

# SCORPIO LOOPS VIRGO

Signs of Love #2 - Epilogue

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ANYTA SUNDAY





## Epilogue

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**C**allaghan: Check my closet, Birthday Boy. Open the round gift in silver wrapping.

**Callaghan:** The envelope on the dresser is also for you, but it needs to remain sealed. Same deal as the last three years.

**Callaghan:** It feels strange waking up without you staring at me.

*Miss you too, Cal.*

Percy *always* missed his boyfriend when he had to stay over in Orchard Bay for college responsibilities. Like giving a presentation on his master's topic at a Jurassic Park convention followed by brunch with world-leading scientists.

A thick, dark blue envelope rested against a photo of the two of them grinning at each other in front of a model *Maiasaurus*. The envelope was firmly sealed. Cal knew better than to use paper Percy could hold up to the light and see through.

Percy tried anyway.

When that failed, Percy fondled the paper trying to guess the contents. A few ideas came to mind, but with only three chances to win their traditional birthday Mystery Gift game, he

wanted to be sure. He couldn't mar his perfect record, especially when he'd been so cocky about how intuitive Scorpios were.

Percy set the envelope down and dressed, choosing the best pair of jeans to show off his ass and an older button-down shirt in case Cal desired to rip it off him.

On top of the dresser sat a black velvet-lined wooden box holding Cal's cuff links, an old watch, and his granddad's wedding band.

Percy shrugged his shoulders and picked up the ring, smirking at himself in the mirror. "Why yes, Callaghan," he said, wedging the ring onto his ring finger. He hooked his thumbs in his belt loops and admired the silver ring. "I do so love this round, silver gift."

He kept the ring on while he dug out the silver wrapped hula-hoop Cal had told him to open. And he kept it on when he made his way to the kitchen to his second birthday tradition.

Aunt Abby's famous cherry-and-apple cake sat on the counter with a short, scrawled note from his cousin.

*Happy Birthday.*  
~Frank

On Percy's first birthday after his aunt's death—the first one celebrated with Cal as his boyfriend—Frank had surprisingly taken him on his word, jimmied the back-door lock, and baked him a cake using their aunt's recipe.

Frank's first olive branch.

All because of Cal.

Percy took out his phone, thanked Frank, and messaged Cal using his toddler brother's favorite line.

**Perseus: Love you to the Jurassic and back.**

Percy twisted the ring on his finger as he savored the tenderness filling him. Cal had written to Frank and told him his own

struggles with his dad leaving, and how they all learned to work together through family therapy.

While Cal's mom and dad hadn't gotten back together, they'd made life work better between them. After moving nearer, Cal's dad actively participated in raising their kids.

Without Percy knowing it, Cal had gifted Frank a few sessions with their therapist.

Percy found out the day of the first birthday. It might have been the best gift Cal had ever given him.

Percy gave a wobbly smile and fondly rubbed the wedding ring. "One day, hopefully." Until then, this beautiful silver band would have to wait. He pulled at the ring.

It stuck at his knuckle.

"Funny. Off you come."

It wouldn't come off.

Percy yanked again. *It wouldn't come off.*

He swiveled to the dish detergent, squeezed a copious amount over his bulging knuckle, and pulled again. And again. "Are you kidding me? Why. Won't. You. Come. Off?"

Maybe the ecological dish detergent wasn't slippery enough?

He scoured the cupboard for oil, trying to calm his thumping heart. He had all morning to get the ring off. Cal wouldn't be back until after lunch.

When the oil did nothing, Percy ransacked the bathroom cupboard for moisturizers, shampoo, and conditioner.

The more flustered he became, the more his fingers swelled.

As he shoved his hands into the freezer, he heard a car parking in the driveway.

Percy glanced at the oven clock. Nine in the morning. Surely it couldn't be Cal. He hurried to the bay windows and peeked outside through heavy sheets of rain.

Cal.

Of course.

A key slid in the lock and the familiar click sent a rush of

nervous energy pumping through him. Percy lunged back into the kitchen, yanking at the ring. Half his knuckle could come off for all he cared. So long as the wedding band did too.

Footsteps approached. "Percy?"

Percy caught sight of the kitchen gloves and snapped them on. Just in time. Cal appeared in the archway wearing deliciously snug jeans and Percy's favorite blue hoody that matched Cal's eyes. Cal ran a hand through his rainwater-matted hair.

Despite being together for three years, Percy's heart did flips every time Cal came home.

Today, those crazy flips were turbo-charged.

"You're home."

Cal stopped juicing his hair of water. "That sounded more disappointed than I'd hoped after declining brunch and waking up at five to drive back and surprise you."

"Trust me, I'm not disappointed." *Embarrassed, on the other hand.*

Cal noticed the kitchen gloves.

"I was doing dishes," Percy blurted. A little too fast, perhaps.

Cal's eyebrow shot up suspiciously, and his gaze flickered to the sink. "There are no dishes."

"I washed them, genius."

"You dried them with gloves on, too?"

Percy winced then whipped around, grabbed the dishcloth, and wiped invisible crumbs off the counter. "Frank left a mess behind."

"Really? He sent me a message saying he'd snuck in and dropped off the cake while you were snoring."

"I wasn't snoring. Just breathing with difficulty. I woke up and it was like Frank did a reenactment of King Kong with a spatula gorilla and sugar skyscrapers."

Cal cocked his head. He pinched his phone from his pocket and flashed him the picture Frank had sent earlier of Percy's

birthday cake on the counter—sans mess. “You’re not usually one for lying, Perseus.”

Percy groaned and slumped back against the counter. “I don’t usually have a reason to.”

“But today you do?”

“Could we just say I’m wearing these to keep my hands warm?”

“Because rubber gloves will really help with that.” Cal moved closer, amused, curious. “Besides, the heating’s set to 72 degrees in here.” Cal lifted Percy’s hands, gentle grip tightening as his expression blanched. “You didn’t get a tattoo in the twenty hours I was gone, did you?”

“I *wish* that was it.”

Cal peeled the first glove off. Nothing incriminating there.

Percy hid his other hand behind him. “How was your conference? Did you get a lot of love?”

“The conference was great.” Cal reached behind him and snagged his hand. “I got all your messages and I’m still wearing the T-shirt you slipped into my bag.”

Heat flooded Percy’s cheeks as the other glove came off.

Cal froze, and the glove fell, landing between Percy’s feet. His voice crackled with surprise. “My granddad’s ring. His wedding ring. On your hand.”

No chance he might not recognize it, then.

Percy tried to withdraw his hand, but Cal’s grip doubled. Percy let out a nervous laugh. “Oh. That. Funny story.”

He hauled in a breath, mining his brain for any possible excuse. His breath funneled out as he stared at the ring. “I wanted to see how it would look. Us. Married. I was playing, okay? I imagined how nervous and happy you were as you gave it to me.” Percy bit his lip and scowled at his traitorous ring finger still cradled in Cal’s hand. “Just your regular case of daydreaming.”

Cal let go, and Percy's hand dropped to his thigh. Percy swallowed a massive lump of mortification.

Warm hands cupped his shoulders, thumbs gently rubbing the base of Percy's neck.

"It's a big deal to me." Cal studied his face, lingering at the lip Percy bit before lifting to search his eyes. "Now I have proof I'm not the only one who's thought about it."

Percy's breath caught. The inches between them evaporated, and Cal's knee knocked lightly against his.

A thousand times they'd stood this close. A thousand times Percy had the right words waiting on the edge of his lips.

This time, however, Percy's belly dipped as butterflies took laps around his body.

"Little problem," he said on the tail end of a squeaky laugh. "I can't seem to get it off."

Cal swept his hand down Percy's arm and lifted his hand between them again. His breath hovered over Percy's knuckles as he studied the situation. "Does it hurt?"

