



ANGELINA BACCICH / IVAN LUPIS-VUKIC
PARALLEL TRANSLATIONS

JOSKO PETKOVIC

ANGELINA BACCICH / IVAN LUPIS-VUKIC
PARALLEL TRANSLATIONS

BEING TWO PARALLEL TEXTS OF

**THE WRECK OF THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN BARQUE STEFANO ON THE NORTH WEST
COAST OF AUSTRALIA IN 1875**
BY ANGELINA BACCICH (1920)

AND

SHIPWRECKED ON A CORAL REEF
BY IVAN LUPIS-VUKIĆ (1953)

COMPARISON
ARRANGED WITH ANALYSIS
BY
JOSKO PETKOVIC

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ANGELINA BACCICH 1920 (ED.) ENGLISH TRANSLATION

THE WRECK OF THE
AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN
BARQUE STEFANO ON THE
NORTH WEST COAST OF
AUSTRALIA

BY ANGELINA BACCICH (1920)

Edited, with analysis
by
Josko Petkovic
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This being the first English translation
of the original 1876 manuscript

*I naufraghi del bark austro-ungarico Stefano alla costa Nord-Ovest
dell Australia*
by
Miho Bačić (Michael Baccich) and Stjepan Škurla

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF IVAN LUPIS-VUKIĆ TEXT

SHIPWRECKED ON A CORAL
REEF

DESCRIPTION OF EVENTS CONCERNING
OUR MARINERS IN AUSTRALIA IN 1875

IVAN LUPIS-VUKIĆ

Translated
by
Josko Petkovic
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The wreck of the Austro-Hungarian barque *Stefano* on the 27th day of October 1875, which foundered on a submerged rock off the perilous coral reefs on the North West coast of Australia, the loss of the captain, the hardships and sufferings of the sailors, the tragic death of eight persons in the first three months of untold agony, the trials and struggles of the only two survivors, Michael Baccich (Miho *Bačić*) and Ivan Jurich (*Jurić*), forms the theme of this book which has truth alone as its sole merit. Not a single word or tale of fiction is interlaced, for the history was narrated by Baccich immediately after his rescue, from facts fresh in his mind, and indelibly imprinted on his heart. A truthful description of regions hitherto unexplored, a faithful picture of the life, characteristics, religion and superstitions of unknown Aboriginal inhabitants may help to make this narrative interesting.

It must be observed that though at the end of January 1876 the survivors lost track of all days, yet after their rescue they succeeded in fully re-establishing dates by comparisons with the length and time of the various trips and meetings with the Aborigines.

I

[1]

On 31 July 1875, the Austro-Hungarian barque *Stefano*, moored in the Port of Cardiff, raised its anchor and was towed out to the Island of Lundy, sixty miles away. Here she was to be prepared for a four-month trip on the high seas.

The sailors, all expert seamen, soon had the vessel fully rigged and equipped, from prow to helm all sails were unfurled giving the barque the appearance of a large, beautiful bird.¹

I

One day in July 1875, the barque *Stefano* left its moorings at Cardiff and sailed away on a four-month voyage to Hong Kong, unaware of what the sea, the wind, and the destiny had in store for it. Loaded with English coal, stocked and ready for every kind of weather, it departed on its long journey.

The owner of this sailing ship was our own Nikola Bačić, from Dubrovnik, who spared no expense when outfitting his vessel. * The *Stefano* was indeed one of the most modern sailing ships, 160 feet long with a carrying capacity of 868 tons, fast, dignified, and strong. **

The weather was delightful, and the *Stefano* was sailing at a speed of 9 - 9.5 knots. With all its sails unfurled, it resembled some great white bird that descended upon the open water to see itself reflected in it.

The captain and sailors, all a jolly set of good fellows, of the same nationality, worked together in splendid harmony.² Some of the older men having made this trip before were telling their comrades of the grandeur and magnificence of the Southern seas, while the novices were full of curiosity and eagerness. Many were the happy dreams these brawny sons of the sea formed. Many glorious pictures they saw in the smoke of their pipes. What odd and curious presents would they bring home to their loved ones! How the sweetheart would delight with the precious little tokens destined later to adorn a humble home! How a mother would bless her dutiful son for his kindly thoughts of her! How a dear and kind sister would rejoice over some token of brotherly love! A strange coincident was the fact that in the whole crew – though quite diverse regarding birth place and age – not a single member, either officers or crew, was married. They were all young men, men in the very heyday of their youth and happiness! Little did they dream, as they sped rapidly on the bosom of a quiet ocean, that this voyage was to be the last to all but two; that the proud ship would ere long be a prey to the buffeting of merciless waves; that they themselves before entering the Great Haven must endure untold agonies. A mother's caress, or a sweetheart's, or sister's would be theirs no more to those dearly beloved faces lost forever! In the agonies of their cruel death they were to meet their God alone, entirely alone, without help from man, nor consolation from God's ministers, nor soothing words and blessed prayers from their dear ones!

Some crew members had sailed this route before. Their forgotten experiences were revived and retold to the younger friends, for whom this was their first journey.

[2]

The barque was fine in all its proportions, of modern handsome build and well-studied model.

No expense had been spared to make her one of the best, most solid and rapid of its kind.

Her length was 50.5 metres and her registry 867 tons. She was chartered for Hong Kong with 1300 tons of English coal.

The owner of the ill-fated vessel was Nikola *Bačić*, by birth from Dubrovnik (*Ragusa*), but a lifelong resident of Rijeka (*Fiume*).³

The captain was Vlaho *Miloslavić*, a nephew of Nikola *Bačić*, a resident of Dubrovnik, a commander of splendid character, who in many a long and dangerous voyage gave abundant proof of unexcelled ability,

(** see opposite page [1] above for Lupis Vukic placement)

(* see opposite page [1] above)

[3]

energy and coolness.

The deputy captain was Karlo *Costa*, a fellow countryman of *Miloslavić*, a gentleman of culture and refinement, whose courage and greatness of heart shone brilliantly through his sympathetic nature and gentleness.

Martin *Osoinak* from Rijeka, a young man of much promise, was first mate.⁴

Besides the two captains and the first mate, the crew consisted of fourteen men, all capable sailors, men who loved their chosen profession, brave and strong, well inured to the hardships of a seafaring life and as jolly and carefree as only true sailors can be.

The roster of the crew was as follows: Ivan *Lovrinović* from Dubrovnik, second mate; Domenik *Antončić* from Mali Lošinj, Ship Carpenter; Miho *Bačić* from Dubrovnik, Cadet; Mate *Zanetović* from Kotor, Cook; Baldasar *Vukasinović* from Gruž near Dubrovnik, Josip *Perančić* from Mali Lošinj, Grego *Pavisić* and Fortuna *Bučić* from the district of Rijeka, Quartermasters; Ivan Pavlo *Radović* from Potomje, Ivan *Jurić* from Oskorušno and

[4]

Toma *Dediol* from Kućište – all these three latter villages were on the peninsula of Pelješac; Bozidar *Vulović* from Dobrota and Nikola *Brajević* from Konavle near Dubrovnik, all sailors, and last Henry Groiss, cabin boy from Cardiff, Wales.

The weather was magnificent. The balmy wind and quiet sea, augurs of good days, seemed to bid the mariners Godspeed.

A school of dolphins followed the ship, their playful antics offering a pleasing recreation to those who watched their quick, agile yet extremely graceful, movements.

These were to be the only animate beings left to the companionship of the sailors for a long, long time, a companionship known and appreciated by none more than those who have thus been alone with their Creator on the immensity of the ocean.

It is to this immediate, constant and intimate communion with his God that the sailor owes his ardent

Once on the high seas, there was little sign of life except for the multitude of dolphins that followed the ship and with their quick and playful movements entertained the young sailors, who in turn fell in love with their endearing displays and held them as faithful friends. Only he, who knows how small and lonely it feels in this vast expanse of water, can understand, and appreciate the joy that every appearance of life on the ocean can bring.

[5]

and religious nature. Alone at the foot of the Almighty's throne, no living being intervenes between him and his Creator. In this great temple of nature, the mighty ocean, that man feels how infinitely small he is. Instinctively realizing how vain are all the world's idle glories, he turns to his God, adores Him, prays to Him and gives Him his whole being.

Favourable weather and propitious winds advanced the ship considerably in its course. The Azores were soon passed and so were the Madeira group, but owing to the great distance, the actual existence or position of these islands could more readily be imagined than seen.

While regulating her course in order to steer west of the Canary Islands she passed the majestic peak of Tenerife, which stood boldly out in all its grandeur, ready to pierce the very clouds, its hoary snow-capped head fully eleven thousand feet above the sea level.

In a little while the ship entered the balmy zone of the trade winds and sailing with due rapidity soon passed the Tropic of Cancer.

Quantities of jelly fish floated almost constantly

On leaving the Azores and Madeira Islands behind and heading west of the Canary Islands, the *Stefano* flew past to the magnificent peak of Tenerife, with its grey head penetrating the clouds and jutting high above the sea.

A period of balmy trade winds followed and gave the young sailors unprecedented spectacle.

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on the surface of these waters. Their beautiful shapes and colourings became a constant source of pleasure and interest. They swim by means of a bladder bag attached to their backs, which they expand and contract at pleasure, and their numerous little tentacles serve to secure their prey.

To these may be added myriads of flying fish whose fins serve as wings and, which, rising from the bosom of the deep, poise for a few seconds in the air flapping their wings, evidently proud of them. But alas! Many with misdirected aim landed on the deck and would then try to get back to their native element but could not. Thus by their very pride and weakness they become ready captives to the ever watchful sailor.

Striking example of hazardous human nature, frail in his highest powers and accomplishments. When he thinks he has reached the pinnacle of success he soon becomes aware of some great weakness, of some sad deficiency which makes his intellect tremble and his heart exclaims with the Sage: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

After leaving Cape Verde Islands on the east, the vessel, favoured by the strong trade winds which considerably cooled the heat of the tropical sun, soon reached the Equator and was securely navigating a calm mirror-like ocean.

It is a custom among sailors to celebrate with much gaiety the day on which they cross the Equator; our jolly fellows fitly and happily did honour to the occasion;

Myriads of flying fish splashed on the sea surface, hitting the sides of the ship or falling on the deck.

Favorable, strong winds drove the "Stefano" onwards. It raced past the Cape Verde Islands, and soon the Equator was crossed.

This event was celebrated according to the old maritime custom.

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following the general custom, they cast overboard a bottle which enclosed the name of the ship, its longitude, the date and time of its crossing the line.

A very good custom this is, for it enables another ship, which picks up the given information to determine not only its own course, but also, the velocity of the equatorial current, which is done by comparison and calculation of the information imparted.

The *Stefano*, after crossing the Equator, was now in the southern hemisphere steering its westerly course through the Brazilian current.

After leaving the Trinidad Islands on the right and passing the Tropic of Capricorn, the sails were set to a north-westerly wind, direction taken towards Cape of Good Hope.

While following this course, the only other ship was sighted, a Spanish vessel bound for Montevideo.

They signalled each other a few words of greeting, gave their respective destination, and as they bid each other Godspeed, the words of the poet arose in their hearts.

A jar was thrown from the ship's deck, and inside it a sheet containing the information about the ship and all its crew. It may still be floating on sea currents today. Often such jars float for decades, even centuries, carrying news from long-lost ships.

Crossing the Equator and stepping into the Brazilian current, the "Stefano" soon crossed the Tropic of Capricorn.

Unfurling their sails and with the north-western wind behind it, the "Stefano" sailed onwards towards Cape of Good Hope.

Along the way, the "Stefano" passed a Spanish sailing ship bound for Montevideo.

The signals were exchanged with the ship's name and expressions of best wishes.

*Ships that pass in the night and speak each other in passing,
Only a signal shown and a distant voice in the darkness.
So on the ocean of life we pass and speak one another,
Only a look and a voice, then darkness again and a silence.*

The delightful weather and the favourable breezes afforded ample recreation to the sailors. Those who were not on duty amused themselves by catching

Young and carefree sailors spent their time performing various allocated tasks. They did so in harmony and solidarity that grew out of their mutual love of the sea, their youth, and their shared hardihood.

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some of the numberless fish which generally follow in the wake of a ship, eagerly catching all food which may be thrown overboard.

On nearing the Cape of Good Hope, flocks of pigeons, sea-gulls and albatross swarmed around the ship and circling round and around, touching here, alighting there, many remaining prisoners, victims of their own audacious intrepidity.

Slowly but steadily the *Stefano* was making its way over the southern oceans, slowly but daily the constellations of the Northern Hemisphere were disappearing; the Great Bear and Polaris too were lost from view, to make place for the gorgeous constellations of the Southern Hemisphere. The Southern Cross was now their guide.

The men spent their free time catching fish, using discarded food as bait. The captain did not object to these activities, and the cook Mato did not complain about having to prepare a good home-recipe of “brudet” <fish stew>.

The dazzling Southern Cross became the “Stefano’s” new guide,

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We stand in awe before the magnificence of our starry skies, but the firmament of the southern heavens is far more radiant and sublime; those who have once seen them can never forget their super magnificence.

Like a famous charger, urged on by its rider's spurs, the *Stefano*, favoured by auspicious winds, sped over miles of its course making an average of eight or nine knots an hour.

On reaching the tempestuous Cape to which John II of Portugal inappropriately gave the name of Cape of Good Hope, strong monsoons were encountered. The sea became very rough and the vessel was soon careening to such an extent that it was deemed advisable to steer further out from land.

The velocity of the wind increasing every minute and the ocean soon showed itself in all its awful sublimity and grandeur. The storm that arose gave truth to the

as the constellation of the southern hemisphere replaced the northern star constellations. This stary ceiling seemed much brighter to the eye and much closer to earth than the one in the northern hemisphere.

As the ship got closer to the Cape of Good Hope, the wind became stronger and stronger, raising furious, foaming waves. The captain issued an order to hold the ship away from the coast.

The wind speed kept increasing.

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name of Cape of Torments which the Portuguese had so fitly given this point. This happened on the first day of September 1875, the thirty-third after the departure from Cardiff.

The wind's violence showing no signs of abatement made it necessary to take in some sails. With considerable effort and danger to themselves, the alert sailors soon had them reefed in. Only a few main sails were left, only such as were really indispensable.

The fury of the wind increased. It was soon whistling among the cordages, the rattling of the chains and the rocking to and fro of the metallic cords created an awful noise. The sailors could hardly move about, so violent was the swaying of the vessel. At times it entirely disappeared in the immense abyss created by the waves. At other times an immense wall of water seemed to advance towards the ship ready to engulf it in its merciless power.

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The crew was soon thrown into a state of dismal apprehension. The rolling and pitching of the ship was so severe that the ends of the yards were touching the crests of the gigantic waves. In fact it was almost impossible to walk at all on deck, so two stout ropes were stretched to which the crew held on with desperate strength to save themselves from being washed overboard. The men at the wheel were secured by ropes tied around their waists.

The crew lowered almost all their sails.

The sound of the roaring waves and the whistling of the wind made it impossible to hear even the closest friend.

The ship rose, driven high by the waves, and then it descended, as if from the top of a hill, downwards towards the depths, only to rise again trembling, squeaking, and moaning. The waves washed and covered the deck like raging demons seizing everything in their path and dragging it to depths.

People tied themselves with ropes to stay in the places where they were needed. Crossing the deck was impossible. One had to wait for the right moment when the ship was in the correct position and then use the rope tied tautly from the stern to the ship's bow to cross to the other side. The sharp and experienced eye of captain Vlaho judged the height, direction, and wave power. He gave orders with a reassuring strong voice to the helmsman who, tied to his wheel,

All hands were next ordered to the pumps as the water was soon washing into the ship at the rate of about thirty-two centimetres in twenty four hours.

managed with abrupt and quick movements to avoid the blows of the powerful waves. The ship's fate and its entire crew depended on these two men's quick-thinking skills, speed, and experience. One clumsy and reckless movement could send them all to the abyss. In this unequal struggle between a small walnut shell of the ship and the raging ocean, the Stefano skilfully avoided the blows of its enemy.

When the ship rushed into the trough of the wave and the bow plunged into the water all the way to the first mast, the young and inexperienced sailors thought this was their last hour. The waves roared, threatened, foamed, and toyed with the small vessel, never allowing the men to catch their breath, to pause, or to rest. In their thoughts, the young men recalled their homeland, the sunny Dalmatian towns, and villages, and silently they bid farewell to their family and friends.

The land-bound people can't imagine this struggle with the sea. Battlefield, assault, man-to-man combat, these are all minuscule compared to Man's struggle with the ocean. To survive and be able to describe this experience is wondrous and magnificent.

Land was no longer in sight.

The Cape was about three hundred miles away, but though the vessel frequently seemed submerged by the giant waves,

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yet its speed was still three or four knots an hour.

Struggling against the elements, its course directed the same way, an English ship was also sighted. Flocks of immense black albatross, almost dismal harbingers of their future fate, circled around the *Stefano*, striking more terror and consternation in the now thoroughly alarmed sailors.

Eight such similarly awful days had to be lived through before the faintest gleam of hope could dawn upon them. Finally, on the ninth of September, a fine manageable breeze succeeded this fierce storm, which the sailors welcomed as a sign of better days ahead.

Without losing a moment they let out all their sails and once more the barque in its full rigging stood out in all its beauty. The bleak stormy days and almost imminent disaster were well nigh forgotten, so buoyed up were the men by the advent of fine weather.

The course of the ship was now changed, being at a distance of about thirty-three miles from the Island of Amsterdam. The vessel was headed due east towards the little Island of

The “Stefano” was moving at 3 to 4 knots of speed and was about 300 miles away from land.

An outline of some English ship sailing in the same direction appeared in the light mist and then disappeared from the view again.

The storm lasted eight days. Its rage slowly dissipated, and by 9 September, it had completely died down. After the superhuman exertion, sleepless nights, and hunger, the exhausted mariners gave a sigh of relief. The fear of the younger men melted away. This difficult initiation brought them even closer to their older and more experienced companions, who had been through many such ordeals and storms before. These companions found the sea to be the sole purpose for their existence, and for them, the sea had become both the dearest friend and the fiercest enemy.

With all its sails unfurled, the *Stefano* sailed gracefully towards the Island of St. Paul.

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St. Paul. This is an important station which navigators, going either to China, Australia or New Zealand never fail to establish in the east Indian Ocean, as this is the recognized point for making magnetic observations and regulating chronometers, thus fixing a correct route for the ships.

In less than twenty-five days from the Cape of Good Hope to St. Paul's Island, the *Stefano*'s log book recorded a distance of twenty-nine hundred miles.

The very thick clouds and heavy fog which surrounded the island obstructed it somewhat from view, though it was passed at midday.

Directions were now changed and the western coast of Australia was now the goal. Before reaching St. Paul's Island the ship was surrounded with penguins which inhabit the island in great numbers. These curious birds are furnished with wings strikingly similar to fishes' fins, thus enabling them to live as much at ease on land as on water.

Accompanying the penguins were numberless other sea fowl whose red beak and feet, black head and grey breast feathers offered a pretty picture.

2. FROM THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE TO THE COAST OF AUSTRALIA

After they had rested, the crew began to repair the damage inflicted by the storm on the ship. Even the slightest little thing did not escape Grga's experienced eye. Everything had to be restored to its designated place. Each rope and there were hundreds of them, of various thicknesses and length, had their place, and Grga knew it. He knew its purpose as well as the purpose of each piece of ship's equipment. He knew the ship like the palm of his hand. Men like Grga, who could not read or write, oversaw the outfitting of new ships, not forgetting the slightest rope, frog¹, or a wedge. Under Grga's supervision, the "Stefano" was soon in perfect working order again.

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Meanwhile, the tropical sun dispelled the clouds, and it was soon plainly visible that winter was making place for spring (21 September). Nature was now taking on her most beautiful garb while, in the far away home of our sailors, summer had fled with all its life and gaiety and sombre autumn was now reigning supreme.

Cutting the water at 10 knots, the "Stefano" was getting nearer to its destination. The persistent clear sky heralded the arrival of spring.

The guards changed every four hours. The busiest men on the vessel were the helmsman and the officer on guard. The off-duty sailors would gather on deck to wash laundry, mend clothes, and converse with one another.

- "What are you discussing in such a lively fashion?" - asked the officer Karlo Costa. The crew greatly appreciated him for his considerate and fraternal demeanour.

- “These young ones,” replied the older sailor Thomas Dediol, “talk about their homes, homeland, families, and their fiancées. Some curious people ask how the Chinese look. Imagine, Jurić asking if Chinese are cannibals!”

Patting Jurić on the shoulder and laughing cheerfully, the officer said to him: - “We are still a long way from home. We’re only just on our way to China. I’ve been there once before, and I am still alive, Jurić! You don’t have to fear Chinese. They are wonderful people, more enlightened than we Europeans. I became acquainted with one of their educated countrymen, who spoke good English. He told me he had been to Europe once and could not but marvel at our customs. After descending from the ship to the shore, he was greeted, he told me, by some grim, unkind men, with girded sabres. They shuffled all his luggage to determine if he was carrying a weapon!”

The conversation continued in this fashion. Each sailor added some thoughts or experiences and, in this way, complemented the figure of a Chinese man.

Time in the conversation had passed quickly, and the change of crew was about to take place. Captain Costa got up from his seat to leave, punctuating his departure with a jocular dare: “So, who among you young men <momci> is afraid of storms?”

- “I am,” cadet Bačić readily replied.

- “I can see we have a real hero here!” teased the oldest helmsman Sretko Bučić. “You have no idea how lucky you are to be sailing on

a new barque. Our sails are new, as are our masts. They can survive the most severe of storms. And what would you have done, young man, on an older vessel if you saw the wind rip and tear away the sails, snap the masts, and the ship is full of water? The crew had to pump water day and night without a break until they fell with exhaustion. You are yet to learn what a seaman has to live through and endure on a sea voyage!”

- “I believe you, even if it is unbelievable,” Bačić replied. “But Captain,” he continued by addressing Captain Karlo <Costa> “why is it that in school we were never told about our mariners? Our newspapers do not write about them”.

- “You ask for a reason? The land-bound writers and journalists are not interested in lives and misfortunes of our mariners. They listen to our stories with disbelief. We sailors do not know how to write what we feel, when we sit on the porch in the cool of the house, when we converse among ourselves, old and exhausted. We believe one another and understand one another. Our children believe us. They retell our memories that recall the courage of their fathers, grandfathers, and compatriots. Perhaps a worthy pen will arise that will tell the world of the unspoken and unseen events and the heroism of our mariners.”

- Bačić could no longer hide his secret: “Captain, I have recorded everything that has happened on our ship from the day of our departure. I will continue to do so if you allow it. I would never want to forget my first voyage and my first storm.”

The bell rang for the new crew to take their place, and Captain Karlo hurried off to take his place on the watch. The conversation among the seamen continued. Every one of them wanted their young mate to record their own story.

- "My father drowned somewhere near the coast of England. I was eight years old" said Božidar Vulović. "Of the entire crew, only two died: my father and another person from the Island of Lošinj."

- "How could that have happened? Tell me about it, Božidar!"

"Men, it's all the fault of poverty and misery. The storm threw the ship onto a protruding rock near the shore. The sailors cut the mast and propped one end across to the shore. This is how they saved themselves, taking only what they had on them. You must know that the shipowners do not worry much about sailors when the ship is lost. Their only concern is to dispatch the men home again.² What do they care that the shipwrecked men need to return to seafaring! As if it is easy for poor men to outfit themselves with clothes and other attire again? My father felt uneasy. He was tormented by the thought that all his miserable possessions would be lost with the ship: "waterproof", boots and a coat "from Marseilles". How would he get these again? He and a mate of his decided to return to the ship on the mast again to save "from the hull" what could be saved. Their companions on the shore watched with apprehension as the two waited for the right moment to return to the ship. No one tried to stop them. They nearly succeeded had it not been for the ferocious waves that drew the ship to the water's depth. Men, is it human, that no one compensates the sailor for his loss, that no one thinks of his poor widow and orphans?"

- “In our village, there is not one family that the sea has not wrapped in black”, added Thomas Dediol, “either the father or the son ... And people still try to persuade you to get married! Well, brothers, why would you get married only to leave your wife and children at the mercy or malice of strangers? I have passed thirty and do not intend to marry. Before my eyes, I always see my poor mother. She married at the age of twenty. My father lived with her for less than a month and then went to sea. He left her with an elderly and odd mother-in-law and father-in-law. She had to raise chickens, pigs, and sheep because the household was untenable without these. Seamen need woollen socks, under-shits, and covering. With us, sheep do not go to pastures. It is necessary to go to the field and cut grass and collect hay for the winter. It is necessary to go to the forest, that was distant some hours of walking, and then bring a heavy load of holy for sheep and for the fireplace. The newlywed bride had to do all of this, and instead of being greeted with “Good Morning” she is greeted by her father-in-law with the question, “Have you fed the animals?”

The father-in-law demands that even the smallest plot of land be cultivated, and the bride and the mother-in-law, if they are able, had to dig the fields, plant, and grow. Not an hour of rest and peace. Even in the evening, there was wool to spin, knit, mend, while their eyes were heavy with fatigue, and the bruised hard hands could barely hold the needle.

1. Frog - ship's name for the pulley.
2. These were the prevailing conditions for seafaring at that time

II

Every second year the man returns home. Each of his visits means another child ... There were six of us, six heavy burdens on the back of one mother. I always remember those terrible nights, when the <northern> *bura* raged outside, or the south wind roared. Mother would go upstairs, and instead of going to sleep, she would stare long into the black night and cry while praying.

The poor thing thought that the storm was raging across all seas and that my father at that moment was in mortal danger. How could she be calm? Every day black news came to the village and enveloped the little houses of sailors with sorrow.

Despite all of this, our men continue to marry, and our girls continue to be married. There really is no pitiable creature than an unmarried woman in a poor seaside house. Even so, widows do not starve to death. With the help of the locals, they somehow bring up their orphans. And when the boys turn twelve or thirteen, they leave for the “call of the wind” as we did ...”

“Stop it! Enough of misery and trouble,” Jurić interjected. “It’s not like that everywhere. As soon as I save a little, I’ll go home and get married. Not everyone goes to the sea here in Oskorušno. People there cultivate the land and don’t leave it to women. Enough of your grief! It’s time to break up.”

[14] cont.

After the stormy winter days, the *Stefano* enjoyed thirty-two of these balmy spring days, so beautiful and enjoyable in the Indian Ocean. On the 23rd day of October, after consulting the chart, the ship was found to be not far distant from the Australian continent.

It became necessary to sight land in order to regulate the chronometer, which had not been done at St. Paul's Island owing to the fog. This was the only method left of establishing a true starting point beyond Ombai for the ship that wished to enter the Pacific Ocean by going through one of the narrow eastern passages and passing south of the Philippine Islands.

The western wind favoured

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the progress of the ship and, although the water was slightly rough, other conditions seemed ideal.

Her speed was easily eleven to twelve knots an hour; on nearer approach to the Australian coast the wind shifted south.

On the morning of 26 October an English schooner was sighted, evidently going in the same direction. At noon, from the topmast, the coast of Australia was plainly discernible.

The "Stefano", in the meantime, flew like a proud swan across the vast Indian Ocean. In 25 days, it had crossed the distance from Cape of Good Hope to the Island of St. Paul,³ but due to the thick fog at this locality, it was not possible to make observations with a sextant nor regulate the chronometer.

At the beginning of October, it was determined from the map that the *Stefano* was approaching the Australian coast. It was now necessary to carry out the observations that were missed when passing the Island of St. Paul. This was necessary as the captain decided to enter the Pacific Ocean through the Ombai Strait and sail through the southern part of the Philippine Islands.

On October 26, at noon, the crew of the "Stefano" saw the Australian coast.

[15] cont.

In less than one month the distance of twenty-two hundred miles from St. Paul's Island to the Australian Coast was happily accomplished. In another month, and with favourable weather, one half of the long trip would be over and then for the homeward return.

What joy this thought brought to the hearts of these sturdy, patient sons of the sea.

For their own security and in order to avoid the coral reefs and numberless submerged rocks which treacherously guard this savage and fierce looking coast, it was deemed advisable once more to change route and turn the ship's prow in a north by west direction.

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After crossing the Tropic of Capricorn a second time, those of the crew off duty, retired for the night, while the others remained on watch for the rest of the night.

The "Stefano" then headed in the northwest direction to stay away from the shore and to avoid its insidious coral reefs.

The guards took turns in the pre-established order. The *Stefano* was now sailing, carried by a slightly stronger wind. The sailors on guard were vigilantly watching the ship's progress.

EDITORIAL NOTES– CHAPTER I

1. The original description of the rigging in the Rijeka manuscript is somewhat more specific and includes details of foremast (sails: foresail, fore topsail, topgallant and fore royal), main mast (sails: mainsail, main topsail, main topgallant and main royal), spanker mast (sails: spanker and gaff topsail) and bowsprit (with four jibs). Between the main mast and the foremast were strung three staysails, and two similar sails were between the main and spanker masts. On the main mast and foremast studdingsails were added on lower, middle and upper fixed sails.
2. The italic text below is not in the original manuscript but was added by Angelina Baccich, the wife of the survivor Miho Baccich, when she translated his 1876 manuscript from Italian into English in 1920.
3. From this point onwards crew surnames are written in Croatian type as in the original manuscript. These include: *Antončić, Bačić, Brajević, Bučić, Costa, Dediol, Jurić, Lovrinović, Miloslavić, Osoinak, Pavišić, Perančić, Radović, Vukasinović, Vulović, Zanetović* and *Škurla* himself.
4. *Osoinak* is the name used in the original Rijeka manuscript. I have reverted to the Rijeka manuscript usage. Both Rathe and Angelina use *Osojnak*.

II

[17]

At the stroke of midnight 26-27 October the first mate *Osoinak*, with the quartermasters, *Bučić*, *Perančić*, *Dediol*, *Vulović*, *Brajević* and *Antončić* were the men on watch duty.

Around two o'clock in the morning, *Osoinak* went down into the cabin for a cup of coffee, the great stimulant of the man on night duty, where he remained a few minutes in conversation with *Jurić*.

Osoinak had barely returned to his post when the ship bells rang 2:30 am and at the same time, the vessel itself gave a violent lunge, *shaking and shivering all over like a convulsed human being; one more second and all was silent.*¹ She had grounded on a submerged rock or a hidden sharp-toothed coral reef:

Shortly before midnight, hungry and tired, Officer *Osojnak* went down to the ship's small saloon cabin to have a drink of black coffee.

With a cup of coffee and a good cigarette, he stayed in conversation with *Jurić*. The cabin was unusually quiet; the roar of the wind and the creaking of the masts barely reached them, but the danger lay in ambush, silent and insidious.

When the clock struck half past two after midnight, the officer made his way slowly to the deck, putting out a burnt cigarette. At that moment, a violent quake shook the vessel and threw him on a pile of ropes. With the sudden halt the ship began to shiver like a man in pre-death convulsions.

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*She struck where the white and fleecy waves
 Looked soft as corded wool,
 But the cruel rocks, they gored her side
 Like the horns of an angry bull.*

The sudden violence of the shock soon brought the panic-stricken sailors on deck. The swaying of the vessel to and fro, the awful rumbling noise, the ominous shivering of the sails, the horrible noise of the quivering of the chains soon informed them of their horrible situation.

Only one ray of hope remained, to set sail in the hope that a sudden gust of strong wind and the force of the waves would lift the ship and this sudden movement would raise it from its living tomb. Alas! In vain. As a last resort the pumps were put in motion with the expectation of finding only a little water, but the pumps could no longer work and peril was imminent.

By now the wind had risen and a gale was soon blowing. The swelling waves were tossing the *Stefano* to and fro as though she were a feather and pounding her most unmercifully. Then with her affrighted sailors she reared completely around from her northern direction and was thrown on her right side.

White waves, which from a distance looked like soft, combed wool, hid sharp coral reefs beneath them. Like the horns of a raging bull, they sank into the hips of the proud ship, which leaned now to one side now to the other until countless ropes trembled. The fluttering of the sails heightened the anxiety, and the feeling that the ship was in extreme danger took over the crew, who rushed to the deck worried and stunned and hurried to carry out the captain's orders.

They unfurled all the sails and pulled them to the wind, hoping that the wind would extract the ship out of its predicament, but all the efforts of the crew were in vain. The coral reef held its prey tightly. "To the pumps!" was the captain's new order, but the pumps no longer worked.

The wind, however, grew stronger, and the storm waves were pounding against the ship with ever greater ferocity. The *Stefano* was shaking, thrashing its hull against the rock.

The situation was desperate as there was no longer any human means left of remedying the disaster which was complete and incontestable.

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“To the boats” was the cry that went up simultaneously from all throats.

Some ran below deck to secure the rigging, but what a terrible spectacle met their eyes. The water had violently invaded the whole vessel. Would these strong men have the time to secure the rigging, to raise and unfasten the boats? This was their very last ray of hope, but it was very feeble compared to the black despair that took possession of their souls.

Death stared all in the face. Would any survive the situation which was momentarily becoming more alarming? How would they be able to combat the waves in their little frail boats! Many a heart became sad and contrite in this hour of anguish; many an eye was dimmed with tears at the thought of the lives soon to be sacrificed to the merciless waves; many a hand trembled as it sought for the ropes and riggings on which their salvation depended.

It was obvious that the ship would fail and that the catastrophe could no longer be avoided or remedied. Men understood and felt their predicament because, despite all their efforts, the ship kept filling up with water, creaking, breaking, and slowly sinking.

“To the boats!” A cry rang out.

At such a time, men jump into boats without asking if the boat can survive the raging sea, which at any moment can swallow both the boat and the people in it forever.

To add to the horrors of all this, they realized the land was only about nine miles away, yet too far to even think of reaching shore.

It was indeed a very hazardous undertaking to lash the rigging in position, to fasten the ropes to the blocks and then to lower the boats. Like someone in the throes of death, the convulsed movements of the *Stefano* threw an icy fear into the bravest hearts.

However, there being no more precious moments to lose, *Perančić*, on the spur of the moment and with a courage born from despair, climbed the mast and

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resisting with almost superhuman strength the violent lurches of the vessel, soon had the blocks in position. The other sailors quickly rushed with provisions to put into the boats, some with clothing, others with casks of fresh water. When everything was packed in the boats, the frailest and weakest of all was lowered into the boat in accordance to the laws of the sea. This was the little English cabin boy.

Without losing his composure, the brave *Perančić* climbed the mast and secured the pulleys on the rigging so that the boat could be lowered with them.

While the lifeboat was still secured, the sailors quickly placed some food, water barrels, and clothing. The weakest and youngest members of the crew were the first to board the lifeboat. But except for Henry, a young Englishman, no one else managed to get into it.

All the elements, however, seemed to conspire against the unfortunate sailors. Hardly had the boat been raised in its blocks than heavy seas began to wash the decks with irresistible power. In one second and without warning the frail boat with all its precious stores was lifted by one gigantic wave and then dashed with tremendous force against the side of the ship. This single wave smashed it into a thousand pieces and the poor little English boy was crushed beneath the breaking timbers. The death of the poor little fellow cast a black pall over the dying hopes of the last mariners. Will this too be their fate?

This gigantic wave was soon succeeded by mountains of water, which washed the vessel on all sides. *Perančić*, who was clinging desperately to one of the yards, was carried overboard, for a considerable distance.

The situation was evident: there was no more hope, all of them saw the yawning chasm

The boat had just started to be winched when a huge wave flooded the deck, took the lifeboat only to slam it against the ship's railing. The wreckage, and Henry's body, was scattered by the waves before his startled and helpless comrades.

The mass of water carried with it everything that was not attached. Huge waves also took *Perančić* as he descended the mast. No more commands were heard. Individuals fought the waves as best they could.

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that lay open at their feet ready to engulf them; some lashed themselves to the rigging, others hung to the masts and yards; all held with a strength born of desperation to anything that promised a little safety in this great hour of peril.

Who was to follow the fate of Perančić and the little English boy? Is it you? Is it I? Mother, home, heaven! Of these three magic and soothing words, which was now on their lips? Would a mother or a home ever welcome them again? Though human nature and human frailty are always inclined to cling to hope even against hope, yet in this desperate case, the sweet sister of faith and charity seemed to have deserted them; she had left these unfortunate sailors to their fate in an angry ocean and instead was smiling most benignly on a growing youth, on a happy bride!

As there was no longer any chance of using the boats, or even of getting near them, *Antončić* seized a ladder and cast himself into the sea. His eager movement was quickly followed by *Costa* and *Bačić*. Clinging to a ladder each, these two allowed themselves to be carried off by one of the enormous waves that never for a moment ceased pounding the ship's sides.

“Courage, dear brothers, farewell!” were the first words that broke the ominous and awful silence. Alas! a wave passed over the ship and the voice that was sending a message of courage to the hearts of his companions and brothers now in the supreme moment, was soon hushed in eternity; it had greeted them, encouraged them and saluted them in a last and solemn farewell!

They tied themselves to the poles, masts, railings, waiting anxiously, if and when the next wave would bring them the fate of Groiss and Perančić.

Helping himself to a wooden ladder, *Antončić* threw himself into the sea with it, followed by Captain *Kosta* and Cadet *Bačić*. Furious waves toyed with them, as with straw.

Meanwhile, *Bačić*, who was struggling in the ocean on his ladder, discovered that instead of helping him, it impeded his progress, so he decided to leave it. He next tried to return to the ship by swimming, but how could he get on the sinking vessel for she was lying on her side almost completely out of the water. Nor could he hope to secure any help from his unfortunate companions,

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who in imminent danger of dropping off at any moment were all grouped together on the rigging.

At the very moment when no human hand can save and help, when the last star of hope has been dimmed, then the Hand of God comes forth.

His greatness and His mercy once more shone for the poor lad so young to be bereft of life and hope; for the same high wave in which the lad expected to find death became his salvation; it threw him to such a height that he was able to grasp a piece of iron projecting from the side of the ship and climbing over its side, he found himself again in the midst of his companions.

Only one of them, *Bačić*, manages to resist their rage and return to the ship again. Clinging desperately to the ship, which lay on its side, he saw a huge hill of water rolling towards him, as if foaming at the mouth. But this time, the wave brought him salvation. Lifting him to its top, the rolling hill of water carried him so high that he managed to grab a piece of iron protruding from the hull of the ship.

The reappearance of *Bačić*, who had been given up as dead, served to buoy up the courage of the others. The yawl, which had in the meantime been lowered, was quickly provided with some nautical instruments and some provisions.

Captain *Miloslavić*, *Osoinak*, *Bačić* and *Bučić* had barely seated themselves when an immense wave which they thought would have carried them landward to safety, gathering up all its fury, caught the frail yawl in its eddy and upset it together with all its unfortunate occupants.

