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The Journey of the Nimble

First the Tales of the Eastern
Rebellion

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Jasmine al-Jaber sat in a makeshift chair, arms crossed inside her tent. The Emir Osman, afraid to have his rebellious subjects put to death had them all stranded on the Isle of Farnmis. The locals just called the island, The Axe. It was mostly a rocky outcropping in the form of a double axe head. On the south side was a large sandy spit, suitable only for small boats to make a landing on. Everything else was large, ship shattering rocks. There were only a handful of trees in sight, so no one was leaving the by building a raft.

Last night, their first on the island, there was a suitable storm. Lightning split the sky and the rain fell in sheets. Now the island smelled like salt and rainwater. Wind rattled the canvas of the tent and poles shook. They might survive for a time on fish, but with no fresh water supply, they would all, sooner or later, die of thirst. Jasmine wondered if this was Osman's cruel way of doing away with them. Beheading would have been a more pleasurable experience.

Zubair burst into the tent. "Come see," he demanded.

Jasmine looked up with distaste, "Why? So I can see the sun with will no doubt roast us every day until die? What? I'm not depressed enough for you?"

Zubair waved his armed excitedly, "You must see for yourself."

Reluctantly Jasmine followed Zubair out into the open air. The wind blew her long hair. "Yes. The sun. Very nice," she remarked.

Zubair smiled, "Not here. The beach."

Jasmine's face lit up like an oiled torch. "Has someone landed?"

Zubair chuckled. "Better still."

Jasmine followed Zubair, scrambling over the rocks. They walked down to the edge of the island. It was littered with small rocks the ocean waves daily smashed against the larger rocks. Grinding them to dust as surely as the island would grind them all. "What could be better than someone coming to get us off this accursed rock?"

The two stepped over the beach pebbles rounding the bubble-like hill on the western end of the island. As Jasmine turned the corner, she could see the first part of it. In her exhilaration she passed Zubair, rushing down along the hard, angular pebbles. Almost everyone was already gathered, standing on the west side on the sand bar. In the middle, laying almost completely on its side was a ship.

Zubair held out both his hands when he caught up. "There? You see? It is as I said ... only better."

Jasmine wasn't so sure. The ship was completely out of the water, resting on the sand. Getting it back in the water would require either a giant or a miracle. And both of these were in short supply on this waste of an island.

Zubair put his hands on his hips. "It is a square-rigged ship of the infidels. But I served on one before as a slave. I know how they work. She's big enough to get us all out of here."

Jasmine squinted in the bright light. "How did it get here?"

"The storm in the night," Zubair replied.

"Where's her crew?" She asked.

"Only the gods know," Zubair replied. "Perhaps they fled when they saw the island approaching."

Jasmine turned and began to walk back to her tent. "Yes, well it's very nice."

The older man stood, looking astounded. "What do you mean? Where are you going?"

"Back to the tent," she answered. "She's not going anywhere. There's not a drop of water under her. We couldn't get that hulk back in the water if we worked at it for a hundred years." She stared at the shirtless Zubair. "Unless, of course, you have a miracle up your sleeve."

Zubair looked astonished. "We'll dig a canal on this side. We'll dig out the sand until it fills with water. Hold the ship up with beams from the masts. Then when everything is ready, we use a rope to pull out the beams. She rocks right into the water and we have a miracle."

She cocked her head to one side, glancing at the old seaman. "Will it work?"

"Have I ever lied to you before?"

"Other than the whole rebellion everyone will join thing, no."

"I tell you it's as good as done."

Jasmine started running for the ship. "Well? What are we waiting for? Do you need the Emir's swordsmen to prod you along again?"

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Most of the exiles had dug out the canal with their bare hands. Most were now cracked and bleeding. They moved sand until the sun went down. Then on their hands and knees, they dug out more of the tiny grains until dawn. After inspecting the boat, Jasmine had learned it was full provisioned with only the ship's boats missing. The crew must have abandoned ship as Zubair suggested. Jasmine had everything taken out of the holds to lighten the ship.

