

The Lady Sara
Noon March 8th

Ty confessed as he embraced Sara on the bow of his mighty Maximus V. “I knew you were my queen the night I met you. You forever changed me.”

“Oh..., my...,” Sara responded.

“I’ve never considered matrimony until I laid my eyes on you.”

“Oh..., my...my...,” she blushed as she thought, “He does not beat around the bush.”

As he melted into her beautiful blue eyes, he said, “At first, I thought I was just infatuated. But your angelic voice never stopped singing in my mind.”

“Oh..., my...”

“Your lovely movement ignites my fantasies.”

“Just being near you forces my heart to pound.”

“Oh..., my...”

“Over these last months, my feelings have only grown stronger. As I sleep, you fill my head with the sweetest dreams.”

““Oh..., my... I don’t know what to say, Ty.”

“Just say “Yes,” and I will give you the entire world!”

“My heart also pounds,’ Sara said as she placed the back of his hand against her upper chest, well above her lovely assets.

“My heart pounds even harder,’ he said as he slipped off his tie, then placed her hand on his solid chest.

“Oh..., my... It beats like a drum.”

“I am so impressed, but Ty, we haven’t even spent an hour together!”

“I never make life-changing decisions spontaneously unless I have no choice.”

“That’s because you are wise, my darling.”

“I love performing for my fans in Ohio. Now, suddenly, I am pleasantly overwhelmed by a change that sounds worldly.”

“The logical step up for you, my darling. Now, the whole world will be your admirers.”

“I plan every detail of my life; I need time to see and feel how ‘we’ would affect ‘me’ and those I support.”

“I assure you no one will be financially harmed.”

“I think you are amazing. Maybe the world’s best catch. I need time to reorganize reality.

“I’m thrilled by your reluctance; I would have found you shallow had you jumped. Thousands of gold-digging beauties would die to be my queen.”

“I don’t need your money; I make three times more than the President of the United States, Groover Cleveland.”

“I find you very attractive,” as she left out, “for your age.”

“I make more every hour than he makes a year.”

“That’s impressive. I need to get to know you before answering your question.”

“I misspoke, my darling. I adore your success!”

“I took no offense. Let’s get to know each other,’ Sara said.

Then Ty kissed her, and she kissed back.

“He is a fine kisser,” she thought.

Forty minutes later, as they were gazing at the rapidly approaching Gulf of Mexico, she said, “I’m figuring things out.”

“Yes, my darling.”

“If I had unlimited wealth, I now know what I would do with it.”

“And what would that be, my dear?”

“Help the poor, repressed, and underprivileged people improve their lives.”

Ty, who had never pondered such a strange desire, responded, “As my queen, you can buy your dreams! Are you now convinced?”

“You are incredible, but it's not just one thing; it's everything. It could take me days or weeks to sort through everything. But I am enchanted by your proposal. It makes me feel wonderful if that helps you any.”

“I understand. Things are complicated, and this just slammed into you.”

“Exactly. I do believe we are going to work well together. That is as far as I can say right now.”

“I do understand; I must finish winning you over.”

“Yes, and that just needs a little time.”

“Anyway, sailing in your ship is like floating through the sky,” she said to change the subject cleverly.

“I’m so glad you approve of it,” Ty said before landing another kiss.

After they parted for air, he slipped an envelope from his tuxedo pocket into her hand.

Inside was the encumbrance-free legal transfer of full ownership to the ship, *The Maximus V*, to Sara Kilbourne of Worthington, Ohio.

A federal judge in New Orleans witnessed and registered this transaction.

“Are you crazy? I cannot accept this! Ty!”

“Crazy? Yes! Crazy for you, my darling.”

“No, Ty, I can’t accept this!”

“I can’t give you something that you already own. There is nothing I can do about it.”

With a lovely, shocked expression, she could not find the words.

“My dear, your ship is the most beautiful ship on earth; it’s the perfect match for the world’s most beautiful woman.”

“Oh..., my...”

“She is also the world’s swiftest ship. I will show you her speed now that we reached the Gulf.”

“What Gulf?” Geography was not one of Sara’s main studies.

“The Gulf of Mexico is the sea we are entering.”

“I can’t take your ship; you need it. I live in Ohio; I have no use for a huge ship.”

“Don’t worry about me, darling, I won’t be roughing it,”

“Even the world’s wealthiest man cannot sail aboard two yachts simultaneously.”

“The Maximus VI is well under construction in Italy.”

Sara’s new ship was almost two years old.

As Ty gazed at the sky above the horizon, he added, “My Maximus VI will be to all vessels, as I am to all men, the finest example!”

“Okay,” Sara replied, as she realized, “He makes Colin seem humble.”

Ty’s eyes returned to hers, “Captain Sara. May I lease your lovely vessel from you until the Maximus VI is ready next spring?”

She said, “Fine idea; I don’t have a place for it back home. Ha”

“Ha, ha, ha. I will pay you its full lease value up front and maintain her pristine condition. That’s what that check is for.”

The envelope also contained a check for one hundred and eighty thousand dollars from Cross Shipping International to Sara Kilbourne. Its notation said, “First-year lease.”

“Ty, this is too much for a simple girl like me to absorb quickly.”

“This is more like a fairytale.”

“Ah, but this fairytale is real, my dear.”

Then, looking beautifully innocent, she added, “Just gazing at your handsome face is like a dream.”

“Oh, Darling, this reminds me. There are several paintings of me at Crosswinds, all created by the world’s finest artists.”

“I’ve noticed them everywhere.”

“Well, I pick them up as I travel.”

“Choose your favorites; I will move them to your suite.”

“It already has five or six of you in it.”

“I just brought Italy’s greatest portrait artist, Giovanni Boldini, to America. He is at Crosswinds waiting to create one of you and several of us together. What magnificent works they’ll be!”

“Ty, I need to catch my breath.”

“I know you need some time. That is why I planned our wedding for May at the Vatican. Pope Leo is a close friend; he has committed to preside over our ceremony.”

“Can the Pope do that?”

“Popes can do whatever they want.”

“Okay.”

“Your companions will make beautiful bridesmaids.”

“Ty, I still need time to soak all this in; it's too much at once.”

“Of course, my darling. All I ask is that you accept my proposal by April tenth.”

“Of this year?”

“Ha, ha, of course, darling, that gives you a whole month.”

“Okay. So, where and when will we perform for kings and princes?”

“In Sicily on the first of May.”

“Where is Sicily?”

“It is a magnificent island on the southern coast of Italy.”

“That may take too long to keep my girls away from home.”

“They can leave anytime; I will provide first-class transportation.”

“A month is only four weeks. If they stay, I will take them shopping in Paris, Rome, and Venice to buy them everything they like.”

“Okay, let's get to know each other; you might change your mind after you get to know me.”

“Not possible.”

“Nothing could please me more than spending time with you.”

“Thank you.”

“You are welcome. Smooch, smooch.”

Crosswinds, 3:13 PM

Max Cross and Animus were impatiently waiting at the dock when the Maximus V, I mean The Lady Sara, returned to Crosswinds.

As the nearly engaged couple stepped off the gangway, Max quietly growled into Ty's ear, "We need to speak right now, alone!"

"Can't you see that I'm busy, boy?" He replied.

"This can't wait, Daddy!"

"Pardon me, dear. I have either an idiot son or pressing business to contend with."

"Ask my staff for anything, and they will provide it."

"Just stay in the shade; the sun here is brutal."

Max quietly erupted once the men were beyond earshot, "While you were out trying to sow old man oats, her real man came for her!"

"What are you saying!"

"Your cascade of love blunders has connected Tyberia to my White Knights! You should have never brought those bitches here."

"Are you talking about her lame ex-boyfriend, Chase McLooser?"

"His name is Mclaughlin, Colin Mclaughlin. He is so lame that he tracked her like a hound for eight hundred miles while the clueless Federal agents overturn every rock around DC, looking for them."

"Max, he did not follow my train; we tailed just to make sure."

"That lame musician did."

“One of your men opened his mouth. No one followed them here,” Ty replied.

“Bullshit, father!”

“He had to come by train just to be here so rapidly.”

“This happened because you had to be dramatic. You kidnapped those bitches in front of the world press.”

“What happened here?”

“McLaughlin and several men came from the lake. They tried to carry your bitches back to their boat,” Max said as he pointed at them.

“But they refused to leave without all the shiny shit you gave them.”

“Their refusal to leave proves that no crime was committed,” Ty responded.

“If just one of these bitches left with him, we would be flooded by federal marshals and the navy by now.”

“Crosswinds is Tyberian land; they can only enter if we invite them.”

“McLaughlin had no invitation, and this was not even his first raid on foreign property today!”

“What do you mean?”

“Before your bitches even arrived here, he blasted his way into the holding facility, so he knows nothing about diplomacy.”

“That proves he did not follow; he had to have taken the main rails from Columbus to be on that side by the time she arrived!”

“Someone over there must have sent him over here.”

“That happened after he arrived in Norleans!”

“I have had no men there since last month. If you had not kept your bitches in plain sight, he would not have raided the property. So, don’t blame my men for your blunders.”

“My plan is perfect!”

“Since you suddenly decided to buy a queen, you lost your mind!”

“Colin McLaughlin is smarter than you; for one, he knew better than to marry that bitch!”

“Your new schoolboy stupidity could unravel everything I’ve spent most of my life planning!”

“Like all my plans, liberation day is perfect! It’s already running as smooth as silk!”

“It was perfect until you used the Knights to nab those skanks!”

“When Federal agents show up here, I will give them access. You better move them out immediately!”

“We need to be in Jagua Tuesday; I’ll take them in the Lady Sara.”

