

LOVERS IN ROME

by

GIOVANNI MAURO ZELKO

GMZ PRODUCTIONS
2721 SECOND STREET
SUITE 203
SANTA MONICA CA 90405
phone: (310) 396-8236
fax: (310) 399-5597

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
COPYRIGHTED WITH THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
REGISTERED WITH THE WRITERS GUILD OF AMERICA

Lovers In Rome

INT.DARK EMPTY ROOM.

Violin Solo: "La Traviatta" by Giuseppe Verdi. We are in a dark unlit room and hear the sound of someone intermittently flipping through pages. The camera dollies at a dramatic low angle to slowly reveal the figure of a MAN sitting at a desk. He is flipping through some loose 8x10 photographs. We cannot see who he is because the desk lamp, the only source of light in the room, casts him as nothing more than a silhouette.

CUT TO:

CU of the man's hand turning through the images, pausing at each one to briefly study it. The images are B&W nude photographs of women. The images are sensual/artsy and not 'pornographic.' Use dissolve repetition between each photo. (All photos have a black oneiric background and the subject is never looking into the lense.)MUSIC FADES OUT AS NARRATION BEGINS.

TRANSITION DEVICE:

ONE CONTINUOUS SHOT:

From the last nude photo of a WOMAN lying back, the camera moves in to an ECU of the feet, and the still frame photo morphs into motion film. A MAN's hand enters frame and begins caressing the foot, moving up the leg. The camera tracks the hand's movement maintaining focus with the hand's arena of progress up the body, pausing a moment at her hips where a single finger traces the hip bone. The hand moves upward to the naval, tracing the stomach before continuing upwards to the breasts. Here, the man's face leans into frame and softly kisses one breast. The woman's chest slowly heaves upward as she takes in a deep breath. The man's face is not completely revealed; rather we see only his jaw up to his nose. The face retreats and the hand continues up to the woman's collarbone, neck, and face. The woman's eyes are closed. Her face is hidden by her hair and a shadow. We can only see her mouth. She has a slight smile upon her lips. She sighs & takes a deep breath.

NARRATION:

(Whispering in a pleading, slow, raspy, breaking voice.)

Love... What does it *mean*? What *is* it? The willful utter abandonment and loss of the self? The sublime heights of being human? The fulfilled oneness between two beings? Or is it emptiness? A void of all except the loved one? Is it absolute falsehood under the guise of truth? Absolute need? The longing to grasp the ever unattainable? The blissful misery of having brushed the fleeting moment of divine beauty, never to recapture it? Is it the maddening silent scream of wrenching loneliness... Are all of these the elements of love? Are *any* of these *things*, these empty words, do any of them even hint at that spark which we call love...

At this point, the narration should end as the above shot ends with the woman's sigh of pleasure.

WOMAN

(whispering as she exhales)

Ti Amo...

The man's lower face leans in again and he gently, slowly, kisses her on her lips.

CUT TO:

Reveal shot of the man's face as the kiss ends and their lips separate. The man, MARCO, leans down and rests his head on her chest, his face revealed to camera. Marco is about thirty years old, has mediterranean features, and a tall, strong physique. Emotionally distraught, his eyes are welled up with tears and his lips tremble. A single tear spills out of one eye, streaking his face. He tightens his eyes completely shut for a moment, releasing more tears as he utters a response.

MARCO
(trembling/whispering)
I love you...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROME/WINTER/DAY

One uninterrupted Steadicam shot: Low< of people's legs crossing in front of camera on a cobblestone street. Across the way is a hotel doorway. We see the legs of a man stepping out of the door. Camera pans up to reveal MARCO. He is elegantly dressed in a coat and slacks. He looks up at the sky, then observes the street left and right of him. He seems pensive and preoccupied. As he steps off the stoop and into the street, he pulls a black duffy cap out from under his coat, pulls it on and flips up his coat's collar against the brisk morning air before thrusting his hands into his pockets. As Marco begins walking down the street, the Camera moves in front of him, maintaining a wide shot of the street with Marco centered. Marco stops at a corner smoke shop/newsstand, and picks up a newspaper, the "New York Times," from underneath a souvenir replica statue of Canova's lounging "VENUS," which is used as a paper weight. Marco addresses the VENDOR. The Vendor is an older man in his fifties full of energy.

