

Simon Atherton

(Season six of London's Night Stalkers)

Chapter 5 – Leaving Benghazi

“Hassan had three pirates to defend the ship and a dragon who refused to admit he was a dragon. According to Patsy Karkengara had an identity crisis, whatever that meant. To Hassan the huge fire breathing creature was his best bet to keep the Mermaid from being overrun by the governor’s guards; and keeping the ship in one piece.”

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His Excellency the Governor of Benghazi was obviously a clever crook to rise so high, but he either hadn't been told that Simon and Giovanni were vampires; or he didn't believe in Satan's favourite children. Plus, the governor's guards weren't that good at fighting. Simon wondered if they simply weren't paid enough to risk their lives for a bandit who'd become their boss ?

“Oh, more of them.....He must employ half of Benghazi as his guards.” Said Giovanni.

“Their hearts don't seem to be in it.” Said Simon.

The first attack by the Governor's guards had split them into Simon fighting next to Giovanni. Cosimo was on the other side of the large throne room, with Patsy and Juliana. Cosimo seemed to be limping from an injury, but his group were surrounded by dead and dying enemies. As for Simon and Giovanni ? So far they didn't have a scratch, but Simon knew that the worst fighters could occasionally get lucky.

“Bastard.” Yelled Juliana.

Bastard appeared to be her new favourite word. It usually came just before she sliced into one of the guards with her sword. What Juliana lacked in strength and weight, she made up for with skill and speed. Her latest adversary fell to the ground, blood pouring from a chest wound. He'd nicked Juliana on the way down, though it didn't look too bad.

“We need to clear the doorway, or our friends could be in trouble.” Said Simon. “We need to get out of here and back to the Mermaid.”

Giovanni snapped the neck of one of the largest guards in room. Simon heard the loud crunching sound, as the man's neck was broken. Giovanni would never admit that it had become his favourite method of killing an opponent, but it did seem to leave him smiling.

“Or, we could kill the governor.” Said Giovanni. “They might fight for a living arsehole, but I can't see this lot fighting to avenge a dead one.”

“You've got a point, let's get him.” Said Simon.

Someone would come along and claim the mansion and the title of governor, maybe someone even worse. For a while though there'd be a power vacuum. With luck it would last long enough for them to set sail and have the Mermaid heading back towards Malta.

“Come on you fuckers.” Shouted Giovanni. “Let's see what you're made of.”

Simon wasn't consciously thinking about the fighting in the main chamber of the mansion. He knew the fighting would have spread to there and some of his best fighters would be hard pressed by now. As Simon drove his sword into the face of one of the governor's personal guards, he felt Rosa die as her heart stopped. Rosa, a native of Malta and long term friend of Cosimo. She was young, tough

and good with a blade. Simon knew that Cosimo would miss her, as would he. Simon gave an involuntary gasp.

"Rosa is dead.....I felt her die." Said Simon.

"Then we shall avenge her." Said Giovanni.

Two angry vampires, armed with incredible strength and two of the best blades money could buy; they quickly hacked their way through the governor's personal guard. No using their fangs in such a crowd, it was the wrong period in history to effectively come out as a vampire. Simon narrowly avoided getting a glove across his face; a glove covered in sharp metal studs. Giovanni barely backed away fast enough from a huge man with an even bigger war hammer. Giovanni dispatched him with his blade, but to Simon it had looked a close thing. If there was a deity who protected vampires, they were working hard that night in Benghazi. Soon there were just two tough looking guards standing between them and His Excellency the Governor of Benghazi.

"I want him, the governor is mine." Said Simon.

"I seem to remember it's my turn to get the top guy." Said Giovanni.

"When did I get my turn?" Asked Simon.

It was the way fate could punish those who looked a gift horse in the mouth. Two guards in the way, that was all and the governor was theirs to kill in whatever brutal fashion they desired. By arguing they gave Cosimo a chance to come in from behind. No real style to how he did it, but six or seven stab wounds in his back and the governor was never going to get up from where he fell. Killing the two tough looking guards was merely a formality.

"Crap.....He was mine, Cosimo." Said Giovanni.

"By the way you two were arguing, he'd still be alive in the morning." Said Cosimo. "I wanted to get back to the Mermaid before the sun rises again."

"Fine.....Let's see if the others need our help." Said Simon.

