

THE ATTENDANT

Written by

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EXT. GAS STATION - AFTERNOON

A solitary gas station, on a quiet, country road.

The pumps are locked with chains. A CAR approaches.

INT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

The TV opposite the counter is on. A news channel, on mute: A throng of anxious people trying to enter a giant black dome.

An ATTENDANT, male, mid-30s, sits at the counter, watching, as the car enters the station and squeals to a stop.

The car HONKS. In a rush. Attendant gets up. Walks out.

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

ATTENDANT walks over to the car and unlocks the pump. Nods at the CUSTOMER, male, 40s, who leans out of the window. Sweaty.

CUSTOMER

Thanks, fella. Need 20 bucks worth.

Attendant starts pumping the gas, eyes on the meter.

CUSTOMER (CONT'D)

Aren't you leaving?

ATTENDANT

I gotta work.

Customer's eyes flash with a sudden, deep realisation.

CUSTOMER

Oh. You made a deal.

Attendant nods.

CUSTOMER (CONT'D)

Well, you're a good man... I have a place. Well, my brother in law does. Built it in the middle of nowhere. Thought I could make it on one tank. But...

ATTENDANT

Right.

The meter hits 20 dollars. Attendant stops pumping. Customer hands him a crumpled wad of bills. Starts the engine.

CUSTOMER  
Keep the change...

Customer leans out of the window as he rolls out.

CUSTOMER (CONT'D)  
You're a good man!

Attendant watches the car recede down the dirt track, disappearing behind a trail of dust. He goes back inside.

INT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

On the TV: Tension around the dome. People trying to push their way in. Armed guards trying to hold them back.

Attendant enters and puts the cash in the register. Watches. Goes to the fridge; takes a six pack of cheap beer. Puts it back. Takes pack of premium. Scans it. Cracks a can open.

His phone RINGS. He puts it on speaker. A GIRL's voice:

GIRL (O.S.)  
Daddy daddy, we made it! We're in!

ATTENDANT  
Great!

GIRL (O.S.)  
Why didn't you come with us daddy?

ATTENDANT  
I had to work baby.

GIRL (O.S.)  
There's so many people here.

ATTENDANT  
Good. You'll make friends.

GIRL (O.S.)  
I miss you daddy.

ATTENDANT  
I miss you too baby.

GIRL (O.S.)  
Mommy wants to talk to you.

A beat.

WOMAN (O.S.)  
Hey...

ATTENDANT

Hey...

WOMAN (O.S.)

The money came through. Just as we got here.

ATTENDANT

Good.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Are you smoking?

ATTENDANT

No.

WOMAN (O.S.)

OK... I love you.

ATTENDANT

I love you.

Woman's voice cracks.

WOMAN (O.S.)

I'm gonna go before I---

ATTENDANT

Yeah...

The line dies. Attendant turns to the TV. The standoff outside the dome is getting violent. He turns up the volume.

TV VOICE

... but it's salvation for those who can afford it. And for the families of those corporate employees who have agreed to stay behind, to close up businesses and wind down operations, in return for a one-time bonus from their corporations. Enough to guarantee those workers' families a ticket into Stormvault.

Attendant mutes the TV. Stands up. Takes the beer. Takes a packet of CAMELS from the rack behind him. Scans it. Walks to the door. Turns the door sign, so that CLOSED is facing out.

We stay inside, seeing the pumping station beyond, and the TV's reflection on the glass, as Attendant exits the station.

He walks to the parking area, gazing at the horizon. Lights a cigarette, exhaling smoke into the cold air around him.

On TV, the people push past the guards and charge the gates of the dome. They are all gunned down.

Outside the gas station, distant, bright streaks of light appear in the sky, but the Attendant keeps smoking. Calmly inhaling and exhaling, as the lights get closer, expanding like blooming flowers.

The image on TV burns white, then cuts to white noise as the light cascades from the mountains, brighter than any sun, swallowing everything.

The Attendant's outline, a black silhouette, flickers, for a brief moment, before it too is consumed in light.

THE END.