

# Bar Talk

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The black luxury sedan pulled up to the curb. Its dark tinted windows hiding the two men inside from curious glances. This wasn't the part of town expensive cars drove through. Not at noon on a Tuesday at least. On a Friday or Saturday night you could catch a glimpse of a senator's Cadillac or a business man's Mercedes steering up to a corner for some "company" or "party favors", but this was unusual. Even more unusual was that the bar the men had pulled up to was open and serving.

"You're sure he's in there? Like, he's actually in there?" the man in the passenger seat asked.

"Oh, he's in there. I saw him with my own two eyes, after the bartender called me," the driver responded.

"So, he's been at a bar, in a bad part of town, for the past few days?"

"That is what I'm telling you, and that is why we're here. I have to get him out of there, and unfortunately, I need your help to do it."

"I don't know, man, this all seems stupid. If my parole officer finds out that I'm not in the half way house and down here...at this bar, wearing this again, I'm screwed. It will be throw away the key and buh-bye to my chances of ever seeing my boy again."

"You're doing me a huge favor. You're doing him a huge favor. You know we've got a good influence on the Judges, and the District Attorney is a personal friend. I don't think you need to worry about it," the driver said. "Now, come on; let's go get him."

The driver reached for the door handle and stopped to look back at his passenger.

"You can do this. You were really something back in the day."

"Yeah, that's why I'm in the sorry state I'm in now. I can't believe I'm about to get out and blow up this car just to get his attention," the passenger complained. "I can see the charges now. Property damage in excess of \$100,000, reckless endangerment of civilians, attempted murder of known law protectors, domestic terrorism—I mean, those are just the ones I can think of off the top of my head."

"I already told you, I can take care of all that. Beside, this car is a spare, and I bought this bar a long time ago. I wouldn't press any charges. It's all insured."

"Wait, you own a god damn bar?! The Night Avenger owns a bar in the east side?!"

"Not just me. We all do, it's actually Justice Corps' property."

"This day just keeps getting weirder."

"Weird is relative. Now, let's focus. We need to make this fight look real to get his attention. You go ahead and blow up the car after I get out. Then we trade a few shots, make a big show out of it, and hopefully that will snap him out of whatever funk he is in, and he'll come out. Got it?" Night Avenger asked.

"Fine. Fine. Let's just get this over with. I know how this ends up. I'm going to get my ass kicked again when he comes out. You better have that check cleared and in my account."

"I do, Bill. Besides, you were one of the few who could take it. I wouldn't have asked anyone else. The Suicide Bomber was the only one he ever had to actually try to fight. Now, le—"

"—First," Bill interjected. "I never liked that name. The *Daily Global* newspaper used that name as a headline, and it stuck. I'm not frickin' suicidal. Secondly, it still hurts when he hits me. Hurts like hell man...and finally, you asked lots of people. Nobody else was stupid enough to say 'yes.' Now go ahead and get out. Let's get this over with."

"Actually, you're the only person I called that wasn't on the team," Night Avenger corrected as he opened his door and got out, moving a good distance across the street from his car. His all black form cast a long and imposing shadow over the pavement. Bill sat in the car, watching the leather



caped figure move. This was the first time he had ever seen the man in daylight, but it didn't make him any less intimidating. Lightweight armor covered his body, which led to a cowl that was formed into a perpetual scowl. The red goggles really sealed the deal and made him look like a crimson eyed demon of the night; except for the open mouth which revealed his chin. Bill thought it was odd how nice he actually was compared to how he looked.

Night Avenger made it to the corner that he was going to use for cover, and then gave the go ahead nod. Bill nodded back and opened his car door. He stood letting his 5'10" frame stretch. His bright orange fire suit reflected brightly. It was his old costume from back in the day when he tried to make a name for himself as a costumed criminal. It was so over the top. The suit even had fake flames made of plastic that came off his helmet and over sized gloves. Apparently, it was something that Night Avenger had kept as a trophy, after Bill got his ass kicked and was sent to jail the first time. Bill hadn't put on a costume since then. He couldn't shake the way his ex-wife had mocked it when she brought their son to visit him in prison. His son, who was only two at the time, liked the bright colors.

"I can't believe I let that creepy bastard talk me into wearing this again," he muttered.

