

Live by the book

Written by
Roberto Ronzulli

EXT. ROME - DAY

FADE IN:

Opening credits rolling over shots of a beautiful, quiet, Roman morning. **Noah** O.S.

NOAH

I've known him since we were kids. We have always been a sort of yin and yang. I was the geek, he was the rebel. I was spending my time on books, he was spending his time on girls. No matter what, though, whenever we needed each other, my bro was there for me as I was for him. And then, you know, time goes by and life takes you to different patterns. Marco moved back to Italy with his family, I kept studying in L.A. We both moved on, I guess. I actually finally met a girl and, even if it is a bit early, I have decided to marry her. She is a bit of a mess, but who is not nowadays...

FADE TO:

Title screen: LIVE BY THE BOOK

EXT. STREETS OF TRASTEVERE - DAY

Noah, geeky guy wearing a short sleeves shirt tucked in a pair of khaki pants, is walking in the streets of Trastevere holding a phone for directions, with a quite voluminous hiking backpack. He reaches a typical looking street, and, after looking for a while on a buzzer, finally finds his friend's name on it. After several trials and some waiting, **Marco** appears from a window:

MARCO

screaming Hey duuuuuude, come up!
(followed by incomprehensible but cheerful Italian)

NOAH

The front door is closed!

MARCO

Just push it hard, it will open!

INT. MARCO'S APARTMENT - DAY

Noah gets through a half-open apartment door, and finds himself into one of the messiest places he has ever seen. Marco clearly just woke up, still dressed up for a night out, and is preparing some coffee.

MARCO

DA MAAAN is here! Come on dude, let me hug you!

They perform a ritual handshake

NOAH

Great to see you too! You haven't changed a bit (looking at the messy room with puzzled expression). Well, it must have been a great party!

MARCO

What party?! Aw, you mean this little mess?
(acting like an exorcist, holding two spoons like a cross) Mom, come out from this body!!

Noah and Marco sits at the table, start drinking coffee, talk (no clearly audible audio, background music fades in)

EXT. STREETS OF TRASTEVERE - DAY

(Music, no dialogues) We see Noah and Marco walking through the streets of Trastevere, talking happily, having fun, getting an ice cream.

MARCO

...and then you were like "no sir, there aren't two Noahs in this class, there is only one idiot that copied my name, as well as the whole test!"

NOAH

(laughing) I should have become a comedian...would have actually saved some time and money! Listen, let's get to serious business. As you know, I am here to find the best rings I can afford. You know, something that screams "I am precious, Italian, hand-made cool stuff!"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCO

Do you want the support of a local fashion expert?

NOAH

Why not! Have anyone in mind?

MARCO

Ouch, that hurts! I know exactly what's hot and what's not. Trust me.

NOAH

If you say so! Let's just take a walk and look at the windows, OK? Maybe you can give me some of your "expert" advice.

MARCO

Whatever you say boss, YOU-ARE DAMAAAAAN! (pretending to grab Noah's crouch)

Marco and Noah start walking again through the streets. We see them stopping at several shops. Noah pointing his finger at the windows and Marco turning him down every time he seems happy about what he found.

INT. MARCO'S PLACE - EVENING

After several shops, and stops, Marco and Noah are back home with no rings.

MARCO

Dude, you are worse than a broke ass bitch: Never happy, wanting to buy everything and ending up with nothing.

NOAH

Hey, I gotta find the best rings I can afford within the budget, and I have only one day left.

MARCO

And by the way, what would this budget be exactly?

NOAH

Five, maximum six Ks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCO

(very interested) In this case, my friend, I might have the solution for you. Andiamo!

Marco Stands up, rushes out of the apartment pulling Noah.

EXT. STREETS OF TRASTEVERE - NIGHT

Marco and Noah gets in front of a building's entrance.

THE CAMERA FIRST POINTING ONLY AT THE ACTORS' PROFILES, DOES THEN A 90° DOLLY AND GOES BEHIND THEIR SHOULDERS. THEN MOVES UP TO SHOW THE SHOP'S SIGN: MINI MARKET.

NOAH

Is this a joke?

