

PERDITA

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EXT. CARDIFF CENTRAL - NIGHT

A starry night sky, then the city centre at about 5.00 a.m. on a Sunday morning. The streets now deserted, but there are remnants of last night's partying, maybe some seagulls feeding on left overs.

EXT. CASTLE STREET - NIGHT

Moving along the animal wall; the frozen creatures look as if they are escaping the park, some of them seem to be staring spookily at us.

Descend by Castle Bridge from the street lights towards the darkness of the river flowing steadily below.

EXT. RIVER - EARLY MORNING

Flowing water, with patterns of eddies where it brushes the bank. Various pieces of detritus float by - a branch, a plastic bag, a bottle, and we watch their movements in the current.

Then an old, broken acoustic guitar slowly floats downstream, half submerged. Our first sight of it is ambiguous. As it snags against a branch and turns, we get the shape of its side, its waist. It is unnervingly human.

EXT. BIKE HUMPS - EARLY MORNING

Along the path stumbles a shadowy figure of a young woman. She walks slowly, occasionally stumbling, almost collapsing, probably still high on something. Her heels click and drag against the tarmac.

She's in her early 20s. Her partying clothes from the night before are a little worse for wear and her hair is dishevelled. This is PERDIE. She stops and stares:

In the half-light there are a host of mud bike humps, somewhat reminiscent of termite mounds.

They confound her.

EXT. BAMBOO GROOVE - EARLY MORNING

She slows down and stumbles a little. Now she looks round, maybe suddenly worried about being followed or watched.

She catches sight of bamboo bushes next to the river.

And teeters through the undergrowth towards them.

She ducks into an opening between the clumps and looks round, smiling to find herself 'inside'. She spots a way in further, to a secluded 'inner room'. This is right next to the river.

She pushes aside some rubbish with her foot, then pulls up her short skirt, squats down and has a pee.

She gazes out through a gap in the bamboo shoots at the river. Then, below her, she notices something in the water:

It's the broken acoustic guitar, its strings caught on a fallen branch. Still ambiguous, but now we see it clearly enough to see that its neck is broken, but nevertheless still attached to the body by some of its strings.

As she stands up, Perdie continues to stare at it. She edges closer to the bank to look. Maybe dangerously close; she's unsteady on her feet.

Suddenly, a duck quacks and beats away across the water.

Perdie looks up, freed from her trance.

EXT. TESCO CAR PARK - EARLY MORNING

A 24-hour supermarket, but the car park at this early hour is almost completely empty, maybe the odd, isolated car. The space is also randomly spotted with some abandoned shopping trolleys. A figure walks slowly across the open space towards one of the trolleys, his footsteps echoing, as there is no traffic. He starts to push the trolley towards the far edge of the car park.

There he finds another trolley. He pushes one trolley into the other and now continues pushing both. He's in his 20s, wearing work overalls, with straggly hair. This is SION.

EXT. TESCO CAR PARK - EARLY MORNING

Now with even more trolleys, starting to form a line, he arrives at a far-flung part of the car park and brings the trolleys to rest. He steps into the undergrowth and untangles a trolley that looks as if it may have been violently thrown into the bushes.

He adds it to the front of his line and starts heading back to the store's main entrance.

As he does so, he speeds up and momentarily jumps up on the trolleys for a brief ride.

Finally he deposits them noisily at the front entrance.

EXT. TESCO CAR PARK - MORNING

Sion meanders down the long front of the superstore towards the side alley, taking out his cigarettes and lighting up as he does so.

He makes his way to the smokers' hut, where he stands in the entrance, staring absentmindedly down at the intimate gathering of empty seats. The sounds of BIRDS CHIRPING their morning chorus can be heard.

Then, first from a distance, he hears the sound of high heels slowly clicking up the Taff's Trail. Occasionally the rhythm is broken, as the sound stops and stumbles.

EXT. TAFF'S TRAIL - MORNING

Perdie walks up the path next to Tesco's. She takes out her mobile phone, squints at it as if she can't quite focus. She glances back down the path, as if she feels she's being followed.

She starts walking on the grass verge, as if she's become aware of the noise her shoes make. She starts to move faster now, maybe a little panicky.

EXT. SIDE ALLEY, TESCO CAR PARK - MORNING

Sion stands facing the fence, and the river beyond, watching Perdie as she makes her way unsteadily along the top of the bank, still glancing behind her now and then. She doesn't notice him.

