

STRANGE FRUIT

A Ted Van Houghton Adventure

by

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1 EXT MONTANA COUNTRYSIDE DAY

A contingent of FBI agents is laying siege to a cluster of farmhouses in a field. They are sitting in their vehicles, standing around smoking, waiting. There's tension in the air. Agent TED VAN HOUGHTON is sitting on the grass leaning against a black HumVee. Unlike the others, he's obviously bored. He smokes. CUT TO helicopters circling above the compound as more FBI agents in flack-jackets and body-armor inch their way through the tall grass, closer and closer. By the vehicles, the agents are talking to each other on cell phones, even though they're standing right next to each other.

FBI AGENT #1

...this creep to come out. Hell, I'm getting antsy.

FBI AGENT #2

I'm with you. This stakeout is endless.

FBI AGENT #1

Yep. These militia nuts are a drag. 100 guns, 50 guys and no brains. And this kook thinks he's the new Hitler.

FBI AGENT #2

Well, he's going to have to do more than rob a couple of gas stations and get a bunch of fat guys to do push-ups. These days, there's a lot of wannabe Fuhrers running around

1A INT THE MILITIA COMPOUND INTERIOR

Inside, a bunch of military guys in tip-top shape are in position for attack. They look very professional, very menacing, contrary to the FBI's description.

1B EXT MONTANA COUNTRYSIDE DAY

More helicopters swarm in from the horizon and the waiting game continues on the ground.

FBI AGENT #1

Actually, I hear his guy is dangerous. He killed all those hostages in Great Falls. A real racist too. So he's not all that goofy.

TED

(leaping to his feet, poised and smug)
Well, danger isn't smart or dumb, so I never take chances. I'm always ready for action. Just check this out!

TED pulls a gun out from under each arm. He flicks his wrist and a third gun on a homemade spring-device pops out of his sleeve, accidentally knocking the other gun to the ground. He bends over to retrieve it while reaching for a fourth gun in an ankle-holster. As he does this, a ripping sound is heard as a long knife tears through the back pocket of his pants and falls to the ground. Embarrassed, TED hurriedly puts the guns away and picks up the knife. He angrily forces it into the sheath in his back pocket, but misses. It sticks into an outboard gas-tank on the side of the HumVee and gas starts to leak out. He pulls the knife out, not noticing the gas, and puts it back into its sheath. The gas quickly courses down a ditch by the side of the road toward the militia compound. None of the other agents have noticed anything.

TED's done this kind of thing before and they don't really pay attention anymore. He leans back on the HumVee and tries to continue smoking as though nothing happened.

FBI AGENT #1

Yep, Teddy. You're ready, alright.
For what, I don't know, but you're definitely ready for it!

Everyone laughs. TED is a little pissed at being made fun of. He flicks his cigarette butt away. It rolls down the road a bit and hits the gas, which has coursed all the way to the militia's depot of vehicles and gas-pumps.

FBI AGENT #2

Hey, does any one smell...

At this point the cigarette lights the gasoline and a line of fire rips right down the hill towards the door of the compound.

FBI AGENT #2

(continues)

...gas?

The whole compound explodes. It blows everyone back to the ground, helicopters catch fire and swerve out of control. TED jumps up and looks at the house, then at the trail of gas leading back to his cigarette butt and finally up to the other agents as they glare at him.

TED

Hey, guys, I... oops.

2 INT FBI HEADQUARTERS DAY

TED is standing in front of a table of big brass, including DIRECTOR CARLSON and his right-hand man, AGENT JONES. They are dead serious and TED is in it up to his eyeballs.

DIRECTOR CARLSON

We've gone over this a thousand times, Agent Van Houghton, and frankly, it's one of the dumbest things we've ever had happen here at the FBI. And that's saying something.

DIRECTOR CARLSON

(continues)

I don't know how you do it, but you've managed to screw up your last five assignments. Ted, you are a fucking menace!

AGENT JONES

Ted, I think what the Chief means is that you may not be suited for fieldwork.

DIRECTOR CARLSON

Hell! He's not suited for work-work.

JONES

Yessir. Anyway, Ted, we, the FBI, think it would be best for you to stay here in DC for a while and work in File Operations. It'll be good for you.

TED

With all due respect, sir, File Operations is just, well, putting away files in a big empty room. I'm field, sir. I'm action. I'm always ready!

