

Praise for Snow Falling

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Snow Falling

Jane Gloriana Villanueva

Inspired by the Following Episodes of
the Series *JANE THE VIRGIN*®

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Teleplay by *Jennie Snyder Urman*

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_____ TO _____

MICHAEL CORDERO, JR.

You live in my heart forever

Prologue

Knowing what would happen—the heartbreak, the tears, the love, the hope, the betrayal, the heartbreak (yes, it was always the heartbreak)—would she do it over? And she knew the answer was yes because of how it all ended.

But I'm getting ahead of myself...

On the night that Josephine Galena Valencia turned twenty-one years old, a miracle happened.

MIAMI, 1900

The rasp of Josephine's pencil on the page of the pristine journal her mother had gifted her that very day was loud in the still of a sultry Miami night.

Pictures played across her mind as she tried valiantly to capture the right words to describe them. She leaned close to the oil lantern beside her, pouring her imagination out onto the pages, wanting to immortalize the images quickly before they flickered out and faded away. Excitement welled up within Josephine, and the ideas percolated until they were bubbling so quickly, they were like water ready to boil. As the story spilled over onto the page, she finally felt like she was moving one step closer to her dream of becoming a writer. That hope had lingered in her heart and the idea had clung in the back of her mind ever since her *abuela* had read that first fairy tale to her as a child.

Today she had turned twenty-one years old, and despite the happy celebration she'd shared with her mother and *abuela* and her friends from the hotel where she worked, Josephine couldn't help but feel that the day had been incomplete. Although her *abuela* and mother always warned Josephine that she let her imagination (and her temper) get away from her too often, she couldn't shake the idea that something had been missing. Something that would have made the day just absolutely perfect. Maybe the father she'd never known. Or even her long-gone *abuelo*. *Something...something magical*, she thought as she scratched out another word on the rough paper.

There was only dim light on the veranda from the lantern she had set on the table beside the rocking chair as she eagerly poured out the story from her heart. With each completed page, pride and satisfaction fed the determination growing inside her to reach for her dreams.

Josephine was so engrossed in her task that it took her a moment to notice the harsh scrape of a footstep on the wooden porch and the shadow now looming over her.

Fear suddenly gripped her as she noticed the large man's shoe barely a foot away from the chair where she was huddled. Heart beating at a frantic pace, she mustered the courage to look up at the face of the man towering above her.

Dark blond wisps of hair escaped the confines of a straw boater that cast shadows on his features until she raised the lantern to chase away the darkness. Smiling blue eyes as bright as a summer sky held no malice, only concern. A sharp, straight nose led to full lips and a strong jawline with a hint of light evening stubble.

"It's a little late to be outside, miss. There have been some problems in town lately, and I've been sent round to make sure everything is secure," he said and drew away the lapel of his mud-brown suit to reveal the shiny silver badge on his chest.

Pinkerton National Detective Agency was engraved on the shield along with a small star. A little quiver of fear returned to her heart. Josephine had heard stories—not all positive—about the Pinkertons

and how they'd busted unions in other cities. The owner of the Regal Sol had supposedly hired them to protect the hotel and the nearby cottages where many of the employees lived, but who knew what his real motives had been.

"It's my birthday," she stammered, suddenly self-conscious since she was clad only in her nightshirt and robe. She drew the lapels of the robe together and hugged the journal to her chest. Her *abuela* would never approve of Josephine being so immodestly clothed in front of a gentleman.

The young man jammed his hands in his pockets and rocked back on his heels as he examined her, and she hoped he couldn't see that she was clearly a little flustered by his presence. Nervously she pulled back long tendrils of dark, curly hair that had slipped loose of the Gibson girl bun at the top of her head. At his prolonged perusal, heat spread up her neck and to her cheeks, and Josephine prayed she was not blushing, although she knew she was.

"Happy birthday, Miss..."

He paused, prompting her, and she hesitantly replied, "Josephine." After a pregnant pause, she shifted the journal to one hand and stuck out the other as she stood. "Josephine Galena Valencia. I'm one of the—"

"Concierges at the hotel. Yes, I noticed you there before," he said, and she lost some of her embarrassment as his face now pinkened with his revelation. Quickly, he took her hand and said, "I work there too."

