



"You'd better start being a very good girl, or you'll be sorry."

The Devil on the Beach

Puntagorda, 21st June 1758.

“Craaaaaaaaark.”

“Evening, Carmelo. I’m going on Papa’s boat this tonight. I hope we bring back lots of fish.” Sara looked around to see whether her mother was watching. Since she was alone, she broke a little bread off her cheese sandwich and gave it to the raven. He was named after the village priest who was a very big man who always wore black, so it was a good name for a big, black bird. “Actually, Mama and my sisters are going to Granny’s, and they say I’ll moan about the long walk. I wouldn’t—I’m not a baby—but I’d much rather go on the boat anyway.”

As the daylight faded, she and her father walked down all the two hundred and thirty steps to the tiny port, where her father’s boat was tied up.

Amado, Sara’s grown-up brother, was already on board, which made a change. He’d been late for everything since he got married three months ago.

“Welcome aboard,” said Papa.

“She’ll be bad luck,” muttered Amado. Lots of sailors thought that women on any boat would bring bad luck.

“I hope we catch lots,” she said. Papa deserved good luck. Besides, a good catch might just persuade Amado not to mind having her on board.

“It’s mid-summer,” said Papa. “That usually brings good luck. Cast off the stern rope, Amado.” And he untied the rope at the front of the boat.

Carmelo the raven flew on board and settled behind a net.