

Hannibal's

Elephant Girl

Book Two



Charley Brindley

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«Tektime S.r.l.s.»

Brindley C.

Hannibal's Elephant Girl / C. Brindley — «Tektime S.r.l.s.»,

Hannibal must transport sixty war elephants from Carthage in North Africa, across the Middle Sea to Iberia. He has to train his people to accomplish this difficult task. The first part of this project is to load one elephant on a ship and sail to the east on the eighteen-day voyage. He has chosen his largest elephant, Obolus, to use in the training of his men. During the loading the animal onto a ship, Obolus killed his longtime handler. The girl, Liada, is the only other person who can control the temperamental elephant. After she succeeds in guiding Obolus up the ramp and onto the deck of the ship, Hannibal asks her to go with the elephant to Iberia. Liada is reluctant to leave her friends at Carthage, but she's also concerned about Obolus' safety on the long voyage. She decides to leave her friends and take care of Obolus.

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Hannibal's Elephant Girl
Book Two
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Printed in the United States of America
First Edition November 2019

This book is dedicated to
James Brindley
Some of Charley Brindley's books
have been translated into:

Italian
Spanish
Portuguese
French
Dutch
Turkish
Chinese
and
Russian

The following books are available in audio format:

Raji, Book One (in English)
Do Not Resuscitate (in English)
The Last Mission of the Seventh Cavalry (in English)
Hannibal's Elephant Girl, Book One (in Russian)
Henry IX (in Italian)

Other books by Charley Brindley

1. *Oxana's Pit*
2. *Raji Book One: Octavia Pompeii*
3. *Raji Book Two: The Academy*
4. *Raji Book Three: Dire Kawa*
5. *Raji Book Four: The House of the West Wind*
6. *Hannibal's Elephant Girl Book One: Tin Tin Ban Sunia*
7. *Cian*
8. *Ariion XXIII*
9. *The Last Seat on the Hindenburg*
10. *Dragonfly vs Monarch: Book One*

11. Dragonfly vs Monarch: Book Two
 12. *The Sea of Tranquility 2.0 Book One : Exploration*
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 23. Dragonfly vs Monarch: Book Three
 24. The Journey to Valdacia
 25. Still Waters Run Deep
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 28. The Last Mission of the Seventh Cavalry Book 2
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Chapter One

Tin Tin Ban Sunia and I slipped through the darkness, keeping low. I glanced up at the mainsail; it was slack, lifeless, its broad red stripe running down like fresh blood on sand. I turned to look back at Obolus. He stood in the center of the deck, his head down, with the last curl of his trunk resting on the layer of dirt covering the rough pine boards. He would sleep until hunger woke him. Pale moonlight spilled over his body like liquid silver flowing over a towering gray mountain.

Tin Tin stopped me with a hand on my wrist. "You hear that one?" she whispered.

I nodded. A low murmur came from the ship's bow. She motioned, and I followed, both of us crouching below the row of shields lining the rail of the ship. The moon gave us a little light as we made our way forward.

So late at night...who could it be?

As we neared the bow, a few words floated back to us. "...with one voice...the priest...taking the ransom..."

I tripped over a coiled rope and fell. My knee hit the deck, hard. Tin Tin's hand was over my mouth in an instant, keeping me from crying out. I rubbed my knee as we stared wide-eyed toward the front of the ship. The voice stopped. My heart galloped as if Turanyu himself had gone wild inside my chest. I pulled Tin Tin's hand away and gulped air, fearing all the while they would hear my pounding heart.

Who are they, and what are they talking about?

Our ship lay perfectly still in the dead black waters of the Middle Sea; nothing moved anywhere. We were so far from shore, we couldn't see land in any direction.

Other than my ragged breathing, not a sound could be heard. Even the rigging that seemed always to creak and moan lay silent.

"...but not so Agamemnon, who spoke fiercely to him and sent him roughly away."

Tin Tin looked at me, grinning—the words had begun again. It was a man's husky voice, talking to someone but apparently taking no notice of us. I whispered a silent thanks to our Great Queen Elissa, long ago passed away but still watching over us.

I heard soft footfalls on the opposite side of the ship, coming forward. I gripped Tin Tin's hand and nodded that way. She pulled me to the mast, and we ducked behind it, pressing ourselves flat against the polished wood. The mast was thicker than my body and made from the trunk of a single fir tree.

