

Death by Lawn Jockey

by

Jim Grigsby

Jagger Pinella stepped over the body, lit a Macanudo Robust cigar, and left for kindergarten. Twenty minutes later, surrounded by the buzz of energetic, chattering five year olds, he helped a stocky, redheaded boy wrestle out of his backpack. A shrill “Mr. Jagger!” penetrated the noise.

“Yes Bonita.”

“Khalil picked his nose and chased me with it”

Jagger chortled. “Khalil, go wash your hands and keep them to yourself. Understand buddy?”

“I was sharing!”

“We don’t share nose pickings.”

“You are not my friend!”

When Jagger glared the teacher’s glare, Khalil stomped to the bathroom, screaming, “I’m not happy!”

Looking across the room, Jagger noticed his aide working hard to appear busy, “Karlita, could you watch the class for a minute?”

She bit a dry, cracked lip. “Why I’d be *delighted* to!”

Jagger waved dismissively and walked hurriedly down the hall where he entered a janitor’s closet. He snaked through the clutter, rested against a stand-alone locker, and punched a speed dial number, speaking the instant he heard a voice; “Can you sanitize my condo?”

“You have the wrong number sir; this is not a maid service.”

“Think *Pulp Fiction*, Mr. Wolfe.”

Odell’s grin reached out and touched Jagger. “You mean ... I mean, for real?”

“Yes. Your wildest, wettest dream has come true. Can you take care of it right away?”

“I’ll change into *Pulp Fiction* boxers and get right on it. You are the best friend a man or dog could have.”

“Thanks much.” Jagger stabbed the end button. *Pulp Fiction* boxers?

Reentering the classroom, Jagger was pleased to find no casualties. Instead he saw seventeen happy faces focused on a *Blue's Clues* video, while Khalil sat alone in the time out corner, facing the wall.

Jagger slipped into his chair and replayed a mental video of the morning's events. A loud banging interrupted his breakfast bar and TV news. At the door was his twin, Brick, who looked and smelled like a disaster refugee. After exchanging semi-pleasantries, Brick made a call and handed the phone to Jagger, who listened to the nasally, Midwestern twang of a probation officer. He tossed the phone back to Brick, who ended the call with a cocky, "Later dude."

Brick's cockiness dissolved as Jagger's hands enveloped his windpipe. "Care to explain, brother?"

Brick shrugged as well as a man can while being held by the throat. "Let me go."

Jagger complied, then crossed his sinewy arms. "Let's hear it."

"Dude, it was nothing."

"You consider indecent exposure and lewd conduct *nothing*?"

"Cool it Dick Cheney! Couple months ago I was at an outdoor concert, went into the woods with the most awesome blonde." He cupped both hands in the universal 'large breasts' signal. "Some cop wannabe flashed his little Magnum on us. While I finished satisfying another customer, he radioed his equally perverted partner, so he could watch too. The rent-a-cop sickos got their jollies watching us, watching her dress, and hauling us in. I got supervised probation, no biggie."

"Being a sex offender *is* a big deal. I live three blocks from a grade school, where I teach. You can't stay here; in fact you need to leave right now."

"Et tu bro? Abandoning me just like Mom?"

Brick snatched a crystal candy dish from the bar and hurled it at Jagger's forehead. Angry that he missed, he lowered his shoulder and charged Jagger, ramming him into the fireplace. Jagger's head bounced off the mantle; he reeled and groped for the fireplace tool stand but missed and tumbled to the floor. Seeing Brick's foot flying at his face, he rolled right, stopping next to a weather-worn, chipped lawn jockey. While struggling to his feet, Jagger wrapped both hands around the statue's torso and swung it like a stubby baseball bat. The muffled thud of lawn jockey hitting human skull was followed by Brick hitting carpet.

Shouts of “A clue! A clue!” splintered Jagger’s thoughts. The noise soon diminished and his thoughts drifted to the lawn jockey; a family heirloom - a reminder of the day his grandmother met the man she would marry. “I was thirteen, out looking for my dog, Boo, and this guy was picking apples from our tree. I grabbed the lawn jockey and when he climbed down, I went upside his head and dropped him straightaway! The next week when his concussion cleared, he apologized to my daddy and started courting me.”

