

TEJAS Y TALIBAN

I.

“Todd Barrel here.”

“Todd, it’s Charlotte. Where are you?”

“It’s 3 p.m., Charlotte. I’m surfing porn. You should know better than to bother me—”

“The Mexicans, they’re rioting.”

“Charlotte, just because Consuelo is late with the dry cleaning, that does not constitute a riot.”

“Look out your window, Todd.”

“I’m in the basement, quietly enjoying Woodenbitches.com and I’d appreciate it if—”

“To hell with your mannequin porn, Todd! The Mexicans are breaking in—”

“Charlotte. Charlotte?”

The line went dead. Now, I’ve known Ms. Charlotte Exxon for quite some time and when she interrupts one of my tug sessions, something’s not right. I’ve only heard her upset like that once in my life and it involved a declined Amex card and a horse named Peaches. I decamped to the garage and fired up my 1984 candy apple red Delorean with Pinafarina styling and Slim Jim humidior.

As the garage door opened, our trusty gardener, Jorge, stood before me with Garden Weasel in hand. It was the first time I had ever seen a look of determination on Jorge’s face. I honked.

“Jorge, I’m glad that you’re finally getting to the roses, but please step aside.”

“Senor Todd. I am no longer your slave!”

“Slave? Jorge, my father pays you in the low-five figures. Granted, it’s mostly in Cracker Barrel stock but—”

“Viva La Revolution!”

Jorge charged like a skinny Sonoran bull. I had no choice but to gun the Delorean and hit my beloved gardener straight on. He rolled over the hood and bounced on the sidewalk. In my rear-view mirror, I could see him shaking his fist and cursing me. Ingrate.

I raced down Petrol Parkway past Enron Gables and hung a left on Exxon Lane, speeding up the two-mile driveway toward Charlotte’s family compound. It was a towering cathedral of a mansion—a symbol of the excesses of their oil empire. Every time I saw it, the minor excesses of my family’s chain restaurant empire seemed insignificant in comparison. “Why did Granddaddy Barrel get into cheese grits instead of oil?” I asked once. “Renewable cheddar” Answered my father.

As I rolled up the circular driveway, a bound and gagged Charlotte was being loaded into a rusty Chevy by five Mexican landscapers. I jumped out of the Delorean but was met by a barrage of illegal fireworks. A bottle rocket hit me square in the crotch, adding ignite to injury. By the time I extinguished my nuts, the truck was halfway down the driveway.

My Delorean gave chase and caught them on the street but I was outnumbered by an army of helado vendors who had barricaded the boulevard, waving sharpened tamarind pops, chanting revolutionary songs and menacing the neighborhood. Houston’s wealthiest were in terror.

Whether detained on 18 counts of public urination or caught in the middle of a Latino uprising, one’s best bet is to give a call to your lawyer. I heeded my own advice and dialed up my legal counsel, Sticky Muff.

“Sticky!”

“Todd, where are you?”

“I’m in the Delorean, trapped in River Oaks.”

“Get the fuck out of there.”

“Why have the Mexicans taken up rakes and Garden Weasels?”

“It’s a full-blown coup. Scores of Texas billionaires and politicians were kidnapped last night. The cities are next.”

“But I’ve always been a friend to Mexico. In ’96, when the price of Latin poon was devalued, I single-handedly kept those brothels afloat.”

“The past is shit, Barrel. Vicente Fox is marching on Texas as we speak.”

“Border Patrol is fucked.”

“And you’re fucked if you don’t get to someplace where there ain’t no Mexicans.”

“And where the hell might that be, Sticky?”

“Just spoke with The Boutros. They’re holding down insurgents at the port. There’s a submarine gassed up for Southampton.”

“No border bandits in London.”

“No chili chokers in Liverpool.”

“I’m on it, Sticky. Wish me luck.”

“Godspeed, Barrel.”

II.

I won’t bore you with details about how I outran a road crew of fifteen steamrollers. (OK, so it’s not that impressive.) Nor will I go into how I was nearly lynched by a mob of house painters, shot my way through a low-rider car club, jumped the Delorean over 100 barrels of crude and parachuted down into The Boutros’ submarine. All I will say is that when it comes time to exit a country under gunfire, ain’t nobody better than me.

Even though The Boutros technically carries Mexican papers, his true allegiance is to the almighty dollar. Anything that threatens his bottom line is the enemy—cultural differences be damned. His submarine was a testament to this egalitarianism. The motley crew of survivors ran clear up the socio-economic ladder, not missing a fucking rung. The shipmate list included:

Chuck Smith—janitor, amateur kite maker
Victoria Perez—secretary, stripper
Vince Laudnum—literary icon, author of Zingbat!
Danny Stalkerton—life coach, billionaire whisperer
Richard Faerworthy—billionaire
Shep Johnson—periscope technician
Tex Holcomb—oil magnate
Jermaine Dupri—hip hop producer

Due to the immediate urgency of our departure, The Boutros’ people didn’t have time to stock the proper traveling food. The only things on board were sixteen cases of White Castle frozen mini-hamburgers and ten cases of Chateau Lafitte ’82. Don’t ask me about his tastes, I could never figure it out. After a nice lunch of bite-size patties and vino, we all settled down in the media room to catch the late breaking news. I tuned us into Fox News in time for the O’Reilly Factor.

“Riots in Dallas. San Antonio is in flames. Houston lawns on the brink of dehydration. Texas is in a state of anarchy. Hello, everyone, I’m Bill O’Reilly, and today a shocking revolution has put Texas at the forefront of world news. After months of protests and the passing of al-Jaafari Bill HR242, illegal Mexican and Latino immigrants have reacted in a violent revolt, prompted by a State of the Plaza address by Mexican President, Vicente Fox.

Yesterday evening, Presidente Fox called for a ‘collective revolution’ against the ‘gringo oppressors’ and ‘great un-moustached.’ He said that it was ‘time for Mexico to retake Texas.’

Top ranking Texas politicians and the state’s leading industrialists were kidnapped early this morning. Fox has threatened their immediate execution if the United States militarily intervenes. One of those kidnapped is President Bush’s younger brother, Chauncy Phillips Bush, also known as “Putter,” a member of the family who has stayed behind the scenes, mostly in the poolhouse.