Simon satisfied himself by being right; the guards weren't going to seek vengeance for a dead employer. By the time they were in the large main chamber where the party was being held, the only guards to be seen were dead ones. There were some dead local civilians, which was a mystery and likely to remain so. Patsy and Cosimo had wounds, but nothing likely to cause problems during a walk back to the Mermaid.

"Oh, I was expecting to see her like that.....But it's still dreadful." Said Patsy.

"At least they didn't have time to interfere with the body." Said Giovanni. "I'll carry her back to the Mermaid."

There was a brief argument about the best way to deal with Rosa's burial, but it was agreed to put off any decision until they were back at the ship. Simon had liked Rosa, but dealing with her mortal remains was well down on his list of major concerns. His main worry was getting back to the Mermaid to help Karkengara defend it against any and all who might try to take her. His second biggest concern were the scrolls in the chest. The governor had hinted at them being really important, yet he was now dead and his ghost was unlikely to talk to those who'd killed him.

"Come on.....We need to keep to a gentle trot back to the Mermaid." Said Simon.

"I'll do my best, but one of the bastards cut my leg." Said Cosimo. "Not a bad wound, but painful."

"Go up the front.....You can set our pace." Said Simon.

"We seem to have lost one of the crew somewhere." Said Galeoto. "I'd like to go back and look for him."

"You must mean Drax." Said Juliana. "I saw him go down.....Brave man; it took three guards to kill him."

Simon stopped and it seemed that how to deal with the dead was going to be an issue that night.

Simon offered to go back with Galeoto to try and find the mortal remains of seaman Drax.

“No, splitting up will cause us problems.” Said Galeoto. “The dead are dead after all; we’d have just given him a burial at sea. I’ll make sure his family are looked after the next time we’re in our home port.”

“Definitely killed.....I too saw him die.” Said another member of the Mermaid’s crew.

Despite his words, Simon could see that Galeoto didn’t want to leave a crew member behind. Even dead, it was awful to think of what the dead governor’s people might do to the body. Simon muttered at Giovanni and took Rosa’s body from him. The woman wasn’t light, but her weight felt like nothing to Simon. Giovanni ran like the wind, back the way they’d just come.

“If it’s at all possible.....Giovanni will recover Drax’s body.” Said Simon.

“Bless you Simon, that means a lot to me.” Said Galeoto.

They must have looked an odd bunch, keeping to almost a run along the roads and rough tracks of Benghazi. Some houses had lights outside, but it was dark and most were in total darkness. No one tried to stop them, or even come out to see who was rushing towards the small bay where the Mermaid lay at anchor.

“I’m sure we can rely on Karkengara.” Said Patsy. “He’ll stop anyone taking over the Mermaid.”

“I’m sure he will.” Said Simon.

The bringer of fire was tough; he’d beat anyone in a fight, even an entire army. The worry was his temper and how he might use his fire against the enemy. Simon hoped they didn’t arrive at the bay to find the Mermaid burning from stem to stern.

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Hassan had three pirates to defend the ship and a dragon who refused to admit he was a dragon. According to Patsy Karkengara had an identity crisis, whatever that meant. To Hassan the huge fire breathing creature was his best bet to keep the Mermaid from being overrun by the governor’s guards; and keeping the ship in one piece.

“I’m just worrying about you setting fire to the ship.” Said Hassan.

Karkengara was good at becoming almost a shadow, but Hassan had learnt how to see him.

“I’ve been in your world a long time, Hassan.” Said Karkengara. “It was me who taught Greek Fire to Archimedes. I’m just saying that I’m no fool and I have no intention of so much as scorching a single timber of the Mermaid.”

“My apologies.....But we are relying on you.” Said Hassan.

“I will keep my fire a good length from the Mermaid.” Said Karkengara. “Now leave me to watch the enemy and plan the best way to deal with them.”

Hassan had a question about Greek Fire and how it might be used against the governor’s guards, but he took the hint and joined the pirates at the stern facing deck cannons. They had far more experience at using the deck cannons than the crew of the Mermaid, but they still worried him. All they seemed interested in was killing all of the approaching guards. Keeping the ship safe was definitely a secondary consideration.

“They’ll soon be close enough to hit with the cannons.” Said one of the pirates.

“Fine.....Just don’t blow lumps out of the Mermaid.” Said Hassan.

The man looked at Hassan as though he’d just insulted him, his wife and his children; maybe even several generations of his ancestors.

“Don’t worry, the Mermaid won’t be harmed.” Said the pirate from Crete.

