

# Stick It Up Your Arse

## Michael Botur

The cup rattled on the plate as I stepped onto his grimy carpet and kicked the door closed behind me. It was seriously warm inside that cloudy smokehouse compared to the outside, where the soft snowflakes bit my cheeks. The deal was that I had to pour pints in the pub by night and make beds in the guest rooms upstairs by day, plus this extra job which was taking care of the old dried up carcass dude that owned the hotel. No one had seen him leave his office in years, bro.

‘That my tea?’ Dicky Mint went, instead of ‘Good Morning’ or something friendly. I was wanting to tell Dicky Mint to stick his job up his arse and get home before Saints day, see my girl and get a fresh coat of cock-paint. Bringing cups of tea like a fag waiter was a sucky way to get the Benjamins, but at least it got me out of pouring perfect pints of that Guinness shit. Like a glassful of diarrhea, honestly.

‘Yup, can I put your tea... Here?’ There was no room on his sagging old desk. That printer of his truly was the size of a heavy microwave oven, with two mouths tonguing paper onto the floor. Stacked against the wall were these older printers, I couldn’t tell how many, with a few reams of dot matrix paper, and framed stock market certificates showing his membership of trading clubs and certificates for each pound of gold and silver he’d invested in. I didn’t know what language them ones were written in. Tracy had told me the gold and silver bars were hidden in “a certain part of his anatomy,” to quote the fat simpleton. Too fucking polite, that lady. Did you know she got all upset because they wouldn’t let her put a \$5.99 Thomas the Tank

Engine toy on layby? Broke-arse ho. I wouldn't root her if you paid me.

I put his Dicky Mint's tea on top of a box of his extra-extra-long cigarettes from one of those Mediterranean kingdoms. It was sad to let the cuppa go – it'd been keeping my frozen fingers red. He extracted a smoke, had difficulty unwrapping it with his shaky 5000 year old twing-fingers. I lit it for him with a golden Zippo that I pulled out of the pocket on his dressing gown, noticing how thin and pink and bony his chest was, with white fur like a lab mouse, and his hips and wrists, man, they were way nobbler than a normal person. There were photos of him on the walls of the pub back when he had a beard and a belly and looked like he could win a fight, and there were still streets and meadows named after Dicky Mint, keepin' his reputation alive, but if I took a Instagram of him now, people wouldn't believe it was him, they'd think it was an albino praying mantis.

The cigarette in his other hand was not even halfway burned. When I dragged an ashtray under his jaw, I noticed some bank notes under the ashtray. He clawed at the notes, thrust them out at me like they were junk mail. He wouldn't take his eyes off the computer screen in front of him. It was a big as a television, ancient and curved and patchy, and it showed moving graphs. His computer tower was dated, too, old and faded as the screeds of shitty paper. He kept pressing F5 and monitoring a line graph which crawled across the screen like a child scribbling on the wall. Windows kept popping up.

'They're absolute nincompoops in Paris,' he wheezed, and his peeling lips let loose some white smoke, 'D'you have any idea how irrational their speculation is, Brett? It *IS* Brett, correct?'

I let the fuck-up with my name slide. On the streets,

he'd be a dead man for callin' me something that dorky.

'Are you aware they're out of their heads, Bretty? Still shell-shocked from Uncle Adolf, one'd think.'

'Shot for this,' I said shoving the notes deep into my pocket, mumbling '*Rich old cocksucker.*' He didn't hear shit.

Old wanker hadn't even turned away from his screen for one second. He'd only owed me fifty. I figured he owed me because... well, just because I'm a legend and everyone needs to respect that.

I wondered which of his stacks of stock market print-outs was going to topple over first. He had spare monitors under his desk – with gold bars stashed in them? I reckoned so. The windows were all black and sparkling and outside the smog and ice crystals bit your nose, but here was Richard Hargreaves, Mr Dicky Mint the Banker, feet warm-as in slippers and a dressing gown thick with his own sweat. He looked like a pink saveloy in white bread, bro... A *mouldy* pink saveloy, if you count the white hairs all over him.

'What else are you wanting?' No matter how often he spoke, his voice always sounded like a car starting on a cold day.

I was eyeing up his ciggies. Smokes ain't cheap. 'Want me to take this out?' I went, rattling some paper box I picked up from behind a dying old dog that looked like a used mop. 'Old print-outs, it looks like?' There mighta been some gold he'd forgotten about in the bottom of the box.

'Incinerate the lot. Nothing but trouble.'