MARCO
Scusa, ma, ce l'ha un pacco di
Dunhill Rossi?

VENDOR
(in a scruffy gruff
voice)
Ma certo.

The Vendor leans down and retrieves the pack of cigarettes, handing them to Marco. He offers matches which Marco politely refuses.

VENDOR
(continuing)
Vuole i fiammiferi?

MARCO
No grazie... Quanto e'?

VENDOR
Dieci mila cinque cento.

Marco hands the vendor the money. When the Vendor tries to give him the change, Marco motions him to keep it.

VENDOR
(continuing;
motioning with the
hand holding the
change)
Grazie signore! Ed abbia passe una
bella giornata!

MARCO
(forcing a smile &
nodding his head)
Grazie, anche a lei.

Marco folds the paper under his left arm and continues down the street, unwrapping his pack of Dunhill cigarettes. He pulls out a Zippo lighter, but is unable to get it to light.

MARCO
(continuing; annoyed,
mumbling)
Fuck me...

He shoves the lighter into his inside coat pocket, leaving the unlit cigarette to hang out of his mouth. The street Marco walks down empties into the bustling square of the Pantheon, alive with splashing fountains, painters, musicians, cafe's, and many pedestrians. As Marco traverses the square and heads toward the crowded tables of an outdoor cafe', the magnificent columned structure of the Pantheon is revealed behind him. Marco reaches an open table and sits. In the background, a black carriage drawn by two black horses crosses the square to come to a stop near the front of the Pantheon.

The horse-drawn-carriage sends reverberating echoes through the square of hooves and wooden wheels clattering on the cobblestones. A WAITER, dressed in a plain black suit, white shirt, and black bow tie, arrives at the table as Marco unfolds his newspaper.

CUT TO:

WAITER
(warmly)
Buon Giorno Signore! Cosa prende questo mattina?

MARCO
(motioning with his hands)
Un espresso, e una bella sfogliatella calda.

The waiter nods and turns to leave. Marco calls out to him, getting his attention.

MARCO
(continuing)
Ohh! Cameriere! Fiammiferi per favore.

WAITER
(smiles)
Certamente.

The waiter returns to Marco's table and hands him a pack of matches which he has pulled out of a pocket. The waiter exits. Marco finally lights his cigarette, takes a drag, and relaxes back into his chair, lifting the paper off the table to begin reading it as he exhales. Note: Marco smokes his cigarette in the Arabic/MiddleEastern manner of placing it between his pinky and ring finger, and inhaling through his fist which acts like a pipe of sorts.

CUT TO:

ECU of the New York Times' front page. Tilt down to Art/Leisure column headline which reads: "New York City's Fashion Industry already preparing for 2028's Fashion Week."

CUT TO:

Marco sitting, reading.

MARCO
(annoyed/mumbles)
Rat race bullshit.

Marco takes a drag of his cigarette and looks up from the paper.

CUT TO:

Marco's POV: He glances at the buildings around the square. A small flock of pigeons are flying in a circle.

CUT TO:

ECU/SLOW MO: His hand flicking an ash. It is important to use a Frazier lense here so that the 'piazza', or square, is completely in focus as well as Marco's hand.

CUT TO:

Marco sitting. He deftly opens the paper up, flipping and scanning through before stopping and folding to a page with an article he wishes to read. The waiter returns with his espresso and pastry. Marco glances up from his paper to smile and say thanks. He lays the paper down on his lap and reaches his hand to the sugar cubes on the coffee saucer.

CUT TO:

ECU: Marco's fingers picking up one of two sugar cubes from the saucer. Without a cut, overcrank to SLOW MO as he dips one corner of the cube into the coffee, allowing the coffee to be absorbed by the sugar cube. He then drops the cube in, splashing the coffee a little. (NOTE: this and many of the ECU shots are intended to be photographed with Frazier lenses to maintain the extreme depths of field)

CUT TO:

MCU: Marco lifts the cappuccino to his lips and closes his eyes. Without sipping it, he inhales the coffee aroma deeply, allowing a slight smile to escape his lips before taking a sip.

