

# Harv and Vera's Adventures



by pshrynk  
with assistance from the llounge llamas

Vera stepped off the veranda into the heat of the Panama City night.

"To Hell with Harv!" she muttered. He was nothing but trouble, anyway. Why, he couldn't even get that damned boat of his to stop leaking, even after three barrels of pitch and an entire sailcloth.

She sauntered down the path leading to the American Zone, thinking she needed to have some fun and the navvies there were certainly her type of fun. She wanted it and she wanted it bad! And nowhere else in Central America did they make peach cobbler like the ones in the Enlisted Club.

*zelda\_pinwheel:*

*oh, bravo!*

*...so what happens next? a lot can happen in panama city at night, you know.*

*Nekokami:*

*Will it involve squid? That's what I want to know...*

*Yvanleterrible:*

*Yes, the one next to the blue fish.*

*ShortNCuddlyAM:*

*:applauds:*

***Originally Posted by zelda\_pinwheel***

***a lot can happen in panama city at night***

*That would make a good first line for the next installment :),?*

*zelda\_pinwheel:*

*Quote:*

***Originally Posted by Nekokami***

***Will it involve squid? That's what I want to know...***

*i think that's the question in the forefront of \*all\* our minds, right now.*

***Originally Posted by ShortNCuddlyAm***

***That would make a good first line for the next installment :)***

*i believe you may be right about that. :rolleyes:*

Slapping her feet down in an agitated tattoo, Vera reflected back on her relationship with Harv. He wasn't really all that bad, at least not for a man who had been morphed into a squid at least once. And there had been that time he'd flown his Grumman Goose all the way up to Lake Managua, just to get her a bouquet of rare and endangered (probably extinct, now) orchids. He just did not understand the needs of a woman, though. All that romantic stuff went only so far. Every now and then, she needed a man to go out and kill a polar bear or something. "Next thing you know, he'll be saying how rare polar bears are this close to the equator," she sniffed. Just like a man.

She turned her head toward the Canal Zone, hearing the faint tinklings of a really bad knock off Dorsey Orchestra. Probably playing at the Officers' Club, she thought. The Enlisted Club had to make do with phonographs of the real thing.

*zelda\_pinwheel:*

*well, i'm torn. on the one hand, this new installment of The Ongoing Saga of Vera is eminently karma-worthy. on the other hand, pshrynk's karma is currently the elegant, rotationally symmetrical number of 21112, and i don't want to spoil that.*

*so i'm posting this comment instead, to express my extreme appreciation of this latest literary triumph, and my unabated anticipation of the next episode.*

ShortNCuddlyAm:

*Fixed that for you :p*

zelda\_pinwheel:

*well, now that it's been spoiled anyway, i might as well add my own. ;)*

pshrynk:

*21234 is sorta cool, too!*

zelda\_pinwheel:

*i'm glad you like it. i did it on purpose.:)*

The gate guards were typically friendly as Vera sauntered through. She nodded at them, with her blinding smile, her curls bobbing with the effort.

As she passed the main pumping station, she thought she heard voices coming from the back. She knew that many adventures started out with some dimwitted dame poking her nose in where it doesn't belong, but she felt strangely compelled. She walked around the station and was surprised to see that nice Mr. Miyatake from the flower shop on Avenida 5 talking with another Asian whom she did not know. They were holding a large satchel between them, as if it was very heavy.

"Mr. Miyatake! What are you doing back here at this time of night?" The words escaped her mouth before her brain had the chance to sit back and think about them.

"Ah. Miss Vera. It is so unfortunate that you should see this. I am afraid I must now have my associate here deal with the situation."

Vera turned to run away and opened her mouth to scream. The small man with Mr. Miyatake was fast, however. Faster than a damsel in distress' scream, apparently.

As consciousness fled her, she thought, "Oh, Harv! I wish I hadn't told you to go drown yourself!"

GeoffC:

*Clouds of enlightenment spoke eloquently through the ether, as lieuse came alive and the ongoing saga of the E-reader naming thread reached great heights never before seen on MR. The Birth of The Cool was a painless affair, especially to the Kindle from Amazon. There were further unutterable utterances of silliness and then in the brightening gloom within the light at the far end of the tunnel, there emerged, undefeated, unbowed and utterly lost for words ... Vera ....*

Montsnmags:

*I wrecked it on purpose. I'm in that kind of mood. (Forgive me, boo?)*

Vivaldirules:

*I'm so happy. :bigsmileydogthing:*

Zelda\_pinwheel:

*you and me both.*

Vivaldirules:

*Just to let you know, I'm working on the next several episodes of Vera and Planet Head. There will likely be pastry, finally, in the next one. In the meantime, I can't wait to read what happens next to Vera in Panama! And someone's adventures with Vera and squid. And more??*

Zelda\_pinwheel:

*:clappinghandsandbouncingonchairtoexpressextremejoy:*

Taylor514ce:

*PlanetHead? Who is he? Sounds like an egomaniac.*

Zelda\_pinwheel:

*it's about time you showed up.*

Vivaldirules:

*Nah. Vera and Planet Head is just a story of Vera and a sad and mildly dysfunctional android with a cavernous cranial container. Either that, or it's a story of Vera on an alien planet where sexual perversions are the norm. I haven't decided which, yet.*

Taylor514ce:

*Are you trying to tell me that there are planets where sexual perversions are NOT the norm? Sorry, but the key to good SF is to start with a plausible premise.*

Harv Wallbanger woke up with a start. Something was wrong. Years of being a bush pilot had honed his senses to a fine point. Yes. Definitely . Something wrong. Maybe it was the silence of the usually raucous tropical birds. Or the lack of sounds of ship engines as they traversed the Canal. Or, just maybe, and he was sort of guessing here, it had to do with the fact that his face was nearly underwater.

He sat up straight, hitting his head on the mast of his little sailboat. Why was he all wet? Oh. Right. The Leak. The damned leak that had plagued him for weeks on end. No amount of patching fixed it, and many of the things he did just made it worse.

He plumbed the depths of his sodden brain, trying to figure out why he was sleeping in his sailboat and not, say, in his plane, or even at Vera's. Oh. Right. Vera. He tried to recall the argument they had had the night before. He tried to remember the night before that he had had after the argument. He vaguely recalled being told to go drown himself.

"Well, she'll be happy to know that I can almost do *something* right," he mused as he jumped out of the listing boat onto the shore where he tied off his plane.

At least that didn't leak.

Zelda\_pinwheel:

*brilliant !! harv is a lot sexier than i remember him... bush pilot ? sailboat ? even a leaky one... i was wondering when he was going to appear on the scene. now what happened to vera during this time ?? i know vera can take care of herself, but nonetheless our last episode left her in a very perilous situation !!! i'm a little worried !!! will she be saved by an amorous squid ?*

**Originally Posted by Patricia**

***The British used to punish convicts by sending them to Australia which, from Marc's account, seems rather pleasant.***

***Perhaps Hell is even nicer than Australia.***

*there's a comforting thought...*

Harv pulled the sailboat onto the shore with the pulley system he had rigged weeks before. It was just more convenient to have it handy. He dabbed at the place he thought the leak was coming from for a few moments and tried to forget about Vera.

Giving it up for a bad idea, he turned and strode to the railhead. Maybe a few peach tortes at the Enlisted Club would help him get over his funk. After jumping on the train, he settled down for the fifty minute ride to Panama City.

He got off the car at the Zone terminus and strode resolutely toward the Base. By God! He would be rid of the thoughts of Vera before the night was over!

Stalking past the guards, he nodded in their direction. It was always good policy to stay in their good graces. As he walked past where the pumping station used to be, he was struck by the oddity that it was no longer there.

"Wallbanger!" cried out a familiar voice.

"Why, Lieutenant Colonel Biggles! How lovely to see you! Pray tell, why is the pumping station no longer there?"

"A very good question, my dear boy! It would seem that we have saboteurs in our midst. Blew up to all Hell and back last night. Right under our very noses!"

"What? With all the guards you have standing around?"

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*COLONEL BIGGLES !!! in the ongoing saga of harv and vera !!!! the lounge really is just one giant, intertangled thread, isn't it ?*

*hmm, sabotage... danger ! excitement ! mystery ! adventure !*

*can't wait for the next episode. thanks for the bedtime story.*

Harv looked over the hole that once was the pumping station.

"But why the pumping station? All it did was bring water to the Base to run the fountains. I would think that they'd have gone for the locks, if they wanted to make a big impression."

"A good question that!" replied Biggles. "And one for which I shall have an answer shortly. Just as soon as I make it up!"

"Were there any casualties?"

"Well, there was a great deal of blood right over here," pointed out Biggles. There was a puddle of blood. It wasn't really all that big. But Biggles was prone to exaggeration.

But there, next to the puddle was a ring that was very familiar. It was Vera's Super Secret Captain Midnight Decoder Badge ring that she never went anywhere without!

"Oh, holy crap!" cried Harv, "Vera!"

He ran towards town. Where, he was not sure, but he was a man of action and needed to take some, right now.

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*i love this story. :)*

*(oh, and it's your fault i'm up so late tonight, because i popped in to say something on your profile page and noticed you were replying to this thread, so i waited around to read your next post).*

*Montsnmags:*

***Originally Posted by Patricia***

***The British used to punish convicts by sending them to Australia which, from Marc's account, seems rather pleasant.***

***Perhaps Hell is even nicer than Australia.***

*I hope so. I'm not doing all this sinning just as an example to others, you know!*

*Cheers,*

*Marc (Hell is other people...but not you folk, of course. You're all faaabulous.)*

Harv skidded to a halt in front of Rick's Cafe Americain Panama City. He hesitated.

"Well, just one," he lied to himself and went in.

"Hello, Rick!" he cried once the dim lighting became accustomed to his eyes.

"Get out! I don't want your kind in here!"

If everyone listened to Rick, there would have been no customers at all in the popular franchise.

Harv ignored the guy wearing a tuxedo five degrees north of the equator.

"Sasha! Zany Carter Deluxe!"

"Sure thing, Meester Harv!"

Harv sat at the bar and ignored the tinkly piano playing. He had to find Vera! But how? He could pilot anything with wings. Well, anything with wings and a motor. To be honest, anything with wings and a motor that was not a product of Dr Montsnmags' perverted little "experiments" with the local water fowl. But he was no detective. Nor could he sniff her out like a dog.

But wait! He *owned* a dog. Well, not so much owned as was tolerated by one. But he had an association with a dog. And the dog was likely to be right here in this very bar. He looked around for the familiar grey, shaggy form of his canine companion. Sure enough, there he was, lying in a corner, worrying a bone. Little piles of bacon ends littered the floor around him.

"Vivaldi! Here boy! We got some work to do!"

"Bugger off! I'm writing the Great American Novel!"

"But you're Panamanian!"

"Doesn't matter. Go away!"

"Are you still sore that I lost you in a poker game?"

"Dogs have feelings, too, you know!"

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

***"Bugger off! I'm writing the Great American Novel!"***

***"But you're Panamanian!"***

*paaaaa hahahaha !!!! :pandalol:*

*this just gets better and better as it goes along.*

*ShortNCuddlyAm:*

*:applauds: Wonderful installments :)*

"I know! And I'm sorry! In fact, I did win you back three days later. I don't know what you're complaining about."

