

Oblivion Girl – Episode 2

ESSA NARRATION

Skyride Studios presents... Oblivion Girl Episode 2. King Without a Crown

ESSA NARRATION

I don't remember a lot from my childhood, mostly because I don't care about living in the past. What I do recall, however, was my brother, Eden.

Being the youngest of two, I've always wondered why my parents had more than one kid. Hell if I'd stick around long enough to find out.

The walls of our tiny apartment were literally stained with blood, sweat, and tears. They resemble the Jackson Pollock painting. Only we'd never get paid millions for our masterpiece.

EDEN

What are you doing?

ESSA

Running away. I can't stand to stay in this house for another minute. Please, Eden, please come with me—

ESSA'S MOM

—Oh no you don't! You're already dead to me. You're not taking your brother down with you. Get the fuck out of my house.

ESSA

Ugh, I hate you!

ESSA NARRATION

I was given no choice but to leave without him. I became a street kid, sleeping in alleys and begging for food. You know, normal childhood stuff. That was when the big one hit.

It came without warning, like mega-earthbreaks usually do.

I looked up just in time to see debris falling from a neighboring building as it enveloped my body. The only difference for me was that I survived, unlike everyone else.

The large cinder block wall that saved my life had cracked support beams. It was these that protected me from the sharp rebar that stopped only inches from my head.

Crawling out of the rubble was like being reborn all over again. Only this time, there was no one there to greet me.

ESSA

Hello? Is anyone there? Hello?

ESSA NARRATION

But only the eerie sound of silence replied.

The city crumbled into ruins. Dust lingered in the air for weeks, a haunting reminder of Mother Nature's devastating power.

People waited for days for help to arrive before vanishing with the rest.

TRAPPED GIRL

Is someone there? Please help me!

ESSA NARRATION

I made my way back to what remained of my parents' apartment. I hoped to find Eden hiding under some sort of shelter. But after a few hours of digging, all I found were my parents' remains.

Once news reached the nearby cities, it didn't take long for the rumors to start.

PROPHET

Look, it's her! Oblivion girl! Destroyer of cities! Don't let the angel of death into your town unless you want to suffer the same fate!

ESSA NARRATION

Oblivion Girl. I liked it. Just repulsive enough to match my personality.

The rumors followed me like gum stuck to the bottom of my shoe, clinging to everything. Just muttering the names and armies running for their lives. Because the only thing that travels faster than light is gossip.

With the bad came the good. Bounty hunters, gunslingers, mafia drug lords, and even psychopathic hobos wouldn't come within a hundred feet of me.

Hard to believe that was only two years ago. I guess time flies when you're obliterating cities.

I like to think I grew into my new name the way a boy grows into a man. But let's face it, I was born with that name tattooed onto my soul. The irony was I didn't just like my new life. I loved it. That's when I discovered the bounty hunting racket. When I found out that people would pay me to trade humans for cash, I just couldn't say no.

FEMALE BOUNTY

Oh crap!

ESSA NARRATION

What a wonderful line of work!

I found the cardinal rule of fashion had transitioned directly over to bounty hunting. Accessorize, accessorize, accessorize. Guns, flamethrowers, slingshots, anything and everything I could get my hands on, and more. I needed it all. Until the day I found my ultimate accessory...

...Atticus.

When we met, he was working a dead-end job that he hated more than his overpriced apartment.

ATTICUS'S BOSS

Once you're done with the animal shit, you can start with the human.

ATTICUS

Sure thing, boss.

ESSA NARRATION

Booze allowed him to open up, but also made him extremely violent.

DRUNK GUY

Oh, sorry about that. I'll go buy you another.

ATTICUS

Come here, you big, dumb son of a bitch.

ESSA NARRATION

One night in a bar, I witnessed that destruction firsthand. I'm not talking about the kind of violence where you bruise someone's cheek and then complain about your broken hand for a month. I'm talking about the kind where you rip the arm off your opponent and beat

him to death with it. Then, when they finally croak, you pee on them to make sure they're not playing dead. The whole time I watched him, he never seemed mad or happy. Just sheer boredom.

