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Honeymoon

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Honeymoon . . .

. . . George Eddington

Twelfth avenue was wet and uninviting as the couple crossed to its west side, to pier ninety, where the *Queen Mary* had docked earlier that foggy April morning. The young woman, a small corsage of white carnations on her blue coat, leaned heavily on the man's arm as they stood gazing at the graceful black hull.

"What does that 'thirty-nine' down there mean, Charlie?"

"Guess it means there's that much more of the ship under the water, hon."

"Isn't it about twelve stories high? I've been counting the rows of portholes. There's no smoke coming out of the chimneys."

"Not chimney; funnel, smoke stack."

"Okay, funnel. Where'd it just come from?"

"Southampton and Cherbourg. And ships aren't *its*, they're *shes*, darling."

"Look at those funny people around the doors to the dock. I'll bet they're foreigners. They look like it"

"How can you tell?"

"They just look like it. See that man with the funny coat and that cloth suitcase. Did you ever see anybody in Springfield with an outfit like his?"

"Hon, that's not nice to say."

"Let's see if we can't get on the boat and look around, Charlie."

"Why? Aw, let's not."

"Wouldn't you just love to go someplace on a big boat like that?"

"Let's not."

"Come on, stubborn."

Charlie reluctantly followed June's lead through the doors and up the cement steps. "Didn't you see that 'no visitors' sign? Besides, there's a cop over near the gangplank. He's not going to let us on."

"Hey, there. No visitors allowed."

"Please, Mr. Policeman, I'd just love to see the big boat. We're in New York on our honeymoon. Please, Mr. Policeman."

"Visitors will be permitted aboard tomorrow from nine-thirty to eleven-thirty in the morning upon presentation of a pass, obtainable at the offices of the Cunard Steamship company, twenty-five Broad-

way." The blue-coated guard met June's gaze firmly. "No visitors today," he added mechanically.

June turned on the policeman. Charlie hurried after her, down the stairs, to the street outside. "Don't see why all the rules and regulations. Charlie, you'll go and get a pass, won't you? I'm going back to the hotel this afternoon. But Charlie'll get a pass for his little bride, won't he?"

"Sure, sure, hon." He took his wife's arm as they ambled toward Fiftieth Street.

When they appeared at the dock the next morning June tugged at Charlie's arm, "Let me see the pass. Oh, look! It says we're boarding the vessel at our own risk, et cetera. And the pass is not transferable, et cetera. It is supposed to be presented at the gangway, et cetera. Charlie, what does *et cetera* mean?"

"June, don't ask so many questions. You must know what it means. Isn't that the cop who stopped us yesterday?"

"Sure, it is. Here give me the pass. Let me wave it under his nose. Look, Mr. Policeman, we've got a pass, today."

"June, honey, be quiet. He'll kick us off the pier."

"But we've got a pass, Charlie. Oh, isn't this exciting? Imagine what fun it would be to really go away on the ocean on this boat!"

They walked up the gently-inclined, rubber-cushioned, canvas-covered ramp to the ship's foyer, a wood-paneled room containing several elevators. The couple joined a group of tourists ready to be guided about the vessel.

"Charlie, isn't this wonderful? Whose picture is that on the wall?"

"It's the queen's."

"Listen to the guide. He's got such a funny accent."

"He's English."

"Oh."

"An officer of the ship."

"How do you know?"

"Look at his sleeve."

"Charlie, you're so smart. That's why I married you."

The tour included some of the first and cabin class staterooms, one of the kitchens, a library and most of the large, public rooms.

"Did you hear that, June?"

"What?"

"He said that Winston Churchill occupied this suite on his last trip to the United States."

"Oh."

The group went on to the Veranda cafe. The guide explained,

"Here some of the young folks who like to stay up late dance."

"Charlie, wouldn't it be wonderful to be taking a trip on this boat instead of just coming to New York for our honeymoon?"

"It costs plenty, you know that."

"I'll bet if you got a better job we could do it, soon."

"But I've got a good job."

"It doesn't pay enough to travel on a boat like this for a honeymoon. Think how much fun it'd be to dance up here. Aren't these drapes pretty?"

"And this," said the guide, "is Piccadilly Circus. Here many of the fine London shops have sea-going branches." He pointed with pride at the paneled corridor lined with show windows.

"Look at all the samples of cloth, Charlie." She moved to another of the cases. "And the gloves and purses. Oh, they're beautiful. I'd like that brown alligator one over there. I wonder how much it costs. I don't know whether I'd like that one or the dark blue one best. They're both so pretty. And the blue one would go with my coat. I think—"

"Please, you'll have to stay with the group," the guide called back to Charlie and June.

"Look, what does that mean? 'Cigarette Ends.' It's printed over those slits."

"That's the same as ash tray."

"Well, Charlie, we're back where we started from. But they didn't show us the whole ship!"

"We saw enough, I think, hon. Aren't your dogs tired?"

"Not very. I sure like those purses in that place. What did that guy call it?"

"Piccadilly Circus."

"That's such a funny name. Gee, but I'd like to take a trip on a boat like this."

"You should have married somebody rich, June."

"Next time I will."

"June, they're loading cars into the hold," said Charlie when they were out of the dock itself.

"There's one with Illinois plates! A car from Illinois! Wonder if it's anybody we know. I wonder whose car it is. Well, guess it proves that some people from home have the money to take nice trips."

"Jesus Christ! Are you still harping on that?"

"Charlie, this is the first time you've ever spoken that way to me and I don't like it. What did I say to deserve it? What did I say?"

"Nothing."

"Then don't be so unreasonable with me."

"There's a car from Quebec being loaded on."

"Where's that, Charlie?"

"In Canada."

"Oh, yes. That's the place where they speak French or something, isn't it?"

"Yes. June, haven't you had enough of this?"

"For today, I have. I found out that the boat's going to leave tomorrow morning. Will you bring me back to see it go, Charlie?"

"Anything you want. I never thought I'd spend my honeymoon playing second fiddle to a god damned ocean liner."

Next day, shortly after ten, they hurried down sloping Fiftieth street to Twelfth avenue. The street itself was a snarl of brazen yellow taxis and private cars stopping and starting before the pier's entrance. Charlie and June threaded their way through traffic and joined a group of on-lookers to the right of the entrance.

"Look at the lady with all the orchids. Did you ever see a coat like that one before in your life? And see what that man's got? A case of Carnation milk and a ham!"

"Some things are still rationed in England."

"Charlie, let's have our picture taken. There's a man over there. He's grouping people around those iron things. The ship'll be in the background. That will be fun to show at home."

"Don't be silly, June. I can't think of a bigger waste of money! No, June."

"You're stingy. You don't want me to enjoy myself in New York. And you don't know how much I'd love to show the picture around when we get home. Charlie, I hate you."

"Come on, June, let's get out of here."

"No. There goes the whistle. The boat will be leaving any minute. Next time I get married I'll find somebody who's willing to do nice things for me."

"I've had enough of this. I'm going to the hotel. Are you coming?"

"No."

He turned his back on his wife and began pushing through the crowd. He walked between taxis and waited for a lull in the traffic before he crossed the street. He didn't look back, even when he heard June's voice.

"Charlie, Charlie, wait for me."