“Next week, we’ll take them to the palace” (in Sainte Marguerite, the Tyberian capital).

“No! Not on Tyberian soil; keep them far away!”

“And what the hell is The Lady Sara?”

“I renamed her a week ago when I gave it to her; you never noticed the name change on her haul.”

“The name or the ship?”

“Ownership of the ship.”

“You gave her our flagship?”

“Are you losing your hearing?”

“You are insane; you’ve lost your mind!”

“That’s not the first time someone called me Crazy today; losers always call great men crazy.”

“It needs to be the last time!”

“It’s just a word. I’m keeping the Lady Sara until the Maximus VI is ready.”

“Send those bitches back home now!”

“Load them down with more happy presents, make some fat donations to their hometown charities and churches, then apologize to the newspapers for all the problems you caused!”

“I have nothing to apologize for; Sara and I will be married in May.”

“That’s why you keep making stupid blunders. You learn nothing from your mistakes. You think you are some god, incapable of mistakes!”

“I made mistakes, like raising you. I should have left you with your mother.”

“Tell their newspapers that you were so enamored with Charlotte that you lost your mind! Try telling the truth for once in your life!”

“Her name is Sara!”

“Buy your way out of this before it destroys our plans and Tyberia!”

“It’s my nation, not yours. I bought and paid for it!”

“My plans are well polished and uninvolved.”

“No one knows that our” (undersea telegraph) “line even exists.”

“But to appease you, after the demonstration at Jagua, I will take them to beautiful La Teja for a week before heading to Europe.”

“I’ll bet they love all the scorpions.”

“Everything is fine. You are overreacting. On Tuesday, we will prove to Alfonzo’s Admirals how effective Avengers are. Then the countdown will begin.”

As Ty, Max, and Animus walked toward the mansion, the Buckeye Beauties swarmed their leader.

Guess who just popped in here!” Liz asked first.

“Who?”

“Colin, Lemont, and some tall skinny guy.”

“You’re kidding?”

“No! They came to drag us home.”

“What did they say?”

“Nothing much; they just tried to carry us to their boat.”

“What did you tell them?”

“I told them that we are not prisoners. After we do a show for kings and princes, and ah, you marry Ty, we will return home.”

“Oh, I bet that went over well!”

“I did not accept Ty’s proposal.”

“You turned down Ty Cross?”

“Well, no. I need some time to think about it.”

“It’s not like I wanted to change the perfect life I already love.”

“Anyways, where did Colin go?”

“They chugged off in a small boat.”

“That is so sweet; Colin came to rescue me!”

“No doubt Colin was Max’s urgent business.”

“For sure. This place has been going wild since they popped in. Look at all the armed guards out here now.”

“I noticed.”

“Well, I must hear everything about your boat ride with Ty!” the usually quiet Daisy demanded.

“Well, I would describe it as ‘wonderfully overwhelming.’”

“Wonderfully overwhelming?”

“He gave me that ship; it already legally belongs to me. He thinks that proves he loves me.”

“What is wrong with that?”

“I need that ship about as much as a third leg,” Sara said as she pointed at her huge new yacht.

“That proves he loves you!” Dotty inserted.

“He gave you legal ownership?” Liz asked.

“This envelope contains the signed and sealed documents of ownership.”

Dolly pointed at its steel haul, “he even named it after you, “The Lady Sara!”

“WOW! He gets to the point!” Dorothy said.

“He goes big for everything he wants.”

“Oh, what is it like doing it on the water!” Dolly asked.

“Doing what?”

“You know, boink-boink.”

“Nothing to boink about, but he is an excellent kisser.”

“Girl, always ride a stallion before you buy it. Not only to ensure fit but to verify that he can plow,” Dorothy laughed.

“You all know; the harder it is for a man to get what he wants, the more he appreciates it if it finally arrives.”

“Besides taking one missed shot, he was a perfect gentleman.”

“One shot?” Dorothy asked.

“Yeah, the old wandering hand.”

“I’m glad he only tried once. I don’t know how long I could have resisted.”

“There is something very arousing while sailing with a great-looking man kissing you. I’m soaking wet!”

“You’re going to marry him, aren’t you?”

“It seems that I would be crazy to say no. How many girls get a proposal from the world’s richest man, who looks so fine?”

“He told me that the pope agreed to marry us.”

“Only in fairytales!” Dotty responded.

“I could help millions of poor people if I married him.”

“Is that yes?”

“Defiantly a strong chance of a possible maybe.”

“Does he want children?”

“Oh, God, I hope not; I think he already has quite a few.”

“He also said he had never considered marriage before he met me.”

“Woo!” like excited schoolgirls, all five beauties responded.

Sullivant's Hill 3:30 PM, March 8th

After Hayes figured out which of the six telephones on his desk was ringing, he lifted its mouthpiece, "These damn things need lights on them, Hayes here."

"It's Stone," the former Union General, now Secret Service Commander Lance Stone, replied.

