

Title: Love, Mamma Grace

Author: M. A. Cole

Synopsis:

"Love, Mamma Grace" is a heartfelt and transformative journey penned by M. A. Cole. The story centers on Presley, a man deeply entwined with his family's restaurant, Helene's, and the remarkable people who enter his life through it. The narrative weaves together themes of love, loss, redemption, and the profound impact one person can have on many lives.

Presley's life takes a dramatic turn when Mamma Grace, a spirited and wise Italian woman, becomes a pivotal figure in his world. Her influence extends beyond her culinary skills, touching the hearts and souls of those around her, including Presley's grandfather's old friends and Presley himself.

Chapters 1-8: Presley recounts his journey with the restaurant and the pivotal role of Mamma Grace. The early chapters introduce Mamma Grace and her deep bond with Presley's family, showcasing her selfless nature and the love she pours into the community. Through her stories, Presley learns about the struggles and resilience of various characters, such as Greg, Paul, Wyatt, and others, each carrying their burdens and seeking redemption.

Chapters 9-10: As Mamma Grace shares more about her past, including her late husband Enzo and her own family, Presley gains a deeper understanding of her strength and compassion. The narrative explores Presley's own challenges, his lingering feelings for Isa, and the weight of his responsibilities at the restaurant. Mamma Grace's influence continues to shape his outlook on life and love.

Chapters 11-12: Mamma Grace's sudden departure to Italy leaves Presley and the others grappling with her absence. Through heartfelt letters, she assigns each person a task to help them fulfill their potential and overcome their struggles. Presley, burdened with guilt and the weight of his own judgments, finds himself lying to protect Mamma Grace's plans while trying to rally the others to follow her guidance.

Chapters 13-14: The shocking revelation of Mamma Grace's passing devastates the group. Her final letter is a poignant apology, leaving everyone in deep reflection about their lives and the changes they need to make. This turning point pushes each character to finally embrace Mamma Grace's wishes, leading to significant personal growth and renewed purpose.

Chapters 15-16: As Thanksgiving approaches, Presley prepares to meet Mamma Grace's family, still grappling with her loss. The unexpected arrival of Isa, Presley's long-lost love, brings a profound and joyful resolution to his journey. The reunion reaffirms the power of love and the intricate plans of a higher power, echoing Mamma Grace's teachings. Presley proposes to Isa, vowing never to let her go again, symbolizing hope and the enduring impact of Mamma Grace's legacy.

Conclusion: "Love, Mamma Grace" is a touching narrative that captures the essence of love, community, and personal transformation. M. A. Cole masterfully blends humor, emotion, and life lessons, creating a story that resonates deeply with readers. Through the unforgettable character of Mamma Grace and the intertwined lives of those she touched, the novel celebrates the beauty of human connection and the lasting power of grace.

Screenplay: Love, Mamma Grace - Chapter 1

FADE IN:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - EARLY MORNING

A cozy, 50s-themed diner with checkerboard tablecloths, chrome speakers, and a row of sparkly red bar stools. A vintage blue neon Motorola jukebox sits next to the entrance. A six-foot statue of ELVIS PRESLEY with a Gibson J-200 acoustic guitar stands in the corner.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) In a world that often whispers, sometimes there is nothing else for us to do but listen. My most recent whispers, as faint as they may have been, led me to write this book. A book about another book, but so much more.

PRESLEY, a man in his late 30s, enters the restaurant, flipping the light switch on. The dim interior comes to life. He walks past the Elvis statue, glancing at it with a mix of nostalgia and mild annoyance.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Many successful authors stress the need for the first chapter to be alluring enough to catch the reader's attention. They say create an interesting plot and then a twist. But for me, I simply write to honor those rare but definite whispers, and for those who taught me how to hear them.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - DAY

PRESLEY is preparing the kitchen for the day's work, checking supplies, and turning on the stoves. The kitchen is a mix of old-fashioned charm and modern equipment.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I've had many teachers. Most were family members, but quite a few friends helped along the way too. Believe it or not, a little restaurant was often the main character in much of my story.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The restaurant is bustling with customers. The music of the 50s fills the air. PRESLEY as a young boy (8 years old), watches his grandparents work. His GRANDMOTHER, HELENE, a petite woman in her 70s, is energetic and lively. His GRANDFATHER, a large man with a kind smile, commands respect with his presence.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) The restaurant itself resembled a bygone era with checkerboard tablecloths and 50s music. My grandparents worked side by side for over forty years in that little restaurant.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The young PRESLEY spins on one of the red bar stools, watching his grandparents with admiration.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) They barely left each other's side throughout that whole time. They worked what seemed like all the time, but they created quite a humble little dynasty together.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - DAY

PRESLEY continues his morning routine, placing fresh ingredients on the counter.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) From what I was told, my grandfather's family was as poor as anyone's in their already poor hometown of Franklin, Virginia. Franklin did, however, have a few opportunities back then because it was also known as the moonshine capital of the world.

FLASHBACK - EXT. FRANKLIN, VIRGINIA - DAY

A young version of PRESLEY's GRANDFATHER, in his 20s, is seen distilling moonshine in a hidden forest area. He's large, imposing, but has a gentle demeanor.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) White Lightning, as he was nicknamed early on, brought his family out of that extreme poverty and eventually to Richmond, Virginia. He did that by selling so much of that illegal version of Mountain Hooch.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

GRANDFATHER, now older, sits with his grandkids in the living room of the restaurant. They are captivated by his storytelling.

GRANDFATHER (smiling) They called me White Lightning, but I never touched a drop of that stuff.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) His road to Richmond wasn't what you'd call a direct route though. He would have gone to jail for his backwoods antics if the judge in that small town didn't give him another option.

FLASHBACK - EXT. WORLD WAR II - EUROPE

GRANDFATHER, in an oversized military uniform, fights in the war. He is seen helping his fellow soldiers, showing immense strength and compassion.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) The problem was World War Two had just begun and he'd be heading to Europe smack dab in the middle of all that carnage.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

GRANDFATHER and HELENE are dancing together in the restaurant after hours. The jukebox plays softly in the background.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) As his stories went, about six months before he was scheduled to return to the States, he got orders to Sicily. It was there near Palermo where that big ole country boy met who he called the most beautiful, sassy, and stubborn woman he'd ever known.

FLASHBACK - EXT. SICILY - DAY

GRANDFATHER, much younger, meets HELENE, a fiery young woman. They argue, then laugh, showing an immediate connection.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) My grandmother was not only his physical opposite, standing only about 5 feet tall, but she also had a much different disposition.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - DAY

PRESLEY looks at an old photograph of his grandparents hanging on the wall.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) When she got really mad, she'd even cuss at you in a different language. She is still the only person I've ever known who could chew you out and make you feel better afterward.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

GRANDMOTHER is scolding a young PRESLEY in Italian, then bursts into a supportive giggle. PRESLEY smiles, feeling encouraged.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) If there was ever anything he lacked, she'd fill by just being herself. Together, they made each other totally and wonderfully whole.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - DAY

PRESLEY places a tray of freshly prepared food on the counter, ready for the day's customers.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Some people say they grew up in a restaurant but when I say it, I really mean it. I was there almost all the time throughout my youth, and for me obviously later on too.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The restaurant is packed. PRESLEY, now a teenager, is working alongside his grandparents, serving customers and helping in the kitchen.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) At one time or another, we had people from all walks of life come in. But no matter whether celebrity, mechanic, street walker, or anything in between almost everyone appeared to be on the same level once inside.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY, exhausted, sits at a table with his grandparents. They share a quiet, content moment.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Once I got old enough to be able to help at the level my grandparents felt was sufficient, I didn't feel like the work would ever end. But I was so grateful even at a young age to be around my family so much.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - DAY

PRESLEY's phone rings. He glances at it, seeing a picture of his grandfather on the screen. He answers with a smile.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Almost always after being directed in such a way she'd then let out the cutest most supportive little giggle. For some strange reason, I'd always feel more motivated than before she cussed at me.

GRANDFATHER (V.O.) Amore, get your culo moving.

PRESLEY (laughing) Yes, sir.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) My grandfather on the other hand was a little more direct with his requests.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

GRANDFATHER is barking orders in the kitchen, but always with a warm smile. PRESLEY, now a young man, follows diligently.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) He was just as supportive and garnered the same if not better results, but he always vocalized his requests in a much more urgent way.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - DAY

PRESLEY places the phone down, looking around the kitchen with a sense of pride and nostalgia.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I loved the fact that my family was so direct about pretty much everything. There was never any talking behind anyone's back or hidden agendas.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The family is gathered around a table, enjoying a meal together. Laughter and conversation fill the room.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Feelings may have been slightly touched at times but there was always a smile,

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a cute little giggle, or a hearty chuckle that followed to make everything alright again. Besides, the perennial goal of the restaurant was to get the job done, and oh how that was accomplished each and every day.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY finishes setting up the restaurant for the day. He stands back, looking at the place with a mix of pride and nostalgia.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) My parents were probably the smartest people in the family because although I knew my mother spent most of her youth at the restaurant as well, neither she nor my father chose to have anything to do with it after I was born.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

A young PRESLEY, around 10 years old, is seen working in the restaurant, while his GRANDPARENTS oversee everything. His MOTHER and FATHER occasionally visit but don't get involved in the day-to-day operations.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) To be completely honest, my grandparents were, let's say quite overbearing at times so I ended up with them and at the restaurant more than anywhere else after a certain age.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - DAY

PRESLEY flips through an old family album, looking at pictures of his grandparents and the restaurant throughout the years.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I think that's how my mother wanted me to be raised so she gave my grandparents and that doggone restaurant certain allowances that directly guided so much of my life, whether I wanted them to or not.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A teenage PRESLEY is closing the restaurant with his grandparents. They share a moment of quiet pride, surveying the empty diner after a busy day.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Looking back, I now realize how the time I spent there was so special. Even profits were secondary or even further down the line to what I'd eventually realize Helene's gave me. Places that are unquestionably built with that much love have a certain magical personality of their own.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The restaurant is empty. PRESLEY sits alone at a table, reflecting on the memories.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) But life, as it does, sped by and soon wanting to follow more directly in the footsteps of my grandfather, I joined the military myself.

FLASHBACK - INT. MILITARY BASE - DAY

PRESLEY, now in his early 20s, is seen in his military uniform, preparing for deployment.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I never made it to Palermo, but I did make it to Italy just like he did many years ago. I was based in Aviano, Italy to be exact, and eventually made my way to a different war.

FLASHBACK - EXT. MILITARY BASE - ITALY - DAY

PRESLEY writes letters home, smiling at the thought of his family. He then transitions into a war zone, showing the harsh realities of military life.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) There were more than a few comparisons to be made between my grandfather's early adulthood and mine but I'm not sure if I wasn't just trying to force things to be that way, or whether it really was predestined.

FLASHBACK - EXT. WAR ZONE - NIGHT

PRESLEY is in the midst of battle, showing bravery and resilience, much like his grandfather.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) There were no cell phones or inexpensive landline calls back then. Heck, most people didn't even have a phone over there so I stayed in touch with my family by sending letters back and forth as much as I could.

