

Strange Bedfellows

Written by

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INT. BAR - EVENING

Windows flicker with NEON SIGNS. An Irish watering hole - old school style.

Beyond, the street's out of view. Because SURGING BODIES block the glass. A protest rages, it's a beaut.

Palestinian and Israeli FLAGS fly, clash. There's no question what this is about.

At the bar: only two occupants - BARTENDER MURPHY and NORM... both clad in working class threads.

Cocking an ear to CHANTS outside, Norm lifts his glass of whisky. Eyes its amber glow, gulps some down.

BANG! The door behind him erupts. Followed by a second SLAM. Norm startles, swings his seat around.

ADAM spread-eagles across the closed entrance. Norm watches a designer clad Adam hyperventilate. Seems vaguely amused.

Concern flickers on Adam's features. He pivots on his heel to lock the door.

A finger wagging TSK-TSK from Murphy stops Adam in his tracks. But fails to wipe the fear from his face.

ADAM

Look what's out there! You want to let all that... inside?

MURPHY

Screaming's thirsty business. If they seek to quench that at MY taps? You're god damned right. I'll wave 'em in myself.

Adam blinks in disbelief.

ADAM

You're OK with serving terrorists?

MURPHY

I serve all sorts. Different sizes. Shapes. Plenty views. No matter how I disagree, who'm I to refuse a man his drink based on politics? That ain't good for business.

He and Norm lock eyes. Share a brief, familiar nod.

MURPHY

Ain't good for patching fences,
neither. If a man can't sit in peace
with your fellow grunt over a pint,
how're you gonna work differences
out?

ADAM

I don't wanna make peace with -

A glare from Murphy shuts Adam up. Slouching, he unlocks the entrance door.

Shuffles over to a stool, and sits down.

Murphy stares at Adam. Who shivers, unnerved.

ADAM

What - you want me to apologize?

MURPHY

(chuckles)

Just awaiting your order. Sir.

Adam scans the bar, doesn't see anything that appeals.

ADAM

Got IPA craft brews?

MURPHY

(snorts)

That yuppie crap? We tried stocking
some last year. Wasn't worth the
shipping cost.

Adam's eyes slide towards Norm; a pleading "can you believe this guy?" look. Norm taps his whiskey glass.

NORM

I recommend Johnny Walker. This one's
blue. And damned good.

ADAM

Fine. I'll have one, too.

MURPHY

Wise choice.

Murphy pours.

MURPHY

But chores call. I'll leave you two
gentlemen to... talk.

Murphy shuffles to the other end of the bar, leaving the two strangers alone.

ADAM
(to Norm)
You know, I'm not at all the hard
liquor type.

NORM
There's a first time for everything.
Don't sell yourself short.

MOMENTS LATER

Adam contemplates the drink in his hand.

ADAM
I'm guessing you're a regular?

NORM
I don't *live* here. But yeah - I come
often. To unwind.

ADAM
And you swear this drink's g-

Norm cuts him off.

NORM
Murphy's suggestion wasn't no order.
We don't *have* to talk. I ain't the
chatty type.

ADAM
Who's Murphy?

Norm points towards the now busy bartender.

ADAM
Oh. Duly noted.

NORM
I'm Norm.

ADAM
And I'm Adam. Glad to meet you. I
guess?

Andy gulps his drink to hide an awkward mood. Shudders as it rolls down.

ADAM
Oooh, that burns!

NORM

It's smooth, too. Give it time.

A sudden THUD from outside interrupts...

A PROTESTOR'S slammed face first into the window. Glass rattles. The protestor's RED HANDS smooch against the pane.

Norm and Adam JUMP. They watch as the protestor's pried away, leaving bloody prints behind.

The two share a WTF look.

NORM

That could be blood.

ADAM

Or paint. Leftist morons like that, too.

NORM

(grins)

Be honest, now. Which would you prefer?

Adam hesitates, realizes he's not sure.

Murphy drifts toward the entrance door. He's about to open it, wipe the hand-prints off.

Last second, he draws CURTAINS instead: hiding the offending smears. Shutting the bar off from the outside world.

MURPHY

I'll clean later. Once the fun's died down.

ADAM

No more equal opportunity serving, huh?

