

She'd been there so long she started to run out of obvious terms to describe it. Not that she minded the challenge, though she took it as a clue that she'd been stuck there a little too long. Once you go from 'taped scrap' to 'bolted plates' it's easy to see a leak in the sarcasm tank.

Money, of course, was her anchor. Like the ships that were anchored by men, she too was anchored by money. Like the ships, she had no say in the matter. Though unlike the ships, as least nobody was constantly running in and out of her with boxes and crane claws.

It was up the gangplank that she noticed how adjusted she was to the spell of oil, rusted metal and gasolines. Several passengers walked off with rotten faces and crumbled noses, choking handkerchiefs and pinching digits. And that's just the quiet ones. Truly, the loud ones seemed to fight the smell with complaints and threats, in ways that made her feel like a mellowed out coconut.

Now, she was used to being in a backpack, but wearing one was just too much. At the top, the crew wasted exactly a second to notice her uniform before barraging and pelting her with cases and baggage, stuffing her backpack until she felt more akin to a mule. All those years of lugging bears around might be the only thing making it bearable, though the suffering of not being able to throw that joke around instantly undid that pleasure.

It didn't help that every single step with heavy packing meant she could feel the Wading Boots clench down against her toes. Her mind toyed with the idea that the rubber melted from the heat, sticking to her feet like wallpaper glue, trying to get her to give up on leaving. Not that she ever took them off; the place was so dirty just taking them off would leave her feet knee deep in gross sticky gunk.

The only nice place was the darn bed she got as a dock worker, which was surprisingly nice. Probably taken from a crashed boat, she figured.

The only reason she was there was due to the cheap prices. That cruise was expensive, and this terrible dump only had literal garbage vessels to the cruise's final destination; the only non-thousand dollar ship going there. The only vessel a poor girl could afford without bank details or a fat wallet. And naturally they agreed to 'find a way' if either got lost.

Every night, when she didn't just faint, she looked outside at the horizon of blue. Feeling dread as she wondered who everyone else there was. They were all quiet and reserved, making her wonder if this place was fueled and staffed exclusively by lost and found, people looking to get a garbage ship home. People who, like her shoes, started to stick more and more, until they were fused to the horrible oil slicks.

Truth be told, she'd happily fly the distance. If she wasn't so darn oily in the first place. Originally, she knew the distance from this place was manageable, so the first step was easy. But fate, like a fly trap, caught her in a nice sticky soup by accident. Her wings are still heavy with grease, oil and other things. She felt more like a mutant, a diseased rat, than a proud breegull.

Perhaps that's why they stayed; too covered in grime to have the pride and self-esteem to flee. They lost so much glory that leaving wasn't an option anymore, as this was the only place worth their salt. The shiver from fear and dumping baggage onto the cart only reminded her of how faded her feathers looked. The showers here were hardly suited to clean up a chemical spill victim. And her sorrowful grumble was a clear sign of that.

Ah, the tips. She'd rather not accept tips, as all these posh nose-clenchers just made her feel like bottom-barrel trash. Like she was pulled through trash and made of discarded body parts, animated by strings. The worst part is the inability to talk. If she did, she'd be out of tips for a week, which was a good part of supplementary pay. Which she needed desperately, with how the ship's ticket seemed to grow in price every minute.

With a fancy coin in hand, the crew went on ship, the workers went back to await whatever poor vessel though this was a place worth visiting. But she stared, with bitter contempt, at the golden coin in her hand. Then, at the murky, likely-not-even-water, water clawing acidly at the stiff concrete.

“This place is a deathtrap, isn't it? A stepping stone you slip and fall off of, so nobody finds you. Lost forever to those who can help, mind numbed by stink and smell. Tsk. I'd lay the bear a fortune worth of beehives to get out of this dump. Even if it's in the bottom of a rotting fruit barge.” She took the coin between two of her front-most feathers and swung it.

But even the coin could not escape this place. It floated to the surface, instead of sink, despite being made of one of the heavier useable metals. It floated, covered by a layer of the most vomit-like seaweed the breegull could imagine. Luckily, she found that more appealing than most things around her.

“Can't even do that, can you? Just a vortex of the unfortunate. Well then.” She grumbled, shivering as her boot squished more than it should, as if to grip and clench her, keep her from moving. Not that she planned to swim, but instead arm herself with a chunk of salt and fling that into the water.

“How about you prove me you can do better? Instead of garbage barges and middle-class cheapo's, you get me a boat filled with adventure? Just to prove yourself you're not a complete waste of time and space.”

With a few deep breaths, which she instantly regretted, she calmed down. In fact, she tried something that she knew was more productive.

“At least you're too slimy to be considered a greaseball. And maybe you'd smell better if you brown-nose your visitors both ways.” She snickered, and could swear someone else was laughing. Perhaps just a mental reflex, but she hardly cared about the details. Just knowing she still had the power to lash out like a serpent's tail. “Meh, works better with a mist-minded straight guy to bounce off of. Or a fog-eyed glass jar. Wouldn't blame blind-eye Bottle for not digging here, considering you can smell this place from the skies to below the bedrock.” With a half-hearted stare, she, for the first time, observed how land-inward the breeze was. Indeed, you couldn't smell the place on a boat, until you caught up to it.

“Even this place's undying pestilent rot can't escape itself? Sheesh. I should buy some coals and ammonia to freshen up the barracks.” And thus she cracked at it for a while. Until a voice more akin to a burp than a bellow ordered her to the next majestic vessel looking to become more majestic by virtue of dumping it's trash.

“Yeayea. Just can't stand some excitement, huh? Well bite me. If you don't want to give me a way out by the end of the month I'll just make a raft out of crates and paddle. Ya got that, swamp sea?”