

# 1 Revelation



Robert Schilt

We had already experienced many storms and survived them more or less unscathed. But this time it was different. It seemed as if the furious sea was determined to punish us for all those times we had managed to outsmart her. Innumerable waves many meters high mounted up in front of us trying to plunge our small fishing boat. Rob and I did our best to prevent the boat from capsizing. Eventually, the rudder broke and we were completely at the sea's mercy. The appalled face of my elder brother shocked me more than the unleashed thunderstorm around us. I had never seen him that helpless and coming to think of it now I am quite sure it was the first and the last time. How could all this have happened? Usually we knew how to cope with the moods of the sea and were able to read the signs of impending weather changes. Even this morning after having reached our preferred fishing grounds close to the Deep Channel that runs between the two islands Radan and Auckland I would have sworn an oath that the weather was not going to change within the next hours. That is why the both of us decided to have a little after-lunch nap in the shade of the sail that was flapping lazily in the moderate breeze. When it fell down on us we woke up abruptly. A vicious gust had torn it to pieces. We jumped on our feet and glanced uneasily in the dark sky. Black clouds had settled in from the north, the

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horizon looked like a gigantic lightening storm. After all, the sea still remained somewhat calm and easy.

We only had slept for a couple of hours, but in between the world had changed completely. Hastily we hauled up the fishing nets which proved to be not so easy as an unexpected large Auregu had caught itself in there. Actually an Auregu is quite a gift for any ambitious fisherman. Indeed they taste delicious, still a present like that is not easily cut out of a fishing net. They usually get hopelessly entangled with their long and sharp-edged flukes and in the end the only way to get them out again is cutting up the precious net. Furthermore, getting in contact with the malicious stings that sit all over the body of the caught fish is an overwhelming experience that mostly leads to marvelously bleeding wounds.

"That is going to be what I call a thunderstorm," I said eagerly to my brother who had started to cut up the net in order to get rid of the unwelcome fish. Well, if it had been my business I would have simply thrown the net somewhere inside the boat with the Auregu in it or not. Apparently, Rob was thinking differently and I was smart enough not to try to talk him out of it. After all, he was just cutting up a fishing net he had only finished a week before. I took care of the second net, chucked it carelessly in one corner of the boat trying not to see all these poor creatures caught in it. All I wanted was to turn back home as I did not feel like being caught in the middle of a heavy thunderstorm. So I hoisted the sail and there the boat started to fly back home over the waves. Still, it would take us at least two hours to reach Port West.

"Well, the sky does not look exactly pretty," Rob said finally having managed to cut the Auregu free only to throw it over board along with parts of the damaged net.

"What are you doing?" I cried, stunned. Giving up an Auregu of that considerable size appeared to me quite like a sacrilege.

"One less danger," Rob said dryly. "Okay, there we go!" He pushed me aside, seized the rudder and immediately changed the direction the boat was speeding in. Now we were heading in a westward direction towards the island of Radan. I was annoyed with myself for not having had this idea. Of course we had to reach land as fast as possible, and Radan was much closer located than Port West.

The menacing pitch black bank of clouds got closer and closer and for some minutes they appeared to be passing by. Then we felt the first icy cold gusts from the impending gale and we knew we had to drain the cup to the dregs. We remained seated, got our shirts on and hoped for the best. For the next hour we lived life in the fast lane. The steeper waves started smacking green water over the windward side. We surfed down the waves and turned into others to climb. The constant up and down nauseated me and I was sure to vomit all over the place soon. The taste of salt water in my mouth was not very helpful. Rob clutched the rudder with his left hand while I was keeping a watchful eye on the sail, prepared to strike it. But I waited too long. A mighty squall hit us and along with the malicious sound of a cracking whip the sail tore free and fluttered in the wind like a captured ghost.

