

TUTOR ME

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. CAFÉ - DAY

ARTHUR (30's) sits at a table with BEN (30's), sharing a large slice of apple pie with two small forks. Arthur looks at Ben, smiling.

ARTHUR

So, is this business or pleasure?

BEN

Is that important?

ARTHUR

(nodding)

If this is business, you're paying and I'll be ordering more. But if it's just two friends meeting up, I'll split the bill and won't order anything else.

BEN

I've been made headmaster of a pretty big Catholic high school, a 170-boys and girls. I'm allowed to bring in my own teachers for three openings. I still have to interview people; it's the law, but I get to pick. And I want you to come in as the history teacher.

ARTHUR

Then this is a business meeting.

BEN

If you accept the role, I'll let you order the whole menu.

ARTHUR

Twice?

BEN

(laughing)

Three times if you like.

ARTHUR

Why would I give up my current gig for this? Oh, and before you answer that, congratulations, Headmaster. That's an achievement to be proud of.

(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

You worked your way up, or crawled, or slithered—you're an old English teacher, you get to choose the right synonym.

BEN

Hard work, passion, and dedication, which are all the qualities you showed when we were doing our training together.

Arthur sits back in his chair, rolling his eyes.

ARTHUR

And here it comes... the lecture.

Ben leans over the table, smiling.

BEN

Snobby, rich kids. Entitled, worthless appearances. That's who you're helping. Wake up. You could actually be making a difference, inspiring the next generation. That used to mean something to guys like you.

ARTHUR

Do you know how I got into tutoring "rich kids" in the first place?

Now it's Ben's turn to roll his eyes, leaning all the way back in his chair.

BEN

Me. Guilty. But I only did it to get through university, quick, easy cash. And that's all it was meant to be for you. But you turned it into a full-time career.

Arthur reaches into his pocket and pulls out his phone. He scrolls through his messages and finds one.

'£2,000 sounds good. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 5 PM till 7 PM. It's a deal.'

ARTHUR

Read it.

Ben glances at the phone screen, only half-interested.

BEN

Yeah, great. So you'll be helping some spoiled brat get his grades up from a B to an A. And in the end, this kid will only end up working for his dad. That's how these people are—pure nepotism. They have inbred thinking.

ARTHUR

Could you pay me that per week?

BEN

Don't tell me you set out to be a teacher for the money, because that's fucking bullshit.

ARTHUR

I spent my whole childhood being poor. Don't now ask me to spend my adult years the same.

BEN

"To make the next generation better than the one before it, only that way can there be a better world." You said that to me. Those words came out of your mouth.

ARTHUR

Okay.

BEN

"Only by being smarter can we be better."

ARTHUR

And who do you think runs the world? The rich. It's smart to be tutoring their kids. Educating the people who are going to run the world one day is what we should be doing, and it's what I'm going to keep doing.

BEN

I really hope you're joking, because if you actually believe that, it's sad. It's a waste.

Arthur stands up, taking out his wallet. He removes some cash and drops it onto the table.

ARTHUR

I didn't meet you here to argue.
It's good seeing you. It really is.

BEN

You have a gift. You have a way of
connecting with children that I
have never seen anyone else do. You
should be out there helping those
kids who need it the most.

Arthur turns to leave.

ARTHUR

You don't decide who needs what.
Especially when it comes to kids.

BEN

If it's money—if that's all you
care about—why not move to North
Korea? Teach that crazy bastard's
kids. Just try and ignore all the
starvation and disease.

ARTHUR

I don't like Korean food. It's cold
in the winter.

BEN

My daughter likes the music from
there, for whatever reason.

ARTHUR

I hope you're talking about the
South because the only music the
North puts out is communist
propaganda. And I'd be worried if
she and her friends were dancing
around to that.

Ben smiles.

BEN

I hope you change your mind.

ARTHUR

(shaking his head)
I'm too stubborn for that.

BEN

I know.

Arthur sarcastically blows him a kiss. Just as sarcastically,
Ben catches it and holds it to his heart.

Arthur turns to leave. With his back to him, Ben grabs what's left of the apple pie and throws it at Arthur, splatting against his back. Arthur turns around, removing his jacket.

ARTHUR

We couldn't leave it at a kiss?

BEN

Get one of your rich friends to buy you a new one.

ARTHUR

Hell no. This is coming out of your pay check.

BEN

Come work for me and I'll get you a new one as a signing-on gift.

Arthur wipes the pie off the jacket, puts it back on, gives Ben the middle finger, then leaves. Ben watches him go, a look of deep regret on his face.

