

‘The Bunker’

A short story by Oliver Escott

He can't remember how long he has been in here. He can't remember much at all. Days and nights have collapsed into each other, blending into one. It is as if time itself has died, just like everything else that existed outside of the bunker.

It is a lonely place. Cracked, grey concrete walls face him from every direction. The floor is like an ashtray, having collected the dust that occasionally flutters down from the cracks in the roof and vents. From the ceiling hangs a white light with a rusted lampshade, dangling perilously from above. The light constantly flickers on and off, in and out of life. It illuminates a tattered and torn mattress and a rotting wooden table, which, like everything else in the bunker, is slowly falling apart. Lastly, the light illuminates him. He has an old, tired face with hairs that are growing grey; his nails are long too. Tall and lanky, his hunchback is covered in brown rags that were once clothes.

Today is a special day. He is the last man on earth, and he is celebrating his birthday. Of course, he cannot be absolutely sure it is his birthday, but the voices told him so.

Despite the rustic and morbid nature of this concrete hall, there stands a pristine cupcake in the centre of the wooden table. It is expertly made; rainbow sprinkles generously coat the white frosting. Its wrapper is stripped away, revealing a chocolate base. A single, hopeful candle stands proudly atop the masterpiece, the orange glow of the candle flame brightens the room when the white ceiling light flickers off.

He doesn't know how it got there; he's not even sure whether it's real or not. The same goes for the voices and noises he hears. It didn't take long for the sounds to start. First he heard them in the vents, a scuttling, scratching sound. Sometimes he would hear a hiss and felt sure that he was being watched. He took it upon himself to look inside the vents one day, but he didn't find anything that could've caused the noise. However, he did find a clump of bloodied animal hairs. Since then, he has never been sure whether what he was hearing and seeing was real. He also heard the voices of his family, calling to him from between the cracks in the walls. They would ask him why he left them, wonder how he could leave their daughter, sneering that he

was a pathetic excuse for a man. He'd often dream of the day the bombs fell, and how his daughter begged and pleaded to be let in as the nuclear fire raged across the world.

He closes his eyes tight, going into the depths of his mind to make a final birthday wish. The bulb of the ceiling light finally flashes and blows a fuse. He keeps his gaze fixated on the candle light as he feels for something on the table. With the object in hand, he holds it to his head and blows the candle out; his last wish.