

FOOD FOR BIRDS

by

Steve Miles

Steve Miles 2015

stevemiles80@yahoo.co.uk

FADE IN:

EXT. H.M.P DUMFRIES - RELEASE GATE - DAY

CORDIE, mid 20s, stands at the curbside, his thin shoulders hunched with cold. He breathes deep, savours the fresh air.

A bird glides overhead. He tracks its flight...

He gathers up a small plastic bag at his feet.

EXT. PARK ACROSS FROM H.M.P DUMFRIES - DAY

GRAHAM, 50s, watches from behind a tree. His bleary-eyes follow Cordie along the pavement; past chain-link fence topped with razor-wire; past a sign declaring HMP DUMFRIES.

Graham takes a big hit from a pocket-flask.

EXT. SIDE-STREET - DAY

Cordie pauses at the roadside. Looks around, searching...

Graham closes in behind him. His pace slows. He shakes his coat sleeve loose...

...a knife slips from the cuff and into his hand.

Cordie spots a bus-stop on the opposite side of the road. He steps forward --

-- SCREECH of brakes. A car swings to curb, cuts him off.

The driver's door swings open. AIDEN, early 20s, jumps out and levels a revolver. He wears a wool hat pulled low.

AIDEN

Cordie you bastard--

Aiden stops dead. Looks past Cordie to Graham -- likewise frozen, a step behind Cordie. They stare at one another...

HISS of air-brakes. A bus trundles into view, heading towards them.

AIDEN

Get in the car.

Cordie's eyes remain fixed on the gun.

Aiden grabs him by the scruff, drags him to the car.

He opens the rear door and stuffs him inside. He looks up to find Graham moving for the driver's side.

AIDEN
No way, piss off.

GRAHAM
Piss off yourself.

AIDEN
There's no way, no way--

He grabs him, Graham shucks him off. Aiden spots the knife.

AIDEN
What you gonna do with that?

GRAHAM
Not stand here yapping.

He ducks in behind the wheel and slams the door.

Aiden gives the roof an angry THUMP!

INT. AIDEN'S CAR - DAY

Graham curses as he GRINDS through the gears.

Aiden braces himself as the vehicle lurches along. Cordie sits ashen beside him, the gun jammed in his ribs.

AIDEN
Forget how to drive man?

GRAHAM
Seat's set for a short-arse.

AIDEN
What's that to do with the gears?

The engine stalls. Graham fumbles to restart it.

AIDEN
...Are you pissed?

GRAHAM
No--

-- CLUNK! Graham slides the seat back. Cordie retreats behind the plastic bag. The engine strains into life.

AIDEN
Jesus, you are, course you are.
You'll get us both nicked!

GRAHAM
I'm sober, enough. Where to?

AIDEN
You're the one driving.

GRAHAM
Don't get smart.

AIDEN
Just drive to where you're parked.

GRAHAM
I'm no' parked.

AIDEN
What?

GRAHAM
Took a bus.

AIDEN
Are you serious?

GRAHAM
Your Ma' needed the car.

AIDEN
What was the plan? Stick the wee
bastard and wait for a bus home?

A sheepish silence from Graham.

GRAHAM
Let's hear yours then.

AIDEN
Mine? Aye, here's mine.

Aiden descends on Cordie with a series of body blows.

Graham watches in the rearview...

AIDEN (O.S.)
Waited seven years for this, you
bastard.

...he grows uncomfortable as the beating continues.

Cordie curls defensively. Aiden snatches the plastic bag from his grasp.

AIDEN
Gimme that.

The bag tears open scattering personal affects -- a number of greeting cards among them.

AIDEN
Your birthday Cordie?

He picks up a card, opens it. He scowls at the childish scrawl. It's signed: ROWENA.

AIDEN
The fuck?

Cordie stares at Aiden, scared.

Aiden retrieves a handful of cards and flicks through them: Christmas, birthday, Easter...

He thrusts one forward to Graham.

AIDEN
The fuck is this?

Graham looks down to see that same childish scrawl.

GRAHAM
Don't look at me.

CORDIE
She did nay post 'em herself.

GRAHAM
Watch it you.

Aiden grabs Cordie, presses the gun under his chin.

CORDIE
They was sent to me.

Aiden sees red. He tosses the gun on the seat beside him and punches Cordie in the stomach over and over.

GRAHAM
Pack it in.

The beating continues.

GRAHAM
You'll be the one to get us a pull.

AIDEN
Gimme the blade.

GRAHAM
Hell no.

AIDEN
Da'--

GRAHAM
Think of the mess.

