

Oblivion Girl – Episode 4

ESSA NARRATION

Skyride Studios presents.... Oblivion Girl, episode Four. Childish Thoughts.

(Gun Firing)

ESSA NARRATION

Have you ever been trapped by a group of thugs in a run-down two-story house?

ESSA

Ah!

ESSA NARRATION

No? Well, that was the situation Atticus, and I found ourselves in after we snatched a bounty from some really shitty goons. The bounty this time, a 16-year-old girl named Alita.

ALITA

Oh my God!

(Gun Firing)

Ah!

ESSA NARRATION

Long story short, her family wanted her back, and I was going to be the one to catch the check. The goons managed to force us down into the basement. In my defense, I'd like to state that I always had a plan if worse came to worst. I just didn't have a plan in case *that* plan failed.

The wooden support beams holding up the house ran from the attic down to the basement. Being the prepared Girl Scout I was, I just happened to have a few grenades on me with extra gunpowder crammed inside. While Atticus held them off with suppressive gunfire, I tied a string and looped the grenades around the support beams. I then attached the string around their pulp ends and connected them to one single strand.

Little did I know, Atticus wasn't doing so well holding the goons back. I learned that lesson the hard way when a wild bullet found its way into the basement, ricocheted off the walls, and gave a high five to one of my grenades.

(Explosion) (House falls down)

Well, at least we won.

ATTICUS

Whoa!

(Coughing)

That was nuts! Wasn't it, Essa? Essa? Essa, can you hear me?

ESSA NARRATION

The now totally pissed-off goons clawed their way out of the rubble like a herd of zombies.

GOON 1

Look, one of those bastards is still alive!

ATTICUS

Oh, fuck.

(Gun Firing)

Fuck!

(Gun Firing)

ESSA NARRATION

Meanwhile, I lay unconscious on the cool dirt. The next thing I knew.

ALITA

Are you awake?

ESSA

Well, yeah, now I am.

ALITA

Where's your friend?

ESSA

My who?

ALITA

...That guy you were with?

ESSA

I'm sorry, do I know you?

ESSA NARRATION

She looked at me like I was crazy. I didn't have any idea what she was talking about.

ESSA

Who are you?

ALITA

You don't recognize me, Mommy?

ESSA NARRATION

Like handing the bank keys to a robber. I'd blame it on Karma, but let's face it, this kid was an all-natural, candy-coated con artist.

ESSA

Of course I do, my darling.

ESSA NARRATION

Mommy, darling? Had I completely lost my mind? A leader made up a clever little story about how that was supposedly our house.

ALITA

Bad people came in and blew it to shreds by accidentally shooting our pile of fertilizer we stored in the basement.

ESSA

Oh yes, the fertilizer.

ESSA NARRATION

Never once did the thought cross my mind that fertilizer doesn't just blow up when you shoot it, or the fact that the brat didn't even bother to make up a fictitious husband for me. She was so sheltered that getting kidnapped was on par with going to Disneyland.

She treated it like a vacation from everyone that had ever pissed her off. So, in retrospect, I could see why she wanted to milk it for all it was worth. Bandits, badasses, and boys. What's not to love?

While Alita spun her tails of deceit into my ear, I noticed we made our way to the town of Aurora. We stopped at the window of a bakery and stared at all the yummy-looking pastries.

ESSA

I'm hungry.

ALITA

Well, let's go eat.

ESSA NARRATION

I liked the way my girl thought until she sat us down at the most expensive restaurant in town and expected her mummy to pay the bill. I'd bet anything this brat's weekly allowance could buy the restaurant a hundred times over.

(Knock on window)

KEME

Essa, it's me, Keme.

ALITA

You know her?

ESSA

I think so.

KEME

Hello, Essa. Are you feeling better?

ESSA NARRATION

How did she know about our exploding house?

ESSA

I do feel better. Yeah, I feel fine.

KEME

Good. And who is this little friend you're with?

ALITA

Grandma, you're so silly. It's me, Alita! Don't you recognize your own granddaughter?

ESSA NARRATION

I had to give it to the little snake. She had guts.

Alita gave Keme a wink, and the poor lady took the bait. She looked up at my ignorant, smiling face and mistook the abuse for some sort of secret game.

KEME

Ah, yes. I was just testing you.

