

There was a god floating in the fountain in front of the bar, sleeping and blowing bubbles full of butterflies. Captain Rose gave it a wide berth and tried to think of a different shaded spot where he could doze away the midday heat.

Some strange fools had left offerings on the edge of the fountain: shiny coins and flowers. They hadn't stayed, though, and the rest of the square was empty, save for the bubbles and their pastel passengers. The sun made rainbows of their shadows. The windows all around were shuttered. The rough tables in front of the bar were empty. No one was foolish enough to stick around, or worse, wake the slumbering deity.

"I need to hire a ship! I need a captain!"

The shout that proved Rose wrong came from the other side of the courtyard. He moved into the shadow of an awning as the shouting fool rushed towards the shuttered bar.

The boy was silk and glitter and rouge, but the make-up had run with sweat or tears, streaking down to his white ruff. Some blue-blood from the upper city, and so far out of his depth he was treading seaweed.

"Is this not where ship-captains drink?" The fop banged against the shutters with his fist. "I have gold to pay!"

There was a low snore that turned into a groan and the water in the fountain frothed azure. Rose slid along the wall towards the idiot, between patches of shade. The blue-blood had better eyes than Rose expected and caught sight of him.

"You! Are you a captain?" The blue darted towards him, knocking over a chair with a clatter that echoed against the walls. The bubbles popped and a cloud of butterflies shimmered away into the sky.

Rose lunged forwards and planted a hand over the blue's mouth, pushing him down behind a table and holding him there. Two hands gripped Rose's arm with surprising strength but then froze as a yawn sounded from the fountain. Deep in that sleepy sound Rose