

## TEASER - Draft Chapters 1, 2 and 3

# The Purser, the Surgeon, the Captain and his Lieutenant

by Emma Collingwood  
Illustrations by Amandine de Villeneuve

To absent friends and Lieutenant Henry Rice RN -  
it took over 200 years, but he finally made captain.

"Recollect that you must be a seaman to be an officer and also that you cannot be a good officer without being a gentleman."

*Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson, 1st Viscount Nelson*

"My morals are like the Loch Ness Monster, James: sightings have been reported, but there's no photographic evidence."

*Sebastian Quinn*

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All is not well aboard *HMS Selkie*, a frigate of the Royal Navy in the late 18th century. The purser would murder his own grandmother for a profit. The surgeon is aboard under duress. Lieutenant Barnett - an otherwise exemplary officer - is in love with Captain Denningham, who was transferred to the *Selkie* for disciplinary reasons.

Such a love, in the 18th century, would lead straight to the gallows. But when neither of them dares to act on it and Denningham dies in battle, love has to find another way to bring them together - 240 years later.

The unfinished business of the 18th century reaches out to transform the lives of the descendants of all those who were serving on the *Selkie*. A lazy snob, a roughcast shipwright, a charming spiv and a stuffy ambulance driver have to learn that every score has to be settled, not just that of love.

***The Purser, The Surgeon, The Captain And His Lieutenant* - a tricky and charming cross-time tale about the tangled lives of four very different men, from the Age of Sail to modern day London. Featuring bravery, treachery, star-crossed love, revenge, the power of magic and overrated movie directors.**

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In other words: buy this book, don't copy it. Don't put it online. Don't scan and distribute it. Miss Collingwood and Mlle de Villeneuve are poor, suffering artists. Poor, suffering artists who'd learn very soon of any fishy goings-on with their work on the internet...!

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## Chapter 1 - Goats

As much as Lieutenant Barnett admired Captain Denningham, as much he disliked HMS *Selkie's* purser. Sebastian Quinn's origins were a mystery; it was rumoured that he was the illegitimate son of an admiral, and his father's money and influence were probably the only reasons why Quinn had ended up on the *Selkie* rather than in prison, on the pillory or, Barnett's favoured option, on the gallows.

Quinn was what the ladies called 'a jolly fine gentleman', too charming, handsome and vain for his own good. He mastered all the latest dances and was a witty conversationalist, so he never lacked for female company. Quinn knew as much about sailing as a dog knew about flying, but he had one talent that made him an asset to the ship and mollified Barnett's frequent irritation: he could acquire everything Captain Denningham needed, no matter how impossible the task seemed. The means were often questionable, to put it mildly, but Barnett had so far failed to prove that they were also against the law. Quinn was a rogue, no doubt - but a very clever one.

For some reason God above had decided to bless Mr. Quinn with boyish, innocent looks, hiding his true nature well. Barnett could have spat nails when he heard people talking about the 'poor fine young gentleman' who had been banished from his own home by that cruel father of his. Barnett had no doubt that Quinn's father must have had more than one good reason to show his wayward offspring the door, for Quinn's shortcomings were numerous.

Tardiness was one of them. Once again the purser was overdue, and Barnett was just about to make a remark to Captain Denningham when the young man finally showed up on the jetty, accompanied by two seamen and a small herd of goats. Denningham arched an eyebrow, clasped his hands behind his back and looked at Quinn, who grinned widely and patted one of the animals on the head.

"Mr. Quinn, please explain where you and those men have been these last two hours, and what this commotion is supposed to be."

"Those are goats, Sir. You ordered them."

Quinn tried to shoo off one goat that had set her heart on taking a bite of his sleeve, while Barnett glared at him with unconcealed dislike.

"There were no goats for sale here. We asked everywhere and were told that HMS *Windswept* had bought all available livestock."

"You must have talked to the wrong people then, Mr. Barnett."

Denningham sniffed.

"Mr. Quinn, I hope you followed the standard procedures when purchasing those animals."

"Sir, you may trust my word on this matter; everything was done according to the regulations."