MURPHY

Door's still unlocked. Anyone who wants to join in doesn't even have to knock.

Murphy hands the remaining BOTTLE to Norm.

MURPHY

I'll leave you to do the honors. I got stuff to clean in back.

Murphy walks off. Norm salutes, tops off Adam's glass.

ADAM

Hey... you're authorized to do that?

NORM

You kiddin'? Murphy's master of my tab. And by the looks of it, you're gonna need a few.

Another THUMP from outside. Bar lamps swing.

NORM

Before headin' back into that storm.

The two toast.

ADAM

Here's to finding unexpected refuge.

NORM

May jihadists get all they deserve!

ADAM

Amen to that, too!

A moment of uncertainty. Adam tries to read Norm's expression. Can't.

ADAM

"Deserve" in the bad way, right?

NORM

Of course! There's nothing "good" 'bout what THEY bring!

The two share a smile over the shared bond. Soon, conversation and whiskey flows.

ADAM

So, you're local?

Norm eyeballs Adam's yuppie threads.

NORM

I know you're not. Down-town doesn't seem to be your style. What brings you to the butt-end of the city, Adam?

ADAM

Someone's gotta stand up to those terrorists! Silence is complicity. And history knows what THAT brings!

NORM

Uh - peace and quiet?

ADAM

No. Shoah. Holocaust!

Adam fishes a STAR OF DAVID necklace from his shirt. Norm's eyes widen. Followed by a grin and nod.

NORM

Ah. For you, this all's personal.

ADAM

Damned right. This madness has to end!

He waves an increasingly drunken hand towards the exit.

ADAM

Going on for two years now. And what are these assholes objecting to?

Norm contemplates that question.

NORM

Your kind having a place to go to,
Call your own?

ADAM

Exactly! Only an antisemite would object!

NORM

(beat)

Well, I think you can suss out I ain't one 'a you. My momma raised me as a good... well, a good-as-possible Christian, anyhow. But I'm feelin' what you say, Brother. All folks DESERVE a special Homeland. Breathing Space. Leg room. Cultural Sovereignty... whatever the kids call it nowadays.

Adam nods.

Outside, chants begin. The two listen carefully.

MULTIPLE PROTESTORS

From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be Free!

Adam winces further as he hears:

UNSEEN PROTESTOR
Baby Killer!

Adam snarls, slams more liquid courage down.

ADAM
Blood libel like that makes me sick.

NORM
Drinkin' that fast can do that, too.
(beat)
Y'now, I hear some kids *have* died...
over there. You tellin' me that's all
a lie?

ADAM
No - but it's not intentional! It's
not OUR fault they hide behind
civilians. War's ugly. And things
must be done. That's the cold, hard
truth.

Adam steams over his drink, eyes and face turning red.

ADAM
Civilians in Gaza aren't all that
innocent, anyway. If they really were
such angels, they'd collectively turn
Hamis in. It's their culture to be
violent. We Jews have a right to
protect ourselves from that!

NORM
(chuckles darkly)
Yeah. Kids grow up like their
parents. So you gotta remove the
risk. None of this bleeding heart
shit. Rip the toxin out at its root!

Adam nods energetically. Waves at Norm to top off his glass.

NORM
Hey, slow down. This stuff is armor
class. Especially for a lightweight
like you. No offense, but you strike
me as a Manischewitz sorta guy.

ADAM
(laughs)
Don't stereotype. Remember? IPA's my
poison!

Another CHANT interrupts.

UNSEEN PROTESTOR
 Palestinians have the right to
 return!

ADAM
 (sarcastic)
 Return to what?

NORM
 Let Arab nations take 'em in.

ADAM
 They wanna talk about "rights"?
 Israel has a right to exist - and to
 keep that riff-raff OUT!

A POLICE RECORDING penetrates the door.

POLICE RECORDING
 You are ordered to disperse. Those
 who do not obey will face arrest.

For Adam and Norm, that's good news. The distant wail of
 SIRENS provides additional soundtrack.

NORM
 Ah, music to my ears.

ADAM
 Mine, too!

NORM
 They should toss those fuckers in a
 camp somewhere.

The word "camp" unsettles Adam... just a bit.