WAITER

Ahem. Once your bill is paid, ladies, you'll be all set.

KEME

Don't worry, dear. Lunch is on me. As long as you come back to my house for dessert.

ALITA

Dessert? Yay!

ESSA NARRATION

Alita and Keme walked hand in hand as we strolled back to her place for afternoon tea. The follow behind racking my brain. Why wasn't this ringing a bell? Where did I know this old lady from? Why did I have a gas mask around my neck? And why was I dressed so unmotherly?

None of it made any sense. I felt like I'd officially lost my mind, but it wasn't like I could just go up to strangers and ask, excuse me, have you seen my brain?

Back at Keme's place, Alita helped in the kitchen and filled Keme in on the elaborate, con she had disguise as a game.

ALITA

...And that's why Essa needs us both to play along.

KEME

Well, that sounds like fun, dear. I'll play along with you both.

ALITA

Look at these fresh cakes Keme made. Don't they smell amazing?!

ESSA

Delicious.

KEME

Thank you. Eat as much as you'd like. Alita tells me your house blew up.

ESSA

Yes, I don't know where we'll stay tonight. I can't remember who to call.

KEME

Nonsense, you're staying the night with me. Here, I insist. I can't have a mother and her child wandering about the streets after some catastrophic event like that.

ESSA

That's very kind of you. Thank you so much.

KEME

Of course, dear, of course.

ESSA NARRATION

Keme winked at Alita, who was too busy shoving cakes in her mouth to notice. By the third day, Atticus, like the true hero he was, decided to give up on his search.

ATTICUS

If they're still alive, they'll make it back to the apartment...

...sooner or later.

ESSA NARRATION

He figured that had the roles been reversed, he'd searched three days longer than I ever would have. He wasn't wrong.

I, on the other hand, got the hang of my motherly role. Keme was gracious enough to lend me some clothes while mine were in the wash. Her old-timey dress was so long that I was afraid I'd trip over it. I looked as though I'd just emerged from the 50s, ready to jive with all the cool cats.

ALITA

Hey, Mom, can we go to the beach with Grandma?

ESSA

As long as it's okay with your grandmother.

KEME

That sounds lovely. I'll go and get ready.

ESSA NARRATION

Something about the beach felt familiar as I dug my toes in the sand. The memory was on the tip of my tongue. I felt if I walked around, it might come back to me. I approached Alita and towered over her.

ALITA

What's up?

ESSA NARRATION

Then, for some unexplained reason, I pushed her over, grabbed her by the foot, and dragged her towards the water.

ALITA

What, what are you, ah, ah, what the hell are you doing?!

(Water Splashing)

ESSA NARRATION

As the salt water sprinkled on my face, my memories rushed back.

(Essa drowns Alita)

(Alita gasps for air)

ALITA

What the hell, Mom?

ESSA NARRATION

Mom, who the fuck was she talking to?

ESSA

Keme, is she talking to you?

KEME

No, dear, don't you remember our game? You're the mother, I'm the grandmother. Did you want to switch roles?

ESSA NARRATION

I was the what?

ESSA

Like HELL I am!

(Drowning) (Gasping)

ESSA NARRATION

Who told that brat how to hold her breath?

ALITA

Well, great. That's just great. And who told you to get your memory back anyways?!

ESSA NARRATION

I was a bit shocked; the brat had a dark side.

ALITA

Well, the game's over, Keme. Sleepy Beauty decided to wake up.

KEME

That's okay, dear, I don't think I scored many points.

ESSA NARRATION

Alita stomped up the beach and back to the house, leaving Keme and me to play catch-up.

ESSA

Alita, hold on a second, wait up! Keme, I'm so sorry.

KEME

No problem at all, my dear.

ESSA NARRATION

Atticus. Must kill—

(Kick open door)

ESSA

Atticus!

ATTICUS

Essa!

(Screaming)

Ahhh...

ESSA

I hope you get a concussion so that it can be my turn not to look for you.

ATTICUS

Good to see you too.

ALITA

Listen, I can explain--

ESSA

You've had enough talking for one lifetime. You're lucky I didn't gut you like a fish and leave you for the seagulls.

ATTICUS

Come on, Essa.

ESSA

And you, you'll be lucky if *all* I do is gut you.

ESSA NARRATION

I needed alone time away from everyone before I killed them all.

