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"Welcome onboard Sir Roy. First time on the Celeste Marie I see," the purser greeted him.

"I'd prefer it if you just called me Roy if you don't mind. The title's rather embarrassing."

"I understand sir. Incognito are we? Mrs King-Pratt doesn't know about this cruise? Don't worry, we're all experts at keeping secrets here."

"Mrs King-Pratt does know I'm here actually, that's why she left me, or was it the money? I don't know, it all happened so fast. Anyway, she's out of the picture now and there's no chance of her every causing me trouble again. That's why I'm here now."

"Yes sir," the purser replied, not sure if he'd just heard an admission of murder, or not.

"All I'd like to do now is to get to my cabin and have a nice hot bath. The scratches on my back from last night are starting to sting. That wife of mine sure dug her nails in when she jumped on me."

The purser had heard enough by this point. Scratching her husband in a bid to save her life most probably. He was used to entertaining Mafia bosses and businessmen who made their fortunes by less than pleasant means, but they never boasted about murdering their wives in their beds.

"Here's your cabin sir. Outside with a bath," the purser informed Roy while placing the key in the door.

"Has that sister of mine been on an economy drive again? I know we'll be cruising in the Caribbean, and it's going to be hot, but I'd prefer a cabin inside rather than sleeping on the deck."

"The cabin is inside sir. Nobody sleeps on the deck. Well actually that isn't true. Sometimes after a heavy session in the clubs we find a few strays but we always put them to bed though."

"You definitely said just now that I was sleeping outside."

"No sir, I said the cabin was an outside cabin."

"What's the difference? If the cabin's outside then so will I be. It doesn't sound at all acceptable to me."

"Let me start again. Your cabin is on the outside of the ship. No, let's forget the word outside for a minute." The purser was finding it difficult conversing with a single brain celled organism. "What I meant was that your cabin has a porthole."

"Well I hope you're going to fix it before we sail."

"Fix what sir?"

"The hole. Don't tell me you intend to sail a ship with a hole in it, and with the leak right next to where I'll be sleeping as well."

"No, no. A porthole is a round window you can look out of while we cruise along. It's a premium rate cabin you're in."

"Premium rate? So what do I get to look at for this premium rate?"

"Mainly water actually, but it's remarkably coloured water. Occasionally there's even another ship to look at and when we're at anchor you can see the tropical islands, if we're pointing the right way that is." The purser's salesmanship had been stretched to the limit on this occasion.

"And the leak will be fixed?"

"Been fixed already sir."

"That was fast, very efficient. What about sleeping outside? No more thoughts about that?"

"Nothing could be further from my mind sir. We have a deluxe cabin for you, with a magnificent view of the sea," the purser replied whilst swinging the door open to show Roy his cabin.

Considering for a moment completing his duties and showing Roy around the cabin, the purser had opted for the less dangerous possibility of letting him work it out for himself. Instinctively he stood in the doorway with his hand extended, palm upwards, in the customary 'I want money' manner. Making a quick exit would probably have been a better option but greed has an effect on people and subconsciously the purser expected a tip. What he thought was Roy disappearing off to get some change was nothing of the sort.

"Hey, pussy, come here a minute," Roy called from the bathroom.

"It's purser sir. Not pussy."

"Whatever you say. Now the bath, sink and toilet are obvious but what's this little thing that looks like an open toilet?"

"It's called a bidet sir. It's used for ... let me think ... washing certain part of yourself sir."

"It's way too low for that, unless it's in case you've got kids with you. I myself would prefer to use the washbasin."

"Not for the parts I'm talking about you wouldn't," the purser commented.

This discussion on the uses of bidets consumed even more of the purser's time and when he'd finally convinced Roy of its function in life, he'd disappeared out of the door faster than a runaway train (no tip), leaving Roy to work anything else out for himself. Roy on the other hand had decided to have a relaxing bath before exploring the ship.

"Ah, purser, bit early for you today isn't it" the barman in the staff bar had commented. "You don't normally drink until late evening."

"It's more than a drink I need today. I've just had an horrific thirty minutes with an English lord and I've still got a nymphomaniac princess to contend with."

"You're wanting to pass up on a nymphomaniac princess. What I'd give to have your job today. Double bourbon on the rocks was it?"

Double bourbon on the rocks for my job? Deal! Let's change uniforms."

"Are you serious? What about the captain, won't he object?"

"It's only for a few hour until that nymphomaniac is settled in, then we'll switch back again."

