

# **Stanley Smartpants and the Stolen Bananas**

One summer afternoon, just after lunch, Detective Sergeant Stanley Smartpants of the Cat-Haven Cat-Police was deep in thought. He sat at his office desk, chewing the end of a pencil. He was trying to figure out why any cat would want to steal a crate of bananas from a boat in Brixcat Harbour.

Stanley was a Blue Tabby Point Birman, and generally regarded as being a very handsome cat indeed. Today he was dressed in one of his favourite outfits, a pair of red and black striped trousers and a bright blue waistcoat that matched his eyes. He also wore a really cool pink bow tie with large white spots.

The telephone on his desk jumped into life and shuffled across in front of him. It startled him into biting off the end of his pencil. He picked up the receiver. "Smartpants," he said, spitting out wood shavings and pencil lead.

"Hello, Sarge, it's me, Jack. I've found a witness in the Harbour Mastercat's office. He said he saw a cat behaving suspiciously on the harbour road, and he was eating two bananas. He kept looking over his shoulder, as if he was worried about something." Without pausing for breath Cat-constable Jumping Jack rushed on. "Which reminds me, Sarge, what do you call a cat with a banana stuffed in each ear?"

“We haven’t got time for jokes, Jack. And slow down, for heaven’s sake. Where’s the witness now?”

“In the Harbour Mastercat’s office. Where I’m calling from.”

“Stay there with him. I’m on my way.”

Stanley knocked lightly on Detective Chief Inspector Derek Dimwit’s office door, and walked straight in. Derek’s intercom was buzzing and the red light was flashing, but he sat motionless in his swivel chair. He was fast asleep.

“Ahem,” coughed Stanley, as he turned off the intercom. There was not a flicker of movement from Derek. “Ahem, ahem!”

Derek opened one eye and looked at Stanley suspiciously.

“Hi, Chief. Jack’s got a lead on the banana case. I’m on my way to Brixcat Harbour now. Would you like to come with me?”

Derek, a very ordinary, plain black and white moggie, rubbed his sleep filled eyes with his paw. “N-n-n-n-no, thanks Stanley. T-t-t-t-take one of the c-c-c-cat-constables.” Derek had a tendency to stutter when he was flustered. “I’m working on something really important at the moment.”

Stanley smiled to himself as he shut the Chief’s door behind him. He popped his head inside the Crime Room, where the Sugacats latest hit was blaring out from Tammy’s iPod Shuffle. “Marmaduke, sorry to interrupt your break, but I need you to come with me. Jack’s found a banana witness at Brixcat Harbour.”

Cat-Constable Marmalade Marmaduke, a slightly overweight Red Tabby Shorthair, who was similar in colour to a jar of Seville orange marmalade, stuffed a final

piece of toast and marmalade into his mouth. “Let’s go Sarge,” he said with his mouth full.

Stanley and Marmaduke took a panda car from the motor pool and drove into the Cathaven-on-Sea town centre, past the level crossing and down to the shore road. They turned right and passed the Cat-Odeon and the Crazy Adventure Golf for Crazy Cats. They drove on out of the town towards Brixcat, and down the steep hill that led to the town. They pulled into the harbour entrance. A self important cat in a Securicat uniform bustled out of the glass booth and held up his paw.

“We’re the Cathaven Cat-Police,” said Stanley, showing his warrant card. “Where can we find the Harbour Mastercat’s office?”

The security-cat pointed with his paw to a wide staircase. “Up those stairs and turn right at the top. His is the first office along the corridor.”

As Stanley and Marmaduke walked through the door of the Harbour Mastercat’s office, they were greeted by Jumping Jack. He was an American Wirehair, and his frizzy fur stood up on end, as if he’d suffered an electric shock.

“This is the cat, Sarge,” he said. “Fishercat Freddie. He fishes for mackerel.”

Freddie came forward and shook paws with Stanley.

“I’m Sergeant Smartpants, Freddie,” said Stanley. “Tell me what you saw.”

“It was about eleven o’clock this morning. I’d just finished offloading my catch and was walking towards the car park. I saw a cat eating two bananas at the same time, and he had loads more stuffed in his pockets. He seemed in a bit of a hurry, and kept looking over his shoulder.”

“Can you describe him?”

“I think he was a Burmese. He was brown, tall and slim. And he was wearing a blue shirt and grey trousers.”

“One final question, Freddie. Have you any idea where he went?”

“Absolutely,” said Freddie. “I was curious, so I stopped to watch him. He crossed to the other side of the harbour, past the marina, and went into the fish and chip shop, the Cheekie Chippie.”

