

FANG'S VACATION

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"Hey 'der Fang mon," the greyhound said as I hauled my diving gear down the dock toward the boat rental pier. "Haven't seen you around in a few months."

"Well my job's been a real pain in the rear, know what I mean?" I grinned, pulling my shades down my nose.

"Sure do," The hound shrugged, "I've been fixing up my boats all day. Bunch of tourists; t'ink dey know evert'ing about boating, and not one of 'em been in the water before! Had t'ree smack into each other just trying to get out the cove!"

"Well what can ya say?" I chuckled, "Some people think they were born with a know-it-all degree in their hands. I hope nobody's smashed up my regular, though."

"No problem. Kept her nice and safe in dry dock, repainting. She's all yours." I rummaged through the pockets of my green swim trunks and fished out a fifty dollar bill and dropped it on the stand counter. I spotted the orange motorboat and hauled my gear up to it. Loading up the boat, I sighed in relaxation as I gunned the motor and headed for the islands in the sound off the city's coast. After the monster case I'd pulled recently, I'd decided to take some of the vacation I'd been saving up for a long time. All my bills were paid, I didn't have any appointments, and according to the papers, crime in the city was the lowest it'd been in months. This Doberman was hanging a "Gone Fishin'" sign on his office door.

Of course, fishing wasn't the only thing I had planned when I tossed all my gear in my trunk. I turned off the boat motor and threw out the anchor as I came between a small island and the reef that surrounded the sound. Whistling to myself, I grabbed my wetsuit and pulled off my T-shirt. Unstrapping my sandals, I wrestled with the rubber overalls and jacket; putting on a wetsuit wasn't as easy as some people made it out. My diving teacher had said it was the easiest part. Then again, he was a crocodile; his scales didn't cling to the rubber like my fur did. After about a minute of stretching that would have given a yoga expert a hernia just to look at, I finally zipped up the suit. I decided to forego the hood; the last thing I needed was something getting caught around my face when I was underwater. Next came my fins and dive knife. Finally, I hauled on the tank and vest. Clipping the buckle, I made sure the mouth piece wasn't clogged. Pulling down my goggles, I sat down on the edge of the boat, grabbed my mask to keep it from sliding, and fell backward into the water.

No matter how many times I dive, it never gets old. The experience is like being on another planet (although many have said I'm ALWAYS on another planet, and some that I'm FROM one). It's something that's hard to describe; seeing a totally new environment that is home to a whole spectrum of creatures and plants. There isn't anything on the land that can't also be found underwater: there are vast sandy stretches with no plant life, huge chasms as deep as the Grand Canyon, and caves that rival

anything a spelunker could hope to explore. I watched as schools of fish moved with the precision of a marine drill team and Moray eels dart in and out of their holes like Jack-in-the-boxes, snapping at them.

I checked my air supply after an hour, noticing that I was getting low. I slowly started up. You never want to shoot to the top of the water after staying under a long time; the bends are something that I've heard can lay a person up for the rest of their life. If not, depressurization is a long, boring process of waiting around in an iron cell. Grabbing the side of my boat, I inflated my flotation vest and unstrapped the tank so I didn't have to haul it up with me as I climbed back into the boat. After getting all my stuff back in, I flipped open a cooler and yanked out some bottled water. Draining it, I revved the motor back up and headed back to the marina.

As I was passing by the beach, I noticed a crowd on the boardwalk. Slowing down, I pulled up closer. I watched as two guys, a raccoon in a pair of jogging shorts and no shirt and a horse in a vest and jean shorts, were standing on either side of two air tanks. They shoved the hoses into their mouths and began blowing up. The crowd started hollering and cheering as the two ballooned and stretched, their guts slowly pushing them up higher and higher. The raccoon stood, well squatted really, with his arms crossed and a smug grin. The horse was clenching his fists and trying desperately to keep up. Finally, he spat out the hose and rolled over on his back, panting. He'd reached fifteen feet in height, but the raccoon kept going up to about eighteen, according to a nearby chart.

"Oh yeah!" the 'coon said, pumping his arms. The horse grunted and snapped his fingers, deflating. The raccoon also returned to normal, picking up a wad of cash under a paper weight. Curious, I docked the boat and slipped my sunglasses on. "Hey," I said, tapping a gryphon on the shoulder, "what's this?"

"That guy over there says he can balloon better than anyone, and is laying two-to-one odds on anyone willing to challenge him."

