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Heigh-Ho Paradise

By Keenan Stafford

The only way these two could get off the streets, was by committing the wildest crime they could imagine. The duo was considered an ideal team for the task at hand. Rufus was the power house between the two of them, but even then, that's saying something. He could get the job done, with his strength, but he was a round, plump man. He was short compared to his partner in crime, Angus. Where brute force held no weight in the situation, Angus' intellect shined like a dull lightbulb. Angus was quite tall, nearly hitting every door frame he came across. The man was skinny with hardly any meat on his bones. He looked like a stick bug.

Angus ducked his head down, evading the door frame as he walked inside of the coffee shop.

“Blasted doors, I tell ya Rufus. Seems like the world's always against me and the door frames are the knockers on the head.”

Rufus' stomach growled as they walked pass the counter and showcase that displayed a vast variety of cakes, cookies, and delicious pastries.

“Aye, Angus?”

“What is it now, you dolt?”

“You sure we can't just have a quick bite before we head in?”

Angus glared at Rufus.

“I swear, you absolute mass of fat. We ain't got the money or time to be worrying about how many crumbs we gotta cram down your throat.”

A pristine robot on a wheel rushed up to the duo. Its voice tingled with etiquette.

“Hello there, gentlemen. How may I help you this morning? May I interest you in a fresh cinnamon roll?” said the robot.

“Aye, Angus. I think he might be onto something.”

Angus slapped his back hand against Rufus' face.

“Rufus, you'd vote for someone who'd run amuck across this country, just so you'd have a right to free French fries.”

Rufus crossed his arms and built up a snooty look.

“I believe that burgers and French fries are an essential combination of foods. One without the other is criminal.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. Aye, John we wanna clean up the closet again.”

“Right this way, gentlemen.”

The robot led the duo to the janitor's closet. Angus and Rufus walked into the closet, cluttered with supplies. Angus closed the door. The two of them barely had enough room to fit in. Angus knocked on the wall and rubbed his hand against it.

“Sweep up the cheese and take out the salmon,” said Angus.

A hole opened up in the wall, revealing a mouth of what appeared to be a grizzled man.

“Who’s reporting in?” asked the man behind the wall.

“Angus and Rufus,” said Angus.

“Oh boy, the boss is gonna want to see you two immediately.”

The hole in the wall closed up and a trap door opened underneath the duo. Angus and Rufus fell down into a dimly lit room with cushions softening their fall. Rufus landed on his belly against the cushions.

“I wish they’d install a slide or something. Better than a trap door,” said Rufus.

“Maybe you need to hit the gym more often.”

Angus stood up and exited the room as Rufus followed along. They walked inside of the elegantly decorated hallway that led toward a lobby. A chandelier with blue lighting lit up the entire room while marble pillars stood beside the walls. The floor had a long fancy carpet and beyond the desk that welcomed people, was two staircases that led up to a massive double door. The receptionist stared at the men as they walked in.

“There you two are. You have been keeping Mister Owesmar waiting for far too long. You are to meet with him in his office, immediately.”

Rufus grabs Angus and shakes him.

“You think we’re gonna get fired?”

Angus pushes Rufus away from him, breaking the grasp.

“We gonna get fired if we don’t throw ourselves into that office. Now get moving.”

Angus and Rufus dashed to the stairs. The two of them ran up separate staircases, pushing the large double doors open and running down the hallway with multiple sets of doors along the

wall. Through the hallway in the middle was a grand double door, black with gold rims and handles.

Angus slowly opened the door to reveal the meeting room. The room had a long table, and Mr. Owesmar sitting in a black office chair.

Mr. Owesmar was dressed in a slick black suit with a red tie. Everything about the man emitted intimidation. His height, his figure, and his soul piercing expression. Mr. Owesmar gestured the duo over to the two chairs that were close and beside him. “Sit down.”

Angus and Rufus took their seats.

“Can you explain to me why I have brought you here, post-haste?”

“You wanted to comment on our performance this past month?” said Angus.

Mr. Owesmar slammed his hand against the table. “I’ve brought you here to set you bumbling buffoons straight.” Mr. Owesmar sighed, resting his hand on his head. He pulled out a remote from his pocket, revealing a large TV screen behind him.

He turned to the screen as Angus and Rufus glanced at it. The screen revealed a graph that shows progress, but suddenly dips down. “The first few missions you two have been sent to accomplish went fruitfully, but for the past few weeks, you have failed every mission.”

“Sir, I’ll admit that we’ve had a few screw-ups for a while now.”

“That is all I need to hear, Angus. What you need to understand is that this association does not need you.”

The double doors swung open, making a booming noise. Vandal stood at the doorway with his hands on his hips. The man had an amazing set of long hair, flowing down to his shoulders and a great mustache. It's a shame that his face doesn't match his hair's beauty. He had

a big nose, small eyes, and a fat mouth. The man looked like an inventor of some sort with his red tinted goggles and heavy belt with a number of unusual-looking gadgets.

“That’s right, you cogs. You can’t cut it like me; a man of machines.”

“Who the heck are you?”

Vendal put his hands on his chest and approached Rufus.

“I am the future. I’m more than just a man of labor. I’m the guy who makes the machines that make people need to get you to work in the first place.” An unsettling laugh rang throughout the room, from Vendal.

“Mr. Dremcral will be taking your place permanently,” said Mr. Owesmar.

“And as my first act of being hired. It will be my honor to show you two, the door. Prepare to be demoted to a citizen.” Vendal pulled out a remote that has a similar design to the building. He pressed a button and two trap doors give out underneath Angus and Rufus.

The two of them screamed, falling down the holes. They slip through a vacuum that sends them out into an alley way. The duo are cushioned by a few bags of garbage. Rufus weighed his gaze to the garbage.

“Guess we got kicked out for good,” said Rufus.

“Yea, well we won’t need them. Not when we’ve still got our plan.” Angus stood up from the pile of garbage and dusted himself off.

“See, I thought we might need a backup plan. We’ve got too much at stake here and I didn’t want things to go south, even if we were stuck in the south pole.”

“Well that’s great and all, but can we grab something to eat first?”

After persuading his partner in crime to get him some food, the two of them returned to their hideout. Their hideout was out in the country beyond the city. The hideout was an old

beaten down house with broken windows and worn-down appliances. It wasn't the prettiest, but it worked well enough for the duo.

Rufus was sat down in an old 1940s chair with a sandwich in both of his hands and a large soda sitting on the ground beside him. Angus had the plan paper taped up on a bulletin board. "Aye, Angus?"

"What is it?"

"You know, I was wondering. What's so special about this Key of Alzonda?"

Angus turned to Rufus with shock plastered on his face.

"You don't know what we've been after with all of this planning that we've been dumping into this thing?"

Rufus shrugs. "I thought it was just a gold key we could sell off." Rufus was just about to take a bite of his sandwich before Angus grabs his arm. Angus stares Rufus in the eyes.

"Aye, you listen here, you pack of snacks. That key is more than just some hunk of gold we can pawn off. This key unlocks the gate to a paradise that has been said to be hidden from civilization. The island has been undiscovered for years, but with the key it can be discovered. With that key, the land of gold will be found."

"The land of gold?"

"Aye, the boss said that when held up to the moonlight, it would emit a light that beams down to the exact location of the island. If we can get our hands on that key, we've got ourselves a boat load of gold on our hands. Maybe I can start eating like you again once this is all over."

Angus snaps his fingers and points to the bulletin board. "Alright, now listen up."

Before Angus could speak up, a burst of flames blasts through the walls and burns up the wall with the plan paper. Angus dropped to the ground, screamed and rolled around on the floor. Rufus chomped his sandwich in panic.

The smoke from the burst of flames faded away to reveal Vendal within a nine-foot-tall flame robot equipped with flamethrowers for hands. Vendal laughed and swirled his controls around in a circular fashion, setting the building ablaze. “Well, well, well. I’ve finally found the coup of the double chicken dunce duo,” said Vendal.

Angus’ flames died down, but the flames around the building kept burning. “Vendal, what in a living carcass’ name are you doing here? How’d you find our secret hideout?”

Vendal found himself in an uproar of laughter. He leaned back, and his robot leaned back as well. “Why, Mr. Owesmar told me to drop on by for some roasted chicken, but it looks like you haven’t even the cooker going yet. Allow me to turn up the heat.”

Vendal pulled a lever on his robot with six extra flamethrowers deploying from his robot. The robot shot a massive blast of flames at the duo. Rufus and Angus make a mad dash for the back exit of the house. Vendal whirled the flamethrowers, spreading the fire throughout the building. He laughed and slammed a button to send the robot flying in the sky. The robot left behind an explosion of flames.

Angus and Rufus managed to escape the explosion of flames, only to see their hideout turned into a bonfire. Rufus ran towards the flames, only for Angus to stop him.

“Rufus are you crazy? Our place is burning harder than a gasoline factory lit up by a smoker,” said Angus.

Rufus dropped to his knees and cried. “We lost it. We’ve lost our hideout.” Rufus tossed his head into his hands and sobbed.

Angus got down to his knees and patted Rufus's back. The duo stared up at the flames. "Don't worry, Rufus. We're gonna make this fella pay by the time we're done with him. Right after we steal that key and come back here as kings." Angus got up and pulled his phone out.

"Wait a minute, how are we supposed to get inside and steal the The Key of Alzonda?"

"Ah well, I got me a backup, backup plan. All we have to do is steal a boat and we can get things underway. Just gotta wait for these flames to die down, and we can scarp together some gear to get ready to get in."

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Angus and Rufus had stolen a boat and got themselves to the island. The island had a number of security guards, and a three-story facility. The duo made their way to one of the docks, wearing torn up clothing and circular bumps on their backs. One of the guards noticed the duo's boat and alerted another guard. The guards surrounded the boat and pointed their guns at Angus and Rufus.

Angus leaped out of the boat and grabbed at the guard's legs. "Sir, sir, sir. You have to let us on your island, please. We ain't got no more gas to go anywhere else."

Rufus climbed out of the boat, dragging himself across the dock and to the other guard. "Water, food, burgers."

Confusion had struck the guards. Before they could speak up, the two thieves pulled out frying pans. They slammed the pans over the guard's heads, knocking them out. The frying pans were strapped down with duct tape onto their slightly burnt up clothing.

"Figured that should do the trick. Now let's get their gear on, and get that key."

The duo put on the guard's outfit, tossing their old clothes to the water. Angus' uniform was somewhat loose, it had a bit of trouble staying on him. While Rufus' outfit stayed tightly on

him, maybe a little too tight. The duo snuck inside of the facility with little to no guards in sight. The sound of workout music is heard in the distance. The duo checked out the source of the noise, only to discover the entire first floor facility workers dancing. A robot in an 80s work out outfit hypnotized them.

“Don’t look, Rufus, but I think we’ve got company.”

“I think it’s already too late, Angus. I think I lost a calorie looking at them all.”

“Looks like we’re gonna have to pick up the pace if we’re gonna have any chance of scoring ourselves a gold island.”

Angus and Rufus got into an elevator after getting through the first floor. The elevator doors closed.

“Angus?”

“Aye?”

“I’m getting a bit hungry. You don’t think this place has some sort of snack machine round here?”

Angus hit his hand against his face and groaned. “The last thing we’ve got time for is finding a vending machine for you to crack open.”

The elevator doors opened to reveal Vendal in plain sight, only with a white lab coat on. Far down the hallway behind Vendal was a room with several strange weapons.

“Well, paint me the color shocked. You two have actually made it here.”

Angus hits his hand against his palm. “You’ve only made it this far, Vendal. You ain’t getting any further while we’re here.”

Rufus makes a jump for Vendal. He pinned him down, holding him in a choke hold.

“Aye, that’s right, you tin lover. We got you right where we want you.”

A feather reached out from underneath Vendal's sleeve, tickling Rufus' chin.

Rufus laughed, letting go of Vendal.

The elevator doors open to reveal the final floor, but Vendal escapes the elevator. He runs through a door and dropped a cube. The cube constructed itself into a murder bot. The robot has a number of swords, maces, and a laser beam.

"Have fun with Carl, fools. I taught him a few moves before I got here," said Vendal.

"Get back here," said Angus.

The robot, Carl, blocked the door way. Carl spun around, whirling his blades and tossing some at the duo. The thieves dodge the blades and pick some up.

"C'mon, Rufus. Let's show this trash can who's the real swordsman."

Angus and Rufus charged at the robot with their blades.

Carl halted their advance swords and swung maces at their bellies.

Rufus rolled across the room and Angus knocked to the ground. Carl closes in on Angus, but Rufus tosses his blade at the robot.

Carl blocks the blade and turns to Rufus.

