

CROSSING THE NORTH PACIFIC

Voyage on Board the RV *Heraclitus*

*Guam to the American West Coast, May - September
2003*

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Expedition Leader

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This is a work of memoir. It reflects the author's recollections of events, locales, and conversations from his own experience over time. Some names and identifying details may have been changed.

PREFACE

The RV Heraclitus was built in 1975 by volunteers of the Institute of Ecotechnics, working eighteen-hour days for eight months on a vacant lot in Oakland, California. She launched into San Francisco Bay at sunrise on March 22 of that year, flying a Panamanian flag — under maritime law, the crew liked to point out, they were technically floating in Panama, even as the tugboat pulled them out past Alcatraz. Her hull was ferrocement: cheap, strong, and, crucially for a crew with more ambition than money, patchable at sea with nothing more than sand, cement, and time. Her lines were drawn from the Chinese junk, chosen less for speed than for the particular stability a junk holds in heavy seas, and for what her builders called the possibility of a “slow boat” — a vessel that let her crew actually feel the organic rhythm of wind and current, rather than simply outrunning it.

Over the following four decades the Heraclitus — known, informally, around the world's ports as the Magic Black Ship — sailed more than 270,000 nautical

miles across every ocean but the Arctic, through twelve major expeditions and hundreds of crew from more than fifty countries. She spent two years working up the Amazon on an ethnobotanical expedition inspired by the botanist Richard Evans Schultes. She carried researchers into the Antarctic to study whales. And her collection of coral specimens along the Yucatan coast helped seed what would become the largest man-made coral reef ever built — inside Biosphere 2, the sealed ecological experiment in the Arizona desert built by many of the same people who had built the ship itself.

By 2003, the *Heraclitus* was several years removed from the Southeast Asian coral reef mapping expedition documented in the author's earlier book, *Expeditions Inner and Outer*, and had turned toward a new horizon entirely: the open water of the North Pacific, departing Guam in May of that year bound, eventually, for the American West Coast. What followed was not the reef-lined, island-hopping voyage of the earlier years, but something starker — four months of true blue-water sailing, much of it far from any land at all, through the doldrums, the westerlies, and the cold, fog-bound stretches above the fortieth parallel, testing the ship, and her crew, in ways the tropics never had. The author served as the expedition's leader throughout this voyage, with Eibes as captain.

What follows was written in real time, mostly late at night, in the log itself — part ship's record, part personal journal, part running argument with the author's own doubts. It was not composed with a reader in mind. It is offered now — an honest and unpolished glimpse of one mind at the time — because the record itself seemed worth keeping.

CAST OF THE VOYAGE

The following crew appear most often across this four-month crossing.

Michel — Expedition leader

Eibes — Captain

Xtine — Mate; sailmaker and rigger

Reka — Crew member; Synesthesia management

Ferdi — Mate; radio and small-boat operations

Orla — Science coordinator; with the expedition from the start, and the author's partner

Heather — Crew member

Linda — Crew member; sewing and sailmaking

Stinj — Crew member

Kira — Crew member; Ferdi's partner

Nicole — Crew member

Carol — Chief engineer and mate

Sebastien — Crew member

Eddie — Crew member

Priska — Eibes and Reka's daughter, referenced from shore

Gaie — Co-founder, Planetary Coral Reef Foundation

Lazer — Chief Operating Officer, Planetary Coral Reef Foundation

Sonny — Makah fisherman and captain of Sonny Boy, who met the Heraclitus at sea with emergency fuel

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Chapter One

Crossing the North Pacific

Guam → Pagan Island → Maug Atoll → open North Pacific

May 4, 2003

Against all expectations, the black ship is getting away, right on our scheduled departure. Within the last five weeks we took on three typhoons of our own making, in a sense. The first two weeks were a typhoon of denial, our containers of equipment to upgrade the ship not arriving until well past when we needed them. The second was a real meteorological one, Typhoon Kujira, heading straight for Guam and forcing us to leave port for two weeks. The third came racing against time, customs officials turning the ship upside down in their search, inner and outer. Three teachings of exactly where we stand, tested almost like a rite of passage before setting out on our odyssey.

We sail out of Apra Harbour at 14:00, out to meet the ocean. Within minutes, half the crew is seasick, collapsing. Our bodies, pushed to their limits without quite realizing it these last five weeks, and the sea sees the weakness and takes over immediately.

We raise the mainsail in a force five — not an ordinary raising, but a total readjustment of the parrels, shaffing battens going on, testing the new halyard line, watching every block and line carefully, untangling sheets, replacing weak or loose rope. It takes almost four hours to get the sail up.

Eibes has caught a cold, his face hardened; I can sense him struggling. The departure itself was its own kind of

*You will be eaten with delight.
He hardly struggled.
We released two baby sucker fish clinging to his
side.
The ocean is welcoming us,
As we are welcoming the ocean into our souls.*

May 6, 2003

I wake often through the night, hearing the new sounds our changes to the rigging make — new songs, new tones, new notes. The engine comes on, and that's the end of any peaceful time in my bunk. I simply can't take it; after thirty minutes my body twitches from the aggression of the sound.

Around three in the morning I hear the rigging singing a tune of complaint. The parrel on the boom has gone loose, a poor knot; the sail bangs unhappily against the mast. Shutting down the engine and following the flow of the waves eases the ship's motion — she dances again now. We need to hold the wind five points before the beam, steering a true course of 010, two hundred sixty-five miles from Pagan.

I spend the evening reading about systems theory, working my way back up toward the whole in reviewing our present state. I realize that although Gaie and Lazer have been calling for a strategy of concentration, in my last speech — at least on a metaphysical level — I called instead for expansion, for going further. Though further isn't always outward; further in is its own kind of further, concentrating the qualities rather than scattering them.

As I put a piece of raw sailfish in my mouth —

Whale, oh —

A shade of darker blue passes beneath the hull, slow, graceful. Someone shouts whale. We wait now, eyes

scouting the waves for the next spot where she'll surface. I hang from the bobstay chain to watch for the blue, just blue, that deep ocean blue. On deck they spot her again. She surfaces a few meters off the bow with a majestic, deep, loud blow. I can see her clearly now, coming straight at me. Grace, simply grace. We look at each other, and she keeps on going and going.

Later, up on deck: what type of whale was that? My mind recalls the image underwater, flips through the book. While I was in the moment, honestly, I didn't much care what type she was — simply in rapture with it.

A sei whale, or a Bryde's whale. Twelve, fifteen meters long, with oval scars running the length of her body.

The wrong knot — the parrels come loose under the strain of the sail rocking back and forth, motoring against the swells. With Eddie, like a circus act, we prepare ourselves for a show, a genuinely useful acrobatic performance on the sails to fix the parrels. All the elements are there — a moving ship, height, danger, spectacle as we climb. Hanging from a rope, we both perform a kind of dance, a sea-people dance, our bodies moving together.

May 10, 2003

Paradise found, for our big send-off. The ship approaches one of the most spectacular anchorages I've ever seen — a perfect black sand beach, a pine forest rising behind it, a huge, perfect cone of a volcano, green grassy hills to the south, sheltered from the southeasterly winds. Nobody lives here anymore, not since the volcano erupted. Cattle run wild now, and so do pigs and chickens. Dolphins visit the bay every day, and the sea has gone flat calm.

The silence takes our breath away.

We add a new sea-people experience here — being hunter-gatherers. Once you physically put yourself in the position of the hunter, a new respect rises in you. We carry no guns, but man has hunted since forever, if a different man than we are now. Today's man struggles even to understand the animal. What it takes is learning to become the animal you mean to hunt. I watch, today, coming ever closer.

It's so simple, and yet so hard. It's all in the courage to strike.

*Kronos and Vulcan made an alliance, geological tempo,
Read on the cliffs of Pagan,
Layers of rock, lava flow, and ashes,
A blanket of pine forest,
A one-way hourglass falling into the sea.
The energy of wind and rain,
Reminding the land that everything flows,
Like castles of sand falling into the ocean.
The ocean takes it all back.
Beauty shines,
Destruction and rebirth,
Tongues of destructive lava took over all life,
Now life creates,
Once again.
A seed finds a crack,
Growing into a tree,
Hosting birds,
Safe by the lava fortress from wild pigs and cattle.
The plains show scars,
A field hit by a shower of meteorite,
Man-made meteorite from the Second World War.
The plains look like a gruyère cheese,
Coated in a mantle of green mold.
Man left.
A tribe of sea people came,
Anchoring at the edge of a black sand beach.*

*I realize we are a different, self-made species of
man.
We strive to recover our heritage,
Hunter-gatherer,
Not for immediate survival,
But to regain a wealth lost along the way,
Without guns,
Playing with evolutionary scenes,
Reactivating our essences.
Dolphins visit,
Flying fish take off,
Dream light of blues, galactic dives.
Huge spiderwebs across an overgrown path,
Shifting the eyes' focus.
Pagan is teaching us to see,
Pagan is teaching us to hear, smell, and taste,
Our hands touching, caressing,
Biospheric understanding,
Moving from one ecozone to another,
Always aware of the whole.
The clouds pass over the volcano,
Caught for a time, then releasing their rain.
The Southern Cross keeps pointing south,
Pointing to where we have been,
And giving us direction for what's ahead.
A wasp bites me twice,
Enough to alter my vision at times,
Traces of poison.
The body fights back,
And the mind takes the opportunity to explore,
New connections.
A blue bird sits on a branch, watching.
I watch, he watches, we meet.
Everything meets you here.
The voice feels free, chanting to the landscape,
Chanting to the sky and the trees.
Trampled on, walked over,
Quiet, do this, do that,
We are in charge here,*

*But we know you can't be in charge everywhere.
We are blessed to be away from the grip of the
dragon of terror on individuality.
Our ensemble reconnects with the biosphere,
We realize we are the biosphere.*

May 11, 2003

*And a toast,
To our friends around the planet,
Clink — stainless mugs filled with white wine and
smiles,
To the hospitality of the biosphere.
Clink — a peek into someone's eyes.
The wind picks up,
And a toast,
To keeping alert,
And laughter,
Whatever it takes.
Clink to the right, clink to the left,
Bottoms up,
To all and everything.*

May 12, 2003

*Hands pick mangoes from the tree,
Carried overhead,
A tongue of black lava in the background,
Highlighting the greens of plant life.
Eddie climbs the coconut trees,
Gathering for our odyssey.
The crew of a Saipanese fishing boat
Roast a fresh-caught male turtle.
They harvest the sea
With know-how and respect.
Sharing stories and tales,
The coconut breaks open,
A fish, smiles, attention, as gifts —
The hospitality of true sea people.*

*Whirling with fire,
The black sand holds the energy of the day.
The moon plays with the sea's foam,
Meeting the land with grace and fluidity.
A cloud covers the moon,
The sea changes,
Dancing, dancing,
The trees, shadow puppets,
Dancing to the beat of the wind,
We dance to the stars,
We dance to man and woman,
We dance to freedom,
We dance to the sky, the ocean, life,
We dance magic.*

May 15, 2003

Huge flames fill the sky, inspiring dances toward the moon, the sea, and us. Dolphins leap close to the beach, joining the party themselves. Like totems, the skulls of cows sit high on stakes, watching over the sea.

*Mermaid mutates into fire goddess,
A dead tree comes to life,
A comet juggler plays with gravities,
Others with breath and beats,
Senses, oh senses,
Stocking up with the land.
Moonlit skins, firelit faces,
Fire madness, screams and shouts,
Totem poles ignited,
Visions, perceptions, projections,
The fire can take it all.
Wishful intention,
Keep the best,
Improve the rest,
Dance fire dance,
Incarnated in heated bodies,
Freed for a moment in and out of time,*

*New programs, available only on Pagan.
The journey of five thousand miles
Starts with the plays of Pagan's incarnated gods.
Fire, water, air, wind, space, seas and seas,
Sky and skies, planets, universes, infinities,
Time after times,
Emotions, dramas,
Values, friendships,
The journey of five thousand miles
Needs to start with a ship of friends.
We are an ensemble around the fire,
With our wits and squeaks, and moans, and
rrrrrrrrr,
We are an ensemble around the fire,
Caressing each other with dances, smiles,
laughter, worlds, gestures, moods.*

We know we're embarking on an adventure, an odyssey entirely our own. We couldn't have left straight from Guam — we needed to reconcile ourselves with land first. Pagan is it. Like old seamen, we stepped onto an uninhabited island to replenish our stock, the crew carrying baskets of freshly picked mango, a team husking coconuts. Eddie, spider-like, climbs the trees — a dance of its own, and a skill only he can really perform. Without a gun, hunting never quite happened in any real sense; not enough real pressure behind it.

A boat of fellow sea people anchors in the bay. Free men.

We're off, right on schedule, departing on the fifteenth of May with a lead of three hundred miles north. The wind's in our favor, a light breeze, enough with the current to sail at two knots. The ship points into the wind, the rigging wishing aloud for something stronger, complaining a little.

The crew sleeps now, real deep sleep, filled with dreams so thick you could almost see them. I dream of my father's whole family, sitting around a table, all of

us looking so alike. Then my grandmother watches the crew and says, no — they look like me. There's a supermarket scene, supplies coming in, faces of people I haven't thought of in years.

May 17, 2003

Sailing with today's wind, the sail happy, our eyes bright, still glowing with moonlight. The mangoes are ripening perfectly, just enough at a time to feed us all.

Two points before the beam, eighty degrees, a low force four, speed 1.8 knots.

We haven't caught a fish yet, and my taste buds are getting edgy. Pure beef broth from a Pagan cow, thanks to the fisherman's gift, makes the best breakfast imaginable, alongside a bowl of fresh mango.

We have the chance to stop en route at Maug Atoll, with the promise of filling our freezers back up with fresh fish. It takes something like a small battle with Eibes to actually make the stop happen. We hold a strat, and it's clear his game isn't entirely straight — like in any war, he tries to land the first punch on his "enemy." But strat decides to stop, and Eibes, Eddie, and I set ourselves up for a full day of fishing.

As we troll our first lure, two rainbow runners bite, but we lose them both — paranoia and overthinking about the hooks, understandable enough given we're in the radial line after all. But we land our first fish, a four-pound rainbow runner. We troll around all three islands. Maug is a textbook young atoll, steep crater rims all around, no landing spot anywhere. No one's ever lived here, and no one ever will. And the fishing shows it. Bite after bite, we reel them in, losing more than half — red snapper and jacks are the first to bite. We work every passage, and inside one we catch a "tuna with yellow fins" versus an actual yellowfin tuna

— a different species entirely, as Orla, our resident fish expert, points out.

Birds are everywhere — boobies, frigate birds, terns, all flying low right over our heads. We duck a few times ourselves. Hitchcock must have gone fishing once, never quite got over it, and made a movie out of it.

On one passage we catch four barracuda, one of them fifteen pounds. Sharks stay close by, dozens of babies following the hooked fish right up to the boat. Every passage proves productive. A trevally takes our hook; we know there's a whole school down there. Without ever putting our faces in the water, we start to know the buzzing life below just from the surface signs. On the horizon, birds work busily, probably tuna schools hunting sardines.

We head back to the ship loaded down and proud of the catch. Eddie, brilliant landing fish after fish; Eibes wouldn't let anyone else touch the rod; I drove the boat most of the time. Eddie caught the biggest fish, the barracuda. Eibes landed the most fish overall.

The landscape glows, radiating beauty, and I let myself be taken by it, delighting in being possessed by her.

A song for an upcoming jam session:

*Wahoo, wahoo,
Mahi mahi, wahoo, mahi mahi,
Tuna, tuna, tuna,
Bite the hook, bite the hook, bite the hook.
Come on, come to the hook,
We will honor you on our sea-people ship.
Wahoo, wahoo,
Mahi mahi, tuna tuna,
We need your help,
To feel real, to feel real, to feel real.
Iha, iha,
Pull in, don't give slack, keep pulling in,*

*Where is the gaff,
Come on, bring it in,
Oh, it's a big one,
Tuna tuna,
Thank you for your visit,
Do not worry,
Somehow you are feeding the sea,
Through the bodies of your emissaries,
Keep them strong, keep them seaworthy.
Wahoo, wahoo,
Mahi mahi, tuna tuna,
Bite the hook, come on, bite the hook.*

Once aboard, five hands come to help clean the catch.
The sun sets, the ship under sail looking magical. How
different we might behave if we could, once in a while,
step outside our own bodies, fly off a couple hundred
meters, and simply watch. Visualization creates its own
kind of miracle.

An ensemble gathers now, sharing minds and bodies
around the table, tin cups clinking through the echo of
sea-people toasts, feasting on fish fresh off the hook,
mango sauce, and coconut rice from our gathering in
Pagan, memories pouring out freely.

The art of seamanship, in a single moment. The
kerosene lamps light every face with the soft warmth of
flame, and everyone looks — or I perceive it this way —
beautiful as gods and goddesses, or better still,
beautiful simply as individual humans, our unity in
diversity thrown into relief. All of us bright, shining
stars in that particular universe called humanity.

May 19, 2003

*Sensual moonlight caresses the waves,
A child rises out of our mind,
A child born from the sea,
Can you see, it is always new.*

*Faces and more faces,
No wave is ever the same.
Sirens lament in the rigging,
Swells, from far away,
Beyond the glow of the lady moon,
A call, a call...*

The wind's dropped, and the swells rock the ship. I listen to Pink Floyd's **The Wall**, a dark masterpiece where so many souls get tangled up.

Is there anybody out there?

*The emergence of planetary man.
Ocean connects us all,
Knowing that we are.
Everything is permitted,
The mind can know no limits.
As a spider casts her web, carefully placed on a
frequented path,
So do the ideas and memes of man,
Catching.
Some come to know the spider, and learn to
escape.
Then you watch for the web,
And leap all the way toward the one you want to
explore.
There's no way to live constantly outside the
webs,
But it should be a right, at least, to try.
Man, organizing himself, creates huge,
indomitable, energy-sucking dragons,
Fabricating the most complex web of all,
But as the webmasters grow ever more efficient,
So does the freedom explorer,
Recognizing the webs, finding new escape routes,
Becoming more man, and more man, and more
man.
Here, right now,
A buzz in my ear,*

*Water songs trailing along the hull,
A valve keeps the tempo,
Floating inner and outer,
Attention to the one.
Then descending,
A line of attention connected around the world,
Time bends,
Everything I think, I think.
Watching, like a hawk,
Ready for all.
It's always dealing with the circumstances given,
Using space.
I repeat, over and over and over,
Memes of my own brand, a cocktail for the
moment, to sip slowly sometime,
Or drink in one great gulp, for that particular
space, that tranquility that emanates from
consumed eternities.
And,
Start over,
Again, again, again.
And — one of man's essences — and?
The "ands" and hands that keep the motion
pointed somewhere.
Silver, shining trails of incandescent moods,
Hidden in every wave.
A single impulse can set a fire.
In this, learning also to play synergetically with
water, air, earth, time, space, matter, flow,
Learning to cook with cosmic forces,
Artist of the sea,
Sea of art,
Nothing but everything,
Now.*

May 20, 2003

The wind's dropped, gone more easterly, ninety degrees, swells settling down. Still moving in the right direction, at 1.5 knots.

A huge bowl of mango for breakfast — the last of the fresh food, for a while now.

May 22, 2003

A typhoon is developing seven hundred fifty miles south of us, moving straight for Guam, and if it holds a northerly course, straight for us as well. The sea is flat calm, the swells clean and mirror-like. The sails flap with each swell passing beneath the hull.

Eibes wants to motor northeast, putting distance between the beast and us. We discuss it in Nemo's. My own concern is our limited diesel supply. I ask that all the mates be notified of the decision, especially Ferdi, our first mate, who's the one really tracking the weather, spending real time analyzing the charts. Simply a matter of respect.