ADAM
 Um, you mean a prison? Hell, yeah.
 (emboldened)
 And throw away the key!

A wide grin splits Norm's face.

NORM
 Preach, my CHOSEN Man!

Unseen VIOLENT ARRESTS rattle the door. The two men high
 five - clasp hands like new fast-friends. Until...

Norm's sleeve slides down, revealing: a SWASTIKA TATTOO.

Adam gulps. He lets go, as if holding a snake.

He scootches his chair away from Norm. Points at his wrist.

ADAM

What the HELL is that?

NORM

Some Native Americans call it the Whirling Log. It's got Hindu and Buddhist meanings, too.

ADAM

You can't possibly think I'll swallow that bullshit?

NORM

You downed plenty whiskey. And that's the PC answer I use on woke kids.

Norm leans forward, a confidential gesture. Adam yanks his chair further away. SCRAPE.

Norm's grin melts into confusion. Feelings sincerely hurt.

NORM

You can't think I mean you harm? 'Til a second ago, we were gettin' along peachy keen.

ADAM

Sure, bonding over terrorists! That's a no brainer. But now...

Adam scans the bar for Murphy. Anything to get him out of this unexpected mess.

ADAM

I should settle my tab and go.

But Norm isn't letting this evening end on such a note.

NORM

Nah, Man. We were syncing on all levels. Peas in a pod. Like this!

He holds up crossed fingers. Adam cowers over Norm's list:

NORM

We both see what animals these Brownies are. And we have sense enough to wanna live with *our* kind.

ADAM

I didn't cosign -

NORM

You did! And it was glorious. Admit it, you're so fuckin' right! You and Israel got the guts to send 'em packing: out there, and back here at home. Chosen One. Master Race: different words. Big deal, it means the same!

ADAM

No! I, I mean... I *hope* not?

Adam stands up, prepares to bolt.

Murphy reappears, off his break. He assesses his patrons.

MURPHY

Uh, is there a problem?

ADAM

Yeah! You didn't tell me this guy's a neo-Nazi!

NORM

"Neo"? Excuse me? I'm no fuckin' dilettante. You're lookin' at old school here. A man with roots!

MURPHY

You seemed to be getting along just fine. Who am I to ruin a moment between soulmates?

ADAM

We're not soulmates!

MURPHY

Whatever. None of my bees-wax. But you seemed to be agreeing on a lot. And that's a GOOD thing, right?

ADAM

(chokes)

I... Excuse me. I have to leave!

Adam darts out the door. Murphy bellows after him.

MURPHY

You downed three shots. Who's gonna pay?

NORM

(waves him off)

I got it. Let him - and it - go.

Murphy and Norm listen to the crowd outside. Adam's voice joins the screams.

ADAM (O.S.)
Officer, I wasn't in the protest. I was just leav- let me go. Ahhhhh!

Norm and Murphy exchange looks.

MURPHY
No sweat. I'm sure he'll get bail.

NORM
He's no jihadist. Only for Brownies do they throw away the key.

Murphy slaps the tab down for Norm to sign.

MURPHY
Norm, I'll never deny you a drink. But your white supremacist views? Don't ever get delusions. You know that's not MY cup of tea.

NORM
Hey, you might wanna rethink that some day. You heard the man. Even Israelis agree with me!

MURPHY
You wanna talk "old school", Norm? I'm 100% Irish.

NORM
But I don't hold it against ya. You should reciprocate, do the same.

MURPHY
(sarcastic)
Noble man you so are. Both sets of my grandparents came off the boat. And both granddads were in the IRA.

He jabs a thumb towards the door.

MURPHY
So, callin' people "terrorist" for resisting occupation don't exactly sit right with me.

Norm raises his glass to Murphy.

NORM
So, what are YOU rootin' for?

MURPHY

An end to the kinda talk you and Mr. Uptown were dishing just now. And some well-deserved justice.

NORM

For the rag heads?

MURPHY

(pointed barb)

An end to racism. No more damned countries that favor "one" group. Call me a lefty if you must, but I'm in favor of equal rights.

He turns a concerned face towards the door.

MURPHY

And peace. For all humanity.

FINAL FADE OUT: