

The Ineffective Detective

by John Schoneboom for Sasha Taublieb and Helene Galek

Characters: A Detective and a Client.

Setting: A detective's office. The detective is seated, cool, confident, at ease, slightly contemptuous. The client stands, perhaps pacing a bit, uncomfortable, nervous; she speaks in an English accent.

CLIENT

So, how long is this supposed to be for, these formalities?

DETECTIVE

For as long as it takes to finish this meeting. I expect to be treated like a professional in my own office. You're my client, we have a business relationship...

CLIENT

OK, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

DETECTIVE

I treat you with professional respect, I expect to be treated with professional respect.

CLIENT

I know, I'm sorry, that's fine.

DETECTIVE

Thank you.

CLIENT

You're welcome.

DETECTIVE

Good.

CLIENT

So I should call you...

DETECTIVE

Ms. Barlowe.

CLIENT

OK.

DETECTIVE

I mean, I've told you fitdy times.

CLIENT

How many times?

DETECTIVE

Fitdy!

CLIENT

Fitdy times?

DETECTIVE

Fitdy! Fitdy times! Fitdy!

CLIENT

OK, OK, I'm sorry, *Ms. Barlowe*. Can we talk about my case now?

DETECTIVE

Please. Now: what would you like to know?

CLIENT

Well, have you found anything out?

DETECTIVE

Oh yes, all sorts of things, I've been following him all over town.

CLIENT

You have? Oh good. Who did he meet at the library yesterday?

DETECTIVE

The library? Ahhhh, well, he met a woman. Yes, a dark haired, quite mysterious looking woman. I think she may have been Persian. Or Russian. In fact, she was a Russian Persian. She...

CLIENT

He didn't go to the library yesterday.

DETECTIVE

Didn't he?

CLIENT

No.

DETECTIVE

Are you sure?

CLIENT

Quite sure.

DETECTIVE

You're wrong. He went, when you weren't looking, and I followed him, and he met a woman from Prussia, and...

CLIENT

I was with him all day.

DETECTIVE

Exactly. You didn't let me finish. It wasn't him at all.

CLIENT

Have you done *any* work on this case?

DETECTIVE

Tons! Rest assured, I've got a quite a docket going already on your husband. Do you see that filing cabinet?

CLIENT

No.

DETECTIVE

Well I do, and it's half full of files on your husband and what he's been up to. It would curl your hair, the things I know!

CLIENT

So go ahead, curl my hair, what have you got!?

DETECTIVE

All sorts of things! Where he goes, who he hangs out with, what he likes to eat...

CLIENT

Where does he go? Who does he hang out with? What does he like to eat?

DETECTIVE

You don't know what your husband likes to eat?

CLIENT

You tell me.

DETECTIVE

Fish.

CLIENT

Wrong.

DETECTIVE

There's so much you don't know.

CLIENT

He's allergic.

DETECTIVE

Is that what he tells you?

CLIENT

I've taken him to the hospital. One time, there was this clam broth...

DETECTIVE

Well, he's changed, obviously. Perhaps that's why you hired me?

CLIENT

Maybe it's me who's changed. I've gotten older...

DETECTIVE

Yes. And so has your husband. And so have I. I was once so small.

CLIENT

Me too! And now I'm full-sized, and I'm not getting any taller. The times have changed. We don't know who to trust anymore. Our own loved ones, the people in our family, who knows, they could turn out to be...anything!

DETECTIVE

Within reason.

CLIENT

Right.

DETECTIVE

There are many things they could not possibly turn out to be. Starting with the obvious: can of tuna, piece of soap.

CLIENT

Rhinoceros.

DETECTIVE

Precisely. Process of elimination is ...

CLIENT

Nice fluffy slippers.

DETECTIVE

That's enough. As I was saying, process of elimination is very important to a detective.

CLIENT

But then there's all the things they *could* be. When I started seeing all those posters, I really started to worry. I never noticed how shady everyone is! Thank goodness you're here. I didn't know where to turn. I mean, my own husband – he left his bag unattended the other day!

DETECTIVE

Where was this?

CLIENT

Right in our home! It was chilling! I think he may be into something big.

DETECTIVE

OK, this is getting ridiculous. I am not playing along with this anymore. Game over.

CLIENT

You're a bad detective! I'm telling you, the signs are everywhere if only you look for them all over the place!

DETECTIVE

Mom! Listen to me! I'm telling you! Dad is not some sort of secret operative, OK?

CLIENT

How do you know? What if he's part of the avant garde...

DETECTIVE

And Mom, there's something else.

CLIENT

What?

DETECTIVE

You're not English.

CLIENT

What do you mean?

DETECTIVE

That accent. You should stop it.

CLIENT

What accent?!

DETECTIVE

Mom...

CLIENT

All right so I watch a lot of public television.

DETECTIVE

Mom, you're tired. You're tired and you're not well. I'm sorry, but dad and I are very worried about you.

CLIENT

Really?

DETECTIVE

Yeah.

CLIENT

So you think he still cares about me?

DETECTIVE

Mom, he loves you.

CLIENT

Are you sure?

DETECTIVE

I'm so sure.

CLIENT

But he had these blueprints and all these electrical wires!

DETECTIVE

Mom, that's enough! Look, I want you to go home and get some rest. Maybe you should think about seeing a doctor.

CLIENT

Well...OK. I am pretty tired. Can I see you tomorrow?

DETECTIVE

Absolutely. Drop by in the afternoon, we'll talk. No charge.

CLIENT

OK. I'm gonna go. I love you sweetie. I mean Ms. Barlowe.

DETECTIVE

I love you too Mom.

The Client leaves. The Detective suddenly speaks in a German accent.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

You can come out now Father, I've taken care of it. She suspects nothing!

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