PREFÁCIO



autor desta quase literal adaptação de *Os Lusíadas* reconhece — apesar do respeito, do cuidado e do carinho que pôs na delicadíssima tarefa — que ela é de qualquer modo sacrílega.

Não se toca numa obra de génio, para a apresentar simplificada aos olhos do público, sem a triste e aliás inevitável sensação de amarfanhar a sua beleza, de corromper e desfolhar o seu encanto radioso.

Não me pejo de confessar que estive constantemente angustiado, que sofri contínuos e sérios remorsos, enquanto procurava interpretar, em prosa corrente e fácil, a grandeza, a majestade épica de *Os Lusíadas*.

Insisti e teimei em fazê-lo, não por gosto e deleite no trabalho, mas porque este me pareceu necessário, urgente e — perdoe-se-me o orgulho — sinceramente patriótico. É costume dizer-se que *Os Lusíadas* são a Bíblia da Pátria, ou, menos retoricamente, o livro nacional por excelência. De facto. Mas essa Bíblia, esse livro intrinsecamente nacional, só tomam contacto com ele — quando o tomam... — os alunos dos liceus, a partir do meio do seu curso, e os adultos.

As crianças não o leem, não o podem ler — as crianças que, por muito pouco que entendam o francês, encontram nessa língua edições, à sua escala e medida, da própria *A Odisseia*, não será tempo de oferecer-lhes uma singela, embora imperfeita adaptação da nossa *A Odisseia* — odisseia real, e não apenas imaginária, e, mesmo por isso, mais do que a outra maravilhosa — para que ao menos se lhes tornem familiares o povo, os heróis, os acontecimentos notáveis e celebrados por Luís de Camões e que são glória imorredoira da nossa terra?

Creio que sim. E foi para elas — pensando na alegria de ajudar a criar nas almas infantis o civismo de que tanto falamos e de que tanto carecemos — que me atrevi a reduzir a linhas essenciais, embora pobres, a linhas acessíveis à mais ingénua visão, a opulência de arquitetura, a prodigiosa riqueza de emoções, de sentimentos, de imagens e de ideias, que, página a página, cativam e deslumbram o leitor de *Os Lusíadas*.

Ousarei ainda acrescentar que esta adaptação a consagro também — ao Povo. Não que o Povo — que somos todos nós — ignore o poema, a sua celebridade e a sua inspiração. Mas esquece talvez demais as nobres ligações que dele dimanam. Atrevo-me a supor que ninguém levará a mal que eu tão francamente o diga — e que ninguém deixará de perdoar, pela pureza da intenção, os erros e faltas da minha modesta e receosa tentativa.

João de Barros

FOREWORD

This is an almost literal prose adaptation of *The Lusiads*, the Portuguese original of the epic by Luís de Camões. Despite the respect, care and deep affection with which I have approached this exquisite endeavour, it seems that the task itself is somehow sacrilegious.

It is impossible to touch a work of genius in order to present it in simplified form to the public without the sad and indeed inevitable sense of tarnishing its beauty, of corrupting and defiling its enchanting splendour.

I freely admit to being constantly in anguish, to feeling unremitting and deep remorse as I sought to convey the epic majesty and magnificence of *The Lusiads* in fluent, everyday prose.

I insisted and persisted in doing it, not because I enjoyed the work, but because it seemed necessary, urgent and—forgive my pride—sincerely patriotic. It is often said that *The Lusiads* is the "Bible of our Homeland", or, less rhetorically, the best literary work our country has produced by reason of its sheer excellence. And indeed, it is an excellent story. Yet we only come into contact with this "bible", this quintessentially Portuguese literary work, as teenagers in high school, and as adults.