FLASHBACK - INT. MILITARY BASE - NIGHT

PRESLEY receives letters from his grandparents, filled with stories and updates about the restaurant. He reads them with a smile, feeling connected to home.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I missed my family, I did, but I was out trying to learn how to be an adult myself. Unfortunately, in my case, I couldn't have had the same claims about alcohol as my grandfather did.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY looks at a framed photo of his grandfather in his military uniform hanging on the wall.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) As strange as it sounds, I felt the military gave me a freedom that I'm not sure I'd ever felt before. I didn't realize how delicate those feelings were though because the thing about freedom is, it can be falsely perceived.

FLASHBACK - INT. MILITARY BASE - NIGHT

PRESLEY is awakened by a beeper going off incessantly. He quickly gathers his gear, knowing it means he's being deployed to a conflict zone.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) A stupid beeper excessively going off over and over again proved just how owned I was. The response to that beeper and the eight-hour flight that followed resulted in me being in a terrible war myself for almost two years.

FLASHBACK - EXT. WAR ZONE - DAY

PRESLEY is seen in the thick of battle, experiencing the horrors of war firsthand.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) My grandfather was right again; war does change everyone.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY looks around the restaurant, taking in the memories and the legacy left by his grandparents.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I returned home changed, but with a deeper understanding of my grandfather and the life he built for us. And now, here I am, back at Helene's, ready to continue the legacy they started.

PRESLEY

(patting the Elvis statue) Alright, King, let's make some magic happen today.

FADE OUT.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The restaurant is now bustling with customers, filled with the sounds of clinking cutlery, laughter, and 50s music playing in the background. PRESLEY is seen serving customers, chatting with regulars, and running the restaurant with the same dedication and love his grandparents showed.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Helene's was more than just a restaurant. It was a home, a community, a place where love was served with every meal. And that, my friends, is the real story behind this book.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The restaurant is closed. PRESLEY sits at a table, pen in hand, writing in a notebook.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) To my grandparents, Helene and White Lightning, thank you for teaching me to listen to the whispers. This book is for you.

FADE OUT.

Screenplay: Love, Mamma Grace - Chapter 2

FADE IN:

EXT. AVIANO, ITALY - DAY

A picturesque Italian town with cobblestone streets and charming buildings. The camera follows PRESLEY, a young soldier, as he walks through the town, clearly in love.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) One of the best and worst parts of my life that almost followed my grandfather's early path to a "T" was, just like him, before the war I found who I just knew was the love of my life in Italy as well. Her name was Isabella. Everyone except for me called her Bella but I called her Isa.

EXT. BODEGA - DAY

PRESLEY approaches a quaint bodega, glancing around nervously. ISA, a beautiful young Italian woman with long, flowing jet-black hair and piercing dark brown eyes, stands behind the counter.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Truthfully in a way, I was trying to be a little different from everyone else but I mainly called her Isa because from what my limited recollection of my grandmother's Italian lessons were, Isa meant "The One." I don't know how I knew, but I just knew my Isa was the one for me from the start.

FLASHBACK - EXT. AVIANO, ITALY - DAY

ISA, at first, ignores PRESLEY's attempts to talk to her, shaking her head and saying "No Americans, No Americans."

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Isa wouldn't even talk to me at first, except to say, "No Americans, No Americans," all while shaking her head from left to right to let me know the seriousness of her objections.

INT. BODEGA - DAY

PRESLEY continues to visit the bodega every day, buying small items and trying to strike up conversations with ISA. He spends his meager military pay on these daily trips.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I wouldn't give up though. I thought of myself as a big tough military guy so there could be no way this cute little saucy Italian chick was going to beat me.

EXT. BODEGA - PATIO - DAY

ISA finally begins to warm up to PRESLEY. They sit together on the patio, talking while ISA's father keeps a watchful eye from inside the store.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) It took her a little while to let me in on the secret that she spoke English probably better than I. I guess eventually I said, or did something right because before long there weren't too many days that we didn't spend at least some time together.

INT. ISA'S FAMILY APARTMENT - NIGHT

PRESLEY is invited to dinner at ISA's family's apartment above the bodega. The family dynamic is warm and welcoming, reminding PRESLEY of his own family.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) The way her family interacted with each other just felt so familiar and the way they treated me did too. Love is the most powerful of languages in any country no matter how the words come out.

FLASHBACK - EXT. ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

PRESLEY and ISA explore the beautiful Italian countryside together, growing closer with each passing day.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) There was no question that in that language, she and I had finally become fluent.

INT. ISA'S FAMILY APARTMENT - NIGHT

PRESLEY nervously asks ISA's parents for their blessing to marry her. They smile warmly and hand him ISA's grandmother's wedding ring.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) They not only gave me their blessing, they also gave me Isa's grandmother's wedding ring to give to her.

FLASHBACK - INT. MILITARY BASE - NIGHT

PRESLEY's beeper goes off incessantly. He looks worried, knowing he has to report back to base immediately.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Later that same day, the very day I got Isa's parents' blessing and her grandmother's ring, my beeper started going off over and over again.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

PRESLEY rushes to the train station, hoping to catch ISA before he leaves. He misses her, looking distraught as he boards the train to the base.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I knew she was on the J train heading back to us at the time. I also knew her parents and I were anxiously waiting for her arrival but I was just a young soldier and a little afraid of not reporting in to see what the emergency was.

INT. MILITARY BASE - NIGHT

The base is in chaos. Soldiers are rushing around, packing their gear. PRESLEY's SERGEANT walks up and down the halls, shouting orders.

SERGEANT Boys, we're going to war!

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) We all had thirty minutes to pack, clear the dorms, and report to the hangar. I'll never forget it because my heart dropped as he kept yelling out "Boys, we're going to war."

INT. MILITARY PLANE - NIGHT

PRESLEY and other soldiers are strapped into the cargo nets of a C5 Galaxy. The plane is loud and cramped, filled with tension.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I didn't take me long to realize that I had no way to contact Isa or her family. They didn't have a phone and even though I'd been to their bodega what seemed like hundreds of times over the past year I didn't know what her actual address was to later send a letter, if that would even be possible in a war.

INT. WAR ZONE - DAY

PRESLEY and his fellow soldiers land in a war zone, quickly adapting to the harsh realities of battle.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) There were no actual seats in those planes either, just rows and rows of cargo nets with hundreds of soldiers strapped in a manner that was a lot less safe than you would be on an amusement ride. I have to say holding on for my life was a priority during the flight but when we finally landed my confused reality landed with me.

EXT. WAR ZONE - NIGHT

PRESLEY, now battle-hardened, fights alongside his comrades. He keeps a determined look on his face, thinking of ISA and the life he left behind.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) My thoughts were still about Isa, even in the midst of chaos. I held onto her grandmother's ring, hoping to one day return to her.

INT. WAR ZONE - TENT - NIGHT

PRESLEY sits alone in a dimly lit tent, writing a letter to ISA. His face shows the toll the war has taken on him, but his determination remains strong.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) War changes everyone. But through it all, my thoughts never strayed far from Isa. She was my anchor, my reason to keep fighting.

FADE OUT.

Screenplay: Love, Mamma Grace - Chapter 3

FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT WAR ZONE - DAY

A barren, sandy landscape with old metal buildings scattered around. There are no trees or water in sight. PRESLEY and his fellow soldiers are seen patrolling the area, looking weary and alert.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) At the time I still wasn't exactly sure where we were because there were no trees or water in sight. There was just sand, the runway, and these old metal buildings all around. We ended up staying over in that hellish existence for twenty-two long and sometimes terrifying months.

INT. MILITARY TENT - NIGHT

PRESLEY sits alone in his tent, holding ISA's grandmother's ring in his hand. He looks at it longingly, lost in thought.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I had friends die and I saw firsthand what changed my grandfather. But even in my version of hell, there wasn't a day that I didn't think about my Isa.

FLASHBACK - INT. MILITARY BASE - DAY

PRESLEY is writing a letter to his family. Other soldiers are doing the same, the atmosphere tense but hopeful.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) We did eventually have the opportunity to write and receive letters. I kept in contact with my family the best I could but I still had no way to contact that beautiful little Italian woman.

EXT. DESERT WAR ZONE - NIGHT

PRESLEY finds a quiet spot behind a sand dune. He closes his eyes, imagining his life with ISA. A serene vision of their wedding day, their children playing, and their golden years together on a sandy beach fills his mind.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) On many of those less active days, I'd try and find somewhere to be alone. I'd just close my eyes with Isa's grandmother's ring in my hand and I'd imagine what our wedding day would have been like. Then I'd see our kids playing. I even saw us in our golden years walking together hand in hand on a sandy beach.

INT. MILITARY TENT - NIGHT

PRESLEY, looking emotionally exhausted, lies down on his cot, staring at the ceiling.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I didn't know why I did that to myself, it never made things easier but while I was imagining what could have been I somehow sent myself to a world that was as peaceful and real as it could be.

EXT. DESERT WAR ZONE - DAY

The soldiers are packing up their gear, preparing to leave. PRESLEY looks around, a mix of relief and uncertainty on his face.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) We did, well most of us did, eventually make it back to our base in Aviano.

INT. AVIANO MILITARY BASE - DAY

PRESLEY is processing back on the base. The atmosphere is busy but celebratory as soldiers reunite with friends and loved ones.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I don't think I fully realized what I lost until after we processed back on the base after the war.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

PRESLEY gets off the J-train, his heart pounding with anticipation. He looks around, taking a deep breath.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) As I was getting off the J-train I said the most profound prayer of my life. I asked for forgiveness and understanding.

EXT. BODEGA - DAY

PRESLEY approaches the bodega, which is now boarded up and abandoned. He looks devastated.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Regardless of how sincere or reflective I was when I got to the bodega, I fully realized all the words I just so wholeheartedly spouted out resulted in nothing more than another unanswered prayer.

EXT. BODEGA - PATIO - DAY

PRESLEY jumps over the cast iron fence and sits at one of the tables where he and ISA used to talk. He holds ISA's grandmother's ring tightly.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) It was now Isa's turn to disappear and that damn numbness set in once again.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

PRESLEY is drinking heavily, clearly trying to drown his sorrows. The bar is dimly lit, filled with other patrons in similar states.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) For the next few months, alcohol seemed to be my only chance at relief.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

PRESLEY, visibly drunk, gets into a fight with another man. The fight is broken up by police, and PRESLEY is taken away in handcuffs.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) All of that drinking and sometimes fighting got so bad in such a short amount of time I thought I might be going to jail myself.

INT. MILITARY BASE - OFFICE - DAY

PRESLEY stands before his MASTER SERGEANT, who looks at him with understanding and concern.

MASTER SERGEANT You've got two options, Presley. Re-enlist and accept new orders to Japan, or take an honorable discharge and head home.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) My master sergeant, the one who gave me the options, wasn't a politician or a non-caring high-ranking officer, he was a real leader and he understood.

INT. MILITARY BASE - NIGHT

PRESLEY is on the phone with his family, tears streaming down his face as he explains his situation.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I hadn't spoken or written to my family for months. Once I did, I realized how frantically worried they were about me. In a way, they made my decision for me and I'd be heading home once again.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

PRESLEY boards a train, looking out the window with a mix of hope and regret.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) It was always my plan for me and Isa to make a life out of the military, but Isa wasn't there anymore and what I used to know about myself wasn't either.