"Really?" I grinned. I wasn't a compulsive gambler, but I never passed up a good wager, whether it was a card game, dice game, or competition. I sidled through the crowd.

"C'mon," the 'coon said, his back to me, "There's got to be SOMEBODY that's a challenge!" I walked up to him and slapped him on the back. He spun on his heel. I smirked as I pulled out some money. "Fifty," I grinned, "says I'm full of hot air more than you." The raccoon laughed as he pulled out a bill and stuck it under the weight with my bills. He tossed the empty tanks to one side and pulled out some fresh ones from a stack to one side. "C'mon," he said, "put your hose where your mouth is!"

I yanked off my T-shirt and rammed the hose into my mouth. The 'coon followed suite, and we each put a hand on the handles of our tanks, eyeing each other like it was a quick draw contest. Quickly, we each twisted the knobs and started ballooning. I crossed my arms and rested them on my expanding gut. The raccoon was making weird gestures

at me; first pointing at me, then at himself with his thumbs. Unless I missed my guess, he was saying “you’re mine”. I grinned and arched my eyebrows over my shades. I had already reached about ten feet, and my belly was probably half again that in diameter. My limbs had bloated, and I had to slide off my sandals before I busted the straps. The raccoon was keeping pace, not for one second phased.

“Wanna up the ante?” I thought. Grinning, I turned to the side and bent over slightly. Grabbing the handle with a swollen hand, I twisted it even more. The ‘coon’s grin dropped slightly, then he also bent over and twisted his handle. I gave my head a small shake; the sap had no idea what he was getting into. I’d been practicing lately, and had increased the elasticity of my skin. I’d increased my maximum inflation limit considerably.

I kept swelling, the ground getting farther away. I decided to forget standing and just sat down, my legs spread to make room for my massive girth. Both I and the raccoon hit fifteen feet, and didn’t slow down a bit. The crowd was hollering louder than ever. We both hit eighteen feet. Now my opponent was starting to sweat a bit. I kept a cool head, albeit with a smug grin. We were getting pretty high, and I was starting to get a bit dizzy from the air. The ‘coon was showing definite signs of wanting to quit. Both our bellies were still getting bigger, our fingers and toes swelling and splaying. Finally, at twenty feet, the raccoon sputtered around his hose, and spat it out! The crowd roared as I kept going, deciding to show off my expertise, and didn’t stop until I hit twenty-five feet.

I spat out the hose and gave the crowd a toothy smile, waving my hands like I was on parade. Reaching up a hand, I deflated, hitting the ground with a thump. The ‘coon had already deflated, and was sprawled on the ground, quite dizzy. I strolled over to the paper weight and grabbed the bills. “You’re good,” The racoon said, focusing his crossed eyes somewhere in my general direction.

“So are you,” I chuckled, giving him a hand up. “Just keep practicing.” Pulling my shirt and sandals back on, I shook a few hands in the crowd as I cast off my boat and returned to the marina. After turning the keys back in, I walked the boardwalk. It was a perfect day for being at the beach, and the crowds proved it. Volleyball games were in full swing, guys were racing jet skis (something I’ve never really seen the attraction of), kids were playing in the sand, all the favorite beach activities.

As I was walking along, I happened to spot *Sand Castle*, the biggest boardwalk arcade on the coast. Grinning, I decided to see if anyone had beaten any of my high scores yet. I changed a five spot at one of the quarter machines. Arcades around the country are all the same; dimly lit, filled with beeping, buzzing, digital explosions, and plenty of other noises. “Good thing I’ve got my shades,” I thought, “Or I’d go blind from all the flashing lights.” At least a hundred video game screens are blasting images at you from ten different directions at any given time in that place. Finally, I picked out one of my regular games, *House Of The Dead 2*, one of those first person shooter numbers where you blast zombies and mutants. Waiting for the highest score screen to come up, I was shocked to see I’d been left in the dust!

“I’m gonna fix this,” I muttered, shoving in two quarters. Grabbing the light gun, I put one hand behind my back and took aim at the screen. “Come and get it suckers,” I grinned. The next forty five minutes were spent in blowing away the digital walking dead. I gathered a bit of a crowd behind me, encouraging me to show off. I tossed the gun from one hand to the other, blasting away. Then I pulled off a shot with my face turned away from the screen. I pulled another shot under my arm, then one under my leg. By the time I was done, I’d hit the No.1 high score. After graciously accepting a small smattering of applause, I checked my watch. Seeing that it was getting on to evening, I packed it in and headed for home.