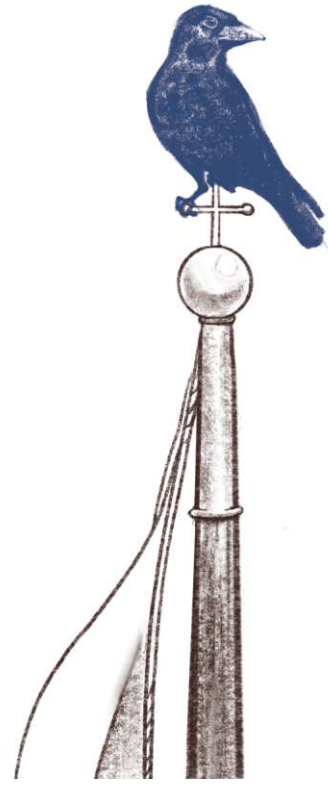
The fact is that children do not read it—they cannot read it—and yet they are able to read appropriately adapted versions in plain French of Homer's *The Odyssey* despite their limited understanding of that language. Is it not high time that we gave our young people a simplified, albeit imperfect adaptation of our own real-life odyssey that recounts actual historical adventures, not just imaginary ones—lending it greater

weight—so that they can at least become familiar with the people, the heroes, and the notable events celebrated by Luís de Camões and which are our country's unrivalled glory?

I believe that it is. It was because of our children and young people—and thinking about the joy involved in helping to create in children's souls the civic spirit that we talk about so much and need so much—that I dared to reduce to the essentials the opulence of the architecture, the prodigious wealth of emotions, sentiment, imagery and ideas that captivate and mesmerise the reader of *The Lusiads* page after page in order to present this more accessible, albeit whittled down, offering that is easier to understand.

I would venture to say that this prose adaptation takes the Portuguese people today into consideration. It is not that the Portuguese—who are all of us—disregard the poem, its renown or its source of inspiration; it is that they have perhaps forgotten too much about the noble connections that flow from it. I daresay that no one will object to my candour and that I will be forgiven for the errors and faults of this modest and humble attempt, given the purity of my intention.

João de Barros







I

COMEÇA A VIAGEM

Era uma vez um povo de marinheiros e de heróis, o povo português, o nosso povo, que já lá vão muitos anos — mais de quinhentos — quis descobrir o caminho marítimo para a Índia. A Índia aparecia então, aos olhos de todos os Europeus, como terra de esplendor e de riqueza, que todos os homens desejavam, mas onde era difícil, quase impossível chegar.

Quatro pequenos navios — tão pequenos sobre o imenso, ignorado Oceano! — Quatro naus comandadas pelo grande capitão Vasco da Gama lançaram-se através do Atlântico, só conhecido até ao Cabo da Boa Esperança, dobraram esse Cabo e puseram-se de vela para a região que demandavam.

O vento era brando, o mar sereno. Até então a viagem correra sossegada. Mas os perigos seriam constantes, a travessia arriscada, a viagem longa. E ninguém sabia ao certo o rumo a seguir, pois nunca outra gente se atrevera sequer a tentar tão comprida e custosa navegação.

Só a coragem e a audácia dos Portugueses seria capaz da proeza heroica!

Iam os barcos já na costa de Moçambique, rápidos entre a branca espuma das ondas.

A Índia estava longe.

Mas o caminho para alcançá-la era aquele, diziam os sábios e marinheiros — e decerto lá chegariam Vasco da Gama e os seus marujos, se o vento e o mar lhes fossem favoráveis e, sobretudo, se a coragem os não abandonasse.

I

SETTING SAIL

In the days of old, we, the Portuguese, were a people of great sailors and heroes. Long, long ago—more than five hundred years ago, as it happens—no one knew how to get to India by sea. Discovering how to do that was all we could think about. There had to be a way! To the peoples of Europe, India appeared like a shining jewel, a land of riches, a prize that everyone wanted. But it was hard to find, and almost impossible to get there.

Four small ships—so small on the immense, uncharted waters of the ocean!—Four *naus* captained by the great Vasco da Gama set sail across the Atlantic, known only as far as the Cape of Good Hope. They rounded that Cape and ventured forth in search of India.

The winds were mild, the sea calm. Until now, passage had been uneventful. But the dangers would be ever-present, the route taken risky, the journey long. And no one knew for certain what route to take because no one had ever dared to attempt such a long and arduous voyage before.

Only the courage and audacity of the Portuguese would be a match for this heroic exploit!

