

Arms And the Man Summary

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Plot Summary

The Beginning of the Story:

At the start of the play, Raina is sitting on her balcony late at night, admiring the stars. Her mother, Catherine, enters and questions her about what she is doing. Raina responds by explaining that she is enjoying the moonlit night and marveling at the stars. Catherine scolds her for staying up late but then shares some good news: their army has won the war in Serbia. Catherine informs Raina that her fiancé, Sergius, had a key role in the victory. He and Raina's father served as officers during the Serbian War of 1885. At this moment, Louka, the family servant, enters the room and advises Raina to close the windows because of the ongoing gunfire outside. However, Raina tells Louka that she will handle it herself, and Louka leaves. Raina, pleased by the news of her fiancé's success, holds a picture of Sergius and talks to herself. As she continues, she eventually falls asleep, forgetting to close the windows and door.

Bluntschli's Arrival and Raina's Assistance: In the middle of the night, Raina is suddenly awakened by a noise. She finds a soldier, Bluntschli, standing in her room, wearing dirty clothes. Bluntschli threatens her with a gun, asking if she is afraid. Raina calmly replies that she is not frightened. Louka knocks on the door. She mentions that neighbors have reported a Serbian soldier in the room and that soldiers are nearby to search. Bluntschli becomes frightened, but Raina reassures him and hides him in the room. The soldiers search the room but do not find him. However, Louka notices a gun and suspects that someone has been there. After the soldiers leave, Bluntschli reveals that he is a Swiss soldier. He explains that most of the men fighting in the war do not even know the reasons for the conflict. He further explains that he takes chocolate instead of ammunition and that his gun is unloaded. Raina begins to feel sympathy for him and decides to protect him. She goes to tell her mother, and when they return, they find Bluntschli asleep in Raina's bed. Raina's mother gives him a coat that belonged to Raina's father. She hopes it will help him escape without being recognized. Raina places a portrait of herself in the coat pocket before he leaves.

Sergius' Attraction to Louka: Months later, Raina's father and her fiancé, Sergius, return home after the war. Raina is happy to see Sergius. They converse pleasantly, although their relationship is mostly an act. Sergius has developed an attraction to Louka. When Raina leaves,

Sergius takes Louka's hand and attempts to kiss her. Louka, overwhelmed by emotion, asks Sergius if he plans to marry her. Sergius admits he wants to, but his concern is Raina's marriage. Just then, Raina returns, and Sergius and Louka pretend nothing has occurred. However, Raina begins to sense that something is amiss between them.

The Second Arrival of Bluntschli: One day, a man visits their house, and Raina and her mother recognize him as the soldier they once helped. He has come to settle some war-related papers and brings the coat with him. Raina's father greets him enthusiastically. He addresses him as "Captain Bluntschli" and warmly invites him inside. Bluntschli's sincerity and reasonableness are quickly apparent. Seeing Bluntschli again, Raina feels a strong attraction and realizes she has fallen in love with him. They sit and discuss the portrait of Raina, which was in the coat pocket. Bluntschli, however, denies having seen it, which hurts Raina. Just then, Sergius enters and confronts Raina. He questions whether she helped Bluntschli escape during the war. Raina, in turn, accuses Sergius of having a secret affection for Louka. The two of them, Bluntschli and Raina, find themselves drawn to one another. They decide to marry the person they love, regardless of the circumstances.

Despite initial concerns, Raina's family does not object to her marriage to Bluntschli. Because he is not only a soldier but also a successful businessman with a good hotel. The play concludes with Raina's decision to marry Bluntschli. It is a choice that reflects her shift in her understanding of love, war, and personal freedom.

Detailed Summary

Act 1: The Hero's Illusion

The play "Arms and the Man" begins during the Serbo-Bulgarian War of 1885 in a lady's bedroom in Bulgaria. The room is decorated with a mix of cheap Viennese and rich Bulgarian items. There is a large portrait of a handsome Bulgarian officer on the wall. Raina Petkoff, a young woman, is standing on the balcony in her nightgown. She is enjoying the moonlit night and thinking about her fiancé, Sergius Saranoff, who is a war hero. She feels proud of him but also has some doubts about his bravery. Her mother, Catherine, comes in and tells Raina that Sergius was the hero of a big battle and led the cavalry charge. Raina is happy and relieved to hear this news.

However, Raina also admits to her mother that she had once thought Sergius might look bad compared to the Russian officers. She worries that her ideas about him are based on romantic notions from poetry and the opera. While they talk, Raina's servant, Louka, enters and warns them about shooting in the streets because of the war. Louka tells them that the Serbians are

retreating and may come into town. Catherine tells Raina to close the shutters, but Louka leaves the room after Raina says she can do it herself.

