



Napoleon's Gambit

A novel by Eric Goldman

Sailing through history ...
to commit the perfect crime

Chapter Ten

March 1, 1813

A brilliant flash overwhelms my eyes. *Bit-by-Bit* heaves violently. A gale of wind howls and the seas stride by twenty-five feet tall, like an army of green soldiers with white-feathered caps.

I check the radar – all clear. The GPS indicates the loss of all satellite signals. StarFix is unable to match the photographs it takes with anything in its database, and the boat pitches too violently for the use of a sextant.

If the boat is going to be right on the weight limit, I want to transit from the exact center of The Gate. I open the cockpit lazarette and extract a canister, anchor and a long line. Grunting with effort, I heave the three concrete lumps of the anchor overboard and, as the line rapidly runs out, throw the canister, too. I pay out enough line for the anchor to reach the

seabed and float the canister about forty feet below the surface. In six months, the canister's antenna door will open, the antenna's float will rise to the surface and transmit a homing signal. Provided it isn't run down, its batteries should last about six months.

I hoist the mainsail to the third reef, unfurl two thirds of the jib and set a course of 170 degrees, to take us clear of the Fiji chain, south and east across the Pacific.

With the sails drawing and the boat's motion diminished by their pressure, I sit in front of the radar and mull the navigational problem. At 11:55 local time, I switch the camera into continuous mode and it captures the sun's position five times a second until 12:05. StarFix begins with the first photo, adjusts the positions of the stars forward to 2011, April 8, 16:00, and compares it to the photo it took here, before the transit. Three minutes later StarFix announces that the sun's altitude at noon today was 47.2°. Assuming I'm in 1813, we're at latitude south 18:19°, longitude west 175:12°. Right where we were just before the button moment. I set three clocks to the local time now. Until proven otherwise, it's 13:15 on March 1, 1813.

I open a bottle of wine, pour myself a glass with difficulty, and raise it in a toast: "To Doc George. Here's to you. If I meet Thomas, I'll be sure to mention you." I take a sip.

And then a groan echoes from the port forward cabin.

I stop with the glass near my lips. A feeble groan again, followed by retching. I put the glass down in the galley sink. Extract my knife from its sheath on my belt, and hurry down the port companionway, the knife poised.

I open the cabin door slowly and peer around its edge. Ses lies on the bunk, her white dress covered in vomit, some of it stuck to her sweating cheeks. The acrid stink hangs in the air and her face is green. Just as I walk in, she hurls again, all over me.

I thrust the knife towards her and yell, “What the fuck are you doing here?” She screams and tries to back away, but her hands slip in the vomit and she screams again and sobs.

I drop the knife on the bed and notice two large bags sliding around on the cabin sole, a smaller one next to her on the bunk. I stare at her for seconds, dumbfounded. “Are you here as a spy? I should throw you overboard.”

“Go ahead, sailor boy,” she says weakly. “Right now, you would be doing me a favor.”

I turn on my heel and slip on some vomit. I put my hand out to steady myself and cut myself on the knife. I grab it by the handle and leave the cabin, slamming the door behind me.

I stomp up the stairs and throw the knife into the sink where it smashes the wine glass. I sit at the helm. My anger feels red hot in my face and I’m breathing heavily. Time passes and helplessness descends. No matter how angry I am, I can’t see myself throwing her overboard, so what am I going to do?

I return the knife to its sheath, clean up the broken glass, shower, bandage the wound, dress and sit at the internal-helm. When she emerges, we will have to deal with her situation. If she dehydrates and dies.... No. I don’t want that.

March 2, 1813

About two hundred miles southeast of Kandavu, the southern end of the Fiji chain, a small reddish-brown bird lands on the cockpit table. It’s so tired, it ignores me, flops onto the table and goes directly to sleep, head on breast. Its chest heaves before slowing. I put some breadcrumbs and a dish of water out.

The bird wakes after three hours, looks around in alarm and leaves

without sampling my hospitality. It was probably blown off course, to be so far from land.

I hear movement in the port-forward cabin and assume Ses is alive. I knock on the door. It opens, revealing a clean bunk. Showered, she's dressed in jeans and a t-shirt. She smiles wanly, and says *Thanks* for the bottle of water I hand her. I leave.