"Strike the sail!" Rob yelled. But the wind yelled even louder and took his voice out to drown it in the unleashed sea. Nonetheless I knew exactly what to do. I yanked it down, struggling to control it. But it was in vain. Another squall hit and this time it tore the sail to pieces and took it away along with parts of the smashed rig. Within a very short time the once sea worthy boat had been damaged seriously and started dancing on the waves like a cork. Rob on the

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rudder did his best to prevent it from capsizing. I had to work hard to keep the water off the boat, knowing that it was impossible. When the heavy thunder and vivid lightning started I lost the fight against my rebelling stomach and puked all over the boat. What a relief! However, the rocking boat and the convulsions that mastered me were not at all compatible and when my forehead with a sickening crack hit the edge of the boat I almost passed out. A play of colours blew up behind my skullcap. Rob yelled something about a broken rudder but all I was realizing was the severely throbbing pain in my head. I felt dizzy and was suddenly afraid of falling over board. Though I felt like chewed and spit out, one thing was as clear as anything. With a broken skull or not, death was waiting for me anyway in this trobled sea. I desperately tried to focus on holding on to something, no matter what. Then, unexpectedly, the boat came to a dead halt. Screaming I was hurled overboard plunging headfirst into the seething sea. Instantly, the elements seized me. Like flotsam I was pushed along helplessly – until I felt sandy ground underneath my body. For a moment I just lay there, dazed, snorting, throwing up salt water and vomit. Finally I tried to scramble out of the imminent danger. Where was I? We must have beached somewhere, probably on Radan... the terrible thought of being dragged back into the deadly sea by the surf gave me new power and I kept crawling on all fours as if my life depended on that... what it did. When the surf caught up, elemental forces pushed me up an unknown stretch of land. Covering my vulnerable head with both arms I expected to be hurled against the cliffs and crushed. But it did not happen. The water pulled back and I found myself half-buried in deep sand. Heavily breathing I gathered all strength that remained in my exhausted body and awkwardly crawled away like a hunted seal.



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I remembered my brother. Where was he? Did he make it too? I hesitated again, not knowing what to do. Then my instinct of self preservation got the upper hand. I even sprang to my feet for a moment before the gale pushed me back to the ground where in its opinion I belonged to. Stumbling, I eventually glanced over my right shoulder down the beach. Good, I was out of danger. After a couple of more meters my legs quit their service and I remained face down where I had fallen. When the rain set in I got back on my feet. Water poured down so hard it made it impossible to see through it. The fear for my brother's safety assaulted my senses. Where was he? Where was the boat? Dispair took over. What was I supposed to do? Never in my life I had felt so helpless. Tears born in hopelessness and pain leaked out of my eyes mingling with the torrents streaming down my head.

What was that?

Wasn't that someone yelling my name?

Or was it only the raging storm?

Was I beginning to hallucinate?

I answered the call and accusingly screamed the name of my brother in the direction of the sea. Then the lights went out. Exhaustion took over, I toppled over and passed out.

World had changed when I came back to life. I opened my eyes, blinking violently. Above me I saw something that looked like the natural ceiling of a cave. Not a big one, as far as I could see. After all, a shelter. I gulped a couple of times, tilted my heavily throbbing skull from one side to the other.

Okay, I was alive.

With a headache like that one must be among the living.

Cautiously I examined my bandaged head with both trembling hands. Who had done that? The blinding sunlight streaming in from outside hurt my eyes and intensified the throbbing underneath my skull. I caught sight of a torn shirt lying next to me on the dry, sandy ground.

Rob's shirt.

"Rob?" Had I spoken with my own voice? It sounded terrible. "Rob, where are you?"

Only the wind in the trees somewhere outside answered. I sat up and got on my feet. My head threatened to explode when I dared the first steps. I ignored the pain and ventured outside. Xyn, the good old sun, was lower than I had expected, dipping the surroundings in a warm and golden light. I saw the sea, as smooth as a looking-glass. There were no more signs of that awful thunderstorm that had raged here not so long ago. I took some more steps and leaned against the welcome trunk of a mighty palm tree when the world around began to spin.

Then I heard the voice of my brother.

"Hey, welcome back to life!" There he was. A smiling Robert Schilt jr., fit as a fiddle, not a single bruise neither in his face nor somewhere else on his well-tanned body. He only wore dirty shorts. For the thousandth time in my life I realized how similar we looked. Sometimes it was like looking in a mirror. Okay, he was three years older and appeared a bit more mature than me. When we were kids we had not been easy to tell apart. Being three years my senior, Rob had always been taller than me and next to him the missing inches gave the game away. Now I was the taller one, even though it were only a couple of centimeters. Still, the amazing physical similarity remained down to the present

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day. I might be a teeny weeny bit taller than him now. Rob, in return, is chunkier and his shoulders broader, after all, a distinguishing feature for the well-trained eye.

