Contre Les Corsaires Francais

The Gentlemen Wargamers convened to fight out a naval action using War Artisan's 1:300 scale cardstock ships, and the "Away Boarders!" rules.

This scenario was set during the Seven Years War, in the English Channel. A group of French privateers, escorting two prize ships, have been forced by bad weather in the Channel to take refuge in a small cove on the French coast. There are two entrances to the cove, on either side of a rocky island, the narrower one overlooked by an old Norman keep. On the shore of the cove lies a small fishing village. Overnight the weather abates, but as the morning mist clears the corsairs spy an approaching British squadron, which has been detached from the channel fleet to hunt them down.

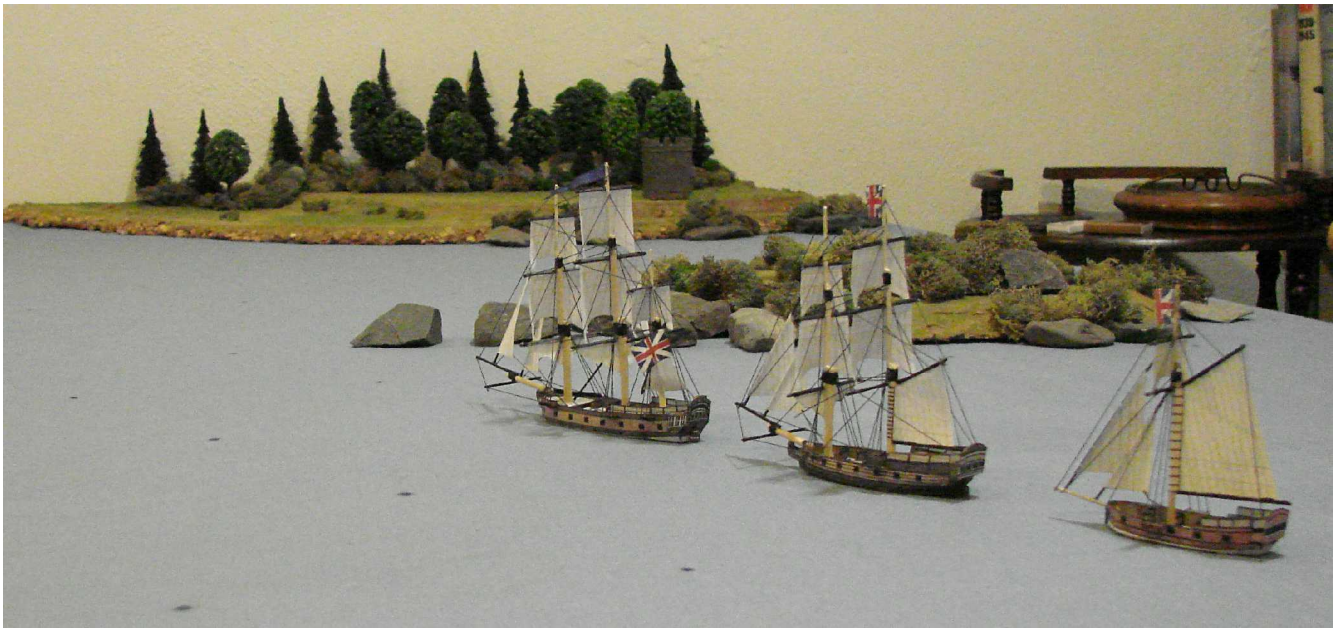
British Squadron

Vigilant - ship-sloop, 16 x 12#
Grampus - brig, 14 x 9#
Weazel - cutter, 10 x 6#

French Squadron

Le Meduse - brigantine, 14 x 12#
L'Epee - schooner, 12 x 8#
Le Faucon - sloop, 8 x 6#
plus two small prizes, a schooner and a lugger

In addition to the general situation, each player has been given a brief paragraph describing his situation relative to his compatriots, and giving him personal victory conditions that may conflict with those of the other players (see the appendix for these, as well as ship charts for the vessels involved in the battle).



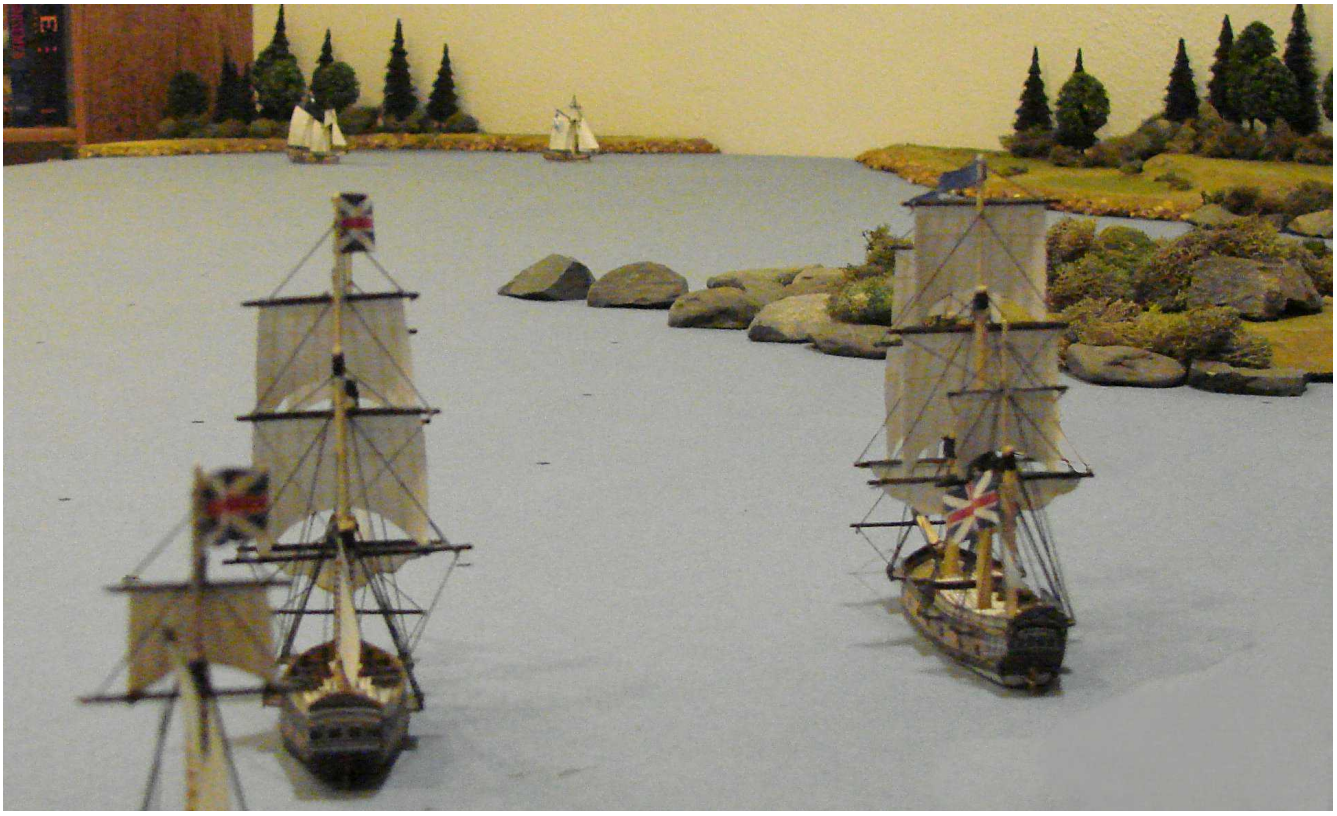
The British squadron, led by HM sloop Vigilant, reconnoiter the Point of Rocks.

