

ABOUT "SEX, SHARKS AND ROCK & ROLL" — VOL. II
"DESPITE ITS SOMEWHAT PROVOCATIVE TITLE, SEX, SHARKS AND ROCK & ROLL IS LESS A COMMENT ON THE AUTHOR'S LIBIDO AND MORE A COMPELLING CELEBRATION OF HIS LIFE AS A MARINE BIOLOGIST."

INDIEREADER
(WWW.INDIEREADER.COM/2017/05/SEX-SHARKS-ROCK-ROLL)

THERE REALLY IS...

...NO CLEAN WAY TO SAY THIS, SO HERE GOES: FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER I HAVE ALWAYS LOVED ANIMALS, SEX AND MUSIC, ESPECIALLY PERCUSSION. IN FACT, I HAVE BEEN TOLD I JERK HARDER THAN SEINFELD'S ELAINE BENES WHEN I'M SHAKING MY BOOTY TO A DECENT BEAT. IT IS THEREFORE NO SURPRISE THAT I STEERED MY CAREER INTO WORKING WITH SHARKS AND OTHER MARINE ANIMALS, WHILE KEEPING A PRIVATE SIDE BUSINESS SELLING SEDUCTIVE LINGERIE AND A FEW OTHER TOYS — OF THE ADULT NATURE - AND ALSO OCCASIONALLY PLAYING MY DRUMS WITH FRIENDS. IT'S NOT EASY TO EXPLAIN HOW ALL THIS CAME TO BE. THERE REALLY WAS NO MASTER PLAN AT THE ONSET AND I CERTAINLY DIDN'T IMAGINE I'D BE DOING HALF OF THE STUFF I DID OVER THE YEARS BACK IN THE DAYS I WAS THINKING ABOUT MY FUTURE.

I CERTAINLY DIDN'T...

...IMAGINE MY FIRST MARRIAGE WOULD OPEN BEFORE IT ENDED, NOR DID I PREDICT I'D BE MARRYING PRINCESS LEIA IN VEGAS AND I CERTAINLY DIDN'T SEE MYSELF SITTING DOWN TO WRITE A WHOLE LOT OF STORIES... SOME INVOLVING SHARKS, SOME AIRPLANES, SOME A TOUCH OF NAUGHTINESS, SOME BOATS, AND SOME PUBLIC AQUARIA, AMONG MANY OTHER THINGS. BUT THAT IS THE WAY THINGS HAPPENED AND THESE PAGES KIND OF EXPLAIN HOW ALL THE PIECES FIT IN THE PUZZLE.

f t i SEX SHARKS AND ROCK & ROLL

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JOÃO CORREIA

SEX, SHARKS & Rock 'n' Roll



SEX, SHARKS & Rock 'n' Roll

2ND
EDITION

JOÃO CORREIA



JOÃO WAS BORN IN 1972 AND IS A RACONTEUR WITH A PH.D. IN MARINE BIOLOGY, WHO'S BEEN FOCUSING HIS ACADEMIC RESEARCH ON SHARK FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION. A FEATURED TEDx SPEAKER, HE BEGAN HIS CAREER IN Bimini, STUDYING LEMON SHARK BEHAVIOR, THEN BECAME CURATOR OF SHARKS AT THE LISBON ZOO (A VERY POMPOUS TITLE, CONSIDERING HE DID LITTLE MORE THAN CLEAN THEIR POOL, RESEARCHED DEEP-SEA SHARK GROWTH, AND THEN JOINED THE OCEANÁRIO DE LISBOA, WHERE HE'D BECOME HEAD DIVER AND CURATOR OF COLLECTIONS.