"What you got, Lance?"

"Every Mayday, twenty royal families, including Cross's family, run private sporting contests against each other."

"Every Mayday, members of each family gather at an old Roman amphitheater in Sicily."

"What sport?"

"A Roman Gladiator Tournament."

"The standard royal affair."

"Right."

"Each country puts a hundred and fifty pounds of gold into a kitty." Each kingdom brings its three gladiators, who enter a one-on-one tournament. Many, to most, don't survive."

"The country with the last gladiator standing sails home with a ton of gold, minus a fee to the facility for hosting the event."

"Tyberia entered contestants last year for the first time. Two years ago, Ty Cross and his son Max first attended as Italy's guests."

"Are there any other royal gatherings in May?"

"None directly connected to Ty Cross that we know of."

“Well, no others in Europe.”

“Is he connected to events in Africa?”

“Not recently. But on the first Wednesday of each May, despots, sultans, and warlords from Africa, Arabia, and Asia attend another ugly event in Morocco.”

“What is it?”

“A slavery auction of the highest quality slaves.”

“How sick,” Hayes replied.

“The girls from their lands have dark hair, so these slimy despots pay huge money to buy colorful status symbols with blond or red hair.”

“British intel believes some of these girls break 100,000 US dollars!”

“Rud, between 1833 to 1856, Ty’s daddy Adrian spent a million dollars fighting against slavery abolishment in the USA. After he died in fifty-six, Ty kept his father’s fight going until Lincoln shoved US slavery up to his ass.”

“Cross’s massive fortune came from the slave trade, mostly through Morocco.”

“It’s ironic that the only nation officially claiming, ‘All men are created equal,’ kept traded slaves for another century,” Hayes replied.

“All governments are hypocrites.”

“Anyways, since Ty Cross is now connected to all those abducted northern girls, this auction sounds like a place to look.”

“Obviously.”

“There is more. Vatican sources say that Ty Cross is to marry a beautiful American ‘Starlet’ in the Vatican in May.”

“Her name and the day were not mentioned.”

“Pope Leo is going to tie their knot.”

“When was the report written?”

“Ah, January 14th, a couple of months ago.”

“There is some serious planning going on.”

“No Doubt, Rud.”

“She was McLaughlin’s girl until last Thursday. That is not the way a fiancée would act, especially Sara. We need to figure out how Ty Cross even knew her.”

“I have no answers about this. It would have been big news if he was in Columbus dating Sara. That would be a local question.”

“Well, he could have met her. Manley confirmed that Ty Cross was at the Neil House Hotel for a meeting with railroad investors last September.

“Rud, we must ask her producer if he heard anything about Ty Cross and Sara crossing paths last fall. She and Cross may have been secretly planning this for months.”

“I have known Sara since she was thirteen. She loves this town as much as it loves her.”

“She has also been sleeping with Colin. I could not imagine Ty Cross putting up with that if Sara knew.”

“You have been busy; anything else?”

“Well, on the 20th of last month, Cross legally transferred ownership of his huge yacht, The Maximus V, to Sara Kilbourne from Worthington, Ohio.”

“I already heard this from New Orleans.”

“Cross spent over three million dollars building that ship, possibly the most expensive ship ever. If Sara disappears before they wed, her family will inherit it.”

“It’s so strange that he did not wait until after they wed to give it to her.”

“That feels like an insecure decision. She would never ask for a huge ship; I believe she has never seen one before. That is just very strange.”

“There is more. He has a perfect 45-carat Emerald rock going into an engagement ring in Venice. He paid a half-million dollars for that stone! Emeralds look best on pretty redheads.”

“Sara has bright emerald eyes.”

“His wedding to an unnamed beauty has been a big deal in Paris since he ordered a wedding gown and five bridesmaid’s gowns in January.”

“If they did not know each other, how could he have known their measurements?”

“I would the tailors who sew their costumes.”

“Right, they would have their measurements on file.”

“This is excellent international teamwork, Stone; I’m very impressed.

“Well, one of our secretaries discovered that French intel while using the commode we installed inside a storage closet for secretaries. She read through a stack of European newspapers the ladies use to wipe off and found this info.”

“We still use trusty Sears and Roebuck pages when we run out of toilet paper. It is usually softer than newspapers.”

“Anyhow, I still need to read a pile of files on Cross.”

“I’ll keep you posted.”

“Likewise.”

“Stone out,” click.

New Orleans Navy Base

9:00 AM, March 9th

Marshall Dupree arrived driving an elaborate coach pulled by six fancy horses for that secret tour of Algiers.

However, this was not the funeral coach. These ponies wore fuzzy tutus, blue for the stallions and pink for the fillies.

Most of the coach’s exterior was pink, with gold-leaf images of flowers snuggling bananas. Its wooden wheels were white, with gold-plated center hubs and spokes. Its white padded alligator skin top wrapped down the coach’s waistline.