INT. FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

PRESLEY reunites with his family. They embrace him warmly, relief and love evident on their faces.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I'll never know how my life would have turned out if I had stayed in the military, but I did know I'd never regret going back home to those who loved me the most.

FADE OUT.

Screenplay: Love, Mamma Grace - Chapter 4

FADE IN:

INT. FAMILY HOME - DAY

PRESLEY, looking despondent, sits in his childhood room, surrounded by unpacked boxes. He stares at the ceiling, lost in thought.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) When I got back home, I sulked around for almost a month. But just like when my beeper kept going off to go to war, I had another important request that put me on another demanded mission.

INT. FAMILY LIVING ROOM - DAY

PRESLEY's GRANDFATHER, a large man with a kind demeanor, sits in his favorite armchair. He gestures for PRESLEY to come over.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) It was my grandfather and he once again said he needed help at the restaurant. I can't say I didn't see that visit eventually coming. I can't even say that I didn't want it to come.

FLASHBACK - INT. MILITARY BASE - NIGHT

PRESLEY and ISA are on a phone call with his family. His parents and grandparents listen intently, smiling as they hear ISA's voice and stories.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Back in Italy, Isa and I did call my family together a few times from a base phone. She did get to speak with my parents and grandparents. They at least heard her voice and some of our stories.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY and his GRANDFATHER walk into the restaurant. As his GRANDFATHER heads inside, PRESLEY lags behind. His GRANDMOTHER appears, taking his arm.

GRANDMOTHER Sit your culo down.

EXT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

They sit on the curb, their version of a patio. His GRANDMOTHER pulls out a letter from her pocket.

GRANDMOTHER Isa wrote this before you disappeared.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She walked out of the restaurant as soon as my grandfather walked in. It was almost as if they were professional wrestlers perfectly timing the tag in.

GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D) She wanted to thank us for how we raised you. She loved you, Presley. She loved all of us.

PRESLEY (reading the letter, tears welling up) I don't know what I could have done differently, Nonna.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) This bonehead who once thought he was such a tough military guy just sat there crying like a baby on my grandmother's shoulder.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY sits at a table with his GRANDMOTHER, still emotional. The restaurant is quiet and dimly lit.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I did write back to the return address on Isa's letters after I saw it that day. Even though it was years later I must have written a hundred letters or more trying to plead my case about what happened.

EXT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY, determined, starts working at the restaurant. He's back in the kitchen, chopping vegetables and cooking.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Finally, I just had to conclude that I couldn't spend every day blubbering on my grandmother's shoulder or feeling sorry for what could have been any longer.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY notices his grandparents, now looking older and more worn out, still working hard.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) At that point, I'd been away from home for a little over four years and even though I was supposedly in the prime of my life I could tell my grandparents had aged quite a bit since I'd been gone.

INT. FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

The family gathers around the dinner table. The mood is somber as they discuss the grandparents' retirement.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) They were planning to retire sometime during the year, but the specifics weren't quite worked out at the time.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY's GRANDFATHER hands over the restaurant keys to PRESLEY, a symbolic passing of the torch.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) My grandparents had been running that restaurant for so many years, of course with ample help but I couldn't envision a Helene's without them or their culos there every day.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The family stands by the graves of PRESLEY's grandparents. Tears are shed, and PRESLEY places a hand on the tombstone, visibly heartbroken.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) He only lived for about ten months after he retired but that was still a month longer than my grandmother. He just couldn't make it without her and as he always did, he kept his promise to be with her forever.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY is working alone in the kitchen when the door bursts open. A small, older Italian woman, MAMMA GRACE, walks in and heads straight to a pile of dirty dishes, starting to wash them.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I'll never forget the day I truly realized who she was. This little older Italian woman busted through the restaurant doors and walked directly over to a pile of dishes.

PRESLEY (excitedly) Excuse me, ma'am, can I help you?

MAMMA GRACE (smiling) Presley, I'm Grazia Isabella Russo, but you can call me Mamma Grace.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Without a word to anyone she just started washing them. We were so busy at the time I didn't have time to address something that was more of a gift than a problem.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The restaurant is bustling. MAMMA GRACE moves around like she's been there forever, knowing exactly where everything goes.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) One thing that was obvious from the start was she was a hard worker just like both of my grandparents.

PRESLEY (after things calm down) Thank you for your help today, Mamma Grace. How did you know my name?

MAMMA GRACE (smiling warmly) Your grandfather asked me to look out for you. He knew you wouldn't sell this place, and he wanted to make sure you had help.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She came in like she'd been there forever and somehow knew where to put up everything once it was cleaned.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

As the restaurant closes, PRESLEY and MAMMA GRACE sit at a table, sharing a meal and talking.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) If my grandmother was a fireball, Mamma Grace was a fireball times two or more, but she also had a lot of my grandfather's qualities about her.

MAMMA GRACE Your grandparents were good people, Presley. They always spoke highly of you.

PRESLEY (sighing) I miss them every day.

MAMMA GRACE (placing a hand on his) We'll keep their legacy alive here, together.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Being around Mamma Grace was a lot like having both of my grandparents back but this time it was with some pretty unique and sometimes quirky little twists.

FADE OUT.

Screenplay: Love, Mamma Grace - Chapter 5

FADE IN:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY is busy in the kitchen, preparing food. The restaurant is filled with regulars, chatting and enjoying their meals. MAMMA GRACE is helping out, moving effortlessly from task to task.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I didn't necessarily think I needed help at the time but there was no way I could ever refuse the wishes of another very sassy and demanding little Italian woman nor from my grandfather.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Various regulars enter the restaurant, greeting MAMMA GRACE warmly. Among them are PAUL, ERICK, WYATT, GREG, LUKE, SCOTT, and GEORGE.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) The thing about a restaurant that has been around as long as Helene's has been, is there are definitely regulars. Those are the people who are going to come in regardless of what's going on in the world.

MONTAGE: REGULARS INTERACTING WITH MAMMA GRACE

- PAUL, a stout former football player, hugs MAMMA GRACE and tells a joke.
- SCOTT, a disheveled man, sits with a crossword puzzle and orders liver.
- GREG, a wealthy man with a Rolex, spins his watch and complains about the prices.
- GEORGE, a large man, eats a massive meal and chats with kids.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) The odd thing was Mamma Grace already knew quite a few of the older regulars and God knows they were excited to see her once again.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY watches the interactions, noticing the changes in the regulars' behavior around MAMMA GRACE.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I don't know what magical spell she had over them, but they weren't the same. They were better people when she was around, or either they were some of the best actors I've ever seen.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

GREG sits at the counter, flaunting his expensive watch and complaining about the prices.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Greg was a very distinguished-looking older gentleman, and I say that term loosely, but it was obvious that he wanted everyone to know just how wealthy he was.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

GREG rifles through stacks of \$10's and \$20's, always paying with a \$100 bill. He grumbles about the prices.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Most of the time he kept his bill under five or six dollars but when he went to pay, he'd rifle through stacks of \$10's and \$20's just to make sure he always paid with a \$100 bill.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY sends someone to the bank for change whenever GREG comes in.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) When I saw him come in, I'd always have to send someone to the bank as fast as I could to make sure we had enough change for him when he was ready to leave.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

GREG complains about the recent price increase, visibly upset.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I raised the prices across the board by twenty-five cents and even though that little price increase was well past due you would have thought I called his mother a bad name or smacked him right across the face.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

SCOTT, dressed in duct-taped clothes, sits with a book and orders liver.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Scott never really wanted to do anything but sit around the restaurant all day. He'd listen to the music, work on a crossword puzzle, or read a book for hours on end.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

SCOTT admires GREG's watch, trying to strike up a conversation. GREG ignores him.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Scott loved watches and would sometimes go over to Greg to admire his. Greg never gave him the time of day, but I'd still bet that Scott knew more about Greg's watch than Greg did.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY wears his grandfather's Timex watch. SCOTT comments on it, expressing his desire to buy it.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I always wore my grandfather's watch. To Scott, for some reason, he felt my watch was as nice as Greg's and always commented on how much he'd like to buy it from me.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY, with a heavy heart, prepares to give SCOTT the watch along with a sympathy card signed by everyone in the restaurant.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) The next time Scott came in I had the watch ready for him with a sympathy card signed by everyone in the restaurant.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

SCOTT is overwhelmed with gratitude, tears in his eyes as he accepts the watch.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) You would have thought I gave him a million dollars. I knew it was just a watch, but to him, it was so much more.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PAUL, loud and boisterous, tells off-color jokes and makes everyone uncomfortable.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Paul was another one of Mamma Grace's old friends who unfortunately was also a regular. He was so loud and obnoxious, and he always told these off-color jokes, mostly about women that no one wanted to hear.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PAUL brings different women into the restaurant, each time boasting about his conquests.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Paul was retired from some big insurance company, and I think he had plenty of money himself. He brought many different women into the restaurant and no matter whether skinny, fat, short, or tall, Paul claimed to love them all.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

GEORGE, a massive man, eats several large meals throughout the day.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) George wasn't like the others. He was another one of Mamma Grace's old friends who came in every day. He'd eat three or four times a day, and they were always big meals.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY watches GEORGE interact with the kids in the restaurant, playing and joking with them.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) George by no means was ever rude or pushy. He was somewhat somber, and he did have a sense of humor. He'd joke and play with every kid that came into the restaurant.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

GEORGE, dressed in a puffy white chef's hat, helps serve food during the annual Thanksgiving dinner.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) On that day each year, George would throw on one of those puffy white chef's hats, one that I'd never wear, but he'd help us serve all day long.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

GEORGE, dressed as Santa Claus, entertains the children on Christmas Eve.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Every Christmas Eve he'd dress up like Santa Claus and believe me he fit the part too. It was almost as if George was a different person on those special days.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The restaurant is filled with laughter and joy as GEORGE, dressed as Santa, interacts with the children and their families.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) It was obvious how special at least those two days of the year were for him.

FADE OUT.

Screenplay: Love, Mamma Grace - Chapter 6

FADE IN:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The restaurant is busy with customers. PRESLEY is working in the kitchen, while MAMMA GRACE moves effortlessly through the dining area, chatting with regulars.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) The next man to describe, who was the most different from the others was Wyatt. He was about six foot two inches and he also had long white hair and an even longer white beard, but he didn't look anything like Santa Claus.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

WYATT, a stocky man covered in tattoos, enters the restaurant. His presence is intimidating, and the other customers give him a wide berth. He sits at a booth, staring into space.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) He usually came into the restaurant only about once or twice a week, more after Mamma Grace got there, but he always looked like he was mad at the world and would dare anyone to say anything to him about it.

CLOSE-UP: WYATT'S TATTOOS

The camera zooms in on the tattoos covering WYATT's body, particularly the ones on his fingers spelling out "H-E-L-P."

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Some of those etched images on that man were on the verge of being horrifying. I had a tattoo myself, a tribute to some of my military friends who didn't make it home from the war. But Wyatt's tattoos seemed to tell stories of a different kind of pain.

