautiously, wincing at the sharp fumes.

LUCIA

Ai, Lorenzo, brandy?

LORENZO

Oh, shush, have a drink, it'll keep
you warm.

Lucia takes a large sip and passes it to Gio.

GIO

Thank you.

Lucia looks up at him amorously. Gio turns away quickly to
give the flask to Edo. She looks away, disgruntled.

GIO (CONT'D)

Do you know what they're playing?

EDO

No idea. Do you think D'Annunzio
picked the music? I bet he likes
Beethoven. Or maybe Respighi.

Gio laughs. Lucia stares at him, hurt that he's ignoring her.

LUCIA

What will we do after--

EDO

Shh!

GIO

Sorry, Lu, they're about to start.

He passes back the flask to a crestfallen Lucia.

The conductor, TOSCANINI, walks out and bows to the crowd. He raps his baton against his podium and a hush falls over the crowd. The orchestra begins to play a slow, romantic piece.

Gio and Edo listen, transfixed. Lucia clutches the flask. Olivia and Lorenzo whisper in each others' ears obliviously.

As the music builds, Gio's eyes begin to tear. Edo slowly, cautiously reaches for Gio's hand underneath their chairs. Their fingers touch. Touching Edo, Gio looks over to the governor's mansion. D'Annunzio is watching the concert from his balcony window. Gio smiles quietly and turns back to the music.

The orchestra plays on.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S SQUARE - LATER

The crowd mills around after the concert. Edo stands near a street lamp, taking portraits of locals. Lorenzo and Gio stand together, bracing against the cold. A few feet away, Lucia is hanging onto Olivia's arm, visibly upset.

GIO

Cigarette?

He pulls out a pack.

LORENZO

I have some, it's fine.

He lights his own. After a beat:

GIO

How are things with Olivia?

LORENZO

Fine.

He looks down at his feet.

GIO

I feel like we haven't done this in months.

Lorenzo looks up.

LORENZO

Well, we haven't, really.

GIO

I know, I know. Everything with Ambruzze and all of Edo's assignments...

Meanwhile, Lucia's started to cry. Olivia tries to console her. Faintly, we hear her saying:

LUCIA

...I don't understand it...

OLIVIA

It's alright, just too much to drink. Do you want to go?

LUCIA

No, no.

She stares determinedly across the square at Gio. Olivia follows her gaze.

OLIVIA

Lucia, don't...

Lucia shakes her off and walks up to Gio. Olivia follows close behind.

LUCIA

Could you please tell me what exactly is so wrong with me?

GIO

(off guard)
What?

OLIVIA

Lucia, not here.

Lucia ignores her.

LUCIA
 Stop, Olivia.
 (beat)
 Am I really so hideous that you
 can't be bothered with me?

GIO
 No, no, not at all.

LUCIA
 You take me out to these things but
 then you spend the whole night
 talking to *him*.

She glowers at Edo.

EDO
 Lucia...

OLIVIA
 Come on, Lucia.

Olivia tries to pull her away but Lucia pushes her off.

LUCIA
 --No. Stop.

Lucia looks back to Gio.

LUCIA (CONT'D)
 I want you to tell me why you're
 doing this.

GIO
 I have a fiancée, Lucia.

LUCIA
 Then why take me out?

GIO
 Well...

LUCIA
 You've never even tried to kiss me
 or touch me-

LORENZO
 -Lucia, stop. I know that's not
 true.

LUCIA
 What?

LORENZO

Gio told me, it's fine.

LUCIA

I don't understand what you're getting at, Lorenzo.

Lorenzo looks over at Gio, confused. Gio looks back at him, panicked. Lucia looks at Gio, horrified.

LUCIA (CONT'D)

Who?

Gio's world is tunneling in on him.

GIO

No one. I- I have a fiancée.

LUCIA

If you say you can't have me but you're letting yourself be with someone else, why would you take me out in the first place?

EDO

Lucia, let's not do this here.

LUCIA

No! I want him to tell me what is wrong. Why are you playing with me?

GIO

This isn't the place to talk about this.

LUCIA

Tell me.

Gio looks around desperately. Lorenzo stares back at Gio, trying to understand what is going on. Fillipo wanders over, attracted by the commotion, drunk as per usual.

GIO

Lucia, I don't know what you want me to say.

FILLIPO

What'd you do now, Giorgio?