IN 2006 HE FOUNDED HIS OWN COLLECTIONS FIRM, FLYING SHARKS, AND, AS A COLLEGE PROFESSOR AT ESTM, HE TEACHES FUTURE MARINE BIOLOGISTS. HE ALSO STARTED AN ONLINE LINGERIE BUSINESS (ALALUNGA LINGERIE) BACK IN 1998 WITH HIS FIRST WIFE, AND THEIR FACEBOOK PAGE OFFERS DELIGHTFUL DISCOUNTS. APPARENTLY HE SHIPS WORLDWIDE TOO, AND HE NEVER SHAMELESSLY TAKES EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO ADVERTISE HIS BUSINESS - EVER! :P

Chapter 14

December 2000

The *Other* Dutch Airline

The other Dutch airline, is a direct transcript of the journal I kept then, back in the day when I wasn't even planning on writing a book per se, and it was the second 'chapter' I wrote, after 'The trip that would not end'. You will notice the writing is a bit *coarse*, but I left it pretty much as it was laid down originally, for these were the pages I shared with everybody who helped us on that trip. During this particular transport, Pedro Antunes, a fellow aquarist from the Oceanário, and I, traveled to Newport, Oregon, and met with the folk from the Oregon Coast Aquarium. Pedro stayed at the aquarium and learned general husbandry skills on oystercatchers, which we were going to move back to Portugal. However, before we flew those animals back, I was going to Vancouver and Seattle to pick up quite a few other things as well. Both oystercatchers, by the way, had been rescued from the wild after being found with injuries. They weren't fit to be released back to the wild, where they wouldn't survive, but us kind Oceanário folk provided them with a decent home and they're still there as I write these words (2014).

I traveled to Vancouver, after leaving Pedro in Newport, and *rendez-vous'd* with Ken Wong, a local collector and our supplier of a giant Pacific octopus (known in the industry as a 'GPO', scientific name *Octopus dofleini*), five tiger rockfish (*Sebastes nigrocinctus*) and a multitude

of anemones, sea urchins and snails. For three days I drove around Vancouver, getting supplies and assembling the four round 1,1 meter (3,6 feet) wide, round tanks, where the rockfish and chimaeras were to be transported on their way to Portugal. The chimaeras were collected by the team from the Seattle Aquarium and would be picked up on the way back from Vancouver to Seattle, which was the point where Pedro and I were to meet and fly back to Lisbon, via Amsterdam (Holland) > Brussels (Belgium) > Vitoria (Spain) and then finally home. Chimaeras are exceptionally delicate animals and this transport involved moving ten animals over an exceptionally long distance, which had all parties concerned about how they would handle being in transit for over 48 hours. I actually ended up publishing our transport technique in *Zoo Biology*, a journal dedicated to advances in captive animal husbandry. You may catch that, and other papers, under the 'Literature' section of Flying Sharks's website, www.flyingsharks.eu.

After a few days picking up supplies from Home Depot, and a very nice red and black bustier with garters for my wife, from Victoria's Secret, (which looked stunning on her), the actual trip back began in Vancouver on Sunday the 10th of December, 2000, at 1:30 a.m. I met up with the awesome Frank McHugh, Ken, and Lisa (his partner), at Ken's facility, and we started packing the invertebrates and rockfish. I suppose now is a good moment to mention that back in those days, every single conference I had in the U.S. involved a visit to Victoria's Secret, which wasn't available in Europe yet. In fact, the Alalunga business was doing so well in the early years of the new millennium, that I had the audacity of asking VS's headquarters what would entail to open one of their

stores in Portugal. They replied very kindly, but explained that moving to Europe wasn't part of their plans just yet and, anyway, they weren't planning on franchising their business. All stores were owned by the 'mother company'. "Damn!..." I thought to myself, instantly deprived of the opportunity of acquiring seductive under-apparel for my wife, at wholesale prices...

Meanwhile, in Newport (4:00 a.m.), Pedro and Jen (the bird aquarist), met at the Oregon Coast Aquarium, packed the oystercatchers and started driving to Seattle.

Back in Vancouver (5:00 a.m.), Frank, Ken and I, finished packing the animals and departed to Seattle. Transport time: two hours.

We arrived at the Seattle Aquarium at 10:00 a.m., but the truck was too big to back up into the loading bay, and we needed to park it on the side of the road. The loading of the chimaeras began, and all systems were checked. The animals looked well, although everybody laughed at our 18 wheel massive truck with only four round 1,1 meter (3,6 feet) wide vats inside it.

