On Monday, February 16, 1981, I was hired as a temporary chambermaid for three weeks in a Venetian hotel. I was assigned twelve bedrooms on the fourth floor. In the course of my cleaning duties, I examined the personal belongings of the hotel guests and observed through details lives which remained unknown to me. On Friday, March 6, the job came to an end.
Monday, February 16, 9 A.M. I go into Room 25. The only room on the floor with a single bed, and the first one I enter. The sight of the crumpled navy pajamas with the light blue piping left on the bed and the brown leather slippers door something to me. The occupant is a man. There are a few clues by the washbasin: a dirty comb with missing teeth, a toothbrush, toothpaste, and Men's deodorant. On the table: Time, the International Herald Tribune, and a book, The Moon and Sixpence, by W. Somerset Maugham, with a marker at page 198. On the windowsill are apples and oranges in two paper bags. On the right table I find a hardcover notebook, his travel log, I go through it. "Friday Rome... Tuesday Florence..." and under yesterday's date, these lines: "...arrived in Venice this morning... up to my room, had a bath, a couple of oranges, a blue T-shirt, and a windbreaker. I lean the room and start to read his diary. His handwriting is poor, heavy, irregular. I re-read his remarks about Venice: "Sunday, February 15, 1981. We arrived in Venice this morning. We took the train. It is really spectacular. No cars, just pretty little streets and small bridges over the canals. We set outside and had dinner of various strange things. We went back to the hotel, I am in a tiny room by myself. Ran out and bought a kilo of oranges and apples and put them on my window sill. We went out and had a very good walk. I ate a good soup, noodles with tomato sauce, and drank a lot of white wine. Went to Piazza San Marco, had a grappa. Made me feel not too good. Went back to Hotel C."

By elimination, that tells me that today he is wearing blue trousers, a blue T-shirt, and a windbreaker. I lean the room and start to read his diary. His handwriting is poor, heavy, irregular. I re-read his remarks about Venice: "Sunday, February 15, 1981. We arrived in Venice this morning. We took the train. It is really spectacular. No cars, just pretty little streets and small bridges over the canals. We set outside and had dinner of various strange things. We went back to the hotel, I am in a tiny room by myself. Ran out and bought a kilo of oranges and apples and put them on my window sill. We went out and had a very good walk. I ate a good soup, noodles with tomato sauce, and drank a lot of white wine. Went to Piazza San Marco, had a grappa. Made me feel not too good. Went back to Hotel C."

I slept a bit. Rob and I went strolling. Sat down at a bar and had a beer. Came back. Rob went up. Got a postcard from the desk and went to hotel bar and had a beer + 1/2. I wrote a long postcard to O.L. Up to my room, had dinner, ate some oranges and apples, and will crash. I have told the desk to make me up at 8:30..."

Room 25, February 16-19

Today, the International Herald Tribune, and a book, The Moon and Sixpence, by W. Somerset Maugham, with a marker at page 198. On the windowsill are apples and oranges in two paper bags. On the right table I find a hardcover notebook, his travel log, I go through it. "Friday Rome... Tuesday Florence..." and under yesterday's date, these lines: "...arrived in Venice this morning... up to my room, had a bath, a couple of oranges, a blue T-shirt, and a windbreaker. I lean the room and start to read his diary. His handwriting is poor, heavy, irregular. I re-read his remarks about Venice: "Sunday, February 15, 1981. We arrived in Venice this morning. We took the train. It is really spectacular. No cars, just pretty little streets and small bridges over the canals. We set outside and had dinner of various strange things. We went back to the hotel, I am in a tiny room by myself. Ran out and bought a kilo of oranges and apples and put them on my window sill. We went out and had a very good walk. I ate a good soup, noodles with tomato sauce, and drank a lot of white wine. Went to Piazza San Marco, had a grappa. Made me feel not too good. Went back to Hotel C."

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Sophie Calle – Double Game – “The Hotel”
Monday, February 16, 9:30 A.M. I go into Room 28. Only one bed has been slept in. I find an impressive pile of luggage on the right along the wall. Four visitors' suitcases stacked on top of each other; three traveling bags, a row of shoes, eight pairs for the woman (size 8) and five pairs for the man (size 11). I open the wardrobes. On the right, some men's clothes including three new pairs of shoes in leather covers, a hat, two pairs of white underpants, and one pair of pants with five buttons. All of them of a fine quality. I imagine some older well-off people. In the bathroom, nothing special except a pink flannel nightgown. I put on some of their Chard No. 5 perfume. Hasty open one of their suitcases. I catch a glimpse of The Economist magazine, some bananas in a plastic bag. Once the room is made up, I leave.

