

Doger, I'm not going to like this place,' said Edna Murgatroyd.

'What's wrong, Edna?' asked her husband.

There was always something wrong! Mrs Edna Murgatroyd was always complaining. The Murgatroyds had been married for twenty-five years and Edna was never happy about anything or anybody.

'It's hot and dirty here,' she said.

'Yes, dear,' said Roger Murgatroyd, 'but we're only going to stay here for a week.'

An hour earlier, the Murgatroyds had arrived here on the island of Mauritius. Now they were in a taxi, travelling north from the airport towards Trou d'Eau Douce - a village on the east coast of the island.

There were three passengers in the taxi - Roger Murgatroyd, Edna Murgatroyd and John Higgins.

Roger Murgatroyd was about fifty years old. He was short, he was fat and he wore glasses. Today, he was wearing a dark suit. His wife was a few years younger than Roger but she was heavy too. She was wearing a large, dark red dress. John Higgins was about twenty-five years old. He was wearing a cool white suit and sunglasses.

The two men worked for the Midland Bank. Roger Murgatroyd and John Higgins were the Midland Bank's Employees of the Year.

Every year, the bank rewarded two of its employees. The two employees who had worked the hardest were given a reward. The bank gave the two employees and their families a holiday. This year, 1977, the reward was a holiday in Mauritius. Edna Murgatroyd had come to Mauritius with her husband. John Higgins was not married - he was travelling alone.

The taxi passed through the village of Trou d'Eau Douce. It was a pretty village beside the sea. The village had a small harbour. There were some fishing boats in the harbour.

'This is a good place for game-fishing,' said Higgins.

After a few more miles, the taxi arrived at the Hotel St Geran. It was a beautiful white building near the sea.

Higgins and the Murgatroyds got out of the taxi and Higgins paid the driver. Two hotel porters carried the three travellers' bags to the reception desk. The manager of the hotel welcomed the new guests in the reception area.

'I hope that you enjoy your holiday,' he said. 'Mauritius is a beautiful island.'

Suddenly, a man who was wearing shorts and a brightly- coloured shirt walked towards the desk. He was holding a can of beer. He had come from the hotel bar, which was near the reception area. He looked at John Higgins and the Murgatroyds.

'Are you the new guests?' he asked in a loud voice. He spoke with an Australian accent.

'Mmmm. Yes,' said Roger Murgatroyd. Roger was a shy man - he could never think of anything to say to strangers.

'I'm from Sydney, Australia,' said the man. 'My name's Harry Foster, what's your name?'

'I'm Murgatroyd - Roger Murgatroyd. This is my wife - Edna, and this is my colleague, John Higgins.'

Edna Murgatroyd looked angrily at the Australian's shirt and his can of beer. She did not speak.

'Where are you from?' asked Harry Foster. He was asking them which country they came from but Roger did not understand.

'The Midland,' he said. 'Higgins is from the Midland's head office and I'm from a branch of the bank in East London.'

Harry Foster laughed. 'So - Murgatroyd of the Midland and Higgins from Head Office,' he said. 'I like it. Good on yer, Murgatroyd!'

The hotel manager looked at Edna Murgatroyd's angry face. He spoke quickly.

'Please let our new guests relax after their long journey, Mr Foster,' he said. He held Harry Foster's arm and led him back towards the bar.

Edna stared at the Australian. 'That man is drunk!' she said loudly.

'He's on holiday,' said her husband.

'I don't like people who get drunk!' said Edna.

When they got to their room, Edna Murgatroyd decided to sleep for an hour after the long journey. Roger Murgatroyd was pleased. He sat quietly and looked out of the window.

The next day, Roger Murgatroyd began to enjoy his holiday. When he woke up, he looked out of the bedroom window. The view was beautiful.

When he looked out of his bedroom window at home in London, he saw cold, grey, wet streets. But here, in

Mauritius, he could see the golden beach, the blue sea and the green palm trees. He looked at the hot sun and at the bright sea and at the white waves. He felt happy and relaxed.

Murgatroyd ate some fruit for breakfast. Then he went down to the beach to swim and to lie in the sun. At ten o'clock, Edna came down to the beach too. For the next two hours, she sat under a sun umbrella and told her husband what to do. She told him to bring cold drinks, then she said that she did not like them. She told him to put sun-tan oil on her back, although she did not want to lie in the hot sun.

At lunch time, the Murgatroyds went back to their room. Roger put on a pair of brightly-coloured shorts.

'Let's go to the restaurant,' he said.

'You can't wear those shorts,' his wife said. 'You must wear a pair of trousers.'