We arrived at SeaTac airport at 11:00 a.m., and met with Pedro and Jen, who had just driven in from Newport with the oystercatchers. Palletizing began immediately after our arrival, and we quickly found out that the wooden pallet, where our oxygen cylinder was mounted, did not fit the aircraft's aluminum pallet. Not to worry though, because I grabbed a hacksaw and cut that pallet down to size quickly enough. The crew at Martinair (whose slogan was 'The other Dutch airline' – I shit you not) was simply excellent. Truly a first class bunch of people. One minor

and unexpected setback though: Pedro, was not allowed on the aircraft (the coolest MD11 ever!), as per instructions from headquarters in Amsterdam. Rats! However, a well-planned backup Northwest ticket saved the day (because this had been a possibility from day one), and Pedro flew off to Amsterdam on a regular KLM commercial flight. At that point I had to take my cabin crew written test, and passed. It had been quite a few years since I had had to study for a test, and Frank had told me to take it seriously because failing would bar me from flying back with the animals inside the cargo plane.

At about 4:00 p.m., all animals, (including myself...) boarded Martinair's massive cargo MD11, and the temperature in the cargo hold was set at 10 degrees Celsius (50 degrees Fahrenheit), as chimaeras do not do well warmer than that. The water temperature, which actually began around 12 degrees, decreased during this flight, which is exactly what we intended. However, because 10 degrees was actually a bit *too* cold for the birds, the oystercatchers rode in the cabin with us, which was set at their perfect temperature of 15 degrees (59 Fahrenheit). Dick, the Dutch loadmaster, and I, froze our butts off during the trip, but the birds were happy, and that's what mattered. The cage eventually provided a fine coffee table, upon which we could rest our tired feet as we sat in the very comfortable Martinair MD11 courier station.

Somewhere near the North Pole (between 5:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m.), I did multiple water checks, and even snapped a couple of auto-timer shots of myself crawling over the cargo pallets taking oxygen measurements of the water inside the tanks. Everything went exceptionally fine and catering was to die for! Sadly I can't remember

what I had to eat, but I remember it was yuuuuummy. I got to sit in the cockpit for take-off and landing, and stayed there quite a bit chatting with the pilots and Dick, the finest loadmaster I ever had. We spent quite a bit of time discussing Flight Simulator tricks, and eventually I fell asleep back in the courier station. Dick then came to nudge me, and told me I should take a look back inside the cockpit... I really wasn't prepared for the view outside the front windows as I walked inside the cockpit again...

We were driving straight through solar wind... The green, wavy Northern Lights were right in front of us and we flew straight through them! Absolutely mesmerizing, and certainly one sight I will never forget.

Did I take a picture? Of course not. Because I'm an idiot!

We landed in Amsterdam at 9:00 a.m. next morning (Monday), but nobody was there to meet me at the plane, which is something that *had* been arranged, as we would need assistance to clear both customs and the veterinary inspection. However, this was way before the time every single living soul packed a cell-phone (or two), and so I ended up walking around Schiphol Airport with Dick, looking for Pedro and Renee, our agent from Malenstein, a Dutch freight-forwarding company. First we tried to smuggle *me* in through the crew area, but had no luck with that brilliant scheme. What can I say, airport security was tight, even in those pre-9/11 days. So then we found ourselves trying to open every door we could see (while walking around the cargo area) until one opened and I could access the passenger area. I then cleared customs with all the 'regular' passengers off commercial flights,

and finally met Pedro and Renee, somewhere in a Martinair office.

At around noon, Renee took us back to the tanks and we tied things up. I had prearranged for the Rotterdam Zoo folk to drop off some clean water at Martinair's cargo terminal. We did a water change with water from Vancouver (enough for 10% per tank), and Rotterdam's. I only did 10% per container, because Rotterdam's water was 5 degrees warmer than ours. We then took the opportunity to re-pack, re-ice, and re-oxygenate the octopus. We also tied up a few loose ends, and rushed to the veterinary inspection, scheduled for 2:30 p.m. We even managed to squeeze in a magic cigarette break just before. I'll take this time to mention that I've never really been a *smoker-per-se*, but a quick cigarette break feels like a million bucks during these long trips, and also when enjoying a few drinks with friends.

