

BOX OF BETTY

Written by

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FADE IN:

INSERT: A NEEDLE DROPS on a SPINNING PHONOGRAPH. It scratches at first, then AN INSTRUCTOR'S VOICE teaches us Italian.

The inch-thick album cover -- one of those multi-LP sets -- leans against the record player, titled:

*Learn Italian! The Language of Love!*

INSTRUCTOR (ON PHONOGRAPH)  
*Avanzata Italiana conversazione  
numero tredici; Advanced Italian  
conversation number thirteen: "La  
fame assassino per amore." The  
assassin hungers for love...*

CUT TO:

EXT. A FIELD IN EASTERN EUROPE - NIGHT

A bag is pulled off the head of ALISTAIR, 25, Australian. He kneels in wet grass, hands tied in front of him. His rapid breathing visible in the headlights of a nearby, idling car.

JAKOV, 33, a hard-boiled Eastern European, coldly holds a gun to Alistair's head.

ALISTAIR  
The DVDs belonged to Big Fish?! I'd  
never mess with Big Fish!

Alistair reaches for his shirt pocket. Jakov calmly cocks the trigger. Alistair freezes.

From Alistair's pocket, Jakov takes A WORN PHOTO OF A WOMAN.

ALASTAIR  
Please. One last look at my true  
love. I'll die a happy man.

Jakov rips the photo in two. Drops it in front of Alistair.

ALISTAIR  
I'll wait for ya, Tina. Forever...

Alistair leans forward and KISSES the ripped photo. Jakov, touched, lowers his gun. Then he recovers his resolve and SHOTS ALISTAIR. A beat, then:

ALISTAIR (CONT'D)  
You...you missed.

Jakov is shocked. He squeezes his eyes shut. Pinches the bridge of his nose. He recites his self-help mantra:

JAKOV  
I am ruthless. I'm a killer. I am  
ruthless. I'm a killer....

Jakov exhales. Centered, he opens his eyes in time to see--

ALISTAIR PEELS OUT IN JAKOV'S CAR and SPRAYS JAKOV WITH MUD from the spinning tires.

RICK (V.O.)  
*...but it doesn't take much to see  
that the problems of three little  
people don't amount to a hill of  
beans in this crazy world...*

INSERT: On a television, it's *Casablanca*. Ilsa's eyes well with tears.

INT. JAKOV'S APT. - NIGHT

Jakov sits on his couch wrapped in a blanket, snarfs down Haagen Dazs and watches *Casablanca*. He holds his breath as--

ON THE TV: Rick gently raises Ilsa's face to meet his.

Jakov says the line with Bogey--

JAKOV & RICK  
*Here's looking at you, kid.*

We move in on Jakov's eyes as they morph into...

EXT. EASTERN EUROPEAN PLAYGROUND, MID '80S - DAY [FLASHBACK]

...the EYES of a young boy. This is--

YOUNG JAKOV, 12, dirt poor, amid a CIRCLE OF GIRLS. THE PRETTY GIRL, 12 uses a folded paper "fortune teller" to predict Young Jakov's fate. This moment is deadly serious.

[NOTE: They speak in Slovene, subtitled.]

PRETTY GIRL  
Name?

YOUNG JAKOV  
I, I am... J-Jakov.

PRETTY GIRL  
 (counting out the letters  
 with the fortune teller)  
 J-A-K-O-V.

Everyone anxiously waits. Pretty Girl peels open the paper flap that reveals Young Jakov's fortune--

--but THE FLAP IS BLANK.

PRETTY GIRL (CONT'D)  
 There is nothing. You will always  
 be alone. No love. No wife.

YOUNG JAKOV  
 But - I love you.

PRETTY GIRL  
 Sorry. You cannot change destiny.

GIRLS  
 (singing)  
*Nobody loves you,  
 you'll never get married.  
 Nobody loves you,  
 you'll never get married.*

Young Jakov cries. A TALL SKINNY KID, 10, laughs at him. Young Jakov punches the Skinny Kid hard on the arm.

SKINNY KID  
 Ow! Why did you do that?!

YOUNG JAKOV  
 Destiny.