To make his point, TED whips out a gun with lightning speed. It flies out of his hand and smashes through the window. There is a pause, then we hear the sound of a gunshot, glass breaking, tires skidding, and two cars crashing. CARLSON and JONES stare at him open-mouthed in disbelief.

3 INT FILE OPERATIONS AT THE FBI INTERIOR

It's an incredibly long room filled with floor-to-ceiling file cabinets that seem to go on forever. TED is going through stacks of documents. He's in a hell of sheer tedium.

4 INT CIA RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT LAB INTERIOR

Meanwhile, in the depths of CIA headquarters, deep in the belly of the beast, we enter a laboratory. In addition to state-of-the-art electronics gear and the obligatory chemical glassware, the walls are lined with cages full of lab animals of every sort. There, two scientists, DOCTOR DORF and his assistant EARL, are talking with CIA Chief of Operations,

HEMPSTONE SMITH. DOCTOR DORF is high-brow and supercilious, EARL more of an eager beaver, but essentially both of these guys have their heads in the clouds. HEMPSTONE SMITH is completely different, a hatchet-faced mastermind with ice water in his veins.

DOCTOR DORF

...so you see, we've always known that under certain circumstances, the *amygdala* or so-called "lizard brain" generates a super-hormone that can fool the body. Think of the housewife lifting an automobile off her injured child or the Hawaiian kahuna walking across flowing lava. That's why our researches into human mind-body manipulation have so-far yielded some astonishing results...

EARL

What Dr. Dorf is trying to say, sir, is we've isolated that "fool the body" hormone. Our new drug therapy actually allows you to think your way to more than God gave you! Like say you wanted to jump over a tall building in a single bound, you take our new compound and... Voila! You're Superman! Or like if you wanted to... oh, let's say increase the size of your... nose, yeah, that's right, or your... feet, or your...

SMITH is bored and doesn't particularly believe them.

SMITH

And you're telling me the President actually asked you to do this?

DOCTOR DORF

Well, sir, he...

EARL

He didn't exactly put it like that...

DOCTOR DORF

I think his actual words were he wanted us to investigate corporeal enhancement techniques to facilitate super-human capabilities in the average organism...

EARL

The President wants a twelve-inch dick, sir. He asked us to get him one.

SMITH

Are you telling me the President likes dick?

EARL

No, he wanted his own twelve-inch. And he asked us to get him one.

SMITH

And have you??

DORF

Well, actually it's a little more complicated than that...

DORF hits a button triggering lights to come on below them, revealing the floor to be translucent. They can see the room below, divided into cubicles containing their various animal experiments. There's a cat with lobster claws instead of paws, a rat the size of a rhinoceros, and a gorilla with brushing a head of luxuriant long blond hair. There's also a chimp painting a landscape, dogs playing poker, and a man who looks exactly like Johnny Winter.

SMITH

By God! I thought I'd seen it all! Christ, that freak looks exactly like Johnny Winter!

DOCTOR DORF

(scientifically detached)

It is. He just likes to hang around here.

SMITH waves and JOHNNY responds with his signature yowl.

EARL

You see, sir, there's still this one small problem...

DOCTOR DORF

(airily)

Nothing we can't solve in time. The drug produces marked augmentation in almost every case, but it's not always the kind you'd necessarily want.

DOCTOR DORF

(continues)

Sometimes the results are a little...
alarming.

EARL

I mean we might be able to give the
President his dick, alright, but it might
not end up exactly where he wants it.

DOCTOR DORF

Plus we have yet to experiment on humans.
We don't even know how long the effects
last. We'll need to do a thorough screening
process, double blind studies. Certain rare
blood types and enzymes have to match up for
us to guarantee you a real "superman"...

EARL

Or even the next Ron Jeremy.

SMITH is impressed in spite of himself. He smiles thinly,
realizing these two nerds haven't got the faintest idea what
they've discovered.

SMITH

So you guys have basically just been dicking
around?

EARL

(giggling)

Yeah, you could say that!

DOCTOR DORF cuffs him.

SMITH

On the CIA's payroll...?

DOCTOR DORF

Well, sir, er... we were acting on the
President's orders...

SMITH

The President, gentlemen, wouldn't know a
good idea if one came up and bit him on
his electoral ass. Has it ever occurred
to you that your discovery could be used
for other purposes?

DOCTOR DORF

Well, sir, I...

