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Auckland Island is a godforsaken place in the middle of the Southern Ocean, 285 miles south of New Zealand. With year-round freezing rain and howling winds, it is one of the most forbidding places in the world. To be shipwrecked there means almost certain death. In 1864, Captain Thomas Musgrave and his crew of four aboard the schooner Grafton wreck on the southern end of the island. Utterly alone in a dense coastal forest, plagued by stinging blowflies and relentless rain, Captain Musgrave inspires his men to take action. With barely more than their bare hands, they build a cabin and, remarkably, a forge where they manufacture their tools. Incredibly, at the same time on the opposite end of the island, the Invercauld wrecks during a horrible storm. Nineteen men stagger ashore. Unlike Captain Musgrave, the captain of the Invercauld falls apart given the same dismal circumstances. His men fight and split up; some die of starvation, others turn to cannibalism. Only three survive. Musgrave and all of his men not only endure for nearly two years, but they also plan their own astonishing escape, setting off on one of the most courageous sea voyages in history.

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