

CRUISE SHIP KID

**Thief
at Sea!**

For the real Tommy and Sylvia - Momma and Grandad.

Miss you every day.



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CRUISE SHIP KID

Thief at Sea!

EMMA SWAN

ILLUSTRATED BY KATIE SAUNDERS





Southampton
Follow this way



FRANCE

Marseille

SWITZERLAND

Venice

Livorno

SLOVENIA

Trieste

HUNGARY

CROATIA

SERBIA

Dubrovnik

ALBANIA

GREECE

SPAIN

Barcelona

ITALY

Gibraltar

Adventure Time

TUNISIA

LIBYA

MOROCCO

ALGERIA



might need these



Hello!

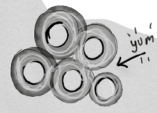
yum



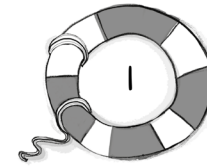
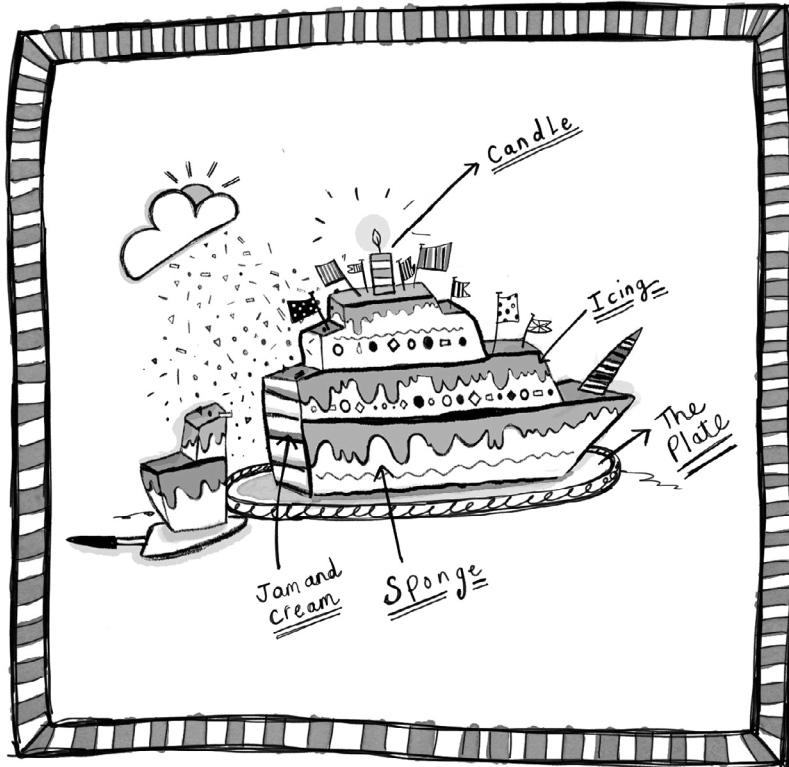
Im delicious



Tasty



yum



CAKE

Day 1
Port Day
Trieste

Living on a cruise ship is like living inside a cake. A cake that floats on the sea. Everything is piled on top of the other but lucky for us the ship is built from stronger stuff than cake mixture, otherwise we'd sink. Try it next time you get a cake – drop it in the bath and see what happens. JOKES. Do not do that, or at least don't say I told you to...

CANDLE: The funnel of the ship is the chimney and it makes me think of a giant candle that I would 10/10 NOT recommend you try to blow out!

ICING: The top of the ship is flat and smooth, like icing. It is also decorated a lot with little flags because "Top Deck" is where the parties happen.

SPONGE: The passenger cabins are the plain layers. I'm giving the passengers the boring bit because they like to

complain A LOT (often to my mum when she is working), even though they are on holiday. My mum smiles and smiles as Grumpy Gwendolen tells her that her “holiday was better 50 years ago” or that she “could make a better 6-course meal at home”. I think, *Why are you complaining – you’re supposed to be having fun?* So yeah, the passengers in their cabins are definitely the sponge.

JAM AND CREAM: In between the sponge layers, the delicious sticky filling is all the fun things to do. Onboard our ship we have 9 shops, a theatre, stairs for sick-bag Olympics (I’ll tell you about this later!), a cinema, an indoor waterfall to drop things down, 5 cafes, 12 chandeliers, 4 restaurants and a buffet where you can eat as much as you like. Sometimes, on special occasions (when Mum isn’t working), I go to the cinema when the passengers are on a trip ashore and Mum and I have the whole place to ourselves. I move seats throughout the film to find the best view, which I think annoys Mum a bit, but as long as I don’t run she says she doesn’t mind.

THE PLATE: The crew area, where I live, is the shiny plate that the cake sits on. That’s because most of the crew live at the bottom of the ship in their cabins. Some passengers treat us like we are lower down than them and they are my least favourite kinds of people.

Our ship has 14 decks (so it’s 14 floors high!). There are 6 hot tubs and 3 swimming pools onboard, but I don’t go anywhere near pools, especially if other kids are in them...

