

# THE RETURN OF THE MYSTERIOUS SEBASTIAN DAVIES

A Lydia James Mystery

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By F. Haywood Glenn

Detective Hines finally took advantage of a much-deserved retirement and left the agency in my capable hands. Of course, I wasted no time in changing the name on the door to Lydia James, Detective Agency. My dream of running my own Agency was finally realized. Now I needed to use all my energies and the skills that I learned from Detective Hines to make this a successful Agency.

Kenneth Hart stayed on after he was able to get his Private Investigator License. Over the years I learned that Ken was not the woman-chasing creep that I first met in the Hines office a couple of years ago. He was actually a very capable young man. I became convinced that he could become a good investigator if given the proper instruction and oversight. The two of us had already solved a number of easy cases and I was quite satisfied working with Ken.

On this particularly warm June morning, I was met by a distraught young woman sitting outside our office. She was a tall, thin, stylishly dressed black woman. I could tell that she had been crying. Her eyes were red with swollen lids. "Good morning," I said. "I'm Lydia James." I extended my hand and she gave it a very gentle shake. I unlocked the office door and motioned for her to come inside and have a seat.

She mumbled a greeting as she sat in one of the office chairs. Her natural hair was twisted up in an elaborate design on the top of her head, reminiscent of traditional African hairstyles. She had dark eyes and full lips. Her makeup was flawless. She sat with her back straight and her eyes looking down at her folded hands. "How can I help you, Miss. . . ?"

"Rose, my name is Denise Rose. Miss James, my life has been ruined. He took everything. I trusted him and he betrayed me." Tears sprang to her swollen eyes and she began to outright sob.

I waited for the crying to stop, at least long enough for her to speak. "Tell me who do you think has ruined your life and how do you think I can help you?"

"The name he gave me was Sebastian Davies, but now I'm thinking that probably isn't his real name. I'm an interior designer and Mr. Davies hired me to redesign his condo. It was a beautiful condo. The first time I met him to show him my designs, there was an immediate attraction. We both felt the attraction. He is extremely handsome, with dark eyes and a smooth voice. He didn't like meeting in an empty condo so we began to meet at different restaurants around town. I tried to keep our association professional but after a couple of meetings, neither of us

could deny the attraction. He hardly looked at my designs. We soon began dating, and the relationship got serious quickly." She began to softly cry again.

"Tell me more," I said.

"He treated me like a queen. We spent a week in the Caribbean and another week in New York going from one Broadway show after another. We went to some of the best restaurants in New York and Philadelphia. He completely swept me off of my feet. I was falling in love with him and I couldn't help myself. I know that he felt the same." She paused and dabbed at her eyes with a tissue. "Miss James, there was no way I could have imagined that this wonderful man would take advantage of me."

"How do you think he took advantage of you?" She leaned forward, any inhibitions she may have had when she came into my office were now gone. The tears had stopped and her sad face was replaced by one of determination and focus.

"He was subtle but convincing. At first, he told me this grand story about how all his money was tied up in investments and he just needed five hundred dollars until a particular situation panned out. No more than a week, he promised. I thought nothing of it and readily loaned him the five hundred dollars. Two weeks later, I got a call from him saying that he was in England and had lost his passport at Heathrow Airport. He needed me to wire him fifteen hundred dollars to help him get a new passport and another flight home. This didn't make sense to me and I now became suspicious."

"Did you send him the money?"

"Yes, foolishly I did. Later I found out that someone withdrew all the money from my personal bank account and my business account. I have nothing left. It is all gone. I have no way of knowing if it was Sebastian who stole my money or some other scammer. I began to do some research. He told me that he was an international attorney and that he was living off the inheritance left by his French grandfather. I didn't find confirmation for anything that he told me. That is why I'm here. This could all be a huge coincidence or a huge scam. I thought it might be wise to track down the truth before I blow up a beautiful relationship."

"When was the last time you had contact with Mr. Davies?"

"We spoke on the phone two days ago. I did not tell him of my suspicions but I did tell him that my bank accounts had been hacked and depleted. He said not to worry. My bank accounts were insured. I know that he is right about that but I can't shake the feeling that he had something to do with the situation."

"Do you have a photo of Mr. Davies?"

"Yes, I have several on my phone."

"Send me the best photo you have."

We discussed my fees, and I promised Miss Rose that I would do my best to learn whatever I could about Mr. Sebastian Davies.

