

THE PROTECTORS OF THE WOOD

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The Protectors of the Wood Podcast

Everything Is at Stake!

Episode #53. Phoebe brings all four together.



Illustration by Carlos Uribe

Narrator: Phoebe headed back through the courtyard in a hurry, and opened the front door. Gilligan was standing right in front of her. He had obviously been watching through the glass. The store was empty.

Gilligan: (anxious, frantic) How's the boy? How's the boy?

Phoebe: I think he's okay. He might have a concussion.

Gilligan: One of the customers said he might be dead! And what was the Chief doing here? He doesn't come out for every little thing!

Phoebe: They're going to check the boy out at the hospital.

Gilligan: Don't hide it!! The Chief was worried, talking to you in the corner like that! He was warning you about these things that *you're* doing! I've been meaning to talk to you! No store does these things. They're going to sue me for everything I'm worth, and there's no insurance for it. I'll lose the store... I'm ruined. (Gilligan totally despondent, anger to depression)

Phoebe: No, everything's fine. The boy wasn't even hurt in the courtyard. The accident happened out on the street. A driver was at fault, who, incidentally, left the scene of an accident. Chief Santiago's looking into it. He said to thank you for letting me take care of it. We're Good Samaritans, helping people from the goodness of our hearts.

Narrator: Gilligan stopped and considered this. His hysteria seemed to evaporate.

Gilligan: (deep breath) Okay... That... puts a different light on things. That... certainly helps... for now. But Phoebe, I've got to say this: it could have happened the other way. And some day it *will*, and we'll be in big trouble.

Phoebe: I'm not arguing. I agree with you. You've got a point, a very good point. I happen to know that Sammy's going to see a lawyer over the next couple of days, a man who advises my father. I'm going to bring him to see you. Ask him anything. Let's see where we stand. In the meantime, I think we're doing good. People are having fun. You're making money. Everybody's winning, as I see it. Our biggest problem is that we need help, and we need it quick. We've got way too much business now for the two of us. I want to recommend someone who could start helping us tomorrow...

Gilligan: (interrupting) Oh!! (he slams a fist into open palm, making a clap) That's right! Is that why you've got George and that girl stuck in the back room? I heard their voices in the empty store like ghosts. It was all I could do to open the door! They say they're waiting for you, but why aren't they out here like everyone else?

Phoebe: Well... it was crowded then... (Phoebe hurries nervously) I've got to talk to them, but I don't think either one can work. But Luis – the kid with the ponytail who's been helping me with soccer – he *can* work, for minimum wage starting tomorrow. Believe me, he gets things done.

Gilligan: Hmm... I don't know... I need to think about it. My nerves are shot. I thought this was going to be a nice, calm little river, and now we're shooting the rapids.

Phoebe: Yeah, I feel that way too.

Gilligan: But you like it. I don't.

Phoebe: But Gilligan, you're good at this. Look at the progress we've made together. Aren't you proud of it? You're successful.

Gilligan: (thrilled with compliment) Do you think so?

Phoebe: As you say, look at the bottom line. Did you count the money in the register today?

Gilligan: Indeed. Our best day yet. I had to phone in half a dozen new orders.

Phoebe: Okay! Now let me talk to George and Abby and see what they want to do. You can take it easy for awhile. I'll close up.

Gilligan: (muttering to himself) Abby... Abby... where did I hear that name?

Phoebe: I mentioned her to you last week as someone who might want to work.

Gilligan: Oh... yes, but there's something else. Is that Abby Chapman? This guy asked me a couple of weeks ago if I'd seen her.

Phoebe: ahh...can we Just leave that alone?

Narrator: They froze as they noticed the front door opening very slowly and quietly.... Jeremy peeked his head into the store. Phoebe breathed a sigh of relief.

Jeremy: (feels the strange mood in the store) I thought you might be closed... but the front gate's open.

Gilligan: We *are* closed. But I can't seem to get out of here tonight.