CUT TO:

SLOW-MO/POV[definitely need the Frazier lense for this shot]
 (*The sound effects here are distorted/echoey: violin playing; horses neighing; carriage wheels/hooves clattering; an italian man's voice shouting out "vaglio!"; heart-beat slowed down.*) An espresso cup and hand are in the bottom of the frame in a tilted up/drinking position. (*We hear a slow-mo "gulp"*). Cup & hand tilt down and out of frame revealing Marco's magnificent view of the Pantheon, the square, the splashing fountains, the violin player, and the carriage & horses driving off and out of the square. In the center of the frame from out of the crowd of pedestrians, a beautiful woman, LISA, walks diagonally across the square towards Marco's caf'e. She is tall with long wavy dark hair and blue eyes. She's wearing knee-high, elegant black lace-up boots, skin-tone stockings, a black skirt, a black bra, a white blouse with the two top buttons undone, and a long, dark-blue, wool coat with silver buttons and rabbit fur on the sleeves and collar. Over her shoulder, she is carrying a dark brown leather satchel. She speaks with a thick London accent, is twenty years old, giddy, bubbly, extremely open and cheery. She is the epitome of youthful purity and curiosity. The world is hers. As she approaches the cafe, she is looking away and consequently walks through a group of pigeons feeding on the ground. The pigeons scatter and fly away, filling the frame with their alternating flurry of black and white flapping wings. She smiles broadly as she walks through them.

FADE TO BLACK

The FADE TO BLACK should be from top down, suggesting Marco's eyelids closing.

CUT TO:

Marco is sitting. His eyes are closed and he wears a faint grin. A few seconds pass.

LISA (O.S.)
 (hesitant/IN A LONDON
 STREET ACCENT)
 Ex,excuse me... sir.

Marco's eyes flash open, his smile vanishing.

CUT TO:

Marco's sitting POV: Lisa stands before him, slightly hunched over as she leans in to address him. She glows with beauty in the morning sunlight.

LISA
(hurriedly)
Excuse me, I'm sorry to bother
you, but their aren't any
available seats and, I saw you
here alone, and thought I might be
able to join you if you weren't
expectin anyone...

MARCO
(pauses/playful)
How did you know I speak english?

LISA
(nonchalantly)
I see that you're reading an
english newspaper...

MARCO
(grinning)
What's your name?

LISA
Lisa.

MARCO
(gesturing with his
hand)
"Lisa," please have a seat.

LISA
(beaming)
Thanks!

Lisa slides her bag off her shoulder and takes her coat off
before sitting.

LISA
(continuing)
And what's your name?

MARCO
Marco.

LISA
(purring)
"Marrrrco..." That's a charming
name, especially here in Rome!
You look italian. Were you born
here or in the states?

MARCO

The states, but I've been visiting Rome almost every year since I was a boy... my mother was born and raised in a small town not too far from here.

LISA

That's cool... Where are you from in America?

MARCO

Me? I was born, raised, and will forever be a New Yorker!

LISA

(excited)

New York!? Great! I'm going to N.Y. tomorrow morning for the first time!

MARCO

(interested)

Really!? Wow, that's wonderful! Going for work or play?

LISA

(enthusiastic)

Both baby! Always both! I'm gonna live there and try me luck at the big city.

MARCO

Excellent. I'm sure you'll love it there... You're from England, I take it?

LISA

Yup. London, actually. Grew up outside the city with me mum and brother.

MARCO

Why are you leaving London? Not fast enough?

LISA

Naw, I was working for a small agency...

(more)

LISA (cont'd)
 modelling...but they sucked, so I
 decided to get out and go big.
 And there aint no place bigger
 than the Big Apple!

MARCO
 (amused)
 Great... You sound very ambitious.
 You'll need to be in N.Y. It's
 the biggest shark tank in the
 world on every level.

The Waiter approaches the table, interrupting.

WAITER
 (to Marco)
 Vuole ordinare anche per la bella
 signorina?

MARCO
 (to Lisa)
 What would you like

LISA
 Just a coffee and a crumpet'll be
 good.

WAITER
 (broken english in a
 thick accent)
 Signorina, we here non hava
 questo... "crumpet."

Marco passes his sfogliatella to Lisa.

MARCO
 (energetically)
 Lisa, try this pastry. It's
 called a 'sfogliatella' and has
 been my favorite since I was a kid!

Lisa takes a small bite.

LISA
 MMM! This is great! I'd love one.

WAITER
 Allora, lo stesso. Un espresso e
 una sfogliatella.

