

Foreign Bodies

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FADE IN:

EXT. OTTAVIANO - EARLY MORNING

Three newly acquainted study abroad students of color, LEWIS(19), STEPHANIE(20), AND BAITEH(19) are only about a week into their 6-week stay with no more money after extreme nights of clubbing, bar hopping, and dining. They are stuck in Rome, waking up on a bench following the previous night.

Stephanie shakes Lewis awake.

STEPHANIE
(shaking Lewis)
Lewis, wake up. We need a plan.

LEWIS
(half-asleep)
A plan for what? Rome waking up too?

STEPHANIE
(sighing)
We're broke. No money, no phones. We missed the last bus to Florence. What now?

LEWIS
(smiling)
We improvise. Like jazz.

BAITEH
Maybe we can call campus. The coordinator?

STEPHANIE
We already tried. No one's answering.

BAITEH
(low)
Maybe we just wait it out. Someone will come looking.

LEWIS
(chuckling)
Or we starve first.

STEPHANIE
(sharply)

This wouldn't have happened if we stuck to my schedule.

LEWIS

Your schedule got us on a wine tour
while our funds evaporated.

Stephanie twitches, closing her eyes and pursing her lips.

STEPHANIE

(sharply)

At least I was trying to keep us from
floating around like... like this!

Baiteh unexpectedly speaks up.

BAITEH

We're already here. Why don't we try
to get back ourselves?

STEPHANIE

(turns to him)

You got something in mind?

BAITEH

We're in Rome. It's not like we're on
Mars. We find a train station, we find
a way.

CUT TO:

INT. OTTAVIANO TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS

Following a MAN through the turnstile, the three friends
synchronously step through the same gate as the man pays for
the subway. Stumbling and holding one another's shoulders as
they wriggle through the anxiously closing gate. They shuffle
down the steps, just barely making it on the TRAIN, a CHIME
rings throughs the hall, just before the doors close. Lewis,
with his coat stuck in the door, pulls repeatedly to escape
the jaws of the train. Freeing himself, he looks up to see
everyone on the train is staring directly at him.

LEWIS

Alright, so I think if we take this
thing down to Termite, we can hop a
train there to the Florence

STEPHANIE

Termite?

LEWIS

Yeah.

STEPHANIE

What are you on about, Lou?

Lewis points toward the overhead sign of train stops, scrolling his fingers across the several stations.

LEWIS

Look, all the train stop names look just like different animals. Flaminio is Flamingo. Ottaviano is Otter. And Termini is Termite.

Baiteh stands idly, leaning against the door and staring at Lewis. The train begins pulling into another station, but he/she does not move before tripping up from the opening door.

BAITEH

So you're just born like this, right?

LEWIS

(facetious)

My bad Baiteh, next time I'll be sure to ask you and your vast knowledge of Italian before memorizing every fucking station name in Rome.

Baiteh shrugs and Lewis shakes his head and turns to look at the dark tunnel through the window, only really showing his reflection. Turning his head from his reflection, to the floor, a BAG is wide open, and atop the things inside, a WALLET. For a moment, Lewis looks to others beside the bag. No one is looking. Lewis leans his head hard against the railing of the train and stares up. Lewis, Stephanie and Baiteh all lean and gawk while the music in their earbuds floods the room. Suddenly, Lewis is jolted by the smack of a purse against his chest. The trains become silent for a moment. A WOMAN (40) dressed in a thin floral summer clothing and surrounded by family.

WOMAN

You! Give me my 50 Euro! Give me, give!

Lewis throws a surrender-like hand gesture in the air.

LEWIS

Woah! Lady, I didn't touch shit of yours!

WOMAN

Yes, Yes you do! You stole my money!

Lewis looks back down to see the wallet alone on the floor. It is opened and went through. All the friends give a lip tucked glare at one another.

STEPHANIE

Yo, that is a strike right there.

LEWIS

I am really not in the mood for this right now lady, go look for a real thief and stop assuming.

The Woman points stiffly, jabbing her finger into Lewis's chest like a bayonet

WOMAN

No! It *has* to be you!

Lewis looks to the rest of the crowd on the train. Everyone - all white passengers - on the train is looking at the dilemma, but they say nothing, each moving their eyes to their phones whenever one of the friends looks for support. Lewis looks back at them and his friends, repeatedly.

LEWIS

Lets get off, now.

The friends file off of the train once it stops, shuffling their feet once on the platform.

LEWIS

I'm not the only one who thinks what that was about, right?

STEPHANIE

Yeah, we know. That's what it had to be!

LEWIS

Yeah!

BAITEH

I had half-hoped that you walked off the train and pulled 50 euro out of
(MORE)

BAITEH (CONT'D)
your pocket.

LEWIS
Hey, I know we need the money more
than ever, but I'm not turning into a
pick-pocket over train fare. We'll
leave that to the Europeans.

STEPHANIE
Let's just wait for the next train.

The TRAIN of the opposite platform WHOOSHES past the trio,
they turn to it as the cacophony of sound fills the station.

CUT TO:

EXT. TERMINI - MONTAGE

--They exit off Termini Station.

--Lewis busks outside with a borrowed guitar. Minimal
passerbyers toss a few euro coins into his cap.

--Stephanie helps tourists navigate with some Italian he
picked up; They tip him.

--Baiteh negotiates with a vendor for food in halting
Italian.