The rum was pointless, but she had it saved to pour under the ship to help it slide into the water. There were several casks of fresh water aboard. By fresh, one would have to explain the phrase meant not salt water. It tasted as if it had been used to clean the bottom of a stable. The main cargo had been tin and lapis. Of value, yes, but not worth the weight if they were going to get off this accursed rock. The strangest part of the hold where a large assortment of rope ladders. Some almost 400 feet long. Perhaps the tin had to be carried down steep cliffs. But with the crew missing, only the gods would know for certain. Well, the gods and the local sharks. But the local sharks weren't talking.

From the stores, Jasmine found a good pair of leather boots which came to above her knees. There was also an unusual corset of black leather. She put it on over her shirt. Otherwise wearing it would have made her feel uncomfortably exposed. The fit was tight, but it had a unique suppleness to it. She moved easily while wearing it.

It took the better part of a month, but they were finally ready. Jasmine waved her sword in the air. The sun gleamed off its silver surfaces. Khaleel led the men as they carefully pulled out the supporting wood. All morning some of them had been pouring the rum down the sides of the wood to make them slippery. Yet when all the wood was out of the way, the ship stubbornly stayed in place. "Are you an efreeti or some demon of the pit to vex me so?" Jasmine yelled at the unmoving hulk. She ordered the wood put back in place.

"We'll dig out more sand and try again," she announced.

Once the men were up to their shoulders in salt water, some of the others started to push the wooden yards down to them. The wind picked up and the ship groaned. No one had heard it make this noise before. The masts trembled and moved. Men scrambled out of the water, desperately trying to escape being under the crushing weight of the hull when she slid down into the water.

When the last man had been pulled from the water, the masts moved back into place and the ship settled back into its place. Jasmine approached the stern, where the great rudder was still partially buried in the sand. With one violent effort, she raised her foot and gave the rudder a serious kick. "Damn and blast you for a faithless gambler," she spat at the hull.

No sooner did her foot leave the wood than it began to creak again. This time the sound grew to thunderous proportions. It was as if the ship itself was about to shake apart. Jasmine frantically waved everyone off with her arms. Khaleel had to grab her and pull her away as everyone else's safety was more important to her than her own. The ship shook and shuttered ... then it began to move. The wooden rudder moved but did not break off. By itself, digging into the sand it was holding the entire structure up. The bow slid into the water first, coming to rest afloat.

But then it seemed to stop, its movement only half completed. The wind rose, and another shudder shook the ship and the stern followed suit. It splashed into the water with great force. It seemed as if it intended to keep going, rocking to the far side. At last, it settled back down. The mast pointing straight up to the sky.

Zubair smiled down at his chief. "Why didn't you do that in the first place?" He demanded.

"If I'd have known it would work, I have tried it at once." She protested.

Still, after all their hard work, the ship rested on the bottom of the sandbank. Stuck hard. Even at the island high tide.

Jasmine gave one of her 'you lied to me again' looks to Zubair. "I thought you said this would work." She growled.

Zubair didn't seem phased at all. "It will work," he protested. "Have a little faith. We take the anchor off the chain and we put it out to sea, then we bury it on the bottom. We run a rope between the capstan and the anchor. Then we just haul the ship off the sand."

"Just like that?"

“Just like ... well almost just like that. We’ll put a lot of pulleys between the anchor and the ship. You see. It’ll work.” Zubair seemed filled with confidence. “After all, we got it in the water. I never thought we would achieve it.”

“What?” Jasmine hollered.

“Yes, but that’s all water under the ... ship now, isn’t it?”

“Damn your eyes.”

Zubair seemed unperturbed. “Pluck out my eyes, cut off my hands, saw off my feet. Whatever pleases you. Only help me get this thing free first.”

