**Key Moments in ‘Brooklyn’ Directed by John Crowley**

**Key Moment 1: The Opening – Eilis’ Future Looks Bleak**

**Quote**: “You’re the prettiest girl in County Wexford. You should be able to choose any man you want. And we’re hoping that George Sheridan from the rugby club looks your way.” – Eilis to Nancy,

“Not if what you’re going to say will cause trouble for me in some way or another.” – Miss Kelly when Eilis asks to talk.

**Notes:** County Wexford is presented as boring and predictable, and Miss Kelly is a difficult, demanding, spiteful employer. The dark streets as the film begins and Eilis yawning to the priest’s monotone present this drab, predictable board. We realise quickly that there is not much potential for excitement or growth in a place like this.

At dinner, Rose trails off while saying how long Eilis will be in America for. Eilis is perhaps leaving forever, going into the unknown and leaving her family behind, which is a daunting prospect.

Eilis feels confined by Enniscorthy. She tells her friend Nancy that with Nancy’s beauty, she should be able to choose any man she wants, not hoping that George Sheridan from the rugby club will look her way. Eilis recognises the limitations that living in County Wexford places on their lives and their chance for opportunity.

The dance shows the limits and limitations of Eilis’ world and her life if she stays in Enniscorthy. The staid social scene here helps to explain her outlook and why she feels America is the best choice for her.

As Eilis stands onboard, ready for departure, there is sadness as she leaves her family, particularly her sister. However, the journey ahead is the path to Eilis’ future. It is a bittersweet moment, both sad and hopeful at once.

**Key Moment 2: Eilis’ Homesickness in America**

**Quote**:

“It’s hard for me to believe that you’re reading this thousands of miles across the sea.” – Rose on a voice over to Eilis.

“

I wish that I could stop feeling that I want to be an Irish girl in Ireland.”– Eilis says this to Father Flood.

“Homesickness is like most sicknesses. It will pass.” – Father Flood to Eilis.

**Notes:**

Once in New York, Eilis struggles with homesickness, feeling sad and alone in her new job and lodging house. She says little and cries as she reads a letter from home. This is a low point for her, to have travelled so far, to feel so unhappy and alone. Eilis’ tears ae a visual, emotional sign of her upset, prompting compassion and empathy in the viewer. Seeing Eilis cry, it is easy to understand and identify how she feels.

Eilis’ manager shows compassion and understanding in sending for Father Flood when she sees that Eilis is upset. This is a quiet act of kindness, she gives Eilis time to compose herself and fetches someone who will make her feel better.

Eilis’ chat with Father Flood shows how choosing what is best can be sad and lonely at times. Eilis is homesick, missing her sister especially. Father Flood’s kind words shows the goodness of people. Additionally, his enrolment of Eilis in a night class shows the potential and possibility of New York. Here, her hard work may earn her a successful career, if she perseveres through this tough time, she will be rewarded for it.

The dance Eilis attends with Dolores is similar to dances at home. This social scene, coupled with her Irish housemates, shows how her circle of experience has not broadened immediately upon arriving in America. Eilis is still an Irish Girl, surrounded by Irish girls.

**Key Moment 3: Eilis Meets Tony**

**Quote**:

**Eilis Lacey:** [voice over] “Dear Rose, I think of you and mother every single day. I have a boyfriend. He’s sweet, he’s funny. Tony has helped me to feel that I have a life here I didn’t have before I met him.”

**Notes:**

Eilis meets Tony, a young Italian man, at an Irish dance, and he walks her home, showing the traditional values of the time. Eilis is much happier once she meets Tony. She smiles and talks more, and has fun with him. Now that she has found him, her homesickness and loneliness are no longer a problem. With Tony, she enjoys talking about her life instead of missing home.

A key moment we see here is when Eilis and Tony go out for dinner and she hardly eats anything, she is so busy chatting. She is comfortable and happy with Tony. It is a very positive relationship.

Tony waits for her outside night class so that he can spend time with her on her journey home, a sweet and romantic gesture. He invites her to dinner with his family, keen for them to meet her. They smile a lot together, and appear as a young couple, in love.

Rose reads a letter from Eilis by the river. It makes her smile, and cry, to read of her sister’s new life in New York. Rose misses Eilis, but is happy to hear that she is happy, and that she has a boyfriend. There is genuine warmth and kindness in Rose’s sadness that Eilis is gone, and in the way she wants the best for her sister. However, it is sad that while Eilis has found new happiness, Rose is left at home bearing her sadness alone. Thus, Eilis’ happiness is also tinged with sadness for the viewer, who is keenly aware of Rose at home, without her.

**Key Moment 4: Rose’s Death**

**Quote**:

**Tony:** You want to go home I guess?  
**Eilis Lacey:** How would it be for you if I did go home?  
**Tony:** I’d be afraid.  
**Eilis Lacey:** Afraid that I wouldn’t come back?  
**Tony:** Yeah. Home is home.

**Notes:** The news of Rose’s death comes as a devastating blow for Eilis. Her separateness and the distance from home is emphasised here, she will not be able to go to Rose’s funeral. Her mother’s phone call underlines Eilis’ grief and upset, each feeling very sad and alone.

Tony comforts Eilis in her grief, understanding her need to go home, but he is also fearful that she will not come back. The security of their world has been compromised; Rose’s death shows that nothing is certain.

Tony then takes Eilis to Long Island, to show her the site of their future home. At this point of great sadness, Tony offers Eilis a home, a gesture that is loving and optimistic.

