

## PUSHING POWDERED DOUGHNUTS

People get into drugs for all kinds of reasons. It's rarely got anything to do with the actual drug or its effects. Mostly it's circumstance, opportunity, availability, societal pressure, self esteem issues, depression, injury, and a host of other varied excuses.

Me... I got into cocaine because of an idea. A business idea of a sort. Well not even that really. More of an operational epiphany about an industry I didn't have anything to do with. I felt that the idea was too genius to ignore so I followed it to its natural, bitter end.

Which is ironic because the idea was so sweet.

Why not transport cocaine on doughnuts? Those powdered, gem-style ones that come in boxes or bags? Simply replace the sugar with coke.

No one would ever suspect.

It was perfect!

This all occurred to me while I was watching an 80s movie in which someone was transporting cocaine in crates full of coffee beans. Apparently the coffee masked the smell of the cocaine so drug dogs wouldn't find it.

Side note: All 80s movies have something to do with cocaine. Either there is a drug shipment coming in from somewhere, always cocaine, or they're at a party snorting coke, oh what a surprise, cocaine, or the plotting is so contrived that the screenwriter had to be high. On cocaine.

Anyway, I found myself wondering what these coke kingpins did with all that coffee. This was during my first year of college, second semester, and coffee had become my life. Did they throw it out? That'd be a waste. Did they drink it? Hopefully, but that's a lot of coffee.

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Maybe they had a side business selling coffee beans to restaurants or perhaps they owned a chain of coffee shops. Good for laundering drug money I supposed.

How funny would it be if cops ended up buying cups of this coffee? Wouldn't that be something? Cops were always drinking coffee, right? And, like any good cliché, the police imagery brought with it thoughts of doughnuts. Since I already had cocaine on the brain, the doughnuts in my mind were powdered.

And that powder was cocaine.

Had this been done before? I didn't think so. I mean, I had never seen it in an action movie, so it was possible that I was the first to stumble upon the idea.

I wasn't a hardened criminal at the time. Truthfully, I wasn't even a petty criminal, but the more I mused about coke covered doughnuts, the more determined I was to see the idea enacted.

But how does one go from common Joe wage-slave to confectionary cocaine kingpin? I would have to start by getting some coke. This was my assumption anyway. And this meant that I would have to find a dealer. The task seemed a bit daunting, though. Perhaps I should find a user friend first. Then they could hook me up with a dealer.

Did any of my friends use cocaine? I didn't think so.

I needed some new friends.

This took some time. I put feelers out to my current crop of friends to see if any of their friends might have a substance abuse problem. They gave me some very odd looks at first, but I found that if I lowered my voice, leaned in close, and confided that a member of my family – extended of course – was dealing with a cocaine addiction and that I was hoping talk to someone

who had been through it, or was still going through it, then my friends took on an understanding, almost pitying demeanor.

This led to some new acquaintances; both recovered types and all out junkies. I used these contacts to further distance myself from the people who knew me, and met a set of new people. I confided in these new people that I was really just looking to “score some blow.” Apparently the terminology did nothing to establish trust with the habit-ridden so I quickly switched back to “get some coke.”

And that’s when I finally got hooked up with Sam.

Sam was small time. She had an older brother who dealt and he sort of franchised a portion of his business out to her because she’d found out that he was dealing and then threatened to tell their mom if he didn’t cut her in on the action.

She was someone who would see the brilliance of my scheme.

“That’s stupid,” she said, not quite convinced of the brilliance of my scheme yet.

“No it’s not. It’s brilliant,” I said, hoping this would be enough to convince her.

“She’s right. It’s dumb,” said her brother, Phil, suddenly in the doorway, equally confused as to the merits of my plan. “You’ll contaminate your product with grease, lose a significant amount because it will stick to the doughnuts, and it will be really suspicious if you have a box full of powder instead of a sifted pastry. You couldn’t move much that way so it wouldn’t be worth it.”