The sun had finally set, and there was just a hint of twilight left on the horizon. I grinned to myself as I gathered up my tools. I’d been planning this gag for three weeks, and was just itching to see my victim show up. Sure enough, as I raised my binoculars up and checked the roof of the building next to my own, the roof door opened and the sucker of the evening stepped out.

“Oh yeah,” I snickered to myself, “that’s right, come on, let’s go....”

“Dude, I don’t think Janet would like to see you eyeballing some chick in her undies,” said a voice behind me. I jerked around. Jason was leaning against the door of the roof of my own building with his hands in the pockets of his jean cut offs, no shirt, and a smug grin on his face. I guess the way I was crouched down behind the low wall along the roof edge did kinda make it look like I was a peeping tom.

I motioned for Jason to be quiet as I crawled back away from the edge. “I’m not spying,” I said. The blue dragon just cocked one eyebrow at me. “Okay, I am. But not on a girl.” Jason gave me a wide eyed stare. I realized how what I had just said sounded and slapped a hand to my forehead. “Urgh,” I grunted. “Look, it’s easier to show you. C’mere.” I motioned for him to get down beside me at the edge. Handing him the binoculars, I pointed at the roof only thirty feet away. A gryphon wearing a hat made out of tin foil in a shirt with an alien on the front and yellow shorts was setting up about five telescopes and three automatic cameras. He had a lunatic look in his eyes and two pairs of binoculars around his neck.

“Jase, that’s Myron. He’s one of those alien conspiracy nuts. I’ve had my sights set on him for a while now, and I’m just about to spring my latest prank on him.” Jason turned to me with a childish grin. “Ooooh, yes! Can I watch?!”

“So long as you do two things: 1. Keep a lid on it. 2. Don’t stand in the way.” The blue dragon gave me double okay gestures. I rubbed my hands together in anticipation and pulled a cloth off of a small bundle I had stashed behind the small cubicle that held the roof door. It had a model rocket, a launching stand, a trigger mechanism, a road flare, and some electrician’s tape.

“Here make yourself useful,” I said, tossing the stand to Jason, “set this up, please.” Jason snapped everything together while I tapped the road flare to the rocket so it was pointed down toward the bottom. I stuck an engine in the bottom of the model and set up the fuse.

“All set,” whispered Jase, setting the stand down. I carefully put the rocket on the stand and double checked the wires. Carefully adjusting the nut at the bottom, THIS nut aimed the rocket so it would fly about fifteen to twenty feet over the roof where Myron was currently jumping from one telescope to the next, ever vigilant for Martian invaders from planet Zeebo.

“So what’s the joke?” said Jason, scratching his head. I grinned at him. “You ever wonder how some of those alien nuts would reach if they were to actually see a spaceship?” Jason took one more look at where the rocket was pointed and broke out an ear to ear grin. I grimaced myself as I double-checked the connections. “Myron is about to have a close encounter of the PRANK kind.”

“Ready?” I whispered. Jase had his hands clapped over his mouth. He nodded. Bending over, I started the countdown. “T minus 5....4....3....2...” I jerked the tab on the flare. It sputtered to life, spewing sparks out it’s top. “1..liftoff!” I stabbed the rocket launch button. The rocket hissed then shot off it’s stand, screaming over Myron’s roof and, actually, directly over his head with about seven feet to spare, looking like a flying fireball leaving a trail of red sparks and smoke.

Myron’s eyes shot out of his head. He began barreling around in a circle, screaming something that sounded like “THEY’RE COMING THEY’RE COMING THEY’RE COMING...” and flapping his arms like he was trying to take off without his wings. He began running in wider and wider circles until he finally ran into the flagpole on the roof of his building and got knocked on his butt.

Jason and I, meanwhile, were beside ourselves. We collapsed against the edge of the roof, watching the gryphon race around like he had ants down his shorts AND with a look on his face like he was about to have explosive diarrhea. I laughed until tears began pouring down my face. I collapsed against the side of the roof and laughed so hard I couldn’t make any sounds, just a hiccuping noise from my throat. Whenever I ran out of breath, I’d take a huge inhale and let out a big whoop, then start hiccuping again. Jason was on his knees, holding his side like he had a stitch in it, making a rattling cackle like a machine gun. He rolled over on his back and started pounding the roof with his fists.

