

Lumpy Gravy

by

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INT. PETERS HOUSEHOLD, DINING ROOM - DAY

1

Dinner is served. The vegetables look like mash. The trimmings are burnt. The gravy is hard. MUM places a dry chicken in the centre and sits head at the table.

MUM

Dig in.

Her guests look at their food with scepticism. DEREK, who's moustache and hair colour clearly don't match, hacks away at the meat. He passes a slice to sour faced PAT on his right. To his left, slim SHEILA reluctantly reaches for the broccoli slush. Opposite her sits NAN, contempt in her own cuckoo world. Then it's CHARLOTTE, fifteen and pretty. She nudges GAZ, the fifteen year old mess next to her. Gaz grudgingly takes a mouthful of food.

GAZ

Mmm. So many...
(gulps)
...flavours.

Mum glares coldly at him before turning to Derek.

MUM

More gravy?

NAN

You what dear?

MUM

I was just asking Derek if he wanted more gravy.

NAN

Speak up.

MUM

MORE. GRAVY.

Nan looks down at her plate.

NAN (CONT'D)

I don't think so dear. There are lumps in it.

Mum turns a blind eye and focuses on Pat. She speaks slowly and clear as if communicating with the mentally challenged.

MUM

PAT. WOULD YOU LIKE SOME EXTRA ROAST POTATOES? THERE'S PLENTY.

Not quite understanding why she's being treated as deaf and dumb, PAT painfully squeals that she has no voice.

DEREK

Best she doesn't. Carbohydrates
clearly cling.

MUM

How about you Sheila? Surely
you're not dieting.

Sheila looks down at her dinner and considers it. The doorbell rings. Like an excited child, Mum shoots up from her chair and darts out the room. Her guests take the opportunity to scrape a little food off their plates.

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INT. PETERS HOUSEHOLD, RECEPTION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

2

Mum charges towards the front door and opens it. Her enthusiasm is met by a gloomy JAMES, nineteen and wishing he was anywhere else. Mum throws her arms around him.

MUM

I had a horrible feeling you were
going to cancel on me.

James waits for the hug to end but it goes on forever.

JAMES

Traffic was terrible.

She finally lets go and ushers him inside.

MUM

I did say to come smart.

JAMES

This is smart.

MUM

I ought to take you shopping.

JAMES

Can't you just give me the money
instead?

MUM

You've lost weight.

James tuts whilst removing his jacket before spotting Nan wandering through looking lost. He greets her with a kiss. Nan lifts her head with tremendous strain.

NAN

Have you always been this tall?

JAMES

You're shrinking. How's the ear?

Nan replies with a sad pathetic look.

NAN
They lost on penalties.

Mum gently guides her back towards the dining room...

MUM
Why don't you rejoin the others?

...and pushes her inside before closing the door.

JAMES
Others?

MUM
Now before we go in...

JAMES
You haven't invited half the
village have you?

MUM
...I need you to know the only
thing I've ever wanted is for us
to be happy. As a family.

James nods, encouraging her to get to the point.

MUM
I've discovered Buddhism.

He stares at his conservative mother. She couldn't be more
Christian if she tried.

JAMES
Okay.

He waits for more but it doesn't come. He glances at the
door handle.

JAMES
So who's in there?

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INT. PETERS HOUSEHOLD, DINING ROOM - DAY

3

The adults watch appalled as Gaz fiddles with the thick
iron bar pierced through his tongue.

MUM
Better late than never.

Mum leads James inside, somewhat overwhelmed by the number
of eyes fixed on him. Derek stands.

DEREK

James. So good to see you again.

A manly handshake across the table.

DEREK

You look all grown up. How have you been?

JAMES

Fine. You know. Fine.

DEREK

Fantastic news.

JAMES

Mum says you're recently married.

Derek nods with pride.

DEREK

Vegas wedding. And honeymoon. She's a real beauty.

James looks at the women sat either side of Derek. He chooses Sheila.

JAMES

Congratulations.

Sheila smiles but signals at Pat, who's face has become impossibly more sour.

DEREK

James. Meet Pat. She has cancer.

An awkward pause.

JAMES

Congratulations.

Mum swiftly changes the subject.

MUM

Don't you remember Sheila? From church? Always there. All those years. In the background. Somewhere.

SHEILA

You make me sound like the village plant pot.

Sheila forces a smile.

SHEILA

Well I remember you James. Ever since you were young boy. And now look at you.

She glances up and down.

SHEILA

A fully grown man.

Mum swiftly changes the subject again.

MUM

Have you met Gaz? Your sister's latest attempt at trying to make me lose my rag?

