

ROOM IN ROME

EPISODE 1 (Sequence shot)

Ext. street (From Hotel room) - downtown Rome - NIGHT

Early summer, 2008

From a fourth floor window we see, perpendicular to the frame, a narrow street in downtown Rome: old buildings with flaking, weathered façades; characteristic black-cobbled roads; all bathed in the dim, murky orange of the street lights.

Two young women walk round the gentle curve at the end of the street. There is a noticeable difference in height between them. The smaller of the two is Alba, Spanish, dark-haired, tanned; the taller girl is Natasha, Russian, blond, fair-skinned. Both are in their late twenties. Alba wears a sleeveless T-shirt and jeans; the Russian, a short dress.

Alba and Natasha stroll along, unhurriedly, slightly tipsy from the drinks they've had. They speak in English, each with her own distinctive accent.

ALBA

How long are you staying in Rome?

NATASHA

I fly back to Moscow tomorrow.

ALBA

What a coincidence! Me too!

NATASHA

You fly to Moscow?

ALBA

Back to Spain.

Natasha smiles.

They reach a T-junction. Alba looks straight ahead.

ALBA
This is my hotel.

NATASHA
(Pointing to the right)
Mine's down there.

ALBA
(Pointing ahead)
So this is closer.

NATASHA
For you, yes.

ALBA
For you, too.

NATASHA
No.

They stop in the middle of the T-junction, framed in a high-angle shot from the same fourth floor window.

ALBA
Just a quick stopover. To drink the last one.

NATASHA
We've drank plenty at the bar.

ALBA
But we only talked about Russia and Spain. Not about us.

NATASHA
I prefer not to talk about us.

ALBA
It's a deal.

NATASHA
What is?

ALBA

Not to talk. We can stay without talking, you know... and even better.

Alba looks forward and up (towards the camera).

ALBA

Look, that's my room. It's got two flags. It must be for a reason, no?

Natasha also looks up. (We don't see the flags).

NATASHA

Yes, one for Italy and other for Rome.

ALBA

I'm talking about what's in between them.

NATASHA

The middle flag is missing.

ALBA

Exactly. It's because of you. Come up and hang it there.

NATASHA

And what do I hang there?

ALBA

Your clothes, for example, you're long enough.

Natasha smiles, a little confused.

Alba takes her hand.

They both stand looking at their clasped hands.

NATASHA

I've never gone up to a woman's room.

ALBA

It's just a hotel room, in Rome.

Natasha tries to release Alba's hand, but Alba tightens her grip.

The Russian girl turns (to the right), her back towards Alba.

The Spanish girl does the same (to the left), so they are back to back, holding hands.

Natasha begins to pull in one direction, Alba in the other.

ALBA

If you keep pulling, you'll win and we'll end up in your hotel.
You choose.

Natasha turns round.

So does Alba.

They stare into each other's face for a few seconds.

Alba gently pulls Natasha's hand and they enter the hotel.

The camera pulls back...on either side two flags appear, attached to a continuous stone and iron balcony, the Italian flag on the left and the European flag on the right. The middle flagpole is empty.

EPISODE 2

EXT-INT. HOTEL ROOM. ROME - NIGHT

The camera continues to pull back, revealing behind the balcony wall a small (fourth floor) terrace with a few plants and flowers. It passes over a table and two chairs and, through an open double door, enters into a hotel room, lit only by the light from outside.

As we gently glide further into the room, we read a caption:

"Room In Rome"

This three-star hotel room, spacious, with high ceilings, still retains vestiges of an architecture that suggests it enjoyed a higher category when it was first

built.

Now the room seems antiquated, but the preservation of its old-world charm gives it a feel of cosy warmth.

We see a writing desk in front of a window, a large double bed, a cupboard... not the tidiest of rooms.

The camera stops in front of the room door which now opens inwards.

Natasha enters, then Alba.

The Russian girl stops after a few steps and looks around the room.

The Spanish girl approaches the bedside table and turns on the lamp.

It lights up a small replica of the Venus de Milo, (a typical tourist souvenir), with her characteristic waist-high tunic and naked torso.

Alba opens the mini-bar.

ALBA

You wanna a drink?

NATASHA

Wine, please.

Alba takes out two small bottles of wine.

She hands one to Natasha and goes out onto the terrace.

Followed by the Russian.

They stand at the handrail, looking out over the city.

Natasha sees the empty flagpole between the flags of Italy and Rome.

Uneasy, she takes a long swig of wine straight from the bottle.

Alba takes a more relaxed sip from her bottle, giving Natasha a sideways glance.

They remain like this, in silence, for a few seconds.

ALBA

Sorry, what was your name?

NATASHA

I told you twice already.

ALBA

Maybe the third time I'll get it.

NATASHA

Natasha.

ALBA

Natasha. Natasha! Is that the name you said before?

Natasha pronounces her name over-articulating and ending on the last syllable with her lips apart.

NATASHA

You're not saying it right.

It's Natasha, sha.

Alba looks at her mouth and tries to imitate her.

ALBA

Scha.

The Russian gets her mouth closer and opens her lips even more.

NATASHA

Nata-sha. Ssshaaa

The Spaniard is mesmerized by the Russian's lips.

ALBA

Nata...sshaa

Natasha pulls a "more or less" face.

NATASHA

And you're Alba, which is Spanish for dawn.

ALBA

Yes. That is my big moment. So this one may be yours.

She looks at her. Natasha shakes her head.

ALBA

Just wanted to share the moments...

NATASHA

Thanks.

Alba takes a swig of wine.

They remain a few seconds in silence, looking out over the rooftops.

A gentle gust of wind ruffles the flags of Italy and Europe.

Natasha looks at her dress which also ripples in the breeze.

Alba notices how it clings to the Russian girl's beautiful body.

And they both look at the empty middle flagpole.

ALBA

Tonight is the first night of summer.

NATASHA

(Cottoning on)

That's right.

ALBA

It's just begun, at twelve o'clock.

NATASHA

My last night in Rome.

She gazes at the horizon, serious, melancholic.

Alba sidles up and slowly takes her hand.

Natasha responds warmly, squeezing it gently in her fingers.

ALBA

Mine too, you're not alone, Rusita.

And you know what? This is the shortest night of the year.

Alba lifts Natasha's hand to her mouth and begins to kiss it gently.

The Russian girl looks at her, a little tense, but studying the Spanish girl's features, her lips, her mouth, her eyes which fleetingly meet her own.

Alba sucks Natasha's fingers.

They look into each other's eyes.

Alba stands on tiptoe, stretches her neck, puts her lips to Natasha's, and they kiss... a long, tender kiss.

Alba begins to explore the Russian's body. Natasha stops her gently, their kissing ends.

NATASHA

I'm not a lesbian.

Alba lowers her heels, her face relaxed.

ALBA

It doesn't matter. You're a woman, I'm a woman, we were drinking alone at a bar, we exchanged looks... and felt attracted to one another. Isn't that what happened?

Natasha quaffs more wine and nods.

NATASHA

It's the first time I've looked like this at a woman. And never before... has a woman looked at me this way.

They stare into one another's eyes, delighting in each other.

NATASHA

I think it's not the first time you've looked at a woman this way.

Alba shakes her head.

ALBA
But every woman is different.

Natasha nods her agreement.

Another breeze stirs the flags and draws Natasha's dress against her body. They both look again at the empty flagpole.

NATASHA
Would you like to see me naked?

ALBA
Yes, I'd love to.

Natasha remains pensive, she seems nervous.

Alba smiles and looks at her with fervid anticipation.

Natasha seems about to take off her dress.

NATASHA
Here?

ALBA
Wherever you like. Do you prefer inside?

NATASHA
(Uneasy)
Yes.

Alba enters the room.

Natasha follows behind, carrying her little bottle of wine.

When Alba reaches the bed, she turns.

The Russian girl stops in front of her. Alba drains the last drop of wine from her bottle.

NATASHA

I think it'll work better if you undress me.

Alba smiles, takes her empty wine bottle, puts it on the bedside table beside the statuette of Venus de Milo, and slowly moves closer.

Very gently, Alba begins to take Natasha's dress off.

Natasha undresses the Spanish girl.

Their clothes lie scattered on the floor.

Standing in front of the bed, only a few feet separating them, they take pleasure in the mutual contemplation of their bodies.

Alba does a twirl on the spot.

Natasha does likewise.

They each enjoy the other's eyes on them, running over the different contours of their bodies.

Alba approaches to caress the Russian girl's body. Natasha is trembling.

Alba holds out her hand to Natasha. She takes it.

Alba leads her to the bed.

They lie side by side, facing each other, but without touching.

Natasha still trembles slightly.

ALBA

It's ok, we'll stay like this... close but not touching... while you relax.

Natasha nods gratefully.

They lie still, very close, looking.

The Russian girl begins to stroke the other's face and head.

She closes Alba's eyelids with her fingers and continues with her caresses.

Natasha gazes at Alba with great tenderness and fascination.

Little by little, we realize, from the Spanish girl's breathing, that she is falling asleep.

Natasha stops caressing her and lies there looking at her for a few seconds.

Natasha carefully slides off the bed.

She begins to hunt for her clothes between the bed and the writing desk.

She finds a bra, picks it up with two fingers and dangles it in front of her eyes.

She smiles and holds it to her.

Not only is the cup size too small for her, it won't reach round her back to fasten.

She smiles as she looks at Alba who is fast asleep.

She tosses the bra to the floor and picks up her own.

She puts it on.

Then her dress.

She picks up a pair of panties, nimbly slips in her feet and yanks them up so quickly that, being too small for her, they rip.

She laughs.

Alba stirs... but sleeps on.

Natasha tosses away the torn knickers which drop on top of Alba's jeans.

She hastily finishes dressing and mutters:

NATASHA

(In Russian, affectionately)

I am glad you sleep, that way there will be no words of
goodbye.

She leans in very close to Alba's face and, mere centimetres from her mouth,

gives her a silent kiss in mid-air.

When she straightens up, something catches her eye.

A large picture hangs over the bed: a grubby, worn reproduction of a Renaissance painting depicting a large group of people listening to an orator spouting forth to one side of a lavishly-appointed palatial hall.

Natasha takes a closer look at the speaker, spotlighted by the table lamp.

The sturdy, coarse-featured man is delivering a fiery discourse to his audience.

Natasha gives a smile of apparent recognition.

She switches off the bedside lamp and the Venus de Milo is plunged into shadow.

Then she turns and walks towards the door.

She opens it.

NATASHA
(In Russian)
You're right... just a few words.

And she walks back into the room. The light from the doorway casts a faint glow over Alba's sleeping face.

Natasha gazes down at her.

NATASHA
(In Russian)
Goodbye, Alba! I don't want to imagine what could have happened. I leave this secret here, sleeping with you. Thank you, Alba. Goodbye!

From inside we see Natasha close the door.

EPISODE 3

TRANSITION.

Alba is fast asleep on the bed.

A cell phone begins to RING.

Alba forces open her heavy eyelids.

She pushes aside the small wine bottle by the figure of Venus to look at the alarm clock.

ON THE CLOCK: 01.52

The cell phone continues to ring.

Alba leans down a little and sees her jeans in a heap nearby on the floor.

On top, her torn knickers.

She reaches out and picks up her jeans.

Alba
(In Spanish, to her jeans)
What have you done to my knickers?

She rummages in the pockets...

...and pulls out her cell phone just as the ringing stops.

ALBA
(In Spanish, to herself, lethargic)
Who changed my ring tone?

She leaves her cell phone on the bedside table.

And goes back to sleep.

A few seconds later it rings again (the same ring tone as before).

Alba opens her eyes.

She checks her phone to find it is not the one ringing.

She looks towards the floor and sees a faint red glow.

She hangs her head over the edge of the mattress and looks under the bed.

On the floor she sees a cell phone flashing red with each ring.

She picks it up and sees Russian letters on the keys.

ALBA
(In Spanish)
Shit! What's going on here?

The phone stops ringing.

She leaves it under the bed.

Alba looks around her.

She's charmed by the large engraving hanging on the wall opposite the bed.

The faded picture, dimly lit by the glow from the street, shows an everyday scene from Classical times: a public square, variously peopled, especially with men, all in togas.

She closes her eyes.

She falls asleep again.

EPISODE 4

TRANSITION.

A KNOCKING at the door.

Alba opens her eyes.

The knocking gets louder.

Alba sluggishly props herself up in bed and calls out:

ALBA

(In English)
Who is it?

NATASHA (V.O.)
Natasha!

ALBA
(In Spanish, to herself)
Natasha! Of course.

She slips out of bed. She is naked.

She reaches the door and opens it.

She finds Natasha in the hallway.

(They speak in English, each with her own accent.)

NATASHA
I think I've left my phone in your room. Did you hear it ringing?

ALBA
Yes, it woke me up actually.

NATASHA
Sorry, I must have dropped it. I'm tired and I want to go to the hotel.

ALBA
Come in and get it.
(A mix of enigmatic and seductive)
It's waiting for you under the bed.

NATASHA
I would rather not come in again.

ALBA
Why? What happened?

NATASHA

Well, nothing actually. Nothing we have to regret.

