

"We are going to do our darnedest not to get caught. We are going to sail *Blue Moon* to the best of our ability to keep ahead of them. All is not lost. They may have to turn back because of fuel, or they may give up ... but we're not giving up," Greg stated.

Tom took over the wheel at eight o'clock, but the others were too concerned to go below. Many eyes watched the small patrol boat forging along behind them. At intervals, Greg checked the relative width of the patrol boat with the sextant and read the angle he had just measured.

"They're getting closer, right?" Lily asked.

"Uh, huh. Not much, but the patrol boat is closer now than before," Greg said.

"Are we near to that island yet?"

"Triangle Island. Remember the name. That's where we're going to conduct our scientific study."

"Sorry. I won't forget," Lily said.

The fog brightened with the coming sun. As it dissipated, Greg searched aft for other boats but couldn't see any despite the improving visibility. There was just that grey shape behind them, slowly getting more prominent as the distance diminished. He then searched the western horizon for Triangle Island. He doubted he would see it; it was too far away.

"You'll probably see Triangle Island when you're on watch this afternoon, Lily."

"What's there? You better tell me all about it so I can get my story straight."

"It's a wildlife sanctuary. It's almost the largest nursery in the world for Steller sea lions. Also, two million birds nest there on just a square kilometre of land," Greg said.

"Really? Can we see any of them now?"

"The birds are gone. They return in the spring to nest so that we won't see any."

"That's a pity," Lily said. "Are we going in real close?"

"Not too close because there are a lot of underwater rocks near the shore, though that's on the west side. We're going to go past the north side. I'm still concerned about that patrol boat as we're not in international waters yet, so I'm cautious. We can sail close to it so long as we don't run aground."

"But what do we do if we get to Triangle Island and that patrol boat is still chasing us?"

"We're not stopping. We'll keep on until we reach international waters," Greg stated.

"Where's that?"

"Twelve nautical miles ... about an hour-and-a-half at this speed."

"So ... we'll probably get away, right?"

"I hope so. If the occupiers chase us into international waters—and I expect them to continue doing that—then we'll keep on going until we're through the contiguous zone—another twelve nautical miles further—because *Blue Moon* is a Canadian registered vessel and our new overlords have jurisdiction over us until we're twenty-four nautical miles away from any Canadian coastline ... and that includes Triangle Island."

Lily absorbed this for a while before replying.

"So, we'll keep on going. We're not going to give up. Right, Skipper?"

"Right, Lily!"

Greg reached out his hand, grasped hers, and squeezed it gently. She looked up at him, her eyes bright and guileless. Lily let go of his hand, gave him a quick hug and then went to the lifelines on the port side. She grasped the plastic-coated wire and looked aloft at the colourful spinnaker filling the front of *Blue Moon*. Lily came back into the cockpit and sat beside Greg.

"I hope I see some birds. An ornithologist came to my school to talk about sea birds around Victoria." Lily said.

"Did you want to get some rest? I'll come and get you if we reach the island before your watch."

"No, I like being up on deck. I'll get some rest later. I don't want to miss anything."

Greg nodded. He was amazed at her resilience. He was consumed with anxiety, yet her simple acceptance of the life and risk they were taking calmed him. He remembered Nick's concern about Lily when anchored in Burgoyne Bay, off Salt Spring Island. He had assured Nick that Lily would assess and adapt to the situation she found herself in. At the time, he had yet to meet Lily, yet had correctly gauged her personality. *She's a good kid*, he thought, then corrected himself. *No, she's a wonderful young woman who deserves to live in peace and security.*



The sun reached above a low bank of fog and cloud that hovered over Vancouver Island to the southeast. The wind stayed steady with the sunshine as *Blue Moon* moved swiftly along. The wind backed to the northeast throughout the day, still mostly from behind. They gybed the main and set the spinnaker on the port side.

Greg would have liked to tack downwind and get a little more speed out of *Blue Moon*, but it would be more challenging to prevent a broach with his still-green crew. One slipup and the patrol boat would be alongside and

boarding them. Sailing dead downwind was straightforward and gentler on the helmsperson. Unfortunately, it was also easier for the patrol boat still chasing them and now only five cables—about a kilometre—behind them.

