The Other Road

by auselysium

Summary

The Other Road picks up 5 years after the end of 2018 Oscar winning film Call Me By Your Name. The year is 1988. Elio is living in New York and one night a familiar face shows up at his apartment. A story of moving on but never letting go, unfiltered memories, exploration of alternate paths and a perfect day in New York.

(AKA - I wrote Luca's sequel for him.)

Notes

This is a sequel so there are direct quotes from the book, snippets from James Ivory's original screen play that we didn't see in the original etc. I OWN NOTHING.

There are music cues interspersed throughout this script. You can find links on my tumblr to my preferred performances or you can just google them yourself! They aren't timed to fit or anything fancy like that but I do think they help.

Also, if you do nothing else, listen to the last song: Sufjan Stevens "The Predatory Wasp of the Palisades Is Out to Get Us!" The title is weird but it screams Elio and Oliver and this story.

The story continues in After New York.
The Other Road

a fan-created sequel to
Call Me by Your Name
Part 2 of 3
Written by Aus Elysium
Based on the novel by
Andre Aciman

I claim no rights to the book, movie, actors, director etc. etc.

This is purely a work of love and adoration of Elio and Oliver, the world created by Aciman, brought to life by Guadagnino and portrayed by Timothee and Armie.

OPENING CREDITS MUSIC CUE - Philip Glass - Glassworks 01. Opening

EXT. CITY - MORNING

The music fades into the sounds of a city. Car horns. Sirens. The hiss of bus breaks. The noise of millions upon millions of people crammed onto one island. There can be no doubt where we are. New York City, 1988. The camera reveals a grey, transitional morning, winter to spring. All the snow has melted for the year but the first flush of verdant green has yet to fully make its way across Central Park. It’s early April but any day could still bring a cold snap or the threat of a flurry.

ELIO PERLMAN, 22, walks along the paths of the park. He carries a shoulder bag, slung across his body, full of music scores. He un hooks a pair of headphones from around the strap and pushes play on a Walkman that is clipped to an outside pocket. The music plays.

MUSIC CUE - Morrissey - Suedehead.

He’s dressed for the weather. His oversized woolen pea coat is unbuttoned, the scarf undone around his neck is there more as a fashion statement than for warmth. He lights a cigarette as he walks with all the familiarity of a long time resident on his morning commute. New York is his home now.
INT. MUSIC STORE - MORNING

Elio exits the street and walks through the front door of a midtown music store. He exchanges a friendly greeting with the STORE OWNER, an older, washed-up, rocker type who is behind the counter helping a customer select guitar strings. ELIO heads straight to the back of the store, ascending a flight of stairs two steps at a time.

INT. MUSIC STORE - MORNING

On the upper landing there are a series of closed doors. From behind each door comes the sound of musicians practicing. Violins, saxophones, a piano or two. It’s a complete cacophony, but a familiar sound to ELIO.

He waits outside one of the doors. There is a rota on the door, a list of blocked off times and names. He checks the rota, then checks his watch, then knocks. It’s his time for the room and he’s mildly annoyed, but when the other musician opens the door, he’s nothing but polite as they exchange the space.

INT MUSIC PRACTICE ROOM - MORNING

Elio sits at the piano. It’s an upright, but a decent one. This is why he rents this space in particular. He pulls music out from his bag, placing them on the piano desk. Well-worn copies of high-voice Italian arias, Mozart violin concerti, a Broadway fake book, a folder of photocopies: The Juilliard School printed boldly on the cover. This isn’t the music he wants to be playing though.

Setting aside all the music on his stand, he rests his fingers on the keys, loving and thoughtful. Then as if remembering the voice of some demanding teacher he sits up taller on the bench, curls his hands so his fingertips rest on the keys. He plays for himself. He’s gotten better. The piece is by young Bach, written for his brother. We know this piece by heart too.

As Elio continues to play, flashes of Summer 1983, vibrant and warm, sprint through his memory and across our screen. Nondescript images: the spin of two bicycle wheels side by side, the curve of a statue, a peach tree heavy with fruit, a large doorway that looks out onto a porch. Images of home more than any one person.

A knock on the door cuts off his playing and his reminiscing. It’s time for his first rehearsal of the day.

We follow ELIO throughout his day. A litany of rehearsals with musicians of varying experience levels. ELIO works intently with the better ones, coaching Italian, matching phrases. ELIO tries to not let his disgust show with the others, including a YOUNG WOMAN who sings Cole Porter with
Jump cut to a ballet studio. He plays an old beat up, rehearsal piano for a set of ballet classes: 5 year old girls in sweet pink leotards, older students in powder blue, then a men’s class - black tights and white shirts. He watches them intently.

ELIO walks past Lincoln Center, fountain flowing, lights on. He likes to come here even if he doesn’t have a reason to. It’s Friday night and concert goers flood the plaza. He even says hello to a few musicians he knows that walk past him and towards the stage door. He’s envious of every single one of them - performers and audience alike.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

A funky place in the Village, record covers as art on the wall and quirky light fixtures. Elio’s group of friends is an engaging mix of men and women his age. All fellow artistic types. They are finishing their meal, countless empty beer bottles and drink glasses on the table. Elio sits with another cigarette in his mouth. He’s happy, smiling, but ok with not being the center of attention. His arm rests on the back of the booth, ostensibly around the shoulders of JOSH, 22.

JOSH is thin, unhealthily so. He’s fully engaged in the conversation, bubbly and overt, but occasionally he stops to cough, a deep rattling thing that seems out of place in a boy so young. ELIO seems to be the only one concerned.

EXT. NYC STREET - OUTSIDE THE CAFE - NIGHT

ELIO’s group of friends make plans. A club just down the street. “Won’t you come, Elio?” a sweet girl asks. She pouts as he makes excuses. “Fucking exhausted. Rehearsal in the morning,” He accepts a quick hug and a high five or two as people leave. JOSH trapeses away with the crowd but ELIO is quick to stop him.

ELIO

Josh, hey! You sure you’re up for this? We could just rent a movie or...

JOSH appreciates the concern but isn’t about to be swayed. He kisses ELIO the lips to silence him. It’s longer than a peck, purposefully ambiguous.
I’ll see you at home, mon amour.

Who exactly is this JOSH fellow?

EXT. NYC STREET - INWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

ELIO emerges from the subway stop way, way up town. The Inwood neighborhood. It’s mostly apartments in this part of the city, not much going on as far as night life, so it’s about as quiet as New York can be. The sound of airplanes flying into Newark across the Hudson, a stray taxi, a couple hurrying to catch a train. He turns off wide main streets onto narrower ones. It’s a good neighborhood but ELIO has lived here long enough to know he still needs to be constantly aware of his surroundings.

Which is why when he sees a figure bent over the buzzers on the steps leading to his building, ELIO eyes him warily.

ELIO

Can I help you, man?

The unknown person stands up from his crouched position. He makes for a formidable figure. He turns. It’s OLIVER, 29. The reveal is as blunt to us as it is to ELIO. He’s missing his tan and is dressed in professorial attire, a suit with his tie loosened, under a trench coat, but ELIO - of course - recognizes him immediately.

ELIO

Oliver.

OLIVER (smiling, warm but cautious)

Elio. God, look at you, you’re...How are you?

OLIVER comes down out of the doorway but makes no move to hug ELIO.

ELIO

What are you doing here?

OLIVER
Your dad gave me your street address but not your apartment number and I could barely make out the names on the mailboxes with the light.

ELIO

No, not my apartment, New York. What are you doing in New York?

OLIVER

Oh, I’m in town for a conference up at NYU. (He attempts to orient himself) Or down, I guess.

ELIO

Yeah, pretty much everything is downtown from here. You presenting new research or something?

OLIVER

I gave a paper earlier tonight.

ELIO

How’d that go?

OLIVER appreciates the question, even if it is just out of politeness. A direct result of a childhood spent around too much academia.

OLIVER

I think about all six people who were there enjoyed it.

The mood begins to soften.