The voice at the bow stopped, then we heard the newcomer. "Lord Hannibal."

"Yes, Captain Xipan."

Tin Tin whispered to me, "Is Hannibal."

"And the captain, too," I said.

"Shall we set the slaves to work with the oars, sir?" the captain asked.

I eased up on my tiptoes to see Hannibal look out over the flat sea.

After a moment, he glanced up at the crescent moon. "It is well past midnight and near to dawn," Hannibal said, turning back to the captain. "Let the slaves rest. If there is no wind with the sunrise, then we shall set them to work."

The captain did not answer; only slapped a hand to his chest in confirmation of Hannibal's order. Captain Xipan hurried back toward the companionway leading below decks.

"Captain." Hannibal raised his voice.

The captain stopped, turning back to Hannibal.

"If the water boy is awake, send him to me."

The captain saluted as before and continued toward the hatch.

I looked at Tin Tin Ban Sunia and saw the smile on her face. I rolled my eyes to the sky. Yes, we both knew who would next appear on deck.

Tin Tin, always the braver of the two of us, took my hand to lead me forward. Soon we knelt, only a few heartbeats away from Hannibal.

“Old man,” Hannibal said, “let me not find you tarrying about our ships, nor yet coming hereafter. Your scepter of the god and your...”

We could see Hannibal clearly now, standing before his table in the moonlight. He wore his red tunic with the fine double stitching. Upon the table sat a small olive oil lamp illuminating a scroll, partially unrolled. He bent low, peered at the scroll for a moment, then straightened up to address his companion; it was Turanyu, his warhorse!

“...and your wrath shall profit you nothing. I will not free her.” Hannibal, with a flourish of his hand, spoke forcefully toward Turanyu, but the horse was obviously dozing, and, just as Obolus often did, he slept while standing.

Tin Tin giggled, then I did, too.

“Liada!” Hannibal said.

I stood up, still giggling, but also frightened.

“And Tin Tin Ban Sunia, too, I suppose.” He was apparently trying hard to display a feint of anger.

“It is myself,” Tin Tin said as she squeezed my hand.

I knew Hannibal could never be angry with Tin Tin, but me, yes, sometimes he was angry with me, and I had seen how he disciplined his men. I remembered quite clearly how he had humbled Sakul with his sword and javelin, and he had caused Sulobo to receive forty lashes across his back. This punishment Sulobo had always blamed on me.

“Come here,” Hannibal commanded.

I edged closer to Tin Tin as we walked slowly toward him.

“What are you doing?”

At this time, Hannibal was seventeen summers in age, but already a grown man in charge of the elephant training camp at Carthage, where he commanded several thousand men and oversaw the training of a hundred war elephants. Tin Tin was eleven summers, and I was twelve.

“We...we...” I looked down at my bare feet. “We heard voices.”

He glanced at Tin Tin.

“Hear talking noise in dark night.”

I looked at Tin Tin from the corner of my eye and saw her grinning.

Hannibal put his fists on his hips. “You girls had better go get some sleep before the sun comes up.”

Tin Tin slapped her right hand to her flat chest, and I followed suit. I thought Hannibal was about to smile, but he jerked his head to the side. We heard it, too—running footsteps. We saw the water boy coming quickly along the deck, rubbing sleep from his eyes.

“Lord Hannibal.” He paused to catch his breath. “You sent for me?”

Tin Tin tilted her head toward me. “Calogo,” she whispered, and I knew without looking she had that mooncalf expression on her face. I liked Calogo, too, but not the way she did.

Hannibal clasped his hands behind his back and eyed the boy for a moment, making him squirm. “How much water does the elephant drink each day?”

Calogo didn’t hesitate. “Twelve buckets, sometimes thirteen.”

Hannibal considered that. “And Turanyu?” He gestured to the sleeping horse.

The animal turned one ear toward his master but did not open his eyes. He was a magnificent black stallion, with a broad chest and powerful muscles.

“Not nearly so much. Perhaps three buckets a day.”

“Hmm. And what happens if we cut their water by half?”

I watched Calogo look toward Turanyu, then back at Hannibal. "They can give up half their water ration for four days, and they will suffer no harm since they do not have heavy exertion onboard the ship. After four days, they will begin..." Calogo paused for a quick look at me. "They will begin to weaken."