*Listening to our planet,
Getting away from her cyclonic centers,
Where structured matter breaks, recycled by the
whole.
You can't rest for too long,
The sea demands all,
At your service and her whims.
I bow to the power of "nature,"
Too shy still to call it god.
Kujira taught us,
Now,
Acting on the teaching.
Another typhoon menaces.
Information gathered with the help of technology,*

*Nothing in the sea or sky hints the beast is
coming,
Slowly approaching at six knots.
Keep the ship in the northeast quadrant,
I hear a small voice say,
But then again,
Keep as many options open
Before you know for certain, in mind and body,
where to run.
Don't confuse emotion with intuition,
Don't let any single center run you,
But let that center run in the service of the
dream's survival.
Sharks,
Respect, a fear triggered by subconscious
memory,
Respect for the survivor of geological time,
Adapted to survive,
Possibly the most efficient biological machine our
universe has ever produced.*

May 23, 2003

*The gods are dying of solitude,
A god needs energy from man to exist,
It is his fuel.
Out of last resort he might throw a fit —
Can you see me?
Now they've grown clever,
Possessing man to create the most brilliant
sculptures,
Drawings, monuments, prose and dramas, songs,
and melodies,
So they might have some chance at immortality,
As long as man kept thinking of them.
A few lie buried now in dusty cupboards, or
hidden places.
Others departed long ago.
Some wait for the right time, the right place,*

*And others are still in the process of creation,
mutating, changing form.
As long as man talks to them,
Dialogue,
One of my gods is the god ocean,
Oceanic dialogue.
Typhoona, maybe jealous, decides to scare us,
Meanwhile the ocean stays kind, sending
messengers,
A dolphin leaping in the long, dreamy blue swells,
Moving east, showing direction,
Offering us a tuna.
Typhoona, in need of attention, takes hold of a
few minds,
She's got a grip, and doesn't let go.
In this pantheon,
The alliances are everything.
My respect to Typhoona.
I don't wish to play too close to your mighty
powers,
I bow to your presence,
But long ago I gave my soul to the ocean.*

May 24, 2003

*Long swells, the messengers of the storm,
Dressed in deep blue,
A gift,
The sky above, a circle of blue,
Invaded on every side by dark cloud.
A few dolphins leap, a hello and a goodbye,
The sky turns gray, then dark gray,
The swells swell, wind picking up,
Forty knots, maybe more,
The wind reader falls from Eibes's hand,
The mizzen mast bends,
Xtine calls the shot,
Quick, lower, with full strength,
Arms stretched, every muscle contracted,*

*Together we pull.
The foresail flaps,
Lower.
Huge waves crash on the bow,
Knees under water,
Every porthole and hatch closed,
The wind four points before the starboard beam.
Contemplation,
Feeling privileged to witness such a face of the
ocean,
Beauty, strength, power,
We are small, humility and reverence,
Today the sea is my temple,
The dragons are fighting in the sky,
We merely catch the outer puffs of their blows.*

May 25, 2003

*The show goes on, the ship keeps dancing with
the Pacific,
We are merely voyeurs,
The ship hove to,
Waiting for Chan-hom to pass.
Most bodies hove to as well,
Paradise's bunks full of sleepy bodies,
Senses sharpened,
Smells traveling the length of the ship,
Chocolate brownies advertising teatime,
Fresh-baked bread,
Farty smells from an overdose of eggs,
Sweat and damp clothes drying in Synesthesia,
Diesel fumes escaping the air vent,
All trapped inside,
We need to keep the sea outside,
Shake it all back and forth,
Et voilà,
The perfume of the day.*

May 27, 2003

The sea has calmed down, and we're hove to, drifting in more or less the right direction.

We catch a mahi-mahi, lose a few others, and everyone talks about the cold air.

Senses sharpen. Bodies stay more compact now, keeping the heat in — more vocal expression than physical these days.

May 30, 2003

Change of the watches. Some of the best theater I've seen on this ship yet, genuinely surreal, dug straight up from the roots of what we've lived through on this voyage.

*The pancake priest performs his nightly
ceremony,
While the navigator goes for a therapy session on
the bench,
Mission Impossible babes, at the service of the
cause,
While two old-timers in 2030
Rap about the past future.
Open sea, sharpening senses,
Open sea, diving ever deeper in,
To let out,
A cleanup of perceptory channels,
For better reception,
But watch the channel you tune to —
What you are seeking
Is also seeking you.*

June 1, 2003

The wind dropped after forty-eight hours of rain and twenty-five knots out of the south, the ship cruising

between six and eight knots. The first real sail for half the crew, and everyone's finally wearing the new yellow foul-weather gear. The southerly wind brought milder temperatures, eighteen degrees.

The stove's decided not to cooperate, fuming like a hungry dragon, turning cooking into a genuine challenge. Eibes and the "engineering team" are on the case — we never installed the T-connection back in Guam.

The deck's dry, the sun nearly up. Air can circulate through the ship again, and bare feet can finally kiss the deck for a few hours.

Sunday night ran low on energy, partly the rough sea sliding the whole table to port, but partly something else too. Some mythical element feels missing, even with the gods apparently set to play with us quite literally this coming Thursday. The balance leans more female lately, and the conversation's gone correspondingly casual — a little too light for a French-raised man who needs the occasional intellectual fix, more real stimulation in the talk.

All told, the ensemble holds together well, and the changeover of watches has become its own real event, a rite of passage. It genuinely was one, and served its function — a deconstructing, a loose moment free of structure through theater, then a reorganization, ideas connecting anew... until the new watches settle into their fresh combinations, reshuffling the whole individual ego-play. Some of the best theater I've ever seen on this ship.

I finish the tale of the Kon-Tiki, admirably told as a proper epic, exaggerating at just the right moments to keep the thrill alive. Courage, and the necessary Nordic stubbornness, carried that voyage through. I pass it straight to Eibes. Those men were genuinely

crazy, true modern-day heroes in service of adventure and history.

*Spaces,
The physical universe,
Bodies,
Biospace,
Cyberspace,
A new evolution,
With humans as co-authors
Of artificial intelligence.*

For now, the information gathered and transformed into computer data mostly lives on individual machines, not yet networked together, the individual still holding onto private property as a value. The real and only private property, though, is the body-mind itself, and its unique network of networks, fed from the senses, the raw food of the body-mind. Then the chef goes to work preparing a delicious recipe — the art.

June 3, 2003

Thick fog infiltrates the whole ship, canceling the horizon, the stars, our very sense of time. The horizon, that symbol of an illusory straight line, is gone now, and with it any real sense of time. We're inside this cocoon of self-created light, beaming through cloud. We could be anywhere in the universe, floating on a bubble of water. We might be sitting in some small depression in the sea's surface, a hole of timelessness, engineered by the sea's own intelligence, programmed for the best return on her devoted bodies and minds.

A huge pod of dolphins comes through, frolicking in the waves. The wind has died completely by now.

Water condenses on everything, inescapably.

We're in the twilight zone. Our attitude as a group feels ridiculous right now, a whole comedy of would-be

important people with nothing much to actually stand for. A strat session of pure bickering, everyone needing to weigh in on everything, converting the world to their own view through petty details, an arena of gladiators too timid to say the real thing straight out, playing instead with pseudo-words. Hilarious, viewed through the lens of comedy. I'm struggling to film lately. Everything feels emptied of content, words uttered without essence or meaning — a mirror, probably, to my own lens.

*Mystic mist,
Time's in transit,
Nowhere for the eyes to exit,
Mystic mist,
Zone?
Going nowhere,
Being everywhere.
Mmmmmm,
The galley's alive,
Mmmmmm,
Frying drizzle,
The fish singing, can you hear me,
Flipped by the alchemist of the day.
Smells,
Escaping through the porthole,
Meeting the sheltering skies.
Swells invade,
Swells invade,
Slow, invade,
Mind, body, invade,
Ocean dream setting in,
Fluid,
Faces keep on smiling,
To the sky, to the moon, to the stars,
To the planet,
Swells invade,
Swells invade,
A caress from the sun,*

*A cold slap from the wind,
A caress from the sun,
A reptile, laid on the deck, taking in the heat,
While,
Swells invade,
Swells invade,
Body moves,
Body grooves,
Swells sensual,
Keep the body moving,
Swells invade,
Swells invade.
So many prophets,
Chanting revelations,
Illuminations,
Absolutions,
Revolutions,
Ovulations,
Caravans of thought,
Caravans of chemical experience,
Shake, shake it,
Lost in the seas, lost in spaces,
Lost, to be,
Reality is a game communicated in sensory codes,
Resurrections,
Detentions,
Liberations,
Realizations,
Me, here,
Now, now, now.
I speak,
Ahooooooooooooo,
I speak the thousand tongues,
In the screams of salvation,
In the screams of simulation,
In the screams of stimulation,
In the screams of titillation,
All for a little attention,
Ahooooooooooooo,*

Ahoooooooooooo.
The muses delight in my weakness,
Sirens,
Why not die in the sound of temptation,
Rather than resignation.
Nothing lasts forever,
But a kiss.

June 4, 2003

There she blows, ten meters off the stern, loud, huge, elegant, powerful. She dives, one more glimpse, reaching for the horizon.

I spend time on images in the computer, playing cyber artist for a while.

The blues give way to grays, and back again, in a game where the sails catch whatever wind they can find. Two bright, dark ultramarine tuna punctuate our day with real oceanic excitement, and the promise of new sensations for our taste buds.

We catch a fish,
We eat a fish.

June 9, 2003

The foremast broke, right at deck level, taking the whole foresail with it, shrouds, standing rigging, all of it. Not without real fright — the mast hung dangerously off the side of the hull under heavy swells, and we needed to get it clear of the ship. It had snapped the bobstay pipe but was still held by the chain connected to the hull; one more shroud held over the bow. We cut the shrouds at deck level with the grinder. I go into the water to cut the last connecting shroud with an axe saw. The swells pound. A nightmare. The metal finally gives, and the mast sinks, still connected to the samson post by the halyard line. All the force is on that line

now. Our only real chance to salvage anything is to let it hang off the stern entirely. Hands rush the rope aft, while someone else rigs safety lines on the port side. The impact has taken the whole railing with it, right up to the main shrouds. Eibes and Sebastien try to free the rope stuck on the samson post so it can hang clear off the stern. The line shaves through fast. Now it snags on the main engine exhaust. A few times I'm ready to cut it myself. Two of us stand there, knives in hand. But the strain is simply too great, and the line shaves through on its own, taking the whole mast down into the depths.

A great samurai god hangs overhead in the sky, waiting for our passage, swinging his sword to decapitate the Heraclitus's bow.

Ironically, our biggest trigger's been removed for us. We came through unscathed, really, as though nothing happened — except a big void left on the bow now. The ship looks smaller somehow, like a peacock that's furled its tail back in. I keep going up to the bow, looking at the empty space, wondering, turning it over in my mind.

A dozen "what if" scenarios flash through my head — the mast piercing the hull, all of us drifting in the life raft, carried by the current into the no-man's-land of the great North Pacific.

Other things start surfacing too. Fear, and denial along with it. We need to keep clear heads, weigh all our real options. First rule: don't fall into the trap of playing the invincible, unbreakable hero who carries on no matter what. There's real help not far off — we're three days from Japan. We won't get a new mast and sail in time to still make this crossing, but we could refuel there, take on fresh food, absorb the shock, buy a coffee kettle, drink tea in some old teahouse, and be on our way again.

The ship's crippled, her steerability reduced. The bow's lighter now, and we can't hold a course on the beam. Once the wind's ahead of us, we need the engine to bring it back behind us before we can sail again.

Strat runs hot, simply because there's this pull toward being for or against Japan. It seems we need that dualistic frame just to function at all, still unable to look at the situation with impartial eyes. I keep my attention on that — making sure it isn't whim, or personal desire, or fear driving my read of the situation. What if — no taboo on any thought, right now.

We're hove to, moving north at three knots.

June 9, 2003 (continued)

More meetings, more conflicting viewpoints, all of it eventually landing on a decision to keep going.

Gaie and Lazer are remarkable in their support, and the crew stands united behind this adventure.

I couldn't sleep, and at three this morning I changed the tack to keep us on track, and finally settled everyone on the simple fact that we can — we can.

*All hands on deck,
Bodies moving,
A samurai in the sky,
Hovering over the Kuroshio current,
Deciding, with his sword, to decapitate our bow,
Cutting clean through our foremast and sail.
Too clean a cut to be anything else
But the gods playing with our fate.
No one got hurt,
The shock woke everybody up,
We could have lost it all,
The mast piercing straight through the hull of the
Heraclitus.*

*The hull is untouched, as strong as ever.
The crew unites, committed to keep going.
The weather teases long enough to allow careful
weighing of thought,
Japan lures,
We decide not to bite.
The Pacific tests us a few more times,
Then lets us go,
Our biggest trigger removed,
We pass, humanly unscratched, through the
invisible gate,
Our good ship in great shape.
Onward, on our journey of five thousand miles,
Continuing our parallel odyssey.*

The epic loss of the mast is behind us now, flushed out with dances, bodies moving, electric.

Dall's porpoise sighted off the stern; Eddie sees two sharks, the spirit of his grandfather reincarnated, bringing him messages. A seal shows up for a playful afternoon, cheering the whole crew with laughter — everyone laughing and laughing.

He knows he's got an audience. A vivid moment for most of us, eye to eye with a barking sea lion four hundred miles from any land mass, taking hot showers on the generator exhaust, playing with the anchors on the bow, splashing. Two huge eyes, staring. As the deck empties, Xtine and Orla keep up a game of hide-and-seek with him around the deck for over an hour, until he finally disappears once everyone's gone below.

Sunday speeches, on the theme of the spirited world tonight.

*Twenty sperm whales' blows echo around the hull
of the ship,
Fog, a cocoon around us,
Beyond time,
Floating in a cloud,*

*Clouds,
Dream clouds,
Vision clouds,
Storing water in the sky,
Weather's fortune teller,
Nimbostratus brings rain,
Cirrus, beware,
Cirrostratus, rain to come,
Alto cumulus, sunny breaks,
Cumulonimbus, thunder,
Stratus for a drizzle,
Stratocumulus, dry but dull,
Cumulus, a sunny spell,
Cirro cumulus, undecided,
Altostratus, mutating,
Milky, fluffy, foggy, ripply, smoky, hazy, misty,
Frothy Pacific,
Steered by the motion of a thousand dolphins,
The right whale dolphin, finless,
White-sided dolphins, frantic,
Laughter, giggles,
The crew in rapture,
Interspecies communication of emotion,
New spaces,
The ship recharges,
And we feed on radiance.
A seal,
An open-sea dream,
A new totem for Xtine,
Laughter, comic relief,
Roars and flips and dances.
A seal visits, and performs.
The show, a success,
Full house,
Fourteen people on deck,
Moving around,
A game of seek and hide,
The bite-the-anchor scene,
Finally a flipper dance we can properly delight in,*

CROSSING THE NORTH PACIFIC

*After clapping and a few encores,
Sustaining the humans' attention for a whole
hour.*

Chapter Two

Waiting for Wind

Open North Pacific, waiting for wind

June 19, 2003

The wind finally comes, riding in off a low pressure system south of us. We've been hove to for days now, watching a steady parade of cetaceans and seals pass by.

Light comments and observations tonight — all is well on the group-dynamics front.

June 21, 2003

*Indigo seas in ocean blues,
Turning gray, turning white,
Shading blues,
Motion, always motion,
Gods pulling out their brushes,
Painting with light through the eyes of man,
We are the canvas
That paints the sea.
Ocean reveals himself to himself.
Bioluminescence,
Galaxies upon galaxies,
Sea reflects sky, sky reflects sea,
Dolphins dancing cosmic on the bow waves,
Mind dancing the waves of timelessness.*

Summer Solstice Party

Watching, in a broken car mirror, the slow progress of "Native America" braiding the hair of some spacey old-world German girl. Tumbi peeks in wearing his "art

critic" yellow hat. Meanwhile rum intoxication finds its opportunity to enter the scene.

Hands sew a theater costume, the needle working from the intent of a sailor-turned-actress. Summertime for summer solstice, a space lounge in the happy '40s. The bell rings, the watches change. Nicole holds power with the only can opener still functioning in her Swiss army knife — two more months and hundreds of cans still to go — though Xtine stands by as backup, a secret army knife hidden in her bunk.

Gypsy Reka reads tarot cards, "from Broome, Australia, gypsy liar" — it's not cool to be a gypsy and not lie, she warns Carol while reading her fortune. Ferdi's muscles are all out on display, sending not-so-subliminal messages. Lavender invades the sense of smell. Heather sends Kira, Orla, and me into bliss with expert face massages, fingers opening, loosening, flashes of red circles worked by pressure and Heather's intention, while Miles blows the horn post-mortem through the boombox.

A kretek cigarette appears, saved since Indonesia, filling lungs and minds with clove essence and triggered memory. Xtine teaches the art of vodka-drinking, Russian style — take a breath, let it all out, drink, let more breath out, refresh with a sip of lemony juice. Then she concocts, feelgood shaman that she is, a brew of chili, nutmeg, coffee or tea, ginger, kava kava, sugar, vitamins, and everyone shows up for more.

Ferdi kneads bread, full makeup on, red wig and all. The makeup station stays busy — nails painted, eyes lashed. Reka reads Sebastien's palm. A dream cocktail. The rum bottle, further emptied of its life at sea, sends a message off the sunset deck — the first visible sun in days.

The low-pressure front is on us, 995 millibars, but the wind's died, even the lows tamed, too tamed. The sun

brings on a photo frenzy, all the high-tech toys out on deck, everyone posing, then taking turns on the space hammock, passing around Orla's chorizo pizza and cheese toast. Stinj and Eibes, the hot-dog chefs, sport spiky hair courtesy of hair-fairy Nicole, with special buns from bun-master Ferdi, everyone retrieving warmth from the cold bites of the deck, waiting for wind, real wind, in the right direction.

June 22, 2003

Sunday to Sunday, on the North Pacific's no-man's ocean.

*Sunday to Sunday,
Waiting for the wind,
Teased, pleased, teased,
Waiting for the wind,
Fog, and fog, and fog,
Wishcakes,
Night Q-beam exploration,
Revealing creatures from the underworld,
Swirling jellyfish wagons,
Fluorescent eyes,
Hunted by seals and dolphins.
Meanwhile sea people play with essences,
Call the shot and see what we can dig out,
Transavantgarde, Homer's odyssey, summer
solstice celebration,
Main halyard block breaks,
Acrobatics atop the mast,
Adrenaline pumped in,
A trigger removed,
Visualizing every what-if...
Waiting for the wind,
Contemplations,
Meditations,
Incense to warm Nemo's loneliness,
A memory highway, full speed into the past,*

*Brought back to the present.
The jewels of moments,
Chronoramas,
Under the waterline,
In the safety of army blankets,
Away from the bite of the weather,
A seasonal chronorama of childhood berries,
First the blueberries, then raspberries, then
blackberries,
And late summer, the delicate wild strawberries,
closing the rama until next spring.
A circle of life, a circle of sensory navigation,
Still waiting for the wind.
Patience, a game learned out in the field,
Too much patience makes a fool of you.
Waiting for the wind.*

June 23, 2003

Waiting for the right wind. The sea's picked up. We're drifting southeast.

*The captain can't take it anymore,
Pacing frantically up and down the ship,
Electrified by his own chemistry.
"We need to get out of here."
Time is taking its toll.
"It's just a matter of time."
A reality check on yourself,
The sea and the ship mirror it all,
Sunday speeches spot on.*

The engine comes on, Eibes on a recruiting mission to motor, like a priest spreading the gospel and finding followers. Still thirty-seven hundred miles to go, and this already our longest voyage yet — fifty days at sea. A new sound turns suspicious; careful inspection reveals a small crack in the mast. Other minds stay busy with their own depressions, their own gulag stories.

Yes, the northeast is gray, constantly gray, the colors all deserted, gray taking over moods, emotions, minds alike. Man still finds his way to enjoy the gray, finding ecstatic bliss in gloom and sad songs, talking up the pain of the world, letting its whole weight rest on his shoulders, taking on the role of a Greek Atlas — "we need to get out of here" — while a pot of soup quietly boils on the stove.

Be here, right now, if you can, at the mercy of the elements. Remember to be an actor, not a reactor. Act the gray; don't react to the gray. The voyage keeps going.

