
**The
Long
Way**

by Bernard Moitessie

**Translated by
William Rodarmor**



SHERIDAN HOUSE

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Contents

Part One

- 1 Full Sail
- 2 Clear Light
- 3 Sunday at Trinidad
- 4 *Muchos Pocos Hacen Un Muncho*
- 5 Played and Lost . . . Played and Won!

Part Two

- 6 Good Hope
- 7 A Saw-tooth Wake
- 8 The Days and the Nights
- 9 The Long Way
- 10 The Rule of the Game
- 11 Christmas and the Rat
- 12 The Time of the Very Beginnings

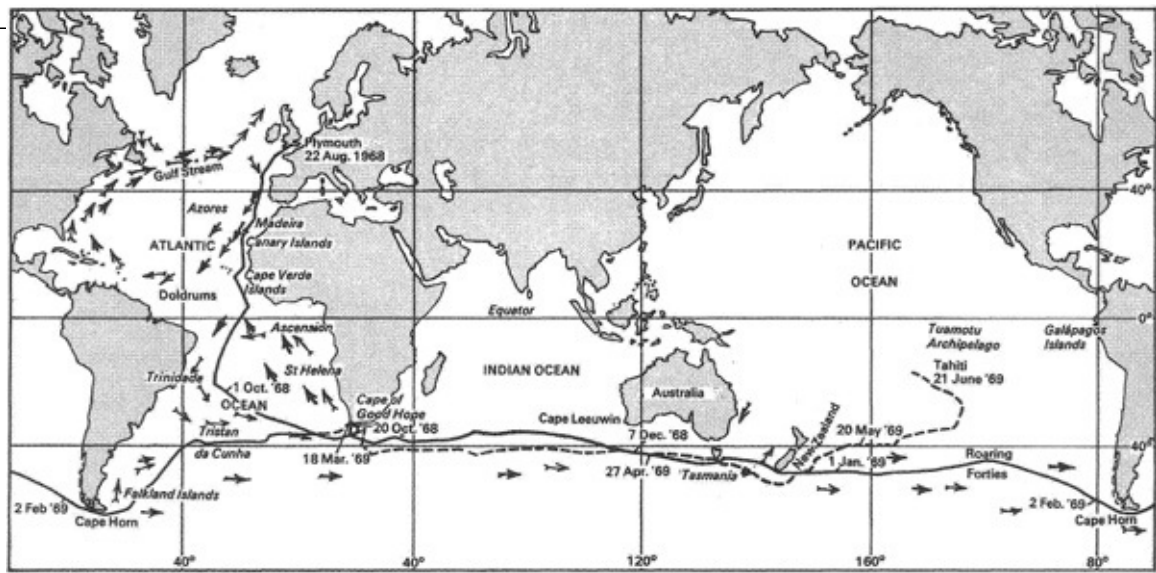
Part Three

- 13 My Eldest Brother
- 14 *Joshua* against *Joshua*
- 15 One Night . . .
- 16 One Day . . . and a Night

Part Four

- 17 True Dreams—and False
 - 18 Time to Choose
 - 19 The Turning Point
 - 20 Listen, *Joshua* . . .
 - 21 Time to Choose—Part II
 - 22 The Second Turning Point
- Appendix
Glossary

Part One



Solid line: first circumnavigation. Dotted line: second passage across the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In total the voyage was one and a half times around the world.

Thursday August 22, Loïck and I pop our heads out of the hatches at the same time . . . we had just listened to the weather report.

‘Did you hear? Shall we clear out?’

‘And how! Tomorrow is a Friday!’

Our boats lie at anchor in Plymouth harbour and the BBC forecasts favourable winds today and tomorrow, but also fog. Too bad about the fog: it will have to be today. Sailors do not like to leave on Friday, even if they are not superstitious, and waiting for Saturday is out of the question; the wind would have time to shift back to the west. We may be crazy to want to fell the three capes at a single blow, but we are not stupid enough to deliberately risk getting blackjacked by the approach of another low in the Bay of Biscay. The good Lord had given us the green light, it is not a Friday, let’s clear off! Bill King still has a few little things to take care of. He will leave day after tomorrow, on Saturday. Hmm . . . could it be that Bill King doesn’t like Friday either? As for Nigel, he cannot leave before the first of September, because of his job in the Royal Navy.

From then on, everything went very fast. I remember Françoise’s small face struggling vainly to keep the tears back. Françoise is my wife. I was upset to see her cry. ‘Listen, we’ll be seeing each other again soon! After all, what is eight or nine months in a lifetime? Don’t give me the blues at a time like this!’ I felt such a need to rediscover the wind of the high sea, nothing else counted at that moment: neither earth nor men. All *Joshua* and I wanted was to be left alone with ourselves. Any other thing did not exist, had never existed. You do not ask a tame seagull why it needs to disappear from time to time toward the open sea. It goes, that’s all, and it is as simple as a ray of sunshine, as normal as the blue of the sky.

All that canvas up in the air! I will heave everything taut when we first come about beyond the corner of the breakwater. The sheet winches creak, the water murmurs on the bottom as *Joshua* gathers way and begins to come alive . . . People who do not know that a sailboat is a living creature will never understand anything about boats and the sea.

Françoise had stopped crying. She was fascinated by the power and harmony of the long red hull trimmed with black, its great white wings bellied by the wind, full of one man’s dreams and the thoughts of many others. She shouted to me, ‘You can’t imagine how lovely she looks; take care of her, she will pay you back!’ But she was crying again when the launch turned back after the breakwater, leaving me alone with my boat and the horizon.

Suddenly, I thought very hard of my children. We had often talked about the voyage. Had I been able to make them understand, in those days when technical preparations called for all my mental and physical resources? I think they felt the essential, and will know enough to obey their own inner voices.

The wake stretches on and on, white and dense with life by day, luminous by night, like long tresses of dreams and stars. Water runs along the hull and rumbles or sings or rustles, depending on the wind, depending on the sky, depending on whether the sun was setting red or grey. For many days it has been red, and the wind hums in the rigging, makes a halyard tap against the mast at times, passes over the sails like a caress and goes on its way to the west, toward Madeira, as *Joshua* rushes to the south in the trade wind at 7 knots.

Wind, sea, boat and sails, a compact, diffuse whole, without beginning or end, a part and all of the

universe . . . my own universe, truly mine.

~~I watch the sun set and inhale the breath of the open sea, I feel my being blossoming and my joy soars so high that nothing can disturb it. The other questions, the ones that used to bother me at times do not weigh anything before the immensity of a wake so close to the sky and filled with the wind and the sea.~~

Before leaving Toulon for Plymouth, I had been incensed at the *Sunday Times*, which had decided to organize a solo non-stop race around the world, with two prizes: a golden globe for the first to finish and £5000 sterling for the fastest voyage. There was no need to be officially entered, and the rules were simple: all you had to do was to leave from any English port between June 1 and October 31 and then return to it after rounding the three capes of Good Hope, Leeuwin and the Horn.

