

BITTERSWEET

by
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(first 20 Pages)

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INT. RESTAURANT - PARIS- DAY

LIBBY ACKERMAN is a charismatic conundrum. Quirky and cute in an under-the-radar kind of way, her abundant charms make her the one to watch. On TV she doles out sweet secrets as if they were magical positions from the Kama Sutra...if only she could bring it to the table when a man was around.

She sits in a restaurant booth, alone. With giddy expectation, she watches a MAN approach. We only see his back as he moves towards her. She smiles lustily.

LIBBY (V.O.)

True love. You can't fight it, right?

The man, whose face we still cannot see, turns slowly revealing her lover: the DESSERT TRAY.

Before her is a sensuous array of chocolate confections so breathtaking you might call it sexy, so mouth-watering a woman might sell her soul to the devil for one decadent bite.

Libby points at one. The faceless Waiter puts it on her plate. As he turns to leave, she tugs on his sleeve and points to another. He dutifully puts the second sweet on her plate.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Of course love is complicated, but the truth is: great chocolate is even more complex. What I wouldn't give to see it transform from the vine to...divine.

LIBBY'S VISION

EXT. JUNGLE-DAY

These are the woods of fairy tales; dark and mysterious. Libby, in a safari outfit, swooshes through the jungle, cutting away low hanging branches with a machete.

LIBBY

Some say chocolate was discovered deep in the jungles of Central America.

She stops in front of a large cocoa tree. Delicate white cocoa flowers sprouts from its gnarled trunk. Magically, the blossoms morph into green pods, ripening in a rainbow of brilliant colors before transforming into dazzling chocolates. A BON-BON flies off the tree and into a starry sky before soaring around the globe.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The history of chocolate spans the globe.

The bon-bon hurtles back down to earth, landing on a sandy beach, unnoticed by CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS and his guide, Libby, now dressed like a native, circa 1400 A.D.

LIBBY (CONT'D)

But it was Christopher Columbus who snagged a lot of the credit for discovering it.

They walk toward an ISLANDER. Libby hands a stack of pelts to the Islander, who hands over a small brown satchel. Columbus eagerly opens it and pours some shriveled cocoa beans into his hand. He droops with disappointment.

LIBBY (CONT'D)

Expecting gold, Columbus had no idea what treasure he held. But it didn't take the rest of the world long to figure it out.

INT. CHOCOLATE FACTORY - DAY

Machines squirt out rows of gorgeous chocolates.

LIBBY (V.O.)

Today, production lines around the world transform cocoa beans into little bits of heaven.

Libby, wearing a factory jumpsuit, works on the production line.

LIBBY (CONT'D)

But try as they might, no one understands chocolate like the French.

EXT. PARISIAN CHOCOLATE BOUTIQUE- DAY

Libby stands transfixed, as rows of miniature artworks crafted in chocolate, beckon. She passes out. MILLIE, a hot blonde, wearing a chef's apron, wakes her by passing a truffle under her nose.

END VISION

INT. LA CHARLOTTE DE L'ISLE CAFE - DAY

Libby's eyes pop open as Millie, the makeup artist, slaps powder on her face. Libby breathes in, gagging on powder.

KATE, an irresistibly attractive woman, and Libby's producer, watches Millie gloss Libby's lips.

MILLIE

There. Now you look almost as hot as any woman on the Paris runway.

KATE

Paris! The city of love!

LIBBY

The city of *chocolat*! Man, if I play my cards right with this interview, I could be part of the most elite chocolate club in the world, tasting the newest creations from the world's leading chocolatiers.

KATE

You and your mouseketeers.

LIBBY

Make fun if you want. But the club has a serious mission: to fight for the quality of chocolate around the world.

KATE

I worry for you, Libby. Why can't you find a normal hobby? Like stamp collecting. Or tennis. Or heroin. I mean, when was the last time you had a date?

LIBBY

When was the last time you had a nice quiet evening alone?

HARRY trundles over. His bow-tied, out-of-date style and gentle manner suggests a man whose interior and exterior are not on speaking terms. He is followed by TREVOR, the butt-kissing, fresh-out-of-film-school director.

HARRY

GOod morning, girls. Jean Pierre is here.

TREVOR

Jean Pierre.

LIBBY

Oh, God, Harry.

HARRY

You're gonna be great, Lib.

