

The small boat ground quietly onto the sand on a moonless night. The wind was rising as was the tide and the chill of dark morning made Bastien want to finish the work quickly and get back to his ship. Captain Martin would want to be off before first light and not miss this tide.

A dark form approached from the shore and spoke into the night. "Bring the payment ashore." Bast gestured silently and two of his crew lifted the heavy chest out of the launch and carried it onto the sand, opening it to reveal its glittering contents. The dark form motioned and a stream of men carrying casks moved to the small boat handing the casks over to the crew to be stowed. "As agreed, 30 fine grain black and 30 of the purest red." the voice muttered as the men worked to receive the cargo.

The small chest was closed and set up into the wagon being silently unloaded on the beach. In minutes it was empty, and drove off, the anonymous hooded workmen disappearing into the black night. Bast gave the signal and the crew shoved off and set the little sail to return to the Coeur de Lion, this little side venture would make he and his Captain rich men.

Captain Martin stood at the rail of the vast Nalvarene warship Coeur de Lion peering into the darkness. The launch finally came into view. The sail was still set and drawing taught. What were those whoreson lubbers thinking? They were going to....then his eyes saw the rope tied to the tiller, a pale green glowing rune, a flash....

A huge fireball cleansed the night of darkness for an instant and a second later the sound of an enormous explosion drifted up from Susmere Deep. A watcher on the hill above the port smiled, and enjoyed the view while the great warship burned. The Hospitallers would be busy all morning, so would the undertaker, and the sharks.

On a small brig further down the shore, men turned the capstan to raise the anchor while others stowed the 55 casks they had just taken aboard. The ship was moving south down the Deep in minutes, heading for the sea, stealing off as the first grey light of a new day threatened the eastern sky. An officer watched the ship burning behind them and shivered. His Captain stood beside him "Better them then us eh Tom?" he queried.

"Aye sir. Indeed"