EDO

Please, not now, Fillipo.

LUCIA

Why don't you want me, Gio?

Fillipo laughs.

FILLIPO
Because he's a fucking fairy.

LORENZO
What?

Fillipo steps unsteadily towards Gio.

FILLIPO
You'd have to be, right? Just look
at her.

EDO
Come on, not here.

Fillipo pushes Edo away, leering at Lucia. Lorenzo is looking back and forth between Gio and Edo, wheels turning in his head. Fillipo spits on the ground and looks up at Gio.

FILLIPO
(hisses)
Bent.

Fillipo turns to walk away. Gio grabs him by the collar and punches him. Fillipo staggers back and then charges forward, tackling Gio to the ground.

Lucia is in hysterics. Edo is paralyzed, not wanting to add fuel to Fillipo's accusations. Lorenzo stares at the unfolding chaos in a daze.

OLIVIA
Lorenzo!

Lorenzo snaps out of it and drags Fillipo off of Gio.

LORENZO
Enough, Fillipo.

EDO
(quietly)
Let's go.

Gio struggles to his feet and starts to walk away from the group.

GIO
I'm fine.

Edo tries to follow. Gio shakes him off.

GIO (CONT'D)
I said, I'm fine.

He leaves the square, Lorenzo and Edo watching him go.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Gio walks down the street. He tries to light a cigarette but his hands are shaking. He burns himself on the end of the match.

GIO
Shit.

He throws the match on the ground and keeps walking.

EXT. BAR - LATE THAT NIGHT

Gio sits on the ground against the back wall of the bar from the first scene. Next to him is his notebook and an empty pack of cigarettes. Music filters down from the apartment above the bar.

Edo walks in through the tunnel across the street. Panicked, Gio looks up at the bar windows. A soldier is smoking out from the apartment. Gio grabs his notebook and walks over to Edo.

GIO
What are you doing here?

EDO
I wanted to make sure you were fine.

GIO
I told you I was fine.

EDO
Gio...

GIO
Not here.

They duck into the tunnel.

EXT. TUNNEL - CONT.

Once they're hidden from view, Edo reaches out for Gio's hand. Gio avoids his touch. They talk softly to avoid being overheard, their murmurs echoing softly down the hall.

EDO
Gio...

GIO
What were we thinking?

EDO
Don't--

GIO
So stupid. I'm not even- I
don't...what he said, this isn't
me.

Edo looks at him incredulously.

EDO
What?

GIO
This isn't me. I'm not like you.

EDO
What are you saying? I don't
understand.

GIO
You know what I mean.

EDO
I really don't.

Gio bursts out.

GIO
I'm not a fucking queer.

His voice echoes down the hall. Edo is knocked speechless.
After a beat, he regains his composure:

EDO
(coldly)
What are we even doing here, then?

Gio glares at him silently. Edo reaches out to him again. Gio recoils. Edo steps closer to him. Gio shoves his hand away. Edo pushes him roughly against the wall and kisses him, tears starting in his eyes.

GIO
(barely intelligible)
I don't know.

He clutches Edo. Edo kisses his face, his hands, his neck.

GIO
How long do we have?

CONTI
It's hard to say. Apparently they
got men to Trieste yesterday,
they'll be here today, maybe
tomorrow.

GIO
What are we going to do?

CONTI
D'Annunzio's been in talks with the
generals all morning. There's no
way out for us this time.

Gio registers all of this.

GIO
So, what...?

CONTI
We're going to evacuate.

GIO
...evacuate.

CONTI
Yes. I need you to help me organize
your barracks.

GIO
Yes, sir.

CONTI
Also, AP's been trying to get
through to their photographer,
Preston. Make sure he knows the
situation.

GIO
Yes, sir.

CONTI
The evac starts immediately. Do you
understand.

GIO
Yes, sir.

CONTI
Good.

Gio lingers, trying to process the news. Conti looks up from his papers.

CONTI (CONT'D)

You're dismissed.

GIO

Right. Yes, sir.

Gio closes the door softly behind him.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Gio hesitates, looking down the street towards the barracks, before walking off in the direction of Edo's hotel.

EXT. AMBRUZZE'S FARM - THAT AFTERNOON

Edo chops firewood in Ambruzze's yard. His breath hangs in the cold air.

