

TROPICAL ESPIONAGE PART 6

Title: Tropical Espionage

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DISCLAIMER: Don't own 'em, don't even want all of 'em.

SETTING: Somewhere (there's a place for us) in Season 3

RATING: PG

NOTES: Thanks to Blue Leader for instigating, Uncle Charlie for levitating, Debbie Ann Macabie for discombobulating, and . . . well, you'll see.

Part Four



"I'm telling you, Lee," Amanda insisted as he hefted their bags, "it would be the perfect cover. Christopher Drake is her nephew."

"I have a plan, Amanda," Lee replied pedantically. "You can't always go changing things around at the drop of a hat. This work takes planning and precision."

"It also takes being responsive to changing situations," Amanda fired back at him, pulling him to face her as he began to walk away. "Don't lecture me, Scarecrow. I do know what I'm doing."

Lee made a wry face and shrugged, turning away. He was heavily laden with both his own bags as well as Amanda's and just managed not to trip over the suitcases as he exited the sliding glass door of the airport. He stumbled slightly, bumping into

Phyllis Scheinkman and setting her jewelry to clattering.

"Oh you dear man!" she exclaimed, catching his arm. "Carrying your wife's bags. My Ralph used to do those things." She turned and drew Amanda to her as well. "You hold on to this one, honey. He's a keeper."

Amanda sent Lee a saccharine-overdosed smile, regarding him with a vacuous look and a sigh. "I know. Isn't he just everything a girl could possibly want?"

Lee stared back at her, momentarily at a loss. He opened his mouth to speak, then thought better of it, shaking his head. He set down his leather burdens and scanned about for a cab.

"Well, that's odd," he muttered. There wasn't a taxi in sight. Around the bend of the drive, however, a long black limousine had just pulled into view. The vehicle drew alongside the curb, and an extremely short, extremely red man emerged from the driver's seat.

"You Mrs. Scheinkman?" he asked curtly.

"I am," Phyllis replied.

"Mr. Drake sent me to pick you up," the man informed her, pulling his flowered shirt away from his sunburned chest by the lapels.

"Thank you, Mr. . . . ?" Phyllis queried.

"Crandankle, ma'am. Russell Crandankle." He waved her toward the limousine and reached for her bags.

Phyllis stepped toward the car, but paused when she noticed Lee and Amanda still scanning the area for a taxi. "Can we give you a lift to your hotel?" she asked Amanda. "I'm sure Christopher won't mind. He's such a dear, sweet boy."

"Ah, well . . ." Lee began.

"We'd be very grateful," Amanda interjected quickly, pulling Lee toward the limousine.

As they clambered into the back of the luxurious vehicle, Amanda whispered to Lee, "Changing conditions." He glared at her, pushing her a little more roughly into the car.

"Mr. Crandankle," Phyllis said as she lowered the glass separating the driver from the rear compartment, "could we take the long way? I've never been in a limousine before."

"Sure thing, Mrs. S," Russell grinned as he started the engine. "I was a little thrown by all this when I first came out here, too. You stayin' around for a while?"

"I might," Phyllis mumbled.

Lee settled back into the supple leather behind him, regarding the small ruddy man in the front seat. He had reviewed all the information the Agency could acquire on Drake's staff and did not recall the name 'Crandankle' or anyone matching the man's description. Narrowing his eyes, he silently vowed to keep a close eye on this particular red dwarf.

"So, Crandankle," he questioned, "what brought you to Grand Bahama?"

"Me?" the driver shrugged off Lee's question. "I just needed someplace to dry out. Back home it rains all the time. Got to where I couldn't take it anymore. How 'bout you?"

Lee stared out the window at the passing scenery, pretending indifference. "I'm a military brat. Grew up all over." His attention was drawn from the spectacle outside the car to the spectacle within. Amanda and Phyllis had nosed into every cubby and corner of the limousine. They now had spread before them a remarkable assortment of ingredients.

Russell turned his head back to view their stash as well. "I see you found Mr. Drake's weakness," he offered sagely.

