

Garden Party.

Katherine smiles as the caterers serve from behind crisp linen laid tables. All manner of Fortnum & Mason goodies to delight and amuse. A bronzed pyramid of scotched eggs, floats in an arctic sea of gin infused cucumber sandwiches. A forest of flutes gargle champagne, strawberry icebergs, slosh around ocean sized punch bowls of Pimm's and salt encrusted rims gasp in the rising heat, desperate for a cheeky margarita. The opening act, Jools and Thomas Dolby tinkle the ivories of two, pristine white, back-to-back, baby grand pianos. First change Jamie Cullum looks on in awe, under pain of death, not to forget Grand Torino from his set.

Katherine's happy. Her private festival, the only ticket in town, nay the whole county was finally underway. She looks up to the cobalt skies. Rain or snow? She just knows it will shine. Friends, family and hangers on, make small talk on the lawn and tap their toes in the marquee. Time to mingle, mingle, mingle.

As the afternoon leeches into the early evening, she kicks off her high heels and pads towards the dell, on the far side of the lawn; which is as well manicured as her toe nails. The hollow is a perfect natural amphitheatre in the estate's grounds. Here, the bands begin to play. All backed by the best of the philharmonic orchestra. How could she stop believing when the music was cold as the champagne on ice. Love was certainly no stranger and how could she fight that urgent feeling? This was the life. Last time she'd been dragged to a festival with her brother, there had been three stages and out of the many bands on show, the trio she'd wanted to see, all played the different stages in a simultaneous and extremely inconvenient cacophony. This now was her gig. She calls the shots; had paid the piper. They play, when and what she requests.

Down on the river terrace this garden party is in full swing. A barge floats past, Geordie folk-music is interspersed with Parisienne walkways. Sumner's tales float across to the far bank, where the adjoining field of barley rustles in synch. A waspish salute is thrown in Katherine's direction. For sure, video never killed that radio star.

Vinegar wafts in the gloaming as fish and chips are scoffed. The wood-fired pizza oven does a roaring trade and the Mr Whippy van, serves the best 99's for miles.

It's now time for the main show. The front man asks if we are going to sing with him tonight? Of course! That goes without saying. The band do their full repertoire; including every track from their eponymous first album. Always Katherine's favourite. In the heat of the moment, she forgets herself and boogies the night away.

No need for dawn escapes from moon-washed college halls. This is her time and just for an instant, it stands still. Braziers spark to life, fireflies seeking soulmates in the nocturnal merriment, or maybe a secret assignation at the old oak tree - beyond the orchard.

Katherine, closes her eyes. Even in her dreams, she won't end the party alone. No strangers here in the night. Her bessie - Ann will finish off the gig. Together they climb the stairway, to where heaven awaits. Through into the early hours, soft acoustic melodies fill the air. It's

Monday morning now, 5:19 and the neighbours can hardly complain, they've all been invited.

Roasted lamb seers the dawn light. Kebabs for breakfast. With tons of chilli sauce. The perfect High Voltage full stop - to Katherine's perfect garden party.