"That guy took me home and gave me to his kids! You have no concept..."

Harv shuddered at the horror induced by Vivaldi's lament. He got over it quickly.

Look, I need your help..."

"Not interested."

"But it's important!"

"Like gambling your best friend?"

"Well, talking dogs are rare..."

"So that gives you the right to use my 'rare' talent as collateral for a busted flush?"

"I could have sworn he was bluffing!"

"I'll give you swearing, you..."

"Vera needs help!"

"Vera? Why didn't you just say so? I'd do anything to help Vera! She never gambled me away. And she gives good skritch."

"Yes, she did, I won you from her in a Cribbage tournament!"

"Let's not quibble in the details! What's going on?"

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*wow. vivaldi the talking dog is my new favorite character.*

*Vivaldirules:*

*Everybody in the pool!*

HarryT:

**Originally Posted by Patricia**

**The British used to punish convicts by sending them to Australia which, from Marc's account, seems rather pleasant.**

Hence the old joke:

[Australian immigration officer] Have you got a criminal record?

[British tourist] No, I didn't know it was still necessary.

They don't write jokes like that anymore!

:D

### Interlude I: Costume change

Pshrynk:

**Retiring the Llama**

Well, this is my last llama avatar until the Comeback tour. Or until another really cool one comes up, whichever occurs first. After a few days, I'm switching gears to match up with the latest Harv and Vera story line, so enjoy the teeth! I'll restart the Harv/ Vera/ Biggles/ Vivaldi narrative when I grow tired of looking at this guy.

Which may be this afternoon. :thumbsup:

Zelda\_pinwheel:

wait, are you saying there will be no new episodes until you change avatars ????

hm.

i didn't want to say anything, but man, that avatar of yours... it feels like i've been staring at it for \*weeks\* already. seriously, don't you think it's time for a change ?

pshrynk:

It does sort of have that effect, doesn't it? If Ricky tells me here or on any other thread that she's seen enough of this marvel, then I'll get back to the fray. i mean, how long can I let Vera hang by her thumbs in that grimy little back alley tea shop?

Zelda\_pinwheel:

if you ask me she's been hanging there too long already.  
(me goes to find ricky and beg her to think of vera.)

Pshrynk:

Well, maybe a short little bit...

Pshrynk:

**Oh, all right, quitter whining!**

High in the Andes mountains, a llama raised its head and looked around, curious. There had been a tremor in the air that only llamas are sensitive to. He chewed his cud for a bit and asked his neighboring llama, "Did you just hear someone screaming, 'Harv!'?"

The neighboring llama, whose name for some reason was 'Steve Jordan,' said, "No."

The first llama spat at his neighbor and went back to grazing.

GeoffC:

*It's a well know fact that the air high in the Andes mountains is thin, deficient in oxygen and cold. It is also lacking, somewhat in molecules.*

*Hence the neighbouring llama misheard his friend, it was not "harv!", ....  
but "merv!"?*

Patricia:

*You may well have a point, Geoff. This would explain why there are now so many llamas in Wales. I always thought that it was just the ridiculously steep hills, plus the cold and rain. Are they now competing with the sheep in Scotland too?*

*Vivaldirules:*

*I have recently adopted a new religion (my third this month? or is it four? never mind, the others were mere idolatry). It is based on the High Llamas of Chile and the realization that the ancients there worshiped Vera, of course, as clearly spelt out in the llama-shaped glyphs they created in the desert there (zoom to the center of the image): <http://googlesightseeing.com/maps?p=...6,0.008224&t=k>  
Hale (hail?) Vera!*

*Pshrynk:*

*Ummm... those look like reindeer to me. :bookworm:*

*Vivaldirules:*

*No, no, no. Turn your monitor upside down. See?*

*Pshrynk:*

*Well, now they look like reindeer doing yoga!*

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*i see them ! i SEE them !!! all hail vera !! llamas be ppraised !!!*

*Pshrynk:*

*Sort of like an aerial Rorschach. I should be charging for this!*

*Vivaldirules:*

*Okay, how much do I have to pay the llady at the door?*

*zelda\_pinwheel:*

*:pandalol:*

*(or should i say "pandallol" ?)*

## **Interlude II: (LazyScot takes a shot)**

Here, or more accurately in the next post, is a one-shot attempt at a Vera tale. But a couple warnings first.

Some of this is shamelessly plagiarized from Nadine Abensur's excellent recipe for pumpkin and parsley risotto in The Cranks Bible. (I kid you not)

I think this might be, um, pushing the boundaries a bit much?

You have been warned. :D

### **Making Risotto**

I'd been away for far too long. Departmental politics, multihop routings through dubious (not to mention dubya) countries, never-ending meetings, urgent project overruns ... So little time, so many people to offend ...

Still, after several months, here I am, back at last. And the mobile informs me I have a message. Vera. So she hasn't forgotten me. But has she forgiven me for not staying in touch?

Heart racing, despite the passing of these many months, I read the message.

"So you're back now?" (How did she know?) "Come over for dinner. 7pm. No need to bring anything."

I glance at my watch. Just about time to dump my luggage, change and head over.

Forget the expense. I grab the nearest thing to some decent flowers from the arrivals lounge and a really nice Royal Tokaji (I remember she loves dessert wines), and charge out. "Taxi!" I shout as I leave terminal.

And so, at about quarter to seven, I'm standing, slightly breathless, outside her door, holding the flowers and Tokaji, with many thoughts going through my mind. How did I get here so quickly?



Will she like the wine? Does she still love me? What have I forgotten? Why didn't I call her while I was away? Desperately trying to calm myself, I take a deep breath and ring the bell ... and wait.

The door opens and Vera is standing there, just as I remember – and as I'd imagined – her.

"You've come early". That voice, that elocution, that ... STOP IT. I'd forgotten how her voice penetrated straight into parts of my mind and played with them – and just how much I love her playing with them.

"Come in. Help me make our risotto," she murmured, sounding like the gentle caress of waves on the shore.

"I thought you might like these. I feel awful at not calling," I at last uttered as I stepped through the door.

"How beautiful – and a '93 Aszu. You do feel naughty. Here, let me chill that for you.

Remember, distance makes the heart grow fonder." I wish my heart would stop stopping, it's so... distracting. And that she wouldn't stress words like that.

I followed her, helpless, like some adoring puppy into the kitchen. Get a grip of yourself. You're a grown man, not a puppy!

"Can you get the Carnaroli, please?" Car-na-rol-i. How can she make an ingredient sound like that? How can she make it so incredibly sensuous? And why do I feel an urge to slobber and go woof?

I find the rice and measure out the right amount.

"Here," she says, taking the rice and placing my hand on the saucepan with the oil and softened onions, into which she pours the rice. "The stock is ready. You can make the risotto." I've never made risotto. This will not go well. And her voice is not helping me concentrate – on cooking.

Somehow, sensing my unease, she carries on: "It's easy, just let it simmer and let your instincts guide you." She places the wooden spoon in my hand and then puts the first ladle of stock onto the rice. "Just play ..." CONCENTRATE. "Turn the heat up with the stock for a moment, and then stir. Gently, then quickly, then perhaps softly, sometimes circle this way, sometimes that way, other times stoke the stock into the rice. Vary the rhythms, dance with the risotto, play with it." CONCENTRATE. MUST CONCENTRATE. "Lead the risotto, and then let it lead you, tease it, caress it, then add more stock and keep the play going and going."

I swallow far too loudly and nervously, and she busies herself with the final preparations of the roast pumpkin, parsley and parmesan.

As I stir, and combine, every few minutes, Vera comes over and rests her head on my shoulder. Her right hand glides gently along my arm until it rests on my hand and can gently guide me.

"Pianissimo", I hear as she slows my hand. Other times it is "forte", as she raises the urgency, then "mezzo piano" as our hands slow. Sometimes her other hand reaches round in a caress.

"I'm almost done," I manage to say, as the last of the stock is almost gone.

POP. I jump.

"Perfect timing. Prosecco?" She smiles, and we add the final ingredients.

We never got round to the Tokaji.

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*zowie. LazyScot, bringing us a new episode in the finest tradition of Vera stories from the golden age of Vera stories. just... excuse me one moment, ah, i think i need to go open a window. and possibly splash some cold water on my face. i'll be fine in a second. bravo !*

*Luigino:*

*I am a risotto specialist! :-D just yesterday evening I cooked some risotto with artichokes and sausage roll balls for some guests I had at dinner... :-D  
Don't get hungry you all! I'm too tired today to cook!.... ;-D*

### Interlude III: (Retiring the Llama)

*Vivaldirules:*

*Please, hurry! My eyes hurt whenever I look at you (it) now.*

*ShortNCuddlyAm:*

*I'm still laughing at the goofy llama :D*

*badgoodDeb:*

*I'm enjoying this llama (the shaggy hair, buck teeth one). The exploding llama I'm quite ready to be rid of!*

*Slite:*

*And if you ever need a Llama avatar to scare the crap out of people.... Use this one:  
(Picture of, well, it's probably a llama that doesn't translate to e-books well.)*

*UncleDuke:*

*can a llama get social security? how many quarters of work does a llama need to retire?*

*Montsnmags:*

*Four quarters make a whole doughnut; forequarters make half a llama; security is made of do-not holes; the daily llama is about to retire.  
It's all a rich tapestry.*

*RalphSirEdward:*

*How do you attach/detach tires (tyres) on a llama anyway?*

*Pshrynk:*

*Well, you jack them up and use a lug wrench, mostly.*

*Montsnmags:*

*Is the jack and the wrench in the trunk or the boot?*

*RalphSirEdward:*

*So you're jacking around with llamas? Hmmm, you definitely are a shrink!*

*Pshrynk:*

*Llamas don't have trunks. Sometimes they wear boots.*

*RWood:*

*So you are giving the llama the boot?*

*Slite:*

*:groaaaaan:*

Cut to interior, Grumman Goose. Seated in Pilot's seat is Harv, Seated in Co-pilot's seat is Vivaldi. Vivaldi is wearing a goggle helmet and scarf.

HARV: Let's run the checklist. Flaps?

VIV: Check!

H: Rudder?

V: Check!

H: Landing gear?

V: We're floating.

H: You still gotta say check!

V: Why should I say check when the landing gear is obviously a large aluminum boat welded onto the bottom of the plane?

H: Because it's in the script!

V: I thought this was the script.

H: Just say check!

V: (Sighs) Check!

H: Engines?

V: Check!

H: Radio?

V: Did you want the rock station or the country western? Because I'm not really fond of hair bands, and that seems to be all that they are playing on the classic rock station this week.

H: You know, they wanted a Jack Russell Terrier for your role, but I insisted that they go with you. I'm not sure why, at this point.

V: Look, it's just a model! No way am I going to risk my life with some pretty boy ex-male model who thinks he can really fly a seaplane!

Vera: (From the back of the plane) Hey you two! Knock it off! I've read ahead in the script and I am not about to stay in that little box for one second longer than I have to! We finally got rid of the damned llama, so let's get this show in the air!

V and H in unison: Sorry!

H: Radio?

V: Check!