Anyway, my name is Silver, I’m 10 and a $\frac{1}{4}$, and I live in a floating cake, also known as a big cruise ship called *Potentia*. I nearly forgot to tell you my name because I have to introduce myself to the frowning passengers **ALL OF THE TIME**. “Hello, lovely to meet you. I’m Silver, Deputy Cruise Director Jane’s daughter. I’m nearly 11... Silver...**SILVER!!**” (Most of them can’t hear very well.) “Yes, the colour... Yes, it is a real name.” So let’s skip that and play a game instead.



TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

(Mum says I should say fib rather than "lie" but I don't think two truths and a fib is very catchy.)

I'll say three "facts" about myself – two are true and one is A LIE!!!! (Sorry, Mum!)

1. I have been around the world (the whole way around) 8 times.
2. I have been stung by a jellyfish.
3. After silver, my favourite colour is pink.

Which do you think is the lie?

1, 2 or 3...?

Don't look...

until...

you've...

GUESSED!



The LIE is that after silver (obviously the best colour), my favourite colour is pink. It isn't pink, it's green, like grass. Definitely not blue, there's too much of that around me. Imagine waking up and looking outside of your porthole and you just see blue. So yes, I've been around the world 8 times and been stung by a jellyfish (and if you have heard about jellyfish, NO, NOBODY WEED ON ME TO MAKE IT BETTER, but it did hurt A LOT.)

Please write in this and tell me about yourself too. Yeeesss, you can write in this book! (Or if you're borrowing this from a friend (JEALOUS) or a library, write your answers on a bit of paper.)

Go on, write two truths and one lie about YOU on the next page.

Then I'll try and guess.

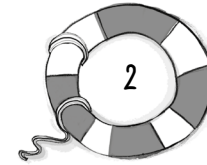
TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

1.
2.
3.

We need to get to know each other, you see, because, well, I hope you don't mind but I'm sort of using you as a practice.

I've never had a best friend for longer than two weeks and two days and I really want one.

A full-time one.



THE GANG

Old people love cruises. Seriously. There is a group of old people that seem to always be on the ship, and they call themselves "The Gang". I find this HILARIOUS because they are the least scary Gang ever.

You see, I do have some friends. The trouble is they are all over 80. I know I said that the passengers are grumpy – and it's true, loads of them are – but some of the very old ones are actually alright.

MEET THE GANG

Gwendolen, 85 - the grump. EXCEPT when she is watching football and then she jumps around cheering at the TV like the players can hear her.





Elvira, 81 – calls herself my “Glamma” (Glamorous Grandma). She wears leopard print or sequins everywhere, including to the pool.

Abdul, 84 – if old people could be cool, I suppose Abdul would be. He used to be an actor when he was young and people sometimes recognize him. He can also do a trick with his hands and pull half of his thumb off – like this.



Tommy, 82, and Sylvia, 80 – they have been married for 60 years and still like each other (WOAH). Sometimes they even wear matching outfits.



Sylvia loves them and Tommy says he does too (whenever he knows Sylvia is listening...).

Betty, 99 – can knit with her eyes closed AND SHE TURNS 100 NEXT CRUISE!!! I've checked



and her birthday is Day 9 out of 13. I've been planning what we should do to celebrate for ages. My first ideas were:

1. Jet-skiing around the ship, OR
2. Throwing 100 birthday water balloons off Top Deck.

But Betty said this all sounds too “active” and she's happy sitting down with tea and a slice of cake. Zzzzzzz.

BACK-TO-BACK

Most passengers come onboard for one cruise. That might be 10 days sailing around the Mediterranean, 16 days in

the Caribbean or 110 days cruising across the world, but they come onboard for ONE holiday...

The Gang aren't like most passengers. They pretty much live full-time onboard and book back-to-back cruises. Sometimes they will leave the ship for a bit, to stay with their families, but The Gang all decided to sell their "on-land homes" to live at sea! I think this decision is 100% because they can't bear to leave me (and not at all to do with the back-to-back cruise discount Tommy likes to brag about!).

HOW I GOT OLD PEOPLE FRIENDS

Abdul, Elvira, Betty and Gwendolen all met onboard over 20 years ago. At the beginning of every cruise there is a meeting for passengers who are travelling alone. It's called the SOLO GET-TOGETHER. Abdul had lost his wife, Betty had lost her husband, Gwendolen had lost her girlfriend and Elvira had lost many, many husbands. So they all went to this meeting. (When they first told me how many people they'd lost, I thought they must be

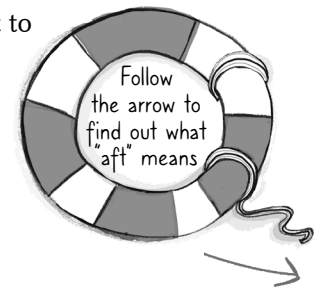
SO forgetful, until I realized this is the old-person way of saying died.)