Doc George insisted that the Time Pulse would not disrupt any of *Bit-by-Bit*'s electrical and electronic systems, but I check each one now, pondering the stowaway. This whole mission has been planned for *Bit-by-Bit* and me, and hopefully *Impérieuse* and her crew – there's no script for a woman.

March 3, 1813

I wake and make breakfast. The smell of eggs scrambling and bread toasting brings Ses out of her cabin, wearing the same jeans and t-shirt from yesterday, her hair combed into a ponytail, her face pale.

“That smells delicious,” she says. “Are stowaways made to starve to death, or could I please share your breakfast? I'm sorry, love. Well, I suppose I shouldn't call you that then. I'll call you Josh, instead. Perhaps Captain Rick? Anyway. I'm trying to apologize, for what I did to you and for stowing away. You scared me. I thought you were going to kill me with that knife. Should have known better, of course, but I doubt I've seen an angrier man in my life. I'm truly sorry.”

I stand, walk to the stovetop, take a plate, add a piece of toast, some egg and hand it to her. I stare into those blue eyes, seeking a difference, a subtle sign of truth versus deception. I nod and say, “Apology heard. But...” I shrug, take my plate and go outside to eat.

She eats in the salon, brews coffee, brings out two cups and sits on the other side of the cockpit table. I glance at my mug and taste it –

black, no sugar.

“Listen, Josh. Please? Let me at least try to explain? I’ll take your silence as permission. Josh, I swear: I do love you, and if at the end of my story, no, my explanation, for it’s true, every word is, at the end, if you don’t want me on board, I’ll leap off and you can sail on solo, just as you wanted. Please, just hear me out.

“I love you, and before I told you, before that, you were in love with me. But now you feel betrayed. Used. I am guilty of that. I didn’t want to, couldn’t anymore. It’s why I packed what I thought I needed for this trip and flew out. I had this naïve thought that, after I told you, you would tell me that it didn’t matter – that somehow you had always known. I don’t know, maybe you would understand the oath of honor part – maybe you will yet. But we both know that wasn’t the only reason I didn’t tell you about it – Cassius had power over me. He probably still does, over both of us. I hoped you would invite me aboard, or else... well, as you can see, or else to stowaway. I came aboard in the morning, while you were meeting with Cassius on his trawler.”

I say nothing, taking in the wind blowing over the port quarter, watching the waves rise and fall.

She stands and begins to walk, aimlessly, looking at me, away at the sea and back to me. Her arms clamp her chest, her shoulders slump and her head hangs. She tries to speak, clears her throat and coughs. “What’s it to be, Josh? I brought what I need; I won’t get in the way. I’ll cook and clean and do the laundry. I’ll sleep in the cabin I’m in now, if you that’s what you want.”

The waves roll past, crest after crest. “You said you packed what you need, Ses.” She stops walking to look at me, her eyes lifting in hope, but I roll on, “Like what? A few bikinis? You think you can use that body of yours as a weapon? Thinking of stunning Commandant Coignart with your perfect tits?”

She lowers her head and moments later looks at me through tears. “There’s no need to be cruel.”

I glance at her slumped over, leaning against the bulkhead. “Perhaps you’re right. But what about clothes? You need warm clothes, waterproof ones, shoes, and boots.”

She walks towards me as I speak, stops in front of me and her watery eyes soften my anger a little. I say more calmly, “And how am I supposed to feed you? I packed enough provisions for one person, for one year. What’s going to happen if we have to show *Bit-by-Bit* to Thomas and James? Where are you going to be? Those men will find a woman, especially one dressed as you do, disturbing. Did you think of any of this before you stowed away?”

She reaches for my hand, but I pull it away. She bites her lip and another tear rolls down her cheek. “Come and look at what I did bring. Please, Josh.”

I follow her into the cabin and she moves aside, points at the large bags, still on the cabin sole. The first is filled with dresses, t-shirts, jeans, sweaters, running shoes, underwear, leather boots and jacket. A set of foul-weather gear, deck shoes, gloves and boots lie on the bottom.

The second contains a bulky plastic wrapped package on top. As I attempt to pull it up to peer underneath, she says, “Please be careful of my old clothes – I had to sew them myself – you have no idea how difficult it is finding clothes from the early nineteenth century.”

Despite my anger, I smile. “What kind of clothes?”