The total transport time at this point was around 24 hours, and we arrived to our customs and veterinarian inspection at 2:30 p.m., on the dot. Which is a disgrace to us Portuguese, who have accustomed people from around the world to us always being fashionably late. Schiphol's customs folk had multiple questions, but we nailed them all with flying colors. Both fish and birds were cleared from customs duties, and then came the vet to do the health inspection. The fish and invertebrates passed almost immediately, but the birds were taking longer... and longer... and longer... "There's something wrong, he's making too many calls..." our Malenstein friend said... And that's when the vet came out of his booth shaking his head. "Where's the health certificate?" he asked. "Here...", I said, holding the *original* US official

health certificate *and* the *original* European Union official health certificate, *both* stamped by the Washington health authority in Salem. “Not those ones, *this* one!” he replied, holding a *Dutch* health certificate.

I felt my face going red. “I think it’s at the office, let’s call ’em.” We called Renee’s office and they faxed every possible document. There was an *original* American Health Certificate, an *original* European Union Health Certificate, and *original* CITES export and import permits for the oystercatchers, but no Dutch health certificate. I’d never even heard of it, to be honest. We rushed back to Renee’s office. On the way back I asked Renee, trying to keep my cool “So, Renee, being our freight agent and all, shouldn’t you have told us that the Amsterdam Veterinarian Inspector would require a *Dutch* Health Certificate?” Renee stumbled a bit and replied “This silly thing became effective last week. I never thought they would take it that seriously”. To which I replied “Well, that’s why you get the big fat check, isn’t it?...” A few days later, Pedro told me that, for one brief moment, he thought I was going to punch poor Renee in the face as we had this conversation. He was right. One does tend to go a little crazy when the shit hits the fan on these trips.

We were in Malenstein’s office by 4:00 p.m., which meant the fine Oregon Coast Aquarium staff had just started their daily routines, because it was nine hours earlier in Washington State. I called them and faxed them the evil Dutch health certificate, asking them to have it signed, stamped, and faxed back to Malenstein. Strictly as backup, I also called the folk at the Oceanário and asked them to perform some ‘scanning & editing’, PhotoShop magic, on the Dutch health certificate. This is not a pretty

thing to do, I know, but what do you do when bureaucracy gets in the way of animal welfare?

At that point, even though they were thousands of miles away, I could just see both Oregon Aquarium's and Oceanário's teams, rushing to meet my desperate cry for help. At the same time, Renee called the vet, his boss, and her boss, in turn. They all said the same: "The birds will not be released until an *original Dutch* health certificate arrives." Meanwhile, the Oregon team finished first, and faxed me the Dutch Health Certificate, as well as the FedEx shipping airwaybill, clearly specifying the original document was literally flying towards Malenstein's office. We grabbed the fax and rushed it to the evil vet. The plan was to persuade him to accept the faxed copy given the fact that he had the original US health certificate, the original EU health certificate, and the original Dutch document was on its way.

We arrived at the vet's cubicle at 6:00 p.m. Renee talked to him and, despite the fact that it was all in Dutch, I gathered it was not going well for us... Then I collected all my *zen*-ness and decided to give it a try... "Excuse me, sir... Let me see if I understand the logic behind your reasoning... One) You have an original US health certificate stating that the animals are disease free. Two) You have a European Union original health certificate stating that the animals are disease free. Three) You have a faxed-copy of a Dutch health certificate, and a faxed FedEx receipt acknowledging that the original is on its way, and you mean to tell me that you, a trained medical animal doctor, in light of these documents that I have presented, think that holding these birds back in your facilities is the

right decision to make?" The doctor said "Yes" in a Dutch heavy accent, and turned his back on me.