The senior Lieutenant of the British squadron, in command of the Vigilant, entered the cove by way of the wider passage on a good, stiff onshore breeze. Through the clearing mist, he could see that the corsair brigantine, a well-armed Dunkerquer, had anchored close by the village, with the two prize ships nearby. The two smaller corsairs, having had presentiments

of disaster, were anchored some distance to the west, across the cove. Upon sighting the Royal Navy ships entering the cove, the French hurriedly got under way.

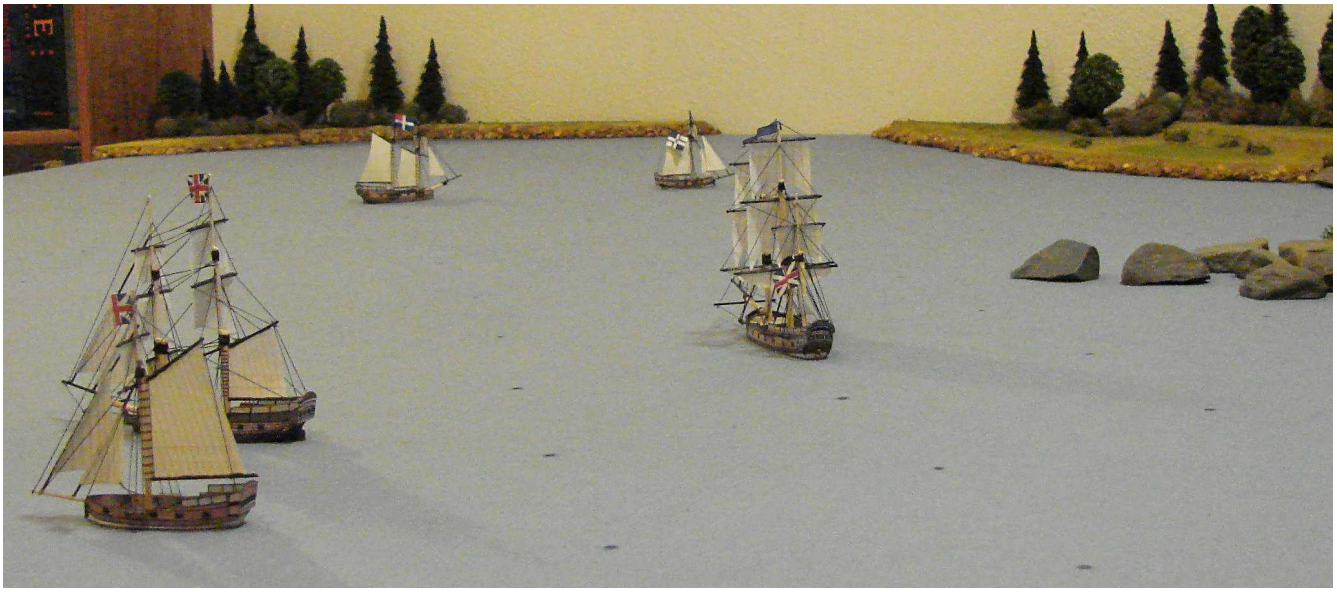
The French corsairs weigh anchor and make sail.

Upon seeing their enemies separated by so much water, the British decided to keep them from joining forces. Vigilant broke away to the west to take on L'Epee and Le Faucon, while the Grampus and Weazel headed towards the village, and the prizes.



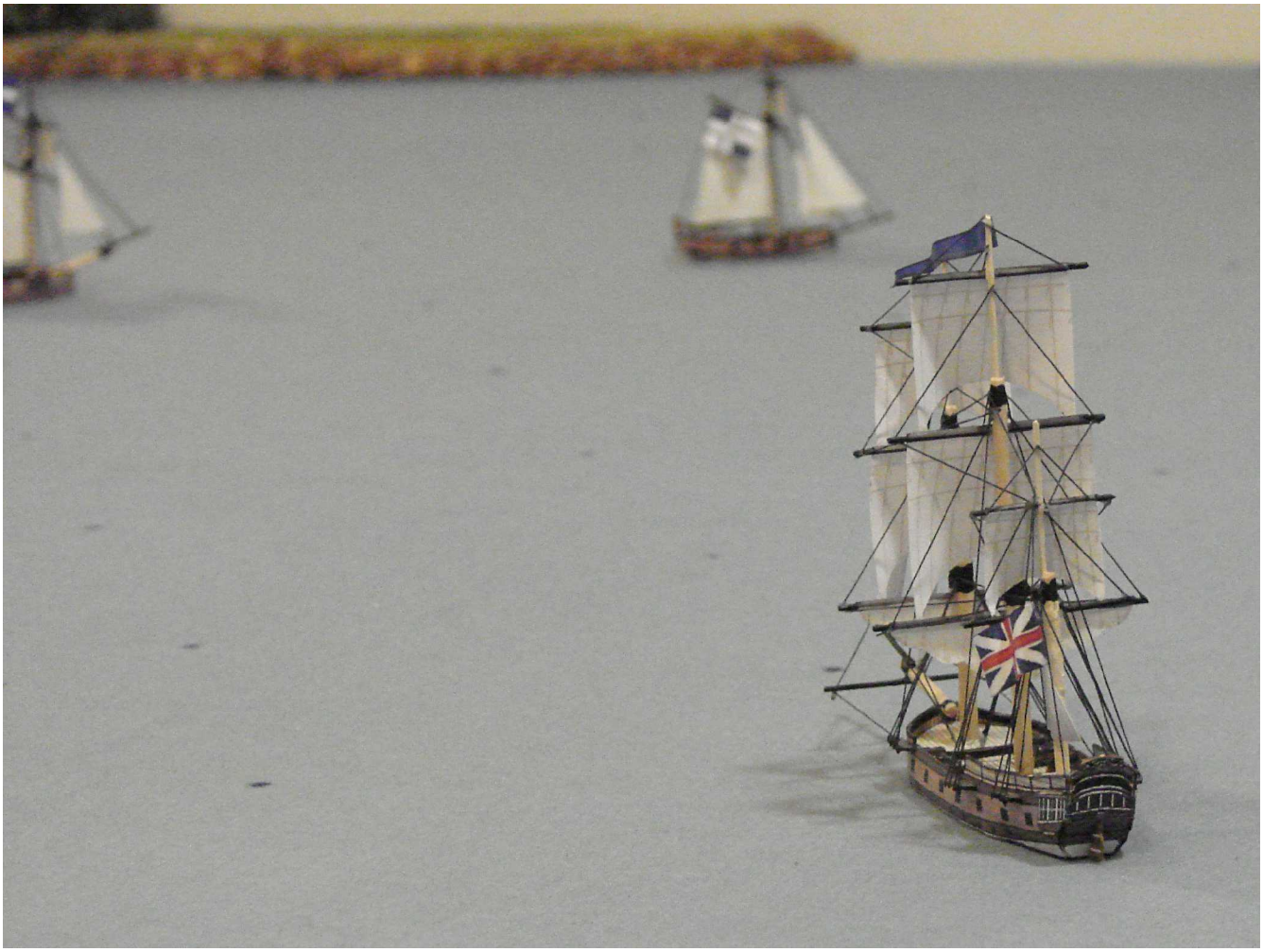
Spotting their prey, the British squadron splits up, Vigilant headed to the West end of the cove, Grampus and Weazel to the East.

The French opened the ball by firing a long range broadside at Vigilant's upper works, hoping to slow her down a little and facilitate their escape. However, having loaded chain shot, the broadside fell short. Le Faucon's six pounders wouldn't reach at that range, anyway, but L'Epee's crew hurriedly reloaded with round shot. On the second try, they holed a couple of Vigilant's sails and a lucky hit dismounted one of her guns.



Vigilant runs downwind towards the corsair schooner.

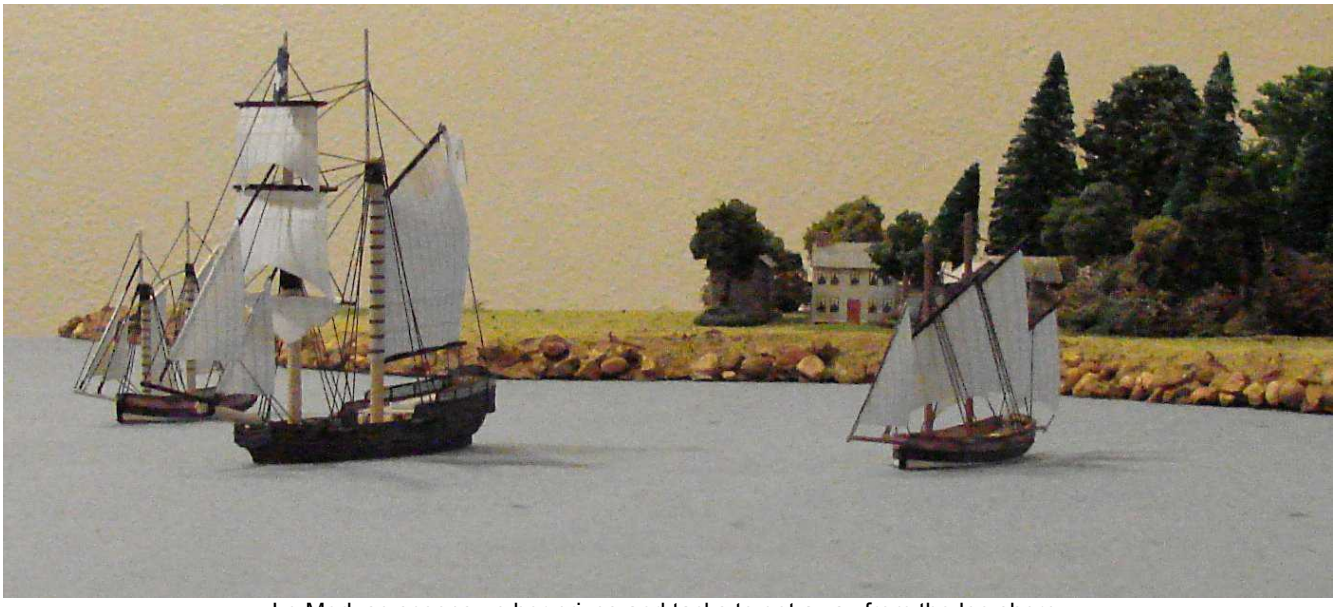
Undaunted, the Vigilant closed to within short range for her twelve-pounders and turned downwind to exchange fire with Le Faucon. Her double-shotted initial broadside shredded the masts and spars of the little sloop, and the chaos on deck put most of the crew out of action, at least temporarily.



Vigilant closes with Le Faucon.

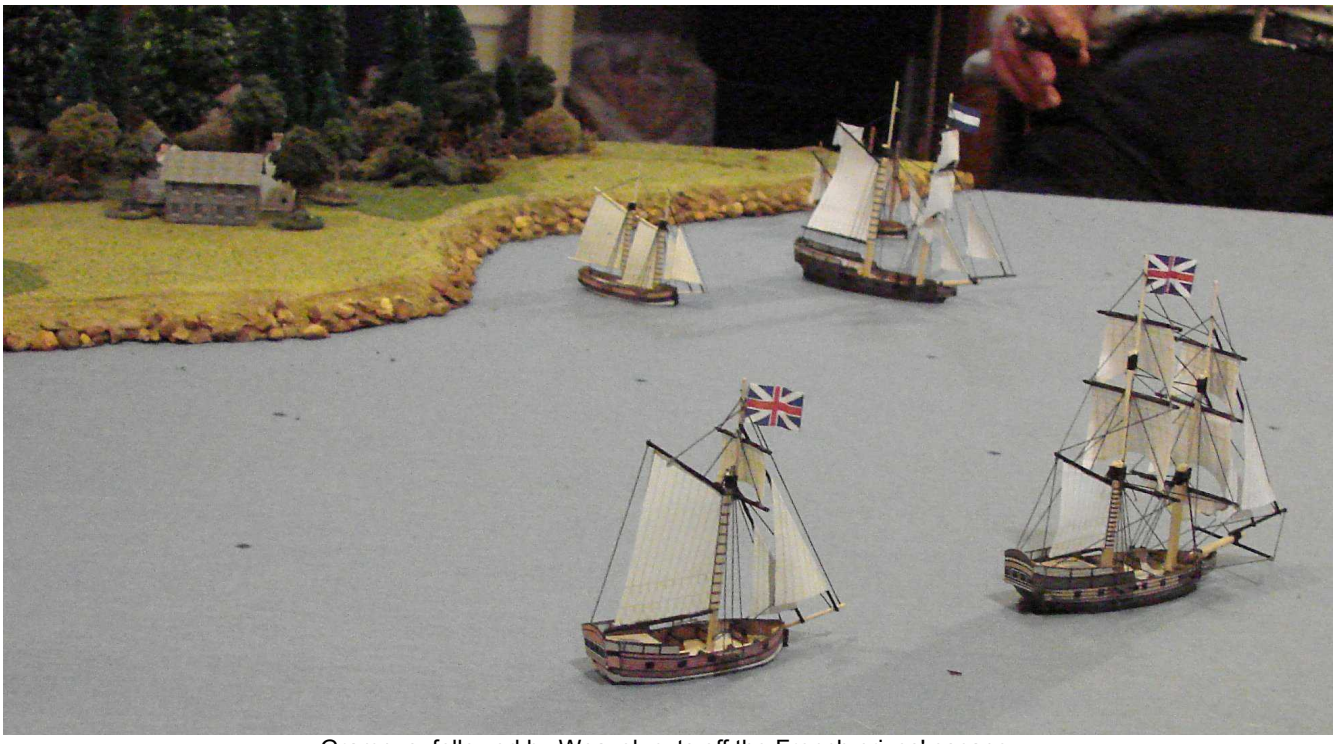
The French returned fire on the British ship-sloop, but with limited effectiveness due to the inaccuracy of their gunners.

Meanwhile, Le Meduse, her captain mindful of the potential value of his two prize ships, had shifted east to get between them and the oncoming British. He tacked and headed back out into the cove, herding the two merchant ships.



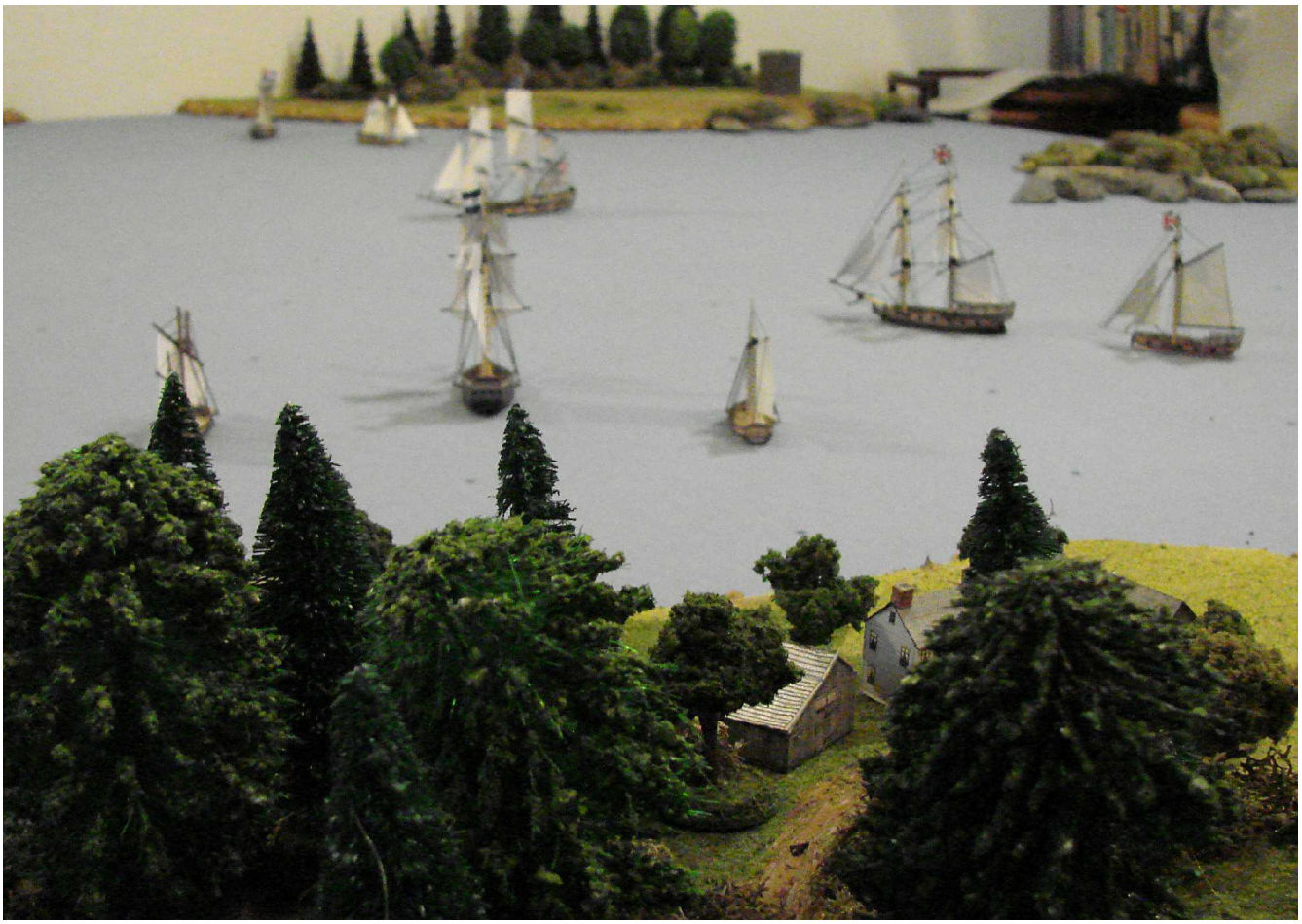
Le Meduse scoops up her prizes and tacks to get away from the lee shore.

