

Some of the pirates were moved to the bilge while the rest were put to work at the oars of Coarse Wind. Vincst and a few others were ordered to the pirate ship, newly dubbed Sea's Bounty, and sailed it in the wake of Coarse Wind.

"What's to be done now?" Roland asked Captain Scalyern.

"We've no need of a schooner," Scalyern replied. "We'll sell her for what we can get in Lavon along with her cargo. We should see a fine profit from the night's work."

"I meant with the prisoners," Roland said. "Will you be questioning them?"

"Question them about what?" Scalyern said.

"About attacking us, their motive or who they might be working for. About where their lair is or if they are in league with any others."

"None of that is my business," Scalyern said simply. "Nor of any interest to me. They attacked us and we captured them. That's all there is to it."

Roland thought deeply on Scalyern's perspective of the pirates. Such lack of concern about bandits, what they might do, and how they operate was an alien philosophy to him. The ideals of protecting the weak by pursuing evil doers was so ingrained in him that any other approach, or lack thereof, had not even occurred to him.

"You captain a warship, though," was the only thing Roland could think of to say.

"Yes. We trade when we can and, when the House of Thorvol calls for war, we answer that call. We kill who we must. The knowing and the reasoning is for someone else."

"So, then a trial and hanging in Lavon?" Roland asked.

"Trial maybe, but not likely hanging," Scalyern said.

"Surely they don't balk at hanging a man for piracy there?"

"Oh, it's not sentiment, boy," Scalyern said. "It's business. We'll be paid a 'reward' for bringing them in. The Marshal of Lavon will jail them, for a time, and then sell them as slaves to whoever can pay. He puts them on the Block."

"But slavery is against the law in the Kingdom of Lethanor," Roland said. "Surely Lady Decelles upholds the laws of Lethanor."

"Oh, aye, it is indeed the law," Scalyern said. "But the Marshal of Lavon does as he sees fit. The good Lady Decelles generally allows him a free hand. She's mostly busy with Degra, the city on the southern end of the isle. They don't call it slavery, anyway. Not exactly. More like prisoners working off a fine. A mighty steep fine. The Marshal judges what their fine is, meaning he sets their price, and the captains or merchants that pay that 'fine' are entitled to the labor of that prisoner until the debt is paid. Usually works out to about five silver a year. So, the prisoner, if he has friends with coin, can buy his freedom, or he is more or less sentenced to so many years of hard labor."

"How do they know that the prisoners are released when their time is up?" Roland asked.

"I don't think they care, lad. Rough guess, but I'd say the life of a slave kills three out of every five men. It is a hard life," Scalyern said, gesturing to his whip marks.

"So, you were once sold in Lavon?"

"Oh yes," Scalyern said. "Many years ago. I was a bit rowdy in my youth. Lucky enough that I was bought by an honest man. He turned me loose after my five years to him was done."

"If he was such a good man, then who whipped you?" Roland asked.

"Oh, he and his men did. As I said, I was a bit rowdy back then."