

THE
DETECTIVE'S
GUIDE TO
NEW YORK
CITY

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GREENBERG

 **Affirm**
press

Dedication to come



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Here, the skyscraper of today is the dust-pile of tomorrow; styles change in a single round of the clock, and they roast tomorrow the favoured celebrity they toast today. New York is the greatest, grandest, most glorious show on earth – and it's never closed. It's more than a city – it's an adventure around the world compressed within thirty-one pulsating miles.

Rian James, An Intimate Guide to New York City

July 21st, 1927

Dearest Pepper,

Didn't I tell you I was destined for stardom? Didn't I say that Broadway would come calling? Well, you heard it here first: your pal Norah Gallagher, not yet four months into her new life in New York City, has landed a part in an actual Broadway show! I keep pinching myself to make sure I'm not dreaming. But it really is happening, true as bricks! The Irish Nightingale is ready to swoop the stage!

It isn't just any old show, either. It's Freddie Lush's new musical comedy, HOLD YOUR HAT! at the Belasco Theatre. That's REAL Broadway, in case you didn't know – with Bette Merrill and Grant Wynn (an absolute peach!) playing the leads. My clever agent Ira gave me a few extra birthdays to get me into the show, so I've even been lying about my age like a real actress (ha ha!). And now that I'm working, I don't have to go to school!

Of course it's only a chorus role, but Ira says that's how lots of stars got their start. And I'm already ahead of the other girls, because ... I HAVE A LINE!!! I'm the one who sings out 'Hold your hat!' at the start of the first big number. That'll make me stand out all right! I've been shouting it all afternoon and startling Mam half to death.

Oh, I wish you could come and see the show. Is your da's ship fixed yet? Do you think he'd let you come across

again? I'd write and beg him myself if you thought it would help. We open on the 20th of October – please, please, PLEASE try and come. Then one day when I'm a leading lady and on the front page of all the papers, you'll be able to say that you saw me in my Broadway debut!

Write soon and tell me you'll be there.

Loads of love,

Norah

PS I've a new bobbed haircut so that I look the part for the show. You'd hardly recognise me!



August 3rd, 1927

Dear Norah,

Hold your hat...

Now, turn the page...

WE'RE COMING!!!

The Captain said yes! And he's already booked the passage on Mauretania, so it really is happening. I'm counting down the MINUTES until I see you and Sol and the whole glorious city. I've been dying to go back there ever since we left.

Poor old Aquitania is still being put together again like Humpty Dumpty. The job really does seem to require all the King's men: the Captain has been traipsing up and down between London and the Clydebank shipyards in Scotland ever since he got back, keeping an eye on the repairs. You'd imagine that he'd be terribly morose with his ship out of service, but it's quite the opposite. He's almost ... cheerful. Though to tell you the truth, I think that has less to do with Aquitania, and more to do with one Emmaline Eagar.

Yes, I suspect – though it hardly takes a great detective to puzzle it out – that the Captain has found himself a sweetheart. And not an ocean liner either, but an actual flesh-and-blood woman. I met her a couple of weeks ago, when he took me up to see the progress on Aquitania. She's a drapery specialist, working on the First Class interiors. She's quite stylish and awfully friendly. And divorced. I'm not sure how I feel about any of that. It's a bit gruesome, thinking about one's father being in love.

Anyway, this Emmaline Eagar and her son Elliott are

coming to New York, too. Elliott is a year older than me, apparently. I haven't met him yet, so I've no idea what he'll be like. Of course, it won't be nearly the same as sailing with you and Sol. Or that rogue Toby, for that matter.

But the important thing is, I'M COMING. Before you know it, we'll be back together in the most marvellous city on earth. And I'll be there on opening night with a bouquet for you the size of Lady Liberty's torch!

*Your loving friend and devoted fan,
Pepper*



August 11th 1927

Dear Pepper,

You're coming! That's just swell – all of us are happy as a bunch of clams at high tide since we got your letter. But you know what? You could have saved the stamps. Norah found out a day before we did, and I swear the whole of Manhattan and half of Brooklyn could hear her hollering. She was waiting for me outside the restaurant when I came to work, jumping up and down like she'd sat on a nest of ants. So I heard your news twice, which was just fine – it's the kind that makes you want a second helping. Having you back in New York will be the bee's knees. And the elephant's eyebrows. And the turtle's two front teeth!

