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## SEA OF SORROWS

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REE SOESBEE

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AN EXCERPT FROM  
*GUILD WARS*<sup>®</sup>  
*SEA OF SORROWS*  
Ree Soesbee

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A sharp breeze swept through Lion's Arch, the curious offspring of cold ocean currents and warm southern winds drifting inland. It wove through the streets of the city, whispering in doorways and slipping down alleys. The cold season had been a long one, and ice still glinted on puddles of melt between stones in the uneven streets. Yet even in Kryta, winter must eventually yield to spring.

The wind broke into a gust, and the ships at harbor shook and quavered in their moorings, pitching uneasily against the salt-soaked boards of the docks. Spray leapt up from a whitecap, foam trickling around sharp barnacles that freckled the mighty galleon's hull. Sailors clapped their hands to their hats, and merchants grabbed their goods, keeping them close. On one of the larger vessels, a youth jumped down the ship's gangplank, leaning into the wind and propelling himself forward with long, uneven strides.

"Thanks for the extra work, Vost!" the young man yelled over his shoulder with a wave. He loped forward on the edge of balance, hardly caring about the wind that shoved against him. Torn, too-short pant legs flapped about his calves, and his shoes clung to the salty

boards despite their cracked leather soles and worn stitching.

Aboard the massive galleon, an older man waved down from the railing. With a leathery grin on his face, he called out, "Are you sure you don't want to sail with us this time, Coby? We've plenty of berth and could use a good spotter out at sea!"

"Sorry, Bosun Vost, but I can't go!" Cobiah waved back. "There's a pretty girl waiting in the city, and I can't let her down!"

"A girl? Ha! Good for you, lad." The older man laughed. "See you on the horizon, then."

"Aye, aye, Vost. Take care!" The youth leapt over a crate at the bottom of the ship's ramp, darting among slow-moving fishermen in the hustle and bustle of the crowd as he headed back toward shore. Whistling, he bounded over fishermen's buckets and dodged through nets hung to dry, squeezing through the sailors at work without so much as an apology.

He was a skinny youth, only just out of boyhood, legs ungainly and arms akimbo. Taller than most, Cobiah had not yet grown into his height, and he ran like an awkward colt still finding its balance. He was pale, with white-blond hair flopping about his forehead. Sharp blue eyes glinted in a lightly tanned face. The gawkiness of adolescence did not diminish a handsome face. It was perhaps a bit too long in the jaw, but it had a firmness and intelligence stamped on every feature.

Cobiah skidded around the end of the dock, ducking under a thick wooden board being laid as a gangplank. He leapt up onto one of the wooden pillars of the dock to make the long jump to a second towering above the sandy beach. Thirty feet over the rocky shore, he balanced for a moment to enjoy the view.

The Lion's Arch docks stretched out like fingers from the sandy shore, reaching out to touch the ocean. Beyond that, a great stone city rose from the coastline, its ancient buildings shining white and yellow in the gentle morning sun. A soft whisper of green tinged the rocky cliffs around it, and mountains rose toward the clouds inland, beyond the city's sculptured outline. Lion's Arch had stood since the days when humans first colonized the nation of Kryta, like a foundation stone of the kingdom, and of civilization itself.

Cobiah grinned and felt the wind shifting all about him. He smelled the bitter tang of the sea and the faint hint of sweetness from the spring's first growth in city gardens and in distant plains. With a smile, he threw himself forward toward the streets of the city. Recklessly leaping onto the high crates of a loading area, Cobiah climbed down a stiff wooden piling until he reached the hard-packed ground below. Once there, he strode down small, wandering streets where scattered beach sand gave way to cobblestones and city dirt. Cobiah hurried as if Grenth, the god of death, were on his heels, and he didn't stop running until he plowed face-first into the proverbial immovable object.

Standing in the doorway of the Iron Tankard, a burly man threw his hand across the opening and held his ground. A hat hung low over his heavy-lidded dark eyes, protecting them from the sun and giving the man a perpetual scowl. "Well, well." A lousy, lopsided sneer spread beneath the hat. "Cobiah. Late again." The tavern keeper shoved the youth backward. "Yer not welcome here no more."

