

THE CASE OF THE CREATIVE DETECTIVE

ALPHA GAMES "HEROES & VILLAINS"

ORIGINIA VS. BLANDISHIN



It was a hot, drowsy afternoon, the kind of afternoon when even the flies buzzing round the ceiling fan looked like they were falling asleep. My feet were up on the desk, as usual, I didn't have any work, as usual, and the toughest decision I was facing was whether to have yet another cup of coffee. What the hell, my blood pressure could go screw itself, I decided as I tipped my dregs into the dead pot plant on my desk and brewed another batch of rotgut.

Behind me, I heard the office door open and shut. I decided to play it cool – it was quite a day for decisions. "I'm busy," I barked without turning round – it was Friday afternoon, after all.

"Clearly you are not," came the polished, assertive response.

Damn, I thought, might actually have to do some work. I turned around to see a woman, very smartly dressed, eyeing me with a mixture of disdain, disappointment and disbelief.

I shrugged my shoulders: "Sorry, sweetheart, I close early on Fridays."

"Don't get cute with me," she snapped. She moved in on the chair in front of my desk and sat down. She looked like she meant business even though I didn't.

"My name is Originia and I have a business proposition," she announced.

I gave in: "Alright, I'm all ears."

She got straight into her pitch. It wasn't very pleasing to the ears. "Look at this place, it's a joke. Look at you, you're pathetic."

"Is this designed to win me over?" I chanced, but she dismissed my quip with a wave of her hand.

"Do you even know what's going on in this city?"

She didn't wait for me to answer. Not that I had an answer. "There's a crime wave!"

"Listen," I sighed, "People come to me when they need help. Until that time, there's nothing I can do. I gotta wait for the family jewels to

to be stolen, I gotta wait for the ransom note to turn up on the doorstep. I can't pre-empt the crime."

"I'm not talking about those crimes. I'm talking about dull gaming experiences full of badly written dialogue and boring stories, not to mention the marketing collateral. There is horrific content out there, coming from every corner of the globe, and the city is suffering. No wonder business is down the drain and everyone's miserable."

Originia had a point there. But I felt out of my depth. "So what exactly are you proposing?" I asked, trying to move things along.

"We hunt down the perpetrator. I've already started investigating, and—"

I shook my head. Now it was my turn to get smart: "Have you noticed... there's one desk in this office, one coat on that coat stand, one coffee cup which is in my hand. The very air sings with a certain singularity. In short, I work on my own. There is no question of 'we'."

I showed her the door, hoping she would make use of it, but Originia didn't move a muscle. We had a miniature standoff, but I was a stubborn SOB. After a tense bout of glaring, up she got.



"Fine, I'll do it myself. Detective work can't be that hard if you do it."

I could've spoken up at that moment, but I didn't. At the door, she turned and gave me her parting shot: "If you get even slightly interested, you'll find the action here." She tossed a business card at my feet and left.

I picked the card up. On it was an address downtown. Was this her address, or the address where her investigation had taken her? I sat down to ponder my new dilemma; I had strong feelings about amateur detectives wading in on my patch. Also, she could be in danger, but I had a sneaky suspicion she could take care of herself. One thing was certain: she'd ruined the perfect equilibrium of my Friday afternoon.

A few hours passed and my sense of doing the right thing finally overcame my inertia. By the time I got a cab downtown it was night.

The address on the card took me to a fancy-looking office building. Everything was in darkness except for the top floor. I jimmied open a side door and headed up the service stairs. I mooched around the corridors, until I found the door with the shaft of light under it. Inside I could hear voices, one of which belonged to the amateur detective. They weren't quite arguing but I reckoned it was only a matter of time. I wondered how long I should wait, and decided that I would rush in at the first sound of breaking furniture.

A few minutes passed. Patience wasn't in my skillset, and I still wasn't hearing the sound of breaking furniture. I opened the door wide, hoping for a dramatic effect.

Originia and a strange bland-looking gentleman stopped mid-flow and stared at me.

"This is the guy I've been telling you about, he's the one destroying the games by making them so dull!" she said.

Weirdly the guy did nothing to defend his honour, he just stood there and took it, even agreed with her. It's funny but I found the longer I looked at him, the more lethargic, apathetic and all-round dead behind the eyes, I became. She was right, this guy was a menace to society.

"Who the hell is this guy?" I exclaimed, tearing my gaze away.

"**Blandishin**," she replied, as she hurried to a desk and sat down, "The only way to stop him is to create some great story, compelling dialogue and jaw-dropping marketing campaigns."

She set to work, typing like a demon.

"Can't we just punch him in the face?" I asked reasonably. But I saw that, as she wrote, Blandishin started to droop and fade. A quarter of an hour later, after she'd come up with some super-smart taglines, Blandishin had completely faded into nothingness.

"Well, whaddya know!" I said, "So what did you need me for?"

"I needed someone to absorb his boring, bland anti-energy while I created some great content. Looks like you have a new skill, gumshoe. Are we going to team up now?"

It was my turn to get smart now: "Sure we are. I'd be stupid not to, right?"

Story by Originia

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