

Excerpt from

BEYOND
THE
FARTHEST
HORIZON

A NOVEL OF
MAGELLAN
AND THE
FIRST CIRCUMNAVIGATION
OF THE WORLD

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PROLOGUE

LISBON, 1493

“HE’S HERE!” The young voice echoed along the stone hallway. “He’s returned, and his ship is at the dock!”

Thirteen-year-old Ferdinand Magellan looked up from the chart he was studying. With eyebrows raised, he watched his cousin run panting into the small chamber. Francisco Serrão, affectionately called Chico, had always been excitable, but he seemed especially animated now. “Who’s here?” Magellan asked.

Serrão gestured wildly, trying to speak as he caught his breath. “In the harbor . . . it’s the ship . . . of Admiral Columbus!”

“Admiral Columbus?” Magellan sat upright. The Genoese explorer had been the topic of much discussion in maritime circles. Columbus had made a bold prediction that he could reach the spice-rich Indies by sailing west across the Great Atlantic. His small fleet had ventured from Seville seven months earlier with much fanfare, and many wagers had been made about the fate of his voyage. “Are you sure, Chico? Why would he come here instead of returning to Spain?”

“I heard the hands at the dock speaking of a great storm. They said the admiral lost one ship and was barely able to steer this one into the harbor. The caravel does look to be in much need of repair.”

Magellan leapt from his seat. “You’ve seen him?”

“Not the admiral himself. He’s not departed the ship. They are awaiting word from His Majesty about permission to refit.”

“Why are we standing here talking then? We may be able to reach the pier before he leaves!” The two boys dashed from the chamber, sending Magellan’s parchments fluttering to the floor.

II

The dock was clogged with people, everyone straining to get a closer look at the battered vessel sitting at anchor in the muddy water. Weaving through the mass, Serrão and Magellan pushed and squeezed their way to the front as only wiry young boys can do. Their colorful page uniforms stood out in contrast to the drab garments of the mostly peasant crowd. Undoubtedly, their teacher, Duke Manuel, would be quite upset if he knew they had deserted their studies to roam the quay. Coming from families of lesser nobility, the two cousins had been pages in the court of Queen Leonor in Lisbon for almost a year, and the thrill of studying at the royal palace was heightened because of its proximity to the harbor. From the windows of the palace towers, the two apprentices were able to watch the magnificent ships sail up and down the Tagus River.

Both boys were fascinated by the sea and its mysteries, and each studied it in his own way. Magellan pored over maps and charts, reading accounts of explorers who had ventured into the unknown and returned to tell their amazing tales. He haunted the royal library, learning everything he could about the art of navigation. Serrão, the more restless of the two, preferred to loiter on the docks, watching the preparation and stocking of ships. He was acquainted with several of the harbor workers and they kept him informed of the various expeditions.

As they stood in the shadow of Columbus’ ship, the two pages learned much by listening to fragments of conversation in the buzzing crowd. Some Portuguese officers had boarded the admiral’s vessel and, according to their report, Columbus was claiming he had done what

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he said he would—he had found a westward route to the Indies. He had even brought back several dark-skinned Indians as proof of his feat.

While returning to Spain, a violent storm blew Columbus off course, separating him from the *Pinta* and forcing him to put in at Lisbon. The Admiral's ship had been nearly stripped of its sails, so he elected to make for the nearby harbor in hope that Portugal's King João would allow him to refit and continue on to Seville. Tensions between the two sister countries had been escalating as they competed for dominance in the enterprise of exploration. Aboard the *Niña*, Columbus awaited word, whether hostile or friendly, from the monarch who had twice before turned down the Admiral's request for sponsorship. It was late afternoon before a messenger brought the king's answer: Columbus' ship was to be repaired and supplied with whatever it needed.

Magellan examined the beaten vessel. The little caravel had one square sail remaining on its bare masts. It was a tribute to the Admiral's skill that they had managed to make it into the harbor. Magellan's gaze wandered down the stained planks of the hull, and he tried to envision the seas the ship had sailed through.

Presently, the crowd parted to make way for a train of mules led by King João's emissary. They were to take Admiral Columbus to the king's country residence. The messenger boarded, and the throng waited impatiently for some sign of activity on the deck. Finally, the Admiral appeared at the rail, flanked by three wide-eyed Indians. The people gave a loud cheer and called his name. Magellan and Serrão stared at the tall seaman as he descended the gangplank.

