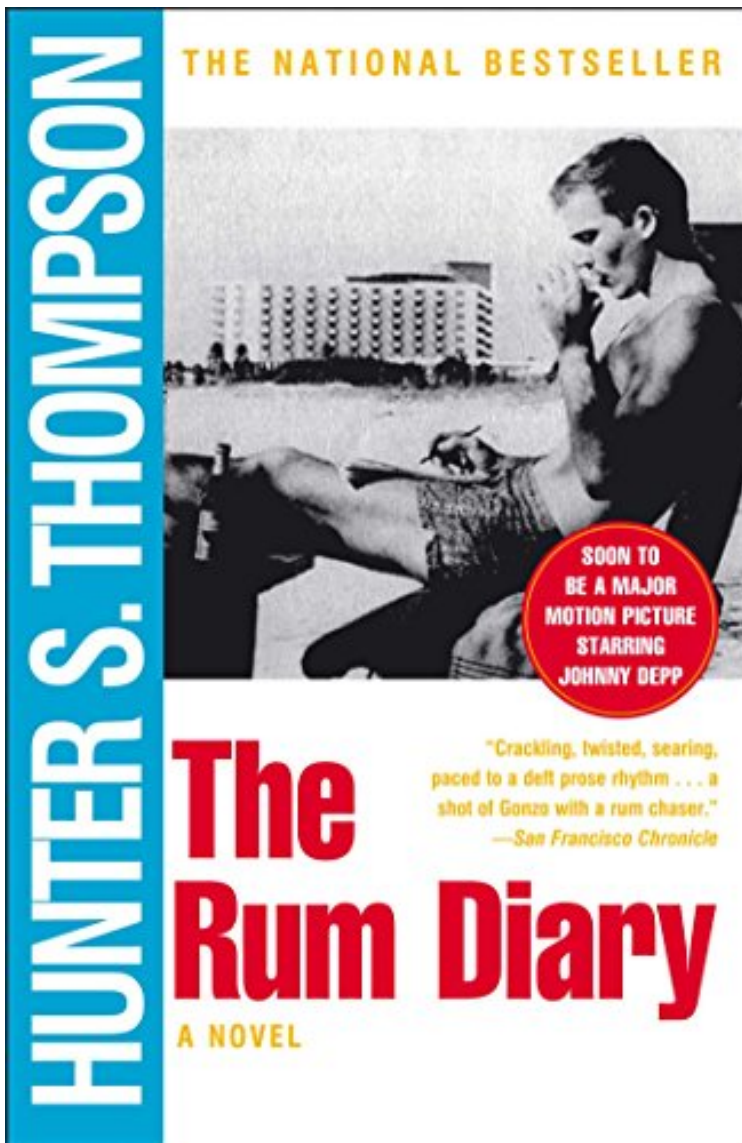


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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurMade into a major motion picture starring Johnny Depp, The Rum Diarya national bestseller and New York Times Notable Bookis Hunter S. Thompsons brilliant love story of jealousy, treachery, and violent lust in the Caribbean.Begun in 1959 by a twenty-two-year-old Hunter S. Thompson, The Rum Diary is a brilliantly tangled love story of jealousy, treachery, and violent alcoholic lust in the Caribbean boomtown that was San Juan, Puerto Rico, in the late 1950s. The narrator, freelance journalist Paul Kemp, irresistibly drawn to a sexy, mysterious woman, is soon thrust into a world where corruption and get-rich-quick schemes rule and anything (including murder) is permissible. Exuberant and mad, youthful and energetic, this dazzling comedic romp provides a fictional excursion as riveting and outrageous as

Thompsons Fear and Loathing books..com"Disgusting as he usually was," Hunter Thompson writes in this, his 1959 novel, "on rare occasions he showed flashes of a stagnant intelligence. But his brain was so rotted with drink and dissolute living that whenever he put it to work it behaved like an old engine that had gone haywire from being dipped in lard." Surprise! Thompson isn't writing about himself, but one of the other, older, aimlessly carousing newspapermen in Puerto Rico, a guy called Moberg whose chief achievement is the ability to find his car after a night's drinking because it stinks so much. (I can smell it for blocks, he boasts.) The autobiographical hero, Paul Kemp, is 30, trapped in a dead-end job (Thompson wound up writing for a bowling magazine), and feeling as if his big-time writer dreams, soaked in Fitzgerald and Hemingway, are evaporating as rapidly as the rum in his fist. In fact, Thompson was only 22 when he wrote *The Rum Diary*, but his fear of winding up like Moberg was well founded. What saved him was the fantastic conflagration of the 1960s, a fiery wind on which the reptilian wings of his prose style could catch and soar to the cackling heights of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Puerto Rico in 1959 doesn't have bad craziness enough to offer Thompson--just a routine drunken-reporter stomping by local cops and a riot over Kemp's friend's temptress girlfriend, a scantily imagined Smith College alumna who likes to strip nude on beaches and in nightclubs to taunt men. Thompson's prose style only intermittently takes tentative flight--compare the stomping scenes in this book with his breakthrough, *Hell's Angels*--but it's interesting to see him so nakedly reveal his sensitive innards, before the celebrated clownish carapace grew in. It's also interesting to see how he improved this full version of the novel from the more raw (and racist) excerpts found in the 1990 collection *Songs of the Doomed* (available on audiocassette, partly narrated by Thompson). --Tim

AppeloExtraitChapter OneMy apartment in New York was on Perry Street, a five minute walk from the White Horse. I often drank there, but I was never accepted because I wore a tie. The real people wanted no part of me.I did some drinking there on the night I left for San Juan. Phil Rollins, who'd worked with me, was paying for the ale, and I was swilling it down, trying to get drunk enough to sleep on the plane. Art Millick, the most vicious cab driver in New York, was there. So was Duke Peterson, who had just come back from the Virgin Islands. I recall Peterson giving me a list of people to look up when I got to St. Thomas, but I lost the list and never met any of them.It was a rotten night in the middle of January, but I wore a light cord coat. Everyone else had on heavy jackets and flannel suits. The last thing I remember is standing on the dirty bricks of Hudson Street, shaking hands with Rollins and cursing the freezing wind that blew in off the river. Then I got in Millick's cab and slept all the way to the airport.I was late and there was a line at the reservations desk. I fell in behind fifteen or so Puerto Ricans and one small blonde girl a few places ahead of me. I pegged her for a tourist, a wild young secretary going down to