

WANTED ON VOYAGE

By Mandy Witt & Phil Lewis

A story of friendship

SHORTENED SAMPLE VERSION

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Approx: 14 minutes.

Cast

MURIEL - Elderly and frail. 70+

EMMA - Young and energetic. 20+

Style

On the deck of a cruise ship.

Use a wheelchair if possible.

If not she can walk slowly – perhaps with a stick.

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(OPENING MUSIC: SAILING by ROD STEWERT)

(EMMA WHEELS MURIEL ON IN A WHEEL CHAIR. THEN LEAVES)

MURIEL: She's a lovely girl. Don't you think? I first saw her in the Craig Williams Day Centre. She was wonderful with the old folk there. Wonderful. I offered her the job a few weeks later. She wasn't sure. Who could blame her. Look at me. Stuck in a wheelchair, can hardly do anything for myself. Terrible thing old age. I think what might have helped make her mind up was the offer to come on this cruise. That, and she'd just broken up from her boyfriend.

So here we are. After twenty years of waiting, I'm on the Princess of the Seas.

(EMMA ENTERS WITH A BLANKET WHICH SHE CAREFULLY FOLDS AROUND MURIEL)

And we're both absolutely loving it.

(MURIEL SLIPS INTO A LIGHT SLEEP)

EMMA: God it's so boring! Why on earth would anyone want to go on a cruise? (DROPS HER VOICE TO AVOID WAKING MURIEL) There's absolutely nothing to do. Well...that's not strictly true. At night there is. Once I get her tucked in for the night, my time's my own. I have a card (SHOWS PASS CARD) so I can buy anything I want. She's generous though. The night club's great. But somehow...I'd like my friends here with me. You know? Speaking of which, I need to finish my email

(MURIEL BEGINS TO WAKE. EMMA MOVES TO HER AND ADJUSTS HER BLANKET)

She knows how to look after herself. Spends a lot of money of clothes, cosmetics and stuff.

I've been really lucky to get this job. It got me away from my problems with Martin.

I do like the fresh air though.

For insurance purposes, I'm technically classified as a companion, slash, carer. Muriel's hot on insurance. After all, it was the insurance money when her husband died that's paid for all this. So we stick to the 'rules and regulations' as she calls them. Everything by the book.

But she's okay, really. She's had it tough recently. She's been so looking forward to this trip. For over twenty years she says. That's a long time to wait for something you want. Don't you think?

(EMMA LEAVES AFTER ENSURING MURIEL IS COMFORTABLE)

MURIEL: Lovely girl. She's having such a wonderful time. I knew she would. I knew both of us would. Arthur and I always wanted to go on a sea cruise. Now finally I can afford it and I'm making the trip for both of us. Arthur would have loved this. We left from Dover, our first port of call – as they call it. A couple of days at sea and next stop was Gibraltar. I didn't get off the ship then – oh, you **MUST** call it a ship, not a boat. Apparently, ships have **BOATS** on them – that's what makes it a ship. Does that make sense? Did I explain that right? Anyway I didn't get off the ship in Gibraltar, it's just a rock and I didn't quite have the energy for all that height.

Marseilles was the next stop. Ohhh, I loved that. We went for a tour on a bus – with a guide telling us everything. I love France. I love the French.

(EMMA RETURNS WITH A COCKTAIL AND HER LAPTOP)

Thank you dear. I'm allowed one a day. So I make it a big one. You loved Marseilles, didn't you, Emma?

EMMA: I did, Muriel. We had a great lunch, didn't we?

MURIEL: I don't quite remember, dear.

EMMA: You had too much white wine. No wonder you don't remember.

(BOTH LAUGH)

MURIEL: Old age.

EMMA: Too much wine.

MURIEL: Can't drink like I used to. Boy, there I used to have some great times. I can tell you.

I'm beginning to get them homesick blues. But what the hell, at my age memories are all I have.

EMMA: It's great you have the memories and a brain sharp enough to remember them all. You've lived through a lot, Muriel.

MURIEL: (SEEING LAPTOP) Sending a text message, dear?

EMMA: Email.

MURIEL: Oh, email is it. Who to?

EMMA: My ex.

MURIEL: Still keeping in touch? It's got to keep in touch.

EMMA: Sort of. Well no. Not exactly.

MURIEL: Oh...is this the person you said you wanted a break from? I remember you saying something about it in your interview?

EMMA: Yes. That seems so...long ago. We were going out for about a year. But in my typical fashion it all came to nothing.

MURIEL: I feel sorry for you, child. I've had that experience too. Too many times I was in despair at a lost love.

EMMA: What was the best port of call for you so far?

MURIEL: Rome. Without a doubt. The history. The Vatican. Everything.

EMMA: For me it was Kos. We had an overnight stay and I went to all the night clubs I'd only heard about. It was the best place in the world.

(DROPS HER VOICE)

I was sooo drunk.....

MURIEL: (HEARING THE REMARK) In my days, we never got drunk. A small sherry before dinner. A glass, or two, of wine with the meal and the men had brandy afterwards. I got to be this age because of tea, dear. Arthur didn't make it because of his love of cigarettes. It's a good job you don't smoke, Emma. (EMMA NODS GUILTILY AT THE AUDIENCE) Filthy habit. Shows no character or backbone, or self-control. Never touched one the whole of my life.

EMMA: (TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT) Where are we stopping next, Muriel?

MURIEL: What? Ohh....Tangier.

EMMA: The exotic African continent.

MURIEL: The exotic African continent. Reminds me of Humphrey Bogart in the African Queen.

EMMA: Wasn't he in Casablanca too?

MURIEL: He was. Arthur and I saw it ten times.

EMMA: You went to see it ten times.

MURIEL: On DVD. We bought it a year before he died.

EMMA: You're looking forward to Tangier, aren't you?

MURIEL: I've looked forward to every port of call. I just sit on the balcony and let them bring the world to me.

EMMA: Shall I go and get your lunch, Muriel?

MURIEL: Yes please, dear. (EMMA EXITS) Such a lovely child. Kind and thoughtful. I hate waiting at the self-service counters. Oh, the food is good. Excellent, actually. But it's cold by the time you get to eat it. I prefer to sit here and have it brought to me, all ready. But dinner is a different matter. Then I dress up. I say 'I', Emma's idea of dressing up and mine is quite different. Oh, they have a strict dress code onboard. But you tell me how a miniskirt is deemed 'formal'?

I'm really not looking forward to the last day of the cruise. We'll disembark to get back to normality. Whatever that is these days. I have so enjoyed myself. Arthur would have loved it too. To you Arthur. Is a man full of wonder a wonderful man? (TOASTS AND FINISHES HER COCKTAIL). She doesn't say it, but I know Emma's had a great time. She doesn't know I know, but she's found herself a boyfriend onboard. I'm not sure if he's a waiter, or something like that. But she comes back very early in the morning and always happy.

(LOOKING FOR EMMA) Where's my lunch?

(LIGHTS GO DIM ON MURIEL AND UP ON EMMA)

EDITED