Columbus and his party pushed their way through the pressing crowd. People reached out to touch them and to pull at their clothing. The Indians looked fearful and huddled close together. Serrão was intrigued by their dark complexion and straight black hair. He had heard sailors tell dreadful tales about the rites of heathens in primitive lands. "Look at them," he whispered to his cousin. "I've never seen savages before. I wonder if they are cannibals!"

Magellan was more interested in Columbus. He studied the Admiral's face, looking at the deep lines, the wind-roughened skin, the red hair streaked with gray. But more than anything else, he noticed the discoverer's eyes, which reflected both triumph and weariness. Young Ferdinand Magellan sensed a vague kinship with Columbus, something he could not define. He stood watching as the line of mules carried their passengers through the crowd and disappeared from sight.

Many years later, on a shore very far from Lisbon, Magellan would think back to this day and remember the look in Columbus' eyes, and would understand.

BOOK I

SOLDIER

BEYOND THE FARTHEST HORIZON





CHAPTER 1

ARMADA

LISBON - MARCH 25, 1505

CANNONS THUNDERED. Cheering crowds filled Lisbon Harbor. Sitting at anchor in the Tagus River were 22 majestic ships with the scarlet cross of the Crusading Knights of Christ emblazoned on the main square sail. This mighty armada was outfitted, armed, and ready for departure. The 1,500 men who would soon board these vessels had come to Lisbon from all over Portugal to enlist in what promised to be the most important expedition in the history of the tiny nation.

Not far from the harbor, in Lisbon Cathedral, a ceremony to launch the fleet was in progress. Rows of soldiers in full regalia knelt with heads bowed as a brightly robed priest waved his arms, sleeves billowing, and pronounced a blessing over the assemblage. The men solemnly confessed their sins and took the sacrament, then pledged an oath of loyalty to King Manuel of Portugal and to their heavenly Father.

In the throng, Francisco Serrão peered out from under his helmet at the line of officers in the front ranks. "I will be an officer, too, before we return to Lisbon," he thought to himself.

Next to him knelt his cousin, Ferdinand Magellan, eyes closed, lips moving in prayer. The devout Magellan looked dwarfed by his armor, which was two sizes larger than his small frame.

The priest concluded his prayer and a courtier announced His Royal Majesty. To the platform stepped King Manuel. The young ruler surveyed the crowd for several moments without speaking and silence filled the great cathedral to its domed ceiling. Magellan and Serrão looked at each other and smiled. His Majesty the king had been their teacher when they were pages at the court and he was but a duke. He had frequently effected this same type of pretentious pause while teaching them navigation and astronomy. It was still difficult for them to think seriously about this monarch upon whom they had played childish pranks.

There had been controversy when Manuel became king after the death of his predecessor, the dynamic King João. Don João's son and heir to the throne, Afonso, had died after being thrown from a horse. Many whispered that Manuel had been involved in the tragic accident. Some said it was to avenge when King João had ordered Manuel's elder brother executed for plotting to gain the throne. Others claimed it was because Manuel had fallen in love with Afonso's beautiful young bride. Nothing was proved, and the crown fell to Manuel as João's cousin and brother-in-law.

Manuel was 26 when he ascended the throne in 1495 and he had wasted no time resuming the enterprises for which he had a passion: exploration and trade. Manuel had ordered his captains to find a sea route to the East. In 1498, the great admiral Vasco da Gama reached India by sailing around the southern tip of Africa, forging a pathway that had brought great wealth to Portugal. After years of preparation, the king was ready to send forth the largest armada ever commissioned to protect this investment.

Manuel gave a nod and the courtier called the name of Don Francisco de Almeida. Every head turned to watch as a man strode to the dais and knelt before the king. A veteran officer, Almeida was

tall and wide-shouldered, his narrow face ringed by a thin graying beard. In his splendid armor, he exuded a commanding presence.

