

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Belamena

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Belamena, Belamena, Belamena's in the harbour;
Belamena, Belamena, Belamena's in the harbour;
Put the Belamena on the dock,
And paint the Belamena black, black, black,
Paint the Belamena black, black black;
When she come back, she was white.

Oh the Mystery, oh the Mystery, little boat very frisky;
Oh the Mystery, oh the Mystery, she used to carry whisky.
Put the Mystery on the dock,
And paint the Mystery black, black black,
Paint the Mystery black, black, black;
When she come back, she was white.

O Inagua, Lady 'Nagua, she got stuck in New York Harbour,
O Inagua, Lady 'Nagua, she carried a very funny cargo.
Put the 'Nagua on the dock,
And paint the 'Nagua black, black black,
Paint the 'Nagua black, black, black;
When she come back, she was white.

Belamena, Belamena, Belamena's in the harbour;
Belamena, Belamena, Belamena's in the harbour;
Put the Belamena on the dock,
And paint the Belamena black, black, black,
Paint the Belamena black, black black;
When she come back, she was white.

Notes: Recorded by Gordon Bok on "A Rogue's Gallery of Songs for 12-String." I've standardized the lyrics slightly; for Bok's uncertainty about what his source sang, see the notes to the record.

During Prohibition, the rum manufacturers of the Caribbean found themselves confronted with a peculiar situation: an increased demand for their products in the U.S. (since other alcoholic beverages were unavailable) and no way to legally send it to America. Their response was an increase in rum-running.

To keep the Coast Guard off their backs, the rumrunners used various tricks. One technique, memorialized here, was to repaint the boats between trips so that the Coast Guard would think it was a different

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vessel and not get suspicious of it.

Apparently it actually worked. Sometimes. RW

RW