

# *Nepthys*

by Liam Andrews

On October 14, 1988, the *Triton*-class cruise ship *Nepthys* was discovered adrift several hundred kilometres off the northern coast of Brazil, near the [REDACTED] archipelago.

Its entire crew of fifty-six (56) personnel, as well as its passenger complement of three hundred thirty-two (332) civilians are, as of this report's writing, unaccounted for.

At the point of last contact, the *Nepthys* was five (5) weeks into a tour of the South Atlantic Ocean, having recently departed Port Elizabeth, South Africa en route to Cape Town.

The following are a series of documents and materials recovered from a safe-deposit box in the quarters of the *Nepthys's* onboard medical psychologist, Dr Rachel Schläffer. For convenience and accessibility, materials have been transcribed and/or translated into English where necessary.

ITEM-001: Letter addressed to Dr. Rachel Schläffer

My Darling Rachel,

I hope this letter gets to South Africa in time. The post office lady said it would be a month at the most, so I tried to send it early enough.

I'm so glad that you're enjoying the South African coast. I'd say that I wished I were there myself, but your descriptions are so lovely I feel like I'm already there!

You don't need to thank me so much. It was your own brilliance and hard work that got you that job, not me! It was nothing to pass your name along to my School's instructor, and I couldn't think of anyone better suited!! I know you'll probably have your walls up for the first little while, and I won't pretend that you've ever kept an open ear to my view of spirituality, but I think through helping Mind's Eye students through their problems, you'll start to see that even us hippies are human! Ha ha.

Now, about Eoin. It pains me to hear that your first impressions weren't entirely positive, but please be patient and try and keep an open mind. His ideas aren't easy to fully "get", and I'll admit I took awhile to come around. If you look in the first chapter of the copy of *Tides* I got you for Christmas last year, you'll see even he doesn't expect everyone to enjoy the book on their first read. There's this beautiful metaphor that he uses — I don't expect this to convey the force of his language — but, he likens us all to shells buried on a beach, and his Truths are the tides washing in and out, and even if a shell doesn't get washed away by one tide, it's just a matter of time until time weathers the beach away and the sea takes it all back into Itself, shells and sand alike. That's why I'm so happy you're out there! I feel like I've handed you off to your "real mother", the vast sapphire mother that we all share!

Boundless love and calm currents to you, my dear darling daughter.

I am so proud of you.

Love, Mom

June 16, 1987

Captain Keen is dead. They've got the corpse in the infirmary now for an autopsy, and I think they're sending a line to our port in Cape Town asking for a replacement. For now, Holloway is taking charge. We're keeping the whole situation pretty quiet around the guests, as if they'll stop floating in that seawater pool long enough to care about administrative changes.

The guy who found the body, a janitor called Bruno, came in for a post-incident today. Almost everyone, without fail has a strong reaction to seeing their first dead body, but it was more unsettling by how easily he was taking it. There wasn't much of the typical confusion or existential shock. I'd even say he was pleased about it. Apparently, there wasn't any mess in the room at all, no blood or vomit or anything. When Bruno knocked and entered the room for routine housekeeping, Keen was apparently sitting upright in his office chair, facing out to the ocean. Bruno spent ten minutes cleaning the bathroom, and then when he went to wipe down the windows he saw how pale and twisted the Captain's face was.

"The face had no spiritual disappointment" is how he described it. "It's good. He looked like he died well. The spirit of the sea was in him, I saw it behind his eyes... He couldn't..." Bruno's English isn't that great, and it sounded like he'd been talking to those Mind's Eye wackos a bit more than he should be. I gave him a dream journal in case his subconscious was in flux about the incident, and told him to take it easy for a couple days.

#### Appointments

- J. Bright - Male, passenger, 55. Depression, narcolepsy. Dreams of his recently deceased wife.
- Y. Aja - Female, passenger, 24. Anorexia. Nightmares of meat crawling into her mouth.
- B. Bianchi - Male, crew, 36. Detailed above.

## *Voices of the Sea*

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. . .

### ***About The Facilitator***

A lifelong mystic and student of the marino-spiritual arts, Eoin Burick is internationally celebrated for awakening a new "wave" of thinking in philosophy and spirituality with his bestselling book 1985 book *Tides of the Mind*. For the first time ever, he and his spiritual community Mind's Eye® will be holding one-on-one seminars for the general public. Book your spot today and discover your soul's true blue depths!