EXT. FIUME STREET - LATER

Edo bikes through Fiume with a canvas wrapped in butcher paper tied across his back. Snow eddies around him as he cycles.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Edo crosses the empty lobby. A radio plays behind the front desk.

RADIO

"...mounting tensions along the Adriatic have lead to..."

Oblivious, Edo bounds up stairs with the package under his arm.

INT. EDO'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Gio is sitting at Edo desk next to a half-eaten plate of toast and a glass of brandy. Edo races in and stops, surprised to find Gio there.

EDO

Oh, hello!

He kisses him on the neck, setting the wrapped package from Ambruzze down on the bed behind them. Edo lies down on the bed to catch his breath, feet dangling off the edge.

Gio gets up and kneels next to the bed, carefully unlacing Edo's boots before he gets mud on the sheets. Edo raises up on his elbows to watch.

EDO (CONT'D)
I didn't think you'd be back yet.

GIO
The meeting was short. Rounds were cancelled.

EDO
Lucky.
(beat)
It's snowing out.

GIO
(wryly)
I can see that. How was Ambruzze?

EDO
Crotchety, as per usual. There's a draft in the kitchen that's driving him mad. What did Conti want?

Gio looks down, taking a breath to steady himself. Edo sits up fully, concerned.

EDO (CONT'D)
What, Gio?

GIO
(beat)
The Italians are invading.

EDO
What? Why haven't I heard about this through AP?

GIO
Conti said they've been trying to get a hold of you all morning, I don't know.

EDO
How long do we have?

GIO
They're already past Trieste, the evacuation is starting.

EDO

Now?

Gio nods. Edo goes to the window, mind churning.

EDO (CONT'D)

How is this happening so fast?

GIO

I don't know...the intel-

EDO

(with rising panic)

Does everyone have to leave or just the military?

GIO

I'm not sure. We're all pulling out.

Edo stills.

EDO

So you're going back.

GIO

What?

EDO

You said "we're pulling out."
You're leaving with them?

GIO

I don't know, I don't know what I'm supposed to do.

EDO

(coldly)

It's an easy choice, Gio. What are the others doing?

GIO

Edo, they'll go back, I guess, but I haven't talked to anyone, I came straight here-

They hang in silence as both men try to parse out what is going on. After a beat:

GIO (CONT'D)

Edo, I haven't had time to think-

EDO

So it's over. Fiume's done.

GIO
It's not done, it's-

EDO
-No, it's fine.

GIO
Edo...

EDO
(ignoring him)
I'll get reassigned, you'll get married. You'll have kids and then move so that you'll be close to a city, that way you can go into town when you need a fuck-

Gio stands.

GIO
-that's not fair.

EDO
No, it's not, but how else do you see this playing out? Have you pictured it?

GIO
You could come with me.

EDO
As what? Your friend?

GIO
We can figure something out.

EDO
I can come visit on weekends, sleep a wall away from you and Ana?

GIO
No, I--

EDO
You saw the way Lorenzo looked at you, Gio, and I saw how it killed you for him to know. We can't have this and have them.

GIO
You think I don't know that?

EDO
Then what are you going to do about
it?!

GIO
I don't-

EDO
You can't just keep saying that you
don't know, Gio. There's a choice
here. You have to choose!

Gio falls silent, overwhelmed. The words stick in his throat.

GIO
I don't, I can't-

EDO
God, I don't know why I thought you
wanted this.

GIO
Edo -

EDO
I should have known after the first
time.

Gio is hurt and ashamed. Tears well in his eyes. Edo grabs
his camera bag from the desk.

EDO (CONT'D)
I have to go wire AP. I've got to
find a way out.

Edo leaves, slamming the door behind him. The room is silent
except for the thudding of Edo's shoes as he walks down the
hall. Gio sits on the bed, shell-shocked.

After a while, Gio looks down at the package Edo brought from
Ambruzze's. He peels back a corner of the brown wrapping
paper. A swatch of green paint peeks out.

Curious, Gio slowly unwraps the rest of the painting,
revealing an impressionistic blur of greens and yellows.

He holds it to the light:

A man lies in a field of tall grass, a small barn in the
background. Gio looks closer and sees a notebook tucked under
the man's arm- his notebook, his arm.

Gio remembers that day, lying in the grass while Edo snuck up
and took his picture. He'd thought he didn't notice.

Gio races to the window. The street is empty. Edo is gone.

