



The Battle of Las Iguanas:

Saturday August 31st, 2024

Rejection leads to attack on local restaurant chain.

I was doing very much what I usually do on this most prestigious day of the lord. It was not of course a day of rest, that is very much Sunday as we all know, but it was however a day that followed a usual heavy night of drinking rum whilst sat at my typewriter until the early hours. Drifting in and out of a restless sleep this mid-morning, I can't shake that I am gripped with an alcohol induced amnesia as to what I was even working on before I had to give into the grains of the sandman. I hope it was something important, or at least something that is worth writing about and above all, will get me paid. Money is seriously drying up. It could be the copious amounts of drink, orders of paper as well as the regular 5 books that get delivered daily. I've recently discovered just how cheap you can get books second-hand online. The issue of course is that although a book individually may be priced at a resale of between £2-£4, you can easily push a prospective bargain too far. Once your basket is full of all these bargains, the capital soon adds up.

Regardless of what it was I had been frantically scribing, I have removed those papers and laid them down in one of the many paper holders that are scattered around my office. A sort of den of organised chaos where although you can't see much of any surface within, I know exactly what is where, how important it is and if I'll bother to finish it later. There are many stories I have started with scrawled notepads, full of obsessive ramblings on topics and events that at some point I am sure will become relevant. Cassettes strewn about, some slightly unwound, needing the aid of a pencil to set them right. It's important to note here that keeping everything is

one of the 7 rules of Gonzo journalism, and I intend to stick to these rules vehemently. Not that I am one for rules of course. I am far more of an anarchist than most would assume although with how isolated I've become working on these stories; I doubt anyone assumes anything about me anymore. however, I do hold a respect for law & order when it is correctly placed. That's why I like to work with law enforcement where I can. If I uncover a tale in the very underbelly of a corrupt or criminal enterprise, I'll spill the beans on it in the papers I freelance for, whilst tipping off one of my Police Informants who will get a solid boost to his arrest record, whilst I get the scoop.

Yes, you read that correctly, a Police Informant. They do exist, contrary to popular belief or to the fact that most professional journalists would call them a source or contact. This police officer, however, will give me tip offs if a crime has occurred, but is not yet responded to, or acted upon. I am not sure why this would surprise anyone, as there are many corrupt police officers that exist in this world. Those that will take a bribe under the table to let slide a petty crime, so that they can feel a part of the action. A lot of the police officers you'll meet will tell you they are all for upholding his majesties laws, but secretly, they go home and watch criminal documentaries or Scorse movies, dreaming about being daring enough to be on the other side of the badge. This police informant however is a straight shooter, a real John Wayne type who fancies himself the answer to all the cities criminal injustices. His corruption is in that he'll drop me lines of information on potential leads that I can write a piece on, whilst I slip him information when I am doing an undercover piece - such as my time spent with the far-right activists. To fool those so-called "patriots" into giving me key information on how they move, organise and spread hate... I write the story, make them feel someone cares, before this lawful associate of mine slaps the cuff on them and no one gets hurt. It's a lucrative model and we're both quite proud of it.

The phone rings. I lean over to answer it and as I usually do, I bang my head on the corner of the windowsill. A searing pain crashes through my head, reigniting the cinders of the rum stoked fires that had been ripping through my skull the night before.

"Fuck!" I scream as I put my left hand up to the space above my left eye.

"This fucking set up man... I need to move this damn bed to the corner or something".

My bed was positioned in the master bedroom of my 3 bedroomed house. It was a large room with ample space, however on the rear wall, it had 2 small windows and the placement of my super king bed just seemed to fit perfectly in-between them both. It's quite a picturesque set up. The type of layout that you'd find in *Good Housekeeping*. Much like many other pristine images you see in a magazine however, its functionality wasn't as its appearance would have you believe and routinely due to my short charger lead for my phone, leading it to rest directly under my windowsill, it then causes me to move from the pillow, straight to the earpiece and headbutt my windowsill - why I don't just unplug it and bring it to my ear, I'll never know.

"Great, now I have to start my day with two kinds of fucking headaches".

I look down at the screen on my phone through blurred vision to see that it's just gone 1100, and that Bobby - not his real name of course. Our lucrative business relies solely on secrecy - is the one calling. I answer excitedly as I knew that a call like this, always means a new story for me to spin and sell to the papers. Easy money.