The idea came to the *Sunday Times* after they heard that Bill King and *Joshua* were preparing for the long way. My old pal Loïck Fougeron was also readying for the trip; we had exchanged confidences at Toulon. We talked rigging, equipment, stores, useless weight, encumbering but essential weight, sails light and easy to handle, or heavier and more solid but harder to furl in a real blow, collecting rainwater, foul weather, cold, loneliness, seasons, human endurance . . . only things of the sea. After the *Sunday Times* announcement we decided to sail our boats to Plymouth, hoping to be able to carry off one or even both of the prizes, the good Lord willing, without risking our freedom since the rules did not specify that we had to say ‘Thank you’. From a strictly technical standpoint the run to Plymouth would also be an excellent trial before the main event, to shake out the bugs; once there, to get everything really shipshape to the least detail.

The wind is holding, *Joshua* is moving very fast, I feel passing through my whole being that breeze of the high seas that once felt is never forgotten. What peace, here in the open sea! And it seems ages ago that I stopped resenting the staff of the *Sunday Times*. In fact my rancour dissipated at Plymouth during our first meeting with the chaps who work on the paper. Robert, the head of the team, would have liked me to ship a big transmitter with batteries and generator. They offered it gratis, to Loïck and me well, so we could send them two weekly messages. The big cumbersome contraptions were not welcome. Our peace of mind, and thereby our safety, was more important, so we preferred not to accept them. Robert understood the meaning of our trip, though, and we were friends. Steve, his fellow from the Press Service, loaded both of us with film, as well as watertight Nikonos cameras. He told us ‘We are giving you all this, we ask nothing in exchange.’ And Bob, the *Times* photographer, shared all the tricks of his trade with us. He too was sorry that I preferred my old, quiet friend the slingshot to two or three hundred pounds of noisy radio equipment, but he could feel the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ and helped me to find good rubber bands, supplying me with aluminium film cans to contain messages that would shoot onto passing ships. A good slingshot is worth all the transmitters in the world! And it is so much better to shift for yourself, with the two hands God gave you and a pair of elastic bands. I will try to send them messages and film for their rag. It would make them so happy . . . and me too.

Madeira is already on my right, with an average of nearly 150 miles a day since leaving Plymouth. I wonder which route Bill King and Loïck will choose—to the right or the left of Madeira? To the right or left of the Canaries, further on, and the Cape Verde Islands? Loïck, Nigel and I had often talked about these problems during our six weeks’ preparation at Plymouth, while our boats¹ were tied up at Millbay Dock. At that time, we all expected to leave the Cape Verde Islands to port, since the doldrums are normally narrower to the west. But we had not yet studied the Pilot Charts on a point that we would have plenty of time to settle later at sea. There remained so many important jobs to do before weighing anchor.

I would like to know where Loïck is. And Bill King, where is he? The BBC has not announced his departure, or at least I have not heard it mentioned. Pity we do not have tiny battery-run transmitters like walkie-talkies but with a range of five or six hundred miles. That way, Loïck, Bill King and I could have kept in touch until the distances between our boats became too great.

The name *Joshua* is in black letters which stand out well against the white of the cockpit coaming. When I first painted the foot-high letters on, they were so eye-catching they made me uncomfortable. I was tempted to paint everything out again, particularly since my mainsail has a big identification number that would let Lloyds know that the boat was indeed *Joshua* (No. 2). Nigel's good sense persuaded me otherwise: 'Don't be a fool; if you have MIK up without *Joshua* written in very large letters, some ship is going to run you down trying to get close enough to ask you your name. That would be smart!'

Yesterday the radio forecast a big gale for the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean. I couldn't care less, I'm far away! It is nice to be at a safe distance when things start cutting loose up north. Now at latitude 30°19'. The wind is very light, but there are flying fish just ahead, dorados too . . . I can tell just by looking at the sky and the sea.

September 1. We meet a ship early in the morning. I get out my mirror, and she answers with an Alder lamp. She has understood and will radio my position to Lloyds. Françoise will know that all's well. I'm happy—right off, my day is made.

Feeling great, I go below to finish my mug of coffee; glancing out the hatch, what do I see . . . the ship coming back! She has made a big circle (I can see her wake on the calm water) and is bearing down on me from astern. Wow! I get pretty rattled . . . She comes by about fifteen yards off, towering like a wall far above my masts. The ship is enormous; she must be well over 300 ft long. When the bridge draws abreast, an officer shouts through a megaphone, 'We will report you to Lloyds. Do you need anything?'

I wave 'No' with my hand, my throat is so tight. The monster takes forever to go by; I pull the helm all the way over to get clear, afraid she would wobble in her course and sweep both my masts away. But the captain of the *Selma Dan* has a good eye and knows what he is doing. I have cold sweats just the same, and my legs feel like rubber. At this range I could pelt the bridge with my slingshot, but there was no time to prepare a message. And I dare not try to get them to understand by signalling; they are so nice they would turn around and come back. I have had enough thrills for one day, and I know someone who is not about to take on any more ships with his mirror for a while.

Flying fish come with the NE trades, which I picked up before the Canary Islands. No squalls, except once between Gran Canaria and Tenerife, which meant a few hours under storm jib instead of genoa. Actually, it was not a squall: the trade wind often reaches force 6 to 7 in the strait between the two islands.

The average speed climbs day after day, on a sea full of sun. I am glad to see that *Joshua* sails definitely faster than before. This improvement is largely due to the fact that she is much lighter. Also, the longitudinal weight distribution is far better; she is less loaded down with useless gear, and I was able to completely clear out the forward and aft compartments. In the old days, we had two dismantled dinghies in the forepeak, one dead and the other useless, not to mention an incredible pile of junk collected over the years. When in Plymouth, I unloaded engine, anchor winch, dinghy, and unnecessary charts, a suitcase full of books and *Sailing Directions* that did not cover my route, four anchors, 55 pounds of spare zinc anodes, 900 pounds of chain, most of the $\frac{3}{4}$ in. diameter line, and a ton of the paint (275 pounds!) after splashing a last coat on deck and topsides.

Incredible, the amount of spare equipment a sailboat outfitted for cruising the trades, with

