

THE DRUNK KNIGHT

A short story written by The Classy Alcoholic

Additional story credit: David Black

Public Brewhouse – Tucson, AZ

Located at 209 N Hoff Ave, Tucson, AZ 85705

Open Mon-Thurs 4p-10p; Fri 2p-12a; Sat 12p-1a; Sun 12p-10p

<http://publicbrewhouse.com>



I walked down Hoff Avenue, which is essentially an alleyway, and found Public Brewhouse. The small brick building was in a lot behind [Ermanos](#), a craft beer and wine bar located on Tucson's popular 4th Avenue. Despite being a bit tucked away there was a decent-sized crowd at Public and the nanobrewery had become increasingly popular since it opened in 2015. The place was very laid back. There was shuffleboard, an old school arcade game, darts and a live bluegrass band playing when I walked up to the bar.

Public had six of their own beers on tap and four guest taps. They even started selling wine not too long before my visit. Flights here were served four beers at a time. I ordered one and waited for a man who called himself "Button." He reached out earlier that day saying he desperately needed to speak with me in person. I was sprawled on the couch with a greasy plate of chicken wing bones resting on my fat stomach while a Golden Girls marathon serenaded me to sleep when I got the call...so of course I told him I was extremely busy and to go to hell. But he was insistent and something in his voice convinced me to hear him out.

It had been a few months since I visited a new brewery. My blog had been silent for a while and instead of writing I was spending my days drinking myself to sleep and my nights trying to make voodoo dolls out of all the shit my ex-girlfriend left behind at my place.



I took a sip of the first beer in the flight, an Oatmeal Pale Ale called Opa! The color of the beer was very cloudy but the taste was light and crisp. The fruity hop finish reminded me for a brief second of the joy I used to get from trying a new Arizona beer at a new brewery. But nothing really felt normal anymore.

A young man with short hair, glasses and a mighty red beard sat next to me. He looked panicked and shot glances all around the room before speaking to me.

“Mr. Classy, thank you for coming. I’m Mr. Button.”

“Not to be a dick, Button, but you interrupted a very important Golden Girls marathon I was watching so I’m gonna need you to talk fast and tell me why I’m here.”

“Oh cool! Public Brewhouse is releasing a series of beers named after all the Golden Girls, believe it or not. Which channel was the marathon on?”

“None, I...was watching the DVDs. Talk.”

“Okay, I’ll cut to the chase. I’m in trouble and need your help. Well, not just me. I’m a homebrewer and I’m trying to start my own brewery called [Button Brew House](#). Here, have a business card.” I took the card and put it in my suit jacket pocket without looking at it. “A few days ago a couple of guys came by my place and jacked some of my homebrew kegs. They were big dudes with guns and they didn’t even try to sneak in. They just came into my garage to harass me and they walked off with my shit. They said they were working for a guy named \$imon.”

“Simon?”

“No, \$imon. With a dollar sign instead of the S. They made that very clear. They took some of my best beers. Not only that but I talked with a couple of my homebrewer

friends and they had the same thing happen to them. The police didn't give a damn 'cause I guess they think stealing beer is like stealing water from a fountain in the park. They don't understand that for guys like us it's a commodity and pretty much our livelihood."

Guys like us. Button definitely wasn't a guy like me...not unless he also spent most his nights trying to find an escort service in town that still accepted coupons. I drank the next beer in the flight before I said anything else. It was called Rico Red and it had a strong malt flavor with some nice caramel undertones. An earthy hop taste topped it off.



"What makes you think I can help, Button? I'm pretty much out of the game. I had my fifteen minutes of fame as a local beer celebrity but nobody cares about me or my blog anymore. Hell, I can't even find an escort service in town that'll still accept my coupons."

"Of course people care. I care! You're the most influential blogger in the entire state of Arizona. The craft beer industry here wouldn't be the same without you."

"Yeah, maybe back when there were less than forty breweries in the whole state. That number's getting close to eighty now and most of the new places have never even heard of me. Hell, Public Brewhouse is killing it without me ever writing a single word about them. There was a time when people could hardly wait for my next review. But the industry is so big now, even a guy like me can get swallowed up in the mass. My legions of fans all disappeared and they stopped buying my novelty t-shirts and bottle openers shaped like penises with inspirational quotes on them. Do you know how many boxes of unsold, penis-shaped bottle openers I have in my place? Dozens, Button. DOZENS!"

I had another beer to calm myself down. It was the Saison Wallonia, a very light beer but with enough of a malty Pils flavor to distinguish it from most other light saisons.

Button and I sat in silence for a minute while I finished the beer. I could tell he was disappointed. I wasn't what he expected. I wasn't what I expected either.

"I read about what happened to you [back in Cottonwood](#), Mr. Classy. That was a messed up situation for sure and I was sorry to hear about it. But you can't let that keep you down. You may not be the huge celebrity you were before and, I'll admit, I didn't actually see that Lifetime Network biopic they made about you starring John Leguizamo in a fat suit. It looked terrible. But there are people out here who still need you. I know because I'm one of them."



My phone rang before I could respond. I didn't recognize the number and I assumed it was my mom calling me so I could post bail for her again so I answered. There was a robotic-sounding voice on the other end. Like someone was calling me using one of those voice modulators that kidnappers always use in the movies.

"What up, Mr. Classy? It's about time we got to talk. Hope you're not too busy making out with your homeboy Button right now."

"What? Who is this?"

"You're about to find out, dawg. I know Button's been looking for that little keg of his. And lucky for him it's in the alley outside Public Brewhouse. So why don't you go take a look?"

Button and I walked outside back onto Hoff Avenue. We spotted a five gallon keg a few yards away at the end of the alley, next to a dumpster.

"That's one of my homebrew kegs, Classy. It has a Button Brew House sticker on it!"

