

**SLIGHTLY AWKWARD
ADVENTURES**

Expensively Cheap Booze

By Larry Tanner

I sat in my car with a cheap bottle of booze we spent nearly a hundred dollars on. Outside the car was my friend Luke. He was puking his guts out. It's hard to say where things went wrong with this trip. We didn't start with the best intentions, and things just went worse from there. This girl I was dating called it quits because as she put it, "*there is always something trying to stop us and just maybe there is a reason for it.*" My friends said we couldn't just sit at home while she went trolling for a new guy. All I said was that I wanted a drink. It was something people said in the movies and on television, and it sounded right, but right now I wish I had said something else.

I was sitting in my room listening to one of my dad's records from a band called Pink Floyd staring at a picture from when I was ten with her and with my hand down my pants doing something. Hey, don't judge me all guys do it, and I was just dumped by a girl I was sort of seeing for nearly eight years. I could imagine her father throwing a party, and like that, my hand was out of my pants. Dad called this his pot music, and I guess I could hear why with it being so mellow, but it fits my mood. My parents don't talk about their times in school, but pictures can tell a story like my mom with her big hair and camo clothing or my dad in a jeans jacket over a Metallica shirt with a hat turned around over his very long hair. My parents, children of the 1980's. Dad bought a 1976 Chevy Nova when he was seventeen, and he still has the car. It's up on blocks in the back of the garage. But I am off track.

I looked out my window and saw my friend Luke. He was standing there watching me, freak. "*Yo, yo, yo big L why you playing player?*" My very white friend Luke was going through this "I'm a rapper" phase, but really, he was just acting stupid while insulting an entire race. "*Luke I just don't know where to start with that. You are the whitest guy I know and Yo, really is this MTV and 1985?*" Luke said he had a plan and all he needed was a hundred dollars and a ride. I had nothing better to do, and most of Luke's plans end up being either fun or a train wreck. Either way, it's better than playing with myself to the sounds of The Wall. I said don't judge me. As with any plan it included Greg. I was already going to pick up Greg from his court-ordered community service after his sort of minivan ended up in a ravine on fire. We were on our way to

buy a certain kind of herb when the car died then rolled off a cliff while catching fire. However, the fire saved us from the county marshal sting.

I took a chunk of my savings and bought a car, a real car not held together with duct tape. A silver 2005 Honda Civic hatchback with a cracked rear window and a hole where a radio should be. I planned on buying a radio until the radiator shot fire out of the front. Ok, maybe it was just steam, but that steam cost me every dime in my savings. What the car did that neither of my friend's cars did was run. Luke and I got in the car and drove over to the place where the state dropped off Greg after a day of picking trash off the road. Oh, sweet irony. Is that irony? Greg's father felt guilty about the minivan and his son serving time, so he was paying him to do the work. I guess his dad doesn't know why we were driving out in the middle of nowhere. Luke just knew that Greg would have the cash, he didn't ask he just knew. We pulled up to see Greg talking with a girl with blue hair and piercings on her face connected by chains. Luke asked, "*where does he find them?*" Greg had this weird pull attracting every pierced, dyed and in some cases goth girl in a hundred miles.

Greg told us how instead of his usual trash detail he was put underneath Candie and they worked on a special project. His emphasis on "underneath" and "worked" made it sound like they did something more than work. Luke asked, "*she looks like she's twenty-something, does she know you're seventeen?*" Greg said, "*Candie is twenty-two, and she didn't care.*" Knowing what I know about Greg, I would bet that she also didn't touch him. Luke asked Greg, "*what about Jorden?*" I asked, "*do you mean Jessica?*" Luke said, "*no it was Jorden, how do you not her name?, You saw her naked?*" I knew her name I also knew that my calling her Jessica pissed Greg off except it didn't. Greg stopped smiling and said, "*she just saw me as a stick to poke things, and when she was done she tried to break me.*" Luke just said, "*harsh.*" Then without a beat or thought he asked, "*is she still single?*" Nice. Luke finally asked if he had the cash and Greg did have the money.

Luke said he knew a guy that ran a liquor store and he would sell us something top shelf for a price. This sounded like the whole pot thing all over again, but what else did I have to do tonight. I drove to the store and around to the back. After a call, a short, pudgy man with a comb-over came out with a bottle of an amber liquid. It was clear that the booze was cheap even from where we were parked. Greg gave him the cash, and we were off. Luke used his phone and looked up the brand only to find out it was a twelve-dollar bottle of whiskey and rated as one of the worst sold. We pulled into a park that no one ever goes to and opened the nasty smelling stuff. I looked at the small cup of poison then down the hill where Jennifer, and I drove her car by accident. I sipped it and immediately regretted it. The booze had this gas taste and made my tongue feel furry. I looked over and saw Luke drinking from the bottle. He pulled the bottle away and spit it out. He handed the bottle over to Greg who wisely knew not to take a drink.

Luke wanted that movie television moment where three friends drink and lament on life, but in reality, those moments are scripted and unauthentic. He is one of these people that thinks life should imitate art. Considering all that has happened I don't think I would want to be in the movie my life is shaping out to be. American Pie meets Superbad with a hint of Dumb and Dumber. Jennifer and I had sex in the back of a car. It was nice for me and awkward, but I don't think she liked both it and how it happened. We didn't speak or text for a while, and the last time I saw her, well let's not go back there again. I guess trying to find myself in someone else, or a bottle won't do anything but focus my life on other people rather than myself, blah, blah self-actualization mumbo jumbo crap, blah. Sitting in my room listening to old toons playing with myself isn't a life either.

I got home to find a note from my parents saying they were going to a concert and won't be back until tomorrow. The little tiny bit of booze I drank was making me sick, but I was home alone so pizza. I sat down to order and heard a noise in the house. I grabbed a fake rifle off the wall and went after the sound. On the door to my room was a bright pink sock. I put the reproduction of a world-war-two rifle down and went into the room to find more clothing. Lying in my bed with just a pillow in front of her was Jennifer. She said, "*I was sitting at home listening to Pink Floyd wondering why I was doing this to us. I didn't know what to expect from*

sex, and it wasn't what other people said it should be. I didn't know how to handle it and how real things became until I walked away." I said, "*I don't know.*" Yeah, I know real commitment to my new attitude. She said, "*you don't have to know, this can be us getting back together as in makeup sex, or it could be breakup sex. You could also say get the fuck out, and I would understand.*" She put the pillow down and walked over and kissed me. What can I say, I'm weak. I undressed, and we made love for the first time. It was so different from the car sex that it deserves such a brand. We spent the rest of the night eating pizza and making love. In the morning, she went home, and I was alone more confused than ever.