"So be it," Hannibal said. "Give them half-rations of water until I order otherwise. Without the wind, it will be two days and nights rowing to Hippo Regius, and you will have to give most of our water to the slaves." Hannibal was quiet for a moment as he looked thoughtfully at me, then at Tin Tin.

I stole a glance at Calogo and saw the handsome blue-eyed boy grinning at Tin Tin.

Oh my Princess Elissa, another mooncalf! These two are going to get themselves into so much trouble.

"If you need help, Calogo." I jumped when Hannibal spoke, because he had raised his voice. "Use these two ragamuffins," he waved a hand in our direction, "to carry water to the slaves. I want not a single slave to expire for lack of water. Do you understand me?"

Calogo slapped his bare chest. "Yes, Lord Hannibal." The boy wore a short tunic, made of tanned doeskin that extended to mid-thigh.

"Keep a close eye on them," Hannibal said, and I saw him wink at Tin Tin. "They're crafty laggards."

Calogo looked from me to Tin Tin, his eyes lingering on her. He didn't actually smile with his lips, but his eyes were certainly laughing. I think Calogo was about my age, maybe a little older.

"I know," he said softly, but then caught himself and looked at Hannibal. "I mean, I know how to make them work, sir."

"Good," Hannibal said. "Now, go check your water casks and make your calculations for the next two days, assuming we have no wind and the slaves must row all the way to Hippo Regius."

"Aye, Lord Hannibal." Calogo hurried away to his tasks.

Hannibal wasn't a lord, not in the sense that his father, the general, was, but he commanded respect and obedience without asking for it. Perhaps this was because his father was in a high position and in command of all Carthaginian forces, but I think it had more to do with his charismatic and beneficent personality. He was a man who could bend others to his will without the use of force.

I heard Tin Tin Ban Sunia make that funny little clicking sound with her tongue. She did that when she was lost in thought or about to say something. Hannibal and I turned to see her leaning her elbows on his table, squinting at the scroll.

"What story you tell Turanyu?" she asked without looking up.

Sometimes I was jealous of Tin Tin and the way she could engage Hannibal with so little effort. I loved her, of course. She was as near to a sister as I ever had, but how I envied her easy way with other people. Even before, when she couldn't speak, she had a way of making anyone like her.

"We better go." I looked from her to Hannibal.

"But this not our words, Liada."

Seeing Hannibal was at ease, I, too, looked at the scroll. It was a strange writing, with some letters I recognized, but arranged differently than ours. Tin Tin and I had only recently learned to read and write the language of Carthage, and that had come almost at the expense of her life, because Tendao had taught us, knowing it was strictly forbidden by the priests. They had tried to burn him at the stake, along with Tin Tin, but Hannibal put a stop to all that.

"Are these your words, Hannibal?" I looked up at him. "Did you write this story?"

He shook his head. "It is the Greek language."

"Greek?" Tin Tin asked.

"Yes. Do you remember that yellow wine from across the sea?"

"I do," I said.

"I know that wine, too." Tin Tin pulled a sour face. "But not like much."

“This writing,” he waved a hand toward the scroll, “also came from that same land. The writing is called Greek.”

“What story tell?” Tin Tin leaned close, trying to make out the words.

“It’s about a war, at a place called Troy.”

She looked up at Hannibal. “Why make this war?”

“The war was fought over a woman,” Hannibal said.

“A woman?” Tin Tin and I asked together.

“Yes. Her name was Helen. Some men kidnapped her and took her far away. Her husband raised an army and went to rescue her.”

“Hmm,” I said. “Was she so precious then, to fight a war over her?”

“They say she was the most beautiful woman in the world. And her husband loved her very much.”

Tin Tin unrolled the top part of the scroll. “You tell story for Tin Tin and Liada?”

Hannibal glanced at the scroll, but instead of reading, he walked to the rail and gazed out to sea. Soon, he began to speak.