FLASHBACK - INT. PRISON CELL - NIGHT

WYATT, younger and more rugged, is seen getting a tattoo with a sharpened toothbrush. The scene is gritty and raw.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I felt pretty positive Wyatt's tattoos were from a prison somewhere. I wasn't sure what he needed help from, or who he was trying to send that message to, but that particular tattoo across his fingers was sincere enough to give me the chills.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PAUL and GREG are at the counter, glancing sideways at WYATT. They do not engage with him.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) They were rarely in the restaurant at the same time but if they were I could see Paul and Greg both side-eyeing Wyatt. They never spoke as far as I saw.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

MAMMA GRACE approaches WYATT's booth. He perks up and smiles at her presence. They talk animatedly.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Even Wyatt and all of his tattoos would perk up and smile when Mamma Grace was around. Sometimes they'd even go over to a booth and sit and talk amongst themselves for quite a while.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

MAMMA GRACE treats everyone with warmth and kindness, making even the roughest characters feel at ease.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Mamma Grace always treated everyone the same anyway. Everyone would become so relaxed around her and her magic.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

ERICK, a know-it-all, and his wife MARY enter the restaurant. They greet MAMMA GRACE warmly but make PRESLEY nervous.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Erick and his wife Mary were also regulars. He usually came in several times a day and at least one of those times Mary would accompany him.

FLASHBACK - INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

ERICK stages a fall in the aisle, creating a scene.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) From what I heard if he needed money, he'd just get into his next car accident or fall in the supermarket.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY hands ERICK a free tea, trying to keep him happy and avoid any potential lawsuits.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I'd give him free tea or something similar just to keep his legal thoughts on my side.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

ERICK and MARY bring their great nephew MARK into the restaurant. MARK, a professional golfer, is warmly welcomed by everyone.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) His name was Mark, and he was somewhere around my age, but obviously much more successful. He was able to travel around the world playing a sport that he was pretty darn good at.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

ERICK pays for everyone's meals when MARK is present, showing off his supposed generosity.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) When Mark joined the pair Erick would always pay for the meals of everyone in the restaurant at the time.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

LUKE, a tall man with thick leathery skin and piercing blue eyes, enters the restaurant. His demeanor is somber and reserved.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) The final man from Mamma Grace's past to talk about was Luke. He also came in from time to time, but I really didn't know him that well, not that I knew any of the others so well, but I knew Luke even less.

CLOSE-UP: LUKE'S EYES

The camera focuses on LUKE's piercing blue eyes, reflecting a deep-seated numbness.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) His clothes, although not overly fancy, were always crisp and pressed with that perfect crease. That's kind of how I knew he was ex-military.

FLASHBACK - INT. MILITARY BASE - DAY

LUKE, in a crisp military uniform, stands at attention. His face is emotionless, his eyes revealing the weight of his experiences.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) He was a tall man with thick leathery skin but what was most memorable was his piercing blue eyes. That man had that numbness in his gaze.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

LUKE speaks softly to PRESLEY, sharing snippets of his military past.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) When he did speak, he didn't seem to waste any words but some of our brief conversations got a little deep.

FLASHBACK - INT. MILITARY BASE - NIGHT

LUKE, returning from Vietnam, stands apart from his family, feeling unfit to be around them.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) One of the things he said was when he came back from Vietnam, he didn't feel fit enough to be around his two daughters or his wife, so he never was again.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

LUKE sits quietly, lost in thought. MAMMA GRACE sits beside him, offering silent comfort.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I was so sorry about the price he had to pay. Anyway, he was another one who came in quite a bit more often after Mamma Grace arrived. I could tell he needed her too, maybe even more than the rest of us.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY and MAMMA GRACE share a quiet moment during the restaurant's downtime.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I didn't find out until a little later that the reason she couldn't make it to either of my grandparent's funerals was because her husband was also sick at the time. He passed away not long after my grandfather so I guess her coming to Richmond was a way to help herself too.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE shares stories of her family in Italy with PRESLEY, her face lighting up with each memory.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She often spoke about her children and grandchildren. She even told stories about her extended family, nieces, and nephews, some of whom were close to my age.

FLASHBACK - INT. ITALIAN VILLAGE - DAY

MAMMA GRACE, younger and vibrant, interacts with her family in Italy. The scene is filled with warmth and love.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I just knew Mamma Grace's family back in Italy considered her as their guiding light too.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY and MAMMA GRACE work together seamlessly, creating a sense of harmony in the restaurant.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) We made a pretty good duo running that little place together, especially when I listened to her about how to run it.

FADE OUT.

Screenplay: Love, Mamma Grace - Chapter 7

FADE IN:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The restaurant is busy with customers. PRESLEY and MAMMA GRACE are working seamlessly together, creating an atmosphere of warmth and familiarity.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) There would never be a day that restaurant didn't remind me of my grandparents but with Mamma Grace there at least it seemed manageable and sometimes even a little fun again.

FLASHBACK - INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

PRESLEY's GRANDFATHER lies in a hospital bed, weak but smiling. PRESLEY sits beside him, holding his hand.

GRANDFATHER Presley, I'm leaving the restaurant to you, but I want you to sell it and find your own life.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Before my grandfather died, he called me next to him and told me he was leaving the restaurant to me, but he wanted me to sell it and go find my own life.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY works behind the counter, lost in thought. MAMMA GRACE approaches and pats him on the back, snapping him out of his reverie.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I never intended to take it over but at that time I just couldn't think about selling it either.

FLASHBACK - INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

PRESLEY's GRANDFATHER speaks earnestly, his voice filled with regret.

GRANDFATHER I regret not taking time to travel or revisit your grandmother's homeland. I wished I lived more of my life outside of that restaurant, but I never did.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) He said he regretted not taking time to travel or revisit my grandmother's homeland. He wished he lived more of his life outside of that restaurant but he never did.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY and MAMMA GRACE talk during a quiet moment. She listens patiently as he recounts his conversation with his grandfather.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I often spoke to Mamma Grace about that last conversation I had with my grandfather and his actual wishes for me.

MAMMA GRACE (smirking) Sometimes we don't make our own plans. Sometimes somebody has a higher calling for our lives.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She'd always end those talks reminding me that sometimes we don't make our own plans. Sometimes somebody has a higher calling for our lives.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The restaurant is bustling. PRESLEY moves efficiently, keeping everything running smoothly.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) With her there, as far as the restaurant itself went, things were starting to normalize anyway. The place was finally once again running like a well-oiled machine.

FLASHBACK - INT. MILITARY BASE - NIGHT

PRESLEY sits alone, writing in a journal. He writes about his imaginary life with ISA, creating stories of their adventures.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I'd often wonder where she was and what she was doing. I figured by then, as wonderful as she was, she was probably out there living my dream with someone else but mostly I prayed that she was happy and safe.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The regulars from MAMMA GRACE's past—PAUL, GREG, SCOTT, ERICK, and LUKE—sit at their usual spots, interacting with her.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) The same men from Mamma Grace's past started coming in even more than ever. She'd always talk to them individually, and they'd always behave while she was around.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

MAMMA GRACE gently reprimands PAUL, who nods and lowers his head in understanding.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She'd nonchalantly tell Paul or Greg or any of us for that matter to quiet down or humble up then a little discussion about her request would follow.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY sits at a small table, writing furiously in a notebook. The words flow effortlessly as he gets lost in his stories.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Somewhere along the line, I started writing down these stories about my imaginary life with Isa among other things. I'd get so lost in my own words that I physically felt like I was wherever I wrote about.

FLASHBACK - EXT. EXOTIC ISLAND - DAY

PRESLEY and ISA are seen in PRESLEY's imagination, exploring an exotic island together, laughing and holding hands.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) We'd go on these adventures to exotic islands, or climb some of the highest mountains. I can't explain the feelings that writing created without including the word free.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY writes late into the night, surrounded by notebooks filled with his stories.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I'd even get up in the middle of the night at times to write something that I suddenly and inconveniently thought of. I guess I was too scared I'd forget it by morning.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY shows MAMMA GRACE a completed manuscript. She reads it with a mix of surprise and admiration.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I will say, that is one story that I still read over and over again. I let Mamma Grace read it too.

MAMMA GRACE (smiling) You should publish this, Presley. People need to read it.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Laughingly, I think she was as shocked as I was that I could write something like that.

CLOSE-UP: MANUSCRIPT TITLE

The camera focuses on the title of the manuscript, "Sempre E Per Sempre."

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I named, or should I say the true author titled that precious story with just a few delicately whispered Italian words, "Sempre E Per Sempre."

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY pays a young college student to type up the manuscript. He then has 100 copies made and bound.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I was so happy and content with what I was given that I paid a young college student fifty dollars to type it up. I then had 100 copies made and bound as a real book would be.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY places the copies near the register for customers to take. The regulars make sarcastic comments, but their curiosity is piqued.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I left the copies near the restaurant's register so anyone who wanted could take one. I got a few sarcastic comments, especially from some of Mamma Grace's older friends calling me the old man in the sea, after Hemmingway.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

GEORGE reads the manuscript, engrossed in the story. He finishes it in one sitting and looks deeply moved.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) George out of everyone was the most appreciative. He read "Forever and Always" from cover to cover in one sitting.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The other regulars subtly change their behavior toward PRESLEY, showing newfound respect.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I think the way the other men acted toward me after the original ribbing showed they all read it too.

FLASHBACK - INT. MILITARY BASE - NIGHT

PRESLEY writes furiously, the whispers guiding his hand as he creates the manuscript.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I didn't even use my name when I signed the bottom as Mamma Grace said I should. Instead, where the author's name usually went, I simply wrote the words "Thank you."

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

A massive storm, named GASTON, hits the area. The restaurant becomes an island surrounded by floodwaters.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) That storm may not have been foreign because it hit our neighborhood, but it was definitely a warrior against Mother Nature. It began about daybreak, right after Mamma Grace and I arrived at the restaurant.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY and MAMMA GRACE attempt to leave the restaurant but are forced to return due to the flooding.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) We were lucky enough to get back to the restaurant even though the power was already out.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY finds flashlights and a battery-powered radio. He and MAMMA GRACE settle in for the night, playing cards by flashlight.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) As bad as it was, I knew there were many worse places to be trapped in other than a dry restaurant full of food.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE puts down her cards and looks at PRESLEY seriously.

MAMMA GRACE Let's talk. There's something you need to understand about those men.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She knew I still judged many of her friends and she wanted to set the records straight.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY listens intently as MAMMA GRACE shares stories about the regulars, providing insight into their lives and struggles.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I listened to every word throughout the rest of the day and most of the night. We'd take a break every now and then to fix a sandwich or get a drink, but she knew she had a captive audience because we couldn't do anything else.

FADE OUT.

Screenplay: Love, Mamma Grace - Chapter 8

FADE IN:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The storm rages outside, trapping PRESLEY and MAMMA GRACE inside the restaurant. They sit at a table, playing cards by flashlight.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She started with Greg. She knew I thought he was one of the most greedy and arrogant men I'd ever met but she'd immediately stop me if I uttered such things.

FLASHBACK - EXT. SMALL TOWN - DAY

Young GREG, around 13, is seen taking care of his two younger sisters. They wear clothes made from feed sacks, and the scene is bleak.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Greg grew up in utter poverty himself. Like my grandfather, the only clothes they ever had were made out of feed sacks until much later in life.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE shares GREG's story with PRESLEY, her voice filled with emotion.

MAMMA GRACE Greg's parents told their children that they had to go out of town for a funeral and never came back, well not for a long time anyway. He was no more than thirteen years old when he inherited the responsibility of taking care of his two younger sisters.

