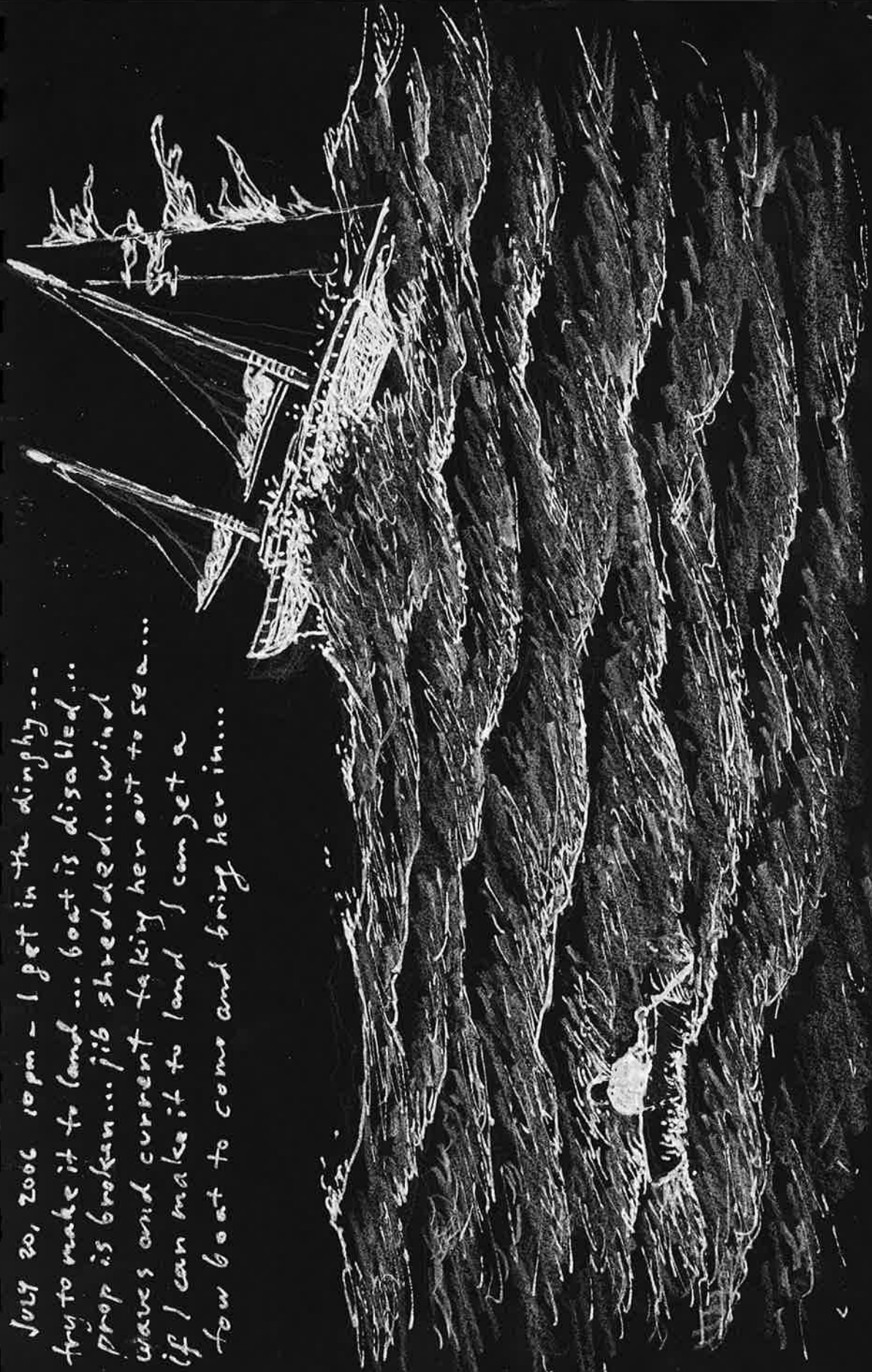