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Denningham frowned and took a step back when he found himself surrounded by bleating goats. Barnett was ready to catch him should he fall; the captain's left leg was immobile since the Battle of Lagos in 1759. A bullet shattering his knee had been Denningham's downfall, in every respect. The surgeon had insisted on amputation of the leg, but Denningham had adamantly refused to cooperate, "*threatening bodily harm to the esteemed Mr. Confry*", as the court papers stated. Subsequently, Denningham's third lieutenant Thomas Barnett had "*attempted to push the unfortunate Mr. Confry through a porthole.*"

Barnett insisted that he had not tried to push the surgeon through a porthole at any time, but admitted the use of "*language inappropriate for an officer*". A very irksome matter, exacerbated by the fact that Captain Denningham refused to let it go. With his father long dead and no influential friends backing his case, but many patrons trying to secure Denningham's command for one of their own protégés, defending his cross-grained lieutenant equalled the end of Denningham's career.

As a consequence, Denningham and Barnett had been ordered to the West Indies to serve aboard HMS *Selkie*, a wrecked, worm-ridden old 6<sup>th</sup> rate frigate. That had been five years ago - five years of murderous heat, March fever, homesickness and battles with the French, the Spanish and the pirates. Not a month passed without Denningham sending a petition to the Admiralty back in London to reconsider the decision and allow him and his now first lieutenant to end their deployment in the West Indies. He was unshakeable in his belief that, eventually, his petitions would be successful.

Considering the parsimony of the Admiralty, Barnett suspected those petitions were used to light the fire in their library during the winter months, but he kept that opinion to himself.

"Please take care of this, Mr. Barnett," Denningham ordered. "I have other matters to attend. And you, Mr. Quinn, will provide me with the documents confirming that these animals have been purchased legally and paid for fully."

"Yes, Sir!"

Quinn and Barnett watched Denningham limp stiffly towards the gangway. As soon as he could be sure the captain was out of earshot, Barnett grasped Quinn by the lapels of his coat and shook him.

"Where did you get these goats, you idiot?"

Quinn shrugged.

"Who cares? You asked for goats, I brought you goats. And ah, mind Article 22, Mr. Barnett! Violence against a brother officer could get you hanged, and wouldn't we all regret losing you?"

"You certainly are not a brother officer! And Article 22 refers to violence against superior officers," Barnett snapped. "You and your bloody goats! You could get the captain in trouble!"

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"True. But he will have goat on the plate first. Be reasonable, Mr. Barnett. When did we last have fresh meat? Aside from the weevils and the maggots, that is. Look at the man; he's sick. He needs more than hard tack and bloody lard."

"Don't you think that you fool me even for a second, Quinn! The only person aboard the *Selkie* you care about is yourself!"

