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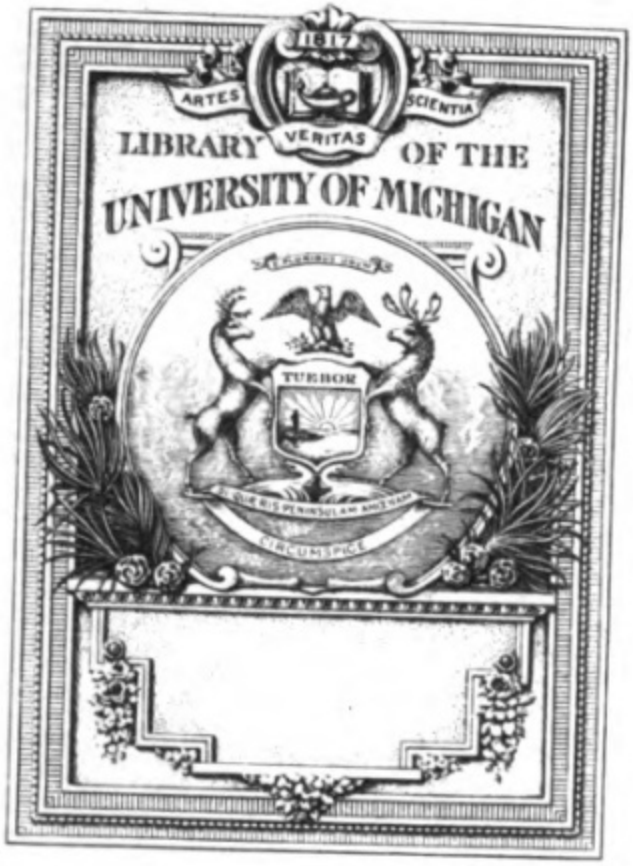

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"The Baron is one of the most amusing detectives we have encountered in a long, long time." N. Y. TIMES.

This book continues the adventures of that remarkable creature, the Baron von Kaz, who was introduced to an enthusiastic public in The Ticking Terror Murders.

Here we see the prodigious Baron with his conceit and naïveté, his old-world sophistication and foolhardy bravery, and his great intuition, facing the "hissing death" in Hawaii.

It began with murder on a Honolulu-bound liner, but the truly amazing aspects of the mystery did not become apparent until after the debarkation. It was then that the Baron received the Green Lion Jade and met the hissing death for the second time. He also built castles in the sand, with almost fatal results, was kidnaped and rescued only to find himself in a worse predicament, and made the acquaintance of the thirty-pound book with the lead corners. Finally he tapped a Japanese agricultural inspector on the head with a champagne bottle, went for a wild ride on a Kona "nightingale," and learned about the Rock of the Shining Water and the burial place of Prince Puakini. And in the old lava tunnel the Baron and Caryl Miquet, a lady of many parts, faced the hissing death for the last time and only the presence of the Baron's boon companion, his green umbrella, saved the day. Even so, the Baron ended up in a hospital bed, but it was from this same bed that he produced the astounding surprise that gives this exciting story its dramatic ending.

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THE FEATHER CLOAK MURDERS

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The Feather Cloak Murders: *The Second Adventure of the Baron von Kaz*

By DARWIN and HILDEGARDE TEILHET

THE SUN DIAL PRESS
Garden City New York

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To

JAMES W. POLING

as a poor substitute for a certain bottle of brandy duly promised and lamentably forgotten

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THE FEATHER CLOAK MURDERS

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CHAPTER I

SPROUTING FEATHERS

THE MAN was saying something. The wind lifted tattered sentences, torn fragments from his speech, and hurled the words around the corner of the deck.

"I'm not double-crossing you. . . . I'll prove it. The assistant manager of the club's a friend of mine . . . he sent me the radio . . . this afternoon. He saw the letter from . . . San Francisco. And they're mailing it to her in Hawaii. That's God's truth. . . . He didn't say, but it ought to get there soon. We can watch her mail . . . know it's coming and can wait and get it and . . ."

Then the man began to laugh. It was a heavy laugh. The other person with the laughing man would speak in a low voice and then this laugh would come, huge and hearty, carrying over the rush of wind, over the wash of waves, as the Kohala's streamlined prow cut through the dark water.

It was past midnight. The great Pacific liner raised up and down easily, like a luxuriously appointed lady with one cocktail too many who still retains all her dignity. The motion became a long, slow, rhythmic weaving into the waves. It was warm. The clouds rolling across the moon were thick and bluish, as though they had been rinsed

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in too much bluing and stuck up there to dry against the soft, star-sprinkled velvet of the night.

Tomorrow morning the Kohala would be in Honolulu. Down below, in the bar, in the ballroom, and in all the cabins, from the expensive Lanai suites on B deck to number six-twenty on D deck, into which the two chorus girls had wangled the two evaporated milk salesmen, the passengers were celebrating their last night before reaching Hawaii.

They were happy, drinking, dancing, and the music floated up through that powdery tropical night to the sports deck.

The laughing man and his companion were standing on the trap-shooting platform at the rear of the sports deck. The platform projected several feet beyond the side of the ship, a sheer drop of fifty some feet to the curling streaks of water creased with shimmering strips of foam. The man continued to laugh. The laugh sounded as though a number of small paper bags were being exploded in a series of three and four at a time.

The laughing man leaned on the railing. Behind him, his hands rested on its salt-roughened wood. His head was back. His big, wide, drunken mouth was opening and closing and letting out the laughs, his eyes wrinkling when they shut. When he laughed his whole body would move. His coat would part. His stomach was big. His stomach would contract as if the laughter were something hard and solid which had to be shoved out, and then the stomach would relax and flow over the belt again.

The other didn't speak very loudly. The other watched the man's big stomach expand and contract and stepped closer to this stomach and quickly, with a single motion,

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drew an object from a holster placed flat against the chest under his coat. The man was still laughing when he felt that hard, shiny thing dig into his stomach, go creeping upward to his heart.

All at once the laughter stopped.

It stopped with an odd fluttering squeak. The laughing man wasn't drunk enough not to know what was in his friend's hand. The night, and the hazy light from the clouded moon and the stars, curiously exaggerated the form of the revolver. The light touched on the barrel of the weapon. It was a long barrel. Twice as long as the barrel of an ordinary revolver. The front half of the barrel was slender. The latter half was swollen, bulbous in outline. The mouth which had been laughing was open, but no sound issued forth, and the eyes sighted down at that cold swollen thing pressing at his heart, and hazy thoughts, clumsy ideas, flashed through the man's head.

From the steel barrel of the elongated revolver came a hissing sound, as faint as any tremulous sigh of the night.

As the big body pitched forward, the barrel was rapidly withdrawn.

The big man fell limply. He went down on his stomach. A fraction of a second after the stomach squashed onto the wood, the head smacked the deck hard.

One of the hands crumpled unnaturally under the soft, bulgy stomach, as though in that instant before he had finally gone off into death he had wished to feel that feathered dart which had struck into the flesh covering his heart.

The other arm had hit the deck, remaining there. His body was rolled to one side. A hand plunged into his inner pocket. A shadow passed along the body. And then

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the body was alone on the port side of the deck, moving sluggishly with the lift of the ship. . . .

Listening to those words whipped to him from the other side of the deck, listening to them without paying attention to them, the brave Baron Franz Maximilian Karagôz von Kaz, formerly of Vienna, looked irritably at his watch for the fifth time.

It was twelve twenty-eight. He had been on A deck since midnight, expecting Caryl Miquet. He lit his seventh cigarette, placed his elbows on the railing and moodily gazed out into the night. Ach! he firmly decided; five minutes longer shall I wait. Only five minutes.

He could hear the nostalgic refrain of the Viennese waltz which the orchestra was playing below. It brought him memories of Vienna. He had been away for three years. Lieber Gott! In a few weeks he would be in Vienna, and no longer would he hear this barbaric American language spoken; no longer would he have difficulty in making it clear to stupid waiters that it was champagne he wished for breakfast and not curious fruit juice concoctions. He sighed and looked at his watch again. Twelve thirty-five. Perhaps it was that imbecile laughing on the other side of the deck who had frightened her.

The music ceased. He lit another cigarette. He would give her five minutes more. No one could say that he, the great Von Kaz, cared whether she came or not. Miti Klingefass was still in Vienna. The Baron lit the cigarette as the laughing blown by the wind from the other side of the deck stopped. The Baron flicked his cigarette overboard. He was in vile humor. He would telephone Miti Klingefass as soon as he arrived in Vienna. He would

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keep her waiting. He would telephone Miti and Rachel von Freiden and the Countess Polakj; then they all could wait for him.

He took his watch out of his pocket and then, coming to a firm decision, clapped it back into his pocket, pulled his felt hat low on his forehead and, with the air of a man who is far superior to the idiotic vagaries of women, especially barbaric American women, walked around the wireless cabin toward the trap-shooting platform. Halfway around he stopped, peered hopefully down over the railing toward the lower deck. He rubbed his nose, muttered to himself. He glanced at his watch. It was eighteen minutes to one. Also, he savagely promised himself, he would telephone Vilma Hobraz and Clara Schonfeld, if they were in Vienna. He would keep them all waiting. Every one.

He passed the wireless cabin, wondering if it could be possible that this American woman had misunderstood the time. Ach, no. That could not be. There must be some other excuse. Thus reassuring himself, he was so occupied by anointing his grievously speared pride that it is conceivable that he might have stridden the full length of the ship and into the Pacific, such was his preoccupation, had he not stumbled.

His foot struck a dark massive shape stretched on the deck. The Baron pitched forward. He landed on his knees and hands like a cat, jumped up, balancing on his toes. All thoughts of the fickle Caryl Miquet vanished from his mind. Head cocked to one side, for a moment he stood over the body looking at the thing rolling back and forth on the grilled wooden platform with every rise and fall of the ship.