My first thought was that this would be a relatively easy case. These types of fraud cases have been on the rise recently and much publicized. The first thing I did was a criminal background check. Mr. Davies was not hard to find because he had an extensive criminal record including, robbery, fraud, and other minor offenses. The photo that I received from Miss Rose did not match the photo on the criminal background. Mr. Davies seemed to be a man in his late fifties. He had a face that spoke of a lifetime of drinking and smoking. I suspected he was likely guilty of other crimes not mentioned on the background check.

I sent the photo to one of my connects in the Philly Police Department who could run it through the department's face recognition software. An hour later my contact called to say that the photo did not hit in their facial recognition database. Whoever Miss Rose fell in love with, it was certainly not Sebastian Davies.

The young man in this photo couldn't have been more than twenty-five or thirty years old. Ken and I began to do a search of high school graduates from local schools going back eight years. It took us a couple of days but we found a young Jeffrey Allen who graduated from a local Charter School six years ago. He was not living on an inheritance and had no investments to speak of that I could find.

Ken and I divided up the work. Ken would search social media and follow up on any leads he found. I would concentrate on public records. We would meet at the office in a couple of days.

Public records indicated that Mr. Allen did, in fact, have a French grandfather, but no inheritance. Unfortunately, his mother, Elizabeth, had become pregnant with Jeffrey while an inmate in a French Asylum. Her mental state was such that she never named the father and her family refused to accept the mixed-race child. He was adopted by an elderly white couple and brought to America when he was five years old.

School records indicated that Jeffrey was exceptionally bright and his parents had very high hopes for his future. However, those hopes began to change after his foster father died of a heart attack right before Jeffrey graduated. He would have been about seventeen years old at the time. According to school records, Sebastian's behavior became increasingly unstable.

I decided to pay his mother a visit and traveled to a small town just outside of Philadelphia. Mrs. Allen lived in a small, modest, one-floor home. The front yard was unkept and had waist-high weeds in the front yard. The screen door was hanging on by one hinge and the front door was weather-beaten. These were not the type of people who would be re-decorating a condo.

I was invited inside. "This is about Jeffrey isn't it?" She asked before I had said a word.

"Yes, Ma'am," I answered.

“What has he done?”

“Well, I’m not really sure if he has done anything. I was wondering if you could tell me about your son.”

“He isn’t well, you know,” she said. “His real mother had some mental health issues and I sometimes wondered if that mental illness could have been passed down to the son.”

“What makes you think such a thing?”

“Well, when he was sixteen, he started to change. He began to take on the identities of other people.”

“Really?”

“After my husband died, Jeffrey started to say he was no longer Jeffrey. He said he was Sylvester. Another time he thought he was Mr. Anderson, a teacher at the school. He kept telling me that he lived in the city. I tried to get him help but nothing worked because he refused to talk with the doctors and psychologist. He would just sit there with his mouth shut and his arms folded. Eventually, after his eighteenth birthday, he just left. I never heard a word from him since. I knew I would get a knock on my door someday with some tragic news about my son.” She retrieved a card from her mantel and handed it to me. “Dr. Moore was the psychologist I took my son to see. You can call him but he hasn’t seen Jeffrey in ten years. Jeffrey is twenty-six years old now. He saw Dr. Moore when he was a teenager.”

“So far, Mrs. Allen, I have not found that your son has done anything wrong or illegal.” I thanked her and promised to contact her if I learned any news about her son. On my drive back to the city, I kept wondering why he used the name Sebastian Davies with Denise Rose. Everything he told her was false. Why would he do that if he was seriously interested in having a relationship with this woman?

I called the Psychologist from my car. Dr. Moore couldn’t tell me much but he did say that he didn’t think that Jeffrey was suffering from any mental illness. He was just a confused and rebellious teenager. He was sure that he would grow out of his deceptive tendencies. Apparently not, I thought.

Days later when I met with Ken, he said that Sebastian’s social media was rather bland. Nothing really to see. There were several photos of a couple of teens. I assumed were his children. No wife or other relatives or friends.

Further research confirmed that Sebastian Davies did not own a condo. The condo was owned by Steven Gold, a Real Estate Investor, whom I arranged to meet that same day at the condo. Mr. Gold was a man in his late sixties. He told me that he was planning to retire soon and he hired Mr. Davies to renovate the condo before his retirement. The case took a turn when I showed Mr. Gold a photo of Jeffrey Allen.

