

## Excerpt from A Little Wicked – By Janet R. Macreery

Chapter 15, Pages 79 – 81

“Looks like those boots are a hazard,” Charles said. He and Ephram laughed. Not a full-bellied Henderson lad laugh like when they teased me in the glen, but the meaning was the same. They had power over me and wanted me to know it. That was fine. There was nothing I could do about it. For now.

I stood up and took my place at the railing.

“Go!” he yelled. I tossed the dowel behind the ship. Charles turned over the sandglass and watched the sand fall from the top to the bottom.

Rope spun off the spool in Ephram’s hands.

“Stop!” he yelled.

As soon as my hands touched the unspooling rope, splinters bit into my palms. Resisting the urge to pull my hand back, I grabbed the rope and pulled until the weighted dowel, now wet, was once again in my hand.

“Three and a half,” Charles said.

“Aye, three and a half,” Ephram repeated. I had so many questions. As if reading my mind he began to explain. “Gerry said you never been on a crew before, not that you are now. Well, bird boy, the rope is knotted at even intervals. We count how many knots go over the railing in the time it takes the sandglass to run out. That is how fast the ship is moving. This time we stopped the rope between the third and fourth knot. We call it three and a half.”

“What are you doing?” Charles asked his crewmate.

Ephram shrugged. “Monday.”

That was twice. What did Monday have to do with anything? How did the day of the week possible matter out in the middle of the ocean?

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“Fine,” Charles said. Turning to me, he continued. “Back in steerage, we use the four rows of holes at the bottom of the traverse board to record the number of knots.”

I knew I was risking more teasing and physical harm but I had to ask.

“Why does Monday matter?”

“Oh, the bird boy asks questions, now, eh?” Charles said.

“Mondays are training days. Every Monday crewmembers try to learn new skills. You should think of everyday as Monday.”

Charles and Ephram thought this a brilliant and funny idea. They laughed a bit more hardy this time. They returned the equipment to Horace’s room and made their marks on the traverse board. I realized how young they were. Not much older than young Ian Henderson. I wondered what made them leave their homes at such a young age. Who were they running from? Perhaps they were just as scared and uncertain about what would happen to them as I was.