I felt like a window shopper at Tiffany's. I just *had* to have him. The challenge was how to force him to become my everlasting sidekick after I'd just watched him pee on his adversary.

So, I left it up to Lady Luck.

ATTICUS

So, you're saying, if you win, I have to become your sidekick for... how long?

ESSA

Forever.

ATTICUS

Right. Okay. And if I win?

ESSA

If you win, then you don't get kicked in the nuts.

ESSA NARRATION

His body started slowly swaying back and forth as the alcohol took effect.

ATTICUS

Right, right. Obviously.

ESSA NARRATION

He set the deck of cards on the table.

ATTICUS

Do you want to go first? Or should I?

ESSA

I will.

ESSA NARRATION

I cut the cards and showed Atticus.

ATTICUS

Three of diamonds. Not going to be hard to beat that.

ESSA NARRATION

I placed the cards back in the deck and shuffled for him.

ATTICUS

Well, lady, I don't know who you are or why we're playing this dumb fucking game. But guess who's *NOT* getting kicked in the nuts tonight? Huh?

ESSA NARRATION

He got used to the idea of being a sidekick after the first few months. Those were the hardest for him.

ATTICUS

My hands are full of blisters.

ESSA NARRATION

I was just happy I didn't have to lug around all those heavy guns anymore. They were taking a toll on my back.

ATTICUS

Ah, my back!

ESSA NARRATION

Better yet, Atticus was an introvert. I had to bribe him with food just to get him to talk. He never asked about my past, and I didn't care enough about him to bother. It worked out perfectly.

Oblivion Girl plus one. Great. Now we can use the carpool. Then late last year, we added Kial to our ever-growing posse.

KIAL

I don't want to be part of your crew.

ESSA

You'll do it and like it.

KIAL

Ouch! That hurts. A little help here?

ATTICUS

If she asks, don't play the card game...

KIAL

Who are you people?

ESSA NARRATION

The kid had brains, and if I was going to survive, I'd need every last brain cell I could get.

It took a while to find out his parents had passed away when he was 10. The only thing they left him with was the building we were in. He used the downstairs as his office, and the upstairs, if you could get through to it, was a maze of supercomputers linked up to one another. The space between the machines was just small enough to let Kial crawl through.

KIAL

I think I'm stuck.

ESSA NARRATION

Once he was on board, he turned the building into a one-stop shop for bounty hunters.

KIAL

Hey, how's it going? Hey, welcome back. Hey, you again, huh?

ESSA NARRATION

It became his job to find and book clients, while Atticus and I hunted them down. Freelance bounty hunters for hire, and we didn't even ask for healthcare. Together, the three of us kicked ass, and I'm thankful to have both. You'll just never hear me tell them that. Like they deserve the satisfaction.

I lay on the couch and stared up at the ceiling fan. I watched as it spun at high speed in our humidity-soaked room.

Kial had his head down against his desk. Atticus lay motionless on the floor, daring not to move an inch.

ESSA

It's so hot!

ESSA NARRATION

Just saying it out loud made my body temperature rise 10 degrees.

ATTICUS

I feel like I'm on the surface... of the sun.

ESSA NARRATION

His thick trench coat still wrapped around his body. An idiot, through and through.

KIAL

It's like the heat... evaporated... all of the energy out of my body.

ESSA

Doesn't help that your place has ventilation like a tin can.

KIAL

If you don't like it, get out.

ESSA

But it's even hotter outside.

(Everyone sighs in unison)

KIAL

Huh?

COMPUTER

You got mail.

KIAL

Looks like we have a new job.

ESSA

Isn't today our day off?

ATTICUS

Yep. First day in two weeks.

KIAL

Okay, I'll let Lumina know you don't want the job.

ATTICUS

Lumina? The city near the ocean?

ESSA

Ocean?!

ESSA NARRATION

Just the thought of going to the beach sent cool, refreshing air rippling down my body.

