

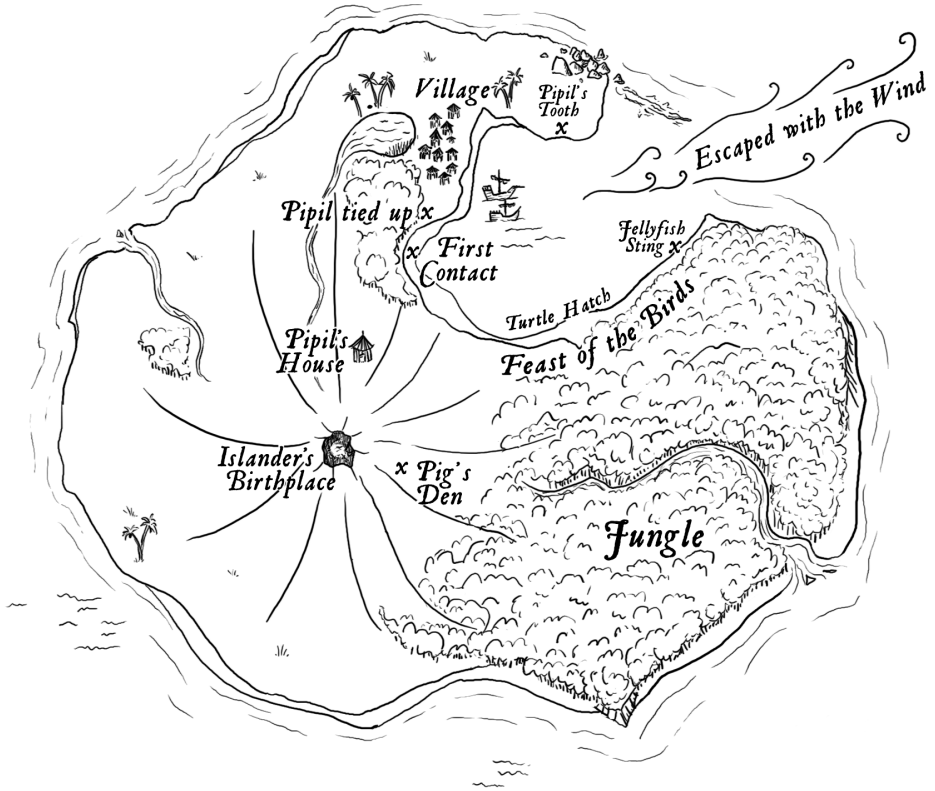
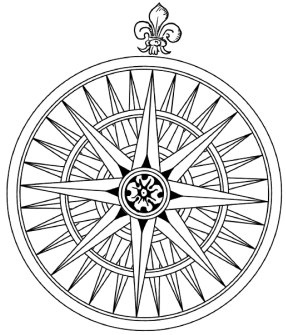
HIGHEST ON THE MOUNTAIN