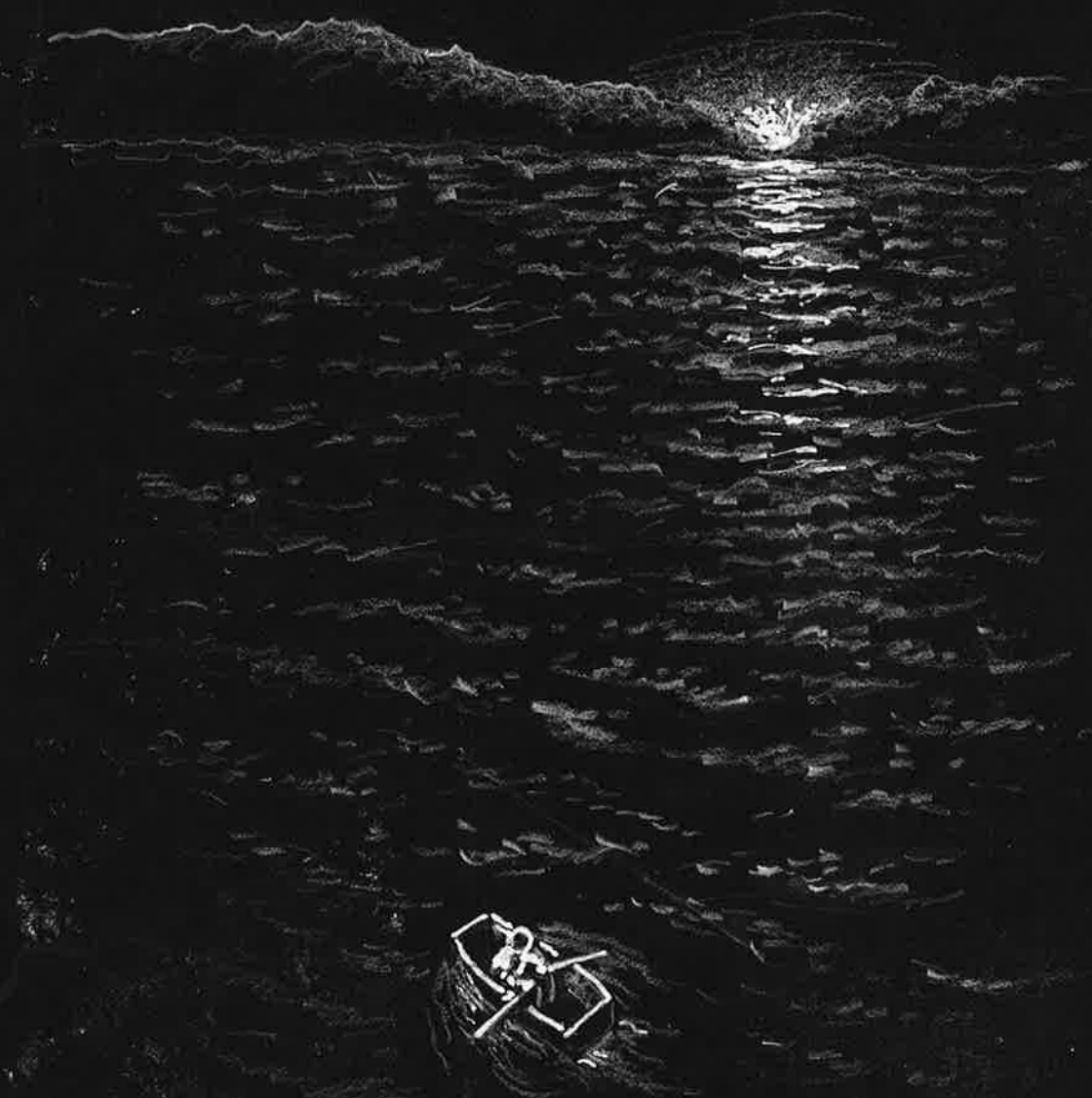