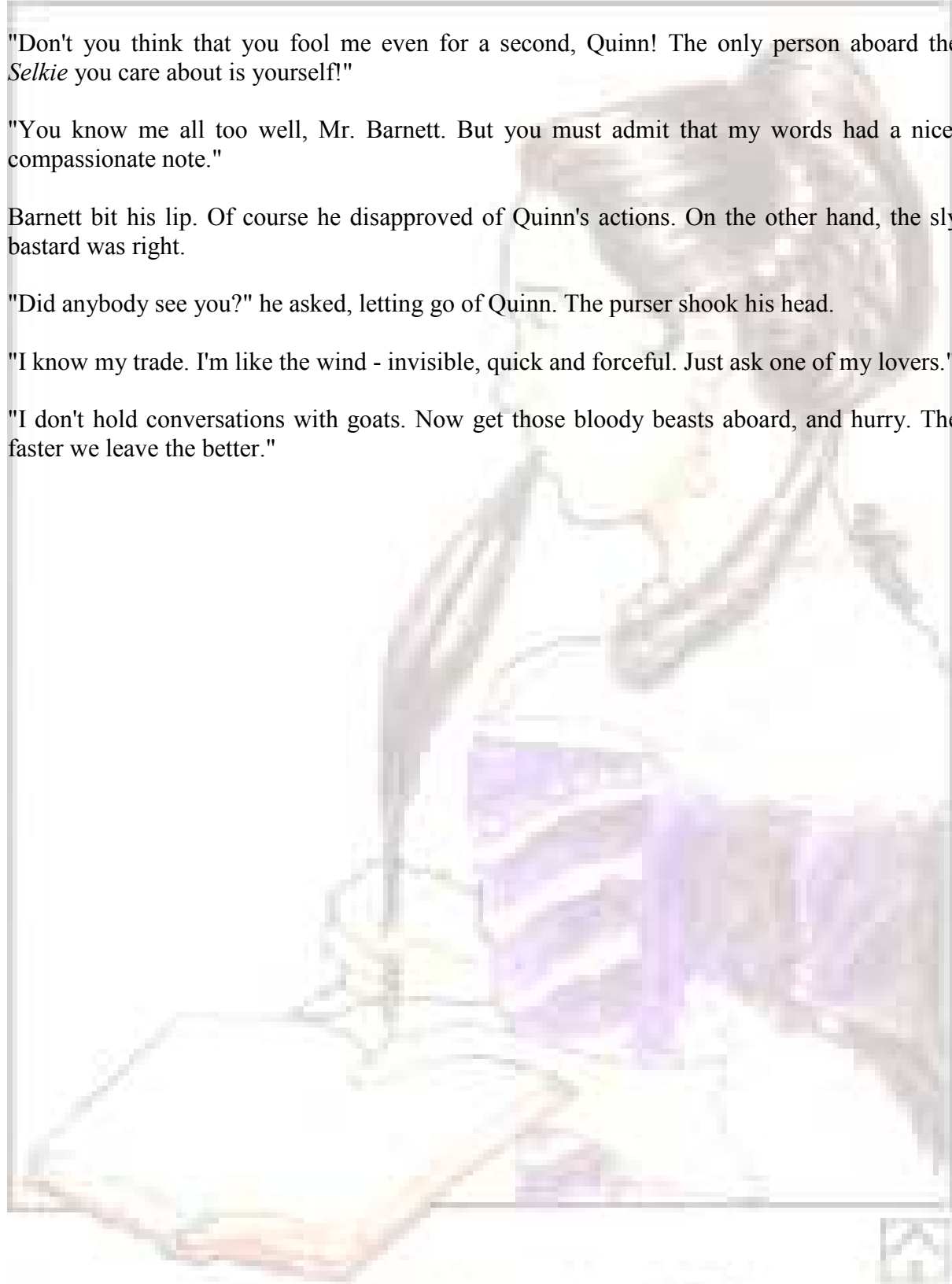
"You know me all too well, Mr. Barnett. But you must admit that my words had a nice, compassionate note."

Barnett bit his lip. Of course he disapproved of Quinn's actions. On the other hand, the sly bastard was right.

"Did anybody see you?" he asked, letting go of Quinn. The purser shook his head.

"I know my trade. I'm like the wind - invisible, quick and forceful. Just ask one of my lovers."

"I don't hold conversations with goats. Now get those bloody beasts aboard, and hurry. The faster we leave the better."



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### Chapter 2 - Extra Shots

"Earth to mothership, the drinks are served!"

Thomas blinked.

"What? Why? Where are the goats?"

"Goats? *Goats?*"

Daniel laughed and sat down on the chair next to him, balancing two mugs of coffee.

"Thomas, girls don't want to get shagged by blokes who fantasise about goats. OK, some might, but I doubt they'd be your type. Here, fuel for your engine."

"Cheers. Sorry, mate, must have been more tired than I thought. Dozed off, I guess. Fucking weird."

"Then coffee's just the thing."

The coffeehouse was crowded with people who tried to sober up with a coffee so they could get properly drunk later on. Maybe they considered themselves cool and edgy, but Thomas thought them a bunch of sad tossers. He and Daniel always had to fight the temptation to kick their arses, mainly because Daniel, an ambulance driver, would have to deal with their unconscious bodies later on, and probably get vomited on in the process.

Thomas and Daniel sat at one of the tables by the front window, watching people passing by and cracking jokes about them. Not the most intellectual of pass-times, but in Thomas' opinion still better than getting drunk in front of the TV and hurling insults at soap-opera characters.

"Saturday night, and we're sitting here in a bloody coffeehouse. I can't believe it!"

Thomas stirred his coffee.

"Yes, it's fucked. Maybe you should go home? Emmelina will be waiting for you."

"She's nine months pregnant, Thomas. As I'm the one responsible for her backaches, sickness, mood-swings and swollen ankles, she'll be waiting for me with a loaded gun, if at all. You're tired?"

"Exhausted. It's been a long week."

"Want to leave?"

Thomas shrugged.

"Here or there, it doesn't make a difference. It's not like anybody's waiting for me at home."

"Still not over Maggie?"

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"Hung-over. The house is empty without her. And then I've worked the graveyard shift Monday to Thursday. I'm knackered."

