

TROPICAL ESPIONAGE PART 5

Title: Tropical Espionage

Author: Uncle Iggy

Disclaimer: Scarecrow and Mrs. King belongs to Shoot the Moon and Warner Brothers Productions.

Setting: Somewhere, Out There, In Season 3

Rating: PG

Notes: Thanks to Aunt Minnie for waiting patiently to get her CQ mitts on this and for the rest of the Queens, Goddesses, and Dirty Old and Young Broads for being equally as patient. I hope it was worth it.

Part Five -- It's Ten O'clock, Do You Know Where You're Xoloitzcuintli Is?

Lee watched as Amanda, a spoon laden with a gigantic glob of ice cream, chocolate syrup and peanuts hovering at her lips, looked out the window.

"I don't think that will fit in there," he offered smugly.

She shot him an offended look, stuffed the spoon and its contents into her mouth, then glanced back out the window. Licking the spoon free of the last of the ice cream and chocolate, she asked again, "Lee, what IS that on top of that palm?"

As the car slowed on a particularly winding area of the oceanfront roadway, Lee followed Amanda's gaze out the tinted window, perusing the row of tall royal palms that separated the blacktop from the wide strip of sparkling white beach. His eyes widened a bit, then squinted as he leaned past Amanda and pushed his nose to the glass for a better look. "It appears to be . . . a person."

"A person?" Amanda craned her neck to get a better view. "Oh my gosh!"

"Pull over," Lee exclaimed, motioning for Mr. Crandankle to stop the vehicle. The little man complied, maneuvering the stretch limo slowly off the roadway. The tires of the large car sunk into the soft white sand and sparse grass of the roadside. Before the limo even came to a stop, Lee sprinted from its depths, followed immediately by Amanda, and, due to her size and age, not so immediately by Phyllis. Crandankle merely lowered the window of the driver's side door to observe the excitement.

Lee reached the base of the mammoth palm tree and peered up, a hand shielding the sun from his eyes, into the bushy fronds. Through the dense foliage, Lee could see two feet, encased in what appeared to be some sort of boots, desperately attempting to gain a foothold on the trunk of the large palm tree.

"Hold on," Lee called out. "Help is on the way."

"Don't need any help," grunted the owner of the struggling feet. The rough rubber soles of his boots at last gained purchase on the slippery surface, and the man took advantage of his new-found control to slide down the trunk, landing in a heap beside Lee.

The agent helped the hapless man to his feet. "What were you doing up there?" Lee questioned, assisting the tall, lanky man in removing bits and pieces of palm leaves from his attire. After getting a better look at the guy, Lee decided the palm fronds had actually been the most attractive part of his outfit.

"I was looking for Howard. He got away from me." The man was painfully thin, his cheap, loud Hawaiian shirt hanging loosely on his gaunt frame. The over-large, magenta colored Bermuda shorts that encased his lower body made his legs look like two Tootsie Pop sticks. Deerskin snow boots, lined with fluffy lambskin, finished off the unlikely ensemble.

"Howard?" Amanda asked, trying not to stare at the man's rather bizarre outfit and shooting a puzzled look at Lee.

"Yes, Howard," the man stated. He spoke perfect English, but with a Scandinavian accent. The man shook his head sadly, his mop of long, dark hair whisking across his shoulders and into his eyes. "My wife ran off with him."

"Ohhhhh," Amanda breathed, raising a knowing eyebrow. "Mr. . . . ah . . . I'm sorry, I don't know your name."

The discombobulated man focused his attention on Amanda, as if just noticing she was there. "Loki," he offered her his hand. "Loki Lipschlitt. Nice to meet you."

The man pumped Amanda's hand with a force that belied his slender frame. "Amanda Ki . . . ah, Stimpson, and this is my husband, Lee, and this is Phyllis Scheinkman." The foursome nodded politely at one another. "Now, Mr. Lipschlitt, is there anything we can do? Do you need a ride?"

"Oh, no, I can't leave," the slender man exclaimed. "I have to find Howard."

"And your wife?" Amanda supplied.

"Oh, yes, her, too, I guess." The man began wandering about the base of the palm tree he'd only recently descended. Bent over at the waist, his eyes feverishly scanned the sand. Amanda, Lee and Phyllis, while not knowing exactly what they were looking for, also bent to the task.

