THE BIRTHDAY

Written by

Caoimnín Mac an Bhreitheamhan

Based on the short story The Birthday.

INT. BASSEM’S BEDROOM - GAZA - MORNING - BASSEM’S

mother Youmna calls.

YOUMNA (O.S.)
Bassem! Bassem!

On the edge of his bed Bassem looks to the WALL CALENDAR. RED X’s mark past dates.

Beside, a POSTER of a RED HUFFY MOTO X KID'S BIKE.

THE BEDROOM

door opens. Youmna pokes her head in.

YOUMNA (CONT’D)
Bassem, Bassem! Time to get up -
the guests are arriving soon.

AT THE CALENDAR - BASSEM

puts a RED X on the days date. In the date box - Happy Birthday.

BASSEM
Finally, it’s here.

He touches the poster: It’s a RED HUFFY MOTO X KID’S BIKE - laughs, fist pumps the air.

BASSEM (CONT’D)
It’s mine

O.S., a loud buzzing sound.

BASSEM

at the window - looks out.

P.O.V. - BASSAM a drone flies outside the window.

BEDROOM DOOR

YOUMNA (O.S.)
Happy Birthday my love. Come, it’s
time to get washed.

She gives BASSEM a kiss, birthday hug. (beat)

INT. SITTING ROOM - DAY - BASSEM'S BROTHER - TARIQ

SISTER - NAJWA tease each other, chase their cousins. Aunts, uncles talk, laugh.

In the room - CHAIRS in a SEMI CIRCLE. In the apex - THE BIRTHDAY CHAIR.

GRANDPARENTS

arrive.

STAIRWAY

door - Youmna yells with

YOUMNA
Bassem everyone is here, we are waiting.

DOOR WAY - BASSEM

emerges to applause - he is mobbed with hugs, kisses. UNCLE HISHAM rubs the top of his head.

UNCLE HISHAM
You look pretty big for a seven year old. You are an image of your dad! Praise Allah.

YOUMNA
Come, come sit. OK everyone - take a seat please.

IN THE BIRTHDAY

chair - Bassem. Youmna passes him gifts.

BASSEM HOLDS UP

a RED JUMPER - he shrugs.

YOUMNA (CONT'D)
Put it on, let me see if it fits.

BASSEM IN

the red jumper - a perfect fit.

MONTAGE

Youmna hands Bassem several gifts - he unwraps

- shoes

- a shirt

- socks

he hides his disappointment.

BASSEM UNWRAPS

underpants - rolls his eyes.

YOUMNA
Ok everyone, that's it. Can we...

Bassem's GRANDFATHER - KHALIL interrupts with

KHALIL
Wait, wait - one more gift.

He gives Bassem a rectangular THREE INCH THICK BOX.

BASSEM
Wow. This is heavy. What is it?

BASSEM

peels off the wrapping: It's a BOOK. He holds it up -

INSERT COVER

A PICTURE HISTORY OF PALESTINE.

BASSEM (CONT'D)
Oh, thank you, thank you.

OPENING THE BOOK -

INSERT

Chapter One - PALESTINE BEFORE AL NAKBA.

BASSEM (CONT'D)
This is so lovely. How did you know
I wanted this?

Khalil laughs.

KHALIL
It is important to know your
history, Enjoy!

A RADIO

fills the room with music.

Tariq, Najwa tease Bassem with -

NAJWA
Show us your underpants.

TARIQ
Show us your underpants

Tariq holds them up - a trophy. Bassem protests with

BASSEM
Stop it, stop it! Mom! Tell them to stop!

YOUMNA
Now, now, be nice to your brother - it's his birthday after all.

BASSEM

at the window - looks out. (beat)

BASSEM
(to himself)
Is this it?

Bassem's father - JAMAL, interrupts with

JAMAL
You know Bassem, this life, it is difficult here. Sometimes we have to make sacrifices we don't like. Every day we must work hard to make the best we can of our lives.

BASSEM
(pointing)
Look Dad, it's another one.

P.O.V. - BASSEM/JAMAL a DRONE hovers outside the window - flies off.

JAMAL
Ok Bassem. We will play a little game. Turn around. You must wear this blindfold; don't worry you can trust me.

Blindfolded - Jamal leads Bassem across the living room to the stairwell leading outside.

EXT. BALCONY - DAY - THE

guests wait.

KHALIL
What a day for Bassem. (He)

YOUMNA
(interrupting)
Shhh, we are to be invisible.

The guests look to the street below, watch the -

FRONT DOOR - BASSEM

Jamal emerge onto the pavement.

JAMAL
OK Bassem. Don’t move.

JAMAL

carries the RED HUFFY MOTO X BIKE - kicks out its stand.

BASSEM
What's happening?

JAMAL
OK Bassem, are you ready?

Bassem nods. Jamal spins him around.

JAMAL (CONT’D)
One, two, three!

The blindfold removed.

Bassem finds his balance.

O.S., applause - cheering from the balcony.

BASSEM
Dad, Dad, DAD! Praise be to Allah,
it’s the Huffy Moto X Bike.

O.S., the balcony guests yell approval

ROAD

Bassem rides up and down the road. Does circles around Jamal.

JAMAL
You’re a natural, a natural.

BASSEM

beams.

BASSEM
It’s a dream, it’s a dream.

O.S., singing, clapping, then -

DARKNESS.

EXT. RUBBLE PILE - DAY - A PALE

HAND POKES out from the rubble.