

FADE IN:

The camera slowly pans down a page in a HAND WRITTEN JOURNAL while the voice of WELDON CLANGER, an English professor of herpetology and keen fossil collector, narrates in a reflective tone. Softly superimposed images of maps, seascapes, and people begin to appear behind the text as the narration proceeds. These dissolve away by the time the camera reaches the bottom of the page and we see Clanger's hand still flourishing a dip pen and resting on what appears to be the edge of a writing desk.

WELDON (V.O.)

Midway through the sixth week, having sailed approximately 7000 miles, we realised that something was amiss and that either Ceylon was seriously overdue or we were. Our captain made reassuring utterances and apologised for a misjudgement made at Aden by the mate who was in charge after an unwise culinary excursion had rendered the captain less than capable.

The captain explained that the ship was no longer sailing to Batavia but had, in fact, been set on a new course to Fremantle, Australia, and that we had just enough coal on board to correct the error. Unfortunately, as we pulled hard to port, this remnant of hope shifted starboard, inducing the most alarming list in most alarmingly rough seas. There was little to go wrong in the narrow stretch of the Red Sea, but the Indian Ocean being...an ocean... well...

Thus it was that our party, clutching those possessions which had fortuitously been marked 'Wanted On Board', found itself bidding farewell to all but one of the ship's company somewhere in the vicinity of the Chagos Archipelago.

WELDON (CONT'D)

The other poor fellows caught the edge of the equatorial counter current and drifted northeast towards the shipping lanes, probable rescue and possible discipline while we, owing to the perversity of the weather, meandered somewhat south of our original position and were drawn into the circular dance between the Equatorial and Southern ocean currents.

Thus positioned, somewhere south of India and west of Australia, within screaming distance of the Tropic of Capricorn and without a ship in sight, my friends and I spiralled into adventure.

The voice of Dourword Bickerblast, American historian, amateur geologist and photographer, and university dean on sabbatical, interrupts this reverie.

DOURWORD (V.O.)

Weldon why are you waving your finger in the air?

CUT to a C/U profile of Weldon lying face up in the sun on an overturned and damaged lifeboat. He rolls his head sideways to face the camera as if in reply.

WELDON

(bemused)

Mmmmm...?

Dry sand falls away from his glasses as he smiles and he then falls off the boat and out of frame.

EXT. TROPICAL ISLAND BEACH

Weldon lands on PÄR UNDERQUEST, Swedish ornithologist and enthusiastic but under prepared adventurer, who was apparently sleeping but is now energetic and fully functional...if only physically.

PÄR

(in a flailing panic)

FARA! SE UPP!! AKTA DIG!!! ÖSA EN BÅT!!!
We bail, Yes?! WE BAIL.....

As Weldon gets to his feet, Pär wildly flings cupped handfuls of sand at Dourword.

PÄR (CONT'D)
(slowly realising that he's safe)
No... No, we do not bail.

Dourword stops squinting and wipes the sand from his face and shirt.

DOURWORD
No, Dr. Underquest, we do not bail.
We did enough of that last night.
At least enough to save our lives.

PÄR
(starting to help wiping)
Sorry for that, Dean Bickerblast.

DOURWORD
Not a problem, Pär, and call me
Dourword. Actually, I think Professor
Clanger...

Weldon approaches to shake Pär's hand enthusiastically

WELDON
Weldon...

DOURWORD (CONT'D)
...and I very much appreciated your
vigour, especially when it was useful.

WELDON
Oh, absolutely! In fact, I can safely
say that all four of.....us.....?

Weldon, Dourword, and Pär simultaneously realise that two others are missing.

WELDON (CONT'D)
Safely... All four...

All three start to run up and down the beach shouting.

WELDON
Lucida!!!

DOURWORD
Miss Camberwell! Mr Spittlecup!!

PÄR
Hello, anybody!!! Hello?!

CUT TO FURTHER DOWN THE BEACH: We hear the voice of LUCIDA CAMBERWELL, Daughter of a Bishop, self-taught botanist, watercolourist, and freethinker. She enters shot calling as Pär's voice trails off.

