

Today we're featuring "The Deadly Dog Show", the newest book (at least for a few more weeks) in the series.

An excerpt from the novel:

Just then the front doorbell rang. I got there first and opened the door to greet a teenager delivering a paper-wrapped bundle of flowers from a florist's truck parked at the curb in front of our house.

A bored teenager looked up from the papers he was carrying. "Does Suzanne Bowman live here?"

Who'd be sending Suzanne flowers, I wondered. Did I miss her birthday or our anniversary? No, both were months away. "Yes, she does."

"Sign here, Mister."

I signed and was handed the flowers, wrapped in green paper. The delivery guy stood there, clearly expecting a tip. I gave him one, got a mumble of thanks, and off he went. I took the flowers inside and handed the conical-shaped arrangement to Suzanne.

She was clearly surprised, not expecting a floral bouquet. "What's this for?"

"I don't know. Why don't you open them and see if there's a card?"

Suzanne carefully unwrapped the package to find a dozen long-stemmed red roses. A card dropped to the floor. She bent over, picked it up, and read it aloud.

"To my dear Suzanne:
Roses are red and violets are blue,
Because of your beauty I share these with you.

Your loving admirer."

Suzanne looked directly at me. Her expression was not a happy one. "Is this your idea of romantic, Roger?"

Suddenly I was on the defensive. "No, I have no idea who sent these. I'm guessing some kind of whack job. A dozen roses delivered aren't cheap, so they're definitely meant as some kind of message. Have you gotten anyone pissed off at work lately?"

Suzanne shivered slightly and looked worried. "No, I haven't. But do you remember that feeling I had when we were in New York that someone was watching me? I wonder if it's possible that I picked up a stalker while we were there? But if

the stalker came from our trip back east, how would they have found my home address? I assume you only gave the AKC folks and our hotel your office address to reach you at."

"Nowadays, if they know how to use a computer I'm afraid that all of that personal information is available somewhere."

I picked up the card and wrapping and found the name and phone number of the florist. It took only a few seconds to dial the number. It rang three times and a deep male voice said "Hello."

"Hello. We just got a delivery of a dozen roses at our house from you for Suzanne Bowman. Can you tell us who sent them?"

"Just a sec!" I heard sound of the phone being dropped on the counter and some noises in the background. About a minute later he was back on the phone. "It was an Internet order paid by cash through a third party site. I have no way of knowing the name of who paid or who placed the order. I can't even tell you whether the order originated locally."

I thanked him for his help, hung up, and turned to Suzanne. "Did you get any bad vibes at Rockefeller University or while we were at the hotel, or was it only while we were at the restaurant?"

She thought deeply for a moment before looking up at me. "Just at the restaurant. And I think I see where you're going logically. If we don't believe in random chance and someone we passed on the street falling in love and somehow getting my name and address, my stalker is most likely to be one of the AKC staff we had dinner with, right?"

"Right. I'll have Vincent run some background checks on all of them tomorrow and we'll see if anyone has done anything like this before and gotten caught at it."

Suzanne carefully put the roses in a vase of water. "Anyway, the flowers are pretty, and they'll look nice on the dinner table."

She put the vase of roses on the dining room table, took a long look at it, shivered, walked over, and hugged me. "As you know, I can take care of myself very well. But this really, really creeps me out." On that note she turned around to pick up the vase and move the flowers onto a table in the front hall, as far away from where the family tended to hang out as they could be put and still be in the house.

I hugged her back and gave her a kiss. "I don't think you have to worry too much about your personal safety unless this creep escalates what he's doing. Flowers or chocolates are pretty impersonal. If he shifts to underwear or personal

stuff I think we'll need to take some serious precautions. In the meantime, I'll have Vincent try again via the florist and the Internet site to see if he can find out where the order originated. Let's also tell Bruce about this at dinner so he can keep half an eye on you and Robert."