"Bobby... what's up? Don't you realise how fucking early in the morning it is?" I answer and say jokingly, but he knows full well I mean it - it's 1032...

"... and a good afternoon to you too SP... figured it's never too early for you if I have a weird one..." he chuckles.

"A weird one? You know I am always up for those. But it better be the kind of weird that gets me published this week... I'm in a real bind here Bobby" I say.

"Oh, trust me... it's going to get you published. Think it's already on social media though... damn things gone viral..." Bobby laughs again. Whatever this story is, the event has seriously tickled him. Bobby isn't the most humorous of individuals at the best of times. Too many years on the force, he's seen some real fucked up shit. In fact, it's kind of how we started bonding originally in a bar many moons ago. I was

sat telling the bar maid she should do a Combat Veteran's discount, to which her response was to ask what I had in mind, so I pulled an entire bottle of *Jack Daniel's* from the bar, opened it and started chugging. She of course was not impressed, neither was the chap sitting drinking alone next to me, who immediately announced himself as a police officer. That was all it took for us to get acquainted. He saw the pain I must have been in on that cold night in November, so he offered to pay for the bottle if he got to share it with me. We swapped all manner of depraved and shocking stories of our equal wars fought on different battlefields.

"Well shit... what's it trending as... what's the Hashimoto or whatever?" I asked.

"The Hashtag you mean?" he asked in response.

"Yeah, sure...*hic* that, same damn thing... you know I am useless at this social media thing... *hic* too old for it..." I belch in between these words, tasting the *Dead Man's Finger* that's desperate to make itself known again.

"Fuck off SP... I'm older than you are... just get on X or *Instagram*, hell even *Facebook* and just search #TheBattleofLasIguanas" he directs me, but I must get him to spell the last part as I kept typing *Los Iguanass* which amused my childlike brain to no end. I figured this spelling was more in line with that of potentially a strip club I hadn't heard of, that had a brunch set going. No idea why I thought this, it's just that so far none of this sounded weird enough for me. Okay... that was an excuse, I was clearly struggling to type this morning. I've never been good with smart phones. I appreciate that the buttons expand as you press them, but my aim is always off, leading me to mistype and having to immediately edit every message I send once I see that the autocorrect has had its way. I also find that smart phones don't correct grammar errors at all, so a lot of the time my texts make it look like I am always on the sauce.

Finally, I get the spelling correct and see videos, tons of them... some are quite well filmed, whilst others are not. The post I found with the best quality video, that was close and almost all in focus, had this statement:

"Bonfire night came early at Las Iguanas thanks to this legend" this is proceeded with a fireworks emoji and flexed strong arm.

The video that then proceeds this statement, plays out showing a medium built man wearing a woodland camouflaged trapper hat, long green parker jacket which is worn open and within he has a black top that looks like overpriced metal merch (I can't make out the band name, just that it has bright orange insignia with some white artwork that is out of focus to distinguish what it is... I've been a metalhead for years, so much so I can spot a band shirt a mile away... sometimes even know who it is because I own the exact same top... another of my collections that went too far...). For trousers he wore jungle camouflage combats that sit neatly and professionally above a pair of patterned black boots with red accents. The heading of the video isn't wrong, this individual is holding what looks like grey plastic tubing that's been lashed together in a cylindrical shape, with one tube in the middle with more forming a circle around this, and outwards of about 3 rows of piping looking like a round honeycomb pattern. Out of the cobble together amateur bazooka of sorts held under his right arm curving round to the bottom of it, whilst the left hand supports the front, are multiple firework rockets, screaming out towards what I can only assume is the restaurant mentioned... *Las Iguanas*. On the floor in front of him, catherine wheels are billowing out bursts of flame as they spin out of control all over the footway as they knock over the launchers that are positioned either side, sending spray of coloured burst in multiple directions across the footway. The sound is deafening, with screeches, pops and bangs accompanying the flashing white lights. The display is chaotic and frenetic... pure carnage and as the video ends after only around 45 seconds, it's clear the cameraman had to get out of the way of the onslaught, coughing ferociously as the screen was now engulfed in thick white smoke. It's correct to note at this point, the individual holding the makeshift rocket launcher had the bright angelic face of a child, laughing maniacally, albeit he looks to be in his mid-30's and has quite the beard on him... it's even longer than mine. Either way, this person although carrying out what many may seem like some form of hilarious terrorist attack, was simply there to have fun at the expense of others. This was pure anti-social behaviour in action... oddly you could see from the rest of

the posts that featured some poorly taken photos or videos, that people were applauding him as some kind of anti-hero... but why...