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Of the four only *Bačić*, aided by the alertness of his youth, succeeded in saving himself by catching hold of the keel of the upturned skiff; the others, poor souls had been engulfed in the immensity of the ocean.

Bačić had hardly realized he was saved when he saw one of the sailors struggling in the water.

This was *Dediol*. *Bačić* shouted to him amidst the fierce roars of the wind and waves. Having a life preserver, the former managed to reach the yawl where both held on to the keel, one at the stern, the other at the bow. By their united efforts and that of a heavy swell, they succeeded in righting the upturned boat and climbed into it. But then it took all their efforts to keep it in equilibrium, the boat being almost full of water which could not be bailed out. Thus they drifted at the mercy of wind and waves, half sitting, half kneeling and using their arms as oars.

The reappearance of *Bačić*, who was considered lost, raised new hopes and gave courage to his comrades. Taking advantage of an opportune moment, the remaining sailors lowered the small boat. After loading it with some food and some nautical instruments, they quickly launched themselves from the ship. Before departing, they threw some remaining food and equipment into the water, hoping that the sea would wash it all ashore. On this occasion, the big waves caught the small, fragile boat in a swirl and capsized it as before.

Only two hands reappeared again to seize the overturned boat. *Bačić* did not hear the last cry of his comrades *Miloslavić* and *Osoinak*, he did not see their struggle with the raging ocean, nor their hands, reaching out for help before they disappeared into the depths. Two brave hearts of two young men vanished forever in the vortex of unmerciful ocean waves.⁴

Through the roar of the wind and the noise of the waves, *Bačić* thought he heard a voice, but exhausted from the long struggle, he did not have the strength to climb on the back of the boat, let alone come to anyone's aid. The voice kept getting closer, and as in a dream, *Bačić* became aware that someone else was trying to reach the boat. It was *Dediol*. He was wearing a lifeboat that helped him resist the force of the waves. Gathering some strength, the two decided to upright the boat. When their efforts succeeded, they climbed into the boat, which was constantly filling with water. It was impossible to empty the water - they didn't have anything to do

This feeling of security did not last long. A heavy swell capsized the boat a second time and again it had to be righted only by most arduous and dangerous exertions. But then another wave hit them. This third blow was the deathblow to the frail boat. It violently lurched about before it struck

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a concealed rock, tearing a big hole in the bottom. The poor unfortunates once more saw death hovering over them with no chance of escape.

Meantime the horrible black clouds began to slowly drift away, and the silvery rays of the morning star shone as a beacon of hope and encouragement to the poor unfortunates, who now for the first time saw how near they were to land. Now floating, now swimming, now drifting, all redoubled their efforts to reach the land which seemed to beckon them.

Six hours of mortal anguish and fearful struggle and the poor unfortunates were so overcome by fatigue and mental anguish that they had given up hope of ever reaching the land which seemed so alluringly near. Then lo and behold! A friendly sail. Hope rose tumultuously in their breasts and both added voices to the chorus of shouts and yells swelling up from their throats. After almost one whole hour of this awful suspense, the mystery was solved. What appeared to be a sail was nothing else but a plain white board which

with it. Rowing with hands and with an effort to maintain balance, they endeavoured to reach the land. The waves upturned the boat a few times along the way, but they managed to upright it again. A sudden onslaught of waves dealt the boat a fatal blow, slamming it against the reef and tearing its bottom.

Holding on to the wreckage of their boat, the men did not abandon the effort to reach the shore. The sea was still rolling huge waves.

Thick black clouds began to disperse and lighten, driven by a strong wind. Soon the sky was almost clear, and the glow of the Morning Star gave new strength to the exhausted men. Their goal was close. The dark outlines of the land rose from the sea of foam.

At that moment, the men realized their ship had been sailing in the wrong direction and that it was by no means 75 miles west of the coast as the crew on the Stefano had thought.

They were nearing total exhaustion from the constant swimming and the struggle to stay afloat. All efforts to move the tired and stifled limbs were now in vain. Their arms and legs were motionless. They were almost certain that death would find them there, within reach of the shore, but the sudden appearance of a white object, which to the shipwrecked looked like the sail of a ship, gave them renewed hope of salvation. At their call for help, the object came closer and closer until they could make out it was Captain

one of the unfortunates had rigged up in his life saving raft, to help him guide his course.

[25]

This proved to be *Costa*, who on reaching the yawl, abandoned his raft to join his companions.

Together *Bačić*, *Dediol* and *Costa* managed to guide the half submerged boat for fully four hours entirely ignorant of the heart-rending scenes enacted on the *Stefano* as it was steadily sinking in the bottomless eddy.

When the yawl overturned the first time, it threw Captain *Miloslavić*, second Captain *Osoinak* and *Bučić* into the ocean. The two captains, two of the bravest hearts and coolest heads, remained engulfed in the merciless waves.

In the horror of that awful night, these two fine young men, Miloslavić and Osoinak, the pride of their home, the idols of many hearts, these two cousins, refined, handsome and educated, met their untimely and merciless death. Their dying struggles were seen by none, their last words were heard by no loving ears, the solemn dirge of the waves chanting their Dies Irae. Alone, entirely alone with their God in that one second before being engulfed in the deep, how fervent, how sincere must have been that heart-wrung cry for mercy and help.

Costa who lay on a whiteboard up to his waist in the sea. The unfortunate men lost hope that help was coming, but the joy of finding one living friend was great. This sad wreckage was now getting closer and closer to the mainland. It was carrying three still living shipwreck survivors, whose only thought, and desire were to reach the mainland as soon as possible, to lie down and stretch out on a firm and dry ground, and never let go of it again.

Could they think of anything else? Not once did they think of their wrecked ship nor the comrades who were still on it. These men remained on the sinking ship until the masts began to break when the risk of being drawn into the depths of the ocean became all too evident.

Bučić saved himself by clinging to the keel of the upturned yawl. *Bučić* alone succeeded in regaining the *Stefano* where he found *Lovrinović*, *Zanetović* and *Vulović* huddled on the forward part of the ship; they did not remain there long, as the main mast, which had been badly buffeted by the waves, fell across the wreck endangering their lives once more. They then joined *Vukasinović*, *Pavisić*, *Radović*, *Jurić* and *Brajević* who were clinging to the bows of the doomed ship.

Touched by the fate of their companions and realizing that they would soon follow, these sadly disheartened men gave up all hope, for as the poet says: "The sense of death is most in apprehension". Giving themselves up as lost, they were soon pouring forth most ardent and eager prayers for the salvation of their souls, for it is a proverbial truth that "he that will learn to pray, let him go to sea".

The cries of mercy and pardon that ascended to the throne of the Almighty were indeed heartfelt and sincere. Being in full possession of all their faculties served only to make a deeper impression on the unfortunates of the utter hopelessness of their condition.

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Dawn found them still huddled and crouching on the wreck which every moment threatened to engulf them all. So one and all decided to secure a raft or a plank and cast themselves into the ocean, there to drift at God's mercy.

As soon as it was light, the crew hurriedly left the sinking wreckage. They mounted small rafts, pieces of beams and soon disappeared from each other's sight. The rough sea made it difficult to stick together as a group or even follow one another.

[26] cont.

With a fervent prayer on their lips not only for their own souls, but also for the dearly beloved ones whom they would see no more, *Lovrinović, Jurić* and *Bučić* set the first example; next followed *Radović, Vulović* and *Brajević*. The three last, *Zanetović, Vukasinović* and *Pavisić*, climbed a mast so as to cast themselves further out, but were never seen again.

It was a useless task to try to remain together after having thrown themselves overboard – the vicinity of the wreck being exceedingly dangerous owing to the wreckage being hurled with great force all around the sinking ship. The sea was still rough and angry and the poor shipwrecked sailors were buffeted around for the whole livelong day.

How interminable that day must have been!

You, who have led a smooth and happy existence, who have never known a stormy day morally or physically, who have always enjoyed health and prosperity, think for a moment of these unhappy young men, for young indeed they all were. Sad and discouraged at heart, sore, wounded and bleeding in body, starving and parched with thirst, death lurking perilously near, life and hope smiling to them, calling them if only that little strip of shore could be reached in the immensity of the ocean. Oh! How futile our endeavors! Then and then alone, man realizes his nothingness; God alone can help him. Think of that in your prosperity, you who have suffered adversity as well as you who have never felt its cruel and bitter sting.

[27]

Costa, Bačić and *Dediol* were the first to be washed ashore at about two o'clock in the afternoon. They were barely breathing, so complete was their exhaustion. *Lovrinović, Antončić* and *Bučić* followed about an hour after, last came *Jurić* towards sundown.

Neither by word or sound did these unfortunates greet each other. They could not congratulate themselves on their narrow escape as they were uncertain if another horrible death was awaiting them on these arid and burning sands. Whither flew their thoughts in these trying moments?

Their first care was to provide some little clothing for *Antončić* who was cast ashore absolutely nude, his body all blistered by the salt water and the torrid seas. *Bučić* and *Dediol*, the richest in clothes², each parted with something to aid their stricken friend.

Entirely extenuated, with no means of resting their tired limbs, they dug out the sand with their hands in which they burrowed and with which they covered themselves in order to secure a little rest needed so badly. They had been in the water so long that their bodies were stiff and frozen and they sought the welcome heat of the hot sands.

After a strenuous battle, which lasted eighteen hours without a break, the exhausted sailors reached the shore at dusk. Without a word, they helped each other, falling and stumbling with fatigue.

Antončić arrived completely naked. His comrades took off some of their own wet and torn clothes and handed them to him. Their weary eyes kept closing. The cold penetrated to the very bones. With great effort, they dug a ditch in the warm sand. With their bare hands, they lay down into it and buried themselves with sand. In a deep sleep, which brought refreshment and peace to their miserable and emaciated bodies, they forgot all their troubles. Their happiness in reaching the mainland was so great that they did not even think what awaited them on that deserted sandy shore without food and water.

NOTES AND REFERENCES – CHAPTER II

- 1 The italics in this case give a good example of Angelina's small scale editorial interventions.

- 2 According to the Rijeka manuscript *Bučić* gave up his underpants and *Dediol* his shirt.

III

[28]

On what land did these unfortunates find refuge?

Where had they been cast by the merciful or merciless waves? Had they any knowledge of this far off land? In maps drawn as little as fifty years ago this country bore the simple name, *Terra Australis Incognita*.

This was the North West Coast of the arid Australian desert and though Australia is a land so rich and fertile, yet its arid deserts have cost the life of so many hardy explorers and navigators.

[28, 29, 30, 31]

A few words about the land which for six months was to play such an important part in the lives of our brave men will not be amiss.

The first intimation Europe had of the existence of an unknown land in the Indian Archipelago was in the sixteenth century when the Portuguese – then the nation of foremost navigators – sailed along its northern shores, calling it Greater Java. The first to verify the existence of the Australian continent was a Spaniard, Torres, in 1606. He confirmed the existence of this unknown land by passing through the straits between New Guinea and Australia which now bear his name. Between this period and 1628, a large portion of the coastline of Australia had been surveyed by various Dutch navigators and in 1664 the continent was named New Holland by the Dutch government, though no attempt whatever was made at colonization.

But the first man to open this vast island continent to European emigration and colonization was Captain Cook. In 1770 he landed with his followers on the shores of what is now Botany Bay. Here at a place he called Port Jackson, six miles south of the present site of Sydney, he took possession of the land in the name of Great Britain. But it was not until 1788 that the latter country took advantage of Captain Cook's discoveries, when Sydney was founded as a penal settlement. This was also the foundation of the future colony of New South Wales. The West Australian colony was founded in 1829, the South Australian in 1836. The last of the colonies was Queensland, founded in 1859.

The discovery of gold in abundance in 1851 caused an immense excitement and great influx of immigrants. The population was then only about three hundred and fifty thousand and increasing slowly, but the discovery of the precious metal started the country on that career of prosperity, which has since been almost uninterrupted. Convict transportation to New South Wales practically ceased in 1840 and the last convict vessel to West Australia arrived in 1868.

For twenty-five years after the colonization of Port Jackson, settlement was confined to the narrow strip of country shut in on the north-west and south by the Blue Mountains, beyond which no one had penetrated – though many attempts to do so had been made. Along the sea the colony extended only from Jervis Bay to Port Stephens, a distance of 165 miles. In 1813 the mountain barrier was successfully crossed by Messrs. Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth, and the plains beyond were at once occupied. In 1817 Oxley discovered the Lachlan River and later the Macquarie and other streams.

In 1824 Messrs Hovell and Hume crossed the district now forming the colony of Victoria. Allan Cunningham, the botanist, made extensive explorations in 1823 and the celebrated Captain Sturt commenced his arduous and wonderful undertaking about the same time, nor should the names of Hume and George McLeay and Major Mitchell be forgotten. Meanwhile the survey of the coast begun by Flinders was ably continued by Captain Parker King and others. The north-west coasts were next explored, but with little result. Dr Leichhardt, often called the Humboldt of Australia, animated by the success of his first expedition to the North West, undertook to cross the continent from east to west, but the perilous journey cost the brave navigator his life. In 1858 Messrs. A. C. and F. T. Gregory, who, together with other discoverers formed searching parties for Dr Leichhardt, came to the conclusion that the latter had lost his life not through the cruelty of the natives, but from hunger, thirst and privations in the arid north-west deserts. Gilmore in 1871 and Hume in 1874 reached the same conclusions. In 1862, after several gallant attempts, John McDouall Stuart crossed the continent from Adelaide to the north coast and returned to the point of starting. In 1860-61 a well-equipped expedition left Melbourne to cross the continent commanded by R. O'Hara Burke and W. J. Wills, an astronomical and meteorological observer. They succeeded in making a passage across the continent, but on their return trip perished miserably from starvation, thirst and the torrid heat. Several relief expeditions had been fitted out and it fell to A. W. Hewitt to discover King, the sole survivor of the unfortunate party who had

been saved from starvation by the kind natives. No other country save Africa exacted such a toll of victims for its scientific and geographical explorations. Notwithstanding the tragic ending of these various expeditions, undaunted explorers continued their voyage of discovery. Among many important names may be mentioned Sir John Forrest, Major Warburton, William Landsborough, John McKinley, , Alexander Forrest, E. Giles, Hodgkinson, Lewis, Lindsay, etc. All these various expeditions established the indisputable fact that the interior of Australia, and the east of the narrow hilly border of Western Australia, is nothing else but a hopeless desert, either of dry, scorching sand, or worse still a dense growth of scrub and spiny lacerating porcupine grass which tears the feet of horses and the clothes and flesh of men. The one considerable exception being the strip of the central telegraph line established in 1872. There is nearly one half of this vast continent of which European civilization will not avail itself, for a cruel merciless death stares the hapless adventurer in the face and, more especially, is this true of the north-west coast of Australia, upon whose barren and rocky shores the Stefano and its unfortunate crew met their sad fate.

Australia forms a barrier between the waters of the Southern Pacific and Indian Oceans; from east to west it stretches nearly twenty-four hundred miles and from north to south nearly two thousand. The most stupendous natural feature of Australia is its granite tableland occupying about one half of its area from north to south, from ocean to ocean. Another peculiarity of this far off

continent is the shallowness of the ocean surrounding it, especially on the north, besides the dangerous coral reef twelve hundred miles in extent and extending along half the coast. There is no harbour of refuge along the rugged cliffs of the Australian Bight to Cape Arid nor does one stream of fresh water flow into the ocean – all the rivers being more or less inland. East Australia is most favourable in this respect. The regularity of its rainfalls, the permanency of its streams, so rare in this continent, will always give it the lead in prosperity and riches. The wool products, especially of New South Wales surpass in value of the gold products of the continent. South Australia yields large quantities of superior wheat. The only natural and valuable product of Western Australian is the Jarrah tree, its timber being in great request for railway sleepers, for building purposes and especially for marine constructions, its valuable properties resisting the attacks of the white-ant on land and the shipworm at sea.

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The north-west coast and, in fact, nearly the whole interior of this continent, as we have said before, is a vast monotonous sterile plain interspersed here and there with stifling, scorching, deep red sand ridges, sometimes matted over for hundreds of miles with the mallee scrub, a species of dwarf eucalyptus, and the mulga scrub, a species of thorny acacia. On the sea shore, scattered here and there can be found many varieties of crystallized shells, petrified ferns, bones and remains of ancient geological formation. In the

arid section there is not a plant or vegetable capable of sustaining life excepting probably a few ferns, the roots of which the natives eat. In the fertile portions, the vegetations are altogether unique. A peculiarity of the trees is their uniform sombre olive shade, the scanty foliage and its general vertical direction, presenting little surface for evaporation, or thick leathery leaves well fitted to retain moisture. The most widely spread types of Australian vegetation are the various kinds of gum tree (Eucalyptus), the she-oak (Casuarina), the acacia or wattle, the grass tree (Xantorrhoea), many varieties of proteaceae and a great number of ferns and tree ferns. The fragrant acacia abounds almost all over Australia. The flame tree with its clusters of red flowers is almost a signal from the Illawarra Mountains to ships miles out at sea. The fern tree of Western Australia burns with orange-colored blossoms like a tree on fire. Though this flora bears some resemblance to the African, yet north-east Australia is more Asiatic in appearance, palms and ferns, nutmeg, fig and banyan trees abounding. Fully nine-tenths of Australia's beautiful flora are peculiarly its own.

The zoology of Australia is even more unique than its botany. Its great feature is the nearly total absence of all the forms of mammalia which abound in the rest of the world, their place being supplied by a great variety of marsupials. These animals being nowhere else found, except in the opossums of America.

The birds excel, in these of all other temperate lands, for beauty of plumage and fineness of form; but on the sea coast only an Di

occasional swallow and a few storm gulls with their dreary cry, disturb the ceaseless silence; not even the animals that are so abundantly found in other portions seeking the dreary waste of the sandy coasts.

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Yet in the midst of these arid desert sands, man, the aboriginal Australian, manages to find some means of existence. The native – a wandering nomad – inhabits this dreary waste and leads a life of misery

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and privations. Notwithstanding all this he seems happy, either because he has not the slightest inkling of a better or more comfortable existence, or because he has not yet been subjected to the destructive influence of his conquerors, or because free and untrammelled, he ignores the full import of the slavery meant in the fatal "Reserve for the Blacks" – a reserve imposed upon fellow tribes by the whites, colonists, immigrants, squatters and bushmen which only wrought fearful devastation and havoc among the poor unknowing and naive blacks.

To what do these nomadic people owe their freedom from the enslaving hand of their conquerors? To the very aridity and inhospitality of the soil, for if it offered anything to excite the cupidity or rapacity of civilized man, the poor nomad would have disappeared from his lonely haunts long ago.

The tribes of Western Australia, considered by their nomadic nature to be the very lowest in intelligence of the whole human family, though this is doubtful, display a wonderful kindness and generosity of heart that they could be easily led to a moral betterment, by good treatment and civilizing influence, unlike the east Australian tribes

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which are generally considered ferocious and even cannibal.

In the first years of European colonization the Australian Aborigines were considered no more than wild animals and their assassination was perfectly legal, even by the very judges and law courts. A newspaper published in Sydney went as far as to propose the wholesale poisoning of the natives in order to clear the coasts of the Hunter Lake of their presence.

Cold-blooded heartless murders of innocent, inoffensive natives, whose sole crime lay in the mere fact of their existence, was the primary law of the early Colonists, the bushmen or bush hunters especially. Acts of revolting cruelty were of daily occurrence.

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Count Beauvoir, in his work on Australia, quotes these authentic facts: “A young explorer in the prime of his youth, about twenty-four years of age, wrought into a passion by his fiery nature and with an iron will for the mere passion of hunting and fun, put to death about seventy-five natives by slowly roasting them to death.”¹ Did not this man descend lower in the human scale than the lowest animal, the vilest cannibal?

The poor natives, so rapidly and cruelly murdered, number now about fifty thousand, but these are slowly but surely perishing, diminishing before the rapid strides of European colonization, so much so, that in less than a century there will not be a single native left. Their history, their race, their origin will be lost forever.

Even the very blacks in some parts of Australia have a faint idea of their future sad end. For, while gathering the fruit of the Banyan, their sacred tree, they chant with a melancholy cadence: “When the last banyan will ripen on the last banyan tree in the forest, then will the last Aborigine give up

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his soul to the stars.” It is a strange coincidence that not only does the Indigenous Australian disappear in proportion as civilization advances, but also the sacred banyan tree cannot live where cities are founded and inhabited. Thus the progress of civilization spells death to the grand old tree which can only flourish in virgin forests!

.....

“England, by excluding for such a long period the black natives from the advances of civilization and by opening for its own benefit as well as that of other merchant marines a new rich and wonderful market, has established the psychological truth which proves beyond any doubt that man *per se* is not bad. Outside conditions and environments tend to make him bad. In his natural state, man’s divine origin manifests itself plainly, and when he is able to provide himself honestly with the necessities or luxuries of life, without meeting oppositions of all kinds, he will also freely use all his faculties, physical and moral to do good always and not evil.”²

So, when we compare the mild and quiet dispositions of the aborigines of Western Australia with their ferocious and cannibal brother tribes inhabiting east Australia,

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we can easily find the solution of this great difference. The former are in quiet possession of their native haunts, undisturbed by European greed or rapacity, while the latter have been robbed not only of their peaceful homes, but of their very lives by their cruel conquerors.

It is incumbent on all great powers who wish to establish their colonies to establish means of protection not only for themselves but for their surroundings. Great Britain, conqueror of this mighty Island, soon exerted its rights, not only for the benefit of its own people but for that of humanity in general, by establishing a military post on the north-east coast at Cape York in the very midst of cannibals, three-hundred-and-fifty leagues away from the nearest white village. This station was established mainly to assure military possession of the site and to help any mercantile vessel in distress while crossing the dangerous passage between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, exposing more than once the lives of the brave soldiers, martyrs to their duty.

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If a similar post had been established on the west coast a double benefit to humanity would have been conferred, for not only would it have saved countless lives lost on these bleak and barren shores, but by exerting a civilizing influence might have educated the poor natives, naturally kind and gregarious and easily led on a good path.

How inhospitable these western shores of Australia were, how cruel, how unfortunate the fate of those cast upon its desert sands, how hopeless the existence of those in search of rescue and deliverance, cannot be better described or explained than by the faithful and true account of the sufferings of the poor unfortunate survivors of the ill-fated *Stefano*.

The ship was wrecked on a submerged rock at about 22°48' meridian latitude and 113°37'40" longitude by a current which drew it in shoreward, caused by a misunderstanding of signals when the ship's route had been changed (A).³

Out of crew of seventeen men only seven, as we have said in the preceding chapter,

None of them knew where they were. Captain Costa guessed they were somewhere in northwestern Australia.⁵

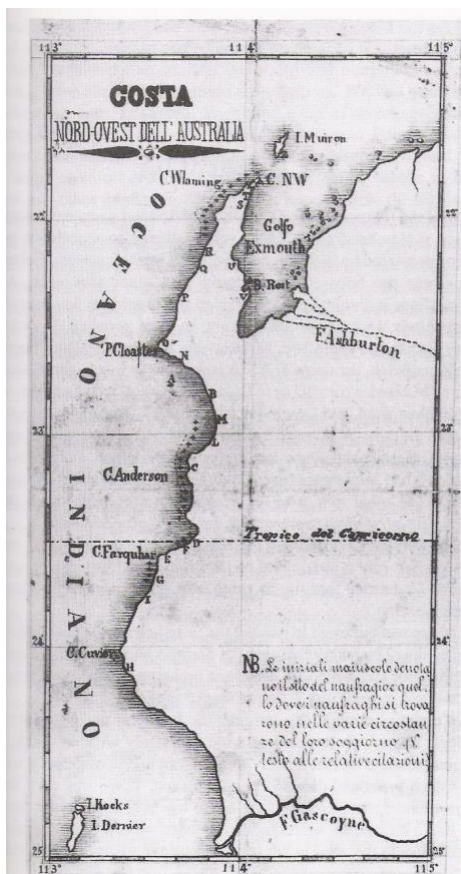
[40]

were found cast ashore, half dead from the fearful struggle with wind and water. These men had been in the water over twelve hours.

NOTES AND REFERENCES – CHAPTER III

- 1 This reference to Beauvoir makes it evident that either *Bačić* or his scribe Skurla must have had access to the Australian section of Beauvoir's book *Voyage Autour Du Monde*. Marquess de Beauvoir (1846-1929) arrived in Melbourne in 1866, and travelled through Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales before heading towards Malaya. His book was first published in 1868 and most likely inspired elements of the *Stefano* manuscript. Some factual errors may also have arisen from this reference as Beauvoir never visited West Australia.
- 2 This paragraph is designated as a quote on page 36 of the Rijeka manuscript – presumably from Beauvoir's *Voyage Autour Du Monde*.
- 3 The following sentence is a footnote in the original Rijeka manuscript:

The map, with its interesting points designated by capital letters, shows the position of the wreck and all the stops made by the shipwrecked men in their six months stay on that particular spot.



IV

[41]

Hardly had the following day dawned (28 October) when the unfortunate survivors, having gathered a little strength from the night's rest, decided to go in search of some more of their poor companions who may have been cast ashore. They also hoped to find, among the washed up wreckage, some provisions which could help them on these bleak and inhospitable shores.

Hungry, thirsty, sore and weary in mind and in body, they turned their footsteps northward, leaving behind *Jurić* whose foot badly hurt and swollen, prevented him from walking.

III

The rest in the warm sand restored their strength. Reunited on the morning of 28 October, their first thoughts were to search the coast for more crew members.

Jurić's injured leg did not allow him to walk, so they left him at the place where they had spent the night.

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Silent and mournful the little band proceeded, walking hither and thither on the burning sands for a distance of about half-a-mile, when suddenly they came across the body of one of their companions who had been cast ashore by the waves the previous night. It was *Brajević*, still breathing but hardly conscious and badly hurt.

How could they help him when they were little better than he? The only means of succour at hand was a moral one. They begged him to try to help himself, to raise himself and with their assistance, they led him to *Jurić* who also hurt, needed companionship.

Meanwhile the able-bodied men went in search of something to help them and to bring to them. Proceeding on their mission they were soon amply rewarded for they found a good deal of wreckage strewn on the beach, among which were considerable provisions, such as two cases of bottled wine, a barrel of flour, a large can of lard, a barrel of beans, a can of oil and other canned goods, meats, barrels of onions, potatoes, etc.

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Having secured these treasures and carried them away of the reach of the waves, lest they should again take back what they had given up, they suddenly thought it wise to revive themselves with a little wine, so each one after taking a small draught carried with him a bottle in order to strengthen and revive others of their companions in need of assistance.

Half a mile to the north, they saw the body in the sand. It was *Brajević*, lying unconscious, eyes closed. Discovering that he was still breathing, his comrades hurriedly set to work helping him regain his consciousness, which they soon succeeded in doing.

“It’s you, brothers!” whispered the poor man, opening his heavy eyelids, but could not move from exhaustion. Happy to have found one of their shipwrecked mates, they carried him in their arms to where *Jurić* lay, and then they set off along the shore, hoping to find some food.

Hope did not fail them: the sea brought a considerable amount of food in buckets and bottles. They found flour, oil, fat, wine, beans, and other things. Dragging this precious treasure to dry land, they quickly opened a bottle of wine and refreshed themselves with a good drop while dividing the other things they found.

[43] cont.

The first to receive this welcome help was *Vulović*, whom they found about seventy or eighty steps from them. He lay motionless, awaiting death to release him from his sufferings. After reviving him not only with some of the treasured wine, but also with words of hope and encouragement, they tried to have him join the other two sufferers, but he was so extenuated from his long struggle with the waves that he actually could not move, so the stronger ones were obliged to lend him their strength and half carrying, half dragging him they went in the direction of the two left behind.

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The sad little procession reached the spot where they had left *Brajević*, who still lay in the same place awaiting their return; administering to him also some of the precious wine he was just barely able to arise and he also had to be almost carried by the stronger ones.

Soon the hunger pangs were making themselves felt. They caught some crayfish crawling on the sands and rolled them in a little flour wet with wine. This was their first meal in Australia.

On reaching *Jurić*, he too was given some of the blessings which a kind Providence had just cast in their path. After a short rest, they proceeded all together northward hoping to find some more valuable provisions or, better still, some more of their companions.

At the very moment when they set off for their camp, they sighted among the wreckage of the *Stefano* washed ashore by the waves, another comrade. He lay there motionless but was alive. It was *Vulović*. They gave him wine and encouraged him by saying they were now saved. As he could neither get up nor walk, they left him to rest and then set about collecting crabs, which were crawling on the sand.

It was their first meal after more than 40 hours, and these raw crabs tasted like the finest treat.

They found in fact two kegs of wine and one of water, the greatest beverage of all and one they needed most.

A few steps more and they came across the corpse of *Radović* stretched out upon the beach.

Wandering further, they found two more barrels of wine, and soon after, the greatest treasure they could imagine and want - a barrel full of water.

3. At the Island of St Paula, magnetic observations are made, and chronometers are regulated.
4. With these words, Captain Bačić later remembered his comrades in his notes on the shipwreck.
5. Their actual position was about 22° 48' south of the equator and 113° 37' east of Greenwich, near Cape Cloates.

III

A step away from the shoreline, among the pieces of wreck lay the corpse of Radović, who was still holding to a wooden board. Death probably cut him down right there at the shore, thus saving him from the terrible torments of slow death, to which his surviving comrades were later subjected. At that moment, they were still rejoicing in life, and the untimely death of their dead friend moved them painfully.

They laid him in a ditch, dug in the sand. Depressed and silent, they left the place, each thinking of their dead friend. Afterward, they returned to Vulović again and took him to the "camp". There they set to work building a shelter from the wreckage of the unfortunate "Stefano." Having no tools, they just arranged boards against one another to at least protect themselves from the wind and moisture.

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Daylight brought an abatement to the fury of the wind and waves, which had been furiously strong all night, and the sun poured forth all its torrid rays.

The poor fellows who had been trembling from cold all night, were now almost burned up by the scorching sun. How painful were their reflections, knowing as they did through experience that the torrid tropical heat awaited them during daytime and dampness and cold at night. In order to protect themselves somewhat from this double evil, they sought some means of erecting a place of shelter, which they succeeded immediately in doing as the waters had brought ashore quite a large quantity of wreckage. Among these were masts and yards, the main mast, skiff oars, parts of life boats, hatches and even a portion of the cabin, the pilot wheel, ladders, tables, casks and boxes, cases and trunks. The boatswain's trunk in particular was rich in valuables for it contained two coats, three shirts, a needle case and thread, two carpenter's planes, about twenty yards of cotton; all these things were of incalculable value to the almost nude and starving survivors, though insignificant in the eyes of anyone else.

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They also found an ornamented column which must have belonged to some other vessel wrecked on the same fateful rocks and a package of letters from the owners to the captain of the ill-fated *Stefano*.

The night was quiet. The wind had almost completely stopped blowing, and the sea had calmed down. At dawn, they were awakened by the blazing tropical sun, which, as it approached noon, began to burn the deserted sandy beach mercilessly. The heat became more and more unbearable, with no trees or caves nearby where the men could take shelter. It became imperative to arrange some protection and build some shelter.

During the night, wreckage from the ship was washed ashore near their resting place. From the wreckage, they drew out what they needed. Someone dragged a mast with sails, and while searching, they found parts of the boat, parts of the cabin, a broken table, ladders, boxes, broken parts of the hull. They also found the captain's sextant and letters from the shipowner addressed to the captain. But the richest treasure of that day was the boatswain's chest. It contained two coats, shirts, a box of needles and thread, two planes, and about 18 meters of cloth.

[46] cont.

The erection of the camp then begun. It was situated at a short distance from the sea, on a sandy plain which, however, showed some deposits of clay and a certain grassy growth as if it had been the bed of a little stream. One side of this shelter was protected from the strong sea breezes by an overhanging cliff while the other looked down upon fine grassy plains, with a few trees here and there. In the distance one could see black looking mountains covered with eucalyptus trees (**B**).

To build this hut they used all the masts and yards of the *Stefano* and whatever lumber they could find. Some of the larger pieces were driven into the ground forming a rectangular room, five metres wide by about two metres long. In the absence of nails and hammers all this lumber had to be brought together and fastened in as strong and advantageous a manner as possible, by tying and

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fastening with ropes and cords of which they had quite a supply.

The sides of the hut were fashioned by means of some pieces of lumber driven into the ground and brought together on the very top to be covered by some of the old sails which had been picked up – these also helped to form the sides. An opening on the east side was left as a sort of door.

Delighted by this discovery, the shipwrecked men diligently set about building their dwelling. Having neither any nails nor tools, they tied parts of the hut with ropes. While some men set to work on the erection of the hut, others went to work to prepare hot food for them.

[47] cont.

The floor of the hut was covered with a sort of dry grass bearing a downy flower and somewhat resembling our fluffy cotton, which was gathered a short distance from the shore.

Costa took the cotton found in the boatswain's trunk and with the precious needles and thread succeeded in sewing up a sheet which formed a covering for all.

As soon as the little cabin was ready a part of the provisions found on the beach was brought in and most precious stored away.¹

Such hard work as these poor castaways were doing required a great expenditure of strength and food. Warm food especially was absolutely necessary.

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But where and how to get the fire?

Fortunately, among the main objects cast ashore there was a metal box with a pound of gunpowder in it, and a sextant box with its two heavy engraving lenses.²

[48] cont.

This was just what they needed. Scattering some of the powder on the ground and surrounding it with dry leaves and twigs, they tried to start a fire by using one of the heavy lenses to focus the sun's hot rays on the powder. One by one, each tried the simple physical experiment, but without success. *Bačić*, being the youngest, was not even asked to help until all the others had exhausted all their knowledge and failed. Taking the lens, with a few dexterous movements, he soon caught the proper focus.

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In a second, a loud report was heard through this echoless desert, accompanied by a piercing shriek. The powder had ignited in all directions at once and the force of the explosion, not only shattered the lens into atoms but also spent all its force against *Bačić*'s right arm, burning it badly.³ The pride of his great achievement was dearly paid for. Sweet oil, which fortunately had also been recovered from the waves, was poured on his burns and some of the linen made an excellent bandage.

While one party was attending to young *Bačić*'s wounds, the other, not to lose the precious fire, busied itself with keeping it up and soon a fine blaze was burning, thanks also to some more of the poor *Stefano*'s wreckage; and others still taking some of the flour, mixed and kneaded it into three loaves of bread about half a kilogram each.

In the boatswain's chest, they found a small tin box with gunpowder in it. Captain Costa tried to set it alight with a sextant lens. Some twigs and dry leaves were quickly collected, and the shipwrecked men waited impatiently for the fire to light. They all tried in turn, and when all attempts to light the fire failed, *Bačić* too jumped in to try. The gunpowder did light up, followed by an explosion because they put more gunpowder than was needed. The lens flew away in pieces, and the flames set *Bačić*'s clothes alight.

"Fire! Fire!" cried the starving sailors, not noticing their friend was in trouble. His right arm was burnt. Only later, when the first excitement passed, did they jump in to help him. From their supplies, they brought oil and a piece of linen and bandaged his burn.

[49] cont.

We can imagine the excellent taste of this bread when we remember that it was partly mixed with sand and was baked in a can which had had a thick coating of tar. But for the poor famished creatures, this God-sent flour possessed a relish unknown to any but those who have suffered the cruel pangs of hunger. This hot paste, for such it actually was, with a can of warmed meat, formed the very first articles of warm food of which they had partaken in so many days.

What a funereal aspect this first meal bore! Not a word was uttered.

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Not a sound was heard save the ever-constant pulsations of the ocean!

Now Mato, the cook, had his hands full. Kneading the dough, he placed it in a can, which they found on the shore. The baked dough had the smell and taste of oil paint, which used to be in the can. There was some sand in it, also, but with a piece of salty meat, it was a sweet meal to the tired and hungry shipwrecked men.

They tried to ration their supplies because no one knew how much longer they had to endure in that deserted land? Will anyone come to their aid, or will they slowly starve to death when they run out of their meagre food supplies? These troubled thoughts swarmed around their heads and made bitter their little meal for many of them.

[50] cont.

What occupied the thoughts of these poor fellows? Were these thoughts of happy homes where mother, father, sisters, sweethearts and friends were talking of their absent ones, counting the days required to reach their destinations? Alas! What a destination! A watery grave for some, a death a hundred times more dreadful for others!

They all knew that their kinfolks at home were eagerly awaiting news from Hong Kong, which would not reach them. No one in the world knew their fate, and it was uncertain if anyone would ever find out and come looking for them?

“Ah, if only you knew what weighs on my heart!” - Vulović sighed.

“As it does with all of us, my friend,” Dediol declared.

“Don’t despair, comrades!” Captain Costa encouraged them. “I assure you we will be saved. I think I know where we are. There is likely to be some settlement of white people somewhere on this coast, north or south. We will go on a reconnaissance. For now, you need to keep the fire going. We must not let it go out. We will set up a guard - as on the ship. There will be a shift every four hours. We don’t have a clock, but I’ll teach you how to follow the stars. In the beginning, it will be hard, but you’ll soon get used to it. Who will be on guard first?”

“I’ll do it tonight,” Zanetović offered.

“And I’ll go after you,” Jurić added, “as in any case, I cannot sleep from my aches.”

“Please wake me when your guard duty is done - I will be third!” Bačić pleaded, always ready to contribute.

The dreary repast over, the still silent sailors tried to drown their sorrows in the forgetfulness of sleep.

But their situation was made worse by the moon which threw fitful rays through the cracks in their makeshift cabin, making everything more weird and horrible. The rest they sought for was vain.

Those hearts which had kept up their courage all this while in the eagerness of their search for their companions, for provisions, for help of any kind, could now find release only in tears. Tears and bitter tears were wrung from those brave and stout hearts. Tears of sorrow for their unfortunate companions already gone before. Tears of sadness for the loved ones at home whose dear faces they may never behold again on earth. Tears of despair for the utter helplessness of their condition! This first night of supposed rest was instead one of intense feverish agitation. The next morning's sun found them weaker physically and morally and much less able to bear the terrible strain of another day of discouragement.

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Meanwhile it behoved them to keep a careful and constant watch on the fire, for with the lens broken, there was no more means of lighting another. It was decided that in turns one of the men would constantly be on guard like a new Vestal to keep alive the embers of the ill-fated *Stefano*.

[51] cont.

The second day's meal consumed the can of meat. This empty can proved a very serviceable utensil, for in it they cooked beans and also made a sort of soup of beans, lard flour and water – an excellent meal for the poor fellows. Bread was baked daily, a few fish or crustaceans were at times caught by the wanderers on the seashore, wanderers always searching for food, for wreckage, or better still for a friendly sail.