H: Right then! Vera and Harv in Panama, or the tale of the Bush Whacked Bush Pilot is ready for take off!

V: Don't we need tower clearance?

H: This is a seaplane! We don't need no steenking tower clearance!

V: Well, I just thought that since this is LAX where we're sitting, we should actually do some sort of actual official type thingy.

H: Just put your paw on my hand and act like you have something to do!

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*:applause !!!:*

*Vivaldirules:*

*Check!*

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*heeheehee !!!*

Vera slowly came to consciousness. She had a headache. More to the point, however, she had a pulse. For that, at least, she was thankful. but where was she? She tried to move and found that her hands were tied , as were her feet. And there seemed to be a box. What was happening?

She tried to scream and discovered that there was also a gag. Great. It was a good thing she wasn't prone to allergies, or there'd be Hell to pay.

She thought of Harv. If only she hadn't sent him packing over such a silly thing as patching a sailboat's hull. It wasn't even as if he made his living with the thing, it was just transportation.

The Goose was the real money maker and he kept that in tip top condition.

She longed for Harv's risotto...

*Vivaldirules:*

*Hey, whatever happened with Vera and the squid? Neko, are you there? Chthulhu (or however the hell you spell your name)? Marc? Somebody?? We gotta flesh out Vera in all her glory.*

Harv and Vivaldi raced back to the Base. Harv nodded to the gate guards as Vivaldi stopped for a skritch. They got to the place where the pumping station used to be. Yellow ribbons were stretched out around the area.

"What's this, Biggles?," asked Harv.

"Not sure. It just seemed like a good idea to cordon off the area and there was a surplus of yellow ribbon in the PX. Makes a good not really existent barrier doesn't it?"

Harv sometimes worried about Biggles' grip on sanity. "I brought Vivaldi back with me. I want to try and find Vera, so would you mind?"

"Who's a good boy then? That's right! Who's a good boy?"

"Yeah, that would be me. Could I just take a sniff around?"

"Go right ahead, old boy. Who's a good boy?"

Vivaldi rolled his eyes and muttered something about wolves, throats, and a coming revolution. He walked over to the drying puddle of blood and sniffed vigorously.

"Well?" asked Harv, nervously.

"Don't rush me!" There have been at least five dogs widdling here in the past twenty-four hours and it takes some time to sort them all out."

"What's that got to do with finding if that is Vera's blood or not?"

"Nothing. It *is* her blood. I could tell that right away. Humans are a lot simpler than dogs."

"Well, why didn't you say so?"

"I just did."

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*oh noes !!!!*

*(have i mentioned how much i adore the vivaldi character ? i like him better than squid, i do believe.)*

Harv gritted his teeth. "Very well. Shall we try and find her, then?"

Vivaldi sniffed around a bit more and then started yapping manically and running around in circles.

"What? Do you know which way she went?"

"I just have to do that three times a day. It's in my contract."

Harv counted to ten. "So, what would you do if you knew which way she had gone?"

"I'd say, 'she went that way, let's go.' What good does having a talking dog do if you don't talk? Sheesh." He kept on sniffing.

"Well?"

"She went that way, let's go."

The small, gray dog started out at a trot in the general direction of the city. Harv followed at a distance, regretting the heat and humidity of mid-day Panama City.

Every now and then, Vivaldi stopped to sniff at a post or tree. Harv had learned long ago not to ask. Slowly, they made their way downtown, then on to the Old Town side. Here, there were various small shops run by down on their luck peddlers and ex-patriates.

They finally ended up in front of Miyatake's Flower Emporium, a small, lean-to shack with a few sad flowers in buckets of water that had started the day out as ice.

"She's in there," said Vivaldi.

"Hello, Mr. Wallbanger," said a familiar voice. "And greetings to Vivaldi-san, as well. My children miss you."

"They're heathens."

"Shh!" said Harv.

*badgoodDeb:*

*Oh my!! Holding my breath, awaiting the next installment feveredly. I do hope they reach Vera in time. I also hope Vera doesn't find out about Harv and Sheila .....*

BookishDreamer:

*Uh-oh...does Harv have a secret family?!*

Zelda\_pinwheel:

**"They're heathens."**

*one of my new favorite lines (although it's not easy to narrow it down).*

GeoffC:

*Don't you really mean .... cheque ....*

Pshrynk:

*Had no idea that I was Tuckerizing Vivaldi. Or what Tuckerizing was.*

Zelda\_pinwheel:

*i know. i'm constantly learning stuff i didn't know here too. :pandalol:*

Vivaldirules:

*Wow. I've been Tuckerized? I'm honored, pshwynk. I think I sense a tear forming.*

GeoffC:

*tuckerized !*

*you've been eaten ?*

Nekokami:

**Originally Posted by pshrynk**

**"Hello, Mr. Wallbanger," said a familiar voice. "And greetings to Vivaldi-san, as well. My children miss you."**

**"They're heathens."**

*Ah. The identity of the mysterious person who won Vivaldi in a card game is revealed at last!*

Nekokami:

Meanwhile, in the back room, kicking frantically, Vera managed to knock over a bucket of ice water... revealing a medium-sized squid, suffering from hypothermia. Vera and the squid eyed one another, each realizing, simultaneously, that they could be each other's salvation... or doom.

[cue dramatic music]

Zelda\_pinwheel:

*the suspense is killing me !!!!*

A loud crash came from the back room. Miyatake looked over his shoulder. Harv tensed to make a lunge. Out of the corner of his eye he saw movement. Looking over, there was a man standing in the shadows.

"I must see to what is happening in the rear. My associate, Mr. Fujimora will see to you." He vanished through a curtain.

"I have heard that you are a good fighter, Mr. Wallbanger. Shall we see who is superior?"

"Okay. You win. Can I get my friend and go, now?"

"Ah, but that would not be a contest, then. Do you not wish to test your skills against mine?"

"If I said no, I don't suppose that you'd go along with that, would you?"

"Assuredly not. Come, we must do this, now."

The small man advanced on light feet toward Harv. He could tell that this guy had some skills. For one, he didn't lick his thumb and grimace. Harv lifted his fists and watched Fujimora's abdomen. The abdomen would telegraph what is going to happen. So, why was it twisting in *that* particular way? A foot hit him in the side of his head. Huh? His vision narrowed and he felt dizzy.

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*good lord. i hope vera's salvation doesn't depend on harv. thank heavens vivaldi is around, something tells me that the talking dog will save the day. as usual.*

Harv stepped back. "What was that?"

"The flying rhinoceros. Very potent!" Fujimora grinned evilly. "I have made an impression, yes?"

"No. Well your foot did, but I'm not impressed." Harv stepped forward, more wary this time of the feet. Who fought with their feet? Except at the end?

Vivaldi started yapping wildly and running in circles. Fujimora moved in and started kicking and punching. Harv managed to block most, and roll with the others. Small man, little stopping power, short reach.

I've got him right where I want him, thought Harv. Another kick landed on the side of his head.

Set up the rhythm. Punch, punch, jab. Step. Punch, upper cut, dodge. take a kick, and a punch. Jab, jab, jab.

The two combatants circled around one another. Harv's blows landing like sledge hammers, the smaller man's feet taking their toll. Punch, punch, jab, upper cut, punch. Dog bites him in the ass, knee.

Fujimora rolled up in a circle of pain. "You... are... not... an honorable... fighter!" he wheezed out between gasps of pain.

"Naw, I just want to win," said Harv, as he kicked him in the head. Fujimora went out.

*Slite:*

*Pwahahahahaha! Hilarious!*

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*it would seem i have underestimated harv. although i note that vivaldi did do his part.*

Taylor514ce:

Camera cuts to two shadowy figures whispering in the dark. Well, not so much shadowy as "woolly". Vivaldi glances their way, mutters "tastes like chicken, always chicken" at them while scratching behind his ear. The two small figures nod, seem to confer silently for a moment while Harv methodically inspects his right toes, then, apparently, roll into a ball and dart into a pipe. (We are still at the pumping station, right? There would be pipes around?)

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*oh my god, it's too much happiness. i may die of joy.*

*Pshrynk:*

*Actually, in Old Town, but there would be drainage pipes around, so we're good.*

Harv massaged his sore shoulder. "He wasn't that tough!"

"Phew! Phew! Yes he was! Phew! Why do I always get the 'Dog bites him on the ass' bit. Phew! Ack!"

"Well, you're a dog, and you're closer to the geography, so to speak. And if you kneed someone in the groin, it wouldn't carry the impact."

"Phew! I need to go drink some toilet water!"

Harv turned to the back room, intent on getting Vera out of danger. He stopped short as Miyatake walked out, holding tight to Vera and holding a squid to her head. The squid had an expression on its face that roughly read, "Hi! Sorry to be in this situation. The original script called for a gun, but someone in casting, whom we will not name, but the initials are Nekokami, sent me over instead. I'm leaving it to the writer to figure out how to get out of this one."\*

"Mr. Wallbanger. I am impressed that you defeated Fujimora. He is one of my best operatives. He was raised by squirrels, you know. Now, however, you will do as I say or it will be the ink for your girlfriend."

"Well, let's see, according to her, she is not my girlfriend. And if you wanted the dog back, all you had to do was offer enough money."

"Hey!"

"Vivaldi-san will be mine again, soon enough. But what I really need is your airplane."

"The Goose? Can you even fly it?"

"And a pilot, roughly thirty five years old, ruggedly handsome, and apparently, a very dirty fighter."

Harv stood and tried to figure it out.

Miyatake sighed. "And apparently not too bright."

"OH! You mean Harv! I was sort of stuck on that ruggedly handsome bit. But dogs have different ideas of handsome. Now, you roll him in some three day old garbage and he'd be a very handsome sight, er smell."

\*Squid are very emotive creatures, one just needs to be able to read them.

*Nate the Great:*

*:rofl:*

*Taylor514ce:*

*Note to pshrynk: Hugo and Lefty have rolled themselves over to the Goose. They are in the cargo area, having stowed themselves in what they think is a backpack. The parachute that was in the way has been removed, of course, but the silk is now highly statically charged due to Hugo doing the nasty with it, repeatedly, while the rest of the cast catches up with them.*

*Ok, just thought you should know.*

*badgoodDeb:*

*So, I'm picturing this massive quantity of silk fabric, statically charged, unfurled, and filling the body of the aircraft. Meanwhile, in a corner of same aircraft, is a backpack filled with Lefty and Hugo. Have I got this more or less right? Gosh, all that fabric could be a safety hazard.....*

*patricia:*

*I think that Hugo and Lefty have got into the parachute pack, mistaking it for a backpack. This could have bad consequences later ...*

*badgoodDeb:*

*Yeah -- that's what I said. And they evicted the former occupant, the parachute. So it has unfurled and filled the REST of the aircraft with soft silk fabric. Good either for sleeping in, or suffocating in. Whichever way the storyline goes.*

Vivaldirules:

*:anticipationwithbucketsofpopcorn:*

ShortNCuddlyAm:

*:onedgeofseatwantingtoknowwhathappensnext:*

"What was that?" said Harv.

"What? No tricks, now!" said Miyatake.

"I thought I heard some snickering and a soft susurraton. And i don't even know what susurraton means."

"I heard nothing."