"Jacob!" Cobiah protested with a winning smile. "You know it's not my fault. I was helping out at the docks, carrying crates to the *Indomitable*. She's to set sail at dawn, and—"

“Din’t ya hear me?” the big man snarled, dark skin flushing with anger. “*Yer not welcome!*”

“One of the crates broke,” the youth claimed quickly, ducking under the man’s muscular arm with eager abandon. Cobiah was quicker than the tavern owner, his skill at dodging honed by a childhood on the streets. “I had to get it all back together and in the hold before the stores got damp, and that’s why I’m late. It won’t happen again.”

The tavern keeper gripped the back of Cobiah’s belt, hauling him out the door and onto the street. “Don’t care.” A grin spread across his features, showing long rows of sharp alligator teeth. “My tavern don’t need somebody that sweeps the floor *after* the patrons show up.” The gruff man’s malicious snarl never faltered. “You’re fired.”

Cobiah paled. “Jacob . . . you can’t do this to me. I need this job.” He folded his hands together, begging, though hesitation replaced the friendliness in his eyes. “C’mon. I get it, you’re strong-arming to scare me straight. Let me in, and I’ll sweep up now, and tonight, too. Without pay.” Wheedling, Cobiah reached for the broom inside the doorway, but Jacob grabbed his wrist so hard that he bruised Cobiah’s flesh.

“*I don’t care!* I’m tired of it, Cobiah. I’m done.” The man’s angry glare softened. “I know yer family’s got it rough, boy, but I can’t make no allowances. I got a bar to run.” Cobiah started to argue again, but Jacob thrust him back, releasing the youth’s wrist with a forceful shove. Jacob growled, “Now get goin’ before I cuff ya!”

People on the street were staring, judging Cobiah with stern, unforgiving eyes. Someone brushing past muttered, “Lazy skale. Shiftless layabout!” Others shook their heads or whispered in mocking tones. A woman in a rich gown cast the pale-haired youth a glance that could have

boiled eggs as she swept past. Cobiah didn't bother to argue. He'd been called worse.

It was as much as he could do to keep his face straight and his jaw square as he slunk away from the dockside bar. Jacob's laughter rang mockingly in Cobiah's ears, but it was nothing compared to what was ahead of him. He'd lost his job. The *Indomitable* was leaving port, so the extra money from loading the galleon would vanish, too. Few other ships were willing to trust a street kid to heft valuable cargo. There was little work in the crowded city of Lion's Arch, and with no real skills or training in a craft, Cobiah was completely adrift. Just six silver coins in his pocket, all his prospects in ruins, and now he had to return home and explain it all . . . to *her*.

The populace of Lion's Arch hustled about their lives, ignoring the tow-haired youth wandering dejectedly through its cobbled streets. The city hadn't lost any of its beauty; sunlight glistened on the waters of Lion's Bay from the sandy cliffs of Lion's Gate through the strait of Claw Island, illuminating soft white waves in the distant Sea of Sorrows. White sails hovered on the horizon like wave foam. He could hear bells ringing in the harbor, signaling the passing of ships in and out of dock. None of it meant anything to Cobiah.

Yet despite the lost, desperate feeling, Cobiah couldn't stop a smile from creeping to his lips at the sight of the most beautiful thing in the city. It wasn't a sculpture or one of the magnificent buildings. It wasn't sunlight, or sea waves, or even glittering gold. It was a little girl, squatting in the gutters outside Hooligan's Route, playing with an earthworm that wriggled in the muddy dirt. She looked up at Cobiah with eyes the color of a clear summer sky. "Coby!" the four-year-old squealed, her grubby face breaking into a wide smile of joy. Leaving the worm

to its own devices, the little girl dove into Cobiah's arms, wrapping her hands around his neck as if to climb right up onto his shoulders.

Cobiah laughed and whirled her about. She giggled, careful not to drop her faded rag doll. Though its yarn hair had worn to threadbare patches and its dress was little more than a dyed bit of burlap, the little girl cradled it close as he held her to his chest. "Heya, Bivy-bear. Sleep well?"

His sister didn't answer at first. Instead, she pushed her dolly into Cobiah's hand. "Kiss for Polla?" Cobiah obediently gave the dolly a kiss on its forehead and handed it back to the girl. Only then did she reply softly, "No." The little girl pouted, lower lip jutting out like a slice of ripe plum. "I had night-horses."

"Nightmares, Biviane?" Cobiah bounced his sister lightly, watching her pale curls tremble across her chubby, dirt-stained cheeks. She clutched his neck tightly and laid her head on Cobiah's shoulder. In her hand, the dolly's stitched lips smiled prettily, and her button eyes matched Biviane's, for all that they stared out of a weary-looking yarn head.