Phil always talked like he knew so much. He was a second year college guy but still lived at home. So I didn’t think he was all that great.

“But no one would suspect,” I said. “And who cares if the operation starts out small. And we could sell the coke dusted doughnuts to junkies with the munchies.”

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“It ain’t pot, you’re working with here. Tweakers don’t tend to eat a lot. Coke-skinny, you know.”

Actually, I didn’t know. I figured that everyone eats, and we all love doughnuts, so if you liked cocaine you’d love coked up doughnuts. And jelly filled ones. They would be the best.

“Hey. Stay out of it,” Sam said. “And get out of my room. I can do what I want with my share of the cocaine. You’ll still get your cut.”

Wait. Was she siding with me? Had I eaten one of my own jelly-filled coke doughnuts? I must be hallucinating. Wait. That’s not a coke thing. I don’t think so, anyway.

Sam was technically a high school senior but she’d graduated a semester early and destined for something Ivy League in the fall. During her free months she’d been quite entrepreneurial though, earning tuition money with her unorthodox franchise operation.

“You just said his idea was stupid,” Phil argued.

“I say lots of things. ‘That’s stupid’ was directed at Tom. I said ‘stay out of it’ and ‘get out of my room’ to you.”

What followed was a tense moment as the two siblings had a brief stare down. I thought that this was it. That scene in the movies, the stand off where only one person walks out alive. Any moment now someone would pull a gun. Then loud sounds, blood, pee my pants, and sirens the distance. But then Phil cracked a proud smile and just walked out of the room. I didn’t understand this at all.

“Oh my god, that was so—” I started, once Phil was out of earshot.

“Shut up,” Sam said. She bit her lip and took a breath.

I almost asked her what our next move was going to be, but managed to remember her last command. Finally, she spoke.

“I have a customer. He’s unique. Accounts for fifteen percent of my business. I want more like him, but he’s not the sort of person you find by fishing. I think your doughnut idea might be a good way to distribute to others like him.”

I looked at her, questioning with my eyes. Or so I hoped since I was still honoring the shut up decree.

“Tell you what, Tommy Boy,” she said smiling. “Let’s go get some doughnuts and see what we can come up with.”

We settled on two packaged types of powdered doughnuts. One boxed, one bagged. Both of them the gem-style variety. Mouth sized. Our reasoning on this – alright, it was Sam’s reasoning – was that the holes of larger doughnuts wouldn’t really hold any cocaine. The smaller doughnuts didn’t have holes as much as they had indentations. These indentations rarely went all the way through. A lot of coke could hide in those pseudo holes. There was the added benefit of smaller units of sale. Not everyone could afford a full-sized doughnut of blow.

Still, more importantly, was the packaging. The material of both packages was white so the cocaine would blend against it. It would be harder to verify volume at a quick glance so we could layer the bottom with a quarter inch of white for larger customers. Both also had small cellophane windows which gave the illusion of complete perceptibility but actually concealed a great deal while psychologically implying the opposite.

Sam had long suspected that her Fifteen Percent buyer was redistributing to others. Selling product to him in this new doughnut manner would force him to deal it out in the same way. At first he had a big problem with this, but she offered him a sizeable initial discount and

that won him over. What she didn't tell him was that she'd added a beeper number to the side of the box in hopes that his customers might see it and they, in turn, would give her a call.

I kindly suggested that this was far fetched. She then informed me that Mr. Fifteen Percent was a cop and that he probably sold to other cops and that cops were known for their deductive skills.

The mention of cops puckered my butt.

"Calm down," she said, "It's no big thing. Police officers are some of the biggest pushers and users around. They have a steady supply of product and are legally charged with taking it away from their competitors."

"So why do they need you?" I asked.

"It's like this. Security around evidence lockers has increased. There's a big push going on that targets this type of corruption. Don't you read the paper?"

"Yeah. Snoopy and Farside. Calvin."

