

Archetypes State of Chaos

Book 2 of the Archetypes Series

Devon Steiger

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Archetypes State of Play

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Part One:

Prologue: The Wheel Turns

Emile Beauchemain,

I sat in my new office, the one of the previous headmaster, some of the furniture still stained with the blood of Diangello's slaughter, the maintenance crew had too much work to do.

I never wanted this, well alright, maybe one day long ago I may have. Being High General of special forces & operations of the Western Armed forces was more trouble than it was worth. This new division would see a lot of action in the coming months, and I was to have it's reigns. On top of that I had to deal with my previous job as General of the Academy, though there was no longer a headmaster. I must admit I am thankful to have an excuse to work almost exclusively with Max's team, once I get an assistant of course, and those will be hard to come by with the restructuring after the massacre.

There was a knock at the door, I cleared my throat.

“Enter,” I said.

The door opened and a young slender man walked in.

“Ah General Beauchemain, we meet again. What a pleasant surprise.”

He took off his hat in a show of respect, just my luck. The civilian inspector assigned to oversee the investigation of Diangello's crimes was none other than Ricardo *. The two of us have unfinished business, don't we Emile, a voice called in my mind, my blade burned in my pocket. Calmly I shut down those reflexes.

“Is something wrong General?” he asked “you look like you wanted to kill me.”

If only you knew.

“No chief inspector,” I said “come in, take a seat. Sorry it has been a rough past week.”

“So I have heard,” Ricardo said taking a seat, “tell me General Beauchemain, what has the brass put you in charge of after all these,” there was a bitter tone in his voice “changes...”

“Please,” I replied “Emile is just fine thanks, I have never been one for such formalities.”

“Ok then Emile,” he said “I would like to hear it from the horse’s mouth, what is going on here and what are your current obligations?”

“Well I still have my old duties as lead General, though I now have been nominated General of Special Forces and Operations.”

“Quite a change isn’t that,” Ricardo said bluntly “would this have anything to do with the slaughter of the command staff that was here?”

He is accusing me, what a cheap attempt, does he think I would fall for such a thing?

“I quite like the new position, it gives me an excuse to work exclusively with Max’s team,” I replied.

He did not look satisfied with that answer, there was a tense silence as he chose his next move.

“You didn’t answer my question,” he said “does this new position have anything to do with my investigation?”

“That is all you will get from me on the record, for more you will have to go through channels,” I asserted.

I had hoped he would give up and storm off to try to get clearance, however, he remained calm and seated. He has learned a lot.

“Well that must be nice then General, it is quite a lot though isn’t it? Granted you are an Archetype after all,” he said.

The powers at be must be out of touch with the realities of Archetypes, we cannot do everything.

“Society has too many misconceptions of what we Archetypes are capable of,” I said “that is why they have been classified for so long, and why many of us had hoped they would stay that way.”

“Ah but no no general,” Ricardo said “this makes so much more sense, do you have any idea how many unsolved and previously inexplicable crimes can be solved when armed with this new knowledge? Bein come on General, it’s a revolutionary concept, real superhumans.”

Max is right, we are not superhuman, the public just doesn’t want to accept that.

“Let’s cut the formalities,” I snapped, “we are both here to do a job. You do yours and I will do mine, stay out of my way and let me know what you need to move along your operation.”

“It seems I have touched a nerve,” he said “allow me to apologize. However, to be sure you remembered our previous meeting, I vowed the two of us weren’t quits. You set me up before, I intend to bring this academy down if I must to get to the bottom of this. Don’t be under it when it collapses.”

“Then we are on the same page,” I said “ I am also investigating these incidents for the military. Don’t step on my toes, that would make you quite the horrible dancing partner, and those don’t get a repeat performance with the military. Am I clear?”

“Crystal General,” he replied calmly “my first request is to interview commander Max.”

“Why?” I asked “he has nothing to do with this I assure you, I was at fault.”

“Oh nono General, you misunderstand the purpose of that part of the investigation,” he said “I am beginning with the mysterious disappearance of Staff Sergeant Billy, with this new information

there are new avenues to follow, perhaps we shall find him and put him on trial, or his killer,”

“I assure you,” I said “off the record, Billy was a horrible, evil, malicious person. He got what was coming to him if he was killed,”

“But yet he has a family that deserves closure like everyone else,” Ricardo said “have Max in my office by Ten tomorrow morning.”

“But what does Max have to do with this?” I asked as he stood up.

“Well it is public knowledge that Max hated Billy with a passion, I have also heard the last place Billy was seen before boarding a train he was never found on was running away from the Commander after nearly killing his girlfriend,” he replied calmly, an edge of accusation in his tone “I don’t know about you General, but to the experienced that reeks of motive and means.”

“I would not look under all the rocks at this academy inspector,” I said “you may not like what you find.”

“Is that a threat General?” he asked as he turned the doorknob.

“No,” I replied “merely some advice and common courtesy.”

