

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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## The Grand Duke's Finances (1924)

F.W. Murnau (1888-1931)

### OVERVIEW

*Auteur:* Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau was a German film director, screenwriter, and producer. Murnau had an obsession with film since his childhood. He studied philology at the University of Berlin; and art history, and literature at the University of Heidelberg. In WWI, Murnau served as a company commander. He joined the Imperial German Flying Corps and flew missions. After the end of WWI, he established his film studio with Conrad Veidt. His noteworthy films are *Der Januskopft* (1920), an adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; *Journey into the Night* (1921), a drama film; *The Haunted Castle* (1921), a silent mystery film; *Phantom* (1922); *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (1922), an adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*; *The Last Laugh* (1924); *Faust* (1926); *Tartuffe* (1926); *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927); *City Girl* (1930); and *Tabu: A Story of the South Seas* (1931). Murnau died in a car accident in 1931.

*Film:* *The Grand Duke's Finances* (German: *Die Finanzen des Großherzogs*) is a 1924 silent German comedy directed by F. W. Murnau. The film is written by Frank Heller, Thea von Harbou, and Fritz Wendhausen. The producer is Erich Pommer. The cinematography is by Karl Freund and Franz Planer. The film stars Harry Liedtke, Mady Christians, and Alfred Abel. The film is about The Grand Duke of Abacco, who inherits a small and deeply indebted Mediterranean Island. He evades the relentless pursuit of usurer Marcowitz, demanding repayment of the debt. A potential solution to his financial woes arises in the form of a proposal: a marriage with the Russian Grand Duchess Olga.

*Historical background:* The movie is an adaptation of Swedish author Frank Heller's novel, crafted by Thea von Harbou. Frank Heller was the pen name of the Swedish writer Gunnar Serner (1886–1947). He authored novels and short stories spanning crime fiction and science fiction genres. His most renowned works centered around Philip Collin, a character who embodied both detective and thief roles. Filming of *The Grand Duke's Finances* took place from May to August 1923 at UFA's Tempelhof Studios in Berlin. On-location scenes were captured along the Adriatic coast in Split, Kotor, Zadar, and Rab. The film debuted in Berlin on January 7, 1924, at the Ufa-Palast am Zoo. Notably, it stands as the sole comedy directed by F. W. Murnau.

### CHARACTERS

*Don Roman XX, Grand Duke of Abacco:* Heir to a small but heavily indebted Mediterranean Island.  
*Grand Duchess Olga of Russia:* A noblewoman who has the determination to marry him  
*Philip Collin (Professor Pelotard):* An intelligent, thief-detective/journalist who is always after adventure  
*Marcowitz:* A usurer, who demands debt repayment from the Grand Duke of Abacco  
*Brother of the Grand Duchess:* The Crown Prince of Russia  
*Mr. Bekker:* A businessman who offers the Grand Duke a substantial sum to exploit a sulfur mine.  
*Isaac:* A congressman who wishes to retrieve his love letters from the hands of Marcowitz  
*Don Esteban Paqueno:* The finance minister of the Grand Duke of Abacco  
*Augustina:* The cook of the Grand Duke of Abacco  
*Joaquino:* The valet of the Grand Duke of Abacco  
*The four conspirators:* Four men who conspire against the Grand Duke of Abacco

### SYNOPSIS

The Grand Duke of Abacco is heir to a small but heavily indebted Mediterranean Island. He avoids the demands of usurer Marcowitz who asks for debt repayment. The Grand Duke's salvation lies in a

marriage with the Russian Grand Duchess Olga, who, despite never having met him and facing opposition from her brother, the Crown Prince of Russia, expresses in a letter her determination to marry him. Meanwhile, businessman Bekker offers a substantial sum to exploit a sulfur mine, but the Grand Duke declines the offer because he fears the negative impact on his people. Bekker, in alliance with local conspirators, orchestrates a revolution against the Grand Duke. Adding to the turmoil, the letter from Grand Duchess Olga is fraudulently obtained by Marcowitz. Thief-detective Philip Collin agrees to recover letters from Markowitz written by Congressman Isaac. During this mission, he discovers the letter from Grand Duchess Olga too, and substitutes it with a forgery. Collin requests a £50,000 loan as his fee from Isaac, which he will use to speculate on Abacco's debt. Meanwhile, the Grand Duke secretly travels to the mainland to retrieve Olga's authentic letter. Philip Collin encounters a woman at a café who urgently requests his assistance in evading her pursuers. He agrees to help, only to discover soon that she is none other than Grand Duchess Olga herself, and the one chasing her is her brother. The newspapers cover the speculation surrounding Abacco's bonds, the uprising of a revolution, and the mysterious disappearance of the Grand Duke. All voyages to Abacco are suspended. Meanwhile, Olga, posing as Collin's wife, arranges to charter a ship to travel to Abacco Island. Unaware of his true identity, she agrees to take along the Grand Duke, who has introduced himself as a supporter of the Grand Duke. Marcowitz boards the ship of the Crown Prince of Russia and persuades him to set sail for Abacco by presenting him with the fake letter supposedly from his sister. In Abacco, the Grand Duke and Collin manage to overthrow the self-proclaimed president and his accomplices after a brief fight. However, they are soon overwhelmed by additional revolutionaries who seize the Grand Duke and prepare to hang him. At this critical point, Olga recognizes the Grand Duke's true identity and attempts to unsuccessfully ransom him from the revolutionaries. Later, the Crown Prince arrives with his sailors and assumes command of the situation. He is initially inclined to support the hanging due to the purported sale of his sister's letter, but Olga reveals the letter to be a crude forgery. Collin returns the genuine letter to the Grand Duke, enabling him to refute the accusations. Consequently, the Crown Prince orders a marriage between Olga and the Grand Duke to rectify the situation. Collin celebrates the success of his speculation on Abacco's debts and watches on as events culminate in a resolution.