Tears streak down Young Jakov's angry, dirty cheeks. We close in on his eyes. They morph into--

[END FLASHBACK]

--the crying eyes of Jakov, in the present. He grabs his cell phone, desperately hits speed-dial. He waits for someone to answer the phone like a junkie awaiting a fix.

JAKOV  
 (into phone)  
 It's me. Got anything?  
 (writing down info)  
 "Sasa Gubensek." Got it... I said I  
 got it!

On the TV, Rick and Louis walk into the foggy night.

RICK  
*Louis, I think this is the  
beginning--*

The TELEVISION EXPLODES. Jakov just shot it.

JAKOV  
I am ruthless...

CUT TO:

INSERT: From the Italian language instructional phonograph--

INSTRUCTOR (ON PHONOGRAPH)  
*Avanzata Italiana conversazione  
numero quattordici; Advanced  
Italian conversation number  
fourteen: "La bella donna fugge  
dall'amore." The beautiful thief  
runs away from love...*

EXT. VENICE, ITALY - DAY

SASA, 29, effortlessly beautiful, darts through the mass of tourists. She apologizes when she jostles them.

BENNY, 22, a weasely Brit, wears a backpack and bullies his way through the same crowd.

Sasa stops in a packed piazza. Looks around for someone.

Benny also stops in a packed piazza and looks around. It's unclear just who is chasing whom.

THEIR EYES MEET. A moment as they register this, then--

--Benny sprints away. Sasa chases.

Benny runs through an open door. Slams it shut. Locks it.

Sasa studies the building. Takes a few steps back, then--

--RUNS AT THE BUILDING. Tourists stare -- *is she really going to just run into the wall?* Sasa reaches the building and--

--LEAPS. She grabs a drain pipe, shimmies up. Pushes off that and BARELY CLINGS to a window ledge. She slips and damn near falls. She climbs up, window to window, balcony to balcony.

Sasa reaches the roof, pulls herself over. The crowd below CHEERS. Sasa ducks away, embarrassed.

ROOFTOPS OF VENICE

Benny leaps across the rooftops. He stops. No sign of Sasa. He unzips his backpack revealing wads of bundled cash.

SASA (O.S.)  
I will have that now.

Benny WHIPS OUT A BLADE as turns and confronts Sasa.

SASA (CONT'D)  
You sell drugs to children.

BENNY  
I don't discriminate.

SASA  
What is that word?

BENNY  
Discriminate? Means everyone is equal. Kiddies got as much right to smack as the next person.

Sasa lowers her head in anger and glares at Benny.

TIME CUT TO:

HIGH OVER THE STREETS OF VENICE

Benny hangs upside down from a clothesline -- five stories up. Sasa calmly walks away on the stone street below him.

BENNY (CONT'D)  
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHO I WORK FOR?! NOBODY STEALS FROM BIG FISH AND GETS AWAY WITH IT! I'M LOOKIN' AT A DEAD WOMAN!!

Sasa doesn't even break stride.

SASA  
You have no idea.

Benny looks around -- an OLD LADY stares from her window.

BENNY  
There now. Be a right old gal and pull me in, wouldya?

The Old Lady closes her shutters.

INT. ORPHANAGE OFFICE - DAY

Sasa stands in the doorway, watches KIDS play on the playground. A STUNNED NUN stares at the open backpack spilling bundles of cash on the desk.

STUNNED NUN

You must let the children thank you.

SASA

Is not necessary.

STUNNED NUN

But this is the third time you have made such a generous donation.

A soccer ball rolls toward Sasa. Sasa expertly kicks it up to her hands. She lovingly wipes off a smudge.

The Nun gently lays a hand on Sasa's shoulder, startling her.

STUNNED NUN (CONT'D)

*Mi scusi* - were you once an orphan?

Sasa seems about to speak, then RUNS AWAY. Her footsteps morph into the sound of SOMEONE KNOCKING ON A DOOR.

CUT TO:

INSERT: The Italian language instructional phonograph plays--

INSTRUCTOR (ON PHONOGRAPH)

*Avanzata Italiana conversazione numero quindici; Advanced Italian conversation number fifteen: "Il bibliotecario è solitario."* The librarian is lonely.