Shock registered in his gray eyes and his face began to flush. "That is not Mr. Davies, Miss James. That is not the man that I hired." He looked as if he was going to pass out.

"Maybe you should sit down, Mr. Gold."

"I don't know that man, but the man that I hired presented himself as Sebastian Davis."

I showed him a photo of Sebastian Davies.

"Yes, that's the man I hired. Who is that kid? He doesn't look old enough to have a renovation business. What the hell is going on, here?"

"That is exactly what I'm trying to find out?"

"Have you paid him anything, Mr. Gold?"

"Sure. I have the contract in my briefcase."

He fished through some papers and handed me the contract. Apparently, the entire job would cost twenty thousand dollars and Mr. Gold had paid half of the total contract. The other half is to be paid upon completion of the job. "And, just how much work has Mr. Davies done to this point?"

"All I've seen him do is measure. I knew I would have to wait for a while. He explained that he had other jobs ahead of my condo."

"I hate to be the one to tell you this Mr. Gold, but I think that you have been scammed. Where did you hear of Mr. Davis?"

"I got the name from a business card tacked to the bulletin board in the lobby."

"My advice to you Mr. Gold, is not to fire Mr. Davies. We don't want to give away that we're on to his scam."

"I agree."

"Thank you, Mr. Gold. I'm going to continue to investigate and turn whatever I find over to the police. I hope that will get your money back."

Shortly after I arrived back at the office, we both packed up to leave for the night. I called Carl from the car. He told me not to wait up. He expected to be working late. I called in an order to the Chinese Food Store so I could stop and pick it up on the way home.

In less than an hour I was snuggled up on the sofa with a glass of white wine and a small dish of Shrimp Lo Mein. Smooth jazz piano played softly as I did my best to unwind from the stress of the day. Once I had eaten, sleep came easily. Sometime after midnight, I woke up with a start.

It came to me. Jeffrey Allen was not a scammer. He likely posed as the Condo owner to impress Miss Rose. He was just an insecure young man with a huge crush on Miss Rose. I needed to find him before Mr. Davies got wind of his deceit.

Before returning to the office the next day, I stopped in the condo lobby searching for a copy of the business card Mr. Gold got from the bulletin board. It was easy to find. Davies Contracting Company specializes in Condo Renovation. In just a few minutes on the Internet, I was able to find a bogus address and phone number along with a slew of customer complaints. Customers made down payments on renovations that were never completed. If that wasn't bad enough, this was only Davies's latest scam. He ran a scam travel agency for a time. He never intended to complete renovations and Mr. Gold was just the latest in an entire list of scammed customers. Back at the office, I drew up a very extensive report on the activities of Mr. Sebastian Davies's activities, at least the ones that I could prove. I sent copies to the Philadelphia Police Department's Fraud Unit.

I gave Denise a call. "Good morning, Miss Rose. I need to ask you a few questions. First, have you contacted the bank about your accounts?"

"Yes. It turns out that my account wasn't the only one compromised. The investigators found out that it was a band of scammers from outside the country. The bank opened different accounts in my name and restored all of my money. Apparently, the culprits are being investigated by the FBI."

"Well, that is great news. I am so happy to hear that. Have you heard from Mr. Davies again?"

"Yes. I got this very weird call. He didn't say much, though. Just that I might not hear from him for a while but he didn't say why." I decided not to tell Miss Rose what I knew just yet. I wanted to talk to Jeffrey Allen.

Through further investigation, I found that Mr. Allen was a student at a well-known school of Veterinary Medicine. He was a good student and worked part-time at a Veterinary clinic. According to the schedule that I accessed online, Mr. Allen should be leaving the clinic at 4:30 in the afternoon. I parked nearby to wait.

Ken called to tell me that public records indicated that Mr. Allen had recently applied for a sizable loan from a local bank. "Well, that explains where he got the money to wine and dine Miss. Rose," I said. But, I still couldn't understand why he would lie to Miss Rose.

Ken checked his social media, which was full of photos of him and Denise. It was obvious that he was completely smitten with this young lady.

Given Miss Rose's description, I knew who he was the moment I saw him. He was dressed in dark scrubs, and white sneakers and he had a hefty book bag swung from his shoulder. He was looking down at his phone as he walked. I approached, trying not to be too aggressive. "Mr. Allen?"

Slowly, he raised his head to look at me. "Yes," he said slowly with a puzzled look on his face.

