

## Story Synopsis: Scarlet Seas

Scarlet Seas begins where *Shifting Tides* ended. During the conflict with the Crimson Rogers, Jeremiah Berek sacrificed himself to allow his crew to escape. The Sea Dogs find a new leader, however, in Berek's ex-bosun: the Highland privateer Bloody Bonnie McGee. Bonnie swears revenge against Reis, and leads her crew to the isle of the Grey Queen, a mystic land said to link the mortal world with the faerie land of Bryn Bresail. She intends to entreat the Sidhe for power to defeat the previously unstoppable Rogers. After exacting an unknown secret from McGee, the Grey Queen allows her to pass through a magic mirror leading to Bryn Bresail. McGee returns but a few minutes later, with a newfound resolve and a strange gleam in her eye. What bargains she struck with the Sidhe, what powers she gained, none can say, but when she emerged from the magic mirror, she had aged three years...

Meanwhile, Reis is furious at losing Berek's crew. He understands the power of his reputation and knows that the Rogers cannot last long if a survivor were allowed to escape his clutches. He orders his bosun to kill Samuel Smitts as a lesson to the rest of the crew, then admonishes the remaining Rogers to find Bonnie McGee...or else. They launch a bloody search through seaside ports and run-down taverns, killing dozens as they go. McGee cannot be found, and Reis's patience begins to run low.

Elsewhere in Théah, the Corsairs and Explorers learn that their respective quests share a common goal. They arrive simultaneously at the site of the mysterious Third Switch, each believing themselves the sole faction to know its location. Tensions rise as the crews size each other up, both sides waiting for a sign of weakness. Before the battle can begin, however, Kheired-Din catches sight of Explorer crewman Maggie Malone and the strange marks on her feet. He recognizes these marks from a holy vision, calling them "the sign of the Lightbringer" and arranges for a hasty truce. After a heated discussion with Guy McCormick, he reaches a deal with the Explorers. Both crews will now work together to activate the remaining switches: the Explorers traveling to an island in the distant west and the Corsairs to a remote location near the Cathayan Sea. The two crews agree to meet at the final switch and share in the spoils of what happens afterwards.

Though he bargained in good faith, Guy McCormick doesn't trust the Crescent Corsairs and sends Jacob Faust to keep an eye on Kheired-Din. He also picks up a new second mate: a man called only "Mumblety-Peg," who claims to know the location of McCormick's missing wife.

The Castillian-Montaigne war continues unabated. Displeased with his apparent lack of results, Admiral Valoix strips The General of his command, taking full control of the Montaigne navy. Loyal Montaigne sailors leave the *Grenouille du Grace* for "proper" Montaigne ships, leaving The General with only a skeleton crew of cast-offs. Valoix

then gives the Eisen mercenary leave to "hunt pirates," while he and his men deal with the Castillians. Burning with humiliation, The General struggles to gather himself in the port town of *San Augustin*, where he receives an unexpected visit from the Castillian Inquisition. The Inquisitors want a show trial of Montaigne sailors to boost morale, and feel that The General's crew would make a perfect fit. At a pre-arranged time, they explain, The General will meet with Castille's Admiral Orduño and fire a single shot into the air. At that signal, Orduño will board the *Grenouille* and arrest the crew, leaving The General with a handsome reward for his betrayal. Still burning with Valoix's words, The General agrees to the Inquisition's plans.

Across the sea, a betrayal of another sort is taking place. Jorund Guttormson, trusted member of the Vesten Raiders, turns his former shipmates over to a waiting Vendel warship. The Vesten don't go quietly however: Yngvild Olafssdottir and her crew fight their way out of the trap, slaughtering their would-be captors and escaping in the confusion. Guttormson joins his Vendel allies, and Yngvild swears she will make the traitor pay.

Meanwhile, Philip Gosse struggles with a nightmare he thought he had left behind years ago. Visions of his wife, accompanied by the sadistic Montaigne who killed her, trouble his sleep. The troubling dreams slowly grow in intensity, transforming him from the kind-hearted "gentleman pirate" into a grim, brooding old man. In the midst of these troubles, Gosse receives a further blow: his nephew Thomas drowns while saving another member of Gosse's crew. The circumstances of the drowning were quite odd. A gale blew up, seemingly out of nowhere, then vanished the instant Thomas sank beneath the waves. Gosse suspects the incident is linked to his nightmares, and the pain of Thomas's death drives him to investigate further.

Finally, the Brotherhood of the Coast sets course for an uncertain future. Fearful of a destiny only she can see, the Fate Witch Alesio asks Allende to sail for a remote location: a blank spot of ocean in the middle of nowhere. Allende cannot understand what lies out there, but Alesio begs him — if they don't go, she claims, the Brotherhood will surely die. Acquiescing to her demands, Allende pilots the *Hanged Man* towards that remote locale. They finally reach the coordinates only to find a most unexpected treasure — clinging to a figurehead, gravely wounded, and delirious from thirst and exposure, but alive. A man cut down by the worst butcher in Théah, a man whose extraordinary luck has been taxed to the limits — perhaps lost forever — but who has survived the odds and now slowly recuperates in the *Hanged Man's* hold: Jeremiah Berek.