With Vicente Fox and the Mexican Army marching on Texas, President Bush has little time before diplomacy runs out. My two guests today, Paul Rodriguez and Carrot Top, have been outspoken on both sides of this topic and they join us today to speak. Carrot Top, Paul, welcome to the O’Reilly Factor...”

“Boutros, do you have a list of the kidnapped?”

“It’s coming through the fax, Todd.”

The list read like a who’s who of corrupt Texas politics, petroleum exploration, aeronautics, barbecue, cow punching, donkey punching, steer queering, real estate speculation and energy market manipulation. All the big wigs represent. A few notable names were Ross Perot, Slim Pickens, Willie Nelson, T-Bone Exxon, Todd Houston, Henry Kravis and Kelly Preston. (John Travolta was leading a Scientology seminar at a Dallas Starbucks and the Mexicans took his wife just for the fuck of it. Even they know to never leave behind a hot piece of ass.)

“Todd, how the hell did al-Jaafari Bill HR242 pass in the Senate?”

“Fucking imam appeasement. Senator al-Jaafari of Michigan isn’t afraid to play the race card.”

“We worked so hard to ramp up the oligarchy! Now this bi-cameral democracy shit is fucking up my

business.”

“Boutros, we have got to find these Mexi-napped Texans.”

“But where the fuck would they stash them? Now, if I were a Mexican—”

“You are a Mexican.”

“Good point, Barrel.”

“That gives me an idea. What’s our ETA in Southampton?”

“With nuclear turbine efficiency at 10,000 joules per barleycorn, I’d say we’ll hit Britain in approximately ten hours.”

“Good. You have A.Q. Chiachfeld on speed dial?”

“Like any good whore-mongering, arms-dealing, international rogue should.”

“Ring that limey, Boutros.”

For the next ten hours we all tried to pass time with activities that would keep our minds off the disaster. Jermaine Dupri got on the turntables while Victoria Perez strip teased to the nation’s hottest club tracks. Nobody had really brought along money, so we used White Castle hamburgers for tips. Victoria had about six burgers tucked into her G-string before the patties hit the submarine floor. In times of crisis, people come together, in the titty bar.

III.

We surfaced in Southampton, England next to the QE2. Shep Johnson kept using the periscope to look up old ladies’ dresses on the QE2’s deck. Gerontophile perv. A fleet of British racing green Land Rovers with the Danderlion crest shepherded us up to Stratford upon Avon to the Chiachfeld Manor.

Everybody washed up and was instructed to kick back until dinner. I finally changed out of my pajama bottoms—the same ones I had been wearing when my porn session was so rudely interrupted by Mexican revolutionaries. Chiachfeld’s butler had laid out some English tweeds, riding boots, 20 gauge Holland & Holland and a pint of Cock Fighter Bourbon Whiskey—my favorite. It’s the attention to detail that makes good help so hard to find.

I was hoping to shoot some grouse or white-bellied chav (very rare in those parts) for the dinner table, so I rode out to the river. The wind was blowing ever so slightly when I spied a British lass across the reeds. My binoculars focused in closer to reveal that it was no lass but a lady—40 years plus with a healthy bottom and resolute funbags. A rare bird indeed—the hot English M.I.L.F. Twas mating season so I followed the river and closed in on the luscious Mrs. Robinson.

As I neared the M.I.L.F., she bent down to pick a cattail and flashed me her wondrous ass that nearly burst out her tight riding pants. She looked back and smiled but before I could return the complement, a spear flew through the air, hitting my horse in the neck and splattering equine blood all over my tweeds.

The Philly reared up and threw me to the ground. I scanned the river bank and spied what looked to be two Taliban freedom haters coming in on a Chris Craft wooden speedboat and shooting AK47’s in my direction. No rest for Todd Barrel. I ran along the bank and shot once into their oncoming boat and jumped, flying through the air and landing on the back.

Oh the luck of the Cheney! My shell had strafed one of the assailants and left him pockmarked with hundreds of buckshot. Unfortunately, this only agitated the mofo. He crept back, bloodied, and pulled his Afghan sword. I repeatedly blocked his swings with the barrel of my shotgun. Splendid English craftsmanship!

I lost my footing and fell on my back. The Afghan attacked, hacking at the wood from which I quickly rolled to and fro, narrowly missing his blade. With one exceptional blow, the Afghan accidentally chopped down into the fuel line that sprayed petrol all over his turban. The sparks ignited his head and he began screaming some Koranic verse. I took this opportunity to shove my Holland & Holland clear up his ass, sodomizing the lad with my firearm, and unleashing my last shell.

Along with the corpse, I fell into the river’s water. The Chris Craft doubled back around and came straight toward me. I backstroked over to a nearby water skier and grabbed hold of his line. Family summers in Lake Havasu had made me an expert barefoot skier. The ski boat pulled me up just in time to miss the Chris Craft. He gave chase.

Bullets flew and I dodged them, dazzling the onlookers with my American hot-dogging. The Chris Craft advanced and I skirted him with a Double Stepper 540, made popular by Lance Kucinski in the ’96 SmartWater™ Games. That was followed by an elegant Toehold Sideslide effortlessly converting into a Wake Double Flip. The Brits cheered.

Speeding close to the bank we neared the beautiful M.I.L.F. I became lost in her bosoms, mesmerized by the perkiness that time forgot and almost dropped my footing. The M.I.L.F. yelled and tossed me her antique single shot 20-gauge. I caught it, mid-ski, looked back at the Chris Craft and let him have it.

The windshield shattered, obscuring his vision and sending the boat up the embankment. The craft was catapulted through the air and crashed into a Victorian era pub called As You Like It Tossed. The thatched roof was engulfed in flames.

I swam over the reeds where the M.I.L.F happily stood.

“Thank you, m’am.”

“That was quite an impressive show of arms.”

“Not too shabby show yourself, of the derriere.”

“May I introduce myself?”

“You may if I shall.”