MONEY slowly trickles in: separate hands of the trio each
appearing with a new amount of money in their palms.

INT. HOTEL IN ROME - AFTERNOON

Stephanie is standing in front of the RECEPTIONIST, (35)
wearing a bright red tuxedo and white gloves - all put
together. She places her hands flat on the counter. The
Receptionist stands idle like a statue.

STEPHANIE
(sarcastically)
You must love your job *so much* you
could throw three kids to the curb.

Receptionist points to the exit, his face concretely frowning
and eyes piercing.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL IN ROME - AFTERNOON

The trio all fold their arms in the chest, mouthing - or about to - but nothing comes out.

LEWIS

One sec, guys.

Lewis walks away to the adjacent café, walking toward an attentive and stiff HOSTESS, (20's) in a nice white button up and hospitable smile, outside the door.

LEWIS

Ciao Bella...

Stephanie and Baiteh wait for a moment, still focused in their minds and inattentive to Lewis.

Lewis walks back to the group with a red slap mark across his cheek, rubbing it back and forth with his own hand. The other holding a sandwich.

LEWIS

Hey guys. Wanna share?

CUT TO:

EXT. CURB BESIDE HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

The trio rip apart the sandwich, eating slowly, savouring each bite.

LEWIS

Alright. Maybe we can get tickets by tomorrow.

STEPHANIE

We can sell more help. Tours. Guides. Whatever it takes.

LEWIS

(smiling)

Or Baiteh can start a Roman music career.

They laugh. The tension cracks.

INT. PIAZZA NAVONA - NIGHT

They lie on cobblestones, stargazing. Silence hangs in the air.

STEPHANIE

(quietly, to herself)

This trip was supposed to be... I don't know. A reset. A break from the noise.

LEWIS

Instead, you got two broke idiots.

STEPHANIE

(smiling faintly)

Yeah. But maybe the noise just followed me.

She glances at Baiteh.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

What about you, B? Why'd you even come?

BAITEH

My parents pushed it. Said it'd be good for me. Be more... independent. (beat) I didn't expect it to be this hard.

STEPHANIE

If I don't plan everything, I panic. Back home... it's always been on me. Bills, baby cousins, my mom's schedule. I guess I got addicted to control.

LEWIS

(sincerely)

You're not a bad captain. Just don't forget you're allowed to rest.

Silence again. But this time, it's peaceful.

LEWIS

Y'know, I've always been good at pretending I got it all figured out.

STEPHANIE

You?

LEWIS

I act smooth but... I never know if I really belong. Anywhere.

BAITEH

I usually wait for people to tell me what to do. And then hate that they did.

A long pause.

BAITEH (CONT'D)

I want to start doing things because I decide to.

STEPHANIE

Same. Even if I mess up.

LEWIS

Here's to messing up together.

They bump fists.

INT/EXT. ROME - NEXT MORNING

Baiteh walks confidently up to a security guard and asks for directions.

Stephanie helps a lost family translate a menu and gives a little history tour.

Lewis teaches a small group of tourists how to busk. They laugh as he mocks himself, shaking his hat and swinging his guitar back and forth like a hair-metal rock star.

They trade roles: Baiteh gives directions, Stephanie smiles without controlling the route, Lewis listens more than talks.

Lewis walks into a café, tossing his wallet onto the countertop. He bends down and his eyes scroll along the different sandwich and pastry inside of the glass display. He points to a couple items and then reach inside his wallet. Lewis opens a tiny pocket inside, shaking out change like a thief in a 20's cartoon, making sure to get every last bit inside. He uses his pointer finger to manage the funds in a neat row by change size and bits his lip as he slowly pushes it toward the counter.

INT. CAFE - CONTINUOUS

STEPHANIE

This might be the best meal we've had.

LEWIS

Bread always tastes better when you
sing for it.

BAITEH

Or beg in broken Italian.

STEPHANIE

(smiles)

You're getting good, though. You
sounded like you knew what you were
doing yesterday.

BAITEH

That's the trick, right? Pretend you
belong.

LEWIS

Fake it till you Florence it.

They all groan at the pun.

STEPHANIE

I take back what I said, Lewis.

LEWIS

(Awkwardly)

Mop the Flor-ence with em'?

BAITEH

You're done.

All three fall silent, then quickly ignore one another to
return to their food.

INT. TRAIN BACK TO FLORENCE

The mood is quieter now. Reflective.

BAITEH

You know... I don't think I want to go
back to who I was before this.

LEWIS

Good. He never tipped me enough
anyway.

STEPHANIE

We should've gotten lost sooner.
(beat) Not that I recommend it.

They laugh softly.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

When I was 12, I missed the bus home and waited two hours at the stop. My mom never even noticed I was late. I think that's when I started planning everything.everything.

They nod. No judgment or glaring eyes.

LEWIS

We all got our own ghosts.

EXT. FLORENCE CAMPUS - DORM HALLWAY - EVENING

They stop outside their separate rooms.

BAITEH

We should do dinner. Real food.

STEPHANIE

And laundry.

LEWIS

And maybe sleep for a week.

STEPHANIE

After showers.

They laugh. For once, no one rushes. Each holds the handle to their separate room, waiting patiently before stepping inside.

LEWIS

Seriously though... thanks for sticking with me.

BAITEH

You stuck with us too.

STEPHANIE

We made it out. That's enough.

They exchange looks. Quiet, but full, and step in their rooms. Doors close.

FADE TO BLACK.