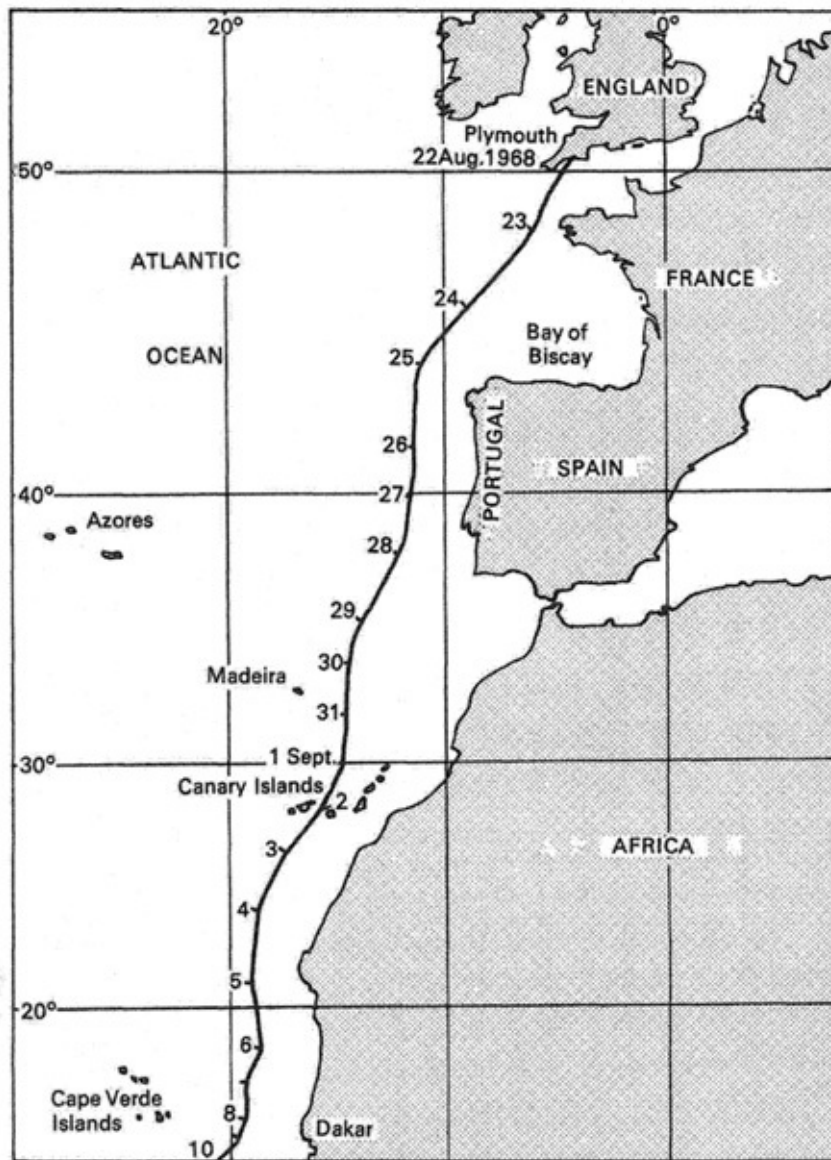
stopovers, can carry. Without speaking of masses of improbable bits of gear which add up to a lot of weight. The whole mess was stored with my friends Jim and Elizabeth, or thrown away, or given to neighbouring boats, greatly relieving mine.

Naturally, I did not completely disinherit myself, in spite of cutting to the bone. Though I kept a strict minimum of charts, they covered all possible landfalls around Good Hope, Australia, Tasmania, the northern and southern islands of New Zealand, the Horn waters with parts of the Patagonian channels, and even a few atolls in the Pacific. In case of trouble, I would not be caught with my pants down.

I therefore left Plymouth with that which I considered necessary, but also that which might become so. My ruthless war on weight spared the 55 pound CQR anchor and the 35 pound Colin Tripgrip, 200 feet of $\frac{3}{8}$ in. chain (in three lengths in the hollow keel), and a coil of $\frac{3}{4}$ in. diameter nylon anchor line.

Though stripped to bare essentials, *Joshua* is ready for an emergency landfall in case of damage, discouragement or illness. Despite all precautions, health always presents a number of unknowns on a trip this long. Above all, there is the great and most beautiful unknown, the sea itself.

Continued fair weather, but very little wind. The speed is still impressive, as *Joshua* can carry more than 1560 sq. ft of canvas. I rigged a 54 sq. ft storm jib as a bonnet under the main boom, in addition to the genoa bonnet, and a lightweight 75 sq. ft storm jib as a second staysail. The sea is calm, my rigger picks up the slightest breeze. I watch the boat slipping along at nearly 7 knots on a smooth sea in the setting sun. What peace! Two weeks already, and a daily average of 143 miles since Plymouth.



22 August to 10 September 1968

Compiling figures may seem odd, when the wind and sea range so far beyond them. But to a sailor's eyes, the sight of miles drawn on a chart reflect the long wake furrowed in the waves by his boat's keel, the measure of his offering to the boat and her offering to the sea. If we are indeed racing, I do not feel that it is against other sailors and other boats.

Anyway, Loïck, Bill King, Nigel and I do not have the same boats. Even if we could conceive of the trip as a race, the trump cards are not evenly dealt. Each of us has the boat he likes best, the one that lets him live aboard as he sees fit.

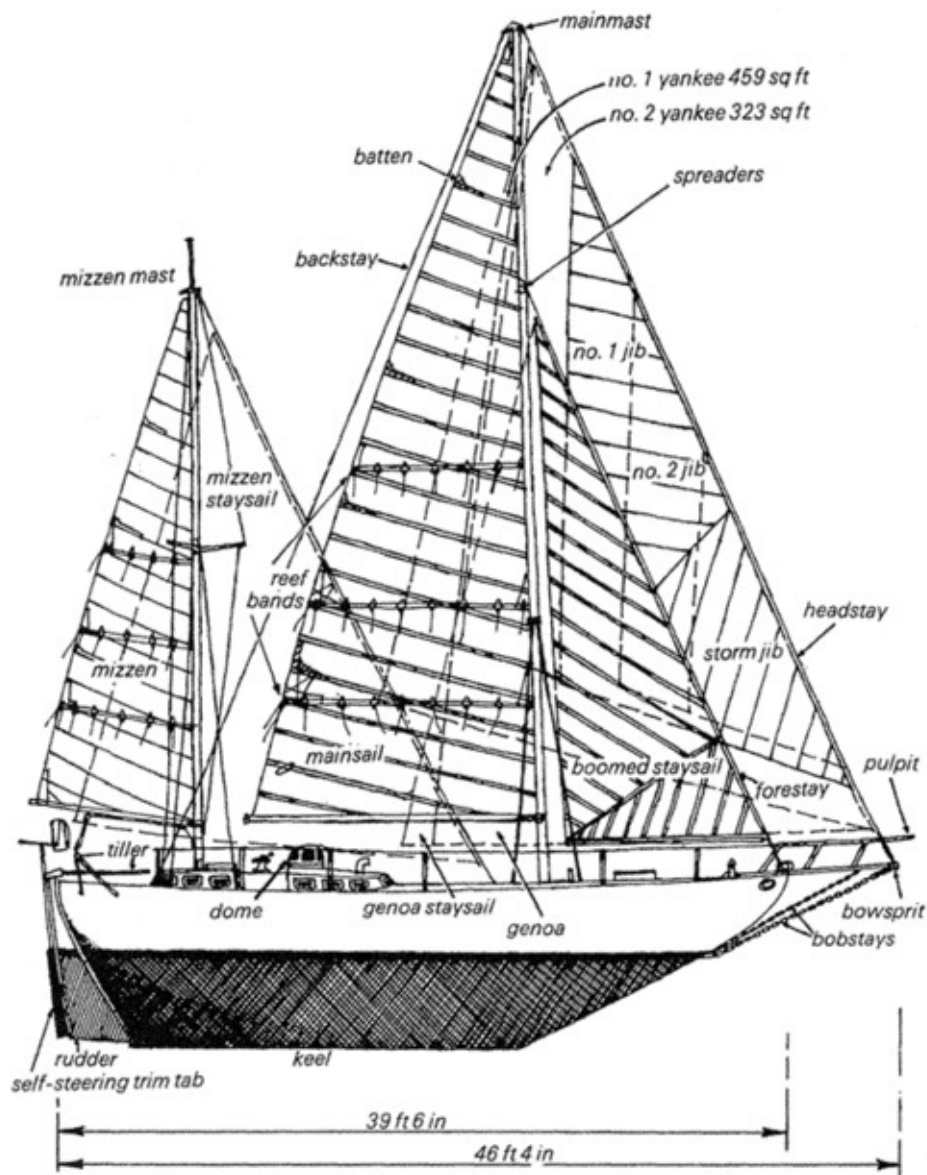
The wake stretches on and on. The Canaries are now astern, the Cape Verde Islands on the right, Africa to the left. Flying fish hunted by the dorados glide in big schools in front of the boat. At times a beautiful rainbow plays with the foam of the bow wave. I film it, securely wedged on the bowsprit pulpit.

