

I'm Not Emilio Estevez

by Christian Bell

I'm not Emilio Estevez. How many times do I have to tell people this? It's like the moment I rolled into Baltimore, someone slapped a sign on my back that said, hi, I'm Emilio Estevez, despite what I may tell you my name is or how I sign my credit card transactions, how much I don't look like him despite maybe similar hair color and shades of a lame '80s hairdo, with an asterisked footnote at the bottom that said, while you're at it, annoy the shit out of me about it too.

I was checking in at the Hyatt, a building from the outside that's all rectangled mirrors, a bastion of privilege into which pedestrians and schmoes driving by in their Hondas and Chevys are forbidden to see. The man at the front desk, a rectangle himself looking a lot like Principal Vernon from *The Breakfast Club*, his face looking straight down while typing with caffeinated fingers, said, if I may be frank, Mr. Estevez, I thought *Men At Work* was a nice film.

I looked around, thinking I was standing in the light of a genuine Hollywood star, but, other than a bellhop crashing a luggage cart into a fake ficus tree and subsequently falling on his side and the cart on top of him, it was just me.

"Pardon me?"

"You and your brother? That's funny stuff," he said, continuing his manic typing. "Comforting, stuff that doesn't make you think too hard. The perfect thing if you're up late and can't sleep. And no offense to your brother, but his best work has always been comedy. And if you'll pardon me, his personal life is a—"

"I'm not Emilio Estevez.," I interrupted. I stood there shaking my head—I had never been confused with a celebrity before, though,

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inexplicably, someone once confused me for a woman. "I'm Christian Bell, like my name says on the credit card. I work in finance, just in town for a meeting."

"Don't worry, Mr. Estevez. We are quite discreet here. Just last month, Mickey Rourke was here and we did not utter one peep about it."

"That's all well and good," I said, having to think about my name before signing it. "But I'm not him."

"Very good, sir. Shall I have some champagne sent to your room, Mr., ah, Bell?" He winked when saying my last name. I took my room key and left.

After settling into my room, I walked up to Federal Hill, a neighborhood of colonial style, two and three story brick row homes. Houses so small and quaint, so stingy with even the space to fit yourself through the front door, that they were completely unaffordable. The neighborhood was a mixture of narrow homes and dentist offices, realtors, and galleries wearing that rockets-red-glare disguise. It was also a mixture of eateries and bars, ranging from greasy spoons to fine dining, from holes in the wall to martini lounges. After almost getting leveled by a Chevy Malibu squealing wheels making a left turn on a red light, I go to MaGerK's Pub, at the corner of Cross and Charles, for a Blue Moon on draft and some wings, my usual first destination and meal when in town. On a nice day like it was, the windows and doors were wide open, allowing in a nice breeze. When the wind was right, the smell of fried chicken from the Cross Street Market was overwhelming.

I sat at the end of the bar, sipped on my beer, waited for wings. On the stereo, Fear's "Let's Have A War" morphed into Dave Matthews' nasally voice going on about ants marching. The midday crowd was a mix of older locals, dressed down suits who were getting an early

start on the evening, and college frat boy lacrosse guys who were damned to be college frat boy lacrosse guys until the day they died.

I felt a meaty embrace of my shoulders from behind. The smell of liquor and sweat from my friendly anonymous assailant was an assault exponentially more vicious than the physical grab.

"Emilio Estevez! Holy shit!" I looked to my right, saw a big doughy drunk head with a hat on backward, looking straight at me. His eyes were like lifejacketed shipwreck survivors bobbing in rough seas. He waved to some guys at the other end of the bar. "Get over here, guys! Emilio Estevez!"

"I'm not Emilio Estevez," I said. Two clones of this lout were now at his side.

"Man, you were the shit in *Young Guns*! Billy the Kidd!"

"Reap the whirlwind, motherfucker!" one of his comrades chimed in.

"I'm not Emilio Estevez," I said. I kept drinking my beer. Whatever the alcohol content was, it wasn't enough. There had to be something stronger—vodka, grain alcohol, Percoset.

My wings came. The bartender looked at me, said, are these jokers bothering you, Mr. Estevez?

"I'm not Emilio Estevez," I told him. The three guys to my right were hooting and hollering, now talking about Kiefer Sutherland and Lou Diamond Phillips.

"Your brother stopped by when they were filming *Major League II*. It was winter, as cold as it gets, and there was some ice on the ground. But he was a gentleman, not the jerk you hear about." He leaned into me, whispered. "But the girl he was with, a bit mannish

looking, if you know what I'm talking about."

"For heaven's sake," I said, my voice raised. I polished off my beer, stepped off the barstool. "Is this some kind of joke? The guy at the hotel and now you guys. Can I just get these wings to go?"

"Hey, Mr. Estevez," the bartender said. "I know it's been tough for you the last few years. Hollywood's not been kind since *The Mighty Ducks* franchise fizzled out. But we're all fans. Have you thought about doing tv like your brother?"

I shook my head. I protested again, I'm not Emilio Estevez, only to be drowned out by the three louts who were now singing, completely off key, *shot down, in a blaze of glory!*

"That's the second movie, you idiots!" I walked out the door, leaving the wings steaming on the counter.

Outside, I walked up Cross Street, my stomach growling, three school age punks giving a homeless guy who was directing nonexistent traffic a hard time, and stopped outside Ryleigh's, which used to be a brew pub called Sisson's the last time I went in about a decade before, and, smelled cooked meats with a hint of Cajun spices. I went in thinking that surely, the Emilio Estevez thing was just a freak coincidence, and it couldn't happen again. I sidled up to an empty bar, ordered a Ryleigh's Revenge on tap and, deciding against shrimp, a roast beef sandwich. The bartender, a seasoned bearded professional with a white towel hanging out of his back pocket and a pencil resting on his ear lobe, took my order with no fanfare and delivered it just the same.

