

<CASUAL JAZZ MUSIC PLAYS, THEN FADES>

LUCY

It was a Thursday like any other Thursday, except it was a Tuesday. I was working on my third cup of coffee, struggling to clear the fog like a firefighter with a tennis racket. It had steadily grown more difficult to find the energy to do the job over the past few weeks. I could blame the heat, but deep down I knew it was something far more insidious than Tennessee weather: it was complacency.

SFX: DOG WOOF

LUCY

Polonius agreed. He, too, was looking a little worse for wear these days. His lack of noble pedigree had never been hidden; his mother was a schnauzer and his father was a Chupacabra. I'm not sure how that works, I've been told life finds a way. But now his ears drooped a little lower and his eyes glazed over, like the donut I got for breakfast and promised to share but didn't.

SFX: CAR SOUNDS

LUCY

I rolled my desk chair over to the window and stared down at Gay Street below.

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When I had first arrived in Knoxville almost two years ago, I had enjoyed what the small town had to offer. I took time to soak in the random musicians scattered on various street corners. Sometimes it was a string quartet, sometimes a lone tuba player. Actually, the lone tuba player only happened once and it was right after I switched medications, but I'd like to think it really happened.

LUCY

And the food, saints alive did I find some good food. Tacos, sushi, fried green tomatoes, you name it. But that was then. Over the years, the music faded and my appetite dulled. Except for donuts.

LUCY

I thought about the cases I had solved here, mostly confirmed suspicions of affairs. Those were the easy gigs. If someone thinks they're being cheated on, they are. I found a few lost dogs and cast and one extremely feisty show chicken. I also learned there are such things as show chickens. I'd spy on kids away at college and potential neighbors before a house closing. Nothing earth shattering. The cases were sounding the same, feeling the same, running together like the dregs of gravy when you've run out of biscuits.

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LUCY I looked at the windowsill: two capsized ladybugs and a spider web. Disgraceful. I took pride in this office when I first settled in. I wondered what my mentor, Sing Leaux, would say if they saw this place. I would give anything to have them read me to filth one last time. My pondering was cut short when I received a visitor.

SFX: DOOR CREAKS

LUCY I started at her designer pumps and paused at her knees. She had great knees, the type of knees you get from really paying attention to your calcium intake. What can I say? I'm a joints gal. Her pencil skirt showed off her great knees the way her fitted jacket showed off, well, everything else. She had perfect teeth and nary a cap. What did I say? Calcium.

MICHELLE Are you Lucy Turner, private investigator?

LUCY That's what it says on my door.

MICHELLE Actually, it says Lucy T gator.

LUCY Damn, this place was really going to seed.

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LUCY Forget the door. What can I do for you?

MICHELLE I'm cheating on my husband.

LUCY **That got my attention. Most people storm into my office demanding I confirm their suspicions about the flaws of everyone but themselves. They feebly dance around the indiscretions they've committed thinking I won't notice, but I always do. This unemotional disclosure was a cool breeze in a stale room, something I hadn't felt since I had accidentally painted the window shut.**

LUCY Congratulations. You should put that on a cake.

MICHELLE I don't eat cake.

LUCY **Forget the great teeth and knees, that was a sin I couldn't overlook. Neither could Polonius.**

SFX: _____ DOG WOOFS

MICHELLE Good God, what is that?

LUCY He's a dog. Almost. So really, what can I do for you?

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LUCY I was starting to wonder if this lady really had a job for me. I had a woman come into my office a couple months ago about her missing daughter. She went into great detail about where she was seen last and all the things she liked to do and where she might have sought help. I was gearing up to help this sad sack find her missing offspring when she tells me that her daughter had been found three years ago, that she just really liked telling the story. Then she got up and left like that was a normal thing to do.

MICHELLE I need to know if my husband knows that I'm cheating on him.

LUCY She goes on to tell me that she's been cheating on him for quite a while and was thoroughly enjoying herself with no intention of stopping. However, she didn't want a divorce. She needed me to do some sleuthing and figure out if the husband knew he was being cuckolded.

She told me that she slipped out to spend time with her side friend on Thursday evenings when she was supposed to be at a quilting circle. Yeah, a quilting circle. And the husband swallowed that.

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LUCY OK, and where are you really? I'm mean the address. In case your husband catches wind.

MICHELLE Don't worry about that. Just focus on him. He starts work at 8:30 in the morning.

LUCY Sure, but you're not slipping off until the evening.

MICHELLE I need to know if he receives any texts during the day or talks to his office buddies about something that could mean he knows.

LUCY **I started to protest, but then she sent me a Venmo three times larger than my normal fee. I didn't like people telling me how to do my job, but I liked my name misspelled on my door even less. I needed the dough. Mmmm, donuts.**

MICHELLE I have to get back to a meeting. I'll be back on Friday, then?

LUCY And I'll have some answers for you.

LUCY **As she left my office, I had this feeling that by the end of the week, I'd have more questions than answers.**

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It seemed straight forward when taken at face value, but I learned a long time ago not to take things at face value. This whole thing stunk like a butt, and I should know. I have a butt.

SFX: _____ DOG WOOFS