

CHAPTER 6

THE NEXT MORNING, ROSE AND ALLNUTT WERE RELIEVED TO SEE that the propeller was working perfectly. They travelled quietly for some time but, when they passed the point where the Ulanga River becomes the Bora, the pair was faced with a new challenge: crossing the Bora Delta. The delta was about fifty kilometres long and was filled with dense vegetation and thick, black mud. It was more like a swamp than a river, and the journey through it was slow, difficult and unbearably hot.

About an hour after they had entered the delta, Rose and Allnutt noticed that grey clouds had gathered in the sky. Thunder was heard in the distance and lightning lit up the sky.

"We should stop here!" Allnutt called out. "It looks like it's going to be a bad storm."

Rose nodded and steered the boat towards the shore, while Allnutt prepared to drop anchor. It started to rain heavily, and Allnutt and Rose could do nothing but wait for it to stop. Finally, the storm passed and the sky brightened once more. Then, the insects came.

Swarms of flies and mosquitoes suddenly attacked the crew of the African Queen. Each bite felt like the prick of a needle and the insects flew into their mouths, ears and nostrils.

Rose and Allnutt tried to fight off the attack, with no luck. When night came, they wrapped themselves up in an old sheet of canvas, but the insects continued biting.

They awoke the next morning, with headaches and red lumps all over their bodies, and had to crawl through thick mud to get more wood. Soon, they were on their way again.

The following night, Allnutt decided to anchor the boat a few metres away from the shore, to avoid another insect attack. His decision proved wise.

"Well, Rose," said Allnutt, as the pair enjoyed a tasty dinner of tinned tomato soup and biscuits, "we did it. We survived the trip down the Ulanga. I didn't think it was possible, but we made it. You should be proud of yourself."

"I didn't do it alone," said Rose, rubbing the sores on her arms.