As in the case of the fire so religiously guarded, so too a special guard had to take charge of the even more valuable drinking water. The cask, too heavy to handle, was about two miles away from the cabin. It too was a sacred trust guarded alternately by one or two of the men while others daily brought over the necessary allowance.

Such was their daily occupation, thus they busied themselves outwardly while in their hearts prayers never ceased to arise to an Almighty Providence for a quick and safe deliverance from this desert Isle.

The morning sun woke the shipwrecked men, and they hurried to prepare breakfast. There was an abundance of wood; pieces of the *Stefano*, dried up by the bright sun, happily crackled and blazed away. In the container emptied of the salted meat, they cooked a few handfuls of beans mixed with flour. Refreshed by this first meal, the mariners went looking around to see if they could find any tracks or signs of human settlement. Some of them settled on the reef to fish, with hooks found in the boatswain's chest.

The days passed in constant search and the hope of rescue. They continually looked to the sea for signs of a saving sail. They took turns to guard the fire. The food containers were getting empty, and the water in the barrel was disappearing. The bread was baked on embers, hard and miserable.

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This routine of this uneventful and monotonous life was unbroken until the 31st of October.

On that day, *Bačić* and *Costa* were guarding the fire, others were fishing, while *Bučić* and *Dediol* were sent for water.

Suddenly these two men beheld a sight which almost froze their very hearts. About fifty natives, men and women and children were descending a hill about eighty feet above the level of the sea.

The sight of these black Aborigines filled the men with unspeakable terror as their minds were filled with the dread tales of their atrocities and cannibalism. Hurriedly glancing down the plains, to their dismay they saw nothing which could hide them, the short brush and undergrowth unable to cover them even in a creeping posture.

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Frightened almost out of their senses, they were ready to fly in any direction whatever, but even had they tried this means of escape, they could barely succeed as the Aborigines' walking gait was much faster than the poor fellows' quickest speed. The advice of *Jurić*, however, prevailed. He pleaded with them to pluck up courage and advance undauntedly towards their great treasure, the cask of pure water.

On the last day of October, *Kosta* and *Bačić* were guarding the fire while waiting for their friend *Bučić*, who had just gone to get some water. Unaware of anything, loaded with buckets that were banging and rattling, *Bučić* walked next to *Dediol*, who was about to take over the guarding of the water barrel.

Deep in conversation, they did not immediately notice the strange-looking group of people coming towards them. About fifty natives were now so close to them that they didn't know what to do.

It was no longer possible to escape. The thought flashed through their minds: cannibals! Terrible people from sailor stories and imagination were now approaching their camp! There was nowhere for them to hide, and the long spears of the natives gleamed menacingly in the sunlight.

Suddenly, *Jurić* appeared in their midst as he was collecting crabs for bait nearby. Encouraging each other, they headed for the barrel of water to save it.

[53] cont.

But alas! Before they reached it the Aborigines were already upon it, regarding it doubtless as a huge toy which they rolled and tossed about on the beach to their utmost glee.

This proceeding, however, was far from pleasing to our men, for this innocent amusement of the Aborigines would probably cost them their only supply of fresh water. To die of thirst in this arid desert was even a more frightful menace than the present fear of the Aborigines.

Advancing boldly towards the Aborigines by words and gestures, they tried to make them understand how absolutely necessary was the cask to them. Instinctively, nay even religiously, these wild children of nature abandoned their disastrous games and now directed all their attention to the affrighted whites.

The former showed signs of considerable astonishment as they approached the latter, touching and feeling their bodies and limbs; these caresses were far from appealing to our men

But the natives had already reached the barrel. It appeared as if they had never seen one before, for they now stood beside it — and watched it in astonishment, looking at it from all sides. They seemed to think it was a toy and started rolling it along the shore. The barrel rolled, bouncing and bouncing on the rocks with the happy merriment of the natives. This shook the frightened sailors. The thought that the natives might break the barrel and spill the water dispelled their fears.

The men approached the natives and tried to explain what was in the barrel and how much they needed it. They used all the languages and all the signs they knew. The natives did come to understand the signs. They abandoned the game with the barrel and headed south, in the direction where Costa and Bačić were sitting by the fire guarding it.

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for their eyes were riveted on the long straight spear which was carried in the right hand and that still strange weapon the boomerang which was carried in the left. How ardent in these few moments were the prayers addressed to God for deliverance from this new and imminent danger.

Apparently stolid and indifferent to the white men's thought and fears, the blacks continued on their way, turning their footsteps southward.

Our men, so suddenly left alone, still were afraid to get too near to the water cask, so, following the Aborigines in a roundabout way, they finally reached the water about midday.

Meanwhile the Aborigines were approaching the ever-watched fires guarded by *Costa* and *Bačić*. The approach of these fierce-looking men threw *Bačić* into such great terror that he tried to sneak and hide in the farthest corner of the tent. Not so, however, with *Costa*, who awaited them calm and dignified before he spoke to them, fearlessly asking them alternately in English, in French and in Italian where lay Champion Bay, which he imagined was nearby to the south.

When he first saw this strange procession, the frightened *Bačić* quickly hid in the hut. *Costa*, in contrast, went to meet the visitors calmly and confidently. Smiling, without fear, he approached them and began to speak all the languages he knew. He tried to explain the misfortune of the *Stefano* and the dire circumstances of its crew, but all that these nomadic people understood was that the white men were hungry, so they offered *Kosta* some of their food. All his attempts to find out their location on the Australian coast were in vain. The natives did not understand what he wanted.

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The Aborigines looked at him in awe and wonder and repeated mechanically after *Costa* a few of the words he had uttered while interspersing these words with their own unintelligible jargon.

About this time *Jurić*, *Bučić* and *Dediol* also made their appearance. *Costa*, reassured by the gentle and quiet behaviour of these black Australians, left his companions in charge of the tent, while he followed the natives to the beach.

Human nature, however low and savage it can be, showed its good side in the case of these wild men, who realized almost immediately that the whites were suffering from hunger and privations. Kindly, generously, almost religiously, they sought to help our men by word and deed, offering to *Costa* the slightest morsel, or the smallest particle before partaking of

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anything themselves.

Our men, perceiving the extreme kindness and benevolence of their nature did not fail to avail themselves of their many acts of kindness. More important than all this material help would be the knowledge of their whereabouts so they may know whither to direct their course. But how could they make themselves understood?

[56] cont

As they were thus almost in the act of consulting one another, an Aborigine came up to *Costa*, handing him with almost a reverential awe a piece of paper which he had found on the rocks.

The captain's face soon radiated with joy; he tried to tell his companions but his emotion was too great, and the tears coursing down his cheeks made him speechless for lo: in his hand lay a fragment of a chart of Australia, the north-west coast of the continent, a guide which would lead them to hope, to salvation.

Judging from this chart, the brave captain made his calculations. The Gascoyne River being presumably only

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two degrees from their present site, he naturally concluded that some European settlement must be found on or near its banks. The distance, the uncertainty of the trip would have discouraged others less courageous, but full of ardour he exultingly exclaimed:

“Only about eighty miles away! Courage, dear brothers, let us go to work, let us proceed! For surely after eight or ten days of walking, we will be saved!”

Saved! How that word was balm to those aching hearts. “Saved! Yes, Yes, let us go!”, came from all. Tomorrow would be the great day of departure.

One little native suddenly called out. He sighted something among the reefs and was soon twisting a small piece of colourful paper in his hand. *Costa* approaching him and quickly realized that it was a piece of a map of the northwest coast of Australia. His eyes lit up with joy. Unable to speak, he just looked at his comrades, who came to him. He surmised that the map to salvation was in his hand.

In his estimate, the Gascoyne River was about 100 miles south of where they were located. He speculated that on the river shores, there was likely to be a settlement of Europeans. He did not think about the distance they would have to cover, nor did he consider the inaccuracy of his assumptions.

“Don't despair, brothers!” He shouted to his companions. “Salvation is near. We only need to cover eighty miles, and we will be saved. That is no more than eight or ten days of travel!”⁶

“Saved! Saved! Let's go now!” Cried the enraptured castaways, and there was no end to their joy. They spent the rest of the day preparing

[57] (cont.)

How then did they spend the rest of this eventful day? In talking over their plans of voyage and over their feats after the rescue.

How little does it take to send hope thrilling, triumphant through the heart! That little scrap of paper was the first stimulant to revive their drooping spirits since the eventful day when the Stefano went to the bottom of the ocean.

At nightfall the Aborigines turned their steps towards the interior. A few of our men, reassured by their inoffensiveness, followed them a little distance in the hope of becoming more familiar with them,

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or better still of securing some food of which they stood so much in need. In fact the Aborigines carried with them a species of bean, half red, half black, the pod resembling somewhat that of our pea. These they ate raw, drinking besides large quantities of water which they carried with them.

Realizing the wants of the whites, the Aborigines generously offered them a considerable quantity, which the poor unfortunates enjoyed immensely. After this most delicious supper they retired to their tent and about midnight the Aborigines one and all left the coast, proceeding due north.

and planning for the long journey, seeing already in their playful imagination the vast river and many sailing ships coming to meet them to take them to Perth, and thence to their native land. All the pain and suffering they had endured no longer existed - in the memory of those men. Everything seemed to have become a distant past. Their thoughts flew to the future, conjuring up images of life in their homeland.

In the evening, the natives headed inland singing their tunes. Our men followed them for some time until they were lost in a northerly direction.

Following the fortunate encounter with this harmless native tribe, the shipwrecked men came across a large quantity of red-black sweet bean, which served as their main food.

NOTES AND REFERENCES – CHAPTER IV

- 1 The original Rijeka manuscript lists wine, beans and tinned food.
- 2 The wording in the original Rijeka manuscript is slightly different and potentially significant:

“ Fortunately, among the many objects discovered on the beach there was a metal box with a pound of gunpowder in it, and in the sextant holder a single microscopic lens.” (*Fortunatamente fra i vari oggetti rinvenuti sulla spiaggia, fu trovato un vaso di latta con entro una libra di polvere e nella busta del sestante si trovo la sola lente microscopica.*”).

From this it is not entirely clear if the box in question also contained a sextant and if the microscopic lens referenced here is the large lens used to read the engraved “microscopic” units on the sextant metal arm. This lens is in fact the second lens on the sextant. The primary lens is the telescopic lens used for celestial observations.

In her translation Angelina also left out the phrase “with a pound of gunpowder in it” which has been reinstated. The next sentence makes it obvious that this was a simple error which, however, further complicates our reading of this sentence.

- 3 The original Rijeka manuscript indicates that the explosion tore the lens from Miho’s hand and they searched for it everywhere. Angelina deduces – probably rightly – that it was “shattered into atoms”.

V

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November 1st, All Saints Day, dawned on our men calmly and peaceably. Nature seemed to smile on their new and important enterprise. Hitherto versatile, now she assumed her most serene and placid garb, the former tempestuous waves that had wrought so much misery were now crooning a sweet lullaby; earth and heaven were in cheerful repose on this great desert isle.

Up before daybreak, our men exhibited the utmost alacrity and joy. With a light heart and a joyous step, they set about their preparations for this short but memorable journey. After burying in secure spots and hiding away whatever they did not deem absolutely necessary, their packs were soon made up. These provisions consisted of twelve bottles of wine, twelve of water, a few cans of salt meat, three packages of various things among which the little flour and beans left.¹ Twelve bottles of water were very little for all, but they hoped to make up for the deficiency by meeting some springs of fresh water; they also thought that they would be lucky enough to secure some fish or some crustacean at low tide.

After partaking of a light repast at about three o'clock in the afternoon, everything was made ready for the famous trip.

The first day of November dawned quietly and cheerful. The sea surface was calm, with only an occasional light wave washing over the reef and bubbling softly.

The shipwreck men got up at dawn and happily began preparing for the trip. They dug deep ditches in the sand and buried all that was not need on their journey. Everything needed for the trip was prepared: wine, bottles of water, flour, beans, and meat. They could not carry enough water with them but were hoping to come across a spring. Around three o'clock in the afternoon, they set off on a journey into the unknown, hoping to catch some fish, crabs, and shellfish along the way.

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They had barely proceeded a few steps, when *Costa*, their captain and their guide, suddenly retracing his steps, stopped before the door of the *Stefano*'s cabin, which had formed a part of the tent. There he bade an eternal farewell to this sad and solemn reminder of once happy days, he carved with his knife upon the panels the name of the ill-fated vessel and its men, including those who had already found a watery grave as well as those who were still counted among the survivors.

The piece of linen saved from the wreck was torn into bandages with which they wrapped up their feet in order to strengthen their limbs against fatigue and to protect them from the stings of insects and the lacerations of the spiky, thorny brush.

The precious fire ignited by *Bačić* with the lens and hitherto so religiously guarded as the Vestal fire of old was now extinguished, as, expecting their trip to be short, they thought they could easily manage for food with the little they carried, and the muscles and crustaceans they would pick up along the beach.

However, in order to avoid the sandy beach, so fatiguing in a long march and so scorching under the fiery rays of a tropical sun, they thought wise to walk further inland where a nice grassy field seemed to beckon to them. Alas for the illusion! What seemed Australian scrub was a lacerating matted grass, a few ferns, a wilderness of thorns and thistles. Though they escaped the sharp rocks and quick sands of the sea coast,

Leaving their shelter brought them no sadness. Everyone was impatient to reach their destination as soon as possible. No one looked back at the remains of the *Stefano*'s cabin, which sheltered them and with the door on which *Costa* on departure had engraved the names of all the dead and surviving members of the ship's crew. The fire, which had been carefully guarded until then, was now extinguished. The empty camp was abandoned.

They moved slowly inland with their legs wrapped in bandages made of sailcloth to protect them from insect bites, sharp rocks, and thorny bushes. They were lured by the green area ahead, which from a distance looked as if it was covered with tall green grass. The closer they got to that green space, the stronger their desire for shade grew, as the blazing tropical sun and scorching sandy soil exhausted their strength. After a long walk, they found no desired shade or soft grass. Disappointed, they came across a thicket full of thorns and thistles, which hindered their progress.

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here they encountered such hardships from the wild brush of the desert that their feet and hands were torn and bleeding; even their few vestiges of clothing were almost in shreds.

The sheet which *Costa* had sewn together and which had been such a comfort to them in their cabin was now carried above their heads like a huge umbrella, but very little did it help them against the scorching tropical sun.

Totally unused to such great heat and such excessive walking the poor fellows, bleeding from their many wounds, blistered by the torrid sun, were well nigh extenuated. To add to their sufferings and to the horrors of the situation, the water which they had carried along soon proved insufficient. Fatigued and with an unquenching thirst that could not be appeased, they had to dispense the precious drops most sparingly for as yet they had not come across the tiniest spring of fresh water.

The food was also distributed with strict moderation in case the precious treasure was needed for a possible drearier day. Thus far they satisfied their appetites with the shellfish gathered off the sands. Not a single palatable, nor even an eatable herb, fruit or root could be found along the way.

The first one to give way under the strain of both physical and moral sufferings

Sharp and thick thorns wounded his legs and arms and tore the last remains of worn-out clothes.

The heat was becoming unbearable. The men unfurled the only sheet they had and carried it over their heads like a huge parasol, but the tropical sun still scorched through it. Wearing this sheet made many of them tired, and the wounds on their legs burned severely. With all that, they continued on their way.

Fatigue and unbearable heat increased their thirst, and when, in addition to all their suffering, the water supply came to an end, they began to waver. Only the hope that they might come across some source of water kept them going. They now tried to consume as little as possible of their supplies.

They never lost sight of the sea so that from time to time, they could go down to the shore to satisfy their hunger with crabs and shells.

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was the Second Captain *Costa*. He, who had urged the others to make the trip; he, who had been the first to hail with joy, the first gleam of hope for a near deliverance; he, the guide, the soul, the director of the every step. After three days of this weary march, unable any longer to control himself on account of the intense suffering caused by his swollen limbs and bruised body, he threw himself down on the ground, declaring his inability to make another step (C).²

Notwithstanding his trials, the generosity of his soul shone radiantly, for begging his disheartened companions to proceed on their trip, he added: “Go, dear brothers, may heaven bless and take care of you, but I remain to die here! And you *Bačić*, if you or any one of you may be saved to see once more our country and our home, remember, I charge you to bring my last greetings to my poor dear Mother and to Amalia. Tell them, I die with their sweet names on my heart and on my lips!”

These words uttered with such fortitude and resignation brought tears to the eyes of these men, though strong and inured to all hardships but as quickly controlling themselves, they tried by word and deed to sooth their dearly beloved captain. *Bačić*, as his nearest and best friend, implored him not to give up and thus perish miserably now,

Captain Costa, who usually encouraged and persuaded his comrades on this journey, collapsed from physical exhaustion haunted by the thought that all their efforts were in vain. No longer able to move his bloody, swollen legs, he threw himself on the ground and decided not to move anymore. The thought that he was leading his comrades to death and not salvation deprived him of all strength and the will to struggle further. But seeing the faces of his discouraged comrades, who carefully bent down to look at him and help him, he tried to give them strength again and lift their spirits.

“Don’t despair that I can’t go forward. I’m going to die here, but you have to keep going. Help each other. I am only one, and there are many of you. *Bačiću*, comrade, if you or any of you are saved and see our homeland and homes again, don’t forget - I implore you - to call upon my mother and Amalia. Tell them that when I died, I thought of them and died with their names on my lips.”

Captain Costa’s determined voice did not tremble, but his words were full of sadness and longing. His comrades’ eyes filled with tears. *Bačić*, Costa’s closest friend, was the first to recover and decisively declared:

“No, you will not be left alone to die abandoned by us. Please gather strength and get up! Let’s move on. Maybe salvation is not far away. If you can’t go, I’m strong. I’ll carry you on my back.”

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when they were on their probable road to safety. Young and strong, he offered *Costa* the help of his strong arms. The other companions did likewise so, after a short rest, *Costa* arose with almost superhuman courage, half leaning on his men and half carried by them. Thus, once more the sad little band tended its way onward.

Poor *Costa*! Not only were the bodily wounds the cause of his distress, but after these few days of weary march, he realized the futility of their undertaking and the utter impossibility of ever reaching the coveted goal. Here at the conclusion of one half of their journey he knew too well in his heart that they would all succumb to the cruel death they were now fighting so bravely. But his generous soul would not impart his fears to his men. Once more he became their guide, never allowing the black despair, in which his soul was steeped, to dishearten them. And thus with his men, he would drain the chalice of bitterness to its very last drop.

In two or three days they crossed Cape Anderson. When the line of the Tropic of Capricorn was reached about 7 November,

6. In a direct line, the shipwrecked men were over 150 miles from the Gascoyne River.

IV

"We will all help," the other men pledged, wiping away tears from moist eyes with their bruised and calloused hands.

After a rest and encouraged by their sincere companionship, devotion, and sacrifice, *Costa* rose on his swollen, trembling legs.

After a rest and encouraged by their sincere companionship, devotion, and sacrifice, *Costa* rose on his swollen, trembling legs. Carrying him on the way more than supporting him, the small party set off, surrendering to the captain's guidance. The farther they went, the more convinced *Costa* became that their wanderings were in vain and that they would never reach their desired destination. The fear that everyone would perish miserably on this arduous journey under the searing and relentless rays of the tropical sun constantly spoiled his mood. He hid this fear deep in his thoughts so as not to upset and discourage his companions again. Maybe, he thought, some of them will succeed in saving themselves, although he couldn't convince himself who or how it could happen.

After several days of torturous wandering, the wounded and tired travellers reached Cape Anderson⁷, and on 7 November, they crossed the Tropic of Capricorn.

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Jurić, Bučić and Vulović, overcome by fatigue, thirst and intense heat, fell extenuated on the burning sands, giving vent to the direct lamentations (**D**).

This new misfortune threw the others into a great dilemma. Must they abandon their companions or must they remain there with them and thus without help of any kind all perish together miserably?

The absolute necessity of trying to save life urged them on to an extreme resolution. They decided to leave these three sufferers temporarily and continue their search onwards, if not for a haven of safety, at least for some clear water to quench their feverish thirst.

They left two bottles of water, one of wine and some beans with the three men and after bidding them a sad but still hopeful farewell, they kept on with what provisions that were still left, such as a few bottles of water, some flour and some beans and, of course, they did not neglect taking all of the empty bottles.

They walked the whole of the following day and a part of the night always on the blunt and barren rocks, amidst thorns and sticks, in the thick and treacherous undergrowth, but not a drop of water, not a soothing grass or juicy bean rewarded their labours. Had these poor unfortunates but known that only a few feet in the interior

With great difficulty, they struggled onwards. Continually someone would lag behind to rest and gather strength, barely able to drag his wounded legs, while others would pause to wait for him. Crossing only a few meters from the cape, they were forced to stop again. Bučić, Vulović, and Jurić were no longer able to move forward.

All efforts of others to get them back on their feet were unsuccessful, and they did not know what to do: leave the three comrades and go in search of water, which may not be far away, or for everyone to stay there, and risk deaths from starvation and thirst.

Deciding on the former, they left their helpless friends with some water, wine, and beans, previously received from the natives.

Retaining only a small amount of water and flour, they continued on their way.

Stumbling and crawling through sharp and thorny bushes, they tracked all day and the next night until hungry and exhausted they sat down in some cave. Water was nowhere to be found. There was no grass to eat, no beans, no roots.

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was a well-worn beaten path made by the Aborigines in their continual marches, how much easier would have been their undertaking, how much suffering they might have been spared.

Dediol, to whose lot fell the carrying of the flour, was ready to give way from extreme fatigue, so to save not only himself but also his precious burden, he decided to bury half of his treasure. Selecting a suitable spot, he dug with his hands into the dry burning sandy earth a hole sufficiently large to conceal his half empty barrel of flour. This he covered up carefully, but in case the flour was needed once more, he tried to mark its hiding place by arranging around and about it some dry twigs and grasses so that he could readily recognize the spot.

The following day (8 November), worn out by fatigue and thirst, and unable further to drag their weary bodies, they stopped at what seemed to be the entrance to a cavern. This was in fact a sort of rocky grotto starting at five metres from the seashore, thence sloping gently, gradually into a small hill.³ This proved to be Cape Farquhar (E).

Provisions were almost finished and to quench the ardent thirst of six able-bodied men,

Their energies were exhausted to the point that they could no longer carry even the few kilograms of flour they still had left. They were forced to bury it in the ground.

Dediol dug a deep pit with his hands and buried their small, broken barrel in it. Filling in the sand on the top, he marked the spot with a couple of dry twigs, so they could later find their hiding place.

At dawn the next day, they continued with their journey. There was no water anywhere. The supplies were getting closer to the end. Finding a cave nearby, they entered it and stretched out in the much-coveted shade, crushed by fatigue and hunger.⁸

The hope of salvation completely abandoned them. Hunger and thirst threw them into hopeless despair.

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there was but one solitary bottle of water What to do? Plunged into darkest despair by the horror of their situation, half starved and almost frantic from thirst, bruised in body and sore in mind, hope, hitherto their only guiding star, seemed to have abandoned them to a cruel and miserable death. Of a sudden, a rustling in the undergrowth awoke their attention. Almost simultaneously two stalwart Aborigines appeared. In other circumstances, the sight of these ferocious and heavily armed creatures would have chilled their hearts with fear, but discouraged as they were, they could certainly not feel any further torture the black men might want to inflict, so all our men could do was to follow with their eyes the movements of these children of the desert.

However, instead of any hostile demonstration the latter approached our men, feeling their limbs quite familiarly, constantly touching and rubbing them. Noticing the wan looks of the men and the empty cans and bottles, the savages seemed to understand their desperate situation, so they tried to address them in their unintelligible jargon.

Their gesticulations more clearly than all plainly expressed the words: "Follow us."

The first impression created by the appearance of the savages over, and reassured of the gentleness of their character through former meetings, what else could they do but arise and follow.

They had already reconciled themselves to death in that shady shelter when the slight rustling of the bushes caught their attention. They held their breath, awaiting something to happen. At the very entrance to the cave, two tall, armed natives appeared in front of them as if arising from the ground. The sharp spears and the rugged appearance of these figures did not frighten the shipwrecked men. Their sufferings and misfortune were so great that even the nearness of death could not make it worse. Death might even bring them relief. Detached, motionless, they watched the Aboriginal men move, expecting their attack, but they, it seemed, had no hostile intentions.

Instead, they gently approached the white men, looking at them in a friendly manner. Peering everywhere, as if searching or investigating, they constantly muttered something in their intricate language, showing each other empty bottles and containers. They seemed to realize that these poor whites needed help. Their exhausted, pale faces with swollen eyes and mouths dry with thirst begged them silently for a drop of water. Judging by the waving of hands and shouts, the natives wanted to explain something to them.

Observing them carefully, the shipwrecked men finally understood.

"Follow us! They spoke. Encouraged by their friendly attitude, the men went with them.

Steadily and rapidly they led away from the seashore, until they had reached a narrow beaten path. This opened into a cool and delicious grassy plain, refreshing and inviting. Here and there were many pretty flowering shrubs, about three metres high and, unlike the regular scrubby undergrowth, this plain was covered with nice smooth grass. It was like a vision of paradise to the poor sailors so long accustomed to the burning sands and tearing thorns. Onward and onward led the natives until they reached a covered-up opening in the earth about 30 centimetres deep and a metre wide.

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Here they stopped to peer into these excavations. Anxiously our men crowded around, but saw nothing. Presently the Aborigines began to dig out the sand with their hands, and the sand withdrawn was quite damp. As fast as it was withdrawn it was again deposited around the inner walls of the excavation, forming a sort of cement to prevent the dry sand from tumbling over again into the well.

Wild with delight at this refreshig vision and half frantic with the pent up sufferings of a consuming thirst, our men greedily snatched up the wet sand, filling their mouths to cool their burning palates. The Aborigines, apparently unconscious of the agitation of these unfortunates, continued digging and walling in the well for about five feet, when a clear cool stream of fresh water rewarded their brave and generous labour.

The joy of our men knew no bounds, they drank once, twice, three times. Never was a cooling draught sweeter or better.

After climbing a hill, they reached a narrow-trodden path, which led them into a valley overgrown with soft and lush grass. There were flowers and water here. After wandering through the hot sandy desert, full of sharp stones and thorny plants, this was a vision of paradise, a miraculous dream.

And when, not far from here, the natives stopped at a branch-covered opening in the ground and began to dig up the sand, which was getting wetter the deeper they dug it, the thirsty and extenuated men felt the proximity of water. At a depth of some five feet, a stream of clear, cold water appeared. The water was there at their feet. They felt like going go mad with joy. They drank to their heart's content. Thinking that perhaps this was just a dream, they dipped their bruised hands into it and sipped from their clasped palms.

[67] cont.

After having amply satiated themselves, they filled their bottles and cans in order to bring solace to their less fortunate companions whom they had left lying helpless on the sands.

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The native Australians, essentially a roving tribe, possess the only precious secret of their desert. Which is very simple: the excavation of a few feet even in the very heart of the Australian desert will usually bring forth a spring of fresh clear water. The worn pathways of these nomads abound in these covered up wells, once used but abandoned by the roving tribes as they proceed on their onward journeys. Our men would have perished miserably had not a kind Providence sent these two Aborigines to show them the water which lay at their very feet. Had this simple though wonderful secret been discovered before, how many precious lives would have been saved; how many great explorers with their wonderful histories of research and discovery would have been spared to modern science!

As if in recognition of the service rendered, these two Aborigines by word and gesture, insisted upon securing the little flour which our men were hoarding most precious; the latter, in view of the immense benefits derived, could barely refuse the request and almost willingly they handed over their treasure.

They then hurried to fill their empty bottles and cans to return as soon as possible to their helpless comrades they had left in the sand.

Indigenous nomadic tribes of the Australian mainland, on their constant wanderings from end to end, have revealed the secret of their desert. If you dig deeper in the sand, drinking water is often found. Narrow-trodden paths lead to such springs. One such spring had now saved our shipwrecked men.

Now, these half-naked, primitive people were trying to explain to Dediol and others that they would like to get some of their flour. They were persistent and could not be denied. A good turn had to be returned, even if the sacrifice risked death by starvation.

[68] cont.

The flour had barely been handed over when one of the Australians ran into the nearby woods, reappearing in a few moments carrying a bunch of dried twigs. Selecting two, he proceeded to rub them together with a quick and continued movement and in a few seconds a spark then a fire blazed merrily.

Meanwhile the other aborigine secured a hollowed-out stone and into its depression mixed a paste of flour and water, then set it on the hot fire to bake.

After received the white powder, the natives hurried into the bushes. In a few minutes, they came back with a handful of dried twigs. Breaking off two sticks of wood, one of them started rubbing them together. To everyone's surprise, sparks soon ignited the dry leaves, and the flame played among the dried, crackling twigs. Finding a hollowed-out stone, the natives hurriedly set out to mix the dough. Pouring some water and flour into the hollow of the stone, they easily mixed the dough and then placed it on the embers.

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In about fifteen minutes, the bread, seemingly baked, was withdrawn from the heated stone and wonders! instead of devouring it himself or escaping with it the Australian turned around and presented it whole to *Costa*.

Such great generosity drew forth tears from the half-starved men who had not tasted any food since the previous day, but could only partake of it by sharing it with these two warm-hearted sons of nature.

How wonderfully good and recuperating this meal was can only be realized by those who some time or other have felt the pinch of some privations. To the half-famished men this feast of bread and water was indeed a most bountiful repast.

The meal over, the Aborigines again indicated their intention of leaving by using sign language.

In a short while, they skilfully took it out of their “stove”. It was really well done. To the astonishment of the shipwrecked men, the natives walked to Captain Costa and, with outstretched hands, offered the bread while indicating in signs that he should take it.

No one expected this, and their gracious gesture deeply moved the shipwrecked men. These primitive people, as yet untouched by civilization, shamed these “cultured” whites with their selfless nobility.

Costa accepted the bread and thanked them for it with signs. Cutting the bread into as many pieces as were present, he offered these first to natives and then to his comrades. A small but warm meal of bread with plenty of fresh water was pleasing to our famished travellers. The natives looked at the faces of our men with satisfaction, just like small children when they peek into the faces of their elders to read on them an expression of satisfaction or praise for the work done.

On departure, they explained something for some time, gesturing with their hands, perhaps describing the direction in which they would go.

Costa, reassured by their kindness and generosity and fearless of any danger at their hands, advised *Bačić* to follow them. This he was loath to do, even though the prize in view was the recovery of the barrel of flour which had been buried by *Dediol* when he had been overcome by fatigue.

Pleading excessive fatigue, he tried to evade the task as these somber children of the desert, though good and kind, did not appeal very much to him. However, he was finally prevailed upon to follow them.

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Brajević, *Antončić* and *Dediol*, each one carrying three bottles of water, left in search of their unfortunate companions who had been overcome by fatigue and dropped on the wayside. But instead of taking the seashore, they ventured on the hilly inland, hoping thus to shorten the trip by at least one half.

Lovrinović remained at the same place guarding the fire while *Costa* retired to the beach in search of some fish food.

But the one who fared the worst of all was *Bačić*, the savages evidently understanding the object of his search, kept on asking him for "*Bulawa, bulawa*," meaning "Flour, flour." The young fellow, eager to conciliate them, repeated the same words trying to make them understand at least by gestures that this was why he was accompanying them.

Our men accompanied them for a few steps before deciding to go to the aid of the remaining three stragglers. *Bačić* was assigned to go and look for the flour, which *Dediol* had previously hidden. Two men were to stay near the water and wait for others to return.

Although *convinced* of the goodness and nobility of the natives, *Bačić* set out on his way with himself following in the footsteps of two native men.

Seeing him, they smiled and exclaimed, "*Bulava, bulava?*"

Bačić knew that they were calling for the flour and repeated the same word to assure them that he, too, was looking for it and had no other intentions. He felt at fault with two of them in front of him as if by sneaking behind them, he wanted to deceive them.

The Aborigines seemed to understand him and were trying to induce him to precede them and show them the spot where the flour was buried. This arrangement, however, did not suit him as he was in constant dread of some sinister movement.

But they were determined, and he was obliged to accede to their whim. He walked a few steps ahead.

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Then on turning around, to his great surprise he discovered that the men were gone – entirely disappeared. Poor fellow, overcome with terror at this new move and utterly unable to find the precious flour, he did not hesitate long about a speedy return.

Like a hunted deer he sped down the hill, when all of a sudden almost emerging from space itself, three fierce and heavily armed Aborigines squarely confronted him. Thinking indeed, his last day had come, far from his companions – who indeed, had they been near would never have been able to cope with these great burly men – the unfortunate young fellow dropped on his knee imploring the God of Mercy for help and deliverance.

His prayers seemed answered almost immediately for the stolid blacks took no notice whatever of the crouching, trembling figure but continued on their way without even casting a glance at him.

Accordingly, he stepped in front of them and led them to the “*bulava*”, intending to give them a portion.

But turning around, he was startled when he discovered that the natives had disappeared. Frightened by this sudden disappearance, he rushed headlong towards his destination so that he could quickly return to his comrades when he almost ran into three wild giants armed with spears. Not knowing what to do, he threw himself on his knees out of fear and cried out for mercy. But the astonished giants slowly retreated from him, unable to understand what the strange white man wanted.

With their disappearance, courage once more returned urging him a gain to seek the buried flour. But, alas! He came too late. The barrel had already been unearthed and emptied of its contents.

Realising any further search would be vain, he decided to return to his companions, but again hardly had he proceeded a few steps

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when he was almost halted by the sudden appearance of another gigantic armed Aborigine who looked neither right nor left but steadily and unhesitatingly walked straight past him and into the surf, emerging in a few moments with a large turtle struggling in his hand.

When *Bačić* finally reached *Costa*, the sun had set, the equatorial regions having an extremely short twilight. Night soon threw her somber mantle over the desert. After partaking of a few molluscs which *Costa* had secured, they dug out their usual holes in the sand into which they thrust their tired and aching bodies. Nature, good and kind in all her provisions, with her quieting influence soon had soothed the weary limbs and trembling hearts of the younger men in a quiet, restful sleep.

Meanwhile *Jurić*, *Bučić* and *Vulović*, partially restored by their short rest, rose about the middle of the night, directing their steps towards their first companions.

Recovering himself, *Bačić* went on to look for the barrel. With trembling hands, he dug up the sand. The barrel was there, in its place, but - empty!

Sad and worried, he went back. The sea was calm.

There, among the reefs, a native was moving, now crawling, now running. He fixed his gaze on a point and moved carefully towards it, stepping into the sea, and pointing his spear. Not long after, a turtle fluttered in his big hands. Only then did the native person noticed *Bačić* and, with a confused laugh, hid his catch.

When *Bačić* arrived at the new camp of his companions, the sun was already setting. It was getting dark, following short equatorial dusk. After consuming some sea snails and shells that *Costa* had collected along the shore, the men dug up their sand beds and lay down to rest. The soft, warm sand was softer and warmer to them than the most beautiful quilt. And while the younger ones were fast asleep and dreaming, their older comrades could not sleep. Black and heavy thoughts tormented their exhausted bodies and drove them away from a rejuvenating sleep.

During this time, the three men who exhausted remained in the sand set out at night in the direction they hoped would take them to their comrades.

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This dreary march was kept up all night and even a part of the following day. The extreme heat of the tropical sun on 8 November, once more sapped their vital energy and they were obliged to give up, again begging God in this sad moment of despair not so much for help as a speedy death.

Their dormant energies were disagreeably aroused by a series of continual shrieks and yells proceeding from a band of natives about fifty in number. These human though Aboriginal voices awoke the slumbering spark of hope in the almost dying men.

They approached the Aborigines and attempted to make them understand their pitiful condition. The former immediately responded by raising the exhausted

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men and carrying them to a spring of delicious fresh water where they abundantly quenched their feverish thirst.⁴ After the men had been somewhat revived, they were motioned to follow their benefactors and on reaching a little sand hill, the whole party halted as of one accord. A fire was started in the usual manner, friction between two dried twigs and ere long a bountiful repast of baked fish was heartily partaken of, not only by the Aborigines but also by the three half-famished men, who could not cease wondering at the great generosity of these wild sons of nature.

The men walked all night and the next morning, and just as their strength was beginning to fail them, strange shouting and commotion drew their attention.

A group of about 50 natives was walking towards them.

Addressing them calmly, the men drew attention to their dire condition and signalled what they needed. The natives picked the men up from the ground and gave them water;

after waiting for them to rest for a while, they invited them to come along. On reaching a nearby hill, they sat down and lit a fire by rubbing dry twigs. Quite soon, a hearty meal of baked fish was ready.

[74] cont.

Hope once more revived by the new strength in their bodies, it was natural that their thoughts should turn to their companions and by all manner of gestures they tried to explain, *Jurić* even showing them some footprints he had just discovered in the sand.

But their explanations were understood almost before they were expressed, as evidently this was the same tribe which had given

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so much relief to *Costa* and his companions and which had also stolen the flour from *Bačić*.

These footprints evidently made an impression on the Aborigines for two of them immediately took up the tracks, while others motioned *Bučić*, *Jurić* and *Vulović* to follow them.

Leaving the large plain, which was bounded on one side by the fathomless ocean and on the other by interminable groves of eucalypti and dark, dreary-looking mountains, they tracked for three quarters of a mile from the sea until they reached a vast grassy plain with occasional patches of clay, dotted with fresh flowering shrubs which varied in height from five to twenty feet, and closed off in the distance by a forest of low black trees.

After eating to the brim, the invigorated sailors again remembered where they were going. They were now afraid of losing their comrades. Using all possible signs, they tried to explain to the native men what was troubling them. *Jurić* showed them the footprints in the sand and demonstrated what they were looking for by following their trail.

The prints in the sand were clear, and some natives immediately began to follow them.

Jurić and his two friends tracked along with the other natives <until they reached an > open meadow. Here remains of a recent feast were still quite visible, suggesting it to be a meeting place of the native tribes.

[75] cont.

This wonderful oasis, apparently surrounded by green and cool forests, must have been the general rendezvous for many Aborigine tribes, as remains of former feasts were scattered all around. In the middle of this plain they came across a rocky opening like an extinct volcanic crater which rose to a small height and encircled a very attractive low space.

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On the eastern side of this enclosed area, bordered by grassy herbs, flowed a cool, limpid stream to the extreme delight of our men so long deprived from this cool, refreshing vision (F).⁵

That meadow was surrounded by a forest, with a steep crater of an extinct volcano rising in the middle.

On its eastern side, bordered by tall, lush grass, a running brook was murmuring along.

[76] cont.

The meeting evidently was pre-arranged for, hardly had the little band rested, when they were joined by a tribe of about eighty men, women and children.

So many strange and ferocious faces and still more strangely armed men could not help but cast terror into the hearts of the whites, the iron hand of cruel fate seemed to be mocking them at every step!