After Louka leaves, Raina admires Sergius's portrait. She thinks of him as her brave hero. Suddenly, the sound of gunfire is heard outside. Raina blows out the candles. At that moment, the shutter opens, and a soldier sneaks into the room through the balcony. The soldier is in tattered clothes, and Raina is shocked to see him. He threatens her, saying if she screams, he will kill her. But Raina is not afraid and says she is not scared. The soldier then tells her that he is a Serbian soldier and is trying to escape.

When Louka knocks at the door, the soldier gets nervous. However, Raina hides him behind the curtains and reassures him. Louka enters with Catherine and a Bulgarian officer who wants to check the balcony. Because they heard about a soldier sneaking into Raina's room. The officer checks and finds nothing. He assumes it was just a mistake.

Once everyone leaves, the soldier reveals to Raina that he is not Serbian but a Swiss mercenary soldier. He says that he fights for money, not for any cause. He explains that he carries chocolate instead of ammunition. He also admits that he is not brave like other soldiers. Instead, he is just trying to survive the war. Raina is shocked by this, as she had idealized war heroes like Sergius. The soldier explains that soldiers are often afraid, and it is not as glamorous as people think. Raina becomes intrigued by his honesty and feels sorry for him.

The soldier tells Raina that he is tired and wants to stay in her room until he can escape safely. Raina feels pity for him and decides to help him. She tells him to hide in the room and assures him that her family is very rich and influential, so he will be safe there for now. She offers him some of her chocolate. He eats it and admits that he is not as brave as he thought. He calls himself a "chocolate cream soldier," mocking his own cowardice.

Raina says she will check to see if it is safe for him to leave. The soldier then climbs into her bed and falls asleep. When Catherine enters, she is shocked to find the soldier in the bed. Raina explains that he is tired and needs to rest. Catherine does not argue, as she believes Raina's explanation.

Act 2: Lies and Realities

Act 2 begins in March 1886 in the Petkoff family's garden. Louka and Nicola, the servants, are talking. Nicola wants to marry Louka and open a shop. Here, he needs the Petkoffs' approval. Louka knows many secrets about the Petkoffs, and she believes they need her. Nicola warns her that if she is dishonest, they could fire her, and no one would believe her.

Major Petkoff comes home from the war. Catherine greets him, upset because the Austrians forced Bulgaria to make peace with Serbia. Major Petkoff doesn't seem to care much and says they didn't have to be friends with the Serbians. He also mentions Catherine's sore throat, blaming it on washing too much. Catherine says they have installed an electric bell so they don't have to shout for servants. Sergius arrives and talks about the war. He says he won the battle "the wrong way." This means that he was not a hero the way people expected. Catherine thinks Sergius should be promoted, but Sergius announces that he is resigning from the military.

Sergius explains that soldiering is a coward's job. He says soldiers only attack when they are strong and stay out of danger when they are weak. He also tells the story of a man who was hidden by two women. Raina realizes the story is about when she and her mother hid Bluntschli. She and her mother act offended, but Sergius doesn't notice.

Later, Raina and Sergius talk about their love. They both speak in exaggerated terms. Sergius says Raina inspired him in the war. Raina says she is not worthy of him. They both feel they are not good enough for each other. They continue talking about how perfect their love is, but it seems to be an act. Louka enters, and Raina excuses herself, saying she needs to dress.

Sergius talks to Louka, saying she might not understand "higher love." He admits that he is a different person with each person he meets. Louka warns him that Raina might be watching them. Sergius becomes angry and grabs Louka's arm. He says that she is betraying her mistress. Louka replies that she is stronger than Raina. She says that Raina is a liar and not as worthy as she seems. Sergius feels guilty for hurting Louka and apologizes, offering her money, but Louka refuses. She demands that he kiss her arm to make up for it. Sergius refuses and leaves.

Raina returns, and Louka tells her what happened. Catherine enters and tells Sergius that Major Petkoff won't listen to her ideas about the military. Raina says Sergius should talk to him. Catherine also says that the story of Bluntschli being hidden is bothering her. She warns Raina that if Sergius finds out, he will break off their engagement. Raina says she wishes Sergius was not so proper, and she likes to shock him.

Louka enters with Bluntschli, who has returned the coat he was given. Catherine is nervous. She doesn't want her husband to know that they helped Bluntschli. Catherine tells Louka to close the library door and bring Bluntschli's bag to her. Bluntschli enters and writes down his address for Catherine. While writing, Major Petkoff and Sergius enter. They immediately recognize him. They greet him warmly, even though Catherine had tried to hide him. Major Petkoff insists that Bluntschli will stay with them while he's in town. Raina, still shocked to see

Bluntschli, calls him “the chocolate cream soldier.” She tries to cover up her mistake by making up a story about a dessert she made.

Petkoff insists that Bluntschli will stay with them. Bluntschli is reluctant at first, but Major Petkoff persuades him. Raina is still embarrassed and upset by the situation, but she goes along with it. The act ends with Catherine feeling helpless, as she knows this situation might cause problems later.