The doldrums are fairly close now. It is a zone of calms and light variable winds, with rain and squalls, caused by the meeting of the two trade wind belts near the Equator. At the latitude of the Cape Verde Islands, the doldrums stretch approximately between the 15th and the 5th parallel north, or about 600 miles.

For the big square-rigged vessels of old, the doldrums meant long, exhausting days handling the

heavy yards in the damp heat under a leaden sky, taking advantage of the least shift in the wind continually coming about. For our small yachts, the doldrums are annoying but nothing more, since coming about is easy; the zone should normally be crossed fairly quickly. Just the same, a sailor will always take on the doldrums with an uneasy conscience. I wonder where my friends will cross? I have not quite settled on a course to the left or right of the Cape Verde Islands.

Joshua has been dragging along for days that feel like weeks. When the breeze drops completely, we have to sheet everything flat and drop the 650 sq. ft genoa-bonnet combination, which would chafe too much, slatting against the staysail stay as the boat rolls. Every time the inconsistent breeze picks up, the genoa has to be raised again and the sheets trimmed to the inch to catch the faintest puff, to sail south at all cost.



I eat badly, I am losing my punch. Several opportunities to make a few miles south have been passed up, because I was disgusted with the rain, or did not want to get wet, or was just not up to it, not having had the heart to fix a decent meal for days.

When rain falls, it is not even useful. On a trip this long, every drop of fresh water is a gift from the heavens. I left Plymouth with enough water to reach New Zealand, though, and will have a dozen opportunities to top up my tank between here and Tasmania. Just the same, I collected 15 gallons yesterday and today, with a bucket rigged under the mainmast gooseneck. Strictly as a matter of principle, as if I did not want to leave this rotten place completely emptyhanded.

I feel empty, like this sea without sun, without fish, without birds, dead as a doornail despite the goddamned swell that tosses the boat, wearing the sails out and wearing me down. I have to pull myself together and hang on, trim the sails twenty times an hour, move out of the doldrums at all costs, before I get completely fed up with everything.

¹ Loïck Fougeron's *Captain Browne*: 30 ft gaff rigged steel cutter, formerly the Van de Wieles' *Hierro*, which he had sailed from Morocco to Plymouth. Nigel Tetley's *Victress*: 37 ft plywood trimaran. Bill King's *Galway Blazer II*, a 42 ft moulded ply schooner with a rigging drawn from the Chinese junks, unstayed masts, turtle deck and a reverse sheer.

All told, there were nine starters for this adventure. I only know Bill, Nigel and Loïck personally, since we were together in Plymouth. Many had left long before us, others afterward, the place and date for sailing being up to the individual. Of the nine starters, only Robin Knox-Johnston brought his boat back to England after rounding the three capes. Nigel was almost home, with three capes in his wake as well, when *Victress* broke up in the Atlantic. I learned of it a few days after *Joshua*'s arrival in Tahiti. Crowhurst died at sea. All the others had to stop en route because of serious damage, boats rolled by breaking waves, etc.

I slowly stretched for all I was worth this morning, first my left side, then my right, then in a circle pulling each joint one by one, yawning till my eyes watered and filling my lungs and all my body with new air. I felt penetrated by something like a great peace and a great strength. That is how life begins. I did not have to get up; my whole body knew that today would be very different from yesterday.

All last night water rustled along the hull; I even seemed to hear it in my sleep. Whenever I cocked an eye open I knew even before I turned the flashlight on that the compass at the foot of the bunk would read SSW. Each time I went back to sleep with an immense hope in my heart.

The spare staysail halyard could be heard tapping against the mast; I had forgotten to replace the shock cord that pulls it toward the shrouds. The rapping usually bothers me; it interrupts the whispered talk between sea and boat. But last night it joined the chorus of sounds a sailor needs tapping out 'the wind is back, the wind is back, tomorrow's clouds will be the shape and colour of the trades, pink-lined petals in a sky becoming bluer with the climbing sun'.

I stretch again, wedge the pillow to leeward, and immediately go back to sleep. A sailor's joys are as simple as a child's.

Joshua is doing 6 knots, closehauled to the light SE trade wind, which we picked up on September 1st in 4° north latitude.

The doldrums turned out to be wider than expected. I had figured on 600 miles; where we crossed, was closer to 900. *Joshua* averaged 90 miles a day, never doing less than 50 miles noon to noon. The rainy squalls were not bad, but it was still a very long ten days. The overall average fell from 144 miles at the beginning of the doldrums to 125.4 at the end; it will be hard to make up.

Also, I have to fill out a little; I did not have much fat to start, and there isn't any left. My inner barometer has been rising rapidly since last night, though. This morning I downed a huge mess of oatmeal and three mugs of Ovaltine with renewed appetite.

Spirits are high again, and except for my lovely torn bonnet, ripped in the doldrums and rotting the cabin, all's well with crew and boat. The barnacles took advantage of the calms to hitch-hike on the rudder and probably the aft part of the bottom. I will dive down and clean them off at the first chance.

The flying fish returned with the wind. So did the dorados, to chase the little gliders as they burst from the water, fanning out in sheets sometimes so compact they look like big, luminous palm-fronds and glimmering with hundreds of silver wings. Here and there, a brief swirl reveals a life and a death.

Watching the struggle for life, you wonder how there can be any small fish left in the sea. Do the flying fish's wings keep them safe from a dorado? True, they can take to the air instead of zig-zagging like a sardine in front of the hunter's mouth, but a dorado swims fast enough to follow a flying fish under water and snap it up on landing, sometimes in full flight. On a calm sea the worried shoals run the greatest risk, with their whole flight visible to the dorado following just beneath the surface.

I catch my breath at a sight I have only seen twice before in all my years at sea. Caught unawares, a flying fish shoots straight up in a twenty foot leap into the air. A huge barracuda takes off after it and snatches the flying fish at the top of the arc. The really amazing thing was seeing the barracuda contorting its entire body and beating its tail, modifying its trajectory to follow the prey, which had

angled off to the left at the top of its leap.

I felt sorry for the little one, but was so struck by the terrible beauty of a master-stroke that I let out a big 'Aaah!'

The air is warm tonight, the wind gentle; there is hardly any swell. From the cockpit, I can clearly hear the rustle of water when a whole school takes off, with *Joshua* or the dorados in pursuit. It sounds like the faint trembling of coconut leaves near a lagoon when a breath of air bestirs the quiet night.

I had gone below to turn in, and was listening to the water flowing along the hull, half asleep, when a noisy flapping broke out on deck. I jump from my bunk yelling 'flying fish!' and catch it on the fin, still luminous from the water's phosphorescence. But I let it go immediately—the fish is so huge it must be a young barracuda or some other menace to wayward fingers. I suddenly flashed back to the misadventure of a sailor I had met in Alicante, in Spain, at the end of the trip with Françoise back from Tahiti via the Horn.

