



From a sketch made in the Antonia Tourist Third Smoke Room

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MAN IN THE THIRD DECK CHAIR

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reminiscently, "prophesied this. Yes. It was that pathetic little Suzette in Paris. You'll get yours," he recalled her saying. "Some woman will put it over you; and when you meet her, God help you... for you'll go down on all fours."

Well, he hadn't gone over that hard yet. But he'd have to be careful. That cool, fair type... rather fatal to the black man... If the girl but knew her power...

THE following morning, Gaylord, meeting Jose on deck, joined her. That she betrayed no difference in her manner did not surprise him. He knew his Jose. From the first he had sized her up as a thoroughbred.

But as a matter of fact, Jose had put in rather a bad night... trying to decide just what attitude to adopt at their next meeting. Perhaps, after all, her mother had read this man correctly. If he really did commit the theft, how he must be laughing up his sleeve at her dumbness.

And yet, she decided, in two more days they would land. Why drop him now? Her mother would crow for the rest of her life. Besides, some other girl would snap Gaylord up... crook or no crook... He was much too fascinating to be allowed to get lonely.

Gaylord's creed was never to explain. Now, to his intense surprise he found himself explaining to Jose. She had been so sporting under the circumstances, he felt he wanted to give some reasonable excuse...

"It is someone on this boat—er—who is shadowing me," he stammered. "The fellow doesn't know me by sight... nor my name..." he hesitated, flushing slightly.

"Why is he following you?" she asked point blank, her keen eyes scrutinizing his face in the strong morning sunlight.

He met her quizzical look with a sudden frank smile. His answer was rather disarming.

"You're not exactly sure that I'm a man you should know?"

"I'm taking you at your face value," she evaded, "just as you are taking me."

"Rather clever, that!" he laughed softly. There was something about the laugh that annoyed her.

"It's not clever. It's simply the truth. On a boat, one can scarcely go about digging up the history of fellow-passengers... whom one will probably never see again."

THE thrust pierced through his suave, polished veneer. "I don't blame you for slapping my wrists," he confessed a little wistfully, "I deserved that. However, to go on with my story. There is really no actual reason why I should evade this man. I could confront him and have it out. There is something I have that he wants. I beat him to it, that's all. But I don't wish to discuss it with him. When we land, I hope to go on my way and never see him again. So why disturb a pleasant voyage with tiresome arguments?"

"Why, indeed?" she responded dryly, "even if you do have to leave dancing partners in the middle of the floor and crawl off to your stateroom like a whipped dog."

He colored slightly, but made no direct answer. Instead, he sat contemplating her... as though weighing the girl herself, rather than her remark. Then he began to speak, slowly, deliberately.

"There is only one person on this boat whose opinion I care a brass tuck for. She's a dear, funny little thing called Jose. Supposing I were to tell her that I'm travelling under an assumed name. I wonder," he mused as though talking to himself, "I wonder what that girl I've grown to like so well would say?"

"She'd say it was your own affair," she echoed with a little high-pitched voice. The man's words and manner had touched her more than she wished him to see.

"Would she be just as friendly toward me?"

"Why not?"

"Shake on it!"

She gave him her hand with a comradely air. But his strong, eager grip sent the warm blood swift to her cheeks. The man, too, seemed in the grip of emotion. Instead of spending the rest of the morning with her, he turned and walked swiftly away.

IT WAS the last day on board. Jose was lingering over a late breakfast, rather listless and preoccupied. She hadn't had a glimpse of Gaylord since their strange conversation the morning previous. She was missing him sadly... and yet she was a little ashamed to admit it even to herself. The man had practically confessed to her that there was something in the air. Yet his decency in telling her had tipped the scale in his favor. She refused to believe, however, that it had anything to do with her mother's sapphire.

It was somewhat of a shock then, when Mrs. Aspenwell, breathless and triumphant, came hurrying in for breakfast.

"My sapphire," she gasped excitedly, "they've found it... that fellow... I knew it all along..."

Jose put down her cup of coffee and stared at her mother. Her face paled, her hands were trembling.

"Knew what? Where did they find it?" she asked in a weak little voice. "Where? You may well ask?" exultantly. "Your smooth gentleman crook, of course! Didn't I tell you!"

An unaccountable fury flamed in the girl. "I don't believe it!" defiantly.

Mrs. Aspenwell gazed at her daughter in blank amazement. "You—don't—believe—your own mother?" she gasped. "My girl, you had better take care. That man has hypnotized you. If you can't take my word for it, go and ask Collins, the detective. He caught your fine young crook with the goods all right. My sapphire! He'd thrown the chain overboard. Pretty sly. Of course he knew the chain would be a give-away. But nothing daunted, when they found the sapphire on him, he had the face to stand up and declare it was his own. He's an old bird at the game. Being caught with the goods doesn't phase him..."

The girl threw down her serviette and rose abruptly from the table. "Mother," she rebelled, "I won't listen. You haven't a grain of heart. Suppose the man is a crook! Why should you crow over it?"

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