

# Spare Tire

by Smiley McGrouchpants, Jr-Esq-III

Miles to go.

MacLean gripped the steering wheel — Allistair MacLean, “not the novelist, just some douchebag” as he'd delight in telling people, clearing *that* up, for sure — and remained transfixed on the needle pinioning the speed between 75mph and just under 80.

He really should watch the road more.

Some thing might come up . . .

He pushed harder *down* on the accelerator, then let is up . . . as though it would do anything. He car, indifferent machine, took in more gas and revved and stopped and went back to normal.

Wouldn't get him anywhere. Was just a passing fancy.

*Three hours, three hours . . .*

He settled in for the rest. His bones creaked. His car didn't seem to care, even about itself.

He had no-one to talk to.

*(Or did he ... ?)*

Pull in at the next rest stop, he figured. There just might be a phone there.

“Martin! Martin.”

“Allistair.”

Martin was a little runt who talked as though he were making public statements all the time 'cause went to Harvard. But, MacLean needed to know something.

“How's the weather out there?”

“Getting rained on.”

MacLean was getting rained on, too. This was getting weird.

“Look, I know you said when you retired — ”

“Save it. I didn't.”

*That* changed things.

MacLean hung up the phone He'd just as soon not talk to him, then.

Somebody *must* know a way out of this . . .

2 hrs., 45 min. and *counting* . . .

The speedometer was staring to pick up some extra weight on the needle (again, out of MacLean's frustration and inadvertently — he didn't need to make extra time), when he saw the lights flashing in his rearview mirror.

*Fuck!* His hands tightened on the steering wheel as he loosened, absurdly, his foot from the accelerator pedal. (*Futilely*, that is!)

*What now!* he thought, like a goddamn idiot, chiding himself like a fool giving himself a slap upside the head. *Last thing I need is a shootout!*

Play it cool, play it cool . . .

"Hello Officer! Oop — " (rolling down the window; gave him a chance to reel t in, play it real.) "Was I speeding?" The grin wasn't too forced. *I hope.*

"No, I just need to see your license." *No dead body in the trunk, don't worry.* "And registration."

"Sure thing!" he said, phony as a cheap cigar, hoe it didn't sound like he was screaming. *Should have stayed on the phone with that prick* . . .

He turned to look after fumbling for the documentation in his glove box, to see a gun pointed at him.

"Get out."

(Not MacLean's best day ever!)

"Wha - wha - wha . . . *what's* the problem officer?"

"WILL YOU GET OUT OR SO HELP ME I WILL SHOOT YOU IN THE FUCKING FACE!" The gun wavering, but leveling again.

MacLean got out.

“Steeeady . . . steeeady . . . ” The cop's gun was wavering. So were MacLean's hands, held in the air as they were. He was moving, vaguely. His heart was hammering in his chest.

“Now what . . . ” The cop cocked the hammer. “I . . . *said* . . . keep . . . 'em *up!*” though MacLean hadn't averred from his instructions. The gun was starting to shake again. That made MacLean very nervous.

The cop reached with his foot and . . . *pushed!* the door closed.

He holstered the gun immediately.

“Now *what* . . . the *fuck* . . . are you supposed to tell me?” MacLean didn't know what to do.

Improvise.

“Uhh . . . *yeah.*” Long, drawn out. Bought him some time — the time it took to *say* it. MacLean thought he was going to start wetting his pants. “*Yeah.*”

“Higher-ups”

“What?”

The cop just looked at him. MacLean knew that hadn't been wise but he'd truly been caught off guard. His brown sweated droplets threatening to drop off the end of his nose, but he dared not move.

“Higher ups *send* you” the cop said.

“Yeah. Yeah.”

The cop took out a cigarette, like it was something to do, flicked a green Bic lighter a couple times to get it lit. Put his hands back on the car, breathed out the cigarette smoke.

“Thought so.”

MacLean didn't know what to do.

THE END