the Caribbean for a two week romp. She had a fine little body and an impatient way of standing that indicated a mass of stored-up energy. I watched her intently, smiling, feeling the ale in my veins, waiting for her to turn around for a swift contact with the eyes.She got her ticket and walked away toward the plane. There were still three Puerto Ricans in front of me. Two of them did their business and passed on, but the third was stymied by the clerk's refusal to let him carry a huge cardboard box on the plane as hand baggage. I gritted my teeth as they argued.Finally I broke in. "Hey!" I shouted. "What the hell is this? I have to get on that plane!"The clerk looked up, disregarding the shouts of the little man in front of me. "What's your name?"I told him, got my ticket, and bolted for the gate. When I got to the plane I had to shove past five or six people waiting to board. I showed my ticket to the grumbling stewardess and stepped inside to scan the seats on both sides of the aisle.Not a blonde head anywhere. I hurried up to the front, thinking that she might be so small that her head wouldn't show over the back seat. But she wasn't on the plane and by this time there were only two double seats left. I fell into one on the aisle and put my typewriter on the one next to the window. They were starting the engines when I looked out and saw her coming across the runway, waving at the stewardess who was about to close the door."Wait a minute!" I shouted. "Another passenger!" I watched until she reached the bottom of the steps. Then I turned around to smile as she came on. I was reaching for my typewriter, thinking to put it on the floor, when an old man shoved in front of me and sat down in the seat I was saving."This seat's taken," I said quickly, grabbing him by the arm.He jerked away and snarled something in Spanish, turning his head toward the window.I grabbed him again. "Get up," I said angrily.He started to yell just as the girl went by and stopped a few feet up the aisle, looking around for a seat. "Here's one," I said, giving the old man a savage jerk. Before she could turn around the stewardess was on me, pulling at my arm."He sat on my typewriter," I explained, helplessly watching the girl find a seat far up at the front of the plane.The stewardess patted the old man's shoulder and eased him back to the seat. "What kind of a bully are you?" she asked me. "I should put you off!"I grumbled and slumped back in the seat. The old man stared

straight ahead until we got off the ground. "You rotten old bastard," I mumbled at him. He didn't even blink, and finally I shut my eyes and tried to sleep. Now and then I would glance up at the blonde head at the front of the plane. Then they turned out the lights and I couldn't see anything. It was dawn when I woke up. The old man was still asleep and I leaned across him to look out the window. Several thousand feet below us the ocean was dark blue and calm as a lake. Up ahead I saw an island, bright green in the early morning sun. There were beaches along the edge of it, and brown swamps further inland. The plane started down and the stewardess announced that we should all buckle our safety belts. Moments later we swept in over acres of palm trees and taxied to a halt in front of the big terminal. I decided to stay in my seat until the girl came past, then get up and walk with her across the runway. Since we were the only white people on the plane, it would seem quite natural. The others were standing now, laughing and jabbering as they waited for the stewardess to open the door. Suddenly the old man jumped up and tried to scramble over me like a dog. Without thinking, I slammed him back against the window, causing a thump that silenced the crowd. The man appeared to be sick and tried to scramble past me again, shouting hysterically in Spanish. "You crazy old bastard!" I yelled, shoving him back with one hand and reaching for my typewriter with the other. The door was open now and they were filing out. The girl came past me and I tried to smile at her, keeping the old man pinned against the window until I could back into the aisle. He was raising so much hell, shouting and waving his arms, that I was tempted to belt him in the throat