ALBA

Why did you chew up my knickers?

NATASHA

I didn't chew anything.

ALBA

Come in and see the state you've left them in.

A waiter appears, MAX (35), with a trolley carrying a meal for two.

Natasha gives a start, Alba just smiles as she looks at the food.

ALBA

How thoughtful, Natasha! I wasn't expecting this.

The waiter stops, looks at them and grins.

ALBA

(To Max)

Go in and leave it on the terrace.

Max glances at the adjacent door, then looks Alba up and down in the doorway where she stands naked.

MAX

It's for the room next door. If you like, I can come to your room later and take your order.

ALBA

(To Natasha, excitedly)

Feeling hungry?

NATASHA

No.

ALBA

(To the waiter)

You heard, not right now. What's your name?

MAX

Max.

ALBA

Max. I think in a couple of hours we will be hungry.

Natasha smiles, half annoyed, half tempted.

MAX

I'm free all night. On duty all night, I mean.

Alba takes a step forward. The waiter stares at her, unabashed. She takes Natasha's hand who, with a look of resignation, allows herself to be led inside.

Alba closes the door behind her.

EPISODE 5

Natasha reaches the bed, bends down and looks for her phone.

Alba stands behind her, studying her.

Natasha takes the phone and gets up.

She looks at it and slips it into a pocket in her dress.

Alba switches on a small lamp which lights a desk on which she unrolls a large map of Rome. The houses and buildings are drawn in relief with great realism and lots of colour.

ALBA

Where's your hotel?

Natasha approaches the map.

She looks towards the east of the river "Tevere" (Tiber) where she places her finger.

NATASHA

This is Tevere. You get to my hotel this way.

She begins to move her finger (east) towards the inner city.

Suddenly she looks surprised and lifts her finger.

We see stadiums, thermal baths, Classical temples, circuses, the Roman forum, the Coliseum... all in a pristine state.

NATASHA
(Amazed)
Oh! This is the Rome of the Caesars!

Alba smiles.

ALBA
Never mind, keep looking for your hotel.

Natasha continues tracing the route with her finger towards the right...

She stops before a beautiful temple, the "Tempio delle Ninfe".

NATASHA
Tempio delle Ninfe"! My hotel is called Ninfe. And yours...

ALBA
Pompeio. Look, it's this way.

Alba takes Natasha's finger and begins to move it to the left, passing by a small temple, the "Tempio della Fortuna".

ALBA
We pass by the Temple of Fortuna, the gardens... It crosses some magnificent gardens...

We see Natasha's finger, held between two of Alba's, stop on the semicircular stage of a Roman theatre, the "Teatro di Pompeo".

ALBA
Here we are, on top of a theatre. No, we're inside the Theatre of Pompey.

Natasha is fascinated.

Alba releases her fingers.

NATASHA

Wow! History is looking at us.

She looks around her, through the window and at the interior of the room.

ALBA

We're surrounded. Can't you feel it?

NATASHA

(Overcome with emotion)

How could I not?!

ALBA

I think you like history...

Natasha wears an "of-course-I-do" expression.

ALBA

That's good.

They stand looking at each other, for several lingering seconds.

Alba closes her eyes, parts her lips, stretches her neck and holds her face up in expectation.

Natasha slowly approaches.

From below, we see her reach Alba and raise her face over hers. The Spanish girl still has her eyes closed.

The Russian girl's lips approach...

...and settle on the Spanish girl's eyes, kissing them gently.

Alba smiles.

Natasha's lips approach Alba's ear... and begin to suck her earlobe.

We see (in a tight shot) the tip of the Russian girl's tongue running over the folds and crevices of the other's ear.

We hear Natasha's breathing.

Alba's hands are beginning to undress Natasha when...

Suddenly they both abandon themselves to the desire to kiss each other passionately, touch each other's body, lie naked on the bed...

The Spanish girl sucks one of the Russian's fingers and one of her own.

And puts each between the legs of the other.

ALBA

Wow, my Rusita, you're so wet!

They touch each other...

They moan in growing excitement...

They writhe with pleasure, pressing their glistening bodies together...

...they embrace, mouths together...

...screaming with delight...

And climax in sync.

The final cry, the most intense, is Natasha's.

A short burst of applause comes from the adjacent room, through the wall just behind the bed.

Alba and Natasha smile as they flop exhausted on the bed...

EPISODE 6.

Alba and Natasha lie together in each other's arms.

NATASHA

Alba, this stays here, ok? In this room.

ALBA

In Rome.

NATASHA

Between these four walls.

ALBA

Yes, but since we're here... let's have some more fun, no?

NATASHA

All I ask is that this doesn't affect my life.

ALBA

And how do you do that?

Natasha pulls away from Alba's arms and rolls onto her back.

NATASHA

By agreeing, the two of us. You also have a life outside of this that you want to protect, don't you?

Alba also rolls onto her back. They lie side by side, looking at the ceiling.

ALBA

Yes, a long way from yours. Tomorrow, Rome will send each of us to an opposite end of Europe. The tall girl goes east (Alba extends Natasha's left arm), and the short girl goes west (she stretches out her right arm).

A bird's-eye shot shows us the two women lying face up, each with an arm stretched out, overhanging the edge of the bed. The difference in the lengths of their arms is noticeable.

ALBA (cont'd)

(Looking at their arms)

See? The east is always longer and the west shorter, because in the west, immediately you've got the sea there (she wiggles her fingers). Otherwise, in Spain, we'd all be taller.

Natasha laughs.

NATASHA

What if I'm not Russian?

ALBA

Oh, no, no! You have to be Russian! I love that.

NATASHA
Well then, I am.

Alba smiles with relief.

NATASHA
What's great is not knowing each other's name.

ALBA
Oh...don't we?

NATASHA
Don't tell me you gave me your real name?

ALBA
So you're name isn't Natasha? I knew it.

Natasha smiles.

Alba looks at her, pensively, then nods and sits up on the bed.

ALBA
Alba is the name I was going to call my daughter.

NATASHA
What happened to her?

ALBA
Alba never saw the dawn.

NATASHA
I'm sorry.

ALBA
That put an end to the worst time of my life, when my Alba died inside of me.

Natasha looks in shock at Alba's stomach.

Alba gets up from the bed, crosses the room and sits on a two-seater sofa against the opposite wall to the bed. Above it hangs the picture of the large ancient public square.

She sits looking straight at Natasha for a few seconds. They are separated by the whole length of the room.

ALBA

My mother took me to Marbella one summer, when I was sixteen. She was almost broke and what little money she had left she spent on fortune hunting. She got lucky. An Arab sheik, Hamir Osemin, bumped into us one day when we were shopping. From that day on, he began inviting us to his yacht, we lunched with him, swam... dined.

NATASHA

And slept?

ALBA

No. At night, a motorboat took us back to the coast. One day, without warning, the yacht disappeared. We returned to Madrid. My mother thought she'd been left without anything. Until Hamir called the house and invited us to spend some time in Saudi Arabia. He has a palace... even if I described it, you could never even imagine the luxury. He bought my mother everything. She has a weakness for jewellery, so she left there with necklaces, bracelets and rings worth a small fortune.

NATASHA

She left?

Alba nods with an air of sadness.

NATASHA

What about you?

ALBA

I stayed. Hamir persuaded my mother to leave me there, in exchange for a monthly allowance over four years. That was the deal. I was all he was interested in.

Natasha sits at the foot of the bed, staring intently at Alba.

NATASHA

So you accepted?

ALBA

You can't imagine how easy it was for me... falling into that lifestyle. I had everything I wanted. He bought me an Arab pureblood that only I was allowed to ride. I came to love it like a child. Everyone around me was so kind... Hamir's other wives treated me like a real princess.

NATASHA

And he got you pregnant.

ALBA

That was at the end. Hamir began to get annoyed because I didn't get pregnant. That was when I wanted to leave, but I couldn't. I'd married him, so I was his property, same as my horse. He sold him to punish me.

Natasha gives her a horrified look.

ALBA

Hamir got his way because shortly afterwards I got pregnant. He was over the moon and began treating me royally again. This time like a queen. But I began to realize that as soon as my child was born, I'd be shut up with the rest of his harem.

Alba pauses.

Natasha walks over to sit beside Alba on the two-seater sofa.

ALBA

The day the doctor told me I was expecting a girl... an Egyptian nurse, who I'd told the story to, helped me escape in a Greek ship. I arrived in Athens at dawn, so I decided to call her Alba.

NATASHA

So how did you lose her?

ALBA

I found out that Hamir had gone to the authorities. There was a warrant out for my arrest in Saudi Arabia. If I'd had Alba, he wouldn't have rested until I was caught. I was eighteen and... anyway, I wanted nothing from that country... so I had an abortion in Athens. I sold my necklace and managed to start a new life in Spain.

NATASHA

What about your mother?

ALBA

I've never seen her again.

Natasha ponders on her thought

NATASHA

And... is that how you became a lesbian?

ALBA

That's how I became a woman.

Natasha seems impressed.

ALBA

What about you... how did you become a woman?

NATASHA

I don't feel like talking about my life.

ALBA

You owe me.

NATASHA

What do I owe to you? The truth or a lie?

ALBA

Whatever you want. Do you think I lied to you?

Natasha scrutinizes Alba in silence for a few seconds, trying to guess.

In the glass window of one of the double doors leading out onto the terrace, Alba sees the reflection of part of the picture on the wall behind, showing an

ancient public square.

She gets up and stands in front of the door.

She notices the bougainvillea growing in front of the metal handrail. Its violet petals ripple gently in the breeze.

Alba feels the breeze in her face and hair.

As if it were an effect of the breeze, she gently nudges the door inwards to an angle that, from where Natasha is sitting on the sofa, reflects the large picture on the wall behind.

Natasha sees, behind Alba, the reflection of the picture in the window glass.

She turns to look at it properly.

Alba enters the bathroom.

Natasha stands to get a better look at the picture.

She smiles and raises her voice so that Alba can hear her from the bathroom.

NATASHA

It's the agora in Athens! Did you know that?

ALBA (V.O.)

Yes.

NATASHA

Which came first, the picture or your story? Who inspired who?

ALBA (V.O.)

Good question.

NATASHA

This picture has been hanging here since before you were born.

The toilet flushes.

Alba comes out of the bathroom.

ALBA

Long before. And it's been waiting for me all this time.

Natasha smiles in disbelief.

EPISODE 7.

Alba crosses the room and sits at the desk. She opens her laptop and turns it on.

ALBA

Let's make a deal... No stories, just tell me where you live... your neighbourhood and everything, so I get an idea of your environment.

Alba clicks into Google Earth.

Natasha approaches and stands behind Alba.

The laptop connects to the image of the Earth hanging in the black cosmos.

Alba looks at Natasha.

NATASHA

First go to Moscow.

Alba clicks "Moscow".

Via Google Earth we zoom in on Russia.

ALBA

You have the biggest map in the world! See how over the top you are?

The image approaches Moscow.

NATASHA

Now go to the Volga, further east.

ALBA

Even further east?!

We approach a large widening of the Volga river.

NATASHA
From there towards Ostrov Nekrasov.

ALBA (Surprised and amused)
You live in Ostras Nikrasev?

NATASHA
Ostrov Nekrasov

ALBA
Is that like a cliff, with sharp rocks and stuff?

NATASHA
Ostrov means island!

An island gradually appears in the middle of the mighty Volga.

ALBA
Ostras!

We see a large mansion surrounded by magnificent gardens.

ALBA
Tell me this is your house and I'll spank your ass!

Natasha smiles and says nothing.

The image zooms in on the house. A yacht is moored to the jetty and there are horses nearby.

Natasha takes Alba's hand and gives herself a smack on the bottom with it.

ALBA
Joder, it's hard as a rock.

And she strokes her butt, her legs...

ALBA
What are you doing here... in Rome?

NATASHA

Auditioning. I'm an actress.

ALBA

A Russian actress! Are you a good one, a really famous one, or just married to a "Mafioso"?

NATASHA

I'm single.

ALBA

You must be a real star, then. Congratulations.

NATASHA

Show me your Arabian palace.

ALBA

It's not mine. By the way, it makes sense that you're a good actress.

NATASHA

Why?

ALBA

We're inside the Pompey theatre, remember?

Natasha looks around her, jokingly acknowledging it.

NATASHA

What about Hamir's palace? Aren't you going to show me?

ALBA

Thing is... if Hamir finds out we're sniffing over his house...

NATASHA

(Vaguely mocking)

What?

ALBA

He's capable of...

(Looking up)

Anything could happen to us.

Natasha laughs.

NATASHA

If you don't show me, I'll think... you're the one who owes me a story, a true one.

ALBA

Look.

Alba turns back to the laptop. We rise away from the island... across Europe...over Spain... and descend towards the north...

We see the city of San Sebastián slowly appear.

And come to a halt.

ALBA

Do you like it?

NATASHA

Is this your village?

ALBA

It's a city. It's called San Sebastian.

NATASHA

It looks a bit small.

ALBA

It depends what you compare it to.

NATASHA

Rome?

ALBA

I'd say... about twenty times smaller.

They both chuckle.

NATASHA

Moscow is three times the size of Rome.

