

The Last Pirate of The Caribbean:

Legend Of The Astrolabe

by Captain Ding Dong

Note: Even in the writing of this story, the video footage of Fitzgerald has gone missing, the transcripts I have spent countless months typing up have gone missing, and alas I, along with the astrolabe, have gone missing.

part I

Yo-Ho-Ho & and bottle of Dom

Green palm trees line the beach. Even at night it's never difficult to see them as the moon reflects off the water and creates this trippy image of lollipop giants with quintessential hair seemingly swaying in tune to Bad Bunny. *Me porto bonito...* Watching a palm tree dance, transfixed in a hyperbolic state of surreal bliss, hearing my own slowed down heartbeat hitting in half time to the 3+3+2 tresillo rhythm, the very backbone of reggaeton, things feel somewhat extraterrestrial. Four rums deeps, few joints, after a day spent on the boat looking for wahoo at various hidden, what we can call, nightclubs. The trombones bang in. That driving force against the claves as *Llorares* blasts, the palm trees suddenly seeming like grandparents in the late 70s with their long collars, bellbottoms, and high waisted linen pants, listening to their songs of love and lust, looking over their children underneath the full moon jam beach party in Puerto Rico. *Ninos...* Bonfire, music, dancing, drugs, thick waists, rum punches, pina coladas, medallas, complete with one hundred pouches of Gasolina, a pig roast, and a few hours earlier, la madrugita, a pink and purple smoothie sky in what's left in the fading little light. The Puerto Rican sunset. Ya' know, the one where you see the green dot.

Is someone shouting in the distance? Out at sea. Am I hallucinating? I look past the soft hair and hoop earrings to the outline of a crazy looking figure on a shanty boat, hanging off the

mast, screaming something that sounds like Sanskrit. “What’s he saying? He’s shouting something,” I mumble to myself aloud, *I think*.

An old drunken pirate, with a long grey beard sways back and forth staring through his telescope... at a very healthy set of Boriqua hips shaking side to side as if it was the world’s most arousing metronome. He swigs his rum.

“Is he saying?...”

“Send me your women! Bring me your pussy!” shouts the pirate.

“He is...” I manage to stumble. It’s not like anyone’s talking to me or listening. After a certain amount of time feigning invisibility, it eventually works. “I gotta go,” I say to no one, run to the water, dump my raggedy, stained, white linen shirt that’s eighty years old under the queen palm, herself *-abuela-* dive in, and swim out.

I know this swim. I know it at night. I know it in the morning. I know that it’s far.

A hand as old and craggy as ancient coral reaches down and pulls me onto the vessel. “Get on my boat,” he says in some gravel induced drunken Boston accent. I flop down and look up at him, having this strange, transcendental moment of seeing myself forty years in the future. Same wily hair, same unfulfilled eyes, same knack for the inoperable word, *adventure*. I became this man, but he does not become me. I find myself at my own epilogue. There’s no sound anymore. There’s not people. There’s him, the sea, and some great secret he wants to tell me.

“You got any rum? You got any gold?” I ask him. “I’ll bring you some women.”

Fitzgerald slams down this chipped coffee mug full of rum. It splashes everywhere. He’s got a couple teeth hanging out. His eyes are super squinty. “Oh, my fuckin’ wife. I’m a lot happier on the boat, anyway. I can’t see a thing. I forgot my glasses.” He’s smiling and spitting Pericles through his pink and blue weathered eyes, product of years of exposure to the elements. *I know the feeling*. Science happens when salt is exposed to your skin. His curly hair. His uneven bread. The way the teeth are. The ones that are still there.

Coke and rum. In excess. Fitzgerald is *definitely* a pirate.

“You all right out here?” I ask him.

“See that over there, see that over there? When I was your age I was fishing right over there, my engine crapped out. I jumped in the water with my snorkel gear to fuck around with my engine and I looked down and noticed some algae growing out of the sand. So, I dove down and found these cannons... and that’s when I saw the astrolabe.”

Fitzgerald tosses aside the telescope, swigs the rum, grabs me by the shoulders and looks at me all crazy eyed and lopsided. His breath could light up a Siberian power plant. He stares at me and grumbles the few words that forever changed my life. “The meaning of life isn’t finding treasure, because once you find it, they all hate you.”

Fitzgerald throws me a dirty rag to dry myself. He goes into the hull which has some beautiful paintings on the walls, and comes out with some pewter plates, a cannonball...

“Treasure. It fascinates us. It does. I found the most valuable treasure in the Caribbean and no one gives a shit.”

“I give a shit.” He places a cannonball in my hand. “What did we grow up with?” He says. “Ahhm, the first paper I ever wrote was um, on pirates. Women pirates... my two loves.” He laughs and holds out an old tin can. I take it. Some kind of offering. Perhaps the most personal offering of my life. Fitzgerald dumps rum over it. “I was in grade school, holding a little piece of gold, well, maybe copper. Maybe it was just a painted rock, but either way it *looked* like treasure. The prettiest girl in class walked right up to me. I looked at her. And *palmed* it. I slowly opened my hand, and I’ll never forget the aquamarine in her eyes. I was so close to her retina, you could see the little fish.” I stare at him, transfixed, me looking at him like he’s some kind of misplaced archaic relic, him looking at me like he’s gonna drink me. “It was right there, in that Boston playground when I realized the power it possesses.”