For one moment this note of despair struck its mournful chord, when a voice from one in the wild crowd, startled, nay, even stupefied them with one word: "Brothers!" Whose voice was that speaking their mother tongue and calling out to them in this Australian horde?

It was the voice of *Perančić*, who up to this moment was counted among those who had gone down with the ill-fated *Stefano*.

This unexpected meeting with one long given up for lost was extremely affecting. They embraced one another with an almost childlike tenderness. All were as eager to hear the narrative of his adventures, as he was of theirs. This was readily gratified as soon as the first gush of emotion from such an unexpected incident passed away. *Perančić* told them as follows: As he was trying

The meeting must have been pre-arranged because another group of about 80 men, women, and children shortly appeared. Armed, stout, and grim natives shouted incomprehensible words.

"Brothers!" cried someone from that terrifying gathering, and a tanned man ran towards them.

Not having time to think whether it was a dream or reality, their arms were hugging - *Perančić*. Yes, indeed, the living and healthy *Perančić*, their friend, whom they thought was lying at the bottom of the sea. He was again with them, hugging them as if in some madness, from too much happiness and joy.

"When I was trying to hitch the lifeboat, a huge wave hit me and

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to loosen one of the *Stefano's* life boats from its moorings, a heavy wave swept over him carrying him into the ocean. The boat was, of course, smashed to pieces but the drifting boards were seized by the drowning man who clung to them with the strength of wild despair. This greatly uneven battle of life against death lasted the whole day when towards evening he was cast ashore at a point about ten miles south of the spot where his other companions had been thrown. A low cave near the beach sheltered the unfortunate for two days, but not a drop of water had cooled his parching thirst since the sinking of the *Stefano*.

He just barely kept up the spark of life with a herb which grew near the shore and which bore a small sweet and somewhat watery berry. The third day, while on one of his reconnoitering expeditions for food and water he met the band of Aborigines who, instead of harming him any way, graciously provided for him, keeping him with them and sharing whatever little food they had with him. The same spirit of whole-hearted generosity was true of all these wild sons of Australia's desert.

After the narration of *Perančić's* adventures, that of his companions too, had to be narrated. His eagerness to meet his other companions was so great, they all decided to proceed immediately towards the sea where the first few men had decided to remain and wait. The Aborigines did not seem altogether pleased

took me with it," *Perančić* told them excitedly as he had everyone eating each one of his words. 'The boat had shattered into pieces, but at the last moment, I reached for a piece of wreckage and desperately clung to it. The waves carried me all night and the next morning. It was not until the following evening, exhausted and half-frozen, that I reached the shore. I don't know where that was, but I think I was a full 10 miles away from you. I took refuge in a cave along the coast and stayed in it for two days without a drop of water or a crumb of food.

I just lay and nibbled on the roots of some grass, which was growing in front of the cave. It wasn't until the third day that I decided to go in search of water. On my wanderings, I came across these native people. You can imagine my fear when I saw their overgrown, dark heads and their spears. But their eyes were calm and gentle. These good people not only did not attack me but took me to their camp and fed me. Assuming that I was the only survivor, I joined this tribe hoping for some future developments and eventual rescue.

Dear brothers, I am so happy to see you again, and I want to see the others as soon as possible. It still seems to me that this is not real and that I am dreaming. For days, I have been living this unusual life as a dumb friend of the native people. Let's go as fast as we can!"

After leaving his rescuers and thanking them for their great generosity, *Perančić* and his comrades headed to the seashore, where they were to wait for others.

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to see the whites leave. One of them ran with all speed towards *Vulović*, snatched off his cap which he donned on his own head and fled as fast as his long limbs would carry him.

Hardly had our little band tracked a few yards along the shore when they met advancing towards them and loaded with a splendid supply of water *Brajević*, *Antončić* and *Dediol*.

When *Antončić* spied *Perančić*, his joy knew no bounds, for the two had been intimate friends and neighbors in the same little home village. Many a tear had *Antončić* shed over the untimely fate of his companion and bosom friend. Now they were locked in each other's embrace, unable to sufficiently control their emotion and relate to each other's adventure.

In a little while they started out, turning their steps southward, there to meet the other companions and re-enact the same scenes of astonishment and emotion. For the third time the stories of the adventures were tirelessly repeated. After partaking of the little food which they still had they retired to a well-earned rest, for the day had been one of strong and continued emotion.

This was the first time since the wreck that the party numbered ten (E).

They barely covered a hundred steps when they came across *Dediol* and *Antončić*. These two were in search of their helpless comrades, whom they had left behind in the desert. When they did not find them in the place where they had left them, they thought that something had happened to them.

Seeing their "resurrected" friend made everyone in the camp happy, so the conversation and recollection of the shared suffering lasted well into the night.

7. Approximately dates and positions were established later by Cap. Bačić.

8. Bačić later established that the cave was located at Cape Farquhar.

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The following day (9 November), they all gathered under a shelter made of twigs and branches almost immediately over the site of one of the very first wells which had been dug out by the Aborigines. As yet, our men had not reached any decisions about their next step. They simply sat there in the shade idly conversing and apparently happy.

Suddenly, they were aroused from their reveries by the appearance of a large and powerful Aborigine, armed with a lance or spear larger and more ferocious looking than himself. Behind him walked a woman, apparently his wife, carrying on her head a wooden vessel scooped out in the shape of a basket. Both Aborigines approaching our men, rubbed their hands and arms, apparently as greetings, and constantly repeated the words “*Be woteri*”. Of course, these words were not understood, but *Bačić* – who had had more frequent encounters with these wild men than any of the others – had also developed somewhat of an ear for their language. He informed his companions that the couple were inviting them to go fishing and as the latter were always in more or less a starved condition, a second invitation was not necessary.

“Let us follow them!” was the unanimous cry.

Bačić and *Vulović* were the first to follow and after about a half hour’s march, in a southerly direction, they reached the seashore where the Aborigines immediately showed them their

V

The conversation among the shipwrecked men became more and more focused. The main theme was almost always the same: what to start and where to go. The next day, sitting in the shade, they touched once more on this burning issue because it was clear to them that they could not stay by the water all the time and that their main goal was to get to the first port. The conviction that the port was not far away gave them strength and determination.

A native couple approached them with inaudible footsteps. The man had a spear, and the woman wore a wooden bowl carved in the shape of a basket on her head. Approaching the shipwrecked, they laid their things on the ground and began to rub their hands. Everyone thought that this was a greeting of some kind.

“*Be woteri*” - they both said, but even *Bačić*, who was proud of his knowledge of the native language, could not understand them.

But as the natives came closer to the sea, it became clear to the shipwrecked what those words meant. The two were looking for something in the sand.

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intentions by digging into the sands for shell fish and turtle eggs.

After collecting about fifteen turtle eggs the Australian pounded them into a soft pulp to which he added some grasses and herbs brought by his wife.

Leaving his spear for a few moments, he suddenly rushed into the sea and finding a convenient rock he dexterously climbed upon it and cast his inquiring glances in various directions, possibly to discover some valued prey which his native instinct showed him to be near. Rushing back to the shore, he seized his spear and so armed once more he rushed into the sea.

Meanwhile the sun's scorching rays reflected upon the arid sands were soon becoming unbearable, when fortunately a sudden storm arose and a slight shower somewhat refreshed the burning atmosphere. With wonderful solicitude the good kind woman urged our men to seek shelter under some neighbouring bushes.

A half hour later the Aborigine succeeded in spearing with his lance a large salmon weighing about eight pounds and brought it to *Bačić*, laid it at his feet, at the same time trying to make him understand by signs that he should bring it to his companions who had been left further inland. To this request, naturally *Bačić* and *Vulović* immediately complied.

Hardly had they proceeded half way when the Aborigine, running up to them, snatched the fish from *Bačić*'s hand and with

The man dug up a couple of turtle eggs, broke their shells, and made scrambled eggs out of them. His wife added some more herbs and offered them to strangers.

In the meantime, her husband was busy with other tasks. He sat down on a rock, laying his spear at his feet, and was carefully peering in all directions. Suddenly he jumped, grabbing his spear, and with quick steps, walked into the sea.

Sitting in the shade of the bushes, our men noticed that he had caught something. At the tip of his spear was a beautiful salmon weighing about 5 kilograms. The man danced triumphantly and proudly offered the fish to *Bačić*, who gratefully shook his hand.

But to his great surprise and astonishment, the native abruptly snatched the fish back from his hand.

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a species of blade cut off the head, which he handed to his wife and restored the rest to the astonished youngster. When the party reached the stopping place where the second, almost sacred, fire was religiously guarded, the Aborigine came up and after taking out a few embers started a small fire to bake the fish's head for himself and his wife.

The fish meal was thoroughly enjoyed and deeply appreciated by our men, to whom the Aborigines had always come to help as angels of mercy. The Aborigines approached our men, again indicating they wished to take some water from the concealed well. This probably had been their first intention, but seeing the dire destitution of our men, their generous hearts helped them first. Then they filled their own wants and left, evidently rejoicing in their good deeds.

With a simple stone knife, the native cut off the fish's head which he kept to himself. He then returned the rest of the fish to the surprised Bačić and they all headed for a small hill, where they had left their supply of water and fire. Their dark-skinned companion collected a handful of wood along the way, which he now placed on the fire. Putting the fish's head on a thin twig and roasting it a little, he shared that small meal with his wife while observing our travellers being sweetly nourished by his gift.

Using signs, he then asked to be allowed to take some water from the spring. He filled men's utensils first and only then his wooden bowl. In the end, the couple cheerfully bid goodbye to our shipwrecked men, probably feeling pleased that he had done a good deed.

Afterwards, the young Bačić, who liked to "philosophize", thought much about the native tribes, whose representatives they met while on this journey. He remembered their nobility and selflessness and soon concluded that these dark-skinned, simple, and timid natives were most benevolent, sincere, and sensitive.

NOTES AND REFERENCES – CHAPTER V

(ad una vastissima pianura di sabbia qua e là mista ad argilla)

- 1 The original Rijeka manuscript also mentions twelve loaves of bread.
- 2 The Rijeka manuscript has this as point “G” which it clearly cannot be. Rathe gives it as “C” which is likely to be correct.
- 3 According to the Rijeka manuscript it was seven metres wide and four high at the foot of a high rock about 5 metres from the sea.
- 4 In the original Rijeka manuscript this passage is described somewhat differently. The castaways asked for water with words and gestures, a request which the Aborigines satisfied with unexpected kind-heartedness and with the assistance of their women:

Gli sciagurati naufraghi, come questi furono loro vicino, si sforzarono di domandare con gesti e con parole dell'acqua, preghiera che gli indigeni, come ebbero compresa esaudirono con insperata cordialità, domandando la cooperazione delle donne.

- 5 Potentially each word which describes this locality is important as it is here at F that four castaways died and were buried.

The original Rijeak manuscript indicates that the Aborigines with three whites:

- (i) left the hill overlooking the ocean
(Gli altri frattanto lasciato il colle che domina dall'una parte l'Oceano)
- (ii) crossed a vast sandy plane

- (iii) crossed an “oasis” of greenery
(*Valicato un bel tratto di corta verzura*)
- (iv) came across a crater-like rocky opening
(raggiunsero un’apertura rocciosa, che, quasi cratere
vulcanico)

The above description is somewhat compresses in Angelina’s translation. These manouvers need to be reconstituted if we seek to identify the landscape around Point E and F.

VI

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The next day (10 November), the dawn, which is always very short in equatorial regions, found our men all up and anxious to go forward and discover the stream which they figured was not far distant and which would lead them to a European settlement and thence to life and home again. Taking with them as much water as they could carry, once more they bade farewell to the scene of their shelter and, full of buoyant hope, they started on their unknown journey. To avoid the torture of the peninsula, they directed their steps further inland, towards the hilly portion, always keeping the sea in sight as a guide.

They soon realized how painful and difficult this dreary march would be, but with home as their guide, they closed their eyes to all these trials, trying very hard not to foresee. Always the same burning sands, always the same lacerating thorny scrub, the evil flesh-tearing bush, every step left its imprint of their life blood.

At dawn on 10 November, the rested travellers resumed their journey toward the imagined river with settlements of white people on its banks. Taking a lot of water with them, they left their little shelter and, full of hope, set off again. To avoid the long and winding curvatures of the coast, they directed themselves over the hill, despite the impassability of such tracks, overgrown with sharp, thorny bushes. Along the way, they found a lot of food, such as ferns, berries, and various other herbs. Yet our travellers were reluctant to go deeper into the woods out of fear of losing their way and often went down to the sea to collect crabs and shells along the shore. They had no more fires. The crabs they caught were eaten raw.

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Edible ferns, berries and other vegetation were easily procured by the Aborigines in the interior plains but to our men this was out of reach, for in the bush, not only would they lose their way, but also the sight of the sea – their only guide.

They reached the beach again, and the only food they consumed consisted of a few mollusks which the waves left high and dry on the sands and which they were obliged to eat raw, as the once faithful Vestal fire had long since burned itself out.

The days passed by wearily without bringing about any material change either in their condition or surroundings. According to their calculations, one half of their tedious journey must have been accomplished. In this way, they encouraged one another and though almost extenuated, still they hoped to reach their goal. On the next day, about an hour before sundown, they noticed in the dim distance a refreshing-looking stream, the sinuosity of which being partly concealed by the heavy bush growth on its banks.¹

The days passed without much change. They had calculated to have traversed almost half of their journey, and in that hope and belief, they supported each other. One evening, when reaching the top of a hill, they saw the mouth of a river. They cheered with joy, believing that it was finally their much-desired river.

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Oh! How their hearts leaped for joy at this gladsome sight! This then was the river that would lead them to fertile soil, to cultivated land, to civilized man, to real life once more!

In their new found happiness, they embraced one another, thanking Providence for this brilliant gleam of hope. Joy lent new strength to their weary limbs, for pushing forward vigorously they soon reached what seemed the head of the stream, although their almost every footstep buried them. Scattered around were numberless shells and quite a large number of skeletons of wild dogs (G).

But alas! Ere long every ray of hope was extinguished!

Having reached the seeming limpid stream, they soon had a full view of the situation: it was only a narrow inlet of the sea, extending inwards a short distance and of no help or benefit whatever to the poor wanderers. On the contrary, it created even greater hardships, as in order to reach the other side, they were obliged to wade in its marshy, slimy waters.

The buoyant hope that had sustained them up to this moment gave way to a fatigue and disappointment doubly painful. These men who one short hour ago were joyous and full of life were now plunged in deepest despair. Yet they had to go on, for here in this miasmatic swamp, a quick and sure poisonous death would soon overtake them. Mechanically, they kept on going their sad way, weary and footsore and starving.

In joyful excitement, they approached their target, convinced that salvation waited ahead.

The disappointment was great when they realized that the river was only a product of imagination and of great desire. It turned out to be only a deep arm of the sea.

Recovering to some extent, the extenuated men had to bypass this new obstacle. Hungry, tired, and bloody, they found it difficult to drag along their swollen legs.

A few shell fish barely supplied their wants, desperation urging them a little further inland where they succeeded in securing the roots of some ferns whose sweet and pleasant taste somewhat appeased their hunger.

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After passing the 24th degree of latitude and Cape Cuvier, they thought their position enabled them to fix their true whereabouts. Whereabouts! On one side the interminable sandy desert, on the other, the trackless, fathomless sea!

The long march had almost exhausted the water supply. They still had some by rationing out most carefully, but tomorrow there would not be a single drop for ten half-famished men, burned up by the torrid sun, fevered and sore from hard marching, torn, bruised and mutilated, helpless and above all hopeless!

(16 November) The gaunt, grim specters of suffering and thirst now became their ever present and constant companions! All realized their sad fate and were almost afraid to look at one another lest their thoughts should be read aloud. To describe their state of mind would be impossible; or to imagine it. Only those who have been at the gates of a horrible death could attempt it!

Deep is the depth of human despair. As deep as the abyss of the fathomless ocean!

Th

The shells and crabs were so small now that they could go no longer satisfy their hunger. They were forced to go deeper into the interior of the country. From the ground, they plucked roots of some ferns, which they chewed long and hard.

After crossing Cape Cuvier and the 24th degree of latitude, they were hoping to determine their approximate location, but this proved impossible. As far as the eye could see, there was only the desert and the sea before them. Endless desolation was all they could see.

Despite rationing, their water supply had dwindled. They now moved forward without a word, preoccupied with the same thought. The fear of death brought uneasiness to their hearts. They were afraid to look each other in the eye so as not to show their feeling of fear and horror.

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In this dire emergency, some of the men proposed to retrace their steps and return to the fresh water spring.

Others, including *Costa*, *Bačić* and *Bučić* preferred to keep on, stimulated not so much by the hope of finding their way across the traceless desert, as by the fear of losing strength and valuable time going over the same fruitless paths already trodden.

The latter three tried to dissuade the others from the step which would lead to their common ruin by reasoning with them and assuring them the same Light would still guide them.

But in vain – separate they must. Embracing once more, they bade one another in silence, a tearful, sad farewell (H).

This eventful evening of 16 November, nature herself seemed to share in the general sorrow and sadness.

Dediol finally broke the heavy silence:

“Men, let’s go back to the water stream! We don’t know where we’re going. We will never get to that river. We will wander like this until we all die of thirst and hunger. Let’s go back!”

Costa, Bačić, and Bučić opposed his proposal, proving that the return is just as difficult and hopeless as the way forward.

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The silence was so intense that one could almost hear the palpitation of those strong men's hearts. The only sound was the splashing of the waves, which seemed to be chanting a dirge of requiem for the harm and damage they had accomplished, accompanied by an occasional piercing scream of the sea-birds.²

Costa, *Bačić* and *Bučić* started on ahead while the others retraced their weary steps towards the spring. Hardly had the former made a few steps when *Costa*, whose generous and loyal soul was overcome by the sadness of the separation, stopped and lifting up his eyes now filled with ill-concealed tears to heaven, he exclaimed: "No, I cannot. I will not abandon them. I will follow them to live or die together!"

His two companions, overcome by his generosity, also retraced their steps and called to the others. Soon the ten were together again, retracing their steps towards the life-giving spring.

However, as most wanted to return, the sad procession headed back to the water source.

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Fortunately for them, they discovered a narrow and beaten path which shortened the distance considerably and they soon reached the welcome well (19 November)³ where they all quenched their parching thirst (**E**). Going a second time over the scene that had raised so much hope in their hearts (**G**)⁴, so soon to be dashed, they thoroughly understood how this visionary stream was only a shallow arm of the sea cut off by a hilly projection not more than a half mile in length and about one hundred feet in width.

Happy in the possession of the crystal liquid and positive of always finding the usual mollusks and vegetables, they took up for a second time the usual routine of life.

But so much hard marching and pent-up suffering were bound to tell on the poor men, who were all suddenly seized with acute inflammation of the knees.

As if to alleviate the intense sufferings endured in the past few days, Heaven guided their footsteps to a large, cool and inviting

Resting in the shade, our shipwrecked people spent a couple of happy days.

They found a nice cave along the coast, in which they took shelter from the scorching sun, night humidity, and cold.

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cave near the shore and but a few steps north of the refreshing well.

Here they established their abode until Providence would provide for their better salvation. Happy and restful indeed were these few days spent in these cavernous depths which effectively shielded them from the sun's scorching rays while also protecting them from the night's frigid dews. Here they rested while the high tide kept them from fishing expeditions.

But this quiet retreat was not to last long. In a little while both mollusks and crustaceans became exceedingly scarce and, in order to secure more fish food, they were obliged to give up their comfortable cave and move further onward to the beach opposite the plain where they had first met *Perančić* (F). Here on the 2 December, they settled down again, some taking charge of fishing, while others carried water from the spring.

The direct rays of the tropical sun were almost too fiery for the poor men to stand. Some sought shelter under the thick undergrowth while the others sought the grotto near the spring.

But life had become difficult. There was no food. Tens of meters around the cave, all shells and crustaceans were gone. A new home had to be found. They soon located a place and settled on the meadow, where they first saw *Perančić*. Here they settled on a daily routine aiming to survive as long as possible until some help arrived. Some took care of their water supply, others collected shells and sea animals, and others took to digging up roots.

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From the eventful day on 10 November – when our men had for the first time left the spring and their almost sacred fire – they had not yet succeeded in starting the fire again, though they religiously guarded a few particles of gunpowder.⁵ In vain they tried every experiment. Even the vigorous rubbing of the twigs, which produced such grand results for the Aborigines, spelled only failure to the white man.

In their wanderings, a climbing plant had been discovered which bore a yellowish bean somewhat similar to our red bean in appearance.

This vegetable seemed not only edible and palatable, but also very plentiful. The need of a fire to cook it in some way made itself most urgently felt.

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A piece of iron from which in all their trials they had never allowed themselves to part, and which they used in their fishing expeditions, gave *Perančić* the idea of a flint. But where to find a stone? At last a small one was discovered and *Perančić* tried for a few moments rubbing stone and iron together nonchalantly, almost with a faint hope of securing the eager flame and lo: a bright flame burst forth, an explosion followed and the gunpowder was soon blazing brightly. (15 December)

The hardest to endure was the absence of fire. They used broke dry twigs, as shown by the natives, but all in vain. Nothing worked. They still had gunpowder, so they tried using it, but without success.

Finding a piece of iron on the shore, *Perančić* finally managed to produce a spark.

[91] cont.

Hearts leapt with joy and a general scampering followed. Some went in search of dried twigs, some for larger wood and others went to gather the nutritious though unwholesome bean. *Perančić* alone stood quiet and immovable, seemingly unconscious of his companions and of his surroundings. When this first hot meal was cooked to the utter astonishment of all, *Perančić*, hitherto so quiet and gentle, so considerate for his fellow sufferers, suddenly thrust forth his hands as if he would grab the whole portion. Astonished at this unusual conduct, but through sympathy or courtesy, the others did not utter a word and allowed him to follow his own inclinations.

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This was not the only cloud that troubled their horizon. Half starved as they were, the beans they had were partaken with too much eagerness and in a few hours they were all writhing in excruciating pain, still they never thought that these pains were caused by its poisonous qualities.

Had our men only know how the Aborigines prepared their delicious bean, they would have spared themselves much suffering. In the first place the bean was so nutritious that a very small quantity sufficed for a meal and, secondly, after being gathered, it had to be baked for a few days in the hot sands then soaked in water for about two days, then baked again in the sand. This process made the bean entirely harmless and extremely nutritious. Later experiences taught them this valuable lesson.⁶

They then placed some beans in a small pot, as they saw the native people do it. *Perančić* stood by the fire, diligently mixing the food.

When the beans were cooked, he grabbed the pot from the fire and began to eat greedily, not inviting or waiting for others, and leaving them not a grain. His comrades were astonished but did not object to him. They went to the shore and looked for crabs.

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Of course, fishing was never abandoned and *Bačić* seemed to be the most eager one at the sport which had now become a daily necessity. Quite a large fish had been left by the waves in a hole in the cave; *Bačić* in his eagerness to catch it failed to exercise proper caution and in a twinkle the fish closed its teeth on his hand inflicting an ugly and severe wound. In fact, it was with the greatest difficulty he finally extricated his hand, but the wound would leave a life-long scar.⁷

So for a few days our young friend had to have his hand bathed in the ocean, bandaged with some ragged strips and, worst of all, he had to refrain from his good sport and daily food. He soon had a companion in distress, for *Vulović*, while wading in search of food, tore his foot so badly on a hidden rock that the swelling became intense and he too was obliged to seek shelter in their first cave (E).

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Here the two sufferers stayed together while the others were <on a level plain> about three miles away (F); nevertheless, they ministered to their wants as well as they could. Another sad case was that of *Perančić*. From that memorable day when he lit the precious fire, he had become like one walking in a trance and a cool spectator of all his companions' hard work. With no more thought or feeling for his companions, he would carry off their food and hide in the woods. His face wore a sickly smile and he was in a state of much nervousness, rushing and walking backwards and forwards in the bush.

The same event was repeated every day from then on. *Perančić* not only ate greedily but also collected every crumb of food and carried it into the forest to hide it from his friends.

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Whenever he appeared among his companions, he would always smile, with the same expressionless smile. But he never uttered a single word though previously, he had been one of the best, most enthusiastic and kindly of men.

Astounded the others watched him, allowing him to do as he pleased, when all of a sudden the lightning flashed through their brains:

“He is mad!”

To add to their misfortune, they were soon to feel the full brunt of tropical storms which occur in these regions and which are often preceded and followed by intolerable hot and fiery north-west winds, which burn and scorch more than fire itself!⁸ On the 21 December, as the month was ending, a new horror arose which was to prove so fatal to our poor men.

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The tropical storm, which had shaken nature so violently, had driven all the fish from the shallower water into deeper ocean thus cutting off almost their whole means of subsistence. Nothing was left but the noxious bean.

Bačić and *Jurić* dreaded the pains caused by the indigestible bean and were always in search of other food. They now found a species of thorny bush, with long and spiky leaves and bearing a grape-like fruit, white green, black and white, and quite palatable.⁹

He soon stopped talking. His gaze wandered somewhere in the distance, and a strange smile flickered on his lips.

His expressionless face and blurred eyes revealed a terrible truth to his comrades:

Perančić had gone mad!

This misfortune was followed by others. In December, tropical storms began.

Furious waves hit the reef and carried away everything within reach. The shallows' fish had now retreated to the depths, so the men had to abandon fishing. There were no more shells or crabs. The men now had to go further inland.

Roots and various beans now became their only food. This was the only way they could sustain themselves but were becoming weaker each day.

A sudden rising of the already strong wind, echoing and re-echoing along the rocky shores, along with the horrible whistling among the shrubs and undergrowth, soon brought home to our men the fact that they were in the cruel fangs of another terrible storm demon.

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With no shelter whatever in sight, how could they even dream of braving the angry elements? "To the old cave with *Vulović*," cried *Jurić*. "It is only there we can be saved." They thought it easy to reach but it was three long miles away.

At nightfall, 24 December, a prolonged roar and rumbling of thunder with the most vivid streaks of lightning seemed to be opening up the very earth. This was immediately followed by a torrential rain which seemed to sweep away everything in its path. The storm's furies were made more fierce and terrible by the vivid and frequent flashes of lightning. The unfortunate victims, all scattered about, tried to save themselves by hiding under the scrubby growth and up against the thorny bushes.

In this terrible cataclysm of nature, the voices of the men shouting and calling to each other were not even as whispers, for no earthly voice could be heard above that of the sea and winds.

Their eyes continually kept searching the open sea in the hope of seeing a sail. But all was in vain: salvation was nowhere to be found.

The gloomy, cloudy sky oppressed them even more, increasing their sorrow and anxiety. The distant rumble of thunder and the flashes of lightning were now coming ever closer. The wind grew stronger and soon developed into a hurricane, carrying everything in its path. Heavy drops of rain poured out in the streams as if they intended to submerge the whole earth. Among the loud rumbling,

Jurić's voice could be heard: "Let's run to the cave!"

However, the cave was far away. The darkness was so thick that a finger could not be seen in front of the eye.

The wind was constantly getting stronger. Exhausted by hunger, the men fell and crawled, hiding wherever they could, in hollows and under bushes.

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At about midnight *Jurić* and *Dediol* reached the cave. Their shouts and calls to their companions were unanswered, not even by the unfortunate *Vulović* who had been in the cave but must have been chased out by some unknown mishap. Thoroughly alarmed by the ominous silence and fearing the worst for their companions, these two men fell on their knees and implored God of all Mercies for pity and help.

At daybreak when the fury of the storm seemed somewhat to have abated, they left the cave to search for their companions. The horror of their condition was made more appalling by the quantity of wreckage strewn on all sides, huge trees and logs, silent messengers of desolation and destruction.

Only *Jurić* and *Dediol* reached the cave and fell asleep.

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Towards the night, as they were about to give up their search in despair, two figures were noticed creeping along slowly towards the cave. These were *Costa* and *Bačić*, the latter after being separated by the storm from his two friends, *Antončić* and *Bučić*. *Bačić* had then accidentally found *Costa* and all through that terrible night the two had sheltered themselves under some projecting rocks. At break of day, they started out towards the cave, their Home, expecting to find there the rest of their companions. This most eventful day was 25 December the great day of all Christian lands, the day of joy and peace and good will to all men.

Yet how sad to our unfortunate shipwrecked men must have been this day that brought before their minds visions of home and happiness, of mother, and sister and sweetheart, for as we have said once before: not one of these was a married man.

Meanwhile, *Antončić* and *Bučić* also reached the hospitable cave carrying with them, as a priceless jewel, a spark of fire in a tin can. With this spark they hoped to ignite some twigs, for as the torrential rains ceased, the desire for a little warm food made itself most ardently felt. They also urgently needed to dry their water-soaked clothing and warm themselves as well as to use the fire as a beacon and as a guide to the lost ones. As no others had as yet put in an appearance the weary travelers decided to take a short rest. In a few hours, two more worn out wayfarers came into the hospital cave, *Lovrinović* and *Brajević*.

When the storm subsided at dawn, the other men reached the cave with great difficulty and were could barely stand on their feet.

There were but two now left unaccounted for, *Vulović* and *Perančić*, so our men decided they must be found. Hardly had this conclusion been made when the heavens seemed to open up again and deluging rains once more inundated everything.

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Surely this new disaster must positively end the lives of the two missing unfortunates if they were still alive! The whole long day dragged itself slowly with everyone realizing and lamenting the fate of the missing two.

Though no one would dare to express his thoughts, the storm added one more calamity to its numerous train – the utter inability to secure the slightest morsel of food.

The following day, 26 December, the rains having ceased, *Jurić*, *Bačić* and *Dediol* hastened out of their sheltering cave to search for the two missing men, while the others went in search of the beans and herbs which had helped them to sustain life so far. <F> But what a sad sight met their gaze. A short distance from the cave lay the body of *Perančić*, who, having lost his mind, could not guide his footsteps and had fallen the first sad victim to the storm.¹⁰

How sad were the already heavy hearts of our men. These unfortunates dug the grave

After they had gathered, they noticed that two men were not among them: *Vulović* and *Perančić* did not return.

Worried about their friends, *Dediol* and *Jurić* went to look for them. Not far from the cave's entrance, on the rocks, lay the body of the dead *Perančić*. His skull was shattered. In his severe illness and terrible fear, he must have fled from the storm and hit his head on the rock.

After digging his grave in the sand, *Jurić* and *Dediol* laid him in it and buried him.

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of their dearly beloved companion, laying him in most tenderly and with most fervent prayers to God for mercy on his soul and on theirs.

The rest of the day was spent in a vain search for *Vulović*. He too must have been another victim of the storm, so with added sadness and despair at the bottom of their hearts, they once more took up their usual routine.

A short distance from the hospitable cave, stood a clump of bushes bearing leaves somewhat similar to our laurel but lacking its sweet odour. These bushes were about four metres tall and bore a yellow berry which on ripening became quite red. This was soon discovered to be not only harmless, but very palatable and decidedly nourishing. But alas the berries had to be consumed quickly so that search for others could be resumed.

“You see,” said Dediol, “you may condemn me now, but I envy him. Death was good to him - it saved him from further torments and whatever awaits us tomorrow. It seems to me that we will depart one by one, parting slowly ... horribly ... Who knows if our people in our homeland still think of us? Who knows if they are still hoping for our return?”

As soon as these two returned to the cave, the storm began to rage again. The rain poured down all day as if from a bucket, even though the next morning.

As soon as it stopped, the men went to find *Vulović*. As he was nowhere near, his comrades began to doubt that he was still alive, for if he were still alive, he surely would have reached the cave already.

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On 27 December, they retraced their steps towards the grassy plain (F) where on a previous occasion they had found the blessing of good clear water. By means of branches and trees accumulated in the recent storm, a sort of shelter shed was soon put up to ward off the rays of the scorching torrid sun. One of their cherished possessions was also sacrificed.

The large cotton sheet which had been sewed by *Costa* had to be torn into bandage strips to wrap around their sorely wounded and blistered feet.

They had to have these if they were to walk at all, as they had to be in constant search of food on rugged rocks and sharp-edged shells, over splintered stoops and thorny bushes and immersions in the most frightful conditions.

The woods were now almost bare of all the berries which had helped to feed the poor unfortunates, the last storm having whipped them all off. The shallow water on the beach gave them very little chance to secure seafood and yet, food of some kind they had to get or starve!

In utter desperation *Lovrinović* suggested a return to the very first shelter (B) where they had buried some food

However, they did not entirely lose hope. As soon as the sky cleared, they crossed the meadow, near the spring, erected a shelter from the branches, and set out again to gather roots and plants.

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which they had not been able to carry along. Though the idea was good, yet it did not appeal to the others, extenuated as they were, for it would require about six days to reach the spot. Only one man, *Brajević* was willing to venture out with *Lovrinović* and, notwithstanding the objections of their companions, they left, taking with them six bottles of water and four so-called cakes of beans. With this scant supply they retraced their steps towards their very first shelter (28 December).

The others were obliged to work very hard to secure some food, so they divided themselves into three parties, one to search for seafood, one to scour the woods for berries and beans and the third party to remain guarding the precious fire. These searching parties succeeded in finding under the elevated plain another cave (**F**) about sixteen metres <sic> high, and as long, and located barely 50 metres from the sea.¹¹ This was to be their new home.

Here the old year 1875 left them, and here the new year 1876 found them.

Nearby, they discovered another cave, quite spacious and sheltered.

Having made comfortable beds of grass, they settled into it, and in that sad setting, they welcomed the New Year 1876.

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On the second day of the new year, the gathering of berries was delegated to *Bačić*, *Antončić* and *Jurić* and they started out very early to avoid the sun's hot rays. They were trudging along talking to each other of the very present subject – their terrible plight and the seeming utter impossibility of a friendly sail every rescuing them – when a most terrible odour assailed their nostrils.

They turned their steps in the direction of the odour, which took them to barely a few feet away from the cave which had sheltered them on that fateful Christmas night (E), when all nature seemed rent to pieces. What did they find? The corpse of poor *Vulović* in an advanced stage of decomposition.¹² Evidently the poor fellow had dragged himself there in the hope of finding his companions in the sheltering cave when he was overcome by the fierce storm.

Their daily duty now was to stock up on food and bandage the most severe wounds. They tore a large sheet, which Cap. Costa had saved and made bandages out of it. *Bučić* and *Antončić* transferred the fire to this new abode, and the guards for the fire took turns, as before.

The water was carried according to a set schedule and mostly in the early dawn to avoid the heat of the day. It was also necessary to conserve their strength because they were becoming exhausted from hunger, and the beans were becoming less plentiful.

One day, when they went into the bushes searching for the beans, they suddenly felt a strong smell of death.

Exploring the area to see where the odor was coming from, they discovered the body of their friend *Vulović*. They dug up a bier to bury the poor, already decomposing body of their friend.

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His feet were so badly lacerated and swollen that he probably could walk no longer and succumbed to his terrible sufferings, dying just within reach of shelter.

How can we describe the feelings of these three men at finding this second victim of this cruel desert? One more friend gone, one more horrible death. What and when would theirs be? For a second time, they were obliged to dig a grave with their own hands and kneeling, they recited most devoutly the prayers for the dead after they had laid poor *Vulović* in his last resting place.

Hardly had they finished this last sad duty, when they heard a faint echo of voices calling out in their own tongue, "Oh Brothers". Reaching the plain (F) again more distinctly came the words, "Oh Brothers".

It was the voice of the two who had gone in search of the buried food treasure, *Lovrinović* and *Brajević*. Happy at the sound of their voices, our three joyously rushed to meet them, hoping they were successful, but alas! The two unfortunates, after walking continuously for three days, were obliged to give up their search, no longer being able to stand the fatigue, the hunger and the thirst.

Deeply shaken, they headed back towards the camp. Gloomy thoughts gripped their hearts. Who's next? Will death cut them all down to the last? Will none of them ever see their homeland?

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“For God’s sake give us a morsel to eat!” was the cry wrung from their tortured souls and, like children, they broke down and wept at their own misery.

Of course, the berries which had been gathered for the little community had at once to be distributed to the two famished men.

After the severest pangs of hunger had been somewhat appeased, together they all went to meet their companions, who hailed *Lovrinović* and *Brajević* with joy, as the former had given up all hopes of ever seeing them again.¹³

After a much-needed rest, the party once more resumed its usual labours: fishing, searching for berries, tending the fire. Unfortunately the number of active men was daily diminishing.

The first to give up was *Costa*, the brave captain whose moral sufferings far surpassed the physical, for he better than any other man fully realized the utter hopelessness of their situation.

A new blow was waiting for them in their camp: they found Captain Costa lying unconscious. Gathering around him, they tried to help him. Slowly but surely, his life was dimming. He was tormented by the thought that to infuse the men with courage he deliberately deceived them and that the blame for their suffering was entirely his. In his restless dreams, he saw their tortured eyes fixed on his own, fully confident he will bring them salvation. They looked at him as their father, leader, and saviour, unaware that he was just as helpless and broken as they were. He felt the nearness of death - if only it would happen as soon as possible!

Seeing their leader stricken almost demoralized the little band.

They immediately felt the utmost necessity of returning to the very first little shelter to unearth the scant provisions which they themselves had buried.

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Lovrinović especially laid stress on the trip, declaring if they only had some of the good wine, they would be able to revive their dearly beloved captain, nay even his life may be saved. This thought alone decided the undertaking and *Brajević* volunteered to accompany *Lovrinović*. (5 January 1876)

Fortunately for them they discovered a path which had evidently been made by the Aborigines and which considerably shortened their trip.

But when the camp was reached their joy was quickly turned to sadness and horror, for indeed all the barrels and bottles and boxes were in the proper hiding places, but the contents were all gone. The Aborigines had found the precious treasure and had consumed everything. Disappointed and disheartened, they stopped awhile to rest and rebandage their feet, which were all lacerated by the thorny and rocky road they had just crossed. (11 January)

How could they bring the sad news to their companions? They had absolutely nothing to bring back but a carpenter's plane

His comrades did not know what to do. He needed strength, but they had nothing to invigorate him. Then it suddenly occurred to them that they had buried all the excess food and wine they could not carry at the first shelter by the shore before they left it.

Wrapping their bloody legs, *Lovrinović* and *Brajević* immediately set off.

By blind luck, they struck upon a well-trodden path and believed it would lead them to their destination.

And indeed, after many hours of strenuous walking, they saw the ruins of their shelter in the distance - the shattered cabin of the *Stefano*. Happily, they set to work. Hurriedly they dug up the sand and soon saw barrels and boxes. Pulling them out of the pit, they cried out in despair. They were empty! Someone discovered them and emptied them.