"Okay. So what do you want with the Goose?"

"I need something... delivered."

Vera was getting tired of all the blabbing. And the squid was getting a bit too friendly. She was definitely going to need a bath after all this. That is, if there was an after all this. Her heart trilled in fear.

"Don't do it, Harv!" she said, "I'm not worth it!"

"Baby, you're worth the world to me!" he answered.

"Oh, a dame is worth the world, but Man's Best Friend is only worth, probably, fifty bucks? Sheesh!"

"Shh!" said all three conscious humans, in unison.

badgoodDeb:

*Now I've got an ad for a GPS navigator at the bottom of the page.....*

zelda\_pinwheel:

***Originally Posted by pshrynk***

***The squid had an expression on its face that roughly read, "Hi! Sorry to be in this situation. The original script called for a gun, but someone in casting, whom we will not name, but the initials are Nekokami, sent me over instead. I'm leaving it to the writer to figure out how to get out of this one."\****

***\*Squid are very emotive creatures, one just needs to be able to read them.***

*paaa hahahahahaaaa !!!!!*

***" He was raised by squirrels, you know."***

*paaa hahahahahaaaa !!!!! x2*

***Originally Posted by pshrynk***

***"Oh, a dame is worth the world, but Man's Best Friend is only worth, probably, fifty bucks? Sheesh!"***

***"Shh!" said all three conscious humans, in unison***

*three times !!!*

***Originally Posted by Taylor514ce***

***Note to pshrynk: Hugo and Lefty have rolled themselves over to the Goose. They are in the cargo area, having stowed themselves in what they think is a backpack. The parachute that was in the way has been removed, of course, but the silk is now highly statically charged due to Hugo doing the nasty with it, repeatedly, while the rest of the cast catches up with them.***

***Ok, just thought you should know.***

*:willnotbeabletosleepwonderingwhathappensnext:*



Taylor514ce:

*Don't look at me, I'm just staging characters. Not even I know what happens to Hugo and Lefty next. I suspect we'll find out as the plot (and maybe Hugo) unravels.*

Zelda\_pinwheel:

*hugo does seem to be constantly unraveling.*

Harv looked at Miyatake. "What do I need to do?" he asked.

"Simply fly to a location and pick up a package, then fly it back to Lake Gatun. After that, you will be freed."

"Sure."

"Well, maybe not, but you need to have hope."

Harv looked down at Vivaldi, who was busy licking his right paw, muttering, "Tastes like chicken. Always like chicken,"

Harv was fairly certain that he had a good chance of dying, even if he and Vera were the stars of this thread. But a plan would come along. It always did, somehow.

"Right. Let's get going, shall we?"

"Just know that I retain the squid, even though it is in my pocket."

Vera looked down. "That is just disturbing."

Trying to look nonchalant as is possible with an unconscious Japanese man over the shoulder of a model-handsome man, a talking dog muttering to himself about chicken, a ravishingly beautiful woman, and a man with a squid in his pants pocket, they made their way down the streets of Old Town. They could have competed in the Olympic Nonchalance Fifty Yard Saunter and placed at least Bronze.

Getting off the train, they walked up the trail to Harv's camp, where the Goose was moored.

Dumping Fujimora's limp body in the cargo bay, Harv turned to the cockpit.

"I'm going to need a co-pilot," he said.

"Vivaldi-san can do it," said Miyatake, whom Harv was beginning to think may not be an actual flower salesman.

"He's a dog! He doesn't have thumbs! No, it's got to be Vera."

"I know that the dog can co-pilot."

"Yeah? How?"

"I saw the trailer."

"Damn!"

ShortNCuddlyAm:

***Originally Posted by pshrynk***

***"I know that the dog can co-pilot."***

***"Yeah? How?"***

***"I saw the trailer."***

***"Damn!"***

*:rofl: Inspired!*

Zelda\_pinwheel:

***Originally Posted by pshrynk***

***They could have competed in the Olympic Nonchalance Fifty Yard Saunter and placed at least Bronze.***

*and, taking the gold medal for "imaginary Olympic events which should really exist," the Nonchalance Fifty Yard Saunter with 10 for technique and 10 for style !*

Harv sat in the pilot's seat and glowered at the instruments. "I had a plan!"

"We can still follow the plan, but this time with someone who knows how to fly in the co-pilot seat." Vivaldi was trying to be upbeat.

"Oh, yeah! Doing an inverted loop with Vera in the cargo bay without proper restraints would really do her a lot of good! Now we have to figure out a new way to get out of this. Any ideas?"

Vivaldi had been looking into the distance and moving his mouth, talking his way through something. "You mean other than dropping your best friend out of a fast moving airplane at a great height?"

"Um, yeah, sure."

"Make your own plans, pretty boy. Let's just do the check list."

"Um. We've done this a million times and we should just skip it?"

"Check."

"Right, let's go."

The starboard engine of the Goose turned over and fired. Seconds later, the port engine fired.

Harv yelled back to the cargo bay to let loose the mooring lines. They slowly slid out to the middle of Lake Gatun. The friends sat in embarrassment.

Finally, Vivaldi broke the silence. "Harv?"

"Yeah, Viv?"

"Why was that parachute opened up all over the cargo bay?"

"No idea. There were a couple of socks in the pack when I put it back."

"Weird."

"Yeah."

The plane picked up speed with a roar. It bounced over the waves briefly and was airborne.

"What did you do with them?"

"Huh?"

"The socks. What did you do with them?"

"Oh. I put them in the emergency case."

"With all the emergency flares?"

"Yeah. Miyatake saw me do it and wired it shut. No chance to get at the flares, now."

"That would have been a good plan."

"Yeah."

*Taylor514ce:*

*[suddenly a loud pop-snap and the smell of ozone]*

*The above line may be inserted at appropriate spots in the plot.*

Psockpuppet:

"Hugo?"

"Yeah, Lefty?"

"Why are we here?"

"Well, some say that the Great Wearer decided that all Wearers needed comfyness and warmth for their feet and therefore stretched His hand forth and caused the Knitting to occur from raw firmament. Others feel that Primitive Wearers had to cover their feet with skins and furs as the migrated northward from Africa. Because of the chaffing, they discovered knitting. After several generations, mutations in the basic pattern of Socking became evident and that led to the diversity of Socks that we have today."

"Huh. Actually, I was wondering why we are in this box."

"Oh. That. Well, we are trying to rescue the Beautiful Wearer from the peril."

"Okay."

They sat in muffled silence as they heard the engines of the plane warm up. They both were pleased at the idea that something was warming up.

"Hugo?"

"Yeah, Lefty?"

"We're basically fashion accessories. How are we going to rescue the Beautiful Wearer?"

"Good question, as usual, Lefty. Grab that end of the bolt cutters, will you?"

Taylor 514ce:

*EDITORIAL COMMENT: Please reverse the names of the conversants in the above dialogue to maintain character fidelity.*

Pshrynk:

*I went over to psockpuppet's cubicle and flogged him until he fixed it.*

Taylor514ce:

*EDITORIAL COMMENT: Please ignore the previous editorial comment, as the puppet has edited the original. You would think a **psockpuppet** could recognize smart wool **socks**, but apparently this particular psockpuppet is a bit of a racist and claims that all smart wool socks look alike to him, which is ridiculous, as Lefty is easy to spot. He's the one on the LEFT, and Hugo has a warped sense of humor (warped, get it?). He's also usually covered in bits of lint and stray threads from his liaisons.*

Zelda\_pinwheel:

**Originally Posted by psockpuppet**

**"Oh. That. Well, we are trying to rescue the Beautiful Wearer from the peril."**

**"Okay."**

**They sat in muffled silence as they heard the engines of the plane warm up. They both were pleased at the idea that something was warming up.**

**"Hugo?"**

**"Yeah, Lefty?"**

**"We're basically fashion accessories. How are we going to rescue the Beautiful Wearer?"**

**"Good question, as usual, Lefty. Grab that end of the bolt cutters, will you?"**

*and they say chivalry is dead. lefty doesn't give himself enough credit though ; a smart sock is so much more than a fashion accessory.*

**Originally Posted by Taylor514ce**

**Lefty is easy to spot. He's the one on the LEFT,**  
*pfff. obviously.*

Harv thought furiously as he flew over Panama city. What could he do? He couldn't get past the idea that Miyatake had the squid. At first, he had thought that it was just a marine invertebrate and what the hell damage could that do. Then Miyatake had demonstrated on the side of the Goose. It was just awful. And it was going to take months to get that ink stain off the side of the plane.

"Vivaldi, hop back and ask Miyatake where we're going."

"No need, Mr. Wallbanger. I am right here."

Harv worked extra hard at not jumping out of his skin.

"So, where we going then?"

"Fly due west for sixty nautical miles. There will be a submarine."

"Six zero nautical at two seven zero. Got it. I suppose we'll be taking off from there, also?"

"Of course. "

"How heavy is the cargo?"

"You do not need to know that."

"Maybe I don't but the Goose does. Anything over a thousand pounds and we'll need JATO. Just saying."

"All has been arranged. Fly the aircraft. Oh, and I will be taking the control panel from the radio, now."

"Hey! I just got a good World Music station!"

"You will have to be content with humming, Vivaldi-san." The Japanese spy reached forward and took the radio from the control panel.

"I can see where his kids got their behaviors from."

They flew on in silence.

"They call them fish, you know."

"What?"

"Submarines. They call them fish."

"Why would I need to know that?"

"I'm just trying to pass the time. I'm bored without my radio."

"And I'm just trying to figure out how to get us out of this jam."

"Well excuse me for having a short attention hey, I wonder if there's any bacon on board?"

*Nekokami:*

*Meanwhile, the squid, unhappy with being crammed into a pocket (and knowing all about ika sushi), especially when it was just getting a chance to start negotiations with Vera that could have led to it untying her and her finding it a nice warm saltwater tank somewhere, began to plot its revenge....*

*LazyScot:*

*Do Squids have big sisters/brothers?*

*Taylor514ce:*

*Oh yes: Giant Squid. Or, since all Harv/Vera stories must include not only squid, but pies, then perhaps we can expect to see octopi as the story unfolds.*

*In totally unrelated news, due to an unfortunate occurrence, I hereby redefine/muzzle "nanosecond" as the interval between realizing your iPod nano is about to drop into the toilet and reaching out to grab it, and it actually doing so as your hand grasps empty space.*

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*dear god, my queendom for a groaning smiley.*

*Taylor514ce:*

*You work stuff in as you can. My space opera (consisting of a single opening paragraph) featured the utility craft Kala Mari.*

*Vivaldirules:*

***Originally Posted by Taylor514ce***

***Oh yes: Giant Squid. Or, since all Harv/Vera stories must include not only squid, but pies, then perhaps we can expect to see octopi as the story unfolds.***

*You are so bad (good).*

***Originally Posted by Taylor514ce***

***In totally unrelated news, due to an unfortunate occurrence, I hereby redefine/muzzle "nanosecond" as the interval between realizing your iPod nano is about to drop into the toilet and reaching out to grab it, and it actually doing so as your hand grasps empty space.***

*Let's hope this has never happened to anyone. I mean, it didn't, did it?*

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

***Originally Posted by Taylor514ce***

***In totally unrelated news, due to an unfortunate occurrence, I hereby redefine/mozzle "nanosecond" as the interval between realizing your iPod nano is about to drop into the toilet and reaching out to grab it, and it actually doing so as your hand grasps empty space.***

*ouch. sorry about that. if it helps at all, might i offer this humble url : [deezer.com](http://deezer.com).*

***Originally Posted by Vivaldirules***

***Let's hope this has never happened to anyone. I mean, it didn't, did it?***

*a friend of mine dropped his cell phone into the chemical toilets of a train. this was about 10 or 12 years ago, when cell phones first appeared, and were by no means common... or cheap. it had been given him specially to use while travelling around (he was a musician and producer and travelled a lot to see new bands / tour, and he was also part of the team that was launching a new live music venue (on a lighthouse boat), so people needed to keep in touch with him). it's served as a lesson to me though, in fact i'm quite paranoid about not dropping anything into a toilet. it helps that i rarely wear shirts with pockets on the chest.*

GeoffC:

*a shirt with pockets on the chest .....*

They were flying at cruising speed, now. Vivaldi had his head hanging out the window.

