Killing Dennis Gauda

by tommy klehr

I killed him. I know you probably don't believe me, but it was an accident. I'll bet everyone in this room knows Dennis Gauda.... or should I say knew him? He was District Governor a while back. He also won quite a few speech contests. Yes... he's competition, but I swear it was an accident. Let me explain.

After the last conference, I was in my car leaving Hotel Utica. Mr. Gauda, as I heard he preferred to be called, was leaving with a few colleagues to go get lunch. As I pulled out into the street, they stood ready to cross. I stopped back away and waved them by. Smiles and waves were exchanged. It would be rude to drive in front of fellow ToastMaster pedestrians, right?

They walked across the street, lollygagging, and as they did, a small plastic bottle fell out of Mr. Gauda's pocket. I stopped the car, got out, and picked it up. It was a bottle of conditioner, marked *Compliments of Hotel Utica*. I called out to Dennis, but his parade kept marching. I jumped back in my car and turned left, following them. At the next intersection, I stopped once again as they prepared to cross in front of me. I rolled down my window and called out “Dennis... you dropped this!” “That's Governor Gauda to you, punk!” was his reply. And then he gave me the finger.

As the group walked in front of me once again, Mr. Gauda mocked me, daring me to hit him. Playing along, I took my foot off the brake, letting the car jerk forward. I did it again, but this time, my foot slipped, I swear it, and the car raced forward, striking him and running him over. The rest of the parade continued on their way, merry unaware that their leader was lying under my vehicle.

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I didn't know what to do. I hadn't run over anyone before, so I didn't know the protocol. I now know that I shouldn't back up. I didn't know it then.

Pop. Crackle. Snap. I reversed over a Gauda-sized speed-bump. I got out to see if he was okay. He wasn't. Far from it, as it turns out.

Luckily, nobody saw anything. Or at least nobody cared. It was Utica, you know.

What to do? What to do? I know. Put him in the back of my car. Take him someplace. Get rid of the evidence.

Some of you know that I am lazy. He was now in front of my car, and I needed to get him into the back of my car. He wasn't getting any deader, so I drove forward again. Crunch.

I jumped out again and I carefully picked up all the pieces and threw them into the back of my car.

I began driving away, my head racing, thinking of where to take his remains. As I drove up Genesee Street, I saw a bloody hand reaching up in my rear-view mirror. I stared at its reflection, shocked at what I was seeing. The rest of Dennis Gauda's body crawled together, yet independently, out of the back and rested right beside me in the passenger's seat.

“Give me my conditioner!” the head screamed. The bloody hand snatched the bottle from the console. The other hand leaped at it and unscrewed the cap. The first hand threw the bottle towards the head, its mouth wide open. The bottle landed on his extended tongue, which snapped back into his mouth. His eyes rolled back into his head as he sucked down the contents of the bottle.

I continued driving, yet I stared at the events transpiring next to me. The body parts started moving back into place. A bright light pierced the dull day and when my eyes readjusted, he was whole again.

“That's Governor Gauda! Must get more conditioner!” He reached across me and opened the door. He then shoved me, showing much agility from one so recently reassembled, from the moving car and sped away down Genesee Street.

When I came to, I found myself lying on the side of the street right in front of the Munson Williams Proctor gallery. I went inside.

While staring at the Pollock painting, I overheard the security guards talking about the incidents of that afternoon. I learned that Mr. Gauda drove through the streets of Utica in my stolen Subaru, stopping at every hotel and stealing complimentary bottles of conditioner from any unattended cleaning carts and empty bathrooms he could find.

Let my story be a warning to you. If you see Mr. Gauda here, first of all do not call him “Dennis.” And, more importantly, do not let him into your bathroom if you want to keep your hair shiny and tangle-free.