

FOOD FOR BIRDS

by

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**FADE IN:**

**EXT. PRISON - RELEASE GATE - DAY**

CORDIE, mid 20s, stands at the curbside, his thin shoulders hunched with cold. He breathes deep, savours the fresh air.

A bird glides overhead. He tracks its flight...

He gathers up a small plastic bag at his feet.

**EXT. PARK OPPOSITE PRISON - DAY**

GRAHAM, 50s, thick-set, positioned behind a tree. His eyes follow Cordie along the pavement, past chain-link fence topped with razor-wire, past a sign declaring HMP DUMFRIES.

Graham takes a hit from a pocket-flask.

**EXT. SIDE-STREET - DAY**

Cordie moves along the pavement.

Graham closes in behind him. He steadies his breath, bites his lip, fighting to control his nerves.

A knife slips from Graham's sleeve into his hand.

Cordie reaches the curb. He spots a bus-stop on the opposite side of the road. Steps forward --

SCREECH of brakes. A car swings to the curb, cuts him off.

The driver's door swings open. AIDEN, early 20s, jumps out and levels a revolver. He wears a wool hat pulled low.

AIDEN

Cordie, you bastard--

Aiden stops dead. He looks past Cordie to Graham, likewise frozen, a step behind Cordie. They stare at one another...

HISS of air-brakes.

A bus trundles into view, heading towards them.

AIDEN

Get in the car.

Cordie's eyes remain fixed on the gun.

Aiden grabs Cordie by the scruff, drags him to the car. He opens the rear door and stuffs him inside.

Aiden looks up to find Graham moving for the driver's door.

AIDEN  
No way, piss off.

GRAHAM  
Piss off yourself.

AIDEN  
There's no way, no way--

He grabs him, Graham shucks him off. Aiden spots the knife.

AIDEN  
What you gonna do with that?

GRAHAM  
No' stand here yapping.

Graham ducks in behind the wheel, slams the door shut.

Aiden gives the roof an angry THUMP!

**INT. AIDEN'S CAR - DAY**

The vehicle lurches forward. Graham curses, struggling to engage the gear.

In back, Aiden braces himself. Cordie sits frozen beside him, the gun jammed in his ribs.

AIDEN  
Forget how to drive, man?

The engine stalls. Graham fumbles to restart it.

AIDEN  
Are you pissed?

GRAHAM  
It's this seat--

CLUNK! Graham slides the seat back. Cordie retreats behind his bag. The engine strains into life. Graham pulls away.

AIDEN  
Jesus, course you are. You'll get us both nicked!

GRAHAM  
I'm sober, enough. Where to?

AIDEN  
You're the one driving.

GRAHAM  
Don't get smart.

AIDEN  
Just drive to where you're parked.

GRAHAM  
I'm no' parked.

AIDEN  
What?

GRAHAM  
Took a bus.

AIDEN  
Are you serious?

GRAHAM  
Your Ma' needed the car.

AIDEN  
What was the plan? Stick the wee  
bastard an' catch a bus home?

GRAHAM  
Let's hear yours then.

AIDEN  
Mine? Aye, here's mine.

Aiden descends on Cordie with a series of body blows.

Graham watches in the rearview, growing uncomfortable as the beating continues.

AIDEN (O.S.)  
Waited seven years for this, you  
wee bastard.

Cordie curls defensively.

Aiden snatches the plastic bag from his grasp.

AIDEN  
Gimme that.

The bag tears open scattering personal affects -- a number of greeting cards among them.

AIDEN  
Your birthday Cordie?

He picks up a card, opens it. He scowls at the childish scrawl. It's signed: ROWENA.

AIDEN  
The fuck?

Cordie stares at Aiden, scared.

Aiden retrieves a handful of cards and flicks through them: Christmas, birthday, Easter...

He thrusts one forward to Graham.

AIDEN  
The fuck is this?

Graham looks down to see that same childish scrawl.

GRAHAM  
Don't look at me.

CORDIE  
She did nay post 'em herself.

GRAHAM  
Watch it, you.

Aiden grabs Cordie, presses the gun under his chin.

CORDIE  
They was sent to me.

Aiden sees red. He tosses the gun on the seat beside him and punches Cordie in the stomach over and over.

GRAHAM  
Pack it in.

The beating continues.

GRAHAM  
You'll be the one to get us a pull.

AIDEN  
Gimme the blade.

GRAHAM  
Hell no.

AIDEN  
Da'--

GRAHAM  
Think of the mess.

AIDEN  
Yous' a valet now?

GRAHAM  
Christ--

AIDEN  
You want him done or no'?

Graham wrestles with the idea. He shakes his head, grips the wheel in frustration.