INT. BARRACKS ENTRANCE - LATER

Gio walks in a daze through the chaotic maze of scattered papers and evacuating soldiers. He climbs up to the dormitory, pushing past the mass of frantic bodies.

INT. BARRACKS DORMITORY - CONT.

The room looks like it's already been shelled. Mattresses are tipped off their frames, tangled bedclothes and forgotten trinkets are littered across the floor. Only a few stragglers remain, rushing to pack their few belongings.

Gio walks over to his bed, crushing a pair of abandoned glasses beneath his feet. He retrieves his rucksack from under the bed and begins to empty his drawers. Suddenly-

BANG. The building shakes. Gio flinches, instinctively falling to a crouch.

BANG. Plaster rains down from the ceiling. The muffled yelling of the men downstairs can be heard through the floor. Gio's eyes dart around the room for the exit.

BANG. Closer this time. A SOLDIER yells to Gio from the doorway.

SOLDIER

They've started! We have to go!

Gio scrambles up, cramming his belongings into his bag. He sweeps his letters into his rucksack, accidentally pushing a glass to the floor. The glass shatters.

BANG. Even closer. The walls shake and smoke begins to leak into the room. Gio grabs his photograph of Ana and runs out into the stairwell.

EXT. BARRACKS STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Gio emerges from the barracks and runs down the street. The shelling continues around him, people streaming into the narrow road to get out from under the damaged buildings. Gio searches wildly for a familiar face but finds none.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

He runs into the square. Half of the facade of D'Annunzio's mansion has crumbled to the ground. The colorful banners that adorned it hang in burned tatters.

Gio is suddenly pushed to the ground. Ana's photograph goes flying.

He turns to see who hit him. Lorenzo is backing away, clutching a ripped bag of clothes.

LORENZO

Shit, Gio.

He turns and keeps running. Gio scrambles to his feet, searching for the photo. A man with bad burns across his face and leg stumbles past, barely able to stand. Gio grabs his arm.

GIO

Are you alright? What happened?

BURNED MAN

The hotel...

GIO

Hotel? Which hotel?

BANG. Another shell goes off nearby. Gio whips around, panicked. He drags the man's arm across his shoulders to take the weight off his bad leg.

He runs the burned man over to a makeshift shelter made between a section of D'Annunzio's fallen balcony and a large door, kicking it to test if it will hold. He tucks the injured man below the sturdy debris.

GIO (CONT'D)

Stay here, help will come.

Gio runs across the square in the direction of Edo's hotel. Ana's photo lies in the rubble.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Gio races into the abandoned hotel lobby. Soot and plaster cover everything.

INT. EDO'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Gio bursts into Edo's room.

GIO

Edo!

He looks around wildly. The room is empty.

He runs to the closet. All of Edo's clothes are gone. Panicked, he checks the bureau drawers, under the bed, the desk top. All empty. Edo has cleared out.

GIO (CONT'D)

Shit, shit, shit.

He sits at Edo's desk, exhausted. He leans his head against the cool wood and breathes heavily.

Artillery goes off in the distance. Gio slowly gets up to go. Something crunches under his foot.

The corner of a canvas, ripped by his boot, peeks out from under the desk.

With his foot, Gio slowly drags out Ambruzze's painting, marred by a muddy tear along the lower edge.

He sinks to the bed and begins to cry.

INT. BAR, VENICE - SPRING, 1938 (18 YEARS LATER)

Gio sits at an old, worn bar, drinking alone. He's dressed in simple civilian clothes.

INT. GIO'S BEDROOM - LATER

Gio walks unsteadily towards his bed. He pulls back the sheets to reveal a sleeping woman lies with her back to him. He takes off his shoes and socks before stripping down to his underwear and climbing into bed.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICES - NEXT DAY

Gio walks into a bustling newspaper office. He passes his secretary, CATERINA.

CATERINA

Good morning, Signor Peretti.

GIO

(hungover)

Hello, Caterina.

Gio walks into his office and shuts the door. A sign on its back reads "EDITOR."

INT. GIO'S OFFICE - CONT.

He throws his jacket over the back of a chair and shuts the blinds against the sun. There's a knock at the door.

GIO

Come in.

Caterina enters carrying an armful of telegrams and ticker tape. Gio settles in to his desk.

CATERINA

I have tomorrow's potential headlines and some messages from this morning.

GIO

Give me the headlines.