KIAL

Yeah, near the Gulf of Velius.

ESSA NARRATION

My mind whisked away to ice cream, snow cones, and slushies. I didn't care what the job was, we were doing it.

I rolled off the couch and fell on top of Atticus.

ESSA

Let's do it!

ATTICUS

Hold on. We don't even know what the job is yet.

KIAL

According to this, the bounty hunter trio known as Ceto have agreed to collect a bounty on a guy named Father Atedor. Apparently, he's lived in Lumina for the past few years after he used the church to smuggle illegal contraband to foreign countries.

The Ceto gang have already captured Atedor and are leaving the Holy City the day after tomorrow. Our client wants us to intercept Atedor and hand him over at a church not too far from there.

ESSA

Holy City?

KIAL

The Holy City.

ESSA NARRATION

I had to confess, Holy Cities were a pain in my arse. They didn't allow weapons, so we'd have to smuggle them inside our baggage or pay off the police.

Lucky for us, Lumina police are too passively moral to check a pile of bras and panties for AKs and M16s.

ESSA

Well, hurry up and buy us some boat tickets. Time is wasting.

ESSA NARRATION

Atticus barely had time to pack before we were on a boat overlooking Lumina.

ATTICUS

The viewer reminds me of Sicily photos I saw in a book once.

ESSA NARRATION

I'd be impressed if I were paying attention. All my brain could think about was the ice cream. Strawberry ice cream, to be precise.

ESSA

All right, see you in a bit!

ATTICUS

Huh? Where are you going? Essa? ESSA!

ESSA NARRATION

As if he didn't know where to find me. I also didn't want to be around when he realized I'd stuck him with all our luggage.

ATTICUS

Huh? Oh no, she doesn't realize she left her luggage! Don't worry, boss, leave it to me.

ESSA NARRATION

What? How would I hold both of my ice cream cones? Plus, this job was so simple it would only take a few hours at max, and that's if I did it by myself. That's why we got there a whole day ahead of schedule so we could relax.

The city was gorgeous. Buildings stacked so close together you could pour your neighbor's coffee from the balcony.

BALCONY NEIGHBOR

Well thanking you kindly.

ESSA NARRATION

Markets overflowed with fresh food, drinks, and jewellery. Fishing boats brought fresh seafood to the docks and local restaurants. Yes, Lumina was perfect. Except for the whole hardcore religious thing.

We crested the top of a hill and were hit with the smell of sea salt carried on a cool breeze. The sound of seagulls put my body in a calm, relaxing mode. The ice cream also helped.

I took the room key from Atticus, who had his hands full with our luggage, and swung open the door of our room. Seashell and sand dollar ornaments, driftwood furniture, and a lush, wide balcony welcomed us inside.

ATTICUS

I'll put your luggage on the bed.

ESSA NARRATION

The warmth of the sunset mixed with the cool breeze felt perfect.

ESSA

Atticus, come take a break and watch the sunset.

ATTICUS

Don't mind if I do! Wow, I've never seen the sunset so colorful.

ESSA NARRATION

The sky turned purple and pink before the stars emerged and sparkled in the night sky.

ATTICUS

Are you ready for dinner?

ESSA

Sure, what are you cooking?

ATTICUS

That's the best part. I'm not. We're eating out!

ESSA NARRATION

We walked across the street to a nearby seafood restaurant.

ESSA

Oh yum. Atticus, you *have* to try this fish.

ATTICUS

Whoa.

ESSA

I know, right!

ATTICUS

Sooo tasty.

ESSA NARRATION

I'd eaten so much that I had trouble falling asleep that night. I tossed and turned until finally I was swept away into another weird dream.

I sank down my moonlit grave to the bottom of the ocean floor. I watched the bubbles scurry up towards the surface.

My feet planted firmly to the bottom of the soft, wet sand. I tried peering around, but the moonlight barely illuminated my surroundings. Something glittered below my feet. I bent down and scooped up a handful of sand.