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which *Antončić*, who was the ship's carpenter, had recognized as his own property. The last faint gleam of hope was gone now and forever, as there was no longer any possibility of securing any other food but the harmful bean, the extremely scarce berry, the almost raw fish and shell fish.

Unconsciously, almost instinctively, both turned their eyes towards the ocean, hoping against hope to get a glimpse of a friendly sail – a miraculous angel's wing. But not a merest speck of any kind could be discovered on that immense, fathomless ocean. Even the sudden apparition of a few Aborigines would be most welcome, for these kind children of nature had already twice saved them from an almost imminent fate. But even they seemed to have entirely disappeared.

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While poor *Costa* lay on the ground, moaning and groaning, from terrible excruciating pains in his intestines, *Lovrinović* broke out in dire lamentations, as he realized that he had completely lost the sight of his left eye which had been hurt on the evening of the fateful wreck.

Desperate and confused, they came back, bent over with fatigue and sadness. Without a word, they sat down by their captain's bed. The comrades understood them. The expression on their faces told them everything.

Not one man could comfort the other. Each one was afraid to look the other in the eyes, for each felt his doom was sealed. Burying their faces in their hands, they all gave vent to bitter scorching tears of despair.

Costa, who had already suffered several fainting spells, lay prone on the sands, barely able to swallow a few drops of water, muttering a few confused and indistinct words, bemoaning his fate and more so that of his companions; his eyes were glassy and the angel of death was hovering near.

With almost superhuman strength, “give me,” shouted the dying man, “give me some food”.

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Fortunately, *Bačić* and *Dediol* had a few berries which they immediately offered him. Grabbing them with a ravenous gesture he tried to bring them to his mouth. But his last spark of strength was extinguished, he could not even swallow them. Casting one look at this companions as if to tell them that death indeed was near, he tried to raise his hands towards heaven to invoke God’s pardon for himself and mercy for his companions.

Kneeling around this saddest of death beds, they all recited as well as they could remember, the prayers of the dying.

However, it was getting harder for *Costa*. His emaciated body was writhing from severe intestinal pain. No one had the strength to comfort him. Silent, they followed his ordeal. There was no help.

Suddenly the dying man flinched and cried out: Food. . . give. . . Men!

Bačić had a handful of berries in his hat, which he had gathered moments before. Leaning over to him, he handed them to him in the palm of his hand. The dying man brought these to his mouth wildly and greedily but abruptly shrank away. He no longer had the strength even to swallow. With muddy eyes, he looked at the sad comrades around him. Tears streamed down his withered cheeks. He did not feel sorry for himself. He knew there was no salvation for him. He lamented to his comrades for leading them on with the hope of salvation and exposing them to greater suffering than they would have suffered had they remained on the shipwrecked shore.

After a few minutes of solemn silence *Costa*, aroused again by the last dying ember of his strength, spoke in a voice so clear that all understood him: “In a few minutes, *Bačić*, I will be with my God and I will pray for you and for all of you, my dear friends, resign yourselves...” His voice now faded in a merest whisper; he fell back, exhausted. His companions laid him down quietly, thinking him asleep, but never dreaming that this sleep was his long and eternal one.

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Before dawn of the following morning (13 January 1876) *Lovrinović* slowly approached *Costa*, to inquire how he felt, but the glassy eyes staring towards heaven and the quiet restfulness of the body, soon told its sad tale. The poor shipwrecked captain had reached the peaceful harbour, where storms and sorrow would no longer assail him!

Horrified at the loss of the man whose kindness and greatness of heart had shone like guiding stars in their terrible days of trial, *Lovrinović* sobbed out one sad moan:

“He is dead, he is dead!”

On hearing this heart-rending cry, the others jumped up and crowded around the man who once had been their guide and their hope. Kneeling down each one kissed his hand and prayed most fervently for the repose of his soul.

And then, gathering some strength, he said in a low, broken voice:

“*Bačić*, I’m going. . . Forgive me, brothers ...” Closing his eyes, he lay there peacefully, breathing easily. His comrades straightened him and made his bed more comfortable. Then they slipped quietly outside, leaving him to rests.

Not long after, *Lovrinović* approached the patient’s bed. He lay motionless, his eyes open. *Lovrinović* asked him how he was feeling, but leaning over him, he saw his open, glassy eyes. He ran outside and called his comrades.

“He is dead, he is dead!”

Whispering, they all gathered around their dead captain. He finally sailed into that peaceful harbor, where there are no more storms, no more suffering, no more despair.

For the third time, the awful task awaited them – that of digging a grave with no other implements but their bare hands at about ten feet from the cave which once had been home and refuge. They laid him shrouded in the few tatters left on his sorely bruised body and a part of the precious sheet which he himself had sewn was his winding sheet.

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The fervent prayers and heartfelt tears of his companions were his solemn requiem!

A few days later (17 January) towards evening, while the few remaining unfortunates were resting near the cave, there suddenly appeared coming from a northerly direction, a tribe of Aborigines, the same probably who had befriended them twice before. Running to meet them, our men led them towards the newly made grave of *Costa*. Instinctively, the blacks seemed to understand the sad tale the whites were trying to tell them by gestures. But though they cast sad glances at the mound of earth,

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yet they passed on, walking, always walking.

VI

SHOCKED by the captain's death, the men sat silently and helplessly at the spring. Their dull, immobile state was interrupted only by heightened despair, pangs of hunger, or an occasional visit by groups of natives, who would give them some food and then leave them to their numbness again.

Meanwhile *Bačić* had hung his flannel shirt and trousers on a bush to dry. Spying these attractive looking articles, one of the Aborigines turned back and, creeping up stealthily, attempted to carry them off. Noticing this, *Bačić* rushed towards the native and by all sorts of signs tried to explain how badly he needed his precious garments. The generous black immediately returned them, keeping for himself a spoon and some cord which he had found in the pockets. Another Aborigine, entering the cave, found the precious bit of flint and, unnoticed by the whites, he picked it up and left.

This tribe numbered about fifty and with the women in the lead they all turned their steps towards where the water wells were located, evidently to lay in their supply of water for tomorrow. Then tired, these children of nature, retired to their usual rest – a hole dug in the sand.

Remembering the former kindnesses of the blacks, our men decided to follow them (18 January). It did not take long for the Aborigines to understand their starved condition

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and immediately they were offered some baked fish of which the natives seemed to have quite a large amount.

Touched by the generosity of these wild men, *Bučić*, overcome by his feelings, seized the hand that had fed him and not only shook it most cordially but, bringing it to his lips, kissed it over and over again.

This act not only arouse the astonishment of the Aborigines, but it served also to amuse them immensely so, with the most grotesque gestures, each and every one tried to imitate it, to the pleasant gratification of all the onlookers.

This strange scene over, our men decided to return to the cave near the sea to look after the almost holy fire, but *Lovrinović*, *Antončić* and *Brajević*, suddenly seized with acute and violent pains in their limbs could not move an inch and were obliged to spend the night near the spring.

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The next day, 19 January, the Aborigines resumed their continual march, always northward. They passed the cave, men leading, women following, but not one turned around towards or stopped near our men.

The three men left near the spring were gradually becoming weaker. The moral strength which up to now had sustained them in all their calamities was entirely gone and their physical strength just hung by a thread.

The others tried to revive them by words of hope and encouragement and principally by bringing them some food. But before long these acts of charity and kindness became too strenuous for the exhausted men. *Dediol* and *Bučić* were the next two to give way under the severe strain. They fell on the sands near their other companions, loudly bemoaning not only their intense suffering, but more especially their utter helplessness and fatal despair.

What to do or where to go? They had resigned to wait for death. Nothing was going to help them, and they knew it. They decided to go to the cave to again lie down by the fire, but *Antončić*, *Bučić*, and *Lovrinović* could not go with them: their bruised limbs were in great pain, which tore at their whole body. The others did not have the strength to carry them. Everyone thought only of their own life and how to prolong it as long as possible. They decided to head back to the cave leaving the three dying men behind.

The next day it was even harder for the sick men. Their comrades brought them food, encouraged them, and calmed them down while trying hard to keep themselves on their feet and overcome their own feebleness. Shortly two more succumbed: *Brajević* and *Dediol*. Terrible cramps in their stomachs and pains in their limbs crushed

Bačić and *Jurić*, being the two youngest, were the only ones left with any strength or vitality. Inspired by a sublime charity for their fellow sufferers they deemed it their sole duty to provide food and water for all the helpless ones.

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The distance between the springs of fresh water and the sea which furnished their meagre subsistence was considerable and the two boys were obliged to perform wonderful exertions to reach either.

The fire also had to be religiously guarded, so each in turn undertook the whole task while the other slept or rested.

But the first acts of the sad tragedy had merely begun. Many more scenes of horror were soon to dawn upon them, to chill them and to scar their very soul.

One evening when *Bačić* reached the spring he found *Lovrinović* lying semi-conscious and muttering almost incomprehensible words. Finally, after much effort he expressed his last desires which were to see and talk to his old friend and comrade *Jurić*. *Bačić* ran as fast as he could to reach the latter, but, as already stated, the distance was so great *Jurić* could only get to his companion the following day, 21 January. But alas! The poor weary soul had already entered into his eternal rest.

hem as well, leaving only two able-bodied: *Bačić* and *Jurić*. Their youthfulness (the first was 17 and the second 20) helped them survive. They took turns visiting their dying comrades: one would carry food and water while the other sat in the cave, guarding the fire and recuperating his strength.

Day by day, things were getting harder for their comrades. Cruel deaths were imminent. *Lovrinović* tried his best to summon his friend *Jurić*, but the cave was far away. His subdued, dying voice could not reach it. The next morning, they found him dead. And so, one by one, these shipwrecked men died.

Hardly had the unfortunate survivors recovered from burying *Lovrinović* when two days later (23 January) while *Bačić* was on his way to the sea, he found the lifeless body of

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Brajević stretched out on the sands. The same evening, when the young fellow had just reached the well, he found *Antončić* barely breathing; one single glance of recognition and he too expired.¹⁴

The youth, now thoroughly alarmed, hardly took the time to fill his bottles, but fled precipitately from the gruesome spot. Then glancing around for just one more second, he hurriedly removed from the dead body of *Antončić* a long woollen scarf which the poor unfortunate had dearly treasured and from which only death could separate him.

The following day, *Bačić* and *Jurić*, the only two still capable of moving about had to perform again the sad duty of digging with their hands the graves of their two friends. After most devoutly reciting the last sad prayers, they tenderly deposited the poor long-suffering bodies in their last resting place. They then went to minister to *Bučić* and *Dediol* who, exhausted and speechless, lay in the cave near the shore awaiting the last summons.

Only *Dediol* still lay in the cave. The young men dragged him there with great difficulty so that they did not have to walk to him. His sad eyes, full of pain and suffering, begged for help. *Bačić* and *Jurić* watched over him as if they wanted to save his life with their eyes. But his hour also struck.

In fact, the next day, 25 January, towards evening, *Bučić* expired.

Not a word, not a sound, came from the two beings now petrified by the almost daily scene of horror. Not a tear came to the eyes of the two boys, *Bačić*, aged seventeen, and *Jurić*, twenty.

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Both had left their homes to enter upon a sea-faring life. Both upon the threshold of their existence and on the very outset of their maritime career. Only to perish, miserable, far away from home and friends, and in a strange unknown world. These thoughts, chasing themselves in their mind with a lightning rapidity, brought them to a state almost of insanity. Their minds became incapable of either understanding or conceiving anything any more. As the dying man sees in a rapid panorama all the events of his past life, so these two boys became utterly oblivious to the outside world and merely existed in a world of febrile agitation.

After a night of horrible anguish caused by starvation and thirst, the dawn of 26 January brought no ray of hope to the two sufferers.¹⁵ *Bučić*'s body still lay unburied, its staring glassy eyes looking upon the hopeless scene. Absolutely crazed by their sufferings,

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with a look in their eyes born only of despair, with a sudden, inexplicably wild movement, they fell upon the corpse.¹⁶

Dediol, who was still breathing, noticed their sudden movement; the truth and horror of their intention came like a flash to his dying mind. He tried to raise his head and in a sepulchral tone, with the last flickering embers of his voice, he hissed more than uttered that awful word, “Curses upon you!” and then he fell back dead.

This sound, this cry from the grave, awoke the boys to the true and fearful horror of their intention and their condition, for the first time. As if just arisen from a frightful nightmare, they looked at each other trembling in every limb.

Afraid to move, they stood transfixed, death having robbed them of their last friend in this fast desert. Starving and burning up with an unquenchable fiery thirst, they fell prostrate on the ground and wept bitter tears that gradually brought back their reason and a faint ray of hope.

“Why didn’t the sea swallow me right away? Ah, my children . . .”
Dediol’s head fell sideways.

His two suffering companions squatted in the corner, motionless and stunned. The next day they did not have the strength to move. They lay at the feet of the dead man and waited for their own deaths. For two days, they had nothing to eat.

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This one word, a curse uttered by a dying man, like a flash of lightning, opened up the black clouds of their now almost heavy and obscure minds, filling them with shame and remorse. For the whole of the following day (27 January) not a morsel of food touched their lips, nor a drop of water cooled their parched throats. The horror of their condition was brought more forcibly to their mind every second, by the putrefying stench of the two bodies uncovered and unburied. The pangs of hunger were not as hard to bear as the all-consuming thirst. But to go back to the spring was utterly impossible. *Jurić*, evidently suffering the most, almost on his knees, implored *Bačić* to go in search of water. Finally the latter consented, but only on one condition: that *Jurić* would let him have the last few drops remaining in the can. To this his companion assented, expecting to receive a full quantity on his return. But the instinct of self-preservation overpowered the divine gift of charity. After the youngster had drained the very last drop, he simply threw himself back, declaring

There was nothing left in the cave. Only a bottle, half filled with water. It was necessary to bring the water at least, but who could do it? *Bačić* was thirsty. He crawled toward where the water was stored. *Jurić* noticed him and begged him not to drink it all to the bottom. *Bačić* promised him that he would get some more as soon as he was refreshed and - he drank everything, down to the last drop, and lay down on the floor again.

“*Jurić*, I can’t move. I can’t. My legs betray me.”

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he could not move a step. Infuriated at this deception, *Jurić* found just enough strength to rise and rush towards the young fellow, to punish him with furious blows, but all strength had disappeared and clenched in each other's arms, both fell like two lifeless bodies.

Here they lay in agony for two whole days with their bodies almost insensible from long-continued suffering, their minds wandering towards their families at home. On the evening of the third day, their fast-dimming eyes were transfixed on that beautiful and mysterious constellation of the southern heavens, the Southern Cross, and just as these two dying men were praying and giving up their souls to God, a sound was heard in the distance, coming nearer and nearer every minute. The Aborigines, once before their benefactors, were passing by.

Enraged by Bačić's action, *Jurić* angrily threw himself at him and started biting and hitting him, but exhausted and extenuated, they both collapsed on the floor next to each other.

Immobile and almost unconscious, they lay in the cave for at least another two days. They could never remember how long it took before they suddenly found themselves outside, surrounded by native people, running around them and waving their arms as if calling on their divinities for help.

They could not move. Their legs and arms were numb. It was as if they had woken from a heavy and long sleep full of horror and death. They could not tell if it was all a dream or a reality. Did all of their comrades really perish? Is Dediol, their old and dear friend Thomas, really under that pile of stones and sand? They did not know who buried his poor body. Maybe they did - but couldn't remember it.

At the sight of the two unburied dead and of the two dying men, the Aborigines halted suddenly, but our boys were too weak to speak. All they could do was barely move their lips and hands. The good-hearted blacks seemed to understand their plight. They came near, touching them gently and looking at them with pitying eyes they motioned them to follow. Unable to stand and less capable of walking, the two men crawled on hands and knees, casting a last sad look at the unburied corpses of *Bučić* and *Dediol*.

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For about three quarters of a mile they dragged themselves along. The hope of being saved from an immediate death enabled them to endure the hardships of this crawl over rocks and thorns.

On reaching the plain where the Aborigines had already camped, *Bačić* and *Jurić* were received with wonderful greetings of joy, and food and water was awaiting them in plenty. When they were somewhat restored, the natives tried to induce them to take a rest by digging a hole in the sand with a larger hole for the abdomen. This latter organ protrudes considerably in the natives and they generally lay on it when sleeping. The following day, 28 January, after many gestures and seeming explanations by the natives, the boys decided they were telling them to join the tribe and thus, by always getting some food and water, be it ever so little, escape the untimely and horrible deaths of their companions.

They did not have the strength to think further and surrendered themselves entirely to the care of the native people, who carried them on their back whenever they set out on their continual wanderings.

They cared for the shipwrecked men as if they were their own children, offering them the best pieces of food, and often competed among themselves as to who would best assist them.

Though the Aborigine life was one of intense rigour and hardship, yet, compared to what they had just gone through, it appealed to them still. The thought of the home 6000 miles away cast its sorrowful shadow over their souls.

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But still they were deeply thankful to their Creator who, at the very moment that they knew would be their last, had deemed fit to send these good children of nature to save them. Would He not some day also send an angel sail to bring them back to their homes.

The Aborigines divided themselves up. The majority went fishing. Some of the women went into the forest to gather wood, others to bring water, while others remained to guard the fire which even to them was a sacred object. The still weak and helpless boys remained with the women, their bodies still racked with pain and their hearts and minds filled with the saddest thoughts. Towards evening the men returned with quantities of fish. Fires were stirred up, families got together to enjoy their evening meal, all vying with one another in offering good portions to their two protégés.¹⁷

Where must they remain, with whom must they sit? With so many calling them it was difficult to decide which family to select. This new joy at so much generosity sent a pang of sorrow through their very souls, for a few feet away were the four almost fresh mounds, sad mementoes of the fate of those whose cruel suffering and probably even death may have been avoided had they also met these kind and generous blacks. Tears dimmed the

Soon the two young men recovered sufficiently to be able to walk alone but were not yet strong enough to endure arduous and long journeys. Usually, the native people divided into two groups when travelling: the men went forward, and the women, carrying children and supplies of water and food, moved more slowly behind them. The extenuated young men joined the group of women, yet the hike was still difficult and strenuous.

In their thoughts, they constantly decried the merciless fate, which allowed death to cut down their comrades.

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eyes of *Bačić* and *Jurić*, the memory of their comrades' fate embittering their own happiness at their miraculous rescue.

The tribe remained in the same place quite a long time, for such roving nomads. Long enough for the two boys to get well acquainted with them and to learn how instinctively good, kind and harmless they were. Nor were they hard to study, these simple and methodical children of nature, as their needs were very few. They satisfied themselves with nature's most modest demands.

The daily routine was extremely simple. As already noted, in the early morning all the men went fishing, while the women went after water, wood for fire, even sometimes berries and other vegetation which in the evening they religiously brought in to prepare the evening meal – this being in fact the only actual meal in twenty-four hours.

When the meal was ready, the ceremonial consisted of gathering all the families together, each group having its own head,

After arriving at a large plain, where a group of men was already waiting for them, the new arrivals lit fires, set up small camps, and stayed there for a whole week. Here the young men began to return to health again. They began to notice the habits and customs of the native people and participate in the work themselves. They collected various herbs, caught fish, and brought water throughout the day, and only in the evening could they sit by the fire and eat — once in 24 hours.

(*) At the head of the fire sat the family elder who distributed the food

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the men usually sitting with their backs to the women. After the former had eaten all they wanted, they would throw whatever was left over their shoulders to their wives, and these in turn would throw their surplus to the children.

Whenever there was a superabundance of fish, which did not happen very often, the Aborigines generally saved some of their portions for the next meal, and so the two boys were instructed to do the same. “*To morning ba-jalgo*” (you will eat tomorrow morning) they would tell them.

But if the boys did not hurry to eat their well-concealed morning meal very early, the women would surround them yelling, “*Chinchi chinchi ba-jalgo*” (Let us divide the food), and though loath, they were compelled to do so. A few recurrences of this taught them the women’s tactics,

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so in the future they sought the company of the men to eat at the same time; for in the presence of the lords of creation, the women generally seemed afraid to breathe.

Supper over, they all began to prepare themselves for the night’s rest, by digging themselves into the sand and by building with twigs and branches a sort of shelter against the prevailing wind to protect their heads.

first to the men, who would then pass their surpluses over their shoulders to women who sat behind them. The women fed the children only with their own leftovers.

(*) If after the whole “feast”, there was any fish or other catch left, the women prepared it for tomorrow’s meal, saying:

“*Tumorning balialgo*” You’ll eat tomorrow.”

(*) After dinner, the natives would dig pits in the sand, which, in addition to the “pillow” of green branches, to protect them from the wind, also had a hollow for their huge bellies. They slept on their bellies and covered themselves with sand.

Before retiring, the men gathered in groups around the various fires, intoning a chant, which they accompanied with loud beating and pounding on their various weapons:

Paur-paur gutari
Puhur cerima
Mali jungura.

This ceremony would last about an hour, but our men never understood its meaning nor its accompanying words.

The pits in the sand were dug mainly to fit their abdomen. They usually retired in silence one person right next to the other, yet each family in its own intimate circle. The two European boys soon

(*) Every night before going to bed, they would gather around the fire, strike their weapons, and with strange movements of the body and hand, shouted the same song all the time:

Paur paur gutari
Pahur cerima
Mali guigura.

(*) The whole ceremony would last almost an hour, and then everything would be quiet, and all would fall asleep. Bačić tried in vain to find out the meaning of the rite but failed. He was even unable to find out the meaning of the words, although he already understood a lot.

In particular, he noticed that the natives used some words that most likely were of the English language. “Tumorning” could only come from the English “tomorrow morning”, and “tatruqa”, as they called their delicacy - a turtle, most likely comes from the same source. Bačić was enthralled by his new discovery. He also confided his hope and joy to Jurić - the natives certainly come into contact with white people. Couldn't we also get to a white settlement one day?

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accustomed themselves to this mode of living.

Fishing was not the only means of subsistence in the seven or more days they remained on the plains. The women contributed to the food supply by bringing in from the wilderness a bean somewhat similar to our lentil, though a trifle more oblong, the pods of which held about twenty or more. These were found on bushes not over one-metre-and-a-half high and profusely covered with long and slender bright green leaves. This bean was allowed to dry. Then by means of sharp stones, the women ground it into a sort of flour, mixed it into a pasty substance in the shapes of small breads, which were roasted on the hot sands or under glowing embers. Naturally, salt being an unknown luxury, these breads lacked much in taste, but they were more than delicious to the famished youths. To top it all, the men of the tribe always made it their particular business to see that the boys were generously provided for.

There was another fruit which both boys and Aborigines highly prized and enjoyed and were always most eager to get, the gathering and distribution of which being left entirely to the women, who were always very reluctant to part with their treasure. This fruit was a species of date, minus the seed, but very sweet. In its raw form it must have possessed some poisonous qualities as it was never eaten unless well roasted or baked.¹⁸ The boys never received more than four or five small pieces and were just craving for more.

(*) Each family had its own fire for the preparation of food. Their main food was fish caught by men. Either nothing was eaten with it, or was consumed with the “bread” prepared by women. They would gather some oblong beans from the bush, similar to lentils, which were dried in the sun, and when dried, they would be grounded and crumbled into powder. The powder was then mixed with water and baked on embers like bread. These small puffs were delicious, even without salt, and the natives always made sure that their two guests were well served. The native women were not as caring or generous

(*) They often brought some date-like fruit from the forest but without a pit. They baked it for a long time and only then shared it - a few pieces each. The fruit was sweet and tasty but could not be eaten raw, probably because it was poisonous.

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One day, *Bačić*, having regained with his strength the daring of his youth and urged on by the men, who by now had become very friendly with him, decided to follow the women into the woods and secure some of the coveted sweets all for himself. Alas for him! His retreat was most precipitous, for when the women noticed him following them to steal their secret treasure, they wheeled around and with sticks and fists beat him back ignominiously and to the great amusement of the men who simply burst out laughing, exclaiming, “*Pinyari cominini!*” (Women are very quarrelsome!). Our friend did not attempt any more such escapades, contenting himself with what was given him, as the women hoarded their sweet treasures so religiously, hardly willing to part with them even to their own men.

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The two boys received all kind of favours from the men, but the language the boys spoke together seemed to annoy or perhaps irritate them, as they did not understand it. Otherwise, they were always good to the boys and provided them with food whenever it was available, and were constantly patting them on their backs and arms. These in their eyes, must have been symbols of love or affection.

Let us stop for a moment to acquaint ourselves with this tribe of Indigenous Australians who claim our admiration and deserve the eternal gratitude of the two sole survivors of the ill-fated *Stefano*

(*) *Bačić* especially liked it, and he continually tried to find out where it grew. However, his attempt angered the women. They attacked him with their fists and fingernails, and the poor creature fled ignominiously accompanied by the roaring laughter of the native men.

(*) “*Prgnari Kominini*” - “Women are belligerent,” the native men shouted at him, warning him never to try to do such a thing again.

NOTES AND REFERENCES – CHAPTER VI

- 1 The chronology in Angelina's translation at this point is somewhat confusing. The Rijeka manuscript indicates clearly that castaways set out on their southward journey on 10 November and on the next day towards sunset they sighted "a refreshing-looking stream". In her translation Angelina's has the expression "The days passed wearily" to describe 10 and 11 November. This is followed by a phrase "One eventful day" they noticed "a refreshing-looking stream". These two sentences are not incorrect but are confusing and ambiguous compared with the Rijeka original. A more precise translation would have been to say "The day passed wearily" (rather than plural "days"). The next sentence has been changed to read "On the next day" as in the Rijeka original to clarify that it was on 11 November towards the sunset when the "refreshing looking stream was sighted".

There is also the possibility that Angelina, on the advice of her husband, intended to create this kind of chronological ambiguity. Although this possibility cannot be excluded it is highly unlikely as the manuscript elsewhere attempts to be clear in all its explanations.

- 2 The phrase "*accompanied by an occasional piercing scream of the sea-birds*" is not in the original Rijeka manuscript but seems to be a poetical addition by Angelina. Curiously she omits translating the very next paragraph that reflects poetically on divine power of the human mind:

Divino potere dell'umana mente! Fin il creato piega al tuo volere e ti seconda mansueto, atteggiandosi al riso, se sei lieta, si rattrista, se vesti gramaglie, si corrucchia se il rimorso del delitto ti conturba!.....

- 3 This date (19 Dicembre) does not appear in Angelina's translation which is surprising as it is an important date. Also the Rijeka manuscript indicates that the castaways returned to E by taking a route not far from the beach. (*Pero fu questa volta accelerato per una via diretta, e non lungi dalla spiaggia.*)
- 4 Point "G" is designated in the Rjeka manuscript immediately after "E".
- 5 The first sentence on this page in the Rijeka manuscript which describes how and why the castaways were unable to catch birds has been left out in the translation.
In questo sito anche il vitto avrebbe potuto esser migliorato; ma le insidie tese con pozzette d'acqua agli uccelli furono vana fatica, causa l'impossibilità di attirarli con buona esca. E quando fossero riusciti a pigliarli, come ammanirli?
- 6 According to Rijeka manuscript, *Bačić* and *Jurić* already had learned this lesson from earlier experiments with this food. Accordingly they kept up their diet of crabs and other seafood.
- 7 The Rijeka manuscript describes the fish as moray eel.
- 8 The Rijeka manuscript indicates this temperature to be around (XXXV) 35 degrees R.
- 9 The Rijeka manuscript tells us that some of the berries were striped black vertical lines other white. These thorny bushes were found half a mile away although it is not entirely clear if this is from Point E or F. A close reading indicates that the location is north of F on a higher plane and ½ mile from the beach.

- 10 The original Rijeka manuscript is slightly different and Point “F” has been left out from Angelina’s translation. Her translation gives the impression that *Perančić* was found a short distance from E. Her simple translation replaces a somewhat confusing expression in the original: “When they arrived at the place (F) which they had departed to save themselves from the storm, they found the corpse of *Perančić*, ...” (“*Giunti cola, donde eransi dipartiti (F) per salvarsi dalla procella, trovarono il cadavere di Perančić, ...*”). Once the coordinates of all named locations are fixed the difference between the two texts becomes clear. Textual analysis indicates that F is on the way from E and the place from which the castaways departed at the start of the storm. To get to the spot where *Perančić* was found from the cave at E one needs to go past the spring at F. Accordingly we should conclude that *Perančić* died a short walk away from the cave at E and on the way to Point F.
- 11 This is an important “Death Cave” and all information we have about it is potentially significant if we are to find it. The wording that Angelina uses to describe this cave is quite different from the original manuscript and this may have been intentional. The dimension she gives for the cave is sixteen feet square – four meters square. This is substantially different from sixteen meters square in the original manuscript. Her exact words are:
These searching parties succeeded in finding under the elevated plain another cave (F) about sixteen feet square and located barely sixty yards from the sea, this to be their home.
- 12 The original Rijeka manuscript is more specific. *Vulović* was found “about 50 paces from the cave and not far from the well that Aborigines had dug.”

- 13 According to the original Rijeka manuscript the return may have been cause of some anger and complaints rather than joy.
- 14 In the original manuscript *Brajević* is found near the spring and *Antončić* expired at the very moment when *Bačić* arrived to get some water. Both *Brajević* and *Antončić* are buried near *Lovrinović* near the spring at F.
- 15 There are a few additions in the original Rijeka manuscript: “Tomorrow,” one of them said, “we will no longer suffer these pains”. “Yes,” said the other.
- 16 The original manuscript’s description of “fell upon the corpse” is a little more dramatic, even if as brief:

“quasi feroci mastivi ne divorano le consunte carni” –
“like fierce mastiffs began devouring the wasted flesh”.

The narrative in the original Rijeka manuscript is immediately followed by *Dediol* cursing the two which stopped them in their tracks.

- 17 In the original Rijeka manuscript we are told that there were about eighty Aborigines altogether.
- 18 The Rijeka manuscript gives this plant as *Cicas Ridleyi*. However, we should note that *Bačić* never sighted the actual plant, which, in any case, does not grow in this region. It may have been the fruit of the mangrov tree, which needs leaching before it is edible.

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Our Australian friend is rather strong and robust, tall and somewhat stout notwithstanding their hard life and many privations. His complexion is reddish brown, somewhat darker than the Malay, with a tendency to a decided black. His skin is hairy, somewhat like the white man's, but rougher and harder.

The cranium is quite regular in shape. In the male it is covered with long straight black hair, which, parted at the temples, shows two large ears. The women's head is covered with a short curly growth. Under a forehead stands out a large prominent flat nose with big sensual nostrils. The face is round and puffed. Eyes black and shiny but somewhat sunken and over-shadowed with heavy bushy eyebrows. The mouth is large with two very thick lips, the upper projecting but showing nevertheless two rows of strong and healthy white teeth. Quite different from the East Australian Aboriginal, the West Australian takes great pride in his long full beard, but cares little or none for the moustache. Indeed he patiently plucks out every single hair that dares

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to appear on his upper lip.

The women of the tribe are rather good-looking when still very young and sometimes even pretty. But her wild beauty is of very short duration as she soon becomes unsightly owing to the abnormal size of her abdomen – a striking characteristic of the whole tribe. After these women have borne children, they become positively unattractive.

Tattooing is very much the prerogative of the men. In fact the young man prides himself in undergoing the painful tattooing act without a single murmur. The tattooing design generally consists of parallel lines, three or four around the arms and ribs, crossed by about twenty horizontal ones over the chest. In the tattooing process, the flesh is cut with either sharp shells or with a pointed stone that forms the end of one of their weapons. Even the thick lips are cut and made to hang over thus rendering their aspect more than ferocious. The face and other parts of the body are not cut but smeared with fats and other substances.

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One more ornament is sometimes added to create a ferocious look. This consists of a small bar of wood or shell that runs through the nostrils. However, this practice, though still observed in some of the tribes, is gradually falling into disuse.

Men and women alike rub their bodies from head to foot with fish oil to which they add a red resinous substance, probably to guard themselves from the sting of the numerous and extremely disagreeable tropical insects.

The men take pride in oiling their long hair so much and so frequently that it becomes eventually stiff and rigid. When it has become quite stiff, they twist it round and round on spikes of wood which they perch on the very tops of their head, tying the peaks up with women's hair or with some vegetable strands. Besides all these hair ornamentations some even add a sort of spear which they run across their head, giving them a most ferocious appearance.

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The men were extremely careful never to oil or grease their beards, nor the women their short curly hair.

If the oiling of their bodies kept away flies and other flying insects, it certainly did not make them immune to millions of tiny insects with which swarmed on their bodies. During the period of rest, it was the woman's duty or pleasure to search for these insects. This she did with utmost dexterity and patience, destroying them in her mouth as do monkeys.

The western tribes derived their existence mostly by catching turtles, fish and an occasional dugong. It is really remarkable how a very small quantity satisfied their needs. The other tribes fished with spears having points of stone or shell, while these caught the turtles using a net from six to nine metres long, one metre wide

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and a mesh of about 20 to 25 centimetres square.

These nets were made from the leaves of the “Grass Tree” or *Richea dracophylla*,¹ which were treated by immersion in water for a certain length of time, after which the natives spread the leaves on their knees and tore them into the long strands with which they wove their nets.

The fish was generally eaten roasted on live embers. Of course, the scales and intestines were never removed. The exception was when a very large fish was caught. Then the liver was removed and its oils extracted by heating it in large shells. This was swallowed most gluttonously.

Another most enjoyable but very ravenous feast was that of turtle eggs, the oils of which were used not only as food but also as the main ointment of their bodies.

In extreme cases of want and hunger, they would eat crabs, stingrays, lizards, beetles, snakes and even wild dogs, but these instances were very rare. On a nearby island flocks of pigeons could be seen but aside from having nothing to catch them with they did not have means of transport to reach them.

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All classes of crustaceans and polyps² were rigidly avoided. The natives took special pains never to touch any of these animals. Whether through fear or superstition, the two castaways were never able to discover.

The dates of a certain species of date palm furnished a toothsome and valuable article of food.³

The lighting of fire was a remarkable procedure. Two pieces of white wood were prepared. From one piece all the bark was carefully removed and the other piece was made sharp and pointy.

Placing this sharp point on the polished surface the native gave the wood a very rapid whirl.

This he continued to do with so much celerity that pretty soon a red glow would show itself almost immediately followed by a lively flame.

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The women of the tribe, in their constant and curious wanderings, were the water carriers. The precious liquid was carried on their heads in wooden vessels about half-a-foot deep, scooped out of the trunk of a certain palm. Instead of bringing the water to their mouths to drink it the Aborigines lapped it up from a large shell – as do creatures in the wild, while the South Australian took his draught from human skulls.

The arms and weapons used by the West Australians were very few and essential in their simplicity, barely harmful as these tribes had not acquired the malice and cunning of the other tribes who usually poisoned their spears and darts. The weapons of offense consisted of the *Galle*, the *Bellara*, the *Bellara-manno* and the *Be-manno* and a sort of lance full of knots in the wood. The only weapon of defense was a plainshield not very large and quite simple.

The *Galle*, which is the Boomerang or *Khilie* of the eastern tribes, is a curved stick, sometimes resembling a rude and very open letter V made of hardwood, round on one side and flat on the other, about one metre long, five centimetres wide and two centimetres thick.

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It is grasped on one end and thrown sickle-wise either straight up into the air, or downward, so as to strike the ground at some distance from the thrower. In the first case, it shoots off with a rotary motion as its shape would indicate and after ascending to a great height, it suddenly returns making an elliptical orbit to its very starting point. When the boomerang is directed downward it rebounds in a straight line, pursuing a ricochet movement until it actually strikes the object at which it is aimed.⁴

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The most singular curve occurs when it is projected upward at an angle of about forty-five degrees, it describes a backward flight and the native throwing it stands with his back to the object that he intends to hit. The Australians are specially dexterous with this weapon and can make it fly in almost any direction, sometimes even making it rebound before striking.

The *Bellara* is a spear about two-and-a-half metres long and about twenty⁵ centimetres wide, highly sharpened at one end and hollow at the other, and unlike the spears of the other tribes, it has neither rough edges of stone nor blunt edges of shell. This spear is also used like an arrow, being projected at a distance with the aid of another weapon called *Bellara-manno*, this taking the place of the bow. How the very large spear can become an arrow to the very much smaller weapon which becomes the bow is a secret which only the Indigenous Australians who use it can fathom.

The *Bellara-manno*

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is a flat instrument of elliptical shape about fifty centimetres long and about one half as wide, very different from the *Womera*, the javelin of the East Australian. One extremity of this weapon is finished with a sharpened edge of flint, which is the only instrument used in the making and sharpening of all the other weapons. This piece of flint is cemented into its position by means of a resin which flows abundantly from a species of pine-like tree.⁶

These Australian men possess a third kind of *Bellara* twice as long and as wide as the one above described, the only difference being in its finish, which the wily Aborigine introduces.

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It consists of five or more wooden projections made in the shape of teeth and presumably serving the purpose of the same. The more malicious East Australian actually uses kangaroo teeth imbedded in the wood with the ever present resin.

The *Bemanno* is used almost entirely in fishing, this being a pole about three-and-a-half metres long, sharpened only at one end, which is one centimetre in diameter, the other end about one-and-a-half centimetres wide, while the centre is more than five centimetres wide.

A rectangular board about a metre long and about twenty-seven centimetres wide and not quite half a centimetre thick is the only arm of defence this Aborigine tribe of men use and this principally to protect themselves against their arrow-like *Bellara-manno*. This board was carried on the arm in a sort of socket carved out of the same wood.

All these weapons and all other utensils used by the Australian tribes are made from the *Casuarina*. There are no leaves to this tree, but in place of them are short, toothed, ribbed sheaths resembling the giant *Equiseta* or Horse-tails.

They are generally called Beefwoods, their timber being of the colour of raw beef, but in Australia they are often termed she-oaks. The young cones of Casuarina quadrivalvis, when chewed, yields a pleasant acid and are useful to those who cannot obtain water; in

cultivated Australia, cattle also are exceedingly fond of them. [
About thirty-two species are known.

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Almost incredible to civilized man is the fact that all these various instruments are made, cut and carved with one of the very simplest and just barely sharpened flint of *Bellara-manno*.

The men carry their spears and short weapons strung to their side on a cord made of the fibrous roots of the *Xanthorrhoea* or grass tree⁷, the latter also yielding the fibres with which the nets are woven. A curious Indigenous custom is also that of braiding a wide belt of women's hair, made strong and unbreakable by immersion for a certain length of time in human urine.

Strangely enough these men possessed a few knives, hatchets and one or two axes that were either lost by or given them by some English settlers. These were regarded as almost of divine origin and never under any circumstances to be used. The boys often begged for the use of an axe at least to chop some wood, but to no avail. These instruments or *Chumberi* were not to be handled.