June 24, 2003

*You cannot learn less,
Says Bucky in my ear,
A mantra for living.
The French want to know what the glue is,
The glue is synergy.
Ship of fools,
Untamed by the establishment,
Running wild
In Pacific spaces,
Beyond compare,
Between times.
Who is steering?
Is there any who?
The black ship that got away,
Beware not to go too far,
Beyond the lands of never-back.
With space,
From sea people to space people,
The Heraclitus hosts,
At your own risk,
A soul that seeks the new,
A soul that seeks.
You will never be able to rest,*

*Evolution is evolution.
The sun is new every day,
Heraclitus.
Sea people dream,
Dream sea people,
People dream sea,
Sea dream people,
Dream people sea,
People sea dream,
We dream the sea,
The sea dreams us,
Mirror of our seas,
The unfathomable depth of our own inner ocean,
We dream our sea.
Dive,
Weightlessness,
The illusion of no gravity,
The sensation of no gravity,
No up or down,
With —
I am water,
Water is me.
Psychedelic realm,
Colors and patterns,
Fluid,
Fluid mentality,
Become the element,
Caresses,
Water's caress,
Skin in rapture,
Being one,
Being.*

June 25, 2003

Xtine and Eibes rig a jib, and the bow finally performs — the ship holds her course, we're heading in the right direction at last, enough pressure on the bow to make a real difference.

*To do, to do, to do,
To be, to be, to be,
To do, to be, to do,
Dobe-bedo.
Silence —
Can you ever meet silence?
Sensual universe.
If I could drive straight up,
In under an hour,
I would see our home,
A planet we should call the blue pearl of our
universe.
Then, driving back,
I could tell everyone to go see for themselves,
My words aren't worth a thing next to the
experience.
A few men have driven up,
But not enough.
Once you've seen beauty,
You will never forget,
Once you know how to love,
You will never love the same way again.
I must confess,
I am a happy man.*

Tea for two — water songs caress the hull. The ship delights. Baggywrinkle doctor called up top for some high work. My mind curses the swells; I stay grumpy the rest of the day. Birds laugh at our fate through the mist, cold slaps from the north, a blow bringing everyone up on deck, diverting the mind from charts and strategic possibility. A cake, baked by the captain as an offering to the gods, and our own intentions written on strips of paper — to call in the right winds, and whatever else we'll never know.

*The wind plays it well,
Desire,
Titillation,
Despair,*

*Jealousy,
Spite,
Hate,
Loneliness.
I found myself in rapture,
In union with the sea,
Since I can only let go,
I might as well do so,
There's no need to cling to what isn't there.
You can never hit a clown in public,
Though his tongue spits arsenic,
A clown can kill,
And everyone will still laugh at the body.
Watch out for the wrong clowns,
They're the most dangerous creatures in town.
Learn how to tell the story.
What's the point of telling
If nobody's listening?
Learn to listen to yourself.
A barracuda crown
In the hair of the blue gaze,
Looting attention,
By ensemble, dance, kinetic beauty,
Lures the body into the dance,
The mind lets go,
The man becomes other,
One in one among one.
Exposed —
You can't hide from a dolphin,
Sonar pierces,
Sonar beeps,
Sonar transforms,
Alter the chemicals,
Reprogram,
Fakeness hurts,
If you're unable to strip the mask.
Dolphins,
Can you tell me where I am?
Migration —*

*We are migrating toward spaces.
The treasure is now,
Every point along the journey,
Every breath,
Every thought,
Every emotion,
Every cup of tea I drink,
Every word I speak,
Every song I hear,
Every sea I see,
Every memory I can summon,
Every cloud I meet,
Every atom I steer,
Every kiss I steal,
Every kiss I receive,
Every time,
Every space,
Every everything,
So the journey becomes inexhaustible,
Timeless, time-bound, and eternal, all in the same
breath.*

Body heat — easier to keep warm with two. How easy
would it be if everybody kept everybody warm.

*You can always look at the wrong side of life if
you want to.
There is enough of everything to feed all of us,
At all times,
All the time,
Wherever you want it to go.
The question is simply defining it.*

Eibes and Xtine rig a jib. Magic. The ship holds position
now, heading the right way, and we can steer, tack,
sail. I dream of the mizzen becoming the foresail. The
sailor's spirit, teaching.

A seal visits in the middle of the night, a drizzle
dancing in the Q-beam's light.

*Molding,
Find the donkey,
Ride the donkey,
And let the donkey go.*

Eibes, cheerleader — the voice that keeps everyone going. Wind metaphors, a poet caught mid-movement. Incarnations, for liberation.

We've been on hold for days now, the wind playing with us, a game of tease — a few miles gained in the right direction, then taken right back. Still four hundred miles off Japan, the current running back and forth like a mid-ocean tide, holding us in place. The idleness takes its toll, and we start weighing the possibility of running the engine — diesel calculations, refueling possibilities. Eibes bakes a cake to call the winds, and each of us writes our wishes on a strip of paper, the whole lot given to the ocean.

*What if
There were no gods but the gods I create,
They are still gods.
There are no other gods but my gods.
There are no gods if I don't believe in any.
Light sparkles infinite mystery,
Your scent intoxicates my memory,
Flashes of splashes in the warm open sea,
Sensual skin, a delightful rhapsody,
Caresses, desire, the sun's ecstasy,
Lips and kisses in melody,
The undulation of kinetic harmony,
All dreaming of moon-shaped insanity,
My love overflowing toward your infinity.
My goddess, to me,
You are as
I see you,
For I can only see
What I can see,
And what I choose to see*

Is up to me.

June 26, 2003

Flat calm, albatrosses resting on the surface, the sea a mirror, though we're technically in the "roaring" forties. Long swells arrive from far off, giving no hint of any weather to come. The sail flaps, but the crew stays jovial, happy, silly conversation running through it. Crowded time around the galley, like a busy street café, everyone grabbing coffee before heading to work. Watches changing — a bowl of warm oats, a stainless mug of fuming coffee, everyone packed into three layers of clothes, watching the birds.

Every day brings its own spectacle. Yesterday a two-meter sunfish rose to the surface, said hello, and dove back down. This morning the birds steal the show, though the clouds have put on their best hues for us to admire.

*Ready on the snorter,
Ready,
Ready on the sheets,
Ready,
Ready on the capstan,
Ready,
Haul away,
Hauling away,
Hands pulling ropes,
Feet going round the singing capstan,
Muscles contracted,
Together, pushing on.
Cease,
Cease.
A line caught needs attention,
Gets attention.
Haul away,
Hauling away,
Batten by batten,*

*The sail unfurls,
Gliding along the aluminum mast,
The parrels squeak,
The sail puffs,
The block moans a little,
Cease.
The sail is up,
The wind picks up,
The bow slices through,
The hull, caressed by the sea,
Delight,
Sending ecstatic songs through the hull,
To serenade the dream-catchers still asleep in
Bio,
A fishing line trolled off the stern wake,
Give me a mark,
Mark,
Keeping a good course,
The helmsman steers with the wind four points
behind,
Deck watch, every sense alive,
Keeping the wind sharp in attention,
Hourly checks for triggers,
Watching out for obstacles, and spectacles,
Fins and blows,
Any clue in the clouds,
Any message in the sky,
If you want to know where you are,
Simply look up.
The horizon plays with the eyes.
What's our speed?
Six knots,
Going east.
I wish, I wish, I wish,
Projecting,
The sea is glass,
The wind too weak even to name a direction,
The sail flaps,
Though we're in the roaring forties,*

*We've lived in the doldrums for two weeks,
Testing our patience now and again,
Trying to find its limits.
Still waiting for the wind.*

With Xtine we watch images of people from our past, reliving memories, feasting on the past, brought back into the present moment like gifts unwrapped, the old seen with new eyes. Some kind of evolution being realized, not quite sure what, who, why, how to blame or worship, only aware of change moving in a definite direction.

*Expert hands on my knotted back,
Heather unlocks the strain,
Another sea-people art,
Loosening accumulated tension and pulled
muscle,
A holistic natural healer on the North Pacific,
An albatross glides past the bow.*

The wind finally picks up, letting us motor in idle while steering east, northeast, right when the tension most needed releasing. Eibes is having a hard time; we haven't really moved in four days, waiting. The wind keeps teasing us, low-pressure fronts circling all around, weak, never quite hitting or strengthening enough for us to sail. We drift west more often than not, days' runs of a ridiculous six or seven miles. Still four hundred fifty miles from Japan.

The pressure of waiting has been building, everyone tested by it. The ensemble stays remarkably strong regardless, never giving up, keeping the spirit happy and pleasant.

I can't help thinking of old sailors, back before engines existed, relying only on wind and current, waiting months to enter port, waiting for wind. No wonder so many songs, superstitions, poems, and carvings were born at sea. Our own ensemble creates too — Reka and

Kira singing, Christine writing, Orla working on her coral reef book. I write poetry, a new way to document our odyssey, and work with images.

June 29, 2003

*She is a Chinese junk in ferrocement,
Three-masted,
A night-black hull,
And a red deck.
Eighty-five feet of her,
Dancing with the sea for twenty-eight years,
An old lady with memories enough,
Dramas, sweat, tears, laughter,
Riding moods,
Creating her own legend,
Always seeking,
In a race against time,
To witness with her own eyes the extinctions on
planet ocean.
Two thousand miles up the Amazon,
Riding dreams and visions,
From Indian shamans, feeding her powers beyond
reason,
Around the world, tasting the vanishing cultures
of humanity,
Releasing dolphins back to the freedom of open
ocean,
Circumnavigating South America,
Reaching the continent of Antarctica,
Sinking in Puerto Rico,
Rebirth, and retirement in Belize,
Brought back to life to fulfill her destiny,
Coral reefs around the world,
Evolving humans,
Dreaming, and giving birth to sea people,
She meets challenges and faces them,*

*Creates heroes, scientists, actors, poets, captains,
seamen, dreamers, seekers, synergists, artists,
talents, sea people,
Without ever losing a human life,
For above all she cherishes humanity,
Never cheats, never lies,
Her devotees are rewarded with wealth,
The wealth of unrepeatable experience,
Unique,
Still humble,
For without the spirit of freedom she incarnates,
She would die.
Dolphins, whales, seals, fish all play with her,
And she watches with her two bright eyes.
She makes you wonder,
Brings you to rapture,
Tests your limits,
Teaches you to be human,
Tirelessly teaching, never giving up.
She brings mystery, magic, reality to those
Who can stand her honesty.
She is beyond compare,
She lets men dream, she helps men fulfill their
dreams,
Guiding,
She is the black ship that got away,
She is the black ship unafraid of getting caught,
For she knows that one day she'll get away again,
Almost her curse,
Condemned to roam the seas,
She chooses her own home,
A flagship to the oceans,
A flagship to the coral reefs,
A flagship to the quest for the origins, past,
present, and future, of human cultures,
A flagship to sea people,
Always creating,
Her name is Heraclitus.
Coral Reefs*

*Builders of underwater cathedrals,
Coral reef temples,
Sacred space,
I salute you.
You, the little polyps and zooxanthellae,
The master architects,
Building over and over your predecessors,
For millions of years,
Never losing focus.
The kingdom of the reef has fallen four times,
Toward extinction, in its two-billion-year history,
But always came back,
With more vitality, more diversity, more shapes
and forms,
More vibrance than ever before,
Radiance,
One look at you and one is transformed,
Choked by beauty, an aesthetic arrest,
Gardens of sculpture,
Deep valleys encrusted with a thousand colored
stars and coral flowers,
Amethyst purple, turquoise blue, ruby red,
sapphire yellow,
In perfect aesthetic harmony,
Musical, colored symphonies,
Masterpieces upon masterpieces,
An infinite treasure chest of wonder.
Entering these oceanic cities,
With rush hours, and regular feeding times,
The ones that munch all the time,
The night feeders, the cleaners, the "sea
cucumber" vacuum crews,
Like shoe-shiners or hairdressers, cleaner
wrasses take one customer after the next,
Often entering the mouths of sharp teeth that
could devour them,
Two octopuses dance, transforming before your
eyes in texture, form, and color,*

*A herd of grazing parrotfish moves past, the
sound of crunching,
The cementing algae,
Holding the limestone together,
Sponge-covered walls and crevasses, an interior
decoration,
The citizens of the coral reef city,
Often exuberant,
Multicolored, multi-designed, paraded, flashing
their costumes to the world,
The wildest fashion show on earth,
One would think one had landed in paradise,
A world of perfect harmony.
But life is fierce on the reef,
Competitive, ruthless,
Each little polyp's tentacles armed with batteries
of stinging cells,
All carnivores, designed to seize their prey,
Feeding on everything that passes over them,
Some wage chemical warfare to kill and drive off
invaders,
Some use poison to paralyze prey before
devouring it,
The scorpionfish relies on camouflage,
Motionless, most of the time,
Then, suddenly, at the speed of light, strikes,
Only to resume his posture as though nothing
happened,
Mass invasions threaten every one,
When armies of the coral's enemy number one,
Acanthaster planci, the crown-of-thorns, march
on,
Night and day sucking the living flesh of coral
colonies,
Leaving fields of dead skeleton.
Plagues of disease decimate whole species,
Black-band disease, viruses,
Infections,
Thermal change, coral bleaching, often dying,*

*The reef relies on an eternal dance of life and death,
As soon as it's created, forces try to destroy it,
Typhoons ripping reefs apart,
Then the little polyps and zooxanthellae
Come in to rebuild.
And soon the reef takes shape again,
An endless circle, one that worked until...
The worst of them all decided to tamper with the
biological rhythm,
The cosmic tempo,
Destroying faster than any typhoon, crown-of-thorns, or plague combined,
Chemical waste, dynamite, poisons like cyanide,
Keeping a few reef fish in a tank for private entertainment,
Scooping up everything alive for miles and miles,
A genocide of life,
None the less, the little polyps and zooxanthellae
Keep on building,
Repairing,
Erecting their cathedrals, temples, and monuments,
Never giving up.
In that spirit,
They will probably outlast man,
Building and rebuilding long after the virus that
created the virus that exterminated them.*

I worship the sun, giving my skin in offering to the biosphere, my body receiving the heat, warming the core of my cells. I worship the sun, sensual, a conscious union, simple, recharging. I am because of the sun. As the sun burns, I feed, energy — sun, water, atmosphere, the basics of life, obvious, simple, delightful. Aware. Sunfish join the scene; birds are everywhere. An albatross rests on the surface, watching the black ship and her creatures. Why does this big bird never fly? After the sensational sun, he settles along a ring of clouds, dark, thick, distant. The

sky becomes the roof of our temple; we've entered a Pacific sea temple. Colors, hues, water rippling like silk sheets. I worship the sun with my body's own sacred spaces.

A small competition breaks out to claim exclusivity over totems, Kira feeling threatened by Nicole in dream-space, fire words so soft yet cutting like blades. But there isn't really any competition. The spirits are everywhere, in everyone. Like seeds, they grow if you feed them — energy of thought, conscious magic invoked within oneself, not for power over others, but power over oneself, to create. At the service of your totem. You are at the service of your gods, not the gods at your service.

Whales! Always a rush of bodies racing through the hatches, moving with lightning speed, eyes scouting the sea for the sight of a blow. And when the whale draws near, the air saturates with her breath, her oceanic breath, time arrests itself, wonder and silence, then laughter.

*Twenty sperm whale blows echo on the hull of the ship,
Thousands of dolphins leaping, dancing the sea,
Right whale dolphins, finless, ride the bow wave,
Bioluminescent trails of tail and motion,
Careless, caressing bodies making love,
But above all,
Here they come,
Tall, towering dorsal fins, erect toward the stars,
Slicing through the wave,
The orca commands respect.
The fastest, fiercest, smartest creature of all,
Feared around the oceans,
The orca rules the seas.
Nothing compares to the bearing of a male orca,
Surfacing at the head of his pod, proud,
With the arrogance of invincibility,*

*Undisputed.
Behind him, more fins, more blows, more
breaches,
Revealing the elegance and unity of the whole
pod,
They move on.
Long after, their spirit remains,
In the legends of our odyssey,
The orca enters our dreams,
Patience, till our next meeting,
The orca have come.*

We're as close to physical space right now as we're likely to get. Birds by the hundred have entered what feels like a sacred place, a Mount Analogue of some kind.

The sun comes out this morning, revealing everyone. Laundry lines strung all around, a mad frenzy to clean and dry clothes — get it while you can, the first sunny days in weeks. I gorge myself on sun, taking my clothes off, stretching my body. I love the sun; I love tropical weather. It caresses my skin, a delight. I don't want to move, and one by one, everybody ends up spending the day on deck.

The sea is flat, clouds surrounding us, the sky crystal blue between them. With Eibes I dive on the rudder, a real test this time, both of us in wetsuits. The water is cold, genuinely cold; we look like penguins in our hoods, stiff with it. The rudder's bolts have come loose, so out come the wrenches, and at the same moment we find fishing line caught on the prop — another huge trigger removed, a great call by Eibes to make this dive happen. A quick hull inspection, thick with marine growth, and we surface — thirty minutes in freezing water. Good news, all told.

To be underwater again is magic, filled once more with that space-dream feeling, real physical contact with the sea, a genuine adventure.

Whales blowing, sunfish sightings, birds and more birds. An albatross decides to keep station three meters off for over three hours, watching us as we watch him.

Tonight, cold as it is, we decide to eat on deck under the stars — everyone padded head to toe, our first dinner on deck since Pagan, more than a month and a half ago now. Already two months at sea, with a minimum of two more likely ahead, possibly more.

After dinner, whales with loud blows come to visit again. The birds, laughing, keep circling and entertaining the deck watch all through the night. Carol gets bumped on the backside, Xtine has an encounter with her foot, another docile visitor lands right on someone's hand. Companions of the night only, they vanish through the day, and until today we never really knew where or what they got up to — simply resting on the tops of waves, sleeping through daylight. The singing starts again as night falls.

*How far do we have to go to realize?
Should we send everyone to sea,
Like the Thai send their young to monasteries?
Fewer and fewer men live with the sea,
The age of clippers, traders, sailors,
An art of the past now, with few survivors,
A culture on the brink of extinction,
Because it's grown hard, nowadays, to survive by
it,
Trading can't compete anymore with the big
dragons.
What to do?
The sea reveals it all,
Good and bad,
Until you realize good and bad don't really exist.
We choose.*

Orcas again, more of them, closer, bigger. The sky's gray, the air moist, nearly raining, cold — but the warm

blood of the orcas warms us all. Not a soul stays untouched, unmoved by the kings of the sea. Why should anyone doubt they'd evolve those giant dorsal fins, in an age-long knowledge that they sit at the very top of the ocean, the master predator, fearless, feared, keeping up their reputation with the occasional killing of a whale or dolphin.

They carry pride, and the ultimate arrogance, and we love them for it. Girls scream at the sight of those tall, proud fins, like giant blades piercing the sky. The men watch quieter, knowing themselves surpassed, able only to bow to the orcas' power.

Here they surface, a few meters off the ship, a fin rising and rising and rising, then a blow, a black-and-white head lifting clear of the water before moving on. Thirty orcas in what looks like a subpod, two males each leading a group of females and young. Tails slap the water, a head bobs up and down, a breach — the grand finale of one of the ocean's grand spectacles. Then they're gone, swallowed by the rising fog.

July 1, 2003

The orcas are sighted again early this morning, the same pod, identified by the leader's distinctive dorsal fin. They don't come close to the ship this time, circling half a mile off instead.

My body's down, unable to stay warm. Seven years now living in the tropics, with only brief excursions to London and France, and I've never had to manage cold for any real stretch of time. It takes conscious effort now, attention in every cell, just to hold heat.

A long strat drags on, a review of every system — engineering, food, navigation. A conversation starved of anything else, like a bone thrown into a pack of

hungry dogs; the particular bone hardly matters, so long as one gets thrown.