Charlotte shoots dagger eyes at Mum. Both James and Gaz offer a single nod as a greeting.

MUM

Sit down James, we've all got so much to catch up on.

James takes a seat. The table is silent. Eventually...

SHEILA

(to Mum)

Haven't seen you at church much.

Mum decides now is a good time to pour herself a LARGE glass of wine. Derek reaches across the table and takes Mum's hand.

DEREK

He's gone to a better place.

Mum takes her hand away.

MUM

My faith is fine.

Sheila's expression suggests otherwise.

MUM (CONT'D)

What is it you think you know?

SHEILA

Well... you said I could help myself to your old books.

(addresses table)

So I was browsing though them when I came across your Bible.

She slyly looks back at Mum.

MUM

Oh. I see.

Mum takes a LARGE gulp from her glass.

SHEILA

There were pages that...

MUM

...were torn out, yes, thank you Sheila. They're just passages I don't agree with.

Mum glances around the table, realising everyone is interested in hearing which ones.

MUM

Pages condemning homosexuality.

Charlotte smiles at James, who simply rolls his eyes.

MUM

Anyone else for wine? HOW ABOUT YOU PAT?

Pat mimes that she has no voice.

DEREK

It's best she doesn't drink too much. Chemo Bladder. At Christmas she managed to wet herself and spray the cat at the same time.

They all become distracted by Nan dropping off to sleep at the dinner table.

MUM

Please tell me you haven't already taken your pills.

Mum walks around the table.

MUM

Better get you comfortable.

She tries to lift Nan up.

NAN

What are you doing?

MUM

Moving you to the sofa next door.

NAN

I don't want to move.

MUM
But you're falling asleep.

NAN
WHAT?

As Mum lifts her off the chair, Nan lets one off. The eruption is followed by silence.

NAN (CONT'D)
Okay dear. Move me to the sofa.

As the women struggle out the room, Mum's guests take the opportunity to scrape a little more food off their plates.

4 **INT. PETERS HOUSEHOLD, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS** 4

Mum manages to get Nan to the sofa.

MUM
I keep telling you, those pills
are for AFTER you've eaten.

NAN
And I keep telling you that I'm
NOT tired.

Mum closes her eyes and breathes deeply, controlling her temper by finding inner strength. Suspicious to the silence that follows, she opens her eyes to find Nan *has* fallen asleep. She attempts to make her comfortable with cushions but Nan is heavy and flimsy.

MUM
Difficult. Even when unconscious.

Mum leaves Nan laying in an awkward position.

5 **INT. PETERS HOUSEHOLD, DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS** 5

Mum rejoins her guests, slipping back into Hostess.

MUM
SO PAT. ANY PLANS FOR CHILDREN?

Pat sighs and mimes that she has no voice.

DEREK
I think it's a little late for
that. Pat's no spring chicken.

Mum turns to Sheila.

MUM
How's Peter?

SHEILA
The usual. Busy with work.
Distracted by girls.

Sheila turns to James.

SHEILA
Anyone to distract you at the
moment James?

James shyly shakes his head.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
I wouldn't have thought you'd
find it hard getting a nice girl.

Sheila looks deep into his eyes.

SHEILA
Or perhaps you'd prefer a woman.

Mum's eyes widen.

MUM
James is gay.

JAMES
Mum.

Mum realises her outburst.

MUM
Yes dear?

JAMES
James. Gay. Private.

MUM
I'm just starting conversation.
There's no need to be ashamed.

Mum spots the anger in her son's eyes.

MUM
I mean whoever it concerns within
the gay community.

JAMES
I'll pass that on. The community
will find it fabulous.

Mum quickly addresses the table.

MUM

Did you know that eighty percent of aggressive homophobics are self loathing repressed gay men themselves?

They all shake their heads.

MUM (CONT'D)

It proves that it's unhealthy to keep it pent up inside.

Witnessing her son's horror, she cautiously adds...

MUM

Just a comment on the topic, that's all.

Sheila breaks the tension by lighting up a cigarette.

MUM (CONT'D)

Actually Sheila, this is a non smoking house. I don't even own an ashtray.

SHEILA

Oh. Where shall I flick my ash then?

MUM

Somewhere as filthy as the habit?

Sheila's eyes wander around the dinner table. She picks up the vase from the middle and looks inside. Mum watches with fury as she flicks her ash.

Out of no-where, Pat stands from her seat and starts clapping at James. He turns to Charlotte for help but she's too busy trying not to laugh. Pat eventually stops her applause and sits back down. Mum squeezes her hand to show her support is appreciated.

DEREK

I must say, this is quite the coincidence. Only the other night Pat and I were watching Brokeback Mountain. Have you seen it James? It has homosexual cowboys.