Before the dust cleared, a bright orange light descended from the surface toward me. It felt as though the sun itself had fallen into the ocean and was heading right for me. I looked down at the item in my hand.

A silver bracelet with something red in the middle. The light got brighter as I shielded my eyes. Soon, the unbearable light touched my skin and encompassed me.

The sunlight had shot through the gap in my curtains and was cooking me under the sheets.

ESSA

Go away, sun.

ESSA NARRATION

I remembered it wasn't just any regular morning. It was a beach city morning! I got ready as quickly as I could.

After our light continental breakfast, we left the hotel and passed by a jewelry vendor on our way to the beach. I got an overwhelming urge to browse. I wouldn't normally buy anything, but then I spotted it. A silver bracelet with a strawberry red ruby in the middle. Just like the one in my dream.

ESSA

It's practically calling my name. Can we buy it?

ATTICUS

And by we, you mean me.

ESSA

Well, duh, you're the one with all the cash.

ATTICUS

Because you never bring any.

MARKET VENDOR

Special deal just today, half off.

ESSA NARRATION

He tied the bracelet around my wrist. I took a closer look and admired the intricate details.

ATTICUS

Doesn't look half bad on you.

ESSA NARRATION

The silver bracelet sparkled like a disco ball in the sunlight.

Before we knew it, our feet hit the lava-hot sand. Atticus stuck an umbrella into the ground and laid down towels.

ATTICUS

So, uh, what do you want to do first?

(Essa runs and pushes him over)

ATTICUS

Essa, let go of my foot. Essa, Essa.

ESSA NARRATION

Sand ran up his shorts as his imagination ran wild with what might lurk under the ocean water.

He began swimming away, but I held tight to his foot.

(Atticus drowning)

ESSA NARRATION

People around us watched in terror as a petite girl attempted to playfully drown her muscular male friend.

Finally, I let go and he sped off back to the blanket as if a shark were swimming up behind him.

ATTICUS

You could have killed me, you know! Who knows what's in the water! Essa, are you even listening to me?

ESSA NARRATION

A wave crashed over me, and having laughed all the air out of my lungs, I rocketed to the surface.

ATTICUS

HA HA HA! That's some instant karma for you!

ESSA NARRATION

I couldn't remember the last time we both had so much fun together.

ESSA NARRATION

Ever look at someone and felt the urge to punch them in the face? Mix that face with the chubby priest body, and you had father Atedor. A sad, poor excuse for a human being. So terrified of death, he'd do anything to stay alive. Including selling his entire family.

ATEDOR'S SON

No, daddy, please! I don't want to go with these men.

ATEDOR

Oh my child, it is God's will.

ESSA NARRATION

No wonder there's a bounty out on his head.

The Ceto gang never knew what hit them.

(Coughing)

CETO GANG 1

What is this shit? Why am I crying?

CETO GANG 2

How the fuck should I know?

ESSA NARRATION

There was just one problem. Atedor was no easy escape. His padded body didn't exactly improve his ability to hop over walls or hide behind corners. On top of it, he wouldn't shut the fuck up.

ATEDOR

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

ESSA NARRATION

And that's when I saw him. The man I hated most in this world, Jophie. He had the reputation for being the sweetest, kindest, most loving human being.

WOMAN

Oh my.

ESSA NARRATION

It made me want to throw up. It was all just some big, elaborate act to get people to trust him. Well, I wasn't buying it. If I had an arch nemesis, without doubt, it'd be this guy. His bleached white teeth, perfectly tan, brown skin, and an annoying little jingle bell bracelet was like trying to fight off Robin Hood. Always saving those in need and giving money to the poor. Fucking brown-noser.

Did I mention he was also a gypsy? Priceless, right? Every time I was about to cash out a bounty, these goody two-shoes came in and stole it away.

JOPHIE

Not so fast, Essa.

ESSA NARRATION

Don't worry. I already killed the person who told him my real name.

ESSA

What do you want, Jophie? If you can't tell, we're kind of in the middle of something.

