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Taking into consideration the five-hour time difference between London and Miami, Roy arrived in Florida in the early hours of the morning. Passport control, immigration and customs took their usual time but eventually he'd reached the arrivals hall of Miami International Airport. The American immigration computers must have been on the blink that day because they hadn't flashed a warning to forbid entry to this individual in front of them.

The Daily Global was only a small newspaper and didn't stretch to foreign offices or associated correspondents. Hence Roy was on his own now, nobody to meet him and no hired limousine. Not being able to drive was a distinct handicap in America, as the society had been developed around car usage. Luckily for Roy in the major cities a taxi service and very limited bus service was still available.

To those people used to the network of buses and multitude of black taxis which provide London with its over ground transportation service, the minimal public transport system in the USA comes as quite a shock. Learning to drive in America was an essential requirement at the age of sixteen and many teenagers received a car as their sixteenth birthday present. For reasons of public safety though Roy had never taken a driving lesson in his life and dog sled driving in Antarctica didn't really count as experience. Once again he needed to rely on a metropolitan taxi service to transport him to his destination and he meandered out towards the taxi rank in front of the airport.

Leaving the air-conditioned comfort of the airport terminal building he encountered the fierce, humid heat of a Floridian summer. This had taken Roy rather by surprise. Pouring with sweat and finding it difficult to breathe in the stifling temperature, he reeled towards the waiting taxis, his faithful puppy dog suitcase trailing behind him.

"Hi there. Where too?" the driver asked.

Roy handed his hotel booking-voucher forward for the driver to look at and presently they were weaving in and out of the traffic in standard taxi driver style. With Miami not being as large as New York City, the honking of horns was disproportionate to the equivalent level of traffic. Maybe it wasn't the volume of traffic that generated the noise but the impatience level of the drivers and American drivers are extremely impatient (Not as bad as Italians though).

The hotel hadn't been as impressive as Roy had expected. Obviously Sadie's generosity had run out at this stage of the planning and a rather more modest tourist hotel had been booked on Miami Beach.

"Hi there. You must be Sir Roy King-Pratt. Gee, we haven't had royalty staying here before. We've put you in the stateroom your lordship," the receptionist greeted Roy.

The American's interest and adoration of anything aristocratic was only overshadowed by her inability to comprehend the significance of titles and their relevant usage.

"Sir represents a knight of the realm doesn't it. Does that mean that you sit at the round table with King Arthur?" the receptionist asked before Roy could talk.

She'd obviously failed to comprehend that King Arthur died many years ago and Camelot had become just a pile of rubble. The relative youth of western civilization in North America has created a culture that thought the 1800s was ancient history and the 1700s prehistoric. Anything pre 1700 was obviously inconceivable and related to pre-human evolution. The human race started with the discovery of North America, or at least in this American's eyes it did.

"Just call me Roy if you don't mind," Roy replied. "The title's kind of a thank you present. That's all."

"OK Sir Roy, let me show you to your suite." It was a futile attempt by Roy at modesty and the receptionist wasn't permitting it.

"How come the bed's heart shaped?" Roy asked.

"Don't tell the manager I told you so, but we don't actually have a stateroom. This is the bridal suite," the receptionist informed him.

"Is there any chance of a normal room?" Roy requested.

"Not unless you want to insult the manager. He's really proud to have royalty staying here he is."

"OK, OK, I'll take it," Roy agreed.

Roy reluctantly accepted the situation and turned to inspect his room. Not only did the suite have a large heart shaped bed in the middle of it but an elegant chaise longue as well. Champagne and chocolates were abundant in the little refrigerator in the corner of the room. Roy turned to look in the gold paint trimmed, heart shaped mirror on the dressing table (the Americans tend to go over the top on any situation) and could clearly see the large black bags under his eyes. Jetting around the world had taken its toll and even though he was only thirty-five, he felt more like fifty.

Tired and jet lagged, Roy decided to rest for a few hours, then explore the sights of Miami Beach until his boat arrived the next evening. A flying leap onto the bed might not have been the best way of climbing onto a waterbed though and the resultant splosh echoed throughout the room. While Roy attempted to climb back out of the constantly flowing bed, which seemed to have a mind of its own, a knock on the door preceded a key in the lock. Roy managed to clamber out of the bed and onto the rug in time to see the manager and bellboy open the door.

"Hello Sir Pratt, is everything satisfactory in here? There seemed to be a lot of noise," the manager called.

"Oh, nothing serious," Roy replied considerately.

"My bell boy informs me that you're concerned about using a bridal suite."

