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The Pursuit of Happiness

by Garf Collins

Wearily opening my eyes, I tried to remember where I was. Slowly it came back to me. The waves crashing on the beach had woken me. It was the party on the island. I had been invited by Brad, who I had met by chance, and it had seemed a good idea to get away and be anonymous for once. He offered what he termed 'The Exclusive Getaway' for just \$2,000. The key attraction was that no personal details were required.

I had certainly had a wild time – drugs and alcohol were there in plenty. *Did I tell anyone my name last night....* I thought. *I don't need any more muckraking publicity.*

Being the son of a wealthy woman was no pushover. I had never lacked money and always had access to capital to start a business. But despite that my life had never worked out. My companies all had foundered, and they were interspersed by hedonistic periods during which I tried to escape. The more jaded I became, the more extreme my ventures – always followed remorselessly by the media. I can't explain even to myself why I did these things. I had easy money, but I didn't have to use it. I had convinced myself that it was all in the pursuit of happiness.

My cellphone interrupted my self-pity.

"Oh. It's you. I thought we had agreed all the details."

"No. That's not right. Your settlement was meant to include the children. Surely, \$20,000 a month is enough."

"Sorry. You'll have to put up with it. It's all in writing now."

My gloom at my encounter with my ex-wife lightened when I thought of Maria – my new girlfriend.

She was on the young side - but delightful. I was sure she loved me for myself rather than who I am and what I'm worth. *Maybe this is a happy ending for me. I must hear her voice*, I thought.

"Hi, Maria darling. How are you? Just calling because I've been thinking about you and I miss you."

"...I know...I didn't...I wasn't...Let me explain. I didn't want to get away from you as you thought. I just wanted to escape from being the wrong side of a camera for a couple of days. You enjoy the media attention I know, but believe me, it won't last. Anyway, let's meet at your place tonight, lover."

"Oh. You have something organised. A pity as I'm busy for a few days now. How about Saturday...OK, Sunday then?"

After the call ended I thought, *that wasn't the loving reception I was expecting. Maybe there are never really endings ...happy or otherwise.*