"Ah, Mr. Lipschlitt? Mr. Lipschlitt?" Lee's voice rose as he tried to garner the attention of the frantic man, who was now moving in widening circles around the grove of palm trees. "Look, I doubt you're going to find . . ."

The man's fearful eyes darted up to meet Lee's. "You don't understand. If I don't find Howard, it's all over."

"You mean your marriage?" Amanda gave him a sympathetic look.

"My marriage? Oh, no . . . my business. Look!" With a shout, the rangy man suddenly dashed out onto the stretch of beach beyond the palm trees. Fearful that he was going to throw himself into the ocean in his grief, Amanda raced after him. Lee, rolling his eyes heavenward, followed her. Phyllis, her plentiful jewelry tinkling and clinking a tune, trudged quietly behind, seemingly happy just to be tagging along on this adventure.

It soon became clear that drowning in the surf was not Mr. Lipschlitt's goal, as his gangly legs carried him closer and closer toward a rotted and splintered lifeguard's tower situated about 15 feet from the edge of the incoming tide. Breathless, and leaning against the tall legs of the tower for support, the man's thin fingers pulled free a piece of red fabric from where it was caught on a rusted nail. He waved the material at Lee, Amanda, and Phyllis. "I knew it." His eyes furtively scanned up and down the stretch of beach.

Lee took the fabric from the man. It appeared to be a tiny red bandana, knotted in a circle, with a small metal ring and plastic tag dangling from it. The red plastic disk was engraved on one side in white letters with the name "Howard," and the other side with "Lipschlitt's Kennels, Rovaniemi, Lapland."

"Ah, Mr. Lipschlitt," Lee frowned, still studying the material in his hand. "Howard wouldn't by any chance be a dog, would he?"

"A dog?" Amanda's eyes widened. "Your wife ran off with . . . a dog?"

"Not just any dog . . . Howard. Howard is the dog that's going to save our business. With the money that Mr. Drake has offered for him, we'll be able to pay off all our debts and buy more breeding stock."

Lee and Amanda stole a quick look at one another at the mention of Drake's name. The plot was thickening.

"And your wife took Howard because . . . ?" Amanda asked, taking the tattered red material from Lee and fingering the plastic tag.

The man sighed and shook his head. "She loves Howard. I tried to tell her that selling him was the only way we could ever make a go of the kennel. How could we turn down \$250,000? I thought she'd finally understood. I guess not."

"Yeah," Lee said, his eyes scanning the beach for any sign of the canine or Mrs. Lipschlitt. "I guess not."

"We were taking a cab from the airport to the hotel when she said she was feeling sick. The driver pulled over. I thought maybe she just needed a little fresh air."

"That's when she took off with Howard?" Amanda asked.

"Yes. We took his travel container out of the cab, so he could get some air as well. I should never have given her the keys."

"The keys?" Lee questioned.

"Yes, to the manacles," Loki explained.

"Manacles?" Amanda, Lee and Phyllis exclaimed in unison.

"Yes," the spindly man nodded. "Howard is priceless. I've had his traveling container chained to me by a set of manacles since we started the trip. No way was I letting our meal ticket out of my sight."

Lee ran an agitated hand through his wind blown hair. "You chained his container to your wrist. What kind of dog is this?"

"A Xoloitzcuintli."

"A what?" Lee, Amanda and Phyllis exclaimed, again in unison.

"Sorry . . . in layman's terms . . . a Mexican Hairless."



"You breed Mexican Hairless dogs . . . in Lapland?" Lee couldn't keep the incredulity out of his voice.

"Yes, and it's not easy. You know, they don't have any hair. We have to put little sweaters on them. And they hate wearing those sweaters. They chew right through them. I spend a small fortune on those sweaters."

Lee held up his hand, effectively silencing the rambling man. "Mr. Lipschlitt..."

"Please, call me Loki."

"Loki," Lee breathed impatiently. "While the apparel misfortunes of Mexican Hairless dogs living in arctic conditions is riveting . . . could you tell me one thing?" At the man's nod, Lee continued. "What is so damned special about Howard that Mr. Drake was willing to pay you so much money for him?"

"Oh, well, Howard, you see, has a very unique talent . . ."

TBC by . . . Aunt Edna!!!

Here are the things that have to be mentioned in your section, Aunt Edna:

PERSON: Seymour, a bellboy with a hearing problem

PLACE: A king-size, heart-shaped bed

THING: A book of matches from Bahama Mama's Exotic Dance Club

PHRASE: "I thought that was anatomically impossible."

