



Rogues Gallery #15
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Featuring Hugo Strange and The Ventriloquist with Scarface.

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At first glance, Arnold Wesker was not at all a threatening person. He was a man in his fifties with a slightly portly physique. He was bald on the top of his head, with bushy gray hair circling it. His beady, nervous eyes were hidden behind a tiny pair of spectacles that fixed his extreme nearsightedness. No one would suspect this man of any wrongdoing whatsoever, which was appropriate because Arnold had never done anything wrong in his life. This is why he was shocked when sentenced to imprisonment in Arkham Asylum until he was deemed sane.

“No!” Arnold protested as two guards escorted him to the madhouse. “You don’t understand! I shouldn’t be here! I’m not crazy!”

“Sure you aren’t.” One of the guards muttered.

“I’m really not!” He continued. “I didn’t do anything wrong! I really, really shouldn’t be here!”

“That’s not for you to decide.” The other guard said. Finally, the trio came to the end of a long hallway and violently shoved Arnold into Arkham Asylum.

“But...but...but...” He stammered, trying to come up with something to say. The guards ignored his plea and shut the doors behind him, locking him into the madhouse.

“But I don’t want to go among mad people.” He finally managed to spit out to people that were no longer there.

“Oh you can’t help that.”

Arnold, an extremely timid person, jumped at the sound of another voice

behind him, and turned to see a maniacal looking short man, dressed in a similar orange jumpsuit to him.

“We’re all mad here.” The inmate continued. “I’m mad. You’re mad.”

“H-How...how do you know I’m mad?” Arnold said with a mixture of fear and confusion. The inmate began to approach him slowly, causing Arnold to back away until he was against a concrete wall and the inmate was a few uncomfortable inches from his face.

“You must be.” The inmate said. “Otherwise, you wouldn’t have come here!”

The inmate let out a high-pitched cackle and skipped away. Arnold watched the strange fellow leave and said through frightened breaths, “Oh dear...”

It had been only a few days in Arkham Asylum for the Criminally Insane, but Arnold had already counted what few blessings he had. There was no cellmate to harass him. He kept to himself at most times and spent as much time as he could alone. He avoided any and all eye contact with the other inmates, and they hadn’t so much as turned a curious eye to him.

Most importantly, the day had finally come when he had an appointment with the psychological analyst at Arkham.

A guard brought Arnold up the many stairs to the psychologist’s office. He violently shoved the nebbish inmate into the room and closed the door.

Compared to the rest of the asylum, the office was a lavish room. The area was well lit, floor was carpeted and bookcases against the walls were stacked with leather-bound books.

Beside a wooden desk, in a leather armchair was a middle-aged man, completely bald with a white goatee and dark glasses. He looked up from the notes he was jotting down and said in a slow, oozing voice,

"Welcome. Please take a seat."

Arnold nervously crossed the room and planted himself on a leather couch, facing the psychologist.

"Look," He said. "I'm not crazy. I shouldn't be in here. I'm rational! I'm sane!"

"Mr. Wesker, please calm down." The psychologist said in an uncaring tone. Naturally, Arnold complied immediately. "My name is Professor Hugo Strange, and I am here to determine whether or not you should be here."

Arnold nodded. Professor Strange continued. "It says here you were incarcerated for drug running, extortion and attempted murder."

"But I didn't do any of that!" He pleaded.

"I have a video, Mr. Wesker." The psychologist said. Before Arnold could say anything, Professor Strange directed his attention to the television in the office and pressed a button on a remote.

On the video, Arnold Wesker stepped into a pawn shop, dressed in a sweater-vest and brown slacks. Behind him was an extremely large man, aptly dubbed "Rhino." The pair approached a shopkeeper, sitting behind a counter.

"Oh no," The shopkeeper muttered.

"There's someone here who wants to see you, Frank." Rhino said in a deep rumble. Arnold nervously pulled his hands from behind his back, revealing a wooden dummy in his right hand.

The dummy was dressed like a 1920's gangster, complete with a white suit and top hat. He was holding what looked like a miniature Tommy gun in his left hand and had a scratch across its left eye. The dummy stared at Frank, its wooden eyebrows arch to indicate its tense anger.

"Where's my money?" The dummy spoke in a raspy, irritating voice.

The dummy's voice was a stark contrast from that of Arnold Wesker. While the latter's voice was as meek, timid and afraid as he was, the former's was harsh and shrewish, but still commanding. However it was clear that the two voices were one and the same. And what was truly impressive was that when the dummy spoke, Arnold's lips didn't move at all.

"I'm not giving you any money, freak." The shopkeeper spoke directly to Arnold. The Ventriloquist shoved the dummy into Frank's face and continued to speak through it.

"Listen here you son of a gitch, you deal wit' me. Not dis fatass, me!"

"Now that was uncalled for, Mr. Scarface." Arnold said to the dummy.

"Shut uk! And you!" Scarface turned his attention back towards Frank. "You give me my money, or Rhino here will take care a' ya! You got dat?"