THE GREAT SEA

North

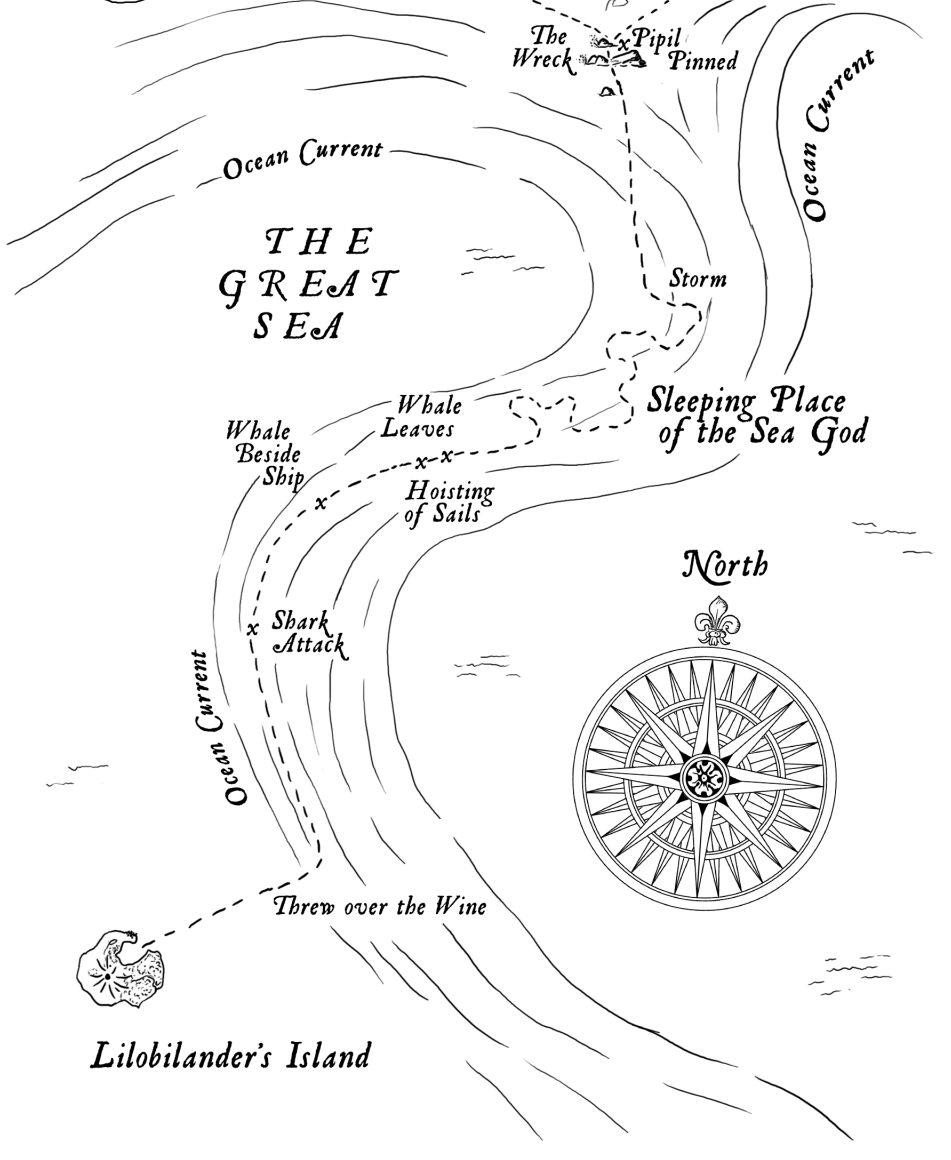
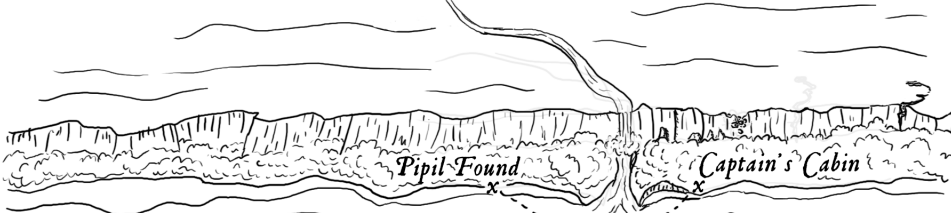