“JIGGILLIC COZY-COACH” appeared on the gold-plated kick plates beneath its doors.

Both doors displayed these words in gold leaf:

Trixie's Pair-A-Dice

The words ‘pair’ and ‘dice’ resembled perky boobs. I’ll leave the shape of the oversized “A” stuffed in between them to your imagination. Fees were posted on the side windows:

No Cash, No Cauchy - No Refunds
Monday-Thursday (Ten minutes)
Daylight: Single Trick - 70¢
(If available) Double Dippers - \$1.20
Nighttime: Single Trick - \$1.00
(If available) Double Dippers - \$1.70

Additional minutes (each) 15¢ Singles, 25¢ Double Dippers
Friday-Sunday ADD 35%
Virgin Pricing always Doubles ADD 100%

Outside, beside each door, were small (red glass) oil lamps. Trixie would light them when no one was on the waiting bench. However, Clyde assumed the red lights would enhance JIGGILLIC’s elegant styling.
So, he fired them up.

A thick velvet curtain separated that waiting space from the “love space.”

“The love space had two small round (dinner-plate-sized) windows, one per side. Several candle lamps set in those little windows set the mood at night.

The carpet, curtains, and upholstery were red velvet, and the wood trim was stained pink. The rear ‘love seat’ instantly unfolds into a bed.

Marshal Clyde Dupree found his perfect disguise under the “waiting” bench. The red velvet cowboy hat matched the black suit’s red lining. The Purple Prince wore a nearly identical suit a century later. If you care to see it, Google ‘Prince, While My Guitar, Gently Sings.’

Clyde added one of those Mardi Gras Masks (in silver) to hide his well-known law-enforcing face.

The agents watched the JIGGILLIC park beside their ORPH through the cabooses' windows. As Lemont and Nicola's jaws dropped in disgust, Colin yelled, "Sweet!" with the excitement of a boy getting a tacky new toy.

"Hey there, Cole, Nicky, and Lemont," Clyde said as the agents stepped out of the caboose.

"Old Tinker gets the day off thanks to Yawl's Commander Hayes."

"That's a shame," Lemont responded as he focused on the ridiculous ride.

"Dis JIGGILLIC is a supreme reconnaissance machine."

"Yawl ever saw one before?"

"A bordello on wheels; what a great idea!" Colin answered as he opened a door and climbed right in.

"You're sick," Lemont said.

"We ain't got noten like dis back in Mountain City either, but dey usual in Norleans. Folks round ear call' um "Snackin' Wagons."

"It's perfect for clandestine penetrations, yuk-yuk, ho-ho," Clyde chuckled.

He pointed inside and explained, "It got a nifty sofer back there."

"How did you find this ridiculous thing?" Tesla asked.

"Oh, I got lucky! Ha-ha, yuk-yuk, ho-ho."

“So you got lucky,” Lemont interjected.

“Oh no, big feller, not that kind of luck! Ha-ha, he, he, da wife would geld me.”

“Before I secured dat funeral coach, I noticed this fine rolling artwork sit’n at da city” (police) “station next door.”

“I asked bout it.”

“City Marshal Justus said its owner, Mr. Silky Smooth, was in a holding cell.”

“What did Silky do?” Colin asked.

“He offered a white girl to a black man.”

“Oh, no offense there, Mr. Lemont.”

“Yeah, right.”

“But Trixie says Silky did not break the law cause she’s a light-skinned darky.”

“That’s really against the law down here?” Colin asked.

“Oh, yes’um, folks here believe in law and order.”

“Apparently.”

“Anywho, da was fix’n to release Trixie and Silky when walked in.”

“So, I gave da Marshal five dollars to verify her origin before they release dem.”

“Since dat would keep’ em locked up fer another day or two. I offered to feed, and water dese ponies, den return the coach tomorrow.”

“Now, we got de most ideal surveillance machine!”

“Attracting attention is not an attribute of reconnaissance,” Tesla replied.

“Ain’t got none of that, Nicky.”

He pointed at ORPH Six and added, “Since Yawl used to fine rides, yawl should feel right at home.”

“At home?” Lemont said as he looked at Colin with a puzzled expression.

Colin responded, “He just wants you to be comfortable.”

“When dat curtain’s shut, it too dark to see in through dem dinky round winders. But yawl can see out, plain as day.”

“Yeah!” At least Colin understood the potential.

“Dat sofer also has an advanced feature,” Clyde pointed out as he directed Colin and Lemont to sit on “the Love Seat” behind the heavy red curtain.

“What does it do?” Tesla (already seated on the waiting bench) asked.

“Just pull dat lever, and it flops into a bed!”

“I just folded it up so you fellers can sit instead of lying down there.”

“You cain’t see out through dem winders when lay’n down.”

“How perceptive,” Lemont complimented as he sat on the left side of Trixie’s folding loveseat.

“Yes’um, perceptibility made me the finest Federal Marshal in this town.”

“How many Federal Marshals are in New Orleans?”