They look at the picture of San Sebastián on the laptop screen.

NATASHA

Well, I like it. And you look lot like your city, small, pretty...

ALBA

That's not my city. I'm from Valladolid which is three times bigger.

NATASHA

So... how many times smaller is your village than my city?

Alba scans the long, white length of Natasha's body.

Natasha sits on top of Alba.

Alba sinks into the chair.

ALBA

iUf!

(In Spanish)

I've got Russian sitting on me!

NATASHA

I want to see where you live. Show me your house.

Alba struggles to free her arms and reaches for the keyboard. On the screen the image zooms in on San Sebastián...

ALBA

Middle class, eh? Prepare yourself.

The program locates a house in the Gross district... It continues zooming in... It stops at a 5 storey block of flats.

Alba looks slightly worried.

On the small terrace of the top flat we see a table with three chairs and one

child's chair.

ALBA
Vaya... they left the chairs out!

NATASHA
So?

ALBA
I didn't expect that.

NATASHA
What, a child?

ALBA
A boy and a girl.

NATASHA
(a little surprised)
You have children?

She looks at the chairs with a melancholic expression.

ALBA
(Sorrow in her voice)
What..?! Can't I be a mother?

Natasha gets up, freeing her. Alba seems upset.

NATASHA (Softly)

Of course.

Alba is visibly affected.

NATASHA
(Cheering her up)
What's up, Alba?

Alba seems to get gradually more upset

NATASHA

The father of your children knows you like women?

ALBA

(Looking at the monitor)

No. It's not that. It's the picture. It's not very recent.

Natasha looks again at the terrace with the table and chairs.

On the screen Alba enlarges the image and navigates around San Sebastian...

... until La Concha Beach appears, packed with bathers, and the bay full of small boats.

ALBA

Look at the beach, it's full of people... I'm sure we were there, or on the island. Yes, it looks like a Sunday. We used to love spending Sundays on the island.

They both look at the island of Santa Clara. There are lots of people on the small beach and in the harbour.

ALBA

This picture is from the summer I began living in San Sebastian. Two years ago.

Alba begins to well up...

NATASHA

What's wrong?

Alba hides her face in her hands and begins to weep in silence.

Natasha kneels in front of her and strokes her hands... kisses them...

She manages to separate her fingers from her face...

NATASHA

Is there something you need to tell me?

Alba shakes her head.

And weeps again in silence.

NATASHA

It's ok, don't tell me then...

Alba gets up and lies on the bed.

Natasha sits beside her and begins to stroke her hair, her face...

Alba lets herself be consoled.

Natasha begins to kiss her, first on the face, then the lips...

She lies next to her.

While they shower each other with gentle kisses, they whisper (each in her own language).

ALBA (In Spanish)

Where did you come from? How come you just turned up like that... without warning?

As Natasha speaks in a whisper, caressing the Spanish girl's bottom lip with the tip of her tongue.

NATASHA (In Russian)

I can't believe what I'm doing.

ALBA

What's happening to me with you? You scare me, Rusita!

NATASHA

Is this me? I don't recognize myself.

ALBA (In Spanish)

I love the sound of you speaking Russian!

NATASHA (In Russian)

I'm speaking it just for you. I'm shaking with fear, too.

They begin to caress each other's bodies.

EPISODE 8.

They become aroused...

(They speak in English)

ALBA

I'm going to give you the best orgasm of your life. Are you ready?

NATASHA

Yes.

Alba begins to caress her between the thighs.

NATASHA

You know what I'd love?

ALBA

Tell me, anything you like.

NATASHA

Do you have a dildo?

Alba stops touching her and looks at her, both puzzled and disappointed.

NATASHA

I'll come better if you put something inside me.

ALBA

I don't use dildos and you're not going to need one either.

NATASHA

I know myself.

Natasha looks towards the bedside table.

NATASHA

What about little wine bottle?

Natasha gets up.

She picks up the small wine bottle standing next to the figurine of Venus de Milo and drinks the dregs.

ALBA

I don't really fancy the idea of anything...masculine coming between us.

Natasha looks at the label on the bottle.

NATASHA

It's from "la Toscana". Sounds very feminine.

ALBA

I'm not sticking anything inside you, Natasha.

NATASHA

Alba, don't forget I like men.

ALBA

But you like me as well.

NATASHA

Yes, but I like men more.

Alba gets up, somewhat nettled.

ALBA

I know plenty who, once they've tried with a woman, don't want to go back to men.

NATASHA

(Rather annoyed)

Well, I won't let that happen to me. In fact, I prefer the opposite.

ALBA

(Hurt, raising her voice)

Oh really? So after me, you expect to like men more.

NATASHA

(Dignified, defiant)

That would be terrific.

ALBA

It's not very nice telling me that now.

They exchange reproachful looks for a few seconds.

Alba walks around the room.

When she returns...

ALBA

(Conciliatory)

I don't want us to argue, and even less over a bottle of wine.

NATASHA

An empty one at that.

They both smile.

Natasha returns the bottle to the night table.

ALBA

I'm going to order you something a little more anatomical.

Alba sits on the bed by the night table and, with decision, picks up the phone.

Natasha looks at her in surprise.

NATASHA

What are you doing?

Alba holds the phone away to speak to Natasha.

ALBA

Spaniards and Italians can understand each other's language.

We hear Max's voice at the other end of the line.

(Alba speaks in Spanish, Max in Italian).

MAX (V.O.) (In Italian)

Good evening.

ALBA (In Spanish)

Yes, very good, so far.

MAX (V.O.) (In Italian)

Are you hungry at last?

ALBA (In Spanish)

Listen, Max... My friend needs a dildo. A "vibratore".

Natasha looks at her with amused puzzlement.

A smile creeps into Max's voice.

MAX (V.O.) (In Italian)

Well... I don't have one. Sorry.

ALBA (In Spanish)

Pity!

MAX (V.O.) (In Italian)

But if you want, I can bring something up... I've got fruit and...

ALBA (In Spanish)

That won't do.

MAX (V.O.) (In Italian)

Well, I don't know...let's see...

(Thinking)

What else might do...

ALBA (In Spanish)

Don't worry. Thanks, Max!

Alba hangs up.

Natasha looks at her reproachfully, but can't help smiling.

NATASHA

You're out of your mind, you know that?

ALBA

I did it for you.

NATASHA

What if Max takes it as a hint... and comes up himself?

ALBA

Well, then you'll be able to choose between Max or a wine bottle.

Natasha gives a puzzled laugh.

Then she becomes pensive and adopts a mischievous expression of pleasure.

NATASHA

Max comes from Maximus.

Alba is surprised but serious.

ALBA

It's also the diminutive of Maximus.

They both smile, the Russian feigning disappointment and the Spaniard, relief.

Alba picks up the wine bottle and inspects it.

Natasha nods and lies face up on the bed.

Alba sits beside her.

She rolls the bottle slowly over her stomach...

... the inside of her thighs.

The bottle approaches her mount of Venus and Alba tips it up.

A detailed macro shot shows us a drop of red wine falling. And another beside it.

Natasha watches...

Between her legs she sees Alba's eyes approaching the two drops of wine...

...her eyes move out of frame and her lips appear...

Natasha gives a smile of abandonment.

The Spanish girl begins to tongue her...

The Russian girl is turned on...

EPISODE 9.

A knock at the door makes Natasha and Alba jump.

ALBA
Max!

NATASHA
Maximo!

Natasha jumps to her feet and puts on her dress.

Alba walks to the wardrobe by the entrance, puts on a long shirt...

And opens the door.

In the passage we see Max, smiling and relaxed.

ALBA (In Spanish)
We're fine, thanks, Max, we don't need anything.

MAX (In Italian)
I've brought a hot cucumber.

He looks down one side of the passage.

ALBA (In Spanish)
What?

MAX
I boiled it for two minutes. It's sterilized.

ALBA (In Spanish)
My friend prefers the wine bottle.
(More confidentially)
It's from "la Toscana".

MAX (In Italian)
Ah! What about you?

ALBA (In Spanish)

Me? I'm a virgin.

MAX (In Italian)
Congratulations!

Alba shoots him a puzzled look.

MAX (In Italian)
Spain beat Italy tonight. Deserved to win.

ALBA (In Spanish)
What are you talking about?

MAX (In Italian)
The European Cup Final.

ALBA (In Spanish)
Sorry, football bores me.

MAX (In Italian)
What about your friend?

ALBA (In Spanish)
Likewise. She's a Russian tennis player.

Natasha can be heard laughing.

Alba turns and looks inside the room.

Natasha, sitting at the foot of the bed, is trying to stifle her laughter.

ALBA (In Spanish)
I love Russian tennis players.

Natasha has another attack of laughter.

ALBA (In Spanish)
Shit, don't tell me she really is a tennis player!

Natasha, laughing uncontrollably, slides to the floor.

MAX (In Italian, to Alba)
Look at her arm.

Alba approaches Natasha.

She stands in front of her, studying her.

Natasha is laughing helplessly on the floor.

Alba seems to discover something.

(They speak in English)

ALBA

(Convinced)

Yes, you are a tennis player! Look at your right arm.

NATASHA

(Between guffaws)

I'm left-handed.

ALBA

Sorry, I mean left.

Natasha raises her left arm and Alba takes it.

She squeezes the Russian girl's forearm.

She takes her hand and opens it to finger her palm.

ALBA

And you've got calluses! That's the definitive proof.

Natasha bursts into noisy gusts of laughter.

They hear some loud BANGING on the wall from the next room.

Maximo shushes them.

MAX

Shhh!

Alba is startled to find Max at her side.

The Russian girl stops laughing.

They both look at him with a mixture of worry and fear.

MAX (In Italian)
Want a threesome?

Alba stands speechless.

Natasha eyes his bulging packet.

NATASHA
(To Alba, confidentially)
Nothing diminutive about that!

MAX (In Italian)
Want to see?

Alba takes a step back.

Natasha gets up and speaks in perfect Italian.

NATASHA (In Italian)
No, Max, we're grateful for offer, but no.

ALBA
(To Natasha, amazed)
You speak Italian?

NATASHA (In Italian, to Alba)
It's a beautiful language.
(To Max)
Please, go, leave us alone.

MAX (In Italian)
I was looking forward to this,
I thought this was what you both wanted.

Max looks down at his rock-hard erection.

NATASHA (In Italian)
Actually, no. It was a misunderstanding. We shouldn't have
rung you.

Natasha goes to the door and stands to one side.

Alba does likewise, standing on the other side.

They both look into the room, inviting Max to leave.

The Italian stands stock-still for a few seconds.

He smiles.

MAX (In Italian, calmly)
Are you two cows?

They look at each other and both answer with a disconcerted shake of the head.

MAX
Well, I'm no bull either.
(To Alba)
In Italy we don't fight bulls.

Alba looks sheepish.

ALBA
I apologize, Max. To be honest, I don't like bullfighting either.

Max steps meekly into the passage and turns round.

MAX (In Italian, to Alba)
By the way, the cucumber thing was a joke.

Alba slowly closes the door.

Both girls stand where they are, look into the room.

ALBA
Well, thanks to Max, I've discovered a Russian tennis player who speaks Italian.

NATASHA
I like football too.

ALBA

You lied to me.

Natasha looks at her in surprise.

ALBA

That mansion on the island couldn't be yours. There's no tennis court.

Natasha smiles and walks towards the bathroom.

EPISODE 10

TRANSITION

Alba wanders slowly around the room... she sits at the foot of the bed.

Natasha comes out of the bathroom.

They stare at each other.

Natasha approaches and stands in front of Alba.

ALBA

So you understood me before.

NATASHA

When?

ALBA

When I spoke to you in Spanish.

NATASHA

Yes, and I was thrilled.

ALBA

Thrilled? To hear that you scares me?

Natasha nods with a pleased expression and begins to take off Alba's shirt.

Then she takes off her dress and they lie on the bed.

Alba begins to stroke the Russian girl's face. Natasha relaxes at her touch.

Alba speaks to her, very close to her eyes...

ALBA

I'm beginning to realize that everything about you scares me. Your eyes, your mouth, your smile, the tone of your voice, the way you speak, your breath, your hair, your scent, your stunning body, that skin...

And she begins to stroke Natasha's milk white skin.

ALBA

Your skin is incredible!

NATASHA

I'm more scared by the colour of yours.

ALBA

But you've got so much more.

Alba turns Natasha's body over, face down.

She rests her head between the Russian girl's shoulder blades and looks down the rest of her body at skin level, as if contemplating some beautiful countryside.

ALBA

You're like the Russian steppe. That's really scary!

Alba glides her fingers over the Russian skin in long delicate caresses.

Natasha purrs beneath Alba's fingertips.

Alba takes unhurried pleasure in what she's doing...

Until...

NATASHA

(Calmly)

A question.

ALBA

Go ahead.

NATASHA

If I had a twin sister, identical in every way, with the same eyes, same mouth, voice, breath...

ALBA

And the same skin?

NATASHA

Yes specially, the skin.

Natasha brushes off the last comment and...

NATASHA

Would you be that scared?

ALBA

Do you have a twin sister?

NATASHA

It's just hypothetical.