(Door Slamming) (Shower)

There was a pint of strawberry ice cream waiting for me on the table. I looked around but couldn't find either of them.

ESSA

Suspicious...

ESSA NARRATION

I cautiously grabbed the pint, stretched out on the couch and inhaled my dessert.

Damn, Atticus for bringing me delicious ice cream. How could I be angry with a belly full of heaven?

Well, at least he's cashing in on Alita's bounty.

(Knock at door)

I snuck up and peeked through the eyehole.

JOPHIE

Essa, it's me. Your knight in shining armor.

ESSA NARRATION

He leaned into the eyehole, searching for any signs of intelligent life.

JOPHIE

I know you're in there, Essa. I can hear you breathing.

ESSA NARRATION

Bullshit, what a dumb bluff.

JOPHIE

Are you really eating ice cream at this hour?

ESSA NARRATION

Okay, that's just creepy.

ESSA

What do you want, Jophie? If you're so psychic, can't you tell I want to be alone?

JOPHIE

I have something important to tell you.

ESSA

Go ahead.

JOPHIE

Can I come in?

ESSA

Do you need to?

JOPHIE

Yes.

ESSA

Then no.

JOPHIE

Even though you secretly love me.

ESSA

And we're done here. Good night.

JOPHIE

Hold on, Essa!

ESSA

No, Jophie. You hold on. I'm not in love with you. I'll never be in love with you. I don't even like to be around you, let alone breathe the same air.

JOPHIE

Yes, yes, you're elaborate act to hide your true feelings. Please don't make this harder than it must be. I know you're irresistibly drawn to me, but we must be strong.

ESSA

Jophie, if you don't leave right now, I'm going to slice your balls off and feed them to Atticus for dinner tonight.

ESSA NARRATION

Jophie didn't have to look down to feel the cold steel blade against his thigh. Normally, I wouldn't have been so hard on him, but he picked the worst day possible, and that day ended with a Y.

JOPHIE

Coming here has only confused you more.

ESSA

Nope, not confused.

JOPHIE

No need to play your erotic games with me, Essa. But remember this—

(Door slam)

ESSA NARRATION

Later that night, once Atticus came home, something was off.

ALITA

What's up?

ESSA

What's she doing back here? You were supposed to replace her with a big sack of cash, or did you forget?

ALITA

We wanted to give you time to cool down before dinner.

ESSA

Oh, really? I'm sorry. I wasn't aware it was National Piss Off Essa Day, otherwise I would have stocked up on more grenades, because in order to eat, we need you to transform into reward money.

ALITA

That's true, but Atticus and I made a deal.

ESSA

Did you now? Atticus, why don't you explain in great detail, this amazing new plan you made without me?

ALITA

I will, tomorrow, when the three of us visit Kial.

ESSA

Well I can see who wears the pants in this relationship. I'm so glad Atticus filled you in on our whole operation. Now you'll have to excuse me, I've decided not to share space with a teenage girl who tricked me into being her mummy.

ESSA NARRATION

I locked the door to my room and decided that it would be a good time to call it a night, before I killed everyone.

(Loud laughter from another room)

ESSA NARRATION

I smashed my pillow over my face in an attempt to either drown out the noise or suffocate myself. Whichever came first. However, due to breathing in my own CO₂, I ended up passing out.

It was night, and I found myself walking down a rainy and foggy main street. Suddenly, I heard music coming from one of the New York-style nightclubs. The music felt like an old friend inviting me in for a drink, and who was I to say no?

Inside the club, blurry-faced people mingled in the shadows of the smoke-filled bar. A band played up on the stage. The music was fast and catchy.

My feet had a mind of their own, carrying me through the dance floor until she stepped out on stage.

Her hair was pinned back in an elaborate 'I've got more money than you' kind of way. She gripped the microphone like a lover, and whispered enchanted melodies into its echoing ear. It took me a moment to realize it was Ayla, Atticus's bartender crush. She looked so attractive that even I couldn't stop drooling.

Freshly painted red lipstick with a yellow hydrangea pinned in her hair. She looked stunning.

Behind her, Atticus softly strummed a cello. Kial followed up on the piano. The room was dead silent in a trance as the group played their love song.

Ayla finished, and her soothing voice left us wanting more, like addicted junkies. Sitting at a table, illuminated by the glow of a candle, I realized I'd forgotten my surroundings as the club roared with applause.

