

DOGS IN LOVE

Written by

Susan Lee Hahn

Susanleehahn@mac.com  
847.224.5356  
SusanLeeHahn.com

3312 Lealand Lane  
Nashville, TN 37204

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DOGS IN LOVE

FADE IN:

INT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT - DAY

An elegant apartment on Chicago's Gold Coast with views of Lake Michigan in the distance where OLIVER REGAL (50-ish), bald, fit, and blind sits at his desk. Waiting. Ready.

His yellow lab, BO (3+) cavorts with a chew toy as if it were a lover. Bo's persona is full of angst and teenage bravado.

The elevator RUMBLES as Oliver 'taps' his way to his front door with his cane. He opens it to a vestibule with the elevator.

The sign on his apartment/office door reads, OLIVER REGAL, M.S.W., Clinical Therapist, Canine Interpreter.

BO (V.O.)  
Oliver! Glasses!

Oliver searches his pockets, but can't find his glasses.

P.O.V. Oliver - A muddy menagerie of gray shapes cloud his vision as subdued shafts of light appear barely define the space. The doors open. The shafts of light shift slightly.

With unblinking eyes, Oliver angles his head in their direction and greets RAMONA (40+, painfully thin) and her dog, WINNIE, a luscious, long-haired sheep-a-doodle.

RAMONA  
You look just like your photo on  
the jacket cover! I've read all of  
your books. I'm a big fan.

Oliver extends his hand into mid air. She reaches, shakes it.

OLIVER  
Nice to meet you. I'm Oliver Regal  
and this is BO.

RAMONA  
I'm Ramona and this is Winifred.

OLIVER  
Please, come in.

Oliver lowers his hand, palm out. Winnie 'shakes' it.

BO (V.O.)  
She's gorgeous! I want her!

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Calm down. You don't know if she  
can hear on our frequency.

BO (V.O.)  
Calm down! I'm in love!

OLIVER (V.O.)  
You fell in love with a salami  
sandwich last week.

Oliver motions in the direction of his office. They file in  
as Bo blathers on about Winnie.

BO (V.O.)  
I want to make babies with her.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Chill! She's not here for you.

Bo offers her his slobbery chew toy. She prances away without  
responding and follows Oliver into his office.

BO (V.O.)  
She even has an adorable tush!

WINNIE (V.O.)  
Not another word, Slobber Boy.

BO (V.O.)  
Slobber boy! I love that nickname!

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Winifred, my apologies.

WINNIE (V.O.)  
Please, call me Winnie.

Ramona settles herself and Winnie across from Oliver and Bo.

OLIVER  
(to Ramona)  
Everything we discuss in here will  
be strictly confidential.

RAMONA  
Will we be in one of your books?

OLIVER  
Perhaps. Anonymously.

RAMONA

Are you recording this?

OLIVER

With your permission.

RAMONA

Of course. I just hope my voice  
doesn't sound fat.

She giggles nervously, then an uncomfortable silence.

RAMONA (CONT'D)

That was a joke!

OLIVER

So, what brought you in today?

RAMONA

It's Winifred. She's not eating.  
I've tried switching her food,  
feeding her at different times of  
the day. It's like she's boycotting  
food all together.

OLIVER

May I speak with Winnie directly?

RAMONA

She told you she likes to be  
called, Winnie? You do speak dog!  
Have you always spoken dog?

OLIVER

I've always had a strong affinity  
for dogs. After I sustained a brain  
injury in a car accident, I  
discovered that I had acute  
hearing.

RAMONA

So If you were to blow a dog  
whistle, I'd hear it?

OLIVER

Yes, but please don't.

Oliver nods, holds out his palm. Winnie gives him her paw.

OLIVER (V.O.)

Please speak freely. How can I help  
you?

WINNIE (V.O.)

I'm not the one who needs help!  
She's got an eating disorder and  
it's getting so bad that she  
sometimes passes out after purging.  
I stopped eating so she'd bring us  
in here. Please help her.

OLIVER (V.O.)

I'll try. Tell me more.

WINNIE (V.O.)

Sometimes she'll eat an entire  
chocolate coffee cake, then  
regurgitates it within minutes.

OLIVER (V.O.)

What's her home life like?

WINNIE (V.O.)

She's married to a horrible man.

OLIVER (V.O.)

What makes him horrible?

WINNIE (V.O.)

He smells like he has been sleeping  
with an under-age, girls soccer  
team or maybe a boys' team. When he  
asked her about the coffee cake,  
she blamed me, so now he calls me,  
'Pig Dog' - he calls her that too.

OLIVER (V.O.)

He sounds like a nightmare.

WINNIE (V.O.)

He's so abusive that she's losing  
herself. Look at her!

OLIVER (V.O.)

You did a brave thing coming here.

WINNIE (V.O.)

I won't eat until she gets some  
help. By the way, I'm starving.

BO (V.O.)

I'll share my food with you!

Oliver kisses Winnie's paw to thank her for being so  
truthful. Bo whimpers, wanting to kiss her paw himself.

OLIVER

(turns toward Ramona)

Winnie is worried about you.

RAMONA

Me? She's the one who won't eat.

OLIVER

She told me about your eating  
habits and about your husband.

RAMONA

My husband likes me to be thin.

OLIVER

Winnie won't eat until you get some  
professional help. Your life is in  
danger, Ramona. So is hers.

CUT TO:

EXT. MICHIGAN AVENUE - DAY

Oliver and Bo walk up Michigan on a spring day. The SOUND of  
Oliver's cane taps to the SOUNDS of the city that unravel  
like a jazz riff as Oliver keeps time to the beat.

BO (V.O.)

Maybe the service will have their  
phone number or her last name.

OLIVER (V.O.)

They won't. I'm sorry.

BO (V.O.)

Street address?

OLIVER (V.O.)

Every detail about a client has to  
remain anonymous.

BO (V.O.)

What about her credit card?

OLIVER

We don't keep those on file.

BO (V.O.)

There has to be a way for me to see  
my precious Winnie again.

OLIVER (V.O.)

She called you, *Slobber Boy*.

BO (V.O.)  
She was flirting with me.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
I love your optimism, Bo.

BO (V.O.)  
It was love at first sniff.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN WOMEN'S HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

They turn the corner and arrive at the Women's hospital. Oliver's posture stiffens as the approach.

INT. WOMEN'S HOSPITAL/ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

They get into an elevator with a young couple in labor who are moaning in harmony. Oliver presses the ninth floor.

OLIVER  
Maternity floor?

The hyperventilating husband nods. The wife screams a moan.

Oliver and Bo ride up as the pregnant couple moan together. The doors open They charge out. The doors close. The elevator stops on the eighth floor.

P.O.V OLIVER - Layers of darkness and a change in gray tones as the door open and MS LAVENDER (40, slender) gets on.

She leans over and presses the first floor button. Oliver catches a whiff of her and breathes her in. He's smitten.

BO (V.O.)  
Love at first sniff?

OLIVER (V.O.)  
What does she look like?

BO (V.O.)  
Chocolate pudding hair, strawberry lips, blueberry eyes, and marshmallow skin.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
She smells like lavender or heaven.

BO (V.O.)  
Say something to her Oliver!

OLIVER (V.O.)  
What do I say?

BO (V.O.)  
I love you!?

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Bo!

BO (V.O.)  
You're running out of time! Speak!

OLIVER (V.O.)  
She's not going to want a-

BO (V.O.)  
Three, two, one...

The elevator doors open.

OLIVER  
You smell nice.

Before his words can land, Ms. Lavender is gone.

Bo catches a glimpse of Ms. Lavender as she greets a man in the lobby and 'signs' a quick and silent conversation. Her voice sounds like she's speaking underwater.

MS LAVENDER  
(while signing)  
It's my choice.

Bo makes a 'that's curious' sound. Oliver stands alert.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
What is it, Bo?

A crowd of people get on the elevator. Oliver presses the button for the second floor. Doors close. He's heartbroken.

CUT TO:

INT. WOMEN'S HOSPITAL//ONCOLOGY FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Oliver and Bo walk the shiny halls to the nurse's desk. NURSE JANIE is a hefty girl with oddball eyes.

NURSE JANIE  
(in a 'doggy' voice)  
You're so cute. Are you the therapy dog?

BO (V.O.)  
No. He's the therapy dog. I'm just  
cute.

OLIVER  
He's a service dog. We're here to  
see my mother, Magda Regal.

NURSE JANIE  
Of course. Follow me.

She leads them to the corner pod where MAGDA REGAL's (68) feisty and bald is hooked up to a drip. Oliver hugs her.

MAGDA  
I see you've met Nurse Janie. She  
likes salsa dancing and Cuban food.

OLIVER  
That's lovely.

Nurse Janie smiles flirtatiously, as if he could see her.

BO (V.O.)  
Nurse Janie doesn't seem to notice  
or care that you're blind!

OLIVER (V.O.)  
How comforting that a woman with  
her powers of observation is in  
charge of my mother's health while  
undergoing chemotherapy.

MAGDA  
Janie, I'll be sure to give Oliver  
your phone number.

Magda gives her a look to leave. She stays.

NURSE JANIE  
Your mom tells me that you're a  
published author and a wonderful  
cook. Do you like to dance?

OLIVER  
(takes off his sunglasses)  
Nurse Janie, my apologies. My  
mother may have forgotten to tell  
you one small detail about me.

It takes her a moment to realize that he's blind.

NURSE JANIE  
Oh. Is that why you have the dog?

OLIVER

One of the reasons. I love dogs.  
This one in particular is a champ.

BO (V.O.)

Thanks Oliver!

MAGDA

(to Oliver, about Bo)

Did you bathe him? You should  
sanitize him before you bring him  
to a hospital, especially an  
oncology floor.

BO (V.O.)

Why is she picking on me?

OLIVER (V.O.)

Don't let her get to you.

BO (V.O.)

She gets to me! I'm sensitive.

NURSE JANIE

You're very handsome. Even without  
the glasses.

OLIVER

Thank you. You have a nice voice.

Nurse Janie leaves. Magda holds Oliver's hand.

MAGDA

This is my last treatment.

OLIVER

Really? He said you were done?

MAGDA

I said I was done.

OLIVER

Do you think that's wise?

MAGDA

I know it's wise. I also know it's  
wise for me to recuperate in  
California.

OLIVER

You're going back to California?

MAGDA

On Saturday.

OLIVER

Why?

MAGDA

Because I'm going to die someday.

OLIVER

What does that have to do with why  
you're going to California?

MAGDA

It has been twenty years since I  
lived there with your father, since  
the accident. I miss it.

OLIVER

California or my father?

MAGDA

Both.

OLIVER

I thought you left him because-

MAGDA

That was yesterday. This is today.

Oliver looks like he's watching an oncoming train.

BO (V.O.)

Oliver? You okay?

OLIVER

What can I do to help you start the  
next chapter of your life, mom?

MAGDA

Give me a hug and go home! And call  
for a ride. It's going to rain.

OLIVER

I don't mind staying here with you.

MAGDA

Even I hate the smell of this  
place! Ask Nikki if she can drive  
me to the airport on Saturday.

Oliver kisses Magda's forehead. She hugs him tightly. Bo gets up and moves eagerly toward the door.

OLIVER

Call me if you need anything. Come  
on, Bo.

MAGDA

You really should get him neutered.

BO (V.O.)

What does she have against my balls?

OLIVER

I'm not neutering him, not yet.

BO (V.O.)

No yet! How about *NOT EVER!* You know why I lick my balls no less than 900 times a day?

OLIVER (V.O.)

I'm sure you'll tell me.

BO

That's how I send signals to the aliens who are planning to invade earth. My balls are the key to mankind's survival.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOMEN'S HOSPITAL/EMERGENCY ENTRANCE - DAY

Oliver and Bo wait under the large Emergency Room portico. Ambulances pull in and drop off patients on a one-way drive.

A white Nissan Rogue barrels up the wrong way and screeches to a stop in front of them. A guard comes out to stop it.

NIKKI VESPUCCI (40-ish) irreverent and eccentric, she's all spunk, all heart and has a unique sense of fashion and style.