Unfortunately for Le Meduse, the commander of the Grampus had seen his opportunity and, hoisting every stitch of sail, was bearing down to cut off his escape. Underestimating the range, a broadside from the brig's double-shotted nine-pounders did no damage to the Frenchman.



Grampus, followed by Weazel, cuts off the French prizes' escape.

About this time, the Vigilant realized that, although the French sloop's ability to make way was severely compromised by the damage aloft, there was no way he could get between the nimble schooner and the passages out of the cove. Mindful of the value of the prizes, and aware that their escort was the most dangerous of his opponents, he turned away to the east, and headed back to rejoin his compatriots.

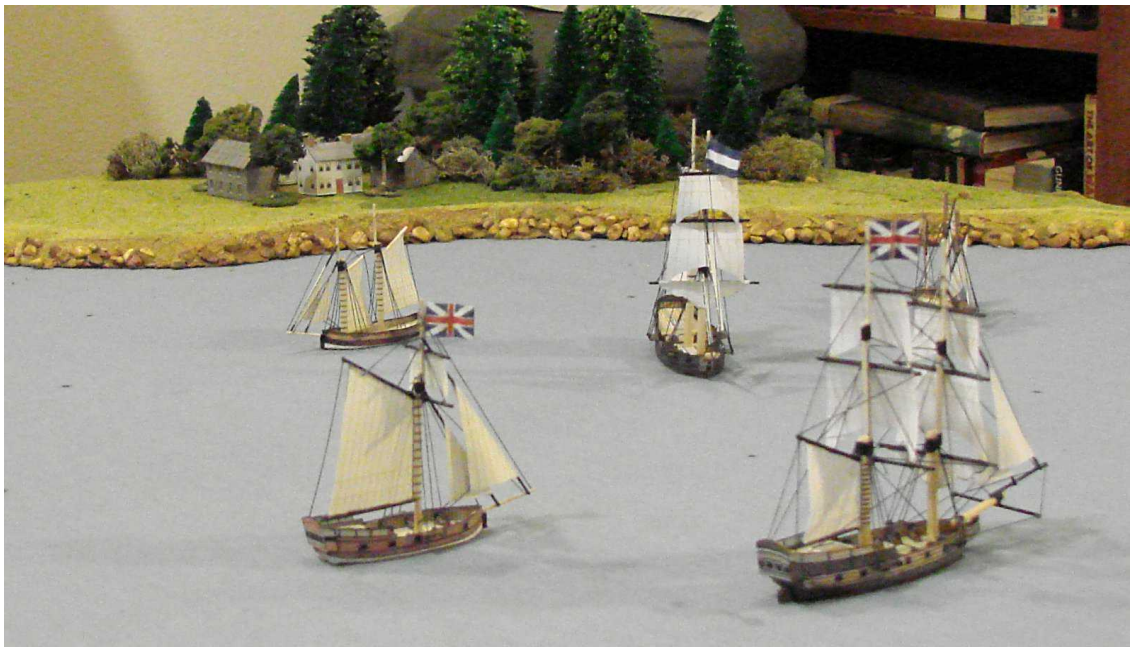


A view of the action from the vicinity of the fishing village.

The commander of the Grampus, carefully keeping the Weazel in his wake and out of danger, steadily narrowed the distance between his guns (now carefully reloaded with double round shot) and Le Meduse until he felt he was close enough to deliver a telling blow. The resulting broadside brought the Frenchman's mainmast crashing over the side and dismounted a couple of the port battery's guns. There were casualties among the crew, but the French Lieutenant stood unscathed amid the wreckage, and called the topmen down to assist in manning the guns. The brigantine was also taking on water. In spite of all this, Le Meduse's gunners were taking a steady toll on their approaching antagonists.

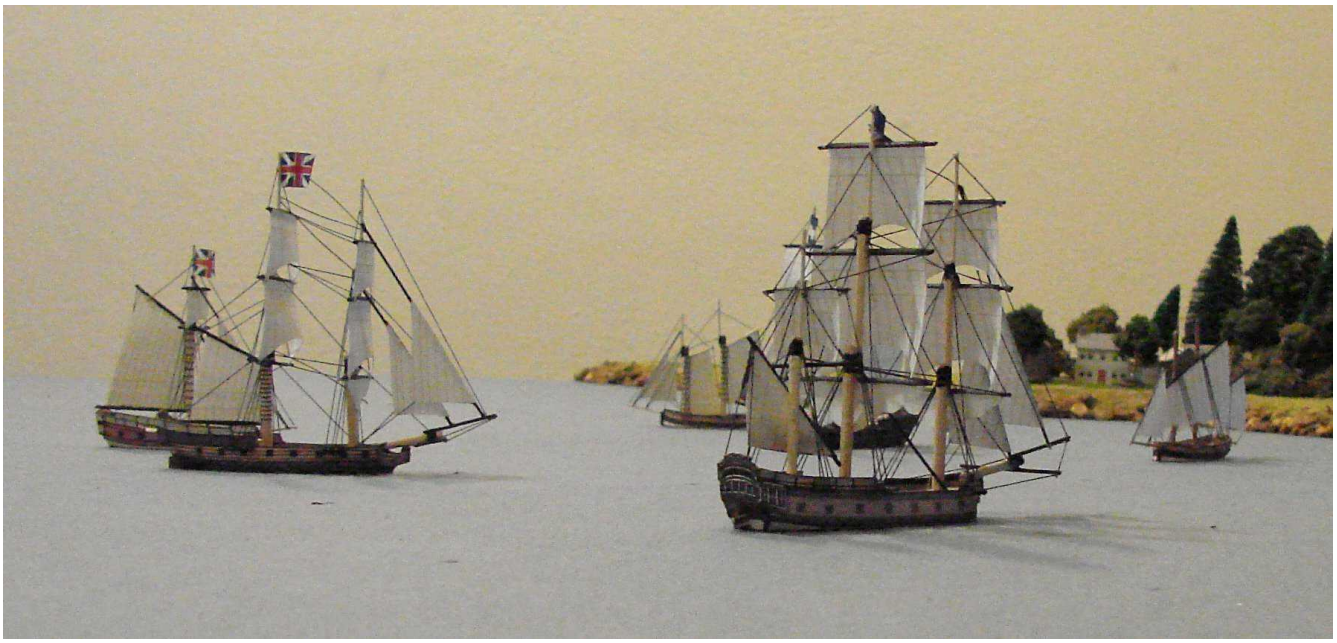
The Grampus delivers a crushing blow to Le Meduse.