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June 17, 1987

I got questioned about Keen today. Holloway and couple of guys from security. Burick was in the room as well (*balancing the room's chakras? I dunno*), but he didn't say anything to me. As an aside, what a fascinating guy. He still gives me the total creeps, and on principle I resent how he's taking advantage of all these vulnerable people, but still. The reverence that they all give him almost makes me wish I'd specialized in cult psychology instead of oneirology. If only he wasn't so personally averse to psych evals. I'd die to just have a real conversation with him, one on one, without it being under the false pretence of him "teaching" me.

Anyway, I didn't have much to say. Keen never once came to me for anything other than a routine mental check-up at the beginning of the summer, and during that one he just seemed like a normal guy. Liked his job a lot. Mildly catholic, hadn't practiced in years. Dreamed about falling from heights, having sex with past classmates. Professional evaluation was "Low Risk".

I'm not trying pretend I'm totally clean about this. Is it my responsibility to make sure crew members are mentally fit for duty? Yes. Does it bother me that a crew member might have offed himself a few dozen yards from where I'm sitting right now? You betcha. Was there any way I could have stopped it? Not really. I don't think. Really, he never seemed like the type.

Speaking of which, the autopsy report came back. Sodium poisoning. Keen died from ingesting about a litres of water straight from the ocean. Bizarre.

#### Appointments

- A. Thorp - Male, crew, 29. Anxiety. Nightmares of being waterboarded and losing teeth.
- S. Poole - Female, passenger, 60. Schizophrenia. Hears the ship talking to her at night.
- C. Lin - Female, passenger, 36. Insomnia, anxiety. Convinced she's running out of oxygen.

#### Addendum

Writing this very early in the morning. I think we've stopped moving.

FROM THE OFFICE OF DR. Rachel Schlaffer, PhD.

DREAM JOURNAL

NAME: Bruno Bianchi

•

I had a dream last night where I had sunk to the floor of the ocean. I couldn't move my hands or legs. Why don't my hands and legs ever work in dreams? And I couldn't breathe in but I wasn't scared. I was back home. My sisters and brothers were drowning along with me, and we were laughing. I felt the Earth's blood in my veins, all of our hearts and spirits had become the same. We were ready. I heard the water speak to me with Mr. Bruckner's voice. It said I was safe now.

But then the laughter stopped. Why did we stop smiling? We all looked around.

"Someone is missing!"

"Up there!"

"Someone must save them!"

I looked up, and there was a prison in the sky. That's where we came from. We had all escaped, and we were laughing because the guards had been so easy to fool. But we didn't all escape. I knew there was still someone up there, in a cage in the prison in the sky. They couldn't taste the Earth's blood, and they couldn't be freed. Their mind's eye was sewn shut. I felt the voice of the sea fading from my ears, and the panic began to come. We were all drowning for nothing. We had failed. The sea was abandoning us.

I woke up feeling very sad.

June 18, 1987

“Freak accident” is what they’re calling it.

Last night, after I woke up and noticed the engines were off, I couldn’t get back to sleep. Weird how when I started here, the constant thumping would keep me up for hours. Now, there’s no sonic buffer between me and the sea, and it just spooks me to the bone. Dumb superstition.

Anyway, I put some sweats on and went for a walk around deck. It was chilly up on top so I started going down to the lower levels. It was so quiet. I was wearing sandals and my footsteps still seemed too loud. I kept thinking that I’d hear another crew member around a corner, or in a storage room, but then when I looked there’d be nobody there.

When I started down the stairs to the lowest level, I started noticing a smell. My mom raised me vegetarian, did I ever mention that in one of my entries? Oh, the smell, right. At first I thought it was just my nose getting irritated by the stale air, but it kept getting thicker every step down that I took. When I got to the bottom, I noticed there was smoke in the air. I still don’t know where the hell the rest of the crew was. I couldn’t have been the only one awake at that point, right? I started wishing I’d just find Bruno lighting up a joint to cope with the dead body incident or something. He doesn’t regularly do that, as far as I learned in his check-up, but it would have explained the smoke. I don’t know what marijuana smells like, obviously.

I was really just on autopilot. When a patient comes to me with chronic nightmares, the advice I usually give them is that they shouldn’t fight the riptide. When your mind wants to show you something, trying to resist it will only make it more upset and insistent. Usually, the fear in a nightmare doesn’t come from the “thing” itself, but rather a total breakdown of the fight or flight response. You could be alone in a room with nothing but a bluejay, but if your mind won’t let you punch it or get away from it, you’ll fear that bluejay with caveman irrationality.