to calm him down. Then the stewardess arrived, followed by the co-pilot, who demanded to know what I thought I was doing. "He's been beating that old man ever since we left New York," said the stewardess. "He must be a sadist." They kept me there for ten minutes and at first I thought they meant to have me arrested. I tried to explain, but I was so tired and confused that I couldn't think what I was saying. When they finally let me go I slunk off the plane like a criminal, squinting and sweating in the sun as I crossed the runway to the baggage room. It was crowded with Puerto Ricans and the girl was nowhere in sight. There was not much hope of finding her now and I was not optimistic about what might happen if I did. Few girls look with favor on a man of my stripe, a brutalizer of old people. I remembered the expression on her face when she saw me with the old man pinned against the window. It was almost too much to overcome. I decided to get some breakfast and pick up my baggage later on. The airport in San Juan is a fine, modern thing, full of bright colors and suntanned people and Latin rhythms blaring from speakers hung on naked girders above the lobby. I walked up a long ramp, carrying my topcoat and my typewriter in one hand, and a small leather bag in the other. The signs led me up another ramp and finally to the coffee shop. As I went in I saw myself in a mirror, looking dirty and disreputable, a pale vagrant with red eyes. On top of my slovenly appearance, I stank of ale. It hung in my stomach like a lump of rancid milk. I tried not to breathe on anyone as I sat down at the counter and ordered sliced pineapple. Outside, the runway glistened in the early sun. Beyond it a thick palm jungle stood between me and the ocean. Several miles out at sea a sailboat moved slowly across the horizon. I stared for several moments and fell into a trance. It looked peaceful out there, peaceful and hot. I wanted to go into the palms and sleep, take a few chunks of pineapple and wander into the jungle to pass out. Instead, I ordered more coffee and looked again at the cable that had come with my plane ticket. It said I had reservations at the Condado Beach Hotel. It was not yet seven o'clock, but the coffee shop was crowded. Groups of men sat at tables beside the long window, sipping a milky brew and talking energetically. A few wore suits, but most of them had on what appeared to be the uniform of the day -- thick-rimmed sunglasses, shiny dark pants and white shirts with short sleeves and ties. I caught snatches of conversation here and there: "...no such thing as cheap beach-front anymore...yeah, but this ain't Montego, gentlemen...don't worry, he has plenty, and all we need is...sewed up, but we gotta move quick before Castro and that crowd jumps in with..." After ten minutes of half-hearted listening I suspected I was in a den of hustlers. Most of them seemed to be waiting for the seven-thirty flight from Miami, which -- from what I gathered of the conversations -- would be bulging at the seams with architects, strip-men, consultants and Sicilians fleeing Cuba. Their voices set my teeth on edge. I have no valid complaint against hustlers, no rational bitch, but the act of selling is repulsive to me. I harbor a secret urge to whack a salesman in the face, crack his teeth and put red bumps around his eyes. Once I was conscious of the talk I couldn't hear anything else. It shattered my feeling of laziness and finally annoyed me so much that I sucked down the rest of my coffee and hurried out of the place. The baggage room was empty. I found my two duffel bags and had a porter carry them out to the cab. All the way through the lobby he favored me with a steady grin and kept saying: "S, Puerto Rico est bueno...ah, s#237:, muy bueno...mucho ha-ha, s..." In the cab I leaned back and lit a small cigar I'd bought in the coffee shop. I was feeling better now, warm and sleepy and absolutely free. With the palms zipping past and the big sun