Nikki flashes the security guard a smile and motions to Oliver and Bo. The guard backs down, mumbling to himself.

NIKKI

There's my favorite, big-tipping duo. Hi Oliver! Hi Bo! Look at you big, handsome dog. Bo, you're a real heartbreaker. Want a treat?

BO (V.O.)

Nikki, Nikki, Nikki! I love Nikki!

Nikki opens the back door. Bo jumps in as she rubs his back, then sneaks him a napkin with grated Parmesan cheese in it.

Bo makes 'yummy noises' as he devours the cheese and the napkin. Oliver pretends to be outraged.

OLIVER

What did you just feed him?

NIKKI

Cheese. He's just not gassy enough.

Bo makes noises (bark, whimper, whine), as if talking.

BO (V.O.)

Tell her about Winnie! She'll know what to do.

OLIVER (V.O.)

There's nothing she can do.

BO (V.O.)

She's Nikki! Nikki can do anything.

Nikki looks in the rear view at whimpering Bo.

NIKKI

What's he whimpering about?

BO (V.O.)

I wish she spoke dog, then I could avoid the middle man.

OLIVER (V.O.)

She doesn't speak dog.

BO (V.O.)

She'll help me find my true love. I know she will. You don't care.

OLIVER (V.O.)

I care!

NIKKI

What's up with Bo? Did some snooty poodle break his heart?

BO (V.O.)

You see! She does speak dog!

OLIVER (V.O.)

She doesn't speak dog.

BO (V.O.)

Then how did she know? She's a true Canine converser without the high-pitched hearing.

OLIVER

Bo fell in love with one of my patients. It wasn't a snooty poodle. It was a stunning Sheep-a-doodle. *Love at first sniff.*

NIKKI

Oh how sweet! What's her name?

OLIVER

Winnie.

NIKKI

Let's find Winnie so they can be together! This is so romantic.

BO (V.O.)

This why I love Nikki so much. *She just gets me!*

OLIVER

We can't find her or make future contact. It's against my policy.

NIKKI

Since when do you have a *policy*?

Nikki swerves through an intersection as a pedestrian pounds his fist on the hood of her car.

OLIVER

I have many policies. One of them is to only drive with safe drivers.

NIKKI

Which is why you drive with me.

OLIVER

Nikki, I might be as blind as a door knob, but I can still hear.

NIKKI

We need a plan to help Bo find her.

BO (V.O.)

I want to live with Nikki.

OLIVER

My lawyers set up my business with complete anonymity so I wouldn't get sued when I publish a book.

NIKKI

We'll find her, don't worry, Bo.

OLIVER

I don't know my patients' names.

NIKKI

How can you help someone if you  
don't really know them?

OLIVER

I listen to them.

NIKKI

You are a good listener.

OLIVER

Go on. I'm all ears.

Nikki clears her throat and rattles off Blanche's monologue with an overly-exaggerated southern accent.

NIKKI

He acts like an animal, has an  
animal's habits! Eats like one,  
moves like one, talks like one!  
There's even something--sub-human--  
something not quite to the stage of  
humanity yet! Yes, something--ape-  
like about him, like one of those  
pictures I've seen in--  
anthropological studies! Thousands  
and thousands of years have passed  
him right by, and there he is--  
Stanley Kowalski--survivor of the  
stone age!

OLIVER

(with a southern accent)  
Lighten up bit on the Southern  
drawl. It sounds like you come from  
an in-bred family.

NIKKI

I do come from in-bred family! You  
must be psychic.

She launches back into the monologue with less twang.

OLIVER

Much better!

NIKKI

I love picking you up, Oliver.  
You've got a great ear, a cute dog  
who doesn't crap in my car -- thank  
you, Bo -- you always smell like  
you just took a shower, and you're  
always willing to listen.

OLIVER

Listening is what I do best. See  
how handy it is that I'm blind?

CUT TO:

EXT. MAGDA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Magda waits in front with two huge suitcases. Nikki pulls up and jumps out. It's a beautiful spring day and Magda wears a Cubs hat over her bald head. Nikki loads her luggage.

MAGDA

I can manage that.

NIKKI

It's no problem. So, what's in  
California?

MAGDA

My ex-husband.

NIKKI

Wow. That's unusual.

MAGDA

I should never have left him twenty  
years ago.

NIKKI

Why did you?

MAGDA

I couldn't leave Oliver after the  
accident. That was twenty years  
ago.

NIKKI

What accident?

MAGDA

Oliver needs to know that he can  
live on his own without me.

NIKKI

Are you going to die?

MAGDA

Someday! But right now, I've got to learn to live again, so does Oliver.

NIKKI

He asked me to pick him up.

Magda studies Nikki.

MAGDA

May I ask you something?

NIKKI

Sure.

MAGDA

Are you married?

NIKKI

No.

MAGDA

Have you ever been married?

NIKKI

No!

MAGDA

How old are you?

NIKKI

Almost forty.

MAGDA

Why haven't you ever been married?

NIKKI

I don't know. I settled for less.

MAGDA

Don't ever do that again.

NIKKI

I promise you. I won't.

MAGDA

Don't promise me. Promise yourself.

NIKKI

You too!

MAGDA

Do you want to know the best gift  
about getting cancer?

NIKKI

There's a gift?

MAGDA

There's always a gift. At first, I  
was frantic, afraid that I might  
miss something in Oliver's life.  
Then I woke up and realized that I  
should be frantic because I might  
miss something in my life.

NIKKI

Wow. That's why you're going to  
California.

MAGDA

Will you watch out for Oliver?

NIKKI

Of course. He's my friend.

MAGDA

You're a good friend. I can tell.

EXT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Nikki pulls up. Oliver and Bo are waiting. The DOORMAN opens  
the car door to the back seat. Magda gets moves to the back  
so she can sit with Oliver. Bo cocks his head.

NIKKI

Come on, Bo. You ride shotgun with  
me up front.

BO (V.O.)

(to Nikki)

I get the front seat! Yippee!

INT. NIKKI'S ROGUE - CONTINUOUS

Oliver looks displaced without Bo by his side. Magda takes  
his hand. Bo can hardly contain himself in front.

BO (V.O.)

I love it up here! I can I play  
with the radio? Do you have any  
snacks. Wow, that sun is bright.  
Can I drive? I'm a good driver.

Nikki pets Bo, then reaches for his seat belt.

NIKKI  
Good boy. I'm strapping you in.

BO (V.O.)  
Strapping me in! This it torture.  
HELP! I'm a captive.

NIKKI  
Relax. It's for your safety.

She snuggles into his fur, kisses him, then gives him a chew toy as she drives away.

BO (V.O.)  
Do that again.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Nikki pulls up to the terminal, gets out, and unloads Magda's bags. Oliver gets out and hugs Magda.

OLIVER  
I'll call you every day.

MAGDA  
Don't call me for a month.

OLIVER  
What? Why? You're kidding.

MAGDA  
You need your space.

OLIVER  
No I don't.

MAGDA  
I need my space.

OLIVER  
You can't take a five minute call?

MAGDA  
I want you to pretend that I'm not here.

OLIVER  
You won't be here.

MAGDA

I mean *here*.

OLIVER

What are you talking about?

MAGDA

I want you to pretend that I'm dead  
so you can get used to living  
without me.

OLIVER

That's ridiculous. You're not  
dying! Your scans were clear.

MAGDA

We have to separate emotionally so  
we can each get on with our lives.

OLIVER

This is a crazy idea!

MAGDA

I'll call you in a month.

OLIVER

You're my mother. You can't break  
up with me.

MAGDA

I love you, Oliver.

They hug. Oliver holds her a moment longer. She leaves.

Nikki witnesses this as she shuffles Bo to the back seat. She takes Oliver's elbow and leads him to the front seat.

Nikki exchanges a look with Magda who nods her gratitude, then disappears into the terminal and the sea of bodies.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE SHORE DRIVE - CONTINUOUS

It's a gorgeous spring day.

INT. NIKKI'S ROGUE - CONTINUOUS

Nikki opens up her sunroof and lets in the sky. She looks up - bright sun, blue sky, and soft clouds. Oliver is quiet.

NIKKI

It's a beautiful day to find your true love, Bo! We're going to the Mutt Strutt in Lincoln Park where any dog who's any dog will be there.

OLIVER

The Mutt Strutt? That's a thing?

NIKKI

You'll love it there.

BO (V.O.)

I love it there. I love Nikki!

NIKKI

What did the blind man say to the garden?

OLIVER

*Seed you later?*

NIKKI

How did you know that?

OLIVER

Lucky guess.

NIKKI

Are you reading my mind again? Bo, is he reading my mind?

Bo whimpers in the affirmative.

OLIVER

That was too easy.

NIKKI

Okay, hot shot. Tell me what I'm thinking now?

OLIVER

Pure filth. You should be ashamed of yourself, Nikki.

Nikki laughs and the car fills with sunshine. Oliver angles his head so a shaft of light crosses his face, eyes open.

NIKKI

Right again, blind boy!

OLIVER

Describe the day to me, Nikki.

P.O.V. Oliver - His darkness is a lighter shade of gray, but he still can't see the sky.

NIKKI

The sun feels like warm honey and  
the lake moves in a little dance  
like this...

She taps out a syncopated rhythm on the steering wheel.

OLIVER

What color is the lake today?

NIKKI

It's a patchwork of colors.

OLIVER

What do you mean?

NIKKI

In the places where the clouds  
block the sun, the lake is a darker  
color, like blueberry pie.

OLIVER

What do the clouds look like?

NIKKI

Big powdery, sugar white clouds,  
like the donut I gave Bo earlier.

OLIVER

You gave him a donut?

NIKKI

He's not hyper enough.

BO (V.O.)

I am now!

OLIVER

What color is the rest of the lake?

Bo licks his sugary nose, then wrestles the bag for remnants.

NIKKI

The rest of the lake is the same  
color as the sky - bright and soft  
and shiny and blue.

OLIVER

Describe it better.

NIKKI

The sky and the lake are like  
mirrors for each other.

OLIVER

In terms of smell or taste.

NIKKI

Lemon meringue pie, kind of sweet  
and light and airy. There's no way  
to really describe it to you  
because it's so big and bright and  
it looks like it goes on forever.

OLIVER

What about a texture?

NIKKI

Sort of like the inside fur of my  
UGG boots, soft and enveloping.  
That's not it. Maybe the sound of a  
soothing voice. I don't know.

Oliver gets quiet. He seems frustrated or sad.

OLIVER

Thanks for trying.

NIKKI

The sky is a *feeling*, Oliver.

OLIVER

Like the feel of the wind?

NIKKI

Sort of. Imagine that earth could  
breathe, then the sky would be the  
earth's breath. Today, the earth's  
breath is fresh and minty, like  
yours always is, Oliver.

OLIVER

Oh.

NIKKI

That's not it. *The sky is hope*.

OLIVER

Hope?

NIKKI

Yes, hope, or love. It's that feeling in your heart that everything is going to be okay, no matter what. It's the feeling that lifts you up and makes you happy to be alive. That's what the sky looks like today, Oliver.

She drives into the park, which is packed. Bo stands up, eager to cavort with the canine crowd at the Mutt Strutt.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Did you remember your celebrity parking by any chance?

OLIVER

I don't want to use it.

NIKKI

Why not?

OLIVER

We could be taking a spot from someone who's truly handicapped and has trouble walking. I'm fine.

NIKKI

That you are.

Nikki looks at Oliver as if he's *so fine*.

EXT. LINCOLN PARK - DAY

Nikki pulls into a spot, opens the door for Bo first.

BO (V.O.)

Nikki, if you were a bitch, I'd...

OLIVER (V.O.)

Hey, watch it!

BO (V.O.)

I'd fall madly in love with you and have babies with you.

NIKKI

You excited, Bo? Maybe we'll find your true love, Winnie here.

Oliver unfurls his cane, taps it in front of him. Nikki stops and waits for him to respond.

OLIVER

What? I can feel that look.

NIKKI

Enough with the tapping, Oliver.

OLIVER

I'm blind. I tap.