OLIVER

There was an opening banquet tonight but those things are insufferable. I slipped out early, thought I’d try and catch you instead. Is there someplace we can go catch up? Grab a cup of coffee?
ELIO

Coffee at 11:45pm at night?

OLIVER is amused by how difficult ELIO is making this. Like that in and of itself brings about fond memories.

OLIVER

Ok. Maybe not my best idea ever. (after a beat, turning serious)

It’ll be five years this summer.

ELIO nods. He knows.

OLIVER

I figured that out on the subway up here.

He stops himself.

OLIVER (CONT’D)

That’s not true. I’ve always known.

ELIO

When do you leave?

OLIVER

Sunday.

ELIO (almost to himself)

Day after tomorrow.
Once again their days are numbered far too short. The lights of the city are soft on Oliver’s face. Something in ELIO’s heart breaks.

He hops up the front steps of his apartment and begins unlocking the front door to his building then looks back to where OLIVER still waits on the sidewalk.

ELIO

Come on, then.

INT. ELIO’S APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

OLIVER follows ELIO up a flight of stairs. Their feet are heavy on the old tiles. One floor, then another. It’s a walk up but OLIVER doesn’t mind. He smiles when ELIO looks back at him. ELIO turns back before smiling carefully himself.

INT. ELIO’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ELIO’s is a typical converted tenement-style apartment. Parkay flooring. Exposed radiators. The ceilings are tall, the space generous but it is decorated with all the panache of a recent college grad, which is to say, it isn’t decorated much at all. Foreign language movie posters are pinned to the walls. Records and cassettes are stored in milk crates on the floor. It’s a bigger space than a musician in his early twenties could probably afford and the furniture looks new. So while, ELIO is clearly not living off his parents wealth to fulfill his New York dreams, he also hasn’t completely lost all touch with the privilege he’d grown up with.

ELIO (a bit awkward)

Did you really want coffee?

OLIVER

No.

ELIO

Something stronger?

OLIVER
As ELIO investigates drink options in the kitchen, OLIVER explores the apartment, gleaning tidbits of present day ELIO as he does. Concert tickets to Carnegie from a few weeks ago, pulpy magazines strewn on the coffee table along with some new books, Toni Morrison and Vonnegut’s newest book.

ELIO (O.S.)

I think all I have is beer. Vodka maybe? It’s not even decent beer.

OLIVER (amused)

Whatever you have is fine.

OLIVER looks through ELIO’s tape collection, loosening his tie and rolling his shirtsleeves up. It gives us a perfect glimpse of his wedding ring.

OLIVER

How long you been in this place?

ELIO (O.S)

About two years.

OLIVER

You like it up here?

ELIO comes out with the beers. He’s made the effort of pouring them into glasses, at least.

ELIO

It’s Inwood, where every struggling musician, actor and artist in the city moves when school ends and you realize you can’t afford midtown anymore.
OLIVER

No one can afford midtown anymore. Besides who’s struggling? Your dad tells me you’re playing all the time.

ELIO (modest)

It’s accompanying mostly. Auditions, master classes. I do some recital work but the audience isn’t there to see me.

Other people’s successes, he means.

ELIO (CONT’D)

It’s good money and I know I shouldn’t complain. I’m making a living playing the piano in New York City, it’s ridiculous, but...

OLIVER

Not exactly what you thought you’d be doing?

ELIO shakes his head. Then as if realizing the oddity of what OLIVER had said before:

ELIO

Wait, when did you last talk to my dad?

OLIVER slickly avoids the question, as if doing so might reveal something. He takes a long drink instead. It’s the first time they share a smile.

INT. ELIO’S APARTMENT - COUCH - NIGHT

A cassette flips automatically in a stereo through a series of clicks. The tape spins. The music starts.

MUSIC CUE - Brahms Violin Sonata No. 1 in G major - 2nd mvt.

ELIO holds a picture of OLIVER’s family as they sit near each other on the couch, the mood
relaxed. Pretty auburn-haired wife, a blond baby in her arms, a toddler with the same pale hair in OLIVER’s. They are dressed up, maybe for a family wedding or a holiday.

ELIO (with wonder in his voice)

Oliver wife. Oliver sons. They’re beautiful.

He means it too. They are a handsome family, thought he doesn’t bother gushing so far that he asks for names. He hands OLIVER the picture back, who places it back in his wallet.

OLIVER

Thanks. People keep telling us there will come a day when we’ll sleep through the night again but I’m beginning to think it’s all just some massive government conspiracy they promulgate to young parents to ensure we keep populating the planet.

ELIO

I started sleeping through the night at two months, according to my mom.

OLIVER

Of course you did; you were born overachieving.

It’s kind of a ridiculous compliment, but ELIO likes it anyway.

ELIO

You going to have any more?

OLIVER

No, god - no. This is it, for me at least.

ELIO (pondering)

Wife, kids, career. The American dream. (Oliver nods along) I almost can’t imagine it though, even with the photographic evidence. I look at you sitting here and all I can see is that grad student. Sunglasses, bathing suit, translations scattered all around him on the grass or sneaking off on his bike after dinner to go play poker.
OLIVER

I haven’t played poker in years. Guess we all have to grow up eventually.

INT. ELIO’S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

It’s time for another round of drinks. The beers are all gone so ELIO pours shots. There isn’t much space in the narrow galley kitchen but neither man seems to mind. They aren’t exactly sober anymore.

OLIVER notices a pill bottle on the counter and the smile slips from his face. The drug name is a familiar one, having flashed across news headlines all year. AZT - the first approved treatment for HIV. He picks up the bottle.

OLIVER

Who’s Josh Winter?

ELIO

We live together.

OLIVER’S curiosity is peaked.

ELIO

Best friend not boyfriend. We tried that once. (Mischievous) Well, more than once. (relenting under OLIVER’s ever more amused looks) Enough times that it started feeling comfortable but not so many times that either of us got hurt when we realized we should just be friends. He was in my year at Juilliard, the first person I accompanied for collaborative piano. God, I hated that class. Couldn’t stand him, either, total primadona. But he was the best tenor I’d ever heard and he grew on me. He can’t really sing anymore, though. It’s too hard on his lungs.

ELIO takes a shot. So does OLIVER.

ELIO

His previous roommates kicked him out and he couldn’t go home so...
OLIVER shakes the pill bottle.

OLIVER

Because?

ELIO nods and OLIVER curses on his breath, “Shit.”.

ELIO

I was with him the day he found out. We’d gone to get tested together.

OLIVER reaches for him out of sympathy and relief. It’s a reminiscent touch to the shoulder. But the intention, the air, quickly shifts to something more when ELIO turns his face towards OLIVER. ELIO is the one to make the move. It’s a test kiss, cautious and slow. Just enough to see how OLIVER will react. OLIVER kisses back, but it is stoic, almost cold.

OLIVER

I can’t.

ELIO (grabbing the collar of OLIVER’s shirt and leaning in)

But I can.

OLIVER (stilling ELIO’s hand)

But I can’t. Even as much as I might want to.

ELIO steps back. It’s a mix of triumph and despair.

OLIVER (softly)

Did you think this is why I came here tonight? For a drink and a fuck?
ELIO

An ex-lover, away from his family for the weekend, appears after 5 years on my doorstep in the middle of the night. What’s a boy to think?

OLIVER (calm, but adamant)

That maybe I’ve missed you and not just your cock?

OLIVER is dumbfounded by ELIO’s nonchalance and more than a little hurt.

OLIVER (CONT’D)

Do you really think so little of me, Elio?

ELIO

Little? Oliver, I worshiped you.

The word affects both of them. ELIO pulls OLIVER into a deeper, kiss and OLIVER falters, caught on that horrible edge of wanting something that is forbidden. OLIVER pulls away, stopping before it can morph into anything more.

OLIVER (not without regret)

Don’t.

ELIO (in a flash of annoyance)

Then why are you here? Why now?

OLIVER (almost pleading)

You must know.

ELIO shrugs his shoulders, a “you tell me” kind of movement. It’s full of bitterness and spite.
ELIO
Whatever happened between us exists in some alternate time warp, Oliver. We can’t go back. I thought by now you would have learned to just let sleeping dogs lie.