Percy shook his head. As Cal carefully turned the ring, the pads of his fingers and the slide of metal elicited goosebumps down Percy's arm. "It fit fine once it was on. I just can't slide it back over my knuckle. I guess—"

Cal pressed Percy's hand against his chest, dipped his head, and slotted their lips together. Under his palm, Cal's heartbeat thumped. Fast, like his. "Happy birthday, Percy."

The intimate tone of Cal's voice flustered Percy. "Guess we should figure out how to get the ring off?"

Cal abruptly pivoted toward the cake. "I haven't had breakfast. Just a few Mentos from the pack you hid in the car. Let's eat."

Two pieces of cake later, they were sitting at the dining table. "It's a letter, clearly. Handwritten, full of your favorite words, semicolons used sparingly but appropriately."

Cal's eyes danced. "It's not a letter."

“Printed photos of us from the last three birthdays?”

“You have one guess left.”

Percy sealed his lips and playfully scowled at Cal over the fork he jabbed toward him. “I know it’s something meaningful. All your gifts are.”

Cal’s thumb massaged the back of Percy’s fingers. The ring glinted in the rain-speckled light leaking through the bay window, drawing their attention to it.

Percy’s palm grew clammy with lingering embarrassment. “I guess we could try lube.”

Cal’s head snapped up. “What?”

“Don’t worry. I won’t use all of it.”

Cal shook his head in wry amusement.

“On a scale of one to ten,” Percy said with a sheepish grin, “how likely are you to forget this?”

“Never and then some.” Cal drummed his fingers over Percy’s clearly fat knuckles. “Percy?”

“Yes?”

Cal slowly exhaled, gaze hopping about their living room. “How about you finally prove you can hula hoop?”

With a scratchy laugh, Percy retreated from the living room. A minute later, he was back—hula-hoop, mystery envelope, and lube in hand.

He set everything on the floor. “Let’s push the table back and turn on some beats.”

When the room was lightly vibrating with background music, Percy stepped into the large hoop.

Cal rested his ass against the table shoved to the window. His gaze slipped up and down the length of him, a dreamy smile playing at his lips.

Percy loved it when Cal looked at him like that. His cock did, too. He dropped the hoop and stripped off his shirt. “So the hoop doesn’t catch on the buttons. Not because I love you ogling me.”

The tight moan that escaped Cal's throat pumped Percy with sly, sexy confidence. He popped open the button on his jeans, slowly unzipped, then wriggled out of his jeans.

He twisted his back to Cal, bent over, and unhooked the bunched material from his ankles.

He turned back to see Cal swallow hard—and that wasn't the only hard thing about him.

Percy picked up the hoop and swung it around his waist. He gyrated his hips to the beat of the music. He was a little rusty, but managed two song verses before it fell to his feet.

He curled a finger at Cal. "Come in here with me. Let's do it together."

"Isn't the idea to keep the hoop off the ground?"

"I'll be behind you." Percy picked up the hoop and spun it around him again, cocking his hips in quick rhythm. "Follow my lead."

"I thought the idea is that *we* stay off the ground?"

Percy made the next swivel of his hips even more seductive. "Come in here. We'll tandem hoop while I tell you what's in the envelope."

Cal adjusted the bulge in his jeans, and Percy lost his rhythm. The hoop fell. Percy crouched to pick it up, but Cal stepped forward, pinning the hoop to the ground with his foot. Percy looked up at the gorgeous man before him, cinnamon hair shimmering under the lights.

Percy shifted onto his knees, bringing himself closer to Cal. He placed his hands on Cal's thighs and squeezed.

Cal glanced at Percy's hand with the ring, then tapped his foot on the hoop. "Do you like it?"

Percy wasn't sure which circular object Cal was referring to. He squeezed Cal's thigh, feeling the ring press deeply into his skin. "I love it."

"That's"—Cal's gaze roamed over him again—"perfect."

Percy kissed Cal's upper thigh, nose pressing into the crease of his crotch. "You want me in nothing *but* this, don't you?"