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The Baron von Kaz had eyes which were remarkably sharp, even at night. The upper deck, as far as he could see, was empty, deserted. Suddenly he stooped, turning the body on its back. By the flickering gleam of his cigarette lighter he examined the face. Something puzzled him about this death, and then he knew: He had heard no shot. There were only two types of guns which could kill noiselessly; the revolver with the silencer or the air pistol. The revolver bullet left a clean hole when shot close, always with powder marks. The silent air pistol shot mushroom lead pellets which made jagged wounds, or slender tufted steel darts. He placed the cigarette lighter near the small, bloody puncture above the heart. Then he saw gleaming, in the bright blood, two hairlike bluish strands.

He lifted the coat a few inches from the white shirt, touched the blood, then placed the tip of his finger beneath the cigarette lighter. The blue shreds from the tufted or feathered steel dart clung to his finger. The tufts or threads or feathers placed in the darts to guide their flight were often loosely inserted, easily detached and ripped away. He wiped his fingers with his handkerchief. The man, whose body was still warm, had been killed by an air pistol. Not a toy pistol, but one of the German pistols, because only in Germany were air pistols made with sufficient power to be used for killing small game . . . or human game at close range.

He threw the handkerchief overboard, watched it flutter, a pale white square, into the night and disappear. After once more regarding the dead man he rapidly ran forward. Amidships was a door which he opened. Entering the stair hall he impatiently glanced at the elevator indi-

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cator, saw that the elevator was between B and C decks, plunged down the stairs to B deck, where he found himself in the amidships hall, decorated with mirrors and gold furnishings and two or three women sitting upon the blue-and-gold chairs waiting for the elevator to rise, their escorts in evening clothes smoking and commenting on the fine weather you always have when you begin to near the Islands.

The Baron von Kaz went right, turned, passed through the library and smoking room, entered the corridor leading to the Lanai suites, the cabins de luxe of the Kohala. Three times he rapped on the paneled door of suite number four, and he heard someone move softly inside, and a suspicious voice came through the wood: "Yes?"

"Von Kaz."

The door opened slightly. For an instant before the door swung sufficiently wide for him to squeeze in, a face stared at him. The Baron shut the door behind him, leaning against it, peering about the room. In impeccable dinner attire, Mr Hiroshita twirled the stubby little automatic he had been holding in his right hand. "You have greatly pleasing visit, Baron?"

Silently the Baron reached the door separating his stateroom from Mr Hiroshita's suite, opened the door and peered into his own quarters. The cabin was empty. "If you please, my dear sir," he asked casually, returning, "did you enjoy the music of the dance?"

"From here one cannot listen to music."

"Ach!" The Baron showed his surprise. "But on such a lovely night you did not go for a walk on deck, no?"

Mr Hiroshita sat down. "Not safe to do so." He watched the Baron restlessly pacing the width of the stateroom.

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"You have greatly pleasing visit with Miss Miquet?" he repeated.

The Baron snapped his fingers. "Naturally." He glanced at his client. "Naturally," he said more loudly. He walked to the telephone. "You were here all the time, my dear Mr Hiroshita?"

"All the time. Why asking?"

The Baron lit a cigarette, slyly squinting through the smoke at his client. "Our dear friend," he stated with deliberate bluntness, "has been murdered."

"Please?" Air hissed from Mr Hiroshita's yellow teeth. The long head completed a quick, startled motion.

"Mr Kohler is on A deck. Dead. He will trouble you no longer, my dear sir."

After a long pause Mr Hiroshita nervously produced a smile. "So very sorry dead." He placed knuckles to his temple where the veins showed blue under the parchment skin. "You are certain?"

"Do you presume, my dear sir, that the Baron von Kaz could be mistaken? He is dead."

"You have told anyone else, please?"

"No one. I came to you first."

The two men eyed each other. "Very clever man," said the Japanese at last. "However, poor Mr Hiroshita in stateroom all evening."

"Ach." The Baron shrugged. "I wished to be sure." Briefly he explained that he had walked up to A deck for exercise and stumbled on the man lying dead on the trap-shooting platform.

"Miss Miquet not see the lamented Mr Kohler?"

For a moment the Baron stared at the Japanese, then said coldly, "No," paused, concluded as though Miss

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Miquet's name had never been pronounced, "Air pistol. He was killed by an air pistol. The German Haenel pistol employs feathered darts. That is why there was no noise. 'Abyssus abyssum invocat.' That is Latin," he explained gravely. "It translates, 'One fault——'"

But Mr Hiroshita was not properly impressed with this display of superior erudition. While talking, the Baron had lifted the telephone receiver, and the Japanese sharply interrupted, "Who telephoning?"

"Hein?" Sadly the Baron dismissed his Latin, resignedly explaining that it was wise to telephone the Captain, inasmuch as Mr Hiroshita apparently had not left his stateroom to kill Mr Kohler.

Mr Hiroshita accepted this stolidly, showed his teeth again. "Must deny having pleasure to kill poor Mr Kohler. Have suggestion, please. Greatly better to see Captain Anderson in honorable person."

"So?"

"Who knows who listens with telephone? I remain here with door well locked."

The Baron shrugged. "I will call the Captain."

"Greatly better to talk in person."

"But, my dear Mr Hiroshita, is it wise to leave you alone again?"

"Wise?" Mr Hiroshita dropped his right hand to his pocket. "Please to tell me what is 'wise'? You speak to Captain, Baron. In fifteen minutes, if you are not returned, Mr Hiroshita rings for kindly steward, inviting him for game of poker which extends to your arrival."

"The steward will not play——"

The Japanese made motions of counting out money.

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The Baron smiled, unlocked the door. "With someone in the cabin you should be safe."

"Honest man always safe," softly stated Mr Hiroshita.

The Baron believed that he knew all there was to know concerning boats. Had he not crossed the Atlantic, penetrated through the canal to the Pacific? Accordingly, when he approached a steward in the B deck lounge and demanded where the Captain could be located and the steward said somewhere in the stern, the Baron marched forward.

The steward ran after the Baron. "In the stern, sir——"

"Exactly," said the Baron. "I understand both the American and English languages perfectly, my dear man."

The steward mumbled protestingly, but the Baron was already out of hearing.

Approximately fifteen minutes later the brave Baron again passed through the B deck lounge and in passing the steward remarked in a saber-edged voice that the Captain was supposed to be in the bar and consequently was not in the stern.

Captain Anderson was sitting with three other men at a table in a deserted corner of the bar. An elderly and liberally rouged woman was rattling the slot machine while three or four girls and their mildly drunken escorts were cheering her on.

Captain Anderson put down his glass of lemonade as, back stiff, feet clicking, the Baron bowed. "Pardon me, my dear sir. I wish to speak to you."

"Sure," said the Captain genially. "Pull up a chair. Feeling better?"

Neither the brave Baron von Kaz nor Mr Hiroshita had departed from their staterooms for more than a few min-

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utes at a time during the entire voyage. Both had explained to their stewards that they were very ill. Inasmuch as the Kohala rocked in normal seas about as little as an express train over a ballasted track, when the Captain had heard of the preposterous behavior of the two passengers in the exclusive Lanai section he had dropped in upon them to assure them that a brisk walk around the deck was all that they required to feel fit. He had found them playing cards, surrounded by a choice collection of brandy and whisky bottles and determined not to brave the elements.

As a result, the Captain had decided that these ill-assorted travelers—a Japanese and an Austrian—were merely utilizing the trip to drink themselves to death. While the Captain didn't mind a drink now and then, he disliked sots who preferred to drink in their staterooms and to issue calumnies concerning the seaworthiness of his ship.

"Thank you," replied the Baron. "I am better. I wish to——"

"Fine." This was the last night, and the Captain felt fine himself. "Baron von Kaz," he waved to the three men, "Mr Preacher, Mr Sargent and——"

The third one, sitting at the end of the table, said, "Bolton." Jeffrey Preacher, next to the Captain, was thin and youthful, about twenty-seven, with wheat-colored hair. John Sargent was stockier, with broad shoulders and a tanned face. "Bolton," concluded the Captain. "This is Mr Bolton."

Despite his haste, formally the Baron bowed to each one in turn. The Baron had been reared in a land of rigid rules and manners; in Austria, when you were introduced

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to an individual, there was a proper way of acknowledging this introduction, a formula which must be gravely followed through even though it might be necessary to make death wait. . . .

Jeffrey Preacher raised his glass. "Aloha! Better have one with us."

John Sargent folded his arms on the table. "My fiancée's cousin, Miss Miquet, has mentioned you, I believe."

And Bolton's thick colorless lips rolled into a grimace. The lips remained pressed together during the smile. Bolton was fat, but the fat was hard and solid. Above his pudgy cherubic face pale brownish hair was brushed forward to hide the bald spot.

The Baron's glance passed over John Sargent as he again turned to the Captain. "If you will permit me, my dear sir?"

"Oh," grunted the Captain. "Want to see me alone?" He addressed the three men: "You'll excuse me?"

He and the Baron withdrew to one side. The Baron whispered.

The others saw the Captain frown, shake his head, then give a forced laugh. "See here, my friend," he stated, forgetting to lower his voice, "no one's shot. Besides, you can't shoot a person dead with an air gun." He clapped the Baron on the arm. "I tell you what, you run off to bed like a good fellow. You've had one too many."

The Baron again started to whisper.

"Yes, yes," said the Captain with an attempt at good-nature. "Don't you worry now. Of course he's shot. No doubt about it. Now you go on to bed and don't worry." He gave the Baron another clap, walked away, and sat down, looking wryly at his companions. The Baron stood

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in the corner, philosophically reminding himself that in a few weeks no longer would he have to suffer the company and the stupidities of the North American barbarians. . . .

"Who's shot?" John Sargent shoved the glass of lemonade toward the Captain.

"Shot?" Nervously the Captain glanced around, uncomfortably aware of a darkly sardonic countenance regarding him pityingly from the corner. "Nobody, Mr Sargent. Forget it." He wiped his mustache after the drink, resisting the temptation to look over his shoulder at the foreigner. "See Carl Kohler this evening? You know him, don't you?"