OLIVER (jaw set, hurt)
Your voice of wisdom was always your winningest trait.

ELIO can’t (won’t) look at him. He pays close attention to the act of refilling his shot glass instead.

OLIVER gathers his things, wallet, hotel keys. As OLIVER is about the leave he turns back to ELIO once more.

OLIVER
I’m sorry, Elio. This was clearly a mistake. I’ll relay to your parents that you’re doing well.

OLIVER pulls the door closed on his way out and ELIO takes another shot, regretting everything.

INT. ELIO’S APARTMENT STAIRWELL - NIGHT

OLIVER goes down the stairwell, gaining speed as he descends attempting to put as much distance between himself and ELIO as possible.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE ELIO’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

OLIVER burts through the front door and catches his breath on the pavement, grateful for the night sky above him. A tragic look falls across his face, a million feelings, a million memories. He had hoped for such a better outcome. He turns his eyes skyward.

Suddenly the light-polluted sky of New York becomes the early morning dark of a familiar pensione in Bergamo, a flashback to their last morning together.

FLASHBACK
Tears fill OLIVER’s eyes as he sits on the bed and watches ELIO sleep. The train whistle pierces the reverence and OLIVER turns at the sound. Then from the bed, we hear the soft stirring of ELIO waking. OLIVER turns back to him, making no attempt to hide his tears.

ELIO (soft, sleepy but clearly affected by OLIVER’s emotional state)

Hey, come here.

OLIVER slips into bed next to ELIO. They hold each other impossibly close until the memory fades.

END FLASHBACK

Back on the New York street, OLIVER tamps down every emotion, giving one last glance up towards ELIO’s apartment, and starts walking towards the subway.

INT. ELIO’S APARTMENT - LATE-LATE NIGHT/ALMOST MORNING

JOSH gets home from the club, slightly unsteady on his feet. He’s not drunk, he’s just exhausted. He shuts the door quietly behind him when he sees all the lights are off in the apartment.

He moves carefully towards ELIO’s bedroom door, noticing the empties on the coffee table on his way. He stops outside the door then knocks softly, opening it when there is no answer.

JOSH (whispering)

Elio?

But ELIO is fast asleep on his stomach - sheets pooled around the small of his back. JOSH watches for a beat, not desiring him, just a bit envious of his seemingly easy sleep.

INT. ELIO’S APARTMENT- KITCHEN - LATE-LATE NIGHT/ALMOST MORNING
JOSH enter the kitchen, switching on the light. He blinks at the brightness. He notes the empty shot glasses. ELIO has clearly had a night for himself. He fills a tall glass of water then picks up the same pill bottle that OLIVER had examined earlier. With a heavy sigh, he opens it, putting the large pill in his mouth, his nightly dose. It hurts for him to swallow.

INT. ELIO'S APARTMENT - LATE-LATE NIGHT/ALMOST MORNING

For once the city is quiet, all noises feel far away. We linger on ELIO as he sleeps.

In a flash, moving fast as ELIO’s unconscious mind, we are in CREMA at Midnight. ELIO and OLIVER, naked, heads laying close on the same pillow. OLIVER’s fingers are in ELIO’s hair, tugging at his ear. ELIO kisses his cheek and OLIVER pulls back, ready to ask ELIO to call OLIVER by his own name. It is a moment burned into ELIO’s memory, one he’s visited innumerable times, both sleeping and awake.

Then in a snap, we are back ELIO’s bedroom in present day New York as ELIO wakes himself from the dream. He rolls over onto his back, breathing heavy, hating the dream/memory. He grabs his watch from the floor where he’d thrown it in his haste to go to sleep the night before. It’s the same clunky, black thing he’s always worn, and seeing that his alarm is about to go off, sighs heavily and pushes himself up out of bed.

INT. ELIO'S APARTMENT - MORNING, LATER

Sunlight filters through the apartment window. The iron-working of the fire escape outside creates interesting patterns across the floor and across JOSH’s face, who sits on the couch in a short satin nightgown. He would be incredibly handsome, in a wholesome, American way, if not for the illness that is deconstructing his body from the inside. His bare feet rest on the coffee table still covered with the empty beer bottles and pint glasses ELIO had neglected to clean up from the night before.

ELIO enters through the front door, same music bag over his shoulder from the previous day.

ELIO greets his friend, chipper, as if nothing strange or life changing had happened the night before. He goes to the kitchen for sustenance, inquiring about JOSH’s day.

JOSH (uninterested)

I’m mad at you.
ELIO (O.S.)
What? Why?

JOSH (mimicking Elio; nasal and whiny)
I’m too tired to go out, guys. I have rehearsal.

ELIO (coming out of the kitchen with a bowl of cereal)
Well, I did have rehearsal. Holy Week is coming up and choir director still hasn’t picked any rep out for Maundy Thursday yet so I’ll probably end up playing my Haydn arrangement. Again.

He rolls his eyes as he plops into a chair next to the couch and digs into his cereal.

JOSH (snickering)
You are the weirdest Jew I know.

ELIO
Say what you want about the religious Right, they give a good paycheck.

His workplace woes properly diffused, ELIO turns his attention back to his perturbed friend.

ELIO
So what did I do?

JOSH
You met someone last night and didn’t tell me.

ELIO
When was I supposed to tell you, exactly? (JOSH doesn’t much care for ELIO’s attempt at logic) Besides, you have it all wrong.
JOSH

There is no way you drank all of this (he points at the coffee table) plus *all* the missing vodka in the kitchen by yourself and still managed to get your skinny ass out of bed to rehearse *Christ the Lord is Risen Today* with the upper east side’s worst church choir.

ELIO gives him a tempering look but realizes he probably should have cleaned before he went to bed if he wanted to avoid an explanation.

JOSH

So...who was it?

ELIO

I didn’t go anywhere last night. I came straight home. And I didn’t meet anyone. I swear.

JOSH

Bull shit.

ELIO

There was someone waiting for me when I got home though.

JOSH

Well, that’s not creepy.

ELIO

It was Oliver.

The name doesn’t ring any bells for JOSH.

JOSH

Is that the waiter guy with the weird neck tattoo...?
ELIO

No, no, Oliver. Like, my Oliver.

JOSH

(He finally gets it, but can’t quite believe it.) Wait...Italy Oliver?

ELIO

Technically it's Massachusetts Oliver if we're keeping our epithets up to date.

JOSH

Holy shit.

ELIO

Yep.

JOSH can’t help but stare for a moment.

JOSH

What did he want?

ELIO (after a sad moment)

Something impossible, I think.

JOSH

Are you ok?

ELIO

I'm fine. He came, he left. Nothing's changed.
The look on his face says otherwise, but JOSH doesn’t press.

ELIO

I’m gonna take a shower.

He steps over JOSH’s legs then turns back.

ELIO

You take your meds yet?

JOSH

Yes, mummy. But seriously, you sure you’re ok?

ELIO tussles JOSH’s hair, kisses the air in his direction and leaves JOSH to drink his coffee in peace.

INT. ELIO’S APARTMENT - MID-MORNING, JUST BEFORE NOON

ELIO walks into the bathroom, a tiny outdated space with black and white subway tiles and a barely there sink.

He looks at himself in the mirror, examining his face as if looking for a change. Clearly, he’s not as unaffected as he’d just let on to JOSH.

Seeing nothing but himself, he begins to undress.

INT. ELIO’S APARTMENT -LIVING ROOM - MID-MORNING, JUST BEFORE NOON

We hear the water begin to run in the background, an annoying whine to the water pressure, as JOSH reads a glossy magazine. He hums a snippet of opera - Puccini’s Tosca. The meatiest tenor
aria from act one - his voice is pure and beautiful. He coughs on the high note, catches his breath.

Someone knocks on their door, which is strange since they have a buzzer out front. Still, JOSH goes to open the door, pulling his dressing gown tighter around him, being sure to cover a KS lesion on his chest.

JOSH opens the door to OLIVER.

OLIVER

Hi, sorry, there was someone leaving when I was about to buzz up and…

He pauses for a moment.