The ships were already off the coast of Mozambique, moving swiftly through the foamy white waves.

India was still a long way off, though.

But learned men and mariners alike had said that this was the route to take – and Vasco da Gama and his crew were certain to get there if the wind and the sea favoured them and, more than anything else, if their courage did not fail them.

Ai deles, porém!

Sempre que um povo ou um homem tenta desvendar e conhecer paragens até então ignotas, ou realizar um ato nobre e grande, parece que as forças da Natureza, ou a inveja dos outros homens, tudo fazem para os não deixar vencer...

Iam senti-lo e sabê-lo bem os nossos temerários antepassados!

E antes de senti-lo e sabê-lo — já os Deuses ou forças, que vivem nas coisas e nas almas, discutiam se sim ou não os deviam deixar triunfar.

Júpiter, que era o Deus dos Deuses, senhor do Mundo; Vénus, filha de Júpiter, Deusa do Amor e da Ternura; Baco, o Deus da Folia e do Vinho; Marte, o Deus da Guerra; Apolo, o Deus da Luz e do Calor; e Neptuno, o Deus do Mar, juntaram-se todos para resolver se dariam ou não auxílio aos Portugueses.

Bastaria que Júpiter desencadeasse um grande temporal sobre as frágeis embarcações, para que um naufrágio as engolisse logo e, com elas, os tripulantes e o próprio Vasco da Gama...

Era isto o que nem Vénus nem Marte — amigos dos Portugueses, que são, como ambos esses Deuses, afetuosos e valentes — de maneira alguma queriam.

Mas Baco — sempre tonto e mau, que tivera outrora grande poder na Índia e receava que os Portugueses, conquistando-a, até a lembrança do seu reinado de lá afastassem —, Baco preparava-se para os inquietar, desanimando a lusa energia com toda a espécie de maldades e perfídias.

No palácio luminoso, perto das estrelas, em que habitualmente se reuniam — grande conversa e discussão houve entre os Deuses a propósito dos nossos Portugueses e da melhor decisão a tomar sobre o destino das suas naus...

But woe betide those who try!

For it seems that whenever a people or an individual dares to explore and discover the unknown, or to perform great and noble acts, the forces of Nature—or the envy of others—conspire against them succeeding.

Our rugged, reckless predecessors would soon come to know this only too well!

And even before they sensed it, the gods and forces that animate things and souls were already debating whether or not to let them triumph.

Jupiter, god of gods, lord of the world; Venus, his daughter, goddess of love and tenderness; Bacchus, god of revelry and wine; Mars, god of war; Apollo, god of light and the sun, and Neptune, god of the sea, met to decide whether or not to help the Portuguese in their endeavour.

All that Jupiter would have to do is unleash a great storm on the fragile vessels, shipwrecking and engulfing the fleet, and with it, the entire crew and Vasco da Gama himself.

Venus and Mars—who looked kindly upon the Portuguese since they were affectionate and brave just like them—strongly opposed this idea.

But Bacchus—so often wicked and malicious—had once held great sway in India. He feared that if the Portuguese conquered that continent, they might erase all memory of his renown, and so he was all set on disrupting the intrepid Portuguese and sapping them of their strength through all sorts of deceit and nefarious means.

And so it was that there was much discussion and debate among the gods in that luminous palace close to the stars where they usually met. They were about to decide on the fate of our Portuguese mortals and their fleet of *naus*.





II
PERIGOS E TRAIÇÕES

Foi nesse momento que umas certas ilhas, aparentemente desabitadas, aos olhos de Vasco da Gama e dos seus marujos apareceram, como chamando-os a descansar.

Mas não viam eles razão para ali se deterem...

De uma das ilhas, porém — da Ilha de Moçambique, que estava mais chegada à costa —, partem já alguns batéis. Alegram-se os Portugueses, que há muitas semanas viviam só entre o Mar e o Céu, e que, não desejando embora ali parar, sempre gostavam de encontrar gente a quem falassem.

Perguntaram uns aos outros a que raça, a que lei, a que religião pertenciam os tripulantes dos batéis.