It might have been the purser's authority over the young barman or maybe his pathetic begging that swung it but in the middle of an empty staff bar, the purser and barman were both undressing.

"Is the purser here?" a young receptionist called as she popped her head around the door, catching both of the men in their underwear. "Oops, sorry to interrupt," she blushed.

"Come in," the temporarily ex-purser called out.

Sheepishly she looked around the door again to see the purser putting on the barman's uniform. The fact that the barman was two sizes smaller hadn't daunted him in the slightest. The desire to be out of the purser's role for a short while had been more than impetus enough.

"Meet the new purser," the new barman introduced.

"If you two children have finished playing dressing up, the British royal party is here," the receptionist informed them.

"Don't look at me, I'm just a barman," the old purser stated as a bell rang. "And there's my first customer now." He disappeared through to the passenger bar on the opposite side of the panelling.

"You're going to be the purser in that oversized uniform," the receptionist addressed the ex-barman, while laughing out loud.

"There's no call to laugh at your senior officer. As the purser the reception staff come under my control."

"Yes sir, anything you say sir," she replied sarcastically, mock saluting him at the same time.

"Stop taking the piss. Now where is this nymphomaniac princess I've been told about?"

"I think I understand your interest in being a purser now," the receptionist replied. "She's in reception with her travelling companion, waiting to be shown her cabin."

"Travelling companion? Is she with a boyfriend?" The temporary purser was getting disheartened at the mention of a second member of the royal party.

"Don't worry," the receptionist said. "It's a female companion and by the looks of her she's a socialite of similar morals to the ex-princess."

The new purser in his oversize uniform ambled down the passageways, narrowly avoiding tripping over his trouser legs on more than one occasion. Paperclips liberated from the ship's office had assisted in keeping them above his feet. The four inch difference in height between the purser and barman hadn't been considered prior to exchanging uniforms, and in retrospect's their trousers that weren't much different in style. The new barman's trousers consequently were extremely tight around his crotch and stopped midway between his knees and ankles.

"Good afternoon ladies. I'm your purser for this voyage. You must be Fungy, let me escort you to your cabin."

"It's the presidential suite," the receptionist called after him.

After an introduction to the amenities of their plush cabin, the purser's ill fitting clothes had been discarded onto the cabin floor and he lay on the king size bed with the two women.

"Do you have athlete's foot?" Fungy asked, after her companion removed her breast from his mouth.

"Not that I know of. Hey you don't have to kiss my feet... ohhh, you're not kissing them, do it more, that's kind of sexy."

"If you think sucking toes is sexy, try this for size," Fungy warned, as her head moved towards a different part of his anatomy.

The original purser regretted almost immediately his decision to swap uniforms with the barman. On the positive side he'd avoided a carnal adventure with a nymphomaniac princess but on the negative side he'd gone around to the passenger side of the bar to be confronted by Roy sitting on a barstool.

"Haven't I seen you somewhere before?" Roy asked.

"Must be somebody that looks like me," the new barman replied.

"You may be right, because his clothes fitted a lot better than yours do. Now, I've been looking at the cocktail list and I'd like to try a banana slammer."

"Wouldn't you prefer something simple, like a gin and tonic?" the purser asked, realizing a flaw in his idea of becoming a barman.

"No, a banana slammer look interesting. I'll give it a try."

"Banana slammer. OK Have you ever had one before?"

"No," Roy answered honestly.

"Great, I'll be back in a minute sir." The ex-purser disappeared around to the staff side of the bar. "Banana Slammer? Banana Slammer?" he said to himself as he searched the shelves for ingredients. "Ah, here we are. Rum, Malibu, fresh pineapple juice, more rum and ... a banana. That should do the trick."

The ex-purser's lack of even a basic idea of the contents of a banana slammer was evident to even the social drinker. Roy, not even realizing that cocktails were alcoholic drinks, had no idea that the concoction he was presented with wasn't even remotely similar to what he should have been served with. The coconut taste, combined with a pineapple tang had given it a Caribbean flavour all of its very own.

"It doesn't taste very bananary," Roy observed. "Maybe it would be better if the banana was peeled."

Two decks and half a ship's length below the ex-barman was having a similar conversation.

"It doesn't taste very cheesy," Fungy complained. "And there was too much salt on the sausage."

"I have to apologise about that," the ex-barman placated. "I'll get room service to bring up another pepperoni pizza, with double cheese this time."