OLIVER

You must be Josh.

JOSH

And you must be Oliver.

He steps back, keeping his hand on the door frame while making a good show of looking OLIVER up and down. OLIVER is still dressed professionally, though slightly more casual than the day before. A different pair of trousers and a button down shirt under a blazer. It’s a bit yuppy, but JOSH still likes what he sees. Who wouldn’t?

JOSH (as if finishing a conversation in his own head)

This explains so much.

OLIVER is so focused, he barely realizes JOSH’s meaning.

OLIVER

Is Elio here?
JOSH

He just got in the shower. He tends to take long ones after he’s been to church. Needs to wash the Jesus off, he says.

OLIVER

Wait...church?

JOSH (amused by Oliver’s confusion)

It was just for a gig. You can wait for him to get out if you want. I’ll make another pot of coffee.

OLIVER appreciates not having to even ask.

INT ELIO’S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MID-MORNING, JUST BEFORE NOON

JOSH preps a coffee to OLIVER’s liking, handing it to him when he finishes. His hand trembles slightly at the end of his too thin wrist. It gives OLIVER pause, a clench of sympathy, before he takes the mug. JOSH notices and reads it completely the wrong way.

JOSH

I promise, it isn’t catching unless things get a lot more steamy than a cup of joe.

OLIVER

I know that. It’s just...I’m sorry, for what’s happening to you.

JOSH brushes it off with a wave of his hand.

JOSH

Unless you’re the bastard who gave it to me, you don’t need to apologize. And you? I would remember.
OLIVER takes JOSH’s flirtation with a good natured smile and a bit of bashfulness.

OLIVER

You can still feel regret for a situation without actually being the guilty party. I used to live in the city, you know. I was here when people were just starting to get sick. They were calling it Gay Cancer.

JOSH

You were at Columbia right?

OLIVER

3 years for my PhD.

JOSH

Then you scampered off to an upstanding life in Breader-ville.

The turn in conversation sets OLIVER back.

OLIVER

He’s told you about me, then.

JOSH

Of course he has. The wedding ring was a pretty good giveaway too, though.

JOSH finishes preparing his coffee with a flourish, turning back towards OLIVER.

JOSH

He used to talk about that summer a lot when we first met. I know details about that you that would make the hair on your head curl like a bad perm.

He gives an immodest glance towards OLIVER’s crotch. OLIVER doesn’t mind the teasing but wants to stay on topic.
**OLIVER**

He never did forgive me, did he?

**JOSH (confused)**

Forgive you? For what? He told me good things only. Always made it sound ridiculously idyllic.

**OLIVER**

Well, that’s exactly what it was.

**JOSH (lofty)**

Perfect summer, perfect place, first love, first heartbreak...

**OLIVER**

Hurting him was never my intention.

He feels like he owes JOSH an explanation.

**OLIVER (CONT’D)**

I had hoped it was just fun and games for him, like it should have at his age. But it was something different for me. I always knew I’d pay for it, somehow.

JOSH eyes him carefully.

**JOSH**

And? Did you?

They have only met mere moments ago but there is the directness in the way JOSH speaks that OLIVER appreciates. The fact that JOSH’s young days are limited gives him a sage quality, an ability to understand life and death beyond his years. Add to this the fact that OLIVER can already see how deeply JOSH cares about ELIO gives OLIVER the space to look back at JOSH, bleak and
exposed.

That is answer enough.

A barely there smile forms on JOSH’s lips and he nods as if he has just granted OLIVER his approval, and maybe his pity, which is really saying something considering the cards he has been dealt.

The shower/whine noise stops, like a cue.

JOSH (gently)
I’ll let him know you’re here.

INT ELIO’S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

OLIVER drinks his coffee alone, hips resting on the edge of the counter, lost in thought. Coming here is a risk and he knows it.

ELIO (O.S.)
You came back.

OLIVER looks up to see ELIO standing there, still in the hasty process of getting dressed. His hair is a dripping wet mess. He looks young, eager and expectant. It gives OLIVER hope.

OLIVER
Are you happy that I did?

ELIO
You know I am. More than I should be, probably.
Me too.

ELIO

I have a thing this afternoon, downtown, but you could come along if you want? I’d like it if you did. Unless, your conference...

OLIVER

The chair of my department is paying me to be there.

ELIO prepares himself for the excuses but then OLIVER smirks.

OLIVER

Doesn’t mean I have to be though.

ELIO’s smile is warm but then OLIVER turns serious.

OLIVER

About last night…

ELIO

Don’t. We’re past apologizing.

They arrive at the same realization, in the same moment: it is ok to feel happy that they are together again.

EXT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - NOON

MUSIC CUE - Steve Reich - Piano Counterpoint

The universe has gifted them with a perfect New York afternoon. The sun shines on the historic
OLIVER

I took something from your room when I left.

ELIO

The postcard off my wall.

OLIVER (amused, almost to himself)

Of course you noticed.

ELIO

It had a picture of the Gulf of Spezia from 1904 on it.

OLIVER nods along, there is something professorial about his demeanor now.

OLIVER

And this stretch of coast of is famous because...

ELIO

Because it is where Shelley supposedly drowned. People travel to that town, specifically, to pay respects to their favorite poet.

OLIVER

And do you know what Shelley’s wife and friends did when they found his body washed up on shore?

ELIO

Why are you quizzing me?
OLIVER shrugs, not having any particular reason aside from loving another glimpse into ELIO’s encyclopedic, beautiful mind which ELIO, of course, is happy to show off.

ELIO

They cut out his heart before cremating him. *Cor cordium.*

OLIVER

Heart of hearts.

For all the casualness of their stroll, this conversation feels important, though ELIO can’t figure out exactly why. Maybe OLIVER has brought this postcard and Shelly up for a reason. But whatever that reason might be, OLIVER gives him no hints.

ELIO

I could have had you charged for petty larceny, you know. Sent the *polizia* after you.

OLIVER

All the way to New York for a postcard, huh?

ELIO

All the way. Maynard fished it out of a flea market in Paris and sent it to me. Said it reminded him of Crema which makes no sense since we’re nowhere near the sea.

OLIVER

Who was this Maynard guy, anyway?

ELIO

Your predecessor.

ELIO bumps OLIVER in the shoulder, teasing, after OLIVER gives him a look.
ELIO

Not like that.

OLIVER (grandly quoting the card)

He wrote, “Think of me someday” on the back. You sure it wasn’t like that?

ELIO laughs.

ELIO

I’d been too young to notice if it had been. Do you still have it?

OLIVER

Yeah, it must be in a box somewhere. We just moved to a new place so...

They have arrived in front of Hamilton Hall, home of the Columbia Classics department. OLIVER stops as he is presented with his own history. He look at this building, where he spent countless hours, bent over texts, writing till his fingers cramped, frustrated by his limitations while full of expectations for his future, and feels very little but distance.

ELIO

You want to go in?

OLIVER looks at the building for a moment longer, then back at ELIO. He smiles gently. This isn’t the time in his life he’s interested in revisiting today.

OLIVER

I’m good.

They continue walking down the street together.

EXT. NYC RESERVOIR RUNNING LOOP - AFTERNOON
They walk the track around the large reservoir in the middle of CENTRAL PARK. Gorgeous views of the skyline through the near-naked trees. ELIO trails his fingers along the chain link fence, known as the Suicide Fence, there to prevent city residents from jumping.

Runners make their way around ELIO and OLIVER’S leisurely stroll

EXT. NYC STREET CORNER - LATE AFTERNOON

ELIO paces up and down the street as OLIVER speaks into a payphone with his wife. He’s left the door to the phonebooth open, almost as if he wants ELIO to hear, like he doesn’t want to hide this. Still, a cigarette helps. “How did Jake sleep last night? Um yeah, it’s going fine. Lots of good connections. It’ll just depend on when I get out of the city. Yeah, yeah, you too. Hugs to the boys. Yep, bye.”

OLIVER hangs up the phone and comes back out onto the street. It’s like he’s check an obligation off his list.

ELIO

All ok?

OLIVER

All ok. You up for lunch?

