

ARMA

Written by

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FADE IN.

EXT. RAVINA CITY - NIGHT - EST.

Ravina City - a haven of dusty wooden buildings and dustier dirt roads. By day the townsfolk melt in the desert sun working honest jobs for honest pay. But at night Ravina belongs to her saloons and brothels.

EXT. RAVINA BANK - NIGHT

The word 'BANK' etched on a dangling sign denotes this is, in fact, a bank.

KA-BOOM.

Glass and splinters explode from the window. A BANDIT emerges from the flames shrouded in smoke. One arm lugs a money bag. The other arm appears to be a massive DOUBLE-GAUGE SHOTGUN. Though hard to tell for sure, it casts a huge shadow.

INT. RAVINA SALOON - NIGHT

Inebriated PATRONS hardly notice the aftershock. Save one.

A swarthy COWBOY in a black duster, matching hat and leather gloves lingers on the ripple in his whiskey. He swigs it as he stands.

EXT. RAVINA ROAD - NIGHT

VROOOM.

The bandit runs for all he's worth, tailed by LAWMMEN on rumbling MOTORBIKES.

Their bullets soar past him, missing their mark. He, in turn, haphazardly fires, each shotgun blast exploding upon landing in a haze of dust and debris. These are no ordinary bullets.

One of the lawmen speaks into his WALKIE, a twinge of fear.

LAWMAN
Requesting backup.

WALKIE (O.S.)
For a bandit?

LAWMAN
He has an Arma.

BOOM. A shotgun blast hits the lawman's front wheel, sending him and his bike careening through the air. He lands in a flaming heap of wreckage. The other lawmen skid to a halt.

The bandit takes his opportunity to slip into an alleyway.

INT. RAVINA ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

The bandit ducks behind an outhouse as the motorbikes race past the alley. Beneath shadows created by a sole flickering lantern, his giant shotgun arm shrinks into a regular arm holding a shotgun.

He PANTS, catching his breath, wiping sweat from his brow.

FOOTSTEPS.

BANDIT

Who's there?

A new shadow casts itself down the alleyway, long and menacing.

He cocks his shotgun.

BANDIT (CONT'D)

I'll blow your head off.

He leers at the shadow as it comes closer. Closer. Then...

FWISH. It's gone.

The bandit's head swivels wildly. Suddenly a black-coated arm darts out around his neck. It squeezes. He chokes. It squeezes harder. SNAP.

The bandit's limp body falls aside, his bloodshot eyes bulging. The Cowboy picks up the shotgun, turning it over twice to inspect. He removes his glove.

Through shadow, the Cowboy's fingers twist about the shotgun, absorbing the weapon into his body.

EXT. ORANGE TOWN - DAY - EST.

A cozy town surrounded by a sea of sand, no bigger than a stone's throw in any direction. There's a saloon, a general store, and not much else.

EXT. ORANGE SALOON - BACKYARD - DAY

CLOSE UP on ZITI ARPEGGIO, 15. He's scrawny and baby-faced, but he scowls like someone who's killed a hundred men. He squints at an unseen opponent and growls in the deepest voice he can muster...

ZITI

You thought you had the world on a string? Too bad I'm the end of the line.

Ziti stares down his enemy - the dastardly DR. FIZZ - a soda bottle.

Ziti's hand hones in on the PISTOL strapped to his waist - a clunky piece of scrap bloated with rust, the trigger stuck to the frame and the magazine practically welded shut.

He clunkily attempts to spin the gun around his finger but fumbles halfway through. The gun loses thrust and clatters to the ground.

ZITI (CONT'D)

Dr. Fizz fires a barrage of bullets. BUM BUM BUM.

Ziti drops and rolls to the side as he retrieves his gun. He jumps back up, shaking off dust.

ZITI (CONT'D)

But Ziti's too quick. He dodges within an inch of his life and...

Ziti carefully takes aim.

ZITI (CONT'D)

(deep voice)
When you meet your maker...Send him my regards.

He tries to squeeze the trigger, but it's too rusty to budge. Ziti makes a firing noise anyway and blows imaginary smoke off his pistol.

MR. REDWOOD (O.S.)