“Shucks, just me.”

With a perfect poker face, Tesla offered, “I will stay up here, out of ‘Yawl’s’ way, so you experienced agents can be alone for the secret view.”

“Hey, fellers, when you flip that bed lever, you can see yourself in the mirrored ceiling,” Clyde pointed out.

“Eu, Yuck! It's slimy!” Colin complained as he sat down on the sofa bed’s right side.

“You stay over there!” Lemont demanded.

“This seat is wet and sticky! You have a towel, Clyde?” Colin asked.

“A pink one fell to the floor when I folded dat seat up.”

“Oh, toss me that towel, brother,” it was in front of Lemont’s feet.

Using one of his size eighteen boots, he flung it onto Colin's lap.

“Eck!” Colin yelled as he knocked it away, “It’s wet and sticky.”

“Stay over there!” Lemont growled at his partner.

After Colin wiped his hands on the velvet curtain, his elbow hit the release lever, plunging the sofa into a bed.

“You must have a death wish!” Lemont growled at Colin as he looked at him through the ceiling mirror.

“Just an accident,” Colin replied while folding the bed back into sofa mode.

Clyde climbed up onto the pimp’s bench (outside) and got the JIGGILLIC rolling.

At the first intersection that required stopping (traffic laws did exist before automobiles), some guy tried to enter the locked doors, to no avail. So, he pressed his face against the little round window on Colin's side.

"Trixie," he beckoned, "Please, come back tomorrow! I'll have three whole dollars for you!"

Before they reached Algiers, eight men and two ladies had already become upset because Trixie's door was locked."

"Once there, the ninth guy yelled, "Trixie, don't shine your love lights if you don't want me!"

Clyde could speak with his passengers through the brass pipe Mr. Silky Smooth used to keep an ear on Trixie.

"Clyde shut off those red lamps. They mean to come in; Trixie has immediate openings!" Tesla yelled into the brass bell on the end of the pipe.

"Slap my head and call me silly!" Clyde replied.

"You fellers need to turn dem knobs beside dem doors."

"This is disgusting," Lemont repeated.

Ten quiet minutes later, Clyde reported, "Dis is Montgomery Street; a herd of big neg-ah/fellers were nabbed round here."

"Dares no gaslights here; when da sun shuts off, it gets mighty dark.

"Marshal?"

"Yes'um, Nicky."

“The sun does not shut off. The earth is a spinning ball. We get daylight when our side faces the sun.”

“I heard dat crap before.”

Suddenly, Colin popped out from behind the velvet curtain, snatched a pencil from Tesla’s pocket, and began writing something.

“What is it? Colin,” Tesla asked.

“Oh, it’s nothing, Nicky.”

From behind the curtain, Lemont answered, “He always does this. He thinks he is writing the next great song. But he ain’t even written a good one yet.”

“That’s not what my fans say.”

“Fan is short for fanatic,” Lemont responded.

“Let’s hear your words, Colin,” Tesla asked.

“These are not worth repeating until I arrange them, my brainy buddy,” Colin said as he slipped behind the curtain.

Lemont snatched Colin’s note and then slipped it to Tesla, and he read it aloud:

**If everyone was naked,
What a wonderful world
We’d have nothing to hide
But plenty to twirl**

“Gimme that back.”

While ‘twirling’ his eyes, Lemont responded, “Oh Cole, that’s a masterpiece! Certainly, your best!”

After 30 more minutes of rolling up and down Algiers' brick and dirt roads, Lemont yelled into the love-compartment’s brass bell, “Marshal, please take us back to the base. This looks nearly the same as when I was a little boy.”

“Okie-Dokie, Mr. Lemont.”

“Clyde?” Colin asked through the brass bell.

“Yes’um, Cole.”

“Lemont was never a little boy.”

7:00 PM Monday, March 9th, Algiers District

About an hour before someone switched the sun off, Lemont started pushing a fully stocked fruit from the Algiers Police Station.

As he sold a few oranges, Tesla checked his location inside the JIGGILLIC parked behind the police station. Shirtless, Colin took a more traditional approach; he took a bareback ride on old Tinker.

Colin snagged a bottle of cheap whiskey from the JIGGILLIC to play the role of a drunken fool. Knowing Lemont was wired, and the plan is for him to be kidnapped, so he did not follow him, as he drunk-sang this Tommy Makem classic:

“♪ I was born ten thousand years ago♪
♪ In Bellmullet in the County of Mayo ♪
♪ It was I who chased the vermin. ♪
♪ While St. Patrick preached a sermon♪
♪ And I'll whoop any man saying that ain't so♪
Burp!”

Within minutes, Lemont rolled past a house with a sign that read, “Bubba’s Buddies.” This was one of the clubs that the White Knights helped organize after the Civil War.

When Grand Master Bubba Bumpus noticed the massive fruit peddler wearing a huge banana hat, he had to call Animus at Crosswinds. His clubhouse had the first private telephone in the Algiers district.