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The western tribes differ essentially from the northern and eastern tribes not merely in the making and using of weapons, but more especially in their mode of life in general.

The very harmlessness of their weapons proved conclusively their guileless souls and, as was remarked once before, they never resorted to poisons to assure the deadly aim of their arrows and spears.

The West Australian is not a cannibal tribe like his East Australian brother. It may be true that at certain times they do consume flesh. This is not through a spirit of cruelty or ferocity but merely from a spirit of religious devotion. For instance, eating of flesh is celebrated only on the death of a child and then with utmost veneration. The body of the child is roasted on live coals and the whole tribe participates in this gruesome feast. More horrible still to our ideas and thoughts is the fact that the parents of the dead child seem to be the most honoured and venerated guests. On absolutely no other occasion does this flesh-eating tendency manifest itself.

These tribes have not the least idea of supremacy or government of any kind.

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They know no king, no chief to guide or direct either the whole tribe in general or a few families in particular. They simply lead a life guided solely by instinct of the wild, each individual family though forming independence.

But the most striking fact, that leaves a most wonderful impression on the mind, is the marvellous friendship, harmony and brotherhood that exist in these diverse families who do not attempt to have either chief or head to guide and counsel them.

Family life is full of vigour; the father is the absolute chief lord and master, not only of his own wife and children but also of other members who in other relationships belong to it. As to the wife, as far as the whites were capable of observing, she was limited to her husband alone. The men provided for the daily food by fishing, while the women cared for the children, brought in wood from the forests for fires, and water from the wells, this being their special duty and most particularly on the long marches.

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The majority of Australian tribes live in shelter or caves or huts of some kind, but the West Australian Aborigines lived under no shelter whatever, leading the life of nomads, continually wandering from place to place, notwithstanding the excessive tropical heat or the torrential rains of the wet seasons. They never suffered from actual cold as the temperature hardly ever goes below tropical spring, hence both men and women were always absolutely nude.

Numeration to them is known only by two numbers, *Cun-jiri* (one) and *Gudara* (two) As to calculations these are out of the question. Any number between two and ten is expressed by the word, *Wrai*; any number above that consists of a particular gesture accompanied by the sound *Brr*. Necessarily divisions of time, days, weeks, months and years also are unknown. Still they distinguish tomorrow from today using an abbreviated *To-morning*,

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a corruption of tomorrow morning, which they must have some time, somehow heard from the English.

The idea of deity is also very obscure. The few mysterious actions and words repeated and performed at the beginning of every fishing expedition are the nearest approach to anything resembling a religious ceremony. They, however, have some ideas of supreme beings superior to man. Some of them good, some evil. *Junowanyabari*, who ruled them with the power of Jupiter and Eolus and Neptune, kept them in abject fear and trembling.

This god or gods lived on the very peak of the highest mountains and from thence set forth fearful lightning, terrific storms and blistering winds. They feared the evil powers more than they adored the good.

About midnight of an exceptionally dark and cloudy night all of a sudden the whole tribe rose like one man and advancing towards the edge of a cliff huddled together in a group, emitting the most violent shrieks and unearthly whistles imaginable, as though, by these means, they could ward off some impending catastrophe. Shaking and trembling in every limb,

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all kept their eyes riveted on the distant mountain. When the two whites rushed to the scene to discover the cause of this fierce outbreak, they were told in mysterious undertones, to go to the spring.

Fearing nothing and wishing to show some expression of gratitude towards their benefactors, they unhesitatingly proceeded in the direction of the springs. Now, whether they wanted merely to test the courage of the two men, or whether they feared some untoward accident may befall them, they were brusquely and almost forcibly ordered to return.

This scene of abject terror lasted over half-an-hour. Then as suddenly as the terror started it quietened as easily. Each group returned very quietly to its own resting place without uttering a sound and thereafter no allusion was ever made to the incident.

What was it? A hallucination? These men were certainly superstitious as was proven by various actions. For instance, the two boys had religiously saved three watches, solemn reminders of their past lives.

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The Aborigines must have in some instances seen English men with them, for they expressed no astonishment. Yet they treated these watches with utmost resentment, breaking them into pieces and whatever small spring or other works they could not destroy by hand were pounded and crushed under heavy rocks.

The life of these simple and harmless children of nature could not show what were their religious beliefs. But they certainly were imbued with something which led them to do good instead of wrong: *Waba*, meant good and *Mirawaba*, bad. It is a remarkable fact that as long as the two shipwrecked boys wandered with these Aborigines the latter were never caught guilty of an indecent or immoral act – a most remarkable condition.

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Sometimes a few angry words and ugly quarrelsome movements were passed, but what were these compared to the very goodness of heart and generosity of soul which on every occasion they showed the unfortunate castaways.

The tribes of East Australia believe that the souls of the dead ascend to the stars. Whether the West Australians entertain the same ideas it is hard to tell. The two boys noticed certain rituals observed on the occasion of the death of a child which led them to conclude that, however essential their wild nature, the belief of the immortality of the soul seemed implanted in their hearts. This is a consoling and bracing thought to man in every stage and condition of life.

That these Australian nomads are good-natured, quiet, human and generous was abundantly proven in all their relations with the two castaways, whom they treated at all times with consideration and generosity. The initial regard for the tattooed nude savages was quickly changed to gratitude and soon, very soon, a new feeling arose in their breasts, namely, the earnest hope that the ever-wandering nomad, always so solicitous for their welfare, would eventually lead them to a civilized European settlement,

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to hope and life once more.

Let us now go back to the camp where we had left our tribe with the two castaways, and, following them in their wanderings, we will not fail to be struck with astonishment and admiration for this man in the wild, so true to nature and yet so kind and good, unguided by anything but his own impulses and the Hand of his Creator alone.

NOTES AND REFERENCES – CHAPTER VII

- 1 The Rijeka manuscript gives this as *di Ibisco Eterophilo – hibiscus heterofilus*. This hibiscus plant was known to be used in the construction of Aboriginal rafts. Where then did the “Grass Tree” *Richea dracophylla* identification come from? Clearly the error is purposeful and curious as *Richea dracophylla* is quite rare and found mostly in Tasmania. Could it be that Bačić and his wife were trying to describe Green Bird Flower, *Crotalaria cunninghamii* which like *hibiscus heterofilus* is an erect shrub up to 2 meters which however, like *Richea dracophylla*, is very stringy and was used for string-making and in the construction of rafts. Green Bird Flower, *Crotalaria cunninghamii* is very plentiful on the North West Cape.
- 2 Elsewhere Angelina uses polyp (*polipi*) as jelly fish although it could also mean octopus.
- 3 *Cicas Ridleyi* is mentioned in the original manuscript but again not in Angelina’s translation.
- 4 The description of the boomerang in the original manuscript is quite technical. It would seem that this technicality does not interest Angelina as much. Her translation of the boomerang passages is truncated.
- 5 This seems unlikely. Two centimetres is probably the intended width.
- 6 The manuscript describes this tree as having a woody stem, triangular foliage, being cylindrical and tall, terminating with mutifloral clumps but the actual name of the tree is not legible.

- 7 As in Note 1 it is likely that Bačić and his wife were trying to describe Green Bird Flower, *Crotalaria cunninghamii* which is very plentifully on the North West Cape. The bark of this plant was also used to make sandals called “Balga”. It also happens that in southwest of Western Australia where Bačić spent some time before returning home “Balga” is the local Aboriginal name for “Grass Tree” – *Xanthorrhoea*.

VIII

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The tribe remained in this camp seven days; in fact, this stop was longer than the usual ones.*¹

On the eighth day of this last stop, the tribe gathered together evidently to proceed ahead and the two boys, who had become accustomed to them, decided to follow them, hoping almost against hope, that this step would later mean rescue to them.

The only preparation for the trip was an ample provisioning of water.

(*1) About this time, the two shipwrecked men had lost track of the days, which succeeded themselves with the same sad monotony, but after a short while their memory became more faithful and, by comparison, they were able to re-establish themselves, by figuring the number of days of travel, the various stops and the duration of the same and pretty soon the dates were so well connected as to include the very date of their rescue.

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This the women carried in scooped-out wooden bowls. As an extra precaution and in order not to lose a single drop of the precious liquid, they made a paste of herbs and grasses with which they plastered the outside of the bowls, so that in case of a leakage in the wood, the cement would save the rest. The women prepared a network of twigs and branches on which they rested their precious burden and which allowed a gentle swaying movement without losing a single drop. It was the sacred duty of every girl on reaching her twelfth year, to carry the water, to go in search of it and provide it for the tribe.

They started their march southward with the two boys and in bands they formed according to their family relations. It suddenly dawned on *Bačić* and *Jurić* that this day must be about 3 February, the feast of St. Blaise, the patron saint of Dubrovnik (*Ragusa*) – their native town. Sadly and longingly they thought of that far-away home where loved ones in church were praying for them as they started on their unknown trip, but brushing aside their tears, on they went.

They had not marched far before they realized that it would be utterly impossible to keep pace with the men who, light of foot and inured to hardships, easily could walk at the rate of about five miles an hour. Spent with fatigue, they leaned on the arms of some

The women prepared their children, and the wooden vessels filled with water. Without water, the natives did not move anywhere. Only women took care of the water, beginning from the age of twelve. Their procession loaded with wooden vessels for water followed the men, who were already well advanced.

The men caught fish along the way, cleared the path, and chose where to camp at night. They would light fires and prepare the fish they caught but would not even taste it until their families arrived at the camp.

The tribe was on the move. According to *Bačić's* calculation, the date was 3 February 1876, the day of Dubrovnik's patron.

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of their willing companions who, though they noticed the plight of their protégés, did not, however, slacken speed, simply dragging, though sometimes almost carrying the young fellows along. The women did not get as much assistance and besides, laden as they were as water carriers, they were always in the van of the procession.

They also followed a different route, a trodden path at the edge of a valley, now and then crossing a hill so thickly covered with matter and thorny underbrush that progress was indeed difficult. Strangely enough all reached the same spot where for the first time the Australians had taught the shipwrecked men how to get water by burrowing in the sand – the same spot also which *Bačić* had reached when he went in search of flour (E).

Here they decided to stop for a short while. Some of the men immediately went fishing, leaving the women and children on top of the hill. But about forty of the men seemed anxious to continue marching and invited the two boys to join them repeating constantly, “*Tataruga woteri,*”

And this is how they moved from one place to another. The daily food supply varied from poor to abundant and was always divided into equal parts.

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meaning evidently they were going in search of turtles.

This last crowd kept on running, followed by some of the women water carriers, and crossing a small brackish lake (**G**), they kept on marching until nightfall, a few of them dropping off to fish.

After a somewhat meagre supper and digging the usual holes in the sand, they all retired to a well-earned rest.² All of a sudden about midnight the air was rent by terrific shrieks and mingled moans of sorrow and despair.

What was it? And why did not the others arise to console the stricken one? These unearthly cries were the funeral hymn shrieked by one of the women, who in the past few days had lost her husband. In fact, the boys remembered he had been missing from the tribe, but what became of him no one seemed to know or care.

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And what became of his body? Was he dead? Another mystery.

His wife kept on her frightful lamentations until morning, repeating them several nights in succession.

The next morning at dawn, notwithstanding the excitement of the previous night, the natives arose, always repeating the words, "*Tataruga woteri*," and, sure enough, turtle fishing started in earnest. It did not seem to require much effort to secure the prizes.

The natives, quick at observing, would watch the turtles when they would swim near shore or come in to bask in the sunshine and quietly sleep.

The greatest joy for the tribe was to come across an area full of turtles. These native men were masters in catching these

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Quick as lightning, the aborigine would throw himself into the sea, catch the unwary turtle, turn it over on its back and, notwithstanding all its furious struggles, it would soon become a captive. Another method was to spread the nets near land and the simple turtle would soon get tangled in its meshes to the immense delight of the hungry crowd. The head was immediately chopped off. The intestines, liver, etc. were then removed through this opening. These were later liquefied, melted and swallowed. Then the whole turtle, shell and all, was placed under a big pile of hot embers.

After remaining a little while in this fiery furnace, the turtle was withdrawn, torn into small pieces, which again were allowed to rest for a while on the fire, after which the pieces were distributed to the crowd.

Our men, who were so anxious to get a taste of this new meal, did not get a very big share, as the aborigines were themselves very famished and could hardly spare much to their equally starving guests.

Worse still, water too became scarce. Very few drops remained after this meal.

While the big turtles lay quietly sunbathing along the shore, the men would jump in, grab them by the neck and pull them out on the sand. The turtles twitched and wriggled, but the strong hands of the natives did not let them go.

The necks were stretched, plucking the intestines and ravenously chewed and swallowed – all of it raw.

After alleviated their hunger, they would light a fire, lay a turtle on it, cover it with embers. When the turtle was half-baked, they would break it up into pieces and bake these again while incessantly and impatiently checking to see if they were ready to be eaten.

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They had no other option but to retrace their steps towards the old spring.

So they all started going back again in a northerly direction. They had barely covered half of the distance when night overtook them, as in all tropical countries the night sets in with wonderful rapidity as soon as the sun disappears from view.

After spending the night on a small hill overlooking the sea, the next morning (5 February) found them up and ready to proceed towards the springs of life-giving water. Every now and then a few of the men would drop off to try to fish as hunger was making itself keenly felt. At about nine or ten o'clock they reached the spring (**E**) and also met the other portion of the tribe who had camped there.

Restlessness being characteristic of the tribe, it soon tired of its place of rest and after roasting their fish and saturating their ardent thirst, they again turned their steps northward, reaching at about noon the fine fertile plain (**F**) where for the first time they had offered hospitality to the shipwrecked men.

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Here they stopped, ate again, and then prepared the twigs and branches for the fire of the next morning's meal.

The next day (6 February) around two in the afternoon they reached a fine and almost fertile large plain, which was immediately recognized as the general rendezvous of the various tribes from the quantity of fish bones scattered around.

As usual, the fire was made, the fish baked, but strange to say it remained untouched until evening, as the women heavily loaded with the water vessels had not yet reached the site. The natural good heartedness of these men of nature manifested itself not only in this instance but also in many others, as their almost constantly famished condition could have induced them to devour all the food.

The next day (7 February) found them following a path at the foot of sandy hills, but the fish were getting scarcer, the only food remaining being about fifty turtles eggs. The castaways always received some of the lucky find, even though their portions were very small, while the women were deprived of this delicacy,

The natives did not share eggs with their wives either, as there was a rule that this rare and much-valued food should be eaten immediately and only by those who found it.

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unless they succeeded in locating the eggs themselves.

It was difficult for our men to understand exactly what was meant by “*tataruga chembo*” and, besides, they never succeeded in locating the delicious morsels. Spurred on by hunger which was now making itself felt, they watched the fishermen very carefully to try to discover their secrets.

To the alert eye of the aborigine, the task was indeed an easy one. With a little digging they would bring out the toothsome morsels hidden by the turtle in a series of holes about five feet deep near the edge of the water.

About three o'clock in the afternoon the tribe reached a spring of fresh water where a stop was made and, following the usual custom, the food was prepared and left untouched, until the

Turtle eggs were considered to be their greatest delicacy. From experience, they knew where to find the turtle nests but kept it a secret. They did not want to entrust this knowledge to Bačić or Jurić and laughed at their efforts to uncover the nests while constantly teasing and misdirecting them.

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women reached the resting place. This was generally a few hours later. This same monotonous life was repeated daily: almost always walking in a northerly direction at the foot of the hills; stopping every now and then to fish and eat; and resting at nightfall at a spot where there was a plentiful supply of water and where they could replenish their jugs for the next days march.

About 9 February, although keeping the same direction, they came down to lower hills, nearer the sea shore. "*Mayabulo*" were the cries that arose from all sides and to the immense astonishment of the two Europeans, two empty canoes were sighted.

These canoes were carved out of some light tropical wood and were carved at one end. There was an attempt at ornamentation in a few bamboo sticks arranged more or less symmetrically and forming a sort of shelter. Judging from the trimming and the extreme scarcity

Walking along the sea one day, the natives noticed a small canoe in the water and hurriedly jumped in to drag it to the shore. Reaching this hollowed-out stump, they mounted it deftly and rowed it to the shore, shouting: "*Majabulo! Majabulo!*"

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of these canoes, they certainly could not have been the workmanship of the tribe, but probably of some Malays who had stopped on these shores in search of water. Or probably some generous soul had kindly left them with these nomads.

Extremely light, there was absolutely no trouble in launching them. Two of the tribe, one, *Bengo*, and the other, *Jimi*, jumped in and almost rode them as though they were horses, venturing out towards deeper water, rowing and directing all their movements with their hands.

It is almost impossible to understand how well and how easily these two individuals managed their canoes. The two castaways watched them intently, struck with the idea that perhaps by this means they would be saved by some passing ship. As often as they could they would attempt to get in, but because of their absolute inexperience and their inability of maintaining an equilibrium the only result of their attempt was a quick tilt and a good ducking, to the great amusement of their companions.

Before sundown *Bengo* and *Jimi* returned

They waved to the young men and invited them to join them. Bačić and Jurić did try to get into the canoe, but their efforts were in vain. The canoe swayed and overturned, accompanied by eruptions of merry laughter from the natives on the shore.

The two young native men Bengo and Jimmy tried to help by demonstrating how it is done, but again without success. Deftly perched in the canoe, the two native men went off hunting for turtles.

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dragging behind them two huge turtles, a grand meal for the community.

On the third day (18 February) this spot³ was abandoned to start tracking again in that northerly direction, but always keeping in view the springs of water which other tribes before them had opened up. The same order of marching was always maintained. The women generally walked at the foot of the hill to get some little protection from the violent rays of the sun and the men hugged the shores to secure now and then a few fish for the evening meal. These men walked incessantly and untiringly, stopping only to take a single meal at nightfall, after which they would burrow into their holes in the sand for a night's rest.

As they marched on they kept on repeating to their two protégés, "*minara denki nagoru*". Though the latter had succeeded in understanding a number of words, still they could not fathom the meaning of these. From the solicitous and kindly tone in which they were so frequently repeated they decided that these words meant something very good, so looking forward with the eyes of hope and youth, the absolute despair of their situation seemed somewhat broken by a ray of light.

"*Minar donki nagoru*," shouted the natives, waving their arms merrily and jumping around Bačić. "*Minara, minara*" they shouted even when they were back in the green valley full of springs of clear water. Bačić and Jurić looked overwhelmed, not understanding why the natives were so happy.

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Almost with every footstep these mystical words were repeated with such exuberant demonstrations of joy and happiness that the two poor outcasts, unable to understand anything at all, could barely smile at all this gladness which eventually might mean nothing at all to them. In the frame of mind and in this state of affairs they finally reached a fine and fertile plain (L) with numberless springs of fresh water. "*Minaro, minara,*" again shouted the blacks.

Here they apparently decided to remain awhile. Some of the men went to the seashore in search of food, while the others kept on lazily drifting northward. Apparently, all seemed to wait for the women to arrive, for as we have said before, the latter always came in many hours later owing to the heavy burdens they carried. Towards sunset the women did arrive, but still they waited expectantly for some one or something else. This was about 15 February.

At last the mystery was solved and the anxiety lifted by the arrival of another large tribe of Australians, quite numerous and friendly.

And the screams, cheers, and tapping of bare feet did not stop. Suddenly a crowd of natives descended from a nearby hill. Their cries grew louder.

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There were now such wild shouts of welcome from those awaiting them, such gestures and yells, such screams and laughter that accompanied the crowd. It was indeed a meeting between friends who had not seen one another for a very long time. There was then the long interchange of experiences good and bad, of joy and happiness as well as of sufferings endured.

Conversation never lagged a moment and naturally in the midst of which was the account of the shipwreck, of the sad death of all the unfortunate survivors and of the rescue of the very last two. These stories must have touched the crowd, the women especially who, looking at them with pity in their eyes, began repeating: "*Kachuljamoro! Kachuljamoro!*"

Almost spontaneously, and cutting short the accounts which seemed so interesting some of the blacks addressing the two whites exclaimed, "*Minara denki bolue,*" and others picked up the chorus also chanting, "*Minara denki bolue*".

Laughter erupted and echoed throughout the valley. The natives patted each other on the back, hit one another with joy, and talked loudly about something to their compatriots while beating on their arms and legs. In these conversations, they often pointed to their two white guests as if talking about their fate.

The newcomer's women, listening to the story, looked at them sadly and sighed:

"*Kaciuga moro, kaciuga moro.*"

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The unfortunate whites, anxious at all these manifestations and entirely ignorant as to what they meant, could only smile with their benefactors, while their hearts were breaking with anxiety, their temples throbbing with suspense.

What could all these generous men mean?

The latter noticing the inability of our boys to understand their meaning and anxious to relieve their suspense, decided to go into more explicit details, seizing them by the hands and almost dragging them along. What a strange and sad sight to greet their eyes!

It was the yawl of the ill-fated *Stefano*, staunchly secured from high tide and heavy winds and waves, high up on the beach. The natives had tried to repair its sails with pieces of canvas they had found and had also tried to close the gaping hole in its side with the resin they used on their weapons. The yawl must have been brought to this spot to be used in turtle fishing. The oars too had been providently cast up by the waves in the same spot.

“*Minara denki bolu!*” The men sang, “*Minara denki bolu.*” The young men went with them, letting them pull their arms and pat them on the back. Arriving at the shore, they had something to see!

On the waterline lay the lifeboat from the *Stefano* turned to its side. The same lifeboat that Bačić was on when the waves carried him to the shore. The bottom of the boat was punctured, and oars lay in the sand. The natives were happy to see the joy in the eyes of their protégés.

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This then was the cause of all the agitation of the natives, this then was the great thing these good hearts were offering. In fact, they recalled the promise, “*Minara denki nagoru*,” meaning possibly, “Shortly you will see the yawl,” and, “*Minara denki bolue*,” meaning, “Shortly you will sail in the yawl.”

Returning to the site of their resting place, they began to prepare their supper on an elaborate scale. The new arrivals had brought a great quantity of turtle meat, so the supper proved most sumptuous. They sat in groups of three to seven persons according to their families, lavishing unwanted attention on their protégés, who were obliged to run from one group to another in order to please one and all who vied with each other in their offerings, continually repeating, “*Denki, denki*”, probably a corruption of the English “Take it, take it”.

Supper over, the usual task of gathering

“*Minara denki bolu*” they still sang convincingly, as if to say: “You’ll be sailing the boat again soon.”

Until then, everyone in the camp was busy. Large turtles were baked for the evening feast. A happy meeting was going to be celebrated.

The feast lasted until late into the night. The newcomers, it seemed, liked the young men. They competed with the host tribe to provide them with more favours and to better serve them.

“*Denki! Denki!*”⁹ They offered roasted meat and invited the men to sit by their fire or to lie down next to them.

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twigs and hedge for the morning fire took place. This time the task was big as the crowd was large, the addition of the new tribe bringing the number to about one hundred and eighty. That solemn chant which had been sung the first day of the meeting and which had not been heard since was intoned once more. To the ears of the two boys, it recalled the day when they lay almost dead of hunger and thirst and these kind-hearted blacks happened to come along and saved them from the sad fate which their companions had met (F).

The song over, the sand pits were prepared and in a short while all was as silent as a grave. But sleep, blessed sleep refused to come to the poor castaways for the sight of the yawl had now opened all their wounds, bringing back to their minds all their sufferings. In memory they pictured again all the last sad scenes when one after another of their companions in misfortune had left them for their eternal rest. Home, family and friends – would they ever see them again? Though the angel of hope was buoyed up by their youth, yet grim despair was beginning to fasten its clutches on their soul.

Early, very early the next morning, the yawl equipped with its five oars and manned with about ten natives and the two whites,

When everything was calm and the last songs and shouts had completely subsided, the young men remained awake. The damaged lifeboat from the *Stefano* reminded them of the pleasant days spent on the ship, of their great expectations, of the horrors and death on the night of the storm, and of the horrible deaths of their comrades.

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was launched out on the bosom of the ocean in search of turtles. This adventure failed signally by the leaky condition of the yawl and the slipping away of the oars from their broken locks. The inexperience of the rowers only brought on excessive laughter and the expedition was given up.

Fortunately, there was enough turtle's meat left to provide for another evening's meal in which they all participated with high glee, without a thought of where tomorrow's meal would come from.

The enigmatic old song was again intoned as on the previous night, just before retiring. Then another incident aroused the astonishment and curiosity of the whites. Almost noiselessly about fifty natives made flaming torches and bearing them aloft threw themselves into the sea, swimming out quite a distance.

The following days passed in rejoicing and feasting with the natives.

The newcomers wanted to show the two young men their skills and abilities, which brought new surprises to them every day.

One evening the natives became greatly excited. They prepared torches, and for an hour, were constantly looking at the sea and then at the sky. When the night fell, they lit torches, walked down to the sea, and began swimming while holding the torches high in their hands, which shone like stars. Soon the expedition returned, dragging many turtles and long, snake-like fish. From the shore, they were greeted by loud merriment and celebration of women and elderly natives.

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Their search was crowned with success, for before the torches were extinguished, they brought in quite a supply of turtle and eels, some of the latter over a metre long.

This furnished a feast not only for the following day, but for two days after the tribe enjoyed the fruit of the night's adventure.

The newcomers had also taken quite a fancy to the two whites. Two especially attached themselves to their service: *Jimmi* was in constant attendance upon *Jurić*, becoming almost his shadow and *Jaki* performed the same offices for *Bačić*.

On 19 February the two tribes decided to separate, so the two boys thought it their duty to remain with the first tribe that had rescued them. This tribe however, knowing possibly or feeling that the larger tribe would lead the whites to some European settlement, kept on repeating, "*Bulura wagaj*," meaning, "Go on ahead".

Not long after, the tribes began to part. The newcomers insisted and begged *Bačić* to join them with his friend:

"*Butur vaj*" - "Come with us," they urged, but the young men were hesitant. They thought their benefactors would disapprove. In the end, however, they agreed.

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But the boys, although inclined to follow the second tribe – especially as it always proved the most apt in securing food – yet gratitude to the first tribe prevented them from leaving.

While they were still deliberating, undecided, an old man from the top of a hill which had already been reached, shouted at the top of his voice, “*Wac-balla Gudarago go!*” – “Wait for the whites”.

The tribe stopped short for the two whites to bid an affectionate farewell to their old benefactors. They then joined the new tribe, which consisted of about one hundred persons all told.

For five consecutive days, with barely any stop or rest, they marched towards the north. Now and then a few men would leave the others to fish and to search for turtles. These paths must have been new ones to the wanderers, as they were by no means easy or pleasant. They led over low sand hills, through thorny and matted undergrowth, and here and there, small patches of briny burnt up grasses.

The new acquaintances were smarter and more skilful, knew the area better, and always had enough food. Also, their names, such as *Jimmy*, *Jackie*, and the like, gave our boys hope that one day they would meet the English, from whom the natives had learned all these words.

Gently bidding farewell to their old friends, the shipwrecked men set out.

The long walk through the rocky country was strenuous and too fast for the young men. They were not yet accustomed to walking barefoot for so long, and they looked forward to the hour when the natives would stop to catch fish. This was the only time the shipwrecked men could sit down and rest their bloodied feet.

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Discouraged and footsore they retraced their steps <southward> and in two more days found themselves at their original starting point.

Jurić, exhausted by the long and weary tramp, and more so by the scorching heat of the sun, simply could not make another step and fell to the ground in agony. Noticing this, his generous hosts stopped also, sending out two of their men to call *Bačić*, who, ignorant of the condition of his companion, kept marching ahead with the foremost crowd.

When the latter returned to minister to his ailing friend, his whole tribe stopped also and none of the men moved on until *Jurić* felt properly restored, proving yet again as in many other instances, their innate goodness and generosity.

One day, *Jurić* couldn't take it anymore. The wounds on his legs hurt too much. He collapsed and called out to *Bačić*, who was already well behind him. Hearing his moaning, *Jackie*, one of the natives, ran forward and called *Bačić*. The whole group stopped and carefully gathered around *Jurić*. Further travel was delayed until he fully recovered.

9. Likely distorted English word "take it".

VII

About the 25 February they reached the spot (L) where the two tribes had spent several happy days together. Of the original tribe only a few men were found. Where had the others disappeared? The yawl also was gone from its mooring place, had the absent ones taken it away? A strange thing was soon to happen which excited wild fear and intense astonishment in the two boys.

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The two tribes hitherto so peaceful, seemed to have reached some disagreement and it was not long before their wild tempers showed themselves in all their unchecked and hideous fury.

Dividing themselves into two groups, one remaining on the top of the hill and the other stationing itself at the bottom, they presented a scene of Dante-like infernal horror. The fierce yells, the screaming whistles, the shriek of the boomerang, the *Galle* and the *Bellara* as these instruments plowed through the air, was horrifying to the two boys. Alarmed for their own safety, they fled in consternation and joined the women who were on the sands along the shore.

I will never forget the attention, love, and care I received from these native people - Bačić told Jurić. "Who knows, if we had joined them earlier, many of our comrades might still be alive now. Remember, Jurić, as I remember! We will talk to the cultured white people about the humanity and love of the uncultured natives."

In a few days, the whole group returned to the plain, where they first met the young, shipwrecked men but did not find the families of their old acquaintances. The lifeboat was gone as well. It was as if they had all disappeared from this world.

But suddenly, like ghosts, they emerged from the bushes, furiously shouting and whirling boomerangs, as if an evil rage had seized them, or as if they wanted to show the white boys that they too could be belligerent and hostile.

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The latter, in the beginning of the fight, hardly paid any attention to it but as the battle raged with more fury they watched attentively, always repeating to the two boys: “*Bulac-balla pinyari*” (The blacks are quarrelling). Finally, as though they could not stand it any longer, about a dozen of the older women,

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throwing themselves in the midst of the combatants, exhorted them to stop. The victory was theirs and in a little while all laid down their arms without any fatalities. The wounded crept down to the sands among the other women to be administered by them. The others fled and disappeared in the vast desert and were not seen again for over three days.

It was the women’s turn now to get quarrelsome. Either because they did not agree about the merits or the valour of the combatants or for some other unknown reason, they too now went from mere words to blows, but without very many bloody results as there were no weapons to fight with but hands.

In all this trouble the whites were practically the greatest sufferers, owing to the absence of the men and to the number of wounded who could not help themselves. They found themselves again on the very verge of starvation and were compelled to search among the already gnawed turtle bones, some of which had just a bit of rotten meat left.

The young men did not know what to do. Unarmed, they were not allowed to approach and calm things down. Nor could they see a reason for their rage, yelling, and fighting.

In the end, the women also got involved with this mayhem crowd when trying to separate the “enemy armies”. After much screaming and scratching, they finally succeeded.

Those they chewed almost like wild animals. Many times they caught some crabs or other shell fish,

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but the women – who were always less generous than the men – would grab and take these away from them. If the women gathered a few beans, the boys made sure not to interfere or even beg for any for fear the women in anger might also disappear and leave them alone and lost in the desert as they had been once before.

About 1 March, a few stragglers were noticed on the crest of the hill; gradually, a few more appeared, to the intense happiness of the women, who, calling the two whites, sang out almost in a glorious chorus, “*Bulac-balla nagoru*” (The blacks are coming back).

Slowly they came down from the hills, looking somewhat ominous and threatening, picking up the weapons they had left behind in their flight. They examined these, evidently counting the number of blows they had sustained.

When the two parties got near the shore, they got together and made peace with one another.

Where had they been in the meantime? Evidently in the thickest of the forests, as they brought back with them quite a lot of dates from the date palm (*Cicas Ridley*). These were roasted and distributed,

The next day everything was peaceful again. Both sides forgot about yesterday’s enmity as if nothing had happened.

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and the hunger from which all seemed to suffer, became a little appeased.

Towards nightfall almost all the men went fishing, leaving behind only two old men who were evidently over sixty years of age. Among the women there were several who seemed fully eighty years old.

Four or five hours afterwards, the men re-appeared each carrying from two to seven kilograms of fish all of different sizes, but all of the same specie.

Immediately the family groups were formed, the fires lit and a happy tribe sat down to a bountiful supper from which they rose only to dig their little burrows in the sand for the night's rest and to prepare their light wood for the next day's fires.

This peaceful and bountiful day was prolonged into two more equally fine days, thus affording the two boys the opportunity of studying the different characteristics of the two tribes and of re-cementing their affections with the two blacks who had in a manner, adopted them.

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Jaki and *Jimmi* became their faithful servants and ever-watchful guardians, even denying themselves in order better to provide for their wards. From this time onwards *Jaki* was *Bačić's* nearest and dearest friend. He was a strong, unmarried young fellow about twenty years of age and formed part of a family of three grown persons. *Jurić's* friend, *Jimmi*, was also an unmarried chap about thirty years old. He formed part of an old woman's family, and as was the custom among the aborigines, she prepared his meals and carried water for him. She may have been some relative and the two together lived with a childless old couple.

Jurić was indeed happy and grateful to his *Jimmi*, for the poor fellow's shoulders were covered with ulcers brought on by all the cuts from spiny and poisonous grasses. The good Australian attended to his wants almost like a woman, dressing his wounds with repeated applications of layers of moist sand. But above all things, the two boys were never more to suffer the awful pangs of hunger, as the two self constituted guardians provided them with all sorts of little attentions.

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The other members of the tribe also seemed to feel a throb of sympathy for the unfortunate castaways. They would call *Jaki* and *Jimmi* when fish was abundant and distribute portions which were afterwards to be shared by the whites. *Jimmi* especially was over solicitous for *Jurić's* welfare and, notwithstanding the latter's objections, would very often on less plentiful fishing days, deprive his own self of food so that his friend may not go hungry. On lucky days, every bit of the catch was brought to *Jurić* who dared not refuse, lest he hurt his benefactor's feelings.

NOTES AND REFERENCES – CHAPTER VIII

- 1 The original Rijeka manuscripts has a footnote here which is given in Angelina's translation as a continuous narrative in the body of the text which immediately follows.
- 2 The half manuscript draft which the editor discovered in Dubrovnik library (Znanstvena Knjižnica, manuscript 352) indicates that the group stopped at Point I on the manuscript map. This point is not mentioned in the two complete manuscripts.
- 3 The original Rijeka manuscript gives this date as 18 February which is an error as we are told that this is the third day starting at 9 February as given on page 159.

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On the morning of 5 March, the company divided. About one hundred men and women and the two whites took the ever-eventful northerly direction and the others remained on the same site (L).

This trip proved very tiresome to the castaways. The Australian nomad, in his natural instinct, does not obey moderation. He is either starving or over-satiated and, in those long-forced marches towards a goal which no one seems to know or understand, he keeps up such a frightful pace, stopping only to get just enough food to prevent him from dropping from hunger.

When he discovers that the rocks are barren of vegetation

Some headed north, while others remained on the plain. The tribe, which Bačić and Jurić traveled with, continued with their journey.

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and the sea poor of fish he will not stop for just a little while to repair nature's spent forces. But on the other hand, if he finds an abundance of fish and beans, he will stop for days and eat and eat, ravenously.

To the two poor whites, this life was most injurious. Utterly unable to keep up with the fast trot of the natives and the sharp contrast between severe hardships and fasting and sheer idleness and over feasting played havoc with their sadly reduced vitality.

For nine consecutive days the untiring Aborigines proceeded on their weary march, feeding themselves on the crayfish which they picked up off the boiling sands.

The privations and sufferings were so great that the poor boys barely could drag themselves along.

The natives noticed this and sought to encourage them by repeating,

Bačić was interested in knowing where they were going in such a hurry and why.

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“*Bullura Wagaj*” (Let us go ahead).

Thinking from previous experiences that *Bulura* meant cape – as they always seemed anxious to reach the North West Cape – the whites would answer, “*Wan-ji Bullura*” (Where is *Bullura*?). But the answer always came back, “*Parue*” (Far away).

This trip proved eventful, not only in the sufferings endured, but it also brought the boys back to the very scene of their first trials, which made their sufferings more acute for it recalled in all its horror the sad fate of their companions and the hopelessness of their own present condition. When the late *Lovrinović* had left the first camp, he brought back to his companions an account of a boat he had noticed on the shore and, sure enough, on the fourth day of this trip the existence of this wreck was verified (M). In construction it appeared to be an English boat somewhat over five metres long, but unfortunately it was badly wrecked and many of its parts were missing.

On the seventh day, the wanderers reached the identical spot (B) where the first camp had been pitched.

“*Buhura vagaj*,” they replied when he asked them about it.

But what is *Buhura*, Bačić wondered. Isn't it North West Cape? That would have to be somewhere in the direction of their movement. “*Vangi Buhura?*” “Where is *Buhura*?” He asked further. “*Parue.*” “Very far,” was the reply, and the men hurried on.

On the way, the wanderers reached the place where the *Stefano* men had built their first shelter. The natives began to rummage among pieces of wreckage to find something.

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The natives, as if recognizing it, slackened their speed to investigate and discover if they could find anything which they may have forgotten on previous inroads.

The sight of this camp, abandoned about four months, was torture to the souls of the last two survivors of the ill-fated *Stefano*. It brought back in vivid pictures the harrowing fate of the others. No longer able to control their feelings, they wept tears of sorrow for their friends, and of despair for themselves.

The tenting of lumber was all there, just as it had been left, but the provisions and other articles buried were all gone, unearthed by the Aborigines. One exception was a large can of potatoes, which, naturally, were now all spoiled but which would have been able to stay the last dying pangs of hunger on that eventful day, 5 January.

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They also found a cask of wine which had been buried, but it lay there upturned and empty.

Bačić, of course, always the most curious of the two, discovered a needle case full of sail needles. This precious treasure he concealed in what was left of his woollen shirt, putting some to use immediately to fasten the few remaining tatters of his trousers.

At the spot where the remains of their hut once stood, they found a bucket of rotten potatoes and an empty wine barrel.

Bačić searched the entire area, but the only reward for all his efforts was a small wrap with needles and thread for mending sails. Still, that wrap was most welcome. *Bačić* sat down and started mending the remnants of his torn shirt.

This new treasure escaped the attention of most of the Australians. But the sharp eye of one of the women, noticing it, ran up to him to snatch it away. *Bačić* refused to part with it though the others urged him to let the women have it. This he refused and by so doing stirred up a real hornets' nest, as all the women crowded around him shrieking, "*Niril, niril,*" (Needles, needles).

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The men too joined the women and here was the whole tribe clamoring for needles.

Why such demonstrations? Why such anxiety to secure needles when these simple folks knew nothing either of thread or materials or their uses? *Bačić*, who of late had always been in need of food, availed himself of this unsought-for opportunity by offering the Aborigines an exchange of needles for a bite of food, or some crayfish, or anything. One of the natives was quick to seize the idea of the barter. He rushed around and soon brought *Bačić* a handful of crayfish in exchange for a precious needle – a wonderful gift which was soon in the proud possession of the man's wife.¹ *Bačić* now possessed a wonderful fortune to be exchanged for morsels of food on poor and hungry days. The value of one needle was much greater than its proverbial weight in gold, as it always brought a pound or more of fish or crayfish.