Phoebe: It's all right, Gilligan, go ahead. We can talk about this tomorrow. Really, don't worry. Everything's going to be okay.

Gilligan: Sometimes it seems like I'm the kid and you're the adult... Don't laugh. All right, all right, I'm going. It'll make more sense to talk about this tomorrow. Keep her out of trouble, Jeremy. And turn off the air conditioner. I'll lock the gate. We don't want people wandering in here.

Narrator: He glanced at Phoebe one more time, as if seeking assurance that all would be fine, and then waved and disappeared out the door. She turned the lock behind him. Phoebe and Jeremy looked at each other. A spark in their eyes confirmed that something very significant had happened that morning. They hugged and kissed on the cheek, relieved that they could signal something so delicate without words, yet without doubt.

Jeremy: I know I'm late. Jim returned with news.

Phoebe: We've got Abby and George back there, anything news just for me?

Jeremy: A message from your father: They found the hay bale garden stripped clean. But they're not backing down. They're going to start deliveries of the new vegetables from the farms. Jim says they are not afraid. That's about it.

Phoebe: That's wonderful! (she claps hands)

Narrator: She turned and speed-limped to the back hall and opened the storage room door.

George: Boy, you take your time. Don't you know we've got things to do? Wait till you hear all this heavy-duty gossip. We've got serious business.

Phoebe: This room is suffocating! How did you stand it? Lock that window and bring the coffee and iced tea and muffins out here. I'm starving.

Narrator: George entered the front room with his hands full of containers and bags and a folder of papers under his arm. He said hi to Jeremy and set his things down on the children's table in the book corner, where Phoebe had taken a seat on a tiny chair. Abby followed slowly, looking things over. She finally picked out a chair off to the side next to the display of a cardboard clubhouse for children. George pulled his chair over near her. They smiled, and their eyes shone. Jeremy sat down in an open spot, making an uneven circle.

Phoebe: It's so wonderful to see all of you. It seems like a year I've been trying to get us together.

George: This is an emergency meeting tonight. I need to talk right away. I'm not kidding.

Jeremy: I've got news too, short, but you've got to hear it before we leave.

Narrator: George checked his watch.

George: It's almost nine, and we have to catch Sammy before he locks up about 9:45.

Narrator: They looked at each other, waiting for someone to speak.

Phoebe: Abby? Anything urgent?

Abby: This is where I want to be. I arrived just in time.

George: You've got a lot to say too.

Abby: that's all right. I'll wait.

Narrator: All eyes turned to George. He hesitated, looked around, and sighed.

George: I've just had this crazy experience. Right across the street at the Middletown Standard...(pause) You know I take photos for editor Peabody. I went in a few hours ago to print some out and decide which ones to show Peabody. The place was empty except for Peabody in his office in the back. I knocked and asked if I could use the computer and the printer. He was on the phone and yelled to go ahead. I sat in the open cubicle in the front and looked at my photos on the screen, and printed out a few. I noticed something that shocked me.

Narrator: George reached out and took a swallow of Phoebe's coffee. No one spoke.

George: At lunch today I went over to the Owens mansion to take some photos Peabody wanted. The place seemed deserted. I just walked around taking nice shots. A couple of them included that crow's nest thing they've got on top. When I examined them on the screen I noticed the guy up there, and he was holding something. I blew it up on the computer and printed it out.

Narrator: George took the top piece of paper from his folder and tossed it in the middle of the table.

George: What does that look like?

Narrator: Phoebe grabbed it and Jeremy looked over her shoulder. She passed it to Abby. The grainy image was a close up of the little glass paneled observation post. The dark shadow of a man stood behind the glass. He was holding a thin, tall, dark something.

Jeremy: It's a rifle. You can see the barrel and the beginning of the stock. I'm sure it's a rifle.