They became friends at the Solo Get-Together so they called themselves The Solo Gang. But then, a few months later, Sylvia and Tommy tagged along (they don't like it when I say that) and so they changed their name to The Solo Gang. The Gang have been sailing together as one group ever since!

Okay, so now the most important bit...

I met The Gang when I was 3. I don't know if I can remember this or if I've just heard them tell me the story a lot. You know when that happens?

Anyway, The Gang were playing Giant Chess on the aft end of Top Deck. Tommy was just about to make his winning move and suddenly I toddled right into the middle of their game, knocking over their giant pieces and said, "Can I play?"



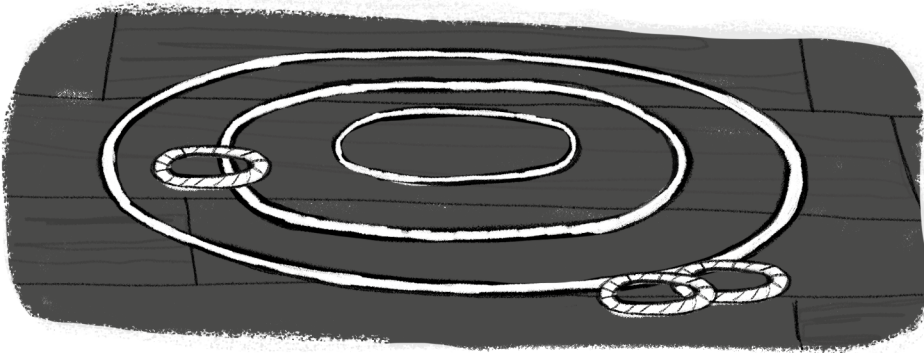
And I became The Gang's final member.

US NOW!

7 and a $\frac{1}{4}$ years later and we still go to the aft end of Top Deck every Thursday but to play deck quoits instead. (They don't trust me near the chess!) Deck quoits is a sport where you throw rope rings and try to get them into white circles on the deck. It sounds boring but it's actually quite fun and I am really good at it when nobody is watching.


This is a deck QUOIT - sounds like KITE if you had a strong Irish accent.

If you don't, sorry, that's not helpful.



Mum says playing deck quoits counts towards my PE, which is great because it gets me out of schoolwork and it means I don't have to go on a deck run that day. Running round and round the deck makes me dizzy because you go in a big loop, breathing in the salty smell. This is only cool if you see dolphins, which does happen, but not often. When it does, I don't make a fuss about it. If somebody shouts, "Dolphins!" all the passengers spill over to that side of the ship and I get crushed. So, when I see them on my run, I feel like they've just come to say hello to me. Their fins pop up out of the waves as if to shout...

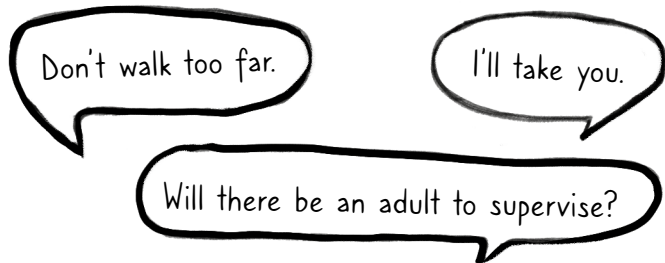
Of course, I would never ever jump in the sea to join them. I do NOT swim and jumping into the ocean from a ship is literally the most



Why are you running? That looks hard, dive in and join us.

dangerous thing you can do. Someone pushing me overboard (or into any water) is my biggest fear, but I don't think crimes like that would ever happen on the ship. Mum says if grown-ups are really badly behaved onboard they are locked in The Security Room until the police come to get them when we get back to Southampton. I've never seen that happen, though, and I have never been in the Security Room but it's on deck 2 and it sounds scary.

I've been pretty much everywhere else onboard though. The good thing about living on a ship is FREEDOM. My mum is the kind of mum who, when we go ashore, would like to tie me to her like a puppy on a lead.



Yet on the ship, I'm allowed to go anywhere (before 7 p.m., 8 on weekends). So it's like I have my own mini, floating town to explore all by myself!

It hasn't always been this way. Before I turned 10, when Mum was working, she would drop me off with different members of my ship family to look after me. Thankfully, now I'm in double figures I can go around on my own. She probably thinks if someone steals me they can't take me very far – unless they hired a rowing boat, buuuuut we won't mention that to Mum.

Anyway, this afternoon with The Gang was seeeeeeriously windy and when Gwendolen threw a deck quoit, her cap blew off. I sprinted after it and caught its red brim before it went into the sea. WINNER. A big hazard to living onboard is that when the weather is bad lots can blow into the water. I've lost pages and pages of homework...

If you're thinking, Why does Silver have homework when she doesn't go to school? I'm thinking exactly the same thing. I ask my mum all the time why I can't just chill and have screen time all day, but apparently being home-schooled or, as I call it, "ship-schooled" is important.