LIBBY

Promise?

KATE

You're blushing! Don't tell me... you have a crush?!

LIBBY

Shut up, Kate. It's not that. It's just... Jean Pierre is the Most Important Man In Chocolate.

KATE

A man in chocolate. That's a delicious image.

HARRY

You're welcome to dip whomever you want in chocolate, *after* work.

TREVOR

After.

KATE

You're cute when you flirt, Harry.

HARRY

Huh? I wasn't - what? Oh for god's sake. Don't you have some producing to do? Let's get this show on the wing.

LIBBY

Road.

HARRY

Wherever. Now, shooo.

Libby and Kate scurry toward the cameras.

LIBBY

The day Harry flirts is the day hell freezes over.

KATE

That, my friend, is what happily married looks like. I'd give anything to meet a guy with Harry's heart and Zack's looks. I mean, Zack is...

LIBBY

Gorgeous. Yes, I know.

KATE

No question. Just a little lacking in the substance department, you know?

LIBBY

No. I really don't.

JEAN PIERRE, a handsome French man who looks no older than a well kept fifty, sits at a cafe table in front of the cameras. Kate pushes Libby towards him as Trevor shouts through the bullhorn:

TREVOR

Places, please, Libby!

Libby sits nervously at the table across from Jean Pierre.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

And...action!

LIBBY

(to the camera)

Hello everyone! We're here in the charming La Charlotte de l'Isle, as SWEET TOOTH explores the decadent delights of Paris. If you've never been here, drop everything and get here any way you can. The landscape, the people and the desserts...magnifique! Our guest today, is my hero, Jean Pierre LeDoux, President of the world famous Club des Croqueurs de Chocolat! Bonjour, Jean Pierre, I'm thrilled to meet you!

JEAN PIERRE

Zee pleasure eez mine.

He kisses her on both cheeks.

LIBBY

I can't believe I'm here with you.

JEAN PIERRE

But why not?

LIBBY

You... are on my top five list of who-I'd-like-to-meet-dead-or-alive.

JEAN PIERRE

I have it on good authority that I am very much alive. So tell me, cherie, who are zee uzzer four?

LIBBY

Oprah. Ghandi. Martin Luther King and
Johnny Depp.

JEAN PIERRE

Ah! I had dinner weez Johnny just last
week.

LIBBY

Really?! I gotta know: what kind of
chocolate does he like?

JEAN PIERRE

I don't know. He ordered zee cheesecake.

LIBBY

Cheesecake? No!

JEAN PIERRE

But why not?

LIBBY

I don't understand why anyone would waste
their time with anything but chocolate.

JEAN PIERRE

Ah, Leeby. You are young yet.

LIBBY

Well, I just thought -

JEAN PIERRE

You Amereekans. Everyseeng eez black or
white. Red state, blue state. Mets or
Yankees. Anorexic or obese. Very
deesapointing.

LIBBY

Oh. Okay. So. Um. Wow. The Head Croquer.
The Club. I mean...Wow! What's it like?
It's incredible, right?

JEAN PIERRE

Yes. Eet eez unique. Elite. Tres chic. We
only eenvite those who really understand
and appreciate chocolat.

LIBBY

I'd do anything to be a member.

JEAN PIERRE

Those are dangerous words, Leeby.

LIBBY

I'm a dangerous woman, Jean Pierre.
But you've got nothing to worry about.
Right now I'm just gonna ask you a few
questions.

JEAN PIERRE

I weel answer yours, eef you answer mine.

LIBBY

Oh, my! It's the foodie version of
playing doctor, ladies and gentlemen!
Okay. So tell me: how long you've been a
member?

JEAN PIERRE

Feefteen delicious years. Now you:
Eef you were to buy chocolat in a
supermarket, what would you look for on
zee label?

LIBBY

Oh, that's easy! I always look for a
cocoa percentage of at least 60 percent
and the beans must come from Madagascar
or South America.

JEAN PIERRE

Tres bien!

LIBBY

Alright now, how often do you eat
chocolate?

JEAN PIERRE

Zees eez a silly question, no? I eat
chocolat every day.

LIBBY

A man after my own heart.

JEAN PIERRE

Chocolat eez good for your heart! Oui!
Oui! Eet keeps you young. How old you
seek I am?

LIBBY

Um -

JEAN PIERRE

Seventy seex! I eat one ounce of dark
chocolat every day.