EXT. STREET SIDE CAFE - LATE AFTERNOON

ELIO and OLIVER sit in the window of a small ethnic cafe, Indian or Thai. Lots of half empty plates and bowls fill the table. The lunch rush is over and the rest of the restaurant is empty. Behind them waiters wipe down tables, sweep, prep for dinner. ELIO and OLIVER finish their meal but are in no rush to move on. We join them mid-conversation.
Sometimes I don’t even understand how these kids graduated from high school, let alone were admitted into a four year college. It’s like, were you ever taught how to write an actual sentence? I’m lucky to have my job, don’t get me wrong, but it sure as hell isn’t Columbia.

ELIO (mimicking)

It isn’t Columbia.

OLIVER

Well, it isn’t.

ELIO

Bet it isn’t Harvard, either.

OLIVER

You really going to start going off on my alma maters, Juilliard?

Checkmate to OLIVER. The teasing comes easily. It feels like flirting, like something they can’t help but do. ELIO looks out the window.

ELIO

You ever…

OLIVER

What?

ELIO

You ever wonder what things might have been like if you’d made a different decision along the way? Gone somewhere else for school or...chosen a different fork in the road.

He doesn’t go so far as to ask anything leading like, “Never left Italy or never gotten married?” but
that doesn’t mean the thought doesn’t cross his mind. Doesn’t mean it doesn’t crosses OLIVER’s either.

**OLIVER**

Do you?

**ELIO**

Sure. I could have stayed in Italy, studied literature instead. Gone into academia just like you and my dad. Or I could have ended up studying music in Paris instead. Maybe we’d be overlooking the Seine right now instead.

It’s not an altogether unpleasant image.

**OLIVER**

Your father and I spoke about that once.

**ELIO**

Me studying in Paris?

**OLIVER**

No, this idea of alternate paths. He was referencing Dante at the time, I think.

**ELIO**

Can’t help but roll his eyes. That sounds like his father.

**ELIO**

And what did he have to say about it?

**OLIVER**

He talked about mistaken turns, *l’altra via*. He said some people spend a period of time going down those other paths, others are too afraid to follow them at all. And sometimes, the wrong path ends up being the right one all along, or just as good as, anyway. He said Dante called it his *traviamento* and that it happens to everyone, even him.
ELIO

Even you?

It’s the closest they have come to the idea that maybe theirs could have been a different story. And ELIO feels the need to know with a reckless urgency. But OLIVER is not nearly ready to broach that subject because the answer to too clear.

OLIVER picks up ELIO’S package of cigarettes and pulls one out. ELIO retrieves his lighter from his back pocket and hands it over.

OLIVER lights the cigarette, finding it hard to meet ELIO’s gaze.

OLIVER

I think that you can’t live your life always looking backwards, wondering if you’re doing the right thing or if you’ve gone astray. It’ll only drive you nuts, Elio. Trust me.

ELIO watches his former lover, as if seeing the way the years have weighed on him for the first time. He leans forward, crossing his elbows on the table in front of him.

ELIO

Ok, but seriously how much do you talk to my dad?

OLIVER laughs, which had been ELIO’s goal in the end.

INT. AUDITION WAITING ROOM - AFTERNOON

It’s time for ELIO’s one work obligation for the day. OLIVER sits, surrounded by would be hopefuls auditioning for something horribly cheesy (cruise line, seasonal amusement park work). These are not Broadway’s best and brightest and OLIVER feels massively out of place as people stretch, do vocal warm ups etc. around him.

Luckily, ELIO comes into the waiting room, followed by the same YOUNG WOMAN ELIO had
rehearsed with the day before. She is dressed to look like a 1950’s pin-up model, tight curls, red lips and all.

**YOUNG WOMAN**

Oh, god, was that ok? I don’t know, something about that time just felt really...right, you know?

**ELIO** (trying to be polite)

Yeah, no, it was good.

**YOUNG WOMAN** (almost squealing)

You really think so? I didn’t get off from you at that one spot?

**ELIO** (lying through his teeth)

I’m sure they didn’t even notice.

She continues to go on about how well she thought she did, while ELIO makes desperate, ‘can we please get out of here now’ faces at OLIVER as he ushers her towards the door. At one point the YOUNG WOMAN turns back to ELIO for more affirmation at which point he plasters a fake smile on his face, too late, when she does.

The whole scene is entirely too entertaining to OLIVER and he watches on, a hand over his lips to hide his smile.

The trio finally make their way out into the stairwell.

**YOUNG WOMAN**

For you. (handing him a folded pile of cash) Thank you, Elio! You are seriously the *best*.

She throws her arms around ELIO which takes him by surprise.

**ELIO**
Let me know when you hear anything.

**YOUNG WOMAN** (going down the stairs, blowing kisses as she does)

I will! Thanks again!

The second she’s through the outside door at the bottom of the steps, ELIO breaks into totally unprofessional laughter. He falls against OLIVER who, catches him, unable to stop himself from joining in the laughter too.

**EXT. LINCOLN CENTER PLAZA - EARLY EVENING**

**MUSIC CUE** - Leonard Bernstein - *On the Town*, 2nd Mvt Lonely Town (Pas de deux)

It’s that transitional time of day, not quite evening but a weakening of the sun in the sky hints of twilight. There is a softening of the light and a softening to the way OLIVER and ELIO’s eyes catch as the walk around the fountain. The sound of the water a pounding rush against other noise.

There is also this sense of knowing that day will become night eventually. Can they stretch this day together into the nighttime? And if they do, what is the implication? The illicit kiss from the night before is never far from thought.

ELIO points out his old stomping grounds around The Juilliard School, whose building is adjacent to Avery Fisher Hall, the Metropolitan Opera. This elegant cultural hub had been his home turf for 4 years of conservatory.

**ELIO**

I applied here to be closer to you.

This is a revelation. A confession of a younger ELIO who had just fallen in love for the first time and he wonders if he shouldn’t have said it.

**ELIO (CONT’D)**

I mean, it’s not like I expected anything; I think I just liked the idea of it. Besides, my chances of
getting in here were pretty minimal.

OLIVER

Why’d you think that?

ELIO

International student of an unknown teacher auditioning by tape, that definitely reduces your chances.

OLIVER

Well, they obviously knew talent when they heard it.

ELIO makes an uneasy sound.

ELIO

‘Strong natural instincts but poor technique.’ That’s what my professor said. I spent my freshman year being unmade by him, lesson by lesson. I wanted to quit and go back home so many times.

OLIVER

But you didn’t.

ELIO

As miserable as it was, I knew I was getting better. Plus, I think I felt like I’d be letting my parents down if I gave up.

OLIVER

Your dad was so proud when he told me you’d be coming to New York for school. Though, I remember wondering why it was I was hearing such good news from him and not you. You hadn’t written me in months.

That had obviously hurt OLIVER at the time.
ELIO
You had other things keeping you busy by the time spring rolled around and I knew I’d gotten in.

OLIVER
Like a wedding, you mean? (a self-loathing laugh) So that is why you stopped.

ELIO
Just didn’t really see the point anymore.

OLIVER
I didn’t suddenly become a different person just because I got married. Didn’t mean that I’d stopped caring or forgotten. (a quiet admission) I told you that.

I remember everything. An echo in their collective memory. It’s the first verbal recognition of their intimacy.

ELIO (contrite)
M’sorry.

OLIVER
We’re past apologies, right?

They continue their stroll around the plaza, wandering past posters outside Alice Tully Hall (which is connected to the Juilliard School) for a piano concert that evening. They read the details. On another night, they might try and go.

OLIVER
I’d love to hear you play again someday. I’d even pay money for a ticket.

ELIO considers things for a moment, then with a confident, “Follow me,” he leads OLIVER to the
stage door of the famous performance venue.

EXT. STAGE DOOR OF AVERY FISHER HALL - EARLY EVENING

ELIO opens the door for OLIVER.

OLIVER

Seriously?

ELIO (like it’s obvious)

I know a guy.