burning down on the road ahead, I had a flash of something I hadn't felt since my first months in Europe -- a mixture of ignorance and a loose, "what the hell" kind of confidence that comes on a man when the wind picks up and he begins to move in a hard straight line toward an unknown horizon. We were speeding along a four-lane highway. Stretching off on both sides was a vast complex of yellow housing developments, laced with tall cyclone fences. Moments later we passed what looked like a new subdivision, full of identical pink and blue houses. There was a billboard at the entrance, announcing to all travelers that they were passing the El Jippo Urbanizacin. A few yards from the billboard was a tiny shack made of palm fronds and tin scraps, and beside it was a hand-painted sign saying "Coco Fro" Inside, a boy of about thirteen leaned on his counter and stared out at the passing cars. Arriving half-drunk in a foreign place is hard on the nerves. You have a feeling that something is wrong, that you can't get a grip. I had this feeling, and when I got to the hotel I went straight to bed. It was four-thirty when I woke up, hungry and dirty and not at all sure where I was. I walked out on my balcony and stared down at the beach. Below me, a crowd of women, children and potbellied men were splashing around in the surf. To my right was another hotel, and then another, each with its own crowded beach. I took a shower, then went downstairs to the open-air lobby. The restaurant was closed, so I tried the bar. It showed every sign of having been flown down intact from a Catskill mountain resort. I sat there for two hours, drinking, eating peanuts and staring out at the ocean. There were roughly a dozen people in the place. The men looked like sick Mexicans, with thin little mustaches and silk suits that glistened like plastic. Most of the women were Americans, a brittle-looking lot, none of them young, all wearing sleeveless cocktail dresses that fit like rubber sacks. I felt like something that had washed up on the beach. My wrinkled cord coat was five years old and frayed at the neck, my pants had no creases and, although it had never occurred to me to wear a tie, I was obviously out of place without one. Rather than seem like a pretender, I gave up on rum and ordered a beer. The bartender eyed me sullenly and I knew the reason why -- I was wearing nothing that glistened. No doubt it was the mark of a bad apple. In order to make a go of it here, I would have to get some dazzling clothes. At six-thirty I left the bar and walked outside. It was getting dark and the big Avenida looked cool and graceful. On the other side were homes that once looked out on the beach. Now they looked out on hotels and most of them had retreated behind tall hedges and walls that cut them off from the street. Here and there I could see a patio or a screen porch where people sat beneath fans and drank rum. Somewhere up the street I heard bells, the sleepy tinkling of Brahms' Lullaby. I walked a block or so, trying to get the feel of the place, and the bells kept coming closer. Soon an ice-cream truck appeared, moving slowly down the middle of the street. On its roof was a giant popsicle, flashing on and off with red neon explosions that lit up the whole area. From somewhere in its bowels came the clanging of Mr. Brahms' tune. As it passed me, the driver grinned happily and blew his horn. I immediately hailed a cab, telling the man to take me to the middle of town. Old San Juan is an island, connected to the mainland by several causeways. We crossed on the one that comes in from Condado. Dozens of Puerto Ricans stood along the rails, fishing in the shallow lagoon, and off to my right was a huge white shape beneath a neon sign that said Carib Hilton. This, I knew, was the cornerstone of The Boom. Conrad had come in like Jesus and all the fish had followed. Before Hilton there was nothing; now the sky was the limit. We passed a deserted stadium and soon we were on a boulevard that ran along a cliff. On one side was the dark Atlantic, and, on the other, across the narrow city, were thousands of colored lights on cruise ships tied up at the waterfront. We turned off the boulevard and stopped at a place the driver said was Plaza Coln. The fare was a dollar-thirty and I gave him two bills. He looked at the money and shook his head. "What's wrong?" I said. He shrugged. "No change, seor." I felt in my pocket -- nothing but a nickel. I knew he was lying, but I didn't