FLASHBACK - EXT. FARM - DAY

Young GREG discovers an old discarded tractor. MAMMA GRACE excitedly points it out to him.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) When she came across an old tractor that someone discarded, all she could think about was telling Greg where it was and how it could possibly help his particular situation.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY listens intently, wiping his eyes discreetly.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Maybe it was because it reminded me of how wonderful my grandfather was, or perhaps it made me consider how hard Greg had it. Either way, I discreetly wiped my eyes and gave Mamma Grace my full attention.

FLASHBACK - EXT. FARM - DAY

PRESLEY's GRANDFATHER helps young GREG get the tractor running, teaching him about its parts and pieces.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) My grandfather not only got that old tractor running, but he also taught Greg about all of its parts and pieces.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE continues, explaining how GREG's success led to bitterness.

MAMMA GRACE Once his parents heard of his success, they decided to return home to claim a share of his newfound prosperity. Prior to their return, Greg didn't even know if his parents were alive.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Listening to his parents' demands made him bitter but it also made him work harder than ever before.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY is deep in thought, his perspective on GREG changed.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I instantly had a different opinion of Greg because I don't think I would have been as persistent or even tough enough to do what he did.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE gives a mischievous giggle.

MAMMA GRACE It's okay though, I have a plan.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) If that was Greg's story, I didn't know if I wanted to hear anyone else's. That one was rough.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE begins talking about PAUL.

MAMMA GRACE Paul also went to school with me. He asked me out every single month in high school, but the only place I'd go with him was the library.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I laughed and was thankful Mamma Grace wasn't getting ready to tell me a story about some old romance with that guy.

FLASHBACK - INT. HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

Young PAUL and MAMMA GRACE sit together, studying. PAUL looks frustrated but determined.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Paul has always acted so overly confident mostly to cover up a true lack of confidence. For him, those feelings come and go.

FLASHBACK - EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - DAY

MAMMA GRACE witnesses PAUL's father beating him with a belt. She looks horrified but doesn't intervene.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Paul's parents were stern people, especially his father. His father just thought Paul was lazy and would often scold him to the point of tears or worse.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY listens as MAMMA GRACE recounts how she helped PAUL with his studies and confidence.

MAMMA GRACE I agreed to tutor him. Once a week, we'd meet in the school's library and even though Paul wanted more, he got smarter instead.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I was still sitting there picturing those romantic attempts from Paul towards Mamma Grace but for some reason, I was imagining them at their ages now.

FLASHBACK - EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - DAY

PAUL arrives home to find MAMMA GRACE talking to his father. He looks nervous but relieved.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Paul knew she didn't tell on him, but he also knew she would knock him out herself if he missed the test again.

FLASHBACK - EXT. OLD OAK TREE - DAY

MAMMA GRACE and PAUL sit under the tree, studying together. PAUL looks more confident.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She stayed an extra hour studying with him underneath an old oak tree. She knew he could pass and before she left, she had Paul believing it too.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE smiles, remembering the past.

MAMMA GRACE Paul needed to take his eyes off himself and learn how to help others. That's where true happiness and satisfaction come from anyway.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Again, when she felt she had said all she needed to say about someone she'd somewhat deviously giggle and say it's okay though, I have a plan.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY listens, trying to maintain his composure as MAMMA GRACE talks about WYATT.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) As I expected Wyatt had been in prison. He was there for quite a while too. This story even had Mamma Grace in tears as she confirmed that Wyatt did kill a man.

FLASHBACK - EXT. DARK ALLEY - NIGHT

WYATT and his young wife are confronted by a thief. The thief shoots WYATT's wife, and WYATT kills the thief with his bare hands in a fit of rage.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Wyatt killed that thief with his own bare hands. Mamma Grace never understood why that judge sent Wyatt to prison, but he did.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE wipes her tears, her voice trembling as she speaks about WYATT's wife, SALLY.

MAMMA GRACE Sally was just eighteen years old. She didn't deserve to have her life cut short by something so senseless, and Wyatt didn't deserve it either.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) You could visibly tell that story shook up Mamma Grace.

FLASHBACK - INT. PRISON CELL - NIGHT

WYATT, older and more rugged, sits in his cell, reading a letter from MAMMA GRACE. He starts writing a response.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) From the first week after Wyatt was sentenced, she wrote him. Even after she went back to Italy, she and Wyatt sent letters back and forth the whole time he was incarcerated and even up to the time she arrived at the restaurant.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE looks determined, her voice steady.

MAMMA GRACE It's okay though, I have a plan.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) That time she didn't giggle.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY asks about his grandparents. MAMMA GRACE smiles, her eyes filled with fond memories.

MAMMA GRACE Your grandfather was a giant teddy bear. And your grandmother, she was the most loving big sister I could have ever asked for.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She spoke about my grandmother like she was the most loving big sister. She said she never looked at my grandparents as her parents because she already had a mother and a father whether they were with her or not.

FLASHBACK - INT. SMALL ITALIAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Young MAMMA GRACE runs to her grandparents' house after her parents are killed in a bombing. She is embraced by PRESLEY's GRANDPARENTS.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Both of her parents died in a bombing that tore up the town. Mamma Grace ran to their house as fast as she could on that terrible day and never left until she came to the States.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE talks about her own parents, her voice filled with love and sadness.

MAMMA GRACE My father was the apple of my eye. He was always joking around, playing his guitar, and singing. My mother was a beautiful, elegant woman, often knitting or cooking.

FLASHBACK - INT. SMALL ITALIAN HOUSE - DAY

MAMMA GRACE's father plays the guitar and sings while her mother knits. The family is happy despite their poverty.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Her mother was also the one who taught her to give back to others because often what she made, whether it be food or crafts, she'd give away to the less fortunate.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE tells stories about PRESLEY's great grandparents, bringing a smile to his face.

MAMMA GRACE Your great-grandfather, Enzo, was one of the funniest men I ever met. He'd have a bottle of wine in his right hand and the Bible in his left.

FLASHBACK - INT. SMALL ITALIAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Enzo, holding a bottle of wine and the Bible, entertains the family with his stories.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) My great-grandmother's name was Angelica. Mamma Grace confirmed that was the perfect name for her because she had the voice of an angel.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE and PRESLEY share a laugh as she recounts how Angelica sang to her every night.

MAMMA GRACE For the first few months after my arrival, your great-grandmother would come to my room to sing to me so I could fall asleep.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I'd never heard any of these stories before and knowing the last few people she spoke about were related to me made me feel proud.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE brings out two scoops of gelato and pours olive oil over them. PRESLEY looks skeptical but takes a bite.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I don't know why it took Mamma Grace to show me what gelato should taste like, but she was right. Olive oil actually does make gelato taste even better.

MAMMA GRACE (smiling) See? Sometimes you just have to trust me.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) It was like my taste buds had their own fourth of July. I think that culinary experience was the comic relief that we both needed before she started speaking about her husband.

FADE OUT.

Screenplay: Love, Mamma Grace - Chapter 9

FADE IN:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The storm continues outside. PRESLEY and MAMMA GRACE are seated in a booth, the soft glow of candlelight illuminating their faces. They sit in comfortable silence, finishing their olive oil gelato.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Mamma Grace was full of love, the same kind of love I've been so blessed to be around throughout my life. I've always felt I hit the proverbial lottery when it came to my family, and I knew she did too.

MAMMA GRACE (smiling) My husband's name was also Enzo. He wasn't a big drinker though.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Her husband's name was also Enzo. He was the love of her life. She said he always made her feel like a princess even in his last days.

FLASHBACK - EXT. ITALIAN SHIPYARD - DAY

ENZO, a tall, strong man, works in a shipyard. He laughs and jokes with his colleagues, displaying a warm, kind personality.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) He worked in the shipyard, and they moved back and forth between Palermo and Aviano.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY looks up, surprised.

PRESLEY I was based in Aviano.

MAMMA GRACE (smiling) Really? Small world, isn't it?

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) They have two daughters and six grandchildren. Enzo was a big man, almost as big as my grandfather, and he had a heart much the same.

FLASHBACK - INT. ITALIAN HOME - DAY

ENZO and MAMMA GRACE, younger and vibrant, play with their daughters and grandchildren. The home is filled with laughter and warmth.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) As she spoke about her family, she smiled the whole time.

PRESLEY Do you miss them?

MAMMA GRACE (smiling wistfully) I do, but I'll return to them when my plans are complete.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Oh no, here we go with the plans again, I thought.

FLASHBACK - INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

ENZO lies in bed, weak but peaceful. MAMMA GRACE sits beside him, holding his hand.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) As she told me about her husband's death, I don't think I've ever heard a description of someone's passing so eloquently relayed.

MAMMA GRACE It was his time to go to a much greater place and do much greater things.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY listens, moved by her words.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She confirmed that she talks to her daughters and grandchildren from Diamond Lil's house.

FLASHBACK - INT. DIAMOND LIL'S HOUSE - DAY

MAMMA GRACE sits in a cozy room, speaking on the phone with her daughters and grandchildren. She looks content and happy.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Mamma Grace's elegance was on display when she spoke about her family.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE turns the conversation to ISA and PRESLEY's book.

MAMMA GRACE Tell me more about Isa and your book.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She knew most of my story, how I left for a war on the day I was going to ask her to marry me, and the fact that I still had her grandmother's wedding ring.

PRESLEY I tried in every way that I could to find her, but it was no use.

MAMMA GRACE (sighs) Sometimes we don't make our own plans. Sometimes somebody has a higher calling for our lives.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I told her I just wished my calling included Isa but I guess that somebody she spoke of had other plans.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

They stretch out, standing up from the booth. PRESLEY washes the bowls they used for the gelato.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Once sitting back down she told me she wanted to talk to me about the restaurant and my grandfather's true wishes for me.

PRESLEY I feel like the restaurant is a literal part of my grandparents. I could never see myself selling it.

MAMMA GRACE (smiling) I understand, but sometimes we need to think about what's best for ourselves too.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She felt I had too much living to get on with to be at the restaurant all the time.

PRESLEY I haven't made any money writing, and I can't live off of sold restaurant money forever.

MAMMA GRACE (smiling) I have faith in you, Presley. More than you realize.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She could tell that I was a little bit touchy on that subject, so she finally got back to her friends.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE continues sharing stories about her friends, focusing on ERICK.

MAMMA GRACE Erick grew up in an orphanage. Many times, the people there didn't treat him very kindly either.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Erick always seemed to be looking to get something for free probably because he's never really had anything.

FLASHBACK - EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Young ERICK and MARY sit alone, looking sad. MAMMA GRACE joins them, making silly faces to cheer them up.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Mamma Grace always made it a point to sit with those two at lunch and be as silly as she could to try and get their minds off of their reality.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY feels a growing compassion for the men and women MAMMA GRACE talks about.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I definitely was starting to feel more compassion for all the men and later even for a few women.

MAMMA GRACE (smiling) It's okay though, I have a plan.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Again, this was a giggle-less ending.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE talks about GEORGE and his struggles.

MAMMA GRACE George's family were my grandparents' neighbors. George didn't start drinking until after he got older, but he was always somewhat of a bigger kid.

