Parking Ticket Parable

or, how to lose your court case because of other people



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I once got a parking ticket for parking in my own driveway.

It was one of those situations where I had a garage, and space in front of the garage that would fit a car, and then the sidewalk, and then the curb cut.

I also had a very big car at the time. Very long SUV. A station wagon in its past life.

There was a period where the classic mess of a garage got so messy that I had to park my vehicle out front. I'm also that person who backs into parking spaces, because in the morning, I'm sure as hell not going to spend valuable time on my way to work *backing up*.

I digress.

Anyway, I got the ticket and pretty much knew that I wanted to fight it, if only on the principle. Because I was parked in front of my garage, and I had enough of a driveway that people could pass in front of my car, I took pictures and felt I had a case. It may or may not have helped that I was working part-time, so the traffic court date could be planned around a relatively flexible schedule.

(Actually, given how little control I had over how I was scheduled, I probably got lucky on the hours.)

Don't remember how much the ticket was. I dressed up.

I was big on bow ties at the time. Still am, but I'm rarely dressing up nowadays. Still, coming from a family of lawyers on my mother's side, I have some lingering respect for due process, judicial proceedings, etc.

Court Date

When I got there, I was maybe tenth on the docket? So I saw a couple funny things along the way.

I don't remember what judge of Jersey City, but he had encyclopedic knowledge of the streets, which was to be expected when you're a judge presiding over traffic court for a long time. My favorite memory of him is hearing the case of a woman who pled guilty over the ticket on a moving truck. And I *think* he asked if she was even the driver. To which she admitted she was not? Okay, the funny bit which only I laugh at in the theater of my mind is this judge telling the woman she was not guilty, and when she confusedly asked for clarity (she thought she was cooked), the man yelling *"Run!"*

Now, I probably didn't have a strong case. But enter this piece of work.

Some guy.

A total wannabe man's man.

Who rolled up with the same kind of case. "I was parked in front of my garage and got a ticket."

Except I'm paraphrasing. He was *belligerent.*

Some argument broke out about it. Can't recall if the judge passed down the guilty verdict and that's what set the guy off, or if the judge started scolding politely, and this complete and total jerk activated jerk mode.

Anyway, he got the guilty verdict and a reduced fine. Didn't deserve the reduced fine, but you get that as a courtesy for showing up before the judge.

Couple dockets later, my turn.

You could tell my judge was still in a bad mood, but he opened up with a smile. "Look at this young man wearing a bow tie. I really appreciate someone who still dresses up for court. How do you plead?"

"Not guilty."

"What charge?"

I let out my breath, because I already knew I was cooked. "For parking on the sidewalk."

I think he deflated too.

Found me guilty, but did me the courtesy of reviewing my pictures and pointed out that the length of my car probably got cited for going past a neighboring building, which had a garage but no driveway and no option for a driveway. Bad luck on my part, but you know what? I was going to take the reduced fine with grace, go straight home, and clean out the garage so I could park my giant SUV in there again. I'll be mad on my own time. Womp womp.

Anyway, I had to pay it there and then. So I left the courtroom, hopped into the line, paid, and stepped out.

And there's the jerk. Hanging around?

"Hey man, can you believe this judge?"

I was pretty aghast. Even with some grace that what happened happened, I was pretty pissed about the fine and the pressing need to

go clean my garage ASAP.

But this dude did the exact opposite of help by arguing with the judge, whom the rest of us still had to stand before. And the audacity to roll up to me afterwards, expecting some pity party of complaints about the trouble he caused us? I couldn’t get out of there fast enough.

That leads me to my entire point, about causing problems for good people you don't even know and ruining their chances at things working out.

Maybe don't be this guy, America.

To Do

Whiskey Dogs hasn't seen any forward process in beta reading, but I've been reading *And The Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic* by Randy Shilts to understand where AIDS started in society and if the differences between our history and the urban fantasy timeline of Whiskey Dogs actually makes sense. I'm...eerily creeped out to find that it does. We'll see if that requires some edits on my part once I finish the book.

Oh, and good news: I've picked a cover artist. So production moves forward!

January had a couple of newsletters, but I'm settling into the hard parts of my new job now and need to slow down the pacing for a second. So you get one newsletter per month moving forward.

The Whiskey Dogs sequel made some headway. And by that, I mean I threw out 2k words because I'd taken the story in a certain direction too soon.

Oh well,
Nico