Act 3: Love, Truth, and Choices

Act 3 takes place the same day in the Petkoff family's library. It is a room that Raina previously boasted about. However, it is shabby and in poor condition. At the start of the scene, Bluntschli is efficiently writing military orders while Sergius watches. He is envious of his skill. Major Petkoff enters and asks for his coat, which he cannot find. Catherine says it's in the closet, but Petkoff insists it is not there. He bets Catherine a piece of jewelry that the coat is not in the closet, and the others, including Sergius, also bet on the outcome. Nicola returns with the coat. She claims it was in the closet the whole time. Petkoff, stunned, reminds Sergius that he didn't take the bet.

Bluntschli finishes his work and tells Petkoff and Sergius to go deliver the military orders. He and Raina are left alone. Raina asks if he has told anyone about hiding in their house during the war. Bluntschli says he told just one person, but that person told Sergius and Major Petkoff. Raina is worried, knowing if Sergius finds out, he will challenge Bluntschli to a duel. Bluntschli is flippant about it, which makes Raina angry. She insists she wants to be perfect for Sergius. She is upset about the lies she has told, especially one to protect Bluntschli.

Bluntschli explains that, as a soldier, he has heard many lies. He says he is not impressed by noble attitudes or ideals. He doesn't believe in the “noble” things Raina says. He also tells her that his admiration is based on her actions, not her ideals. Raina is shocked that Bluntschli sees through her pretensions. She says that he is the first man who sees her for who she really is, and she feels vulnerable.

Raina then remembers the photograph she left for Bluntschli in the coat pocket. Bluntschli admits he didn't know about it and that it might still be there. However, he confesses that he pawned the coat to survive. The photograph may have been taken by the pawnbroker. Raina is appalled and says that he is not a gentleman. She regrets ever meeting him.

At this moment, Louka arrives with mail for Bluntschli. She informs him that his father has passed away. Bluntschli must leave immediately to take over his family's hotel business. Louka remarks that he seems unaffected by his father's death. Raina explains that he has been a

soldier and is used to difficult situations. Louka disagrees and says that Sergius still has a heart. Raina leaves the room, deeply conflicted about everything.

Meanwhile, Nicola and Louka discuss their future plans. Nicola wants to marry Louka. However, he is concerned about how their marriage will affect his social standing. Louka, however, has different views and wants more out of life.

Later, Sergius is alone with Louka, and they discuss courage. Sergius talks about how he was brave in battle. Louka challenges his idea of bravery. She asserts that true courage is when you marry the person you love regardless of their social status. She accuses him of lacking the courage to marry her because of the class difference. Sergius, embarrassed, dismisses her words but is clearly troubled by her challenge. He then admits that he has feelings for her.

Sergius is furious and decides to challenge Bluntschli to a duel. Raina walks in and asks what the fight is about. Bluntschli, ever calm, reassures her that he has been a sword instructor and that Sergius won't harm him. He plans to leave instead, and Raina will be free to marry Sergius. Sergius, realizing that Raina has feelings for Bluntschli, becomes angry. He accuses her of loving the Swiss soldier. Bluntschli, however, insists that Raina only helped him because he had threatened her with a gun.

Raina admits that Louka told Sergius everything. Sergius is now enraged and calls off the duel. He is embarrassed to realize that Louka deceived him. Raina, frustrated with Sergius, reminds him that Louka is already engaged to Nicola. They discover Louka listening outside the door.

Just as the situation becomes heated, Petkoff enters. He comments that his coat feels too big. He also wonders if it was stretched by someone with broader shoulders. Catherine is altering it, and Petkoff asks Louka to fetch it. Nicola enters with the coat. Raina seizes the opportunity to sneak the photograph out of the pocket and give it to Bluntschli. However, Petkoff notices that the photograph is missing and assumes it was meant for Sergius since it is from Raina to her "Chocolate Cream Soldier."

Bluntschli finally explains what happened. Petkoff asks Raina who she is engaged to. Raina replies that Louka is the one Sergius loves. Nicola steps in to correct them, saying Louka is engaged to him. However, Louka admits she is in love with Sergius. Sergius apologizes to Louka and kisses her hand. Louka accepts, and they are now engaged.

Catherine is upset with Louka. But Louka asserts that she had no reason to hide her feelings. She confesses her love for Sergius. This love is more potent than Raina's love for Bluntschli. Bluntschli, meanwhile, is still unsure whether Raina truly wants to marry him. He doubts her feelings because she is too young for him. But when he learns she is 23, he decides to pursue

her.

Catherine protests, saying Raina needs a man like Sergius, who is of noble birth. Bluntschli, however, reveals he is far wealthier than Sergius. He reveals that he owns hundreds of horses and a successful hotel business. Raina is not moved by his wealth, but Petkoff and Catherine are convinced. Raina, however, insists that she cannot marry someone simply because they are rich.

Bluntschli declares that he will return in two weeks to settle things. Raina admits that she gave her heart to the “chocolate cream soldier” and not to anyone else.

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