



APOCALYPSE SOONISH

by Verity Budd

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APOCALYPSE SOONISH

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CHARACTERS

Character A *The older of the two by at least five very visible years.*

Character B *Younger and acts like it most of the time. Is more outwardly affected by the events, but could be misconstrued as just general sensitivity*

Reporter *A voiceover role, prim and proper newsreader type.*

A BUNKER- UNSPECIFIED TIME OF DAY/NIGHT.IT IS DARK.IN THE BUNKER THERE ARE CUPBOARDS AND SHELVES STOCKED WITH CANNED FOOD, AND ON THE FLOOR NEXT TO THIS DECENTLY SIZED PANTRY IS WHAT WILL BE REVEALED AS AN ELECTRICITY GENERATOR AND WATER PUMP, WHICH POWERS THE TEA MAKING FACILITIES, LIGHTS, AND MEDIOCRE FORMS OF CONTACT TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD. THIS IS A BUNKER DESIGNED BY A PARANOID PERSON. AN ARCHAIC PARANOID PERSON AS MOST OF THE SUPPLIES HAVE GAINED A LAYER OF DUST AND THE LABELS HAVEN'T BEEN SEEN SINCE THE LATE 80S.A SINGLE MATTRESS SITS IN THE CORNER PERPENDICULAR TO A WOODEN BENCH AND TABLE. THE SCENE IS STILL, DESPITE THE CONSTANT MUFFLED AIR RAID SIREN.

We hear a dull metallic bang as some distant light appears, the air raid siren clear and unnerving. The light is covered partially by the moving shadow of a person that gets larger.

CHARACTER A

(offstage, distant,
desperate)

Run! Get in there quickly, for
Christ's sake!

CHARACTER B runs in, wide eyed and out of breath. They turn to the door as a similarly frantic moving silhouette covers the light on their face. There is a pause as the metallic bang happens again, throwing the scene into complete darkness, the siren muffled again yet continuing. CHARACTER A emerges from the stairway slowly, equally out of breath. They stand in the darkness for a second, trying to recover.

CHARACTER B

There were people we could have
taken.

CHARACTER A

It's a two person bunker.

CHARACTER B

They could have squeezed in.

CHARACTER A

I didn't see you trying to squeeze
anyone in whilst you were sprinting
for safety. Just be grateful you're
here.

CHARACTER B

I am, I am! We just-

CHARACTER A

We just what?

CHARACTER B

Never mind.

There is silence for a moment.

CHARACTER A

If you're trying to mouth a name at
me, it isn't working.

CHARACTER B

They sigh, dejected, defeated.
It's really dark in here.

CHARACTER A

Well, there's hardly going to be
natural light in here.

CHARACTER B

That's what it needs! A sun roof!

CHARACTER A

There's a switch somewhere.

They slap the walls a few times before hitting the switch,
the old light bulbs still peculiarly bright in contrast to
the darkness previously.

Quite cozy. Quite nice.

CHARACTER B

Quite. What is this place?

CHARACTER A

A bunker.

CHARACTER B

I got that bit but why is it here?

CHARACTER A

Dad made it.

CHARACTER B

Ah.

CHARACTER A

He never took you here?

CHARACTER B

It must have been before my time.

CHARACTER A

It wasn't.

CHARACTER B

Well, he must have forgotten to
show me.

CHARACTER A

He's always been paranoid, hasn't
he? He made this in the 80s just in
case the USSR decided to attack and
overestimated the distance the
bombs would go.

They pick up a can opener thrown onto the counter top.

CHARACTER B

Explains the self defence classes.

CHARACTER A

And the fire drills.

CHARACTER B

He doesn't do those anymore.

CHARACTER A

They visibly tense up, knowing what their sibling is trying to talk about

No, he doesn't.

CHARACTER B

Because he's dead.

CHARACTER A

They return the can opener to the top with deliberate slow movements.

Yes, we know that.

CHARACTER B

Really? We haven't been talking about it. I'm surprised that you even remember you had a dad, judging by the amount of times you mention him. I mean, we were just rifling through his things less than a minute ago.

CHARACTER A

Do you really think this is the right time? We can talk about this later.

CHARACTER B

How long will that be then? An hour? God forbid another minute of agonising waiting, listening to that fucking siren!

CHARACTER A

We'll be fine!

CHARACTER B

A bunker from the fucking 80s isn't going to stop bloody...armageddon.