“What’s the astrolabe,” I ask him. “You fuckin’ idiot, you fuckin’ moron! It’s the most valuable piece of nautical history ever discovered in this hemisphere.”

“What is it though?” He nearly attacks me. Pulls out a picture. It’s me. No, it’s him. I’m not sure. But it’s 1982, whoever it is has his arms outstretched, hands wrapped around bottles of champagne like they’re egret necks at the Calypso bar wearing what looks like a colossal, priceless, golden compass around his neck.

Ding! The chime and spark of pickax on steel. *Ding!* Manic flashes of crazed eyes, wild hair, covered in what seems to be colorful war paint? *Ding!* Some frantic, handsome, dirty, hedgecock-human-looking-maniac chaotically digging and searching for what must be Jesus' foreskin. Something very, very important. He can't find it. More digging. More searching. More chugging of rum. This massive overhead omniscient view of a field full of holes and this half naked wolfman howling in the jungle.

One week earlier.

Fitzgerald is pirate drunk at the Calypso bar doused in rum punch bullshitting the curly bartender. This is wild west 80s Rincon. There are no rules. Except the rules of nature. The rules of the obvious. The rules of respite. The rules of *respeto*.

"Why won't you go home with me?" Fitzgerald asks the completely out of his league, Essy.

"Same reason I never go home with you."

"Too charming?" He smirks.

"You ain't got no home, Papi!" she reminds him.

"I got a boat. Ahhhh..." Fitzgerald waves his hand and drinks more rum. "I'll paint you. You know that. I'll paint you so you look like Queen Isabella of Spain."

"What's wrong with Essy and her fat ass from Mayaguez?" She says.

"Absolutely nothing, sweetheart." Fitzgerald reaches over the bar and stops when he hears an annoyingly deep, and masculine, overly impressive voice, the kind that's in Star Wars.

"Fitzgerald!" It booms.

"Ah, Hawk, this asshole. Haven't I had enough of you?" declares Fitzgerald. The voice belongs to Harry Hawk, the Texan Navy seal who swam around the entire island of Puerto Rico. He's flanked by two beautiful women.

"Hey Hawk! The sewage pipe's dumping in Aguada. They said they need you to shove your inflated fuckin' head up there to stop the runoff," shouts Richard.

"You know when I first met Fitzgerald—"

"Hawk here is some kind of prolific asshole." Fitzgerald interjects.

"I was coming out of the water at the marina after—" They both say, *more like Fitzgerald vomits* "swimming clear cross the island..." Fitzgerald reaches over the bar, grabs a bottle of Don

Q and starts chugging rum. Hawk *drives* this man to drink (more than usual) as he continues, “I swam from San Juan to Rincon, and this grizzled goblin is on the beach, buck naked, standing in the middle of a fire—”

The glare of Hawk’s white teeth causes Fitzgerald to lower his sunglasses. Also causes him to spit-spray rum everywhere.

“You’re asking for it, Richie,” warns Hawk. Fitzgerald gets up in his face and quietly whispers. “I’m a conscientious objector, a distributor of peace and happiness, a goddamn man of humanity, and I wear glasses, Harry. You think I’m a man capable of any more violence?”

“This AWOL prick abandoned his unit in Thailand,” Hawk guffaws.

“Abandonment requires some type of betrayal which requires some type of loyalty,” says Fitzgerald as he spits on the floor.

“Don’t forget who you’re talking to—“

“Forget this, Captain Imperialism!” Fitzgerald grabs his crotch. “Those MP maggots found me livin’ in a whorehouse teachin’ little Thai kids *The Times They Are A Changin’*. It was beautiful, I’ll tell you. The look on their pale, iniquitous faces.” He looks at Hawk. “It means grossly unfair and morally wrong.” Harry tosses this one at Essy. “You know what AWOL stands for?”

“Oh, tell me, beautiful,” burps Richard. Hawk smiles. “A Worthless Oil Hole—“

“Ah, you don’t even know how to fuckin’ spell your own name, Hawk.”

“Loser,” says Harry.

“I’m the finder, you moron,” replies Fitzgerald.

“The finder of what?”

“What you’ll always want, what you’ll never have, everything you ever dream for.”

Fitzgerald grabs him by the neck and plants a big sloppy kiss on Hawk’s face. Now, they’re fucking brawling. Tables crashing. Bottles shattering. That kind of drunken pirate shit. One of Hawk’s women starts screaming in rapid fire machine gun Spanish.

“You know you always have to take it too fucking far, Richie. Just stop bein’ an asshole!”

“I can’t!” Fitzgerald shouts! Hawk is on top choking him. He lets go. Fitzgerald’s glasses are knocked off his face. Fitzgerald waves his hand. Everyone looking down at him through his distorted vision. Hawk, to his women. “Ven.”

Fitzgerald drunkenly stumbles through a backyard stopping at an aloe plant. He turns around to see a woman brandishing a shotgun, screaming at him in Spanish. His face is covered

in aloe and he looks like hell. He looks at her. Looks at her like she's the only one. She is.
"Marta," he says. She cocks the gun.

- Loaded to the Gunwales – it means drunk - To Be Continued...