Alba gives it some thought.

Then sends her fingers dancing once more over her skin...

ALBA

To tell the truth... maybe I would. Or maybe I wouldn't. Which do you prefer?

Natasha falls silent, staring intently into Alba's eyes.

NATASHA

I feel very fortunate that it's me here and not my twin sister.

ALBA

Ok, you need to explain that.

Alba stops caressing Natasha who turns over.

NATASHA

I have a twin sister, with a degree in History of Art. She's just finished her thesis on Italian Renaissance. I came here with

her.

ALBA
What's her name?

NATASHA
Dasha.

ALBA
Like you? Because you told me your name wasn't Natasha.

NATASHA
I don't know your name either.

ALBA
Now I get why your Italian is so good.

NATASHA
I also studied History of Art, but in our third year we both auditioned for a film... and they chose me. Since then, my sister and I drifted apart.

ALBA
Can you prove it?

Natasha looks away, smiling.

She remains pensive.

She gets up and sits in front of the laptop.

She clicks into the web page of the actress "Sasha Vorónina". Alba approaches and stands behind Natasha.

ALBA
What does that say?

NATASHA
Sasha Vorónina.

ALBA
Natasha, Dasha... and now Sasha. Are you triplets?

Natasha smiles and shakes her head.

She shows her photos of her acting in several films.

Alba doesn't seem completely convinced, and looks at her left arm.

ALBA

So what's with the tennis?

NATASHA

My sister Dasha and I have played since we were kids, but she was always better than me.

ALBA

So when do you get to play tennis? You can't have much time between filming, premieres, parties...

Natasha clicks into Google Earth.

She reaches the island of Trankaya and settles on a clay tennis court, situated at the far end of the island.

Alba now feels disarmed.

ALBA

Can you show me your sister?

She enters the web page of the Russian Tennis Federation.

NATASHA

Dasha is number ten female seed in Russia.

We see in tenth place a photograph of "Marusha Vorzakova", in full play, hitting a left-handed forehand drive.

ALBA

She's left-handed, like you.

NATASHA

Yes, I'm also left-handed.

ALBA

There's no reason why twins should both be left-handed, even though they're identical in every other way.

NATASHA
But we are.

ALBA
Is there not anything different between you two?

Natasha becomes serious, thoughtful, she gets up and walks towards the terrace's door. She stops with her back to Alba.

NATASHA
I was the first to become a woman. Though not like you.

ALBA
What do you mean?

NATASHA
My mother died when we were thirteen, we were just little girls... I can only remember her suffering... first her jealousy towards my father, who was never home, and then her mental illness. From that point, the only good thing that happened was my father's new devotion to my mother; he spent his days caring for her, whispering apologies on her ear; I could hear it. One day he was busy fixing the drainpipes in the kitchen when he had to rescue my mother out of bed; she had set her room on fire.

Alba approaches slightly, from behind, interested, respectful.

NATASHA
When it started to look like she was getting better, she finally got her way. We returned home from buying her a birthday present and found her hanging from the ceiling... from the lamp in the living room. She had kicked the table to the side with her legs. The floor was scattered with the broken pieces of the plates my sister and I had set for dinner before we left.

Alba, disturbed, approaches her and stands looking at her intensively from behind.

NATASHA

My father had great tolerance for alcohol, so he just kept on drinking more and more. One night he really frightened us. It was already bedtime and he hadn't come back. We stayed awake until very late, waiting for the sound of his keys. The doorbell eventually rung; we jumped.

A friend from work came in carrying my father on his shoulders. He dropped him on his bed, completely passed out, and then he left.

We undressed him and went to bed. We tried to sleep, but we heard some weird laughs coming from my father's room.

We rushed towards him. It was so sad to see him laughing like that, looking so lost... Soon the laughter turned into a horrible weeping...poor thing. We two also began to cry. The three of us weeping together. Sitting next to him, we kissed and stroked him. He suddenly reached out for us and held us so strongly it scared me, he kept weeping and weeping... until he started to snore. We felt asleep with him until the next morning, when we rose up early to go to school.

Alba stands next to Natasha.

NATASHA

From that day... even though I was still a girl, every night... my father started to treat me like a woman.

Natasha looks at Alba

NATASHA

He only used to touch me.

ALBA

Only you?

NATASHA

Yes. Just me.

ALBA
Why?

NATASHA
I don't know. I felt I should keep it from my sister.
Until one night... Dasha saw us.

ALBA
How did she react?

NATASHA
Badly. She felt rejected. That's how her inferiority complex began.

ALBA
She got a complex because your father didn't touch her up?
She should have felt lucky!

Natasha doesn't seem to agree

NATASHA
That didn't last long, less than a year. My father started going out with women again. For a while he used to bring home girl younger than us. That's how my father was, the most attractive man I've ever seen.

ALBA
And now?

Natasha lowers her head.

NATASHA
Now he's got six months left, maybe less. He's got cancer.

She turns and sits on the edge of the bed.

Alba approaches, sits on the bed and wraps her arms round her from behind.

Her hands sense something irregular and jerky in Natasha's breathing.

ALBA

Are you crying?

NATASHA

No.

ALBA

You can, if you want.

NATASHA

The thing is... I don't cry. Well I haven't in a long time.

ALBA

Crying is good for you.

NATASHA

I know.

ALBA

So... cry like an actress.

Alba moves round to sit facing Natasha.

ALBA

Come on, act for me, please.

NATASHA

That's what I am doing.

They look into each other's eyes.

Natasha makes an effort to cry.

Alba encourages her and, unintentionally, her eyes well up.

ALBA

I'd love to see you cry. Then I'd have the chance to comfort you.

NATASHA

Sorry, Alba. I'm not a good actress.

A hint of disappointment colours Alba's puzzled look.

She get up from the bed and paces up and down.

ALBA

Ah! So you're the lover of a mafioso who produces films for you.

NATASHA

You're not far off.

ALBA

Then carry on. Please, I need to know who the hell you are.

Natasha shakes her head and seems to refuse something with her hand...

NATASHA

That's enough

Alba picks up the TV remote, sits at the foot of the bed, beside Natasha. She gives her a playful nudge her with her shoulder and turns on the TV.

EPISODE 11.

A program about Spanish music appears on the screen. Alba begins to sing along timidly with the Spanish song "Pretendo hablarte".

ALBA

"Quiero pensarte, no recordarte, mientras te vas tus labios conmigo se quedan, yo te espero, tu me olvidas, él me deja, escondido entre mi verso tu nombre...

Quizá mejor así, tal vez mañana, quiera morir por ti o vivir así. No sé si pronto yo reciba tu llamada, por si tardara yo te esperaré sentada. Comprende, cuando no amas como lo hago yo con decirlo es suficientesi es que me quieres como dices tú... ven y hazme feliz".

Alba stands up in front of Natasha...

ALBA

(Singing with gusto)

“Dame tu corazón la razón de llamarte así,tu me quieres querer, yo quiero sufrir. Dame tu corazón la razón de llamarte así, tu me quieres querer, yo quiero sufrir”.

Cut TO:

On TV, a music video by a Russian singer.

Natasha jumps to her feet and lip-syncs the song in rock style.

Alba bursts into laughter, throwing herself on the bed on her back.

Alba breaks into a typical Spanish dance.

Natasha does some Cossack dancing, kicking out her legs from her crouching position and slapping her shoulders.

They fool around in all sorts of ways.

Natasha pretends to serve a tennis ball and play a tough rally using her left-handed forehand drive and two-handed backhand with great panache.

They join together...

They push each other...

They are both sweating...

Natasha takes Alba by both hands and swings her around in ever faster circles.

Until she slips from her grasp and lands on the bed, making the bed head crash noisily against the wall.

Angry knocking on the wall can be heard from the room next door.

Alba touches her head. Just a minor bump.

Standing in the middle of the room, Natasha makes an apologetic gesture.

On the ceiling behind Natasha's head, Alba sees there is a faded old fresco painted with various figures of the Greek god Eros, wings spread in mid-flight and arrows pointing downwards, ready to be loosed.

Alba stealthily slips off the bed and approaches the Russian girl who waits for her, motionless.

The Spanish girl leaps and wraps her legs in a scissor-lock around the Russian girl's waist.

She shins up her...

... until their nipples touch.

Heads now on a level, they kiss with open mouths.

Alba clambers higher so that Natasha can suck her breasts.

They remain this way for several seconds.

The Spanish girl climbs a little higher until her legs are on the Russian girl's shoulders.

Alba looks at the fresco on the ceiling and sees one of the Eros figures just above her head, pointing an arrow at her.

She takes Natasha's face between her hands and raises it so that she can see the painting of Eros.

It produces quite an impact on the Russian girl.

Alba guides Natasha's head between her legs.

Alba's body begins to writhe with gentle spasms of pleasure.

Natasha staggers and falls with Alba onto the bed.

The two women indulge in a steamy session of oral sex.

EPISODE 12.

Alba and Natasha need time to recover...

They both lie stretched out on the bed.

NATASHA

I imagine, in that Arabian's harem, you had all kinds of

relations with women.

There's a touch of surprise in Alba's face.

NATASHA
Or was it forbidden?

Alba smiles.

ALBA
I never lived in Saudi Arabia.

Natasha looks disappointed.

NATASHA
Shame. I liked that story.

ALBA
So did I.

The Russian girl stares wide-eyed at the Spanish girl.

ALBA
It was my mother who fled from Saudi Arabia in a Greek ship.
She was pregnant with me, running away from my father. I'm
Hamir's daughter. And I was born in Athens.

Natasha props herself up against the bed head and looks at the picture of the
Athenian agora.

NATASHA
I'm glad Alba exists.

ALBA
Thanks!

Alba also leans back against the bed head.

NATASHA
So you're Greek, not Spanish.

ALBA

No. A few months after I was born, my mother brought me back to Spain.

Natasha has a thoughtful look.

NATASHA

So... did your mother become a lesbian after that experience?

ALBA

Hay, Come on Natasha! My mother had several men, and several problems, but she always took care of me. And I took care of her.

NATASHA

And you, have you ever been with a man?

Alba smiles.

ALBA

Look I am a lesbian from birth, like you're a twin from birth

Natasha smiles, she gets up and stands in front of the terrace door.

NATASHA

Look, Alba... I haven't been completely honest with you.

Alba is surprised and interested

NATASHA

I'm getting married next Sunday.

Alba is stunned.

ALBA

(Somewhat disconcerted)

Who? The actress or the tennis player?

NATASHA

The tennis player.

ALBA
Dasha?

NATASHA
Yes.

ALBA
So you're not the actress, you're the twin?

NATASHA
My sister is also a twin.

ALBA
Yeah. But are you the Renaissance one?

Natasha nods.

Alba gets up and stands in front of Natasha.

ALBA
(Disturbed)
Ok, in one way, I prefer it, but I don't like the idea of you getting married so soon.

NATASHA
We've been planning it for almost a year.

ALBA
Who with?

NATASHA
The tutor supervising my thesis on the Renaissance.

ALBA
Is he Italian?

NATASHA
His father was Russian and died in the Afghanistan war.
His mother is originally from Poland and he lives with her in Moscow. I still live with my dad. We've already bought a small apartment. We'll move in after our honeymoon.

ALBA

In one of those Russian beehives.

NATASHA

Yes. Very different from Sasha, my sister.

ALBA

I prefer you being middle class, but I'm even happier that your father didn't touch you up.

Natasha nods lightly.

Alba is pensive.

ALBA

And so you're the one with the inferiority complex.

Natasha stays quiet few second.

NATASHA

One night I woke up and saw my sister's bed was empty... I decided to get up and go to my father's bedroom.

(...)

I remember his huge hands, with their long, strong fingers... caressing Sasha's naked body, identical to mine. I stayed there hidden for a while, watching... It was the first time in my life I experienced sexual pleasure.

Alba looks her in the eye, close and understanding

NATASHA

Every time I woke up and my sister wasn't there I undressed and touched myself.

Alba walks around the room.

ALBA

I understand you my Rusita

NATASHA

That put an immense distance between Sasha and me.
But now I like my life so much more than my sister's

ALBA

I'm glad. You can now have your own family.

Natasha nods in delight.

Alba reaches the desk and picks up her mobile.

She scrolls through her photo album.

She chooses one, approaches Natasha, holds out her hand and shows her a video.

On the screen we see EDURNE (35) and her two children, (a girl of 8 and a boy of 6) in the Paseo Nuevo in San Sebastian.

The camera follows the children who playfully try to escape its eye, giggling.

The one who doesn't move is Edurne, who appears on screen when the children duck out of sight.

The camera tries to catch them again and once more they give it the slip. We hear the voice of the person filming...

ALBA (V.O.) (In Basque)
Will you keep "unmoving"?!

Boy (In Basque)
Alba, you're saying it wrong.

Edurne (In Basque, authoritatively)
Well, teach her to say it properly!

Girl (In Basque)
We'll keep "still" when she says it properly.

NATASHA

What are they speaking in?

ALBA

Basque. A very, very old language. I'm trying to learn it but...
It's quite difficult.

(Affectionately)

And every time I make mistakes, the kids make fun of me.

