

EXCLUSIVE
BONUS
Epilogue

FOR

A Heart in
Florence

SOME PLACES
STEAL YOUR HEART.
OTHERS GIVE
IT BACK TO YOU.
FOREVER.



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Exclusive Bonus Epilogue

A Heart in Florence

by Alison Reid

Fifteen Years Later...

The grand ballroom overlooking the Arno shimmered beneath crystal chandeliers, their light scattering across polished marble and gleaming glass displays.

Journalists, buyers, socialites, and collectors filled the room, their voices blending into a low hum of anticipation. Elegant gowns swept across the floor. Cameras flashed. Champagne flowed freely.

Yet Isabella Caravelli barely noticed any of it.

Standing alone behind a velvet curtain, she stared at the collection that would be unveiled in less than ten minutes.

Her collection.

Not as someone's daughter.

Not as Lorenzo Caravelli's wife.

Not even as the celebrated designer known throughout Europe as Loren Bella.

Simply Isabella.

The pieces glittered beneath carefully positioned lights.

Moonstones.

Diamonds.

White gold.

Sapphires.

Each design represented a chapter of her journey. There were subtle nods to Tuscany throughout the collection—the curves of olive branches, the graceful lines of cypress trees, the golden hues of the vineyards at sunset.

And at the centre stood the masterpiece.

A breathtaking necklace crafted from white gold and diamonds, inspired by a mother's embrace.

Rebecca.

Her throat tightened.

Even after all these years, there were moments when she still missed her mother with an ache that caught her by surprise.

A soft knock interrupted her thoughts. Before she could answer, the door opened.

Lorenzo stepped inside.

At forty-five, he was somehow even more handsome than the young man who had first found her sketching beneath the olive trees. His dark hair now carried the faintest touch of silver at the temples, adding distinction rather than age.

His eyes softened immediately when they found her.

"There you are."

A smile tugged at her lips.

"I was hiding."

"So I gathered."

He crossed the room and took both her hands. His gaze moved over the collection before returning to her.

"Nervous?"

"Terrified."

His laugh was warm and familiar.

"Impossible."

"It is not impossible."

"It is."

She rolled her eyes.

"I have spent three years designing this collection."

"And it is extraordinary."

"What if nobody likes it?"

Lorenzo stared at her in disbelief.

"Isabella."

She laughed despite herself.

"Fine. That sounded ridiculous."

"Completely ridiculous."

He lifted her hand and pressed a kiss against her knuckles.

"There are people flying in from New York, Paris, London, and Milan because of you."

Her stomach fluttered.

Even now, after years of success, she sometimes struggled to comprehend how much her life had changed.

The frightened nineteen-year-old girl who had arrived in Florence carrying a suitcase and a sketchbook would never have believed this future possible.

A knock sounded again. The door burst open.

"Mama!"

A whirlwind of dark curls and excitement launched herself into Isabella's arms. Elena. Now thirteen. Tall, confident, and every bit as dramatic as her father.

Behind her came Gabriel, fourteen and attempting—and failing—to look unimpressed.

"You are not supposed to be hiding," Elena declared.

"The show starts soon."

"I am aware."

"You look nervous."

"Thank you for pointing that out."

Gabriel smirked.

"She's been checking every five minutes to make sure you're okay."

Elena gasped.

"I have not."

"You have."

"I was being supportive."

Gabriel looked at Isabella.

"She was panicking."

Lorenzo chuckled.

The familiar chaos instantly eased Isabella's nerves.

This was her greatest success—not the jewellery, the acclaim, or the awards, but the family she loved beyond reason.

A movement near the doorway drew her attention.

Marco stood in the doorway, smiling quietly. Older now, his hair almost completely silver, but his eyes remained exactly the same—warm, kind, and steady. Beside him stood Rosa, their youngest daughter, her small hand tucked securely in his.

Those were the eyes of the man who had met her at the airport all those years ago, when she had believed her world was ending.

"You look beautiful, bambina," he said softly.

Emotion clogged her throat.

"Thank you, Papa."

Marco approached and wrapped her in a hug.

For a moment she closed her eyes. Safe. Loved. Home. The feeling never grew old.

When he stepped back, he reached into his pocket.

"I almost forgot."

He handed her a folded piece of paper.

"What is this?"

"Open it later."

His smile softened.

"After the show."

Curious, she tucked it into her clutch.

A stage manager appeared moments later.

"Five minutes, Signora Caravelli."

The room suddenly felt very quiet. Everyone seemed to sense it. The significance of the moment. Lorenzo slipped an arm around her waist.

"You ready?"

She looked around at the people she loved most. Her husband. Her children. Her father. The family she had once believed she would never have.

Then she looked toward the collection. Toward the dream she had carried inside her for so many years. And finally, she nodded.

"Yes."

The applause began the moment she stepped onto the stage. It rolled through the ballroom like thunder. Warm. Overwhelming. Endless.

Isabella blinked rapidly as emotion surged through her chest. For a brief moment, she imagined her mother sitting somewhere in the audience.

Watching. Smiling. Proud. The thought nearly undid her.

She approached the microphone.

The room gradually quieted.

"Good evening."

Her voice trembled slightly before steadying.

"Many years ago, I arrived in Florence with nothing but a sketchbook and a dream."

A few people smiled. She continued.

"I thought I had lost everything. Instead, I found my future."

Her gaze drifted to Lorenzo. To Marco. To her children.

"My family gave me the courage to believe in myself when I could not. This collection exists because of them."

Applause rippled through the room.

She took a breath.

"And because of one other person."

The ballroom fell silent.

"My mother."

The words hung in the air.

"She taught me that beauty matters. Kindness matters. Dreams matter. She believed in me long before I believed in myself."

Her voice thickened.

"So tonight, I am proud to announce the Rebecca Moretti Foundation."

A murmur swept through the audience.

"It will provide scholarships and mentorship opportunities for young artists who have lost a parent, because no young dreamer should have to face grief alone."

Several people began applauding. Then more joined. And more. Soon the entire ballroom was on its feet.

Isabella struggled to hold back tears. Across the room, she found Lorenzo. His eyes never left her. The look on his face stole her breath. Pride. Love. Wonder. As though after all these years he was still amazed by her. And perhaps he was.

The applause continued long after she stepped away from the microphone.

Hours later, after the final interviews and congratulations, the family gathered on a private terrace overlooking Florence.

The city glowed beneath a blanket of stars.

At last, Isabella remembered the folded paper Marco had given her. She opened it carefully.

Inside was a single page. A letter. Written in her father's familiar handwriting.

My dearest Isabella,

When you were a little girl growing up with your mother in London, I called often to check on you. Every time we spoke, your mother told me how talented you were, and as it turns out, she was absolutely right.

She always said that one day you would create beautiful things. More importantly, she believed you would become an extraordinary woman.

More than anything, your mother wanted you to be happy and loved.

Looking at your life now, I know her wish came true.

I hope you know how proud she would be of you.

And I hope you know how proud I am too.

You were always destined for wonderful things, bambina.

With all my love,

Papa

Tears slipped down Isabella's cheeks as she carefully folded the letter and held it against her heart.

Strong arms wrapped around her from behind. Lorenzo. Always Lorenzo.

He pressed a kiss to her temple before resting his chin lightly on her shoulder.

"I love you, Isabella," he whispered against her ear. "You are my world, and you always will be."

Fresh tears filled her eyes. Even after all these years, his words still had the power to steal her breath.

She covered his hands with her own and leaned back against him, drawing comfort from the familiar strength of his embrace. Together, they looked out across the city she had once feared.

The city that had given her everything.

A husband. A family. A future. A home.

The city lights shimmered beneath the stars, stretching across Florence like a sea of gold. Somewhere beyond the rooftops and ancient streets was the frightened nineteen-year-old girl she had once been, arriving with nothing but grief, uncertainty, and a dream she barely dared to believe in.

How amazed that girl would be to see this life. To see how love had found her. To see how happiness had found her. To see how every loss, every challenge, and every heartbreak had led her here.

Safe. Loved. Home.

As the lights of Florence sparkled beneath the night sky, Isabella smiled through her tears and tightened her hold on Lorenzo's hands, knowing that some dreams came true in ways far more beautiful than we ever imagined.

— The End —