

My guest sat quietly during my mental perambulations, puffing away on the weed in amicable silence. When he could see that my attention had returned to rest on him, he resumed our intercourse naturally.

“You realize that you are compelling me to do something which I had thought not to do again.”

“I, Durchlauscht? You amaze me! What power should one such as I have to coerce you to anything?” I asked.

“That power lies not so much in you as in this gift you have bestowed. Having once had it, and sensing its good qualities, I must, of course, sample it again and again. Who should deny me? If I desire it, I shall have it!” Some of his calmness had left him, but I had no fear for myself. Such animations make for a livelier discourse. Besides, I must admit that I was quite flattered that he so esteemed my offering. “And so, by this cigar, you have compelled me to return to America to seek its like.”

“You mentioned, great one, that you had not visited America in some time, but I would think that you would receive as large a welcome there as anywhere. Are not people much the same everywhere?”

“Not so, my friend,” he stated, and again my chest swelled at his words, “for there is a group in that country which has grossly wounded my pride. Perhaps you have heard of the Arizona Territory?”

“I am familiar with the place, Ihro Majestät.”

“And could you guess that those people would dare to claim that their land was hotter than mine own demesne?”

“What harm is there in a little boasting or exaggerating, Durchlauscht?” I countered.

“Oh, nothing, nothing,” he said. “In fact, I encourage such. The problem is they’re telling the truth.”