

THE LAST BAGEL

Written by

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FADE IN ON:

EXT. POST-APOCALYPTIC WASTELAND

Wind moans over sand swept devastation. Between two piles of building rubble:

A half-buried STEEL DOOR. The only sign of lasting life, a scrawled sign on it declares:

"Warning! Nuclear Waste inside. If you want to keep your skin, stay the fuck out!"

INT. FALL-OUT SHELTER

Claustrophobic and grimy. A 7/11 basement would have more charm. Similar decor, too:

Folding chairs. Metal shelving along cement walls. On those shelves: cans of food. Much of it's already been raided. Empty spaces flash gap-toothed smiles.

A dwindling supply, since the world fell apart. A shrinking population, too. Specially: 3.5 inhabitants.

BENNY (50s) - portly and bespectacled, his look howls "accountant" through and through.

Benny peruses the shelves for nourishment. Squints at a label of "Canned Beets" and gags.

TRISH (20s) sits backwards in a chair and watches; almost thin enough to see through. A touch of defiant punk color brightens the tip of her bangs. The rest of it's grown out.

At her feet: MAX - scrawny JACK RUSSELL ribs protrude as he pants. His eyes still show plenty of spirit... though lack of food could slow him down.

EDWARD (20s) - nerd/slacker extraordinaire, he lies on mattress, bored. And throws a tennis ball at the ceiling.

It arcs back down; Edward fails to catch the ball. It BOPS him in the nose.

EDWARD

Ow!

TRISH

(snorts)

You've been doing that for hours.
You haven't learned to catch yet?

BENNY

Hours? Correction: Days. Months.
Then again, who's counting?

TRISH

You. Mr. "Numbers Guy."

BENNY

That's "Inventory Administrator",
to you! As we should all recognize
by now, tight control of supplies
in any apocalyptic event such as
this is literally Life and Death.
Nothing to make light of, for sure!

Edward digs the ball out of the mattress, and resumes his
throwing game. Mindless movement. Up and down.

The tennis ball SQUEAKS. Max's ears perk up.

Benny separates intact cans from dented - moves them around
on shelves like chess pawns.

BENNY

Hmmmm - perhaps separating by
protein percentage is in order
here?

TRISH

Lima Beans aren't "Life and Death".
What happened to Randolph is!

BENNY

Face it, we would *all* starve if not
for my efforts here. What happened
to Randolph proves my point -

EDWARD

Randolph was no-where near
starving. He snarked a Reddi Whip
can and ran out.

TRISH

Yeah - sugar high-tailed it right
into the radioactive zone!

EDWARD

You don't know. Maybe he's still
alive?

TRISH

Nuh-uh. I saw it through the
window.

Trish points towards a slab of half-melted glass.

TRISH

He liquified before the
intersection of *Thorn* and *Burberry*.
All that was left of Randy was his
shirt. And that got buried quick in
sand.

BENNY

Just his shirt, not his pants?

EDWARD

You were in back, counting cans.
And missed the entertainment.
Randolph ran out totes commando.
Just went stir crazy, I guess.

Trish frowns at a prison-style calendar on a wall. The black
marks go on endlessly. Marking a year of hell - at least.

TRISH

Boredom's driving us nuts, one by
one. All we have is each other...

Edward smiles hopefully towards the girl.

TRISH

Now even Randy's gone. This sucks!

Edward's face falls. Busy Benny keeps rummaging, hums.

BENNY

In times like these, it's best to
embrace the *simple* things in life!

Trish stomps over, grabs a can from Ben's hands.

TRISH

"Simple." You mean like Shop Rite
Cream Corn? No thanks, *Benjamin*.

BENNY

How many times do I have to correct
you? That's "Benny". Please.

TRISH

I don't care how much of a "gourmet
cook" you think you are, there's no
way to make this taste good!

She rifles through other options. Winces at what she sees:

TRISH
Okra? Gross. Spam? Even worse!

Max picks up his head, whines happily.

TRISH
Puppy, I promise. It's all yours!

Trish digs deeper. CLANG. Hits something metal. Stops.

TRISH
What's that?

BENNY
Not a Shop Rite canister. That's a wholly different sound.

Ben parts the cans like Moses' Red Sea and pulls out:

A METAL BOX with a scuffed-up window. Something heavy rattles inside.

EDWARD
That might be radioactive. Dude, watch out!

BENNY
Go back to your game of fetch, Mattress Boy. This is the last place on Earth that *isn't* radioactive. Remember: that sign on the door's a ruse to keep looters and the feeble minded out!

Ben rubs the tarnished label on the device. Revealing:

BENNY
"Bed Bath and Beyond Bread Box."
Hmmm - outstanding quality. The question remains, what's inside?

