

Staplegun Logic

(More Inhuman Resources)

K.K.

Staplegun Logic: More Inhuman Resources
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MAD DOGS AND ENGLISHMEN

“Ah, New York in the summer. Lovely, isn’t it, Muriel?”

“Enchanting, Bernard.” Muriel murmured, patting her dear old chap on his dear old arm. Arm in arm, they turned from 2nd Avenue onto 100th Street. Muriel Milquetoast’s well-worn leather pump crushed a length of dog excrement into an artistic new shape. Bernard’s old boot slid for a bit in an orange puddle of Cisco vomit, but he didn’t miss a beat.

“A better smell to it than Newcastle, eh, Bernard?”

“Heavenly, Muriel. And as I understand it, the thinner air enables the bullets to travel farther.”

“Fascinating!”

“Quite.”

Their deep, rich accents mixed with the sounds of a rape victim screaming, a wino vomiting, an adorable Jewish merchant getting his nose pulped by the Mad Dogs, breaking glass, shrieking tires, and more. Hot town, summer in the city. Entrenched in their fantasy world, they strolled on.

From a rooftop above, a young black man giggled to himself as he watched them walk. His name was Jerome Jefferson, IQ 207, supra genius. And just because the police had given up on his neighborhood didn’t mean that *he* had.

There was an expensive laptop computer laying open on the gravel rooftop; on its monitor were four different video images of good old New York mayhem. Periodically Jerome would limp from the edge of the rooftop, over to the laptop, and back again.

The limp was a gift from the Mad Dogs, courtesy of Montrose’s chrome-plated .357. The Mad Dog’s gift had been expensive...erasing a basketball scholarship in addition to a few grand for a steel pin in his leg. Jerome idly wished Montrose would be on the street today; he had an equally expensive present in mind for him.

The Milquetoasts had gotten a miraculous four-tenths of a mile down 100th and still hadn’t gotten mugged. It was possibly a record of some kind...but it was all about to change.

Bernard and Muriel passed Montrose and two of his lieutenants as they lounged on the steps of a crumbling brownstone, in a cozy afterglow of coke, smoke, and the stabbing of a rookie cop.

“Yo, Montrose, check these immigrants.” Grunted Baldy.

“Lookin’ like...” Leatherlungs hunted an analogy: “Archie an’ Edith Bunker an’ whatnot.” He grinned with a mouthful of slimy gold teeth.

Montrose woke from his pleasant half-stupor of chronic, as much from Leatherlung’s breath as from his statement. He saw them: an old fart pushing eighty, with slicked-back white hair dripping grease, an ugly plaid suit, and a wife that made Nancy Reagan look like Vanessa Williams. Both his back pocket and her purse were bulging, and Montrose’s boys were letting them stay that way...*why?*

“Yeah. So what you waitin’ on? An engraved invitation? Take ‘em out!” Montrose muttered. It was so hard to get good help these days.

Baldy chuckled as he and Leatherlungs got up and ambled quickly towards the whistling duo.

“Muriel?” Bernard drawled.

“Yes, Bernard?” Muriel sang.

“I believe we are about to be accosted.” He yawned.

“You don’t say. By the young lads behind us, I suppose?” Muriel inquired sweetly, drawing her tortoise-shell glasses down the bridge of her nose.

“I’m afraid so.”

“What? Without being properly introduced?”

“Quite.” Bernard said as Baldy’s switchblade sliced the air next to his neck. He stopped, turning towards Baldy with a yellow-toothed grin. “Excuse me. Would you be with that ah, rap group? The Who Danged Clan, or somesuch?”

Baldy’s eyes widened at the remark, but he kept focused on the task at hand. “Lissen, Li’l Lord Fauntleroy, you best give up yo’ wallet nice an’ easy...” He grunted, easing the switchblade under the corpulent rolls of fat that comprised Bernard’s neck. There were no cops on 100th; none in their right minds, anyway. There were no citizens saying “Hey, stop that!” This was Bedford-Stuyvesant.

“Suppose I have no wallet to give up, old bean?” Bernard asked, stopping in his tracks.

“Then you get CUT!” Baldy growled, forcing the knife harder against the old man’s skin, towards the carotid artery. It should have hurt like hell, but the old man gave no sign if it did. What was up with this stupid ol’ whitefish boy?

“Well, have a go at it, then. But you’re a disgrace to a violent society.” Bernard grumbled with a slight frown.

