

# “Under the Palms” – Squared

"Whatever is that you are drinking?"

The two couples were enjoying a cocktail together as they waited for their dinner to be served at "Beachcombers".

"It's called a Mudslide", answered Sue, smiling back at the rugged-looking man sipping a much more orthodox-looking Whisky Sour. "Would you like a taste?"

"I should think there are few things he'd like less." Sandy, Bill Davis's wife, answered for him. She knew her husband's tastes pretty well after twenty-five years of marriage. "You never know," said Bill. "I could find myself becoming attracted to all kinds of exotic things now I'm getting used to this Caribbean lifestyle."

"Well, you can put some boundaries around thoughts like that," retorted Sandy, giving her husband a playful punch.

"And you needn't start getting ideas either," added Sue. She gave her husband Colin a mock-serious look as he sat and soaked up the atmosphere.

The air was still and warm, welcoming and silky-soft on the skin as the light softened, reflecting the orange and red colours of the tropical sunset. Beachcombers, where the foursome had chosen to meet for dinner that evening, was a fish restaurant on the beach. One of the up-market couples-only resort's ten different places to eat.

The restaurant had no walls, and the tables were placed directly on the marble-white sand under a thatched roof supported by sturdy-looking pillars. Surfboards and fishing nets provided the decor. The sound of waves gently breaking on the shore was punctuated by the occasional cry of a seabird. Between the restaurant and the sea, a flock of semi-tame sandpipers scurried around constantly, ignoring the restaurant guests.

The four had met at a manager's cocktail reception a few days earlier, where they had quickly discovered that this was the first time they had visited Antigua. They had much in common: teenage children, similar educational backgrounds, and membership in tennis clubs. It was natural that they would be drawn to each other and arrange to meet for dinner.

As the waitress took their orders, talk turned to what they had each been doing to make the most of the resort's extensive facilities. Sue and Colin were enthused about a Segway tour they had made to an old fort, while Sandy and Bill talked about all the sea life they had seen on a day-long Catamaran trip.

By the time dessert arrived, they found themselves asking each other what it was that had motivated them to come for their first holiday to this tropical paradise.

For the Davises, it had seemed an ideal location to celebrate their Silver Wedding Anniversary. But the Drapers had a more unusual tale to tell. Sue's maternal Grandmother, Ingeborg Raschig, had left Nazi Germany in the late 1930s, as had many other Jews. That much Sue had always known. But twelve months ago, she had learned that her "Oma", as her grandmother liked to be called, was the niece of Marianne Raschig, a well-known Chiromancer who practised in Berlin in the 1920s and 1930s.

When the family cleared Oma's house, they wanted the grandchildren to have something to remember their grandmother by. The keepsake selected for Sue was a box containing dozens

and dozens of palm prints, many with the Raschig Studio stamp. Most of the dusty sheets of paper seemed to be signed, and Sue was sure that one read "A. Einstein. 9. IV. 30".

Sue and Bill called Sotheby's, who were excited about the number and quality of the items. Apparently, Marianne Raschig had collected the palmprints of the cream of Berlin Society between 1922 and 1935, and Sotheby's experts were able to establish the full provenance.

Sue kept a few as mementoes of Oma but let the famous auction house sell the rest. To her amazement, the collection realised more than £120,000 when it went on sale in June earlier that year. The Einstein print alone fetched £55,000.

As Sue said, bringing her unlikely tale to a close, "Who would have thought that two little squiggles 'under the palms' of a handprint would lead to two glorious weeks 'under the palms' in Antigua?"

Terry Cooke-Davies

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