“Thanks, Freddie. Here’s my card in case anything else occurs to you. Jack, I’d like you and Marmaduke to sniff around the fish offloading area. See what you come up with. I’ll go over to the Cheekie Chippie.”

“I’m hungry, Sarge,” said Jack. “It must be time for lunch. Is it ok if me and Marmy grab a cat-burger at CatDonalds?”

“I suppose so,” said Stanley. “I guess I can pick up some fish and chips myself.” He winked at Jack.

Stanley strode into the Cheekie Chippie fish restaurant, and approached a pretty Turkish Angora behind the counter. He took out his warrant card and introduced himself.

The Turkish Angora smiled sweetly. “I’m Cheekie Charlotte,” she said.

“I’m here about some stolen bananas, and .....

Charlotte gasped. “That’s odd,” she said. “There was a strange cat in here a couple of hours ago. Incredibly he tried to sell me some bananas – even insisted on

giving me a free sample. He said I could set a new trend in fish and chip shops, by selling banana and chip butties.”

In spite of himself Stanley laughed. “I take it you didn’t buy any?”

“Good Lord, Sergeant, as if I would! And anyway,” she chuckled, “I’d hardly admit it to a cat-police officer if I had done, now would I? But no, I didn’t.”

Twenty minutes and a piece of succulent cod with a mountain of chips later, Stanley was still licking his whiskers, and preening himself, when his mobile phone rang.

“Sarge,” said Jack excitedly, “we’re in the marina. We’ve just had a tip off that a cat in a blue shirt and grey trousers has boarded the Flower of Westminster, the yacht owned by that politician-cat. We ..... oh my God!”

“What is it, Jack?” shouted Stanley down the phone.

“Marmaduke’s just taken a tumble, whisker over paw. Oh no .....” Jack began to laugh. “He’s only slipped on a banana skin!”

“Stay there, Jack. I’ll be with you in two sniffs of a cat’s snout.”

Two minutes later Stanley had joined Jack and Marmaduke on the jetty where the Flower of Westminster was moored. Marmaduke seemed none the worse for his fall.

“I want you to stay here, Marmaduke, while Jack and I go on board. Keep your eyes peeled.”

“Suppose it’s better than keeping a banana peeled,” said Jack, digging Marmaduke in the ribs.

As Stanley and Jack clambered aboard the luxury yacht, they were confronted by a large, round Norwegian Forest cat, wearing a Captain's hat.

Stanley flipped open his warrant card. "If I'm not mistaken, sir," he said quietly, "you're the Minister-Cat of Culture, Sir Lancelot Smiles-A-Lot."

Predictably, Sir Lancelot smiled, showing a mouthful of brilliantly white teeth. "Indeed, Sergeant."

"Sir Lancelot, have you seen a brown Burmese with a load of stolen bananas stuffed in his trouser pockets?"

A guilty look crossed Sir Lancelot's face. "Well, yes," he said hesitantly "he's down below in the lounge. Fed me some absurd story about being from Oxfamcat, and selling cheap bananas to raise money to send clothes to Catmandu. Of course I realised the bananas were stolen." The same guilty look clouded his face. "I was on the point of asking him to leave when I saw you and your colleague come aboard."

Stanley knew that the Minister-Cat was lying, and that he was probably negotiating an even more favourable price with the Burmese. "Quite so, sir," he said evenly. "Perhaps we could have a word with him. Let's ....."

Stanley was interrupted by a flash of blue and grey streaking across the deck, making for the bow. Before he could react the Burmese leaped from the boat onto the jetty, and it seemed odds on that he would make his escape. But he had reckoned without Marmaduke who performed a brilliant rugby tackle on the fleeing cat, and brought him down. Jack too had reacted quickly and was at Marmaduke's side in a flash. He pounced on the Burmese and promptly handcuffed him to one of the iron railings that ran alongside the jetty.

An hour later, a van arrived to take the Burmese back to the cat-police station. By that time he had admitted the theft, and told Stanley where he had stashed the crate of bananas.

“A good job, well done,” said Stanley as the Burmese was loaded into the van. “I think we deserve a small celebration. We’ll call in at the Kitty Kat Ice Cream Parlour, and I’ll treat you both to a Banana Surprise.”

“What’s a Banana Surprise, Sarge?” asked Marmaduke.

“It’s a special ice cream dessert served in a tall glass, with lots of fruit and stuff, and the surprise is that there aren’t any bananas in it!”