



## ***Season Two:***

### ***Episode Eight***

Niles Coleman was expecting to be reprimanded for his tantrum in the dining room in the Administrator's office. Instead, he followed Dr. Forthright to one of the Wellness offices that visiting physicians used.

"I understand from your resident file that you've been a quite vocal advocate for resident rights, Mr. Coleman," Dr. Forthright said as he closed the office door. He held up a hand as Niles opened his mouth to respond. "And I admire it. Most people assume seniors will be quiet and accept their lot, whatever it may be, but I can tell that you're a person who's still invested in changing things. What was it you did for a living?"

"Government work," Niles said. "Nothing too fancy."

"Ah, the endless toil of bureaucracy. A never-ending circle of warring parties undoing the others' work for the betterment of the nation."

"Something like that," Niles said.

"Well, as someone who knows the value of hard work, I'd like to make you an offer, Mr. Coleman."

The conversation wasn't going the way that Niles thought it would. He'd expected to be spoken to as a child, made to feel inferior because he refused to bother with so many of what he considered pointless elements of apartment life. He was retired and after 25 years in the field and another 25 behind a desk, he was determined to live simply and without care for what others thought of him.

Not that he didn't care about others. He'd dedicated his life to the security of the nation. And no one would ever know. Which was how it should be. Especially when the sole purpose of his work was left unfinished. Fifty years of

trying to find one man. To this day, he still pulled out and pored over files that the service had told him to destroy. But Niles couldn't let it go.

"You may think of me as simply an administrator, but I too have important work to do for our country. I am working to improve the lives of citizens by offering hope. Hope that the next cure to cancer or the one medicine that will stop Alzheimer's in its tracks is just around the corner. To do that, however, we need people who feel passionately about the betterment of their fellow man."

Niles wanted to roll his eyes. This man sure liked to hear himself talk. It reminded him of someone he used to know. Someone who would, with victory just at the tip of his fingers, go on and on in never-ending monologues, so taken with the sound of his own voice and his own genius that he often gave Niles the time to escape.

"Which is why," Dr. Forthright continued, "I would like to make you an offer, Mr. Coleman."

"I'm listening," Niles said.

"I have brought with me a new medicine, currently under review, that protects seniors against a variety of illnesses and ailments."

"You mean a vaccine?"

Dr. Forthright smiled but shook his head. "No, this is something that works on a much deeper level – at the very DNA of a person."

"You want to muck around with my DNA?"

This time the administrator laughed outright. *That laugh*, thought Niles. *I know that laugh.*

"I want to improve it, Mr. Coleman."

*Can it be?* Niles wondered. All these years later, could the man he'd spent his entire life trying to lock away be standing here in front of him in the senior living community he chose to call home?

Before he answered, he quickly took in Dr. Forthright. The height was the same, but the face was different. Although, a little plastic surgery and some facial hair could make one all but unrecognizable. The eyes – the eyes were the same. A dark green shading to brown. And the laugh. One's laugh was as singular as a fingerprint. Yes, Niles was almost certain. It had to be Olaf Grandeur. Once known as the most dangerous man in the world.

So, what was he doing masquerading as a senior living administrator? It hardly seemed a likely key element in a plot to eliminate the human race. Could Olaf have had a change of heart? Was he trying to reform himself?

In the back of his mind, he heard the voice of his wife, Monica, ask "Doesn't everyone deserve a second chance?" She had asked him that the day she

took him back, the day he quit the service for good. He had never been sure that one did. But his years with Monica had been good. Happy and peaceful, until the cancer took her.

“Can I think about it?” Niles asked Dr. Forthright.

“Unfortunately, no. My time and supply is very limited, I’m afraid. But in exchange for your time and your confidentiality, I will waive your rent and any ancillary fees you accrue in perpetuity. You’ll never have to pay a cent to live here for the rest of your life.”

Niles sighed and nodded. Monica’s optimism had been drowned out by the equivalent of five alarms going off at the same time in his head, but Niles took a deep breath and ignored them.

“I’d say you have a deal, Doctor.”

The administrator smiled and held out his hand. Lying on his palm was a small, mint-green capsule. Niles took it, held it to the light. The capsule itself was clear. The faintly glowing color was coming from the liquid inside.

He put the pill in his mouth, accepted a small paper cup of water and swallowed.

“Excellent, excellent, Mr. Coleman. You’ve just taken a step in the effort to improve our future. I, and the rest of mankind, thank you. I’ll check in with you tomorrow and see how you’re doing. I’ll note any side effects you may experience, although I sincerely doubt there will be any that you’ll notice.”

As Niles walked alone back to his apartment, he felt his pulse quicken. He wasn’t sure that being a willing guinea pig to a madman’s experiments was a good idea, but if not he, then who? He thought of his neighbors at Shady Bluff. Most of them were kind, good people. It was better this way. If Olaf was up to something nefarious, he was the only one who could stop him.

*I’ve finally got him*, he thought as he settled into bed.

## *Credits*

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