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Brotherband: Slaves of Socorro by John Flanagan

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This blockbuster 464 pages novel is the fourth book in the Brotherband series. It's a seafaring adventure peppered with fascinating details of life in medieval times in fictional places loosely based on countries bordering the Northern seas and North Africa. Vikings, raiders and pirates were active in those times, which allows plenty of scope for daring deeds and villainous characters.

Hal is the teenage skirl (captain) of the *Heron*, a Skandian fighting ship hired by other countries to protect their coasts and seas from smugglers and raiders. Although young, Hal and his loyal crew, known as the Herons, have been victorious in battle many times. Lydia, a young woman whom Hal saved during a previous skirmish, is the sole female on board. She's a skilled hunter and fighter who has proven her worth as a member of the Herons.

Slaves of Socorro is a swashbuckling tale of bravery, comradeship, and tenacity. Hal and his crew are committed to rescuing a group of Araluen villagers who have been captured by a renegade Skandian crew. The Heron's quest is complicated by many hazardous encounters which only fuel their determination to succeed.

The characters are well-written and convincing with the impetuosity of young people in any era. There is in-depth detail about the ships involved, battle strategies and armour, plus background information on the countries visited along the way. Fascinated readers may be inspired to research more information about the time and places brought to life in this gripping adventure.

The *Brotherband* series is a companion to the author's earlier *Ranger's Apprentice* series, also set in medieval times.

Reviewed by children's book author, Jean Bennett

Brotherband Chronicles website:

<http://www.brotherbandchronicles.com>