No moving cannons around, there weren't enough crew left to do that. Plus, they were likely to soon be under attack by the guards rowing hard towards the ship. They'd get one shot from each of the two rear facing cannons. After that it was swords, daggers and the advantage of them knowing the layout of the Mermaid. One of the pirates had an ancient flintlock, but Hassan doubted if he could hit much with it. There was Karkengara of course, their huge and clever version of Greek Fire. When they were close enough, one of the guards began to yell threats at them, of course they did.

"Those on the Mermaid." A guard shouted. "Surrender and give us control of the ship. Otherwise you will be considered an enemy and executed. This has been ordered by His Excellency the Governor of Benghazi."

"Fuck your governor." Yelled Hassan.

The pirates cheered and one or more of the guards' boats must have been in range. There was a massive bang and a lot of white smoke, as one of the deck cannons fired. Whoever was aiming the cannon had done well; the result of that single shot was carnage. One of the boats was gone, while another was engulfed in flames. There was a lot of screaming coming from the water, but it was too dark to see how many guards had ended up wounded and in the water.

"They're making for the rope ladder.....Fire the second cannon." Shouted Hassan.

There was another cloud of smoke and an ear splitting boom. Another boat seemed to have gone, as there was no sign of its light. More screaming coming from the water, which had to mean a lot of badly injured guards. Hassan had no sympathy; the governor's guards had threatened to execute everyone on the Mermaid.

"They'll be on the rope ladders next." Someone yelled.

There had been a conversation about leaving the rope ladders hanging down the side of the ship. Actually, more of a heated argument than a conversation. The pirates wanted to bring up the ladders to slow down whoever the governor might send to grab the ship. On the other hand Hassan has seen large iron nails driven into hulls, for attackers to use as steps. The damage to the hull was often disastrous. As Simon had left Hassan in charge, he insisted that the ladders be left where they were.

"They'll be trying to climb, while we hack at them from above." Hassan had said.

They'd even filled the largest cooking pot in the kitchen with water. That was now simmering away nicely, to be thrown down on anyone trying to use the ladders. Where would Karkengara be while all that was going on? He'd been imprecise, but Hassan was expecting something amazing from him. Just seeing the boats up against the side of the Mermaid, was difficult in the dark. One of the pirates looked over the side, to be dragged down by the muscular arm of a guard, probably dragged to his death.

"Stand away." Said Karkengara. "The time has come for me to deal with the governor's guards."

He didn't fly, there was probably no need. The bringer of fire leant his long neck over the edge of the ship and poured his fiery breath over the men and boats below. A few were close to the top of the rope ladders. Karkengara ripped those apart with his wicked looking front claws. He made it look so easy, bathing the governor's men in flames until the screaming stopped. Karkengara turned towards Hassan and the two surviving pirates, as if taking a bow.

"They'll give you no more trouble." Said Karkengara.

Shortly after there was a lot of yelling from the beach, where everyone was waiting to be rowed back to the Mermaid. They'd had their own battle to fight and it seemed His Excellency the governor was dead. Half the crew were still waiting on the beach, when Giovanni arrived with Drax over his

shoulder. A grim moment, but it was nice not to have left him behind. It all became an exchange of dreadful stories, but they'd actually lost very few comrades.

"The storm has gone; we'll leave this dreadful place at first light." Galeoto had said.

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Giovanni felt better than he had in some time, mainly because he'd fed on fresh blood the night of the party. He'd found the body of Drax dumped like trash, at the rear of the dead governor's mansion. One lone guard had attack him as he'd put the body of Drax over his shoulder. It seemed a needless waste of an opportunity, not to feed on the guard. Giovanni would have brought a guard back for Simon to feed on, but vampires only fed on the blood of the living. The blood of the dead is actually toxic to them. Carrying Drax and a living, struggling guard.....Not impossible, but far too much aggravation after an already trying night. Simon could tell he'd fed though, as they used their strength to pull in the Mermaid's huge anchors.

"I know that look.....A freshly fed glow." Said Simon.

"I feel so good." Said Giovanni. "If it had been possible, I'd have brought back a living guard for you to feed on."

Vampires always looked pale, but Simon looked even paler than usual. His friend looked close to being desperate to feed on blood, but a long way from needing to feed on any passing stranger on a dark night. Simon was giving him a cynical look, as if doubting his sincerity.

"Not a problem, I'm certain to get an opportunity to feed in Malta." Said Simon.