At the same time, Weazel fired a few shots into the merchant schooner, and her prize crew, lacking any means of resistance, immediately hove to.



While Grampus continues to pound Le Meduse, Weazel forces the prize schooner to heave to.

Having worn around, Vigilant now swung in downwind of the fight between the brig and brigantine and her twelve-pounders joined the fight, riddling Le Meduse's hull, bringing down her other mast, and leaving only a handful of men standing on her bloody decks.



Vigilant rejoins the squadron, and Le Meduse's fate is sealed.

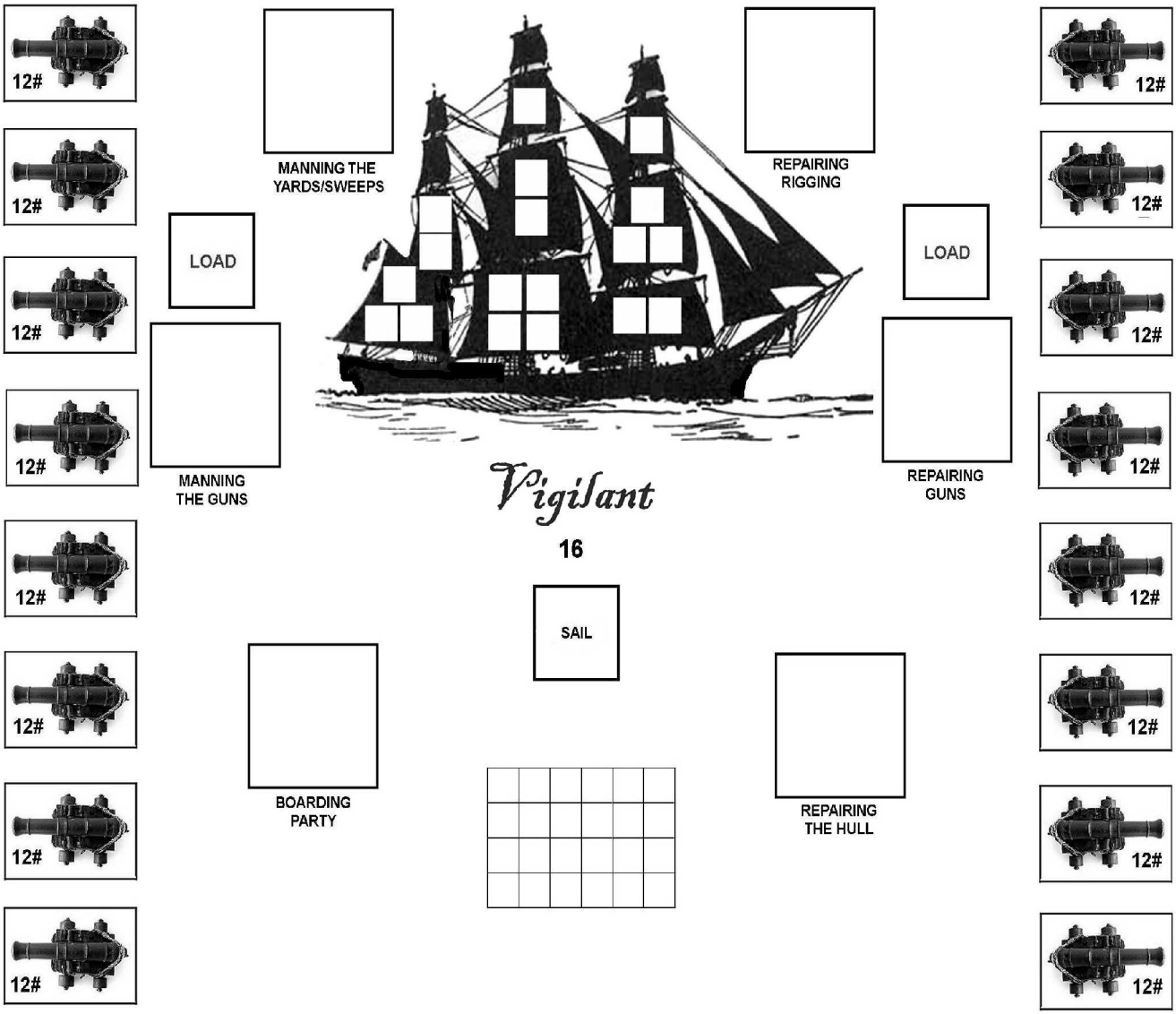
Surrounded, immobile, sinking, and almost crewless, the brigantine's commander is left with no option but surrender. Witnessing this disaster, the prize lugger heaves to and hauls down her flag as well.

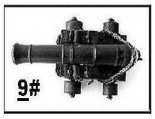
Le Meduse's surrender.

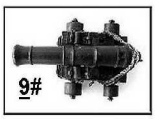
To the east, at the narrow passage, the enterprising captain of the damaged sloop, Le Faucon, has rallied enough of his crew to man the sweeps and, escorted by L'Epee, is making his way out into the open Channel, while a few of his men rig a jury mast that will help ensure his escape once he gets to windward of the island.