King Manuel was handed a white banner adorned with the same crimson cross as on the sails of the fleet. “Don Francisco de Almeida, I place in your charge the greatest of missions. You shall command our mightiest armada, and with it you shall fortify all strategic points on the sea road to India, establishing bases and installing garrisons to ensure that any maritime traffic will be controlled by Portugal. You are to destroy any strongholds of the Mohammedans, and sink any vessels of the prophet’s minions. But most of all, you are to carry the gospel of Christ into these heathen lands and let His banner wave over them. You will be my right arm in India and carry my authority. I christen thee Captain-General of the fleet and Viceroy of the Indies. Go and conquer in the name of Portugal!”

Almeida rose and the king handed the silk banner to his new viceroy. The 1,500 soldiers jumped to their feet and shouted their support. Magellan stood with the others and bellowed, “Onward for the greater glory of God and Portugal!” He felt a rush of emotion and expectancy as he was about to embark on the adventure of which he had dreamed all his life. For too many years he had watched others sail from Lisbon into the unknown. Now at last, it was to be his turn.

As the sailors began making their way out of the cathedral, Magellan turned to Serrão. “The ships await, Chico! Soon we will leave this dreary city in our wake!”

Together they marched with the procession through the sloping streets of Lisbon to the docks. The midday sun beat down on the men in their heavy armor, but Magellan and Serrão paid little attention to the sweat running down their backs. The soldiers were cheered by crowds of people who threw beads and handkerchiefs. Serrão flashed his most charming smile at each young lady they passed, even stopping to kiss a few hands before being pulled along by Magellan.

Soon the masts of ships became visible over the rooftops. The parade made quite a spectacle, with their weapons brandished and

armor glinting in the sunlight. The sailors wound down to the docks and began to board the grand vessels. Cannons roared in salute and the din of the crowds became louder. Women wept as they embraced husbands and sons for what might be the last time. But more than sadness, there was excitement, the thrill of adventure, the hope for riches, and the stirring pride of patriotism.

Having been clerks together in Lisbon's marine agency, *Casa da India*, Magellan and Serrão had arranged to be assigned to the same ship. The *San Gabriel* was a three-masted caravel of 120 tons and was one of the vessels that made the first journey to India with Vasco Da Gama seven years earlier. Since then, the *San Gabriel* had been refitted three times and was probably not as seaworthy as some of the newer ships. But there was something reassuring to the young adventurers that this ship had already made the arduous journey around Africa twice before. It was familiar with those oceans so far away, and they would feel secure on its seasoned planks.

They boarded with their bedrolls and small bag of clothes and stood at the rail to watch the boisterous whirl of activity on the quay as the fleet made ready to embark. They were two young sailors among many. Serrão was slender and handsome with a long mane of wavy hair. Magellan was short, stocky and strong. His face was flat with a dark complexion and sepia eyes sheltered under thick black brows. Although very different in temperament, the two cousins were devoted to each other. For nine long years they had worked at *Casa da India*, filing manifests, writing reports, and recording the yield brought back by the ships returning from the East. Many expeditions had come and gone as they awaited their opportunity to put to sea. Now in their mid-twenties, they were finally seeing their dreams realized. They would savor the experience side by side; Serrão the romantic, Magellan the pragmatist.

At last the signal was given for the armada to depart. With only foresails raised, the ships began their slow progress down the Tagus as the cannons bellowed a final salute. Magellan and Serrão felt a

deep exhilaration. They watched as the crowds and the harbor grew small and were finally lost to view. The journey down the river was short, and the fleet soon spilled out into the Great Atlantic. All sails were hoisted and the canvas billowed with the sea winds.

“At last!” thought Magellan as the shoreline of Portugal became a hazy silhouette. Whatever lay ahead in the vast oceans and distant lands, he was ready to face it.

II

The thrill of adventure quickly eroded as Magellan and Serrão became acquainted with the realities of ship life. Though they came from noble families, they were only supernumeraries—volunteers doing military service. This meant they ate and slept out on the deck with the common sailors, and worked from sunup to dusk. This would be their routine until initiative, opportunity, or a superior’s untimely death created an officer’s position for them.

Their duties were varied: scrubbing decks, trimming sails, cleaning guns, all manner of repairs. They most dreaded being assigned to the *calafate*, the ship’s caulker, who was responsible for keeping the vessel watertight. They would splash around in the fetid darkness below decks inspecting the ship for leaks by torchlight, patching seams with tar, and manning the pumps.

