

The Birthday Party

by  
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FADE IN:

INT. GENERATOR ROOM/ NUCLEAR BUNKER

Dim bulbs brighten on panting, sweating SALLY (25), pale as a ghost as she peddles frantically. Her static bike is rigged up to a makeshift generator which she charges while exercising.

She is clad in a green HERITAGE ASSOCIATION staff T-shirt complete with name badge.

INT. RADIATOR ROOM - MOMENTS LATER.

Sally jogs in to find upbeat Yorkshireman JEFF (77) tending to a healthy crop of potatoes. They sprout from a patch of dirt spread beneath an improvised greenhouse of shower curtains and water recycled from urine.

SALLY  
Morning Jeff.

JEFF  
Morning treacle. Lovely day for it.

Jeff suddenly launches into a deep hacking cough.

SALLY  
You alright, Jeff?

JEFF  
Never better. Just giving the pipes a good clear out.

And he pops another potato into an overflowing bucket.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER.

Jeff's wife, MAUREEN (77), jigs about a pristine kitchen, singing to herself as she cooks.

Sally heaves the bucket of potatoes onto the counter top.

SALLY  
I'm so excited about your cake, Maureen.

MAUREEN  
Aw, thanks, treacle.

Maureen empties the potatoes into a vat of boiling water, bar one with a carved smiling face. She shows it to Sally.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)  
(RE: Jeff)  
He's such a silly one.

Suddenly Maureen violently sneezes blood all over the counter and potato. A shocked moment between them. Then they exchange a laugh and Maureen drops the bloody potato into the vat.

INT. COMMS ROOM - MOMENTS LATER.

As Sally enters, a paint-flecked, adorably goofy ADAM (25) turns from adding the final touches to a wall mural.

He also wears a HERITAGE ASSOCIATION T-shirt with name badge.

He has painted an epic sunset. Sally takes a closer look.

SALLY  
That is one impressive sunset.

Silhouetted against the reds and oranges is an illustration of a hulking Adam. He's punching a bear.

SALLY (CONT'D)  
Wait. What's that.

ADAM  
Me. Obviously. Fighting a bear.  
(off Sally's look)  
Don't worry, you're in there too.

He points to a cartoon Sally, gazing at him in awe.

SALLY  
Looking constipated?

ADAM  
No, looking impressed! I'm protecting you from the bear.

SALLY  
What? I bet you started it. I bet you covered yourself in honey and called him a furry prick.  
(beat)  
Come on, let me punch a bear too.

ADAM  
Fine. But you really shouldn't interfere with the artistic process like this.

SALLY  
Thanks. And give me massive tits.

They share a smile and then Sally gestures to a bulky 1980's military radio crackling with open-air static.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Any luck?

Adam flicks between the stations, punctuating each word.

ADAM

Not. A. Sausage.

SALLY

Ah well, it's still early days.  
You'll find someone, I know you  
will. We'll be okay.

Adam isn't so sure. Sally's eyes turn back to the mural.

ADAM

Best sunset you've seen in a  
while, right?

SALLY

What do you want, a medal?

ADAM

Yeah.

SALLY

Oh. Okay.

Sally mimes putting a medal over his head. He "admires" it.

ADAM

Thanks. Shiny. I got this  
wrestling bears.

Sally laughs. And picks up the bunting.

SALLY

See you at the party.

INT. COMMUNAL AREA - LATER.

Sweet natured SAM (12) uncovers his eyes and is met with a chorus of -

EVERYONE

SURPRISE!!!

Sally and Adam, Maureen and Jeff have been joined by Sam's uptight parents, TOM and MATILDA (40's).

MATILDA

Happy birthday darling.

Sam beams as he takes in a handwritten 'Happy 12th Birthday' sign. It hangs along side improvised bunting and balloons imprinted with 'HERITAGE ASSOCIATION'.

SAM

Wow! Thanks.

SALLY

Blow out your candles Sam, and be sure to make a wish.

They gather around the large potato cake and Sam blows out the candles. Everyone claps and Tom shakes his son's hand.

TOM

Congratulations son, you are now a man.

Sally hands Sam a knife to cut the cake. But Tom takes it.

TOM (CONT'D)

Not so fast. I haven't done my speech yet.

MATILDA

Oh, for God sakes Tom, let him eat his cake.

But Tom takes out his cue cards and plows on.

TOM

Happy birthday, Sam. May there be many more to come.

He gives a lengthy pause. It seems he's done.

ADAM

(singing)

Happy birthday to -  
(off Tom's incensed face)

No?

TOM

One year ago today we brought Sam on a tour of this fine Cold War bunker. And if we hadn't had made that decision then we would all have been horribly killed. It is an honour to share this facility with all of you good people.