"Aren't you going to stay with us for a little while longer?" Fungy complained. "We're nowhere near tired yet."

"You two are way too much for me. I'll set up a rota of the crew and we'll all have to take it in turns."

"You mean that?" Fungy asked.

"It's a promise," the ex-barman replied. He then staggered bow legged, walking on his heels, out of the doorway to the presidential suite.

"Is that better sir?" the ex-purser asked after peeling the banana and replacing it in the tall glass so that half the length of it was in the liquid and the remainder protruded

from the glass like an ancient phallic symbol. The two cherries didn't help the image very much either.

"Much, much better. It tastes very bananary now. I think I might try a calypso explosion next."

"But you haven't finished that one yet," the temporary barman observed, more eager to dissuade Roy from ordering more cocktails than anything else.

Roy lifted his glass and downed the banana slammer in one go and after removing the banana to eat later, he replaced the empty glass on the bar.

"OK I'm ready for a calypso explosion now," Roy slurred slightly. His first exploration of alcoholic beverages having had its usual effect.

"Calypso explosion? Just by chance, do you know what goes in one of them?" the ex-purser asked.

"aint got a clue, but the name sounds good," Roy admitted.

"Very well then, one calypso explosion coming up." Once again the so-called barman disappeared around to the staff side of the bar. "Now, what can I use for the calypso taste?" He was talking to himself again. After a short experimentation with various different ingredients, a bright coloured, frothy drink, with a paper umbrella sticking out of it was presented to Roy. "One calypso explosion sir," the ex-purser said as he put his masterpiece on the bar.

"I've never seen a calypso explosion like that before," the regular barman commented as he hobbled back into the staff bar. "What ingredients did you use?"

"Let me think, pineapple juice, orange juice, Bacardi, black rum, Tia Maria, Tequila and just a dash of lime cordial. Hey, don't look at me like that. I haven't got a clue what it's supposed to be, I was just guessing."

"It's not the incorrect recipe I was grimacing at, it was the thought of drinking that lethal combination of liquors. How many has he drunk?"

"Only the one. He had a banana slammer last time."

"I take it you just guessed the ingredients that time as well?"

"Of course I did. I don't know what goes in a banana slammer, apart from the obvious banana that is. Why do you looking so worried?"

"Let's go and see how the customer is and find out shall we."

Both the barman and the purser walked through to the passenger side of the bar only to be greeted by a glassy eyed Roy and an empty cocktail glass.

"Slov'ly fruity dvinks," Roy slurred, before falling backwards off the bar stool.

"Now look what you've done," the real barman accused. "We'll have to carry him to his cabin now."

"Don't blame me. It was your idea to change jobs, and you seem to be walking rather funny at the moment."

"That's the last time I take on the British aristocracy. On their own, they'd be a handful but both together, they're deadly."

"Now you see why I was happy to change uniforms with you. Until this jerk had to go and devour the contents of the cocktail menu that is. I'll never understand the British. All of them bloody crazy. At least we only have three on this trip, the rest of the passengers are from the good ole USofA."

While Roy slept off the effects of his adventure into Caribbean cocktails, Fungy had sized up the crew and fellow passengers and wasn't too impressed by what she'd seen.

"This cruise might not have been such a good idea. The opportunities for entertainment seem pretty limited," she'd observed.

"Remember our main reason for coming on this cruise in the first place," her companion had reminded her. "Your financial position necessitated finding a rich husband to bail you out and this is the largest collection of rich men in the world."

"They're all old and ugly though."

"You've never been fussy before. Why start now?"

"Maybe it's the kids. Being a mother has kind of changed me you know."

"And where are these lovely children now?" the companion asked.

"In a boarding school of course, out of the way. We don't want them cramping our style do we?"

"That's more like it. For a moment you had me worried. I thought you'd come down with a serious case of monogamy," the companion sighed with relief. "Anyway, I've been checking out the passenger list. We've not only have a collection of businessmen and film stars but a football hero and some singers as well. We should be able to find at least one suitable candidate amongst them."

"I certainly hope so," Fungy replied. "I'm running out of original helicopter story ideas. Last week I tried slipping in a repeat but the publisher noticed it."

The ex-princess and her companion continued to scan the statistics of the passenger list as the walkway was raised, and with a whistle and a hoot the little cruise ship pulled away from Miami dock. The Bahamas lay ahead and no sooner had the ship cleared US territorial waters, the casinos opened for business.