

Episode 3: Intrusions

Stan Mulder arrived at his office to discover two things: a manila envelope and a second desk. Ignoring the envelope, clearly labelled *Detective Mulder*, he stepped up to the intruding piece of furniture and stared at it. It was a completely ordinary desk; the kind of desk most people would describe as unnoticeable or inconsequential. It was hardwood, Stan believed it was oak, much like Stan's own desk, two feet to his left and forming a right-angle with the new one. The leather chair behind the desk was occupied. Sarah O'Shea swivelled the chair around, a small smile on her face.

"What is this abomination and what is it doing in my office?"

"Well, a week ago, when I was in your apartment—"

"When you broke in to my apartment."

Sarah gave a frustrated sigh before she continued. "You said that I would need to start complaining if I ever wanted things to get done. So, not having an office, I complained about that. Larry put me in here with you, partner."

"I strongly object to this."

"I know. That's why I got you this." She set a wrapped box on her desk. "Should help you take your mind off of this ..., Would you call it an intrusion?"

"I would call it a pain in the ass," Stan muttered as he turned away from the gift and instead focused on the envelope. He picked it up absentmindedly as he realized that it was not the gift that Sarah had meant.

"So, what's this?"

"No idea. It was on your desk when I came in. No name on it, besides yours."

"Well, it can't be that important then." Stan reached for the boxes ribbon and pulled. He then continued to surprise Sarah by how carefully he unwrapped her gift. "You bought me a coffee maker?"

Sarah couldn't tell what it was in Stan's voice: anger, fear, uncertainty, or even, dare she think it, gratitude. But Stan didn't open the box. He just set it down carefully, almost reverently. "Do you like it?"

She had broken the spell. "I don't know, do I? Don't have coffee to try it out. Good choice though. Black. Good colour. Could never stand the silver or white ones."

"Yeah. Kind of figured that's what you'd say."

Stan moved around his desk and sat down. He then refused to look at either the coffee maker or the envelope. Instead, he pulled a file out of his desk.

"Since you actually care about things, and since you're still too new to this city for me to convince you that there is no point caring about all of said things, I'm guessing you probably want to try getting actual work done."

"The thought had crossed my mind." Stan tossed the file onto her desk. "What is it?"

"If I tell you, it won't be a surprise." He sounded like he was mocking her, even though she had never used that line with him before.

“The South Boss murder?” Sarah looked up over the file at Stan.

“Don’t blame me if you get killed. But, new South Boss, whatever the kid’s name is, is demanding answers. You seem more inclined that I am to try and get them. So, it’s your case now.”

“You aren’t coming with me?”

“I never said you were going anywhere.”

“Why not?”

Stan gestured at the collection of phones on his desk. “Each one of these connects me to a different Affiliated Boss without having to wait: South End, East Side, West Shore, Downtown, North Suburbs. Which one do you want to call?”

“No point in calling South. We don’t really need the son to tell us that it was probably one of the other Affiliated Bosses.”

“You aren’t as dumb as I thought you were. Still not saying you’ll survive this case.” Stan shrugged. “The weapon suggests West Shore.”

“So that’s who we question first.”

Stan gestured to the second phone from the right. “Be my guest. Just pick it up. No need to dial anything.”

The phone hadn’t finished its first ring before it was answered.

“Stan, darling. I can’t say that I’m pleased to hear from you, but, you know, it has been such a long time since you visited me, and it’s starting to get cold at night.”

“Am I speaking to Caroline Shaver?”

The same playful voice continued. “You’re not my Stan.”

“No. I’m Detective Sarah O’Shea.” Stan groaned as she used her real name and position. “I have some questions about the murder of your associate, Terrence Cassel.”

“Are you saying that I am a suspect, miss O’Shea?”

“I am saying that there are only a few people in this city that would attempt such a high-profile murder. And yes, you are one of them. I’m asking you to come down to the police station and answer my questions.”

