

Friday, June 3. 2011

## **Half-way**

Friday, 02.06.2011, 12:00 local (16:00 UTC), 14:52.2N, 070:38.3W (half-way between Puerto Rico and Colombia). Liz gets seasick quickly below, so I cook lunch. Potatoe curry in the pressure cooker. Yummy. As I fill the first bowl a sea hits the side of Gudrun and she heels quickly. I spill the contents of the bowl over my leg and on the floor. Ouch. Fortunately I've cooked enough for four. We eat lunch, happy. The wind drops and we take out the 2nd reef to increase sail area. The wind drops further and we take out the 1st reef as well. The wind drops further. We can't get more sail area up. We're going slow. It gets dark, real dark. This is the darkest night in my life. No stars, no moon, a thick cloud cover, rain, and no scattered light from civilisation. The wind is gone, but the old seas are still there and the boat rolls heavily from side to side. Bang, clang. The noise of the boom and rigging clanging and flapping is unnerving. We work with our headlamps to secure the boom and tie down everything. When people ask about sailing they always want to know about the storms. But to me the worst are the calms. A sailboat without wind is the most useless piece of equipment. Under sails it's elegant, graceful, fast. Becalmed it becomes a manifest of frustrated dreams and hopes. I look at the wind indicator. 5 to 6kn from the back. Barely enough to fly the Parasailor. But we have to try. We can't just sit there and get pounded to insanity. An hour later the Parasailor is up. It always takes ages and is extremely frustrating, especially at night. We move with 2.5kn. Only walking speed, but enough to not have the seas crashing into the back of the boat. Quiet. Finally. We fall asleep. We wake up to the proximity alarm of the AIS. A tanker is crossing our path and will come to within half a mile. I wonder what the chances are for that. Later we see the tanker turning around and heading back. It is circling. That solves the question of how we got so close, but why is it doing it? We'll never know. The wind has increased again and turned further south. We change the parasailor for the genoa to maintain course. Still completely dark, still raining. Liz is crying. The darkness, the noises, the event with the tanker is getting to her. I try to comfort her, she falls asleep. We have breakfast in the cockpit. "I feel so vulnerable, useless" she says. "It's not your environment, yet." "It's not my environment. Punkt." She laughs. I laugh. We wonder how we'll cross the Pacific together. She doesn't want to do it really, but she doesn't want to leave me alone either. I don't feel like doing it right now either. But I want to have done it. It sounds all very romantic and adventurous when you think about it from the shelter, safety and comfort of home. After a bad night at sea it doesn't seem like such a good idea any more. But it's just that: "It's an adventure when you want it to stop right now and go home."

Posted by Axel Busch at 11:30

Axel - so well written. As I read it, I felt I was there. Hang in there, Liz!  
Anonymous on Jun 4 2011, 03:49

Yeah, being becalmed is horrible. I got stuck about 20nm south of Madeira, couldn't really do anything for a whole night, then had to use a hammer on the outboard bracket to use the engine.

Your perspective on those bits definitely changes when you get in though, for what it's worth. Good luck for the rest of the trip

P.S.  
It's a pity understanding some German gets in the way of me imagining Liz staring Axel down and saying "It's not my environment."  
\*Punkt\*.

Anonymous on Jun 4 2011, 04:24