"God, you're an idiot," she said. "There's a lot of attention focused on cop-dealers right now. And sure, bribes to security details still happen, but it's more expensive and quite a bit more risky. So they approach small time dealers, buy from them at extortionist prices. Or just plain intimidate them. That's how I was approached. Cop busted some kid I sold to. He rolled over on me. The cop threatened to run me in if I didn't pass my product along to him. But I don't roll over that easy. At all in fact. So we talked terms and worked out a pretty sweet arrangement for both of us. Part of the deal was that I would limit my operation."

"Wait. I thought you said we were expanding?"

"Right. But if other cops should happen to find me, how could I be expected to refuse their requests? That would put me at risk for getting busted. If I got busted then I would have to

roll over on Mr. Fifteen Percent, wouldn't I? So it will be in his best interest if I expand when that happens.”

And it went down just like she said. A few calls trickled in from interested parties. We filled their orders as inconspicuously as possible to avoid alerting Mr. Fifteen Percent. Turned out that it didn't really matter. The doughnuts were such a huge hit with his clientele that he soon became Mr. Twenty-Five Percent. Our roster of ex-cops – retired or working security gigs – and current but corrupt officers kept growing.

Convincing Phil to increase his, and subsequently our, supply of cocaine was a bit more difficult. But after a few minutes of shouting at each other he caved – happily it seemed – and Sam got what she wanted.

We diversified our pastry offerings as well. Full-sized doughnuts and jelly-filled, all powdered of course, were now financially feasible.

And then, like in all the drug running movies I'd seen, just when we were rolling in it and getting overly cocky, our empire came crumbling down.

It was that old cliché of cops and doughnuts that came back to bite us in the ass.

An honest cop, holding a strong cup of coffee that was desperately in need of a companion pastry, had the audacity to go rooting around in a fellow officer's desk. An officer who was frequently seen eating those delicious looking powdered doughnuts.

The honest cop was a hefty man so he wasn't exactly shocked at the heart palpitations he was soon experiencing. Unfortunately he was muscley-fat, generally fit despite the extra weight, and didn't die of cardio infarction. When a toxicology report came back positive for cocaine he probably did have a real heart attack, but this didn't kill him either.

It was a huge scandal. Decorated cop hospitalized after cocaine overdose. They always called these things overdoses in the news. It was nothing of the sort. Anyone unknowingly ingesting cocaine would probably check themselves into the hospital.

Our business actually increased after the event as a redoubling of efforts to eradicate evidence locker dealing further shrank the available supply for addicted officers. Unfortunately, this also increased our arrogance. Little did we know that Officer Heart Attack had some friends. Good cops. Clean cops. They didn't believe for a second that their comrade would go in for nose candy. They united to form a secret task force whose mission was to ferret out the real guilty parties.

Eventually they came after us.

We were in the process of buying a bakery. Sam said it would be a good way to launder our dirty drug money. It would allow us to do custom orders for big parties. I'm not sure what she had in mind. Maybe someone would pop out of a giant, coke-filled doughnut, completely covered in powder, and the partygoers would... What? Snort it off his or her body?

I made the mistake of mentioning this thought to Sam and she punched me in the chest. I never did find out the rest of her long term plans.

It was providence, of a clichéd sort, which helped the good-cop task force to track us down that day. The owner of the bakery had a close relationship with several officers. That whole cop/doughnut thing again. She found it suspicious that a high school girl and her college-aged toady were making an offer to buy a bakery and offering a large cash down-payment.

I was hurt that she thought of me as Sam's toady. Would it have been such a leap to assume that I was Sam's boyfriend? Not that I wanted to be her boyfriend. Sam is kind of scary.



Anyway, the cops set a trap for us on the production floor where all the mixers and ovens and doughnut conveyers were. I don't know if they were trying to catch us talking about our plans or if they just meant to ambush us. We were being anything but discreet as to our intentions so they had ample opportunity for evidence gathering.

