Flowers in Bloom

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EXT. HIGHDON VILLAGE CENTER, CHURCHYARD - DAY.

A PRIEST walks out of her church [34] and is dressed in casual clothes fit for the brisk March air, in a shirt adorned with Pride pins, a wooden cross around her neck. There is an Easter celebration, and there are small food stalls giving out free fruit and veg. Plums, apples, aubergines, onions, strawberries, bananas, cabbages; a feast of colour. There is a big banner above the entrance to the church which reads "HIGHDON ANNUAL EASTER AND GOOD FRIDAY FESTIVAL! 29-31 MARCH 2024!" with plenty of multi-coloured balloons attached to it. We see children and their parents sitting in the church gardens, among the roses and daisies. They are screaming, laughing, as their parents look on, exhausted. A child pulls a foxglove from the ground, and the Priest runs over.

PRIEST
Oh! Be careful Ruby! These flowers can make you very poorly if you smell them!

RUBY
I'm sorry Miss Cora.

PRIEST
Don't be silly lovely! I just don't want you feeling icky is all!

Ruby giggles as CORA, the Priest, ruffles her hair and gently takes the foxglove from her, Ruby's mother giving an exasperated look of gratitude to Cora. From off-screen, HENRY is heard, his voice loud but slurred.

HENRY
(O/S)
Fucking Paki groomer! Yeah! I bet you love to touch little girls don't you, you fucking nonce! Fucking monkey cunt...

Cora turns around. Standing at the gate to the church is Henry [28], wearing a creased blue shirt and torn black denim jeans. His hair is greasy and unkempt. He wears glasses. He carries a nearly empty can of Red Stripe and he's stumbling around, unable to hold his own weight. Quickly, the sounds of sirens can be heard as a police car drives up outside the church. The children look concerned over the yelling man, but only some of the parents acknowledge the disturbance. Cora, trying to hide her discomfort and anger, walks forward in front of the crowd.

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HENRY
What have I done? Got a problem with freedom of speech do ya? She's fuckin' touchin' kids!

CORA
Henry my love! You seem very hot headed today? Shaving off the mop on your head should help! I've seen your mum's hair and she's looking wayyyyy better than you!

INT. FLOWER SHOP, FRONT - DAY

Cora is hard at work shifting her flower displays around. She's wearing a green apron with dried mud on it. There are plant pots, compost bags and bags of seeds all over the floor as she scrambles to make sure everything is ready for business. She checks her phone: it reads "09:57, 28.03.24". She's shocked that it's nearly 10. She moves to put everything out in her stockroom behind the till desk, but looking up out through her shop window, she sees BARRY standing outside waiting; a much older man [76], with fluffy white hair, dressed in a bowler hat, loose trousers and checked green and white shirt. She unlocks the door, and props it open.

CORA
Morning Barry. Please don't look at the floor I was trying to get the new displays sorted-

BARRY
Ah no bother Cora love. Let me help you. `ere you are.

CORA
Oh, Barry don't it's-

Barry crouches down and, with a hearty grunt, lifts a bag of compost onto his shoulder, taking 3 plant pots in his hand as though they were dirty pint glasses. He steadily makes his way to the stockroom. Cora smiles, dragging another bag of compost behind him.

INT. FLOWER SHOP, STOCKROOM - DAY

BARRY
In the corner alright, Cora?

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CORA
That's perfect, thanks Barry.

Cora and Barry swiftly move all of Cora's stock out of the way and Cora makes Barry a coffee for his trouble.

INT. FLOWER SHOP, FRONT - DAY

BARRY
Mmm that's good that. Thanks my dear, that's `ansome.

CORA
Of course, Barr it's no trouble! Thank you for helping me move all of that, it's all for the Easter fest tomorrow so I needed it out of the way.

BARRY
Ah right yeah, you're organising it this year, aren't you?

CORA
Yeah, I'm excited for it! Really wasn't expecting Maggie to let me lead it, especially as I haven't lived here that long...

BARRY
Ah that's enough of that. It'll be great, don't stress yourself. Maggie's ran the thing for 40 years, you're doing her a favour!

CORA
Ha! Yeah you're right! Does being rational come with old age?

BARRY
Well you're a churchie so you can't be too rational can ya?

Cora looks faux-offended and lightly smacks Barry around his head and he gives a small chuckle.

CORA
Shut it! You're gonna be there tomorrow right?

BARRY
'Course. Maggie always does the most

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beautiful steak and ale pie, you ever had some? Come round this Sunday actually and we'll cook for you.

CORA
That'd be lovely-

Cora stares out of the window.

