

"I expect there'll be some guesses but they won't be answered at Amblett's. All my instructions were verbal from the beginning, nothing on paper at all, nothing. My orders came direct from the general manager and he made it clear from the start that the whole deal is classified top secret . . . hush-hush and double-shush." He opened the door.

The Lily Inez swung out into the spotlight beams; the magnificent coat hung from a satin-padded shoulder form fixed to the back of the cabinet's door.

Under that bright light the sables seemed alive. The deep blue pelts quivered with constantly shifting high lights of rich chestnut; the shimmering of the silver-tipped guard hairs gave the uncanny effect of sinuous animal movement.

"You're right, boy." Don was impressed. "I've never seen anything like it. It's sensational."

"Glorious, absolutely glorious." The fur buyer caressed the shoulder of the garment. "It is more than probable that this is the finest crown sable ever made. I can scarcely wait to see if the wearer is worthy of the coat." He ran the tips of his fingers down the sleeve. "On the other hand, I can hardly bear to part with this lovely thing. You can't imagine what this does to a man who has spent his life with furs."

Don said to himself: *You sound like a guy making love to a girl. As if you'd like to sleep with that set of sables.* Aloud, he remarked: "I expect you'll be glad to be rid of the responsibility, boy."

Grolheim closed the cabinet with the air of one shutting the door of a mausoleum. "That's quite true; it is a bit of a sword of Damocles hanging over my head until I see it safely delivered to the lady. It's insured . . . but only in her favor. If anything happened before she signed the receipt, it would be the store's loss."

Don asked: "What you worrying about, My?"

"Nothing, actually," the buyer said. "Nothing I can put my finger on, at least." He switched off the spotlight. In the late afternoon grayness and without the dazzling sables, the office again seemed suddenly gloomy; the buyer, too, appeared glum and depressed; the flush of anticipation, the gleam of excite-