“Ah but Emile,” Ricardo said “the wheel still turns, it has come full circle now and the real pieces are starting to be revealed. The military and this academy have been shown to be dishonest, don’t fall into that hole with them. That is my advice to you General, make sure Max shows up.”

“I will,” I said “take care of yourself inspector, I wouldn’t like to see you get hurt.”

He exited the room. *Well isn’t that great, his first priority is to solve Billy’s disappearance, which makes my job a hell of a lot more difficult.*

Ricardo’s personal log, Day 1 of investigation.

General Beauchemain is hiding something, I am sure of it, no not something— many things. However, whether they are for his sake

or someone else's I cannot tell, perhaps both. I am treading on dangerous territory, General Beauchemain, as much as I dislike him, make that hate him, is right- I am here only out of courtesy and for appearances, the military has never enjoyed interference. I had better watch my back, for not even all my inspectors will be on my side.

Tomorrow I meet with Max Aereno, an alleged hero in his own right. My fight may not be with him, but I have to do whatever I can to bring down Emile, no matter the cost... If that means taking on his right hand man so be it, dangerous as that may be.

End of Log

Chapter 1: Mirky Waters

Max Aereno

Emile warned me this Ricardo character is good, he also told me that he will do everything he can to get under my skin, I have to watch myself. If I show a hint of the animal inside me he will latch onto it like a pit-bull, and I will have another body on my hands. Why is he so curious about Billy's disappearance, it is meaningless to the current issue. Maybe it isn't about Billy, maybe it is personal...

I took a deep breath, shoving the rage I felt further inside me and opened the door.

“Good morning Commander Aereno, I have been expecting you,” Ricardo said motioning with his hand “Please, come in, have a seat.”

“Will this take a while,” I said closing the door “I have real duties to attend to, we are in a state of crisis after all.”

“That is all up to you,” he replied.

“Look inspector,” I said “with all due respect, I don’t see how investigating Staff Sergeant Billy’s death will help the current predicament.”

“His family deserves closure,” Ricardo said “any murderer no matter how well protected should be brought to justice.”

“I thought he took to the wind,” I said “he did resign after all...”

“That was a forgery,” Ricardo said “a damn good one, but a fraud no less. No one saw him get off the train, he simply disappeared after assaulting your girlfriend. Is that correct Mr Aereno?”

“Yes,” I replied “I guess so.”

“And am I also correct in saying the two of you had your... Differences?”

“That would be an understatement,”

“Did you want him dead commander, did his behaviour get to you, did you snap like the bones of your girlfriend under his brutal assault?”

Images of the beating played over in my mind, how dare he bring this up. He wanted to draw my demons out of me, that was his plan all along and it is working, though I did my best to hide it.

“Please Mr Aereno, I am on your side here, I do not believe you are responsible for Billy’s death...”

“Then who?”

“General Beauchemain,” he said, his voice dripping with malice “everywhere he goes he leaves death in his wake. He has killed for much less than an assault.”

He really has it in for Emile doesn’t he? I thought, he is willing to pin Billy’s death on him with no evidence, he is probably fishing for some. What history do the two of these have? Emile surely would have told me.

“I am sensing a little tension between the good General and yourself,” I said slowly, choosing my words carefully “what bones do you have to pick with him?”

He laughed sarcastically, “the ‘Good General’” he mused “I love how people call him that after the things he has done,” he stood up and went over to a side table and picked up a bottle and two glasses “A drink?” he asked.

“Sorry,” I said “I am on duty.”

“Fair enough commander,” he said pouring himself a glass and sauntering back over to his desk “your senses are keen commander, too keen. Yes I have a bone to pick with Emile, several to be exact.”

“Why is his title so humorous to you?” I asked “quite frankly I think he deserves it given his...”

“Given his what?” he asked.

“His track record,” I said quickly, I had better watch my words more carefully.

“His track record,” Ricardo replied taking a gulp from his glass “Mr Aereno, allow me to enlighten your knowledge of his ‘track record’,” he paused to put down his drink and lean over the desk, his breath wreaked of alcohol “General Beauchemain has been responsible for the most civilian casualties of any operative, general or otherwise. One of them was my sister,” he paused to take a deep breath “he shot her in cold blood and fled, she spotted him while leaving her friends house. He was on an undercover operation staking out an Eastern traitor’s house. She was friends with this person, who was promptly framed for her murder,” he paused “Mr. Aereno, think what you want but do not hold onto delusions, that man is a murderer, a coward and deserves to pay for all the harm he has done.”

You would probably kill to know my story then inspector, I thought to myself, or those of other learners. Still, why would Emile not tell me about this, he cannot tell me he has no knowledge of why Ricardo is out for blood if this is true. Something doesn’t add up here, and I am sensing a new skill in my arsenal...

“Do tell me more,” I said slowly, *I should squeeze him for all the information I can*, I thought, “I would love to know what my brother has been up to while I was away.”