"My name is Lydia James, Private Investigator." I didn't give him a chance to answer. With my phone, I showed him the photo of Sebastian Davies. "Do you know this man?"

He hesitated. "No, not really."

"His name is Sebastian Davies." I waited for a reaction, but none came. After a few seconds, he tried to walk away. Do you know a woman named Denise Rose?"

He stopped walking and turned to face me. "Did she hire you?"

"Why would you think that Miss Rose would hire a private detective?"

"All right," he said. "I meant no harm. I saw the name on a business card and I just thought it was a cool name so I told her that I was Sebastian Davies."

"That isn't all you told her. You posed as a contractor hired to redecorate a condo. Miss Rose thought she had landed the job of her dreams."

"Oh, my God!" He looked so defeated. I just wanted her to like me. I wanted to impress her."

"So, you thought passing as someone else and spending money that you really can't afford would impress this woman?"

"When you say it like that, it sounds foolish."

"It was foolish but, your actions brought attention to Mr. Davies that I am sure he didn't want or expect. I need to meet with Miss Rose to tell her what I have learned. I suggest that if you are really interested in a relationship with this woman, you contact her and tell her exactly who you are and what you do for a living. You might want to contact her before I have to give her a report."

"Yes," he said sheepishly.

"First, pay her back the two thousand dollars that you borrowed. That was really low."

"I was going to pay it back."

"Then, do so. And, call your mother. She is worried about you."

"My mother?" He questioned. I just gave him a real, that's what I said look. "My mother! Yes, Ma'am."

I turned to go back to my car.

"Miss James," he called after me.

"I think meeting with Miss Rose is going to be really awkward. Can I ask for your help in setting things right?"

I thought for a moment. "I suppose I can arrange something. I can't promise that she will forgive you but I can arrange a meeting."

Back at the office I called Miss. Rose to set up a meeting that afternoon. She arrived at our office at exactly two as we had arranged. Again, she was stylishly dressed but the tears were gone.

"Good afternoon, Miss Rose."

"Good afternoon."

"Have you heard from Mr. Davies since we last spoke?"

"No, Not a word."

I showed her a photo of Sebastian Davies. "Do you know this man?"

"No," she said emphatically.

"Have you ever seen this man?"

She was thoughtful for a moment before she said, "I think I've seen him in the lobby of the Condo. Who is he?"

"This is Sebastian Davies," I said. Shock registered on her face. "This," I said as I produced the photo of Mr. Allen, "is Jeffrey Allen."

With her mouth open and her eyes wide in surprise she shook her head. "Oh, my God!"

"This may all sound very mysterious but it is quite simple. Mr. Allen had no nefarious intentions. The young man wanted to impress you. Unfortunately, the person he chose to immolate is a criminal. A fact, he could not have known. He is as handsome as you said and is quite a charming young man."

"But a liar," she said disdainfully.

"Well yes. It is quite up to you if you chose to forgive his deception, however, I would like to introduce you to Mr. Jeffrey Allen."

I opened the door and Jeffrey slowly walked into the office. Denise stood up, her face twisted in a contemptuous frown. Jeffrey took sever steps toward her, "I am so sorry," he whispered.



“Why did you lie to me? I thought we had something special.”

“I just wanted to impress you but after things were going so well, I was afraid to spoil it with the truth. You are a successful professional and I’m still a student. I thought you would think me not good enough for you. Can you please forgive me?” They were face-to-face at this point. He reached down and took her hand in his. I do love you, Denise.”

Tears filled her eyes and she began to smile as she moved into his waiting arms. “I love you, too.” She paused. “Jeffrey!”

“Well,” I said. “Mystery solved.”

“So, that’s it? It’s over?”

“Unless you would like me to investigate something else,” I said.

She shook her head before writing a check for our fee. We shook hands and they left, hand in hand.

Ken and I met for lunch to discuss how the case wrapped up. He, of course, learned some very interesting facts about the mysterious Mr. Sebastian Davies. Apparently, he was more than just a petty thief. He was the prime suspect in an unsolved art heist.

“Really?” I questioned. “Where was the art stolen from?”

“It was stolen under the artist's nose during an Art Show. The few leads the police had dried up. It’s a county cold case.”

“Interesting!”

Another case solved but instead of feeling the sense of satisfaction that usually comes with solving a mystery, I am still thinking of Sebastian Davies and the unsolved art theft.

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THE END