Each night as they lay on the hard deck, their muscles groaned with a clamor that kept them awake despite their fatigue. The two often reflected on how different life aboard ship was from what they had imagined.

“Chico, I have come to realize that study is a poor substitute for experience,” Magellan said. “All those years I read about the mariner’s life and thought I was prepared to be a sailor. Hah! The reports neglected to tell how a seaman is constantly wet from rain and sea spray. They did not speak of the tasteless food, the sunburn in the day and cold of the night, and the endless sway of the ship that keeps the gut unsettled.”

"Aye," Serrão agreed, "and nothing can prepare you for the foulness of the ship's bowels. The stench in the hold is suffocating. After tramping around in bilge water, I stink for days! Nor do the stories tell of the burns from dripping tar, or how it peels a layer of skin when you scrape it off." Serrão examined the scarlet welts on his arms. "Fernão, we must find better work while we still have skin remaining!"

"I have been considering that as well. We are both educated men. Surely we can apply for positions befitting our nautical training. I will present my credentials to the *piloto*, in hopes that he might employ me to read charts and help him plot our locations."

"That sounds like civilized work! I too must find something that keeps me away from the *calafate*. If I spend too many more days in the hold with the rats and the cockroaches, I will die from the reek and you will have to toss my corpse to the sharks."

III

The captain of the *San Gabriel* was Don Lorenzo de Almeida, son of the viceroy. Lorenzo was an imposing leader and strict taskmaster. He was taller than his father, with powerful arms and a deep chest. He had, on occasion, knocked a troublesome crewman senseless for being slow to carry out orders. Despite such a reputation, Magellan found Lorenzo to be an evenhanded leader who was as generous with his praise as he was with his wrath. Unlike most captains who gained their rank solely because of noble birth, Lorenzo was an experienced seaman. On most vessels, the everyday operations of running the ship were the responsibility of the master, but Lorenzo assumed this position himself. He knew every yard and rope on the ship, and could assume any task if the need arose.

Magellan nervously approached the captain with his request to assist the ship's pilot. Lorenzo reviewed the young crewman's credentials and nodded approvingly. "Pedro is one of the finest navigators in all of Portugal, but he is getting old and could use an apprentice.

Submit this to him with my endorsement and help him keep us off the reefs.”

Pedro da Silva was a rotund man of 60 years who had studied and served with the great Amerigo Vespucci. The pilot was impressed by Magellan’s knowledge of astronomy, cartography, and mathematics; and he offered the young man practical training in coastal pilotage. Magellan was also put in charge of updating the *portolani*, the ship’s map book, with any new geographical discoveries.

Magellan fulfilled his new duties with eagerness and precision. When assigned to watch the compass, he would shout directions through an open hatch to the helmsman, who manned the tiller on the gun deck below and controlled the course of the ship. Occasionally, Magellan measured the vessel’s speed with a log line—a length of cord on a reel, knotted at equal lengths. A small piece of wood was tied to one end of the line, and this was tossed overboard from the stern of the ship. He counted the number of knots that ran through his fingers as the cord unreeled to estimate the speed in nautical miles. Silva taught Magellan an old navigator’s trick for determining the ship’s pace. He sent his apprentice to spit off the bow, and the veteran pilot would stand at the stern and count his pulse beats while watching the spittle as it trailed past the ship. Magellan was impressed with Silva’s accuracy at estimating speed using this crude method.

Serrão, who was not the navigator like his cousin, volunteered to work with the ship’s sergeant-at-arms in maintaining discipline among the crew. Martin Freitas was the only crewman stronger than Captain Lorenzo. Freitas was a huge man, with a back so broad and arms so thick with muscle that no uniform would fit him. He wore large golden rings in his ears, and kept his head shaved smooth.

When Serrão applied to Freitas, the big sailor looked him over doubtfully. “I suppose I could use another man, but you seem too scrawny to break up a fight.”

“What I lack in brawn I make up for in shrewdness,” Serrão replied. “There are many ways to put out a fire.”

Freitas grinned. "Aye, so there are. I'll give you a chance, then. But remember, the men must either fear you or respect you."

Thus Serrão became a member of the sergeant-at-arms' ranks, and he proved his worth over the next few days. His personable manner quickly made him popular with the men, and he was often able to diffuse volatile situations with a joke and good-humored appeal for calm.