"Still working on that boat?"

"It's a ship, not a boat. The work's hellish, but she's looking great."

"When's the big day?"

"End of February. Not that *we* will be there, of course. *We*'re good enough to work our arses off rebuilding her, but once she's ready to launch, it'll be the rich buggers who get their photographs taken."

Another crowd of people came in. Thomas glanced at two men heading for the empty table next to him and perked up when he recognised one of them. He was quite surprised; this was neither the area nor the place he would have expected to see James Denningham.

"Cappuccino with an extra shot?" James' mate asked, throwing his jacket over a chair.

"Make that two."

"Right."

James took off his jacket and hung it neatly over the back of his seat. He stifled a yawn, then he noticed Thomas. For a brief moment James didn't seem to be happy about the unexpected encounter, but then he relaxed and nodded.

"Thomas - didn't see you when we came in."

"Heh - bad week for you as well, James?"

"A long one."

"Just said the same to my mate."

"Coffee good here?"

Thomas shrugged.

"Better than turps."

"That will do."

James had dark hair which fell into his face. He kept trying to push it back behind his ears, but it wouldn't stay there. The gesture reminded Thomas of somebody, but he couldn't quite place the memory.

"A friend of mine just moved here," James explained. "We've been shifting boxes all day long, and now I'm dead on my feet."

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"Ah."

Thomas thought of all the boxes *he* had been shifting these last weeks. They were piled up in the hallway, and if Maggie didn't pick them up very soon, he'd drag everything outside and set it on fire.

"You must be Little Red Riding Hood. Good to meet you, I'm the Big Bad Wolf."

James' friend had returned. He looked pointedly at Thomas' hair and gave him a blinding smile - how many teeth did that idiot have, sixty-four? - before he rested his hand on James' neck and kissed him enthusiastically on the cheek, not letting Thomas out of his sight for even a second.

"I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow - oh fuck, no, that was a different fairytale."

James looked very uncomfortable.

"Could you try not to get us beaten up and killed in public, please?" he hissed.

"Sure. Though it was fun the last time, when I shoved that fucker's baseball bat up his - never mind, just ignore me."

Thomas gaped at James, completely taken by surprise at the revelation that the guy he had been talking to from time to time at the wharf and who paid his wages was queer. The fuck? That thought had never crossed his mind. James had laughed at Bill's dirty jokes, and agreed that Miller's assistant was quite a ride. Queer? James bloody Denningham? A rich bugger in every meaning of the word then. No way could that be real, James was from a military family and a decent guy.

'*Decent guy* - fuck, I'm beginning to sound like my dad', Thomas thought, and tried to look unperturbed. So the guy had a boyfriend - no problem. Not *his* problem. After all he was open-minded, tolerant, supported equal rights for everybody, singing kumbaya around the campfire and saving the dolphins.

Still, he didn't feel comfortable sitting next to a guy who played catch the pecker with another bloke. No, wrong: he didn't feel comfortable sitting next to the guy *without* feeling uncomfortable, which was oddly enough the case.

Thomas looked quickly over to Daniel, hoping for some sort of rescue, but the bastard was talking on his mobile.

"No need to call 999. It's not contagious," James said tartly.

Thomas felt nabbed.

"No problem here. I'm just very tired and not in the mood for anybody's love-life. Mine just went down the pan."

"Sorry. I didn't mean to be rude."

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James produced the odd almost-smile that was so typical for him, and not for the first time Thomas wondered if something was wrong with his teeth.

"That's Thomas," James said, turning to his friend. Thomas had to hide a gleeful grin when he noticed that the previous demonstration of affection hadn't been received with much enthusiasm. Ah, so James wasn't a public guy. Well, that was one point in his favour.

"Tommy or Tom?"

This had to be the boyfriend. Scrawny bastard! His jeans were ripped above the knee and he wore a leather jacket over a grey hooded sweater. He was smaller than James, with long legs and strong hands. The dark eyes, watchful and curious, reminded Thomas of a ferret.

"Just Thomas. I'm from a poor family, we can't afford diminutives."

James winced.

"And this is Sebastian. I know it's hard to believe, but he's not half the idiot he pretends to be."

Thomas had his doubts, but he was too tired to get into an argument. As usual he felt a little self-conscious next to James. People like him lived in a different solar system. The black turtleneck James was wearing must have cost a fortune, judging by the designer label on the sleeve. Thomas cursed Maggie, who had left him for some bastard with a 9 to 5 job at an insurance company. It was fucked - Saturday night, and he was exchanging polite insults with some queer bastard.

