



THE MAGIC STRAW HAT¹

By

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My name's Rylee, I'm 14 years old, I live in Kingstown, the capital of St Vincent.

St Vincent is a little island in the West Indies, between St Lucia and Grenada. From my bedroom window, I can see the beautiful bay! I live near the sea, and my parents have a little restaurant named "The rainbow fish". I eat fish and seafood at breakfast time, lunch time and dinner time!; do you like crayfishes and crabs! I don't!

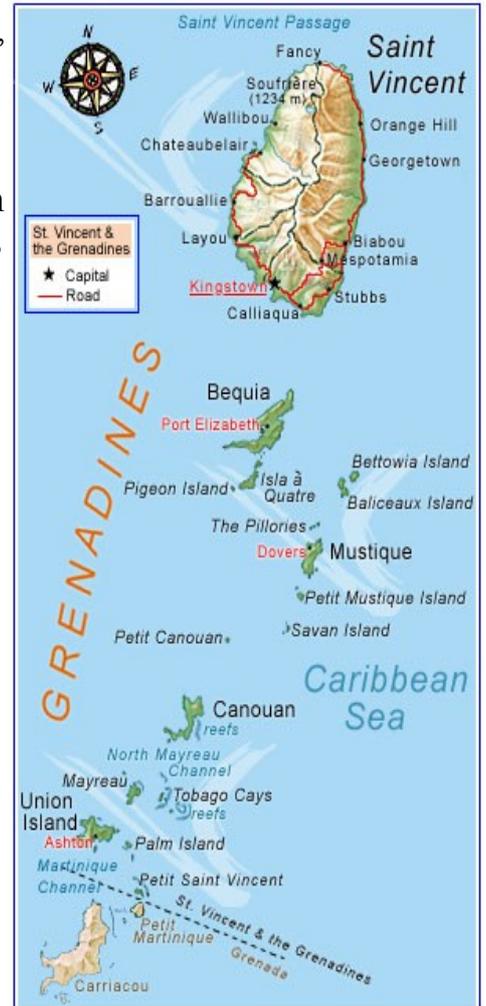
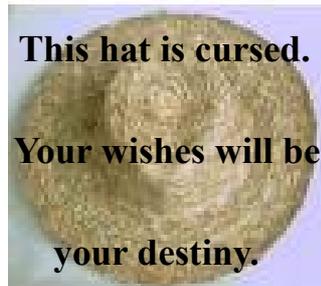
St Vincent is also famous for The "La Soufriere", a 3,864 ft volcano.

Well, last Monday morning, a very strange thing happened to me! I was preparing my carnival costume when I realized that there was something that was missing.... **A Hat!!**

I was very worried because I couldn't go to this parade with a costume which was not complete!

Oh! I'm sorry; I didn't tell you about carnival in St Vincent and the Grenadines! Carnival there is exciting. It starts at the end of June and lasts for two weeks.

Uh... Oh, yes! So, I went as fast as I could to the supermarket to buy a straw hat, but the masqueraders were blocking the way. Then, I saw a little shop I had never seen before. There were lots of hats in that shop; some of them were 100 years old! Suddenly, there was a mysterious old woman next to me who gave me a straw hat, as if she knew what I was looking for. But after giving me the hat, the woman said I should look at the back of the hat. It read:



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Oh, Good! I won't be ridiculous in the parade! I thought . Now, I had a hat; it was a very large hat but when I put it on my head, it was just on my size; I was satisfied with it!

When I came back home, another strange thing happened to me: My father called me to make my bed.

- "I hate making my bed! It is stupid, really! In the morning, you make it, and at night, you undo it!" I mumbled.

So, with my new hat on my head, I wished that my bed was made! And in a second, my bedroom was as clean as my mother's; bed and all! Believe me!

Then I went into the kitchen to have dinner. It was fish and vegetables... Yuck!!! My father said that I had to eat it and eat it fast. He went out. I wished that my food would be a true Caribbean Christmas dinner: spicy ham and meat patties, pork, pigeon peas and sasa yam, and for dessert, egg-battered bread and hot chocolate; and the delicious food appeared on the table! I was so happy I ate everything! Then, I went to bed.

The next day was Mardi Gras; I went to my girlfriend's house. She was angry because I was late. I pretended to go home and I hid at the end of a deserted street; I checked that there was nobody around and I wished that my girlfriend wouldn't be angry. I went back to see her and she was no longer angry. I was relieved.

I went to the parade with her, and we had a lot of fun. There were lots of colourful costumes, and, of course the scary red devils were there too!

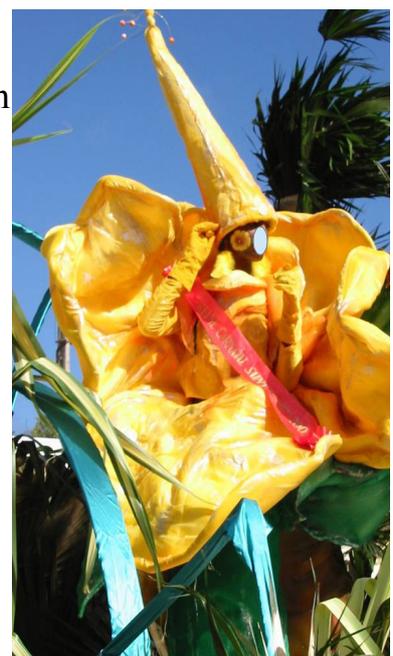
oOOo!!! .There were also a lot of floats, and some had come all the way from Martinique, a French speaking Caribbean island not too far from St Vincent; all the floats were built with wood, the wheels too, and the tops which were flat, were covered with leaves and beautiful, colourful and wonderful flowers such as yellow birds of paradise and bougainvillae, and there were also beautiful human flowers!!

Everybody was dancing to carnival music.

There was steel pan, reggae and soca; It was the most beautiful carnival of my life!

My girlfriend's costume was very..... "Sexy"!!! She was dressed as a weird cat; she also had the tail!! But mine's was simple and not very special, except for my hat with its purple pearl in the middle...

She said that for her, I was special!!²



On Ash Wednesday, as I was jumping up, my hat fell off; as I was picking it up, I read: **My master will meet Death!** and I saw a little smile on the pearl of the hat! I was scared.

I ran as fast as I could to Kenny's house to see if he was OK; Kenny was my best friend, but at the moment, we were on bad terms because he had played foul on me. "You will die for that" I had shouted on the football ground.

When I got to his house, his parents told me that he had had an accident on his way back home after the football match. I was horrified.

Suddenly, I saw the mysterious woman from the shop walking down the street. I ran as fast as my poor legs could support me. The old woman told me: "the hat is cursed! I told you so, but you paid no attention; the past is past, the present is present and nobody can know the future".³

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**I live now on my boat,
far away from home,
far away from the people
I love.....**

**ALONE
FOR EVER**

**... unless
ONE DAY,
in the Caribbean,
someone
needs a straw hat,
a nice old straw hat,
..at Carnival time.**