"Wait, Button, don't go near that!"

Button ran toward the keg before I could stop him. Something wasn't right. I ran after him but he was way faster 'cause I was fucking fat. As I got closer I saw a blinking green light on top of the keg that then turned red. The thing made a loud beeping sound that could be heard across the alley. Button stopped dead in his tracks. That's when we both realized what was coming.

I grabbed Button and leapt for cover behind the dumpster. The keg exploded and a ball of fire rolled through the entire alley like a murderous tumbleweed. The shockwave slammed the dumpster up against our backs and knocked us on our faces.

I wasn't sure if it was a few seconds or a few minutes before I was able to get back up. The explosion kicked up clouds of dust everywhere. My ears were ringing and I could barely see through the fog of dirt. I could feel a trickle of blood running down the side of my face and every inch of my body ached. I yelled Button's name as loudly as I could without being able to hear myself.

Button reached out from behind me and grabbed my arm. He was yelling something back at me but I couldn't make out a word. We both limped down the alley together, back toward Public Brewhouse. The customers had run outside in a panic and the taproom was empty except for the two of us. We sat back at the bar waiting for the ringing in our ears to go away. There was one more beer left in my flight and I needed it now more than ever. It was called the Huge Hefe. It was a wheat beer with a strong, sweet banana taste and I gulped it down without hesitation.

I felt my phone buzzing in my suit jacket pocket. The ringing in my ears subsided enough that I could actually kind of hear my "It's Raining Men" ringtone. I put the call on speaker and let Button listen in.

"How'd you like my little present?" the robot-voice man said from the other end.

"Who are you, you sick sonofabitch?"

"I'm a butterfly, bro. I flap my wings up here and I fuck up your shit all the way down there like in that Ashton Kutcher movie. It's called 'The Butterfly Effect' and it's the best movie ever. Have you heard of it? So put on your war paint 'cause you just got called out by muthafuckin' \$imon."

"What the hell do you want, Simon?"

"NO! That's not my name! It's \$imon! With a dollar sign instead of the S! And I want The Classy Alcoholic on a string. 'Cause I hid another one of those presents at a microbrewery in the Greater Phoenix area and it's gonna go off today unless you do exactly what \$imon says. And this isn't some tiny little homebrew keg like the one you just saw. This killer keg is way bigger than anything you could imagine. It's the 'My Dick' of kegs!"

"Alright...\$imon. What do I need to do?"

"You're gonna go to Goldwater Brewing Co. in Scottsdale. I'll give you instructions when you get there."

"And I suppose I can't tell anyone about this evil plan of yours?"

"Naw. You need to tell everyone! Arizona's beer community listens to you and admires you. So I want you to share the word about me and my plans on your blog. *click-whirr*"

"Wait, what was that sound?"

“Ummm...what? What are you talking about? What sound? *click-whirrr*”

“That! That sound I just heard. It sounds like you turned a garbage disposal on and then off really fast.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about. Just go to Scottsdale. You’re probably just hearing shit that isn’t there, you delusional weirdo. Stop making up things you think you’re hearing. Anyway, everything’s cool, you didn’t hear anything. Byeeeeeee!”

Simon ended the call.

“We have to get to Scottsdale right away,” Button said, getting ready to kick ass and take names but then realizing at the last minute that he had run out of names to take.

“No, Button, I can’t bring you with me. This is too dangerous.”

“But I can help you, Classy! You just saved my life and I owe you for it.”

“Yes you do. And I’m not gonna waste that life debt by letting you get killed. Besides, if you really want to help me you’ll stay here and watch over the town’s microbreweries. After this attack they’re all gonna lose their shit. You have to do everything you can to keep them calm and get business back to normal. I’ve been protecting Tucson’s craft beer industry for years. But Tucson doesn’t need The Classy Alcoholic right now. It needs a man like you. So don’t let me down, Button.”

“I wouldn’t dream of it, Mr. Classy.”

The sound of police sirens grew louder and louder as they approached Hoff Avenue. I felt confident leaving Button behind, knowing that he was the hero Tucson deserved. I approached the police officers on the scene and told them the whole story. They agreed to escort me up north to Scottsdale. I rode in silence in the back of the cop car as we left the Tucson city limits. I had no idea what I was walking in to...and no idea if I would ever make it back.



Goldwater Brewing Co. – Scottsdale, AZ

Located at 3608 N Scottsdale Rd, Scottsdale, AZ 85251

Open Mon-Thurs 3p-10p; Fri 1p-12a; Sat 11a-12a; Sun 1p-8p

www.goldwaterbrewing.com



I arrived in Scottsdale with my police escort. On the way up from Tucson I wrote a blog entry warning people in the greater Phoenix area that some nutjob named \$imon had stashed a huge, explosive keg in a microbrewery somewhere in the city and I advised everyone to steer clear of their local breweries until I could stop this man. Word spread across the media quickly. I watched the local newsfeed on my phone. The anchor was reporting some fluff piece about how every single Grand Canyon helicopter tour was booked solid that day or some shit when he was interrupted by the more pressing story. Soon every channel was talking about me, my blog and my mission. This was the most press The Classy Alcoholic had gotten since that time a few years ago when I got punched in the face by Lou Diamon Phillips on camera during a live telethon.

According to the news it looked like most breweries in the city had been abandoned while police were in search of the keg bomb. But with almost 30 breweries throughout all of Phoenix, their manpower was stretched thin. It was up to me to be the hero that Arizona's craft beer community needed.

I walked into Goldwater Brewing's taproom. There were a few customers in the place who must've not heard the news. There was an old man sitting at the bar wearing jean shorts and a fanny pack, drinking a glass of wine. He pointed at me and waved me over.