TRISH
I'm guessing: Garlic Bread.
Wouldn't that be epic? Yum!

EDWARD
You kidding? Garlic Bread's "Garlic" 'cause it's almost past expiration. Who would try to preserve that?

TRISH
Maybe a Croissant? A Twinkie?
Anything caloric works for me!

Benny and Trish squint at the bread-window. In silhouette, Trish sees a torus shape:

TRISH

A donut? I was right. Score! Is it chocolate or powdered?

She reaches for the bread box. Ben grabs her wrist - quick.

BENNY

You know how long this has been waiting for us? If you open it, but don't eat instantly, the air's sure to ruin what's left.

TRISH

So? I'm down with that. Meal-time!

She reaches once more. Again, gets blocked.

BENNY

Have patience, Girl! You think we'll ever find another? This is a last-in-a-lifetime delicacy. And so not an event to be rushed.

Holding the box to his ear, Benny shakes it gently. THUNK.

TRISH

Stop. You'll ruin it!

BENNY

It doesn't sound fragile. Not very donut-y, in fact.

A few more shakes. No chocolate smears or flying powder seen.

BENNY

But if it isn't that, what could it be? Wait. It couldn't - and yet *could* be..!

Ben's round face lights up like Christmas. He turns to Trish with glee.

BENNY

This is no mere donut.

TRISH

It's not? Dammit. Fuck me!

BENNY

My child, don't despair. Celebrate!

Edward groans from the mattress.

EDWARD

In this Hell hole? What for?

BENNY

Because here in my hands lies an unexpected delicacy. Something far more durable than some paltry pastry.

TRISH

Enough with the dramatics. Spit it out!

BENNY

(chuckles)

Oh, you won't want to do that. This is a treasure to be savored.

TRISH

Savor what, Mr. Numbers Guy?

BENNY

This - the last bagel on Earth!

MOMENTS LATER

The three humans (and Max) huddle in a circle. On the floor, the mystery Bread Box takes centerstage.

TRISH

You think it's worth the drama? Other than a Twinkie, what stays fresh all this time?

BENNY

Are you kidding? A bagel is the perfect food for this infernal fix we're in. I surmise it's got just the right of surface coating and body density to keep air borne bacteria at bay.

EDWARD

Yeah but - how's it gonna taste?

BENNY

That depends on what flavor Bagel's inside.

Trish angles a flashlight at the window. It's too blackened to get a decent view.

Even worse, the flashlight's battery flickers. Trish smacks it. The gadget sputters and dies.

TRISH

Fuck. And since when's there more than one breed of bagel?

Max whines at the word "Breed." Ben stares at her, aghast -

BENNY

"Breeds of Bagel?" Blasphemy. How could you not know about -

A knowing look on his bland features.

BENNY

Oh, right. You're from New Jersey. I forgive you for your ignorance, Child.

Ed glares at Ben.

EDWARD

Don't call Trish a "Jersey Girl"!

TRISH

Madison, specifically. Either of you got a problem with that?

She swings towards Benny and pouts.

TRISH

Fine, Mr. New York Bagel specialist, what type a' bagel do you "surmise" we've got?

BENNY

Hmmm. Good question. With a wide range of answers. There's Plain, of course. Good, but blah. Then there's Cinnamon, Sesame or Poppyseed...

EDWARD

(alarmed)

Poppyseed? Doesn't that give you a false positive on drug tests?

TRISH

Like that matters anymore? Duh.

BENNY

Whatever the variety we find before us, what ultimately matters is we enjoy the experience communally... with proper atmosphere to bestow on this event the dignity such a pinnacle of culinary culture so deserves.

The two Millennials shoot each other what-the-fuck looks. What's the old guy rambling about now?

Benny rubs his hands together with gustatory glee:

BENNY

I'll gather side dish ingredients in the backroom, for the perfect bagel centric meal! You two keep busy. Make perimeter rounds, check all the locks. We don't want any unexpected mutants - er, "visitors" - to interrupt our feast tonight!

Ben snags Cranberry sauce off a shelf, and skips giddily towards a back door.

BENNY

I do believe there's wine to be cracked open, too.

TRISH

Wine? You didn't tell us that before?

BENNY

I was hiding it from crazy Randolph. Who can blame me? He couldn't even handle his sugar. Be right back!

With those words, Benny's gone.

Leaving Trish, Edward and Max with the box. It beckons to them silently; like an evil relic of yore.

Max inches towards the box and sniffs. Edward chucks the tennis ball across the room.

EDWARD

Go get it, Boy!

Max rockets after the toy, knocks over cans. Edward and Trish exchange looks.

TRISH

Do you ever stop playing with your ball?

Edwards blushes.

TRISH

Don't even. You know what I mean!