BARRY
What's wrong love?

Barry follows her gaze. Outside on the other side of the street, Henry is easing a bottle of Peroni.

CORA
He's done this every day this week...

Cora and Barry watch him. Henry notices them staring and gives a broad smile.

HENRY
You getting a nice long look Cora-n? I bet I taste better than whatever rug you've been munchin-
(NOTE: "Cora-n" is a blend of Cora and Koran)

Suddenly, out of nowhere, HARRIET [52] slaps Henry hard around the face. The sound echoes loudly through the street. Barry quickly shuts the door whilst Cora is left stunned. Harriet is dressed in a yellow sundress.

HARRIET
You fucker! Is this how I taught you to treat people?! Would you treat me like that, you digusting bastard?!

Harriet drags her son harshly by the arm, his bottle smashing to the ground. Cora sits, exhausted. She checks her phone: it reads "10:20, 28.03.24".

INT. HARRIET'S HALLWAY - DAY

Their house is very fancy; Harriet is firmly in the upper class. Harriet is sobbing as she barges the door open, leaving her key in the door, heading for the kitchen. Henry silently walks in behind her, taking the key from the door, placing the key on the table in the doorway and following his mother into the kitchen.

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INT. HARRIET'S KITCHEN - DAY

In the kitchen, Harriet has taken out a one litre bottle of Smirnoff from a cupboard and has poured herself a half pint of it. Henry tries to walk past her, but she shoves him away harshly. Henry leaves to his bedroom.

INT. HENRY'S BEDROOM - DAY

It's shockingly bland. There's nothing on the walls and his bedspread is just white on black. The only notable things are a mostly empty bookshelf save for the "Lord of the Rings" saga, a copy of "The Right Side of History" and one very dusty copy of "The Magic Faraway Tree". There is also a plain desk and swivel chair with a laptop on it. Henry sits on the chair, flips up his laptop and it unlocks onto Twitter with a Tucker Carlson / Chris Moritz video paused at 29:59. He plays it. The video plays for 1 minute, uninterrupted. Carlson finishes this segment with a comment of:

CARLSON
Promote?

MORITZ
Promote!

Harriet, after overhearing the video, storms into Henry's room. She is crying. She wrenches the laptop off the desk, takes it out of his room and returns, her face fury.

HARRIET
I told you not to watch that! I TOLD YOU! You're being horrible to Cora and me and it's all cos of these horrid people! Why-

HENRY
Why? Cos they're right Mum. These people are trying to hurt kids. And kids need protecting.

Harriet is left stunned. She is defeated. Looking into Henry's eyes, she walks out of the house. Henry cries silently, and unemotionally.

EXT. HIGHDON VILLAGE CENTER, CHURCHYARD - DAY.

Cora watches as the police take Henry away in their car. She turns back towards the onlooking crowd.

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RUBY
Are you okay Miss Cora?

CORA
Yes Ruby. I'm fine hunny.

Cora gives a big smile, and the festival is normal again. Cora checks her phone: it reads "12:36, 29.03.24". Cora briefly turns back towards where Henry stood, but now notices Harriet on the other side of the street. Cora walks to Harriet and she seems despondant.

EXT. HIGHDON VILLAGE CENTER, OPPOSITE THE CHURCHYARD - DAY.

HARRIET
I'm so sorry Cora...

CORA
Oh, honestly it's-

HARRIET
Don't say it's okay. It isn't.

CORA
It's not your fault. I can't blame you for what he does.

HARRIET
Oh, you can.

Harriet takes a small 50ml bottle of Glenfiddich from her pocket, and she downs it in one.

HARRIET
He's my son. I've tried with him forever. It's my fault he drinks and treats people different from him so awful. If James were still here, he'd be heartbroken.

Harriet walks away, Cora looking at her with consideration and anxiety.

CORA
Harriet!

Harriet stops walking, but does not turn back.

CORA
He may be your son, but he's his own man. You cant blame the mother for the

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sins of the son.

Harriet turns around.

HARRIET
No. But the mother can still punish herself for them.

Harriet takes out a small 50ml bottle of Whitley Neil gin, swallows it's contents, and slowly walks away again.

INT. HIGHDON CHURCH - EVENING

It's Easter Sunday; the church is empty save for Cora and Barry. Cora stands at the pulpit reading from the book of Peter, and she is dressed in formal Priest robes, with her pride pin shirt underneath it. Barry sits on the front row of the right-hand aisle, pensively looking to the floor, dressed similarly to how he was in the flower shop previously.

CORA
"But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

Cora sighs, closing her Bible, she checks her phone: it reads "18:05, 31.03.24". She looks to Barry.

