

CLEOPATRA 52-51 BC

Tales of Batnoam the Amazing Sailor

~ or ~

Stuff Just Happens to Me

Marian Marion Kebab

Batnoam Protects Nikkal

Batnoam skirted around the backs of houses, outrunning some of the dogs, until he got to a place on the very edge of town. He clambered up on the roof and took a deep breath. He relaxed a bit and looked at the stars to get his bearings.

Nikkal: "What are YOU doing up here? ... May you live."

Nikkal appeared out of nowhere with her bow and arrows.

"May you live. Finding some peace and quiet."

"All you have to do is give me a little fun, and I'll give you a little peace."

"I thought I made it clear when I was cornered in your little forum!"

"Who listens to a man avoiding bed?"

"You have a culture, nothing wrong with that, but I ... who are THOSE guys?"

A band of armed men were advancing along the pathway to town.

"Nurritani. We've been at war with them for years, hence our shortage of men. Are you going to do anything about it?"

"They're out of my range."

Nikkal started firing arrows into their archers. Arrows started flying back at her, and Batnoam plucked them out of the air, while yelling to the lookouts. With their archers wounded or killed, the pack turned around. The lookouts signaled the alarm, and the village armed itself.

"I figure you saved my life 4 or 5 ... "

Batnoam turned and saw two burly men climbing over their roof. They never quite got their balance over the edge, since Batnoam took care of them with throwing knives and they fell off before Nikkal could draw her bowstring..

Nikkal's eyes were wide and sparkling. She had a very mischievous/evil grin.

Batnoam: "What's wrong? You all right? Did you take an arrow?"

Nikkal grabbed Batnoam and planted a hot, wild, passionate kiss on his lips that took his breath. She tripped him and straddled his body. She needed two hands to wrestle with her undergarment, which gave Batnoam the opportunity to tip her over. He ran across the roof and just dived off. There was a close building that was undergoing some maintenance and had a partially constructed bamboo scaffold. It was a little wobbly, so Batnoam didn't stay long on any one piece, but quickly swung through it like a monkey until he hit the ground running.

Nikkal: "You are SO gonna give me babies."

Batnoam Has A Desperate Plan

Batnoam: "Oh, thank god, Captain. Steer so that their prow almost touches us. When I jump, raise the fore, then come about and ram them when their sails drop ... Captain."

Captain: "When he *WHATS?!*"

Chief: "Don't question genius, Captain. That *thing* is going to catch us anyway. What have we got to lose?"

"He's *ordering ME* around!!!"

"Man up, and do what you're told ... *Captain.*"

"I hate you."

Batnoam Talks to His Friend Kel

Batnoam: "I got lucky one more time. I hope these kinds of things don't keep happening."

Kel: "Like the Chief said 'Bat's Luck' ... I'm enthusiastically looking for more tales of *Batnoam the Amazing Sailor.*"

"Shut the hell up ... do you have water by any chance?"

"Here. Go crazy buddy."

"PWahhh ... pwuh, pwuh, plahhh ... It's *wine!*"

"Oh my! How did that happen? Everyone knows sailors aren't allowed to carry wine on ship!"

"Now I'm *more* thirsty and my mouth tastes like sour wine. You're a true pal."

"Don't mention it."

"I'll try hard not to."

"Hey! Move your foot."

"Why?"

"Because I asked ... *Please* move your foot."

"Fine."

Batnoam collapsed on the spot.

Batnoam Meets the High Priestess of Lacinium

The Temple of Juno was relatively close to shore but there was a huge religious complex extending from it. Almost 200' of causeway had some buildings at the end of it with lots of people and guards milling about. Batnoam was admitted to the inner sanctum of the temple where a mature priestess eyed him with a seductive grin: she wore a Greek-ish dress with a neckline curiously cut down to her navel.

"You would be Batnoam?"

"Yes, priestess. I'm here to see the High Priestess."

"That would be *me*."

"Permit me some disbelief, please. I'm entrusted with intelligence."

"ARE YOU MORE COMFORTABLE NOW?" <Showing her tattoo, revealing more than necessary ... and moving very close to him.>

"Thank you, High Priestess." <They exchanged intelligence ... Her perfume began having its desired effect.>

"Why don't you have a seat and we can chat about your adventures?"

"I have to get back to my ship, High Priestess."

"SIT"

She grabbed Batnoam's arm and pulled him down on a couch, shoulder-to-shoulder with her. She put an arm around his waist.

"Uhhh ... Please excuse my forwardness, High Priestess. You're only my third High Priestess, and Italy is different from anything I knew before ... uhhh ... Aren't Roman priestesses ... uh ... *virginal*?"

"Yes, they absolutely are ... but this is really a Temple of Hera, the Romans just slapped the name 'Juno' on it. I'm Greek. We don't have any silly rules." <Her face was inches from his.>

"I'm ... *married*." <He had grabbed her wrist as it was headed to his neck.>

"That's not what I heard. I heard you were quite popular until you started chasing your cousin. Nyx is just the latest. You know this is an intelligence organization, right?"