*Would you want to live in a world without color?
The revolution the reefs created in the world
Is not yet understood.
The impact of the fluidity of color, design, shape,
form
On art extends beyond reason.
Millions of people attempt to reproduce, in
miniature,
The world of the reef, via aquarium,
A fish in a bowl.
From a fish in a bowl probably came biospheres,
With the lesson that life goes on,
Finds a way,
With or without man.
And man should think of himself as staying on the
life train,
We are its last wagons,
We will not be the last forever,
But we might not stay attached to the train,
If we keep hammering, molesting, abusing,
exterminating the other wagons,
The mechanics will find a way to stop us,
Sending armies against our own wagon, our own
body,
Viruses, plagues, geological disaster,
Or simply not having to create any, since we're
already doing it ourselves.
The reef becomes a magnifying glass,
Held up to the collective stupidity of a species,
Taking over blindly.
And yet the individual members of that species
evolve,
Create new alliances,
Create new dreams.
The dream of seeing an end to the destruction of
the world's reefs,
A necessary dream,*

*The more who share the dream,
The more real it becomes,
Infecting the mind of man like a virus,
By contact.
It's fine to want to protect what you love,
But you have to love it first.
So love the reef,
Because the reef is the most beautiful place on
our planet.
Go there,
Don't rely on a film, or a picture,
But experience it,
Floating, weightless,
Leaving the laws of gravity behind,
And fill your mind with your senses,
All of them.
Once you've seen coral alive,
You won't want to display a skeleton,
However beautiful it might be.
Surround yourself with life,
Even life in a photograph.
Life is what it's all about,
Life feeds on life.
Down, going down, further down, further,
High, high, higher, higher,
By going down to the sea,
The sea that can never run dry,
A heart assured of plenty,
Always enough for one more cry.
The great ride of the open sea
Is a ride through open memory,
Deep, going deep and deeper,
The sea refuses no river.
A cosmic emergency,
The biosphere under attack,
By the minds and hands of a single species,
That built itself an untamable monster.*

July 2, 2003

Xtine, with Kira's help, produces a sail out of old tarp. Within six hours of steady machine-sewing, the sail flies with the wind, hands tight on the ropes, playing, back to the beginning — not giving up, trimming, adjusting the lines. But the wind refuses to fully cooperate, at least for today.

July 4, 2003

Yesterday, force eight, the swells picked up, wrong wind, right in the middle of a low, the barometer dropping. The top of the mainsail shredded. I'm as low as I get, nailed to my bunk, feverish. The gale slowly shifts, bringing us east by midnight.

Seven a.m., the engine goes off — we're sailing. Five knots, heading east. Our eyes brighten, the right wind at last, the ship truly sailing east. Hope shows its face plainly, the mood lightens, smiles at the meeting.

Every bit of attention goes to the steering as the sun pierces through to say hello. Condensation, and a huge wave over the port side, flooding Nemo's. Water collects on the ceiling, dripping onto some of the books — a small salvage operation. The stove becomes the only place anything can properly dry. The sailing takes the edge off, though there's an all-time low around six that morning during a jibe.

*What is it, the color of an angel?
I ask because I'm scared of a silence that never
comes.
Tears,
Staying behind the doors of my eyes,
Not wanting to see the day,
They know that stepping out,
They will die.
Cry, sky, cry,*

*Wash with your sweet tears
The salt of my oceanic skin.
Fire —
Too close, you burn,
Too far, you die.
Artificial intelligence,
The utopia of man's intellect,
A mind that could be kept "alive" forever and
ever,
The elixir of immortality.
Competing with life,
Dying without life,
Racing to create robots,
The gatherer of information,
The engineer,
The bodies that perform the motions,
Harvesting the raw product,
Playing with biomechanics,
Keeping a few brains in plasma,
Connected to the machines,
At the service of the machines.
But as long as there is a tree, a fish, and a man to
feel,
To cry and laugh,
To create beauty with his mind,
Art will survive, for art is immortality.*

July 5, 2003

The sky fills with albatross, circling the ship, paying close attention too to our lures trolling behind us. The show turns transcendent, right up until an albatross strikes a lure and gets it caught on its beak. Then a moment turns both sad and beautiful at once — the caught bird drowns, towed behind the ship, dying, while albatrosses from far off all flock in, trying to help. We pull the line in, but too late. A morbid fascination with death sets in, people wanting to feel sad, to feel

concerned. I throw it back to the sea — it will probably feed a seal, or a shark.

We're sailing, five knots, in the right direction. We finally have a real sign that we can do this. Since the mast came down, we haven't sailed any substantial stretch, still saying out loud it's possible, but only in theory until now. The ship glides on the swells, calculators come out — what if the wind held like this? One month, at minimum, unlikely but not impossible. For the first time, we feel we're not stuck anymore, doomed to circle round and round.

At the same time, a tension keeps building. Reka, understandably, wants to open a communication line with Priska. If we open channels with two more months minimum ahead of us, we change the whole dynamic of the voyage — not necessarily a bad thing, but a definite, irreversible shift in its nature.

Four p.m. — "bread, snack, snacky snacky," Eddie's voice reaching all the way to the command room. Eibes, Ferdi, Orla, Reka, and I all crowd computers, while Stan, avoiding the fumes of contact cement in Synesthesia, wipes page after page with a Kmart sock worn like a glove, working through books glued together by Pacific mist. Carol and Heather join in. Xtine stays on deck with Linda finishing the ripped sail, fingers red, bitten by the cold.

How long ago did we last dive a coral reef? It feels like forever, though it's only been a few months since the Heraclitus sat anchored in tropical lagoons, diving her reefs, monitoring their health. We're in the middle of the Pacific now, away from "the world," connected only by BBC broadcasts over single-sideband radio. What reaches us is war, death here and there, never a word about our own planet, our home — like this week, five tons of cyanide destroying millions of coral colonies for the benefit of a handful of aquarium owners, so they

can watch fish die at home. The purse-seine industry hauling in tons of bycatch, dolphins and turtles and sharks among them, wiping out one stock of fish after another. Nuclear waste now being dumped in the Pacific. A new resort, no adequate wastewater system, killing millions of fish and corals, then going bankrupt because its guests have nothing left to see.

We've witnessed more than enough to speak on the reef's behalf, since it can't speak our language — carriers of memes that need to travel from mind to mind. We've heard and seen bombs exploding on pristine reef, killing everything, leaving rubble deserts. Sharks rotting on beaches, intact but for their fins, shipped off to China. The sea, once thought inexhaustible, shows real weakness now, catches growing smaller, the fish themselves smaller, fewer places left to hide from the big dragon ships and their high-tech tools. We've stepped aboard fishing vessels equipped with the latest technology — radar tracking birds feeding on the surface, helicopters scouting, mother ships loading tons for the factories.

Enough scenes to realize it isn't a bad dream, but a bad reality creeping steadily over the world.

I'm mad, genuinely mad, and still a happy man, because it isn't my own sadness that will heal the reefs — it's the energy that keeps the voyage going, the Heraclitus's voyage, mankind's voyage, the biosphere's voyage, transcending good and bad both. Only the lovers will survive; everything else is dead already. To keep reefs alive, we need to love them. Like missionaries, we've come to spread the gospel of the ocean. The ocean is sick, genuinely sick, but alive, giving because she doesn't know how to do anything else. Man no longer receives — he takes, grabs, pillages, rapes. He isn't blindfolded anymore, and still...

Same words, different voices. What you're telling us is nothing new, I hear the voices bickering already. The truth is always new, however old it is.

*A peach and a lover,
Blossom
Of
Sinuation,
At
Risk,
In
Saturation,
To
Memory,
But
Only
If
The peach
Is fresh
From
The
Tree.
Stare,
Smiles,
From man to the world,
A face,
From life to death,
Courage,
Of folly without remorse.
The buddha on the shelf meditates,
A Khmer scarf still mourns the past,
Climbing shoes resting too long,
And a spear gun,
Waiting for its opportunity.
Restless,
Engine on,
Sacrilege to teatime,
For no reason but to blaspheme,
Against the sea, and our own dignity.*

July 6, 2003

*The ancient Greeks never needed to write about
pollution,
Ozone layers, CO2 emissions, meteorite collisions,
or space travel,
Or plane schedules, or TV tonight.
They were too busy inventing us,
Laying the foundation for future genius, and
future madness.
We're here now,
At the foundation of the new future,
And if not today,
We can always start tomorrow.
The never-ending story,
Especially if you never start it.
There was a man,
Like any other man,
But he knew he was a man,
And that made him more than other men.
Words,
Blades,
Caresses,
Slow-burning spells,
Or shooting prayer wheels,
At our disposal,
To use,
Often abuse,
Abuse to use more,
Until it fuses
With the sound of the word.
Man is making himself out of words.
What does it all mean?
Any takers?
If you can't answer a question,
There's always someone, somewhere, inventing
the answer.
Anyone for an answer?
Here we go, one story of creation.*

*Here's another question, coming up on the right:
Why do fish keep swimming after midnight?
Here's a PhD for you, ma'am,
Just be sure to write three hundred pages,
And make it hard to read,
So we won't have to hear the same question
again.
What's God's phone number?
Not listed in the yellow pages.
If it's not in the yellow pages, does it not exist?
Maybe there's a private line,
Plenty of people wanting to reach him.
I hear there's a guy who takes messages,
And passes them on,
Though the list of requests runs so long
Your odds of an answer in this lifetime are slim,
So someone invented reincarnation,
Buying any god a little more time,
Since he can't answer them all, and there are so
many souls waiting,
You'd better invent some games to keep those
questioning minds busy.
It took a million years to figure out you could
entertain forever
With a few zeros and ones,
Every mathematically probable combination
possible as reality,
Finite,
The death of infinity,
Therefore the death of immortality.
Confusion is a dish always better eaten hot.
Hey, what's in a voice?
Don't ask — start by listening.
Identity —
Give me an identity, mister.
All right,
But it will cost you your life, sir.
Okay.*

*Corporate identity number 3492, under the title of
manager of departmental affairs for physics and
poetic illusion.*

Thank you, thank you.

On TV tonight, the wheel of fortune,

A possible dream, a way out of that identity,

*Invent the sand, the palm tree, dump your wife for
some big-breasted Mexican goddess,*

Only to discover she can't cook.

Lunatics on the run,

Looking for a full moon to justify their behavior,

*But the full moon only shows up every twenty-
eight days,*

Just enough time to pack enough dynamite

To blow one's own brain out.

Full moon tonight,

And here they come,

Bigger, brighter, crazier than ever,

The full-moon lunypolytuti brothers,

Live,

Without a net,

Here they are...

Courage to sing, chartering new chemical highs for an instant emotional ride. Voices come out, discovering themselves, feeding off an audience; in turn we dance the voices of sea people. Frenzy in the galley, it's snack time again — there's no Nurse Ratched dishing out the medication here, it's a free-for-all slice of bread, a run at the peanut butter jar; today the honey's escaped the synesthesia manager's guarded vault. Noodle soup gets five bodies going, imitating, slurping loudly, asking each other how old these little packets even are.

The mood shifts and mutates, traveling round the ship, pick your scene — variety in the air today, no one dominating, the crew balanced synergetically.

Leadership —

What does it mean, to be a leader?

*It doesn't mean
You have to be,
With enough being to simply be,
And listen, listening, listening, listening.*

It takes sometimes a lot to realize how little actually matters — simple, simple. In the middle of the Pacific, miles from any land, closer to space than to land, literally, we get bigger and bigger and bigger, because we finally have room to expand.

Only by stepping outside the game can you see there's no real winner at all. When a young man, after rebelling, turns back to the wise elders because he senses they know something worth living by, he's already learned to listen. Humanity is still a young species, very young, probably still in full rebellion, not yet ready to listen to the wise — a young man out of control, refusing to hear. The wise one here is called life, the biosphere. It's time to listen. The time for excuses is over; we finally have the tool for it — communication. And that's exactly what a satellite monitoring reefs would do. Communicate.

There used to be a kind of magician who could tell you if someone was sick, even if that person pretended otherwise, hid behind makeup or clothing — no instrument, no thermometer needed. I'm no magician, and all I have is words, second-guessing words, though I feel it plainly enough. You can always argue with the magician that it isn't true. You can't argue with a satellite answering you directly, over the internet, on the state of our reefs.

If we can talk to the biosphere, she'll answer. That's what Biosphere 2 did — opened a communication with man as its operator, for the survival of man. Life will go on long after we're gone, but I love man, and I want man to succeed. It isn't all doomed — that particular thought is the worst virus to have infiltrated the mind

of man since his creation. Nothing is doomed. Our future's still brighter than it was a few centuries back. The individual was born en masse; we're only now discovering the secrets of becoming individuals, so fast, though maybe not fast enough. An army of sleepwalkers has taken over, hoarding, grabbing, taking, and our biosphere only knows how to give. She'll keep giving, but the pace of her production line isn't keeping up with man's mad race to nowhere.

It's time to take our planet's pulse, and listen. Not too late, we hope. Certainly not too early.

The sun already brightens the sky, three in the morning. Insomnia, James Joyce's **Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man**, and Ken Kesey's **One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest** for company. The wind whistles in the jib on the bow, long whistles demanding more. The promised lows keep failing to reach us, surrounded instead by highs, and a cold breeze from the northeast making sure we don't get too warm.

Thirty-two hundred miles to go. Destination Canada, arrival time unknown, twenty-eight hundred liters of diesel left, drifting toward Hawaii, only fourteen hundred miles away now. Japan still lures as a possible turnaround, though nobody even wants to hear the word anymore, a real taboo by now. **The Pillow Book**, a brilliant film, stirs in me the urge to pursue filmmaking of my own someday.

July 8, 2003

The Day of the Reef aboard the Heraclitus — the wonder of the underwater world, our own extravaganza. Orla's at the sewing machine, transforming herself into the villain, crown-of-thorns. Linda's been busy for days already with papier-mâché, building an acropora mask complete with extensions.

A slideshow, and these were the words that went with it:

*The eyes of a dolphin told me to go and see,
See where I come from,
There are worlds out there,
Beyond compare,
To be explored and experienced.
Millions of years in the making,
Dramatic geological events,
Volcanic explosions,
Giving birth to atolls,
Islands rising,
Islands sinking,
Storms and typhoons.
And here I go,
First the blue,
That blue that becomes you,
That blue that will color your dreams ever after,
That blue that will hypnotize you,
That blue that is the blue of blues.
Underwater gardens,
Reaching for the surface,
Piercing through to the other side,
Giant fields of acropora,
Forests of staghorn coral,
Branching out to catch every bit of sun they can.
The hardest organic builders on the planet,
Biospace ships,
Creatures that decided to return there,
And the polyps keep on building,
Indefatigable, relentless,
Garden upon garden,
Cathedral upon cathedral,
Animal flowers,
Creating dreamy seascapes,
Evolution playing with form,
Pattern,
Multitude,*

*Architects, masters of color,
The polyps erect their temples,
Relatives fill in the tentacular beds,
Surreal tables.
Half in, half out,
Relying on its bounty,
Man,
Inspired,
Feeding on mood,
Vibrant,
Transcendent,
Comical grace,
Miraculous,
Competitive,
Playful — the dolphin's eyes were right.
Aesthetic arrest,
Spaces beyond compare,
A fluid brotherhood.
Plague, and disease,
Fearless predators,
A dramatic universe.
And then man came,
At first playful, grateful,
Evolving with the sea,
Evolving in the sea.
The reef was brought up,
Ground and powdered for kicks,
Harvested for survival,
Revered for artistic experience,
An inspirational extravagance,
A meditation on our relationships,
A simplicity,
Until the balance tipped over,
Greed,
Grabbing, abusing,
While some still remembered
Symbiosis, and simplicity,
But the rape goes on,
Senseless, apocalyptic,*

*With bigger nets, and bigger nets,
Scooping, and scooping, and scooping,
Scooping up all the fish,
Never thinking of tomorrow,
While some still remembered
Symbiosis, and simplicity.
Meanwhile the blind extinction carries on,
Some still rushing to see
Before there's nothing left to see,
But a few shells on a dusty shelf,
Trophies of long-gone species,
Plundering the rest.
Meanwhile some still live the old way,
Taking only what's needed,
Calling out for rescue
With the blow of a conch,
The sea is crying.
Now the fish are gone,
No worries, there are still slugs to scoop,
To feed the hungry dragons of the cities,
A resemblance of life, to remember by,
Life before the techno-dragons,
Too late for the ones who remembered,
Still trying to live in harmony,
Teaching the art of living with,
As one with the sea.
Nonetheless the polyps keep on building,
Cathedrals and temples,
Not giving up,
Keep on going, little polyp,
Keep life going,
And going, more sacred places,
Come on, little polyps,
Keep building for our dreams,
Building in the name of beauty,
Inhabited by time-tested evolutionary survivors,
All living beneath the cities of the master
architects,
The little polyp*

*Holds no grudge,
He will forgive,
So we can still dream together.
I carry the reef within me,
Connected until my forever,
We are all connected to it,
Whether we see it or not,
Whether we want it or not.
We are performing, in this century, the biggest,
stupidest amputation of our own body,
Mutilating our own soul,
Senseless,
A genocide.
I carry the reef within me,
And like any real experience,
You have to be there to feel anything.
Sensing with our whole beings,
Our own beings,
More than connected,
I am one with it.
My body becomes a vehicle,
A transport system,
A medium.
Speaking of myself,
I don't like to be molested,
Though molestation is part of the world.
I am what I despise,
I am what I love.
I am born of planet Earth,
She is my mother,
I am her,
She is me,
We are, together, I.
I am falling in love with you every day.
Why do I choose to speak of corals,
And not of cars, or computers, or movies?
Urgency, a state of emergency,
Like a wound sending out its pain signals,
So the focus shifts toward the trouble.*

*The coral reefs are in trouble,
Serious trouble.
Who cares?
Letting something go, destroying it,
Is destroying one possible self,
Destroying potential,
Reducing the flavors of ourselves,
Growing poorer, and poorer.
I want to be able to see myself in its most
outrageous, decadent beauty,
And nowhere else but in my own coral garden self
can I feel such vibrant exuberance.
There are forces that, like a bad virus,
Sweep over us,
Feeding on color, mood, emotion, vibration,
Only to leave behind a straight line without a
pulse.
The coral reefs are going,
Oases of pristine reef growing rarer by the year,
What I call an essence reef,
Those sacred places,
Spaces that create their own space within a
person,
Not just to survive,
But to evolve, with as many colors on our palette
as we can find,
So we can paint our world,
Within the world,
With the full scale,
Never reducing ourselves,
Only ever expanding, as life itself demands.
Befriending life
Is befriending yourself.
I am the coral reef,
You are the coral reef,
Trying to save reefs is saving oneself.
The coral reefs are resilient,
They've survived their share of geological
disaster,*

*We, the new kids on the block of evolution,
Playing games at deleting ourselves.
Realities —
There are many games,
Played simultaneously,
Nobody wins, nobody loses,
You can't judge yourself, judging yourself, judging
yourself, forever.
I am a kid,
I want to keep playing with the reef,
I refuse to let anyone destroy or steal my toys,
I will not let you destroy me,
I am greedy for experience,
I am greedy for beauty,
I am greedy for myself.
I can have it all,
Why settle for less?
It's already there,
Why spend so much energy destroying it?
Okay —
Life and death,
Rebirth,
Destruction, creation...
But if we all play at destroying
Faster than the others can rebuild,
We are heading straight for disaster.
I can bite off a fingernail, but trouble starts once I
keep on biting, past my fingers, into my hands —
How far are we willing to take that game?
I am the coral reef,
And I refuse to die.*

Chapter Three

The Long Wait

Open North Pacific, the long wait

July 10, 2003

A seal and white-flanked dolphins greet the day. Twelve degrees, smoke on our breath, the wind barely there, the blue-and-yellow jib flapping loose. The seal shows up for comic relief, twisting, popping his head up, flipping over, taking a few laps around the ship.

Muffins come out of the oven, Heather teaching Eddie the art of baking.