"Carl?" John replied vaguely. "Saw him early this evening. Said he was going to bed after a dance or so. Why?"

Captain Anderson nodded in satisfaction. "Sometimes these passengers of mine get a little too much to drink. The foreigner over there—— Don't notice him. He'll go to bed in a minute. He thinks he saw Kohler up on A deck. Says he was shot with an air gun." The Captain replaced the empty glass on the table. "An air gun. We'll be having sea serpents next."

The people around the slot machine were already looking curiously at the Captain's table, sensing that something unusual was taking place. The Captain left his chair again and took the Baron by the arm. "Go on," he urged. "You need your sleep, old fellow."

"Captain." Bolton had oozed out of his chair and was facing the two. "The man may be so drunk that he's really killed someone. Do you want me to go and see if anything *has* happened to Mr Kohler?"

Bolton's face was more cherubic than ever.

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Those at the slot machine heard what Bolton had said. Jeffrey Preacher and John Sargent stepped forward. "How about all of us taking a look-see, Captain?" asked Jeffrey. "This hasn't been such an awfully exciting trip so far."

"And it isn't going to be, if I can help it," stated the Captain grimly. "I'll go, if it's necessary. Come on, Baron. The rest of you stay here. Baron von Kaz has—these tropical nights are rather stimulating to the imagination." He grasped the Baron's shoulder forcefully, gave him a little jerk, not angrily, but indicating that he wasn't going to tolerate any more nonsense.

"If you please, my dear Captain," murmured the Baron politely as he lifted the other's hand from his shoulder. He smiled pleasantly. "I am able to march without assistance."

The Captain opened and shut his right hand until feeling was restored into his fingers, staring at the foreigner in bewildered surprise. The dark face smiled at him; the eyes were uncommonly innocent of all malice.

At the same time a brown-haired girl in a flowered evening dress ran from the bar to the table. "John, who's killed?" She pointed at the fat man who was lighting a cigar. "I heard Mr Bolton say that Carl Kohler had been——"

"Come, come, Miss McKay," soothed the Captain. "No one's been hurt."

But the damage was done. The old woman let loose a scream. The girls with brightly painted lips clutched at their escorts, and Bolton continued to puff the cigar, his cherubic countenance as expressionless as a rubber doll's with all the features worn away. The Baron wondered if this Mr Bolton had deliberately spoken to the Captain in

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a voice loud enough to reach the slot machine. And above the questioning voices Jeffrey Preacher cried hotly, "I won't, Bolton. I won't go to my room." He looked ashamed, embarrassed by the quick silence. "Sorry to yell. But Bolton's been ordering me about so long that he forgets I'm not fifteen years old now."

Bolton's thick lips twitched; the rest of his face was stolid. The Captain, deciding on the only means by which to calm his passengers, called to the Baron, "Let's go."

Jeffrey Preacher, John Sargent, and the brown-haired girl in the flowered dress followed them along with several others. At the entrance to the empty ballroom the Captain instructed them to wait in the bar. "No one's been hurt. I'll be right back. The Baron's probably been dreaming of some child's popgun."

Ach, thought the Baron. A child's air gun. In Germany he had seen the Haenel air pistol shoot through three inches of seasoned oak.

Bolton was finishing his drink when the two men and the girl returned. Jeffrey said cheerfully enough as he sat down, "You are a fool, Bolton, shouting like that to the Captain."

Bolton's slate-gray eyes raised, looked at the young man.

"And why the devil couldn't I have gone with the Captain?" Jeffrey dropped his elbows on the table. "I'm getting tired of being ordered by you all the time."

Bolton stood up. Ignoring Jeffrey's rebellious complaint, he removed the cigar to say quietly to the other young man, "I don't like this, Mr Sargent. I think I'll go and see what the trouble is." Jeffrey started to leave the table, saw the expression on the pudgy face and sat down again.

"I'll go with you," decided John. "You two stay here."

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Mary McKay shook the ice in Jeffrey's glass and after a few minutes asked, "Why don't you get rid of Bolton? Every time I look at him he gives me a funny feeling."

"Don't be silly. He's all right. Only he likes to boss me as if I were still a kid."

"I don't like him."

"John seems to. What do you want to drink?"

"Chartreuse. He used to be a wrestler, didn't he?"

Jeffrey called the steward, ordered a Chartreuse and another scotch-and-soda. "He told you?"

"He told John. I don't see why John likes him."

"Bolton's been with me so long, I wouldn't hardly know how to tell him I didn't need him any more. That's the trouble. Mother took me to Paris because she had a mania about kidnapers. Bolton was physical instructor at an American boys' school outside of Paris when she got him. And since she died he's been so damned loyal I don't know what the devil to do about him."

"Well," declared Mary decisively, "if John thinks he's going to get Bolton to take charge of Billy, I won't have it."

"Oh." Jeffrey opened wide his eyes. "You're not luring him——"

"Certainly not," Mary said. "And John's marrying me, not Billy. Billy doesn't need anyone to look after him on the ranch."

"How old's Billy?"

"Nine, and he's swell, Jeff, even if he is my brother. . . ."

The Baron von Kaz and Captain Anderson had climbed the outside stairs to A deck. Above them the tall slender

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masts swayed in the night, and ahead huge funnels jutted toward the stars like massive cliffs. "This way," said the Baron. "He was lying on the trap-shooting platform."

The Captain walked past the wireless cabin, reaching in his pocket for his flashlight. The beam picked out the grilled wooden floor of the trap-shooting platform, but there was no body upon it.

Angrily the Captain swung his light on the grilled floor, then up and down the deck. "Are you satisfied, Baron?" he asked grimly. "There's no body here."

"So? However, Mr Kohler's body *was* here, my dear sir."

The Captain sighed. It was part of his duty to be patient with his passengers, but mortal man has limits to his endurance. "Come on, Baron. What you need is sleep. I'll help you to your stateroom." The Captain silently told himself what he thought of these drunks, these damned drunks going and upsetting everyone in the bar by their silly talk.

The Baron was on his knees. Assuming that the foreigner had collapsed, the Captain resignedly reached to haul the man to his feet when the Baron's voice came, metallic, precise. "Here! If you please, your flashlight. He was here. His body was here."

A white beam of light splashed on a small, reddish stain. "See here, Baron, that's paint," explained the Captain. "Red paint."

The Captain even condescended to place a finger on the stain to prove to this foreigner that it was red paint. "Certainly it is. You come along to bed and—— God Almighty! It's *blood!*" He had put his finger to his tongue.

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Now he choked, feeling a queer rush of nausea. Frantically he wiped his fingers on the white dress coat, spat over the railing.

"So?" The Baron stood.

"You're right." Only for a moment did the Captain hesitate. Then he ran to the wireless cabin, knocked on the door. "Baron," he called, "will you wait in the wireless room?"

The Baron hadn't foreseen this. The Captain was issuing orders to the two wireless operators. One stepped out, hastily buttoning his coat. "He wants you in there, sir." Realizing that if he refused he would cast suspicion upon himself and thus risk involving his client, the Baron von Kaz bowed slightly, entered the cabin where the Captain had the chief purser on the telephone.

When John Sargent and Bolton, followed by several other curious passengers, reached A deck, they were stopped by a polite but firm wireless man.

"Sorry," he said. "There's been a slight accident. This deck will be closed for at least half an hour."

The lights were shining through the wireless cabin windows. At one of the windows Bolton saw the Baron's head, nodding vigorously, as if explaining to the officers in the room what might have occurred.

A few minutes later Bolton sat down next to Jeffrey. "They've got the Baron up there, and they're closing the deck for half an hour. Something's doing, all right. I think you'd better go to your room." And as the younger man didn't move Bolton's voice pitched higher, "Do you hear, boy? Get to your stateroom."

"Don't be so excited, Bolton." John gave the fat man a friendly glance. "Take it easy. I've managed too many

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Mexicans doing geological work to get excited when I'm giving orders."

"I'm never excited," contradicted Bolton flatly, unemotionally. "I am a plain, humble man. Mr Sargent, my job is to protect Mr Preacher. For fifteen years I've made that my job——"

"Oh Lord!" said Jeffrey wearily. "Let's not go into that again. Who the hell's going to kidnap me on a boat? I'm not going to my room. I'm staying here with Mary. And John," he added as an afterthought.

Bolton pushed back his chair, his colorless lips twitching. He got up and walked out of the bar. There was a long, awkward pause, and Jeffrey said finally, "He always gets sore if I don't do what he says. I guess I'd better go after him and tell him I'm sorry."

"I've got to go down for cigars," the geologist announced as Jeffrey stood. "They don't sell any decent ones here at the bar. I'll go part way with you. Coming, Mary?"

"I'm staying. *I'm* finishing my drink."

"Good," he said, oblivious of her frown. "I'll be back in a few minutes."

During the twenty-odd minutes that he was in the wireless cabin the Baron repeated his story, telling how he had discovered Mr Kohler's body, to at least four ship's officials. He did not mention Miss Miquet. He merely said that he'd wandered to A deck to smoke a cigarette before retiring.

During these twenty-odd minutes the stewards had been notified by telephone unobtrusively to search the Kohala for Mr Kohler. And Mr Kohler was not located. Very little more could be done. There was some hope that

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he might be sleeping in another passenger's cabin. It was obviously impossible for the stewards to rouse every person on board. Captain Anderson thanked the Baron, apologized to him for disbelieving his story at first, and said he was quite free to return to his stateroom.

The Baron descended to B deck at once. For a few minutes only he stayed outside the ballroom on the promenade deck overlooking the tourist quarters. Like tiny flashlight bulbs, the stars went on and off in the midnight sky, and the wake of the ship curled toward the rear, luminous and vague.

