

BOLOGNSTEIN

by
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FADE IN:

INT. DIMLY LIT KITCHEN - NIGHT

A pot boils steadily away as THE CAMERA ZOOMS IN SLOWLY. No one else is in the room except this pot coughing and spluttering. The light seems to angelically focus on this creation.

CUT TO:

A girl is frantic, she's running around muttering to herself as she throws things into a bubbling pot, only stopping to check an ancient piece of paper sticky taped to the cupboard above the stove.

Panting, she opens her phone sitting on the bench beside. It blinks:

7:02

SOPH

Fuck!

Another girl enters the room, both are similar ages, around mid-twenties.

JESS

What's up with you?

SOPH

(not looking up)

Oh sorry, I can't make out what this writing says.

She delicately tears the ancient paper down and holds it up.

SOPH (CONT'D)

Is this saffron or salmon?

JESS

You're making Bolognese right? Deductive reasoning?

SOPH

(reconsiders the paper)

True. My grandma was a pretty kooky lady though, she'd always throw the most random things in a meal, but it'd always turn out epic.

JESS

(gently)

What time's your mum coming?

SOPH

7:30, but she's always late.

JESS

Do you need a hand? I make a pretty good carbonara.

SOPH

Different regions, Jess. Bolognese comes from Bologna, that's where it gets the name.

JESS moves to sit down on a bench facing the stove.

JESS

Thanks for the etymology lesson, Gordon Ramsay. Thought you were into vaccinology?

SOPH

(looking up apologetically)

Sorry, I just want this to be perfect.

JESS considers her and decides to take a different approach.

JESS

Is that where she's from? Your grandma?

SOPH

No, she's from England, but she used to travel to Germany a lot for work.

JESS

(cracks a smile)

True, kind of fits with the kooky old science thing right? If she worked in Germany.

SOPH

(smiling back)

I could see that, she would've seen Metropolis in theatres I guess.

JESS

But so, isn't the whole thing her and your mum weren't that close because she was never home to make dinner? Is that why you're cooking this?

SOPH

Elementary, my dear Watson. Emotional manipulation, I need to tell her Sam and I broke up.

JESS

Trueeee. Yikes, she loved that guy.

SOPH

She loved how fucking boring he was. She couldn't wait for me to quit my job and start popping out babies.

JESS

(dramatically)

Ahhhhhhhhh!

SOPH falters, looking up laughing. JESS joins in.

JESS

(through laughter)

Do you remember that time when you fell asleep after doing a pregnancy test and you came into my room in the morning crying because it had turned positive?

SOPH

(looking gravely in the distance)

I went all the way to the abortion clinic just for them to tell me I wasn't actually pregnant.

At that moment, the bubbling pot gives an angry spurt, pieces of it getting onto the ancient paper, as if trying to remind the cook she had a meal to make.

SOPH

(turning back to the stove)

Oh shit.

She weakly gives the pot a stir, before bringing the wooden spoon up to her lips for a taste. She winces.

JESS

Too much salt?

SOPH

Too much salmon.

JESS

Soph!!

JESS gets up to stand intimately behind SOPH, she rests her chin on SOPH's shoulder to read the ancient text.

SOPH

Does any of this make sense to you?

JESS

No. But I don't speak German.

SOPH smiles and touches JESS's arm in a thank you. She peers closer at the paper, confused.

JESS

(walking away)

Okay, I'll be in my room watching Rosemary's Baby. Call if you need any help.

SOPH

(distractedly)

Yep, have fun.

JESS walks out of the room, glancing back, but SOPH is enwrapped in something she's seen listed on the ancient paper under the ingredients section.

B-4587

She frowns at this word, trying to remember where she's read it before. She glances down at the bubbling stew of meat, now lovingly simmering up at her.

SOPH

(to the pot)

What do you want? What do you need?

She picks up her phone, dialling a number, but hovering her finger over the call button.

She puts the phone back down and places her hands on her hips, sternly looking at the stew.