"It just that I'm not married and I don't feel right in a room like this."

"No problem sir I'll see what I can do."

Roy's interpretation of this statement was that a change of rooms would be imminent and when there was a knock on the door a second time, he fully expected the manager or bellboy again.

"Hi Sir Roy. I'm off duty now. I thought you might like a guide to the Miami Beach sights." The original receptionist had changed into short shorts and a skimpy T-shirt.

"But, mmm mmmm..." Roy tried to say.

"Don't talk, just kiss me," she instructed during a breath stop. "This is so romantic and in a bridal suite." Another breather. "Will you marry me?" she asked while unbuttoning Roy's shirt.

Roy was taken completely by surprise by this advanced seduction technique and he was powerless to refuse. And the fact he was a man who hadn't had sex for a considerable length of time. (Twelve hours is a considerable length of time for most men).

The easy with whom this American jumped into bed was amazing to observe. It was like a lioness stalking its prey. First the observation to ascertain the prey's bank balance (or assumed bank balance by virtue of title in this case), then the waiting for a suitable opening and finally the pounce.

Roy was certainly feeling the pounce at that moment, as they cavorted on the water bed. Considering Roy's introduction to the pleasures of sex was less than a year previous, he'd crammed a lot of experience into that short space of time, Karma had seen to that. Waterbeds hadn't featured into his training to date though and riding on the wave presented a dilemma for him. Timing was his problem because he'd found it nearly impossible to time his downs with the waves ups and spent most of the time chasing the receptionist around the bed. Noticing his lack of experience she came to the rescue by grabbing his bottom and guiding his rhythm. The inch long blood red nails that dug into his buttocks just added to the moment.

"When do we get married?" she asked after the cavorting was over, a drained Roy being too exhausted to reply.

"I thought it was the man's place to propose marriage?" he finally panted out.

"This is America, if you want it you've got to go for it and we're very compatible."

He had a title and supposedly money to go with it, at least this is the American theory and she wanted the money and to share the title. How more compatible can you get.

"We can get married as soon as a church can be booked, licences obtained, a vicar found and guests invited," Roy agreed, fully aware that by the next evening he'd be cruising the Caribbean and would never see her again.

In Britain the term shotgun wedding was frequently used to indicate a forced marriage. In America they believed in bigger and better everything and they'd improved upon this theme inventing the supersonic cruise missile wedding. Shotguns were considered too slow and old fashioned. At supersonic speed the receptionist telephoned the wedding chapel, licence office, her local pastor and a company called 'Rent a Congregation'. Within one hour the wedding had been arranged for midday and the couple were walking into the city office to obtain their marriage licence.

"What's the idea of taking my blood before we get married?" Roy was rubbing his sore arm where the needle had been. Cruising on autopilot he'd been swept along with the flow of things and had been overwhelmed by the speed of the American wedding industry.

"It's a requirement that you have a blood test before getting married in this country. We have to know what diseases each other is carrying. The results were negative though."

"I see. What if I had a serious medical problem then?" Roy asked.

"That wouldn't matter. I'd just get your money quicker, that's all." Roy's face looked horrified. "Only teasing, she quickly added. Now let's sign these licence applications or we'll be late for the wedding."

The bride's dress and Roy's tuxedo had been off the rack and within five hours of meeting they were declared husband and wife. Roy had taken to his new roll with more than a little trepidation. The thought of marriage had never crossed his mind before and now he had a wife who was talking about children no less.

"Where are we going for our honeymoon?" she asked hopefully. "Didn't you say something about a Caribbean cruise?"

"Oh yes, I'm off on a Caribbean cruise tomorrow, but that's just work."

"Of course it is. Now that I'm Mrs Sir Roy King-Pratt, I'll be able to accompany you on this business trip."

"Can you afford a ticket? I'm told they're pretty expensive."

"What do you mean, can I afford a ticket? I'm your wife and you own a newspaper. I expect you to pay."

"I think you might have misunderstood something. I don't own any newspaper...."

"But you said your newspaper was footing the bill for the cruise."

"That's right. The newspaper I work for sent me out here."

"And your apartment in the centre of London?"

"A converted store-room attached to the print-room. It's a bit small but we'll both fit in with a squeeze."

"No million dollar bank balance?"

"I never said there was."

"And the title of Sir Roy?"

"Given to me by the Queen, for services rendered in her rescue from Antarctica. Is there a problem or something?"

The former receptionist was collecting her belongings together and packing them into her suitcase.

