

THE NATIONAL THEATRE OF NOWHERE, NEBRASKA

LA, 2018. Charming British movie star DANIEL, once hailed 'the new Laurence Olivier', is settled in Hollywood with a successful acting career. Bored of playing super-villains – Hollywood loves British bad guys - he misses his early career, particularly his first role in a film by talented writer/director SOPHIE.

In London, Sophie's career is stuck in development hell until fiancé DUNCAN gets her a gig directing a documentary for the National Theatre. The theatre have received an invitation from Goose Creek, Nebraska, to the grand re-opening of their community theatre, which they claim was built by Sir Laurence Olivier. An interesting but unlikely story, it will make a great documentary. They want Sophie to take a theatre director to help the townspeople put on their opening show. And they know just the man for the job: Daniel, who's been putting out feelers about getting back onto the London stage as an actor or director. Sophie isn't keen on working with Daniel again – he left for LA after they wrapped on her movie, and despite his promises hadn't returned for the premiere. And they'd had a romantic encounter the night before he left... But the project's funding depends on a big name being involved, so she and Daniel head to Goose Creek with her three-man crew.

Daniel and the locals rehearse while Sophie investigates the theatre's history. In 1963, a drifter with a British accent arrived in town. He tried to lie low, working on a nearby farm owned by CLAYTON and CATHY, but the town gossipmonger recognised him from a celebrity magazine; Laurence Olivier! 'LARRY' became smitten with Cathy, who dreamed of a life on the stage, and set up a community theatre to give her a chance to live her dream. And then on opening night Larry packed his belongings and slipped away... Sophie isn't convinced - Olivier was busy founding the National Theatre Company in 1963 - but it's a good story.

Sophie has tried to avoid being with Daniel, but he's charming, good company and makes her laugh - very different to her reliable, considerate but staid fiancé. But he let her down and she's not ready to forgive him. She knows that he could've made it back for the premiere of their film, but chose to stay in LA for a glitzy party put on by a Hollywood movie mogul because it would be better for his career. Daniel has always regretted letting her down – he misses the fun they had together before he went to LA – and being with her again confirms that he made a mistake. But just as Sophie is beginning to thaw, Duncan joins them in Goose Creek. Daniel tells her that he respects her decision – she's chosen Duncan – and that he won't make things awkward for her. But he secretly doesn't think that Duncan is the right man for her; he's unwittingly crushed the spontaneity that made her work so brilliant.

Daniel's agent calls him with great news – a role he'd lost out on is now his as Matt Damon's broken his leg two days into filming and can't do it. But they need him now. Daniel really wants this role, but turns it down; he tells his manager that he can't let the people of Goose Creek down, and that it's not all about him and his career. Sophie is amazed but delighted; maybe he has changed after all.

One week before curtain up, disaster strikes when the newly renovated theatre catches fire. But Sophie, back to her crazy, spontaneous self after spending time with Daniel, hatches a plan; they can do the show promenade-style, using different locations in town. She excitedly brainstorms the idea with Daniel, closely watched by Duncan... All hands to the pump, the whole town get to work; for one night only, this will put Goose Creek on the map. One night to go, they're ready. As everyone heads to the bar for a well-deserved drink, Duncan gets Sophie on her own. He tells her that she should be with Daniel, because he brings out the best in her; and that he (Duncan) should be with someone who looks at him the way she looks at Daniel. He asks her not to say anything until after the play; he wants to watch it, and then just slip away.

Opening night. Daniel's agent calls and tells him the part is still his – Michael Fassbender (Matt Damon's replacement) has broken his hand so they're offering it to him again. Daniel accepts. After tomorrow, the play will be over and his part done. The play is a triumph. Duncan slips away. And Clayton's son, GEORGE – who everyone suspects is really 'Sir Larry's son – tells Sophie his father has finally agreed to talk to her – and only her - about the past. Next day, Sophie heads to her meeting with Clayton, after first making her camera operator and old friend ELLEN promise not to tell Daniel that Duncan's left her. Daniel's off to LA, back to his old life, so nothing's changed. Ellen agrees, reluctantly.

Clayton tells Sophie the truth about 'Larry'. A failed actor turned bank robber, he'd buried the loot outside town and waited for it to blow over. He'd persuaded unappreciated Cathy to run away with him after their opening night, but knew she deserved better than him. But he also thought she deserved better than Clayton, who'd mocked her acting dreams out of fear of losing her. He told Clayton that he needed to appreciate and support her before he lost her. Clayton never told anyone the truth about 'Larry' – he knew Cathy felt guilty and didn't want her to feel stupid on top. He encouraged her to act, getting involved with the local theatre himself, and they'd ended up having a long and happy marriage.

Back at the crew's B&B, Daniel is about to leave. He wants to say goodbye to Sophie... Ellen is ready to burst, knowing that Sophie's single again – she thinks they're made for each other – so her partner, sound man MARTIN, spills the beans. Daniel borrows a horse (his car's out of action) and gallops off to find her.

Sophie realises she has been too harsh on Daniel; he deserves a second chance. She jumps in the car and heads back to the B&B. But on the way back she almost hits Daniel on his horse; he falls off, they embrace and confess their feelings for each other...and Daniel realises he's broken his leg (just like Matt Damon) so he can't take the part he was heading back to LA for...

LA, two years later. Sophie directs Daniel in her latest movie – the big action flick both of them have always dreamed of making. And Matt Damon is the bad guy.