Lee pondered that statement. If this Russell knew Drake's weakness, he must have been around for a while, yet the Agency knew nothing of him. Of course, if the items Amanda and Phyllis were compiling made up Christopher Drake's weakness, he would be on a par with T.P. Aquinas. Within moments, the two ladies had assembled a rather respectable banana split, complete with chocolate sauce, pineapple, whipped cream, and cherries. Lee shook his head, puzzled, as Phyllis offered him a spoon.



nvttech "I'm Christopher's guest, Mr. Stimpson," she insisted.
"And you are mine. It'd be downright silly to waste this opportunity, don't you think?"

"Come on, Lee," Amanda nudged him, "loosen up." She turned her attention from her 'husband' to her new-found friend and ticket to simpler surveillance. "A freezer in a limousine; I didn't know you could do that."

"Isn't it amazing the things they can do these days?" Phyllis mused.

"The marvels of modern science," Lee uttered with thinly veiled sarcasm, returning his attention to the man in the front seat.

"The boss' women all think that's pretty amazing, too," Russell chuckled. "Don't ask me why."

"Is that a fact?" Lee idly reached out one hand to pluck a bright red cherry that was sliding down the edge of the frozen treat.

Amanda gently slapped his hand away, speaking to him as though to a small child. "You acted like you didn't want any, so you'll just have to do without." Her hand rested on Lee's a second longer than strictly necessary, drawing his gaze to her. Her eyes held his, ignorant of the vehicle's other occupants. He couldn't look away -- until he had to look away for fear of what her eyes might demand of him. He

squeezed her fingers gently, unwilling to let the moment pass without some acknowledgment, and released them as he turned away once more.

"So, what's your boss like, Crandankle?" Lee forged on past the slight crack in his voice. "How long have you worked for him?"

"I met the boss back in Seattle," Russell replied as he scanned the countryside. "There had been some big snafu, and he ended up in my cab. I drove him around all day, and the next day, he came down to the dispatch and offered me a job. I've been here ever since, though sometimes I go with him on his travels."



"Travels?" Lee prodded.

"Yeah," Russell was suddenly evasive. "The boss gets around a bit."

"I can imagine," Lee muttered, turning his gaze out the window.

The other occupants had likewise taken to staring at the passing scenery.

"Lee," Amanda drew his name out questioningly. "Up there, on top of that palm tree, what is that?"

TBC by . . .

. . . . oh gosh where's that list . . . I know I was taking down names . . . hmmm . . .

"Aunt Lillian knows all," oh yeah . . . how can I chose just one? . . . this is so difficult . . . I can't do it . . . I can't take the pressure . . . We'll always have Arlington . . . oh, blast! . . . OK, people, there's only one way to decide this. I'll do it the same way I pick which line to stand in at the grocery store . . . BOY!!!! Get in here. There's the list, pick one. You always pick the good lines.

Are these really all people, Mom? They have some weird names!

I know, Sweetheart, just pick one. It doesn't really matter.

Then why don't you pick one?

Because you're better at it. You always pick the good lines. I pick the lines with the little old ladies who move really slowly or that annoying man who comments on everything we buy.

Aren't names supposed to be capitalized?

Well, umm, yes.

Is Gilstrap really a name? It sounds like a ride at Islands of Adventure.

It's a code name. Everyone has a code name.

Do you have a code name? What is it?

If I told you, I'd have to kill you.

You wouldn't do that.

Well, no, because then I wouldn't have anyone to pick the good lines, would I?

Or take out the garbage.

That, too. See how valuable you are?

Take the one on top.

The name at the top of the list? Why that one?

Because it's first.

Can't argue with that logic, can I?

Not if you want me to take out the garbage.

Well, there you have it. The list we were looking at was from Debbie Ann's post, so that means Tropical Espionage will be continued by-----

Uncle Iggy!

Here are the things that have to be mentioned in your section, Uncle Iggy:

PERSON: Loki, a dog breeder from Lapland

PLACE: a lifeguard's tower

THING: a set of manacles

PHRASE: "I don't think that will fit in there."