"How do you do that?"

"What?"

"Hang your head out when we're doing one hundred knots."

"I dunno. How do I talk? Ask the writer, he's the one making this stuff up."

"See anything?"

"Yeah. There's the fish now."

"Look, I'm not going to do a whole 'Who's on First' routine with you about the double meaning of 'fish.' Do you mean, there is the submarine we are looking for, which I am calling 'fish' or do you mean there is the great, wide ocean, full of fish, which I am saying I see in hopes that you will fall for it and we can get into a hilarious argument?"

Vivaldi looked down at his paws. "The latter," he mumbled.

"Let me know when you see the submarine, which for sake of argument I will allow us to refer to as "the" fish."

Grumble grumble grumble. "Check."

A short time later, Vivaldi started yapping excitedly. "There it is!"

Harv looked out his side window and saw the submarine. Vivaldi was singing some nonsense song about fish. He circled around the boat. There was activity on deck.

"Ah, Mr. Wallbanger! Excellent piloting! Now, this one is very important. We have no way of communicating with the submarine, since they are under strict radio silence.

"You must do exactly as I say. They will now set off two smoke trails. You must land nearest the proper one, or they will fire upon us. Ah. They have released the smoke. You may now land."

Harv looked at the submarine. Smoke trailed from each end. "Which one?" he asked.

"The blue one, next to the fish, will do."

*badgoodDeb: :rimshotsmilie: !!*

*ahh, here it is :rimshot:*

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

***Originally Posted by pshrynk***

***"Look, I'm not going to do a whole 'Who's on First' routine with you about the double meaning of 'fish.'"***

*aw !! that would have been hilarious !!!*

**"You must do exactly as I say. They will now set off two smoke trails. you must land nearest the proper one, or they will fire upon us. Ah. they have released the smoke. You may now land."**

**Harv looked at the submarine. Smoke trailed from each end. "Which one?" he asked.**

**"The blue one, next to the fish, will do."**

*and, in the category of "premeditation", the joke set up farthest in advance, ladies and gentlemen, we give you The Blue Smoke next to the Submarine !!!!*

*:standing ovation:*

*:thecrowdgoeswild:*

*:pandalol:*

*pshrynk:*

*Author's note: I'm going to start running out of tropes before too long. If you have an oldie but goodie you'd like to have me work in, PM me.*

*DixieGal:*

**Originally Posted by zelda\_pinwheel**

**ouch. :( sorry about that. if it helps at all, might i offer this humble url :  
deezer.com.**

**a friend of mine dropped his cell phone into the chemical toilets of a train. this was about 10 or 12 years ago, when cell phones first appeared, and were by no means common... or cheap. [...] it's served as a lesson to me though, in fact i'm quite paranoid about not dropping anything into a toilet. it helps that i rarely wear shirts with pockets on the chest.**

*Oh, if only someone had called that number when the port-a-potty was occupied! :D  
OK, WHY WAS I NOT INFORMED? I only just found this thread and spent the whole afternoon catching up. Who do I have to meld with to get on the alert list?*

*Pshrynk:*

*I only learned about it last week or so.:embarrassed:*

*badgoodDeb:*

*Yeah, me too. It was dormant for a long while (I think I had read it way back then) but WHOOOO would have guessed a thread with this topic would turn into a far more interesting thread, that I needed to follow???*

*DixieGal:*

*I would like to play, but can't think of a single line to add. "... The blue one, next to the fish" sort of gave me writer's block, or at least some form of blockage. (Note to self: Eat more fiber when reading this thread.)*

*Oh! I have a BM (Brain Movement) .....*

*DixieGal:*

Meanwhile, back at the RAF base, Biggles was picking through the office fridge, peeking into brown paper bags, trying to defenestrate whose lunch to appropriate. Snortington's bag contained yogurt and a banana, not a very manly lunch at all. Biggles made a note to ask and tell. Saltenham's bag contained a rugged sandwich of bear meat on whole wheat, a thermos of dirty creek water, and a big slice of Mom's apple pie. Biggles made a note to recommend Saltenham for a commendation.

"That's the sort of rough and ready man we need in this man's air force," he harrumphed to himself.

Wandering back to his office in order to eat Saltenham's lunch in privacy whilst he surfed the net to find out what happened on Desperate Housewives last evening, he happened to glance over a cubicle wall at Mrs. Miyatake's work station.

"Ingrid, he said, "My dear, why are you crying?"

"Ah, mein Capitan," she said germanically, "My husband is missing. I fear he is in trouble."

"Whatever do you mean? What sort of trouble?"

"Some of his former colleagues from the Japanese mafia located him and he went to speak with them. I haven't heard from him in three days now," she sobbed weepily.

"Hmmm. How did we pass someone with her husband's background through our pre-employment security check?", he wondered administratively, while secretly craving the purloined lunch he still held in his hand and trying to figure a way to get out of this conversation without committing himself to any sort of decision.

"Er, uh, Ingrid dear, dry your eyes. You take a long lunch, and when you get back, type all of this up and email it to me," he improvised impromptu.

"Oh thank you, mein Capitan!," she germanically and manically jumped for joy and shouted as she grabbed Biggles around the shoulders and hugged him repeatedly, then hurried out the door to eat her squid puff and pear tart lunch in the employee break room, which had much better digital music than the executive break room, which only had one lousy house band that played only covers of Alanis Morissette songs.

"Finally I can eat my, er uh, *Saltenham's* lunch," Biggles biggled to himself.

Harv brought the Goose in slowly, feathering back the props. It landed gracefully. Well, as gracefully as three tons of what is basically an aluminum boat welded to an airplane can be. He taxied up to the submarine, which ironically was named Bluefish in Japanese. Thankfully, the ocean was calm, so there was little difficulty in mooring the plane to the deck.

Miyatake stuck his head through the door. "You two stay here. We will take on the cargo and then leave."

They listened as various thumps gave evidence to a weighty load being placed in the cargo hold.

"So, do you think the White Sox have a chance at the Series, this year?" asked Vivaldi.

Vera had had an unpleasant ride. First there was the unconscious form of Fujimora, who slowly came back to life. His moaning and complaining had been unbearable. Then, the squid was rather awful. It had crept out of Miyatake's pocket and had made it half way up the bulkhead to the window before being retrieved and placed in a bucket of water. Now, it just glared at her over the rim with a look that said, "I really object to being treated like an object, you know. Even squid have feelings. If you had any compassion at all, you would have helped me jump out the window when I was making my bid for freedom. I could be halfway home, by now.\*"

Vera felt vaguely guilty.

But worst of all had been the rustling coming from the emergency kit. The lid had snapped open at one point and she swore that a pair of comfy looking wool socks had scurried out. She'd have screamed, but the one sock without the safety pin had implored her with a look not to. She was beginning to doubt the sanity of a person who could read the expression of a wool sock.

*badgoodDeb:*

*[ She was beginning to doubt the sanity of a person who could read the expression of a wool sock. ]*

*Or could write a story about one. But don't mind me --- carry on, carry on!*

*Nekokami:*

*Oh, for the love of Chthulhu, will someone PLEASE help that poor squid escape becoming ika sashimi???*

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*don't worry Neko, something tells me that he's only still around because in the end he's the one who will save the day (along with hugo and lefty, my intrepid smart socks, obviously).*

*after that he will of course live happily ever after, in the briny depths.*

*right, pshrynk ? ahem. RIGHT ?*

*pshrynk:*

*I'm not really going to point fingers, here, but it was someone from Central Casting with the initials Nekokami who sent the squid rather than the gun. I mean, being violently opposed to violence is good, and all, but we gotta make do with what we got to work with, then, eh?*

*DixieGal:*

*Mrs. Miyatake makes her own squid puffs and sauerkraut. Don't you think the Mister is bringing it home to her as a reconciliation gift? Think about it.*

*Patricia:*

*And don't let Hugo and Lefty anywhere near Thpud the nip-addicted cat: she'll only chew them up. However, I could see Thpud and VR getting together, in one of those opposites-attract sort of relationship. She only needs the love of a good dog in order to give up her addictive behaviour, and come to terms with living in Wisconsin, in the house of a very strange man indeed.*

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*\*snif\* i love a happy ending.*

***Originally Posted by DixieGal***

***Mrs. Miyatake makes her own squid puffs and sauerkraut. Don't you think the Mister is bringing it home to her as a reconciliation gift? Think about it.***

*no. that is not what happens. try to keep up, it's the post directly above yours, sheesh !*

*pshrynk:*

***\*\*ahem\*\* Thspud is formerly male. :embarrassed:***

Harv and Vivaldi sat in their seats, frustration palpable between them. They felt the call to action, but were stymied at every move. They needed something to turn the tide. Sure, the squid looked more and more like it was not actually on anyone's side but its own, but Miyatake still controlled it. And Harv was fairly certain that shooting off the flare gun into the cargo bay would have resulted in more smoke than he was willing to put up with. Especially smoke involving parts of the Goose being strewn around the Pacific in a distressing fashion.

"We need a plan, Viv."

"How about we send off for a mail order catapult and launch ourselves after the spies as they run away?"

"Um. While that might sound like a good plan on the surface, I'm not too sure about the quality of goods one can get in the mail."

"Just a thought."

Another clunk signaled something heavy being put into the cargo hold.

Psockpuppet:

Hugo and Lefty snuck through the floor plates into the cockpit.

"How do you know where we're going, Hugo?"

"When we were staying with Taylor, I snuck a peek at his library. He had a set of blueprints for a Grumman Goose."



"Wow. He had everything in that library."  
 "Everything but the Woola Sutra."  
 "What's that?"  
 "Um. Sort of an instruction manual. For knitting."  
 "Are there pictures? I'm not too good with books unless there are pictures."  
 "Oh, yeah! There are pictures." Hugo paused, briefly lost in happy reverie. He shook himself out and continued to move forward. "We've got to convince the big Wearer to let us help."  
 They skittered up into the cockpit, much to the surprise of Harv and Vivaldi, who said, "Just a thought. Holy crap!"  
 "Hey! It takes a lot of experience and living to get this holey, Mac!" said Hugo.  
 "Hi!" said Lefty.  
 The big Wearer and the Worrier looked at them, dumbfounded.  
 "Those socks are moving! On their own!" said Vivaldi.  
 "I've had sock that did that," said Harv.  
 "Yeah, but they stopped after you washed them. These guys look clean already. And I think they're trying to talk to us. Socks don't talk!"  
 "Neither do dogs, most of the time. I'm just sayin'."  
 "Look," said Hugo, "We can debate the reality of talking socks another time. We have to do something to save the beautiful Wearer! I've got a plan..."