"Holy shit... what the fuck is going on!" I shout with glee... "This story is going to be a hoot, what happened next? Have you got him in custody?" I ask.

"No, he's not in custody or under arrest, but he's still here... I've confiscated the equipment, and all the fireworks are gone. He's just sat on this bench with me..." Bobby said.

I couldn't believe that this level of out-there behaviour had not warranted Bobby to arrest and take him to the station.

"Surely, you must have charged him with something?" I ask.

"Well yeah... I've written him up and given him a public disorder ticket he's gotta pay, but he was calm, didn't resist arrest and got it all under control when I arrived..." he says, but I have the feeling there is more... so I press him. "Come on... what else is there about this?"

"Well..." Bobby starts, "it turns out the people in the restaurant are his friends... and they're still here, just enjoying brunch like nothing ever happened..." I can almost hear his lips smirking at the notion of the ridiculousness of this whole event.

"What the fuck? They know him... then shit, why aren't the pressing charges?" I ask, shocked at this whole thing. I've acted out in several anti-social ways in the past in less public places and had to spend time in the constabulary of up to 12 hours... I never had any charges pressed against me, but then I was just blowing up gas canisters in a field for fun with a shotgun we had found in the farmhouse shed of some family friends, who we were staying with on holiday. I suppose the shotgun was licensed and owned by the farmer, but the display of the recklessness of explosives is what got me inside to cool down I suppose, that and I was clearly over the limit so I guess being in a cold cell for that amount of time in the west country will sober anyone up whilst also putting the locals at ease once they see the explosions and gunfire have ceased.

"They say that they 'did a bad thing' and that they accept this..."

What the fuck is Bobby on about?! They did a bad thing? So, the response to this, is some maddened lunatic creating a '*my first rocket launcher*', to rain hellfire on them in the middle of the restaurant district?

"Can you get him to wait around? I'll be about 15 minutes..." I ask Bobby, already out of bed and chucking on some cargo shorts and a Hawaiian shirt.

"Oi... you live about 30 minutes away..." Bobby cajoles me...

"Well shit, of course but if I put on some hard music and put my foot down, I can halve it..." I explain.

"You mean speed?" definitely detecting the mother in his voice now...

"Well sure, what traps are out today?".

"None" he says... "but that doesn't mean..." he begins before I cut him off.

"Damn it man, we're running out of time... you say the others are still eating in the restaurant?" I scream this question at him, not sure if he can hear me as at this point, I am holding the phone between my head and shoulder, creating a nasty crick in my neck. I never enjoyed hands free or speaker phone. I like to live uncomfortably, making every movement an uphill battle so I can feel some form of martyrdom over doing something basic. Besides, if I put the phone on the side, there is even more chance of him hearing me pouring and mixing up a Bloody Mary for breakfast... I know he can't see it, but he knows what I am like... I couldn't help it though, this hangover is a killer and there is nothing like a hair of the dog... besides, breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and tomato juice is nutritious.

"Yeah, they're still there... looks like it's a bottomless brunch though so they could be there a while... Las Iguanas does good deals... you ever been?" what is it with this guy... calls me up telling me to get down for a story, then doesn't let me get off the goddam phone!

"Enough Bobby... no, I haven't, but I'll buy you something when I get down there... I'll see you in 10..."

"Sure, this guy says he's up for meeting with you and telling you the story... I reckon he'll wait, but not for long..."

I hit the hang up button and slam my phone down on the side.

This is a perfect opportunity on a Saturday morning, one that can't be wasted. I break off a stick of devil's food - celery that is... this stuff is disgusting and very much is the only food I will never eat, but damn it, this Bloody Mary has to be stirred somehow and the slight bitterness it adds to it, does elevate this divine concoction of vodka, tomato juice, lemon juice, *Worcestershire sauce* and *Tabasco* with a helping of cracked black pepper and a pinch of salt.