He passed me a wooden mug. "You must be pretty thirsty."

I was. I took the mug and drained it. The water was cool and sweet and I asked for more. Rob prostrated and refilled the mug with water out of an old wooden bucket. I recognized the bucket as well as the mug instantly. Last time I had seen them aboard the boat. I grabbed the mug again and drank. What a pleasure!

"So you have made it too", I finally said. "Must you always be better than me?" I added reproachfully and smiled. I was more than relieved to see my brother alive and he knew it.

"Hey little brother," he said, grinning. "When I was in your age I always acted awkwardly and stupidly, just like you. There we are, having a little boat trip – as if it had been your first one – and the first whiff throws my baby brother overboard. And what is he doing when I finally find him? He is lying half buried and unconscious in the dirt with a hole in his head, playing dead man. Gosh boy!" He put both arms around my shoulders and gave me a big hug. The tone in his voice changed drastically. "I was worried sick about you. We beached and you disappeared so suddenly. I already thought you were dead."

"I flew overboard so fast I had no idea what was going on." I shivered remembering that dreadful moment.

"The surge must have hurled you all the way up the beach." Then Rob told me how the boat had been overturned by one of the next incoming waves. "I swam for my life, tried to get out of the current. I finally made it, don't ask me how. A huge wave washed me up onto the sandy beach. There I was, you gone, the boat as well and around me the most devastating thunderstorm I've ever lived to see. I cried for you again and again. And you answered me. Only once, but that was enough. I knew you were alive. I ran to where your cry came from and there you were. Then I found that cave and carried you in there." He examined my wound carefully. "Your head is badly injured. I hope it is only a laceration. You have slept through one day and two nights."

With all ten fingers I cautiously examined the covered wound as good as possible. "Still throbbing quite a bit," I admitted. "I hit the edge of the boat. That was not exactly pleasant."

"Definitely not. By the way, I have found the boat. It is down there on the beach, solidly aground. Quite a bit damaged too. I have even retrieved some shreds of the sail. Fancy that! Nothing that cannot be fixed. We are definitely not stranded here forever. When the sea remains that calm we can get back home pretty soon."

Finally some good news.

"Is this Radan?"

"Must be. There is no other island that close to the Deep Channel. Don't you think it's better to lie down again? Give yourself a break. I will need all your strength soon. Guess I am not able to drag the boat back into the sea myself."

So I returned slowly to the cave, absorbed in thoughts. What father and mother might be thinking? They too must be worrying about us. No question, we had to go back as soon as possibly possible. I would have liked to help Rob repairing the boat but did not feel yet capable of doing so. I did not even dare to walk down the beach let alone rolling up the sleeves and get to work.

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Xyn was setting with a beautiful rosy colour, sending shafts of golden rays through the cave's entrance. For a very short time the whole cave was illuminated so brightly that I could clearly see its other end.

Now something was about to happen that should not only change my life completely but also the lives of all human beings in Gondwanaland. Even today, lots of years later, I sometimes wonder what would have happened if I simply had not made this discovery. A cloudy horizon would have been enough to prevent the rays of light from uncovering something that might better not be seen again. I could have fallen asleep and thus miss the few moments of revealing light. Neither Rob nor I would have occurred to have a good snoop round that cave. We would have spent another night or two in here and then have left it forever. Never would it have crossed my mind to come back. However, maybe the time was just ripe for it.

Today I am convinced that it did not happen by accident that I made this revelation on 33 October 621 after the beginning of the human history on Gondwana. Whether or not the Ermeskul had their (non-existing) fingers in the pie may be as it is. Looking back I do tend to this theory.

A part of the rear wall of the cave suddenly appeared odd to me as if it was made of stacked stones. The rays of light forced me to see it clearly. My eyes narrowed and focussed immediately on this peculiar discovery.

It was made of bricks indeed!

That wall once must have been stacked brick by brick.

But who did it? And why?

I was bursting with curiosity. But the moment I decided to get up in order to look more closely into the matter the sun went down and the rays of light were gone. The cave plunged back into darkness as if someone had blown out the only candle. I froze, my eyes still fixed on the spot now again as dark as a new-moon night.

Still it was too late.

I had seen what I had seen.

