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THE LIFEBOAT

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CABO PANTOJA, DOCTOR JULIANA LOPEZ PERFORMS AN ECOGRAPHY ON A PREGNANT WOMAN ON BOARD THE SHIP. THE ECOGRAPHY IS TRANSMITTED IN REAL TIME TO A NAVY HOSPITAL IN LIMA, WHERE SPECIALISTS GUIDE DOCTOR LOPEZ, WHO IS A GENERAL PRACTITIONER, ON HOW TO PERFORM THE EXAM CORRECTLY AND REACH A DIAGNOSIS.



THOSE WHO LIVE ALONG THE NAPO RIVER – A TRIBUTARY OF THE AMAZON RIVER IN PERUVIAN TERRITORY – PRAY FOR ONE THING: NEVER TO GET SICK.

FOR THE MORE THAN 50,000 PERSONS WHO LIVE IN ALMOST COMPLETELY ISOLATED COMMUNITIES ALONG THE 667-KM-LONG PERUVIAN STRETCH OF THE RIVER, EVEN THE SIMPLEST DISEASE CAN BECOME A CATASTROPHE: IQUITOS, THE NEAREST TOWN WITH A HOSPITAL, IS OFTEN IMPOSSIBLE TO REACH FOR THOSE WHO MOVE ON A PYROGUE. AND FOR MANY, THE SCARCE PUBLIC TRANSPORT ON THE RIVER IS SIMPLY TOO EXPENSIVE. MOREOVER, IQUITOS HAPPENS TO BE THE LARGEST TOWN IN THE WORLD WITH NO ROAD ACCESS (IT CAN ONLY BE REACHED BY BOAT OR AIRPLANE), A FACT THAT HAS A DRAMATIC REPERCUSSION ON THE STANDARD OF ITS HEALTH CARE STRUCTURES.

THE POPULATION OF THE WHOLE REGION, PLAGUED BY POVERTY AND MALNUTRITION, IS HIGHLY AFFECTED BY SEVERAL DISEASES: MALARIA, DENGUE, BIRTH MALFORMATIONS, INTESTINAL INFECTIONS, TUBERCULOSIS, AS WELL AS FREQUENT TRAUMATIC EVENTS, FROM GUNSHOT WOUNDS TO THE ACCIDENTAL FALL OFF A TREE.

THE GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO MEET THE HEALTHCARE NEEDS OF THE NAPO POPULATION WITH THE AMBITIOUS PROJECT OF A FLOATING HOSPITAL, ON WHICH A TEAM OF DOCTORS – PAID BY THE HEALTH MINISTRY – PERMANENTLY TRAVELS BETWEEN IQUITOS AND THE BORDER WITH ECUADOR IN 45-DAYS VOYAGES, BRINGING FROM VILLAGE TO VILLAGE THE ASSISTANCE THAT THE COMMUNITIES WOULD OTHERWISE NEVER GET.

THE HOSPITAL BOAT HAS BEEN BUILT, AND GIVEN TO THE HEALTH MINISTRY, BY THE PERUVIAN NAVY, WHICH MODIFIED A BIG BARGE PREVIOUSLY USED BY DRUG TRAFFICKERS AND SEIZED BY THE POLICE. ON BOARD THERE IS A SMALL HOSPITAL COMPLETE WITH DELIVERY ROOM, SURGERY ROOM, AN ANALYSIS LAB AND ROOMS FOR HOSPITALIZATION.

THE EXPERIMENT WAS LAUNCHED IN JUNE, 2013, AND WAS SO SUCCESSFUL THAT THE SHIP WILL CONTINUE ITS NAVIGATION UP AND DOWN THE NAPO UNTIL 2021, WHILE BORDERING COUNTRIES SUCH AS BRAZIL, ECUADOR AND COLOMBIA ARE PLANNING TO REPRODUCE THE INITIATIVE FOR THEIR OWN AMAZONIAN COMMUNITIES. THE BOAT IS NOT ONLY A FLOATING HOSPITAL, BUT ALSO (SOMETHING THAT THE U.S. EMBASSY IN PERU HAS CALLED "UNIQUE IN THE WORLD") AN ACTUAL MINIATURE BRANCH OF THE GOVERNMENT, WHICH CARRIES AN OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL BANK AS WELL AS WORKERS OF THE REGISTRY OFFICE AND TWO SOCIAL ASSISTANTS WITH THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN WITH THE TASK OF SENSITIZING THE LOCAL PEOPLE ON GENDER-RELATED ISSUES.



CABO PANTOJA, NAVY PERSONNEL TAKE LLERME JARAMA, A 37-YEAR OLD PREGNANT WOMAN AT RISK OF MISCARRIAGE, ON BOARD THE SHIP'S AMBULANCE BOAT. SHE WILL BE EVACUATED TO ROCAFUERTE, AN ECUADORIAN VILLAGE BEYOND THE BORDER, WHERE THE LOCAL HOSPITAL IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE THE FACILITIES TO TREAT SUCH A CASE. AS IT WILL TURN OUT, THE HOSPITAL WILL REFUSE TO ADMIT HER, AND THE CREW WILL BE FORCED TO BRING HER BACK TO PANTOJA.



MILITARY PERSONNEL ON THE
BRIDGE DURING NAVIGATION
ALONG THE NAPO RIVER.





TEMPESTAD, A WOMAN GETS HER BLOOD PRESSURE CHECKED AS PART OF THE STANDARD TRIAGE PROCEDURE, WHILE HER HUSBAND AND DAUGHTERS WATCH.