Ziti!

Ziti swivels around to face MR. REDWOOD, 60s, a saloonkeeper with thick white whiskers like a friendly dog, popping his head out from inside the saloon.

MR. REDWOOD (CONT'D)
 (winking)
 Customers'll be coming soon. How
 about the world's best gunslinger
 come help with the dishes?

Ziti's bravado sinks like a pebble in quicksand. He nervously
 laughs, tucking his pistol back into his pants.

ZITI
 Be right in, Mr. Redwood.

He moseys inside to help, chucking poor Dr. Fizz into the
 recycling along the way.

EXT. ORANGE SALOON - DAY TO NIGHT

TIME LAPSE. The red desert sun sinks low as the sky turns
 from blue to blood red to black and a thousand stars twinkle
 to life.

The sign on the door changes from OPEN to CLOSED.

INT. ORANGE SALOON - MAIN FLOOR - NIGHT

Ziti sweeps between worn wooden chairs and tables.

Mr. Redwood washes glasses behind the bar, arm-deep in a
 soapy basin.

MR. REDWOOD
 I got something for you.

ZITI
 A present?

MR. REDWOOD
 I've been meaning to give it to you
 for a while, but my memory poofs.

ZITI
 You didn't have to get me anything,
 Mr. Redwood.

MR. REDWOOD
 Bah.

Mr. Redwood dries his hands and disappears into the store
 room. Ziti hears barrels and boxes getting pushed around.

MR. REDWOOD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Where did I put the damn thing?

More rummaging.

MR. REDWOOD (CONT'D)

Here we go.

Mr. Redwood emerges with a small box shoddily wrapped in brown paper. He hands it to Ziti.

ZITI

It's not my birthday for another three months.

MR. REDWOOD

I know I'm not your dad, Ziti. But you're getting older, and a man should be able to protect himself.

Ziti's eyes light up. He excitedly tears through the paper to a brand new PISTOL. It's sleek and shiny with the glisten of fresh black steel.

Ziti closes an eye and peers down the barrel.

ZITI

You have no idea how much I've wanted a real gun.

MR. REDWOOD

I have some idea.

Mr. Redwood's eyes wrinkle when he smiles.

Ziti replaces the rusty gun in his right holster with the shiny new one. He puts the old gun in his left holster.

ZITI

Thanks, Mr. Redwood.

EXT. ORANGE TOWN - NIGHT

Ziti meanders along the main dirt street, past little houses, the general store, the lawman's station. Then fewer buildings, more sand...

Up a sloping side-street...

EXT. ORANGE TOWN OUTLOOK - NIGHT

Ziti arrives atop a small hill on the edge of town. The far side looks out across the vast sea of desert. In the distance, Ravina City twinkles like a beacon.

Although the sky is dark, shimmering stars provide just enough light to define a bench on the edge of the peak.

Ziti sits on the bench.

He takes out his new gun, closes one eye, and looks at the city through the pistol's sights.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAPITOL CITY - GRANDPA'S HOUSE - FLASHBACK

A small, simple house with a welcoming glow. A GRINNING FACE DOORMAT out front says *ENTER IF YOU DARE*.

INT. CAPITOL CITY - GRANDPA'S HOUSE - DAY

Inside, the decorations verge on kitsch. Doo-dads, knick-knacks, trinkets and trophies from all corners of the world clutter the floor. Rare weapons line the walls. In spite of the mess, the value - both sentimental and monetary - is beyond compare.

Ziti's GRANDPA, 70s, the former Grand Sheriff of the Capitol and current lounging enthusiast, sits YOUNG ZITI, 8, upon his knee on the sofa. He's the kind of man whose charm comes from his tales, spun so tall they must be fiction.

Ziti wears a cowboy hat much too big for his head.

GRANDPA

That's an awful big hat you got, Ziti.

ZITI

It's Dad's.

GRANDPA

You gonna be a cowboy now?

ZITI

Yup. I wanna be Grand Sheriff, like you.

GRANDPA

That's a big title. You gotta be the best slinger in the Capitol if you wanna be Grand Sheriff.

ZITI

I'm gonna be.