Mouros eram, como depois se viu, Mouros que exploravam o comércio das regiões africanas.

Atracam os batéis às naus, e entraram em amena conversa os Mouros e os nossos.

Os Portugueses, confiados, contavam os seus intentos. Prometeram os Mouros, que se fingiam amigos, indicar-lhes um bom piloto, que mais fácil guiasse até à Índia os navios de Vasco da Gama. E também convencem os Portugueses de que lhes dariam alimentos frescos, e água doce dos rios e das fontes da ilha onde habitavam.

Nessa noite os Portugueses dormiram um sono tranquilo, certos do auxílio tão rapidamente oferecido e que tanto os ajudaria a realizar o seu desejo. Piloto seguro e mantimentos frescos para continuar a viagem — eis, na verdade, as coisas de que mais precisavam então...

II
DANGER AND BETRAYAL

It was at this moment that certain, apparently uninhabited, islands came into view as if beckoning Vasco da Gama and his sailors to take some rest ashore.

But they saw no reason to stop there.

Then, they noticed that some small boats were leaving one of the islands—the Island of Mozambique—that was closer to the mainland coast. The Portuguese, who had been on their own and had seen nothing but sea and sky for weeks on end, were suddenly filled with joy at the sight. Although they did not want to stop there, they always liked to meet people and talk to them.

They wondered among themselves what race, what law, and what religion the people on the small boats belonged to.

They were Moors, as it turned out, Moors who engaged in trade in African regions.

Once they had tethered their small boats to the *naus*, the Moors began having a lively conversation with our sailors.

The trusting Portuguese told them of their plans. The Moors, who were only pretending to be their friends, promised to find them a good navigator who could guide Vasco da Gama's ships to India more easily. They also convinced the Portuguese that they would supply them food and fresh water from the rivers and springs on the island where they lived.

That night, the Portuguese slept soundly on board their *naus*, certain that the help they had so readily been offered would make their dream of finding a sea route to India come true. A navigator who knew the safest

Assim que a aurora nasceu, Vasco da Gama — a quem o Regedor ou Xeque das Ilhas anunciara uma visita — mandava embandeirar as naus e adorná-las de toldos vistosos para receber condignamente os seus hóspedes.

Não sabia o Regedor das Ilhas a que país, a que religião pertenciam os Portugueses.

Pensava ao princípio que seriam Turcos, e que adoravam, como ele e toda a gente moura, não Cristo, mas o Deus dos Maometanos, o Deus dos Infiéis — que Portugal tinha sempre e sempre combatido.

Mas receando afinal que o não fossem, e tremendo já de encontrar ali os velhos inimigos de sua raça, pediu ao valoroso Vasco da Gama que lhe dissesse donde vinha, o que pretendia, e que lhe mostrasse os livros da sua Fé, e também as armas fortes que usavam os seus.

Vasco da Gama, leal e sincero, tudo explicou sem dificuldades, por intermédio de um intérprete, já se vê — pois que não conhecia a língua daqueles estrangeiros.

Contou-lhes que se dirigia à Índia, que era cristão e que não trazia nem precisava de trazer consigo os livros da sua Fé, porque tinha os mandamentos desta gravados e guardados na alma.

Mostrou-lhe as suas armas de guerra... Mas só como bom amigo, dizia, acrescentando que desejaria nunca mostradas como inimigo.

Armaduras, pelouros, espingardas de aço e aljavas, bombardas e chuços — tudo o Regedor olhou e admirou, não querendo o grande capitão que se queimassem as estrondosas bombardas, para não assustar o visitante mouro.

Julgava o grande Vasco da Gama — como todas as pessoas verdadeiramente fortes e corajosas — que é *fraqueza entre ovelhas ser leão*. Os homens daquelas ilhas pareciam-lhe inofensivos, amáveis, e nunca indignos da sua amizade...

Enganava-se na sua lealdade...

O mouro, vendo tantas armas e gente tão corajosa, ficou cheio de raiva e de medo.

way and fresh supplies to continue their voyage – these were the things they needed most...