feel like taking the trouble to get a dollar changed. "You goddamn thief," I said, tossing the bills in his lap. He shrugged again and drove off. The Plaza Coln was a hub for several narrow streets. The buildings were jammed together, two and three stories high, with balconies that hung out over the street. The air was hot, and a smell of sweat and garbage rode on the faint breeze. A chatter of music and voices came from open windows. The sidewalks were so narrow that it was an effort to stay out of the gutter, and fruit vendors blocked the streets with wooden carts, selling peeled oranges for a nickel each. I walked for thirty minutes, looking into windows of stores that sold "Ivy Liga" clothes, peering into foul bars full of whores and sailors, dodging people on the sidewalks, thinking I would collapse at any moment if I didn't find a restaurant. Finally I gave up. There seemed to be no restaurants in the Old City. The only thing I saw was called the New York Diner, and it was closed. In desperation, I hailed a cab and told him to take me to the Daily News. He stared at me. "The newspaper!" I shouted, slamming the door as I got in. "Ah, s," he murmured. "El Diario, s." "No, goddamnit," I said. The Daily News -- the American newspaper -- El

News. "He had never heard of it, so we drove back to Plaza Coln, where I leaned out the window and asked a cop. He didn't know either, but finally a man came over from the bus stop and told us where it was. We drove down a cobblestone hill toward the waterfront. There was no sign of a newspaper, and I suspected he was bringing me down here to get rid of me. We turned a corner and he suddenly hit his brakes. Just ahead of us was some kind of a gang-fight, a shouting mob, trying to enter an old greenish building that looked like a warehouse. "Go on," I said to the driver. "We can get by." He mumbled and shook his head. I banged my fist on the back of the seat. "Get going! No move -- no pay." He mumbled again, but shifted into first and angled toward the far side of the street, putting as much distance as possible between us and the fight. He stopped as we came abreast of the building and I saw that it was a gang of about twenty Puerto Ricans, attacking a tall American in a tan suit. He was standing on the steps, swinging a big wooden sign like a baseball bat. "You rotten little punks!" he yelled. There was a flurry of movement and I heard the sound of thumping and shouting. One of the attackers fell down in the street with blood on his face. The large fellow backed toward the door, waving the sign in front of him. Two men tried to grab it and he whacked one of them in the chest, knocking him down the steps. The others stood away, yelling and shaking their fists. He snarled back at them: "Here it is, punks -- come get it!" Nobody moved. He waited a moment, then lifted the sign over his shoulder and threw it into their midst. It hit one man in the stomach, driving him back on the others. I heard a burst of laughter, then he disappeared into the building. "Okay," I said, turning back to the driver. "That's it -- let's go." He shook his head and pointed at the building, then at me. "S, est News." He nodded, then pointed again at the building. "S," he said gravely. It dawned on me that we were sitting in front of the Daily News -- my new home. I took one look at the dirty mob between me and the door, and decided to go back to the hotel. Just then I heard another commotion. A Volkswagen pulled up behind us and three cops got out, waving long billyclubs and yelling in Spanish. Some of the mob ran, but others stayed to argue. I watched for a moment, then gave the driver a dollar and ran into the building. A sign said the News editorial office was on the second floor. I took an elevator, half expecting to find myself lifted into the midst of more violence. But the door opened on a dark hall, and a little to my left I heard the noise of the city room. The moment I got inside I felt better. There was a friendly messiness about the place, a steady clatter of typewriters and wire machines, even the smell was familiar. The room was so big that it looked empty, although I could see at least ten people. The only one not working was a small, black-haired