

THE BREAK IV: 24-HOUR ROMANTICS

by

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EXT. CRUMLIN ROAD - NIGHT

Midnight sky. Footsteps pounding. Streetlights glow orange on the rooftops whisking past.

VIVIANA (O.S.)
If I can just get to you...

And here's VIVIANA (16, Romanian funkily dressed including a MEMENTO), sprinting up the Crumlin Road. She glances back, elated that no one's followed her - yet. Viviana speaks straight to us, out of breath as she runs, her English accented.

VIVIANA
I know where I'm happy, so I go
there. That's how it works, right?

The road is grim and desolate: post-conflict and post-industrial. All shops are shuttered, many buildings are abandoned. If you didn't know better, you'd think it was a little dangerous. Her pounding footsteps become the drum/bass track of an upbeat, offbeat SONG. It's spare and funky, contrasting with the setting and mirroring Viviana's anxious joy as she runs.

VIVIANA
Are your parents melters like mine?
'Pack your bags, Viviana'. 'We're
going home, Vivi'. What they say
goes. Fuck it. They have nothing to
say about us.

Viviana stops to catch her breath.

VIVIANA
Like Tata. Does my father care
about the past four years? Renting
our place on Crumlin Road, running
the carwash? Nope. Belfast was wait-
and-see for Tata. A no-place. And
Mama? Scared of Brexit, hates rain.
Whatever. The whole world is a
mess. Sure it rains everywhere.

Viviana checks behind her.

VIVIANA
All I remember about Romania is
that pair trying to leave. Now
they're dead keen to go back? We
didn't even get deported. What the
fuck is that about?
(MORE)

VIVIANA (CONT'D)
At least wait and get deported like
normal people.

EXT. TENNENT STREET - NIGHT

Viviana runs across the street toward the 24-hour petrol station. It's the first lit-up building so far, a hothouse flower planted weirdly in the empty streetscape.

VIVIANA
'We're leaving,' say Mama and Tata,
and boom - they buy plane tickets.
Here - all this running was not my
plan. I was taking it slow with
you.

EXT. PETROL STATION FORECOURT - CONTINUOUS

Viviana arrives at the edge of the forecourt. One customer, a PEUGEOT DRIVER, is filling their car at the far pump. Viviana gazes toward the shop's 24-hour service hatch. CRAIG (18) is the clerk working behind the bullet-proof glass window.

VIVIANA
I look for you around but I only
ever see you in there on the
overnight shift.

INT. PETROL STATION - NIGHT

Craig's in a navy blue work-shirt with his name on the pocket. He's air-drumming to the music in his headphones - it's that song, but we can only hear it faintly. He's intent, eyes closed - a one-man silent disco.

VIVIANA (V.O.)
Maybe you live in the milk fridge.
Or you're a werewolf? Anyway -
you're inside, I'm outside. You
can't leave, I can't go in. That's
how it works.

EXT. PETROL STATION FORECOURT, PUMP 3 - NIGHT

Psyching herself up, Viviana lingers by the pumps fiddling with the MEMENTO.

VIVIANA
Mama and Tata never want me talking
to people - definitely no boys.
(MORE)

VIVIANA (CONT'D)

'Be good, Vivi.' So I'd sneak out to see you here. I'd buy crisps or whatever, and just... I wasn't breaking any rules, right? You were behind the window.

Behind the window, Craig's now trying to juggle bananas; he's not terribly good but nevertheless charming.

VIVIANA

The other ones your age all left, moved away I guess, but you're still around. Maybe you're stuck. Or maybe you love it here like me. When you give me change you do that wee...

(she winks)
...and it's like the whole city smiling.

Viviana musters her courage and walks toward the window -

EXT. PETROL STATION WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

- but the Peugeot driver arrives at the same moment. Viviana steps back politely, lets them go ahead out of habit. Aaaand now she has to work up her nerve again. Craig fumbles putting the bananas down, smiles sheepishly as he helps the driver.

VIVIANA

I think about sneaking into the old courthouse with you. Chasing swans in the Waterworks. Surfing on the top deck of the 57. I want you to play me your music. When Mama and Tata talk about home, I think about you. I sit on the bridge in town and watch those birds go mental at sunset and I think about you. I think I think about you too much.

The driver is taking an age, counting coins into the metal tray at the window. Vivi's jumpy - every approaching car might be the taxi.

VIVIANA

But if I go now - just leave and nothing - it's like I was never here.

Finally the driver's away. It's her turn. Craig grins. This feels good.

VIVIANA

I came to see you all those nights
 and I always wanted to say -
 (to Craig)
 Sausage rolls.