July 20, 2006 10pm - I get in the dinghy...  
try to make it to land... boat is disabled...  
prop is broken... jib shredded... wind  
waves and current taking her out to sea...  
if I can make it to land I can get a  
tow boat to come and bring her in...



After an hour and a half of hard rowing I was forced to admit to myself that I was not going to make it. My effort had produced blisters on my hands and less than a mile. There were 4 miles to go and I was exhausted. How did I get myself into this predicament???



tantalized by the lights of St. George's, Grenada 4 miles away (so near, so far) there seemed nothing but total disaster ahead for me... 2

2 weeks earlier...

After a 2 month visit in Vermont I returned to Trinidad where I had left my boat "RUBY", a 36' gaff-rigged schooner I'd built under my living room floor and had been cruising in the Caribbean for the last 8 years...



But an angry and extremely hostile immigration officer had other plans...

I see you been in my country too long - You got 2 weeks to get out..

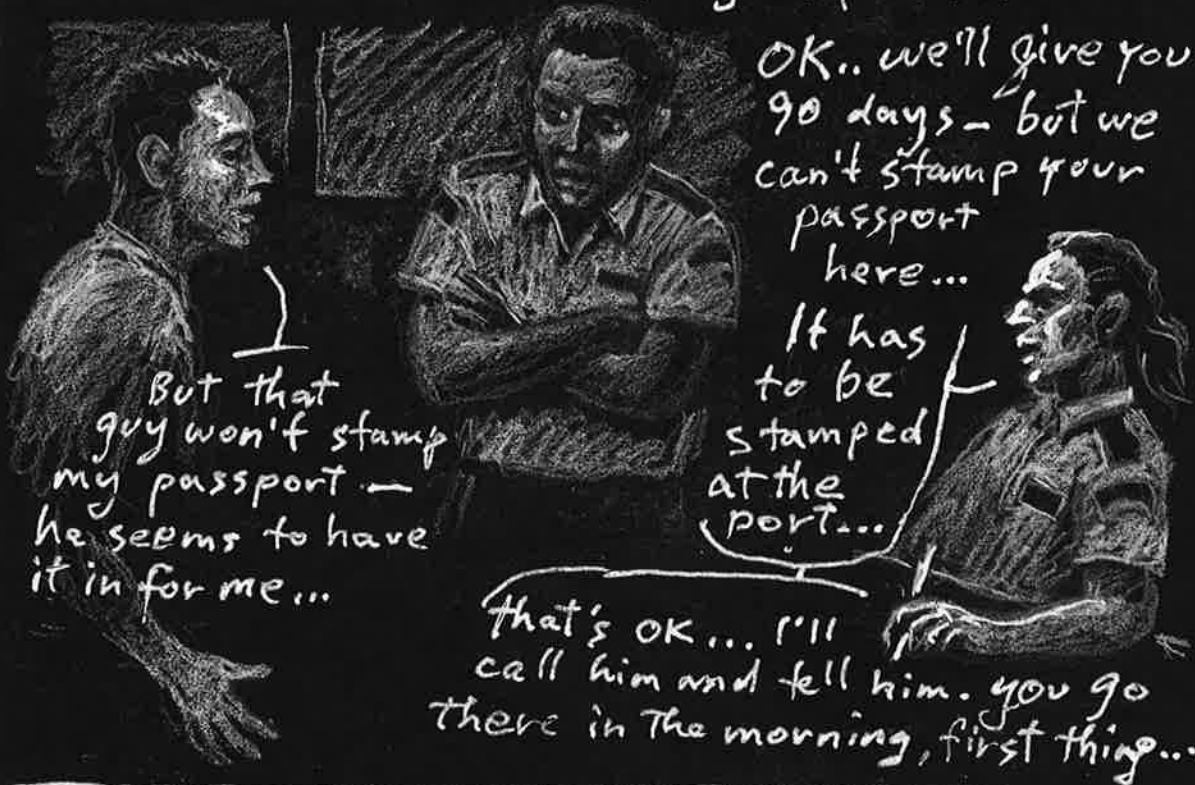
But I've always gotten 90 days in the past when I return



Well, you're not getting 90 days now - and if you don't like 2 weeks I'll give you 1 week to get out !!!

clearly I was not going to get anywhere with this guy - I would have to see a Senior officer...

I made an appointment and went to the main Immigration office in downtown Port of Spain and made my case, that I needed to haul out my boat to make some necessary repairs...



BUT...

Those #0!!x guys downtown don't tell me how to run this office!

and you better be gone by Friday or I

will take strong action against you!

So, in the last hour of daylight, July 19<sup>th</sup> I sailed out thru the Bocas bound for Grenada, an easy overnight voyage... or so I thought...



A beautiful quiet night with a moderate breeze...

...around midnight the Gods rewarded me with the singular gift of a moonrise at sea...



an hour before dawn,  
Sky is getting lighter  
motor-sailing in a  
light breeze...