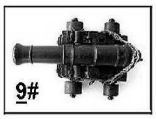
L'Epee and Le Faucon make their escape.

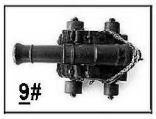
Appendix: Ship Charts











MANNING THE YARDS/SWEEPS

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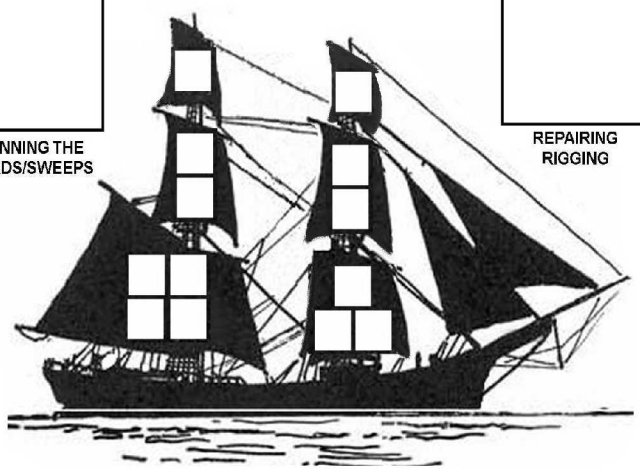

Grampus

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SAIL

BOARDING PARTY

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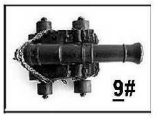

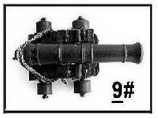

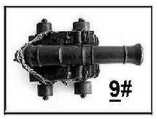

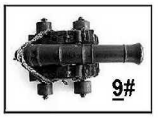

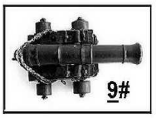

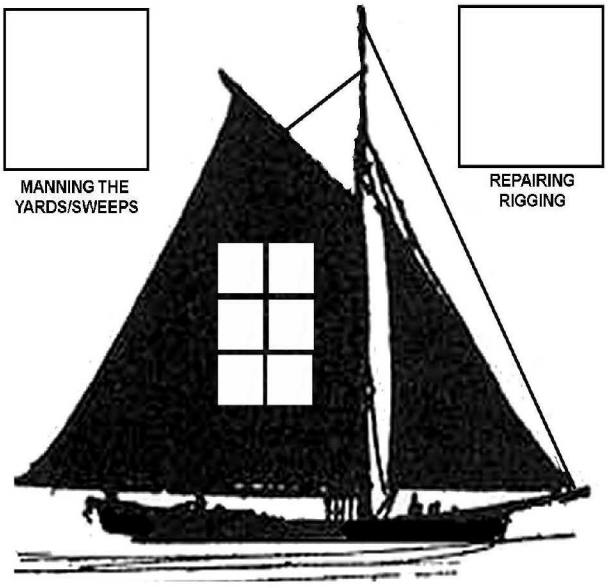

Weazel

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MANNING THE YARDS/SWEEPS

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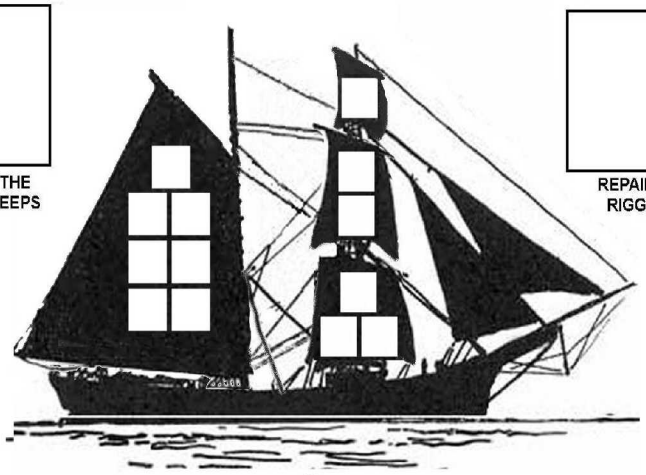
SAIL

BOARDING PARTY

REPAIRING THE HULL



Le Meduse

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MANNING THE YARDS/SWEEPS

REPAIRING RIGGING

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MANNING THE GUNS

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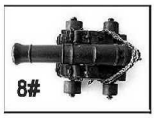

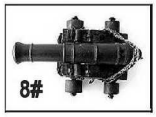

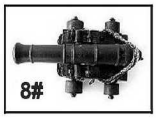

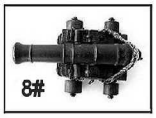

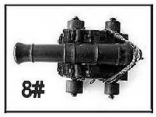

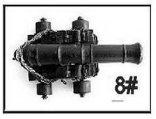

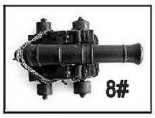

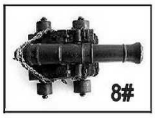

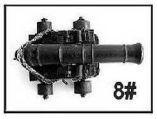

MANNING THE YARDS/SWEEPS

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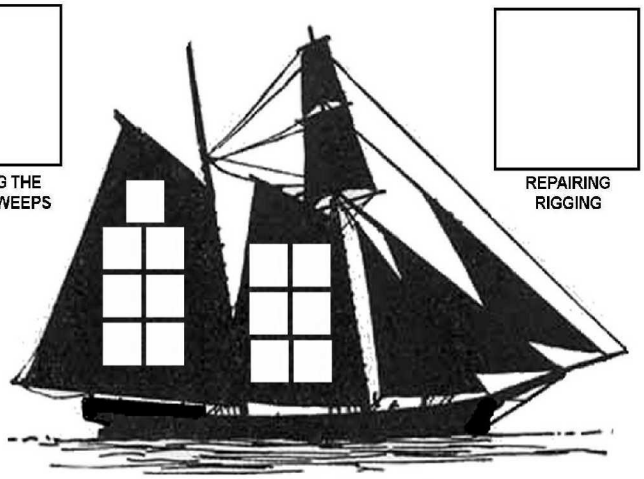