Okay, not quite what she planned ...

VIVIANA

(to Craig)
 Please.

Craig goes to the fridge. Viviana silently screams at the roof.

VIVIANA

Bollocks! What am I like?

Craig's back. He rings up the sausage rolls.

VIVIANA

(to Craig, flustered)
 And, um - flowers. What you think
 is nicest.

Craig takes his time. He smells yellow roses, then a bunch of red-speckled carnations.

VIVIANA

Oh god you are so fucking lovely.

Craig brings the carnations to the window and pushes the rolls and flowers to her through the drawer. She takes them and Craig tells her the damage.

Viviana shakes her head, mischievous.

VIVIANA

(to Craig)
 Come get it.

She backs into the forecourt, holding two fivers, daring him.

Craig frowns, looks at the door, looks out at her again. He's not supposed to leave, but she's caught him in a mistake - and she's actually kind of funny.

EXT. PETROL STATION FORECOURT - NIGHT

Viviana's goofing, tantalising Craig. She drops one of the notes, chases it in the wind. When she turns back, still laughing, he's suddenly right there. No window. Their proximity is a little awkward, a little sexy.

Viviana puts the money in Craig's hand; now they're both holding it. Neither moves away. Viviana gently touches his nose with her finger - a stray impulse. Craig does the same. They smile. She's shit scared but leans toward him.

Her first kiss. It's pretty glorious. They both think so.

But a car horn -

EXT. PETROL STATION WINDOW - NIGHT

- jolts Vivi out of her daydream. A taxi pulls up behind her.

VIVIANA
Christ. Here come the melters.

Vivi's parents MAMA (early 50s) and TATA (late 40s) pop out of the taxi's passenger windows. Tata shouts for Vivi to get in.

VIVIANA
(to Tata, in Romanian)
Okay, Tata! Cool down.

Craig's back at the window, for real this time, holding a bunch of multi-coloured daisies. He tells her the price - higher than in the daydream, of course. The bland muzak does nothing to alleviate the crap situation.

VIVIANA
Here's me and there's you. That's how this place works - no matter how long you stay.

Viviana pushes the money under the window. Mama's turn to shout from the taxi, hurrying her daughter along.

VIVIANA
(to Mama, in Romanian)
Mama, I need change.

Vivi rolls her eyes and smiles at Craig in apology for her clearly crazy parents. Craig pushes everything through the drawer to her and says something generic to finish the transaction. Viviana pockets the change, lifts the sausage rolls and glares at the rubbish petrol station flowers.

VIVIANA
(to Craig)
That's me away now.

Deliberately, she puts the flowers back in the drawer and pushes them through to him. It's not enough. She takes off the MEMENTO and shoves it in too.

VIVIANA
(to Craig)
I'll miss you.

Craig picks up the flowers and the MEMENTO. He and Viviana look at each other. Craig clearly doesn't know what to say, certainly doesn't wink. It's a lot awkward, a lot disappointing. Even the muzak has given up. The taxi horn again. Vivi nearly speaks, but turns abruptly away.

EXT. PETROL STATION FORECOURT - CONTINUOUS

Viviana's biting back tears as she walks quickly to the taxi.

VIVIANA
(whispers)
Shit.

She gets in and slams the door.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

The taxi turns and pulls toward the street. Mama and Tata are fussing; Mama hands Vivi her passport. Viviana leans her head against the window. This is it - they're really going - and it's sadder than she expected. Vivi closes her eyes, blocking out her parents' questions (heard indistinctly in Romanian)...

... and then music. It's the full version of the joyful music she started running to, blasting out the speakers into the forecourt, tinny like an iPhone through a crappy mic - but it's joyful, and it's for her. A small smile, then Viviana's eyes pop open. She rolls down the taxi window.

EXT. PETROL STATION WINDOW - NIGHT

Craig's there, looking for her reaction. A huge grin when he sees her - and yeah, the whole city is smiling. He lifts the flowers over his head, triumphant, he's wearing her MEMENTO. He rests his hand on the window - a goodbye.

EXT. TAXI, CRUMLIN ROAD - NIGHT

Viviana waves back. The taxi rolls on, away from the shop, down the hill toward town. Viviana leans on the car windowsill, eating a sausage roll and watching her home go.

VIVIANA

(to herself)

This is how it works: Tata will give you hell for talking to a boy. It'll be raining when you land in Bucharest. You'll never see this ugly beautiful road again. Part of you will stay where you're happy.

The joyful music (now non-tinny version) plays us out.

THE END