

Germany

# **Torrent of Dreams and Nightmares**

## **A Monologue**

**Special Version**

based on the original production

**„Gesänge des Charon“**

Deutschlandfunk Kultur

and HR2 Kultur

2018

**Director's Cut**

by

**Werner Cee**

41'17"

featuring

**Gaspere Balsamo**

voice

Editor: Ulrike Brinkmann  
Director: Werner Cee  
Assistant: Esther Schelander  
Studio technicians: Martin Eichberg / Sonja Rebel  
Translations: Bettina Obrecht

Composition and field recordings: Werner Cee

Musicians:  
Norbert Grossmann: church organ  
Giovanni Apprendi: tamburello  
and additional music by Giacomo Cuticchio and his ensemble

# Torrent of Dreams and Nightmares

## A Monologue

41 '17"

### Director's Cut from „Songs of Charon“

The piece was inspired by the monumental novel „**I fatti della fera**“ by Sicilian writer **Stefano d'Arrigo**, a work describing the last eight days in the life of 'Ndrija Cambria. The sailor 'Ndrija returns from the war in 1943 and tries to reach his home village on Sicily. It is his objective most of all to find a way of crossing the Strait of Messina which separates continental Italy from the island of Sicily. His travels and his fantasies are shaped by ancient mythology as well as contemporary political events and 'Ndrija's personal experiences and memories.

The crossing of the Strait with its appeal to an encounter with Charon, the ferryman who guides the dead to the afterlife, constitutes the work's leitmotiv. In wartime, the world comes apart, people lose their orientation between isolation, war trauma, deception, prejudice and a feeling of being a „foreigner“ in every place.

The present director's cut is a purely monologue version of the piece in Sicilian language, containing scenes and fragments of ancient mythology and folklore, war trauma, feverish dreams, all described while sailing on a smuggler's boat on the Mediterranean sea.

The speaker uses the ancient Sicilian style of „cunto“, a storytelling method which draws on Greek theater and relies heavily on improvisation. It alternates between sung verse and spoken prose. Usually, the „cuntisti“, the storytellers, tell stories of epic heroes and their struggles, though nowadays they may include tales of daily Sicilian life.

The monologue depicts an image of the South where numerous facets of human life blend in consistently: archaic myths with everyday banality, a deeply enrooted culture with coarse, wild burlesque, divine as well as profoundly humane aspects. It creates neat acoustic images and daydreams. The epic chant offers an orientation, with semantics and narration not always being carried on in words alone, but also in sound, music and noise.

Combined with the music and field recordings, the composer transfers the listener to the era and the landscape described in the piece, creating a suggestive atmospheric image.

The monologue is performed by Gaspare Balsamo. He was born in Erice, Sicily. He is a writer, actor, cuntista and theatre director. He learned the art of Cunto Siciliano from the renowned master Mimmo Cuticchio and is today one of the new generation's most important representatives of cunto. He has collaborated with many musicians, among others in the Werner Cee's project „Torrent“ with Alf Terje Hana and Giovanni Appendi.

### How to use this manuscript

This manuscript is meant as a guide through the piece, offering a timeline and structure, synopses of the stories told in English as well as keywords of the Italian/Sicilian original language to go along. However, the Sicilian texts are improvised, they are at some points spoken in strong local vernacular. Word-by-word transcription is neither possible nor intended, as the focus of the piece rests on the sound of the language, the strong nonverbal expressivity of cunto which makes it easy to understand situations without knowing the language, the colourful sound of the Sicilian idiom strongly connected to the legends, images, heroes, landmarks and figures mentioned in the improvisation.

**0"**

Ulysses' sneaks up on the Cyclope who breaks into wild swearing

**1'30"**

The city of Messina has been destroyed by bombs, voices from the „Devoti“ at the Sant'Agata festival in Catania.

**3'15**

The chant of a nightguard.

**4'13"**

The „feminote“ sorceresses lure the young man with their song.

**5'56"**

The fishermen are impoverished, there are no more swordfish, only the Fere (a negative expression for dolphins) are left.

**8'07**

A nightly crossing takes place, organized by a female smuggler; luring of and defence against the „Fere“  
A scurrilous scene, seduction by the feminote sorceress

**13'43"**

The fishermen are ordered by the fascists to use the politically correct term „dolphin“ instead of „fere“ and change their way of speaking

Chants of pious people in Catania

**17'10"**

Underwater, there is an eruption of fire and lava, a graveyard of „the fere“, a mythological scene

**20'10"**

The legend of *Colapesce* caught under the sea who is supposedly supporting a broken column under Sicily.

**21'17**

A father is looking out for the lost son

**22'45**

Back to war, flags and the „bright“ sides of it all – American chewing gum, cigarettes

**24'12"**

again, calls of the Devoti in Catania

disintegration and death of the dreaded orca, power dissolves, diminuendo,

**34'37"**

a rowing regatta

**36'52"**

a rifle bullet that went astray kills 'Ndrija

**39'52"**

the return of the soldier

Glossary

**fera – dolphin.** Despective name used by the Sicilian fishermen who consider the dolphins their enemies, because they tear their nets and rob their fish.

**ferone** – big fera, Orca, a symbol of death.

**feminote** – in d'Arrigo's work „Horcynus Orca“, the female inhabitants of the Scilla region. They are sorceresses and smugglers and dominate the Strait of Messina.

**Colapesce** – hero of a Sicilian legend.

**Chariddi** – Charybdis, 'Ndrijas home village



<p><i>Chiange, chiange Messina e chiange la Sicilia che decino liberata ma invece è destrutta da tutte le bombe ...</i></p> <p><i>bombe americane ... bombe francese ... bombe inglese ... bombe tedesche ... bombe italiane ... bombe di tutti i paesi del mundo ... bombe bombe bombe</i></p>	<p>Messina is crying, Sicily is crying, they call it liberation, but it is destruction by all the bombs.</p> <p>American bombs, French bombs, English bombs, German bombs, Italian bombs, bombs from all countries of the world, bombs, bombs, bombs</p>
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3'15

### **Cry of the nightguard**

<p>... è solo un spada</p>	<p><i>Singing ...</i> this is not a „fera“ (dolphin), it is only a sword fish</p>
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4'13

### **The feminotes, dedicated to smuggling goods across the strait of Messina, lure the young sailor Ndrija who returns from the war and wants to reach his home village Chariddi in Sicily.**

<p>Giovanotto, venite, giovanotto, avvicinatevi giovanotto, giovane marinaio, giovane marinaio, venite qui sotto questo bosco, tra questo bergamotto, tra queste arancie, venite qui sotto lo scuro in mezzo a queste feminote pien' die sale; siamo feminote statue die sale, no invecchiamo mai, siamo tutte belle donne, belle donne giovane e anziane,  ma sempre belle con pelle liscia e bianca  perche come si racconta una volta in mezzo al latte la donna era bella, e noi, sempre sotto sale siamo, ed essendo feminote sotto sale, la nostra pelle è bella e giovane.</p>	<p>young man, come here, young man. come closer, young man, young sailor, young sailor, come here into this wood of bergamotte and oranges,  come here into the dark, join these feminote women covered in salt, we are feminotes covered in salt, we never grow old, we are all beautiful women, beautiful young women, we are very old, but still beautiful with smooth, white skin, because it is told that once women kept beautiful in milk, but we are always salted, and as we are covered in salt, our skin remains beautiful and young.</p>
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Giovanotto, venite, giovanotto, avvicinatevi, la nostra vergine vi vuole scoprire, la nostra vergine vi vuole infatare, la nostra vergine vi vuole amare.	Young man, come on, young man, come closer, our virgin wants to discover you, our virgin wants to enchant you, our virgin wants to love you
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5'56

**Ndrija discovers carcasses of dolphins, that are called „fere“ by the fishermen (who hate them), on the feminite beach. They explain to him, that the fishermen can't catch tuna and sword fish any more, so people have turned to eat „fere“. However, they do not know that they are eating an animal they despise. The vendors sell the dolphin as tuna fish. 'Ndrija is dismayed.**