"I dreamed there was a monster outside. Polla was scared. I tried to sing a little song to make her feel better, but . . . that made Mama yell." Biviane sighed heavily, kicking her feet in exasperation. "Mama took Polla away and put her in the dark place."

Cobiah's blood ran cold. "Polla went into the dark place?" he asked carefully. "Just Polla. Not you, Bivy. Right?"

Biviane lay her head on his shoulder, curls tumbling down onto Cobiah's chest. In a small voice, she whispered, "Not me. I was very, very quiet, and Mama let me sleep." A pause. "This time."

A breath he hadn't known he'd been holding eased out of Cobiah's lungs. "Good girl." His hair lay against hers along the curve of his shoulder, matching like two skeins of the same thread. It was probably a good thing that Biviane couldn't see his expression, for it took him several moments to get it under control. At last, with infinite care, he lowered his sister to the ground. "Here." He forced a happy smile onto his lips. With a wink, Cobiah drew a silver coin from his pocket. He held it up, giving it a flourish so that the metal sparkled in the sun. "Do you know where I got this?"

Biviane clutched her dolly close to her chest and opened her rosebud mouth with awe. She shook her head, eyes wide, staring at the money.

Cobiah let the coin dance over his fingers. "See those big masts out at the last dock? That's the *Indomitable*. She's got three masts and three decks, and a hundred guns on each side. The king of Kryta built that ship himself, and she's the finest one on the sea!"

Biviane stared out over his arm, glancing back and forth between white sails and yellow gold. "That's King Baede's ship?"

"His biggest one. And it's a sight to see. It could fit a hundred soldiers on it, and still have room for fifteen houses, a thousand cats . . ." He smiled to see her mouth purse into a little O of astonishment. "And Polla, too."

"Wow." Her eyes were big and trusting. "And you were on that ship?"

"I was. I was helping to load it last night, and while I was putting a crate in the hold, I looked out of a porthole at the sea. Do you know what I saw there?" Cobiah leaned in close and whispered in Biviane's ear. "A *mermaid*."

The little girl's blue eyes grew as wide as china plates. "A real one?"

“Yes, indeed. She’d come to see the king’s galleon. She had green scales from her shoulders to the tip of her tail, and she wore a dress made out of kelp and pearls. Her eyes were pale, like stars on the water, and her hair looked *just like yours*.” Cobiah tugged gently on a curl as Biviane giggled. “She said I was so handsome that she wanted to take me to the bottom of the ocean and keep me for her very own. But I told her that I wouldn’t leave my sister for the whole wide world.” He shook his finger teasingly. “Then she told me she’d give me some of her treasure if I gave her something in return. And do you know what she wanted?”

“A kiss!” Biviane breathed.

“I did, and she gave me this piece of silver. Now that I’ve told you the story, little miss, I’ll make you the same deal. If you give me a kiss, it’ll be yours.”

With a gasp, Biviane threw her hands around Coby’s neck and kissed him on both cheeks, giggling. Hugging his sister tightly, Cobiah pressed the coin into her palm.

“Did you really see a mermaid, Cobiah? A really-real one?” Biviane squealed, and her face glowed with delight. Cobiah couldn’t help hugging her again, breathing in the warm scent of his sister’s hair.

“Go get some breakfast, Bivy. And buy a piece of candy for Polla. I have to talk to Mom.” Cobiah set the girl down on her feet and waved to one of the sailors passing by. “Romy? Are you headed into town?”

“Aye, young Cobiah. What can I do you for?”

“Can you take my sister to the muffin cart and help her pick out a nice sweet one? She’s not allowed to go into the city alone.” Cobiah smiled at the old man.

“Why, of course I can.” Romy smiled, his green eyes adrift amid a sea of wrinkles and white beard. “C’mon, little lass. Ooh, is that your dolly? What’s her name?”

“Polla!” Biviane said, taking Romy’s hand trustingly. She turned to look back over her shoulder. “I love you, Coby!” she squealed. “I’ll see you soon!” With a leap, she followed the old man, clutching her rag doll close to her chest. Cobiah straightened, watching his sister dance along the sand at the edge of the row of houses. Romy headed for the vendors at the docks, just a little ways down past where the big ships were moored, chattering happily to the little girl all the while.