'Yes, dear,' said Murgatroyd. He took off the shorts and put on a pair of dark trousers.

The days passed quickly. Every day, the Murgatroyds did the same things. They sat on the beach. Edna sat under a sun umbrella and read romantic novels. Roger did what his wife told him to do.

John Higgins had met some young people and he went out with them each day. The Murgatroyds did not see him

often. But on the Friday afternoon, Roger did see Higgins. Higgins spoke quietly to Roger Murgatroyd while Edna was asleep.

'Tomorrow is the last day of our holiday,' said Higgins. 'Do you want to come game-fishing?'

'What do you mean - fishing for sharks?' asked Murgatroyd.

'Not sharks - tuna, bonito, dorado and other big fish,' Higgins replied. 'I've been to the harbour at Trou d'Eau Douce. Three South African businessmen hired a boat. They wanted to go fishing tomorrow. But now they have to go back to Johannesburg quickly, so they don't have time for fishing. The businessmen have paid half the money for the boat. So we can hire the boat for only fifty dollars. We can go game fishing tomorrow.'

'Edna won't let me go,' said Murgatroyd sadly.

'Then don't tell her,' said Higgins. 'Just go!'

For a moment, Roger Murgatroyd was shocked. He always asked his wife before he did anything. But tomorrow was the last day of his holiday. He wanted to enjoy himself. He would never have a holiday like this one again. He wanted to go game-fishing with Higgins!

Suddenly, he felt happy. 'Edna will be angry,' he said

to himself. 'Well, I don't care!'

'Yes! All right,' he said to Higgins. 'I'll come with you.'

'Good!' said Higgins. 'Meet me by the hotel reception desk at four-thirty tomorrow morning.'

Murgatroyd was awake all night. He lay quietly beside his wife, but he did not sleep. At four o'clock, he got dressed quickly. He put on his brightly-coloured shorts and a thin shirt. It was dark outside. Murgatroyd left the bedroom very quietly and he met Higgins by the hotel reception desk. Soon they were in a taxi, travelling south towards Trou d'Eau Douce.

At the little harbour in Trou d'Eau Douce, they met their guide. He was a tall South African called Andre Kilian. Murgatroyd and Higgins each gave him twenty-five dollars. The guide took them to a boat called the Avant. They met the captain and a young man who worked on the boat.

'This is Monsieur Patient,' said Kilian. 'And this is his grandson, Jean-Paul.'

Monsieur Patient was a strong old man in his seventies.

He was wearing an old straw hat. Jean-Paul was a tall man in his twenties.

Jean-Paul carried boxes of food and cans of beer onto the boat while his grandfather talked to Kilian. Finally, Jean-Paul put a large tool-box and a metal bucket full of squid onto the boat's wooden deck.

'We are ready to leave,' said Kilian.

At about half-past five, the boat left the harbour. The sun was rising.

Andre Kilian showed Murgatroyd and Higgins the two long fishing rods which were used to catch big fish. Each rod had a large reel of very strong fishing line.

'The reels have eight hundred metres of line,' Kilian said. 'Big fish are very strong. A big fish will pull out several hundred metres of line from the reel. It's difficult to reel in a big fish. It's difficult to pull the fish to the boat.'

There was a special seat at the back of the Avant. A fishing rod could be fixed to the deck in front of the seat.

'When you catch a big fish, you must fix the rod here,' said the guide. He pointed at the deck. 'You must sit in this seat while you reel in the fish.'

At about half-past six, Monsieur Patient slowed down the boat's engine.



'We will fish here,' Kilian said.

Jean-Paul went to the fishing rods. At the end of each line, there was a very sharp hook. The young man put a small squid onto each hook, and he threw the ends of both lines into the sea. If a big fish ate one of the squid, the hook would cut into the fish's mouth. Then one of the fishermen could pull the fish to the boat. He could reel in the fish.

After a few minutes, one of the fishing lines became tight. A fish had eaten the squid and the hook.

'We've caught a fish!' shouted Higgins. 'I'll reel it in!' Higgins took the rod and he sat in the seat. He started to reel in the fishing line. He turned the reel slowly and carefully. Soon, the fish was beside the boat. Jean-Paul leant over the side of the Avant. He lifted the fish into the boat and pulled the hook out of its mouth.

'It's a bonito,' said Kilian. 'It weighs about two kilos.'

Jean-Paul put another squid on the hook and he threw it into the sea. Soon, one of the fishing lines was tight again. This time, Murgatroyd took the rod and sat in the seat. He started to turn the reel.

'It's heavy!' he said. 'It must be a big fish.'