I catch traces of clown-white still streaking my face, left over from last night's incarnation — devoured and digested by Acropora Linda. The evening never quite took off; the expedition looked good on the outside, a few great costumes, but the inside stayed empty, despite a last effort to push a few scenes through. Orla, the crown-of-thorns villain, devours Acropora Linda...

I can't sleep, my mind busy with coral reef memories, half-formed speeches, statements, working out exactly where I stand.

A seal appears again, performing his morning toilet in front of an ecstatic crew. Talk and whistling, the seal backflipping, rolling, dancing. After an hour I grab the deck broom; the seal circles it, plays, touches it. Eddie touches the seal, and a whole new game begins — touching a wild seal on the open Pacific. Everyone laughs, healthy laughter, the kind that comes straight from the heart, the kind that makes you feel properly alive. Xtine grabs the mop for another round; the seal plays and plays. Stinj brings a rope into it, and the seal

starts biting, friendly bites, teasing bites, switching between mop and rope. Now Kira, Stin, Heather, Eddie, and Nicole all hang over the rail together, watching the star performance — a seal, a broom, a mop, a rope.

*Once upon a time,
There was a ship on the open sea.
A seal, a broom, and a mop,
Performing a dance,
Building toward a touch,
Human hands entering the dance.
Songs of laughter,
Sparkling eyes.
Like a torero,
Bust hanging low over the side of the black ship,
Fingers instead of a spear,
The mop standing in for the cape,
Olé — the seal is touched.
The dance ends after two hours of nonstop
performance,
Everyone retreating,
The seal to the open sea,
The crew to the comfort of the mother ship.*

The wind keeps coming from the wrong direction, northeast, not strong enough to motor-sail, pushing us further south. Tension builds. We're on the edge, close to a point of no return — go, man, go, it's all in the elements now.

Voices betray their own state of mind. We've learned each other by now, learned to give each other space. Keep the energy rotating, allow the excursions into depth, but don't let anyone get stuck down there. Expeditions go and come back. And back is the ensemble, the animal we've agreed to live inside, for better or worse. We create our own weather. A juggle of pulling in and letting go, a ballet of emotional dances, all across fourteen bodies and their memories.

*The song of the open sea,
Ruthless,
Yet compassionate,
Hiding only means retreat,
And the sea accepts no one but her most faithful,
truthful lovers.*

I watch, through the porthole, the wind's direction on a sock hung out to dry, surrounded by the words of man at his best. Nemo's — our mine of golden thought, some of it buried, regularly stolen through by a quiet master, mostly turning up gems.

*We have been taught to put the weight of
unwanted words and gossip on the tips of our
fingers,
Then let them go, fly like the albatross over the
open sea,
We have been taught to troll a bait to catch a
wahoo,
We have been taught to eat raw tuna, dipped in
seawater, feeling the swells, becoming the sea,
We have been taught to spear a fish, catch a
coconut crab whose claws could take your arm
off,
We have been taught solidarity,
Men braving huge swells, breaking over a
treacherous reef passage, hauling taro thirty
miles through force-seven water to an island
whose garden a typhoon took,
We have been taught to play with dozens of
children underwater, without a word, only
laughter,
We have been taught simplicity,
In the art of a canoe,
We have heard the songs that call the wind, on a
carved and painted canoe under pandanus sails,
We have been taught to sail outrigger canoes,
catching fish, calling dolphins, refusing to give up
on a broken mast, navigating reefs to meet the
Heraclitus eye to eye,*

*We have been taught by the reefs themselves,
Arresting time,
Finding, for a moment, the elixir of immortality,
Like Gilgamesh, at the very origin,
We have been told stories of white whales and
friendly sharks,
Of demons, spirits, heroes,
We have been taught not to give up,
Despite the deserts,
Reefs destroyed by the greed of man.
We have been taught to recognize the big
dragons,
The mad techno-dragons, feeding man worthless
goods in exchange for precious life,
A bad trade, for the benefit of a few monsters,
Enslaving minds with cheap drugs,
We have watched beauty destroyed by the
tentacled dragon.
We created our own monsters,
Let them loose, fed them, enslaved by our own
emotion,
The dragon knows, hunting to exploit our
stupidity,
Feeding on our greed, our vanity,
The monster we made is eating us,
Killing values, replacing them with
Cars dumped over five miles of road, traffic jams
on a tiny island,
Unable to walk without breathing fumes,
Yet still walking faster,
Between piles of dumped trash,
Too drunk on imported beer to see
Nothing left of the reef but a spoiled cemetery
Of algae and oil spill.
The crown-of-thorns is a villain, sucking live
polyps down to dead skeleton,
But it works within a balance of death and rebirth,
Nothing compares to the big dragon,
Sucking life at a continental scale,*

*Infiltrating the last sacred spaces.
We scout, and scout,
And dig, and dig,
Like miners, hunting jewels,
We've dived thousands of hours,
Everywhere, without prejudice,
Just to see,
Because if you want to see something, you have to
be there,
And we found jewels amid the apocalyptic truth,
Enough to fuel our hope,
We have danced with mantas,
Interspecies underwater ballets,
Swum with a hundred sharks in deep blue
canyons,
Dreamed with a thousand dolphins riding our
bow,
Fallen in love with magic reefs,
So full of life that, for a moment, we thought of
nothing but rejoicing.
We have seen reefs recover from dynamite blast
within five years,
We have seen the same rubble dynamited over
and over, to scoop up half-finger-sized fish,
We have wept to see once-unspoiled islands
Invaded by dozens of tuna factory ships,
We have seen dead sharks rotting on beaches,
intact but for their fins,
We have heard of cyanide pumped into the ocean,
extracting a few nuggets of gold for imaginary
vaults,
We have seen transcendent dances and
ceremonies,
Sunsets and full moon rises,
We have been taught new constellations,
We have watched the stars for no purpose but to
feel closer to them,
We have dreamed of aliens,
We have seen inexplicable things in the sky,
We have seen inexplicable things in the sea,*

*We have seen inexplicable things in man.
We have felt the ocean invade us, possessed by
the spirit of our home,
And come back without any way to explain it,
We have felt small on the open sea,
The humility of being human,
And, too, the arrogance of knowing where we've
been,
The arrogance of knowing we saw the last of
vanishing wonders.
We had the last chance to see,
We are being taught to dream,
Dreaming of sea people,
Planetary people,
We have tasted a life of plenty,
We have tasted a life of freedom,
We have tasted a life genuinely full of life,
We now fear losing it.
It's time to monitor the damage of the big techno-
dragon,
By taking the pulse of our planet,
By taking the pulse of our home.
The reef will communicate with us,
A satellite, circling our planet,
Telling us of our own insanity,
Monitoring our fall, or our recovery,
All for the price of a single warplane among
thousands.
The big dragon doesn't want us to know,
As long as it's only the word of a few men,
Easy enough to dismiss,
As with Biosphere 2,
But everyone has the right to know,
Everything's already here for us to succeed,
So why not let humanity succeed?
There's enough sight aboard our space-ocean-ship
Heraclitus,
We live too with a human group animal,
Testing how to keep control,*

*If that animal is ever let loose to become a
monster.
Without a monster,
Humans become individuals,
And the more individuals there are,
The fewer beings left for the dragon to enslave.
We chose the ocean,
As our home upon our home,
And what we see
Is our home being raped, abused, pillaged.
The big dragon, whore or advertiser,
Can conjure meteorite-disaster scenarios all it
likes,
Let evolution take its course, we will evolve
regardless,
But can we please keep the whole catalog of
choice on the table?
What good is freedom of choice
If we keep narrowing it down to this or that?
Wealthy — I want to be wealthy,
Why settle for less than all we can be?
Without the reef, we lose wealth, so much wealth.
Why bother, for a few flowers?
The coral reefs are like flowers in the ocean,
And we are taking flower after flower,
Until all that's left are dead stems.
Imagine a world without flowers,
Imagine your grandchildren asking,
What is a flower,
What is a whale,
Can I see a pristine reef?
No, you can't — but once upon a time, there was...
We are at the stage now of trying to save a few
seeds of every species,
Quick, the DNA recipe, so we can build it again
later.
What about souls,
What about the spirit of the wild.*

*A dolphin in a round pool is only the shadow of a
dolphin,
He looks like a dolphin,
Acts, sometimes, like a dolphin,
Trained to eat frozen fish,
Refuses, at first, but eventually refuses to die and
eats,
Dies anyway, of stress and melancholy,
Turning round and round,
With no horizon to see,
No predator to flee,
No fish to chase,
No friends but a few inmates as lonely as he is.
Dolphins in the open sea
Are the spirit of freedom itself, incarnate.*

Now the humanity-animal shows suicidal tendencies. Life will go on, but what about man — not man as body, but man as spirit? We will never destroy the dragon; we need the dragon, we simply need to learn to tame him, before he tames us. We're resting in the arms of the open sea, who won't let us go until we learn to simply be. Pacifica, teaching us, sometimes against our will, but expect the unexpected — a life of plenty isn't necessarily kinetic, sometimes it forces contemplation, or has us circling round and round in worthless words. Inner expeditions. Get it while you can.

July 12, 2003

Dolphins, in high jumping spirits, surround the ship. I'm alone on deck, working through a personal low, while the crew warms up for our upcoming watch-duo skits. Dolphins to the rescue — lifted, I can finally smile back at the horizon.

Stinj and Reka perform a love story, brilliant, all mirrors, words, gesture, mood, drawn from **The Pillow Book** — magical. Kira and Xtine become two huge-chested, red-horned Viking valkyries fighting over a

lover, dustpan axes swinging, plenty of theatrical boob action. Heather and Eddie dance the albatross, black and white. Linda and Orla dance a moody, soft tango with the wind. Carol and Sebastien perform a tumultuous love affair in foul-weather gear. Ferdi and Nicole, behind two curtains, transform a hundred times over. Eibes and I rap about wind — snatches of popular song, "Wind on the Water," "It's Been a Windless Week" (a nod to the Beatles), "My Wind, No Wind, No Cry" — then a bit on the great bean-conspiracy theory, a no-theater dance called "no wind," finishing with a wind-machine duo straight out of James Brown.

A whale blows and dives — always a show, always awe.

Red River tonight, a true frontier film, the drive of a thousand-head cattle herd over a hundred days, full of human drama and a happy ending — enough echo of our own expedition to be worth noting. Who's really projecting onto whom would make for an interesting question. The frontiersman and woman, the history of the United States before it was united, when there was still room, still land to explore. That world died almost as soon as it existed, but not the dream — and dreams like that always resurrect the frontier spirit somewhere. Planets are next. No one's claimed the moon yet, but it won't be long after the first permanent landing before some real estate agent starts selling plots.

*A windless night,
Rigging squeaks and dolphin blows,
The moon a halo behind cloud.
Fresh memory of diving beneath a lone sperm
whale's tail,
Visions of Arthur C. Clarke's Rama world,
The space age,
We are as close to space as we've ever been,
Drifting,
Among alien intelligence,*

*Sometimes our own,
The frontier of sea-minds,
Contemplating life,
Our existence, the dream still becoming,
We are here,
Here is now,
Now will always be now,
Forever and ever,
A convergence of timelines,
A grid of synchronicities,
Keeping us wondering,
It is all happening,
A theater of every possibility,
The freedom of beings among other beings,
All in one, among ones,
Hacking your own mind,
To find its potential,
So many roads to eternity,
Regardless of death, or immortality.
Being, while you can,
Simply because we can.*

A head full of noise, unable to hear a single song, zero tolerance for my own mind — a moment, this too shall pass, it's already past, always new.

The Pacific has become our whole life now. The ship refuses to hurry, content simply being where she is, visited almost daily by sea-minds — dolphins of every kind paying tribute to the black ship, sperm whales' blows caressing her hull, a seal dancing with her in the twilight, sharks inspecting and moving on, sunfish rising painfully to the surface, not wanting to miss the show either. Birds have taken up residence at night now, laughing at the humans, singing to the ship. The wind has decided, apparently, to keep us here.

*There has always been a reason for our
disappointments,
We are handed a fraction of hope at a time,*

*Just enough to keep us sane,
Just enough to keep us here.
There is nowhere to run,
Only our will to go,
Moving anyway through the universe,
At a speed beyond our comprehension,
We worship the sun ever more,
Since he must compete now with the cloudy sky.
The colder ocean brings new smells,
Another sensation for our repertoire,
New colors for our inner paintings,
More wealth for our memory.
The crew is dreaming now,
Each in his own small version of the universe,
All drawn from the same bank of data,
Every possible possibility,
Inexhaustible, for one mind.
Boredom is self-inflicted,
An inability to grasp the gift of simply being,
It arrives with satisfaction guaranteed,
And dissatisfaction is only ever a kind of
satisfaction itself,
The satisfaction of not being satisfied,
A push toward further,
A trampoline toward more.*

July 14, 2003

A froth of prince — a mile-long parade, dolphins arriving from every horizon to play in our bow wave, eating away, for a moment, at our own hidden frustrations. The wind finally shifts to push us north, fringing the edge of a low. Inner and outer, the navigation of our own group-animal demands everything.

I lie down, juggling my own thoughts and everyone else's — brain-hacking, brain-hacked, synergy the most worthwhile game of chance there is, the unknown that

will spark something new. The wind from the south brings mild temperatures, and memories of a tropical heart. A clove kretek cigarette brings Bali back alive, incense, gamelan tunes, the play of gods, gestures, and cultural abundance, a melting pot brewed thick with Balinese stock, always creating something new. The principle stays the same; the outcome never does. You can never bake the same bread twice.

"Steer 030." "Roger. Try to hold that." The wind's on the beam. The mizzen comes down, force four, just. "Go in neutral." "Let the sail out as much as it takes." Eyes stare at the GPS. 1.8 knots. "Are you hard over?" "No, twenty-five to port." Four bells; the eight-to-twelve watch keeps its tempo. The wind swings to 130. The small jib rips; a line pops. The ship can't hold her course. The engine comes back on, the captain's voice betraying his frustration, an edge hidden beneath it, pacing in front of the chart table.

More than three thousand miles still to go. Sixty-four days at sea.

Every word carries real weight now, the tension of outer inertia building on the inner. More than anything else, this has become an inner expedition, a ride into the unconscious. Discoveries there aren't always comfortable, and reconciliation isn't always immediate — so the mind plays tricks to hide from itself. New watch combinations, a readjustment of people's dynamics, new ingredients for a new watch recipe, new combined essences.

*Walking through a sea of eyes,
Few that you truly meet,
A flash, a second,
Eyes too scared to meet,
Too scared to look at themselves.
Behind every eye
Lies an open soul.*

Full moon for Sunday night; voices carried to the stars.

*In every wave there is a spirit,
In every moment,
There is an opportunity to play,
Play with me, mother earth,
For I am your child,
And your child I will remain,
Until you take me back from the stage,
Back, to create a new actor.
A hundred billion souls have walked on your body,
A hundred billion stars among a hundred billion
stars,
Celestial bodies, inner and outer,
For every man there is a star,
For every star there is a man.*

The wind has come, slowly, turning ever more southerly, first motorsailing, with a moment of near-total frustration where the thought of turning back looms close overhead — then finally proper sailing, thirty-six hours of it now. Four knots, wind behind the beam, while in the command room I overhear a conversation drifting toward the extreme. Carol, more out of spite than reason, proposes cutting the lights in the bunks so people read only in the communal area. Before we get anywhere near that desperate, we've got room to spare.

*Sailing, we are sailing,
Endless games with the sky,
Obsessive stares at the GPS,
Almost hypnotized,
The veil has lifted.
We are sailing,
Three points behind the beam,
Four knots, eating up the miles in the right
direction.
The Heraclitus stands proud,
Dall's porpoise joins the celebration at the bow,*

*We are sailing.
A cocoon of thick fog hides the horizon,
We travel in a bubble of time,
The spirit will lift,
A conscious acknowledgment to the biosphere,
The lows are piling up,
Pushing us ever forward,
We are sailing.*

Midnight, crossing the fortieth parallel, and 163 degrees.

A hummus lunch fills the stomach with delight, energy boosted by the alchemy of taste, the recipe often doing more to steady my mood than the raw ingredients ever could — not the product, but the synergy of it.

A day's run of ninety-eight nautical miles — the dream shifting from almost impossible to almost possible. Always just, right up to the edge, before the canvas rips. We are the paint; the Heraclitus, the canvas. The sea washes it clean each day, an art performance that survives only in memory. Essences, tasted.

The fog lifts its veil at last, swells uniting with waves, the ship dancing under the helmsman's spell. Bodies dreaming in paradise — how many dreams can meet at once? How far can you actually think? Infinities of universe, infinity of reality, infinity of infinity.

A Japanese fishing vessel comes in close, three cables off. Everyone aboard reveals a different facet of themselves. Xtine, the most open, reaching out toward whoever populates the sea. Eibes, wary of contact, puts on a small show of arrogance — they can't speak English, he insists, refusing even to consider asking for help, too proud. Ferdi curses at them under his breath. Kira goes quiet, scared like a small bird. Stinj smokes a cigarette. Reka reaches for her camera.

Dolphins, Pacific white-sided, ride the bow wave,

Togetherness in perfect synchrony, a parade of waves.

The wall of Japanese fishing boats blocks our line at 170 degrees, like an army, an intimidation game, crossing our bow, rusty, old, rough, the look of men with nothing left to lose.

One mile to our halfway point — 170 degrees east, 43 degrees north. Clem's bottle of Moët fires up into the sky. Halfway to nowhere. A party breaks out, dancing, breaking through, a real celebration.

The current turns; we start drifting backward, west. The odyssey continues.

Currents Within

Lying in my bunk in the dark, every sense awake, I ride a current of memory. Faces, situations, come drifting in, triggered somehow by thoughts of friendship, male and female both. I find myself back in London.

Here, aboard, right now: Ferdi's at the start of a relationship, though not so much the start anymore, fully in love with Kira. Carol still hovers near Ferdi, a quiet competition running underneath, seeking a close friendship with Kira as though they were already best friends, pulling Ferdi aside for hour-long, lamenting talks. Then, at other moments, they all sit down together and share the same giant bowl of noodle soup. Kira waits for Ferdi, showering daily, her moisturizer's scent filling the air; Eibes and Reka have ended their own relationship, and Reka, understandably, struggles with it, though she understands — fifteen years, and then... She's infatuated with Stinj now; they've already spent one night together. Stinj, meanwhile, plays the perfect male friend, that particular Northern European gift for real intimacy with a woman that doesn't ask for anything more. He and Linda had something early on that faded. Now Heather genuinely wants him, though

he isn't looking for that part of it, and Reka isn't sure what to do with any of it, or how Heather will take it.

Xtine and Eibes were together once, and she still, quietly, loves him — this goes back twenty years, before the ship, back to a few villages apart, back to school with Reka. Reka and Eibes found each other eventually, had a child, and have stayed together since. Xtine isn't with anyone now, but our own friendship's grown close, old wounds healing, and I notice, at least for myself, I can look back on it clearly now, without grudge. Linda keeps to her own world, quiet. Eddie and Nicole have found each other — she knew right away, took him quickly, and he's shy about it still, though the two of them are lovely to watch together, his first real relationship. Sebastien stays the loose joker of the group, friendly with everyone, a frequent cushion for Carol, the available young man. Orla and I stay steady.

So here I am, back in London, remembering a friendship with Véronique. We tried, once, to sleep together — she was too nervous, and I wanted my own freedom too much — but we were a real couple regardless, living together, sleeping side by side, in a crowded house run by a Jewish landlady who packed four or five people into every room. No hot water, ever, through the worst of winter; Véronique and I would heat kettles on the gas stove and carry them to the bathtub. Some of the best baths of my life, that way. I had affairs on the side, but with us settled as a household, I mostly let them come and go without much weight.

Véronique invited her best friend from Paris to stay — a beautiful girl named Sophie. I'd had a thing for Sophies since I was nine years old, every one of them touched with the same particular vanity. We ended up sharing a bed, the three of us in the flat, though Véronique wasn't quite open enough for anything further with Sophie — that stayed a kind of taboo, unspoken.