Thoughtfully he lit a cigarette. Mr Hiroshita had been afraid of Mr Kohler. And now Mr Kohler had been shot in the heart, and his body had in all probability rolled off into the sea unless . . . unless it had been deliberately pushed off after the Baron had departed. Ach! thought the Baron, that is not pleasant. He wished that he were certain Mr Hiroshita had been in his stateroom during the time taken to wait for Miss Caryl Miquet.

The Baron absently considered the fiancé of Miss Miquet's cousin. He hadn't met him before on board. As he flicked his cigarette into the water, in the shadow under one of the lifeboats he saw a rounder dark blob. It was Mr Bolton. This gentleman puffed at his cigar, giving no sign of recognition. The Baron had no idea how long the man might have been there, or even whether he had confined himself to B deck or had followed to A deck. Quickly the Baron went through the empty ballroom, from there into the bar.

Half an hour ago nearly deserted, now there were at least two dozen men and women excitedly clustered

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around Mary McKay. "I heard the Captain say it," she was assuring them. "He said Carl was killed."

"Where's the body, then?" a man wanted to know. "Are you sure Carl was shot?"

"Right in the heart with an air gun. They've gone up on A deck to find the body now. Isn't it *awful?"*

"Mary!" John Sargent's big shoulders easily thrust through the throng collected at the bar. "I'm turning in. I'll walk with you to your room."

Mary's drink slopped on the bar as she saw the Baron standing near the slot machine, his dark face impassive. "There's the man now!" she cried, and would have run to him if John hadn't taken her by the arm. Anxious to reach his client, afraid that he had been too long away as it was, the Baron heeded none of the questions thrown at him as he passed out of the room.

The Baron rapidly walked down the hall toward the Lanai suites. Not until he had twice rapped three times on number four did he wonder if something were wrong. He stepped back from the door, his face sharper. A light leaked under the door into the hall. "Mr Hiroshita!" he called, again rapping three times. "Mr Hiroshita! It is Von Kaz."

There was no reply.

He darted to his own door, next to Mr Hiroshita's suite, unlocked it with his key, switched on the light, ran to the intervening door, smashed it open on the third attempt.

Mr Hiroshita was on the bed. Mr Hiroshita was lying on the bed with his eyes closed and a bloody welt stretching across his yellow forehead.

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CHAPTER II

THE HAWAIIAN WOMAN standing next to the bandmaster in Aloha was singing, her brown friendly face, shining like a well-oiled poi bowl, was raised to the passengers massed against the railings of the Kohala.

Two newspaper men finished taking photographs of a congressman from Louisiana on his way to Japan to view with alarm the yellow peril at first hand; the newspaper men elbowed through the passengers squirming self-consciously under masses of scented leis and grabbed Mr Hiroshita.

"No, no, gentlemen," protested Mr Hiroshita. "No pictures."

A dark-faced gentleman appeared from behind Mr Hiroshita and accidentally bumped into the cameraman, and somehow the cameraman slipped and fell. The Baron von Kaz apologized for his clumsiness; butter would have melted in his mouth. When the cameraman got to his feet Mr Hiroshita was going down the gangplank, the hat perched on his bandaged head. "To hell with him!" said the cameraman.

In the cool vaulted arches of Aloha Tower, the Baron and his client worked their way through a friendly peo-

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ple. The Baron was aware of white faces, brown faces, and those of various shades of yellow; a conglomerate of Oriental and Caucasian races under one flag and under one government and now for the moment united for the single purpose of welcoming these travelers from a land below the horizon.

The Baron was alert, watchful, suspicious. But the two men safely gained the exit, crossed the street away from Aloha Tower to the green park. Purple mountains lifted jagged sharp peaks above the buildings, and from the sun, hot, although it was only a few minutes after ten, poured a white radiance which shimmered in a blue, an eternally blue sky.

"This way, please," said Mr Hiroshita, leaving the park. "I cabled automobile to wait for us at Bishop Street and Alakea."

As they walked beneath arcades of the old buildings, heavy, square, built of stone which had come from New England, the Baron glanced behind. The two Japanese sauntering half a block distant were examining the contents of a shop window.

The Baron grasped his green umbrella more firmly, increased his pace, but his client refused to be hurried. The Baron was forced to slow down. At the corner of Bishop and Alakea a man jumped out of a big car and stepped in front of Mr Hiroshita. The Baron reacted instinctively. Mr Hiroshita uttered, "Umph!" as a hand struck him on the chest, shoved him to the stone wall. The umbrella handle gently stopped just below the other man's chin.

"You wish?" asked the Baron with cold politeness.

Mr Hiroshita recovered, sidled between the two men, laughing without humor. "Very sorry. This is George. Mr

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George Tuung." Like a machine gun going into action, Mr Hiroshita spoke in Japanese. George Tuung's mouth opened, and teeth three times too large for his triangular face shone brightly.

"How are you, Baron?" he inquired without the slightest trace of an accent. "Okay," he said as the Baron, realizing his mistake, bowed stiffly. "Don't apologize. I shouldn't have jumped at you so suddenly." Then he addressed Mr Hiroshita in Japanese as he opened the rear door of the automobile.

"Only two?" For the first time Mr Hiroshita looked over his shoulder. One of the men following them was lighting a cigarette. His companion was gazing at the sky. "Please." Mr Hiroshita dismissed the two men, hissed liquidly at the Baron, "Please to get in, Baron."

For the first ten minutes of the ride the Baron said nothing, thought a great deal. From time to time Mr Hiroshita slyly glanced at the dark-faced Austrian. "Have successfully evaded reporters, no?"

"Very successfully."

And abruptly changing the subject, "You thinking of poor Mr Kohler? Body perhaps not rolled overboard?"

In the month he had been with Mr Hiroshita the Baron had accustomed himself to the unpredictable leaps of the little man's mind. From the back window he saw the yellow taxi trailing them, and even as he replied he placed the green umbrella between his knees. "Ach, the great Von Kaz can not answer that question, Mr Hiroshita. The body *could* have rolled overboard. I was stupid. I should have removed the body to a safer place, but I did not wish to touch it."

Mr Hiroshita's eyes became half moons in a yellow

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square. The Baron looked out of the window again, placed his hand on his client's shoulder. "If you please, sit lower in the cushions. Your head is exposed, my dear sir."

The big automobile turned into a narrower street. Here the houses were smaller, newer than those huge cool buildings of stone in the center of Honolulu, but shabbier, dirtier. The sweet perfume of flowers, exotic and fresh, had vanished. The Baron sniffed delicately. The smells were sharp, sour. Dried fish hung in red strips from shop windows, and rancid vegetables and pickled beans; strange spices and condiments gave forth their own particular odors. The people in this narrow street were smaller. Old women clopped by in sandals. Their heads were nearly bald, wrinkles tracing their faces as if the flesh were covered with a coating of almond paste which too soon had dried in the bright flood of sunlight.

The big automobile coasted to a halt in front of an orange and purple painted store, three stories high. The windows were dusty slits. Above the drab-colored door was a sign: AKIA HIROSHITA, IMPORTER & GOODS OF NOVELTY. George Tuung opened the door. The Baron stepped out first. The yellow taxi slowly passed them. In the back seat the two Japanese were lounging, seemingly half asleep. George Tuung walked with the Baron and Mr Hiroshita to the entrance of the building, spoke to the latter in Japanese. Then he waved cheerfully to the Baron, said, "I'll be seeing you."

There were little nods and murmurs of greeting from several yellow-faced men, who, almost as if by accident, found themselves in front of Mr Hiroshita's store at the exact moment of his return. Suspiciously the Baron

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watched these people who were so small and suave, so oblivious of his own presence. And when Mr Hiroshita had completed his hissing and his smiling and his bending up and down as though his head were attached to a pump handle, he ushered the Baron into a long, musty room with two counters on each side. In the greatest confusion, toys, knickknacks, bolts of cloth, a heterogeneous collection of objects, were piled upon the shelves and along the counters.

An oldish person, resembling a polished stone Buddha dressed in a dirty silk nightshirt, stepped over a rusty child's tricycle and advanced, making sounds like a leaky teakettle. When another stretch of Japanese backfiring was ended, the two almond eyes of the Buddha turned upon the Baron.

"Mr Ukio," presented Mr Hiroshita, "the Baron von Kaz I have greatly honored you writing about."

"So happy, Baron von Kaz." The Buddha inclined, the silken robes rustling at his arms.

Mr Hiroshita continued toward a door at the rear of the store. The Baron regarded Mr Ukio, considered the contents of the store and effectually concealed his enormous surprise. He had understood that his client was a man of great wealth. But this place—so shabby, so musty. . . . He smiled cheerfully at the impassive Buddha, caught up with Mr Hiroshita, his eyes roving restlessly from side to side. This did not march so well, he concluded.

Beyond the door two flights of stairs led to a large sunny room. Here were cool gray walls and bright yellow mats on a polished floor, and waxy flowers waving on slender stalks cunningly arranged in red and yellow porcelain bowls. "Enter, please," said Mr Hiroshita, stepping

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aside for the brave Baron, and this gentleman's umbrella dropped to the floor. Mr Hiroshita leaned down to retrieve it, but the Baron said he was such a dolt and had the umbrella between his fingers before the Japanese's arm had reached the floor, and somehow, when all of this was accomplished, it was the Baron who was behind his client.

"Ach!" declared the Baron, obviously so entranced by the room that in his eagerness to enter he pushed his client into it ahead of him. "It is lovely!" The Baron, however, advanced in a slightly curious fashion; he came in crabwise, sideways, rubbing the green umbrella between his hands, and his eyes darting four ways at once, a great feat but not impossible to a man spurred by the vivid imagination of the Baron von Kaz. He was a brave man, to be sure, but it was extremely easy for him to imagine the paralyzing sensation of a feathered dart striking into his back.

"Most beautiful," commented the Baron, proceeding in his curious manner.

"Be seated, please," requested Mr Hiroshita, ignoring the fine compliments. "No person here but us."

