

The Neptune Grouper

By Natascha Pearson

A couple sat at a table outside of their room, at the *Stardust* hotel, producing a chime of light noted giggles and sensual whispers. From the corner of the room, a camera reared to the right until it could no longer, causing a ticking sound until settling, catching the tail end of Ruth Mahoney. Watching from a van parked on Paradise St., three FBI agents waited for a clue.

“Reporting in, team FLOCK has followed suspects related to Julius and Ethel Rosenberg to the Stardust hotel. Thanks to the help of Agent Jacobs, who intercepted a conversation at a Berry’s dinner outside of Goleta, confirmed their current location. We have reasons to believe suspects are atomic spies and expect proof to gain a warrant and too ambush immediately Rodger,” the agent spoke quietly. The inside of the van was hollow beside a black and white tv and a speaker next to it attached to a long cord with a microphone outside of the hotel room’s splintered gate. The prospects hinted at not being anything other than a very intimate couple pursuing their hobbies.

“I think we should head east to the aquarium. I want to hear a speech on the Neptune Grouper.”

“It isn’t in the plan, Ruth. The aquarium is north, and it isn’t certain they will have the Neptune Grouper. We have more resources if we head west to San Diego. I can get you into the Birch Aquarium to talk with the executive of affairs, so you can get the proper papers.” Frances was hunched, his tie hanging like a pendulum while he fiddled his fingers. Ruth had always been able to hide her angst behind soft chuckles and a vodka on the rocks. “Anyways darling I’ve got

the film you wanted of the Nami Green Arowana while we were in New York. You can study that darling and send it to your sister Bertha.”

“Oh, I don’t know Francis. I don’t know if a video will capture all the details. The documents though, the documents will explain it all. We owe it to Bertha. To our country.”

“What would you suppose we do?”

“We continue to the capital. I’ll use my brother in law’s position and present them with better material resources. I will get the Neptune Grouper. I will get all of the documents representing it and we can relocate. Julius and Ethel, it’s to late for them but we can get what they couldn’t. We don’t have to worry about killing the fish.”

“Ruth, I think you might have said too much. Come let’s go back into the hotel room and do what we love most.”

Ruth giggled, sloshing her drink on the patio floor. Francis grabbed her hand and lead her through the glass door, allowing her in first with a gentleman’s smirk. Skipping inside, she tossed off her heels and pulled her blouse over her head exposing her large breast, pressed tight with a pushup. On her chest a tattoo of two eagle heads and a coat of arms. Before Francis could undress a loud pounding came from the door.

“FBI, open up.” A shattering spray of debris came from the entrance. Francis grabbed a handgun from his suitcase aiming it at the man who came through the door in full protective gear. Agents flooded in, lining the room. Francis looked at the team, sweat dripping from his eyebrow. He raised the gun up in defeat.

There was a sound of a crack. The agents starred down Francis as if he was the largest threat in the room. There was no time for their attention to be redirected before Ruth threw a

grenade. Francis and Ruth both fell to the floor using the hotel beds for cover followed by a loud explosion. Francis and Ruth laid stunned. Ruth opened her eyes and looked over to Francis. She could see a gun wound bleeding from Francis' rib. He stumbled up grabbing the nightstand for support as Ruth grabbed the suitcase, which was now covered in sawdust and blood. Francis covered Ruth with a blanket, the blue of her pupils filling her eyes. Intertwining his fingers, he gives her a lift over the wooden fence. Francis followed behind. A piercing scream rang from the hallway of the hotel.

Police sirens wailed from the outskirts of the property. Quick-walking down the street, they found an alleyway three blocks down. Hiding behind a trash can Ruth unzipped the suitcase and put on a long jean dress and a black wig. Frances also changed into jeans, a t-shirt, and a ball cap. Leaving their red Mercedes and the drama of the FBI behind.

“Do you still have the video?” Francis said from the corner of his mouth.

“The Nami Green Arowana? Yes.” She slipped a VHS tape out of the front pocket of the suitcase, allowing a little smile toward Francis and zipped it back in place. I'll send it to your sister Bertha right away, so she can get it to the NKVD. I didn't think anyone noted me video tapping the... cyclotron. It's now or never. We need to relocate fast.”