ADAM

(singing)

For he's a jolly good fellow, for he's a -

(off Tom's look)

There's more?

Tom raises his chipped mug of recycled water.

TOM  
To Sam. And the bunker.

EVERYONE  
The bunker!

INT. GENERATOR ROOM - ONE YEAR LATER.

Sally peddles, struggling to keep the dimming lights on.

She has trimmed her sleeves in an attempt to style the sweat-soaked HERITAGE ASSOCIATION T-shirt.

INT. RADIATOR ROOM - MOMENTS LATER.

Sally finds a sweating, dizzy Jeff struggling to garden football-sized, mutating potatoes. His whole body shakes with a deep, guttural wheeze as he fights for breath.

SALLY  
Morning Jeff. Lovely day for it.

JEFF  
Morning... trea... cle... can  
you... [help]

He gestures towards a huge potato he's straining to lift. The effort seems to floor him and Sally darts in to help.

SALLY  
I've got it, don't worry.

JEFF  
Thanks. Just... cleaning... out..

But he starts to cough. And cough. And cough. He can't stop. Sally is disturbed but forces a smile.

SALLY  
Don't work too hard.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER.

A wild haired, tarred clothed Maureen maniacally jigs about and cooks as Sally enters and drops the huge potato on the counter next to five others.

MAUREEN  
Perfect. Thanks treacle.

Maureen turns one of the huge potatoes around. It has a terrible jagged smiley face carved into it.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)

Oh, he makes me laugh that one.

And then she cleaves it in half, startling Sally.

SALLY

Um... Jeff looks a little bit...  
tired today.

MAUREEN

He's fine! Just a touch of man  
flu! You know what men are like.

Sally laughs. But it seems a little strained.

SALLY

Do I? Yes, I do. Idiots!

INT. COMMS ROOM - MOMENTS LATER.

Sally finds a sleep-deprived Adam working desperately at the military radio.

She glances at the sunset mural and sees herself now depicted as a busty Amazonian cracking the necks of wolves.

But the paint is chipped and the wall has a large crack.

ADAM

Mayday, mayday. This is Adam  
Roth. I am with six survivors in  
a bunker 47.6 degrees North of  
York Castle and 122.33 degrees  
west of the Lidl on Chessil  
Avenue. We need help. Over.

(nothing but static)

Bonjour. C'est Adam dans une...  
bunker. Aidez moi! Salut? Merde!

More static. Adam throws down the receiver in frustration.

SALLY

No wonder no one's answering. Your  
French is terrible.

Adam ignores her and goes back to fiddling with the radio.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Just keep at it. There's bound to  
be others. We'll be okay.

ADAM

(harsh)

You sure about that?

Sally doesn't answer, thrown by his tone. And then her nose starts bleeding. Badly. Adam is shocked.

Sally clumsily wipes at it but only spreads blood across her face. She hastily grabs the bunting, and goes to leave.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Sally, wait. Come here.

He holds her face and wipes away the blood with a tissue.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Mucky pup.

And for a moment their eyes linger on each other. They might kiss. But then Sally untangles herself.

SALLY  
I'm sorry, I... Thank you.  
(forced smile)  
See you at the party.

ADAM  
(sad)  
Yeah. Can't wait.

INT. COMMUNAL AREA - LATER.

Everyone is worse for wear as they gather around the huge potato cake. Sam attempts to blow out the candles but he's shaking and drenched in cold sweat.

Sally tries to rally them.

SALLY  
Come on everyone, lets all help!

She starts blowing out the remaining candles and is joined by Adam, Maureen and Jeff. But it triggers a huge coughing fit from Jeff. And then his nose falls off.

A frozen moment. Adam and Sally exchange a horrified look. But Matilda tries to breeze over it.

MATILDA  
Happy birthday darling!

SAM  
Thanks mum...

Sam starts coughing as well.

MATILDA  
Oh, now, don't you start!

Maureen picks up Jeff's nose and leads him from the room.

MAUREEN  
Come on love, lets go sort you out.

MATILDA

Tom. Do your speech.

Tom fumbles with his cue cards, struggling to see them.

TOM

Speech, yes. Happy birthday Sam.  
May there be many more to come.

But Sam passes out. Adam and Sally catch him and lower him into a chair, Adam providing a jumper to rest his head on.

MATILDA

Wow. You've bored him to sleep.

TOM

Two years ago we brought Sam on a tour of this Cold War bunker, and if we hadn't have made that decision - well it was my decision really. You wanted to take him to Disneyland!

Tom points accusingly at Sally, who exchanges a confused glance with Matilda.

SALLY

Um... Sorry?

TOM

Anyway, if *I* hadn't have made that decision then...

He stares at his cue cards.

TOM (CONT'D)

Oh my God, I've gone completely blind!

Matilda claps long and slow.

MATILDA

Well said.

INT. GENERATOR ROOM - ONE YEAR LATER.

Lights flicker as Sally strains to peddle. She is exhausted. Her T-shirt has become a crop top.

INT. RADIATOR ROOM - MOMENTS LATER.

Sally tentatively searches for Jeff amongst beach ball sized mutated potatoes.

SALLY

Jeff?

She gasps as she finds him splayed on the ground, riddled with lesions, skin rotting and barely able to move.

A small potato replaces his nose, tied on with string.

Maureen suddenly pops up from behind a potato, brandishing a trowel and startling Sally.

MAUREEN

Morning treacle. Don't mind me, I'm just giving the lazy old bugger a helping hand with the gardening. You know what men are like!

SALLY

Would you like me to make the cake?

MAUREEN

Wouldn't dream of it. You get the bunting. Let me take care of the rest.

INT. COMMS ROOM - MOMENTS LATER.

Adam has opened up the radio and is frantically soldering circuits as Sally enters. She's startled.

SALLY

Um... anything?

ADAM

No. I'm busy. I'm trying to boost the range.

Sally backs off and glances at the mural instead. The cracks have grown and the orange sunset is mouldy.

In it Sally and Adam are both being eaten by bears. Sally grimaces slightly, but soldiers on.

SALLY

Okay. Oh! Maureen mentioned having a limbo competition tonight. I mean, Maureen! How low can she go, right?

Sally laughs. And laughs. Just a little too hysterically. But Adam just watches her until she finally falls silent.

ADAM

You do understand what's happening to us? This place is falling apart! We need help. What we don't need is a fucking party!

Sally's smile finally waivers. She looks young. Scared. She musters what resilience she has left.

SALLY  
Well, maybe you don't.

INT. COMMUNAL AREA - LATER.

A rasping, sweaty Sam is barely conscious of the eight different potato cakes before him, all glowing with candles.

Tom and Matilda squabble over cue cards.

TOM  
I do the speech!

MATILDA  
You always do the speech!

SALLY  
Guys, come on, lets get this party started -

MATILDA  
Happy birthday darling. I remember when you wanted to go to Disneyland but you're father insisted we come to this fucking disused cold war bunker instead -

Blind Tom barges his wife aside.

TOM  
Happy birthday Sam. I remember when your mother wanted to abort you -

Adam gets up.

ADAM  
Well, it's been fun but -

He heads for the door. But Sally grabs his arm.

SALLY  
Adam, please.

ADAM  
What?

SALLY  
We haven't even had the limbo competition yet?

Adam turns sharply away. But Maureen leaps up from cradling Jeff's head. Jeff slumps.

MAUREEN

Enough! Both of you! Some of us  
have put a lot of love into this  
party, okay! So please, just...  
shut up!

Suddenly Jeff rears up, his body mutating. He howls in agony.

INT. GENERATOR ROOM - ONE YEAR LATER.

Each turn of the peddles is agony for Sally. Until finally  
she can turn no more and gives up. The lights dim to black.

INT. RADIATOR ROOM - LATER.

Lit only by candles, Sally struggles to extract the  
mountainous potatoes. Many are beginning to show signs of  
sentient life and movement and resist the trowel.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER.

Sally desperately searches the crumbling kitchen for  
something to make a cake from. She opens a cupboard full of  
potatoes, faces carved into them in freakish expressions.

INT. COMMS ROOM - LATER.

Sally stands in the doorway watching Adam desperately plead  
with the radio.

ADAM

Anyone. Please respond. We're  
running out time. Help. Please...

She sadly gathers up the bunting dumped outside the door.

INT. CORRIDOR - LATER.

Sally passes Maureen, seated in vigil by a bolted steel door  
through which we hear Jeff grunting. Her skin is ashen and  
sweats blood as she hums quietly to herself and gently  
cradles a mouldy potato, a smiley face carved in to.

SALLY

(heartbroken)  
Morning Maureen.

MAUREEN

(a million miles away)  
Morning treacle.

Jeff growls from behind the steal door.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)  
He makes me laugh, that one.

INT. COMMUNAL AREA - LATER.

Tom and Matilda wrestle on the floor amongst spilt cue cards. Matilda takes ruthless advantage of Tom's blindness.

MATILDA  
Surrender!

TOM  
Never!

Sally is the only other attendee to Sam's party. Sam fragile little body is held together by duct tape and weeping bandages. He's at death's door.