L'Epee

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MANNING THE GUNS

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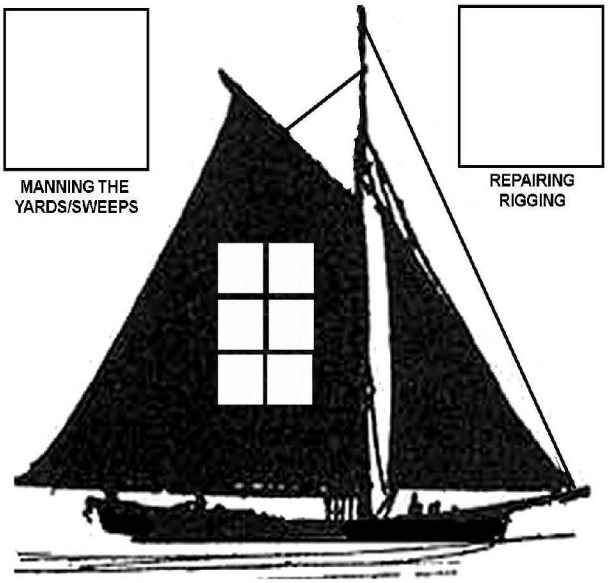
BOARDING PARTY

REPAIRING THE HULL



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MANNING THE YARDS/SWEEPS

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MANNING THE GUNS

REPAIRING GUNS

Le Faucon

8

SAIL

BOARDING PARTY

REPAIRING THE HULL

Appendix: Victory Conditions

Le Meduse - You are a Lieutenant in the French navy. You have been assigned to support the efforts of French privateers to ravage the commercial shipping of Great Britain in the English Channel. Currently in command of the Dunkerque brigantine *Le Meduse*, you have been accompanying a couple small corsairs, the schooner *L'Epee* and the sloop *Le Faucon.* The two corsair captains do not impress you very much, being a bit rough and seemingly unscrupulous, so you have made sure that the prize crews put aboard captured vessels consist mostly of your own men. This has, unfortunately, also left you somewhat shorthanded. Recently, two small prizes were taken, but before they could be sent into St. Malo, you little squadron was forced to take refuge from some rough weather in a small cove on the coast of France.

The dawn has brought calmer seas, but daylight has also revealed that a few British ships have discovered your location and are closing in fast under a favorable breeze. You'd like to get both your prizes away if you can, but it is at least imperative that you don't allow yourself to be captured, and you don't mind sacrificing both of the other corsairs if necessary.

L'Epee - You are the Captain of the French privateer schooner *L'Epee,* out of St. Malo. You have been cruising the English channel, looking for easy prizes among the British commercial vessels moving through the Narrow Seas, in company with another privateer captain out of Granville, and a naval Lieutenant in command of a Dunkerque brigantine. The brigantine's speed and guns have been very welcome, but the Lieutenant has treated you and your compatriot with barely concealed contempt and you're not sure he can be trusted to stand by you if things get rough.

Some bad weather has forced you and your companions, along with two prizes recently captured, to take refuge in a small cove on the coast of France. The dawn has brought calmer seas, but daylight has also revealed that a few British ships have discovered your location and are closing in fast under a favorable breeze. If you can escape this trap with your ship you can at least hope to continue your hunt for fortune; if you can get away with at least one of the prizes, that would be even better, but the prize crews are mainly the Lieutenant's men so they may be less than cooperative.

Le Faucon - You are the Captain of the French privateer sloop *Le Faucon,* out of Granville. You have been cruising the English channel, looking for easy prizes among the British commercial vessels moving through the Narrow Seas, in company with another privateer captain out of St. Malo, and a naval Lieutenant in command of a Dunkerque brigantine. The brigantine's speed and guns have been very welcome, but the Lieutenant has treated you and your compatriot with barely concealed contempt and you're not sure he can be trusted to stand by you if things get rough.

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Vigilant - You are the Lieutenant Commander (hopefully soon to be made Post Captain) of His majesty's sloop *Vigilant.* A report from a passing merchant has revealed that a pack of French corsairs has been harassing British shipping in the channel and the Admiral has detached you with the brig G*rampus* and the cutter *Weazel* to hunt them down.

After a rough night in the Channel, you discovered the pirates in a small cove, with a couple of recetly taken prizes. This is your chance to show your superiors the initiative and aggressiveness as an independent commander that will make your promotion to the seniority track a virtual certainty. Destroy the pirates and recover the prizes, and your future success is guaranteed.

Grampus - You are the Lieutenant in command of His Majesty's brig *Grampus*. You have been detached from the fleet under the command of a slightly more senior (and considerably less competent) Lieutenant, commanding the sloop *Vigilant*, in order to hunt down a pack of French pirates operating in the English Channel.

Also accompanying your little squadron is the cutter *Weazel*. whose young commander happens to be the younger brother of your betrothed (the beautiful and wealthy daughter of a prominent Lord, whose influence probably was responsible for the young officer's appointment to his first command, in spite of his utter lack of experience). Your intended will likely never speak to you again if anything untoward should happen to her darling younger sibling while you are around to prevent it. Since the fire-eating commander of the *Vigilant* is bucking for promotion to Post Captain, this opportunity for an independent command (which you are sure you could handle far better than he) make it seem likely that you will all very shortly be put in harm's way.

After a rough night in the Channel, the pirates have been discovered in a small cove, with a couple of recently taken prizes. Retaking the prizes (while protecting the *Weazel*) would be quite the feather in your cap, and it wouldn't hurt you much if the commander of the *Vigilant* was disgraced by failing to mop up the French corsairs in the process.

Weazel - In spite of being the most junior Lieutenant in the fleet, you have been granted the special honor of commanding His Majesty's cutter *Weazel* as part of an independent squadron which has been tasked with hunting down a pack of French pirates ravaging British commercial shipping in the Channel. You suspect that this signal opportunity may have partly

due to the influence of your future Brother-in-Law and commander of the brig *Grampus*. who is also along on this expedition.

After a rough night in the channel, the pirates were discovered in a small cove, with a couple of recently taken prizes. You are determined to show that you are worthy of your superiors' trust and to win the admiration of your soon-to-be family member by demonstrating that your courage and resourcefulness are second to no other officer in the fleet. Taking on the corsairs and helping to recapture the prizes will make your family proud and be a great benefit to your future career in the navy.