Myron, meanwhile, had gotten back up. Our laughing had carried over to the other roof and he had spotted us. “What the....?!” the gryphon started.

“Stick around,” I hollered at him, “Maybe they’ll come back and ask you to take them to your leader!” The gryphon took this in, then guessed what had happened. What Myron started screaming at us I won’t repeat, but somebody from a different apartment building threw an empty soda bottle at him and said if Myron ever used that kind of

language where his son could hear it again, he'd put him in orbit. By that I mean Myron, not his son, although it was pretty obvious the guy was tempted to launch his offspring into outer space since it sounded like the kid was running around the apartment, gleefully repeating every dirty word. As Myron got into an argument with the other guy, Jason and I did what every veteran practical joker knows to do: slink away at the first chance with your hands clapped over your mouth to stifle your hollers of mirth.

"Dude, your gonna be in so much trouble with your neighbors tomorrow." Jason whispered as we headed back toward my apartment. "Ah," I shrugged, "So what? They'll complain to Chen, and he'll just say: 'Well what you expect? Fang is plivate investigator. He no have leal job!'" Jason threw both forearms over his eyes and gave several guttural sounds of amusement. I always bragged that I could get a laugh out of the blue dragon. But then again, I am talking about the guy whose idea of dry humor is dumping a pail of sand down someone's pants. Not that Jase doesn't laugh at intelligent humor, but you'll see him laughing at someone breaking wind in public a lot more often.

"So what have you been up to, man?" I asked Jase, tossing him a soda.

"Oh, not much. I went around this morning seeing just how hard those restaurants enforce that 'no shirt, no service' policy...."

"Jason, your rep around town's bad enough as it is."

"Yeah whatever. So I went to one of those Jamaican food stands and started chatting with this babe."

"Let me guess...."

"But then her boyfriend showed up," we both said at the same time. If there's one thing that blue dragon is good at, it's managing to spot a girl that's already got someone. Once, he actually hit on a girl that was wearing an engagement ring! Let me stress, however, that the light in the room that time was bad and he had on sunglasses.

"So you got anything planned tonight?" Jason asked, taking a pull from his drink.

"I thought I'd see 'The Lord of The Rings'."

"AGAIN??! Dude, you've been to that, like, five times!"

"Well, once is never enough for any movie, except a bad one."

"So then what's the max?" Jase said, crushing his soda can against his forehead. I shrugged. The dragon shook his head. "Well, you remember Diane?"

"That girl from our inflation poker nights? Sure."

“Well, she’s found this cool night club. I was gonna take her down there and wanted to know if you and Janet wanted in too.”

“Sure, I don’t see why.....wait a minute. Jase,” here I cocked one eyebrow, “what kind of club is this?” The dragon mumbled and answer. “WHAT KIND?” I said again. “It’s a....” again with the under-his-breath answer. “JASON.”

“All right, a balloner club.” He said, rubbing his neck. I shook my head. “Man, you know how I feel about those places.”

“Oh yeah? I hear you took a drag on a hose today in public.”

“That was different.” I said immediately. Jason crossed his arms and looked expectantly for an explanation. My eyes darted from side to side. “I’d....already scoped out the crowd, and it looked okay. Those clubs attract the weirdos who enjoy our hobby Jase, you know that. Nutcases that’ll come up and put their hands on you when you don’t even know them.”

“Hey man, you know I keep it clean. Besides, Diane says this place is really careful. They screen everyone before they let them in. And if anyone gets complained about, they toss ‘em out and never let ‘em back in. Plus, they’ve got private booths and stuff, as well as public areas. C’mon man, whaddaya say?” I scratched my muzzle. Private booths.....tight security.....we’ll see.

I went over to the phone, hitting the speed dial for Janet’s home number. It rang three times, then her sexy voice came over the end. “Hello?”

I held up a hand to quiet Jase, then held my nose to disguise my voice. “Yes, I found your number on a bathroom wall. I was wondering what you think is ‘a good time’?”

The end was quiet for a second. Then... “Either you’re my boyfriend looking for a bop in the head, or I’m calling the police.”

“Oh, you’re too slick for me, honey,” I chuckled.

“I thought so! Mike, one of these days I’m gonna get you for all these pranks. So, what’s up?”

“Well, Jason just came by and wanted to know if you and I wanted to go with him and his girlfriend Diane to a club they found. Oh, sweetie.....it’s a balloonner club.”

