

One Screw Two Days (OSD Part 5)

by

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Captain Mental and Constable Morgan are sitting on a damp, grassy, slightly wormy field, facing each other. A shared cloth is in-between them, with cakes, sandwiches, etc. on it, as well as a switched-off torch. A perfectly normal picnic it would seem. But it's nighttime. Because the night is better. Consequently, the whole area is deserted. Moonlit trees are surrounding the place, but they're not people so yeah, it's still deserted. I think. Mental starts an obvious but necessary conversation with a bit of muffin in his mouth: 'I can't believe that old granny got away AGAIN! She could barely walk properly.' Morgan responds: 'Don't worry. She's harmless.' Mental clenches his fists, grits his teeth and spits: 'Hijacking a spaceship is NOT h...'

Mental jolts with wide eyes then freezes still as he sees an OAP standing a short distance in front of him, in what seems to be a red military uniform. The newcomer is as still as the policeman is. Morgan leans back and asks: 'What is it?' Mental goes white and responds: 'I swear I've just seen myself.' 'What are you talking about?' Mental picks up the torch and shines it at the mysterious figure. Against all reason, the enigmatic old gentleman not only wears the same attire as Mental, he looks exactly the same as him. He has the same hair, the same face, the same demeanour, you name it. Mental screams: 'Oh my God!' The doppelgänger jumps backwards, pulls himself together and says: 'Mental?'

'Who the hell are you?' Replies the officer. His apparent twin stutters: 'I... have to get out of here. This isn't... right. Goodbye'. 'Wait! I need to know what's going on!' 'Just go back to your life. It's better that way. I just came here for a walk. I wasn't expecting this'. The mystery man turns his back and strolls away. Mental springs up and follows him whilst chatting: 'Do you think I can't handle this situation? Believe me when I say I've seen it all. I once saw a guy dressed in a sausage roll costume going about killing people'. The strange man faces Mental, pauses and speaks again: 'You don't say.' 'Now are you going to tell me what the hell is going on?'

The clone looks to the floor then makes fixed eye contact with Mental: 'My name is Sir George. I'm a writer.' 'What's so creepy about that?' Replies the lawman, sighing. 'The thing is... Mental... I made you up. You're a figment of my imagination. You don't exist.' Mental furrows his brow: 'What are you talking about?' 'You're a character in my book that I simply called 'Captain Mental'. So is the sausage roll killer. So is the granny I heard you talking about'. 'Good one!' Mental sticks out his hand, ready for a strong shake. 'This is no joke. Did you ever arrest a group of nazis wearing face paint? Did you ever witness people exploding?' Mental sheds a tear: 'If you know so much about me, what's my socionics personality type?' 'I actually posted that in the end of my work as a joke. I wrote ESTj, but that was a mistake. It's a long story. Really you're an ESFj.' Mental widens his eyes more than ever.

'Morgan, did you just hear that? Am I going mad?' The traumatised officer looks to his friend who he sees to be paralysed from shock. Mental walks to him and nudges his shoulder a bit. 'Morgan?' Morgan slaps himself and replies: 'I don't know about you. I think I'm going nuts though. Is the Chief of Police real, then?' Sir George responds, softly: 'No. I would never make a protagonist that unlikable. It seems my book isn't your life word for word'. He tilts his head with empathy. 'Do you mind if I join your picnic, Morgan?' The man nods and the author sits. He treats himself to a cake. Mental also sits. George tries to be lighthearted: 'Look on the bright side!...' Unfortunately he can't think of a follow up sentence. He coughs. 'Anyway, if it makes you feel better, sometimes I wonder if I exist too. You never know, someone could be making me up, right now...' No one responds.

He continues: 'Anyway, I want to say thank you for making me rich. 'Captain Mental' is a best seller. Come with me to my car. There's something I want to give to you.' George stands up with grace and the two others copy him like lifeless puppets. 'Are you two ok? I hope I haven't freaked you out, too much...' The policemen reply in unison like robots 'we're fine..' George is more upbeat: 'I'm a huge music fan you know? I don't give CDs away to just anyone, but you two can have any one of your choice. I always keep a few in my car, ready for playing on my stereo...' Silence follows. The threesome do much rural rambling until they reach the beauty spot's car park. Next to an unremarkable Mini is a black Ferrari. George opens the latter's doors and then its glove compartment. He picks out a small collection then faces the two cops.