"My dear sir," protested the Baron, very pained, "I assure you, you misjudge. I desire merely to examine this admirable room. It is charming."

"Yes, yes," said Mr Hiroshita, sinking into a green leather chair. He placed his hand on his bandaged head, relaxing for a moment with the pain flaring in his eyes. "Head persists in punishing poor Mr Hiroshita. So sorry; have great deal to say, Baron. Please forgive if words come not quickly in present state."

With this he appeared to withdraw into the tenuous

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fastness of his own thoughts. The Baron sat down, continued to float a polite smile upon a foundation which was not so unconcerned as it seemed to be.

In Mexico City, and until last night on the boat, the Baron had believed that he was being paid one thousand dollars to guard a wealthy Japanese importer who was bringing a valuable jade piece to Hawaii. There were no complexities in that task; it was a simple, straightforward engagement.

Enormously confident of his abilities, the Baron had convinced himself that this frightened Japanese could be protected without complications which might interfere with the voyage on to Austria. An opportunity to collect a thousand dollars en route to Vienna does not come every day; the Baron could not resist it. He had accepted the engagement. But now the Baron felt a stir of annoyance. It was as though he had been gazing over a calm sea and suddenly sighted unsuspected depths from which loomed treacherous and hidden reefs, dangerous and obscure. . . .

As the silence began to stretch and wrap around the Baron and squeeze into him he tried to relieve this uncomfortable presentiment of future disaster by prodding the man opposite him into conversation. "Do you know, my dear sir," he asked with the most deceptive casualness, "I reproach myself severely for not remaining last night in your cabin with you?"

Mr Hiroshita stirred slightly. The eyes turned to the Baron. "Happy to claim fault as mine. Insisted brave Baron locate Captain in honorable person. When hearing knock on door, made mistake to think my trusted friend desires re-entrance. When door unlocked, unhappy

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"Ach, so," murmured the Baron blandly. Whoever had attacked Mr Hiroshita certainly would have examined the man's pockets. The Baron raised his shoulders. "You are here," he suggested delicately. "My duty is—uhm—terminated, my dear sir." Mr Hiroshita merely blinked. "You are aware that we were followed?"

The bandaged head inclined.

"I advise you to see the police at once." Mr Hiroshita said nothing. The Baron's show of calmness appreciably diminished.

When he had accepted Mr Hiroshita as his second client in the Americas, the Baron had faithfully fulfilled his obligations until the last night on board. Then his client had been injured, but this was not the Baron's fault. True, he had wished to see Miss Miquet at least once before the boat entered the harbor, but it had been his client who had suggested that he telephone her and ask for a midnight appointment. He was never guilty of mixing business and affairs of the heart. . . .

Mr Hiroshita speculatively regarded him. "No, absolute proof not seeking Green Lion." He opened his wallet, extracted a round stone piece approximately two inches in circumference. It was greenly opaque. Upon one side, delicately carved, was traced the outline of a crouching lion.

This was the first time the Baron had seen it. "So? It is beautiful although I must admit I would not pay one hundred thousand dollars to possess it."

Mr Hiroshita held the Green Lion to the light. "Not pay one hundred thousand dollars to possess?" The Baron wondered if there was a mildly ironic note in the inflection. "Note very cunning workmanship, Baron. Perhaps

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brave Baron lacks artistic background to appreciate true worth?"

"Artistic background? My dear sir! In Vienna, I inform you, no one appreciated art as did the Baron von Kaz."

"Excellent." Mr Hiroshita tossed the carved stone to the Baron, who was so astounded at the sight of one hundred thousand dollars flying through the air that he almost failed to catch it. "Can be nice neckpiece for lovely lady, no?"

The Baron didn't reply. He turned the Green Lion around in his hands. On the rim were engraved the words, not in Japanese or Chinese characters, but in Spanish: *No Pidas De Grado Lo Que Puedes Tomar Por Fuerza*. As the Baron slowly translated the Spanish into English his dark face grew perturbed:

"'Do not ask as a favor what you can take by force.' Lieber Augustin! This is not at all Chinese jade!"

"Not Chinese jade?" Mr Hiroshita inserted a cigarette into his long holder.

"It is soapstone! Ach, Mexican soapstone such as can be purchased in any market place."

"Not market place, Baron."

The Baron placed the soapstone upon the table. "If you please, why have you told me that you purchased a green jade carving which you had negotiated to sell to a wealthy American for one hundred thousand dollars? Did you not tell me that you required a brave detective to guard you in anticipation of being set upon en route to Honolulu?" Mr Hiroshita closed his eyes. "One hundred thousand dollars. Ach! One hundred dollars would be——"

"One hundred twenty-four dollars, American money," said Mr Hiroshita, opening his eyes. "A humble gift to brave Baron von Kaz. Ignore stone but study carving."

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"I have it? And my fee——"

From the same wallet Mr Hiroshita counted ten one hundred dollar bills, laid them on the table beside the soapstone tablet. "One thousand dollars."

The Baron recounted the money.

"Do not forget Green Lion." Mr Hiroshita handed it to the Baron. "Words are translated. But meaning? Maybe then would value insignificant gift more." Mr Hiroshita's pink fingernail touched the rim. "Please permit slight demonstration." He took the Green Lion, held it between the palms of his hands. He twisted it, showed his hands with a round half of the ornament in each hand. The left half had a small cavity. Mr Hiroshita screwed the two parts together, returned the stone to the amazed Austrian.

"When planning departure from Honolulu, please?"

The Baron said that he was taking next week's boat to Australia and from there an English boat to Italy. Landing at Naples, he would fly to Vienna. This did not please Mr Hiroshita. He squeaked, "And Miss Miquet, please? Miss Miquet accompanies brave Baron?"

The Baron leaned on his umbrella. After a second's hesitation, while his face turned very dark, he said, "I do not expect to see Miss Miquet."

"Not see her?" The little man left his chair to come close to the Baron, squeaking a number of excited words to the effect that the Baron had persuaded him to delay departure from San Francisco by an entire week in order to be on the same boat with her.

This was true. However, at the same time, the Baron had been most casual in speaking of Miss Miquet, saying that a friend of his was to sail on the Kohala, and, all

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things considered, it might be wiser to cancel the reservations on the Lohaala and take the later boat instead. Then, if Mr Kohler had heard they were departing on the Lohaala, they might be able to escape him more successfully.

But now Mr Hiroshita was greatly disturbed that the Baron was not planning to see Miss Miquet. He explained to the Baron how greatly his services had been appreciated. Mr Hiroshita's teeth showed in a smile. "As indication of high regard engaged room for you at Imperial Hawaiian, Baron. Gladly honored to pay fifteen dollars each day for brave Baron to stay long as desires. One week? No, please, two weeks. Three weeks, even. Three weeks, yes-s-s." Mr Hiroshita hissed happily at the thought of the Baron staying three weeks as his guest.

"Then must meet Miss Miquet. Will recount greatly frightened client proved very large trouble on Kohala not permitting brave Baron——"

Above the door a bell rang. Mr Hiroshita lifted the speaking tube, listened, replied rapidly in his native tongue. When he was finished, he rubbed his hands, addressed the Baron. "Greatly disturbed, Baron. Greatly sorry to state two police arrived here wishing to question you. Greatly sorry. Have much of importance to say, please. Tonight in Imperial Hawaiian at seven." He tittered. "Police here very curious. Please do not mention engaged by Mr Hiroshita."

Christian Jameson, chief of detectives of the Honolulu Police Department, sat at a desk of kola wood, fumbling with his silver-rimmed glasses while he examined the sheaf of papers before him. "That's all, boys," he told the

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two policemen who had escorted the Baron to the police station.

The swinging doors shut. Above on the ceiling green lizards scampered across the whitewashed surface, and the Baron nervously moved his chair to the left, afraid that they might fall upon him. Jameson was an old man. He had a missionary mouth, puckered and dry as though he had just bit into a green passion fruit. He raised his head, speaking with the soft, archaic inflection of the islander who has generations of New England ancestors behind him:

"Baron, you've caused us a lot of trouble. We wanted to question you about the murder—the presumed murder —of Carl Kohler. But after we got done talking with Cap Anderson and got the facts from him and tried to find you, we discovered you'd already left the ship."

The Baron politely informed the chief of detectives that he had been in a hurry.

"In a hurry, hey? Well, well. Let me see your passport."

The Baron showed it to Jameson.

"Been in Mexico City? Well, well. This is a new one, ain't it? Dated February nineteenth. Lose your old one?"

Over three years ago the Baron had escaped from Austria. In Vienna he had been in charge of the special investigating division of the Viennese Police until he was arrested along with others who had plotted for a return of the monarchy. He had escaped to Switzerland, and from there to the Northern States of America where he had hoped to make his fortune.

After an experience in Carmel, California,* where he

*See *The Ticking Terror Murders—The First American Adventure of the Brave Baron von Kaz*. Crime Club, Inc., Garden City, N. Y.

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had met Caryl Miquet, the immigration officials learned that he had illegally entered the United States, and he was forced to flee to Mexico. Here he had hidden a few months with a compatriot, that Braunback who had originally introduced him to Mr Hiroshita at the Cosmopolitan Club in Mexico City, until he learned that the former socialistic government in Vienna had been wiped out. With a new regime, the Baron's powerful friends, now restored to power, arranged to bring him back, having a need for him, and had issued a passport.

Something of this he told Jameson. When the Baron was silent Jameson tapped several papers. "If we'd seen you a couple of hours ago you'd have saved us a lot of trouble, Baron. We wondered why you ran off, and while the boys were tracing you I telephoned the San Francisco police. They got hold of your embassy in Washington. Guess you're a pretty important feller after all, eh?"

The Baron modestly stated that he was the greatest detective in all Austria.