As soon as dawn broke, Vasco da Gama—to whom the regent Sheikh of the Islands had announced his visit—commanded his ships be decked with flags and adorned with colourful bunting to welcome his guests.

The Sheikh of the Islands did not yet know which country the Portuguese were from nor their religion.

At first, he thought that they might be Turks, who worshipped not Jesus Christ, but Allah, the God of the Mohammedans, as did the Sheikh and all the Moors – the very people whom Portugal had always and forever fought.

But fearing that they were not Turks, and trembling to find the age-old enemies of his race in front of him, he asked the valiant Vasco da Gama to tell him where he came from, what he wanted, and to show him the books of his faith, as well as the weapons that his people used.

Vasco da Gama, honest and true, answered all these questions clearly and without any problems – through an interpreter, as it happened, since he did not know the language of these foreigners.

He told them that he was going to India, that he was a Christian and that he did not have to bring the books of his faith with him, because he had memorised its commandments and engraved them on his soul.

He showed him his weapons of war, making sure to explain that he did so only as a good friend, and that he would never want to brandish them as an enemy.

Coats of armour, bucklers, muskets of tempered steel, and quivers, bombards and muzzles ready: The Sheikh looked at and admired them all. The great Captain refrained from having the bombard cannons ignited, since he had no desire to frighten his Moorish guest.

The great Vasco da Gama thought wisely—as would any truly strong and courageous person—that *acting the lion in sheep's company is what weaklings do*. The men from those islands seemed harmless enough, pleasant, and certainly not unworthy of his friendship.

His trust was sorely misplaced.

The Moor, seeing so many weapons and such brave people, was filled with both rage and fear.

E, como era mau e traidor, imaginou que os Portugueses fingiam ser bons — só para o atacar na primeira ocasião.

Disfarçou o ódio, calou-o e tratou de não despertar qualquer suspeita nos Portugueses.

Disse que daria um ótimo piloto a Vasco da Gama.

Falou-lhe noutras coisas com muita doçura.

Tal doçura, porém, era só astúcia. E astúcia perigosa! A ideia dele foi logo atrair os Portugueses a uma cilada — e desbaratá-los. Mas disfarçava o ruim projeto.

Toda esta fúria, afinal, porque os Portugueses eram doutra religião — e ele, maometano, nunca perdoara a nenhum cristão as derrotas infligidas a seus avós, em Portugal e em Espanha, pelos nossos antepassados!

Foi então que Baco, mais zangado do que nunca por uma repreensão que Marte lhe dera ao terminar a reunião dos Deuses, resolveu ajudar os Mouros na perfídia que maquinavam.

Pensando sempre que os Portugueses lhe roubariam a fama que ainda tinha no Oriente, transformou-se em Mouro — num Mouro que andava acompanhando o Xeque das Ilhas.

Tais mentiras inventou sobre os Portugueses, chamando-lhes ladrões e assassinos e jurando que em toda a parte onde tinham passado na sua viagem só mortes e desgraças deixavam, que o Xeque se tomou de pavor, e no extermínio completo dos navegadores viu a sua salvação e a da sua gente.

Quando Baco, disfarçado em mouro, anunciando que os marinheiros de Vasco da Gama viriam à terra muito cedo para buscar água doce, aconselhou o Xeque a matá-los todos — preparou-se logo este para tão feia ação, e imaginou logo uma cilada.

A cilada surtiu efeito, infelizmente, como ides ver...

Os Portugueses, na manhã seguinte, lá foram até à praia mais próxima, na intenção de buscar água e de trazer nos seus batéis o piloto prometido.

Mas — graças a Deus! — desconfiados já por certas atitudes e perguntas muito esquisitas do Xeque, armaram-se à cautela. Não levaram, porém, as espadas na mão, nem supunham ter de lutar.

And since he himself was evil and treacherous, he imagined that the Portuguese were merely pretending to be good, and planning to attack him the first chance they got.

So he concealed his hatred, held his tongue and tried not to arouse any suspicion among the Portuguese.

He said he would give Vasco da Gama an excellent navigator.

He talked about other things in a most pleasant, agreeable manner.