"Hello, Mr. Classy. My name is Fey. I'm here to watch you and make sure you don't

try anything stupid.”

“So you work for \$imon.”

“Hell no! I don’t work for anyone! That punkass kid doesn’t give me orders. I’m here because I want to be. And ’cause Simon’s ridiculous bomb threat made the news interrupt the Golden Girls marathon I was watching on TV, so what the hell else was I gonna do? I tell ya, everybody always talked about how hot Blanche was but I was always a Dorothy man myself. What I wouldn’t give for a night with Bea Arthur. Is she still alive? I don’t even-”

I stopped listening even though Fey kept ranting. My phone rang. \$imon was on the other end and I put the call on speaker.

“Sup, Classy? Is the old fart who works for me there with you?”

Fey looked pissed enough to give himself a heart attack. I heard him mumbling some curse words (and possibly the N word) under his breath in between sips of his Cabernet because Goldwater also offered wine.

“Yeah, your old ass employee is right next to me.”

“Cool. \$imon says order yourself a flight.”

I did as I was told. Goldwater had twelve regular beers on tap plus a few special brews that were in limited supply. I got a flight of six. The first beer was their Poolside Pilsner. A light beer with a mild hop flavor, crisp enough to be refreshing on this hot summer day and flavorful enough that it didn’t taste like drinking a watered-down macrobrew.



“I’m playing your little game, \$imon. So how about you tell me what I’m doing here.”

“You’re atoning for your sins, bro. You’re Colin Farrell and I’m Kiefer Sutherland’s voice from that movie, ‘Phone Booth.’ Have you seen it? It’s the best movie ever.”

“That’s not very specific. I got plenty of sins to go around.”

“I know you do, dawg. ‘Cause I’ve been following your career from the very beginning. I read every single one of your blog posts from beginning to end. Not just that, but I’ve talked to people who really know you. I went to visit [your old nemesis Romeo](#) in prison. I tracked down that boat that [your ex-girlfriend Rosario](#) was using to smuggle herself out of the country after she got caught selling fake panda meat to Mexican taco carts in South Tucson. I watched you start as a nobody and end up a superstar in the craft beer community. But I know you’re a fraud. You don’t deserve your fame!”

A part of me thought \$imon was right. It was over a year since I started my blog and I never really felt like I was a true part of the craft beer community. I felt like an outlier, faking my way into the industry. I sipped the next beer in the flight while I thought about how to respond. It was a golden ale called Winnie the Brew. It was another light, crisp beer with the addition of Arizona honey that made it absolutely delicious. I always loved honey in a beer.

“I think you’re overestimating my status, \$imon. Yes, I was a major celebrity in the local beer scene but those days are pretty much gone. Everybody forgot about The Classy Alcoholic. That’s the thing about this business. The Arizona craft beer industry is growing so fast that no one really knows if they can withstand the test of time. It doesn’t matter how great your brewery, or craft beer bar, or blog is. One day you’re 1990’s Ray Liotta...and before you know it you’re 2016’s Ray Liotta.”

I moved on to the next beer in the flight while I contemplated how awesome and smart and deep that last paragraph was. It was called Say John! and it was a light saison made with sage. It tasted of lemon, orange and had a very interesting peppery finish. A lot of saisons can be too light and lacking in flavor for me to really get excited about them but the Say John! was a very exciting beer.

“Don’t try to downplay your influence, Classy,” \$imon said. “Your dumbass achieved so much with nothing more than a necktie and a bunch of dick jokes on a free blog site. You don’t own a brewery or a bar and you don’t even homebrew your own beer. You have no idea what it’s like to dedicate your entire life to the beer industry and then have your life’s work blow up in your face! *click-whirr*”

Fittingly, the next beer in my flight was a Pale Ale called Dynamite. There was a lot of citrus on the nose and in the taste. It had a very nice fruity undertone with a hint of melon sticking out over the rest of the flavors.



“Is that what this is about, \$imon? You couldn’t cut it in the beer business and you’re jealous of my supposed celebrity status? Trust me, that’s no reason to destroy Arizona’s microbreweries. I’m such a nobody now that I couldn’t even win a Latin Grammy last year. Danny Trejo officially has more Latin Grammys than I do! I’m not the success story you think I am!”

“I guess it’s just a matter of perception, then. Tell me about the beer you’re drinking now.”

“It’s called AU. It’s gold colored and has a mild hop taste up front with a bitter flavor that lingers at the end.”

“Very nice. Now here’s the moment of truth. If you want to stop this keg from going off you’ll tell me what kinds of hops were used in this beer.”

“What? You want me to give you the names of the hops? I don’t know how to recognize that from the flavor.”

“I know you don’t, Classhole. I can’t believe you reached that level of fame you got without even knowing basic shit about beer. You just failed my test. Say bye bye to your beer and say hello to my big boom!”

“Wait, don’t do this, \$imon! YOU CAN’T!”

I waited for the sound of an explosion. I didn’t know if I could even hear it from here but I braced myself anyway. A few second passed before I heard \$imon chuckling on the phone. Fey reached into his fanny pack and pulled out a folded piece of paper that he handed to me.

“Alright, Mr. Classy,” \$imon said. “I’m willing to give you a second chance. Old Man Fey gave you a letter I wrote. If you read this out loud while Fey records you, I won’t set

off the keg.”

I unfolded the letter. Fey pulled his cell phone out from his fanny pack and tried to figure out how to open the camera. Then he took another fifteen minutes trying to figure out how to go from Photo to Video. He got really frustrated a bunch of times and muttered a few racial slurs under his breath so I helped him out. Twenty minutes later he was ready to record. I read the letter out loud.