As Khaleel and Ahmed dragged out the anchor, Jasmine and the others set about lighting the ship still further. She had all the railing removed, two of the masts taken down, The glass windows from the ship master’s cabin. Anything that was not nailed down. And if it could be pried up ... well then, it really was nailed down tight enough. She had those removed too.

Once the anchor was secure under a pile of rough boulders, Ahmed and Khaleel strung ropes between it and the ship. They put block and tackle between the two and strung the rope between them. They proceeded to put more pulleys between those. Until the rope was more a tangle of knitting than a line from one point to another. The women sewed the sails shut and filled them with air. They strapped them to the sides of the ship to give it more buoyancy.

They waited until spring tide when both the sun and moon made the strongest pull on the waters. Jasmine watched as the shadow of the mast disappeared under the wood. “Now,” she screamed, “Pull.” The men heaved, and the women worked furiously to force more air into the sails with bellows.

At first, nothing transpired. They stayed as stuck as before. To turn the capstan, Zubair began to hum a tune. Soon everyone was singing, coordinating the rhythm of their movements with the melody. The wheel groaned, but the rope moved. Under them, they could feel the deck sliding. It was an extra job to keep the wheel turning as the floor moved out from under your feet. Several times one or the other of them was nearly pulled off their feet, but they somehow managed to keep the wheel turning.

A great cheer ran up once they felt the ship float free. “OK, Zubair you can keep your eyes,” Jasmine told him.

“And my feet and hands?” he asked.

“I’m still thinking about it.”

It took the better part of two weeks to fully rebuild the ship. Without any of the ship boats, men had to carry their loads into the seawater and walk or swim them out to the ship. Each piece had to be hoisted aboard like cargo. At the end of each day, a man shirt would have a thick line of salt at the shoulders. Their skin became dry and cracked, but still, they worked tirelessly.

At night everyone slept onboard. Even though the ship was still roped to the anchor, there was a great fear of storms. One had thrown the ship onto the beach before, another one could again. In the dark, the ship smelled of oiled ropes and molten tar. Unless the sea spray was up. Then the out fragrance was

the tang of the salt in the air. Of all of them, Jasmine has the most trouble sleeping. When she looked up she swore she saw faint lights at the top of the masts.

Sprites twisting around the topsail wood. At times, she thought she could make out black holes where eyes belonged and the slenderest of hands. Zubair laughed at her and called them dreams, the arc of the starlight reflected off the nails and the fittings. "The nails are black," Jasmine protested.

"So?"

"Light doesn't reflect off of black."

"Then it is something else. Just thank the gods and pray for calm weather." Zubair said.

Everyone ignored her warnings, but she kept her eyes facing the topmasts. Sometimes, sometimes, she imagined them hiding behind the wooden columns. As if playing a cruel game of hide and seek. Surely any ship to have crashed on this island was cursed, she felt. All the other sailors gave the rock a wide berth. It was an easy task as it fell on no known route.

The masts and the yards were the most difficult to get on board. Dragging them across the sand was a nightmare. The work was mostly done during the night, to prevent those doing the chore from being broiled in the tropical sunlight. At least, once they were in the water, they floated. The women worked on returning the canvas to sheets and the men hauled them up the masts. A few nearly fell to their deaths as they struggled to attach the canvas sail to the yards. They were learning to become sailors.

"Time to vote for the officers," Jasmine announced.

"Ship's Master, Ship's Master!" everyone shouted. In general acclaim for Jasmine el-Jaber.

"I know nothing of ships," Jasmine protested, "Why not Zubair here? He's the sailor."

"Rowing slave actually," Zubair corrected her. "And I was only aboard for a week before I escaped. So, technically, you've as much experience as I."

"I'm still considering those hands and feet," Jasmine spat back at him.

"Ship's Master, Ship's Master!" everyone returned to shouting.