Cal's fingers laced through his at his thigh. "Yes."

Percy peered up at Cal's softly smiling face. He nuzzled kisses over his boyfriend's hard cock and used his teeth to undo the top button of his jeans. "You need to lose a few layers, too."

"So the hoop won't snag?"

"So I can ogle you back."

Percy helped Cal out of his jeans, while Cal shucked his hoody. A bright teal T-shirt with a "Percytaur" print stared down at him.

Didn't that make him grin? "Percy looks good on you, Cal."

Cal pressed a hand to the smartest, best-looking dinosaur of all. "He feels good too."

Lifting the hoop, Percy stood and hooked Cal with it. He slid his hands over the plastic rim and steered Cal flush against him. "The envelope," he said against Cal's lower lip. "It holds tickets."

"Yes."

Yes! He was a ring-thieving, mystery-solving mastermind after all.

Cal ghosted his lips over Percy's jaw and pressed a kiss under his ear. "But what are they for?"

Miley Cyrus? A spa resort? A receipt that Cal had taken care of his library fines? He had no idea. Maybe he was just a ring thief with ultra large knuckles.

As if Cal sensed his frustrated ignorance, he trailed kisses down his neck. At his collarbone, in the sensitive nook at the base of his throat, he said. "Here's a clue. My favorite ice cream flavor."

French vanilla.

Disbelief warred with excitement and Percy plastered himself against Cal, snatching his lips into a French kiss.

A laugh rumbled in Cal's chest, and he pulled back with a bright, cheeky smile. "Hot, Percy. Really hot."

“You don’t mean the kiss, do you?”

“Not just the kiss, no.” Cal tugged Percy to the envelope, picked it up, and handed it to him. “What are the tickets for?”

“I’m nervous I’ll get this wrong.” Percy pointed to the ring. “I’ve already embarrassed myself once today.”

“You won’t get it wrong. You never do.”

The envelope shook in Percy’s trembling hands, and he choked on a delighted whisper. “France?”

The twinkle in Cal’s eye confirmed it.

Percy jumped him. Cal hit the wall, catching Percy’s leg at his hip. He hooked it there as Percy collided their lips together. Percy cocked his hips against Cal’s, their hard-ons rubbing deliciously. “I love you. I love you so hard. I missed watching you wake up this morning. I hate it when you’re not home. I can’t believe you bought us tickets to France.”

“It’s the city of love,” Cal murmured back into their kiss. “I thought we’d fit in well.”

“You thought correctly.”

The doorbell rang.

“No, go away.” He’d forgotten Cal’s sister was coming over. He’d invited her over last night thinking Cal wouldn’t be home yet.

The bell rang again. Cal slid his hand down Percy’s thigh, gently setting him on his feet. “Looks like this will have to wait.”

Percy growled against the collar of Cal’s T-shirt. “But we were meant to get all French vanilla inside the hula-hoop.”

Cal’s face glazed with a heady combination of lust and amusement. “We have all day.”

Ellie knocked on the door, calling Percy’s name. “This gift won’t open itself!”

“Just a minute, El!” Percy yelled back.

He grabbed Cal’s jeans and threw them to him, then jumped into his own.

“Oh, crap!” Percy tugged at the wedding band still stuck on

his finger. “She’ll see it. She’ll think you proposed.” Percy gestured to the lube. “That might ease it off.”

Cal tossed the lube across the room to the couch.

Percy frowned. “Do you have a better idea?”

“I do.” Cal crossed over to him and lifted Percy’s hand. The band sat just above his knuckle, refusing to budge any further. “I’ve been trying to think of the most romantic way to say this since the second I saw this on you. No words seem good enough.”

Percy’s stomach dropped through his feet. “Callaghan?”

Cal’s breathing hitched. “France could be our honeymoon.”

“Wh—what are you saying?”

Cal warmly slid the band to the base of Percy’s ring finger. “Keep it on?”