Such pleasantness was merely a ruse, however. And a dangerous ruse at that! His idea was to lure the Portuguese into an ambush – and then to destroy them. But he concealed his wicked scheme.

All this rage was basically because the Portuguese were of another religion – and he, a Mohammedan, had never forgiven any Christian for the defeats inflicted on his grandparents in Portugal and Spain by our ancestors!

It was just then that Bacchus, angrier than ever at being reprimanded by Mars at the end of the meeting of the gods, decided to help the Moors with their treacherous plot.

Still stewing over the idea that the Portuguese would rob him of the fame he still had in the East, Bacchus transformed himself into a Moor – not just any Moor, but one who accompanied the Sheikh of the Islands.

In this disguise, Bacchus invented such lies about the Portuguese, calling them thieves and murderers and swearing that everywhere they had gone on their voyage they had left nothing but death and disgrace in their wake, that the Sheikh was terrified, and the only way to salvation for him and his people was to completely exterminate the sailors.

When Bacchus, in his Moorish disguise, announced that Vasco da Gama's sailors would be coming ashore very early the next day to fetch fresh water, he advised the Sheikh to kill them all. And so the Sheikh immediately prepared himself for the ugly deed and figured out how he would ambush the sailors.

The ambush would come to an unfortunate end, as you will see...

The next morning, the Portuguese went to the nearest beach in their tender boats, intending to fetch water and collect the promised navigator.

But—thanks be to God!—they had already become suspicious of the Sheikh's somewhat strange attitude and stranger questions, so they

Os Mouros é que não hesitaram!... Receberam-nos em som de guerra, lançando sobre eles uma chuva de setas. Insultaram-nos, perseguiram-nos, feriram muitos, mas não conseguiram matar nenhum.

Defenderam-se os nossos com tremenda coragem. E nos batéis da frota estala o som da artilharia, som que os Mouros nunca tinham ouvido e que os atordoou e encheu de pânico.

Fugiram assustados. Uns, feridos, para os batéis. Outros afogaram-se. Os restantes desapareceram a pouco e pouco. Enfim os Portugueses regressam vitoriosos à armada, mas aborrecidos com a infâmia do Xeque. E o que sucede, no entanto? Assim que chegam às suas naus, o Rei Mouro, arrependido, apresenta-lhes propostas de paz!

Paz fingida, é claro, essa paz que o Xeque propõe.

Não que desejasse combater mais. Mas, vendo que não vencia frente a frente Vasco da Gama, resolveu enviar-lhe, e recomendar-lhe como bom, um piloto desleal, que não o conduziria à Índia, certamente, mas que faria naufragar a frota na primeira ocasião.

Vasco da Gama aceitou o piloto; mas, homem prudente, já não acredita muito nos conselhos que ele dá.

E bem fazia, na verdade, pois o piloto queria levá-los para uma outra ilha, chamada Quíloa, onde novos e cruéis Mouros receberiam os Portugueses pior, muito pior ainda do que os primeiros.

Apesar desse cuidado, as caravelas de Vasco da Gama teriam aportado a Quíloa — por não haver terra mais perto — se os ventos contrários não afastassem as naus para longe.

Vénus, amiga dos Lusitanos, lá conseguira este favor da Natureza...

Estariam salvos já da infame ardileza os valentes e ameaçados nautas?

Ainda não...

O piloto, se os não pôde fazer aportar na segunda ilha da traição, outra reservava ainda para os deixar lá, destroçados e mortos.

armed themselves just in case. They did not take their swords with them though, nor did they expect to have to fight.

But the Moors lost no time with their hostilities! They welcomed them by sounding the trumpets of war as they showered them with arrows. They hurled insults at them, chased them, and wounded many, but managed to kill none.

Our people defended themselves with tremendous courage. Then, the roar of artillery rang out from the fleet of *naus* – a sound the Moors had never heard before. It stunned and terrified them.

They fled in panic. Some, who were wounded, fled to their small boats. Others drowned. Those who were left gradually disappeared. Finally, the Portuguese returned to their fleet victorious but outraged by the Sheikh's infamy. So, what happened next? As soon as our sailors reached their *naus*, the Moorish Sheikh, now repentant, made them a peace offering!