## SCENES

### **Ramon XXII is heir to the Grand Dukedom of Abacco**

We are introduced to a small island in the Mediterranean: the Grand Dukedom of Abacco. Its benevolent dictator Ramon XXII is the last heir to the Crown and to a sizable national debt. The Grand Duke says that a marriage to Her Royal Highness, Princess Olga, would save all of Abacco: 'God knows, I can't blame Crown Prince Nicolai for forbidding his sister to marry a man whose entire dukedom consists of debt.'



**Mr. Bekker offers to buy Hermosa Point from the Grand Duke** Soon, a man named Mr. Bekker comes to speak with the Grand Duke. He says to Grand Duke: 'If I pay you five million Francs for Hermosa Point, you don't need to worry about why I want it.' However, the Grand Duke wants Mr. Bekker to explain his reasoning.

Unwillingly, Mr. Bekker admits that he has discovered vast deposits of sulfur around Hermosa Point. He wishes to exploit the sulfur deposits with the help of the Grand Duke's countrymen. The Grand Duke declines the offer because he fears the negative health impact on his people. Mr. Bekker is offended: 'One who is up to his ears in debt, like you, Your Highness, can't afford to be sentimental!' The Grand Duke gets angry and throws Mr. Bekker out of his place.



**Mr. Bekker incites a group of ne'er-do-wells to revolt against the Grand Duke** Meanwhile, Mr. Bekker talks to a group of ne'er-do-wells: 'Finish off the Grand Duke! Run him off the island, which doesn't belong to him anymore anyway!' He adds that he has a bone to pick with the Grand Duke. Thus, the orchestration of a revolution against the Grand Duke begins.



**Mr. Bekker finances the revolution against the Grand Duke** We see Mr. Bekker who finances the revolution against the Grand Duke. He talks to a man and says to him: 'I give you money to finance the revolution and support your presidency—I get Hermosa Point, as is, with all rights.'



**The Grand Duke of Abacco receives a letter from Princess Olga** A plane flies through Abacco and a package is thrown out of the plane into the lands of Abacco. The children get the package and run to give the package to the Grand Duke. It turns out that there is a letter hidden in the package and the letter is from Princess Olga. She writes: 'I now have my mind set on becoming Grand Duchess of Abacco. In truth, I know as little of you as you know of me but I think highly of you since I learned how you sacrificed to help save the victims of the 'Palestrina' when it sunk. That you have no money does not matter at all—I



have plenty. I will see to it that your finances are put in order. In short, I am Your Olga, Crown Princess of Russia.' The Grand Duke searches for Princess Olga's letter which he has lost. It turns out Don Esteban Paqueno secretly took the letter from the hands of the Grand Duke while he was sleeping: 'Highness, I wanted...to use the princess's letter to gain a reprieve from Marcowitz.' The Grand Duke is shocked to hear this. Don Esteban Paqueno explains how Marcowitz kept the letter. The Grand Duke is infuriated for a moment but very soon, he calms down: 'Then we just have to go get the letter!'

**Marcowitz demands his debt payment** Marcowitz impatiently waits for the Grand Duke. Don Esteban Paqueno tells him that His Excellency is still asleep. Marcowitz is determined to wait for the Grand Duke. Don Esteban Paqueno goes to the cliff where the Grand Duke is and tells him that Marcowitz insists upon an audience: 'The loans are due in three days! Your Highness must speak with him personally!' The Grand Duke unwillingly leaves the cliff and goes to talk to Marcowitz who demands his money back. Marcowitz says: 'If I don't have my money in three days, your entire island belongs to me.'