"Check this out," Sam said passing me a tray of doughnuts.

"What are they?" I asked. Not really needing an explanation as I lifted one to mouth.

"Jelly filled," she said as I bit into it.

"Yeah?" I said, shrugging. Not really understanding whatever it was that she intended me to get. "It's good."

"Look at the texture. Those aren't your standard smooth-topped jellies. Check out that crisscrossing pattern they got. Plenty of places for cocaine to hide."

"Oh," I said. And took another bite.

"And wait until you see—" she started.

But she never got around to showing me what I should see.

"Freeze! Doughnut smugglers!" a deep, electronically amplified voice shouted.

Now, I am not one hundred percent positive that the term "doughnut smugglers" was used. I know that there was a some string of syllables, but after the "freeze" part of the command I was too busy trying not to pee my pants to adequately encode the words into memory.

Sam was better suited for such a confrontation and ducked between two mixing vats then pulled a small handgun from her jacket. An agreement will never be reached as to whether this was the moment that my bladder let go or if it was when shots were fired.

I'm pretty sure Sam fired the first shot.

She was holding her gun up over the edge of the mixing bowl at one point. Firing blindly.

I shrieked like a little girl and flinched so hard that the tray of doughnuts I was holding flew up into the air. Most of the gunfire was over before the last of the airborne doughnuts hit the floor. I'm told that only single shot fire-arms were involved in the exchange but it sure sounded like a gang of machine guns taking on a rival band of Uzis to me.

My strategy of standing perfectly motionless, frozen with fear, did not spare me from injury. I was shot twice. I wasn't fatally wounded, though the amount of red that spattered across my chest and arms had me convinced that I'd been turned into hamburger.

I wasn't.

It was jelly.

It seems that Sam had inadvertently (or vertently; I never really trusted that Sam) positioned me between herself and the weapons of all those angry officers. Also finding themselves between the two opposing sides were the recently airborne jelly-filled doughnuts, of which the armed exchange had a most unfavorable result. Namely their being indiscriminately ripped apart by high velocity rounds.

The violent deaths of the jellies accounted for the spattering of red that had so disconcerted me. As for my wounds, a bullet grazed my hand, possibly as I lifted it into the line of fire to quake effeminately at the side of my head as I screamed. The other was a solid hit on the right side of my ass. It passed through one cheek, skimmed across the void of my crack, and imbedded itself in the butt meat of my left side.

So, either a wild ricocheting round from one of the cops, or a purposely aimed piece of disciplinary justice for a naughty drug pusher. Considering that Sam was to my right though, I

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feel I must place blame with her for that particular injury. She swears that she never targeted me and I am inclined to believe her. She was shooting blindly after all.

The butt-wound pretty much countered the stand-motionless strategy I had going and I soon found myself on the ground. Some would say I swooned, but I prefer collapsed due to gunshot.

On the floor I was free to panic about all the blood (jelly), and it wasn't long before I slipped into shock. This was good though because it helped calm me down a bit. Everything became slow motion. The sounds of bullets twanging off machinery echoed nicely and bags of flour erupted like tiny ash volcanoes as stray rounds tore into them.

It was nice.

It was tranquil.

I noticed how cocaine-like the little flour clouds were and this got me thinking. Perhaps we'd done it all wrong. Instead of dusting doughnuts with coke, maybe we should have transported the drugs disguised as bakery supplies. Not flour though. It was a little too yellow. Powdered sugar would've done the trick. A whole bag of coke hidden amongst bags of confectioner's sugar. But no, I was sure that had been done before. Didn't I see it in some movie? A TV show? Still, I kept thinking that we could make it work. If we survived the gun fight.

And then I thought about powdered sugar's other uses. They make frosting out of it, don't they? Hmm... Would cocaine mix into a similar paste? Would it ruin the drug if we did that? If it didn't, we could decorate cakes with coke-frosting.

No one would ever know.

It would be perfect!

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