So that’s what it felt like. I was letting the riptide pull me along, and hoping all I’d find in the engine room was a bluejay named Bruno, smoking a joint. Instead, I found the kids.

Security must have forgotten to lock the engine room up last night. These kids, these *stupid* teenagers must have been looking for somewhere private, and the engine level is the only one without any cabins. I think I'd seen them around, a couple times. Last week they were together at those two float ceremonies. I thought it was cute. They looked like two little otters.

Do you know how many amps run through the diesel-electric converter of a *Triton*-class cruise ship? I don't. I think a diesel car runs on about a hundred, so scale that up as you will. Do you know how much current it takes to stop a heart? About zero point two amps.

Dr. Ross is pretty sure they were wearing at least *some* clothing. He said the girl was wearing a bra, but below the waist it's pretty hard to tell. He said they would have been fine but for the salt in their sweat making such a good conductor. He also says it couldn't have been very painful, and that most of the charring occurred after death. I hope he's right.

In any case, the engines are blown. Totally shot. Even if we had anybody onboard with the expertise to repair an entire fucking cruise ship engine, we're short on almost every required part. Holloway is gonna send another line to Cape Town saying that a repair team and the parts are going to have to come out here to us.

As far as I know, there's been no response about Keen's replacement. I'm sure the rest of the crew has it under control.

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#### Appointments

- None. Doctor's not in today. Need some sleep.



# NOTICE - ALL PASSENGERS

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DUE TO ENGINE MALFUNCTIONS, THE NEPHTHYS' SCHEDULED  
STOP IN CAPE TOWN HAS BEEN DELAYED

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NIGHTLY BUFFET IS CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.  
RATIONS WILL BE DELIVERED TO YOUR CABINS BY CREW / STAFF

\*\*\*\*\*

DO NOT PANIC

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DIRECT QUESTIONS / CONCERNS TO ACTING CAPT. HOLLOWAY  
CABIN 21A

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ALL MIND'S EYE® GATHERINGS WILL PROCEED AS USUAL

\*\*\*\*\*

MR. BRUCKNER WILL BE HOLDING A SPECIAL SEMINAR TO  
ADDRESS THE HEIGHTENED SPIRITUAL STRESS THAT THIS  
DEVELOPMENT MAY INDUCE.

ALL PASSENGERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND.

—

**FLOAT CHAMBER - 9:00AM, JUNE 20TH**

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SIGNED, ACTING CAPT. HOLLOWAY

*Michael Holloway*

June 19, 1987

Ever wake up more exhausted than you were before you fell asleep? I never remember my dreams, but I think I had a lot of them last night.

It's been a fucking busy day, too. This morning, when I got to my office, there were drop-ins lined up out into the hallway. I got through as many as I could, but I had to turn away at least a dozen when my shift ended came around. Almost all of them were reporting the same laundry list of symptoms. Stress, anxiety, insomnia, panic attacks, hallucinations, and nightmares. One girl said she looked over the deck railing and saw eyes under the ship. An older guy said he dreamed that the ocean was swallowing him whole. Not drowning, but being swallowed. Five different people say they've been hearing voices. The weirdest part? It was all hired crew. Not a single passenger came to my office today.

That can't be a coincidence, right? This boat is filled with passengers who think that yoga and vegetables will solve their neuroses, people who completely disregard my recommendations for prescribed medicine and active therapy strategies and think just being near the ocean will make them better. People who can't possibly be feeling good right now. Half of them didn't even go onto shore in Port Elizabeth because they were scared they'd get kidnapped, and yet none of them start freaking out when we just get stuck in the middle of the South Atlantic? How are all the anxiety cases not jumping off the rails and trying to swim to safety? Maybe they're all just sticking around to be close to Bruckner.

Bruckner. There must be something he's been doing. Maybe they've been putting LSD in the crew's food supply, or opiates in the passengers', or something. I'll bring my recorder to that big seminar tomorrow morning, and see if I can get him alone afterwards to ask him a few questions.

ITEM-006: Magnetic tape, recorded on and found within a Sony CTR-73 tape recorder. Main speaker identified as Eoin Bruckner. Recorder identified as Rachel Schläffer. Transcript provided below.