**Mr. Isaac needs Philip Collin's help** Philip Collin, a gentleman of changing names and professions, and Mr. Isaac, a financier and budding parliamentarian. (Youthful follies, which he carries on to this day, assure our liking him from the start.) Mr. Isaac visits Philip Collin in a state of desperation: 'If you don't help me, my political career is over.' He then talks about how he wrote love letters to a woman and that these careless letters are now in the hands of the biggest extortionists on earth. Philip Collin joyfully



asks Mr. Isaac to count on him: 'I've got a plan!'

**Philip Collin retrieves Mr. Isaac's letters and also discovers the letter of Princess Olga**

Semjon Marcowitz reading a letter: this is to let you know that I have a letter in my possession that certain people would pay a lot of money for. In case you are interested, I am available between 5 and 6.' After reading this letter, Marcowitz leaves the room. Soon after, Philip Collin comes to Marcowitz's house through the chimney, disguised as a chimney technician. He looks at the letters that Marcowitz possesses and takes Mr. Isaac's letters. He also notices the letter written to the Grand Duke by Princess Olga and takes it. He writes a copy of the letter and substitutes the letter with the forgery.



**Philip Collin wants to make a killing in Abacco bonds**

Philip Collin gives Mr. Isaac's letters back to him. Mr. Isaac burns all the letters in his fireplace. Philip Collin requests a £50,000 loan as his fee from Mr. Isaac. Mr. Isaac wonders about what Collin will do with so much money. Philip Collin says that he wants to make a killing in Abacco bonds: 'I'm telling you that if you buy up Abacco's bonds, then in eight days you'll be able to buy the Emperor of India's throne.'



**A mysterious lady asks for help from Philip Collin**

We see Philip Collin reading the newspapers with the heading: 'Sensation at the exchange! Purchase of Abacco securities by unknown party. Who is behind this market coup?' Collin laughs while reading the newspapers.

Suddenly, a woman appears from a car and swiftly comes near Collin: 'Save me, sir, if you are a gentleman...Talk to me as if I were your girlfriend.' The woman faints very soon. Collin orders a cognac. When the waiter brings the cognac, Collin drinks it immediately and says to the waiter:

'You see, I immediately feel weak when anyone faints.' Then he gives a little of the cognac to the woman who wakes up. She asks whether the car is gone. As soon as she understands she is safe, she wishes to pay for the cognac and leave. However, she realizes that she left her purse in the car. She gives her ring to Collin as a security.



**The mysterious lady and Collin manage to escape from the lady's pursuers**

Collin asks the woman if she is on the run from someone. She asks him to take her to Hotel de l'Europe. However, when their carriage arrives at the hotel, she sees the mysterious car that has been pursuing her parked at the entrance. So, they change their route. Collin then proceeds to paint her face so as to render her unrecognizable by her pursuers. Next, they drive to the train station and manage to get on the train. She tells him that she called him because she wants to settle her debt. When she gives him the notebook which she has been using to take notes of the things she should pay him for. Collin recognizes the royal logo on it and when he opens the little notebook, he sees a photo of the Crown Prince of Russia. He realizes that the mysterious lady is a noblewoman.



### **The Grand Duke prepares to leave the island**

Meanwhile, the Grand Duke prepares to leave the island. He talks to his cook Augustina: 'We leave tonight...secretly. I don't want anyone to find out about this little jaunt to the continent. I think we should be back in eight days.' He tells the cook that she can rule the island in the meantime.



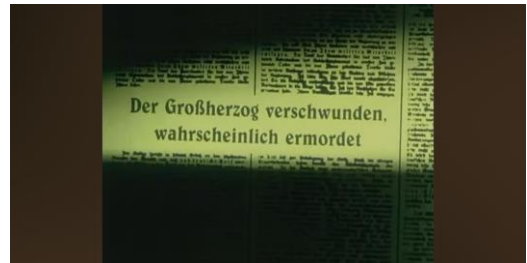
### **As the Grand Duke finds out that eighty percent of the debt of Abacco was purchased**

The conspirators see the Grand Duke running away from the island. One of them goes to inform Mr. Bekker about this departure. As the Grand Duke is about to leave with the ship, the cook comes to the coast and shouts that there is a telegram for him. She throws the telegram onto the ship. The message in the telegram says: 'Eighty percent of the national debt of Abacco was purchased at the exchanges in London, Rome, and Paris for an unknown amount. Financial circles are in an uproar.'



### **The news of a revolution in Abacco comes out**

The Grand Duke and Don Paqueno see the daily news of the purchase of Abacco securities by an unknown party. Soon, another piece of news: There is a revolution in Abacco and the Grand Duke is deposed. Moreover, the Grand Duke is missing and he is assumed by people to be murdered. Louis Hernandez is the president of the new republic. When the noble lady finds out about this, she faints.