AIDEN
Yous' a valet now?

GRAHAM
Christ--

AIDEN
You want him dead or no'?

Graham wrestles with the idea. He shakes his head, pounds the wheel in frustration.

AIDEN
(more to himself)
Think you can choke a man with a shoe?

Graham looks in the rearview -- Aiden watches with a sneer.

AIDEN
Just pull over an' fuck off.

GRAHAM
No.

AIDEN
You mean no?

GRAHAM
It's a main road.

AIDEN
Use another road then, man, they're all attached.

CORDIE
I want to see her.

The argument stops dead.

Aiden stares at Cordie in stunned disbelief.

CORDIE

Was on my way, wanted to see her. I
just wanted to see.

Aiden dives forward, paws at Graham for the knife. Graham
struggles to steer and fend him off.

AIDEN

Gimme the knife!

Cordie watches the struggle.

WHUMP! Aiden falls back into his seat palming a bloody nose.

AIDEN

Christ Da'.

GRAHAM

Is it bleeding?

AIDEN

It's no' running with wine.

GRAHAM

I've a hanky--

CORDIE

Take me to see her. Please.

AIDEN

No fucking way.

CORDIE

You don't even know where we're
going. Take me to her, what happens
after...

He meets Graham's eyes in the rearview.

CORDIE

I'm clean now, been that way for
years.

GRAHAM

You lying to me?

CORDIE

No lies. I need to do this, say
what I need to.

AIDEN
Don't you even--

Graham cuts the wheel to turn off.

AIDEN
Stay on.

GRAHAM
He wants to see.

Aiden seethes. He shoves Cordie into the corner.

He pulls his hat off in frustration -- a mop of hair falls into place. Gone is the thug from moments before.

INT. AIDEN'S CAR - DAY

No longer moving. Houses line the street beyond the windows. The trio sit in silence.

Aiden broods. Tissue plugs trail from his nose.

AIDEN
You're really gonna let him do
this?

No answer.

AIDEN
Think Ma'll let you just--

GRAHAM
Your Ma's at work.

AIDEN
Who's with Rowena?

GRAHAM
Mrs Fenwick said she'd pop by.

AIDEN
She's no' a fuckin' cat!

Graham bristles at the comment.

Aiden reigns himself in.

GRAHAM
Give me the gun.

Aiden pouts.

GRAHAM

Not having you waving that thing
around inside, not with a new
carpet.

A begrudged Aiden stuffs the revolver inside his hat and
passes it to Graham.

AIDEN

(to Cordie)

One word out of line, I'll beat you
raw, carpets or no'.

INT. GRAHAM'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Modest and homely.

Aiden takes in the family photographs and memorabilia lining
the walls and sideboards.

One photo stands out -- it shows a younger Graham and Aiden
alongside a WOMAN and a GIRL. The Girl looks to be a little
older than Aiden.

Cordie stands cowed by the door.

Graham perches at the base of the stairs.

GRAHAM

Shoes.

Aiden curses under his breath, sets to removing his shoes.

ELLEN (O.S.)

Don't bother.

Graham freezes.

They look up as one.

ELLEN, 50s, a weight of sadness in the way she holds
herself. She stares down at them from the landing.

ELLEN

Bumped into Mrs Fenwick.

Graham takes a deep breath...

INT. GRAHAM'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAY

Ellen sits at a dining table.

ROWENA, mid 20s, rests in a wheelchair. A ragged scar creases her temple. Her eyes roam loose and unfocused. She wears a jumper embroidered with a bird motif.

Graham, Aiden and Cordie stand ranged around the room in varying states of awkwardness.

ELLEN

Feel quite the one left out.

The trio shift their weight in silence.

ELLEN

Am I speaking to myself?

GRAHAM

They let him out.

ELLEN

Has it been that long?

GRAHAM

Wanted to tell you--

ELLEN

You didn't.

CORDIE

Was my idea. To stop. Was on our way someplace else.

ELLEN

I won't ask where that someplace is. Same as I won't ask where my best knife got to. I'll only ask that when you leave you don't come back.

She burns a look at Graham.

ELLEN

None of you.

CORDIE

I've something I needed to say.

Ellen studies him, weighing his intent. She nods.

Cordie takes a deep breath and steps forward.

AIDEN
Stay where you are.

Rowena's face lights up, her hand twitches.

CORDIE
She know me?

ELLEN
She knows you.

AIDEN
You hear me Cordie?

ELLEN
He heard you. We all heard you.
Nothing wrong with our hearing,
it's your manners need addressing.

