



## ***Season Two:***

### ***Episode Three***

With as stealthy a step as he could manage, Percival crossed the threshold of Phillip's house. Neither the maintenance director nor Cordelia were there, yet there were signs someone had recently been home and from the looks of things, in a hurry. The front door hadn't been locked.

The house was dark and cool. There was a musty smell inside. Things shut up a little too long, cleaned a little too infrequently. Percival moved from the living room to the kitchen, taking a quick survey of the boxes of snack foods, the fridge full of beer. He then moved on to the bedroom. *Bleak*, thought Percival. There was just a mattress on the floor. The walls were bare. Phillip didn't care much for art, apparently.

There was, however, an envelope on one of the pillows. Percival picked it up, brought his nose closer and sniffed. Perfume. The handwriting was also feminine. There was no stamp or return address – this had been hand-delivered or left for Phillip. Percival pulled out the content, a card featuring a beautiful pencil sketch of a vase of flowers. It did not seem to be a reprint. A card of this type with original artwork was either given by an artist or purchased by someone who liked unique things.

He read the contents of the card, eyebrow arched in surprise. Well, well. The maintenance director was a ladies' man after all, it would appear. But it was the signature that really caught Percival by surprise. *Love, your Lily Rose.*

Percival knew of only one person by that name. And she was a married woman.

But that wasn't to be the only shock waiting for Percival. As he tried to wrap his head around why the Countess would be writing a love letter to Shady Bluff's maintenance director, a low buzzing took his attention. He followed the cadenced beeps around the corner and down the hall to the last room. He put his ear to the door. Was someone here after all?

But no, he heard only a mechanical sound, like that of a computer alerting its user to an alarm or notification. He pushed the door open and looked inside.

It was a surveillance room. Three monitors sat on a desk, each of them featuring a revolving display of four camera views. They were all of rooms. Percival recognized his own during one of the cycles. He watched the displays, each of an apartment of a resident of Shady Bluff.

Why was Phillip spying on the residents? That was certainly against privacy laws, even in an assisted living community where they wanted to monitor every element of your life – from the length of your stride to the consistency of your bowel movements.

Papers were strewn about the desk, pages filled with a clunky handwriting. *Apt. 243, bottom right drawer, one read. R. Niemeyer, stock portfolio = 2007?,* read another.

Percival drew his phone from his pocket and began to take photos of the pages.

When he left, he made sure that everything was as it had been before he arrived. He wanted to make sure that no one knew he'd been there.

As he settled into the driver's seat of his car, his phone began to ring. It was from a local number.

“Hello?”

“Is this Percival Beauregard?”

“Speaking,” Percival said. From the very tone of the voice, he knew the caller was someone in law enforcement.

“This is Lieutenant Danvers. I would like to speak to you about a situation we have found ourselves in.”

Percival was thrown off by the man’s tone. They’d never met or spoken before, as far as he knew.

“And what might that be?” he asked.

“A couple of our patrolmen stopped to help a gentleman change a tire. The driver said he was on his way to get a hope chest appraised. But it turned out that its contents were the most valuable thing he was transporting.” Percival held his breath. *Cordelia*, he thought, fearing what was to come next.

“Do you know a woman by the name of Cordelia Buttons?” Lt. Danvers asked.

“Yes, she’s a friend of mine. Is she alright?”

“Yes, very. And she has quite a lot to say, some of it involving you. Would you please come down to the station immediately?”

Percival put the car in gear. “I’m on my way,” he said, feeling his worry and curiosity over unfolding events overshadowed by the joy that Cordelia was okay and now safe and sound.

*I’m coming, Cordelia. And whatever is going on, we’ll figure it out together.*

### *Credits*

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