LUCIDA
(shouting)
Hello, EVERYBODY!
(to herself)
Well, that helps a bit.

She picks up her shawl and starts walking briskly towards them.

CUT BACK:

WELDON
Oh, thank goodness...

The group quickly converges just beyond a large piece of driftwood.

LUCIDA
I had just eaten some fruit to get my strength back and was about to go looking for you.

DOURWORD
You are resourceful. Any....?

Lucida smiles, showing them a large handful fruit gathered into her shawl.

LUCIDA
Has anyone seen Barth Spittlecup?

WELDON
Not yet, I...

Pär calls from the other side of the driftwood. A pair of bare legs poke out from its shadows.

PÄR (O.S.)
OVER HERE! It's good, yes? *Ha tur.*

Weldon and Lucida turn and Dourword runs over to Pär.

DOURWORD
(grimacing)
Good Lord!

Weldon arrives before Lucida and turns back to stop her.

WELDON
(gravely)
No. Don't look. He is.....

LUCIDA
Yes.....?

WELDON
.....unclothed.....

Weldon puts a steadying hand on Lucida's arm and she assumes his gravely shocked tone.

LUCIDA
Oh....Oh, well then....

Lucida lowers her head and then manages to peek around Weldon's shoulder. What she sees shocks her and she quickly turns away both revolted and amused.

BARTH SPITTLECUP, a short, hairy, English west country merchant seaman emerges adjusting himself.

BARTH
Thank'ee gentlemen. Much obliged.
Oh, thas' better.

Barth has just finished tucking his shirt in and offers his hand to Pär who smiles lamely, hesitates, shakes hands, and then wipes his on the driftwood as Barth turns to the others.

BARTH
(tired but cheerful)
Well, 's not so bad after all, is it?

DOURWORD
Wait a minute, Mr. Spittlecup!
Aren't you the...first mate! You set
the course. You're the one who got
us into this...this...ocean!!

BARTH
(shocked)
I'm not the first mate, neither!

DOURWORD
Second, then!

 BARTH
No!

 DOURWORD
But you did it?!

 BARTH
It weren't my fault!!

 WELDON
 (trying to calm the situation)
Oh...that's alright, Barth...what
were your duties then?"

 BARTH
I was a... a petty officer...

 PÄR
Yes..?

 BARTH
...I'm ...the cook.

 LUCIDA
Well then, all is not lost;
we have a chef!

 BARTH
You all forgive me then?
I did me best.

 DOURWORD
 (pausing to say this carefully)
What.....do you mean?

 BARTH
Well, when the captain and his mates
went down with the collywobbles, it
weren't easy. "Set a course.", he moans.
 "Follow the charts.", he wheezes.
"Well.", I says, "I'll set as many
courses as you please, but this is
different!" "Just try.", he coughs.
"Keep the sunrise slightly to port.",
he groans. Well, I felt ever so sorry
for him, so..."

Everyone is transfixed.

BARTH (CONT'D)

All the same, I thought it'd be better if I was in your lifeboat instead of the captain's.

LUCIDA

The man thinks very well...

DOURWORD

...But he can still be wrong...

Dourword starts advancing.

WELDON

Steady, Dourword. He might not be a navigator, but where are we going anyway? He is a cook and this seems to be an island with more than enough edible flora growing on it.

LUCIDA

Agreed.

Lucida smiles shrewdly and tosses Barth some fruit. He is surprised, smiles, and nods his thanks.

WELDON

And there are fish.

PÄR

Yes. Many fish!

WELDON

In any case, he didn't cause the ship to sink.

DOURWORD

Oh, good heavens, no! No, no, no, no, no. He just made it.....possible!!

WELDON

Ah.....

PÄR

(nervously)

But...what about the food...poisoning?

Dourword freezes and shoots Barth a meaningful look.

BARTH

They got that in Port Said! Said they didn't like my meals. Got tired of them, they said. Wanted something different. Well, it were different enough, I'd say.