Caroline shrieked with laughter. “Maybe Stan hasn’t explained something to you, but Terrence and I were the Affiliated Bosses that supported your department’s continued existence. So, I think that it is in your best interest to forget that I am one of your so-called ‘suspects.’ Understand?”

“Miss Shaver-”

“Let me talk to Stan.”

“Miss Shaver-”

“Girl, I am very comfortable making threats. If you like any part of your body the way it is, you will do as I say. Now, I want to talk to Stan.” The playfulness of her voice was gone, but Caroline still sounded somehow pleasant. She could have been talking about the weather. Reluctantly, Sarah handed over the phone.

Stan took the phone from Sarah’s limp fingers. “Yeah.”

“Don’t you dare let her-”

“Caroline ...”

There was a short pause. “I’m sorry dear. You know I get worked up.”

“Do me a favour.”

“You are calling in a favour. Finally. I was beginning to wonder how I would ever pay you back. I did acquire this cute little dress recently. Tight in all of the right places. I know you like that. The girl it belonged to was quite pretty. Shame about her. But I could-”

“Come in to the station and let me pretend that I actually do my job.”

There was a longer pause this time. “That’s what you’re calling for?”

“You have to tell the truth, too.”

“Stan, darling, you could call in a favour for anything, and you’re choosing the truth? You know how dangerous the truth is in this city.”

“Yes. But she doesn’t.”

“She had better not be there when I’m being questioned.”

“No promises.” Stan hung up the phone before Caroline could respond. “She’s coming in. Not sure when. It’ll be on her terms though.”

“I don’t think it was her anymore, though.”

“I know it’s not, but she’s still an Affiliated Boss. Anything she lets slip, and it won’t be much, could help us solve half-a-dozen other open cases. But why isn’t it her?”

“She said that she and Terrence were the only two Bosses who supported the police. She doesn’t need us. She’s too careful. So, who gains the most if we stop existing?”

“You’re right, or at least, not wrong about Caroline. She is too careful to actually need us. She wouldn’t use a weapon that would point straight back at her. And Terrence was just as careful. He would never meet with another Boss in that Boss’ territory. It would have been either his office or somewhere neutral.”

“So ...”

“My guess is that Jacques gains the most from having the police dissolved. Without us, he can run riot without consequence, not that there are really any consequences for him now. But with the two most dangerous Bosses supporting the police ... Jacques is a coward.”

“If he murdered Terrence, is Caroline safe?”

“You seem overly concerned.”

“Not really about her ... darling.”

Stan groaned. Sarah raised an eyebrow. “Jacques is a coward, as I’ve said. Caroline has bigger balls than all the other Bosses put together. If he tried to pull a knife on her, she shoot his nuts off and then microwave them until they blow up, while he’s watching.”

“What would Terrence have done, if he wasn’t dead.”

“Probably would have had all of Jacques’ bones broken, one at a time. He was a scary man. But not horrible. Kept it pretty clean, as far as gangsters go. Nice enough fellow. Never had any complaints about him.”

“Do we bring Jacques in?”

“Not without half this department in full combat gear. Jacques’ thugs don’t leave him by himself. Ever. A lot of people would die if we tried to catch him.”

“So what do we do?”

“For now, we wait until Caroline tells us face to face that she didn’t kill Terrence. Until then, I suppose I should open this envelope.” Stan pulled a knife out of his coat pocket.

“So, you and Caroline ...”

“That is not a question I am answering. Ever.” He cut open the envelope and poured its contents onto his desk. Three severed fingers, a plastic bag with some hair, and four folded pieces of paper fell out of it. Stan looked inside to see if there was anymore and pulled out a note. “It cost a few people use of one limb or more, but here’s what you asked for: permission in writing from each Affiliated Boss to investigate my father’s murder. I’ve also forced Jacques to hand over the thugs responsible for the other murders in his district. The fingers and hair should help you identify them. I can’t promise that they will still exist when you come to arrest them. I will understand if you simply leave them to me. – L. C.”

“Luke Cassel?”

Stan handed her the note. “Luke Cassel has just made us members of the Affiliated.”