# Two Bowls of Soup

by Chris CORBIN

Mid afternoon at Soup Bowls. So called because the local name for white water is ‘soup' and there's lots og ‘soup' at Soup Bowl. ‘Bolw' because wher the reef shallows the wave sucks up and a fast breaking bowl shapd section sets up.

Only three guys out, a boogie boarder and two surfers. It's low tide. That means the usual gauntlet off spiky urchins hiding in evry hole in the sharp coral until it gets deep enough t start paddling. ( ‘Walk in the bottom of the ruts', teh regulars say, but that's where the lion fish with their ‘pain worse than childbirth' sting tend to lurk).

Jumpin onto the back of the surge from an incoming wave; keeping the board as flat as possible to stop the fin snagging on the reef; paddling wide and shallow, like a turtle, to get some traction without shreding my hands on the coral; I make it out through the shore break. Stroking furiosly across the rip to avoid being pulled into the exposed heads of coral on the edge of the channel, and out into the line up. It's a familiar route from having been through the routine a hundred times or more.

I’m hardly into positon; the boogie boarder paddles over to me and shakes me byt he hand. ‘I want to shake the hand of a brave man,' he said. I obviously loked puzzled because he continued ‘There's no way I would come out here on a long board today. It's not the size, it's the steepness'.

‘Well, I'll have fun in the process,' I replied, fairly nonchalantly. Inside I was a biut taken aback by the interaction with the boogie boarder and became aware of the conflicting voices in my head. One echoed eth words I had said ‘It'll be fine, I surfed bigger stuff here just a couple of days ago.' The other was saying ‘He's right. You should hav taken Sam's lead and used a short board.' Sam and I had driven down together and he paddled out behind me. As we waxed our boards on the beach beforehand he was saying ‘I'm taking out the short board today. Once Soup Bowls gets beyond a certain size I get worried that the power will snap my long board.'

‘Well, I'm a longboarder and that's it. As long as I can get out I always prefer to ride the long board. If it snaps; it snaps.' I was now thinking that maybe Sam was right.

Still half-aware of the conflictiong voices in my head I paddled into my first wave – not much shape; a short, wuick ride; nothing special, no mishaps; my confidence rose.

I paddled int o my second wave, a bit late on the take-off and experienced exactly what the boogie boarder predicted. Wehn what seemed to be a fairly benign wave when I paddled into it, hit the reef adn the gentle slope I was expecting transformed into an empty cavern. I leapt to my feet and desperatly tried to set a rail in the near vertical face of the wave but without success.

Spitting froth, I paddled back out with the ‘should have used a short board' voice louder than ever in my head. I rode a few more waves. Made some; didn't make some and generally things were going OK.

The enegy in the ocean was vibrant. In between sets one of the other surfers sudenly said, ‘... Wait nuh; how we get all de way down here?' Ya know wa? Dat last swell dat come through, wash us off de reef.' And he was right. Because of the low tide the water was pouring off the reef after every wave and taking us with it. We had to paddle constantly just to stay in position.

Three of us went for it. Sam was deepest inside, then ‘Wait, Nuh', then me. I got to my feet and looked fleetingly to my left. The other two guys had pulled back. I loked right and saw a wall of green fethering into the distance. I banked hard, stooped low and droped just in front of a cascade of ocean. I squeezed off the bottom and up into the middle of the wave. My ass was dragging along the face of teh wave as the lip pitched over my shoulder. I exploded out of the end of the wave, my hands raised, hooting like a rabid ape. The guys out the back joined in.

After that the ‘it's fine' voice was the only one I heard in my head. Indeed it evolved into ‘you can ride anything out here; just don't get cocky.' I didn't.

An hour later, the paddling took its toll and I called it a day.

Two things have stayed wiht me: If I can get out I will always ride a long board. If I can't get out; I'll surf somewehre else. Of wider importance; how can we silence the questioning voices that distract us from relising our full posibilities and get more of that sense of capabilty, confidence and clarity in our lives as a whole?

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