



Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow: My Life

By Sophia Loren

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In her first memoir, the Academy Award-winning actress Sophia Loren tells her incredible life story from the struggles of her childhood in war-torn Naples to her life as a screen legend, icon of elegance, and devoted mother.

In her acting career spanning more than six decades, Sophia Loren became known for her striking beauty and dramatic roles with famed costars Cary Grant, Frank Sinatra, Marlon Brando, Gregory Peck, Jack Lemmon, and Paul Newman. The luminous Italian movie star was the first artist to win an Oscar for a foreign language performance, after which she continued a vibrant and varied career that took her from Hollywood to Paris to Italy—and back to Hollywood. In *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, Loren shares vivid memories of work, love, and family with winning candor.

Born in 1934 and growing up in World War II Italy, Loren's life of glamour and success was preceded by years of poverty and hardship, when she lived in her grandparents' house with her single mother and sister, and endured near starvation. She shares how she blossomed from a toothpick-thin girl into a beautiful woman seemingly overnight, getting her start by winning a beauty pageant; and how her first Hollywood film, *The Pride and the Passion*, ignited a high-profile romance with Cary Grant, who would vie with her mentor, friend, frequent producer, and lover Carlo Ponti to become her husband. Loren also reveals her long-held desire to become a mother, the disappointments she suffered, the ultimate joy of having two sons, and her happiness as a mother and grandmother.

From trying times to triumphant ones, this scintillating autobiography paints a multi-dimensional portrait of the woman behind the celebrity, beginning each chapter with a letter, photograph, or object that prompts her memories. In Loren's own words, this is a collection of "unpublished memories, curious anecdotes, tiny secrets told, all of which spring from a box found by chance, a precious treasure trove filled with emotions, experiences, adventures." Her wise and candid voice speaks from the pages with riveting detail and sharp humor. *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* is as elegant, entrancing, and memorable as Sophia Loren herself.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Sophia Loren's fascinating life has long deserved a proper telling and now her autobiography *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* does justice to it." (Daily Express)

About the Author

Sophia Loren is an international film star who won an Academy Award for Best Actress for her role in *Two Women*. She has earned a record six David Di Donatello Awards for Best Actress, a Grammy Award, and five special Golden Globes, as well as the Honorary Academy Award in 1991. In 1995, she received the Cecil B. DeMille Award for lifetime achievement. Loren lives in Europe and frequents Los Angeles where her two sons and grandchildren live.

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Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

Prologue

The doorbell to my apartment keeps ringing while I finish kneading the last of the struffoli, our traditional Neapolitan Christmas pastry. I leave the dough to rest and hurry to open the door, my hands covered in flour, wiping them as best I can on my apron.

The florist, behind a huge poinsettia, hints at a smile.

"For you, Signora Loren. Can I get your autograph, please?"

The label on the ribbon takes me back to Italy for an instant. I put the plant down on the piece of furniture and open the card. It conveys an affectionate, cheerful thought.

The voices of my grandchildren, who have just arrived from the United States for the holidays, fill the house with excitement and chaos. Tomorrow is Christmas Eve and we'll finally all be together. The truth is, though, that I'm not ready. How will I manage to feed so many people? How can I possibly fry all those struffoli?

The world whirls around me dizzily and I feel as if everything is slipping out of my control. I go back to the kitchen, in search of certainties that I can't find. I head into the dining room, hoping that things will go better there. The table! Yes, the dinner table for tomorrow. I want it colorful and beautiful. In a frenzy, I take out the glasses and arrange the plates and cutlery. I fold the napkins carefully. I have fun deciding who will sit where.

I'm a Virgo and, most days, I even manage to bore myself with my compulsive perfectionism, but not today. Today it looks like the messiness is getting the upper hand. I start over again on the table, trying to keep my emotions at bay. Let's see, two, four, eight, plus five, thirteen, and four makes seventeen guests for dinner tomorrow . . . No, not seventeen, that's an unlucky number! Let me count over again.