WELDON

You see, Dourword. The man's innocent. Tedious, but innocent, and, for better or worse, he's one of us now.

Weldon turns and offers his hand to a grateful Barth.

WELDON (CONT'D)

Shall we shake on it?

DOURWORD

Oh, very well...

And they all do.

DOURWORD (CONT'D)

But, the fact is...we are still lost.

WELDON

I know, Dourword, and that is the most staggering thing of all! Because, you see, if we are lost, truly and completely lost, why, we might just...have discovered this island! Our island. Think of it!

DOURWORD

Yes, Weldon, our island...forever, if no one discovers us!

LUCIDA

Excuse me, but don't you think it's a little soon to panic? After all, we've only just arrived and, frankly, I'm far too tired to rush up and down this beach screaming at the top of my lungs."

DOURWORD

(confused and offended)
Panic?.....

LUCIDA

In any case, we need time to think as well as time to rest, so let us be positive. I am quite sure that we will get out of this alive and all be home once more...

We hear a loud 'CRUNCH' from O.S.

LUCIDA (CONT'D)

...many of us.

Pär has fallen through a thin crust of pumice into a waist deep hole.

PÄR

(bemused)

Det var som tusan!

This is interesting. It smells like old eggs!

DOURWORD

(looking closer)

I accept your opinion as an ornithologist, Dr. Underquest, but as a gentleman geologist I would add that you've probably tested the structural limits of an old lava tube.

LUCIDA

Volcanic? Now that is interesting.

WELDON

Congratulations, Pär, on the first serious bit of research undertaken by our little party.

As Weldon and Barth help Pär out of the hole, Dourword leans towards Lucida.

DOURWORD

You're petrified, aren't you?

LUCIDA

Of course. Does that change anything?

DOURWORD

Hmmmm. I take your point.

Weldon, Barth, and Pär approach Dourword and Lucida. The five characters are together on the beach some distance from the overturned lifeboat and midway between the shore and the jungle which fringes the central peaks.

WELDON
(chuckling)
Well, I had hoped to be studying the flying lizards in Batavia, but I think that until we're rescued this is as fine a place as any for a little scientific research and adven.....

A faint but deep droning sound rises and fades away. Everyone is confused and strains to listen for its return.

PÄR
Djur? Animal?

BARTH
The wind in the trees, maybe.
Morning breeze y'see.

DOURWORD
(thinking)
Perhaps.... You were saying, Weldon?

WELDON
(distracted)
Oh, yes, Dourword...I was going to say adventure ...a little adventure.

Weldon gives a plucky smile and a thumbs up.

PÄR
(enthusiastically)
Oh, yes! Adventure! *Mandom*...manhood!
....Ah, please excuse, Miss Camberwell...

She smiles. Pär then clears his throat and continues.

PÄR (CONT'D)
But, you know, maybe we should go back to the boat and see what we have still got.

The five of them start walking back to the lifeboat.

LUCIDA
The lifeboat survived?

WELDON
Well, upside down and a little damaged,
but I think most of what we did manage
to get on board is still in...well,
under it.

DOURWORD
Actually, Lucida, after that last wave
hit I was amazed that any of us remained
onboard. How did you both survive?

LUCIDA
Well, separately it seems.

BARTH
'S right. I didn' see no one 'til you
found me! Clung to that driftwood like it
were me mother's....well, you know...
tight like.

LUCIDA
(showing excessive interest)
As you would...
For myself, it was mostly luck really.
The wind seemed to billowing my clothes
up anyway so I just lifted them a bit
higher and eventually got blown to shore.
Not easy...but it worked.

PÄR
(laughing)
Fiffig...Pigg!

LUCIDA
I beg your pardon?

PÄR
(still laughing)
Ingenious! You have much spirit!!

DOURWORD
Well, we'll all need as much if we're
going to get a camp organised before
nightfall. Let's hope that Weldon's right
about what's under that boat.

They all drift away from the camera and up the beach.

*N.B. The Swedish spoken by PÄR and the Dutch to be
spoken by reclusive JOOST SOJOURN appear italicized.*