They drop down onto the bench with an audible crack, the wood not used to the weight of a person.

CHARACTER A

But it might slow it down. Do you have to be such a prick? I've given you a better chance at life than the other poor saps out there!

CHARACTER B

No, Dad did! You just took credit for it!

CHARACTER A

Well I fucking inherited it when he dropped dead!

CHARACTER B

How can you say that?

CHARACTER A

Easily!

They both sigh, exhausted at each other. The silence left from their lack of words is incomplete, the siren still muffled up above.

(calm, yet with tinges of residual annoyance)

Look, turn on the radio, will you?

CHARACTER B doesn't respond, instead looking down at the floor, taking deep breaths.

Come on, we're not doing this again are we?

Beat.

We're doing this again. Okay, just remind me: how old are you?

Beat, then a sigh from A

I thought you would have given up giving me the silent treatment after an argument by now. We're not children anymore.

Beat.

Look, I'm sorry. I'm genuinely sorry.

CHARACTER B

Are you?

CHARACTER A

Yes, I am. This situation doesn't exactly bring out the best in people, does it? Is the apology accepted?

CHARACTER B

(mumbling)

Yes.

CHARACTER A

What was that?

CHARACTER B

Yes! Your apology is accepted.

CHARACTER A

Well, isn't that good? Now, will you please turn on the radio. It's by your feet.

CHARACTER B

Fine.

CHARACTER A

Thank you.

CHARACTER B

They grab the radio, small and stocky. Its long antenna wobbling with slight movement.

(sniffing)

How does it work?

CHARACTER A

It's wind-up. The handle folds out.

CHARACTER B

Got it.

CHARACTER A

Just start winding it and we'll be able to hear something soon.

They look towards the cupboards and water tank, an idea forming on their face.

Do you want a drink? There's somehow working plumbing. I can't be certain it's safe but it's better than nothing.

CHARACTER B

What are my options?

CHARACTER A

Well, there's suspiciously clear water...

CHARACTER B

And?

CHARACTER A

That's it really.

They turn around and pick up the electric kettle.
We could spice it up by boiling it.

Opening the cupboards, there is four boxes of teabags in the corner of one of them, made even more obvious in contrast to the rest of the contents of the cupboards: more cans.

Tea! We've got tea!

CHARACTER B

What about coffee?

CHARACTER A

Dad wasn't adventurous enough for coffee apparently. Although there could be a can but I've gone can blind.

They blink deliberately and rub their face.

CHARACTER B

Tea then.

CHARACTER A

Righty-o.

They take a box out of the cupboard and study it, bringing it further away from their face then suddenly closer.

CHARACTER B

The radio emits a faint sound, slowly recognisable as a song. The song is ironic and pretentious and definitely old. Think Enola Gay, It's the End of the World As We Know it, Two Tribes.

Got something!

CHARACTER A

They run over, still holding the box, to try to listen.

What is it? What does it say?

CHARACTER B

The music is slightly louder.

(more desperate)

Is it code? I never bothered to learn morse in guides, the badge was ugly!

CHARACTER A

It's synth. It's just music.

CHARACTER B

Oh.

They straighten their back, slightly disappointed and evidently confused, going by the furrowing brow.

Why would a radio play music at the end of the world?

CHARACTER A

Titanic.

CHARACTER B

Celine Dion hasn't had a hit in years.

CHARACTER A

No, the actual event.

CHARACTER B

The film was based on actual events?

CHARACTER A

Looks at B in a wild exasperation.

CHARACTER B

I'm joking!

CHARACTER A

I hope so. Try and get it to a news station.

CHARACTER B

Where would that be?

CHARACTER A

Just twist the knob and listen for sounds.

CHARACTER B

I beg your pardon?

CHARACTER A

Twist it. Now.

CHARACTER B

Okay, I'll find the news.

We hear static and snippets of the same song as the radio finds its way through different stations.

CHARACTER B

Do all songs with synth sound the same?

CHARACTER A

No, we just happen to live in the range of some very smug yet bland djs.

After the line, a voice cuts through, finishing a line. Then a stereotypical newsflash sound clip preceding a woman, posh and proper, enunciates the report perfectly.

REPORTER

In breaking news, the Prime Minister has stated in a rushed announcement that the U.K are preparing their nuclear warheads, an attempt at defense in a cloud of threats and actions. Just 10 minutes ago, the sirens were played, warning all civilians to head for whatever safety they could find as the USA and Russia

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