James Don't Drive

J. M. Smig

It had been a bad day in court for James.

He had spent the day defending his client, a Russian resident alien who was in the country on a student visa but got popped for selling his ass and an 8 ball of coke to an undercover cop in a Providence bath house.

The case against his client appeared to be hermetically sealed and made of solid steel. The bath house had a security video with an image so clear that the jury could see the points of the Russian hammers and sickles tattooed on each of his client's butt cheeks.

James attempted to get the charge dismissed on grounds of entrapment, arguing that the cop came first, but In the amount of time that it would take a one-legged man to put on a pair of pants, the jury came back with a guilty verdict.

James drove to his regular watering hole and was now drinking frozen mudslides like McDonald's shakes. Frank the bartender, a tall Sicilian with frog lips that could suck the husk off a coconut, poured another one as James sat back in his chair and attempted to balance his miniature spoon keychain on the arc of his distended stomach. James' client, who had also been his primary dealer, hadn't yet paid him anything beyond his retainer before being whisked away to a detention facility to await deportation. It looked like the rent was going to be late again.

James heard the door open and his nose was assaulted by patchouli and mothballs. His neck creaked as he rotated his head.

It was the Dancing Fool. The Dancing Fool was a middle-aged art school dropout and a registered sex offender of an undisclosed nature. He had a hairline like St. Francis that he attempted to hide by growing his hair to his feet and tying it back like a Samurai. He never bought a drink but would gravitate to the open floor in the middle of the bar and just dance and dance and dance, twirling and jerking like a ballerina on blotter acid until Frank would get fed up and give him a choice between hitting the bar or hitting the road.

The only reason that he was allowed in the bar at all was because he usually had a delivery for one of the regulars. The Dancing Fool made a living as a runner for Little Vinnie and a couple of the other local hoods. He also made extra money selling drawings of boy scouts to a retired Army sergeant who worked as a counselor at the YMCA day camp and always insisted that the boys be drawn with Japanese eyes.

The Dancing Fool grooved to the jukebox as he shuffled toward James like Michael Jackson moonwalking in reverse. This time, he had a delivery for James.

The two of them went into the mens room and crammed into a stall. While two queer soldiers on furlough got it on in the adjacent stall, James dipped his pinky into the small bag of powder and put it to his tongue.

There was so much baking powder cut into it that he could use it to make pancakes. He pulled out his cell phone and called Little Vinnie. He had paid up front and wanted his money back.

Little Vinnie wasn't picking up. No matter. He had done enough pro bono work for Vinnie's family in the past to know where to find him. He knew that this was the night that Vinnie was running illegal duck fights in the back of his body shop.

As James drove to the body shop, he called Scott, his backup dealer. "No dice", he was told. Scott proceeded to explain that Vinnie was giving hot food stamps to all the Mexican kids in the neighborhood in exchange for shoplifting all the baking powder in town. The law of supply and demand was forcing the other dealers to sell it pure at cut price, depleting inventories faster than normal. "How about some nice homegrown Purple Urkel instead?"

From the unlocked rear entrance to the body shop, James could hear quacks and cheering. A crowd of old men and gangbangers stood in a circle goading two malnourished ducks with razor blades taped to their bills. James saw Vinnie in the corner and put a gun to his head. Vinnie laughed and called his bluff.

Before Little Vinnie could call his goons, James pushed his way through the crowd and scooped up one of the ducks. He made a mad dash for the door, Vinnie's goons following him in hot pursuit, but he held them back by swinging the duck like a machete.

James escaped, peeling out of the parking lot like a snake out of old skin. He knew what he would do. He would hide the duck and hold it for ransom.

But he needed a place to hide the duck. He knew the perfect place. He couldn't think of a better place than his mother's house. His mother worked for the archdiocese. Little Vinnie wouldn't dare cross the church.

James drove to the house and used the spare key hidden under the porch Madonna to let himself in. His mother was in the kitchen making dinner. James flopped down on one of the chairs at the kitchen table, dripping blood and sweat. As his mother turned around in surprise, he noticed that there were two plates set. He didn't realize that she was expecting him.

"This isn't for you. I have a new boyfriend and he's coming for dinner. He's gonna be here any minute."

Just then, the doorbell rang.

"That must be him."

As his mother went to answer the door, James' nerves began to unravel like the waxed line of a broken fishing rod as he stared at the dead duck hanging limp by its neck from his closed fist. On the way in, he had managed to rip the blade off of the duck's bill but barely realized that he had snapped its neck in the process. His leverage was gone.

The sweat froze in place on his face as he heard a click and felt a gun press against the back of his head.

"You killed my duck." He turned to see Little Vinnie scowling at him as he aimed the gun at his face. His

mother casually walked back into the kitchen and drained the pasta that had been boiling on the stove.

"Vinnie", she asked in an indifferent tone as she "Why is he still here? Didn't you cut it with rat poison like I asked?"

"James, you ain't gonna drive me crazy no more."

Now James don't drive
'cuz James can't drive

James can't drive
'cuz James ain't alive.

So be careful who you cross
and don't be dumb
'cuz you never know
who might be bangin' your mum.
Motherfucker!

Lyrics Submitted by Larry Rick

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