JOPHIE

I'm afraid I can't let you pass without handing over Father Atedor.

ESSA

Like hell, I'm just going to hand him over to you. We stole him fair and square.

JOPHIE

Well then, my dear, I guess we'll have to do the same.

ESSA NARRATION

Jophie could act nice and refined all he wanted, but he didn't hold back. While I was dancing around with Bruce Lee's half-wit cousin, Atticus faced off against Jophie's brother, Micah.

ATTICUS

Um, Hi... Micah.

ESSA NARRATION

Micah, like Atticus, wasn't much of a talker. His body was thin and frail-looking, but his superior mind was what set Micah apart from his brother. He could react to his fight twice as fast as his opponent. I've seen the guy dodge bullets and counteract deadly blows.

Micah's skin was like porcelain, with one scar running across his cheek. The reason that scar existed was because of Atticus, a constant reminder that he was the only man Micah considered a worthy adversary.

Atticus wouldn't tell me how he gave Micah the scar, as if telling me would release some sort of bad karma. Back in our world, Jophie and I were about to go all apocalyptic on each other. He hadn't seen my new toys yet, and I *so* wanted to introduce the two of them.

The only problem was, I used my last smoke canister on the seatos. All my spares were back at the hotel. That was what I got for thinking this was going to be a quick and easy job. It didn't matter anyway. Father Atedor spotted the Ceto gang catching up to us and decided not to wait around for the touching reunion.

CETO GANG 1

There's the fat bastard! Get him!

ESSA NARRATION

He took off like a chicken with its head cut off, down towards the harbour.

All three groups had the same reaction. Catch the greased pig.

We all ran after him, splitting off into our groups to hunt down the nervous breakdown of a priest. With seven people chasing after him, each door picked up his pace. It wasn't like he was fast; the streets were just filled with shoppers, making it close to impossible to grab a hold of him.

ATTICUS

Out of my way!

MARKET SHOPPER 1

Geez! Fuck you too!

ESSA NARRATION

Atticus made his way to the roof parts and tracked him from a higher viewpoint, as I hunted down below.

Every few minutes, Jophie and Michael crossed paths in front of me, covering the nooks and crannies of the side streets. The Ceto gang trailed behind, but they couldn't keep up the long. We'd worn them out hours ago when they combed the street searching for us.

CETO GANG 1

You can... you... you can have him...

ESSA NARRATION

It all comes down to gesturing in me, and let me tell you, I wasn't about to lose to a man who stank of Jasmine and overconfidence.

BOAT CAPTAIN

Last call. All aboard!

ATEDOR

UGH! Wait for me! Oh, I made it! Thank you, Jesus!

ESSA NARRATION

Atticus instantly spotted Atedor, moving towards the front of the boat.

ATTICUS

He's down at the dock, on a boat.

ESSA

Not for long!

ESSA NARRATION

We soon found ourselves in a foot race against Jophie and Micah. The boat began taking motion. The slow speed made Atedor crazy.

ATEDOR

Move faster! Move faster!

ESSA NARRATION

Atticus and I gained the lead, and we're about to pass the last street, when Jophie rammed us into the unsuspecting citizens.

All I could do was watch as Jophie and Micah hopped onto the boat and stole my meal ticket.

JOPHIE

HA HA! Well done!

ESSA

No! This is far from over, Jophie!

ESSA NARRATION

Bruised and battered, Atticus and I made our way back to the hotel.

ESSA

Hurry and grab your shit, Atticus! Our only shot now is to get to the drop zone before them.

ESSA NARRATION

Atedor didn't know it, but Jophie wasn't planning on giving him up to the same clientele. He was giving him to Atedor's cousin, Albeon.

Albeon was more of a snake than a saint. He kept up the appearance of having money, but the sad fact was that he was worse off than me.

Once he heard that his cousin had a bounty on his head, Albeon suddenly had a solution to all his debt...

...Father Atedor.

