

16 Nov. '92--Trying to unclog the office, moving Heart Earth research material into retirement to make way for Backing the Sun filecards and folders, today I winnowed The Sea Runners file cabinet drawer, disposing of about a foot of photocopied articles etc. on Sitka, Russian America, Indian canoes, Swedish background. Anything I thought of value, I consolidated into the file folder with checking copies and correspondence; that turned out to include notes on the writing and editing, 1st drafts of the book's lead, and similar items which ought to be looked at if I do anything with the Blue as the Odyssey filecard/diary of The Sea Runners.

possible change of p. 1, 2nd sentence:

Carried nearer and nearer by the water's determined sweep, the craft sleds
across the curling crest of wave and begins to glide the surf toward the
dark frame of this first necessary picture in your mind, a shore...

Or:...craft sleds across the curling crest of wave and now, in this first necessary
picture in your mind, begins to glide the surf...

TRIP OF [unclear]

--10 Aug. '81: during Oly Pen'a trip of 6th-9th, decided M's death should come past halfway mark, more like 3/5 thru the book; also think as much as 10 pp. might be added to first half of ms, about half of it dialogue, including maybe one longish scene of only dialogue.

make sure - ms goes logically from sentence to sentence.

--have K and W (and B?) try conceal canoe with driftwood or brush on the broad Wash. beaches where they couldn't get it across the sand into hiding?

Carol suggests: put K and W in a storm before Willapa, maybe holed up somewhere food can't ~~g~~ be got, so thejr condition will be weakened when they get to Willapa?

--have them sit out a storm, 2 days or so, on wide-open beach such as s. of Westport because they can't launch the canoe into the storm surf?

W: My thought is this. If you don't...I will kill you.
I can always kill you.

K: You can always try.

Have them lighten the canoe, as they get more desperate?

Or lose rifles, etc., in an upset?

write the journey down Vancouver I. as one unbroken section, saying early on that they made it, then weaving back to ~~xxx~~ a few specifics: an overview piece.

Now, last, this: (final pic in the mind, of Washington coast)

flashback memory, perhaps K's, of Melander aboard the schooner?

The canoe is too heavy for two (or even three?) of them to pull to shelter, so K and W must hide it as best they can at shoreline.

--also difficulty of getting it ashore, just the two of them.

have someone catch cold?

named
The islands of the eastern shoreline of the QC were not on M's map,
simply sketched in (thus he dies on island unknown to him).

After M's death, describe what K takes over: besides the maps, the pegboard ~~map~~calendar,
(flashback to what B had said when he stole it and added it to the cache) compasses...

Karlsson on discovering the map quits at Nootka:

He had a sensation of being emptied, as if his body from the stomach down had vanished along with the bottom of the map.

Karlsson knelt close by the firelight, carefully unrolled the map and weighted it at the corners with small rocks. Melander's pencil marks began near the top of the map, at a harbor-with the island which K recognized as Sitka, then traced from island to island, across the channel of peril to the Queen Charlottes, down their shores to the island--not named, Kunhit--where M had been killed. K saw ~~that~~ they now were on an island off the mainland. Then he glanced to the bottom of the map, and froze. In his mind's eye he saw the sketch of coast M had drawn into the sand of the three lines of coast ahead of them, the Queen Charlottes, then Vancouver Island, then the ~~Am~~ shore south from the Strait of Juan de Fuca to Astoria. The map ~~stopped~~ ended just beneath the top of Vancouver Island.

After Melander's death, face-off as to who will lead now. K has expected W will demand to, and has been wondering what to do about it. Instead, W with a struggle says, "You'll have to be in charge now." To K's silent inquisition, W at last blurts: "I can't read the map."

Wennberg begins to rebel against Karllson:

K at campfire becomes aware of W standing beside him. Braaf, across the fire, notices too, casually picks up gun, hums as he fondles and cleans it: W gets the hint, moves off.

Braaf is killed at Cape Johnson, in the tidal trough, as he is caught by tide while gathering mussels and slips, strikes his head.

RUNNERS

Only Melander and perhaps one other--Karllson?--can read, and thus follow their stolen map.

The map runs out at some point: Nootka? They sail then off the edge of their world, as sailors ~~always~~ always have.

--After Melander's death, and the map runs out, K pretends that they still are moving through mapped territory: makes up geography as they go along. One man is oblivious to this, the other becomes suspicious.

Braaf's drowning at Cape Johnson: when he slips into the tidal trough, the mussel shells and barnacles slash his hand as he tries for a grip. He is sloshed back and forth, one the others trying to reach a hand to him as the third man runs to the canoe for the rope. And then he is gone.