Hearing the *Blues* theme song, Jagger rubbed his hands together. “Hey, who wants to finger paint?”

As Jagger and Karlita helped the kids into oversized and stained painting shirts, Odell whipped his dented and patched Cadillac ambulance into Jagger’s parking space. Wriggling through the passenger side window he spotted a stunning blonde with her face pressed against the condo door’s small window.

Odell straightened his leather jacket, smoothed his khakis, and marched imperiously across the lush lawn. “Good morning my good woman. I am Mr. Pinella’s executive valet; might I assist you in some manner?” *Should have worn formal briefs.*

She didn’t respond, just pointed. Odell followed the line of a slender and well manicured finger pointing to a spot in front of the fireplace. And a body. She gasped, “His name is, or was, Brick Pinella.”

Odell opened the door and twisted his squat body into the door frame. *Oh no!* “Ma’am, that appears to be my, uh, employer, Jagger Pinella.”

The woman peered over his shoulder. “No that’s Brick Pinella; a scumbag from Ohio. He’s wearing the same clothes he had on yesterday – dirty, torn jean shorts and a ‘Born to Run’ tee.”

Odell’s thick fingers fumbled to speed dial Jagger. “Houston, we have a problem.” *Didn’t think I’d need NASA underwear today.* Relieved to hear Jagger’s voice, he blurted, “There is a woman here who says the body that looks just like you, is in fact, one Brick Pinella. Could you clarify sir?”

“She is correct. It’s Brick, my twin.” Jagger exhaled loudly. “Who is the woman?”

Odell spun to face her. “Ma’am might you provide a name for me relay to my liege?”

“Tanith Santo. And you are?” *My liege? This is one odd character.*

He shrugged and resumed his call. “She purports to be Tanith Santo. Sir, might I request your presence, forthwith?”

"I'll be right there."

Jagger arrived twelve minutes later; after introductions, he led Odell and Tanith to his patio, where he related the morning's events, his eyes never leaving Tanith.

Odell smirked. "You offed him with a lawn jockey? I can see the made for cable movie now, 'Twin Killing'." He grinned at his wit.

Jagger inclined his head toward the inside; "Weren't you going to *sanitize* the scene?"

Odell aimed his head tilt at Tanith. *Wonder if there are Jeopardy! briefs?*

Tanith crossed her long legs at the ankle. "Guys, if you are concerned about me calling the cops, don't be - he's not worth it. I followed that maggot here to confront him." She half smiled. "Yesterday, I informed Brick that I am pregnant and he asked me to "fetch him" a glass of water. Before I could walk the ten feet to the kitchen, he bolted out the door.

"Later I drove to his apartment and saw him toss a duffel into his car; so I decided to follow him. Drove all night and he never saw me, not even at the gas stations. When he entered your place, I decided to wait a few minutes before knocking. I fell asleep and woke up just before your *valet* arrived."

Jagger ignored the valet reference and stroked Tanith's arm. "Brick would have been a lousy father; you and your child will be infinitely better off without him. His sense of responsibility ended at, heck, it never began."

"I guessed as much."

"I teach kindergarten and see the effects of lousy dads every day."

Tanith's green eyes flashed. "You teach kindergarten? What an amazing coincidence, I graduated kindergarten!" She smiled warmly and stroked his fingers.

Odell realizing he was not needed sauntered into the condo, ready to fulfill a dream. *Wonder if I can find some Three's Company shorts?*

"Tanith, how long did you know my brother?"

She gazed at sandaled feet. "We met at a concert a couple months ago."

Jagger nodded knowingly. "I guess you won't name the baby Woody or Ranger?"

Tanith laughed and rubbed tired eyes. “Jag, I could use a shower, a nap, and a change of clothes. Could I impose on you? Once Odell does his thing, that is.”

“You are welcome to stay here as long as you want.” He caressed her hand. “Look, unlike my brother I’m not an irresponsible idiot....”

Tanith placed one finger on his lips. “Shhh. Jag, I’ll stay as long as you convince that you are different than the not so dearly departed. Besides you are a gentleman and much sexier- you have a working brain.”