

Tribal Elder

by Kevin John Phillips

Seems we're planning a cruise. It's starting to pan out as one of those husband-wife things equipped with different expectations. I know what I expect.

Just pour me one of those umbrella drinks, set me down at the front of the ship, I'll yell, "Land Ho!" when I see it and we can steer right for it.

(Hey, could you do that for seven days, Kevin, wouldn't you get bored? I could do it for seventy times seven days, brother, and celebrate my last day on earth listening to calypso music. What a way to go!)

Her expectations, on the other hand, are much like one of those trick cans with the spring-loaded snake. Jam packed, you might say.

"Look at this," she says while thumbing through the guide book, "look at what we can do on Jooga Booga island. Says here, 'Parasailing over the sapphire blue sea, one soars hundred of feet above water-skiers, boaters, and snorkelers, and the picture is breathtaking.' Wow!"

She gets this look in her eye, and I know it's a spark from the wheels turning.

"I'm going to stop by the sporting goods store," she announces, "and see if they have any..."

Just pour me one of those umbrella drinks, slip some fresh (not frozen!) fruit chunks in and set me down at the front of the ship. I'll yell, "Land Ho!" when I see land, and Captain Stubbing can steer right for it. I think I'll have dinner on the Lido deck, thank you, and when we dock get me directions to the Island Employment Commission. See if there are any openings for tribal elders.

"Oh, wow, snorkeling! Says here, 'The warm blue sea is perfect for viewing nature's wonders. The picture is breathtaking.' Sounds great, doesn't it? I'll go price some new masks. I think Jenny at work has some stuff she's looking to sell, I'll ask her if she..."

Pour me an extra large Pirate Delight, and put it in a coconut shell. A real shell, and make it big one, 'cause navigating these superliners takes some time to learn. Yo ho ho.

"Well, look at this. Our third stop is St. Peekaboo Island. One of the beaches is a 'European-style, clothing optional beach.' "

Pour me one of those . . . what? It says what?

"Clothing optional. That means you don't have to wear a bathing suit if you don't want to, right? She snorts and looks over at me.

No way. That's the first thing. Second, I don't think the beach at St. Peekaboo is ready for this Stallone in Rocky XXV-like physique.

If I want to make someone groan in pain, I'll tell 'em one of my dad's jokes. And third, while everyone is bugged-eyed on the beach, I'll commandeer the blender, sneak up to the bridge and take the ship for a spin around the island. I'll crank the radio up real loud, race other cruise ships, and toot the fog horn the whole time. Might even take out a few snorkelers if they aren't careful.

She continues to read.

" 'After six PM, proper attire is required on deck. Your cooperation is appreciated.' Kevin, I'll have to get some clothes, and I'll need some. . . . "

I'm taking two pairs of shorts; when the first pair gets too stinky, I'll put on the second pair. Let them try to call me on it. Let them try to get me off the. . what do they call the front of the ship? Ah, just fix me a kettle drum full of Crème De Chunka Bunka's. Anyone that dares to cross me will walk the plank! Avast, ye swabs! Thar she blows, mate. Raise the giblets and...um...trim the dorsal fins..."

"So I was thinking we get the all-day discovery tour, and then. . . . "

Hmmm. Maybe even an apprentice tribal elder.