Melander is questioned why so many muskets are needed: "We're taking a canoe, not a man-of-war." He tells the questioner no one can reload as fast as several others can shoot.

Karlsson and the gate:

He uses as an excuse the visits to the Indian women, gradually becoming later in his comings and goings.

He jokes with the old gate guard about coming to have a woman too. "No, no, I'm limber as OO, no women for me," the guard says. K begins to ~~shake~~ return to the fort mock-drunk (have him sing 2 lines of Swedish song) and to share a drink (of native hootch? the name derives near Sitka) with the guard, the point being to accustom him then get him ~~down~~ thoroughly drunk on escape night.

The guard is an old-timber--Bilibin--who dates from Baranov's time and has survived O R-A governors since; is a drinker, and so is put on night duty to keep him from roistering.

Have Wennberg cut himself into the escape plans, perhaps by discovering Braaf stealing something and bullying from him ~~the~~ confession of the plot?

describe their waiting, before the escape

Waiting for the escape:

All is ready except for final stealing of food, and of 3 more muskets (Rns wd be concerned about loss of many muskets because of Indian threat).

Meander: "We are ready, but the ^{time} weather isn't." To their puzzled silence, he explains his plan of waiting for foul rainy weather, when Russians won't pursue. Wennberg or one of the others asks him why he hadn't told them this in the first place; he asks in return whether they would have readied themselves as they have if they'd known the escape wasn't imminent.

the escape:

They assemble their escape gear by late summer (show details of them doing so, stealing an item now and then, at spaced periods so they won't be missed), and at least one of them--Wennberg?--is impatient to go. Melander insists they wait for the rainy season, then for a specific rainy night, weather so uncomfortable the Rns won't want to chase them, will send Indians instead. ("The Russians are fat and comfortable. They will not follow us in the rain.")

Have the Indian canoe which does follow them come as a surprise. Then the face-off as the Indians refuse to risk themselves against the runners' muskets. A sardonic glance on the face of the leading Indian as he calls off the chase, indicating they can't survive anyway. He ~~says~~ calls to them a single Indian word, meaning "dead-men."

the escape:

the guard they choose is a Russian old-timer, one who had come to Alaska on one of the early flimsy willow-bound ships, who is given chronic guard duty because of his drinking.

The runners at first talk over killing him; one of them suddenly says no, no killing, an offense so serious will mean the R-A admin must send crews to chase them. He offers instead to get the Rn guard drunk.

(Have Karlsson listen to this, discovering himself ambivalent, not having spoken up against the idea of killing the guard?)

Melander names the canoe. (or they discuss it, and W or B comes up with the best name?)

Karlsson touches the Haida carved columns

possible ending: do a variant of Russell's letter about
finding the men.

possible handling of Nootka:

The next 00 days were appalling (then do the Vancouver I. voyage in one continuous ~~proof~~ narrative)

50 pp. → Aristagabal

Dixon storm

coastal descrip

daily routine

totems

Ind culture

M. & B

desc. maps

ship misses them

→ Astoria - mention settlers to m.

→ sketch of K

50 pp → B's death

revel.

Matani

shipwreck

50 pp - end.

30 pp. to be added
in revision

insert a character sketch of K soon after he takes over?

" " " " of W?

perhaps use a sequence of map references: toll them off periodically--

Kaigani, ... Nootka...

--or maybe use passage from map 1 to map 2, etc.

Have a coastal Indian, perhaps one shot by Wennberg, regard them as invaders of his world?

At some point fairly far on, have K voice a suspicion about W in a way that confirms a suspicion within the reader; a volt of recognition should be felt.

Runners

Have a single Indian appear ^{to runners} - as a deer does when
sound of it lifting a hoof 1st reveals it. An other hunter?
The question: do they kill him?

RUNNERS

possible ending of book:

"OO," Karlsson said. I said.

(would reveal that narrator was one of the men.)

use snatches of dialogue--paragraphs of it, standing alone?--as it would stick in the memory.

show the increasingly dream-like, delusional character of the trip;
the switch to interior monologue of K, then W as well...

strive for a rich, allusive texture.

Show W's bgnd only late in the book, perhaps when he and K are the only ones left.

(Bgnds sequence thus will be: M's is shown promptly;

B's is shown promptly;

K's is less promptly, but during the prelude of
waiting for escape;

W's is shown late, keeping him something of an enigma.

think thru the scenes in my mind as if this were a movie...

The book needs to have occasional "pillars": sections of a page or two of broad perspective, on the fur empires, on the coast, on the length of journey. These will have to carry great weight, be wonderfully done, to support the honed-down narrative.