

SHE PIRATE OF THE CARIBBEAN

Logline

The Post WW2 adventure of CJ, a Caribbean girl, orphaned and homeless at 13, who, after 4 kids, becomes at 23, an unlikely but wily seafaring smuggler in the dangerous 'man's world' of illicit trafficking, risking all to overcome her horrific beginnings and build her dreams.

Synopsis

It's a December 1942 WW11 early morning dawn on the island of St. Vincent after another night of blackouts. On the horizon a cargo ship is coming into harbour. the ocean is calm and glistening with the light of the early morning sun just peeking up and the air fresh with a slight ocean breeze is intoxicating.

Bottom Town (Long Lane, Kingstown, St. Vincent) with its narrow laneways of shacks and broken down lean-to one-room dwellings, is awake and buzzing as it is every morning with the clang of *potties* [bed pans] being emptied, the smell of burnt coal and kerosene fired up to boil water for morning tea, and if you breath deep you can catch a wiff of *fry-bake* and burnt toast, and the endless chatter of neighbours.

Protagonist, **CJ – [CYNTHIA JOYCE DAISLEY]** a lanky, 'soon come' 13 year-old teenager with large questioning eyes keeps watch as she listens for the familiar hum, and is reassured by the electrifying buzz, and daily gossip report on which "so and so got ah lucky pick to go!". Getting picked to answer the call of the "Mother Country" [Britain] during the Second World War was not just a privilege but a much-sought golden ticket out of the hard life most Vincentians men and women experience. CJ cannot wait to be sixteen when she can legally register for her opportunity to ship out. She was going to be 13 years old in four weeks, just 3 years to go! On this morning she poked her brother **GRAFTON** awake, did her chores and went for her 'sea-dip' [bath] to get ready for school, The taste and smell of the ocean always made her feel calm and quell her anxieties. But the calm promised beauty of this day will be shattered later that morning when CJ's mother **LEONORA EDWARDS** collapse in the yard over her washtub.

CJ, a poor, near 13-year-old girl confronts the horrific nightmare of her young life that immediately unfurls following her mother's sudden death. Homeless, penniless, without adult protection, and a 10-year-old brother to look after. Grafton can't stop crying but CJ had no tears all she felt was desperation and fear of the unknown.

As a last resort, **BLIND SPAN**, her mother's sightless best friend temporarily took them in, despite being totally dependent on the kindness of neighbours for her own survival. Spann's room was smaller than their old room, but was closer to the center of town, a short walk to the public toilet and bath, Upper Bay Street and the shipping docks. It also had a special feature; Blind Spann's corner room had a street entrance and the good fortune of having Bottom Town's only **streetlamp** outside her door.

Her brother it turns out did not have the same father and secretive Leonora, never told Blind Spann who the man was. But a few days later all was revealed when a woman, introducing herself as **MISS PEARL** Grafton's Grandmother, came and took him to live with her.

CJ survives her teens "*scrunting*" [working hard for less than the job is worth] **DUNCAN DAISLEY**, the man she was told was her father, apparently had a deal with her mother to stop paying support when she turned 13. A deal she only became aware of when she made her monthly trip uptown to pick up the '**envelope**' which was not there. and Blind Spann explained why. This heartless rejection, coming just four weeks after her mother's death – on her birthday – brought CJ excruciating pain and bitterness – and embedded a sub-conscious *will show you!* anger.

CJ was growing up fast. School was no longer an option. Blind Spann allowed her to keep her sleeping spot on her floor, but it could only be temporary, so she had to find work because now she needed to pay for a '*home of her own*' she worked hard, refusing almost no job so long as it paid: washer woman, cleaner, market go-fer, housemaid, When there was no work CJ made her own, walking miles into the country to buy charcoal by the hundredweight coal sack, carrying it back to town on her head which she sold by the '*penny heap*'. saving every penny, she could – muttering Blind Spann's chant '*penny penny make a shilling*'.

CJ with her curiosity and large questioning eyes soon became a fixture around the bay and docks. She often wore her crisp school uniform and '*washicons*' [sneakers] with her hair in braids as a buffer against unwanted attention but it was most likely a subconscious reminder to herself that she was more than the hand she had been dealt.