Jameson removed his spectacles. Without them his face looked harder. The near-sighted eyes were small round holes. "Well, well, Baron. We folks here don't think we need much detective work. We don't have much crime. Islands too far from any place for a criminal to escape." He polished his glasses. "You cost us a lot of money with all this telephoning. One of the reporters said you'd left with Hiroshita, but we didn't think to look there until we'd checked all the hotels. Wonder if your friends in Austria know you're so companionable with a dope smuggler, eh?"

The Baron grunted as though he had been kicked. His

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head swung from right to left. The Baron was a vain man. Accordingly it was his habit to conceal as far as possible his prognathous jaw, his single heritage from that distinguished grandfather of his, by compressing his lips, thus minimizing the major defect of a darkly aquiline profile. But now, in his astonishment, the jaw and lower lip thrust forward the full Hapsburgian length. "So?" he uttered unbelievingly.

"Well, maybe I shouldn't say that right off. We haven't had a complaint against Hiroshita for several years. How'd you know him?"

The Baron, recovered from the first shock, explained coldly that he had been introduced to the Japanese by a mutual friend in Mexico City. Hearing that Mr Hiroshita was to sail for Honolulu on the Kohala, and as he was returning to Vienna via Hawaii, he had gone with him.

"Well, well," said Jameson. He handed the Baron a radiogram. "This came half an hour ago. Maybe you'd like to read it?"

JAMESON CHIEF DETECTIVES HONOLULU POLICE
CHECKED WITH OCEANIC NAVIGATION COMPANY STOP CLERK DISTINCTLY RECALLS VON KAZ CAME IN DAY BEFORE KOHALA SAILING STOP ASKED IF MISS MIQUET HAD RESERVATION STOP CLERK POSITIVE WAS VON KAZ STOP REMEMBERS PHOTOGRAPHS FROM CARMEL CASE WHEN IN PAPERS STOP TELEPHONED AUSTRIAN EMBASSY AGAIN STOP THEY INSIST BARON OKAY AND ON WAY HOME STOP WE HAVE NOTHING AGAINST BARON HERE STOP ASSISTED US GREATLY IN CARMEL CASE STOP EXTEND ALL COURTESIES TO HIM
LINN SAN FRANCISCO CHIEF POLICE

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When the Baron returned the cable, Jameson didn't refer to it. "Cap Anderson says you were the man who found Carl Kohler dead. What d'you know?"

In five minutes the Baron had given all the details, saying that he had gone to A deck to look at the stars, happened to stroll to the port side, stumbled upon the body, went down in search of the Captain.

"You wanted to tell the Captain first?"

"Ach, my dear sir, he was the man in charge."

"Sure, and while you hunted him the body disappeared." Jameson lit a long dry cigar, puffed it reflectively. "You didn't know Carl, did you?"

"Mr Kohler? I saw him once or twice on the boat."

"You didn't get out of your stateroom very often, the Captain says. Just happened to bump into Carl, hey, and introduce yourself?"

"I am a poor sailor. However, every day I would leave my cabin for a short walk on deck. I remember stopping in the bar and noticing this Mr Kohler talking loudly. I heard his friends call him 'Kohler.'"

"And you recognized him on A deck at night?"

"There was the moonlight." The Baron added carelessly, "And I have a phenomenal memory, my dear sir."

Jameson coughed and eyed the Baron sharply, but the Baron was perfectly serious. He *had* a phenomenal memory.

"Well, well," said Jameson, biting hard on the cigar. "You haven't any idea what could 've happened, hey? Carl was a hard drinker. He could 've got drunk and fallen overboard, but your talk of an air gun makes it mighty confusing. Sure you weren't drunk too?"

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"Pardon," the Baron informed him kindly. "Never does the great Von Kaz become drunk." He smiled.

"The great——" Jameson got up and went to the window. He took several deep breaths, walked back and sat down again. "Excuse me, Baron. You haven't any ideas, then?"

The Baron shook his head. "All right. Don't go around talking about that air-gun business. We've arranged for the papers to say Carl fell overboard. He fell overboard all right. When we examined the trap-shooting platform we found paint scratched away on the lower railing and a shred that was torn from his tie. We'll find out who killed him, but if there was an air gun we'd just as lief let the murderer believe we think you're lying." He stood. "As for you, Baron," he said unwillingly, "you're cleared, I guess. But let me tell you something before you go: We folks here like to have people visit us. We don't aim to cause trouble to them as long as they behave themselves. And this is what I'm getting at, Baron. Most of us on the Islands sort of stick together. Maybe you don't know it, but Caryl Miquet's got good friends here. Her uncle, Louis McKay, came here fifty years ago from France; he bought a ranch on the island of Hawaii and changed his name from Miquet to McKay, so it 'd be good American."

Jameson relit his cigar, puffed at it while the Baron remained silent. "He married a Lorring girl, and *her* family, Baron, goes a hell of a ways back. Both are gone now. But their daughter Mary McKay's well liked here. And someday Billy McKay's going to grow up into a fine young feller——"

"Pardon!" The Baron leaned forward. "If you please, who is Billy McKay?"

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"Her brother. And as I was saying, Mary McKay and her cousin Caryl Miquet've come here, and I'm not going to have anything cause either of those girls trouble. You're to leave Caryl Miquet alone."

The Baron was on his feet now.

Jameson waved his hand. "No need of you looking like you were wishing to put a knife in my throat, Baron. You're not in Austria now. And I can lock you up so damned quick if you start anything that you won't realize what happened. There's a boat leaving tomorrow for Australia. You take that boat and get to hell out of here."

The Baron bowed.

He left the building in a ferment of indecision. The uneasy feeling which had first oppressed him last night, had increased. Something, he knew, was not marching. Ach, no! Whatever it was, he assured himself as he walked down the steps, was none of his concern. He was out of it. He had intended to depart from Honolulu without ever seeing Miss Miquet. She was as nothing to him. He had waited nearly an hour for her on the ship, and she had failed him; she was merely another barbaric American. He stood on the curbing, clutching his umbrella, absorbed and worried. Lieber Gott! why was it that Mr Hiroshita had desired him to stay just to see her? And now this American police official had brought her name into the conversation. That was coincidence, perhaps. Naturally.

Impatiently he started to cross the street, trying to rid himself of that queer onerous feeling, and then someone was shrieking behind him, and the long gray car lunged forward, at him. It would have struck him and smashed

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him senseless to the pavement had he not reacted entirely by instinct.

Those muscular legs of his had not been inherited from the Von Kaz side of his family; and now they lifted him from the path of the car. They leaped, coiled springs suddenly released, and he landed on his shoulders in a most undignified and disgraceful position.

Automatically he raised up and saw a face peer down at him from the car. It was a rubbery, cherubic face. And the face was already starting to pout in disappointment as the automobile swept on, gathering speed. The Chinese woman rushed to him. "You neahlly killed."

"Hein?"

"You neahlly killed. Velly neahlly killed."

"Ach, so? Nearly? I see." He smiled mechanically, brushing his clothes. "Did you get the license number?"

She didn't understand. The man had been nearly run over, and she was excitedly trying to tell him how close had been his escape, and he didn't seem to care at all.

He wasn't listening to her.

He was peering down the street, but the gray car had vanished and with it Mr Bolton.

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CHAPTER III

UNDER THE YELLOW UMBRELLA

AS HE WALKED through the lobby of the Imperial Hawaiian the Baron bought a copy of the afternoon *Honolulu Star-Bulletin,* continued out to the terrace, where he ordered lunch. Carl Kohler's death filled two columns on the second page. Nothing in the story indicated that he had been killed. Nor was there any mention of the brave Baron von Kaz in the account, an oversight which caused this gentleman a slight amount of irritation because he enjoyed seeing his name in the paper.

According to the circumspect narration, Carl Kohler presumably had imbided too freely and in some undisclosed way had fallen overboard. The police had investigated, and found on the trap-shooting platform marks where something heavy had passed under the lower railing. The police had also found blood spots on the wood, but this was another fact that was withheld.

Mr Kohler's biography was short. He had been born on the Islands, graduated from the University of Hawaii, entered the plant research department of one of the pineapple companies. Nine years ago he had gone to the island of Hawaii as manager of a sugar-cane plantation. Five years ago he had accepted a position as assistant manager

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to the great Preacher Ranch in North Kona, three years later went to the McKay Ranch, which was next to the Preacher Ranch, as manager when old Louis McKay died. He had stayed on the McKay Ranch about a year, then had resigned, according to the *Star-Bulletin* to handle his own affairs. During the past year he had taken several trips to Mexico in an effort to start a pineapple plantation there. That was the sum and total of Mr Kohler's existence. The Baron folded the paper, completed his lunch. He looked at his watch. It was one-thirty. In five and a half hours he would see Mr Hiroshita, and then he hoped to have the mystery of the soapstone Lion and how it involved Miss Miquet cleared. He signed the chit, wandered over to the low wall separating the white sands of Waikiki from the green terrace of the hotel.

Waikiki was disappointing in size. From what he had heard the Baron had expected a beach practically as long as the island of Oahu. But the green sea, translucent and dazzling under the sun, with flying manes of white surf, had such a regular lunge and roar that it made up for the smallness of the beach. Far out brown bodies on surfboards were waiting for the next big swell. Diamond Head loomed behind Waikiki, a backdrop for the bathers, fringed along the base with palm trees half hiding white and pink homes. The sand was covered with varicolored beach umbrellas and men and women doing their utmost to expose the legal limit of flesh to the rays of the tropic sun.

All at once the Baron's mildly scornful expression changed. Twenty feet or so away he noticed a bright yellow beach umbrella. It was tilted so that part of the

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rim rested on the sand. And extending from this umbrella were two legs. They were bronzed legs, marvellously and smoothly shaped. Even from where he was standing he could see that they were uncommonly attractive legs. Others also had discerned this fact. At frequent intervals gentlemen passing by the yellow umbrella would pause in complete and happy astonishment at the display. From their undisguised admiration the Baron gathered that the possessor of these legs was sleeping, unaware of the havoc her property was creating.