Had her years in the lab - researching disease pathogenesis, analysing immune responses at a molecular level, and developing synthetic antigens to combat infection - really not translated to the basics of cooking?

She had spent countless nights away from her warm bed and loving boyfriend in the sterile environment of fluorescent lights, developing the most recent COVID-19

vaccine, only to be labelled a monster by right-wing media and subsequently, her mother.

She had learnt, through rigorous repetition, that sometimes science had a way of rejecting traditional ideas and conventional processes. Sometimes it came down to something that had nothing to do with science at all.

Was this the same?

SOPH looks at the paper again and then back at her phone. The time reads:

7:17

The pot spurts up and suddenly, she remembers:

B-4587

THE CAMERA CIRCLES OUT OF HER EYE (THAT'S SO RAVEN STYLE) AND CHASES UP A SET OF STAIRS INTO SOPH'S BEDROOM TO FOCUS ON A SMALL GLASS BOTTLE SITTING IN HER PURSE.

It was a chemical in her most recent trial of the COVID-19 vaccine she'd been working on. A vaccine she had brought home to continue working on into the early morning.

SOPH considered why a chemical for an experimental vaccine would be listed as an ingredient in her grandmother's Bolognese recipe. Maybe it added a special colour to the soup? Maybe it helped break down the protein in the meat? Maybe it made the sauce last longer for leftovers?

SOPH's mother had never kindly talked about her own, *but* she had always reminisced about how good her mother's Bolognese was, on the rare occasion she had a moment to make it.

Maybe this was the secret ingredient.

It definitely wasn't love.

SOPH walks out of the kitchen and up the stairs, THE CAMERA FOLLOWING HER FROM BEHIND. She enters her room and riffling through a purse, she pulls out a small vial of clear liquid. She walks back down, THE CAMERA STILL FOLLOWING HER, and back into the kitchen. FROM BEHIND, we see her pause for a moment before pouring the whole shot into the simmering mixture.

What's the worst that can happen?

She was pretty sure her mum had never gotten the COVID-19 vaccine anyway.

A moment.

THE CAMERA ZOOMS OUT SLOWLY, still showing SOPH peering over the pot from behind. Then.

EXPLOSION

Bolognese is everywhere. On the walls. On the cupboards. On the floor.

High-pitched ringing noise PLAYS

THE SCREEN FADES IN FROM BLACK as we focus on SOPH's face splattered in Bolognese. Her hair sticks up wildly, frizzy and charred.

She orients herself and sits up from the floor, looking towards the stove. It is eerily silent.

Beat.

A Bolognese hand reaches its way slowly outside of the pot and curls its fingers around the rim. SOPH gasps.

SOPH

What the fuck?

She slowly gets up from the floor, cautiously walking over to the anthropomorphic stew. She peers in, THE CAMERA FOLLOWS HER GAZE.

The cutest Bolognese monster you've ever seen is staring up at her, cooing softly.

SOPH

(a whisper)

It's alive.

She reaches down to touch the gooey body, her finger goes straight through and the creation giggles. As she brings her finger back up, a train of sauce, still sticking together, follows her hand and curls around her finger affectionately.

For a second, disgusted, SOPH takes a deep breath.

SOPH

(exhaling)

Awwwwwwwww.

At the same time, JESS enters back into the room.

JESS

Hey, do you think it's shitty of me if I don't say hi to your- Oh my god.

SOPH turns around slowly. The kitchen is a mess. A literal explosion just happened. Her burnt hair makes her look like a mad scientist as she wears a distant yet slightly crazed look in her eyes.

In her arms, she holds the Bolognese baby.

SOPH

Jess, I'm a mother. I've created life.

JESS

What the actual fuck.

SOPH

I might win an award for this. I might get promoted! Jess, I've just had a major scientific breakthrough. I've redefined humanity as we know it.

JESS

Right. Cool. Um, I reckon let's talk about this, but I think you need to put the, the *dinner* down.