“Hello Phoenix and all of Arizona. I am The Classsy Alcoholic. I tried to save your microbreweries from getting blown up but I failed because I know nothing about beer. I’m a loser and a fraud. My blog is totally gayballs and so am I. The only reason nothing blew up is because the sexy badass known as \$imon decided to take pity on you dipshits. That was super cool of him because he usually spends his days boning hot ladies but he took a break from that just to show you that he controls your beer industry now. Also, if you get a chance, check out the Ashton Kutcher movie, ‘The Butterfly Effect.’ It’s the dopest movie ever. The end.”

Fey fiddled with his phone for another fifteen minutes before he figured out how to forward the video. \$imon hung up, obviously done with me. Fey left me and walked over to the other end of the bar to get another glass of wine. I pulled out my phone and brought up the local news feed. My fat face was already on every channel. I watched myself reading \$imon’s letter over and over. I knew my career as a beer blogger was over. I wasn’t the beer hero Arizona needed or deserved. I grabbed another beer from my flight because why the hell not.

It was an IPA called Birthday Suit. It had a piney taste with tropical fruit on the nose and a strong citrus flavor on top of the bitter hop finish. That’s when my phone rang.

“Mr. Classy, it’s Button. You won’t believe what’s happening down here in Tucson!”

“Let me guess, a bunch of Tucsonans saw me embarrass myself on the news and they decided to tear down that bronze statue of me that I put up a few years ago.”

“No! Or, well, yeah, that statue is straight up fucked. It looked like when the tanks pulled down that statue of Saddam Hussein except this wasn’t an obviously staged PR stunt. But that’s not why I’m calling. After that keg blew up outside of Public Brewhouse everybody left the taproom. I stuck around for a bit and guess who came by? The same dudes who came into my place and jacked my homebrew kegs! They had a huge truck with them and they tried to steal the kegs at Public. Luckily I stopped them. You should’ve seen me, Classy. I kicked their asses and dodged a bunch of bullets and I got into a crazy car chase. It’ll be great material for the blog!”

“Oh, um, sorry Button but I’m writing this story in first person so I won’t be able to include your adventures this time around. Maybe next time.”

“Oh, okay, that sucks. Well that’s not all. I called a bunch of other brewery owners here in town and had them go and check their beer fridges. Classy, all the microbrew kegs in Tucson are gone! They were stolen by \$imon’s henchmen while everyone was distracted by the keg bomb.”

“Holy shit, Button, do you know what this means? For the first time in my life something isn’t entirely all about me. \$imon didn’t just want to ruin my reputation. He used my immensely influential blog to distract all of the state’s brewery owners and customers. He knew Tucson’s breweries would evacuate after the bomb so he sent in

his henchmen to just pick up all the kegs in town without anyone getting in their way. And I bet you he did the same thing in Phoenix. Call all the brewery owners you know up here and tell them to check their keg fridges. Most of them will be empty.”

“Why would Simon do this?”

“I don’t know but we’re gonna find out. I’ll call you back.”



I walked up to Fey as he was closing his tab. I punched him in the back of the head hard enough to knock him on the ground. I jumped on him and expected to easily overpower his old ass. I didn’t count on his old man rage, though, and he wrestled me onto my back while he sat on my chest and punched me in the face over and over. I unzipped his fanny pack and slid my cell phone into it. I zipped the pack closed before he was done beating the shit out of me.

“Goddamn kids need to learn to respect your elders!” He grumbled to himself as he walked out of the taproom.

I asked the bartender to borrow her cell phone as I felt blood pool up in my mouth. Normally I wouldn’t be able to reach anyone I knew without my cell because I didn’t know anyone’s number by heart...but I remembered I had Button’s business card in my pocket. He was the hero I needed now.



“Button, I need you to get in touch with the FBI field office in Tucson. Ask for a man named Lennix. Tell him to track my cell phone’s GPS signal. He set it up for me after I got lost in Disneyland this one time. I was super drunk and harassed a whole bunch of the princesses. It’s a long story, don’t worry about it.”

“Okay, I’ll reach Lennix but I’m definitely coming up there now, Classy.”

“No, Button. I told you, it’s too dangerous!”

“I don’t care! \$imon made this personal. He didn’t just fuck with me. He fucked with all of Tucson. The beer community down here is a family and I’m going to stand up for my family just like you’re doing now!”

I didn’t argue. I could’ve started sweating Fey for information on \$imon but I didn’t because I knew this was too big for me. I needed backup. I took a sip of the very last beer in my flight. It was the Desert Rose, an ale with a beautiful, bright pink color to it. It was brewed with Arizona cactus fruit and the smooth, prickly pear flavor reminded me why I couldn’t give up and why I couldn’t go it alone this time.

“You’re a true hero, Button. Tell Lennix to pick you up on his way to meet me. The three of us are gonna find this \$imon \$onofabitch and we’re gonna save our state’s craft beer industry. Even if it costs us our lives.”

“Woah, hold on, Classy, I never agreed to give up my life for this. I mean, I have a family and I-”

“EVEN IF IT COSTS US OUR LIVES, BUTTON!”



Flagstaff Brewing Company – Flagstaff, AZ

Located at 16 Historic Rd 66, Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Open Mon-Sun 11a-2a

<http://flagbrew.com>



My team and I arrived in Flagstaff via helicopter. Lennix, my FBI contact from [my last adventure in Cottonwood](#), was piloting. Button was in the backseat, getting ready to kick ass and drink beer but then realizing at the last minute that he had run out of beer to drink. We tracked my cell phone's GPS signal all the way up from Scottsdale. Lennix set the helicopter down in a public park where a family was having a birthday party for one of their kids. The food, party favors and bouncy house all blew away thanks to the wind from the helicopter blades. Man, Lennix was such an asshole.