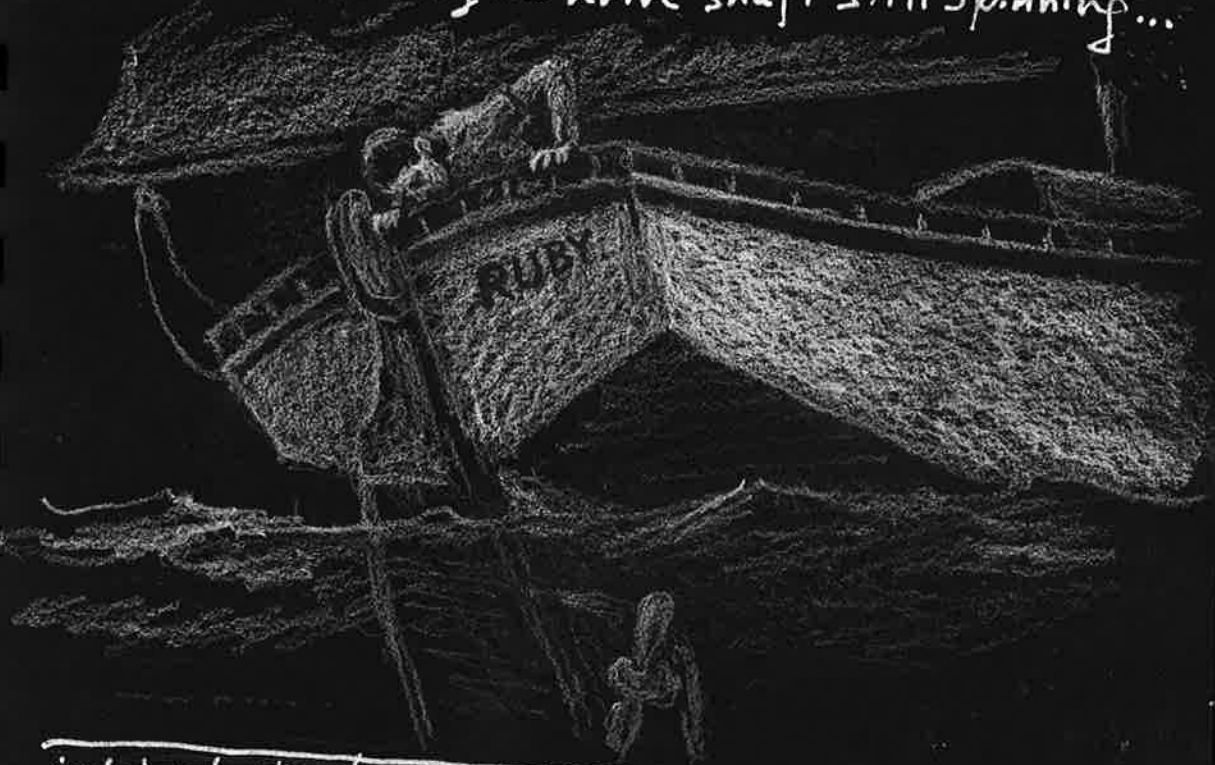


20 miles to go, another 4 or 5 hours, then drop  
anchor, breakfast and a nap...



a hard jolt and a loud metallic CLANG  
what the hell was that?

What had I hit? a log? whale? container? The prop was broken, not turning tho the diesel was still running the drive shaft still spinning...



judging by the loud metallic CLANG! the known fact that there are tens of thousands of shipping containers that have fallen off ships, and are floating around in the world's oceans, I assume that I hit one floating just a few feet below the surface...



at 40' in length and weighing around 50 tons a light tap from one could destroy a small boat in a heart beat...

...it had hit the steel keel, broken the propeller and opened a leak in the hull as I discovered when I went below and saw water sloshing around inside...



After the bilge pump quit I went below every half hour to pump another 20 gallons by hand...



By 9 AM I've closed that 20 miles to the South coast of Grenada but without aid of the motor the current has carried us 10 miles to the west of the island. As the Atlantic flows into the Caribbean through the 85 mile gap between Trinidad and Grenada there's a powerful westward current which is hard to overcome... for every 4 miles northward the current sets us 2 miles to the West... from 10 miles away Grenada sure looks small...