When his fingers enclosed hers, Josephine felt a small frisson of heat, and when she looked down, sparks of light seemed to be dancing along their intermingled skin. Her pulse quickened. Suddenly, she wanted to know more about this endearingly awkward lawman. "And your name, sir, is..."

"Martin. Cadden. Detective Cadden," he said and then looked away, gesturing with his head in the direction of the darkness on the street. "As I said before, we've had some issues in town. You need to be careful out here, a beautiful girl like you."

He shut his eyes tight and grimaced, but then a lopsided grin spread across his features and the joy of it spread to a place inside her. He gestured to the journal held tight against her breasts. “What were you doing out here all alone in the dark?”

Hesitant to reveal her secret wish to be a writer, she reached for the copy of the Jane Austen novel she’d also received that day as a gift and said, “Just scribbling in my diary and reading.”

He smiled, his genial face alight. “I enjoy a good dime novel now and then.”

He might not have known it, but Detective Martin Cadden had uttered exactly the right words. “Oh, I love to read, especially romantic novels like Jane Austen. Have you read her?”

Martin’s smile broadened, though he shook his head slightly.

“The nuns at the convent where I go to school said they’ve never seen anyone before who likes to read as much as I do. I only have a few more correspondence classes to finish, and Sister Elizabeth said she’d help me get a job as a tutor.”

Martin looked at her questioningly, almost as if he was deciding something. He took a step closer and sank down on the edge of the table, his eyes fixed on Josephine. “What is it that you love about those stories?”

“That idea that two people are destined to be together,” she answered. Their gazes met and held. Tiny flutters, like the beating of a butterfly’s wings, resonated within Josephine’s chest. Perhaps this was it, the elusive *something* she had been anticipating all day. “That feeling they have when their eyes meet, and they think, *I knew it was you. I just knew.*”

She waited for his censure, but instead Martin smiled once more, took off his boater, and sat down on the rocking chair beside her. “Please, tell me more, Miss Valencia.”

And she did, for what might have been hours as they sat and talked comfortably like old friends, trading tales of their favorite stories and some of their hopes for the future. The night grew ever darker until

the flame in the lantern suddenly sputtered out entirely, leaving them bathed only in moonlight.

She stared into the handsome detective's bright eyes, her breath held. The moment stretched on, shimmering with potential like the stars in the night sky, until she quietly, and with some disappointment, murmured, "Well, it's getting late, Detective, and I have work in the morning." She could have spent the entire night talking with him, and maybe even more than talking, if she dared.

"Of course. I'd feel better walking you to the door and making sure you're safe," he said, the very model of proper behavior as counter to Josephine's rather improper thoughts, and held out his hand in the direction of the cottage's entrance.

Ahem, we should note at this time that the entrance to the cottage was barely a few feet away, and Josephine could have made the journey quite safely all on her own...but alas, then the miracle would not have happened.

Josephine inclined her head in agreement and took a step, but tripped on one of the loose wooden floorboards of the veranda. Strong arms kept her from falling and drew her close against a lean body and the hard butt of the pistol in the holster he wore beneath his suit.

Heat spread everywhere from that simple touch, and, beneath her nightshirt, her skin tingled. She peered up and met that caring gaze that was looking at her as if she were special. *So special...* But suddenly, a big, fat white flake landed on Martin's shoulder. Then a flurry of flakes drifted down like snow falling as the plaster ceiling above them finally succumbed to the Florida humidity and peeled loose.

Josephine laughed in delight. "I've never seen real snow but I've always thought it was so romantic," she said wistfully.

Tenderly, Martin reached up and brushed a flake from the loosened curl at her temple. "And maybe even magical?" He applied gentle pressure at her waist to urge her upward.

Snow Falling

“Maybe even miraculous,” she said as she rose on her tiptoes.

Unbeknownst to the young lovers so completely enthralled with each other, the flame in the small oil lantern flickered to glorious life once more, as he covered her lips with his.

And as romantic and magical as snow might be, it couldn't stand a chance against the heat of that kiss on a sultry Miami night. For this was the night that Josephine Galena Valencia's life would change forever.

Chapter One

TWO YEARS LATER

Josephine Galena Valencia always did things the right way and in the right order. At the ripe old age of twenty-three Josephine had finalized her master plan, and nothing was going to keep her from accomplishing it: find a job as a tutor, finish a novel, and marry Martin. Or so she thought...