FLASHBACK - EXT. SNOWY SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Young GEORGE is pelted with snowballs by bullies. MAMMA GRACE appears, throwing her prepared ice balls at the bullies, chasing them away.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She said she drew blood from every one of those bullies and at least that crew never picked on George again.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY listens as MAMMA GRACE continues.

MAMMA GRACE George wanted to change, he just hadn't been able to as of yet on his own.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She felt they were all running out of time.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE talks about aging and regrets, touching on the topic of the restaurant again.

MAMMA GRACE Up to that point, she hadn't been as vocal about that topic but for some reason that night she started to be.

FLASHBACK - INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

MAMMA GRACE sits by ENZO's bedside, asking him about his regrets.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Before her Enzo died, she sat down at his bedside and asked him if he had any regrets.

ENZO (smiling) Always be true to yourself. Don't necessarily do what others expect you to do. Don't work so much, play more, and have a life full of fun.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I thought to myself, "Okay, now I know that's at least strike two and three for me."

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE finishes ENZO's advice.

MAMMA GRACE Have the courage to go out in the world and be who you are meant to be.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She told me how after he ran down his list, he then smiled at her and said, "But like I said I have no regrets, so I hope my friend gets the message."

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY looks tired but attentive as MAMMA GRACE starts talking about SCOTT.

MAMMA GRACE Scott had very nice and loving parents. Scott always did even better than she did in school.

FLASHBACK - INT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Young SCOTT wins a science fair, beaming with pride. His parents are there, cheering him on.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Scott's father was also an aeronautic fanatic. They'd sit up for hours after Scott probably should have been in bed talking about their shared favorite topic.

FLASHBACK - INT. BUTCHER SHOP - NIGHT

SCOTT's father, overwhelmed by debt, takes his own life in his shop. SCOTT discovers him, devastated.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Scott's father took his own life in that same little shop he was trying to save his family with.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY looks down, feeling a pang of guilt for his previous judgment of SCOTT.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I sank a little thinking about how many times I made fun of his preferred food selection in my head.

MAMMA GRACE I knew that was one problem that was too big for even me, but I also knew where to ask for help.

FLASHBACK - INT. CHURCH - DAY

MAMMA GRACE takes young SCOTT to church. They sit together, finding solace in the service.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She took Scott to church. He didn't keep going after she left but she did say at least it looked like he had a little relief on the days they went.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE talks about LUKE and his military past.

MAMMA GRACE Luke was a prisoner of war in Vietnam. He's been going back and forth to the Veterans Hospital trying to get all of that terror out of him ever since.

FLASHBACK - VIETNAM PRISON CAMP - DAY

A younger LUKE, emaciated and bruised, is held captive in a prison camp. He endures immense suffering.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Vietnam was one of the most violent wars the U.S. has ever been a part of even though it was never labeled as such.

FLASHBACK - VETERANS HOSPITAL - DAY

Older LUKE, visibly haunted, attends therapy sessions at the Veterans Hospital.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) On the outside, he looked somewhat normal, even pretty good for his age, but on the inside, he must have those jagged edges that so many have from war.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE reveals a surprising connection.

MAMMA GRACE Luke's wife is Elizabeth. You know, Diamond Lil.

PRESLEY (surprised) Elizabeth?

MAMMA GRACE (smiling) Yes, it's a twisted soap opera, isn't it?

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I don't know what plan Mamma Grace thinks she had for that one, but she still claimed to have one.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

They stretch out, trying to get some sleep. MAMMA GRACE puts a comforting hand on PRESLEY's shoulder.

MAMMA GRACE God is everywhere, Presley. He covers everyone, no matter whether they accept His eternal blanket or not.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Right before we fell asleep, Mamma Grace put the nightcap on the evening by reassuring me that regardless of how the situations may have seemed in all those stories, God was there.

FLASHBACK - INT. ITALIAN CHURCH - DAY

A younger MAMMA GRACE prays in an Italian church, a look of serene faith on her face.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She went on further by adding, the troubled, desperate, angry, or hurt have at least one grain. Sometimes they hide it, some deny it, and many never use it themselves but it's still there.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE finishes with a gentle but firm statement.

MAMMA GRACE Presley, with that tiny mustard seed, anything is possible.
Goodnight.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She dropped the proverbial microphone after that beautiful story and we both fell asleep.

FADE OUT.

Screenplay: Love, Mamma Grace - Chapter 10

FADE IN:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAWN

The first light of morning filters through the windows. PRESLEY and MAMMA GRACE stir from their makeshift sleeping arrangements.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) The next morning came, which was only a few hours from when we went to sleep. Luckily most of the water around the restaurant receded.

EXT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY helps MAMMA GRACE into his truck. They drive off, navigating the still-damp streets.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I took Mamma Grace to Diamond Lil's house so she could get some real sleep and then I returned to the restaurant.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY walks back into the restaurant, exhausted. Customers start to trickle in, including GREG, who looks impatient.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I wasn't back any longer than 10 minutes before people started trying to come in to get an early breakfast.

GREG (grumbling) Took you long enough.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I did have a little more compassion towards him after I heard about his past, but he was still being an ass.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY rushes around, getting everything up and running, but it's clear he's struggling without MAMMA GRACE.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I got everything up and running but since Mamma Grace wasn't there it didn't run as smoothly as normal.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - EVENING

A MAN in a shiny silver suit with slicked-back hair walks in. He sits down at the counter and starts talking to a waitress.

WAITRESS (points to PRESLEY) That's him over there.

The MAN walks over to PRESLEY, extending his hand.

MAN Hi, I'm from Board & Board Publishing. We received your manuscript, "Forever and Always."

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I then thought, oh hell no, not another plan.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The MAN pulls out a large sketch pad and colored pencils, creating a cover design for PRESLEY's book.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) What he came up with was simple yet so complex at the same time. For a minute I thought that he had colored an analogy of my life.

MAN (smiling) What do you think?

PRESLEY (serious) Just make sure to put "Thank you" where the author's name usually goes.

MAN (chuckles) No problem at all.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) That well-dressed man didn't seem to have a problem with my request.

The MAN pulls out a contract, and PRESLEY signs it without hesitation.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I signed it without hardly reading a word. I remembered enlisting in the military and that man's contract couldn't be any more controlling than that one was.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY calls MAMMA GRACE to tell her the news.

PRESLEY (excited) Mamma Grace, you won't believe what just happened!

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) All she did after I told her what had transpired was giggle again and remind me of her mustard seed story from the night before.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MAMMA GRACE and PRESLEY talk about the mustard seed story.

MAMMA GRACE (smiling) With that tiny mustard seed, anything is possible.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY stays up late, imagining a book tour.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I stayed up almost all of that night too, imagining I was on an elaborate book tour traveling all throughout wherever that man said my book was going.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY talks to MAMMA GRACE about her plans.

PRESLEY I want to help you with whatever you're planning.

MAMMA GRACE (smiling) That's why we were stuck in the restaurant all night.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Joking or not, she'd been secretly plotting her steps long before she let me in on the secret.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

MAMMA GRACE explains her plan to PRESLEY.

MAMMA GRACE I'm going to pretend like I'm sick.

PRESLEY (incredulous) You're going to fake an illness?

MAMMA GRACE (smiling) Yes, it's the only way to get them to change.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) For the month before she left, I have to give her credit, she tried hard not to have to deploy such a scheme.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY follows MAMMA GRACE's directions, calling everyone in the restaurant for a meeting.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She was going to have me call everyone in the restaurant all at once.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The regulars file in one by one. GREG, ERICK and MARY, PAUL, SCOTT, GEORGE, WYATT, and finally LUKE.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) On the day of deliverance, spinning that Rolex, Greg of course came in first.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY hands out handwritten letters from MAMMA GRACE to each of the regulars.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She said inside would be a little note of encouragement and a few carefully chosen tasks for each to accomplish while she was sick, ha-ha, I mean fake sick.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The regulars read their letters, their expressions ranging from surprise to determination.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I knew this one would be a hard thing to explain if it didn't work out but again Mamma Grace had that unmovable and unwavering mustard seed.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY and MAMMA GRACE stretch out, trying to get some sleep.

MAMMA GRACE Presley, with that tiny mustard seed, anything is possible. Goodnight.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She dropped the proverbial microphone after that beautiful story and we both fell asleep.

FADE OUT.

Screenplay: Love, Mamma Grace - Chapter 11

FADE IN:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - EARLY MORNING

PRESLEY arranges tables into a large oval shape, reminiscent of King Arthur's round table. He steps back, surveying his work, reflecting on the recent whirlwind of events.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Before I joined the group, I had the tables pushed together so everyone could sit across from one another. I was going for that King Arthur and his knights of the round table look, but considering all of those guys were in their sixties it was probably more like Presley's hair club for older men's convention.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

A young PRESLEY, sitting on stacked milk crates, peels potatoes while his grandparents, WHITE LIGHTNING and GRANDMOTHER, check on him and give encouragement.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I remembered my first real responsibility at the restaurant was peeling potatoes.

GRANDMOTHER (giggling) Get your culo moving!

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Even with all of Mamma Grace's friends, I'll always give them some degree of respect. It was more about putting the needs of others in front of your own.

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

WHITE LIGHTNING's country friends argue about barbecue. Young PRESLEY laughs at the mention of "butts."

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Those old moonshiners looked like they were going to get into a fight over who had the tastiest butt.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY looks around the restaurant, reminiscing, but is brought back to the present by the arrival of MAMMA GRACE'S friends.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I have to say when that day came, I was nervous for several reasons.

GREG, ERICK, MARY, PAUL, SCOTT, GEORGE, WYATT, and LUKE file in and take their seats. PRESLEY sits at the head of the table, passing out envelopes.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I knew that no one other than me and Elizabeth knew that Mamma Grace was back in Italy.

PRESLEY (slightly shaky) Mamma Grace asked me to tell you that she's quite sick and won't be around for a while. She did, however, leave a letter for everyone that she asked to be read aloud.

GREG side-eyes PRESLEY, but PRESLEY avoids his gaze.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I gingerly passed out each envelope and asked them not to open it until I explained what was going on.

EXT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

An ambulance siren blares in the distance. PRESLEY takes a deep breath, knowing it's time to start the fibbing.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) It was like Mamma Grace even had the paramedics working for her and that was my signal to start.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

GREG opens his letter and reads it aloud, starting with the Bible verse from Psalms 90:10.

GREG (reading) The years of our lives are seventy, or even eighty; but they are soon gone, and we fly away.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She didn't just write heart-felt letters. She was so serious about her wishes and wanted each one of us to feel her words.

GREG (reading) She asked me to start teaching young men and women my trade...

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) For Greg, she asked him to start teaching young men and women his trade.

The group listens intently as GREG reads the rest of the letter.

GREG (reading, concluding) Love, Mamma Grace.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

ERICK and MARY read their letter together, their expressions turning serious.

ERICK (reading) We're asked to consider fostering two children...

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Erick and Mary were older, and even if it was only going to be for a few years until the children went off on their own, Erick and Mary would be more like grandparents rather than parents.

MARY (smiling softly) Love, Mamma Grace.

PAUL, looking nervous, opens his letter.

PAUL (reading) Teach a personal finance class...

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Paul too ended up as a pretty smart man.

PAUL (concluding) Love, Mamma Grace.

SCOTT opens his letter, revealing a huge box hidden in the supply room.

