

DEADGEHOGS: THE SWORD OF POO-MAH-PARNTS

Written by

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EXT. SCONE SQUARE - NIGHT

High above a small city centre square, full of trees and bushes, surrounded by town houses.

It's after midnight, silent and still.

MR NESBIT (V.O.)

It's the quiet hours that gets me,
the darkest moment just before
dawn, that's when the voices in my
head grow louder, when they break
into my waking thoughts, compelling
me to ki-

LARKIN (V.O)

(Interrupting)

Are you doing a voiceover?

EXT. SCONE SQUARE BUSHES - NIGHT

Street level, in amongst the bushes with MR NESBIT and LARKIN.

MR NESBIT

Vlogging.

LARKIN

Really? Pretty dark for vlogging.

MR NESBIT

Vlogging's not all '*like and
subscribe*', Larkin. It can be real
soul vomit stuff - that's how you
connect: truth. Then it's '*like and
subscribe*'.

LARKIN

Really? I thought it was unboxing.

MR NESBIT

Unboxing of the heart.

LARKIN

Wow, very deep. Pity you don't have
a camera.

MR NESBIT

(gestures theatrically) My audience
is out there. They will find me.
They will hear my words.

LARKIN

Maybe, I don't know, if we go to the top of the slide they might hear you.

MR NESBIT

The top of the slide? Is that even possible?

LARKIN

We don't know till we try. Think of the sense of achievement.

MR NESBIT

None.

LARKIN

Plus we'd see the moon, and perhaps the muse might strike and-

MR NESBIT

Fluffing poetry? Again? Forget it.

LARKIN

(disappointed) No? OK, well maybe we'll just stay here then. On the ground. The low point. Where dreams die.

MR NESBIT

It's just the moon, Larkin.

LARKIN

But she's so round and beautiful and made of who-knows-what!

MR NESBIT

It's a rock! That's all! A fluffing ugly rock! If you want real beauty you should see my gold award for one million views on my '*Hedgehog has a bath*' video.

RORI bursts out of the bushes, excited and breathless.

RORI

(panting) Not tonight! We have a date with destiny!

LARKIN

The moon?

RORI

Better than the moon.

MR NESBIT

A warm bubble bath with paid for product placement by El-diablo Fizzy Bath Bombs.

RORI

Better than whatever that abomination is, Mr Nesbit.

LARKIN

So, no moon?

RORI

(excited, getting louder) Forget the moon! This is better than anything! I've found something extraordinary, Larkin. D'you hear me? Extraordinary! Extra! Ordinary!

LARKIN

Well, yes, of course I hear you. You're right there, and you're shouting. Please stop shouting. You're spitting on me.

MR NESBIT

Extraordinary would be the skinned carcass of the beast that did this to me. (points at scarred face) Revenge is a dish.

Long silence. Larkin and Rori wait. Mr Nesbit is far away, imagining inflicting horrible pain.

LARKIN

A dish best served cold?

MR NESBIT

Do I look like I care? This isn't a menu. It's revenge, that's all that matters.

RORI

Revenge can wait for another night.

MR NESBIT

Oh yes, it will wait, and fester, and grow!

RORI

Well, while that's simmering, you can both come with me! I have such wonders to show you.

LARKIN

Wonders?

RORI

OK, wonder, singular. Slight exaggeration. One extraordinary thing. But still amazing!

Rori leads them into the bushes. Larkin follows. Mr Nesbit waits, imagining her revenge.

MR NESBIT

(whispers into the night) I will have you, Cheesy Puff. Mark my words. One day, I will have my revenge. You will pay for what you did to my beautiful face.

Larkin pokes his head out of the bushes.

LARKIN

Coming, Mr Nesbit?

MR NESBIT

(flips from vengeance to smiles)
Yeah, wait for me!

Mr Nesbit follows Larkin into the bushes.

EXT. BUSHES - NIGHT

A small clearing in the bushes. CALASO is waiting beside a roll-up cigarette butt.