EDWARD

It's the art of distraction, OK? I didn't want Max to pee on the last bagel left on earth.

TRISH

It's safe in a bread box, dummy.

EDWARD

Not a pee-proof one, I'm sure. Remember what Maxie did to that box of energy saving lightbulbs?

TRISH

You've got a point. Old Benny'd have a stroke. We'd lose out, too. Quick thinking. Color me impressed.

A coy smile creeps across her lips.

TRISH

You know what'd make me even *more* in awe?

EDWARD

Uh, if I caught the tennis ball 20 times in a row?

TRISH

No, silly. If you scrounge up candles for tonight's meal. I mean, if this must be the last time humanity ever tastes the "pinnacle of culinary culture" - it *should* be a tiny bit romantic, right?

Ed beams. In hopeful puppy-love once more.

EDWARD

You mean, with both of us in the room?

TRISH
(shrugs)
Everyone knows, Benny and Maxie
don't count.

Ed scrambles off in search of candles - so fast he leaves
vapor trails.

And Trish with the Bread Box. All alone. She looks around. No
one's watching now.

Sloooooowwly, she stretches a hand towards the handle. Tugs.
Thanks to rust, it's somewhat stuck.

TRISH
Dammit!

She digs a long punk fingernail into a crevice. Pulls.

The lid creaks. In a second, it's sure to give...

BARK!

Trish jumps backward. Shrieks. Falls on her butt. Thinking
it's Edward, she babbles excuses - eyes closed.

TRISH
I wasn't trying to open it. I had
to flick a cockroach off!

DRIP. Something wet splats Trish's face. She sputters, looks
up... at drooling Max.

TRISH
You flea bitten apocalypse Terrier.
Yuck!

Lights flicker behind her. Trish twists around.

A stunned Edward stands in the doorway. A lit candle in his
clenched fist.

EDWARD
I thought you liked me. Finally,
after so long - but no! You sent me
away as a trick. Exactly like I did
to Max. Trish, you treated me just
like a dog!

TRISH
No, I didn't. Cross my heart. Uh,
hope to die... or not?

EDWARD

What heart? Don't gaslight me. I
saw you try to open the box.

He holds out the candle, tragic betrayal in his eyes.

EDWARD

And after I picked this one out for
you. It's Caramel scented. Your
favorite kind.

TRISH

How the fuck-all do you know what
my favorite candle is?

EDWARD

Remember that time we talked about
candies we missed from Pre-War
days? You said you dug Rollos, so I
thought...

TRISH

Wow. You put a lot of thought into
that, didn't you?

Trish ruffles Maxie's ears, and pouts.

TRISH

OK, I confess. I tried to eat it.
The temptation got too much.

EDWARD

But, but - why?

TRISH

LOOK at me!

She jumps up, and points down her harshly angular body.

EDWARD

Uh, yeah. I know what you look
like, Trish. Not that I ever peek,
of course!

(whispers to himself)

Though we've been living together
almost a year...

TRISH

It's not like I want to steal. But
whatever bagel's in there - I
really, really need the carbs!

Silence grows between the couple. A heavy sadness;
realization of how pathetic their world's become.

TRISH

Just look at us. Fighting over a stale bagel.

EDWARD

I'd never want to fight - with you.

BENNY (O.S.)

What's all this hubbub about fighting, kids?

Benny bounces in, filled WINE GLASSES in each beefy hand. With a flourish, he hands one to Edward. Then Trish.

BENNY

Consider this an aperitif. Top drawer Port. No expense spared!

Ed eyes him skittishly.

EDWARD

Where's yours?

BENNY

Oh, I finished off my share in the back room. I was so thrilled over the upcoming bagel feast, I clear lost track of time!

Benny peers down at the Bread Box - notes disturbed dust around it on the floor.

BENNY

Am I hallucinating, or did that move?

Trish groans, and downs her glass in one gulp.

TRISH

Max almost pissed on it. OK?

LATER

Things are getting comfortable. Shoes off, everyone lounges on the floor, and stares the box.

TRISH

(slurred)

Come on, I'm hungry. Can't we open it before midnight?

BENNY

Give it time, Girl. Give it time!

Maxie gnaws on his tennis ball - SQUEAK.

A clearly wasted Edward weaves around, lighting candles. As unsteady as he looks, he shouldn't be allowed near flame.

EDWARD

Hey. Let's roast the bagel on a stick like S'mores! It's getting late. Time to make a campfire. It'll be like Boy Scouts, indoors!

He reaches a woozy hand towards the Bread Box lid. Trish slaps it - and Ed - away.

TRISH

You didn't like when I touched it!

BENNY

(coughs)

Excuse me? Did I miss more "entertainment"? What mischief transpired between you youngsters while I was busy in the back room?

Eddie reddens.