Aiden bites his lip, chastened.

Cordie crouches before Rowena.

CORDIE
I got your cards.

He pulls several cards from the tattered bag.

Rowena smiles.

CORDIE
This one was for my twenty-first.
Wouldn't let me have the badge.

He holds up a card showing a pair of love-birds.

CORDIE
My favourite.

Rowena beams.

Cordie's smile fails. His head dips, a wave of emotion.

CORDIE
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry darlin'--

AIDEN
That's not your darlin'. Hold your
head up, that's you what put her
through that windscreen. You what
left her dyin' in the fuckin'
street as you ran--

ELLEN

That's enough.

AIDEN

Spare me the shite Ma', she didn't send those cards.

GRAHAM

That's no way to talk to your Ma'--

AIDEN

An' you'll what? You did nothing when she took up with this junkie prick an' you'll do nothing to right it now. You'll just keep runnin' off to get pissed...

Graham hangs his head.

AIDEN

...or smile an' wish the bastard merry Christmas, like it never happened... Might as well have put her in the car yourselves.

Ellen stands. She turns to a cupboard and pulls out a handful of sealed envelopes. She drops them onto the table. They fan out: Aiden. Son. Brother.

ELLEN

I knew where he was.

Aiden stares at the cards. He collects himself.

AIDEN

Get up, an' don't be leavin' that crap.

Cordie stands.

ELLEN

This really who you are now?

AIDEN

Someone's to be.

Panic sweeps Ellen's face. She summons her strength.

ELLEN

You'll stay for tea.

AIDEN

We'll no' stay for tea Ma'.

ELLEN

You will. It's four, always tea at four. Routines important for Rowena. And the birds.

She looks to Graham for support.

GRAHAM

Aye, routine.

AIDEN

We've someplace to be.

ELLEN

No place that can't wait.

She collects a blanket. Tactfully places herself between Aiden and Cordie as she shakes it out.

ELLEN

(to Cordie)

You get the chair, take her outside, she'd like that.

Graham moves to help -- she bats him away.

ELLEN

There's a kettle won't fill itself.

Cordie takes hold of the wheelchair and maneuvers Rowena towards the patio doors.

AIDEN

Ma--

ELLEN

There's a Jay takes the food from your hand. She's a nest in the Hawthorn. I'll not keep her waiting.

She drapes the blanket on Rowena's lap and helps Cordie as he backs through the doors. Off down the path they go...

Aiden slumps into a chair. He sags, beaten again.

AIDEN

For Christ'sakes.

He looks to the cards. Runs a hand through his hair.

INT. GRAHAM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Graham waits for the kettle to boil. He slips Aiden's hat from his pocket and unwraps the revolver. He turns it over in his hand. Smiles.

He looks to a knife block -- the largest slot empty.

He retrieves the blade from his anorak. His colour drains, sickened at the sight of it.

INT. GRAHAM'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAY

Aiden sits at the table. He thumbs the cards. He looks up to see Graham watching from the doorway.

GRAHAM
Bit old for toys, son.

AIDEN
Looks real enough, eh?

GRAHAM
He looked scared enough too. That
the plan?

Aiden shrugs.

AIDEN
You?

Graham looks away. His eyes wander the room. He settles on Ellen and the others in the garden.

GRAHAM
Out there everyday for nigh on a
year. Patience of a saint your Ma'.

AIDEN
It true? From your hand?

GRAHAM
A sight to see.

Aiden drifts back to the cards...

...the kettle's WHISTLE reaches a pitch.

EXT. GRAHAM'S HOUSE - BACK GARDEN - DAY

Ellen crumbles bread into a bird-feeder. She turns to see Aiden and Graham before the patio set. Graham sends her a smile. He places a tea tray on the table and finds a seat.

GRAHAM

Sugar?

Cordie stares at the table in silence.

Aiden sits beside Rowena. He tweaks her jumper. She giggles.

AIDEN

Still got that old jumper Sis'?
Let's see shall we...

He flicks through the envelopes, selects one and opens it. He plucks off the badge, thumbs it.

GRAHAM

Well? One, two..?

Cordie looks up, regards Graham nervously.

CORDIE

Two. Ta'.

AIDEN

He's a bus pass too, you want it...

GRAHAM

Aye, good all day.

Aiden slides the badge to Cordie.

Ellen watches. A faint smile reveals her relief.

Rowena gasps as a bird lands on the feeder. She puts a finger to her lips, bids them quiet.

She stretches out a crumb laden palm and waits...

FADE OUT