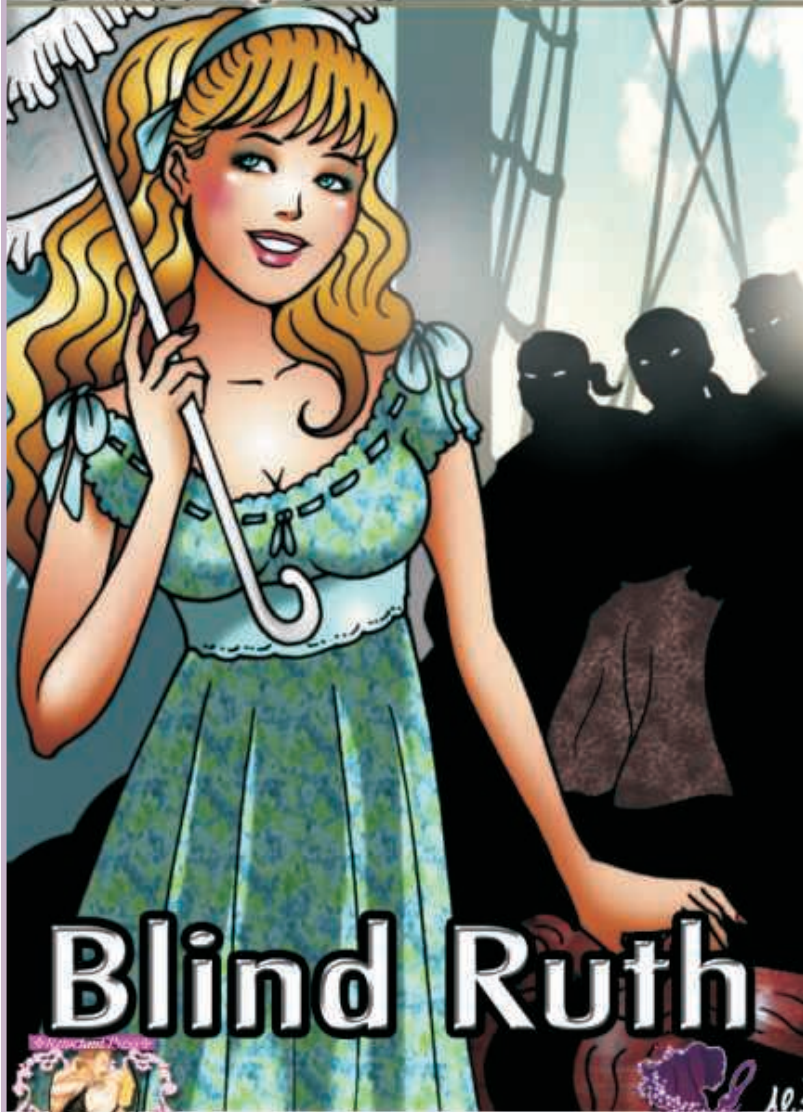


Ship's Lady



Blind Ruth



An "Adult Tv" Novel



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SHIP'S LADY

By Blind Ruth

PART 1 PREPARATIONS SHIP'S LADY

What is a ship's lady? To put it in simple terms it is a man dressed in woman's clothes onboard a ship. There have always been such men since time began in ships that sail the high seas. It has always been considered unlucky by sailors for a woman to be onboard a ship. Therefore it is no surprise that some men have dressed in female clothes. These men were not scorned or laughed at; to the contrary they were revered and respected as a welcome sight on long voyages. It was not uncommon for members of the crew to fight over the favours of such "ladies." These men who dress in women's clothes take great delight in dressing in female finery. Of course such men would attract other members of the crew even if those men did not consider themselves homosexual. In some

cases it was not unknown for a ship's lady to share the captain's bed.

For many such "ladies" it could be an easy life as they would be excused from the usual duties and hard work onboard ship as long as she gave her favours to the crew. Make no mistake, these "ladies" were beautiful and accepted as ladies and therefore learned the art of makeup. It was in their own interest to be attractive. Some could make a good living from dressing in women's clothes. Fine dresses, perfume, precious jewels and other such goodies would be theirs and they could retire on their ill-gotten gains and maybe live full time in women's clothes.

It is whispered in nautical circles that the famous "Mutiny on the Bounty" may never have happened had such a Ship's Lady been on board. That could be mere supposition and we will never know but it is food for thought.