GRANDPA

Well, don't tell your mom I said this, but I think you'll make a great Grand Sheriff one day.

ZITI

Really?

GRANDPA

Absolutely. You have all the important traits a Grand Sheriff needs. You're smart. You're determined. And most importantly, you're kind.

ZITI

I'm gonna be big and strong.

GRANDPA

That comes later. You can work on your muscles anytime. But who you are?

He points to his heart.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)

That's set in here. You either got it or you don't.

ZITI

And I got it?

GRANDPA

Of course you do. You're my Grandson.

(beat)

You're only missing one thing.

Grandpa places Ziti down on the sofa and walks over to his wall of weapons.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)

I haven't given you a birthday gift yet, have I?

Ziti takes a deep breath.

Grandpa combs the wall, eyeing ornate guns and shimmering swords. He picks one off and returns.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)

In all my years as Grand Sheriff, I never came across a weapon quite as special as this one.

Ziti's eyes brim with excitement.

Grandpa reveals his gift - the clunky, rusted pistol.

Ziti's eyes fall.

ZITI

Oh...Thanks, Grandpa.

GRANDPA

It doesn't look like much, does it?
But when push comes to shove,
there's no gun I'd rather use. This
is the gun that took down the
legendary outlaw Banjo Silvers.

Ziti tries to pull the trigger. It's actually immobile.

ZITI

The trigger's stuck...

GRANDPA

Well, I guess it is pretty old. But
hey, you gotta start somewhere.

Grandpa gives Ziti his biggest, proudest smile. Ziti gives one right back.

END FLASHBACK.

CUT TO:

EXT. ORANGE TOWN OUTLOOK - NIGHT

Ziti takes out his old gun and compares it to the new one. Night and day. He tries to pull the old trigger but it's still rusted as ever.

He smiles, presumably remembering his Grandpa's boast.

BREEEEY. The moment shatters with the WHINNY of a dozen horses accompanied by thunderous GALLOPS and GUNSHOTS coming from Orange. CRASHES. SHOUTS.

Ziti jolts up. He pockets his old gun and readies his new one as he runs back towards town.

EXT. ORANGE TOWN - NIGHT

Ziti returns to the town mid-raid. SIX BANDITS sweep down main street, leaving a trail of broken windows and burning buildings.

A TOWNSMAN emerges onto his porch with a shotgun. He starts to take aim at a Bandit but immediately gets mowed down by another.

The Bandits HOOT and HOWL and continue their destruction.

Back at the entrance to town, Ziti witnesses the carnage ensue. He checks the gun's chamber. It's full - 6 bullets - one for each Bandit.

And he's off.

INT. ORANGE SALOON - NIGHT

A squeaky record player sings some OLDIES. Mr. Redwood polishes glasses and hums along.

FOOTSTEPS outside. He looks up.

MR. REDWOOD
Back already, Ziti?

KA-BAM. A heavy kick splinters the front door. THREE BANDITS enter - scraggly sunnabitches, the lot of 'em, with long greasy hair, unbrushed teeth, and pistols at the ready.

A fourth steps in behind - their boss, IRONSIDE, 25. He's cleaner and thicker with slicked hair and a slew of golden rings. Unlike the others, he keeps his gun at his hip.

Mr. Redwood puts his hands up.

EXT. ORANGE SALOON - NIGHT

Ziti runs up to the saloon. His stomach drops at the sight of the Bandits' horses tied up outside.

He sidles over to the edge of the building, pinning his back tight against the wall, gun drawn. Voices inside.

Ziti creeps along the wall like a gecko, craning his neck for a peek inside the busted door frame. He catches a glimpse of Mr. Redwood cowering behind the counter.

Ziti clutches his new gun, closes his eyes, and braces himself.

INT. ORANGE SALOON - NIGHT

Ironside surveys the room, honing in on the back room. He nods to his men.

IRONSIDE

Take the ale.

The three lackeys storm the back room. One shoves Mr. Redwood to the ground as he walks past.

His glasses clatter off as he hits the wall. Slumped, Mr. Redwood gropes for his glasses.

Through cracked lenses he looks up into the visage of Ironside looming above. Ironside stares back with pitiless eyes.