'I should probly bring in your dinner, if that fatarse hasn't scoffed it.'

'If you must.'

Tracy always gave the old fuck a smaller portion of that weird fluffy pudding bullshit that goes with sausages in

England. She'd been keeping an eye on Dicky Mint's plates and he was hardly touching nothing, he fed his lungs and let the rest of himself go without. I trudged through the grey snow-sludge that carpeted the parking lot, got his dinner out of the oven and trudged back, eating three of his four sausages as tax for the effort. They were rubbish anyway, I was doing him a favour.

'Tracy didn't give you much sausages, sorry,' I went, setting the plate down at his elbow.

He surprised me by fully spinning the chair and, using my shoulder to support himself, he stood and sized me up, leaking carbon monoxide on me, turning my face yellow. His eyes looked like used teabags.

'Have I paid you, son? I can't leave you with nothing.' He wobbled and rested his weight on the vast computer monitor, fetching an ice cream pottle which he pushed into my palms and closed my fingers around.

I locked myself in a toilet stall and played Minecraft on my phone til my shift ended, but not before I counted about two hundy worth of coins in there. Hooray for Alzheimer's, bro.

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I rolled out of bed, hit the carpet, scraping my knees, and fished inside the hole in my mattress and groped until I found that sweet, slightly soft, papery texture. I turned the notes queen-up and gave the HRH a kiss on each one. The notes were a different texture to the plane tickets and passport and all that back-to-reality shit stashed with the money. My hundy notes were safe, all sixty of them. I loved how they got warm when I slept on them for long enough. I was never gonna spend 'em, I knew the serial numbers and everything, they had little personalities, my hundies did, they were like pets.

I done my pimp-strut down to the train station in case

any little shepherd honeys were watchin and I scored a free ride to the big city by telling the ticket-dick I was on a workin holiday and I'd got mugged and lost everything and I had to get to the embassy, while secretly in my pocket I was clutching this wad Dicky Mint had given me to get him some more of them crazy smokes from the Vatican or wherever. The man owned the train and the tracks from here to the city, I'd heard. The train was like a plough and pushing snow off the tracks, heaping it up along the hedges crowding the tracks. The big trees got small and the fields became backyards with greenhouses and then the white flanks of the mall took over the sky.

Tracy had me livin' in a caravan, see; she was technically 2IC under Dicky Mint, but she didn't push it. I didn't think the free meals and accommodation on top of my salary was good enough, so I was in the habit of putting my magnet fingers in Tracy's handbag while she was in the kitchen. She'd think her chubby ginger twins'd done it. Hopefully she'd beat them to death and do the world a favour.

Soon enough that was mostly all I was doing around the hotel, all snowed in and wearing two layers of hoodies, I'd take Dicky Mint's money in exchange for cups of tea and ciggy missions to the city, and make the odd bed and pour the odd pint if Tracy got all up in my face. I'd give the old fuck a cuppa; he'd give me a tenner. I'd chuck out a box of transaction records and find a blank chequebook at the bottom of it. I'd open some cigarillos for him, he'd tuck a hundy into my pocket. C.R.E.A.M., son, C.R.E.A.M. The months started to move quick as clouds on a windy day. I sent the odd international text to that li'l honey I was tapping back home, the one I'd given the engagement ring to so she'd swallow, told her I'd be bringin' back mad stacks and it kept her moist.

Weird shit seemed to be happening while I slept or worked through the winter months, though— someone was emptying the fridge, and leaving the toilet and shower unscrubbed, and little hairs in the sink and that, plus white hairs were on my bed and in the sink: Dicky Mint had been spying on me, I could tell. He'd owe me big time, now. *Big time.*

After I came back from town and got off the train, I walked through the puddles on the platform (no roof on the station, bro, Dicky Mint reckoned that was a luxury, wouldn't pay for one) and I taxed Mr Mint's change and started heading back to the hotel to get my wank on. I stopped to take a piss against his maroon Jaguar, parked on the road, right on the outiest part of the bend, squeezing traffic into a one-vehicle space so that everyone had to brake as they drove past. Dicky Mint hadn't driven the thing in ten years, but he wouldn't give it to anyone, not even his son, one of those missing dudes in the framed news reports stuck on the pub wall. I'd probably disappear too if my dad was that much of a tightwad (I'd take a chequebook when I went, though.) Tracy still prays for Dick Jr, but she's a head-case. If she even tried to pray for me, I'd tell her to stick her prayer up her arse.