The peace offered by the Sheikh was a false peace, of course.

It is not that he wanted to stop fighting. But, because he saw that he could not beat Vasco da Gama head-to-head, he decided to send someone he described as a good man and recommended: a rogue pilot, who certainly would not guide Vasco da Gama towards India but instead would shipwreck his fleet at the earliest opportunity.

Vasco da Gama accepted the pilot with good grace, but, as a prudent man, he no longer believed much in the navigational advice he gave.

And he was right not to, because the pilot wanted to take them to another island, called Kilwa, where more cruel Moors would be sure to give the Portuguese a much worse welcome than they did the first time.

Despite his caution, Vasco da Gama's ships would have docked at Kilwa—because there was no land closer—if the headwinds had not blown the ships away from it.

Venus, friend of our Lusitanian heroes, had obtained this favour from Nature...

Were the brave sailors in peril now saved and safe from vile barbarism?

Well, not quite.

If he could not get them to drop anchor at the port of Kilwa, where a second betrayal was planned, the rogue pilot had yet another one in store. He intended to leave them there, wrecked and dead.

Promete levá-los a uma cidade cristã, onde encontrariam seus irmãos de crença — e conduz os navios a Mombaça, terra de pagãos.

Ali chegados, o Rei da povoação manda-lhes um recado muito amável — e, bem industriado pelo espírito de Baco, sempre no encalço dos Portugueses — afirma-lhes que os receberá como é devido a gente tão ilustre e tão nobre.

Rejubila Vasco da Gama. Pensa que vai descansar enfim uns dias, antes de recomeçar a trabalhosa e fatigante jornada.

Ai dele e dos nossos, todavia, se porventura se tivessem fiado em tais palavras!...

Mal vai sempre a quantos não usam de cautela e acreditam nas palavras de quem não conhecem bem!

Como o Xeque da Ilha de Moçambique, o Rei de Mombaça envia um mouro a bordo da nau almirante, que oferece aos Portugueses água e mantimentos — e convida-os a visitar a cidade.

Nela — diz esse embaixador — encontrariam os nossos um povo cristão e seriam fornecidos de tudo quanto precisassem ou ambicionassem, até de especiarias e de pedras preciosas.

Para comprovar a sua amizade, envia-lhes o Rei belos e ricos presentes, que Vasco da Gama recebe sem suspeita. Mas a experiência ensinara-lhe já a precaver-se. E, para evitar surpresas desagradáveis como aquela que já tivera — manda primeiro a terra dois marinheiros espertos, para observarem bem o que lá se passava, e se lá havia realmente cristãos.

Mais uma vez, no entanto, o maldoso Baco urdira uma das suas perfídias.

Tal como se tinha já transformado em favorito do Xeque de Moçambique, transforma-se agora em sacerdote, e põe-se de joelhos diante de um altar que tinha fabricado.

Julgaram os Portugueses ver um padre da sua religião e ficaram muito contentes.

De mais a mais, os Mouros tratavam-nos com aparente bondade e simpatia.

He promised to take them to a Christian city where they could meet their brothers in faith, and so he guided the ships towards Mombasa – pagan territory.

When they arrived, the King of this city-state sent them a very kind message, well fuelled by the spirit of Bacchus, who was always hot on the heels of the Portuguese. He told them that he would receive them in a manner worthy of such an illustrious and noble people.

Vasco da Gama rejoiced at this, for he thought that he would be able to rest for a few days before resuming this arduous, tiring journey.

Woe betide him and our sailors, had they relied on such words!

It never goes well for imprudent people who place their trust in the words of people they hardly know!

Like the Sheikh of Mozambique Island, the King of Mombasa sent a Moorish ambassador aboard Vasco da Gama's *nau* who offered the Portuguese fresh water and supplies – and extended them an invitation to visit the city.

In the city—said the ambassador—they would find fellow Christians and would be supplied with everything they needed and wanted, including spices and precious stones.