At last, Jasmine acknowledged the acclaim. "Alright then. What of Ship's Sailing Master? Who will you elect?"

In unison, the crowd chanted, "Zubair, Zubair, Zubair!"

"No, no, no. Not I." Zubair protested. "I was only a rowing slave."

"What?" Jasmine said to him. "What makes you think your protest will be any more effective than mine? Surrender to your fate. I don't think you have much of a choice."

Zubair frowned. "Very well." He shouted back at the crowd, "but you'll regret it."

Jasmine crossed her arms and motioned Zubair to stand behind her. "And now," she proclaimed. "Your most important choice yet. Who will you decide on to be Quartermaster?"

The crowd mumbled and broke into small groups and began heated conversations. The Quartermaster distributed food and water, their task was as critical as the Ship's Master ... perhaps even more so. It had to be someone that everyone trusted. As the argument built to a crescendo, Song spoke up. "What of Ahmed?" she said in a meek and quiet voice. The crowd fell silent.

Song was a small woman, thin and frail looking. Yet all among them believe she was a seer. While the rebellion was failing, Song urged everyone to run. She told them the Emir's swordsmen were coming. No one believed her. But since their arrival on the island, no one had yet doubted her word. She had even told them they should not wait for rescue. They would rescue themselves.

The chant started out as a low whisper but built into a giant roar. "Ahmed! Ahmed! Ahmed!"

Ahmed stood forward and walked to stand behind Jasmine.

"What no protest?" She asked.

"Why would it help? It didn't seem to help you two," Ahmed suggested.

"Well?" Jasmine asked.

"Well, what?"

"The Quartermaster must name the cook," Jasmine answered.

Ahmed rubbed his chin. "I appoint Ruwaida al-Dia as cook." There was a favorable rumble among the crowd. As one time owner of the best eating establishment in the city, she was a wise choice. She's roasted all their fish with nothing but palm fronds and seagrass for a cooking fire. Even Khaleel ate her fish. And he detested the taste of fish.

Jasmine turned to the heavy-set, but newly minted Ship's Sailing Master "Zubair shall we raise the anchor."

He frowned. "It wedged itself under a rock. Only a giant or a sea monster could break it loose."

Jasmine stared at him, her eyes burning red. "So, we have held officer selections for a ship which can go nowhere?"

Ahmed stepped forward and drew his axe. He swung the blade once, twice, three times until the coil of rope parted. It fell to the deck and slithered like a snake off the stern end of the ship.

"What are you all standing around for?" Ahmed asked. "get up those masts and set the sails. It's time for us to leave this place."

The crew scrambled to reach for the shrouds, climbing the ropes as if they had born monkeys.

In moments, they were untying the rope which held the canvas rolled up against the yards. At a signal from Jasmine, they let go the sails.

They fluttered down from the yards, rippling in the sea breeze. All at once everyone had to grab something to hold on for dear life. They expected some movement once the wind filled the sails, but no one expected the ship to rise straight up.

Water dripped from the hull as he came completely free of the water. Jasmine turned to Zubair, her eyes were a bonfire of anger. "You mean to tell me all we needed to do was set the sails and the ship could have lifted itself off the sand bar?"

Zubair looked back at her with a sheepish grin. "How was I to know?" He protested vociferously. "I was a rowing slave. You think a week as a rowing slave makes one an expert at spotting flying boats?"

Jasmine grumbled.

Lowering the mainsail put them gently back down on the water. The more mail sails they put up, the higher the ship was elevated. The Jibs and the spanker, however, moved the ship forward. The first time this occurred, there was widespread panic. Since the cased the ship to head straight for the island.

"Turn the wheel," Jasmine screamed, "turn it now."

"Which way?" the call came back.

"Who cares," Jasmine yelled, "Turn right ... I mean starboard. Just turn now."

"How many degrees?" The helmsman asked.

Jasmine was starting to look just a little exasperated. "Keep turning until I tell you to stop."

