

ON THY CHEEKS A FADING ROSE

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FADE IN:

EXT. FLOWER STALL, CITY STREET - NIGHT

CLOSE UP: A red rose. PULL BACK: it is one of many packed tightly together in a plastic bucket.

A hand enters the frame and pulls out four roses with the dexterity of a seasoned flower seller. Not our rose though.

FLOWER SELLER (OS)
Sure you don't want half dozen,
mate?

CITY BOY (OS)
Four.

FLOWER SELLER (OS)
Twelve pounds.

PULL BACK: The flower seller puts the money in his pouch as the city boy hurries off through the throng with his flowers.

FLOWER SELLER (CONT'D)
(softly)
No action for you tonight.

BACK TO OUR ROSE: A bit battered.

The hand back in the bucket, a dozen roses out this time.

PULL BACK: A homeless man (matted hair, tattoos) and homeless woman (strong cheek bones, weather-worn skin) pass the stall. He's drinking a can of super-strength lager; she makes a grab for it. He lifts the can out of her reach as the flower seller glares at them.

HOMELESS MAN
Youse had some.

HOMELESS WOMAN
I never.

HOMELESS MAN
Did.

They pitch on. Still arguing.

BACK TO OUR ROSE. Alone in the bucket. Another two dozen fresh roses are plonked in unceremoniously. Our rose is squeezed to the edge, one of its petals hangs by a thread.

PULL BACK: It's brisk business on the stall. A young man buys a dozen roses, a young woman some lilies, then more roses go: grab, wrap, cash, grab, wrap, cash.

EXT. UNDER THE RAILWAY ARCHES - NIGHT

The homeless woman sits scowling at nothing in particular. Beside her some empty cans and a sleeping bag.

EXT. FLOWER STALL, CITY STREET - NIGHT

The pavement starts to empty. The flower seller packs up the stall, a cigarette on his lips, eyes weary. He picks up the bucket where our rose lies broken in two, and tips it onto the floor.

CLOSE UP: Our rose, only half a stem, half of its petals missing, lies on the damp February ground. FOOTSTEPS. A dirty hand strokes the forlorn flower.

PULL BACK: The homeless man smiles at the dishevelled rose.

EXT. UNDER THE RAILWAY ARCHES - NIGHT

The homeless woman glares at the approaching homeless man.

HOMELESS WOMAN
Sod off.

HOMELESS MAN (OS)
I got something.

He sits down besides her.

HOMELESS MAN (CONT'D)
I ever give you a present?

She laughs at the thought. He reveals the flower with a flourish of his hand. She takes the sorry looking rose. A tear glistens in her eye.

HOMELESS WOMAN
You know the date?

HOMELESS MAN
Tuesday?

She smiles, leans over and kisses him on the cheek.

HOMELESS WOMAN
I never got given a flower before.

She places it tenderly in an empty lager can in lieu of a vase.

CLOSE UP: The rose in the can. It has never looked more beautiful.

FADE OUT. THE END