Good thing this was not the type of place his work mates frequented, he'd never hear the end of it. Daniel still wasn't paying any attention, and Thomas didn't feel like talking to James and Sebastian any longer.

"Be right back," he said, and headed for the Gents. He should be out in a club, finding himself a new girl. Couldn't be that difficult. Or should he go to a pub and get pissed? Now *there* was an idea.

On the way back, he decided to buy a sandwich, and had to wait in line. When he finally returned to their table, Daniel was gone, and Sebastian also seemed to have disappeared.

"Where's Daniel?"

James sat over his coffee, looking a little sheepish.

"Your friend left."

"Left?"

"Yes. He said you shouldn't worry. If I understood him correctly, his wife's about to have a baby."

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It had been more of a hysterical scream into the mobile, some stammered words and then a quick rush out the door on Daniel's part, but thanks to a lot of experience in the art of understanding Sebastian Quinn, James had caught the gist of the incoherent message.

Thomas looked very happy. "She is? That's great! Hope everything's going well, have to call him later on. And where is your - friend?"

"Sebastian left as well. He remembered he was meeting somebody at eleven."

Thomas unwrapped the sandwich and began to eat. James watched him for a while, fervently trying to think of an uncontroversial topic.

"Is it his first?" he finally asked, rolling the mug between his hands just to keep them busy.

"What?"

"Baby."

"Oh, sure, yes. They're very much looking forward to it."

"Ah. And you? Any kids?"

"No. I just split up with my boyfriend."

*Boyfriend?* What the fuck? Thomas almost choked on the last bite of his sandwich. He wanted to hit his head on the table and correct the slip of the tongue, but it was already too late. He felt like jumping up and running out of the coffeehouse, especially when he saw the surprised, but also pleased expression on James' face. Shit for brains, that was what he had! Now the bugger thought he was also a - fuck, Saturday from hell, absolutely. Then again - did it really matter? It was just another one of those embarrassing things he wouldn't tell anybody unless completely drunk. Maybe not even then.

James gave Thomas a sidewise glance. "I'm sorry. I wouldn't have snapped at you like that if I'd known that you're..."

"Could we change the subject, please?"

James misunderstood that statement completely.

"Sure. Sorry, that must have been hard for you. Want another coffee? Or - well, I saw a wine bar just down the road on the way here, and maybe... I don't know, maybe we could have a glass of wine? It's a bit crowded here."

James didn't look like a lunatic axe murderer. Thomas thought of his empty house, the boxes of Maggie's stuff stacked in the hallway. It was Saturday night, Daniel was at the hospital to attend the birth of his first child, and there was no place in the world for Thomas Barnett to be.

"Why not," he said.

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## Chapter 3 - Powder Monkey

Sending troublesome naval personnel to the West Indies meant a reduction of twenty-percent in costs and paperwork, as that was the average death rate within the first year of service: very effective, and less bother than dealing with the miscreants at home. Was there ever a more efficient administration than that of the British Admiralty?

Barnett was a down-to-earth man. Unlike Denningham, he knew that the *Selkie* marked the end of their career, but he was quite happy serving King, country and his captain, and had no ambitions to change his status. Barnett had a quick temper and made sure the captain's orders were executed to his fullest satisfaction. The men knew that Captain Denningham was more lenient towards them than most other captains in the Royal Navy, but Barnett had no qualms about the cat coming out of the bag if necessary. Whatever he ordered, Denningham backed all the way, and so he was nicknamed "Denningham's Terrier".

Oddly enough, Barnett was more popular than the captain. He was strict and insisted on discipline, but the punishments were not handed out undeservedly. He could hold his liquor and curse the devil's hair off his head - qualities that might not be asked of a lieutenant by the Admiralty, but that the men greatly admired in an officer. There were rumours about duels which had ended fatally for Barnett's opponents. That was probably balderdash, but then one never knew, and one was well advised to stay out of his way when he was in a foul mood.

Denningham on the other hand was uptight and stiff, his correctness bordered on pedantry. Despite the suffocating heat his uniform was pristine, from his hat to the carefully tied cotton lawn cravat right down to the buckles on his shoes. He held himself with the pride of a man who knew that he had been wronged but still fulfilled his duties to his best abilities. He never complained, but at times an undertone of impatience was discernable when he briefed Barnett on the latest orders from London.

