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Roy had taken a flight to the Falkland Island to meet the Antarctic supply ship, departing from the Royal Air Force base at Brize Norton in Oxfordshire. This twice-weekly service by R.A.F. VC10 passenger jet being the only scheduled service from Europe to this barren isolated outpost of British colonialism. Strategically important, it had remained under British control since 1833 and probably would remain so until at least the fifty year agreement, holding off on the commercial development of Antarctica, ran out in the 21st century.

With only one airline and only one flight to the Falklands it wasn't too difficult even for Roy to find the correct check-in desk. His single backpack had been accepted without question and had disappeared faster than he'd imagined possible. The efficiency of the R.A.F. terminal staff was far superior to anything that the airlines could ever offer.

With time on his hands he sat down on a spare chair and surveyed the other occupants of the waiting room. It was immediately obvious that the entire room was filled with passengers for the Falkland Islands, as everybody carried a large fur trimmed parka for protection against the constant penetrating wind of this barren rock.

"What takes you to the Falklands?" he asked the young man sitting next to him.

"We're from the University of Aberystwyth, on a research project to study the emotional bonding of ovine and homosapien in remote isolated regions. We'll be there for six months collecting data," came the reply.

"You mean you have to go all the way to the South Atlantic to find data. Isn't there a suitable source closer to home?" Roy's brain-cell had taken a holiday and its replacement was working overtime. He actually sounded coherent for once in his life.

"We've taken a control sample from the local area and when we return we'll collate all the data to determine the effect of isolation on the bonding process."

"You don't think your control data might be a little tainted then?" Roy asked. The alien brain-cell obviously having taken root in his head.

"Not at all. We spent six months living with hardy Welsh shepherds. Taught us a lot about the affections of sheep they did. Very emotional creatures sheep." The broad Welsh accent was clearly evident in this student's speech.

"These studies you're doing in the Falklands, is this just bookwork or are you planning to do any practical experiments as well?" Roy was getting intrigued by this student and his current source of interest.

"We'll be using all the latest technology to assist us," the student explained. "We have video cameras of varying different magnifications and a selection of electronic stimulation accessories to provide a varied scenario and background."

Being naturally a tad on the thick side of stupid, Roy was still under the impression that this was a purely scientific field trip and not an outing of the 'Experts in Woolly Entry Society', or E.W.E.S. for short.

"This is an expensive trip. How do you get funding for it? I was under the impression that students were supposed to be poor," Roy continued.

"We have a research grant from the Welsh Office in London. In fact the Welsh Secretary is personally interested in our studies and he may even visit our research station towards the end of the project."

"Very interesting," Roy commented. "I'd like to have seen your project when it was working, but unfortunately I have an assignment in Antarctica. I'll only be in Port Stanley for two days until the supply ship picks me up."

"You're welcome to visit anytime," the student offered. "We'll even pick out a good sample for you to study if you like."

Totally oblivious to the ramifications of this offer, Roy accepted it in principle, explaining that he was unlikely to attend due to his full schedule though.

Roy scanned the waiting room for another likely candidate for a conversation. The student had returned to his colleagues who were involved in a serious debate on which breed of sheep provided the best project results. The other passengers waiting for the Falkland Islands flight were a mixed bag of individuals, with the exception of a company of Royal Green Jackets relieving the existing garrison on the Island.

Some of the passengers looked like scientists, with their thick round glasses and lap top computers. Others were more likely fishermen, with their rough and ready language and full-face beards. Neither of these groups seemed like a possible source of conversation. The scientists, because Roy couldn't sustain an intelligent conversation for more than a few milliseconds, and the fishermen because if he said the wrong thing he'd be mashed to a pulp in a few seconds. He detested any kind of violence, especially if it was on a personal level.

Roy still hadn't got used to the joys of international travel and was bored again within minutes. His attention had turned to a middle aged man in a blue v-necked pullover and matching tie.

"Hi, my name's Roy. I'm with The Daily Global newspaper, heading down to Antarctica. What brings you on this flight?" he asked, trying to make conversation.

"I'm an investigator with the R.S.P.C.A. looking into reports of cruelty to sheep on the islands. How come the press are interested in the South Pole then?"

"It's all pretty hush hush, but I'm the Chief International Investigative Reporter for the newspaper. I'm checking out some information that the polar ice caps are shrinking. I have to go to a research station to observe the increase in icebergs," Roy replied proudly.

"And how long are you planning on spending down there?"

"The supply ship will drop me off, then on their next run two months later I'll return to Stanley for the flight home again. I'm taking it easy at the moment after my ordeal in occupied Gibraltar."

"Oh, you're that investigative reporter. How are the giant maggots?" the RSPCA officer asked. He'd obviously read the tabloid newspapers at the time.

"I'd rather forget about that if you don't mind," Roy replied. "My stomach still turns at the slightest thought of those days."

After inadvertently subsisting on dried maggots for many weeks Roy could no longer face the idea of rice or anything of similar shape to it.

"I won't mention the special fried maggots in sweet and sour sauce again then," the RSPCA officer commented.

Roy's face had tinged a pale shade of green as he looked for the sign indicating where the toilet was located and soon he was dashing across the waiting room.

As Roy was reaffirming his religious beliefs in the customary kneeling position and talking to God on the great white telephone, the remaining occupants of the waiting room were milling around. Filling the remaining hours before the scheduled take-off time, as best they could. This consisted mainly of idle chitchat and the swapping of life stories.