IRONSIDE (CONT'D)

You have a safe.

Mr. Redwood nods.

IRONSIDE (CONT'D)

Show me.

Mr. Redwood hobbles over to a spot near the back wall. He pushes out a loose wood panel and reveals a tiny safe.

MR. REDWOOD

It's not much.

IRONSIDE

Open it.

Mr. Redwood shakily turns the lock.

Ziti watches from outside. Ironside has his back turned to the door. This is his shot.

Ziti steps in and aims at Ironside's head...shoulder...back. His stance is shaky. His aim faulty. He fires anyway.

The bullet soars out Ziti's barrel, across the room, heading directly for the unaware Ironside. It's about to hit. A lucky shot.

FWOOSH. Ironside spins around, grabbing Mr. Redwood as a human shield. Ziti barely has time to scream.

ZITI

NO.

The bullet lands directly in Mr. Redwood's chest. His eyes widen, then shut. Ironside lets his body crumple to the floor.

IRONSIDE

You had one shot.

The other three bandits come out of the back room, jumping over the counter, guns trained on Ziti. Ironside puts a hand up to stop them.

IRONSIDE (CONT'D)
I'll give you one more.

Ironside holds his arms out wide, an open target.

Ziti aims again through tear-streaked eyes. He fires. As soon as the gun goes BANG, Ironside barrels across the room, deftly dodging the bullet and landing a powerful UPPERCUT into Ziti's stomach.

Ziti flies into the wall, his gun spinning out across the room. He coughs and hacks, spitting blood onto the floor.

IRONSIDE (CONT'D)
What's your life worth? Some
barrels of ale? Ten silver pieces?

Ironside turns to leave.

Ziti fumbles at his side, pulling out the rusty old pistol from his left holster.

He raises it to Ironside, shaking like a lantern in a sandstorm.

ZITI
(quiet)
I'm going to kill you.

The men laugh raucously.

BANDIT
Look at that thing. It's so cute!

Even Ironside cracks a smile. He gestures to his men. *LET'S GO.*

ZITI
(louder, crying harder)
Did you hear me? I said I'm going
to kill you, you scum bastard.

Ironside stops.

IRONSIDE
I'd have let you live...Stupid kid.

He turns and draws almost faster than the eye can follow.

BOOM. The bullet flies out of Ironside's barrel with a deafening CRACK. Ziti closes his eyes, and squeezes the rusty old trigger with all his might.

The rust crumbles.

The trigger CLICKS.

The gun DECONSTRUCTS. Its body compresses and expands all at once. Geometric fractals of brilliant gunmetal twist and fold across the fingers of Ziti's right hand, up his wrist, down his arm. Metal patterns layer into a sharp arch atop his shoulder before doubling back to his hand.

Once back at the hand, the gun RECONSTRUCTS its shape, now slender and black and void of rust. An engraving along the side reads - HEMINGWAY.

The resulting form rests somewhere between organic and mechanical. Ziti's entire right arm has become thick metal armor, both his and not his. It's alive.

Ziti barely has time to process as a bullet erupts from Hemingway's barrel - a bullet pulsating with hot blue electric energy - literally dissolving Ironside's measly bullet in its wake.

The bullet hones in on Ironside, entering his face through his crooked grin, tearing along his cheek, and exiting out the back of his ear.

Blood, gunk, and teeth drip to the floor.

Ironside collapses to his knees, clutching the left half of his face, or whatever remains of it.

He tries to mumble something but can only manage a pained YELP like a wounded dog.

His men run to his side, draping his arms over their shoulders, lifting him to his feet.

Ziti takes in the resulting carnage with his jaw on the floor. Nobody expected this, least of all him.

Ironside glares at Ziti as his men drag him out of the bar empty-handed - his eyes a mix of fear and hate.

One of the bandits manages a stammer before leaving.

BANDIT

Y-you're a monster.

They're gone.

Ziti stares at his new metal arm, thick fingers grasping the smoking gun. The fingers snap open, and the gun clatters to the floor.

The gun RATTLES.

Just as fast as it had formed, the metal armor disassembles in geometric fashion, down Ziti's arm, back into the gun.