I pushed the crusty, frosty door in and kicked the snow off my toes and rattled the box of smokes, like catnip. He didn't turn his head. I slid the box onto his lap. He slid it onto his desk. I piled the change in front of him but he shoved it off the desk and scribbled the mouse over where he'd knocked the money off. It was pretty weird – I'd given him most of his change back (taxed, of course) and he didn't even want it, even though it was like half a week's wages. He was seriously losing it – you should've seen the brick of Euros he'd tried to chuck out. I saved that one for him.

I figured it was about time the old bastard carked it so I stumbled through the slush and into the pub in my jammies and dressing gown, comfy as a pimp. I loved the pub, yo, the baskets of sharp, heavy chips that burned your fingers, the sloppy mugs of soup, the fire full of snapping pinecones, the old timers with long chin hairs and black teeth who would tell you stories about King Richard's curse and the gold stashed up the boss's buttohole, all that jazz. I loved the sting you got when you pulled your wet gloves off with your teeth and roasted your white, bloodless hands over the flames until they stung. I loved the smell of Tracy scrubbing the urinals for me. I loved how splashes of bleach would turn her carrot hair yellow and leave white splotches on her forearms. This big hunting party was in the foyer, shivering and waiting for some Asians to clear off their table so they could get stuck into some roasted bird. One sucky thing though was you could see your breath if you weren't close to the fire, because Dicky Mint had the flue rigged to divert the majority of the heat into his office.

I got this huge sobbing rant from Tracy 'bout how worried about me she was, that I looked white as a ghost in a sheet, worried a bear had gotten me or some shit, and I just worked on a bag of chips while she had her big fuss in front of these three customers she was serving simultaneously, but I had a thousy burning a hole in my pocket so everything she whinged about didn't even bug me. I wouldn't need that bitch's handbag any more soon, not if Dicky Mint kept paying out. It was honestly hard to hold all the cash he pushed on me sometimes. She asked me when the Lions Club man had been in to empty the donation box, 'cause it was empty and it was only halfway through the month, and she was sure it'd had a few coins in it last week, but I didn't even answer her little Pommie

Inquisition, I told her to ask her ginger twins wassup if it was empty, then I said I needed to take a shit and went to the bog and sat there playing Bejewelled while Tracy squirted polish on the tables and wages dripped into my account. I wondered how many hours I should put on my time sheet for that week. From now on it'd be ciggy runs, cups of tea, dumping old stock reports, burning the secret print-outs, taking the garbage out, walking his dying dog, that sort of shit. Actually, maybe I could buy a fresh visa, extend my stay, bleed the old prick dry, yeah, yeah what sort of a person would jump off the gravy train just to get home to a pre-used pussy?

On my way out of the hotel, I took a detour into the chicks' toilets and removed the toilet paper from the stalls. Tracy would hopefully lose her job if customers went psycho-enough about it. That'd serve Tracy right for being all concerned about everybody all the time.

On my way back to the caravan, fingering my pipe in my pocket, already smelling the sweet stinky smoke, I bumped into Tweedle Dumbass and Tweedle D-bag, that's what I call Tracy's brats. They were struggling to bring out all the chip baskets and Beef Wellingtons, sweating and sucking their burned thumbs. I told them to hurry the hell up, their mum needed them, and that I'd be counting the chips later to make sure they ain't stolen none.

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The stars were white stones frozen in an indigo pond. Chimneys funneled grey balls into the blackness. Everyone in the village would be huddled around their fireplace. I thought about hiding those bars of gold on my body and I shivered. Gold glows, it's warm if you put your hands on it and treat it right. I pulled on my boots and gloves and went out earning.

Dicky Mint said to take boxes of reports to the furnace



down the very rear of his office. The major markets he followed online were closed between 4pm and 11pm, and there was nothing he could do to hurry the world up. He had a pillowcase full of ruffled bank notes and he was keeping only the undamaged, newish notes; the used notes, he slid off his desk onto the floor.

‘Take these and make yourself scarce,’ he went, and pushed into my hand the collection of dirty notes. These were notes I’d only ever seen on movies, tall amounts with loads of zeroes.

‘No sweat, I’ll tape ‘em up and—’

‘Don’t. Toss them.’

He had to be taking the piss, but I looked round and there was just his mutt snoring on an old coat and white windows and smoky blackness outside.

‘You serious?’