NIKKI

It's off-putting.

OLIVER

(defensive)

How is it off-putting!

NIKKI

All that tapping creates an invisible barrier around you, energetically speaking. May I please have the cane.

OLIVER

Why?

NIKKI

You don't need it today.

OLIVER

What if I need to use the restroom?

NIKKI

We can take it with us.

She holds her hand next to his on the cane. They linger.

OLIVER

I tap into the rhythms around me.

NIKKI

You don't need it today. You've got me and Bo - he's a seeing eye dog!

BO (V.O.)

She's got a point. Lose the cane.

OLIVER (V.O.)

Why do you always take her side?

BO (V.O.)

Because she's right. Besides, maybe you'll meet someone here today.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
You sound like my mother.

BO (V.O.)  
Great! Soon I'll want to cut off my  
own balls.

NIKKI  
What are you two arguing about?

OLIVER  
How did you know we were arguing?

NIKKI  
By your postures. Let's go!

Oliver relaxes his grip. Nikki takes the cane, folds it up, and puts it in her backpack. Oliver looks freaked out.

OLIVER  
Ready.

NIKKI  
Put on your sunglasses, Oliver.

He obliges. She straightens them, looks into his blind eyes.

OLIVER  
How do I look?

NIKKI  
You look like any other handsome  
guy walking with his dog in a  
really loud shirt.

OLIVER  
What's wrong with my shirt?

NIKKI  
Your mom buy that for you?

OLIVER  
As a matter of fact, she did.

Nikki loops her arm through Oliver's. Bo drops into position at his other side. Oliver walks tentatively at first.

NIKKI  
Let's see if we can find Bo's  
girlfriend, Winnie.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Bo, what's wrong with my shirt?

BO (V.O.)  
Nothing's wrong with it.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
What does she mean, *loud*.

BO (V.O.)  
It's colorful.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Is that bad?

BO (V.O.)  
She called you *handsome*.

They walk toward the entrance to the Mutt Strutt as Oliver relaxes into the space in the crook of her arm, grateful to be anchored in human contact.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MUTT STRUTT - CONTINUOUS

A section of the park looks like an art fair with booths filled with dog products. There's a lot of CHATTER on the canine frequency as they over hear conversations.

Bo asks everyone who will listen if they know Winnie.

BO (V.O.)  
Hi! Do you know a stunning sheep-a-doodle named Winnie with a patch of black fur over her right eye. She's the most beautiful bitch on the planet? (Ad lib)

Nikki is like a celebrity at the Mutt Strutt because so many of the dogs know her as their dog sitter. They all love her!

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Any luck so far?

BO (V.O.)  
Not yet, but who knew Nikki was the Oprah of the dog world.

OLIVER  
(to Nikki)  
We didn't know you were such a celebrity with the canine crowd.

NIKKI

I take my fans where I can find them.

OLIVER

Speaking of fans. How was the Audition?

NIKKI

I bombed.

OLIVER

Just stay with it. You've got a lot of talent. I can *hear it*.

NIKKI

Thanks, Oliver.

She snuggles into his side in a subtle gesture of gratitude.

They meet a pair of two tiny purse dogs with Burberry bows and matching pedicures. Their OWNER (30) takes them out of the purse to pee. They're not happy about it.

BURBERRY PRINCESS DOGS (V.O.)

Not the ground! We hate the ground.  
It's dirty down there. We'll pee in the purse. Anything but the ground!

Oliver and Bo get a good laugh. Nikki laughs too.

A SERIES OF SHOTS as they meander through the Mutt Strutt, speaking with dogs, searching for Winnie, and devouring the free dog treats at various booths. Bo is having a great time.

He sniffs his way over to two overweight, waddling bull dogs, like two old Jewish men. BOYCHICK and MOTEK's low-hanging bellies scrape the ground as they kvetch and chat.

Nikki pets them. Their owner, MAURY introduces them.

NIKKI

Who do we have here?

MAURY

Boychick and Motek. They haven't missed a meal since the nineties.

BOYCHICK (V.O.)

Look at you! You're collecting leaves with that pippick.

MOTEK (V.O.)

Oh, like you can suck it in!

BOYCHICK (V.O.)  
I can still suck. Well, maybe not.

BO (V.O.)  
Excuse me, gentlemen, do you know a  
beautiful sheep-a-doodle named  
Winnie? Long hair, luscious eyes.

MOTEK (V.O.)  
Who wants to know?

BO (V.O.)  
Me. I'm Bo. I'm not neutered.

BOYCHICK  
You in love with her, kid?

BO (V.O.)  
I am.

MOTEK  
Of course you are! Why not get a  
little schtupping in before they -

BOYCHICK (V.O.)  
You can still be in love, even  
after they snip 'em.

MOTEK (V.O.)  
We're snipped.

BOYCHICK (V.O.)  
Maury threw a party for us.

MOTEK (V.O.)  
He said it was our Bris.

BOYCHICK (V.O.)  
We even had our own tray with  
bagels and cream cheese.

BO (V.O.)  
You're what?

MOTEK (V.O.)  
Let me give you some advice, you're  
never too old...

BOYCHICK (V.O.)  
Or too young...

MOTEK/BOYCHICK (V.O.)  
To fall in love.

BO (V.O.)

I keep telling Oliver that! You  
hear this, dogs do fall in love!

BOYCHICK (V.O.)

Motek fell in love with a little  
Border Collie back in the day, boy  
was she was a looker.

MOTEK (V.O.)

And Boychick fell in love with a  
pretty poodle, snootiest dog ever.

BOYCHICK (V.O.)

A real bitch.

MOTEK (V.O.)

But love changed her.

BOYCHICK (V.O.)

When she was with me, she was as  
sweet as chopped liver.

MOTEK (V.O.)

You go find your Vinnie!

BO (V.O.)

Winnie

BOYCHICK

Whatever!

While they're chatting, MARTIN MOORE (55, sleazy, middle-aged, man-child) spies Nikki and crosses the park to her.

Nikki sees him and her body stiffens. Bo notices this.

BO (V.O.)

Oliver! Put your arm around Nikki.

OLIVER (V.O.)

Why?

BO (V.O.)

Just do it!

Oliver puts an arm around Nikki as Martin arrives.

MARTIN

(pseudo surprised)

Nikki! What a surprise. How have  
you been?

NIKKI

I'm fine Martin. Why are you here?

MARTIN

Because you don't return my calls.

NIKKI

I don't want to talk to you.

MARTIN

Is that a way to treat someone who-

NIKKI

Fine. I'll talk to you. Not here.

MARTIN

When?

NIKKI

Later. Sometime.

Nikki is stone-faced. He moves in seductively.

MARTIN

I was so worried about you, Nikki.  
Alone in the big city without me.

NIKKI

I'll call you tonight. Leave me  
alone.

MARTIN

Let me take you to dinner.

Nikki recoils, moves closer to Oliver. Martin moves in.

Bo barks as Boychick and Motek sink their teeth into his pant legs and growl like tough guys.

OLIVER

She said to leave her alone.

MARTIN

(to Oliver)

What are you staring at?

OLIVER

You. You're ugly. Get lost.

MARTIN

Martin notices Bo's service collar and Oliver's blindness. He shakes off the dogs. They both lift a leg and pee on his pants. Motek farts. He jumps back, disgusted, then leaves.

OLIVER

You okay?

NIKKI

I'm fine. Thanks.

Oliver gives her a very slight, quick kiss on the head.

OLIVER

I'm here if you need me, Nikki.

BUBBLES, an excitable Golden Retriever with a pink bow gallops off-leash toward Nikki. She's super-chatty, a little ditzy, and adorable when she's not annoying.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

It's Nikki! Hi Nikki! Hi! Want to come over and play? Let's stay up late and eat all the Cheerios like we did last time. That was so fun. I love you Nikki! Who's this? How come he smells like wet grass? What's his name? What's with the shirt? Do you have any cheese?

BO (V.O.)

Someone needs to switch to decaf.

OLIVER (V.O.)

Bo! What if she can hear you?

Nikki hugs Bubbles who's jumping and twirling around.

NIKKI

Hi Bubbles! Hi Pretty Girl. Where are your daddies?

Her two 'daddies' (JERRY and GARY - a gay couple, early thirties) arrive, all smiles. Jerry flaunts a new ring.

JERRY

Guess who's engaged!

NIKKI

Congratulations!

GARY

We're pretty excited.

NIKKI

When's the wedding?

JERRY

We're eloping. *In Paris!*

NIKKI  
I'll stay with Bubbles.

JERRY  
We were hoping you'd say that.

NIKKI  
But only if you promise to stop  
sharing your double shot lattes  
with her. Her heart is racing.

GARY  
Jerry! You know what the vet said.

JERRY  
I know, but she loves lattes. *Don't  
you my little Bubble-y-bo.*

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
I do love lattes!

GARY  
You could give her a heart attack.

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
I love coffee. Coffee. Coffee.  
Coffee. Coffee. Coffee.

BO (V.O.)  
I love quiet. Nap. Nap. Nap. Nap.

Bubbles stops moving and looks at him.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Bo, she heard you! Apologize.

BO (V.O.)  
It's not my fault she's stuck on  
fast forward.

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
Who are you and why are you so mean  
and slobbery?

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Bubbles, this is Bo. He's sorry. He  
doesn't realize that other dogs can  
hear on our frequency.

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
You speak dog?

OLIVER (V.O.)  
I do.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

(to Bo)

Why do you smell like that and why  
are you so cranky?

BO (V.O.)

I don't like other dogs who think  
they can just jump all over Nikki  
when I'm with her. I don't like  
sharing Nikki.

Nikki bends down and pets Bubbles affectionately.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Get used to it, big boy. She'll be  
at my house for a whole week!

Oliver pets Bo's head to try to calm him.

OLIVER (V.O.)

(to Bo)

Be nice! Maybe she knows Winnie.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Winnie? The Sheep-a-doodle with the  
black patch over her right eye?

OLIVER (V.O.)

What do you know!

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Why do you want to know if I know  
Winnie?

Bo starts to answer, but can't get the words out.

OLIVER (V.O.)

He has a *thing* for Winnie.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

A *thing*?

BO (V.O.)

I'm in love with her, okay?

Bubbles laughs.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Ha! You're in love with Winnie?

BO (V.O.)

What's so funny? I can be in love.

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
Nothing. Winnie, huh?

BO (V.O.)  
Do you know where she lives?

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
I don't know exactly where she  
lives, but I see her in the park  
sometimes.

BO (V.O.)  
Where do you live?

BUBBLES  
Gold Coast, where all the uppity  
designer dogs live. God Forbid  
someone should rescue a pup!

Nikki hugs Jerry and Gary, then kisses Bubbles.

NIKKI  
Okay, my precious girl, we're going  
to be roommates for a week!

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
(to Bo)  
Hear that? *My Precious Girl...*

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO PIZZA PLACE - NIGHT

They sit outside on a warm night. Martin dotes on her.

NIKKI  
I asked you not to follow me to  
Chicago. I need my space.

MARTIN  
You said six months. Time's up.

NIKKI  
I'm not coming back, Martin.

MARTIN  
Nikki, you don't even have a place  
to live. Let me help you.

NIKKI  
I'm fine. I usually dog sit, so I  
always have a roof over my head.

MARTIN

I realized a lot of things while  
you were away.

NIKKI

So did I.

MARTIN

I realized how much I love you and  
that I can't live without you.

NIKKI

I realized that I can live without  
you, Martin. It's really over.

MARTIN

No it's not. We've been here  
before, many times over the past  
ten years. We never break up.

NIKKI

Martin, I spent my most fertile  
years watching you raise your kids  
and take your family on vacations.

MARTIN

Fertile years! You said you didn't  
want kids. You wanted dogs.

NIKKI

I'm done.

MARTIN

I'll leave Sally. She's not  
interested in sex anymore since she  
went through Menopause. We can  
travel, make love, go to Europe.

NIKKI

You're not listening. It's over.

MARTIN

It's not over. It'll never be over.