"Whatever." Frank said, this time speaking directly to the dummy. "I ain't paying you any money, so you might as well leave before I call the cops."

"Dat's it! Rhino!" Scarface commanded. "Don't do this, sir." Arnold pleaded. "He's not going to pay, we might as well leave."

"Uk yours, dummy! We're getting cash outta dis gastard!" Scarface responded harshly. As Rhino approached Frank, the shopkeeper reached under the counter and pulled out a wooden baseball bat. "Just try it." He warned, a tense look in his eye as he stared down the hired muscle.

And then they all heard a gunshot.

Everyone turned to see Scarface, his miniature gun smoking and pointing at Frank. The shopkeeper looked down and saw a hole in his white shirt and blood beginning to stain it. "What the hell...?" He asked. Scarface fired off five more shots, before Frank doubled over and fell to the ground.

“Take dat, gitch!” He said angrily.

And then the tape stopped.

“Well.” Professor Strange asked.

“Well that shows you!” Arnold pleaded. “I didn’t do anything! It was all Mr. Scarface!”

“Franklin Russo is fine, in case you were wondering.” Professor Strange said, scribbling on his paper. Arnold shamefully quieted himself. The psychologist continued. “Mr. Wesker, I’d like to have weekly sessions with you to properly analyze your mental state and possibly provide a cure.”

“I don’t need curing! I’m not crazy!” Arnold said. Professor Strange merely beckoned him away and said “You can return to your cell. Please make sure the guards bring in Mr. Tetch, he is quite the wily one.”

A guard escorted Arnold out of the office. On his way back, he saw the familiar short inmate being escorted to the psychologist’s office.

“Curiouser and curiouser!” Jervis Tetch addressed Arnold, a look of surprised glee on his face.

Arnold turned his head away and continued on to his cell.

The next week, Arnold Wesker returned to Hugo Strange’s office. Once again, he sat on the leather couch, facing the psychologist.

“Welcome back, Mr. Wesker.” Professor Strange said. “How are you feeling today?”

“...alright, I suppose.” He answered nervously.

“Good, good.” The psychologist continued. “Now, last week we talked a bit about ‘Scarface.’ Please tell me more about him.”

“Well,” Arnold began. “Mr. Scarface is...not a nice man. He is very rude and insulting and violent. He’s very, very violent. He’s the one who should be here, not me.”

“Hmm...” Professor Strange thought as he scribbled quickly and sharply on his paper. “When did you first manifest...err, meet Scarface?”

“It was a few years ago. I had gone to Blackgate Penitentiary...”

“For what?” The professor interrupted.

“Well, the report said that I was involved in a murder. I don’t even remember it happening. I-I was in a bar and a fight broke out and someone hit me and...and then it was all over and the man who hit me was...he was dead. People said I killed him but I don’t remember any of it.”

The psychologist continued to take notes as Arnold spoke.

“A-Anyway, I was at Blackgate and my cellmate was a man named Mr. Donnegan. He was very quiet. I didn’t feel scared around him, or at least as scared as when I was around the other prisoners. Anyway, Mr. Donnegan had a wooden friend named ‘Woody.’ Woody was a nice fellow; it was always nice talking to him. Unfortunately, Mr. Donnegan was sentenced to death. He took Woody with him to the electric chair. When Woody came back, he had a little scar on his face. He insisted I call him Scarface and the name stuck.”

Professor Strange continued to write, not even bothering to look up at Arnold until the inmate said silently “My father was named Woody.”

The psychologist looked up, suddenly intrigued. “Really? Please, tell me more about your father.”

“His full name was Woodrow Wesker.” Arnold explained. “He was an enforcer for the Mandragora crime family. He thought I didn’t know about it; that I didn’t know why we had so much money or why he’d come home at two in the morning covered in blood and bruises. But I

knew. He...he wanted me to be tough, like him. He was always insulting me; always calling me names, saying that I was too much of an idiot and a weakling to do anything right...he was a lot like Mr. Scraface."

Professor Strange continued to write and said "Did you have any other family?"

"Yes. My mother." Arnold answered. "Allie Wesker was not like my father. She was always warm and caring, and I could always make her laugh. That's kind of what made me want to be an entertainer; I loved to make people laugh."

"And what happened to that?" Professor Strange asked.

"Well, my mother...my mother was in a car accident. She died and there was nobody for me to make laugh. So dad was even harder on me to be the tough guy. It was...not pleasant. No, not very pleasant at all."

"I see...and why did you choose to study ventriloquism?"

"Well, I thought I made a better straight man." Arnold said. "Plus, I would be too nervous being on stage by myself like that."

And Professor Strange continued to take notes.

A week later, Arnold Wesker was back in the office, still on the couch, facing the psychologist.

"Mr. Wesker," He said. "I'd like to hear more about Scarface."

"He's a very angry man, who makes me help him do terrible things." Arnold said. "He robs, he extorts, he...he's even killed people. I don't want anything to do with him but he makes me go along with him."