The ship passed close enough to one of the taller rocks, you could have reached out and touched it. When the ship was headed back out to sea, Jasmine called a halt. "Well, Zubair, where do we go?"

"You're asking me?" He replied.

"Well you are the Sailing Master," Jasmine said.

"I keep telling you, I was a rowing slave. What do I know about navigation?"

"Well, pick a direction then."

Zubair rubbed his chin. "OK, let's see. Zuggobar is north, so let's go north."

"Helmsman set a course north," Jasmine demanded.

"What will we call her?" Ahmed asked.

Jasmine's eyes narrowed. "Call what? Who are we talking about?"

Ahmed crossed his arms. "The ship. What shall we name the ship?"

Jasmine grinned. "Oh, that. I don't think we have much choice, do you?"

"Begging the Ship's Master pardon, but what do you mean?"

"Why the way we barely missed crashing into our own island. Seems we have no choice. We'll have to call this ship the Nimble."

Ahmed smiled like the proverbial cat, "Well, Nimble she is then."

The sea can be a depressing sight, with nothing to see but water. It is not improved by being 400 feet above the waves, because then all you see is more water. Imagine living on a farm and all that surrounds you is fields. You build a great tower, to see what lies beyond those fields. Then, when you climb to the top all you can see are more fields. The night sky is filled with the seven moons and the stars. Before the bow, anyone could see Miltha, the northern constellation. It was a good sign since it meant we were heading in the right direction.

However, when the air is hot, and the sea is cold, all manner of mirages and illusions will make themselves appear. *Look there is land over there. No, it's over that way. No, that's nothing at all.*

When we first spotted another ship, we thought she was a mirage as well and ignored it. We would have completely missed our first encounter with another ship, save for the fact it sailed right for us. Our approach was made a bit more difficult by the fact none of us knew how to fly. It's one thing when you are chasing someone in a horse. It's another when you are working a rudder and sails to do it.

Despite our ineptitude, the sailors on the ship we were following were distraught. The ones who were not madly raising and lowering sails were on their knees praying. Their ship turned one way and then another, in a desperate attempt to avoid us. In the end, we made a classic rookie mistake. We overtook them, turned sideways and then splashed right into the water. By all rights, they should have rammed us, but their captain panicked and had the crew cut down every sail they had.

"Swords," Jasmine yelled.

The prow of the other ship just touched us, and our crew jumped onto her deck. The other crew surrendered immediately. Seemed they didn't think themselves a match for a flying ship. Jasmine held her sword to the throat of the captain. His hands reaching high into the sky. "Jasmine," Khaleel called to her, "you have to see this." He and the other members of the Nimble's crew were snickering like schoolboys. Jasmine turned to see a tall slender woman dressed all in white and gold. By her looks, there was more about the palace to her than the sea.

Jasmine broke out in laughter as well. "Who is she?"

Ahmed forced back a belly laugh. "We'll unless I miss my guess ... that ... is the Emir's sister."

"Oh, no. You got to be kidding me." Jasmine didn't sound happy. "What's she doing out here?"

Ahmed smiled, "Well, we could ask Zubair, but ..."

"Yes, I know."

In unison, everyone said, "I was only a rowing slave."

It was the Emir's sister who finally broke the debate. "Pirates, aye?"

Jasmine tried to answer, by she was cut off in a haughty manner typical of spoiled princesses. "Then I'll sail with you. These men are incompetents."

Jasmine growled. "We're not taking on passengers."

The girl didn't even look impressed. "Not even for the ransom, you brother will surely pay you?"

Jasmine pointed her sword at the Emir's sister. "No passengers," she repeated.

"Let's not be too hasty," Zubair interrupted, "A ransom could be quite useful."

A swift argument ensued, but it ended quickly. As they noticed the girl was already aboard the Nimble. "Delighted to be a member of your crew." She giggled. "I love saying that."