“Animus, a massive darky, is right out front. He looks bigger and stronger than you. He could do the work of three, maybe four.”

“What is he doing there?”

“Peddling fruit.”

“We stopped collections after those two escaped; this might be a setup.”

“He’s a damn neg...! Yankees ain’t going that far.”

“Don’t bet on it.”

“This one has arms like tree trunks.”

“Have you seen any cops hanging around?”

“He’s working alone.”

“Have you seen anything else unusual tonight?”

“Maybe an hour ago, I saw a drunken fool fall off a mule, but that ain’t that unusual.”

“Are your men around?”

“Yeah, a few.”

“Have them tail him. Tell them to stay away. Call me back if they confirm he is alone.”

Bubba called again an hour later, “No one is keeping an eye on him.”

“Where is he now?”

“On Elm Street” (the next road over).”

“Keep them watching; I’ll be there in 30 minutes.”

“Around 8:30, several darts nailed Lemont’s neck and back. He pulled one out, then nothing.

Animus and some buddies loaded Lemont into a wagon.

Since The Lady Sara was leaving for Jagua La Campa, Cuba, in the morning, Animus dumped Lemont in its brig.

While he was still unconscious, Animus stripped him and secured him in a fresh set of full-body shackles that could hold King Kong.

Clyde dropped Nicola and Colin off at the naval base about an hour later.

As Colin Yeager and Conrad removed the surgical car from the ORPH, Tesla stared at Lemont’s locator.

ORPH six had already launched for New York City, where Westinghouse would replace its missing batteries. They would return afterward.

Moments later, Tesla announced, “He has stopped moving. It is pointing at Crosswinds.”

“We need to roll as soon as he moves again; if they get 20 miles away, we could lose him.”

Maximum speed happens when steam and electric drives are fully engaged. Tesla estimated that the little boat could hit over forty miles an hour. Wouda instantly converted that to thirty-five knots.

“That would make this the fastest boat on earth,” Wouda told Tesla as they installed the batteries.

“How long do you think it can maintain those speeds?” Wouda asked.

“Fully charged, they hold forty kilowatts, which should supply five to six hours of full power. Then about eight hours to recharge the batteries. Recharging will take around twelve hours while also using the steam drive.”

“Well, pray for calm water,” Wouda replied. “Rough seas could bog us down. Fortunately, early spring is normally calm.”

At 10:30 PM, Tesla called Hayes.

“They grabbed Lemont, sir.”

“His signal is strong and stationary.”

“Where is he?”

“I can only determine direction accurately; it's pointing straight at Crosswinds.”

“Are you ready to cruise if he moves?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I just finished adding a buzzer to warn me if he moves so I can work instead of staring at the gauge. I also set my chime to ring twice an hour to double-check the buzzer.”

“Have you communicated with him yet?”

“We’ve sent him messages, but he has not responded.”

“His last message was “dart,” then nothing. So, could still be unconscious.”

“Those two escaped men said they were chained and shackled; he may be unable to reach his mouthpiece.”

“I am making a no-hands version for Colin right now. It should work by just teeth chattering our new Morse Code version.”

“Great.”

“Captain Wouda must come along to navigate. He knows the Gulf like the back of his hands.”

“Colin and I have not been here before. I know Lemont drives your little steamboat, but he is unavailable.”

“Damn. I did not think of that.”

“This happens when we plan missions on the move.”

“Wouda has a full security clearance and is a brilliant engineer.”

“Can he physically manage this mission?”

“He is a beast. He swims back and forth across this half-mile river thrice a week.”

“That is impressive!”

“Yes, sir. He was inspired by Benjamin Franklin, who swam every day he could.”

“Make sure he knows to stay quiet about our new wireless communications.”

“Communicating without wires is a huge advantage; we don’t want anyone else to know about this for as long as possible.”

“He knows, sir.”

“Good thing you found him.”

“Nicola, when you return, we need to get telephones operating aboard rolling ORPHS.”

“Already working on it, sir.”

“Nicola, I know this communications invention is worth a king's ransom.”

“No doubt, sir.”

“I will ask our new President (Grover Cleveland) to reward you accordingly. I am supposed to meet him on the 26th.”

“That will be most appreciated, sir.”

“God, I hope we are not overlooking anything.”
“Have Admiral Forti call me when you rush off.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Hayes out.”

New Orleans US Navy Base **March 10th, 1885, 5:30 AM**

As the sky brightened, the magnificent Lady Sara silently moved away from Crosswinds, triggering Tesla's new motion-sensing buzzer to do its buzzy thing.

“He's moving!” Tesla yelled as he shook Colin awake.

“My head is pounding!”

“I had too much whisky to fake being drunk.”

“I need to fix it with another shot!”

“No, you need water; alcohol dried your brain,” Nicola said as he handed Colin a canteen of fresh water.

“Lemont is moving!”