He creaked the chair towards me. His eyes were dirty white cue balls and the skin around them was purple-brown, but his cheeks were looking pretty tight and his wobbly throat-curtains were almost gone. ‘Presumably I owe you for helping out last week?’ He pulled some funny-coloured notes out of his waistband. Probably some foreign shit. I knew there was a catch.

‘Yup,’ I stammered, ‘It’s okay though if—’

‘Ere.’ He picked up a heavy bag of coins from under his desk and dumped it into my arms. I was left holding coins and notes as well as several times my normal pay packet – Oh my God – probably ten thou or more. I looked for a place to put the money down, but I couldn’t let it go. I couldn’t return to home with nothing to show my baby mama.

‘Got any gold?’

‘A SWEET TOOTH FOR THE CARAMEL METAL!’ He coughed until he got a few red snotty drops

on his hand. I woulda patted him on the back, but I was hoping he'd cough himself to death and I could put a pen in his hand and force him to write my name on his will on his way out. He reached into his jingling pocket, pulled a fistful of copper coins out and biffed them at me.

'Light me up, would you. Attaboy.' He coughed again and blood and spit went all over his knee and I scooped the coins into my jacket and rolled it up. Then I heaved a lump of old market reports, printed on that old joined paper with the frills, into the far corner of the office, opened the furnace and pushed it all in... well, most of it. There were a few sheets with bank account numbers that it would have been a crime to *not* take.

I woke up later, electric shocks running through my blood.

How long had I been out for? Dicky Mint hadn't moved. I heard thunder, and something began to tap on the roof. His head was on the desk and he was snoring but his finger was holding down F5. He didn't have a clue I'd woken up. The market wouldn't be open for another 3:58. I sat behind him and waited for him to wake up and acknowledge me, tapping my foot on his dog. I thought about how his life could have become like this. If his son was around, would Dick Junior have him in an old people's home, drinking his meals and popping pills from a blister pack, rockin' out to Neil Diamond?

It was hard waking up, trying to remember, well, you know those real massive sleeps you have when you go into the abyss and when you resurface, you have to recollect your childhood and your address and how you got here? My fingers were locked like tetanus around a ten-thousand wad I'd found buried under dust bunnies, and I had to pull my sore cramped digits off one by one. My neck hurt from

resting on a ream of printer paper. Dicky Mint was out for the count. What if that fat bitch Tracy burst in and got all nosy?

‘You’d better not be dead, old man,’ I went, reaching down inside his pyjama top and fishing out a book of cheques. I noticed that his chest hairs had turned black, and it scared me – musta been a symptom of rigor mantis, that thing that happens to you when you die and get all stiff. It was almost impossible to tip him out of the chair, pull his pants down and reach on into that filthy cavity, but I slowly tugged and his pink muscle let go of a beautiful gold bar which came out with a sucking, slurping sound.

His mouth gasped and he began coughing, and hugged his knees and rolled around on the carpet. He didn’t snap in half like I thought he was gonna. His spit was the colour of blackcurrants: the mummy had come to life. His dog whimpered. I told it to Fuck Up.

‘HURRY UP AND F5!’ I yelled, making his wispy white hair rustle, ‘YOU’RE MISSING THE MARKET!’

I guided his shaky finger onto the button and made him press it. While he was busy with that, I went around the study stuffing a rubbish sack with bonds, notes, ivory, rings, paintings, what have you, and left it by the door. A candelabra, too, like Liberace, bro.

While he tried to steady himself against the desk chair and get to his knees, I tried to pick the exact liver spot to crack his skull open like an ostrich egg, and I was trying to decide whether to use the old steel printer cartridge when he shunted his chair aside and handed me a gold bar. Where had it come from? Who cared.

‘You get one more chance,’ I growled into his ear, pressing his stiff limbs into the chair and pulling up another one. Really, I needed the prick to teach me how to work the markets before I bopped his noggin in.

We hurled ourselves into the glowing green market, and his hand nibbled my thigh with excitement, and I kept patting his hand. Okay, so a few bucks bought him a little bit of time and I chilled and just learned about the markets. We were buccaneers, yo, rogue traders. I was starting to feel exhausted, but it was sweet to see the old fuck's heart start beating again.

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I put a good couple grand on a bar tab under Dicky Mint's name. Tracy's ginger ninjas worked the counter while she caught up on cleaning the rooms and kitchen. I hadn't been able to help out with that shit since my apprenticeship had begun. Tracy couldn't afford no babysitter for them little gingers. She was all worked up and blubbering, saying someone had nicked the babysitting cash from her handbag. 'There's thieves about,' I warned her. I shoved a bar rag at her and Tracy kept blowing her nose and sobbing, 'You don't have to do that, you needn't trouble yourself, Sir, you need your rest, sir.' She seemed to enjoy working her butt off, so I figured why not let her? Besides, she was talking to me with a newfound respect, so I was gonna make the most of this *Sir* shit. I liked it plenty.