You'd better come hungry, because I've already asked our maitre d' to reserve the best table for you on the Saturday night. We'll be sure to make something extra special for dessert.

I have to split now, though – I've got two hundred profiteroles to fill!

Your friend,

Sol

PS Sorry about the custard stains. And can you please bring me a copy of the menu cards from the Mauretania?

CHAPTER 1

When Pepper Stark had imagined returning to New York, the ocean voyage that she saw in her mind belonged to her and the Captain alone. The other First Class passengers – all five-or-six-hundred of them – were just a hazy background to their private adventure. She'd pictured herself and her father deep in conversation all the while: strolling on the promenade decks, taking tea in the garden lounges, touring the hidden parts of the ship that ordinary passengers were not permitted to see. And when their destination twinkled over the horizon at last, they'd be standing side by side on the command bridge to watch New York rise from the water, just as they had done on *Aquitania*. They'd fill their lungs with the first scents of the port: engine smoke and fishing boats and the tantalising possibility of hot dogs. Their eyes would crinkle against the sunlit dazzle of the towers, their hearts accelerating as one in anticipation of the city's wonders

Chapter 1

and delights. Norah and Sol would both be waiting to welcome them, not as visitors but as people who belonged here, even if New York was not strictly their home. The city, Pepper felt, would have a place reserved especially for Captain and Pepper Stark.

But things were not turning out quite as she had imagined. Emmaline and Elliott Eagar were sharing this voyage with them. And all the way from one side of the Atlantic to the other, Emmaline Eagar had been stuck to the Captain like a rope lashed to a buoy.

Emmaline (she'd asked Pepper to call her by her first name the minute they met) seemed nice enough, Pepper supposed. She was small and doll-like – a good inch shorter than Pepper – with bouncy red hair and an odd, hiccupping laugh. And she was full of enthusiasm for everything, brandishing her guidebook (embarrassingly titled *An Intimate Guide to New York City*) and reading out great long passages about what they *must* do or see when they got there. This would be Emmaline's first visit to the Big Apple, and she looked ready to gobble it up whole. Pepper had only been to New York once herself, but now she felt like a citizen whose town was about to be trampled by gawping tourists. It was her mother's city, after all. It didn't belong to Emmaline Eagar.

The thing that really set Pepper's teeth on edge, though,

THE DETECTIVE'S GUIDE TO NEW YORK CITY

was the way Emmaline called the Captain, 'Captain'. It was a silly thing to care about and Pepper felt awfully petty admitting it, even to herself. Everybody called him 'Captain', after all. But when Emmaline used the title, it sounded like a soppy private pet name. *Look, Captain! Is that an albatross? Shall we have lunch in the Verandah Café, Captain? Oh, thank you, Captain, that bouillon was just what I needed ...* She might as well have been calling him *sweet pea* or *sugar-plum*. Pepper could feel herself wince a little every time the word came out of her mouth. But the Captain didn't seem to be discomfited by it at all. Could he actually be in love? It really *was* too gruesome to think about.

Whatever it was with Emmaline, it had certainly wrought a change in the Captain. He hadn't gone completely soft, of course, but one might say that he'd mellowed from sheer granite to something more like slate. He was gracious with *Mauretania's* crew, who insisted on saluting him at every turn, and he tolerated the inquiries of his nosy fellow passengers without growling at a single one. He slept in (sometimes until seven o'clock!), took his dinner in the grand saloon where the four of them were guests at Captain Alexander's table, and accompanied Emmaline uncomplainingly to whichever shipboard entertainments took her fancy.