We headed toward downtown Flagstaff on foot, following the GPS signal toward Historic Route 66. The weather was a bit cooler than it had been back in Scottsdale but it was still pretty punishing for a guy in a suit. The signal ended at Flagstaff Brewing Company. The three of us walked in looking for Fey, \$imon's old-ass henchman.

"The GPS beacon is coming from the bathroom," Lennix said. "If Fey is around my age he's gonna be in there for a while. I haven't been able to take a full dump in under thirty minutes since the 90s."

"Jesus, Lennix, I swear I don't even know how you're still alive."

"Me either. I should've been dead years ago but I really think nothing can kill me."

I asked for a beer flight while we waited. Flagstaff Brewing has a smaller operation so they only had four of their own beers on tap this day with several other guest taps.

But what they lacked in beer production they made up for in their enormous whisky wall. Apart from their beer this brewery prides itself on their extensive Scotch and Bourbon selection and they even offer whisky flights.

I got my four beers and Button asked for a flight of Highland Park Scotch. He got sips of the 12, 15 and 18-year batches. Lennix got a glass of Bourbon that he mixed with a bit of the Metamucil that he always carried in his back pocket.



I sipped a glass of the 3-Pin Pale Ale. It was light on the hops and kinda dry on the finish. The GPS tracker started beeping faster and faster. We looked to the back of the brewery and saw old man Fey walking over to the bar with his jean shorts and fanny pack. I tried to turn away so he wouldn't notice me but I was the only dipshit in the brewery wearing a suit, tie and pocket square.

"Oh fuck, it's The Classy Alcoholic!" Fey yelled as he ran toward the front door. Lennix ran after him and grabbed the back of his fanny pack strap. He pulled Fey back toward him and they both fell on their old asses. I heard a couple of cracks and figured they each broke a thing or two. Button punched Fey in the stomach and held him down to keep him from escaping. I kept drinking my beer 'cause it looked like these dudes had their shit handled.

"Alright, old man," Button said, full of Scotch rage. "You're gonna tell us where \$imon took all those kegs he stole or I'm gonna take your little fanny pack and wrap it around your face like a snorkel. Then I'm gonna sit on that fanny pack and make you snorkel through an ocean of Button Hole until you agree to talk!"

"Hahahaha! You think you can threaten me kid? I endured years of torture from the

Viet Cong back in the 60s. I highly doubt you could get me talk when they couldn't. Plus, you're describing the exact same thing I paid extra for during my last sex tour in Amsterdam five years ago!"

Lennix and I looked at each other, realizing that Fey wouldn't respond to physical threats and also fondly remembering those same Amsterdam sex tours we each went on a while back. I took a sip of Flagbrew's Agassiz Amber, a beer with a strong caramel flavor with some nice hop taste tossed in, as I came up with a plan. I thought back to my first interaction with Fey at Goldwater Brewing Co. in Scottsdale and how angry he got when I asked him if he worked for \$imon. I brought Lennix over and whispered in his ear while staying far enough away to avoid the hairs growing out of it.

"I respect you, Fey," Lennix said. "I know you're a man of honor. I'm sure you're willing to go to prison before rolling over on your boss, \$imon. You're the best underling a guy like him could hope for: loyal, quiet and obedient. I salute you." Fey looked like he was pretty much foaming at the mouth. He didn't like that implication at all.

"FUCK YOU, LENNIX!!! I'm not Simon's goddamn henchman! I funded that kid's entire fucking plan! I paid for those explosives. I gathered his army of hired goons. I supported his homebrewing hobby for years even though his beer tasted like watery dogshit. And I'm the one who paid for his life-saving surgery after that dumb little asshole got his face blown off by a homebrew keg because he didn't know when it was over-pressurized. But it didn't matter that I spent millions of dollars from my personal fortune to try and make him happy. That ungrateful little turd still treats me like I'm someone he can boss around."



“Holy shit, Classy,” Button said. “I think I know who this guy is. There was a dude named Simon who joined the Arizona Society of Homebrewers a few years ago around the same time I did. He was an obnoxious douche who drunkenly hit on my wife all the time and he kept whipping out his dick at every Homebrewer’s Society meeting. We couldn’t do anything about it because he always got in early enough to add his dick to the meeting agenda. Plus his beer was absolute garbage. We all heard about a keg blowing up in his garage and we seriously thought he was killed. I’m not gonna lie...the entire Society of Homebrewers was kinda relieved when it happened.”

“He wasn’t killed, Button. The explosion blew Simon’s jaw right off his face. It couldn’t be recovered so I had the surgeons replace it with a state-of-the-art robot jaw. He spent the next few years in rehab learning how to speak again and following this Classy asshole’s rise through the craft beer industry.”

I drank the next beer in the flight, the Bitterroot ESB. The ESB stood for “extra special bitter” and it was based on an English Pale Ale style that had a strong balance of strong malt and hop flavors. Simon’s whole plot was starting to make sense...but there was one more thing I didn’t understand.

“Tell me something, Fey. If you’re not working for Simon then why are you funding his whole operation?”

“Goddammit, stop calling him that! I didn’t name him with that stupid dollar sign. His real name is Simon Billingsley Fey III. He’s my son. And he’s a total disappointment! But I couldn’t just let him try to make it out there on his own. His mother raised him to be a total pussy before she died mysteriously in a car crash with her lover in the passenger seat so she couldn’t take half my shit after the divorce. So it was up to me to support Simon’s stupid goals. I spent thousands of dollars on his homebrew materials even though his beer tasted like hot garbage water. He wanted to start his own microbrewery but I knew he couldn’t compete with any breweries in Arizona that knew what they were doing so then I bought a huge stake in Anheuser-Busch so we could start trying to buy out or shut down breweries all throughout the state. Just so Simon could get his stupid little fucking business off the ground.”

“Dude, you spent that much money on your shitty kid? How much are you actually worth?”