From the photograph of him on the chiffonier, Carlo is smiling that special smile of his on our wedding day. I'll never forget the first time I felt his eyes on me, many years before, in a restaurant with a view of the Colosseum. I was not much more than a young girl, and he was already a successful man. The waiter came over to me with a note from him saying that the producer had noticed me. Then the stroll in the garden, the roses, the scent of acacia, summer as it was coming to a close. That was the start of my adventure.

I stroke the green armchair where Carlo would doze off while reading the newspaper. I feel cold; I must remember to light the fire tomorrow. Luckily, Beatrice, the youngest of my grandchildren, comes along to take my mind off my recollections. "Nonna Sophia, Nonna Sophia!" She's very blond . . . and very determined. Behind her, the others peer in, like a delegation of little rascals. It's time to get ready to go to bed, but they have no intention of doing so. I look at them, they smile at me, we make a deal.

"Why don't we see a movie?"

Amid shouts of joy, a battle breaks out as they choose which cartoon movie to watch. In the end Cars 2 wins, their favorite of the moment. We all sit down together in front of the TV.

"Nonna, can you imitate Mamma Topolino for us?"

"Now, mangia. Eat!" I recite my line from Cars 2, making funny faces as I do so.

"Again, again, Nonna, please. Do it again!"

Hearing my voice, the same that comes from the mouth of a little car, drives them wild. Who would have thought they would enjoy it so much when I accepted, rather reluctantly, the proposal to do that peculiar dubbing job?

Little by little, Vittorio and Lucia, Leo, and Beatrice are mesmerized by the movie and, before it's over, they're fast asleep. I cover them with a blanket, look at my watch, and think about tomorrow. Outside it's started to snow, but with all the hustle and bustle inside I hadn't even noticed.

Comings and goings are always very special moments. They set the merry-go-round of recollections in motion, opening doors to yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

When I think back on my life, sometimes I'm surprised that it's actually all true. I say to myself, One morning, I'll wake up and find out that it's all just a dream. Not that it was always easy. There were hard times. But it was definitely wonderful and worthwhile. Success, too, bears its burden that you have to learn how to cope with. No one can teach you. The answer is inside you, where all answers are.

I tiptoe back to my bedroom. It's comforting to spend some time alone. I know that if I stop for a moment of quiet, I can find the peaceful beating of my heart, and calm.

As soon as I'm in the bedroom I realize I'm still wearing my apron. I untie it, take off my shoes, and slump onto the bed; the magazine I'd been reading in the morning is still open to the same page. The excitement of embracing my family again has made it hard for me to sleep these past few nights, and I feel lost if I don't sleep. It's the engine that helps me to travel through my days.

"Buon riposo!" (Good night!), Ninni shouts out from the other room. "Cerchi di dormire!" (Try to get some rest!)

Ninni, Ninni . . . she's been with us for nearly fifty years. She was Carlo Jr. and Edoardo's Nanny, and when they grew up she stayed on to take care of me. Now, whenever my sons come to the city with their children, she takes care of those little rascals with the same enthusiasm as ever. Sometimes I wonder where she finds the patience to put up with us.

"Sto già dormendo" (I'm already half asleep), I tell her to reassure her. But instead of sleeping I just lie there, my eyes wide open as I stare at the ceiling.

As I try to calm down, thoughts race through my mind. Will my grandchildren like my struffoli? The ones that my Zia Rachelina would make for us in Pozzuoli, the small town where I grew up, were much better than mine. You know, the flavors of our childhood are always better than others.

I feel restless, the way you do when you slowly slip from reality to a different world, one of dreams or memories. I can't keep still, so I put on my bathrobe and go into the study at the end of the hall. To do what, I don't know. I look at the shelf, I move aside some books, bric-a-brac, pictures, paperweights. I fret, as if I'm looking for something. Then I see a dark wooden box at the back of the shelf. My heart skips a beat. It takes me by surprise, but I recognize it right away. In an instant, I pull it down and open it. Before my eyes are letters, telegrams, notes, photographs. That's what was pulling me here; this is the thread that guided my footsteps on this cold winter night.

The wooden box holds my treasure trove of memories. I'm tempted to leave it as it is. Too much time has passed, too many emotions. But then I muster the courage to pick it up, and I slowly carry it back to the bedroom.

Maybe this is my Christmas gift, and it's up to me to open it.

Users Review

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