

BRUSHTOWN STORIES

A Game of Cat and Clown: Part 2

CIA Agent Samara Javadi took off after the General Manager of the Funco Promenade who had just tossed a pie in her face. She had goaded her into tossing the pie to confirm that she was in fact a clown. Taking down clowns was her job at the FBI. And she hoped this pastry-tosser would lead her to Dr. Gigglepuss.

Samara chased the general manager down the hallway and into the old pipe alley. This whole mall was a former rubber chicken factory and this was the area where the liquid rubber was pumped. It was a tangle of vents, pipes and tubes. Samara was losing ground to the escaping clownist in the corridor.

She was getting away so Samara aimed her gun and fired at one of the old rubber pipes, it ruptured and rubber runoff splurged out and hit the general manager. She let out a cry. "No! Rubber runoff! I'm allergic to rubber runoff." She hit the ground with a small bounce.

Samara grabbed her and threw her up against the wall. Her body made a comical honk as she hit the wall. Clowns, Samara thought, always honking.

"Please, I'm not bad. My father was a clown and, and I didn't know ... I was born this way, it's in my blood."

Samara narrowed her eyes. "You're small potatoes, shoe string fries. I'm looking for the russet gold. The big one. Gigglepuss."

"Who?"

"Don't lie to me!" She slammed her against the wall, "Gigglepuss is the number one fugitive clown doctor, the number 2 clown leader, and number 3 on the FBI's most wanted list. Tell me where she is!"

"I don't know," the manager replied.

Samara reached for her gun and put it against the manager's head. "Funny scum like you are the reason this country has problems. Big shoes, red mouths, I'll see you rot in Clowntanamo Bay! Or maybe I should just put you down right here."

"I never met her, but. But the lower level. She uses it for her - to treat wounded harlequins. Her operating room. I can tell you."

Samara holstered her gun and stepped back. "Don't tell. Show me," she growled. She then followed the general manager down a secret set of stairs to the lowest level of the factory.

The scene both shocked and disgusted her. It was a makeshift operating room. Blood stained the walls, odd equipment was cobbled together into monitors and other medical equipment. Bone saws and cutters leaned against the wall. It was a real chamber of horrors.

The General Manager scowled, "Can I go?"

"Yeah," Samara said, "but go turn yourself into the local police station."

"Okay," she manager sighed.

"Promise?"

"Yes Agent Javadi."

"OK then - wait, did you have your fingers crossed?"

"You got me." The Manager blushed. "I'll go right to the jail, for real." With that the General Manager was gone.

Samara took in the room. There was odd mix of robotic parts and other bits and pieces. What happened here, Samara wondered. There was an operation and recently. She looked over the readings on various print outs. Brain activity was spiking off the charts. Whoever was worked on in this lab was in bad shape.

But how do I find Gigglepuss, Samara wondered. Suddenly an alarm went off. INTRUDER ALERT, INTRUDER ALERT! Red lights began to flash as a door opened and a robot rolled into the room.

"Halt! I am the Denfenmailtron 394-523-323-255-5233 ... 9000!" the robot declared. "I am a combination defense weapon and mailbox! Prepare to be destroyed!"

Well that's no good, Samara thought. She then jumped out of the way of the robot's flamethrower. She did a quick backflip and then kicked off the wall.

She then drew her gun and fired at the robot. But like most robots a few bullets weren't enough to stop it. It came at her

quick swinging a giant hammer arm. Samara rolled away but it was close. Got to lay off the croisanwhiches, she thought.

The robot came at her again. She dodged it. This is getting old, she thought. She grabbed the electric bone saw and held it up to the robot.

"Mere blades cannot harm me!" the bot said.

"I know. But what about a 100 ton piston?" Samara threw the saw against a button on the wall which caused a giant piston to crush the robot. "I have failed," the robot said before shutting down forever.

"That robot got ro-got," Samara said. Then she was sad that no one heard her retort. Oh well. But why create a robot to guard this place? It seemed abandoned. Why? And then Samara remembered the robot's words: "Halt! I am the Denfenmailtron 394-523-323-255-5233 ... 9000!" the robot declared. "I am a combination defense weapon and mailbox!" There's a chance there's still some mail inside.

Samara went to the mail storage area of the robot and opened it. Bingo! Amongst the magazines and bills was a letter from the Canadian Clown Front. The CCF one of the main sources of the Underclown Clownroad. The letter was from a Montreal Mime named Monsieur de l'Honk. At first the letter seemed to simply list several lazzi (clown routines) but then she noticed a pattern. The pantelone cypher! Of course!

About a year ago the FBI had cracked a famous clown code called the Pantelone Cypher. It used a simple red nose substitution and if you arranged the letters according to the arc of the spray of a squirting flower then the true message would be revealed.

Samara quickly reordered the message. A shipment of medical equipment. Various parts ... bionic floppy shoes? What was going on? What did they build in this lab? But then there's mention of a special part that had to be shipped separately. Secretly directly to Gigglepuss herself. At her home. I got you, Samara smiled.