“A couple billion. No big deal.”

“So what the hell is he doing with all those kegs he stole from Tucson and Phoenix?” Button asked. “Does he just want to hoard them for himself?”

“No, Simon can’t drink beer anymore. His robot jaw will short out if he does. He’s gonna put a bomb on every single one of those kegs and blow them up on live television.”

“Every keg?” I asked. “There must be hundreds of them if he knocked off every brewery in Tucson and Phoenix.”

“That’s right. And I bought him every single one of those explosives. I had to liquidate a couple of strip clubs and a few brothels and a bunch of day care centers I owned in order to make it happen. I also paid for him to rent out every single Grand Canyon helicopter tour in the state. Simon’s gonna load the kegs into the back of the helicopters and blow them up at the same time over the canyon while every local news

channel records the destruction of Arizona's craft beer industry."

Holy shit. \$imon wasn't just going to blow up most of Arizona's craft beer, he was also going to kill every Grand Canyon helicopter pilot along the way. I drank the last beer in the flight – the smooth, creamy Blackbird Porter – while I figured out what to do next.

"Alright, Fey, it looks like we have a bargaining chip to get \$imon's attention."

"Heh. You mean me? That dipshit kid doesn't care if I live or die."

"No, I'm not talking about you, asshole."

I reached into Fey's fanny pack and grabbed my cell phone, a cigarette lighter and his checkbook. I asked Button to take a picture of me holding the lit lighter right next to Fey's checks. I got \$imon's number from his dad and texted him the picture with a special message:

Meet me at Grand Canyon Brewing Company in an hour if you ever want to see your daddy's money again.

[Smiling emoji with tongue sticking out; laughing while crying emoji; monkey emoji]

I immediately got a text back from \$imon that said, "Who dis?" I texted back and said it was The Classy Alcoholic and then he texted back again saying, "A'ight."

"Get the old man out of here, Lennix," I said.

Lennix called a squad of his fellow FBI agents who came into Flagbrew and hauled Fey off. I gathered my team and gave them the plan. Lennix was going to take his helicopter to the South Rim of the Grand Canyon while Button and I headed to the town of Williams, the home of Grand Canyon Brewing Company. It was just under forty minutes west of Flagstaff on I-40. For the first time today we weren't going to be chasing after \$imon. We finally had the upper hand and he was going to meet us on our turf.

Button finished his whisky flight. I could see his hand shaking as he took his last sip of Scotch.



“Are you nervous Button?”

“Of course I am, Mr. Classy. Don’t get me wrong, I’m ready to kick ass and give a fuck but then realize at the last minute that I’m all out of fucks to give. But I remember this \$imon character from back in my homebrew days. He was a total egomaniac who thought his shit didn’t stink.”

“And you think I can’t handle this guy?”

“Well, no, I definitely think you can take him out. But...ummm...\$imon was the kind of oblivious egomaniac that never had any self-doubt. As far as I can tell you’re the kind of guy who knows himself well enough to constantly doubt himself. And I guess I’m worried that you may be even more nervous than I am.”

Button was right. I wasn’t just nervous. I was terrified. I was terrified of what was gonna happen when we finally met \$imon in person. I was terrified of what could happen if I failed to stop him. But there was something Button didn’t realize. He didn’t know that what terrified me the most was the thought of what could happen if I did nothing.



The Grand Canyon Brewing Company – Williams, AZ

Located at 233 Historic Rte 66, Williams, AZ 86046

Open Sun-Sat 11a-11p

<http://grandcanyonbrewery.com>



Button and I left Flagstaff Brewing Co. and headed west on Route 66. About forty minutes later we were in the town of Williams where the southern terminal for the Grand Canyon Railway was located. The summer months always brought a large influx of tourists to Williams on their way to the Canyon and today was no exception. The town's historic, Western look made it the perfect setting for our final showdown with \$imon. We walked into the Grand Canyon Brewing Company taproom, which had the feel of an old-timey saloon with its wooden bar, wooden stools and the river of peanut shells on the floor. There were sixteen beers on tap and flights came in either samples of four or samples of eight. There was even a fridge with cans and 22 ounce bombers that you could take home.

Button and I shared a flight of four. I sipped the first beer called Sacred Saguaro Lager. It was light, crisp and refreshing; a perfect brew for the hot summer day. I was sweating under my suit jacket, partly because of the heat, mostly because I was nervous.

"So what's the plan, Classy?"

"We're gonna stall \$imon until Lennix gets here. And when he does...you're gonna do what you do best. I'll take it from there."

Button took a sip of the next drink in the flight called Expedition as he put on a pair of

brass knuckles. It was another light beer that had a nice, citrusy wheat taste to it.

I heard the clacking of cowboy boots behind us followed by a familiar sound: *click-whirr*. It was that same weird noise that I heard every time \$imon was on the phone. Button and I turned around.

A white guy with a beard wig stood at the entrance of the brewery. Like, a big fake red beard covering the bottom half of his face held on by a string that went around the back of his head. And he was wearing cowboy boots with cargo shorts for some reason. This was him.

“Well if it isn’t Mr. Classy and Mr. Button!” \$imon said. “Sorry I’m late. I had to stop and get these sick-as-fuck cowboy boots since we’re meeting in this Old West town. Now I’m like Will Smith and y’all are Kenneth Branagh in ‘Wild Wild West.’ Have you seen that shit? It’s the best movie ever!”

Ugh. This guy was the worst.

“We know exactly what you’re up to, \$imon. Your dad told us your entire plan.”

