

Gravediggers' Arms Part 3

The three men sat around a dusty table in the cold, unheated function room.

‘When will we three meet again?’ asked Gordon, the grey-haired doctor.

‘When we find some sucker who’s deluded enough to think they can take this place on,’ cackled Clive the estate agent.

‘Are you sure we need to go through with this plan,’ asked Will, the solicitor. ‘I reckon I could have a word down the lodge, pull a few strings.’

‘Very true, Will,’ said Gordon. ‘I don’t want my hundred grand tied up too long.’

‘Sorry gents. It’s the last pub in the village,’ said Clive. ‘Got to prove to the council that it’s completely unviable before we realise our asset.’

‘And what do you think again that our asset might be worth, Clive’ asked Will.

‘Nice plot like this – maybe half a dozen family commuter pads at half a million or fifteen starter shoeboxes at two hundred grand.’ He traced the figures £3,000,000 out in the dust on the table top.

‘Take away the developer commission and construction costs and we’ve still tripled our dosh,’ Gordon chuckled.

‘Yeah but I’m worried if we’re not careful we might get landed with a viable pub,’ said Will.

‘You really think so – after the disaster that Tony made of this place. It’s guaranteed to fail,’ said Clive. ‘Look at the state of the place. It’s ready to be condemned.’

‘But there’s quite a few pubs in other villages that the locals have bought and turned around – taken what the pubcos had given up on and revived them as proper community pubs that actually make money,’ said Gordon.

‘That’s other pubs and villages. This is the Gravediggers. Even the best intentioned couldn’t make this work. It’s the biggest dive in the county. The beer lines are so gunged up it’s a wonder liquid comes out, the kitchen uses more rat poison than salt and if you added up the IQs of the regulars you still wouldn’t get to three figures,’ smiled Clive.

‘So we’ve got to make sure it stays that way. We need to pick our landlord very carefully,’ suggested Will.

‘We need a plausible idiot, preferably someone local with no experience or business sense and who’s likely to drink away any profits that he might make by chance,’ said Gordon. ‘Then when he goes bust the council will have no choice but to let us flatten the place.’

‘Right, let’s find him,’ said Clive. The three men downed their gin and tonics in celebration.

Gordon, Clive and Will entered the main bar of the Gravediggers and slammed their empty gin glasses on the bar.

James was leaning on the bar, draining another pint glass and waving a piece of paper at Lisa the surly barmaid.

‘Redundancy money. What am I going to do with it, Lisa? I’ve only ever worked at a desk in the city,’ James said, slurring his words and collapsing off his stool.

‘Ever thought about running a pub?’ asked Clive.