

BITTER SWEET

CHARACTERS:

Leo

Sheila: Leo's girlfriend

Patrick: Leo's father

Little Dora: non speaking character

SCENE I

The apartment of a couple of youngsters in a middle-class neighborhood in

Thessaloniki

SHEILA

So, are we going to keep this baby?

LEO

I . . . I don't know

SHEILA

But . . . it's such a heavy sin falling upon both of us if we . . . Besides I really want to have this baby with you.

LEO

Sheila, I don't even have a job!

SHEILA

Yes. But there must something we can do. You can find a job in a coffee shop and by the time the baby arrives I will have my degree and I will be able to work as a teacher too

LEO

And by then what? How are we going to pay for the doctors and all?

SHEILA

Well, if there's a will there's a way. Please Leo, this baby is our chance to start up a happy family, our own family

LEO

It is not that simple! I mean, are we both ready for this? Do you think you can take care of this baby, stay inside the house and give up on your social life for a while? Things won't be the same between us.

SHEILA

Oh now I see! Maybe it's you that is not ready to become a father. I guess you want to continue hanging around in the bars playing Don Juan, just like you did before you met me!

LEO

Oh God! I just mean to say we're going to have more responsibilities. And we lack the means to bring up a baby.

SHEILA

Maybe our parents could help with the finances.

LEO

That's right! I'll go ask my father if he wants me to join his bakery business.

SHEILA

Sure, maybe that works. He is close to retiring anyway.

SCENE TWO

At the house of Leo's father, at noon, on the same day

LEO

So I thought... I thought I might join you in the bakery. You can teach me the tricks of the trade and then when you retire I can continue the business on my own. What do you think?

PATRICK

Well, you need to know that a baker's job is not that easy. Do you think you can wake up at 5 a.m. every morning like I've been doing for thirty years? Would you travel with the car to deliver our goods to the stores out of town every day?

LEO

It might be difficult at first, but I guess I'll get used to it. I mean... sure I can make it.

PATRICK

Well it's not a piece of cake. You see, making drinks and looking at beautiful girls in the clubs where you've been working till now is nothing compared to being the head of a business.

LEO

I know but ... I think I might give it a try.

PATRICK

You sure? And if we assume that the car breaks down while you're transferring the products to our stores out of town, do you know how to fix it?

LEO

Well, I think you can teach me

PATRICK

Oh boy... I don't know what I'm going to teach you first.

LEO

I do not mind. I want this job. I want to try, at least.

PATRICK

Son, even I am not getting enough out of the business anymore. With all the chain stores that have opened up around the neighborhood. They sell everything! Even organic bread and cereal bars. Plus, the coffee stores now sell cakes too.

LEO

I will bring new recipes to the store as well. I can even include coffee in the pricelist

PATRICK

Well if you want the truth, I don't think you are responsible enough to take care of a whole business, let alone make it a successful one. But even if you make it, I do not think being a baker will give you a happy life. Working day and night and having no time for yourself and your family. I've been through that and do not want you to have such a life. I am closing down the business anyway. I'm sick and tired of it and I want to rest. Melanie and I are going to Bali to spend the rest of our lives in peace and quiet. You will find something else to do.

LEO

What? Alright, take your wife and go to Bali, to Tahiti, Maldives, she names it. While your son is here without a chance of making a living. I thought you would stand by me. But you only care about yourself and that woman who took my mother's place!

Leo leaves the room shutting the door.

SCENE THREE

The couple's apartment at the night of the same day

SHEILA

I got news!

LEO (*simultaneously*)

I gotta tell you..

SHEILA

Ok you go first!

LEO

My father, won't have me in the business. He's closing it down! Doesn't think I'm capable of doing it, doesn't think I deserve such a life. Cheap excuses to move to Bali with his second wife.