I neck it down in one swift gulp, bung some dog food into the bowl and pet my Maltese fluff ball Lola on the head before I head out. Before I head off of course, I realise I've left my tape recorder in my office... Ho Ho! I can't be missing that... any journalist worth their salt knows that they can't be caught interviewing without one, despite the style they are writing, a note pad will never be enough... I head back to my office to rummage around, before finding it and slamming everything into my convertible.

I arrive in town about 12 minutes after I put the phone down on Bobby. He was right, I really did live 30 minutes away, but unpopular to him I knew the best routes to take to avoid patrols, speed cameras and any residential routes that would make me feel genuinely awful for mowing down a kid running after their ball, whilst possibly over the limit and going about 32mph over... but time waits for no man and neither do good journalistic opportunities like this. I park up behind one of the business blocks, in a bay that says, "Employees Only". The trick here of course is that I at this spot, cannot see any business insignia or signage stating which business you would have to be employed by to park here... so, I move into a state of ignorance and also comfort myself with the altruistic knowledge, that I am here for a story, ergo I am here to work... a journalist in fact, working in this very location in circumference to this very spot, so I am an employee of this fair city. Therefore, I get to use employee parking, besides, this spot here is behind the retail district of the high street, so you know full well the likelihood is this is reserved for those managerial types who do absolutely no fucking work, sleaze all over the young girls that work for them, whilst hiding out back the moment a customer starts to

use a matter of fact tone... no... fuck that prick, he can park somewhere else today.

I come round the corner to the off-street footway that goes into the shopping centre, and to the left is where all the newest and flashiest restaurants line a railing overlooking a water fountained courtyard, that is built into the old walls of this port city. Round the corner, the walkway goes into a more indoor area with more places to eat and a cinema and bowling alley. It was built not too long ago and has really been up and coming. It's the sort of place where people go to feel safe, spend their hard-earned cash and enjoy overly priced dinners that are most likely zapped in the most expensive of microwaves. Ping!

I see Bobby sat with my interviewee. As I approach, I can still smell the gunpowder and observe littered across the floor are empty casings from the fireworks that were blasted at the restaurant. Looking at *Las Iguanas*, I can see that there are scorch marks adorning the windows, but there doesn't appear to be any major damage. These kind of marks would come off easy with a jetwash I assume. Inside there is a table of a few young people, at least in their mid-twenties all enjoying their brunch, with occasional glances in our direction. Ah... I thought to myself that the bright pink flamingo adorned shirt I am wearing must be doing its trick... but no, they seemed to go straight from me and back to looking at this man on the bench. I think I've just seen my next individuals to interview. I wave at them... one of the young ladies waves back... it's at this point I notice her hair cut looks a little off... but take no real notice as I am not sure what trends are in these days... only recently, the mullet has just come back into fashion and women or should I say, young ladies are getting perms... it all comes back around my friends.

"Bobby... solid work my friend... this is going to be a screamer. I have no idea who the hell will want to post it, but you're right... this is an odd one" I say as I reach out and shake Bobby's hand. A firm grip is always the best way for men to greet. Especially either serving or veteran members of any kind of service... you want the person to know you're in the club of 'I've seen some shit, man'.

"Well, you know, figured you've done a lot for me recently, so it's the least I can do. I'll be heading off now you're here anyway... got other routes to patrol... now... you, remember

you've got to pay that within a week, or it'll get more serious... and no more fireworks... right?"

The man he's looking and speaking to now, smiles, nods and shakes Bobby's hand before he departs us...

"Nice to meet you... I'm S P Koutsoumanis... but most people just call me SP" I say, reaching out and taking it in a firm grip, to which he reciprocates and looks me in the eye as he comes in with a vice like type grip... I suddenly get the impression, that this guy too... has seen some shit.

**Tape recording - Interview with Rex Baron: The Firework
Wielding Maniac:**

SP: Well Rex, it's uh... nice to meet you on this day of our lord 31st of August 2024... I uh... guess we better start with the obvious... what was this all about man?

Rex: Rejection...

SP: Rejection? Well... seems like a real weird way of trying to discuss that topic.

Rex: No... it was because of rejection.

SP: What do you mean? So, you got rejected so you came down here with fireworks?

Rex: Yep.