“Shit! That old man could never keep his goddamn mouth shut! You know, my mom bailed on us when I was a kid because she heard him bragging to his Jai alai buddies about how he was boning the Nicaraguan babysitter that he bought me. She wasn’t even that hot! I mean, she was a Nicaraguan eight, but that’s only like a Scottsdale five. Whatevs, doesn’t matter now. Y’all can’t stop anything. Every single keg I stole from Phoenix and Tucson is strapped with an explosive. And they’re all loaded onto helicopters that should be flying over the Grand Canyon in...” he looked at his Apple Watch, which was the only accessory that could make him look like even more of an asshole than the cowboy boots with shorts, “the next fifteen minutes. You should come outside with me when I actually detonate that shit. You can probably see the fireworks from here. And you can officially say goodbye to Arizona’s craft beer industry.”

Button was about to lose his shit. I put my hand on his chest and held him back.

“Not yet,” I whispered.



I was honestly surprised that he even listened to me. Button grabbed another beer from the flight. It was the Horseshoe Bend Pale Ale. It was yet another light beer with a nice hop undertone that wasn't overly bitter. So far our flight was perfectly suited for the summer weather.

"I know what happened to you, \$imon," I said. "Old man Fey told us about the homebrew keg that blew up in your garage. And he told us how it blew your jaw right off your face. That's the clicking and whirring sound I heard over the phone, isn't it? It's coming from the robot jaw that you got surgically implanted."

\$imon clenched said jaw hard enough that it let out another *click-whirr* sound.

"So you couldn't make it as a professional beer brewer," I said, not waiting for him to respond. "Oh well. There's tons of homebrewers like you who make shitty beer that no one would ever buy. But you're such a spoiled little brat that you think you deserve a seat at the table anyway. Craft beer is a business. And the business doesn't owe you a goddamn thing."

"My beer may have been shitty but at least I created something! *click-whirr* This industry is a mess. It elevates nobodies like you to celebrity status. You write stupid dick joke stories that nobody likes but somehow you still achieved fame, money and got to go on Ellen that one time when you danced like an asshole. Well it's time to bring some balance to Arizona. Once the majority of the state's craft beer is blown up my homebrew is gonna start to look more and more appealing to people. And now that your influence has been ground to shit, I won't have to worry about being hindered by you...bro."

I was about to grab the last beer in the flight when I heard the faint *fwap-fwap-fwap*-ing of helicopter blades off in the distance. I looked over at Button. He adjusted his brass knuckles to make sure he got a snug fit. We sat in silence for a beat listening to the sound of the helicopter getting closer and closer. That had to be Lennix.



“You’re right about a few things, \$imon,” Button said, stalling a bit more. “The Classy Alcoholic may be an asshole. He may be a talentless fraud undeserving of fame and respect. He may be a sloppy drunk and an all-around train wreck of a human being with terrible impulse control issues. He may be too oblivious to recognize when people dislike him and he may be a really shitty friend who’s always ‘busy’ when you need help moving but the second he goes through a breakup he’s blowing up your phone trying to get you to listen to him whine about that bullshit for weeks. He may be into really weird sex shit that involves Chewbacca masks and those giant tubs of sour cream that you buy in bulk at Costco. He may be absolutely fucking terrible at The Electric Slide. But this man isn’t a nobody. He is important to the craft beer industry because, apart from being all of those really shitty things I just mentioned, he’s first and foremost a drinker. I’ve poured my heart and soul into the beer business. But I don’t do it for me. I do it for the sad, lonely, disillusioned drunks who’ve given up on life but still find their only semblance of joy in a pint of really good beer. I do it for him.”

“That was beautiful, Button.” A tear rolled down my cheek as I heard the helicopter blades slow down and eventually stop. Lennix was on his way in. “I think it’s time you let \$imon know exactly what you came here for.”

“Sure thing, Classy. I came to kick ass and drink some beer.” Button chugged the final sampler in the flight. It was called Pistachi-Yo! A slightly tart pistachio-flavored saison made in collaboration with [Arizona Wilderness](#). “And it looks like I’m all out of beer.”

Button lunged. He punched \$imon in the stomach, grabbed him by the neck and slammed him into a table. Lennix came into the taproom with a keg that was strapped onto a dolly. I took off my necktie and helped Button keep \$imon’s arms behind his back but he was a lot stronger than we expected. He flailed around and we were having trouble holding onto him. \$imon whipped his head back and bashed his skull into my nose. I was about to lose my grip when Lennix came over to help us.

Before I realized what happened \$imon stomped his boot on the floor and a three inch blade popped out the bottom of it. He stuck the boot knife right into Lennix’ stomach.

“Lennix, NO!!!”

Button kicked \$imon’s other leg out from under him and we put his back up against the keg on the dolly. I used my necktie to bind his wrists together behind the keg. Button went to check on Lennix. He was on his back, bleeding very badly.

“Alright you piece of shit,” I said. “Lennix got this keg out of one of the helicopters you hired. If you set off those explosives this one’s gonna take you out with it. So tell me where the trigger is.”

\$imon only laughed. His jaw was clicking and whirring up a storm.

“Where’s the trigger?!?!” I Batman-ed. I always wanted to do that.

“You idiots. This was your stupid fucking plan? I wasn’t willing to die for my scheme before. But I definitely am now. Because if I detonate this keg it means I get to watch you burn. I hate you, The Classy Alcoholic. I’ve hated you ever since I first saw you that one time on The People’s Court when your ex-girlfriend was suing you for small-claim damages after you broke into her car to take a dump in it. And the more I learned about

you after that, the more I hated you. So not only do I get to still destroy the beer industry you love but now the last thing I'll ever see is the look on your stupid fat face as you accept that you failed."

I could tell he meant it. The look in his eyes was the same one I had every time I drunkenly Facebook stalked my ex-girlfriend and saw pictures of her new shitty boyfriend with the tongue ring. His hatred was real.

"Button we have to find the trigger. It's probably in his stupid cargo short pockets."