EARL

We could give all the President's interns bigger tits!

DOCTOR DORF cuffs him again. SMITH moves away from them, staring at the mutants below him with cruel fascination.

SMITH

(to himself)

These fools don't even know what they've done. Why, with a discovery like this, I could create a race of super-agents. Men with the strength of Atlas and the minds of... ME! There's no telling what I could do...

He turns to the two scientists, having come to a decision.

SMITH

(continues)

Okay, listen up, you two. I want you to run a complete scan through the employee database of every government agency and department. Collate all the medical records and find all the viable candidates for testing with this new super-drug of ours.

EARL

Wait a minute. That could take like, days!

SMITH

(smiling)

Well, then I guess you'd better get started.

DOCTOR DORF

You want us to screen every government employee?

SMITH

Start with the main ones: CIA, FBI, postal workers... you know, the real killer elite.

DOCTOR DORF

But none of these people will know they're being tested?

SMITH

Of course not. You know the CIA motto: "If anyone's going to subvert democracy, let it be us."

EARL

And what do you want us to do with this list of names once we get it?

SMITH

(another thin smile)

Give it to me. I don't like to burden the President with unnecessary details.

DOCTOR DORF and EARL look at each other and shrug. They're not too thrilled with this new assignment, but SMITH is their boss so they realize they'd better do it.

DOCTOR DORF

Okay, sir, you can count on us.

SMITH

Good work. Keep me posted.

SMITH leaves. DOCTOR DORF and EARL sit down at a computer terminal and log on.

DOCTOR DORF

Well, I guess we better get started...

They log onto a web site: <www.screw.your.rights.com>. There they find listing for the FBI, the CIA, the ATF, etc., all graded from D- to A+.

DOCTOR DORF

Have to start somewhere...

CLOSE-UP of a finger pushing the cursor highlighting the "FBI, Grade D-" list. The screen goes blank and then starts scrolling through millions of gibberish signs as it runs a program presumably sorting the candidates.

EARL

(leaning back in his chair)

So... what you doing for the weekend?

DOCTOR DORF
(disgusted)
Staying here, I guess.

The computer sounds a "ding" like a microwave and prints out a single sheet with one name on it. DOCTOR DORF reads it.

DOCTOR DORF
Great. Special agent Ted Van Houghton.
Ever heard of this guy?

EARL shakes his head.

DOCTOR DORF
(reading)
AbScam... Iran/Contra... Waco... Yow!
What hasn't he screwed up!? We can't
give Smith somebody like this!

EARL
Hey, Doc, what say we highlight all the
lists and just do a batch search? I
mean, why the hell'd they invent computers
anyway, if not to save time for a brewski!

DOCTOR DORF
You know, Earl, you might just be right.
Set it up, would you?

CLOSE-UP of a finger hitting the button "SCREEN EVERYBODY".
The computer starts to do its thing. EARL and DOCTOR DORF
rise gratefully.

EARL
Okay, Doc! It's T.G.I.F. for us cybernauts!

DOCTOR DORF
Lead the way. I mean, it's not as if the
fate of the entire free world depends on
this.

EARL
Oh, yeah, riiiiiiight!!

Both laugh and exit.

5 EXT CIUDAD SANTA MAMACITA NIGHT

In a small alleyway in a Caribbean city, we see a camouflaged van. Inside, eating a banana, is SHARK, an evil drug lord and criminal mastermind. His cell-phone rings (the tune is "Yes, We Have No Bananas") and he answers it quickly. He's keyed up, high, giggling and eating the banana in rapid tiny bites.

SHARK

Si. Shark here.

VOICE

(over the phone)

Your target should be coming in sight now. I don't want any screw-ups.

SHARK

Who, me? Oh, baby, I'm ready for Fernando! We'll snatch that little Presidential puta but good!

SHARK's eye is caught by a distant convoy of limousines making its way through the narrow streets. He quickly finishes his snack and tosses the peel out the window.

SHARK

(continues)

Got to go. Bye-bye.

(pause)

No, thank you, Mr. Smith!

He hangs up.

6 INT THE PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER'S LIMOSINE NIGHT

In one stretch-limo, with American flags flying up front, is the daughter of the President of The United States, CHYNLEIGH GERN. She's on a party-ride with diplomatic kids from all over the world. They're also rubbing and throwing bananas all over each other.