CUT TO:

INT. WOMEN'S HOSPITAL/LOBBY- DAY

Oliver and Bo enter and go to the elevator.

BO (V.O.)

Tell me again why we're here?

OLIVER (V.O.)  
We're just here.

BO (V.O.)  
You hated coming here.

INT. WOMEN'S HOSPITAL/ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Oliver stands guard at the panel, presses the eighth floor.

A SERIES OF SHOTS as Oliver searches in vain for another 'whiff' of Ms. Lavender as they go up and down for hours.

BO (V.O.)  
There has to be another way to find  
her. I'm getting nauseous.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Your right. We'll go. I'm sorry.

BO (V.O.)  
Dude, I completely understand. If I  
thought I'd find Winnie, I'd ride  
the elevator until I found her.

The elevator stops on the second floor, Nurse Janie gets on.

NURSE JANIE  
Look who's here! Our famous author.

OLIVER  
That must be Nurse Janie.

NURSE JANIE  
Just call me, Janie, Punkin'.

OLIVER  
Bo, say hello to Janie.

Bo gives an obligatory bark.

NURSE JANIE  
You missed your momma. She's not  
here. I heard she left town.

OLIVER  
She did leave town. I was just,  
looking for...

NURSE JANIE  
For me! Oh, that's so sweet. She  
forget to give you my number?

OLIVER

Yes. She forgot.

BO (V.O.)

Nice comeback!

NURSE JANIE

Give me your phone, I'm going to call myself. You call me anytime. You never know who's going to become a great *salsa* dancer.

Oliver gives Janie his phone. She types in her number. It rings (something strange), which makes them jump.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOLD COAST PARK - DAY

Nikki and Oliver sit on a park bench with Bo and Bubbles frolicking off-leash. Bubbles talks a blue streak, all wound up on sugar.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

The Slide! I love the slide. I've never actually been on the slide, but it looks like so much fun. You go up and down, then up and down. Let's play in the sand box. I love the sand! I love to roll around in it and get it really deep in my fur. I'll bet I could find a lot of great chew toys and garbage in that sand box. Let's play in the garbage! I love garbage! There are so many smells-

BO (V.O.)

Do have to have an 'off' switch?

BUBBLES (V.O.)

What! I'm an enthusiastic girl!

BO (V.O.)

Bubbles, are you high?

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Me? No. I just had two scones for breakfast with Nikki. No coffee.

BO (V.O.)

Shocking.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Why are you like that? Is it  
because I'm Nikki's favorite?

BO (V.O.)

You're not Nikki's favorite.

Bubbles runs and nuzzles Nikki who pets her lovingly.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Why are you so hung up on Winnie?

BO (V.O.)

Because she's beautiful and she  
smells so good.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

You're in love with her smell?

BO (V.O.)

It was love at first sniff.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Dude, you're in love with her hair  
care product.

BO (V.O.)

I am not. I'm in love with her.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

She goes to Dogphoria, the doggie  
day spa. They use a special shampoo  
that's designed to smell soothing.

BO (V.O.)

You don't know what you're talking  
about.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Actually, I do. I also know where  
Winnie hangs out.

BO

Where?

BUBBLES (V.O.)

At the park at Banks and Goethe.

BO (V.O.)

(to Oliver)

Let's go! Did you hear that?!

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK AT BANKS/GOETHE - CONTINUOUS

Nikki practices an audition monologue as Oliver listens. The park is empty so Bo and Bubbles are off leash. Bubbles explores the swings and hits herself in the face. Bo giggles.

Suddenly, his nose is alert. Winnie prances around the corner with a DOG WALKER (gangly teenage girl). Bo is so nervous that he runs back to Oliver.

BO (V.O.)

It's her!

OLIVER (V.O.)

What?

Nikki stops rehearsing as she sees the majestic Winnie.

BO (V.O.)

It **is** her. What do I say? How do I look? How's my breath?

OLIVER (V.O.)

You have dog breath, but she's a dog. Don't worry.

BO (V.O.)

What do I start the conversation?

OLIVER (V.O.)

Hi. I love you. You smell nice.

BO (V.O.)

Very funny.

OLIVER (V.O.)

I wasn't being funny!

Winnie prances into the park and sees Bubbles. Nikki pets Bo.

NIKKI

Okay, Champ. There's your girl.

WINNIE (V.O.)

Well, if it isn't little miss hard to get. How are you, Bubbles?

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Doing well, Winnie. How are you?

WINNIE (V.O.)

I'm clean. I'm sleek. And I'm still available.

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
And I'm still not interested, but I  
do know someone who might be.

Winnie notices Bo for the first time.

WINNIE (V.O.)  
You! What are you doing here?

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
He's with me, so be nice to him.

BO (V.O.)  
Hi. Remember me? I'm *Slobber Boy*.

WINNIE (V.O.)  
You're kidding.

BO (V.O.)  
I'm so happy I found you. I can't  
stop thinking about you.

WINNIE (V.O.)  
Oh no, dude. Listen, I'm not  
interested in Alpha Dogs. Do you  
catch my drift?

BO (V.O.)  
I'm not an Alpha dog. I'm a lab.

WINNIE (V.O.)  
I'm not interested in male dogs. I  
like female dogs.

BO (V.O.)  
I do too! We have so much in  
common. Will you marry me?

Oliver overhears and tries to intervene.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
What she's trying to tell you-

WINNIE (V.O.)  
Is that I'm GAY!

BO (V.O.)  
I'm gay too! I'm always happy. Ask  
Oliver. Aren't I a cheerful guy?

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
She means sexually, she doesn't  
like male dogs, only female dogs.

BO (V.O.)  
She doesn't like me? So who does  
she like -- you?

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
Yeah, but I'm not into her. I'm  
strictly a hetero-bitch.

WINNIE (V.O.)  
Which is such a shame.

Bo slumps down next to Oliver.

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
You'll get over her, I promise.

BO (V.O.)  
But she smells so good.

WINNIE (V.O.)  
It's the shampoo from the club.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Winnie, do you mind if I ask you  
about Ramona. How is she doing?

WINNIE (V.O.)  
Much better! She's in a program at  
the hospital and is getting  
divorced! And I'm eating again.  
Thanks to you.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
I'm so relieved to hear that.  
Please send her my best.

Bo perks up and faces Winnie.

BO (V.O.)  
Winnie, that's great news. I'm so  
happy Oliver could save both of  
your lives. The way I see it, you  
owe him a big favor.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Bo!

BO (V.O.)  
Hear me out. Bubbles, back me up. I  
know what it feels like to love  
someone or to yearn for someone and  
not be able to find that person.

OLIVER (V.O.)

Bo, stop. I know where you're going with this.

BO (V.O.)

Oliver fell in love at first sniff in the elevator of the hospital when we went to see his mom in chemo. We don't know her name. We just call her, Ms. Lavender. She has brown hair, blue eyes, and speaks with her hands. Her voice sounds like she's underwater.

WINNIE (V.O.)

So she's deaf?

OLIVER (V.O.)

I know. A blind guy and a deaf girl. What a pair we'd make!

BO (V.O.)

I want you to help us find her, for Oliver.

WINNIE (V.O.)

Us?

BO (V.O.)

Me and Bubbles. We're on a quest to find Ms. Lavender so Oliver can have his own true love.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

We are? We are. You should help us. You know all the dogs in town.

OLIVER (V.O.)

Gang, you don't need to do this.

WINNIE (V.O.)

I'm in! Oliver, it's the least I could do.

Winnie holds out her paw. Oliver shakes and seals the deal.

WINNIE

(referring to Nikki)

Maybe she can help us too.

All three dogs and Oliver look at Nikki.

NIKKI

What's going on? What are you talking about? Why are you all looking at me?

OLIVER

We need your help.

NIKKI

I'm all yours.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOGPHORIA DAY SPA - DAY

Nikki pulls up to the valet. Oliver's in the front seat with all three dogs in the back seat. A dog Concierge greets them.

DOG CONCIERGE

Welcome back Winnie. I see you have two friends with you today. Bo and Bubbles. Do you think they'd like the couples massage?

BUBBLES (V.O.)

We'd love it! Sign us up!

BO (V.O.)

We're not a couple.

OLIVER (V.O.)

Bo. Be nice.

INT. DOGPHORIA DAY SPA - CONTINUOUS

The upscale dog spa has lounge beds, a relaxation area with aromatherapy, a puppy pool, and all the spa treatments.

Winnie waits while a dog groomer ties her hair back for yoga.

WINNIE (V.O.)

I'm going to yoga. The class is usually full. You guys have fun and just ask around about Ms. Lavender. I'll do the same.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Oh My GOD! I love this place. Look at these treats. How many do you think I could eat without throwing up? Look, there's a swimming pool for puppies. Oh they're so cute.

BO (V.O.)  
Bubbles, we're here to relax.

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
I'm relaxed. I just get excited  
easily. No coffee. No sugar. Just  
high on life! Let's get massages.

Nikki has an equal amount of enthusiasm.

NIKKI  
I've heard about these places, but  
I've never been to one. I love it  
here. Mmmm.. This is interesting.

Nikki tastes a dog treat.

OLIVER  
Am I hearing you right. Are you  
eating a dog treat?

NIKKI  
Yes. It's good. This is probably  
made from better ingredients than  
most Americans eat in their  
lifetimes.

She gives a treat to Bubbles. The two are equally  
enthusiastic as they munch in unison.

DOG CONCIERGE  
If I may, let me show you to the  
waiting area and get you set up for  
a complimentary foot massage while  
I take Bo and Bubbles to their  
couples massage. Such a cute pair.

BO (V.O.)  
We're not a couple.

NIKKI  
Complimentary foot massage.

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
Have fun you two!

INT. DOGPHORIA/WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Nikki and Oliver sit on big fluffy chairs while two women rub  
their feet. Oliver is tentative while Nikki is exuberant.

NIKKI

Oh this feels so GOOD. Yeah. Rub right there. Ahhh. You got it.

INT. DOGPHORIA DAY SPA/DOG MASSAGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bubbles and Bo lay next to one another on luscious dog beds. They each have a masseuse working on them. Bo is so relaxed.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Oh this feel GREAT! I love this.  
Can you get the muscle at my hip?  
Ahhhh... You got it. I'm so  
relaxed. Bo, are you relaxed?

BO (V.O.)

Bubbles.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

What?

BO (V.O.)

This is really nice.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I know. It's great! The rubbing and  
the soft towels and the-

BO (V.O.)

You know what would make it even  
better?

BUBBLES (V.O.)

What's that?

BO (V.O.)

A little quiet.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Sorry. But this is so fun!

INT. DOGPHORIA DAY SPA/WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Nikki giggles as an attendant rubs her feet. She's ticklish. Oliver is tentative.

NIKKI

You need to do this more often.

OLIVER

Yeah, well. I'm not used to  
strangers touching me.

He lets out a laugh, also ticklish. Nikki smiles.

NIKKI

So, there's an open call for summer children's theater. They're doing Rapunzel.

OLIVER

Which one is Rapunzel? With the evil step sisters and the prince.

NIKKI

No! I hate Cinderella.

OLIVER

What have you got against Cinderella?

NIKKI

She's a meek fuck, excuse my language.

OLIVER

How do you figure that?

NIKKI

She could have run away anytime from those abusive step sisters and that horrible step mother. Instead, she just became a victim and waited to be rescued. I hate that in fairy tale.

OLIVER

What's your take on Snow White?

NIKKI

I kind of felt sorry for you. She had all those weird little guys to take care of - I've got nothing against midgets.

OLIVER

Tell me about Rapunzel.

NIKKI

She had the long hair and was stuck in the tower by her overly possessive mother or some witch. She'd let her hair down and her true love used it as a rope to climb into the tower.

OLIVER

I vaguely remember that one.

NIKKI

I'm a big fan of anyone who sneaks  
boys into their room.

OLIVER

Is that from personal experience?

NIKKI

When I was a kid, I used to pretend  
that I was Rapunzel and put my  
mother's tights on my head as if it  
was my long hair.

OLIVER

What did your mother say?

NIKKI

They were just tights.

OLIVER

About sneaking boys into your room.