To prove his friendship, the King sent them beautiful, rich gifts, which Vasco da Gama received without suspecting anything untoward. Yet experience had already taught him to be on his guard. So, to avoid any unpleasant surprises like the one he had already had, he first sent two smart sailors ashore to assess the situation and to see if Christians really were living there.

Once again, however, the spiteful Bacchus was up to one of his malevolent tricks.

Just as he had transformed himself into a favourite of the Sheikh of Mozambique, he now transformed himself into a priest and got down on his knees in front of an altar he had made.

The Portuguese thought they were looking at a Christian priest and were very happy.

Aside from that, the Moors treated them hospitably and with apparent courtesy.

Por isso, ao voltarem à nau de Vasco da Gama, acompanhados por vários mouros que ofereciam agasalho e paz, trouxeram as melhores informações.

Baco e os Mouros iam vencer aleivosamente os Portugueses, se as caravelas chegassem a ancorar nas águas de Mombaça...

Velava, porém, a Deusa da Ternura, Vénus, a mais linda de todas as Deusas.

E, quando as naus entravam na barra, Vénus, escondida na espuma das vagas, com outras Deusas do Mar, impeliram a armada para fora, para o Mar largo, como se fossem a própria força da maresia...

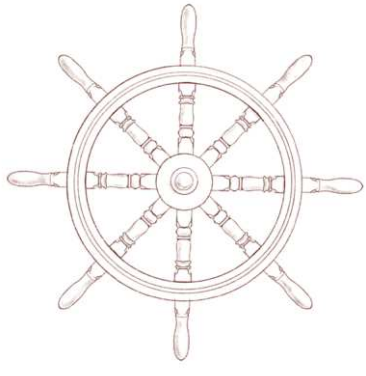
Obrigados pelo ímpeto das ondas, desistem os Portugueses de fundear.

Os Mouros que cercavam nos seus batéis os nossos navios julgam então que Vasco da Gama adivinhara o seu intento, tão pesada lhes está a consciência!

Fogem receosos e gritando.

O piloto, o piloto desleal dado pelo Rei de Mombaça, lança-se ao Mar!

Vasco da Gama, ao ver tudo isto, compreende a armadilha em que fatalmente cairia, se porventura tivesse chegado mais próximo da terra. Mede a luta desigual — contra os elementos e a maldade dos homens — que vai sustentando com os seus companheiros. E reconhecendo quanto a Providência o tem auxiliado, e como tem livrado de perigos e traições os seus navios, lançados em viagem tão difícil, agradece a ajuda divina. E a Deus roga que enfim o conduza à Índia ou, pelo menos, a um porto sossegado onde possam todos descansar das longas provações sofridas, onde todos possam repousar sem medo e refazer as forças exaustas...



So when they returned to the Captain's ship, accompanied by several Moors who offered them hospitality and protection, they eagerly confirmed that this would be the case.

Meanwhile, Bacchus and the Moors were going to wreak havoc at random on the Portuguese if they dropped anchor in the waters of Mombasa's port.

Yet they did not anticipate that the goddess of tenderness, Venus, the most beautiful of all the goddesses, was watching closely.

When the ships entered the harbour, Venus, together with the other goddesses of the sea hidden in the foam of the waves, propelled the fleet back out into the open sea, as if it had been the force of the ocean itself.

Defeated by the power of the waves, the Portuguese gave up the idea of dropping anchor.

The Moors who surrounded our ships in their small boats then thought that Vasco da Gama had guessed their intention, and they were struck by an enormous sense of guilt!

They ran away fearful and screaming.

And the rogue pilot given by the King of Mombasa threw himself into the sea!

Upon seeing all this, Vasco da Gama understood that he would have been caught in an ambush if they had managed to get any closer to the shore. He weighed up the ill-matched struggle—against the elements and the evil of humankind—in which he and his companions would persist. Having recognised how much Providence had helped him, and how it had delivered his ships from peril and treachery ever since they had set out on this difficult voyage, he thanked God for his divine help. And he prayed that God would at last lead him to India, or at least to a safe harbour where everyone could rest from their long ordeals suffered, where his whole crew could step ashore without fear and regain their strength depleted in battle.