SP: Okay... kind of an odd reaction...

Rex: I don't think so, I was just staying true to me word... Are you a man of your word SP?

SP: Well... uh... sure, I guess I am a man of my word. I told Bobby I would make a 30-minute trip in 15 minutes... but I got here in 12...

Audible laughter

Rex: Yeah, he said you'd be speeding... said you'd most likely be over the limit too...

SP: He's swine... of course he'd say that... they hate honest journalist types like me... anyway, you have your answer, I am a man of my word... Why do you ask?

Rex: because I think it's important to be... I've never lied in my whole life. I live life by a very strict code... don't gamble. Don't lie and I hold one quote above all else...

SP: What quote is that?

Rex: "You are what you do, not what you say you'll do" ... Carl Jung... he was a...

SP: Psychiatrist... yes, I've read his works. Always liked his pieces around personality... interesting stuff... went a bit pear shaped with how it inspired the whole Myers-Briggs and how that was then used...

Rex: Huh?

SP: Never mind, I'm rambling... I do that. Great quote, one of my favourites of his for sure...

Rex: Thanks... yeah, I like it... just makes me think, if you say you're gonna do something, you've got to live up to it and do it... can't be a bitch in life... commit to the things you promise...

SP: So, I guess what you're saying is, albeit in a bit of a cryptic way... is that this was a self-fulfilled prophecy... you'd planned this all out?

Rex: Yep... told those fuckers I'd do it...

SP: Which fuckers?

Rex: Those lot sat in the restaurant...

Rex waves over and smiles in a polite manner to the group in the restaurant. Oddly enough, they laugh and smile back

SP: Okay... I'm confused now... so only about say, 40 minutes ago... you came up here, with a makeshift rocket launcher, catherine wheels, rockets and launches, so you could barrage these people with fireworks... but you guys seem... cool?

Rex: Yeah... we all work together, some of those people in there are like my closest friend's man... it's why it pissed me off that they rejected me... then doubted me... can't stand for that shit man...

SP: So, what happened? How did we get to this point in time? Seems like one hell of an escalation...

Rex: Okay... so like, you see that one there with the glasses in the middle and the short beard?

SP: Yeah

Rex: That's Leeson... he's like a little brother to me man... I always joke he's one I never would have wanted, but I would have him as a brother really... he's a good kid. It was his birthday a few days ago, but I missed it because I've been fucked up with a broken leg and had a few appointments about it... anyway... we're at work and I'm chatting to that chick there... you see, the young lady at the end of the table?

SP: I do...

Rex: Well, me and huh are talking right... and she says, I'm at a brunch this Saturday... so I'm like cool, who is that with? She says it's for Leeson's birthday, he's organising a birthday brunch, and he's invited a bunch of us from work... get this. She then lists off pretty much all the fucking girls from a different team... Leeson and I are the same team you see, well shit, actually... I run the department, so was his manager for a bit but am like, above him now... but yeah, it just got to me man...

SP: Okay... just to check I'm following... you had a broken leg... a few appointments and by the looks of it you've got a cane with you...

Rex: yeah, only been out the cast a week or so

SP: cool... gotcha... congratulations on that... nice cane by the way... what is that, a bronze skull on the top?

Rex: Of course...

SP: Sweet... that's the kind of fucker I'd go for...

Rex: If somethings worth doing, it's worth doing right

SP: Agreed... okay, so you're on a cane and hobbling about... then you find out it's your friend's birthday, or sorry... knew it was your friend's birthday and that he'd organised this brunch, but didn't invite you...

Rex: Yeah... that's it... so I'm like... what the fuck man? This guy comes round my house, drinks my beer, eats my food... fuck, he even drank rum with me too... did shots whilst watching bad movies... I put him through those Terrifier movies...

SP: Shit... no wonder he didn't invite you...

Audible laughter but louder than the last time

Rex: yeah... ha ha... you're probably right there... especially that second movie... that shit is nasty, he almost threw up!

SP: Okay... so you find out he hasn't invited you, and then you just show up here blasting?

Rex: No... see you missed a bit... I told you I was upholding a promise... turning it into a guarantee...

SP: Oh shit, right... okay... so tell me what happened next

Rex: So, I tell her... little fucker... he didn't even invite me at all. Sounds like he's just invited all the goddam chicks he fancies and failed to invite his brother! Kid talks a lot of big shit about us being close then does this... nah... I am messaging that little prick...