Caterina hands him the ticker tape and walks out of the room.

Gio looks over the headlines: "Britain & France Weather Backlash for Franco Recognition" ... "California Reels as Floodwaters Recede" ... "Sir Halifax to Pick Up Eden Slack"

His eyes glaze over.

GIO (CONT'D)

(hoarsely)

Caterina!

Caterina opens the door and pokes her head in.

CATERINA

Yes, sir?

GIO

Some coffee, please.

She closes the door. Gio turns back to the strips of ticker tape, shuffling through potential headlines until something catches his eye. He looks closer at the slip of paper. It reads: "D'Annunzio, War Veteran, Dead at 74."

A cloud of pain and disbelief starts to gather on his face.

Caterina comes in with his coffee.

GIO (CONT'D)

No, not now.

CATERINA

You don't--

GIO

-Please. Out.

She leaves quickly. Gio sits alone at the desk, blankly clutching the slip of paper. The blinds' thick shadows cut across his face.

After a beat, he collects himself, grabs his jacket, and carries the slip of paper out of the room.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICES - CONT.

Gio sets the headline down on her desk and heads for the door.

GIO

This is what we're running.

He exits.

INT. BAR - NEXT DAY

Gio is back at the bar, drinking and trying to write. Next to him, a piece of paper reads: "D'ANNUNZIO, POET & HERO, DEAD AT 74."

INT. KITCHEN - DAYS LATER

Ana works at the stove as Gio sits listlessly at the table, notebook by his elbow. Their 10 year-old daughter, SOFIA, plays with a cat by his feet.

ANA

Maria wants us for dinner Sunday
after mass.

GIO

Fine.

Sofia twirls bell on a piece of string and the cat goes crazy chasing it.

SOFIA

Look, papa-

Gio smiles and caresses Sofia's hair.

There's a knock at the door. Ana walks out to answer it.

She returns carrying the mail.

GIO
Anything?

Ana sifts through the letters.

ANA
One from home.

She sets it down on the table in front of him. She takes out another, surprised.

ANA (CONT'D)
One from France.

GIO
Really?

She hands it to him and goes back to the stove. There's no return address but several French stamps line the upper right corner. The handwriting looks familiar.

Sofia's bell tinkles below the table as she teases the cat.

Gio opens the envelope and draws out a short letter. As he reads, his heart falls into his stomach.

ANA
Who's it from?

GIO
(beat)
An old friend.

ANA
Who?

GIO
Nobody- someone from the war.

ANA
Really? What does he want?

GIO
He's coming here.

ANA
When?

GIO
A couple days, he has work down the coast.

ANA
Can he come for dinner?

Gio rereads the letter, lost in thought.

GIO
No. I don't think that would be a good idea.

Ana turns around, hand on her hip.

ANA
Giorgio, what is it? We never have anyone to the house who's not from here.
(teasing)
Are you embarrassed of us?

GIO
Nothing, it's just-

ANA
It would be rude not to have him. I'll write him back and invite him over. Did he give an address?

She grabs the letter out of his hands.

GIO
(furious)
Ana!

Sofia's tinkling stops abruptly as she looks up at her father. Ana hands back the letter.

ANA
I'm sorry.

Gio takes the letter and storms out. As he climbs the stairs to his study, we see Ambruzze's painting hanging in the hall, rip and fading boot mark still intact.

INT. KITCHEN - ONE WEEK LATER

Ana sets the table. Gio sits on the floor with Sofia and the cat. The doorbell rings. Ana fumbles with her apron excitedly.

ANA
Help me out of this?

Gio stands and unties her apron. She runs to open the door. Gio listens as she greets Edo in the hallway.

EDO (O.S.)
Hello, Ana.

ANA (O.S.)
You must be Edward, come in.

EDO (O.S.)
I wasn't sure what to bring.

ANA (O.S.)
Oh, they're beautiful, thank you.

Their footsteps get closer. Gio looks around the room, trying to arrange himself to look nonchalant. His hands shake.

ANA (CONT'D)
I'm so thrilled you could come.

They walk in the room. Edo and Gio look at each other for a second, frozen. Edo regains his composure.

EDO
Gio.

They shake hands. Gio is awkwardly quiet. Ana looks at him, exasperated- she's used to him being bad with guests. She sets down a bouquet of flowers and turns to take dinner out of the oven.