He steadied himself in the middle of the street beside the car. He wanted to blow it up and cause only minimal damage to the surrounding buildings. He hunched over and concentrated. He was trying to do something he hadn't done in a very long time, something that he swore, for his son, to never do again. His brow furrowed as the air around him started to dance like it did on hot asphalt in the distance. Somehow he became brighter in his center, and the light spilled outward to his extremities. The Night Avenger ducked lower into cover.

"That's right, Bill, nice and easy, like we talked about," he thought. "Make it like a lightening flash, so we get a nice, loud thundering boom."

Suddenly, the bar door slammed open. Hard enough to leave it firmly indented into the wall.

"STOP," the figure in the doorway demanded.

Bill stopped glowing and stumbled back gazing at the slouched figure in the doorway. He hadn't seen him in person in years. He was used to the tall chiseled figure that you could break stone on, but that wasn't the sight he saw now. Instead, Alpha Citizen was slumped and wobbling in a grungy, stained t-shirt and ripped jeans. His jet-black hair was uncombed, and he had a good couple of days of growth in his beard. He looked like a hilarious shadow of the clean-cut Boy Scout everyone loved. He turned his back to the two costumed men, revealing he was at least still wearing his long blue cape.

"You two better get...get in here and stop making a spec...specta...asses of yourselves," he slurred. He didn't walk so much as he floated in air while moving his feet. He haphazardly levitated from side to side as he went back to his bar stool.

Bill blinked in disbelief until he was startled by the hand that gripped his shoulder.

"It's worse than I thought," Night Avenger said.

"Holy shit...is he...is he drunk? How? I mean, I didn't think that was possible."

"We'd better get in there." Night Avenger walked up to the bar entrance before turning to look back at Bill. "And when you come in, yank this damned door shut behind you."

Bill did as he was instructed and found the two men in capes at the bar. Night Avenger sat on a stool to Alpha Citizen's right, so Bill took the one on his left to even out the trio. The bartender wore a look of worry and mental exhaustion. He had apparently been awake long enough to hear all the woes of a super hero. Alpha Citizen informed the bar keep that they'd each be having a whiskey, straight up.

"I think you might've had enough, sir," the bartender replied.

"Ted, don't be rude. Give our friends some drinks and keep mine coming too."

Ted looked at Night Avenger, and then glanced at Bill, before returning his gaze to the man in



goggles. Night Avenger nodded, and Ted pulled down a new bottle of whiskey, cracked it open, and poured three equal glasses. He handed them out and then put the bottle in front of Night Avenger.

“I’m going home. You guys take it from here. I’ve been up all night with him.”

“Don’t worry, Ted. We’ll take good care of him,” Avenger replied.

Bill watched as Alpha Citizen pulled an odd looking flask out of his belt. It was a dense, dark metal and had a radioactive decal on the front. He opened it and dropped a few glowing green drops of liquid into his whiskey, before securing the flask away again. As he did so, a bit of sand fell off him and landed on the floor. Alpha Citizen swirled the beverage with his finger and took it down in one drink. His throat pushed the mixture down, and he coughed. Then he stared at the big screen behind the bar.

“You’ve got a little moon dust on you still,” Night Avenger commented.

“Yeah...I hadda...Hadda fly up...and get muh flasssk. I heard ya guys in da car... go head and tell Suici...uh, Bill here what’s in it.”

“Look, Bill, one time,” Avenger began before taking a sip off his glass. “This one time, Dr. Genocide actually devised a way to hurt Citizen here. He found some of the minerals around the portal that brought Alpha to our dimension, and after irradiating them with one of his death beams, he found out that the stones actually could hurt him. He nearly killed Citizen, but the Justice Corps showed up and stopped him. Afterwards, I realized that we should probably keep the stones just in case, because you never know right? Anyway, I told Citizen all about it, and he agreed. So, we hid the stones away in a safe place. But then, this one time, we were at Liberty Eagle’s bachelor party, and we had all had a few and felt that Citizen was left out. So we guessed that he could get drunk, too, if we used the minerals in miniscule doses and added some booze. Well, we worked it out, and Citizen got drunk for the first time. That didn’t go too well though because his powers got a little out of control, and well, you saw the news the next day. The whole Justice Corps had to pretend an alien invasion happened just to cover it up. It wasn’t our finest moment, and we weren’t proud of ourselves at all, but after a while, we kinda forgot about the whole thing.”