There was only one thing in American society faster than a wedding and that was a divorce. Within one hour the papers had been filed and Roy was served with the marriage annulment. In the length of one day he'd been seduced, engaged, married, consummated and divorced. (Not necessarily in that order). Consummated may even have appeared more than once on the list somewhere.

Alone in his hotel room Roy was still trying to comprehend the situation. He normally had trouble with the slower pace of life in London but the supersonic lifestyle of America was too much for him and his head was spinning. It was now early evening and after a soft drink at the bar Roy decided to return to his room. He was still trying to work out what had happened that day and he'd eventually decided to give up.

When he awoke the following morning he'd convinced himself that it was all a bad dream. It was impossible for so much to have happened in such a short space of time. Alas, the evidence of the marriage and divorce licences that were on his bedside table contradicted this convenient theory.

Roy only had one more day left in America, and then it was onto the cruise ship Celeste Marie for a relaxing cruise of the Caribbean Islands. By 8pm that evening he would be out of US territorial waters and into the Bahamas.

The tourist brochures that were in abundance in the hotel lobby caught Roy's eye, and one had indicated a half-day tour of the everglades. Sitting on a coach out of Miami he was glad not to be in the hotel for the rest of the day. His ex-wife had resumed her position as receptionist and the icy stares he received anytime he was in the lobby, more than indicated her contempt for him. How he'd let himself get into this situation was foremost on his mind, and he probably never would completely understand it in his lifetime. Putting it behind him and moving on to the next one would have been the usual American way, but unfortunately Roy wasn't an American.

The everglades tour had been time consuming if nothing else and Roy had returned to the hotel with nothing more than an alligator bite. It was only a small nip and hadn't

required medical assistance. The guide's quick reflexes had prevented a more serious incident.

"You don't pet the alligators! They're dangerous creatures!" he'd screamed as Roy had stretched his hand out to stroke one. "Are you stupid or what?"

Roy's knowledge of dangerous animals totalled up to nil, which is unless you classify penguins as being dangerous. To Roy an alligator was just a larger version of his pet lizard and that never bit him. The fact that an alligator's teeth were considerably larger, he'd completely overlooked.

"Can I have the keys to my room please?" Roy asked his ex-wife who was sitting at the reception desk.

"Your bags are in the corner over there," she indicated towards a pile of torn and battered luggage. She didn't even look up to acknowledge his presence.

"They seem to have been damaged. Are you still angry with me?"

"You seduce me and trick me into marrying you. Then you drop me like a hot potato when you've had what you wanted and you wonder why I'm angry."

"I was under the impression that you were the one keen on getting married," Roy accurately observed.

"Typical of you to twist it around to that way of thinking. Just ask any of the staff here, they'll bear witness for me."

This argument fitted in well with America's approach to the law. Facts were not what actually happened but what you could convince everybody else of, by obtaining the largest number of friends, who would swear an oath they saw everything and your version was obviously the true one. Whether it actually happened that way or not was totally irrelevant. Fiction becomes fact and fact was relegated to non-existence as Roy soon found out.

Roy accepted defeat and collected his small bundle of belongings from the corner of the hotel lobby. His ex-wife had already claimed anything of monetary value as her part of the divorce settlement. In Roy's case this was his watch, his mobile telephone, the company lap top computer and the contents of his wallet. He was left with his clothes, which were of no value whatsoever, his credit cards, that she couldn't use, and the cruise ticket, which was in his name and non-transferable.

Roy slunk out of the hotel and into a waiting taxi. "The docks please." he instructed. "I need to catch the Celeste Marie, sailing for the Caribbean tonight."

It was only five o'clock but hopefully they allowed early boarding and occupation of the cabins. Going shopping and replacing the items he'd lost to his ex-wife had crossed his mind but he was considerably more interested in leaving America. He'd completely forgotten that the cruise ship was U.S. registered and that most of the passengers would be Americans.

Pulling onto the docks, the taxi approached the F&O line terminal, where the Celeste Marie could be seen tied up alongside the dock. A considerable improvement on an Antarctic supply ship it still fell short of the magnificent cruise ships that usually frequented the Caribbean Islands. Painting it in the gold and silver livery of all the ships of the F&O line had failed to camouflage the fact that it was a converted freighter. Specializing in a cruise that concentrated more on remaining in international waters than visiting island paradises, the emphasis had been placed on fitting out the casinos and nightclubs that made up most of the entertainment facilities onboard. To say the Celeste Marie didn't look elegant would have been unkind. In her own way she stood out. She just wasn't as large and resplendent as Roy had expected.