Battle of the Giant White Fishes



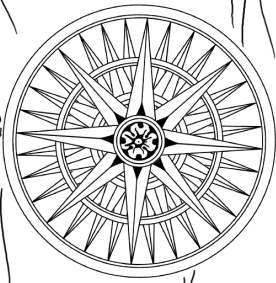
LILORBILANDER'S ISLAND

MAGTYMGULY



Lilobilander's Island

North



Valley

Flat Area

Farboo's Clay Deposit
Camp

MAGTYMGULY

Nim Noga

Giant
Waterfall

First Way
Up

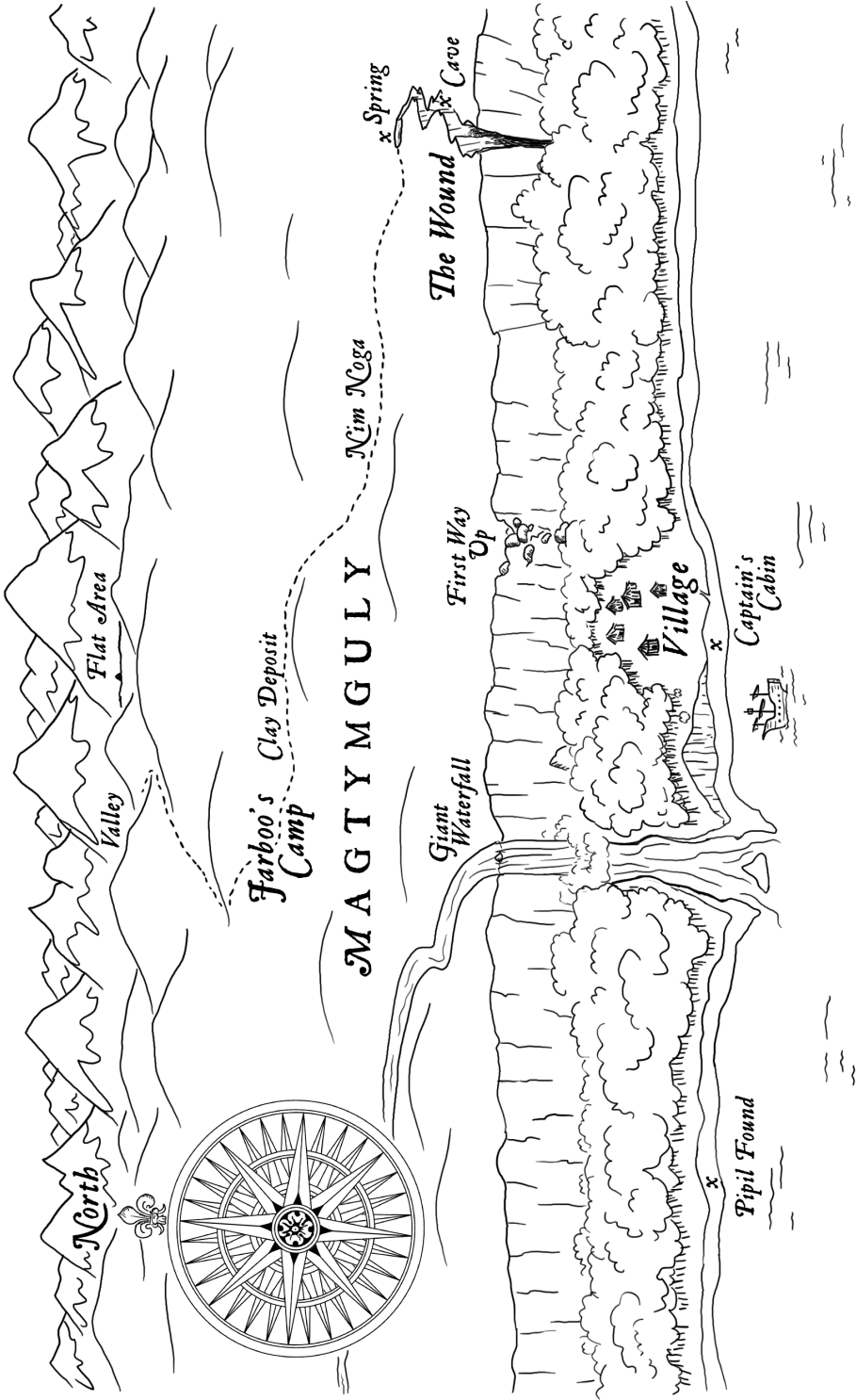
The Wound
& Cave

x Spring

Pipil Found

Captain's
Cabin

Village



HIGHEST ON THE MOUNTAIN

A Novel by

WILLIAM WALTHER

ROSEBURG, OREGON

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HIGHEST ON THE MOUNTAIN

CHAPTER ONE

PAINS

PIPIL was crying for the first time in his adult life. There had only been two times before when he had shed so many tears, and both of those times were when he was young—still a boy.

As a young boy, while eating his fill of crabs—which up to that point had been one of his favorite foods—a little piece of shell cut a very small part of his gum next to one of his molars. He didn't think much of it at the time, but the next day, he did. It was swollen, and hurt when touched. No matter what he did, the pain would not go away.

The eldest man on the island, who was also the record-keeper of things that could be done with illness or accidents, made his decision.

Pipil did not approve, yet he was in such pain that

HIGHEST ON THE MOUNTAIN

he allowed them to do with him as they would. Being so young, he really had no choice—he only believed he did.

The old man directed some women to weave a small net from reeds that grew in the jungle. They had already driven short wooden stakes into the ground. They placed Pipil's head between the stakes and covered it with the net, then pulled the net as tight as they could, while attaching it to the stakes.

Once tightened, Pipil could not move his head. He tried and tried, again and again. He could only move his body, his arms, and his legs—that is, until the old man had four strong men hold him down, one man on each leg and one man on each arm. Pipil then laid there trying to figure out why this was supposed to help the pain.

Then, he knew. He was sure his eyes had gotten so big that they were almost able to pop out of his head. He had not agreed to what was happening, and now he couldn't do anything about it.

Instead of asking Pipil to open his mouth, the old man just poked the swollen tooth area, causing Pipil to open wide. Then, in a moment quicker than one flap of a butterfly's wing, he slipped a specially grooved rock between Pipil's teeth. Now Pipil laid there, unable to move, with his mouth wide open.

It was what he saw in the old man's other hand that

PAINS

made his eyes bulge. He was holding a sharpened short stick, and the sharpest stone Pipil had ever seen.

The old man stuck the point of the stick between the tooth and the swollen gum, and it exploded with a white liquid. Even in his pain, Pipil wondered if the bad tooth had turned his blood white.

The pain immediately lessened. That is, until the old man took the sharp stone and stuck it in the same place, between the tooth and gum, then took a flat rock and pounded until the sharp stone was under the tooth, and pried it up and out.

Even though tears were streaming down Pipil's face, he thought to himself, "Someday I am going to be the leader of these people. I will not scream. I will not scream. I will not—" Pipil passed out while telling himself not to scream.