Cobiah watched as the two vanished into the press of people moving back and forth on the pier. Even after she was gone, he stood there, imagining that he could still see her bouncing golden curls here and there among the crowd. Finally, with a sigh, Cobiah turned toward the shanty and headed inside.

The rotted door swung gently on ruined hinges. Inside the dark, filthy hut, the smell of tar and whiskey hung on foul air. The window glass was cracked and clogged with spiderwebs, and its wooden floor was thick with grime. The hut was composed of one choked-looking room. A faded red-and-blue rug lay dejectedly on the mud-and-slat-board floor. It was wrinkled and limp, looking very much as if it had died trying to crawl to freedom. The room’s central table tottered in uncertain balance, tilting precariously on three warped legs and a half leg resting on a rusted bucket. In the rear of the cottage stood a large bed behind a wide, withered-looking threefold screen of paper.

The only bright spot in the little shanty was a trail of thin pink ribbons on a rickety-looking ladder. They’d been woven in lumpy braids by uncertain fingers, and hung down in tatters like tiny banners. The ladder, its rungs half-rotten and dripping wooden flakes onto the floor, led to a thin ledge tucked under the roof of the hut,

where a flat, musty-smelling mattress of reeds had been shoved into the nook, covered by a small, faded quilt.

A harsh throttling noise shook the shoddy boards of the cabin. Cobiah jumped within his skin, unable to control an instinctive wash of revulsion. He steeled himself and stepped inside. Across the rickety table lay a woman, her snores echoing so loudly that they shook a trio of empty glasses arrayed on the board. Her hair was pale gray with care and years but bleached and tinted to give it a sickly echo of its original yellowish cast. Wrinkles clustered like vultures around her eyes, and her teeth were gray like stones. She snored again, choking on her breath, and absently mopped at her crooked nose with one half-aware hand.

Cobiah crept into the room warily. He gulped, unwilling to wake her, and fingered the five silver pieces left in his pocket. Maybe he could give them to her and leave, go find another job in the city. Making leather, maybe, down at the tannery . . .

The woman snorted, choking, and turned her head to spit a thick mass onto the floor. She peeled one bloodshot eye open to regard Cobiah. Grunting, the woman lurched upward in her chair and fixed him with a nasty gaze. "Filthy, useless boy. Why are you standing there like a gape-jawed idiot?" she snarled, muffling a belch. "Give me my money!" Her eyes were sharp and cold, deeply bloodshot and staying open due more to anger than to interest. She pawed at him greedily, hand snatching out like a hunting bird trying to catch a mouse.

"Yes, Mother." Biting his lip, he quelled the waver in his voice. Cobiah held out the five silver coins.

With a snarl, she snatched them from him. She peered at the coins in her palm and then held one up, fingers pinching the metal skeptically. Cheeks purpling, she

growled, "Only five? There should be at least eight. Are you hiding money again, Cobiah?" She said the last words so strongly that a chill ran up Cobiah's spine.

Clearing his throat, he managed to say, "I never had more than six. I gave one to Biviane, so she could get breakfast—"

"You *what?*" Cobiah's mother lunged forward, rising to her feet between chair and table. Clumsy with the left-over effects of drink and sluggish sleep, she raised her hand and struck him to the ground. "That girl doesn't need breakfast—she's fat enough! She's like a little gutter pig. Wish I could sell her like a pig . . ." The drunken woman stood over him and scowled. "Bah, you lazy boy. Just like your father. Every day I thank the Six Gods for the storm at sea that drowned him. Wish one would come and take you, too! Useless, hopeless . . . worthless!" With each exclamation, she struck him, kicking him broadly as he lay curled on the floor. "You hear me? You're worth nothing! I should have drowned you myself, when you were small . . ." He could smell the rotten alcohol on her breath, feel the mud from her shoes falling on him in chunks. For a moment he wanted to fight back, rage flaring up and causing his hands to clench so hard that he could feel the curves of his fingernails splitting his palms. But he couldn't fight. If he did, she'd just take it out on Biviane. Forcing himself to lie still, Cobiah accepted each stinging slap and fierce, degrading kick.

"Cobiah!" Suddenly, a frantic shout from outside drew their attention, causing her hand to pause in the air. "Cobiah! Come quickly! Biviane's hurt!" Romy's voice, cracked with stress and fear.

At the sound of his sister's name, Cobiah pushed himself up and scrambled toward the shanty door, the coins—and the beating—forgotten. His mother was less quick to

respond, her liquor-addled mind struggling to grasp the meaning of the words. He could hear her behind him, still yelling, as Cobiah darted out onto the street.