IV

Two weeks out of Lisbon the fleet made its first stop at the Cape Verde Islands off the northwest coast of Africa. These islands had long served as a Portuguese base where ships took on supplies and underwent minor repairs. Weather-faded wooden buildings lined the pier, most of these being taverns. The harbor was soon crowded with sailors drinking, cursing and brawling. Viewing this cacophony from the rail of the ship, Magellan was not inclined to disembark.

"Come," Serrão insisted. "I know it's not Africa, but at least it's not Lisbon. We sat in libraries and offices most of our lives, let us at least enjoy a drink at our first landfall."

As they moved through the crowds on the wharf, the smell of salt water, sour ale, cooked fish and unwashed bodies was almost worse than the bilge. They ventured into a dilapidated tavern. Sitting around filthy tables were groups of drunken sailors, clutching their bottles and listening to one of their mates telling a bawdy story punctuated by belches. A few tired-looking prostitutes were sprinkled among the revelers, sitting on laps and trying to coerce coins from addled seamen.

"Francisco! You and your cousin come here!" They saw Martin Freitas motioning to them from a nearby table. "Have a drink with us, lads."

Magellan hesitated, but Serrão pushed him forward. As they were seated, the other sailors slapped them on the back and shoved half-empty bottles into their faces. Magellan grimaced at the reek from the greasy jug he'd been handed and wondered how many of these

dirty men had guzzled from it. He saw Serrão drinking eagerly from his bottle and determinedly took a swallow from his own. The brew burned a fiery path to his belly. His eyes watered and he felt his stomach tightening.

“A hearty ale, is it not, Cousin?” Serrão asked.

Magellan nodded uneasily and took another swig. “Aye, quite invigorating.” He quickly passed the bottle to his neighbor.

Magellan managed to avoid the ale for the next two hours, but Serrão continued to drink and his speech became increasingly loud and incoherent. The men around the table began to disperse or drift off to sleep. Magellan helped Serrão stagger back to the ship. Just before going aboard, Serrão bent over the rail and vomited into the harbor. He looked up at Magellan with heavy-lidded eyes and grinned, spittle trailing from the corner of his mouth. “What a great time, eh? I like those fellows. We must do this again...” but he was unable to finish his sentence before turning to heave once more into the water.

V

The fleet remained five days in the Cape Verde Islands. Captain-General Almeida divided the armada into two groups; the faster caravels, including the *San Gabriel*, would comprise an advance squadron to proceed to the Cape, the slower naos would follow later under different orders. It was essential for the fleet to round the Cape of Good Hope in time to catch the eastward-blowing monsoon in the Indian Ocean. The captain-general led the first squadron of twelve vessels in his flagship, the *San Miguel*.

After giving a wide berth to the reefs of Cape Bojador, the ships moved in closer to the continent. A lookout sighted the Rio de Oro, the fabled River of Gold, and two days later they skirted the dazzling white shores of Cape Blanco. Magellan and Serrão saw their first whale as it spat a shimmering plume of spray near the bow.

As he gazed at the desolate coastline, Magellan often thought of accounts he had studied of the bold explorers who first traveled these

waters. In the early years of the fifteenth century, Portuguese sailors had tentatively crept down the northwest coast of Africa, but they had always turned back at Cape Bojador. The treacherous shoals around the Cape had made passage difficult, and the superstitious sailors dared not trespass into the “Sea of Darkness” where dragons and other monsters of the deep waited to swallow vessels whole.

It was a young nobleman, Gil Eannes, who finally crossed the feared boundary and pushed past Cape Bojador in 1434. What he found was not boiling seas or terrible leviathans, but calm waters that caressed a fertile coast. Eannes’ discovery gave Portuguese mariners the courage to continue exploring the continent, and in the decades that followed, many expeditions pressed further and further south. In 1482, Diogo Cao reached the mouth of a great river, which he named Congo after the friendly Bakongo people who lived there. But it was Bartolomeu Dias who finally reached and rounded the southern tip of Africa in 1488. Venturing past the stormy Cape of Good Hope, Dias found that the continent turned upward, and the Portuguese realized that a sea route to the East had been opened. Ten years later Vasco da Gama accomplished the great feat of reaching India by sailing around Africa.