### **Mr. Bekker is behind the revolution in Abacco**

The Grand Duke says he knows who is behind the revolution in Abacco. Next, we see Mr. Bekker and the conspirators near him. He holds a letter on which it is written: 'For deposing the Grand Duke, the undersigned shall receive a one-time fee of 2000 dollars. Should the Grand Duke perish in the process, the fee will be raised to 5000 dollars. The takeover of Hermosa Point...' The Grand Duke wishes to go back to Abacco immediately.

### **The noblewoman Olga charts a ship for a trip to Abacco**

The noblewoman also wishes to go to Abacco, one of the officials comes and says that perhaps Captain Treponte could sail to Abacco. So, the noblewoman goes to see Captain Treponte. She says to him: 'Captain, you were described at the port as a man who knows no fear...I have to get to Abacco!' The captain agrees to take her to Abacco.



### **Philip Collin finds out that the noblewoman Olga already chartered a ship to sail to Abacco**

When Philip Collin goes to the same captain to ask him to take them to Abacco, he finds out that a *Madam Professor Pelotard* has already chartered a ship for a trip to Abacco. Philip Collin is shocked to hear that *his own wife(!)* did such a thing. He goes directly to her place and says to her: 'Dearest lady, I appeal to your sense of justice. It would be more than uncomradely of you to go to Abacco without me.'



### **The noblewoman Olga, Collin, the Grand Duke, and his finance minister decide to travel together**

Collin, the Grand Duke, and his finance minister, all under false identities, meet at a hotel. The Grand Duke says to Collin: 'Professor, you see before you two weary travelers who absolutely must get to Abacco.' Collin replies: 'In order to reach Abacco, you don't need my consent, but rather that of my wife!' Collin goes to bring the noblewoman Olga. When she comes, she says to the two men: 'I hope you want to go to Abacco in order to stand by the Grand Duke.' The two men (the Grand Duke and his finance minister) present themselves as friends of the Grand Duke and so, they all agree to travel together.



### **Marcowitz decides to board the one at the disposal of Crown Prince Nicolai of Russia**

Meanwhile, Marcowitz is also in a hurry to get to Abacco. However, he misses the ship with the Grand Duke. We hear the Grand Duke saying to Don Paqueno: 'Didn't I tell you Marcowitz would be in a hurry?' When Philip Collin hears this, he understands that one of the men must be the Grand Duke and decides that to be on the safe side, he will look at all of his fellow passengers as 'Highnesses'. Marcowitz notices the monitor at the disposal of Crown Prince Nicolai of Russia. He is determined to take that ship to Abacco.



### **Marcowitz boards the ship with the Grand Duke of Russia, using the supposed letter from Grand Duchess Olga to gain access**

Marcowitz tries to board the monitor at the disposal of Crown Prince Nicolai of Russia: 'Admiral! I implore you! I must come on board, Commander!' However, the admiral says this is out of the question: 'His Excellency is already in a most foul mood!' Marcowitz then gives a letter to the admiral in which it is written that he can legitimize his presence with the letter from Her Royal Majesty, the Crown Princess Olga. The Crown Prince accepts Marcowitz onto the ship and reads the letter supposedly written by the Grand Duchess to the Grand Duke of Abacco.



### **The Grand Duke of Abacco talks to Philip Collin and his 'wife'**

The Grand Duke of Abacco asks Philip Collin: 'Are you aware that your interest in Abacco may be putting you in mortal danger?' Philip Collin says: 'I'm a journalist! Wherever the action is, I have to be there!' Later, the Grand Duchess Olga comes and says: 'I can't wait to get to Abacco!' The Grand Duke of Abacco asks Olga which newspaper her husband writes for. She doesn't know what to say so, she says that she has known him for such a short while.



### **The conspirators overpower the Grand Duke**

The ship arrives at Abacco. Back at the castle, the Grand Duke and Collin catch the self-proclaimed president stuffing his pockets with a few coins. They manage to overpower him and the conspirators rushing to his aid. He tells him that they are in the white pavilion. Philip Collin is concerned about the Grand Duke of



Abacco: 'You have overtaxed your nerves, Highness, give yourself a moment's rest. I can find the white pavilion!' After Philip Collin goes, Mr. Bekker comes and hits the Grand Duke with a bottle of wine, preventing the defeat of the revolution by knocking him unconscious.