“Lady Gwendolyn Blackburn of Doncaster. My intimates call me Tush.”

“Pleasure to meet you, Lady Tush. I am Todd Barrel, of the Houston Barrels.”

“The pleasure is all mine.”

“May I be so bold as to ask a forward question?”

“You may.”

“Is the Lady married to a Lord?”

“Did I introduce myself as Widower, Mr. Barrel?”

“I apologize, Lady Tush. Your arse has lit a fire in my libido which in turn betrayeth my tongue.”

“I am not familiar with American customs, Mr. Barrel, but in the United Kingdom, a Lady is not indisposed to being ravished by a strapping young squire like yourself.”

“Then I shall rip you twain, Lady Tush.”

Roll, roll, roll in the reeds. I ran my hand along the back of her legs and up toward her crotch, removing her breaches and exploring her inner mysteries. She was wetter than the Queen at a horse auction. I pulled out every metacarpal trick in the book in my attempt to bring Lady Tush to orgasm but soon the puppet began playing the puppeteer with moves that would have raised the eyebrows of even the most experienced of cocksman. She had much to teach. I had much to learn.

I countered with the passion of ten thousand steeds and tore her entire wardrobe to shreds. Tweed, fingernails, pubic hair and milky juices soon formed a hazy storm cloud that enveloped our heaving bodies.

Post coital, Lady Tush fixed her hair and donned what remained of her riding uniform. As it turned out, the Afghan survived the crash, so we tied him up and brought him back to Chiachfeld Manor for interrogation.

IV.

Dinner was shite. As can be expected from the Brits.

After our stomach-wrenching repast, we repaired to A.Q. Chiachfeld’s laboratory where cocktails were mixed and a little dancing was done. I presented my idea.

“A.Q., remember when we did that summer abroad with the Zaparo Indians and tripped our balls off?”

“You thought you were a jaguar and repeatedly urinated on my sleeping bag.”

“I was marking my territory.”

“You made me feel like a latrine.”

“Anyway, the German exchange student in our program, Torsten, had some very interesting hallucinations. I remember that he channeled his Teutonic forebears and had visions of Nazis past.”

“I recall something like that.”

“One evening, after snorting twenty lines of Ayahuasca powder and downing two liters of Riesling, he began mumbling about hidden treasure.”

“Nazi gold.”

“Good memory, Chiachfeld. I sharpened a root, dipped it in my jaguar urine, and transcribed his rantings on the back of a native boy.”

“And?”

“And I stowed that boy away in my suitcase to Houston. Upon arrival I placed him under a black light and copied my notes.”

“What happened?”

“He was sent to the Cracker Barrel Work Camp for Boys.”

“No, the notes.”

“Oh, yes. I flew to Switzerland, following Torsten’s descriptions and arrived at a cave high in the Alps. Inside that cave were 200 bars of pure Nazi gold. I was rich.”

“What happened to that fortune, Todd?”

“That’s not the point, A.Q. My point is that these hallucinogenic drugs tap into one’s DNA—a

collective cultural memory, if you will. And if that’s the case, then I believe that if we dose The Boutros with some South American blotter, then he might be able to tap into his recent cultural memory and find out where those fucking Mexicans are hiding the Texas billionaires.”

“Interesting.”

“Fucking fascinating. Now, A.Q., do you have any of that shit around?”

“I’ll look in the freezer.”

Within minutes, The Boutros was happily chugging down a subtle concoction of mescal and ground Ayahuasca root. The first few minutes were pretty chill as he began speaking in his native tongue, a pigeon version of Spanish that mixed coyote howls with Latin scripture. Then he began to convulse and danced around an imaginary sombrero.

After showing his impressive catalog of moves that channeled Charro and Montalban, The Boutros settled in and frothed at the mouth. I tried to focus the man.

“Vicente Fox, Boutros. Give me more Fox.”

He then spewed forth a tidal wave of verbal diarrhea, the contents of which are translated below:

“Gloria, oh Gloria...flan y Coca-cola...don’t stop...who’s at the door...tacos...lepers?...let them go...Ah!...No!...Taliban!...my face.”

The Boutros collapsed on the laboratory floor, spent of all his energy. Little was gleaned except that he could dance. The Boutros’ tripped-out mention of the Taliban and the arrival of the Afghan assassins couldn’t just be coincidence. I proposed that we dose the freedom fighter.

Through repeated belt whipping, we learned that the man’s name was Hashmat. No more information was gathered as he was a trained professional and didn’t buckle under prolonged exposure to Danish cartoons or internet porn. Hallucinogenic root powder would fix that.

He responded similarly to The Boutros, but instead of dancing, he outlined, in detail, how to build a mud tower to store a virgin bride. Bor-ring. I was tiring of this little terrorist charade, so plugged him up with another five doses. The results were stupendous.

An oral history of his tribe was etched out, from the ancient killing techniques of his ancestors to the ancient ‘hand job through the sheets’ technique made popular during the Taliban salad days. He was ready for more specific interrogation.

“Hashmat. Why are you here? Why did you fucking try to kill me?”

“Allah. It is the word of Allah.”

“Yeah, I get that part. But who gave you the word of Allah?”

“It is written in the book.”

I went birzirker and thrashed the man with 18-gauge surgical tubing.

“Names. I need names!”

“The man who is the Goat of the Mountain.”

“The Goat of the fucking Mountain? Where are the Texas billionaires?”

“In the Caves of the Oil Teardrop.”

“What the fuck did you say?”

“The Oil Teardrop.”

Chiachfeld noticed my harrowed look.

“Barrel, you look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

“No. I look completely different when I’ve seen a ghost. This is worse. It’s personal.”

“What is it, Todd?”

“I’ve been to the Caves of the Oil Teardrop. I’ve fornicated in the Caves of the Oil Teardrop. I’ve blown rails with kidnapped supermodels in the Caves of the Oil Teardrop. I’ve co-hosted Chinese real estate tycoons in the Caves of the—“

“Todd!”

“It’s in Brunei, south of the Sultan’s palace.”

“You mean, The Sultan of Brunei, one of your most trusted friends?”

“Or so I thought, Chiachfeld. Or so I thought.”

V.

Let me take this moment to get you up to speed on my relationship with the Sultan. We’re like two sides of a coin—complementary colors, if you will. What the Sultan lacks in social graces, I possess in spades. What I lack in my bank account, the Sultan pumps five fold from his offshore wells daily. There is an art to blowing cash and they call me maestro. I took the Sultan underneath my wing and showed him how to spend millions in seconds. He, in turn, provided the millions.

In addition to skeet shooting off his yacht, driving sports cars across the Australian Outback, doping racehorses in Dubai, buying modeling agencies, and whatever else suits the fancy of the day, I also advise the Sultan in international and domestic politics. When the Sultan threw Kate Moss a 200 person bash at the Plaza Athénée in Paris, commemorating her third completion of rehab, it was I who notified him that unless Moss’ secret boyfriend, Henry Kissinger, was added to the list, he risked losing Brunei’s much-coveted seat on the UN’s Council on Human Rights. Doubly important since Brunei was coming under scrutiny for a smattering of harem violations.

I placed a call to the Sultan’s direct line to fish for clues.

“Sultan of Brunei here.”

“Sulty, what up? It’s TB.”

“TB. Are you safe?”

“So you’ve seen the news. I’m fine but the same can’t be said about a few other Barrels.”

“Whatever I can do, I am at your service.”

“Actually, Sulty, there is. Remember the Heineken Casino Brothel Barge that I was considering an investment in?”

“I believe it was inspired by my Jäger Body Shot Mini Yacht.”

“Don’t start taking credit, Sulty. I put that idea in your head. Anyway, the Chinese boat builders have put the finishing touches on it and was supposed to set sail for Houston two days ago. For obvious

reasons, the investors are loath to dock in Texas. The Chinese officials are coming down hard on my nuts, threatening to appropriate the barge if it stays in port. Do you mind if I park it off Brunei for a few weeks?”

“Certainly, TB. My house is your house. Where are you?”

“I’m in hiding. Maybe I’ll head to Portofino until this Mexican business blows over.”

“TB, there are bounty hunters looking for rich Texans all over the world. It’s too dangerous.”

“Can’t live in fear of those beaners, Sully.”

“Come to Brunei. We’ll play golf.”

“Thanks for the invite, S. Let me call you back in a half hour.”

“I’ll be waiting.”

It was getting all muddled: Did he know that I knew that he was holding the Texas hostages? And if he did, what did he think I would do if I knew that he knew that I knew? I bounced it off The Boutros, who was slowly coming down off the acid.

“What do you think, Boutros?”

“I think we go in, guns blazing.”

“Too risky.”

“I have some contacts up in Pakistan. We could get a nuke and drop it on the Sultan.”

“No. Those Pakis are good people, but nukes are messy.”

“What’s our exit strategy, Todd?”

“We find the hostages, shepherd them to safety and get word to Bush so that he can wipe Texas clean.”

In the middle of this brainstorming session, Lady Tush entered with a tray of tea and crumpets. She wore her Sunday best and I hoped that she hadn’t washed where I requested.

“Tush.”

“Yes, Todd.”

“Would the Lady be interested in some Southeast Asian subterfuge?”

“Depending on the circumstances.”

“I would be honored if you should accompany me to Brunei, undercover of course.”

“And what cover shall I be under?”

“Your maidenhead shall be under by my manhood. But in the daylight hours you shall assume the identity of my mother, Daphne Lisbet Barrel.”

“Do I resemble?”

“Only in years, though thine ass dost betray them.”

“Todd, I blush.”

“And I jest, Lady Tush! You are as nimble as a hothouse strumpet.”

“Oh, Barrel.”

“Saddle up, Tush. We ride come daybreak.”

The Sultan’s respect for motherhood is paramount. He would never dream of harming me in front of my mums. The man believed that mothers are the purest form of human and should be shielded from the fleshy elements of common life. As long as Tush was by my side, he wouldn’t dream of putting a bullet in my head.

I followed Lady Tush up to her chambers and prepped her for the coming mission.

“This will be dangerous. Is Milady ready?”

“Ready as I’ll ever be, Todd.”

“Should we notify Lord Tush of your absence?”

“He’s in Morocco, bugging school boys.”

“Why did you marry such a poofter?”

“He was titled. I had money.”

“And have you gone unfulfilled all this time?”

“Nonsense, Mr. Barrel. I’ve run through 80 gardeners in 20 years, not to mention the Trinity College Cricket team and Manchester United (1993-95).”

“You have a thing for athletes.”

“I have a thing for winners.”

“Then blow on this whistle, Lady Tush.”

For those of you unfamiliar with the subspecies of M.I.L.F., I must educate you to the fact that time has only made them better. And wiser. And expert in the art of delivering a stout BJ. Lady Tush was no exception to that rule. The pleasure I received was so intense that I bled out my ears and extinguished five candelabra with a ricochet cumshot.

“Thank you, Lady Tush.”

“No, thank you, Todd Barrel.”

VI.

The Sultan sent out his supersonic jet to London and Lady Tush and I arrived at His Highness’ airstrip in Bandar Seri Begawan in just under four hours. If you have the choice, I highly recommend supersonic travel. Beats the shit out of Braniff. The Sultan greeted us with a traditional Bruneian marching band and a fleet of vintage Lincolns. Complete red carpet treatment.

“Nice red carpet.”

“TB, anything for you, my brother.”

“Sulty, I’d like you to meet my mother, Daphne Lisbet Barrel.”

He knelt and kissed Lady Tush’s hand. I prayed that he didn’t pick up the scent of my crotch.

“It is an honor to meet you, Mrs. Barrel.”

“The honor is all mine.”

“Every day is Mother’s Day in the Constitutional Sultanate of Brunei.”

“I suppose you do make the rules, Sultan.”

“Call me Sulty.”

“Sulty.”

“Let me show you my palace.”

The palace was a sprawling estate, decorated in that oil sheik Rococo meets Neoclassical Asian dictator style made popular by Imelda Marcos in the 1980’s. The aesthete in me has a soft spot for

English Tudor but the money-worshipping, power-hungry rest of me loves this kind of shit. The roaming panthers and vultures completed the picture.