“On this the rest of the Achaeans with one voice were for respecting the priest and taking the ransom that he offered. But not so Agamemnon, who spoke fiercely to him and sent him roughly away. ‘Old man,’ said he, ‘let me not find you tarrying about our ships, nor yet coming hereafter. Your scepter of the god and your wreath shall profit you nothing. I will not free her. She shall grow old in my house at Argos far from her own home, busying herself with her...’” Hannibal strode back to look at the scroll. He ran his finger along a line, then began again. “‘Busying herself with her loom and visiting my couch. So go, and do not provoke me, or it shall be the worse for you.’” Hannibal regarded us for a moment. “I’m trying to commit the whole story to memory.”

I unrolled the lower part of the papyrus scroll and saw it went on for hundreds and hundreds of lines.

“All this, Hannibal? You can keep all this in your memory?” I asked.

“I can only try.” He lifted his drinking bowl and frowned at the dry bottom.

Tin Tin took the empty bowl from his hand. “I fetch raisin wine for you drink.” She ran toward the storeroom. “Do not talk more yet,” she called over her shoulder, “not till Tin Tin come back to hear all words.”

“What did Agamemnon mean?” I asked. “When he said ‘visiting my couch?’”

“Um...well...you see...”

This was something new; Hannibal lost for words. I had never seen him uncertain. Now I knew something interesting was going on between that woman, Helen, and Agamemnon.

“Do you mean,” I said, “that she was like Lotaz back at camp? I saw a couch in her tent.”

“Something like...”

I heard bare feet running along the deck and knew it was Tin Tin. Breathing hard, she held out the bowl of wine, using both hands but still sloshing some of the brown liquid over the rim.

“You drink, Hannibal, then talk more in memory.”

He took the bowl, sipped, then leaned down to read silently for a while. Soon he began to speak, and by sunrise the Trojan War raged all about us while Tin Tin and I sat cross-legged on the deck and Hannibal sat on his stool, reading aloud now but not trying to memorize.

None of us noticed Calogo coming to stand close behind Tin Tin Ban Sunia. He listened to the story for some time, but then apparently remembering he had work to do, he cleared his throat. Hannibal looked up, raising an eyebrow at the boy.

“Lord Hannibal, you...um...last night said these two could help with the water, and I—”

Hannibal raised his hand, stopping Calogo. He looked out at the flat sea, frowning at the lack of waves, then nodded.

We stood, and I hurried to go with Calogo, but then I realized Tin Tin was not coming with us. When I turned back, she was standing at Hannibal's table. He had spent the last part of the night indulging two girls' insatiable curiosity, and I knew he had much more important things to do than entertain us. I ran back and grabbed her hand to pull her away, but she resisted.

"Hannibal," Tin Tin said, "someday you will teach this words," she pointed at the open scroll, "to Liada." She looked at me and grinned. "And maybe Tin Tin Ban Sunia little bit also, too?"

"Thank you, Hannibal." I stepped back, pulling Tin Tin's hand until both our arms stretched out at full length. "For telling us the story of Helen. We'll go help Calogo now." Tin Tin's feet seemed rooted to the deck; I couldn't budge her. "Tin Tin," I whispered. "Come on."

"Wait, Liada," Hannibal said. "When the sun is highest," he gestured toward the top of the mast, "and you see that Dorien has finished his tasks with me, go with him to the shade of the awning, and he will begin to teach you the Greek letters." He stood and began rolling up the scroll. "But remember, all your duties must be done first."

Tin Tin grinned at him as I yanked her away. "Thank you, Hannibal," I said over my shoulder. "We will watch for Dorien when all our duties are finished."

Calogo had gone ahead of us to start working, but on our way to check on Obolus, we saw Rocrainum, Hannibal's lieutenant, coming toward us.

"Good morning, Rocrainum," I said to the tall Carthaginian.

"Good morning, Liada." He smiled at Tin Tin. "Good morning, Tin Tin Ban Sunia."

"Morning, Lord Rocrainum," Tin Tin said.

"I still can't get used to hearing you speak."

"My speak not good."

"Oh, you talk very well."

Rocrainum was a member of the aristocracy and very handsome man of about twenty, but he was never haughty or arrogant. He was commander of the twenty soldiers on board, and whenever he was not busy with his official duties, he would always chat with us as if we were part of his own class. Something he never did with anyone other than Hannibal.

"Do you think we'll have the wind today?" I asked.

He looked around at the clear blue sky and calm sea. "I doubt it. If the wind doesn't come up at dawn, it usually doesn't come at all."

