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Successful Effort

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SUCCESSFUL EFFORT

The ship went down, with a big bump reached the bottom of the sea, and keeled over. It now turns out that it was a country, a nation. "After a hurricane." I was a passenger, but somehow or other—due to sheer chance or because, in spite of the storm, I'd gone up on the deck to look around—a current (I held on to the railing in vain) carried me up to the surface. The sun was shining. Yachts were racing on the calmed water. My friends, flying along in a boat, cried out in a foreign language, but so clearly, in words as cleanly luminous as the sparkles of sun on the rippling water. Of the shipwreck—or even of the storm—they knew nothing. I laughed, I drank—the ambrosial Banyuls; and because—again by sheer chance—I knew how to handle the sails, I could become, then and there, a happy member of the *equipage.* Together we took possession of the wreath of victory.

It took me five years and a thousand tricks to get back to the ship on the bottom of the sea, where whoever hadn't perished had gone mad.

Translated from the Hungarian by
Bruce Berlind with **Mária Kőrösy**