EDWARD

Trish didn't mean - well you know me. I never would!

TRISH

(beat)

Maybe you should. Just ask?

Is that - a flicker of chemistry between the two? Before it grows, Benny interrupts...

BENNY

What happened? Confession time. Tell the truth!

TRISH

Um, nothing major. Pinkie swear. I just tried to get a little... uh, preview of tonight's main course?

EDWARD

(snorts)

"Preview"? She tried to scarf it down!

BENNY
Betrayal. How could you?!?

TRISH
Simple! I leaned over, like so -

Trish demonstrates. But before she reaches the Bread Box, she falls on her face... fast asleep. And snores; louder than someone twice her size.

EDWARD
Babe, you OK?

He sways drunkenly.

EDWARD
Oh man, I'm woozy. It's only been a year... has my tolerance dropped that freakin' low?

Subtle, Ben kicks the ball away from Max, towards Edward.

Groggy, Ed bends over to pick it up.

EDWARD
Max, you lost your squeaky? Bad, bad boy...

WHACK! Benny cold cocks Edward from behind. Ed lets out a sad POOOF, and goes down - out before he hits the floor.

Ben stares down, eyes hard and cold.

BENNY
You're the bad boy, Edward. You and your sleeping beauty "girlfriend" there. You think I'd share the find of the final century with you? This is *my* bagel. I'm the only one cultured enough in this hideaway from Hell to appreciate all it represents for mankind!

Ed snores on the floor with Trish. Almost cuddled together, both clearly alive.

BENNY
Don't worry. You'll both wake up not so bright eyed or bushy tailed tomorrow morning. It was just a *touch* of roofies; mild enough to blame on the booze. Compared to apocalypse? No harm, no foul.

As for the bagel, I'll just tell
 you I found it moldy, and threw it
 out in the radiation compost out
 back. In the end, I'll be full. And
 you'll be fine. And forever
 blissfully ignorant of what I've
 gained - and you've lost.

Ben picks up the Bread Box. Gloating, he holds above his head
 like a holy relic from ancient times.

BENNY

Oh Great Bagel of the Millennium -
 you are mine!

Benny pulls on the Bread Box lid, wobbles it to break the
 seal of rust.

BENNY

What's behind Door #1? Let's find
 out!

GROWWWWL.

A blur of pure Terrier fury slams into Benny. Bowled over,
 the portly accountant goes down.

His glasses fly off. And land somewhere. CLUNK.

The bagel - too fuzzy for Benny to see - tumbles from the
 Bread Box and rolls across the floor.

Benny scrambles for it.

Maxie growls, and dives for this unexpected meal.

The bagel rolls under a FOLDING TABLE. Circles for a second,
 then falls down.

Benny groans - dismayed and blind.

BENNY

Dammit. Dibs on five second rule!

He darts towards the table; trips over a sleeping Edward.

BENNY

Oooof!

And face plants right next to the bagel. Max seizes the baked
 good, and zips off.

Benny jumps up, whacking his head against the table's
 underside. It flips over; empty wine glasses shatter.

Benny tiptoes through the shard minefield. Unable to see clearly, his bare feet suffer multiple assaults. Burning candles and glass - both hurt!

BENNY

Oooch. Ouch!

By sheer bulk and desperation, Benny corners Maxie. The Terrier growls at him, bagel clenched in fierce, small teeth.

BENNY

Unhand that bagel, hellacious cur!

Benny reaches for the treasure. Max drops the bagel. CHOMPS!

Benny screams, but grabs the prize with his uninjured hand.

Bleeding, he stumbles to the other end of the room; retrieves his glasses as he does.

And settles down in his own corner to eat. Not as fancy as hoped, but it'll do...

BENNY

Ah. Culinary delights must be seen,
before eaten, too.

Sighing, Benny fits now-broken glasses to his face.

And sees the bagel clearly for the first time.

BENNY

An Everything Bagel? Unacceptable!

Frustrated, he throws it to Maxie, who gulps it down.

Benny stares morosely at his bleeding hand. Then at Trish and Edward, snoring peacefully - together - on the floor.

BENNY

A life like this isn't worth the
disappointment. Or pain. You want
to inherit this world, kids? Have
fun. It's yours.

Benny shuffles to the exit door and opens it. Chuckles darkly at Trish's "stay the fuck out" sign, then moves on.

Maxie runs to the half melted window and watches Benny trudge away. Post apocalyptic sand erases Benny's footprints as quickly as he lays them down.

Then, unseen radiation flares. Benny's flesh sizzles (OS).

Wagging his tail, Maxie huffs and trots back to sleeping humans Ed and Trish.

The canine circles for the perfect spot several times, then snuggles down between the couple.

And licks his paws. A good night. At last.

FINAL FADE OUT: