

Dangling Participles

by avocadoben

Flies as big as raisins sucked spit off his lip as he slept. Not sleep in the strictest sense of the word because guys like him don't sleep, they merely avoid life between rampages. And this guy, well, he's gonna wish he'd avoided life a bit longer because when he wakes up, he'll find me sitting in his bedroom, on this chair, with my gun.

My work isn't personal—usually. For my clients, on the other hand, it's always personal. Almost all my cases are about money, but this one's different. I'm here on this bright, sunny, Sunday morning because this guy pissed off the wrong woman.

Although the particulars are fuzzy, it's generally like this: She trusted him. He hurt her. She wants vengeance. Bad for him, good for me because fixing what others can't fix themselves is both my occupation and my passion. I suppose, in that one, small way, I'm a lucky man.

This guy's luck, on the other hand, at least this morning, is straight Boxcars. Hold that thought, he's waking up. He'll need some instructions.

He turned to the naked man on the bed. "I'd be still if I were—."

"What the hell--!" the man yelled. He looked around the room, then at the leather restraints holding his hands to the bed. "What--?" Screams snuffed out his words as he unsuccessfully reached for his balls. Agonizing cries echoed off the ceiling.

"I suggest you calm down and listen."

"Who are you?" the man screamed. Unable to reach his groin, he kicked against the bonds that held his feet.

"Listen," the gunman said, rising from his chair, "if you keep screaming, I'm going to shoot you. But if you turn down the volume I'll—"

The naked man screamed again and struggled harder. Seconds later a gun rested against his nose and the buzz of angry flies was the room's only noise.

"There now, that's better. I like quiet, Sunday mornings."

Available online at «<http://fictionaut.com/stories/avocadoben/dangling-participles>»

Copyright © 2013 avocadoben. All rights reserved.

The man grew rigid as he looked crossed-eyed at the barrel. "What's wrong with my balls?" he whispered.

The gun inched away from its target, "Your balls and dick," the man said, stepping away, "are tied up at the moment. To be exact, they're sequestered in what's called a Lubiana Loop." He looked at his victim. "Do you know what that is?"

Clinched teeth revealed his ignorance.

"Didn't think so," he said, slowly retracting the weapon. "It's called that because the sick fuck that thought this up is from Yugoslavia." He paused, "do they still call it Yugoslavia?" He shook his head at the distraction. "No matter; for our purposes, Yugoslavia will do."

"Anyway," he said, walking back to the chair, "that's where the device that is presently wrapped around your scrotum and, by extension, your penis was created. The idea is simple. Make a wire loop, wrap it around the object of *interest*, tighten it around that object, and secure the other end. In your case, the object of my client's interest is your left and right Louie, and the object securing the Loop is a weight dangling over the foot of the bed."

The gunman kicked the bed and screams of pain filled the room. "Yep, seems to work," he said with a hint of pride.

"You know," he continued, pulling a comb from his suit coat, "the more you move, the tighter the loop becomes. The tighter the loop—well, think slip knot." He smiled at the sign of recognition. "Yeah, that usually paints a pretty vivid picture."

"Why?" the man croaked through barely open lips.

The comb ran through a patch of salt and pepper hair. "Do you really want to know *why*? He returned the comb to the jacket. "I'm always confused by that question because ninety-nine out of a hundred times when people find out they're going to die, or in this case, become emasculated, instead of asking how they can stop the agony or what they have to do to save themselves, they waste time asking *why*. As if knowing that will somehow save them." He looked at his victim. "Truth is, it doesn't help. In fact, from my observations

in the field, knowing why only makes things worse." He smiled. "That's exactly why I'm going to tell you."

He pulled a handkerchief from his pocket. Twisting it into a fist sized ball, he walked to the head board. A firm, sharp, shake, filled the room with screams which were aborted by the handkerchief.

Gagging on the wad of cloth, the naked man struggled against the bonds. Stepping back, the suited man examined the *damage*. "Now you've done it," he sighed. "You're bleeding." He shook his head. "I mean, really, will you never think of others? Isn't your wife going to be upset enough when she finds you ball-less on her bed? Do you have to ruin her best sheets, too?"

A muffled protest rose from the statue-still man.

"Don't you wish you'd gone to church?" he asked, making his way to the foot board. "You'd of been safe there. I don't go near those places, but looking around, I don't see any holy symbols on your walls. No crucifixes, alters, pictures of the divine. What," he asked, lowering his hand to the wire, "you're not a believer?" He ran a finger along the shiny tightrope. "Not a praying man?"

There was no response.

Nodding, he bent low and examined the line. "That," he said, looking along the wire toward the bloody mess, "might explain why you ignored my client's prayers for mercy." He checked the line for tension. "She tells me she begged you to stop. Pleaded actually, but you wouldn't."

A slight yank of the wire produced muffled screams.

He stood tall. "Now as I was saying," he waited for the moans to subside. His voice hinted at disapproval as he asked, "Do I have your full attention?" The man's eyes grew wide and he nodded obediently.

"Good."

A grunt that sounded like a question rose from behind the gag. A moment later the weight swung wildly. "Did I ask you a question?" the suited man said over the din of pain. "You will speak only when spoken to. Am I clear?"

The answer came in the form of a tearful, whimpering nod.

"Now let's revisit your original question. Why am I here and why am I extracting your," he looked toward the oozing mess, "less than pound of flesh? The answer is easy. You, my malevolent, self-absorbed, psychopath made the terrible mistake of violating a dear friend of mine."

"Now don't get me wrong, I am not one to intervene in the lives of others. I've known her for a long, long time and seen her date a lot of losers. In those cases, I've sat by and watched her struggle, hoping she'd grow from the experiences, but she seems to wander aimlessly from one loser after the next."

"I've struggled to explain her choices, even blamed myself for a while, but I know better than that and believe everyone picks their own path. And my beautiful, young friend is no exception." He looked his victim in the eye. "Breaks my heart, but I have to accept that I'm powerless over both her and her choices." He snapped a finger against the line. "But I take great comfort in the fact that although I'm powerless over her, I have a Godlike power over you. Too bad you don't pray."

Looking at the blood, he smiled. "Seems like our time is short, so I better get to it. Now that you know why I'm here, and you have deduced what I am going to do while I'm here, it is time to do it."

A muffled protest rose from the bed.

"Now, now," he waved a finger in the air, "no sense arguing. We both know that you blackened her eye, cracked her head open, and choked her 'til she passed out. What you might not know is that the next morning she crawled home and, after two days, called me. When I got there, I saw the bruises and stitched together the wound. I'll never forget her weeping in my arms and what she said. *I told him to stop. I told him to stop.* If she said it once, she said it a thousand times."

He turned his eyes to the man. "But you didn't stop. Of course she'll never understand why, but you and I" he waved a finger between them. "*we know*".

"She's convinced she did something wrong and was somehow responsible for your insanity. I tried to talk her out of it, but was

unsuccessful." He shook his head, "But we know what went through that twisted head of yours. You thought her *no* meant what your *no* means. Your no just means not yet." He looked for a flash of recognition. "You know what I mean, don't you? You've told yourself no a million times. *No*, I won't hit her. No, I won't strangle her, No, I won't crack her head open. For you, *no* isn't no, it's just a rest stop on the way to a violent and bloody *yes*."

"Well, listen up, you sick fuck," he placed his hand on the wire, "when she said *no*, she-meant-*no*!"