EXT. MANSION - DAY

Arthur, swinging his briefcase, walks up the private driveway of a huge family home. He can't help but whistle as he approaches. RICHARD (40's), in an electric golf buggy, drives up toward him.

RICHARD

You're late.

Arthur stops dead. Richard almost runs him over.

ARTHUR

I don't think so.

Arthur fumbles through his pockets for his phone.

RICHARD

(annoyed)

Hey. Who's paying who?

Arthur finds the text message and tries to show it to Richard, who couldn't care less.

ARTHUR

See? Five. It's a quarter to.

RICHARD

Are you ready to start at 5? That was the deal. You don't look ready to me.

ARTHUR

I've never been here before.

RICHARD

Then you should have come early, hence why you're late. He's failing maths and English, and not doing too well with French. He's got his end-of-year exams coming up. You get him to pass everything, you get a £5,000 bonus on top of everything else.

ARTHUR

I like a bonus.

Suddenly, the sound of gunshots fills the air from a rifle, then the sound of glass shattering. Arthur's smile turns to a frown.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

What's that?

Richard smiles knowingly at him.

RICHARD

Your student. You better go find him. Tutoring starts at 5, remember.

Richard starts up the golf buggy and speeds off, heading away in the opposite direction from the gunshots.

ARTHUR

Hey, aren't you going to give me a lift?

Richard continues driving and doesn't look back.

EXT. MANSION - LAWN - DAY

Arthur walks over the immaculately cut, watered, and cared-for lawn. As he walks, the sound of the gunshots gets louder and louder. A GARDENER (60's) holding a rake approaches him.

GARDENER

Sir, can I help you?

ARTHUR (SMIRKING)
I don't suppose you have a
bulletproof vest, do you?

The gardener's face changes. He slowly looks Arthur up and down.

GARDENER
Oh, you're the new tutor.

ARTHUR
Yeah.

GARDENER
Good luck, sir.

The gardener turns to walk away, but Arthur reaches out, taking hold of his wrist. He pulls the gardener back to him.

ARTHUR
Wait, so I'm the new tutor? Do you
know what happened to the old one?

The gardener scowls at Arthur's hand that's holding his wrist. He hits the handle of the rake against Arthur's knuckles, forcing him to let go.

GARDENER
I wouldn't like to say.

ARTHUR
Wouldn't like to say because he was
killed and you helped bury the
body? Or wouldn't like to say
because you don't like to gossip?

GARDENER
I'm sorry, sir, but I have things
to do.

ARTHUR
Please, I need someone to take me
to where the kid is.

GARDENER
You don't have enough money to make
me do that. I stay away. Everyone
does.

INT. STABLE - DAY

A converted stable is a kid's playhouse with a pool table, dartboard, and toys everywhere.

LIAM (12), armed with a high-powered and deadly modified pellet gun, is taking aim at some large school textbooks that have been strategically propped up on a table. Liam shoots them, and they fall off one after another with great accuracy.

Arthur is in the doorway. He's watched the whole thing.

ARTHUR
I'm looking for a kid.

Liam reloads, giggles to himself, and doesn't even look over at Arthur.

LIAM
There's only one of those around here.

Arthur enters, taking a good look around at all the stuff.

ARTHUR
Wow, nice place. If I was 12 years old, I'd be screaming with excitement right about now.

Liam, with his rifle reloaded, now takes aim and shoots at different movie posters hanging on the walls.

LIAM
Well, I'm 12 years old, and I hate this room.

ARTHUR
What's the mansion like?

LIAM
Boring.

A beat.

ARTHUR
Where's fun for you?

Liam considers, then shrugs.

LIAM
Not here.

Arthur picks up one of the shot-up school textbooks.

ARTHUR
I think you're supposed to read these, not shoot them.

LIAM

Relax. I'll pass the tests. My dad just wants A's when I'm giving him C's and B's. But I don't care. I can't wait for all of this to be over with.

ARTHUR

You know, people always think I'm crazy for saying this, but I actually loved going to school. I hated missing it when I was sick, and I hated the school holidays. If I could redo my school years all over again, I would. I just wish every kid felt the same way. That's the main reason, above everything else, for why I became a teacher.

LIAM

I don't know about any of that. I've never been.

This hits Arthur hard. He frowns, playing it over in his head.

ARTHUR

Never?

LIAM

Never.

ARTHUR

You've NEVER been to school?

LIAM

Home-schooled. Why do you think you're here?

ARTHUR

No other kids?

LIAM

No.

ARTHUR

You play any sports? In the Scouts? Summer camps?

Liam shakes his head at all three questions.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

If I were you, I'd be pretty lonely.

