

Next morning a choppy sea and northerly breeze kept them busy until midday, when a lessening of the wind allowed them to gnaw their ration of ship's biscuit. Ursula was sitting with her back against the ship's rail by a small wooden shrine in the stern of the boat. She was in her usual place with Fronto between her and Juba so she didn't have to look at him. But now their plot to punish Castor made it necessary for them to work together. Although she would never forgive Juba for selling their sister, it was a relief to be able to speak to him again. They had been discussing their plot when the Captain interrupted them.

'You should kiss Castor's feet!' He was speaking Latin rather than Brittonic.

'What do you mean?' Ursula had been sucking her piece of ship's biscuit to make it soft. She looked at the Captain.

'I mean you should kiss his feet in gratitude.'

'Why should we be grateful to him?' Juba glowered.

The Captain kept one hand on the tiller and turned round. 'Because when the three of you first arrived I thought you'd be goners.'

'What do you mean?' Fronto asked.

'I mean you were plump, pampered and posh. If he'd let you hide out in his cabin reading scrolls, you'd be in no shape to survive in Britannia.'

Ursula scowled at him. 'Why not? Because it's a cold and hostile country full of wolves and other wild beasts?' She lifted her chin. 'I like animals.'

Captain Caerulus frowned. 'It's not just the animals. The Britons are the most savage race you will find. Their warriors run around naked, covered in blue tattoos. They put clay in their hair, which they wear long. When it dries they look like the sun god with their hair all sticking out in spiky rays. And when they kill you — and they will kill you, be sure of that — they cut off your head and keep it so your spirit can't go down to the underworld.'