CALASO

(muttering) "Hello, Calaso, happy birthday!" Yes, they'll remember, I am sure. Might they sing? Yes, they will sing, their voices filled with love and joy. No, they won't sing. They won't even remember. They never remember. They hate me. Worse still, they hate themselves. No, no, they are good hedgehogs, Calaso, good hedgehogs. They will remember. And they will sing, with all of their hearts! Tonight will be a birthday like no other, you will see. Have faith, have faith.

(beat)

They hate me. I hate me!

RORI, LARKIN and MR NESBIT step out of the bushes.

CALASO (CONT'D)
(hides doubts behind giant grin) My
friends! An excellent night.

MR NESBIT
Jury's out.

LARKIN
Hope fills my heart, Calaso.

RORI
Thank you, I'll take it from here.

Rori nudges Calaso out of the way and stands triumphantly
next to the cigarette.

RORI (CONT'D)
Behold! Our ticket out of this mad
existence.

MR NESBIT
Where?

Rori gestures to the cigarette.

LARKIN
That? What is it?

RORI
Can't you tell? This is the fabled
Sword of Poo.

MR NESBIT
Sword of what now?

RORI
Poo.

MR NESBIT
Poo?

RORI
Don't pretend you didn't hear me.

LARKIN
The Sword of Poo-Mah-Parnt?

RORI
Thank you! At least you've heard of
it.

LARKIN
Of course. Which God-fearing
hedgehog hasn't?

Mr Nesbit and Calaso shrug.

CALASO

Looks like a cigarette to me. Would make a nice birthday present for someone. Maybe. If it was their birthday, you know?

RORI

This is the Sword of Poo-Mah-Parnts
-

MR NESBIT

(sniggering) Poo!

RORI

(Ignoring the interruption) - as foretold in legends of old.

LARKIN

All legends are old. That's sort of the point.

RORI

(Ignoring him) Don't you see? This is our ticket out of the Lay-by of Life and Death.

MR NESBIT

I'm not buying it.

LARKIN

It's written that the Sword of Poo -

MR NESBIT

(sniggering) Poo! Every time.

LARKIN

- can slice the very air open. Poo-Mah-Parnts was said to walk between life, death, and all the strange smelly bits in between.

MR NESBIT

'Said to'. Important detail. Who the fluff is Poo-Mah-Parnts anyway?

LARKIN

The Prophet of the Hedgehogs. He died for our sins so that we might live in peace.

MR NESBIT

We're dead, Larkin. Did you miss a meeting?

LARKIN

And yet we still live, sort of.

MR NESBIT

Sort of? If this is living, it's a furry, fluffy piece of shi-

RORI

Poo-Mah-Parnts transcended life and death. And so can we.

CALASO

You mean...?

RORI

We can leave this limbo and finally-

MR NESBIT

Live! What?

LARKIN

Die! What?

LARKIN (CONT'D)

We've already lived, Mr Nesbit, you shouldn't be greedy. Now we can finally die and be at peace.

MR NESBIT

Or... we can live again!

CALASO

Or... it's just a cigarette.

MR NESBIT

I could be reborn, but with even more followers! How do we do it?

RORI

Well... I'm sure it's quite simple.

Rori waves the cigarette in the air like a sword. Waits. Nothing happens. Tries again, more theatrically.

LARKIN

Magic words, maybe?

RORI

Oh, right, of course.

(Clears throat)

Oh great Poo-Mah-Parnts -

MR NESBIT
(Laughing) Sorry, carry on.

RORI
- hear our prayers and grant us the
mighty power of your sword!

Jabs again. Nothing. Lowers the cigarette, dejected.

MR NESBIT
Signal's not getting through.

LARKIN
Of course! We need to go higher!

RORI
(Higher pitched)
Oh great Poo-Mah-Parnts, hear our-

MR NESBIT
To higher ground! How did you not
die sooner?

Mr Nesbit leads the way. The others follow her to-

EXT. PLAYGROUND - NIGHT

A small area with a swing and climbing frame with a red
slide.

MR NESBIT appears from the undergrowth. RORI, carrying the
cigarette is close behind, followed by LARKIN and CALASO.

CALASO
... better things to do on a night
like this. I mean, it's just
another night, right? Not a special
date or anything. Who cares, in the
big scheme, yes?

LARKIN
Hush, please, Calaso.

