

Another Nevermore

(Excerpt from the script *'Nevermore'*)

by Allison Duggins

Elliot looked up as Cleon Manning came into his office, unannounced.

"What?" Elliot asked.

"I'm getting out," Cleon calmly stated.

Elliot was shocked. "I can't do this without you."

Cleon gazed at Elliot, his eyes steady. "I'm sorry."

Elliot looked down at his desk, trying to figure out what to say to make Cleon change his mind. His eyes met Cleon's.

"I'll double your retainer."

"That's not it..."

"Plus, a bonus. A hundred thousand if you find him."

Cleon's anger got the best of him. "It has to be this way. Two of my field people have disappeared already." He hesitated before continuing. "I have a family...."

Elliot realized there was no changing Cleon's mind once he decided on something.

".... You've made up your mind...."

Cleon offered Elliot his hand.

"Be careful, Elliot. Be very, very careful...."

Elliot gave Cleon a long look, then took his hand in silence.

Cleon left Elliot's office. The large complex of suites is empty and darkened. Spooky. Cleon passed a bank of desks and headed into the hallway. A shadow from a doorway alcove picked Manning up as he entered the hallway and started to follow. It ducked into a doorway as Cleon sensed something and slowed down his pace.

In a few moments, Cleon reached the elevators and pushed the down button. He looked back over his shoulder but saw nothing. The elevator doors opened, and he stepped inside. Pushed the lobby button and waited for the doors to close.

Just as the door was about to seal, a gloved hand suddenly stopped them. The glove is distinctive---tan leather with an open back, like a driving glove. Cleon reacted instinctively and reached for his gun in his shoulder holster. He stopped as the gloved hand brought up an ugly black automatic pistol and

loudly cocked the hammer back. Slowly the doors closed behind them. The gloved intruder pushed the stop button, making the elevator lurch to a stop.

"Mr. Manning..."

"Who the hell are you?"

Cleon eyed the white-haired man aiming the silenced pistol at him.

"Someone who respects your reputation instead of just shooting you as I was ordered to do so."

Cleon snorted. "Now why would someone order *'you'* to kill *'me'*?"

Snow looked at the Black man in bemusement. "Because *'your'* employer is interfering with *'my'* employer."

Snow noticed the gleam in Cleon's eyes as the pieces came together in his mind.

"Gabriel..."

"The same. Now, I have no wish to kill you just to prove a point. Maybe we can come to some type of... arrangement?"

Cleon looked at the man, eyeing the pistol the whole time. "What did you have in mind?"

"Convince Mr. Burch to cease his activities."

"Don't you think I've tried. Elliot has a mind of his own. Once he makes his mind up, he won't stop till he accomplished his task."

Snow looked down, then back at Cleon. "That's unfortunate."

Cleon sized up the assassin in front of him, gauging whether he could get the drop on him in this cramped elevator.

Snow immediately knew what Cleon was thinking. "A foolish thought, Mr. Manning. A foolish thought indeed."

Before Cleon could act in his impulsive thought, Snow shot him in the chest. Slowly, blood seeped onto Cleon's shirt front. He knew he was a dead man. The assassin looked on as Cleon stumbled back and hit the elevator wall then slowly slumped down.

Snow knelt before the man on the floor.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Manning, but Mr. Burch obviously needed visual proof of what Gabriel is capable of doing."

"Elliot won't stop. This will only make him more determined." Cleon rasped, struggling to breathe.

Snow nodded in agreement.

"Of this, I have no doubt. Not to worry, Mr. Manning. Gabriel has plans for Mr. Burch. You are just a small demonstration."

Cleon looked up as Snow took careful aim and fired once more. Pushing the stop button to release the elevator, Snow pulled a walkie-talkie from his pocket and informed his associates to meet him when the elevator stopped.

Elliot stands at his desk, placing folders into his briefcase, then closing it. He pressed the button on the desk intercom.

"I'm ready, Pierson."

Elliot leaves the office and walks to a desk where two men wait for him, one of them, Pierson, an armed bodyguard. The three of them walk to the elevators.

A black limo is parked, waiting. One of Elliot's men opens the back door of the car for him. The bodyguard gets into the front seat. Elliot climbs inside and the car drives away from Elliot's second employee. The limo begins the long winding trip out of the parking garage. At the last turn, the body of Cleon Manning comes into view, hanging from the ceiling by heavy chains.

Elliot stares.