Albeon's instructions stipulated that the captors should meet him at noon in the middle of the town near the fountain. However, Albeon's rewards were far less lucrative. Anyone with half a brain would turn Atedor over for the higher bounty, but being the Robin Hood that Jophie was, the family would take priority over wealth. What an idiot.

The one and only advantage we had against Jophie was that he'd make a grand entrance, followed by an agonisingly long speech. To him, entrances and exits were the make-or-break of legends, and he wanted to be the king of legends.

Albeon sat on the edge of the fountain and gazed at his watch, which read 11.59. Any minute now, Jophie and Micah would be arriving. We had 10 minutes before Jophie finished his speech; every second counted.

JOPHIE

Sometimes it's better to fill our hearts than our wallets. These values separate God from the Devil himself.

ESSA NARRATION

Albeon looked around, trying to find the source of the voice, but Jophie was nowhere in sight.

JOPHIE

I'm here today to tell you, Albeon, that your cousin, Father Atedor, is safe within my care, ready to be reunited with the family who cares for him more than *any* bounty hunter.

ESSA NARRATION

What Jophie didn't realise was that Albeon couldn't care less about his cousin. He had planned to collect the bounty, skip out on paying Jophie, and leave the town. As if I'd ever let that happen.

Albeon glanced at his watch again. Nine minutes remained before his boat's departure. Jophie, Micah, and Father Atedor appeared from around the corner. A rope connected Father Atedor's wrists to Jophie, like a leash on a dog.

JOPHIE

Because in the end, who are we to get in the way of family?

ESSA NARRATION

Jophie's speech was so bad that everyone in earshot clapped in celebration when it was finally over.

Albeon could hardly control his excitement. He'd sent mice to fight mice, only to have them deliver the cheese to him on a silver platter. His plan had actually worked. That was until Atticus and I took back our cheese.

Silently, we sideswiped through Jophie and Micah. They didn't hear us coming until it was too late. My knife cut through Jophie's ropes like butter as Atticus grabbed Atedor's leash and pulled him away.

ESSA

We'll be taking that.

ATTICUS

Thank you very much.

ESSA NARRATION

Atedor looked back and saw Jophie take out his crossbow while Micah expanded his spear. Wanting to keep all his blood in his body today, he picked up the pace. About time.

I threw down a smoke canister to keep the brothers from getting a clear shot. To my surprise, an arrow sliced through the smoke and headed straight towards us. We dashed around the corner right before impact, just as the arrow stabbed him through the wall. We zigzagged our way across town, but Jophie and Micah were close behind. Our drop off was at the end of town, waiting inside a church, ironically.

We reached the church by the skin of our teeth. Micah reached for Atedor as Atticus flung him into the church, tumbled past me as I slammed the heavy wooden doors shut. As long as Atedor stayed in the church, the gypsies couldn't get to him. They'd been banned centuries ago from ever entering.

ESSA

Hell yeah! We did it!

JOPHIE

I wouldn't have expected you to fall for such an obvious trap, Essa.

ESSA

And what does that mean?

JOPHIE

Think about it for a second. Do you even know who you were supposed to collect your bounty from?

ESSA

I, uh...

JOPHIE

And to top it off, how does your client even know you were the ones who delivered Atedor? Did you ever meet face-to-face?

ESSA NARRATION

I hated to admit it. The bastard had a point.

Father Atedor's lifeless body lay sprawled face down in the floor. The church was empty, just like our wallets.

We later found out that an ethics group had accused Father Atedor of molesting children and advertised a fake bounty so they could execute him once delivered.

ATEDOR

No, please! Dear God!

(Stabbing)

ESSA NARRATION

We were the idiots who freely handed him over. Fucking wonderful.

KIAL

So... I just got a letter in the mail from Albeon's lawyer?

ESSA

What does the cockroach want?

KIAL

To pay a settlement fee for the loss of life of his brother.

ATTICUS

And how much is that, exactly?

KIAL

Ironically, the same amount as his gambling debts.

ESSA NARRATION

The only thing I hated worse than working for free... was paying to work for free.