“Your brother?” Ricardo said slowly taken aback, he looked like he had just run over someone’s pet and was torn between telling them or fleeing.

“Yes,” I replied “trust me, we have our differences and I intend to get to the bottom of this.”

“Oh then I have said to much,” Ricardo said, I could see him reaching for a sidearm strapped under his desk, he really couldn’t hide it that well.

“Well then inspector,” I said “if you insist on playing games and reaching for concealed weapons instead of discussing this like adults I will take my leave of you. Try to kill me as I leave and it will be the last thing you do. I have respect for my brother that is all, there is plenty of bad blood between the two of us as is, my girlfriend is missing because of him and all he brought back was her washed out father.”

I stood up and walked to the door, I could hear his heart racing and his muscles contracting as his arm pulled back. He was terrified, but willing to discuss.

“I am sorry commander,” he said “my mistake. Please, do tell me more about the troubles you have with your,” he fell silent for a moment “brother,” he added maliciously “did he actually go to Diangello’s headquarters as is rumored? If so why has he kept that to himself?”

I released the doorknob and turned around, *he does want to play*, the voice inside my head said *how fun*. I shut the rest of it out, this was between the two of us.

“Allegedly, he was the one who threatened my girlfriends family,” I said waking back to take a seat “he has denied it, but Santo claims he went to see him to rough him up and plant bugs. When I went to kill Emile, he had saved Ichiro from Diangello’s hands. We learned a lot from him, but this all seems too convenient...”

“I like where you are going with this,” Ricardo said “you are insinuating that he may be hedging his bets, playing both sides against the middle so to speak. Leading a double life, maybe multiple personalities... I like the way you think commander, if anything this would be a great article,” he sighed “You are right, he may still be in bed with...”

Oh if only you knew the dark side we carry, I mused, we have more problems than multiple personalities, that is for sure. Though I believe them both, odd as that may sound, they are both entirely

convinced what they are saying is true... who is being dishonest, or rather, who is the double agent.

“Oh you misunderstand me inspector,”

“No no, bein sure, it makes perfect sense. C'est parfaitement claire, n'est pas?”

“No inspector,” I retorted “I am not claiming any of that. I am just thinking there are other possibilities that neither of us have considered. I will look into this personally and get back to you when I hear anything.”

“But we were making such progress commander, I am sure we are getting somewhere. This is all clear to me now...”

“You have misunderstood me,” I repeated getting up “as soon as I find anything I will get back to you. Good day inspector.”

“Then what sort of avenues will you be investigating,” he said sheepishly as I opened the door.

He doesn't want to let go, he is a pit-bullâ€!

“Are you familiar with the dossier released to the public about Archetypes,” I asked turning around.

“Bein sur, Commander I read those cover to cover five times on my way here. I understand most of your team are of that kind, are they not.”

“Yes inspector, though that is not even a drop of water in the bucket. Much still remains classified, and much unknown to the military. I was there when it started, I was one of the first experimental types, there were others. One of the ones I remember vividly would fit in nicely with this story.”

“And what type would that be?”

“Rumour had it before I left that the president was replaced by an Archetype that could change physical appearance at will. However,

the experiments in those types were all finicky and did not work correctly, or so I had thought.”

“No no commander,” he said “you cannot be suggesting that there are two different Emiles...”

“That is exactly what I am suggesting inspector. Either that, or one of the two of you are being controlled by the enemy, which I would rather not be the case.”

“If you believed that why tell me?”

“An act of good faith,” I said “good day inspector.”

“Then allow me to reciprocate. While you focus on this I would like to interview some of your team members.”

“Send me the list and I will go over it tonight. The ones I approve will be in your office first thing tomorrow morning.”

“Thanks commander,” he replied.

Ricardo's log Day 2 of Investigation

People do not seem to trust me here, which may stall my investigation. Commander Aereno seems to be co-operating with me, though he is distracted. He says Emile was responsible for his girlfriend's disappearance, maybe that is the leverage I need, though his trustworthiness and sanity can be questioned with the nonsense he is spouting. An Archetype doppleganger? Though many murders, disappearances and other oddities can be explained with this new knowledge, I doubt there is something as outlandish as a shapeshifting Archetype, the stuff in the report seems to be only small time stuff, nothing as dangerous as an infiltrator of that calibre. Sure it mentions different fields of view, information warfare and other somewhat scary prospects, it does not have anything too serious a threat to a properly secured system. Commander Aereno said the report was not complete, and I have no reason to doubt his word as he has no reason to lie about this, unless he is trying to cover for his brother.

Commander Aereno has granted my request to interview some of his team, Hanz Fredell and Mike Herdell. I have unfinished business with Mr Fredell and Mr Herdell may be able to help me with my predicament with his 'skill set'. I hate to go behind Commander Aereno's back, but in this case, the military is not co-operating. When I show them how desperately they need a civilian investigative service after what has transpired they will have no choice but to co-operate.

Nothing more to report.

Ricardo Bezzio.