“Dresses, shawls, underwear: clothes for a few days. In case I need to appear in public as a woman. As you said, if I wore any of my modern clothes they would arrest me for indecency.” She lifts the package carefully. A midshipman’s uniform from 1813 lies on top. Under its jacket and top-hat, canvas shirt, trousers and silver-buckled shoes, is a rope belt with a dirk. Two muzzle-loaded pistols come next,

complete with powder and shot. A few cans of food, bottles of water, a pile of books and maps of San Sebastian and Pompey from the early 1800s form the next layer. At the bottom are two French Army jackets and pantaloons, with insignia to complete the uniforms of a commandant and colonel from the Napoleonic Wars. A small fiberglass case holds a Beretta pistol, tools and oil and several packs of ammunition.

I look at her for some time and she points at the small bag, still on the bed. Inside is a leather purse with one hundred Guinea gold coins, stamped 1813 below the head of King Charles III. A large manila envelope and her personal toiletries complete the contents.

“I thought if food was a real problem we could buy some from Port Jackson, as we go past it. You might even want to buy an old boat there, to be used to approach *Impérieuse* in.”

I leave the cabin, heading for the cockpit. She put a great deal of thought into this, but I shake my head: she’s a spare part on the mission, a dangerous distraction. She cries, “No.” She pushes past me and strides to the cockpit on the port side. She quickly throws a leg over the rail, holding the lifelines tightly with both hands.

“Ses. No!” I shout. I stand frozen. If I rush her, will she let go?

She stares at the sea for a long moment, and then her body convulses and she screams, “I can’t! Goddamn it, I can’t fucking do it!” She turns to climb back aboard, but her foot slips on the wet deck. She loses her grip on the lifeline. She drops overboard and vanishes beneath the sea.

I rush to the rail. I scan the sea and suddenly her head breaks the surface, already thirty yards astern. I grab the horseshoe float, ensure its attached line is secured, and throw it towards her. I tighten the main sheets. Run to the helm and punch the autopilot off button. I spin the wheel trying to keep my eyes on her head, the only visible part of her, now two hundred yards astern and dwindling rapidly. We jibe through the wind

and the mainsail lunges across; but the two main sheet system prevents a complete jibe and everything settles into place with a twang. Except for the genoa which back-winds itself and begins to heave us to. I furl it and search for her head.

Her blond hair is difficult to see against the white caps at the top of each wave and impossible to see at all in the troughs. For a frantic few minutes there is no sign, and then I catch a glimpse of her trying to reach the horseshoe float. She's too far astern and the boat is pulling the horseshoe further away from her. I yank out the knife and cut the line. I lose sight of her behind a wave. Another crashes into the starboard hull and stings my eyes. By the time I can open them, she's nowhere to be seen. I scream her name and listen. Scream again and listen, but all I hear is the wind and water.

I glance at the sea temperature: 19°C. She will die of hypothermia in about six hours. With her lack of body fat, she will enter stage one in thirty to forty minutes. I systematically scan areas, all the while screaming her name and listening. Five minutes later, I run inside to use the infrared camera. Her head will be hotter than the water and should stand out well.

Still no sign of her; a deep despair wells and I start the scan all over again.

The minutes tick by. I ensure that she is not near the jet drives and start the motors. I douse the sails. With the port motor in forward and starboard in reverse, I slowly rotate *Bit-by-Bit* through three-sixty degrees. Pan the camera in long vertical sweeps and the green and blue thermal image of the sea slides slowly across the screen.

Another ten minutes passes and I feel panic rising. She didn't make it to the horseshoe float. I stand and stretch my neck and shoulders, and take a few deep breaths. I step back to the camera control and begin the scan again.

And then a red blob appears on the image. I breathe a sigh of relief. She is twelve hundred meters away. I stop the boat about fifteen feet upwind of her, cut the motors and *Bit-by-Bit* drifts towards her. Grabbing a boat hook, I walk down the starboard steps and push the hook towards her. She lunges for it and manages to grasp it. I drag her to the boat, kneel down and pull her back on board. She's shivering, her teeth are chattering, she's retching seawater and both crying and laughing. With some shock, I realize I am, too.

I carry her into her cabin, strip her, dry her and put her to bed wrapped in a blanket. I go upstairs, make her a cup of tea, add a shot of rum, pour myself a shot and return to the cabin. She's lying back, a dreamy smile on her face and I put the drinks down and prop her up on a few pillows. "I guess this means you get to stay," I say.

I hand her her tea and sip my rum. She nods and looks down at the bed for a long time. Looks up and says, eyes heavy, "Do you think you will ever trust me again?"