It's not too bad. Amandeep, the ship's librarian and my



teacher, lets me use a laptop in the library for a lot of the day and sometimes I can sneak onto a game of "Zap the Lizard" when she thinks I'm revising my "qu" words. I can always get away with quite a lot when the library is quiet and a passenger is enquiring about a book...

Zap zap zap ☺

I do learn things too. Last week we were doing similes. I used it on you, did you notice? At the very start I said living on a cruise ship is like living inside a cake. BOOM! SMASHED IT. I was trying to show off to make you want to be my friend. Did it work? Anyway, trust me, smiles smiles took me ages to understand until Amandeep said I could use food to compare things to, and now I like them.

Staying up late is like going to the chocolate buffet.

Going to Kids Club is like eating sprouts dipped in sick with a crispy bogey coating. (Amandeep wasn't a fan of this one but I think it's my best work!)

Tomorrow it is TURN AROUND DAY. This has nothing to

do with people spinning and is actually the day where one cruise ends and another begins. Passengers who have finished their holiday get off in the morning and the new passengers, who are starting theirs, get on in the afternoon. The Gang, me, Mum and all the rest of the staff just stay where we are and watch sad faces leaving the ship and excited ones getting onboard.

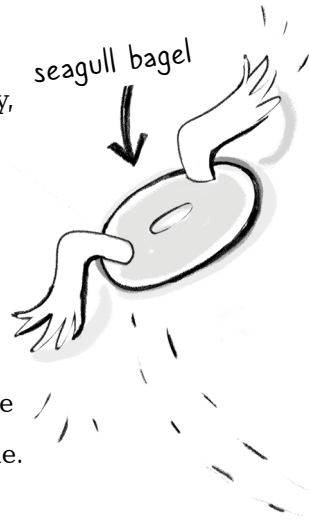
Tomorrow is also the start of the first summer holiday cruise and that is the worst time of my life. In the summer I don't have to do schoolwork any more, but I still have to do extra music and PE. (I seriously get away with nothing onboard.)

For PE I have "Kind Pete". He is a big man, both ways, but he is SO speedy. He does deck runs with me and shouts, "Hurry up, Silver star, I'm racing you to our next port." I like Pete and so do the passengers. He often joins us for deck quoits on a Thursday and makes The Gang laugh with his bad jokes.

"Why do seagulls fly over the ocean?"

"Because if they flew over the bay, we'd call them bagels."

Gwendolen always laughs at Pete's jokes and this afternoon she did a big snort at this one. This made me giggle (not the joke – sorry, Pete) and she glared at me.



"We'll be missing you tomorrow, Silver, won't we? You won't be hanging around with our Gang when all the kiddies your own age get onboard."

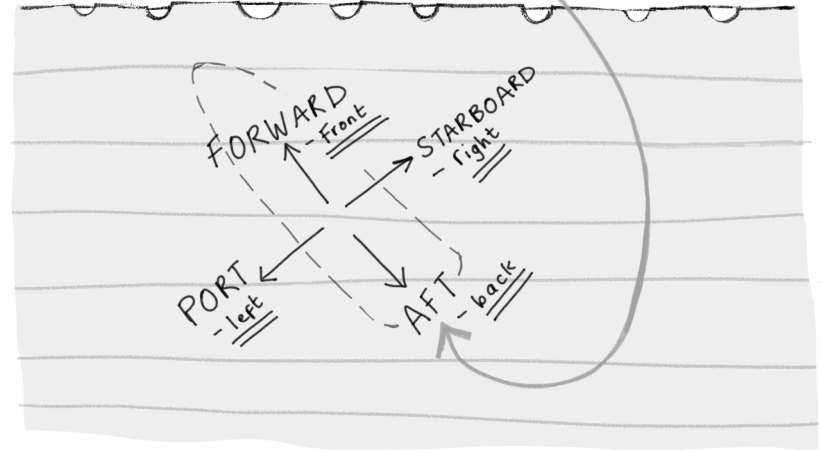
I let go of her cap, that I had SO kindly saved, and it blew off the aft end and into the sea. Whoops.

WAIT WAIT WAIT. Sometimes I use words that land people miiiiight not use (that's you by the way – people who live on land). Just in case, I'll put them here. Hang on though, can we do a swap? When I give you any sea-people words, will you answer a land-person question so I can learn about you?

SEA-PEOPLE WORDS



Onboard we don't call the sides of the ship right and left. We say:



Hmmmmm, how can you remember that?

Well, Amandeep gives me a STAR when I get things right so STARboard is the right side and so PORT must be the left.

F for front, so FORWARD, that's easy.

Ooh, and there is often a drAFT from the back of Tommy

after he's eaten too many beans at the breakfast buffet.
So drafty AFT is the back!

LAND-PERSON QUESTIONS



Where do you live and what's your favourite thing about it?

.....

.....

.....

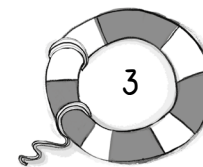
.....

When our ship is full, it fits 1,925 passengers and 802 members of staff onboard. (Including me and Mum.) How many people live with you?

Is your home drAFTy? He he he.

YES

NO



GOOGLY EYES

Earlier tonight, Mum and I were on our way to get ice cream when Debbie spotted us. Debbie is one of those people who is always smiling. Seriously. I often wonder if she sits in her cabin just smiling at the walls. I'm a bit suspicious of people who smile all the time because it's like they are hiding a secret. I'm also suspicious of Debbie because, when she is not in her cabin "wall-smiling", she is running Kids Club – AKA the most terrible place in the world. Passengers send their children to Kids Club to be looked after, so they can have fun. Most kids LOVE it and, between you and me, I used to really like it too, but I met someone there once and it put me off ever going back.

(I'll tell you about her in a second.)

IF YOU CAN'T WAIT
TO FIND OUT, FOLLOW
THE ARROWS

Smiley Debs was sticking a handmade poster to the Kids Club door, ready for the new passengers tomorrow. I wondered why she hadn't used a computer, but I suppose

the bubble letters and glitter made it stand out. The writing on it made my belly twist like a swimming costume when the water's being wringed out of it. (BOOM! See that simile?) She started chatting to Mum.

I've heard most kids look forward to the summer holidays all year. For me they are the worst, because Mum tries to make me go to Kids Club to make friends, but I'm never doing that again. That place reminds me that I'm good with grown-ups, but rubbish with people my own age.

I had a BFF once, when I was 7 and $\frac{3}{4}$. Her name was Chloe and she looked like a real-life princess. My hair is mousy and my body is lumpy, but Chloe still said she liked me. We were BFFs for an Easter cruise and I met her...you guessed it...in Kids Club.

We had 2 weeks and 2 days of doing everything best friends do. We snacked, played games, cinema'd, raced and photobombed the passengers' pictures together. By the way, that's another strange thing about the passengers. We go to such cool ports on the ship – one day

we'll visit a rainforest in the Amazon, another volcanoes in Iceland, and then go for camel rides in the desert. However, the passengers don't want photos of those things. Instead, they want photos of themselves posing in front of a backdrop with a picture of the cruise ship on it.



I wanted to stay in touch with Chloe, but the internet can be terrible on the ship and I'm not allowed a phone. I can

only use Mum's and Amandeep's laptops for school stuff, so when the holiday was over, I said to Chloe we should write to each other. She agreed, so I asked Mum to buy me a special stationery set with neon stickers and colourful envelopes and everything.

If, reader, you are thinking, *WAIT*, can you get post when you live on a ship? The answer is yes! When we stop at a place, somebody called a Port Agent comes onboard with a bag of mail for the staff. (I prefer to call them Posty Post People but they prefer Port Agents. Booooooring.) Passengers who are on the ship a long time (like The Gang) can get their post this way too. All you have to do is let the person sending the letter know the address of the Port Agent at your next stop, and your letter should get to the agent before the ship does!

I wrote the addresses of the Port Agents *SO CLEARLY* for Chloe so she would know how to contact me.

After I sent Chloe the sixth letter, I went to the Captain's cabin to complain. I told him my post wasn't getting to me



and must be lost at sea. He said he would double-check for me with all the Port Agents. He did.

There were no letters.

Since then it's...well, you know how some kids get shy around grown-ups? Like if you have to speak to your mum's friend and there's nothing to say so you just freeze, like a laptop out of power. (BOOM!) Well, that's me now around anyone my own age and I don't know what to do. How come I can chat to Amandeep, Kind Pete and even Grumpy Gwendolen, but I can't chat to anyone my age? How can I get a real BFF if I'm too scared to talk to anyone?

Smiley Debs had finished with the poster now and she was smiling even more at what Mum was saying. Smiley Debs smells of playdough a lot. I didn't know that was a possible smell for human beings until I met her. My eyes met the familiar seashell sign on the Kids Club door.

Under the shell's googly eyes it said:



Tomorrow, when the ship isn't just full of old people any more, and loads of kids get onboard, these sea creatures will go to Kids Club not knowing anyone. Then the next day, they'll be walking arm in arm down the gangway or playing "Who can fit the most on their tray" at the buffet and they're all best friends.

HOW?

I walk around the ship and when I see someone my age

I try to look anywhere else: at peanuts on the bar table, at the bruise on my knee, or up at one of the big chandeliers. Mum does the opposite and tries to catch the eye of people my age, expecting them to go, "Oh heyyy, Silver. Great to see you." Ha, as if.

Sometimes Mum deliberately talks to the passengers with kids. This happened today, just before we saw Smiley Debs. People were walking towards us. I could see that Mum had spotted her target.

"Mum, come onnnnn, come onnn." I tugged on her white blazer sleeve, but she pretended she couldn't feel it.

"Mummmm, please."

"Hello there, my name's Jane, your Deputy Cruise Director. Are you enjoying the last night of your holiday?"

I pulled at the painful bit of sticky-out skin next to my fingernail.

"This is my daughter Silver. What's your name, little one?"

One of the passengers squeaked a reply, while I ripped off the sticky-out skin with my teeth. Ouch!