He turned the reel slowly. He reeled in the fish. Kilian leant over the side of the boat and looked into the water.

'Another bonito,' said Kilian. 'A bigger one - about four or five kilos.'

At eight o'clock in the morning, the sun was getting hot. Higgins and Murgatroyd caught some more bonitos.

Before nine o'clock, Higgins caught a much larger fish. It was the colour of gold.

'It's a dorado,' said Kilian. 'Dorados are good to eat. We'll ask the chef at the Hotel St Geran to cook this fish tonight.'

Soon after nine o'clock, Monsieur Patient spoke to his grandson. He spoke in Creole French.

'Ya quelque chose - nous suit,' he said.

'What did he say?' asked Higgins.

'He said that there's something following us,' answered Kilian.

Higgins looked at the sea behind the boat. He could not see anything.

'How does he know?'

'Monsieur Patient has been fishing here, in this sea, for

sixty years.'

Jean-Paul reeled in the lines. He took some wire-cutters from the tool-box and he cut the hook from the end of each line. Then he fixed much larger hooks to the lines. He did not put squid on these. On each hook, he put one of the bonitos which they had caught.

Half an hour later, one of the lines became tight. Murgatroyd took the rod and sat in the seat. Suddenly, his line was pulled out very quickly. A hundred metres of line was pulled out in less than a minute. The reel made a loud noise as it went round and round.

'Hold onto the handle of the reel!' said Kilian. 'Slow down the reel, or all the line will be pulled off it. You've caught something big.'

Murgatroyd held the fishing rod tightly. He slowed down the reel. The end of the rod bent over and pointed down towards the sea. After three minutes, the reel stopped turning. Six hundred metres of fishing line had been pulled from the reel.

'We must put the harness on you,' said Kilian. 'This is a very big fish!'

The harness was fixed to the fishing seat. Quickly, Kilian and Jean-Paul harnessed Murgatroyd to the seat. There were two leather straps over his shoulders and two

round his legs. Another strap was round his waist.

'Now the fish won't be able to pull you into the sea!' said Kilian.

Old Monsieur Patient slowly turned the boat. He looked at the sea behind the boat. 'Marlin!' he said.

'You're lucky, Mr Murgatroyd,' said Kilian, 'you've caught a marlin.'

'Is that good?' asked Murgatroyd.

'Marlin are the biggest and best game-fish,' Kilian answered. 'Rich men come here every year. Many of them spend thousands of dollars and they never catch a marlin.'

Murgatroyd could not see the marlin, but he knew that it was very strong. Sometimes the fish turned and swam towards the boat. When that happened, Murgatroyd reeled in some of the line. Then the marlin turned away from the boat and pulled the line from the reel again.

'That fish will fight you for hours,' said Kilian.

Murgatroyd felt the heat of the sun. It was ten o'clock. His arms were aching. Soon the sun would be hotter. Could he hold the fishing rod for hours?

Between ten and eleven o'clock, Murgatroyd reeled in the line three times. Each time, he slowly and painfully reeled in a hundred metres of line. Each time, the big fish pulled a hundred metres out again.

At eleven o'clock, the marlin tail-walked for the first time. It was five hundred metres from the boat. It came out of the sea and it stood up on its tail.

'It's walking on the water!' said Murgatroyd.

Monsieur Patient looked at the huge fish. 'C'est l'Empereur,' he called to his grandson.

'What did he say?' asked Higgins.

'He said that it's the Emperor,' answered Kilian. 'All the fishermen on the island know about this fish. They say that the Emperor is the biggest blue marlin that they have ever seen.'

At midday, Murgatroyd was feeling tired and ill. His hands were very painful. He had been fighting the fish for two hours. Murgatroyd pulled. The fish pulled. Murgatroyd turned the reel forwards. The marlin made the reel turn backwards. Suddenly, the fish stopped pulling. A few minutes later, its head came out of the water. The fish was only three hundred metres from the boat. After a few seconds, it went back under the water.

'Reel in! Quickly! Reel in!' shouted Kilian.

Murgatroyd reeled in the line as fast as he could. His hands began to bleed.

'You're tired,' said Kilian. 'Shall I hold the rod for an hour? Then you can take it again.'

'How much longer will the marlin fight?' asked Murgatroyd.

Kilian looked at Monsieur Patient. The old man said, 'Deux heures encore.'

'Two more hours,' said Murgatroyd, 'I'm all right. I can do this for two more hours. It's my fish.'