“...Mike, are you serious?”

“Well, Jase says it’s supposed to be really secure, not to mention exclusive.”

“Define exclusive.”

“They toss out anyone the second someone complains about them.”

“Mmmmmm, sure, why not!”

“Sounds great, we’ll pick you up around...” I turned to Jason, who held up his fingers. “...seven-ish.”

“I’ll be sure to wear something....flexible.” Janet said coyly.

“Rowr,” I snickered.

Jase had to run back to his place to get something on that was within the club’s dress code. I changed into my blue short-sleeve shirt, blue jeans, and sneakers. I was just about to get in my car when I heard a horn. I looked up. Jason was in one of his numerous Hawaiian shirts, same cut offs he was in before, waving me over in the driver’s seat of his dune buggy. “Well,” I thought as I vaulted into the passenger seat, “might as well go in style.” Jase slapped a C.D into his radio. Jase and I may agree on a lot of things, but music isn’t one of them. I go for Classic rock, a little techno, some dance music, movie soundtracks, and classical. Jase, on the other hand, goes for just about everything else. Heavy metal, hip hop, rap, you name it. Fortunately he shies away from the stuff with dirty lyrics, but still the music he does play gives me a headache sometimes. As we went down the road, he was drumming on the steering wheel, bobbing his head with the music. I, however, folded my ears back to try and muffle what sounded like a truck full of empty garbage cans crashing into a burglar alarm factory.

“Hey look no hands!” Jase said. I turned sharply. Jason didn’t have his hands on the wheel! “JASON!!” I roared. He laughed as he took the wheel again. “Psyched you out!” He laughed.

“If you weren’t my best friend AND weren’t driving I’d strangle you!”

“C’mon, lighten up!” the dragon grinned.

“At the club,” I snickered. Finally, we pulled into Janet’s driveway. I was about to get out when Jason honked the horn. “Hey sweet thing! Your chariot awaits!” Several windows opened. I slid my shades back on, got back in the buggy, and hunkered down in the seat, trying to be invisible. Janet came out the front, shaking her head. She was in a gorgeous number; orange T-shirt that showed off her chest, green shorts, and tan sandals.

“Oh baby,” I grinned at her, “you look good enough to eat. But you need just one thing...I know!” I reached into my back pocket and pulled out a flat jewelry box. Janet’s eyes widened as she opened it and saw a bracelet with ten garnet stones in it; her birth stone. Janet slipped it on around her shapely wrist, then kissed me in a way that seemed

to make the earth stand still. She threw me a wink and I felt my insides melt as I held out a hand to help her in the car. Picking up Diane was something to see. Jason pulled up underneath her apartment window and blew a shrill whistle with two fingers. The red dragoness started down the fire escape, dressed in a tight yellow tank top and brown shorts. When she got to the last floor of the fire escape, she called out “Catch me!” sat down on the rail, and dropped over backwards! Jason was right underneath her, and caught her all right. However, I think he got a hernia, judging from the look on his face.

The dune buggy came to a screeching halt in the parking lot of “The Tank Bank”. A three story, glass-and-steel building, it’s front sign had a pair of crossed air tanks and a fair sized line at the door. “Oh yeah,” Jason said, vaulting out of his ride. He rubbed his hands together “my kind of place!”

“That’s not a good sign,” Janet said to me as we followed the blue dragon to the door.

“Let’s at least take a look inside. Then we’ll cut and run if need be,” I whispered to her. A couple of bouncers were screening each person as they went in. A sign by the door, however, stated that previous customers and their guests went first. Diane moved us up to the head of the line and showed them a receipt. While one bouncer went to check all our identities after taking our payment at the door, the second one, a muscular fox, was trying to chat Janet up.

“Hey sugar, I get off shift in half an hour.” he said, eyeing her up and down. I held my temper in check, but I was sorely tempted to grab the fox, bruiser that he was, and thump his skull.

“What a coincidence,” Janet said, “I’ll be with him,” she gave a nod in my direction, “in half an hour.” The second bouncer returned and waved us in. Just as I was bringing up the rear, the fox turned to me. “Jeez, you are one....”

“.....Lucky dog. I know.” I said, grinning.

