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The first port of call for the Celeste Marie was the Bahamian capital of Nassau. The more inquisitive passengers had disembarked for the day, leaving Roy still fast asleep and the hardened gamblers in the very active casinos on the lower decks. The gaming laws in the Bahamas were such that entry into Bahamian territorial waters hadn't hindered their game in the slightest. While hundreds of passengers and crew plundered the market stalls of Nassau, thousands of dollars changed hands in minutes. Security was tight and the names were big. Ex-president Nicksom was there with his bodyguards, not to mention some large names from the stock exchanges of Wall Street.

Filing back onto the deck after a day of decadent shopping, the British royal party returned to their cabin to coo over their newly acquired material possessions. "What did you get at the market then Fungy?" her companion asked.

"Something to cheer myself up during the long lonely nights ahead and it's very useful as well."

"Did you remember to buy the batteries as well, or does it plug into the mains?"

"No, I've already got one of those. I bought something of a literary nature," Fungy explained, producing a large book from the shopping bag on her bed.

"It's your autobiography. What do you want to read that for?"

"I've forgotten half of the men I need to send postcards too. I was hoping this book might trigger my memory. It's worth a try, don't you think?"

"Sounds reasonable to me," the companion replied. "What about your ex-husband? Are you sending him a card?"

"He never really understood my needs," Fungy reminisced. "Very unsympathetic to my desires, and complained bitterly when I sought solace in the psychic community."

"It's me you're talking too now Fungy. Your needs and desires are unconventional and polygamistic to say the least, and running up a bill of £500,000 calling the psychic hotline could be regarded by anyone as being slightly excessive."

The ex-princess and her companion had become very close friends over the years. Hardly surprising, considering they'd shared a lot of difficult times together and they'd only had each other to turn to in safety. The run of exposé books on the private lives of media sensitive personalities had required that they only confide in each other, as both had an equal amount to lose by a double cross. Their friendship had lasted through the hardest days and since the press had eased off following their divorces, a more relaxed social life could be contemplated. The only time Fungy featured in the media now was if news was thin on the ground and padding was needed. The swarms

of photographers who plagued her during her married life had left to harass some other poor individual.

"How's the man-hunting going then Fungy?" her companion enquired. "I noticed you were up in the bar last night."

"I didn't even get a look in. Some big country music star had everybody's eyes instead."

The Yanks can't stop being interested in a British princess. You've got no competition with a country music star."

"And how do I get their eye and tongues out of Polly Harrdon's cleavage for starters?" Fungy asked.

"Point taken. What about the big black guy at the bar then? He looked a likely candidate."

"If you think I'm getting married to Mojay Stiffsem you've gone crazy. I know I live my life on a financial knife edge but I'd like to keep it just a financial one, thank you very much." Fungy had become a little edgy with the last suggestion from her travelling companion.

"I'm sorry Fungy. I didn't realise who it was. Maybe we should cool off the man hunting for a while. It is a two-week cruise anyway. Plenty of time later."

The duo unpacked their purchases, wrote postcards from the Bahamas while Roy slept peacefully in his cabin (Inside, with a porthole). The majority of the other passengers either lounged around the small swimming pool or in the plentiful bars located throughout the ship. Those that weren't in the casinos that is.

During this time the Celeste Marie slowly meandered on its course through the Bahamian cays, famed in the pirate ship days as hideouts for the buccaneering crews that flew the 'Jolly Roger' from the masthead. More money changed ownership in one hour on the lower decks than had been stolen in a year of piracy. The casino had taken its cut and for a small ship its profits were immense.

"Ow, my head," Roy complained to himself as he woke up.

He'd just discovered the third stage of experimentation with fruity drinks of dubious content. The first being euphoria and the second being coma. Looking at himself in the mirror and splashing some water on his face, he'd thrown some clothes on and left in search of the sick bay.

"What appears to be the problem Sir Roy?" Dr Muffler asked after being recalled to the sick bay from his vantage point on the deck above the swimming pool.

Following a successful career in gynaecology he'd made the professionally suicidal mistake of incorporating natural medicine into a modern medical practice. A

disciplinary tribunal had interpreted his philosophy of kissing it better differently and his licence to practice had been suspended for a year.

