

Episode 2: The Sergeant

The phone rings. A man picks it up.

"Hello."

"Speaking. Are you alright?"

"Yes, mam, that'd be me."

"Missing persons report. I see. Let me get a pen."

The man walks to his desk, pins the phone between his jaw and left shoulder and pulls a ball point pen out of an empty coffee mug and a notepad from under a pile of letters. He pushes the notepad against the wall with his left arm and begins taking down the information coming over the phone. A fly buzzes past, brushing against the man's cheek. He swats at it absentmindedly with his pen hand and pokes himself in the eye.

"Damn you."

"No, sorry. I was talking to a fly."

"Thank you for the information. Right."

The man hangs up the phone, rubs his eye, chuckes the pen down the hallway and stares at the notepad for a while. He looks up smiling, having spotted the fly on the kitchen counter. He tosses the notepad into the waste bin and inches toward his prey. He had recently been in Norway, where he'd learned a marvelous trick for swatting flies: The usual one handed swat against the surface of the fly's seat is doomed. Human muscle speed pales in front of a fly's reaction time. The trick is to take both hands and give a nice hard clap (as if applauding) about 1-2 inches above the surface where the fly is sitting. A fly's first instinct after detecting rapid motion in its vicinity is to lift off perpendicularly from it's seat thereby causing it to fly right into your clap.

The man gives it a shot. The damn insect flies forward, under his hands. Palms stinging, he stalks after the thing. He follows it once around the kitchen, then down the hallway, loses it in his bedroom and stands stock still in the doorway for something like 10 minutes before hearing it buzz past his ear and springing back into the hallway. It flies low along the floor. He hunches low and follows its worse-than-zig-zag path like, missing twice more on attempts to swat it out of the air. He knocks a painting off the wall but doesn't notice. He tries kicking it out of the air. He makes contact but the creature keeps on buzzing along. He almost follows it out of the window. He yells as it melts into the morning sky.

"Don't despair." He tells himself, sweat beading on his brow.

From below the window:

"About what?"

"Oh hey Nance"

"Mornin', Sarge. Everything alright?"

"Yeah yeah, just quoting Joseph Conrad to myself it seems."

“Wanna come down for a cup of tea?”

“Gimme a minute.”

The Sarge picks up the pen from the other end of the hallway, puts it back in to empty coffee mug in his desk, then throws the coffee mug out the window. He walks down to Nance’s flat, patting out a wrinkle in his shirt sleeve and nursing his still-stinging hands.

Nance sits him down at the table and presses a big thermos full of tea into his hands. She fixes up a plate of macadamia nut cookies, sesame crackers, and a bowl of trail mix.

“Was that your coffee mug I saw flying into the street?”

“Yeah.”

“What happened?”

“Thought it might be bugged.”

“The coffee mug.” (Incredulously)

“Yeah.”

“That’s ridiculous.”

“Yeah. That’s just how my enemies operate though. I got another fake missing persons report this morning. One of those high society gals from west country. Leanna Marchenko.”

“ I think I know her. Blonde hair right? Vapidly beautiful, bit of a floozy?”

A bit of tea goes down the Sarge’s windpipe but he recovers quickly and Nance appears not to notice.

“Blonde hair, yes, as for the vapid beauty, I’ve never seen her, but now that you mention it maybe I should look into it after all. Even if its a trap. Is she married?”

“Even if its a trap.” (Incredulously)

She rolls her eyes. The Sarge drinks deeply from the thermos. He’s not worried; he’s sure it must be the trail mix or the sesame crackers. He remembers that she pushed those extra close to him when she set them down, and he’s positive he once told her he hated sesame. He’s not as close with her now as he used to be. He’s not as close with anyone now as he used to be. That’s what this job’ll do to ya, he thinks.

He takes another sip of tea, and ponders the different probabilities associated to the myriad ways she might be trying to poison him. He decides it is unlikely to happen today, if at all, and is therefore content to let his guard down and therefore maybe even try to score while he's down here and all. He's always found Nance attractive. She's like that old family friend who used to come around and you know you're not supposed to be attracted to her and it would never even be possible anyway but somehow you still find yourself pondering over her curves whenever she's over spooning ice cream out of a big old tub after a nice dinner that her mom and your dad cooked over on the barbecue out yonder and then all of a sudden 2 years have gone by and you find yourself pondering over her curves as you gyrate on top of her in the back of some car or shopping mall or motel or hotel or vacation home, depending on your economic caste, he thinks.

He finds himself in her arms, working hard at the knot in the back of her apron while she bites his chin. Then he pushes her against the kitchen table and hoists her up, stumbling a bit as his left foot slips on the apron heaped in a nice bouquet of red cloth on the white tiles. And the table is short so her upper body traverses the length of it and her head rests gently on the white windowsill with the sunlight pouring in and her hair is falling beautifully over the edge of the sill and out the window. The Sarge looks out the window toward the green tangle of the hedgerows in the yellow sun and the black asphalt between them and the rows of houses upon houses and lovely bougainvillea and he pulls her back toward him across the table and reaches to shut the window for he has decided he cannot taint such an innocently picturesque suburban postcard scene with his and her debauchery. His hand reaches the edge of the window but it isn't there. He stumbles a bit to the right having expected the window to catch his shifting weight as he reached. His elbow hits the table hardly. Shoulda taken my eyes off her titties before I go grabbing into thin air, he thinks. He takes his eyes off her titties. With her left hand she had closed the window and drawn the blinds. With the right she had produced a knife from he knows not where. But he does know where it's headed. He is still leaning over her from between her legs which are hanging off the edge of the table, wrapped around him. He decides to act. Still fresh from the encounter with the fly, his first reaction is to swat. She slits his throat. The Norwegian technique pays off. He smashes his hands into both sides of her face, truly smothering her temples. Her legs relax and his blood rains down on her. He stumbles back and clutches his throat. He finds the incision easily enough, the blade was rather dull. His shirt is beginning to soak with blood. He clutches the flaps of skin together with all 10 fingers like he's trying to take a bite of a big monstrous sandwich but has misjudged the location of his mouth. He wonders if it maybe looks like he has a double chin. He is upset because he was sure she'd use poison.

He stumbles out toward the door and opens it. On the doorstep he remembers that he almost forgot, and at the same time suspects that he probably almost forgot on purpose because the thing that he was about to do was deeply regretful to him in more ways than 1. He turns around, drops his neck sandwich for a moment, pulls a gun out of his sock and shoots Nance in the face as she begin to sit up, still in a daze. The bullet passes through her head and shatters the window. Bending down for his gun had left a splatter of blood on the floor. He wonders if it maybe looked like he vomited when he reached for his ankle. He turns his attention back to his neck sandwich and walks out.

The Sarge walks across the lawn and bulls through the hedgerow, out into the yellow sun on the black asphalt. The bougainvillea are a tantalizingly familiar shade of red. Ah yes the blood, he thinks. Don't think about that now, he thinks. The house at the end of the street is the home of a doctor. She once gave him some medicine when he had that terrible cold. She should be able to help. He's having trouble breathing so he tightens his grip on the neck sandwich. His breathing improves. He wonders if he should call for help. Then he remembers where his vocal chords are located. The sun is hot so the bloody footprints not 10 steps back are already dry. He wonders if blood stains asphalt too, and if salt helps with those stains, as it will with his shirt. His vision starts tunneling and he begins to get nervous. He tries to pick up the pace but he stumbles over a shattered coffee mug lying in the street. Sprawled in the road with his head to the side he sees the a set of bloody footprints and a pen.

"Damn the Ayala bitch."

Then he passes out.