It was as if she had given us a gift, and we had no other way to thank her than to clap for more. It grew so loud, I could feel the sound vibrate off my chest. It got to a point of being deafening. The clapping turned into a buzzing noise, and my eyes opened to my alarm clock.

ESSA

Eleven?! Overslept again!

ESSA NARRATION

I rushed through my morning routine and out the door in ten minutes. A new record, if I do say so myself.

ESSA

Atticus! Wait up!

ATTICUS

Morning.

ESSA NARRATION

When I slid open Kial's door, I was horrified to see Alita and Kial kissing.

ESSA

Ugh! Gross! Get away from him, you whore!

(Throws item at Alita)

ALITA

Ah! Bitch!

ESSA NARRATION

Alita had that glazed, killer look in her eyes. For a moment, she reminded me of my younger self. I was weirdly proud.

I grinned wider as I reached for my knife, only to find it was missing. I looked at Atticus who had a guilty look on his face as I watched him hide my knife behind his back.

ATTICUS

Uhhh!

ESSA NARRATION

That sneaky S.O.B. Oh well, fists it is.

ESSA

Ouch! Ouch, let go of my hair!

ALITA

Ah!

KIAL

Should we do something?

ATTICUS

Sure. You go first.

ESSA NARRATION

Half an hour rolled by.

(Out of breath)

ESSA

I'm going to kill you.

ALITA

I'll take you on any day, fatty.

KIAL

Well, now that I have everyone's attention, I've got a bit of an announcement.

ESSA

Please tell me that she's pregnant and has to move far away to raise the baby?

KIAL

Actually, it does have to do with Alita. As of today, she'll be the newest member of our team.

ESSA NARRATION

If I hadn't been lying on the floor, I would have fallen over.

ATTICUS

You might want to reconsider—

ESSA

—Have you lost your mind?!

ALITA

Why? Jealous someone pretty is finally part of the group?

ESSA

I didn't know that people call boys pretty.

KIAL

And because I know you two love each other so much, you'll be in charge of training Alita for her first week. Frankly put, you'll be responsible if she dies.

ESSA

Well, I quit.

ATTICUS

Essa...

ESSA

No, Atticus. I won't stand here and listen to how our prize money gets sworn in as the newest member of the brain-damaged boys' brigade. It's her or me.

ESSA

Just because I have to train you, doesn't mean I'm going to have your back in battle.

ALITA

Thanks for the wisdom, oh great teacher. I think I'll be fine on my own.

ESSA

Good luck with all that thinking.

ESSA NARRATION

I didn't really have a group to train her against, so I assembled the next best thing, the Oblivion Babes. Five young girls who wanted nothing more than to dress and act like me. There were two sisters, Lillim and Lillu who led the group.

LILIM

Hello.

LILLU

Hi.

ESSA NARRATION

Ariel, who documented all my adventures.

ARIEL

(Camera flash)

(Speaking Japanese)

ESSA NARRATION

Zophiel, who designed and sewed all their costumes.

(Sewing machine)

ZOPHIEL

No, this is all wrong.

ESSA NARRATION

And Ezra, who only joined a few weeks ago.

EZRA

Mmm, a lemon...

ESSA NARRATION

Not only were they fierce little girls, but they hated Alita for becoming the newest member so easily, a position they all craved. If anyone would try to kill Alita, it'd be these girls.

To make things a little more interesting, I bought a couple of items along with me. One was a mystery bag of stuff, and the other was a gallon jug of water.

In no time, we were standing next to the SS misery. She looked even more rusty than the last time I saw her. Such a beautiful ship.

(Metal falls off ship)

We climbed the side of the ship and made our way onto the deck. The sun was setting, but that was all in my master plan.

ESSA

Ezra, here. Hand these out.

ALITA

Water guns? What are we doing with water guns?

ESSA

Not we. Them.

ALITA

...Why?

ESSA

It's simple, my stupid-minded apprentice. They are going to chase and shoot at you. It's your objective to tag me before any drop of water hits your body.

ALITA

But that's impossible.

ESSA

Impossible? I do that against bullets every day. But if you think you're not up to it, we can go home and tell Kial I was right.

ALITA

Let's do it.

ESSA

Good. Fill them up.