The American registered vessels of the F&O Line were required by law to carry a medically trained officer and although his licence suspension had reverted back to active after the year was up, finding employment had proved difficult to say the least. For the penny pinching F&O Line, finding a doctor, who would work for a quarter of what they could make in private practice, had involved hiring second-rate medical staff. The bulk of his duties revolved around prescribing tranquillisers to the neurotic stars of stage and screen, as well as applying the occasional plaster to a broken finger nail. To date only two women passengers had commented about the need for a vaginal examination to rule out complications of a twisted ankle and only their blind ignorance of moderately intelligent subjects (medicine being listed above moderate) had prevented loss of his licence again.

"I woke up with this pounding headache and my tongue feels like sandpaper. My stomach's churning and my vision's out of focus," Roy reported to the doctor.

"Please climb onto the couch and spread your legs," Dr Muffler ordered. The high-pitched whining voice of Roy had obviously confused the doctor. "No, sorry, on second thoughts don't bother. Forget my last instructions." The doctor had looked up from his papers and had a bad vision of the person in front of him being naked.

"I thought it sounded rather strange considering my main problem is a headache," Roy replied, rather befuddled. "Do you think I could have a brain tumour?"

"No chance," Dr Muffler replied, realizing the size of Roy's brain. "What did you drink last night?" The doctor was obviously experienced in cruise medicine.

"Only a couple of fruity drinks," Roy honestly replied.

"No alcohol?"

"Not that I know of."

"In that case I'll have to examine you," the doctor stated reluctantly. "Climb up onto the couch."

Thirty minutes of tests on his stomach, reflexes and eyesight and Roy had been proclaimed physically fit. Mentally the doctor had his reservations, especially after Roy misunderstood the doctor's request that he provide a urine sample and had fulfilled the doctor's request in full by filling his pencil holder to brimming. After testing of the specimen provided had indicated 100% proof to alcohol, the doctor revised his original diagnosis and informed Roy that he had a hangover.

"What's a hangover?" Roy asked simply.

"It's the after-effects of getting drunk on alcohol."

"But I only had fruit juices" Roy protested. "One banana slammer and a calypso explosion with lots of pineapple in both of them. Do you think the pineapple was off or something?"

Convincing Roy that he'd ingested any form of alcohol was a task in itself and the doctor had taken two hours to assure Roy that he hadn't contracted food poisoning from dodgy pineapple juice in the cocktail bar. Eventually he'd managed to placate Roy with two aspirins and a milky substance to settle his stomach, under the guise of a new wonder drug that would cure anything. Roy in his present hypochondriac state was willing to believe anything the medical profession told him.

With Roy's hangover cured and Fungy keeping a low profile to avoid the interest of Mojay Stiffsem, the cruise liner entered the ex-British colony of the Turks and Caicos Islands. With another session of shopping and exploration of the previously tranquil islands, this time Roy was awake and capable of inflicting himself on the local economy.

"Hello pussy...."

"It's purser, not pussy sir," the purser corrected him.

Roy had decided to explore the island and was about to descend the walkway to a waiting launch. His holiday seemed to be proceeding fairly uneventfully by his normal standard but he still hadn't been able to track down Fungy, who he was still expected to interview.

"Am I the only British passenger onboard this ship?" Roy asked the purser who was standing at the top of the walkway entrance.

"No, Sir Roy. We have two other British passengers."

"Does that include a fallen princess by any chance?"

"I'm not at liberty to divulge the identity of our passengers sir. Confidentiality is very important to most of our passengers, as you yourself should be aware. I won't repeat what you told me about your wife and you can't expect me to break anybody else's confidence in return." The purser was still convinced that Roy had murdered his ex-wife.

"Am I permitted to ask if these two other Brits are male or female, or is that a secret also?" Roy asked, annoyed that his line of questioning had hit a brick wall already.

"Ah, Sir Roy. Here's a fellow passenger who's also going ashore," the purser announced as Mojay Stiffsem approached the walkway. "You two may have something in common to talk about."

Roy resolved to question the purser again on his return to the ship. Fungy had to be onboard and he was determined to find and interview her. As the little launch chugged across the harbour of the Turks Island capital of Cockburn, he'd become deep in conversation with Mojay Stiffsem.

"If you're looking for the British princess, there was one in the bar yesterday. Short, fat, redhead, with a chip on her shoulder," Mojay informed him.