Ma com'è possibile che 'ca 'n tutta questa prai ci sono tutte queste carcasse di fere? La gente non può mangiare ne pesce spada ne tonnina.	- But how is it possible that on this beach there are all these carcasses of „fere“... – People are starving to death, they cannot eat sword fish nor tuna, so they eat the evil fere.
Ah, questa disonorata guerra ...ci fa mangiare solo fere ... fere, fere a tutte banne ... e pesce spada non ci sono più.	– Oh, the wretched war - it makes us eat only fere, fere, fere everywhere, and there are no more sword fish nor tuna.
Ci sono i rigattieri che camminano spiaggia a spiaggia ...	The dealers are coming up, wandering from beach to beach, they take away all the fere and sell them for tuna.
tonnino, tonnino, tonnino ...tonnino di mare tirreno .... tonnino rosso ....tonnino rosso...	<i>(vendor's call)</i> Tuna, tuna, tuna fish from the Tyrrhenian sea, good tuna, red tuna, red tuna!
Ma invece non era tonnino, era fera.	But they were not tuna. They were fere, and they cheated and sold them for tuna, and the people did not know that they were eating the wretched fere, their enemies that tore their nets and ate all the fish they caught.
fera cumpare, fera scumpare. fera, cumpare, fera scumpare.	Fere, Fere everywhere  <i>Zauberspruch</i> Fera, appear, fera, disappear

**The feminine Ciccina Circe, smuggler and sorceress, agrees to take 'Ndrija across the sea at night.**

**She rings a bell, which frightens , 'Ndrija who is afraid of custom's officers and English soldiers, and conjures up helpful, bewitched dolphins.**

**The dolphins show them the way across the sea, while Circe continues to ring the bell.**

<p>La vergine feminata giovane, era enfiata, ...</p> <p>Queste femmine erano femmine bedde e brune e neure... e portarano sempre mangiarezze pesce spada sale tabacco</p> <p>Bel giovinotto, appoiate ca, in questo bello petto ch'io ho,</p>	<p><i>Ding (the bell)</i></p> <p>The young feminine woman was a witch. She was even more beautiful than the other feminine women.</p> <p>These feminine women were beautiful, black and brown, and they always carried food, swordfish, salt, tobacco, across the sea.</p> <p><i>Delfinruf</i></p> <p>But how can you ring the bell at this moment with all the Englishmen, all the customs officers on the sea? How can you ring that bell? But there was a response from the left side. And all from her memory, without the slightest light from the moon, with utmost expertise, Circe steered the rocking boat over the waveless sea to the left, then straight on.</p> <p><i>ding ding.. (the bell rings)</i></p> <p>Circe talked to the dolphins and a second dolphin arrived, and a third one, from the left, from the right, from all sides, and the feminine said: But what are you doing? Don't be afraid</p> <p><i>Ding ding (the bell)</i></p> <p>Dolphins from all sides, again ringing of the bell. 'Ndrija didn't know whether to laugh or to cry The feminine didn't care at all.</p> <p>My beautiful young man, bend over, lean on my beautiful breasts, didn't you see my beautiful tits? Come here.</p>
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<p>guarda che belle minazze, belle, bianche bianche, chieni, chieni di latte...</p> <p>Suga ...</p>	<p>Look how beautiful my breasts are, beautiful and white and full, full of milk. Suck them. Suck suck suck. Come here, lean down on these beautiful soft cushions... ... This woman wants to steal my soul. ... 'Ndrija?</p> <p>Fera, appear, fera, disappear...</p> <p><i>Clicking of dolphins</i> <i>The bell rings</i> Fera ... fera ... fera ... fera... go away, fera</p>
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13'43

**The fascists order the fishermen to change their language. They are supposed to use the positive term „dolphin“ instead of „fere“, which has a negative connotation.**