He had been trolling, and caught two mackerel towards the end of the afternoon. As night came on he looked astern and saw that his line was taut again. He hauled it in, and grabbed the fish to break it back. It turned out to be a big weever, a long fish with an extremely painful, sometimes fatal sting. He was sailing singlehanded without an engine, and was almost unconscious when he reached a Spanish port the next day.

Mine was a flying fish though, but an unbelievably big one. Just as I instinctively let him go, his wings brushed my wrist; a second reflex quickly closed my hands again—too late. Now he is flopping around the deck, and it is like chasing a bar of soap in pitch black darkness. He gets away, after caressing me one last time with his enormous wings. I am heartsick. My mouth waters as I curse myself.

I like flying fish better than anything. It tastes like sardine, but much better. I did not see mine too clearly, but he was gigantic, possibly over two feet long. I am not sure that my hands could have managed around his body. To think he will probably wind up in some dorado's belly, when I had him a yard from my frying pan! Others land on deck, of course, but they are just babies. I want the big one so badly I can taste him.

The sea is full of life here, nervous then calm again. The Pilot Chart puts us in the middle of the westbound Equatorial Current, whereas the alternating areas of choppy and calm water suggest veering of current setting to the east. That would explain the concentration of marine life.

At dawn, *Joshua* passes near a school of a dozen big puffer fish floating belly up, completely inflated. It is the first time I see any blown up of their own accord; when I catch one I usually have to scratch his belly to make him puff up. Seeing them like that, I wondered what could have happened. Did they all die, for some mysterious reason? Was a branch of the current carrying a plankton that was poisonous to puffers?

My quick deduction was obviously idiotic. If they actually had died of a poisonous plankton, they would not be floating all together in a ten foot square, felled at the same time by a universal tummyache. Just then I see a fin followed by a swirl; in the eddy, one of the white balls disappears, swallowed by the shark. The other white balls don't lose their nerve. They just float there, serene, awaiting the call of destiny, perhaps wishing all the same that someone else would be the next to go and hoping the shark would die.

I do not see the story end; *Joshua* is doing 7 knots and I was too engrossed to climb quickly up the mizzen mast. Those puffers blew themselves full of air to fool the shark, but he didn't fall for it. I would give a lot to know how the shark is feeling right now, because puffers are usually poisonous. In Mauritius, I saw a litter of kittens die that had eaten one left on the beach by a fisherman.

Oddly enough, the flesh of the puffer is delicious. Yves and Babette Jonville ate plenty of them during their visit to the Galapagos in *Ophélie*, but they knew the trick, and were careful never to eat the head, liver or skin, which are extremely dangerous.

When I was in the Galapagos, the De Roys told me the story of a yachtsman who did not believe the tales. He swallowed the raw liver of a puffer in front of André De Roy, who was struggling to stop him. His tongue swelled up to enormous size, he started to suffocate, and very nearly died.

Probably nothing more serious than after-dinner drowsiness will befall my friend the shark. Not that I think of it, I remember a perfectly healthy dorado speared from the deck of *Marie-Thérèse* about this latitude, which had ten little puffers in its stomach. How those slow and apparently defenceless fish could have got there, at the mercy of any foe and a thousand miles from shore, I can't imagine.

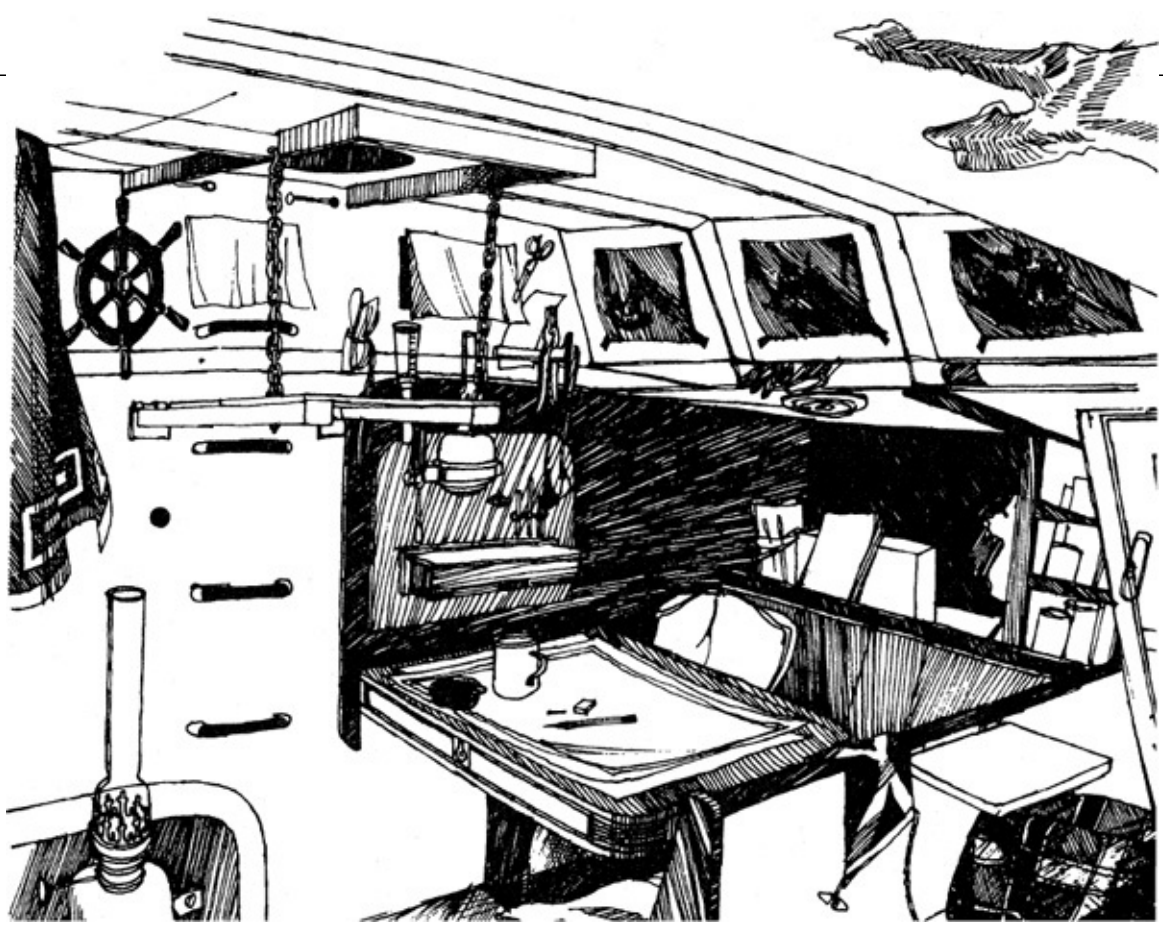
I wonder why such inequality is so common in nature? Sharks and dorados can eat all the puffers they like, and their victims can't raise a fin to stop them. Whales snuff out half a ton of lives at a single bite, without even looking. What is the reason behind all that? Yet it must serve some purpose.

Why was I thinking about those things, so complicated yet so simple? I forgot to climb the mizzen mast to see how many white balls were left in the wake.

