

TEN TILL TWO (10:10)

ELLIE GA

Three Arctic Booklets [#1]
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At the beginning North was here. But it keeps changing. That's where we were. This is our world. We had a couple of trips outside of this map but not maybe more than four days altogether. These are pressure ridges. I tried to name them after things I know, like the national mountain of Norway. There is another one over there. And that one doesn't have a name.

This is the area where the polar bears used to hang around. They hung around for a week. Around some hummocks. A hummock is a big pile of ice.

That's Tartu. That's Helsinki. Copenhagen is not here. It broke up when we were building the runway.

It's not a long time ago that we saw our last bird. For us, a bird is like a big plane.

So where is New Helsinki? I keep thinking New Helsinki is over here. No, Saint Petersburg is over here. This is almost melted. A lot has disappeared. It is a world that moves fast in fact. Like right now. During the summer the boat's position was north-this way. But that doesn't matter.

Tromso, Helsinki, they don't exist? Yes, they exist for me.

In fact, St. Petersburg is not there. It was just a visual moment.

Is there a name for this area? I'm not sure. Why? Because it is not there.

South was there. That's the limit. It is important and not important.

They never did replace Helsinki. We never put it back. It was never here. So there is no New Helsinki after all.

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A question mark? Does that represent the big idea?

Bad shovels. Bad organization, but they all survived. We can be optimistic. How long ago was that expedition? A hundred years? That boat was wood. Ours is aluminum. Wood breaks. Aluminum bends.

This is a map of the future. With a little bit of the past.

The furthest I have been from the boat was a few kilometers. The visibility was good, we could see the boat. But after 10-15 minutes, the visibility changes and when the boat disappears it is as if our star disappears. But it's good when this happens, when the visibility changes, because you have the impression that you are really far from the boat even if you are only 2 or 3 km from the boat. You have the impression of really being far.

Here we are near the top of the world. That's the door to the exterior. Bottles of gas, the sauna, kerosene drums, the ropes, the snowman, the toilet, the moon and the snow. It's like we are on the moon looking at the earth. That's the wind which blows on us. We don't know the destination.

For me, now, the north is empty. Nothing there. One time I had shooting practice facing north. That's about it. The wind blows and blows from the north, which will one day blow us home. I don't like that idea. I prefer to stay here.

Chaos, the big hummock. Paris has changed. Now Paris is bigger.

You've been there. I've been there.

Paris turned into an airport on the eastern extreme of the validation line.

Chaos has disappeared.

We slid by the North Pole. During the summer, the boat was very close to the pole. I don't remember how close we were, how many kilometers exactly, but one day we were very close and the next day we were far away again. Everyone was disappointed. Everyone wanted to get farthest north. We were going to ski to it but it was too difficult, too far. But whenever we went out for a walk we would always head north.

North. South. East. West. It's different each time. I'm just trying to search the archives of my memory. We often

us the word ephemeral: our life here,
our passing, everything is being erased
behind us and even our memory is being
erased as our world has gotten smaller
and broken up. Our world is gone.

Here is the boat. And here is the wind.
And this is the zone I often called our
garden. That is our world and it has
shrunk. Helsinki didn't last. It was
moved over. We called it New Helsinki.
This one here is Wellington.

The limit was further. But not much
further. Just behind the toilet.

The points in the distance were the
validation line. The validation line is a
1km line. We need to validate our world
because we are not sure it exists.

North was here. Over here somewhere.
Our ice block always stayed at the
same position, then we went across the
top and north became south and south
became north. It doesn't really make
any difference to our life. At least we
weren't drifting sideways.

This is the one moving now, the remnants of our ice block. Where we peed or where we used to pee. It's all melted away now. This was later on. Tartu is now over here. The validation line is broken in half.

I call Charles de Gaulle airport Liban-Lebanon. Because Charles de Gaulle airport is the only place in France with a Lebanese cedar. When I go there I can see it from the highway. There is just one. I remember it from when I was a child.

There's the radiometer. If I could see, it would be easier. Tartu is dead. The black box was at Tartu, which recorded the information, just like the one on an airplane. A mermaid for Copenhagen. Berlin represents where the bears used to stay. This is New Helsinki, the beginning of the line. But I thought that no one knew it was called Helsinki, so they renamed it Saint Petersburg. New Helsinki and St. Petersburg are not the same place. Now we have both St. Petersburg and New Helsinki.

That's the reception from the iridium phone. It's a complex world in terms of everything you don't see.

I'll put the boat in the middle because it's our house. Here's the fire for burning the rubbish and here's the toilet. Here's a piece of ice, like a mushroom, under the boat. When we dive we wake the little fish up. I saw a lot of beer cans down there.

Here's the old lead and a little tent. The other one disappeared.

It wasn't possible to walk around here then. Paris here. Charles deGaulle airport there. The first airplane arrived here. Then another one. I arrived here with the first airplane. Then I took another airplane to get to the boat because we couldn't cross it then on foot.

In the summer, first we got around with skis, then with rubber boots, then with a life jacket. The world changed a lot back then, every week. I'm happy that

the situation evolves. There is nothing I miss. I'm content to see the stars now. In the summer it was always the sun and after five months the day is finally finished.

Ten people are put into an unknown room for one minute, maybe a little less, not more. Then they are asked to describe what they have seen. What do they remember? The descriptions are very different for each person. Nobody sees the world in the same way. We don't have another picture world. We must see only what we can see, not more. Not more.

NOTE

I arrived on Tara when she was locked in the ice at approximately 86°N, 12°W right before the sun set for the long polar night. Before I had left for the expedition I was told I should prepare to be aboard for at least six months. Upon arrival, predictions were saying we would drift so fast that we would be out of the ice in little over a month. I felt that I had come to the party too late and that I would never get to know the ice in the same way that some of the other nine crewmates understood it. It was all just a lot of ice and snow to me.

My crewmates draw me maps of our world and no two maps are ever alike. I record their narrations as they draw their maps. Of course there are some common references, like the boat or the toilet or the shared place names used to identify the science stations. But on some of the maps there are places that only one person has named – or has noticed. And of course the longer a person has been here, like in most places, the more there is to see and to point out.

And there are differences. Just the other morning the captain and the carpenter caught a glimpse of my own map and they began to correct some of the orientation. They wondered why I had written silence under the area in my map labeled south. South is the silent area, where we are headed, the future for me is silent. For the captain, who has been here for over a year now, the south is noisy – filled with people and commitments. The mechanic disagrees and on his map, he too writes the word silence under the area labeled south. But regardless of what we imagine for the future and what the future might sound like, there is actually no silence up here – despite what everyone down there thinks.

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From September 2007 to February 2008 Ellie Ga was the artist-in-residence aboard Tara, a two-mast aluminum sailboat locked drifting in the pack ice near the North Pole. Ellie Ga is creating *The Fortunetellers*, a multi-media project based on her nine-month experience in the frozen Arctic ocean. The project is a collection of performative lectures, installations, videos and texts.

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