The wind strengthened when Marcus took over the helm at two in the afternoon. They had to take down the spinnaker. Greg outlined the process as all except Nick had been unable to practice the operation. Nick unfurled the genoa and trimmed it for a broad-reaching course when they doused the spinnaker and brought it into the cabin. The temporary loss of speed had enabled the patrol boat to gain ground. They were now four cables away—about eight hundred metres.

“Marcus, I want you to steer by the speed of the log. We’re going for speed, not course. Turn gradually to starboard until you get the best speed. Nick will trim the genoa and mainsail to suit the course. Try not to broach, but anticipate the push of the swells from the northeast. They’re small now, but they’ll get bigger, and you’ll need to turn the wheel downwind before the stern lifts and the swell grabs the control from you.”

“Aye, Aye, Greg.”

*Blue Moon’s* speed was close to what it had been when they were flying the spinnaker. This situation was better, but the patrol boat was too close for comfort. Greg walked to the bow and looked ahead. The wispy, moist air cleared, and they could now see Triangle Island close ahead.

“Look, Lily, there it is, almost dead ahead!” Greg called from his lookout at the bow.

They closed on the island quickly. The crew stood up to see this wild and remote place. They had a beautiful view of the island in bright sunshine; however, as it was devoid of birds and other life, the experience wasn’t as exciting as they had hoped. It was a beautiful sight overshadowed by the dread of the patrol boat closing the distance behind them.

The island rose two hundred metres above the ocean and was devoid of trees. Storms had scoured the lower hundred metres, leaving steeply sloped cliffs with clinging thorny green undergrowth. The afternoon sun lit up the island’s western shores, showing the harsh shingle beaches where Steller sea lions came ashore to mate.

They couldn’t sail close to the island as a chain of islets extended some four hundred metres from its northern point. They sped quickly past the island with a sense of disappointment at the transient nature of their experience. They wanted respite from the stress they all endured after running from the patrol boat in the dark and fog for many ocean miles. There was a tinge of fear for some, who, for the first time, were genuinely sailing into the unknown. They instinctively knew they were leaving their country and

home behind, perhaps forever.

There came a sharp sound from the patrol boat. Then another and another.

"They're shooting at us, Skipper!" Nick yelled.

"Everybody! Get below and lie down on the cabin sole! Marcus! I'm taking the helm. You go below, too. Everybody move!" Greg shouted.

There was a rush for the companionway as people quickly descended the narrow stairs. When they were below, Nick saw that Lily was crying.

"It's okay, Lily. We're safe down here," Nick assured her.

"It's not that. They know we're escaping. It won't matter what we tell them. They won't believe us. They'll ... they'll capture us and they'll ..."

Lilly burst into tears as her mother crawled over to her and wrapped her arms around her. Nick held Lily's shaking hand.

"It's all my fault," Tom said. "I've put you all in grave danger. I'm sorry."

"Buck up! It's not over yet. We're still sailing."

At first, Marcus thought it was Laura who spoke. It wasn't. When he looked at Margaret, he saw she had an angry, determined expression. It surprised him as she had seemed so ... superficial. Yet here she was exhibiting courage under fire—literally.

Greg hoped they had followed his instructions as he wanted them to have not a single part of their bodies above the waterline where a powerful bullet could pierce the fibreglass hull and travel through the cabin. He lay on the cockpit floor and held the wheel as he steered by the wind indicator at the top of the mast; it would lessen the chance of being shot.

He heard a bullet whiz by and saw a small hole appear in the mainsail. *Blue Moon* would continue to sail as long as there was a shred of cloth to catch the wind. *At least it's not like Lord Nelson during the Battle of Trafalgar*, Greg thought.

A faint voice came from a megaphone calling for him to hove to, but he ignored it. *Can I keep this up for another hour-and-a-half until we're in international waters?* Greg thought. Greg heard more gunshots but didn't hear the sound of them hitting *Blue Moon*. The gunshots were sporadic as if multiple rifles were trained on them from the now yawing and rolling patrol boat. Greg didn't dare stick his head above the cockpit coaming to see what was happening for fear of being shot in the head. He had no clue how close they were, or what they were planning on doing. The rate of gunfire diminished and became more random. There was a long pause, and Greg felt seconds stretch into minutes. He ached to know what was happening. After a few minutes, he dared a glance over the stern coaming.