

The thatch of rushes and turf that Birno had laid over the jaws of whalebone rustled and rattled as if a rat were among them. The pitch of the wind's whine grew higher. "It sounds like a storm blowing up," Stempsi remarked. Tenko rose to his feet. "I will go down to the beach and see that the boats are well pulled up."

"I will come too and help you," Birno said. When they reached the sand dunes the wind whistled about their ears. The bent martram grasses quivered and rustled: the sea heaved and twisted, flecked with spume. It seemed as if the whole world was stirring, uneasy and menacing. They went down to the beach. The waves were breaking hard on the distant reefs and there was a heavy drag of shingle in the undertow on the beach. It was still low tide. Some instinct told Tenko to lift the boats to some other place instead of just above the high-water mark on the beach. "Let us carry them to the rocks that are close in to the shore at the place where the stream of Skara flows into the sea," Tenko suggested. "The tide never covers those rocks."

"Yes, we will do that," Birno agreed. It meant carrying the boats nearly a quarter of a mile to the south of the Bay of Skail. Tenko and Birno bent their backs to the task. It was a grim struggle. The wind was blowing off the sea against them, a cold biting wind that raised little scurries of sand and blew it into their eyes. Their lips were gritty and salt with the feel and taste of it. At last, breathless, they reached the rock well above high-water mark. There, in the shelter of the rock they had a brief respite from the wind.

"Here there is a curved bite out of the rock facing the land. Let us put the boat here," Tenko suggested. They stowed the boat under the lee of the rock.