MUM

Actually Derek, James doesn't like the word homosexual.

(whispers)

He finds it too formal.

James closes his eyes, wishing the ground would just hurry up and swallow.

DEREK
(whispers back)
What should I call it?

MUM
Gay is fine.

Derek turns back to James.

DEREK
What's gay like these days?

JAMES
(deadpan)
The gayest.

Mum raises her head inquisitively.

JAMES
(snaps)
It means it's full of gayness.

Mum wonders what on earth he means. She doesn't dare ask.

SHEILA
Well I agree with Pat. It's all
very courageous. Although, the
health issue still concerns me.

She inhales from her cigarette.

MUM
If you're talking about sexually
related diseases Sheila, I agree
they are more commonly found with
gay men. But as long as James is
having safe sex, that reduces the
risk of him becoming infected.

James couldn't be any more mortified. Until...

MUM
Are you having safe sex James?

The table nosily waits for an answer. He decides there's no other alternative.

JAMES
Charlotte's pregnant.

Everyone looks at Charlotte. They wait for her response but she's simply too stunned to answer.

MUM
Charlotte. Honey. It's okay. I'm
not mad. I just need to know one
thing. Is it Gaz's?

Charlotte gasps that Mum could ask such a thing. She turns to Gaz, who's expression asks the exact same question.

CHARLOTTE

YES.

Both Mum and Gaz hang their heads with disappointment.

MUM

Why weren't YOU having safe sex?

CHARLOTTE

We're not having this conversation right now.

MUM

Well it appears I should have bought it up months ago.

CHARLOTTE

You said you weren't mad.

MUM

At you Honey.

She looks at Gaz with disgust.

MUM

Honestly. It'll grunt until the baby reaches two, then take it out for matching piercings.

CHARLOTTE

I knew you wouldn't be able to resist putting him down. Why can't you accept that I love him?

MUM

Oh for goodness sake. You don't love him. You love the fact that I can't stand him.

Charlotte struggles to answer back. She turns to James instead.

CHARLOTTE

Nice work, Sperm Burper.

MUM

Well it's not his fault.

CHARLOTTE

No. Golden Boy can do no wrong. I bet you'd be over the moon if he'd got some bird up the duff.

Mum gasps.

MUM

He can't have children.

JAMES

I'm not impotent.

CHARLOTTE

I'm sure a knee in the groin
could get that arranged.

MUM

That's enough.

CHARLOTTE

Finally. Something we agree on.

Argument over. Until...

SHEILA

I don't wish to intrude...

MUM

Then don't.

SHEILA

Excuse me?

MUM

Excused. Why are you here anyway?

SHEILA

I'm not entirely sure. I came to
drop off some leaflets and you
assumed I was staying for dinner.

MUM

So I didn't invite you then. For
a moment I was starting to
question my own judgment. I don't
think I've EVER liked you.

SHEILA

(points to plate)

Which explains why you tried to
poison me.

DEREK

Ladies.

SHEILA

This household has lost all
stability. The mother gone wild.
The daughter easy. The son a
navigator of the windward
passage.

Confusion spreads across everyone's faces.

MUM

Now you listen here. Just because nature gave you those bony rake hips only suitable for baring your one Perfect Peter...

DEREK

Let's avoid getting personal.

MUM

Personal? That's rich. Coming from a man who talks about his wife the way you do? And making decisions for her? Sometimes a woman likes to make up her own mind, isn't that right Pat?

Pat begins to mime...

MUM (CONT'D)

Oh shut up.

SHEILA

I've had enough of this rudeness.

Sheila theatrically stands.

DEREK

Hang on. Let's talk this through.
(to mum)
Perhaps you should apologise.

SHEILA

Be more specific Derek. For her behaviour or the food?

Jibe in, Sheila smugly leaves. Mum follows.

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INT. PETERS HOUSEHOLD, RECEPTION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

6

Mum speed walks past Sheila, beating her to the front door. She opens it...

SHEILA

Quite frankly, I'm insulted by your hospitality.

MUM

Well I'm insulted by your beehive hairstyle.

...and slams it shut before storming back to the others.

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INT. PETERS HOUSEHOLD, DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

7

James gawks at his unstable mother, strangely proud that she's capable of such emotion.

JAMES

Buddhism really suits you.

The tension is heightened with the arrival of Nan.

NAN

What's all this racket?

Her voice only infuriates Mum further. She picks up the gravy jug and turns aggressively

MUM

YOU WANT SOME AS WELL DO YOU?

Nan looks at the jug then back at her daughter.

NAN

No. I've told you. It's lumpy.