Less than a second later, a crowd of bushy women gathered around him. Shouting, "*Niril, niril,*" they tried to steal his treasure.

Bačić defended himself and hid the needles, not understanding what those women would want with them, as they have nothing to sew. All natives were as naked as a finger. But the old Dubrovnik merchant spirit quickly awoke in *Bačić*.

"I will give them to you," he said, "but you will give me food whenever we are hungry." the women agreed, and their men laughed with pleasure after seeing *Bačić* outwitting them.

The native women were, in fact, very stingy. The food they collected was prepared for themselves and their children. *Bačić* and *Jurić* never got anything from their hands. <see page [xx] >

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Evidently the tribe was bent on reaching a certain point, for it kept on going, not even stopping for the usual night's rest (N). Much to the astonishment of the whites, the ninth day these inveterate nomads met seven men of the tribe they had left only a few days before. Mutual exchange of greetings was in order, but how had they covered so much territory in such a short time? By following a very narrow path over hills and valleys which was not nearly as rough and inaccessible, and still entirely unknown to the rest of the tribe. As they got together, they decided to remain for a short while at this meeting place and, of course, took the precaution of digging for water. They began preparing their evening meal which excited

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no little horror in the whites. This supper consisted of two large rayfish, one fat lizard and four snakes.

But not all were able to sit at this feast of delicacies.

Most men who came early that morning (13 March) went out in the canoes to search for turtles and fish. Only about ten men remained on shore, *Bačić* and *Jurić* being among these, their indefatigable *Jimmi* and *Jaki* having left to fish for them.

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Finally when the Australians decided to eat their supper they performed quite a number of antics before eating the rayfish, which was generally despised by them and only eaten when driven by the pangs of severe hunger. At other times they only drank the liquefied liver and spleen which they melted into oil by removing the bones.

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Then by means of shells they crushed and pulverized the mass to which they added water, making a sort of paste which was swallowed almost repugnantly.

To catch lizards and snakes the natives used dogs to hunt them out of their hiding places. In all their travels they had with them two tamed dogs which they must have captured when quite tiny.² Before roasting the snakes and lizards the tails were always chopped off either to remove the poisons, or for some other superstition. Notwithstanding all this, this unheard-of meal was indeed welcome to the two ever-famished castaways.

At nightfall the women returned as did the men who brought some fish which were immediately devoured. Then the sand pits were dug and all retired to rest. Not so, however, poor *Jurić* who was suffering from a terrible toothache. His groans and moans

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brought to his side almost the whole tribe full of sympathy for his sufferings. All of a sudden, one of the tribe named *Challi* came to him and after chasing all the others from the suffering man, made over him some mysterious signs and chanted some unearthly jargon.

Before long the pain seemed to disappear either in truth or imagination, and the patient was at ease.

The natives had predicted a rainy day for 14 and 15 March. They pointed to the summit of a mountain at some distance on which their God "*Junovanyabari*" resided. At the prolonged roars of thunder and the vivid flashes of lightning they shook and trembled with fear and terror. Near Point Cloates (O) they were reminded of *Stefano* again when they discovered one of its cabin doors among the rocks.³ This the whites put up in some way to shelter them from the fierce rain. For three more days the whole tribe with its protégés kept on its weary march without meeting any other incidents.

On the 17 March, they divided

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into two bands, both taking the northerly direction. *Jurić* went with the first group, followed almost immediately by *Bačić* in the second group.

The day was bright, calm and clear, and the majestic silence of nature was not broken even by the footsteps of the men, which fell in noiseless thuds on the desert sands. All of a sudden loud cries of joy echoed and re-echoed in the air, the chorus continuing unremittingly: “*Janina, Yanina*”.

What had happened?

To *Bačić*, always curious and now particularly anxious to find out the cause of much happiness, was imposed the order of strict silence. Then, walking on tiptoes and looking in the direction of their wild gestures, he finally could discern a huge sea monster, swimming towards the shore.

Like an army arrayed for battle, these men of the wild formed a line to meet not their enemy, but some living thing which could keep body and soul together for many a day.

A part of the tribe remained on shore to keep strict watch on every movement of the huge fish, while the others ascended to the top of a nearby hill to light an immense bonfire

During this time, the two natives were quietly squatting on a reef and staring at the sea.

“*Janina! Janina! Janina!*” They shouted at once. And all the women and men abandoned whatever they were doing and rushed towards the sea.

The silence was grave. *Bačić* asked what was happening but did not receive an answer and had to remain silent, waiting for the event itself to provide an answer. He soon noticed what the cause of the silence was. A huge fish was swimming along the shore with almost half its body out of the water. It was the so-called “Dugong” from the East Indian Ocean that feeds on seagrass and is found along this coast.

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as a signal to any stragglers, but principally to recall the first batch of men who had set off in the early morning.

These calls for help were almost immediately answered, for they came running back as fast as they could.

About forty men spread themselves in line along the beach, all armed with flint stones and heavy logs of wood. All stood there in silence, watching, waiting for the propitious moment to strike. Then, with the fiercest of yells, all as one body plunged into the sea, carrying their large net with them, swimming about ten feet and trying to surround the animal, which, evidently aware of its danger, plunged and dived and struggled. Many a time it carried down its captors in huge eddies, to re-appear again in a few minutes and renew its struggles. At last, fearfully bruised and mortally wounded by the raining

The natives were ready: armed with batons, spears, stones, they were only waiting for the right moment. A small, primitive net made of thin rope also stood in preparation. Suddenly, forty or so bodies crashed into the sea. They caught the fish with the net and began a fierce fight. They grabbed it with their hands and beat it everywhere. Often the fish dived into the depths and dragged the men with it, but they were good swimmers and divers and did not let go.

At last, the gigantic fish was subdued, and the loud cries of women and children accompanied the hunters and the fish to the fire.

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blows of stone and log, the huge beast was dragged ashore.

This wonderful animal was the *dugongo* or dugon of the East Indian seas – a herbivorous mammal widely distributed in tropical waters and frequenting the shallow quiet bays where marine vegetation abounds. They range in size and can be over 3 metres long. Their flesh is highly thought of as food and they yield a clear oil. As this one was quite large, it proved a true manna in the desert for the ever-famished nomads.

According to the usual routine, the liver and spleen were withdrawn first to be swallowed raw this time, so eager were the hunters for the delicate morsels. Next the head and tail were chopped off, the latter also being cut in half. Next the meat was all patiently removed from the backbone and cut into small portions so as to be handled and carried about with more ease. The glowing embers were ready and the ravenous feast began.

One of the stragglers came along carrying a large turtle which he was to contribute to the evening meal. Noticing the big supper he dropped the turtle unceremoniously to take part in the better and newer spread.

When they had sufficiently appeased their hunger they started out again in that ever-constant northerly direction.

Towards sundown they met their companions,

Dissecting the fish, they pulled out its liver and intestines and ate it all raw.

Later on, they baked it - and the feast lasted three nights with much singing and dancing.

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who had proceeded so far ahead they did not notice the bonfires.

Generous to a fault, these too had to be re-fuelled with the wonderful flesh of the dugong and, of course, they all feasted over again.

Having an abundance of food they remained in the same spot and feasted for three whole days (18, 19, 20 March) – even though the drinking water dug up so near the shore was impure and brackish. This was of no consequence to the Aborigines, but to the two whites the salty water gave rise to a burning thirst. Along with the now almost decomposed dugong and the scorching rays of the tropical sun, these three days were full of agonizing suffering.

The women had appropriated a good number of pieces of sail canvas from the wreckage of the *Stefano*. After much repeated begging, the two survivors finally managed to secure these from the women. With a few upright sticks the boys succeeded in erecting

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a sort of tent which somewhat lessened the direct rays of the tropical days.

When the women saw this, they regretted parting with their gift and began to torment the boys. They even tried to tear and pull down all their work. Goaded to anger, *Bačić*, notwithstanding the prudent advice of his friend, *Jurić*, lost his temper, and seizing some sort of weapon he found on the ground, threw it at the women, thus dispersing the motley crowd. Frightened at his own audacity and fearing dire vengeance and punishment he and *Jurić* fled, hiding in the woods, not daring to put in an appearance until all the men, their special friends, had returned. When they did, no mention of the event was made by the women to their men and so it passed off unnoticed, unpunished.

The next day, as all the dugong had been devoured, it was necessary again to start searching for turtles; this they did by following the coastline and, incidentally, they located a spring of fresh clear water – a God-send to their parched throats; here also was a stopping place for that day and the whole of the next.

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An interesting incident now attracted the attention of the boys.

One of the natives, somewhat middle-aged, got into a discussion with his wife and, losing all control of himself, beat her unmercifully until she lay on the ground bleeding and unconscious. Horrified at this sight, his good natured tribesmen gathered around the offender and seizing him, began beating him until he pleaded for mercy. Then in token of reconciliation the husband and wife were obliged to smear their heads with a thick white paste made of ground shells.

After this incident, they all returned to their self-imposed duties, which consisted mostly of fishing to provide for their daily food. The two boys imagined the natives did not care to have them join their fishing party,

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judging from the superstitious signs and mysterious gesticulations which preceded each catch. But on the contrary, they were urged to come in and increase the supply.

Unfortunately they lacked the celerity and agility of the Aborigines for their efforts, though quite tiring, proved vain. A solitary jelly fish was the sole reward of their hard work. When they brought it near the fire to bake it the blacks compelled them to cast it back into the ocean as this fish was regarded with such contempt, none would touch it and, as to eating it, nothing but extreme starvation would be necessary to indulge in such a meal.

Their northward trip was not yet accomplished and on 24 March, the onward march followed the coast, all the time to ensure fishing, while three natives in canoes never relaxed their search

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for turtles. The two whites unable to keep pace with them, followed along with the women who carried water, whatever food could be procured and even the men's weapons. In fact, the former, often when dressed up in these implements of warfare, imagined themselves as fierce warriors. *Bačić*, less able to stand the strain than his companion *Jurić*, was obliged to walk with an old woman of about eighty years of age.

Just at sundown, scanning the sea's vast horizon as was his usual wont, *Bačić* suddenly stopped. Extending his arms in that direction he began wildly and convulsively waving the piece of cloth he had snatched off the old woman's shoulders. He kept this up a few minutes in a frenzy of wild ecstasy and then as suddenly he stopped. Looking upwards towards heaven and in the saddest tones of despair he cried out

“It is gone!”

This was actually the very first time since that eventful day when the two of them gave themselves up to die in the cave – only to be miraculously saved – that the poor young fellow gave way to his sad feelings.

Tracking further with this native tribe, one afternoon *Bačić* walked alongside an old woman. She was carrying a piece of sail on her back, which she found along the shore, while *Bačić* was thoughtfully searching the far-away horizon. Suddenly it seemed to him that a ship was approaching from a distance - a ship! He frantically seized the canvas from the old woman and started waving it while calling out to *Jurić*. The natives ran around him, and everyone was peering into the distance. Their sharp eyes saw better than *Bačić* - an upturned boat was floating towards them, brought here by the sea from who knows where.

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His extreme pallor attracted the attention of the old soul, who, patting him on the back and shoulders, tried to make him feel her sympathy and encouragement. But as one stricken blind, he saw and heard her not, for right there, barely a mile from them and riding the waters most gracefully, stood a full-rigged schooner, a star of hope, a beacon guide to home and life once more. His outstretched arms, his wild signalling, his hoarse voice carried to its highest pitch, all were rudely swept away in one second by a veering of the sails which seemed to blast all his hopes and to plunge him once more in the depths of the most profound despair.

Youth and hope whispering courage, he shook off his deadly lethargy and went in search of his friend, *Jurić*, to relate this latest adventure. He found the latter taking very much interest in some tale

Everyone was sad that Bačić was disappointed again, and they tried to comfort and reassure him with all possible signs:

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related by a number of Aborigines, who wound up with the refrain, “*Minara denki nagoru*” (In a little while you will see the boat).

This brought hope surging most tumultuously in the hearts of the two castaways. They too must have seen the schooner, was the consoling thought. Their disappointment was more than doubled when they found the boat the savages referred to. It was nothing more but an upturned yawl, evidently of English make, which had drifted and finally landed on a nearby point of land.

Without being aware of it, the two shipwrecked boys with their wandering companions had reached the west point of the peninsula whose extremities bear the name of Cape Vlaming and Cape North West.⁴ As they kept on wandering, they reached a ridge of land (**P**) covered with tall Eucalyptus trees and thorny undergrowth, all more or less under water.⁵ Some of the natives partly waded, waist deep, and partly swam across while the others, and with them our two men,

“*Minara denki nakarn*” - “You will see the ship.”

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coasted along the edges of this inundated spot, reaching the other side at nightfall in time only to eat a very meagre supper and then retire.

The rest was not long. The next morning, bright and early, found them ready to resume the march. This time an arm of the sea came between them and their intended destination and, to shorten the journey, it was decided to wade through, an extremely difficult feat to the boys, though the distance was only about eleven metres.

The blacks waded straight ahead apparently unaffected by the sharp cutting shell and the muddy, slippery bottom. The two whites tried to imitate them, only to slip and fall, thus providing much amusement to their companions. They gave up the attempt, preferring to swim across in their own style which, in turn, the Aborigines grotesquely tried to imitate.

On reaching the other side, the only food obtainable were two much-despised rays of which, as usual, only the liquefied liver and spleen were swallowed. About ten of the natives who had gone ahead to fish came back

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to invite the whole crowd to join them as fish was unusually plentiful.

Throwing themselves into the surf, they formed a veritable human net. Then with wonderful dexterity they struck and beat the waves with their *Bemannos*. In a few minutes they had gathered about thirty fish of different sizes. Loaded with this bountiful supply, they returned to the valley where they were joined by other members of the tribe who also came in laden with fish. But as usual, no one stopped until nightfall. Then in the company of the women they all had their big feast.

In the middle of the night, groans and moans once more rent the air. *Jurić* was suddenly attacked with a violent indigestion and, as usual, all the natives crowded around the sufferer. But it was only the medicine man, *Challi*, who could do any good. His exorcism, however, did not have as good or as quick an effect as with his late toothache, so he employed another method:

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rubbing *Jurić*'s abdomen with a tuft of the former's hair moistened with some of the fish oils. Whether the rubbing or the oily hair was effective, the patient was soon relieved.

For four more days the weary march continued (26 to 29 March) ever onward in a northerly direction, resting only at night. Another inlet had to be crossed; this, on account of its depth, required much swimming prowess. The faithful *Jaki* swam across with his protégé *Bačić* on his shoulders.

On reaching a large plain (Q) they discovered a spring full of good, sweet and clear water – the very best they had enjoyed for a very long time. As usual, the supper consisted of whatever they had gathered in the day's march, this time two turtles. After this meal they retired to the usual burrows in the sand for a night's rest. Some of the women who before sundown had gone into the woods, returned early the next morning, bringing with them a large quantity of insects resembling our domestic bee, which, after being roasted on the hot sands, proved quite a palatable morsel.

These little insects resembled our bees not only in appearance but also in habits. They build a sort of hive from the wet soft mud, which hardens when baked by the hot sun.

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These hives rise to a height of about one metre and a half and about one metre in diameter at the base, tapering in a conical shape. They are full of tiny holes giving their exterior a very rough appearance. The two whites, watching the women, noticed they carried firebrands when in search of these insects, which the latter placed all around the hives and the insects, half smothered by the smoke, became easy victims.

On 30 March, the wanderers reached a vast sandy plain (**R**) with not a single blade of grass to enliven its monotony. Here they stopped to spend the night. A good many of the blacks went fishing but did it so quietly that the boys slept on without hearing any noise. They were wonderfully successful, fifteen turtles being brought in as a reward for their quiet labour. On the second night ten were taken, as one of the natives told *Jurić*, showing him his fingers: "*Nulla wi la tataruga dadalgo*" (We will have as many as I have fingers!).

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Such an abundance of food, and so easily caught, proved indeed a God-sent to these harmless souls, almost always on the very verge of starvation. As an instance of the generosity of these simple children of nature, on the morning of 31 March, *Tairo* and *Tondogoro*, two of the young natives, having just caught two turtles, roasted them and brought them whole to their protégés, who hitherto had been very glad to get only such pieces as could be spared.

NOTES AND REFERENCES – CHAPTER IX

- 1 In the original manuscript we are told that *Bačić* had 12 needles left to trade with.
- 2 In this sentence there were two obvious, uncharacteristic and somewhat comic errors in Angelina's translation: the canoes (rather than canes) and tamed snakes (rather than dogs) "To catch the lizard and snakes the natives beat them out of their nests with bamboo canoes; they had with them in all their travels two tamed snakes which they must have captured when quite tiny."
- 3 This sentence was incomplete in Angelina's translation.
- 4 Cape North West is now better known as the North West Cape.
- 5 Some of these trees were seven metres high according to the original manuscript.

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(1 April) One fine morning, bright and early, the two whites, worn out by the excessive fatigue of the long marches, exhausted by the scorching rays of the tropical sun that was now daily getting more unbearable – and from which there was absolutely no shelter – threw themselves into the surf. Noticing this, the Aborigines rushed to them and taking them out of the water, laid them on the beach, and then started rubbing and massaging them from head to foot. This treatment, besides helping them physically, stirred in their souls sentiments of deepest gratitude towards a people classed as savages but possessing a high degree of the superior qualities of generosity and greatness of soul

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to which the souls of the civilized man must bow in profound admiration.

As was often the case, these restful moments in such a restive tribe were suddenly interrupted by the loud and heart-rending cry of a poor mother who for a few days had been watching over her dying child, which now drew its last breath. Necessarily the sorrow and desolation of the parents became the sorrow and desolation of the whole tribe who, gathering around the afflicted parents, patted them gently and tenderly with their hands as if expressing sympathy and condolence. Pretty soon their tears mingled with those of the parents.

Meanwhile, *Challi*, who as we have already seen possessed a whole treasure of exorcism, of massages and of all sorts of charms, took upon himself the office of chief mourner and high priest to the whole tribe. He retired into the woods, to reappear with his head and body all adorned and almost covered with green branches and twigs. Grabbing some of the weapons,

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he threatened to throw them among the men. The women, seeing this, begged him by all means of promise to come down among them and mourn for the untimely dead.

The funeral preparations were progressing; in the first place, to show their sadness and mourning the child's parents threw back into the sea all pieces of fish they had saved from the night's supper for the next morning's meal.

Next, a big fire was made and the corpse was laid on the glowing coals. When it seemed sufficiently roasted, the gruesome meal began. The first portion was offered to the father who stood all alone on a hill apart from all the others. Next the mother was served. Then all the others sat down to eat as though this meal was not an unusual one, until all was consumed.¹

After this communal feast was over, the bones were gathered together with some semblance of religious devotion and burial. The ceremony over, the father arose alone and in deep silence led the tribe, also in profound silence, on their interrupted march onward to the north.

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Just a little before sunset he stopped by the sea and with him the whole tribe.

The abundant shells along the shores were collected then grounded. This furnished a white powder which was used as another means of publicly showing their distress. The dead child's father and mother added water to this powder and made a paste which they smeared on their heads, arms and chest until they were hideously white. Then all the natives did likewise, excepting the married women, who only filled their hair with the white paste.

This was not an end to all the ceremonies, for ten more days, at night and just before dawn, the same married women would all get together and chant in the most doleful of choruses: "*Kai-biri gogay*" (Return to unfortunate me).

The night of the second and third of April, a certain *Nili*, a very brave fellow, availing himself of an opportunity,

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caught a wild dog and killed him with stone blows. The next day while the men were fishing, the women roasted the dog and were enjoying it when *Bačić*, so anxious for a bite of anything else but the usual fish begged them for a small portion. They not only refused in quick terms but chased him with violence. The returning fishermen, learning of the trouble explained, “*Wac-balla mira wan-ja ba-jalgo*” (Whites do not eat dog flesh!)

There was quite an abundance of fish, but *Bačić*'s appetite was lost as he witnessed the upsetting cuts and wounds which one of the young men was administering to himself in order to be properly tattooed – this being the ceremony to show that he was no longer a boy but a full fledged-man. The sharp shells cut deep and hard and the blood gushed freely from the painful wounds. But never a sign of whimper, not a sigh of pain came from the new *man*. To celebrate this event, a great feast was spread, fine large turtles roasted and all sat down to the big meal, man, woman and child.

The following day the onward march northward was resumed,

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and for three days, they barely stopped to even sleep and much less rest (the nights of 4-5 April). As usual, they either moved in bands or sometimes all together, with a few individuals fishing as the requirements demanded.

After crossing a fine grassy field and a strip of land damp evidently from recent rains, *Bačić*, with some of the men, found himself on the opposite side of the peninsula, at a spot which the natives called *Bunda-jo* (S). Here they found a well, the opening of which was secured by an inverted barrel, surely the work of white men: “*Nulla wac-balla, Karkara willa babba*” (Here, as at Karkara, the white men dug the wells).

Jurić, who was traveling with the other band, reached the opposite side of the peninsula just a little further south of North West Cape (T). Scattered around here he noticed various things which aroused his curiosity to a high pitch, including a wreckage of a schooner on which the words *Fairy Queen Singapore*,² were barely legible, along with a great quantity of broken coconuts, empty bottles, broken chests, ship implements and instruments, an anchor, rusty chains, etc.

Jurić questioned these men minutely about the presence of these various objects

After resting in that place, the tribe moved onward and before dusk they reached the peninsula that the natives called *Bundagio*. Close to the shore, they found a source of drinking water covered with a barrel, and the natives explained: “*Nula vak bala Karkara vila baba*”

“Here, as in *Karkara*, is a well dug up by white people.”

Not far from the well, *Jurić* found a pile of wreckage, consisting of ship parts, devices, empty bottles, various tools, and even a board with an inscription “Terry Queen.” <*Fairy Queen*> It was probably the name of a vessel.

He asked the natives what the name meant, and they explained to him that the English had asked them to collect the wreckage. *Igrana*, one of the natives, told him, pointing to the pile and impatiently gesturing:

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and finally, after much difficulty, he understood that the English had at one time or another asked of the Australians to gather up and save in one spot, all objects that were cast ashore by the relentless waves.

In fact, the Aboriginal by the name of *Igrana* went further: “*Minara Challi gogay, Pulimandur wagay, chullu ba-jalgo chugga, turadji, ba-jalgo* ” (In a little while you will go to Pulimandur and you will eat much sugar, rice, tea and cocoa). But these wonderful words were lost on the poor shipwrecked boy, who did not even dare dream of building any hopes on them, as he thought the natives were talking about other ship-wrecked unfortunates like himself.

When all the wayfaring bands got together, (S) they decided to start out in a southerly direction and for three days (7, 8, 9 April) they traveled through masses of thick and matted undergrowth.³ The natives sped through this forest of thorns and brambles with

“*Minara Chali gogoj, Pulimandu vagaj, kuila bachalgo kuiga, turagi bachalgo, tie bachalgo, kakonagi bachalgo.* “Soon, you will go to *Pulimandur*, and you will eat sugar, eat rice, eat tea and cocoa.” But Jurić did not understand. He couldn’t understand the connection between the wreckage heap and his departure.

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incredible speed and even the women, notwithstanding the loads of water on their heads, made pretty good time.

Not so with the two boys. Their limbs were torn at every step by the lacerating bush and other poisonous weeds and they could hardly keep up on account of their cruel sufferings. It now also dawned on the whites that they were skirting the coasts of a peninsula until they reached a fine plain near the sea. Here, they stopped and rested for two days (U). At this place for the first time the women enjoyed a much-earned rest from water carrying as the water had to be taken from swirling creeks. The men thought them entirely too dangerous for the women to approach, so really for the first time to the knowledge of the whites, the blacks volunteered to get the water while the women rested.

The delicious berry which had been found on Christmas Day was again now located and it furnished a palatable diversity to the tiresome fish. The twelfth of April found them again taking up the trial of the never-ending march; the two boys also carried water on their heads as the torrid heat of the tropical summer days made their sufferings from thirst more intensely felt.

It did not take long for *Bačić* to give way under the combined effect of the heat and the weight on his head. The Aboriginal by the name of *Valero*

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came to his rescue and, taking from the boy his little tank of water, offered to carry it and take charge of it the rest of the trip. This man, *Walero*, presented an extraordinary type. He was so tall that the very tallest among the blacks barely reached his shoulders. All parts of his body were proportionately large and heavy, so much so that his huge bosom looked just like that of a woman and there was an enormous protuberance of flesh hanging over his abdomen. Another striking peculiarity, making him entirely different from the other men, was the total absence of beard. He had short stubby hair on his head and almost none at all on his body. He was about forty years of age.

The rest of the tribe looked on him with respect amounting almost to veneration and probably as if either in fear of or homage to his extraordinary appearance actually waited on him in the most servile manner, never requiring the least bit of labour from him.

The tribe had not proceeded far when those in the lead gave forth a shout which was taken up and re-echoed all down the line: "*Yanieballa jurogaya*" (The ship is approaching).

Excited by the wild cries, the boys hastened to the shore to discover its cause. What could it be? An old man, *Ca-jaro*, seizing a firebrand climbed to the very top of one of the highest hills, to light an enormous

"*Jani bala jurogaja!*" - "The ship is approaching!"

As the two struggled to communicate, the others ran to a small hill, shouting to each other:

The elder quickly cut some twigs and lit a huge fire. The young men stared in vain in all directions but could see nothing. Only a little later, they did again see the sail of a cutter sailing towards them.

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bonfire visible for miles around, possibly as a beacon to others of the tribe, or as an ordinary signal of present whereabouts. All the others, following the old man's example, climbed the hill and spreading themselves silently in the direction of the ocean, fixed their eyes steadily on some object evidently much hoped and anxiously waited for. There at the very end of Exmouth Bay and just barely visible to the naked eye, a fully rigged cutter was plainly outlined. Where was this cutter going, in such a sea, whose desert coasts on all sides were a shallow barren waste of hidden treacherous shoals and knife-edged coral reefs? Was this trim little vessel only an apparition just to taunt their elated hopes and to sink them further in the abyss of despair? A curse, almost a blasphemy, came from those maddened hearts. The blacks noticing this rushed to their assistance and patting them on the back in true tones of sympathy told them:

“Minara Challi Daghi Pulimandur wagay.” (In a little while you will see *Challi* and you will leave for *Pulimandur*.) This hopeful speed could not relieve the anguish of the poor castaways nor did the following explanation enlighten them any better: *“Minara Challi, gogay Chinchin wagay.”*

Crazy with joy and excitement, they hugged their dark-skinned friends, constantly rubbing their eyes to glaring in the distance, at times barely believing that finally, they were seeing a real ship. The ship - after so many months! But as if it were just an illusion, the white sail of the ship suddenly disappeared. It disappeared as if it had never existed. Perhaps it went into some cove without them even noticing it in their joy. The native people, their sensitive, tender friends, looked at them sadly and patted them on the shoulders, trying to comfort them with every possible word of their poor vocabulary:

“Minara Chali dagi Pulimandur ¹⁰ vagaj. Mana Chali gogai Cicin vagaj.”

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(You will soon see *Challi*, and you will go to *Chinchin*.) Through constant daily intercourse the boys had succeeded in understanding almost all of the tribe's essential vocabulary, but the new words which up to now they had not heard before, "*Karkara*, *Pulimandur* and *Chinchin*," were quite an enigma. Of course, later they realized that *Pulimandur* was a corruption of Fremantle, a city in the South of Western Australia, and *Chinchin* was Tien Tsin, a town in the north and which later played an important part in the history of their rescue.⁴ As to the word *Challi*, no meaning could be found to fit it, little knowing that this was the Aboriginal way of pronouncing the name "Charlie," that of their future saviour.

They kept watching with eyes rivetted on the ship and with high hopes fixed on its every movement. But it gradually disappeared from view, leaving them almost in a state of collapse, caused by the wonderful hopes which rose in their breasts only to be as suddenly dashed.

While this was going on, one of the women, whose container of water was getting empty, surreptitiously crept back on *Jurić*, emptying the contents of his into hers.

"You will soon see Charli <Taki> and travel to Fremantle. You'll soon see Charli and go to Tientsin."

But the young men were overwhelmed by the pain of disappointment, so they ignored "*Chali*" and "*Cicin*". They had no idea that this "*Chali*" will play an important role in their destiny!

An unpleasant accident snapped them out of that sad state. One of the women silently approached *Jurić* and poured all the water from his water bottle into her bowl.

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The latter, still in his maddened state and without reflecting as to the probably fatal consequences of his act, seized the nearest weapon, a *be-manno*, and dealt her a severe blow across the shoulders. Everyone was attracted by the cries of the victim.

“Great God! What have you done!” exclaimed *Bačić*, “we are both lost.”

But fortunately for the two whites, the other women knew what she had done and instead of sympathizing with her, scoffed at her, reviling her for her greedy actions. The men, enjoying the whole affair, were encouraging *Jurić* to punish her again by yelling to him: “*Pinyari cominini*” (Women are quarrelsome). These strange proceedings fully exemplified their natural qualities of loyalty, truthfulness and kindness to the poor strangers, along with a grudging respect directed at the women. Many a time, the boys, urged on by hunger, would steal a little food from the women, to the great amusement of the men who delighted in playing pranks on the women.⁵

The following day, 13 April, the march was again resumed.

Jurić noticed her when she was already retreating. In anger, and not having time to think about the consequences, he mercilessly struck her with a stick. The woman began to scream and moan, bending on the ground.

Why this madness, brother? We are both done now!” *Bačić* reprimanded him, while the natives sharply scolded the woman and contemptuously pushed her with their feet.

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The two boys, as usual, followed in the rear with the women <stopped at Bay of Rest. (V)>⁶ This separation from their friends proved quite disastrous, as the men evidently had been detained and did not put in an appearance for two whole days, leaving them in the pangs of continued hunger as there was no one able to fish.

About dawn of 15 April, *Bačić*, whose sharp watchful eyes never left the ocean a moment in his constant vigil for the “Ship of Hope,” suddenly spied a sail in the distance. He ran breathless to *Jurić* with the good news. The latter, being more of an expert mariner, replied:

“It may be a boat of some ship just recently wrecked like ourselves.”
 “If that is the case,” answered *Bačić*, “they may be heading for some European settlement and we could be saved with them!”

The seconds seemed minutes, then hours, and then centuries to the watching, waiting pair. Almost weeping and praying to the Almighty for deliverance, they rushed to the seashore and, seizing some of the torn sails which had been appropriated by the

The burning desire to see some kind of a ship finally bore fruit. Early the next morning, a sail appeared on the horizon.

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women, began to wave them furiously over their heads, calling and praying for the assistance they so sorely needed.

One could almost feel the heart beats of the poor castaways when they noticed the boat veering shoreward. The women especially expressed intense joy when they noticed the sails lowering. They gathered around the whites and went so far as to offer them food, which on previous occasions they formerly had been obliged to steal. Then forming themselves in circles around the boys they showered them with caresses and indulged in the strange and most enigmatic dances.

“But why such demonstrations, why such joy at meeting people entirely unknown to them, why so many caresses, unless they too feel our happiness at being saved!”

Alas, for the sad hopes so quickly awakened were so soon to be dashed to pieces! The boat, of a carrying capacity of two or three tons, did land and its crew consisted of about thirty Aborigines. Its cargo had an abundance of food, some tobacco and some clothes. In fact, a few of the Aborigines wore shirts and trousers. This then was the cause of the unwanted joyousness of the women and this accounted for all the festive dancing.

A ship of about three tons was shortly seen. Its crew consisted of about thirty natives, who landed their cargo on the shore - an abundance and variety of food, tobacco, and clothing. The newcomers were greeted with loud cheers. The women pulled out the clothes and looked at them from all sides wondering what their actual use was.

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These men were a part of a third tribe, hitherto unknown to the whites.

In a few minutes they unloaded the cargo of turtles and deposited these on the bank. Meanwhile the other two sister tribes, which generally travelled together, also arrived at the same spot and they too were putting all the food in common in preparation for another huge feast. There was no happiness in the hearts of the two castaways, as every new hope turned into a sudden disappointment. They feared to hope altogether, especially after this last cruel ordeal.

Still, they wondered, where did the Aborigines get such a well-appointed boat and who provided them with the objects to which they were certainly not accustomed?

To the many inquiries, no satisfactory answers could be obtained.

They certainly must have had some sort of contact with white men, as so many things in and about the boat abundantly proved.

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And this *Challi* of whom they never ceased talking, who was he and what good would he bring them?

A few straggling rays of sunshiny hope began to pierce their horizon at these reflections, which were almost as soon dispelled by a fierce quarrel which arose between the men and which threatened to become very stormy, but after a long and somewhat silly shrieky discussion, no fatalities resulted.

To change the monotony of this daily existence, some of the natives decided to make a trip on the boat. So on 16 April, the two boys were cordially invited, together with *Tondogoro*, *Tairo*, *Miki*, *Naman*, *Jaki* and about ten others, to set sail for an island in

The newcomers cheerfully greeted the young white men and invited them to join the boat to a small island, some 8 miles away. Bačić and Jurić readily responded to their call. It had been a while since they had seen or sailed on a boat.

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the Gulf of Exmouth with a cripple at the helm.⁷ The winds being contrary, they made slow progress and only reached the island at dusk (**Z**).

This island was situated about eight miles from the extreme point of Cape Vlaming and about forty from their starting point at the Bay of Rest. The island itself was a low plain seven miles long and about three in its widest point, with barely any rocky formation, and no bays or inlets which could be used as a safe harbour for the boat. But its appearance was enchanting to the eye. Geographically this island was named Muiron, but the Aborigines gave it the general name of *Island*, a word which they must have learned from the English.

It was impossible to make a landing without endangering the boat, so most of the natives threw themselves overboard to swim ashore. The two whites and the crippled boatswain, remaining at the helm, guided the boat to the east where they located a somewhat snug little inlet. Here they fastened their little boat securely and went to rejoin their companions.

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It is superfluous to describe the great joy of the whites when they landed on this fine grassy island, so different from the sandy desert on which they had been imprisoned for such a long time. The place was entirely covered with a fine growth of rich vegetation and fresh and beautiful green grass. An unusual sound came from the distance. It was the songs of thousands of beautiful birds filling the air with melody and filling the hearts of the poor castaways with deeper sadness as they recalled the melodies of their own dear homeland.

Although the distance from the mainland was not great the variation of the climate made itself acutely felt. The dews felt exceedingly cold and this added very much to their discomfort. On the way across the island to meet their companions the two whites and the cripple, being rather hungry, began digging in the sands for turtle eggs, the best food and the most easily secured. In fact, before

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reaching the rest of the tribe, they had already secured about one hundred eggs and even a turtle whom they had caught in her very nest. The others too were quite laden with turtle eggs, along with about fifty beautiful birds. These were a variety of wild pigeon – different from the domestic ones. Their heads were adorned with a tuft of beautiful jet-black feathers; their wings were striped black and gold and white at the very edge; the upper part of the neck was a mixture of warm bright colours; the breast was a dusky shade and the eyes were a vivid pink.

This meeting place was also selected as a resting spot. Here they retired after a light supper of turtle eggs.

Early the next morning (17 April) the fires were burning brightly and roasting some of the birds and turtles. Leaving the two whites and the cripple together, the rest of the men resorted

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to turtle fishing, even swimming out quite a distance. Their hard work was abundantly rewarded. In a short time, they had captured over thirty-two turtles, as there were so many that had ventured out to sleep on the fine sunny banks.

With fishing over, the bird hunting began. But the two whites were not admitted to this sport, much to their regret as they would have enjoyed watching the natives' skill in trapping the birds.

When they were abundantly provided with both fish and birds, some of them went to roast some turtle, others carried their booty to the boat, while two of the men, climbing to a slight elevation, lit quite a large bonfire, evidently signalling to their companions of their wonderful success and speedy return.

They then brought the boat around to the spot where they had first landed and the whole party re-embarked

On this voyage, they caught about thirty turtles, a multitude of birds, and turtle eggs.

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after creating more havoc among the turtles. So many were caught it was hard to load them all – the boat was only able to hold about fifteen large turtles besides the supply of eggs and birds. The rest simply had to be abandoned on the beach. With sails unfurled they started in the direction of the peninsula, though the wind was a little strong and the seas choppy. Forgetting probably how full and rich a cargo they carried, *Tairo* and *Miki*, noticing a large turtle swimming leisurely along, threw themselves overboard to catch it, not realizing on the spur of the moment that they could not handle any more. Realizing their mistake, they refrained from killing it, coming back yelling and laughing, “*Mirawaba Tataruga*” (The turtle was not good).

The wind kept on increasing, making the trip very dangerous to the brave but very inexperienced sailors. Not one of them knew how to give right direction and not one of them thought about taking in some of the sail. As a result the heavy wind tilted the boat to one side and would certainly have overturned it had not all the men stuck doggedly to

On the way back, they were swept by a strong wind. Bačić and Jurić boldly and cheerfully took the sailing ropes in their hands, and soon the boat was cutting through the waves at a speed that frightened the natives. They were not yet skilled at sailing, and the skills of the two white youths aroused great admiration in them.

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their post preventing further disaster or serious loss to their precious cargo. But then Kind Providence came to their assistance and a few hours after sunset found them once more in their original home.

Meanwhile the Aborigines who had remained on the peninsula travelling north reached the site (T) where on 6 April they had discovered the wreckage of the English ship. Here they met a third tribe, the whole number now amounting to about one hundred and sixty. All of whom waited patiently for the arrival of the boat.

A cry of happiness greeted its appearance; impatience, greed and hunger too waited its unloading but the little cripple at the helm sailed about forty or more feet further down, reaching a spot where unloading the precious cargo could be accomplished with more security and greater of safety to the tribe.

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It did not take long, however, to unload the little vessel, which was immediately surrounded by all the men present and it was not long before everything had been removed. The work was so quick and dexterously accomplished that *Jurić* lost his cap before he quite realized it. The latter contained some hidden treasure – quite a number of turtle eggs. The next day searching all through the tribe, he found his cap but, of course, minus the eggs.

Such haste and such anxiety to get to the good things on the boat followed a natural sequence. Although those on shore were so eager to get to the food brought them, still they did not forget the fishermen's needs for water, knowing that the islands where they had secured so much treasure lacked fresh water to quench their thirst.

A large number of turtles and birds were roasted, leaving the half-live ones on the sands for the next day's meal. Then the whole tribe sat down to a wild orgy of feasting. The two boys

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had not really suffered from hunger in the past few days and were quite worn out by the recent trip so they went to sleep, leaving the others still celebrating.