Passing through the Regal Sol Hotel's luxurious lobby, Josephine smiled in satisfaction. The hotel had opened just three years earlier and had quickly become Miami's premiere lodging for the nation's rich and famous. Since she had secured a position as a concierge there, she'd hobnobbed with the likes of the Astors, Andrew Carnegie, various US senators and European royalty, and even the big man of Miami himself, Henry Flagler, the owner of the nearby Royal Palm Hotel and one of the city's founders. That is, if you consider making sure that such luminaries had transportation from the rail station and choice spots for the nightly lounge show as "hobnobbing."

Her long skirt and petticoat swayed around her legs as she pushed through the door into the immense dining room, where nearly two hundred guests were enjoying an extravagant four-course meal. The

expensive fragrance of the ladies' perfumes battled with the scents from the floral arrangements scattered along the edges of the space and on the tabletops. The murmur of conversation sounded almost like the susurrus of the nearby Miami River, broken only by the clatter and clank of cutlery against fine porcelain.

Silver centerpieces gleamed on tabletops, but paled in comparison to the glint of gold and sparkle of jewels draped on ears and necks, or gracing the wrists of the hotel patrons. Perfectly groomed ladies swathed in rich silks and brocades sat alongside dashing gentlemen in elegant evening dress.

Such amazing opulence, Josephine thought as she sashayed through the dining room, smiling at the various patrons and stopping to chat with one couple for whom she'd arranged a romantic yacht cruise along the Miami River. Before long her cheeks ached from the smile she kept firmly in place, and even with the breeze sweeping in from the open-air entrances around the room, a line of sweat trickled down her neck and beneath the high collar of her prim, white cotton shirt.

Josephine was counting the minutes until the end of dessert, when the guests would hurry out to the hotel's lounge for the nightly entertainment. Once the dining service ended, she could slip away to spend some precious time with Martin before having to turn in for the night.

Martin. Even after two years of courting, her heart sped up a little at the thought of seeing him. Of maybe sneaking away with him to...

But she was getting ahead of herself again, which sometimes happened when she thought of Martin.

As a passing waiter placed the last dish of tutti-frutti ice cream in front of Mrs. Smith, of the Boston Smiths, Josephine hurried outside to one of the back paths to avoid the crush of guests that would shortly be heading to the rotunda that doubled as a lounge at night.

And there he was. Martin was waiting for her, leaning against a column at the edge of the passage. Unlike the guests dining in their evening wear, Martin still wore his daytime charcoal-gray sack suit

over a pressed white shirt. Despite the slightly boxy cut of the suit, the single-breasted vest beneath hugged the lean lines of his body.

His gaze locked with hers for only a second until, with a gentlemanly dip of his head, he said, “Miss Valencia. So nice to see you. I trust that you are well.”

“I am, Detective Cadden. Thank you for asking. And you?” she asked and accepted the arm he gallantly offered.

He darted his gaze around and led her to a darkened spot beneath a poinciana tree just off the path. As he turned to her, crystal blue eyes dancing with humor and happiness, she smiled and leaned into him. Rising up, she whispered playfully into his ear, “Is it time for a proper welcome now, Martin?”

His hard, hot kiss was answer enough as he drew her deeper into the shadows for privacy. As the kiss grew more and more heated, Josephine’s head swam and her body ached for his touch. When he reached up and cupped her breast, little sparks heated her skin, but she broke away from him.

“We must stop, Martin. You know I want to wait until we’re married,” she said and slapped a hand over her mouth as the words slipped free.

“Married?” he repeated and guided her from the intimacy of the dark bower and back onto the path. Placing a hand at the small of her back, he led her in the direction of the cottages, obviously intending to walk her home. They were silent during the short stroll, the impact of that one small word hanging over them until they reached the cottage and entered. Josephine fretted. She had said too much. She thought, as she often had during recent months, that perhaps Martin still needed more time to decide if marriage was in their future.

“*Abuela? Mami?*” she called out just to confirm Alberta and Zara weren’t home. Her grandmother had been asked to work an extra shift at the hotel and her mother was performing at a saloon in North Miami.

