

## Appendix iv



### Fishing

by

D. Gevisser

The afternoon was quiet.

Motor yacht Melody was cruising gently towards the Island of Santa Carolina, having ferried most of her crew to the mainland at Vilanculos. Eleanor was, as usual, dozing with one hand resting lightly on the worn cork of her rod. Eric – as usual after a good lunch – was sipping his excise free beer and philosophising sentimentally about Nature and Goodness with an occasional earthy thought as a condiment. Zanzibar, the Muslim cook-cum-deckhand, sat moodily on the deck sharpening a wicked sheath-knife. Moosa unenthusiastically inched the wheel this way and that to the peremptory dictates of our pilot, standing on one leg like an anxious black heron peering over the bows at the blue water

I lay back in my chair on the aft deck letting Eric's gentle moralising wash over me, and devoted myself somnolently to the pressing matters requiring attention – my beer, the delicate tracery that Melody's wake made as it washed itself out against the enveloping clear blue water, the perfect cloud free sky, the intriguing mystery of the islands toward which we were passing, the almost hypnotising effect of the brightly-coloured feather jig at the end of Eleanor's line, bouncing and diving in and out of the water, behind us, the baby barracouta tied inescapably to our hooks and, through Eric's guile, seemingly chasing the launch, free of contact with it, the peace, the slop of water on the bows, the far-awayness of everything but pure enjoyment of the moment and the place – than which there could be few spots better at a time than among the coral islands off the Moçambique coast of Vilanculos and In Hassore

It is one of the chief joys of fishing that often, in the sheer pleasure of sky and sea and peace and beauty, you forget that you are fishing for

something lithe and powerful and swift beneath you. If the fisherman's surroundings do not mean more to him than the sport itself, well – he would not have been on the Melody. That is how we were – Eric and Eleanor and I and Zanzibar and Moosa and the pilot, each at his own depth gathering himself quietly together, dreaming, philosophising, watching that mesmeric feather jig – when it vanished in a flurried swirl, when two small captive barracouta leaped as if resurrected, when their reels screamed insistently as their hoard of line vanished into the excited water

There it was, the lure, attraction, joy, excitement, surprise of fishing. In one crowded moment six people had become transformed from sleepy indolents to vibrant hunters. Peace yielded to chaos. It seemed that everywhere round Melody marlin were dancing and shimmering on their slender powerful tails. Three game fish at one hit. It needs a lucky expert to land one. For a few minutes lines were crossed, curses flowed freely, the helmsman went port for one and starboard for the other, the pilot's ancestry was compromised unequivocally, the marlin were jumping, magnificently, and suddenly the sea was quiet, and the lines were slack, and the marlin were free, and we sat back, and collected our thoughts and grinned ruefully at one another, and reached for the momentarily forgotten beer

This was what had brought us 800 miles from Durban in Eric's 65 foot Melody. There were no vocal regrets. It would have been less than human not to have speculated on the marlin's size, or on why we had lost them, or how we would rectify our errors when they came again. Tomorrow they would be bigger, but even for those few minutes only the trip would have been worthwhile.