ESSA NARRATION

I gave Alita a smoke canister and a word of advice.

ESSA

Count out loud to 30 and try not to make this boring.

ALITA

Yes, mommy.

ESSA NARRATION

I flipped her off and disappeared inside the ship. This was going to be good. I'd "forgotten" to tell Alita, but I put some vinegar in the water guns. On the off chance she'd get soaked, she'd also smell as bad as she looked. Not that she needed help in that department.

ALITA

29, 30.

ESSA NARRATION

She clenched the smoke canister so tightly in her hand that the whites of her knuckles glowed in the dark. Inside the ship, I patiently waited in my hiding spot.

Up to bat first was Ariel. While Alita tried making up her mind about where to start, Ariel slowly crept up behind her on deck. She was wearing socks so as to not make any noise and was doing great until that one creaky step on the deck gave her away.

Ariel had her dead in her crosshairs as she squeezed the trigger. Alita pulled the pin on the smoke canister, dropped it on the deck, and took off into the interior halls of the ship.

ALITA

Better luck next time!

ESSA NARRATION

Ariel tried her hardest to re-pump the water gun, but lost sight of Alita and gave up. In the dark interior hall, Alita waited for her eyes to adjust under a doorframe. She didn't know it, but she was only a few feet away from Lillu, who had tiptoed nearby.

(Giggles)

Tired of waiting, I decided to help bring the two together.

ESSA

Catch me if you can.

ESSA NARRATION

She was fast, but I was faster.

ESSA

That all you got?

ESSA NARRATION

Lillu heard us approaching and crouched down next to one of the rooms. In the middle of the hallway, there were steps that elevated the floor a few feet higher. The barrel of her water gun stuck out around the corner. Alita ran past but didn't see the steps and tripped over them as Lillu shot.

Alita felt the mist from the spray and rolled back onto her feet. Lillu was shocked to see that within seconds, Alita had twisted the water gun out of her hand and continued after me.

Alita popped off the water canister and tossed the gun. When suddenly, Zophiel stepped out in front of her, Alita flung the water at her, forcing Zophiel out of the way as she bolted past.

ALITA

I'll be back for you.

ESSA NARRATION

When Zophiel looked back, Alita had vanished around a corner.

ESSA

I bet you'd run faster if I were Kial.

ESSA NARRATION

She picked up speed. She finally seemed to be taking it seriously. As we rounded another corner, to Alita's surprise, I had disappeared.

ALITA

You're not playing fair.

ESSA

When has life ever played fair?

(Sniffs)

ALITA

Did you really have to put vinegar in the water?

ESSA

Why? Afraid of smelling good for a change?

ESSA NARRATION

All I had to do was stall long enough for Lillim, who was at the other end of the hall, to aim and take a shot. It would have been perfect, except Ezra friendly fired at Lillim, thinking she was Alita. Pissed off, Lillim fired back at Ezra. Alita saw the two shooting and ducked behind a door.

ESSA

Looks like it's just down to you and me, my ugly friend. I'll give you a hint as to which room I was in. All you have to do is add 34, 23, and 11 together. See you there.

ESSA NARRATION

Alita cautiously crept down the hall, looking for Room 68. When she arrived, the door was shut.

I was across the hall in Room 67. Maths was never my strong suit.

ALITA

What the...

ESSA

Got to watch out for booby traps.

ALITA

Why, you little bitch! Take this!

ESSA NARRATION

Anyone living in a 10-mile radius would have heard the scream of seven girls as the most epic water battle unleashed inside the beached warship.

All of us smelled like vinegar as we walked back to the town.

ALITA

Would you really have turned me in for that bounty?

ESSA

Still want to, but I can't anymore.

ALITA

Why not?

ESSA

You're part of our team now. You'll make us more money working than a tiny bounty would.

ALITA

Even though the bounty has tripled?

ESSA

Wait, what?

ALITA

My father tripled the reward for me. If you were nicer, I would have split the profits with you. Maybe I'll collect it and split it with Kial instead.

ESSA

Tell me more.

ESSA NARRATION

That night, the four of us devised a plan. We'd collect the reward, and then Alita would 'run away' from home again. That way, we got the cash without losing her as part of the team.

The next morning, Alita and I stood at the front door of her parents' house. The place was a mansion covered in vines with a yard bigger than a football field. One thing was for sure, Alita's family wasn't hurting for cash. I hope they didn't mind letting go of some, either.