man at a desk beside the door. He was tilted back in a chair, staring at the ceiling. I walked over and as I started to speak he jerked around in the chair. "All right!" he snapped. "What the fuck are you after?" I glared down at him. "I start work here tomorrow," I said. "My name's Kemp, Paul Kemp." He smiled faintly. "Sorry -- thought you were after my film." "What?" I said. He grumbled something about being "robbed blind," and "watching it like a hawk." I glanced around the room. "They look normal." He snorted. "Thieves -- packrats." He stood up and held out his hand. "Bob Sala, staff photographer," he said. "What brings you in tonight?" "I'm looking for a place to eat." He smiled. "You broke?" "No, I'm rich -- I just can't find a restaurant." He dropped back in his chair. "You're lucky. The first thing you learn here is to avoid restaurants." "Why?" I said. "Dysentery?" He laughed. "Dysentery, crabs, gout, Hutchinson's Disease -- you can get anything here, anything at all." He looked at his watch. "Wait about ten minutes and I'll take you up to Al's." I moved a camera out of the way and sat down on his desk. He leaned back and stared again at the ceiling, scratching his wiry head from time to time and apparently drifting off to some happier land where there were good restaurants and no thieves. He looked out of place here -- more like a ticket-taker at some Indiana carnival. His teeth were bad, he needed a shave, his shirt was filthy, and his shoes looked like they'd come from the Goodwill. We sat there in silence until two men came out of an office on the other side of the room. One was the tall American I'd seen fighting in the street. The other was short and bald, talking excitedly and gesturing with both hands. "Who's that?" I asked Sala, pointing at the tall one. He looked. "The guy with Lotterman?" I nodded, presuming the short one to be Lotterman. "His name's Yeamon," said Sala, turning back to the desk. "He's new -- got here a few weeks ago." "I saw him fighting outside," I said. "A bunch of Puerto Ricans jumped him right in front of the building." Sala shook his head. "That figures -- he's a nut." He nodded. "Probably mouthed off at those union goons. It's some kind of a wildcat strike -- nobody knows what it means." Just then Lotterman called across the room: "What are you doing, Sala?" Sala didn't look up. "Nothing -- I'm off in three minutes." "Who's that with you?" Lotterman asked, eyeing me suspiciously. "Judge Crater," Sala replied. "Might be a story." "Judge who?" said Lotterman, advancing on the desk. "Never mind," said Sala. "His name is Kemp and he claims you hired him." Lotterman looked puzzled. "Judge Kemp?" he muttered. Then he smiled broadly and held out both hands. "Oh yes -- Kemp! Good to see you, boy. When did you get

in?" "This morning," I said, getting off the desk to shake hands. "I slept most of the day." "Good!" he said. "That's very smart." He nodded emphatically. "Well, I hope you're ready to go." "Not right now," I said. "I have to eat." He laughed. "Oh no -- tomorrow. I wouldn't put you to work tonight." He laughed again. "No, I want you boys to eat." He smiled down at Sala. "I suppose Bob's going to show you the town, eh?" "Sure I am," said Sala. "Do it on the old expense account, eh?" Lotterman laughed nervously. "You know what I mean, Bob -- let's try to be civil." He turned and waved at Yeamon, who was standing in the middle of the room, examining a rip in the armpit of his coat. Yeamon came toward us with a long bow-legged stride, smiling politely when Lotterman introduced me. He was tall, with a face that was either arrogant or something else that I couldn't quite place. Lotterman rubbed his hands together. "Yessir, Bob," he said with a grin. "We're getting a real team together, eh?" He slapped Yeamon on the back. "Old Yeamon just had a scrape with those communist bastards outside," he said. "They're savage -- they should be locked up." Sala nodded. "They'll kill one of us pretty soon." "Don't say that, Bob," said Lotterman. "Nobody's going to be killed." Sala shrugged. "I called Commissioner Rogan about it this morning," Lotterman explained. "We can't tolerate this sort of thing -- it's a menace." "Damn right it is," Sala replied. "To