And as the Baron stood there idly, enjoying the sheen of water and the huge bulk of Diamond Head and the two bronzed legs outstretched upon the white sand, he saw a man and a boy walk toward the yellow umbrella.

The man was fully dressed, his face cherubic, and from the thick colorless lips protruded a large black cigar. The boy was in a bathing suit, black haired, with a smudge of freckles across a small tilted nose. The boy would run ahead, bouncing a rubber ball, and then wait for the man. The man sat down on the sand, a few yards from the yellow umbrella, glanced once without interest at the two bronzed legs near him while the boy began to dig.

The Baron circled back to the terrace, approached the sea wall in another direction. After a time he noticed that Bolton's gaze was directed to one particular stretch of water. Far out were three black spots, and when a green rush of surf flowed in from around Diamond Head these three black spots, along with others, were picked up. A little later Jeffrey Preacher, Mary McKay and John Sargent floated in upon their surfboards. Jeffrey's wheat-colored hair was glistening. Mary stood in the water, snatching off her red bathing cap, shook the brown curly

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hair, laughing. John Sargent pulled the surfboards high on the beach, waved to the fat man sitting there so quietly with his back to the wall.

The Baron hurried to his room, changed into a black bathing suit.

Ten minutes later the boy disgustedly destroyed the sand walls and commenced again to build. A shadow passed on the sand, and a voice above him asked amiably, "What is that, please?"

The boy frowned importantly. "A castle, can't you see anything?"

The man in the black bathing suit and striped bathrobe dropped to the sand. "Ach so, a castle? But it is a very poor castle, no?"

The boy's great gray eyes scornfully contemplated this intruder. The boy decided to ignore the man. But the man imperturbably rubbed his nose for a second, then poked his finger into the sand. "Now I should have a barbican here, and here will be the fosse defended by two guard-rooms. So?" He smiled.

In amazement the boy watched the man swiftly pat a small mound of sand, poke windows and doors into it, then efficiently mark off a large square.

"What's—what's a——" The boy pointed. "That thing you said."

"Ach—a barbican?" The Baron nodded. "The ante-mural. That comes from Latin. When I was your age I had to study Latin very much. It means in your language, 'the place before the wall.'" He said seriously, "I think for this castle we shall have five hundred soldiers, no?"

"Why, you know all about castles!"

"I lived in one many years ago," the Baron said as he

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scooped out the center of a pile of sand. "Here will be the inner bailey. Do you understand what that is?"

The boy shook his head.

"The courtyard. What is your name?"

"Billy."

"So? Billy what?"

"Billy McKay. Do you have soldiers in the—the antemural too?"

"Fifty, my dear Billy."

"What's your name?"

"Franz." He stood. "It is very simple, no? Now if I had a knife I would carve a portcullis."

"I've got a knife upstairs!" exclaimed Billy excitedly. "What's a porkillis?"

"Boy!" Bolton came up from behind. "It is too hot. Go to your room——"

"Gee, Mr Bolton, Mary said I could stay——"

"Do you hear——" Bolton removed his cigar when he saw the face of the man in the striped bathrobe; it was a dark face with a projected jaw. The man's hair was dark brown, cropped short in the manner favored by German officers whom Bolton had seen in prison camps during the war. No emotion appeared upon the cherubic countenance of Bolton. He said, "Hello, Baron. I've been looking for you," and turned to Billy, absently caressed the boy's bare shoulders. "Get to your room, Billy."

"Aw gee, Mr Bolton——" Entranced, Billy stared at the castle builder; a baron, Bolton had said! It was almost like seeing a prince. Or a king.

"We'll construct a better castle some other day," smiled the Baron.

Reluctantly Billy started toward the hotel, paused, asked

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shyly, "You're a real baron? Have you killed people? My tutor told me how the robber barons killed hundreds of people."

"Ach, my dear Billy. I have killed thousands," said the Baron.

Billy's gray eyes opened their widest, and Bolton looked furiously at the Baron, reminding the boy that he was supposed to be on his way to his room.

After the boy had vanished, Bolton said, as though there had been no interruption, "I've been looking for you, Baron. I've been so shaken."

"So?"

"I can't tell you how I feel, Baron. I was driving down King Street on an errand for Miss McKay. I was driving, and I'm afraid I was in a hurry, and then when you stepped in front of the car I lost my head completely." Bolton shuddered. "What if I should have killed you? It would have been terrible. I could never have forgiven myself for such a terrible tragedy. Never!" His eyes watered at the thought. "By the time I had collected myself and returned you were gone."

"My dear Mr Bolton." The Baron was frank and candid and puzzled. "Ach, I do not comprehend. I have not seen you since last night."

"You have not seen me?"

The Baron smiled. "I assure you, no. I have been in no accident."

"You—— I've made a mistake. I'm sorry. But I thought it was you, and I wanted to see you to apologize."

"You are most kind, my dear sir. However, your near victim was not me." The Baron took his cigarette lighter

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from his bathrobe, lifted it to Bolton's cigar tip. "Permit me. Your cigar is out."

Bolton sucked on the cigar. "Thanks. Nice day, isn't it?"

"Marvelous, my dear sir." The Baron dropped the cigarette lighter into his pocket. "I see that the *Star-Bulletin* states that poor Mr Kohler was so inebriated last night that he fell overboard."

"That's what I read. You thought he was killed, didn't you?"

The Baron lifted his shoulders. "It is so easy to be mistaken."

"I thought that silent air-gun story of yours sounded funny, Baron. I'm just a plain, ordinary man, but last night I couldn't figure how an air gun could kill someone." Bolton puffed impassively on his cigar.

"Ach, on the last night it is so easy to drink in excess." The Baron winked, but Bolton's face didn't change. "When I read that he had worked on Mr Preacher's ranch I felt that I should offer my condolences to Mr Preacher, no?"

"Mr Preacher didn't know him." Bolton flicked the ashes from his cigar. "Neither did I."

"So?" The Baron was surprised. "You didn't meet him on the boat?"

"I never permit Mr Preacher to meet strangers on a boat or elsewhere," said Bolton in his hard, flat voice.

"Then Mr Sargent had met Mr Preacher before embarking on the Kohala?"

Bolton looked at the Baron, took the cigar from his mouth. "Glad I didn't run over you, Baron," he said,

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shoved himself to his feet and walked off, his shoes crunching in the soft sand. . . .

Under the yellow umbrella, about twenty minutes later, Caryl Miquet awoke. She yawned, stretched, then frowned severely at two male creatures who were staring at her. When they were immediately possessed of the desire to dive into the limpid Pacific she smiled to herself with satisfaction, unscrewed the top of a bottle of oil and commenced to rub her legs.

Her skin was very brown, and there was little of it unexposed. A white bandeau, tied beneath her arms and at her neck, was divided from the white shorts by an expanse of rippling skin. Her hair was midnight black, darker than the long eyes which maliciously followed the two males who were so hastily plunging into the ocean. She was a well-designed piece, even for Waikiki, and what's more, in her arrogant way she knew it.

"Damn!" she said when she accidentally upset the bottle, and as she moved lazily to retrieve it, her hand encountered another. The gentleman bowed, offered her the bottle.

"Good-afternoon," announced the Baron in what he hoped was a gallant and yet casual fashion. "Ah—good afternoon, my dear Miss Miquet. Ah, I cannot tell you how charmed I——"

"Please don't bow again." She applied the oil to her legs.

The Baron sat down. "I assure you, Miss Miquet, that my manners——"

"Your manners?" She rubbed vigorously. "*Your* manners. I know all about your manners, Baron von Kaz." Her legs shone.

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"If you please," he suggested mildly, "you will remove all the skin."

"Oh!" She faced him. "I don't want to talk to you. I don't want to see you. Considering what took place in Carmel, I should think you could understand that!" The scarlet lips closed firmly.

He nodded humbly.

"Go away, then."

"But you consented to meet me last night."

"I consented to meet you?" Her voice was low but furious. "I was curious to know what you'd have to say. I wanted to know why you followed me. What are you doing here? Fortunately, I told John—my cousin's fiancé. He advised me not to see you—not to let myself be troubled by you."

"So?" He stood, bowed formally. In the bathing suit such a bow was somewhat ridiculous, but the Baron was entirely too vain to believe that anything he could do would be ridiculous. "I only wished to offer my deep regrets, Miss Miquet. I only wished to tell you . . ." What could he tell her? Against that flamboyant pink background of the hotel, here among her friends, where she was known, secure, his fears of this morning were out of place, unreasonable, the grotesque worries of a man who is so accustomed to intrigue that in any occurrence he reads danger. And was he to admit to this scornful creature that he, the great Von Kaz, beloved of the ladies of Vienna, was in love with her, an American nobody? Was that his message? He could see her eyes, ironic and amused as they regarded his discomfort.

He was not inured to this treatment. His back stiffened. "Tomorrow I depart for Austria. I bid you good-by."

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"One question before you leave, Baron." She was imperious. She stood, tall and slim. She wasn't afraid of him. She wasn't afraid of anything any more, she had assured herself. "Before you go, Baron, will you tell me just why you opened my mail this morning?"

"Hein?"

"Why did you open my mail? What right had you to open my mail?"

"Mail?" he stammered. *"Mail?"*

"When they brought the letters to my room this morning, at the hotel, I found that all the envelopes had been obviously opened and clumsily restuck together."

"Please," said the Baron and put his hand on her bare shoulder, and under the weight of that firm hand she was forced to the sand. "Not so loudly. Excuse me, but I must comprehend." He crossed his legs, said very deliberately, "My dear Miss Miquet, this I do not ask you to believe. Nevertheless, I can prove it. This morning I left the boat with a friend—an acquaintance. I have reliable witnesses that will testify that not until after twelve o'clock did I enter the Imperial Hawaiian."

"Who else would open my mail?" she asked angrily, because she did believe him. "You've followed me. The man who made my reservations on the Kohala told me that you had asked about me. What have I done to you?"