The waiter nods his head to Marco to confirm and exits.

MARCO
(to Lisa)
I'm sorry, what were you saying?

LISA
I was telling you that I'm a model, or am going to be one. I wanted to be an actress at first, but actresses are too weird for me, you know? Always working on being someone else and never focusing on who they really are. It's creepy... they seem like, they seem empty or hollow, *especially* when they're not acting, you know? It's fucked up.

MARCO
(smiling)
Yea, I guess I know what you mean.

LISA
(concerned)
You're not an actor, are you?

MARCO
(smiling)
Only in the bedroom.

Lisa chuckles.

MARCO
(continuing)
No, a former girlfriend of mine is an actress. I think I understand what you mean.

LISA
Anyone famous?

MARCO
No, not really.

LISA
So, Marco, what do you do?

MARCO
Oh, a little of this, a little of that.

LISA
Well, whatya doin in Rome? Work
or on holliday?

MARCO
(excitedly)
Why, both baby, always both!
Always both, whenever possible.
The key to happiness, right?

Lisa smiles and nods her head in agreement.

LISA
Yea...

The waiter arrives and places Lisa's coffee ad pastry before her.

LISA
(continuing; to
waiter, in a thick
english accent)
"Grazeya"

WAITER
(in a thick italian
accent)
Your welcome, Signorina.

The waiter exits as Lisa excitedly mock claps her hands, her enthusiasm bubbling over.

LISA
I love new experiences! When in
Rome...

Lisa giggles as she sips her espresso.

LISA
(continuing)
Mmm... I love strong coffee! I'm
sorry, you were saying...

MARCO
Right now, I guess I'd call myself
a photographer.

LISA
(excited)
Really! That's great! What'ya
shootin?

MARCO

I'm working on a project for the Vatican.

LISA

Wow! Cool.

MARCO

Yea, they're putting together a three volume set of its artwork, and I'm one of a few of the photographers hired to take the snapshots. Pretty easy gig, and I get to enjoy the beauties of Rome!

Marco toasts her with his cup of espresso.

LISA

(intrigued)

I would love to do something like that! Art history classes were my favorite in school. I loved looking at all the beauty spread over the world, you know? Wow, that's cool man, you're lucky. How'd you get a job like that?

MARCO

I was lucky. The good ones tend to fall into your lap when you're not looking. A few years ago I met and worked with a Cardinal at the Vatican while I was filming a television documentary. We had to shoot some interior scenes and frescos in the Vatican, and he was the priest who was basically our chaperone, making sure we didn't walk off with anything. Anyway, we got to talking and stayed in touch ever since. He's a really interesting guy who spent most his life travelling as a missionary to some of the harshest places in the world.

LISA

Wow. Sounds like a cool dude.

MARCO

(smirks)

Yea, he is. That's why whenever I come back to Rome, I make sure we get together for lunch or dinner. Anyway, when the project came up, he recommended my name.

LISA

That's really cool. It must be great being a photographer!

MARCO

It has its moments.

LISA

Do you do fashion photography?

MARCO

(not enthused)

Yea, sometimes. Not if I can occupy myself with something else, though.

LISA

Why? I thought it would be exciting and glamorous.

MARCO

Well, it's usually just a job and you have to listen to some advertising producer tell you his 'vision' which is almost always garbage. And when it is any good, it's usually someone else's recycled garbage. I hate playing the brainless hired gun. It's frustrating. But it pays the bills sometimes, so, *c'e' la vie'*.

LISA

(disappointed)

I didn't think of that... You still love photography, though, right?

MARCO

Of course, otherwise I wouldn't tolerate the downside.

(more)

MARCO (cont'd)

Still, once in a while, I get to work with friends and with people who are pretty creative. And every once in a while, I get to go to great beaches to shoot swimwear. You can't beat that! Paid to get a tan around beautiful scantily clad women! Ultimately, I'd really love to focus on being a gallery artist travelling with my exhibitions from city to city around the world all year long. But, at the moment, reality faces me with photographing statues, paintings, manuscripts, and every odd religious item you could imagine. In the end, life's always a compromise. You take the good with the bad, and try to have a party along the way! Right?!

LISA

(confident)

Yea. I know what you mean. I would have loved to have stayed in England if I could, to be near my family and mates, you know? *But*, there is so much I wanna do and see,...