An ashen-faced Roy eventually staggered out of the toilets and back into the waiting room, just in time for the boarding call and he continued onto the waiting plane.

Compared to his last international flight this one was pretty uneventful. The flight crew ably taxied the plane onto the runway and took-off heading south on course for their refuelling stop at Ascension Island in the Mid-Atlantic.

As part of the Dependency of St Helena this sandy outcrop, hundreds of miles from anywhere, had been leased to the United States as a military base. While the R.A.F. passenger jet taxied around to the fuel island at Wideawake USAFB (It's probably called Wideawake as an intelligence trick) the cabin crew were handing out request forms for hamburgers and all the trimmings.

"What are these for?" Roy asked the soldier next to him.

"This is an American base. They've got a 'Mc Doggies' on the flight line. It's a pity that the R.A.F. doesn't follow their example."

"Is the drive thru open today sergeant?" the pilot enquired after the VC10 had been refuelled.

"Certainly sir, just follow the line of F111's. They're on their burger break at the moment," he replied.

Sitting in the queue for the drive thru hadn't taken very long at all. Despite all the failings of the American race (and they have plenty) efficiency at delivering fast food was not amongst them. The jet had followed the signs on the tarmac and when they'd come level with a red line across the taxiway, a microphone had lifted out of the ground like a periscope and positioned itself level with the pilots window.

"Welcome to Mc Doggies. I'm Randy can I take your order."

"Yes, I'd like sixty two mega double cheeseburgers and twenty four chicken breast burgers. All with regular fries."

"Would you like anything to drink with that sir?"

"Yes, fifty two regular and fifty four diet colas."

"That'll be \$172 please."

The pilot placed the required money in a tray that had appeared next to the microphone. It promptly snapped shut and disappeared on its telescopic pole back into the ground again, only to reappear again thirty seconds later.

"Thank you sir. Please take your change and move forward to the next stop line. Have a nice day now."

The microphone followed the money tray back into the ground as the pilot moved the jet forward a few hundred yards, level with the next red line across the tarmac.

As before a microphone appeared out of the ground, level with his cockpit window.

"Hi my name's B.J?" Obviously this American couldn't handle anything more than just initials. "Your order is being processed. Sorry for any delay."

Despite the large order, in a remarkably short period of time a large box appeared beside the pilot's window. Rolling the cover back the pilot retrieved twenty burgers and handed them to the cabin crew waiting behind him. This process was repeated until all the order had been delivered and the box together with the microphone had both disappeared into the ground.

"Thank you for your custom. Please call again. Have a nice day now," came the parting greeting, which was echoed in four-foot high yellow paint across the tarmac in front of the aircraft as well.

The VC10 taxied passed the line of F111's parked along the edge of the runway, all the pilot's with their faces full of hamburger, and it wasn't long before the Royal Air Force jet was taking off again on its final leg towards the Falkland Islands.

Situated fifty miles outside of the main urban area and the port of Stanley, the airport also doubled as the R.A.F. base, providing the air defences of the entire area. After spending all the night and most of the accompanying days on an aircraft, nobody was

in the best of moods and the constant howling wind on the island wasn't much comfort either.

Sadie on one of her economy drives (in so much as she told everybody else to save money so that she could spend it on her own pet projects) had booked Roy into the cheapest hotel in Stanley. The term hotel could only technically be applied, because they actually charged a nightly rate for a bed and the greasy surprise that was dished up in the early hours of the morning could probably be regarded as breakfast. This basic deduction could only be made if the circumstantial evidence of chronology was taken into full consideration.

Roy had been presented with this dish after a sleepless night in a very rickety bed. Although the owner charged a nightly fee for a room, the closeness to the docks, and relatively affordable prices, encouraged a personal service industry for the large numbers of trawlers of varying nationalities, which frequented the port for supplies and fuel. These ladies of the night used the unoccupied rooms on an hourly basis and although Roy accepted that the constant chill wind demanded a sheltered location for their nocturnal profession (he would feel sympathy for any man attempting to perform in the open) the need for sleep prevailed in his thoughts. After six hours of the screaming and moaning, not to mention the banging of the furniture against the wooden walls of the building, a bleary eyed Roy had dragged himself into the breakfast room.

The deep plate of grease with crunchy brown lumps in it that was presented to him was probably supposed to be regarded as his breakfast.

"Have you got anything light?" Roy asked.

"Light? I don't do light. If you're going down onto the ice, you're going to need some blubber on you. You'll freeze to death otherwise," came the reply from a well built local expert.

"What are the little crunchy bits?" Roy asked, as he gingerly speared one with his fork.

"That's good meat that is. Lamb crackling. One hundred percent nutrition. Put hairs on your chest that will."

It may have been solid nutrition to the eighteen stone woman in front of him, built to handle not only the bitter winds but also the rowdy patrons of her establishment. To Roy, of the easy life and modern comforts, it was a disgusting lump of solid fat and high in cholesterol. He was sure he'd heard somewhere that cholesterol wasn't good for you.

While he moved the lumps from one side of the plate to the other, the hotel proprietor looked on, wondering if he was going to start eating soon. "If you don't want it, I can make you something else," she offered.

"What else have you got then?" Roy asked with a sneaking suspicion that it would be worse than lamb crackling.

"I've got a couple of fish I could fry. One of the customers last night had them in his pocket."

"What kind of fish?"

"Short, fat, wet ones. How should I know. Do you want fish or are you going to eat your lamb crackling?"

"I'll try the fish," Roy decided.