NATASHA

(Melancholic)

I want to have children, too.

In the video we see Edurne, looking out to sea, in a world of her own, while the children continue running around. Alba's camera seizes the chance to film her features, her body, her hands...

Meanwhile, we hear...

ALBA

They're Edurne's kids.

NATASHA

How long have you been with her?

ALBA

(She presses "pause" in the video)

Two years. She'd just separated and I'd just come out of a very stormy relationship. One weekend Edurne passed through Madrid, and we hooked up one night... the following month I went to live with her in San Sebastian.

On the cell phone screen, the boy goes up to his mother asking to be picked up. Edurne tries but it's a struggle...

She eventually manages to.

Suddenly, Alba bursts into tears and puts the phone on the table.

Natasha approaches.

NATASHA

What's wrong? Come on, Alba, tell me.

ALBA

The little one. He died last winter.

Overcome with emotion, Natasha squeezes Alba's shoulder.

ALBA

It was a stupid accident, in the house. Poor little thing...

Alba continues watching the images in which all three appear.

ALBA

This is the first time I watched this video since it happened.
Eduarne isn't over it yet.

On the screen, Eduarne alone smiles at the camera.

Alba turns off the video.

Natasha helps her to lie on her side on the bed.

ALBA

It's good to have the bed handy, for emergencies.

Natasha lies down just behind her, wrapping her long body around her.

Alba curls up into the foetal position and Natasha moulds herself around her.

Time passes...

Alba calms down.

She strokes Natasha's thigh (the one not resting on the bed), causing her to stretch out her long leg, flexing it up into the air.

ALBA

How do you run with these legs?

Natasha smiles and moves her leg slowly, as if she were running, first bending then stretching.

ALBA
I bet you sprint like a gazelle.

Alba caresses both her legs.

ALBA
These legs belong to you and your boyfriend. How lucky you both are!

And she turns to face Natasha who gives her an amused look.

ALBA
How long have you been with your boyfriend?

NATASHA
With Vadim? Four intense years.

ALBA
And you love him?

NATASHA
Actually, I do. Deeply. I learn a lot being with him. He's very cultured. And he always knows what to do. He has the most interesting personality of any man I've ever met.

ALBA
Is he like your father?

Natasha drops her eyes.

Then she looks at Alba, her slightly embarrassed smile a virtual admission. There is no prejudice in the look Alba returns.

ALBA
Do you have a photo of him? Of your boyfriend?

NATASHA
Yes, but... I can't show it here.

ALBA
Had you ever been unfaithful to him?

Natasha shakes her head with a certain sadness.

NATASHA
Had you? To Edurne?

ALBA
Me neither

They both become pensive, serious.

NATASHA
This hurts us both equally, right?

Alba nods although she gives the impression of being worse off.

They lie there looking at each other, then at the ceiling, at the frescos... they drift off to sleep.

EPISODE 13.

Natasha gets up. Alba feels it and opens her eyes. The Russian sits at the desk.

NATASHA
(Casually)
Do you want to give me a wedding present?

Alba is rather taken aback but immediately replies:

ALBA
(Excitedly)
Sure.

Natasha gets up and goes to the writing desk.

She types something into the computer.

Her wedding list appears on the screen.

Alba stands beside her.

NATASHA
Oh, look, Anna has bought me a blender.

ALBA

I've got one. They're amazing.

They see the photographs of the numerous presents (a typical wedding list), tagged with Russian names.

NATASHA

These are what's left.

And she shows more photographs.

ALBA

I don't know. What do you prefer?

NATASHA

Whatever you choose.

ALBA

And what do I write: "From Alba, the Spanish girl in Rome"?

Natasha nods and...

NATASHA

If you were a man, it might look suspicious. I'll say that while I was in Rome I met a very sweet Spanish girl.

ALBA

And cute?

NATASHA

Gorgeous.

ALBA

Why are you here in Rome?

NATASHA

It's a wedding present from my sister Sasha. A week in Italy. An attempt to bring us together. But tonight, after dinner, we had a fight and I went off to my own.

ALBA

So I met you thanks to an argument.

Natasha nods.

ALBA

Is your sister a good actress?

NATASHA

Yes, very good and she can cry wonderfully. But it's also true that her boyfriend is a gangster. He owns the island, built the tennis court for her. I've played there many times with my sister. And I always win.

ALBA

Where do you think your sister is now?

NATASHA

In the hotel, I guess.

ALBA

Higher class than this one?

Natasha nods.

NATASHA

When I leave here, I'll go to the hotel, sleep a while and then pack. We fly back to Moscow tomorrow at five.

ALBA

I have to be out of the room by twelve. I have a flight at three to Barcelona and then a connection to San Sebastián.

NATASHA

What about you? What are you doing here?

ALBA

Here?

NATASHA

Yes, In Rome.

ALBA

I'm here for the Alternative Locomotion Energy Fair.

Natasha looks blank.

ALBA

Future means of transport... clean, ecological vehicles, with low energy consumption.

NATASHA

Nice!

Alba looks at the laptop and types on the keyboard.

A web page appears on the screen showing a strange vehicle, a mixture of VESPA, FIAT 500, Indian rickshaw and tandem... but light and futuristic in its design, and with elegant bodywork.

The Russian girl looks at it in amused amazement.

NATASHA

What is it?

ALBA

It's called Aspasia, it's perfect for getting around in the city. Maximum speed, 40 miles per hour. It works like a bike, you pedal it, but if you need help getting up a slope, you can connect a silent compressed-air motor... And if it rains, you don't get wet.

We see further images of the vehicle, from different angles, in sections, all its separate parts...

NATASHA

(Amused)

Who invented this thing?

ALBA

Me.

Natasha can't help laughing.

ALBA

What? Don't I look like an inventor?

NATASHA
Actually, no.

And she bursts out laughing.

ALBA
I'm a mechanical engineer. Came top in my year.

Natasha puts her hand over her mouth to stifle another cackle of laughter.

ALBA
What's up?

Natasha slowly uncovers her mouth, restrains another incipient grin and...

NATASHA
It makes sense.

ALBA
Why?

NATASHA
Because you're the best woman I've ever met.

ALBA
Thanks, love.

NATASHA
Don't call me love.

ALBA
Why?

NATASHA
Love is something else.

ALBA
For me too. But what I'm feeling right now is very similar to love. Almost identical.

NATASHA
Any love there might be here, right now, is pure fantasy.

ALBA

Just like anywhere else.

Natasha looks away and stares at Alba's invention on the laptop screen.

NATASHA

I know what you can get me as a present.

Natasha points to the Aspasia vehicle.

ALBA

It's not on your wedding list.

NATASHA

I'm adding it right now. And if you don't get it for me, someone else will.

ALBA

Okay. I'll leave it here in Rome for whoever wants to come and pick it up. It's in the Fair.

NATASHA

Was it a hit?

ALBA

You bet.

NATASHA

I love it. I'm sure it won't be long, before they ban all cars from cities, and introduce your Aspasia.

They both look at the vehicle on the laptop screen.

ALBA

At the moment, this is the only prototype.

NATASHA

One is enough for me in Moscow.

ALBA

Be sure that if you get my Aspasia as a present, it comes with me inside. We're inseparable.

Natasha smiles and moves very close to Alba.

NATASHA
Even better.

Alba smiles.

NATASHA
I also know who Aspasia was.

ALBA
As soon as I walked into this room a week ago, I noticed the picture and I was sure it was a good sign for my Aspasia. But just today, I was told there's no chance of it being manufactured.

NATASHA
So you went out and got drunk.

Alba nods, without much conviction.

ALBA
(Sadly)
The truth is, since last winter... after what happened to the boy... There's not a night I go to bed without drinking. It helps me sleep.
(Joking)
Except tonight, you woke me up.

The both remain in silence for a few seconds. Natasha stands up, ready to leave. She notices her dress on the floor.

NATASHA

Well, I should get going.

Alba nods seriously.

The Russian looks at the Spaniard

NATASHA

Can I have a shower first?

Alba gives her permission with a gesture.

Natasha walks into the bathroom

EPISODE 14.

The original white tiles are peppered with new ones. The bathroom fittings and the claw foot bathtub are also original, although the plumbing has been replaced. The room is completely white.

Natasha looks at her reflection in the mirror.

She talks to herself, worried.

NATASHA (Russian)

Forgive me, Vadim, but I'll never tell you about this.

Alba is sitting at the desk, but turned facing the room.

She looks back and forth between the picture and the bathroom doorway through which Natasha can be seen reflected in the mirror.

ALBA (Spanish)

Maybe I misread the sign from the picture.

She sees her speak.

NATASHA (Russian)

Now I have a secret too. But it's more remote than yours.

Natasha gets closer to the mirror and points with her finger at her reflection.

NATASHA (Russian)

You're always going to choose that one, my reflection.

She stops and points at herself with dignity and satisfaction

NATASHA (Russian)

This one is only for me.

Alba sees Natasha disappear inside the bathroom.

She hears the splash of the shower and, straight after, Natasha singing "Volare".

NATASHA (V.O.) (Singing)

Penso che un sogno così non ritorni mai più,
mi dipingevo le mani e la faccia di blu.
Poi d'improvviso venivo dal vento rapito,
e incominciavo a volare nel cielo
infinito

Standing in the bathtub under the jet of water, she turns to see her reflection blurred by the steam. She gradually ups the volume of her song...

NATASHA (Singing)

Volare, oh, oh
Cantare, oh oh oh oh.
Nel blu dipinto di blu,
Felice di stare lassù

Alba enters the bathroom and joins in with the song.

Natasha laughs as she sings.

Alba gets into the bathtub and stands under the shower beside the Russian girl.

They both give a hearty rendering of "Maruzzella", directing their voices at the showerhead as if it were a microphone. Alba points at Natasha every time the name "Volare" appears in the song.

Natasha sings while laughing.

Alba, steps into the bath and stands next to Natasha under the jet of water. They stay like this for few seconds.

Finally, they hold each other in a tight embrace under the jet of water.

They stay this way for some time.

Natasha begins to caress the back of Alba's head which is level with her breasts.

Alba begins to stroke Natasha's butt which is also on a level with her breasts.

They touch.

They kiss.

Standing under the shower, they make love.

Natasha is the first to climax.

Then the Russian devotes her energies to Alba...

... who reaches a prolonged orgasm and almost faints.

The Russian holds her in her arms and places her right under the jet of water.

She gazes at her for a few seconds.

When Alba begins to come round, Natasha turns off the tap and carefully helps her out of the bathtub.

Then she steps out herself.

Alba and Natasha notice two white bathrobes, each on their respective hangers, His and Hers. Under each one, on the floor, is a pair of white slippers.

Natasha takes the smaller of the two, the woman's.

Alba gives her a puzzled look.

Natasha helps Alba into it, adjusts it and ties the belt.

Then she bends down, takes the slippers and puts them on her feet.

When Natasha has finished, Alba takes the larger bathrobe and, on tiptoe, and not without a struggle, slips it onto the Russian.

She straightens it up and ties it at the waist.

She bends down for the slippers, picks them up, kisses the sole of one of Natasha's feet and very carefully slips it into one of the slippers.

Then she kisses the sole of the other foot and puts on the other slipper.

Alba gets up, stands in front of Natasha and begins to comb her wet hair with her fingers.

Natasha reciprocates.

They groom each other this way, gazing at each other.

NATASHA

I want to tell you something.

ALBA

Whatever you like.

Unconsciously, Alba stares at her sun pendant.

Natasha turns slightly and stands facing the mirror.

Beside her, Alba does the same.

They stand looking at each other's reflection.

NATASHA

Tonight, before I met you, my sister told me something at dinner that deep down I imagined, but never had the courage to ask her.

Alba looks at her, intrigued.

NATASHA

We had drunk a lot of wine. We were having a very good time until...

She looks at her own reflection with a sad expression.

NATASHA

She told me that Vadim was with her before me. He was also my sister's teacher, but we were in different classes. When

she got the part she auditioned for and stopped coming to the university... he called her. And they were out together for a while. It was she who left him.

Alba gives her a pitying look through the mirror.

NATASHA

I suppose between them they decided not to tell me, until tonight my sister let it slip.

They both remain in silence, looking at each other through the mirror.

Alba sidles slowly up to Natasha.

ALBA

(Under her breath)

Don't tell anyone but... I like you much more than your sister.

Natasha smiles.

ALBA

And white suits you much better.

Alba takes her hand.

They look at their clasped hands through the mirror.

They smile. They are content.

ALBA

The guests are missing.

Natasha laughs.

NATASHA

(Confidentially)

My sister was thinking of inviting few friends of her boyfriend. Dodgy people. Actually, that was why we argued.

ALBA

(In a low voice)

Good for you. We don't want gangsters here.

Alba looks back and addresses the imaginary guests.

ALBA

If anyone has anything to say... let him speak now or forever hold his peace.

NATASHA

Me.

Alba looks at her in surprise.

ALBA

We're all ears, bride.

NATASHA

Last spring I received a weird message on my phone, from Vadim. It said "thanks for that night" and went on to talk about the pleasant memory and the farewell. I didn't understand. I asked him about the message and he told me he sent it by mistake, that it was meant for an old friend he'd been out drinking with. A few weeks later he proposed. I erased that message it. I didn't want to see anything strange in it... until now.