Back to the present: after a real scare, the current running west, we're sailing again — though not through open ocean, through a maze of lights, hundreds of them brightening the sky, fishing boats, some as close as two cables, weaving our way through this strange floating city. Within a thirty-mile radius, more than a thousand men at work, harvesting the sea, all of it at night. What are they catching, and why here, a thousand miles from any land, in such numbers? An upwelling, maybe. No answer over the radio — no VHF, or no English, we can't tell. Where are we? It feels like a twilight zone, an industrial zone in the middle of nowhere. The radar shows fifty boats at a time. Fog rises, and the lights disappear, only to reappear within four cables of us.

July 24, 2003

Eighty-seven days at sea. Time shifts, and the cold, ten degrees now, demands its own kind of energy. Once warm, the body only wants to be left alone.

Whispers from my bunk, tucked right behind the command room table — the spy bunk. I hear the course, speed, and track called out, along with everyone's running commentary. The helmsman's style betrays him every time; knowing a person, you learn to read their mood in the small variations of how they steer.

July 27, 2003

The wind's died completely, the sea on its way to becoming a mirror. The easterly current, the superhighway we'd counted on to carry us home, isn't there right now — we've drifted onto a branch current instead, moving south. Not great for morale. Eibes and Reka clash in the command room, different approaches colliding.

"You don't get into it right now."

"It's not my approach."

"What is your approach?"

"Well, let's make a plan. I need time to think it through. My attention isn't on Saturday's acting class right now."

"You're not interested in raising the crew's energy right now."

"I'm very interested in the energy level. It's always Eibes calling the crew together. I just need more time to prepare. It's a logistical problem."

In the end it's never really the words, but the lines and tones running between them. The tension's real, and neither wants to be the one to release it.

The nights are cold now. A trip to pee becomes its own small ordeal, knowing you'll have to rebuild the warmth under your blanket afterward. Twelve degrees, inside. I remember Ernie in Guam, warning us — you're going to freeze your asses off. It dawns on me now how unprepared I really was for this, never quite believing it would get this cold. We're in a hostile sea, one that won't tolerate a body in the water for more than twenty minutes before taking it. You have to stay more conscious out here. The wind snaps against your face, a constant reminder of exactly where you are.

The comfort of the blankets lets the dreams perform properly. A man who doesn't dream, literally, dies. Twelve degrees isn't the end of the world, but we've no fire to warm ourselves against. The pressure's psychological more than anything — we have plenty of food, enough diesel for three months of power. What we're waiting on is the right wind. Since the foremast came down, we've grown pickier about it, needing real strength and at least three points behind the beam to

make any headway at all. We navigate, or more often are navigated, through a maze of highs and lows, seeking out the lows, though they come and go. In between, we wait.

We lower the boat to scrape a five-centimeter blanket of barnacles off the hull — the first time off the ship since the foremast came down. I catch sight of us properly for the first time in a while. We look rough, singular, intense, beautiful, like a poem of the open sea. Our mainsail keeps showing new weakness, constantly patched.

A cruise around the black ship, rum and coke in hand. The crew spontaneously drags the music box up on deck, and a daylight rave breaks out, free-spirited movement, a dance of the open sea while dolphins hunt all around us, three hundred sixty degrees of blows and splashes as far as the binoculars can reach. A feast of emotion, a feast of consciousness. The ensemble takes it in first with laughter and excitement, then settles into awe and quiet contemplation. We look beautiful, and the resident dolphins, seals, and albatrosses all come to join the celebration. A seal catches a silvery fish, shows it off, gulps it down.

Saturday movie night — Synesthesia transforms, carpet down, cushions and warm bodies settling in to watch. Tonight, **The Italian Job**. Laughter carries through the ship, coffee steaming from the mugs, bellies full, minds resting from a day of pure sensory overload.

*The ocean smells of the breath of a thousand
dolphins,
The deck welcomes the dancing feet,
An ensemble celebrates.
We are celebrating freedom,
The moment that will never come back,
The Pacific, as she reveals herself,
Bouncing hearts.*

The drift's a good one — fog rolling in, we've learned its particular taste by now. The laughing birds are back, jokers of our calm nights, keeping the deck watch company. Ten degrees, well layered against the northern wind's bite, happy.

"Yes, we're drifting good," a voice whispers in front of the GPS.

The wind's picking up, says the hull, straight to my ears.

Man created the ultimate conscious entity in the concept of god — not gods, but the one all-encompassing god who sees everything at once, the ultimate dream of a species that, by its own physical and sensory nature, can never quite manage it. We can't be everywhere, all the time. We're windows, each of us, perceiving only as far as our own traveling mind can reach, reaching inward and outward both, creating our own realities, playing at being gods since we can't quite be the god. Essences of who we are, a taste of human potential, evolving, transforming.

The dancing bodies of the Heraclitus crew, swinging with the Pacific swells, taste the essence of freedom — a moment, carved into memory, of experiencing togetherness as one, children of the earth, planetary minds in the making. Strike the iron while it's hot, to forge sharp enough blades to carve ourselves into reality. Moving, sensing sculptures, honoring the gift of life.

We receive our visitors from the open sea with open arms, a kind of conscious transmission — sea dialogues, with sea minds, alien intelligence. A seal cruises to the bow, pops his head up, peers into the black ship, watching for a receptive soul. The call of the wild.

Wind from the west steers us the right way again. Fog returns, radar standing in as our eyes now, technology at the service of man.

*Traveler, exploring,
A new medium,
Like new sciences,
Reaching for the all-encompassing,
Creating with mind-made tools,
Synergizing,
For the new.*

The sciences explore where we came from, how we came from it, the interplay of elements, the laws we've built to harvest potential from it all — programmers, all of us. A few decades ago, we didn't yet know what we looked like from above; man went up, recorded the image, shared it with everyone. Memes trigger connections, understanding. We are an ocean planet. Information no longer belongs only to those roaming the sea, but to everyone. Mankind's whole adventure is really the odyssey of our planet.

July 28, 2003

The wind picks up to a force six. The helm screams; hard work now. But we're racing, six knots, the swells building — we've finally met the westerlies, reinforced by a low pressure front to our west. I take the helm myself for a while, to soak up the accumulated heat of it, teaching Eddie and Sebastien a few tricks to keep from wearing themselves out too fast. The wind's ice-cold on every bit of exposed skin, sharp; scarves, gloves, clouds of warm breath everywhere. The swells rise higher and higher; the ship handles it well, taking each one like a dance, surfing for a moment at a time. Stars show tonight, like long-lost friends turning up again. Dolphins come to play in trails of bioluminescence.

Small dramas unfold. Heather breaks down in tears, in love with Stinj, who's just been lost to Reka — she's the type who never quite gets the man, and tonight it finally catches up with her. Carol and Nicole sit with her through it in one corner of Synesthesia, while Eibes, Xtine, and Linda watch *Shrek* on a laptop just a few feet away. All of it a little surreal together.

We're racing now, fast, the sail puffed and singing its northern-wind song, a low pressure guiding us forward. The light delights in caressing the sea; the sea delights in being caressed by it; and somewhere in the middle, he delights in the delight of both.

A private moment, worked through in the small hours of a long watch — the particular ache of not quite knowing where you stand with someone, asked and answered and asked again, until the asking itself becomes its own kind of exhaustion.

Eight degrees now, wind painting our noses red, numbing fingertips.

August 1, 2003

Jolts of pain down my back, unbearable. Everything turns sharp, the wrong kind of sharp, the sharpness of darkness. Paranoia creeps in; every word starts to feel like an attack, real or imagined. I react internally to the smallest hint, and through that particular dark lens, the worst in people shines through in pure negative emotion.

They aren't unbeautiful — I made them beautiful, chose to see them in the best light. Now, for a while, I see only greed, perverse lust, scheming, vanity, gluttony, as though the whole world were made of nothing but negativity, a broth of madness. Down that road, the images turn genuinely dark — corpses, blood, flashes of it.

Then I step outside myself, and the pain eases. I watch, aware of the possession running through me, able to control only where I place my body, not how my mind perceives what surrounds it. I retreat to my bunk, away from wherever I know I'd only feed the darkness further.

The lens itself isn't wrong. Negativity is everywhere — so is everything else. Only a magnifying glass, really, held up to the nature of our being. I choose to ride it out, knowing this too shall pass.

Tonight Bio transforms into a den of debauchery, hosted by Reka and Christine, Bertolt Brecht songs rehearsed in Synesthesia, while the "engineering team" screams at each other elsewhere, quietly redefining the word *team*. I don't think anyone here really understands debauchery in its full sense — excess in perversion, sex, alcohol, right up to the edge of sanity.

Nothing is ever truly forever in the mind. I frantically read tonight, and find the book that seems to demand you meet it halfway — often I can't fully follow it, and there's a strange comfort in that not-understanding. Did the man himself understand it all? He saw symbols everywhere, and I'm not nearly educated enough in his particular history to catch every association. Every sentence loaded to capacity, some detonating instantly, others on a delay. The United States banned it once, not for obscenity, but because the man was a kind of mind-alchemist, and anyone who learned his secrets would never be quite the same again. James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Whispers of confession, whispers of observations no one's meant to overhear, of our own human dynamics — everyone watching to see who falls next, the arrogance of thinking it isn't oneself, when every fall is really a failure of the whole group, something we all

built together. The stage is everywhere; we are the actors.

Between the privacy of our thin plywood walls, the voices give nothing away that isn't already known organically. The words might change, but the underlying energy is always exposed. Seductions run low here, dice rolled with whoever's left available. But bodies aren't souls, and the energy still moves as fast as ever — only now it doesn't get consumed, just floats in a kind of blue cloud above the dinner table, watching, sometimes laughing, mingling entirely without our consent.

August 2, 2003

Wind back in our sails after last night's den of debauchery aboard Bio — an incredible transformation, thoroughly post-World War One, Brecht and "Lili Marleen," that Berlin-brothel Germanic style. The evening takes off, our magic room turned stage, everything glowing red. Archetypes emerge — the women choosing their style to lure the men, enlarging what needs enlarging, showing skin, suave voices all around. Stinj becomes a priest, then a stripper with a huge tattooed dragon and two painted ladies across his whole back. Ferdi plays his Tina, in his favorite black-and-white dress.

The diversity of the culture we've built here, layered with whatever culture each of us carries in our own body and mind, together with a goal bigger than any of us — that's the real secret of our success. Monitoring the health of our own behavior and thought stays the best gauge of where we stand.

We're at the heart of the biosphere right now, the middle of the Pacific Ocean. I've always seen our planet, poetically, as a single whole being, and the sea as the medium through which we come to know

ourselves. There's constant flux, more mixing now than ever, so much that individual colors grow harder and harder to make out, everything fusing, like a painter who couldn't stop blending until every color was lost. The secret's in the mixing itself — a little of this, then a little of that. An artist needs to understand the essence of a color before he uses it. I'm still learning what blue actually means.

Mankind's whole adventure only ever goes as far as the mind allows. We'll reach space eventually, not that we aren't already traveling through the galaxy on our own spaceship Earth. But if we're to start some new branch of humanity, we'll need to send real humans — the man-woman teams carrying the deepest wealth of human experience, because they'll need every bit of it.

He couldn't sleep — the particular kind of insomnia that brings tears without quite reaching the jaw, wiped away mechanically, a gaze fixed on nothing and everything at once. Not even a memory left to hold onto. Something close to Zen, except entirely empty. No thought at all. He feels, for a while, something like dead — though he's never actually died before, so who's to say.

August 4, 2003

It will stay the fourth of August for forty-eight hours. We're crossing the international date line, 180 degrees, which never once shows up on the GPS — twenty-four hours given back, hour by hour, after decades spent losing them heading the other way. A visualization of time travel. This time, we let time travel through us instead.

A double day, the day that never quite existed. No better excuse needed for our biggest party yet. Cultural expeditions run through the ship — a chill-out lounge in Nemo's, chicha smoke and Arabic-Indian music, a

cyber-tent in Synesthesia showing images from our last few years, the lab turned isobar, full rave culture. Time on deck to remind us we're still sea people first, dancing woven through as an essential part of the day. Food as art — Orla turns out masterpiece after masterpiece, blinis with smoked salmon, spinach tarts, homemade crackers with cream cheese, white-chocolate-covered peaches, polenta with parmesan and bacon.

Kool-Aid becomes the drug of choice, a new meme of everyone licking their palms, then offering a taste to the next person. Dancing carries on until dawn, alcohol taking its toll, bodies collapsing one by one until the ship goes quiet, but for the ripple of a calm sea.

*Time out of time,
Between timelines,
No past, no present, no future,
Every channel open, open, open.
Anything, out, in, everywhere.
An atom, matter,
Does it matter?
I am matter,
Matter is me,
I am not what I am not.
Yeah — without time, space loses all its hold,
Structure off into something spacey and tuneful,
Oh no, oh no, show me the way to the next line of
anything,
Show, show, all a show toward the unknown,
Good — I hear good,
I lost good, to find it all again.
An alchemist in the galley,
Celebrating the day that never was.
In, out, everywhere,
Albatrosses and winds of no place, no time,
Drop reality, since it's all real, all, all,
Melt memory,
The melting of time and space,*

*The melting of whatever you want melted.
Transform whatever you wish to transform,
Transform into whatever you wish to be.
Isobar 1060 millibars, opened,
A laboratory for induced alcoholic vision, no
prohibitions,
A cyber-tent on Synesthesia's Persian carpet floor,
A rave in the isobar, the highest pressure
possible,
Techno and freedom lights,
The aliens are taking over the bodies,
Cigar smoke twirling,
Body heat, Kool-Aid our drug,
Chemical-producing brains,
Transcend, invent new chemicals of your own,
An out-of-mind experience,
In full-body mode.
The computer glimpses our past,
A snapshot of our own history,
A trigger for memory to strike,
A full-sense time machine,
The chicha brings you down,
Hands clapping toward human godliness,
Scenes from the same dream,
As human as we can be.*

August 5, 2003

The wind still hasn't come. The body rests. I dream wildly, flying on a handlebar across wild landscapes, watching cross-sections of fish-filled seas below.

August 6, 2003

Ripples forecast wind, still off in the distance. Seb catches five fish for a proper feast — determination, the spirit of not giving up. Bodies recover from the expeditions, a new chapter opening in our odyssey.

In Africa, millions of years ago, a man-to-be watches his own reflection in a lake. Others before him did the same, but something in him catches, differently — he doesn't recognize what he sees, and from that moment dedicates his life to learning exactly what that creature is. Millions of years later, he'd invented the tools and machines to harvest the whole universe, always reaching further — telescopes for the ever-larger, microscopes for the ever-smaller, his mind building the organs he needed to transcend his own senses. He invented culture, to build combinations of sense and essence. Baby talk, compulsive talk, a fear of silence blurred over with sound. A kind of regression.

Eddie got drunk at the party and pushed Nicole a little too hard; she's shaken by it, and he's miserable now, waiting for her to come around. Eibes has started something with Linda.

August 7, 2003

The countdown's begun on the GPS, invisible lines crossed one after another, drawing us ever closer to our actual destination. Mizzen up, jib up, we're sailing, two knots, the right direction. Mizzen down again, drifting us too far north.

Dinners keep recalling memories of past expeditions — Synesthesia transforms once more, an Arabic tent this time, calling back images of Oman, Egypt, Yemen. We've traveled through so many cultures aboard this ship, recalling their essence in turn — old Cairo, whirling dervishes uniting with the god within, the smell of hot desert sand, Bedouin camels crossing the Sinai's ridges, the pyramids, and, in sharp contrast, the coral reef temples of the Red Sea.

I sit, motionless, letting the senses recall and relive, brought back to the present while sifting through facts

gathered wandering old Cairo, the remains of the mad Mamluk empire.

We are the latest evolutionary step of the traveling sea — first reaching for land, moving through metamorphosis from fish to reptile, mammal, man. Now the traveling sea wants to reach the stars. What if it was the sea, all along, dreaming us into being?

August 8, 2003

*Tolerance, for yourself,
For others,
Let it all pass through your body,
You can always learn to read it later.
Knowing the program doesn't mean knowing how
to uninstall it.
Culture is like cheese,
Some tastes good but smells bad,
Some smells good but has no taste,
Some rots too fast,
Some only gets better with age.*

August 9, 2003

The actor enters the stage, carrying a mirror:

*The sea reflects all,
The dread of a high gone on too long,
The sea reflects all,
The unspoken words,
The wildest fantasies,
The sea reflects all,
The flashing memory of old clashes,
The transcendence of a silver lining in the clouds,
The dreams of a thousand minds,
The smiles of a thousand dreams,
The sea reflects all,
In the foam at the crest of a magic swell,*

*Visions of consciousness,
The sea reflects all,
For you cannot hide,
For you cannot hide.
She digs in,
To pour it out,
She knows your deepest secrets,
The ones you buried even from yourself,
The sea reflects all,
The desire of repressed kisses,
The desire of desire itself,
Emotional swells of light,
Creeping into the darkest corners.
The good and the bad,
The sea reflects it all,
To teach you that good and bad don't really exist,
Everything simply is,
The sea reflects it all.
A time-travel machine,
We build our own.
A synergy of bodies and memory,
Inner and outer,
Becoming whole.
What have you done for our biosphere lately?
I love her.*

Fresh bread bakes in the oven, Papua New Guinea
highland coffee scenting the whole ship. An albatross
waits alongside the Heraclitus for the wind. Horizons of
silver-gray cloud, while lovers make their peace in the
safety of their own two square meters of privacy.

Dreams — the bodies are dreaming now. I stay awake
most of the night, bathing in that shared dreamspace,
the ensemble's collective dream.

We are the dream of space travelers, carving out our
own immortality until the day we die. How many times
have we already died on this voyage? How many times
have we bent down to gather the pieces of some broken

reality, still clinging to our own puzzle? The pieces stay the same; the image one perceives is never quite the same twice.

*We are oceanauts,
The voices of the ocean,
We are oceanauts,
The traveling bodies of the ocean,
The ocean wants to reach space,
Heard through the biological senses of conscious
beings,
The call of exploration,
The call of evolution.
Man stepped onto the moon.
The first step.
But a child doesn't stop after his first step,
He learns to walk, then run, always further,
And if he meets an obstacle,
He goes around it, or leaps it,
Or tears it down.
We are going,
Keeping the voyage going, and going,
But never quite gone,
Because we don't know how to be anything else.
We are born to travel.*

The reef is nature gone psychedelic.

*I hear so many "I want,"
Without a thought for how,
Taking for granted that the wheel keeps turning
out more.
I want something new,
It's crucial that we get it,
Just in case,
"They" can get it for us.
One voice says we,
The other always answers, I.
I am a spy inside my own world,
Keeping track of my own small fascist tendencies,*

*Neuroses dressed up as statement,
Neuroses dressed up as behavior,
Mine, and everyone else's,
To keep the utopia of freedom as alive as freedom
can actually be,
Watching that freedom itself doesn't lock me into
a cell of its own making.
I am a spy inside my own world.
To know is the first conscious step, before doing,
Unless you're doing simply to know.
Separation, only ever, to learn how to operate,
Never to live by.*

Chapter Four

The Last Fuel

North Pacific → fuel rendezvous → Seattle / American West Coast

August 9, 2003

Pacific, unfortunately, lives up to her name. The ocean is flat calm, almost a mirror, canceling any thought of wind coming soon. A super typhoon is stealing all the lows right now, leaving the Heraclitus sitting in a stationary high pressure system. There is nothing we can do but wait, once again.

A blank page is not empty. A blank page is the totality. Too much to bear — a writer sets himself the task of retrieving lines from the whole. Parallel lines never meet. They might come close, but they'll never touch. They might head the same direction but never reach the same place. Life is made of the crossing of lines — time, space, dream.

*Blossoms,
Moonlit waves induced forms,
Taste of breath,
Grasps the resurrections,
Blossoms again.
Find your gems,
Sharpen tools,
And cut for optimal light transrefraction.*

Sometimes the best-preserved cultures are the ones you had to carry with you into exile, contenting yourself only with their essences. The ones that stayed behind get taken over by complacency.