Even today these ship's ladies still exist on the many super oil tankers, tramp steamers, and huge cargo ships that sail for months on end, going from port to port all over the world. The ship's ladies of today can have breast implants, even gender reassignment.

This is the story of one man who became a ship's lady unknowingly but maybe not unwillingly.

TREASURE MAP

Sir Edmond Cummings was at present converting his attic into an office for himself in his spacious manor house. It wasn't that Edmond had wanted to do it but Eustacia, his wife who had a quick temper, told him she was fed-up with clearing all the papers and business letters he kept leaving all over the place. Anything for a quiet life for his beloved Eustacia; she had a wicked tongue.

Sir Edmond was what one might call a business magnate; the family business in engineering had been handed down from father to son over hundreds of years. Edmond was the most successful of that line for the company had expanded under his guidance into a large conglomerate of companies which dealt in a wide diversity of goods and services. He had been knighted by her majesty the Queen for services to industry years ago.

He had hired a construction company to convert the attic to his office; the floor would need strengthening as would the beams within the attic. A lot of what Sir Edmond called junk had accumulated over the hundreds of years his manor house had been in existence and the construction company was told to clear it out. Edmond, being a cautious and careful man, told the contractor to put aside each item for his inspection before it was disposed with. As he had expected, a number of paintings were found. Some were of his ancestors; those he would keep, the others would go to auction. The items found were numerous but one that came to his notice was a large locked oak trunk.

This caught Edmond's imagination for it looked centuries old but how to open this mysterious object for there were no keys with it. A locksmith was called; he came with bunches of keys and soon had it opened. The heavy lid creaked open to reveal an abundance of papers, letters, and documents. The contractor was told to bring the trunk to the library where Edmond could peruse the contents at his leisure. He took a keen interest in reading the hand-written letters from centuries past. It took him some time to go through all papers within the trunk. At the very bottom was a yellowish waterproof oilskin pouch tied with string around it which immediately got his attention.

On unwrapping the string, Edmond found it contained a shabby dog-eared map written in French. There was also an envelope with a seal on the back which was from one of his ancestors, Jeremiah Cummings. On breaking the seal on the envelope, he discovered a letter which read as follows.

My Dear Descendant

To whoever you may be, it is I, Jeremiah Cummings, who writes this letter. I hope it is one of my descendants that reads this epistle. I would not like the contents of this letter to fall into the wrong hands. If you are reading this, you will have discovered a map, written in French, which I had translated into English. This is said to be the treasure map of the famous French pirate Jacque Le Blond whose treasure has never been found. Jacque and his pirate ship sailed many seas and oceans and struck terror into the hearts of all he captured. He was a fearsome individual of six foot six inches and had a red beard. He carried a cutlass that would kill a man in seconds with a swift blow. He amassed a fortune from the booty plundered in his raids on helpless merchant ships. He was no respecter of the fair sex. Any woman found on board a ship would be brutally raped by him and his merciless crew, then killed.

This map came into my hands as payment of a gambling debt from a Frenchman with a dubious past said to be a member of Jacque Le Blond's crew. He said it was given to him by his captain on his death bed as a gift to a trusted friend. The treasure is buried on the island shown on the map. The island was not on any map of that time. Jacque thought it an ideal spot to bury his treasure. So Jacque and three trusty members of the crew went to it by longboat over a period of several days, making many trips to the island. Only one man returned at the end of the trips and that was Jacque. It was said that he had killed

the other three so no one would know where the treasure was buried on the island. The island is somewhere in the Indian Ocean as I know from the translation from the French.

I was told I was a fool to accept such a worthless piece of paper as a gambling debt but I did believe this Frenchman so much that I financed an expedition to find Jacque Le Blond treasure, which I never found. Many things went wrong on that voyage of the ocean-going Mary Rose. I had to ration the food supply, for the ship was months on end without the sight of land in scorching heat. I suffered a near-mutiny of the crew which I, the Captain, and a few trusted crew members held off till we arrived safely back in England.

I do believe the treasure exists and it is my wish that a future generation of the Cummings family will try and seek out Jacque Le Blond's bounty.

Should you are set out to find this treasure, I wish you God-speed.

Yours Faithfully,

Jeremiah Cummings

After reading that letter and studying the treasure map, Sir Edmond was most thoughtful. Edmond was an adventurous man; he hadn't built his empire without a sense of adventure. He was seriously thinking of taking up the challenge laid down by Jeremiah Cummings. Then a bright idea came into his head which could garner a lot of publicity for his various companies. Why not build a ship similar to that of his predecessor Jeremiah Cummings and try to find the long-lost treasure? Even if he found such a ship, a most skilful captain would be needed for the art of operating ships with sails was long lost.

Edmund intended to seek sponsorship for the voyage from his business associates and other interested parties. Interviews with the press and media would surely bring

that. Stories of pirate treasure should fire the imagination of the public. Where Jeremiah Cummings had failed, he would succeed for Edmund was a determined man.

He first needed someone with knowledge of the wooden sailing ships of the 18th century. Jeremiah had translated the French writing on the map and that was a help. A person with knowledge of maps was hired to see if this island was still there and could be gotten to.

The island was named "Le Blond Island" after the pirate, probably by Jacque himself. It was three miles long and approximately a mile in width with a number of coves and bays where Jacque La Blond would have anchored his ship. There was a volcano on the island.

A person with knowledge of sailing these ships had not been found. A sailor and captain who had experience with finding treasure had, however, been found. Captain Brendan Connelly was an Irish man; his credentials were perfect and he had a reputation second to none. Edmond Cummings was impressed with this six foot two muscular giant of a man of fortyish whose hair was turning white and who had a beard

"Everything seems in order, Captain Connelly, except for one item."

"And what would that be, sir?" asked Brendan in his Irish brogue.

"I can tell you now, Captain, that this voyage is to find the long-lost treasure of one Jacque Le Blond, a Frenchman and well-known pirate."

"Your man mentioned that before I came for this interview. My record is unparalleled in these treasure hunts as can be seen in the expeditions I have captained."

"Please let me finish, Captain."

"To be sure, sir," answered Brendan.

"This will be no ordinary hunt. I have decided that the ship I sail in will be as near as possible to the ship my ancestor Jeremiah Cummings sailed in three hundred years ago. That means it will be a sailing ship with no mechanical means whatever. Do you think it is within your ability to captain such a ship and have a crew proficient enough to handle this type of vessel?"

Captain Brendan Connelly didn't reply at once and a thoughtful expression came over his face before he spoke.

"It is true I have never sailed in the type of ship you described, however I am a Master Mariner. This is a challenge I will gladly take up if you hire me, sir."

"Captain Connelly, I think you are a trustworthy and honest man and will sign you up as captain of this ship whenever it is found."

"I would like some things cleared up, sir, before we shake hands. While the ship maybe of the eighteenth century, I hope you will be installing radar, sonar, and a ship's radio and that I shall have complete say as to who I wish for members of the crew."

"These matters I leave to you, Captain." The deal was signed. Now the task was to find a ship!

For Captain Brendan Connelly there seemed nothing he could do till a ship was found, however he was not the kind of a man to twiddle his thumbs. He dropped in on Sir Edmond's office. Edmond was rather surprised to see him.

"Captain Connelly, you are more than welcome here but I did say you would be informed whenever a ship was found."

"I know that, sir. Do you have the captain's log of the ship your ancestor sailed in by any chance?"

"No, it wasn't among the papers in the trunk. But why would you want that if I may ask, Captain?"

"It could very well be of the utmost importance. I am sure the daily log will have the settings and positions of the ship. If I have them, I can plot the course the ship took from when it left Plymouth to where it turned back in the Indian Ocean. Whether that will be of any help, I do not know but at least we will know what parts of that ocean he sailed in and where he didn't. If it can't be found, Lloyds registers all ships and the log book of the "Mary Rose" should be in their files."

The log book of the "Mary Rose" was indeed down in Lloyd's basement among other dusty logbooks of ships from centuries past. The log book of the "Mary Rose" was a thick volume detailing from when it came into commission till it went to the breakers yard. The ship had a life of more than forty years, mainly as a cargo ship sailing the England-to-West Indies route. Captain Connelly had brought with him maps of the area the ship he would be captain of would be sailing in. He took notes of the captain's daily logging and positioning of the Mary Rose. These he painstakingly marked out on the maps. Even in the twenty-first century there were still parts of that ocean that have no charts. Brendan would make a point of visiting these blank areas.

Captain Brendan Connelly could not fail to read other entries in the log. One which caught his eye was an entry from when the "Mary Rose" crossed the equator. It read as follows.

Captain's log: Friday July 7th in the year of our Lord seventeen hundred and twenty-three.

To-day we have crossed the Equator. All the crew are in good spirits and to celebrate this auspicious occasion I have ordered an extra supply of rum and that a party be held this evening when it will be much cooler than now as the sun mercilessly beats down on us.

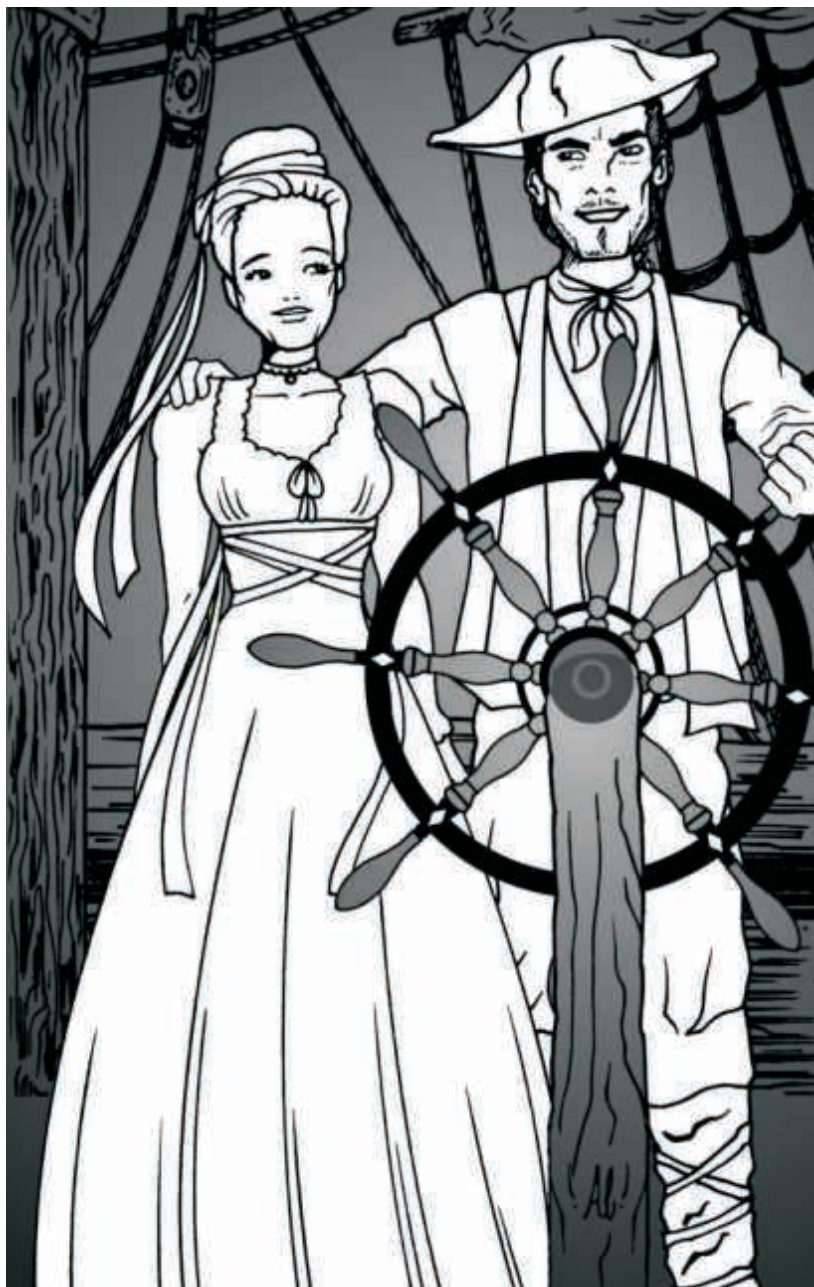
The events of this evening were most jolly and gay; cook laid on a sumptuous meal. The bosun entertained us with his playing of the violin and the crew joined in on the many sea shanties he played. I was more than surprised to see a lady in our presence for one of that fair sex had certainly not boarded the ship on leaving Plymouth.

On approaching her, I asked where she had come from. The sweet thing blushed and answered, "Don't you recognise me, Captain? I'm midshipman Jenkins." It took me several minutes to identify the features of young Anthony Jenkins for he certainly disguised himself well in the form of the gentle sex. I was not annoyed by this for she was popular amongst us sailors who had not seen the female form for several months.

It seems among our crew, young Jenkins was given the nom de plume of Lady Antonia, a fitting name for Anthony in a woman's skirts. He certainly was the centre of attention that night and I think he rather enjoyed the treatment and the civility that all paid to him. I do think the presence of a so-called lady had a calming influence on the crew. I had expected a rowdy drunken rabble and was prepared for such and would excuse it because of the festivities.

The following morning, everyone tackled their jobs with zeal. On enquiring of the first mate James Rowan as to why all seemed in a good humour compared to other days on this voyage, he replied, "It is the Lady Antonia, Captain. As you well know, these men for months have been deprived female company. I can tell you, Captain, only this morning I have been approached by several

mates as to why there is no presence of Lady Antonia on board ship and asked to relay this to you, Captain."



I said that surely they understood that it was only midshipman Jenkins in a frock.

He replied that they did but the Lady Antonia's presence had greatly brightened their attitudes and enabled them to perform their duties with renewed vigour. He asked me if I would consider allowing "her" presence for the remainder of our voyage.

I did give the matter considerable thought and spoke with young Jenkins on this matter. I asked him if he enjoyed the wearing of women's clothing. He informed me that he used to play with this sister when he was young and that she took great delight in dressing him in her clothing. He did in fact take pleasure in the wearing of frocks. I then asked him if he would mind dressing as Lady Antonia for the rest of the voyage and he informed me that he would not mind that duty in the least but he was concerned with missing his duties as midshipman.

I informed him that he would be relieved of them and would no longer sleep in a hammock below decks with the men. I will make available for his use a small cabin used when this ship had passengers on board. As there are none on this trip, it is his to use.

Jenkins said that this new duty was a dream come true for him.

Young Jenkins, in the guise of his alter ego Lady Antonia, put a spring into the step of all who saw him and it was a much happier ship. A few nights later before retiring to bed, I decided to take a stroll on deck to get some fresh air in my lungs. There to my surprise was first mate James Rowan whose watch it was at the wheel with his arms around "Lady Antonia." I made a noise again as if clearing my throat to let them know I was near. On hearing it James quickly released his hand from Antonia's waist and she stepped backward as if studying the bright stars above. I noticed Antonia had a necklace of various colours

which I am sure she never had before. I think it was a present from James. What they do is their affair as long as it does not interrupt the harmony of the ship.

No more did Captain Connelly read of this Lady Antonia in the ship's log.

So they had them hundreds of years ago. These women were what Brendan called Ship's Ladies and he knew all about them. Many a ship he sailed on had a ship's lady. Even his own vessels had these so-called women who served a purpose and trafficked in a trade as old as the world.

The captain now had all the information he had come for. He must now wait for this ship; till then he would start seeking out he knew from past experience were reliable for his crew.

ELIZABETH

The expensive apartment block was modern and well-kept; only those with a reasonable income could afford to live here. The amenities were first class as they should be for the money paid. To gain entry one had to press the call button of the flat of the person one wished to see. This Captain Brendan Connelly did. After a slight delay, a woman's voice was heard over the intercom.

"Yes, who is it?"

"It's Brendan Connelly, Elizabeth."

"Right Captain, do come on up."

The elevator swiftly rose to the third floor where Brendan alighted, then made his way along the corridor past a number of flats till he came to a door with "Bowring" on the nameplate. He pressed the button beside the door and chimes were heard. A minute later, a woman of some five foot nine opened the door.

"You look as beautiful as ever, Elizabeth," Brendan greeted the woman, aged 32.

"You always were a flatterer, Captain but do come in. It's nice to see you once more. What has brought you here this fine day?" Elizabeth said as she led Brendan to the sitting room.

"It's John, isn't it, Captain? You wouldn't come all this distance to see anyone else."

"But I came to see you as well," he lied.

"Why don't you stay for tea? John is still in bed but will be getting up shortly for his tea. He is on nightshift at present. Then you can talk about old times if that is what you are here for."

"Yes, that would be nice, Elizabeth." The captain had serious matters to discuss with John Bowring.

Captain Brendan Connelly did not lie when he said Elizabeth Bowling was pretty. He had held her naked body close to him many times in the past.

Elizabeth went to the cocktail cabinet, poured out a glass of whiskey, and handed it to Brendan. "Jamieson's, Captain, that's your favourite, isn't it?"

"You never forget these things, Elizabeth, you're a good hostess." Elizabeth had poured herself out a Bacardi and coke.

"Well, I think I have known you long enough, Captain."

Elizabeth Bowling let her mind wander back to when she first met Brendan Connelly. She was not dressed in all the female finery that adorned her figure at present. She had signed on as an able-bodied seaman. All through her life, she had never come to terms with her maleness. Elizabeth's brain never functioned as male, always female.

For years she had gone through mental torment in a fight to establish her female identity. On her original voyage with the captain, she found him a reasonable man and approachable which gave her confidence. It was on the third day of that voyage when she asked to see the Captain in private.

Seated before Brendan Connelly, she talked in hushed tones. "Captain, I have come to discuss a very delicate matter. I know you are an intelligent and impartial man and will hear me out. What I have to say has taken a considerable amount of courage. You see, I have been struggling all my life with my sexuality and I feel now is the time I expressed my femininity. I ask your permission to that do now, please, Captain."

Captain Connelly looked at David Donnelly (for that was her name then). Brendan turned matters over in his mind but had further questions to ask.

"David, you say you want to express your female side. By what means will you do this?"

"By wearing the clothes of my own sex, female. I now regard myself as a female. The clothes mean nothing but if that is the way society determines who is a woman, then that is how I want to be seen."

"I have no objections to that, David, but do you understand the danger you will be putting yourself in?"

"Danger, Captain?"

"We are at sea for months on end and the sight of a woman can do strange things to a man's mind. Remember, you will be the only woman onboard."

"I hadn't thought of that," replied David. "But I have not had the operation yet, Captain!"

Captain Brendan gave a belly laugh "And you think that makes a difference? I've been around a long time;

some of the things I've seen with ships' ladies—and that is what this crew would regard you as—I wouldn't want to repeat to your young ears."

"I still want to go through with this if you give me permission, Captain."

"In that case you will have to remove your things from the crew's quarters and I shall make a cabin available next to mine for your safety. I take it you have some woman's dresses and skirts here with you. By what female name do you wish to be called?"

"Yes Captain, I do have a few dresses and frocks. Please call me Elizabeth which I think is a fitting name."

No more was said as the now-named Elizabeth transferred her things to the assigned cabin.

That inaugural meeting between Captain and the now-Elizabeth was in the passageway between cabins as Elizabeth was about to make her entrance for all the crew to see. That entrance never reached the deck as Brendan beheld Elizabeth's feminine beauty.

"My, but you are a most desirable woman, Elizabeth." Before she could answer, Brendan's hand had gone round her waist and was leading her in the direction of his cabin.

An hour or so later, Elizabeth Donnelly found she was alone in bed with a crumpled up sheet over her naked body. The virgin was no longer a virgin. He had been gentle with her for he knew she had a certain amount of fear of their sexual connection. Elizabeth appreciated his

concern for her and the blissful introduction to that act. She had not been forced and willingly accepted that act. Maybe she had always wanted to make love as a woman.

Elizabeth reflected on the events of her day. She hadn't been shirked or harangued as she had expected and prepared for. The captain had had a few choice words for the crew and told them in no uncertain term what would be their fate should any harm come to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth knew one day she would marry; of that there was no doubt in her mind. The right man would come in time. Till then she would take the opportunity to have affairs with her former mates. Elizabeth made herself available to those she liked for sexual purposes.

For three voyages with Captain Connelly, Elizabeth became the established ship's lady and was recognised as such. It was on her third trip that Elizabeth met John Bowring and was immediately attracted to him. Brendan Connelly and he worked well as a team; even though John had his captain's ticket, he learn much in seamanship from Brendan.

John Bowring knew a lot of these ship's ladies from past experience with them. However Elizabeth was different; the others were used for sexual functional needs. John found himself falling in love with her. Elizabeth came to the conclusion that John Bowring was the man for her. For two more trips they were together. Elizabeth had taken steps to have her body altered. Breast implants were already in place, hormones had been started, and a date set for the final operation.

It was on the final trip with the captain which would take them to the Far East that Elizabeth booked herself into a clinic for the operation. The happy day came and John was there at her bedside as the effects of the anaesthetic wore off. On returning to the ship, Elizabeth used

all her powers to persuade John to give up the sea, marry her, and live on shore. She succeeded only because of John Bowring's love for her. They married onboard ship, Captain Brendan Connelly performing the wedding ceremony as his office entitled him to do so at sea. The happy couple settled down and it was now five years since their last voyage.

All of these things flashed through Elizabeth Bowring's mind as she sipped her Bacardi and Coke and watched Brendan.

"John is up. I'll inform him you're here, Captain, then see about finishing the tea."

Brendan Connelly watched her trim figure exit the room. A voice interrupted his recollections

"Old times, Captain."

Turning around, he faced John Bowring. "Yes indeed, John. Wonderful memories, will they ever come back?"

"Elizabeth says you have come to see me, Captain?"

"That I have on a private matter but maybe this is not the right time before tea."

"Of course, Captain. Things always seem better when the belly is full," John joked.

"You're a good cook, Elizabeth," commented Brendan.

"Don't say that, Captain, you'll swell her head," laughed John Bowring.

"Now if you don't mind, Elizabeth, the captain and I will retire to the living room for I am sure he has plenty to discuss with me. I am confident you will find something to occupy your time."

“Yes John,” Elizabeth softly replied.

After his wife departed, John Bowring faced Brendan as they sat on easy chairs. “Well Captain, give it to me straight for you have not come here for a meal.”

“You assume correctly, John and I’ll not beat about the bush. I have been given the enviable task of finding the treasure of the legendary French pirate Jacque Le Blonde and I’m asking you to come on board as my First Mate. I would not ask anyone else for you have the knowledge to tackle this alongside me.”

John Bowring thought for a few seconds then replied, “Captain, there are many capable men out there who can fulfil all the work that a first mate job entails and better than me.”

“You think so, John? The job I have in mind is worthy of only you and your abilities. You haven’t heard the whole story. The ship that will be employed on this voyage isn’t any old ship. It will be at least two or three centuries old, no mechanical aid, all sail. Now do you see why I want you? It is a challenge to our seamanship, John.”

“Where is this ship, Captain?”

“That’s the problem. I have yet to see it.” Brendan Connelly saw some light at the end of the tunnel as John Bowring seemed to be taking an interest.

“How is that, Captain?”

“Centuries-old sailing ships don’t exactly grow on trees, John. What’s more, when it is found, I don’t expect it to be seaworthy. That is a problem that will be dealt with as it comes.”

Captain Brendan Connelly could see there was an itching, a stirring inside John to hit the sea again.

"You know, Captain, if I were to leave home for the sea, Elizabeth is not going to be happy about it all. I'm afraid I will have to persuade her to let me go."

"Do what you have to, John. I can understand her point of view. Let me know what decision you come to."

In bed that night John Bowring approached the delicate subject of the offer Captain Connelly had made to him about this forthcoming treasure hunt. Elizabeth listened, knowing she would be fighting a demanding mistress to keep her husband there beside her. Elizabeth would plead and cajole all to no avail for the lure of the sea was in John Bowring's blood. And so it was that Elizabeth reluctantly gave up the fight. The sea was too deeply ingrained in her husband's soul.

Captain Brendan Connelly had gained the prize he wanted. All was set for the expedition except for one vital thing: a ship.

THE BULWARK

It was one of Sir Edmund Cummings lackeys who came up with the answer to their problem of finding a suitable sailing ship. "There she is, sir, a beauty," the man excitedly exclaimed as they stood on a riverbank looking at a three-mast sailing ship.

"What is she called, Harry?"

"Bulwark, Sir, H.M.S. Bulwark, part of Nelson's fleet, said to have fought at Trafalgar alongside the great man himself, Sir," Harry said hoping to impress Sir Edmund.

"That may well be, Harry, but the final decision will be Captain Connelly's for he will be sailing it. I don't intend to buy this ship till I have his say so."

A crestfallen Harry looked at the ground.

Captain Connelly inspected the ship from bow to stern, top to bottom.

"What do you think, Captain?" enquired Sir Edmund.

"If you want the truth, she is a sturdy oak ship and should stand the rough sea we are likely to encounter on our voyage. But much work will need to be done before she is seaworthy. Much of the oak structure will have to be replaced. The openings where the cannons were situated will have to be filled in. otherwise they will ship in water, Sir."

"Well, you are the expert, Captain, but you do think she can be made seaworthy for the long journey ahead?"

"Certainly sir, but a fair amount of money will have to be spent."

"That I have never thought as a problem, Captain, for I shall put a small amount myself into the project. But most will come from commercial interests and on that front I intend to make a statement to the press and media about our proposed treasure hunt. For that, you will be at my side to answer any nautical questions that may arise."

"I see, sir. Where do you intend to have this conference?"

"Here on the deck of the 'Bulwark'. What better place for a story?"