

ARBAT DELI BY RENATA SHAYKHETDINOVA

INT. ARBAT DELI - DAY

VIDA picks apples at a busy Arbat Deli when the store employee JUAN MARCUS approaches her.

JUAN MARCUS

Vida! Our favorite customer! We've missed you! You used to come every day. What happened?

VIDA

Oh, hi! Nothing happened, I've just been busy--

Another store clerk NARINE cuts her off.

NARINE

Too busy to buy groceries?

VIDA

Hi! Good to see you!

NARINE

37 days, 23 hours, 30 minutes, and 7 seconds. That's how long you've been gone.

Juan Markus flips the cardboard that states the price of apples to reveals "Time since Vida stopped by" tally marks.

JUAN MARCUS

Yes, we've been keeping track.

NARINE

Vida, you used to come every day--

VIDA

--Every day?.. I guess I did come here for one week straight when my car was broken and I could get to Trader--

JUAN MARCUS

--Every day I'd help you pick fruit while sharing my extramarital shenanigans with divorced Armenian women, and confused young men--

NARINE

--Every day at the register you'd ask me how I was doing, and I'd tell you all about my family: grandpa Armen, grandma Arda, Perouze, uncle Nishan--

VIDA

Oh, how is Nishan, he is always so cheerful and kind?

NARINE

He died!!! OF A BROKEN HEART!

VIDA

Ah!

NARINE

...and getting hit by a train.

A little girl ANAHIT runs to Vida, hugs and won't let go.

ANAHIT

Aunt Vida! You're back! We've missed you so! Look, I've made this at school!

A drawing of a big family - and a photoshopped security camera photo of Vida with her shopping bag.

ANAHIT (CONT'D)

Why haven't you been coming?

Third store clerk ARTOON suddenly pops up.

ARTOON

She's been shopping somewhere else!

Juan Marcus, Anahit and Narine gasp.

ARTOON (CONT'D)

That's right, I saw you. Shopping at Zeytun Deli two streets down!

Juan Marcus, Anahit and Narine gasp.

VIDA

Oh... ummm...hi!

ARTOON

You don't even remember my name!

Juan Marcus, Anahit and Narine gasp.

ARTOON (CONT'D)

You've been coming to Arbat Deli every morning--

VIDA

--FOR A WEEK!

ARTOON

--and you don't remember

VIDA

Um...Robert?

ARTOON

Artoon! Every day I'd hinder the access to the dairy section educating you on how much better things were under Stalin--

NARINEV

We were a family!

VIDA

I've met you 2 months ago for a week. I'm sorry, but we were never a family!

Juan Marcus, Anahit, Narine gasp.

ARTOON

If Stalin were alive, you'd be building railroads in Siberia!

NARINE

(starts crying)

Vida, why haven't you been coming? Don't you know how much Artoon, Juan Marcus, and little Anahit get worried when you don't visit?! I lost 12 pounds wondering where are you - hospitalized? deported? dead?

VIDA

THIS IS WHY I STOPPED COMING! Our transactional relationship turned extremely personal. I just want to buy stuff, be friendly, and leave.

JUAN MARCUS

If you cheer me up when I'm down, If you listen to my hardships, if you show me you care, you stop being just a customer. We enter a relationship.

ARTOON
We become a family!

VIDA
That's not how things are!

ARTOON
That IS how things are.

NARINE
(cold)
Artoon, please, if she doesn't want anything to do with us, it's her decision.

VIDA
Now you're acting like my actual mother. I have my own dysfunctional family, I don't need another one!

ARTOON
That's it! I'm disowning you.

Narine braces her heart.

VIDA
You can't disown me! You are not my father! I'm leaving and I'm never coming back!

Artoon, Juan Markus, Anahit gasp.

VIDA (CONT'D)
Now I'm acting like a rebellious daughter. That's it, goodbye!

Vida with her grocery bag in front of her backs away toward the door. Artoon blocks the exit.

ARTOON
No one leaves "Arbat Deli"--

Lights flickering. A beat.

VIDA
STAY AWAY! I HAVE A TASER!

ARTOON
--without paying.

Vida throws money at Artoon, runs away.

NARINE
VIDA! WAIT! I MADE YOU A SCARF!

JUAN MARCUS

She'll be back. One day she'll be
craving our splendid salad Olivie -
but all the other delis will be
closed.

NARINE

We really need to fix this light.

ARTOON

Lightbulbs were so much better
under Brezhnev.

ANAHIT

(reveals a sickle)
She really thought a taser could
have stopped a sickle!

BLACK OUT