**The Grand Duchess of Russia tries to ransom the Grand Duke from the conspirators** The conspirators prepare to hang the Grand Duke. The moment he is about to be hanged, the Grand Duchess comes to the scene. Mr. Bekker explains to her that they want to hang the Grand Duke of Abacco. Grand Duchess Olga says: 'I will buy his life from you!' She says she will give one million Francs to each of the conspirators. Mr. Bekker intervenes and says to the conspirators: 'Don't be stupid! If she's really got as much money as she says, we'll get it with no problem!' Olga goes to stand in front of the Grand Duke to protect him: 'Don't touch him! Or—I assure you, as Olga, Crown Princess of Russia—you'll pay for it with your lives!' At that moment, Philip Collin comes and shoots the rope with which the Grand Duke would be hanged.



**Olga identifies the letter from Marcowitz as crude forgery** Olga's brother arrives at the scene. He orders that a hanging be immediately prepared. He says: 'A man who uses the letter of a woman who loves him as security for debts deserves hanging!' Olga demands that he prove that to her. When she looks at the letter her brother possesses she declares that it is a miserable forgery of her handwriting. When her brother asks where the real letter is, Collin secretly hands the Grand Duke the original letter, allowing him to refute the Grand Prince's accusation.



**Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Russia get married** Then the Crown Prince orders an immediate marriage between the Grand Duke of Abacco and the Grand Duchess of Russia: 'Get the ship's priest! Prepare everything for a wedding! Let that be his punishment!' Collin celebrates his successful coup by drinking wine: 'Here! Here! May Your Highness's wedding prove to be just as good a speculation as mine in Abacco securities!'



## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**The Grand Duke of Abacco:** The Grand Duke is one of the main characters of the film. He is the benevolent ruler of the island of Abacco. However, his island is heavily indebted. Throughout the film, we become witness to how much of a self-sacrificing and caring ruler he is who is deeply interested in the well-being of his subjects.

*Self-sacrificing:* When Mr. Bekker tells the Grand Duke that he has discovered vast deposits of sulfur around Hermosa Point and wishes to exploit the sulfur deposits with the help of the Grand Duke's countrymen, the Grand Duke declines the offer because he fears the negative health impact on his people. He well knows that he has huge amounts of debt. Nevertheless, he shows self-sacrificing behavior and puts the well-being of his subjects before himself. This event shows us the benevolence of the Grand Duke.

*Caring:* The Grand Duke is a caring ruler. This is why Grand Duchess Olga wishes to marry him despite knowing little about him. The reason he thinks highly of him is because she knows that he sacrificed to help save the victims of the 'Palestrina' when it sunk. We do not get to know many details about this event but we can conclude that the Grand Duke's behavior shows his benevolent and caring nature.

**The Grand Duchess Olga:** The Grand Duchess Olga of Russia is a noblewoman who sends a letter to the Grand Duke where she expresses her unwavering determination to marry him. She is the sister of the Crown Prince of Russia. Throughout the film, we witness her loving and determined nature.

*Loving:* The Grand Duchess is a loving character. She expresses her admiration for the Grand Duke in her letter where she writes how much she was impressed by the self-sacrificing behavior of the Grand Duke when the ship Palestrina sunk. That is the reason why she wishes to marry him. One particular scene where we witness both her courageous and loving character is when she tries to ransom the Grand Duke from the revolutionaries. She is aware that the Grand Duke could be hanged at any moment and she shows courage and tries to protect the Grand Duke no matter the cost.

*Determined:* Throughout the film, we observe how determined a character the Grand Duchess is. She is intent on getting to Abacco to meet the Grand Duke. Therefore, she does whatever she can to evade her brother, the Crown Prince of Russia, who relentlessly pursues her. She gets help from Philip Collin in evading her brother.

**Philip Collin:** Philip Collin is one of the protagonists of the film. He also goes by the name of Professor Pelotard. He is an intelligent thief-detective/journalist who is always after adventure and who substitutes Grand Duchess Olga's letter with a forgery. He wishes to make a large profit from Abacco bonds. Therefore, he purchases Abacco securities.

*Intelligent:* When Philip Collin enters Marcowitz's house to retrieve Mr. Isaac's letters, he also notices the letter to the Grand Duke by Princess Olga and takes it. He writes a copy of the letter and substitutes the letter with the forgery. This shows us his intelligent nature as he is aware of which sorts of letters are valuable. He is prudent, discerning, and also able to predict the future. He realizes that when Grand Duchess Olga marries the Grand Duke, Abacco will become a rich place. Therefore, he speculates on Abacco bonds. At the end of the film, he joyfully celebrates his successful coup.

*Adventurous:* The adventurous nature of Philip Collin can be observed when he secretly enters Marcowitz's house disguised as a chimney technician. He is not afraid of being caught or any part of his work going wrong. He is confident in himself and enjoys doing his work. When the Grand Duke talks to Collin and asks him whether he is aware that his interest in Abacco may be putting him in mortal danger, he responds: 'I'm a journalist! Wherever the action is, I have to be there!' This response clearly shows us his adventurous personality.