I called him just about every name I can think of, *motherfucker* being the kindest of all. Renee urged me to keep quiet. I replied "What's he gonna do? Hold me inside the fucking bird cages??" Later on, Pedro told me he'd never seen me this angry in his life. He was right again, I don't think I ever *had* been.

So there it was. 7:00 p.m. and it was time to leave Schiphol airport. For the first time *ever* I was going to have to leave animals behind. Granted that they would be released as soon as the God forsaken original Dutch health certificate arrived, which would happen in one or two days. Still, the thought of moving on and leaving the poor oystercatchers in the hands of KLM's animal guy, was killing me. Anyway, there was absolutely nothing left to do, but to ensure the trip continued smoothly, and make sure that the rest of the animals got the best care possible. We walked over to the animal housing facility at Schiphol, and talked at length with the guy that took care of stranded animals. Of which there were plenty, including some Russian parrots. We gave him instructions, but couldn't help noticing the cages with parrots on the floor. One parrot was dead. We wrote instructions on the bird box, changed their water, put new food in, and asked for the room to be chilled down to 15 degrees Celsius (59 Fahrenheit). The guy asked if the Parrots would take it and we said "Hmmm... You better move those parrots into a warmer room..."

At 8:00 p.m., strictly as planned, we hopped on a truck that would take us and the animals to Brussels, where

we would board a DHL flight back to Lisbon. We did a final check on oxygen and the animals, and everything looked good. In just a few minutes we were on the road to Brussels, inside a big semi-truck with climate control. The box was set at 10 degrees Celsius (50 Fahrenheit), and oxygen cylinders were cranked way up to supersaturate the tanks before sealing them in Brussels for the last flights to Lisbon.

Total transport time was now 32 hours.

We arrived at Brussels airport cargo section at 10:45 p.m., fifteen minutes *ahead* of schedule (quite amazing, I assure you!) and called DHL's staff. They told us they were in the *passenger* section of the airport and so we drove there thinking "Okey dokey... This day is turning out to be just peachy anyway..."

It was precisely 11:00 p.m. when we met with Burghardt, our contact at DHL. He was a man of few words, but got the fucking job done and that's what we wanted to see. Offloading of the truck began seconds after, and I have to say we felt in pretty good hands. This guy knew his shit! The DHL boys sure knew what they were doing, but suddenly, Burghardt looked at our black round tanks with fish and asked "That's not going, is it??"

My hair curled while responding affirmatively. I explained that I was aware we could not use oxygen nor pumps inside the plane, and that the tanks were sealed. We had explained this to DHL a million times *before* the trip. He replied "I thought you were only carrying styrofoam boxes, but that's OK, we'll take that... I never palletized

stuff like this before, though. ” “That’s OK...” I said “... we’ve done it a few times and we can help...”

By midnight, Tuesday came along and palletizing was well on its way. The DHL folk worked hard, and quickly figured out how to strap everything down nicely. “I could *so* have fucking used *these* guys at the FineAir terminal in Miami a couple of years ago...” I thought to myself. Pedro and I did water checks, while keeping an eye on the 50+ forklifts that zoomed around the DHL hangar at what looked like light-speed. It came as no surprise to us that the two tanks with the heaviest loads, had the highest ammonia concentrations. The tank with the five rockfish, and the one with 4 chimaeras, were both at 0,25 ppm, which is scientific lingo for ‘parts per million’, or ‘milligrams per liter’. The other two tanks had 3 chimaeras in them each, and ammonia was virtually zero.

We were not going to get any further chances to access the tanks now until Lisbon, so both tanks with ammonia got 10 grams of Amquel (an ammonia quencher), and 50 grams of sodium bicarbonate (a pH buffer agent). Oxygen read approximately 300% in all the tanks, and was finally turned off. Which meant turning on the small 3,0 volt aerating units that were mounted inside the lid of each tank, and which would then help diffuse the oxygen *above* the water back *into* the water. One unit died on the spot, but was quickly replaced with a backup. A second unit died, but no more backups were available. Not to worry, as we ensured the tank with 450% oxygen, was the one riding with no aerating unit.