They both had NORA doctor's bags packed for an instant departure. Tesla's bag held his new Webley six-shooter, batteries, and an assortment of his new communication devices, several of which he invented as Colin slept.

Colin's bag held four batteries, a receiver on Lemont's frequency, and ammunition; however, no gun. He had not mentioned the missing Webley prototype pistol he had lost during that wet wheelie.

Realizing that Lemont is always hungry, Colin tossed several fish cans into his little leather bag.

After that, Tesla ran to the boat, woke Wouda up, and fired up the boiler. Colin joined them several minutes later.

Wouda ordered a sailor to tell the Admiral, "It's on!"

Admiral Forti called Sullivant's Hill minutes after he heard.

After informing Hayes of the motion, he ordered the USS Puritan (a warship) to stay within sight of the point twenty miles south of Cuba's western tip in case they needed help.

As Colin heaved through one of the water taxi's windows, its boiler needed ten more minutes before it could supply much thrust. So, they quietly launched on only battery power.

After Colin recovered, he tried contacting Lemont again. But still no reply.

About ten minutes later, they spotted Sara's huge ship about two miles ahead, slowly moving toward the Gulf.

"No smoke, all wind," Wouda pointed out.

He then switched over to steam power, which also charged the batteries.

They soon reduced steam to put a few more miles between them. Once south of New Orleans, twelve knots kept them perfectly spaced for several hours before the Gulf.

As Sara's mighty ship hit the open ocean, smoke rose from its center masts.

“It's full-speed time!”

America's fastest warship could not keep up with The Lady Sara. So, to prevent vessels from trying, full speed was her standard procedure each time she entered any sea.

To stay within range, Wouda switched the electric drive back on.

The Cross family (with Spain's help) kept their secret port at Jagua La Campa hidden from Navy intelligence for over a hundred years.

International maritime law kept US ships at least twenty miles from Cuba's coastline. But even a quarter mile away, Jagua La Campa was still hidden behind a row of flat-top hills. These overlapping hills rose enough to conceal the highest ship masts from the sea.

Unfortunately, the rough sea kept the water taxi from matching the big ship's speed, even with steam and dynamos propelling it. “We could stay with her on calm water, but these swells are slowing us down.”

Tesla had spent many hours riding ocean swells. However, Colin had never sailed on water rougher than the Erie canals. After blowing his last chunks, he adjusted.

After an hour on the open sea, Lady Sara had gained about ten miles on them. Wouda knew the distance from its smoke on the horizon.

It still took several more hours before they lost Lemont's signal.

"Damn!" Tesla yelled.

However, Wouda's experience with these waters took over. He was not concerned that the mighty ship was heading southwest instead of southeast toward Cuba.

"Don't worry, we are not losing him," Wouda responded.

"How do you know?" Colin asked.

"There are no ports that a 300-foot ship can dock at on these headings; she is aimed at 3000 miles of jungle, swarming with spiders, snakes, mosquitoes, and countless nasty things."

"Why would they go there?"

"They're not. Captain Funk is using an old tactic for swift vessels."

"What tactic?" Tesla asked.

"It's basic. Set a false heading at high speed. Hold the deception until tails fall under the horizon, continue for a while, then set course for the real destination."

"Indeed," Tesla replied.

"So, what do we do?"

"We change course for Southern Cuba, then let that Captain Funk catch up to us."

“That sounds risky,” concerned Colin said.

“It is where he's going.”

“We are about to hit the Cayman Current, which pushes boats east to Cuba. It's a free ride for vessels heading east.”

“About ten miles in, it's deeper, which helps larger vessels.”

“So, we'll let the captain catch up to us. Then we will follow Lemont's signal to that hidden complex.”

“I hope you are right.”

“I am,” he coolly hoped.

A moment later, Colin asked Wouda, “What are Cuban ladies like?”

“Scarcely dressed, sassy, and steaming hot.”

“I like 'em, hot and sweaty.”

“Ah, did you feel that?”

“Cuban ladies?”

“No. The Cayman Current just shoved us,” Wouda answered as he flipped off the electric drive before making a 90-degree turn to the port side.

Two nerve-racking hours later, one of Tesla's buzzers sounded. The needle was pointing behind them.

“They are heading west!” Colin yelled.

“No, they are heading east, from west of us,” Tesla explained.

“Right.”

About forty minutes later, they saw that stunning ship slip past them about two miles south.

“Great, no smoke; she’s all wind.”

Colin, again, tried to contact Lemont but to no avail. But his signal was strong.

About an hour later, the ship disappeared over the horizon, so Wouda applied enough electricity to maintain the signal. Lemont’s shackles locked his hands to his waist; he could not reach his mouth to return a code, but he got the message.

Twenty-one hours later, Wouda pointed at another Island.
“There’s Cuba.”

“Finally!” Colin erupted.

“Ah, don’t get too excited. This island is 1250 miles long. It would take two days to pass it at this speed.”

They would only need one.