"You have breakfast by now?" Tin Tin asked.

"Not yet."

"We bring you food from below deck."

"Good, but first I must speak with Hannibal. Have you seen him?"

"He over stand by Turanyu." Tin Tin pointed her chin toward the bow of the ship.

"All right." He left us.

We watched him walk toward the bow. He wore a knee-length tunic like Hannibal's, but tan in color, rather than red. Unlike Hannibal, he was armed with a long sword. This heavy weapon was scabbarded on an iron-studded leather belt.

We ran to check on Obolus.

Chapter Two

It was dim and stuffy below deck, without even a whiff of fresh air coming through the scuttles. The stink rising from the bilge was almost overwhelming. I tried to hold my breath or breathe through my mouth, but still my stomach rolled and I felt as if I would throw up.

Earlier, up on the top deck, when Calogo had told me and Tin Tin he was going to carry water to Obolus and Turanyu, I suggested Tin Tin should help him.

“While you two care for the animals, I’ll start giving water to the slaves.”

Neither of them voiced any complaint about that arrangement, and I thought it might be nice for them to have some time together. They could come help me when they finished with the elephant and horse.

Most of the slaves were silent as they watched me carry the heavy wooden bucket along the narrow board that ran down the center of the compartment. The springy plank, barely wide enough for a person’s feet, lay across the beams supporting the two banks of rowers. Each bank consisted of three staggered rows of slaves. Some of the men groaned in agony as they bent their backs, straining hard to pull the heavy oars. There were three men to an oar and they wore only ragged loincloths.

The close space, packed with sweating bodies, was also filled with sound; the moans of the slaves, the oars creaking in the rowlocks, and the synchronized splashing of the oar blades cutting the water, all in perfect rhythm with the hortator’s drumbeat. This man sat in front of the eighty slaves, next to the scowling slave master.

The drum was made from a section of hollow log, the size of an earthen kettle, with pigskin stretched over the top. The little man beat out the cadence of the slaves’ never-ending labor. The hortator’s pounding, like an evil heart pumping misery rather than blood, drove the ship relentlessly forward.

Boom, boom, boom-paboom, boom, boom, boom-paboom...

Even though their wrists were chained to the oars, the men were able to continue rowing with one hand as they took my water bowl and drank thirstily, sometimes saving a bit of their water allotment to pour over their heads.

Most of the slaves whispered a furtive ‘thank you’ to me, but some sneered and bared their teeth, as if I were the cause of their misery. Perhaps the slave mark branded into my face softened some of their hearts toward me.

I wasn’t a slave, but I carried the mark by my own choosing because my friend Tin Tin Ban Sunia was once a slave and the evil Sulobo had seared his brand into the side of her face. I glanced at him as he sat beside his drummer; he stared at me. I looked away and dipped more water.

Tin Tin was no longer his slave. Yzebel had purchased her from Sulobo, then set her free to sail with me to Iberia. This, too, was another thorn in Sulobo’s side, which he blamed on me.

I was saddened to think of Yzebel. She had done so much for me, and I didn’t know if I would ever see her again. She took me in when I was lost and alone, teaching me how to trade for goods and how to cook. And something else: She gave me character and pride when I had none.

She paid three gold coins, plus a silver one, for Tin Tin, then she treated us both as her daughters, even though she had two sons of her own to worry about.

Helen of Troy might have been the most beautiful woman in the world, but Yzebel was more than beautiful; she was at once teacher, protector, provider...and she loved us all, no matter what.

Lost in my thoughts, I had forgotten about Horus, the Egyptian slave. Calogo had warned me to stay clear of him, and to give his drinking water to another slave, to be passed along to him. But while thinking of Yzebel, I had set my bucket down, dipped water into the drinking bowl, and leaned across the first man to offer a drink to Horus. Without warning, Horus grabbed my arm, wrenched the bowl from my hand, and gulped the water while still holding me in his rough grasp. He then threw

the bowl, hitting another slave in the back of the head, and he pulled me over the chains and oars to get both hands around my neck.

I screamed and kicked, trying to get away from him, but he only laughed at my puny efforts to escape. He growled like a wild animal as he pressed his thumbs into my windpipe. Men struck his back with their iron manacles, and the slave next to him tried to pull me away. The uproar caused the hortator to cease his drumming as he stared at the struggle taking place. Without the drumbeat to command them, all the slaves either turned or stretched sideways to see around the other men, leaving their oars to clatter and clash in complete disorder.