(Door knock) (Door Opens)

ESSA

Delivery.

MAID

Oh my, Alita! One moment.

(Door Closes)

ESSA NARRATION

And a minute later, Alita's father, Kiro, opened it.

(Door Opens)

KIRO

Alita! Baby!

ALITA

Father!

(Chains)

ESSA

Not so fast.

ESSA NARRATION

That got Kiro's attention. He gave me an unwelcoming look. The kind he probably gives his servants. Please,

KIRO

Come inside... both of you.

ESSA

You don't have to ask me twice, Pops.

KIRO

Pops?

ESSA NARRATION

Inside was the real eye candy. Paintings older than your grandma, furniture older than your grandpa, and so much money you could almost smell it through the big, stupid vault.

We sat down on chairs so old, Adam and Eve probably whittled them themselves. I spotted an assortment of cookies sitting alone on the table and decided this was a good alternative to lunch.

ESSA

Are those cookies homemade? Don't mind if I do.

ESSA NARRATION

Kiro went straight to business. I liked his style.

KIRO

Thirty thousand. Not a penny more.

ESSA

First off, there are about five things wrong with that sentence.

ESSA NARRATION

I lean forward, letting the crumbs spill onto the imported Italian hardwood floor.

ESSA

Ransom specifically said one hundred thousand, and that's not including the money I had to spend to rescue your daughter.

KIRO

Money? What money could you have possibly spent?

ESSA

Bullets, guns, grenades, hotel rooms, food, travel expenses. Any of this ringing a bell? Not to mention my bonus for returning a living, breathing body instead of a shot-up corpse.

KIRO

What's the total?

ESSA

Two hundred and fifty thousand. Non-refundable and non-negotiable.

KIRO

That's outrageous!

ESSA

You're right. I guess we'll be on our way.

KIRO

Where are you going?

ESSA

I hate wasting my valuable time. I'm sure I can get about the same over at some brothel. I also heard body parts on the black market sell pretty high too.

KIRO

Now wait just a minute!

ESSA

Time's money pops. The more you make me wait, the more it'll cost you. Price just went up to three hundred thousand. Seems like a good deal to get your daughter back. Better than three hundred and fifty thousand, that's for sure.

ESSA NARRATION

Never let bounty hunters know how much you can afford. Otherwise, you'll end up paying every penny of it.

KIRO

Okay, fine. Anything to get you to leave!

ESSA NARRATION

I was stunned the girl was actually useful for a change. We swapped the cash for the handcuff keys.

KIRO

Sophia, please see this bounty hunter out.

MAID

Yes sir, right away. Please follow me.

ESSA NARRATION

That night after dinner, Alita opened a window and snuck out of the house. She left a ransom note on her desk, signed with my name. The next morning, I got a rude awakening when twenty bounty hunters stormed into my room.

(Kick open door)

ESSA

I smelled you before I saw you. Don't you guys ever shower?

(Kicks Essa's knife out of her hand)

ESSA NARRATION

I didn't even have time to pee before I was back at the mansion.

Let's just say there weren't any cookies this time. I had already asked.

KIRO

Where is she?!

ESSA

Where's who?

KIRO

Stop playing games. You took my money, and then you kidnapped her from me again?!

ESSA

Nice try, but I'm pretty sure your daughter was the mastermind behind this. That's not even my handwriting.

KIRO

What makes you think I'd believe you?

ESSA

Well, for one thing, I can't read or write. Also, I had hidden your reward money in my bedroom, and this morning when your goons barged in, it was missing. Plus, if I did do it, why would I still be here and not a million miles away?

KIRO

...Alita did this?

ESSA

Oh yeah, that girl is nothing but trouble. Always has been. You want her back?

KIRO

Yes, of course I do.

ESSA

Well, you're in luck, cause so do I. Hire me, and I'll bring her back to you.

KIRO

Why should I hire you when I have plenty of other bounty hunters?

ESSA

Cause Oblivion Girl is the only one who can get her back in less than a week, and you're looking at her.

KIRO

Your Oblivion Girl?

ESSA

The one and only.

KIRO

Alright, how much this time?

ESSA

One hundred and fifty thousand.

KIRO

Fine. I guess I'll see you in less than a week.