Now Portugal was no longer dependent on Arab-controlled land routes to obtain goods from the East. Its armadas could sail directly to the Orient, and the small Iberian country was growing wealthy. King Manuel recognized the need to protect this precious pipeline from all interference. Almeida’s mighty fleet was to ensure Portuguese control of the sea roads by establishing fortified bases in both Africa and India. Like all the other sailors, Magellan and Serrão had committed to a three-year tour of duty with the armada. Brimming with patriotic zeal, they were ready to earn their place in Portugal’s glorious history.

VI

Near the end of May, the *San Gabriel* put in to a small bay with lush green foliage bordering the shore. Several of the ship’s water

barrels had cracked and leaked, and their supply of fresh water was perilously low. Captain Lorenzo decided to separate temporarily from the rest of the fleet, replenish their stores, and catch up later. Martin Freitas assembled a detail of ten men to go inland to gather water. Magellan and Serrão accompanied the party, but they were left at the beach to guard the longboat.

Magellan longed desperately to venture into the jungle. He was pacing the sand when he noticed a gray shape at the edge of the tree line. Moving closer, he found a stone pillar topped by a cross. It stood as high as a man and was engraved with the Portuguese royal coat of arms. Beneath the seal was an inscription: *Hither came the ships of the illustrious King João II. Captain Diogo Cao, 1485.*

"Look, Chico! It is a *padrao*. Diogo Cao left many of these markers at his landfalls. I have been following our course in the chart book and, by my reckoning, this must be Cape Cross."

"Hmmp, he did nothing to improve this place," Serrão muttered. "There is nothing here."

It was near dusk when the shore party came out of the jungle. Three of the men were holding bloody bandages and one limped along between two others.

Serrão hurried to the group. "What's this? Were you attacked?"

"Aye. We're lucky to all be here with our skins," Freitas snorted. "When we reached the stream we saw a lone man, black as ebony, gathering water. As we moved to capture him, the dog let out a howl and summoned his brothers. A pack of savages came screeching out of the trees with spears. We tried to fight, but they were thrice our number. So we retreated, leaving behind our water casks and our pride. Antonio here caught a spear in the foot, but the rest of us escaped with only scratches."

The weary men piled in to the longboat and plotted their revenge as Magellan and Serrão rowed back to the ship.

"Tomorrow we will return with a battalion," Freitas said. "We'll send these jackals yapping back to their den with arrows in their backsides!"

As night fell, the full moon rose over the water and its reflection was broken into a hundred dancing shards. Magellan stood at the ship's rail staring at the dark shoreline. Strange birdcalls and other unidentifiable noises drifted from the jungle. He wondered what type of people could live in such a dangerous land so far from the civilized world. As he thought of tomorrow's raid, he felt regret that his first encounter with the inhabitants would be as adversaries.

The next morning, a squad of 30 armored men marched into the jungle, led by Martin Freitas and Captain Lorenzo. The path to the stream was quiet. No screaming attackers appeared. A disappointed Serrão suggested that they search for the natives, but Lorenzo was more concerned about catching the fleet. The party filled their casks and returned to the ship without a skirmish.

After weighing anchor, the ship unfurled all sails. They found favorable winds and rejoined the armada by the next day. Magellan marked the location of the stream and the *padrao* in his chart book. He felt a strange, indefinable attraction to the African continent. He hoped to soon meet some of its people, preferably not over crossed swords.

VII

The night was cold, but the sea was calm so the sailors on deck were able to sleep without being tossed about. The ship's timbers creaked rhythmically with the sway of the vessel on the water. Magellan and Serrão clutched their blankets around them and looked up at the stars sparkling in the vast black canopy, the constellations now so strange and different.

"How far have we come?" Serrão wondered aloud.

"Three hundred fifty leagues, I think." Magellan calculated in his head, ever the navigator. "Soon we shall make the turn at the Cape."

"So far from home." Serrão tossed restlessly. He wondered if he would ever get used to sleeping on the hard deck.

"Aye, and even further to go." Magellan's mind swirled with excitement, stirred by images that had inflamed his imagination

since childhood. "What adventures await us out there? What things will we see?"

"Wonders we cannot imagine!" Serrão said.

Magellan closed his eyes and did indeed try to imagine. Waves lapped gently at the hull, and they listened to the song of the dark sea. One of the sailors mumbled something incoherent in his sleep. "Tell me, Chico, do you think we'll ever see Portugal again?"