At 2:00 a.m., we were waiting in DHL’s crew lounge, after having 3 cups of soup, which was our first food in

the last 24 hours. You can see now why I talk so much about food, right? After sneaking yet another cigarette break, the ground staff introduced Pedro and I to the DHL pilot that was to fly us to Vitoria (Spain), and then on to Lisbon (Portugal). The pilot spoke in French with the co-pilot, and I could hear him saying “Can’t believe we have to carry these two clowns to Lisbon... They look like they’re half dead... Hope they don’t do anything stupid.” After this interesting dialogue I walked over and asked him *in French* if we were going to be able to check on the tanks before taking off. He went red in the face and replied “Mais oui, monsieur!”

We took-off from Brussels at 4:00 a.m. The loadmaster of our Airbus 310 was Portuguese and went by the name of Sobral. Pedro sat in the cockpit while I got to stretch across 3 jump seats, strapped at the waist, for take-off. Somewhere over France, we did our tank checks and, at about 5:00 a.m., were glad to see that the oxygen was still high and the ammonia still low. Sobral found us four granola bars, and we gobbled two each as if we were starving Sudanese children. Damn, that was probably a politically incorrect thing to say, but my backspace key is busted and so it’ll have to stay... Hopefully one or two of you can see the humor in that sentence, which was the original goal when it was written... Sweet granola bar and sweet Sobral! It never ceases to amaze me how poorly we always prepare the ‘human’ component of these transports. We have dozens of check-lists on every conceivable piece of equipment, tool, backup, document, permit, pharmaceutical drug, etc., and yet we will often forget something as basic as ‘food’ for the folks doing the transport. Not to worry, though... Some kind soul always appears to come to our rescue, it seems.

We landed in Vitoria, Spain, at 5:30 a.m. and left the plane to find sandwiches and coffee in the pilot's lounge. We were just a few hours from home and all animals looked well. Pedro and I were in high spirits and there was enough time for another quick cigarette break. We were cheerfully laughing, and hardly noticed a DHL operations girl coming in the room and snatching our captain, saying "Please come to the Ops room. I think your flight has been canceled..." The pilot returned 15 minutes later and informed us that our 7:00 a.m. departure was rescheduled for 5:00 p.m. due to fog in Lisbon. The plane *could* actually land two hours later, but that conflicted with the crew's resting scheduled hours. I explained that all fish would die if their arrival was delayed for 10 hours. He said he couldn't do anything. So I turned to all the pilots in the DHL lounge and asked "Anyone going to Portugal??" And that's when someone said some guys from the UK, were flying to Porto. That was 3 hours by road from Lisbon but good enough. Except for the part where I learned their plane was taking-off in 15 minutes.

It was 6:00 a.m. when I rushed to DHL Operations at Vitoria airport and, in Spanish, explained that I needed to get 2 pallets (loaded with tanks and styrofoam boxes) from the Airbus that we had flown on from Brussels, and move them to the Boeing 727 that was going to Porto. Operations didn't like the idea a whole lot, but said they'd run it by the boss. I then talked to *el jefe* myself and he said "Ok." Actually, he said "*Si, hombre.*", but who cares. The pallets were quickly pulled out of our previous aircraft and moved to the 727. I then called my Oceanário buddy, Gonçalo David Nunes (it was 5:00 a.m. in Portugal...) and asked him for a truck to be in Porto within an hour.

“No problem.” he replied. “God damn, what a fucking awesome team!...” I thought yet again.

At 6:05 a.m., we found out that, unfortunately, the pallet with the four round tanks was Airbus-310-size and did not fit the cargo hold door of the Boeing 727. “No problem!”, I replied, while frantically undoing the straps and cargo net securing the tanks. The DHL Spanish crew caught on my despair and quickly helped. We undid all the straps and cargo net in *seconds* and the tanks were moved to two ‘igloo’ containers that fitted the B727 cargo hold, after which we were told to board the plane immediately, as the ol’ swaperoo operation was taking up valuable time.