When it appeared they were alone, Martin tried to draw her close, but she shied away from him again. “Martin, please. You make it so

hard to wait, but you know why I must. What we have is so special. I think it's worth waiting for." *And I don't want to get carried away and be left alone like my mother*, she thought, not that she would ever confess that to Martin or anyone else except possibly God. Her *abuela* always said that Josephine could say anything to God and He would understand.

"I think it's worth waiting for too, Josephine. I want it to be special for you," Martin said, his words hesitant. "We have both been so busy with work, and I know you're still hoping to get a position as a tutor—"

"I just have another couple of classes," she said, disheartened as she thought of the correspondence lessons sitting on her desk upstairs.

"It's not an easy thing, but you've accomplished so much in two years. Don't get discouraged," he said, stroking her upswept hair and the loose tendrils trailing down her neck.

"I suppose," she agreed, but that did little to assuage her disappointment that she hadn't accomplished her one real desire: to write a novel. She knew Martin was just being practical, as always, but secretly she wished she could share her real desire with him and have him understand.

He must have seen the shadow that crossed her face, because he took hold of her hand and urged her to face him. "I do want us to be together," he repeated. "Do you doubt that?"

She shook her head. "No, I don't, only...it's been two years, Martin." She blushed, adding shyly, "I had thought that maybe by now we'd be talking about marriage."

He smiled that lopsided grin she'd grown to love so much.

"You know that I love you, don't you?" he said, with a look in his eyes that took Josephine's breath away. The blue, as bright as ever, seemed to shimmer and gleam with a light that warmed her heart and chased away her doubts with its strength.

"I love you too," she said, then watched with stunned surprise as he reached into his pocket and brought out a small box.

"Then it seems like it might finally be the right time to ask—"

She gasped in shock. Josephine had dreamed about this moment so many times before, but she hadn't expected it to happen like this. She felt surprisingly unprepared. "Martin, what are you doing?"

"I'm proposing, my dear girl."

Almost on instinct, she protested, "But our plans... We haven't..." She trailed off, having trouble finding the words, and he held up a hand to stop her.

"It doesn't matter, darling. You will. We will. Together. I don't want to wait any longer to make you mine." He blushed. "And not because I want to do things with you that are inappropriate for an unmarried lady. I want to spend my life with you, Josephine. And raise children with you. And well, yes, do inappropriate things with you." His smile turned slightly devilish and he bent down on one knee, opening the box. "So, Josephine Galena Valencia, will you do me the honor of marrying me?"

Another gasp escaped her lips at the knowledge that it was finally happening. The rest of her life was finally beginning. "Oh yes, Martin, yes! I'd be honored to be your wife." Her hand shook as Martin slipped the simple gold band with a small but brilliantly glittering stone onto her finger. The metal warmed her, and for a second it seemed as if sparks glanced off it, awakening fire in the stone.

Then Martin drew her into his strong arms. He kissed her until she was almost breathless. Her heart raced madly beneath her breast, and behind her closed eyelids, she saw fireworks.

Martin laid his hands on her, tracing the shape of her curves and drawing her ever closer. Josephine hoped that neither her *abuela* nor *mami* would be home anytime soon so she and Martin could celebrate in ways that were inappropriate, but not that inappropriate. At least not yet.

As Martin and Josephine rejoiced, it seemed to Josephine that it was just a matter of time before the other parts of her plan fell into place. But of course, the road of love is never quite so smooth. In fact, for Josephine Galena Valencia, the journey on that road was about to hit quite a number of bumps.



Martin stood with his boss in the Pinkerton office as Mayor Reilly paced before them. The man's agitation was apparent as he stroked his thick moustache and complained about the city's problems with their neighbor to the north.

"There isn't a day that goes by that Doc isn't called to North Miami to patch up someone who's gotten shot or been knifed," the mayor railed and shot a pained look at his marshal as the man fidgeted beside him.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Mayor, but even with an assistant, we're so busy checking licenses, sidewalks, and street lamps, and now you want me to be the fire chief too. There's only so much a man can do," the marshal replied, but stopped his excuses at a steely glare from the mayor.

"Which is why you're here, detectives." The mayor crossed his arms. "We need the Pinkertons to find out who's supplying these North Miami dens of iniquity with their liquor and prostitutes, and we need you to keep that filth from moving downward into our area. Miami prides itself on being a moral and chaste town."

