

THE BREAK SERIES III

"Gloss"

Written by

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"Gloss"

FADE IN:

1 EXT. BUS STOP. 08.35 - DAY

1

Someone is crying. We hear her wretched tears as we pan through the quiet Glasgow square in winter to the bus stop.

GEMMA (V.O.)
So I'm not even worth speaking to now?
Just call me back, OK? Please.

We reach GEMMA, hunched on the kerb, pleading into a phone. She looks a bit of a mess - hair beginning to come down where she's run her hands through it, pile of folders and gloves strewn to one side.

GEMMA
You owe me that much.

Pan slowly away from Gemma and down the street in one smooth movement until we reach her close, where Gemma's elbow is already emerging through the door, levering it open. The elbow is followed by the rest of Gemma, walking backwards, protected by NEAT WINTER COAT, SCARF, and GLOVES, arms full of BRIGHT, METICULOUSLY COLOUR-CODED FOLDERS FULL OF PAPERS. She's rushing, running late.

FX: her PHONE rings: her ringtone is the opening to The Beach Boys' "God Only Knows". Whenever Gemma uses her phone, details of the call enter the scene, subtle augmented reality style, matching colour and tone to blend in as part of the landscape, moving with Gemma as she moves. This time, we see the name 'Zainab' and a contact photo: a slightly vacant looking middle aged British Pakistani woman in hijab.

Gemma manoeuvres folders and removes a glove to get at her HANDBAG. We see her clearly for the first time: she's about 26, charismatic, highly professional, earnest if a bit superior. Her phone stops ringing just as she gets to it; Zainab's details fade, then reappear accompanied by a text:

"Joe McPherson is missing?!"

Gemma reads this off her phone, poised awkwardly to hold phone, folders and glove. She looks straight at us:

GEMMA
(to us)
Shit.

She hits the call button, wedges the phone on her shoulder and hurries down the steps, Zainab's details beside her.

2 EXT. THE STREET OUTSIDE GEMMA'S CLOSE. 08:31 - NEXT 2

Gemma is bustling down the road as the call connects.

GEMMA
(into phone)
What do you mean, 'missing'? - Well,
has his mum- Shit. - And the police
have- Great. - No. But I think we'd
better find him first, don't you? I'm
sure he'd rather see a friendly face
than a bunch of- Right. OK.

Gemma rings off.

GEMMA
(to us)
Zainab. I used the term
'extracurricular' to her last week and
she looked at me like I was speaking
Greek. Trouble is, any half-decent
teacher who comes in for interview
takes one look round and decides
they'd rather spend a few more months
in the dole queue. I'm staying put
though. That lot need me a lot more
than a bunch of middle class Bearsden
kids do.

Gemma walks on.

3 EXT. BUS STOP. 08:32 - NEXT 3

Gemma reaches the bus stop, puts her folders down. Tries Zainab again. No answer. She calls Joe.

FX: "Joe McPherson" appears on the screen. The name fades as the call rings out, reappears as Gemma instantly calls back.

Gemma gives up: nothing more she can do. She pulls out some LIP GLOSS (the kind that comes in a tub, like vaseline), takes off her other glove so she can open it, methodically puts some on. Puts it back in her pocket.

GEMMA

(to us)

Carol Ann Duffy for the third year running this term. How they expect teachers to keep up their enthusiasm for the same eight poems year after... Only. With Joe around it feels like... reading them for the first time. I'd started them on "Havisham" and he, he's only fifteen, and he found something in it I'd never seen. He said, "Miss, have you noticed? Even when she's wishing him dead she still wants him with her? She always wants to be with him even when she wants to hurt him." He's so clever.

She pulls the lip gloss back out of her pocket, applies some more. Beat. She looks at us. A 'can I trust you' look. Pause.

GEMMA

(to us)

The first time we kissed, I said to him, Joey, are you absolutely sure this is what you want? He did his impression of me, of my serious teacher face, said

(she does an impression of him doing an impression of her)

"Yes, I'm absolutely sure".

Gemma slips into a smiling reverie as she remembers. She scrolls through jokey photos of Joe - a handsome but young looking black 15 year-old in school uniform, goofing around for the camera; they appear on our screen.

GEMMA

(to us)

He knocks my socks off. Every time I see him, I know I'm risking every other part of my life for this one and I don't care because he's... delicious.

A flash of anxiety overcomes her. She calls Joe, twice, then Zainab. No answer. Pulls out her lip gloss and applies some more, a little obsessively. The action seems to calm her a little.

GEMMA

(to us)

You want to know. I know what you want to know. And honestly, the answer is it's the way he loves me. Most blokes, they might have their arms round you but they're looking out over your shoulder seeing what else they can get. To him I'm, I'm the only thing in the universe. The only thing. And the next day that smell of him, still on my skin, it's like. Like wearing armour. For the whole day I get to be what he sees. I get to be this dazzling, dazzlingly intelligent and witty...

(pause)

I'm good for him. I am. My first time, I was sixteen, stuck with some asshole fumbling his way in, thinking, 'at least it's dark so I don't have to fake being into it.' Joe's first time was beautiful. Relaxed, easy, fun. Like it should be. We got a takeaway.

(pause)

And he's so straightforward. I tell him what a relationship looks like and he agrees. Well. But it's like I said to him, he started all this. He pursued me, he asked me to risk my career for him. I said, "I made you happy before, I'll make you happy again, just tell me what you need..." What sort of girlfriend would I be if I just let him walk out on this?

(pause)

I'm sure he's fine. We had a. Fight. Last night. I told him, "Joe, you've said this is what you want. You can't go changing your mind now." He was upset, but. He's got to learn. At some point, all my boys have got to learn.

(pause)

Oh, this is silly, he's not going to hurt himself. He's not!

(tears force themselves out)

I've been so tired. The last couple of weeks I could feel him... I could feel him pulling away from me but. It wasn't until last night he actually said, said he wanted to...

(MORE)

GEMMA (CONT'D)
 (pause, a change in her)
 You can't give a person all that love
 and then just take it away.
 He had to be made to see that. He's
 fine. I haven't done anything wrong.

A pause. She's agitated, upset. She moves around, sits down on the kerb where we found her at the beginning. We've come full circle. She picks up her phone. Calls Joe. No answer, calls back and leaves a voicemail.

GEMMA
 (sobs into phone)
 So I'm not even worth speaking to now?
 Just call me back, OK? Please. You owe
 me that much.

She hangs up. Then her phone rings.

FX: 'God Only Knows' ringtone. A moment of suspense as to who's calling, then Zainab's contact details appear on our screen.

Gemma hastily collects herself, answers.

GEMMA
 (into phone)
 Zainab! Have you - What?

On her face, flat and unresponsive as she listens to Zainab. It feels like the silence goes on forever.

GEMMA
 (into phone)
 OK. Um. OK. - No, I, I'm still
 at home. I'll be here.

Gemma rings off. Desolate. She can barely look at us.

GEMMA
 (to us)
 They've found him. He sat up all night
 in his dad's car, apparently. Just.
 Thinking. Next to a bunch of unopened
 packs of painkillers.
 (pause)
 He's told them. Everything.

Pause, then she puts her phone down, almost tenderly, on the pile of marking and stands up, bare hands a stark contrast against the winter. Beat.

GEMMA
(to us)
Funny thing is, if he had gone through
with it...

Gemma smiles at us. A beat. Then she arranges her coat neatly, and tidies her hair a little. Calmly, she takes out her lip gloss and applies it once more. Then she sets her chin and steps forward to the edge of the pavement to wait. She's ready.

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE