

Kris Saknussemm

Captain of Dark Mornings: The Disgraceful King Log Episode

Dateline: Nuku' alofa, Tonga

What I'd learned is what some would call a valuable lesson. A woman with a sore buttohole from especially vigorous anal sex is not a happy camper. If, at the exact same time, you are both embroiled in a joint bankruptcy court case in a foreign country, things only get worse. If she's actually in love with you and secretly really did like the sex despite the result, you have a major problem. If she's a dark, voluptuous Swede and is someone who you can barely stop thinking about even when comatose...you have an international incident on your hands.

In my case, I'd lost my passport and was looking at incarceration in very uncongenial surroundings. So I was forced to pick up my spear gun and accost the petty government official that my lover and ex business partner had finagled into accepting her version of the story, who had my means of departure in his chest pocket, in the lobby of the Dateline Hotel. (Oh, Tonga, the graves, the blowholes, the flying foxes, pigs, horses, dogs, rats and shipwrecks in the moonlight.)

I'd intended merely to threaten, but the little big nob got up on his high horse and I was tanked on vodka and orange juice, so I nailed him to the wall where the cockroaches were scurrying while Felicia played her nightly torch song piano. I'm very pleased with that shot, as I hadn't even sighted, just fired from the waist. I missed a major artery but made my point—and then pressure packed him when the locals started panicking about blood loss. People always panic about blood loss. It annoyed me then



and still does. I felt a distinct lack of empathy with my situation. Here I was, having to flee what I felt was a fine island, and a gorgeous woman...to accept a new status as a fugitive from justice and a common drunk. But that was just how things were.

Both shaken and stirred by this episode, I mysteriously didn't return to either Australia or America. Not then. For reasons that remain unclear, I first sought refuge in Fiji and soon found suspicious looking Indians offering me unwashed mangoes in an open-air claptrap bus clattering through the cane fields, warm rain whipping in.

Intense diarrhoea followed. (There's something curiously focusing about having to squat by a tractor road in a thunderstorm with a busload of strangers watching as yellow shit jets out your ass.)

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But I didn't stay focused for long. I eventually made camp at a Somerset Maugham style hotel that looked like it had been hit by a tidal wave only a few years previously, but with a reassuring view of the freighters lying in Suva Harbor and the jagged jungle mountains rising steeply from the bay.

I'd spent considerable time up in that volcanic range in the interior on my earlier visit, sleeping in the smiling chicken and pig villages (and getting scabies), rafting the flooded brown rivers—and in the end walking all the way down from the highest cloud-swept peak to an Indian general store selling everything from liquor and ghee to inflatable Batman dolls along with cases of plastic Shivas in bright dream colors...raucous mynah birds riding shotgun on the necks of hump-backed cows all along the way.



This time I merely wallowed in booze, surviving on turtle soup—the only thing that would stay down. (It's actually not as nice or interesting as it sounds...very rubbery meat and a disappointing old bath water flavor.)

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By this point I was so continuously drunk my erective capacity had virtually vanished—which didn't stop me from having an hallucinogenic romance with a Fijian woman named Mona who had recently run off from her husband and spent two hallelujah months on a bender of her own, rocking out every night at a dance bar called the Bamboo Palace and getting continuously laid by the anonymous men she latched onto. She apparently saw some potential in me and had learned something from the drowning time she'd experienced and so, while the seasonal rains poured down, she nursed me back to some semblance of sobriety and returning virility with the promise of ever more sex—a very strong incentive, for Fijian rain is like sex and Fijian sex is very much like warm, healing rain.

I find something irresistible about black coral on black skin and this little interlude I'm pretty sure saved me from serious malfunction, as just before I met her, I'd been sitting in a movie theatre with a bunch of young Fijian wanna-be gangster teenage boys lost in pornographic kung fu delusions watching *Rocky IV*, when I had a kind of seizure. (They thought I was just getting into the action of the fight scenes.) A local doctor suggested drinking seawater until I vomited (at least I think he was a doctor, he did have a lot of fabric he was trying to sell). I shrugged this off and just took to vomiting on my own.

Mona proved to be a much more enjoyable and effective solution until her husband finally tracked her down and one sodden sweet scented afternoon busted in my hotel room door to find her astride my much reinvigorated member and very nearly broke both our jaws before dragging her away by the hair kicking and screaming, promising me that if I ever tried to fuck her again he would cut off my head after yanking out my heart and eating it in front of me. I was very sorry to see Mona go—but relieved of course to see the back of her husband.

Her style of unwanted departure had some instant repercussions however, in that the hotel management seemed disinclined to have me stay. It was understandable, I concede, especially since the night before Mona and I'd gotten a little silly in the main lobby area, which somehow led to me pulling down a rather over-shellacked swordfish from the wall and chasing her and several other guests with it. I didn't actually impale anyone but I suppose that wasn't really the point. Brandishing a swordfish is threat enough for some people.

So, out into the monsoon (I seemed to be trapped in my own private monsoon) I was forced once more to flee, and could've ended up with a completely different life because that very same afternoon I was taken under the wing and across the island by an older English woman who looked disquietingly like Margaret Thatcher.

(Put your faith in strangers is one of my mottoes—they're less likely to know how much trouble you'll be. It usually takes at least one major incident to clue them in.)

I was picked up, or maybe "netted" is the right word at a Chichi/Blue Hawaiian bar where I'd taken shelter from the downpour, the hotel ejection and the unfortunate beating by Mona's enraged husband. I wasn't sure at the time what exactly was on offer with my new and very British friend but I was in no position to quibble and since standards and dignity had pretty much been thrown overboard long before, I thought what the hell. So what if she's thirty year older and looks like a horse? I'm getting it up again and she clearly has money.

This latter fact became increasingly evident with each passing minute as we moved rapidly from the tacky lounge bar to a hired limousine with a uniformed driver, all the way west to the sumptuous compound of the Regent Hotel with lighted torches around the pool whenever the rain stopped long enough for them to be lit.

That evening I was treated to an intimate banquet in a teak-lined private dining room with purple orchids glowing in the lamplight and a turbaned bearer behind each chair, the walls bristling with pineapple clubs, whale's teeth and polished spears. It was then revealed what my gracious hostess' true ulterior motive was.

There was indeed a business proposition on the table—along with a simply staggering quantity of fresh seafood and fruit, and the most expensive champagne to ever be propped in a bucket of ice.

Let's call her Mildred, for a woman of her stature and backbone might very well still be alive and I wouldn't want to cause her any embarrassment, as her position in English society was no small thing, as I soon found out.

What I in my Ronrico rum-bum beachcomber haze took to be some general signs of fairly significant but still conventional wealth were in fact just some subtle and to her unpretentious travelling necessities masking what

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was actually a genuinely outrageous fortune. A palatial crystal chandeliered flat in Kensington, a rambling 50-room 500 year-old country estate with its own moat, stag heads and suits of armor, 1,300 acres of prime farmland with stables full of horses for foxhunting, a grouse hunting lodge in Scotland, another apartment in Paris, a villa in Gibraltar, a home in Bermuda, collections of art, a fleet of cars and an army of staff.

I tried to seem unimpressed, while stuffing my face with coral trout and swilling the bubbly that had cost more than my whole stay back in Suva. But I was surprised to learn that whatever her interest, she wasn't interested in my attention on her own behalf. Oh, no. She had a daughter—let's call her Caitlin.

Here my ears perked up along with my pineal gland for I sensed that I was heading into uncharted waters once again.

Caitlin was then described to me. A French certified cordon bleu chef, a respectable follower of polo and a witty conversationalist—altogether a charming well-bred lass of 32 (only a few years older than myself at the time, a novel concept for me then, but still acceptable).

I was starting to get the drift, as I'm sure you are too, but still I let her tide take me. The coral trout was exceptional and the champagne unsurpassed.

It was at this moment that Mildred, with her diamond-crusted fingers, got down to brass tacks. She dismissed the waiting staff (I was now unsure if they worked for the hotel or for her), lowered her voice and much of her guard. Caitlin it seemed did have some "flaws," in addition to her many virtues and "assets." I think the word "assets" was used more than I felt comfortable with. The sum total of these, *disabilities* shall we say, had placed "obstacles" in the way of her marital happiness and indeed her "fulfilment as a woman."

Just in case I was in any doubt about what this last admission actually meant, my severely prim hostess broke out of her normally posh diction and following a heaved sigh, exclaimed with sawdust and clamshell directness, "She's never ever had a boyfriend and has never once been shagged." Suddenly everything became clear and even the excellent champagne lost its zing.

It went positively flat only about a minute later, when as if on some prearranged cue, into the private dining room stepped Caitlin herself. Actu-