“The Tank Bank,” was set up like several night clubs I’d been in before, but this time there wasn’t any liquor being sold; there were different types of stuff to inflate with. Helium, Oxygen, Nitrous Oxide (with warnings to take it in doses, since inhaling THAT stuff in vast quantities is dangerous), among others. Dance music was playing over a loud speaker, as flashing lights lit up a dance floor on which several couples were grooving while ballooned. In one corner a group had gathered and several nutcases were having a competition, much like the one I had been in. The bulk of the first floor was set up with several metal cylinders with numerous hoses coming out of them with special tips that looked like they were designed to fit in a mouth comfortably. On each one was a digital key pad where you selected the stuff to inflate with.

“I hope they sterilize those things,” Janet said.

“Hey honey, don’t worry,” Diane grinned, “They change those things after every customer.”

Desiring a bit of privacy, we went up to the second floor. The top two floors had been designed with private booths. Well, they weren’t really booths, more like entire rooms. Each one was a semi circle about fifty feet deep with optional curtains. The insides were padded, and there were numerous piles of bean bags around, as well as another inflation cylinder.

“Fang, party of four?” Jason said, flamboyantly ushering us into one of the booths. Just then, a voice over a loudspeaker announced that there was going to be a dance contest in two minutes, and anyone that wanted to sign up had to do so at the front desk. Jason and Diane disappeared almost instantly, knocking over several ballooned patrons in their rush to sign up. Janet and I, however, opted to just watch them. Janet took a seat on one of the bean bags with her usual good posture. I, however, decided to kick my shoes off and go for a lounging sprawl that took up about three. Figuring that since I was in Rome I might as well do as the Romans were doing, I took a hose and punched up straight air on the console; I didn’t really feel like using helium. Once, I went a little overboard with that stuff and wound up bouncing along on a ceiling until I could find a handhold to get down with.

“Well Jason certainly doesn’t waste time,” Janet said. I glanced over the railing. The blue dragon had jammed two hoses in his mouth at once and was bloating like crazy. His shirt came unbuttoned and his gut swelled until he was at least fifteen feet around. Diane followed suit, her stomach pushing her buxom chest up close to her chin.

“No he doesn’t,” I chuckled, sticking the air hose in my mouth and taking a long drag. My shirt parted company with my belt, as my stomach grew as big around as a beach ball. Like every time I inflate, I felt the pleasant tickling sensation from the inside.

“Now me,” I said, getting Janet’s attention, “I prefer to take my time.” Her eyes widened a bit, then she smirked and took a hose of her own. She took it delicately between her lips and swallowed. Her belly bulged and stretched, pushing her shirt up and swelling out. Not to be outdone, I took another drag, my belly expanding out and my arms and legs growing a bit as well.

Janet gave me a coy look, fluttering her eyelashes, and kept right on going, swelling in the bust as well as the stomach and limbs. My own feet, which I had spread to make room for my girth, were puffing up and splaying my toes.

“Well don’t you have an inflated ego?” Janet giggled, still inflating. She was easily as big as me, even though she’d gotten a later start.

“And now for our next duo of the evening: Jason and Diane!” The announcement over the speaker made me stop inflating and try to give some applause with my bloated hands. The two dragons bounced out onto the dance floor. Jason signaled the D.J, who started up some sort of Latin music. Jason and Diane had some difficulty joining hands, their bloated stomachs getting in the way. Still, they managed somehow. Squeezing

together, they didn't seem to even touch the floor; heck, they probably weren't touching it! They took a quick bounce forward, then back, then Jason gave Diane a twirl. Diane's shoulder-length black hair flew out, buffeting Jason in the face; he seemed to enjoy it. The dragoness stopped with her back to Jason, who was holding her sides, unable to get his hands around her belly. He hoisted her up over his head, spinning on his heel. Once the blue dragon stopped, his partner slid down behind him. He turned back toward her, taking her by the hands again. They started doing what looked like a fast-paced tango, until Jason suddenly went down on his back, letting go of one of Diane's hands. The dragoness was pulled gracefully, to an extent, on top of his gut, balancing on her own.

The music stopped and the crowd went wild. I wasn't able to stand up, so I resorted to holding a bloated finger and thumb to my mouth and letting out a shrill whistle.

I didn't get home until around midnight. Collapsing on the couch, I fell asleep immediately. It was around eight the next morning that I woke up. Stretching and scratching, I took a quick shower and changed into my usual clothes. When I got to my office, my vacation, however short, had renewed my interest in my work. I picked up my fedora off the desk and adjusted it on my head. Just then, the phone rang. "Ah well," I thought to myself as I picked it up, "back to the old grind."