LIBBY

You hear that, everyone? Forget face lifts and low carb diets, the new beauty regime is chocolate!

JEAN PIERRE

Certain-moi. Now, eef you love chocolate you must know zees: what does Criollo mean to you?

LIBBY

Right, right. Um, it's uh...

JEAN PIERRE

Ah! You do not know?

LIBBY

It's a variety of cocoa tree mainly grown in Brazil!

JEAN PIERRE

Voila!

LIBBY

Supposedly it yields the best chocolate.

Reverentially, he pulls out a small, exquisite wooden box.

JEAN PIERRE

Not supposedly. Eet truly does.

LIBBY

For me?!

He hands the box to her. She starts to open it but he puts his hand over hers.

JEAN PIERRE

Ah, ah! Zer eez one last question zat separates zee amateurs from zee pretenders.

LIBBY

Bring it on!

JEAN PIERRE

Which is more eemportant: love or chocolate?

She looks at the box, then at Jean Pierre.

LIBBY

That's easy. Chocolate!

Jean Pierre inhales as if he has been shot.

JEAN PIERRE
AH! You know nuseeng.

LIBBY
What?

JEAN PIERRE
(sadly)
You've meesed zee whole point.

He grabs the box away from Libby.

JEAN PIERRE (CONT'D)
Eef you don't know love, Leeby, you'll
never know chocolate.

INT. SWEET TOOTH PRODUCTION OFFICE - SEATTLE - DAY

The office, walls lined with soft-core shots of dessert, is a swirl of energy. Libby sits in front of a TV holding the remote. She watches, as Jean Pierre takes back the box.

JEAN PIERRE
You don't know love.

She rewinds, watching it again and again.

JEAN PIERRE (CONT'D)
...you don't know love...you don't know
love...you don't know love...

Her brow crinkles, tears threaten. Kate walks over.

KATE
Lib? You okay?

LIBBY
Not according to Jean Pierre.

KATE
What does he know?

Libby rewinds.

JEAN PIERRE
...You don't know love...

KATE
Your audience loves you.

LIBBY
They love me?

KATE
Yup.

LIBBY
Does that count as a love life?

Kate flips the TV off.

KATE
The Croakies suck.

LIBBY
It's Croquers. It means 'to crunch'.

KATE
To crunch. To suck. All the same.

Libby flips the TV back on.

JEAN PIERRE
You don't know love.

LIBBY
What if he's right?

KATE
Then you're screwed.

INT. HAVEN RESTAURANT - LATER

Libby sits in a booth. Romantic candlelight underscores the palpable heat of the conversation with an unseen man.

LIBBY
Don't tease me like that.

JAKE(O.S.)
You know you want it.

LIBBY
You know me too well. Oh, you're killing me. Okay...just...do it.

Ah...it's just the waiter. JAKE isn't going for a rock and roll look, he just rolled out of bed that way. Despite his rumpled shirt, his easy charm and warm humor load the scale and tip jar in his favor. He presents the dessert tray with a flourish.

JAKE

Alright. We've got a seven layer chocolate miracle with a dark chocolate drizzle.

LIBBY

That looks insane.

JAKE

It is. I don't smoke, but I really want a cigarette after that one.

LIBBY

Been there!

JAKE

We've also got a chocolate pistachio cake with gran marnier ganache -

LIBBY

See now, why go ruining a simple thing of beauty with all that fancy stuff?

JAKE

Exactly! I don't know why Pistachio is the 'it' flavor this season. And the gran marnier - it's just overkill.

LIBBY

Food fads slay me.

JAKE

Okay then. We'll just ignore it. Now our chocolate-chocolate éclair is another thing altogether.

LIBBY

So sexy. Please tell me it's as good as it looks.

JAKE

Better. I embarrass myself when I eat this one.

LIBBY

You can't be worse than me. I go into a stupor complete with involuntary whimpering.

JAKE

Well, if you don't want to attract attention, I'd definitely steer clear of the chocolate raspberry Lambert torte.

LIBBY

I knew it. You can tell just by looking at it. Well. I'm in trouble. It's between the éclair and the miracle.

JAKE

Don't look at me. I can never pick just one.

LIBBY

Thank god I'm not the only one. Okay, um, I'll take the -

She looks at him - he shrugs playfully.