SCOTT (reading) Seven brand-new outfits...

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Inside that box were seven brand-new outfits with underwear and socks included.

SCOTT (finishing) Love, Mamma Grace.

GEORGE reads his letter, chuckling.

GEORGE (reading) Got me banned from all the bars...

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She visited all the little pubs and bars around and got George banned for life.

GEORGE (concluding) Love, Mamma Grace.

WYATT, stoic, opens his letter.

WYATT (reading) Help lead a division of the prison ministry...

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Wyatt would follow Mamma Grace's directions, but instead of doing what she asked, he goes to the prison even more.

WYATT (finishing) Love, Mamma Grace.

LUKE, silent and reflective, reads his letter.

LUKE (reading) Talk to the counselors together once a week...

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Mamma Grace wanted them to start mending the fences to hopefully become a whole family once again before it was too late.

LUKE (concluding) Love, Mamma Grace.

PRESLEY, the last to read, takes a deep breath and opens his letter.

PRESLEY (reading) Stop judging others...

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She told me, no ordered me, to stop judging others.

PRESLEY (reading, continuing) Start looking for a buyer for the restaurant...

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She asked me to start looking for a buyer for the restaurant...

PRESLEY (finishing) Love, Mamma Grace.

The group reacts, some with surprise, some with determination. PRESLEY feels a mix of emotions.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I felt to a degree Mamma Grace betrayed me a little.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY calls MAMMA GRACE, updating her on the meeting.

PRESLEY (exasperated) I told them you were possibly dying...

MAMMA GRACE (laughing) Good, I might need to use that later.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I had much more clarity about what she was trying to accomplish than before however, I don't think Einstein could fully figure this one out.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

A month later, the regulars are seen following MAMMA GRACE's directives. SCOTT looks dapper, GREG and PAUL teach at the job center, ERICK and MARY foster two children, and GEORGE appears healthier.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Everyone including Luke and Elizabeth seemed to be at least attempting to follow Mamma Grace's desires.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY talks to a real estate agent but ultimately sends them away.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I did run the real estate agent out of the restaurant but I'm not judging myself or others for it.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY on the phone with MAMMA GRACE, updating her twice a week.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I still had to push all those damn numbers to get to her, but I know she's enjoying being back home with her family as she should.

PRESLEY (smiling) I was happy for her and still grateful she loved us as much as she did.

FADE OUT.

Screenplay: Love, Mamma Grace - Chapter 12

FADE IN:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - EARLY MORNING

PRESLEY, tired and stressed, stands behind the counter, glancing nervously at the phone.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I felt so guilty as the weeks went by because one week, I had to tell everyone Mamma Grace was getting better, and the next not so much.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY fumbles through conversations with regulars, offering inconsistent updates about MAMMA GRACE.

CUSTOMER 1 How's Mamma Grace doing?

PRESLEY (uncertain) She's... getting better.

CUSTOMER 2 Is Mamma Grace okay?

PRESLEY (sighs) Not so much this week.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Every time someone asked about her, I couldn't remember what I told the last person anyway.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY on the phone with MAMMA GRACE, expressing his discomfort with lying.

PRESLEY I don't like doing what you're making me do.

MAMMA GRACE (changing the subject) Oh, I have to go. We'll talk later.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Even though I didn't want to admit it, I did know why the guilt about this situation was bothering me probably more than it should have.

FLASHBACK - INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A younger PRESLEY sits beside his ailing GRANDMOTHER, holding her hand, feeling guilty for being upset about her impending death.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Before my grandmother died, I had guilt like this but even worse. I was just broken from knowing our family would never be the same without our guiding light.

FLASHBACK - INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

PRESLEY stands by his GRANDFATHER's bedside, overwhelmed by grief.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) It wasn't long after that those feelings were more than multiplied with my grandfather.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY, reflective, serves customers while thinking about his grandparents and MAMMA GRACE's plans.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) That is also why I'll help her forever and always regardless of how ridiculous her plans may be.

EXT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

A car pulls up, and the two well-dressed men from BOARD & BOARD PUBLISHING step out and enter the restaurant.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY, cleaning in the kitchen, is approached by the well-dressed men.

BILL BOARD JR. Hello again, Presley. Can we talk?

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) That same man who told me my book, Forever and Always, was doing fine came back into the restaurant but this time he brought company.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - LATER

PRESLEY sits at a table with BILL BOARD SR. and BILL BOARD JR., listening to their proposal.

BILL BOARD SR. Your book is starting to sell in Europe. We'd like you to go on a book tour.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) They wanted me to go around to various bookstores and libraries in certain cities throughout Europe, mostly in Germany, Italy, and Spain.

PRESLEY (at a loss) At my own expense?

BILL BOARD SR. (smiling) Yes, but if it does well, we'll start selling it in the States.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I didn't realize I'd be asked to pay to try to get people to buy my book myself.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - EVENING

PRESLEY, conflicted, decides not to tell MAMMA GRACE about the meeting.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I decided not to tell Mamma Grace about what happened mainly because nothing really did.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY observes the regulars, noticing they're not keeping up with MAMMA GRACE's directives.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Except for Wyatt and Scott, all the others seemed to be falling off from their responsibilities regarding what Mamma Grace asked of them.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

GEORGE, clearly drunk, stumbles into the restaurant, confirming PRESLEY's fears.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Even George, who was doing so well at first, looks as if he fell the fastest.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY calls MAMMA GRACE, lying about the group's progress.

PRESLEY (lying) Everyone's doing great, Mamma Grace.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I knew I had to do something drastic before all the wheels fell off.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY arranges another group meeting, pushing tables together and rehearsing his speech.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I decided to call another group meeting without Mamma Grace knowing.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - SATURDAY MORNING

The regulars gather around the table, PRESLEY ready to speak.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I truly didn't know what else to do.

PRESLEY (clearing his throat) I called this meeting because...

CUT TO:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - SAME TIME

The door swings open, and MAMMA GRACE walks in, surprising everyone.

MAMMA GRACE (smiling) I think it's time for an update.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Regardless of how much I rehearsed or thought I knew what I was going to say, I never got a chance to say a word.

FADE OUT.

Screenplay: Love, Mamma Grace - Chapter 13

FADE IN:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - SATURDAY MORNING

The restaurant is quiet, filled with an air of anticipation. The regulars gather, looking expectantly at PRESLEY, who nervously shifts his weight from one foot to the other.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) There are no words to describe what I felt that Saturday morning. At first, I thought it was just another one of her plans.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

PRESLEY hums and haws around, making sure everyone has something to drink. The tension is palpable.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) We were all there except for Luke, no one ever saw him that much anymore anyway, but I thought he'd at least show up for another one of Mamma Grace's requested gatherings.

CUT TO:

EXT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - MOMENTS LATER

LUKE walks in, eyes bloodshot red, and approaches the table. He places a single envelope down in the middle and abruptly leaves.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) We all noticed something was wrong as soon as he came in. His eyes were bloodshot red as if he'd been crying all night.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

The group stares at the envelope, hesitant to touch it.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) It was almost as if someone put a rattlesnake in between us and no one would dare touch it.

PRESLEY (sighs) Alright, I'll read it.

PRESLEY reaches for the envelope and pulls out two letters. He hesitates, then starts with the letter from ANA.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Ana's letter wasn't long at all, but each sentence took what seemed like forever for me to get through.

PRESLEY (reading Ana's letter) My mother, our Mamma Grace, loved all of you so much. She cherished the past few months at Helene's. But now, she has left us for a greater place to do greater things.

The group reacts with shock and grief. Tears fill their eyes as they process the news.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) There wasn't a dry eye at the table. None of us will ever speak to, see, or hear Mamma Grace again.

PRESLEY (reading Mamma Grace's letter) My dear friends, I am so sorry to leave you. I feel as though I have failed you all. My only wish was to help, but it seems I have not done enough.

The group, including PAUL and GREG, openly sobs. PRESLEY fights back his own tears.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Her letter reminded me of when my grandfather said he had regrets. We knew Mamma Grace had absolutely nothing to apologize to us for.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

The group sits in silence, overwhelmed by guilt and sorrow. PRESLEY's hands shake as he puts down the letters.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Shame and guilt don't come close to describing what I was feeling. A few of those who you would never think would, were openly sobbing.

PRESLEY (softly) How I prayed it wasn't so.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The group leaves, one by one, still in shock. PRESLEY remains seated, holding the letters tightly.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I tried to call Mamma Grace's phone after everyone left. I tried then and many more times after. There was never an answer.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - WEEKS LATER

The restaurant bustles with activity, but PRESLEY moves through the motions, his heart heavy.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) About a month later, I received a call from Ana. She wanted to attend our annual Thanksgiving event with her family.

PRESLEY (on the phone) Of course, Ana. I'd love to meet you all. I'm so sorry about Mamma Grace.

ANA (softly) Thank you. We'll see you soon.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) That was an unexpected, welcomed, and painful call all at once.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - THANKSGIVING DAY

The restaurant is filled with people, but there's a noticeable void where MAMMA GRACE used to be. The regulars gather for the annual Thanksgiving event.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) The month or so preparing for that special day was always so much fun. Even though Mamma Grace's time there was brief, I couldn't see it being that much fun this time because we lost yet another big part of that place.

PRESLEY sets up the tables, reflecting on the memories of MAMMA GRACE.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Again, for the life of me, I prayed that we could all be able to come in this life together and go out together as well, but I knew that was going to be just another unanswered prayer before I even prayed it.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY, alone, cleans up after the event. He stops, hearing a faint whisper.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) As odd as it sounds, right before I couldn't hurt anymore that faint whisper returned.

WHISPER (V.O.) "The years of our lives are seventy, or even eighty, but they are soon gone, and we fly away."

PRESLEY looks up, feeling a sense of calm wash over him.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I'm not saying that definite whisper was Mamma Grace and I'm not saying it was God. I'm not saying it was anyone because I didn't know who or what it was, but I knew it was real, as real as anything I've ever heard.

PRESLEY, now feeling a sense of peace, continues cleaning, a small smile forming on his face.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Maybe a passage from my book, which was just a similar summation of other thoughts created from those whispers could say it the best, "When the heavenly stars say we can no longer be together, your heart and mine will still be intertwined, always and forever."

FADE OUT.

Screenplay: Love, Mamma Grace - Chapter 14

FADE IN:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The restaurant is a warm, bustling place, filled with the scent of delicious food and the hum of conversation. PRESLEY stands by the counter, reflecting on the past.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Life seems to last but a minute and Christmases do speed up. Some get seventy, eighty, or more years, while others get a lot less. Either way, we all have a purpose, a reason for existing.

FLASHBACK: INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - PREVIOUS GATHERINGS

Various scenes of the regulars—GREG, PAUL, SCOTT, WYATT, ERICK, MARY, LUKE, and ELIZABETH—show them interacting, laughing, and working together.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) For me and the others who were so hurt by Mamma Grace's final envelope, our acknowledged and redeclared purpose was to completely fulfill the dreams of our angel. The angel who was here and is now above but still and always will be intertwined in our hearts.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

GREG and PAUL are seen helping young men and women learn their trades. They look fulfilled and happy.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Almost immediately, Greg and Paul got on track. Paul never missed a class again nor was he ever anything other than respectful to everyone, especially those in need.

