

KISSES FROM THE SUN

C.G. Harris

Juan Luis Garcia Hernandez woke with murder on his mind. How do I know this? I answer simply: this morning, concerned, he told me so. Yet, even if he had not, there was a heat in his eyes and upon his brow that informed me of a troubled mind.

Now, let me say that although I but work as his foreman I have been his friend for some years and I cannot argue that such a frame of mind is a healthy one. I am sure that he himself was as much disturbed as I; it is not a thought that a respectable Spanish landowner such as himself would normally entertain. But he has a very young and lovely wife, and jealousy is an emotion not easily controlled.

We had breakfasted early together, as was our custom, whilst the sun rose up from the sea across the bay. I will say that our positioning for repasts is perfect, for the garden of Juan Luis is set amongst orange and olive trees and nestles on the cliff heights where one can look down upon the small town of Canos de Belleza. Indeed, this day, once we had eaten a simple breakfast of *tostada* with olive oil and drunk our coffee, served by the beautiful, slim, dark haired wife of which I speak, he took me by the arm, this tall, narrow man with the saddest of moustaches, and, placing his ivory Panama upright upon his head, walked me through a tiny grove to a stall whereupon we could sit and view the small town in its bleached and modest glory. Some distance below, the waves marched back and forth in their forlorn, unhurried way and we sat for some time unspeaking; eventually I saw that the rhythm of the seas dispelled something of his mood.

“Maria is a beautiful woman, is she not?”

This was undoubtedly the case and I replied without hesitation that indeed she was.

“And she is young, is she not? By this I mean, my friend, that she is considerably younger than I...”

This, too, was a fact I could not dispute and so I coughed and said:

“Yes, Juan Luis, she is beautiful and she is young – but you are rich.” we laughed before I continued, “besides which, she is beautiful and she is young – but you are rich.”

He did not look
cannot say whether

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think it is so – I

“Love can take
say why one loves another?”

age; who is to

I watched as he held out his hands and turned them, first palm up, then down, and studied them closely. The wind moved but softly through the olive trees, yet when it did the branches shook; from between them the light from the morning sun, now bright and yellow, reached down and caressed my face.

At last, Juan Luis said, “I am not so young, my health is not good, my hair has gone and my ability to please a woman with it. I envy you, Ricardo, you retain your vigour; you are like a handsome bull, although one with sensibility, it is true.”

“Why do you talk this way, Juan Luis?” I said.

“There are those who would love to please Maria in a way that I cannot.” His eyes had regained that glowing heat and he stood and walked to the cliff edge; he motioned for me to join him. “See,” he pointed to the far side of the bay, “there is a fine house.”

It was a fine house. Large and whitewashed, it shone like a pearl set upon green velvet; the grounds led down to the azure sea; white to green, to blue.

“I know the house, Juan Luis, and so do you – it is that of Emiliano Ortega – not as rich as yourself perhaps,” I shrugged, “but wealthy, it must be said.”

“Yes, Ricardo; he too is a handsome man, with one eye on his wealth and the other, I fear, upon Maria. I watched closely those eyes as we sat at dinner together in *Casa de Comida Hermosa*, Maria and I. He was across the way and lounging at his ease alongside the bar – oh, you know how he has this arrogant way about him, he and his laughing *companeros* – and he raised his glass, one of many he had drunk, I am sure, in our direction. It was politely done, I grant you, but I did not disregard the fact that his face was flushed when he looked at Maria; it was not with the wine, Ricardo, it was...” Juan Luis lowered his voice, “It was with desire, Ricardo.” He spat out the offending word.