NIKKI

They're doing Rapunzel and I want  
to try out.

OLIVER

You should!

NIKKI

Oliver, I'm almost forty. Rapunzel  
is a maiden.

OLIVER

I say, buys some tights and show up  
for the audition. You never know!

INT. DOGPHORIA DAY SPA/YOGA CLASS - CONTINUOUS

Winnie quizzes the 'downward facing' dogs for intel on Ms. Lavender. She speaks with a white Shih Tzu named, SHITSEE.

SHITSEE (V.O.)

There's a woman in my building who  
always smells like lavender and  
talks with her hands. She sounds  
like she's exaggerating her words  
and can't pronounce "r" or "l".

WINNIE (V.O.)  
Thank you, Shitsee. Very helpful.  
Where do you live?

SHITSEE (V.O.)  
I don't know. I go for walks, but  
only around the block.

WINNIE (V.O.)  
Is there anything that could help  
us identify your building so we can  
zero in on Ms. Lavender?

SHITSEE (V.O.)  
Oh! There's a Great Dane that takes  
a crap the size of my body and his  
owner never picks it up. You should  
see these logs when they freeze in  
the winter.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOGPHORIA - DAY

The three dogs pile in the back of the car. Oliver slips into  
the passenger seat, Nikki is at the wheel.

INT. NIKKI'S ROGUE - CONTINUOUS

NIKKI  
(to the dogs)  
Anything?

WINNIE (V.O.)  
(to Oliver)  
There's a stupid little hairy dog  
named, Shitsee in my yoga class who  
told me about a woman who lives in  
her building and fits the  
description of Ms. Lavender.

BO (V.O.)  
Nice work, Winnie!

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
I'm SOOOO relaxed.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Did you get an address?

WINNIE (V.O.)  
She doesn't know where she lives. I  
told you she was stupid.

OLIVER  
Thank you for trying, Winnie.

NIKKI  
What? They got something?

Nikki stops the car before she pulls out of the valet drive.

OLIVER  
Yes, they found a dog who may live  
in the building, but the dog  
doesn't know where she lives.

NIKKI  
What's the dog's name and what does  
she look like?

OLIVER  
Little white hairy dog named,  
Shitsee.

NIKKI  
Shitsee? Piece of cake.

Nikki pulls over and jumps out of the car.

EXT. DOGPHORIA - CONTINUOUS

Nikki hands the keys to the valet.

NIKKI  
I'll be back in a flash!

INT. DOGPHORIA DAY SPA/RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

Nikki speaks with the woman at the front desk.

NIKKI  
Hi! I'm Nikki. I'm a dog sitter. I  
was just in with Bubbles, Bo, and  
Winnie. Great service. We love it  
here. There's another dog whose  
owner has asked me to drive her  
here next week and I can't find the  
owner's address or number. The dog  
is Shitsee, a little white, hairy.

RECEPTIONIST

We love Shitsee! She's here every week. Will you be her new driver?

NIKKI

I hope so! If I find her address.

The receptionist writes it down. Nikki smiles.

INT. NIKKI'S ROGUE - CONTINUOUS

Nikki gets back in the car, triumphant.

NIKKI

Mission accomplished!

OLIVER

You got her address?

NIKKI

What do you think this is, amateur hour?

OLIVER

You see how handy it is that you're an actress?

CUT TO:

EXT. MS. LAVENDER'S BUILDING - DAY

The building is near the park. Nikki pulls in the circular driveway as a woman slides into the cab in front of her.

Bo barks. MS. LAVENDER is about to drive away.

BO (V.O.)

That's her! Oliver! Ms. Lavender is in front of us.

Oliver freezes as the other dogs bark. Nikki is confused.

NIKKI

What is it?

OLIVER

Nothing. This is the right place.

NIKKI

Why are they suddenly barking.

BO (V.O.)  
Chicken shit! Tell Nikki to follow  
that cab. Don't let her get away.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
That's not the right way to  
approach her. Chill out.

NIKKI  
Everything okay?

OLIVER  
You think you can get her email  
address?

NIKKI  
Watch me!

Nikki goes inside.

CUT TO:

INT. MS. LAVENDER'S BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Nikki ultra polite to the doorman as she hands him her card.

NIKKI  
Hi! I'm a driver. I recently drove  
a woman home from the hospital to  
this address. She gave me an  
extraordinarily big tip and I  
wanted to send her a thank you  
note, but I don't know her name.  
She's pretty, slender, brown hair,  
blues eyes, smells like Lavender  
and I believe she's deaf.

DOORMAN  
That would be Chiara Williams. You  
just missed her!

NIKKI  
That's okay. I just want to send  
her a note. My mom raised me to be  
grateful for all the kindness.

Nikki gets choked up.

DOORMAN  
Your mom would be proud.

NIKKI

(tears in her eyes)

You don't know how much that means  
to me to hear you say that. My  
mother passed away recently.

LONG SHOT from the car: Bo sees Nikki with tears in her eyes.

BO (V.O.)

She's a great actress. She's even  
crying. Oh, now he's writing down  
some information. She's a genius.

INT. NIKKI'S ROGUE - CONTINUOUS

Nikki arrives with the information, tears wiped away.

NIKKI

This is why they pay me the big  
bucks. I'm going to text you her  
email address and the building  
address. Siri can read it to you  
later. Not bad for a day's work.

OLIVER

Are you okay?

NIKKI

I'm fine.

OLIVER

Bo said you were crying.

Nikki looks at Bo. He cocks his head.

NIKKI

Have I mentioned that I want to be  
an actress someday?

CUT TO:

EXT. CHILDREN'S THEATRE/PARK - DAY

The outdoor theater has a small stage and a horseshoe set up  
for the audience, which is filled with young, hopeful  
actresses. Nikki is twice the age of the other girls.

The auditions are open, so each person auditioning faces both  
the director/producer panel and the audience.

A SERIES OF SHOTS as several beautiful girls state their  
name, their age, and then rattle off the same monologue.

Nikki's number is called. She goes up on stage. The director, JOE STORM looks annoyed.

JOE

Name?

NIKKI

Nikki Vespucci.

JOE

Age?

NIKKI

Eighteen.

JOE

Yeah, right.

NIKKI

In my heart. I'm almost forty.

JOE

We're not auditioning for the role  
of the witch until next week.

NIKKI

Which is why I'm here today.  
Because whichever witch you see,  
you'll never see one as fierce as  
me...

Nikki rattles off an improv riff as the witch that's funny and endearing. The audience loves it! So does the director.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLIVER'S BUILDING - DAY

Nikki sits in the driveway in her car. The doorman comes out.

NIKKI

I'm just waiting for Oliver.

DOORMAN

I just send a man up with his Jack  
Russel. It'll be an hour or so.

NIKKI

I'll wait.

INT. NIKKI'S ROGUE - DAY

Nikki leaves Oliver a voice message.

NIKKI

Hi! I'm in your driveway. I have some exciting news. Call me!

Another calls beeps in as she's leaving a message. *Martin*. Nikki declines the call. He calls again. Time passes as she turns her radio up and watches the phone light up with calls from Martin - 28 times. She finally picks up.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

What!

MARTIN (O.S.)

I left her. I'm all yours.

NIKKI

What part of 'it's over' do you not understand, *Martin*?

MARTIN (O.S.)

I wanted to prove to you that I would really do it this time. I have to see you, Nikki! I'm on my way to Chicago right now.

NIKKI

Your timing is horrible.

MARTIN (O.S.)

I was so afraid of losing you, Nikki that I told Sally about us. I told her everything.

NIKKI

She kicked you out.

MARTIN

You know I love you so much, baby.

NIKKI

Ugh... don't ever call me, baby.

MARTIN

I'm already halfway between Detroit and Chicago.

NIKKI

*Martin*, there's someone else.

MARTIN

Who? The blind guy? Oh please. He could never give you the kind of life that I can. I'm staying at the Four Seasons.

NIKKI

You love the Four Seasons.

MARTIN

So do you!

NIKKI

Have fun by yourself.

MARTIN

All I ask is that we have one night together before you throw away ten years of a beautiful relationship. Nikki, we can finally have the life that we've been planning for years.

The man with his Jack Russel terrier (Oliver's client) walks out of the building.

NIKKI

I have to go.

CUT TO:

INT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Oliver and Bo greet her at the elevator. Nikki looks around.

NIKKI

I've never been up here before.  
It's so nice. Great view.

OLIVER

Which is lost on me. My mother picked out this place, said it would be better for resale with a view. My clients like it, the human ones at least.

NIKKI

Have you heard from Magda yet?

OLIVER

Nope. I'm still in training for her death. I'm so glad you stopped by. So much has happened in the last couple of days.

NIKKI

Really, what?

OLIVER

What do you mean, *what*? Thanks to you my life is about to change forever.

NIKKI

Wow. Me? What did I do?

OLIVER

Ms. Lavender, Chiara. Her name means Clear in Italian. I finally got the guts to send her an email and introduce myself. She emailed me right back. We've been writing ever since. You don't know how much this means to me, Nikki!

NIKKI

That's great Oliver. I'm really happy for you.

OLIVER

Come in! Can I get you something to eat or drink?

NIKKI

No, I can't stay. I've got work.

OLIVER

Are you on a dog sitting gig?

NIKKI

No, actually, it's quiet.

OLIVER

Hey did you call me?

NIKKI

Yeah, no. A message. No need to listen to it. Just checking in on you. I figured with your mom being pretend dead, you might want someone to touch base with you occasionally. Looks like you have a new romance. That's what girlfriends are for. You've had girlfriends before, haven't you?

OLIVER

That's another story. Let's save it for another time.

NIKKI

Sure. Let me say goodbye to Bo.

Bo hears his name and saunters over. She leans down and nuzzles into his fur, finding comfort from him.

BO (V.O.)

I love you, Nikki. Why do you smell like tears?

NIKKI

(to Oliver)

I've got to go.

She rings for the elevator, which is right there. She gives Oliver a quick kiss on the cheek and slips into the elevator.

OLIVER

You sure? I was going to read you some of Chiara's emails. She's very witty and articulate.

NIKKI

Keep in touch.

The doors close. Bo stands there, perplexed.

OLIVER (V.O.)

What's wrong?

BO (V.O.)

For someone who claims to be so sensitive, you don't hear very well.

OLIVER (V.O.)

What are you talking about?

BO

Nikki. She's covered in sadness.

CUT TO:

INT. STARBUCKS - NIGHT

Nikki is still trying to find a place to sleep on a 'Couch Surfing' website. There's nothing in a good neighborhood.

Martin calls. She picks up.

MARTIN (V.O.)  
I have champaign on ice,  
cheesburgers arriving from room  
service, and the best bathroom.

NIKKI  
One night. That's it.

Nikki closes her laptop and heads out.

CUT TO:

INT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Oliver hovers in the dark over his computer, typing away on a Braille keyboard. He hears the 'ding' of a new message. The computer voice reads Chiara's note.

COMPUTERIZED CHIARA  
I just finished reading your last  
book, which was so wonderful. I  
cried when I read the part about  
the little boy who was lost and the  
dog who saved him. Did that really  
happen?

OLIVER  
(voice dictating)  
Yes.

COMPUTERIZED CHIARA  
When can we meet in person?

Oliver stops for a moment, stuck. Bo perks up, alert.

OLIVER  
(voice dictating)  
When would you like to meet?

COMPUTERIZED CHIARA  
Soon.

OLIVER  
Let's not rush into anything.

COMPUTERIZED CHIARA  
Are you really who you say you are?

OLIVER  
I am. I promise you.

COMPUTERIZED CHIARA

Because there are so many scam  
artists out there, preying on women  
and taking advantage of them.

OLIVER

I promise you! I'm not one of them.  
I really am Oliver Regal, Canine  
Communicator and expert chef.

COMPUTERIZED CHIARA

You're an expert chef?

OLIVER

I am. That's why I'd like a few  
days to prepare a dinner for you. I  
want our first date to be special.

COMPUTERIZED CHIARA

I think we should meet first.

OLIVER

Okay.