"Attention!" The Baron smiled and began to tell her how beautiful it was and how pleasant Waikiki was, and then Mary McKay reached the yellow umbrella, dripping wet and a little out of breath.

"Hello, Caryl. You're awake at last." She glanced at Caryl and then at the dark-faced man, thinking she had seen him before somewhere.

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"This is the Baron von Kaz—my cousin, Miss McKay," Caryl heard herself saying.

Chivalrously the Baron bowed over Mary's hand, kissed it, and as he did so Mary winked at Caryl. Mary's grimace unaccountably irritated Caryl. When the Baron turned to her she gave him her hand very gracefully.

"The dancing commences at nine tonight," he murmured. "I hope I may be honored." His back was to Mary.

"I'm sorry." Caryl was aloof. Then some quality, something in his expression, caused her to add lightly, "But we can have a cocktail together at seven, if you like."

"At seven," he said, inclined slightly to Mary and departed. Caryl watched him go, wondering why she had ever mentioned cocktails at seven. She hadn't intended to. She had said it impulsively, without thinking.

"Did I hear you invite him?" Mary helped herself to the bottle of oil.

"He's impossible. I don't know why I even introduced him to you."

"So that's the way you feel?" asked Mary shrewdly, and they were both laughing when Jeffrey and John joined them a few minutes later.

Jeffrey sat next to Mary. "Stick your legs in my direction," he ordered, "and I'll show you how to put oil on them. Not too much. I learned that trick on the Riviera."

John Sargent took the bottle of oil, said gruffly, "You're not on the Riviera now, Jeff."

Jeffrey grinned. "You know sometimes, John, I forget you and Mary are engaged. How the devil did a cantankerous geologist like John ever get you to give in, Mary?"

Mary laughed, tossed her pretty head. Caryl looked at the two men. "John," she said quietly, "don't spill all the

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oil over her legs. I need a little. Jeff, you can be my man-servant."

"If you put more oil on those legs of yours they'll take you for a Hawaiian," said Jeffrey.

John poured oil in his hand. "With that yellow hair of yours, Jeff, no one 'd think you——"

"John!" Caryl interrupted quickly.

"Hell, don't mind John," Jeffrey said easily, stretching full length on the sand, his bare arm touching Mary's. "I'm a royalist. I've got just enough Hawaiian blood in me to wish I were a king sometimes." His head moved lazily toward John. "If I were king, do you know what I'd do? I'd cancel your engagement to Mary and send you back to Mexico. Then you'd be good and sore, wouldn't you?"

The Baron found Mr Hiroshita's name in the telephone directory. He was finally put through to this gentleman, informing him that a most important engagement prevented him from seeing Mr Hiroshita at seven o'clock. Nine o'clock would be more convenient. Mr Hiroshita protested. The Baron was firm. Mr Hiroshita agreed to be at the Imperial Hawaiian at nine o'clock sharp and clicked the receiver. There was a ripe pineapple on the table. It was the custom of the Imperial Hawaiian to welcome their guests with this traditional fruit of hospitality. The Baron tasted the pineapple, approved of it. When he had finished it he took a hot bath followed by a cold shower.

Then he shaved and changed to immaculate gray flannels. He wondered if he should wire his friends in Vienna and inform them that he might be delayed a few days. He had promised to be in Vienna by the middle of May. The

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government in power officially was neither friendly or unfriendly to the monarchist element. It was a stopgap affair, containing Nazis, monarchists, and those who believed that Austria would be better off without an emperor or a Nazi dictator. The Baron's friends had scheduled their monarchistic attempt for the end of May, and the Baron was to help them. Despite his faults, they needed him. They were well aware of his pride, now so prodded by his supersensitiveness to his dubious ancestry that it had grown almost to demoniacal dimensions. He was a baron, to be sure; but that meant little to the august class in Vienna who still recalled the scandal resulting when his grandfather fell in love with a gypsy dancer . . . who in due course of time became his grandmother. And his friends deplored his impulsiveness, his erratic methods, his colossal assurance, and above all his volatile imagination. However, they admitted that no one else in all Vienna had his peculiar ability, amounting in fact to genius, in ferreting through an involved intrigue or counterplot. With him in Vienna, they believed they could proceed without being tripped up unknowingly by the opposition.

With his usual optimistic confidence the Baron decided that there would be no need to cable, that by tonight he would pierce through this mystery: He would discover why Mr Hiroshita was so interested in Miss Miquet; he would learn why her mail was being intercepted.

He went to the elevator, already anticipating his meeting with Miss Miquet. He would be most firm with her; he would demand an apology from her for permitting him to wait on A deck. That was exactly what he would do, he had determined by the time the elevator deposited

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him on the lobby floor; he would suffer no more nonsense from her. She would know with whom she had to deal. . . .

When it was necessary to his own ends the Baron could be damnably engaging; he knew how to smile, his blue eyes would become candid and guileless, and he could listen in a way that indicated that no one else in the world could say such interesting and amusing things. Now he listened to the desk clerk, his head cocked attentively to one side, the two lines on each side of his lean face deepening in his swarthy skin as he nodded with utmost amiability.

The majority of the guests in the hotel were either napping or on the beach. The lobby was deserted. The clerk had been bored until this distinguished foreigner had questioned him regarding the island sights. The afternoon drowsed by. Butterflies alighted on the yellow coconut fronds arranged on the big table. The Filipino boys squatted behind the folding doors and nodded. And the clerk leaned on his elbows and told the Baron about the burial caves on the island of Hawaii, the blue clouds at night, the half-million-dollar feather cloak worn by King Kamehameha I which could be seen in the Bishop Museum, about the night-blooming cereus, the crater of Kaleakala in Maui, and when the clerk at last paused for breath the Baron thanked him politely.

The clerk had only just started. However, the Baron's attention had been drawn to the cluster of mail boxes behind the desk. "No," informed the clerk, "no, you haven't any mail, Baron. The Kohala's mail was sent in this morning, and we don't expect more from 'outside' for three days."

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The Baron frowned. Now this was strange, was his mild complaint, because he had been given to understand that one of his shipboard friends was writing to him here an address of considerable importance.

"We sent all letters to the guests' rooms between ten-thirty and eleven," insisted the clerk.

"Ach!" The Baron pondered. "No one then is permitted to take it from the desk?"

"Sure, if you're here."

"Perhaps one of your other guests would have taken my mail by mistake?"

"Hardly." The clerk pointed to the boxes. "We keep the letters sorted for the various rooms. This is wing seven B. We couldn't make a mistake. There are only six rooms in this section——"

"And you delivered all the mail to my wing, my dear sir?"

"Sure. I handled it myself. No, wait a minute." The clerk hurried to the door at his left, stuck his head through the doorway. "Say, Chuck. Didn't someone in Miss McKay's party call for the mail this morning?"

The clerk returned. "I'm sorry, Baron. Mr Bolton stopped by for the mail. There are five of them with rooms near yours, Miss McKay and her friends. Mr. Bolton got the mail for them. He might 've taken yours too. I'll see if he's in his room."

"Ach! Donnergott!" The Baron struck his temple. "My dear sir, I am so stupid. I am most stupid."

The clerk dropped the room telephone.

"Do you know, my dear sir, I now have just remembered? My friend, he has promised tomorrow to mail me the address. One thousand pardons!" In his agitation the

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Baron retreated, and the clerk sat down again to his magazine. All these foreigners were nuts.

Upstairs again, the Baron stopped in front of seven thirty-two, the room next to his own. Each room was closed by two doors, one copper screened, and a second one of wood. The locks were simple. It would be a matter of a few minutes to open both doors. He was greatly tempted, but the three elevators passing up and down his floor every minute or so made the act too risky. The elevator boys might know what room he should be in. Or one of the other guests in this wing might appear. No, he thought, not now. It is not worth it. He entered his room, locked the door with the screen and left the wooden one partly open to keep the room cool. It would have been cooler to leave it wide open, but the door shielded his bed. The brave Baron had not forgotten the silent air gun. He took out his watch. It was three forty-five. He threw himself on the bed and in five minutes was asleep. He awoke at six-thirty, verified the time by his watch, complimented himself on his faculty for awakening at any time he so desired, as if such a miracle were usual only to the Baron von Kaz. . . .

"You are charming." He bowed over her hand. She was one American woman who could give her hand graciously, casually, as though she were accustomed to homage.

The ash-rose taffeta emphasized the warm olive color in her cheeks. She did look charming; unfortunately she also looked perfectly possessed, entirely too assured. She scrutinized him from under those level brows of hers, thinking that he would appear very creditable indeed if he would only let his hair grow long instead of cutting it

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short in that ridiculous fashion. And so they faced each other at the small table, with the perfumed breeze blowing in from the terrace, and the parrots contributing clattering noises, and the oiled Filipino boys pattering on the woven mats.

"Well?" There wasn't any need for her gesture of brushing her hair back from the wide olive forehead. The black hair was perfectly arranged, parted in the middle, the comb marks glistening. He told himself that this was the time to be firm. This woman was but another North American barbarian. He was doing her a favor, ach! a great favor. He called one of the boys. Caryl requested a long cool drink. Something with rum in it, please. He ordered a brandy-and-soda. Two of brandy instead of one.

"My dear Miss Miquet," he cleared his throat, sitting very erect, "I wished to see you."

"So I gathered." She was equally impersonal. "And *I* wished to see you to inform you, Baron von Kaz, that I don't ever care to see you again."

"Excellent." He nodded. Women were always difficult, and he had handled those who were more difficult than this young person with the deep black eyes. "Tomorrow I will be on my way to Australia, thence to Austria. And so I desired to tell you that I did not touch your mail."

"You didn't?" The long smooth fingers tapped nervously on the table. "Who did, then?"

"Were all the letters opened?"

"No." Then she closed her lips firmly as though she had decided not to speak. He waited. She said, "Only two."

"Ach so. Small or large?"

"What difference does that make?"

He shrugged.

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