I twisted around and reached for the dagger in my purse, but before I could get my hand on it, Horus wrapped his leg around my waist, pinning my arm. He then pressed me backward over his other leg, trying to break my back.

My scream stuck in my throat as a whip slashed down over Horus's shoulder and wrapped around my forearm. I felt my skin tear when the lash was yanked away, then I saw the whip wrap around Horus's head, just below his eyes. But still he held me in his ever-tightening grip.

The next pop of the whip circled the lash around Horus's neck and pulled tight. He cried out as he let go of me and clawed at the braided leather cutting into his throat.

With the help of the other slaves, I scrambled over men and oars to jump onto the center board, where I backed away to the end of the plank, gripped my bleeding wrist, and stared at the ugly event unfolding before me.

The slave master, Sulobo, had taken his time to come to my rescue, and I knew if Hannibal had not been aboard the ship, he surely would have let the crazed slave tear me to pieces. Thankfully, his fear of Hannibal was much greater than his desire to inflict his revenge upon me.

Sulobo was employed by Hannibal to control the slaves and also to replenish their ranks as many of them died from the inhuman misery of their labors. At each port he purchased the strongest men the slave markets had to offer.

Sulobo pulled himself along the length of the whip, keeping it tight. He cursed Horus with every step.

"You Egyptian blood-sucking leach. I would let my whip cut through to your rotten throat if I did not have need of all my slaves to push this stinking boat to shore."

He stood directly behind the struggling slave, yanked hard on his whip, then uncoiled it from Horus's neck. Horus gasped, and his chains rattled as he rubbed his neck. When he saw the trace of red on his fingertips, he glared up at Sulobo.

"Your whip does no more than..." he paused for a quick breath, "...than to tickle my skin."

Sulobo reached to his shoulder, as if to straighten his ragged tunic, but then, quick as a cobra, he struck Horus's jaw with his clinched fist.

The slave's head snapped sideways. He tried to stand and if his chains had not restrained him, he would have attacked the fat slave master.

Sulobo stepped back. "At Hippo Regius, I'll find a fresh slave to take your place and heave your dead body into the sea for the sharks to feast upon." He rolled up his whip while staring at Horus. "Give me any more trouble, and I'll throw you over before we get to port and put that half-wit slave girl in your place."

Without waiting for a response from Horus, Sulobo stepped to the board and advanced on me. He shook his whip in my face.

"Cause me any more difficulties, you filthy little tramp, and you may find yourself accidentally becoming a playmate of the sharks, along with your friend there." He jerked his thumb toward Horus.

"He attacked me, Sulobo." I rubbed my neck. "I did nothing wrong, you stupid *kusbeyaw*." I still didn't know what that word meant, but apparently several of the slaves did, because they snickered, elbowed one another, and shot quick glances at Sulobo.

He grabbed my shoulder, squeezing hard. “Shut up, and get on with your water duties, but give none to that putrid Egyptian for the rest of the day. Do you understand me?”

I understood well enough, but didn’t acknowledge him. I shoved away his grubby hand and took up my water bucket, wanting nothing more to do with the ugly gorilla.

When I glanced around for the drinking bowl, a slave two rows ahead held it out. I took it from his hand, and he smiled broadly, showing off his only remaining tooth; a chipped incisor right in the front of his lower jaw. He rubbed the back of his head and tried to look at me, but one eye wandered to his left, and the other to the right. He turned his head to bring the right eye in alignment with me, still holding his open-mouthed grin, and I realized he was as mad as a deranged stump cat. I dipped the bowl in my bucket and put it in his hands, while keeping a wary eye on Horus the Egyptian.

Sulobo made an angry gesture at the hortator with his whip, and the bowlegged little man started up his drumbeat.

Boom, boom, boom-paboom, boom, boom, boom-paboom...

As the slaves slowly took up their oars and worked them into the rote unison of their labor, Calogo and Tin Tin Ban Sunia came down the companionway, each with a bucket of water. I knew from Tin Tin’s glance at me that she sensed trouble, but I shook my head and kept my wounded arm from her sight—we could talk about what happened after we finished our work on the slave deck.

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