

A Ladder of Swords

to the wind still more, and bore on towards the passage. At last, as they were opening on it, the wind suddenly veered full north-east. The sails flapped, the boat seemed to hover for a moment, and then a wave swept her towards the rocks. Buonespoir put the helm hard over, she went about, and they close-hauled her as she trembled towards the rocky opening.

This was the critical instant. A heavy sea was running, the gale was blowing hard from the northeast, and under the close-hauled sail the *Belle Suzanne* was lying over dangerously. But the tide, too, was running hard from the south, fighting the wind, and at the moment when all seemed terribly uncertain swept them past the opening and into the swift-running channel, where the indraught sucked them through to the more open water beyond.

Although the *Belle Suzanne* was in more open water now, the danger was not over. Ahead lay a treacherous sea, around them roaring winds, and the perilous coast of Jersey beyond all.