"Ah, hello there, Maya!" said Mum. "Silver, introduce yourself to Maya. She obviously likes...erm, rabbits, like you do, Silver!"

I looked down at the girl and nearly died. She was about 6 years younger than me (tiny kids are onboard all year) and clutching a well-chewed bunny toy. Not a potential BFF!! If I hung around with Maya and her rabbit I'd be babysitting! THE WORRRSSSTTTT!

"Hi," I said, scuffing the carpet with my flip-flop.

Maya was now sucking on the bunny's ear. EW, GROSS. GET ME OUT OF HERE.

After 5 more minutes of excruciating chat from Mum, who kept giving me those eyes that say "Speak, Silver, this is for your benefit", we walked down the corridor.



"You could have been more polite."

"She was a baby, Mum."

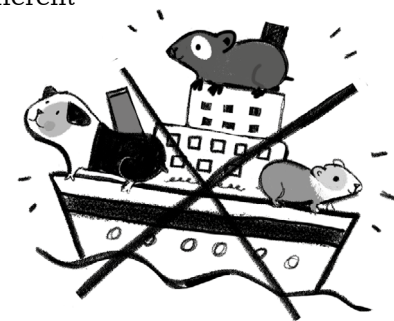
"Well she might have been a little young but it's important for you to socialize. I do worry about you only talking to adults these days, Silver. It's a shame you didn't meet her earlier in the cruise. You're so unique, darling, anyone would be lucky to be your friend."

Why do grown-ups say unique like it's a good thing?

Unique means *different* and *different*

means *weird* and *weird* means

living alone for ever with a family of guinea pigs but not actual guinea pigs because you are not allowed those onboard.



"I'm FINE, Mum. You always make it worse," I snapped.

Mum went quiet and I felt a bit guilty that I'd pushed it too far, but I didn't feel like saying sorry.

Suddenly, my in-between-ears voice was rudely interrupted by Smiley Debs jolting me back to now, standing outside Kids Club. "We're relying on you to spread the word." Debbie smiled.

By the way, in-between-ears voice = my thoughts. Not a sea-people thing, just a Silver thing.

I looked up and saw Smiley Debs's teeth still beaming at me. I remembered the girl with the bunny and Mum's disappointed forehead creases.

Smiley Debs was pointing at the words on the poster.



"She'll be there," Mum said. "She'll definitely be there."

SEA-PEOPLE WORDS



SEA DAY = We're at sea and the ship won't stop anywhere that day. (WOO-HOO! I like to watch back-to-back films at the cinema with a giant pick'n'mix.) We need a sea day when there isn't enough time to sail to our next port overnight. On a cruise, lots of sailing is done when the passengers are asleep.

Did you know that?

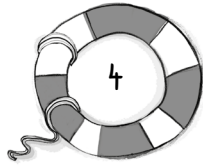
YES / NO

PORT DAY = We dock somewhere and you can get off the ship and go onto land.

LAND-PERSON QUESTION

Would you rather wear a hat made of jelly or socks made of mashed potato?

JELLY HAT / MASH SOCKS



DAD

I don't know my dad because he was eaten by a shark. Okay, that's not true but it's what I like to tell people. Really, he left when I was a fiiiiiiiny baby, and it's sort of the reason I live on the ship. Mum and Dad had a plan when I was born that Dad would live on land with me, so I could go to school, and Mum would live at sea as that's where her job was, then we would join together on the ship for the holidays.

Then Dad got in the car one day when I was little and didn't come back. I know, not as cool as the shark story, but it meant that after the divorce Mum and I came to live on the ship full-time instead.

I don't really think about my dad much because I don't remember him, but I sometimes get carsick and I'm never seasick. ENOUGH about me.

I want to know you better,
let's do a quick quiz:



Which do you like best? Circle the answers.

1. Animal

A. Dogs



B. Cats



C. Pygmy hippos (look them up - SO cute)

2. Food

A. Pizza

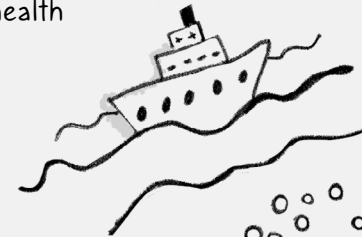


B. Chocolate

C. Healthy, healthy salad with a crunchy coating of health

3. Place

A. The sea



B. The pool

C. The bath



4. Hobby

- A. YouTube
- B. Videogames
- C. Books



5. Do you have a BFF?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Not yet but I really want one



Now add up all your answers.

Mostly As? You are my kind of person. Do you have a dog? If so I'm verrrrrry jealous. I'm not allowed pets onboard. Pizza! The sea! The ship Wi-Fi is the worst for YouTube but I love it. You should definitely keep reading. Oh, and if you have a BFF – TEACH ME HOW!

Mostly Bs? We are alike. I think we'd be friends. On this cruise there's a whole buffet made of chocolate on one of the days – you'll love it! There are some cool videogames

in Kids Club (NOT that I go there any more).

