

The Knotted Rope

by

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“A sailor don’t got the room for fancy stuffs,” the old Bosun growled at the Cabin Kit. “All the room ya gots is yor sea bag, and yor memory.”

“But what if your memory is failing?” the kit asked the larger Cat.

“N who might you be think’n of there mister?” the old male hiss whispered. “Bad luck to voice those thoughts out loud don’t cha know. A mind lost like that is turmoil and trouble.” He winked to let the youth know he could trust him.

“The Captain, sir. He forgets a bit these days and it ain’t the drink. He calls me his Polly, and he’s constantly playing with the knots on line he keeps hung around his neck. It makes me rightfully a’feared, sur.”

The old Calico looked at the youth, and chuckled. “He ain’t playing with the knots, kit, that’s his memory and he’s jest think’n back.”

“His memory?”

“True be’s my words... his memory.” The Bosun walked to the water barrel next to the mast and reaching down inside with the scooper, pulled out a good drink. When he had slacked his thirst, he placed the scooper back and lowered the lid. “The longer you sail these seas Cabin Kit, the more anniversaries you have to celebrate, and the more ya has want ta forget.”

“I don’t understand, sur,” replied the kitten.

The Calico, at the risk of losing his pantaloons, untied the rope belt that secured them in place and held it out. “This here is my memories,” he said. “Take it. Finger the knots and calls them out to me by type.”

The Kit was confused, but did as he was told. Looking closely at the first knot, he said “Square knot.”

The old Cat smiled, his eyes half closing. “The day I signed on to my first ship. I was about your age.”

“Overhand knot.”

“The first time I had sex... ahhhh... that is to say...”

The Kit smiled at the older Cat. "I know what that is," he hiss whispered, "The cook showed me."

"He what?!"

"It's a type of biscuit that has six layers to it."

"Oh," the Bosun said with a note of relief. "Tell me the next knot."

"Bowline."

"Good eye and you're leaning your seamanship quite nicely. That would be the first port I stopped in. They used that knot to hang me over the side so I could paint the hull."

"Figure eight knot."

"My first gale what I weathered. We was all lashed to the main mast it was that bad. The only thing what saved the ship was the fact we was carrying a cargo of coconuts. Every seam on the ship seemed to be sprung, but we stayed afloat."

"This one is all wrapped with twine, but it looks like a sheep shank."

"That one is a sad one... my first sea battle. I lost a good bunch of my mates, and killed my first enemy. That was on the Barnacle, 24 gun brig." He smiled, remembering. "We used to call her The Litterbox, cuz she was sech a crappy old ship."

There were twenty four knots on the rope, and the pair went through all of them, the Bosun remembering each and every anniversary like it had happened only the day before. By the time they were done, the sun was on the horizon, and it was near dinner.

"I have to go and prepare the Captain's table," the kit told the Bosun, "But later I want to make a belt like yours. The first knot will be to remember you Tom."

The Bosun smiled and ruffled the kit's fur. "I'm right honored."

The kit giggled, and then told him, "You show me how to tie it, and I'll go get some sex from the cook, and eat while sitting on your lap like I do for him."

With that, the Cabin Kit skipped off to attend his duties, leaving the Bosun with his mouth hanging open.

The old sailor Cat decided right then and there to go have a little talk with the cook.