

SLOW DRINKERS,
GIANT BALLBAGS
&
SMELLY BASTARDS

A NOVEL

Matt Micros

*“It is one of the blessings of old friends that you
can afford to be stupid with them.”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Also by Matt Micros

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**SLOW DRINKERS,
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&
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For old friends and a lifetime full of memories...

This book is a work of fiction.
No part of the contents relate to any real person or
persons living or dead. No events depicted actually
happened or are implied to have happened.

I THE END

Jim Reilly woke up dead and he was really pissed off about it. He snapped open the paper while sitting on the can, the way he did every morning, and found himself staring at an old picture of himself in the obituary section on Page 6. It wasn't even a good picture.

Jim Reilly, 45, of Stratford, died suddenly yesterday of unknown causes. A lifelong sports enthusiast, Jim was a New York Mets season ticket holder for 15 years in the seats directly in front of Jerry Seinfeld's suite. They spoke five times during the games they attended together, but he believed they had an unspoken mutual admiration, even though there was no logical reason to believe that. Jim was a novelist in his free time, when he wasn't working for the Town of Stratford in their Park and Rec Department as a youth league coordinator. His books had sold a grand total of 42 copies, when he decided to take matters into his own hands and buy a few hundred copies, which drove him high enough up the Amazon Best Seller Lists to get recognized by people who would not have otherwise seen him. The response was nothing short of amazing, as he went on to slowly grow a following that helped

him sell two million copies over the next year. And yet, he never moved out of the small home he had shared with his wife of twenty years, the pre-deceased, Sharon.

Jim believed in accountability instead of excuses, kicking off from the 25 yard line, paying people exactly what they were worth regardless of the demand, and he was vehemently opposed to baseball managers removing a good player from a game due to a righty-lefty match up. He also believed that he could do nearly any job in the country better than anyone who currently did them, and had no problem sharing his ideas with anyone who would listen--along with a few who would have preferred not to.

He is survived by a brother, Sam, whose whereabouts is unknown, and millions of fans spread around the globe, who are encouraged to attend the funeral service, as no one should be buried alone. In lieu of traditional calling hours, there will be an Irish Wake held at Finnegan's Pub in New Haven on Saturday night from 5:00pm til close."

"What the hell?!" Jim grouched, as he quickly folded the paper back up and reached for his cell phone.

He called the contact number on the inside of the paper. Someone answered on the 5th ring.

"Obits and op-eds," the voice said.

"Hello. This is Jim Reilly calling. This morning, you guys ran an obituary for me, but as you can hear, it was a bit pre-mature. I'm clearly not dead."

"Interesting. Well, we just run what people give us to run," the man responded.

"Who gave it to you? It had to be submitted online. You should be able to trace the payment or server," Jim insisted.

"Let me have a look. What was the name again?"

"Jim Reilly. James Reilly."

"Forty-five years old from Stratford?"

"Yes."

"It says here it was actually dropped off in person along with the payment."

"But who paid?"

"That it doesn't say. Paid in cash apparently."

"Cash?? Who pays in cash these days?" Jim asked.

"Apparently this person did."

"Well, you need to write a retraction."

"I'm not sure we do retractions."

"What do you mean you don't do retractions?"

"We've never had someone come back from the dead before."

"I was never dead. Someone is obviously playing some sort of sick joke."

"I suppose if you can get us proof you are alive, we might be able to get something in next week."

"Next *week*?? People will be upset. Some might even be hysterical. You need to take care of this straight away."

"Let me talk to my boss. This is a bit unusual. Not sure what we would call it. Obituary comes from the Latin word, obit, which means death."

"Call it a Vituary then. From the Latin word for life! Just get this sorted!" Jim huffed as he hung up.

He immediately dialed another number.

"Aaron Harrington," the voice on the other end answered.

"It's Jim. What are you up to?"

"I'm at work," Aaron said, sounding puzzled.

"Can you break away?"

"I suppose so. Is everything ok?"

"No. But I'll explain when I see you. Let's meet at the Sitting Duck in 20 minutes," Jim said.

The bar was a local watering hole whose clientele hadn't changed much in the past 20 years. Dark, not necessarily dingy, but not immaculate either. Jim grabbed a table near the back of the bar and ordered a Guinness while he waited for Aaron. It was a bit early for a drink, but surely if there was an occasion that warranted it, it had to be your death. He skipped the customary greetings when Aaron arrived, opting instead to shove the paper in his face and point to the article in question. "Read this."

"Well, hello!" Aaron exclaimed. "Haven't spoken to you in weeks. Haven't seen you in months, but let's skip the pleasantries and shove a paper in my face."

"Just read it," Jim insisted.

Aaron glanced at it casually at first, before a bemused look overtook his face as he read on. "Is this some kind of joke?"

"You tell me," Jim answered.

"Whoever wrote this has you pegged pretty spot on," Aaron laughed.

"What do you mean?"

"Just mean that whoever wrote it must know you pretty well. So who did write it?"

"I have no idea. The person paid cash and dropped it off in person. And the paper is saying it could take a few days to get a retraction in."

"Well, I wouldn't worry too much about it. After all, you are alive. And I don't think most people our age tend to scour the obits on a daily basis. We're not 90."

"It only takes one," Jim insisted. "Then they tell someone, who tells someone else. With social media the way it is these days, the news could already be everywhere, and I don't want people wasting money flying clear across the country to attend my funeral."

"People don't fly across the country to attend a wake or funeral. They send flowers. But you might want to try and reach your brother just in case."

"Should we post something on Facebook?" Jim asked.

"Like what? I'm not dead?" Aaron laughed.

"Well, yeah."

"Look, I think you're looking at this all wrong," Aaron said. "You've got the opportunity to attend your own funeral. While you're alive no less.

How cool is that?"

Jim appeared to be thinking about that. It was an intriguing concept. "What if no one showed up? That would be pretty embarrassing."

"I wouldn't rule that out as a possibility," Aaron said. "You have been kind of a salty recluse for the past few years. "Don't get me wrong," he quickly added when he saw Jim's face turn sour, "I understand why."

"I have not been a salty recluse," Jim responded defensively.

"You don't go anywhere. You don't do anything. You haven't written a word since she passed away.

"She was my wife. And the love of my life."

"I get that, but she was my sister and I loved her too. And I *know* she wouldn't have wanted us wallowing in misery at her leaving us. If you're honest with yourself, you know that too."

When Jim didn't respond, Aaron took that as a small victory.

"Tell you what," Aaron said, "I'll make some calls to see what I can find out. You should call your brother. And let's plan to go to this wake."

"I'm not going to the wake. That's creepy."

"It's the least you could do for the people that show up."

"I didn't invite them. I didn't tell anyone I was dead. I don't owe them anything."

Not taking "no" for an answer, Aaron said, "I'll pick you up Friday at 4:15 so we can get a table in the balcony. It's good to see you out and about."

Jim watched his brother-in-law leave while slowly sipping his Guinness. He touched the name "Sam" under his list of contacts and held the phone to his ear. After the 4th ring, Sam's voicemail picked up.

"You've reached Sam. Unfortunately, I can't get to the phone right now because I'm probably scaling Mt Everest, bungy jumping in the Everglades, whale watching in Cabo or some other crazy shit like that."

But instead of a BEEP that would allow Jim to leave a message, the voice message said the voice mail was "full" and "could not accept any messages."

He pressed the red button to end the call and continued to slowly drink his beer.