At 6:15 a.m., we were literally running towards the plane stopped on the tarmac, taxiing lights on, engines running and waiting for us. I suddenly remembered we needed documents to land in Porto. I asked for them, but the staff told me the documents were back on the Airbus and there was simply no time to get them. A girl came and rushed us to the B727. “You have to go *NOW* or stay in Spain!” she told me, in Spanish. We went, but not before giving the young lady a business card with the fax numbers for the Oceanário and our freight agent in Lisbon, and asking her to fax all the paperwork there, and also to Porto DHL’s office in Porto. “Fuck it!...” I thought “...we’ll make it work. We always fucking do.”

We boarded the aircraft at 6:17 a.m., and were greeted by a really nice British crew. They fed us pretzels and we sat in the very small B727 cockpit. As the captain started to taxi off, he slammed on the breaks and said “There’s someone on the tarmac waiving at us!...” He opened his tiny pilot window (while the plane still taxied in very slow

motion) and shouted with someone outside. He closed the window, turned back and told us “Your documents are in the belly compartment.” Blessed DHL! We took-off 13 minutes later.

Total transport time was now 42 hours.

We landed in Porto at 7:45 a.m., and were greeted by a DHL guy after we exited the aircraft. We explained that we had no freight agent in Porto and the fish needed to get to Lisbon ASAF’nP. I also asked “Where’s the truck?” and he replied “What truck?”

I explained I needed a truck and he replied “But a temperature controlled rig is gonna take a long time to get.” I replied “I’ll take the first thing available. Screw temperature control. It’s cold outside, anyway.” and he said “It’ll be here within the hour.”

Pedro and I then sneaked inside the cargo terminal, casually dropping our bags and pretending we hadn’t just flown in. It was 8:00 a.m. and customs was still closed. We sure as hell couldn’t wait for it to open. Also, we had cleared customs in Amsterdam, so sneaking past the Authorities in Porto, after flying in from Spain, wasn’t really that big of a deal. If we had driven in, we wouldn’t have even had to say a word to anyone. Still, all our documents had Lisbon listed as a final destination, and explaining everything would surely take forever. So I asked the DHL guy “Say... All our paperwork has ‘Lisbon’ as our final destination, and I am fucked if we have to wait for customs to open at 9:00 a.m. to sort this mess out... Can we load the tanks in the truck and get the fuck out of here?...” the guy hesitated, but reading my anxious

despair, signaled a forklift dude and told him “Load these tanks in that truck, will you? Quick.” ...and I could have married him on the spot... Which is something you have now heard me say quite a few times, right? What can I say, I’m a very emotional character and fall hopelessly in love for those who lend me a helping hand.

A few minutes later the tanks were loaded inside the truck, and I then called Lisbon and explained that the birds were still in Amsterdam. I provided the Oceanário team with phone numbers of the evil vet in Amsterdam, and also of our truck driver, because my phone was running pretty damn low on battery. At this point, we also found out that the pallet with the styrofoam boxes, containing all the invertebrates and octopus, was still in Vitoria, inside the Airbus. Only the 4 tanks with chimaeras and rockfish, and the pallet with gear arrived. “Fuck!...” I thought, realizing there hadn’t been time to move them from one plane to the other, and I had been so preoccupied about the tanks with the ‘delicate’ animals in, I hadn’t even remember the invertebrates. No problem. The invertebrates and octopus would arrive later that day. I let the freight agent know these were coming at 5:00 p.m., and sneaked another cigarette break, for I felt a heart-attack coming. Some of you will now comment “If you felt a heart-attack coming, surely a cigarette was not your best choice.” Others, however, will understand precisely why I did it. That sentence was for these latter ones.

We boarded the truck at 8:45 a.m. with no customs clearance, holding the documents in my hand, we drove south to Lisbon, three hours away from us. The truck driver’s phone rang some 10 times during the trip. The Lisbon crew was working hard trying to persuade the evil

Amsterdam vet to release the birds. The original health certificate was FedExed from Oregon, but would not arrive until Wednesday morning. It was now Tuesday. Also, the parrots from Russia were also waiting for a health certificate and the vet now claimed he would not release the oystercatchers until he got the health certificate for the Russian birds as well. And then the Oceanário's vet talked to the boss of the Amsterdam vet, who asked if the oystercatchers could get a certain disease that the parrots usually carry. Our vet answered 'yes', God bless his professional soul and sharp sense of ethics... But we still love ya, Nuno!