Knowing that the cave provided something most unusual, something that was not supposed to be here at all, I just could not let go. What were those walls hiding? Radan had never been populated, as far as I knew. By all means possible that Rob and I were not the first ones to have spend a night or two in here. I almost began to crawl into the darkness to examine the once again invisible wall. Yet I remained lying down. I wanted to wait for my brother.

It took quite a bit of time but finally he came back. Ebrod, the larger one of Gondwanas' two moons, had risen over the sea, spreading mysteriously silver light over the land.

"Jack? Are you sleeping?" I heard him whispering from the cave's entrance.

"No," I said clearly.

"Are you hungry?"

"Like a wolf," I answered.

"I'm afraid I can't offer you a feast. What about Tichinas?"

"Better than nothing." I got up and staggered outside. The giddiness had almost gone away. Rob sat cross-legged right in front of the cave, covered in silver moonlight, cutting up Tichinas. The moonglow had brightened and the pale shimmer illuminated the world around us in a spooky way.

"Do you feel better? Yes? Well, sit down and eat."

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I sat down. Rob passed me a peeled Tichina. Reluctantly I took it. "No need to feed me! I am not invalid or something."

Rob ignored my remark. "I was hunting a Moa but the beast escaped. Otherwise we had a hearty meal now."

The thought of the scrumptious meat of a Moa made my mouth water. Instead I had to be satisfied with Tichinas already tasting faintly of mold. Their edible spongy fibrous pulp is not exactly what I would call a proper meal. Yet I was grateful for having something in my stomach at all. Pensively I chewed away. I was itching to tell my brother.

"The sail is in bad condition after all," Rob told me. His voice sounded confident, though. "I've got nothing here to patch it up with. But don't you worry, I'll find a way."

I could not hold back any longer. "I was examining our cave a bit more closely, Rob."

He did not even look up. "And?"

"The rear part consists of a wall of stacked stones. Isn't that unusual? Unfortunately it got too dark before I found out more."

Rob paused. "Bricks?"

"I don't know. Possibly yes."

"Let's have a look at it tomorrow morning." Rob closed. That was it. He fully concentrated on the Tichinas again. I was disappointed. Maybe there was nothing to it at all. Maybe I had just seen a ghost.

How much I was mistaken!

On the next morning we had a closer look at my discovery. The lighting conditions were not bad at all, most of the cave was clearly visible. However, the wall itself was well-hidden behind a ledge concealing it from view. We stood right in front of it and even now it was hardly to recognize.

"Most fascinating," Rob said. "Bricks indeed. Unprofessionally done, if you ask me." With swift hands he started to examine the wall that was as high as a man and about three meters wide. I followed suit. Here and there the mortar between the bricks stuck out about a fingers' breadth and crumbled away when touched.

"That wall had been erected in a hurry. A long time ago."

"It looks like that. It reminds me of the remnants of Van Dien. Do you remember? The ancient ruins of our ancestors? The old foundation walls were in such a bad state that just touching turned them to dust. It's similar here."

"You are right, Jack. This wall is some hundred years old. I am wondering what is behind." We looked at each other. Despite the bad light I saw Rob's eyes gleaming. His curiosity was aroused too.

"We need more light," I said matter-of-factly. Without words we had agreed on tearing that wall down.

"We've got none," Rob replied with just a hint of impatience in his voice. "Our torches and candles along with all the other stuff are resting on the bottom of the sea. But don't you worry, I am going to wreck that wall. It doesn't look as if it will resist, anyway. Some well-aimed kicks should do the job. Step back, baby brother. I don't want you to be hurt anymore."

Typical Rob! As always he took the command allowing me only to watch. I was about to object, but changed my mind and stepped back as I had been told. It might be right to let him do the hard work. I still felt a bit groggy and working surely was not the best way to fully recover.

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Rob set to work immediately. Initially, he kicked the old brickwork with all he could. The wall shook but resisted. "It won't be long," commented Rob his first attack.

He was right. Four more assaults were enough. The old brittle wall collapsed without warning. Rob had prepared for the next kick when he sensed a movement in the sighing brickwork and jumped back instead. The ancient wall came down groaning and moaning and with it a dense cloud of dust that spread within seconds covering the whole cave. Coughing we hurried outside, panting for air.

Rob grinned at me triumphantly. "How have I done it?"

"Like a professional," I said appreciatively. "For one moment I thought the whole cave come down on us."