INT. SECURITY STATION BACKSTAGE - AVERY FISHER HALL - EARLY EVENING

Behind security glass, a sits a SECURITY GUARD - ill-fitting, short-sleeve shirt, badges, emblemed ball cap and the like - sits on a high stool, black and white monitors behind him with his arms crossed. He has the same look on his face a worn parent might looking at a pestering child. This is not the first time ELIO has come asking for exceptions to be made.

ELIO has draped himself across the counter, pleading his case. This is clearly not the suave maneuver he’d hoped to impress OLIVER with.

GUARD (thick NYC accent)

There’s a concert tonight, man. I can’t let you on stage, you know the rules.

ELIO

But the concert’s in, like, 2 and half hours.

The GUARD checks his watch.

GUARD
ELIO nearly growls in frustration.

**ELIO**

We’ll be out of there in plenty of time for the tuner to get in. 30 minutes tops. I swear, no one will even know we were there.  *Please.*

The GUARD eyes ELIO, then OLIVER, not sure what part he is playing in all this.

**GUARD**

20 minutes and then I’m turning the lights off.

**ELIO**

I owe you. Seriously.

**GUARD**

You always say that.

He gets off his stool with a grunt.

**GUARD**

You’re going to get me fired of these days, you know that E?

**INT ALICE TULLY HALL - EVENING**

ELIO and OLIVER walk onto the silence of the stage. Their footfalls are loud in the perfect acoustics. As promised, our security guard friend has turned on the lights. The brilliant stage lights overhead are warm on their skin, like a summer sun they haven’t seen together in years. The lights of the auditorium illuminate every red-velvet covered chair, the elegant sweep of the wood paneled walls.
There is a single piano on stage, an 11 foot Steinway Concert grand, the best of the best. ELIO lifts the cover and tinkles the keys, playing nothing, a little pentachord, the start of a familiar Mozart tune, maybe. OLIVER revels in the way the space fills with sounds.

**OLIVER**

You played here before?

**ELIO**

Just once, senior year for concerto competition finals. The winner got to solo with the top orchestra down the street at Carnegie.

OLIVER is genuinely impressed.

**OLIVER**

What did you play?

**ELIO**

Ravel G major concerto.

**OLIVER**

Bold choice.

**ELIO**

Stupid one, probably. I played so well. Like I knew while I was performing that it was something special. That doesn’t happen, that you can be outside yourself like that in the moment. It felt like ‘this is it’, you know? The moment my future starts. If I could win this...

ELIO becomes aware of how revealing this is. Letting OLIVER into that moment, into a part of his past that OLIVER had nothing to do with. It’s bridging a gap.

**ELIO (CONT’D)**
I was runner up. They ended up giving it to a freshman violinist from Taiwan who played Tchaikovsky.

Another almost. Another not quite. ELIO’s New York experience has not been the gilded dream he’d imagined.

OLIVER

Do you still remember the piece?

ELIO (affronted)

Of course.

OLIVER

Then if the Maestro pleases.

OLIVER gestures for ELIO to sit, so he does. ELIO takes a moment, collecting himself, then brings his hands to the keys and plays.

MUSIC CUE - Ravel Piano Concerto in G - 2nd Mvt.

ELIO begins with the 2nd movement, a slow, haunting, almost-waltz - the piano alone, left and right hand in two different meters.

OLIVER is unprepared. The sadness of the notes. The purity of ELIO’s advanced technique. He can hardly bare to watch him.

As the phrases intensify, the notes drifting past him in this magnificent space, OLIVER closes his eyes, his back to ELIO and for a moment, he imagines him at the piano in CREMA. Shirtless, jean shorts, boyish short hair. OLIVER watches on from the edge of a chair, young, yellow bathing suit on, realizing how real his infatuation with ELIO is becoming.

OLIVER opens his eyes and turns. And there he is again at the piano on this stunning stage. His ELIO - mature, filled with life experiences, elegant, beautiful. He is struck by how much has
changed 5 years, and yet almost nothing at all.

OLIVER walks to him, coming to stand directly behind ELIO as he continues to play. Delicately, so as not to disturb his nuanced performance, OLIVER reaches for ELIO. Fingers brush precious curls. His hand trails the curve of ELIO’S jaw line. These subtle touches that are more evocative than any overt act could ever be. They are whispers of desire. Like memory. Like a plea for permission.

ELIO melts. Into the keys, into OLIVER’s touch.

ELIO stops mid-phrase. OLIVER sits next to him on the piano bench, his back to the instrument so they are face to face. They are both breathless. The look on OLIVER’s face is one of utter tenderness.

ELIO

I thought...you couldn’t?

OLIVER

So did I.

They kiss because they have to. Because they are empirical. Because there is no other way but this inexplicable bond between them.

Five years evaporate on their lips. It’s a beautiful, sweeping moment.

The stage and audience lights cut out, leaving them in near darkness, left with only the work lights from backstage.

GUARD (O.S.)

Alright, Romeos. Time to go find yourselves a smaller room.

ELIO and OLIVER share an embarrassed look.
GUARD (still O.S., to himself as he walks away his voice fading)

Preferably one without a $200,000 Steinway in it.

EXT. LINCOLN CENTER PLAZA - DUSK

ELIO and OLIVER walk through the plaza, with a quick determined pace. The softness of twilight around them. They’d be holding hands, if they could.

The lights of the fountain turn on as they walk past, illuminating the water, turning their shapes to black outlines in shadow. OLIVER slips his arm around ELIO’s shoulders as they continue to walk out of frame.

FLASHBACK EXT. CREMA - PERLMAN’S GARDEN - DUSK

ELIO comes through the back garden door. He’s looking for OLIVER. He sees him, far off, sitting alone in a darkened archway of the villa’s garden. The image of OLIVER in the moonlight touches him, filling him with something deeper and more complicated than he’s felt that summer until now.

OLIVER notices ELIO approach, making room for him. ELIO touches his shoulders and kisses him on the neck, letting his lips linger. Both men sense the importance of the touch.

ELIO sits, knees to knees.

ELIO

What are you thinking about?

OLIVER

Things. Going back to the States. The courses I have to teach in the fall. My book. You.

ELIO almost can’t believe that is possible, near bashful.

ELIO
No one else?

**OLIVER** (a tender smile)

No one else.

They are completely on the same page.

**INT. ELIO’S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

ELIO and OLIVER stumble through his front door, laughing and giddy, souls light from any and all worry. This is an effortless moment between two friends. Not free from life’s consequences but unaware of it for now. OLIVER carries a pizza box and ELIO has a half eaten slice in his hand. They kiss in the doorway over width of the box.

It is revealed that JOSH has witnessed the whole thing.

**JOSH** (knowing, smirking)

You boys have a good day?

ELIO and OLIVER have no qualms of having been found out.

**ELIO**

Let’s go dancing.

**OLIVER**

No, I...What?

**ELIO**

When was the last time you danced?
OLIVER

My wedding?

JOSH (as if he’s really thinking about it)

I don’t think that counts.

ELIO

That definitely doesn’t count. We’re going.

JOSH and OLIVER share a look. With ELIO this determined and jubilant who are they to get in his way?

JOSH claps. That settles it!

JOSH

I’ll make phone calls, we can make a night of it.

ELIO’s attention is suddenly on JOSH.

ELIO

Two nights out in a row. You sure that’s a good idea?

JOSH

I’m sick, not dead. Besides (he gestures at the full height of OLIVER with a finger) I need to see how all of *that* looks on the dance floor.

INT ELIO’S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

MUSIC CUE - Talking Heads - This Must Be the Place
ELIO and OLIVER go through ELIO’s wardrobe trying to find something for OLIVER to wear. After ELIO shows him several options and OLIVER promptly rejects them, he pushes ELIO out of the way and starts digging through ELIO’s closet himself.

He shoves shirts, suit coats and even a set of tails out of the way until, at the very back, he finds a pale blue shirt, its buttons only halfway done, the fabric soft and familiar, and a note - written in his own hand - still attached to the old wire hanger. Billowy.

OLIVER takes it out with reverence and reads the note to himself, fingering the note he’d written while ELIO slept, smiling privately, before turning to ELIO to show him his discovery.