SHEILA

Wow! Well honey, he must be completely out of his mind... But...we don't need to worry, really. Remember my father's small estate property? My uncle used to hold a restaurant business there, but it was in-debt and he closed it down. Now, my father owns the entire property and he is willing to grant it over to you so you can start your own business.

LEO

But... you said the business was in-debt

SHEILA

That's true. But we have a two year deadline to pay it off by installments. I think we will be able to make it by then and support the baby at the same time. I mean... you are so clever, and you can build up a successful business

LEO

Well, my father is not of the same opinion. He says I'm not responsible enough to lead a serious business...maybe he's right. What do I know?

SHEILA

Oh love, I trust you! Of course you can make it. Why not give it a try? You can start whatever business you dream of. A cocktail bar! You're such a good bartender. Besides you have so many friends around town that the bar is bound to be packed every day!

LEO

Haha. You're right baby. A cocktail bar. That's the idea! That's it!

SHEILA

That's right! We're so lucky! We are going to do the property transference tomorrow morning! Then we can start making plans on how to start the bar, advertise it... you know.

LEO

Right! Neon Lights, Cocktails, Music, Posters...

SCENE FOUR

Two years later, at the bar which seems to be a successful business by now. The couple has been married and the baby is six months old.

SHEILA

A double Martini with extra ice please! What is it Little Dora? Oh I can't believe you've grown up so much. You're walking already. So much time has passed!

LEO enters in a hurry.

LEO

Sheila! We've got a problem here. A warning paper has come today that we have to pay off the debt in two months!

SHEILA

Well, have we made enough to pay it off? *(Pause)* We haven't. Oh god, I thought we would have made it by now.

LEO

We? What are you talking about Sheila?! I was working here all day and you stayed home with the baby. You didn't help with the business!

SHEILA

But I had to take care of her! Do you think it was easy? Staying home all alone with the baby night after night? How could I help with the business too?

LEO

Any way! You were the one who came up with the idea to take up this overdrawn business! You believed this would work but this is not a Tom Cruz movie dear. That's life!

SHEILA

Oh really? Why didn't you reject it right there and then. I guess you liked the idea of having your friends around, drinking and partying every night, claiming you are running this business to make money for our family.

LEO

Such a wild imagination! I've been doing nothing. I was here taking care of our business and when my friends came we had fun. No women, no nothing.

SHEILA

And after all, you think this is the life I've dreamt of? I could have finished my degree and I could be working too!!

LEO

I thought all you wanted was a family.

SHEILA

Well yes... That's what I thought I wanted. But you have a life, besides our family, outside the house! I don't!

LEO

And I thought we were... together in this. It's not a competition about who's having more fun, who has a life of his own and who hasn't!

SHEILA

And as for you blaming me for handing this property over to you, for giving you my idea... Would you rather I treated you like your father and his beloved wife, who turned you down?

LEO

Sheila, let's...let's just forget it

SHEILA

Oh, we will forget it. Me and the baby. And you should forget about us too

Sheila exits

SCENE FOUR

Leo is alone in the closed bar, thinking of a way to pay off the debt and of what will become of him and Sheila.

PATRICK

Hey!

LEO

Dad!

PATRICK

It's a nice hell of a bar over here. I can see you made it out good enough without me.

LEO

Why are you here?

PATRICK

To have a Johnny Black. And to speak as a father to a son.

LEO

Cool. What's with this rhyme thing now? You should have spoken to your son as a father when it was the right time.

PATRICK

I just apologize for not being there when you needed me. You did not mention anything about the baby when you came to me asking to join the business. Why? I would have certainly done so, if it were for my grandchild

LEO

I was afraid of telling you. But even if it weren't for the baby, why did you reject me? I wanted that job!

PATRICK

I was afraid you wouldn't make it. And I didn't want you to do such a tiring job for your entire life

LEO

And you think I'm better off now! Sheila is thinking I'm cheating on her because I own a bar and I go home late at night while she stays home with the baby

PATRICK

Well, is that true?