hell with Commissioner Rogan -- we need a few Lugers." He stood up and pulled his coat off the back of the chair. "Well, time to go." He looked at Yeamon. "We're going up to Al's -- you hungry?" "I'll be up later on," Yeamon replied. "I want to check by the apartment and see if Chenault's still asleep." "Okay," said Sala. He waved me toward the door. "Come on. We'll go out the back way -- I don't feel like a fight." "Be careful, boys," Lotterman called after us. I nodded and followed Sala into the hall. At the rear of the building a stairway led down to a metal door. Sala poked at it with a pocket knife and it swung open. "Can't do it from outside," he explained as I followed him into the alley. His car was a tiny Fiat convertible, half eaten away by rust. It wouldn't start and I had to get out and push. Finally it kicked over and I jumped in. The engine roared painfully as we started up the hill. I didn't think we'd make it, but the little car staggered manfully over the crest and started up another steep hill. Sala seemed unconcerned with the strain, riding the clutch whenever we threatened to stall. We parked in front of Al's and went back to the patio. "I'm getting three hamburgers," said Sala. "That's all he serves." I nodded. "Anything -- I need bulk." He called to the cook and told him we wanted six hamburgers. "And two beers," he added. "Real quick." "I'll have rum," I said. "Two beers and two rums," Sala shouted. Then he leaned back in his chair and lit a cigarette. "You a reporter?" "Yeah," I said. "What brings you down here?" "Why not?" I replied. "A man could do worse than the Caribbean." He grunted. "This isn't the Caribbean -- you should have kept on going south." The cook shuffled across the patio with our drinks. "Where were you before this?" Sala asked, lifting his beers off the tray. "New York," I said. "Before that, Europe." "Where in Europe?" "All over -- mainly Rome and London." "Daily American?" he asked. "Yeah," I said. "I had a fill-in job for six months." "You know a guy named Fred Ballinger?" he asked. I nodded. "He's here," Sala said. "He's getting rich." I groaned. "Man, what a jackass." "You'll see him," he said with a grin. "He hangs around the office." "What the hell for?" I snapped. "Sucks up to Donovan." He laughed. "Claims he was sports editor of the Daily American." "He was a pimp!" I said. Sala laughed. "Donovan threw him down the stairs one night -- he hasn't been around for a while." "Good," I said. "Who's Donovan -- the sports editor?" He nodded. "A drunkard -- he's about to quit." "Why?" He laughed. "Everybody quits -- you'll quit. Nobody worth a shit can work here." He shook his head. "People dropping out like flies. I've been here longer than anybody -- except Tyrrell, the city editor, and he's going soon. Lotterman doesn't know it yet -- that'll be it -- Tyrrell's the only good head left." He laughed quickly. "Wait till you meet the managing editor -- can't even write a headline." "Who's that?" I said. "Segarra -- Greasy Nick. He's writing the governor's biography. Any time of the day or night he's writing the governor's biography -- can't be disturbed." I sipped my drink. "How long have you been here?" I asked him. "Too long, more than a year." "Couldn't be too bad," I said. He smiled. "Hell, don't let me throw you off. You may like it -- there's a type that does." "What type is that?" I asked. "Bagmasters," he replied. "The wheelers and the dealers -- they love it here." "Yeah," I said. "I got that feeling at the airport." I looked over at him. "What keeps you here? It's only forty-five dollars to New York." He snorted. "Hell, I make that much in an hour -- just for punching a button." "You sound greedy," I said. He grinned. "I am. There's nobody on the island greedier than me. Sometimes I feel like kicking myself in the balls." Sweep arrived with our hamburgers. Sala grabbed his off the tray -- and opened them up on the table, throwing the lettuce and tomato slices into the ashtray. "You brainless monster," he said wearily. "How many times have I told you to keep this garbage off my meat?" The waiter stared down at the garbage. "A thousand times!" Sala shouted. "I tell you every stinking day!" "Man," I said with a smile. "You should leave -- this place is getting to you." He gobbled one of his