"No, Classy. It's not on a device. It's wired right into my jaw. I just need to say the code words out loud and it'll transmit the signal to every single keg at once. Like this: Ashton. *click-whirr*"

A green light on top of the keg came on.

"Scarface. *click-whirr*" The green light started blinking and emitting a beep.

"Shut up!" Button yelled. He used his brass knuckled hand to punch Simon in the jaw as hard as he could. There was a loud clang as the brass hit steel and the sound of bones cracking. But Simon didn't flinch. Button screamed in pain as he fell to the ground holding his hand on his chest. He must've broken all his fingers and everything else down to the wrist.

"Nickelback. *click-whirr*" The light went from green to yellow. Still beeping. Still blinking.

Simon smiled at me. He knew I was panicking. I didn't know what to do. My hands were shaking as I looked around for something I could use.

"Vince Vaughn but from the early 2000s after he got chubby. *click-whirr*" The light stayed yellow but the beeping got faster.

"Do something, Classy!"

I looked over at the empty beer flight behind me.

"Wait, Simon, not yet. Just...let me have one last drink before you finish."

Simon nodded. Instead of pouring a beer from the tap I went over to the fridge and grabbed a 22-ounce bottle. It was summer but Grand Canyon still had a batch of their pumpkin porter from the previous fall. I held the bottle up to my face and caressed it with my other hand.



"I'm sorry, my delicious friend," I whispered to the bottle as I grabbed it by its neck. \$imon smiled at me. I knew he had no intention of letting me drink that beer before he finished the code. He just wanted me to get my hopes up one last time. But it was okay...because I had no intention of having my last drink just yet.

"Axe body spr-

I swung the bottle of pumpkin porter across \$imon's jaw before he could finish. Glass and precious, precious beer went everywhere. His robot jaw got dislodged from the hit and flew across the taproom along with his stupid beard wig. The jaw landed on the ground a few feet away and the wig stuck to the wall 'cause it was soaked in beer. A couple more whirring sounds came out of the disembodied jaw but they quickly stopped after the alcohol seeped into it. The light on top of the keg went off.

\$imon's tongue flapped around, not having anywhere to rest. He couldn't do anything other than let out a weird, guttural yell. Tears streamed down his face as he slammed the back of his head over and over into the deactivated keg.

"Don't mess with The Cla\$\$y A£coholi¢, motherfucker!"

ONE HOUR LATER

The sun was all but gone and the evening summer breeze rolled through Williams. Police, paramedics and press were on the scene outside of the brewery. \$imon got strapped to a gurney and put into the back of an ambulance. I sat alone in the taproom for a while drinking a pint of Grand Canyon's Sunset Amber Ale. It had a nice red color to it and there was a strong sweet finish that was more prominent than in a few other

ambers I had. The police lights outside danced around the flashes coming from the press cameras. I closed my eyes and tuned out the sound of the people outside. I took a second to enjoy the silence in my own head before it had to be broken.



Button walked into the taproom with his broken hand in a cast. Lennix came in behind him with his stab wound bandaged up and a dark bloodstain decorating the lower half of his shirt.

"We did it, Classy," Button said with a smile. "The cops said all the helicopters landed safely back in the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. The bomb squad was able to detach all of the explosives. We didn't just save our beer, we saved people's lives!"

"Good job, kids," Lennix said. "You were true heroes today. And I'll make sure everyone knows that. But first I'm gonna take the helicopter outta here and head to Vegas. I need to get myself laid or something."

"Jesus, Lennix, you just got stabbed. Shouldn't you take it easy?"

"Nah. I already told you, nothing can kill me."

Lennix walked out leaving Button and me sitting in silence for another minute.

"I think it's pretty fitting that it was beer that ended up saving your life, Mr. Classy. That beer bottle saved all of us."

"That's true, Button. And it made me realize something important. It looks like I need beer more than beer needs me. Simon was jealous of all my success but I think about my life and I don't see what he saw anymore. The beer industry in the state is growing like crazy without me and I think it may have left me behind. People like you are the ones who are gonna take the reins going forward."

“Woah, Classy, it sounds like you’re talking about retiring.”

“No, not at all. I’m always gonna be The Classy Alcoholic. Not because I want to be but ‘cause I don’t know how to be anything else.”

“That sounds kind of sad. Almost like you’re stuck.”

“Well, maybe life isn’t about having huge epiphanies and completely changing who you are as you grow. Maybe the trick to life is becoming slightly better versions of the people we already are. Slightly better versions of the people we’ll always be.”

“That’s deep, Classy. So you’ll be around?”

“Always, Button. I’m the hero the craft beer industry in this state deserves. But not the one it needs right now. So I’ll be around, roaming through the shadows and through the bushes outside my ex-girlfriend’s house. And I’ll make sure that you, [Button](#) [Brewhouse](#) and the rest of the Arizona beer family are safe and taken care of. I’ll be the silently shitfaced guardian. The hammered, pants-less protector. The Drunk Knight.”



“Wait, I thought I was gonna end up being The Drunk Knight in this story.”

“What? No, I’m The Drunk Knight. Why would you be The Drunk Knight?”

“Well just ‘cause you kept talking about how I’m the hero Arizona needs.”

“Yeah but that just makes you a regular hero. That doesn’t make you The Drunk Knight. The Drunk Knight’s heroism is a point of pride but also a burden. And he has to balance his heroism with his dark side.”

“I have a dark side too, though.”

“Shut up, Button, you’re 39 years old and still look like you’re 25. There’s nothing for you to be dark about. Go fuck yourself. I’m The Drunk Knight.”

“Alright, alright, fine! You’re The Drunk Knight. So where are you going now?”
“I don’t know. I have nowhere to go. Which actually means I can go anywhere.”
Damn. That was a good-ass line.

The End