When he woke several sunrises later, the swelling had gone down, and there was little pain. Hung around his neck in a little woven pouch was his tooth, now a symbol of his bravery.

* * *

The tears now streaming down his face were of a different kind of pain. Sobbing came with it. He had seen women sob when they had lost a child, and now he understood why they sobbed. He was losing his daughter. This pain was in his heart, yet he could feel

HIGHEST ON THE MOUNTAIN

it in his stomach and his head—a pain that he had never felt before. This pain was even worse than the second time he had cried—when his dad had warned him not to go into the water.

“Look!” He was told, “Do you see all the clear, see-through flower-fish, floating in the water? There are too many—they sting and they are dangerous.”

Pipil could not imagine that such beautiful creatures could be so lethal. After all, he meant them no harm.

He had only been in the water long enough to take four or five steps when he felt the sting. He was almost unable to get back to shore. The pain crippled him immediately.

Again, the old man was called. Pipil knew that he was in for a bad time. This time it was his fault. The old man tied a braided reed rope around Pipil’s leg, above where he had been stung, then ordered four people to carry him to a sleeping mat.

Pipil noticed it was the same four who had held him down while his tooth had been dug out. He thought to himself, “Not this time!” He would have fought and run away, if he could have. Instead, they kept slowly pouring water over the sting and fanning him with palm leaves. “Okay,” again he thought to himself, “this isn’t so bad.”

He changed his mind when the pain woke him the

PAINS

next morning and he noticed his leg! It did not look like his leg anymore. It was two—maybe three times bigger around. It was gigantic. The slightest touch anywhere on his leg was like touching that long gone tooth.

Every day, the old man stuck his sharp stick into the sting. Each day, more white blood came out—a little less each time.

Finally, a whole moon-cycle later, the swelling had mostly gone down. The hurt was gone except for right at the sting spot. Even later in his life, whenever Pipil would climb the mountain in the center of the island, he would feel a little pain in that leg.

His memory of those beautiful, gentle-looking, kind-acting see-through fish-flowers caused him to see a similarity with the people who now had taken his daughter. At first, they had looked and even acted kind—and then they had stung.

What could he do? They had tied him up to a post. He was as helpless now as he was when the old man had taken out his tooth.

The men who had tied him up were bigger than he or his people. They had weapons that they called “knives” and “long knives.”

He saw his daughter being carried onto the man-made floating island that they called their “ship.” She was screaming for him. She was kicking and hitting at

HIGHEST ON THE MOUNTAIN

them. She too was helpless. He knew why they wanted her. Her life would be terrible from now on. If they took their island and went away with her, he could not even imagine what her life would be like.

It was not just her. They had taken more than twenty young girls onto the man-made island, all from fifteen to nineteen sun-cycles old. They had taken just as many young men, though they were older—most at least twenty sun-cycles old. They kept those young men in what they called “chains.” They would be muccas, or as the men called them, “slaves.”

How could he, Pipil, live through this, knowing about his daughter and his people’s misery. He thought back to a better time. If he had only known what he now knew, maybe they could have hid on the mountain.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ISLAND

PIPIL woke to his children's excitement. The sun was just beginning to break above the horizon. This was the time in the sun-cycle that the whole population on the island waited for. It was called the feast of the birds. He could taste the flavor of the birds, slowly roasted over an open fire. His mouth began to drool in its memory of the mouth-watering treat.

Then, his mind re-focused on his children. Why were they here? They were supposed to be down at the beach, waiting for the hatch.

Sometime within the next few sun-rises the beach would explode with thousands, if not millions, of baby sea turtles. They would awake from their sand-nests and slowly make their way to the sea. Many would not make it. Sea birds of a dozen varieties would be waiting for them—waiting to feast upon the bounty. Those turtles lucky enough to make it to the water

HIGHEST ON THE MOUNTAIN

had large meat-eating fish waiting for them.

The second day was always the largest hatch—not the first day. The birds would eat so many turtles that they would become too heavy to fly. All of the islanders would then chase them down the beach until enough were caught to have their great feast of the birds. They would thank the Turtle God for his bounty. Not only did he give them the birds, but the islanders would collect thousands of the little turtles for their shells, and to make dried meat.

On the first day, children would spend most of their time chasing away the birds, picking up turtles and carrying them to the water. It was the second day when the islanders would take their share.

If everything had been going as usual, his children never would have returned so soon in the day. Was one hurt? He had to find out. Getting hurt was not a good thing. He knew the pain of getting hurt.

Pipil in his whole life had only known his island. He didn't even know that other people or lands existed. There were times when they wondered if they were alone—if the mountain in the middle of the island had given them birth, and only them. Were there other birth-mountains on other islands? Were there even other islands?

Unknown to Pipil, this was a very small, yet perfect, island. It had a very nice coral bay for protection from

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