Sailors from the American and British ships were generous with their candy and cigarettes, and CJ collected as much as she can. Each Saturday, on a couple of burlap bags. she staked out her spot in the open-air market, to sell her staples

of American cigarettes and candy by 'ones and twos', cooking coals, and anything else with a sales value, she got 3 pennies for a *French letter* [condom]. All the while saving and waiting for her 16th birthday

1945, the end of WW11 marked her 16th birthday, and wearing her "**mother's hat**" for good luck, she had her picture taken for her application to be selected for the opportunity to migrate to Britain. And she waited and worked adding to her repertoire of skills with a sales value by teaching herself to knit and crochet at night under the "**streetlamp**" at front of Blind Spann door.

CJ was no tomboy, and at 17, she certainly did not look like one but found it easier to make male friends. They in turn treated her as one of them – Like them, she was a hustler and never looked to them to give her anything - they respected that.

Neither CJ 's work ethic or her saving philosophy ever slagged, and those pennies did make shillings and she was now the proud owner of a bank account in the new '*Penny Bank*' [St. Vincent Co-Op Bank] and now had her sights set on building and owning her home. Until then she was still living and sleeping on Blind Spann Floor, and they had grown close, In-fact Blind Spann was becoming CJ's only confidant, but Blind Spann had strict rules: no bad-words or cussing; no '*rum*' [*alcohol*]; no coming in late. CJ was also warned about '*dutty wimmin*' and '*wutless men*' and not to '*brung them in she place*'.

That strict warning came because CJ was now spending time with a group of friends, mainly men who fit Blind Spann warnings. They hung out at the docks and at the rum shop by day, gambling and playing checkers and dominos. CJ never played for money, just maybe a cigarette or two. In the evenings they hung-out at the public bath, just up the street from Blind Spann. These evenings were fun and full of laughter especially on moon-lit nights when they shared '*jumbie*' stories.

On one of those evening one girl shared she knew where they could get a fowl to cook. CJ supplied the coal and cooking pot, only to be discovered by the fowl owner and being blamed for the entire incident.

Eighteen, no golden ticket and Blind Spann kicked her out on the street again for getting mixed up wid '*dutty wimmin*' and '*wutless men*' and '*bringin shame to she door*'. CJ ended up staying for a time with her friend **NEWTON MYERS** at his mother's which was a hike out of town in a two-room, seven-person family shack. CJ liked Newton he was a smooth talker and made her laugh and they

became close. Only to realize Newton was going through her things while she slept and stealing money from her – a few pennies at a time. She started tying her daily sales around her waist before going to sleep.

CJ begged Blind Spann take her back, 3 months later she did. But there was no take back on the fowl-stealing incident which branded her with the demeaning nickname “**Cynthia Fowl**”. An insult never forgotten, and resurrected time and time again to demean and insult her. This unfortunate incident forever sealed her distrust of all women friends.

CJ had not been feeling well, and her stomach seem to get upset every morning. On this morning, she could not hold back her vomit and had to use Blind Spann’s potty [bed pan] and Spann immediately got upset and started railing at her and calling her a ‘*dutty wimmin*’. Turned out she was pregnant and Blind Span kicked her out again.

With nowhere to-go CJ use some of her savings to rent a room from MR. **FERRINGTON** the same landlord that kick her and her brother out of their room when their mother died. Despite attempts at an abortion, CJ give birth to her first child – a girl she named **NELDA**, 10 days before her **19th birthday**. That date officially marked the end of any relationship with Nelda’s father Newton Mayers and marked the return of her anxiety and sense of gloom – her savings was dwindling fast and she needed help and had to get back to finding work. So began CJ’ s questionable choices and self-serving decisions when it came to the well-being and safety of her children. CJ went back to finding ways to earn a living and left her 3-month-old in the care of a totally blind woman who never had a child of her own. At five months, Nelda fell from Blind Spann’s bed splitting her tongue down the middle. Nelda’s tongue healed but the split only partially closed, thankfully what remained of the split did not impair her speech.

CJ met and married **EUGENE OLLIVIERRE** a light-skin handsome ‘**Bequia**’ seaman, sailing on the **The Lady Angela** a cargo [merchant] ship travelling the high seas, he treated her darker complexion with sweetness, admired her fierce, independent, entrepreneurial aggressiveness, and he became her contraband supplier and diversified the quality and choice of her supplies. And before the wedding, he rented two of Mr. Ferrington front rooms with two doors and a window looking unto the street for his young family. CJ opened a window shop visible selling her legal stock, and covertly selling, only to trusted customers, the contraband, which she kept hidden under the floorboards of their rooms. She gave herself a wedding gift by demanding her father **Duncan Daisley**, who was now one of her trusted alcohol clients, pay her the respect of walking her down

the aisle and he did. She was happy, 20 years old, legally married and pregnant. She was officially **MRS OLLIVIERRE** a respectable woman.