Then the marlin started pulling on the line again, but it did not pull as strongly as before. For another ninety minutes the fish and the man fought each other. Murgatroyd's mouth and lips were dry. There was blood on the fishing rod. Pull. Reel. Pull. Reel. -Murgatroyd forgot that his hands were bleeding.

At last, the marlin stopped pulling. Murgatroyd reeled in carefully. Suddenly they all saw the fish.

'The Emperor is coming in!' Kilian shouted.

The blue marlin came out of the water thirty metres from the boat. Murgatroyd continued to reel in the huge fish. When it was three metres away, he could see the hook in its mouth.

Jean-Paul moved to the side of the boat. He had a large, pointed metal bar his hand. He lifted the bar above his head. He was going to kill the fish.

'No!' shouted Murgatroyd.

Jean-Paul stopped and looked at Murgatroyd. Murgatroyd got out of the harness. Slowly and painfully, he went over to the tool-box. He took the wire-cutters from the tool-box and he walked to the side of the boat.

The huge blue body of the marlin lay in the water next to the boat. The fish was tired. It had no strength for fighting.

Murgatroyd leant over the side of the boat. He put the wire-cutters round the fishing line and he cut through it.

'What are you doing?' shouted Higgins. 'The Emperor will get away!'

'Yes,' said Murgatroyd.

The great Marlin went down slowly beneath the

Advant. The fish was free.

Murgatroyd tried to stand up but he was too weak and dizzy. He fell heavily onto the deck. He had fainted!

The Avant returned to the harbour at Trou d'Eau Douce in the evening. Murgatroyd had drunk some cold beer and he was feeling better. But his hands were still very painful. And the skin of his arms and his legs and his face was sunburnt.

There was a crowd of villagers standing at the harbour when Monsieur Patient turned off the Avant's engine. Jean-Paul and his grandfather got off the boat first. They went to talk to the villagers. Then everyone walked back to the Avant.

Kilian and Higgins helped Murgatroyd to get off the boat. As Murgatroyd walked away from the Avant, Monsieur Patient took off his straw hat and said, 'Salut, Maitre.'

The villagers repeated his words. 'Salut, Maitre, salut,' they said quietly.

'What are they saying?' asked Higgins.

'They're talking to Mr Murgatroyd,' said Kilian. 'They're calling him a master, a great fisherman.'



'Because I caught the Emperor?' asked Murgatroyd.

'No! Because you gave him his life,' said Kilian.

Kilian and Higgins took Murgatroyd to the small hospital in the village. A young Indian doctor put some bandages on Murgatroyd's hands.

At nine o'clock, Monsieur Patient came to the hospital. He and Murgatroyd talked for half an hour.

It was ten o'clock when Murgatroyd and Higgins walked through the doors of the Hotel St Geran. Murgatroyd was very tired. His skin was burnt by the sun. Both his hands were covered with white bandages.

Harry Foster, the Australian, held up a glass of beer. 'Well done!' he said. He was drunk again.

Then Edna Murgatroyd came downstairs. She had curlers in her hair. She was very angry.

'Murgatroyd!' Edna shouted. She always called her husband 'Murgatroyd' when she was angry. 'Where have you been? You look terrible!'

Murgatroyd looked at his wife. The curlers in her hair were like snakes. Suddenly, he shouted at her.

'And you look terrible too, Edna! Be quiet or go to bed!'

Edna Murgatroyd's mouth opened but she said nothing. She had been married to Roger Murgatroyd for twenty-five years and he had never shouted at her.

'Edna, for twenty-five years you have made me unhappy,' Murgatroyd said to his wife. 'You have often said that you wanted to go to live with your sister. Well, now you can go to live with her. You are free. I shall not return to England with you tomorrow.'

A crowd of people had come from the hotel bar. They stood with Harry Foster and they looked at Roger Murgatroyd.

'Have you forgotten your job at the bank?' asked Higgins. 'You can't leave the bank, Murgatroyd. How will you earn money? How will you live?'

'Edna can have our house and everything in it,' said Murgatroyd. 'I have a little money. I'm going to buy Monsieur Patient's boat and a small house on the beach here. I will learn about the sea and about fishing. Monsieur Patient will teach me. We will go game-fishing with the tourists who come here, to Mauritius. They will pay us well.'

'But - the bank!' said Higgins.

'And me. Have you forgotten about me?' Edna asked angrily.

Roger Murgatroyd thought for a moment, then he said, 'To hell with the bank! And to hell with you, Edna!'

And Murgatroyd started to walk towards the hotel bar. The crowd of people with Harry Foster followed him. They laughed and shouted.

Harry Foster smiled and held up his glass of beer. 'Good on yer, Murgatroyd!' he said.

- THE END -

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