"I don't know. You lied to me for months. For almost a year, you were playing games with me, with the truth."

"You're right. I wish I could go back to when I met you and start all over again. All I can say is, I'm sorry. And thank-you for saving my life."

"You could have drowned. It's not that easy to pick up a person from the sea, especially when you're the only one on board."

"I know – like I told you – I know something about boats. You did well to save me. I somehow knew you would, though. I mean, standing there at the rail, I felt worthless enough to feel no one would care, that it wouldn't matter. I wanted to let go, so you could sail on solo as you so obviously desire. But in the end, I couldn't leave you."

I nod, but feel confused. I leave the cabin and head to the salon, nursing my rum. I get us underway again.

It's late afternoon before she emerges. She looks rested. Her hair is tied in a ponytail and a smile forces its way to my lips, past the anger. "Listen, Ses. You can stay, that much is obvious. But that gear you brought is not going to be used. You are not going aboard *Impérieuse*. And as for us," waving my hand between us, "I need some time to think this through."

She doesn't smile but says *thank you* and sits opposite me, at the table.

"We do have a food problem, though," I say. "But stopping in Botany Bay, it's not on our course. And I don't want to find the old boat until we need it, as I have nowhere to store it. I don't want it hanging about when we go round The Horn. We do have a year's provisions for one person, and I did bring a little extra, so there's no immediate shortage. We will get more when we need to. But that was clever of you. To bring all the stuff you did. By the way, the money from this time period, where did you get it?"

"It was Cassius's. He kept it in his safe, along with the maps I brought."

I tense at the thought of him and her and turn away. Silence for seconds, and I say to lessen my discomfort, "He probably stole them anyway. He's lucky we will not see him again. He kept threatening to kill me, and when we got back there, he may have tried."

Her facial features relax and she stands straighter. "So we're not going back then? What are we going to do?"

Tension ebbs slightly from my neck. I walk to the couch and sit, leaning back.

"Let's see if we can lay our hands on Napoleon's gold. Then we'll decide. But the French uniforms? What's that all about?"

She smiles and looks out the salon portholes for a while. "It's my Plan C. I thought we, you and me that is, could perhaps combine our

two plans.”

“You are assuming that I also have a Plan C. Right, of course. And mine required a bunch of additional equipment. Yours appears to need just two officers’ uniforms.”

“And an envelope. And probably some of what you brought.”

I sit up to look at her more clearly. “Let me guess. I dress up as a French Colonel, walk in to see Coignart in San Sebastian and tell him to load the gold into *Bit-by-Bit*?”

She chuckles and shakes her head. “Mmm... sort of. But first, let me ask you a question. Is it likely that we will find *Impérieuse*, before the seventeenth of June? Gives us a couple of days to locate her, right?”

“The odds of finding them are good. We will have had two opportunities, and the odds are pretty good for the first.”

She leans forward, excitement gleaming in her eyes. “Good, then here’s my plan. It assumes that we do find *Impérieuse*, but too late for her to intercept *La Clorinde* on her way into San Sebastian. We give Thomas his orders, he sets sail for San Sebastian and we go ahead in *Bit-by-Bit*, to near San Sebastian. We go in to see Coignart, that is you and me -.”

She breaks off as I stand, shaking my head. “Don’t shake your head like that, sailor boy; you haven’t heard the plan yet. If you think I’m just along for the ride, you’re mistaken.”

She leans back on the couch and looks at me intently. “As I was saying, you as the Colonel and me as the Commandant, we go in to see Coignart. The envelope contains an order signed by Joseph Bonaparte, the King of Spain. Forged, of course. It instructs Coignart to follow your orders. You tell him to put the chests back on *La Clorinde* and wait for further orders. When *Impérieuse* arrives off shore, you tell him to leave immediately. She sails directly into a trap.”

She stands, bows, and says. “Ta da! For my next act.”

By the time she finishes, my head has stopped shaking and I stare

at her. “That’s pretty good. Except for the *you and me* part. But how do I get into San Sebastian in the first place? I can’t just walk through the gate without a guard of men. Colonels don’t travel solo, do they?”

She smiles at my amazement. “No. They don’t. That’s why you need me; you will need at least an aide. But I guessed that your Plan C would cover the getting in – I saw some of the paperwork from Sergeant Davis for the SCUBA gear you requisitioned.”