SP: You sound tough to be friends with Rex, if you don't mind me saying...

Rex: Shit, you think I don't know that... of course I'm difficult... it's because I'm real... I don't play any games... if I say you can call me at 2am... then you can... I'll bleed for my family... you ever served?

SP: Yeah, Op Herrick a couple times... you?

Rex: Same! Nice man...

Loud clapping noise as both bump fists

SP: Anyway, sorry, ignore that outburst... you were saying that you were going to message him

Rex: ...and message him I did... I was like... Brunch? Thanks for the invite.

EDITORS NOTE: Since this interview I have had the pictures sent to me by Rex of the text exchange between him and his "little brother" Leeson, so instead of transcribing the recording I'll write them up below:

Text log - Rex and Leeson - August 29th:

Rex: Brunch...

Rex: Thanks for the invite

Rex: Last time you sit in my field with a beer... you swine

Leeson: I didn't think brunch would be your vibe man! Should have offered in the first place in fact so bad friend moment here man sorry

Rex: It isn't for these multiple reasons:

1. Either have lunch or breakfast, stop making up a new meal
2. It's actually called second breakfast and is not okay to eat unless you are a hobbit
3. I am not a sex in the city character
4. Mimosas are not the drink of the morning; a Bloody Mary is and those are drunk at 0800 on the dot!

Rex: Also, yes... terrible friend... I see what you're doing... no invite and then you invite the rest of the road crew for yourself...

Rex: You sir are an enemy of the state

Leeson: I know my place good sir, so don't you worry. I shall become a vassal of the state and will agree to the terms of tribute where necessary

Rex: hahahahaha

Rex: No

Rex: Don't make me laugh

Rex: I am mad at you

Rex: Curses... why do you always win me over... motherfucker

Leeson: because I'm like that shop keeper in Frozen, I'm annoying but lovable

Rex: Gross... I don't wanna know about your big summer blow out...

Rex: Yoohoo

Rex: Who else is going to this brunch... I have noted an invite still hasn't been issued

Leeson: That's the first thing that came to my head when I made a reference to me being lovable...

Leeson: If I invite you, you'll just list off the reasons why not again...

Leeson: but

Leeson: to make my friend happy. Would you like to come to this bottomless brunch?

Rex: Christ... now I don't know how to react... This is all too much. To be thought of like this... Who else is going? What's the occasion.

Leeson: It's my birthday and we've got Kam, Louise, Sammy, Abi, her friend Molly (Not that Molly) and my mate Lee and MAYBE my friend Dan, but he's about as reliable as a chocolate solar panel

Rex: Sounds awful... I'll sit this one out

There're many more rambling texts here, but then we get to the real reason why these messages matter. This next section highlights that Rex, really is a man of his word, however much a mad one.

Rex: Picture message - The picture shows a collection of screamer rockets

Rex: Ready to hit up Las Iguanas for some brunch on Saturday...

Leeson: Hahahahaha I feel so bad now...

Rex: Just know that feeling is gonna be amplified by my screamers. Looking at some of the more explosive rockets too... shouldn't do any more harm than singe a few hairs and perforate ear drums. But you and your esteemed invited guests will recover.

Rex: Just arranging a fast mobility scooter so I can get away quick enough

Rex: These messages are not by way of a pre-emptive confession of the crimes I am about to commit

Leeson: This is like dealing with a mad ex

I think I stand with Leeson on this one. This friendship seems bizarre to me. Don't get me wrong, I've mentioned earlier about blowing up gas cannisters with shotguns, but this Rex seems so unhinged. I like him, in fact, I really like him. He is one of those rare breeds you find in life that really are a man of his word. It's a shame he's not a politician, he'd for sure get my vote. A prime example of eccentricity let loose in a friend group who clearly as an individual has a leadership role both in his professional and social circles, and by the fact these kids haven't pressed charges, they must have some level of respect for him. But not enough to invite him to events as simple as a brunch out.

I pass him back his phone at this point after reading the messages and our interview continues...

SP: Well holy shit... so, you clearly have a good relationship with this kid, he seems to have made a genuine mistake and aims to make good on it... invites you to his brunch... which you made quite a protest on coming to, but instead you then make jokes about firing off explosives at him and his guests... why?