The air held a bitter tang of fish and sea-stained nets, but the sky was still bright with morning. Cobiah spun about, fixing his eyes on Romy. The aged sailor was standing in the plaza, yelling as loud as his old lungs would allow. The man's face was white, his hands cupped around his mouth. "Cobiah, hurry! I only took my eyes off Bivy for a moment—just a moment, I swear it. She said she wanted to see a mermaid. I don't know what she meant, but she went a-running, and she's such a snippet of a girl, I couldn't keep up with her in the crowd—"

"Where is she?" Cobiah shoved passersby out of his way, clearing a path through the streets.

"On the shore, down under the pier!" Romy pointed with a shaking finger, his eyes wide with horror. Not wasting even a minute, Cobiah raced toward the planks where the great ships were docked. All the anger he'd felt, all the pain, was forgotten completely, channeled into a mad need to find his sister.

He skidded through the streets, grabbing hold of a pole to spin around a street corner, and took the stairs down to the ocean's edge three at a time. Cobiah's heart pounded in fear. Abandoning the stairs, he leapt down the rocky cliff from stone to stone, landing heavily in the wet sand below. He could hear the ships' bells tolling like a call to worship, mixed with the faraway catcalls of the street vendors, and he could see a small group of sailors clustered beneath one of the large pylons by the rocks. Cobiah shoved his way through them as he struggled to catch his breath. Reluctantly, they parted to allow him entrance. Just before he reached the center of the throng, a firm hand seized Cobiah's arm and dragged him to a halt.

“You don’t want to go in there, son,” a man with a full red beard said, reaching out with both hands to hold Cobiah steady.

Cobiah looked past him to the beach. He could see a sailor kneeling amid the rocks with an old green blanket in his hands. The sailor spread it out, and the blanket billowed but did not touch the ground, huddling instead over something that lay beneath it. Cobiah’s mind balked, refusing to identify the outline. “Biv . . . no, Biv . . . I . . . I have to help my sister.” He stumbled over the words. His tongue felt thick, like old gruel. Through the sailors, he could see a tiny black shoe peeking out beneath the edge of the blanket. Waves licked at it, foam teasing around the worn leather, a rusty silver buckle hanging from a mud-covered leather strap. A child’s everyday shoe. Ordinary. Common.

“Your sister?” The man put his arm across the youth’s chest. Cobiah hadn’t even realized he’d tried to step forward. “You knew this girl?”

“Her name is Biviane. Biviane is my . . . my sister,” Cobiah stammered, his blood cold. Why were they talking about her that way? “This girl”? Couldn’t everyone see that Biviane needed him? That she was frightened and he had to protect her? Anger and shock flooded Cobiah, hot and cold and hot again, pounding through his veins. After a moment, he recognized that the old man was wearing the sky-blue robes of the goddess Dwayna. The bearded man was a priest, then. “She went to get breakfast. I gave her a coin. She’d be right back. She’s coming right back.” He glanced again at the blanket, trying to make his mind attach relevance to the shape beneath it. “She needs me . . .” Cobiah raised a shaking hand and pushed at the priest’s shoulder, but the old man might as well have been made of stone.

The priest sighed grimly. "Your sister. I'm terribly sorry, son. She slipped from one of the dock pylons." As if this explained everything, the priest added, "It was quick."

Cobiah sank to his knees. The world around him spun, sickness rising in his throat. "I told her I saw a mermaid near the docks. I said . . . but it was just a story . . . just . . . Goddess Dwayna, no . . ."

"Don't blame yourself," the priest murmured, his hands on the young man's shoulders. "Those pylons are slick with ocean spray. No one saw her climb them. It happened too quickly for anyone to intervene. We must turn to Dwayna the Merciful, sweet and gentle comforter of the soul. Pray to her, young man. She will bring you peace."

In the midst of the priest's benediction, a piercing shriek split the air. Shoving the crowd aside with wild, drunken movements, Cobiah's mother lurched onto the rocky beach. "Biviane!" she howled insensibly. Hands clenching into fists, the woman shrieked in anger. "My little girl! She can't be . . . she can't be dead!

"Cobiah! You worthless, useless—Where were you?" she screeched, turning her anger toward her son. "*You* gave her money! I'll bet someone pushed Biviane off the dock to take her coin! This is your fault!" The priest turned to grapple with her as she kicked and struck at Cobiah's head and shoulders. "You foul piece of nothing! It's *your* fault she's dead! Your fault!"

