



## **Hotel Kaiser**

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## Hotel Kaiser

He woke in the hotel room, didn't know how he got there or why his head ached so much. He got out of the bed and groaned as he saw his reflection. The word 'BASTARD' had been written in marker pen across his forehead.

There was a knock at the door.

'Mr Hopefeld? Hello ... Mr Hopefeld, are you in there?'

He stood transfixed unable to move. Who was Mr Hopefeld?

The knock at the door came again, this time louder.

'Mr Hopefeld! Open this door.'

He retreated a few paces as the door opened. Three men stepped into the room.

'Mr Hopefeld,' one of them said. 'Are you all right?'

*He looked from one to the other, eyeing them nervously while trying to appear cool. All three were sporting dark suits. Boiler suits. None of them smiled. He coughed and looked down, relieved to discover that he was wearing trousers, though he was bare-chested.*

*'Yes, thank you,' he told them. 'Will you excuse me a moment?' Silence. 'I need the bathroom,' he explained, heading for a door to his right. He flung it open and entered, closing the door behind him.*

*He reached in his trouser pocket, pulled out a wallet and examined the contents.*

*Mr JP Hopefeld, read the driving licence inside. The photo was not him.*

He put on the complimentary 'HK' monogrammed bathrobe and smiled at himself in the mirror. What on earth was that written on his head? His vision was slightly blurry and the letters were back to front. He gave up trying to figure it out and went back to the others.

'JP.' He smiled as he shook their hands. 'How can I help?'

'My colleagues and I are with the Hotel's undercover unit,' the one with the eye-patch said.

The other two watched his reaction closely. There was something suspicious about them. And it wasn't that they were holding hands.

'Undercover unit?' he replied, with a bemused look.

*'Yes, and frankly we're rather surprised to see you here ... You did say JP Hopefeld didn't you?'*

*'Well, yes.'* He hesitated. *'Why?'*

*'We were looking for a Randolph Hopefeld. We had some news for him. Some rather unfortunate news regarding his father, JP.'*

*'Unfortunate?'*

*'Sir, are thereby any chance two JP Hopefelds in the family?'*

*He squirmed inside, unsure how to respond. 'Yes, yes,' he gambled. 'Indeed.'*

*There was silence for a moment while the man with the patch stared him sternly in the face. 'Then perhaps you would care to explain your relationship with the Mr JP Hopefeld who we found dead in the rooftop pool, not four hours ago.'*

*'I can't remember.'* He shook his head. *'I come here every Friday night and book myself in as JP Hopefeld as a decoy. JP goes about his business on the rooftop. I don't know what goes on up there.'*

Suddenly a splatter of machine gun fire hit the hotel room. The man with the patch got one through his good eye and was killed instantly. The other two were riddled with bullet holes and fell to the floor still holding hands.

He ducked low and thought about his next move. He had to get up to the rooftop to see what had happened for himself. The lift would be too obvious so he took the stairs.

*The gun in his hand was still warm, and he wondered where on earth he had learned to fire such a weapon and what the hell he had killed the boiler suit guys for. And if JP Hopefeld - whoever he was - was actually dead, then had he killed him too?*

*He was sweating like a dog as he reached the top of the stairs. He left the machine gun behind a plant pot in the stairwell before emerging into bright sunshine on the roof. Red and white tape surrounded the pool and a solitary, unarmed policeman stood guard over the scene.'*

*'Ah, there you are.'* A man in his late fifties appeared from nowhere and thrust a champagne glass in his face. *'Marvellous to see you. The party's just getting started. I sent some undercover boys down to fetch you.'*

*'Yes.'* He coughed. *'They introduced themselves but had to leave in a rush.'*

*'Shame.'* He took a gulp of champagne. *'Bit bloody rude if you ask me.'*

They walked to the swimming pool. Something was floating on the surface. It was a body, spreadeagled, face down.

*The man turned to him, eyed his forehead. 'Nice touch that.'*

*'Sorry?'*

*'The marker pen on the forehead. Nice touch, you tricky bastard. Anyone'd think you'd really been on a bender last night.'*

*'Well, no, not really, of course.'*

*'Always best to stay in character,' said the man.*

*'Absolutely.'*

*'Still, they tell me you're special forces in real life.'*

*He thought back to the machine gun, the killing. 'Real life?' The bullets, the blood, the bodies had been real, that was for sure.*

*'Is this your first?' the man asked.*

*'First ... what?'*

*'Murder mystery weekend,' he said, indicating the dummy floating in the pool.*

\* \* \*

*Words in italics by Will Arnold.*

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