Really, what she should've been upset about (apart from the collagen swaying under her arms like seaweed) was how shittily her twins poured pints. I've never seen more beer wasted. And they needed to stand on a chair to reach the beer taps. Amateurs, bro, total amateurs.

I got the odd peck on the cheek from some farmers' daughters and their boyfriends didn't do shit about it. They actually laughed. Word musta got around about my reputation back home. It woulda been partly because I was buying, but I could also taste this attitude like I wasn't a threat. My leg was sore and I had a bit of a limp. They all kept calling me Old Boy and it was nice to be welcomed

like that but it got a bit aggravating. I was glad I'd come in my dressing gown and hadn't dressed up. If I had pants on, it would have been even harder to hold my gold inside me, and don't even ask how hard it was to sit down. I couldn't wait to strut around back home like this, make my bitch suck my cock at a moment's notice, like a fire drill: stop, drop and ho.

There was some young prick with masses of black hair cutting through the crowd, and I wasn't too impressed with him trying to get in on my bar tab so I told the twins not to serve him. They were trying to do their homework at the same time as pouring, like looking down and trying to write something in pencil while they filled glasses as big as their arms. I told all the locals I was leaving soon and that this was my shout and I'd miss them all, there was six figures in my mattress now and I just needed a bit more gold before I got going, but they were havin' a hard time understanding me, and it was hard for me to talk, to be honest. Maybe the beers the child had poured me had had a nip of whiskey in 'em, but I was drooling and my tongue had swelled up too large for my mouth and all of a sudden, I was weary as shit, and cold, too. Needed me a warm glowing monitor and a pack of endless smokes.

When everyone had gone home and Tracy was locking up, I downed one last beer and went to get a little payment for all the overtime I'd been doing. His head was trapped in the monitor's beam, again, didn't even see me burst in, scaring his dog. I hauled him off the chair, bopped his head against the wall and let his thin, light, raggedy body crumple on the floor like a poster fallen off a wall. He'd managed to grab himself a ballpoint pen which could have cut me. Enraged, defending myself, I yanked the mirror out of his hands and propped it against the computer screen. You could see this white-haired old fuck in the mirror. Dicky

Mint was still logged in on his comp and I could see the numbers ticking up in a green box in the bottom right corner of the screen – this cunt was pulling in about eight hundred an hour, doing nothing at all, just playing the market, clicking the right buttons, consolidating, divesting, futures, spot trading. I punched in my details and transferred all twelve of his bank accounts into a single one with the account details I'd found on that bit of paper he was gonna chuck. I was doing everyone a favour.

I played the markets all night until my eyes burned. I knew that the hardness under my arse were my future, compressed. When the windows turned from black to blue to orange and I found myself yawning and sipping cold tea, I programmed a safe line of bids, kicked back and lit up a cigarillo. Dicky Mint's arms and legs were a bit stiff but I pulled them out of his robe and pants. I switched clothes with him and folded his body into one of those big boxes that holds ten smaller boxes of paper.

I was lining it up in front of the incinerator when a knock at the door made me shit myself, just about.

'Y'a'right in there, Sir?'

Ta for the Sir, Trace, but she should've been able to see through the window I was busy at work. I found myself too weak to yell at her to fuck off. Too much trading, too many late nights and ciggies. She got one of her gingerlings to finally reach in through a window and unlock the door and Tracy waddled in after, going, 'Mr Hargreaves, Mr Hargreaves, dear, come and say ta-ta – the young lad's off, the foreign boy who cleans your office.'

I didn't know who she was on about. I stumbled out of the chair. My knees screamed –pins and needles? – and I had to limp and then rest my frame against Tracy's busy blubber, and there was something about the way she didn't hold me up too well that made me think, You sneaky

whore: you've known all along.

At the train station platform, as I fell out of Tracy's van, shivering, my skin stinging in the cold, I could see him standing inside the train, thumbing a passport with a green sticker which he pressed against the glass as he disappeared. In the carriage windows, I could see a wrinkled face. The train filed past me and I opened my mouth to scream something as Dicky Mint's train pulled away, and my arse was getting real sore.

