

# Afterword

## The Desert and the Sea

I wrote the first draft of this story in my notebook on the way back from a week's vacation on the Red Sea (in the Four Seasons Hotel at Sharm el Sheikh) in December 2007. Somehow, the words just flowed from my pen, in the departure lounge and on the flight home, stopping only occasionally to mop up the leaking ink – the curse of using cheap biros on intercontinental flights.

Earlier in the holiday, Tracey, Sebastian and I had taken a sunset cruise on the Red Sea, and I was truly inspired by the coastline. The corals were spectacular, as I had earlier discovered while snorkelling to view the reef at closer range, and there was a modern wreck, all broken and rusted steel, still stuck fast on the shoals.

I found myself trying to imagine what it would have been like before all the hotels and buildings had been put up. It seemed the ideal location for a fantasy tale, and then I knew just which story it should be.

The other inspiration for this story came from pondering the implications of the kind of inter-dimensional crossing I postulated in the *Lyndesfarne Bridge* series, and in this story. It seems to me that all sorts of things could go wrong, with the implication that – following *Murphy's Law* – they almost certainly would.

I had made notes on the bare bones of this story quite some time before, originally to appear as a tale told by Bret in *Death on the New Bridge*. It may still appear there as well of course (probably as Chapter 20) but I suspect that Bret would not naturally use the slightly archaic language I have adopted in this version.