Jasmine turned to Ahmed. "Why does she like saying that?" she inquired.

Ahmed smiled. "It's because it's her name, Delight."

The crew of the Nibble relieved the captain of the ship of half of her stores. Except for the gold he was carrying, they took all of the gold. The captain bowed and scraped as the crew took its leave. He had a shocked look on his face. As if he had not expected to still be living at this point. The Nimble rose into the air and set a course north again.

Jasmine approached Delight. "Do you know how to sail?"

"Heavens no."

"Are you a map maker?"

"Afraid not."

"So, can you do anything? Anything useful I mean?"

Delight lifted one dainty palm. A fire instantly sprang up, but she made no movement. No sign she was holding a flame in her hand. When she had determined she had made her point, she closed her fingers. The flame was extinguished. "I make magic," she replied.

Jasmine tried not to be dumbfounded. "OK, it could be useful."

"You're the rebels, aren't you?" Delight asked. "Now that you have a ship, what are your intentions? What do you want?"

Jasmine had the sinking feeling she stood before a djinn who would take her desires and use magic to twist them into an evil affair of little practical use. "Not much," the Nimble's Ship Master replied, "I guess I'm looking for justice, a chance to fight for the little guy. The ones you nobles always like to crush."

Delight cocked her eyes at Jasmine. "Not revenge."

"No," Jasmine was certain about this, "Only some justice."

Delight smiled. "Then it is a good thing I'm here. Do you know why your rebellion failed?"

"Bad timing." Jasmine answered and then looked over at Zubair, "and not a small amount of terrible advice."

"No," Delight spoke in hushed tones, "It wasn't that. You had no chance. The Emir knew everything you were planning. Who you were and where you were going to be."

Jasmine's eyes turned black as pitch, "You mean there was a traitor?"

“Not at all. You people are as loyal and dependable as the sun.”

“Then how?”

“How did he know all?”

“Yes.”

“Because I ... Delight ... am his sister.”

Having the Emir’s sister onboard change the whole nature of the Nimble’s journey. Arguments broke out with some anger and not a little bit of violence. Punches were thrown. Bodies fell to the deck. There were a few who, after hearing the news were definitely out for revenge. And they saw Delight as the perfect way to get it. Delight, for her part, merely watched the crew’s ministrations with a fair amount of indifference. She spent most of the time carefully admiring her fingernails.

Jasmine too, spent time simply listening to the arguments. When the proposal for throwing Delight overboard was raised, she decided to speak out. “I suppose you could try.”

The arguments stopped. One of the crewmen piped up. “What do you mean?”

Jasmine casually leaned against a mast and crossed her arms. “She makes magic. If you think you can throw her overboard and not be turned into a marmoset, feel free to try.”

The crew was silent. They noticed Delight examining her fingernails. Some of the crew helped those on the deck back to their feet. Still, others gave Delight the haughty look which seems to say, I have more important things to do. Before the sundial had moved another notch, the rest of the crew was off fixing ropes, mending sails, or polishing the ship’s brass.

Meanwhile, Delight calmly walked into the captain’s cabin. Jasmine followed her, finger raised in protest. “Yes.” Delight beamed, “This will do nicely.”

“Wait a ...” Her words about being turned in a small primate returned to haunt her. She turned until she was facing out the door. “Khaleel.” She yelled, “move my things to the crew’s quarters.”

“Don’t bother,” Delight answered. When Jasmine turned around all her things had been replaced with fine furnishings, rugs, pillows, scented candles on tall holders, a myriad of fine silk fashions, and a four-poster bed complete with velvet curtains.

“What the ...” Jasmine exclaimed.

“I told you,” Delight smiled. “I make magic.”

That night the Zubair woke Jasmine from her hammock. “What? What’s wrong?”

“The stars,” Zubair gave her a panicked look in the dim light, “They’re gone.”

Jasmine rolled over, still not fully awake. “It’s called clouds, Zubair. Nothing to be worried about, they’ll come back another night.”