'Here we have Van Halen's first album, a few Iron Maiden CDs, some Joe Satriani, 'Speed Metal Sentence' by Cranium and 'Fillet Show' by Hum. You can have one each...' Mental scratches his head and speaks, still looking vacant: 'You can't go wrong with Maiden...' Morgan continues with a similar disposition: 'Van Halen, please...' George laughs: 'Oh no, no, no. You can get those albums anywhere. I recommend the Cranium and the Hum. I'm tired of them now, anyway...' He gets a couple of saddened 'thank yous' and replies: 'So yeah, I suggest you go back to your lives, as will I. Just pretend this whole event never happened and you'll be fine, I'm sure. It was nice meeting you. He gets in his car and drives off with an eerie calmness.

A day passes, and Mental and Morgan are back in the police station. This time in the Chief of Police's office. All around is ornate blue and gold wallpaper and rich red carpet is on the floor. Two antique, oak cabinets are at the back of the room, and in-between them is a just as stylish desk with a computer on top of it and a throne-like chair behind it. The COP stands facing the cowering twosome with his arms on his hips.

He rages: 'I DO NOT HIRE FICTITIOUS PEOPLE IN THIS FORCE!' Morgan responds, shaking: 'What do you mean?' 'Don't play dumb with me! I had someone spying on you when you went for your picnic!' 'Why??' 'Power tripping! Now get out!'

Mental does his best to defend himself: 'But we caught the sausage roll killer! Doesn't that mean anything to you??' 'He doesn't exist either and you know it! Give me one good reason why I shouldn't shut this whole station down!' 'He may not be real, but he committed real crimes!' 'Mental, this is hurting my head...' 'I don't really understand either. I should have asked Sir George to give an explanation about that... Anyway, remember that time we forgave you for getting a fish poisoned? You were all apologetic and acted like a changed man! Then you turned back to normal without an explanation. Don't you think that's a little unfair?' The COP looks down and continues: 'Sorry... I... I...'

The three look around the room and twiddle their thumbs. Mental breaks the silence... 'So we have our jobs back?' The COP responds: 'I guess so. But I won't be able to look at you in the same way again. How will I trust you when nothing you say is real?' 'Well no one is writing this... Do you see Sir George with a pen and paper anywhere?' In a state of mind never experienced before, the Chief looks around the room, then inside the cabinets, under the desk and even up Mental's nose. He checks Morgan's sniffer too with narrowed eyes then speaks: 'Just go. And don't mention the fish again, either. It makes me feel bad.' 'Of course'. The apparent non-entities leave, broken as ever and with slow movements.

The corridor of the complex is a lot less interesting; it is bare and just features a load of doors. It is tidy though. The duo keep walking in the same way as before to the exit of the building. Morgan stops, puts his hand on his friend's shoulder, looks deep into his eyes and starts a conversation with a blank look on his face: 'Mental?...' The man replies: 'Yes? Why so serious?' You know when Sir George said he doesn't like the albums he gave us any more?...' 'How could I forget?' 'I looked them up when I got home, yesterday.' 'So what?' 'The thing is...' 'Yes?' 'Well, he reviewed them online. He said they were his favourite albums of all time. And as he put it were 'rare as f**k'. He then said he never lends his releases to anyone, and if anyone touches them, they will get slapped senseless...' Mental's jaw drops open. 'Wow. I had no idea...' 'We have to look after our gifts, Mental. They are more treasures than CDs, you do know that right?' 'Oh my word...' 'Right.' The two nod to each other and resume walking. This time with a spring in their step.

Everything is black until policeman helmet repeating wallpaper is seen all around, ever more vividly. So is the TV and the massive black and white picture of General Mental. Everything goes black again. That was the vision of Captain Mental! He speaks to himself: 'Well thank f**k for that! Just a dream!'