And you're brave if you like swimming pools.

You should definitely keep reading this book. And if you picked that you don't have a BFF, maybe we can help each other.

Mostly Cs? SALAD?!!!! Mum, is that you? You might have picked the pygmy hippos though, and that's cool. I saw one once in Africa and it was ADORABLE. I asked Mum if we could keep it and she did that eye-rolly thing that means, "You know the answer to that question."

Books – yay, you should definitely keep reading this one, aaaaaand you want a BFF too?

WE CAN DO THIS.

TIP UPSIDE DOWN TO READ:

Yes okaaaaay, I said you should carry on reading this book to all of the answers, BUT IT'S TRUE. Unless you're a grown-up, then put this down now because you won't understand it at all...





It's turn around day and the first day of the summer cruise. (UGHHHHH!) Which means that this morning, lots of old people got off the ship and, right now, loads of families with kids my age are getting onboard. (AHHH!) Mum likes to make a "good impression" on the new passengers, so she spent ages earlier ironing her uniform – a white suit with gold stripy shoulders.

The officers on the ship get stripes to show what kind of job they have. The Captain, Yin, has four stripes and she is the most important person onboard. (I like Captain Yin, but you would NOT want to upset her as she says what she thinks. Like that one time a passenger said, "A woman captain? I'm not sure we'd have booked if we'd have known," and she said, "Well then it's your lucky day, isn't it?" and walked off.)



The Chief Engineer on the ship, Kwame, has four stripes too (he's married to Kind Pete, and I was bridesmaid at their wedding). Next is the Cruise Director, Dave, with three stripes and he is the Head of Entertainment. That sounds like a fun job full of dancing but really it just means working A LOT. I know this because Mum is the Deputy Cruise Director (with two-and-a-half stripes) and I think she does her job and Lazy Dave's job at the same time, because I always see him sitting at the bar while Mum is in meetings.

I like everyone on the ship no matter if they've got four stripes or zero – except for someone called Snooty Simon, who is a Deck Officer. I don't know what that means. Maybe he just shouts at the floor all day, but I do know he always calls me Susan.

Mum says I need to be nice to Snooty Simon because his wife left him and he lost a lot of money in the



break-up. I don't know how someone so mean found a wife in the first place, but I couldn't say this out loud because Mum would tell me off for being VERY RUDE.

You see, being the Deputy Cruise Director's daughter "comes with responsibility". This is what Mum says anyway. Basically, it means I need to behave all the time and follow the rules, because if I don't it will make Mum look bad. For example, if I feel cross on the ship I have to wait until we're in the cabin to talk about it. So Mum reaaaaally wasn't happy about what happened this afternoon.

We were in the lift, and I shouted, "Please, Mum, I don't want to do piano today, it's boring arpeggios."

A lady with curly hair, flowery clothes and glasses dangling from a necklace (weird) tutted at Mum and said, "Poor child, making her practise piano on her holiday."

I started to tell the woman that "Actually I'm not on holiday, I live on the ship..." but Mum spoke OVER THE TOP

OF ME and said, "Welcome onboard, Madam... Ooh, I love your bag, where did you get it?"

Glasses-on-a-necklace lady seemed to fully forget that we'd just been speaking about piano and said, "Well actually I got it last Christmas to mark our 214th voyage. We are platinum club members you know, so..."

ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ.

Then Mum asked the question that means there is no escaping the LOOOONNNNGGGGG answer the passenger will give: "Are you enjoying the first day of your cruise?"

"Yes, well...no, actually..." (READER I TOLD YOU!)

"I did notice that the aft end of the ship isn't getting quite as much sun as the forward end, so I wondered if the ship could be turned round as, you see, I've found a lovely sunbed spot at the back."

Mum kept smiling and nodding as glasses-on-a-necklace lady went on and on about her suntan goals until finally

she got out of the lift. PHEW.

"Mum, why didn't you tell her that I have to do piano because we live on the ship, and that the Captain can't turn the ship round for her sunbathing because then when we set off again we would literally BE GOING THE WRONG WAY?"

Mum laughed as we walked towards the happy and sad masks outside the theatre. "Silver, you know we must always agree with the passengers. They're the paying customers so they must always be right."

"But—"

"Trust me, darling. It's much easier. One time a passenger told me there was too much sand on a Caribbean beach and asked if some could be taken away."



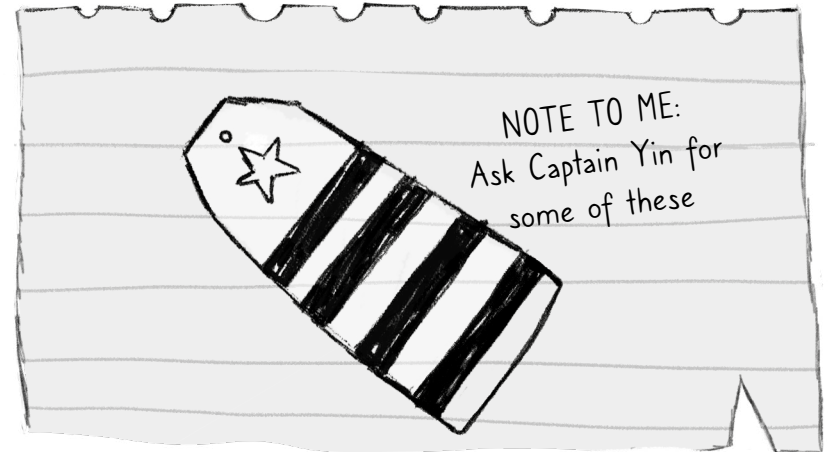
I did a laugh-snort.