With a generic oath against white people in general, the Mad Dog ripped the knife hard to the right, his bicep rippling under his colors. Bernard suddenly grinned from two mouths.

At the same instant, Leatherlungs ripped at the fat and inviting purse dangling from Muriel’s thin, pale right arm.

Leatherlungs had done this a thousand times since he was nine years old. It was very simple: either the purse ripped free, or the lady hung on to it and fell, needing to be kicked loose. Normally. But normally, the purses he snatched didn’t have fifteen hundred volts running through them. So normally, Leatherlungs’ dreadlocks wouldn’t have stood straight up in a crazed frightwig of electric pain, and he wouldn’t have stood there gibbering and drooling in shock. But he did.

Baldy’s knife released a flow of liquid warmth, as usual...but it wasn’t the deep red he was used to. This liquid was thicker than blood, amber-tinged and clear.

Without releasing Muriel’s arm, Bernard reached out with his free hand and clamped it around Baldy’s thick bicep. Bernard’s eyes swiveled down to see the amber flow drenching Baldy’s knife and hand. “Ah. I seem to be getting your knife a bit sloppy. Dreadfully sorry, old chap.”

Baldy screamed as he saw a flesh-colored panel slide back on the back of Bernard’s flesh-colored hand, and a scalpel-like blade emerged from the gleaming, whirring darkness within. He tried to pull away, but Bernard’s grip put a battleship anchor to shame.

Bernard’s grin grew a bit wider, as the flow of amber liquid stopped. “So tell me, is it still ‘Resolutely Strive Against The Paper-Tiger Neo-Colonialist’ or is it just ‘Kill Whitey’?” He asked Baldy amiably.

And the blade, emerging on an odd and thin metallic stalk from Bernard’s hand, went to work on Baldy’s arm. In a few short strokes, the oil-soaked switchblade fell from nerveless fingers to clatter on the soiled sidewalk.

Confident in his boy's talent for violence, Montrose had slipped back into a daydream. He was cutting a rap CD called *Pimpin' An Ho'in Is Da Only Thing Goin'*, until Baldy's screams snapped him out of it. He looked towards the source of the sound.

There was Leatherlungs, jitterbugging on his back on the sidewalk...what, was he *break-dancing* for those two crackers? But wait...there was Baldy on his knees nearby, moaning over a dozen nasty lacerations.

And there was the English guy, covered in some fluid that obviously wasn't blood, with *knives sticking out of his skin*, approaching Montrose with his wife in tow.

"Beg your pardon, old boy..." The 'man' said.

"Would you be Mr. Montrose?" Chirped its 'wife'.

Montrose didn't answer them; he merely reached for the chrome-plated .357 in the back of his waistband.

"We've a message from an acquaintance...a Mr. Jefferson."

Montrose wasn't trying to hear it. He aimed at the Englishman and fired twice.

A patch of flesh peeled back off of its face, revealing well-crafted steel. The Englishman smiled, and spikes grew through the flesh of its knuckles.

Montrose got up and took a fast look around, as the Milquetoasts got closer. The street was alive with watchers now, none of whom were eager to give him any help. He could take off into the building, but that was the easy way out. He fired three more times, and neat punctures appeared in the old woman's quaint flower-print dress. The holes began to bleed the same oily fluid as Bernard.

"Mr. Jefferson says you need..." Bernard began.

"A GOOD STABBING!!!" Muriel crowed, and a bayonet emerged from where her tongue should have been.

Montrose emptied his gun into both of them, with equally lame effect, then threw it down and ran off, gibbering.

The Milquetoasts followed him, implacably.

On the rooftop above, Jerome Jefferson followed their pursuit on the monitor-displays of the laptop, giggling at the defeat of the Mad Dogs. Then a call came in on his cell phone.

"Yeah?"

"Jefferson?"

"Yeah."

"This is Percy, from the eight precinct. We'll take one of your Milquetoast thingamajigs..." A voice crackled.

Jerome glared at the phone. "I'd appreciate your not calling them 'jigs', Percy. I'm recording a trial run now; they're most impressive. You'll have one tomorrow. There's just one thing..." Jerome began, watching the video stares of his inventions as they tracked down his enemy relentlessly.

"What?"

"The price just went up...to eight hundred thousand."

"Eight hundred thousand?!?! Listen, you Disney-world night-fighter—" Percy began. Jerome hung up as he watched Montrose beat on a locked apartment door, screaming to be let in as spiked appendages reached for his neck.

Jerome smiled, and a moment later the cell phone rang again. The more things changed, the more they stayed the same...