Natasha grows serious.

Alba stands in front of her, caresses her face, her eyes.

ALBA

(Tenderly)

You're right; nothing makes you cry.

NATASHA

The weird thing is, I'm afraid for Vadim, in case my sister's boyfriend finds out. He's an animal.

ALBA

What about you?

NATASHA

Me? I know Vadim is in love with me.

ALBA

(Fascinated)

I love the way you are, you're such a good person! The best of all of us. So I'm sure you're right. Vadim loves you, more than anyone.

NATASHA

Another strange thing, Vadim has always reminded me of someone from the Renaissance, one person in particular.

ALBA

Who?

Reflected in the mirror, Natasha sees the large picture over the bed head is receiving the first light of day. The orator can be seen more clearly, surrounded by spectators.

NATASHA

That guy, the one speaking over your bed.

Somewhat surprised, Alba stands nearer to Natasha in order to see through the mirror and also notices the picture.

NATASHA

It's Leon Battista Alberti, one of my favourite humanists.

Natasha goes towards the door, stops just in front of the doorjamb and pokes out her head to look at the picture.

Alba follows suit.

We see both heads, at different heights, looking round the bathroom door.

The centre of the painting highlights the orator's impassioned gesture.

NATASHA

The picture represents a symposium in the Medici palace. I'm sure he was talking about the Greeks. He was fascinated by them.

Alba takes it as a hint and looks flattered.

Natasha smiles at Alba and turns her head to look at the opposite wall.

We see the large picture of the Athenian agora, with people dressed in tunics.

NATASHA
That painting...
(Referring to the symposium)
...speaks of the other
(referring to the square)

Alba looks impressed by the idea.

Natasha turns her head towards the painting of Florence.

Alba does likewise.

Then again towards the painting of the Athenian agora.

NATASHA
There are twenty centuries between these two pictures.

ALBA
In our case, only a room.

The two heads peering through the doorway, look first at one painting, then the other, in unison, several times...

ALBA
We look like we're at a tennis match.

Natasha laughs and can't resist giving Alba a fleeting kiss.

Alba takes her by the hand and sits with her on the sofa.

She looks at the picture which is right behind them and...

ALBA
Conclusion, here beneath the city of my birth...
(To Natasha)
Do you love me?

Natasha becomes pensive for a few seconds and looks at the picture.

NATASHA

I don't know why but right now I am... loving you.

ALBA

With fantasies or without?

Natasha looks her in the eye.

NATASHA

Both.

ALBA

I look good in white too, don't I?

Natasha smiles affirmatively and takes her hand.

They both look at the difference in the size of their fingers...

Then their respective breasts... and they move so they can be seen...

ALBA

What did we answer? We were cows... or we weren't?

They touch each other's breasts, gently, slowly...

Alba takes the sun pendant between her fingers

Natasha softly breaks away and looks towards the terrace...

NATASHA

(Slightly worried)

A new day is coming

Alba also looks. Over the rooftops of Rome we see the glow heralding sunrise.

ALBA

Dawn is my moment

EPISODE 15.

Alba gets up.

ALBA

Do you want to see where we are?

Alba sits in front of her laptop.

Natasha walks up behind her.

Alba clicks into Google Earth and we once again see the Earth hanging in the cosmos.

Natasha looks at the computer screen.

Alba finds Rome. The image of the city is very sharp.

They zoom in.

ALBA

(Excited)

They took this picture at dawn. Look at the shadows!

NATASHA

Just for you.

ALBA

The sun is in the east. So there's a connection with you, too.

They look out of the window and see the sun's glow emerging in front of them.

Via Google Earth they zoom in until they are over the hotel roof. The road perpendicular to the street where the hotel is situated has a stretch to both right and left, forming an inverted "T".

They zoom in a little further until they see three flags hanging over a terrace, the flags of Rome, Italy and Europe, all horizontal, since the picture was taken when they were flying in the wind.

ALBA

Look, this is our room, the one with the flags!

Natasha looks towards the terrace and sees the limp flags.

NATASHA

But there's no wind today.

ALBA

The flag of Europe is the one missing.

They both look at the empty middle flagpole.

Alba turns back to the laptop screen and, with her index finger, points to a part of the hotel roof, near the flags.

ALBA

Look, we're beneath my finger, the two of us, alone.

Natasha puts her finger next to Alba's... until they touch.

ALBA

Very close. And with no one to see us.

They sit cheek to cheek, full of emotion, looking at the laptop screen.

ALBA

Where do you think we would belong... inside the Pompey Theatre?

They both look at the map, lying nearby on the table, of the Rome of the Caesars, paying particular attention to the Pompey theatre.

Natasha points to a central area of the tiered seats near the stage.

NATASHA

I prefer here, in the front rows.

ALBA

Why not here?

She puts her finger on the stage.

NATASHA

There were no actresses then, only men in masks.

Alba immediately pulls her finger away.

ALBA

In that case, we'll find a couple of good seats.

NATASHA

Oh, I forgot. Women were only allowed in the top rows.

She points the top rows of the theatre. The muse for a while.

ALBA

(Confidentially)

What if we put on a mask each and we enter the stage together?

NATASHA

No one will realize there is a woman behind each mask.

They put their fingers together on the stage.

Their lips touch... they kiss.

They remove their fingers and look with fascination towards the Rome of the Caesars, its squares, thermal baths, temples...

ALBA

Where did you go yesterday?

NATASHA

All over.

(Suddenly remembering, enthusiastic)

Oh, and we saw the Pope!

ALBA

Really?

NATASHA

I saw a wedding and, straight after, the Pope. It seemed like a good omen.

ALBA

Are you religious?

NATASHA

I'm not. But Vadim is a Catholic. His mother was Polish. Do you know what Vadim has done for my father?

Alba looks at her with interest.

NATASHA

He converted him to Catholicism. My father has never believed in God, but now he's dying he has a religion to hold on to. He almost seems happy. Do you want to see him?

ALBA

Who?

NATASHA

The Pope. I filmed him on my mobile for Vadim and my father.

Natasha searches her dress lying on the floor and pulls her mobile from the pocket.

She hunts for the video images and shows them to Alba.

On the small screen we see a bride and groom posing for the photographers. In the background, the columned portico of the Pantheon of Agrippa, milling with tourists.

NATASHA

Look, first we came across a wedding in front of the Pantheon di Agrippa.

A guy dressed as a Roman soldier walks in front of the camera and clowns around, brandishing his sword.

They both smile.

Natasha looks for the next scene.

NATASHA

And then the Pope arrived.

On the screen of the mobile we see a black car approaching, protected by bodyguards at the vehicle's open doors. A policeman in the foreground stops

people crossing the street.

The black car drives past the camera with the Pope sitting in the back seat, dressed in red and white.

NATASHA

It was a nice coincidence that the Pope should drive right in front of us. We'd no idea.

Alba acknowledges Natasha's good luck.

ALBA

Do you want to see what I filmed?

NATASHA

Of course.

Alba takes her mobile and shows her images she has videoed in Rome: bikes, scooters, three-wheeler vans... an ageing busker in Navona square...

A tourist stand where her hand buys a small figurine of the Venus de Milo (the one on the bedside table)... And the Coliseum surrounded by hundreds of tourists.

NATASHA

What time were you in the Coliseum?

ALBA

After lunch.

NATASHA

So were we. And I videoed it on my mobile.

ALBA

(With enigmatic excitement)

Can you imagine?

Natasha puts her mobile beside Alba's

We see both screens, side by side, showing similar shots of the Coliseum, in the same light.

They both scrutinize the screens, looking for each other among the tourists...

On Natasha's mobile, her sister, walking beside her, appears every now and again. Tatiana dresses in a more sophisticated, elegant style.

Almost simultaneously we see the same men dressed up as Classical Romans, posing for the tourists.

On Alba's screen, she appears filming herself...

ALBA (To the camera)

Hi, Edurne. I thought the Coliseum would be a good place to tell you that I intend to treat you to a holiday in Rome, you and the girl. A trip for three women.

Alba looks at herself in the mobile with a slightly worried look.

ALBA (To the camera in Spanish)

I've bought a map of the Rome of the Caesars so we can lose ourselves.

Alba disconnects the video.

ALBA

Sorry, I forgot you understand Spanish.

Alba lowers her head. Natasha also disconnects her video. Alba talks without showing any pain...

ALBA

The little boy died when I was with him... just the two of us, at home and... Edurne doesn't blame me, but she could.

NATASHA

Why?

Alba looks upset.

Natasha strokes her hair.

We hear the bells from a nearby church.

Natasha looks towards the window and parts the curtains.

The sky just above the rooftops of Rome is now tinged orangey-pink.

NATASHA

Come on Natasha. Your big moment is on its way.

Alba looks at Rome's horizon.

NATASHA

I'll stay and watch the dawn with you, and then we say goodbye.

Alba confirms it with a gesture, she gets up, walks out to the terrace.

Natasha sees her through the window.

Alba takes a chair and puts it opposite the handrail.

Natasha gets up and stands by the terrace door, watching how Alba takes another chair and sets it next to hers. She comes out and sits next to Alba. We see her backs in white bathrobes against Rome horizon.

ALBA

Do you know what Edurne doesn't know?

Natasha looks at her as inviting her to continue.

Alba looks into the distance as she speaks, very serenely.

ALBA

One evening I was at home with Ion, the little one. He used to get a bit hyperactive but when he focussed on a game, he would play for hours. That evening he was absorbed playing with an explorer I had given to him as a present. That day I had received from London a book on Biomechanics. At that time I was still working on my Aspasia so I got immersed in my book in the living room. Time just flew by... It started to get dark so I tried to switch on the lamp and realized it wasn't working. Weird! Had the fuses gone off? The whole top floor was with no electricity.

I suddenly realized I hadn't heard Ion for quite a while. I walked downstairs squeezing the book in my hands, shaking, too freaked out to even call him out.

Downstairs was even darker. The moment I stepped into his room I saw him in front of me, on the floor, against the wall. I realized he was dead because his fingers were black... lying right under the socket.

I approached him slowly, wanting to die, but there was no current left for me when I touched him. I heard Edurne's and Ainara's voices outside, laughing joyfully, getting closer while the front door opened.

The book fell from my hands. I wanted to die or to have never existed so much that I collapsed next to Ion with my arm across his back.

Natasha is shocked.

ALBA

I heard the keys rattle and Edurne and Ainara calling us... and then their screams; the little girl's were horrifying and I felt so far gone I couldn't even blink.

(...)

In the ambulance I overheard that I had tried to save the boy... that the poor thing had been dead for two hours, from heart failure.

When we arrived at the hospital I opened my eyes confused. To begin with no one wanted to tell me what had happened as if not to distress me. Then the psychologist arrived, a caring woman who made sure I would not feel any guilt.

Alba looks at Natasha who seems both moved and perplexed.

ALBA

Do you know why I 'died' like that? To prevent Edurne from thinking that if she had been there, reading in Ion's room, she would have been quick enough to save him.

After losing her child, she didn't need to regret living with a woman with no maternal instinct.

I did love them both, but never as much as I adored their mother.

Natasha churns all this over in her mind... confused and shocked.

Alba stares out over the rooftops.

The sun is about to appear over the horizon.

They stare ahead, ready to greet the dawn.

ALBA

Sometimes I feel I should have disappeared off the map before ever meeting Edurne.

The sun begins to peek over the Roman skyline.

Natasha and Alba stare at the orange sphere.

Their shadows, cast onto the terrace wall, slowly descend towards the door frame.

The sun is halfway above the horizon.

Alba and Natasha lean together, cheek to cheek.

Their shadows enter the room where the sunlight spreads over the two opposite pictures, slowly spilling its golden light over Leon Battista Alberti...

... and a young woman in the Athenian agora, Aspasia, half-hidden behind a veil and surrounded by men.

Their shadows are projected against the white wall of the bathroom.

Tears begin to well up in Alba's eyes.

Natasha looks at her out of the corner of her eye, unable to cry.

The sun finally rises above the horizon.

Alba dries her eyes.

They look at each other...

Natasha stands, Alba does too, in an attitude of farewell.

NATASHA

Congratulations, Alba!

The Russian girl embraces her.

They stand locked in an embrace for a long, lingering time.

EPISODE 16.

They slowly release each other.

Alba looks at the horizon.

The both watch the TV aerials on the roof as we become more aware of the city sounds.

Natasha enters the room, head bowed.

Alba follows, several steps behind.

Natasha stops at the sight of her dress lying on the floor.

Alba also stops and looks at it.

But they don't look at each other.

Natasha unfastens the belt of her bathrobe.

Alba takes the remote control and turns the TV on.

Natasha turns and looks at her.

Alba sits at the foot of the bed and zaps.

ALBA

(Naturally)

Don't you wanna stay and see how our countries have risen

today?

Natasha smiles, ties her belt, approaches Alba and sits at her side.

ALBA

I'll watch Russia's news and you watch Spain's.

We see them, snuggled together, in their bathrobes and white slippers, watching the news from Spain and Russia on the TV.