For a moment, ELIO is sheepish, unsure how OLIVER will react to his blatant sentimentality. He feels very young. But OLIVER is touched beyond words that ELIO has kept hold of his shirt all this time. It only serves to confirm what he’s always hoped.

He pushes ELIO up against the nearest wall, kissing him now not with the tenderness of the concert hall but overt lust. This is OLIVER in rare form, consumed with a ferocious confidence and assertion that ELIO had seen only glimpses of in their time together. ELIO responds in kind.

OLIVER drops to his knees and undoes ELIO’s fly with a wanton grin. OLIVER yanks ELIO’s pants to the floor and we watch ELIO’s face morph as OLIVER begins to pleasure him (off screen). OLIVER, for all his sacred, married life, has not lost his skill with male anatomy and a stunned laugh escapes ELIO’s mouth as his fingers find OLIVER’s hair.

INT ELIO’s APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ELIO and OLIVER emerge from ELIO’s bedroom sometime later. ELIO wears a tight fitting long sleeve shirt. OLIVER is, of course, in Billowy. They try to look innocent but ELIO’s cheeks are flushed pink and OLIVER’s hair isn’t nearly as neat as it had been before.

JOSH, who is waiting for them on the sofa, takes one look at the pair of them and simply rolls his eyes dramatically as he gets up to leave.

INT - NYC GAY CLUB - NIGHT

MUSIC CUE - New Order - Bizarre Love Triangle
JOSH, ELIO and OLIVER make their way through the dark hallway just past the entry to the club. The music is still muted at this point. They leave their coats at the coat check.

OLIVER

I can’t believe they carded me. Me!

ELIO

He was flirting with you.

OLIVER

Really?

JOSH

Oh Oliver, you’re far too intelligent to play coy.

They enter the main room of the club and the music surges. It’s Saturday night, party night. Lights. Music. Men and women, but mostly men. Energy and vibration.

JOSH quickly finds the other friends they were meeting. ELIO greets them, gives quick introductions. He doesn’t really care that his other friends are here, anyway. He moves to the bar to order drinks.

OLIVER is hesitant. Feeling very adult, very suburban, very married in this thrumming room of beautiful youth. And yet, he takes it all in, remembering his days in the city when he could have been one of these people - free. Safe in this space and at ease in his own skin if only he had been brave enough to take that road.

ELIO brings over two shot glasses, the music already manifesting in his limbs, ecstatic and loose. The fruity drink goes down easily. ELIO slides towards the dance floor, offering his hand back towards OLIVER as he does.

There is a moment of realization for OLIVER when he realizes that he can so he does.
INT - NYC GAY CLUB - NIGHT

ELIO and OLIVER are lost in each other as they dance together. Lights pulsating across their lips as the music surges. Bodies touching, hands everywhere. They make for a pretty sight on the middle of the crowd, but they might as well be completely alone for as much as they notice the people around them.

ELIO presses in even closer, hands rough in his hair.

ELIO

Take me home. Fuck me, Elio.

OLIVER instantly remembers and moans his name into ELIO’s ear.

INT ELIO’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jump cut to ELIO and OLIVER stumbling through the front door, clothes already being torn away. Shoes get pulled off and thrown with a thump against the floor. Belts slap through loops. This is desire, unchained.

They push and pull each other in turn, swaggering into ELIO’s bedroom and falling back on his bed.

OLIVER lands on top of ELIO, his large body looming in a way that is both arousing and careful. It is in this moment, where every intention is obvious and there can is no turning back, that ELIO pull back. He searches OLIVER’s face, looking for something more than just a wild, half-drunken fuck. He looks and finds the same man who had made love to him with controlled patience their first night together. The who had allowed ELIO to do the same to him only a few nights later. He finds the same eyes of the lover whose idea it had been to take each other’s name and become the other.

The space around them becomes sacrosanct.

Final articles of clothes are removed. A condom is taken from ELIO’S nightstand.
Their bodies join, moving together, face to face, with soft gasps and moans.

It is like life comes back into both of them.

INT. ELIO’S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

The apartment is quiet. ELIO wakes on rumpled sheets, alone. Mild panic. Has OLIVER left? No, his clothes and shoes are still strewn about the floor, but the bedroom door is open, a slight draft catching in his curtains. He pulls the comforter off the bed, wraps it around his body and goes to find OLIVER.

INT. ELIO’S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Into the dark room, ELIO calls out for OLIVER, softly, as if not to break the stillness.

There is a catch and flare of a lighter, the glow of a cigarette tip. From the fire escape, OLIVER answers, “Out here.”

EXT. ELIO’S APARTMENT - FIRE ESCAPE - LATE NIGHT

City sounds, distant but comforting provide a safe backdrop for their moment. Everything feels very far away. Like nothing of the outside world can quite reach them.

OLIVER is seated in the corner of the fire escape, wearing one of ELIO’s oversized sweatshirts and his boxers. ELIO likes how OLIVER looks in his clothes. His legs are tucked up against him, making his long body look impossibly small.

This is the look of a man who has, with complete intention, fully aware of what he’s doing and the vows he’s broken, found himself again. It’s not regret, it’s heartbreak. The wretched realization that a suspicion he’d harbored for 5 years is horribly (wonderfully) true.

ELIO comes to sit next to OLIVER, shoulder to shoulder against the fire escape rail. He shares his
blanket, draping it over OLIVER. It is big enough that they are encircled in the quilted fabric, sharing its warmth.

They are quiet for a time, passing the last of OLIVER’s cigarette (which he’s totally stolen from ELIO’s jeans) back and forth.

OLIVER flicks the finished cigarette over the edge of the fire escape, watching it land on the sidewalk. The look on his face is still bleak.

ELIO

You can say it was a mistake if that makes it easier. I get it.

OLIVER

You have that much experience with married men in your bed to know the signs?

ELIO

Nah, I’m pretty sure you’re my first. (then shy, realizing what he’s said) Seems to be a trend for us. I just know you.

OLIVER

It wasn’t a mistake, Elio. The farthest thing from it. It was a choice. And given the chance, I’d make the same choice again.

ELIO tips his head towards OLIVER, humbled by his tenderness. OLIVER rubs his nose against ELIO’S curls, his lips brushing his skin.

OLIVER (CONT’D)

But it won’t be without consequences, the extent of which I can’t even begin comprehend right now. And that scares me.

ELIO feels completely out of his depth. He knows nothing about marriage, about fatherhood. He only knows that in this moment, he’s never cared for OLIVER more. That manifests as a futile dream. He slips his hand into OLIVER’s.
ELIO

I wish we could start over in that little room, not like we were then but as we are now.

OLIVER

What did I say about looking backwards, huh?

ELIO

That everyone does it.

OLIVER appreciates ELIO’s logic. He laughs softly.

OLIVER

Fair enough.

ELIO

Maybe this time you wouldn’t fight it so hard and I’d find the words I hadn’t been able to then. And we could stand on that balcony, the one at the end of the hallway by our rooms.

OLIVER

I remember.

ELIO

Rubbing shoulders in the sunlight, making plans, everyday for the rest of my life.

OLIVER

Every day of mine too.

OLIVER nearly chokes on the words. ELIO is no less moved.
Letting himself go in a way he has never allowed in front of ELIO (perhaps in front of any one) OLIVER folds into ELIO’s side, seeking comfort against his neck, his skin, like a small child might. They hold each other, not afraid to grieve the fact that their wishes and their realities cannot align.

They could have had this. If only they’d taken the other road.

INT. ELIO’S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

On the bed stand next to ELIO’s bed is a Polaroid camera, several blurry shots of the two of them together face up underneath.

ELIO is propped up on his pillows, in boxers only (as is OLIVER) as he looks through several polaroid shots. He selects one and gives it to OLIVER. OLIVER considers the picture with fondness then places it on top of his pile of clothes on the floor.

He settles back into the bed, under the covers, drowsy.

ELIO

Don’t fall asleep on me.

OLIVER (shaking himself awake)

I won’t.

ELIO looks down at him and reconsiders. OLIVER sure does look comfortable.

