

You slam on the brakes and pull the wheel hard to the right, the sounds of horns blaring from every direction. OK, that one was too close, way too close. That other driver didn't even look before changing lanes. They call them the express lanes, but you think "extinction lanes" is really more appropriate. Today seems worse than usual. Almost like it's Celebrate

psychotic

Driving Month or something and you're in the parade. No matter. You're almost at the restaurant. A very chic, very you-know restaurant that you cannot afford. It is here that you are meeting your **well-intentioned** friend whose cousin twice-removed is in town. Cousin needs a date. Cousin is just right for you! your friend claims. Sure. That's what your friend said about Dream Date Y last month. The dream ended at the police station. Don't ask. "Sorry," you tell your friend, "I'm booked."

Friend laughs.

Friend knows you are never booked. An hour later you're cruising for parking. Five blocks. Six. Seven. Eight. Suddenly, you see it. A space. A real, live legal parking space. With...can it be? Time left on the meter. You slow to a stop. Flip your blinker. Stick your arm out the window for good measure. Sure, it's a tricky parallel parking problem, but hey, you're a mathematician. You calculate, then begin the backup. Suddenly out of nowhere, it comes: a cheesy little red sports car zipping into your space, the driver laughing maniacally.

Your blood pressure rises.

The jerk. You start to pull away but suddenly remember. Well, of course. You smile. Pull out your laptop. Connect the modem to the cell phone. Go. Ahh, there it is. OK, download. Now, display. Virtually out of nowhere a police officer materializes. She gestures at Mister Sports Car. "Move this vehicle now, sir." Mister Sports Car argues, but the police officer is firm. You watch as Mister Sports Car reluctantly pulls away. You smile. Log off. Power down. Parallel parking is tricky. **Damn, that's good software.**

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