

Excerpt from Chapter 86 of Life of Pi

The ship slid by for what seemed like a mile, a mile of high, black canyon wall, a mile of castle fortification with not a single sentinel to notice us languishing in the moat. I fired off a rocket flare, but I aimed it poorly. Instead of surging over the bulwarks and exploding in the captain's face, it ricocheted off the ship's side and went straight into the Pacific, where it died with a hiss. I blew on my whistle with all my might. I shouted at the top of my lungs. All to no avail.

Its engines rumbling loudly and its propellers chopping explosively underwater, the ship churned past us, and left us bouncing and bobbing in its frothy wake. After so many weeks of natural sounds, these mechanical noises were strange and awesome and stunned me into silence.

In less than twenty minutes a ship of three hundred thousand tons became a speck on the horizon. When I turned away, Richard Parker was still looking in its direction. After a few seconds he turned away too and our gazes briefly met. My eyes expressed longing, hurt, anguish, loneliness. All he was aware of was that something stressful and momentous had happened, something beyond the outer limits of his understanding. He did not see that it was salvation barely missed. He only saw that the alpha here, this odd, unpredictable tiger, had been very excited. He settled down to another nap. His sole comment on the event was a cranky meow.

"I love you!" The words burst out pure and unfettered, infinite. The feeling flooded my chest. "Truly I do. I love you, Richard Parker. If I didn't have you now, I don't know what I would do. I don't think I would make it. No, I wouldn't. I would die of hopelessness. Don't give up, Richard Parker, don't give up. I'll get you to land, I promise, I promise!"

– Yann Martel