LIBBY (CONT'D)

Okay. I'll take...the decadence.

Jake sets it before her.

LIBBY (CONT'D)

And...

She points to the éclair, which he slides onto her plate.

LIBBY (CONT'D)

They have incredible éclairs in Paris.

JAKE

Mmmm. Paris.

LIBBY

Right?

JAKE

Without a doubt. It's number one on my top five list of places I gotta get to.

LIBBY

Good choice.

He nods towards her desserts.

JAKE

You, too. Alright, I'll leave you to it.

EXT. THIS, THAT & THE OTHER THING MAGAZINE VENDOR - LATER

Libby, carrying a take-out box, collects a razor and a lip gloss then peruses the chocolate selection. She picks up a chocolate bar, reads the label, closes her eyes and sniffs.

She sets the chocolate down, inspects another and another. The owner, VICTOR, watches her. He's an ancient philosopher living in the wrong century with the physique of a couch potato and the insight of a psychic.

VICTOR

Y'know hon, you could save yourself a lot of time. You always pick the same one.

LIBBY

I know, but I -

VICTOR

No need for excuses. I'm not your mother.

She's about to grab a chocolate bar, but stops cold when she catches sight of *It-Girl* Magazine. The cover has a large crystal ball with a headline that reads:

INSERT - DO YOU HAVE A ROMANTIC FUTURE?

VICTOR (CONT'D)

Well, do you?

LIBBY

Mind your own business.

She turns the magazine over as if punishing it, But the *Be Hot* magazine next to it taunts her. The cover features Two MODELS laughing and pointing at her, under a headline that reads:

INSERT - ARE YOU STILL SINGLE?

She turns that magazine over too. Flustered, she forgets the chocolate, walks up to the register and sets her items and take-out box on the counter. Victor raises his eyebrow at her.

LIBBY (CONT'D)

What?

VICTOR

My other customers may need the wisdom seeping from those pages.

LIBBY

Wisdom, my ass.

Libby dutifully goes back to the magazines and scolds them as she turns them face forward.

LIBBY (CONT'D)

You're two dimensional. Try to remember that!

ANTHONY steps up to the register. He is a breathtaking blend of drop-dead gorgeous, super fit with a hint of heart. He pays for his power bar.

VICTOR

So? What was the verdict, counselor?

ANTHONY

We got 'em!

VICTOR

Way to fight the good fight. Score one for the law! Zero for Exxon!

Libby, standing behind Anthony, looks back at the magazine - the COVER GIRLS stick their tongues out at her.

Victor, still talking with Anthony, accidentally bags her items with his. When Libby turns around, all of her stuff is gone.

LIBBY

Where's my -

She whips around and sees Anthony a half a block away.

LIBBY (CONT'D)

Hey! That guy's got my stuff!

VICTOR

We've got more of everything.

LIBBY

But...my leftover dessert!

She runs after Anthony. Someone passes in front of her, and suddenly he is nowhere in sight.

LIBBY (CONT'D)

Damn it!

Picking up speed, she trips, her heel breaks, causing her shoe to fly off. She is mid flight - lunging spastically towards her wayward shoe. She hurtles forward, right into Anthony.

ANTHONY/LIBBY

Whoa!

Aaah!

As if sliding into second base, she rescues her shoe. She jumps up, pulling her skirt into place.

LIBBY

Sorry, I -

She wave her broken shoe stupidly like a flag.

LIBBY (CONT'D)

Runaway shoe.

ANTHONY

Are you okay?

They look at each other for the first time. SHAZAM!

LIBBY

Me? Fine. Absolutely. Couldn't be better.
Um. I was actually, see, you uh,
accidentally got my stuff.

She points to his bag. He opens it and pulls out her stuff.

ANTHONY

Oh! Sorry. I don't know how that got in
there. Sorry you had to chase me down.

LIBBY

No biggie. I love a little workout! Well.
I better get going. See ya.

ANTHONY

Bye.

She turns to leave.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Hey. I...I took your stuff, I killed your
shoe. The least I can do is buy you
dinner.

LIBBY

Dinner? I... um, I could do dinner.

Anthony hands over his business card.

ANTHONY

Crush?

LIBBY

Crush?

ANTHONY

The restaurant.

LIBBY
Oh! *Crush*.

ANTHONY
At seven.

LIBBY
Sure. Right. Yes.

INT. SWEET TOOTH MEETING ROOM - LATER

Staff members sit around the table. Harry addresses his troops. Libby rushes in bedrugged and ten minutes late.

HARRY
Look what the rat dragged in.

LIBBY
Cat.

KATE
You met someone!

LIBBY
I did!

KATE
Oh, I'm good. And?

LIBBY
And I have a date tonight!

HARRY
Focus, please, people.

TREVOR
Focus.

KATE
Oh, lord in heaven don't blow this one.

LIBBY
Shut up! I'm nervous enough already.

KATE
Just relax. Be yourself.

LIBBY
That never works. I'd rather be you.

HARRY

Something you'd like to share with the whole class, Ackerman?

LIBBY

No.

HARRY

Okay. Let's get to it. Well, you convinced us that going to Paris would be amazing television and you were right! People ate it up! Get it? Ate it up? Our ratings were through the roof. Hands down, your best show ever.

LIBBY

Wow. That's great!

HARRY

Yup. The people have spoken. They want chocolate! I want a kick-ass chocolate story by our next meeting. Wait! Make that five kick-ass chocolate stories. Let's do Chocolate Week! Like Shark Week... only without the sharks.

TREVOR

No sharks.

HARRY

And with chocolate. Can you handle that?

Libby's face is lit up like a kid on Christmas.

LIBBY

Easy as chocolate cream pie.

INT. CRUSH - THAT NIGHT

Anthony and Libby are deep in conversation.

ANTHONY

And she said she didn't. But her lips were ten times bigger than they were the day before!

LIBBY

Wow.

ANTHONY

I mean is it really so hard to be honest? I guess that's a deal-breaker for me.

LIBBY

I hear that.

ANTHONY

So how about you?

LIBBY

Me? Oh, no. My lips are real.

ANTHONY

No, seriously. What are your deal-breakers?

LIBBY

I don't know. Uh... Dog-kicker. Child-hater. De-caf drinker.

ANTHONY

You are funny. Best date I've had in a long time.

LIBBY

Really?

ANTHONY

Yup.

He reaches for her hand. She beams - her life just got made.

Jake arrives with the dessert tray. Libby tries not to drool as she ponders, finally pointing to a sumptuous slice of chocolate cake, which Jake sets on the table in front of her.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Oh, no. You're... not going to eat that, are you?

LIBBY

Huh? Oh do you want this one? I can -

ANTHONY

Nooo! I'm deathly allergic to chocolate and -

He gags.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

And just the sight of it makes me -

He gags and runs towards the bathroom. Jake and Libby look at each other, bewildered.

EXT. A ROMANTIC BRIDGE - LATER

Libby and Anthony lean against the railing bathed in moonlight.

LIBBY
Are you feeling better?

ANTHONY
Yeah. Um. So.

He reaches for her hand.

LIBBY
What?

ANTHONY
Here goes. Oh Man.

She pulls her hand away from his.

LIBBY
Save your breath. I know what you're going to say. I've been here before. I get it. It was great meeting you, too.

ANTHONY
No, wait. You've got it all wrong. I want to see you again.

LIBBY
You do?

ANTHONY
Yeah. It's just...do you...do you think - boy, this is gonna sound weird but do you think you might be willing to...give it up?

LIBBY
Oh! Um, well, I kind of have a policy. I don't usually...give it up...on the first date. I mean I did in college but that always turned out to be a bad idea, so -

ANTHONY
Oh no! Not *that*, I mean, I...I hope it's not too much to ask, but do you think you could...live without chocolate?

LIBBY
You - what?

ANTHONY

I know it's a weird request but it's the only way I could really consider dating someone in a serious way.

LIBBY

Really? I mean, It's not like I smoke. Or worship the devil.

ANTHONY

You got me there.

LIBBY

So...what happens if you eat chocolate?

ANTHONY

Anaphylactic shock.

LIBBY

Anafa - what?

ANTHONY

Basically, I blow up and die.

LIBBY

Seriously?

ANTHONY

Yup. Throat swells up, can't breath - the whole deal.

LIBBY

Wow.

ANTHONY

I know. And I just can't imagine a future surrounded by chocolate.

He shudders at the thought. Libby turns this intoxicating idea over in her mind.

LIBBY

A future? Wow. I mean...sure. Yeah. Why not. I mean...it's just chocolate. Right?