**Marcowitz:** Marcowitz is a usurer who demands debt repayment from the Grand Duke of Abacco. As a usurer, he exploits people in that he lends people money with the agreement that they will pay back a very much larger amount of money later. He is greedy and corrupt.

*Greedy:* We first meet Marcowitz at the beginning of the film where he impatiently waits for the Grand Duke of Abacco. The loans of the island are due in three days and Marcowitz demands his money back. He says: 'If I don't have my money in three days, your entire island belongs to me.' As a usurer, his very nature depends on exploitation and we can see his greedy nature in his desire to possess the island.

*Corrupt:* Marcowitz's corrupt nature can be observed when we look at the letters in his possession. He forcefully or fraudulently takes important letters into his possession so that he has power over people and can make even more money by exploiting them. When Don Esteban Paqueno uses Grand Duchess Olga's letter to gain a reprieve from Marcowitz, Marcowitz refuses to give the letter back. This act of his shows us how corrupt and greedy he is for power and possessions.



**Mr. Bekker:** Mr. Bekker is a businessman who offers the Grand Duke of Abacco a substantial sum to exploit a sulfur mine on his island. When he is rejected, he later orchestrates a revolution against the Grand Duke. He is a greedy, corrupt, and insensitive person, in a similar vein to Semjon Marcowitz.

*Greedy:* We first meet Mr. Bekker when he visits the Grand Duke of Abacco. He wants to buy Hermosa Point and pay the Grand Duke five million Francs. However, when the Grand Duke questions him as to why he wants to buy Hermosa Point, we learn that he has discovered vast deposits of sulfur around it. He wishes to exploit the sulfur deposits with the help of the Grand Duke's countrymen. His desire to exploit and make money from the sulfur mines underlines his greedy nature.

*Insensitive:* A happening that shows us the insensitive nature of Mr. Bekker is when The Grand Duke declines Mr. Bekker's offer because he fears the negative health impact of the sulfur mines on his people. At that moment, Mr. Bekker is offended: 'One who is up to his ears in debt, like you, Your Highness, can't afford to be sentimental!' This reaction shows us that he looks down on sentimentality or sensitivity. Mr. Bekker sees sensitivity as a sign of weakness and is insensitive himself.

*Vengeful:* When the Grand Duke rejects Mr. Bekker's offer to exploit the sulfur mines, Mr. Bekker becomes full of feelings of revenge. Thus, he incites a group of ne'er-do-wells to revolt against the Grand Duke. We see him do other heinous acts such as hitting the Grand Duke with a bottle of wine, preventing the defeat of the revolution by knocking him unconscious. He even is ready to hang the Grand Duke. These acts all underline his vengeful nature.

**The Crown Prince of Russia:** The Crown Prince of Russia is the brother of Grand Duchess Olga and hesitates regarding his sister marrying the Grand Duke. He pursues his sister throughout the film. He is ultimately a good-natured and just person who wants the happiness and well-being of his sister.

*Just:* One of the characteristics of the Crown Prince of Russia is that he values justice. When he reaches the island of Abacco and meets the Grand Duke for the first time, he wants him to be immediately hanged. The reason for his decision is that he believes that: 'a man who uses the letter of a woman who loves him as security for debts deserves hanging'. However, when it becomes clear that the Grand Duke is not faulty, he changes his mind and orders an immediate wedding between the Grand Duke and his sister. Thus, we can say that he acts based on the pieces of evidence and proof he is presented with and tries to be just. (It is important to note that whether taking the life of a human being can ever be just is a philosophical topic that the readers of the article might later like to reflect on.)

**Don Esteban Paqueno:** Don Esteban Paqueno is the finance minister of the Grand Duke of Abacco. He plays a minor but crucial role in the film. He is a naive person who uses the letter of the Grand Duchess to gain a reprieve from Semjon Marcowitz. However, his plan backfires.

*Naive:* Don Esteban Paqueno is a rather naive character. He shows his naiveté when he goes to the usurer Marcowitz to show him the letter of Grand Duchess Olga to the Grand Duke in which she expresses her unwavering determination to marry him. He wants to gain a reprieve from Marcowitz, but what happens is that Marcowitz fraudulently keeps the letter in his possession.