(beat)

*"E sapete una cosa? E 'anche una specie di testa di cazzo."* And you know what? He's also kind of a dick...

INT. ALBERT'S HOME - MORNING

The door-knocking continues as we sweep through this cozy, comfortable, lived-in home.

LIVING ROOM

ALBERT, 35, plays Scrabble. Good-looking, but he's not only lost his smile, he has no intention of ever looking for it.

He lays out some game tiles, spelling:

XENOPHOBE

ALBERT

Triple word score, plus fifty  
points for using all my letters.  
Game, set, and match. I win.

The knocking on the door stops and now the DOORBELL RINGS.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Be right back, Betty...

He leaves. We see "who" he was talking to:

A shoebox-sized WOODEN BOX on the coffee table. Inlaid into  
the hinged lid is one word: *BETTY*.

AT THE OPEN FRONT DOOR

Albert shades his eyes to the sunlit world outside where  
birds chirp, lawn mowers buzz and MARCI, 12, eagerly stares  
up at him.

Marci wears a pink "FCC: Fight Cancer with Cookies!" t-shirt.  
A clipboard in one hand, she proudly extends her free hand to  
Albert. Albert stares at her outreached hand.

MARCI

Um, hello, sir. I'm Marci, and I'm  
with the Fighting Cancer with  
Cookies campaign and I was hoping--

ALBERT

You're joking.

MARCI

Sir?

ALBERT

Fighting Cancer with Cookies?  
Seriously? You realize that every  
hour, like, one hundred and fifty  
people are diagnosed with cancer?  
You got enough cookies for that?  
What, do these cookies have cancer-  
killing properties? Are they  
*irradiated* in some fashion?

Marci is totally thrown from her pitch. She turns, signals to  
her DAD who sits in a Volvo station wagon at the curb. Albert  
takes Marci's clipboard and reads the order form.

ALBERT (CONT'D)  
 "Live Strong Lemon-Drops." "Peanut Butter Buddies." Yeah, I don't see the "Anticarcinogenic Crunchies."

MARCI  
 It's not the... Look, we're raising money by *selling* cookies--

ALBERT  
 --what's the point? The cookies are probably filled with sodium nitrate and god knows what else.

Marci turns to her dad again and indicates this is a *code red* situation. Dad gets out of the car and hurries over.

ALBERT (CONT'D)  
 I'm buying cookies to fight cancer that will GIVE ME CANCER?!

MARCI'S DAD  
 (arriving)  
 Hey man, what are you doing?!

ALBERT  
 I'm just trying to express how pointless this all is.

MARCI'S DAD  
 (to Marci)  
 Go get in the car, sweetie.

Marci is shell-shocked, her pie-eyed hopefulness erased. She numbly shuffles towards the street.

MARCI'S DAD (CONT'D)  
 Dude, she's trying to do something meaningful here.

ALBERT  
 I'm sure she's a great kid, but you shouldn't encourage this kind of, of--

MARCI'S DAD  
 --*hope?*

ALBERT  
 Exactly. Where's that gonna get her in life?

Marci reaches the car, but just drops her clipboard and shuffles despondently across the street.

MARCI'S DAD

Jesus Christ, man. I hope you don't  
have any kids.

A PLAYGROUND WHISTLE blows.

EXT. GRADE SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Albert oversees sixth grade recess. He watches DANNY, 12, red-headed and chubby, walk through a GROUP OF PREPPY GIRLS, who tease him like a pack of Forever 21-clad hyenas.

Albert approaches Danny, who takes out his anger on a tether ball. Danny awkwardly flails away and his wrist gets completely wrapped up in the rope.

ALBERT

Okay Raging Bull, take it down a  
notch.

Albert un-knots the rope from Danny's wrist. He notices Danny is mesmerized by someone across the playground.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Which one?

DANNY

Roxanne Bartushova.