The theme for dinner that evening would be Mother’s Feast, in honor of Mrs. Barrel. All of the Sultan’s brothers and their respective mothers would attend. His father could be accused of many things, but having weak sperm and a small harem weren’t those. The family numbered 94 and the 280-foot-long table was set accordingly. I’ve never seen that much gold flatware in my life. I made a Crate & Barrel mental note for Uncle Jack.

Lady Tush and I were seated next to the Sultan and his mother, Maysaa, which means ‘to walk with swinging gait.’ Boom-chicka-boom, that bitch could move. She was one hot mamma whose M.I.L.F.itude rivaled that of Tush. It was all I could do to stop myself from staring at her ripe melons.

Fast food is considered a delicacy in Brunei, so the Sultan made what the Italians call una bella figura by serving us trays of Pizza Hut, KFC, McDonald’s and Taco Bell. I guess Cracker Barrel’s too high-brow for the Sultan’s table. Nonetheless, the Gordita Chicken Supreme tasted delicious.

All that fried food gave me a hard on. I couldn’t pry my eyes away from the Sultan’s mom’s sweaty little ass. Tush saw my mouth watering and bristled at the lack of attention I was giving her. Jealousy even strikes during menopause. She jammed her hand down my pants and I choked on some Stuffed Crust Pizza. I excused myself and retired behind some velvet curtains to the food prep area. Tush followed me in.

“Tush! Do not give me a hand job at the Sultan of Brunei’s dinner table.”

“Don’t raise your voice at me, Todd Barrel. I saw the way you were looking at his mother.”

“Maybe if you play your cards right, I can lure her in for a three way.”

Tush open-handed slapped me across the face.

“You like to play rough, do you, Tush?”

“I want it hard.”

“Little aristocratic fuck freak.”

“Keep talking dirty.”

“Don’t tell me what to do!”

“Oh, Todd.”

I bent her over and opened her basket. Last Tango in Paris came to mind as I eyed some loose nacho cheese on the side table. It was delectably horrific. I played rough and Tush was close to climax. She tried to balance herself by grabbing onto the curtains and you can guess what happened next— everything came tumbling down.

Tush and myself were revealed in our cheesy sexcapade for all 94 members of the Sultan’s clan. All the moms shielded their eyes. I heard a fork drop.

“Sulty, it’s not what it looks like. Well, kind of—”

“Mothers are not for fucking. Not in Brunei!”

“She’s not my mother. She’s my M.I.L.F.”

Just then I received contact from Chiachfeld who had outfitted me with a wireless ear piece.

“Hostages located. Heineken barge sixteen fathoms from coast. Requesting status.”

“Dinner’s over. Dessert is served.”

I pulled out of Lady Tush and unholstered my ivory Uzis, firing a few rounds into the air.

“Nobody move!”

“TB, I invite you to Brunei and you disrespect my family with your Oedipal sex and weapons.”

“And you disrespect Texas.”

“Whatever are you talking about?”

“The fucking hostages, Sulty.”

“I don’t know about any hostages.”

“The hell you don’t.”

I grabbed the Sultan and put an Uzi to his head. Palace security pulled their Glocks.

“Put your weapons away or the Sultan gets it.”

“TB, don’t do this.”

“You’re coming with me, Sulty.”

I led him down to the driveway and we boarded a royal golf cart. Lady Tush drove. The Sultan cowered.

“Todd, where are you taking me?”

“Caves of the Oil Teardrop, Sulty. Should bring back fond memories.”

“I haven’t been there since Don Simpson tried to bludgeon that Burmese hooker.”

“I got a tip from a Taliban monkey boy that says different.”

“My niece and her new husband have been staying there while their house is being built in Riyadh.”

“He marry her for your money?”

“His family is almost as wealthy as mine.”

“What’s his name? With that cash, I’ve probably heard of him.”

“Johnny bin Laden.”

“You stupid fuck.”

It made sense that Johnny bin Laden was involved with my Afghan assassin, seeing as how he was Osama’s nephew, but it didn’t shore up with the Mexican invasion. It’s not like those Mexicans to farm out labor. In fact, the opposite was true. Labor is one thing they possess in droves.

As we approached, I could hear gunshots and shouting. Chiachfeld contacted me over the wire.

“Meeting with resistance. Heineken barge is docked and forces are ready for deployment.”

“All keg stands go!”

Getting an Afghan out of a cave is like coaxing a cat out of a tree—you have to shoot them down. Delta Force and the Russians can attest to the fact that it’s a huge son of a bitch. I had the foresight

to gather a small army of equally fearless henchmen—European soccer hooligans. The unlimited Heineken was both payment and liquid courage for these bruisers. They were experts in tossing homemade bombs, blowing up cars, fighting riot police and pissing on street corners.

Chiachfeld had Photoshopped some pictures of the Brunei Soccer Club holding up anti-Arsenal banners and burning effigies of Beckham and Posh Spice. That, coupled with the 90 cases of Heineken that the hooligans downed on their way had made them wasted, agitated and thirsting for violence.

Dressed in their team colors, the hooligans attacked like a band of medieval rapists, come to pillage the Moors. Their weapons were rudimentary and their manners, even ruder. The Glenmorangie Strikers took up the left flank, fighting hand to hand with the Afghans, and giving atomic wedgies to the foes. The boys from Stuttgart had brought their pit bulls, who were equally drunk, and unleashed them into the cave. Cries streamed from the Taliban who were having their bollocks sniffed and chewed off.

The Newcastle United fans are quite possibly the dirtiest hooligan scum—and I love them for it. Put a bottle in one hand and a knife in the other and you’ve got yourself a rioting savage. Tush and I joined their ranks and moved up the middle. A couple of punters kept groping Lady Tush but I was too busy cutting down Taliban assholes with my Uzis to react. Besides, the Lady can take care of herself.

After 45 minutes of bloodshed and binge-drinking, the cave was firmly under Team Heineken control. Chiachfeld and I quickly made our way back to the Grotto Pleasure Apartment’s door that was welded shut. Screams for help could be heard on the other side.