Ziti slumps on the floor amidst the gun, the gore, the barrels of ale, and Mr. Redwood's corpse.

INT. ORANGE SALOON - LATER

Ziti lays a bedsheet over Mr. Redwood's body up to his neck.

He kneels down next to the corpse.

ZITI

You told me men shouldn't cry, so
I'm not crying.

Long beat. He triple blinks.

He draws the sheet over Mr. Redwood's head and cries.

INT. ORANGE SALOON - ZITI'S LOFT - NIGHT

Ziti lays on a small cot, sniffing up the last of his snot and wiping his bloodshot eyes.

The room is a converted upstairs storage space, sparse, save a few of Ziti's own touches - a wooden dartboard on the wall, clothes on the floor, a picture of young Ziti and his parents on the dresser next to Hemingway.

A building still smolders in the distance, visible through an open window overlooking the town. But the commotion has quieted down.

Ziti glances at the gun.

He reaches out and pokes it before snapping his hand back, like a child touching a hot stove. Feeling nothing out of the ordinary, he touches the gun once more, still carefully.

Ziti picks the gun up now. He turns it over in his hands, inspecting it thoroughly.

No more rust. The once bloated pistol is now sleek and glistening with a weighty bulk that suggests raw power.

Ziti opens the chamber. To his shock, it's empty. No bullets. He brushes his fingers against the empty slots and rubs them together. No residue either. He closes the chamber.

Finally, Ziti eyes the indented letters, engraved along the gun's edge. The letters carved in perfect script, a master's touch - Hemingway.

ZITI
(sotto)
Hemingway.

Ziti gingerly places the gun back down on his night stand next to the picture of his parents. For a moment, his eyes wander over. He lingers on his mom, his dad, and then himself, young and carefree.

Ziti shuts his eyes tight and tries to sleep.

INT. ORANGE SALOON - ZITI'S LOFT - LATER

A cool wind rolls in through the open window.

Ziti turns in his sleep away from the breeze.

A SHADOWY FIGURE crouches on the window frame, appearing from the darkness itself. It slips inside, out of the black night. His identity revealed - The Cowboy.

He looms over Ziti, watching him sleep. A quick shot of remorse passes over The Cowboy's face.

He opens his palm wide.

An opal shotgun materializes in sharp fragments. The Cowboy aims at Ziti at point blank range.

He hesitates again, a pained expression.

KA-BOOM. A massive blast of explosive flame explodes from the shotgun.

CRACK.

The Cowboy's eyes widen.

CR-CRACK.

The blast lingers in the air before recoiling in a flood of fire.

The Cowboy grits his teeth as he shields himself from the flame. Even so, the force sends him crashing to the ground.

Hemingway's frame engulfs Ziti's arm, forming itself as Ziti groggily wakes up. A deep blue crack disseminates from the shotgun blast's point of contact, spreading along the armor. Ziti's metal arm crackles with electricity before deforming back into Hemingway, now pulsating with blue cracks.

Ziti hardly takes a second to absorb his surroundings - fire, smoke, and The Cowboy in the center of it all.

The photo of Ziti's parents lies in the corner, its glass shattered. Ziti clearly plans to grab it before escaping, but a GRUFF VOICE echoes deep in his subconscious.

GRUFF VOICE

Run.

Ziti gives his parents one final glance before jumping out of bed, grabbing his coat off the ground, and sliding down the ladder to the main floor.

No sooner has Ziti left then The Cowboy rises from the flames.

INT. ORANGE SALOON - MAIN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Ziti scrambles across the room, panting, tripping over Mr. Redwood's corpse, almost reaching the door.

GRUFF VOICE

Duck.

Ziti looks back just in time to see another massive shotgun blast flying his way. He hits the floor right as the blast passes overhead, exploding through the door and taking half the wall with it.

GRUFF VOICE (CONT'D)

Now go.

Ziti forces himself up and continues through the wreckage.

EXT. ORANGE TOWN - CONTINUOUS

Ziti races down the road, kicking up dirt in his wake.

He SCREAMS at the top of his lungs.

ZITI

HELP ME.

A glance over his shoulder reveals The Cowboy still on his tail.