DANNY'S POV: He watches ROXANNE, 12. Tall and thin. She SPINS IN SLOW MOTION, her long raven mane shines like black silk rippling as she turns. She flashes a BRACES-FILLED SMILE.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I love her. But if I tell her,  
she'll laugh in my face.

ALBERT

Likely.

DANNY

And if I don't tell her I'll die.

ALBERT

Equally as likely.

DANNY

Is it always gonna be like this?

ALBERT

It gets better.

DANNY

Really?

ALBERT

No. It gets much worse.

Danny laughs, but only a little.

DANNY

But seriously. There's someone out there for me, right? I mean, you found Mrs. B.

EXT. YARD SALE - DAY [FLASHBACK]

Albert, 20s, feigns interest in a record player as he sneaks a glance at--

BETTY, 20s and cute. She picks up a ONE-INCH THICK ALBUM SET. The album's cover: *Learn Italian! The Language of Love!* [It's the same one from the Italian language learning inserts we've seen so far.]

BETTY

Oh god, I've always wanted to go.

Albert looks down -- his hands rest on an old Pioneer turntable. He picks it up.

ALBERT

I'll take you.

Betty LAUGHS and Albert is instantly and forever smitten.

BETTY

I'm gonna hold you to that, mister.

She extends her hand to shake his.

BETTY (CONT'D)

I'm Betty.

[END FLASHBACK]

PLAYGROUND

Albert stares ahead, lost in his memory. A SCHOOL BELL RINGS and the kids run indoors. Danny faithfully stands by Albert.

DANNY

Hey, Mr. B? It's over.

ALBERT  
It sure is, Danny.

Danny leaves. Albert mindlessly holds the tether ball.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

BUDDY, 40, the principal of the school, talks to, JAMES, 12.

JAMES  
It's not my fault! It's got a mind  
of its own. I mean, right in the  
middle of class, it'll just pop up--

BUDDY  
Okay, we don't need to get into  
your specifics, James, but--

JAMES  
And having Miss Murphy for health,  
that's just not fair. Have you  
seen her? She's totally stacked!

BUDDY  
Well, she is, but you can't just  
*touch yourself* in class.

A beat.

JAMES  
What about if I go to the--

BUDDY  
*Or in the school bathroom.* Just save  
it for home. Like the rest of us.

Through the window, Buddy sees Albert on the playground--

--Albert tries to really smack the tether ball, but it ends  
up tangled around his wrist. He can't undo the tangle.

BUDDY (CONT'D)  
(under his breath)  
Jesus, pal. Get a grip.

JAMES  
I thought you just said--

BUDDY  
Not you. Don't touch it!

INT. SCIENCE CLASSROOM - DAY

Buddy locks the door and turns off the lights -- lock down mode. Albert wonders what the hell Buddy's up to.

ALBERT

Alright. What's the big mystery?

As Buddy shuts the window blinds--

BUDDY

Look, after Betty died, I was happy to give an old friend a job, give you a place to get your bearings. But I gotta be honest: Five years and you're still the worst grade school librarian I've ever seen.

ALBERT

That's a little harsh.

BUDDY

What is Charlotte's Web about?

ALBERT

Charlotte's Web? This is a book?

BUDDY

See, that's what I'm--

ALBERT

I'm kidding, I know this.

(improvising)

Charlotte's Web...is the tale of...a vindictive woman who tracks down and kills the men who have wronged her. It was on Lifetime.

BUDDY

You're fired. I'm serious.

ALBERT

Fine. You want to know what Charlotte's Web is *really* about, Buddy? Charlotte *dies*. The End. Oh, and the novel *conveniently* leaves out Wilbur's *final* chapter: "That's Some Bacon!" The whole thing should be called, "Everyone Dies, So What's the Point?"

BUDDY

God, it would have killed Betty to see you like this. A pathetic, cynical, out of shape, nihilistic--

ALBERT

You had me at "pathetic."

BUDDY

I want to show you something.

Buddy kneels by the wall and pries off a heating vent. Albert kneels by him. We can HEAR voices from the next door room.

ALBERT

That's Francine Eichmann's room.

BUDDY

She's single.

ALBERT

She's *eighty*. She has love notes from Rudolf Hess under her mattress.

BUDDY

Albert. Get ready to meet your first date in five years.

Buddy pulls the vent off the wall and SEVERAL THIN SHAFTS OF LIGHT illuminate the darkness.

Albert leans in. Shafts of light cut across his face.

ALBERT'S POV: Directly in front of him -- AN EXTRAORDINARY ASS IN A TIGHT GREEN DRESS.

ALBERT (O.S.)

That is *not* Miss Eichmann's ass.

BUDDY (O.S.)

Miss Eichmann's ass is having hip surgery.

ALBERT

Why? What happened to her?

BUDDY

Freak accident.

INSERT: MISS EICHMANN, 65, steps off a curb and is drilled by a PINK VESPA, which then speeds off.

ALBERT

Wow. We definitely came out ahead  
in the ass department. Who is it?

BUDDY

That's her sub, Miss Murphy.

SMASH CUT TO:

INSERT: The Italian language instructional phonograph plays--

INSTRUCTOR (ON PHONOGRAPH)

*Avanzata Italiana conversazione  
numero sedici; Advanced Italian  
conversation number sixteen: "La  
donna è pazza." The woman is  
insane.*

(beat )

*"Scherzi a parte. È pazza come la  
merda del pipistrello." Seriously.  
She is batshit crazy.*

INT. HOME EC CLASSROOM - DAY

NANCY MURPHY, 32, writes the word "DETENTION" on the  
chalkboard. Nancy has a throw-back, 50's hotness, like she  
walked out of Beaver Cleaver's wet dream.

While most of the other boys pay attention to Nancy's ass,  
SAM, 12, pesters JEANNIE, 12, who tries to ignore him.

Nancy slowly sharpens a pencil, but keeps her eye on Sam. As  
she turns the sharpener handle, her hips undulate.

NANCY

Life is all about choices. You  
wouldn't be in detention today...

Nancy's perfect red lips purse as she blows the graphite dust  
off the sharpened pencil.

NANCY (CONT'D)

...if you had made different  
choices yesterday.

Sam puts his hand on Jeannie's thigh. Jeannie shoves his hand  
away, but Sam's persistent. Nancy sees this and--

In one sudden movement, Nancy turns and ZIPS THE SHARPENED  
PENCIL at Sam like a ninja star! The PENCIL IMPALES HIS  
CHAIR, inches from his crotch. Sam is paralyzed with fear.

INSERT: Albert and Buddy are shocked -- did she just do that?

NANCY (CONT'D)  
 Respect must be paid, Sam.

INT. SCIENCE CLASSROOM/HOME EC CLASSROOM

Albert leans in closer to listen to Nancy's lecture.

NANCY (O.S.)  
 Don't you think I'd like to throw  
 caution to the wind? Make unhealthy  
 choices? Be...*naughty*?

Albert involuntarily jerks and bumps his head on the table.

HOME EC CLASSROOM

Nancy hears this muffled "THUMP" and turns around.

SCIENCE CLASSROOM

Albert and Buddy throw their backs against the wall to hide.

ALBERT  
 (whispering)  
 Nice job, asshole!

BUDDY  
 (whispering)  
 That's the thanks I get?!

The following argument starts as whispering, moves to fierce whispering, and finally to an all-out screaming match.

BUDDY (CONT'D)  
 You've been a goddamned zombie for  
 five years! We've invited you to  
 dinners, tried to set you up--

ALBERT  
 Oh, Jesus, I'm sorry my grieving is  
 so inconvenient--

BUDDY  
 But it hit me today: You don't want  
 to heal. You have some perverse  
 mental thing here, where you think  
 your pain is, *noble* or something?

ALBERT  
 Wait. You think I like living in a  
 house, every inch of which reminds  
 me of Betty? Every inch smells like  
 Betty, tastes like Betty, IS Betty?

BUDDY

Yeah, I do!

HOME EC CLASSROOM

ALBERT'S RANT ECHOES through the school's vents.

ALBERT (O.S.)

You think I like living in that house, knowing it was MY fault, knowing I was the one driving?

SCIENCE CLASSROOM

ALBERT (CONT'D)

You think I like this, Buddy? You think I want to live like this? YOU THINK I LIKE PLAYING SCRABBLE WITH BETTY EVERY GODDAMN NIGHT?

BUDDY

Albert--

ALBERT

BETTY CHEATS!

Albert's desperation echoes throughout the entire school.

BUDDY

Betty's dead, pal.  
(beat)  
Betty's a box of dust.

A SCHOOL BELL RINGS. Buddy leaves. Albert sits alone in the dark and fights the tears.

INT. GRADE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - EVENING

On stage, Roxanne rehearses the role of Juliet. She says her lines to an imaginary Romeo.

Danny hides in the wings. He hangs on Roxanne's every word.

ROXANNE AS JULIET

*This is too rash, too unadvis'd,  
too sudden; Too like the lightning,  
which doth cease to be ere one can  
say it lightens. Sweet, good night!*

Danny steps out from his hiding place -- he's directly in Roxanne's line of sight as she continues.

ROXANNE AS JULIET (CONT'D)

*This bud of love, by summer's  
ripening breath, may prove a  
beauteous flower when next we meet.  
Good night, good night!*

ALBERT (O.S.)

Okay, not bad. Let's take a break.

Danny watches Roxanne walk over to the other girls. He sighs.

DANNY

(whispering, to himself)  
*O, wilt thou leave me so  
unsatisfied?*

BILLY (O.S.)

Hey, Danny--

Danny forces his gaze off Roxanne to see all the other BOYS ribbing Albert. James continually "stabs" himself in the head a COLLAPSIBLE PROP DAGGER. Danny goes over by the guys.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Hear about Mr. Big's meltdown?

ALBERT

Do you want detention, Billy?

BILLY

Doing this play IS detention.

JAMES

(looking O.S.)  
Holy shit!

ALBERT

James, no cursing--

JAMES

Seriously, Mr. B, LOOK!

Albert turns to see what James sees--

ALBERT

Holy shit.

Nancy STRUTS down the center aisle of the auditorium. Tight green dress. Six-inch heels. Red lipstick. The boys look on with growing erections, the girls flush with envy.

Nancy comes up on stage. The boys are terrified -- Nancy is too beautiful to look at. Danny hides behind Albert.

NANCY

Mr. Biggens. I'm Nancy Murphy.  
I'm new in town, and I hear it's  
been a while since you've escorted  
a young lady to dinner. I propose  
we kill two birds with one stone.  
I've made reservations at *Osteria  
de Pesci*. Pick me up at seven.

ALBERT

I'm sorry. I can't.

Nancy's lower lip trembles. She bites it to maintain control.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Miss Murphy, it's me; it's not you.

NANCY

Of course it's not me.

ALBERT

Well. Thanks. But no.

Nancy clenches a fist -- her perfect nails dig into her palm.  
But before she draws blood, she calms herself and breathes.

NANCY

You're making a mistake, Albert.

She calmly walks away.

DANNY

Mr. B, you're, like, an adult. If  
you can't deal with girls, what  
hope do I have?

And Danny sells his plea with puppy dog eyes.

ALBERT

Oh, stop it. You look like Bambi.  
(to Nancy)  
Miss Murphy! I'll, um, I'll meet  
you at the restaurant at eight.

Nancy strides triumphantly away. The boys cheer and high five  
each other. James sidles up to Albert and winks.

JAMES

You gonna tap that tonight, Mr. B?

INT. ALBERT'S HOME - NIGHT

Albert digs deeply through his closet. Pulls out a few ties -- none match his shirt. On the top shelf, A TIE BOX, underneath a STACK OF OLD RECORD ALBUMS. Pulls out the tie box, and--

--the TIE BOX AND ALBUMS CRASH DOWN ON HIM. He sits up. He holds the tie box in one hand, and in the other he holds--

The Italian language instructional album from the yard sale.

ALBERT  
(reading)  
*Learn Italian. The Language of  
Love...*

He opens the top of the album cover, and resting on top of the set of LPs, a NOTEBOOK. He picks it up, opens it.

ALBERT (CONT'D)  
Betty...?