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*yay !!!! now we're getting somewhere !!*

*Patricia:*

***Originally Posted by pshrynk***

***\*\*ahem\*\* Thspud is formerly male. :embarrassed:***

*Well, perhaps it will be an ending where the two buddies link arms (paws?) and walk away from the plane saying, "This could be the start of a beautiful friendship."*

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*oh brilliant. man, somebody should make a film that ends that way.*

*BookishDreamer:*

***Originally Posted by psockpuppet***

***"Everything but the Woola Sutra."***

***"What's that?"***

***"Um. Sort of an instruction manual. For knitting."***

***"Are there pictures? I'm not too good with books unless there are pictures."***

***"Oh, yeah! There are pictures."***

*I don't think I'll be able to look at anything wool and knitted without thinking about Hugo, Lefty, and the Woola Sutra. :startled: Oh gees, how am I ever going to be able to wear my wool sweater without blushing...or laughing?*

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*yeah. that's sort of a recurring theme in all our ongoing sagas. you should see some of the early episodes of the Adventures of Vera. pear tarte has never been the same since then.*

Harv and Vivaldi watched, jaws agape as the pair of socks, well mostly the rougher looking of the two, outlined their plan. The socks gave a little bow and disappeared through the floor plating.

"Did anything about that strike you as unusual?" asked Vivaldi after a few minutes had passed.

"Socks that could move on their own and seemed to be communicating a rather complex plan, you mean?"

"Nah. They were obviously smart wool. I mean, they were clearly a matched pair, but one was nearly pristine and the other had that safety pin and what was clearly a tattoo on his heel. I mean, aren't they supposed to look alike?"

"And how do you tattoo wool?"

"I was in the Air Force. I've seen stranger things."

Taylor514ce:

*"I was in the Air Force... I **AM** a stranger thing."*

Montsnmags:

**Originally Posted by Taylor514ce**

**Oh yes: Giant Squid. Or, since all Harv/Vera stories must include not only squid, but pies, then perhaps we can expect to see octopi as the story unfolds. :rimshot:** I like squid. And Octopuseseses. And I don't meant "...to eat" or anything either. Well, except for the squid.

**In totally unrelated news, due to an unfortunate occurrence, I hereby redefine/mozzle "nanosecond" as the interval between realizing your iPod nano is about to drop into the toilet and reaching out to grab it, and it actually doing so as your hand grasps empty space.**

*I'm scared. I nearly did this last night (though, technically, it was an iPod Touch and not a nano). Did I forget to switch the webcam off again?*

**Originally Posted by zelda\_pinwheel**

**oh brilliant. man, somebody should make a film that ends that way**

*...and then Adrian can swing out of a nearby window onto the heads of them both and give them a nice big pie each in the face.*

*Not my story though. It doesn't even have an Adrian, probably because Adrian's real, whereas the other characters are super-real.*

badgoodDeb:

*I thought you always hung the towel over the webcam? I mean, it looks fluffy and fuzzy every time I try to watch it. And mostly blank. Or is that only when you are taking a shower, that you hang the towel there? darn.*

He sat in the jungle, waiting. He knew that he had a task to complete. His kind just knew. Above a bird started screeching loudly. It was annoying. He reached up swiftly. The screeching stopped. Feathers floated down, slowly.

Somewhere, there was the call. He strained to find the Place. The Place where he must be. And of course, the Time. The Time was most important.

The jungle grew silent around him. It always did when he was in this mood.

Monkey Island could not hold him. Neither could mere time and space.

Zelda\_pinwheel:

*masterful. i wasn't sure it could be done, but i should never have doubted you i particularly like "And of course, the Time. The Time was most important."  
and "Monkey Island could not hold him. Neither could mere time and space."*

Montsnmags:

**Originally Posted by badgoodDeb**

***I thought you always hung the towel over the webcam? I mean, it looks fluffy and fuzzy every time I try to watch it***

*That could be my butt...and a bit of Narnia.*

***Originally Posted by pshrynk***

***He sat in the jungle, waiting.***

*WOOHOO! I'm doin' my Mowgli Happydance right now!*

Vera sat in the cargo bay. She was getting tired of being the third wheel in this pantomime. After all, she was top bill, wasn't she? She struggled with her bonds and found, once again, that they were tight and not budging. The Japanese sailors brought the large cylinders into the bay. There were four of them. Each of them had Japanese glyphs painted on them. She wished that she had paid attention in class when she'd taken the Japanese course in High School.

Fujimora moaned loudly in the corner. She really wished that he wouldn't do that. He sounded awful and she didn't want her last... She didn't want to be hearing that when... She just didn't want to hear that right now.

And the socks were back. That was stranger than the first time that she had heard Vivaldi talk. Even considering that it had been a five minute monologue, none of which could have been printed in a family newspaper. Even the prepositions had been vulgar.

They were creeping around the parachute pack. She was quite certain that there was something about to happen.

*Nekokami:*

*Look, I sent the squid to form common cause with Vera-- the squid could untie her bonds, and she could find the squid some nice warm salt water somewhere. Now you've got Miyatake or whatever his name is oppressing both the squid AND Vera! Don't go blaming me!*

*And don't expect me to send in my Silly Bird, either! :angry:*

Harv and Vivaldi sat in the cockpit, feeling helpless. The socks' plan could only be played out back at Lake Gatun.

"Sort of quiet out there," said Harv.

"Yeah. Too quiet, if you know what I mean."

*GeoffC:*

*little did they know....*

*it wasn't the same without the langoustines...*

*BadgoodDeb:*

*Oh, I like the jungle twist! Agreed, very masterful way to get .... shhh ..... you know who .... involved!*

Miyatake came forward. "We are ready to go."

"How much weight are we carrying?"

"An extra four hundred pounds. Your plane should be able to handle it."

Harv did some mental calculations. "Should be no problem. Back to Gatun?"

"That will do. Oh, and should you have any ideas of trying any of your 'fancy' maneuvers, just be aware that there are not enough seats in the back for everyone and your Miss Vera will be riding without a seatbelt."

"Bastard!"

"Not according to my mother. For a dog, you are quite lippy."

"Whatever. Strap yourself in, laughing boy. I'd hate for you to fly out with the slipstream on takeoff."

"How droll."

"You know," said Harv after Miyatake had left, "It doesn't do any good to antagonize him."

"Doesn't hurt, either."

"True enough."

"Wanta skip the checklist again?"

"Check."

After they were airborne, Harv turned to Vivaldi and said, "Take over. I need to get the harness ready."

"I'm enjoying having my head out the window too much. Why not turn on the autopilot?"

They both looked down at the control panel. There in the middle was a plate labeled

"M.A.R.V.I.N."

"You mean the Multi-Axial Reactive Vortex Inertial Navigator?"

"We have another autopilot?"

Harv flicked the switch.

"Well, it took you long enough. It's not like anyone really cares about the autopilot."

"Just fly the plane. Vivaldi -- wiggle the controls every now and then to make sure the passengers don't get suspicious that we're up to something."

"Oh, sure. Ask the dog to do it. He's an organic being. Not that having a Genuine People Personality Prototype is good enough to fake the flight characteristics of a real person. It's very depressing."

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*JOY !!!!!*

*Nate the Great:*

*DITTO !!!!!*

*badgoodDeb:*

*INDEED, YAY VERILY!!!*

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*:rolleyes:*

*GeoffC:*

*calm yourselves children, it's only a story ....*

*Pshrynk:*

*It's just a model! Wait -- that's for the Python Only thread...*

*LazyScot:*

*Michael Winner?*

*GeoffC:*

*Did he ? what was her name ?*

Harv worked feverishly at modifying the harness of the parachute to the specs given by the sock with the safety pin. He paused briefly to try and figure out how he knew what the sock had been "saying," discovered that his mind went blank and went back to work. Vivaldi tried to engage the autopilot in small talk

"So, been an autopilot for long?"  
"You're just trying to cheer me up. It won't work."  
"Not really, I just get bored easily."  
"So you talk to inanimate objects just to pass the time?"  
"Pretty much, yeah. Just an hour ago, I was talking to a pair of socks."  
"It is difficult for me to fathom that there is someone in the universe more pathetic than me."  
"Yah. Anyway, I've been working on a new story about Harv and Vera. I haven't been able to write much, because Harv keeps dragging me on these adventures. Do you suppose there's any way to put all this on autopilot so I can have a life of my own?"  
"Don't talk to me about life."  
"Okay! Got it! I hope this works." Harv eased himself back into the pilot's seat. "Um, Viv?"  
"Yeah Harv?"  
"Any idea why we're flying at about thirty feet elevation?"  
"Well the autopilot seems a bit depressed..."  
Harv and Vivaldi looked out the windscreen at the rapidly approaching coastline with its attendant small, but considerably higher than thirty feet, and severely hard mountains and started screaming.

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*best ! saga ! ever !!*

***Originally Posted by pshrynk***

***"So, been an autopilot for long?"***

***"You're just trying to cheer me up. It won't work."***

***"Not really, I just get bored easily."***

***"So you talk to inanimate objects just to pass the time?"***

***"Pretty much, yeah. Just an hour ago, I was talking to a pair of socks."***

***"It is difficult for me to fathom that there is someone in the universe more pathetic than me."***

***"Yah. Anyway, I've been working on a new story about Harv and Vera. I haven't been able to write much, because Harv keeps dragging me on these adventures. Do you suppose there's any way to put all this on autopilot so I can have a life of my own?"***

***"Don't talk to me about life."***

*best conversation between a depressed (android) autopilot, and a talking dog ever !!!*

*:pandalol: !!! :llamallol: !!! :squirrel:!!!! :standingovation: !!!!!*

*Nekokami:*

*:snicker*

*All squids, abandon ship! :D*

Harv reacted automatically by ramming the throttle forward, pulling back on the yoke, turning the plane starboard, and swearing loudly.

"Beep! Beeeeeeeepity beep! What the beeeeeeeeeep!"

"I have no idea what you are talking about."

"That thing just about killed us, Vivaldi! I'm entitled to a few beeps. And a beeeeeeeeeep!"

"I don't know why you're so upset. You wouldn't have felt a thing. I know I wouldn't have."

"You're just a machine! You have no feelings!"

"Go ahead and rub it in!"

"Turn it off, Viv!"

"Check."

The control panel managed to look hurt and disappointed.

"What the hell was that?" demanded Miyatake from the back of the cockpit.

"Nothing! Just an instrument malfunction!" The control panel looked disdainful. "When you took the radio, it damaged the altimeter."

"Well try not to do that again. There are several hundred pounds of high explosives back here. I nearly had a heart attack!"

"Like I care," muttered Vivaldi.