Finding themselves on a warship in the West Indies had not been a new situation for Denningham and Barnett, for this was where their paths had first crossed. In 1741, Denningham had served as a midshipman during the attack on Cartagena. Barnett had been a powder monkey on the same ship and committed the folly of slipping and going overboard. Captain Blane was of the opinion that nobody could expect him to delay his mission for the sake of a boy who would be dead by the time the longboat was launched.

It had been Denningham, usually as obedient and correct as one could wish a midshipman to be, who objected to that decision with all the enthusiasm of a thirteen year old boy. After realising that Captain Blane wouldn't listen to the opinions of a mere midshipman, Denningham had jumped overboard to fish the boy out. A ridiculous action, and not only because Denningham couldn't swim. Captain Blane wouldn't have stopped to rescue the two fools if he hadn't known for sure that Denningham's father would ask for his head on a plate if his youngest son should come to any harm. And, knowing the Admiralty, they *would* serve Blane's head to old Admiral Denningham - on a silver platter, with an apple in his mouth and parsley in his ears, and so the two miscreants had been hauled from the sea.

This had resulted in rather painful and humiliating disciplinary action for Mr. Denningham, but it had also won him Barnett's eternal gratitude, admiration and loyalty. Under Denningham's patronage, the powder monkey had become a seaman, then a midshipman, had even made his lieutenant's patent and followed James Denningham from ship to ship. Indeed,

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Denningham would have had a hard time recalling a day aboard a ship without Barnett's comforting presence.

In the eyes of his peers, Denningham's patronage for a *powder monkey* had only been the first in a long row of wrong, ridiculous and inopportune decisions. Denningham didn't care. He was convinced that his own path and the one of Barnett had crossed for a reason, had known it from the very moment he had grasped the powder monkey's hand and plucked him from the claws of death. Barnett had studied and worked hard, his manners had become more polished, but his admiration for Denningham had not changed at all.

If anything, it had deepened over the years.

Such loyalty, it goes without saying, made some of the men serving on the *Selkie* secretly speculate about the true nature of the first lieutenant's feelings for his captain. Was there really nothing but simple admiration for an esteemed senior officer behind Thomas Barnett's devotion to James Denningham?

Nobody would have ever dared to voice such concerns, of course. They knew that Barnett didn't suffer fools and gossipers, and who would have wanted to be on the receiving end of both Barnett's wrath and the tails of the cat? Better wise, quiet and alive than a blathering idiot with a loose tongue - or without a tongue at all.

\* \* \*

James had problems deciding on the right keyhole; for some reason, the front door had two of them all of a sudden, and both were moving. After the fifth failed attempt to put the key in the keyhole, the door opened, revealing a rather miffed Sebastian, wearing nothing but a towel.

"Odd coffeeshop that, serving wine until three in the morning."

He hauled James into the hallway and closed the door behind him.

"Aww, Sebastian. Let me have some fun, won't you? I don't mind you having a shower at three in the morning, either. How did you get into my shower, anyway?"

"I have a key, remember?"

"Oh yes, sure. The key. Thanks for leaving, Sebastian. It was a fun evening!"

"Yeah, I can smell it."

"It was *really* fun!"

Sebastian helped James out of his jacket.

"Especially for London's wine bars. You must have doubled their weekly turnover."

"We talked about the ship, Sebastian. He knows all about it!"

"What ship?"

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"The ship, you goof. The *Selkie*. He works at the boat-builders. He's a shipwright. I've told you a dozen times, don't you ever listen?"

James took his jacket from Sebastian and hung it neatly on a coat hanger. Drunk or not, James Denningham was an orderly man.

"Sorry, that detail must have gone unnoticed. I only remember you talking about his voice, arse, hands, eyes and even his fucking ears for weeks on end. So he's a shipwright? Yes, he looks the type. That or a butcher. Let me guess, he loves football and his girlfriend's pregnant?"

"No pregnant girlfriend. No not-pregnant girlfriend. Actually, no girlfriend at all. It's my lucky day, Sebastian! He's funny, smart, gorgeous and just split up with his *boyfriend*! Hah!"

Sebastian felt a headache coming on.

"James? James. Are you needing new contact lenses?"

"What? Why?"

"He's got red hair."