Lisa clenches her fists, drawing her arms close to her body.

LISA

(continuing; pleading)

I wanna feel, I wanna taste. You know?

MARCO

(nodding his head)

Sure, I know... I know.

Marco takes a sip from his coffee.

MARCO

(continuing)

So, N.Y., huh?

LISA

(beaming)

Yup! New York City, Baby! The Big Apple. Work all day, party all night, and sleep when you're dead! Hey, I'd love to check out your photography when we're both in N.Y. Maybe you can shoot me when I'm a famous model!

MARCO

Absolutely! Well, listen, look me up when you get there. I'd love to hang out with you again and show you around. We'll have breakfast at Joe's Diner across from the Garden. They make the best omelettes!

LISA

Cool! "The Garden", is that what they call Central Park?

MARCO

(grins)

No... Madison Square Garden.

LISA

Where the Knicks play!

MARCO

Yea, among other things.

Marco pulls out a business card from his wallet, writing on its back before handing it to Lisa.

MARCO

(continuing)

Here's the number to my studio. Call me in a couple months. I should be back by then. And I wrote the # of a good friend of mine who's at a strong modelling agency. Call and meet with her. Her name is Daphney. Let her know we're friends, and maybe she'll be able to help you out. At the very least, she'll point you in the right direction as far as finding other agencies.

LISA
(appreciative)
Great. Thanks! Thank you so much.
I've made a friend in N.Y. and I
haven't even stepped on the plane
yet!

MARCO
(gesturing with his
head)
How's your sfogliatella?

LISA
(bubbly)
It tastes wonderful...

Lisa leans down and, closing her eyes, inhales it's aroma.

LISA
(continuing)
And it smells even better!

Marco sits quietly for a moment watching Lisa enjoy her
pastry. He is admiring Lisa's inner and outer glow.

MARCO
Hey, ya doin anything this
afternoon?

LISA
Nope, just wandering around the
city, soaking in the beauty.

MARCO
The eternal city is a great place
for that. You stumble across one
beauty after another.

LISA
I know what you mean.

Lisa gazes around her, resting her eyes upon Marco's eyes.

LISA
(continuing)
I didn't even plan on coming to
Rome! My flight wasn't direct...
cheaper, you know...
(more)

LISA (cont'd)
and so, when my plane touched down
in Rome for a stopover, I grabbed
my hand bag, and, here I am! An
unexpected day in Rome! I just
hope my suitcase is waiting for me
in NY when I get there!

MARCO
(impressed)
I'm sure it will. Your adventure
sounds wonderful. You're
spontaneous... I admire that.

LISA
Thanks.

Lisa lights up a cigarette.

LISA
(continuing)
That's me!

MARCO
Listen, since you and your bag
don't have any plans for today,
I'd love for you two to accompany
me into the countryside. I'm
going to shoot the ruins of an old
castle about forty minutes away
from here.

Lisa waves her arms excitedly.

LISA
Are you serious?! I'd love to!

Lisa gets up, collecting her coat and bag.

LISA
(continuing)
Well! Lets get going!

Marco grins and swigs down the remainder of his coffee as he
stands up and throws some cash onto the table.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR/DAY

(Rave Music is pumping. The song is "Breathe in Me" by Tekara.)

ECU of hand shifting the stick into sixth gear, 'dropping the hammer.'

CUT TO:

ECU of left foot popping off the clutch and right foot slamming on the gas pedal.

CUT TO:

ECU of RPM tachometer pushing 7000 RPM. We hear the engine rev and roar.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY/DAY

The rear of a BLACK BMW M3 sportscar speeds away on a straight-away of the Italian SuperStrada amidst the rolling hills and pastureland of the countryside- South of Rome. The landscape is breathtaking, and we see old Roman aqueducts in the immediate area.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR/DAY

Lisa is dancing in her seat to the entrancing beat of the rave music.

LISA

This is a great fuckin disc!

MARCO

Yea, it kicks ass.

Marco has both his hands gripping the steering wheel and is concentrating on the road. He is wearing Revo sunglasses, and is slowly bobbing his head to the music.

MARCO

(continuing; glancing
at her)

A close friend of mine runs a big nightclub in Manhattan, so I always get killer discs from great spinners.

LISA

Cool.