Martin shared a look with his boss, who said, "We'd be delighted to assist you and investigate, sir. Detective Cadden is one of our best, and I have no doubt he can get to the source of the problems."

Mayor Reilly nodded and gestured to his marshal. "We have some information for you on the murders that have occurred in the area lately." Chaste and moral as it may have been thanks to the restrictions one of the city's founders, Mrs. Julia Tuttle, had placed on landholders, in recent months Miami had been the center of a small crime wave. In the nearly six years since Mrs. Tuttle had finally convinced Henry Flagler to expand his railway line to the city, the town seemed as if it had doubled in size. And now that growth showed no signs of stopping, as people came in search of their fortunes in the burgeoning Magic City. Unfortunately, as of late, more and more of those enterprising individuals were being kidnapped and killed. "We believe some of them may be connected to whoever is bringing in the contraband."

The marshal handed Martin a folder containing a stack of grainy photographs as well as the list of names and dates for the deceased. As he peered at the photos and the dates, he could already see a pattern. “It seems like the murders first started while the railways and hotels were being built five or six years ago, and then there’s a gap before they begin again. Do you have any thoughts about why that might be?”

The mayor and marshal shared an uneasy glance. With a cough, the mayor said, “You are sharp, Detective Cadden. We suspect it’s someone connected to one of the hotels. Maybe someone with a large yacht that can transport liquor into one of the marinas.”

A yacht at either the Royal Palm or Regal Sol, the only two hotels with marinas on the river, means the criminals have both money and social connections, Martin thought. “If that’s what our investigations reveal, it may be hard to prosecute them,” he said.

“We understand. We’ll deal with that when you find the person or persons responsible,” Mayor Reilly replied.

Martin was happy that the mayor had said “when” and not “if.”

“You won’t be disappointed, Mayor,” Martin said and hoped that were true. But if there really was a criminal enterprise using the Regal Sol as a base of operations, Josephine might unknowingly be in the middle of a possibly dangerous situation. He’d have to be extra careful to make sure she wasn’t drawn into the investigation and that nothing he said or did compromised the task he’d been asked to complete.

This was a very big case he’d been entrusted with, and solving the case could help Martin secure his position with the agency and allow him to provide a very comfortable future for himself and Josephine. She wouldn’t have to work so hard, and maybe she could finally finish her classes and land a job as a tutor. He smiled at the thought as the men said their goodbyes and he left to return to the Regal Sol.



The diamond glittered in the light from the electric sconce as Josephine held out her hand so her best friend Liana could see the engagement ring.

Liana grasped her hand and gushed, “It’s so lovely, Josephine. I’m so happy for you and Martin. He’s one of the good ones.”

“He is one of the good ones,” she repeated as they strolled through the hotel gardens on their way to work. Dozens of guests sat in rocking chairs on the nearby veranda, enjoying the early morning sun and views of Biscayne Bay.

Martin was patient. Kind. Responsible. Gentlemanly. Yes, very gentlemanly and patient (*always* patient, maybe even *too* patient).

“Have you set a date yet?” Liana asked.

“Not yet, but I don’t think we want to wait too long.” *Especially not another two years*, she thought, because she could not be *that* patient.

At the entrance to the hotel the uniformed bellman opened the door and smiled. “Good morning, Miss Valencia. Miss Duarte,” he said and dipped his head in greeting.

“Good morning, Mr. James,” Josephine replied.

Liana saucily winked at the handsome young man. “Good morning, Matthew.”

“You are so forward, Liana,” Josephine said with a shake of her head. Her friend’s one hope was that she would meet someone who would take her somewhere far more glamorous than Miami, so she kept her flirting skills honed for that moment.

“Practicing just in case I run into Rake Solvino. Rumor has it he’s come back,” Liana whispered and scanned the lobby for any sign of the Regal Sol’s mysterious owner and wealthy railroad tycoon—not to mention reputed robber baron. It had been years since the man had taken part in extending the railroad down to Miami and built the Regal Sol. If the gossip was true, which it almost never was, both the railroad and hotel were an attempt to launder ill-gotten gains into more respectable businesses.

“Do you even know what he looks like?” Josephine asked.