*[Recording begins as E. Bruckner is addressing a crowd of people through a microphone. Murmuring is heard throughout the room.]*

**Bruckner:** -felt the winds of the world as they pass through us, and felt the pull of the tides as they carry us through life. I thank all of you for being so patient. I also thank the entire crew we have here, onboard the *Nephthys*, for allowing us to go on this journey. Let's show our love to Adherent Holloway...

[Scattered applause]

**Male voice:** Thank you, Eoin.

**Bruckner:** Friends... Let me begin this with a story, a... An experience, from my younger days. One that you won't find in *Tides of the Mind*. When I was just a boy, my parents brought me to an island off the Ivory Coast. Well, ahem. They called it a vacation... As you may know, they were missionaries, for a faith of yesterday. They had brought me along in order to further their-

**Crowd:** [booing]

**Bruckner:** My friends, please... Thank you. We were visiting a slum, a place where [inaudible] and went hungry. These people had relied on the sea to survive, and would give thanks to their God for the bounty it gave. In time, their population grew, as did their exploitation... They blamed their God when the sea no longer fed them. My parents were sent to restore their belief...

[Bruckner pauses, clears throat]

**Bruckner:** The mission went on for so long. Days felt like weeks. There were so many meetings, and none of the village's children

would speak to me. They thought we were there to break their spirit, reshackle them to an unloving master. We- they were, my parents... I would spend the days walking up and down the shore, looking out at the jewelled horizon at sunset. I couldn't believe anyone could be unhappy, living [inaudible] so grand. But, there they were. Suffering. You see, my friends, it wasn't God that they had abandoned, but this. All around us. They renounced it the moment they thanked anything else for what it had given them. None of them could see that...

[Speech pauses for 30 seconds, Bruckner is heard speaking away from the microphone to someone]

**Bruckner:** I'm getting off track, I apologize. On the eighth day, the village had heard enough. My father grew frustrated, the discourse turned violent, I heard shouting from the centre of town, and I grew fearful. I thought they would burn our boat and keep us there, so I fled to the water. I thought I could hide from them under the waves, and so I did. What a silly I was, I could not swim. I felt the will of the water, drawing me away from the shore, and it scared me. I struggled, and I was pulled under. My world went dark, and I was given a dream.

[Crowd's murmuring grows louder]

**Bruckner:** I did not drown that day, my friends. I awoke on the shore, physically unscathed. My mind, however, had been touched by something greater than myself, greater [inaudible] that caused the bickering on that island... For in that dream, the sea spoke to me. It told me that I should not fear, for it would protect me. [inaudible] chosen son, and that I would spread its [inaudible] broken and beaten by the powers of the land.

**Woman in Crowd:** What happened to the village?

**Bruckner:** That island, and those who inhabited it... Friends, it is not easy to change one's course, especially when winds and currents of one's own making pull them ever-closer to ruin and corruption. My parents failed, that day. The people of that island were dragged further away from the sea's favour and into the mire of industry, and five years after my communion with our Mother, she sent a great and terrible wave to cleanse that blemished rock. They have all been [inaudible] to her purifying embrace.

[Shouts of approval and agreement rise in the crowd, momentarily overpowering Bruckner's voice]

**Bruckner:** Friends, my time on that island no different from where we are today. We are adrift, safe in the ocean's arms. The failure of this ship's engines is no coincidence, I assure you! We were all drawn to this spot, by the world's currents! To leave now would be to go against the flow of [inaudible] It wants us to be here, I feel it, calling to us, have you? The comforting voice of our great mother?

[Shouts of ecstasy]

**Bruckner:** Then let us begin, my friends! The pool is ready for us. Drink deep, and feel the blood of the sea fill you with your new life.

**R. Schläffer [muffled]:** Jesus Christ, that'll...

**Bruckner:** Adherents, please fetch any latecomers, and those who may resist the riptides...

[Numerous of coughing and retching are heard. The sounds suddenly become quieter; a door closes. Heavy breathing and footsteps can be

heard. A door opens, the recorder is heard being set down onto a metal surface.]

**R. Schläffer:** Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, holy fuck.

[Sounds of paper shuffling, being placed on top of the recorder]

**Man:** Doctor Schläffer?

**Schläffer:** Michael? This is insane, what the fuck was happening out there?

[Metal door closes, muffling the rest of the conversation]

**Man:** Come with us, Rachel.

**Schläffer:** What? No, no, no, no, you can't. Get your hands off me! Michael, stop!

[Screaming is heard for several seconds before fading from earshot.

Recording continues in silence for one hundred-sixty five (165) minutes before stopping. This is the end of the tape.]