I shake my head in wonder. “I guess I should have left the planning to you.”

She flushes with pleasure and we sit, thinking it over for a few minutes.

Then I say, “To tack to a completely different topic, are you hungry? Would you like a celebratory dinner?”

She laughs. “I’m starving. What are we celebrating?”

“The start of *First Nudge*, the fact that Doc George’s machine seems to work. And, well, that you are alive, despite that foolish stunt you pulled.”

She sits at the couch, leans forward and smiles. “I like those reasons, sailor boy. What did you have in mind?”

“I caught a fish today, while you were sleeping. Our speed dropped to around five knots for a while, just right for a Yellowfin. How about that, with a salad, some wine, a bit of port, perhaps a joint and some chocolate?”

“You sure know how to celebrate. I’ll put on some music.” She launches iTunes, dials her selection of music and Janis Joplin, *Get it While You Can* plays. I whirl in surprise. “How do you even know about this song? You can’t be a Joplin fan?”

She smiles. “Actually, my mum loves her. Plays her all the time. How about you?”

“Yeah. My parents, also.” We both join in with Janis as she belts

out her pain-filled instruction: *When someone comes along, and wants to give you some love and affection, I say take it while you can....*

I prepare the fish while Ses makes a salad, pours wine for both of us and we clink glasses.

She says, “Here’s to forgiveness. I am truly sorry for what I did.”

“In that case, I suggest we drink to truth and honesty between us – see if we can rebuild trust.”

“To truth and honesty.”

We sip and she asks, “Can I help with the rest of dinner?”

“No, from here on, it’s under control. Why not sit back and take it easy?”

She leans back against the couch, rubs her hand across the blue ultra-suede and glances around. She touches the Canadian Maple table top, looks over at the internal helm and turns to me. “*Bit-by-Bit* is amazing. She does seem to sail along by herself. But what’s that headset you’re wearing, and the little microphone?”

“I use it to communicate with *Bit-by-Bit*.”

“You mean you speak to her and she talks back?”

“Yeah, sort of. Here, let me show you. BeeBee,” I say into the headpiece, “switch to speaker mode.”

“Aye, sir. Speaker mode,” comes from the sound system speakers, while the music fades and swells around the words.

“She’s female!”

“Of course, she’s a boat.”

“But I thought she would speak with your voice, in your accent.”

“No, she has to be taught to recognise a voice and its accent. I picked her voice from a few that came with the software. BeeBee, status report.”

“Aye sir, Status report: No radar targets. All is well with me. Local time is 19:30. Position 33.22° south, 178.12° west. Heading 110°. Water

depth is 900 meters. Wind southeast at 20 knots, apparent wind 35 knots, apparent wind angle 90°, boat speed 19 knots, VMG 15 knots, waves 30 feet, barometer 30 millibars of pressure and steady, sea temperature 20°, air temperature 25°, energy draw 60 amps, hydrogen stack at 80%, main on 2nd reef, genoa on 2nd reef, jib is furled. Nav lights are on. Water and Diesel tanks are full. Holding tank is empty. Present orders are using sails only, to head as quickly as possible to waypoint Cape Horn. Out.”

“As you would say, love: Wow! That’s brilliant. But why do you call her BeeBee?”

“I have to have a way of making sure she knows I’m talking to her, as opposed to anyone else on board. I preface every command with BeeBee and she tunes in to the words that follow.”

“Captain Rick,” says *Bit-by-Bit*, “Unrecognised command. Please say again.”

Ses and I laugh. “BeeBee, modify command, Nav lights. Change to always off, unless otherwise instructed.”

“Aye, sir. Navigation lights are now off and will remain so, until otherwise instructed.”

Ses looks around the salon and says, “Like I said, Josh. She’s amazing.” I raise my glass in a silent toast, sip and continue grilling the fish. And then she says, “Do you think she would understand me. I mean could I talk to her, like you do?”

I focus on the electric barbeque. “Perhaps, maybe in a while....”

The silence hangs, and then she says, “You said to rebuild trust. I like that. I don’t think love exists without trust.”

I nod and say, “You’re right about love and trust.” I shrug. “We’re hard aground here – no room to maneuver.”

“I think that’s your intellect telling you that. What’s your heart saying?”

“I can’t see into my heart past my anger.”

“Some Roman poet, I think it was, said that anger makes you smaller, while forgiveness forces you to grow beyond what you were.”