George: That's what I thought. I was looking at this when suddenly the door opened and a man walked right by me. He was so intent on getting to Peabody he didn't even see me. He opened Peabody's office door and starts right in like they'd been arguing already. This guy just lit into Peabody, saying things like, "When you work for me, I expect obedience!" Peabody replied, "Calm down, Milton, I'm sure we can work this out." I realized the guy was Morphy, and there I was listening to their conversation with the photos in my hand and on the computer. And one of the things they were arguing about was my taking photos of his new house! Peabody said it would make a good article and improve Morphy's image in the town. "You don't have the common touch, Milton," he said. "People find you a bit arrogant." Morphy was having none of that. He said, "Look, Jerome, I want those photos retrieved and destroyed, do you hear me! Never assign anyone to photograph my house. And any article about anything connected to me must be approved by me personally! Do you hear me!

Narrator: George stopped to catch his breath, and take another swallow of Phoebe's coffee.

George: That's really how this guy talks. I erased the photos of the house, and then I heard some incredible stuff. Morphy was giving instructions to Peabody on how to report on a police action that Morphy expects on this Friday night. He listed off a whole bunch of things, like fire code violations, runaway teenagers, cabaret and alcohol violations, even endangering the morals of a minor. "We're going to break them!! Do you hear me!! Break them!" He went on to order Peabody to never write anything positive about the toy store or the coffee shop again. And then he said: "I want that boy fired. The one who photographed my house and is part of that so-called concert across the street." Peabody protested that I was only following orders, and I'm a good boy and work for Scutter and my parent own the gift shop, and it might be helpful to have an employee with inside knowledge and access to the other side. Morphy replied, "Now you're thinking! That's something we need. Maybe you and I can do business after all. Let me tell you... I've got a new plan." I heard the office door close, and muffled voices. I grabbed my printouts and camera and slipped out the front door, and came here by the back way. I don't think anyone knows I heard all this.

Narrator: George looked around.

George: That's it.

Phoebe: That is so fantastic, George... Whoa, so well done. This gives us a chance to warn Sammy, and protect ourselves.... You were right, Jeremy. He *is* angry, and vicious in ways I never expected. They are stepping up their game.

Narrator: Jeremy was studying the folder of papers.

Jeremy: I'd like to show these to Jim. Can I take them?

George: Get them away from me! I'm going to tell Peabody they're over-exposed, I used the wrong lens. (In a different tone of voice:) You know, I'm glad now that I work at Scutter's. I'm a double agent.

Phoebe: It's true, but it's scary. These people will stop at nothing, and hate even the most innocent activities. They seem to hate us.

Jeremy: I'm sorry, everyone, but look at the time!! We've got to get out of here in twenty minutes. This news could save Sammy from disaster. And some of you may not know that Morphy has at least three more observation posts, one on the roof of Middletown Hospital! It seems we hear about a new one every day. His staff are stationed all around town, looking for... well, we'll have to talk about what they're looking for. But one thing for sure, they're watching *us* very carefully. And Abby, we haven't forgotten Phoebe's party. We know they're especially looking for you.

Abby: I've learned to take care of myself. They're no match for me in the forest, or even in town. Now that I don't stay with Glenda, I worry about no one.

D E-
Sometimes I'm walking on rainbows

G D
Sometimes I'm locked underground

B- D
But if I hear you say, It's all okay,

B- A E-
There's nothing compares with that sound

F# G D
I'm lost but now I'm found

D E-
I care about a lot of things I guess

G D
I try and try just to do my best

B- D
But if it's not right with you,

B- A E-
There's nothing I can do I'm lost before I begin

F# G D
God help the shape that I'm in

CHORUS

G D
God help the shape that I'm in

B- A
God help the shape that I'm in

G D
Just come back to me, I'll be yours for free

B- A E-
I'll do all the good I can do

F# G D

It's just that I need you

D E-

Sometimes I'm stumbling through my day

G D

And there's no light upon the way

B- D

There's nothing I can see,

B- A E-

it's dark as can be Hold my hand and see me through

F# G D

I'm lost if I don't have you

CHORUS