Liam shrugs, placing down the rifle. He goes over to a basketball, bounces it on the ground, and shoots at the hoop on the wall. He misses.

LIAM

Are you supposed to be teaching me?
When does class start?

Arthur searches through the ruined textbooks. He picks up one particularly ruined book and throws it toward the basketball hoop. It goes in. Liam bursts out laughing.

ARTHUR

I don't feel like it anymore.

LIAM

My dad won't pay you.

ARTHUR

I need to talk to him.

LIAM

He won't listen, no matter what you say to him. You could tell him the house was on fire, and he wouldn't hear it. You don't talk to my dad. You just stand there while he talks at you.

ARTHUR

I wanna try.
(Shoots another textbook
through the hoop.))
You shouldn't be here. And neither
should I.

LIAM

If you like wasting your time, go
ahead.

ARTHUR

If I could get you into a school,
would you like to go?

LIAM

Don't know.

ARTHUR

How about just to be shown around?

LIAM

Maybe.

ARTHUR

Baby steps. I can't teach you here.
Aren't you curious what school is
like?

LIAM

I've seen them on TV shows, films,
or whatever.

ARTHUR

Do these shows have a laugh track?

LIAM

Yeah.

ARTHUR

Real schools aren't like what
you've been watching. But they can
still be awesome, fun places when
it's done properly. Just needs good
teachers.

LIAM

Like you?

ARTHUR

I hope so.

INT. RICHARD'S OFFICE - DAY

Richard, with both hands clasped around a nine-iron, smashes golf balls into a net. In front of him is a large screen showing a golf game, each hit measured and showing Richard how far he's hit the ball. Arthur circles around the office. Despite the desk and computer setup, this office in truth is another kid's playroom—a big kid's playroom.

ARTHUR

Your son needs other kids.

RICHARD

A's. That's all you should be
worried about.

ARTHUR

He's isolated. He's lonely. Hell,
if I were him, I'd be a ball of
rage ready to explode.

RICHARD

Well, it's a good job you're not
him, isn't it?

ARTHUR
I want to enrol him into school.

RICHARD
No.

ARTHUR
Why?

RICHARD
Because I say so.

ARTHUR
I want to know why.

Richard gives up with his game but still holding on to the nine-iron. He waves it in front of Arthur's face threateningly.

RICHARD (SHOUTING)
You don't get to ask questions! My son is failing maths, English, God knows what else! Your job is to get him A's, A's, A's! I pick his college, I pick his future. My father did it for me, and his father did it for him.

ARTHUR
And are you happy with how you turned out?

He holds the business end of the golf club right in front of Arthur's face.

RICHARD
I'm warning you.

ARTHUR
Your son needs other kids. You're ruining him and for what? To brag that he gets good grades? One chance. One chance at life. One chance at childhood. He needs to know what it is to be a kid, and you're ruining that for him. And when he's older, it's going to be something he's never going to forgive you for.

WHACK!

Richard swings the golf club, catching Arthur on the face, cutting him above the eye. The side of his face becomes red and swollen.

Arthur falls to the floor and Richard stands over him.

RICHARD

Do you want this job? Or is it too hard for you? Is my son so fucking stupid that you're now trying to get yourself fired?

Arthur needs a moment to collect himself. Rolling over onto his back.

ARTHUR

No. I can get him A's. I'm good. You give me almost any child, and I can turn them into straight-A students.

RICHARD

So it's money?

ARTHUR

No.

RICHARD

Then what?

ARTHUR

I want to teach him full-time. No extra charge. Monday to Friday, 9 AM until 3 PM. But not here. I want to be free to take him on field trips.

Richard considers, shaking his head.

RICHARD

You came so highly recommended. I can't tell you how disappointed I am to finally meet you.

WHACK!

Richard slams the club down into Arthur's stomach with a wild practice swing. The air is knocked out of him. Coughing, wheezing, Arthur struggles to get his breath back.

RICHARD

That's for pissing me off. That kid gets straight A's, or I'll ruin you.

(Tosses the club away)

You think I'm ruining my own son?
You just wait and see what I do to you.

Arthur holds up a hand, giving Richard an "okay" gesture.

INT. STABLE - DAY

Arthur leans against a wall, his face looking worse and a lot more swollen. He watches Liam as he slowly walks around, filling a backpack with a couple of shot-up textbooks, pens, paper, and whatever else could be passable as school supplies. Liam shoots him a look and can't help but laugh.

LIAM

I told you he wouldn't listen.

ARTHUR

Will you just hurry up and pack that bag?

LIAM

Where are we going?

ARTHUR

Field trip. I'm not just your tutor, I've been promoted to teacher.