Angus stood up, yanking a mace from the robot and smashing the bot's head.

Carl goes haywire, spinning around with the lasers on full power.

Angus and Rufus ducked down while Carl tore up the third floor's walls.

The robot reveals Vendal and the treasure room just a running distance's away. As the robot collapses to the ground, Angus and Rufus realize their only chance is right before them.

Angus dashes for the treasure room with broken security measures. "Rufus, get the treasure." Angus jumps at Vendal and pins him down.

Rufus reached for the key and once he grabbed it. Alarms went off.

“The facility is locking down into reconfiguration mode. Evacuate the building,” said a voice from the speakers.

Vendal disappeared with only Angus and Rufus left to panic.

Angus pointed to the door with a sign that said staircase. “Aye, Rufus, this way.” He sprinted to the staircase as Rufus followed along. The two of them made it.

Rufus still held onto the key. “Aye, we did it, Angus. We actually did it.” The ground shook. Rufus dropped the key into the sand as the facility configured itself into a giant robot. The duo turns around to see a twenty-foot robot.

“Oh, Christ. How are we gonna get out of this one?”

Vendal is sat in the cockpit at the head of the robot. He laughs with his voice being heard through a loud speaker.

“Did you truly think you could beat me? I am nothing of your average man. They told me that I wasn’t gonna make the cut. They told me that it was only a matter of time before you lose your mind, but I did it. I got the money to make my ultimate creation.”

Vendal makes the robot flex. “Gaze upon those expensive metals. You could go to the junk yard and make this hunk of metal look like gold even if you scarped it. Oh, and I believe the best part of it all, was the fact that the key was a trick. The guards? Everything was an act to test out my amazing new secret invention.”

Angus looked down at the key. He picked it up and stared at it. “No, no. This can’t be. This is all just a lie. We had so much banking on this and now we’re just sitting ducks on this god forsaken island.”

“Enough of this. It’s time to end this game.”

Vendal slams down a button. The robot shifted around, moving visible parts inside of it, only to push out a bunch of crazy weapons to the ground. A saw blade machine gun, an electric whip, a five-barrel freeze ray shotgun, and much more trashed along the ground. “The one button that brings out the super-mega-doom laser and it doesn’t work. This is couldn’t have gone worse. You, weeds cut through the facility and ruined my bot.”

Angus grabbed the electric whip. “Oh, I don’t think so, Vendal. I’m gettin’ off this island and you ain’t stopping me. Even if we’ve gotta blow up this entire island.”

He cracked the whip onto the leg of the robot. The robot froze in place as Vendal and the robot are shocked.

Angus kept on whipping the robot. “Rufus, find something to destroy this thing. I’ll keep it stunned for as long as I can.”

Rufus ran around the island, searching for a weapon.

The robot drops to the ground face first. The window of the head of the giant robot breaks, leaving Vendal exposed.

Angus stopped whipping the robot, only for Vendal to activate the fist rocket.

The robot’s hand formed into a fist, launching at Angus.

Angus got down to the ground as the fist flew over Angus and into the water.

Rufus found a water gun sniper rifle. He aims it down at Vendal and fires a watery bullet. Vendal is hit and is turned into water vapor.

Angus tossed the electric whip to the side and sat down in the sand.

Rufus ran up to him. “We’ve finally done it.”

“Don’t say another word. We did not do anything today.” Angus stood up. “All we did was lose everything we could have ever wanted in the name of tom foolery. We failed beyond belief.”

“You’re wrong, Angus. Look we didn’t get the money, but it doesn’t always have to be like that. Look around you.” Rufus grabbed Angus by his head and forced him to look at the island coated with random gadgets and gizmos.

“We may not have gotten the treasure, but we got something better.”

“If you even think about saying friendship, I’ll chop you up with that saw gun. You got a point though. I ain’t got a clue who would come around here. We got plenty of time to plan out something big with all these weapons. Think that whack-head said this robot’s gears sell for a metric ton doesn’t it?”

“So, what’s it gonna be, boss?”

“I tell ya what we’re gonna do, Rufus. We’re gonna try out these bad boys out one by one. Think it’s about time that we didn’t have to worry about things too much.” Angus stares into the distance of the dark ocean.

The night sky shrouds the waters, but the island’s spotlights shine around the land. The relaxing sound of the waves echo amongst the ocean.

“I think we oughta take some time to relax.”