With a shrug, Liana said, “Francesca saw him arrive. She says he’s tall, dark, and handsome. A rake true to his name.” She sighed, and Josephine rolled her eyes. She loved her friend dearly, but sometimes she could be entirely too much.

“Hmm. Well, I must be off,” she said, hugging her friend and hurrying to the concierge desk to start her shift. But as she arrived, it was obvious that her supervisor was in an agitated state, rare for her normally unflappable boss.

“Is something wrong, Mr. Adams?”

The man dabbed at the sweat on his upper lip with his handkerchief and then mopped away even more perspiration from his brow. “I’ve just heard that we’ll have a very important guest arriving later today: Mr. Deering.”

When the name clearly didn’t ring a bell with her, he added impatiently, “From International Harvester.” That did register; Josephine recognized the name of the well-known manufacturing conglomerate. “Quite a coup that he chose us, but he won’t be arriving until very late tonight and I have no one to cover the desk in case he needs anything.”

“I can do it,” she volunteered. The extra money in her paycheck would be welcome to start some savings for her wedding to Martin.

“You’re willing to do an extra shift? I’d do it myself, but I’ve just worked a double, since Richard failed to show up yesterday afternoon.” He tut-tutted disapprovingly.

Josephine took up her spot behind the desk, and as she organized the pamphlets for the guests, she said, “Oh dear. Is he sick?”

“I don’t know. He just didn’t come in for his shift. Thank you so much for helping out, Josephine. I truly appreciate it.” He dashed off, leaving Josephine to man the desk.

Luckily, except for the late arrival of their very important guest, it was a quiet day. She booked a fishing expedition for a lovely gentleman from New York and trips into the Everglades for a number of other guests who wanted to go birding and possibly see some alligators or a panther.

Liana helped her out by bringing her some small sandwiches from the high tea service and covering for her to take a short break. By evening, however, Josephine’s stomach was growling. When a buzz began from the few guests in the lobby as a nattily dressed elderly

gentleman with a short white beard entered, she gathered that it was none other than their very important person. The hotel manager rushed over to greet him and in short order, Mr. Deering and his family were on their way to a room.

She gestured to the night manager, who hurried over. “Is everything all right, Miss Valencia?”

“It is, Mr. Jackson, but if Mr. Deering doesn’t require my services, I was hoping to take a short dinner break.”

The older man nodded and smiled. “You may. We appreciate you stepping up to help us out. It’s unlike Mr. Slayton to be so irresponsible. The kitchen is already closed, but I’m sure you can find something to eat.”

With a nod, she hurried off and into the empty kitchen. A loaf of bread that had been freshly baked that morning sat on a countertop. Scrounging through the icebox, she found a block of Cheddar and a crock of butter and knew exactly what she would make.

As she laid out the items on the counter, the squeak of a door opening and the sound of footsteps drew her attention to the kitchen entrance. The shadow of a man, a big man, filled the entryway for a second before he walked in, but remained at the dark end of the room.

“Who is it?” Josephine asked, still unable to see his face in the shadows. Decidedly uneasy at being alone with a total stranger—especially since there had been some strange incidents around the hotel lately—she picked up the knife she had intended to use on the cheese.

The man strode into the room, and much to her surprise, a soft golden halo like that of an angel seemed to dance around the edges of his silhouette. It glimmered warmly as he approached, until he stepped into the circle cast by the hotel’s new-fangled electric lighting, and the brighter illumination cast his features in sharp relief.

There was nothing angelic about him.

The man was tall, dark, and handsome. *Way* too handsome. *Way too dangerous*, she corrected herself as she took in the sight of him. Dark stubble across a strong jaw called attention to full lips set in a

scowl. His shirt was unbuttoned to midchest, revealing a hint of lean, smooth muscle beneath. Pinstriped pants hugged a slim waist and hips, and powerful thighs. Thick brown hair waved around his face, billowing as if touched by a breeze.

He could be the embodiment of the swashbuckling pirate hero in one of the books Josephine longed to write someday. Only he was no pirate. She knew exactly whom he was: the Regal Sol's mysterious owner, Rake Solvino.

And, much to her surprise, the man with whom Josephine Galena Valencia had shared her very first kiss.

Well...I did not see that coming. Perhaps this was actually the night Josephine Galena Valencia's life would change forever? Let's read on and see, shall we?