As he takes his jacket off and rests it on the back of a chair, Edo's eyes fall down to rest on Sofia. Sofia looks back at Edo shyly. Surprise flits across his face before he looks up at Gio quickly. Ana turns around.

ANA
Let's sit? Dinner's ready.

They all sit down to dinner. Gio helps Sofia into her chair.

EDO
Thank you so much for this.

ANA
Of course, we're thrilled.

She hands him a plate of food.

ANA (CONT'D)
You're coming from France?

EDO
Yes, I was there for work.

ANA
And where did you know each other?
Giorgio never told me exactly.

EDO
Fiume, during the occupation.

ANA
You were a soldier too?

EDO
(glances at Gio)
No, a photographer.

ANA
Oh! For the army?

EDO
For the press.

ANA
I didn't know there was a lot of
press there... I've never seen any
pictures. Did you work together?

EDO
Yes, for a while.

Edo looks over at Gio who is refusing to make eye contact with anyone. Ana smiles politely and takes a bite of food.

ANA
How long will you be in town?

EDO
Not long at all, I'm covering
D'Annunzio's memorial in Brescia.

ANA
Where are you staying?

EDO
Nowhere, I'm just in Venice for
dinner, actually. I only have a
couple hours between trains.

ANA
Oh, what a pity.

They eat in awkward silence. Ana glances at Gio.

EDO
So, Ana. When did you move to the
city?

ANA

Right after we got married. Giorgio decided he wanted to write, and there wasn't anywhere to publish in our town.

EDO

(to Gio)

You're published?

GIO

Not like that.

Ana looks at him curiously. He shakes his head.

ANA

(to Edo)

He's editing now, mostly.

EDO

That's great.

(to Sofia)

Do you write like your father?

GIO

(tersely)

She paints.

An awkward beat.

ANA

And you? You still work for the paper?

EDO

Yep. All my life.

ANA

That must be so exciting.

(beat)

I'd get tired, though. And so lonely, travelling all the time. You never wanted to settle down?

EDO

No, I never found somewhere I liked enough to want to stay for more than a month or so.

ANA

It's so funny that you and Gio haven't crossed paths, you'd think an editor and a photographer would see each other sometime.

EDO
Oh, I haven't been in Italy since
before the war.

ANA
No?

EDO
No.

The cat mews at Sofia's feet.

SOFIA
Mama, did you put her food out?

ANA
Oh, I forgot, she must be starving.
Excuse me.
(to the cat)
C'mere...tsk tsk...

She walks into a back room, cat winding around her ankles.

Gio and Edo sit in silence across the table from each other, eyes cast down. Gio chances a glance at Edo's hand. No wedding ring. He fiddles with his own.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Edo helps Ana at the sink. She passes him a dish to be dried.

ANA
When did you say your train was?

Edo looks at his watch.

EDO
Shit, I should go soon.

Ana glances over at Sofia.

EDO (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Language, sorry.

Gio sits tensely at the kitchen table, knee bouncing. Edo starts to quickly wipe down the rest of the dishes. Ana takes them away from him.

ANA
No, no. Let me do that, you don't
want to miss your train.

EDO
You're right. Thank you.

He puts his jacket on. The wheels turn in Gio's head. He gets up abruptly.

GIO
I'll walk you.

EDO
Great.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Edo picks up his bag by the door. Gio shrugs on a coat.

ANA
Lovely to meet you.

She leans in to kiss him on the cheek.

Edo looks up at the stairwell and sees Ambruzze's painting. He squints surreptitiously, trying to make out if it is what he thinks it is.

EDO
(distracted)
Yes, thank you for dinner.

Gio opens the door. They walk outside.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Gio and Edo walk down the steps. Edo turns and waves to Ana in the doorway. She waves back happily and closes the door.

They walk away from the house in silence. After a while:

EDO
She's beautiful, Sofia.

GIO
I know.

EDO
And Ana too, they seem happy.
(beat)
I mean it, really.

They walk quietly. Cars pass. Gio turns onto a smaller, empty street. Edo follows.

EDO (CONT'D)
How do you have the painting?

GIO
What?

EDO
Ambruzze's... I left it in the
hotel room.

GIO
I took it.

EDO
What? When?

GIO
When I went back for you.

Edo looks at him, confused.

EDO
What?

Gio interrupts.

GIO
How did you find me?

