

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.



"You fixed the propeller and you kept the engine going. No other man would have been able to do what you did. Now we just have to get through the delta."

Allnutt nodded. "With a little luck, we'll be at the lake soon."

Allnutt went to sleep a short while later, while Rose stayed awake and thought about the journey ahead. It was a beautiful night; the water surrounding the boat was still and dark and it reflected the light of a thousand stars. Despite the painful insect bites, Rose felt happy and peaceful, and, eventually, she too fell asleep.

Unfortunately, luck wasn't on Rose and Allnutt's side. The channels of the delta were narrow, muddy and filled with reeds and by the following afternoon, the African Queen had come to a complete standstill.

"We're stuck in the mud," said Allnutt.

"I know," said Rose. "What can we do?"

Allnutt wiped the sweat from his brow with the back of his hand. "I can use this boat-hook," he said, picking up a thin, curved piece of metal. "I'll hook it onto the reeds and pull the boat along."

Rose looked at the thick reeds on either side of the boat and sighed. "Using a boat-hook will really slow us down," she said.

"We have no choice," said Allnutt. "The propeller won't turn in mud."

It took Allnutt two hours to move the boat just a few metres forward. The work was exhausting and when the insects returned, Allnutt collapsed on to the floor of the boat.

"I can't go on," he said breathlessly. "I'm sorry, Rose."

"All right," said Rose. "Give me the boat-hook."

Allnutt was too tired to argue. He gave Rose the boat-hook, but as much as she tried, she wasn't that successful either. After about ten minutes, she threw the boat-hook down with a clatter and sat down next to Allnutt.

"We'll go on tomorrow," she said.

Later that night, after Allnutt had fallen asleep, Rose heard the sound of raindrops on the stern and almost jumped for joy. Now



the water level in the channel would rise and by morning, the boat would be above the mud and reeds. They would be able to continue their journey at full speed. Rose smiled to herself and fell asleep.

The rain had indeed been a blessing, and Rose and Allnutt set sail after a quick breakfast. By lunchtime, they had entered another channel, only this one was full of water lilies. It was a matter of minutes before the boat got stuck again.

This time, Allnutt used his boat-hook and Rose used a canoe paddle to move the boat forward. But it was no use. The boat wouldn't move.

"What do you think is wrong?" asked Rose.

"Sounds like something's happened to the propeller," said Allnutt.

"I'll have to go down and take a look."

Rose looked concerned. "Do be careful, Charlie," she said softly.

Allnutt nodded. He dived into the water and disappeared under the carpet of weeds while Rose looked on anxiously. She sighed with relief when Allnutt finally reappeared.

"There are weeds wrapped around the propeller," Allnutt informed Rose. "I managed to cut some of them away, then I had to come up for air. It shouldn't take me too long to cut away the rest."

"Please be careful," said Rose as Allnutt went under a second time.

He had to dive four times to cut the weeds away from the propeller. When Allnutt came up for the last time, his face was shining with pride.

"All done!" the mechanic announced as Rose helped him on to the boat. Suddenly, Rose let out a little cry; Allnutt was covered in fat, black leeches. They were stuck on his arms and legs and were quickly swelling up with his blood.