ELIO fits easily into OLIVER’s arms, like their bodies remember how to fit together.

ELIO

The Met Museum collection has statues from the same era as the ones you and my dad were studying. Let’s go there, tomorrow.
OLIVER blinks at the city outside the window. Morning is closer than either of them would like. He pulls ELIO close.

OLIVER

Tomorrow is today.

INT. ELIO’S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MORNING

MUSIC CUE - Erik Satie - Gnossiennes No. 3

OLIVER and ELIO stand under the hot spray of the shower together. They exchange soft, sleepy, smiles through the steam. Sudsy fingers work through the other’s hair. Occasional light kisses that are effortless but also resigned.

ELIO catches OLIVER’s left hand in his. He plays with OLIVER’S wedding ring for a moment, watching the gold drip wet, considering all it represents. In a wave of possessiveness, he takes that same hand and places it (off screen) on his cock, a daring move. But OLIVER likes this brazenness and responds, equally bold. The boys fall together against the shower tiles for one last tryst.

INT. ELIO’S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

OLIVER emerges from the bathroom, one towel around his waist, another working through his hair. That shower is still running as ELIO finishes up the hot water. OLIVER only notices JOSH, who is leaning in the doorframe between the kitchen and the living room, when he speaks.

JOSH

Last day in paradise, huh?

OLIVER

You must hate me.

JOSH

That seems extreme considering I only met you 24 hours ago.
OLIVER (as if it’s obvious)

But, you know what I’ve done.

He makes a feeble gesture over his shoulder towards the shower and ELIO within. OLIVER’s guilt has little to do with what awaits him at home, and all to do with ELIO.

OLIVER (CONT’D)

You know I won’t stay.

JOSH

He knew that you wouldn’t stay when he invited you up for drinks two nights ago. He knew that when that he fell in love with you 5 summers ago.

The use of that one particular word catches OLIVER in the chest. He breathes unsteadily around its weight.

JOSH (CONT’D)

He knew and he did it anyway because he’s been happy with you, Oliver. Even if it’s only ever a glimpse, even if it takes an entire lifetime for you both to sort out what this really means...He’s needed this just as much as you. And if you can’t see that, well maybe you aren’t the brilliant understander of philosophy that I’ve been led to believe you are.

JOSH’S assurances are warm, delivered with kindness and gratefully received by OLIVER. They share a moment of mutual love for ELIO, each one glad for the other. The shower turns off.

OLIVER (quickly, realizing time is short)

Will you…?

JOSH (cutting him off)

Of course I will.
OLIVER

That means you need to take care of yourself, too.

JOSH salutes OLIVER with a relaxed hand.

JOSH

Model patient.

INT - SUBWAY TRAIN CAR - MORNING

Sunday morning and the train traffic is light. OLIVER is wearing his own clothes again. They stand, holding onto the same pole. As the train sways, they let their bodies touch. It’s a safe way for contact in public. But there is already a sense of finality to this journey and their smiles don’t reach their eyes.

EXT - STREET OUTSIDE THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART - MORNING

Outside the Met Museum, the city is loud. Cabs drop off tourists and large groups congregate on the wide concrete steps that lead to the grand, columed exterior.

ELIO walks a few feet ahead of OLIVER then realizes OLIVER has stopped walking. He turns.

This is it.

ELIO

You’re not coming inside are you?

OLIVER wordlessly shakes his head. He steps in close, but not so close as to make a scene. ELIO hates this, feeling like the entire city is on hand to watch him say goodbye to OLIVER.

OLIVER
I need to pick up my things from the hotel, start heading home. I hope my car hasn’t been impounded.

ELIO

You have a car.

It’s not a question. It’s the visualization of an artifact from OLIVER’s other life that ELIO knows nothing of. It is the wildest idea.

ELIO

I’ll come with you. I can help you pack.

ELIO begins walking back towards the subway but OLIVER catches him at the elbow.

OLIVER (plaintive)

Elio. We could stretch this day on forever and then I might never leave.

ELIO

And that would be a bad thing?

OLIVER smiles sadly. Of course it’s a thought that had crossed his mind more than once in the last 24 hours.

OLIVER

Maybe it wouldn’t.

OLIVER pulls ELIO against him, an extended goodbye embrace. He speaks into ELIO’s ear. In a city of millions these words are for him alone.

OLIVER

Whatever happens between us now, I just want you to know. Promise me, Elio.
He pulls back, holding ELIO’s gaze with assurance.

**OLIVER (CONT’D)**

Don’t ever say you didn’t know.

His words hardly make any sense and yet ELIO understands them completely. This is OLIVER’s I love you. His If I could, I would.

His promise that this isn’t the end for them by far.

It is another wordless goodbye and ELIO is the one who walks away. He turns back to see OLIVER rooted to the spot, watching him.

**ELIO**

I’ll write you.

**OLIVER**

I’d like that.

ELIO starts walking towards the museum again. We pan out, watching, just as OLIVER does, until ELIO disappears into the crowd.

OLIVER turns and heads towards the subway.

**MUSIC CUE - SUFJAN STEVENS - “The Predatory Wasp Of The Palisades Is Out To Get Us”**

While the song plays, we see OLIVER and ELIO moving through their lives intercut with flashbacks from Crema, Bergamo, and their day in the city.

ELIO walks through the Greek and Roman collection at the Met, having decided to go, regardless.
The statues remind him of home, of his father, of OLIVER. The light from the glass roof overhead takes on an almost physical presence.

The two boys dance through the street of Bergamo at night. They kiss against a wall, blissfully drunk.

OLIVER skips down the steps of the subway, making his way to the train. He knows the way. This used to be his city too.

ELIO returns home to his apartment. JOSH is there, tidying the kitchen. ELIO kisses him on cheek then holding his jaw in one hand, looks at him appraisingly. He gives him a pleasantly surprised look. JOSH looks better, more color to his cheeks. Maybe this drugs really do work. Maybe ELIO won’t lose him after all.

ELIO and OLIVER’s feet twist around each other underwater in the pool at the Perlman villa. The camera pulls back to see them making flirtatious, carefree eye contact with each other as Mr. and Mrs. Perlman look on, approvingly.

OLIVER drives down a New England road, the sun shining through the open windows. He likes the drive, the private moment of remembering.

ELIO enters his NYC bedroom. Billowy is tossed across his bed. He picks it up, bringing it up to his face. It smells like OLIVER again. After carefully hanging it back up in his closet, he pulls out a yellow legal pad, shoves the laundry off his desk chair and the clutter on his desk out of the way and starts writing a letter. “Dear Elio,” he writes. The salutation pleases him.

ELIO and OLIVER stand at the counter of a tiny pizza shop, waiting for their order. They are laughing like idiots.

OLIVER arrives home, a modest but nice middle class ranch somewhere in Massachusetts. His older son comes bounding out the front door. His wife, with the baby on her hip is not far behind. OLIVER scoops up his son, kissing him playfully. His wife hands him the baby as he kisses her on the cheek. It is a cursory greeting but not unwarm. She thinks nothing strange of it.

ELIO drops a letter into a mailbox on the street corner near the music shop then hurries up the steps to his studio. His name isn’t on the list so he adds it. He sits, no music on the stand and plays for himself. Eyes closed. Head back. It’s bliss.
Two male bodies move with timeless passion in the darkness of Midnight.

OLIVER enters his home office. There are unpacked boxes in the room, the book shelves are mostly empty. They clearly haven’t been in this house long. But on his desk, in pride of place just to the right of his Macintosh computer is ELIO’s postcard - framed.

He takes it out from behind the glass, fingerling the old paper carefully. He reads the faded words (in German) from the original sender, the words from Maynard. He pulls out a pen from a desk drawer. In a blank corner, with dark ink, OLIVER writes the words “Cor Cordium” along with the dates he’d been in New York 3/19-3/21 1988. From his breast pocket, he pulls out the Polaroid of him and ELIO and tucks it behind the postcard, before putting all of it back into the frame. He sits back in his chair and examines his work.

He’s content for the first time in ages.

Roll End Credits

End Notes

The story continues in After New York. See link below.

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