I ducked into the bathroom to relieve myself. Looked at myself in the mirror. I'm not Emilio Estevez, I said. Not even close. My head was round, not angular. My nose was shorter, my lips were bigger, my eyes weren't as beady. And I didn't look like Martin Sheen. It

was just a freak occurrence what had happened. It was over. I had returned to Christian Bell from my brief sojourn as Emilio Estevez.

I returned to the bar, my beer and food waiting, and as I ate and drank, with the Jon Bon Jovi song from *Young Guns II* now stuck in my head, the bartender was hunched over a pile of receipts in the far corner, his pencil no longer an accessory but now being used to furiously scratch on a pad of paper. He cast an occasional glance into a small box that sat above the receipts and glowed. I looked at it a few times from my angle and couldn't figure out what it was.

I enjoyed the silence, thinking about the meeting I had the next day. Fun stuff about asset management to a room full of bland suits. Five years ago I relished this stuff but now I had to pretend it was something I gave a fig about. I had lost my love for it. Now, I was drifting along, unsure of what I wanted, who I was.

"How's everything?" The bartender stood before me, knocking me out of my thoughts.

"Great. The sandwich is quite tasty. The beer is rich, textured body with a strong hop flavor. I'll have another, if you don't mind."

He flipped a clean glass, pulled the tap down. The beer poured smoothly into the glass, the sound of the liquid soothing to my ears.

"Can I ask you something," he said. He put the full glass on a coaster, then, with his elbows propped on the bar, leaned in.

"What's it like working with Mick Jagger?"

I groaned, head sinking, wanting to drop it in the smeared ketchup on my plate. It was ridiculous, a completely preposterous situation. What was next—aliens, the CIA? I wanted to grab this guy by his preposterous beard and just hit his head on something, the harder the better.

"I mean, *Freejack* was a bit of a stinker—there's five bucks I'm not getting back, huh?—but you worked with Jagger, man, and Hannibal Lecter too."

Damn the ketchup—I dropped my head straight onto the plate. I felt the globs of condiment cling to my nose and forehead, along with scattered salt and pepper grains. I just lay there, unable to move. But he kept going. He could've cared less that, as a customer, I had checked out of the conversation by dropping my head into food.

"And, I hate to get personal here, but why are you Estevez and your dad and brother are Sheen? That's something that's been bugging me since the '80s. I mean, I couldn't even enjoy *Maximum Overdrive* because my date and I kept talking about it."

I lifted my head and took a long, long drink of my beer. It wasn't long enough and eventually the glass was empty. I knew he was looking at me, waiting for a response. I knew that I had ketchup painted on my face and that I probably looked more like Mike Tyson than Emilio Estevez. I looked at up at him and, seeing his fuzzy faced grin, said, I have to go to the bathroom, because I had nothing else for him.

In the bathroom, I wiped the condiments from my face, including something that appeared to be an olive part. Here was the situation, as I recounted it to myself: somehow, I was trapped in some unearthly dimension where Baltimore, actor Emilio Estevez, and myself had somehow collided in a big cartoon scrum complete with onomatopoeias and clouds of dust. But what do I do about it, and will I smell like ketchup for the rest of the day?

While I was in the bathroom, my cell phone rang. My home office called, informing me that, because of a case of projectile vomiting, my meeting tomorrow had been canceled. Perfect. Now, I had no

reason to be in Baltimore, to be Charlie Sheen's older brother to every chucklehead who crosses my path.

I went back to my position at the bar, ready to pay and be gone. A fresh glass of beer was there, and the bartender waved me off as I reached for my wallet.

"Mr. Estevez, this one's on the house. I know a big star like yourself—or, well, like you used to be—has plenty of cash. But, hey, indulge me."

"But, I'm not—"

And then it hit me—adulation, free food and beer, and now, with nothing to do. Maybe, just maybe, I was Emilio Estevez. I mean, really, who am I to argue?

"Well, thank you, sir. I'll be sure to tell Charlie about your fine establishment the next time I see him."

So the rest of the afternoon and evening followed in the same delusional manner. I regaled bar patrons with tales of *The Outsiders* and *St. Elmo's Fire*, of *Wisdom* and *Another Stakeout*, Charlie Sheen and Paula Abdul. The more I drank, the more I got into it. Reciting lines from the movies, even doing some of the dancing from *The Breakfast Club*. My performance was worthy of free beers and adulation if not an Oscar. Who says I wasn't Emilio Estevez?

The next morning, after returning to my room late the evening before with a spread of appetizers and fresh fruit and, yes, a bottle of champagne on watery ice waiting for me, I checked out, my carriage turned back into a pumpkin. There was a different guy at the desk, looking like grizzled Harry Dean Stanton's Bud in *Repo Man*.

"Thank you staying with us, Mr. Bell. I hope you choose the Hyatt the next time you're in town."

"Hasta lasagna, don't get any on ya," I replied, stealing a line from Emilio's uncredited cameo in *Mission: Impossible*, my head aching from a late night. Bud's smile quickly disappeared and he turned away. Clearly, he should've been around the previous day.

So, the fun was over. Now, I accept the fact that I sacrificed the entire previous day for whatever it was I did to make the world think I was Emilio Estevez. And that I know that was wrong. But if I have to explain myself now, then, well, you're crazy. What does anyone care? Everyone wanted to see me as a celebrity. But what I found out is that, yes, I can be a celebrity, a bar patron, a hotel guest, an asset management specialist, and myself.

I walked out the door, across the street to my car parked in a garage. My fist in the air.

No, I'm not Emilio Estevez. But then again, who is?