"That sounds like Fungy all right. What was she doing?" Roy asked.

"Sorry, I can't help you anymore than that. Polly Harrdon was in the bar and I got kind of distracted."

"Who's this Polly Harrdon everyone's talking about?"

"See for yourself, she's waiting on the dock to board the launch back to the boat."

"You mean the blond carrying the two parcels against her chest?"

"No, those two parcels are her chest. I see this is your first meeting with her. It would be etiquette for you to not have your tongue out, drooling, when we dock."

"Are they real?" Roy was overawed by the spectacle in front of him. His months of deprivation had taken its toll. To give Mojay his due, he did steer Roy away from the possibility of physical contact with Polly's appendages, and Roy had started to recover by the time they arrived in the little town. "What do you do for a living Mojay?" Roy asked in an attempt to make conversation.

"I play football," Mojay replied.

"Have you ever been in the F.A. cup then?"

"What's an F.A. cup?"

"It's a football competition."

"Is it like the super bowl?"

Amazingly they conversed about two entirely different games for most of the time ashore, without even realizing the difference. Eventually they returned to the Celeste Marie in time to sail again towards the US Virgin Islands.

The passenger list of the Celeste Marie had started to thin out by this point of the journey. Ex-president Nicksom had been caught cheating at poker and together with his bodyguards he'd been put ashore to catch a flight back to the USA. Polly Harrdon returned to the ship when Roy had seen her, but only to collect her belongings, apparently the Grand Ole Opry couldn't do without her and she was required back in Nashville. Mojay Stiffsem was the only high profile face left on the ship, together with the Wall Street gamblers and a few minor screen legends. Roy and Fungy made up the British contingent, even though they'd never met yet, much to Roy's disappointment. His recent friendship with Mojay and rumours about the demise of his ex-wife in Miami, had engendered a modicum of self-preservation into the female passengers. The majority had given Roy a wide-berth in any bar he visited despite his reputed wealth and privilege.

"What do you mean, let's go up to the bar?" Fungy asked as the Celeste Marie prepared to sail towards the US Virgin Islands. "Not only is Mojay Stiffsem up there, I here there's a British equivalent as well."

"But we can't spend the whole voyage in our cabin. I want to have some fun. We'll just go to a different bar, that's all." Fungy's companion had been trying to encourage her to leave their cabin for hours now.

"I'm quite happy staying here and accepting the crew's rota. It adequately satisfies my basic needs."

"But the crew haven't got enough money to pay off all your debts. It's a rich man you need and they're all in the bars. With Polly Harrdon back in Nashville, the competition has to be considerably less. Just a few has-been movie stars left. Alcoholics and junkies the lot of them."

"And I'm not a 'has been' princess then?" Fungy asked, her sense of realism working overtime. Or maybe it was just a spot of depressive negativity.

"You're still Fungy. The world-renowned princess who is loved by all. Has been movie stars have never been a problem in the past and we need to find you a golden egg. Come on we're going treasure hunting in the Caribbean."

An hour of further encouragement, followed by thirty minutes of preening and the duo pranced into the cocktail bar where Roy and Mojay were already sitting. The barman noticed them as well. Dropping the glass he was holding he ran around to the staff side of the bar, hurdled the counter and careened through the off duty staff at their tables, before disappearing out of the door and continuing on until he eventually dived overboard.

"Cut engines! Man overboard!" the captain yelled.

Stationary in the water the Celeste Marie launched a lifeboat to collect the crazed barman, who seemed determined to swim back to Turks Island, which was situated only five miles behind them. Persuading him to climb onboard the lifeboat had been difficult enough but any attempt to return to the Celeste Marie resulted in him breaking free and diving into the water again. Eventually a compromise was agreed upon in the form of the barman climbing back into the lifeboat, which would then drop him off on Turks Island before returning to the Celeste Marie.

"Poor sod, frightened to death about something. He wouldn't say what but it would appear to be something in the cocktail bar," the first mate reported to the captain after returning from the lifeboat that had just been hauled back onto the deck.

The Celeste Marie was now on course again for the US Virgin Islands again but with a rather depleted complement of passengers. Maybe everybody leaving the ship was a bad omen and the captain being a superstitious sailor had thought of this as well.