



Sister Mary Teresa was fed up. That parrot and his foul mouth had been driving her crazy for two long days now. Cooped up in small, closet-sized cabin on the Portuguese tramp steamer with nothing to do except praying to pass the hours until she reached Lisbon, she had long ago lost her patience with that bird.

"How's yer arse? How's yer arse?" Every waking moment was all that parrot would say.

Sister Mary had complained to the ship's master, who, while polite, only shrugged. After all, the ship was the last one out of the West African country whose government was about to fall again, this time to nationalist guerrillas, who absolutely hated westerners, especially members of veiled Christian religious orders.

Sister Mary had escaped just ahead of the guerrilla capture of the port city. The ship's master, a Portuguese Catholic, had kindly taken Sister Mary aboard and given her the only cabin in the ship's hold he could spare.

But that darn parrot! In that small enclosed space, and that "Awwk!" followed by "How's yer arse? How's yer arse!"

On the fourth day out, Sister Mary Teresa was at the end of her patience and was praying for guidance and forbearance when ship began vibrating, lost power, and after a frightening explosion began sinking stern first. The crew wasted no time abandoning ship.

No one, it seemed, was brave enough to try to rescue Sister Mary and the parrot. They abandoned the hapless duo.

Grabbing a life ring and the parrot's cage, Sister Mary barely made it up to the main deck. Off in the distance were the crew in the ship's life boats, and aft of Sister Mary, the water was covering the main deck.

She freed the parrot and jumped overboard. Hitting the water, she thrashed and held herself upright with the life ring. She grabbed a floating wooden table, and clung to it, exhausted.

"Holy Mary, mother of God..." she prayed, feeling all hope gone.

"Flap, flap, flap," she heard, and with a thunk the Parrot landed on the table.

"How's yer arse? How's yer arse?" said that wretched bird yet again.

She'd had enough: "Shut up!" shouted Sister Mary Teresa.

"So's mine; must be the salt water," said the parrot with cackling "Awwk!"

Whereupon, Sister Mary Teresa broke the parrot's neck and dined on that nasty bird until she was rescued by a passing trawler.