LIAM

Says who?

ARTHUR (LAUGHING)

It was your dad's idea.

LIAM

You've only just met me.

ARTHUR

I've seen countless kids like you. And I haven't done enough. Just took the money. But with you, you're going to get an education. You're going to get what every kid should. And I'm going to do what I should have done from the start.

LIAM
Not get hit in the face with a golf club?

ARTHUR
Be a teacher.

Liam zips up the backpack and slings it over a shoulder.

LIAM
Ready?

Arthur pushes himself off the wall, but he instantly doubles over. A violent coughing fit. He spits a mouthful of blood onto the floor between his feet. Liam hurries over to him.

LIAM (CONT'D)
There's no one like my dad, huh?

Arthur wipes the blood from his mouth with the back of his hand.

ARTHUR
No.
(head shaking)
My dad used to beat the shit out of me all the time. I'm alright getting hit.

LIAM
But my dad uses a golf club.
(A beat)
This field trip... where is it?

ARTHUR
About 20 minutes from here.

LIAM
You're not driving?

ARTHUR
I'm an excellent driver.

LIAM
You're also spitting up blood.

ARTHUR
I'm fine.

LIAM
My dad has chauffeurs. Use one of them. Bill my dad. He'll hate it.

A smile dances across Arthur's lips.

ARTHUR

Sold.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - BEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Ben sits behind his cluttered desk. Facing him, sitting on hard plastic chairs on the opposite side, are Arthur and Liam.

BEN

(pointing at Liam)

And who's this?

Liam points right back at him.

LIAM

Who are you?

BEN

(to Liam)

I'm headmaster of this fine school.

ARTHUR

This is Liam. I'd like to enrol him.

LIAM

I've never been to school before, but I'm willing to give it a go.

BEN

(to Arthur)

Can he even read or write?

Arthur considers, then shrugs.

ARTHUR

No idea, but he's a pretty good shot with a gun.

LIAM

Thanks.

BEN

I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that. You want to enrol him? Have you got his parents' permission?

ARTHUR

No.

BEN

Then he can't enrol.

ARTHUR

Just let him sit in the classes,
experience school. Say he's a guest
that comes to school every day.

BEN

I'm sure what you're asking me is
breaking some kind of law. I just
don't know which one yet.

ARTHUR

You have to let him.

BEN

And what do I get in return? Huh?
Can you tell me that? And if you
dare bring up money or put any
money on this desk, I swear to
whichever god you believe in, I'll
shove it down your throat.

ARTHUR

(slowly)

You get me.

Silence. A beat.

LIAM

I've only just met him. I don't
know if that's a good deal or not.

Ben stands up. His whole demeanour changes.

BEN

(warning Arthur)

Don't mess with me.

ARTHUR

I mean it. Whatever you want me to
do, I'll do it, but the kid comes
with me.

Ben starts picking up anything and everything from his desk
and tossing it playfully but forcefully at Arthur.

BEN

Don't mess with me.

Arthur lifts his hands up, protecting himself, smiling.

ARTHUR

You've got me. Whatever you want me
to do, I'll do it.

BEN
Shit money?

ARTHUR
Below minimum wage shit? You want
it? You've got it.

BEN
Why?

ARTHUR
Every kid deserves a chance, and
I'm good at what I do. It just took
me too long to work out the right
path.
(Smiling to himself)
I should have met up for lunch with
you years ago.

BEN
When can you start?

Arthur points at Liam.

ARTHUR
He starts right away.

BEN
I didn't ask about him, I asked
about you.

ARTHUR
I need a couple more days.

BEN
For what?

ARTHUR
Over the last couple of years, I've
tutored a lot of privileged kids.
Taught them all how to get A's and
got them those A's. But what they
needed most was the opportunity to
grow, and they can only do that in
a place like this.
(To Liam)
You need to stay with him. And I
will be back to take you home.

LIAM

So a guy I've only just met has brought me to a school I've never been to before and is now asking me to stay with another guy I've only just met whose name I don't even know.

ARTHUR

Do me a favour, don't tell your father.

LIAM

(smiling)

He wouldn't listen even if I did.

BEN

(to Arthur)

I really got through to you, didn't I?

Arthur considers, then nods.

ARTHUR

(to Ben)

You should really think about becoming a teacher.

Ben laughs.

Arthur leaves. The door closes behind him. Ben walks around his desk to Liam.

BEN

What do you want your first lesson to be?

Liam chuckles.

LIAM

Surprise me.

BEN

You sure?

LIAM

Well, today has been one big surprise after another, so one more can't hurt.

BEN

Tell me about it.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END