They stop at the base of the slide. It's HUGE, a giant red
path into the starry night. The Dedgehogs are dwarfed by the
structure.

RORI
Didn't look so big from the other
side of the square.

MR NESBIT

How do we get up there? I don't climb.

LARKIN

It's just a hill, surely. A giant, red, slippery hill. Perhaps if we sang a marching song?

RORI

Grit and spunk! Gritty spunk! That's what we need!

MR NESBIT

No thank you.

RORI

Good old fashioned effort!

Rori climbs onto the slide and, with much effort, stands upright.

RORI (CONT'D)

(raises cigarette)

Onwards to glory!

She marches up the slide, struggles, slips, regains her footing, tries again, grows more determined, runs up, slipping, sliding, down into a heap.

She stands up, dusts herself down, tries again.

RORI (CONT'D)

This is one small slide for a hedgehog... ask not what your slide can do for you... ask what you can do for your slide... I am become death, destroyer of slides, Ich bin ein slide... this hedgehog's not for sliding!

Breathless, Rori struggles, claws her way up, up up! Then slides down to the bottom again.

RORI (CONT'D)

This will not defeat me, I swear! If it takes all night and all day I will...

(notices she's alone)

Where is everyone? I'm making an impassioned speech here.

LARKIN (O.S.)

Up here, Rori.

At the top of the slide is Larkin, Mr Nesbit and Calaso.

RORI
But... how did you...

MR NESBIT
There's some steps round the other
side. Not so good for speech-making
but easier on the legs.

Rori contains her rage, tries to think of a reply, then hops
off the slide and walks round to find the steps.

EXT. TOP OF SLIDE - NIGHT

Rori, breathless, muttering, joins the others at the top of
the slide.

RORI
... I was almost there. I mean, the
steps are fine, but I didn't need
them.

CALASO
Of course not.

RORI
Right. Here we are.

MR NESBIT
You brought the sword?

RORI
Fluff!

Rori, swordless, turns back to the stairs.

FAST FORWARD FX. The Deadgehogs stand, waiting.

Eventually, Rori returns with the cigarette, breathless.

RORI (CONT'D)
(panting) Here... not a problem...

MR NESBIT
Come on then! Make me live again!

RORI
(still gasping) ... Right...

Rori raises the cigarette once more.

RORI (CONT'D)
Oh... great... pain in my chest...

MR NESBIT
Ignore it, you're already dead.

RORI
(clutches chest) Can't breathe!

LARKIN
None of us can.

RORI
Arm... numb! My heart! Can't...

She tries to raise the cigarette higher but she struggles and drops it down the slide.

RORI (CONT'D)
What's my face doing? Does it look OK?

CALASO
One of your eyes is throbbing.

RORI
It always does that.

LARKIN
Someone's going to have to go back down there now.

MR NESBIT
Yes, someone.

She pushes Larkin down the slide. He <SCREAMS>

MR NESBIT (CONT'D)
And be quick about it! Looks like rain.

FAST FOWARD FX. Dark rain clouds zoom overhead.

Larkin, out of breath, returns with the cigarette.

RORI
Finally! Give it here.

LARKIN
Feeling better then?

RORI
My heart may be flat but it still beats to a warrior's rhythm.

CALASO

A warrior? That's good for where we're going.

RORI

(suddenly doubtful) What do you mean?

CALASO

You wield the sword.

RORI

Wield? I'd hardly call it wielding. A loose grip at best.

LARKIN

Oh, Calaso's right. The wielder of the Sword of Poo -

MR NESBIT

(Laughing) Sorry, I know, it's immature. Carry on.

LARKIN

The wielder of the sword will undergo many challenges and trials in the underworld before they receive their reward.

RORI

(Nervous) Trials? What sort of trials?

LARKIN

Heroic.

CALASO

Painful. Lots of things poked into your body.

RORI

Poked? I didn't ask for poking.

LARKIN

But think of the reward. We can finally leave this hellish place behind. You won't have to worry about us any more. We can finally be at peace, one among the millions of hedgehog souls.

RORI

One of millions? Doesn't sound like
I'll have much of a say in
things...