Simon heaved on an anchor winch, as if showing he wasn't weakened by a period of having no blood to feed on. Giovanni used the winch on the second heavy anchor, enjoying the way the cable came up out of the bay. Anchors lifted meant they'd soon be away from Benghazi. Giovanni had arrived with an open mind, but now hated the place.

"So, we're still going back to Malta?" Asked Giovanni.

"Yes, according to Brother Alberti we need a witch to for the Ivory Coast." Said Simon. "Lučija on Malta sounds perfect, as long as she's willing to go. Alberti warned me about trying to force her to join us."

"Money, offer her money." Said Giovanni. "I've yet to meet a witch who didn't love gold."

"Alberti said much the same thing." Said Simon. "If she refuses we'll look for another witch on Malta."

Giovanni waved at whoever was in the wheelhouse, a sign that the anchors had been raised. It was as if the wind was being sent by whoever looked after the luck of vampires and their friends. The storm had come up behind them, as if trying to crash them into the rocky coast of North Africa. Now a decent wind was coming straight off the land; perfect to take them back to Malta. A gong was being sounded outside the room where everyone ate. Mia's face came out, her hair still in a mess from the fight at the governor's mansion.

"Food is ready.....Come and get it while it's hot." Shouted Mia.

How quickly things came back to normal, though there were still two dead companions to bury. Drax and Rosa were to be buried at sea, once the Mermaid was well out to sea. Simon had thought it was the sensible thing to do and Galeoto had agreed with him. Giovanni felt that the words spoken over the dead mattered, not where they were actually buried.

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Cosimo's leg had needed stitches and Mia had done a pretty good job of stitching him up. Not pretty, he'd end up with a ragged looking scar. Not exactly painless either, it had taken a lot not to yell out as the large sail mending needle had closed up the wound. Washing the wound with salt

water after stitching had caused him to yell, twice. Worth the pain though, he already found it easier to take a walk around the deck of the Mermaid.

"The weather is our friend.....A decent wind and a little sunshine." Said Simon. "All the way from Benghazi."

"We had one rainy night." Said Cosimo.

"Rain at night doesn't count." Said Simon.

According to Galeoto they weren't far from Malta and he was rarely wrong about such things. The charts in the captain's cabin were old and his sextant was a little battered. Galeoto had experience though, years and years of it. If he said they'd reach Malta that day, Cosimo would have bet every gold piece he possessed on it. There was a yell from one of the crew up above them, in the rigging. Difficult to tell exactly what he was yelling, but one word was loud and clear.....Malta.

"He's done it again." Said Simon. "Galeoto can find his way around the oceans, better than an old Tom cat can find his way home."

Patsy joined them at the front of the ship, all of them staring across the water. Was there a superstition about it being bad luck to look and hope to be the first to sight land ? If there was, Cosimo had never heard of it.

"Will we stay at the same lodgings as before ?" Asked Patsy.

"Depends on where has space." Said Simon. "Ideally I'd like us all in the same lodgings."

"Are we in danger ?" Asked Patsy.

"Someone will be annoyed at us killing the governor of Benghazi." Said Simon. "With luck we'll be on the coast of West Africa before they look for us in Malta. I really can't see anyone following us all the way there."

Cosimo had been looking, but Patsy obviously had younger eyes.

"There." Said Patsy, pointing. "I can see the coastline.....And a few buildings."

"Probably the south west of Malta." Said Cosimo. "We've some way to go before the Mermaid drops anchor in the harbour."

Cosimo wanted to be active; ideally he'd have been up there in the rigging, getting the best view of Malta. His leg was sore though and though he hated to admit it, he wasn't as young as he once was. Then again, who is ? He found somewhere to sit and discussed the Ivory Coast with Simon. When he looked up again, he could actually see people on the shore. They still looked tiny, but they were definitely people. Juliana came to peer at the distant shore and stopped to talk about gossip from Florence and Livorno. By the time she left, Cosimo could see trees along the coast and waves hitting a smooth sandy beach. The Mermaid was still heading east, but had turned slight north of east.

"Good spot you've found.....Mind if I join you ?" Asked Mia.

"No, not at all.....Glad of the company." Said Cosimo.

"Are the stitches still painful ?"

"No, just sore.....I overdid things." Said Cosimo. "I like to keep active."

They talked about all sorts of things until Cosimo leant back and fell asleep. Unintentional of course, but his damned leg had been quite sore the night before. He dreamt of them finding the fabled City of Shadows, where Simon seemed to believe he'd be given directions to seek his great quest, the true meaning of Festina Lente. The city wasn't empty, shadows seemed to be following them everywhere, until.....