Around 9:00 a.m., the truck's fuel gauge was dangerously close to 'E'. "Do we have enough until the next gas station?" I asked. "Think so." the driver replied. Shortly after a sign showed 'Gas 35 km'. I asked him "Can we make it?" and he replied "Don't know..." "Wow, this trip is going really well..." I thought... We made it, though, and took the time to check the animals and buy some M & M's, the cornerstone of a nutritious breakfast.

We arrived at the Oceanário at 1:30 p.m., and quickly offloaded the truck, acclimated the animals to their new water, and introduced them to a quarantine tank at 2:00 p.m. Total transport time for the rockfish: 50 hours. 43 for the chimaeras. The anemones and birds were still in transit at this point. All fish looked fine, oxygen was still in the upper 100s% and ammonia low in all tanks.

At 3:00 p.m., the phone battle began. I talked to Annie (the Amsterdam vet's boss) and Renee. Mark talked to Rotterdam Zoo and other institutions. The plan was to have someone going over to check on the birds. We also

talked to the guy who was taking care of them and he said they were fine. Nothing left to do until the original health certificate arrived from Oregon. We traced it online at FedEx and learned that it was going to be delivered Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. It was time to go home and sleep.

The anemones and the octopus arrived safely at Lisbon airport at 6:00 p.m., and all looked good upon acclimation and introduction to the Oceanário's quarantine tanks. Total transport time for those: 55 hours.

Wednesday morning I Called Renee. He confirmed he had the original health certificate in his hand and had just called the vet: he was going to release the birds. The day before's schmoozing worked, but we still had to send them an official document from the Portuguese Government Veterinarian Authority, stating that the birds would be quarantined once they arrived to the Oceanário. Which, of course, they would have been, anyway. Now it was time to fly them back from Amsterdam to Lisbon. Bad weather, however, had cancelled the first flight from Air Portugal, which meant they needed to make the evening flight, or Thursday morning. We tried KLM also, but they simply refused to fly the birds at all. So, back to Air Portugal it was. Because their first flight had been canceled, and the evening flight was overbooked, 2 containers of luggage were already doomed to stay behind. No chance to sneak the birds in there.

At 2:00 p.m., I called Public Relations at Air Portugal, and explained the situation. I suggested the birds flew in the cabin. They called back and said they'd do it if the pilot authorized it. I called Renee and asked him to take

the birds to Air Portugal, when the time came. I also wrote a nice letter for him to give to the pilot.

At 8:00 p.m., Renee called and said the pilot did not want to carry the birds, to which I replied “Go ahead and slit his throat with a rusty knife now, please.” However... The ground handling crew somehow squeezed the birds in the cargo hold, so the birds *were* flying back!

I was home when I called our freight agent in Lisbon, at 8:01 p.m., and told him “The birds are coming, we need you at the airport by 9:30 p.m.” “No problem”, Ezequiel replied.

At 9:15 p.m., Ezequiel called and said “Flight is delayed. Let’s meet at 11:30 p.m.”

At 11:45 p.m., the plane finally landed and myself, Isabel and Ezequiel, were there. The birds cleared customs and were loaded in my car. They were introduced to their quarantine room at 1:00 a.m. (Thursday) and looked good. Weighing revealed they had only lost about 50 grams (1,76 ounces) each. Transport time for the birds: 85 hours.

What can I say? Go visit the Oceanário and pay attention when you get to the Pacific habitat. When you see three black birds with really long orange beaks, those are the oystercatchers (scientific name *Haematopus bachmani*) in this story.

We went through a lot to get them there, but we’d do it all over again, for those birds help the Oceanário tell a cool story about conservation, and that’s what this business is all about.

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