
PART THREE

Chapter One

“No — I will *not* have him in my cabin!” Reijo slammed his cabin door shut in the face of the first mate standing in the passageway with Toivo and his belongings.

... bunk with Toivo... never in hell...

Reijo was not about to bunk with his archenemy. Since he was returning to Finland to rejoin his Home Guard unit, he could have had free passage and a hammock with the other thirty-eight men in the cargo hold returning to Finland to enlist, but he didn't want to spend twelve days that way — his pride wouldn't allow it. He had paid for his passage, even though that had left him with less than a dollar and he would have to walk home from Helsinki.

The first mate had a dilemma. There were only two cabins for paying passengers: the one with the tall angry Finn and the one with the crippled angry American from *The New York Times*. He knocked on the journalist's cabin door and resolutely opened it, surprising Denny who was placing a dozen or more bottles of gin in the top drawer of the cabin's bureau.

Denny glared at the intruders at his door: “What the hell do you —” was all he got out before he was interrupted.

“Mr. Arnold, this passenger will be traveling with you.” The first mate's voice left no room for discussion.

“I was promised a private cabin! The ship's agent said I would —“

“Ship's agents say a lot of things, Mr. Arnold. This is not the Queen Mary, it's a freighter with very few passenger cabins and —“

“— and you can put him in somewhere else! I’m not sharing my cabin!” Denny started to shut his cabin door, but the first mate held it open.

“*The New York Times* does *not* own this ship, Mr. Arnold. You *will* share your cabin with this man! Take the top bunk,” the first mate ordered Toivo and then stalked off, having had his fill of passengers for the day.

“Hey, come back here!” Denny hobbled on his crutches out from his cabin past Toivo and into the passageway to stop the first mate — who slammed a hatch shut behind him, ending the discussion once and for all.

When Denny turned back toward the cabin, he saw Toivo place his rucksack and mirror ball on the cabin’s top bunk. “Whoa, cowboy, I want that bunk!” Denny protested, feeling abused by life and having had enough strife for the day.

“Well, you can’t have it,” Toivo said, feeling abused by life and having had enough strife for the day as well.

“He told me to take it.”

They glared at each other, neither yielding.

The *Sisu* had now reached the rough seas of open water and the ship began to roll. Denny lost his balance and fell onto the small sofa beneath a porthole against which an occasional wave now splashed ever so softly.

Denny grimaced and reached for a bottle of gin in the bureau’s top drawer, took a swig — but almost choked as Toivo pulled in his cart from the passageway. “What the hell is that?”

“My work. Paintings. You got a problem with that?”

“What are you so torn up about?” said Denny, who clearly was the more injured of the two.

“Why? Are you writing a book?” Toivo surprised himself with his caustic tone of voice.

Denny took another swig and then offered Toivo the bottle. “Want some gin? Cures just about anything. Broken hearts. Shattered illusions. Name the problem, gin can handle it. Here, have some.”

But Toivo didn’t want anything cured just then and shook his head.

“Tell you what —“ Denny reached into his pocket and took out a coin that he expertly flipped in the air; it was a trick coin with heads on both sides. “Want to trust your luck? Heads I get the top bunk, tails you do.”

“I don’t believe in luck,” said Toivo who seldom in life had experience any — except when Kerttu was in his arms and then he knew that he had more of it than anyone else in the world.

“Well, let’s put it this way then, I want that bunk and I intend to get it.” Denny seldom gave up and made no beans about it.

“What about what *I* want? I hardly ever get what I want and now I want this bunk!” Toivo had spoken with the intensity of one who would do anything for a sign that he had some control of his life — any kind of control.

“Why is that goddamn bunk so goddamn important to you?”

“It’s no more important to me than it is to you!” yelled Toivo as loud as he could.

In the next cabin, Reijo banged on the bulkhead for quiet. Denny told him where to go — rapping back on the bulkhead with his bottle of gin. He then took another hefty swallow and watched as Toivo hung the mirror ball at the foot of the top bunk and began to unpack his rucksack.

Denny’s bottles clinked against each other in the bureau’s drawer as the freighter plowed through the angry Atlantic.

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