Suddenly she looks towards him and they both startle, as their eyes meet. She does not look pleased. She turns, but one of her shoes comes off in the mud.

SION  
Hey. Sorry. Didn't mean to...

She bends down to pick up her shoe, and staggers.

SION  
You alright, love?

She looks at him.

For a moment they're eyeball to eyeball through the fence.

She opens her mouth, as if to speak, almost as if she knows him, then blinks and shudders, turns away.

But her legs give out beneath her, and she crumples, rolling down the little grass embankment towards the high fence.

Sion is right up against the fence now.

SION  
Oh my god! You alright?

Perdie lies on the ground motionless.

SION  
Are you okay?

She stirs, maybe in pain. Her eyes open, blearily, in his direction.

SION

Stay there. Don't move. You hear  
me?

(no response)

Oh, shit...

He is unsure what to do. He glances back towards the front of the store:

Just outside the store's main entrance is another YOUNG MAN, wearing the same overalls as himself and a 30-something woman, Sion's SUPERVISER. They chat with their backs to him.

He again looks down at Perdie:

Her eyes close and her head lolls back.

A final glance towards the front of the store, before Sion suddenly sprints towards the far corner of the car park.

EXT. BUSHES, TESCO CAR PARK - MORNING

He runs into the bushes. Bumps into another trolley, pushed even deeper in the undergrowth. Swears at it and scrambles up the bank.

EXT. WESTERN AVENUE - MORNING

He clammers awkwardly over the high fence onto the pavement, looking up with habitual guilt as a car zaps by along the dual carriage way. He sprints along the road and then down the steps in a few leaps.

EXT. TAFF'S TRAIL - MORNING

He arrives, panting heavily, at the place where she was lying. But she is not there. She's vanished.

He looks round, wildly.

He climbs back onto the path and looks both ways. Looks at the river and then at the dark tunnel of the subway.

Sion runs up to the tunnel entrance and squints into it.

SION  
(his voice ehoey)  
Hello!

He is nonplussed and panicky. He rushes into the underpass.

It's dark and covered with graffiti; his footsteps echo each step of the way.

He exits at the other end and stops. The path breaks in two: one heading towards the river, one up a ramp.

He rushes up the ramp:

The river bank and a council tower block, everything completely still - not a soul in sight. It's far too early on a Sunday morning for even dog walkers to be out and about.

He rushes back into the underpass.

He exits at the other end and goes straight to the river bank, where he stands, looking down into the brown eddies:

The river looks cold and deadly.

EXT. TESCO CAR PARK - MORNING

From the car park Sion, can be seen standing motionless, staring at the river.

It's the POV of his supervisor. She glares at him in disbelief.

SUPERVISOR  
(shouting)  
Sion!

He spins round with a look of having been caught red handed. He immediately legs it back up the steps.

She also turns on her heels and marches back to the main entrance. The sound of the slow, steady build of TRAFFIC now becomes a feature, replacing the BIRDSONG. HOLD ON her as she marches determinedly across the car park. Eventually he runs and catches up with her. They are too far away to be heard, but their exchange is obviously quite heated.

EXT. TESCO STORE FRONT - MID-DAY

Through the window panes we see that the shop's tills are now busy. Sion emerges from the front entrance with the young man we saw earlier, both now with wearing jackets over their overalls. They've been sharing a joke.

YOUNG MAN  
See you then, Sion.

SION  
Yeah, see you.

They go their separate ways.

EXT. TAFF'S TRAIL - MID-DAY

Seen from the river side of the high fence, Sion makes his way first down the front of the store and then across the car park, which is by now fairly full of cars and shoppers. He glances towards the fence, towards the grass bank, but carries on walking. He heads to the bushes in the far corner, the same way he went earlier. We stick with him, even though he is out of view, tracking his course along the road, over the underpass and down the steps. He is about to enter the underpass, presumably on his way home, when he stops and glances over towards the spot where Perdie fell. Then he walks towards that spot and looks at the ground:

There are scuff marks in the mud.

This spurs him on, so he squats down and scrutinizes the ground even more. And then he finds something:

Perdie's mobile phone, half hidden under leaves.

He picks it up and stands up.

SION  
I knew it. I bloody well knew it.

He studies the phone for an instant, then pockets it and walks away.

The sequence ends with an image of the high fence that separates the river and the car park. It has weeds growing up against it, which are dotted with delicate white flowers.

FADE TO BLACK