EDO
I don't know, D'Annunzio in the
papers again, it made me think of
you. I saw your byline after his
obituary.
(he laughs)
I thought I was hallucinating.

Gio plods on grimly, anger building.

GIO
You can't just show up here.

EDO
I'm sorry. I just needed-

GIO
What could I possibly have left to
give you?

EDO
Gio-

GIO
-Giorgio. No one calls me that
anymore.

They round the corner to the train station.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - MOMENTS LATER

The steps out front are nearly empty at this hour aside from a few couples and families saying goodbye on the platform inside.

Edo follows Gio up the steps in silence. He looks up at Gio desperately- this is his last chance.

Edo stops.

EDO
Gio - Giorgio - Please.

Gio stops and turns to face him.

EDO (CONT'D)
At the end - you came back?

GIO
And you were gone.

EDO
I was so scared...

Edo trails off.

GIO
(quietly)
And you think I wasn't?
(beat)
I looked for you, I waited for you.

EDO
The hotel got shelled, I had to
leave.

GIO
We could have found a way to have
more time.

EDO
As soon as you had to choose, you
froze.

GIO
We could have at least said
goodbye.

EDO
I didn't want goodbye, Gio. I
wanted more than goodbye.

GIO
How can you even say that? You
left. You disappeared. I stayed for
you.

(beat)
You left things half finished.

EDO
They were done, Gio.

GIO
No.

EDO
None of it was real for you, Gio.

GIO
How could you know that?

EDO
You couldn't do it, you couldn't
even say that you wanted to.

GIO
You walked away before I had a
chance to tell you how I felt.

EDO
I walked away before you had a
chance to hurt me. One of us had to
do it.

GIO
That's not true, I wouldn't have.

EDO
Really? You could have left all
this, your perfect family?
(beat)
I could have never given you what
you need.

He starts to walk up the stairs, brushing past Gio. He pauses
for a beat, and then turns around.

EDO (CONT'D)

You know, I'm glad I came. I wasn't sure, but I am now. You're happy here, Gio. This is good.

Tears start to well in Gio's eyes. He brushes them aside angrily.

GIO

Don't tell me that I'm happy.

Edo shakes his head bitterly and turns back up the steps. Gio follows. They reach the entrance to the station.

As Edo reaches for the door, Gio screws up his courage and blurts out:

GIO (CONT'D)

You didn't let me choose.

You chose for me, and now it's too late. I thought about you for eighteen years. Looked at every picture you published. I waited for you to come back.

Gio looks at him desperately, decades of hurt showing through. Edo looks back, tears welling.

GIO (CONT'D)

And now there's too much distance. He's dead and it's over and there's nothing left.

EDO

Don't say that.

GIO

You know I'm right.

Edo shakes his head, tears coursing down his face.

GIO (CONT'D)

(beat)

I loved you.

EDO

(chokes out)

I know.

GIO

You were the happiest part of my life.

Edo looks up at him.

EDO
And you were mine.

The train's whistle blows. Edo turns to look. He wipes the tears from his face, laughing at what a mess he is.

EDO (CONT'D)
I can't miss the train.

INT. TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS

As they walk across the smoky platform, Gio reaches for Edo's hand. The whistle blows a second time. Edo's hand moves out of Gio's reach as he climbs on board.

From the platform, Gio watches Edo move through the compartment and set his suitcase down next to a young woman. She says something and he smiles. He looks out the window and finds Gio's face, his smile faltering.

Gio looks at the compartment door.

In a blur, he runs up the compartment steps. Edo races to meet him.

They kiss in the narrow corridor.

The whistle blows a final time and the train begins to move. Gio looks Edo firmly in the eye before letting him go.

He hops down to the platform. Edo makes his way back to his seat.

As the train picks up steam, Edo manages an uncertain smile for Gio through the window. Gio smiles back through his tears. He watches Edo grow smaller and smaller, trying to grasp this moment as hard as he can.

Eventually, as he watches, the train disappears into a tunnel. The small crowd on the opposite end of the platform begins to filter out. Their chatter echoes against the vaulted ceiling. Gio stares into the tunnel.

After the station is empty and still, Gio turns around and walks into the street.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS

Seen from above, Gio is tiny against the wide boulevard. Light from the station's glass roof spills out across the sky and into the square below. As he walks away from the brightly lit square, the stars fade into view.

FADE OUT.

THE END