Rex: Because people have got to learn man... he's just lucky it's me that did this today... somebody else doing it, well they may have gotten it wrong... shit, at least I'm a professional... demolitions was my thing back in the engineers.

SP: Well shit... mine too...

Rex: No way! Right, you see the videos of that shit?! Set up good right and solid! Been a while and I was pretty proud of myself...

SP: Yeah, gotta hand it to you, that set up was slick... shame Bobby took it with him... I would've hired you for November the 5th

Rex: Haha... remember remember, las iguanas... the rejection, the banter and plot...

SP: haha that's pretty clever... I'll hand it to you...

Rex: Thanks...

SP: So, this was all just one big display of... I said I would do it; I am a mad of my word... so I did it... seems just a little off if you ask me... somethings missing...

Rex: Like what? I don't think it goes any deeper...

SP: I don't know Rex... I've known you all of 15 minutes now and I'd say there is one thing you probably need to admit to yourself, at least about this event...

Rex: What's that?

SP: That you are terrible at taking rejection my friend...

there's a brief pause on the tape where all that can be heard is background noise, before there is an outburst of laughter. I remember at this point we both stared at each other seriously before erupting

Rex: Shit... ha ha... I never thought of it that way before... I guess I am... still... what a ride huh... they've had a laugh and respect me as a man of my word... The copper tells me I'm trending on social media... not that I use that crap... too old for it and for once since I left the forces, a journalist gives a crap to talk to me...

SP: Maybe that's it Rex... You didn't just come down here to pay respects to your own words and make good by them, you came down for that rush you're missing... maybe you need to join a club... I'd say civvy life is getting to you...

Rex: fuck yeah... I should say so... been 12 years since I blew something up for fun... guess I just needed any old excuse and let this get completely out of control... fucking lucky I didn't get arrested!

SP: Technically you did, but he's just written you up with a warning and have issued you a public disorder charge... my suggestion though, pay off that fucking thing or they'll make your life hell...

Rex: You speaking from experience?

SP: Absolutely.

End recording

That was it. An interview with a combat veteran who was desperate to seek the explosive and turbulent past he was

missing, by detonating over 50 fireworks in a makeshift launcher of his own design, which by looking at text records he only took 2 days to make. I checked the website he used for the fireworks and for next day delivery, it's not as if it's cheap either, they charge you for the express privilege. All in all, he had purchased the below:

- 2x Sizzling comets £6.49 each
- 2x Angel Dust £9.99 each
- 4x Screamer rockets (10 pack) £5.99 per pack
- 2x Pioneer rockets (7 pack) £12.49 per pack
- 2x Catherine wheels £5.99 each

Total cost of ammunition: £93.88

This doesn't of course account for materials, wherein he mentioned he went to a local hardware store and picked up at least 20 pieces of piping, gorilla tape and some fuse wire (how he got the fuse wire I do not know). The other expenditure was to hire a mobility scooter for the day, which after our interview he happily rode away on after chucking on a pair of sunglasses as by this point the overcast and cloudy day was starting to see the rays burst through. Leaving the location, he happily waved at his friends in Las Iguanas and shouted, "See you fuckers at work on Monday, now that you've learned your lesson!", to which still in absolute astonishment, they smiled, laughed loudly at and wave him off, now with an added red glow in their cheeks from the copious amounts of Mimosas they had been drinking.

I didn't use my tape recorder when I approached them, at this point I was starting to flag. Rex was a ball of energy, and I felt he was getting charged up by my presence, with the kind of excitement that you get when you're around toddlers... they get revved up, whilst all you do is get drained and want to sleep. He was an exceptionally odd individual and reminded me of a classic gonzo piece wherein which is one of my favourite quotes, for whenever I find creatures that exist in this world like he does:

"There he goes. One of god's own prototypes. A high-powered mutant of some kind never even considered for mass production. Too weird to live, and too rare to die." - Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*

The individuals at the table, other than clearly being terrible judges in character, were all quite... dare I say it... normal. They worked well paid-ish jobs and were quite well spoken of Rex, how he's done a lot for them over the past couple of years. Taught them ways of seeing and being in this world they hadn't quite encountered before. To my surprise, it almost sounded like these people really did look up to that sociopath as a role model... When I queried this with them, they agreed and made it clear that he was very much a version of person that they dreamed to exist as but didn't dare to manifest. It was almost like his obscure outlandish behaviour almost brought out a sense of admiration, that made this group want to break free of their own insecurities and just take life by the balls... launch fireworks in public... tear up Las Iguanas and leave everyone in it bewildered as to whether they'd experienced men and women, or Buffalos that charged through, destroying everything within reach for a good time.