But Sally tries desperately to distract him.

SALLY  
Erm... Happy 16th birthday, Sam. You could have gone to Disneyland but you came here instead, and we're all very grateful. Um... and you're parents both love you, and each other, very much...

TOM  
(to Matilda)  
FUCK YOU!!

SALLY  
Make a birthday wish Sam.

Sam suddenly sucks in a huge, rasping final breath and keels forward. Seemingly dead.

SALLY (CONT'D)  
Oh my God. Sam. Sam? Oh, Jesus. Sam!?

TOM  
What's happened?

Matilda breaks off from Tom, as Sally tries to shake Sam "awake". Suddenly Sam rises up with a bloodcurdling, mutating howl, bandages falling away in patches to reveal the rotting flesh underneath.

Matilda edges towards the table, her eyes on a knife next to one of the many potato cakes.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONT'D.

Jeff hears Sam's howl, and responds in kind.

MAUREEN

What's that, love? You're hungry?

She looks at the potato in her hand and reaches for the bolt.

INT. COMMUNAL AREA - CONT'D.

Sally is trying to comfort a confused and frightened Tom as Sam's twisting form lumbers towards them.

But Matilda pounces first, and with a wild battle cry she stabs him with the knife.

SALLY

Oh no.

Matilda turns her sights on Tom and Sally.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Please, Matilda, don't...

Suddenly Adam bursts in, and as Matilda raises the knife, he dives in and tackles Sally out of the way. The knife descends on poor blind Tom.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONT'D.

Sally and Adam sprint from the communal room, Tom's screams following them.

And they run into mutated Jeff, splattered with blood and grasping his favourite potato like some weird doll.

SALLY

Jeff, it's me, Sally. You know.  
Treacle.

He limply throws the potato at her. It bounces off her shin.

But then Matilda appears behind them. She sees Jeff and instantly charges at him.

INT. COMMS ROOM - CONT'D.

Sally and Adam dive through the door and out of the way.

But just as Sally tries to swing the door shut, Matilda and Jeff come barrelling in.

Desperate Adam snatches up the bulky radio and lashes out at them both with it, using it as a battering ram to drive them back into the corridor. Sally slams and bolts the door.

The shattered radio falls from Adam's grip. He stares at it, his hopes of finding help broken with it.

Then Matilda screams in agony from behind the door.

A beat of loaded silence.

SALLY

Shit! She was the last mother  
alive. And now she's dead!  
Everyone's mum is dead! My's mum's  
dead. Your mum's dead! Literally  
everyone's mum is dead!

Sally is bouncing off the walls as she freaks out.

ADAM

Hey. It's okay...

SALLY

And I've been doing what? Throwing  
birthday parties! Making stupid  
bunting! When everyone's mum is  
dead!!

Sally grabs bunting from a store cupboard.

SALLY (CONT'D)

I hate bunting! Stupid smug  
triangles, just...

She tries to tear it up but it proves difficult.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Die!!!

Adam takes the bunting from her and dances about with it.

SALLY (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing?

ADAM

Trying to distract you before you  
realise everyone's dad is also  
dead?

Sally laughs sadly. And then she spots the broken radio and starts to cry. She sinks to the floor.

SALLY

I'm so sorry, Adam.

ADAM

For what?

(RE: radio)

Oh. That. Probably for the best. I  
think I was clutching at straws.

SALLY

Like me?

ADAM

No. You kept everyone's spirits up.  
Like always. You're the best bunker  
tour guide I know. I think you  
deserve this more than me.

Adam mimes taking off his "medal" and puts it around Sally's  
neck. She mimes looking at it, incredibly touched.

SALLY

("reading" the medal)  
Thanks for participating?

Adam laughs and Sally smiles back as sits next to her. They  
share a moment, gazing at the remains of the mural, now  
little more than a smudged mess of orange and mould.

ADAM

What now?

A slow little smile spreads across Sally's face.

EXT. NUCLEAR WASTELAND - EVENING.

Sally and Adam emerge squinting and blinking into a shattered  
atomic wasteland. The bleak, twisted wreckage of a former  
city bathed in the irradiated orange glow of setting  
sunlight.

SALLY

Now that is one impressive sunset.

Sally takes Adam's hand, and they stand, gazing at it as  
their skin begins to crisp and flake off.

INT. COMMS ROOM - CONT'D.

The only sound echoing though the hollow shell of the bunker  
is the occasional burst of static from the broken radio.

And then a voice...

VOICE

(on radio)  
bonjour Adam Hepworth, est  
quelqu'un là-bas ? bonjour , nous  
avons entendu votre appel de  
détresse

CUT TO BLACK.