SOPH

Dinner?! Jess, look! It's literally alive.

JESS

Okay, you don't need to prove your mother wrong this badly.

SOPH

(suddenly remembering)

Fuck! My mum.

She runs across the room, still carrying the meat baby, searching for her phone. Finding it, she picks it up and realises it's now broken.

SOPH

Damn. Jess, give me your phone.

SOPH and the monster advance towards JESS, she cowers back.

JESS

Uh, I'd rather you put that thing down girl.

SOPH

Girl, he's harmless.

Just as she says that, the meat baby leaps from SOPH's hands, tiny carrot stick claws emerging from its soupy exterior. It screeches as it sinks into JESS's chest.

Believe Again by Delta Goodrem PLAYS

JESS starts screaming, trying to fling the thing off as it begins to bite down on her.

SOPH begins to panic too, trying to catch the splashes of sauce that are flying from the baby as JESS tries to shake it off.

SOPH

Jess! Jess, be careful! Jess, I love-

SOPH stops shocked as the Bolognese monster finally sinks its teeth into her housemate, taking a deep bite from the girl's neck.

JESS drops to her knees. She inhales to let out another scream, but before she can, the stew creature envelopes her, covering her face in its saucy goop.

SOPH takes a few steps back, losing her voice.

The thing is eating her housemate from the top down.

SOPH now turns, running up the stairs to her bedroom. THE CAMERA FOLLOWING, she slams the door shut. There, she rifles frantically through her bag, grabbing another vial of the vaccine. Printed on the back of the bottle in large font are the words:

DO NOT MIX WITH MARY SHELLEY'S BOLOGNESE RECIPE

SOPH

Oh no.

It was there the whole time.

She knew there was a family secret her mother had never shared. A reason for the rift between her and her mother. A reason why she had never been supportive of women in STEM. Apart from the obsession with Sky News.

What was it her mum always used to say?

SOPH

(staring up into the distance)

Women. Can't. Be. Evil. Scientists.

She thought it was just because of the hair.

At that moment, a squelch is heard outside the door.

SOPH

Bolognst- ?

A blast, the meat baby breaks through the door, it has grown stronger. It covers SOPH in its saucy mess.

She screams as the very thing her mother always wanted for her - a child - and the very thing her mother always feared - independent, female-led scientific discovery - eats her alive.

Meanwhile, a slam of the front door.

A tall, well-dressed woman walks into the living room, fiddling with her gloves and handbag.

MARY JR.

Darlingggg, sorry I'm late but really it's not my fault, you picked a horrible street to live on, there are absolutely no spaces to park. Now, in my neighbourhood, the homes actually come with their own garages, but I see that none of the houses in *this* neighbourhood come with their own garages. So, I- Oh my gosh, *Sophie*. It is a *disaster* in here! What have you been doing? Honey, how do you ever expect to keep Sam around when this is what he may one day be coming home to? How would you react if you came home from a long day of work and your wife had left your kitchen in this state? I mean, the *walls*, they're ruined! You need to use lemon and baking soda to get these stains out. *Sophie? Lemon and baking soda*, alright? I just- And oh gracious, you've burnt dinner. I really don't know what Sam must think of you, I

really don't know what to do with you, I
really-

MARY JR. spots the ancient slip of paper still taped to the blackened kitchen cupboard and stops. With a manicured hand, she slowly peels the sheet off and looks at it closer.

MARY JR.

Oh fuck.

She looks up the stairs and begins walking up them slowly, one at a time. Facing SOPH's bedroom door, she softly knocks.

MARY JR.

Sophie?

The door quietly swings open.

The room is dimly lit, surrounded by SOPH's things - a "28 Days Later" poster on the wall, microbiology books on the desk, an overflowing purse on the floor.

In the middle of this, sitting on a neatly made bed, and spotlighted by an overhead light, is an immaculate bowl of Bolognese.

The perfect dinner.

Her mother would be proud.

CUT TO BLACK.