Nervous and cautiously Samara approached the dingy basement apartment on the wrong-side of the monorail track. These apartments had been built in the 60's to house the Tartars who worked at the Great Ukraine Exhibition but in the years since had fallen into disrepair. The Exhibition was created to

highlight the plight of the Ukrainians under the yoke of the USSR. It was part propaganda, part EPCOT, and a lot of borscht. Samara's parents went to the Exhibition on their third date. They danced under the grain dome and kissed in front of the gingerbread Odessa steps. She had wanted to see it herself but most everything including the great Kievatorium was destroyed by Hurricane Isaac.

Samara wondered if she was just stalling. She looked at the peeling paint on the door. She should have called for backup. She should have radioed it in.

The door was unlocked. Samara pushed her way inside. At a grimy kitchen table sat Dr. Gigglepuss. Her poofy purple hair was matted and her make-up cracked. She put her gloved hands on the table. She smiled.

"Agent Javadi," Gigglepuss said, "it's good to see you."

Samara stepped into the kitchen. The place was a mess, dishes in the sink, the stove dirty, the floor - eh the floor was okay but it could use a mopping. Gigglepuss seemed to sense this. "Oh it's not much to look at dear, not much to see. But then it's all I can afford."

"It's more than you deserve." Samara put her hand on the table. It wobbled. Even the table's off kilter here. She frowned. "You're coming with me."

"After medical school I was jaded. I cared more about getting awards and making money than healing people. I was the best in my field and I knew it. I traveled around the world. Stayed in the best hotels. Dated the most attractive people. My patients were just a way of keeping score, of racking up wins. And I was winning. Then I went to Hawaii."

"I've never been. Never had the opportunity." Samara shot back. "So what, you choke on a macadamia nut and decided to go grease paint?"

"No. I was almost killed. By an elephant."

Samara was confused but she refused to give into the story. She folded her arms. "Elephant?" She narrowed her eyes.

"A circus elephant went berserk during a show. She killed her trainer and broke out of the Neil Blaisdell Center and ran through the streets of Honolulu. I was eating at a local sushi

place, I'd ordered the most expensive dish on the menu a type of fish only caught by hand during the full moon, served with a live lobster holding a diamond. The rice was perfect. But before I could crunch into that decadent dish that elephant came crashing around the corner. I was dining al fresco and I was about to be al stompo-ed when all of a sudden in a flash I was knocked out of the way. It was the circus clowns. They had run into the street and were doing their best to get us out of the way of the rampaging pachyderm. The clown that saved me was called Hee-Haw Henry and his tumbling and antics saved me. But they didn't save him. Have you ever seen an elephant's trunk pull out the intestines of a man and twirling them over its head like a lasso?"

"No," Samara replied, "but I saw a gerbil eat its babies once."

"It's as beautiful and horrible as you'd imagine. I realized that de-intestined clown was the true hero. Those other clowns were saving people. Really saving them. I was saving people for myself. They were saving people for the greater good. And it was that day I decided to truly help people. As a doctor clown."

"A nice story, but you know as well as I that clowns are destroyers. They probably berserked that elephant in the first place."

"It's unfortunate how deeply the rot has infected the world. The lies of Dentites and -"

"Don't make excuses! I know what you are. You seltzer squirters are the lowest run of the ladder. I've hunted you, I've caught you."

"Indeed you have," Gigglepuss replied. "It's funny in a way."

"Nothing is funny." Samara stepped toward Gigglepuss. Gigglepuss reached under the table and pulled out a gun. Samara tensed up. She had used up her bullets on that robot.

"I've achieved my goal," Gigglepuss said, "you saw the lab. She's fixed, she's out there, she's avenging us. All of us."

"Who?" Samara asked.

"Red nose, blood red. Knock, knock you're dead," with that Gigglepuss let out a small laugh.

"OK, doc, put down the gun."

"It's funny in a way," Gigglepuss said again.

"So you think you can shoot me and just pratfall away from this?"

Gigglepuss sighed, "Shoot you, my dear? You're brains been twisted up like a balloon dog. No. this gun is for me."

"You're crazy!" Samara stepped toward the table.

"But crazy ha-ha or crazy strange," Gigglepuss let out a long laugh and then put the gun near her head.

"NO!" Samara cried.

Gigglepuss pulled the trigger. There was a burst of confetti and a flag with the word: "Bang" popped out of the gun.

"Confetti gun! Surprise!" Gigglepuss said and tossed the gun away. "Whoopie!" She laughed.

Samara grabbed her. "Whoopie nothing, you nutcase."

"My nutcase is full of snakes, don't you see Agent, I'm just one clown, but *SHE*, she is everything. Let's go I'm tired."

Samara pulled her to her feet. "Good. I'll see you get a long nap in the Ha-ha camps. It's Levityworth Prison for you." Samara zip tied Gigglepuss's hands behind her back and shoved her out of the apartment into the warm afternoon. It was over, she was caught. And yet somehow the victory felt hollow. She put Gigglepuss into the car and slammed the door. Then she turned and looked out at the neighborhood. Will it ever end, she wondered, or is it just a game of whack-a-clown? A carnival of greasepaint and terror always dancing to a calliope in the shadows. It was hard not to get jaded when you were on the clown beat. She looked back at Gigglepuss who's white and blue make-up was cracked and peeling. Small victories, she told herself, it's all about the small victories.

END OF STORY