*Zelda\_pinwhell:*

***The control panel looked disdainful.***

*:pandalol:*

*GeoffC:*

***Originally Posted by pshrynk***

***"Like I care," muttered Vivaldi.***

*:hmm:*

*dib dib dib*

The Goose flew over the Miraflores Locks and climbed to Lake Gatun. Several large freighters were making their way through the Canal.

"I wonder what he's going to do with explosives," said Harv.

"Drop them with timed fuses at the upper and lower gates of the Gatun Locks, thereby causing a traumatic failure of the upper system. That, in turn, will cause the catastrophic flooding of the Miraflores Locks, the destruction of the American Zone and Panama City, and the crippling of the Panama Canal."

Harv looked over at Vivaldi.

"At least that's what I would do... If, you know, I wanted to destroy the Canal... Which I don't!

Quit looking at me like that!"

"Put a little time into thinking about this, have you?"

"Hey, Miyatake's kids are reprehensible little heathens! And Frau Miyatake? Don't get me started! That woman is a Teutonic Nightmare! I had to clean up my own poo from the yard and double wrap it for the garbage! At night, I spent all my spare time trying to figure out how to get my revenge. I even wrote it down in a notebook... Oh. Crap."

"Well, maybe he destroyed it and the authorities won't be blaming you for the whole sabotage thing."

"I'm going to need a new identity when this is over."

*Nekokami:*

*Er... does the Miyatake family live in Panama City? Otherwise, I'm not seeing quite how Vivaldi's plan is meant to get revenge on the shums....*

*Pshrynk:*

*They run the "Flower Emporium" in Old Town. Any catastrophic failure of the Canal will rip through there like Patton through Germany. Also, Harv spends most of his time in Rick's Cafe Americain Panama City, so that would go, too.*

*DixieGal:*

*(It's funnier if you read it as Panama City Beach, Florida.)*

The Goose skidded to a landing on Lake Gatun. Harv taxied it to his landing, called, oddly enough, Adrian's Landing. He never quite understood why it had that name. It was just a stretch of shore when he took it over and after that everyone started calling it Adrian's Landing. He felt sure that it ought to be Wallbanger's Landing, or at the very least Goose Landing. He shrugged. Right now, he had bigger things to worry about.

Vivaldi jumped out and pulled the mooring lines to their stantions, which were palm trees. Harv shut down the engines and did his final checklist. He hoped that the socks' plan worked and it wasn't also his "final" checklist.

He jumped to shore. Miyatake and Fujimora were there already, Vera held between them.

"Mr. Wallbanger, if you please. What do you call that maneuver that you and the dog used in our fight that ended so dishonorably?"

"The Harvaldi."

"Ah. Just know, that I have spent the day in contemplating the moves and have devised a means of countering it, should we have occasion to test our skills once more."

"Then all you have to worry about is the Reverse Harvaldi, I guess."

Fujimora's lips moved silently. His eyes widened in fear.

"Enough talk!" said Miyatake, "Get the cannisters out of the plane and into the sailboat."

"You're stealing my boat?"

"I doubt you will have much use for it after today, Mr. Wallbanger."

Harv and Fujimora started unloading four cylinders from the cargo bay of the Goose.

GeoffC:

*We interrupt this program with a News Bulletin....*

*Authorities in Lake Gatun are concerned that activities on the lake are incompatible with the environmental nature of the reserve.*

*The FBI, CIA, local police and the Panda-Brigade are currently investigating.*

*We shall bring further news as the situation develops...*

badgoodDeb:

*The ninja-squirrels are on alert too.*

DixieGal: Meanwhile, outside Biggles office, Ingrid's mighty heart pounded, almost as though someone she loved was plunging toward a horrible death driven by a depressed autopilot. But then, it was over, and she could draw breath again into her massive, breastfeeding, working bosoms. She bustled into Biggles office, her face red from the effort of bustling.

"What's wrong, my dear," Biggles asked.

"Nein, mein Capitan, nein. I must leave work early today as all nein.. nine... of my children got sent home from school due to lice," she improvised on the fly in order to not appear to be fibbing.

"Then go, my dear, and shave those heathens... ahem... HEAvenly angels," sputtered Biggles, all the while hoping that she had not carried the heathens' parasitic plague into the office with her that morning.

"Donkeyshane (Ed. I don't know how to spell "thanks" in German.) mein Capitan," and she rushed from the office, department, building floor, lobby, and building, before hailing a cab.

Happily, her pager was on vibrate when it went off in the cab. (I'm leaving this in as a temporal anomaly, because really, don't we all need more vibrators.. vibrating pagers?)

Later, much less frustrated and safely sequestered in her secret solitary shelter, she logged onto [www.largegermanspy.net](http://www.largegermanspy.net) and checked her couriered mail.

"What's this? Mein got in himmel, I must leave my children in the kennel... with the babysitter... and meet a squirrel dressed like a man in Mexico City," she spoke aloud to herself, and

shuddered with her accustomed dread of being in a city that is so dangerously close to an active volcano with a squirrel.

*Pshrynk:*

*Oh, great. Now I gotta get squirrels in the plot.  
And who knew the Nazis invented the interwebs back in 1938?*

*badgoodDeb:*

*Goodness! Where did Ingrid come from? She's new here!*

*Pshrynk:*

*Here.*

*Dixiegal:*

*Oops! I forgot it was 1938. I went back and fixed it.*

*badgoodDeb:*

*Oh yeah. Well then, carry on, Ingrid!*

*DixieGal:*

*She's just taking up space right now. I think she would be a much better operative if she didn't have a yard full of heathens, but what can I say? She loves her (Catholic) Japanese husband very much. So, even though she's a lousy baker and a Lutheran, there's always a bun in the oven.*

He waited in shadow. He was torn. He was needed elsewhere. The Master was in need. But he was contracted to this plot. Torn. This was going to sting.

His being torn in two, he sent a part of himself to the Master. The rest, the part with the most anger stayed here.

He checked his operatives, who chittered and screamed in a side dimension.

All was ready. He chewed a banana... waiting.

*Dixiegal:*

*It feels like Christmas came early!*

*Montsnmags:*

*It's like you can read my mind like a book! (Tell me, is it Little Golden Book, or Dr Seuss?)*

Harv helped haul the last of the cylinders into the sailboat. He checked the rollers to see that they were clear. The time for action was coming up swiftly. He hoped that the socks knew what they were mumbling about. As he straightened up, he saw that Miyatake had the squid held to Vera's head.

"Now, I am afraid that our time has come to an end, Mr. Wallbanger, Miss Vera."

"Don't suppose I could talk you into just sailing away and leaving us here, could I?"

"That would be imprudent, I am afraid. We must get ourselves out of the country as quickly as possible after delivering our packages."

"Okay. I guess, then, there's only two things to say."

"What would that be, Mr. Wallbanger?"

"First, you talk too much, second: now."

"Now?"

"NOW!"



Then, several things happened at the same time. Since this is not the movies, where large actions can be shown simultaneously and in split screen, we will describe them sequentially. Pay attention, because the special effects were very expensive.

*[suddenly a loud pop-snap and the smell of ozone]*

The parachute ballooned up, covering Miyatake as Vera pulled away and dove for cover.

The socks, Lefty and Hugo, were furiously rubbing themselves against the fabric of the parachute. Sparks cascaded from it like chain lightning.

Zelda\_pinwheel:

**Originally Posted by pshrynk**

**Pay attention, because the special effects were very expensive.**

:D

**Originally Posted by pshrynk**

***[suddenly a loud pop-snap and the smell of ozone]***

*planet head is going to be so happy.*

**The parachute ballooned up, covering Miyatake as Vera pulled away and dove for cover.**

**The socks, Lefty and Hugo, were furiously rubbing themselves against the fabric of the parachute. Sparks cascaded from it like chain lightning.**

*Hugo and Lefty to the rescue !!! :yay !!:*

Psockpuppet:

"Hugo?"

"Yeah, Lefty."

"This feels wrong."

"It's for the greater good, Lefty. Try not to worry about it."

"Okay."

Taylor514ce:

*Post #431, my legacy of stage craft. I'd claim Hugo and Lefty, but of course they, by definition, have a life of their own, and their genesis can be credited to Neko and Zelda. But the loud pop-snap and the smell of ozone, that's all me, baby.*

*I am inordinately happy.*

*EDIT: Zelda, stop reading my mind.*

Zelda\_pinwheel:

**Originally Posted by psockpuppet**

**"Hugo?"**

**"Yeah, Lefty."**

**"This feels wrong."**

**"It's for the greater good, Lefty. Try not to worry about it."**

**"Okay."**

*heeheehee*

**Originally Posted by Taylor514ce**

**EDIT: Zelda, stop reading my mind.**

*i can't help it. you know i know you better than you know yourself. :mellow:*

Harv kicked out at Fujimora, who ducked and grabbed his groin, defensively.

Vivaldi started running around in circles, yapping hysterically.

"I thought you only had to do that three times a day?"

"This is a bonus."

In Panama City, Ingrid Miyatake, suitcase in hand gave final instructions to her gardener on the care and feeding of her children and boarded a plane for Mexico City.

Taylor514ce:

**Originally Posted by zelda\_pinwheel**

**Heeheehee**

***i can't help it. you know i know you better than you know yourself. :mellow:***

*That phrase, interpreted "biblically", is most certainly true.*

Zelda\_pinwheel:

*you really are incorrigible.*

Taylor514ce:

*...and yet.*

Miyatake pulled the trigger on the squid, which discharged onto the fabric of the parachute, causing an awful mess. Some of the ink splattered on Lefty, forming, for some reason the picture of a flying panda near his toe.

Vivaldi lunged for Miyatake's throat.

Harv swung wildly at Fujimora.

Vera reached into the boat and pulled the safety switches off the canisters.

DixieGal:

**Originally Posted by pshrynk**

***In Panama City, Ingrid Miyatake, suitcase in hand gave final instructions to her gardener on the care and feeding of her children and boarded a plane for Mexico City.***

*Meanwhile, in Mexico City, the streets mamboed as the mighty and mighty beautiful and mighty dangerous volcano belched forth a hot and stinking cloud of gas with a mighty rumble, then settled down to slumbering dormancy yet again. Or did it?*

badgoodDeb:

*On, no!!! Not the safety switches!! We're in trouble now.*

Zelda\_pinwheel:

*a squid with a trigger !! man, this story has everything.*

DixieGal:

*It just keeps getting better!*

Harv missed and lost his footing.

Grinning evilly, Fujimora raised his hands in preparation.

"Now we see who is better at fighting, no?"

Miyatake dodged the dog attacking him, swept his hands around and pushed the parachute into the lake, grounding it, and eliminating its defensive abilities.

He raised the squid, which seemed to be saying, "Hi! I was supposed to just untie Vera and be in my way. Sorry about this."\*

**Freeze frame to get the perspective, just a moment:**

Harv is unbalanced and near to falling over

Vera is leaning on the sailboat, unable to get out of the way.  
Miyatake is holding the squid in a menacing fashion on Vera.  
Fujimora is getting ready to kick Harv's ass.  
Vivaldi is flying through the air with an embarrassed look on his face.  
The squid is calling his agent and complaining.