Chapter 1

As a result, Pepper and Elliott were left largely to themselves. Elliott had turned out to be quite good company in the end. Norah would probably like him all right, Pepper thought, though Sol might find him a little odd. He had a keen eye for style and was at his happiest taking in the glamorous fashions on display, pointing out a hat designed to suggest a Japanese paper crane or a shawl whose colours copied the latest costumes of the *Ballets Russes*. He was clever, and funny, too, once his initial shyness wore off. But it was a different story when the Captain was near. Then, Elliott became an oyster. His chatter and charm vanished completely. His voice collapsed into an awkward mumble, and his eyes shifted from side to side as if he wanted to disappear. True, the Captain did not have any talent for making idle conversation, let alone conversation about hats and frocks. But Elliott seemed positively petrified of him. *For goodness' sake*, Pepper felt like saying. *The Captain's a pussycat now. You ought to have seen what he was like before!*

All in all, the crossing was a pleasant one. There were the marvellous breakfasts and magnificent dinners that the Cunard Line was famous for; there was music and dancing and games, and lazy deck-chair afternoons reading Olive Marvell mysteries while Elliott appraised the passing parade of First Class couture. As lovely and luxurious

THE DETECTIVE'S GUIDE TO NEW YORK CITY

as it was, though, Pepper was itching for the six days of the crossing to be over and done with. She couldn't wait to run down the gangway and fling herself out into the grit and glitter of the greatest of cities, where surprises waited around every corner and anything, *everything*, was possible. But when the last day finally arrived, Pepper got a taste of New York that startled both her and Elliott alike.



It began with the martinis at breakfast. Pepper already knew that the First Class passengers liked to drink – and especially the Americans. Hard liquor of any kind was illegal in the United States, so when Americans got aboard a British ship they couldn't wait to pour the stuff down their necks. She'd seen plenty of tipsy behaviour on all three of her voyages, plus a few proper roaring drunks. But what Pepper had never seen before, thanks to the dramatic circumstances of her first crossing to New York, was the frenzy of the Americans when their country drew near and the bottle was about to be snatched away. Now she saw them drinking in desperation, downing tumblers of whiskey as if they were headed for an iceberg rather than for home.

By afternoon, the First Class lounge was a raucous pit of *very* undignified behaviour. A fur-swaddled dowager, sloppy with booze, was staggering along behind an officer,

Chapter 1

her jewelled hands flailing as she tried to pinch him on the bottom. A young woman shrieked and sobbed while her friend pried the champagne coupe from her grasp. A burly fellow came strutting though the crowd with a woman's feathered cloche askew on his head, ropes of beads swinging to his navel and a mess of lipstick smeared across his mouth.

The Captain's face was grim with distaste. At this stage of the voyage he would ordinarily be up on the command bridge, far removed from displays such as these. He pulled his knees in as the man in the feathered hat passed close by, but he wasn't quick enough; the man tripped over the Captain's polished shoes and crashed onto the carpet, sending beads skittering in every direction. The Captain curled his lip and glared: *Disgusting*. Elliott was rattled, too. Pepper saw him recoil and flush pink beneath his freckles; he had turned his head so as not to look at the sprawling man. The other passengers hooted and cheered as if it were a Punch-and-Judy show.

Into the middle of this free-for-all marched a steward ringing a little brass bell. The expression on his face was half apology and half trepidation. 'Ladies and gentlemen, in one hour we will reach United States territorial waters. In accordance with United States law, all service of alcohol will then cease.'

THE DETECTIVE'S GUIDE TO NEW YORK CITY

'Twelve-mile limit!' a man screamed. In an instant the cry was taken up – *Twelve-mile limit! Twelve-mile limit!* – and the passengers rushed the bar in a drunken stampede.

'What's a twelve-mile limit?' Elliott shouted over the din.

'It's the start of American territory,' Emmaline shouted back. She was grinning; even this grubby spectacle seemed to tickle her enthusiasm. 'Once we're within twelve miles of shore, Prohibition is in force. No more booze.' She turned to the Captain. 'Are they always like this?'

The Captain nodded. He was granite once more.

'It's not as if they can't get a drink at home,' Emmaline said wonderingly. 'According to my guide book, you can hardly throw a stone in New York without knocking a bottle out of a bootlegger's hand.'

'That might be,' the Captain said in a stiff, clipped voice. 'But if you're fool enough to drink bootleg liquor ...' He shook his head. 'Well, you just never know what you're going to get.'