

Dec 22 Nighttime Mini-Crisis: We busted the traveler.

*[Picking where left off earlier...]*

*When I awake, all is calm. Mark is at the helm motoring directly downwind. All our sails are down. Mike is in the cockpit as well, crouched over the traveller. He takes a moment to lie back and rest or meditate, clearly and very understandably exhausted. Should I be a mom and make him go get some sleep? He makes the responsible decisions on his own to hit the sac, planning to return to the problem in daylight hours, after a decent sleep. He asks us to wake him up.*

*I take the helm from Mark for a few hours. The sun starts to lighten up the horizon. I've a cooling breeze in my face and majestic ocean all around. It feels great. I won't get use to it. It's an incredible, addictive, feeling, harnessing the power of the wind and waves to buoy up our small boat from points A to B. I feel simultaneously miniscule, a small spec in the great ocean, but also powerful.*

*Maddie takes the helm from me after an hour or so. We're the only two awake. Thankfully we got rest. See it all works out now.*

*Mike passed out nestled in the spinnaker on the floor of the narrow forward hallway. As I wake him, he explains the problem that arose last night with the traveler: The plastic fittings on the traveller all busted from the force of the jibe. The metal ball bearings of the traveler went everywhere. They are now going to fix the traveller in place with screws going through the hull and jerry-rigged the plastic fittings that helped distribute force. We will continue to rely on the boom break to help prevent future unintended jibes; the boom break stops the boom from completely crossing the boat during a jibe. Last night as they tinkered with the traveler they secured the boom in place with lines connected to the cockpit support cover.*

*I think part of the chaos came from complications raising and lowering the sails in the winds last night. Standard maneuvers like raising and lowering sails will become routine for us, like we could do them in our sleep, soon enough. Yes we should have gotten to this stage by running through drills in the harbor before we started the crossing, but, whelp, too late for that. We must compensate now. There's nothing like learning from experience. Thankfully we're all safe and although the situation I describe here might sound worse than what it really was, at no point did I seriously question the safety of our crew.*

*Eirik has developed an ingenious method of working at the sink. Rather than letting the boat toss you around, he used a carabineer and line his waist to clip to deck rails (through the port above the sink), keeping you stable. This only works on a port tack, but still, points for cleverness.*

*We checked up on Bizzy in the morning. She's slightly better. We don't have the ability to do any rehydrating IVs out here, so it's extra important she's sipping water constantly. She manages to swallow a fever reducer and Dramamine. I'm impressed by her strength. I hope she never doubts that she's a tough cookie.*

#### Dec 23 Another Nighttime Mini-Crisis

*We had another crisis tonight, completely unrelated to yesterday's. Tonight the batteries failed. Mike said they read 19V each (they are 12V batteries). This means we have no power on board – no stove, no water maker, no water pressure, no built-in navigating system, no lights, no speakers, no way to charge electronics. We're reliant on our back-up navigation system, a hand-held Garmin GPS, for real-time position tracking.*

*Maddie, Jeremy, Mike, Mark (who's awake because he's still sick poor fellow), and I sat in the dark contemplating our options. We either continue westward to St. Thomas or change direction southeast to fix the batteries and other mechanical issues on land at Cape Verde. All our hearts want to continue to St. Thomas, but as in many aspects of life we must balance emotion with logic.*

*Mike says sometimes a boat gives you signs. We've had some signs here, the failed traveler, failed autopilot, faulty solar panels, dysfunctional alternator. We are already reliant on our backups for these systems. The next thing to go wrong is a catastrophic boat failure. And yes, the boat was making some new creaking noises that Mike picked up on recently.*

*Maddie and I do a quick food inventory check and determine that without fire we would have an estimated 10-day supply of food. And that's eating random stuff like cereal and bread for two meals a day, and just plain canned beans. Not ideal, but we wouldn't starve to death by pushing for St. Thomas. We would be cutting things very close, however.*

*More alarming than the food shortage is that without battery power we may not be able to start the engine. We have a spare starter battery, but we can't assume it will be reliable considering we're not sure what fried our main batteries.*

*Cape Verde is the most responsible option. Mike makes the Captain's decision. He wakes the rest of the crew to tell them the news that we're heading south for land. It will take us about four days to sail there. To me that means "In four days we'll be able to take showers, use stationary toilets, and eat pizza..." I feel guilty for being excited by*

*those things all of the sudden. Maybe I'm just a blind optimist.*

*I've been journaling mainly about what happens during the day, but to make this really interesting I know I should reflect more on how things make me feel and the lessons learned each day. This way the journal will show some sort of character development. This is harder said than done. Maybe my emotions just aren't that strong at the moment. I'm thinking about the Cape Verde situation fairly logically.*

*Mike, Jeremy, and Eirik take the helm, making a controlled jibe to get us on course southward. Maddie and I stare at each other in the dark, finishing the food rationing. We feel like pilgrims. Speaking of which, how on earth did they do this? They used candles for light? On a wooden boat? A bunch of the women were pregnant too? They had zero comforts to look forward to when they arrived in the wilderness of North America.*

***Epilogue:*** *We didn't end up landing in Cape Verde because we managed to resurrect the batteries. We proceeded to St. Thomas and arrived safely by Jan 11th.*