“Todd, I have some C4 to blow it.”

“Not necessary, A.Q.. I’m gonna kick this bitch down.”

I stepped back a few paces, took a deep breath and ran, jumping into the air and delivering my signature Todd Barrel flying roundhouse kick. The steel door reverberated like a gong struck by an ancient Barrel mallet and fell to the ground with an ear-shattering smash. The dust cleared and the hostages were free.

Out streamed our billionaires, politicians and other horse flies on the ass of Texas power. Some ladies were still tarted and baubled from fundraisers the night of the kidnappings. Willie Nelson and some others had wisely brought fat sacks of Maui Wowee and looked stony-eyed. I scanned the survivors for Charlotte Exxon.

I found her huddled up next to her father, T-Bone, and my Uncle Jack Barrel. She jumped on me and wrapped her long legs around my body.

“Todd, you saved us.”

“Fuckin’ A, baby.”

“It was terrible. There was no elliptical machine and they made us eat Afghani dirt cakes.”

“Uncivilized, mountain dwelling—”

“Never leave me, Todd.”

“Not this song and dance, Charlotte.”

Lady Tush walked in and saw Charlotte Exxon and myself wrapped in embrace. Their eyes met and the whole story of me rodgering the shite out of Tush was told with one look. I braced for a cat fight but instead something strange happened. Charlotte broke away from me and approached Tush.

“Hello. I am Charlotte Exxon.”

“Lady Tush, Charlotte.”

“Thank you for taking care of Todd, Tush.”

“It was he who has cared for me.”

“I know that kind of loving.”

“Usually involving petit fours and gondolier hat.”

“It makes you feel special, doesn’t it, Tush?”

“And sore.”

“Yes.”

“Here, come with me. I’ll clean you up.”

Tush delicately placed her hand over Charlotte’s and whispered something in her ear. A chill went down Charlotte’s back and she stroked Tush’s hair. Fireworks went off in my pants. This could only go somewhere good—straight into my bed. The Boutros, meanwhile, had found another group of survivors deep in the cave. He called.

“Barrel! There’s something you should see.”

I walked down and saw The Boutros un-gagging what looked to be the Presidente of Mexico, Vicente Fox. I was flabbergasted.

“Sir, if I’m not mistaken, aren’t you supposed to be leading a Mexican insurrection?”

“Senor, Barrel. I, too, was taken in the darkness of the Oaxacan night.”

“What happened, Foxy?”

“I was enjoying a midnight snack of Coca Cola and flan at the Presidential retreat when my mistress, Gloria Trevi, heard a knock at the door. She peaked through the door and saw three hunched-over people in sombreros and panchos. They said they were lepers and asked only for a few pesos and maybe a taco. My Gloria’s heart is as big as Chihuahua, so she unlatched the door and handed them some fajitas.”

“And?”

“And they broke through, tied us up and revealed themselves as the dogs they are.”

“What breed, Foxy?”

“Osama bin Laden.”

“Jesus, fuck! Again?”

“Yes, again.”

“So who’s giving the orders now?”

“They took a plaster cast of my face and fashioned a latex mask for Osama.”

“He speaks Spanish with a Mexico City accent?”

“He’s very smart.”

“A little too smart for freedom. We’ve got to get on the horn to Bush so he can attack.”

“Todd, no. Millions of innocent Mexicans would die.”

“I don’t think rioting Mexicans are exactly innocent, Foxy.”

“Have mercy, Todd Barrel. They are but simple people. My people. I must talk to them. We must have peace.”

“And what do I get out of this?”

“You seek personal gain?”

“You’re damn right.”

“I’ll appoint you Ministerio de Agencia Federal de Cerveza, Gallos y Pistolas.”

“What the fuck is that?”

“The Mexican ATF.”

“So I’ll have access to all the booze, smoke and weapons south of the border?”

“Si.”

“Sweet.”

“Do we have an agreement, Todd?”

“Foxy, I’d say we do.”

“Bueno.”

“Now, let’s get out of here. There’s an Islamic Militant fuck stain in some serious need of Texas justice.”

VII.

The Sultan apologized for his (recently deceased) brother in law’s indecencies against Texas and presented me with a solid gold eagle as a token of his shame. The Boutros, Chiachfeld, Lady Tush, Charlotte Exxon, the European hooligans, hostages and of course, yours truly, set sail on the Heineken Casino Brothel Barge for the Port of Houston. Brothel barges are notoriously slow ships, so T-Bone called in 50 tugboats from an Exxon rig off the coast of Malaysia to haul us full tilt boogie back to the homeland.

While the hooligans got wasted, gambled their combat pay and boned all the Chinese whores, I had better things to do—mainly get busy with Tush and Charlotte. The two had quickly formed a unique bond blending friendship and carnal pleasure. The clinical name for this relationship is called ‘rug munching’ but it’s commonly referred to as ‘lezzing out.’ Neither had lost their lust for the Barrel, so we all played tongue fu like one big happy family. In those short ten hours, I don’t know if I’ve ever felt so close to two women in my life. It helped that I was sandwiched between them in 38 different positions. With six holes to feed, my performance had to be perfect. And it was.

The only sour grape on ship was “Putter” Bush, who kept griping about wanting to call his mommy and daddy. I hogtied and gagged Putter with his own madras pants and locked him in the galley with the Lands End catalog. That shut him up.

The Boutros had been gathering intel from certain Mexican nationals, in-country, who were sympathetic to our cause. Fox, or Osama, had taken the Capitol in Austin. The Mexicans had been ordered to set fire to all the oil fields and the Texas sky burned black. Every large city from Dallas to San Antonio was occupied. Outlying suburbs were peppered with armed loyalists and bigger militias were being mounted in small towns across the state. Bush feared an all out guerilla war and congress was pressuring him to attack before the Federal Government looked impotent and unwilling to save the Lonestar State.