“That’s not it,” Zubair tried to explain, “you can see them. They are just not where they are supposed to be.”

Jasmine sat up and looked him straight in the eye. When she could see he was serious, she rushed up the ladder to the desk. The sky was clear, only the chill of the night air was present, the smell of the clouds. Three of the seven sister moons were out joined by the stars. There were indeed in the wrong places. Off the stern, Jasmine could see Miltha, the northern constellation. "Look, there's Miltha."

"I know," Zubair replied.

Jasmine walked to the stern, untied the rudder bar and pushed it to one side. Nothing happened.

"I tried."

Jasmine was cool, but her eyes were bright. "There must be something wrong with the rudder. We'll fix it in the morning. Bring down the jibs."

Zubair eyes still showed panic. "I've tried to, but none of the rope knots can be undone."

"Well, then there is nothing to be done until morning."

"We're heading south."

Jasmine began walking back to the main hatch over the crew's quarters. "I know."

"Where are you going?"

"Back to bed."

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The sun was high in the sky. Ahmed was over the side sitting on a board suspended between two rope ladders. He was examining the rudder. "I can't find anything wrong." He yelled up.

"There isn't anything wrong."

Before even turning around, Jasmine knew the overconfident voice was Delight. "Everything is working as it should."

"Except we are headed south, towards Qurahbar." Jasmine grumbled.

"Yes. I know."

"I told you I do not seek revenge."

"You want justice," Delight remarked.

"Yes. At the same time, I'd like to stay as far away from your bother and his city as possible."

"Oh, we're not going to see my brother. We're going to pay a visit to some of his friends." When Jasmine's expression did not change, she continued. "My brother's friends ... and business partners ... now have a free hand to oppress the city's residents. If you want justice, you'll want to deal with them."

Jasmine smiled, "So, you're out for revenge."

"You catch on quickly."

Zubair looked at Jasmine plaintively. “You sure about now throwing here overboard. I volunteer to become the ship’s monkey if it is your will.”

“No,” Jasmine replied, “use her.”

“How?”

“When I figure it out ... I’ll let you know.”

The next ship which merited our attention was carrying a cargo full of weapons, bound for the Emir’s troops. The captain and the crew needed little persuasion to redistribute their cargo to the Nimble. The emir’s guards would be somewhat less equipped for their next foray into the innocent citizens of Qurahbar.

As usual, Jasmine release both the crew and the ship unharmed. As she left, it was Delight who ran up to the Nimble’s railing. Her eyes were fire. Her spit could have boiled men in their boots. “Tell my faithless brother. His sister ... the one he exiled to marry some useless potentate ... Now blockades his city. He has seen the last trade ship from another port.”

The captain called back to her. “You blockade the mighty port of Qurahbar with but one ship?”

Delight’s voice was as icy and cold as her eyes were a blazing fire. “One ship is all I need.”

She stormed off back to the Ship Master’s cabin, her feet pounding the decks.

Over the next several months, Delight led Jasmine on her crew to the path of every ship leaving the harbor. They released citizens who had been taken as slaves for no other reason than it suited Osman’s fancy. They dumped loads of cotton into the sea and made the rich merchants of Qurahbar poor men. Some they even captured attempting to leave the city, seeking greener pastures. They left with their hides intact, but little else.

The confiscated gold Jasmine sent to the poorer quarters of the city. She did not want to take the Nimble into the harbor and the ship lacked the long boats to carry the gold to shore. But Delight proved to be most useful in place of such a boat. In the wink of an eye, she could carry them from the deck to the inside of the poor quarter, laden with bags of gold. Then before much could be said by anyone, it was back to the Nimble. All men accounted for but sans the bags of treasure. Jasmine began to wonder why Delight even needed a boat.

Soon the Court of the emir was impoverished, the merchants close to losing all their wealth. Something had to be done.