"What kind of talk is that? We're going to come back rich men!"

"You know our chances of returning are slight. Two of every three sailors who ventured out of Lisbon did not come back. Shipwreck, disease, pirates, hostile natives...all take their share of seamen's lives."

Serrão rolled over to face his cousin. "Are you sorry you came?"

"No."

"Then what are you moaning about, Fernão? We have waited for this a long time. Would you let the dangers hinder you now? With the share we bring back, we'll be wealthy for the rest of our days and heroes to all those who remained behind."

Magellan opened his eyes. "Don't take my caution for fear, Chico. I am not afraid. Like you, I have dreamed of this voyage most of my life. I remember those many occasions when a ship would return from a long expedition, battered and leaking, with a handful of wretched sailors. But the tales they told! Stories of peril, battle, and exotic lands. I envied those ragged men for what they had experienced. I vowed that someday I would sail off and return with my own fantastic tales. When we put in to port again at Lisbon, I am going to stop the first boy I see after I leave the ship and fill his ears with my exploits."

"Ha!" Serrão laughed. "Is this my serious cousin speaking? Fernão the buccaneer, the soldier of fortune! That is supposing you don't get skewered by the first infidel you meet! There are many years between us and the day we see Lisbon again. Go to sleep, Cousin, and dream your dreams of glory. Those dreams will dim soon enough in the morning light."

IX

Two days before reaching the Cape of Good Hope, the fleet was engulfed in a storm that erupted with frightening swiftness. The captain-general signaled the vessels to stay within sight of the flagship, but the violent winds tossed them about like driftwood. Magellan whispered his prayers, fearing that any moment his ship would be swallowed by one of the monstrous waves. He had often read of the Cape's vicious storms, but he never imagined the elements could rage with such fury. He was shaken from his worried musings by a sharp blow to the shoulder.

"Get up!" Captain Lorenzo boomed. "We must bring down the sails before the winds bring them down for us! Never have I seen a storm blow in so quickly!" Magellan scrambled to the task, trying to maintain his balance on a deck that was pitching madly. Salty spray blinded him as he loosened knots on the halyard.

Lorenzo peered through the gale, trying to locate the rest of the fleet. "Helmsman! We must stay with the flagship. I see its lantern ahead." The captain barked directions through the hatch. A huge wave slammed against the side of the ship, causing the vessel to reel and tearing the tiller from the helmsman's grasp. The heavy pole slammed against his temple, sending him sprawling, and leaving the ship without guidance, completely in the grip of the storm. The masts groaned under the onslaught of the tempest. Magellan feared that even if the ship survived the storm, they would be hopelessly lost, blown far from the fleet and the Cape.

Through the slanting rain, the captain made his way to the hatch and looked down. The helmsman was still senseless, so Lorenzo turned to Magellan. "I'm going down to take the tiller. Be my eyes, and make sure we do not lose the flagship's beacon!"

"Aye, Sir!" Magellan clung tightly to the mast and shouted instructions to the captain below, but the tossing of the ship threw him to the deck and he nearly lost sight of the lantern. He used a rope to secure himself to the mast, and facing into the pelting torrent he kept

the *San Gabriel* on course with the flagship all through the storm. When at last the winds and rain abated, a hoarse and exhausted Magellan loosened his rope and collapsed.

Lorenzo climbed up from the hatch and clapped him on the back. "Hah! I've never seen a man tie himself up like that! The waves tried to pry you free, but you stayed firm. Good thinking."

Magellan stood and the captain shook his hand. "Thank you, Sir."

Lorenzo grimaced as he flexed his shoulders. "My arms will ache for a week. Steering the tiller in a gale is work enough, but without you we would be lost. This won't be forgotten, lad." He turned to the crew and bellowed. "Heave to, men. Let's clean up this mess and hoist the sails!"

When the battered fleet regrouped the following morning, only nine vessels remained with the flagship. For two days they waited for the three missing ships, but none appeared. The captain-general decided the fleet must continue on and round the Cape of Good Hope.

Finally, on June 26, after two days of more moderate weather, the weary vessels saw the outline of Table Mountain. Once past the cliffs of the Cape, the fleet made the turn northward and pointed their bowsprits toward India.