Under the blanket of night, we moved quietly via Chevy from the Port of Houston to Willie Nelson’s ranch outside of Austin. Mexicans had looted his dope fields (big surprise) but had left his cattle untouched out of respect for the braided one. We worked until daybreak, sharpening our knives and loading our many guns. Since our numbers were few and our resources limited, our attack would be have to be strong and lo-fi and that meant one thing—cattle drive.

I addressed our group for some words of Texas encouragement.

“Friends, fighters, fellow Texans and M.I.L.F.y Brits...Texas was once Mexico. And then we kicked Mexico’s ass. We let down our guard and those motherfucking Mexicans took our state back! No offense, Boutros and Fox.”

“None taken.”

“But the real problem here ain’t the Mexicans, it’s terror. Crash a plane in New York, ignite a bomb in London, blow up a boat in Yemen—you tempt the might of the USA. But if you take the capitol in Austin, then you invite the fury of Texas to descend upon you like the wrath of God himself—because God loves Texas. That crazy towel head, Osama bin Laden, has gone a cunt hair too far in his audacious attempt to bring Texas to its knees and pit Mexican and Texan against each other. Ladies and gentlemen, a Texan is a Mexican, and a Mexican is a Texan. Today we’ll kill a mess of wetbacks, but fear not. For those spics are under the spell of terrorism, like a zombie who’s gone undead. I empathize with their mothers, but you can’t reason with a zombie—you’ve got to blast them to hell. Our bullets are blessed with freedom and we shall prevail! Remember the Alamo! Never forget Brunei! ”

“Huzzah!”

We mounted up our horses and cracked the whip on the herd. The Great Freedom Cattle Drive was under way.

“Move ’em on!”

“Head ’em out!”

“Set ’em out!”

“Ride ’em in!”

“Cut ’em out!”

“Zip it down!”

“Stick it in!”

“Get ’em off!”

The dust kicked up by the 5,000 head of cattle made our march on Austin look like a foreboding Texas twister. It was just like the olden days, except that instead of a lasso and a pistol, we carried M-16s and 300,000 volt cattle prods. A cowboy of one.

We hit Congress Avenue from the south and moved up the boulevard toward the capitol building. Anti-gringo graffiti covered barbecue joints and coffee houses. Vendors hawked Mandy Moore pinatas and pirated Linda Ronstadt CDs. For the most part, they were scared shitless of the thousands of cattle coming towards them. People scattered. Mexican sharpshooters positioned themselves on top of buildings and fired but the dust, sweat and cow poop made it almost impossible to hit a target.

Soon, we were about a hundred yards out from the capitol building. The grounds looked deserted.

It all seemed too easy. I trotted my steed over to The Boutros, who was smoking a cigarillo and checking up on some business on his satellite phone.

“Where are all the Mexicans, Boutros?”

“I smell a trap.”

“That’s donkey piss you’re smelling.”

“Exacto, muchacho.”

Just then, four brightly colored busses came barreling out from behind the capitol. Their horns blared “La Cucaracha” and behind the wheel sat crazed men—Mexican suicide bus drivers. Prerequisites for driving a bus down there are a stint at the Sinola State Mental Hospital and a complete disregard for vehicular law. More dangerous than a Hamas teenager strapped down with explosives, Mexican suicide bus drivers just don’t give a fuck. They came towards us full steam. I feared for our lives and livestock.

Balancing themselves on top of two longhorns, Lady Tush and Charlotte shot RPGs at the oncoming busses. Give a woman an inch and she takes a mile. Outfit her with a machine gun and she shows up with a rocket launcher. My ladies blasted the suicide drivers and sent the third class coaches up into flames.

Hundreds of Mexicans then emerged from behind the hill. They silently stood, armed with antique rifles and makeshift weapons. A lone voice yelled into the air, “Ay, ay, ayyy!” The legions ran down the hill with more resolve than if they were crossing the Rio Grande. A.Q. Chiachfeld signaled with an air horn and we took the herd straight for the Mexicans.

Fighting was intense. They outnumbered us in men, but we outnumbered them in steer. The Mexicans hacked away at the cattle, slowly making their way to the center. My ivory Uzis pounced with the accuracy of Wild Bill Hickock and rendered a death toll of which Pol Pot would be proud. The Boutros defended himself against an onslaught of busboys wielding five-inch kitchen knives. Chiachfeld was busy launching explosive cow patties from a motorized trap shooter and Lady Tush and Charlotte took on a division of seamstresses outfitted with salsa-tipped sewing needles and blow guns. We stood our ground.

Soon we had pushed toward the doors of the Capitol that were barricaded with pool equipment. Chiachfeld lobbed a large piece of poo and blew the doors off the hinges. We dismounted and I barked the orders.

“Chiachfeld, you stay here with the girls and fend off the attack. The Boutros and I will take Fox with us and find Osama.”

“Right-O, chap.”

“Boutros, let’s put an end to this Mexican bullshit.”

Boutros and I headed up the stairs with Vicente Fox in tow. Fox might be able to close multinational trade agreements or negotiate with ski-masked Marxists but he couldn’t fight worth a damn. Where I come from, you’ve got to do both. Halfway up the stairs we were met with gunfire.

At the top of the steps was a menacing mariachi band dressed in matching black uniforms and waiting

with instruments in hand. They were Guadalajara mariachi assassins and they didn't come to do a hat dance. The guitar player pointed his case in our direction and let out a flurry of ammo. Didn't I see that in a movie? Then a grossly obese man with rolls of fat sneaking out of his suit pointed a guitarrón (big fucking bass) in our direction and laughed as drool soaked his lapels. He plucked a low G string and a ten-foot flame shot out of his instrument and engulfed us en fuego.

“Stop, drop, and roll!”

The three of us retreated to the base of the steps to regroup.

“Boutros, cover me. I'm going in.”

“Watch out, Barrel. The fiddle player has a blade.”

“Don't worry, Boutros. I've danced this dance before.”

The Boutros pulled his M16 and began firing away. I made a mad dash up the stairs, blew holes in the guitar player with my ivory Uzis, back-flipped off the railing to avoid the fat man's flame thrower and put the heel of my custom Lucchese boots straight into his pudgy, little nose. The fiddle player tuned his A string and a large, steel machete shot from the back. Switchblade fiddles are for pussies. My Uzis quickly ripped him to shreds. The brass section suffered a similar fate from the swift slugs of The Boutros' rifle.