"Wake up, Cosimo.....Time to go ashore." Said Simon.

A hand to go with the voice, pushing at his shoulder. They were there, anchors dropped and in the harbour, yet he'd missed it all. Cosimo never had been one for napping, but he must have needed the sleep.

"Wow, I was out there.....Missed seeing us arriving." Said Cosimo. "Aren't we going to tie up at one of the jetties?"

"We're being a bit careful this time." Said Simon. "Galeoto's idea to keep the Mermaid away from the jetty; at least until we're sure of the greeting we're likely to get in Malta."

"Fair enough, though getting supplies might be difficult." Said Cosimo.

"If it looks safe, the Mermaid will be tied up before sunset." Said Simon.

The rest had done his leg good, though Cosimo needed a little help to get into the boat. At the jetty end it was just one set of steps and they were in Malta again, in the docks where just about everything worth happening; happened.

"Well, no angry faces." Said Patsy.

Had they killed anyone important in Malta? Were there unpaid bills that might be chased? Cosimo didn't think so, but their history was beginning to become a little complicated; and he was still trying to properly wake up. One of the main suppliers of ships provisions seemed happy to see them, so all told; they didn't look to be on anyone's revenge list.

"Give the Mermaid a wave." Simon said to Mia. "Galeoto knows that means he can use the main jetty."

"Will do." Said Mia.

A Patsy saying, or way of talking, everyone was beginning to pick them up. Cosimo wasn't sure where Patsy had lived before moving to Florence, but she had a very quick and punchy way of talking. Giovanni was supposed to have been in the second boat from the Mermaid. Instead he'd wedged himself between the rowers and arrived with them. He had the feel of a man on a mission.

"I'll see if I can get us all lodgings with Mrs Camilleri." Said Giovanni.

With that he was gone, at quite a pace. The docks were full of gulls, the sky was blue and most of the locals were wearing their summer clothing. When Simon said something about finding somewhere with decent ale and food; Cosimo wasn't about to argue with him.

"I never thought I'd say this, but I'm getting a bit of a taste for ale." Said Juliana.

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Mia had already been to see Lucia the witch the night before. Just to sound her out really, as her family had known Lucia's family for years. Not real friends, but Mia had a pretty good idea that she was more likely to say yes to visiting the Ivory Coast, if she asked her. They might not be lifelong friends, but Mia was a woman and Simon was a man she didn't really know at all. Mia mentioned the Shadow City and the scrolls; she even mentioned needing Lucia as a healer. Lucia had asked for a reasonable amount of gold, considering she had to know the job was going to come with a lot of danger. Her only real stipulation had been a surprise, but Mia had duly passed it on to Simon.

"I want access to the scrolls before we go." Lucia had told her. "Full access.....I insist on being able to read any of them I choose."

"That would actually be quite useful." Simon had said.

They were now outside of Lucia's house with a third of her fee in gold. Simon and Giovanni were carrying the chest full of scrolls. Two leather bags would have been lighter, but Lucia had insisted on seeing the scrolls and the chest they'd been found in.

"Trust me; there will be something unnatural about the chest." Lucia had said.

Again, Simon seemed to view her stipulation as a good thing, rather than an annoyance. Mia banged on Lucia's front door, as Simon and Giovanni placed the chest on the ground. Patsy and Juliana were also with them, mainly in case the street thugs took an interest in the chest. It did look the kind of chest made to hold valuables of some kind. Lucia opened her front door.

"You came.....Good." Said Lucia. "Come inside, I can't want to see these scrolls you found."

"We also brought the gold you asked for." Said Patsy.

"Quiet girl, some around here would cut your throat for far less." Said Lucia. "Come inside.....All of you, welcome to my home."

Mia entered the house last, after giving the street a very good look over. As far as she could tell, no one was watching them; or if they were, they were very good at it.

"Anyone following us?" Asked Simon.

"No one I could see." Said Mia.

They'd been to the house before of course, when a few of them had required healing, the kind of fast and no questions asked healing that a good healing witch specialises in. Mia noticed that herbal tea had been prepared for them, and there was the smell of fresh baking.

"There is food and drink." Said Lucia. "I'm hoping you can stay and enjoy it.....I could never eat all the pastries on my own."

"I'm very fond of pastries." Said Giovanni. "And herbal tea for that matter."

The chest went where Lucia pointed and Simon pulled back the lid. Mia had seen inside the chest before and there always seemed to be more scrolls, in a huge variety of languages.