SPANISH NEWS BROADCAST. It opens with the victory by penalties of Spain against Italy in the European Cup. We see the two saves by Casillas.

Then follow some brief items about the beginning of the Spanish summer.

RUSSIAN NEWS BROADCAST. It opens with domestic issues.

Next there is mention of Spain's match against Russia the following Thursday.

The two girls shout for joy.

ALBA

We're going to play together!

NATASHA

Against each other!

They high-five each other.

ALBA

(Spontaneously)

We have to celebrate. I'm going to order breakfast for two.

NATASHA

From Maximo?

ALBA

From Max. Just you and me, as a farewell.

Natasha stands thinking.

ALBA

Since we've had the shortest night, we might as well seize the morning.

Natasha smiles.

NATASHA

I'll call my sister then.

ALBA

That's my Rusita!

And Alba rushes to the phone on the bedside table.

She picks up the receiver.

Max's voice is heard at the other end of the line.

MAX (V.O.) (In Italian)

Good morning!

(Alba speaks to him in Spanish and Max answers in Italian).

ALBA

(Excited)

Good morning indeed. Since the first sun of summer has just risen, we want to be the first to have breakfast.

MAX (V.O.)

(Good-natured)

That's what I like to hear. How would you like breakfast? Simple, or more...?

ALBA

(Cutting him short)

The longest you have.

MAX (V.O.)

You want it to last?

ALBA

Yes, please. Thanks, Max!

Alba hangs up and looks at Natasha who is arguing in Russian into her mobile phone. She approaches just when it seems Natasha is on the receiving end of a good rollicking.

ALBA

Can I hear your sister's voice?

Natasha turns on the loudspeaker and we hear a voice identical to hers, ranting angrily on in Russian.

ALBA

It's like they split your voice in two.

SASHA (V.O.) (In Russian)

Who's there?

Natasha immediately turns off the loudspeaker.

NATASHA (In Russian)

The breakfast waitress.

SASHA (V.O.) (In Russian)

You're having breakfast?

NATASHA (In Russian)

Yes, I'm hungry. I'll see you back at the hotel.

Natasha hangs up, and stands there, looking ruffled.

ALBA

Are you never going to tell her?

Natasha's face is non-committal.

ALBA

So then... what's the plan? Pass through here without a trace?
Without ever telling anyone?

NATASHA

That's up to each of us.

ALBA

But there has to be something of ours, of both of us, to remind us of this night.

NATASHA

Like what?

A light suddenly goes on in Alba's head.

She looks at the bed.

She makes a beeline for it, pulls off the counterpane and throws it on the floor.

Natasha gives her a puzzled look.

Alba takes some hairpins from the bedside table and slips them into her bathrobe pocket...

Then she pulls off the white bottom sheet and crosses the room with it.

She goes outside and leans so far over the handrail that her feet leave the floor.

Natasha runs to hold on to her and laughs when she discover that Alba is trying to attach the sheet to the empty flagpole with the hairpins.

The Russian girl then stretches herself to her full length and attaches the sheet to the top of the flagpole, leaving the Spanish girl to fix the part nearest the handrail. They both laugh heartily.

Once done, they stand looking at the three flags hanging perpendicularly.

The Italian flag, the white sheet and the Roman flag.

Alba looks up at the sky.

And then back at the white flag.

ALBA

There's still no wind. It's quite early.

Natasha scans the sky.

NATASHA

When it blows, they'll take the photo, you'll see. They owe it to us.

ALBA

What a beautiful thing you've just said my Rusita!

NATASHA

Your idea was the best of all.

ALBA

We make a good team.

NATASHA

Yes, but we can only be seen from a satellite.

ALBA

You're inspired, eh?

NATASHA

By you.

ALBA

That deserves a kiss.

And they give each other a long, lingering kiss.

We see their two white bathrobes blended into each other with the white sheet in the background.

There's a knock at the door.

ALBA

Max!

NATASHA

Maximo!

ALBA

Our breakfast.

EPISODE 17.

Alba opens the door.

It's Max with the breakfast trolley. He seems cheerful. (Max and Natasha speak in Italian, Alba in Spanish)

MAX
Good morning.

ALBA
Very good, Max. Marvellous, in fact.

The Italian pushes the trolley up to the table by the terrace door.

Natasha is already seated.

Alba sits down.

MAX
(Good-humoured)
Ah, I see you're dressed as cows.

NATASHA
Yes, Max. Just for you, but actually, we love it.

Alba laughs and looks at Natasha, fascinated.

Max serves breakfast on the table.

MAX
This order was very easy. You order two long breakfasts and so here I bring two long breakfasts.

ALBA
Thanks, Max.

MAX
(Excited)
When I finish serving you, I'm free and...

Max begins to unbutton his shirt...

Alba and Natasha watch him, in amused anticipation.

Finally, the Italian uncovers his left shoulder, revealing the tattoo of a beautiful young girl with long black hair.

MAX

This is my wife, she's waiting for me.

ALBA

Bella, bellissima.

MAX

Pregnant. Seven months.

ALBA

Wow! Congratulations.

NATASHA

Congratulations.

Max covers his shoulder and begins to button up his shirt.

MAX

Thanks.

Suddenly, in the background, between the two women, he spots the white sheet hanging from the central flagpole.

MAX

Ah!

Alba and Natasha exchange an amused look.

Max looks at them both, with the white flag in the middle.

And begins to sing to them operatically...

Alba and Natasha watch him, fascinated.

Max, singing wonderfully, begins to withdraw.

He steps back into the room, singing for all he's worth. As he passes by the picture of the agora at Athens, the image moves from a close up of Aspasia to

where an older man (Pericles) is looking at her.

From a close up of Leon Battista Alberti, following his eye line, we move to the face of a beautiful youth.

Max reaches the door with his trolley, waves and goes.

ALBA

Well, now we have a best man.

NATASHA

Couldn't be better.

They begin breakfast.

Natasha notices how the sunlight is now shining brightly on them.

NATASHA

I think the daylight will do us good.

ALBA

I'm sure. It usually does.

They look at each other... They are really beautiful, overflowing with light.

NATASHA

Hey, the sun looks fantastic on your face, in your eyes, on your lips.

ALBA

Well, look at your skin, the steppes are turning gold... Scary!

NATASHA

I'm even more scared!

ALBA

Why?

NATASHA

Because I know what I'm seeing. And feeling.

They look at each other again, marvelling.

Then look down at their breakfasts.

ALBA

Shall we play at being brave?

Natasha nods enthusiastically.

ALBA

If we didn't have partners, what would we do... you and me?

NATASHA

I don't know, this is all so new to me.

ALBA

Shall we stay and live in Rome?

Natasha looks towards the rooftops.

The day is bright and clear.

NATASHA

I'm in love with Rome.

ALBA

And I'm in love with you.

Natasha feels she's run head on into joy and lowers her eyes.

Alba looks at her, visibly moved.

It's a few seconds before Natasha's sincerity lets her speak again.

NATASHA

I don't know how I'm going to make sense of my life now, if I separate from you.

ALBA

We stay and live in Rome then.

NATASHA

(amazed and excited)

Would you do it? Would you leave Edurne and her kids...

sorry, her daughter... to live with me, here in Rome?

Pause...

Alba nods, bewildered by her decision but sure of it.

ALBA

This is real, Natasha, not a fantasy. I see it with absolute clarity.

Overcome with emotion, they both exchange a look charged with uncertainty.

ALBA

The gates are opening for us, can't you hear it?

Natasha tries to hear.

ALBA

Close your eyes

Alba shuts her eyes looking at Natasha. So does Natasha.

ALBA

If our hands meet on the table, we enter together, deal?

NATASHA

Deal!

EPISODE 18.

We see them both opposite each other, eyes closed, putting their arms on the table, hands crawling tentatively forward. We see in detail the hair on their arms rising...

Since they have both pulled out their right arms, the hands are moving in parallel and so, separated.

Each hand looks for the other without meeting.

The arm hairs come down and their hands stop.

Both their faces grow sombre.

Alba begins to retract her arm.

Natasha furtively opens her eyes... and sees what's happening. She throws her hand forward to catch Alba's just before she takes it off the table.

ALBA (In Spanish)
You gave me an electric shock!

NATASHA
So did you! Do you think I didn't feel it?

Alba looks at her with a puzzled expression

ALBA
What was that about?

NATASHA
Electricity

ALBA
It happened because we're very sure about this, aren't we?

NATASHA
I'm not.
(...)
But right now it's what I most desire in this world.

They look at each other in silence for a few seconds, then smile, impressed by what has just been sealed.

ALBA
We have to plan all this carefully, so we don't fade away.

NATASHA
Yes, not turning back.

ALBA
We'll do everything together. And the first thing is...to ring our partners.

NATASHA

I'll tell Vadim not to meet me at the airport. And then... I've no idea how you say something like this.

ALBA

I think it's better to be brief. No explanations.

NATASHA

There's nothing to explain. It happened, that's all.

ALBA

They have to know what's happened to us is not their fault.

NATASHA

It's not.

ALBA

Only us to blame.

NATASHA

No one is to blame.

Alba accepts this with good grace.

And looks towards the Roman rooftops.

ALBA

We'll rent an apartment, a tiny one, so we can be closer together.

NATASHA

Good thinking. Meanwhile, we could stay in this room. I love it, with those two pictures...

ALBA

They were waiting for us.

NATASHA

We have to stay here, in the Pompey Hotel.

Alba seems to agree, as she looks towards Rome and bows as if to an audience. She then points at the other performer in the cast, who also bows

to an audience.

They applaud intimately, they look at each other and smile...

ALBA

I suggest we don't go back to Russia or Spain for a long time, not until we are solid as a couple.

NATASHA

How long?

ALBA

Six months?

NATASHA

(Sadly)

That's how long my father's got left.

ALBA

Ah! And cancer doesn't wait. We'll go sooner, then.

NATASHA

Yes, just for a visit.

Natasha turns pensive.

NATASHA

I'll ask my sister to send my things here.

(More to herself)

And Vadim to return the wedding presents.

ALBA

I'll have my blender sent here. And more stuff, of course.

NATASHA

And what will we live on?

ALBA

I've got some money to start us off. And I can accept the offer I was made yesterday for a job here. Today I'm going to introduce you to my Aspasia!

NATASHA

And you could take me for a ride around Rome.

ALBA

Of course, as soon as I get it registered. I like the idea, Aspasia with Roman number plates. And it's perfect for getting around the streets here.

She glances at the narrow central street.

NATASHA

I could give classes on the Italian Renaissance. I hope my Russian accent won't bother them.

ALBA

You could also teach tennis, and Russian. I'll sign up for tennis lessons.

NATASHA

So, I have my first pupil. Things are looking up.

ALBA

And what would my teacher like to be called, Dasha or Natasha?

NATASHA

Nata-sha.

ALBA

What do you say again?

NATASHA

Sha. Nata-sha, which is the name I invented for you.

ALBA

(delighted)

Mmmm!

And I'll get to see you run. Can't wait to go outside and watch your long legs sprinting.

NATASHA
(Amused)
I promise you'll see them.

They continue eating breakfast.

Savouring every morsel.

NATASHA
I will never forget this breakfast.

ALBA
The breakfast of our new life.

NATASHA
We should tell Max we've become a couple.

ALBA
Max! Yes, he's played a part in it.
(Suddenly excited)
And... We'll watch the Spain-Russia European Cup together!

NATASHA
You root for Russia and I for Spain.

ALBA
Sure.

EPISODE 19.

They're still at breakfast, but now they are both pensive, each looking at her plate.

For a long, wordless time.

We see the sun rise a little further while a shadow falls between the two women.

The excitement fades from their faces.

NATASHA
(Slightly worried)

Do you think it's a good thing we're sitting in silence?

ALBA

No. If we had a newspaper, it would make more sense.

Silence returns.

Their movements slow down.

Their faces grow serious.

Alba writes "Natasha" in the butter with her finger.

Natasha takes the small milk jug to pour milk into her coffee but pauses.

They avoid each other's eyes.

They both look downhearted, the sparkle has gone.

Natasha stands and goes into the room.

She goes to the desk and picks up her mobile.

She comes back to the terrace and sits at the table.

She checks through her text messages.

She opens one and stretches out her hand so they can both see.

There is a video message from Vadim (45) speaking to the camera.

Natasha translates her boyfriend's Russian words into English.

NATASHA (Over Vadim's words)

Hello, my love. I'm stealing a few seconds of your trip so you know I'm always thinking of you and so you can carry me with you for the days left.

Natasha looks as if she is about to cry but the tears don't come.

Vadim continues talking and Natasha translates.

NATASHA (Over Vadim's words)

I hope your trip is useful in sorting out the tension between you and your sister. You both deserve a break. And don't ever doubt that my greatest wish is to spend the rest of my life at your side.

Natasha gulps as she wipes away non-existent tears.

Vadim says goodbye.

NATASHA (Over Vadim's words)
Enjoy yourself, my love, and be as happy as you like. I'm waiting for you here, in front of the church that will join us forever.

Vadim points behind him and we see the front of a church.

Natasha is overcome with emotion.

Alba is left speechless.