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YARINA LLACTA. YELSI MASHACURI, 5, SUFFERED SERIOUS BURNS AFTER A COOKING POT FILLED WITH BOILING WATER WAS ACCIDENTALLY POURED ON HIM, AND WAS TAKEN ON BOARD BY HIS FATHER FOUR DAYS AGO. THERE IS NOTHING THAT THE SHIP'S DOCTORS COULD DO FOR HIM, EXCEPT DRESSING THE BURNS. THE KID NEEDED TO BE EVACUATED BY SEAPLANE TO IQUITOS, THE NEAREST PERUVIAN CITY WITH A HOSPITAL, MORE THAN 500 KMS TO THE SOUTHEAST. THE SHIP'S CREW HAVE BEEN TRYING TO COORDINATE THE EVACUATION FOR THE PAST FOUR DAYS, BUT BAD WEATHER IN IQUITOS PREVENTED THE PLANE FROM TAKING OFF UNTIL NOW. NOW THE KID CAN FINALLY BE EVACUATED AND IS BEING TAKEN ON BOARD THE PLANE, BUT HIS SITUATION IS EXTREMELY SERIOUS AND HAS THE DOCTORS DEEPLY WORRIED ABOUT IT.



CABO PANTOJA, AN OSTETRICIAN WATCHES OVER LLEME JARAMA, A 37-YEAR OLD PREGNANT WOMAN AT RISK OF MISCARRIAGE, IN ONE OF THE SHIP'S ROOMS.



MILITARY PERSONNEL ON THE
BRIDGE DURING AN EMER-
GENCY STOP ALONG THE RI-
VER BANK AFTER AN ENGINE
FAILURE.



CABO PANTOJA, WATER LEVEL MARKERS NEAR THE VILLAGE'S ONLY FRESH WATER SOURCE, WHICH IS MOSTLY USED FOR WASHING CLOTHES. RIVER WATER IS TRADITIONALLY PREFERRED BY LOCAL PEOPLE FOR COOKING.



MIRAFLORES, AN ELDERLY PATIENT IS TAKEN CARE OF ON BOARD THE SHIP BY NURSE LILIA RAMIREZ, WHO IS INSERTING AN IV INTO HER FOREARM.



THE SHIP MOORED ALONG
THE NAPO RIVER AT SUN-
SET DURING ITS NAVIGATION
TOWARDS THE ECUADORIAN
BORDER.



DOCTOR MARIA CARRANZA, ONE OF THE SHIP'S SURGEONS, CHECKS THE TEMPERATURE OF A KID. THE MOTHER HAS COME ON BOARD REPORTING HIGH FEVER AND HER LITTLE DAUGHTER IS SUSPECTED TO HAVE MALARIA.

THE HOSPITAL SHIP MOORED FOR THE NIGHT ALONG THE NAPO RIVER. AT NIGHT, WHEN THE SHIP HAS TO STOP SINCE IT WOULD BE TOO DANGEROUS TO NAVIGATE IN THE DARK, AN ARMED MARINE INFANTRYMAN IS ALWAYS KEPT ON WATCH TO PREVENT PIRACY ATTACKS.



TEMPESTAD. YELSI MASHACURI, 5, IN THE SURGERY ROOM AFTER DOCTORS FINISHED DRESSING THE BURNS. THE KID NEEDS TO BE EVACUATED BY SEAPLANE, BUT BAD WEATHER IN IQUITOS PREVENTED THE PLANE FROM TAKING OFF, AND NOW THE KID'S SITUATION IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE SERIOUS BY THE HOUR.



VENCEDORES, VILLAGERS IN
FRONT OF THE HOSPITAL SHIP.





DOCTOR MARIA CARRANZA,
ONE OF THE SHIP'S SURGEONS,
EXPLAINS TO A PA-
TIENT HOW HE IS SUPPOSED
TO TAKE THE MEDICINES HE
HAS JUST BEEN GIVEN.



NAVY PERSONNEL WHO CAME
AGROUND TO SECURE THE SHIP'S
MOORING FOR THE NIGHT ARE
FOLLOWED BY A KID FROM THE
LOCAL COMMUNITY.



NAPO RIVER BASIN. INSECTS THAT WERE ATTRACTED BY LIGHT TO A WINDOW OF THE HOSPITAL SHIP WHILE IT WAS MOORED AT NIGHT HAVE DIED SHORTLY AFTER DAWN AND STUCK TO THE GLASS.



CABO PANTOJA, A MAN UNDERGOES A TREATMENT FOR PULMONARY INFECTION IN ONE OF THE SHIP'S SURGERIES.

TEMPESTAD. YELSI MASHACU-
RI, 5, SUFFERED SERIOUS
BURNS. THERE IS NOTHING
THAT THE SHIP'S DOCTORS
CAN DO FOR HIM, EXCEPT
DRESSING THE BURNS, LIKE
MARIA CARRANZA, RIGHT,
AND HER NURSES JUST FI-
NISHED DOING HERE. THE
FATHER IS DESPERATE.





THE HOSPITAL SHIP'S CAT ASKS FOR FOOD IN THE DINING ROOM WHERE MILITARY PERSONNEL ARE HAVING LUNCH.

YARINA LLACTA, A HEAVY
STORM ABOUT TO REACH THE
VILLAGE.





YARINA LLACTA, YELSI MASHACURI IS FINALLY ABOUT TO BE EVACUATED TOGETHER WITH HIS FATHER (IN BLUE T-SHIRT), BUT BY NOW HIS SITUATION IS EXTREMELY SERIOUS AND HAS THE DOCTORS DEEPLY WORRIED ABOUT IT.



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