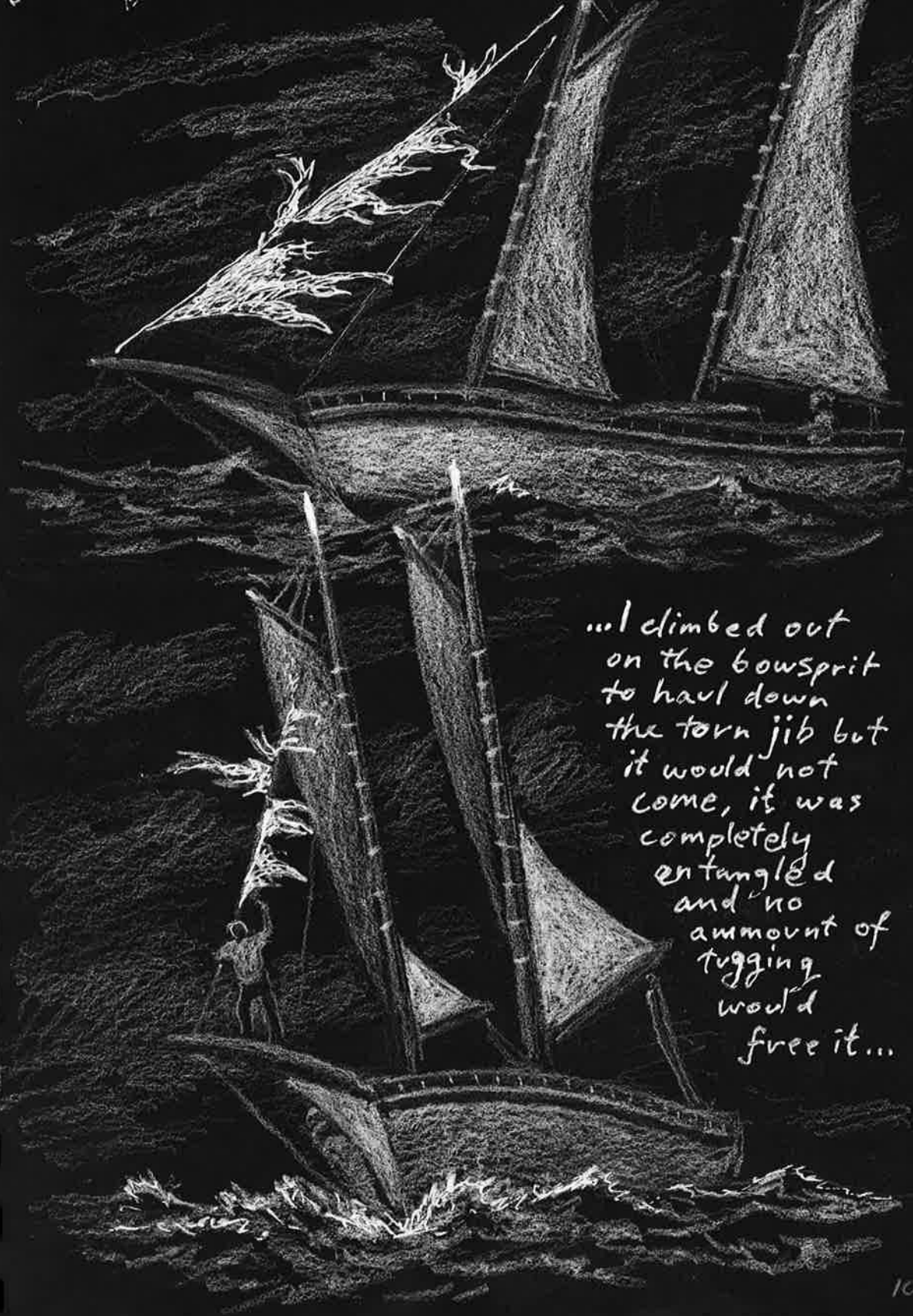


...hours of tacking back and forth, making slow progress against the current, very frustrating, evening coming on, closer and closer but very slowly



After 8 years sailing under the tropical sun Ruby's sails were showing a lot of wear, loss of shape and deteriorating threads, needing to be completely re-stitched which I'd planned to do in Trinidad...

At 8pm the jib gave up the ghost and blew out completely, only shreds left wrapped around the jib stay so I couldn't even bring it down...



...I climbed out on the bowsprit to haul down the torn jib but it would not come, it was completely entangled and no amount of tugging would free it...

at that point I decided call for help on the VHF radio but could not raise Coast Guard. I called for any boat in the harbor but got no answer...



...with nothing but bad choices available to me I decided to take my chances in the dinghy. try to get to land (I know - "Stay with the Boat" that's the rule...)

so I packed a waterproof bag with important papers, my sketch books, some tools and yes, some duct tape!



I loaded the dinghy with the bag, 3 gallons of water, a tarp and a few other things I thought might be useful, and hand-held VHF and hand-held GPS...



Then I climbed into the dinghy and started rowing, wondering if I'd done the right thing and if I'd ever see Ruby again...