"Read what you want, for as long as you want." Said Simon. "We'll enjoy those wonderful smelling pastries."

"I'll make more when those run out." Said Lucia. "I also have two rabbits to go in the pot later. I promise you won't go hungry while I read."

"I love Rabbit stew." Said Patsy.

"Just ignore the swearing when I can't read the language a scroll is written in." Said Lucia.

Mia helped herself to herbal tea and the largest pastry on the plate. I looked as though it might be a long day and there was a chance they'd be sat in Lucia's back parlour all night. Simon had told them before they arrived that he didn't want to hurry the witch in her reading; and he had no intention of letting the scrolls out of his sight. Lucia was already reading one of the oldest looking scrolls, written in black ink of very old and yellow parchment.

"I knew it.....The chest is important." Said Lucia. "Even if it's empty, it must go with us to the City of Shadows."

"Why is it important?" Asked Simon.

"Not totally sure why, not yet.....But it is, very important." Said Lucia.

Lucia kept up a steady flow of muttering for what had to be hours. When she needed wax candles to read by, Lucia had obviously decided it was time to make them rabbit stew as their evening meal.

Lucia passed her scribbled notes on the scrolls to Simon.

"Just a few of my assumptions." Said Lucia. "Some might be wrong, but I'm usually right."

Mia watched Simon, as he read the notes. The look on his face said more than words ever could. He looked excited and terrified in about equal measure.

"Are you sure, Lucia?" Asked Simon. "I always assumed they were nothing but a legend."

"Nothing is certain until we see them and talk to the Borren." Said Lucia. "As I did say though, I am usually right about these things."

"What has Lucia written?" Asked Giovanni.

“See for yourself.” Said Simon, as he passed Lucia’s notes to Giovanni.

Giovanni read and looked horrified, as though he’d been given a note containing the day and hour of his own death.

“No.....They don’t exist.” Said Giovanni.

“I can assure you they do.” Said Lucia. “Now.....No more talk about grim myths and legends until we’ve had our rabbit stew.”

Giovanni handed her the notes, but Mia couldn’t bring herself to read them; at least not until she’d eaten and everyone was in a better frame of mind. The stew was wonderful, considering it was mainly turnips and rabbit. Lucia was definitely a very good cook.

“That was the best rabbit stew I’ve ever had.” Said Patsy.

It was the ideal time to read Lucia’s notes, but Mia decided not to. She gave the notes back to Lucia, who dropped them into the chest.

“Probably for the best, Mia.” Said Lucia. “You’ll be face to face with them soon enough.”

Simon didn’t get to pay Lucia her gold and carry the scrolls out of Lucia’s house for another day. By then he must have known as much about the City of Shadows as Lucia. Not that he was saying much about it. By then Mia had left the house and begun seeing various suppliers of everything they’d need on a long voyage to the Ivory Coast, a very long voyage.

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Juliana wasn’t surprised that when the Mermaid left Malta and headed west it was raining. The kind of rain her mother would call lazy rain; because it would rather go through you, than around you.

The torrential soaking rain seemed to suit the mood of most of those on the ship. Galeoto was in a good mood, but he actually seemed to enjoy rainy days. She could have been looking out at the rain through a tiny window in her cabin. She should have been in the dry, maybe still in her bed. Instead she was stood next to Captain Galeoto and they were both dressed from head to foot in waterproof clothing. They were in front of the wheelhouse, watching for obstructions like ships taking an erratic course into the harbour. Juliana didn’t need to be there, but she wanted to say a proper goodbye to Malta.

“Goodbye Malta.....I’ve enjoyed my time here.” She said.

“I’m pleased that no one turned up seeking vengeance for us killing the governor of Benghazi.” Said Galeoto.

“Simon said the world is a big place.” Said Juliana. “He thinks they’re likely to be looking for us in Livorno.”

“He has a point, it is our home port.” Said Galeoto. “Not that I expect to see that city again soon.”

Lucia was settling in well, though she was sharing a cabin with Mia. The Mermaid was large compared to many ships which picked up and delivered good in a variety of Mediterranean ports. There wasn’t unlimited space though and there were worse things than sharing with Mia. Juliana had shared with Rosa, whose belongings were still all over the cabin. Juliana was going to give it a few days before packing up Rosa’s thing.

“I just wish it would stop raining.” Said Juliana.

“The wind is perfect, so I’ll not complain about a little rain.” Said Galeoto.

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