“But I dinnit,” Citizen said. “I membered where we hid the stones n’ made sum’ more of the booze. Then put it in one of these lead flasks, so I could carry it ‘round. I didn’t think anybody would notice, but Night Avenger did.”

“I did. And we got Citizen some help and put it all behind us. I even went and hid all of the stuff on the moon. Apparently, not well enough.”

Citizen smirked and brushed a little more moon dust off of his shoulder. Bill was speechless. He looked at the other two men with wide eyes. Then he took a gulp of his own drink and winced as it burned on the way down.

“So, you’re telling me that the greatest hero of all time...is an alcoholic?”

“Bingo,” Citizen quipped, while pointing a finger in the air.

“Wow. Just wow. All those years of plotting your destruction through outrageous plans and all we had to do was hand you a bottle of cheap scotch and some magic rocks. This is crazy.”

Night Avenger poured Bill and himself another glass, which they each gulped down. Then, he put the bottle away. He looked at Citizen and put a hand on his slumped back.

“Go ahead and give me the flask. It’s almost empty anyway. Then we can talk about it,” he said. Night Avenger reached for the flask and was met with a stiff shrug. The shrug knocked him off the bar stool and onto the floor. Bill scooted back, unsure of what to do.

“I’m not done,” Alpha Citizen declared.

“I know you don’t think you are, but you need to put the damn thing down, Alpha,” Night Avenger said as he struggled to his feet. “Bill, take it from him.”

Alpha Citizen kicked the bar stool into Night Avenger and sent him sliding across the floor. Then, he turned to fix his gaze on Bill. His eyes started to shimmer and glow.



“Don’t make me hurt you, too,” Alpha Citizen warned.

Bill was unsure of what to do. In fact he was downright afraid. He looked over to Night Avenger’s body on the ground.

“Did you just kill him?” Bill asked.

“No way, the guy has taken much worse. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’ve a drink to finish,” Alpha Citizen declared. He reached for his flask and filled a new glass with the exotic concoction. Just as he raised the drink to his mouth, Night Avenger reached around from behind him and shoved a glowing rock into his mouth. The reaction was immediate and violent. Alpha citizen bucked forward in a gagging motion that crumpled the bar in front of him.

“Now! Hit him with everything you’ve got, Bill!” Night Avenger demanded as he sprinted for the door. Bill hunched over without hesitation and channeled everything he could. Night Avenger barely made it out the door before the blast lifted him off his feet and slammed him into the black sedan parked in front of the bar. The entire back of the bar erupted in a giant blast. Somehow the blast was contained to only the bar. None of the surrounding property was damaged, except for a few scorch marks.

Night Avenger slid down against the car. His suit armor had absorbed most of the shock, but he had still felt the impacts. He removed his goggles, just in time to see the glowing rock and metallic flask bounce out from where the door used to be. Inside, Bill had cleared them away from Alpha Citizen.

“Nice work, Bill. Just like we planned,” Night Avenger said as he secured the flask and rock in a special container. “You really contained that blast. I think you’ve been practicing.”

Bill walked out from beyond the rubble with Alpha Citizen over his shoulders.

“Planned my ass! You said we would be able to talk him down. I thought he killed you,” Bill shouted.

“Well we had to do something. Besides, now you can say you took down Alpha Citizen. Can anybody in your old crew say the same?” Night Avenger asked.

“Don’t even try to play my ego. Look at this place. I’m so going back to jail.”

Bill set Alpha Citizen on the ground next to Night Avenger, and then he surveyed the scene.

“Oh yeah,” he began. “I’m definitely going back. How long until the cops get here? I’d like to at least try and call my son so I can say good-bye.”

“You’re not going to jail, and the cops aren’t coming. Well, not once I make a call to the Corps headquarters and tell them it is under control,” Avenger responded. “You did great, Bill. You proved that I can count on you. I won’t forget that. Thank you, and I’m sure, when Alpha Citizen wakes up, he will thank you as well.”

“Somehow, I sincerely doubt that,” Bill said. “This costume business is insane. I’m never putting this damn costume on again.”

“Not even for induction into the Justice Corps?” Night Avenger asked.

Bill smiled at that and thought of his son.

“Well, maybe I could be persuaded.”

