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## Anyway, what about your story?

by Pauline Walden

'Anyway, what about your story?'

'The chilling tale I'm about to tell you happens to be true; dismiss it at your peril.

'I was due for repatriation after a long tour of active service. But from the moment I'd been given my departure date I'd had grave misgivings.

'It was the name of the ship on which I was to sail that I found so disconcerting.

'Missing my family and friends I longed for the comfort of my own home, and yet...I'm not superstitious, but try as I might I could not shake off the feeling of unease.

'So it was with something akin to relief when, a few days before I was due to set sail for England, I fell victim to a virulent bug for which I was hospitalised. Of course, my departure was delayed but I eventually arrived back in the UK after an uneventful voyage.

'It was some time later that my wife showed me a newspaper article about the ship that had mysteriously gone down with only a handful of survivors, one of whom had been a close comrade in those dark days and with whom I would have shared the journey but for my illness.

'I immediately contacted him and the tale he told was chilling indeed.

'It had been a long and tedious voyage through tropical waters and the crew was bored, hot and tempers easily frayed.

'One of the deck hands would sit for hours watching a bird which seemed to be following the ship, roosting in the crow's nest for hours at a time.

'One afternoon when there'd been a heated argument between himself and another crew member he grabbed an air rifle and took a pot shot at the bird, which fell dead at his feet. The other crew members stood aghast.

'You fucking idiot!' one of them screamed at him, 'Don't you know that killing that bird is the surest way to bring bad luck?'

'Three days later the ship went down.

'So, I reflected, the name of the vessel was prophetic after all. Or was it pure coincidence - which is what I choose to believe.

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