"And?"

"It's red."

"You already mentioned that."

"You've told me over and over again that he was the most handsome man you've ever seen. What the fuck? He's ugly as sin! He's got freckles! ! And he's got a naked fucking mermaid tattooed on his forearm!"

James scratched his head.

"Would you like him better if the mermaid was wearing a bikini top?"

"James, that man is not gay. Never. He's been taking the piss, trust me on that. Tomorrow he'll laugh his arse off about you at work."

"I like him. A lot. He's fun, and he's got a great smile. Perfect teeth, Sebastian! Nice eyes, too. And I bet the rest of him isn't bad, either."

"I don't want to hear it. Call your optometrist on Monday, will you?"

"I'm seeing just fine, thank you very much! He seemed to feel a bit uncomfortable at first, I guess he's still hanging on to his old lover. But then we hit it off like a house on fire!"

"No surprise with that hair colour," Sebastian grumbled. "Hands up!" He pulled the turtleneck over James' head; the dark hair was now standing out in spikes and Sebastian smoothed it.

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EMMA COLLINGWOOD

"I don't want him to feel comfortable around you."

"Sebastian, you're jealous."

"I hope that a demon turned up at midnight and dragged him back to the 13<sup>th</sup> circle of hell which is reserved for red-haired men, tax inspectors and overrated movie directors."

"Jealous, jealous, jealous. Jeeeeaaaaalous."

Sebastian rolled his eyes.

"Look, it's great that you had a fun night out, and I don't want to spoil it for you. I know you're looking for a long-term relationship, and I'll be the first in line to congratulate you should you find a bloke who's willing to put up with you, your family and your odd taste in movies. But not him, James. That gobshite's as straight as a flagpole, trust me on that."

"No, he's not. He's got two cats. Horatio and Emma. How many straight men working as shipwrights do you know who have cats?"

"I don't know any shipwrights at all, straight or not. Horatio and Emma? What the fuck?"

"Well, better than Charles and Camilla. He's from a seafaring family, you know."

"That's no excuse; so are you."

"I could get myself a hamster and call him Napoleon."

"Generations of Denninghams will rise from their watery graves and make you walk the plank for that, James," Sebastian predicted while fiddling with the zipper of James' jeans. "So why didn't you bring The Ginger Miracle home then? I could have slept on the couch and put on my MP3 player, or drowned myself in the bathtub."

The jeans dropped and James tried to step out of them. Unfortunately he still wore his trainers, so he started to topple. Sebastian caught him at the last moment.

"Christ. You're completely pissed."

"I only had a glass of wine. Or two. I think he's shy, you know."

Sebastian, kneeling on the floor now and trying to free James of his shoes, laughed.

"Shy? A six foot something shipwright with tatts is *shy*? Fuck, what did they give you to drink, antifreeze? Lift your foot, please. Fucking hell, do I have to do all the work here?"

"You lost your towel. And stop swearing."

"I'll swear all I want. Try and stop me. And feel free to look at my cock."

"That's not fair. I'm too drunk to enjoy it."

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"Now *that's* big news."

After another five minutes, Sebastian had managed to undress James and lead him towards the bedroom.

"In the morning you'll have the hangover from hell and feel like a real idiot when I tell you what rubbish you spouted tonight."

James stretched out on the bed, that ridiculous dopey smile still on his face.

"Great night, really. He's special. My powder monkey."

"If you get any sappier, I'll puke my guts out," Sebastian bitched, and rolled James onto his side. Then he slipped under the duvet and held him tight, resting his head on James' chest.

"Powder monkey... what sort of moronic nickname is that, anyway?"

"I don't know," James said, closing his eyes. "But I like it."

\* \* \*

END OF TEASER

**"The Purser, the Surgeon, the Captain and his Lieutenant"**  
**Scheduled for a release in spring 2008**

For the geeks:

REFERENCES

**"I'm from a poor family, we couldn't afford diminutives."**

This is a running gag all through comedy history (George Burns and Gracie Allen, anybody?). Thomas Barnett loves classic Hollywood movies (and hates art cinema); he probably thought of "The Liar Song" from "Royal Wedding", written by Alan Jay Lerner and Burton Lane, performed by Fred Astaire and Jane Powell:

**"Didn't your mother never teach ya no manners?"**

**"I ain't never had no mother. We was too poor."**

Then again, Thomas might have just tried to be witty.

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