CORA
I didn't expect it to be this quiet. And I especially didn't expect my only attendant to be an old atheist. No offense Barr.

BARRY
None taken Cora, jus' wanted to make sure you weren't alone is all. How many for your service this morning?

CORA
Only ten. I dont fault them for not being here now though, not at all. Friday was hard and yesterday was...

BARRY
Hmmmm.

CORA
Don't think Maggie will be letting me run the festival again.

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BARRY
Oi! Enough of that.

Barry stands and gives Cora a hug, which she reciprocates. At that moment, the church doors open with a loud creak. Henry stands in the doorway, his face sweaty and white. He is dressed in chino shorts, his hair still greasy and a vest. Barry turns to look at him, and then faces away again, sitting back down. Cora watches as he makes his way down the centre aisle, and sits on the front row of the left-hand aisle. Henry is watched closely by Cora, who gives no hint as to what she is feeling.

BARRY
Why you `ere? Think you could get some sympathy from her did you? After you called her all that disgusting shit on Friday?

Henry squirms in place, not looking away from the floor. Cora eventually sits next to Henry.

CORA
I'm sorry for what happened to your mother Henry. She was a kind woman.

Henry looks at her, baffled.

HENRY
Kind woman? Ha! Of course a dyke thinks that a woman who beats her kid is kind!

Barry leaps up and grabs Henry by his collar.

BARRY
Oh you're a real piece of work you are! Come in 'ere, seeking help from this woman and you call her that?!

Barry holds Henry like that for some time.

CORA
Barry.

Barry remembers himself and releases Henry. Barry breathes heavily and steels himself again, sitting on the pulpit stage. Henry cries silently. Cora kneels in front of Henry.

CORA
Are you okay? Want some water?

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Henry does nothing.

CORA
Or maybe would you prefer it if someone from the stronger sex or race offered you some? Maybe my 'dyke water' is too filthy for your pure hands?

Henry begins crying, audibly. Cora considers him.

CORA
Do you know how your mum's doing?

HENRY
Ha! The old bag talks to you once and suddenly you give a shit. Bloody fag.

CORA
Your mum is currently in hospital with severe liver damage and all you've got is 'let's keep being a cunt to Cora'? Fucking hell Henry, grow up!

Barry is shocked, Henry is outright speechless and Cora stands.

CORA
What? Nothing to say to that? Not gonna call me a dyke, or a fag or throw "Cora-n" out at me again? You're a waste of space you fucking bastard.

Henry is still stunned, Barry likewise. Cora takes a deep breath and walks briskly to the church exit, opening the doors carefully and sits outside on the stone steps.

EXT. HIGHDON VILLAGE CENTER, CHURCHYARD - EVENING.

The sunset casts a warm orange hue to the churchyard, and Cora basks in it. There's a small wind carrying a smell which Cora catches. She looks down for its source, and sees Ruby and her mum walking towards the church with a tupperware tub of gingerbread people.

RUBY
Miss Cora! Me and mummy made them for you to say thank you!

Cora is happily surprised and gives Ruby and her mum a hug.

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CORA
Thank you so much, this is too kind!

RUBY'S MUM
Don't be daft love! You did so well this weekend! Would love to chat, but Ruby is staying over at her Gran's tonight. Say bye to Miss Cora, Rubes!

RUBY
Bye bye!

Ruby and her mum walk away. As they turn out of the gate, Henry and Barry emerge from inside the church. Without thinking, Cora forces Henry and Barry a gingerbread.

CORA
I'm sorry for how I was-

HENRY
Genuinely shut up, I don't care.

Henry eats the gingerbread silently. He clearly cares, and the others can see it; he feels remorse. Cora gives Barry an inquisitive look.

BARRY
I didn't do nothing you wouldn't have done. Little shit finally realised how much he's screwed up I think.

Henry looks solemn. He takes out his phone and goes through his contact list until he finds a contact labelled "Mum", and rings her. He walks towards the churchyard gate. Cora watches him and munches on her own gingerbread. Henry is unable to get through.

ANSWERPHONE
Please leave your message after the tone.

HENRY
Mum I'm sorry. I know that doesn't mean anything, but I am. I'm on my way to the hospital now. Love you.

Henry turns towards Cora and Barry, gives them a nod, and walks away, gingerbread in hand. Cora and Barry give a cheers to each other with their gingerbread and sit on the church steps.

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INT. HARRIET'S HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

Henry sits next to Harriet's bed, holding her hand. An IV drip and canula is inserted in her wrist.

FIN

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