Each morning the sun tinges the little clouds with pink and mauve as they drift along like snowflakes. Then it begins to climb, a clear light in the pale blue sky—the trade wind sky of the South Atlantic where the weather is constant, without squalls or calms. The wind breathes into my sails the life of the open sea; it runs murmuring through the whole boat, to blend with the rustling of water parted by the bow.

Joshua has been sailing in the trade wind for a week, averaging 159 miles a day. I listen to the sound of water along the side, and the wind in the rigging. By turns, I read *The Roots of Heaven* and *Wind, Sand and Stars*, in little sips. I spend long moments on deck, watching the flecks of foam rising in the wake. There are so many things in the flecks of foam and the water that runs along the side I could not ask for more; I have it all.

The sun rises, peaks and sets, and one day gracefully makes way for the next. I have only been gone a month; my boat and I could have been sailing forever. Time stopped long ago, I have the feeling nothing will ever change; the sea will stay the same luminous blue, the wind will never die, *Joshua* will always carve her wake for the pleasure of giving life to sheafs of spray, for the simple joy of sailing the sea under the sun and the stars.



Sunday at Trinidad

Calms, calms, light breezes from the north, more calms . . . the sun is shining to raise my spirits after the noon sight: only 45 miles covered in the last 24 hours. The shortest run since the start.

The overall average dropped from 132.4 to 130 miles since this time yesterday. That will be hard to make up, as any sailor knows. What consoles me a little is that as the breeze has shifted to NE, the 45 miles on the chart run due south, toward the little island of Trinidad.

Next day, September 28, the breeze returns to the south; I come about and steer for Good Hope. We are not going fast, but at least make a few miles in the right direction. Up to now *Joshua* has been sailing SW close to the wind, to pick up the following winds which should be blowing along the 35th parallel this time of year. Better to head SE along the 35th than give up ground by continuing westward.

The average again dropped after the noon sight: 129 miles, down from 130 yesterday and 132.4 the day before. I do not lose my head, but I meditate on the vanity of things . . .

The breeze shifts to SE force 3; I come about again onto the other tack. Trinidad is only 90 miles to the south. The sea turns unpleasantly rough: the presence of a heavy southerly swell in this latitude (19° south, well in the tropical zone) surprises me a bit. A distant gale probably, but a very violent one to have sent a residual swell this big so far north.

Best not head further south than necessary. It is still spring down there; the gales are more frequent and their average path runs further north than during the favourable summer season.

The breeze really does not know what it wants: now SE, then east, at times even NE, but always light. I take advantage of every favourable shift to make for Trinidad, where I want to drop off a package and film for the *Sunday Times*. We have been doing about 4 knots since yesterday. If the little breeze holds, and the sky says it will, *Joshua* should be in sight of land tomorrow morning, under full sail.

Early in the afternoon the wind steadies to force 3 from the east. My spirits start to rise, though I have no landfalls. They upset the normal cadence of things; they alter the very slow inner rhythm a sailor develops after a time away from the dangers of the coast, in the security of the open sea where everything takes its true place, without demanding but also without deception.

For the sailor, the coast is often like a great whore. I should know: two of my boats have been lost. If I do have to sight land, I like it to be from as far off as possible. Moreover, in chasing weight to Plymouth, I simply forgot to take along the *Sailing Directions* for Brazil, which include Trinidad. Not a very smart move.

I had read the description of the island during Tahiti-Alicante, and remember that the east coast is fairly straightforward, with a small settlement. They probably have a radio transmitter, and can notify the Lloyds if I am not able to deliver my package for some reason—like the fact that tomorrow is Sunday.

I hope the radio operator, probably the only person to know what MIK flags mean, will not decide to take a dawn to dusk siesta. Even if the whole town is snoozing, though, the appearance of a racing yacht is sure to dispell its tropical torpor.

Early next day, September 29, land ho! The wind is a steady NE force 3 under an absolutely blue sky. No problems—the wind will not drop. I can't say why; it is just one of those things you feel

instinctively, from a hundred little signs in the sea and sky. And this time the coast is a friendly one with a perfect steady breeze to take us there.

Will there be coconut trees on the beach. I wonder? I would like to caress them with my eyes, just in passing.

For once, everything is turning out exactly the way I had hoped yesterday. Trinidad gets bigger by the minute, first its colours, then its features showing through. It is high and jagged, with big cliffs and rock faces shading from light purple to dark blue depending on the angle of the sun. There are patches of pink too, but very little green. The island is beautiful. I would like to sail round it, a stone's throw from the cliffs, perched on the lower spreaders to keep an eye on the bottom. I bet the coastline is absolutely clear of dangers.

The breeze, still NE, has gone to force 4. Through binoculars I can make out the little settlement. It is tiny, like a pretty miniature. The roofs are green. I am intrigued by a long red thing at the breaker line that looks like some sort of peculiar jetty. What the devil is it?

Joshua closes with the coast at 6 knots. The red thing is not a jetty, but a boat anchored offshore, rusty as a nail. It seems to be a whaler, like the ones I saw at Cape Town fifteen years ago. That means the coast is perfectly clear, as I thought.

The distance narrows pretty fast. Under my feet *Joshua* feels easily manoeuvrable, ready to gybe or come about at a moment's notice. Already the sea is much calmer. The rusty boat still intrigues me; if I were a whaler captain, never would I anchor so close to shore. I keep it in view in my binoculars.

Way out! I was right the first time, it's a jetty! Or rather, the wreck of an old steel whaler, no doubt sunk deliberately and filled with stones to make a breakwater in front of a tiny small boat anchorage.

If there really is an anchorage, it is out of sight behind the wreck. I do not see any rowboats or canoes on the sunswept beach, so there has to be some sort of manmade harbour if the villagers want to fish from time to time. But who knows? They may catch all they want just by casting from the beach.

Toward 11 a.m. I heave-to 300 yards from the wreck, staysail and genoa aback, and from the lower spreaders check for shoals on the leeward side. Everything is deep blue, except for a few suspicious yellow-green patches close to shore.

The climbing rungs screwed to my masts are really useful. I first saw the trick on Bardiaux' *Les Quatre Vents* when he came through Mauritius, then on *Didaki* at Cape Town after his visit there, then on five or six other boats. Nigel mounted them on *Victress*. Bill King wanted to do the same, but had a touchy problem: his Chinese junk rig sails are laced to the mast, which has to be perfectly smooth. I hope Bill worked it out, because with rungs you're at the lower spreaders in two shakes.

Bardiaux had carried the idea one step further. The Mauritians still remember him sitting on the lower spreaders while tacking around the coral heads under club-footed staysail and main, when entering a difficult pass. He had a combined watch and steering position on the spreaders with a control system rigged to the tiller.

Joshua drifts slowly. Everything is clear for a couple of hundred yards at least. There is a questionable patch far to the right of the village, and another to the left, where there is a tell-tale brownish discolouration. It is all imprinted on my memory, for a few hours at least.

I climb down and scan the village with my binoculars: not a soul. The windows seem to be closed with green shutters, the same green as the roofs. I give a blast on the foghorn, then shoot a reel of movie film with the Beaulieu. I blow the foghorn again, then gybe to get closer before altering course.