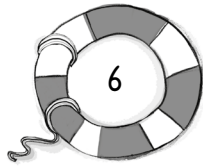
"It's our job to smile and nod until they think of something else to complain about."

"But what if they..."

"And don't argue with me again in front of passengers! Enjoy your lesson, sweetheart. Ooh, and bring your life jacket later, I've got a little job for us to do."

Sometimes it feels like I work on here too. I should have my own mini shoulder stripes and be Officer Silver.





SAIL AWAY

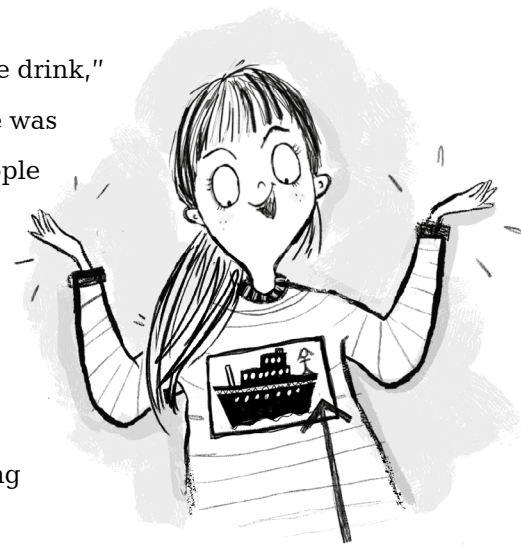
When the ship sails away from the first port there's a party. It's called the Sail Away Party (grown-ups can be so predictable). I have been to this hundreds of times and I should be bored of it, but I'm not. We all go up to Top Deck and the band plays and people watch as we get further away from land. Today we were in Trieste in Italy and the passengers had flown here to meet the ship. (Grown-ups say "meet the ship" a lot and it makes me laugh thinking about people saying, "Heyyyyy, ship, how's it going?")

FUN FACT: if Italy is shaped like a boot and Sicily is the football, then Trieste is on the bum.



A man who was bald on top but hairy everywhere else was swaying next to the

bar. "I'm just having one drink," he said, even though he was holding two. Lots of people wore T-shirts or caps with the cruise ship on, like we were all in a big club together. I was wearing my favourite green jumper, pretending I was the club leader.



Tommy and Sylvia were dancing in front of the band. Elvira, Abdul,

Grumpy Gwendolen and Betty were sat playing cards. (Weeellll, Betty was more watching and starting to make a scarf; she takes her knitting needles EVERYWHERE.)

I ducked down, as whenever I play cards with The Gang, Grumpy Gwendolen turns it into a maths lesson. She used to be a head teacher and you can tell.

"Silver! ¡Ven aquí!" Elvira shouted, looking over her huge leopard-print sunglasses.

ME at the front waving
(I may have drawn this on)

Oh no, they'd seen me.

"Come over, love!" said Sylvia and Tommy, twirling over to the others. Sylvia had a big stripy bow in her hair that matched the stripes on Tommy's shirt.

"Yoo-hoo, Silver!"



I had no choice.

"How are you, Silver?" said Abdul. "My gr—"

"Shh, Abdul!" said Grumpy Gwendolen, staring at the cards in her hand that looked like a fan. (BOOM!) "I'm concentrating."

We all held our breath.

"SNAP," she shouted. "Okay, now you can talk."

"My grandson is on this cruise, Silver," said Abdul. "I'm not sure where they've gone, but look." He pulled out a photo from his wallet. "This is Mo." A baby with huge cheeks and a snotty nose was sitting in the bath, waving.

"Yeah. Errrr...cute."

"I want you to meet him," said Abdul.

WHY was everyone trying to make me a babysitter lately?

"Now look at my cards, Silver. If you add all the hearts and clubs together, what would you get?" said Grumpy Gwendolen. READER, I TOLD YOU.

"Run, Silver," whispered Tommy, standing behind me.

"While you still can."

"Maybe later, Gwendolen," I said. "I've got to go."

I walked over to my usual viewing spot at the aft end and stopped.

A girl my age (ish) was in my place, leaning on the railings and looking bored. I knew the girl was popular even though she was on her own. You know when you can just tell straight away? She had dark-brown shiny hair all the way down her back. Another girl with braids and a neon backpack walked over to her and then they showed each other their bracelets. Then they started smiling. They had just made friends. HOW?

