

Greetings fellow 'swamp rats' and 'jungle bunnies',

As to the relevance of it where matters of a far eastern nature are concerned, can I just say that when this 'incident' occurred we were in the process of being shipped out to the Far East (Singapore and Malaya) by troopship (Nevasa) and RN vessels in early 1962 from Malta, so I hope it qualifies for inclusion. Our unit, 40 Commando Royal Marines was in the process of being re-organised into army style companies of about 120+ strong from the older RM 'troops' of about 60-70 strong. We were in the process of being sent to serve alongside another unit, 42 Commando, which was already out there.

So here's a little something to relieve the tedium of whatever it is you are doing. I know it's a little old (about a decade or four) but it seems to wear well enough. Enjoy!!

The Run Ashore

We have been let out for a weekend pass (fatal) in Malta, and have just met up with our fellow 'bootnecks' from a visiting RN ship. Come Saturday afternoon, and having breakfasted and lunched on a goodly supply of various local types of beer and vino, we is in the mood for all kinds of sundry dark and dirty deeds, the culmination of which, and after a rather 'fluid' 'O' group, involves the 'kidnap' of the biggest matelot from the ship in question.

The plan is to 1. kidnap him, 2. 'invite' him to get into a sleeping bag, 3. tie sleeping bag and said contents to a metal bed, 4. go find a 'gharri' (a horse drawn Maltese type landau carriage), 5. deposit 'cargo' therein, 6. drive gharri into Valletta, 7. deposit iron bed and cargo on city centre's main roundabout or thereabouts. This sounds so easy we salute and toast each other with even more of our abundant liquid lunch. One of our number, a member of the ship's detachment of marines, just smiles and starts taking bets. (Q. Does he know something we don't), probably not we think, and start handing our money over after hearing what appears to be quite ridiculous odds.

We get an invite back to our fellow 'booties' messdeck, and a 'highly organised' stealth recce of the ship reveals a suitable candidate. 'It' is a Petty Officer sick berth attendant, is very large indeed, and a passable imitation of Odin, or Erik the Red, or something similar from an Icelandic or Viking Saga, or maybe even the 'double' of the Incredible Hulk on a bad day. Said monster comes complete with a full red set. By God Sir, he's a bleedin' biggie alright. He's got thighs as thick as my waist, fingers like full size jumbo sausages, a chest like a gorilla's, and an arse like a water buffalo. We hear later that he went on to play professional rugby league for Widnes. Said monster is also prop forward for Royal Navy rugby union team. and the 'dutch courage' of a couple of hours before is rapidly diminishing.

"Jesus Christ, there's no way were' going to get that 'thing' of the ship, we'll just have to entice it off, which we do under the pretext of an injury to a fellow mess mate around the corner of a warehouse before we 'pounce' on him, bad mistake. There follows, or so it seems to us, the 'mother and father' of arguments, with twelve sometimes fifteen 'booties', three sheets to the wind, against a stone cold sober, very fit, very strong, very angry Matelot with arms and legs, bodies, and sundry bits and pieces everywhere. I have to tell you that he did his ship's company very proud indeed, although we did think it most inconsiderate of him not to agree to our plan.

Still, what's a few fat lips, cracked ribs, black eyes, broken teeth, dislocated shoulder blades between friends, and twisted ankles between friends?

The rest of the plan goes ahead relatively 'painlessly' for the 'walking wounded' and the naval shore patrol find him eventually, although by now he has developed a distinctly low tolerance threshold towards members of the Globe and Laurel fraternity. Oh, I almost forgot, I was wearing the latest fashion 'winkle picker' type shoes and in the struggle during the trussing up and subsequent attempts to get 'it' on board the by now wildly gyrating gharri (because of a deeply upset horse), two of its wheels ran over my feet, and I ended up wearing what looked like those court jester things with bells on. At one stage during our attempts to

'persuade' him into the sleeping bag, his blindfold slips off and he glares at us in the manner of a presiding judge at a war crimes tribunal, saying "you lot are dead meat", or words to that effect.

In due course, our friends from the visiting ship departs, and we hear later on that all royals on board suddenly become far healthier than the rest of the ship's complement. Apparently one of our fellow 'booties' sustains an injury to one of his knees during fitness training, and is ordered into the ship's sick bay which is staffed among others by you know who. I tell you, that guy put up one hell of a struggle not to go in there, he kept saying, "I am alright, I don't need treatment", and finally a last plea, "please don't make me go in there". To be greeted by, "well hello, nice of you to drop by, we are going to have some fun, aren't we now?" My god, the screams, 'It' knew how to cause the maximum amount of pain without leaving a mark.

Monday morning on the range was very interesting. Three of our number couldn't get their berets on because of all the lumps on their heads, a couple of others refused to shoot on account of the noise being incompatible with their headaches, and yours truly got a tap on the back of the head from our company commander's swagger stick when he asked, " what the hell's a matter with you? Are you actually aiming at something? What effing target are you aiming at? You're usually OK". So I turn to him with a face like a relief map of the Himalayas, and eyes like traffic lights/racing dog's b-----s, and he replies, "Ah well, perhaps not today".

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