Headsails aback again, I ease the staysail sheet with the helm well alee, beating very slowly along

the shore. The Beaulieu is near at hand, and I shoot more film between horn blasts. My signal flag flutter in the wind. They have been up since Plymouth, and are still in good shape, a bit faded, after five weeks at sea, but easy to make out with binoculars. I hope the people on shore have a pair of binoculars, at least. Nothing stirs.

Another horn blast: no greater success. It is past noon and I am hungry in spite of my excitement. I would like to pick up the smell of the earth, but the wind is from the sea. The island probably does not have much aroma, it shows so little green.

The foghorn again: nothing. After all this trouble, I would hate to turn tail and leave. Still, I am tempted to forget the *Sunday Times* and just sail around this beautiful island, slipping by the rock cathedrals that scale the cliffs. I would give myself just enough leeway to gybe, in case the genoa gets backwinded by a downdraft so close to the coast.

But that would mean letting Francoise and my friends down, who would be glad to get any good news. Also, if the paper got a radio message from Trinidad, the BBC might announce that *Joshua* had been sighted on such-a-such day, and give positions for Bill King and Nigel as well. I will stay glued to the radio for three days after Trinidad. I would be so happy to find out how my friends are doing wherever they are. I do not expect to hear anything of Loïck; like me, he has no transmitter.

The foghorn—nothing. It's unbelievable! They must be noisily filling their bellies with all the windows shut!

At last! One, two, three . . . nine . . . I lose count . . . They pour out of a big house onto the steps. I was right: they were all stuffing themselves at Sunday lunch, probably making enough noise to raise the dead. Maybe some kid sent to stand in the corner raised the hue and cry, shouting '*Bella barca! Bella barca!*'

By now there are at least twenty people jamming the steps, but they just stand there motionless. I wave my arms like mad: no reaction. Wait . . . one man runs down the stairs and dashes into a little house. He is not wearing any uniform. Nobody else moves; they look petrified. If I were in their shoes I would have already sprinted down across the beach and been out in the water, without even taking my trousers off.

What the hell is going on? I can't figure them out. In any case, there are no boats in the place. Passing south of the rusty whaler I did not see any shelter behind it, so the ship is just a wreck, with no particular use.

Those people are not going to move. The one who ran into the house emerges with something in his hand. Quick—the binoculars: he is peering at me with his, but does not answer my friendly waves. This worries me.

Nothing doing in this bay. I gybe, release the tiller and snap on the windvane set for a beat to go out. Just in case, I dip the MIK flags five or six times.

The one with the binoculars could easily make out the name *Joshua* painted in large black letters on the white cockpit coaming. I hope he read it, and also the big number 2 sewn on the mainsail.

Joshua heads for the sea again, her lee rail nearly awash, steering well clear of the green and brown patches. Squatting in the cockpit, my elbow resting on the coaming and chin in hand, I gaze at the people grouped on shore, who have still not moved, as if afraid. As if they were looking at the Devil. I am almost relieved that they have no boats here: I was beginning to wonder whether an armed party would come out 'requesting' that I show them a visa authorizing me to spy on their island.

I really don't understand. These people are very isolated; at most, a grey naval supply ship from Brazil visits them twice a year. If I were one of them, my heart would really start pounding at the sight

of a man coming over the horizon in a little red boat, carrying the world's vastness in his sails. What makes them like this?

I stand up, and make a wide, slow gesture with my right arm, the gesture that men all over the world understand, no matter how savage: the gesture that means goodbye. Suddenly all the arms start waving, and everybody runs down to the beach with a chorus of friendly shouts. Three men run in the water up to their waists. I can feel their warmth coming out to me, and get a lump in my throat.

At first they all thought I was going to anchor there. They were waiting, hoping, afraid to believe. For fear the dream would suddenly vanish, they did not move a muscle.

I did not understand, either. But they have no boat, and I have no dinghy.

Still waving, the arms get further and further away. The shouts from shore begin to blend with the rumble of the sea as *Joshua* rushes towards the horizon. I feel as though I want to cry.

At sunset, Trinidad is in the wake. I can see the island in the distance, magical and unreal, its dark blue profile showing against an orange sky.

A little dorado hits the trolling line I had put out, from habit. But I'm not hungry tonight. I unhooks the fish and return him to the sea. It is the first fish I have ever thrown back. I suppose I could have kept him for tomorrow, but I did not feel like it. The dorado is lucky.

I look at Trinidad, tiny now and blurring into the sunset. The entire island comes back to me—in its cliffs, its rock cathedrals, its colours, its shadows and warmth: I can see the village with its green roofs and the men running on the beach, shouting and waving.

Were there any coconut trees? I don't even know. That is the one thing I forgot to look for.

Muchos Pocos Hacen Un Much

In the three days since Trinidad disappeared astern *Joshua* has crossed a square predicted on the Pilot Chart as having 5 per cent calms. And yet, the average was 148 miles a day. For the horse latitude that is real luck. She is heading SE, leaving to the north two other squares marked 6 per cent calm with a strong predominance of contrary winds predicted as well as the damned calms.

By now, the wind has eased a little, but the sails are full and *Joshua* is still moving fast on a broad reach, not tossing at all in the nearly following swell.

The log turns steadily. Before I left, I could not see the point of continually towing a log in the middle of the ocean, wearing out the mechanism for nothing. I find a log most useful when nearing the capes or in coastal sailing, where accurate dead reckoning is essential.¹

Nonetheless, I promised the Vion company to tow the log during the whole trip, to test out the equipment. I do not regret it, because the log helps me trim the sails to their optimum. A variation of a quarter of a knot is hard to feel; the log picks it up. And a quarter of a knot means six extra miles in 24 hours. The overall average has risen to 129.5.

On October 3 the log turns more slowly; on the 4th, not at all. It recorded barely 93 and 23 miles for those two days. The overall average falls abruptly to 126.2 because of a two day bummer. Actually, it is not so bad. The wind has really treated us very well since Trinidad. *Joshua* is in the horse latitude and it is natural that the normally prevailing conditions return. Flat calm now. A long SW swell moving across the sea, with a shorter one from the south. In addition, the sky was covered with cirrus yesterday, with lots of altocumulus this morning. These signs all point to an early return of the wind.

I pull on my wetsuit. Now is a good time to take care of the gooseneck barnacles, which have probably thrived since the Equator, and must slow us down somewhat in light airs. They are crustaceans with a peduncle long enough to keep their branchiae out of the toxic zone of the best antifouling paints. The few I find are big ones, especially on the zinc anodes which protect the hull from electrolysis, and under those parts of the keel that could not be treated when I hauled out at Toulon in June.

The sea ripples, and the wind rises again. It blows gently from the SW for the first time; force 2 then a nice steady force 4. Fantastic, in only 26° south latitude!

Joshua gets all the right cards: 110 miles covered by the October 5 sight, 147 next day, 143 on the 7th.

The sea has got cooler, and I have two sweaters and a pair of wool trousers on. The 484 sq. ft genoa is back in its bag, replaced by the little 161 sq. ft jib, with the storm jib on the pulpit, all ready to use.

To think we have actually caught the westerlies where there are normally calms and SE winds! The barometer is falling slightly, so it is going to last. I spend a lot of time on deck adjusting the sheets to make the most of this miracle.