CUT TO:

INT. GYM - DAY

GEORGE is seen working out with a personal trainer, smiling as he lifts weights.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Although it will take a little time to completely get there, George loves himself again, so he can accept love from others.

CUT TO:

INT. CIVIL AIR PATROL OFFICE - DAY

SCOTT, looking dapper, instructs a group of young cadets.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Scott and Wyatt, well they found their purpose earlier and never looked back.

CUT TO:

INT. ERICK AND MARY'S HOME - DAY

ERICK and MARY are seen with BEN and JESSICA, having a family dinner.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Erick, Mary, and the kids are figuring it out one day at a time. They all found that little mustard seed inside of themselves.

CUT TO:

INT. VETERANS HOSPITAL - DAY

LUKE and ELIZABETH sit with their daughters, tentatively sharing a meal together.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Luke, Elizabeth, and their two daughters are taking baby steps, but it seems they were doing that long before Mamma Grace's letters.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

PRESLEY stands behind the counter, deep in thought.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) As for me, I'm thinking more and more about freedom every day. This time at least I didn't kick the real estate agent out of the restaurant.

FLASHBACK: INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - PAST EVENTS

Scenes of celebrations, weddings, and funerals held at the restaurant, highlighting its importance in the community.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) We are all so very far away from perfect but in dedication to someone who put us all on a very special personally chosen path we're going to get as close to perfection as we can.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

PRESLEY looks up as BILL BOARD SR. and BILL BOARD JR. walk in, dressed impeccably.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) As soon as I decided to let the restaurant go, I received another sign, and once again that sign was from Bill Board Sr. and his son.

BILL BOARD SR. (running up and hugging Presley) We sold out of all the copies of Forever and Always in Europe!

PRESLEY (shocked) You're kidding!

BILL BOARD SR. (handing over a check) We sold over 500,000 copies and have another combined order for that many more overseas.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) This might be even better than the lottery, I thought.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

PRESLEY stands with GEORGE, MARY, and ERICK, discussing the future of the restaurant.

PRESLEY I want to give you a gift that's been a huge part of my life. It's time for me to move on, and I can't think of better hands to leave it in.

GEORGE, MARY, and ERICK exchange looks of surprise and gratitude.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Thanksgiving would be my final day there, my sunset if you will, but the next day will be George, Erick, and Mary's first day to make sure nothing else ever stops those doors from opening.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - THANKSGIVING DAY

The restaurant is bustling with activity, filled with laughter and the smell of food. PRESLEY watches the scene with a bittersweet smile.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) They'll definitely see that the restaurant is more like a cranky old man than a fine wine. They'll have to fix things that break but overall, they'll all be blessed beyond their wildest dreams.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

GREG and PAUL stand outside, admiring their new wristwatches. SCOTT shakes hands with his new lawyer, a smile on his face.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Greg and Paul were already more than okay, so all I got them was just something they could spin around on their wrist. Scott has a new lawyer who's going to see if he can get compensated for his invention.

CUT TO:

INT. VETERANS HOSPITAL - DAY

LUKE and ELIZABETH, sitting together, look at a check from the Veterans Administration.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Wyatt & Luke didn't want anything for themselves, but the Veterans Administration and that prison ministry sure didn't mind taking a check.

CUT TO:

INT. ERICK AND MARY'S HOME - NIGHT

BEN and JESSICA look at their grandparents with gratitude as they enjoy a family dinner.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) If Ben and Jessica ever feel ripped off by having to be at the restaurant so often, they can remember they never had to walk to school uphill both ways.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY looks around the restaurant one last time, the memories flooding back.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Finally, even though it probably won't arrive until after Thanksgiving, Mamma Grace's entire family is going to receive a little mail of their own.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PRESLEY leaves a letter on the counter for the new owners, looking back with a mixture of sadness and hope.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) One of the only things I asked, other than to make sure no one gets into an argument about a juicy butt, was to treat the restaurant as it has treated my family for all those years.

FADE OUT.

Screenplay: Love, Mamma Grace - Chapter 15

FADE IN:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT BEFORE THANKSGIVING

The restaurant is quiet and dimly lit. PRESLEY sits at a table, deep in thought, as he ponders the word "grace."

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Considering all that has happened in such a short amount of time, I began thinking about the word grace. It's not just a name; it's divine intervention making the impossible possible regardless of the recipient's actions.

FLASHBACK: INT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - MOMENTS OF GRACE

Scenes of people saying grace before dinner, moments of divine intervention, and clips of Grace Kelly as the Princess of Monaco.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Defined that way, there's no wonder why our beautiful, sassy, and stubborn Mamma was named Grace.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - THANKSGIVING DAY

The restaurant is bustling with activity. The place is packed with people, and there's an air of festivity.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) When the festivities started the next day, that restaurant was as packed as I'd ever seen it. Free food will do that, I guess.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN

GEORGE, ERICK, and MARY are working together seamlessly, preparing food and joking with each other.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) It wasn't just George that helped out this year. It was the whole gang led by George, Erick, and Mary.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - MAIN AREA

The restaurant is filled with people. 50s music plays in the background, adding to the nostalgic atmosphere. PRESLEY watches as people laugh and enjoy themselves.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) All day people came and went, but each seemed to be served to as close to perfection as we could get. If I tried just a little, I could see the silhouette of my grandmother shaking her little Italian booty next to the king.

FLASHBACK: INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - PAST EVENTS

Shadows and silhouettes of PRESLEY'S grandparents working in the restaurant, laughing, and enjoying life.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) If I squinted just a tad, I could also see the outline of my great big grandfather and his giant hands chopping up some of those moist butts.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - THANKSGIVING DAY

ANA and her family arrive in groups. PRESLEY tries to greet them, but he is constantly pulled away by other guests.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) The restaurant was so busy and so many people heard it was my last day that everybody seemed to want to talk to me.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN

GEORGE wears a puffy white chef's hat, playing with the children. BEN and JESSICA help out with remarkable efficiency.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) George had that doggone puffy white chef's hat on again, playing with all the children. Ben and Jessica were doing better than I did at their age with helping out.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - MAIN AREA

PRESLEY notices LUKE and ELIZABETH sitting together with their daughters. This sight makes him pause and reflect.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) What made me stop in my tracks was when Luke and Elizabeth and their two daughters came in and sat down together. That Mamma Grace is something else, I thought.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - TABLE WITH OLIVE OIL BOTTLES

A table is collecting an unusual amount of olive oil bottles. PRESLEY approaches, feeling a strange sense of déjà vu.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I felt like I'd seen the scene before.

CLOSE UP: PRESLEY'S FACE

He sees the most beautiful, sassy, and stubborn little Italian Ghost lady sitting with her family.

PRESLEY (screams) Mamma Grace!

PRESLEY falls to the ground, sobbing. The restaurant falls silent as everyone rushes over.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Even Mamma Grace knew she had gone too far with that plan, but it was done, and no matter what, she was still with us.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - GROUP HUG

Everyone hugs MAMMA GRACE, crying and laughing simultaneously. LUKE and ELIZABETH sit back, smiling knowingly.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Everyone else ran over when they saw me crying on the ground and after they saw her, every one of them did the same.

CLOSE UP: LUKE

LUKE explains his part in the plan, revealing the soap in his eyes and his double-double agent status.

LUKE (chuckling) I had to put soap in my eyes for the effect, but it burnt so bad I had to run out.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) That day just became surreal, but regardless, Mamma Grace was with us all once again.

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The restaurant is now self-serve as everyone stays close to MAMMA GRACE, talking and laughing.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) None of us could stay mad at her even though that ridiculous plan went way beyond too far.

CLOSE UP: MAMMA GRACE AND PRESLEY

PRESLEY hugs MAMMA GRACE, tears streaming down his face.

PRESLEY I love you too much to be mad at you, but you aged me at least twofold today.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) This crazy woman is just too much, I thought.

FADE OUT.

Screenplay: Love, Mamma Grace - Chapter 16

FADE IN:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - THANKSGIVING NIGHT

The restaurant is buzzing with activity. PRESLEY stands near the counter, glancing around as he gets used to the idea of MAMMA GRACE being back.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Once everything calmed down as much as it could, and we all got a little more used to Casper the conniving Mamma Grace ghost being back, Ana told me that most of her family had arrived except for her cousin, his wife, and their daughter.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - PRIVATE CORNER

ANA talks to PRESLEY, explaining the situation with her cousin's family.

ANA They had to take a later flight because her younger cousin, the daughter, had been fighting cancer for the last five or six years. She's been in full remission, but this last doctor's appointment was the one that fully cleared her to go out and live her life again.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) She thought they'd arrive shortly but mentioned they'd have my book to read on the flight over.

PRESLEY Your family read my book on the flight?

ANA (smiling) Yes, Board and Board Publishing made it available on flights coming out of Italy.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Ana told me how her whole family loved my book.

ANA Isa's story...it felt like one of those tele novellas that are so popular now.

PRESLEY (chuckling) I wasn't aiming for a soap opera, but I can see what you mean.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - BUSY MAIN AREA

The restaurant is bustling with guests. PRESLEY keeps an eye on MAMMA GRACE, still wary of her causing more trouble.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I was still side-eyeing Mamma Grace myself while we were talking because I didn't want that lady to cause any more trouble.

CUT TO:

EXT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - PARKING LOT

ANA's cousin, his wife, and their daughter arrive. The father and PRESLEY lock eyes, both feeling a sense of familiarity.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) When her cousin and his family came in, me and the father kind of stopped and stared at each other. It was as if we'd seen each other before.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - MAIN AREA

The daughter heads to the bathroom to freshen up. The father approaches PRESLEY.

FATHER She's excited to meet the famous author.

PRESLEY (nervously) Famous, huh?

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I knew they all read my book on the flight over too, but once again with my five minutes of fame, I could only be sarcastic with myself.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - SUPPLY ROOM

PRESLEY sits on an old milk crate, holding ISA's grandmother's ring in his hand, reflecting.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) As sad as it might sound, on any big occasion, I'd always take Isa's grandmother's ring and put it in my pocket.

PRESLEY (to himself) I miss you, Isa.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I knew it wasn't the time to wallow in anything, so I got up and started to return to the others.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - MAIN AREA

PRESLEY walks out, still holding the ring. The father starts to introduce him to his daughter, who is behind PRESLEY.

FATHER Presley, I'd like you to meet my daughter—

ISA (whispering in his ear) Sempre E Per Sempre.

PRESLEY's eyes widen. He drops to one knee, holding out the ring.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I knew right then as well as my lungs knew they needed air, that was my Isa.

PRESLEY (voice trembling) Isa...will you marry me?

ISA (teary-eyed) Yes, Presley. Always and forever.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I didn't care where she'd been or what she'd been doing. I didn't even look to see if there was already another ring on her finger.

ISA'S PARENTS

They rush over, hugging PRESLEY and ISA, tears streaming down their faces.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) Her father was the second person in my life to hug me like he was the world's strongest gorilla, and Isa's mother was the third.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENE'S RESTAURANT - GROUP HUG

Everyone gathers around ISA and PRESLEY, sharing in their joy.

NARRATOR (PRESLEY) (V.O.) I had my mind made up that once I found the love of my life again, there was no way I was ever going to let her out of my sight, again. It was going to be us, together, forever, and always. **FADE OUT.**