

BRUSHTOWN STORIES

Since Sliced Bread Part 2

The cracked earth of the lava fields gave way to the sandy desert capital city of Bazamia. Ulan Popolus was built on the remains of a giant dinosaur bone that was found during the Iron Age and worshipped as a deity. This was long before Unstopapopolus wrestled control of the land from the nomadic tribes and former his government.

The Bazamian flag whipped in the wind. It was bright purple with an orange fist in the center. It was ugly but the point was to use none of the colors of the Olympic flag as the Olympics were proud that their flag had up until the creation of Bazamia contained at least one color from every nations' flag.

Unstopapopolus enjoyed sticking it to the Olympic committee as it was famed bronze metal long jumper Joe Greene who helped foil his robbery of the Corn Palace. They also said Bazamia could only compete in the "& the rest" nations group which included Abkhazia, Aruba Junior, and an odd assortment of what he termed "junk countries."

None of these facts were known to Marissa McMenemin as an armored car drove her from the airport to the Tarantula Arms Spa and Resort the best hotel in Bazamia. Well the best ever since the Ramada closed due to a quantum-rat infestation. She was given the best room - the Bloody Suite which was decked out in all sorts of blood themed décor. The severed limbs lamps. Corpuscle shaped bed. The fountain of blood which was really Mountain Dew Code Red (the most evil of Dews) and the carpet which was woven with the fur of 700 glor-voles the rudest rodent known to man. None of this impressed Marissa much, but she did enjoy the minibar which she emptied about ten minutes into her stay.

She looked out the window of her suite and saw the flame spitting statue of Unstopapopolus which turned ever fifteen minutes to face and belch flame in a new direction. It was the 18th largest statue in the world and had the distinction of shooting flames further than any other. Though it's only real competition was the Napoleon Bonfireaparte. Which was a De Kooning instillation at Minneapolis's Walker Museum. But this was no De Kooning. Not even a Rauschenberg. It was a tiny bit

Brancusi but Marissa slept through most of her Art History class so any similarities the statue bore to a certain Modernist sculptor was lost on her. And at the moment she was just hoping they'd refill the minibar. Just then the phone screamed, Marissa jumped. It screamed again. Stupid phone, she thought, why does everything here have to be scary.

She picked it up and put the cold receiver to her ear. A flat voice on the other end informed her - "Dr. Sonar is waiting for you in the lobby." Before she could answer the man on the other end hung up.

The lobby was decorated with repurposed torture devices. There was a shabby chic iron maiden coat closet and a brazen bull which had been repurposed into an upscale cocktail bar. Marissa felt that maybe Unstopapopolus was leaning into this super villain thing a little too much. Maybe some nice throw pillows or some Caribbean wicker chairs would brighten up the place.

Dr. Sonar stood by the large metal doorway. He wore a long yellow robe and thick red tinted glasses. Strapped to his chest was his infamous *sonariutum* a device which he used to control bats. They exchanged pleasantries as they walked through the lobby.

Dr. Sonar praised Marissa's genius and said that since they were both creators and innovators in the world of science they should aid one another. Marissa nodded unsure of what Dr. Sonar was talking about.

They took a blood red limo toward a large fortress up on a hill. It was the Summer Lair of Unstopapopolus. It was made of blue bricks and the blood of unbelievers. It also had nice ocean views and an open floor plan. The limo stopped at a large iron door which was just set up in the middle of the road. Green cloaked guards appeared and opened the door so the car could drive through. "That's odd," Marissa mused.

"Oh it's part of the great gate. Eventually there shall be an impenetrable barrier built here but for now it's just the door. The rest is to be built later but there have been some issues getting the materials. Nothing serious and no real issues but it's been a real problem. Not that there are problems here. Everything in Bazamia is first rate."

Marissa nodded and once again doubted that coming here was in anyway a good idea. Soon they pulled up to the entrance to the Summer Lair. More green cloaked guards escorted them inside.

They came to a large wood paneled office decorated with the heads of various animals and upstarts. At the desk was Unstopapopolus. He loomed large, his bald head and thick black eyebrows were noticeable even through his semi-transparent dome helmet. He had on a polo shirt and Hawaiian theme print board shorts. His summer "chillaxing" outfit. His power tubes - a series of black tubes that connected him to his "fluids of vengeance" crisscrossed his body. Instead of getting up several of the green robed servants came in and moved the desk and other objects out of his way. Then the chair he was sitting in started to tilt and moved him to his feet. He walked over to Marissa and Dr. Sonar.

"Ah my dear Dr. Sonar, so good to see you." His voice had a metallic tinge to it and also an echo since it was coming through his fishbowl helmet. Dr. Sonar knelt before Unstopapopolus. Unstopapopolus put his hand on Dr. Sonar and then turned to Marissa. "You," he said, "invented this amazing technology!" One of the green cloaks handed Unstopapopolus the sandwatch prototype. "We would like to buy the technology."

"Um," Marissa replied, "you mean the watches?"

"I mean," Unstopapopolus replied his voice flat and filled with a darkness that fit his super villain nature. "I want all of it. This watch. This sandwatch. It knows what sandwich I want. Right now. Bologna and cheese! It's exactly right. This morning? Egg and bacon. It's a marvel."

"It's not really ... it's a novelty watch." Marissa started to sweat. She felt it in her armpits and the bottoms of her feet. This was that fear sweat that smelled extra bad according to that deodorant commercial.

"I know it's a trick. The watch doesn't read your mind. That'd be silly."

"Right, yeah," Marissa replied. She felt a sense of relief.