COMPUTERIZED CHIARA

Where?

OLIVER

There's a park at Stockton and  
Webster. Let's meet there tomorrow  
morning at 10 AM.

COMPUTERIZED CHIARA

It's a date!

CUT TO:

INT. FOUR SEASONS SUITE - NIGHT

Martin opens the door to find Nikki looking rather ragged. He scoops her up in his arms and kisses her as she enters.

NIKKI

Wait! I'm gross. I have to take a  
shower and get these horrible  
clothes off of me. I've been  
working and cleaning-

Martin kisses her. She tries to resist, but kisses him back.

MARTIN

I'd love to take a shower with you.  
Get all soaped up and slippery.

She pushes him away, goes toward the bathroom.

NIKKI  
By myself.

MARTIN  
I bought you some new clothes and I  
left some lingerie in the bathroom.

Nikki peeks her head out of the bathroom door.

NIKKI  
Thanks.

She retreats. Then peeks her head out again.

NIKKI (CONT'D)  
I kind of hate how well you know  
me.

MARTIN  
You kind of love it too.

She retreats again, this time, she turns on the shower.  
Nikki's phone rings and Oliver's photo pops up.

MARTIN (CONT'D)  
Nikki's phone.

INT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Oliver looks startled, worried.

OLIVER  
Is Nikki there?

MARTIN (O.S.)  
She's in the shower.

OLIVER  
Who's this.

MARTIN (O.S.)  
It's Martin, her boyfriend, soon to  
be fiance, but don't tell her. I  
don't want you to ruin the  
surprise.

Oliver looks disturbed, frightened.

OLIVER  
Let me talk to Nikki! She wanted  
nothing to do with you.

INT. FOUR SEASONS SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Martin rummages through her purse and computer bag.

MARTIN

We've had a complicated  
relationship, but we've survived.

OLIVER (O.S.)

What's so complicated about the  
fact that she clearly didn't want  
to see you.

MARTIN

You think you know Nikki? We've  
been together for almost a decade.  
How long have you known her? Four  
months? Six months?

OLIVER (O.S.)

I know Nikki. I know when she's  
telling the truth. I can hear it in  
her voice.

Oliver has a look of recognition... her voice sounded sad.

MARTIN

I just left my wife of thirty years  
for her. She said she wanted some  
space, but this crazy quest to  
become an actress at her age and  
the six months of being a homeless  
Uber driver and a pet sitter is  
just her way of mourning the death  
of her mother.

CUT TO:

INT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Oliver sits in the dark with Bo by his side.

OLIVER

When did her mother die?

MARTIN (O.S.)

You see? You really know nothing  
about Nikki. Oh, I just made a  
joke. I said, 'You see' to a blind  
man.

Oliver hangs up the phone.

INT. FOUR SEASONS SUITE - NIGHT

Martin stares at Oliver's photo until it disappears. He puts her phone back and calls down to room service.

INT. FOUR SEASONS SUITE/BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nikki steps out of the steamy shower and wraps up in a big towel. She combs her hair and examines the lingerie.

She stares at herself in the mirror 'Do I really want to do this?' Martin knocks on the door.

MARTIN (O.C.)  
Dinner is served!

She puts on the lingerie, then the big bathrobe over it.

INT. FOUR SEASONS SUITE - CONTINUOUS

They eat and drink by candlelight. The luxury seduces her. He makes a toast to her. She looks like her heart isn't in it.

MARTIN  
To my best girl ever!

NIKKI  
I'm not your 'best girl'.

MARTIN  
Nikki, I know this has been a hard time for you.

NIKKI  
I'm fine.

MARTIN  
You don't look fine.

NIKKI  
I just got my first role in a play.

MARTIN  
That's nice, but that won't pay your bills, will it?

NIKKI  
Can't you just be happy for me?

MARTIN  
I'm so happy for you, sweat heart.  
You finally got what you wanted.

NIKKI

You? I don't think I want you  
anymore. I'm sorry.

MARTIN

Let's see how the night unfolds.

They finish dinner. He pours them each a drink. They sit out on their private balcony as the city blinks beneath them.

A SERIES of shots of their seduction scene. Martin knows her body and her desires. She gives in, only human. The passion heats up and she gets swept into it like a vortex.

Inside her purse, her phone blinks to life with the photo of Oliver as he calls her several times during their lovemaking.

INT. FOUR SEASONS SUITE - DAY

Nikki wakes up next to Martin. It's 7 AM. She checks her phone and sees ten calls from Oliver. She goes into the bathroom and calls him back, whispering from the shower, water from the sink running to cover up her voice.

NIKKI

(whispering)

Oliver? Is everything okay?

OLIVER (O.S.)

That's what I want to know!

INT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Oliver has spent the night in the same chair. He's groggy.

OLIVER

Are you okay?

NIKKI

I'm fine!

OLIVER

I was so worried about you.

NIKKI

Why?

OLIVER

I called you last night and that creep answered. *Martin*.

NIKKI

Oh. Shit.

OLIVER

He didn't kidnap you, did he?

NIKKI

No. I'm just an idiot.

OLIVER

I listened to your message from  
yesterday. What was your exciting  
news?

NIKKI

It's nothing.

OLIVER

Nikki. Please tell me.

INT. FOUR SEASONS SUITE/BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

She turns off the water. Stares at herself in the mirror.

NIKKI

I got a part in a play.

OLIVER

Rapunzel? You got it?

NIKKI

Yeah. As the witch.

OLIVER

That's great!

NIKKI

It's true.

OLIVER

I'm so happy for you.

NIKKI

Why did you call me so many times?

OLIVER

I panicked. I have a date with Ms.  
Lavender.

NIKKI

When?

OLIVER

Today at ten in the park. She just  
wants to meet me to make sure that  
I'm real.

NIKKI

You're real, Oliver.

OLIVER

I'm scared.

NIKKI

I'll be right over.

Nikki gets dressed in her clothes from the day before that  
are hanging on the back of the door. She sneaks out.

CUT TO:

INT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Nikki arrives with coffee and a day-old scone, which Bo  
devours in the front vestibule. Oliver looks worn out.

In his bedroom, he has several bottles of colognes on the  
dresser. He waves in their direction.

OLIVER

Will you help me pick one?

NIKKI

Even a blind man has trouble  
deciding what to wear.

OLIVER

Smell this one? Too *nighttime*?

NIKKI

Don't wear any of them.

OLIVER

Go naked?

NIKKI

It's too early in the day.

OLIVER

She'll be wearing lavender.

NIKKI

So let her be the star scent.

OLIVER

Good idea. What do I wear?

Nikki opens his closet and finds a plethora of loud shirts.

NIKKI

You have to stop letting your mother buy all your clothes.

OLIVER

Why? They're soft fabrics.

NIKKI

I'm sure they're expensive too.

OLIVER

What's wrong with them.

NIKKI

They don't say, 'I'm a cool guy'.

OLIVER

I'm not a cool guy.

NIKKI

Right. They're screaming with color. If I were prone to migraines-

OLIVER

I thought people like bright colors.

NIKKI

Your mother clearly likes bright colors.

OLIVER

Now that she's pretend dead, who's going to shop with me?

NIKKI

I will but we don't have time to shop now. You're meeting her in two hours.

OLIVER

Help me! What do I say? How do I act? She can't even hear me.

NIKKI

Okay, let's get you dressed. You smell like you've already showered and brushed your teeth five hundred times.

BO (V.O.)  
What would we do without Nikki?

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Let's not think about that!

Nikki rifles through his closet, finds a white shirt, jeans. She lays the clothes on his bed, leaves the room. Bo follows.

Nikki looks out at the lake and the people on the path. Bo snuggles up next to her. She bends down and hugs him.

BO (V.O.)  
I wish you could hear me, Nikki.

NIKKI  
What is it, Bo?

BO (V.O.)  
I don't want Oliver to fall in love  
with Ms. Lavender. I want him to  
fall in love with you because I  
love you Nikki.

Bo licks her face.

NIKKI  
You're such a lover-boy!

Oliver emerges from the bedroom looking like a cool guy.

BO (V.O.)  
Dude, you don't look so dorky.

OLIVER  
Nikki, what do you think?

NIKKI  
You look like a handsome guy in a  
white shirt with a big heart.

OLIVER  
Really?

NIKKI  
Yes. I'm making you breakfast.

OLIVER  
You are?

NIKKI  
You should eat something.

OLIVER

Are you channeling my 'pretend  
dead' mother?

NIKKI

No! I'm hungry, so I thought I'd  
use the guise of cooking for you.

OLIVER

Step aside.

Oliver maneuvers around his kitchen and makes breakfast.

NIKKI

Impressive. Delicious.

OLIVER

How do I communicate with her? She  
can't hear and I can't see.

NIKKI

Talk into your phone or just text  
her. She can read.

OLIVER

She doesn't speak very well and I  
can't learn to sign.

NIKKI

Let her type what she wants to say,  
then put an earbud in and let your  
program speak it for you. Simple.

OLIVER

Awkward.

NIKKI

It's only as awkward as you make  
it. Just relax. Be yourself.

OLIVER

Thank you. Will you come with me?

NIKKI

No! Then you'll never look cool.  
I'll drop you guys off a block  
away. Let's go! You want to be  
early.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK AT STOCKTON/WEBSTER - DAY

Oliver waits with Bo by his side. An elderly woman with a King Charles Cavalier touches him on the shoulder.

OLIVER

Chiara?

ELDERLY WOMAN

No. I'm sorry to bother you. Are you that gentleman who speaks to dogs?

OLIVER

I am.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Would you mind asking my Jojo if she ate my diamond ring? I can't find it anywhere.

OLIVER

Sure. I doubt she ate it. She doesn't look like the type.

(to Jojo)

Do you know where the ring is?

JOJO (V.O.)

In the kitchen, on the floor, right side of the sink where the cabinets meet. She dropped it and it's stuck between the floor and the drawer.

As Oliver explains where the ring is to the woman as Chiara arrives, smiling.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Thank you so much! My husband passed away recently and that ring has great sentimental value. He gave it to me when I was nineteen years old, seventy years ago.

The woman pats him on the cheek in a gesture of affection. Chiara sits down on the bench next to him.

CHIARA

(out loud, exaggerated)

It is you!

OLIVER

Chiara! It's so nice to meet you.

Chiara takes his hand. He thinks she's trying to hold his hand as a romantic gesture, but she moves it to her ipad and hands him earbuds.

She types her part of the conversation, then it speaks the words to him. He speaks, then it transcribes his words for her. Technology connects them.

CHIARA

Did you just help that woman?

OLIVER

I did.

CHIARA

Do you speak feline too?

OLIVER

No, just canine.

CHIARA

Too bad, I have cats!

While they converse, Nikki parks her car, gets out, and positions herself so she can spy on them. Bo perks up. Nikki motions for him to keep quiet and not tell Oliver. Bo sighs.

Oliver asks if he can touch her face to 'see' her features. He gently traces the contours of her face. His touch is as sensual as it is exploratory.

OLIVER

What were you doing at the hospital  
when I first encountered you?

CHIARA

It's complicated.

OLIVER

Are you okay? Are you ill?

CHIARA

I'm in perfect health, except for  
my eardrums.

Oliver smiles.

OLIVER

You have the energy of someone who  
seems healthy and very much alive.

CHIARA

Thank you. I was at the fertility  
clinic that day.

OLIVER

You're trying to have a baby?

CHIARA

Yes. I would LOVE a baby.

OLIVER

That's very brave of you to have a child on your own.

CHIARA

Actually, I have a husband.

OLIVER

What? A husband?

CHIARA

We're separated, sort of.

OLIVER

How can you be sort of separated?  
Isn't that like being sort of pregnant?

CHIARA

He's away for the summer. We needed some time apart to figure some things out.

OLIVER

Does he not want kids?

CHIARA

No. He wants kids. He just wants them to be conceived effortlessly and with no genetic flaws.

OLIVER

Sounds romantic. My attempt at a joke.

CHIARA

What were you doing at the hospital that day?

OLIVER

My mother was in chemo.

CHIARA

Is she doing okay?

