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Letter to Sandy from San Juan

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LETTER TO SANDY FROM SAN JUAN

Dear Sandy: We listen to marine calls every night.
Bad news, mostly. One wife, cheery as sparkling wine
We didn't hear his side. Someone else is waiting
for the baby, another took on water in the storm.
The gillnetters are angry. You have our number.

Sunny weather, minus tides—good for digging clams.
We used the depth finder only once,
proceeded dead slow into Oak Harbor. Customs laughed
at my bouquet—31 varieties of wild flowers
picked on Lopez. I watch them every day. I think of you.

There was that real estate agent at Friday Harbor,
wanted to sell us the top of the spit overlooking
the cannery. "God doesn't make any more land,"
he said, "and the zoning's getting strict."
They haven't raised peas since the rabbits invaded.

The night of the storm, we found a berth at Lopez,
went ashore for dinner. One restaurant,
46 pages of menu. The locals were cheering up Otto.
His wife took him to court and won
2/3 of the farm and the fishing license.
It could be worse. He has his health and friends.

I'm beginning to notice the intricate patterns
of flowers. I would like to transfer these
designs to fabric. I feel dowdy
with no shower for a week. You must keep up
your strength. We anchored to a buoy
in Roche Harbor, took our drinks on deck
and counted hemlocks. We know them
by the way the tops lean. We watched the eagle
perch, turn upside down as the branch brushed ground.

My favorite flower is the weed
I haven't learned the name of. There must be
a hundred perfect pods before it's in full bloom.
You would like the churches here. Old
and white, ideal for weddings. They play
sing-along hymns on their chimes at night.

Yesterday we were caught in the ferry's wake.
The flowers tipped over. Everyone was mad.
I cleaned up the mess, threw away the dead
things. The columbine is too fragile to last.
The salal, sturdy. Our boat is named Loki.
From mythology, I think. The Indians stick it out
together on Lummi. I saw the women at the shore,
that ritual waiting, as we cruised by
on our way to Orcas.

We got the Cuban cigars over the border. No problem.
And your china vase. You'll be pleased, I think.
The charts are accurate. We learned to understand
the legend: red, right, returning.
The last thing I did was toss the flowers
in the sea. Bless the fleet. Marilyn