MARCO

Man, you gotta trust me on this. I know the guy, and I know that the mini market is nothing of what it seems. Ever heard of under cover pawn shops?

NOAH

Porn shops?

MARCO

PAWN shop! P-A-W-N!
He might have something incredibly precious for incredibly cheap! Come on.

They enter the cheap looking mini mart. The shop is dirty and chaotic. A middle aged Indian man is sitting behind the counter, eating some food from a bowl. As soon as Marco gets in, **Bharat**, the shop owner, stands up, dropping the food on the counter, and starts yelling at him in Italian.

BHARAT

Con quale faccia ti ripresenti? Non ti ricordi che mi devi ancora tre mila euro (he does the 3 sign with his hand)? You gotta be thankful that our friendship goes back a long time, otherwise... (mimics a slap)

MARCO

Carissimo Bharat! Long time no see!
Yes, my mom is doing very well, as
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCO (cont'd)
well as my three dogs (he rises up
three fingers imitating what Bharat
did)

NOAH
whispering Three dogs? You don't
even have one dog!

MARCO
Shush, shush! Listen Bharat, we are
here because my dear friend, Noah,
here, is looking for the best rings
the eternal city can offer. He is
looking for something special,
outstanding, stylish...and PRECIOUS
(wink wink)

BHARAT
Well, in this case, I might have what
you are looking for. What's the
budget?

Marco, following the fingers trend, rises up four fingers.

BHARAT (cont'd)
Ok let's see, something for four
hundr...

Noah stops him before he can finish the word

NOAH
THOUSAND euros! (smiles and nod his
head)

BHARAT
(barely holds himself from the shock)
F-ffff- Four. Of course, thousand.
Sorry but my English is a bit rusty,
you know.

Takes out a jewelry box and opens it in front of them. Two
pretty rings are stored in it.

NOAH
Well, I gotta say that they look
pretty damn good...

BHARAT
These are handcrafted my friends,
their value goes way beyond your
budget, but a friend of Marco's is a
friend of mine. Only for you, only
for today, 3.500 Euros.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCO

Hey look at that, you even saved 500 Euros!

NOAH

Aw, shut up!

MARCO

Dude this is the chance, take it or leave it. Do you remember the old times? YOLOOOO

BHARAT

IOLLOOOO

NOAH

You know what? You are right. YOLO MAN! 3.000, deal?

Noah and Bharat shake hands.

INT. A PUB - NIGHT

We see Marco and Noah celebrating the "success" in a pub, drinking several beers. We see then Marco talking to a girl, **Anastasyia**, on the dance floor, handing her some money and pointing to Noah who is sitting at the counter. Anastasyia is a good looking, East-European blond, wearing some fairly sexy clothes.

She goes talking to Noah, who is not aware of what's going on but is actually pleased of being picked up by a good looking girl. We see them flirting, laughing, drinking. Marco gets closer to them after a while, and hands Noah some keys.

MARCO

I need to run an errand...go ahead, I'll see you back home. These are the shop keys, you will find my house keys in the drawer behind the counter. Not the first from the left, not the second, but the forth. Which is actually the third from left up...(he is clearly tipsy and confused)

NOAH

Cool, got it, got it. Shop. keys. Ok. I will find them somehow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCO

See you later champion (pretends to grab Noah's crouch)

INT./EXT. PUB AND STREETS OF TRASTEVERE - NIGHT

Noah and the girl, both pretty drunk, after a few more shots (the girl teaches Noah how to do a over the back glass throw, "Russian style") gets to Marco's dad shop: a butcher. Noah looks up at the sign, then looks at **Anastasiya**, and starts laughing hard. They decide to get in together to look for the apartment keys. As soon as they get in, Noah grabs a salame and hands it to the girl.

NOAH

Can I interest you in some homemade *salame*? Unfortunately this is the only one I can offer you tonight!

ANASTASIYA

Well, maybe then you can try out my *mozzarella*!

Grabs a couple of mozzarella cheese from a box, and tries to look provoking squeezing them like if they were tits, but starts laughing hard right away. We see the two of them talking, eating nearly everything they can find in the shop, laughing and flirting like two teenagers on a first date.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. MARCO'S APARTMENT - DAY

Noah wakes up in Marco's place.

