

World Travelers

By C. T. Suddeth

A little girl with long, black pigtails and a blue fedora rapped on the front door.

Hurling his beer bottle under the couch, Jake answered the door. “Can I help you little lady?”

She curtsied in her red dress. “I’m a Magic Scout, and I’m selling Magic Scout Cookies to make money for a new clubhouse.”

“I’ve never heard of the Magic Scouts.”

“We’re new in town.” She shoved a box of cookies in his face. “Only two dollars. Please buy a box. If you don’t like ‘em, you can get your money back.” Four more boxes were stacked neatly beside her.

Jake looked at the front of the cardboard box, Tahitian Island Cookies. On the side it read, It’s better than taking a trip to the South Pacific. Pictures of hula girls adorned it. He almost laughed, but he didn’t want to hurt her feelings. Although they were just ordinary coconut cookies, it was for charity. “Give me one of each flavor.”

She squealed and danced in a little circle. “Thank you!” She handed him the five boxes. “Ten bucks.”

He handed her a ten-dollar bill. Passing him the boxes, she merrily skipped away.

The other boxes were German Chocolate, Swiss Chocolate, Mexican Mariachi, and Italian Wedding Cookies. He liked coconut so he popped a Tahitian Island Cookie in his mouth.

He closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them, he was in a lounge chair on a sunny beach listening to the roar of the surf.

A hula girl appeared. "May I help you, sir?"

Jake grinned "Something with rum in it."

She brought him drinks for hours. He didn't understand what was happening, but he ogled the bikini-clad beach bunnies until he lost track of time. Realizing he was drunk, he waved her off.

She waved. "Aloha."

Jake blinked. He was back on his couch.

His wife, Liz, glared at him. "You've been gone for four hours. Where have you been?"

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you, so you'll have to see for yourself." He handed her a Tahitian Island Cookie and took one for himself. "Sit beside me and eat it."

She rolled her eyes, but she slowly chewed it. A moment later, they were sitting on a beach blanket with ocean waves gently lapping at the sand and palm trees shading them.

"What was in those cookies?" she asked.

He shrugged. "I don't know but I like it."

They ordered rum drinks from a grass-skirted server. He stared at the almost-nude girls on the beach.

Liz jabbed him in the ribs with her finger. "Quit gawking." She was in her forties and a trifle overweight.

Jake had forgotten that he was pushing fifty, and he wasn't a movie star either.

"You're drinking too much," said Liz.

She shook her head at the pretty waitress, and they were home again. Four hours had elapsed.

"I have to admit, that was a ball," said Liz.

Jake held up a box marked, "Mexican Mariachi Cookies." A voluptuous Mexican woman with a white sombrero graced the box.

"Why not?" Liz reached for one.

They chewed the spicy cookies. In a twinkling of an eye, they were sitting at a wooden table in a scenic Mexican cantina and listening to a Mariachi band. At the other tables, flamboyantly dressed couples smiled and waved to them.

Jake ordered tequila for them, although the lovely Mexican senorita didn't know English.

Liz stood up and gave the little place the once-over. "How's this possible?"

He guzzled tequila. "Who cares? Just enjoy."

A college-age girl did a flamenco dance on a little stage while everyone cheered, especially Jack.

"What if some travel company is charging us for these trips?" asked Liz.

He laughed. "You worry too much."

"And you drink too much."

Four hours later, Liz told the senorita, "No, no." They returned to their living room in the blink of an eye.

Jake held up the other three boxes.

Liz grimaced. "Let's hit the sack."

The next morning, Jake opened the Italian Wedding Cookies, which had a picture of someone resembling a young Sophia Loren, and offered Liz a cookie.

"Are you sure it's safe?"

"It worked yesterday." He bit into his cookie that tasted of pistachio and vanilla.

She shrugged and followed suit. They ended up at a long wooden table in a vine-covered courtyard surrounded by people in colorful costumes. Two men played mandolins while the wedding couple danced, and everyone else clapped in time to the music.

A sexy, nubile girl dressed in a Roman toga served them glasses of red wine.

Liz hugged Jake's arm. "This is really great."

He swigged the cool, sweet wine and gazed at the lovely bride with fiery, dark eyes. He was delighted he had helped the Magic Scouts out.

Four hours later, the wedding celebration was over. Their young server waved good-bye. A split second later, they were standing in their kitchen.

Liz inspected the other two boxes. "As long as these cookies last, we don't have to worry about going on vacation...but it's almost too good."

He opened the German Chocolate Cookies, which had a picture of a big-busted woman in a peasant outfit, and handed one to her.

Liz hesitated. "You already paid for the cookies? They won't come back asking for more money? You won't get too looped?"

He shook his head and jammed the cookie in his mouth. Sweet hazelnut filled the chocolate cookie. He pointed to her mouth, and she munched on hers.

Suddenly, they were at a rustic Bavarian beer hall. A polka band with an accordion, tuba, and drums played on the stage. A beautiful fraulein in lederhosen brought them tankards of dark beer.

Jake drank several beers until he was almost drunk, but he was sober enough to lust after the sexy fraulein.

Liz pushed his tankard away. “If you get too drunk they may not let us have more cookies. And quit eyeballing the girls.”

After four hours, Liz shook her head at the fraulein. Then they were back in their kitchen an instant later.

Jake grabbed the Swiss Chocolate Cookies. A blonde goat herder in a low-cut, embroidered dress smiled on the front of the box. “Liz, just one more box.”

She pushed the box away from her. “In the morning. I need some sleep, and you’re getting too drunk.”

He was disappointed, but she had a point. The next day, after a late breakfast, he opened the Swiss Chocolate Cookies. “Are you ready to travel?”

She sighed. “No, can’t we take a break? Switzerland sounds dull. Is there such a thing as Swiss wine or beer? Maybe tonight. You just want get wasted and stare at the pretty girls.”

Jake wasn’t surprised. She was never a real party girl even when she was young. “The Swiss speak German, so I bet they have great beer.”

She snickered. “And beautiful girls.”

He waved the cookie in the air to entice her. “I’m going with or without you.”

She opened the Sunday paper. “Without me, bub.”

He bit into the cookie and licked his lips. “This is the chocolatiest cookie I’ve ever tasted.”

She didn’t even look up. “I don’t care.”

He finished the cookie and disappeared.

* * *

A minute after Jake vanished, Liz heard a knock at the door and opened it.

Standing there was a thirty-year-old woman wearing a red dress and a blue fedora.

“Hello. Did my daughter sell you some cookies from the Magic Scouts?”

Liz showed her an opened box of Tahitian Island Cookies. “Got any more? These are something else.”

The young woman pursed her lips. “Then you’ve used them without problem?”

“Four hours and we came home each time. I never thought I’d get a chance to visit so many foreign places.”

“Swiss Chocolate is what I—”

Liz counted off on her hands, “Mexico, Italy, Tahiti, and Germany—everyone was so nice to us.”

She smiled. “They were nice, or they wouldn’t have let you come home. Now about the Swiss Chocolate—”

Liz was ready to slam the door on this nosy woman. “Don’t tell me the Swiss aren’t nice, my granny was Swiss.”

She held her little hat in her hands. “You don’t understand. The box has been mislabeled. It wasn’t Swiss Chocolate.”

Liz grinned. “It was chocolate all right. Jake bragged about it.”

She dropped her head so Liz couldn’t see her face. “It wasn’t SWISS CHOCOLATE, it was DEVIL’S FOOD.”

THE END