Stunned, Cobiah couldn't even raise his hands to defend himself. She struck over and over again, jolting him from every angle, raining down sharp pain on his shoulders, arms, and face. The priest grabbed the haridan's wrists, forcing her to stop her attacks, but that did little to halt the abuse. "Foolish, worthless boy! Biviane

was just a baby, she was an innocent child, and you've killed her!"

*You've killed her!*

His mother's words careened through Cobiah's mind. He couldn't force the sound from his ears, but his body reacted to expel it, vomiting bile onto the sand. Rage gripped Cobiah. Her abrupt, hypocritical turnaround felt like a punch in the stomach, and it took all the force of his will not to drive to his feet and strike his mother in return. Before he could move, sailors in the crowd dragged the woman off, her wails descending into screaming, incomprehensible accusations.

Cobiah drew a long, shuddering breath. He tried to focus his eyes and found himself staring at a rag doll floating in a tide pool. While everything around him was pandemonium and pain, the stitched burlap head with its cornflower-blue eyes still held for him a soft smile. Without thinking, Cobiah pulled the dolly from the tide.

Gently, the Dwaynan priest helped Cobiah stand. "Come, young man. I'll help you back to your house. There are preparations to be made . . ."

"No."

The old priest blinked. "What? No?"

"She needs . . . I can't pay for a funeral."

"I can arrange the funeral, son," the priest responded gently. "Your sister will have a safe place to sleep."

"Thanks," Cobiah murmured woodenly. "She'd like that." He squeezed the priest's hand and turned away, clutching the rag doll to his chest.

Numbly, Cobiah made his way back up onto the docks. He stumbled through the press of people, the calls of sailors and dockworkers echoing around him without any meaning registering in their words. He remembered Biviane's bright smile as he taught her

how to read letters, forming them into words. She was so smart, so clever. The way she asked him questions when he told her tales, forcing him to elaborate further and further until she laughed. *She was the only good thing I had in this world.*

No job. No home. No sister to protect. He had nothing left except a sodden mother whose drunken binges would kill them both in time. Cobiah huddled in the cold, holding the limp doll to his chest. Her yarn hair was wet with seawater, but her stitched-on smile never wavered, frozen in a moment of time. Faintly, Cobiah realized that someone was calling his name. A familiar voice, rough and brutish like an old tree. Cobiah came to his senses and found himself standing at the base of a gangplank, staring past the end of the dock into the stormy sea. "Cobiah?" Bosun Vost's voice finally pulled Cobiah from his fugue. "What're you doing here, lad? We were about to raise the gangway. She's ready to sail." The old bosun eyed the youth with concern, taking in his bedraggled, pale appearance and the little bundle clenched in his hand. More soberly, the old bosun asked, "You doin' all right, laddie?"

"Were you serious, sir?" The words rushed out of Cobiah's chest, pushing down the tears and the sick feeling in his gut. "About my coming with you?"

Taken by surprise, Vost nodded. "Aye, we need a few more hands. You'll have to sign to a full tour of duty. Six months or more. What happened, Coby? Did you lose your girl?" The old sailor chuckled curiously, expecting the sad tale of a failed romance.

"Something like that." Cobiah didn't bother to correct him. "Sign me up, Vost. I'll take that berth." He lifted his chin, stuffing the rag doll beneath one arm and reaching for Vost's hand to pull him up the gangplank.

Something in the calmness of his words quieted the old man's protests and questions, and Vost simply nodded. "Come aboard, Cobiah of Lion's Arch. You're a mariner now."

Outside the city of Lion's Arch, the sun beat down on a vast and empty ocean. It twinkled on the foam of a thousand waves and shone warmly over the hulls and decks of massive ships that plunged into the sea spray. The galleon *Indomitable* heaved her bulk from the dock like a thick-shouldered bull, stiff and ungainly in the shallows. While her sailors called the chants and songs, she lowered her sails to catch an early wind, and they spread in wide white arches over the broad top deck. *Angel's wings*. Cobiah looked up at them as he gave a hand to the sailors slinging ropes from canvas to canvas across the lower boom of the mast. *Biviane's wings*.

Cobiah stared very hard at the *Indomitable's* sails as the ship made her way into the open sea. He watched them as they caught the wind, putting the city of Lion's Arch—and the only life he'd ever known—far behind.

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