## THEMES

### POLITICS

**Leadership** One of the themes of *The Grand Duke's Finances* is leadership. The Grand Duke of Abacco is the leader of the island. He is a benevolent ruler who cares about the well-being and happiness of his subjects. In contrast to the benevolent leadership of the Grand Duke, there is Mr. Bekker who is a rather greedy and insensitive figure who is ever-ready to exploit people for his personal and financial gains. The difference between these two people can be seen clearly in the scene where Mr. Bekker offers to buy Hermosa Point from the Grand Duke of Abacco. When questioned by the Grand Duke about his aims and interests, he admits that he has discovered a sulfur mine which he can exploit with the help of the Grand Duke's countrymen. The Grand Duke refuses this offer even though he could pay his debts

and save himself with five million Francs because the ultimate thing that matters is the well-being of his subjects. He does not want his people to suffer from various health conditions that could come about as a result of working in the sulfur mines. In response to this, Mr. Bekker mocks the Grand Duke by saying that he cannot afford to be sentimental when he is up to his ears in debt. Here, we see that Mr. Bekker views sentimentality as a weakness and not as a virtue. Filled with feelings of revenge, Mr. Bekker goes on to incite some of the countrymen to revolt against the Grand Duke and he leads the revolution by supporting it financially. Approaching the end of the film, we witness how Mr. Bekker goes so far as to wish to hang the Grand Duke, to complete his act of revenge. The fact that he can easily consider taking the life of a person shows us his insensitive and cruel nature once again. When we contrast the leadership styles of the Grand Duke and Mr. Bekker, we see a noticeable distinction between the concepts of benevolence versus malevolence, sensitivity versus insensitivity, and self-sacrifice versus exploitation.

**Intrigue** Intrigue is the making of secret plans to harm or deceive people. In *The Grand Duke's Finances*, there is the political intrigue of the revolutionaries to overthrow the Grand Duke of Abacco and build a republic instead of the dukedom. Incited and financially supported by Mr. Bekker, a group of conspirators proceed to take charge of the leadership of Abacco Island. As a result of the revolution, Louis Hernandez becomes the president of the new republic. When the Grand Duke returns to Abacco, the conspirators prepare to hang the Grand Duke. However, Philip Collin comes and shoots the rope with which the Grand Duke would be hanged. Afterward, the Crown Prince of Russia seizes control of the situation, and the revolution is defeated. When examining the course of this revolution, we can infer that most of the people of Abacco do not support the revolution at all. It is only a group of conspirators (ne'er-do-wells) incited by Mr. Bekker that wish to overthrow the Grand Duke and hang him. In contrast to these revolutionaries, most of the people of Abacco are content with the ruling of the Grand Duke. To sum up, we can say that we witness the beginning, development, and defeat of a political revolution in *The Grand Duke's Finances*.

## CRIME

**Punishment** *The Grand Duke's Finances* is a comedy. Therefore, there is no harsh punishment for any of the characters. At the end of the film, we do not find out what happens to Mr. Bekker or the revolutionaries. We only know that they are defeated. However, we could guess that the Grand Duke would probably forgive the conspirators for their actions and only Mr. Bekker would have been exiled from the island of Abacco. A similar fate occurs for the usurer Marcowitz. When it is found out that the letter he possesses is a crude forgery of the original letter of Grand Duchess Olga, he immediately runs away, is chased by the cook Augustina, and ends up jumping into the sea. This is a comic fate suggesting that he has also been exiled from the island forever. All in all, there are no bad consequences for the good characters and only slightly discomforting consequences for the bad figures Mr. Bekker and Marcowitz.

**Revenge** In the film, the figure who wishes to take revenge on the Grand Duke is Mr. Bekker. He is a greedy man who wishes to possess Hermosa Point at all costs. When his offer to buy Hermosa Point is rejected by the Grand Duke, he is filled with emotions of anger, hatred, and revenge. Therefore, he incites a group of ne'er-do-wells to revolt against the Grand Duke. Approaching the end of the film, Mr. Bekker hopes that he will achieve his aims if he hangs the Grand Duke. However, his plans fail because of Philip Collin who shoots the rope with which the Grand Duke would be hanged. Afterward, the Crown Prince of Russia takes control of the situation and the innocence of the Grand Duke is proven. As a result, the revolution is completely defeated and so all the revenge plans of Mr. Bekker come to naught.

## PSYCHOLOGY

**Anger** There are very few scenes of anger being displayed in the film. One of the scenes where we see one of the characters get angry is when Mr. Bekker offers to buy Hermosa Point from the Grand Duke. When the Grand Duke declines the offer, Mr. Bekker is offended: 'One who is up to his ears in debt, like you, Your Highness, can't afford to be sentimental!' At this point, the Grand Duke gets angry and throws Mr. Bekker out of his place. Another scene where we see a display of anger is when Mr. Bekker tries to hang the Grand Duke with the help of the conspirators and get his revenge. He seizes the

Grand Duke and talks about how sweet revenge is. In that scene, we witness not only the anger but also the greed which consumes Mr. Bekker.

