

Rex, a sickly man in his early 30's, had killed himself. It was an accident, of course. At least, that's what he declared as he staggered into the bar on 15th and Juniper.

Falling onto a bar stool, he ordered a drink and recounted to the bartender his tragic tale. He was driving in his Range Rover when a man leaped out into the road, faced the car with a disturbing twinkle in his eye, and splat—he was spraypaint all over the pavement. The bartender, a man with the pensive face of an undertaker, eyed Rex as if waiting for the punchline. “Sounds like you killed another guy,” he said.

Rex raised a finger as he gulped the last of his beer. “Wait. I'm not finished,” he said. “So I check on the guy to see if he's hurt or whatever. And he's hurt alright. He's dead. So I'm freaking out right? I'm shouting at the people standing around me to call an ambulance. Then I check his wallet—and get this—the guy's name is the same as mine.”

“Wild,” said the grim bartender.

“Then I check his birthday. Same. Height, eye color. Same. He's a donor, I'm a donor. Then I look at his face, I take it in my hands even though it's all covered in blood and smashed in, and I swear upon my dead dog's grave it was my own face. A little older, though. Five years older, maybe. Come back from the future, obviously.” Rex slid the empty beer mug away from him, saying “How's about something stronger this time? One of your famous concoctions.”

The bartender solemnly went to work mixing a wide array of liquids into a steel shaker.

“The bitch of it is,” Rex said, “I'm Catholic. It's a mortal sin to kill yourself. And even though I'm still here, I technically did kill myself. You see the predicament I'm in?”

“I do,” said the bartender, shaking the container with both hands, his coal-black eyes fixed on Rex. “I once mixed a shot that made a man time-travel.” He said, pouring the contents of the shaker over ice in a highball glass.

“What happened to the guy?” Rex asked.

The bartender shrugged and wiped the bar down.

“Do you remember how to make it?”

“I have the recipe here somewhere,” said the bartender. He opened a metal lock-box and sifted through handfulls of papers and receipts, mumbling to himself, his heavy eyebrows darting up and down with each examination. “Here it is.”

The recipe was simple, a little vodka, some rum, apple juice, a dash of grenadine, lime, and a small piece of lint. The lint, he explained, had fallen into the shot accidentally. He wasn't sure whether it was essential to the time-traveling effect it produced, but it was in that fateful shot.

“Are you sure you don't want it?” he asked the bartender.

“For what? If I send all my customers on a trip through time, I got no more customers.”

Rex folded the recipe delicately into his coat pocket and sipped his drink, plotting his redemption.

Over the next several months he made the shot a kazillion times, drinking about 30 every day, preparing each one exactly to specification, measuring the portions with surgical accuracy, examining the lint, making notes on its qualities, but none of the shots catapulted him back into time. So great was Rex's desire to redeem his soul.

Not long after, Rex was drinking more than just shots. He was chugging whole bottles of whiskey, mistaking rum for applejuice and funneling it down in great gulps, devouring gallons of everclear as if it were water in a desert oasis.

Years passed and Rex gave up on his quest to redeem himself. “My soul is black as my liver,” he cried to strangers who looked at him too long as he reclined on park benches, covered in newspaper. He lost his job, his home, and his sanity to drink.

Then one day, he bumped in to a familiar grim-faced man. “You,” he said, cocking his head. “You're the bartender who gave me that phony recipe for a shot.”

The bartender's eyes became coin slots. “I don't recall...”

“The shot that sends a man back in time!”

“Which one exactly?”

“There's more than one?”

“Oh sure, I've got hundreds. One shot sends you back ten years. One send you back ten minutes. One sends you forward a million years. One takes you forward a few seconds. To which shot are you referring?”

“But you said it was bad business to send your customers through time.”

“Did I? I don't remember saying that. I discovered the first recipe by accident, and I would've given up on it altogether if I hadn't been paid a visit by a future version of me who came with boxes of recipes for time-travel. Is there something in particular I can help you with? If not I'd like to be on my way to the horseraces.”

Rex let him go, and his hope for the future was reinvigorated.

The next day he breezed in the old familiar bar, plopped onto a barstool and met eyes with grim-faced man drying the glasses. “I'd like one of your famous concoctions,” said Rex.

His plan was simple. He hated the younger version of himself for killing himself and his plan involved setting the record straight.

He told the bartender the exact year, month, day, and hour he wanted to go back in time, and the bartender got to work. Under a minute later a frosty shot was under Rex's nose. “Cheers,” he said, and took a sip, then popped away.

Rex found himself in the middle of a road. Careening towards him was his old Range Rover, the one he'd totaled. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw a man who looked just like him. It *was* him. The Range Rover shot by him, the side view mirror clipping his shoulder. A loud thump sounded, a body flew into the air, and the Range Rover skid to a halt.

As Rex approached the wreck he found the young version of himself caressing the head of the dead version of himself.

“Terrific,” Rex said, peering into the Range Rover and pawing under the seat until his hand found the tire iron.

Young-Rex never knew what hit him. Two deft strokes with the tire iron and he was another cold body piled in the road.

Rex knew that simply stopping himself from killing himself wouldn't be enough to save his soul. After all, he'd killed himself. It didn't matter that there were multiple Rex's, a sin is a sin. This was simply cold revenge on the mindless bastard who took his soul away, nothing more.

The crowd gasped at what they'd seen. They pointed at Rex, accusing him of murder, yelling for the police. Rex put his hands up as if to quell the panic. “It's okay,” he said, “It's okay now.” The tire iron clanged on the pavement and the people continued to watch as Rex slouched across the street and back into the bar.