“Todd, where do think Osama's hiding?”

“Governor's office. It has a beautiful eastern-facing view of Mecca.”

We ran down the hallway towards the office. Surprising enough, it was unlocked and unguarded. When we busted through, Osama in a latex Fox mask was lounging on a leather couch, feet up, and puffing on a Cuban cigar. A half empty tumbler of Bourbon sat next to him. He greeted us cheerfully.

“Boys, what took you so long?”

“Stand your ass up, Osama.”

“Easy, Barrel. I'd be a lot more comfortable if you'd point those Uzis away from me.”

“How comfortable are you going to feel six feet under?”

“What's with the cowboy talk? Is a new sheriff in town?”

“Don't fuck with me, bin Laden.”

“Todd, I would never fuck with you. I'm here to make you rich.”

“I am rich. Well, sort of—”

“Boys, what do you think this is all about? Don't know? Well, I'll let you in on a little secret—it's all about the Benjamins.”

“Quit your jibber-jabber, Osama. It's time to die.”

“Cool down. I didn't start a revolution in Texas for religious reasons. That's all a creation of the media. I did it for money. With no Texas crude on the market, the price of oil rises and my homies at OPEC get even richer. Shit, they've cleared billions in the past few days of chaos.”

“This is insane.”

“This is the truth. The images of devout Muslims rioting around the world are shot on a sound stage in Burbank. Hell, Muslims practice less than Catholics. That whole Israel vs. Palestine thing? We're in cahoots with the Jews! They have massive petroleum interests in the middle east. It's just like Paris Hilton vs. Nicole Ritchie—covertly concocted for press. But when we do it, we move markets,

bitches! Oil is my business...and business is good.”

“I don’t believe it.”

“Do you believe this?”

Osama walked over and opened up two Louis Vuitton steamer trunks filled to the brim with fresh cash.

“Go ahead. It’s just a taste.”

“Take your blood money elsewhere.”

“Blood money? Since when is dirty money too good for Todd Barrel?”

“Every man has a line. And you crossed mine when you came to Texas.”

“Todd, you disappoint me.”

“And you smell like death.”

I walked over and kicked Osama bin Laden so squarely in the nuts, virgins cried in heaven and the stock exchange took a dip in Bahrain. The motherfucker vomited his whiskey and looked up like a hurt puppy.

“Get up, bitch. Time to face the Mexicans.”

We led Osama, kicking and screaming, out to the capitol’s veranda overlooking the city. Vicente Fox walked out first and the throngs of fighters stopped and cheered el Presidente. I pushed out Osama next. Gasps rolled across the crowd as the two Vicentes stood side by side. The real Fox spoke to his masses.

“Mexicanos y Mexicanas, my brothers and my sisters, where you stand was once called Mexico. Where you fight, once stood your ancestors. One hundred and sixty years ago, a whoring, gambling, lazy-eyed Mexican General named Santa Anna fucked all of us. He fell asleep receiving felación from a puta gringa and the Army of Texas vanquished him, sending our forefathers back down south. Since then, Texas has become rich from oil deposits and a strong entrepreneurial culture while Mexico has made their sneakers and changed their sheets. But now I have a daydream. I have a daydream that one day Native American Indians will be changing our sheets. I have a daydream that one day Mexicans will be accepted into the highest business circles. I have a daydream that one day it won’t be called ‘white collar crime’ but ‘brown collar crime.’ I have a daydream that one day our children will work at Starbucks, grinding the beans instead of picking them! Some say daydreams can’t come true. To them I say I’m a Mexi-can and not a Mexi-can’t! But, my brothers and sisters, violence is not the way to make a daydream come true. Revolution might be fine for the comunistas but it is not fine for Mexican business. The Texans are our friends. They buy our tacos. And we buy our own tacos. But one day I daydream that tacos will be free at last! Tacos will be free at last! Tacos, will be free at last! Lay down your kitchen knives, Mexicanos, for I am the true Presidente!”

Fox ripped the latex mask off Osama bin Laden and the hundreds of Mexicans went silent. A murmur soon turned into a roar and the crowd began calling for blood. Fox seemed reluctant to deliver vigilante justice but in Texas we don’t have that problem. I ceremoniously put my boot up Osama’s ass and kicked that mofo over the capitol balcony. He fell 30 feet onto two baby calves and some loose pool sweeps. Mexicans descended on that Arab and I quickly lost sight of his twitching body. No matter, the Lonestar State was saved and a great lesson was learned—if you fuck with Texas, you

fuck with Todd Barrel.

VIII.

The Mexicans eventually put down their arms and returned to work. Bush didn't need to attack but he did charge Fox \$30 billion for damages to be paid over time in both flour and corn tortillas. Osama's body was never recovered. It's rumored that he survived and now picks oranges in California. Some farmer probably thinks he's just a tall Mexican. The Texas billionaires were returned home safely and they in turn, handsomely rewarded all of us for our brave rescue. Very soon after, I was caught by the CIA for trying to trade Mexican guns to the Peruvians for uncut cocaine and black market Bowler hats. It turns out being the head of the Mexican ATF isn't so glamorous—all my cash went to bribing officials in three countries. Lady Tush and Charlotte's relationship could never survive in the real world; only in times of war can an English Lady and an oil heiress finger-bang each other with social impunity. After order was restored to Texas, the three of us met at the penthouse of the Houston Ritz-Carleton for one last romp.

“Ladies, history is always written by the victors who stand with sword in one hand, and quill in the other. Take my quill in your hand, Tush, and Charlotte, open your inkwell to me. Together, for the next twelve hours, we shall write a chapter on fornication that will one day be recounted to the world in a memoir of such epic proportion that generations will regard it as scripture. A memoir that will elicit envy in men and lust in women. A memoir that will give an account of the greatest moments in history—a chronicle of my incredible adventures...The Adventures of Todd Barrel.”

“For fuck sake, Todd. Just shut up and drop your pants.”