Eugene, who is away at sea 3 weeks out of every month, missed the birth and death of their newborn son, **KENNETH** who died in CJ's arms, CJ was spooked and devoid of emotion, she placed Kenneth down and could not bring herself to go near him after that. Neighbours prepped him for his funeral. And after his burial, CJ immediately went back to work.

News spread about the quality of her rum, brandy, whisky and port, and it brought middle class buyers to Bottom Street, it also brought unwanted attention and searches from the police. However, many of CJ's customers were policemen, she treated them well and they looked out for her.

Having a supplier enhanced CJ's business stature and won respect from the men who bought her contraband. But their wives and girlfriends still treated her with disdain, often whispering '*Cynthia Fowl*' within her hearing. **Now 21** and her house was almost done building, but it also marked the arrival of a third but sickly girl child with special needs she named **DIANA**. However CJ was not to be deterred, she added hustling for a cure for Diana's excruciating skin eruptions to the job of operating her business, she was too close to realizing her dream of owning her own home, but there were still bricks to make. Nelda, her first born, now 5-years-old, was inducted into fulltime babysitting service in addition to her supporting role carrying buckets of sand and pebbles for the bricks.

Now **22**, CJ is dealt another cruel blow, the promise of financial salvation and the emotional rescue her marriage offered became undone by her husband's sudden debilitating illness and his exile to a sanatorium, and a fourth pregnancy, a son, **AGUSTINE**.

Adding to her distress, her brother Grafton, still unable to overcome the loss of their mother Leonora, had been acting out strange, and his father's family had him committed to the '*mad house*' where he died of pneumonia at nineteen, 6 months after CJ's 22nd birthday.

Pushed into another spiral of abandonment, helplessness and in deep despair, plus the agonizing threat of never getting out of St. Vincent or realizing the possibility dream of never finishing building her home, she made the decision at age 23 to become, with the blessing of the **Captain of The Lady Angela**, to become her own contraband supplier. CJ made plans for her inaugural voyage the next time The Lady Angela pulled up anchor.

CJ shipped out 2 ½ months after the birth of her son Augustine, leaving all three of her young children with Blind Spann, with Nelda, now 7 years, as primary caregiver, to become St. Vincent's unlikely, post-WW11, ocean-going seafaring smuggler in the dangerous 'mans-world' of contraband trafficking – her return timed to take advantage of the island Christmas shopping.

Heroically, albeit illegally, CJ skillfully navigate the next decade fiercely defending her dreams of safe harbour, and a home of her own; against attempted murder; a mind blowing hurricane storm at sea; an attempted drowning; numerous police raids, one successful and several unsuccessful robberies; a personal life threatening medical emergency, building her second home in an upscale neighbour in the center of the city, whilst still pursuing her dream of permanently and legally migrating out of St. Vincent. Only now she has her sights set on three possible final destinations, Britain, USA, Canada

1961, **CJ is now 32**. And she has been trafficking for almost ten years. She was out of the hospital and feeling stuck. Five years earlier, her husband still confined to the sanatorium and afraid of spending his life in exile, escaped, stopped to say quick goodbye and shipped himself off the island. And after 20 years of waiting for someone else to give her a migration opportunity, she decided it was time to give herself the golden ticket. Starting with step #1: get herself and her children out of St. Vincent and migrate with her children to *Trinidad* **[Trinidad & Tobago]** She had money and *Trini* [Trinidad] friends in the right places to help if she needed it. But most importantly she had a Vincentian male friend and family member on her husband side, she can trust to look after her house/investment which she had no intention of selling.

And as if the universe was letting her know this is a good decision - her neighbour, **MRS VERA CRUICKSHANK** who never forgive CJ for building a house with the identical architectural design as hers, often cussed CJ loudly for any reason, never forgetting to loudly and disdainfully invoke CJ's nick name **Cynthia Fowl**. And knowing CJ was leaving the island for good, she gave her a farewell *tongue lashing* with maximum liberal use of **Cynthia Fowl**. CJ uttered a sigh of exhaustion and relieve she was finally getting out.