Such wild orgies were soon followed by a sad accident. The wind rose again during the night and broke loose the insufficient moorings of the boat, dashed it against the sharp rocks and tearing a big hole right under the keel.

The next morning <18 April>, having discovered the sad mishap, the Aborigines called *Jurić*, whom they thought of as the only man capable of repairing the damage done.

Deploring the situation almost more than they did, what could he do in the absence of hammer and nails? This did not satisfy them and walking along the shore, they picked up all the scraps they could find and brought these to him. Of course, they could not understand that these alone were not enough to even begin the repair work.

The merry and sumptuous feast that evening was interrupted by a sudden storm. The boat broke away from the shore and hit a rock. In the morning, there was general sadness over this. But one of the new natives recalled Jurić's resourcefulness and skill yesterday, so now he began to press him to fix their boat. Everyone else joined his pleas, and Jurić, not knowing what to do, fled into the woods and hid there. The natives could not believe that he did not know and could not do the repairs. They could not understand that repairing a boat could not be done without tools, without nails and a hammer, so what could Jurić do but hide. He didn't show up until the evening meal.

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To escape their importunities, he was obliged to hide in the woods, while the Aborigines, seeing their project futile, returned to their fires, there to spend another night of feasting and revelry like the preceding ones.

NOTES AND REFERENCES – CHAPTER X

- 1 An unusual side note is “inserted” in the Rijeka manuscript on page 204:

“*A questo convito i bianchi, ne si s ail perche, non furono ammessi*” (For reasons unknown the whites were not admitted to this banquet).

This is the only side “insertion” in the manuscript. This “insertion” is not included in Angelina’s translation and one could hypothesise that this is because the two castaways did participate in this unusual communal meal, as outlined in Rathe’s book *The Wreck of the Barque Stefano Off the North West Cape of Australia* (Carlisle, WA, Hesperian Press, 1990), pages 61-62. One would think that Angelina, as the wife of the survivor *Bačić*, would have known the truth.

- 2 The manuscript gives this as *Terry* (ie *Fairy*) *Queen* - Singapore.
- 3 According to the original manuscript the undergrowth was thick with Casuarina trees.

- 4 This sentence is in fact a footnote in the manuscript on page 212, in reference to the names mentioned in the text on this page.
- 5 Angelina was not as impressed with the treatment of the Aboriginal women by their men and in her translation she equated their treatment as cruel and rough as if women were slaves and sometimes beasts of burden. I have corrected her sentiment somewhat by reverting back to that in the original manuscript.
- 6 The Rijeka manuscript indicates they stopped at Bay of Rest. The half manuscript draft which the editor discovered in Dubrovnik library (Znanstvena Knjiznica, manuscript 352) indicates that the group stopped at Point V on the manuscript map. This point is not designated in the narrative of the final two manuscripts.
7. This is the first time that this cripple is mentioned. No other information is given on him.

XI

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The very same morning after the squall and even before the Aborigines discovered that their precious boat had been wrecked, *Jurić*, on awaking, ran to his friend whom he found sound asleep. “Wake up” cried *Jurić*, “Wake Up, I have had a grand dream. Today we will be saved.”

“What,” answered *Bačić* sarcastically, “do you believe in dreams then? Well, pray tell me what have you dreamt.”

“I have dreamt that an Englishman came to these shores, took us on his boat and saved us.”

“Vain hope! You know we dream of what we desire and we desire things that are difficult or rather almost impossible to get. When we dream of happiness some ill-luck will befall us.

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“You have dreamt that we were saved, hence, we will have a much longer life of slavery. Let us not build false hopes, my dear friend; this land on which we are stranded is deserted and uninhabited, and owing to its rocky coasts there is very little hope that any vessel will ever come near!”

“This is but too true!” answered *Jurić* and the stern realization of these facts struck deep into the hearts of the two boys, now just in the very prime of their youth, and they sobbed their broken hearts out as though they were little children.

Following the Aborigines again, they found themselves at the spring (S) where once they had almost been lost and to which the natives gave the name of *Bunda-ja*. The tribe had just retired to rest as usual each in his little sand pit, when the loud voice of the old man *Bengo*, weaver of nets, broke the solitude with such joyous notes that all the blacks as of one accord arose noisy, prattling and happy. *Bačić*, who also jumped up with the others, thought he understood the old man’s words, but would not dare believe his own ears,

The tribe was getting ready for sleep. Some were already lying in their beds of sand. *Bačić* went to meet *Jurić* and stopped by the old native *Bengo*, who was busy preparing his nets. Looking up at the horizon to see what the weather would be like tomorrow, *Bengo* pricked up his ears and kept looking for a long time. He then called *Bačić* and, pointing to the open sea, shouted cheerfully to him:

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his emotion being so great, he felt as though his heart would stop beating.

“*Yanie-balla Challi komin*” (Here is the ship, *Challi* is coming!)

“Ship-coming!” repeated our poor castaway and looking up to heaven with a prayer on his lips to the Almighty, the youngster rushed to the shore to verify the truth of old *Bengo*’s cries, and *Bengo* had said the truth!

Barely a mile away lay a trim schooner, its prow turned landward, a schooner just as *Jurić* had described in his dreams. It was a cutter rig such as is used by yachtsmen, pilots and revenue cutters, the last two in English waters. It had a single mast and a “single stick” straight-running bowsprit that may be housed in bad weather. The hull was very deep and narrow. She was about sixteen metres long and painted white, and looked like a sloop in rig.

Mother, home, country, like burning arrows, sped through *Bačić*’s heart; speechless and motionless he stood, the shock of sudden happiness almost overpowering him.

“*Tank bala! Chali koming! Chali koming!*” - “*Chali* is coming! *Chali* is coming!”

The children jumped out of their beds first, and then everyone else. *Jurić* also appeared, rubbing his sleepy eyes.

The cutter looked very impressive and well equipped. The natives waved and shouted, lit a fire, and tried in every possible way to attract the attention of the ship’s crew. The ship disappeared behind the cape in an instant, but the natives said:

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Recovering himself, he sent one of the men to give his friend, *Jurić*, the glad tidings and, climbing the nearest hill, he began to make all kinds of gestures and signs to attract the attention of the boat's crew. The natives, full of sympathy for the two unfortunates, tried their best to assure them that the vessel would positively stop here.

“Minara Challi gogay nulla.” (Shortly Challi will come here.) With straining eyes and hearts, every movement of the schooner was nervously watched.

Slowly, very slowly, its prow was turning, away from land and in a few short moments, the vessel had almost disappeared from view. A cry of anguish came from the two unfortunates who almost collapsed at the sight. *“Minara gogay”* (It will return shortly), reassured the kind natives, but the two victims of so many illusions could only answer, *“Mira gogay”* (It will not return). Besides, how was it possible for this simple honest folk to assure them of something of which they knew nothing themselves?

“It will return,” said *Jurić*, but not for us. This schooner must have been abandoned

“Minara gogaj. Minara Chali gogaj nula.” - “The ship will return. *Chali* will definitely come back here.”

“Mira gogaj” - “He won't come back,” Bačić replied sadly and was ready to cry because of the new disappointment. But the ship did reappear. The wind was unfavourable to it, and it had to veer - that was the cause of its disappearance.

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by its former owners and is now manned by the blacks who are using it as an ordinary fishing boat as they used the last one we saw.”

“Let us ask them again,” answered *Bačić*. “They may be able to tell us something more.”

To the feverish questions plied with firing rapidity as to who owned the vessel and who were the crew, the aborigines answered quietly but positively: “*Wac-balla gudara, bulac-balla gudara, sandi tobi mulla kughi chinaman.*” (There are on board two whites, two blacks and one Chinese cook.)

This information, instead of satisfying them, made them feel positive that the ship belonged to the blacks and that the two whites were two unfortunates like themselves, two more companions in misery.

Twice the schooner veered in its movements, shifting its prow oceanward each time, but the third time turning sidewise shoreward, she seemed to be making preparations to launch a skiff.

While all this was going on, the natives did not

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cease repeating: “*Minara, nulla Chialli gogay, niengo gudara, Tigone, Tondogoro gudara, Chuchigo, Pulimandur, wagay ba-jalgo chulla chugga, thie, turadji, kokona-ji.*” (Shortly *Chialli* will come here and you two and *Tondogora* and *Chuchigo* will all go to *Pulimandur* and you will eat much sugar, tea and cocoa.)

It is worthy of notice here that the natives had given names to their protégés, *Mir* to *Bačić*, a corruption of *Miho*, a pet name by which his companions called him and *Tigone* to *Jurić*, this was a corruption of *Ivane*, his Christian name. Thus even in their intimate daily intercourse, they showed their friendliness.

But what was *Pulimandur* of which the natives spoke so much? And how much faith could they attach to these assurances of the natives?

When the boys saw the skiff coming shoreward they rushed to the very edge of the water, wildly signaling, the one with his cap and the other with his hat. Incidentally

The lifeboat was lowered from the ship. *Bačić* was mad with joy, and *Jurić* still couldn't believe his sleepy eyes. The natives tore the loose hat from his head and began to wave with it.

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Bačić's hat was a large felt affair that had been presented to him by a member of the second tribe, who had secured it from who knows where.

The sea was calm and smooth and, in a few hours, the unknown skiff was ready to land with its crew – just as the natives had predicted.

And just as the natives had predicted, its crew was made up of two white men and two blacks. The former, however, probably fearing some unfriendliness, held a small revolver each, ready to defend themselves, should the occasion require. One can only imagine the amazement of these two armed men, when on landing they noticed the two unfortunates, whose livid faces were whiter and paler than usual and whose trembling bodies were shaking by the emotion they could no longer conceal. The older man, lowering his pistol, approached the two boys, put out his hand and kindly addressed them with a few words of English.

What joy! What happiness! This was the first time in six months that a white man had shaken hands with them in a friendly greeting. Then came the many questions from the good man: What was their country and their home? What had become

There were two white and two dark-skinned men in the boat. The whites held revolvers in their hands, but as soon as they saw the whites among the natives on the shore, they put away their revolvers and hurried to land. Shaking hands warmly with the young men, they interrogated them in English how they landed among the natives on that desolate shore, but the young men, overcome by joy, could not utter a word.

The natives, on the other hand, danced merrily and hugged the young men full of happiness. White men were moved by the selflessness of the natives.

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of their companions, if any? How did they happen to be with the Aborigines? How did they exist? They tried to answer, but their joy had made them speechless. Throwing themselves in the arms of their saviour, they gave full vent to their feelings, sobbing and smiling in one breath. The fine old Englishman with his mate were so deeply touched, they too could not refrain from tears while the good Aborigines looked on, happy at the new found happiness of their wards.

After the first burst of emotion was over and the two boys had been finally quietened, the captain ordered his mate and the two blacks to unload the sacks of flour and sugar they had brought to the natives. Then they were to take the two almost-resurrected boys on board his cutter, after which they were to return with more flour and sugar. In the meantime, he would remain with the natives until they returned.

The captain gave strict orders that no other food, but bread and water should be given to the boys at first, fearing disastrous consequences to stomachs deprived of proper food for such a long time.

They were saved! They were being taken to a friendly ship!

After the first excitement had passed, an Englishman ordered his crew to unload sacks of flour and sugar for the natives and transport the shipwrecked men to the cutter.

In particular, he ordered that the young men not be given anything to eat except bread and water because anything else could harm them.

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A friend, a white man like themselves, had put forth his right hand in welcome, and had assured them of the happiness he felt in being able to send them back to their home and country. But even all this could not entirely convince them. So many misfortunes had made them fatalistic and fearful and now they dreaded everything: the ship might be a pirate ship and the captain, a slave merchant. With hearts filled with fear they almost regretted leaving the Australian shores – scenes of so much suffering.

The kind and consoling words of the mate could not change their sombre thoughts, until they reached the cutter and its name, *Jessie*, Fremantle, W.A., shone almost in letters of gold before their eager eyes. Then at once the clouds were lifted as they realized the truth of all the consoling words of their black benefactors.

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They could not stop marveling at their wonderful generosity, their good sincere loyalty and tears of gratitude for these good people mingled with their tears of joy for themselves and their good fortune.

The welcome given to the boys by the captain and mate had to be outdone by the Chinese cook who professed to obey implicitly the captain's order of a bread and water diet for the time being. However, no sooner had the captain left, then with great compassion to the two famished men, he laid before them a huge bowl of rice pudding and a good portion of fried fish which, needless to say, were almost immediately devoured to his great delight.

The flour and sugar which the captain was distributing to the Aborigines were so eagerly sought, that they almost came to blows in securing their portions. The captain seeing how useless it would be to pacify them, rowed out a short distance and shot his two pistols in the air to frighten them back to their senses. *Tondogoro* and *Chuchigo*, whom the natives had always said would follow *Challi* certainly did so, each man coming on board carrying his portion of turtle meat. Pretty soon the schooner

They were greeted very warmly onboard — the master of the ship, Capt. Charles Tuckey, *Chali* to the natives, and his officer showed them almost paternal care. The young men promised to follow all the captain's instructions, and though they were tired and hungry, they agreed to sleep outside on the deck for the first few days until they got used to it and to eat only small meals of food.

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weighed anchor and left the Gulf of Exmouth for Tien Tsin, a town in North Australia, which they had just left a few days ago. The captain gave all his attention to the two poor boys in order to restore their wasted strength and restore them back to the civilized life they had left six months ago.

Who was this captain?

Charles Tuckey, Master of the schooner *Jessie*, was the man *Challi*, of whom the natives had always spoken with so much reverence, and whom the blacks were announcing as their future saviour. The rough exterior of the seaman, bronzed by constant exposure to a tropical sun and hardened by the open air life, was only a cloak covering a man whose heart was generous to a fault and whose fatherly affection and solicitude for his adopted castaways will live forever in their memories. Born in Fremantle

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of English parents, he spent the best years of his life on pearling trips between Tien Tsin and Fremantle. Those were the magic names that the natives had converted into *Chinchin* and *Pulimandur* or *Karkara*, and which they always used as a balm to the wounded feelings of the shipwrecked boys. Captain Charles Tuckey, the pearl-fishing merchant, was well known to all the Aborigine tribes of Australia, as he generally stopped over and dealt with either one or the other at least once a year. He usually employed them as divers for the pearl oysters. Notwithstanding their ignorance in other matters, these hardy fellows would dive for Captain Tuckey to a depth of more than ten metres, searching for the pearl shells.

Unlike others who might have taken advantage of the poor blacks, Captain Tuckey always treated them with fatherly consideration, and would bring them on every trip those things which they needed the most. Charles Tuckey or *Chialli*

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as he is affectionately known among the various tribes is synonymous with kindness and benevolence, a name to be conjured, a name that will pass down from father to son in terms of endearment.

In order to bring the civilization gradually to these good people, Captain Tuckey had the patience on every trip to take with him two men of the various tribes and to bring them in contact with the white man. He would thus implant the seed which would later bear good fruit when the two men with the knowledge and experience they had acquired would return to their native tribes.

Now standing in front of this man on the deck of the *Jessie* were two human figures, gaunt and skeleton-like, faces blackened by exposure, pinched and drawn from sufferings endured, bodies covered with layers of sand and clay in which they had been walking by day and sleeping by night, almost unrecognizable semblances of human beings. The oldest one wore a few tatters of what a year ago may have been classed as drawers and undershirt. The young one had only a few shreds of what originally may have been called drawers. These spectres were none other

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but *Bačić* and *Jurić*.

Fearing that the sudden transition from a desert life to a comfortable civilized one might prove injurious, the captain, after given them the dual blessings of a good bath and clean European clothes, thought it wiser to keep them on deck and even arranged for their sleeping quarters to be in the open.

The saving of the two men at this particular time was clearly an act of Divine Providence. Captain Tuckey had left Tien Tsin for Fremantle and had no idea of stopping at all on this trip, but a squall overtook the little cutter and the pumps being somewhat disabled he decided to return to Tien Tsin. Having an extra amount of provisions aboard he thought of the Aborigines and decided to stop along the coasts to distribute some flour and sugar.

Soon the cutter was heading for Fremantle, so that in a few days, *Bačić* and *Jurić* would again be “civilized white people”: dressed, washed, combed, trimmed, and fed.

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It was thus Providence that brought him directly to the two castaways just at the moment when their moral courage was leaving them and deep despair was entering their souls. After Captain Tuckey had explained all these things to the boys, the role of Providence acting on their behalf impressed upon them more than ever. This truth brought home so vividly the remembrance of the horrible nightmare of the past six months and the sorrow for their companions who had suffered so untimely and sad deaths. All these thoughts, like burning brands, seared their very souls and did not allow them to close their eyes in sleep. The next day they looked as haggard and weak as if they had just suffered a severe illness.

Added to all this, about midnight, both boys were seized with an acute indigestion, caused by the indiscretion of the over-generous Chinese cook. The morning of 19 April was not as radiantly happy to the two survivors as Captain Tuckey would have wished.

Even he, the good hale old Englishman, could not enjoy his good night's rest. The history of the wreck of the *Stefano*, the adventures of its men as related to him by the Australian *Naman* while Captain Tuckey was ashore, and further detailed by the men after he had picked them up, their starved and extenuated looks, all of these things hurt the kind-hearted man so deeply that sleep refused to come to his eyes as well.

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With the first rays of sunlight he went to look at his protégés and was horrified to find them in the throes of severe physical suffering.

The services of the little ship's pharmacy were immediately requisitioned. Liniments, plasters and drugs were hurriedly dealt out and, luckily, with good results. The men were afterwards moved to a cabin nearer to the captain's so that he could have them always under his immediate surveillance. Due to his administering words of cheer and good fellowship, and personally supervising all their medicine as well as their food, the two boys were soon on the high road to recovery.

In the course of conversation it developed that the boat in which the savages had gone fishing to Muiron Island had been given to the natives by Captain Tuckey himself, and it was his own sails they saw on that eventful 12 April, when they were so downcast at his not stopping.

These narratives were interrupted by the watch announcing "Sail ahead," so Captain Tuckey

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had to go on to deck to verify.

Signals were exchanged and showed this vessel to be a two-masted English schooner of around 500 tons, headed for Fremantle with a cargo of copper from Tien Tsin and manned by about eight persons, captain included.

Captain Tuckey, desirous of sending a letter to the authorities of Fremantle, invited the master of the schooner on board the *Jessie*. Naturally the history and adventures of the boys and the incident leading to their rescue were the most interesting subject of conversation.

“I would follow your route,” said Captain Tuckey, “but am short of men; could you let me have one of yours?”

“Very willingly,” came the reply, “but in order to lessen your task I could take one of your survivors and at the same time I could enjoy listening to the detailed accounts of their adventures.”

After landing at Shark’s Bay, Captain Tuckey sent a message to Fremantle about the shipwreck of the *Stefano*, announcing that two surviving members of the “Stefano’s” crew were on board his ship “Hassy” <*Jessie*>.

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“No Captain,” answered Tuckey, “It is better not to separate them as they may need each other’s company and separation may be displeasing to them.”

Furnishing each other with whatever provisions of water or food one or the other lacked, both vessels steered for Fremantle, but did not remain very long in sight of each other.

Towards evening the *Jessie* anchored near an island of the Dampier Archipelago to gather wood, leaving the following morning quite early.

Thanks to the kind treatment of the good captain and his crew, the two survivors were regaining their strength very rapidly. *Tondogoro* and *Chuchigo* were their constant companions. The former, especially enjoying himself immensely on this his first trip, expressed wide-eyed amazement at every little event, much to the amusement of his friend, *Chuchigo*, who laughed hilariously at his friend’s mistakes.

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Chuchigo had become a wise man, a philosopher in his own estimation and the tears which *Tondogoro* shed when the shores of his dear Australia disappeared from view were new sources of merriment.

Chuchigo also confided in *Bačić* and related to him how the natives had located the barrels of wine and other provisions the shipwrecked men had concealed when they had made their first stop. Finding the wine quite excellent in taste and hilarious in effect, these naïve folks returned to the spot every night until they had drained the last drop, while getting drunk and very quarrelsome at times.

Nine such pleasant days passed by and on the morning of 29 April, the *Jessie* entered into Shark Bay, casting anchor near the Island of Dirk Hartog, almost entirely owned and occupied by an English family, wealthy owners of vast sheep property.

The captain was an old friend of this family but had not seen them in the past ten years. He came ashore accompanied by his mate, one sailor, the two survivors and the two Australians.

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The English family were more than delighted to see Captain Tuckey and meet his interesting party. They offered the hospitality of their home, and the services of their numerous servants both black and white. Then the two children of the family left nothing undone to amuse and interest the strange crowd, opening the whole magnificent home and showing them all about the grounds.

All spent a most enjoyable day but naturally the conversation drifted constantly to the adventures of the two survivors. At midday, a splendid dinner was served after which games were played and the evening was spent roaming around the beautiful grounds of the estate. This place was certainly a precious gem set on a valuable island. The house was a beautiful large bungalow with an immense living room in the centre with rooms on each sides, thus affording space and ventilation. It was tastily and even exquisitely furnished with all modern conveniences.

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On the grounds were splendid stables for fine horses and carriages and houses for servants. The immense stables for cattle and sheep being off in the distance.

One can picture the happiness of the two castaways as they once more felt themselves a part of civilized world, contrasted to their condition of just barely ten days before. For the two Aborigines, these were the best days in their new lives, and for the two survivors – the most contented days since they had left their own home.

At dusk the party left and, while rounding the southern extremity of the island, the *Jessie* ran aground on a sand bank. The night was spent in this rather perilous position. Fortunately the tide coming in the next morning lifted the cutter and with full sails on again, she was soon in the high seas.

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Almost near the spot where the ill-fated *Stefano* had met its watery grave, the *Jessie* met an English barque *Alexandra* sailing due north. Captain Tuckey, signaling its master, told him all about the wreck of the *Stefano*, and the fate of its survivors, even writing on a large board:

AUSTRIAN BARQUE STEFANO WRECKED NORTH WEST
CAPE

He also informed them that the only two survivors were with him. Captain Tuckey was anxious for the barque to publish these facts at the port where it was destined for the information of all concerned.

In fact, as soon as the *Alexander*

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reached Tien Tsin its master immediately imparted this information to the authorities of the town. As this first news seemed not very clear among the locals, a vessel, the *Victoria*, commanded by Captain Walcott, was fitted out without delay for a search expedition.

The natives were found at the very spot where the two survivors had left them. Captain Walcott took with him a white man who understood the language of the tribe. The Aborigines were interrogated at length only to affirm that the whites had already been rescued. Flour, sugar and other goods were distributed to them and one of the tribe was taken as a guide to the precise spot of the shipwreck.

Reaching the inauspicious point, the schooner was anchored between the treacherous shoals and the coast. Proceeding on a minute search, the party found the sheltering cave, the improvised tents, in fact everything just as it had been left. Skirting the coast, they located the torn and abandoned wrecks of seven other vessels.

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After this survey, the party brought the Aboriginal back to his tribe and set sail again for Tien Tsin. Meantime, our *Jessie*, encountering favorable winds, on 5 May, reached the City of Fremantle.

Fremantle is a small town situated at about 32 degrees latitude in a basin near the Swan River, where it empties into the sea, a quarter of a mile further north. It contains about four hundred houses quite tasty in appearance, disposed and arranged in the strictly geometrical order which seems the *non plus ultra* of English architects. Its population is about twenty-five hundred. The rear of the city extends an esplanade at the extreme point of which is stationed a beacon or signal to guide navigators against the submerged rocks with which this coast also abounds. There is also another lighthouse near the mouth of the river, another on Rottnest Island, twelve miles west. Fremantle is also quite

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a buoyant commercial and industrial city, having a number of manufacturing plants and a few mills.

The story of the rescue of the two boys had already preceded the *Jessie* in the city and long before the boat landed, there was a large crowd of curious people, anxious to get a glimpse of them.

Tondogoro who, during the whole trip, had been rather sad and melancholy for his home, now became all excited for it was the first time in his life he had seen so many boats and a city with so many houses.

Giving one loud cry of happiness, he kept on repeating, "*Gnogaja chullu wac-balla*," meaning, "What a number of whites".

But when he saw a number of them come on board, he was terribly frightened and hid in the hold where he peered at everything through little cracks.

Among others who came on board were the officer of the Port and the Chief of Police. A man whose family had lived in

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Rovigno, Austria, for a number of years came forward to act as interpreter for the boys, who were more than delighted again to hear their native countryman in so far off a country.¹

The first formalities of landing over, Captain Tuckey came ashore, taking with him the two survivors and the two Australians. He then gave the former some money to buy some fruit for the two blacks Australians and left them for a little while.

Later when the boys were taken to the Custom House, the chief officer in charge, the same one who had called on board on their journey to Fremantle, ordered one of his men to take the two boys to a store where they could get proper shoes and stockings as they were wearing those loaned them by the kind hearted crew of the *Jessie*.

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When they returned to the Custom House, there was a commotion caused by the arrival of an individual panting, out of breath, hurrying, anxiously to explain to the authorities that he was also an Austrian, like the two boys, and wanted to take all charge and responsibility of them. He was a good-natured fellow about forty years old, short and rather stout, wearing a thick beard and quite pock-marked. Bustling around with the greatest air of importance, he continually repeated, “I too am from *Ragusa* (Dubrovnik), I was born on a little island near *Ragusa*”.²

His joy knew no bounds, not only at meeting his countrymen, at being able to converse with them in his native tongue, but also at being able to do something for them, to help them out in every possible way. Deciding that the boys were not as well fitted-out as he liked, he hastened with them to another store and out-fitted them from head to foot.

A pleasant surprise awaited our young men in Fremantle: our emigrant countrymen were waiting for them on the shore and kissed them warmly. They took care of their clothing needs and sent a cablegram to their families, announcing their rescue.

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Of course, he gave the history of his own life. His name was Vincent <Vicko> Vuković and for seventeen years that he had been living in Australia, he had never been able to get any tidings from his dear old home.³ His wife was a fine big-hearted Irish woman, a native of Limerick. They had five children and were really quite prosperous, as he was Master of a ship which was his own property.

On completing all the purchases, the boys were brought home to meet the wife and children. The whole family treated them as cordially as though they were their very best friends, stinting nothing to make them feel happy and comfortable. The next step for Captain Vuković was to send cablegrams home to the boys' parents announcing their miraculous rescue.

When Captain Tuckey returned to the Custom House he offered the boys a position on his boat, as his own mate had decided to remain ashore. But as the boys were exceedingly anxious to get back home, they were obliged to refuse his generous offer, and especially as Vuković promised he would study all means of helping them get home. One can imagine their feelings towards the man who had saved them from a living death!

The next few days the boys were besieged on all sides for detailed accounts of all that had occurred to them since the wreck of the ill-fated *Stefano*. The Governor of Perth also showed interest in their story and personally came over to Fremantle

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After declining the kind offer of Captain Tuckey to remain on his ship and thanking him for his great kindness, the young men spent a few days in Fremantle as guests of the Cap. Vuković, one of our emigrants.

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to see them. On 22 May, after bidding a tearful and affectionate farewell to their good Captain Tuckey, to the kind crew of the *Jessie* and to the two generous and kind hearted Australians, they embarked on Vuković's schooner to go to Tien Tsin. After this trip another trip was planned to the West Australian coast by the British government to reward the good natives who had succeeded in saving the two castaways. The boys were desirous of forming part of this expedition, as they wanted to see those brave fellows once more before they left for their native land, and to express their gratitude in a substantial manner, so that in the future there would be an incentive for these children of nature to help and care for all unfortunates.

In eight days 30 May, they reached Tien Tsin after a quick and delightful trip. In fact, Captain Vuković, full of pride and happiness, affirmed that in his seventeen years, this was really the finest trip he had ever enjoyed in those seas.

Tien Tsin is a small town nicely nestled on a small hill and gently sloping into a little bay. There were but three brick or stone houses, the others are all frame with thatched roofs. There were about three hundred whites, the rest were

Before returning to their homeland, the young men asked Cap. Vuković, to take them once more to North West Cape on the Fleming Peninsula, where they left their black benefactors, to embrace them for the last time.

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all natives. All around the town were grassy plains, fertile pastures, drained by a clear little river emptying into the bay. The principal commerce of this town was the exportation of copper, the mines of which being in the immediate vicinity.

The schooner *Victoria*, which had been sent by the British government from Tien Tsin to search for more survivors, had not been heard from and grave fears were entertained for its safety. Finally, after two whole months, it sailed into port on 28

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June. Among the first visitors were *Bačić* and *Jurić* and their friend, *Vuković*. The *Victoria* had brought back all the relics which they had left behind as reminders of sorrowful days. Among these were the door of the *Stefano* on which poor *Costa* had inscribed all the names of those who were then the ten survivors, little dreaming that the number would soon be reduced to only two, the rest to perish in such awful agonies.

On 30 June, Captain *Vuković* set sail for Fremantle, taking with him besides the two survivors, Captain *Walcott* of the *Victoria*, who was returning to his home, and several other passengers.

On 4 July they reached North West Cape on Vlaming Peninsula, where they found the Aborigines. Casting anchor, the party, consisting of the two survivors, the two captains and the passengers, got into the skiff to come ashore.

From the hilltop, the Aborigines observed these movements. Most scampered away frightened, all but two who seemed to recognize *Bačić* as he was making all his familiar signs to them with his hat. Positive now that these were really their old friends, the Australians yelled the glad news to the others who gradually all re-appeared,

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but in a much greater number than the two whites had ever met at one time before. There must have been about two or three hundred.

Without waiting for the skiff to land, a good number of natives jumped into the sea, to help pull the boat onto the beach. It was strange and wonderful to experience the happiness of these good people at meeting their old guests and friends again. They patted them on the back, danced around them expressing their joy in a thousand different ways. Their enthusiasm reached its climax when they saw all the good things the boat held for them: sugar, flour, tobacco, weapons and lots of other objects. There was so much loud screaming and scrambling to get the good things.

Among those engaged in the grand scramble was *Jacki*, so glad to see his *Mir (Bačić)* again. *Gimmi*, however, was not present.

Jacki also was not very happy with the general distribution of gifts to the whole tribe. He and *Jimmi* had been the boys' best friends and he thought they should have it all.

The happy meeting with the natives on this occasion is something that the young men will never forget. Their small, humble gifts were received by these good people with indescribable gratitude and joy.

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For a while he wanted to take his grudge to others in his group. But in the end he was pacified with a little diplomacy.

Bačić, as a special gift to his friend, had brought him a leather belt which held a sheathed knife. This beautiful ornament soon adorned his otherwise nude body and a quantity of tobacco exerted its pacifying influence on the good black. The delighted women, pouring the sugar on the sand, spread themselves full length on the ground to lick it up, which they did with great gusto and much smacking of lips.

The flour remained untouched, the natives carried it away with them in the woods.

Next to be distributed were the mirrors. These caused all to go wild at the sight of their own reflections. The next item that drew everyone's attention was the small cannon which Captain Walcott had brought with him.

"Give it to me," said one of the natives, and to the question what would he do with it, the answer was ready: "*Yungoro a-ju nulla pinyari cominini.*" (Give it to me so I can beat the women.)

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Captain Walcott to amuse them, shot off several rounds, each explosion accompanied with screams of joy and shouts of surprise – particularly when they could notice the balls fly out.

The distribution over, the natives again shoved the skiff back into the sea after bidding a long last farewell to their two white friends, who begged them to show the same generosity to any other poor unfortunates who may happen to be lost among them.

And though the two boys were happy to leave this coast, which for them had been the scene of so much suffering, yet they could not refrain from shedding tears of emotion for all the generosity they had received from these true sons of nature, as well as of deep sadness and sorrow for their unfortunate comrades, who could all have been saved, had they only met and followed the black Australians as they did.

They weighed anchor once more and proceeded to their destination and after a pleasant trip they arrived at Fremantle on 12 July.

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Naturally their desire to return home was making itself felt more keenly day by day in the city of Fremantle, whose kind citizens had even presented them with a quite a snug little purse for their homeward journey. They then embarked on the little steamer *Georgette* for Albany, King George's Sound.

After a stop there of eight days for connections, they took an English steamer for Point Galle in Ceylon, which they reached after a trip of fourteen days. On the second day after their arrival, they were transferred to the steamer *Indus* on its way from Japan for Aden in the Red Sea, which was reached in fifteen days. The next stop was Suez. Here the Austrian consul took charge of them and after two days spent in Suez, they were sent by train to Alexandria. From this point they reached Trieste, Austria in eight days. The month of October

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1876, exactly one year after the eventful wreck of the *Stefano*, found *Bačić* and *Jurić* once more in the bosom of their respective families, who long had mourned them for dead. Their return home brought a great demonstration of affection from their friends and relatives

In August 1876. *Bačić* and *Jurić* sailed from Fremantle with a nice sum of money gifted to them by the citizens on departure. The young men were deeply moved by this caring gesture and that of Captain *Vuković* in particular.

After a full year of painful wandering, the shipwrecked men arrived in their homeland.

Their difficult experiences and the sufferings they endured were retold and preserved for a long time in the memory of old sailors. Now, almost 7 years after the shipwreck, they appear for the first time in our press, according to *Bačić's* original records. (End)

10. ?

NOTES AND REFERENCES – CHAPTER XII

- 1 The manuscript tell us that this man spoke both English and Italian.
- 2 The manuscript gives the locality of Vincent's family as the Island of Šipanj.
- 3 Gustave Rathe, the author of *The Wreck of the Barque Stefano Off the North West Coast of Australia in 1875*, got in touch with Captain Vincent's descendants in Fremantle following initial research by Neven Smoje from Perth, Western Australia

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ABORIGINAL-ENGLISH VOCABULARY

This is a collection of words and phrases used by the Aborigines of the North West coast of Australia which *Bačić* and *Jurić* learnt:

Junowanyabbarri	Name of tribe's deity ?	
Bengo	Proper noun – masculine	
Challi (corruption)	Proper noun – masculine	Charles
Ca-jaro	Proper noun – masculine	
Chuchigo	Proper noun – masculine	
Jaki,	Proper noun – masculine	Jacky
Jimmi	Proper noun – masculine	Jimmy
Igranne	Proper noun – masculine	
Miki	Proper noun – masculine	Micky
Naman	Proper noun – masculine	
Tairo	Proper noun – masculine	

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Todogoro	Proper noun - masculine
Nili	Proper noun – masculine? Nellie?
Bunda-ja	Name of locality Possibly derived from the verb <i>Bundai</i> (v)
Karkara	Fremantle (city) <Karrakatta (Perth)>
Pulimandur	“
Chin Chin	Tien Tsin (town)
Chinaman	Chinaman Chinese
Wac-balla	A white man, A white fellow
Bulac-balla	A black man, A black fellow
Pikinini	A boy, <i>Piccaninny</i>
Curi	A youth between 16-20
Cominini	Married women
Kugghi	A cook (corruption)
Ta	Mouth

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Tulla	Eyes
Najengolo	Nose <Ningaloo>
China	Sole of foot
Polco	Calf of leg
Gundum-balla	Male organs
Wandi	Male organs
Be	Fish
Yanina	Dugong fish
Nulla	Birds
Tataruga	A turtle or a tortoise
Wan-ja	Dog
Cocon-jai	Goat
Bildura	Intestines of fish
Manda wan-ji	Crabs and crayfish
Birra	Shell

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Chembo	Egg
Pinoro	Fire
Kalla	Wood
Milli Milli	Paper
Bulawa	Flour
Chugga	Sugar
Turadji	Rice? Turkey?
Thie	Tea
Cocona-ji	Coconuts
Nurgan	Fat
Yanda	Sun
Willara	Stars or moon
Yengo	Rain
Babba	Water
Buria	Sea

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Denki	Skiff, yawl, <i>dinghy</i>
Yanie-balla	Ship, <i>Ship fellow</i>
Yirala	A sail
Mayabulo	Canoe
Culgo-manda	Iron stone, Log of wood?
Paura (corruption)	Gunpowder
Chumberi	Iron weapons
Tanta	Trousers
Char	Shirt
Changuru	Hat
Chuchigo	Shoes
Niril (corruption)	Needles
Galle	An Australian weapon
Bellara	An Australian spear
Bellara-manno	An Australian weapon

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Be-manno	An Australian fishing spear
Wario	A vine
Puliman	Butter
Island	Island
To-morning	Tomorrow morning
Sandi	<i>Sandy</i>
Tobi	<i>Toby</i>
O-ju	I, me
Niengo	You
Wirago	Sick
Ulma	Old
Gamogo	Starving
Birida	Thirsty
Wabba	Good
Mira-wabba	Bad

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Cun-jiri	One
Gudara	Two
Wrai	From 2 to 10
Br	From 10 on
Mamma	Very much
Chullu	Very many
Arima	To die
Bunday	Bathe at sea
Bagay	To shipwreck
Ba-jalgo	To eat and drink
Bambay	To sleep
Bolue	To row
Gallyadaga	To kiss
Chinchi-chinchi	To divide, To share
Dagolgo	To take

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Daghi	To come <Tuckey?>
Gogoy	To return
Galbai	To arise
Yungoro	To give
Yurogaya	To approach
Komin (corruption)	To come
Nagoru	To see, to observe
Pinyari	To quarrel
Tantargoria	To sit down
Woteri	To search
Wagay	To go ^[L] _{SEP}
Minara	In a short while
Paru	Far, distant, Far away
Muriandi	Quick
Yi-jala	Immediately

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Wan-ji	Where
Bullura	Before
Nulla	Here
Willa	How
Mira	No
Go	Hey! Hello! (exclamation)
Kachullyamoru	Poor fellow
Kai-biri	Unfortunate me
Eun-jeri	Oh the devil!
Inagoyo	So much
Neru-wolu	What do you want?
Yanie-balla bagay	The ship is wrecked.
Kolla woteri	To gather wood
Be-woteri	To go fishing
Chinchi mamma	Very fat

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Yungoro a-ju	Give me
Yanda buday	The sun is setting.
Wan-ji bambay	Where will we sleep?
Babba birida	He is thirsty.
Chinchi-chinchi ba-jalgo	Let us divide the food.
Niengo gamogo	You are hungry.
Niengo mamma gamogo	You are very hungry.
Niengo mirra ba-jalgo	You will not eat.
Niengo babba dirido	You are thirsty.
Yungoro ba-jalgo babba	Give me a drink of water.
Van-ji wagay?	Where are you going?
Minara yongo gogay	It will rain soon.
Wac-balla chullu ba-jaglo	The whites eat a lot
Chir iriri	To satisfy nature's demands, to void
Pinyari cominini	Women are quarrelsome.

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Tendi wan-ju-jeri	An ugly word or a curse
Tendi balan-jeri	An ugly word or a curse
Tendi duga	An ugly word or a curse
Paur paur gutari	The evening song or verses
Puhur cerima	which had never been
Mali jungura	understood.