After a long silence...

Alba gets up, enters the room and then the bathroom.

From the terrace, Natasha hears Alba start running a bath.

Natasha's phone RINGS, making her jump.

She looks at the name and answers.

NATASHA (In Russian)
Hi.

SASHA (V.O.) (In Russian)
Dasha, what's going on?

NATASHA (In Russian)
Nothing, I'll just get dressed and I'll be on my way.

DASHA (V.O.) (In Russian)
Are you naked?

Natasha looks at herself in her bathrobe.

NATASHA (In Russian)
No, I'm in white.

TATIANA (V.O.) (In Russian)
A bit soon for the wedding.

NATASHA (In Russian)
That's right, far too soon.

DASHA (V.O.) (In Russian)
I don't understand you, Dasha.

NATASHA (In Russian)
Just as well.

She hangs up.

EPISODE 20.

In the bathroom Alba washes her face and begins to brush her teeth.

Natasha enters, stands beside Alba, picks up a hairbrush and brushes her hair.

They avoid looking at each other's reflection.

Reflected behind them is the bathtub. The sound of running water fills the room.

Alba pops her toothbrush into a glass and rinses her mouth.

Natasha takes Alba's toothbrush, squeezes on some toothpaste and begins to brush her teeth.

Alba watches Natasha's movements, avoiding eye contact.

Through the mirror she looks at the stream of water filling the bathtub.

Then she looks up at the Russian girl's lips, coated with the white foam of the toothpaste.

Alba goes to the bathtub, turns off the tap and returns to the mirror as

Natasha puts down the toothbrush and rinses her mouth.

Alba speaks to Natasha through the mirror.

ALBA

Get in to the bath with me, please.

Without turning round.

NATASHA

No.

ALBA

Just a bath, together, in each other's arms, without doing anything.

NATASHA

We will suffer more and it will make it harder to say goodbye.

ALBA

Harder?

(Slowly)

Natasha, never, in my whole life, I've known a love like this, not this way. And it... can't all be for nothing.

Natasha turns and looks at her sadly.

ALBA

Are you sure we have to part... forever?

With a pained expression, Natasha nods.

Alba approaches with her arms open, but the Russian girl avoids it and steps aside.

Alba unties her bathrobe and lets it fall to the floor. She lifts her arms again.

Angrily, Natasha strides towards her authoritatively, raising her voice. Alba, in contrast, seems small, fragile and very disorientated.

NATASHA

Don't lower yourself, fight!

ALBA

This is what I'm doing; I'm fighting for you.

NATASHA

You've got the wrong person then. You are meant to be the strong one.

Alba looks at her confused

NATASHA

Do you think I'm not like you?

ALBA

So, let's hold each other.

NATASHA

No!

Alba is taken aback.

NATASHA

I have to fight much more than you, because if I break down you won't know what to do with me.

ALBA

I would know. I've looked after my mother.

Natasha stops talking.

Alba's breathing becomes jerky, she is suffering greatly.

ALBA

You're right, I'm sorry. You can go whenever you want.

Natasha gives her a puzzled look.

Alba is looking into space... towards the ceiling, the white walls...

ALBA

I'm staying here... I prefer it...

And Alba faints.

Natasha reacts in time and catches her just before her head hits the floor.

The Russian girl sits with Alba's head resting on her legs. Alba's skin is drained of its colour, her half-open eyes don't fix on anything.

POV Alba: her gaze floats around the inside of the bathroom, passing over Natasha's face, though unable to focus.

NATASHA

(Bringing her round)

What is it, Alba? Please don't suffer like this!

POV Alba: she finally manages to focus on the ceiling. Through the open bathroom door we see the painting of Eros flitting in mid-air, his flexed bow and arrow pointing at her.

ALBA

(Looking at Eros)

So it's true... what they always say about love. I just felt the arrow.

Natasha turns and follows Alba's eye line.

Seeing Eros pointing his arrow, she smiles and looks at Alba, full of love.

They gaze fixedly at each other, bewitched.

ALBA

It's left a strange taste in my mouth... and my throat feels tight. I don't know, it's a weird taste, very weird.

Natasha begins to cry.

Alba seems to find a certain solace.

Natasha leans over and smothers Alba's face with kisses.

When she looks at her again, she discovers that Alba has gone pale and is struggling to breathe.

Concerned, Natasha strokes her face, her hair...

She sees that Alba's lips are dry.

She immediately kisses them and licks them several times.

Alba begins to shake.

Natasha pulls away, a little frightened...

ALBA

I want a bath, I'm freezing. Strange, isn't it?

Natasha picks Alba up as best she can and manages to lower her into the bathtub full of steaming water.

ALBA

I've got a terrible pain in my chest, here.

Alba takes the Russian girl's hand and places it on her left breast.

ALBA

Natasha, it's real. Pull it out, please!

Natasha closes her hand over Alba's breast, as if taking hold of the arrow transfixing her.

ALBA

Or even better, push it further in. I want to get to the end...

Natasha's hand grips the arrow tightly and pushes it further into Alba's breast.

POV Alba: The water begins to turn pink.

POV Natasha: Alba is staring at the transparent water.

POV Alba: The pink deepens to blood red.

POV Natasha: Alba, staring fixedly at the transparent water, looks as if she is going to die.

Alarmed, Natasha pulls the arrow in the opposite direction, outwards.

Alba begins to recover... she opens her eyes, her breathing returns to normal and her skin colour returns.

Natasha strokes her face.

NATASHA

Alba. You're right. It's the same for me... I've never loved as intensely as tonight with you.

ALBA

(Excitedly)

Really?

Alba smiles happily.

NATASHA

From now on we can think that for once in our lives... we experienced it.

Completely in agreement, Alba looks at her, fascinated.

NATASHA

The best thing is to leave it here, keep it forever between the two of us, so it never fades.

ALBA

In the bathtub?

NATASHA

Sure. Where else?

Natasha takes off her bathrobe, gets into the bathtub and embraces Alba, who seems more relaxed.

They remain this way for a few long seconds until...

ALBA

Know something? You're very wet.

NATASHA

(Russian expression)
Vadadada. I hadn't realized.

They laugh.

ALBA
One last turn?

NATASHA
Where?

ALBA
In our bathtub. To leave everything here.

Alba hugs her tightly and submerges underneath Natasha, forcing her up to the surface.

When Alba reappears, it is Natasha who goes under water.

We see their clasped bodies rotating in the water, one on top, the other below, alternating, their heads, their faces, gulping in air before submerging and releasing it amidst laughter upon surfacing again.

EPISODE 21.

Alba comes out of the bathroom in her bathrobe.

She places her suitcase on the bed, goes to the wardrobe and takes out her clothes.

Natasha comes out of the bathroom in her bathrobe and watches Alba packing her case.

Then the Russian girl picks her clothes up from the floor as Alba does with her own, also scattered on the floor from the night before.

Inadvertently, Natasha gets the wrong bra.

Alba realizes and hands her the larger one. They exchange bras, each taking her own.

Alba picks up her ripped panties, glances at them sadly and bundles them up

with the rest of the clothes in her hand.

She takes the statuette of the Venus de Milo and her laptop and puts them into her suitcase.

On the writing desk she rolls up the map of the Rome of the Caesars in such a way that the last thing to disappear, slowly, is the Pompey theatre.

Then she takes off her bathrobe which slips to the floor.

The Russian girl also takes off her bathrobe, tossing it deliberately on top of Alba's. Alba smiles.

They help each other to dress.

No words, only looks. They love each other and this is fun.

When they finish, Alba closes the suitcase, picks it up and heads for the door.

She opens it and gestures "after you".

Natasha steps into the hallway just as a couple of ageing men are passing, a very camp English guy and a French guy. They stop and reproach them, visibly annoyed.

ENGLISH GUY

(In a very English accent)

We haven't had a wink of sleep, thanks to you two!

NATASHA

I'm sorry, we apologize.

ALBA

How many nights have you been together?

The two men stand there in silence, giving each other puzzled looks.

ALBA

Don't worry, she and I have no future. It was just this one night.

NATASHA

So you'll forgive us, right?

Puzzlement turns to understanding.

FRENCHMAN
(To his partner)
Shall we tell them the truth?

The Englishman shrugs, though with an implicit "yes".

FRENCHMAN
(To the girls)
We also had our first night when we were your age.

Silence. All four exchange looks.

ENGLISH GUY
This was our second.

The male couple leave.

Natasha and Alba exchange looks.

Alba takes her case and brings it out into the hallway.

She closes the door.

We hear their footsteps walking away...

Showing the closed door, the camera very slowly pulls back...

turns...

...and heads towards the open terrace door.

We fleetingly pass over the faces of Leon Battista Alberti and the young Athenian woman, Aspasia...

..the camera passes through the open door onto the terrace...

...and over the table with the remains of breakfast...

Etched into the butter, the now somewhat melted letters spelling "Natacha".

The camera peers over the handrail.

EPISODE 22. (Sequence shot)

Ext. STREET (FROM HOTEL ROOM) - DOWNTOWN ROME - DAY

It stops in a bird's-eye shot showing the entrance to the hotel (from the 4th floor).

We see the elderly male couple emerge, cross the street and continue straight up the centre street, disappearing out of frame.

Now Alba, with her case, and Natasha emerge from the hotel entrance.

ALBA
I'm taking a taxi to the airport.
(Pointing left)
It's that way.

Natasha points right.

NATASHA
Hotel Ninfa is in the other direction.

Alba nods, looking that way.

Natasha moves away slightly.

NATASHA
So, goodbye, no kisses.

ALBA
You sure?

NATASHA
Absolutely.

ALBA
Ok, but don't forget I kissed the soles of your feet.

NATASHA
I didn't kiss yours.

ALBA
(Playing the victim a little)
No.

NATASHA
Shall I kiss them now?

ALBA
(Jokingly imitating her)
No. It would make the goodbyes much harder.

Natasha laughs and they shake each other's hand, look at each other, take a step towards each other...

And stare into each other's eyes, smiling.

First Natasha turns slowly, without letting go of Alba's hand, but turning her back on her.

Then Alba does likewise.

And slowly their hands slip apart...

They walk away from each other, slowly, with bowed heads, in opposite directions. Alba to the left, Natasha to the right.

Until they both exit frame simultaneously.

Only the sound of their footsteps remains, growing wider apart...

Until we hear Natasha's footsteps stop on the right.

We hear...

NATASHA (V.O.)
(Shouting)
Alba!

Alba's footsteps come to a halt.

And we hear...

ALBA (V.O.)
(Shouting)
What?

NATASHA (V.O.)
(Shouting)
Look!

From the sound of her footsteps we sense that she is beginning to run.

Natasha leaps into frame, her long gazelle-like legs striding across the screen to the sound of Alba's laughter.

Just as she exits frame, we hear her fall to the ground.

ALBA (V.O.)
(Shouting)
Natasha!

With her case dragging behind, Alba's footsteps approach the Russian girl.

The camera pans towards the left-hand street to show Natasha lying on the ground, just as Alba reaches her with her case in tow.

ALBA
Did you hurt yourself?

NATASHA
Not much. Just my knee.

ALBA
Let's see, stand up.

The Russian girl gets to her feet.

NATASHA
Hey! It hurts.

ALBA
I'll go with you to the hospital. There's one nearby,

(Pointing to the street in front)
at the end of that street.

Natasha tries to walk but can only limp.

Alba grabs Natasha around the waist, pulling her case with her other hand.

They both begin to walk slowly down the narrow street.

We see them from behind, Natasha hobbling and Alba acting as her crutch.

NATASHA
How can I get married with a limp?

ALBA
Is the floor flat?

NATASHA
What?

ALBA
I guess your dress is long, so you can stand on a skateboard.

NATASHA
I love skateboards.

ALBA
And your father can pull you along by the hand.

NATASHA
Or push me from behind.

ALBA
Yes, your ass is quite hard.

NATASHA
Don't be cheeky.

ALBA
(Enthusiastic)
That's going to be my wedding present! A skateboard.

Natasha laughs.

They grow gradually smaller as they walk off towards the end of the street which ends in a curve...

Their voices grow fainter and fainter.

ALBA

Don't laugh, I'm going straight out to buy it once I've left you at the hospital.

NATASHA

Thanks.

ALBA

Thank you, for that beautiful sprint.

They begin to laugh as they disappear round the bend at the end of the road.

For a few brief seconds all that remains is their distant laughter.

We hear the sound of a gentle breeze.

In the lower part of the frame, the flapping white sheet appears.

The wind grows in strength...

The camera moves forward and positions itself above it.

The texture of the sheet fabric becomes a blur until all we can see is an outsize pixilation.

The camera begins to rise vertically.

When we see the hotel roof, we notice the pixilation of the sheet diminishing.

We see the triangle of streets in front of the hotel, with the hospital at the end of the central street (we are moving away via Google Earth).

At a height of more than a hundred feet, we can clearly make out the white flag between the flags of Italy and Europe.

We continue rising above the centre of Rome.

The Coliseum appears.

The whole city of Rome.

Italy.

Europe, with Spain at the western extreme and Russia to the east.

The image continues to open until we see the whole earth suspended in the black cosmos...

THE END