MARCO

Good morning princess! I suppose that you won't be having breakfast after yesterday night's feast

NOAH

Oh God, my head is exploding. What a night dude (Noah starts talking like Marco). I don't remember much...just
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NOAH (cont'd)
the fact that I laughed a lot with
Anastasyia, the girl from the Pub

MARCO
Are you sure you only laughed a lot
wink wink? The shop was a mess!

NOAH
Totally sure about that. Even if I
was quite tipsy, I am still a man of
sound principles who is going to be
married soon.

Looks for the rings in his pants, hanging on a chair next to
the bed, but can't find them. Starts panicking looking
everywhere in the room

NOAH (cont'd)
Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit. It can't
be! I've lost them! That's
impossible, I had them in this pocket
the whole time!

MARCO
Well then, are you sure you had your
pants ON the whole time? They might
have slipped off while performing one
of your famous stripteases!

NOAH
Stop it, this is serious! And I told
you, we didn't do anything

MARCO
Are YOU being serious? What the heck,
I even gave her 50 euros...

NOAH
Wait, what? WHAT WHAT WHAT? Are you
telling me that you HIRED a hooker,
for me?

MARCO
Hey slow done dude, she is not a
hooker, OK? It's more like she's a
friend of mine and I owned her 50
euros

NOAH
What da fuck man! I can't believe you
did this to me. (starts pushing him).
A prostitute, you hired a prostitute.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCO

I did NOT! And even if I did, it would have been FOR-YOU, Mr. Perfect-but-boring life! (pushes him back)

NOAH

Well fucking thank you then, Mr. perfectly-shitty-mess! Guess what, your "friend" just proved to be a thief, as well as a very unprofessional hooker! I can't believe I fell for it. I am such an idiot. But all this happened because of you, THE KING OF THE MORONS! (pushes him again)

MARCO

Hey, stop it, ok? It was meant to be a nice night. I even gave you the keys to my shop, and look, you raided it down. Is that how you thank your friends? (pushes him back)

NOAH

Fine, fine, let's call it even. We got more important things to worry about now. We have to find Anastasyia. You said you know her, right?

MARCO

Well, I know where she works, we can start from there.

EXT. STREETS OF TRASTEVERE - DAY

We see Marco and Noah coming out of a clothing shop.

NOAH

Figures, she didn't show up at work today. I am in deep shit now. I have a plane leaving tomorrow, no rings, no money left. (sarcastically) Thanks to YOU my friend.

MARCO

I know man, I screwed up. I am sorry. Listen, let's go back to Bharat and see if he still has something cool left.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NOAH

Yeah, and buy it with what money?

MARCO

Well, one thing at a time. Andiamo.

They start walking towards the Mini Mart but on the way there, they see Anastasyia coming out of a shop, holding her phone.

ANASTASYIA

Hey guys, what a coincidence! I was just going to call you now! (to Noah)
Good morning party animal!

NOAH

I can't believe you did that. I even thought for a second that you were a nice person.

ANASTASYIA

What are you talking about? Yesterday night, when you passed out, I've even put you in bed and got back home by myself. Was I that bad?

NOAH

It's more about the cost. Three thousand euros seems to be a bit overpriced

MARCO

Hand us back the rings, thief!

ANASTASYIA

Oh god, not again these stupid rings! Why would I have them? I actually don't wanna even see them, ever, again! I had enough of them the first time

NOAH

What are you talking about?

ANASTASYIA

Were you even listening to me last night?

FLASHBACK

INT. BUTCHER SHOP - NIGHT

NOAH

Yeah, I think that at the end of the day this is the right thing to do. I know, I know, I am probably making a mistake, but what should I do? I will probably never find anyone else who likes me...

ANASTASYIA

What are you talking about? I am sure that a lot of girls find you attractive and would say yes to you, even without the help of some expensive jewelry! And I am one of them! Now that you got me interested in..., show me those rings!

