

The Arms

By

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EXT. PUB - MORNING

Late morning. A country pub on a village green, spring time.

A MAN, early 30s, is sitting on a bench watching the pub from a distance. Patient, pensive, hands in his jacket pockets. This is GRANT.

INT. PUB - MORNING

ALAN, late 40s, a big bear of a man, unlocks the front door. Opening time in this quiet local pub.

He returns behind the bar and sits on a stool by the till, starts to read the paper.

Grant enters through the front door, approaches the bar. Alan, not expecting anyone this early, straightens.

ALAN

Morning. Were you watching the door?

GRANT

(smiles)
Something like that.

ALAN

What can I get for you?

Grant thinks a moment. Regards the optics.

GRANT

I think I'd like a whisky please.

ALAN

Talk about blow the cobwebs off.
Any in particular?

GRANT

(shakes his head)
Any's fine.

Alan pours a shot from an optic.

GRANT

What time does it get busy here?

ALAN

Well...if busy is my regulars,
about five this afternoon.

(CONTINUED)

GRANT
Tough business eh?

ALAN
Tell me about it. Ice?

GRANT
No thanks. On your own then?

ALAN
Yeah for now. No point paying
people to sit on their arse doing
nothing. I've got myself for that.

Grant manages a weak smile. Takes a long sip from the
whisky. Eyes closed, savouring. Alan watches,
non-judgmental.

ALAN
If you fancied something to eat
I'll happily knock something up for
you. Kitchen doesn't open til
twelve, but I'm sure I could manage
a sandwich?

GRANT
No, not today thanks.

ALAN
Right, well that's two-eighty then
please.

Grant hands some change to Alan, who attends to the till.
Grant's demeanour suddenly turns very cold, smile gone.

GRANT
Listen, while you've got the till
open can you do me a favour?

ALAN
Yeah what's that?

GRANT
Give me all the money out of it.

Alan stops. Slowly turns, till still open.

ALAN
Sorry, what?

GRANT
Give me all the money from the
till.

Alan plays dumb. Smiling.

ALAN
Sorry, I don't understand.

GRANT
Yes you do. This is the third time
I'm asking, there won't be a
fourth.

Grant slowly produces a gun from his pocket, lays the
gun-hand gently on the bar.

GRANT
(CONT)
All the money from the till.

He tosses a small cloth bag in front of Alan.

GRANT
(CONT)
In there.

For a moment neither says a word. Grant stares straight
through Alan, who still holds his odd smile. Switches his
gaze to the gun, where it stays.

ALAN
You know it's eleven o'clock,
there's nothing in there.

GRANT
More than I've got.

ALAN
No, I mean there's literally
nothing...

Grant raises the gun so his elbow is leaning on the bar.
Alan stops, now looks back up at Grant.

GRANT
I'll take what there is.

The stare-out continues. Alan suddenly becomes more serious.

ALAN
You're seriously gonna risk getting
locked up for fifty quid?

GRANT
(shakes his head)
No, more than that. I used to work
in a pub.

(CONTINUED)

ALAN

I wonder why you don't any more.

GRANT

Yeah, fucking jokes. Now you need to stop worrying about me and how worth my while this is gonna be and empty that till.

Alan suddenly becomes a bit more jovial.

ALAN

Have you been here before?

GRANT

Are you fucking serious?

ALAN

I haven't seen you in here before.

GRANT

I'm gonna shoot you in the leg.

ALAN

Yeah?

GRANT

Yeah.

ALAN

You're ready to do that?

GRANT

Yes I am.

ALAN

What do you need the money for?

GRANT

My nan's sick.

ALAN

I'm sorry to hear that.

GRANT

It's a bad cold, she just needs some Lemsip. You know how expensive Boots is nowadays.

ALAN

You tried Poundland?

(CONTINUED)

GRANT

You know, I thought publicans were supposed to be funny.

ALAN

(winces)

That hurts.

GRANT

Yeah this is great and everything, but I'm bored. I'm going to ask you...

ALAN

You said you weren't going to ask me again. I'm guessing this is your first time.

GRANT

I'm guessing that makes two of us cos you don't seem too familiar with how guns work. Now if that bag isn't getting filled in ten seconds I'm gonna shoot you in the kneecap, come round there and do it myself. So save yourself the aggro and get on it, now.

A tense moment, another stare-out. Then Alan slowly holds up his hands, 'you win', and takes the bag. Starts to fill it from the till.

ALAN

You want the copper as well?

GRANT

Everything.

Alan stuffs notes and coins into the bag.

ALAN

You got kids?

GRANT

Not interested.

ALAN

In kids?

GRANT

In you, or your chat, just fill the bag.

Alan finishes. Turns, bag in hand.

(CONTINUED)

ALAN

I appreciate you paying for the drink, that was a nice touch. You gonna finish it?

Grant doesn't speak.

ALAN

(CONT)

You don't look like someone who's comfortable holding a gun.

GRANT

But I am holding one, just remember that.

ALAN

Yeah you are. I've seen plenty of people who are comfortable holding guns. You know how you can tell?

Grant doesn't move.

ALAN

(CONT)

They don't talk. The gun talks for them, they know that.

GRANT

In a minute this one will.

ALAN

Yeah?

(shakes his head)

You could have walked in here, gun out and told me to empty the till, but you ordered a drink! You're knocking off a village pub at opening time, how desperate are you?

GRANT

Desperate enough.

There's a slight waver to Grant's voice, but he holds firm. Meets Alan's gaze head on.

ALAN

Do you know what I did for work before I bought this pub?

(off of Grant's silence)

I was a bouncer. When I was younger. Some of the things I used

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALAN (cont'd)
to see you wouldn't believe.
Started on the clubs, then casinos.
Small ones, you know, ones that are
a bit more exclusive. Earn their
money in other ways. Pay you
bonuses for work off the door.
Keeping people quiet. Really quiet.
I took on all the jobs, I earned
all the bonuses, until before I
knew it I had enough to buy a pub.
Not much, you know, but it's mine.
So when I say to you that I know
what someone who's comfortable with
a gun looks like, I mean I really
fucking know.

Alan is ice cold, no levity now. Grant tries to hold his
nerve, sizing up the big man in front of him.

ALAN
(CONT)
Now you've put me in a position.
You're holding a gun which I have
to assume is loaded, and I have to
assume that you're prepared to use
it. And I haven't made my way
through the last thirty years of
staring at guns to get complacent
now.

Alan drops the bag on the bar. Grant eyes it.

ALAN
(CONT)
So there you go. But think about
this. Think about what you know
now. Police? No, you don't have to
worry about the police. I can make
as many phone calls as I need to
make until I've got you in a
corner. And then I'll be the one
with the gun. Or, you can walk off
without the bag. And maybe I'll sit
and have a whisky myself, and by
the time I've finished it I might
have calmed down enough to put
the money back in the till and
forget about it. So think about
this. Do you really want to be
watching over your shoulder every
day

(indicates the bag)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALAN (cont'd)
for that?

Beat. Pure tension, neither man moving. Eyes fixed on each other. Then Grant looks down at the bag. Holds for a moment. It's right there - this small but so important prize.

Grant reaches for his whisky. Downs it. Back on Alan. And then the gun goes back in his pocket. Starts to walk slowly backwards while staying fixed on Alan.

And then suddenly Grant is out the door. Gone. Alan doesn't move for a moment, then goes over to the door. Bolts it.

LATER

Alan is sitting in the comfiest chair in the bar. He has a whisky, staring off into space. Takes his phone out from his pocket and looks at it. Thinking. Spins it round idly in his fingers. What to do next.

CUT TO BLACK