AIDEN  
Think you can choke a man with a shoe?

Graham looks in the rearview -- Aiden watches with a sneer.

AIDEN  
Just pull over an' fuck off.

GRAHAM  
No.

AIDEN  
You mean no?

GRAHAM  
It's a main road.

AIDEN  
Use another road, man, they're all attached.

CORDIE  
I want to see her.

The argument stops dead.

Aiden stares at Cordie in stunned disbelief.

CORDIE  
I wanted to see her. I was on my way, I just want to see.

Aiden dives forward, paws at Graham for the knife. Graham struggles to steer and fend him off.

AIDEN  
Gimme the knife!

WHUMP! Aiden falls back into his seat palming a bloody nose.

AIDEN  
Christ.

GRAHAM  
Is it bleeding?

AIDEN  
It's no' running with wine.

GRAHAM  
I've a hanky--

CORDIE  
Take me to see her. Please.

AIDEN  
No fucking way.

CORDIE  
You don't even know where you're going. Take me to her, what happens after, I won't fight you.

He meets Graham's eyes in the rearview.

CORDIE  
I'm clean, been that way for years.

GRAHAM  
You lying to me?

CORDIE  
No lies. I need to do this, say what I need to.

AIDEN  
Don't you even--

Graham cuts the wheel to turn off.

AIDEN  
Stay on!

Cordie curls into the corner, head against the window.

Aiden pulls his hat off in frustration -- a mop of hair falls into place. Gone is the thug from moments before.

**INT. AIDEN'S CAR - DAY**

Parked at the curb. Houses line the street beyond the windows. The trio sit in silence.

Aiden broods. Tissue plugs trail from his nose.

AIDEN  
You're really gonna let him do  
this?

No answer.

AIDEN  
Think Ma'll let you just--

GRAHAM  
Your Ma's at work.

AIDEN  
Who's with Rowena?

GRAHAM  
Mrs Fenwick said she'd pop by.

AIDEN  
She's no' a fuckin' cat!

Graham bristles at the comment.

Aiden bites his tongue.

GRAHAM  
Gimme me the gun.

Aiden pouts.

GRAHAM  
You're no' waving that thing around  
inside, we've a new carpet.

A begrudged Aiden stuffs the revolver inside his hat and passes it to Graham.

AIDEN  
(to Cordie)  
One word out of line, I'll beat you  
raw, carpets or no'.



**INT. GRAHAM'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY**

Modest and homely.

Aiden broods impatiently.

Cordie takes in the family photographs and memorabilia lining the walls and sideboards.

One photo stands out. It shows a younger Graham and Aiden alongside a WOMAN and a GIRL. The Girl looks to be a little older than Aiden.

Graham perches at the base of the stairs.

GRAHAM

Shoes.

Aiden curses under his breath, sets to removing his shoes.

ELLEN (O.S.)

Don't bother.

Graham freezes.

They look up as one.

ELLEN, 50s, a weight of sadness in the way she holds herself. She stares down at them from the landing.

ELLEN

Bumped into Mrs Fenwick.

Graham takes a deep breath...

**INT. GRAHAM'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAY**

Ellen sits at a dining table.

ROWENA, mid 20s, rests in a wheelchair. A ragged scar creases her temple. Her eyes roam loose and unfocused. She wears a jumper embroidered with a bird motif.

Graham, Aiden and Cordie stand ranged around the room in varying states of awkwardness.

ELLEN

Something you'd like to tell me?

The trio shift their weight in silence.

ELLEN  
Am I speaking to myself?

GRAHAM  
They let him out.

ELLEN  
Has it been that long?

GRAHAM  
Wanted to tell you--

ELLEN  
You didn't.

CORDIE  
Was my idea. To stop. Was on our  
way someplace else.

ELLEN  
I won't ask where that someplace  
else is. Same as I won't ask where  
my best kitchen knife got to. I'll  
only ask that when you leave you  
don't come back.

She burns a look at Graham.

CORDIE  
I won't keep you.

Ellen studies him, weighing his intent. She nods.

Cordie takes a deep breath and steps forward.

AIDEN  
Stay where you are.

Rowena's face lights up, her hand twitches.

CORDIE  
She know me?

ELLEN  
She knows you.

AIDEN  
You hear me, Cordie?

ELLEN  
He heard you. We all heard you.  
Nothing wrong with our hearing,  
it's your manners need addressing.

Aiden bites his lip, chastened.

Cordie crouches before Rowena.

CORDIE

I got your cards.

He pulls several cards from the tattered bag.

Rowena seems pleased at this.

CORDIE

This one was for my twenty-first.  
Wouldn't let me have the badge,  
what with the pin an' all...