"Let's wait a couple of minutes until the dust has settled. Then we'll see!"

So we let some endless minutes pass by before we entered the cave again. The air flickered with thousands of particles but we did not care. The wall had collapsed from the top down. Debris all over. A black gaping hole stared at us where some minutes before bricks had been. We peered curiously inside. There was nothing to see but impenetrable darkness. Apparently, the new cavern was not very large, Rob's efforts had probably be in vain and there was just nothing in there. If we only had a candle! We had to rely on the scarce light streaming in from the entrance.

"I'm going in," I said suddenly and before Rob was able to object I had slipped through the gap. A bit too hastily. Barely inside, I tripped over a rock in my path and fell down landing on something hard that did not feel like stone at all.

"Are you hurt?"

"No!" I was just annoyed with myself. With both hands I started examining the thing I had fallen on. Felt like mouldering wooden stakes crumbling under my weight. "What is that?" I asked aloud as if talking to someone. The assumed stakes clattered against one another, sounding hollow and empty. My fingers were still trying to picture what I had fallen onto. An eerie suspicion floated in my mind.

Screaming I jumped on my feet and hurried out of the dark cavern. Rob watched me contemptuously.

"What's wrong with you?"

"Oh my gosh, I tripped over a dead guy!" I was still trembling with horror. "There is a skeleton in there!"

I was expecting Rob to get at least a bit frightened too. But my remarks left him cold. "So what? A dead man can't harm you, can he? Pull yourself together!" Shaking his head disapprovingly he stepped inside. There was a sickening cracking when the bones broke.

"Can you see something?" I asked him, breathing hard. To my utmost amazement I heard the rustling of paper. Then something came flying out of the gap like a flapping chicken, narrowly missing me, landing somewhere behind me.

"Have a look yourself," Rob cried, not able to conceal the disappointment in his voice. Another "chicken" darted out, this time hitting me square in the face. Hundreds of yellowing sheets all around me. I was reaching for them when a third bullet flew close by banging against the cave's wall.

"What are you doing? Stop that!"

"Just old scripts. Fucking old scripts and a carcass. I don't know which of this is more exciting!"



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Rob was very disappointed. On the other hand, I was not. Old records like that have always fascinated me. Whilst Rob started carrying heaps of scripts and books out I inspected them not having a clue as to what I was actually looking at. Light was definitely too bad to read only a single word so I took some of the scripts outside.

Now I was disappointed too. Hundreds of blotched and yellowed sheets written in a hand that portrayed the writer's age and feeble condition. And furthermore in a language I did not understand.

"Something else other than these scripts?" I asked Rob who had come outside watching me.

He shook his head. "No. You know something? I think the whole stuff had been brought over here at the end of the Great War to prevent it from being destroyed by the Opreju."

I doubted it. "I don't think so. I mean, Port West was about to be attacked. There was virtually no one wasting time on unimportant paperwork like that."

"Not so unimportant as you might be thinking. After all, do you really think the poor guy in there had to be killed for nothing?"

"You mean he had been murdered?"

"Quite so. Whoever he was he had to die to keep this hiding place secret."

I nodded. "Sounds plausible. But that would mean that there was at least someone else who knew about the whole thing."

"Naturally," Rob agreed. "That one who brought up the wall. The murderer."

"Scary." More respectfully than before I turned to one of the piles Rob had so neatly stacked. "So far I don't know what to think about it. It's all written in a strange language." I took a large-sized cover made of what once used to be leather. Inside I found a collection of different maps looking as if they had been drenched in the sea a long time ago. "Look at this. Maps."

Rob knelt down. "These are detailed maps of Aotearoa," he said mesmerised. "Father has got a small collection similar to them... better ones, of course. Look, this is the Bay of Islands. Apago, Wentland, Ewas, Radan... only do they seem to bear different names... can you read that scribbling? 'Eylo-essudi', isn't it? Look, all the names for the islands start with 'Eylo'..."

I was not listening anymore for I had turned my full attention to some other scripts. At last I had found something written in our language. A compilation of loose sheets written in fading greenish ink in something that once must have been a cardboard box.

"Well then!" I said, excited. "Rob, look, finally something legible. Looks like a diary to me."

What I was holding in my trembling hands should change the world in which I had lived as long as I could think forever.