LEO

No, I mean I'm not cheating on her, but maybe having a family with me is not enough for her

PATRICK

I'll tell you one thing. Women are women. They will be jealous no matter whether you are a baker, a shoe maker or a doctor. She loves your family, but women have changed nowadays. They're not like the good old times, you know...happy housewives and just that.

LEO

Well, she said I should forget about her and the baby and she'll spend the night at her mother's house.

PATRICK

Ha ha ha. But seriously? Do you think she went through all that with you, just to give you up? She loves you, man. Can't you see?

LEO

(slightly smiles) But there's another thing.

PATRICK

Do not tell me that your bar is in debt?

LEO

How do you know?

PATRICK

Huh, small town, news spread quite quickly. Thank God I managed to keep some out of the savings from the liquidation of my business, because the bitch took it all and run away.

LEO

Is that so?

PATRICK

Yeah...She took most of the money away and flew to Mykonos to open up a clothes boutique for her daughter or something.

LEO

Oh my God! The woman must be insane! Did you love her?

PATRICK

(sighs) Love her! I just wanted peace and quiet, you know, a safe haven to lay my tired old ass after all these years of loneliness since your mother passed away.

LEO

(laughs a little) Come on old man. That woman didn't worth a penny.

PATRICK

Although she took most of my pennies with her. Anyway! No big deal. Now, I have my grandchild to spend my time with, and a place where I guess you would but me a glass of ouzo now and then

LEO

(laughs) You old man!

SCENE FIVE

Sheila enters the room with the baby at noon on the next day. Leo and Patrick enter

LITTLE DORA

(running to Patrick): Pa-pa

PATRICK

What is it little creature?

(Patrick takes Little Dora into his arms)

SHEILA *(to LEO)*

What's with your father?

LEO

We made up.

SHEILA

Made up. Cool

LEO

What's that over there? You packed all your things in that car? Where are you going? You can't be serious.

SHEILA

Well Leo, I can't take it anymore. I can't get off my mind the thought that you might be involved with another woman... I don't know. But it's not just that... Of course I love Dora and I wanted this family with you but I'm not just a wife and a mother. I am a woman, you know, a person! I want to do something productive and exciting again. Just put yourself in my shoes. Could you stay at home all day, taking care of the baby and the household, would you take it?

LEO

First of all I am not involved with anybody. I got you ... my Sheila! And as for the baby you're right it's not that easy but... working here every night wasn't as fun as it sounds either.

SHEILA

Leo, I want to work in the bar too. You will be working half the days of the week and I will be working the rest of the days. You'll have the chance to spend more time with your daughter too. You said we are together in this! I stand by you when you're down and I am the only one who takes care of the baby. Then you blame me for not helping with the bar. Now I will. If you want us together, we will be equal in this from now on.

LEO

Hmm... It's not such a bad idea after all... Let's see if that works for us... My father said he wants to help with the baby too. Come, you should meet him

...

(Sheila sits at a table with Patrick while Leo gets inside the bar to continue working)

PATRICK

Well I guess what you're thinking about right now. Who is he talking to behind the bar?

SHEILA

Well, I was actually thinking at what time he'll finish his shift, cause I'm next.

PATRICK

What? I see... you girls are all about gender equality, women in the workforce e.tc. I've heard Melanie talk about that stuff.

SHEILA

Yeah. But don't worry I'm not going away to Mykonos. I guess you can somehow bring the binaries together, combine work and ... love. Anyway, I wanted to thank you for paying off our debt.

PATRICK

(Holding her hand) Ahh, I want to thank you, for seeing potential in my son, when I couldn't.

SHEILA

(Smile) I've heard you wanna get to know your granddaughter better.

PATRICK

Oh, sure!

SHEILA

Then take care of her because my shift is on.

PATRICK

Hahaha

Leo gets out of the bar and hands his bartender's apron to Sheila. Sheila wears it and they kiss before she gets in the bar.

THE END