Unstopapopolus continued, "rather it bends your mind to the sandwich."

The relief faded. "Oh," Marissa said. This was not good. And not true.

"Such a device as you use it is limited. It effects but one person at a time. But imagine your sandwich scaled up to military grade. A beam of pure sandwich power. We could make all of Europe crave a gyro at once. All of China go mad for a tuna melt! The UN General Assembly begging me for a grilled cheese. That sort of power can rule the world. You created something beautiful and now I shall birth that beauty into the world and we shall feast upon the placenta of results."

"First, gross. Don't ever say that," Marissa replied, "But it's just a silly watch. Like. It just says a sandwich at random. There's no mind control. It's just like a series of 20 randomized sandwiches. Some are time sensitive like the breakfast burrito or the brunch bahn mi but most just appear at random. It's a joke like ha ha this watch says I want a PB&J. That's cute."

Unstopapopolus bent his body to get down to Marissa's eyeline. She could hear the fluid running through his tubes. His breath was visible in the helmet. "Don't lie to me!" He reared back and shot an energy beam at the wall which left a large black mark. "This watch, it knows! Every sandwich! Every moment!"

"It's just lucky. Coincidence."

"NO!" Unstopapopolus clapped his hands together in rage. "This is powerful science! Not some trickery like a can of peanut brittle filled with spring snakes! This is no fake ice cube with a fly inside! I am at the mercy of this! Look! It says I want a Rueben and by the Devil I do!"

"Maybe you just really like sandwiches? Or are just really open to suggestions?" Marissa felt all the color leaving her face. Her lips felt numb. This was a big mistake. This guy is going to kill me, she thought. Stupid watch. Stupid.

"ARE YOU SAYING I'M GULLIBLE!?" Unstopapopolus began to vibrate with anger.

"It's just a dumb joke thing, I was just hoping to make a buck, please. Let's just chalk this up to wanks and pranks."

"Wanks and pranks?" Unstopapopolus replied, suddenly he became quiet still, it felt like the moment right before a lightning storm before the deluge of rain came and ruined your picnic. "There will be only one wank and one prank. The wank of your death and the prank of your burial."

"Well I also hoped I'd die in some Jell-O wrestling," Marissa said as she tried to casually back away toward the exit. She kept talking more out of fear than anything else. "Or maybe," she continued, "by accident or peacefully in my sleep surrounded by a boy-toy who then would contest my will but I left most of it to the Alzheimer's research fund and he's like "but I did things to her no man should," he's Brazilian by the way that's why I did that accent. Is it offensive? I mean he'll have that accent. But still I mean I'm not saying all Brazilian men are gold digging boy toys but this guy Raoul he's that. But there are a lot of good Brazilians too like um Ronaldo or that statue of Jesus. Jesus there was a good guy he really would just laugh this off. What would Jesus do? Let me go is probably is what. He would. Do. So ..."

"Enough of your prattle!" Unstopapopolus' hands started to glow.

"Enough of you, bowl-boy!" A voice called from the corner of the room. But who? Unstopapopolus turned to see who spoke.

"How dare you!" he said, "show yourself interloper!"

"With gusto!" And with that one of the green cloaks ripped off said cloak to reveal a female Sasquatch.

"Agent Squatch!" Dr. Sonar said as he reached for his *sonariutum*. But Agent Squatch threw a quick foot-o-rang disabling it.

"Bats off to you, doc." The lady Sasquatch said as she vaulted over Unstopapopolus and gave Dr. Sonar a good kick to the face.

"My nose! I was using that for smelling!" Sonar said as he began to cry. He didn't take injury well.

Unstopapopolus then fired an energy blast at Agent Squatch but she jumped out of the way.

"This is all very unexpected," Marissa said.

Agent Squatch scooped up Marissa and cradled her in her large hairy arms. "We gotta scoot."

"But why? But how? But when?" Marissa asked.

"Your brother sent me to watch out for you. Watch, huh I didn't even mean that. I mean with you're whole--" She was cut off by a laser blast that hit too close for comfort. "Anyway, he was

afraid you'd end up as the pawn in an evil madman's scheme for world domination."

"Ugh he's always so over protective. I can fend for myself."

Another blast from Unstopapopolus hit just to their left.

"Fend for me! Fend for me!" Marissa grabbed the Agent's soft fur. It was warm and even though they were in immediate danger it put her at ease. Agent Squatch then beat a hasty retreat.

Unstopapopolus yelled after them - "this isn't over Agent! I shall have my revenge! And my dinner! And they are best both served cold! I'm having ceviche!"

"He loves ceviche," Agent Squatch informed Marissa. The Lady Bigfoot brought them to the water's edge where a small jet ski was waiting. "There's a navy cruiser just a few miles off shore. Let's ride!" With that Agent Squatch ripped off her clothes to reveal a tasteful bikini. She then went into a pouch on the Jet Ski and took out another bikini, "I got one for you too."

"I don't think there's time to change."

"There's always time to change. Suit up." She said tossing the bikini to Marissa. It was quite revealing but Marissa put it on anyway. She said it surprised her that there weren't any death troops out looking for them.

"Unstopapopolus gives up easy," Agent Squatch informed her, "he's an idea villain but not a real follow-through villain." Agent Squatch then complimented the bikini. Marissa blushed slightly then they hopped on the Jet Ski.

They blasted across the surf and out to sea. Marissa was sad that she wasn't able to close the deal for the sandwich but she was happy she wasn't dead. Overall, she thought, I guess everything evened out in the end.

END OF STORY