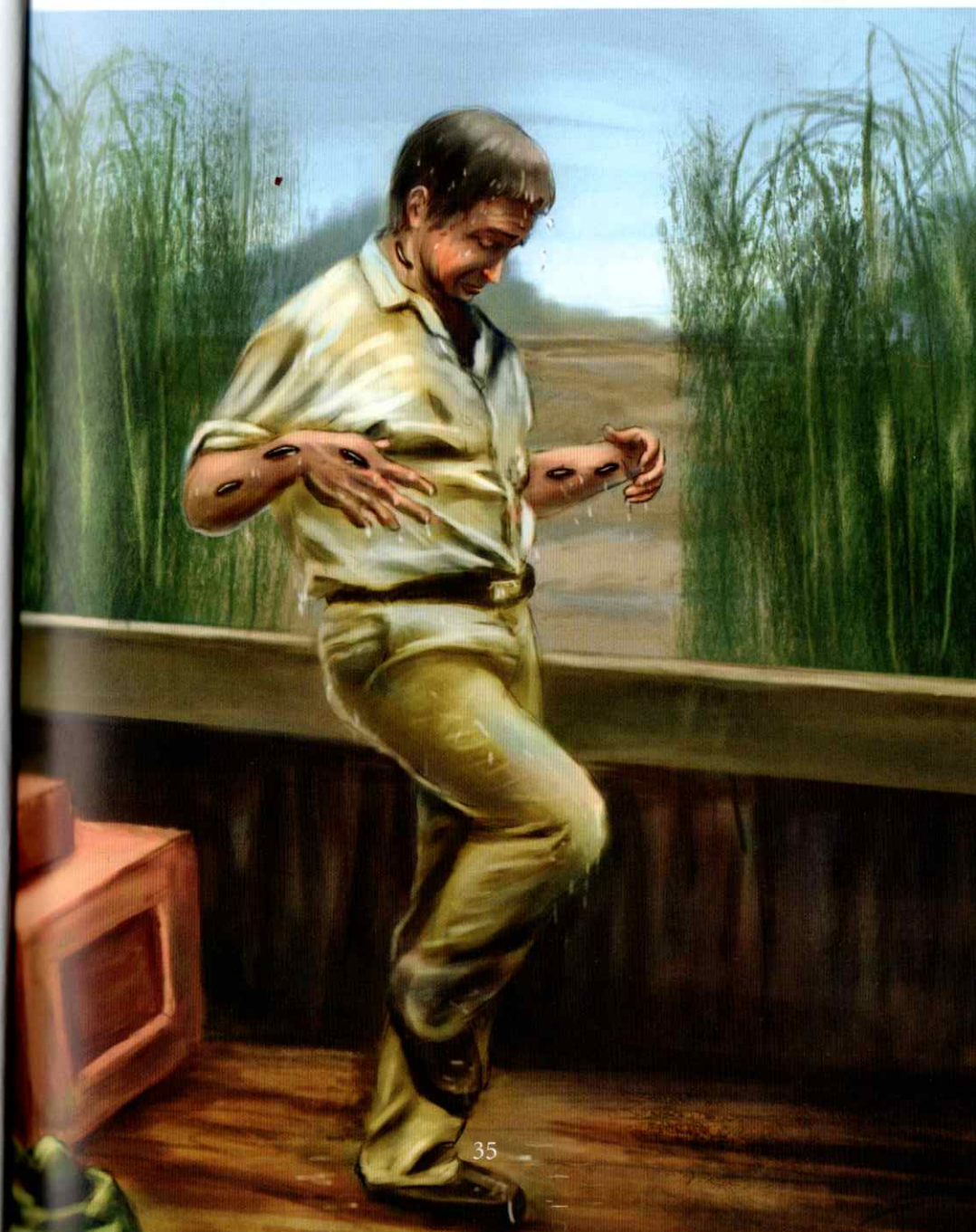
"Get them off!" Allnutt shouted as he hopped around the boat. He hated leeches more than anything in the world.

Rose remembered that the best way to remove leeches was to pour salt over them, and she rushed to the store cupboard to get the tin of salt. She rubbed the salt on the leeches and they rapidly let go of their victim. The creatures fell on to the floorboards one by one, and Rose threw their remains into the water.

Allnutt looked disgusted. "Let's get away from here, Rose!" he

pleaded. "Quickly!"

Ten minutes later, Rose and Allnutt continued their journey through the delta.



CHAPTER 6

Comprehension

1 Choose a, b or c to complete the following sentences.

- In the Bora Delta the crew of the African Queen
 - attacked flies and mosquitoes.
 - were attacked by insects.
 - wrapped some insects up in an old sheet of canvas.
- Rose thought that using boat-hooks
 - would help them through the delta.
 - would keep away the insects.
 - would slow them down in the delta.
- Allnutt dived into the water in the delta
 - to find out why the boat wasn't moving.
 - to get some water lilies for Rose.
 - to find a canoe paddle.
- Rose got rid of Allnutt's leeches
 - with some reeds.
 - with a boat-hook.
 - with some salt.

2 Answer the following questions.

- What is described as being more like a swamp than a river?

- What did Allnutt and Rose do to protect themselves from the insects at night?

- What happened when the boat tried to get through one of the channels of the delta?

- What did Allnutt use to move the boat through the reeds?

- Why did Rose cry out when she saw Allnutt after he had freed the propeller?

Vocabulary

3 Match the two columns to make expressions.

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. at full | a. for joy |
| 2. come to | b. minutes |
| 3. a matter of | c. your side |
| 4. luck on | d. speed |
| 5. sigh | e. with relief |
| 6. jump | f. a standstill |

4 Complete the following sentences using the words from the box.

muddy thick gather lump collapse stern

- I have decided to have the _____ of my yacht repainted next week.
- _____ soup is very tasty, especially in cold winter months.
- The old stone wall looks as if it is going to _____.
- A lot of people are going to _____ in the park for the free concert.
- My brother has a _____ on his leg where his friend kicked him.
- Your shoes are _____, can you please leave them outside?

Follow-up activities

5 Discuss.

- Rose and Allnutt keep facing difficulties, but continue their mission. How important is it to have values and ideals to follow? Why?
- The weeds in the delta were extremely difficult to clear but Allnutt was determined to keep the boat going. What do you think gave him the strength and courage to go on?
- When Rose saw that Allnutt was covered in blood-sucking leeches, she immediately went to help him and didn't think of the danger to her own health. Do you agree with her actions? Why? / Why not?
- Do you think the pair will be ready for the next challenge on their journey? How do you recover your energy after you have become very tired?

6 Put yourself in Allnutt's position and write an account of the event with the leeches. (100 - 120 words)