<p>La fera è malo pesce. la fera è pesce infame, la fera è pesce traitore, la fera è malacarne, è bastardu. ...</p> <p>Dite delfino. Bisogna dire e chiamarlo delfino. L'autorità nazionale linguistica e fascista vi ordina di cambiare lingua e registro. Si dice delfino. Delfino è più gradevole, più musicale</p> <p>Basta! L'autorità ordina che si sillabi: Del-fi-no. Avanti! In lingua! In marcia! Del-fi-no, Del-fi-no</p>	<p><i>the dictator speaks</i> The fera is a bad fish. The fera is an infamous fish, the fera is a treacherous fish, the fera is a villain, the fera is a bastard. They say the fera is the same as the dolphin, but no! no!</p> <p>Say: dolphin. It has to be called dolphin. The national fascist linguistic authority orders you to change your language and register. You will say dolphin. Dolphin is more pleasant, more musical</p> <p><i>(the fishermen protest)</i> Enough! The authority orders you to pronounce dol-phin. Go on! Speak! March on! Dolphin! Dolphin!</p>
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<p>C'è lingua delfino e lingua fera</p> <p>Il delfino è animale gentile, sensibile, la fera è zaurda, tascia, zalla ...</p> <p>L'autorità decreta che da oggi si parla sempre, solo e soltanto in lingua delfino.</p> <p>Morte a la fera, victoria al delfino! Sillabiamo, sillabiamo! Del-fi-no...</p> <p>Cittadini, cittadini, siamo tutti devoti, tutti</p>	<p>There's language and language. There's language dolphin and there's language fera.</p> <p>The dolphin is a gentle, sensitive animal, while the fera is impudent, obtrusive, coarse.</p> <p>The authority orderst that from today on, only and exclusively dolphin language will be spoken.</p> <p>Death to the fera, victory to the dolphin! Let's pronounce together:</p> <p>Dol-phin Dol-phin Dol-phin</p> <p>15.47 <i>cricket sound</i> 15.52" <i>voices of procession in Catania: ... citizens, we are all believers ...</i></p>
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17'10"

**A legendary king has heard that there is an eruption of burning lava at the bottom of the sea. He wants to know whether this is true. Also he has been told that in the middle of the lava, the Orca/Ferone is asleep. There is also the description of a graveyard of the fere/dolphins who supposedly jump into the crater of the volcano and turn up as white ashes under the sea. The Orca comes to the surface in a sea of white ashes and boiling lava.**

<p>Mi diciamo che sotto il stretto ci sono tri canali di lava ´nfocata , vero è? Vero è? Che tutta questa lava de la montagna scende al mare e da sotto ancora non s'astuta, resta fumante rossa ... e in mezzo a tutta questa lava dorme il ferone. .. Focu. Focu meu. Focu. Focu meu.</p>	<p><i>The king speaks:</i> I was told that deep under the straight (of Messina) there is a river of boiling lava, is that true? Is that true? That all the lava runs down from the mountain into the sea and down there it is not extinguished, but still glows and smokes? And that down there in the dark, the Ferone (Orca) is asleep? (???) Fire. My fire. Fire. My fire.</p>
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<p>...</p> <p>Cenere bianca mezzo tutto l'aqua di mare. Cenere bianca mezzo tutte le sarde, sardine, anchove e tutte le anguille che camminano</p> <p>..</p> <p>Orca!</p>	<p>And that in that fire, all the bones of the dolphins that jump into the volcano, are burnt to ashes, in all this smoking lava, all the bones of the fere are burnt, they collect and collect and become white ashes in the dark sea.</p> <p>White ashes between sardines anchovis and eels, and the ferone comes up to the surface of the boiling water.</p> <p>The ferone: Orca</p>
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**20'10"**

**The legend of Colapesce tells of a young man, half fish, half human, who supports a broken column under Sicily. Colapesce speaks of his desolate situation. If he lets go, Sicily is submerged under the sea.**

<p>Che volete de mì?</p> <p>Sono Colapesce in fondo al mare, sostegno a Sicilia.</p> <p>Se cade la colonna, la Sicilia si sprofonda</p> <p>Colapesce, Colapesce, Colapesce...</p>	<p>What do you want from me?</p> <p>I am Colapesce, caught on the bottom of the sea; I am supporting Sicily.</p> <p>I am Colapesce and I am supporting a column under Sicily.</p> <p>If the column falls, Sicily will sink into the sea.</p> <p>If the column falls, Sicily will sink into the sea.</p> <p>Colapesce Colapesce Colapesce</p>
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**21'17"**