Tuesday, February 17, 9:10 A.M. The twin beds have been slept in. In the wardrobe, the banana peel, a bottle of water, and a pair of hardly worn black flats (they fit me; I take them). On the chair, a thick white cotton pajama bottom. To the left, some mint, a crossword on a bedside table, an alarm clock, a torch, a roll of Scotch tape, three pairs of glasses, a book, Games with Love and Death by Arthur Schnitzler. In the chest under the drawer, I find two handbags, some pearl necklaces in a plastic bag, and ten small identical boxes full of white pills wrapped in a Fingersall shoe cover. The two lower drawers contain some women's clothes, silk blouses, pasted color scarves.

Wednesday, February 18, 9 A.M. The two beds have been slept in. There is some progress on the crossword puzzle grid started yesterday. The banana peel is still in the same place. I lift the suitcases; three of them seem to be full. I open them. In the first one I find a toilet kit, in the second a set of identical Brooks Brothers shirts with blue-and-white stripes. In the third one, a book, Artists Crime by Nikko Marsh, a Miro, a camera, a fortune flower (saw), a 7" x 9 1/2" photograph of a sailing boat on the sea, a reservation at the Milan Carlton for February 19, a portrait of the Pope, an envelope addressed to Mrs H. Baltimore, with the following notation on the back: "Jean Paul Belmondo, rue des La Paix, Paris 5e" (the street number is not mentioned; the address number number is wrong, the post-office cancelation has been written over in ball-point). A series of index cards with columns of numbers (stock exchange quotations?). I hear some noise, hastily close the suitcase, and make the bed.

Thursday, February 19, noon. They have gone. They have left nothing behind. I take a last photograph of the tumbled beds. The memory I will keep of them is the obscene image of the pattern bottom, lying stupidly on the chair.
Monday, February 16, 11 A.M.
I hear a woman's laugh coming from Room 46. A quarter of an hour later, the bellboy knocks on the door, brings in breakfast for two and leaves. I go up to the room to listen.
She says, "Oh! This is lovely!"
He replies, "But anybody can make that!"
She says, "This is chocolate; the way I like it." "He laughs throatily. My services are wanted elsewhere. When I come back ten minutes later, the subject of conversation is still the same.
She says, "I really don't know how they make that."
12:30 A.M. The bellboy knocks on their door; takes the tray, and leaves.
She says, "Oh! Those Italians!" and, "Oh no, don't do that! I've got problems. I swear: You're too much!"

I hear their kiss.
She says, "You shouldn't do that! I haven't been to the loo this morning," to which she shrinks, "Oh, I forgot to lock the door!" The key turns in the lock, it's 1:10 A.M. They're loudly making love and I go off to sleep.

Tuesday 17, 11:30 A.M.
I pass by Room 46. I hear the woman say, "I told you when we left ..." followed by silence. By 12:40 A.M. they have gone out. I go in. The first thing to catch the eye is the mind-bogglingly huge pair of shoes, under the table, that blocks out everything else. Then find the following items scattered about the room: a carton of Camel cigarettes, a pair of Ray-Ban glasses, a Sony Walkman with two sets of earphones, tapes (Bernard Lavilliers, The Doork, books: Examen, Return to Brooklyn by Hubert Selby Jr, La compoterie du Caire by Gerard de Villiers, La grande chaîne en repas by Hunter S Thompson, and three comic books: La Colique and Fabrice de Venise by Hugo Pratt, and A Suivre, special John Lennon issue, A Knife and shashka, a book by M V Sturman on aerospace medicine, notes on the same subject, and stationery with the letterhead of Cercle de Cercle du City Hall. One of them wears striped pajamas at night, the other a black silk slip and pink bed jacket. All the clothes are hanging in the wardrobe.
In the suitcase are two pairs of women's panties, tights, a pair of men's underwear, a tube, and a jar of vaseline. The bathroom is a mess.

Wednesday 18, 10 A.M.
The room is empty. They have checked out. On a piece of paper in the wastepaper basket is the following text, scribbled in pencil: "Ghetto, Court of Malta and gilded mouth, Court of Malta, wooden staircase, street of love, of friends, the bridge of wonders."

On the way back, old ghetto.
Crazy staircase. Turk sewer rats.
They have forgotten a pair of panties and socks that are drying on the bathroom radiator.
The towels are all over the place and the water is still running in the washbasin.