When Eilis says she must go home to her mother, Tony proposes, wanting to make sure that Eilis will come back to him. Once she agrees to marriage, they have sex, further developing their relationship. Tony must feel that this formal bond will ensure that Eilis returns to New York, showing the significance and importance of marriage vows in this world. Despite the romance of their relationship, he may secretly fear that once she goes home, she may not return. We are reminded that Eilis has two separate, parallel worlds to negotiate.

**Key Moment 5: Eilis’ Dinner with Jim Farrell**

**Quote**:

**Jim to Eilis** “I’m sorry. I wanted to ask you a thousand things and all I’ve done is talked.”

**Eilis**: “I’m glad

**Jim**: Really?

**Eilis**: Yes.”

**Notes:**

Once Eilis returns home, her mother is keen to keep her there, telling her to stay on for Nancy’s wedding., and mentioning her own empty days. Nancy invites Jim Farrell along on Eilis’ first night out with her old friends as a potential love interest, knowing nothing of Eilis’ marriage to Tony. Her connection with Jim Farrell and their developing relationship will further complicate Eilis’ life at home, and the decision she will have to make about returning to Brooklyn.

Tony’s letter is narrated to images of Eilis and Jim laughing and spending time together. There is tension and potential conflict here. Eilis is involved with two men, in two different countries. The tension is increased as Eilis does not read Tony’s letter but instead goes for dinner with Jim Farrell.

Eilis’ meal with Jim in the Connaught Hotel is significant as while she is with her other love interest the dynamic follows the same. The film directions make it clear that Jim cares about Eilis having a good time at their meal. However, it is Jim who does all the talking as opposed to when it was Eilis doing so with Tony, earlier, at the heart of the connection is a focus on the other.

Jim, despite talking, halts himself to return to ensure Eilis is enjoying herself: “I’m sorry. I wanted to ask you a thousand things and all I’ve done is talked.” Similar to earlier, Eilis realizes his care for her and in doing so shows concern for him, here appeasing Jim that she is having a good time: “I’m glad... Really?... Yes.” The symmetry to Eilis’ connection with Tony shows the difficult situation Eilis is in, and it is hard to know what the right thing for her to do is. Eilis’ difficult choice is messy and complicated, and someone is sure to be hurt.

**Key Moment 6: Miss Kelly Tries to Catch Eilis Out**

**Quote**:

Eilis to Miss Kelly - “I’d forgotten what this town is like. What were you planning to do, Miss Kelly? Keep me away from Jim? Stop me from going back to America? Perhaps you didn’t even know. Perhaps it was enough for you to know that you could ruin me. My name is Eilis Fiorello.”

**Notes:**

Miss Kelly sends for Eilis and viciously reveals that she knows of Eilis’ wedding at City Hall. Miss Kelly’s revelation of her knowledge of Eilis’ marriage represents all that is spiteful, vicious and mean-spirited about Eilis’ home community. The older woman relishes having this information as something to hold over Eilis. Eilis is not cowed by her old boss, but challenges her, asking her what she intended to do with such information.

Once Eilis calls herself Eilis Fiorello and asserts that she is a married woman, her return to Brooklyn is assured. She no longer wants to stay in a place like this, but also, the secrecy surrounding her marriage and her relationship with Jim Farrell. This is a tense, dramatic scene, as Miss Kelly attempts to manipulate and dominate Eilis with her discovery. In this moment of conflict, Eilis is assertive, owning her title and standing up to Miss Kelly.

In choosing New York, Eilis chooses Tony, and the future he has promised her. She is also rejecting the small world of Enniscorthy, where her private life may be the subject of gossip, for the freedom of starting afresh in America.

**Key Moment 7: Eilis Returns Home (To America)**

**Quote**:

“You’ll feel so homesick that you’ll want to die, and there’s nothing you can do about it apart from endure it. But you will, and it won’t kill you. And one day the sun will come out. You might not even notice straightaway, it’ll be that faint. And then you’ll catch yourself thinking about something or someone who has no connection with the past, someone who’s only yours, and you’ll realize, that this is where your life is.” Eilis (Voiceover)

**Notes:** Eilis’ conversation on deck with the young woman going to Brooklyn shows how much Eilis has grown and changed since she first went to New York, while simultaneously reminding us that she too is a young, hopeful girl, making her way in the world.

Eilis’ closing voice over, which begins when talking to the girl on the ship during her return journey to America, details the difficulties of emigration, how “You’ll feel so homesick that you’ll want to die, and there’s nothing you can do about it apart from endure it.” Such a comment represents the difficulties she has faced during the plot and how she would be justified to be focused on herself during such turbulent periods. However, her closing lines detail how “one day the sun will come out... And you’ll realize that this is where your life is.” Eilis refers to someone who has no connection to the past, someone who is yours alone. For Eilis, this special someone is Tony. She is joyfully reunited with him, happy to have come back to him.

The film directions make it clear that Eilis is still caring and considering of Tony until the last. Initially, he is unsure how she will react to him and it is her embrace that finally reassures him. (Scene)Tony sees her. He stops in his tracks, smiles broadly, runs across the road. For a moment he’s worried about the reception he’s getting. Eilis’ expression is difficult to read, and for a moment he looks at her anxiously, but she opens her arms to him. Freeze on their embrace.

The story ends happily, with Eilis and Tony thrilled to be reunited and together again, and Eilis’ life in Enniscorthy consigned to the past. She has chosen Tony and New York, and all that they represent.