CHYNLEIGH

I never knew you commies could party like this! I mean, like, the bands are kind of like "Helloo, acid wash denim anyone?", but the pot is great!

CHYNLEIGH
(continues)

And the club scene is right out of "The Godfather Part II." And who knew bananas could be so much fun!!!! I am soooo glad I came down here for this Organic Food For Peace conference!

7 EXT CIUDAD SANTA MAMACITA NIGHT

As the limos drive past SHARK's alleyway, black-clad commandos burst out of every doorway, jump off roofs with ropes, rise up out of manholes, and swarm all over the limo. With guns blazing, they grab CHYNLEIGH and carry her off into the van. There have to be at least thirty of these kidnapers, but somehow they all manage to fit into the van. The vehicle lumbers off in the opposite direction with its rear-suspension dragging the ground under all the presumed weight. One SECRET SERVICE AGENT almost catches up with them on foot, but he slips on the banana peel and hits the cobblestones flat on his ass. Using a lapel-communicator, he frantically reports in.

SECRET SERVICE MAN

May Day! May Day! Code Name: "Furburger" has been abducted. Repeat: Furburger has been snatched! Agent down! Send help!

8 INT CIA RESEARCH LAB LATER THAT NIGHT

OVERHEAD PULL BACK from the misshapen freaks in the lower lab, as a CLEANING LADY enters the shot vacuuming the floor above them. She's used to the sight of these creatures and pays them no mind, even though they track her movements from below, looking up her dress. She reaches the full extent of the vacuum cleaner's power cord and it pops out of the socket. The machine winds down and she mutters to herself.

CLEANING LADY

Damn rats! I hate 'em. Damn monkeys, smellin' an' shittin'. But these deformed motherfuckers, well they're just the worst! They just ain't good for shit!

She whips the power cord across the floor and walks over to EARL's desk where his computer is still running through the personnel files.

The CLEANING LADY yanks out the power cord feeding the computer, shutting it down. On the screen, a cute little Apple logo waves "bye-bye!" She plugs in the vacuum cleaner and goes about her work.

9 INT WHITE HOUSE OVAL OFFICE LATE NIGHT/EARLY MORN

In the Oval Office, an emergency meeting is in progress. All "The President's Men" are there, including Navy Commandant ADMIRAL COLIN POLLIPS and White House Chief of Staff BILL. Standing in the shadows, and not fully visible at first, is the mysterious HEMPSTONE SMITH, Director of the CIA.

PRESIDENT GERN

Gentlemen, as you know, this is a very bad day for me... and for our country, of course.

ADMIRAL POLLIPS

Mister President, I suggest we send in some Trident subs right away and blow the shit out of those banana republic commie dirtbags! We gotta show 'em who's boss!

PRESIDENT GERN

No, you idiot! My daughter's being held captive there!

ADMIRAL POLLIPS

Oh. Oops. Sorry, Chief. Just a thought.

PRESIDENT GERN

Bill, do we know what they want?

BILL

Well, Mister President, we don't know for sure yet. They probably want to use your daughter as leverage during the upcoming UN drug talks, embarrass us and make us look weak. Aaaaand they probably all want to strip her down to her underwear and check her out.

PRESIDENT GERN

(sighs)

Well, I guess that's just the price a president pays...

BILL
For being president?

PRESIDENT GERN
No, for having a real hottie for a daughter.

The others all look at each other nervously.

PRESIDENT GERN
Right, like you guys never checked her out.
Fuckers!

Now, they're really nervous.

PRESIDENT GERN
(continues)
Okay, so what do we do now? If this gets out that my daughter can be kidnapped by any old commie spic, that means she could be kidnapped by any fucking towel-head, hebe, spook, chink, gook, or eyetie in town. We're gonna look like total pussies!!!

PAN around the Oval Office. Among the military and political officers, we have an Arab, a Jew, a African-American, a Chinese-American, a Vietnamese-American, an Italian-American, and a woman. They all stare blankly in amazement.

PRESIDENT GERN
Errrrr-ah... if ya get my point.

BILL
The President's right, gentlemen, but until they communicate their demands, we've got to just sit tight.

PRESIDENT GERN
This sucks. Well, you guys are so fucking smart, what do we do? Declare war? If my daughter gets killed my wife's gonna bust my ass!

The others all look at their feet. SMITH speaks up.

SMITH
Mister President, if I may?