Racing? Yes!—racing the seasons. Hitting all three capes at their best times is not possible, so you try to press on to avoid reaching the Horn during the southern autumn. If everything goes according to schedule *Joshua* will round Good Hope a little early in the season (no choice), Leeuwin and New Zealand just right, and the Horn still at a good time. There's no sense in thinking about that for the moment; it's still too far ahead. I just have to get my boat to do her best.

I hoisted the 75 sq. ft storm jib in addition to the big 194 sq. ft staysail, and a second 54 sq. ft storm jib as a bonnet under the main boom. While I watch the log turn, I watch the wake, I heave on the staysail halyard just a bit . . . no, too much . . . I slack it half an inch . . . there, it's perfect now, and the staysail draws all the wind of the sky and turns it into flecks of foam that come to life in the wake. The whole universe meets in the staysail.

A school of porpoises keeps us company for nearly half an hour. I just finished Robert Merle's first book *The Day of the Dolphin* and am filled with images of porpoises playing with men, teaching the wisdom. I think I would dare swim among them now, in a flat calm . . .

I film them for a long time from the bow, the bowsprit, the mainmast: three reels; they are certainly worth it. Have to start watching my film, though; I have already shot 47 of the 100 reels I started with.

An hour later my porpoises are back. Two of them start spinning in the air like corkscrews. I rush to get the camera, stowed in its locker—too late; they are leaving already. I am as disgusted as if I had dropped an anchor without shackling it to its chain. After missing the terrific shot of the barracuda catching the flying fish in mid-air, I had sworn to leave the Beaulieu in the cockpit during foul weather, all set to go, with a cloth to protect it from the sun. But that is not enough. I am starting to realize that I too need to be protected from the camera.

In the beginning, I thought that you just set the lens and released the shutter. It is not like that at all. You have to give the camera something more. And now it is trying to suck my blood. It would be easier to stuff the camera in a waterproof tank and forget it exists, but it is too late—and in any case I am not sorry.

From a technical point of view, I have no experience at all; I had never shot stills or movies before this trip, but left everything up to Françoise. It was just as well, because I never did try to master the ASA and DIN, aperture and shutter speed business. But I have made real progress since setting out, thanks to Quéméré's *Cinema et Photo sur La Mer* (Blondel la Rougery), an excellent little book, clear and simple; the author is able to put himself into the shoes of the rankest or even hostile beginner.

We often regretted not having a movie camera during Tahiti-Alicante, and to compound the oversight we only took three rolls of 20-exposure black and white film along. Yet we never dared take pictures of the sea before the Horn, and least of all after our big gale in the Pacific. Not because of danger or fatigue, but because we felt, in a confused sort of way, that it would have been a kind of desecration.

I think the previous trip was to see and to feel; I would like this one to go further.

The sea is already that of the high latitudes: long, full of restrained power, a little jerky at times. The log turns and turns, and the barometer falls very slowly, without wavering. Don't go too far south . . .

Watch this: we'll try a little finesse, just to keep our hand in—skirting the last square marked 6 per cent calms and 47 per cent SE winds . . . It works! Two days later, the square is astern and can only try to catch up. Go to it *Joshua*, have at them! Great! Beautiful!

There was a little gale yesterday, like a first brush with the high latitudes. Mostly force 7, 8 times, always from the SW; the low was therefore far to the SE. Very manageable sea, and very beautiful; a little surfing, just to make sure everything is all right. The bow lifts like a feather.

The barometer is a good deal higher today, and the wind eases to force 3. I take the opportunity to bend on the small 280 sq. ft mainsail and the little 150 sq. ft mizzen; they will stay up until after the Horn.

Changing the sails is a big job, especially folding the big trade wind mainsail properly and wrestling it into the cabin. I lay it flat on the floor, with the genoa and mizzen sailbags wedged side by side on top. It clutters the cabin a little, but I prefer to concentrate weight as much as possible, which

can be crucial in these seas, and more so every day.

~~I watch *Joshua* sailing as fast as before under her new heavy weather sails—small, light, easy handle, with very high reef bands and reinforcements that would take a sailmaker's breath away.~~

I will have to keep an eye on the South Atlantic spring, if I am not to get stabbed in the back. During yesterday's little gale everything was going well; the waves were heavy and breaking fairly hard, but not dangerous. *Joshua* was on a broad reach, taking them almost astern.

The wind let up a little, then dropped to barely force 5; the sea stopped breaking though it was still fairly heavy. Next the wind shifted to SSW, still force 5. It was the normal swing, and I set the wind-vane for a beam reach. I had not been below for over a minute when a huge breaking wave smashed into the boat, knocking her down more than 60°. *Joshua* was barely heeled when it hit, so the cabin took the blow squarely. At the time I thought all the windward ports had shattered. No damage . . . but I set the vane to take the waves broad on the quarter. The cockpit was full.

The odd erratic breaking sea was probably due to a crosscurrent of about a knot that the Pilot Charts show for this area. Also, we were not far from the line of a subtropical convergence of warm and cold currents. Details that bear watching. First blood in barely 31° south latitude: beware of spring tides in the southern hemisphere. Remember the safety harness when going on deck, for whatever reason.

Good Hope is 1500 miles away, and the wind is holding. At this rate, ten more days . . .

October 12 brings another gale. Not too nasty for the moment, but the wind is NW, the barometer falling, and the sky overcast. The low is therefore coming in from the SW. Two reefs each in the main and mizzen at 1 a.m. and the 161 sq. ft jib changed for the 38 sq. ft storm jib. What a joy, watching my boat sailing that fast under so little canvas!

The sea is not really heavy. It never is, during the NW phase of a gale. It is afterwards that things can get nasty, because the wind swings around to west, then SW, and raises cross-seas.

The wind is picking up and gusty now. Since dawn, a reef has reduced the big 194 sq. ft staysail to 97. It is less complicated than changing the sail, but not always easy. The 100 sq. ft of extra material make a big bundle to gather in the wind and tie down with reef points. Best to have close-trimmed fingernails for that kind of job.

Still too much canvas: the log shows 7.8 knots, with probably more than 8 in spurts. The speed is illusory, though, because *Joshua* is moving at her hull speed in the fairly heavy sea, and her yawing just makes the distance longer. I drop what is left of the main and staysail. Perfect: the speed steadies at 7 knots under close-reefed mizzen and the 38 sq. ft storm jib. Much relieved, the rigging seems to say 'thanks'. If this little gale really bares its teeth between now and sunset, I need only drop the remaining 75 sq. ft of the mizzen to keep *Joshua* in good shape (Inch' Allah!). We are in 35° 30' south.

The sky clears by 9 a.m. The wind shifts to the west, only force 4, as the barometer rises a couple of pegs. At noon the wind drops to force 2–3 and the sails slat in the heavy swell. False alarm! Shake out the reefs.

Yesterday at the noon sight *Joshua* had covered 182 miles in 24 hours. Only 173 today, in spite of the moderate gale. The Cape of Good Hope is less than a thousand miles away. No point in heading further south for the moment. I will make the final decision in a few days, whether to pass close to land to try to give word to a fisherman on the Agulhas Bank, or head for the open sea south of the 40° parallel to avoid the dangerous meeting-ground of warm and cold currents, which can raise monstrous sea (the word is not too strong) in the vicinity of the Bank in a gale. For the moment, Good Hope is both very far and very close. Although it is a thousand miles away, we will be there in a week if all goes well.

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