All visualization belongs, in the end, to one's own mind.
Your mind belongs to you; in its world, you are your
own police.

We are expeditioners in the world. Hollywood — we're
coming for the experience. The myth factory of the
twentieth century, fabricating heroes and goddesses,
playing with archetype fusions, the media alchemists.
Senses, more play for the senses. We retrace history,
Haight-Ashbury, taste, feel, being there. Other time,
other space, but traces remain, folded into our sea-
people dream. Planetary minds isn't globalization;
wealth is eating the fruit that humanity itself created.

Wonder, always wonder — how far man has gone, and
is going. Taking it all in, why reduce ourselves? We are
building here, on the Pacific Ocean, our own vehicle for
experience. We are aliens in our own bodies. Perpetual
appetite.

*Like a banyan tree, we spread our roots over the
earth,
Feeding on saps of sense waves,
Melting into each other,
Crossroads at branches,
Bearing fruit when the season comes.
The fruits are surprises,
New tastes, new forms, new,
And when the fruit becomes too much of the
same,
We go on spreading even wider roots,
Searching for forgotten corners,
Digging ever deeper,
To bear new fruit.
Like a banyan tree,
A theater ensemble.
Expeditions to the heart of the Pacific,
Beat, the beat,
Earth blood, dispatched,
Clouds, monsoons, storms,*

*Organic soup, the base stock of biomass,
The highest protein manufacturer,
At the service of consciousness,
An expedition to expand our physical memory
with our planet,
Planetary man,
Collecting seeds for our new business,
The exportation of souls to other planets.
Dolphins, you were right,
Man's destiny is to become man.*

How good it feels to be human. A sea-people civilization is born.

*The Pacific is taking us hostage,
Wrapped around her calms,
The ocean demands our soul.
No price on our head but our head.*

The Pacific crystallizes, in our own bodies, the true scale of our biosphere. We've been close to coral reefs before, but still needed to set them against a scale this large. Since Biosphere 2, it's been clear the planet's systems need real monitoring. The advance since the industrial revolution reaches impacts that go well beyond anyone's own backyard — an industrial complex in one part of the world affects another, always. We're playing now with the very mechanism that regulates our biosphere.

If a group of people set themselves the task of at least monitoring the health of our planet — putting forth the logistics, the know-how — and are denied the money to do it, the position of the establishment in place becomes perfectly clear. Asking for one small sensor to monitor reefs is nothing, on a biospheric scale.

The big ethical question comes in: do we bend over and take it, so as not to disturb the pseudo-peace, at the risk of suffocating on our own mess anyway? Or call for

revolution? Or simply carry on, in the spirit the biosphere created us for?

Mankind has come so far that every day now is a day one can genuinely wonder at. Wonder doesn't exclude the intelligence to recognize suicidal behavior. In our own sea-people laboratory, aboard the Heraclitus, we might produce exactly what planet ocean needs most — potential biospheric managers. Not for the sake of power, but for the sake of survival. Life itself isn't at risk here; she's shown the capacity to start over, again and again. She's produced her most sophisticated species yet — a species still in the making. In forecasting the future of her children, life accelerated the process of making them ever more conscious. Did she ever imagine her children would grow this arrogant, and this consistently stupid? She might have misjudged — handing out powerful tools too fast.

Our Pacific odyssey feels like a space voyage. Inner and outer. We keep the exploration going. When we land, I hope to be able to tell you where we've been. Look into our eyes.

*Fingers feed on electrical sensation,
A touch,
Longing for another.
She is waiting,
Slave to a touch.
The thin plywood wall resonates,
The heat of passionate embraces,
The breath betrays the tempo,
Covering the sound of friction.
The wall goes quiet again,
The charge dissipates,
Feeding eroticism to dreams in progress.
Paradise alley,
Sensual alley,
Bodies fresh from the shower,
Smells of scented soap and apple shampoo,*

*Hands caress the skin,
Bodies flirt in the excuse of a passage,
Two lovers' feet sneak out from the blankets,
While another composes rhymes for a distant soul,
Clouds of fantasy float above,
Safe from escape,
All recycled.
Could,
Yes, I could.
Should,
Yes, I should.
Would.
No, I wouldn't.
Could would should,
Should could would,
Could should would,
Should would could,
Would could should,
Would should could.*

Sheiße, comes out of the command room. I am my own spy, and from the vantage point of my bunk, I hear it all. German gets spoken more and more — a sign. Unfortunately, or fortunately, I understand it all. Carol hovers, in search of a little attention, now that she has none from the possible suitors, who've made up their minds anyway.

A shift has occurred. After the 180th meridian, a real mark in our voyage, the psychological point people are treating as the turn toward home. Thinking of what we'll do next. A pressure transformed into a need to produce.

*The whispers,
The tone of the whispers,
Confidence,
Or gossip.
Everyone watches everyone else,
Forgetting to watch themselves.*

*More whispers.
The eyes can't lie.
Hiding behind the glow of the lamp,
Flame eating at the edges,
Blurring, to soften the stare.*

Eibes has transformed, out of some synergetic effect of Linda, or a genuine breakthrough in perception.

August 10, 2003

A message arrives. The chart of the coast of Canada, Pender Island, and San Francisco comes out in the command room. The date's optimistic, but better than gloom straight through. We missed a fish last night.

Strangely, everyone turns frantic all at once, as though suddenly grasping why we're heading for the west coast — but also realizing they don't carry the coral reefs in their hearts the way I do.

If humanity can be looked at as a single person — a life, a human circle — and the Oedipal complex a real possibility within it, then I think we should step into a new phase right now. We've done wrong by mother earth long enough; and if the ocean is our father, we can stop stabbing him too.

The world of man was built with words, but a reef is hard to give proper justice to. It's the most colorful place on earth — the range of color in a single glance unsurpassed anywhere in the natural world. How that first affected the mind of man, I don't know, but it was a real shock to mine.

Food, food — so many words about food. Everyone calling out memories, strawberries, steak.

"What I really need right now is goat cheese."

"How about a bowl of fresh grapes?"

"No, let's keep the grapes for wine — raspberries instead."

"Hold on, I've got it. Imagine, first, a barbecue over hot coals. On the side, waiting to be cooked: steaks, bacon, shrimp, mushrooms. On the table, bowls of fresh salad, sauces, a fresh fruit buffet."

We're all drooling, tasting in our own bodies the food we're only calling out.

"Don't forget the cheese platter, with French baguette."

"We're American, we like cheese with crackers."

"Fine — French baguette and crackers."

The obsession's a healthy one. Right now our choices run to green beans, carrots, or corn, all sharing the same distinctive tin flavor. The packet soup comes in two varieties, chicken noodle or creamy potato, neither of which was ever much of a hit on any shelf.

And we're not catching fish. Three bites in two months, two nearly landed, but nearly landed doesn't count — you either succeed or you don't. Still, it gives us plenty of energy to be mad about it, something to curse, and it feels good. You can already taste the flesh, visualize it cut into thin strips, wasabi and soy sauce waiting on the side. The moment the fish slips off the hook, the visualization only gets stronger, knowing full well it won't become real. But then hope sets back in. There are fish out there.

Tonight we eat our last steaks. Sunday dinner, and a toast —

"To the fish on our hook."

"To the fish on our line."

"To the fish we're going to eat."

August 11, 2003

I nearly blow up during strat, genuinely concerned about our bodies. Something feels missing. We have eight meals of protein left, apart from beans, with possibly two more months to go.

But the wind comes, and we're sailing — four points behind the beam, five knots.

"Fish! Fish!" On deck, a huge albacore tuna lies in its own pool of blood. General hysteria, healthy hysteria. We haven't even tasted it yet, but the adrenaline's already pumping through our bodies. Suddenly a huge whale blows beside the ship. The biosphere is with us, testing us right to our limits, then giving us exactly what we need. And we needed it.

Right wind, fish on the deck, whales — the body isn't cold anymore, warmed instead by excitement and joy.

Another fish takes our hook. Six meals of fresh meat now. It's a genuine pleasure to cut through the flesh, thick and white. I put my hand to my nose, smelling the sea on it.

In the command room: "So, Linda — first time you've killed a fish?"

"Yeah. I want to do it again."

The instinct of the warrior is unmistakable once you've got prey in your hand — an adrenaline transfer from one life to another, like a bolt of energy running through the body. It's coarse, raw, vital. Life feeds on life. Right in your face. It's for this same reason a soldier can keep firing his rifle. It's for this reason the crew punches pillows in Synesthesia. It's for this reason we're not cows, grazing all day.

After catching, cleaning, cooking, the circle comes round at last to eating. We haven't eaten anything fresh in over two months. At first the taste buds and tongue wonder, groping for some memory to hold the experience against. After so long fed on long-dead, pasteurized, frozen food, the taste that hits is the taste of life itself, still fresh, almost suspiciously so. The ocean gave her own essence to the flesh of this tuna. You can taste the cold of the water in it, and the sheer grandeur of the North Pacific.

August 12, 2003

2:30 a.m., crossing the two-thousand-miles-to-go line, six points behind the beam, heading northeast at five knots. An invisible landmark. I stay up just to watch it tick over to 1,999, out of pure childish satisfaction. The sea's been swelling, and though a huge high pressure is building around us, the wind's kept consistently picking up speed. To crown the night, we catch another albacore.

Last night at dinner, talk turned to Mars. Would you bring the values of personal property up there, if you had the chance? Any laws? And whose laws? Biospheres, design, criteria...

How about group dynamics — a popular word these days. We're a group-dynamics experiment ourselves, same as any ship, any group living together. A family is a group experiment too. But when it comes to space experiments, we're about as close as anyone's likely to get. The Heraclitus herself could pass for a spaceship — the diversity of cultures aboard makes her unique, and so does the diversity of types.

10:00 a.m., another albacore on the line. The sweet music of the line running out, bodies rushing through the command room hatch, the gaff ready, the cheer when the tuna hits the deck, hands holding it down, the

knife coming for the kill, blood running through the scuppers, trailing into the sea. And already the visualization of the cooked flesh entering the mouth, almost tasting it. I understand now the mountains of food built for the gods in Bali, offerings carried to the temple, the god feeding first on the essence, and only once the ceremony's done does the food return to the people.

It feels like we're eating the essence of the fish the moment it's pulled out. Eddie goes a step further, digging straight in to tear out the heart, the dexterity of a magician, into his mouth faster than lightning. I asked him once why, and he told me it tastes sweet — but I know, watching his eyes, that's only half the story. In Simbo they kept huge bonito shrines to help ensure good fishing.

On this voyage I've heard Eddie talking to his grandmother, talking to sharks, always quiet, off away from the crowd. Once in a while he steps forward for a Sunday speech. He got drunk at the 180th-meridian party, and a lot came pouring out of him. Nobody quite knows how to handle him in that state; I think he scares people. You have to be willing to step into his world. He pushes every limit, including ours, and in those moments the cultural differences between us show clearly. It takes real honesty and friendship. So I step in, because that's what he actually wanted — for someone to come in and stop him.

In the command room, the food obsession rolls on. Laser asks what everyone wants to eat the moment they arrive. Orla leads the conversation now, laughter, giggling, mouths watering. There isn't a single person who won't get swept into it.

August 13, 2003

The wind's died, the sail flapping, swells rolling the black ship, carried off now by a high pressure system. The voices have lost yesterday's effervescent sparkle, back when full sail had us making real way. The spirit of sailors, condemned to ride the drama of almighty weather — once again, waiting for the wind. An endless game. We've stopped hiding from it; we just keep on seeking.

Some minds repeat the same memes over and over, too tired to dig for anything new. But the new is always there to grab, always there to discover, behind some cloud of inertia. The tuna came to our rescue, feeding us more than just our bodies — essences, oceanic jolts of raw energy. The ocean's given us one of her signs, right wind and fish biting our lure both, signs enough to fight resignation, to keep our spirit sharp with exploration. So we ride, mood after mood, toward a richer humanity.

During every drift, the jubilation of arrival takes its own kind of rest, our bodies conditioned now to tune with the ship's own kinetic intensity. A symbiosis, all of us in it together.

Watching the faces carefully — the ones that have washed their masks away. The masks are still there, but translucent now, revealing maybe more than they should. Blurring the vision for a new set of information, watching the moves, feeling and feeling. Receiving the signals, processing rather than reacting, if you can manage it. Bringing your own body toward its most tender wounds, staying there without a word or a move. Absorb and transform if you're able; hide from it if you must.

The ocean gives, right now, just enough. No excess — even the fish can't quite be landed. Last night, three bites, all of them gone.

August 14, 2003

As if some magic wand kept sweeping over the ship, the sun paints everything it touches in its brightest possible colors. The hull feels warm, an almost unreachable memory.

On theater: the cosmic actors — sun, moon, planet, stars, rain, light. Matisse said never leave the rain out of your landscape, even if the sun's shining the day you start it.

In the command room, words after words in fast succession, everyone's mind busy. Eibes plays the turbine today, or the typhonic force, drawing words straight out of the reactors. A master puppeteer, working today on Reka — she now recites his monologue back to him. A work of manipulative art, real art whether conscious of it or not. He goes to everyone in turn, assigning a task or asking for one.

We're all puppeteering each other by turns, though you can see the rush to grab the strings. The hardest thing is getting someone to actually let go of the strings they cling to. But no one can pull every string in harmony at once, so unless you're willing to give some strings away to operate, the whole will always fall short of its potential. History shows this over and over. Another typhoon needs to come through, loosening hands, redistributing strings. Ideally, the strings stay available even when not in use.

What's our secret? A biospheric one — one of nature's most successful strategies, and it's called diversity. As an explorer, what shines from our planet, and from humanity too, is exactly that diversity. Senses melt into

faster experience, but time can be stretched, needs to be stretched, to draw out certain essences. So it's a give-and-take always, an exchange. In the Trobriand Islands they call it the art of gift-giving and gift-receiving — a deep, genuinely poetic way of interacting with the world and our own biosphere.

So we're here, on a mission of gift-giving and gift-receiving. What we have to give is our experience — what we've seen, felt, learned. We're sea people, a planetary tribe, coming to tell you what we've witnessed about our home, the ocean. Some of it is wonderful tales of oceanic dream; some of it is disaster stories of devastation and human, demonic blindness.

Our world at its best.

Our world at its worst.

The balance shows a real tendency toward madness here. We do need to hurry. What's the rush? We're moving so fast that the countermeasure needs to move just as fast as the destruction, or we have a problem. Planet earth control, we have a problem. Now here comes the satellite, sensing our planet. Now — what if there's no sensor at all? Well, then planet earth never gets to say she has a problem. We won't know about it. But we'll still have it regardless. I think by now we've learned the situation won't improve unless immediate action takes place — a virus, unless countered straightaway. We can still keep most of what we have.

Kitava... Gilbert's settlement in the Solomons... Simbo Island... Balinese art... but also gone mad: cyanide, shark fin, factory ships. On and on.

August 15, 2003

Seven knots, force seven, wet air. The ship struggling to hold her course, wind constantly climbing. This week barely seems to exist in my immediate memory, either

buried too deep already or simply slipped off the top shelf. It takes real conscious effort to remember it at all.

We finished the Odyssey, after three months of heroes and gods and goddesses. We crossed below the two-thousand-miles-to-go line. We caught fish, ate fish, talked about fish — so much, in fact, that I'm not sure we haven't trespassed the very threshold of sanity.

A coral reef scene has emerged out of something close to controlled chaos, barely. Denial and resistance, hope and excitement, emotional rescue, all of it — for a voyage moving in time yet somehow outside it, becoming untimeable, unfortunately also unfoldable in no particular time, sitting instead like a jewel that can't quite be seen, a jewel that can't be stolen, because it lives entirely outside time.

The wind died as fast as it came. And behind the curtain of faces lie individual struggles, and the pressure keeps building. We need to find a faster pace again — not necessarily faster sailing, but faster switching. Last night, for speeches, time itself became a factor — after three minutes I'd raise my hand. It helped focus things, and every speech benefited from it.

August 17, 2003

An evening devoted to our mission around coral reefs. Orla gives a presentation with images, highlighting the work of PCRF and the ship.

In the end it's events like this that create their own highlights in a life. Last night was one of those. A giant squid, a body a meter long plus tentacles, takes our hook. Sebastien reels the line in. The squid changes color under the Q-beam's light; gaff in hand, we wait for our moment to strike. As if it knew exactly what we

intended, it spits directly in Sebastien's face from three meters away, then spits the hook back at us.

This was probably only a baby giant squid, but for us it took on the form of the old sea monsters of sailor lore, back when you could still puff up a story freely. Ours suddenly became a giant, capable of sinking a ship. Jules Verne simply took the fisherman's art of storytelling a little further into literature.

Patterns of history play out right in front of us. All undercover, but all real — takeovers, battles for territory, duels and conspiracies, dictatorship and kingdom, gurus and religious dogma, obsessions of power, manipulation, strategies of control. They all exist here, and all interact.

Meanwhile dreams grow ever more vivid.

On the physical side of the ship, the sail demands constant attention. To hold certain winds, it needs to run as far out as possible, chafing against the shrouds. We regularly replace the lashings holding the chafing battens in place. The cloth weakens in spots, so we keep patching it. Christine and Linda have become the undisputed queens of sewing. The jib rips now and then, and again Christine works miracles with the machine.

The helm becomes a genuine challenge whenever the wind really picks up, and it takes each person a while to adjust to new conditions. Steering the ship is an organic feeling, your whole organism melting into hers. There's no science to it, no perfect method — the only perfect way is the alliance between you, the ship, and the ocean. Every wave is slightly different, and no recipe exists.

Navigation of the senses. The sea smells different depending on the pressure — a particular low-pressure smell, and a humid, foggy scent when a high's just

arriving. Now the sound of the birds, how loud, how strong — albatross gathering on calm seas, landing feet-first as a kind of brake. The smell of whale breath, the sound of the wind in the rigging, songs of lament from the booms, whispering to the sky, whispering to our minds the stories of Pacific melody, breathing in the air of a thousand waves. The sky stays gray; the blue stays hidden.

And we go on, further into the realm of this new, ancient kingdom of our own freedom — an oceanic freedom, eternally vigilant. Every jealous force will come to compete, traveling miles of brain neurons to divert us, to play. But no — the oceanic warrior won't give up his dreams, dreams of open space, beyond false histories, breathing poetry for a lifetime, whenever he can. The black ship rides the swells, wind behind the beam — go, Heraclitus, go, toward our destiny, steering among a million possibilities, all present at once, simultaneously. We ride, we ride, if only for a moment caught between times, never lost, only, everywhere, simply recalled.

The art of navigation is first the art of sensing, then mapping that sensation across time and space. I navigate the ocean, above and below both. A human home. I choose the planet itself as the temple to worship.

The wind's picking up; we're racing now. Still 1,689 miles to go. Two in the morning, listening to "A Merman I Should Turn to Be," I take the helm. The sea is raging.

Pacific white-sided dolphins play the swells, foaming under the bow wave. A parade of swift precision.

*Man dies so easily,
Long before physical death claims their bodies,
Decaying souls,
Pretending to be.*

August 22, 2003

Seascapes, sea, sky, moon, dream, love, escapes.

*Where the wind gives birth,
To the sailor's desires,
A hollow of stardust,
Man the man.*

August 23, 2003

Sensing moods passing by, sometimes taking hold, taking over entirely. We're drifting again, having traveled only three hundred miles this week. Maybe an ocean-timeless, or time-stretched, feeling has taken hold of me. The urgency of living fades a little; the pulse slows. I also know this is only part of a wave, and that "the world" will hit us harder than ever soon enough. Life experiments with itself, and whether you want it or not, you accept being part of it, for as long as you keep on living.

August 25, 2003

Nemo's transforms into a smoking room, apple-scented tobacco picked up in a rush with the last of my Egyptian money in the Cairo airport. That simple gesture becomes the departure point for a scene set in the sixties. We watch *Hair* for our now-almost-ritual Saturday-night movie. A weekly event by now, the movie list posted like any real cinema, everyone knowing when a particular title's due to screen on this voyage.