"I'm *going* to marry her."

"What difference does that make?" <She was already close, but somehow got closer.>

"Uhhhh ... you gotta lot of guards here ... and peacocks."

"Oh, sweet boy ... need some small talk? ... *Before*? ... Perhaps the guards have something to do with all our gold. Did you notice it as you came in? Our famous column that Hannibal drilled into? ... Peacocks are one of Hera's animals ... I like that they get frisky all the time."

"Uh ... yes, yes ... a lot of gold ... and amazing paintings." <He was fighting her free hand trying to paw him.>

"Zeuxis did the best ones in the old days. Romans just stole some big ones where the walls are blank ... and damaged. Enough talk!" <Her lips were open and moving in. They had a sweet fruit aroma.>

A loud knock came to the door.

"WHAT?!!"

"You said to interrupt you when that whale showed up? The grain merchant? High Priestess."

“FOR THE LOVE OF HERA ALMIGHTY! ... **YOU!** STAY RIGHT HERE!” <She covered herself with a very matronly dark cloak and dashed out.>

Batnoam did not “*stay right here*” and was glad they exchanged intelligence boxes at the start.

Batnoam Talks to His Friend Kel

Kel: “So, how’d it go?”

Bat: “Why don’t *you* tell *me*? You’re gonna make it all up anyway.”

“Prudish Roman High Priestess risked being buried alive by crawling into your bed in the middle of the night?”

“Yeah, that’s exactly what happened. It’s like you were there. Her name’s ‘Octavia’.”

“Isn’t she like 100 years old?”

“At a minimum. She was kind of crackle-ly.”

“Where’d you get the maps?”

“Stole ‘em.”

“Why do I think you’re lying?”

“No clue. I’m not in your head ... It’s never bothered you before.”

Timon Takes Blue Eyes to His Apartment for the First Time

They left the complex and were met by an enormous wall of sand rolling into Alexandria from the south.

Blue: “What the hell is THAT?!!”

Timon: “A haboob. We need to get inside ... somewhere. Cisterns are too far. We’ll never make the Temple. We’d better run to my place.”

“That doesn’t sound so bad.”

Blue: “This is exactly what I expected.”

Timon: “I’ve never had a visitor before ... I’m not very organized here.”

“Do tell, do tell ... You play the *harp*?!”

“No ... no, no, no ... someone just asked me to keep it for a while.”

“Someone who’s never been here?”

“Yes?”

Blue: “AAAHHH! You’ve got a RAT!!” <Something ducked under his bed.>

Timon: “Not exactly, just a sec.”

Timon flattened himself on the floor and reached under the bed.

Timon: “C’mon little guy. Don’t be shy. I’ll protect you. Come. Come, come, come. That’s a *good* boy. Collected some dust bunnies, did you?”

Timon produced an African hedgehog. It was a little big for his cupped hands, and was gripping his fingers with its tiny paws

Blue: "Sweet Mother Amphitrite! That's the most adorable thing I've ever seen! Can I pet him?"

Timon: "I don't know. Since I found him in an alley, no one else has gone near him. His spines only go one way, but they're damn sharp. Stay away from his mouth, he kills and eats rodents. His name's 'Archimedes'. Lemme try something."

Timon began singing a little chant, over and over.

*Once there was an Archie,
The one with the stylus nose
Once there was an Archie,
Mister belly rub*

Eventually, the hedgehog shut its eyes and rolled on its back, revealing a belly covered in very soft golden hair.

Timon: "You can pet in one direction or just kinda ruffle it."

Blue: "What a sweet little thing! Archie, Archie, Archie ... Is he the only one who likes belly rubs around here?"

"Uhhhh ... I used to have a wild little lizard too, but Archie scared him off ... at least, that's what I like to think."

Blue: "What took you so long to bring me here? What other surprises are you hiding?"

Timon: "Nothing ... Nothing at all. I'm pretty boring."

"What's this stuff? *Poetry?! ... Oh! They're songs, aren't they?!*"

"Uhh ... Don't look at that! ... uhh ... It's someone else's personal stuff."

"You are such a pathetic liar it's amusing. Sing me this one Tie-tie ... This one with my *name* in it."

"Umm ... I don't ... uhhh ... It's not finished ... It doesn't rhyme ... I haven't worked out the melody ... It's no good ... How 'bout this one about Archie?"

"This is going to be the only topic of conversation until you give in. I'm considering punching to push you along ... *THIS* one."

"... ummm ... There's only one verse ... uhhh ... How 'bout this one about a haboob?"

"***THIS*** one!"

"My Blue Eyes ... OW!"

"*Sing* it, harp boy."

*My Blue Eyes is just talking
But I can't get past her lips
I hold her hand just walking
But I'd sell my soul for a kiss*

"Yours' am I? ... I thought you were *never* going to ask."

Blue Eyes grabbed his tunic with both hands, and pulled him to her, inches from her face.

“I’ve been *waiting* for this.”

The kiss started out warm and soft, but it didn’t end there.