**A father is looking out for his lost son. It is 'Ndrijas father who misses his son and gets mixed up with the legend of Colapesce**

<p>Aqua!</p> <p>Aqua!</p> <p>Acqua fresca! Acqua fresca per piacere!</p> <p>Datemi un bicchiere d'acqua fresca!</p>	<p>Water</p> <p>Water</p> <p>Water</p> <p>Fresh water, freshwater please</p> <p>Give me a glass of fresh water</p> <p>Water</p>
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Figlio, figlio! Sei morto?	My son My son. Are you dead Answer me
Sento lo scruscio qua sotto in fondo al mare, figlio. Figlio! Sei morto?	I hear you at the bottom of the sea, my son, I hear your breath. My son. Are you dead?

22'45"

**Meanwhile, some people find that war has its bright sides: On the black market, all kinds of American luxury goods are now available.**

Bannere, bannere Finanzieri! Siamo rovinati, siamo sconsolati!	<i>piano music</i> Flags, flags, flags Customs officers We are starving, we are ruined, we are desperate
Mastica caramelle, caramella mastica, masticamo, masticamo...	Chewing gum, candy, candy, chewing gum we are chewing, we are chewing, American Reval candy, chewing gum, chewing gum, chewing gum,
Sigarette, sigarette Lucky Strike, Marlboro, Marlboro, Lucky Strike, Marlboro, americane, americane, americane...	cigarettes, cigarettes, Lucky Strike, Marlboro, Lucky Strike, Marlboro, American, American,
Che bella la guerra! Si fuma, si mangiano caramelle, si mastica chewing gum.	How beautiful is the war! We can smoke, we can eat candy, and we are chewing gum. Chewing gum, candy...chewing chewing smoke... cigarettes feminotes ... smuggling ...

24'12"

**The Orca/Ferone, which is called the death of the sea, turns up at the surface. In a previous battle with the dolphins it has been severely injured and now, the putrid smell of death reaches the fishermen. The Orca is dying, its power over all the other fish in the sea dissolves.**

<p>Batta un cuore in fondo al mare</p> <p>sangue del mio cuore sangue della mia vita</p> <p>Gioia dello mio cuore</p> <p>Da sotto se sentia un rumore come un suono</p> <p>.... e sopra tutto si movía...</p> <p>com'una montagna, come l'Etna ...</p> <p>era l'Orca. La morte marina. Orca. Ferona.</p>	<p><i>rumbling volcano</i> <i>faithful people at Catania processions</i> <i>citizens, we are all believers,</i> <i>prayers...</i> <i>citizens, citizens,...</i></p> <p><i>organ</i> <i>breath of the dying Orca</i></p> <p>27.12 A heart beats A heart beats at the bottom of the sea A heart beats at the bottom of the sea My blood Blood of my heart Joy of my life Joy of my heart</p> <p>From down in the darkness of the sea there was a noise to be heard, a sound like ....wrooom.... and above, everything was moving, and there appeared something like a mountain, like Etna, and water flowed down on every side of it it was the Orca the death of the sea Orca Orca as displayed on photos in the books, Ferona that was feared far and wide by all the fishermen and those who dwelled on all the coasts, Ferone It had a tail like the fere, only fere and ferone have a tail like that, this flat tail.</p>
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Dalla Tunisia a Gibilterra, della Spagna all  
Sicilia, ogni pescatore almeno una volta ...  
l'angoscia quando succede

Pesce solitario in mezzo l'oceano e mare,  
fete, fete da lontano.

L'orca non ammazza per mangiare sino per  
piacere a ammazzare.  
Un corpo colossale di una quindicina di metri  
pesante e tonellate e tonellate di pelle grasse  
fumante come lava

aveva arrivato un altro feto - il feto della morte.  
Era il feto ferone. ...

e poi ... basta più.

