

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to my Second Grubling's Bar Mitzvah

By Bill Wolfe

Go ahead, already. Your drink you should finish. We're on an expense account, after all. Perhaps a small nosh, to hold us until dinner? Okay, as you wish.

Don't let the large proboscis and swarthy integument fool you. Many who look like me have a reputation for business matters. But what am I, a meshugener, that I take no time for pleasure, and the getting-to-know of my newest pilot?

The green scales, I admit, are a sign of youth. But I'd be mishegas not to offer you all that the client is willing to pay for.

No? What are you, a shlemiel?

Once even, on the expense of my client, of course, I bought the Creator of Bethdish two bottles of Krupnik. Yes? . . . No. . . not the Planetary Administrator, the Creator! A small party in his particular dimensional plane, Casa Vila. I've found that alcohol makes business, and everything else, go more smoothly. Especially when I'm on someone else's shekel.

I'm so very happy that your species does not find alcohol toxic. Bad for business to kill a customer or partner, don't you think?

Agreed? Yes. Good.

Well, at the risk of getting a little schmaltzy, I should tell you of the last time I was here. Yes, of course, have another, by all means.

What? From where comes this kvetsh?

Why would I try to get you farshnoshket, when you're already sending my poor children to the orphanage with your astute bargaining? The little things are crying in the night for the food you are taking from their gastronimetical orifices.

Yes, of course. But this girth is needed for making me look more successful, more formidable to the less-aware. It is not meant to fool one such as yourself. No, my good friend, I am at your mercy in this transaction. I'm sure that once you agree to the price we discussed, one of my children will surely starve. Your spiel, when we spoke last, was very good. Tonight is merely to formalize our transaction.

Would I lie?

It is good, isn't it? You'll never be served anything schlocky at The Mare.

Why, of course! All you want.

Tell me when, and I'll signal Blanche.

Ah, for a shikse, she's really something, isn't she?

Let's schmooze, while we wait. Shall we?

A few nights ago, I am sitting on my tuches in here, minding my own business and discussing certain customs irregularities with another client, when who should come in, but the Reeveer?

Him? Ah, a true mentsh, but still the highest law officer in Bethdish. You should know this man already, no?

This tells me much about you, friend. A man who does not fear the law is either yiddisher kop, or perhaps a bit of a schlimazel.. You are the former, of course. I notice that your record is clean in this part of the galaxy, by the way.

Nothing recent, of course? Nothing? Good.

In any case, It was here that the Reeveer detained my previous pilot, for a minor docking infraction, I'm sure. He was an Ibeesan named Kakartuouload. Ahh. . .you've heard of him, I see. Good.

He was on his way to meet me and my contact about shipping the. . .baubles. . .we discussed off of Bethdish without. . .how should I say this?. . .without undue attention from the authorities.

Kakartuouload didn't seem to mind that he was picked-up here. Had he been charged on his home planet, they would have chopped his head off. I hear it takes weeks for an Ibeesan to grow it back.

It was simply ill fortune that we scheduled our meeting for the one hundredth anniversary of Max's tenure as bartender here at the Mare. Max and the Reeveer go a long way back, more than a million years, if the stories are true.

Yes, I said a million. Million. Yes.

Of course they're both Immortals. You knew? Not? Interesting.

Your glass is empty? How embarrassing, as I am your host. I'll signal Blanche for a refill, immediately. I'll tell you, if I were a thousand years younger, or if the Harem were a little less vigilant. . .

Who? Trixie? Yes, of course. But such a tiny thing. Nothing to sink your grappling tentacles. . .ah well. . .a gentleslug does not discuss such matters.

“To each, his own.” I’ve heard some say.

That one, that Trixie was here when poor Kakartuouload was detained. Now, I don’t know much about her species, but from the way she was looking at Max, I am surprised he is working now, behind the bar. I swear, from her body language and the hungry look on her face, that night, I wouldn’t have been surprised that she would have made a meal of him. Such appetite, I saw.

Oy vey iz mir, had she had her way with poor Max. Who else would mix such a perfect Alter Kaker? The prune juice alone, he must pay handsomely to have smuggled-in from wherever those luscious tidbits are grown. Perhaps she is on a diet, and so he still lives. It would explain both her small size and how Max survived the evening.

Ahh, the lovely Blanche brings us a reprieve from a slow, parched death in the barren desert.

You flatter me, mistress. What they say is true. A direct relationship, since you were kind enough to ask. Yes, it’s quite proportional, and also prehensile, as well.

Come friend, let us toast to such a divine creature. Just watching how she walks away, I could plotz!

And now to our business arrangements, we are in agreement, yes?

And finally, let us toast to The Mare Inebrium, may its taps and the stories to be told here, never run dry!

Mazel Tov!

The End