He holds up a card showing a pair of love-birds.

CORDIE

My favourite.

Rowena beams.

Cordie's smile fails. His head dips, a wave of emotion.

CORDIE

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry darlin'--

AIDEN

That's no' your darlin'. You put  
her through a windscreen, left her  
dyin' in the street while you ran  
away--

ELLEN

That's enough.

AIDEN

Spare me the shite, Ma', she didn't  
send those cards.

GRAHAM

That's no way to talk to your Ma'--

AIDEN

An' you'll what? You did nothing  
when she took up with this junkie  
prick an' you'll do nothing to  
right it now. You'll just keep  
runnin' off to get pissed...

Graham hangs his head.

AIDEN  
 ...or smile an' wish the bastard  
 merry Christmas, like it never  
 happened...

Ellen stands. She turns to a cupboard and pulls out a handful of sealed envelopes. She drops them onto the table. They fan out: Aiden. Son. Brother.

ELLEN  
 I knew where he was.

Aiden stares at the cards. He collects himself.

AIDEN  
 Get up, an' don't be leavin' that  
 crap.

Cordie stands.

ELLEN  
 This really who you are?

AIDEN  
 Someone's to be.

Fear sweeps Ellen's face. She summons her strength.

ELLEN  
 You'll stay for tea.

AIDEN  
 We'll no' stay for tea, Ma'.

ELLEN  
 You will. It's four, always tea at  
 four. Routine's important for  
 Rowena. And the birds.

She looks to Graham for support.

GRAHAM  
 Aye, routine.

AIDEN  
 We've someplace to be.

ELLEN  
 No place that can't wait.

She collects a blanket. Tactfully places herself between Aiden and Cordie as she shakes it out.

ELLEN  
 (to Cordie)  
 You get the chair, take her  
 outside, she'd like that.

Graham moves to help -- she bats him away.

ELLEN  
 There's a kettle won't fill itself.

Cordie takes hold of the wheelchair and maneuvers Rowena  
 towards the patio doors.

AIDEN  
 Ma--

ELLEN  
 There's a Jay takes the food from  
 your hand. She's a nest in the  
 Hawthorn. I'll not keep her  
 waiting.

She drapes the blanket on Rowena's lap and helps Cordie as  
 he backs through the doors. Off down the path they go...

Aiden slumps into a chair.

AIDEN  
 For Christ'sakes.

**INT. GRAHAM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

Graham waits for the kettle to boil. He slips Aiden's hat  
 from his pocket and unwraps the revolver. He turns it over  
 in his hand, his eyes tighten.

He looks to a knife block -- the largest slot empty.

His colour drains, sickened at the sight of it.

**INT. GRAHAM'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAY**

Aiden sits at the table. He thumbs the cards. He looks up to  
 see Graham watching from the doorway.

GRAHAM  
 Bit old for toys, son.

AIDEN  
 The look on his face was real  
 enough, eh?

GRAHAM  
That the plan?

Aiden shrugs.

AIDEN  
You?

Graham looks away. His eyes wander the room. He settles on Ellen and the others in the garden.

GRAHAM  
Out there everyday for nigh on a  
year. Patience of a saint your Ma'.

AIDEN  
From your hand?

GRAHAM  
A sight to see.

The kettle's WHISTLE reaches a pitch.

**EXT. GRAHAM'S HOUSE - BACK GARDEN - DAY**

Ellen crumbles bread into a bird-feeder.

She turns to see Graham. He places a tea-tray on a patio table and finds a seat beside Rowena.

Cordie still stands, shifts nervously.

ELLEN  
No' gonna sit for tea?

CORDIE  
I should get on.

Ellen looks back to see Aiden watching from the lounge. He looks away.

**INT. GRAHAM'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAY**

Aiden's attention drifts to the cards...

**EXT. GRAHAM'S HOUSE - BACK GARDEN - DAY**

Cordie gives Rowena a last look, turns --

Aiden approaches him from the path.

Cordie tenses.

Aiden sweeps past to take a seat beside his sister. He tweaks Rowena's jumper. She giggles.

AIDEN

Still got that old jumper, Sis'?  
... I wouldn't trust his tea. But  
his bus pass is good.

Cordie studies them both, hesitant.

GRAHAM

Aye. It's an all day.

AIDEN

Next one won't leave for a little  
while.

It's an invitation. The best he'll ever get. Cordie takes a seat at the table.

A faint smile from Ellen reveals her relief. She joins them.

AIDEN

Let's see shall we...

Aiden flicks through the envelopes, selects one, opens it.

Rowena gasps as a bird lands on the feeder. She puts a finger to her lips, bids them quiet.

She stretches out a crumb laden palm and waits...

**FADE OUT**