Everyone piles into Synesthesia with blankets, cushions, a glass of rum, wrapping themselves up comfortably, and while some pass out before the end, the crew stays together, silent, happy. We glimpse history — Jefferson in Paris, the Barbary Coast, *Red River*, *Hair*, *The

Great Dictator*, *Modern Times*, *The Untouchables*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *The Right Stuff*, avant-garde with *The Pillow Book*, comedy with *The Italian Job*.

Our life's become routine, a test of our own synergetic culture, but routine with an edge, the ocean's moods still genuinely unpredictable. We've sailed rough seas this week, thrilled by high swells and full sail — so even the routine of cooking dinner becomes its own small challenge, and the food tastes even better for it, regardless of it being the same old beans.

A fresh pot of coffee travels the length of the ship, drawing in visitors from every corner of our world — a small, eighty-seven-foot world, but ours. How many times has the visualization of being a spaceship, traveling through galaxies, meeting storms and black holes and other intelligences, alien communications, armadas of ghost ships —

"You're five points behind."

"Roger."

The helm's a real workout; a slip in attention costs us the engine coming back on. Every split second counts. A dance, a rough dance, where tempo and beat intertwine, the tango of a force seven, à la Pacifica.

Most conversation we overhear now is pure social utility, the actual words hardly mattering, just getting the voice out. More often than not, a purely reaction-based exchange, a strange ritual of gesture and sound, or a mechanical commentary on everything at once. For the first time in over three months, I block out the voices with music. I couldn't bear hearing the same voices performing their same routine, repeating the same course readings off the GPS. I didn't want to hear that pulse anymore; I went looking for another beat.

Gaie and Laser — but more Gaie, ever present in my mind. Not the "I had signs, visions" kind of thing, but a real presence, almost a copilot, a player in my own private mythology.

August 28, 2003

A sixties party, painting.

Dolphins put on an extravaganza for four hours around the ship. Torpedoes racing around us by the hundreds, surfing the swells. Finless dolphins perform jumps, swim upside down, spy-hop — the most gracious dolphin of them all. Two distinctive characters among them, the Pacific white-sided dolphins, stocky, fast, almost furious.

The essence of the wind's own breath guides the ship. Swells rising. Four knots toward the right direction. I want to arrive. I find myself, these last few days, turning the same thoughts over and over in my head. The level of conversation runs very low, purely social, without much intellect to it — repeating sentences, reading the GPS, commenting on life as it passes.

Phobias start to appear. One person thinks she's in some kind of carbohydrate crisis, that she needs therapy. Another talks constantly, without a break, like the subtitle running under her own personal movie. Sharp, supposedly humorous but really just full of arrogance, shooting down anything that moves. Plenty of people present laugh, because if they actually stopped to think, they'd probably want to hit her instead.

Electricity, energy created but never quite transformed.

The helm squeaks and moans, but keeps going. For a few hours the wind drops, and it feels almost tragic — a deserted helm, left all alone, going nowhere. Inner and

outer. And for a traveler, isn't that the tragedy of tragedies?

The fish keep refusing our lures — maybe naming them wasn't the best idea, especially when one's called the Terminator, which never worked once, and the other the Dude, after *The Big Lebowski*. So instead I eat a giant bowl of oats, a couple of canned pears stirred in to make it taste better.

The sea reflects all, and I'm shown exactly what I am, right now.

August 29, 2003

A storm's coming our way, forty-five knots predicted. We get the ship, and ourselves, ready. Nemo's hatches and the bosun's locker get sealed; the galley made shipshape. I sip a rum and coke.

A seal comes for a visit, quick comic relief in the middle of acting class. The coral reef re-enters our life through the very scene we're rehearsing.

August 31, 2003

Force seven, sun out. Everything today carries a dreamy quality. Dolphins come to play and parade, surfing the cerulean blues of the breaking waves, riding the bow while playing their own sensual games — spins, rubs, tail slashes. Now and then they leap toward the sky in spectacular, superhigh jumps. For three hours they entertain us. For the first time I feel almost in the water myself, my body balanced on the bow, hands touching the waves, breath catching their blowholes' scent, eyes meeting theirs right at water level. The dolphins only play harder and harder.

On the stern I pull the line. A fish, huge, on the hook. Eddie hauls it in, gaffed — thirty pounds of fresh

albacore tuna, energy enough for a proper feast. The dolphins leave the bow just to come watch us haul it aboard.

September 1, 2003

Atop the mast, huge swells. A plate holding the main halyard shackle breaks, and a shroud's attachment cracks. For over two hours the swells rock the ship back and forth, bashing me against the mast repeatedly. I curse at the sky. A few times it's genuinely close — one of the plates drops and I catch it between my legs while the swells pound me nearly to shreds.

It takes two hands of precise work, and only a few seconds of real opportunity between swells, to set the plate with its bolts and shackle pin. Not to mention it takes several tries just to find the right hole in the right place. When the plate's finally in, bolted, the block raised, the crow's nest itself bends under the strain. More than once I'm ready to give up, but I know I can't. In the end, Eibes lends a hand, bringing up a new shackle and helping pull.

A whale blows in the distance. Victory. We get to play the heroes tonight, and Eibes doesn't miss his chance during the Sunday speech.

Rehearsal for our tribute performance to the ocean. Dances and a coral reef extravaganza. The wind died but picked back up right as the performance began.

Whales, and fish, and phone calls.

September 4, 2003

A thousand miles to go, under full sail, racing toward Pender Island at six knots. Everyone gathers in the command room to cheer the countdown to 999 miles,

fresh-baked pizzas and peach coladas — one of our new creations — passed around.

Midnight. Moonlit seas and swells. A whale surfaces, spraying the deck with her blow. She comes back, over and over, like a scene from a dream, until everyone's caught the image of her. Huge silver swells, a moon-diamond ocean sparkling around us, the sound of her blow, loud, proud, and right there, teaching us biospheric history — that what matters above all else is life, and that everything can amount, in the end, to a single moment.

The mast has a crack — a growing one. We lower the sails. Everything we wanted is here regardless: a majestic ocean turning blue with the coming sun, force six, perfect wind from the west, 270 degrees, racing at five to six knots, with less than a thousand miles left to go. You only arrive when you arrive.

We call Gaie and Laser for technical advice. My mind moves at the speed of light under this kind of pressure. We're lucky — we still have a mast sleeve left over from the Antarctica voyage, one that should fit this mast perfectly. But the crack sits close to the wedges, so we opt to cut them back, buying a few extra inches of support for the sleeve.

Meanwhile whole scenarios keep popping into my head — how much fuel, mental math running the miles we could still make under engine alone. The math is simple enough: eleven hundred liters of diesel, a thousand miles to go, a hundred twenty liters a day at idle, double that at higher RPM. We could make three to five hundred miles at most, with nothing left over for the generator or any real emergency. We rely on the main engine just to be able to sail at all — we can barely hold a course below a force five, and even then only if the wind sits four to six points behind the beam. Getting

there without the engine's help, we haven't yet managed.

The nearest port is Seattle, and we're as far from everything as it's possible to be — a thousand miles in every direction.

Most of the ship's systems are showing real weakness now. A crack in the shrouds, in the plates. A small leak on the exhaust. The makeup water pump's down on one generator; the other's starter battery is dead. The fridge died. We broke our last thermos, so there's no more hot drink waiting when you wake for watch. We're on our last bag of rice.

A thousand miles to go, and we'll mark it with an event on the high seas. Events and parties are the markers we carve into our own odyssey, and 999 miles to go, after exactly four months at sea, is a real seamark.

We haven't made more than three hundred miles in a week. We can't hold a course at all if the wind's below a strong force four, and can only hold it, regardless of force, when the wind sits at least four points behind the beam. Making things worse, the weather's a steady succession of highs and lows, the lows moving so fast that at most we've had forty-eight hours of strong wind straight. Always hoping it comes from the right direction. Still, mile by mile, sometimes through sheer hard work on the helm, we get closer.

The helm demands full attention — a split second's inattention costs us fuel, and fuel's something we don't have much of, twelve hundred liters left. But the wind does come, eventually, and a new toast joins our Sundays: "Every mile counts."

Four months without a stop is a huge load on the ship herself, physically, and on the people too. The change in climate must be working the metal harder than it should. The rudder bolts came loose, seriously loose. A

shroud connection cracked and had to be rewelded. A plate holding the main halyard shackle broke. A few cracks here and there show in the cement now too. And more serious than any of it, a crack in the main mast itself.

The mainsail needs constant attention, not helped by needing to be let out further than usual just to hold a course. We've run out of small rope, so we've started braiding our own lashings, with Nicole's fairy hands — the fastest braider in the universe. The engineering systems keep giving us little signs too — fuses in the desalinators, a pump failing on one generator. Our fridge broke. And the small details keep piling up — the last thermos, gone.

We keep generator schedules and stove use to a bare minimum, watching every volt used throughout the ship closely. Every mile counts, so does every liter of fuel. And we know time itself is ticking — every mile counts, every liter counts, so does every day.

The food won't last forever, but we're still eating healthy meals, and enough of them, though the repetition of flavors has grown tiresome enough to fuel plenty of good jokes — a choice between corn, carrots, or green beans, and for dessert, peaches or pears. But we have food. For a while it looked genuinely tight, protein-wise, but the sea heard us, and just when we thought there wasn't a single fish left in her, twenty pounds of albacore tuna took our hook. We missed a few, and nothing frustrated us more than that — but eventually we landed them, and fresh food made all the difference. We can talk about cuisine again, and food remains, as ever, one of our all-time favorite conversation topics.

We know it's time to arrive. We're down to our last bag of rice, ate our last pasta, one meal of polenta left. Reka sprouts seeds once a week, a real delicacy. And

great news when we discovered a few extra boxes of coffee we'd thought we'd run out of. The Synesthesia team, Reka and Heather, are amazing — managerial wisdom in action. Meals remain the major daily event of our lives.

We know a great deal rides on timing. The weather isn't getting friendlier the longer we stay out here, and beyond that, our whole visit to the west coast is getting shorter, and shorter, and ever more complicated. We know it's harder still for the people not aboard, waiting. All we can really do is seize every opportunity that brings us closer.

We can picture how much work it must be, organizing just the supplies to replace our foremast and sail, not to mention the resources and finances behind it — how much added stress for a whole team waiting on us. The ocean is always uncertain, but we're definitely pushing the limits of uncertainty out here. The most important thing now is simply to arrive, healthy.

The ocean comes to our rescue, in our lowest moments, plugging in with high-voltage boosts — dolphins, whales, seals, albatross, grand spectacle after grand spectacle, bringing the wonder of life right to our door. Like the ocean herself is cheering us along. And the encounters keep growing longer. Dolphins kept leaping and riding our bow through high seas for over four hours a few days back; today a huge baleen whale escorted us right through the night up to lunch, appearing close beside the ship.

All of it fueled our theater aboard — coral reef scenes, sail dances, seal dance, ocean dance, songs. We discovered how important it is simply to dance. Don't let the world pass by without dancing.

For our major events, the sun always seemed to show up. We don't see him often out here, and we've grown used to living beneath a gray ocean. But for every

party, we received the gift of a sunset too, and those became their own events.

We're exploring our own moods and emotions, but the ensemble stays strong. We're blessed. Of course, edges show now and then — we want to arrive. A few of us turned properly tropical in our bodies out here, changed at the root. But we're still aware of our privilege, and of our opportunities.

Timing will dictate our strategy from here, and this time the ocean's the one calling the shots. Getting the sail properly repaired in Seattle looks, timing-wise, genuinely unlikely. And it's clear that coming under the Golden Gate Bridge with a crippled ship will change the whole meaning of "homecoming." The ship is tired, and will need real attention before setting out on another thousand-mile voyage to Oakland — winch, anchoring system, restocking fuel, food, supplies, and time for everyone simply to communicate, take a walk, taste the land again.

September 18, 2003

Disaster — I open the computer to find two weeks of writing gone with the wind. Two weeks of waking in the middle of the night because the thoughts felt right, all of it lost.

There is a crack in the main mast, our main propulsion for now.

Mast check. Sleeves. Fuel boat. The decision not to divert to Pender, but head direct for Seattle. The Golden Gate Bridge of San Francisco as our mark. Coral and man's mutual evolution. The paradise of the tropic belt. The weather system — the sun's heat, day and night, the creator of wind, and wind the creator of waves.

September 20, 2003

The sea is flat calm, and we get confirmation: fuel, via a fishing boat called *Sonny Boy*, is on its way.

A whale surfaces in the dark of night, in sync with the music playing, the deck and our bodies dancing to celebrate Xtine's thirty-ninth birthday.

September 21, 2003

Sonny Boy is on her way from the west coast of the United States, coming to meet us two hundred miles offshore to deliver fuel. We're almost dry — a mere two hundred liters left, kept in containers as our emergency reserve.

We're blessed — the sea's flat calm at sunrise, long low swells gliding toward the horizon. A high pressure has decided to keep us company just long enough to help. So we burn our last fuel to meet "Sonny Boy." He's already something of a celebrity in our minds, the whole crew's attention narrowed down to him.

In the distance, a speck of white. Eibes has already radioed a couple of times. They should be here. They should be here. It's 3:00 p.m.

We make contact with *Sonny Boy*. It's them. They've found us.

Sebastien and Eddie drive out to meet them, loading up the goodies — a giant turkey, so enormous nobody can quite believe it's actually natural. Someone tells Eddie it's the size of an American chicken. A case of oranges, flashing their color, two cases of beer loaded onto the deck. And a fresh salmon.

All our attention turns to the goodies, while the thick steel hull of *Sonny Boy* draws closer and closer. Frighteningly close. Suddenly I feel almost fragile in

our own ferrocement shell, out here beside such a monster.

I jump into the small boat and head over. We try, desperately, with a hose too short and a pump too small, to transfer fuel — it isn't going to work. The wind's picked up a bit, to a force three, the hose slips loose, the pump refuses to cooperate. We'll have to do it by hand, with containers.

"Sunny" turns out to be Sonny, and the boat's name, *Sonny Boy*. Sonny's a Makah Indian, though he warns me straight off — "I'm Americanized." Sixty years old, one good eye left to see with, one leg, he steers with a fingertip resting on the autopilot console.

We start talking. He's the first man I've met in five months. Sonny's a fifth-generation fisherman. As he tells it, there isn't much else to do up there — you're either in logging or in fishing.

Like any fisherman, I suppose, he starts in on the complaints. There's more fish out there than ever, but harder than ever to catch, thanks to regulation. America's at war with everybody, he says, but how do they think they'll handle Koreans by the millions when they can't even manage a handful of them in the middle of the desert.

He feels traditional values have actually strengthened over the last ten years. "When I was in school, they taught us math, English, and that was about it. Now the kids learn to make harpoons, weave fish traps, weave baskets. They wanted to do it the way their ancestors did, so they went after a whale — the tribe hadn't taken one in eighty years. They went out with canoe and harpoon, and got one. Asked me to help bring it in. Thirty tons of meat, gone in about five days. Everybody ate it, even my wife tried. The meat looked grainy to me, and honestly I felt sorry for the whale. But kids, you know."

Now it's my turn to share a piece of our own story — the foremast going down, the fish we've caught, how hard it's been to steer, and now the crack in the main mast. He knows the sea himself — fished the coast of Peru, Mexico, forty years now. Has another boat, rigged for tuna; used to go out for two months straight, though he doesn't do that anymore.

What we're doing right now is technically illegal — we're in Canadian waters. "They're gonna think you're smugglers," he says. He tells me nobody else wanted to come out here, too far, this late in the season, the weather's about to turn to real trouble in a couple of weeks. But he figured we needed the help, and he isn't doing it for free.

He asks me twice whether we're actually volunteers. So you're really doing this for nothing? That seems to impress him more than anything else.

I ask him: "How much?"

"Ten thousand dollars."

A knot in my throat. I hide my surprise.

We make that much in a week of fishing, he tells me. They bottom-fish — halibut, cod, six hundred feet down. I ask if they shoot the halibut. "Heck, no — the boys just haul the beast on deck and that's that. It's the sport fishermen who like to do it that way."

Looking around his ship, everything speaks of efficiency — dirty, no real comfort, but no wasted motion either. He's earned it. One leg missing, one fresh deckhand aboard. The man clearly has nerve.

We finish the transfer in the dark, hauling the small boat back up. There's diesel all over the ship now, like an invasion. The engine's running at higher RPM, and it feels almost like an assault — vibration everywhere, everyone talking louder just to be heard, the smell

inescapable. To top it off, an O-ring starts leaking in the main engine's oil filter, rags upon rags, hands black with grease. It feels like a premature arrival. Whatever serenity survived the rough seas has vanished now. A huge push is on. The techno-world has finally caught up with us, all the way out here.

But the dinner turns to magic — salmon caught right off the coast, bright pink, the best-tasting fish any of us can remember. The oranges look almost obscene in their perfection, and the turkey's beyond comment.

Tension released, and tension built. Never-ending, all is flux, said Heraclitus, and he clearly knew exactly what he was talking about.

September 22, 2003

We're racing now, engine on full blast at over fourteen hundred RPM, the hull vibrating, our own bodies vibrating along with it, clogging our ears, shaking our minds. We're on a different planet — the land reeling us in as fast as it can: phone calls, fridge dimensions, plate dimensions, estimated time of arrival, frantic pacing in the command room in front of the GPS and charts. This time it isn't because we're getting nowhere. After almost five months, we're down to considering minutes now — whether we can reach Port Angeles early enough to clear customs and push straight on to Seattle.

The image of Jesus on the cross was never really meant to remind us how he died for our sins, so much as what would happen to you if you didn't obey the power in place. It shines instead as a warning — look, this is what happens if you rebel. Stay quiet, and worship. For some, that stopped working, so the symbol changed — the cross remains, but Jesus isn't crucified anymore, simply stretching out his arms in a gesture of

sympathy, smiling, the way I once saw in a church in Namonuito. They sing heavenly songs there, together.

Now we have Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, and countless others, all trying to free man from his own conditioning. There were thousands of Jesuses in the sixties, changing the world — probably without ever quite realizing how much they were changing it. I can exist as I am because of them. It's the new type of man, emerging en masse to finally take into his own hands what's rightfully his — the right to happiness.

Now the government knows this too, and installs a police state, brainwashing the masses with cheap television and —

The log ends here, mid-sentence — the final entry of the voyage, cut short, perhaps by land finally coming into view.

A Note on Return

The log ends here, mid-sentence, in September 2003 — not because the voyage did, but because this is where this particular record of it stops. Land was close by then; whatever finished that thought was written somewhere other than the log, or not written at all.

I stayed on. Like the ship herself, and like much of the crew who sailed these pages with me, I continued the voyage well beyond where this particular record closes — the Heraclitus never was a vessel built for a single, tidy homecoming, and neither, in the end, were we.

Reading this back now, years later, what stays with me isn't any single passage but the accumulation — four months of open ocean, the long stretches of nothing but wind and waiting, broken by whales, by a cracked mast, by a fisherman named Sonny who found us two hundred miles offshore with fuel we genuinely needed. Most of what happens aboard a ship like this never gets written down at all. This is simply the part that did.

Glossary

Bio

A working and living space aboard the Heraclitus.

Comments and observations

A recurring evening ritual in which crew members shared honest reflections on the day, the voyage, or each other.

Nemo's

The ship's library and quiet common room.

PCRF

The Planetary Coral Reef Foundation, founded in 1991, the organization behind the Heraclitus's broader reef research mission.

RVH / Heraclitus

The RV Heraclitus, an 84-foot, three-masted junk in ferrocement, launched from Oakland, California, in 1975 by the Institute of Ecotechnics. Known informally as the Magic Black Ship.

Sea people

The crew's own term for themselves and their particular, deliberately chosen way of life aboard ship.

Strat / Strat command

A strategy meeting among ship's officers to plan logistics, route, and immediate priorities.

Synesthesia

A multipurpose room aboard ship used for meals, theater, meetings, and communal life generally.

Watches (e.g. "eight-to-twelve")

Shifts of duty, named for their hours, during which crew members stood deck watch or held the helm.