## FLAW

**Greed** Greed is the major flaw of Mr. Bekker and Semyon Marcowitz. Both these people are consumed by this emotion and their actions are ultimately driven by this emotion. Both Mr. Bekker and Marcowitz are greedy for money and power. Mr. Bekker wishes to buy Hermosa Point to exploit the sulfur mines and make great financial gains. Marcowitz is a corrupt usurer who wishes to possess the entire island of Abacco. When Mr. Bekker is declined by the Grand Duke, he is filled with feelings of revenge and orchestrates a revolution against him. His greed makes him go even so far as wanting to take the life of a human being by hanging him. Marcowitz's greed shows itself when he fraudulently takes possession of the letter of Grand Duchess Olga to the Grand Duke. He uses this letter to board the ship of the Crown Prince of Russia and to convince him that the Grand Duke has used the letter of Grand Duchess Olga who loves him as security for debts. At the end of the film, both these characters are met with discomforting consequences as a result of their actions. Because the film is a comedy, we do not see any dire consequences for any of the characters involved. Nevertheless, we see that the benevolent characters ultimately have a happy ending whereas the greedy figures Mr. Bekker and Marcowitz do not achieve their malevolent aims.

## QUEST

**Explore** The film can be seen as an exploration by the characters of their surrounding environments. The setting is mostly the island of Abacco, but the mainland and the seas also play an important role in the development of the storyline. Philip Collin, being one of the protagonists alongside the Grand Duke of Abacco, explores his environment in different ways. We see him disguised as a chimney technician when he goes on a mission to retrieve Mr. Isaac's love letters. Then he speculates on Abacco's debts which entails taking a financial risk but taking risks and leading an adventurous lifestyle are the motivating factors in Philip Collin's life. Then he meets a mysterious woman whom he learns is actually a noble lady and he helps her evade her pursuers by pretending to be her husband. Later, he goes on yet another adventure when he boards a ship with the Grand Duke, Grand Duchess Olga, and Don Esteban Paqueno who are all acting to be different people than who they truly are. When they arrive at the island of Abacco and the Grand Duke's identity is revealed, Philip Collin helps the Grand Duke overpower the self-proclaimed president and the conspirators. In all these situations, Philip Collin plays an active role and at the end of the film, he celebrates his successful coup. When we examine the actions of the other protagonist who is the Grand Duke of Abacco, we see that he also explores his environment in a variety of ways while taking a rather more cautious approach to life. As he is a benevolent ruler, his first concern is the well-being of his subjects. That is why he declines to explore and exploit Hermosa Point that is filled with sulfur deposits. However, he explores his environment when he secretly sails to the mainland to retrieve Grand Duchess Olga's letters. He also fights against the conspirators with the help of Philip Collin. Moreover, he faces the possibility of being hanged. Thus, like Philip Collin, he finds himself navigating a variety of complex environments.

## RELATIONSHIP

**Loyalty/Betrayal** Loyalty and betrayal are two themes of *The Grand Duke's Finances*. We see that some are loyal to the Grand Duke and some betray him. People who are loyal to the Grand Duke are most of his countrymen, Philip Collin, Grand Duchess Olga, Don Esteban Paqueno, Augustina, and Joaquin. People who betray the Grand Duke are the four conspirators (ne'er-do-wells), Mr. Bekker, and Semyon Marcowitz. As the Grand Duke is a benevolent ruler with a compassionate character, the people who support him also are good characters whereas the people who betray the Grand Duke are either people who are not willing to act in any responsible way or outright evil people with selfish and greedy aims such as Mr. Bekker and Marcowitz. Thus, an association of loyalty with benevolence; and betrayal with malevolence or sloth can be made.

**Love** Love plays a role in the film even though it is not emphasized. Grand Duchess Olga is determined to marry the Grand Duke even though she knows little about him: 'I now have my mind set on becoming Grand Duchess of Abacco. In truth, I know as little of you as you know of me but I think highly of you since I learned how you sacrificed to help save the victims of the 'Palestrina' when it sunk.' Grand Duchess Olga is impressed by the benevolent character of the Grand Duke. This forms the basis of her love for him. Another scene where we see her love displayed is when she tries to stop the hanging of the Grand Duke by ransoming him from the revolutionaries. She does everything she can to protect the Grand Duke. Thus, what we witness in the film is a love that is based on the appreciation of the good character and virtues of the other.

#### APPEARANCE

**Secrets** Grand Duchess Olga has to keep some secrets to protect her identity from being revealed. As she is running from her brother, she happens to encounter Philip Collin whom she asks for help. However, she doesn't reveal her true identity to him. It is only when Philip Collin chancily sees the royal logo on the cover of her notebook that he understands that she is a noblewoman. In a similar vein, both the Grand Duke of Abacco and his finance minister Don Esteban Paqueno hide their true identities for security purposes while they search for a ship to go to Abacco. However, all their secrets are ultimately revealed when they arrive at Abacco.