PRESIDENT GERN

Ya see? Here's the one guy who always comes through! The C-I-fuckin'-A! Whaddya got for me, Smith?

SMITH

Well, there's a bit more here than meets the eye. My information tells me this event has nothing to do with this crumbling socialist government at all. The real perpetrators are actually under the employ of a particularly sleazy fellow known only as "Shark". As far as we can figure out he's a former communist guerrilla who has happily embraced the capitalist ethic of dealing drugs.

PRESIDENT GERN

What's the name of this coke snorting beach-burg anyway?

ADMIRAL POLLIPS

It's the People's Republic of Santa Mamacita. A small island with massive resources of cocaine, marijuana and bananas. You may remember that, in the Catholic faith, Santa Mamacita is the patron saint of drugs and tropical fruit.

PRESIDENT GERN

Cocaine, marijuana and bananas? What the hell do they need bananas for?

ADMIRAL POLLIPS

Everyone likes bananas, sir.

SMITH

If I may continue, sir.

PRESIDENT GERN

Santa Mamacita... wasn't there a missile crisis there back in the sixties?

BILL

That was Cuba, sir.

PRESIDENT GERN

Oh yeah, right. We showed those fuckers! That JFK was gold when it came to tail too!

Ahh, the good old days...

(singing)

"EEEE-Oh Eleven!"

SMITH

Mr. President, if I may... we've been keeping an eye on this "Shark" character for some time now. He's been trying for years to create some sort of international incident to force us to swoop down into Santa Mamacita, kick some commie butt, and pave the way for his own ruthless, bloody dictatorship.

PRESIDENT GERN

Okay. So, what's wrong with that?

SMITH

But wait, there's more. Santa Mamacita is the only known source of "cocanas".

PRESIDENT GERN

(impatiently)

And...

SMITH

It's a hybrid fruit, a cross between coca plants and bananas. We don't know if they mutated naturally or perhaps they're just an agrochemical experiment gone horribly right, but they're down there... in the millions. Just waiting to cross our borders. The perfect delivery system for the world's favorite addiction: cocaine!

PRESIDENT GERN

Good God! An army of bananas!! Working their way into every lunchbox in this great land of ours!!! Right up our noses... creamy smoothness with a natural lift. Sweet Jesus, how will I explain Carmen Miranda to my grandkids??? And The Banana Splits!? Arrrrrrrrgh!!!

PRESIDENT GERN collapses onto the top of his desk gripping its matching ornamental penholders. All the President's men back off to various corners of the room at the sight of the

Commander In Chief breaking down. SMITH, however, holds his ground and continues in a calm, soothing voice.

SMITH

I think The Agency can handle the whole situation, sir.

SMITH takes PRESIDENT GERN aside out of earshot of the others.

SMITH

Mister President, this may be the perfect time to kill two birds with one stone, if you catch my drift.

PRESIDENT GERN

You're gonna start killing birds! Christ, that's all I need is the environmentalists on my ass!

SMITH

(patiently)

No, sir, that was just a figure of speech. What I meant was this may be a perfect opportunity to test out project, er, how shall I put this... "Project Foot-Long".

PRESIDENT GERN doesn't get this at first, but when SMITH looks pointedly at his crotch, he does. But he's still confused.

PRESIDENT GERN

(*sotto voce*)

You're going to give this guy Shark my penis?!

SMITH

Mr. President, I wouldn't dream of it. Our scientists have assured me that they can also use the enhancement qualities of the drug to construct the perfect warrior. We can create our own Super-Agent, if you will, send him in there, grab your daughter, and destroy the cocanas.

PRESIDENT GERN

You're fooling with God's hot-rod now, big boy. I just hope you know how to

wire the slant six.

SMITH

Sorry, sir?

PRESIDENT GERN straightens his tie and speaks loudly for the benefit of the others.

PRESIDENT GERN

Never mind. Mr. Smith, I'm sure the fate of the First Hottie is in excellent hands, so long as you're prepared to take the blame... I mean, take the responsibility. After all, the last thing we need is a brand new party at The Copa Cocana.

Everyone laughs. PRESIDENT GERN speaks behind his hand to SMITH again.

PRESIDENT GERN

So, who's our boy?

SMITH

We'll know shortly, sir. I just have to make one quick call.

He picks up the phone in front of him and calls DOCTOR DORF at home.

END