"Hmm..." Professor Strange continued his seemingly endless writing. "I'd like to try something, Mr. Wesker."

Hugo Strange reached under his desk and took out something that made

Arnold cringe.

Scarface sat on the desk, still dressed in his suit and hat. His gun was missing and an orange paper tag was around his right ankle.

"He-he-hello, M-mister Scarface." Arnold said, trembling at the sight of his malevolent counterpart.

"Evening, dummy." Scarface gave a harsh response that only the Ventriloquist could hear.

"I thought I might have a talk with Scarface." The psychologist said.

"You couldn't have talked to him without me?!" Arnold said.

"I thought it would be best to have the two of you together." Professor Strange said. Arnold, however, was focused on the dummy. He broke his stare and said "I'm sorry, Professor, I couldn't hear you over what he was saying. Could you repeat that?"

"I said I thought it would be best to have the two of you together." He repeated. The psychologist stood up, crossed the room and put Scarface in Arnold Wesker's hands, before returning to his desk.

"Now, may I ask what your name is?" Professor Strange said, addressing the dummy.

"It's Scarface." An irritable response came from the dummy.

"Do you have any other name?"

"No. Just Scarface." He said.

"Really? I heard from a reliable source that you used to be named Woody."

Scarface turned to Arnold and said "What'd you tell dis guy?"

"Nothing, nothing at all!" The Ventriloquist said, worried.

"Nutting, what?"

"Nothing, sir."

Fascinated, Hugo Strange continued to write. "So tell me, Scarface, when did you meet Arnold?"

"I already told when..." Arnold began.

"He was talkin' to me, dummy!" Scarface snapped. The Ventriloquist stared at his feet quietly.

Scarface continued. "I met dis fatass back in Blackgate. Dere was a riot and some guys groke out, including da dummy, carrying me. I had da smarts to take over Gotham and dis lucky gastard was along for da ride."

"If you don't mind me asking," The psychologist asked. "You replace the letter 'B' with the letter 'G'..."

"It's a skeech imkedament!" The dummy snapped furiously.

"He didn't mean anything by it, Mr. Scarface." Arnold pleaded.

"Shut it, dummy!" Scarface answered.

"Tell me," Professor Strange continued. "Why do you want to be a criminal?"

"What kinda question is dat?" The dummy responded. "Criminals have all da kower. You seen dis town? Gad guys rule. Guys like Joker and Riddler, dey run da show. You tink it's Gatman or da law? Wrong! It's da gad guy."

"Interesting..." The psychologist scribbled. "And tell me what you think of your partner, Mr. Wesker?"

"Da dummy? He's a jackass and wuss. He's always askin' me 'Don't kill him, Scarface' and 'Dere's a getter way, Scarface!' It's a kain in de ass!"

It was interesting for Hugo Strange to hear Arnold Wesker provide the voice of Scarface, while the dummy was in turn doing an imitation of Arnold Wesker. "So if you hate Mr. Wesker so much, why don't you work without him?"

Scarface paused and then said shamefully. "Cause I need dis guy. He's my hands and my voice."

"Well, why not get someone else?" The psychologist asked. "What about that Rhino person who you two are always seen with?"

"Rhino? He's even dummer den dis dummy!"

"Hmm." Professor Strange continued writing. "Misters Wesker and Scarface, I'm afraid our time is up. You," He looked at Arnold. "I will see next week. And you," He looked at Scarface. "You are going back into the evidence locker."

"What? No!" Scarface protested. A guard stepped into the office and took the dummy from Arnold's hands. "Do something, dummy!" Scarface screamed at the Ventriloquist, but he just stared at his empty hands in silence.

Like clockwork, Arnold was back in the office, on the couch. Hugo Strange clicked the top of his black ballpoint pen and said "Good afternoon, Arnold. I'd like to try something to help rid you of Scarface, if you're willing to try it."

"Anything, professor." Arnold responded.

"Good. First I want you to lie down on the couch."

Arnold complied, staring up at the white ceiling with his hands rested on his portly stomach.

"Now what we're going to try is hypnotherapy." The psychiatrist said. "What I want you to do right now is to just relax. Take a deep breath in, and let it out. And once more, in...and out. Just breathe and relax. Listen

only to the sound of my voice.”

As he spoke, Hugo Strange stood up and unplugged the camera in corner of his office. “Now when I count to three, you will be completely asleep. One...two...three.”

Some time later, Arnold Wesker stepped out of the office unaccompanied and said, “Thank you, professor.” And closed the door. To his left, Arnold saw the familiar figure that was Jervis Tetch, leaning against the wall.

The inmate looked at Arnold and addressed him in a languid, sleepy voice.

“Who are you?”

Arnold marched up to Tetch and gave him a hard kick in the stomach with his left foot.

“I’m Scarface, bitch!”

He left Tetch’s body, headed towards his cell and said to himself with a malevolent smirk “Damn it feels good to say B’s again.”

The End.

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