hamburgers. "You'll see," he muttered. "You and Yeamon -- that guy's a freak. He won't last. None of us will last." He slammed his fist on the table. "Sweep -- more beer!" The waiter came out of the kitchen and looked at us. "Two beers!" Sala yelled. "Hurry!" I smiled and leaned back in the chair. "What's wrong with Yeamon?" He looked at me as if it were incredible that I should have to ask. "Didn't you see him?" he said. "That wild-eyed sonofabitch! Lotterman's scared shitless of him -- couldn't you see it?" I shook my head. "He looked okay to me." "Okay?" he shouted. "You should have been here a few nights ago! He flipped this table for no reason at all -- this very table." He slapped our table with his palm. "No damn reason," he repeated. "Knocked all our drinks in the dirt and flipped the table on some poor bastard who didn't know what he was saying -- then threatened to stomp him!" Sala shook his head. "I don't know where Lotterman found that guy. He's so scared of him that he lent him a hundred dollars and Yeamon went out and blew it on a motorscooter." He laughed bitterly. "Now he's brought some girl down here to live with him." The waiter appeared with the beers and Sala snatched them off the tray. "No girl with any brains would come here," he said. "Just virgins -- hysterical virgins." He shook his finger at me. "You'll turn queer in this place, Kemp -- mark my words. This place will turn a man queer and crazy." "I don't know," I said. "A fine young thing came down on the plane with me." I smiled. "I think I'll look around for her tomorrow. She's bound to be on the beach somewhere." "She's probably a lesbian," he replied. "This place is full of them." He shook his head. "It's the tropic rot -- this constant sexless drinking!" He slumped back in his chair. "It's driving me wild -- I'm cracking up!" Sweep came hurrying out with two more beers and Sala grabbed them off the tray. Just then Yeamon appeared in the doorway; he saw us and came over to the table. Sala groaned miserably. "Oh god, here he is," he muttered. "Don't stomp me, Yeamon -- I didn't mean it." Yeamon smiled and sat down. "Are you still bitching about Moberg?" He laughed and turned to me. "Robert thinks I mistreated Moberg." Sala grumbled something about "nuts." Yeamon laughed again. "Sala's the oldest man in San Juan. How old are you, Robert -- about ninety?" "Don't give me your crazy shit!" Sala shouted, springing up from his chair. Yeamon nodded. "Robert needs a woman," he said gently. "His penis is pressing on his brain and he can't think." Sala groaned and shut his eyes. Yeamon tapped on the table. "Robert, the streets are full of whores. You should look around sometime. I saw so many on the way up here that I wanted to grab about six and fall down naked and let them crawl all over me like puppies." He laughed and signaled for the waiter. "You bastard," Sala muttered. "That girl hasn't been here a day and you're already talking about having whores crawl on you." He nodded wisely. "You'll get the syphilis -- you keep on whoring and stomping around and pretty soon you'll stomp in shit." Yeamon grinned. "Okay, Robert. You've warned me." Sala looked up. "Is she still asleep? How long before I can go back to my own apartment?" "Soon as we leave here," Yeamon replied. "I'll take her on out to the house." He nodded. "Of course I'll have to borrow your car -- too much luggage for the scooter." "Jesus," Sala muttered. "You're a plague, Yeamon -- you'll suck me dry." Yeamon laughed. "You're a fine Christian, Robert. You'll get your reward." He ignored Sala's snort and turned to me. "Did you come in on the morning plane?" "Yeah," I said. He smiled. "Chenault said there was some young guy beating up an old man on the plane with her -- was that you?" I groaned, feeling the web of sin and circumstance close down on the table. Sala eyed me suspiciously. I explained that I'd been sitting next to an aged lunatic who kept trying to crawl over me. Yeamon laughed. "Chenault thought you were the lunatic -- claimed you kept staring at her, then ran amok on the old man -- you were still beating him when she got off the plane." "Jesus Christ!" Sala exc