DixieGal:

*That squid struggles to communicate, being forced to emote with its eyes and such. It is very thoughtful and insightful. I think it should use some of that ink and write a book.*

Zelda\_pinwheel:

**Originally Posted by pshrynk**

**The squid is calling his agent and complaining**

*pfff. i would too. :rolleyes:*

Fujimora stepped in, guarded, jabbed, brought his leg up for the "Swan on a Misty Lake With Just a Hint of Rain" death kick, and had to deal with a screaming mad, thirty pound gibbon, who was thinking that he weighed four hundred pounds, who had materialized out of nowhere. "Yar! Geroff! Geroff!" he screamed as he danced madly around, trying to keep Screaming Mad Adrian from tearing his tongue out by pulling his ears off. Miyatake was distracted by the screaming and looked away from Vera, just as *[suddenly a loud pop-snap and the smell of ozone]* four black-clad, twelve inch long creatures with cute, furry tails materialized at his feet and raced up his pants legs. "Yar! Geroff! Geroff!" he screamed as he danced madly around, trying to keep his winning streak with Ingrid alive.

Zelda\_pinwheel:

*wow. marc is going to be sooooo happy !!!*

*(see !! squirrels are on the side of GOOD !!! good, i tell you !!)*

DixieGal:

*We don't know that yet. Squirrels are opportunistic marauders and may be taking advantage of Miyatake's moment of weakness while his bodyguard is busy being confused by the ape.*

Zelda\_pinwheel:

*nonetheless, you'll note they're affiliated with hugo and lefty here. that's a clear sign, as far as i'm concerned. even if they are possibly mercenary squirrels (maybe they're just there for the nuts).*

DixieGal:

*I did not realize they were with the socks! It's all clear now! :eek:*

Zelda\_pinwheel:

*well, they do \*seem\* to be fighting on the same side... of course, that could just be random luck, or coincidence, or accident. find out in the next episode ! same bat-time, same bat-channel !*

badgoodDeb:

*Don't you mean random bat-time, same bat-channel? Ya hafta keep your set tuned in at all times, or you miss an episode or two!*

Pshrynk:

*They're in it for the nuts. Just ask Miyatake. :evilgrin:*

Patricia:

:rofl:  
Dear me.  
Zelda\_pinwheel:  
:rimshot:  
he'll be here all week. :D

Harv got his feet under him and punched Fujimora in the gut. He would have tried for a head shot, but the gibbon was occupying most of that real estate, and he didn't like the look in the eyes of the primate.

Fujimora, deciding that collapsing in a heap was probably the fastest method of relieving his brain of the horror of the assault from the gibbon, did so.

Harv looked around. Vera was okay. The socks were backstroking across the lake and seemed okay. Adrian handed him a note\*\*\* and disappeared with a \*pop\*.

In horror, he saw Miyatake and the squid. And Miyatake with his hand in Vivaldi's collar.

"Well, Mr. Wallbanger, we seem to have an impasse, once again."

Montsnmags:

**Originally Posted by zelda\_pinwheel**  
**wow. marc is going to be sooooo happy !!!**

Marc is do-do-doing...

(Very strange You-tube video that won't play on your reader, so stop whining!)

Ah, my invisible, inadvertently violent friend... ~sigh~ they grow up so fast [wipes small, happy tear from cheek]. It almost makes me wish I could.

Nekokami:

**Originally Posted by pshrynk**  
**The squid is calling his agent and complaining.**

Ah... I guess that would be me.

Hello?

Yes? No, that wasn't the role I thought you were getting either. What? NOW? I

suppose... let me see who's available... ok. But you're probably going to lose your signing bonus... fine.

fzzt-pop

The squid vanishes from Miyatake's hand, to be replaced with a rather irritated electric eel.

Zelda\_pinwheel:

:rofl

oh, NOW what is going to happen !!!

(cut to pshrynk, tearing his hair out over this unexpected plot twist, muttering "stupid unreliable cephalopods !! i had big plans for that squid !")

Pshrynk:

Well, I did. :(

"So, Mr. Wallbanger? What shall it be? Step away from the boat and allow me and my associate to go in peace? Or -- Holy Jeezus!" Miyatake dropped the squid, which had, for some reason, turned into an angry electric eel. The eel cast a dirty look over what would have been its shoulder, had it any, and slithered into the lake, swimming away.

"Oh, bugger this! This non-violence shtick has gone on long enough!" He reached into his pocket and pulled out the gun which would have been there if the squid hadn't been hired by accident.

Harv found that *his* gun had reappeared, as well. He pulled it from the holster.

Somewhere in Wisconsin, an aspiring writer, who really had had it with being a psychiatrist and just wanted to have a little fun with writing an action adventure story, screamed and pulled out his hair.

The two men stood in a face-off.

"Right," said Miyatake, "What now?"

Slite:

*Oh man.... you just HAVE to compile this into an ebook once it's done! I'll take mine in PRC format thank you very much!*

*But what the heck happened to the pirate ninja squirrels?*

Zelda\_pinwheel:

***Originally Posted by zelda\_pinwheel***

***(cut to pshrynk, tearing his hair out over this unexpected plot twist, muttering "stupid unreliable cephalopods !! i had big plans for that squid !")***

***Originally Posted by pshrynk***

***Well, I did. :(***

*i hope you'll publish the outtakes so we can find out what \*would\* have happened.*

***Originally Posted by pshrynk***

***Somewhere in Wisconsin, an aspiring writer, who really had had it with being a psychiatrist and just wanted to have a little fun with writing an action adventure story, screamed and pulled out his hair.***

*:pandalol:*

***Originally Posted by Slite***

***Oh man.... you just HAVE to compile this into an ebook once it's done! I'll take mine in PRC format thank you very much!***

***But what the heck happened to the pirate ninja squirrels?***

*inquiring minds want to know !!!*

*(no chance of continuity problems or unwrapped-up loose ends when the story is unfolding in real time in Teh Lounge. just call us The Observers.)*

*oh, and : epub for me, please.*

Pshrynk:

*All I got is mobipocket creator, so someone else will have to translate. I could send the finished Word doc to anyone who is willing...*

Zelda\_pinwheel:

*prc = mobipocket, actually.*

*but i'm sure that we'll be able to find people willing to make other formats...*

Patricia:

*I'll make a book in all three formats: lrf, prc and imp.*

*But will someone turn that music off, please.*

Miyatake got a distant look on his face. He pointed the gun at his pants, not losing eye contact with Harv.

"You can come out right now, you little bastiches. I've had enough kids in this life and don't care about collateral damage!"

Four meek looking squirrels scurried out from his pockets and ran off into the jungle. One stopped and threw a salute at Vera before disappearing.

"Now that was just wrong," said Vivaldi.

"Okay," said Harv, "Just let my dog go, and you can take the boat and leave. We're not in a place we can stop you."

"If I keep the dog, then I am in a better position to accomplish my goals, don't you think?"

"Look, he's just a dog! If I'm going to try something, he wouldn't figure too greatly in my plans."

"I'm standing right here, you know!"

"My children will appreciate having Vivaldi-san back in their playroom."

"I mean, does anyone ever bother to ask me if it would be okay for me to be used as a hostage? No!"

"Don't worry, Viv. Miyatake is a gambling addict. I'll win you back next week."

"Like I'm a piece of property or something! What kind of a life is this? I wouldn't make my cat suffer like this."\*\*

"I am afraid that I will probably be losing Vivaldi-san to the Crown Prince next week, Mr. Harv. After I have finished my business here, I will be recalled and given a hero's welcome at home."

"Besides, my GA group meets on Mondays, so I should be okay."

Miyatake nudged Fujimora, who was whimpering "The fangs! The awful fangs!" to get in the sailboat. He dragged Vivaldi over the gunwale and pulled the mooring line free. The sailboat slipped into Lake Gatun. Fujimora started the outboard with undue haste and they buzzed into the twilight.

"Hasn't anyone ever heard of lifting a dog into a boat? No? Just haul him over by the collar! I'm writing the SPCA!"

\*\*He would have said "dog," but did not, for obvious reasons.

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*oh noes !!!! they got vr !!! how is he going to get away ??? (or is this part of the cunning plan ?)*

*DixieGal:*

***Originally Posted by pshrynk***

***"Hasn't anyone ever heard of lifting a dog into a boat? No? Just haul him over by the collar! I'm writing the SPCA!"***

*Uh oh! No thumbs makes writing angry letters difficult!*

"Oh, Harv! That's just awful! Can't we do something?"

"Well, Viv's a pretty strong swimmer. I think he'll be okay."

"He can't swim from Japan!"

"No, even though you can see Russia from Japan and Alaska from Russia. But he can swim from the middle of the Canal."

"What?"

"Well, I was fixing the sailboat this morning. When I got tired of that, I went to have a drink. That's when I found out that you were missing."

Faint screaming in Japanese drifted over the water.

"Harv, never, ever let me complain that you can't fix a leaky boat!" She leaned in and kissed him.

*badgoodDeb:*

*Vivaldi can talk. I'm sure he'll just dictate to a secretary. After he swims ashore.*

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*a happy ending ! aw, \*snif\*, that's lovely !!*

*my sincere and extreme felicitations to you for this masterpiece ! this story is destined to become a timeless classic if ever any story was. i laughed, i cried, and it's got a good beat and you can dance to it.*

*:standingovation: champagne for everybody !!*

*DixieGal:*

*Satisfying indeed. I love a happy ending! :)*

## EPILOGUE

The two lovers sat and watched the twilight blend to darkness. There were no cares in the world.

"Harv?"

"Yes, Vera?"

"I'm really sorry."

"About what?"

"Well, in all the excitement of the fight, I sort of pulled the safety switches off the Nippo-Montsnmags Mark IV depth charges in the sailboat. I thought that if there weren't any switches, they would have to not try to destroy the locks."

A faint "crump" sounded out in the Canal, followed by largish waves lapping the shore.

"Ah, well," said Harv, "Biggles has a runabout that I can win off him next week at the poker game. He's as bad as Miyatake."

"Does it leak?"

"Sometimes."

"Well that's all right, then." She snuggled back into his arms.

"Mutter, mutter, mutter! Couldn't even give a dog a bit of warning! One minute I'm looking at having to try to swim to Russian and then to Alaska, not to mention finding a way back to Panama, the next I'm swimming for my life! I'd like to see a Jack Russell Terrier do this scene!"

A wet, bedraggled, irritated, gray dog scrambled ashore and shook vigorously. Sitting there, enjoying a few beers and, in at least one case, a smoke were Hugo, Lefty, and the squid.

"You guys got a brew for a poor dog?"

Hugo lifted him out a cold one and offered him a cigarette.

"No thanks! I'm trying to quit."

The squid looked at his companions, as if to say, "Louis, this could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship!"

"Who's Louis?"

*Zelda\_pinwheel:*

*oh !!!! CLASSIC !!! brilliant ending !!!! really, hats off to you. we should create a new literary prize, so we could give it to you. how does "pshrynk, recipient of the Llama\* for outstanding fiction work" sound ?*

*\*or something*

\*\*\*

The note read:

*One (1) nearly god-like intervention in the plot line, mutant ninja squirrels included. Comped by manager.*

*Montsnmags International (Holdings)*

It was the only thing that seemed to make sense that day.