The last point the group did make, which came from Kamila, the strong and confident female lead type, who I was now sitting only across the table from (and I realised that her jagged haircut perceived earlier was due to some of it being singed off by a well-aimed or not rocket) had at least understood their part to play in the life of one of their idols.

"If we don't reject him from things... he's never going to learn how to handle it and we're worried that one day, he'll do this sort of shit with the wrong people... better it be us... we're his friends... besides, can you imagine having that guy next to you at a bottomless brunch... we'd probably have to call an ambulance and that would ruin Leeson's birthday for sure"... they all laughed at this. I did too. It's almost like Rex is so blinded by the perceived rejection, that really wasn't anything more than a mistake, that he's entirely missed the point of all of this. Sometimes you're not going to be wanted and that's okay. We've all got those friends that we need in certain situations. The daredevils that are ready to

get up on the dancefloor, pull the worst moves so you can feel that confidence to get up there and join them. The wingman that pops the first icebreaker to the group of women you believe are well out of your league. Rex was essentially one of those friends. You could take him to brunch, but you'll know there's going to be trouble, so invite the ones that can conduct themselves, or you'll face the judgment of peers for your lack of selective process. After all, we judge people by the company they keep.

This case really has got me thinking however, that we are all desperate to not feel that disconnection which a rejection brings forth. Humans are inherently a cooperative species, which many biologists over the years have attributed to the tribal antics and follies of our ape ancestors. In short, if we're not together we die. Hell, humans even invented currency in ancient times not as a way of capital, but a way of communicating with other tribes that didn't share the dialect of our own group. Rejection, is a part of life though and I think it's healthy to admit to oneself that you aren't going to always handle it well... I don't believe anyone does... I also believe that in the percentage of those that deal with this emotion using coloured gunpowder, Rex is in the 1 percent. Good on him I suppose

It's valid to say I feel at this point before I sign off, that if there is a World War 3, which feels ever more likely with the current political state of affairs in the world, Rex is someone you really should invite to brunch on the day the bombs inevitably drop...

Editors note: Since the writing of this story by our freelance reporter S. P. Koutsoumanis, it's come to light that there are queries from those in our office as to the legitimacy of this tale. The queries go as follows:

1. No one has heard of this story, including all that live locally to the city it is stated to have taken place in. We at The New Gonzo Journal are convinced it may not have happened at all. The reason for this is that the attributed hashtag of #TheBattleofLasIguanas has not been found on any social media platforms. It's also been investigated further by a visit to the restaurant and

there doesn't appear to be any evidence of damage to the exterior or interior of the property - The restaurant didn't refuse a request to review CCTV for the date in question... When the footage played, no such described individual had been witnessed attacking the location.

2. There are no residents in the area with the name Rex Barron. It's quite possible the entire events may have happened in the head of S. P. Koutsoumanis whilst they were trying to get over some kind of personal rejection. Other details of the story remain totally accurate, however. To wit: the online cart of fireworks and other paraphernalia that were used in the rumoured attack, the text messages and also the named individuals - all of which know S. P. Koutsoumanis and may have rejected him from a brunch.
3. The weekend it is reported to have happened, S. P. Koutsoumanis was out of town chasing down an undercover and covert group of thugs to try chase a beat on an investigative story, but it is noted he never got as far as the city he aimed for and was found passed out on a beach wearing a t shirt that said white power... despite his protestations of it being a disguise, he was arrested, questioned and then released. This took place some two days after the so called 'Battle of Las Iguanas' was deemed to have taken place.

We have tried to get further answers, but since the further emergence of the Far Right in UK Politics and the popularity of Reform UK, S. P. Koutsoumanis has gone deep under cover to investigate this further, and no one can get further comment... we await his further writings to review with the utmost scrutiny.