NOAH

Ok, get ready for it. Don't forget to wear your sunglasses, as you might get blinded by their shining greatness!

Takes out a box from his pocket and slowly opens it. Anastasyia is petrified.

NOAH (cont'd)

Wow, this is the reaction I was looking for! Are they THAT good?

Anastasyia starts crying.

NOAH (cont'd)

Ok, this is a bit too much

ANASTASYIA

I can't believe that I have to see them AGAIN. This must be a curse.

NOAH

Did I already show them to you before? Jeeez, I must be drunk, sorry!

ANASTASYIA

Let me guess, you bought them from Bharat, right?

CONTINUED:

NOAH

Yeeah! How do you know that? Wait, wait, don't even tell me that...these were yours?

ANASTASYIA

It's a long story...

NOAH

Well, we have a long night ahead, and a lot of salame left. bring it on girl!

END OF
FLASHBACK

EXT. STREETS OF TRASTEVERE - DAY

MARCO

Ok, but this doesn't really explain how they disappeared.

ANASTASYIA

I don't know that, ok? They probably didn't even disappear. Did you look everywhere?

(Noah and Marco look
at each other)

NOAH

The shop!!!

They start running back. Anastasyia follows them slowly.

INT. BUTCHER SHOP - DAY

Marco and Noah gets into the shop and start looking for the rings everywhere. Unfortunately, they don't succeed.

NOAH

Oh well, that's official, they are gone

MARCO

Let's not give up, maybe we didn't look hard enough

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NOAH

Listen bro, we gotta be realistic and accept it for what it is. At this point I better call her and tell her everything. At least I won't have to do this in person once I am back in L.A.

We see Noah nervously talking on the phone, for a long time, rolling his eyes and getting extremely annoyed. In the mean time, Anastasyia, who got to the shop later on, is cleaning up the mess with Marco. Noah finally hangs up the phone.

NOAH (cont'd)

WHAT-A-BITCH!! Dude, you won't believe this, she started yelling at me saying that I am not good for anything but books, and that I shouldn't even go back to her if I don't prove to be good enough to at least find these fucking rings.

MARCO

Yikes

ANASTASYIA

Listen Noah, I am very sorry for what happened, and I wish I could help you. Maybe we can find a solution, I know a couple of shops

NOAH

That's nice of you, but that's alright. I have a flight in 10 hours, no money, and you know what? I am actually reconsidering all of this. I can't believe that the woman that should be by my side, for the rest of my life, treated me like shit for such a silly thing.

MARCO

Hey, you know what we say in Rome? *Magna e nun ce pensà!* Let's eat something, and forget about all this mess!

NOAH

(stops a second to think...then screams) YOLOOOO!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They start preparing a meal taking stuff from the shop. We see them laughing and joking, up to the point where Anastasyia grabs two mozzarellas, bare hands, and finds one of the two rings in the "misty" water.

NOAH (cont'd)

Holy moly! Is that what I think it is?

Anastasyia stands still, holding the ring on her wide open hand, looking at it.

Noah gets close to her. His right hand slowly goes under her hand holding the ring, and with his left one picks it up. At first they both look down at the ring, then simultaneously look up, in each other eyes.

(DETAIL OF THE HANDS) Noah moves his right hand in order to hold Anastasyia's one, then looks at her, smiles, looks back at the ring and throws it back over his shoulder like Anastasyia thought him to do with the shot glass (Marco grabs the ring)...and then, kisses her.

FADE TO:

The opening song plays in the background. Scenes of Rome at night, rolling on the screen. Noah O.S

NOAH (cont'd)

Well, you guessed it. I ended up not taking that flight and enjoyed a bit more of the famous Dolce Vita...as much as the cash I got back from selling that ring allowed me to. Anastasyia? Never judge a book from its cover. She is one of the nicest and most caring people I have ever met, and believe it or not, this is all thanks to Marco. What would Marco be, if he was a book? Probably one of those weird coloring books for adults, with a title like "Free your inner child" or "Live life in color". And what about me? I don't know yet, but if this is the first chapter, I really can't wait to read the rest of it!

"LIVE BY THE BOOK" appears on the screen.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END.