LARKIN

Not a bit! Isn't it delightful?

RORI

Trials? Poking? Obscurity? No, I've
changed my mind. Here.

Rori offers the cigarette to Larkin.

LARKIN

No, I'm not worthy.

Rori offers it to Calaso.

CALASO

I'm worthy, obviously, but not a
fan of all that glory and
limelight. Much more your thing.

Rori turns to Mr Nesbit.

MR NESBIT

Forget it.

RORI

(increasingly desperate)
Won't someone take this from me?
Please!

Rori jabs the cigarette upwards, just as lightning strikes!

Rori is scorched. The cigarette ignites - smoke surrounds
them.

MR NESBIT

The portal? Did it work?

LARKIN

I... I don't know.

CALASO

It's just thunder. And rain.

RORI

And... pain!

Calaso takes the burning cigarette from Rori's brittle hand
and inhales. She blows out smoke that covers the others.

CALASO

Thought so. Cigarette. (it hits her) Ohhh... special cigarette! Such a special day.

LARKIN

Ah, isn't it your birthday, Calaso?

CALASO

Finally! Someone remembered. You always were my favourite, Larkin. Here, try this.

Calaso puts the cigarette into Larkin's mouth.

LARKIN

(high) Happy... birthday...

Mr Nesbit has a go on the cigarette. She exhales on Rori. She takes the cigarette and has a go.

MR NESBIT

(tripping) Wow, this is different. Can you see the colours?

RORI

I see all the colours.

CALASO

I see only black.

LARKIN

I see Poo-Mah-Parnts.

Mr Nesbit <LAUGHS HISTRICALLY>. Rori join is.

CALASO

Where?

LARKIN

There! Can't you see him? A shape in the clouds.

There's a dark shape in the clouds, indistinct.

CALASO

(facing the opposite way) I just see the moon.

LARKIN

(turns round) The moon? Oh, yeah! I really wanted to see the moon. It's a birthday miracle.

The dark shape in the clouds become clearer - an ancient hedgehog adorned in beads and ceremonial robes: POO-MAH-PARNTS

POO-MAH-PARNTS
Hello? Who summoned me?

But all of the DEADGEHOGS are facing the other way, watching the moon.

RORI
The moon is so pretty, isn't it?

MR NESBIT
I've never really looked before,
but now you mention it...

POO-MAH-PARNTS
You have called upon the great Poo-
Mah-Pants - that's me, by the way.
Speak your desire and I shall grant
it.

RORI
Do you hear something?

LARKIN
What?

RORI
A sort of pretentious voice.

MR NESBIT
Just yours.

POO-MAH-PARNTS
You offend me! You are not worthy
of my blessings. May you remain in
this nether realm for the rest of
eternity... and then a little bit
longer. Until it is really, really
tedious and unfashionable.

A low rumble of thunder and Poo-Mah-Parnts disappears in a swirl of clouds. No one notices.

CALASO
(hugs Larkin) I saw the moon on my
birthday, with my special dead
friends.

LARKIN

And I shall immortalise it in a poem: Oh Moon, you are so big, and yet so far away... The end.

RORI

You know, I normally I detest your poetry but that was very moving, Larkin.

LARKIN

(realising) I detest poetry as well.

MR NESBIT

Does anyone think the moon looks fat?

CALASO

And a bit annoying?

RORI

It's quite showy, isn't it?

MR NESBIT

Big fluffing, stupid, annoying moon!

LARKIN

I'm hungry.

MR NESBIT

Yes! Me too. But we're dead. I wonder how that works?

CALASO

I saw a rotten chip by the side of the square earlier.

RORI

Lead the way, Calaso! Lead the way!

One by one, they tumble down the slide. Only Larkin remains, staring at the moon.

LARKIN

(quietly) Oh moon, I love you so. Go! I release you! Wander the cosmos and bring meaning to our existence.

(waits)

Go! You are free, great Moon of old. Go where you will.

(waits)

(MORE)

LARKIN (CONT'D)

Or stay, it's up to you, really.

(waits)

OK, see you tomorrow? Good. Love
you, bye.

Larkin steps onto the slide and whooshes out of sight.

END