INT. OSTERIA DE PESCI - NIGHT

Nancy sits alone at a table for two. She wears a slinky tight black dress slit up to here, black dinner gloves and holds an unlit cigarette in a fancy holder.

The dinner setup is untouched. Silverware and napkins, undisturbed. Water and wine glasses, unfilled. Crisp. Glistening. Perfect.

INT. ALBERT'S HOME - NIGHT

Albert sits on the edge of his bed and studies the notebook:

The notebook's pages are covered with PICTURES OF FAMOUS ITALIAN LANDMARKS, cut out of magazines.

Taped onto each Italian scene are SMALL PHOTOS OF ALBERT AND BETTY -- Betty has created the Italian vacation she and Albert never got to take.

Albert slowly flips through the notebook, lingers on every photo of Betty. He stops on a page with VERONA! handwritten across the top.

The cut-out picture: A COURTYARD AND JULIET'S BALCONY. Betty taped small "Betty and Albert" photos onto this page, too--

Betty stands on Juliet's balcony while Albert looks up from the courtyard. It's cute. And sad. And it tears Albert apart.

Albert silently reads Betty's handwritten note. WE HEAR:

BETTY (V.O.)

*...I want to walk the streets of Verona. I know we can't afford it yet. But I also know Albert will keep his promise. The promise he made the day we met. Someday, when I least expect it, Albert will surprise me and take me to Verona. And I have my own surprise for him: I've been learning how to speak Italian! The language of love! And when we get there, when I'm standing on Juliet's balcony and Albert looks up at me, I'll say, "Il cuore è fatto per amore. E il mio è stato fatto per il vostro."*

ALBERT

Betty. Why didn't you say anything?

MOMENTS LATER

Albert faces the foot of his bed. In front of him on the bed, a TIE on one side. The NOTEBOOK on the other.

EXT. OSTERIA DE PESCI - NIGHT

The "open" sign is turned off. Busboys overturn chairs and sweep. Nancy resolutely sits at her undisturbed table.

The restaurant lights go out. Nancy is lit only by the candle at her table. She leans over, lights her cigarette, then blows out the candle. Nancy takes a deep drag and her cigarette glows ominously in the dark.

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Other than the flickering of an O.S. candle, this room is completely dark, until--

Nancy KICKS OPEN THE DOOR and stands in the doorway, enraged.

NANCY

Where are you, Albert Biggens?!

This room is combination shrine to Albert/covert ops station. Photos taken surreptitiously. A portrait of Albert painted on black velvet. A piece of toast with his likeness. Creepy.

On a table, a middle school yearbook opened to the "School Staff" page shows Albert's picture and reads: "Librarian, Albert Biggens." A single devotional candle burns.

NANCY (CONT'D)

This isn't over. I've waited too damn long and worked too hard...

Nancy slams the door. It pops back open. She slams it again, again it opens. Finally, she GRABS THE DOOR, RIPS IT OFF ITS HINGES, AND THROWS IT DOWN THE HALLWAY.

She turns out the light, leaves. In the dark: Albert's photo, crazily lit by the devotional candle's flickering flame.

BUDDY (V.O.)

(answering machine)

Buddy and Barb. Leave a message.

Beeeeep.

ALBERT (V.O.)

Buddy, it's Albert. I need some time off. Can you run rehearsals till I get back?

(beat)

I'm taking Betty to Verona. It's what she wants. And it's what I promised...

INSERT: The Italian language instructional phonograph plays--

INSTRUCTOR (ON PHONOGRAPH)

*Avanzata Italiana conversazione numero diciassette; Advanced Italian conversation number seventeen: "L'Italia è piena di gente bella e accogliente."* Italy is filled with beautiful and friendly people.

(beat)

*"Tuttavia, alcuni di essi possono cercare di ucciderti."* However, some of them may try to kill you...

A TRAIN WHISTLE blows...

INT. ITALIAN TRAIN - DAY

Albert ignores the gorgeous countryside. He pores over a CROSSWORD PUZZLE BOOKLET. On the seat next to him, the BOX OF BETTY rocks rhythmically, jostled by the train.