In the whole Mediterranean sea, the people who  
live by the sea know it. Everywhere from  
Tunisia, Gibraltar, Spain to Sicily every  
fisherman has experienced fear at least once  
when encountering it.

*30.03 organ, breathing*

solitary fish,  
in the middle of the ocean,  
a putrid smell comes from far away,  
and all the whales, sharks and other fish flee  
from it

because it does not kill to eat, but because it  
likes to kill.

A colossal body of fifteen meters, weighing tons,  
tons of fatty skin, smoking like cooling lava, in a  
cloud of bad smell  
and black, black

The Orca came to the surface among the sea  
grass  
the fishermen understood that along with all the  
other putrid smells,  
there was a new smell , the smell of death, the  
smell of the ferone

the putrid smell from coast to coast of putrifying  
flesh, because the orca was so badly injured by  
the dolphins, its body was rotting while it was  
still alive. A cloud of flies was floating over the  
body that had come up to the surface, it stayed  
in the air above.

*33.42 breathing of the Orca*

34'37"

**ʼNdrija is asked to join a rowing regatta against the English. He agrees, he and his friends start to row, gaining speed, sailing towards victory.**

**ʼNdrija Cambria was commanding the boat and they rowed ever more swiftly, they did not grow tired, their oars created white foam on the sea on all sides of the boat, and their boat accelerated and shot across the sea. Their English competitors did not manage to stay close to them.**

<p>Forza, caruse, forza! Sapete vogare... (Sports reportage) ... forza, voganno, voganno, vogamo, vogamo mezzo il stretto... forza, che è oscuro forza, che il mare è nero voganno, voganno, voganno Forza, siete arrivate, state arrivando a la coda del portaaeree</p>	<p>Come on, friends, come on. You know how to row a boat. We will show everyone what we can do. Come on. Forza!</p> <p>Come on, friends! Rowing, rowing, rowing. Rowing, rowing, rowing. Hee-oh. Let's row. We are rowing across the sea. We are rowing towards Messina and ʼNdrija Cambria is cheering on his friends.</p> <p>Come on, friends, don't grow tired, let's go, let's row, let's row, let's row and the English will stay behind, let's go, we are already close to the English aircraft carrier, the sea is dark, the water is black Let's go, rowing, rowing, rowing rowing, rowing, rowing let's go, my friends, we are getting closer, we will soon be there,</p> <p><i>(cheering on til 36'50)</i></p>
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36'52"

**From a nearby English aircraft carrier, a salute is fired and erroneously kills 'Ndrija.**

<p>E voganno ... E da lontano videro il portaaeree inglese gigante come una montagna che sventolava bannerera.</p> <p>Partio un colpo proiettile dal portaereo inglese ... che picchiò ...preciso mezzo al frende 'Ndrija</p> <p>Noooo!</p> <p>Mio Dìo! Noooo!</p> <p>'Ndrija!</p>	<p>They kept rowing and from afar they saw the English aircraft carrier like a giant mountain flying their flag</p> <p><i>37'50 Schuss</i></p> <p>And a salute was fired from the big vessel and hit 'Ndrija right between the eyes, so that he was thrown into everlasting darkness.</p> <p><i>Shots</i></p> <p>Nooooo! Noooo! My god! Nooooo! 'Ndrija! 'Ndrija!</p>
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39'52

**the return of the soldier**

**His friends spontaneously decide to take him to his village**

<p>Ma fu solo un pensiero In questo momento Massino l'unico pensiero era di tornare subito verso Chariddi e portare Ndrija a casa</p> <p>come in un mare chieno die làcrime fatto e disfattoa ogni colpo di remo</p> <p>tra mare e mare.</p>	<p><i>Tamburello</i></p> <p>But there was only this one thought 'Ndrija's friend Massino had only one thought: He had to take 'Ndrija to Chariddi immediately, take him home.</p> <p>The boat was on the sea between Scilla and Chariddi</p> <p>as in a sea full of tears, a sea that arose and disappeared at every stroke of the oar,</p> <p>a sea between two seas.</p>
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