

WHEN IT'S OVER

by

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EXT. HARRIS HOUSE - DAY

A large number of people sit in a semi-circle around a man in his seventies, BOB HARRIS. Beyond them are a series of tables and picnic cloths all over the place complete with plates of leftover food.

A grill smokes a short distance from both the tables, cloths, and the gathering. Its top is closed and the fire appears to be out.

The group applauds. "Happy Birthday" is heard variously and in abundance.

Next to Bob is his wife, LINDA. She sits close to him and beams at him as he surveys the gathering. MIKEY, a boy of 6, pipes up.

MIKEY

Is Grampa going to open presents now?

Everyone laughs.

BOB

Okay, Mikey, we can do that.

Bob's eldest, ROBERT JUNIOR, 50, is the first to move in. He hands over a package shaped like a short box.

ROBERT

Okay, mom said you could use one of these, so...

Bob nods and tears open the package. He pulls out a vest with a ton of netting and pockets.

BOB

It's a fishing vest.

ROBERT

Yeah, they say it works really good. There's pockets for everything in it, and even some specially lined pockets for the hooks and stuff.

BOB

Great. Yeah, this is really nice. Thanks, Robert.

Bob stands up and tries the vest on for size. He stands for all to see.

BOB

This is perfect. We were going fishing -- when was it again Linda?

LINDA

Next week. We've got the fifth wheel all stocked up. Just need to take a few perishables, and then it's fish heaven.

She turns to the younger of the men, CARL, 42.

LINDA

Were you and the kids planning on coming down again, Carl?

CARL

I don't know, mom. They still haven't approved those vacation days.

LINDA

Oh, well. I hope you can come. It's always so much fun.

Carl's wife, DAWNA, tugs at his sleeve.

DAWNA

(softly)

Why did you tell her that?

CARL

(softly)

I didn't want to hurt her feelings.

DAWNA

We don't like it. Just say so.

CARL

She thinks we do. Just let it go. We're the only ones who live close enough, and I want her to believe we love them enough to go, but can't.

DAWNA

I still say it's wrong.

Dawna glances down to a flat package on Carl's lap.

DAWNA

You're not still giving him that one gift, are you?

CARL  
Yes. It's funny.

DAWNA  
Oh God...

Dawna hides her face as Carl looks back to the proceedings. The daughter ELSA, 46, hands over a medium sized box. Her daughter, JANINE, 23, sits right behind her. Linda claps, excited.

LINDA  
Oh, is this what I think it is?

Elsa nods.

BOB  
Oh no, what did you do to me?

He tears the paper and opens the box. He looks in it for a long moment, a smile creeping across his face.

BOB  
Would you look at that?

He reaches in and pulls out a triangular flag display box attached to a smaller glass case. The flag box has the American Flag (folded properly) and the case has a series of old Army medals.

ELSA  
Mom got us all your old stuff.  
Janine and I put it all together.

BOB  
Wow, this is nice.

He points to one medal.

BOB  
I always thought this one was funny. They give it to you for sticking around. We called it the "Good Boy Award."

Everyone laughs. He points to another one.

BOB  
Here's one I wish I didn't have.  
That was one bloody campaign. I was almost not alive after that one.

(MORE)

BOB (cont'd)  
We were going through the jungle  
and got ambushed. Most of the  
platoon was killed except me and  
Jenkins.

Bob sighs.

BOB  
I was lucky. Very lucky. Yup, that  
one got me a medical discharge  
right there.

Bob hugs Elsa and Janine.

BOB  
Thank you. Thank you very much.

He sits and admires it a moment longer. He nods.

BOB  
I'll put this in a place of honor,  
definitely. Have to hang it up  
later this week.

He puts it down. Carl steps forward and hands Bob a flat  
package about the size of a magazine. Bob feels of it and  
looks at Carl with a smirk.

BOB  
Oh no.

CARL  
Oh yes.

Bob laughs. Linda looks at him.

LINDA  
What is it?

BOB  
Your son has a corky sense of  
humor, that's what.

LINDA  
How do you know?

BOB  
You remember last year when you  
went off on that scrapbooking trip  
or whatever it was?

ELSA  
The convention?

LINDA

Oh yes. We were gone for -- what was it?

ELSA

Three days.

BOB

Oh, but what along three days it was. Well, Carl happened to call, and I let him know I was lonely, and he made a joke about something to keep me company.

LINDA

You never told me any of this.

BOB

I had honestly forgotten about it till now.

Bob opens the package. It is a Penthouse magazine. Some gasps. Some chuckles. Mikey's eyes are covered. Bob laughs. He opens it to a page. Linda rolls her eyes.

BOB

Thanks, Carl, but I don't think my heart can take that kind of company any more.

He puts the magazine down.

DAWNA

I'm so sorry.

BOB

No, Dawna, it's fine. I'm amused.

DAWNA

Seriously, I'll get you something real this week.

Bob laughs again.

BOB

Okay.

He stands.

BOB

I just want to thank everyone for being here today on this rather balmy afternoon.

(MORE)

BOB (cont'd)  
Thanks to everyone who brought and prepared the food. Thanks especially to my wonderful wife, Linda, for her incredible barbeque sauce recipe.

(to Linda)  
I'm telling you. I might sell it someday and make a fortune.

Everyone laughs. Linda brushes him off.

LINDA  
Oh, please.

BOB  
But seriously. I want to thank you all for taking the time to see me today. We're trying to be as active as ever, but the doc says I need to slow down. I am, of course, ignoring all his sound advice.

Everyone laughs and nods, like they know these things.

BOB  
I just want you all to know that I love you, I'm proud of you, and I'm always thinking of you. I want everyone to have a safe trip back home because I want to see you again. So thanks again for the party.

Everyone says "Happy Birthday" again variously.

INT. HARRIS HOUSE - NIGHT

Bob sits on the couch watching television. Linda comes in and sits next to him. They kiss, briefly, but romantically.

LINDA  
It was a wonderful party, wasn't it?

Bob nods.

BOB  
Thank you. I loved seeing everyone again. I wish they could come by more, but I know they have their own lives; their own children; their own worries.

LINDA

Still...

Bob nods. He turns off the TV and lays his head back on the back of the couch.

BOB

Linda...

LINDA

Hm?

BOB

I love you.

LINDA

Well, I love you too.

BOB

I just wanted to say that you've meant the world to me. All these fifty years we've been together, I just couldn't have done it without you.

LINDA

It has been fifty years, hasn't it? And we're having fifty more, right?

Bob smiles.

BOB

Do something for me.

LINDA

Anything.

BOB

Would you sing "Amazing Grace"? I've always loved that song. I've always loved to hear you sing it.

Linda lays her head on his chest and sings it sweet and slow.

LINDA

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound  
that saved a wretch like me. I once  
was lost-

Linda stops. Tear brim in her eyes. She looks up. Bob's head still rests on the back of the couch, but it is lolled to one side.

LINDA  
(quietly)  
Bob?

She touches his face gently. Tears stream from her eyes. She gently kisses him. She lays her head back down on his chest.

LINDA  
(choked)  
I once was lost but now am found,  
was blind...but now...I see...

She breaks down and bawls in his shirt.

THE END