CHEMICAL ATTRACTION

Written by

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EXT. BAY OF CANNES, SOUTH OF FRANCE - DAY

Glorious sunshine and millionaire yachts in azure waters. all you'd expect off the coast of Sud de France.

EXT. YACHT: DECK - DAY

A wonderful yacht. Sails bulge slightly on gusts of wind.

TESS BLOOM (late 30s), beautiful, striking, sits on the bow of a 30 foot sailboat, sailing gently in a cove, across from FRANCOIS, metro-sexual Euro-man and her boyfriend of the moment.

They clink champagne flutes.

TESS
(American) I love this yacht. Thank Gianni for me.

FRANCOIS
You'll have your own someday. Your new deal with Ravel will change everything.

TESS
I can hope. Yeah, I'd like a yacht like this someday.

She picks up a magazine. She's on the cover:

'What next for 'The Nose'?

'Powerhouse perfumer teams up with Pierre Ravel'

Her face tweaks - something catches.

She turns her face into the breeze and closes her eyes.

She inhales deeply.

He recognizes the signs.

FRANCOIS
What are you getting?

TESS
Sea salt combined with a white wine and garlic vongole sauce coming from Piccolinos in the east. Sea food marinade, deep fried calamari. Ravioli with mushrooms and truffle cream, Parmesan shavings.

FRANCOIS
And from the west?

TESS
Fritters of zucchini flowers with ricotta and basil, slightly spicy sweet sauce.
And from my favorite bistro the rack of lamb, thyme jus and Provençal vegetable tian.
Apricots roasted with rosemary, mascarpone mousse with lavender and grilled almonds.

FRANCOIS
You can smell all that, from here?

TESS
That's why they call me the nose.

FRANCOIS
It's a cute nose, I always loved it.

TESS
Thank you.

She leans in to kiss him he but he 'incidentally' avoids the kiss by reaching for the wine to refill his glass.

FRANCOIS
It's going to be worth millions.

TESS
It will need to be, if I'm going to buy a yacht.

He's nervous, drinks too quickly.

FRANCOIS
You're a workaholic now, once you start work for Ravel you won't have time for me.

TESS
We'll make time.

She glances at him, lovingly, but he's not looking back.

He lies down, sunglasses on so it's harder to 'read' him.

A flicker of concern crosses her face.

TESS (cont'd)
Francois?

FRANCOIS
Hmmmm?

TESS
Are we okay?

She's looking at him - wants him to say everything's fine.

FRANCOIS
Actually there is something
I wanted to talk to you about.

TESS
Oh?

He sits up, still not meeting her gaze. Fills his glass again.

He moves to refill her glass. She gestures: no.

FRANCOIS
I've met someone.

Tess's face: she knew it.

FRANCOIS
To be more precise, I've been talking
to a married woman.

TESS
You're sleeping with her.

FRANCOIS
Not yet, but I think it's going
somewhere.
I want to give it a chance.

TESS
So this is...what?
You're dumping me? For a *married*
woman??

FRANCOIS
I prefer to think of it as moving
positively forward into the future.

Tess gets briskly to her feet, she angrily cranks a handle to pull up the anchor.

FRANCOIS (cont'd)
What are you doing?

TESS
If it's over, we're not staying.
(MORE)

TESS (cont'd)
Turn for the marina will you?

EXT. WATER BESIDE THE YACHT - DAY

The anchor emerges from the water,

EXT. YACHT: DECK - DAY

The yacht reacts to the wind, starts to turn.

FRANCOIS
You can't just - the sails.

Tess spins to head below deck when the boom below the sail swings in an arc --

-- and cracks Tess across the side of her head --

FRANCOIS (cont'd)
Tess!

-- punching her over the rail and into the water.

Francois panics, grasps the rail, moves left and right, looking for her.

EXT. WATER BESIDE THE YACHT - DAY

Tess breaks through the surface, sputtering.

FRANCOIS
Thank God. Over there, over there.

He directs her to the sea-stairs on the side of the yacht.

EXT. YACHT: DECK - DAY

Tess climbs onto the deck. She has a hand pressed to the side of her head.

TESS
Thanks for jumping in to save me.

FRANCOIS
You know I'm not good in water.

She stares at him, really sees him for the first time.

TESS
Not just in water.

She pushes past him.

FRANCOIS
Where are you going?

TESS
To get some ice for my head,
then I'm getting dressed.

FRANCOIS
We have the yacht, we can stay
one last night.

TESS
Francois - you've got to be joking
me - you're dumped!
Now take us back to shore.

INT. YACHT: BEDROOM - DAY

Tess bundles ice cubes into a towel, presses it to her head.

EXT. YACHT: DECK - DAY

Francois steers the yacht to shore.

INT. YACHT: BEDROOM - DAY

Tess is dressed.

She sprays perfume. Then sniffs. A look of puzzlement on her face. Sprays again. Sniffs. Nothing.

She looks slightly concerned. Picks up her overnight bag.

EXT. YACHT: DECK - DAY

Tess hurriedly emerges onto the deck.

The yacht is moored at Old Port of Cannes marina.

She picks up the magazine.

FRANCOIS
Don't be in such a hurry.

Tess fires a frown at him.

FRANCOIS (cont'd)
It's a shame to waste all this.

He gestures at the yacht.

TESS
Call your married lady.
Maybe you'll get lucky.

She exits the yacht.

EXT. MARINA - DAY

Tess walks, inhaling deeply, becoming more concerned.

She turns into the wind, takes a lung-filling nose-full of sea breeze: nothing.

SOUND: Her cell phone rings. She looks at the display.

She answers it.

TESS
Hi mom, yeah...
(completely disinterested)
oh no, I'm sorry to hear that.
(too self-interested to listen)
Yeah. Listen, I just got off the yacht and it's been a horrible day -- yes, the yacht. I'm in Cannes. South of France. Yes it is nice. But it's been the worst day and I have fly back to Paris. Let's speak soon. Yeah, luvya. Bye.

Hangs up, as if she barely registered the call.

She scans the area for a real test for the sense of smell.

There's a disgusting waste bin nearby, she places her face over it. Takes a deep sniff.

She straightens, a look of horror on her face.

TESS (cont'd)
Merde.

INT. HOSPITAL MRI ROOM - DAY

Tess is fed into an MRI scanner.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Tess sits opposite the grey-haired distinguished DOCTOR (50s) who reads her chart. He looks at her over his glasses.

DOCTOR
There is no cure for loss of smell I'm afraid. You will just have to wait. And hope.

TESS
I'm a perfumer, a sense of smell is my business, there must be something you can do?

DOCTOR
All you can do is wait --

TESS
-- and hope. Yeah, I get it.

She takes the magazine from her bag. Shows him the cover.

TESS (cont'd)
I don't think you understand, I'm The Nose, without my sense of smell I'm out of business.

The doctor looks at the cover.

TESS (cont'd)
There must be something you can do.

He offers a sympathetic smile and a gallic shrug.

EXT. PARIS SKYLINE - DAY

Glorious, just before the sun goes down.

INT. TESS'S APARTMENT: KITCHEN - DAY

Tess is on her laptop searching 'cure for loss of smell'

Her daughter NATASHA (15) enters.

NATASHA (O.C.)
Mama, whatever you're cooking it's burning.

Tess dashes to the cooker, opens a window to let the smell escape.

Natasha opens the fridge and recoils.

NATASHA
Man, that fish is definitely mauvais.
(to Tess)
What's wrong with you lately?

TESS
There's something I've been meaning to tell you.

EXT. PARIS SKYLINE - DUSK

Tess and her daughter sit on a park bench. Natasha is absorbing the shock.

NATASHA
Why didn't you say something?

TESS
I didn't know how to.
It might change things.

NATASHA
How can you be a perfumer without a sense of smell?

TESS
I'll think of something.

NATASHA
Have you told Chloe?

INT. OFFICE SUITE - DAY

Tess strides to push open a door: TESS OF PARIS

INT. OPEN OFFICE - DAY

Her assistant, Chloe, immaculately-suited executive-in-waiting, is at her desk.

CHLOE
Bonjour. Your mother called.

Tess waves that away. She's nervous.

TESS
I have a confession to make.

CHLOE
You lost your sense of smell.

TESS
How do you know?

CHLOE
I'm with you everyday.
I know how you work.
Also, Jeannot was here yesterday
with his smelly feet worse than ever.
You did not even notice.

They share a smile.

TESS
Let's see how long I can fake it.

EXT. PARIS CITY STREETS - MORNING

We travel from the macro to the micro - down into the streets of Paris - traffic, commuters, neighborhoods, boulangeries, cyclist, shop owners sweep doorsteps.

SUPERIMPOSE: Six months later

INT. TESS'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Tess drinks coffee. She's in a hurry.

TESS
Natasha. We're going to be late!

NATASHA (O.C.)
Where's my red scarf?

TESS
Hurry up.

Tess's phone rings - she looks at it, hesitates, then answers.

TESS (cont'd)
Hello Mother... what are you
doing up so late? It's 3 am there.

Natasha comes in with her backpack.

NATASHA
I'm not leaving without my scarf.

She reaches for a croissant and pours a shot of espresso. Tess hunts for the scarf as she talks.

TESS
Yes...yes... I'm really sorry to hear that...get some rest...listen, it's sort of a bad time now Mom...yes, I'm off to a meeting and Tasha is late for school. Talk to you soon, Okay?

She hangs up.

TESS (cont'd)
Let's go.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING: STAIRCASE - DAY

Tess and Natasha rush down the stairs. Her landlord, PASCAL (40s) sweeps the stairwell.

He's about to speak

TESS
Not a good time, Pascal, not a good time...

PASCAL
(calls after her)
You are four weeks late!

TESS
Soon. I promise.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Tess kisses Natasha goodbye, both cheeks, on a busy corner.

TESS
Remember I'll be late.
You and Sabine order Chinese.

She slips money into her hand.

NATASHA
Thanks.

Tess kisses her on both cheeks.

TESS
See you later.