Oliver gets quiet, then choked up.

OLIVER  
It's complicated.

CUT TO:

EXT. NATURE BOARDWALK STRUCTURE/LINCOLN PARK - DAY

Nikki, Oliver, and Bo walk by the South Pond and past the big, open structure by Studio Gang where a yoga class is in progress with people and their dogs. Winnie is in the class.

WINNIE (V.O.)  
Will you look who it is!

BO (V.O.)  
Hi Winnie. You're still as beautiful as ever.

WINNIE (V.O.)  
Ramona comes home tomorrow.

BO (V.O.)  
Oliver just has his first date with Ms. Lavender.

WINNIE (V.O.)  
That's great. Are you still going out with Bubbles.

BO (V.O.)  
I'm not going out with Bubbles.

WINNIE (V.O.)  
Why not? She's hot.

Oliver smiles. Nikki looks at him.

NIKKI  
What's so funny?

OLIVER  
Dogs in love are just as complicated as people in love.

NIKKI  
Bo, you hold out for the right one.  
You'll know when it feels right.

OLIVER  
So what's with you and that Martin character?

NIKKI

Yeah, I slept with him last night.

OLIVER

Do you love him?

NIKKI

Nope. Not anymore.

OLIVER

Did you ever love him?

NIKKI

A younger version of me loved him,  
as much as I could love anyone at  
that time.

OLIVER

I'm sorry to hear about your mom.

NIKKI

He told you that?

OLIVER

Yeah. I wish I could call my mom  
and tell her about Chiara.

NIKKI

You going to see Chiara again?

OLIVER

I'm making her dinner on Saturday.

NIKKI

That's nice!

OLIVER

She's married.

NIKKI

Take my advice! RUN!

OLIVER

They're separated.

NIKKI

Truly separated or *conveniently*  
separated. Martin told me that he  
and his wife were *emotionally*  
separated, which meant he  
emotionally separated from her when  
he cheated on her with me.

OLIVER

I just wish I could call my mom and tell her that I had my first date in twenty years.

NIKKI

Has it been twenty years?

OLIVER

You're not making me feel any better.

NIKKI

Would it help if I told you that Magda knows about Ms. Lavender?

OLIVER

How? You think she's psychic?

NIKKI

No. I called her.

OLIVER

You did?

NIKKI

I knew it would make her happy to know. She's not my mom, so I don't have to pretend she's dead. I have my own, truly dead mother.

Oliver puts his arm around her.

OLIVER

I'm sorry about your mom.

NIKKI

It's okay. I spent the last ten years taking care of her. What your mom is doing is an act of love. She wants you to have your freedom and she's afraid she's in your way. And look, you had your first date!

OLIVER

I'm so glad we're friends, Nikki.

NIKKI

Me too.

They walk as Nikki has her arm looped through his, no cane.

CUT TO:

INT. MEN'S CLOTHING STORE - DAY

Nikki takes Oliver shopping for clothes. She hands him various outfits in his dressing room. He comes out and models them for her. The salesman comes over to help.

SALESMAN

Would he like to use the three-way mirror.

NIKKI

Oh, he's blind as a bat. I'm his mirror. Turn around Oliver, let me see the back. That's good.

The salesman scurries away.

OLIVER

Bats are not technically blind.

NIKKI

Yeah, well I got rid of him.

Nikki picks out the clothes that look best on him, earthier and edgier than his prissy, loud shirts.

CUT TO:

INT. WHOLE FOODS - DAY

Oliver, Nikki, and Bo shop for food.

NIKKI

What are you making Ms. Lavender for dinner on Saturday?

OLIVER

I don't know yet. I'm thinking about test-driving a few dishes to see which one you like best.

NIKKI

I'm always happy to give my opinion when it comes to food.

OLIVER

Is that so?

BO (V.O.)

Me too! Salami, Bologna, grilled cheese, ice cream, you name it!

They pass the cheese section with samples. Nikki unabashedly takes some for Bo.

BO (V.O.)  
She might speak dog and not realize it. Or, she's reading my mind.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Let's hope she's not reading your mind. I can only imagine what's going through that thing.

BO (V.O.)  
If you only knew.

CUT TO:

INT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT - DAY/NIGHT

Oliver and Nikki cook in his kitchen. He teaches her how to cook. She teaches him how to dance.

While he's stirring a pot and she's chopping something up, she turns on some music.

NIKKI  
Oliver, women love when you dance with them. Do you know how to dance?

OLIVER  
I can cook, isn't that enough?

NIKKI  
No. Dance.

OLIVER  
You are so bossy.

NIKKI  
You'll thank me.

She puts on some music and tries to teach him. He's stiff.

OLIVER  
Dance with Bo. He's got the moves.

Bo barks. Nikki laughs, tries to get Bo in on the dance.

NIKKI  
Pretend your body is like water, loosen up, let it move, flow with the music.

OLIVER  
It's not my body, it's this music.

NIKKI  
Oh, is that it?

Oliver turns on Stevie Wonder and lets loose. He's really a great dancer. Nikki is stunned and thrilled.

OLIVER  
Come on!

NIKKI  
How did you learn to dance like that?

OLIVER  
I have a secret. I wasn't always blind. I had my sight until I was twenty eight. I lost it in a car accident. I lost my fiance then too.

NIKKI  
Oh, I'm so sorry.

OLIVER  
I am too, but right now, I have to move!

He dances. She dances.

NIKKI  
So you know what the sky looks like!

OLIVER  
Now I know what it looks like to you. Dance with me!

They dance up a storm in his kitchen with pots boiling over and Bo barking, dancing with them.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHILDREN'S THEATRE - DAY

Nikki and a young Rapunzel rehearse their lines. Joe, the director takes her aside.

JOE  
Did you forget your lines or are you improvising?

NIKKI  
A little of both.

JOE  
Okay, NO improvising. This is a  
children's performance. We have to  
be so careful of what we say or we  
could lose our funding.

NIKKI  
I understand.

JOE  
Do you?

NIKKI  
Yes.

JOE  
You seem like you're a bit of a  
wild card, a loose cannon.

NIKKI  
Me?

JOE  
Just stick with the script.

NIKKI  
Got it.

He walks away. Nikki has a glint in her eyes.

Later, she walks back to her car and finds Martin leaning  
against it.

MARTIN  
You're a bad girl.

NIKKI  
I'm not a girl. I'm a woman, idiot.

MARTIN  
I'm not an idiot, though I'm crazy  
in love with you, especially after  
the other night. Nikki, we belong  
together.

NIKKI  
That was just sex and you can't  
have any more. Go away.

MARTIN  
Baby, please! I'm begging you.

NIKKI

Don't 'baby' me. I told you. I'm  
not coming back. Go back to Sally.

MARTIN

I can't.

NIKKI

That's not my problem.

MARTIN

(tries to seduce her)

Come on. Name a country and I'll  
take you there. Italy. France. New  
Zealand. Peru. I could Peru you.

NIKKI

I'm not going anywhere. I'm in a  
production now.

MARTIN

You're the witch in a kid's play.  
Run away with me!

NIKKI

Way to win me over, Martin.

She pushes him out of the way, gets in her car, drives off.

CUT TO:

INT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The big date. Oliver wears new clothes from his shopping spree with Nikki. He has the table set, candles, and dinner made for Chiara. They converse with the use of technology. The evening seems pleasant, but a bit stiff. Chiara looks beautiful, but seems distant.

After dinner, Oliver turns on some music. He holds out a hand and tries to be romantic and asks her to dance. He doesn't grasp that Chiara is really uncomfortable.

OLIVER

May I have this dance?

CHIARA

Oliver, I can't hear the music!

Her voice is harsh, loud, on the verge of tears.

OLIVER

I'm sorry. I thought I could just hold you and you could sway with me, feel the music through me.

She's too flustered, upset.

CHIARA

I'm going to go.

OLIVER

I thought it would be romantic. Please forgive me. I didn't mean to upset you. Please stay. Let's talk.

CHIARA

Thank you for dinner.

She leaves. Oliver and Bo sit for hours as the candles burn out and they're left in darkness, again.

CUT TO:

INT. GARY AND JERRY'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Nikki and Bubbles lay in the king bed, eating Cheerios, and watching a movie. It's dark. Quiet. Peaceful.

NIKKI

I love it when your daddies are out of town. This is my favorite place to stay and you're my favorite dog.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Will you please write that down and sign it so I can show it to Bo. He thinks that he's your favorite, but I now I have proof! I am!

Nikki sees a text come in from Oliver that says, I blew it! She calls Oliver on their house phone.

Intercut between her house and his.

NIKKI

What happened?

OLIVER

Who's number is this?

NIKKI

Jerry and Gary's, I'm staying with Bubbles.

(MORE)

NIKKI (CONT'D)

I don't get good reception here, so I'm on their land line. Who has a land line? Be sure you save this number in your phone in case you ever want to reach me here. So how was the date?

OLIVER

I blew it.

NIKKI

Did you burn dinner?

OLIVER

Dinner was delicious.

NIKKI

What did you wear?

OLIVER

What you told me to wear.

NIKKI

I love when you do what I tell you to do. I'll bet you looked great.

OLIVER

I wouldn't know. Just like I wouldn't know that it was the worst idea ever to ask a deaf woman to dance.

NIKKI

Ohhhh, I forgot about that part! And you're such a good dancer.

OLIVER

She left. Forever.

NIKKI

I'm so sorry Oliver. I know how much you liked Ms. Lavender.

OLIVER

Chiara. Her name is Chiara.

NIKKI

Chiara.

OLIVER

Did I really like her, or did I like the idea of her?

NIKKI

I don't know.

OLIVER

I mean I hardly knew her. And what could ever come of a relationship with a blind guy and a deaf girl. It was a real Helen Keller Summit.

NIKKI

Maybe she'll give it another chance.

OLIVER

Would you?

NIKKI

You can't go by me. I don't have a lot of emotional intelligence when it comes to dating.

OLIVER

Are you referring to Martin?

NIKKI

I hate Martin.

OLIVER

I thought you just slept with Martin.

NIKKI

I did. So now I hate myself too. Romance can be a real bloodbath.

OLIVER

I'm going to call my mother.

NIKKI

Good idea.

OLIVER

She's not really dead. She's just pretend dead. I don't want to play this game anymore. I don't want to play any games anymore.

NIKKI

She misses you.

OLIVER

How do you know?

NIKKI

I talked to her this morning. I told her about your next date. I didn't want her to miss anything.

Silence.

OLIVER

Nikki?

NIKKI

What?

OLIVER

Thank you.

NIKKI

For giving you the worst dating advice ever?

OLIVER

For just being you.

NIKKI

Good night, Oliver.

OLIVER

Good night, Nikki.

They hang up. Bubbles gets up.

NIKKI

What is it girl?

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Why don't you just tell him that you love him? How hard could it be?

NIKKI

I wish I knew what you were saying.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Me too.

Bubbles lays back down, snuggles next to Nikki.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Oliver and Bo are just coming back from a walk when a large Buick pulls into the circular driveway in front. Loud music blares from the car, which has an odor and a clunking sound.

Nurse Janie gets out of the car and barrels toward Oliver.

NURSE JANIE  
There you are!

OLIVER  
Who? Me?

NURSE JANIE  
You never called me! I figured you  
were too shy, so I came over here  
to ask you out on a date.

OLIVER  
What?

NURSE JANIE  
It's me. Nurse Janie from the  
hospital. I was your mom's chemo  
nurse. Remember?

OLIVER  
Nurse Janie, of course. I'm sorry I  
didn't call you, but I-

NURSE JANIE  
It's okay. I'm here now. Should I  
come up?

The doorman comes out to rescue him.

DOORMAN  
You're expecting clients in about  
ten minutes, is that right, Mr.  
Oliver?

OLIVER  
That's right, Donnie. Thank you. I  
should prepare. Nurse Janie, it was  
so nice of you to stop by. I'll be  
in touch, but I really have to go.

NURSE JANIE  
(whispers to him)  
People may not tell you this  
because you're blind, but I'm  
really hot. Big women in bed are  
the best.