“Maybe he didn’t get sold to the highest bidder. How could you use me like that? I know you said the oath was binding – yeah, so was mine. But you were leading me into a dangerous mission with no thought to my welfare. A weapon to be used to steal some gold. Is that what I mean to you? A few million bucks, or whatever Cassius was going to give you?”

Her eyes cloud. “In the beginning, yes. It was all a game. And when I read your file, yes, then too. Back then you were just a part of the mission and meant nothing to me.”

She stands and walks to the salon door and stares out at the sea, a black shifting shape outside the cockpit. “But in the car, on the way to PNRC from Heathrow, you seemed to truly understand me. And you’re the first man I’ve ever met, who didn’t fawn and want to paw me, or show me off like some prize. But I felt trapped. He, Cassius that is, he treated me with kindness, bought me stuff, showed me round, took care of me. He reminded me of my dad, I suppose, but then he wanted more from me than just friendship. Couldn’t see how to refuse. And then he started to obsess over me. He’s dangerous with his obsessions, Josh. I wanted to leave him, to be free to explore the connection with you. I wanted to tell you. Really, but I was too scared of him and what he would do.”

I sit for a time and say, “What about when we went to Macbeth, about me being holed by a shot. That was a perfect opportunity.”

“It was. I tried, but I couldn’t - I was scared of him, scared of what you would do, scared for myself.”

I carve the fish, carry it to the table and we eat. I don’t want to continue down this road. We sit in silence for a time. She asks, “Are you always this much fun at a celebration?”

“I feel depressed and low. So I’m going to say good night. No need to get up early, just when you feel like it. WatchMate will keep an

eye out for us; wake me if it sees anything. Get some rest.”

We head off to our respective cabins.

April 14, 1813

WatchMate wakes me with, “On Deck. Land Ho!”

“BeeBee. Report.”

“Cape Horn, sir. 10 miles due east.”

We dress in our foul-weather gear, don our harnesses, open the salon door, clip our tethers to the jack-lines, and go outside. The wind is a steady gale of forty knots, the waves roll by, forty-foot monsters, and the surf and wind howl around the boat.

Shielding our eyes against the stinging spray, a row of flat-topped peaks, like teeth, rise from the sea. And then False Horn appears, a black fang against the sky. An hour later, Cape Horn’s steeply sloped face heaves into view.

We round The Horn and go back inside. I say, “BeeBee, set course for Aix Roads.”

“Aye, sir. Heading 70°, ETA at waypoint is June 10th, 1813.” *Bit-by-Bit* settles on a run north and east, angling us away from the coast of Argentina, towards the middle of the ocean.

I look at Ses. “That calls for a celebratory drink. We’re lucky, the weather is calm for this place.”

She nods uncertainly. Then, to my surprise she says, “I’m not really in a celebratory mood, Josh. Sorry. Back in a moment.” She heads down to her cabin and comes back carrying a gold locket. She clasps it around her neck, then looks out the forward porthole to the east. “My dad gave me this on my third birthday. It used to have a picture of him and mum, but I changed it to one of her and me.”

She opens the locket to show me. It’s a head and shoulders shot

in which Ses looks much like she does now. She's wearing a white open collar blouse and the locket's tiny gleam of gold at her throat matches her hair. Her mother looks about late seventies and is smiling warmly.

I nod and raise my eyebrows, "What made you...? Oh, Sorry." She's aware that we will pass near the Falkland Islands today. I stop, not sure of what to say next.

"I'm going to give the locket back to him," she says. "It'll have to wait a long time for him to arrive, but maybe that way I can say goodbye to him. Please tell me when we're as close as we're going to get."

I cross to the nav-station and glance at the chart. "BeeBee. Sailing on this course, how close we will be to the location in which *HMS Sheffield* sank."

"Aye, sir. The point, 15 nautical miles from *Sheffield*, will occur 12 hours from now."

"BeeBee. Alter course to pass directly overhead and alert me when we are half an hour from reaching it."

"Aye, sir. 30 minutes from new waypoint, I will alert you."

Ses looks up at me from the table. "Thank-you, Josh. That's kind."

I nod, again at a loss for words. She stands and looks astern at The Horn fading from view. "I know we achieved a sailing milestone there, Josh. Rounding The Horn is a big deal in a sailboat, but I feel safe with you. And I think our uneasy truce has become an uneasy peace. I'll take that as a personal milestone."