OLIVER  
Right. Okay.

CUT TO:

## EXT. FARMERS MARKET - DAY

Oliver and Bo and Nikki and Bubbles walk through the Farmers market on Saturday morning. The foursome feels like a family.

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
Will you look at these tomatoes!  
They look so juicy and perfect. Oh,  
that arugula smells good. And  
there's mint! I love mint!

BO (V.O.)  
Bubbles, is there anything that you  
don't love?

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
In fact there is.

BO (V.O.)  
What's that?

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
Cranky yellow labs with an  
attitude.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Simmer down, you two.

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
He started it.

BO (V.O.)  
You can't love everything, Bubbles:  
cauliflower and cabbage and those  
red daisies and the way the grass  
smells and the toothpick on the  
ground that smells like cinnamon.

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
I can love everything. You can't  
tell how to feel.

They pass the kids' section and Nikki picks up a big thing of bubbles. She blows and Bubbles fill the air.

NIKKI  
Look Bubbles, bubbles!

Bubbles is elated and dances around the bubbles. She's adorable.

BUBBLES  
Bubbles! Bubbles! I LOVE Bubbles.  
Come on Bo, chase them with me.

Bo can't resist and tries to catch a bubble with his mouth. Nikki keep blowing and encouraging them. Oliver smiles.

Oliver stops at a deli booth with salami. Bo is all excited.

BO (V.O.)  
That smell is driving me crazy. I  
love that smell. It reaches the  
inner depths of my soul and moves  
me.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Bo, it's a salami.

BO (V.O.)  
It's not just any salami. It's my  
true love salami.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
You're crazy.

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
He's not crazy. I understand what  
he's saying.

BO (V.O.)  
Thank you!

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
Sometimes you just love something  
or someone so much and it isn't  
rational and it doesn't make any  
sense and you just feel it so  
deeply.

Bo and Bubbles look at one another.

OLIVER (V.O.)  
Are you two...

Nikki buys some salami and gives them each a piece.

OLIVER  
You like salami?

NIKKI  
No. I bought this for you, for Bo.

BO (V.O.)  
I really love you, Nikki.

BUBBLES (V.O.)  
I'm her favorite.

Nikki hands the big slab to Oliver.

OLIVER  
You excited for tonight?

NIKKI  
Nervous.

OLIVER  
We'll all be there. Gerry and Gary  
are picking us up.

NIKKI  
I know. I told them to do that.

OLIVER  
Don't you just love it when someone  
does what you tell them to do?

Oliver touches her face to 'see' her smiling.

NIKKI  
How did you know I was smiling?

CUT TO:

EXT. CHILDREN'S THEATRE/BACKSTAGE - DAY

Nikki gets dressed as the witch. She has fun with it. Joe comes back stage and talks to her.

JOE  
You look great, Nikki. Just stick  
to your lines.

NIKKI  
I always do.

JOE  
You never do.

NIKKI  
I will today. Promise.

Joe gives her a suspicious look. Martin makes his way to her dressing area. She's surprised to see him.

MARTIN  
Nikki, I need to talk to you.

NIKKI  
You came!

MARTIN

If you were to pick a country,  
where would you go?

NIKKI

I'm not playing this game with you.

MARTIN

I'm not playing this time.

He pulls out two passports.

NIKKI

Why do you have my passport?

MARTIN

I was going to surprise you with a trip to Europe for your fortieth birthday, so I took it. But then your mother died and some stuff happened at work that I couldn't talk about.

NIKKI

What happened?

MARTIN

Some things I can't speak about,  
for your own good.

NIKKI

What are you saying?

MARTIN

I need to leave the country.  
Tonight. I want you to come with me. Name the place. I'll go anywhere with you because if you're there, I'll have a home.

NIKKI

If I don't go, when will I see you again?

Martin doesn't answer, which means *never*. The director calls everyone to a meeting and 'shoos' Martin away.

MARTIN

Think about it, Nikki. Good luck.  
I'll see you after the performance.

CUT TO:

INT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT - DAY

In his closet, Oliver feels the texture of each shirt, smells their fibers, and falls in love with the sensation of Nikki.

In the other room, Bo has gotten a hold of the salami slab. He devours the entire thing, then collapses.

Oliver calls Bo with words and on the canine frequency.

OLIVER

Bo!

No answer.

OLIVER (V.O.)

Bo! Where are you?

Oliver feels his way around his house and discovers Bo collapsed on the floor. He panics. He tries to get Bo up, but he's out cold.

Then he searches for find his phone and finally finds it.

He calls Nikki - right to voice mail. He calls Jerry and Gary. One of them answers. Oliver sobs his story.

OLIVER

Gary? It's Oliver. Something's happened to Bo. He passed out!

GARY (O.S.)

We'll be right over. Try to get him downstairs.

Oliver calls the doorman who comes up moments later with a cart. They hoist Bo up on the cart.

OLIVER

I wish they had an ambulance for dogs.

DOORMAN

He'll be okay, Mr. Oliver.

OLIVER

I hope so. What if he's not?

Jerry and Gary arrive with Bubbles. She's beside herself with worry and love for Bo. She stays next to him.

CUT TO:

## I/E. GARY AND JERRY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Oliver and Bubbles surround Bo in the back seat.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Please don't be dead, Bo. I love you too much to lose you. You're my favorite dog.

Oliver holds onto Bubbles, both are emotional.

OLIVER (V.O.)

Come here, Bubbles. He's going to be okay. He has to be okay for both of us. He's still breathing. His heart is still beating...

CUT TO:

## I/E. EMERGENCY ANIMAL CLINIC - CONTINUOUS

They race him in and discover that the salami nearly killed him. They pump his stomach. All during this ordeal, Bubbles is by Bo's side, proclaiming her love for him.

JERRY

They pumped his stomach. He's going to be fine.

GARY

The vet just told us that it looks like it was a salami overdose. Nothing serious, but you have to keep an eye on him. Sorry.

CUT TO:

## EXT. CHILDREN'S THEATRE - NIGHT

The play is already underway when Oliver, Jerry, Gary, Bubbles and Bo arrive and sit on the outskirts of the audience. Bo looks weak. Bubbles dotes on him, chatting incessantly on their frequency. This time, Bo doesn't mind.

Nikki comes out on stage, dressed as a witch. She sees Martin in the front row, looking at her, begging her to be with him.

She stops, as if she forgot her lines. Then she goes into her own, improved soliloquy.

NIKKI

Rapunzel, let's look at this rationally... you're stuck in this tower and you've got this great guy who keeps climbing up to the tower to be with you. What are you going to do?

The director, Joe starts to panic, knowing that Nikki the loose cannon is going off on her own tangent. He motions to her, but she ignores him, speaking at first directly to Martin, then to the rest of the crowd.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

You could wait here to be rescued, but that's no fun. Besides, I'm the witch, I could ruin your life, cut your hair, keep you chained up here indefinitely. Here's the thing... There's always some witch, metaphorically speaking who's going to chop you down and keep you in a prison. Are you going to let her hold you back from your own beauty, from your own greatness? No! Don't give her the power. Take back your life.

RAPUNZEL

What the hell are you doing? Those aren't your lines. You're ruining the play!

NIKKI

I'm rewriting the story for the audience. The moral of the story of Rapunzel is to unlock yourself from your own prison. Come on, everybody get up. All you kids up front, can you help me help Rapunzel unlock herself from her prison.

All you grown ups too, join in. We're all slaves to our own isolation or to the standards of beauty that someone else has set. Come on everyone, unlock your door. Set yourselves free. We're all Rapunzel. We all have a great love who has been thrown from our reach, who wanders blindly in the forest waiting for our souls to be reunited so he can see again.

(MORE)

NIKKI (CONT'D)  
Imagine you have the key to your  
own freedom in your hand, now  
unlock the door to your own prison.  
That's right pretend to put the key  
in and turn it. Open up the door.  
You're free!

Nikki pantomimes the unlocking and opening of the door. Soon, the kids follow and even the grown ups get into the experience of setting themselves free.

RAPUNZEL  
You're crazy.

NIKKI  
Fairy tales are meant to be  
rewritten with every generation. In  
this new story of Rapunzel, she  
holds the key to her own freedom.  
She decides that being in the tower  
isn't for her.

Nikki looks at Martin. It's clear that she's not going with him. She nods. He nods. He leaves the front row and walks out of her life forever. She watches him leave as she unlocks herself from her prison.

Martin walks past Magda who sits in one of the back rows. Nikki sees her for the first time. Magda applauds her.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHILDREN'S THEATRE/BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The director comes back stage. Nikki recoils.

JOE  
I'm not sure if I should fire you,  
sue you, or thank you.

NIKKI  
What?

JOE  
One of our big donors saw your  
dazzling diatribe and thought it  
was brilliant. She doubled her  
annual donation to the Chicago  
Children's Theatre.

NIKKI  
You're welcome?

JOE

You better remember exactly what  
you said tonight and repeat it  
tomorrow night.

A SERIES OF SHOTS as Nikki's friends come and congratulate her. Gary and Jerry bring Bubbles, who is her usual exuberant self. She tries to recount the tale of Bo's narrow escape from a horrible salami death, but Nikki just hugs and kisses her, which is good enough.

Finally when the crowd has thinned out, Oliver and Bo wait for a moment alone with Nikki.

NIKKI

There's my favorite big dipping  
duo.

BO (V.O.)

I love you Nikki, even if you were  
the drug dealer who bought me a  
nearly lethal amount of salami.

OLIVER (V.O.)

Bo, will you go and wait with  
Bubbles. I need a moment alone with  
Nikki.

Bubbles barks and beckons Bo over. Oliver releases his leash.

OLIVER

Nikki, you were great.

NIKKI

Thanks Oliver.

OLIVER

I loved the part about the key and  
setting ourselves free. Gary told  
me that you had the whole place  
standing and pretending to unlock  
themselves. Nikki, I can't set  
myself free from my blindness.  
There is no key.

NIKKI

Oliver, I-

OLIVER

But I have the sky.

NIKKI

The sky?

OLIVER

That feeling of hope, or love, or whatever it is that gets you up in the morning happy to be alive.

NIKKI

Oh, right.

OLIVER

*Nikki, you are my sky. I love you. I've always loved you...*

NIKKI

Oliver. Stop talking so I can kiss you.

He stops talking. She kisses him. He kisses her.

CUT TO:

ONE YEAR LATER...

EXT. NATURE BOARDWALK STRUCTURE/LINCOLN PARK - DAY

The open structure has a different crowd around it today as Nikki and Oliver have their earthy, make-shift wedding under the canopy of the curvaceous ceiling.

The small gathering consists mostly of family, friends, and their dogs. The cast includes Magda and his dad, DAVID (newly reconciled with Magda who now has hair), Nurse Janie, many of the dogs from the Mutt Strutt (Boychick and Motek), Winnie and Ramona, etc.

Oliver walks down a short aisle with Bo by his side. Gary and Jerry stand at the front to perform the ceremony.

Preceding Nikki are her 'flower girl' escorts, a team of rambunctious puppies, the product of Bubbles and Bo. Bubbles frets over her puppies.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Come on, stay in line. Walk to daddy, go, don't eat the flowers. Stay out of the mud. You kids!

Nikki and Bubbles walk down the aisle.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I just love weddings. Wedding are so much fun, especially when people you love so much are getting married! Oh look at those flowers. I wonder what they taste like. Isn't Nikki beautiful. Hi Oliver!

BO (V.O.)

Bubbles.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I swear to you, Bo, I haven't had any coffee today!

BO (V.O.)

I know. I love you.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

You do? I love you too.

Nikki arrives and takes his hand. Bo stands next to Oliver and looks out at the crowd. Nikki and Bubble's words overlap.

OLIVER

(to Nikki)

I love you.

NIKKI

I know. I love you, too.

Magda holds two of his puppies. She cries tears of joy as she watches Oliver and Nikki get married.

The puppies lick her face. She kisses them.

BO (V.O.)

I'm so happy for you Magda and I'm so happy for me too, especially because we didn't snip my balls!

FADE OUT.